

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Inside this week



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## TUC votes to oppose Tory laws

# Fight for the right to solidarity!



Photo John Harris

**“** *If the TUC is really serious about creating free trade unions, then they have to back up workers in struggle with strike action. That is why our union, the AEEU, was calling for a very clear commitment to legalising solidarity action. Unfortunately, that clear commitment seems to have got lost. We were left with a fudge, not a clear commitment, but that's what you expect from the TUC* **”**

John Kydd, convenor, Timex.

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## Cross-union strikes could save NHS



# TUC votes for solidarity rights

By Tom Rigby

**T**HE TRADES Union Congress in Brighton has responded to the latest round of anti-union laws by calling for a campaign to establish a framework of positive legal rights for trade unions, including the rights to join a trade union, to strike, and to take solidarity action. This is a step forward for the TUC.

Previously Congress policy opposed making solidarity action legal under a future Labour government. Unfortunately, the clear-cut proposal from the National Union of Mineworkers for active defiance and total repeal of the Tory laws was defeated — though over two million votes backed Arthur

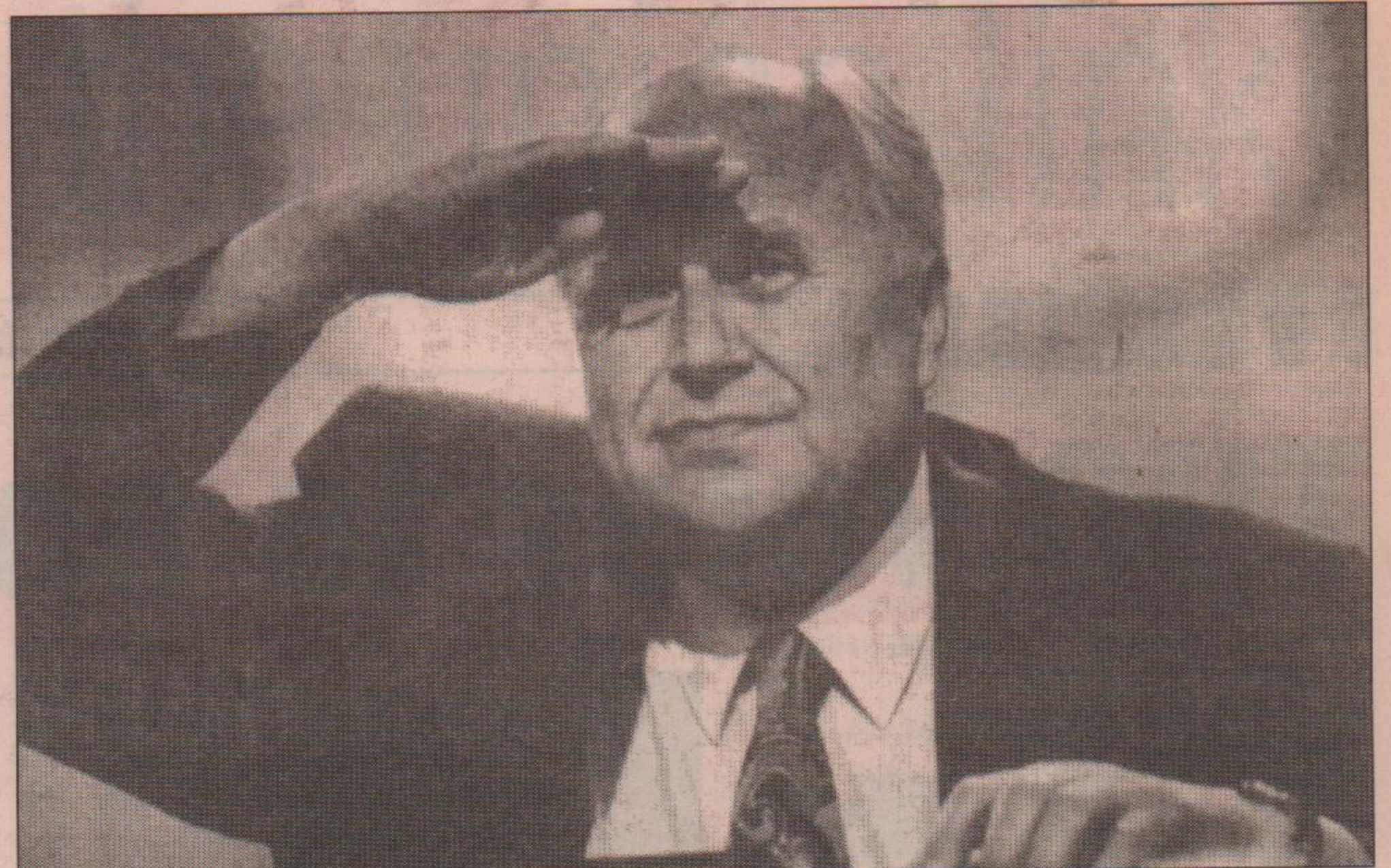
Scargill's arguments, including those of the 1.5 million strong UNISON.

The broad range of support for the motion eventually carried suggests that it must be pretty vague — otherwise, why would hardened right-wingers like the ex-EETPU and CPSA leaders vote for it. Nevertheless, two speakers from major unions backing the motion, UNISON and the print union GPMU, stressed in their speeches that the phrase "solidarity action" should mean strike action, not just letter-writing, which is the only kind of legal "solidarity action" allowed today.

During the debate, Jimmy Airlie of the AEEU angered the Timex workers present, in whose name he claimed to

speak, by attacking Arthur Scargill. He devoted more of his time to denouncing the miners' leaders than to the Timex bosses. But Scargill's reply brought the house down: "We are talking about sequestration, not castration, Jimmy". Airlie had promised the Timex strikers he would speak on the need to confront the laws.

Labour Party leader John Smith addressed Congress on Tuesday afternoon, 7th. He avoided any mention of Labour/union links, and instead concentrated on Labour's version of a "Workers' Charter", which includes a commitment to a minimum wage, full-time rights for part-time workers, and the legal right to join a trade union.



Norman Willis looks around: "Strikes? I see no strikes!"

## Fight for the right to solidarity

**B**RITAIN NOW has the fiercest anti-union laws in Europe. It is high time that the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party started a serious campaign against these laws.

One small step forward came this week at the TUC, when Congress voted to oppose the government and demand new positive legal rights for workers, including the right to join a union, strike, and take solidarity action.

The trade union leaders have done nothing to organise any real campaign for previous union decisions on union freedom, and they made sure that this one was watered down. But Timex, Burnsall, and a dozen other struggles show that the need is urgent.

The Tories aim to make almost any effective workers' action impossible, so that workers have no choice but to

accept whatever the bosses care to offer us in the Tories' beloved "free market".

This month it became illegal to go on strike at all without having a postal ballot. Unions are now compelled to give bosses detailed information on any ballot they hold, including a list of all workers to be balloted, the ballot question itself, details of the ballot result, and seven days' notice of any strike action.

These new chains come on top of six previous rounds of anti-union laws. Since 1979:

- \* Rights to union recognition have been completely abolished.

- \* All forms of 100% trade union membership agreements have been outlawed.

- \* All forms of "secondary" and solidarity action have been banned, even by those working for customers and suppliers of firms in dispute.

- \* All unofficial strikes have been banned. It is even

unlawful to hold a ballot for industrial action in support for those sacked for taking part in unofficial strikes.

- \* Judges can rule a strike unlawful because they do not like the wording on the ballot paper.

**T**HE TUC's decision should be used as a starting point for a campaign to free our trade unions, linking up support and solidarity for workers in struggle with a mass campaign to force a General Election and a battle to commit the next Labour government to workers' rights. The case for a Workers' Charter of trade union rights will also be on the agenda at the Labour Party conference later this month.

The fight back should start with the big public sector union UNISON bringing forward its day of action to save the Health Service from 11

November, and other unions joining in. Strikes to save the Health Service — unless they are by individual groups of workers striking over their own particular conditions — are now unlawful; but the Tories and the bosses will probably not dare to use their laws on this issue at this time.

On the picket lines, in the trade unions, and in the Labour Party, the campaign for free trade unions is central.

**\* For copies of the Workers' Charter and more information about the campaign, write to Dion D'Silva, secretary, Labour Party Socialists, 106 Lyham Road, London SW2.**

## The TUC: what they said

"Smith's speech was contentless. He cynically milked the applause from the Timex workers and posed for the cameras, but he said nothing, and Labour's official policy would have allowed Timex management to behave more or less exactly as they did. The convenors would still have faced the threat of jail under a Labour government led by Smith. There is a crying need to reassert the basic ideas of socialism in the trade unions".

Ian Cuthbert, NCU Executive, Communications Broad Left chair

"It is time the leadership of this movement realised that there is an alternative. It is called resistance".  
Arthur Scargill, President, NUM

"We are fighting for the soul of the labour movement. The political and industrial wings of the movement have got to wake up. If the supporters of OMOV get what they want then you are going to end up with an SDP Mark 2... Our ability to fight back is shaped by the battles that have gone beforehand. Last October, there was a huge political vacuum. Half a million people took to the streets behind the miners. But all that was wasted. The leaders of the TUC told us to look to parliament and dissi-



Now TUC leader, John Monks

dent Tories, and didn't want to talk about organising action".  
Dennis Skinner MP.

"It is important that the left in both the TUC and the Labour Party get together and create a common framework for our activities so that we can be more effective".  
Bill Fry, President, NCU

"We need to pull together all the initiatives on the left of the trade unions and work as one. When I got on to the NUT Executive my avowed aim was to get the two left factions there working together. We've got to do the same across the whole movement. When we talk about linking the left, we've got to do it from top to bottom, from the TUC Congress to every workplace, union branch, and Labour Party ward meeting".  
Mark Slater, National Union of Teachers Executive.



Trade union solidarity at Wapping, to back printworkers against Rupert Murdoch: the TUC's shift of line should be built on.

# Breakthrough for the PLO

**I**N OUR OPINION, the Israel-PLO deal is, despite everything, a breakthrough for the Palestinians.

Let us consider the objections to it. On the Arab side, there are two sorts of objections.

The first is an objection on principle to any deal that leaves Israel in existence. The second is an objection is on the grounds of the scope and details of the deal.

There are many good grounds for objections to the scope and details of the upcoming agreement. It gives the Palestinians too little now; it does not commit Israel to recognise what we believe to be the inalienable right of the Palestinian Arabs, self-determination in an independent state where they are the majority; it leaves military power in the hands of the Israeli state; it does not even allow for the refugees from the 1967 war and their descendants to return to the West Bank if they want to.

These are weighty objections. They would be decisive objections if there were not good grounds for believing that once the Palestinians have gained initial autonomy, they can quickly go beyond the terms of this deal.

The Israeli chauvinists are right when they say that this accord can be the thin end of the wedge for an independent Palestinian state.

It would, of course, be better if the starting point were a great deal more satisfying to Palestinian aspirations. Even so, the unanswerable argument for welcoming the deal is that there is now no other approach that will serve the Palestinians.

Arab conquest, subjugation and dismantling of Israel is the only other imaginable course. That is not possible and it is not desirable.

The Palestinian people are either going to progress by deals like this, or they will continue for further decades committed to the impossible dream of reversing history and destroying Israel - while in reality existing as the victims not only of Israel but also of the Arab states. Arab states have for decades cynically used the Palestinian refugees as diplomatic counters and pawns in a game with Israel; Jordan and Syria have massacred tens of thousands of Palestinians.

This deal can be for the Palestinians the beginning of an emergence out of the terrible decades-old condition in which generations of them have been born and grown up to sorrow, hopelessness, helplessness, and desperation.

**Y**ET LARGE numbers of Palestinians and other Arabs will continue to reject any deal that does not undo and reverse modern history.



Men from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine paint slogans against the deal in a refugee camp in Lebanon. But building on the deal offers more hope to the refugees

The watershed in that history was passed when refugees from Hitler, sixty years ago, transformed the Zionist project of a Jewish national home in Palestine from a utopian dream held by a minority of Jews into the desperate last resort of millions of people fleeing for their lives.

As an answer to the murderous anti-semitism of that time, Zionism was the failure Marxists always insisted it was. It did not, and in the circumstances could not, avert the Holocaust. It involved the Jewish settlers in a terrible conflict with the Arabs. But by the outbreak of World War 2 the Jews were a sizeable and dynamic national minority in Palestine.

After Hitler's defeat in 1945, that Jewish national minority was augmented by Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who could not go on living in the slaughterhouse into which Hitler had turned Europe.

The partition of Palestine followed, and then wars and endless

preparations for wars. It is a terrible story in all its aspects. But that history cannot now be reversed or undone.

Those Arab nationalists who will reject any deal if it does not dispossess the Jews - the majority of

whom were born in Israel - and restore the Arab refugees of 45 years ago and their millions of descendants to the land which is now Israel, demand in effect a holy Arab-Islamic war against Israel. Theirs is the voice of Arab-Muslim

chauvinism and revanchism. Theirs is a programme that can only lead to more bloodshed, misery and desperation for the Palestinian people.

When it was tried in the past it failed - catastrophically in 1948. It is not going to happen now. The ultra-nationalist position is today only a recipe for continued hopelessness and misery for the Palestinian Arabs.

That "nothing-less-than-the-destruction-of-Israel" position

which the PLO held for decades played into the hands of the worst Israeli chauvinists.

**T**HE PRESENT accord is at best only a beginning. But it is an enormous breakthrough in principle insofar as it involves mutual recognition by Israel and the PLO - recognition, if not yet of two states, at least of two entities. It can be built on.

It may be a false beginning. The opposition to the deal among Palestinians is fierce and plausible. Even if this is a stepping-stone to Palestinian self-determination, many know that it is possible to get stranded on stepping stones if the tide changes. The Israeli government may fall. Opposition in Palestinian ranks may be such that the PLO leaders are repudiated.

It may take a very long time for the seeds of a better future that can be discerned in the accord mutual recognition and agreement by Israel that the Palestinians should have autonomy - to bear fruit.

Nevertheless, the only alternative has been drunk to the dregs by the Palestinian Arabs, and found to be so bitter, so p

sonous, so murderous, that there is reason to hope that those who want to work the deal can prevail, and by doing so move towards Palestinian independence.

Socialists cannot take responsibility for an agreement such as this, worked out by these people in this way. We can acknowledge that the alternative is worse. We

**Continued on page 4**

remember that the... continuing and as long as... occupation continues the oppression... go on and the legitimate opposi... of the Palestinian people will... anue.

Rabin's government and the leaders of the PLO have reached an agreement of understanding between each other. But Israeli-Palestinian peace is still far away. We must see the full withdrawal of the Israeli army from all the Occupied Territories and the end to 26 years of occupation.

The peace camp should work for this solution, because the government will not act without our actions. Never before have we had such a heavy responsibility.

The Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen), 3 September 1993

# TUPE or not TUPE

**W**Henever two or three trade union officials are gathered together these days, the conversation almost invariably works round to TUPE — the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. The apparently irresistible fascination that TUPE holds for officials may seem a little strange at first, but can be explained by four crucial factors:

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

1. It comes from Europe and all modern trade union officials are keen Europeans these days.
2. It involves a lot of legal jargon, allowing the officials to indulge their favourite Walter Mitty fantasies of being lawyers.
3. As the full implications of TUPE have yet to be firmly established and existing Industrial Tribunal decisions are contradictory, you can safely espouse any opinion on TUPE and no-one can say for sure that you're wrong.
4. It appears to offer a jolly clever way of stopping privatisation and contracting out without the need for industrial action by the members.

The last point is undoubtedly the most appealing for the officials. In any article about TUPE, there must inevitably come the boring bit. Here it is: TUPE is the statutory instrument enacted by the UK government in 1981 in order to implement the European Commission's Acquired Rights Directive (ARD) of 1977. The ARD is designed to protect in law the rights of employees when the organisation they work for is transferred from one employer to another. The UK government's interpretation of the ARD (the TUPE regulations) ensured that there is automatic continuation of employment contracts with the new owner, safeguarding continuity of service, collective agreements and all existing terms and conditions.

Great, isn't it? Well, no, actually. Because the UK government didn't really implement the ARD at all.

They slipped a number of loop holes into the 1981 TUPE legislation, making it all but worthless for most practical purposes. In particular, undertakings "not in the nature of a commercial venture" were excluded as were transfers that took the form of closing, franchising and subcontracting. The result was that the UK courts and industrial tribunals decided that TUPE did not apply to the contracting-out of public services and other forms of privatisation. This was clearly in breach of the European Commission's original intentions. By 1992, a number of European Court of Justice rulings indicated that the UK government's interpretation of the ARD was wrong. By then, as well, the European Commission had taken infringement proceedings against the UK for non-compliance with the ARD. The government's response has been to incorporate changes to the TUPE regulations into the 1992 Employment Rights Bill, bringing the Regulations more into line with the ARD.

At this point many readers who are still awake may well be asking themselves an obvious question: if the government's 1981 Regulations were so obviously at odds with the intentions of the European Commission, why has it taken the leadership of the British trade union movement over ten years to wake up to that fact? Why were none of the dozens of TUPE cases that the unions lost in the British courts and tribunals ever pursued to the European Court of Justice? Why is it, in short, that our union officials have only now discovered the magical properties of the wonderful panacea called TUPE? The only explanation is that much as most union officials fancy themselves as barrack-room lawyers, most are not really very good at it.

Better late than never, though. Suddenly, TUPE is all the rage. But is it the

idea that the officials would have us (surprise, surprise) is no. A revised version of TUPE about to come into force will stipulate that existing contracts of employment by the new owner/operator in the course of the transfer has gone through, your only protection is that competent management can usually give you a month's notice, going through the process of varying the contracts. Is this a delusion for trade unionists? No: it's at least buy time in a contracting-out process, bidders, looking for a fast buck, can be delayed by the consultation process for "broadly comparable" offers. This can be used to slow down the whole process in the fight against privatisation and they only provide a hiatus, in which time they don't know how to use it.

Trade union solidarity at Wapping on.

# A chance for

## "Cautious support, but we have to remain independent"

Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv on how Israeli socialists are responding to the Israel-PLO deal and the Israeli right's campaign against it

**T**HERE WAS a peace demonstration in Tel Aviv of around 100,000 on Saturday 4 September. It was organised by Peace Now and the Labour Party. The slogans were 'Israel wants peace' and 'The right will not block peace'.

The Labour Party still finds the fact that they have made a deal with the PLO uncomfortable. Two Labour ministers spoke at the rally without mentioning "PLO".

The Palestinians have had some bitter pills to swallow. The question of Jerusalem is off the agenda for the time being; the Jewish settlements will remain, guarded by the Israeli army; there is no assurance that there will be a Palestinian state.

However, the dynamics of the situation are leading in the direction of a Palestinian state.

There was great pressure on the Palestinians because of the cutting off of money to the PLO from the Gulf states, in the aftermath of the Gulf war. The PLO was near collapse. They were having to close their newspapers and stop paying wages to their workers. There was also pressure from the Tunisian government on the PLO to close down their Tunis headquarters.

Pardoxically this weakness also

put pressure on the Israeli government. In a year's time, perhaps, they would have to deal with Hamas instead of the PLO.

The Israeli bourgeoisie in its overwhelming majority is in favour of a deal. During the whole past year the Association of Industrialists and the Association of the Chambers of Commerce were having their own dialogue with Palestinian businessmen. They pressured the government for a deal. In the last few days there has been a full-page advert in the papers from the eighteen biggest industrialists in Israel supporting the government.

The Tel Aviv stockmarket had the biggest jump since it was founded after the deal was announced.

On pure economic grounds the industrialists feel that the economic advantage from having a captive market in the Occupied Territories are not worth the loss of having the Arab world closed to Israeli goods. They also hope that peace will bring investment from America, the EC and Japan.

*"the dynamics of the situation are leading in the direction of a Palestinian state"*

**B**UT WILL the deal hold? Assad, under American pressure,

has given Arafat a luke-warm go-ahead. There is some irony here, because the Palestinians were very worried about the Syrians doing a deal with Israel behind their backs.

Assad's best card is the Palestinian opposition, based in Damascus. It seems, in the circumstances, that he will not go as far as authorising, for instance, the assassination of Arafat.

Arafat has a number of cards. He



Yassar Arafat

will be able to deploy 20-30,000 PLO 'police'. In fact they will be a lightly-armed army.

And, when the Israeli soldiers leave there will be tremendous rejoicing in the Occupied Territories. For a while at least Arafat will be very popular.

The crucial issue is the longer term economic prospects. They are asking the EC for millions of dollars. The Scandinavian countries have already agreed \$160 million. Peres and his circle are very much stressing the need for massive international investment. Clearly they are right. And if the economic situation does not improve in places like the Gaza Strip anger will quickly turn on the Israeli state and on Arafat. That will be Hamas's big chance.

The weakness of those who oppose the deal is that opposition is based mainly on a narrow group of the population — the settlers in the Occupied Territories and the nationalist religious people inside Israel. They are 5 or 7% of the population. They could only become a real threat if they won Likud's supporters. But Likud's leaders are opposed to violent opposition. One of the Likud leaders is even giving half-hearted backing to the agreement.

The right-wing have been some-

# Breakthrough for the PLO

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can hope for a favourable development. We can try to talk to our Israeli and Arab comrades about the need for working-class unity against the chauvinists on both sides. We can argue for a commitment to extending democracy until the Palestinian-Arab aspiration for self-determination is realised.

**W**E CAN avoid being mindless and irresponsible. A shameful example of the latter is last week's *Socialist Worker*.

*Socialist Worker* opposes Israel's right to exist on principle. Any deal that left Israel in existence would be damnable in its eyes. *Socialist Worker* supported Saddam Hussain's bomb attacks on Israel in the 1991 war.

Last week's *Socialist Worker* expresses implicit support for

Hamas and other religious bigots "organising for continued resistance against Israel", whose view of the world is as irrational as that of the SWP (though for different reasons). It concludes:

**"The autonomy proposals will not bring peace.**

**They represent another twist in the tragedy of the Palestinians, who remain caught between Israeli repression and the Arab states - Egypt, Jordan and Syria - that have failed them for the last 40 years."** (Emphasis added).

Plainly *SW* would like another, broader, holy war. That is no way forward. Should the Arab holy war succeed, it would simply replace the present Arab refugees and their descendants with Jewish refugees, most of them born in Israel.

This vicious, albeit vicarious, Arab chauvinism is shameful because it is cheap and, for the SWP and its leaders, without cost

in terms of sacrifice.

It is indeed true that the accord will not undo history, or automatically lift the Arabs out of the poverty and squalor of Gaza. It will not do that even if it does open a process that develops as the well-wishers of both Arab and Jews would like, and as advocates of Arab-Jewish working class unity desire. Capitalism will continue to exist.

But the deal can be a start towards Palestinian self-determination. That is why, though socialists should not take responsibility for the accord or for those making it, we should recognise that it embodies principles that amount to a great breakthrough and may be the seed of a transformed Middle East. The rest is ultra-nationalist phrasemongering. The Palestinians have had too much of that in the last 50 years.

**Two states for the two peoples!**

# peace, with dangers

what wrongfooted. They have been running a campaign to oppose a deal with Syria. There is much more support against the return of the Golan Heights to Syria than, for instance, against giving up the Gaza Strip.

There is a big majority for withdrawal from Gaza

**T**HE DEAL provides for the withdrawal of the Israel army from other parts of the Occupied Territories within nine months of the signing of the agreement. This would create a mosaic of interlaced Palestinian areas and areas of Israeli settlement.

A large danger exists there. I expect the settlers to attack the Palestinians, to provoke confrontation. For instance they could enter a Palestinian town, ignore the Palestinian police and try to create a situation where the Israeli army would re-enter a Palestinian area.

The nightmare scenario is a Bosnia-style war. The way to prevent this is for the proponents of the agreement to assume that the settlers will act against the Palestinians and to be prepared to act against them.

There is also a fear that the right will take action against the left. However, one thing does distinguish the nationalist opposition in Israel from other nationalisms and that is their aversion to attacking other Jews.

**I**F THE 'left' includes Meretz, which forms part of the government, this broad left is uncritical of the agreement. Meretz is ecstatic. They take the deal at face value, without reservations.

My organisation, the Peace Bloc, has many shades of opinion. It contains the Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Matzpen and individuals from the Communist Party and the left fringe of Meretz. Our general feeling is one of cautious support, while being aware of the limitations and possible dangers. We feel strongly that we have to preserve ourselves as an independent entity capable of coming out against the government, Meretz and Peace Now where necessary.

Adam Keller is editor of 'The Other Israel'. A new issue is out soon. Contact The Other Israel, PO Box 2542, Holon, Israel 58125

## Scrap the settlements, call off the repression



Israeli right-wingers rally against the deal



Yitzhak Rabin

- release of political prisoners;
- an immediate halt to land confiscation and settlement building;
- implementation of the right of families to be together;
- a total end to the permit system and freedom of movement.

If these conditions are implemented, and only if they are implemented, the Israeli-Palestinian agreement will pave the way to a real peace between the two peoples. But, if this government fails to take these steps, and prefers to stick only to the clauses in this agreement, this settlement will not be the opening for a real peace but will bury the last prospects for co-existence between the two peoples. A vicious circle of oppression, opposition and oppression will continue. More blood will be shed and hope will turn to despair and violence.

Our happiness is mixed with heavy concerns.

We have not been convinced that Rabin is determined to do everything possible to bring about these steps, the only possible way to a successful end: the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination through the establishment of an independent state in the territory which was occupied in 1967.

The peace camp must not be satisfied with clapping hands for the government. Now, more than any time in the past we must be on guard, to take to the streets, to counter the attacks of the right, to prevent the government's retreat.

But, above everything else, we must remember that the occupation is continuing and as long as the occupation continues the oppression will go on and the legitimate opposition of the Palestinian people will continue.

Rabin's government and the leaders of the PLO have reached an agreement of understanding between each other. But Israeli-Palestinian peace is still far away. We must see the full withdrawal of the Israeli army from all the Occupied Territories and the end to 26 years of occupation.

The peace camp should work for this solution, because the government will not act without our actions. Never before have we had such a heavy responsibility.

The Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen), 3 September 1993

**Michel Warshawsky introduces the text of a Matzpen (Israel Trotskyist) leaflet which was circulated on the Tel Aviv peace march on Saturday 4 September.**

**T**HERE IS NO CHANCE that the agreement can take us forward unless two conditions are met. First the settlements must begin to be dismantled. Second, the situation in the Occupied Territories must begin to be changed right now. This must include the release of the thousands of prisoners held by the Israeli state and the abolition of the death squads. If these preconditions are fulfilled then we can move forward, if not we will find ourselves in a dead-end. Such a dead-end will definitely close the way for any possible compromise between Palestinians and Israelis. This is an unclear and risky agreement, precisely because of

what is not written into the text of the deal. I do not think the settlers are really a threat if the government is truly determined to move forward. On the Palestinian side people are unhappy with the agreement but there is no real opposition. The struggle for peace is only beginning

**A**fter 26 years of occupation it seems as if the slogans for which the left have struggled are being implemented. Negotiations with the PLO have started and there is a schedule for the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The agreement which has been initialled in Oslo by the Israeli government and the PLO will be the first step to an Israeli-Palestinian peace based on the implementation of the

right of the two peoples for self-determination only if two conditions not included in the agreement are met:

1. Peace requires the total evacuation of the settlers, and so there should be a schedule for evacuation;
2. An immediate, far-reaching change in the relation between the military government and the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories in the entire West

Bank and Gaza Strip.

This change must include:

- ending the closure and allowing free movement between the West Bank and east Jerusalem;
- dismantling of the under-cover units;
- the return of hundreds of deportees;

*"We must see the full withdrawal of the Israeli army from all the Occupied Territories"*

## For peace, recognise national rights

**T**HE Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace welcomes the decision of the Israeli government on 31 August 1993 to approve the Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

Since its formation in 1975, the ICIPP has called for recognition of the PLO as representative of the Palestinian people, for recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination in the territories conquered during the Six-Day War, and for coexistence based on a peace agree-

ment between the state of Palestine and the state of Israel. Already in 1976 did the PLO make known its willingness to recognise Israel on a mutual base. The unfortunate refusal of successive Israeli governments to listen to these positions led directly to the killings and destructions which occurred subsequently and to the loss of many opportunities to live in peace with all our neighbours.

After the achievement of peace with Egypt — which we whole-

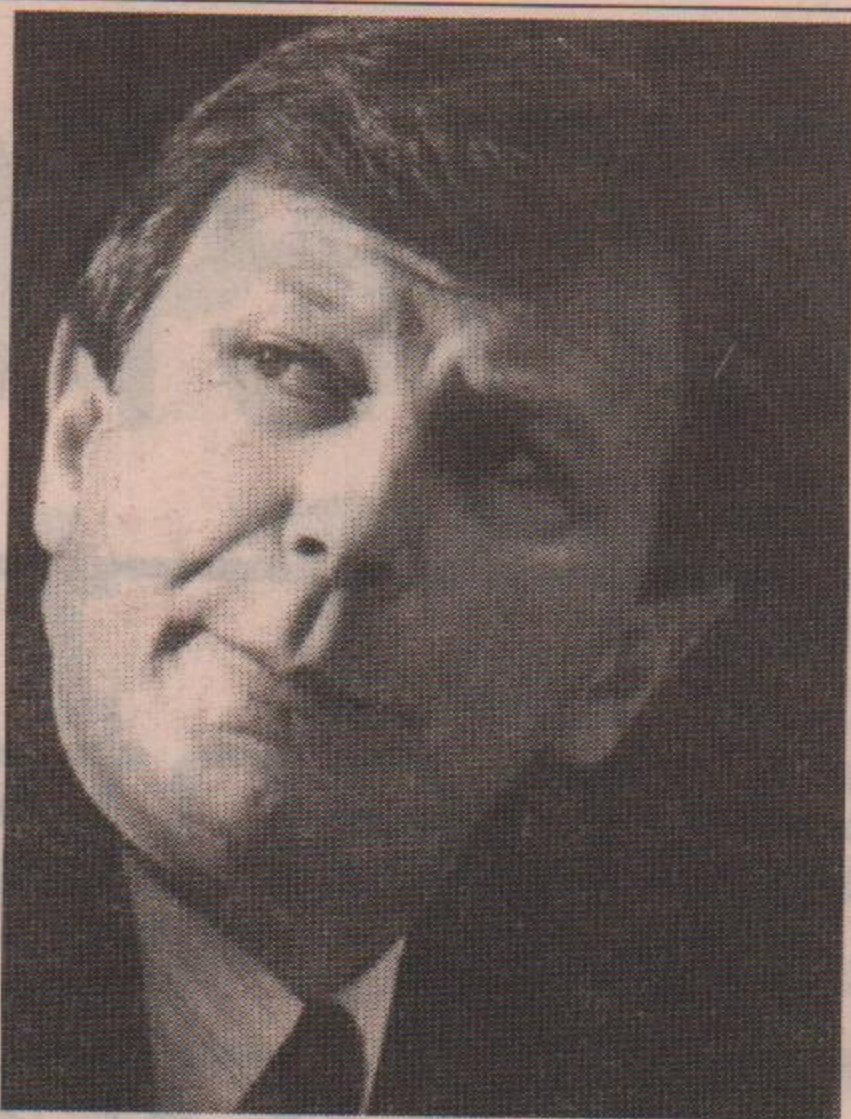
heartedly supported — it became clear that peaceful coexistence with all peoples of the region had passed from the realm of dream into being a realistic possibility. However, the official Israeli insistence upon denying the basic rights of the Palestinian people continued to constitute a major obstacle on the way to peace.

Now, at last, the government understood that peace with the Palestinians is not only possible but also vital for Israel's continued existence. Steps were taken

— initial, but very meaningful and opening new horizons. The ICIPP wholeheartedly joins in congratulating the government upon its wise decision. We hope that these initial steps will be followed up and point out the future development towards full Israeli-Palestinian peace, coexistence between Israel and Palestine, and simultaneously — peace with all nations of the region, based on mutual recognition of national rights and creative regional cooperation.

# The Last Tycoon?

A man fit to be... Ken?



## And extra for keeping our minds off the cuts...

### GRAFFITI

**P**ERFORMANCE related pay has now made its way into the Buckingham Palace — the servants are going to be paid by results. One perplexed employee asked: "Is the size of our rise going to depend on how low we bow?"

But surely what is good for downstairs would make upstairs more efficient too? Why not pay the Royals by the task, for their productivity at such things as opening hospitals or presiding over international charities playing polo? No, that would be demeaning. Royal pay should be linked to their great role in British society — the civil list should in future pay out in terms of pounds per tabloid column inch.

**I**T SEEMS THAT the headlong rush into market capitalism being orchestrated by the Chinese Communist Party (motto: it doesn't matter what colour a cat is as long as it catches mice) has not quite gripped the tourist industry yet: the Chinese government recently issued guidelines for tourists to help them to enjoy the holiday: "Don't squat when waiting for a bus... don't spit in public. Don't point at people with your fingers. Don't make noise. Don't laugh loudly... Don't pick your teeth, your nose, blow your nose, pick at your ears, rub your eyes or rub dirt off your skin. Don't scratch, take off your shoes, burp, stretch or hum. When walking, keep your steps light. If you are in an emergency, you may quicken your pace, but do not run wildly". Oh yes, and have a good holiday.

**N**EW EUROPEAN guidelines encourage the printing of sell-by dates on individual

eggs as soon as the technology allows. With bubble jet printing becoming increasingly cheap it seems that the days of the individually labelled egg will soon be with us. But these capitalists don't miss a trick — plans are already in hand to use the technology to print individual advertisements on eggs at the same time.

**I**F YOU WERE wondering what you have to do to become a saint nowadays — look no further. The Bishop of Metz in Lorraine is hoping to submit a beatification request (which can be the first step on the ladder to sainthood) to the Vatican for Robert Schumann. Schumann's claim to the wings, halo and harp comes from his key role in the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950, a direct ancestor of the EEC.

**A**T THIS YEAR'S TUC there will be a fringe meeting on "keeping the link". John Edmonds of the GMB will speak on the same platform as the well-known left wing pretender to power, Ken Livingstone. Eh? Sorry — that should have been Bryan Gould. Livingstone is out of favour this year. The wire-pulling king-makers of the left (and-not-so-left) have had enough of the man from the TV cheese commercials. They are putting their money on Gould. Gould is the perfect candidate to fill Livingstone's shoes — he is a slippery man who will tailor his politics to fit the occasion and, he hope, boost his flagging career.

Even so Gould has a long way to go before he is as slippery and slimy as the one-time Future Lord RedKen is. Gould has one other recommendation: he has never written a column for the Sun.

### PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**T**HE GREAT days of the media baron are over. No-one laughed when Rupert Murdoch said that at the launch of his new multi-channel TV package last Wednesday. Maybe they did not see the joke, or maybe they were simply stunned by the enormity of this latest example of the Big Lie technique. Or maybe it was because a fair number of those present were people who can not afford to laugh at Murdoch — media employees and a Tory minister, for instance.

At the risk of stating the obvious, may I just point out that the man who proclaimed the end of media barons controls (at the last count):

- \* Five national newspapers commanding 35% of the UK market;
- \* 109 newspapers (80% of the market) in Australia;
- \* Half of BSKyB satellite TV, carrying 10 channels, six of which he owns;
- \* The 20th Century Fox film studios and Fox Television
- \* Harper Collins publishing
- \* Star TV, based in Hong Kong and aimed at a three billion audience in Asia;
- \* The New York Post and

other leading papers in the US, Hong Kong, Fiji and Papua and New Guinea;

\* A new cable TV network covering the whole of Latin America.

And even that list ignores the myriad Murdoch tentacles reaching out into radio, records, computers, printing and electronic data. Yet this man can claim "the days of the media baron are over" and no-one even sniggers. Part of the reason is surely that — like all the best demagogues and dictators — Murdoch clearly believes his own propaganda. He is no Beaverbrooke, using paper ownership to nobble elected politicians and crudely interfere in government policy.

He does not need to do that: the laissez faire ethos of his media empire has run with the grain of mainstream government thinking in Britain, the US and most of Europe for over a decade. Mrs Thatcher and her ilk did not have to be cajoled or bribed into exempting him from the anti-monopoly regulations that partially constrain his competitors. His editors (like Andrew Neil) are probably telling the truth when they describe him as a "hands-off" proprietor.

He can even tolerate a few token lefties in his camp, like Richard Stott and the (slightly) left-of-centre *Today*. Murdoch plainly believes that his ever-expanding ownership of the world's media is a thoroughly benign, pro-democratic influence harnessing the inexorable march of information technology for the common good. As Hugo Young put it in a mildly anti-Mur-

doch piece in the *Guardian*: "the more Rupert Murdoch owns, apparently, the less power he somehow has. To his dinner guests he painted a rueful portrait of impotent owner overpowered by technology neither he nor anyone else can control".

Murdoch's faith in himself as an elemental force was best summed up in an interview in the *Observer* (another act of supreme confidence, perhaps: giving an "exclusive" to a rival publication?): "I think those restrictions (on ownership) are all going to go away... it's a free world. A Labour government isn't going to do anything about it; the sting has gone out of it." To which Robin Cook, shadow Trade and Industry spokesperson, replied: "what we have done this week is to ask the Director of Fair Trading to refer the issue to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. As Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I would be in a much better position to secure an MMC inquiry with the objective of putting pressure on Murdoch to divest some of his interests." No wonder Murdoch is laughing, even if no one else dares to.

**O**NE PERSON who definitely was not laughing was the *Independent's* chief honcho, Andreas Whittam Smith. Hard on the heels of the BSKyB multi-channel launch came the announcement that the *Times* would be cutting its price from 45p to 30p on weekdays and from 50p to 35p on Saturdays.

Murdoch and *Times* editor Peter Stothard presented it as

an act of public-spirited generosity intended to revitalise the broadsheet market as a whole.

*"The Times price cut is intended as a mortal blow against the Independent, its weakest competitor".*

Whittam Smith knows better. The *Times* price cut is intended as a mortal blow against the *Independent*, its weakest competitor. On Thursday, in a front-page editorial, the *Indi* denounced Murdoch and railed against the lack of regulation of the "free market" that allows Murdoch to get away with his dirty tricks: "What Mr Murdoch is doing — multiplying the already enormous subsidy the *Times* receives from his other commercial interests — would almost certainly be illegal in the US... in Britain Mr Murdoch will no doubt be allowed to do what he wishes, because he always is."

All very true, of course. But can the author of this self-righteous tirade be the same Mr Whittam-Smith who set up the *Independent* on Sunday with the deliberate intention of killing off the *Sunday Correspondent*? And who wanted to buy the *Observer* simply in order to close it down? Surely not.

## EP Thompson: activist and ideologue

**E**P THOMPSON, who died last week, was an important figure on the left, as both ideologue and activist.

As a historian he revolutionised the writing of early labour movement history thirty years ago with *The Making of the English Working Class*. He found the field of Labour history dominated by the Fabian and Liberal assumptions of writers such as the Hammonds and rejected them, to uncover the real, long-buried roots of the labour movement in the revolutionary radicalism of 200 years ago.

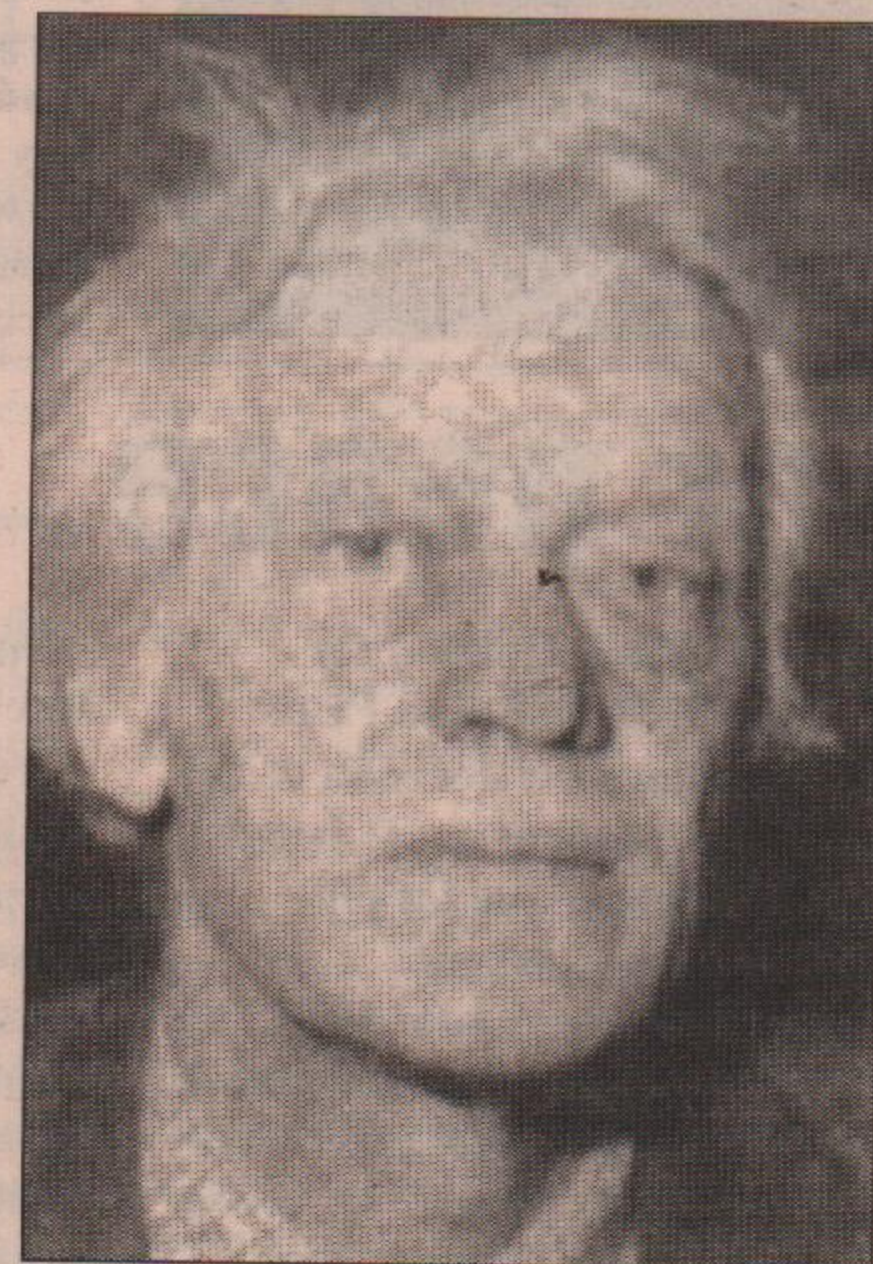
Thompson the activist was much less than Thompson the

historian.

He was perhaps the single most influential person amongst the thousands of ex-CPers who broke with the Communist Party in 1956, the year when Khrushchev denounced Stalin and crushed the Hungarian revolution.

While he might have helped regenerate a real communist tradition, he led people to the right, towards reformism and "Marxist" academicism. It was a great chance missed.

In the early '80s he was a central figure in the campaigns for nuclear disarmament which grew up anew in response to the international tensions of that period.



Next week Alan Johnson will contribute a full appreciation of EP Thompson.

**Build for 16 October demonstration**

# Anti-racists: unite on the streets!

Southwark Anti-Racist Alliance, in South London has been very effective in organising large public meetings. It has seized the initiative in local campaigning against racism.

The last public meeting "Standing up to Racism" attracted over 35 people, who heard speakers from local campaigns and black organisations.

Supporters of Southwark ARA leafleted the ARAFest to build the meeting.

We will be building for the Unity Demo on 16 October. ARA nationally should be supporting this move towards united campaigning against racism and fascism.



The Unity Demo assembles at 1pm, Saturday 16 October, at Wimms Common, Plumstead, London SE18

## Labour must organise youth!

**Hannah, South London**

**T**HERE ARE more than three times as many [Labour] party members over the age of 66 as there are under the age of 25. So says Labour's own National Executive. The NEC want to recruit young people to the Labour Party, but on their terms.

In the early eighties the Labour leadership attacked the LPYS as part of their drive against the Militant. They shut down the national structures of the LPYS and reduced the age limit from 26 to 23. The result of this was not the creation of a new LPYS, but the collapse of nearly every local LPYS and a fall in youth

membership of the party.

Now Labour's leaders propose to restructure the YS yet again. "The new youth groups" — an NEC document says — "would not have a representative role and would not send delegates or resolutions to constituency party General Committees". In that case, what is the point of these youth sections? The need to recruit young people to the party is pressing, but how many young people are going to want to join something which is merely set up to canvass for the Labour Party at election times, without any part in democratic control over policy, or any real input into broader party discussions? Not many,

that's for sure.

To add insult to injury, Regional Offices would have to "agree that a group be set up and would be empowered to simply dissolve or reconstitute groups if... the group was not working." This is a structure in which middle aged Labour Party officials will exercise dictatorial control over Labour youth.

If Labour leaders genuinely want to recruit young people they should not be considering these proposals at all. A stifled and dead youth section constantly under the thumb of officials will not attract youth. If Labour wants to attract youth it must let the youth have space to organise it themselves.

selves.

Labour must start by taking young people and their concerns seriously. Many young people are very angry about the raw deal that they are getting from the Tories. The Labour Party should be campaigning around issues such as youth unemployment, low wages, restoration of benefits for 16-18 years olds. Young people need a political forum in the labour movement which takes their concerns seriously, which fights for their rights which gives them a proper share, as young people in policy making.

Labour's conference this year will discuss a resolution opposing the NEC proposals. Instead, it proposes:

Youth Fightback is...

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth. This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967 for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

\* raising the age limit for members in youth sections to 26.

\*GC representation for youth sections;

\* responsibility for youth sections to be kept at CLP level.

This resolution has been sent to all Labour MPs and has received support from many different wings of the party. MPs including Gavin Strang, Chris Smith, Alice Mahon, Tony Blair, Joan Lester, Ann Clwyd, Dawn Primarolo, Chris Mullin, Gerry Bermingham and Mildred Gordon have given their support.

## Reform or revolution?

### IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

**Y**OUTH FIGHTBACK believes that a socialist revolution is necessary, we believe that it is possible. We work to bring it about.

Why do we need a revolution? Why can't we create a new society by reforming the existing system?

Youth Fightback want a revolution because it is the only way to win socialism.

Certainly we should fight for every reform we can get, however small. We should try to commit the Labour Party leaders to carry out reforms. We should use parliament as much as possible. But commitments and promises are one thing. Power is another. Who has the power? The ruling class — the top 5% who own 37% of all wealth and control the economy — have power, and they will use it to resist any reforms they find too costly.

If the Labour Party were really to

strike at the power and wealth of the bosses, they would strike back, using their army and state forces to repress the workers' movement if necessary or simply to cow the Labour government. Whoever wants to break out of the social limits defined by the interests of the bosses must be prepared to disarm the ruling class and destroy the state. Only the working class can do that.

Any parliament-based government that attempted really radical change would put its head on the block, and while the present armed forces exist the axe is in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Alarmist? A fantasy of insurrectionary politics that is out of place in Britain? Unfortunately, no. The army has become highly politicised through its work in Northern Ireland.

In 1980 the pacifist Pat Arrowsmith debated with Field Marshal Carver, chief of the British Army during the industrial struggles that forced Tory Prime Minister Edward Heath out of office in 1974. "Fairly senior officers," said Carver, "were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army

would have to do something about it..."

Former spy master Peter Wright's revelations about MI5 conspiring against the Wilson Labour government underline the same point. The police are the clearest example of a force dedicated to defending the bosses and their system on picket lines, in demonstrations and in the communities.

While Parliaments come and Parliaments go, Britain has a permanent, unelected state machine — top civil servants, judges, heads of the police and army — which is deeply Tory and tremendously powerful.

**T**HE POWER of the ruling class is not entirely, nor even essentially in Parliament. That is the terrain to which they go out from their redoubts in industry, the civil service and the armed forces, to meet and to parley with the labour movement, and to put on a show for the people. But if the labour movement insists on new rules for parleying game, they have a reserve language to resort to — force. So have we.

In 1974 the top brass told the

coup-makers then to shut up. But they won't always: some of the would-be coup talkers in 1974 are themselves into the top brass. In any case we should not rely on their restraint.

Labour governments have not even tried to challenge capitalism. Every Labour government is tested by the banks and the IMF etc from its first hours. If it does not go on the offensive in the working class interest, against the capitalists and their system, then it has to go on the offensive against the left in the labour movement.

The economic restraints of capitalism do not allow a middle road. So Labour governments like those of 1964-70 and 1974-79 have ended up not even making reforms, but just managing the system and preparing the way for the Tories to return.

The labour movement needs to overturn capitalism, not tinker with it. And that will not be done only, or even mainly, through parliamentary decrees. The direct struggle of workers, in the factories, the offices and the streets — that is the only force capable of beating the bosses. Revolution is the only way.

### Bigot of the week...

Our bigot of the week is John Halfren, Tory councillor for Dove in Sheffield, who has supported claims for the reintroduction of hanging and flogging for crime. He says that young people should have better moral education at school and by their parents to tell them how they should behave and the rules of society that they should obey.

Youth Fightback supporters organised a petition and picketed his office. We say young people aren't to blame for crime when we live in a society rife with unemployment, poverty and lives for boredom for a lot of youth. The Tories make these demands to deflect the blame from themselves.

# From a dream to a nightmare

Stan Crooke looks at the story of a housing development in Glasgow which epitomises the botches and blunders of council house-building in the 1950s and '60s

**B**ETWEEN FIVE and ten thousand people are expected to turn up this Sunday (12 September) to witness the demolition by explosion of the Queen Elizabeth Square multi-storey flats in Glasgow's Gorbals.

Built in the early 1960s, when Glasgow's town planners and councillors regarded multi-storey flats as the housing of the future (at least for the working class), the 20-storey tower blocks were meant to be part of the solution to Glasgow's housing crisis.

In 1945 40% of Glasgow households were living in overcrowded conditions. Nearly 100,000 people were on the waiting list for a council house. Over a third of houses in Glasgow had no fixed bath, and over a fifth had no internal toilet.

High rents, crooked landlords, and miles of decaying tenements were the product of "market forces" combined with decades of under-investment in council housing.

In the Gorbals of the late 1950s, the situation was even worse. Less than 3% of housing in the area was in an acceptable sanitary condition. Just over 6% was in an unacceptable condition but capable of improvement. The remaining 91% was in an unacceptable condition and incapable of improvement.

When the veteran socialist Harry McShane stood as a council candidate in

the Gorbals, the scandalous local housing conditions were highlighted in his election material:

"The fact that most of the houses are over a hundred years old condemns them as unsuitable in the light of modern requirements. In some cases the outside lavatories serve seven families. The presence of rats and other vermin, the wet walls and many other evils, drive home the urgency of the question of housing".

"A rat is found in a child's cot in a house in Crown Street. A man and a woman and five children are living in a single-apartment house in Erroll Street, with rats and snails in the house. In Lawmoor Street a tenement has eight feet of water in the basement water coming in through the attic, and rats passing the children on the stairs."

The city planners drew up proposals to sweep away the Glasgow of the slums and replace it by one given over to cars, multi-storeys and sprawling peripheral estates.

Middle class commuters would enjoy a transformed roads and motorways network, whilst the working class would be packaged away in tower blocks and peripheral housing estates.

Glasgow was to have more miles of urban motorway per head of population than any other city in Europe, despite having one of the lowest levels of car ownership in Britain. And the city was to be home to more than 200 tower blocks, some of them the tallest in Europe.

Multi-storeys held an obvious attraction for local councillors and the then Tory government: they could be built on the cheap and quickly. They had even more advantages for the big construction companies: big projects, big profits, no com-



Queen Elizabeth flats under construction

petition from smaller companies.

Design costs were low. Only one floor needed designing — all the rest were exactly the same. The speed of construction also kept down costs. A year before work started on the Queen Elizabeth flats, for example, three 20-storey blocks were built in the Royston district of Glasgow in less than eight months. Multi-storeys had the added attraction of a government subsidy of £30 per flat for 60 years, a much higher level of subsidy than that available for low rise development.

The Tory minister who provided this financial encouragement for building multi-storeys was Keith Joseph, whose family owned the Bovis construction company. In the 1980s Joseph attacked the poor quality of council housing — for which his own policies of the 1950s were largely to blame.

"Streets in the sky" seemed to be the solution to Glasgow's post-war housing crisis. As Glasgow Corporation's Housing Committee convenor wrote in 1962:

"Over the next three years the skyline of Glasgow will become a more attractive one to me, because of the likely vision of multi-storey houses rising by the thou-

sands".

The Gorbals was a natural target for such a vision. With the attention to detail and bureaucratic arrogance of a Stalinist "planner" in the Soviet Union, a blueprint was drawn up for the total transformation of the Gorbals.

The population was to be reduced from 27,000 to 10,000. The number of shops was to be cut from 444 to 57 (10 grocers, 6 butchers, 4 greengrocers, 4 bakers, 2 fishmongers, etc. etc.) and the number of pubs from 48 to 9.

The Queen Elizabeth Square flats were to be the flagship of this redevelopment programme: two separate tower blocks on stilts, nearly 200 feet high, containing 400 flats for 1,280 tenants, and with each flat having its own balcony garden.

The tower blocks were designed by Sir Basil Spence.

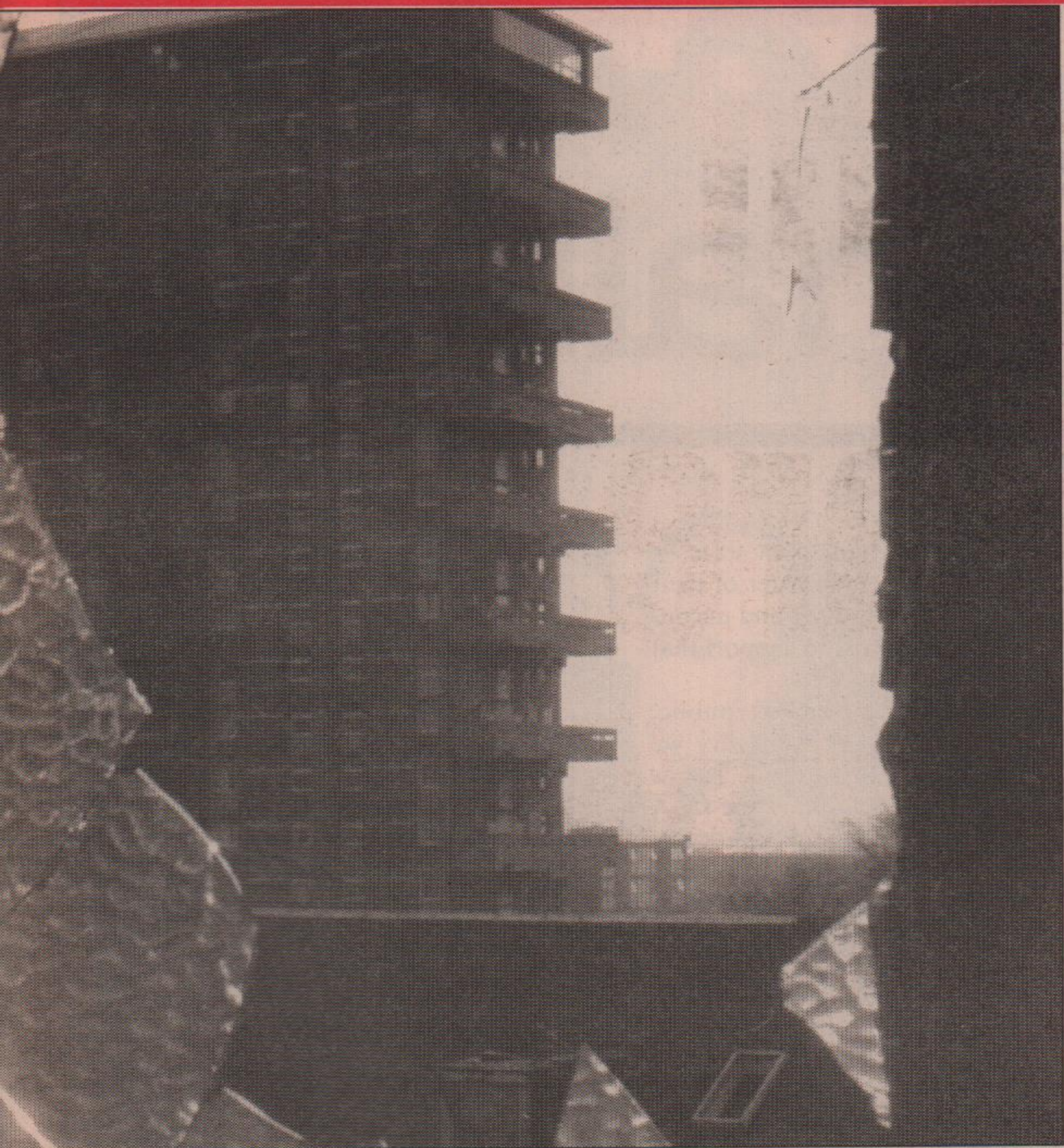
One Glasgow Corporation architect recalled Spence like this: "he was a right patter merchant if ever there was one." Typical of Spence was his description of his balcony gardens: "On Tuesdays, when all the washing is out, it will be like a great ship in full sail".

If the Queen Elizabeth Square flats were the distant relative of a ship, then it was the Titanic rather than the Royal Yacht





# GLASGOW



Queen Elizabeth flats as they are today

Britannia.

"A bloody great slab cake" is how one of the tenants described Spence's architectural feat. The three blocks (A, B and C) into which the towers were divided were soon nicknamed Alcatraz, Barlinnie, and Sing-Sing by the tenants.

There were frequent complaints about lift breakdowns and the absence of public phones in the tower blocks. Parents complained about the lack of play areas for their children. Elderly tenants suffered from isolation and were afraid to go out in case they got stuck in a lift.

The most vaunted balcony gardens never materialised. And the novel design of flats-on-stilts meant that tenants had to negotiate their way through a wind tunnel in bad weather.

Electricity breakdowns began to occur with increasing frequency. This turned out to be the result of an even greater problem: rain penetration, which soon began to eat away at the window frames in the flats as well.

The redevelopment of the Gorbals also broke up established communities, especially the local Jewish and Irish communities. As one Glasgow journalist wrote at the time:

"The Gorbals has become a concrete island cut off by a road network which feeds the city centre. It seems that the soul has been torn out of the community, and the flats such as those built by Sir Basil must bear at least some of the responsibility".

Not until 1974 did Glasgow abandon its policy of building tower blocks. But this change in policy brought no relief for tenants already resident in multi-storeys. As the age of the Queen Elizabeth Square flats increased, so too did the list of tenants' grievances

By the early 1980s the list covered: faulty windows and window frames, lift breakdowns, dampness, loss of electricity, faulty veranda doors, drug abuse in the stairwells and connection corridors, peeling paintwork and an inadequate repairs service.

£2 million was spent on a partial refurbishment of the flats in the late 1980s. But

this quickly proved to be a mere drop in the ocean: a further £15 million, the equivalent of over £31,000 per flat, was required in the short term alone.

Cutting its losses, and backed up by a ballot of tenants in the flats, the council opted for demolition in the summer of 1990. In twenty years' time the Council will still be paying off the bill for the construction of the flats.

It was all a false economy. Piecemeal low-rise redevelopment, preserving communities and retaining a high density of population, would have been much cheaper in the long run, and better too. Tenants paid the social costs, the council paid the financial costs; the construction companies' big profits were untouched.

The construction of the Queen Elizabeth Square flats was part of a housing programme which merely replaced one housing crisis by another.

By the mid 1980s 40,000 families were on the council's waiting list. New entrants to the waiting list were outstripping vacancies by 14,000 a year. 14,000 council houses suffered from dampness. 13% of council housing was below tolerable standard.

On some of the city's peripheral estates overcrowding was seven times the national average, and infant mortality was nearly five times the national average. Nearly £2,000 million was needed to bring the council's housing stock up to standard.

The Queen Elizabeth Square tower blocks are a monument to the inadequacies of the council housing of the late 1950s and the 1960s.

We need public housing: but ones designed and implemented with democratic involvement of local communities not ones decreed from above by bureaucratic planners whose choices are shaped and limited by big construction profiteers.

But it should never be forgotten that they were meant to be part of a solution, however inadequate, to a housing crisis produced by exactly the same policies as those being pursued by the Tories today: systematic under investment in council housing and the promotion of "market forces".

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# Trotsky on black nationalism

## James Davies assesses Leon Trotsky's views on the struggles of black people in America

*"We have nothing special to offer the Negro" declared Eugene V Debs, the great revolutionary propagandist of early American socialism. "And we cannot make separate appeals to all races. The Socialist Party is the party of the whole working class, regardless of colour — the whole working class of the whole world".*

FOR ALL ITS limitations, Debs' outlook represented the most advanced attitude within pre-First World War American socialism on the Negro question. Socialist Party leader Victor Berger, for instance, was an unashamed racist: "There can be no doubt", he wrote in his paper the *Social Democratic Herald* "that the Negroes and mulattos constitute a lower race".

Under the impact of the Russian Revolution a Communist Party was formed in America in 1919. It followed the line championed by Debs and that other great American socialist, Daniel De Leon.

But soon the impact of the Bolsheviks' thinking on the 'national and colonial question' changed all that. As early as 1913 Lenin had written: "In the United States, 11.1 per cent of the population consists of Negroes (and also Mulattos and Indians), who must be considered an oppressed nationality", rather than simply workers like any other workers.

The Bolsheviks insisted that the CP must be the boldest champions of black peoples' rights. In 1928 this policy was extended to include support for black self-determination — the right of Blacks to take a part of the territory of the USA as their own and set up a Black Republic.

The black people of the USA were recognised as having national rights; the slogan of a Negro Republic in the South was advanced; at the same time the Party campaigned for complete 'equal rights' for Blacks outside that area and (so long as no Negro Republic was established) within it.

However, the 'Black Republic' slogan was put forward in a very ultimatum way.

The CPUSA was the first "white" organisation to consider the blacks to be an oppressed nation, but a whole series of Black organisations and initiatives had shown that there was a national consciousness among American blacks.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, American Blacks hotly debated the question of a "national home for the Negro". In this period there were numerous schemes to settle Liberia, California, Haiti, Canada, parts of South America and Africa.

After the Civil War, blacks were robbed of the rights they had hoped to win, as northern industry did a deal with the Southern plantocracy. Nor did their situation improve gradually after that: the turn of the century saw blacks in several states disenfranchised.

Throughout this period, the leaders of the Negro movement — above all Booker T Washington and those around him at the black college at Tuskegee, Alabama — preached patience and industry.

The drift to the north around the time of

the First World War changed all that, just as it shifted the locus of the militant Negro struggle from the Southern fields to the Northern ghettos and factories.

The new struggle took on a clearly nationalist flavour. In 1913, Nobel Drew Ali formed the Noors, the forerunner of the Black Muslims, in Newark. The next year, Marcus Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Jamaica, but shifted its centre two years later to Harlem. The Garveyites' slogan of "Back to Africa" expressed — in a confused way — the desire of black people to have their own state rather than go on being ruled by whites.

1915 saw the beginning of the nationalist-religious movement of Father Divine.

After 1928 the CPUSA learned to recognise the significance of this tradition. Around the same time the CPUSA's dominant faction — loyal to the Stalinists in the Soviet Union — expelled the Trotskyist Left Opposition led by James P Cannon and Max Shachtman.

The Trotskyists formed the Communist League of America in 1929, but at their founding conference decided to delete the passages in a draft resolution which referred to the Negroes as a nation. They decided to discuss the matter later, but did not. So it was with a view to clarifying this question, with the guidance of one of the Bolshevik leaders, that CLA militant Arne Swabeck raised the matter in a discussion with Trotsky, early in 1933.

Swabeck thought in terms of "the unity of the workers, black and white... proceeding from a class basis... it is our opinion that in this respect the main slogan should be 'social, political and economic equality for the Negroes'... His approach was abstract and academic: the Negroes are not a majority in any one state; their language and religion are the same as that of the whites.

In reply, Trotsky pointed out: "Abstract criteria are not decisive in this question; far more decisive is the historical consciousness of the group, their feelings, their impulses."

Trotsky rejected static categories — "The Negroes are a race and not a nation. Nations grow out of racial material under definite conditions. The Negroes in Africa are not yet a nation but they are in the process of forming a nation".

He stressed that the question is a matter of their consciousness, otherwise it would not be self-determination: "We of course do not obligate the Negroes to become a nation; whether they are is a question of their consciousness, that is, what they desire and what they strive for".

And should the blacks desire and strive

for their own nation, their own state — however they determine the matter of their nationhood — it is the absolute and unconditional duty of the Marxist to support that struggle actively.

As for the slogan of a Black Republic, Trotsky could see "no reason why we should not advance the demand" — just as the Communist Party (of which the CLA still considered itself a faction) was doing. Whether it could have any real agitational force was another question, but certainly, Trotsky thought it should be part of the party's programme.

On one significant point Trotsky did distinguish himself from the CPUSA's version of the self-determination slogan. The CPUSA ultimately pointed to the slogan of a black republic in the south as the only solution to the Negro question. The Party press even carried maps and tables stipulating just where this Black Republic should be situated.

"We do not compel them to separate from the state" he said, criticising this Stalinist decree, "But they have the full right to self-determination when they so desire and we will support and defend them with all the means at our disposal."

It did not matter that the blacks were not a majority in any one state: "It is not a question of the authority of the states but of the Negroes." Nor was it true, as Swabeck had claimed, that the slogan of self-determination would rally the petty bourgeoisie and deliver the workers to them. It was the slogan of 'integration' that the petty bourgeois Black leaders supported: *the nationalist movements had almost always been predominantly proletarian.*

Nor was it decisive that the blacks did not then call for a separate state. Firstly, it was a question of programme and not necessarily of immediate agitation. And secondly, "The Negroes have not yet got it into their heads that they dare to carve out a piece of the great and mighty States for themselves." In part, the idea of raising the slogan was precisely to educate the Negroes into that degree of daring while educating the racist whites as to their duties as workers.

At the time of this first discussion in 1933, America was in the grip of a deep depression. There were about 15 million unemployed and racism was sharper than ever: there were eight lynchings in 1932, and twenty-eight in 1933.

The South was still the home of 79% of American blacks, but racism was by no means confined there. During the twenties the Ku Klux Klan had become a major factor in a number of northern cities. Its extreme wing, the Black Legion, was a real force in cities like Chicago and Detroit. In



Trotsky and Arne Swabeck

the period 1931 to 1936 the Black Legion was credited with executing over fifty people in Detroit alone. The majority of unions did not accept black workers as members.

Before World War One, 80% of the firemen of the Southern Railway were coloured; by 1929 this number was reduced to 33%. On the Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Air Line the percentages were reduced from 90 and 50, to 50 and 25 respectively.

And William Z Foster, the CPUSA leader, writes that "At the 1926 convention of The Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, President Robertson informed the delegates that he hoped to be able to tell the next convention that 'not a single Negro remained on the left side of an engine cab'."

By the time the other two discussions in the *Pathfinder* volume took place, in 1939, things looked very different.

In Europe fascism was at its zenith, but in America the most terrible years of the depression were over. Unemployment had fallen somewhat and a mood of militancy rapidly gained ground within the working class. This development was stimulated by the New Deal policies introduced by the Democratic President Franklin D Roosevelt.

The New Deal brought few tangible reforms for the Blacks but the number of black workers on the Federal payroll was increased from 50,000 in 1933 — a year after Roosevelt's election — to over 200,000 during the war; most, of course, in the poorest-paid, least skilled categories.

The most important New Deal labour measure directly affecting blacks was the setting up of the Fair Employment Practices Committees. This was only done in 1941, and even then the American Federation of Labour was against it. It wasn't until 1944 that the AFL endorsed it with the rider that no action would be taken against union members not operating the "fair practices".

In the mid-thirties, basing itself on the new boldness of the working class in the mass production industries like steel, motors, rubber and mining, the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO) tore itself



In 1931 in Scottsboro, Alabama, nine young black men were convicted of raping two white women. The men were innocent and there followed a massive campaign to demand the men's release. Here the *Scottsboro Boys* as they became known discuss their case with their lawyer

It is the privileges, the comforts which hinder them from becoming revolutionists. It does not exist for the Negroes. What can transform a certain stratum, make it more capable of courage and sacrifice? It is concentrated in the Negroes. If it happens that we in the SWP are not able to reach this stratum, then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie."

James expressed his position perhaps best in a later document drafted in 1948. He pointed out that the more black people were incorporated into the unions the stronger became the independence movement.

"Now Lenin has handled this problem... He says that the dialectic of history is such that small independent nations, small nationalities, which are powerless — get the word, please — *powerless*, in the struggle against imperialism, *nevertheless* can act as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which can bring onto the scene the real power against imperialism — the socialist proletariat..."

"They, by their agitation, resistance and the political developments that they can initiate, can be the means whereby the proletariat is brought onto the scene".

The task of the Trotskyists, James concluded, was to establish a black party capable of drawing in the masses rapidly. This party would have a working class programme adapted to the realities of Negro life. It would not be a black version of the Trotskyist party, but a black version of the idea of the Labour Party.

The American Trotskyists argued for the trade unions to launch a workers' party independent of the Republicans and the Democrats. They reckoned that this new Labour Party could be a fluid, open political formation, through which millions of workers would enter political action and within which revolutionaries could play a leading role — a Labour Party far removed from a bureaucratized, conservative party such as the British Labour Party had become.

As with the Labour Party, the emphasis of the black party was to be on two things: independence and a mass proletarian base.

Trotsky was far more attuned than the majority of American revolutionaries to the need for blacks to gain confidence through their own organisation. "They were enslaved by the whites. They were liberated by the whites (so-called liberation). They are led and misled by the whites, and they did not have their political independence. They were in need of pre-political activity as Negroes".

He and James had slightly different estimates as to the role of black intellectuals within this party. But they were agreed on the need for a mass base.

Trotsky still insisted on the need for the right to self-determination in the party's programme, but he attacked the Stalinists' way of posing this issue with their customary ultimatum. "We cannot tell them to set up a state because that will weaken imperialism and so be good for us, the white workers. That would be against internationalism itself... We can say: 'It is for you to decide'."

The record of Trotsky's discussions (collected together in a Pathfinder press publication *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism*) is an extremely rich example of the Marxist method in action. It demonstrates admirably the ways Marxists approach the question of nationalism and self-determination. (His comment quoted above, that you do not promote a nationalist movement because it would be a blow to imperialism, is a repudiation of the *modus operandi* of the left in a whole range of issues today, from Ireland to Israel).

From the vantage point of the 1990s, however, even this rich and flexible approach seems to have failed to give adequate attention to the form of expression of black nationalism in the Northern ghettos. Marxism deals with *changing* reality, and Trotsky stopped thinking about the affairs of the world over 50 years ago.

state of Ethiopia and turned to support for Roosevelt in 1936, most of these black CP members flooded out of the Party. 79% of the black CP members in New York left the Party.

In addition, some of the blacks the CP now picked up were less militant and more "integrationist" than those who had left. In practice the CP dropped its self-determination slogan.

How did the Trotskyists, who had done very little on the Negro question between 1933 and 1939 (when the two further discussions took place) face up to these opportunities?

Leading the Negro work of the American Trotskyists (the Socialist Workers' Party) was CLR James (called Johnson in the discussions) — a Trinidadian intellectual

who while in Britain had joined the Trotskyists in the ILP. James had also played a leading part in the organisation of the Pan-African Congress Movement.

James' view was that self-determination

should remain a part of the party's programme, but that it had no mobilising power. On this issue the difference with Trotsky was not great: but it is significant that Trotsky would not allow James to label Black nationalism as reactionary.

Trotsky insists that as a party the SWP can remain absolutely neutral on the question of secession, of an independent Black state. But he also insists "We cannot say it will be reactionary. It is not reactionary."

This issue was, however, not the central one this time. James posed the issue: he believed it was time for the Trotskyists to take the initiative in the creation of a Black party. In this way Blacks would be brought into, and even give leadership to, the class struggles of the American workers. The way this could best be brought about was to build a broad, mass black party fighting for a programme that concerned itself with the conditions of the black workers and sharecroppers (people who gave up a fixed share of crops to the landlord for rent).

It is worth emphasising that just when the US was beginning to see joint black-white struggles, Trotsky and James advocated the setting up of an all-black Party.

"We must say" Trotsky argues "to the conscious elements of the Negroes that they are convinced by the historic developments to become a vanguard of the working class. What serves as a brake on the higher strata?"

free of the hidebound labour aristocrats of the AFL and founded a great new militant trade union movement. This movement, at least on paper, welcomed black people.

Meanwhile in the South the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union had been formed to wage a united struggle against poverty and landlordism. A quite different mood reigned from that of 1933. In 1938 there were six lynchings and in 1939 "only" three.

The situation provided the Trotskyists with big possibilities in every field, and the decline of the Communist Party's black membership opened up the chance of a breakthrough. The CPUSA had won a very big Negro following in the early thirties, but when the Soviet Union supplied Italy with oil for its campaign to conquer the black African

**"[Trotsky's comment] that you do not promote a nationalist movement because it would be a blow to imperialism, is a repudiation of the modus operandi of the left in a whole range of issues today, from Ireland to Israel."**

# Strikers and officials debate Burnsall strike

Virtually alone amongst the papers on the left *Socialist Organiser* believes in free and full debate. On this page we present differing views on the Burnsall — a long strike for union recognition by super-exploited, mainly Asian, workers at a small metal-finishing factory in Birmingham — dispute. If there are lessons to be learned from the dispute then the only

way to draw them out is open debate. Previous articles by Jim Denham and Tom Rigby in SO 569/570 argued that the bulk of the criticism of local GMB union officials for their handling of the dispute was wrong. Nevertheless, we believe that it was a mistake not to put the question of calling off the strike to a vote of the strikers themselves.

Letter to John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB union

Dear John Edmonds,

WE ARE writing to inform you of the events which took place on Wednesday 30 June 1993. We feel that the behaviour of the two GMB officials, Danny Parry and Jo Quigley, broke all union regulations, and we are very angry about this. We want to know what the GMB intends to do about the behaviour of these GMB officials.

On Wednesday 30 June, the union officials called us into the office and told us that they had closed the strike and that we could not do anything about this. If we agreed with them that was okay but if we did not then that was too bad. They said that if we criticised them, or talked to the press about it, or attended the 3 July demonstration, they would drop our Industrial Tribunal cases. They also said that if we went to the picket line or the demonstration, then we would be arrested by the police and the union would not help us. We said that

we should be given two to three weeks to discuss things and decide about the strike democratically rather than in a unilateral way. They told us they had already closed the strike and it was up to us to agree with them.

During most of this strike, we had very little contact with the GMB members and other trade unionists. We did not even know which branch we were in. In fact many of us received our membership cards for the first time on the day the union officials decided to call off the strike. We feel that we would not have been treated in such a shabby manner if we had been white workers in a similar situation.

We the Burnsall strikers would like to continue the strike. Its termination is not valid since it was not democratically decided upon and no vote was ever taken.

We look forward to your reply concerning this matter.

Yours sincerely,  
Burnsall strikers



Burnsall strikers

## The Burnsall strike continues: strikers demand John Edmonds' support

THE BURNSALL strikers are determined to win their vital struggle for union recognition despite the attempt by the GMB local officials to call it off.

Fourteen, predominantly Asian women, remain defiant after 13 months of strike action. They balloted for action in June 1992 after the majority of workers in the Smethwick metal finishing plant joined the union but the O'Neill brothers who own the

plant refused to negotiate with union representatives.

The workers had joined the union to end the O'Neills' practices of enforcing overtime, including weekend working, carrying out arbitrary sackings, penalising workers for going off sick, and paying the women as much as £30 a week less for doing the same work as the men.

Please pass resolutions and send telegrams to the GMB head office at

22-24 Worple Rd, Wimbledon, London SW19 4DD, demanding the GMB leaders restore official status to the strike, resume strike pay and bring the whole of the unions' strength to bear on winning this dispute which is vital to the whole trade union movement.

Please send financial support. For further information contact: Balvir Singh, 82 Rosefield Road, Smethwick, Birmingham B67 6DX. Telephone: 021 565 5416.

## A reply to statements by the so-called support groups

By Jo Quigley and Danny Parry, GMB regional organisers

THE BULK OF the statements put out by the so-called Support Groups are riddled with contemptible lies.

The union officers involved in this dispute have been accused of betraying trade union principles, yet they fought this strike for one full year in

order to get trade union recognition.

We have been accused of "preventing the strike from attracting mass support and not producing proper leaflets for the first six months of the strike". Not all correspondence has survived, so what follows is bound to be a slight underestimate. Nevertheless, the Burnsall files for the sixth month period, mid June to mid December 1992, record 108 items written by

the two GMB organisers in promoting the Burnsall strike. This does not include 399 letters of acknowledgement that often included further collection sheets and details of the strike's progress. Nor does it include the individual registering of 56 Industrial Tribunal claims and preparation of those claims.

It does include twelve press releases. Each press release led to further coverage of the strike in newspapers, radio and TV. After the first

month, journalists for the *Express* and *Star* BRMB and the BBC's *Asian Network* were regularly contacting the union for Burnsall stories.

The first press release "Workers at 10 Downing Street Prepare to Strike" was adapted as a general leaflet for fund raising purposes, translated into Punjabi and, in both languages, was reprinted in tens of thousands of copies. This leaflet was the main source other unions

drew upon when their journals published articles on the Burnsall strike and issued appeals for support.

We produced health and safety questionnaires and reports, prepared submissions for the DHSS and the Labour Party's commission on social justice and prepared speakers' notes for MPs and other supporters of the strike.

We have been accused of "showing a complete lack of respect for strikers, who have made enormous sacrifices". For the first time since the law was changed in the early 1980s preventing strikers from receiving unemployment benefit, the GMB successfully secured, for the Burnsall strikers, the right to receive unemployment benefit whilst on strike. In addition the union established a separate strike fund. As a consequence, the union was able to ensure that our members received a sum of money equivalent to a normal 56 hour Burnsall wage for the whole of the twelve month strike.

The union provided and supported a fully heated caravan, which was parked outside Burnsall — twelve yards from the main gate — for eleven months of the strike.

The union has been accused of "refusing to provide effective legal representation". Every striker, without exception, who has been charged with an offence, has been given legal representation by the union. There is not one single example where the union has refused.

The allegation that "union officers said that if the strikers criticised them, their tribunal cases would be dropped" is accurately and effectively repudiated by David Brown's statement.

## The allegations are completely untrue

By David Brown, Burnsall striker

AS ONE OF THE Burnsall strikers, I stood on the picket line and travelled up and down the country speaking on behalf of the strike and on behalf of my union, which is the GMB. I attended the meeting at the GMB offices on 30 June 1993 when the strike was called off. I have read accounts of allegations made by some of the strikers against the GMB in *Eastern Eye*, *Birmingham Post*, *Newsline* and various other newspapers and all I can say is that such allegations are completely untrue and I do not agree with them in any way. When on 30 June 1993 the union decided to call off the strike, I was in total agreement with the union and I believe that the union's decision to call off the strike was the correct one in all the circumstances. Examples of the allegations which have been made by some of the strikers against the union include the following:

That the two officers, i.e. Joe Quigley and Danny Parry involved in the dispute threatened to confiscate donations made to the strike fund if the strikers criticised the union.



David Brown

This is completely untrue. In fact, the

union said that all the money which had been paid into the strike fund would be paid back to the members to the full amount and on top of that the union itself would also make a donation to the strike fund so that in the end, we would get one large lump sum which consisted not only of the money which was originally in the strike fund but in addition money which had been contributed to the strike fund by the union itself.

That the union would stop supporting our Industrial Tribunal cases if we criticised the union.

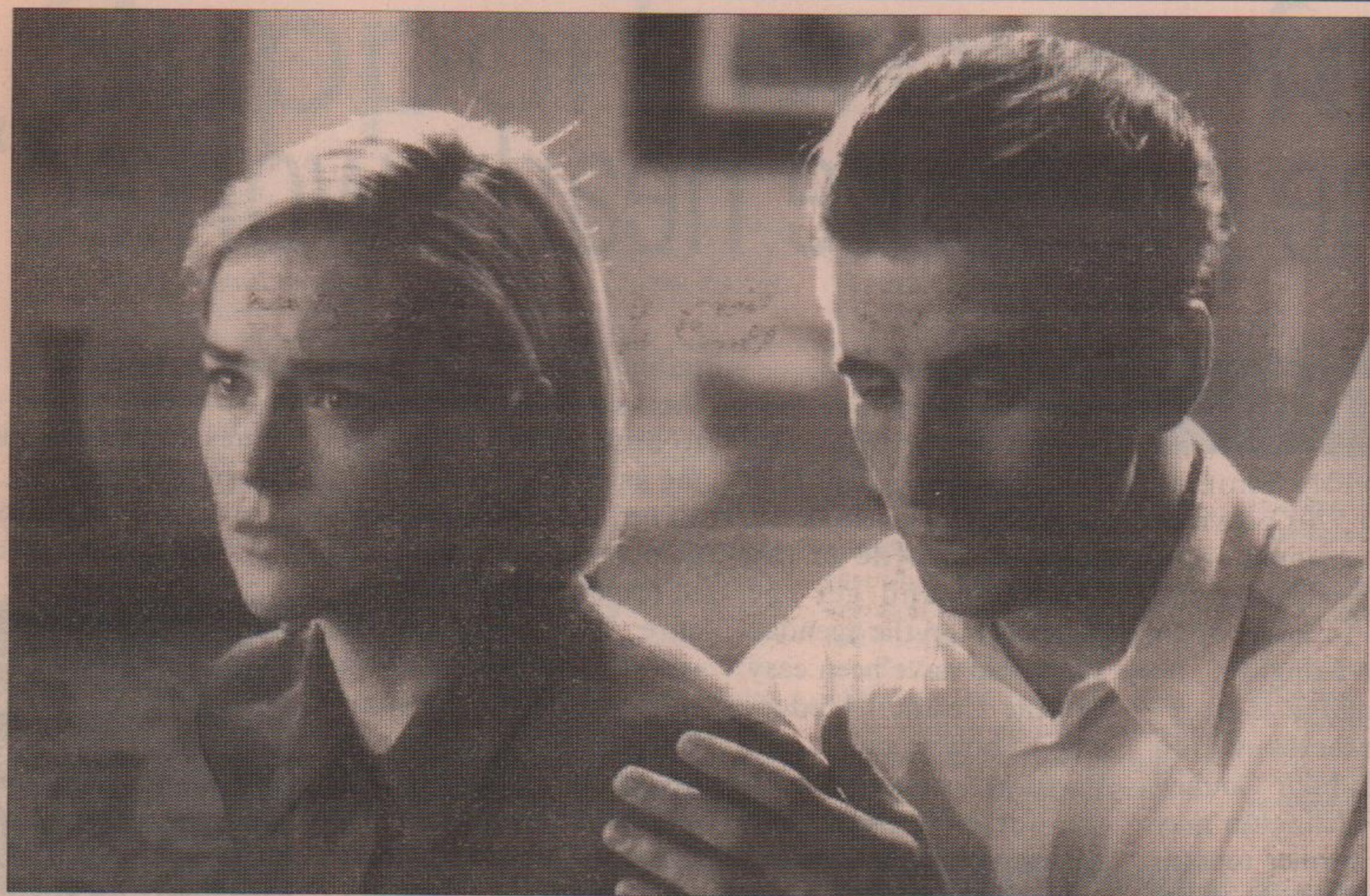
In fact, none of the strikers at the meeting on 30 June 1993 asked the union whether their Industrial Tribunal cases would continue to be supported by the union if the strike was called off. The union officers reassured us that it was only the picketing which was being called off. The political fight in support of unskilled workers was to be continued and the fight against the management of Burnsall's was also continued. The union reassured us that the Industrial Tribunal cases would be fought even though the picketing had been called off.

The strikers make these statements against the union by saying that the

statements have been made on behalf of all the strikers but I have never been shown any of the statements in order to ask me whether I agree with the statements or not.

A few months ago, I found out that Balvir Singh Shoker (who is also known as "Bally") was taking money for the strike fund to an ex-striker who is now working in another factory. When I found out that Bally was doing this and I told the union about it, Bally and some of the rest of the strikers became totally against me and so I had to stand on the picket line on my own when picketing. I stood on the picket line on my own like a statue. The strikers wouldn't come near me because I had found out what Bally had been doing.

I feel that the allegations which have been made against the union by some of the strikers are terrible and disgraceful. I want all of my fellow strikers to show solidarity in supporting the union which has supported us throughout our fight. I want them to show respect to the union for what they have done. They could not have done any more than what they did. I thank the GMB for the support that they have given us in our fight.



I have never walked out of a film before, but I left 'Sliver'. "Sit through the last half hour or miss the ending and go to the pub", I asked myself. The pub won. Missing the end was an added incentive. I had been promised drama, tension and an in-depth exploration of female sexuality. That was the hype. Instead I got the dullest of dialogues, amateur acting and tiresome titillation. I ended up pondering one of the great mysteries of modern cinema: why is Sharon Stone considered sexy? Do not see this film: read the book.

Garry Meyer

## Where the '60s went

### Television

#### Paddy Dollard reviews Hollywood Britain

**H**OLLYWOOD UK, whose first episode covered the years from *Room at the Top* (1958) to the early mid-'60s, when "London" began flabbily to "swing" reminded me of just how radical some of those early 1960s films were — radical, indeed, against what had gone before, but radical in their own right too. And not only in the way they dealt with sex. Though it is tame beside what is now normal in the cinema and even in TV drama, the sexual radicalism of those films was very great in its time. Until the late '50s, sex — people as they are sexually, and "love" whose main element is sex — was something you encountered only in the X-certificated French and Italian films shown in a few special "continental" cinemas.

Sex in the cinema definitely was not "British", or American either. *Brief Encounter*, which was about a passionate but completely platonic love affair involving avid adultery, but only of the mind — that was sex in the British cinema!

*Room at the Top* showed real people — people with genitals who copulated. Significantly for the time — sex had yet to gain citizenship — it made the heroine French, Simone Signoret.

It also showed people who lived in a class society. Its class viewpoint was that of the envious lower middle class — John Braine, author of the book on which it was based, was in the Monday Club a decade later — but it was startling enough for all that.

*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* shows the plight of a young man chained for life to a capstan lathe in a bicycle factory

in Nottingham. It retains all its original force as a radical critique of the position of the industrial worker under capitalism. So does the splendid, less narrowly focussed, *This Sporting Life*.

Imagine *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* remade for now, translated into the '90s, and you will have the measure of both the early 60s' cinema radicalism and of the British cinema now.

By contrast, *Billy Liar*, made towards the end of the period, is only a clever concoction by two ultra-professional writers, relocating Walter Mitty in working class provincial England; the Julie Christie heroine is no more than a male fantasy, albeit one who tends to take on a life of her own. She is the amoral temptress of many films, except that here she is "good", representing a newly free cinematic sexuality. By that time the sexual revolution was in full swing outside the cinema.

**WHAT HAPPENED** to it all? The tide of cinema commercialism flowed into different channels. Its themes and innovations were subsumed, diluted, and partly redirected to television. In that sense it is still with us — but without the first shock and force, and without the radicalism.

The dominant themes were those of radicalism, not socialism, though some of the film makers and writers — Alan Sillitoe and Lindsay Anderson for example — were socialists, part of the socialist renaissance of the late '50s. Others were Labourites. This radical current subsided because it prevailed.

Radicalism is a negative current, a movement against artificial restriction and against outmoded vested interest. Thatcherism too was radical in that sense. Radicalism is shaped, and defined and the direction of its revolutionary force determine, by that against which it struggles. Victorious, it dilutes and

dissipates, merging with the rest of the old status quo.

Thus a man like John Schlesinger, who made *This Sporting Life* and later *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, which treated gay and bisexual relations as part of normal everyday humanity, could go on to make the Tory Party's TV commercials in 1992.

The heirs of the period are of course the TV radicals, with their dramatised sociology, people such as Ken Loach — still going strong, and not only in television — whose mid-60s *Up the Junction* was reshown recently.

Against my prejudices — because of Loach's recent involvement in duff political drama, poisonous (*Perdition*) about Israel and foolish (*Hidden Agenda*) about Ireland — I found myself impressed by *Up the Junction*, brilliant with speed, sharpness and sheer life. But this was the working class of South London strictly from the outside, complete with cute proletarian sayings and observations. Utterly from the outside, observed by alien middle class observers — the camera was a microscope.

Watching *Up the Junction* helped me to understand better why so many of these talented middle class people in the '60s and '70s who wanted to "turn to the workers" nevertheless joined or fellow-travelled with the Healy cult and its governing notion of building a sect in a safe, largely middle class, political ghetto, there to develop "leadership" and one day bestow it on the "masses".

The Reiss/Sillitoe *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* shows people with depth and minds — thinking people, real working class people and not sociological cuts-outs. Alongside *Up the Junction* it was simply on a different, and immensely higher, level.

The rest of *Hollywood UK* is on Sundays at 9pm on BBC2.

## Much Ado About Nothing

### Cinema

Tom Macara reviews the new film of *Much Ado About Nothing*

**K**ARL MARX was a bardolator, that is, a fanatic lover of Shakespeare.

And he passed his love on to all his daughters.

Eleanor, when she was not helping to organise gasworkers and dockers into Britain's first general unions, would relax by enacting scenes from Shakespeare's plays, gleefully intoning lines about such characters as the king who "could smile and smile and smile and be a villain" — just as she had with her father when she was a little girl.

You would have to trawl wider than Kenneth Branagh's "Much Ado About Nothing" to understand Marx's life-long passion, but if the idea of "Shakespeare" puts you off, you could do worse than start exploring here.

This is a joyful, warm-spirited production of one of the most popular of Shakespeare's comedies. Filmed in Italy, the whole production is drenched in sun and good feeling.

The story concerns two pairs of lovers, and a benign prince and his malign brother, Don John, the Bastard, who is a sort of pantomime villain.

The first pair of lovers, Beatrice and Benedick, are notoriously at odds, verbally fencing and sparking off each other with sharp wit when they meet. Their friends and the prince conspire to bring them together. They are brought together by struggle against the sombre fate of Hero, Beatrice's cousin, one half of the other pair of lovers.

Hero, all innocence and inexperience, is to be married to Claudio. The night before the wedding, the idly malicious Don John sets it up so that Claudio is led to believe he sees her making love to someone else.

The next day he goes half way through the wedding ceremony and then, in a scene of savage vindictiveness, publicly denounces, slanders and disgraces the bewildered Hero.

This is a terrible scheme; the men turn hysterically on the young woman as if they will rend her, because she has, they believe, transgressed against their sexual code.

Her father, Leonato, an upright, dignified, good-hearted man, at first turns on her, with implicit faith in what Claudio says, backed by the prince, who also saw what he thinks he saw.

Later the father relents, not from an instinctive siding with his daughter, but because he is finally convinced that she is wronged. He will speak bitter words about that savage wedding scene and what the prince and Claudio did to his daughter. He questions one of the tools in the plot to slander Hero:

"Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast kill'd mine innocent child?"

The man replies: "Yes, even I alone".

"No, not so villain; Thou beliest thyself.

Here stand a pair of honourable men;

A third is fled that had a hand in it. I thank you, princes, for my daughter's death;

Record it with your high and wor-

thy deeds:

"Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it".

Hero is not dead, they only pretend she is. Don John's plot is exposed by Shakespeare's version of the Keystone Cops, the Town Watch; Hero and Claudio are reconciled.

The cast is especially good — Denzel Washington is unexpected but fine as the Prince; Emma Thompson wonderful as Beatrice; Richard Briers dignified as Leonato. Michael Keaton, recently Batman, the weird vigilante of Gotham City, is here the fat, dirty and stupid Dogberry, head of the Town Watch.

Dogberry, hilariously, does to the English language what many Marxists do to the language of Marxism. For example:

"Marry, sir, they have committed false report; moreover, they have spoken untruth; secondarily, they are slanders; sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady; thirdly, they have verified unjust things; and, to conclude, they are lying knaves".

Doesn't it remind you of the non sequiturs, muddled logic, decayed formulas, and the vain pretensions to system and sense, that so often pass for Marxism? Whole dictionaries of Dogberryisms could be compiled from the publications of the pseudo-Trotskyists!

The hype for Kenneth Branagh is enough to put you off him, and I don't like him much as an actor, but this is the second Shakespeare play he has turned into a passable, and in some ways fine, film, and I am grateful for that. See it!

## Labour on TV

By Geoff Ward

**B**BC2'S THREE-part political satire, *Love and Reason* (Wednesday 9.25pm) looks like doing for Labour what *The House of Cards* did for the Tories.

There's corruption aplenty as newly elected Labour MP, 'Lov Larson' battles with the right wing in her local constituency party and the party nationally.

Her left credentials were fixed in last week's episode. She battled alongside the miners in *Women Against Pit Closures* (1984-85 strike), then kept it up after the strike by fighting to save a women's refuge from cuts imposed by her corrupt Labour councillors.

As MP for a Yorkshire coalmining constituency, will she stick to her principles or fall behind Kinnock's New Realism like some of her male comrades.

Women seem to be given strong roles for a change and there are some good insights into political infighting in the Labour Party. Compulsory and compelling viewing for socialists.

# Why you should be a socialist

**W**E LIVE IN A capitalist world. Production is social;

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

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

**F**ROM 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 worst 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.

## Islington nurseries battle

# "The pressure nearly worked"

### LETTERS

**M**ARTIN Thomas (SO 570) provides an honest and searching analysis of the campaign to keep open nurseries in Islington.

The campaign is to re-open nurseries which Islington Labour Council has closed. Islington may rest on its former reputation for being left-wing, accountable to the Labour Party and the community and funding progressive child-care. The reality is different. Islington Labour Parties, for all their left talk, frequently accept whatever terrible cuts the Council proposes. This cut, however, was widely recognised by the Party as a cut too far.

*"Over the summer, the campaign within the Party has dissipated. It is now the left's task to raise the profile"*

Nursery campaigners visited almost all Labour Party ward meetings. They put their case directly to Party members. 13 out of 20 wards, along with one General Committee and the Local Government Committee, passed motions calling for the Council to reverse its policy and keep the nurseries open. Islington Labour Group of Councillors was forced to re-debate the issue. All the Labour Councillors were under pressure from their wards to vote to keep the nurseries open. The pressure nearly worked! Some Labour Councillors changed their mind, acknowledged their ward's views and voted with the left who had always argued for the nurseries to be kept open. Other Labour Councillors, having promised support to the campaign, stayed away. The motion was lost by three votes. Since then, the Council Leadership has resisted all attempts to re-debate the issue, even avoiding calling meetings request-

ed by Labour Group.

Over the summer, the campaign within the Party has dissipated. It is now the left's task to raise the profile of the campaign and get the issue back on the agenda!

It would have been easy for the Council leadership to bow to public and Party pressure and keep the nurseries open. The cut proposed was a small sum compared with the millions hidden in accountancy techniques. The Council would have emerged as responsive to

public pressure and with the humility of listening to arguments and changing its mind.

The Council leadership was determined not to respond to public pressure. They could not be seen to be "giving in" (in their words) to the community. They refuse to accept the legitimacy of a community campaign. To "give in" would, in their eyes, mean that they lost face.

The campaign is continuing. It has survived the loss of one nursery. The

other, Springdale, is defiantly occupied and continues to receive public and party support.

Liz Davies,  
Islington councillor

**Messages of support and donations to Islington Under-Fives Action Group, c/o Springdale UFEC, 15a Springdale Road, London, N16. (071-923 0263)**

## Left Unity repels York fascists

**O**N 7 August Richard Bayley and I had just started a

*Socialist Organiser* paper sale in York City Centre when about seven men approached us distributing leaflets. They did not see my papers as I was petitioning against a hospital closure, but Richard's display of *S.O.* carrying the headline "Scrap these racist laws" ensured a verbal conflict between him and fascists.

When they tried to take my bag I pulled it back and was then physically attacked. The BNP organiser was trying to stop the

attack and a member of the public intervened. We later found out that a number of fascists had been in jail or just released, so they probably did not want to fight, which was just as well because against our two they now had 20.

We shadowed the fascists until they set up their paper sale and then began to rally more help along with members of the SWP who were beginning their paper sale. Once we had about seven socialists we began denouncing the fascists who were paper selling and leafletting. This continued for about 20 minutes until the police

came. The fascists paid great respect to the police but we were told to move on. After the paper sale, which was shortened through having most of our papers snatched or torn we wandered through the town to see where the BNP had gone. They were nowhere to be seen but later that day some of them attacked an SWPer as they were driving of York.

On 14 August we had a paper sale with local members of Anti-Fascist Action in attendance just in case fascists came; they did not.

Tony,  
York

## We need £2,000

**A**T LEAST two major campaigns will be central in the coming months: "Keep the Link" and the fight for the Workers' Charter of trade union rights.

On both of these issues *Socialist Organiser* has done irreplaceable work. Our paper first launched the idea of the Workers' Charter, and our supporters then helped get it adopted by such groups as Labour Party Socialists and, now, trade unions such as RMT and UNISON. Our supporters were also central in launching the "Keep the Link" campaign, to defend Labour's links with the unions, and in getting its policy adopted

by major unions. The paper has teased out all the arguments and covered the campaign. Both fights continue, and will continue for some time.

Our paper is central, and irreplaceable. Yet we face a desperate shortage of money in producing and promoting the paper. We have no wealthy backers, no big income from capitalist advertising. Each week we depend on the 50 pences and 25 pences collected on door-to-door sales, street sales, at workplaces and in labour movement meetings — and on whatever extra we can get from our committed supporters. We have been pushed, paradoxically,

into some of the same difficulties as small capitalist businesses, by the bank tightening up on our credit.

We need £2000 extra by the end of October to keep the paper appearing regularly each week — and we need chunks of that £2000 to start coming in very fast. You need our paper. Our paper needs you.

Send your donation, or the proceeds of your jumble sale, car boot sale, sponsored swim, fund-raising party, film evening, or whatever it be, to *Socialist Organiser*, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Cheques payable to "WL Publications".

# Support grows for UCH strike

**T**HE STRIKE by porters and nurses at University College Hospital, London has shown how much can be achieved by people prepared to stand up against the destruction of our health service.

The strike has certainly done more in three weeks to publicise the funding crisis for our hospitals than Charles Marshall and the Health Authority have in months.

Since the strike started, there has hardly been a working day when we have been out of the news.

David Blunkett, Labour Shadow Health Secretary, has joined the campaign. He has called for a stop to any further

ward closures until the funding crisis is resolved and will join us on the picket line when a UCH ward is due to close.

The rally on Friday 3 September was joined by a march of Middlesex staff, whilst Royal Free workers organised their own local protest. Other hospitals including the London, North Middlesex, Barnet, Whittington, Maudsley, St Georges' Ealing are to join the UNISON backed London March and Rally and are planning for the day of action on 16 September. St Georges' has already decided to organise a lunchtime rally outside their hospital that day in support of UCH and to highlight cuts in London hospitals.

Support from workers outside the NHS has been fantastic. The rally on Friday was joined by workers from local DHSS and dole offices — some who walked out for two hours to join us. Others included UNISON members from Camden and Islington councils; NUT members from local schools who have meetings in nearly every school this week to discuss what further action teachers can take; bus workers; railworkers who organised a benefit for strikers and raised £400; Post Office workers from three sorting offices — those from Mount Pleasant bringing their second fantastic collection of £500.

Further support and hundreds of pounds were also raised in

shopping areas and markets over the weekend.

(From the UCH strike bulletin)

## Save UCH, support the strike!

Resolution for trade unions

This... applauds the magnificent indefinite strike action by nurses and porters at University College Hospital (UCH) to save their hospital.

We agree:

1. To invite a striking nurse or porter to our next union meeting.
2. To support any demonstration called to save UCH.
3. To take regular workplace collections for the strike fund.
4. To send a delegation with our banner to the UCH picket line.
5. That if beds, wards or part of the hospital are immediately threatened with closure the UCH strikers can call on us for solidarity and we will take whatever action we can, up to and including strike action, and mobilise to prevent the closure.

We condemn the threats of serious disciplinary action made by UCH management against three striking nurses. We demand that all charges are immediately withdrawn.

We demand that our trade union leaders campaign in support of those victimised in this way at UCH. We demand they support and build for any action called in defence of healthworkers who are victimised for fighting to save our health service.

We demand the TUC immediately organises a national day of action and demonstration in defence of the National Health Service.

## Tory tests: finish them off now!

By Liam Conway

**T**EACHERS need answers to three questions as they return to work for the autumn term. 1. Is the interim Dearing Report a victory for the teaching unions? 2. Is the boycott of the Tory tests over? 3. Should the NUT continue the boycott alone if the other unions accept Dearing? Answers: 1. Yes and, mostly no; 2. No; 3. Yes.

Dearing represents a limited retreat by the government. The Tories have abandoned league tables at 7 and 14. They have accepted that testing will largely be limited to the core subjects of Maths, Science and English. They have cut by half the time spent on tests in the core subjects. But, and it is a big but, the tests still exist and will be published at 11 and 16 to the detriment of the vast majority of school students. Worse, these new short, sharp, shock tests will probably be even more educationally unsound than the ones boycotted this year.

The John Major diet of 'standards', 'spelling', 'results' and 'grammar' will be the order of the day. Any acceptance of such terms will be a cruel and crushing defeat for all teachers, but especially those English teachers without whom the government would not be retreating a single inch. And we do not have to accept Dearing or any of the government imposed tests,

assessment or league tables.

The NUT boycott ballot does not run out until 12 November. With the full Dearing Report not due until December and with the possibility that it could involve major changes to all current assessment procedures, we should use the boycott to stop all aspects of National Curriculum assessment. Local Associations and Divisions of the NUT should mail schools urgently to hammer home the message that the fight against tests continues. Continuing the campaign against the tests in such a way is the only way to prove that the NASUWT and ATL are wrong to call off the dispute on the grounds that the issue of workload has been resolved. For a start, the issue of workload has not been resolved. Take History for example. The national test is gone but we are still left with a system of assessment that is a marking and administrative nightmare. Finally, English teachers at the very least will be expecting the boycott to continue until the tests and league tables are gone for good. Despite the pressure from the left the NUT leadership is currently silent not only on where to go from 12 November, but what we do now. We need maximum pressure to force them off the fence. Let's step up the campaign now in the preparation for a renewed ballot to continue the action after 12 November.

## UNISON: vote yes for pay action!

By Tony Dale

**H**ALF A million white collar workers are being balloted on strike action over the Tories' 1.5% pay freeze. UNISON's pay claim is for a

flat rate pay rise of £700 per year.

Despite fine words the national campaign for a Yes vote is lacklustre. A tour round the country by national leaders calling for a Yes vote is needed.

Television and newspapers should be used in order to make the pay ballot a public showdown with the Tories over the pay freeze.

A public sector wide fightback against the pay freeze is a possi-

bility. A vote by UNISON to go for strike action would be a signal for the start of that fightback.

The ballot on a rolling programme of six days of national strike action closes on 24

## Tube ballots to strike against pay limit

By a Central Line guard

**R**M T members on the London Underground are balloting this week for a series of one-day strikes against the government's 1.5% pay limit.

This provides tubeworkers with the opportunity to start turning things round after the recent defeats.

Last December saw the implementation of London Underground Ltd's Company Plan. This means 5,000 job losses and a bonfire of conditions and agreements.

It has become clear that rather than being the limit of their ambitions, the Company Plan

was just the starting point. This year sees a 30% cut in tube funding. P.way and signal maintenance are already threatened with further job losses. They are not likely to be alone.

What is now vital is to find the issues on which we can get united action from all tubeworkers, regardless of their grade or union.

One issue that may well prove important - particularly amongst train crew - is the five day week.

Now most tubeworkers work on an 11 day fortnight. The five day week was supposedly promised to ASLEF full-timer Kevin Rose in November in return for calling off the ASLEF ballot and ensuring the Company

Plan came in smoothly. Since then there has been no sign of the five day week.

Rank and file ASLEF and RMT activists are now beginning to organise together to start the fight for the five day week. Formally the policy of both unions is for a 35 hour week and "Five days and 35 hours" would be an excellent slogan.

If we are to have any chance of beating management we must be united. And we desperately need a rank and file movement to build that unity - in depots and workplaces — across unions and grades.

The first step would be for ASLEF and TSSA to ballot on pay.

Tube: Strike to defend Pat Sikorski!

Last Thursday, 2 September, London RMT District Council secretary Pat Sikorski lost his appeal against sacking on the ludicrous charge of threatening behaviour towards a Train Crew Manager.

The appeal confirmed the sacking despite five witness statements supporting Pat's story. Like the initial disciplinary hearing it was a charade. As with Ray Stelzner, the guard who's sacking led to the alleged 'incident' between Pat and the manager, the most basic rules of justice were blatantly ignored.

Last Thursday also saw a well attended meeting at Leytonstone to start in earnest the fight for the reinstatement of Pat and Ray. The postal ballot of Central Line train crew is to start from Friday 10 September. If one day strikes on the Central Line do not win reinstatement then a combine-wide ballot is planned.

There is no real chance of getting ASLEF to ballot for action, so the emphasis must be on winning the rank and file ASLEF members to respecting picket lines. Tube bosses are stepping up the level of attacks on us, but the obvious victimisation of a well-known activist may prove to be a two-edged sword. There is a lot of anger and disgust, and this latest attack could be made to blow up in management's face.

## Firefighters' strike could start on 8 November

**D**ELEGATES AT last week's special Fire Brigades Union conference voted overwhelmingly to reject the employers 1.5% pay offer and to prepare for strike action

from 8 November.

The government are unilaterally abandoning the firefighters pay formula which was agreed after the 1978 strike. If the formula was still in place it should have given increase between 2.5% and 4%.

Union leaders are to meet the employers for "final" talks on 24 September.

This will be followed by a special FBU conference the next day which, if delegates agree, could vote for a ballot timetable which could see strike action start on 8 November.

Mass picket Timex Factory in Feltham

Friday 10 September  
UK Time Limited, River Gardens, North Feltham Trading Estate, Feltham  
Picket starts at 7.00 am

## Bone and blood is the price of coal

Springhill

In the town of Springhill Nova Scotia,  
Down in the dark of the Cumberland mine,  
There's blood on the coal and the miners lie  
In the roads that never saw sun or sky,  
Roads that never saw sun or sky.

In the town of Springhill, you don't sleep easy,  
Often the earth will tremble and roll,  
When the earth is restless miners die:  
Bone and blood is the price of coal,  
Bone and blood is the price of coal.

In the town of Springhill Nova Scotia,  
Late in the year of fifty eight,  
Day still comes and the sun still shines  
But it's dark as the grave in the Cumberland mine,  
Dark as the grave in the Cumberland mine.

Down at the coal face miners working,  
Rattle of the belts and the cutters blade,  
Rumble of rock, and the walls close round  
The living and the dead men two miles down,  
Living and the dead men two miles down.

Twelve men lay two miles from the pit shaft,  
Twelve men lay in the dark and sang:  
Long hot days in a miners' tomb,  
It was three feet high and a hundred long  
Three feet high and a hundred long.

Three days passed and the light gave out  
And Celeb Rushton, he up and said:  
"There's no more water, nor light, nor bread,  
So we'll live on songs and hope instead",  
Live on songs and hope instead.

Listen for the shouts of the barefaced miners,  
Listen through the rubble for a rescue team:  
Six hundred feet of coal and slag,  
Hope imprisoned in a three foot seam,  
Hope imprisoned in a three foot seam.

Eight days passed and some were rescued,  
Leaving the dead to lie alone  
Through all their lives they dug a grave,  
Two miles of each for a marking stone,  
Two miles of each for a marking stone.

Peggy Seeger

## Car expenses dispute bites

By Tony Dale

**1**00,000 WHITE collar council workers have been in dispute since mid-July over how much they receive for using their cars for work. Unison members have been refusing to use their cars after the employers unilaterally ripped up a 50-year-old agreement.

The dispute is about defending council workers' living standards. It is also about defending national agreements. If the employers get away with ripping up one national agreement, what will be next? The action followed a 3:1 majority in a ballot of car users, and has been solid throughout.

The employers finally met Unison negotiators on 31 August. Nothing came of out of this meeting and another session has been set for 14 September. Rumours of a

deal have been in the air. Any offer must be put to the membership in a ballot. We do not want a very effective work-to-rule called off by the negotiators following some shoddy settlement. Selected branches are being balloted on escalating the action.

The most popular and effective form of escalation is refusing the sharing of hire cars between a group of drivers. All branches should be encouraged to escalate along these lines. Where escalation leads to lock-outs, Unison needs to give full backing to local branches. In Doncaster about 1,000 Unison members walked out in support of two workers sent home for refusing to share hire vehicles. Unison full-time officials came in and called off the action, advising members to share hired vehicles. This is no way to run a dispute.

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Save our student unions!

# Labour: keep the union link!

By Vladimir Derer, secretary, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

The general issue behind the dispute over Labour's union link is that Labour Party leader John Smith wants to distance the unions from the Party.

It is not just a matter of pressure from the Tories and the media. Smith knows that the possibility of a Labour government delivering reforms is limited. He can not offer very much.

The drift towards cutting off the Party from the unions is, at root, a preventive measure. Smith anticipates the time when a Labour government will, for instance, ask the unions for pay restraint and cuts. He remembers the past. He wants to cut off the unions from having a strong voice in the Labour Party.

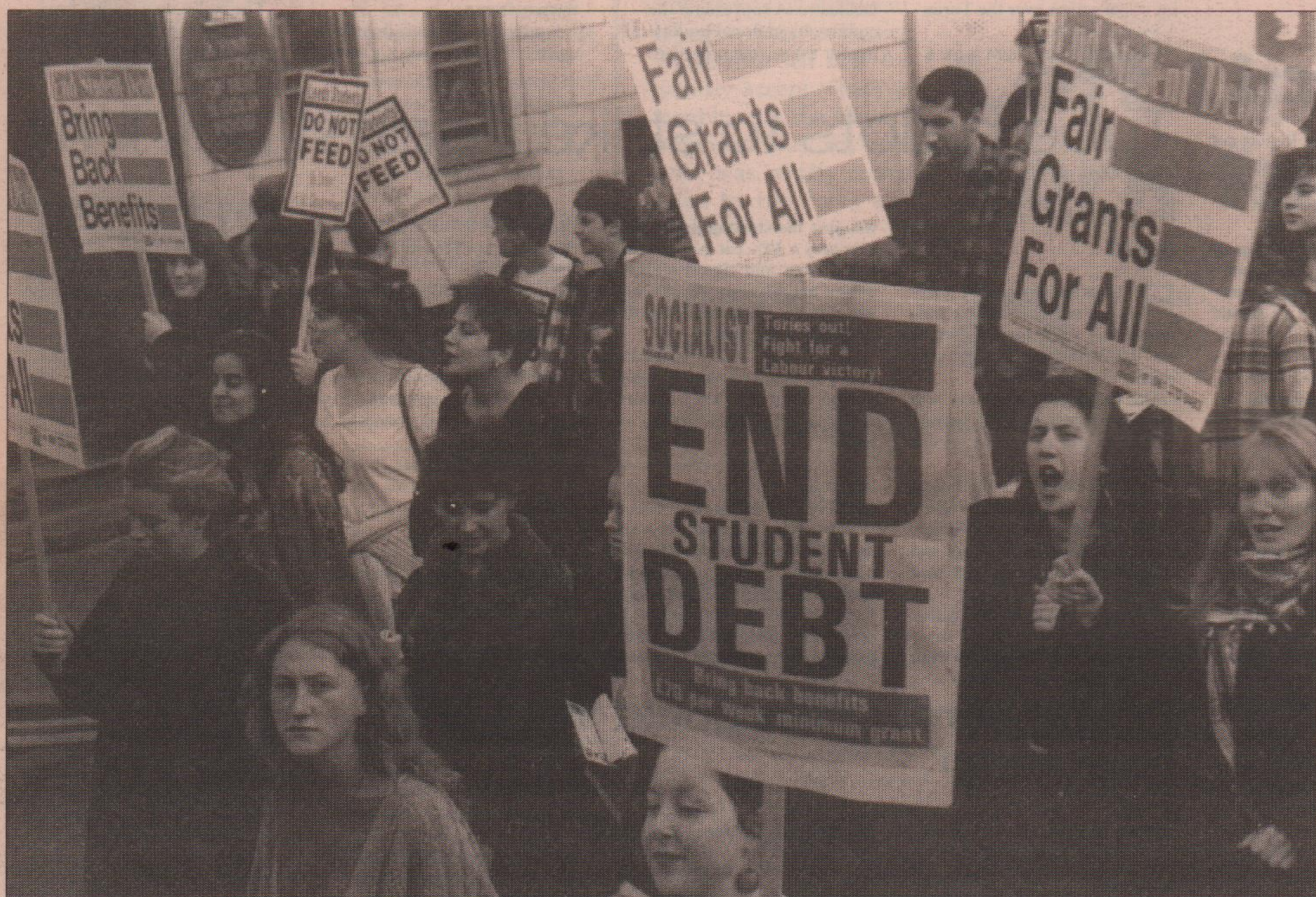
How it goes at Labour Party conference will depend to a large extent on the resolve of the unions to stick to pro-Link resolutions from their own conferences. Some of the unions are vacillating; some leaders are saying they are not bound by their conference decisions.

Labour's leaders have gone back on so many policies that they have demoralised many activists. Many on the left have been forced out of the Party or have drifted out. The general level of political activity is low.

There are some small symptoms of dissatisfaction in the motions to Party conference. For instance, on the economy, half the motions mention the need to renationalise and call for an extension of public ownership. A number of resolutions go beyond that.

We must not overestimate this mood. If we look at the elections to the Constituency section of the National Executive, then we would have to go back further than the 1940s to find the left so isolated.

However, we can still win on the Link. It is not a left-right issue. It is a general question of union involvement in the Party. The fact, for instance, that USDAW has not got a left-wing executive is not particularly relevant. The question is, will a union like USDAW stand its ground to keep the Link.



Student unions must be defended on the streets, not by whispering in the ears of Tory MPs.

By Elaine Jones, National Union of Students National Executive Committee

STUDENT UNIONISTS met this week in Birmingham to re-launch the national "Save Our Student Unions!" campaign. Its object is to mobilise students - and where possible the labour movement - to fight the Tory government's plans to dismantle the structure of student unionism.

Over seventy student unionists were there, with representatives from the major political groups in the student movement as well as many independents.

The Labour Students leadership of the National Union of Students turned up - the re-launch was organised alongside the NUS "Campaign Launch Conference" - and opposed the campaign. Even at this

late hour they think that the best way to fight Tory plans for student unions is to continue with their pathetic and provedly ineffective "charm offensive" on wet Tory MPs.

By contrast, the mood among students is militant. Even Labour Student members of the NUS National Executive had to pretend that they supported such actions as the Cumbria and Lancashire Area NUS picket of Tory party conference and the demonstration organised by Manchester Area NUS for 3 November.

They even tried to convince the meeting that they do not support Tory proposals for a Graduate Tax, although both Labour Party leaders and Labour Students have publicly expressed support for the idea.

On all counts the NUS leadership failed to convince the meeting. Most people applauded when Kevin Sexton, a Left Unity member of the NUS Executive, called for the re-launch of "Save Our Student Unions!" as a broad-based activist organisation.

"Save Our Student Unions!" is a vital campaign. With the leaders of NUS refusing the organise action to defend our unions, and underhandedly preparing to support the system of student fees and Graduate Tax which will hit hard at all but the richest students, student activists must

unite on a national level to build action.

Students must be organised in opposition to the suicide tactics of the NUS leaders. The support for "Save Our Student Unions" at the first NUS campaign event of this academic year proves how much anger against the Tories and the NUS leaders there is in student ranks. The energy exists to build a fight back across the student movement - now!

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**"Save Our Student Unions!" Picket Tory Party conference, 2 September, Blackpool. Demonstrate 3 November in Manchester.**

**SOCIALIST** Inside this week  
**MAF-SOLM**  
 Behind the hype  
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**Buses, rail, pits, public sector**

**STRIKE TOGETHER!**

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