

Racism in Labour councils



By Dion D'Silva

ONE morning two weeks ago a black woman worker in Islington council Neighbourhood Services had a rude awakening. At 7 o'clock, loud knocks at the door of her flat got her out of bed. On the doorstep were five policemen and three council officials. They handcuffed her in her pyjamas while they searched her flat.

The search was part of an investigation by Islington council into alleged fraud in their Neighbourhood Services. The council has disciplined a number of staff without even telling them the charges against them. Islington Labour council is guilty of treating its own employees as "guilty until proven innocent".

In protest, UNISON A (that part of the councilworkers' union which used to be NALGO) held a one-day strike in Neighbourhood Services on Tuesday 9 November. Activists hope to bring out the whole UNISON branch in protest at the council's treatment of Neighbourhood Services workers: suspensions without warning, evidence or right of appeal.

WHAT MAKES the demonstrations of solidarity with the suspended workers especially significant is that all but one of the workers being investigated is black. UNISON members are defending their comrades against racism.

The union's main concern is that the council is ignoring proper procedures for disciplinaries, a straightforward trade union issue. But one of the reasons the council treats its workers with such contempt is racism. Councils — Labour councils included — treat black workers worse than white. Southwark councilworkers struck in protest at the unequal level of disciplinaries against black workers. Lambeth council housing department is twice as likely to discipline a black worker as a white worker. They are three times as likely to sack a black worker found guilty of a disciplinary offence as a white worker.

How is this possible? Racism. The same sort of racism which made Lambeth Labour council slow to quash ugly stories in the press about African immigrants fiddling their way into council housing. The story here? The real story here was that no one is building, renovating, bringing back into use the houses that are desperately needed by all groups of people. That was the real story. Why was Lambeth council slow to tell it?

Labour councils, where they aren't racist, are complacent about racism. Local government unions must continue to support victimised black workers, give hope to black and white workers that they can defend members against councils too quick to use racist Tory lies to excuse doing their dirty work. Activists must continue to get black and white workers into the unions, to fight racism and to defend their jobs.

South Africa: the more things change the more they stay the same

By Anne Mack

Q: When is majority rule not majority rule?

A: When it's in South Africa.

That may sound cynical but unfortunately it's an accurate description of the prolonged process of democratisation from above presently unfolding

in the land of apartheid.

On 27 April next year we will see the first ever election based on one-person one-vote in a unitary South African state. That, of course, is a massive step forward.

But even if the ANC win a big majority at the polls it will make very little material difference to the

lives of the vast majority of black South Africans.

Already Nelson Mandela has agreed to setting up a power-sharing "government of National Unity" including De Klerk and his allies which will be in place for five years up until 1999.

Such a government will not be capable of making the decisive inroads against

white capitalist power and privilege which will be necessary in order to provide homes, jobs and decent public services for the black majority. In fact, under the new constitution signed last week a "Bill of Rights" expressly protects all the property and wealth of the huge gold mining and other monopolies built

up on the super-exploitation of black workers.

Huge battles are certain. The white right (and their black allies like Bantustahn boss Buthelezi) will fight to maintain their old privileges while the black workers will be unlikely just to accept a few crumbs from De Klerk and Mandela's table.

Irish workers rally, but unity is flimsy

Richie Carrothers reports from Belfast

TENS OF thousands of people attended peace rallies in Northern Ireland on Thursday 18 November.

Sixteen rallies were held — mostly organised by the trade union movement. Perhaps 30,000 workers attended the largest demonstration, assembling in front of Belfast City Hall.

Although the scale of these rallies undoubtedly indicates tremendous — and very healthy — disgust with the recent IRA and UFF sectarian killings, socialists should be aware of the flimsiness of such working-class unity.

The slogan under which the Irish Confederation of Trade Unions organised the Belfast rally was "For a Unifying Peace". Like 'opposing sin', this is something everyone sup-

ports and which simultaneously means different things to Protestant and Catholic communities.

A platform speaker said "rallies are being held in Belfast, Derry etc."

In the crowd a man said "Derry? Did he say Derry?" Then, shouting, "It's Londonderry! Londonderry!" — underlining the point. (Catholics call the city Derry, Protestants call it Londonderry).

Tories ban prison officers protest An attack on every union

WHATEVER you may feel about the job that prison officers do and the legal system they are part of, the recent attacks by the courts on the Prison Officers Association (POA) should be of concern to every socialist and trade unionist.

The Tories have managed to get the judges to ban three days of industrial action due to start this Monday (22 November). The proposed work to rule in protest at Tory plans to contract-out prison officers' work to the private sector was certain to cause "absolute chaos" according to one POA activist.

But now the POA is not allowed to take such action as prison officers are deemed to "have the powers of Constable" and cannot legally take industrial action.

It certainly looks like the POA could have beaten the Tories. A victory for any group of workers against "market testing" and contracting-out would, in turn,

have encouraged others to fight back against a government offensive that could threaten one million jobs in the next few years.

That's why the Tories have turned against a trade union which organises people who could hardly be described as the vanguard of the working class.

This Tory government is deadly serious about "market testing". It is a central part of the drive to create a more brutal and red in tooth and claw capitalism in Britain.

So even groups like the Prison Officers Association must be broken if they stand in the way.

Full support must be given to the POA in any action they take against the Tories.

And remember, if the POA go down, UNISON and the civil service unions will be next. A full scale strike ban in "essential services" will be the logical next step for the government. We can't allow them to get away with it.

Fight racism and fascism
Speakers include: Eddie Newman, Glyn Ford and Graham Stringer

11.00 Saturday 4 December. Manchester Town Hall. Sponsored by Manchester City UNISON

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Labour and trade union conference against fascism and racism

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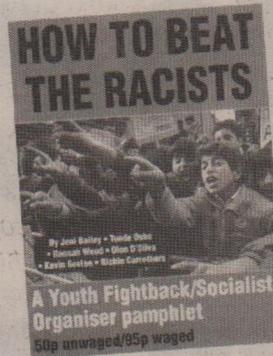
Details from 59 Woolwich New Road, London SE18.

RSI victims face benefit cuts

A WOMAN suffering from the debilitating industrial disease Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) has been told by the DSS that she must either work as a nude artist model or lose her invalidity benefit.

Her benefit was withdrawn earlier this month despite the fact that she says she is unable to do even simple chores without suffering pain and discomfort.

Hundreds more RSI sufferers could face the same threat from the DSS.



How to Beat the Racists

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Fighting racism and fascism in the West Midlands

Picture and story by Mick Duncan

ABOUT 1000 people marched through Bloxwich near Walsall on Saturday 13 November to protest against the rise of racism and fascism. The march was called by Walsall TUC on the weekend of Remembrance Sunday.

The demonstration stopped to lay a wreath at the war memorial and this theme of "our fathers who fought against fascism"

was carried on at a well attended rally afterwards.

But despite the soft nationalism of some of the speakers about "Britain's proud history in fighting fascism" this is the sort of action we need from the labour movement.

The Labour Party and TUC should call national and local actions to mobilise youth against the rise of fascism and Labour should tackle institutionalised racism in parliament — rather than supporting racist legislation like the Asylum Bill.

Socialism or barbarism

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More details: 071-639 7967



Labour leader Margaret Beckett leads the march on 20 November. But she will not lead a consistent campaign. Photo: Garry Meyer

Tories drive "back to barbarism". We need a fight back! Who will stand up for the Welfare State?

THE TORIES' drive to bring about the breakdown of the Health Service continues relentlessly. They are bleeding it to death by way of a thousand lacerating cuts.

Like an insidious disease, they work away, undermining, sapping, destroying the Health Service.

Their intention is to force those who can afford it — and, soon, anyone who wants adequate health care — to go private, leaving the Health Service as a slum for the poor and the helpless.

Most people in Britain are hostile to what the Tories are doing to the Health Service. But still the Tories do it. That is not surprising. The Tories represent big business, not the people of Britain.

What is surprising is that the Tories get away with it. Of course they weasel and lie. Of course, they deny the facts and throw around obfuscating figures and statistics. Of course, their press covers for them.

Of course, they are slippery hypocrites, hard to pin down, and harder still to control or bring to book.

Yet, despite the lies and the hypocrisy, people do know what is happening, and there is widespread opposition to it.

There is organised opposition. There are many campaigns, though

they tend to be, or quickly to become, localised. Individual doctors, and even the British Medical Association, have spoken out against the Tories' treatment of the Health Service.

The Health Service unions have campaigned to defend the NHS. There have been many demonstrations, of which last Saturday's TUC-organised march of 25,000 through London (20 November) was a splendid example.

Despite it all, the Tories have not been stopped, or slowed down, or shamed.

After the 1992 election the hypocrite John Major made a public pledge that the Health Service was safe in Tory hands — even while those brutal Tory hands were continuing to tear it apart, piece by piece. You could not find a clearer expression of Tory contempt for the people they claim to represent or of the extent to which transparent official lies now dominate British political life.

Yet the Tories must be stopped — and time is probably short. The main significance of the "internal market" is that it tends to remove the Health Service from direct political control — and from political responsibility. Health care as we have known it since Nye Bevan created the Health Service in 1948 is already breaking down all over the country — patients are being

turned away, wards closed, hospitals destroyed. Time is short!

But how can the Tories be stopped? How can they be targeted, pinned down, prevented from doing what the big majority of the electors do not want them to do? How can the democratic will of the majority of the British people be given effective expression against a government hell-bent on ignoring it?

How can the mass of people who oppose the destruction of the Health Service be mobilised and set in motion as a force the Tories will have to reckon with?

"The Labour leaders have not boldly championed the working-class philosophy — the inalienable right to life and to the best possible health care for everyone, not only for the rich"

Because the leaders of our labour movement have refused to fight the Tories, an effective answer to these questions has eluded us for over ten

years.

Of course, the labour movement could do it. But it has not done it. All we have had from the Labour and TUC leaders is sporadic protests, hangdog opposition, the occasional demonstration, and (in the 1992 election campaign) ill-managed stunts.

In face of the implacable Tory drive, the response from the labour movement, Labour and TUC alike, has had neither force nor consistency. The Bible long ago provided us with the explanation for the failure of the dominant right-wing Labour and TUC leaders here: "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall answer?"

Faced with the brutal assertion in the Health Service of the dog-eat-dog philosophy of Thatcherism, the Labour leaders have not boldly proclaimed and championed the working-class philosophy which was embodied in the Health Service which Labour created in 1948 — the inalienable right to life and to the best possible health care for everyone, and not only for the rich.

The Labour leaders have hummed and hawed and evaded the issue. Why have the labour movement's leaders made so uncertain and faltering a response to the destruction by the Tories of Labour's greatest achievement, the National Health Service?

Because they inwardly accept the Tory case that the costs of full medical treatment on demand for everyone would be prohibitive — in a society which spends vast millions on arms, makes tax cuts to benefit the wealthy, and devotes immense amounts of wealth to sustain the upper classes!

That is why Labour's leaders have not responded as they should have done when the Tories have openly said — and it is now one of their central arguments — that modern health care is too expensive to give to everyone, that is, to the poor, and so can only be made available to those who have the money to pay for it.

The reformist leaders of the 1940s would have responded to such Tory ideas as people stung to action in defence of their most basic beliefs in human equality and solidarity and in social justice. But they were convinced reformists.

The present leaders are not even reformists. They have not known how to answer the Tories. No, they have mumbled and fumbled, accepting the gruesome Tory argument that "we" cannot afford proper health care for the poor... and asked the Tories to go about it with a little less savagery. The Tories have not obliged them!

Continued on page 4

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

Karl Marx

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WE SAY

Unite to build the TUC anti-racist march!

THE TUC HAS called a demonstration against racism and fascism for 19 March 1994. The march will be held in east London, where the neo-Nazi British National Party recently won a council seat.

This is a welcome initiative from the labour movement. The various competing anti-racist campaigns should be able to support and actively build it in unity.

Labour and the unions must not — as has been suggested — allow the march to be jointly backed by people like Paddy Ashdown. The Liberal-Democrats are a big part of the racist problem faced by East End Asians. The Liberal-Democrats have regularly used racist leaflets in Tower Hamlets to mobilise the white-racist vote for their candidates. In the process they have fertilised the ground for the fascists. To involve Ashdown would be for the TUC to give signals that it is not serious.

The Labour Party and the TUC must see the demonstration as part of an organised working-class anti-racist campaign leading up to the May council elections. Direct action, marches and pickets must be tied to political action by the Labour Party.

We must stop the BNP at the polls in May. Anti-racist activists must turn to politics, to Labour and to active campaigning for Labour in the elections.

Save the right to silence!

THE GOVERNMENT intends to curtail the right of a prisoner to remain silent when questioned by the police. This is a gross attack on the age-old rights of the citizen against the state and its agents.

It comes at a time when it has been publicly established to the satisfaction of every thinking person who reads newspapers or watches TV that the police routinely use violence against prisoners to force false confessions out of them, and just as routinely, manufacture evidence.

Perhaps, by taking away the prisoner's legal right to silence the Tories want to reduce the wear and tear on overworked policemen!

The move is part of a Tory law and order drive in which they seem hell bent on railroading new tens of thousands into Britain's murderously overcrowded prisons. Traditional liberal hypocrisy about reforming the prisoner is now openly disavowed. Vengeance! Punishment! These are now the Tory cries. They don't want to know when the evidence tells them that everything they do is counter-productive and does not reduce the crime rate.

These people see themselves in a war to beat down the have-nots, social outcasts and rebellious youth driven to despair and desperation.

Increasingly the Tory crusade for Tory law and order sinks to the level of legalised lynch-mob activity.

NAFTA: respond through workers' unity

THE NORTH American Free Trade Agreement finally passed through the US House of Representatives last week, removing the last major obstacle to its legal enforcement. NAFTA creates a free trade area similar to the EC between the USA, Canada and Mexico. The agreement removes tariff barriers, gives rights to trade officials to amend national laws where they may be considered to infringe free trade, and creates a pressure throughout the three countries for deregulation (i.e. the removal of laws which limit market forces).

The US trade union movement was among the most vociferous opponents of the treaty, largely on the basis that it would lead to investment and jobs moving to 'low-wage' Mexico. Most of this opposition was highly nationalist and ultimately based on the idea that US workers should and could protect their interests by economic border controls.

Much of the far left has also opposed 'free trade' and NAFTA. Though their reasons are different, their opposition to free trade, too, gives credence to the nationalist dead end.

A successful working-class strategy must be based on joint organisation and struggle across the three countries. Where US firms organise in Mexico, the unions should press for US union rates wherever the firms work.

Mexico still has labour legislation, which, on paper, at least, is better than that in the US after the Reagan-Bush years. Independent Mexican workers' organisations are rarely in a position to enforce the law against the state and employers. What's needed is a joint campaign to level up the three countries, to take the best labour law from each and campaign jointly for its enforcement across all three. Finally, border guards still patrol the Rio Grande to keep Mexicans out of the US. An end to racist immigration laws must also form part of the campaign.

Who will stand up for the Welfare State?

From page 3

THE ATTITUDE of the Labour and trade-union leaders has been central to what has happened to the Health Service, as to so much else in Britain for a decade and a half. Without that inner acceptance of the basic premiss of what the Tories are doing — that "we" cannot afford the Health Service — their fight against the Tories would have been fuelled by righteous, invigorating anger and determination.

Their denunciations of the Tories would have carried conviction. They would have known what they wanted and asked the labour movement to back them in fighting for it. They would have rallied the British people against the Tories. It is the Tories that would have been smashed up, and not the Health Service.

Ideas are central here. You cannot fight the Tories if you accept their basic ideas and believe that the laws of capitalism and not the needs of the working class are the highest court of appeal.

Elements of "the political economy of the working class" invading the domain of "the political economy of the middle class" — the rule of profit and the worship of property even at the expense of the lives of the working class — that was how Karl Marx described some of the very early pieces of protective social legislation which curbed the power of the capitalists over factory workers, for example such laws as those which limited the hours young children could be made to work.

The Welfare State, at the heart of which was the Health Service, created in its modern form by a Labour Government which had won an overwhelming victory at the polls in 1945, was a tremendous extension of the political economy of the working class at the expense of the political economy of the ruling class.

So overwhelming was the support for the reforms of the 1945 Labour Government that even the Tory Party as it was then, and for three decades after, was forced to accept them. But even the most impressive reforms leave the commanding heights of the economy and the state power in the hands of the ruling class. Over time the ruling class recovers and fights back. We have lived through the years of the bourgeoisie's triumphant revenge.

To oppose them you need conviction. Only the bold proclamation of the principle that life comes before property, that the right to health care for everyone is basic and inalienable, can allow the labour movement to rally, organise and focus the opposition to what the Tories are doing — opposition which is as widespread

now as it is helpless to affect events.

The central failure of the Labour leaders in the last 14 years has been a failure of reformist nerve, a moral buckling and bowing-down before the dog-eat-dog philosophy of the Tories.

But then the Labour Party in power in the mid-'70s initiated the epoch of cuts. Thereby they not only prepared the Tories' 1979 election victory and cleared the way for their cuts programme in office, but also prepared Labour's own collapse before them. Labour in office set the Tory bandwagon rolling — and then fell under its wheels! There is more to it, but that has been central.

And yet the Health Service is the question on which everything could be made to turn around in our favour again, the issue on which the Tories and their philosophy are already widely discredited and on which they can be thoroughly routed.

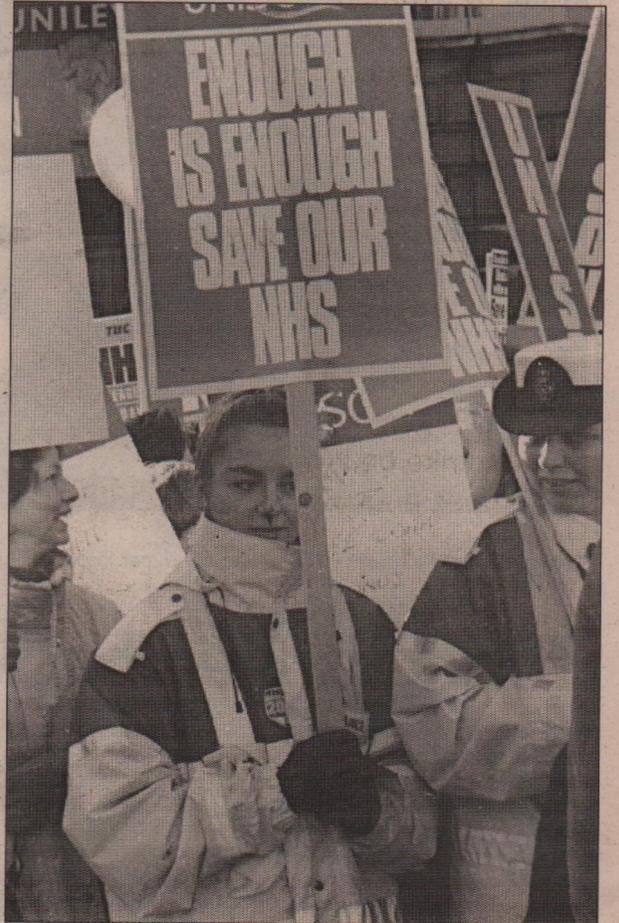
You simply can not express the basic difference in outlook between them and us more powerfully than on this issue. On our side we assert, defend and fight for the right to basic state-of-the-art health care for everyone. On their side the Tories brutally deny that right and proclaim that only the rich and well-off can have it, leaving the poor to die or linger in suffering if they can't afford to pay. This is the real spirit of Toryism, and by opposing it seriously we could turn the tide against them as we did in 1945.

We will never find a more powerful, more clear-cut, more emotion-charged issue on which to express the humanist philosophy of the labour movement and counterpose it to the savage outlook and practice of the Tories!

The Tories must be challenged! A bold campaign for the Health Service, for all-out acceptance of the principles of 1948, for a full-scale restoration of health care and its extension according to the 1948 principles — that would rally millions against the Tories.

What can we do? The labour movement must demand of its leaders — Labour and trade-union alike — that they launch a Crusade for the Right to Life. We need not a series of odd, ragged, half-hearted, half-serious, dispirited objections and demonstrations, but a radical crusade that dares to reassert the basic socialist idea embedded in Nye Bevan's Health Service — that the right to life is greater than the rights of property, that the right to health care for everyone comes before the right of the well-off and rich to pay less tax.

Many millions who already agree with us in their guts even though they may be oppressed by the dominant Tory philosophy and not yet know how to



A consistent campaign could mobilise far more than the 25,000 who marched on 20 November. Photo: Garry Meyer

answer it. We can give them the answer!

The labour movement that created the Health Service had its roots in a powerful governing idea, expressed in the early years of the labour and socialist movement by men such as Henry Hyndman, James Connolly, and Keir Hardie, in these words: "A full, free, happy life, for all — or for none". We

"Labour in office set the Tory bandwagon rolling — and then fell under its wheels!"

must recall, proclaim, and fight now for that principle.

However, the Labour and trade-union leaders will not launch a crusading campaign, they will not claim the moral high ground and indict Toryism and all its manifestations. At best they will continue to protest and sometimes march, ineffectively, as the inexorable drive of the Tories to smash up the Welfare State continues and millions are pushed back into the swamps of social barbarism over which the reformist labour movement for a while built its bridges and causeways.

Can anyone else do it? How,

given the state of labour movement leadership, can we launch a crusade to save the Health Service? Who can now proclaim a working-class philosophy against that of the Tories, and fight with every means necessary — propaganda, demonstrations, direct action — to stop the Tories destroying the Health Service?

It could be done in this way. We have in the past seen powerful movements created by ad hoc committees. The most pertinent is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which became an immense force, able even to shape the affairs of the labour movement. It was started by prominent writers like the late J B Priestley and Bertrand Russell, and by left-wing politicians.

Such a single-issue campaign should be built to defend the Health Service and the principle of proper medical care as a basic social and human right.

Such a single-issue campaign should begin to mobilise and organise the vast opposition that exists to the destruction of the Health Service. It could give integration and coherence and added force to the myriad existing local campaigns. It could become a force within the unions, adding to the weight and strength of anti-Tory, pro-NHS campaigns such as that of UNISON.

That is what we need — that is what can be done even, initially, without the Labour and trade union leaders. It is what must be done.

Revolt in France

The upsurge in French workers' militancy sparked by the Air France victory continues. 10,000 demonstrated in Paris on 18 November, and more in other cities, while public-sector workers struck. Power workers are due to strike on 23 November, and miners on 24 November; action continues in Air France; and students have joined the movement, protesting against education cuts.



Check-off R.I.P.

LET NO ONE TELL you that union leaders have lost the will to put up a serious fight in defence of jobs. TUC general secretary John Monks has declared the issue "top priority" over the coming year and set up a unit at Congress House to co-ordinate the campaign. The TGWU has held a special "all officer" conference to hammer out its strategy. The officer caste of every union in the land is on red alert.

It's all in marked contrast to the desultory response of the official movement in the face of pit closures. But the jobs now under threat are particularly important to the officials: their own.

This chilling threat is enshrined in Section 15 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993, which introduced draconian legal restrictions on the "check-off" system of paying union subscriptions. The Tories' cunning plan is to make check-off arrangements so tiresome, bureaucratic and expensive for the employers that they all say "sod it" and pull out.

As around 80% of the total membership of TUC-affiliated unions currently pay their dues via check-off, the threat to union finances and officials' jobs is obvious. Hence the uncharacteristic vigour of the response.

In one respect, however, officialdom is running true to form: the last thing they want to see at the moment is

industrial action. Even before the new Act comes into force, some more aggressive employers (notably British Rail, the Coal Board and some Tory local authorities) had withdrawn check-off facilities in order to punish unions for industrial action. Now, even relatively union-friendly employers have a powerful incentive to pull out of check-off at the slightest provocation — or indeed, without any provocation at all.

TGWU general secretary Bill Morris has sent a letter to all officers urging "as little disruption as possible to existing check-off arrangements" and "a joint commitment (with employers) to minimum disruption to industrial relations." Which is, of course, the logic of the "save the check-off at all costs" line. But for how long are rank and file trade unionists expected to pull in their horns in order not to jeopardise check-off arrangements? As long as the Act remains in force all employers will be liable to pull out at a moment's notice. So must trade unionists play dead until Labour wins a general election and repeals the legislation? It could be a long wait...

Meanwhile, rank and file members will be more concerned about such mundanities as their own jobs, wages and conditions. If the unions back away from confrontation over such basic issues, for fear of losing check-off arrangements, a lot of members will begin to wonder why they bother paying their dues in the first place.

Which brings us to the nub of the whole matter: most union officers want membership by default, without ever having to argue the case for trade unionism or justify the collection of dues. They like members who cough up regularly and don't ask questions about where the money goes or how it's used. Check-off is a convenient and efficient method of collecting dues but it has also served to formalise all that is worst about post-war British trade unionism: the bureaucratic complacency of the officials and the passive indifference of much of the membership. And, of course, it presupposes a high level of co-operation (and collaboration) between union officials and employers — which is why a 1968 Royal Commission urged employers to adopt it.

Only a silly ultra-left would be indifferent to the threat that now faces union finances. Unions, like any other effective organisation, need to maximise their income. The latest Tory legislation could even be doing the movement a favour, by forcing us to go out amongst the membership to argue the case for trade unionism. The costs of administration and services are not too difficult to justify. The difference between administration and services on the one hand and 'bureaucracy' on the other, is that no one knows what exactly the 'bureaucracy' spends its money on — apart from the salaries of full-time officers.

The trade union movement needs to recognise that check-off is on its death-bed and the cost of striving officiously to keep it alive will be virtual sweetheart deals with employers. Far better to follow the example of the RMT (after BR withdrew check off in July of this year) and launch a campaign for payment by direct debit, arguing the case for basic trade unionism with every member.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Witch-hunt grows in the Wirral

Love Frank Field or get out!

By Cate Murphy

THE McCarthyite House Committee on Un-American Activities had nothing on the North West Regional Labour Party.

At the recent selection process to draw up a panel of prospective councillors to fight next year's local elections on the Wirral, nominees were asked a couple of strange questions.

The McCarthyites demanded of each candidate: "What do you think of the Wallasey Socialist Campaign Group?" The Wallasey SCG was set up to provide a constituency-wide campaigning forum for all Labour Party members when the National Executive shut the Wallasey constituency party down in March 1993.

The party remains suspended (although we haven't officially been notified of any "charges" against us) and six

individuals are now suspended from holding office pending further investigation by the National Constitutional Committee.

For the record, the Wallasey SCG is affiliated to the National Campaign Group Supporters Network (not a proscribed organisation) which in turn is linked to the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs (no, they're not yet a proscribed organisation either).

Those foolish candidates who couldn't see anything wrong about campaigning organisations with socialist policies existing within the Labour Party were unceremoniously rejected. Those who condemned the WSCG as a bunch of wild-eyed lunatic extremists who should be immediately drummed out of the Labour party and possibly burned at the stake made the panel!

In case any candidate with

even vague sympathies with the left slipped through, the next question was: "What do you think of Frank Field?" Frank Field is MP for one of the constituencies covered by Wirral Council, Birkenhead. Remember Frank Field? He called for people in Wallasey not to vote Labour at the 1987 election, thinks the Child Support Agency is a good thing, and believes ordinary public sector workers should take a 5% pay cut to help the unemployed (he said that in the same week as MPs voted themselves a pay rise twice the rate of inflation).

Forget policies for fighting the Tories, paid up membership of the Frank Field Fan Club is what whizzes you up the ladder of local government success in today's Labour Party.

Wallasey Socialist Campaign Group will keep campaigning until the suspensions of

the six individuals are lifted, and the constituency is reconstituted with all members able to participate. To date resolutions in our support have gone through Region 6 of the TGWU, Wirral District TGWU, Manchester DLP, Banbury CLP, Knowsley North CLP Tower Hill Branch, Glasgow Central CLP and Leeds CLP University Branch.

The North West Regional Labour Party passed a motion calling for the six individuals and the constituency to have the charges relayed to them, and given the right of reply as outlined in the Labour Party Rule Book. Keep the support coming!

Please pass a resolution in our support, send it to the NEC and let us have a copy. For more information on WSCG write to Flat 2, 51 Egremont Promenade, New Brighton, Merseyside, L45 7PZ. Tel: 051 638 0133



Tories find a new scapegoat

Our very trim Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley, has clearly got a problem. Everyone in the Tory Cabinet has their scapegoat. Education Minister John Patten can blame any one of an array of folk-devils for the state of schools, from truants to trendy lefty teachers. Home Secretary Michael Howard has single parent families and the Second World War to blame for the rise in crime. Social Security Minister Peter Lilley can blame the high benefits bill on fraudsters, scrounges and new age travellers. And just about anyone can blame their troubles on asylum seekers.

But if you are Secretary of State for Health who can you blame? Well, you can blame the sick, but most people think they can't help it, so that is not much use. Now, after months of research Bottomley has found her scapegoat — "obese people". They are the dead weight pinning Britain down in the '90s. For those of you who didn't know, Virginia Bottomley is an anagram of "I'm an evil Tory bigot".

Nobody wants to be burgled twice in three years. But increasingly those who experience this trauma are finding an even worse problem — insurance companies are refusing to reinsure them against further risk! Last year, insurance companies raked in profits like £206 million (General Accident) or £113 million (Royal

GRAFFITI



By Cyclops

Insurance).

Front runners in the tenders to operate the privatised Royal Train, worth £2.5 million, is a company set up by Pete Waterman. He is obviously well qualified. As the producer of records by Kylie Minogue and Jason Donovan he is an expert in delivering highly polished but worthless rubbish.

According to the American socialist magazine *Against the Current*, the accounts department of a large hospital in free-market America has 350 workers, while a similar-sized hospital in Canada, which has a national health service, needs just five workers to deal with its book-keeping.

The Tories' "internal market" is taking Britain the same way as the US. A recent report shows that in Wales, since 1990, the NHS has 1500 more managers and just 20 more doctors!

Scarce resources are being diverted into exercises in cost-juggling and shopping-around whose only purpose is to cover up cuts, provide levers to worsen Health Service workers' pay and conditions, and pave the way for more private profit in health care.

War is hell — shock horror!



THAT well-known scourge of humbug and injustice, the *Daily Mail*, has chalked up another famous victory. It has forced the gutless mandarins of the Ministry of Defence to open an inquiry into Argentinian atrocities during the Falklands war.

I'll pause for a moment while you come to terms with the full significance of this journalistic triumph...

When was the Falklands war? Eleven, twelve years ago? And didn't papers like the *Sun* and the *Mail* tell us at the time that the Argies were a blood-thirsty rabble who ate babies, worried sheep and ignored the Queensbury rules? Wasn't that precisely why we sent Our Boys out there in the first place?

So what on earth does the *Daily Mail* think it's playing at, devoting front-page lead stories, double-page spreads, editorials and special "Comment" boxes, to telling its readers something that all of them (even those too young to remember the propaganda first time round) already know? To give the whole charade a veneer of seriousness, Monday's *Mail* even claimed to have put

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

its dossier to a leading academic, one "Dr Hilaire McCoubrey, director of the Centre for International Defence Law Studies at the University of Nottingham, who said there appeared to be evidence of a number of violations of the Geneva Convention."

In fairness to the editor and staff of the *Daily Mail*, it should be pointed out that they don't actually take their own "revelation" very seriously — nor are they living in a time-warp, busy preparing stories like "Leonardo a Genius" or "Crippen Guilty". Monday's *Mail* "comment" column gives the game away: "We accept that the claims of Argentine atrocities which our reporters have probed are not conclusive. How could they be so long after the fog of war has cleared... That is exactly why it would also be folly to mount a prosecution against any British soldier or to burden a jury in this country with the unreasonable responsibility of having to reach a verdict."

It turns out that the *Mail*'s "Argentinian atrocities" campaign is nothing more than an elaborate spoof, designed to spike the guns of a Scotland Yard inquiry into alleged British war crimes during the Falkland's campaign. A book by former Lance Corporal Vince Bramley, published two

years ago, claimed that Our Boys ran amok in the Falklands, looting, mutilating bodies of Argentine troops and shooting defenceless prisoners of war. As a result of these claims, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind ordered an inquiry. There was a chance — a very small chance — that one or two prosecutions might result.

The *Daily Mail* (together with the *Express*, *Sun* and *Star*) was outraged by this slur on the integrity of Our Boys: "Are they, then, of so little account that the Crown Prosecution Service could yet

bring one or more of their number to trial for what may — repeat may — have been done in the heat of battle?"

Of course, the *Mail* has a point and it's a good point: war is hell, as someone once said. There can be no doubt that foul atrocities were committed by both sides in that squalid, unnecessary conflict of twelve years ago. To prosecute a few pawns in the battle of Thatcher's Face for overstepping the mark (with the benefit of hindsight) would be no more just than to indict Argentinian pawns for their part in Galtieri's exercise in mini-colonialism.

But it has surely come to something when the *Daily Mail* is forced to base its case on the idea that Our Boys — a professional, voluntary and relatively well-paid army — are the same as the miserable conscripts forced into reluctant battle by the military dictator Galtieri. What's the Argentinian for "Gotcha!"?



Any excuse will do to put a 'Royal' on page one and hint and insinuate and nudge and wink. The *Sun*, which made the item only the second story on page 1 appeared restrained compared to the *Daily Mirror* which gave it the whole of page 1.

Health for sale



WOMEN'S EYE

By Debbie Leonard

LAST Saturday, 25,000 people demonstrated for the NHS and against the Tories who are smashing up the NHS.

The internal market in the health service is the first step to an open market in health care — that is, in life.

The internal market means that if hospitals, GPs or clinics fail to get in enough money or spend too much of what

they get, then they don't go bust. Hospitals, wards and departments close. Jobs go in their thousands.

"Balancing the books" in practice means inadequate treatment and services.

The murderous ideologues who rule our lives believe the health service cannot be allowed to continue as of old: it must conform to the rules of a market economy. They don't care what that means in terms of needless suffering and premature death for those who can't pay.

This is a fundamental attack on working class people and on the labour movement!

The majority of job cuts come as a result of ward and hospital closures — this means that nursing and ancillary staff are the first to go.

The majority of these are women.

Most consultants and doctors in the NHS, who tend to

be men, will have their jobs protected for a while at least.

The biggest users of the health service are children (if you include maternity care) and the elderly.

Services primarily for women such as smear test, screening and well women clinics are increasingly difficult to get access to. So are abortions. Family planning clinics are starting to refuse you contraception if you're registered with a GP.

More and more services will only be available if you have money to pay for it. This will lead to thousands of people not getting much-needed treatment at all. Single parent families, pensioners, low paid workers and the unemployed will be the most affected.

London's inner city hospitals are being closed outright or are having departments closed.

More money is supposedly going into the community. In Grove Park, a long term hos-

pital for adults with learning difficulties is being closed in March. These people, who need 24 hour care, will be moved into their own flats, cut off from the friends and acquaintances many of them have known for the past 20 years!

Although more emphasis should be put on increasing community care it must not be at the cost of the livelihood of individuals or the reduction of other care in the clinical setting.

Because of lack of other help, thousands of women are caring for people in their own homes, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These people are not recognised and the job they do is free, although it is often done at the cost of their own health.

We need to force Labour to fight to reverse all these cuts and restore the health service!

• Debbie Leonard is a student nurse

Left Unity

Inside: • Tory attacks
• How to fight back

Don't let the Tories smash our union

Why students must organise

The government is moving in on student unions to close down the campaigning activities of the National Union of Students. They want to pin down students so that they cannot fight back. We look at the lot of students under the Tories and explain why students need a campaigning national union.

STUDENTS ARE amongst some of the worst off in Britain. After 15 years of Tory attacks student hardship is the norm, not the exception. Students in further education get no grants and many are excluded from the benefits system. If you are between 16 and 18 years old you get no benefits at all. Dependent on parental handouts and part-time work, students struggle — harassed and poor — through their courses.

In higher education, students get by on part-time work. Most end up in debt. But this isn't the whole story.

Colleges have suffered from cuts and changes in funding. Under-resourced libraries, overcrowded classrooms and lecture theatres, poor, expensive and inadequate accommodation and demoralised staff — these are common things in most British educational institutions today.

Take these examples:

A second year post-graduate student in York: like many unemployed people, a part-time student claiming housing benefit. Last term her rent was £37 per week, but the local authority said the house was worth only £27 a week — and that is what they paid her. She had to make up the difference of £10.

Before 1988 councils had the power to put the rent down to what they thought it was worth. The Tories took that away. This left the post-graduate student in York living on £23 per week!

A second year undergraduate student has been working part-time to make ends meet and to pay off debts accumulated in her first year of study. Her wages took her 9 pence over the threshold for free prescriptions and dental work. She was recently forced to give up her part-time job in order to get substantial dental work done!

Part-time jobs are hard to come by and she feels she'll be very lucky to get another.

Another student at York University has had to find £104 for course books. He is forced to eat snacks for main meals because the food in the college canteen is too expensive and the stove provided in halls of residence is inadequate for cooking anything other than toast.

Another first year student is having to work at Burger King for £2.99 per hour to top up her grant. The main food she gets to eat is subsidised burgers from her part-time job. Because she has to work all possible overtime, she misses lectures and seminars.

Falling behind on her work has made her depressed. She worries that she may not get through her first year exams, despite having very good "A" levels.

A mature student from Northumbria can't find a work placement, a compulsory part of his degree, and as a result his grant has been stopped. He has been told that he can not sign on for benefits. As a result his five children face a miserable Christmas.

Already his rent arrears have led to threats of eviction. Other debts have led to threats that his furniture will be repossessed.

A student at Middlesex University attends her course at a site that had previously been closed. The library there consists of four floors with rows and rows of shelves but no more than three or four books on each shelf! All the books students require are on other sites as far as ten miles away. Travelling to the other sites takes time and, more importantly, costs scarce and precious money.

Eight core sociology books were supposed to be shared between 120 students! When students complained about this to the college authorities they were told that the expenses incurred in changing the name of the college (from Poly to University) and the changes needed to make the institution competitive meant that such cuts had to be made!

Another London student has an £830 loan outstanding from her first year and will require the full loan facility for this year — totalling £960. On top of this she already exceeds her £400 overdraft limit by an additional £420 — and the first term isn't over yet.

Although she receives a full grant her rent is £237.50 a month. From September to December her rent is more than her grant allowance for the term!

The best wage she can get for work that would allow her still to attend college pays £3 per hour. Her food costs £15 per week, her books on average £3, bills £6, travel £10 and clothes and toiletries £5. Just to cover cheap essentials she needs to work 12 hours a week on top of college work.

To go out socialising and to live a little better she would have to work an extra 20 hours a week on top of her full-time course.

These stories are not exceptional, they are common, the norm for students in higher education.

Students in further education are even worse off. Young people are being forced to stay in the parental home, even when there are serious problems and conflicts, in order to have a roof over their heads. There is no other way they can get through college.

Many work what are equivalent to full-time hours during the evening and at weekends. Their studies are clearly suffering.

This is the Tory-designed educational system for the masses! They want to make it even worse! We need our unions locally and nationally in order to be able to defend our interests, fight for our demands and campaign for improvements in education across the board.

Use this pull-out in your union, get copies made and dis-

play it around the college.

But posters alone cannot save our unions. We need a national campaign that involves the mass of students in direct action against the Tories. The right-wing Labour leaders of the NUS won't organise such a campaign. This is why we organise in Left Unity.



Defend your s

Why student unions are important and should be defended

THE GOVERNMENT is attacking student unions. Why? Because they hate any form of collective organisation that can allow its members to organise to defend themselves from Tory attacks. The government wants to remove all obstacles in the way of its plans to cut funding even more and introduce private sector control into education.

Governments have been forced to change tack in the past and the Tories can be forced to change their minds now!

History tells us that they will not be forced to back down by a letter-writing campaign, even if the letters come in envelopes with Santa Claus on them!

Governments don't back down because they are persuaded of the injustice of the case against what they want to do. They back down because an organised fightback threatens to cause them more trouble than they feel they can handle.

The anti-poll tax campaign had millions of people supporting it and tens of thousands demonstrating

against the government. Thatcher lost power because of it.

Students should remember their own history. In 1984 we fought hard to defeat Tory plans to introduce loans. The government could not cope with another fight alongside the miners, who were then on strike, and so they backed down. Student loans were not introduced in 1984.

We need to build a great groundswell of support for our student unions and for the NUS.

We need to build national demonstrations, occupations and lobbies.

We need to defend our right to collective organisation and action, in self-defence.

We need to fight — now! — to defend our right to a decent education. The government's attacks will deprive us of that.

Our task now is to organise one united, democratic campaign that involves as many students as possible in a fightback against the government. We should make every possible effort to initiate joint work with the education trade unions.



The "Battle of Westminster", November 1984: letters to Tory MPs are no substitute for direct

What is the government proposing?

- To split student union activities into "core" and "non-core" activities:
"Core" activities include catering, sports, welfare and internal representation. Public funds can be spent on these activities.
"Non-core" is everything else and will have to be funded by "private sources".
- To end the use of public funds in campaigning activities.
- To stop general meetings having the power to make union policy.
- To outlaw political candidates from union elections.
- To introduce a "code of practice".
- To stop college unions from affiliating to the National Union of Students (NUS).

What is NUS proposing?

- To reform itself — dividing NUS

into three sections: NUS services, NUS, and a charity.

- To write lots of letters to Tory MPs asking them not to support the government's proposals.
- To send Christmas cards to Tory MPs requesting support against the government's plans!

(Presumably if this fails then we'll all have to wait until Valentine's Day for the next phase of the "fightback"!)
That's all folks!

We demand...

- No division between "core" and "non-core" activities! All union activities must be democratically decided by student unions, and all student union decisions are legitimate.
- No interference by outside bodies in the running of student unions or NUS.
- The right for students to campaign against any policies of the government of the day.
- The right of college unions to use our funds to affiliate to NUS and other external campaigning organisations.

It's not too late

THE NUS leadership's response to the Tory attack has been appalling! The day before the Queen's speech, *NUS Action* (the NUS national broadsheet) quoted Faz Hakim, NUS National Secretary: the 'crucial letter writing campaign' to Tory MPs is 'the mainstay of the official NUS campaign' she said.

Over the last 18 months there have been

a number of false starts to the campaign in the colleges. NUS has insisted each time that the Tories would back down on their threat of legislation if NUS reformed itself. In fact, what has happened is that NUS has pushed through a number of reforms (often by cheating) and still the Tories press their attack on student unions and NUS.

A student in full-time higher education in 1983/84 would have had the following benefits:

- Full grant £1,975 (London)/£1,660 (elsewhere).
- Travel grant — to cover all expenses over £50 per annum.
- Hardship allowances worth up to £39.65 per week.
- Housing benefit during both term time and holidays.
- Supplementary Benefit [now Income Support] worth £26.80 during the summer vacation (for 10-12 weeks a year).
- The average student rent in

London was £20, and £11 per week elsewhere.

A student in full-time higher education in 1993/94 is entitled to the following:

- Full grant £2,845 (London)/£2,265 (elsewhere).
- Maximum student loan averages £855 (London)/£728 (elsewhere).
- The average student rent is now £47 in London. The average rent elsewhere is £35. There has been an 18% increase in housing costs since 1991/92.

student union!



ction

e to organise

The leadership have played a classic role in dissipating anger and action at every opportunity. Despite this it is still not too late to undo the damage and fight off the government's proposals.

We believe that the following actions have to be supported and built. Left Unity supporters on the National Executive Committee have been proposing these ideas for the last year or so.

- NUS should call a national demonstration in defence of student unions and against tuition fees/graduate tax as early as possible in the second term.
- NUS should hold an Extraordinary Conference in January so that student unions from around the country can get together to decide on the right strategy.
- The NEC should support all campaigning initiatives taken by student unions and NUS Areas.
- NEC members should visit as many colleges as possible and speak at meetings about the government's attacks.
- Student unions should be given advice on how to organise various activities together with resources such as leaflets and posters.
- Liberation campaigns should be fully

involved in this campaign and more priority given to their work.

- Campaigns on other issues — for example, tuition fees — should be stepped up and linked-in to this campaign.

Cuts in student financial support to higher education students in the last decade

- 1984** The minimum grant cut from £410 per annum to £205. The travel grant was abolished.
- 1985** Minimum grant was abolished.
- 1986** The right to benefits during winter and spring vacation was taken away. Special equipment grant abolished. Students living in Halls of Residence lost their entitlement to housing benefit.
- 1990** Students' entitlement to Housing Benefit and Income Support during summer vacation was abolished. The government introduced student loans.

The student grant has decreased by 27.8% in real terms since 1979.

Give the Tories compulsory French lessons!

ACTION TAKEN BY French students has recently forced the French government to back down on proposed cuts in rent allowances.

However, many students are still pushing forward for other concessions.

Strikes and demonstrations continued after the government backed down on rent allowances at Nantes University.

Students urged academic staff to join them over teacher shortages and overcrowding. Despite students in Paris being attacked by extreme right-wing students, many have declared that they will fight on!

Let's take a leaf out of the French students' book and force the Tories to back down!

The case for an extraordinary conference

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE has not, as far as many students around the country are concerned, come up with a proper strategy on how to fight attacks on student unions. Tea with Tory ministers and the "crucial letter writing campaign" do not make good strategy.

Students around the country have ideas about what to do and how to do it. The most effective way of co-ordinating these ideas and getting them aired is at an NUS Conference.

National Conference is not due to take place until April 1994, in the third term. By this time legislation may have already been debated and passed — hence the need for an Extraordinary Conference as soon as possible in the second term.

The Tories plan to have the legislation through both houses and passed by the end of May. Time is short!

Further, the NEC, as of now, has neither a sensible strategy nor a proper mandate for fighting the government's proposals.

Students from all over the country must be allowed to have their say in how NUS faces up to the proposed legislation, and know that their national representatives have been mandated to carry out their wishes.

The entire future of the student movement is at stake — there can be no greater emergency for NUS to deal with than its own existence! And even if we disagree strongly on strategy and tactics, we can surely unite in the need to defend our union against an external threat.

How to call the conference

An Extraordinary Conference must be convened by the NEC if 25 student unions request it. These requests must be passed at your student union's supreme governing body (usually a

general meeting) and signed by the principal elected officer (usually the president). Since the majority of the NEC appear not to support the idea of an Extraordinary Conference (presumably because they do not want to be told what to do by the membership), they will probably do their best to disqualify requests. So it is important that, if your union wants to submit a request, you follow this procedure:

1. Pass the motion below at a general meeting.
2. Put the motion, together with the minutes of the meeting, with a covering letter signed by the President, requesting that the NEC convene an Extraordinary Conference on "Government attacks on student unions".
3. Send your request to the Left Unity office (address on these pages). The reason we are asking you to do this is so that we can submit all the requests together, by hand.

The motion

THIS UNION NOTES:

1. The proposed government legislation against student unions and NUS.

THIS UNION BELIEVES THAT:

1. We need a strategy that can defeat this legislation.
2. The membership of NUS should decide what that strategy should be.
3. NUS should convene an Extraordinary Meeting of Conference under Clause 28 of its Constitution.

THIS UNION RESOLVES TO:

1. Send this request to the NUS NEC.
2. Ensure that the NEC calls the Extraordinary Conference within seven weeks on the receipt of 25 constituent members requesting the Conference under Clause 2b of the NUS (UK) Constitution.

Why you should join Left Unity

LEFT UNITY is an alliance of left activists campaigning inside the National Organisation of Labour Students [NOLS] and NUS.

Since 1989 we have fought for a radical response to the Tories. We have argued that NUS must build broad-based campaigns to beat the Tories, involving and mobilising its membership. We have organised action in the colleges and won. At conference our positions on the poll tax and loans became policy. But NOLS and their allies failed to implement them. So we stand for democracy inside NUS, from the smallest FE college to the National Executive Committee.

We believe the self activity of students linked to the rank and file of the labour movement must be our strategic aim. Concretely we build support for workers' struggles and link student campaigns to those of the labour movement.

We have a proud record in building and organising in the liberation campaigns. Unlike many on the left we support the self-organisation of the specially oppressed and reject the approach of groups such as Militant and the SWP who reduce oppression of women, black people and lesbians and gays to economic issues.

Internationally we give unconditional support to the oppressed. When many linked up with the state student unions in Eastern Europe we made solidarity with the underground unions.

Most of us are members of the Labour Party. The right wing are turning the Party into a newly founded SDP. Labour should organise



against cuts and adopt a radical socialist agenda.

Inside NOLS we campaign for democracy. For too long NOLS has been the possession of the right-wing leadership failing to represent most Labour students.

Our socialism is based on independent class politics, not Stalinism or social democracy. We stand for socialism.

Join Left Unity

IF YOU are serious about fighting the Tories' attacks on education you

should get involved in your local students' union and the National Union of Students.

But there is a problem. The NUS leadership is dominated by Labour 'moderates' who for years have refused to organise national action. In the face of every major attack, they have refused to organise a fight back.

The left *does* organise in the student movement — in Left Unity.

Left Unity builds action in the colleges and challenges the cowardly right-wing Labour leaders of NUS. And we organise national action.

Left Unity is the national left wing opposition to the 'moderate' do-nothing leadership of NUS.

If you want a student union movement that takes on the Tories and unites with the labour movement, join us!

Name

Address

College

Return to: Left Unity, 9 Love Walk, Camberwell, London SE5; 071-639 7967.

Campaigning ideas

1. Hold regular (at least weekly) campaign meetings which are well-publicised and open to all.

2. Have a stall in your student union every week to build the campaign.

3. Highlight all union services under threat. Contact Left Unity for material.

4. Contact all local organisations you have had contact with — trade unions, especially those you have supported in the past; voluntary sector organisations, especially those that your Community Action group are involved with. Ask to speak at their meetings.

Ask for statements of support and publish them.

5. Involve your liberation groups. Offer them union facilities to produce campaign material relevant to their areas of work. Left Unity can supply speakers for liberation campaigns.

6. Contact all your clubs and societies, informing them of the proposals and how they will affect their work. Remember to stress that we should work with each other, and not fight to get 'our' club and society into the 'core'.

7. Involve 'ents'. Put information about the government's proposals on

the back of tickets, have brief speeches between bands/disco.

8. Organise a debate. Perhaps with a local MP or local councillors. Invite the press.

9. Contact your college authorities and try to get them to agree to a joint press release or letter opposing the plans. If they refuse, get student reps to propose a motion to the next meeting of the relevant committee and hold a lobby outside.

10. Organise a shutdown of union facilities. This will be especially effective if your union services are concentrated in one area of the college. Explain the reasons for the shutdown.

11. Contact, through your NUS Area, other local student unions to find out what they are doing. Get your Area to organise a local demonstration or rally and a 'voluntary membership' campaign network. Attend Area Council meetings to make sure that the Area Executive are working on the campaign.

12. Set up a 'Save our Student Union' group. Get it ratified as a union society.

13. Organise leafleting in your town centre and set up a stall. This is particularly effective on Saturday mornings.

14. Press release everything you do. On your local radio or TV station have a 'round table' discussion programme, get in touch with the producer and suggest 'student unions' as a topic for it and offer speakers. Write to letters pages and ring up radio phone-ins. It might

be useful to set up a 'media team' responsible for this work. Have some students to give quotations that can be given out to journalists when they ring up.

15. Hold a 'Save our Student Union' week. Include lots of the action listed above.

16. Support demonstrations and actions being organised by other student unions and Areas.

17. Try to make sure that students are aware when they are using union facilities. Produce stickers that can be given to students every time they use a union service — whether they buy something in the shop, come to a General Meeting or get welfare advice. Another idea is to run a free raffle, where a student gets a ticket every time s/he uses a union service during a particular week. The tickets should also include a brief explanation of the issue.

18. Provide training for students who are involved in the campaign. Organise speaker training for students who are willing to talk at trade union meetings, etc.

19. Find out what your local MP thinks about this issue. If s/he is on our side, then ask for a statement of support. Also ask her/him to make representations on your behalf to the DES, and to speak at meetings and rallies that you are organising. If s/he supports the government's proposals, organise a lobby of her/his next surgery.

20. Try to get to speak to school students. You may be able to get an invitation to sixth form General Studies lessons. Alternatively, leaflet outside school gates.

A model motion for your union

THIS UNION NOTES:

1. The government's proposed legislation against student unions and NUS.

THIS UNION BELIEVES:

1. That these proposals are an attack on student unions, and will destroy a lot of the valuable work that our union does.
2. That the proposals are motivated by the Tories' dislike of collective organisations, and by a desire to remove all effective opposition to their disastrous education policies.

THIS UNION FURTHER BELIEVES:

1. That we must do all that we can to defeat these proposals and

to defend our union rights.

THIS UNION RESOLVES:

1. To launch a major campaign in defence of student unions.
2. To base this campaign on maximum student involvement and on high-profile action.
3. To support national action such as demonstrations, pickets, lobbies, petitions etc.
4. To organise and build local activities such as pickets of Tory MPs, occupations of Tory Party offices, demonstrations, stalls, lobbies of governors if they don't oppose the government's plans.

Add your own campaigning ideas, let other colleges in your area know what you're doing. Organise as much co-ordinated action as possible and go for maximum press coverage when organising local activities. Liaise with cross campus trade unions.

A brief history of government attacks on student unions and NUS

12 July 1978: Nicholas Winterton, Tory MP for Macclesfield, introduces a private member's bill to the House of Commons entitled "Student Unions (Voluntary Membership)". Defeated 227-79.

1981: Right-wing libertarians gain control of the Federation of Conservative Students (FCS).

1983: FCS raises a question about 'voluntary membership' at Tory Party Conference.

1985: Edwina Currie introduces Early Day Motion entitled "Reform of Student Unions".

December 1987: Early Day Motion submitted by a group of MPs led by Tim Janman — signed by 214 MPs.

1988: Janman and others propose an amendment to the Education Reform Act to introduce individual membership of NUS. The amendment is not debated.

1988: Secretary of State for Education Kenneth Baker conducts an investigation into student unions.

January 1989: Janman introduces an Early Day Motion entitled "Government Enquiry into Student Unions" — signed by 224 MPs.

11 December 1989: John McGregor and Robert Jackson (DES) meet with the CVCP and CDP to discuss student unions.

1989: Student Robert Halfon asks European Court of Human Rights to rule that automatic membership is a violation of freedom of association. The Court rules against him.

November 1990: Under-Secretary of State for Education (Alan Howarth) announces a consultation with student unions, NUS and heads of institutions. The only student political groups he consults are the Conservative Collegiate Forum and the Tory Reform Group.

15 June 1992: Graham Riddick, Tory MP for Colne Valley, tables an adjournment motion arguing for membership of student unions to be made 'voluntary'.

October 1992: In a speech at Tory Party Conference, Secretary of State for Education, John Patten announces his intention to legislate against student unions and NUS.

June 1993: John Patten announces proposals for legislation.

November 1993: Queen's Speech announces government plans for "Reform of Students' Unions" to go through this session of Parliament.

The man of the house

Kennedy: the man behind the myth



Matt Cooper
reviews
*The Remains
Of The Day*

Directed by
James Ivory



Emma Thompson and Anthony Hopkins portray "the crushing inhumanity of deference"

THE REMAINS of the Day could be criticised for being "Howard's End part two". Another Merchant-Ivory production, it again pairs Emma Thompson and Anthony Hopkins in the Laura Ashley-style setting of an English countryside dotted with stately homes and the genteel mannerisms of the British landowning aristocracy. To write off the film on these grounds would be an injustice. It is a remarkably well made

"Stevens defers to those who have the right to rule.

The film explores the crushing inhumanity of such deference."

and vivid portrait of the repression of individuality in class society, although its target is "tradition" rather than capitalism.

It is the story of an aging butler, Stevens (Anthony Hopkins), whose life has been dedicated to the upkeep and smooth running of Darlington Hall, the home of Lord Darlington (Edward Fox). Darlington is the essence of "an English gentleman", an honest and sincere amateur politician and dabbler in world affairs.

The house is one of the "Great Houses" of Britain, and its prestige is the butler's source of prestige. His individuality is merged almost completely into the household. He lives only through the life of the house. As he says, the butler's dignity is derived from the dignity of his station. Stevens believes in what he does and in the moral superiority of those he serves. Stevens defers to those who have the right to rule, in this case, Darlington. The film explores the crushing inhumanity of such deference.

The Remains of the Day begins in the

late fifties. Lord Darlington is dead, the Hall has been "saved" by an American, and it is being held together by a skeleton staff. Stevens, now at the end of his life, dreams of making the house great again.

With the first free time he has ever had, he sets off to find the old housekeeper, Miss Kenton, now Mrs Benn (Emma Thompson), in the hope — he tells himself — of re-employing her.

Through flashback, a story of two intertwined themes emerges: the betrayal of Stevens's trust in this employer, and Stevens's betrayal of himself and of his own feelings, particularly those for Miss Kenton. By way of this struggle with this past Stevens fights to establish an identity for himself after a lifetime of being a mere aspect of someone else's ego.

Stevens's dedication to duty has left him emotionally crippled. He is unable to talk to his dying father (who also works in the Hall), and cannot absent himself from his duties when he dies. He cannot tell Miss Kenton how important she is to him. Whenever she comes threateningly close, he retreats into talking about the house. The closest he can get to telling her how much he needs her is to say how important she is to "the house".

The tragedy of the character of Stevens lies not so much in his self-eviscerating devotion to duty, but in the worthlessness of the object of that duty.

Darlington is Stevens's only pathway to glory. But Darlington in his amateurish attempts at international diplomacy only succeeds in becoming an unwitting and naïve Nazi apologist.

The film communicates this futile tragedy almost flawlessly, despite its slight tendency to chocolate-box-England. It avoids the e

timentality that could have ruined a film about sentiment and loss.

This is largely due to some truly great acting by Hopkins, who succeeds in the near impossible task of showing a silent human character buried beneath the butler's false sense of duty.

The Remains of the Day will certainly win Oscars — but don't let that put you off! This is an excellent film.



Paddy Dollard looks at the man behind the myth and the TV fuss on the 30th anniversary of Kennedy's assassination

THE GAME everyone who is old enough plays with John F Kennedy's assassination is the one contained in the question: "Where were you when you heard Kennedy had been shot?"

It may even be true that most people can remember. My friend Rod and I were coming out of a cinema in Central Manchester when we saw the placards beside a news vendor. Rod reacted with a very loud, exhibitionistic: "Kennedy's dead? Good!" Much to my surprise not a single person in the milling crowd around us objected to this.

There is another Kennedy game that should be played, but nobody seems to play it. It too could be summed up in a question: "Where were you in November 1962 in the nine days during which, as a result of

"A year before Kennedy got his' in Dallas he himself came close to assassinating a large part of the people on the planet."

Kennedy's blockade of Cuba and his threat to sink Russian ships approaching Cuba if they refused to be searched, nuclear war seemed to be about to engulf us?"

A year before Kennedy "got his" in Dallas he himself came close to assassinating a large part of the people on the planet. It was the only memorable thing he did as President.

Otherwise, Kennedy was a handsome zero. He didn't even have the guts or the conviction to back the black Civil Rights Movement. Instead he let the FBI harass its leaders, such as Martin Luther King.

The continuing fuss about this glamorised nonentity, the cynical son of a corrupt, once pro-Nazi millionaire who bought his son the Presidency is both ridiculous and significant.

What it signifies is how dull, grey, tedious and awful — albeit sometimes murderous — his successors have been!

Viper in the realm



Geoff Ward
reviews *To Play
The King*

BBC1
Sundays 9.05pm

THE LONG awaited sequel to Michael Dobb's *House of Cards* got off to a ripping start. *To Play the King* is set in the near future where ruthless Tory politician Francis Urquhart (Ian Richardson) is now Prime Minister and the Tories are still running the country with a slender majority of

The Labour Party is continuing to offer a wimpish opposition while unemployment and poverty get worse.

In steps a new King to take up the role of opponent of the government. Played in a way to make him resemble Prince Charles, this king wants to reign over a fairer and more decent society. He is prepared to stick to his principles even if it means taking on the Prime Minister.

Urquhart has the means, if he chooses, to bring down the monarchy. But someone has the means to bring down Urquhart: a tape secretly made of the young journalist he murdered in the first series keeps coming back to haunt him.

We need stronger trade unions



Paddy Dollard
reviews
this week's
viewing

ON THE 125th anniversary of the TUC, Doug Low and Bill McDonnell make the case for strong trade unionism — in *Open Space* on 28 November, BBC2 at 7.30pm — by showing what fourteen years of Tory rule have done to the working class in Sheffield.

Later in the week, on Wednesday 1 December, 12.15am, Channel 4 shows Ken Loach's political thriller about pre-reunited Germany, *Fatherland*.

The SWP in the trade unions, 1982 to 1993

From dow to zig-zag

Jim Denham concludes his discussion of the trade union work of the Socialist Workers' Party. In the first part he described how the SWP's militant, economistic "rank and file" orientation collapsed and was replaced by a sourer, more sectarian attitude under the political stresses of the mid-'70s.

FROM THE early '80s until a year or so ago, the 'downturn' theory became the SWP's holy writ. The industrial downturn and the capitulation of working-class organisation in the face of the Thatcher offensive was so bad (they said) that systematic intervention into the unions was a waste of time. The task was to re-build solidarity brick by brick around issues like health and safety, while trying to convince the 'militant minority' that no real fight back was possible unless they joined the party.

The 'downturn' theory was publicly unveiled in an article in the May-June 1982 *Socialist Review* by Tony Cliff (who else?). In the course of the article, Cliff slipped in a thinly-disguised attack on the IS/SWP's old 'rank and file' activity. "If you really represent the wide movement it is excellent, but if you represent nothing, but pretend you represent the wide movement, then it's a catastrophe. What that means is that you simply cover up your politics."

As usual, there was a grain of wisdom and truth at the heart of Cliff's thinking, but it was taken to bizarre extremes.

In the NHS, for instance, the SWP wound up their rank and file group 'Hospital Worker' just six weeks before the start of the 1982 pay campaign, the biggest ever national healthworkers' dispute. This action went on for over nine months and included ward occupations, one-day and sectional strikes and a TUC Day of Action in September which saw more workers take strike action in solidarity with the healthworkers than struck for the Pentonville dockers ten years earlier.

If this was an industrial "downturn", then surely today's situation with strike levels hovering around a 60 year low must amount to an industrial black hole!

The SWP didn't fare much better in other unions.

In USDAW, an SWP member who was a little slow to pick up on the new line got himself the Broad Left's nomination in the union's national executive elections. Not only that, but he actually won the election. The SWP's response was to order him to resign from the executive immediately!

When arch right winger Eric Hammond won the election for general secretary of the EETPU, *Socialist Worker* (8 January 1982) responded by saying, in effect, that it didn't really matter. "The union won't be changed by the election of individuals



While miners fought the police, *Socialist Worker* declared their struggle doomed from the start. Photo: Andrew Wiard

anyway. The emphasis has to be on rebuilding organisation at a shop floor level — and that needs to be done whoever is in office."

When the ballot for a strike against the closure of the Lewis Merthyr mine was lost, *Socialist Worker* (12 May 1982) argued: "The overall picture emerging from the ballot is that of a growing chasm between left wing executive members and even branch officials and the rank and file... socialists in the pits have to accept that we've got to start organising from scratch. Electing a good official's no good if there's no base."

When workers at Leyland Vehicles' Lancashire plants struck against mass redundancies, *Socialist Worker* predicted defeat in the very week the strike began!

This sort of ultra-pessimism and defeatism (verging on saying that the rank and file of the working class wouldn't fight under any circumstances in the foreseeable future) was also applied to the Labour Party, where the SWP dismissed the vigorous struggle by thousands of activists determined to transform the party as of no significance. When the left-winger Peter Tatchell lost the Bermondsey by-election, *Socialist Worker* (5 March) argued that: "The left cannot deliver the goods electorally in the present period... Five years of sustained effort enabled Peter Tatchell and the people around him to build up the individual membership of the Labour Party. But when the election came these socialists found them-

selves a small minority in the constituency. In electoral terms they counted for nothing."

In other words, the trouble with the Labour left (and left activists in the unions) was that they were too far in advance of the mass of the working class. The SWP came close in the early 1980s to criticising the Labour left and the union Broad Lefts of being... ultra left!

"For the first five or six months of the miners' strike, the SWP refused to participate in the broad-based support committees."

But, of course, there was a sectarian sting in the tail of all this pessimism: give up on the fight to transform the unions (and, of course, the Labour Party) and join the SWP. Or as the 29 January 1982 SWP National Committee put it: "The recent defeats have led a small number of individuals to question what has gone wrong. Not all are demoralised... In the workplaces we need to argue with all these individuals about all our ideas — and we need to involve them in the slow

process of rebuilding strong workplace organisation."

This approach reached its most perverse expression in the SWP's response to the great miners' strike of 1984/85. By early April 1984 (only one month into the strike) *Socialist Worker* was saying that it was a lost cause — "an extreme example of what we in the SWP have called the 'downturn' in the movement!"

In early June, again, they were crying woe: "The chance has been lost to rejuvenate a strike which has been drifting towards a 'compromise' settlement". In fact, the strike still had over seven months of heroic struggle to run!

Then at the end of January 1985 while the majority of miners were still locked into an epic battle with the NCB and the government, *Socialist Worker* ran a two-page feature which took defeat for granted and asked "Who is to blame?"

For the first five or six months of the strike, the SWP refused to participate in the broad-based miners' support committees that sprang up throughout Britain, raising money, collecting food and making propaganda in support of the miners. These committees were usually organised by local Trades Councils and involved hundreds (if not thousands) of Labour Party members, CPers, non-aligned trade unionists, the unemployed and many people who'd never been involved in politics before. Until October 1984 (when there was a sudden, unexplained, change of line) the SWP denounced

these committees as "left-wing Oxfam" and "the baked beans brigade".

It is a shameful episode in the SWP's history, and one they now either gloss over with embarrassed excuses or simply deny. But the truth is known by the hundreds of activists who witnessed it. And it has to be put to the SWP, even now: what kind of 'revolutionary party' is it that responds to the greatest industrial struggle in Britain since 1926, in such a negative, sectarian and mistaken manner for six months?

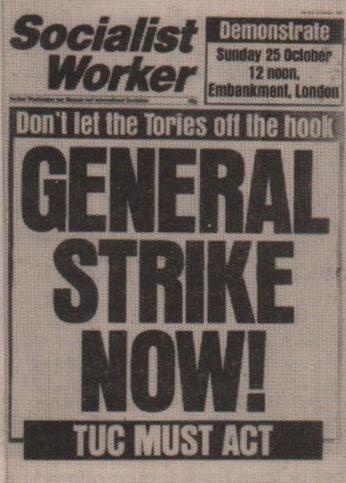
In typical fashion, the SWP never acknowledged its massive misjudgement of the miners' strike, but did de facto soften its 'downturn' dogmatism in the later 1980s.

By 1988, the SWP's industrial work appeared to have no logic or coherence of any sort running through it — apart from the usual knee-jerk opportunism. During the healthworkers' dispute that year, the SWP opposed the formation of a national shop stewards' committee on the grounds that without the support of the NUPE and CoHSE leaderships, nothing could be done.

When Alan Tuffin called off the postal dispute in September 1988 the SWP immediately pronounced the strike dead and began the post-mortem — despite the fact that thousands of UCW members had rejected the deal, were still holding out, and continued to do so for nearly a month.

In contrast, over GCHQ, where the Tories had finally driven out the remaining trade unionists from the

nturn S



Since the late '80s, the bleak "downturn" perspective has been replaced by frantic zig-zags

government spy-centre, the SWP rejected the idea of campaigning within the structures of the CPSA for a re-ballot and for all-out action, and instead ranted on endlessly about unofficial action.

There was no logic or consistency to any of this beyond sheer opportunism: SWP members in the health service and Post Office tended to be fairly demoralised and defeatist, while in the CPSA an ultra-left tendency prevailed.

In one case, the Post Office, a real, powerful, unofficial strike movement was ignored and underestimated, whereas in another, the civil service, an imaginary unofficial movement was counterposed to the real need to mobilise the members through the existing channels.

This incoherence was the product of the SWP throwing off the "downturn" dogma but not yet developing an alternative theory. It has continued for the last five years.

In the early 1990s there have been some signs of the SWP trying to get its act together in the unions. SWP members now stand for shop steward positions again, and involve themselves in Broad Lefts. But, true to form, the SWP's union work continues to zigzag between crass opportunism and rank sectarianism.

A classic recent example is in the NALGO Broad Left, which the SWP seized control of in a vote-out show-down. Facing challenges like privatisation, redundancies and the prospect of the UNISON amalgamation, they put SWP theoretician Chris Harman on the platform to give a talk about the USSR... and then took a vote committing the Broad Left to a state capitalist analysis of the USSR!

This provides a pristine pure example of the SWP building "broad groups" not as real fighting bodies in the unions that organise the rank and file over the key issues facing the members but as hollow fronts for "the party".

Politics gets introduced from the "outside" into the unions in the crudest possible form of the party giving lectures to the rank and file.

A proper approach would instead involve trying to draw out the political logic of the struggle of local government workers by linking politics organically and rationally to people's experiences. In NALGO, for example, we raise issues like affiliation to the Labour Party, fighting inside Labour for a policy of no cuts, no redundancies and no rent rises, and the democratic control by users and providers of public services.

To try to reorient the SWP's trade unionists, Tony Cliff wrote an article entitled "Dark Clouds with Silver Linings" in which he warned of a tendency to "approach every struggle that arises today as a defeat. It can lead socialists to argue how they differ from those in struggle rather than what they have in common." The old guru seems to be harking back to the golden days of the early '70s, when this organisation built a reputation for serious work in the unions and had the respect of wide range of activists. But having built a 'cadre' of apolitical sectarians with a reputation for zany antics in the unions, it seems highly unlikely that the SWP will ever regain the standing it once had amongst militants.

The SWP today is a chronically unstable organisation, ultra-left and rightist by turn, guided only by blind loyalty to 'the Party' and cheap-skate opportunism. Nowhere is this plainer than in its union work.



The SWP denounced the "baked beans brigade" raising support for the miners. Photo: Mark Salmon



Written out of history

THE SWP'S accounts of its own history are grossly selective and unreliable. Their accounts of the organisation's record on the rank and file movement write out of history the activities of Workers' Fight (the Trotskyist Tendency of the SWP, then called IS, from November 1968 to December 1971).

In mid-1969 the Manchester branch of IS, on Workers Fight's initiative, proposed to the National Committee that the organisation should begin to work towards the creation of a rank and file movement.

Though the proposal had the backing of prominent supporters of the Cliff tendency like Colin Barker, it met with a very hostile reception at the National Committee and was rejected.

Also written out of SWP history is the fact that members of IS — that is, Workers' Fight in Manchester — ran two rank and file papers, *The Hook* and *Germ's Eye View*.

Unity and mumbo-jumbo

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Matt Cooper

PAUL FOOT is a well-known journalist and *Socialist Worker* columnist. He writes books for the SWP with titles like *Why You Should Be a Socialist*, and, as the SWP's main media star, does speaking tours for them. Oddly, though, politics seems to be Foot's weak point.

Take his column in this week's *Socialist Worker* [20 November]. An unseen questioner asks him why "we all can't get together to push out the Tories" — why not "an Anti-Tory League" like the Anti-Nazi League?

That might mean a concerted effort by all working-class organisations to ensure a Labour and trade-union fight against the government. Logically it would involve the SWP in putting forward policies for the existing labour movement and perhaps, being less of a sect.

How does Foot respond to what may be "pressure from the ranks" of the SWP? He obfuscates, like the most chicken-shit sectarian and with a crass ignorance all his own.

The answer to this problem, says Foot, "lies in the old difference between a 'popular front' (like an Anti-Tory League) and a 'united front' (like the Anti-Nazi League)".

He spells it out: "A united front means joining together on a specific issue with anyone who agrees with you on that issue to obtain a single purpose — for instance to smash the Nazis". This may surprise even some members of the SWP.

Surely the united front is something to do with class politics? And isn't it concerned with uniting working-class organisations? Wasn't the united front which Trotsky proposed against the Nazis in Germany a front of working-class organisations, mainly the Communist and Social Democratic parties?

What Foot describes as a united front was described by Trotsky as a popular front!

For example, the Stalinists after 1935 united with 'anyone' against Hitler — with Tories and Liberals and, believe it or not, with 'patriotic' anti-German French fascists. French CP leader Maurice Thorez made the offer of such unity in 1938.

So far the SWP's ANL has gone no further than an occasional alliance with Tories and Liberals,

but if you want to be technical about it, Paul, the ANL is a popular front.

Poor Foot seems to be confused, but maybe he'll clear this up when he explains what a popular front is. Read on:

"A popular front means merging all your political attitudes with those of others to present a common political 'fudge'. What this meant for the Communist Party in the thirties was, in the Foot view of the world, that "from despising and ignoring all the rest of the left, the party switched to wooing and snuggling up to it". Here the issue of "fudging" politics is confused with that of seeking the widest possible united action.

Though, for Trotsky, the popular front meant uniting working-class organisations with bourgeois organisations, for Foot and the SWP the popular front means working with the rest of the left! For Foot that would never do! So he

uses 'popular front' as a way of dismissing talk of a united front of working-class organisations.

The real popular front was the Stalinist policy of ludicrously identifying fascism with only a small section of capitalists and pretending that most of the bourgeoisie and their parties could be reliable allies of the labour movement against fascism.

The Stalinists dropped their criticisms of capitalism as a whole to pave the way for alliances with — in Britain — maver-

ick Tories and Liberals.

For Foot the SWP's ANL is a "united front" (read: good thing) even when it invites the *Tory* Mayor of Bexley onto its platform (as they did on the 1992 Welling demo). And the SWP would be part of a 'popular front' (bad) if it joined a league of the labour movement organised against the Tories!

To build a campaign against the BNP in Millwall, uniting the working class around a vote for Labour and a fightback against the Tories through the unions — that would be a 'popular front'!

Foot says of the popular and united fronts, "the splitting of terms like this often sounds like sectarian mumbo-jumbo". Yes, Comrade Foot, it often is. But at least the straight-line sectarians sometimes have some idea of what they are going on about. You do not.

Perhaps Foot sent his copy to the wrong publication by mistake? Maybe it was written for *Private Eye*, a magazine which deals in political jokes?

"For Foot, the ANL is a 'united front' (a good thing) even if it invites a Tory mayor onto its platform. A league of the labour movement against the Tories would be a 'popular front' (a bad thing)."

Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

LONDON

Wednesday 1 December

"The education crisis — should we blame the Tories?"

A debate between Elaine Jones (AWL and National Union of Students NEC) and Tim Kevan (Chair of Conservative Students) 7.00, London School of Economics

Wednesday 8 December

"How do we clean up the environment?"

Debate between the AWL and the Green Party 8.00, Efra Hall Tavern, Brixton

YORK

Monday 6 December

"Ireland — what should socialists say?"

Pat Murphy (AWL) debates George Thompson (Socialist Outlook) 7.30pm, Priory Street Community Centre

EDINBURGH

Monday 29 November

"Crisis in Russia"

7.30, Windsor Bar, Leith Walk

BRIGHTON

Thursday 9 December

"Homes for the homeless"

With Liz Millward (AWL), Nicky Fisher 7.30, Brighthelm Centre, North Road

CANTERBURY

Tuesday 30 November

"How to fight the racists"

7.30, Sydney Cooper Centre

MANCHESTER

Thursday 2 December

"Moral backlash and Tory crisis"

Speaker: Pat Murphy 8.00, Unicorn pub

John Maclean misremembered

Stan Crooke reviews *John Maclean — Clydeside socialist* by James D Young

"DURING the past decade I have had more than an equal share of abuse heaped upon my books on Scottish history," writes James D Young in the introduction to his *John Maclean — Clydeside socialist*.

If this biography of Maclean is anything to go by, such abuse is only too well deserved.

In terms of style the biography is a less than happy amalgam of James Joyce's stream-of-consciousness writing and Edward D Bono's exercises in lateral thinking.

It is the literary equivalent of a fly in flight — zig zagging back and forth and up and down, completely devoid of any logic in the direction it takes, and covering the same ground time and time again.

A considerable proportion of the book is taken up by lengthy digressions of questionable relevance and dubious accuracy, whilst Maclean himself disappears from view in the fog of Young's mental meanderings.

Young also displays his characteristically novel approach to the use of quotations. He quotes Angelica Balabanoff on Antonio Labriola to illustrate Maclean's attitude to education, just as he quotes Carl Boges and Antonio Gramsci to illustrate Maclean's "voluntarism."

A more orthodox — and coherent — approach would be to quote what Maclean himself had to say in relation to such issues. Oddly enough though — the book is, after all, meant to be a biography — Maclean is rarely quoted.

Another of Young's peculiarities is that, despite modestly describing himself as a "chronicler of socialist history", he makes assertions without backing them up with facts and without commenting on facts which suggest the opposite of his assertions.

Young blandly asserts that Maclean "did not join the Socialist Labour Party" [SLP — a Glasgow based syndicalist organisation which published *The Socialist*].

But Nan Milton, one of Maclean's daughters, refers to her father as a SLP member in her biography of him. The SLP likewise spoke of him as a member. And in an article which he wrote for *The Socialist* (13 January 1920) Maclean described himself as an SLP member.

Young likewise claims that "Maclean did not join the Scots National League", whereas Milton writes: "In 1920 he became one of the founders of the Scots National League."

Another of Young's claims is that "The Communist Party did not produce a single obituary notice dealing with the death of John Maclean." But the first issue of the Communist Party-run *Worker* to appear after Maclean's death carried an obituary lamenting the loss of "the working-class movement's greatest and most valiant

fighter."

With a flagrant disregard for the facts of history Young writes that Maclean "enjoyed mass support amongst workers in Glasgow towards the end of his life" and that Maclean "did not end his life as a politically isolated figure."

Compare that with Milton's description of Maclean's release from his last spell in prison: "There were no waiting crowds to welcome him. He had lost his wife, his family, his career, his reputation (in communist circles at any rate) and his livelihood."

And when Maclean's Scottish Workers' Republican Party stood a dozen candidates in the local elections in Glasgow shortly before his death, none of them came anywhere near winning. Maclean himself polled only 623 votes out of a total of 8,190 votes cast.

Young vigorously rejects the suggestion that Maclean was "a model Social Democrat" in the early twentieth century. (The expression is taken from David Howell's *A Lost Left*). Yet he also writes: "to insist that Maclean was a Kautskian before 1914 is accurate, but not very illuminating."

But surely to be a Kautskian (Kautsky was the chief theorist of the German Social Democrats) was the very essence of being "a model Social Democrat"?

Just for good measure, Young fills up space with other choice absurdities, especially his suggestion that the militancy of "Red Clydeside" could be attributed to "racial differences" and "national temperament", and



John Maclean deserved better than the account offered up by James D Young

his endorsement of Maclean's outlandish allegations about the role of police spies in the labour movement.

(On a lighter note, it should be mentioned that the reader is spared a re-run of Young's earlier efforts to compare the position of Scots in Britain with blacks in the Southern States of America.)

What holds Young's book together — insofar as anything holds it together apart from the binding — is an incoherent but vituperative denunciation of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

With characteristic repetitiveness Young harps on about the "one dimensional totalitarian socialism of the Bolsheviks", denounces

"Leninist class truths and moral reductionism", attacks "the Bolsheviks' amoral behaviour towards fellow socialists" and condemns Lenin for his "inherently anti-democratic behaviour."

The height of absurdity in this anti-Bolshevik tirade is reached when Young favourably compares Hyndman (an anti-semitic, pro-war, pro-imperialist "socialist") with Lenin: "Unlike the Leninists, Hyndman and his followers possessed and practised socialist morality and truthfulness."

John Maclean — Clydeside socialist is surely the worst book ever written — until, that is, James D Young writes another one.



Why you should be a socialist

TODAY ONE CLASS, the working class, lives by selling its labour-power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the social means of production. Life is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes unemployment, the maiming of lives by overwork, imperialism, abuse of the environment, and much else.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty fights to convince and mobilise the working class to overthrow capitalism. We aim not to create a new labour movement, but to transform the existing workers' movement, trade unions and Labour Party.

We want socialism: public ownership of the major enterprises, workers' control, and democracy much fuller than the present system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We stand:

- For social planning, for a sustainable use of natural resources.
- For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working-class-based women's movement.
- For black and white workers' unity, organised through the labour movement, to fight racism and the despair which breeds racism. For labour movement support for black communities' self-defence against racist and fascist violence; against immigration controls.
- For equality for lesbians and gays.
- In support of the independent trade unions and the socialists in Russia and Eastern Europe. We denounce the misery caused by the drive to free-market capitalism there, but we believe that Stalinism was a system of class exploitation no better than capitalism.
- For a democratic united Europe; against the undemocratic and capitalist European Community, but for European workers' unity and socialism, not nationalism, as the alternative.
- For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.
- For the Palestinians' right to a state of their own, alongside
- Israel, and for a socialist federation of the Middle East with self-determination for the Israeli Jews.
- For national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide.
- For a workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to decide their own union rules.
- For a rank and file movement in the trade unions.
- For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.
- For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

95% vote yes! SATs boycott continues

TEACHERS

By Liam Conway

IN THE National Union of Teachers (NUT) re-ballot a majority of 20 to 1 voted to continue the boycott of the Tories' SAT tests. This provides teachers with the protection they need against the excessive workload involved in testing and it protects pupils from the damaging and degrading effects of being tested. We can now concentrate on educating students rather than filling in endless tick boxes and

preparing pupils for mindless tests. By boycotting the SATs teachers are neither disrupting the education service nor 'bringing chaos to schools'. On the contrary, the boycott improves education and restores calm to schools.

The SATs boycott shows what can be done if trade unionists are determined enough to defend their services from government attack.

But we should not underestimate the Tories. They aim to keep these tests at any cost. So the NUT needs clear objectives with which to lead all teachers to victory on this issue.

We should continue the boycott until the Tories withdraw all SATs, remove the confusing and pointless 10 level assessment system and permanently abandon the league tables.

Meanwhile and despite their U-turn over the SATs boycott, the latest national elections in the NUT continue to show a steady decline in the fortunes of the so-called 'Broad Left'. Whilst it was disappointing to see Ian Murch of the Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union (CDFU) ousted as National Treasurer, Carole Regan became the first member of

the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) to be elected Vice-President of the union. Joan Ivens, also of the STA, topped the poll in the elections for Examiner of Accounts. Once again the left holds 2 out of the 5 national officer posts.

The results prove that the left can make gains in the union at every level if they campaign consistently on a fighting platform.

It only needs a relatively small swing to the left to end the long and dismal reign of the Broad Left on the National Executive.

The Industrial Front

THE STRIKE by twenty workers at the Royal Mail research and development centre in Swindon has ended in victory. After three months on strike management conceded on nearly all fronts by reinstating a flexible leave agreement and awarding the strikers a £700 lump sum and an extra three days holiday per year.

Management had hoped to sit out the strike but the eventual decision by the strikers' union NCU to ballot workers at 24 other offices for solidarity action tipped the balance.

London Ambulance workers are currently holding a "consultative" ballot over management's restructuring plans. The ballot result is to be announced on Friday 26 November. Strike action — with emergency cover — will be needed to force a retreat from the employers.

An unofficial strike by 500 production workers at Marshall's chicken processing plant near Glasgow has forced management into a temporary retreat.

The strike was in defence of a victimised worker whose sacking has now been referred to ACAS the arbitration service. An official strike ballot is promised if there is no reinstatement.

The series of one day strikes against a pay freeze at Vickers tank builders in the North East have been called off after management offered talks. But with the pressure now off there may well be few concessions on offer.

The Department of Employment have just released their latest set of strike statistics. Most of the press have made a lot of the fact that in the year to September 1993 strikes were at the second lowest for 60 years. This September is supposed to have had the lowest number of strikes for a century.

However the picture is very different if you calculate from November '92 to November '93. If you take into account the 1/4 million strong civil servant strike earlier this month then there were three times more strikes in '93 than '92! So the statistics don't quite paint the picture of doom and gloom

Yarrow — half a victory

YARROW

By Mary Cooper

THE 500 striking workers at Yarrow shipyard in Glasgow have accepted an improved pay offer after more than two weeks on strike.

A mass meeting of the strikers

on Friday voted to accept the bosses' new offer of 2.5%. Previously they had been offered 1.8% plus an element of Performance Related Pay for selected individuals. The workers had resolutely opposed the introduction of PRP. The 2.5% deal is across the board.

The strikers have won a partial victory. Although they got less

then they wanted (the manual workers got 3.7%), they did win substantial improvements. They did show that they were willing to fight under a lot of pressure. This was very important after two years without a pay rise. Significantly for the future, they defeated management's attempts to introduce Performance Related Pay.

NUCPS: focus on the fight-back, not election pacts!

NUCPS

By an NUCPS member

THE Broad Left of the civil service middle-grades union NUCPS has voted to discuss 'joint campaigning over market testing' and a 'common slate for the NEC in 1994' with the hard line Stalinist Unity group. This resolution — jointly moved by SWP and Militant supporters — is potentially disastrous.

Joint campaigning, and a joint slate even more so, can only be a

way forward if it matches the tasks in hand. Yet the conference — urged on by the SWP — rejected an amendment which sought to widen the talks and laid down a principled basis for joint work.

The argument that BL should seek Unity's agreement to fighting market testing 'by a campaign of sustained industrial action leading to all-out industrial action' was described by the SWP as 'a wrecking amendment'. The Militant argued that it would be unacceptable to Unity! Conference even refused to ask the Stalinists to participate in the unofficial, branch-

based, Civil Service Campaign Against Market Testing.

Desperation and unprincipled electoralism is not a national strategy for fighting market testing.

It is essential that the BL focus on the positive motions carried — fighting market testing, building the Civil Service Campaign Against Market Testing, defending jobs, merger with IRSF, fighting fascism — and builds the combativity of union members. If we can do that on a principled basis with other forces well and good. If we cannot, then we must campaign alone.

Manchester council victimises workers

TOWN HALL ROUND-UP

By a Manchester City Council UNISON member

TWO MANCHESTER Housing workers have been sacked for allegedly assaulting their manager. The incident took place late on a Friday night after a works social evening.

The vast majority of witnesses clearly showed that the two were innocent of the charges. Management's chief witness kept changing his statement. Despite this the Director of Housing rejected their appeal on Tuesday 16 November.

The whole incident started with the local manager over-reacting on a mistaken view of the events. Once the local manager decided to go for the two workers, managers up the line including the Director and Assistant Director fell loyally into line. Through some bizarre collective management discipline, two innocent people have been sacked.

The two workers came from a workplace where there has been a series of disputes. Instead of looking at the problems in the hostel, management have decided the problem lies with a bolshie set of workers.

The UNISON members at the hostel are discussing what industrial action to take. One option is indefinite strike action and that would be the most effective response.

UNISON members in the Housing Department are to be balloted on one-day strike action.

The next level of appeal is to the councillors. A claim for unfair dismissal has been submitted to the Industrial Tribunal.

The key to a successful outcome will be combining local industrial action with a campaign to highlight the case in the Manchester labour movement.

UNISON Fightback conference

By Chris Croome, Sheffield UNISON

The Newcastle Local Government Branches of UNISON have called a conference for all UNISON branches and activists to discuss cuts, privatisation and the pay freeze. This conference is to be held on the 15 January at the University of Northumbria Students

Union from 10am until 4pm. UNISON branches are invited to send four delegates per branch and the conference is also to be open to observers. This conference could launch a serious rank and file organisation in UNISON.

Bentley miners vote to accept closures

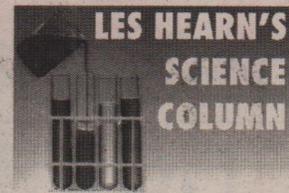
PITS

MINERS AT Bentley colliery in South Yorkshire have voted to accept the closure of their pit.

Other pits facing the threat of immediate closure include Hatfield Main, Frickley, Silverdale, Littleton, Ellington and Wearmouth.

Responsibility for this defeat lies not with local or national leaders of the NUM but with the leaders of the TUC and Labour Party who refused to organise an effective campaign of industrial and political action in support of the miners.

Thorp wastes away



IN THE early days of the Thatcher regime, when it was imperative to weaken the bargaining power of the miners, the construction of BNFL's Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP) at Sellafield was approved. This was to take spent fuel from existing nuclear power plants and extract unused uranium-235 plus the plutonium which was made during operation from the otherwise useless uranium-239.

The reprocessed uranium and plutonium would be used to fuel the new generation of Fast Breeder and Pressurised Water Reactors (FBRs and PWRs) that would reduce Britain's dependence on King Arthur's miners. Of course, they could also be used to make more warheads to be targeted against the 'evil empire' of Brezhnev.

Now THORP is ready to operate but no-one can remember what it was for! The miners are down to 10% of their number at the start of the 1980s while the fragments of the former Soviet Union are more likely to nuke each other than the UK. The result is a genuine debate within the Tory government (and within the Labour Party) over whether to allow it to start up and throw good money after bad.

The latest nail in THORP's coffin is a report from the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) about the radiation dose to people as a result of allowing THORP to operate.

At present, BNFL is awaiting government approval to increase its radioactive discharge limits: this would allow it to start up THORP. But, legally, the government must show that the benefits of running the plant outweigh the potential harm. In August, inspectors from the Department of Energy and the Ministry of Agriculture approved the new discharge limits and the government said it was "minded" to allow THORP to go on stream. However, the inspector's advice was arrived at without the benefit of the NRPB report.

What the NRPB had done is to estimate the average dose to people in the UK and elsewhere due to the proposed limits. From these it has then calculated the likely number of fatal radiation-induced cancers. Using models that predicted the movement of radioisotopes in the sea and the air, the scientists estimated

the doses people would receive from eating contaminated food and breathing radioactive particles in the air.

Their calculations showed that these doses would increase with the proposed discharge limits. One reason would be the release of more long-lived isotopes. Iodine-129 for example, has a half-life* of 16 million years and its release would present an effectively permanent addition to the amount of radioactivity in the environment. In contrast, strontium-90, released in atom bomb fall-out, with a half-life of about 30 years, is effectively gone in a couple of hundred years.

NRPB's best estimate for the number of THORP-related deaths is 213, compared with 675 for Sellafield as a whole. The good news for

BNFL is that only four would be expected to occur in Britain, with 17 in Europe, and all spread out over 500 years, beyond which time NRPB declined to speculate.

This is indeed a small, perhaps tiny risk, dwarfed by the toll from passive smoking, among others. But it does rather con-

tradict the view of the government inspectors who advised that Sellafield's new discharge limits "would effectively protect human health, the safety of the food chain and the environment."

The NRPB's findings do not clarify the issues that much for socialists. There are large uncertainties about the role of radiation in deaths, as the current debate about "clusters" of leukaemia cases around Sellafield shows.

Some people say that even one death would be one too many (a good argument for banning smoking in the presence of non-smokers!) One specialist in the health effects of radiation argues that the size of the risk to any individual is not the point. To illustrate this, he argues that if he were to go out into the street and shoot someone at random, the risk to a particular individual of being killed would be small. Nevertheless, the action would be immoral.

We also have to look, however, at the effects of other courses of action. Keeping spent fuel without reprocessing it also carries risks of escape of radiation in the environment. And any future society could dig it up and reprocess it, extracting the plutonium to make bombs or whatever. Perhaps it would be safer to extract it now and burn it up in reactors, thus protecting our descendants to some extent. It seems we are no nearer putting the genie of nuclear power back in the bottle.

* the time for half the radioactivity to go. After two half-lives, three-quarters would have gone and so on.

"We are no nearer putting the genie of nuclear power back in the bottle."

SOCIALIST

A victory for stubbornness

ORGANISER

Left needs new policies to meet crisis

Italy: fascists fill the vacuum

By Katrina Faccenda

THE RESULTS of last Sunday's municipal elections in Italy may be the beginning of huge realignment of Italian politics. The party which has governed Italy since the war, the DC (Christian Democrats), has been obliterated and the PSI (Socialist Party), which was powerful in the 1980s under Craxi's leadership, has gone the same way.

The elections are bound to be seen as a dry run for the general elections which will take place early next year under the reformed electoral system.

Although the elections for mayors and

City councils were taking place throughout Italy, attention has focused on the elections in the cities of Rome, Naples, Genoa, Venice, Trieste and Palermo. The six candidates topping the first-round polls in these cities were all either PDS (ex-Communist Party) or backed by the PDS. The possibility that these candidates will win in the second round could give the PDS a big stake in the control of all Italian cities, with the exception of Milan and Florence.

The other side of the coin has been the huge advances of the MSI, which is the fascist party. The MSI is not a modern conservative party. It is the party founded by the scraps of Mussolini's fascist party after World War 2.

In these elections they have gone from being an irrelevance in electoral terms to having around 40% support in the cities of Rome and Naples. They think that this has made their long-awaited breakthrough.

In Naples, Alessandra Mussolini, the grand-daughter of Benito Mussolini, will face Antonio Bassolino, who is seen as a hard left candidate.

In Rome, Gianfranco Fini of the MSI will face Francesco Rutelli, who was backed by the Greens, PDS and Radicals in the first round. With 15 candidates now eliminated, Rutelli hopes that a left/progressive alliance will enable him to defeat Fini.

In central and southern Italy the vacuum created by the collapse of the DC has been filled by the PDS and MSI, and in the north the Lega Nord (Northern League) and PDS.

The biggest single winner in the elections was Leduca Orlando. In Palermo, Orlando is the leader of La Rete, the anti-mafia party. He won around 70% of votes to be elected in the first round.

Although the MSI candidates are unlikely to win in the second round, they have won hundreds of thousands of votes. It may be that many of these votes were once DC but an openly fascist party gained huge support.

The PDS success brings little comfort. The PDS's own politics are a castrated "democratic socialism" but in these elections they formed a number of alliances with the sole interest of victory.

Even if the fascists are denied victory this time, it will take more than the alliances of the PDS to beat them in the long run.



Alessandra Mussolini, Benito's fascist grand-daughter, comes second in Naples

By Martin Thomas

STUBBORN DETERMINATION and militancy can win! On Monday 22 November the parents who have occupied Springdale nursery in north London round-the-clock for nearly seven months to stop Islington council closing it, won a great victory against the odds.

A joint meeting of the council Labour Group and the Islington Labour Local Government Committee (that is, delegates from the local ward Labour Parties and trade unions) voted for Springdale to stay open as a council nursery.

Under rules dating from Islington council's leftist period in the early 1980s, the council's ruling Labour Group is bound by the decision of this joint meeting. Council leaders are already trying to weasel out of it, but nursery campaigners, reinvigorated by their victory, will be increasing the pressure to make sure they can't.

The joint meeting, originally due in June, had been postponed again and again while the council leaders tried to isolate and wear down the nursery occupiers. Workers occupying Harvist nursery (also to be closed) were forced to end their action in August by the threat of the sack and lack of support from their union, UNISON.

The council threatened the Springdale occupiers with cutting off the electricity, gas and water, and with prosecution under the Children Act. Week after week, they stuck it out. Illnesses, worries about their children's future, and sheer weariness, thinned out the occupation. A stubborn few held out.

A dogged political campaign in the local Labour Party — which won 15 out of the 20 wards to the cause, including some which were considered solidly right-wing — combined with the occupiers' determination to win the vote on 22 November. Both the direct action and the Labour Party campaign were vital. Neither could have succeeded without the other.

Support is now more vital than ever, to enforce the Labour Party decision.

Union branches, Labour Parties and other groups which have backed the nursery campaign should flood Islington Town Hall with letters welcoming Islington Labour's responsiveness to the wishes of the local community and demanding an early date for the re-staffing and re-opening of Springdale — write to the council leader, Derek Sawyer at the Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD.

The letters should also demand details on the promise made by the council's chair of education, Phil Kelly, to try to fob us off on 22 November, that the Harvist site will be reopened as a voluntary-sector nursery in the New Year.

Activists should stand ready to mobilise for demonstrations and lobbies. (The next council meeting is 9 December).

Donations, messages of support and copies of any letters sent to Derek Sawyer should go to "Islington Under-Fives Action Group", at Springdale Under-Fives Education Centre, 15a Springdale Road, London N16 (071-923 0263).

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SOCIALIST inside this week
MALCOLM
Behind the hype
page 12

Buses, rail, pits, public sector

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