

# SOCIALIST

**Socialism  
and Democracy**  
*Direct action and Parliament*



A debate between  
**Michael Foot and  
John O'Mahony**

opening remarks and chaired by Alan Simpson MP

Conway Hall • Wednesday 9th March 1994 • 7.30pm

**ORGANISER**

*It will be socialism or barbarism!*

## TORY JUDGE TELLS STRIKERS:



# YOUR VOTE

See  
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# DOESN'T COUNT!

## NATFHE STRIKE VOTE RULED ILLEGAL

## Tory judge tells strikers Your vote doesn't count

By a Southwark college  
NATFHE striker

**E**ARLIER THIS term, our union organised a national ballot for industrial action and won a significant majority for strike action. A national one day strike was called for March 1 with some branches, especially in inner London, voting for additional local escalating action against college principals determined to impose new contracts.

However, the one day strike was sabotaged by a High Court injunction confirmed in the appeal court last Friday, 25 February. The bosses' federation, the CEF deliberately waited till the last moment before taking out this injunction.

Under Tory legislation, passed last year, unions must notify management both before and after taking a ballot, and they must "describe" the categories of workers taking part in the action so that management "can readily ascertain [those].... reasonably believed entitled to vote."

The union interpreted this as "describing" the job titles of those being balloted, but High Court Judges interpreted it as naming all those union members, college by college, being balloted.

This is a blatant attack not only on NATFHE but on all unions. It makes it extremely difficult to organise a legal ballot. Only workplaces with 100% union membership, or with 100% check-off, can be sure of escaping an injunction without supplying a list of members.

The Tories are busily outlawing the closed shop and encouraging employers such as British Rail to harass unions by abolishing check-off. Management want the names of members so they can intimidate and victimise them. It is also a breach of privacy and civil liberties.

*This judgement affects all trade unionists and must be repealed along with the rest of the Tory anti-trade union laws.*

The injunction was also a full frontal attack on democracy — nobody was suggesting NATFHE had not run a fair and secret ballot. But the employers didn't like the result of democracy, so they ignored it and their courts ruled the decision illegal.

This court action was an attempt to stall any strike action till new contracts are imposed on April 1.

As we go to press, on Tuesday 1 March, FE lecturers at three colleges are defying a high court injunction and organising successful unofficial strike action.

Huge branch meetings at Handsworth in Birmingham, and in Tower Hamlets voted to strike. At Southwark College, two out of three sub-branches, and the vast majority of members, took strike action.

As reported in last weeks *SO*, Tuesday March 1 was earmarked for a national one day strike over management attempts to impose new contracts.

College Principals across the country have been flexing their muscles. Bully-boy managers

at Southend de-recognised the union. In Birmingham, at the College of Food, managers are victimising a union activist. And at Bath, the Principal threatened to sack around 50 lecturers who refused to sign new contracts! It was only strike action that forced the management at Bath to back down and call in ACAS.

It is only national strike action that will stop this onslaught on our conditions.

Our NATFHE leaders should have defied such a crude attempt to use Tory laws. We had a democratic vote. We should have called their bluff and organised our national shut down of colleges.

Even if the CEF had wanted to pursue sequestration, a government in such a mess as this one would try to avoid a confrontation with the trade union movement over such a principle of democracy. They would have put pressure on the CEF to back off.

Instead our leadership panicked and called off the strikes. I personally received 4 letters on Monday 28 February telling me not to go on strike — two of them from my own union!

I am faced with a leadership that wants to surrender national agreements and descend into "local bargaining," where Principal after Principal will pick off relatively inexperienced and overworked union officials. This would be a disaster.

We must continue the fight for national conditions.

If the leaders of our union don't to call the strike we have voted for, branches must call for an immediate re-run of a national ballot in compliance with the law, building an even bigger vote for escalating strike action.

The unofficial strike action is important because it shows a willingness to fight back. But we must build on it to resist the drift towards local bargaining. Those branches willing to fight should link together, and call for a national delegate conference to hammer out a strategy to defend national conditions and the "Silver Book".

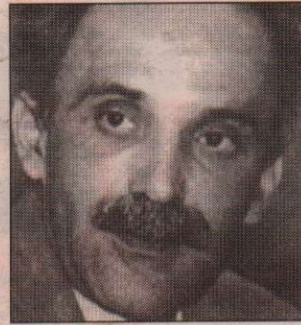
We need to build the widest possible support in the union for this so that when we do need to organise strike action, official or unofficial, next time we can do it more successfully.

**Socialist Organiser campaigns to commit Labour and the trade unions to a Workers' Charter of positive legal rights, including the rights to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, to have union members freely decide their own rules, and to stop unsafe jobs. More information: *SO*, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.**

# After Hebron

## What the Israeli Trotskyists say

Michel Warshawsky, a member of the Israeli Trotskyist organisation Matzpen, reports from Jerusalem on the response of his organisation to the Hebron massacre.



**WE DEMAND** the total and immediate disarmament of the settlers and the immediate expulsion of the settlers from Hebron.

We want the settlements to begin to be dismantled.

We demand the reopening of the Oslo agreement and the inclusion, in the first paragraph, of a clause which states that the settlements will be dismantled.

We want all the Palestinian prisoners released and a commitment from Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories and allow the formation of a Palestinian state.

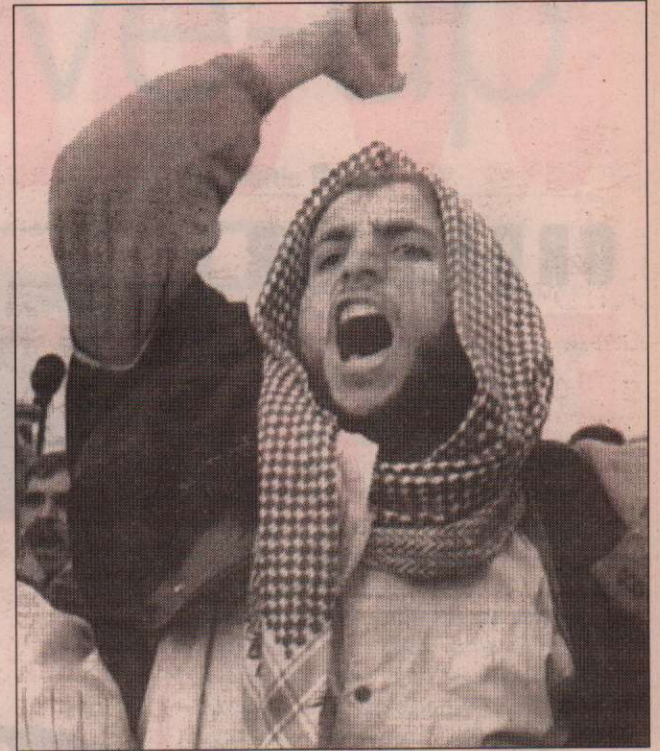
The members of Kach that have been supposedly placed under administrative detention are actually free. Television crews can find them

whenever they choose. So this is really not a serious move by the state.

We on the Israeli left have fought for years against administrative detentions, which have been used extensively against Palestinians. I think, as a matter of principle, it is wrong to support the use of such orders against the right.

We also opposed the attempt of Palestinian lawyers to have the house of the family of the killer, Baruch Goldstein, destroyed. This is wrong.

The active group among the settlers have always been a small minority of the settlers. I am sure that a firm and a



More Israelis are speaking out in solidarity with the Palestinians.

clear government which moved against them could dismantle the settlements. The problem is a weak and unclear policy towards the settlers.

But Rabin wants to use the settlers as a pressure on the Palestinians, to blackmail them.

According to various opinion polls 35% of the settlers are

ready to leave immediately if the government guarantees them compensation.

Generally this massacre has shocked all layers inside Israeli society. People who would not have spoken against the settlers are now doing so.

We are active in a committee making solidarity with Hebron.

## Israeli youth shout: "Peace yes, occupation no!"



Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv

**A**FANATICAL doctor, Baruch Goldstein, who had been a member of racist organisations, perpetrated the massacre at the mosque in Hebron. After his attack, numbers of Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army.

There have been big disturbances inside Israel itself.

Ten minutes from where I live, the road has been blocked by hundreds of people throwing stones. This is Tel Aviv, the very heartland of Israel - not Gaza.

A few hours after we heard the news of the Goldstein massacre, a few hundred people assembled in Tel Aviv and in Jerusalem. The protesters tried to block the street in front of the Defence Ministry in Tel Aviv, and three were arrested.

Peace Now organised a demonstration in Jerusalem on Saturday night. Several thousand people came at short notice. It was organised by phone calls alone.

The speakers were mainly from the left-wing part of the government, Meretz and the Labour doves. For the first time, the Communist Party was invited too, and the speeches were more militant and angry than before.

The "Two States" solution is now totally accepted by Peace Now. Any ambiguity has been removed.

The Labour Party and Meretz youth were shouting slogans which had previously only been raised by the radical left: "Peace yes, occupation no", "Dismantle the settlements", "Disarm the settlers".

The government met on Sunday 27 February to determine its response to the massacre. It fell far short of what should have been done.

They have decided to set up a Commission of Inquiry into the killings. Rabin opposed this because such a commission will have quite wide powers. The outcome might be very inconvenient for the government.

They will also take steps against the extreme right-wing Israeli-chauvinist Kach movement. Five of their central activists are to be placed under administration detention without trial. The government is also considering banning Kach.

My feeling is that this is undemocratic, and besides the point. What is really necessary is to start dismantling the settlements.

The first move should be against the settlers who have been living in Hebron itself. There are four settler enclaves in

the middle of this Palestinian city. They are surrounded by masses of barbed wire and soldiers. The settlers travel round the city with their weapons, write racist graffiti, overturn market stalls. This is not peaceful co-existence!

A few years ago a television crew visited the settlers. They interviewed a five year old boy who spoke naively about how his parents gave him sweets as a reward for urinating out of his window on to Palestinians. That is the flavour of the situation.

On this issue the Oslo deal is contradictory. It says that no settlers will move, and the Israeli army will stay to protect them. But it also says that the army will withdraw from Arab population centres prior to the elections, and that authority for law and order will pass to the Palestinians.

For Hebron, this is a flat contradiction. Some government ministers are now urging the removal of the settlements from Hebron.

There has been increasing frustration among the Palestinians.

Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho did not take place on time, and Israeli prime minister Rabin, has been trying to squeeze more concessions out of the PLO.

Palestinian support for the Oslo agreement between Israel and the PLO has been eroded.

Yet Israeli settlers in the West Bank are feeling increasingly frustrated too and threatened. There have been a number of

Palestinian attacks on settlers, and a number of them have been killed or wounded.

The settlers have been scared by the prospect of an armed Palestinian police force taking control of Jericho and Gaza and then the other Palestinian population centres.

And they feel politically threatened. Their dreams are under threat.

I do not think civil war is likely in Israel. The massacre has increased the isolation of the settlers. No "respectable" politician was able to say anything about it except total condemnation.

There are now two possibilities for the negotiations. Either they will be derailed, or Rabin will have to give the Palestinians something.

The ironical result of the massacre is that Arafat's negotiating position has been strengthened. The strong pressure of the Palestinian masses is pushing Arafat. He could quite realistically say: unless you give way, I will have to call the negotiations off.

The second factor is the US. The Americans seem to be saying that they will become more active on the issue. We will have to see. I have little confidence in Clinton.

28.2.94

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# After the Hebron massacre Two states for two peoples

**B**efore he went and killed perhaps 50 Palestinian Arabs while they were at their prayers, Baruch Goldstein told his associates that he would soon do something "big and dramatic".

His intention was to inflame the Middle East against Israel, and thus force Israel to abandon the recent agreement with the PLO and annex the occupied West Bank territory to Israel for settlers like himself.

That was probably what he intended, and certainly what he and his political mentors, the overtly racist Kach party, whose leader Meir Kahane was assassinated not long ago, hoped for. They advocate the expulsion of Arabs from the Occupied Territories.

On one level he has had his way, as is shown by the tremendous wave of Arab anger sweeping the Middle East and the great pressure against the Israel-PLO agreement that has built up in the West Bank and Gaza — where Hamas, made up of Muslims who are the mirror image of the Jewish-chauvinist culture which produced Baruch Goldstein, is growing stronger — and within the PLO itself.

But it is more likely that Goldstein, an American racist who was beaten to death in the mosque after he ran out of bullets, has achieved the opposite of what he wanted to achieve.

With unanswerable force he has put the question of the Jewish settlers in Palestinian-majority territory at the top of the agenda. These range in type from groups of crazies like Goldstein, in the grip of a collective paranoia, to recent arrivals in Israel from the USSR who are in the West Bank because that is where they could best find housing, under Israeli government sponsorship.

The settlers are armed, as they had to be if they were to survive amidst a hostile population. There is no provision in the PLO-Israel agreement to



The Hebron massacre highlighted the problem of the Israeli settlers — a hostile armed population in Palestinian territory

disarm them. Israel is to remain responsible for their security even after Palestinian self-administration begins.

What Goldstein has demonstrated beyond dispute is that, because the settlers are intensely hostile to the PLO-Israel agreement, the status quo is simply untenable.

No real progress is going to be possible while this hostile armed population is in the Palestinian territory, and while a monstrous lunatic such as Goldstein can do what he has just done. Goldstein was not an isolated crank.

According to press reports, settlers of Goldstein's persuasion appeared on TV to justify the slaughter. At Goldstein's funeral a mourner said that "one Jewish fingernail is worth more than a million Arabs' lives". Such people are not fit to be at large, still less to carry guns, lording it over the Arabs in places like Hebron.

The Trotskyist left in Israel pointed out the central importance of this question at the time of the accords, and called on the Israeli government to remove the settlers. It may come to that, as it did when Israel and Egypt made peace at the end of the 1970s, though the settlers, whom Israeli soldiers eventually removed by force, were far less numerous in Sinai.

When *Socialist Organiser* published the analyses of the Israeli Trotskyists, we hesitated to echo or endorse this call because it could be a two-edged weapon. There are a million Arab citizens of Israel, one in five of the

population. Are they to be removed? The Israeli left would answer: "of course not"! But how would the right and the ultra-chauvinists answer? Far better than an "exchange of population" would be full equality for Jews and Arabs as citizens of each others' states in Palestine.

Between that desirable situation and now, however, there is the reality of hatred, conflict and murder embodied in the "big and dramatic" deed of Baruch Goldstein. It should be possible for Jews to live in the future Palestinian-Arab state with full rights — but they will have to live there on a radically different basis from the present Jewish settlements, which are military bases of a hostile occupying

*"The only solution is  
Palestinian self-  
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sovereign state in the  
areas where they are the  
majority."*

power.

The Israeli government's response so far has been, as the PLO says, to make only a few cosmetic gestures against a handful of the settlers. After the massacre it was the Arabs who were put under curfew, not the settlers!

This is still the government of the

settlers, still a government that wants to keep the Palestinians down.

The future of the PLO-Israel accord will depend on three things:

- On whether a "left-wing" Israeli government will use, and politically can get away with using, whatever repression against the Jewish settlers (the government that took the settlers out of Sinai was the right-wing Likud government)
- On whether the PLO supporters and architects of the agreement can maintain control of the PLO.
- And on whether the PLO can fend off the challenge to its leadership from Hamas and others who reject any compromise with Israel.

The leader of Likud publicly called Goldstein's action "despicable" and indefensible. How much opposition would Likud put up to government action to remove or disarm the settlers, or to lock up a large number of the political lunatics amongst them? Likud, like the whole of Israel, is still faced with all the international and logistic pressures which produced the PLO-Israel agreement last year. Likud opposes the agreement, but constitutionally.

That is the fundamental reason to hope that an Israeli government can do what needs to be done to give the PLO-Israel accord real life.

On the other side, the Baruch Goldsteins are far more numerous, not only in the West Bank, but throughout the Arab world. Here too, however, nothing has really changed, despite the outcry against

the massacre. There is still powerful US and EC pressure on the Arab states, too, to settle the Palestine-Israel conflict. They still have no alternative to the PLO-Israel deal.

That too is reason for hope that the agreement, the most promising development on its level in the Middle East for 45 years, has not been killed by Goldstein's bullets.

On the British left — among people such as the publishers of *Socialist Worker*, who say that the Arab equivalents of Baruch Goldstein's organisation Kach, the Muslim fundamentalists, can be "progressive" — the massacre will be grist to the "anti-Zionist" mill, proof, they will say, that Israel does not have a right to exist.

Like the Arab regimes, though for different reasons, they are hypocrites. In the guise of righteous horror at this massacre they advocate the immensely greater massacre that would have to accompany the destruction of Israel and the subjugation of its population by the surrounding Arab dictatorships.

The actions of one or a dozen Jewish lunatics can have no bearing on Israel's right to exist as a nation-state as long as its people want it — no more than Arab deeds of indiscriminate terror can cancel out the Palestinians' right to a state of their own on the West Bank and Gaza.

The only solution is Palestinian self-determination in a sovereign state in the areas where they are the majority: two states for the two peoples!



Baruch Goldstein

*"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

## UNISON and the Labour Party: one fight, two fronts

**T**HIS WEEKEND sees the first ever merger conference of local government members of Britain's biggest union the 1 1/2 million strong UNISON.

The union — which was formed out of the merger of NUPE, NALGO, and COHSE — could be a powerful instrument in the hands of public sector workers.

It unites workers across the public services in manual, clerical, craft and technical jobs.

But UNISON will only be an effective instrument if it is a democratic and fighting body which recognises the burning need to link the fight back in particular councils and hospitals to a political campaign against the Tories. We need to fuse the individual local fights to stop closures and defend jobs to a generalised political campaign for a Labour government, and for policies which will restore and expand services, tax the rich and cut working hours to create jobs.

Over the last fifteen years the Tory government have launched a series of generalised attacks on working class people.

Public services have been destroyed and trade union rights removed. Living standards have fallen for the majority while the rich have got richer.

These attacks have become more and more intense as the cushioning effect on the budget deficit provided by North Sea Oil revenues and the sell-off of state assets has all but disappeared.

Over the last few months the Tories' plans have included:

- \* Taxes up by £10 per week.
- \* A pay freeze.
- \* VAT on fuel.
- \* A 30% cut in student grants.
- \* Major cuts in unemployment benefit.
- \* The extension of Compulsory Competitive Tendering and Market Testing.

Local government workers feel the pinch with massive cuts in funding from central government. Sheffield's Labour council is talking about £38 million cuts.

Generalised attacks on this scale require a generalised response.

First of all, the leaders of the unions and the Labour Party should call a national day of protest action in support of public services and public sector workers.

This should take place on a weekday and be backed up by strike action, including solidarity action by private sector workers, all of whom need to use public services.

This day of action should be seen as the first step in a campaign of industrial and political action with the aim of forcing the Tories to call a general election.

The leaders of UNISON, who are supposed to favour a day of action, should stop pussyfooting around.

They should name the day and approach the TUC and Labour Party to support it, rather than hiding behind the right wing leaders of other unions in the TUC who don't want to see action.

As well as uniting the workplace and political struggles, we also need to provide ideas that would give strength and coherence to that fightback.

The central, core, driving idea on which a public sector fightback should be built is this: public and medical services should be provided to the highest technical level possible to every person who needs them. There is no absolute lack of resources to pay for such a policy.

The money to pay for this will come from the capitalist class who have benefited from the last 15 years of Tory rule. Resistance to such a policy should be met with nationalisation under workers' control.

No advance can be made if the leaders of the public sector unions and the Labour Party continue to accept the Tory agenda.

To do so means arguing for the "Sheffield option": wage cuts at a local level in order to preserve services and jobs. That policy has not worked. It cannot work.

Workers have only ever made gains by rejecting the arguments of the bosses about profitability, viability and efficiency. If we hadn't, then we'd still have child labour and a 12 hour day.

# When the m took on the



Women Against Pit Closures march, August 1984. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni

By John O'Mahony

**E**XACTLY ten years ago, one of the great class battles of British working-class history began when the miners made a stand against the Tory pit closures.

The miners' strike triggered an explosion of class militancy. Thousands of men roused themselves into action in the cause of the strike. The women of the mining communities, up to then 'mere' wives and daughters, roused themselves too, playing a key role in keeping the strike going and in winning support for the strikers.

For 13 months an epic struggle raged. Immediately, the miners fought against pit closures, but in doing it they came out against, and said that they refused to accept, the very idea that communities and people's livelihoods should be destroyed because they were "uneconomic".

Against the Tories and their gods of money and profitability, they thus proclaimed a different faith: the socialist faith which places people first. Thus, in the fifth year of

Thatcher's reign, they challenged the entire ethos of Thatcher's Britain, not in words but in action.

The Tories, and their police and press, responded to this challenge with savage violence — with lying propaganda and with repression by a semi-militarised police force under a central national command centre created especially for the purpose of defeating the miners.

Tragically, the miners were split. Notts miners felt — foolishly, as they have since found out — that they were not likely to be faced with closures. They did not feel threatened and they did not want to fight.

When the national leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers responded to a Tory provocation with a call for strike, but without calling a national ballot on it, the Notts miners had the excuse they wanted. They scabbed on the other miners.

A union leadership more skilful and sensitive than the left semi-Stalinist group around Arthur Scargill might have played things dif-

ferently — had they dared risk it, they could probably have won a ballot to continue the strike in mid-1984 — and thus deprived the Notts scabs of their "good reason" for scabbing. But they might have scabbed any-

*"Tragically, the miners were split. Notts miners felt — foolishly, as they have since found out — that they were not likely to be faced with closures."*

way. Other areas — South Wales, for example — were initially against the strike. Then they took their place in the ranks of their union against the class enemy.

Notts was different. Their "good reason" was not the real reason. Split itself, with some

miners still working, the NUM was badly placed to appeal for solidarity from other workers. Almost everywhere, the tired trade-union bureaucrats, already cowed by Thatcher and submissive to Tory anti-union laws which banned solidarity, prevailed. They stopped decisive solidarity with the miners.

They hated Scargill not because he had links with Stalinist police-state unions in Eastern Europe — the right-wingers had such links too — but for his militancy.

With unemployment standing at over four million — in real figures — rank and file solidarity was not forthcoming, either, or not adequately.

The struggle between the Tories and the miners settled into a war of attrition. Miners' mass pickets which tried to spread the strike were met with full-scale repression by foot police and by police cavalry. Mining villages were "occupied" by hostile police. In the summer of 1984, large-scale pitched battles took place at Orgreave coke depot, near Sheffield, between

# Miners Tories

## Albert Bowns

# A great class fighter

John Bloxam pays tribute to Albert Bowns, a leading activist in the 1984-5 miners' strike, who died recently



Albert Bowns (centre) and John Bloxam (to the right) on a miners' demonstration



The police were used as as semi-military force against the miners

miners and riot police, who were armed with every advantage modern technology could give them.

To win, the miners needed reinforcements. Two times in 1984 the dockers struck, but only briefly. The pit deputies (overseers), who have their own union, were on the point of striking with the miners. Liverpool council, led by Militant, was at the point of all-out confrontation with the Tories.

Any one of these near-events might have tipped the scale for the miners. Dockers, deputies, and Militant in Liverpool all backed off. All compromised. All pursued sectional interests.

You could not get a clearer proof that working-class solidarity is pure enlightened self-interest than the subsequent fate of the dockers, the deputies, and Militant in Liverpool.

The dockers, missing the chance to ally with the miners, were picked off after the miners had been defeated. The National Dock Labour Scheme, which gave them some job security and protection against being driven into casual labour,

has since been abolished.

The pit deputies have lost their jobs as the pits have closed, like other mineworkers. Militant, who made a rotten deal with the Tories to buy themselves one year, were picked off by the Labour leaders, and are now a shrunken shadow of an organisation.

Isolated from the decisive solidarity of industrial action, the miners fought on through 1984 and into 1985. After 13 hard months, they went back to work.

It was a glorious fight, but the result was a defeat, and the miners have suffered terrible consequences. Ten years later, the Tories, who in 1984 fervently denied that they intended to close more than a few pits, have virtually closed down the entire coal-mining industry.

The tragedy — and not only for the miners — is that the miners could have won in '84. The tide could have been turned against Thatcherism. The Tories could have been beaten. It stands to the eternal glory of the miners — and of their leaders, despite their political faults — that they tried.

**FIRST MET** Albert Bowns at a meeting called in June 1984 by *Socialist Organiser* at Ollerton Miners' Welfare in Nottinghamshire, during the 1984-5 strike.

It was the second of a series of meetings and schools on working class history and socialist ideas organised in Ollerton by both *Socialist Organiser* and the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee throughout the strike.

By the end of April a majority of the Notts miners were back at work, deserting the National Union of Mineworkers and scabbing. But, despite this and the massive police 'occupation' of the Notts coalfield and mining communities, a militant and determined minority stuck by their union and their class. Over 200 strikers attended the first *Socialist Organiser* meeting at Ollerton.

Albert travelled from South Yorkshire to the meeting in June to show solidarity with a group of workers he always held — and continued to hold — in the very highest respect, those Notts miners who stood by their principles and their union. He spoke at the meeting.

With other miners from his pit, Kiveton Park in South Yorkshire, he had just spent 14 days in Lincoln jail for trying to picket out Notts miners. Released on conditional bail, and instructed not to picket on pain of four months' jail, Albert's message to the meeting was simple and reported in *Socialist Organiser*:

"We were going picketing, I can tell you that. They say it's sub-judice, but I don't give a toss, and I don't give a toss about the bail conditions either... The police stopped us. Vanloads and vanloads converged on us as if they had found a coal seam. So we had a meeting in the middle of the roundabout, and said we were going to give them a test case... Those lads from Kiveton Park did it for the National Union of Mineworkers. They didn't do it for themselves. We don't accept the police conditions..."

Throughout the strike Albert remained in the forefront of the action — including the epic battles at Orgreave coke depot, near Sheffield, in the summer of 1984, and from August onwards, at his own pit when a trickle of scabbing started. It was at this time that the police made a clumsy attempt to frame him for carrying offensive weapons.

They held him in solitary confinement for 40 hours but then released him for lack of evidence. He was a marked man.

He told all about this at the joint meeting held by the Notts miners' strike committee and *Socialist Organiser* at the Blackpool Labour Party conference in October of that year. The miners' strike was a major item on the conference agenda. It was at that Labour Party conference that bailiffs publicly served Arthur Scargill with a sequestration order against union funds.

Lol Duffy, a Cammell Lairds shipyard worker and Labour Party activist then in jail for his part in occupying his shipyard, sent greetings from jail to the meeting. Despite their own hardship, Albert, Paul Whetton and the other miners at the meeting insisted that the collection go to the Cammell Lairds workers.

Albert was not a boastful person. He told about his experiences at meetings throughout the country not because he felt they were unique, but, on the contrary, because they were typical of the experience of thousands of miners and their communities.

He wanted to explain not only what the miners were

up against, what was at stake, but also to show the miners' militancy and determination. The Tories and the state could throw anything they wanted at them: they would not be intimidated; they would fight to the very end.

Albert had long been in the local Labour Party, but not otherwise politically involved. He was a quiet, decent man — a lovely person — in a quiet, decent mining community, a solid trade-unionist and citizen of the labour movement, pitched suddenly into battle by the threat to jobs and communities, and by the savage police offensive against the miners that accompanied it.

He explained to a meeting of Tower Hamlets Trades Council how he saw the police offensive: "The police at Orgreave are deliberately trying to force us to retaliate. But having said that, if someone is going to charge at me on a horse, or try to club me and hit me round the head, then I'm going to pick up the nearest thing to defend myself. I've no choice." (*Socialist Organiser* 185)

He threw himself into the fight against the brutality and violence of the police. Miners formed guerrilla groups to harry them and the scabs, and Albert was in the thick of it.

In those days the Labour right-wing had not yet smothered the life out of the Labour Party, and there was mass Labour support for the miners. Local Labour Party headquarters were centres of strike activity, and not only in mining districts.

Like many mining villages, Kiveton Park was very well

organised, with a powerful Women's Action Group, regular meetings, both young and old completely involved, and strong connections with many trade unionists and labour movement activists. It was one of the first miners' villages to "twin" with other sections of the labour movement. Albert was as centrally involved with the speaking, the meetings, the street collections, as with the picketing.

Albert didn't just want to 'hold on'; he wanted to win the strike. And throughout he was always thinking and discussing how to do it.

Everywhere miners were fighting back on flying pickets. Albert set to studying the experience of other workers in similar situations, which were discussed at length with people like myself.

He read the articles we published in *Socialist Organiser* about such experiences as the Dublin workers' "Citizen Army", set up in 1913 to stop police beating strikers. He studied the writings of the American Trotskyists on their experience in the Minneapolis Teamsters' strikes of the 1930s, when they organised workers' defence squads.

When the strike ended, the miners went back, led by their bands, bloody but unbowed. Albert stayed active after the strike, in the union, in the Labour Party, speaking at *Socialist Organiser* meetings.

Because of the general downturn of the class struggle, Albert did not become a fully committed revolutionary socialist. But he was both a great class fighter, and, for me, a good friend.

I salute his memory.

## Who will buy Labour lunch?

**L**ABOUR'S TRADE and Industry spokesperson, sorry that should be spokesperson, Robin Cook, enjoyed a little dinner with a few minor industrialists at Soho's Pavilion Restaurant last week. This was the launch of Labour's new Forum for Business and Industry, a gathering designed to raise money to finance the formulation of policy and help Labour close the gap between old-fashioned socialist values — provision on the basis of need — and the Labour leaders' big new idea that private business should go on producing things for profit. Difficult job? Nah! Easy: just drop the former in favour of the later.

Cook invited members of the Forum to invest £500 each in the exercise. Only 25 signed up, giving a grand total of £12,500. In other words, not enough for many more meals in West End restaurants.

**H**OW many generations of immigrants fleeing persecution and oppression have wondered at the words of Emma Lazarus inscribed on the Statue of Liberty guarding the entrance to New York harbour:

Give me your tired and your poor  
Your huddled masses  
Yearning to breathe free.  
Ah, the land of the free. But what's this? The USA is introducing a non-returnable charge of \$130 payable in advance before any individual can apply for political refugee status — a measure even Britain hasn't got yet.

**M**ARJORIE Mowlam's suggestion that fox hunting could be replaced by drag hunting didn't go down well amongst Tory backbenchers last week. Don't worry, drag hunting isn't anything to do with pulling on your riding britches and taking your leather switch in hand to chase men in women's clothing. It is hunting a trail of scent — laid down in advance using a sack filled with aniseed — as a test of skill and control over horse and hounds. Clearly this could not satisfy the blood-lust of the rural sections of the ruling class. What would be the fun in having your cheeks smeared with pungent vegetable matter at the end of the hunt? One Tory MP, Michael Colvin, had a choice turn of phrase for such dull work. It would be like "kissing one's sister".

**A** MESSAGE from our "Voice of Reason" department: the government's inaction is disgraceful — young and impressionable people are not protected from dangerous and unnatural activities that, as we now know, can lead to horrendous and fatal diseases. There is far too much pressure on young people to experiment, far too many images in the media of this disgusting and degrading life style choice. Too many young lives are ruined. I write of

### GRAFFITI

VIVELA  
REBOLUCION

By Cyclops

**course about fags... When will the government act to curtail cigarette advertising that plays such a large part in encouraging nearly a third of young people to take up smoking? (Remember, the age of consent to have a relationship with a tobaccoist is only 16, what kind of age is that to take a decision that could affect the rest of their lives?)**

**G**OOD to see that the new model Labour Party is swinging into action in Rotherham. With the seat vacant, the party can show off its ultra-modern more-democratic-than-you-ever-believed-possible selection procedure. By the time you read this, Rotherham CLP will have chosen their candidate. It will not be local favourite, Peter Thirwall, who made the simple mistake of gaining more nominations than anyone else, thus proving he was popular with local activists and therefore not suitable. He is not on the shortlist.

The NEC selection panel also seems to have forgotten the policy of reserving half of all safe or marginal seats for women. Only two of six people on the shortlist are women.

**S**LOW developer of the year award. Roy Hattersley, who is leaving Parliament at the next election, has made a big leap forward in his understanding of the world. "It took me 30 years to realise that politics and parliament were not the same thing" said the great lardy one. Roy is to concentrate on writing. This may mean that the quality of his weekly Guardian "Endpiece" column will improve, but is more likely to mean that he will increase his output.

**V**ANESSA Redgrave, great actress and long-time luminary of the Gerry Healy (RIP) sect — she once sued SO for libel for telling a little of the truth about the Healyites — gets mellower with age. Here she is on the front page of the yucky sycophantic Hello magazine.



At home with Vanessa

# Lies, dam lies and the free(ish) press

### PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

In a political culture less accustomed to routine dishonesty and corruption, this admission would have caused

*"In a political culture less accustomed to routine dishonesty and corruption, Hurd would now be 'considering his position'."*

an outcry and Hurd would now be 'considering his position.' Instead of which, the

Foreign Secretary is brazening it out and, indeed, counter-attacking: "Newspapers," says Mr Hurd, "seem to have no concern for the consequences of what they write on British jobs."

Consider for a moment the sheer arrogance and audacity of that remark, coming as it does from a member of a government that has presided over three million unemployed and the destruction of the coal industry. Ponder, as well, the implicit attitude towards press freedom: newspapers have no business exposing dodgy deals, bribery and the misuse of "aid" if it jeopardises British trade and profits.

Clearly, Mr Hurd's gut atti-

tude toward press freedom is not so very different from Dr Mohamed's. You can understand the Malaysian premier being a little confused and upset: first Margaret Thatcher assures him that trade and aid deals are hers to bestow with a wave of her hand; then Douglas Hurd blames an 'irresponsible' press for kicking up a stink about it all. Why, reasons Dr Mohamed, doesn't the British government simply censor the press and sling the offending journalists into jail?

The rest of us might ask why the majority of 'popular' papers have not given this story the screaming front-page headlines it plainly warrants. And why the *Sunday Times* (whose coverage is said to have been the 'final straw' for the Malaysian Government) has concentrated its fire on Malaysian corruption rather than the British Government's blatant lying? Could it possibly be that most British newspaper editors are still infatuated with Margaret Thatcher?

## All sisters together?



By Jean Lane

**A** CONFERENCE of women took place last week in Brussels to discuss efforts to help the world's 550 million rural women who live below the poverty line.

One of the attendees of the conference said: "As women we have particular responsibilities towards our sisters in the rural world". The sister in question? Queen Paola, wife of the new Belgian King. All fifteen participants were, in fact, queens or wives of heads of state.

*"Even queens presumably, experience those irritating little moments when someone doesn't take them seriously because they are women."*

Queen Noor of Jordan, during a press interview given at the conference insisted that there was nothing in the lifestyle of a head of state's wife that denied her sister-

hood with the millions of third world women who live in grinding rural poverty. So we are all sisters under the skin: no matter how rich you are or how much power you've got, we are all oppressed as women.

Yes, all women suffer sexism. Even queens, presumably, experience those irritating little moments when someone doesn't take them quite so seriously because they are women. Mind you, how you are supposed to tell — as a queen, I mean — that some one opening a door for you is a sexist gesture, implying you can't do it for yourself, rather than the pomp and ceremony any decent, self-respecting queen would expect from a citizen, or from a security guard making sure that none of those nasty, unclean democrats and poor people get too close, I don't know.

But even if, taking a worst case scenario, a queen was a victim of persistent domestic violence, the idea that this makes her equal to and sisters with the millions of women who live in absolute grinding poverty; who have to walk miles every day to draw water from a well; who have to grow food with which to feed their families in soil unfit to grow anything; whose main source of fuel is animal droppings; whose breast milk is poor due to bad diet; who have never seen a sanitary towel and who have to cross mountains to find the nearest hospital or die in the attempt — the very idea that the worst treated first lady

should see herself as a sister to those women is a misunderstanding of the relationship between sex and class of the most mind-blowing proportions.

When Queen Noor was

*"The rural poor need the sisterhood of queens and first ladies like a hole in the head."*

asked, though there were no tiaras in sight, did she really believe that a queen's lifestyle allowed them to be sisters, she explained that her family and official duties amounted to an 18 hour day! Even if the official duties amounted to more than attending glittering balls, flying between international capitals, opening official ceremonies and attending conferences like this one; and even if the family commitment involved more than checking that the nanny was doing it right, her life could not compare with those she claims as her sisters.

But even if that were the case, it is not the point. Those poor, rural women are so because of the political system they are forced to live in and have no control over. It is because of the imperialism that treats them as pawns on a global chess board. Their

so-called sisters have a stake in that political system and collude in that imperialism.

It may very well be that many of the rural women the conference is talking about are illiterate and therefore unable to speak up for themselves. It is almost certainly true that many of them are disenfranchised, not by illiteracy but, by their menfolk who do not believe they should have the right to a say. But also millions are unable to speak and are disenfranchised because they do not even have the most basic democratic right to a vote in an election.

We are talking about political regimes run by queens and overseen by first ladies here. Jordan, Queen Noor's country, held its first ever halfway free election last year. She and her system are the reason they need some one else to speak up for them. It's like suffocating some one to the point of death and then, out of compassion, calling out "Stand back, the patient needs air!"

The rural poor of the world need support and help. They need the solidarity of the poor, disenfranchised and working people from the rest of the world. They need the right to vote, to land and to clean water. They need the charity that is sent in its millions from working class people from all around the world to organisations which help set up health care and community self help schemes. They need the sisterhood of queens and first ladies like a hole in the head.

# Red cloud over the black hills

By John Howard

*"The White Man made us many promises, more than I can remember but they never kept but one: they promised to take our land and they took it" — Mahpiua Luta (Red Cloud)*

**T**HIS YEAR Leonard Peltier, leader of the American Indian Movement, enters his nineteenth year in prison for a crime he did not commit. Peltier was convicted on discredited murder charges following a shoot-out on the Pine Ridge Reservation, near Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1975. His story is part of the lost history of the struggle of the American Indian people against genocide, and the subsequent expropriation of their traditional lands.

Under Red Cloud and Crazy Horse the Sioux people inflicted a series of spectacular military defeats on the US Army and the armed gangs of white settlers whose invasion it had been their task to support. By the terms of a Treaty signed in 1868 the nation of the Sioux peoples were guaranteed "absolute and undisturbed use" of the Black Hill and

Powder River country in what are now the states of North and South Dakota.

The Treaty was never honoured; and the tribes whose way of life stood in the path of the white man's 'progress' were ethnically cleansed from the American plains. After their massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, the remnants of the Sioux nation were held prisoner in desolate refugee camps on the badlands at Pine Ridge and Rose Bud, South Dakota.

In these camps the lives of a defeated generation of Indians were degraded by racialism, persecution, poverty and despair. But by cruel irony, massive uranium coal and oil deposits were discovered in the Black Hills in the 1960's, and the white man's greed was once again excited. The Kerr-McGee, Union Carbide and TVA Corporations developed plans for extensive strip mining and energy production for the Minneapolis and Saint Louis industrial belt. Out of this economic, environmental and racial ferment a new generation of Sioux were radicalised.

The American Indian Movement (AIM) was immediately officially classified as an extremist, terrorist

organisation, and, as part of an international communist threat to democracy and corporate profits. The FBI actively set about its destruction in a violent campaign which led to the 1975 shoot-out at Pine Ridge in which two FBI agents and an Indian man were killed. Employing vigilante gangs and state troops as well as its own agents, the FBI organised the largest man-hunt in its history. Leonard Peltier was its principal political target.

*"Peltier was caught and quickly convicted on the basis of fabricated ballistics evidence and fraudulent witness statements."*

Peltier was caught and quickly convicted on the basis of fabricated ballistics evidence and fraudulent witness statements. Despite the lack of any eye witness to the killings, Peltier was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences for the murder of the two FBI agents. The campaign to free him has attracted widespread support, and is backed within the United States by Democratic Party politicians such as Senator Daniel Inouye and Jessie Jackson; and has been championed by entertainers such as Robert Redford, Robin Williams, Oliver Stone, Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson. Peltier's case has also been taken up by Mikhail Gorbachev, Bishop Desmond Tutu, the main Canadian political parties, and the Spanish Human Rights Commission. His treatment has been condemned by Amnesty International, which has accused the US Government of abuse of power, and the fabrication and falsification of evidence.

In his statement from the dock Leonard Peltier said, "I stand before you as a proud man. I have no regrets of being a Native American activist — alerting my brothers and sisters to the new threat from the white man, and the attempt to destroy what little Indian land remains in the process of extracting our uranium, oil and other minerals. "Thousands of people around the world have and will continue to support me to expose the injustices which have occurred in this courtroom. I have no regrets — I feel only pity for your people that they must live under such an ugly system.

"Under your system, you are taught greed, racism and corruption — and most serious of all—the destruction of our mother the earth. Under the native American system we are taught that all people are sisters and brothers; and to share wealth with the poor and the needy.

But most important of all is to respect and preserve the earth, who we consider to be our mother. No I am not the guilty one here.

"I am not the one who should be called criminal — white racist America is the criminal for the destruction of our lands and the murdering of my people. It is to hide your guilt from the decent human beings in America and around the world that you will now sentence me."

AIM is currently organising a world-wide campaign of letters to President Clinton urging him to release Leonard Peltier. Please add your voice to it.

Contact: Leonard Peltier Freedom Campaign, c/o International Action Centre, 39 West 14 Street, Room 206, New York, NY 10011.

## No compromise on the age of consent

**L**AST Monday, Parliament voted not to equalise the age of consent for gay men. Some are saying that lowering the age of consent to 18 was "a suitable compromise," but, I think, it was no achievement at all. The basis of the law is to maintain the idea that gay men should not have the same rights to decide about their sexuality as others. That has remained.

We want equalit, nothing less!  
We can blame the result of the vote on several factors. Firstly the overt personal bigotry of many MPs, both Tory and Labour. The vote for 16 was lost by 27 votes. 35 Labour MPs voted against party policy, which is for an equal age of consent at 16.

MPs like Bob Cryer from the Socialist Campaign Group, David Blunkett, Shadow Health Minister and Ann Taylor, Shadow for Education put their personal prejudice before arguments from health organisations like the BMA and the Terrence Higgins Trust, before the democratic decision of the Labour Party conference and before the obvious case for equality.

We must also blame the overriding tactics used in the campaign, which focused largely on individual lobbying of MPs. The message to lesbian and gay activists has been: "speak nicely to MPs, convince them that we're normal, and we might get accepted." Very little has been done to challenge inequality in society as a whole, or to put pressure on MPs.

Stonewall have organised a very efficient lobbying campaign, which left MPs snowed under with letters from their gay constituents; but still they spouted their original arguments that 'the public' is not ready for full equality.

Demonstrations, pickets and mass lobbying should have been used as

**YOUTH FIGHTBACK**

**Rebellion**

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

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

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

*Youth Fightback is...*




Propa-Ghandi from rap band, Fun-da-mental took time out of recording their new album to speak at an AWL meeting on *How to Beat the Racists*, last Wednesday 23 February, in London. He argued for a resolute fight against racism and for unity of the anti-racist and anti-fascist movements.

part of the campaign. This would have challenged ideas more widely and led to a deeper change in attitudes.

The campaign should have also targeted the Labour Party. Individual MPs should have been forced by their constituencies to vote with party policy and there should have been a whip on the vote — this is a political issue of equality, not a moral issue to be left to the personal whims of bigots.

The result has left people angry and willing to take direct action. Straight after the vote was announced, a group from the demonstration outside the Commons tried to storm the building. OUTRAGE have called a demonstration for 14 March.

We should channel this anger in to effective campaigning. No pussy-footing around to keep in with people like Edwina Currie. Equality and nothing less!



This is the kind of bigotted filth the Sun thinks it can get away with. Last week's decision just gives them more grist to their mill.

# Right-wing alliance with Berlusconi aims for power

# Will the fascists

# Italy's election?

**Katrina Faccenda looks at the background to Italy's forthcoming General Election**

ITALY'S FIRST general election under the new electoral system has been set for 27 March at a time when the whole political landscape is being reshaped.

In the past, when elections were held under proportional representation, the ruling party — the Christian Democratic Party (DC) — could secure a majority only by making post-election deals. The electoral system has been radically altered — there is a big element of first-past-the-post in the new system — and now the deals are being done before the voters get anywhere near the ballot boxes.

The manoeuvring and deal-making is taking place amidst the debris of the long-dominant Christian Democratic Party, which recently disintegrated after ruling for nearly 40 years.

To a lesser degree the PSI (Socialist Party) too has collapsed. Both these parties crumbled mainly as a result of the huge "tangentopoli" and associated scandals. Three quarters of these parties' leaders are currently under investigation for corruption!

While the DC was hugely powerful, the influence of the Socialists was always half-illusory: the PSI gained power thanks only to the electoral system, which made it possible for its leader Craxi to become Prime Minister of a coalition government.

Benito Craxi is currently being tried for corruption, but in the 1980s he gathered a group of yuppies, careerists and TV stars around him. For a while the party seemed powerful and strong. Big businessmen like Silvio Berlusconi became closely associated with Craxi but like Craxi himself were at no time socialists.

The political Catholic movement — DC — was never homogenous. It was held together only by opposition to the only other party capable of governing, the neo-Stalinist PCI (Communist Party). DC was bonded together by desire for a Christian (Catholic) input into government, and by a commitment to the defence of the establishment.

The DC did not disintegrate overnight. Leoluca Orlando, founding member and leader of the anti-Mafia party La Rete, left the party after his experiences of DC-Mafia collaboration when he was Christian Democrat mayor of Palermo (Sicily) in the 1980s. Another prominent DC member, Mario Segni, left the party to lead the campaign for a yes vote in the referendum on the electoral system. Scandal sapped the party's credibility all through the '80s. After years of scandals nothing was left but corrupt politicians like Andreotti, an ex-Prime Minister who

allegedly kissed the ring of a famous Mafia Don, and the most die-hard Christian Democrats. Many of the DC politicians are now out of politics, in jail or on their way there.

The party has been "refounded" as the Popular Party of Italy (PPI). Although this change in name may be taken by some voters as a fresh start, they have lost and must try to reclaim their old status as the official party to claim the vote of conservative Catholic voters.

It has been "refounded" before. The original PPI was the focus of Catholic opposition to Mussolini in the 1920s, but was eventually crushed by the fascists, and sapped by the Vatican's accord with Mussolini. Inactive during the '30s, the PPI resurfaced in 1942 as the DC.

The DC, founded by those who had mainly dropped out of political activity in the late '20s, went on to win the 1945 elections. To grasp how they did this, and their extraordinary subsequent domination since 1945 you have to look at the vital years from 1943 when Mussolini fled Rome. The 1945 elections were decisive.

The Catholic anti-fascist resistance movement had been minute in comparison to that of the Communist Party. Togliatti, the leader of the PCI, had spent the years of fascism out of Italy as an honoured guest of Stalin and one of his agents in Spain, undermining the Spanish revolution. But in spite of fascist repression and an exiled leadership, the Communists had maintained a structured organisation within Italy, which had helped bring down Mussolini.

Instead of consolidating these victories, Togliatti — working for Stalin — was concerned with convincing the British and Americans that he was not interested in revolution or in supporting Italian workers who thought they were on the threshold of one. He spent a lot of time trying to convince his supporters of the progressive nature of the DC. While he was doing this, the DC leader De Gasperi, a rabid anti-socialist who had applauded the bloody defeat of the Austrian social democrats in 1934, manoeuvred his party into power with the connivance of the Allies. The CP was in a coalition government with them until 1947.

In short, the PCI strategy, as well as betraying the workers and peasants, who had driven Mussolini out of power and the Germans out of Italy, handed the government of Italy on a plate to the DC. They held on to it for 40 years.

During these years of opposition, in spite of its size the PCI did little, although many of the most militant trade unionists were at some time members of the party. More and



The granddaughter of Benito Mussolini, fascist dictator of Italy from 1922 to 1943, came close to a fascist vote.

more industrial action has been initiated not by CGIL, the Communist-controlled union confederation, but by autonomous trade union committees.

THE RECENT local elections were seen as a post-scandal, post-"tangentopoli" trial run. The PDS (the renamed PCI) did well, but for the first time since Mussolini the fascists (MSI) were a powerful force. Since 1945 the MSI have maintained a fairly large membership and gained enough votes to be represented in parliament, but they were never close to challenging the DC for the conservative vote. In the local elections last year they took advantage of a discredited and demoralised DC to do just that.

Their non-involvement in the scandals is of course more to do with them not being in a position to get bribed than it is a testimonial to their integrity.

In the period between the first and second round votes the media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi announced that he would support Gianfranco Fini, leader of MSI, for mayor of Rome. Berlusconi was the President of Fininvest.

Journalists working in Berlusconi's empire — which controls 21 holding companies, two publishing houses, a national newspaper and three TV networks — responded to his support for Fini with immediate strike

action.

The politicians who governed in the interest of business men like Berlusconi have been eliminated from the political scene and he has decided to become directly involved in politics. He has founded a party whose name could have been inspired by his time on the terraces of AC Milan, the football team he owns. Forza Italia means "Go Italy!"

*"The alliance which defeats the fascists and Berlusconi must have a programme and the PDS won't come up with one."*

Forza Italia is a political party with 3 national TV networks and a newspaper at its disposal. Journalists working in this empire are rightly worried about their journalistic freedom and jobs. Berlusconi produced a video to launch his party, in which he said he was putting himself forward as a candidate to save Italy from communism. What he is really concerned with is the defence of the privileges gained by business in the '80s during the Craxi era.

Berlusconi comes across a bit like Ross Perot. He talks of the need for strong non-nonsense government and uses populist vocabulary. He argues that government is best run in the way he runs his businesses.

The party itself is made up of many of the careerists who were in the PSI when Craxi was in power; of the right of the DC — those not in jail! — and various right wing careerists. The rhetoric may be about a "fresh start" but these people are the power brokers of the 'ancien regime'.

Come the elections Berlusconi's real importance will depend on his success in forming and holding together a right-wing



Andreotti



Segni



Craxi



power  
win



to winning the vote for mayor of Naples on a

coalition around Forza Italia.

The Lega Nord (Northern League) gained support in the North by capitalising on the corruption scandals. They have already gone in with Berlusconi. The Alleanza Nazionale, which is basically the electoral name of the fascists, is negotiating a coalition with them.

In their ideal Berlusconi would concern himself with central Italy, the Lega with the north and the fascists with the south. However, Fini has announced that his party would have candidates in all of Italy and would challenge the League. This may only be rhetoric to please party members.

Achille Occhetto, the leader of the PDS, has worked for years to form the alliances which brought victory in the local elections. He is trying to carry this forward to the general election so that he can fulfil his ambition of becoming Prime Minister. The Progressive block is dominated by the PDS and includes Rifondazione, the Greens, La Rete and some smaller groups.

With the threat from the far right the elections inevitably dominate the left agenda in Italy now. But, if the left wins the election, can it solve Italy's immense economic problems?

The Italian economy is in chaos. Even Berlusconi's Fininvest is massively in debt. It is hard to imagine that the Progressives will come up with a programme which can tackle these economic problems.

Yet the PDS having managed to survive the collapse of Stalinism, may go on to take power. This is claimed as the real vindication of "eurocommunism". The current electoral strength of the PDS has little to do with their policies and more to do with their ability to manoeuvre and their low level of involvement on the corruption scandals. The victories in the local elections were welcome defeats of the fascists and the Lega, but not unfortunately, victories for socialism.

The rise of the MSI has enabled the PDS to revive old sentiments and memories in Italian politics: the war-time anti-fascist popular fronts. But the alliance which defeats Fini and Berlusconi must have a programme and Occhetto certainly won't come up with one.

# The Foot-O'Mahony debate

## Socialism means democracy not Stalinism

By Joan Trevor

IF ANYONE is going to mention those two words — socialism and democracy — in the same breath they had better be ready to have a debate about the ex-Stalinist states.

Were they "better" than capitalist countries? Was the economic system there the next stage on from capitalism in terms of human economic progress? Is every person who fights for socialism — especially every person who preaches the need for revolution — a fledgling Stalin? Someone who wants to make the world what the Soviet Union was?

*"Stalin led a counter-revolution against the working class and, naturally, the aims and policies of Lenin and the Bolsheviks."*

The answers, of course, are no, no and no. But it's natural that people's thoughts go down these lines when almost all propaganda — from right and from left — supports that idea.

Anyone a socialist hopes to persuade of the need to fight for socialism will have misgivings about — or else rosy illusions in! — the ex-Stalinist states — and in the neo-Stalinists in the ex-Stalinist states who today do deals with neo-fascists to get back as far as possible to their totalitarian Golden Age.

The degeneration of the revolution which Lenin and the Bolsheviks made in 1917, and then the consolidation of a new exploiting society wallowing in the abuses which it inflicted on the people it ruled — these have been the bourgeoisie's best ideological weapons against socialists for almost seventy years.

We socialists are all intent on building a tyrannical, monolithic state to rule over people, and we hope to sit on top of it creaming off the surplus product and hypocritically proclaiming it a socialist paradise.

This is the imaginary paradise to which many socialists in the western and third worlds did and do believe, "bearing witness" as an act of faith, as Christians do for their own imaginary paradise. Out-and-out Stalinists did and do this, and so do certain "Trotskyists". The Stalinist states, contrary to all appearance and common sense, were socialist in some sense: this was the nonsensical thesis that hypnotised generations.

Serious accounting is required from these "revolutionary socialists".

The really freaky thing is that the people — the cunning, young right-wing Labour careerists in the National Union of Students, for example — who, given half a chance, would be most like to go down this road call us working-class revolutionaries "Stalinists". They are "democratic socialists", a statement that contains at least two lies aside from its manifold confusions!

How are they able to do this?

Because Stalinism was an economic and a political system. There are plenty of people in the Labour Party now who happily use the political methods of Stalinism while they avow themselves completely opposed to Stalinism, the economic system.

Where does this seeming paradox originate? In history and geography.

To answer the question you have to look at the conditions — which were not of their choosing — in which the Bolsheviks acted. They made a workers' revolution in an economical-

ly backward country, all the while knowing that their revolution could only succeed by spreading to other, advanced, western European capitalist countries, which it did not.

They did not make the first, February revolution — the workers of St Petersburg and Moscow made it and put into power a liberal, bourgeois government which continued the disastrous war that had undermined the Tsar and brought them to power in the first place. Impotently this government presided over continuing economic and social collapse, because, as Cathy Nugent put it in the first part of her article on Lenin [SO 585], "the Russian bourgeoisie was a feeble class and at the sight of the mass socialist workers' movement all over Europe a fear-stricken class".

They did not dare to be bold against the old autocratic system. They cut the ground from under their own feet.

Trotsky said later that had the Bolsheviks not seized power in November 1917 fascism would have been the only other answer to Russia's crisis. The 14 imperialist powers who — half-heartedly — invaded the workers' state would back the deposed aristocratic class in crushing the workers and their revolution.

After three years of a war which almost destroyed the economy, and decimated the working class, the Bolsheviks held on to power but — isolated from the rest of Europe — what could they do?

There was a power struggle in the Bolshevik Party over the way out of the mire and Stalin won it on behalf of a new ruling class, which climbed on to the backs of the people.

He led a counter-revolution against the working class and, naturally, the aims and policies of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

He established a bloody economic and political system which developed the country rapidly in terms of heavy industry and basic amenities and provided a surplus to sustain his bureaucracy — the Soviet Union's new ruling class. This was a system suited only to the forced-march development of a backward country where the working class and peasantry are so much in thrall that the rulers can achieve their economic "gains" by a vast expense of millions of human lives.

The reason the right-wing and soft-left Labour politicians can be against Stalin the dictator and yet themselves be petty bureaucratic dictators, and sanctimonious careerists who carve and lie to get into power is because capitalism has developed the productive forces in Britain.

They don't have to subscribe to Stalin's economic system because Britain already has railways and steelworks and — indeed — is gone pretty much beyond those things: privileged Britain has motorways, a car to a family, declin-

ing heavy industry and developed light industry and new technologies.

Economically Britain is far in advance of Stalinism. More advanced politically and in terms of democratic freedoms too — and that is where the Labour right and the soft-left would like to stick.

They have no vision of something better — something possible, achievable! — than the best of capitalism. While that is sad for them, what is sad for us is that the vision they do have is completely anaemic.

They never won any of the freedoms we enjoy. Neither did their political ancestors, so it is no surprise they aren't prepared to defend them against the Tories.

It is surprising in that case that they claim these freedoms their own creatures and claim to be able to hold them against us.

They didn't build the economic system they want so desperately to get their hands on. The capitalists did. So it is no surprise no-one thinks they can run it.

Once upon a time ruling-class newspapers wondered if "capitalism is safe in their — Labour's — hands". Meaning — imagine it if you can — that a Labour government would try to take over, go beyond, radically reform capitalism. Now the question "is capitalism safe in their hands?" means only are they competent enough accountants and managers? Will there be enough grey-suits on the Labour Party front bench?

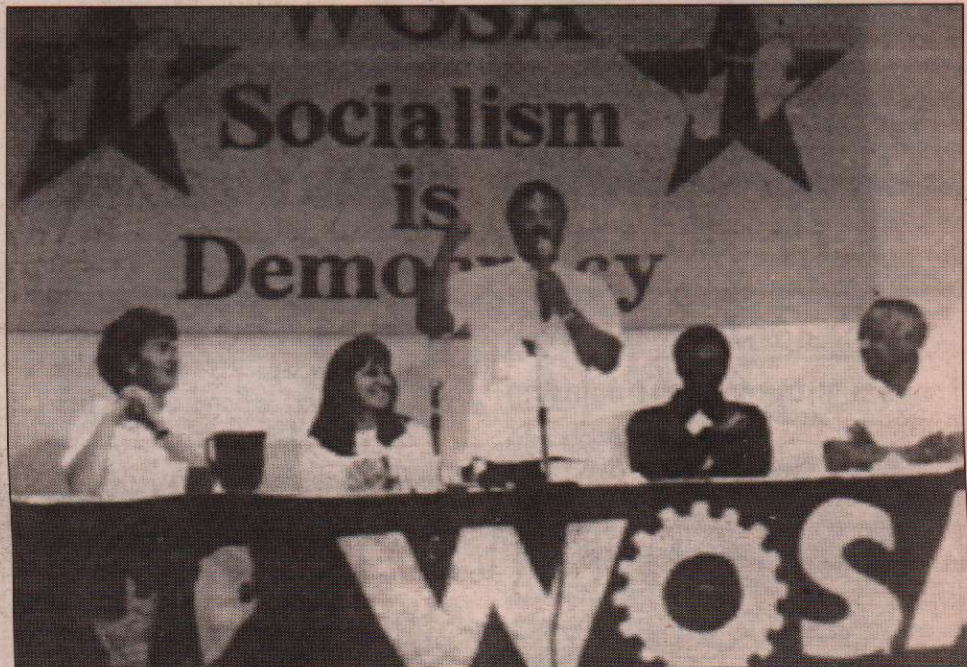
The new Alliance for Workers' Liberty pamphlet, *Socialism and Democracy* addresses questions like these. It sets out to explain

- how the Bolsheviks were the best democrats
- that democracy is about more than electing a government and sitting back
- that being a democrat is a question first and foremost of defending and fighting for more democracy against governments, elected or otherwise, and regardless of whether you voted for them.

It revolves around a debate from the early '80s between Michael Foot, then Labour leader, writing in the *Observer*, and John O'Mahony, writing in *Socialist Organiser*, about what democracy means and the duties you take on when you profess to be a democrat.

For a long time Marxists stressed that real democracy means economic and social democracy — a working-class revolution against the capitalist system. Of late we have been neglecting the first and essential building blocks of making a revolution — defending and extending our first gains on that path around political democracy — and this pamphlet aims to redress that.

• *Socialism and Democracy* £1.95 plus 36p postage from WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4 NA.



"Socialism is democracy", say South African Marxists.

# Chartism: when workers fought "There can be no liberty without e

Gary Scott continues his series on the Chartists, the pioneer workers' movement of the 1830s and '40s.

**A**FTER THE FAILURE of the First Chartist Petition in 1839, there followed outbreaks of violence and then state repression. The arguments for the use of physical force methods were to be rejected even by previous advocates of it.

George Julian Harney, writing to Marx in 1846, stated:

"As to what O'Connor has been saying lately about 'physical force' I think nothing of it. The English people will not adopt Cooper's slavish notions about peace and non-resistance but neither would they act upon the opposite doctrine. They applaud, at public meetings, but that is all. Notwithstanding all the talk in 1839 about 'arming the people' the people did not arm and they will not arm."

As the movement began to regroup and assess the reasons for its failure, divisions

began to increase within the movement. Those who had never supported physical force methods broke away to form their own organisations.

*The leaders of the Democratic Association emphasised social and class issues that were to divide middle class and working class radicals.*

Lovett proposed a "National Association of the United Kingdom for promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People" to:

"Unite in one general body, persons of all

creeds, classes and opinions, who are desirous to promote political and social improvement of the People."

Feargus O'Connor, writing in the Northern Star, denounced this brand of Chartism seeing it as diversionary and elitist:

"I object to Knowledge Chartism because it implicitly acknowledges a standard of some learning, education or information as necessary qualification to entitle man to his political rights."

The divisions within the movement that were to widen after the failure of physical force methods had existed from as early as 1837. These divisions could be seen most clearly in London.

In London, in 1837, two organisations whose main aim was the six points of the Charter existed alongside each other: the East London Democratic Association and the London Working Men's Association.

The London Working Men's Association was a more exclusive organisation, concerned with attracting the more "respectable" sections of the working classes and appealing to the middle classes for support. The more oppressed sections of the working classes were excluded from it and its emphasis was on education — what O'Connor termed "Knowledge Chartism".

The Democratic Association tried to appeal to wider sections of the working classes of London: "No man is too poor to unite with us, on the contrary, the poorer, the more oppressed, the more welcome."

The leaders of the Democratic Association emphasised social and class issues that were to divide middle class and working class radicals. It drew inspiration from people like Thomas Paine and Thomas Spence. Its leaders had been involved in the unstamped press movement and included such people as George Julian Harney.

In an address to the Polish Democratic Society in 1837 the Democrats wrote:

"We agree with you that without equality there is no liberty; for while a class or classes live on the labour of others such men must of necessity be tyrants, and all other labour must be slaves."

The LDA, unlike the IWMA, saw the achievement of the six points of the Charter as being part of a larger programme. Writing in the *London Democrat*, 1 June 1839, J J Coombe emphasised this point:

"I have a great objection to its [the Charter] being considered as a panacea for all the evils under which you labour. The disease which is now preying on your vitals is much too deeply seated to be effected by remedies of this kind. Your whole system requires revolution, your commercial system requires revolution and nothing short of actual convulsion will effect a cure... Establish the People's Charter tomorrow, and the working man would have no difficulty the less to contend with."

The movement in London was to be split over the issue of support for Trade Unions. At the end of 1837, the Irish Catholic leader, Daniel O'Connell, an honorary member of the LWMA, attacked Trade Unionism in the House of Commons. There was widespread condemnation of O'Connell's actions. Harney and others campaigned for the LWMA to break with O'Connell. The LWMA brought a motion of censure against Harney for this. On 6th March 1838 Harney, Tom Ireland and Charles Neesom resigned from the LWMA and began building a rival body to be called the London Democratic

Association.

**F**OLLOWING THE release of the movement's most prominent leaders, arrested during the disturbances of 1839, there was a revival of Chartism. The movement under the leadership of Feargus O'Connor underwent steady growth. Throughout 1841 local Chartist and Working Men's Associations were drawn into the National Charter Association. By December 1841 there were 282 local organisations with 17,000 members. By April 1842, 50,000 members and 401 associations were claimed.

One of the reasons for the failure of Chartism prior to the rejection of the First Petition was its lack of leadership and organisation at national and local level.

From 1840 onwards there was to develop a new kind of movement. There were to be delegate-based conferences, executive members were to be paid and a system of Chartist Lecturers was to be established. O'Connor suggested a scheme that involved the provision of regular prizes for working class essays. The improvement in organisation

*Chartists were to concern themselves with trying to establish an alternative culture and articulate an alternative political economy. Co-operative stores, temperance societies, schools and democratic chapels were all formed.*

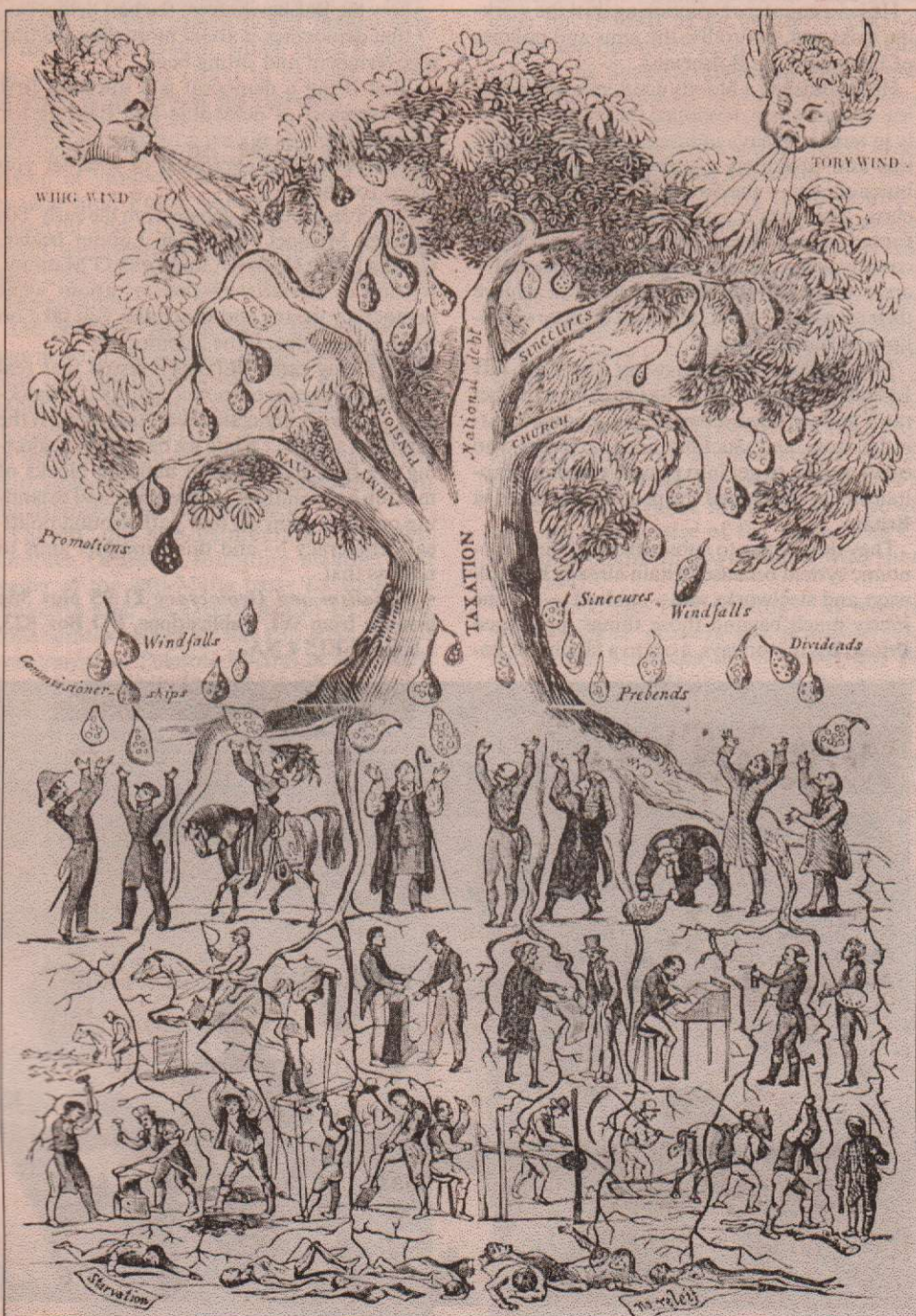
resulted in 3,317,702 signatures on a second petition. It was presented to Parliament in 1841 and rejected by 287 votes to 49. The number of signatures indicated growing support for the Charter. O'Connor wrote in the Northern Star "We are 4,000,000, Ay and more... How proud must I now be to call you 4,800,000!"

Rejection of the petition led many Chartists to carry out practical measures through which could be measured improvement in their and other people's lives.

It is in this context that such tactics as "exclusive dealing" should be seen. Through exclusive dealing the working class attempted to organise its own life and to undermine the economy of what they saw as a parasitic and wasteful shopocracy.

Exclusive dealing involved the working classes withholding their spending power, and, by a run on the banks, ensuring that working class money would not fund hostile institutions. Robert Lowery explained the strategy in the following terms:

"Our pennies make their pounds, dealing at their shops made them middle class men and voters. If we cease to deal with them they will become poor, and lose their votes, and have to labour for their bread honestly... All those splendid shops we see in every town



A Chartist caricature of "The Tree of Taxation" shows how poor people's taxes support the armed forces, the Church, and the bureaucracy.

OUR HISTORY

# for democracy O quality”



1848: the middle-class magazine *Punch* tries to deride “a physical-force Chartist arming for the fight.”

have been furnished by us; all those fine houses in which the gentry dwell, with their snug parlours, fine drawing rooms and costly furniture have been furnished by the profits on our labour; and if we have done so much for others, may we not do so much for ourselves?”

In the following years Chartists were to concern themselves with trying to establish an alternative culture and articulate an alternative political economy. Co-operative stores, temperance societies, schools and democratic chapels were all formed. Cultural activities were organised locally including lectures, debates, Chartist Sunday Schools, tea parties...

It could be seen that capitalism meant over-production, excessive powers for employers backed up by state repression. Capitalism brought with it mass unemployment. A Chartist critique of this political economy included support for the campaign for the Ten Hours Bill, to restrict competition and overproduction. To ease unemployment people should be employed on the land. They argued for a minimum wage and, through the Charter, political power for the working class.

During the 1842 General Strike a resolution from the Bolton spinners shows how

they were coming to terms with industrial capitalism and attempting to work out strategies to curb its excesses:

“This meeting is of the opinion, that a great deal of distress in the manufacturing districts is owing to improvements of machinery which have superseded manual labour and created a burthensome population. And this meeting is further of the opinion, that the best means to be adopted, would be to establish an efficient Ten Hours Bill... to immediately colonise the Crown Lands which would thus employ the redundant population and at the same time improve and augment the Home Trade.”

**\* Thomas Paine**

AUTHOR OF *The Rights of Man*, published in two parts in 1791 and 1792. It became an international best-seller.

He was a staunch republican, describing the origin of the monarchy in the following terms: “A banditti of ruffians overthrow a country, and lay it under contributions. Their power being thus established, the chief of the band contrived to lose the name of Robber in that of Monarch; and hence the origin of Monarchy and Kings”.

Next week: **The Land Scheme and the Third Petition.**

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Lenin

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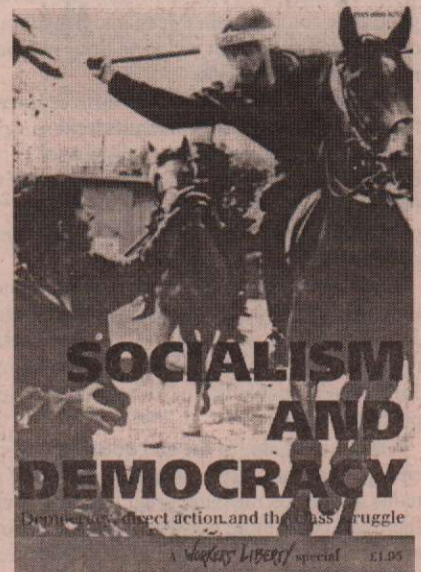
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This pamphlet is dedicated to all the victims of the cruel British Empire and the divided Irish struggle — Orange, Green, and Green-White-and-Orange alike — did by partitioning Ireland in 1922. It is dedicated too to the Irish labour movement on both sides of the border, which must fight its way out of the blood-soaked mess capitalism has made in Ireland and build the only republic that is not a glib and cynical mockery of the long struggles of the Irish people for freedom — the workers’ republic.

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## Who was Jesus Christ?

## When did the Gospels become 'The Truth'?

**C**HRISTIAN WRITERS of the first and early second centuries nowhere refer to any Gospels though they sometimes quote "words of the Lord Jesus". The first to mention what can be recognised as the Gospels is Papias who lived at Hierapolis in Asia Minor in the first half of the second century. His work "An Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord" is now lost other than in quotes preserved by other writers.

Iranaeus, late in the second century, quotes one of the oral traditions that Papias says he prefers to books, in which Jesus paints a highly materialistic picture of the good time coming in the Messianic Kingdom when vineyards will yield wine to overflowing and wheat will yield flour in fabulous abundance. This is nowhere recorded in the Gospels.

Preserved by Eusebius in the fourth century in 'Ecclesiastical History' is a quote from Papias, the first that mentions the Gospels. Here Papias quotes an unnamed "elder" as saying that Mark, a disciple of Peter but not of Jesus, wrote "accurately, but not in order" what Peter remembered of the sayings and doings of Jesus. Papias also says that Matthew collected the "oracles" of Jesus in Hebrew and that others translated them into Greek as best they could. There is no mention of Luke or John.

Writing in Rome in the middle of the second century is Justin. He doesn't mention a Gospel by name but says that "memoirs of the apostles", along with the Jewish prophets, were read at Christian meetings. Where he quotes them we can recognise Matthew, Mark and Luke and another source lost. There are none from John even though much of that particular Gospel would have been useful in supporting his points.

It is not until almost the end of the second century that the four Gospels we have emerge as authoritative. Iranaeus, Bishop of Lyons about 180AD, is the first to name all four by the names that we know them and he gives mystical reasons why there can be no more nor less than four. As of this point the four were generally accepted though there were notable Christians who rejected John even into the fourth century.

So while investigating the supposed eyewitness accounts among the Christian sources for information in answer to the question: "Who was Jesus Christ?", we can so far establish the following. Of the four Gospels 3 are based on a common source itself written at least a generation after the death of its central character. What has been handed down to us as the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are compilations based on this source and edited in the light of current concerns. In so far as this source provides any information as to who was Jesus Christ then the Christian sources thus provide only 2 documents — the source behind Matthew, Mark and Luke and the Gospel of John.

Before looking in more detail at these it might be useful to give an idea of how much overall information about Jesus is provided in the Gospels by looking at how and to what extent they support the Nativity story of popular myth.

## Anno Domini: The Year of Our Lord?

**T**O BEGIN AT the beginning. The Nativity, or the story of the birth of Jesus, gives us our calendar in the "Western" world. The years are numbered as of that moment. As I write this is the year one thousand, nine hundred and ninety four. How do we know that Jesus was born exactly that number of years ago? We don't.

Only 2 of the Gospels — Matthew and Luke — actually mention the Nativity. And even in these there are contradictions suggesting that they are later additions. According to Matthew:

'Jesus was born of Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King' (Matthew 2:1).

There then follows the story of how Herod, hearing that a King of the Jews had been born, ordered the deaths of all children under 2 years old. Meanwhile Mary and Joseph have been warned by an angel because of this to flee to Egypt. Later the angel tells them that Herod is now dead and they may return:

'And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel' (Matthew 2:20-21).

How old the 'young child' was at this point we aren't told but since Herod died in what we now call 4BC Jesus could not have been born 4 years after the death of Herod.

Luke agrees with the dating of Jesus' birth in the reign of Herod the Great by linking it with the birth of John the Baptist who was also born

'in the days of Herod, the King of Judea' (Luke 1:5).

So we have the same problem.

However Luke later, in trying to be more precise, adds a contradiction by saying that Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem to be assessed for tax:

'this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria' (Luke 2:1).

But we know from Roman sources that Cyrenius was not appointed governor of Syria until what we now call 6AD, the same year in which Judea became a Roman province and therefore assessable for tax purposes. Jesus could not therefore have been born in a stable, due to the Inn being full, until after 6AD.

But Luke goes on to offer a third possibility. He describes the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. All four Gospels agree that this immediately preceded the commencement of his ministry. John began his baptisms

'In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea.....Annas and Caiaphas being the High Priests....' (Luke 3:1).

Tiberius Caesar became emperor in 14AD and Luke says:

'And Jesus began to be about thirty years of age' (3:23) when he started his ministry.

So fifteen years into the reign of Tiberius Caesar, which began in 14AD, means Jesus was 'about 30' in 29AD. Of the three choices the Roman Catholic Church plumped for the last one which the Roman Empire consequently made the official dawn of time. And December 25th, of course, nowhere gets a mention.

Next week: the Virgin Birth



By Rob Dawber

## Derek Jarman: a flare against the darkness

By Edward Ellis

**D**EREK JARMAN'S films were generally very low-budget, rarely used famous actors, and depended primarily on stunning, painting-like visual images. They were also uncompromisingly gay. It is indeed surprising that Jarman's name is so well-known and his work so widely viewed.

His early films were particularly controversial, both *Sebastiane* and *Jubilee* managed to outrage Mary Whitehouse when they were shown on TV in the 1980s. *Sebastiane* was an almost uniquely gay film for its time, describing (in Latin, with subtitles) the martyrdom of St Sebastian. *Jubilee* was perhaps the movie of the punk era, made in 1977, and with Elizabeth I wandering the desolate streets of contemporary England.

Many of his films — *The Angel's Conversation*, *The Last of England*, *The Garden* — consist literally of a series of images. These are frequently powerful, political images: fully-uniformed soldiers dancing together, down-and-outs, bleak tower blocks. Or there are images of homoerotic love. Jarman's films are always, even when they are bleak, beautiful, colourful, full of light (he was fond of flares glowing against the darkness) reflections, flowers. In *War Requiem* he married this distinctive imagery with Benjamin Britten's anti-war song-cycle.

*"Many of his films consist literally of a series of images. These are frequently powerful, political images: fully-uniformed soldiers dancing together, down-and-outs, bleak tower blocks."*

Other films have a more conventional structure. *The Tempest* transformed Shakespeare's play. In *Edward II*, one of his more recent films, he took Marlowe's play about the love of the English king for Gaveston, and turned it into a vivid portrait of contemporary homophobia. *Wittgenstein* looked at the life of the philosopher. *Caravaggio* told the life of the Italian painter through an imagery which mirrored the homoeroticism of his paintings.

Most uncompromising of all was his last film, *Blue*, recently shown on television. By the time he made it, Jarman was almost blind. The screen consists of an unchanging blue while music and voices describe the life of



Derek Jarman: film maker, artist, writer, activist.

a person with AIDS.

The remarkable thing about Jarman's films was that although they were firmly at the 'art house' end of the market, they were accessible. Never boring, never gratuitously complex, often funny, they deservedly won a wide audience. He was a pioneer and trail blazer for British film makers, perhaps especially gay film makers.

His work was very different also from other critically-successful British film makers like Peter Greenaway. Greenaway's films deal with the soullessness of modern society (as in *The Cook, The Thief...*). But Jarman's films never included Greenaway's gaudy overstatement. The remained always rather gentle, fey and personal.

Derek Jarman was also a writer and activist. Several commentators have noted that even at the end of his life he was committed to quite gruelling work around AIDS and gay rights. Like most public figures who are gay, Jarman was rarely interviewed without this political dimension becoming the central issue. Some of what he said did not always please even gay men. His spirited defence of the right of gay men to have sex on Hampstead Heath was considered by some to be irresponsible. Possibly there was a certain naivete to some of his political statements.

But not all. When the actor Ian McKellan accepted his knighthood, Jarman denounced him. Against the idea that the knighthood represented a breakthrough for lesbian and gay rights, Jarman insisted that it was, in effect, a sell-out. The Tory government could not be trusted to grant

equality. Certainly, in light of events at Parliament less than forty eight hours after his death, here it was not Jarman who was naive.

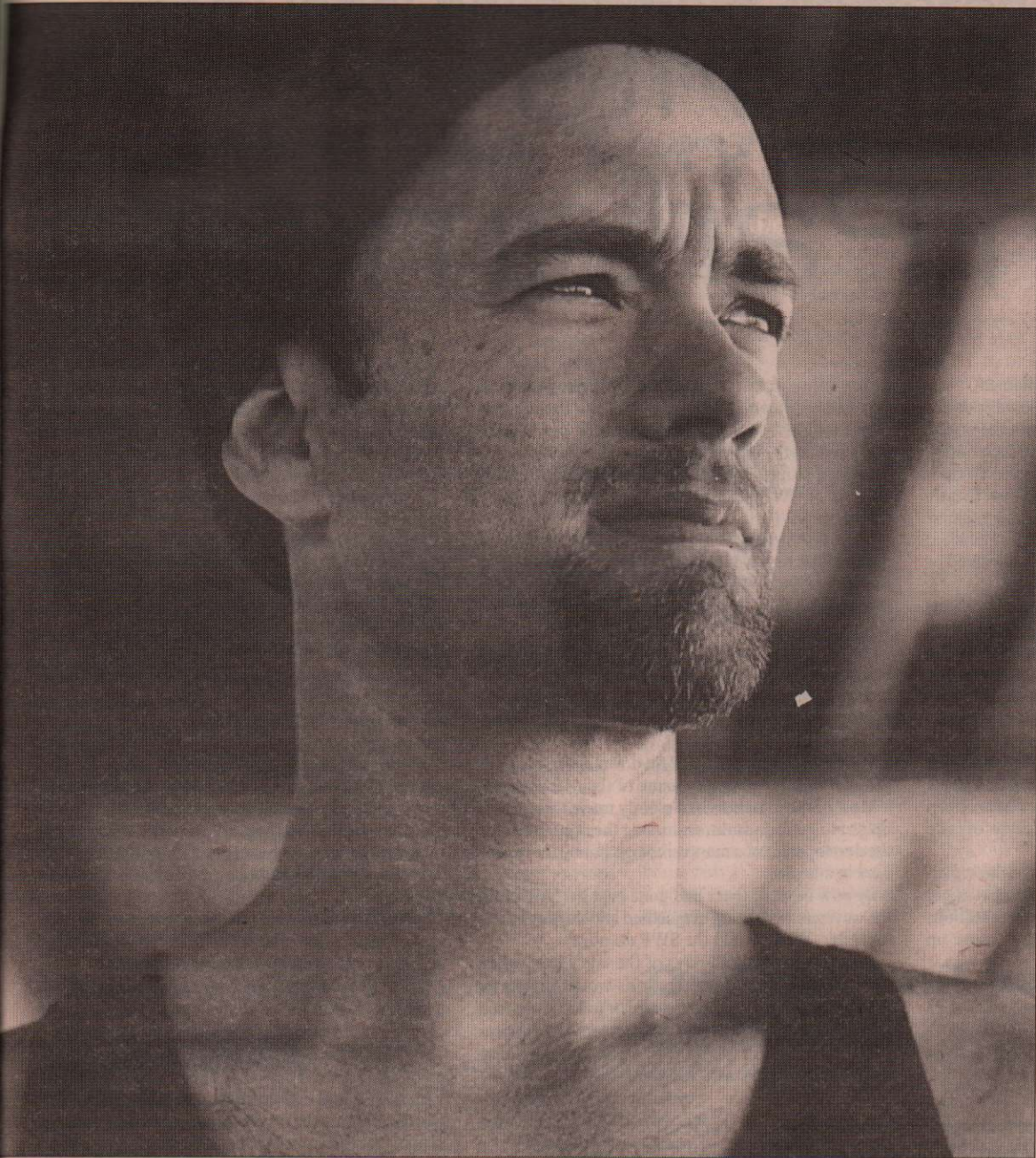
Derek Jarman once told a television documentary that he regretted nothing in his life, not even the day he contracted HIV. It is a sentiment often expressed by people living with HIV, and at first sight might seem a bit implausibly optimistic. The films he made even when he knew he was dying prove that it was not a false optimism. He understood that there is no point in wasting the life we have.

In his diaries, *Modern Nature*, published in 1991, Jarman responds to a critic: "Vincent Canby, who has hated a lot of my films, perhaps none so much as *The Tempest*, slaughtered me again today in the *New York Times*. Perhaps I should be pleased by the column inches. 'Derek Jarman has made a movie of such epic irrelevance that when it rises to the occasion it is merely redundant... Mr Jarman, whose films include *Sebastiane* and *Caravaggio*, has a weakness for the kind of baroque imagery that is utterly beside the point'. The last line: 'Mr Jarman decorates a film as much as he directs it'."

"Since much of the cinema is an enormous irrelevance, a medium that has crossed the boundaries of intelligence in very few hands, it does not worry me. No-one except fools expected to find much at the end of this rainbow."

Rainbow or not, there will be less to find now that Derek Jarman is gone.

*Caravaggio* is being shown as a tribute to Derek Jarman on Channel Four on Tuesday 8 March at 10 pm.

Tom Hanks is never less than convincing in *Philadelphia*

# Deserving more praise than blame

Matt Cooper  
reviews  
*Philadelphia*

Directed by  
Jonathan Demme

THIS WEEK saw two big events for AIDS and film making. The first was the death of Derek Jarman from AIDS-related illness. The second was the release of *Philadelphia*, the first big-budget

Hollywood film to deal with AIDS as a central issue. It is easy to see this as a symbol for a cultural shift. Whereas Jarman's films were iconoclastic and avowedly art house, *Philadelphia*, by contrast, is a glossy commercial affair featuring a host of star names.

The city of Philadelphia — whose name means city of brotherly love — is home to some of the major law firms of the US. Brotherly love and the law constitute the two main themes of the film: should a gay man suffering from AIDS be included within the embrace of the State's

ideal of brotherly love, and can he find justice?

Tom Hanks specialises in playing rather irksome overgrown children, but in this portrayal of a man — a brilliant and successful young lawyer — dying of AIDS he is never less than convincing and at times he is quite inspired.

The film starts by establishing two facts. Hanks had a glowing future ahead of him as a lawyer, but he is never likely to realise it now that he is HIV positive and beginning to show sign of full blown AIDS. Prejudice disables him long before

the disease does.

The effect of AIDS as such is treated dispassionately by the film. Its anger is directed at people's reaction to AIDS, especially AIDS in gay men. When a senior partner in the law firm rattles that Hanks has AIDS, he has him sacked on a trumped up charge.

As a lawyer Hanks seeks redress for unfair dismissal, and the film becomes a court room drama. This constitutes the first theme of the film, the fight for justice.

The second theme, brotherhood, is supplied by his relationship with his lawyer, played by Denzil Washington. At first he cannot find a lawyer to represent him. Eventually he turns to a black lawyer, Washington, with a legal track record in civil rights. But Washington is rabidly homophobic. He is also more than a little ignorant about AIDS: immediately after meeting Hanks he goes rushing off to his doctor for a check up! (It is difficult to believe that any educated person could really be this ignorant, but the comic

*"The full blown horror of AIDS is never seen."*

effect is great).

Eventually, it is Washington's belief in civil rights in general, not in gay or HIV-suffers rights in particular, that persuades him to take up Hanks's case. This sets up for a second struggle intertwined with that for justice — the struggle for acceptance.

Washington's initial reactions and prejudices are gradually whittled away and he gains a deeper understanding of Hanks, his sexuality and his illness.

It is difficult to know whether to praise or blame this film — it deserves both praise and blame. It pulls many of its punches. Some of the effects of AIDS are shown, but its full horror is never seen. Hanks's long-term relationship with his partner, played by Antonio Banderas, is presented in Victorian mode: where Washington gets to kiss, hug and even sleep with his wife, Hanks and Banderas seem almost scared to touch each other. (There was apparently a more intimate scene which was cut).

Possibly the strongest criticism of this film is its degree of fantasy — all of Hanks's family are totally understanding about his sexuality and his illness, and there is never any tension.

On the whole, however, the weaknesses of the film can be forgiven. Aiming at a mass audience it is justly concerned not to alienate that audience by doing too much at one time. Such an approach is open to criticism, but it can be defended, and it is at least sincere.

Harder to stomach is the film's sentimentality. In focusing on Hanks as the brilliant young lawyer and all-round good guy, it portrays a personal tragedy that transcends his sexuality. In the end, even the homophobic head of the law firm who sacked him is affected by Hanks's sheer nobility: he does not thereby become less homophobic.

But the film's positive side wins through. It is impassioned about injustice, to both gay men and people who are HIV positive. It clearly sees that these two are not the same thing. It especially emphasises that there is no innocent/guilt divide as far as HIV is concerned.

This is a film with its heart pretty near the right place, despite its Hollywood production values. It may face a degree of just criticism from some quarters, but don't let anyone tell that it isn't a good thing that this film has been made.

**"It will be the fate of dinosaurs or it will be socialism"**

TV  
REVIEW

Gary Meyer

reviews

*Horizon*

BBC2  
Monday 28 February 8.00pm

ARE THERE millions of asteroids lurking in outer space just waiting to crash in to earth, bringing with them destruction equivalent to a 1 billion megaton nuclear bomb?

Some scientists and the American military believe that there is a such a threat and are taking it seriously. But this is where I become cynical.

The cold war is over, and now there is only one superpower (the USA). The American Star-wars programme has effectively been put on hold. The scientists and military personal involved in this project are having to look around for another reason to a) keep their jobs and b) keep their millions of dollars funding. Their answer? — the technology can be used to protect the earth from the hazards of nature.

*"It is possible to put asteroids on a collision course with earth, as a military weapon."*

The threat from asteroids and wayward comets may be real, and it seems reasonable that the movements of these heavenly bodies should be monitored, but...

There is an even more sinister military reasoning involved here. In theory, it is possible to play a sort of pool game with asteroids, putting them on collision course with earth on purpose. This of course would be a formidable weapon for any power to wield. The sooner we disarm these militarists the better!

The fascinating *Horizon* programme spent much of its time on facts and statistics about asteroids, discussing whether or not they were responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs. Maybe we should amend our slogan on page one: "It will be the fate of the dinosaurs, or it will be socialism!"

## A tale of injustice from the Deep South

Paddy Dollard  
previews  
*Judge Horton and the Scottsboro boys*

BBC1  
Thursday 10 March 2.15pm

THE "Scottsboro Boys" case was one of the most celebrated cases of the 1930s. Nine young Deep South black men were falsely accused of raping two white women. A conviction would bring the death penalty. After a US-wide campaign, their lives were saved, but they spent many years in jail.

Boys? Black men were then still called 'boys' even if they were 80.

(You'll find it even in *Casablanca* (1943) the famous anti-Nazi film, where Ingrid Bergman refers to Dooley Wilson, a man in his 40s, as a 'boy').

*Judge Horton and the Scottsboro Boys* tells the story from the point of view of the 'courageous' southern judge who presided at their trial. The TV Times praises this 1976 TV movie highly... Video it perhaps.

# The SWP and its "March on Parliament"

## AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna

**B**ETWEEN FIFTEEN and twenty thousand students marched through London on 23 February in protest at the Government's decision to cut student grants by one-third over the next three years. They were organised by the Student Activist Alliance, initiated by supporters of *Socialist Organiser*.

That march may prove to have been the beginning of a deep and powerful mobilisation of students for a serious fight to force the Government to retreat. It was an important event.

By contrast, the Socialist Workers' Party's [SWP's] much-advertised student "March on Parliament" on the same day – and, indeed, "on" the same demonstration – was a silly fiasco, a real non-event. They got no nearer to "marching on parliament" than making a feeble attempt to stop the march in Aldwych and pushing half-heartedly at the police lines there, over a mile away from Parliament.

The most malevolent critic of the organisation led by Tony Cliff could not have imagined or concocted the sequence of events which unfolded around the SWP's "March on Parliament" – not even as a piece of fiction designed as a parable about the faults of the SWP.

For the left – and on the blighted landscape of the left today, the SWP looms large: strange and weird, but comparatively very large – the SWP's "March on Parliament" was an important event, too.

This, as I understand it and as I witnessed some of it, is the story.

The Student Activist Alliance called the demonstration on 23 February, believing that it is now possible to mobilise tens, and ultimately maybe hundreds, of thousands of students against the Government. It was planned as an orderly march because it was intended that those attracted to the demonstration would be asked to go back to their colleges and agitate for larger-scale action against the Government – that is, to go back and agitate with presently right-wing and apolitical students to get them to begin to act in their own interest against the Tory cuts.

Stunts like a major clash with the police would be counterproductive here.

Support built up for 23 February. Then the SWP decided to "intervene". They started advertising it – as an SWP event! Then they called on the Student Activist Alliance to turn the demonstration into a "March on Parliament". Whatever the SAA did, they announced, the SWP itself would make 23 February into a "March on Parliament".

The right-wing Labour leaders of the National Union of Students eagerly picked up this notion. They urged people not to demonstrate on 23 February, because, they said, it was an SWP march, and they were concerned for students' safety. Reports indicated that they had some success in this.

Not for the first time, there was a tacit alliance between the right wing Labour leadership of NUS and the SWP/Socialist Worker Student Society.

But the SWP seemed to know what they were doing. Large numbers of posters were put up on walls throughout the country announcing the "March on Parliament" for 23 February.

SWP leaflets said that the demonstration, combined with student occupations, could "bring down the government", and at the SWP's national student event early in February there was – so I'm told – much excited talk about the "March on Parliament" and how it could spark a student revolt as big as that of May 1968 in France. One SWP banner on the demonstration summed up this mood: "Paris, May 1968; London, February 1994".

Thus, an organisation which claims 8000 members, at least 2000 students, seemed to be mobilising as seriously as it could to assemble the forces for a real attempt at marching on Parliament.

On the eve of 23 February, they held a SWSS stewards' meeting to discuss tactics for compelling the demonstration to become a "March on Parliament". They decided to sit in the road and provoke clashes with the police.

Of course, it was the sheerest nonsense. It is illegal to march within a mile of Parliament while it is sitting. All the formidable forces of the state would be deployed against any "March on Parliament". Unless the police and the army were seething with rebellion and ready either to desert or to go over to the "marchers", you would need a very good army to clear the road for a "March on Parliament".

When a student demonstration announces that it would "March on Parliament" that is just a grandiloquent way of announcing that it will fight with the

police in the streets, far away from Parliament.

A limited student campaign might reasonably decide on a publicity stunt involving clashes with the police. Socialist Organiser supporters have done such things, in the "Arts Attack" protests, for example. To do it on 23 February was to go in for a bit of street theatre instead of working to mobilise a mass campaign against the Tories. Unknown thousands who can be mobilised in their own self-interest would be scared, alienated or repelled by such ultra-left posturing.

The colleges and the National Union of Students have moved distinctly to the right in the last few years. They can now move quickly to the left by way of a mobilisation on students' own interests; but they have not yet done so. The job of serious socialists is to help them do so.

Instead of developing a movement, the SWP calls for 'instant barricades', and proclaims as the immediate goal of the very first national demonstration against the grant cuts nothing less than a "March on Parliament" and the bringing down of the Government!

This SWP approach would simply take the socialists out of all constructive work – the work that might well build towards large-scale student confrontations with the police that would not repel but rouse up more student anger.

The SWP leaders know all this. They know that they could not have mobilised a march the size of 23 February on the call for a "March on Parliament". That is why they tried to hijack the Student Activist Alliance march. They probably know, too, that their hi-jacking effort lost the march much support. But those are not their concerns. Recruits, and "exposing" *Socialist Organiser*, are.

They never really believed a "March on Parliament" to be a real possibility, or a proper goal to set the demonstration. Their call for a "March on Parliament" was directed only at the Student Activist Alliance.

What happened on 23 February? As the march assembled in Malet Street, London, thousands of Socialist Worker placards, carrying a cartoon of John Major with a meat cleaver stuck in his head, were given out. Lots of students took placards, making the SWP seem a formidable force on the march.

Oddly, the placards did not mention the "March on Parliament". The technique of parachuting in on demonstrations with SWP placards depends on making the placards broadly acceptable to the demonstrators. The SWP knew already that "March on Parliament" would not be acceptable.

However, little knots of SWSS people chanted for a "March on Parliament". Why? "That's where the decisions are made", the very anti-parliamentary SWPers chanted "so that's where we should go". "We must go where they can hear us".

As the march assembled, one SWP organiser was shouting: "We're going to march on Parliament... to lobby the MPs". The demonstration would smash through police lines, take over central London – as it would have to – and then go and chat to a few MPs! Really they had no idea what their call meant.

The SWP stewards' meeting had decided that they would try to force themselves into the front of the demonstration, but as the march set off they did not even try.

Apart from spreading the rumour that Parliament had closed down for fear of their "march", they didn't try anything until the march reached Aldwych, at the bottom of the Holborn Kingsway. The set route demanded that the marchers turn left; their "march on Parliament" demanded a turn to the right.

As the march moved down the left side of Kingsway, a group of SWPers made a "revolutionary" beachhead on the traffic island in the middle of the road, and, with loudhailers, called on people to assemble and turn right with them for the "March on Parliament". Inside the march, groups and individuals took up the cry.

The march organisers said keep going to the left. The majority did that, flowing past the citizens of the traffic island like a river, disgorging SWPers who swelled the crowd on the traffic island and narrowed the channel for the march.

Organisers and SWPers with megaphones shouted themselves hoarse, competing, exchanging abuse. A

group of anarchists joined the SWPers. Waverers wavered on the fringes of the island. But that did not stop the tide, which continued to flow contemptuously past as the big majority turned left, rejecting the proposed stunt. One of the odd sights was a large number of SWP placards flowing past the stranded hard-core SWPers.

The SWP stewards' meeting had – so we heard – decided that they would sit down on the road to divert the march. Now was the time for it. It might have stopped the flow. But the ground was wet, greasy, sloppy and cold.

Hasn't Trotsky described for us how the Russian Revolution in February 1917 advanced on its knees, with women crawling under the belly of Cossack horses? But no, the SWP did not want to get their backsides wet.

March on Parliament? Yes! Sit down on the cold wet ground? No. It was one measure of their seriousness.

Most of the marchers had plainly made their minds up not to go for a stunt, endorsing the arguments for the development of a mass campaign put by the organisers in a leaflet.

By now most of them had gone past the SWP, and the waverers were being magnetised and starting to follow after. What would the SWP do now?

Back in the good old days of the late 1960s, when anti-Vietnam-war demonstrations would divide on whether to go to Trafalgar Square or to the American Embassy, the separation would take place at an appropriate point and those out for a fight with the police would go and get stuck in. So, having separated the revolutionaries from the others, would the SWP now "march on Parliament"?

They had only a few hundred people, probably a lot fewer than the number of SWP members and sympathisers on the march. Yes, but "marching on Parliament" never meant anything but a clash with the police, and a few hundred SWPers could do that, at least.

Well, they didn't. They never meant to. Feebly, they shouted abuse down megaphones at the rest of the marchers – one man was shouting that Socialist Organiser students were students "from police colleges" – but they were not willing to follow their own advice and charge the police, or even

push very hard.

When a *Socialist Organiser* man asked one of their organisers, a bit later, why they had not at least gone ahead and charged the cops, he was told: "We're not adventurists!"

The slogan they raised for the whole march was adventurist? Yes, but it was not meant seriously. It was to "expose" *Socialist Organiser*!

A few brief moments of scuffling with police now erupted at one end of the island, and three people were arrested. The anarchists, at least, were serious, but there were not many of them.

**N**OW THE heroes on the island, who would neither get their backsides wet nor risk getting their noses bloodied, had to decide what to do. They ran to catch up with the demonstration!

Having failed to "march on Parliament", did they now loyally join the march? No. Led by full-time organisers, a couple of hundred of them dashed down a side street and came out at the head of the march, confronting it as a hostile force.

This at least made the focus of their efforts clear. Were they going to "sit down without illusions" now, to frustrate the intentions of the big majority of the marchers? No. The ground was still just as wet and they were not, I guess, in the best state of morale by now. This was just a show of petulance.

After a ten minute delay, they let the march through. The SWP contingent crossed Waterloo Bridge ahead of the main march, turned off to the right in another feeble gesture, stopped at the police lines – and eventually turned round to chase after the main march and accuse *Socialist Organiser* of blocking the "March on Parliament"!

That was how the SWP "marched on Parliament" on 23 February 1994.

Isn't all this reminiscent of something else? Haven't we been here before, and recently?

In late 1992, the SWP reacted to the widespread, but only-just-beginning, outcry against the Tory announce-

ment of pit closures by calling on the TUC to initiate an immediate all-out General Strike. The labour movement was to go from its lowest ebb in decades to a revolutionary general strike – which is what an all-out general strike is – in one bound, and led by the TUC! This was, quite literally, a crazy proposal, and the SWP dropped it soon afterwards.

And isn't it reminiscent, too, of their call for "Troops Out of Ireland Now"? The SWP leaders do not actually mean "Troops Out Now", and sometimes they leave no doubt of it by coupling the "militant" demand "Troops Out Now" with small-print additional demands for the British first to disarm the Protestants (which would imply more troops, not fewer, and for the indefinite future).

For serious Marxists there is no such thing as a slogan or a proposal put forward merely for effect, or to "expose" opponents. For serious Marxists, developing and mobilising large masses of workers or students is our method of going forward politically. By that method – by putting forward proposals and perspectives for the broad movement, and within that work – we recruit to and build our own socialist organisation.

We do not put forward "militant" but politically nonsensical slogans like calls for a "March on Parliament" designed only to create a "militant" image.

On 23 February the SWP put forward a preposterous demand that served to distinguish them from the organisers of the march but which – as I have shown – cut against the development of a mass student movement against the Tory cuts. They are not concerned with such things any more than they were concerned with developing the on-the-ground practical action to support the miners in October 1992 which, if developed, might have been made to coalesce into generalised action against the Tories.

At the first sign of pregnancy they raise the "demand": "The Baby Now! Now! Now!". But the SWP leaders do not believe in it themselves. It is all a cynical game.

When they were trying to be a serious organisation, they were militantly hostile to "transitional demands", the breaking down of the socialist programme into a series of linked demands, geared into the developing struggle. Now they use the most vulgar and ridiculous version of "transitional demands", indeed, a hostile caricature – demands that "can't be met", used to "expose" someone. They do not use slogans and demands as tools for mobilising people on goals which are limited but which open up a perspective of developing a movement to higher and higher levels in struggle. They use them as mere literary devices for smart-alecs posturing in confrontational debate.

On 23 February, we had the strange spectacle of an organisation with at least 1000 student members relating to a national demonstration called to fight a massive Tory attack on student living standards with the sole purpose of "exposing" an opponent organisation, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and *Socialist Organiser*, whose student membership, though a lot more useful and politically better-educated than theirs, is not even a tenth of their numbers.

The word parasitic suggests itself here, except that that is only part of it.

The SWP is now a radically disoriented organisation. It uses slogans and ideas with an advertising-agency cynicism similar to that of the Labour Party leaders and "mainstream" politicians. Pretty much anything goes. Organisational self-promotion devours everything else.

Nothing matters but to recruit to "the party". We too recruit to our organisation, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. But an organisation is what it does, tries to do, represents, stands for, proposes.

At the heart of the SWP's performance on 23 February lies deep pessimism, defeatism and demoralisation. Despite their big revolutionary talk, they acted as people who could not believe in the possibility that the left can develop, build, and midwife the powerful student anti-Tory movement which is now possible.

All they were capable of doing was self-obsessed posturing and faking to "build the party". The feebleness with which they went about getting their "March on Parliament" – in practice, a bust-up with the police – is explicable only on the assumption that they did not believe in it themselves.

The SWP does now what the Healyites did in the late 1960s. The SWP slogan on 23 February was ultra-left. But they did not behave as ultra-lefts. As their organiser said, "we're not adventurists". These are newspaper and placard ultra-lefts, not real ones.

The "fake left" – Labour and trade union leaders talking militant for the rank and file – is an ancient and dishonourable tradition in the British labour movement. Now, in the SWP, we have a fake ultra-left! Progress, it isn't.

*"The SWP is now a radically disoriented organisation. It uses slogans and ideas with an advertising-agency cynicism similar to that of the Labour Party leaders and "mainstream" politicians."*

## INDUSTRIAL

# UNISON local government conference We need a national strike against the Tory attacks

## UNISON

By a conference delegate

UNISON'S FIRST local government group conference meets in Bournemouth from 4 March.

The Tories' freeze on the public sector pay bill until 1996 is coupled with a massive squeeze on public sector spending and sharp tax rises. The TUC has predicted that 200,000 further job losses will go this year across the public sector. This will be in addition to a 6% cut in our living standards, if the effects of the frozen pay bills are combined with April's tax rises and the Treasury's own forecasts for inflation. We need nationally co-ordinated industrial action if we are to defend jobs and services. Conference will be discussing a number of good motions calling for a ballot of all local government UNISON members for a one day strike and a reconvened meeting to plan further action. This should be combined with a campaign involving other public sector unions and service users, local and national meetings, rallies and protest marches.

The UNISON leadership, however, seems content to sit back and allow local authorities to be picked off one by one. They are opposing any action that could seriously turn the tide.

Low pay is endemic in local government. Figures for "white collar" staff alone showed the numbers on low pay have increased last year from 40% to 44%.

Women make up the majority of the workforce in local government. Full time women are still over £75.00 a week worse off than men in the public sector, with an average earnings of £282.50 a week. And part-timers who make up 48% of the public sector female workforce.

Conference will be discussing motions on harmonisation of UNISON members' terms and conditions, in particular a flat-rate claim for APT and C and manual staff.

The structures for a merger are supposed to be in place at a national level. At a local level the story is very different. The vast majority of branches have still not merged. To achieve merger as soon as possible will be vital if we are to effectively defend and improve the

jobs, terms and conditions of our members.

Carrying the motions on harmonisation would make it clear at branch level why we merged and what we should look to achieve.

A merger for the sake of it is no use to our members. A merger on the basis of campaigning for:-

- a unified pay structure with common settlement dates and a basic minimum wage,

- harmonisation of terms and conditions based on levelling up not down,

- for a 35 hour week,
- would strike a chord with members in branches and strengthen the union.

We desperately need to learn the lessons from the first round of Compulsory Competitive Tendering. The first round of CCT resulted in job cuts which have had devastating effects on the health and safety of members. The services provided have deteriorated. Union organisation has been massively weakened. All this has been even worse where the in-house bid did not succeed, but winning in-house bids at a cost to members is a defeat too. We need to campaign against CCT and stop it in its

tracks.

All the civil service unions struck together against Market Testing on March 5 1993. We need to take a leaf out of their book. The only proposal on the agenda which could start a real campaign for CCT to be stopped is the resolution from Sheffield calling for a national one-day strike.

We are in danger of seeing UNISON evolve into a monster union with all the worse aspects of each partner union. We cannot let this happen! There are numerous examples of undemocratic practices which would not have happened in any union pre-merger.

Liverpool ex-NALGO branch were suspended and stopped from holding their AGM because members wanted a new branch secretary! Yorkshire and Humberside regions' agreed proposals for their local government structures are being blocked by the national leadership!

A motion from Knowsley and amendment from Barnsley have been ruled out of order because they call on the Labour Party to oppose the Tory cuts!

We clearly need to campaign for democracy in UNISON.

## Stop the cuts in Sheffield

## UNISON

By Chris Croome, UNISON No 2, Shop Stewards' Organiser

SHEFFIELD'S LABOUR council keep putting off decisions about how to balance their budget by cutting £36m of expenditure. They have hesitated in issuing compulsory redundancy notices because of the UNISON threat to strike should notices be issued. The council are frightened that any strike action before the May local government elections will highlight the service cuts they will be making and will result in Labour getting hammered. They are not wrong — it looks very likely that the Lib. Dems. will wipe the floor with Labour. The working class in Sheffield is sick of a Labour Party which does not represent their views.

Following a meeting of 2,500 UNISON members on 25 January where it was agreed to strike on 10 March — the date by which the council has to set a legal budget — an industrial action ballot was

## Chinns: support this strike

OVER 50 metalworkers are now in their third week of all-out strike action in defence of union organisation at JS Chinn near Coventry.

The strike is in support of John Watkins, the MSF convenor, whom workers believe has been deliberately victimised in the latest round of redundancies.

This attack is seen as part of a wider drive against experienced union activists by the bosses in the West Midlands engineering industry.

Messages of support, donations, collection sheets, speakers: J.S. Chinn Picket line, Coventry Rd., Exhall, near Bedworth or MSF 26 Coudun Rd, Coventry CV1 4AW. Phone: 0203 222920 or 0203 220274.

started.

Due to a hopeless central membership register, the region balloted 12,000 people when there are only 9,000 members employed by the council. Hundreds of the 9,000 did not receive papers either.

A meeting for all members is planned for March 9 and the ex-NALGO, (No2) UNISON branch is going to propose that the strike go ahead for 10th March. Every thing possible was done to take action legally, we have no alternative but an unofficial walkout.

It is vital that the members' meeting on 9th March adopts a clear position of opposition to cuts in terms and conditions. The council want to cut £9 from members' pay. In addition UNISON needs to start acting as a branch. Departmental discussions on conditions cuts and departmental ballots for action are not good enough. Branch wide action is necessary to resist the cuts.

## Defend rail jobs!

## BR PRIVATISATION

By a RMT member

THE NATIONAL leaders of the different rail unions have signed away bargaining rights, jobs and conditions. They have accepted the changes necessary for privatisation and offered no practical resistance.

But they haven't yet signed away the PT and R! The Promotion, Transfer, Redundancy and resettlement agreement has been described as the greatest achievement of post-war trade unionism. Perhaps. For sure what they do is tie the hands of the management of the railways as to who can be required to do which jobs, where; who can be told to move to another job; when and under what circumstances; when a job can be moved and how much the individual must be paid to go and do it; or whether they must be paid to remain where they are even when there is no work.

Not surprisingly management do

not like this agreement and would like to be rid of it. They see privatisation as their chance. They are not wrong; it is incompatible with privatisation. Their aim is to use the legal situation that allows every part of BR to be sold off under privatisation to become separate companies and say that the PT and R does not apply to them.

Left to their own devices they will succeed. We can't afford that. We must defend these agreements as a part of the general fight to resist privatisation.

The rail unions must raise their eyes. Privatisation is not inevitable — especially not now when the Tories are in so much trouble. We should demand an agency to safeguard the rights and conditions that railworkers currently have. An agency to oversee the PT and R would be at odds with the drive to privatisation just as much as a strike would be illegal. That should not stop us. We would be mad to lie down in the face of a runaway train.

## Students and the fight for socialism

By Richie Carrothers

FOLLOWING the 20,000-strong student march against poverty and Tory education policy on 23 February in London, the AWL is organising a recruitment drive among student activists.

Our paper, *Socialist Organiser*, is already well-known on the student left. A number of our comrades hold leading positions in the student movement and we continue to be central to the left opposition in the National Union of Students — Left Unity.

Our members were central to the organisation of the huge demonstration on 23 February and also to stopping the Socialist Workers' Party's sectarian attempts to wreck the march in a crazy battle with the police — a fight we clearly couldn't win. Now we want to make sure all those who joined the march on 23 February understand more about our organisation.

We will work with students, trade unionists, Labour Party members and campaign activists on whatever common ground we can find. We want to develop a mass movement — centrally a working-class movement —

against the Tories. We want the working-class, to regain its confidence.

For this reason we stopped the SWP's stunt on 23 February — we want to help develop a mass movement. We want our organisation to grow because we are the best builders of the mass movement and we have the best answers to the problems students, youth and workers face. We are not — as the SWP are — parasites on the movement.

Find out more about us; phone: 071-639 7965 for details, or attend one of the meetings below.

## Student Alliance for

**WORKERS' LIBERTY**  
public meetings

## SHEFFIELD

12.15pm Friday 4th March  
Norton College12.15pm Thursday 10th March  
Stradbroke College,Lunch time, Wednesday 9th March  
Sheffield University

## LANCASTER

1.00pm Tuesday 8th March  
Flyde lecture theatre 3, Lancaster University

## BIRMINGHAM

Lunch time, Monday 14th March  
University of Central England SU,

## LEICESTER

12.30pm Tuesday 11th March  
Leicester University SU

## CANTERBURY

7.30pm Tuesday 15th March  
Keynes College, UKC

## LONDON

1.00pm Wednesday 16th March  
Goldsmiths College SU committee room

## NEWCASTLE

1.00pm Friday 18th March  
University of Northumbria SU

# NATFHE has betrayed us all

**A**S REGULAR readers of this column will know, the Somnolent One does not always advocate all-out defiance of the Tories' union laws as a matter of principle. Back in 1989, for instance I was willing to give Ron Todd and the T&G leadership the benefit of the doubt as they avoided an outright confrontation with the courts over the abolition of the National Dock Labour Board. I don't want to re-run that argument now but in essence it seemed to me that Todd was in a difficult spot: the issue affected a very small (and not particularly popular) section of the union's membership, the prospects for widespread solidarity action seemed limited and the Tory laws were by then an established fact. Some ducking and diving on the part of the T&G leadership was not to be denounced out of hand under the circumstances.

But, of course, straight forward defiance is still very often the best

response — especially in the face of new and previously untested laws. That is why last week's climb-down by the NATFHE leadership in the face of the High Court and the 1993 "Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act" (TURER from now on), was such a betrayal. The dispute was over the "Silver Book" terms and conditions agreement that directly affects the bulk of NATFHE's members: with a clear cut majority under their belt, there was obviously a strong case for the union defying the interim injunction ordered against them and going ahead with the action.

In addition to that, the particular section of the Act that was used to obtain the interim injunction is one that has the gravest repercussions for all unions and all forms of industrial action. Section 21 requires unions to provide employers with at least seven days' notice in writing of official industrial action, and to "describe the employees involved so that their employer can readily ascertain them."

What this section means in practice has yet to be fully tested, but NATFHE's climb-down makes it much more likely that the worst possible interpretation will be put on it by the courts: names and addresses of every single member involved in the action must be provided to the employer.

Quite apart from the opportunities for victimisations this provides, it also gives employers a virtual carte blanche to get strikes declared unlawful: no union in the land has a fully up-to-date central register of members. Even if a union were to genuinely do its best to provide full information to the employer, inevitably some members will have moved, died, changed jobs, etc etc. The information will always be slightly out of date and therefore, liable to be challenged. Sheffield UNISON recently called off a strike ballot over £36 million cuts for fear of falling foul of this legislation. Now NATFHE has balked in the face of an interim injunction. They have played into the Tories' hands and betrayed every trade unionist.

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

# SOCIALIST

# Bosnia carve-up

ORGANISER

# The next step for students

By Martin Thomas

**B**RITAIN, the US and the western powers are still going for a carve-up in Bosnia, in cahoots with Serbia and at the expense of the Bosnian Muslims.

On Monday 28 February NATO aircraft shot down four Serb aircraft, thus giving a show of teeth to the repeated threats about "air strikes" and maybe signalling to the Serbian leaders that NATO wants a settlement soon.

But the Serb chauvinists want a settlement too. They have already seized all they can realistically hope to win in Bosnia, and are fighting now only about the details of a carve-up.

After the UN and NATO threats:

- The Serbs' ally, Russia, has troops round Sarajevo.

- Russia is central to shaping any settlement. The *Financial Times* (1 March) spells out the view of Western big business: "The correct response for NATO is to hold back from further air strikes, while asking Russia to use its influence with the Serbs".

- The Serb forces are bombarding Tuzla, the other major multi-ethnic city besides Sarajevo left in Bosnian government hands. NATO ultimatums demanding that the Serbs stop this shelling have been replaced by silence.

- "Serb officials believe", as the *Financial Times* reports, that "Belgrade has seized control, via Moscow, of the political agenda for ending the war".

US proposals for a confederate Croat / Bosnian-Muslim state in ex-Bosnia, maybe linked in a further confederation with Croatia, look unlikely to halt the vicious communal polarisation in Bosnia.

Socialists should not place any trust or hope in the Western powers' intervention. We should do what we can to aid the defence of the beleaguered multi-ethnic cities and Muslim communities.

The only way out is through working-class unity across the communal divides and consistent democracy for all the peoples and nations of ex-Yugoslavia.



After the 23 February demo, organise in the colleges

By Elaine Jones (National Union of Students National Executive Committee member)

**O**N WEDNESDAY 23 February twenty thousand students marched through London in a national demonstration against the Tory cut of 30% off student grants over three years.

The demonstration was a massive show of strength by a student movement that had not had a national demonstration for two years. February 2 was organised by the Student Activist Alliance, and it was supported by hundreds of student unions from Paisley in Scotland to Wales and Plymouth in the west and south west.

The march was the latest stage in a nationwide wave of protests and action.

And yet the slug-like leaders of the National Union of Students have still done nothing except attempt to discourage student unions from supporting further action. They did their best to undermine February 23. Lorna Fitzsimmons sent a mailing or fax to every student union in the country saying this:

"[The National Executive]... further made a clear decision to actively discourage students from having any involvement in a demonstration called for February 23 by groups within the student movement."

Yet even Fitzsimmons, who has described demonstrations as being tactics from the stone age, was forced in the same mailing to announce an NUS national demo — albeit one to be held on 21 April.

The slugs who currently run NUS have been thoroughly exposed by the new mood in the colleges. Students know that if NUS now had, a fighting leadership, then the movement against grant cuts could be much bigger and much stronger.

Student activists must continue to fight for NUS to give a lead.

Off your knees, Lorna!

In April, at the NUS National Conference we will have an ideal chance to change NUS.

The National Union of Students has nearly two million members. With a fighting leadership, and campaigning policies, it could become a huge force for change.

At conference the present student leadership must be cleared out. The careerists must be replaced by activists.

Of course, new careerists are emerging in NUS. They will claim to be left wing, to be activists, even when they share the blame for NUS's passivity with members of the older generation like Fitzsimmons. Jim Murphy is an example.

He is Labour Student candidate for President, but despite his 'left' image he voted to oppose the demo on 23 February. As current President of NUS Scotland he attempted to stop college union sending coaches to the demo; in most cases he failed.

The Labour Student slate and the so called independents standing for the NUS Executive belong to the self same species of Labour careerist as those who have failed the student movement this year and for many years past.

Janine Booth — standing for President — heads the Left Unity slate. It is a slate made up of left activists who played a key role in setting

up the Student Activist Alliance and who have built action both locally and — on February 23 — nationally. This slate has a real chance of winning the leadership of NUS.

Left Unity's Sarah Welling looks well placed to win the vital position of NUS national women's officer.

Over the next few weeks student activists must see to the winning of delegate places and commitment to left policies for NUS conference. This must be part of a rolling programme of action that can build a mass movement to fight Tory grant cuts.

NUS Conference details  
Registration deadline 17 March  
Conference 11-14 April in Blackpool.

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