

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

Inside this week



D-Day



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Close these racist jails!



By Hannah Wood

SIX PRISONERS ESCAPED from Campsfield House immigration detention centre after a major rebellion on the evening of Sunday 5 June.

Campsfield House — a pleasant enough name for what is, in reality an ugly new prison — opened in November 1993. Campsfield, run for profit by the notorious Group 4 security firm, can hold up to 200 men, women and children: the big majority of those jailed are black or Asian and most are asylum seekers.

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Mistaken views not allowed here

MANY YEARS AGO (about 20, to be more precise) there was an organisation called the International Socialists that was attempting to build a serious base of support within the trade unions. It aimed to bring together socialist militants in every union and industry to discuss their experiences, draw out the lessons and plan for the future. Naturally, open debate, frank discussion of disagreements and a willingness to admit to mistakes were essential to this project. It won the IS a lot of respect and influence amongst rank and file trade unionists.

It also brought the IS into conflict with the bureaucrats, who resented the criticism they were subjected to and feared the prospect of an active, informed critical rank and file. It was not uncommon for IS militants to face disciplinary charges — often that old bureaucrats' favourite "bringing the union into disrepute", which usually meant "daring to criticise the leadership". Frank Chapple of the EETPU and Clive Jenkins of ASTMS tried to bankrupt the IS's newspaper with libel actions.

But that was all a long time ago. The IS became the SWP in 1976 and the National Rank and File Movement was quietly killed off a few years later. It didn't fit in with the new emphasis on "building the party" and, in any case, the SWP's theoreticians reckoned not much could be done in the unions because of something called the "downturn". Sure enough, throughout the 1980s the SWP more or less withdrew from trade union activity and instructed any members who held official union positions to resign — in order to avoid being contaminated by "bureaucratism".

In recent years, the SWP have started to do systematic union work again, but on a very different basis to the rank and file orientation of the early '70s. Their tactics in the unions veer from ultra-left posturing (e.g. 1992's call for a general strike "now" against pit closures) to thoroughly bureaucratic antics worthy of the worst sort of union right-winger.

Take recent events in Sheffield UNISON. Faced with £30 million of cuts from the Labour Council, UNISON no.2 branch had to decide on its response. This is the most important trade union branch in the country led by the SWP. Some left-wingers (including supporters of this paper) argued for a ballot for branch-wide action; the right wing argued for sectional action; the SWP called for a one day strike and sectional action and remained silent on the question of a ballot. In practice, the SWP supported the right-wing sectional strategy against the call for branch-wide action and at the crucial meeting united with the right to stitch up the vote accordingly.

That was bad enough; but the SWP's response to criticism of their role has been truly breathtaking. UNISON steward Chris Croome. The response has been the following motion to the branch Executive Council:

"This Executive Council

(1) Deplores the article by Chris Croome in the 12/5/94 edition of Socialist Organiser because we believe that

(a) To describe recent events in Sheffield in relation to the budget crisis as a "trade union disaster" is a mistaken view and insults and potentially undermines the confidence of those members who have resisted further attacks on pay and conditions in the aftermath of last year's pay cut;

(b) The article fails to give due weight to the role of the Executive and the branch meetings in the decision making process and instead places undue weight on the fact that two key positions in the branch are held by members of the SWP;

(c) A branch officer who has been fully involved in all the decision making processes should have carefully considered the potentially damaging effect on this union that such an article could trigger, especially as this article was timed to coincide with the first UNISON Conference;

(2) Therefore censures Chris Croome and asks him to consider whether in the light of the publication of this article he should continue to act as Stewards' Organiser in this branch."

To be scrupulously fair, it should be pointed out that the precise origin of this motion is not clear: it may not have been drafted by the SWP. In fact it was moved by someone who during last year's budget crisis supported wage cuts as a way of helping the council out of their cash crisis. But what is certain is that their members have been very happy to support it.

What kind of organisation is it that censures someone for writing an article expressing a "mistaken view"? This is pure Stalinism.

It might also be added that the SWP's concern about the dangers of "undermining the confidence" of members by making "potentially damaging criticism" is very selective: during last year's London Underground dispute over victimisation of two leading militants, the SWP distributed a leaflet describing the tactics agreed by the entire RMT left on the Underground (successful tactics, as it turned out) as ... "criminal".

The Sheffield UNISON motion speaks volumes about today's SWP's contempt for the elementary norms of labour movement democracy — not to mention their sensitivity to any kind of criticism. Frank Chapple and Clive Jenkins would be proud of them.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

NEWS

Prescott and Blair are not the same

By Gerry Bates

BY THE time you read this article the precise shape of the Labour leadership contest will be clearer than it is as I write.

One thing is clear, though. John Prescott will be perceived by the great bulk of the 4.5

million potential electorate as the representative of the working class and trade unionism in the contest.

This will be especially the case after Prescott's performance on "Question Time" last week when he criticised Michael Heseltine over the minimum wage, asking the

millionaire if he could live on £2 per hour like some of "our people" have to.

Prescott's methods must have horrified Tony Blair: it is extremely difficult to imagine him directly attacking someone like Heseltine for being super-rich. Those who think there are no differences

between the likely candidates are living on a different planet.

Socialist Organiser supporters are canvassing party members and trade unionists to sign the following statement.

"We the undersigned want to see a campaigning Labour Party which opposes the Tory government by every means available and is committed to:

- The restoration of trade union rights including the right to strike, take solidarity action and picket effectively.

- Rebuilding the Welfare State and public services.

- No Liberal/Labour pact. Defend Labour/union links.

- A 35-hour working week with no loss of pay.

- A £4.05 per hour minimum wage.

We will seek to organise around these ideas in the Labour leadership elections and will support the candidate who stands closest to them."

- More on the Labour leadership on page 14

Close these racist jails!

From page 1

THE REBELLION broke out after it became clear that an Algerian detainee, Ali Tamaret, had been taken to Gatwick airport to be deported back to a country where his life is in danger. Under pressure, the Home Office agreed to slightly delay Ali Tamaret's removal.

According to reports, Group 4 called in the riot police and the jail was bloodily retaken. At least six prisoners were injured and 22 "troublemakers" have been arrested.

In the wake of the 1993 Asylum Act numbers of migrant workers and asylum seekers being held in British jails and detention centres

has increased drastically.

The treatment of asylum seekers was highlighted last week when on 24 May Elizabeth Blanchard, an asylum seeker from Nigeria, was handcuffed and gagged with tape by police who had been called in to transfer her from Campsfield. She was kept in Banbury police station for 16 hours.

By the time Elizabeth reached Holloway prison her health had deteriorated so much that the prison refused to accept her. Unconscious she was taken to the Whittington Hospital in North London and put on a drip. This is the treatment meted out by the British state to people fleeing persecution!

Socialists stand for the free movement of people. We demand Labour repeals the Asylum Act and other immigration laws and that Campsfield House and other deten-

tion centres are closed.

There is an ongoing campaign to close Campsfield set up by Oxford Trades Council. Dozens of protests have been organised. The latest, a national march held in pouring rain on Saturday 4 June, was attended by 400 marchers.

The prisoners clearly heard the changes of "Campsfield, close it down!" Someone briefly waved a blue towel from a cell window.

The police obviously feel Campsfield is a very sensitive jail. It is set back from a minor road and surrounded by woods. "Inmates" have protested through hunger strikes.

The rally in front of the jail was photographed and ringed by police, including some on horses.

You can contact the campaign c/o 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford. Help them close this racist jail!

Workers' Liberty '94

Ideas for Freedom

Three days of socialist debate, Friday 8 to Sunday 10 July, Caxton House, 129, St John's Way, London N19

Featuring

Guest Speaker South African socialist, Neville Alexander, from the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action, on the struggle for socialism after apartheid.

Debates include "How do we win peace in Ireland?" with Sinn Fein and "Should socialists support the PLO-Israel peace deal?"

Friday Highlights

◆ "Fascism, free speech and no platform" John O'Mahony (editor of *Socialist Organiser*) discusses with Tim Gopsill (editor of *The Journalist*) and Steve Myers from the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe ◆ "Should we ban boxing?" — a debate ◆ A short course on the theory of capitalist crisis introduced by Martin Thomas ◆ A forum on building rank and file groups in the unions ◆ Stalinism and music ◆ "What is the role of left-wing papers?" Jill Mountford of the AWL debates the editor of *Tribune*, Mark Seddon

Saturday Highlights

● The AWL debates Sinn Fein on peace in Ireland ● Neville Alexander and Tom Rigby from *Socialist Organiser's* Editorial Board discuss the struggle for socialism in South Africa ● Hillel Ticktin and Bob Arnot examine the crisis in Russia ● Cathy Nugent and Avedon Carol from Feminists Against Censorship discuss "Women, sex and pornography" ● Clive Bradley defends Modernism ● Rob Dawber asks "Did God write the Bible?" ● Jim Kearns discusses why people commit crime and what socialists say about the solution ● Alan Johnson and Caroline Henry run a short course to introduce Marxism



Sunday Highlights

■ Prof. Meghnad Desai debates Martin Thomas on "Is full-employment possible?" ■ Neville Alexander and Sean Matgamna look at how the international left can work together ■ Gail Cameron and Tony Greenstein's debate the Israel-PLO peace deal ■ Jon Pike asks "Why should socialists be bothered with philosophy?" ■ Paul Field looks at South Korean capitalism and unification ■ Janine Booth discusses Lesbian and Gay struggles with Stonewall ■ *Revolutionary History* run a series of discussions about the roots of the Cliff, Healy and Grant tendencies.

For more details phone Mark on 071-639 7965. There is cheap food, accommodation, entertainment available at Workers' Liberty. There is a professionally staffed creche.

Tickets before the end of June are cheaper.

- Three day tickets £7 (unwaged), £11 (low-waged), £16 (waged).

- One day tickets £3/£5/£7

Cheques to "W.L. Publications". Return to WL '94, AWL, PO Box 823, London, SE15 4NA

Defend the welfare state!

Defend Community Health Services!

Campaign meeting against the cuts in Manchester's Community Health Services

Thursday 16 June, 7.30

Mechanics Institute, Manchester

Organised by "Defend Manchester's Health Services"; contact c/o Central Manchester CHC, FREEPOST, 77 Deansgate, Manchester M3 8BD

For a democratic assembly to shape a democratic Europe!

COMING WITHIN days of each other, the elections to the European Parliament and the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day bring sharply into focus questions which are of tremendous importance for the labour movement.

For the soldiers of the USA, Britain, and the British dominions who fought their way on to the beaches and up the cliffs on the Normandy coast 50 years ago were invading a continental Europe that was more united than at any time since the collapse of the Western portion of the Roman Empire 15 centuries earlier.

From the Pyrenees, on the borders of the Iberian peninsula, north to the borders of Sweden and east as far as Poland, with Switzerland as an island in the middle, Hitler had united most of Europe by 1940.

Of course, it was a Europe of peoples united by chains rather than bands of international solidarity, a Europe of enslaved peoples forced together in the maw of German imperialism, by

way of conquest, rather than a Europe of free nations that had voluntarily come together in a United States of Europe.

Yet — and fifty years later there can be no doubt of it — that European unification, even under Hitler, was a distorted expression of a long-felt historical necessity. Europe needed unity because the existing nation states were too small for the enormous economic dynamic which had developed within them — in the leading place, Germany.

The Anglo-American invaders on those beaches in Normandy fifty years



The Tories have made the "anti-European" cause their own

ago came to break German hegemony in Europe and to break down the walls of the Nazi prison-house of nations which Europe had become. All across Europe the invaders were supported by uprisings of peoples seeking national self-determination — French, Belgians, Italians, Poles, Czechs. After Germany was beaten and overrun, the peoples of Europe — outside of Stalin's new East and Central European empire — reverted to independent nation-states.

Indeed, one consequence of Hitler's brutal German-imperialist attempt to override the peoples was a new upsurge of nationalism and chauvinism all across Europe, especially in the East, where Germans were its main victims. Germans to the number of perhaps thirteen million were driven out of East Prussia and Czechoslovakia and other areas where Germans had lived for many hundreds of years.

And yet the need for European economic unity did not fade, even though much of Europe was economically in ruins. European unity was still economically, politically and militarily necessary.

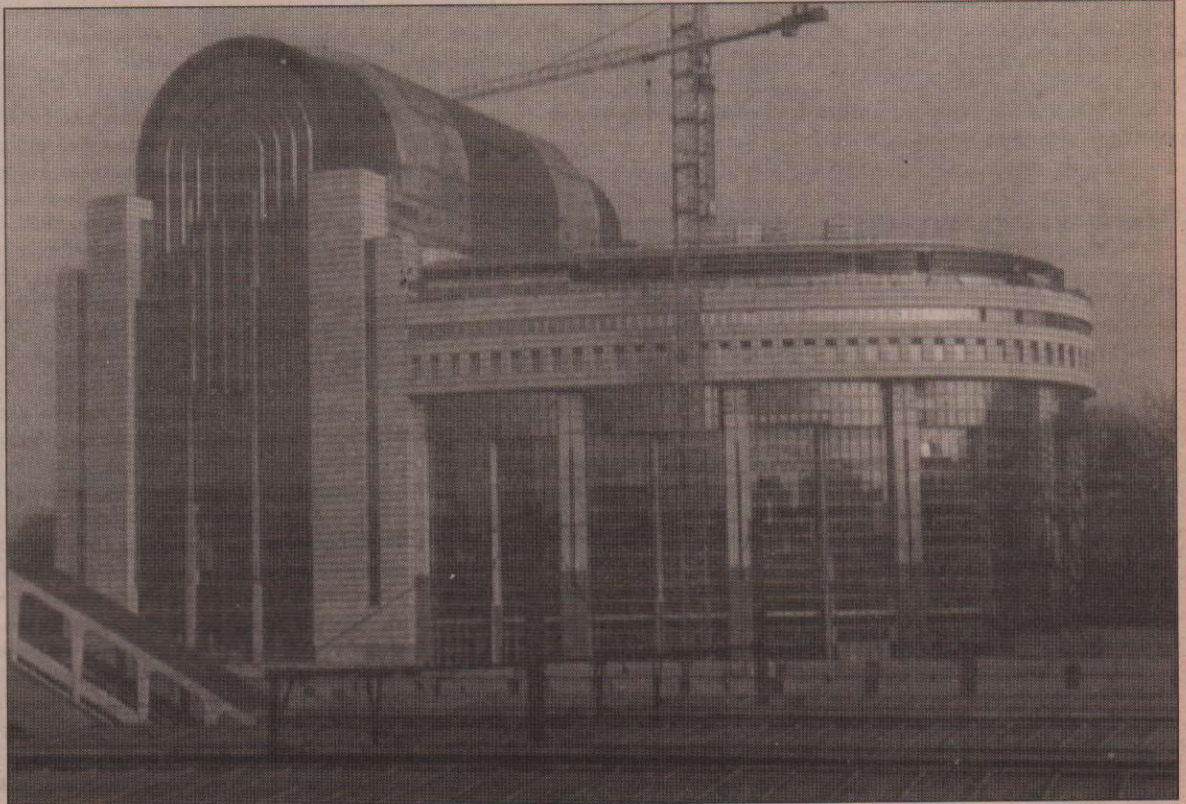
Political and military unity was now very urgent because it was likely that soon there would be war with Russia, whose vast army could in the mid '40s have advanced quickly from the centre to the Western end of Europe.

Politically, however, formal unity was impossible, less possible maybe than before Hitler's conquests. An attempt in the late 1940s to create a single West European army proved still-born.

Yet unity could not be postponed. Now the European bourgeoisie drew on the experience of German history, where the dozens of big and little German states had been drawn together inside a customs union, the Zollverein from 1833, and the basis laid for the unification of most of Germany under Prussian predominance in 1871.

FIRST, THEY created the Iron and Steel Community (1951), and then the Common Market (Treaty of Rome, 1957-8). This was movement towards union by way of bypassing insoluble political questions such as the recently re-won and therefore sacrosanct sovereignties of the various states and concentrating on economic knitting-together of the independent states. It was a bit like knocking down the internal walls in a row of houses, making them into one entity while preserving the facade.

Over time the economic barriers came down, and the original six countries of the Common Market achieved, despite the separate sovereign state-



The Euro-Parliament remains largely powerless, a sham show of democracy

hoods dividing them, a level of economic integration more intense than that achieved within the USA.

And, over time, a ramshackle growth of Europe-wide political and economic institutions grew up alongside and on top of the institutions of the nation-states. These institutions bear all the marks of their origins.

Even after the Maastricht Treaty, this Europe, which is economically united, still resembles a political shantytown. It is something thrown together higgledy-piggledy. It is neither rational nor properly and directly democratic.

There is now a European Parliament, which, though it has recently increased its powers, remains a feeble shadow of what a sovereign parliament should be. It does not yet effectively control the civil servants or the Council of Ministers. Relations between the component states and the EC are disobligingly ill-defined.

In short, much that the nationalist and other critics of the EC say against it is true. That is why people like ourselves who believe in European unity backed the call for a referendum on Maastricht: support for European unity does not have to imply backing what the dominant capitalists and their servants do, or the way that they do it.

European unity is as necessary now as it was in 1914 when Germany launched its first ill-fated attempt to unite Europe under its heel — and socialists such as Leon Trotsky raised the call for a United States of Europe. The anti-EC nationalists and chauvinists, even when they raise valid criticisms of the EC, have nothing to offer instead of "Europe." The celebration around the anniversary of D-Day point us soberingly in the direction of the alternatives to European unity — to even this imperfect capitalist, and not yet democratic, West European unity. The alternative? Wars of the sort that two times in the first half of the 20th century brought Europe to ruin and devastation and turned it into an abattoir.

The only progressive way ahead lies in democratising Europe, not in the vain and reactionary attempt to scramble it back into its national components. That is why Socialist Organiser has for many years advocated the creation of a fully democratic European parliament, with full powers.

But how will such a parliament be achieved? By piecemeal evolution? That is how the European Community has developed and develops. It is simply not adequate. It is slow, it is uncertain; where the mass of the people are concerned, it is blind. It leaves both power and initiative in the hands

of bureaucrats.

Whenever great states — and that is now what the European Community is — have been in the making, a Constituent Assembly or Parliament has been called to work out constitutional arrangements for the new state. That is what the USA did over 200 years ago; what revolutionary France did 200 years ago; what England did at the dawn of Parliamentary sovereignty, 300 years ago.

It is what Europe should do now. The European Community needs a Constituent Assembly.

A European Parliament should be elected to work out a constitutional framework for the United States of Europe. In that way the boundaries between the present national parliaments and the future sovereign European parliament, and similar perplexing questions, can be democratically worked out.

Campaigning for such a "constitutional Parliament", the labour movement and left across Europe could undercut the rightists and the chauvinists who make legitimate criticisms of the presently chaotic European political structures the basis for a reactionary attack on European unity.

Unfortunately it is not only the chauvinist right who oppose European unity. People on the left, too, oppose European unity under cover of just criticism of what exists now. The serious pro-European left must both take on board their legitimate criticisms, and disarm them.

Continued on page 4

"Support for European unity does not imply backing what the dominant capitalists do, or the way they do it."

"We can point the way forwards towards a democratic Europe and towards the Socialist United States of Europe."

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

Karl Marx

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WE SAY

Unite the left! For unity in action and honest dialogue about our differences.

Campaign for a General Election now!

IN THE EURO-ELECTIONS this Thursday, 9 June, the Tories are unlikely to win more than 20 out of Britain's 84 seats, and may win only six.

This follow-up to their trouncing in the 5 May council elections will show how discredited the Tories are. Increasingly, they are forced back on to golf-club bar prejudice (John Major's attack on beggars), racist demagoguery (Michael Howard's scare-stories about Labour letting in more immigrants), and kitsch patriotism.

Wounded and discredited, they are still the government, and they still do harm. They are selling off British Rail and the Post Office, "contracting out" public service jobs, and cutting back trade-union rights.

Before he died, John Smith said he would call for a General Election if a contest opened for the Tory leadership. Why wait on the Tories? Labour and the trade unions should start campaigning for an early General Election now.

Yes to a minimum wage!

JEAN-CLAUDE PAYE, secretary-general of the international bosses' club, the OECD, has backed the Tories' opposition to a minimum wage.

Minimum-wage laws, he said, have "contributed to make things more difficult for youth and low-skilled workers."

"If you are in the shoes of an employer, you look twice before you hire somebody whose productivity does not match or correspond to the wage or the extra costs of taxation that come on top of the wage".

In fact, every worker, with a minimum of training and half-decent equipment, produces much more new value than the £4.05 per hour proposed by the trade unions for the minimum wage. The average value-added in manufacturing industry is between £15 and £20 per hour per worker.

A minimum wage might ruin some small sweatshop employers who rely on quick profits from low-productivity work on ultra-low wages, and all the better if it does! Every worker has a right to a decent job, on decent wages, with decent equipment.

For a democratic assembly to shape a democratic Europe

Continued from page 3

The British left is still infected by the virus of nationalism. There are a number of reasons for this. Britain did not join the EC — though it made two abortive attempts to do so — until 14 years after the Treaty of Rome came into operation. Initially there was strong ruling-class opposition, and that was reflected inside the labour movement. The USSR opposed the EEC, and the Stalinist party in Britain — which had much influence in the shop stewards' movement and in the trade unions generally — took this line ready-made, hypocritically purveying British nationalism the better to serve Russian foreign policy. The British trade union bureaucracy was comfortable then in the close links it had with the British national state, and did not want to risk losing them. It all added up to a powerful many-streamed current in the British labour movement against Europe.

The revolutionary left was swamped by this current. Initially refusing to be tainted by the "little Englandism in the service of the USSR" of the CP and the other more sincere little Englanders and chauvinists, the revolutionary left eventually allowed itself to join the anti-EEC chorus for fear of antagonising working-class militants influenced by the chauvinists. Throwing overboard the Marxist responsibility to orientate on the basic issues according to real working-class interests, the left has been the most wildly demagogic, denouncing the EC as "capitalist Europe" — as if the alternative now were not "capitalist Britain", and a Britain that has become the despised cheap-labour slum of capitalist Europe in the last terrible 15 years of Tory rule.

The left let itself be smashed by prime minister Harold Wilson in 1975, staking everything on a chauvinist victory in the referendum on the EC held in that year. It is time for the left to shed its ridiculous chauvinism!

What happened on D-Day, 6 June 1944, and in the years before and after that date, proves that even this existing European unity is better than any other capitalist alternative. By campaigning for a Constituent Assembly we can point the way forwards towards a democratic Europe, and towards the Socialist United States of Europe.

Europe needs a European Constituent Assembly!

Israel-PLO deal

The incomplete withdrawal

By Adam Keller

DECEMBER 13, when the Israeli army was due to start withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho passed; so did April 13, when the withdrawal should have been completed; and still the soldiers were there, doing what they have always done: harassing, arresting, shooting.

Meanwhile, at the Cairo talks the Israeli negotiators repeatedly made harsh demands upon Arafat's emissaries, interpreting the text of Oslo in the most narrow and strict way possible — and gaining full diplomatic backing from the Clinton Administration, which dropped any pretence of being an impartial mediator.

Yasser Arafat's popularity among his people dropped to an all-time low, with many of his former supporters swelling the ranks of the vocal opposition; an increasing number of young Palestinian militants, embittered at seeing soldiers continue to kill their fellows, took up once more the armed struggle — aimed at military and civilian targets alike. For their part, these Palestinian attacks increased the feeling of scepticism and distrust among Israelis, gradually eroding their own support for the peace process.

Things came to a head on February 25, *Black Friday*. The doctor-settler-mass murderer Baruch Goldstein — a man whose fanaticism was, by all accounts, guided by a keen intelligence — chose well the time and the place for his deadly assault. It was during the prayer of Ramadan, most holy of Muslim holidays, at the Hebron Ibrahimiyah Mosque/Cave of the Machpela — a site venerated by Muslims and Jews alike as the burial place of Avraham/Ibrahim and his sons.

Goldstein's act of murder and desecration left dozens of Muslim worshippers dead and hundreds wounded; many other Palestinians were killed by the army in the riots which immediately broke out all over the West Bank and Gaza Strip, spreading also to Arab towns and villages inside Israel. The closure of the Occupied Territories was re-imposed in all its severity — once more depriving 120,000 already impoverished workers of their livelihood. For more than a month, Israelis lived in apprehension of the coming Palestinian retaliation — yet when it did come, the country reeled under the two painful blows landed by young Palestinian suicide bombers at the towns of Afula and Hadera. But though he left behind him a long trail of blood, Goldstein failed in his main purpose: to derail the peace process.

Indeed, the Hebron massacre may have jostled the Cairo talks out of the rut in which they were long stuck. With the Palestinian Intifada once more flaring up everywhere, Rabin was faced with the possibility of a total collapse of the whole process, leading to the fall of Arafat and an uncontrollable escalation. Therefore, the decision was taken to start evacuating military installations in the Gaza Strip, even before a detailed agreement was signed with the PLO; and in the ongoing negotiations,

Rabin made several concessions which he did not originally intend, such as the introduction of international observers into Hebron, and granting the Palestinian Self-Governing Authority some trappings of sovereignty: a separate international telephone code, the right to issue postage stamps, the right to issue passports.

Still, the negotiations were tough, and the definite agreement contained many provisions extremely distasteful to the Palestinians. A particular sore spot was the very limited dimensions of the Jericho enclave — a mere 62 square kilometres, surrounded on all sides by Israeli settlements and military bases. Debate on this point continued, indeed, up to the Cairo signing ceremony itself; the grand spectacle, carefully orchestrated by Egyptian President Mubarak, was disrupted when Yasser Arafat refused to sign the Jericho maps appended to the agreement. Only after frantic negotiations and exhortations, carried out under the gaze of an astonished worldwide TV audience, did Arafat consent to sign the controversial map — under protest, and subject to further negotiations.

Arafat's sulky behaviour at Cairo matched well the mood among his people. On the streets of Palestinian towns, no celebrations were to be seen — such as characterised the time of the Washington ceremony, seven months earlier. Too much blood had been shed in the intervening period, too many hopes dashed, for the mere fact of one more signature to arouse much enthusiasm. Yet within a few days, the change became manifest.

One by one, the Israeli military installations were evacuated. Some of them were handed over to the Palestinians with handshakes and formal, televised ceremonies. However, at "hot spots" such as Jabaliya Refugee Camp — "Cradle of the Intifada" — the army pulled out unannounced, in the middle of the night; inhabitants woke up to find the hated and feared guard towers deserted.

With the real withdrawal, the scenes of rejoicing did come. Members of the Palestinian police — actually veteran PLO fighters, who had been dispersed throughout the Arab world — were given a hero's welcome in the streets of Gaza and Jericho; youngsters were quick to enter the installations at which they had been throwing stones for so long, and hang Palestinian flags everywhere; former detainees returned to the — now open and empty — cells where they had been interrogated and tortured... and, for the first time in seven years, inhabitants of Gaza enjoyed the simple freedom of walking the streets at night undeterred by curfew.

The whole process was broadcast day after day into every house in Israel, with the noticeable feature of Israeli soldiers and officers broadly smiling, obviously relieved at the long-awaited *Farewell to Gaza* (banner headline of *Ma'ariv*, May 15).

ISRAELI OCCUPATION troops still maintain a brutal rule over most inhabitants of the West Bank; and a full quar-



Bound and blindfolded, a Palestinian arrested on the Gaza border

ter of the Gaza Strip remains under control of Israeli settlers, enjoying extra-territorial status, and of Israeli soldiers who continue to patrol the corridors linking each settler enclave to Israel.

Already within a few days of the withdrawal from Gaza, the grave problems inherent in this situation became manifest: Gaza-based radical Muslim militants started a campaign of ambushes and armed attacks against the remaining soldiers and settlers; the Israelis demanded that the Palestinian police take action to find and disarm them. The not yet well-organised Palestinian authorities were faced with a difficult dilemma: confronting the opposition groups may precipitate a civil war and leave the PLO open to accusations of collaborating with the still unfinished occupation; on the other hand, avoidance of such confrontation might be considered by Rabin a breach of the agreement, and entail a halt in implementation of the Oslo agreement's second stage.

Meanwhile, there is a growing agitation among the Palestinian grass-roots activists, in both the evacuated areas and those still under direct occupation rule. Supporters as well as opponents of the peace process are clamouring for democratisation; having made enormous sacrifices during seven years of Intifada, the Palestinian population is not about to submit meekly to any ruler.

Agitation is further increased by the deep economic crisis, with the ongoing closure still depriving tens of thousands of their workplaces in Israel; and even should all promises of international assistance be fulfilled, it would take years before new jobs are actually created in the Gaza Strip itself.

Clearly, the situation after the incomplete withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho is extremely unstable. The second stage envisaged by the Oslo agreement is the holding of free elections

throughout the whole West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the redeployment of the army outside all populated areas. This was supposed to take place by July 13 — but, judging by the long delay in implementing the first stage, it seems highly unlikely that this date will be kept.

Negotiations on the modalities for elections and redeployment are bound to be long and difficult — and accompanied by a great deal of violence. Moreover, as long as no settlements are removed, these long negotiations would inevitably end with the West Bank transformed into a maze of armed enclaves, Israeli and Palestinian, linked by criss-crossing narrow and winding corridors, providing endless opportunities for provocations, confrontations and armed clashes, and multiplying the problems already evident in Gaza. According to Oslo, this situation is then supposed to last for a five-year "interim period"...

Contemplating this soldier's nightmare, a growing number of Israeli generals start questioning the whole Oslo concept of *Peace in Stages*; they find common ground with the more daring politicians and diplomats, who advocate an early start of the negotiations on the definite solution. It is obvious to generals and politicians alike that such a solution must include the creation of a full-fledged Palestinian state.

Whatever course things take in the coming months and years, they will be deeply affected by the new facts created at Gaza and Jericho. The full import was brought home to Israeli viewers by the terse report of a veteran TV commentator: *It's over. Today, General Han Biran of the Israeli Defence Forces handed Jericho to General Haq Isma'il of the Palestine Liberation Army. This is Ehud Ya'ari of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority, speaking from Jericho, Palestine.*

• *The Other Israel* is available from: PO Box 2542, Holon, Israel 58125

Hungarian elections

Old wine in a new bottle?

LETTER FROM HUNGARY

By John Cunningham, Veszprem, June 1994

FOR once the political pundits got it right. The Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), which had led the governing coalition since the first elections in 1990, virtually collapsed in the recent election and the second round of voting in the Hungarian elections.

The Free Democrats (SZDSZ) won 70 seats (18.5%).

Hungary thus joins a trend which can also be seen in Lithuania and Poland — the return to power of the "Communists".

Why has this turn-around happened? The answer, in Hungary at least, lies in the appalling record of the MDF-led ruling coalition in the four years it has been in power.

Bungling, contemptuous of the working class, elitist and often just plain stupid, the cavaliers of the MDF and their fellow travellers, the Christian Democrats (KDNP) and the Smallholders (FKGP), have now reaped the harvest of their disastrous policies they inflicted on the Hungarian people. Life in general has become so bad, particularly for the poor, that it is common to hear people say how better things were under the old system. Eloquent and damning testimony to the Government's record.

Having promised the capitalist Nirvana, the government delivered unemployment, rising prices, inflation, static wages and a general deterioration of living conditions. And while the majority of Hungarians, particularly pensioners, struggled to make ends meet, an affluent minority lorded it in fine villas in the Buda Hills (the Kensington of Budapest), driving expensive German cars and living opulent lifestyles of nauseating vulgarity.

The economic policy of the governing coalition amounted to little more than a society-wide car-boot sale of public assets. Whole factories were sold off at rock-bottom prices. Allegations of bribery and corruption were, and still are, common. Many of yesterday's Stalinists had little trouble U-turning into today's spivs and entrepreneurs. In no time at all chunks of the old ruling class, the so called nomenklatura had transformed themselves into a new state 'clientural', a new elite with close ties to the new capital flooding into Hungary and the quiescent government.



Anti-government demonstrators pile-up old TV sets in protest at interference in the media

The MDF seemed to think people would be satisfied with a revival of Magyar nationalism based on idealisation of the Hungary of the inter-war years. This message was lost on a population much more concerned with the increasingly harsh realities of everyday life.

There is little desire nowadays to 'reclaim' the territory taken away from Hungary at the treaty of Trianon just after the First World War. Most Hungarians are looking westwards to membership of the EEC, rather than eastwards to Transylvania (the major area, now part of Romania, which was lost at Trianon).

Only the more extremist right wing parties called for revision of the Trianon borders. The appeal of most of the right-of-centre was to some variant of Hungarian Christian-nationalism. And while there has been a rise in nationalist feeling since 1989 and a rise in, for example, anti-semitic incidents, the election results are an indictment of nationalism of whatever variety.

Along with this misreading of the political mood of the country, the new elite and its political representatives replicated many of the worst features of the old regime. They showed an utter contempt for ordinary people — pensioners, the underprivileged, low-income families, Romanies, Jews and organised labour.

"The new elite and its political representatives replicated many of the worst features of the old regime."

In one of the crudest suppressions of dissent seen in Eastern Europe since 1989, they ignored and tried to stifle any voices of opposition.

The Hungarian 'media war', as it became known, displayed the style of government these new standard-bearers of 'freedom' personified. Dissatisfied with criticism of its policy on the airwaves, the government prompted by the reactionary lout Istvan Csurka (at the time Vice President of the MDF), summarily sacked Elemer Hankiss and Csab Gomba, the presidents of Hungarian TV (MTV) and Hungarian Radio (MR) respectively.

In their place the government



MSZP President Czyula Horn

installed two hacks who proceeded to turn both branches of the electronic media into pliant mouthpieces of the government. Programmes such as Esti-Egyenleg (Evening Balance) were scrapped, there programmes were cancelled at the last minute, journalists were harassed and victimised and, finally, the last desperate measure: over 130 media workers were sacked from the radio and the popular programme 168-ora (168 hours) was taken off the air.

By the time of the election, the media, in particular news and news analysis, was almost totally dominated by pro-government hacks, some of whom were known to be former loyalists of the old regime. Opposition views were rarely presented and the MDF dominated the election build-up.

The coverage became so biased that at one stage MTV interviewed an Hungarian, now living in Sweden, who claimed that the MSZP President, Gyula Horn, had beaten him up in a police cell during the 1956 Revolution. Horn wasn't even asked for his comments about this allegation. Although Horn has never denied he was a member of the Stalinist 'Workers Guard' during 1956, the available evidence suggests that he spent most of his time guarding bridges and installations rather than fighting.

What is striking however about all this media manipulation is how startlingly it failed to achieve anything for the MDF. Hungarians showed a marked resistance to media manipulation and it even became something of a national joke. I remember one Hungarian calling his TV the 'MDF-Box'.

Of course the bias was so crude it was impossible not to notice it. Hungarians voted primarily on the basis of their real-life experience rather than media images or expensive advertising campaigns such as that mounted by FIDESZ (which failed utterly).

The MSZP has reaped the benefit of disenchantment with the MDF and the right in general. They can also, justifiably, point to their record before 1989. Most of them were not the Stalinist hatchmen, mass-murderers

and Satanists much beloved of right wing demagoguery. The majority of the MSZP leadership came from the reform-liberal wing of the old Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (MSZMP).

It was Horn and his colleagues, who in the 1970s introduced a number of economic reforms and liberalisations. Certainly in comparison to many of its neighbours, Hungary was relatively easy-going, often in the '70s referred to, half-mockingly, as "the happiest barracks in the world." It was they who opened the border to East Germans fleeing to the West. Rather than hang on to power in desperate rearguard Cseausescu style they agreed to the Round table talks of 1989 and were instrumental in ushering in one of the most peaceful revolutions of modern times.

Of course Horn and company did this, primarily to survive. But survival meant change and in this respect many of their actions were in advance of Gorbachev's.

"Survival meant change and in this respect many of their actions were in advance of Gorbachev."

From the point of view of political programme however there is little to choose between the MSZP and its nearest liberal rival, the SZDSZ. They say they will bring privatisation under the control of Parliament and promise a government of 'experts' as opposed to the bungling incompetence of the MDF. Most importantly, they are committed to restoring welfare benefits which have been severely eroded in the last four years and this factor alone probably earned them many thousands of votes from Hungary's increasingly destitute pensioners.

The MSZP also has a close relation with the largest trade union federation, the National Organisation of the Hungarian Trade Unions (MSZOSZ; 1,000,000 members) and the prospect

of a more benevolent attitude towards organised labour probably assured it of large support, particularly, from depressed industrial towns such as Miskolc and the coalmines of Tatabánya.

Fundamentally, however, the MSZP promises more of the same but with efficiency. They are absolutely committed to the "free market", though Horn tempers his comments with references to 'capitalism's negative side' and the need for 'rationality'. They appear to have no plans to involve trade unions in their decisions other than as junior negotiating partners in redundancy schemes.

Whether or not the MSZOSZ will be able to assert any kind of independence remains to be seen. A small number of MSZP MPs are union candidates (similar, but by no means identical to union-sponsored Labour MPs) and at a broader level the Hungarian trade union movement is split and fractious.

One of the most influential independent trade union federations — LIGA (The League of Independent Trade Unions; 200,000 members) continues to eye MSZOSZ with suspicion and united action between the various organisations has only been sporadic. There is a crying need for the Hungarian trade unions to unite into one federation and present a united independent front against the employers and the government. Sadly this is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future.

Signs of resistance are growing however. Earlier in the year, coal miners near Pecs in Southern Hungary staged a successful stay-down strike and won a favourable agreement.

Teachers and railway workers have been on strike and growing discontent in other sectors of industry will almost certainly result in more industrial action.

While the working class slowly and unevenly nudges its way back in the political arena after years of silence and inactivity, the political left — those groups offering a non-Stalinist, democratic socialist alternative — are virtually non-existent. Whether the new shifts in Hungarian politics will spur on their development remains to be seen.

Spot the loonies

SPOT the Euro-election loonies. Are they:

(a) The Natural Law Party, who say that they "...do not require sacrifices on the part of any nation for the sake of the European Union. By creating coherence in the collective consciousness of every nation... nations will naturally form an invincible union". This will happen through the establishment of a group of "7,000 experts in Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's technology of consciousness — Transcendental Meditation and Yogic Flying". For immigration and refugees the Natural Law Party offers a solution "on a world level... Yogic Flyers in every continent will maintain a high level of satisfaction and integration everywhere..."

(b) The Conservatives who believe that European union does not entail a loss of sovereignty for any country if the Union adopts John Major's model of a multi-speed variomatic Europe with variable differentials and layered opt-outs as well as a large red button marked "Emergency Stop" for countries that feel sick and want to get off. The Conservatives plan to place about six MEPs in Europe, who will do a lot of expenses-paid flying.

On the refugees and immigration, the Tory policy is to (a) lock them up, (b) deport them and (c) see if they can't kill them in the process.

Have you spotted the loonies yet? Here is another clue. On crime the Natural Law Party promise "scientifically-validated programmes for effective rehabilitation of offenders to... prevent future crime", whereas the Conservatives promise military-style youth detention camps.

IN THE Tory Party, deep divisions are now emerging in that most vital of policy areas — scapegoating.

Who can forget those halcyon days of every ill being laid at the door of the last Labour government or the trade unions? But now the Tories have slumped into an ill co-ordinated and almost random patchwork of blame.

The Prime Minister's underlings have clearly ignored his lead against beggars. Portillo is concentrating on foreign social security scrounging drug-addicts while, Michael Howard mounts a broad offensive in his Criminal Justice Act against squatters, travellers and others.

Meanwhile more junior figures in Government put the blame for Britain's ills on anyone from sick old people to Brussels bureaucrats and bishops lacking moral backbone.

What the Tories need is a strong leader with the single-minded vision to express hate of one group of people at time.

AN Mitchell, currently Newcastle organiser for the SWP, was one of those who

GRAFFITI



By Cyclops

knocked down and kicked Socialist Organiser supporter, Mark Sandell for giving out leaflets at their "Marxism '93" event.

Recently some young members of the SWP who were running a stall in Newcastle were questioned about the incident. What did they think of their organiser settling disputes with violence? We were there, they replied, and Sandell thoroughly deserved it.

At this point Mitchell himself arrived. Did he agree with his young fans? No, he replied, the incident never happened.

It is well known that goldfish can only remember for 5 seconds, and the incident was 10 months ago, SWP organisers are still higher in the evolutionary scale than goldfish.

USEFUL tips for anyone hiring a van — always check your mirror before setting off. Not your rear-view mirror, but your bathroom mirror.

If the face looking back at you is black, then avoid going to the North's leading hire firm, Salford Van Hire.

The Commission for Racial Equality found that at their Leeds branch they instructed counter staff to charge a £50 deposit to white customers but £100 to black drivers. They also were instructed to refuse personal accident waiver insurance to any black customer.

IN THE blue corner: The new Messiah, John "Son of God" Patten, his mission to instil a fear of God into the youth of the nation. His knock-out punch is that from the age of four upwards children must be morally educated and taught the difference between right and wrong by being forced to stand up every morning and sing songs about some bloke being banged up on a cross 2000 years ago. His crime? Preaching against the established church and a disrespectful attitude to his political rulers, but never mind about that.

In the red corner: well, what did you expect? Anne Taylor draped in the Red Flag? The Bishop of Ripon (Church of England education spokesperson), the National Association of Head Teachers, the teaching unions and other assorted covens of devil-worshippers. All of these take a line against forced worship.

Patten has now countered with parent power — aggrieved and godly parents can complain to the government about schools' diabolic disregard for God and country. The response so far? None.

A cast of grotesques in a tawdry farce

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

THE TALK of cads and bounders. The wronged wife warns of the dangers of bedding the "below-stairs class." the jealous husband brandishes a horse-whip. Can this be the 20th century? Coming hard on the heels of Major's call to sweep beggars off the streets, the Alan Clark bedroom farce should at least ensure that we hear no more "classless society" humbug from the Tories for quite some time.

The language and imagery — Henry Fielding meets PG Woodhouse — is, of course, calculated to entertain and it succeeds admirably. The guiding hand of Max Clifford has once again ensured a brilliant performance. Were it not for the fact that Mr Clark has now retained the services of George "Killer" Carman QC (fee: £1,000 per breath) the obvious conclusion would be that Clark, the Harkess family, Clifford and the Murdoch press were all in on it together. After all, everyone wins: the flagging sales of Clark's diaries have been given a boost, the Harkesses have their revenge and their money Clifford can chalk up another media triumph and the *News of the World* has its scoop.

Certainly, Clark seemed quite happy to play along with his allotted role as cad/bounder until the Harkesses went too far in this week's *News of the World* and accused him of fathering a "love child" with a 24 year old, exposing himself to gay friends and fancying his mother-in-law. This was going beyond a joke.

Actually, the whole sordid business was beyond a joke all along. The cast of grotesques who make up the dramatis personae of this tawdry production may be very entertaining, but they share at least one very unamusing characteristic: racism. James Harkess was a supporter of Enoch Powell and stood on an openly racist platform as Tory candidate for Brixton in the 1970 general election. He has never forgiven John Major for trying to get him de-selected. No-one

who knew him was surprised when Harkess and his family emigrated to South Africa in 1977, where he became head of the "guest section" of the department of information. But times were changing: in 1987 the National Party rejected him as too right wing.

No wonder Harkess and Clark became friends. Clark too was (and remains) an admirer of Enoch Powell and once, notoriously described Africa as "Bongo Bongoland." Mrs Thatcher, with her soft spot for bounders, made him a minister but Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong was sufficiently worried to take him to one side and question him about his links with the National Front.

Then there is the strange business of the £100,000 account opened in the name of Valerie Harkess but according to

Clark's "investment adviser" Gerald Morse — intended to allow Clark to deal in shares while a minister. The shares involved were in an arms company called Astra. Clark was Minister of State at the Department of Trade from 1986 to 1989 and then at the Ministry of Defence from 1989 to 1992. Ministers are not allowed to deal in "any investments which seem likely to give rise to an actual or apparent conflict of interest." this story has been known to Fleet Street since the middle of last year, but only *Private Eye* had picked it up until last week, when *Today* and then the *Sunday Times* gave it some space (although the latter dismissed Morse's claims as making "no sense").

Paul Foot, who wrote the original *Private Eye* article summed things up very well in Monday's *Guardian*: "Clark the lover levels in the publicity, strutting through his grounds, forever grinning, forever talking, and chucking morsels of 'remorse' to journalists who snivel their delight like the dogs at the nobleman's table. Clark the sharedealer is silent." And, Foot might have added, most of the press is equally silent about Clark the racist.

Bugs under the microscope



By Jean Lane

BAD AND blundering national figures, like John Major, the Chas and Di Road Show, the organiser of the British D-Day celebrations and Necrotising Fasciitis, will all be let off the hook for the next few weeks as the media spotlight will swivel between the Harkess family and Alan Clark like the heads at a Wimbledon centre court final.

Josephine, who was terrified that anyone in her neighbourhood in South Africa would put two and two together and recognise her from the oblique references to the "coven" and "Joie" in Clark's diaries published over a year ago, has decided that she will protect her reputation by making sure that everyone in the whole world will know who she is, what she has done and with whom. She and her Mum and Dad will release more and more smut about Alan Clark:

starting with his constantly showing her and her sister, Alison, his penis when they were little girls, to — so far — his alleged "love child"; a euphemism about as accurate as the Gulf War's "friendly fire" — which is probably a better description of Clark's style of "love making".

The media's problem with all this is that there is no one character for the public to love, feel sorry for or identify with. The woman who was "seduced" stood by and watched her daughters served up for dessert and then continued her affair with him. Josephine would have said nothing about it if it wasn't for the fact that she's got a top-nob marriage in the offing which could be jeopardised. Even the "wronged wife", Jane, is a toffee-nosed, upper-class snob of monstrous proportions, whose sole worry about the whole affair seems to be that her husband chose to go "below stairs" for his philandering. When Clark is said to have bragged that he had also had it off with her mother, she laughed, seemingly thinking it all a jolly good jape.

We feminists will be searching for a wronged woman whose cause should be taken

up. But, search as we might — there isn't one. They are all rotten to the core. Sitting on top of society like useless, bloodsucking parasites, the whole lot of them haven't got one saving grace between them.

Clark, already worth £40million, tucked safely away in his Kent castle, stands to gain from the increased sales of his diaries. The Harkess family are going to make £150,000 out of the media circus ("more than I am making from my diaries", bleats Clark). Max Clifford will rake in enough to keep him rolling in luxury at least until the next Princess Di scandal breaks.

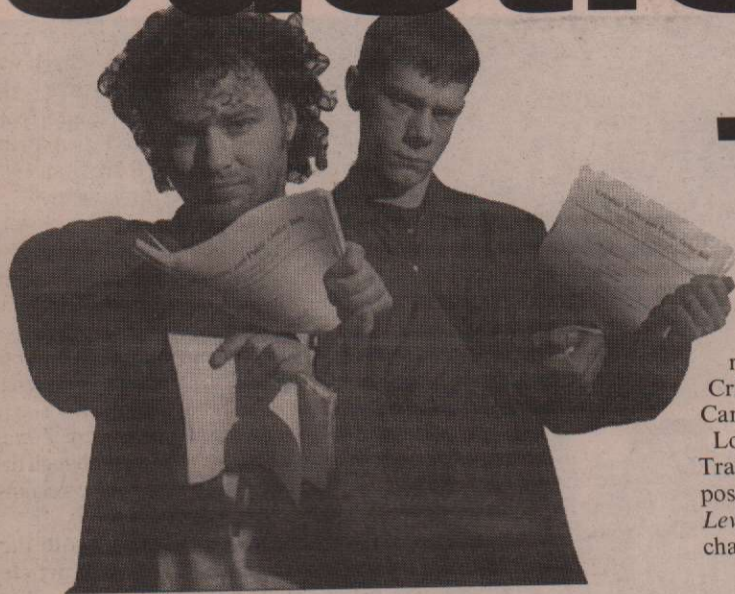
The nearest we come to a victim is from Jane Clark's reported comment when asked why she didn't leave her husband: "Where would I go?" If she was a working class woman on an estate who, on leaving her husband, would be faced with fighting the Housing Department for a place to live, the courts for an injunction, the DSS for enough money to get by on, and the search for a non-existent job, her question would arouse recognition and sympathy in the breasts of women everywhere.

Above stairs Jane Clark has

none of these problems. Her situation does inform us of one thing about leaving rotten husbands which is true for all women, upstairs, downstairs or in the cellar; it takes more than money to leave. It takes confidence and courage to go it alone as well. Even working class women who do have enough financial independence find it hard for this reason. Most, who manage to get away, develop the confidence by the sheer necessity of getting through, by going out to work, and by discovering a new life for themselves. If Jane Clark is anything to go by, money can't buy love and it can't buy independence of mind either. If she was prepared to descent her glittering staircase it would be possible to consider this fact sad.

Mind you, she has found one fan to sympathise with her. "I think I would feel very insulted if my husband found a girl from the slums more attractive than me", says Barbara Cartland, who saves a bit for poor old Alan as well: "There are different rules over fidelity for the rich because they can afford it". On the nail, Babs! It does take one bug to know another.

Smash the Criminal Justice Bill!



THE GROUP, *The Levellers*, have been banned from hiring advertising space on London Buses to run their "Stop the Criminal Justice Bill Campaign." London Regional Transport banned the posters even when *The Levellers* offered to change the wording to

"criminal justice or criminal injustice?" London Regional Transport also banned an advert for *Queen's* Roger Taylor's anti-Nazi single "Nazis."

The Criminal Justice Bill represents a massive attack on the civil rights of, particularly, squatters, travellers, ravers and protesters.

The Levellers have linked up with the union on the buses, the Transport and General

Workers' Union, to pressure LRT to take the adverts.

The bosses at LRT are clearly crawling to the Tory government by banning these adverts. The labour movement must oppose this political censorship, but, more importantly, it must throw its weight behind the Campaign Against the Criminal Justice Bill.

Contact The Freedom Network — 071-738 6721 — for more information.

Darnall 8: Asian youth arrested for self-defence

Drop all the charges!

Nazi gang threatens anti-racist meeting

Birmingham anti-racists see off Nazi stunt

By Mick Duncan

A GANG of 15 fascists turned up to last week's launch meeting of Birmingham United Against Racism and Fascism.

The meeting was well attended, with representatives of a number of campaigns, including the Anti-Nazi League, Anti-Racist Action, AFA and Youth Against Racism in Europe.

Speakers included Christine Crawley MEP and councillor Phil Murphy.

Bill Morris, leader of the TGWU, sent a message of support urging "all trade unionists, in particular, to support this campaign."

The campaign has the support of Theresa Stewart, leader of the city council, both Birmingham MEPs, a number of Labour councillors, the Trades Council, West Midlands Area NUS and other trade union and student union groups.

When we arrived there were police outside the door. They said they had had "information." While Christine Crawley was speaking a group of men, one of them with a bonehead hair cut, came in. We passed round a new attendance list for them to sign. It came back with "Adolf Hitler" and address like "18 Combat Drive" and "6 Million Lies" written on it.

The meeting was stopped and we

demanded that they leave. After a brief argument they did, chanting "Sieg heil" and "Combat 18." They waited outside and as we left sang "Rule Britannia." We left the meeting in large groups to defend ourselves from attack.

The attempt by these Nazi thugs to break up our meeting must be a warning to the whole left. In Birmingham the National Front are standing a candidate in the Euro-elections against John Tomlinson. NF and BNP candidates gained bigger votes than expected in the local elections in Birmingham.

It is high time that the left got its act together and united. We need to go out into the community and fight the Nazis on every level. We need to organise self-defence and stewarding.

Most importantly, we must mobilise the millions-strong labour movement to take on the Nazis and offer real alternatives of jobs and homes for all against the Nazis' "rights for whites" drive.

Birmingham United Against Racism and Fascism is an excellent step in the right direction.

We will campaign hard for John Tomlinson, the Labour MEP, in the Euro-elections.

Contact BUARF, c/o the Students Union, University of Central England, Franchise Street, Perry Barr, Birmingham B42 2SU. Cheques payable to "BUARF."



By Ed, Sheffield

HUNDREDS OF angry demonstrators gave a strong message to the police and magistrates in Sheffield last Wednesday, 1 June, in response to the arrest of 8 local youths. The Asian youth had defended themselves during an attack by a group of racists on Monday 2 May.

Since the success of a mass picket of the local police, when 500 people vented their anger, the Darnall Defence Campaign, has gone from strength to strength. Support from local trades unions has been good, with the Sheffield Trades Council supporting the campaign and calling on all its affiliates to support it. At a special meeting, Labour-controlled Sheffield City Council agreed to support the call for an independent enquiry.

At the court hearing on Wednesday 1 June, the charges were dropped on 3 of the youths. Charges had already been dropped on 13-year old Monaim Kahen. Nissar Jaffer, spokesperson for the 8 arrested, had his charge of breach of peace dropped and was awarded nearly £300 costs, only to be replaced with another charge of using threatening language. "Justice has been halfway done," he said. "The police have been shown they were wrong to arrest me. They charged me with something I did not do." Clearly

the campaign is far from over. The cases were all adjourned and the next date for the hearing will be set on 30 June.

All the defendants are still demanding not only dropping of charges, but an independent enquiry into the actions of the Attercliffe police.

The Campaign is now setting up in a shop in the centre of Darnall to act as a drop-in centre to monitor other cases of police harassment.

It is important that the basis of this campaign is spread out throughout Sheffield. The campaign can be used as a basis to building grassroots campaigns which demand not only an inquiry but also the accountability of local police to their community and the creation of jobs and house building programmes. In this way we can not only tackle police racism, but also undermine the increase in racism across Sheffield.

Sheffield Against Racism and Fascism (SARF) who brought together many trades unions, local Labour Parties, community and anti-racist groups for an anti-racist May Day demonstration, has been supporting this campaign.

SARF has open meetings every fortnight at SADACCA, the Wicker, Sheffield. Our next meeting will be at 7.30pm on Monday 20 June. All welcome. Tel 0742-722348 for details.

Youth Fightback is...

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

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

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

Make the rich pay for more education

THE MAIN bosses' organisation, the Confederation of British Industry, has produced a report which calls for cuts in college expenditure per student and cuts in grants. These "savings" will pay for the continued expansion of Higher Education.

Mr Cadbury, chair of the CBI's Education and Training Committee — oh, and chair of Cadbury-Schweppes multinational company — wants 40% of young people to go into Higher Education while the Tories think 33% is quite enough.

Multi-millionaire Mr Cadbury wants students and college workers to pay for the expansion by barring students with better-off parents from all maintenance grants and forcing already hard-up colleges to deliver "efficiency savings" of 4% a year.

The CBI and Mr Cadbury want to take the Tories' policies that one step further away from properly funded Higher Education open to all, and closer to a pile 'em high, teach 'em cheap system, the main purpose of which will be to produce model workers for multinationals like Cadbury-Schweppes.

Of course we want more people to be able to go into Higher Education, but this expansion must be properly funded. The running down of colleges must be reversed. All students should get a minimum grant of £70 a week, and full benefit rights, regardless of their parents' income. If their parents are rich, then tax them to pay for the expansion of Higher Education.



7
YOUTH
FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

Defend the Welfare State

Eleven million in

By Dale Street

FIFTEEN YEARS OF social engineering by the Tories have produced an explosion in poverty and social inequalities in British society. In 1979 14% of the population were living on or below the Supplementary Benefit level. By 1989 20% of the population (11,330,000 people) were living on or below the level of Income Support (as Supplementary Benefit was renamed in 1988).

When the Tories came to power 9% of the population were living below 50% of average income. A decade later 22% of the population (12 million people) were living below 50% of average income.

Poverty encountered by children is even greater than for society as a whole. Whereas in 1979 11% of children lived on or below the Supplementary Benefit level, in 1989 2,760,000 children (22% of all children) were living on or below the Income Support level.

This growth in the number of people living in poverty has continued into the 1990s. Between 1989 and 1993 unemployment rose by 80%

from 1.6 million to 3 million people, according to official figures. Average household income and expenditure fell between 1990 and 1991. Heavier taxation, such as the extension of VAT to domestic fuel, has plunged more people into poverty.

The poor have not merely increased in number under the Tories. They have also grown poorer. Since 1979 the real income of the bottom 10% of the population has fallen by 14%.

One consequence of the poor becoming poorer is that they have become burdened with ever greater debts. 33% of households with a net weekly income of less than £100 have debt problems, compared with 2% of households enjoying a weekly income of £400 or more. The reasons for incurring debt problems are also very different.

In 1991 96,000 Income Support claimants had deductions from their benefits to pay off electricity arrears, 146,000 had deductions to pay gas arrears, 94,000 had deductions to pay rent arrears, 34,000 had deductions to pay poll tax arrears, and 443,000 had deductions to repay Social Fund loans.

In 1989 8,426 households had their water supplies disconnected for non-payment of charges. Three years later the figure had increased by some 250% to 21,282.

The introduction of pre-payment meters for gas and electricity, which "allow" consumers to disconnect themselves, has resulted in a fall in the official figures for gas and electricity disconnections.

Greater poverty has also led to worse health

and higher death rates. Surveys of families living on Income Support found that over 65% of the families reported ill-health or disability amongst parents, and over 70% of the families reported ill-health or disability amongst children.

The poor not only suffer worse health but also die younger. A survey of mortality rates in the North of England revealed that in the most deprived areas death rates for some age groups are four times higher than the most affluent areas.

The Tories claim that the poor need the spur of their own poverty to get on in life. They certainly do not apply the same principle to the wealthy. Under the Tories the wealthy have

received one handout after another.

Nearly £4 billion was given away in tax cuts between 1979 and 1986 to the wealthiest 10% of the population. In the budgets of 1987 and 1988 a further £3,160 millions was given away to the top 10%, of which £1,730 million went to the top 1% alone.

Between 1979 and 1989 the wealthiest 10% of the population experienced a leap of 46% in their real income.

As the rich got richer while the poor got poorer, then, by definition, overall inequalities necessarily grew.

In the course of the 1980s the bottom half of the population saw their share of total income drop from 32% to 27%, whilst the richest half increased their share from 68% to 73%.

At the top of the scale the increase was even more dramatic. Over the same period the top 5% increased their share of total income by 50% (from 10% to 15%), while the top 1% increased their share by 100% (from 3% to 6%).

Inequalities in rates of pay increased as well. By the beginning of 1991 the gap between high-paid and low-paid employees was the widest since records first began in 1886. The highest incomes had increased 16 times more than the lowest.

In 1991 the average annual income of households in the wealthiest 20% of the population was £25,320, compared with an average income of £3,410 for households in the bottom 20%. The contrast between the average income of the top 10% (£31,931) and the bottom 10% (£2,704) was even more marked.

By 1993 the top 10% of the population in John Major's "classless society" owned 50% of all wealth in Britain, whilst the bottom 50% owned just 8%.

Poverty has increased as a result of policies consciously pursued by the Tories.

MOST IMPORTANT in terms of levering open the gap between rich and poor has been the major shift away from direct to indirect taxation under the Tories, which has

"Poverty has increased as a result of policies consciously pursued by the Tories."



The Tories viciously attacked Labour's mild plans to tax the rich: but they themselves have increased

the tax burden for the poor whilst reducing it for the rich.

In 1979 income tax accounted for 34.6% of all revenue. A decade later it accounted for 28%.

Over the same period VAT rose from 8.3% to 15.1% of all revenue, and national insurance increased to 18%. The 1994 increase in national insurance and the extension of VAT to domestic fuel have further increased the proportion of revenue raised through indirect taxation.

Whereas in 1979 the average family was paying 35.1% of its income in tax (direct and indirect), by 1989 the average family was paying 37.3% of its income in tax.

For the poorest families the increase in the tax burden was even more dramatic. In 1979 the poorest families (those on 50% or less of average income) paid 2.5% of their income tax and national insurance. Ten years later they were paying 7.1%.

For those on 20 times average earnings, the

proportion of their income consumed by income tax and national insurance fell from 74.3% in 1979 to 38.5% in 1989.

The handing over of billions of pounds to the wealthy through cuts in income tax and shifting the tax burden towards indirect taxation was a straightforward redistribution of wealth. It was financed by major cutbacks in social security expenditure on the poorest sections of the population.

Unemployment Benefit has fallen as a proportion of average earnings from 16.2% in 1979 to 14.2% in 1992. The earnings-related supplement to Unemployment Benefit has been scrapped.

Since 1988 access to Unemployment Benefit has been dependent on contributions paid in the two previous years, instead of one as previously. Disqualification from Unemployment Benefit for being "voluntary unemployed" has increased from six weeks to twenty-six weeks.

Income Support (as Supplementary Benefit was renamed in 1988) is no longer paid to 16 and 17 year olds unless they have a Youth Training place. Young people in the 18 to 24 age range also receive a lower rate of Income Support. The introduction of a variety of "availability for work" tests has transformed gaining access to Income Support into an obstacle course.

Income Support rates are now so low that they meet only 74% of a "low-cost" budget and 33% of a "modest but adequate" budget for a couple with two children aged 4 and 10.

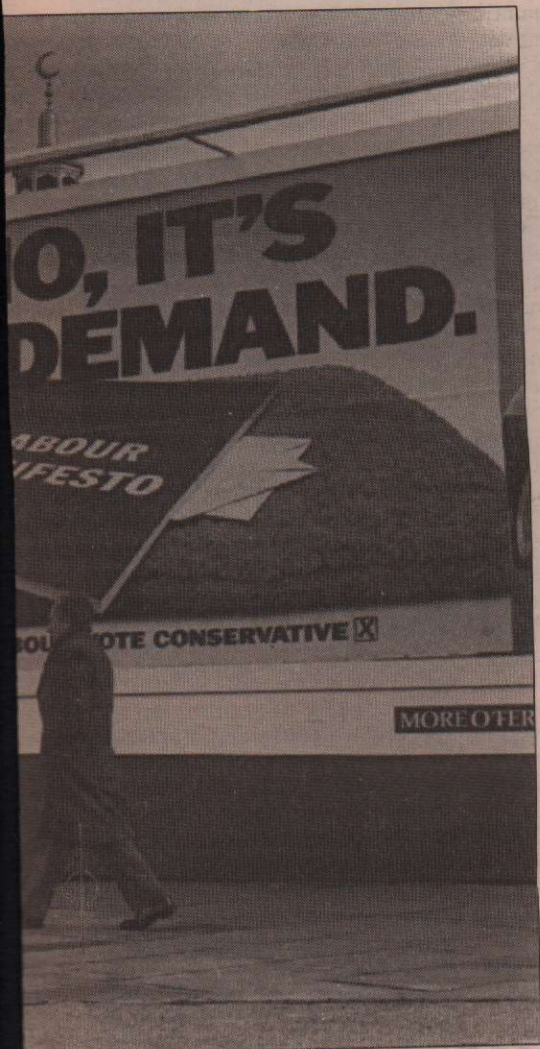
Family Credit (paid to the low-paid with families) is equally inadequate. As a result of cuts imposed in 1988 recipients of Family Credit ceased to be entitled to free school meals for their children, and Family Credit recipients receive no help with mortgage interest pay-

"Income Support rates are now so low that they meet only 74% of a 'low-cost' budget."



The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer — especially among children and young people

poverty



the gap between the rich and poor. For the rich privatisation has meant an opportunity to buy up valuable assets at bargain-basement prices plus fat share dividends. For the poor, privatisation has meant higher bills.

Unemployment has been encouraged by the Tories as a deliberate policy. The sudden explosion of unemployment in the early eighties, with two million people thrown out of work between 1979 and 1983, was the product of the Tories' desire to undermine the strength of trade union organisation.

GIVEN THAT unemployment is a prime cause of poverty, the increase in the unemployment rate to one in seven of the working population immediately increased the number of people living in poverty. By undermining the strength of trade unionism, unemployment also weakened the potential opposition to other Tory policies geared towards the creation of a more unequal society.

The succession of anti-union laws introduced by the Tories — in 1980, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990 and 1993 — served a similar purpose. By hindering the possibility of taking effective strike action, they allowed private employers and the government to hold down wages and cut living standards, thereby giving a further twist to the spiral of poverty.

Not content with attacking trade unions, the Tories also scrapped legislation introduced in earlier decades in order to provide some limited protection for the worst-paid workers.

In 1986 Wages Council protection for young workers was abolished, and weakened for adult workers. In 1993 Wages Council protection for adult workers was abolished in turn. The number of wages inspectors has also been slashed under the Tories, especially as a result of legislation passed in 1986.

Although recently frustrated in their intentions as a result of European legislative protection, the Tories scrapped the Fair Wages Resolution in 1982 in order to encourage contracting out. This meant that private contractors taking over public sector work could impose wage-cuts in the event of winning a contract.

With a government in power committed to minimising wages and maximising poverty, employers took initiatives of their own to promote still further the Tories' goals. As a consequence, there has been a major restructuring of working patterns over the last decade.

Between 1984 and 1991 the number of part-time employees increased by 17%. Over the same period the number of workers on temporary contracts grew by 11%. The growth of part-time and temporary work meant a larger proportion of the workforce on lower wages and enjoying fewer benefits.

Full-time workers are more than twice as likely as temporary workers to have access to sick pay, and four times as likely as temporary workers to have access to a pension scheme.

The proportion of part-time workers on low pay (77% of the part-time workforce) is more than twice the proportion of full-time workers on low pay (36% of the full-time adult workforce).

The promotion of poverty and social inequalities has been the guiding light of Tory policy since 1979.

That they have succeeded is less a reflection of their political skills than of the failure of the labour movement leadership to mount an effective challenge.

"The poor have not merely increased in number under the Tories. They have also grown poorer."

ments (unlike Income Support claimants).

In the worst cases of the operation of the poverty trap (when a rise in earnings is largely cancelled out by a cut in benefits), a family in receipt of Family Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit retains only 3p of every extra pound earned — equivalent to a marginal tax rate of 97%.

Social security Single Payments (one-off grants for particular needs) were scrapped in 1988 and replaced by a cash-limited discretionary Social Fund. Most money paid out of the Social Fund is in the form of loans. In 1993 just £91 million was paid out as outright grants — compared with £504 million paid out in the last year of Single Payments.

Stringent conditions were imposed on the distribution of money from the Social Fund. An 82 year-old single pensioner was denied money for an electric stove on the grounds that hot food was not a necessity. Eventually the conditions were relaxed in order that any money from the Social Fund could be distributed at all.

In 1980 the linkage between pensions increases and the rate of pay increases was scrapped. As a result, a single pensioner was £19.35 a week worse off by 1993, and a pensioner couple was £30.65 a week worse off. Two thirds of pensioners now live at or below the poverty line.

Whilst the "reform" of taxation and the social security system has played the leading role in the direct redistribution of wealth back in the direction of the wealthy, the Tories' deliberate creation of an increasingly unequal society has also been promoted by a range of other measures.

Privatisation of public utilities has increased

"Time is running out. We need to fight now to defend the welfare state!"

A student nurse from St Thomas's spoke at a London Alliance for Workers' Liberty meeting, "In defence of the Welfare State", last week. This is part of her speech.

GUY'S HOSPITAL was once the Tories' flagship Trust but is now their latest and biggest target in the destruction of London's health care. The closure which has been presented as a merger with St Thomas's, the other hospital in the Trust, is going ahead despite opposition from many quarters.

Dozens of specialist units and medical teams at Guy's face drastic cutbacks or total extinction under the merger. 750 beds will be lost and 2,000 — mainly nursing — jobs will go.

When the closure was announced last February several different committees were set up to fight it, pulling the workers in different directions. But the campaign headed by Southwark Community Health Council — known as Save It, Casualty in Crisis — has united these other committees and has begun to give some lead to the campaign.

The closure will further deplete London's casualty units. A fifth of London's Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments have closed since 1990. At the moment, Guy's A&E deals with over 60,000 cases a year. It is mad to think that St Thomas's could cope with these extra cases when so many other A&Es have closed. More madness is the argument which has been used for closing St Bartholomew's hospital: that its casualty services could be taken over by Guy's!

The end result of all this is even longer delays and the units that remain open will face massive pressure. Thousands of people every year will be left without the emergency care they need and people will die so that a little more money can line the Tories' pockets.

Despite the efforts of many workers and local people the campaign to save Guy's has been largely ineffective. This is due to two major problems.

Firstly there has been a lack of unity between the workers at Guy's and Thomas's and linked to this is the second problem: the weakness of UNISON, the largest union in the health service.

Many of the staff at St Thomas's are beginning to feel complacent. Whilst they know jobs will be lost from the St Thomas's site as well as Guy's they also feel the decision leaves them safe and it will not be their jobs that will go.

We need unity between the workers at both these hospitals but this is unlikely to happen if UNISON continues to act as it has been doing.

A big problem has been that the ex-COHSSE and NUPE branches have not yet merged in either hospital. At St Thomas's the NUPE branch secretary has deliberately obstructed a merger as this would mean giving up access to branch funds which augments their pay to the tune of several thousand pounds a year. In addition none of the UNISON branches meet regularly and so no action can be organised.

In an indicative ballot at Guy's, 76% said they were willing to take industrial action to save the hospital. But the ballot has not been followed up and no action has been organised. Guy's UNISON now appears to be getting its act together. Both the ex-COHSSE and ex-NUPE branches sent an emergency motion to UNISON conference. The motion called on the NEC to support a demonstration and lobby of Parliament on 5 July and to immediately launch a national campaign in defence of the NHS.

What's happening locally at Guy's and St Thomas is a reflection of the national state of UNISON's organisation in the health sector. At UNISON's health sector conference a few weeks ago, at the urging of the national leadership, delegates voted against a weekday strike by almost 3 to 1.

The closure of Guy's is just one example of what the Tories are doing. They are pushing relentlessly

ly to bring about the final breakdown of the health service and its formal reorganisation into a two-tier structure with strict rationing in both quantity and quality for the poor.

Since Thatcher came into office in 1979, 60 local hospitals in London have closed and the number of beds has fallen from around 64,000 to 34,000. There pressure on hospital beds is now so great that there are camp beds in wards and long waits on trolleys, especially in A&E. Planned operations are continually being cancelled so that emergency patients can be admitted. Conditions are similar to London in the rest of the country. Managers around the country are quoting Tomlinson and his report in order to push through closures of hospitals and other health services.

The Trusts and GP fundholders operate through the internal market. This is designed to put profits before people's needs, cutting services that aren't "cost effective."

Yet the overpaid and overbearing managers of the health service still find money for themselves.

The cost of NHS company cars — many of which are merely perks for managers — went up by a third last year to £70 million. This is more than the NHS gas heating bill, and three years' worth of car expenses would pay for building a whole new hospital.

Spending on managers' pay in London has increased by 109% over four years. But nurses have to work a bit harder for their money: Alan Langlands, the new NHS chief executive, is committed to performance related pay for us. Even a smile has its price in the new NHS.

Most people in Britain are hostile to what the Tories are doing to the health service. But still the Tories do it. That isn't surprising. What is surprising is that they've got away with it and have been doing so for the last 15 years.

The Labour leaders' failure to defend the health service is almost unbelievable when they could not have had an easier or more popular case to argue. They can't convincingly defend the NHS because they accept the basic Tory case against it: the full cost of medical treatment is prohibitive, especially so in a society that spends millions on arms and makes tax cuts

to benefit the rich.

The Tories central argument is that modern health care is too expensive to give to everyone — that is the working-class people, the poor and the old. It can only be made available to those that have the money to pay for it.

To oppose the Tories you need conviction. If the Labour leader had denounced the Tories they would have to do so with that conviction, pushed forward by the determination of millions of people who would have rallied against the Tories to stop them smashing up the Welfare State.

A fight to save the NHS and the whole of the Welfare State could turn the tide in our favour. We don't need a series of odd, half-hearted, dispirited objections and demonstrations but a radical fight to reassert the basic socialist idea embedded in the 1948 health service: that the right to life is greater than the rights of property or the right of the rich to pay less tax.

We demand that the Labour and trade union leaders launch this campaign, but we will not wait for them. We can't wait any longer. We need to build a single-issue campaign to defend the welfare state and in the first place the health service. We must rally around the principles of proper medical care, housing, education, benefits and basic social and human rights.

Such a campaign will mobilise and organise the vast but headless opposition that already exists, in defence of the health service and the whole of the welfare state.

Time is running out. We need to fight now. We cannot sit back and let the Tories destroy the welfare state, the product of 150 years of working-class political activity.

"We must rally around the principles of proper medical care, housing, education, benefits and basic social and human rights."

Cut work hours, rebuild the Welfare State, win democratic control

The way to full

Trade unions like the GMB have argued for the Labour Party to make "full employment" its main slogan, and the Labour Left conference organised by the Campaign Group Supporters' Network this coming weekend (11 June, in Manchester) has "full employment" as its main theme. But how can full employment be won? Martin Thomas looks at the debate.

THE MOST primitive human societies manage to organise "full employment." Peoples who have not developed written language or any sort of science still manage to organise themselves so that everyone contributes within their abilities to the labour necessary for society, and no-one is rejected as "redundant."

Unemployment is a problem created not by human nature, but by a particular form of economic organisation, characteristic of a particular stage in history — namely, capitalism, or production for profit.

Under capitalism, the social means of production are owned by a minority, and the majority get access to those means of production, to work, only as and when their work yields profits for the minority. When the wealth-owning minority hold back on investing in new production, because they judge the prospects for profit not good enough, or squeeze the same labour out of fewer workers, then workers are jobless.

No-one alive today has ever seen any way of organising society other than capitalism (and its mutant ugly sister, Stalinism). No-one can remember anything different. Usually, it is hard even to *imagine* anything differ-

ent.

It is that failure of imagination which makes full employment seem such a remote prospect. If capitalism is accepted as the natural order of things, then unemployment is also part of the natural order; it can be held back or limited only piecemeal and with difficulty. If we can imagine doing away with capitalism, then we can imagine doing away with unemployment.

In Britain today there are about four million jobless: some show up in the official figures as unemployed, others as "on training schemes", "housewives", "early retired", "unable to work", and so on. Young people leave school or college with little chance of a stable job; men and women in their 50s and early 60s are told that their useful lives are already over.

At the same, public services are collapsing for lack of staff, and thousands of jobs need to be done which are not being done.

The GMB trade union leadership, which has called for full employment to be "forced... to the top of the UK political agenda", argues that the way to get it is by returning to "demand management, varying government spending and tax policies... so as to keep total spending in the economy high enough... creating jobs for almost everyone who wanted to work." In short, the government should spend more.

That is a start. Where the GMB executive's statement "Full Employment and a Fair Society" is inadequate is in spelling out where and how more should be spent, where the money should be got from, and how the various obstacles should be dealt with.

It also fails to deal with the capitalist flipside of unemployment, *overwork*.

On a capitalist basis, increased

investment, which the GMB calls for, can lead to more, not less, unemployment, by replacing workers with machines and using those machines to speed up the work of the workers remaining.

The first priority of a drive for full employment should be to *rebuild the Welfare State*.

Hospital closures should be halted; staffing levels increased so that junior doctors and others no longer have to work 80 hours or more a week; ancillary services (cleaning, laundry, and so on) brought back "in-house" and staffed properly.

New clinics and health centres should be built and staffed, so that everyday health care, for minor troubles, no longer means long queues in germ-filled waiting rooms. More people should be employed on health promotion and preventive medicine.

More staff should be employed in schools and colleges, to end the scandal of primary-school children being taught in classes of 30-plus. Cuts in adult education should be reversed.

Libraries should be reopened, and staffed so that they can remain open for longer hours.

New nurseries should be built and staffed, so that every pre-school child whose parents wish it can have a place.

Local authorities should be given funds, and a legal mandate, to take over and renovate or convert empty houses, flats and offices, and build new housing where necessary. We should house the homeless!

Public transport should be expanded, and staffed properly, with an end to "one-person operation" on buses and trains.

These measures would create hundreds of thousands of useful jobs, and probably millions when you count in the extra employment generated by the knock-on effect of the extra demand for goods and services created by people coming off the dole and getting wages.

Most of them require no elaborate outlay on investment and training: they can be done with existing facilities, equipment, and qualified (but unemployed) workers, or with only short periods of training for most of the new workers.

Increased investment and training are desirable, but a lot of useful new jobs could be created without waiting for that investment and training to be set up and to yield results.

The government's "training" schemes for the unemployed — designed to provide cheap labour, to harass the jobless, and to help fiddle the official jobless figures down to a lower level — should be replaced by proper training, on trade-union rates of pay, leading to recognised qualifications and a guaranteed job at the end of the course.

Capitalism has two "motors" generating unemployment: the reluctance of the wealthy classes, at times of low market demand, to spend their wealth on employing new workers on new enterprises; and the employers' drive to get more labour out of fewer workers.

A drive to rebuild the Welfare State can counteract the first "motor". A campaign for a *standard 35 hour work week* is needed to counteract the sec-

ond.

Full-time workers in Britain do an average of 43.6 hours a week. It is the longest average work-week in Western Europe. If the average work-week were cut by 14 per cent, to 37.5 hours (or just slightly less than Belgium's average), then the same total amount of work would employ 14 per cent more workers, and create jobs for all the four million unemployed.

The calculation is abstract, because the drive to shorten the working week could not and should not be made while leaving the existing total of work done, or the way in which it is done, unaltered. But the basic message is clear: a 35 hour week would be a powerful weapon against unemployment, as well as making life more liveable for the millions of workers currently exhausted and overstressed by long hours.

All the arguments against these two policies for full employment — rebuilding the Welfare State, and shortening the working week — come down to the idea that they cannot be "afforded."

Who can't afford them? Not "society", for "society" would be *better off* to the extent of the extra goods and services produced by the new workers who were previously idle and jobless. It comes down to the idea that *the wealthy classes* couldn't afford it, for they are the only ones who would lose out.

Look at some figures; the following are all based on the 1991 National Accounts. 14 per cent of the total wages bill would be about £50 billion, so the gross wages cost of employing the unemployed would be £50 billion.

The real nett cost would be much lower, because a great deal would be saved when the unemployed workers stopped getting state benefits and started paying taxes. The wage-bill cost of 4 million new jobs would be about £14 billion, even without counting the probable savings from lower rates of crime and illness. But the government would not need to create the full four million new jobs directly: employing 100 workers who were previously unemployed as hospital ancillaries, for example, will create extra jobs for other workers producing the extra food, clothes, and so on which those workers will now buy.

The new jobs will require some spending on new facilities and equipment, but, as we have seen, not much. £14 billion could well cover the whole cost of the programme.

The total value of goods and services produced each year is about £450 billion (on 1991 figures). Of that, the rich control £42 billion in profits after tax, dividends, and so on, and another £40 billion or so in other personal income.

A total of £68 billion is paid to households in incomes from wealth rather than from work — dividends, interest, and so on — and only a small part of that can be the interest received by workers with a few thousand pounds in a building society.

Higher taxes on profits, on high incomes, or on wealth could easily take £14 billion out of the £80-odd billion controlled by the wealthy classes (as company bosses or as individuals).

Would it mean no money was left for new productive investment? Not at all. Of some £150 billion received by companies in gross profits, rents, interest, and so on, only about £50 billion was spent on "capital formation", while £79 billion was spent on dividends and interest.

British companies pay out far more in dividends than companies in most other countries. Many economists who are not left-wing at all complain about this because they reckon it means that less funds are available for long-term investment, and the British economy is biased towards "short-termism." The government could take some of the money currently paid in dividends, and put it into public services, without going anywhere near producing an absolute shortage of funds for investment.

Or put it another way. Between 1961 and 1991, according to a recent study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the richest 10 per cent increased their take of national income from 22 per cent to 25 per cent. Increasing their taxes by an amount equal to 3 per cent of national income would cut their take down to 22 per cent again: not a welcome prospect for those fat-cats, but not a recipe for ruin, either. But that 3 per cent is almost exactly £14 billion, the amount needed to employ the unemployed.

Between 1979 and 1991 the richest five per cent saw their income increase by 58 per cent after housing costs (while the poorest one-sixth became worse-off). The richest five per cent get maybe 15 per cent of national income. To take the £14 billion from them would still leave them in greater luxury than in 1979.

Or again, consider the amounts spent by the State outside of public services. It spends £24 billion on military purposes, £12 billion on the police, courts, prisons, etc., £7 billion on administration, and £11 billion on debt interest (some of it to small savers, but most of it to the rich).

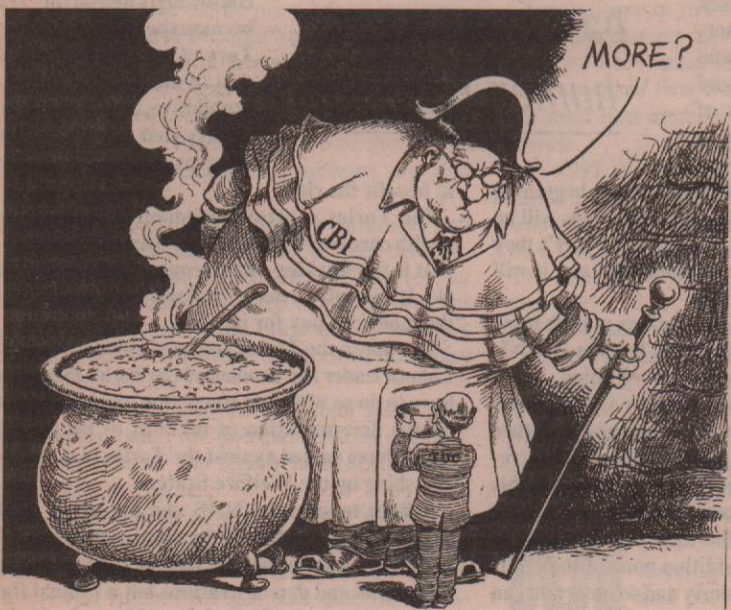
To halve the military budget would release £12 billion — almost all the £14 billion we need — and still leave Britain's military expenditure, as a proportion of national resources, higher than that of many other West European countries.

The story is a little more complicated, and it is not true, as some on the Labour Left sometimes suggest, that full employment and the Welfare State can be assured just by cutting military spending and without touching the incomes of the rich. Cuts in military budgets would not produce immediate results — demobilisation costs money, too — and they would leave many former soldiers and arms-industry workers seeking new jobs.

Still, much of the cost of employing the unemployed could be met by cutting the repressive expenditure of the State. And all of it could be met by cutting even slightly into the luxuries of the rich.

The first reason why this is difficult is that the rich resist cuts in their luxuries, and they have the power to make their resistance felt. The second reason is the power of the international capitalist markets.

When the French government led by the Socialist Party in 1981 tried a weak version of this policy of expanding public services and cutting the working week, France quickly ran into a big excess of imports over exports, a flow of capital from the country, a virtual standstill of private investment, and a decline in the value of the franc compared to other cur-



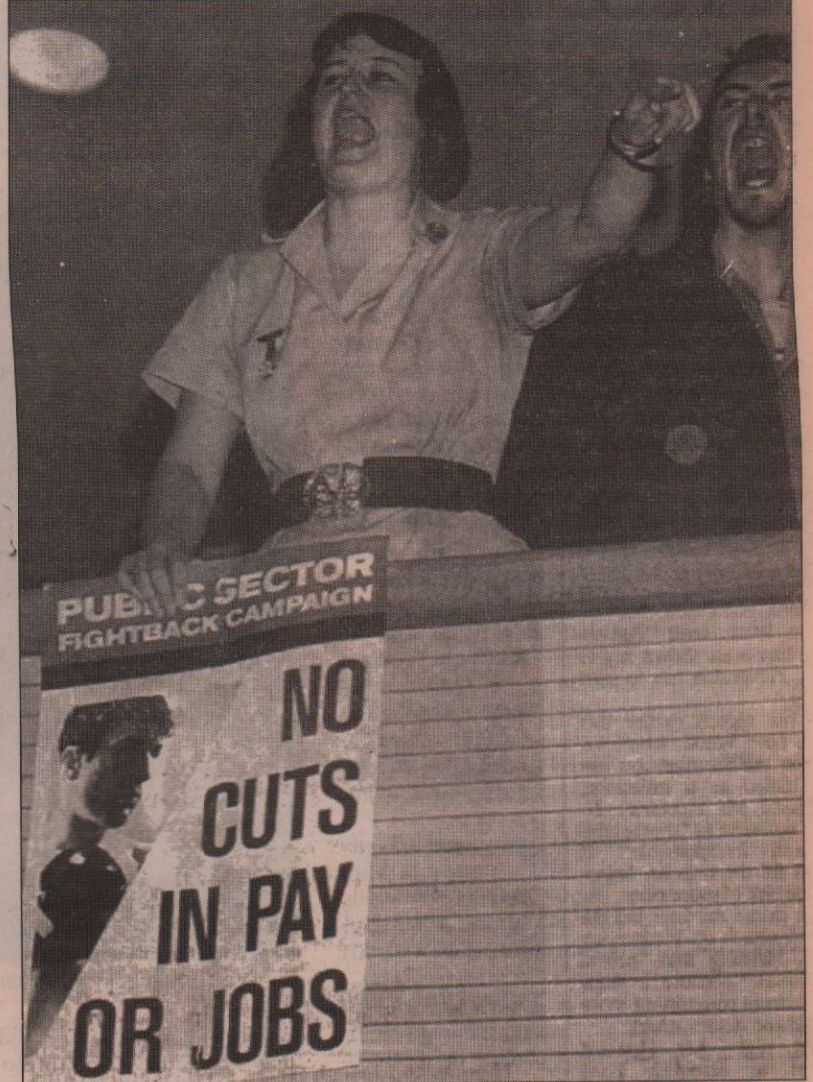
The mass anger against the Tories shown by the marches against pit closures in October 1992 can be channelled into a fight for the Welfare State. Photo: John Harris

of wealth

Full employment



British Aerospace women workers march for the 35 hour week, 1989. Photo: John Smith, Profile



Why are trained nurses being thrown on to the dole queue?

rencias. By 1983 the government had retreated under these pressures and switched to a Tory-type policy of "austerity", cuts, and a "strong franc."

If the jobs programme were financed by taxing the rich, then it would not necessarily cause imports to outstrip exports. Ordinary workers spend less of their budgets on imports than the wealthy do, and the investment necessary for the jobs programme — building new nurseries, health centres, rail lines, and so on — would draw mostly on domestic production rather than imports.

However, a "flight of capital" or "strike of capital" is an almost certain result of such a jobs programme. And those in turn would tend to lead to a collapse in the value of the pound relative to other currencies —

as the rich tried to sell their pounds and buy marks, dollars, or francs instead — and price inflation. Those are real problems. Moreover, the "strike of capital", where private capitalists halt new investments or run down existing businesses, would throw more workers into unemployment, negating the effect of the government jobs programme: this happened, for example, in Nicaragua under the Sandinista government.

The only answer is for a Labour government to take the whole credit system into public ownership and control, so that the credit required for new investments is distributed according to a democratically-decided public plan.

The banks, insurance companies, and pension funds which control the bulk of capitalism's cash should be nationalised. As things are today, the social symbols of wealth — the cash, shares, and bonds which those institutions hold — dominate over the real productive wealth embodied in workers, buildings, equipment, infrastructure, and so on. Public ownership and democratic control would make it possible for investment to be geared to a plan for producing what people need and want, with the smallest human and environmental cost, rather than to the crazy gyrations of the financial markets.

The Stock Exchange should simply be shut down. Its supporters say it has a positive social function because it enables companies to raise funds for productive investment by selling shares. In fact, a very small proportion of the funds for investment comes from selling shares. A calculation by French Marxists estimated the proportion in France at two per cent, and it cannot be much higher in Britain.

The small effect of the huge stock-market crash of October 1987 on productive industry is evidence of the same fact: the stock markets provide a mechanism for vast amounts of money to be siphoned into the pockets of speculators, and a source of disruption and crisis, but no real contribution to production.

And where capital goes "on strike", by shutting down factories or cancelling investments, a Labour government should nationalise those companies under democratic and workers' control.

A "flight of capital" could make things very hard for a Labour government fighting for full employment, by destroying the value of the pound and making imports, relatively, very expensive. Many Third World economies suffer this as a chronic problem: because they are poor, with limited markets and poor infrastructure, capital flows out of them, their currencies lose value internationally, their reserves of internationally-valid currencies like the dollar dwindle, and they cannot buy imports necessary for industrial development. They stay poor, and the vicious circle continues. Capitalism develops in those countries, but in a grinding, uneven fashion, which generates much more unemployment than even the worst of what the Tories have done in Britain.

A Labour government seriously fighting for full employment would have to bring in strict controls over currency exchanges — something which has been advocated even by Labour right-wingers like Roy Hattersley, though, in isolation from a comprehensive socialist economic programme, it is no more than a

nationalist measure — and carefully regulate the supply of credit inside the country.

Because of the vast increase under capitalism, and especially in the last 50 years, of economic links across national frontiers, this whole programme for jobs would be implemented much better, with less difficulty and with fewer side-costs, across the whole of Europe rather than just in Britain. The socialist movement needs to be international.

Nevertheless, a start *could* be made in one country. Its international trade would be severely disrupted, and that would cause all sorts of difficulties and costs, but it could still organise full employment. The purpose would not be to construct an isolated "socialism in one country", but to help rally and inspire workers across the world to fight for international socialism.

That one country would not, of course, attract the flows of speculative capital which currently whizz through the City, but it could quite possibly, while it had to survive in a capitalist world, attract productive investment from multinational capitalist firms and loans from international banks. It would be quite possible for a socialist government to do deals which allowed capitalist multinationals to

take away a substantial rate of profit in return for bringing more advanced technology into the country, training workers in new skills, and providing an agreed minimum of wages, conditions, and workers' control. A number of Third World states have done that sort of deal, except that there the local benefits go only to the local ruling classes, and not to the people.

The collapse of the Stalinist states in Eastern Europe and the USSR has been used by many Tories and right-wingers as evidence against the sort of full-employment programme advocated here, with increased public services and public ownership of the commanding heights of finance and industry. Isn't that just what the Stalinist states did, they ask. And didn't it result

in an expansion of ill-organised, decrepit, obsolete industry, with unemployment not so much abolished as "hidden" under the form of factories holding large numbers of demoralised surplus workers, poorly paid and with no real jobs to do?

In fact, an economy based on public ownership and public services *under democratic and workers' control* would be much more different from Stalinism than Stalinism is from capitalism.

The Stalinist economies were regulated not by democratic planning for need, but by haggling between different bureaucratic factions and groups under the overall imperative of increasing the assets, power, international position, and income of the bureaucracy. That haggling led to investment plans chronically in excess

of the economies' capacity (because every enterprise's bureaucrats wanted more investment in their area); a bias in that investment towards heavy industry (because the heavy-industry bureaucrats were the strongest faction); periodic lurches into stagnation (as excessive investment plans were halted); immense delays (because of the economies' capacity (because every enterprise's bureaucrats wanted more investment in their area); a bias in that investment towards heavy industry (because the heavy-industry bureaucrats were the strongest faction); periodic lurches into stagnation (as excessive investment plans were halted); immense delays (because of the economies' capacity

breakdowns in supplies and periodic freezes on investment); and failure to shut down obsolete plant (because shutting it down would undercut some bureaucrats' power-base).

Factories held surplus labour not as an inevitable result of full-employment policy but in order to increase the power-base of the bureaucratic bosses of those factories and their ability to respond to erratic instructions from above. And full employ-

ment was never a social policy to meet workers' needs — workers' interests came last under the Stalinist system — but a mechanism for keeping the working class under control. It was not a constant of the economic structure: in Yugoslavia before it collapsed, and in China today, market mechanisms were and are used under Stalinism to create unemployment levels quite comparable to the Western capitalist countries.

A socialist, democratic full-employment regime would be worlds apart from Stalinism. It might possibly have one problem parallel to those of Stalinism — difficulty in shutting down obsolete or environmentally-harmful factories, facilities and jobs because the workers and managers there would instinctively tend to value their own efforts higher than an objective assessment would. Guarantees of alternative jobs and retraining, and a free, flexible democracy in deciding such shutdowns, could keep that problem small. If it remained as a small problem, it would certainly be a much smaller problem than having four million people unemployed.

To fear and hate Stalinism is necessary; to go from that to fearing to fight for any radical alternative to capitalism is illogical and disastrous. Full employment cannot be won by minor tinkering with capitalism. For capitalism, unemployment *works*.

The individual capitalist who gets more work out of fewer workers, and the national capitalist class which cuts its bill for wages and public services and keeps a large army of unemployed people in misery as a means of disciplining and coercing the workers in employment, do well in international capitalist competition.

For capitalism, unemployment and misery are healthy. If that makes no sense in human terms, it is because capitalism makes no sense in human terms.

"A Labour government should take the whole credit system into public ownership and control."

"Full employment cannot be won by tinkering with capitalism. For capitalism, unemployment works."

What the Trotskyists said about D-Day

"The workers ask themselves: 'Are we talking about the same liberation, Eisenhower and us?'"

The capitalist press is full of *their* history of D-Day, and what *they* said at the time. What did the working-class socialists, the Trotskyists, say?

THE paper which the French Trotskyists produced under Nazi occupation *La Verité* (10 June 1944) highlighted the fact that where the Allies had already seized territory from Hitler, in North Africa and Italy, fascists who had turned against Hitler remained in high positions, the Allied armies suppressed independent workers' movements, and shortages and hunger were rampant: living standards in continental Europe would continue to be desperately low until the 1950s. What the American commander Dwight Eisenhower and his allies were bringing to Europe did not look as good at the time as it may seem with hindsight, knowing as we do that military rule would prove short-lived, capitalism would boom, more-or-less stable parliamentary democracies would emerge, and there would be no immediate Third World War.

Allied troops had landed in Algiers on 7-8 November 1942, and the local French armed forces, owing allegiance to the Vichy government, quickly capitulated. Admiral Darlan and General Giraud took over with the support of the Allies, and Darlan for a while even claimed to represent a provisional government of the French Empire.

Allied troops landed in Sicily on 9-10 July 1943. Seeing the end in sight, a group of Mussolini's colleagues, round Marshal Badoglio, ousted him on 25 July and formed a new government (with martial law) which moved quickly (by 3 September) to sign a deal with the Allies.

Badoglio was eventually forced to resign on 9 June 1944, and his government was replaced by one led by Bonomi and including the Communist Party leader Togliatti. Italy threw out its monarchy in a referendum in 1946.

Countering the French Communist Party's chauvinist slogan "A chacun son Boche" [a call for indiscriminate killing of all Germans, or "Boches"], the French Trotskyists called on workers to establish links with rank-and-file German soldiers who were thinking of turning their weapons against their officers. Some French Trotskyists had worked with German Trotskyists to produce a German-language socialist paper aimed at the workers in France, *Arbeiter und Soldat*; it lasted until they were all arrested and sent to their deaths in concentration camps.

"THE LANDINGS have begun. The decisive moment of the war has come. From all sides we are called to a 'great struggle for liberation'..."

Churchill and Roosevelt say to us: help us to liberate you from Hitler and fascism, to introduce liberty and prosperity. Spill your blood



It will be socialism or barbarism

to help the work of the Flying Fortresses. But how can we trust those who through the war have supplied Hitler with oil, machines and minerals, while the USSR was bleeding in the struggle against the Wehrmacht? How can we believe that they will bring us liberty when Great Britain holds India under its yoke, hungry and exploited... when racism is rampant in American against the Negroes as in Germany against the Jews, when Eisenhower threatens us with military dictatorship? How can we believe they will bring us bread when in England itself Churchill crushes the big miners' and apprentices' strikes by force, and Roosevelt shoots down the strikers in Minnesota? How can we believe they will bring us peace, these people who bring bloodshed into our homes, who want to mobilise us against Japan, and who are already talking of the third world war, that is, the war against the USSR?

We have seen how North Africa and Italy have been "liberated". Hunger has continued to reign. The native peoples struggling for their liberation, and the workers struggling

against the bosses, are still being thrown into prison. [The British general] Alexander has crushed the strikes in Naples in blood, as Hitler has done to the strikes in Milan. Fascists like Badoglio remain in place. In Algiers... the officers educated in the school of Maurras [a French fascist] remain in charge of the army, and Giraud the capitulator is Eisenhower's adviser. In Algiers as in Italy, the bosses continue to exploit their workers, the banks and the monopolies continue to crush the working peasants, while General Motors and the J P Morgan bank join in.

And so the workers ask themselves: "Are we talking about the same liberation, Eisenhower and us?" And they are quite right to be distrustful.

Our fate is in our hands.

In reality, the only real liberation is socialism, which will drag the world out of the bloody chaos of capitalism and organise production for the needs of the working masses. It is the Socialist United States of Europe and the World which, by suppressing the vicious race for profit, will bring peace between peo-

ples. Roosevelt and Hitler work precisely to prevent us from liberating ourselves from capitalism, because they are the agents of the Krupps and the Morgans.

That is why we must trust none of the capitalist "liberators." That is why to liberate ourselves we can count only on the union of the workers of this country and of the whole world.

As from now, it is on ourselves that we should rely to protect ourselves from death and famine, to save those in jail, to defend ourselves against the fascists and the reactionary gangs.

Against famine, organise control over supplies.

Transport is at a standstill. Electricity and petrol are reserved for the war. Supplies no longer arrive. There is talk of cutting off the gas and even water. How can we save ourselves from hunger?...

[The public stocks] should be seized and distributed *immediately* to the working people. Factory trucks should be requisitioned to go to the countryside, organise distribution in the localities, and break the power of the black-marketiers.

All that can only be done by the workers and housewives, grouped in *neighbourhood committees*.

Let us fraternise! Hold out a hand to the German soldiers!

Of course, the working class, even with organised workers' militias, would be absolutely powerless if it had to confront the gigantic military forces of Hitler and of Eisenhower. But the armies of Hitler and of Eisenhower are made up of workers who, like us, want bread, liberty and peace. The workers who drive the tanks and the air mechanics have the same interests as us.

Anyone who talks to the German soldiers today knows that they are ready to break with their bourgeoisie and to turn their weapons against the Nazis, on condition that they know that the French workers are the allies against their common enemy: the bourgeois of all countries.

The workers will not fall into the trap of the international bourgeoisie, which wants to set them once against the other with chauvinism. They will shoot down the SS men with the eagle on the sleeve and the SS sign. They will shoot down the Gestapo agents and the reactionary officers, but they will hold out a fraternal hand to the soldiers of all countries, and in the first place to the German soldiers. They will help them to form their soldiers' committees. That is the only way to a real peace...

Let us form our class front! Let us enter into the struggle with our own flag!

For the workers' solution of the imperialist war! For the Soviet Socialist Republic of France! For the Socialist United States of Europe and the World!

"Only a workers' army can uproot fascism"

The British Trotskyists' paper *Socialist Appeal*, dated "mid-June 1944", also denounced what the Allies had done in North Africa and Italy.

"THE DEBACLE in North Africa where a deal was done with Quisling [Nazi collaborator] Darlan, in Italy, where King Victor and Badoglio replaced Mussolini — and were only removed at the insistence of the masses, despite the protection afforded them by Churchill and Roosevelt; the recent speech by Churchill in which he applauded Fascist Franco who butchered the flower of the Spanish working class and peasants: these acts are ample evidence that the programme of Anglo-American imperialism is not an anti-fascist programme, is not a pro-

gramme of liberation. *Only a workers' army united by class bonds and with a class programme can perform these progressive and historic tasks.*

The new phase in the military field opens up wide perspectives and a new phase in the political field. The refusal to recognise even the anti-socialist De Gaulle as the new leader of France is evidence that the Allies are leaving themselves free to do a deal with a more reactionary bloc: the Vichyites or another section of the French Quislings — that they are leaving themselves free to do another Darlan. This is to be expected if it suits their interests and is in line with their programme and past activities.

But the French workers cannot and will not support such a foul manoeuvre. Nor should they place their hopes and trust in the programme of the apparently more radi-

cal De Gaulle!

The difficulties of the Nazi armies, their defeats and retreats, will undoubtedly uplift and encourage the French masses to organise widespread partisan warfare. The workers and peasants of France will arm themselves and fight for their liberation. *Every independent step on the part of the masses in the struggle for national liberation will be greeted with joy on the part of the internationalists — the Trotskyists.*

Another article pointed out:

"OUT OF the 1914-1918 slaughter arose the glorious Russian Revolution, the overthrow of Czarism, and a series of social upheavals throughout the world. But world

capitalism survived the storm. The workers were defeated, betrayed by their leaders, who led them not to socialism but back to capitalist servitude. Fascism, Nazism, and this new great slaughter are the result.

The war rises to a new high level of ferocity and massacre with the invasion of Europe. The only way out for the workers and soldiers of Europe is to finish with capitalism, overthrow the war makers, and establish the Soviet United States of Europe and the world.

If, out of this bloodbath, capitalism succeeds in establishing its regime as it did after the last, then a new, a third, a much more terrible war will be inevitable. The workers of Europe have now the historic task of preventing that new war, of solving the problem of this one, by overthrowing capitalism, the system responsible."



Women who are lives are threatened by Thatcher's brand of capitalism

Love destroyed by capitalism



Clive Matterson
reviews
The Secret Rapture

Directed by
Howard Davies

The pivot of these is Isobel (Juliet Stevenson) a graphic designer who, in her father's footsteps, believes that pleasure is more important than profit. She pursues this petit-bourgeois idyll with her partner Patrick (Neil Pearson) in a home-based graphic design business.

Her sister and dark alter-ego, Marion (Penelope Wilton), a thrusting Tory with a businessman husband, Tom (Alan Howard).

Their stepmother, younger than either of the daughters, who is more like the petulant child than wicked stepmother, is self confessed trash: Katherine (Joanne Whalley-Kilmer).

After their father's funeral Marion forces Isobel to take on the responsibility of protecting Katherine, and at the same time uses Katherine as a wedge to gain control of the graphic design firm, co-opting Patrick along the way.

As the bounds of family and love are usurped by those of capital, the characters are gradually destroyed. The graphic design business owned by Tom's firm, expands, and the relationship between Isobel and Patrick

is at first destroyed and then turned into its monstrous opposite. The work ceases to be a pleasure and becomes a dominating and alienated force over the characters' lives.

Although the characters are a little detached from the day-to-day existence of most people, the message is clear, and to criticise the film for having a middle-class focus would amount to little more than the unreasonable demand that David Hare become Ken Loach.

The problem with this as a film is that it is not a film but a play. David Hare's screenplay is an adaptation of his own play, and its director and some of the leading cast are borrowed from the original National Theatre production.

The dynamics of plays and films are very different. Hyperbolic emotion displayed in the film can be gripping on stage but often appears a bit too stacy, for a film. If you stand on a railway platform you can feel a train going past, but merely filming it will not convey this feeling. The film seems strangely cold and badly paced.

The darkness of war

Song, by Alun Lewis
(On seeing dead bodies floating off the Cape)

The first month of his absence
I was numb and sick
And where he'd left his promise
Life did not return or kick
The seed, the seed of love was sick.

The second month my eyes were sunk
In the darkness of despair,
And my bed was like a grave
And his ghost was lying there.
And my heart was sick with care.

The third month of his going
I thought I heard him say
'Our course deflected slightly
On the thirty-second day —'
The tempest blew his words away.

And he was lost among the waves,

His ship rolled helpless in the sea,
The fourth month of his voyage
He shouted grievously
'Beloved, do not think of me.'

The flying fish like kingfishers
Skin the sea's bewildered crests,
The whales blow steaming fountains,
The seagulls have no nests
Where my lover sways and rests.

We never thought to buy and sell
This life that blooms or withers in the leaf,
And I'll not stir, so he sleeps well,
Though cell by cell the coral reef
Builds an eternity of grief.

But oh! the drag and dullness of my Self;
The turning seasons wither in my head;
All this slowness, all this hardness,
The nearness that is waiting in my bed,
The gradual self-effacement of the dead.
• Alun Lewis was killed in 1944.

A soldier in Wellington's army



Geoff Ward
reviews *Sharpe*

ITV
8pm Wednesdays

PERHAPS IT was my childhood interest in toy soldiers, Airfix models and Commando books which drew me to watch Carlton TV's action-adventure serial *Sharpe*.

"Britain was fighting for its own imperial interests and to restore the old monarchies in Europe."

Sean Bean plays the title role — a maverick working-class rifle brigade officer in Wellington's army during the Peninsular wars against Napoleon in Spain and Portugal (1808-14).

Napoleon had won control of much of Europe and was now trying to bring down Britain, the leading industrial power. Sadly much of the history is faded away so that the impression is given that Britain was fighting merely to liberate the

Portuguese and Spanish from French domination, and not for its own imperial interests and to restore the old monarchies in Europe.

Sharpe is an adventure of good versus evil. Sharpe is the good soldier pitted against a sadistic sergeant by the name Obadiah. He has to cover his back against priggish aristocratic officers, favoured by Wellington, many of whom ought their commissions. These officers care more about uniforms, drills, slavish obedience and social engagements, so they resent Sharpe's rising from the ranks. Sharpe is more concerned with his men's fighting skills and easing their burden.

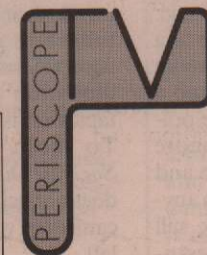
Ordinary soldiers suffered shockingly low pay, brutal discipline and appalling conditions. For many, army life was little better than prison. Recruited from pubs, villages and slums, the rifle brigade consists of destitute Irish peasants.

In last week's episode some were stirred into deserting, encouraged by French revolutionary ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity and the national uprising of the Spanish.

It was all tainted by the fact that the evil Obadiah was one of their leaders. Yet desertion was the only means of escape from a war they no longer wanted any part of and an army that brutalised them.

The battle sequences in *Sharpe*, though small scale, are exciting. Predictably, the women who want to loosen the many buttons of Sean Bean's tunic form an orderly queue.

Programmes that take the lid off the system



By Wayne
Geoffries

she took over the security services have been going through a cosmetic exercise of 'glasnost'. Despite the end of the Cold War, there has been no scaling-down of their activities and they are still not democratically accountable.

A Different County (Monday 13 June, 11.15pm, BBC2) looks at the growth of Scottish nationalism, focusing on the more extreme elements who refer to outsiders as 'white settlers' and advocate attacks on property.

Global Image (Monday 13, 10.55pm Channel Four). Some of the women responsible for the deaths of oppositionists in Pinochet's Chile are confronted by film-maker Carmen Castillo.

Faith in the System (Tuesday 14, 7.50pm, BBC2) examines attempts by the Tories to ram religion down the throats of school children, even if this means imposing Christianity on schools where the majority is non-Christian. Frontline (Wednesday 15, 9pm, Channel Four) has right-wing Labourite Bryan Gould whingeing about assorted political issues before giving up on fighting for them to return to New Zealand.

Fine Cut (Saturday 11 June, 8pm, BBC1) has film maker Haile Gerima exploring the legacy of colonial rule, underdevelopment and war on the lives of ordinary Ethiopians.

The Richard Dimbleby Lecture (Sunday 12 June, 10.15pm, BBC1) is given by Stella Rimington, Director General of the security services. Since

Next week issues of *Socialist Organiser* will carry an obituary of Dennis Potter, the controversial playwright and screenwriter who died on Tuesday 7 June

Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

MANCHESTER

Thursday 16 June

**"What leadership does
Labour need?"**

8.00, Unicorn Pub, Church Street.

YORK

Thursday 30 June

**"How to defend the
Welfare State"**

7.30, Priory Street, City Centre

NOTTINGHAM

Thursday 9 June

**"Can workers trust the
ANC?"**

8.00, ICC, Mansfield Road.

NORTHAMPTON

Saturday 11 June

**"How to beat the racist
and fascists"**

12.30 Vocal and Instrumental
Club.

GLASGOW

Thursday 30 June

**"What leadership does
Labour need?"**

7.30 Patrick Burgh Halls

LONDON

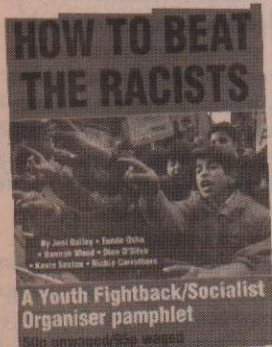
Wednesday 22 June

**"Trotskyists and the
Labour Party — can the
left vote for Prescott?"**

Speakers include Sean Matgamna
and Al Richardson

7.30 Calthorpe Arms, 252 Gray's
Inn Road, Kings Cross

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Hospital
Demonstrate
Tuesday 5 July
outside Guy's.
March to St
Thomas's
Followed by a lobby
of Parliament
Backed by UNISON**



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The left and the Labour leadership

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Chris Reynolds

THREE questions are agitating the left in the run-up to the Labour leadership election.

Should the Campaign Group of left Labour MPs stand a candidate?

This breaks down into two very different questions: should the Campaign Group back Ken Livingstone as a candidate, and should it stand a more serious left candidate.

Ken Livingstone is the only member of the Campaign Group putting his name forward. Yet two facts make his enterprise more a matter of Ken Livingstone promoting himself as leader of the left than the left promoting itself as the alternative leadership of the Labour Party.

Firstly, he will not be a candidate, and is not even campaigning seriously to get the 34 MPs' nominations he will need to enter the contest. The *Morning Star* (4 June), which is very close to Livingstone, is already announcing that he "would be unlikely to find sufficient nominations if other candidates stood against Mr Blair" — and they will.

Livingstone's "campaign" looks like his effort in the 1992 leadership election, where he promoted himself a little as the representative of the left, got nowhere near the nominations necessary, and then rallied to Bryan Gould.

Secondly, Livingstone is a maverick, a self-publicist, more a "media personality" than a representative of definite politics. He is associated more with the *Sun* newspaper and TV commercials than with anything to do with the left. He still argues that the best representative of "working-class revolutionary" politics in Britain was the crazy sectarian Gerry Healy, financed by Libya, Iraq, and other Arab despotisms, and that the long-overdue breakup of Healy's WRP in 1985 "was the work of MI5 agents" because of "the pivotal role of Healy in maintaining contact with Yasser Arafat's HQ through the WRP's use of the latest technology" (see last week's *SO*).

Livingstone can only be a joke candidate. No-one should back him standing unless they want the left to be discredited by a joke candidate becoming established as its main public figure.

Whether the Campaign Group should stand a more serious candidate is a different question.



The least-bad option?

It would be good if it could; whether it can is a different matter.

In 1992 *Socialist Organiser* called on the left in the trade unions and the local Labour Parties to "draft Tony Benn" for leader. But Benn made it clear then that he considered himself too old to stand. A repeated call to "draft Benn" now would lack all credibility.

Another Campaign Group MP, like Jeremy Corbyn or Alan Simpson, might make a good candidate, if they were willing to stand and could build up momentum for enough nominations from local Labour Parties and trade unions to

expose their probably inevitable failure to get enough MPs' nominations as an undemocratic limitation of the contest. In fact, that is not possible now. To shout "defeatism" (as *Socialist Outlook* does, 1 June) does not help: a feeble no-hope campaign would not boost the left.

The second main question is: **given that there is no real left candidate, whom should the left support? Or should we abstain?**

Socialist Organiser has argued that the left's least-bad option will probably be critical support for John Prescott if he stands against Blair. The *Morning Star* and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy favour Margaret Beckett: "Mr Livingstone has already called for... Beckett to enter the race. She would win the backing of large sections of the left in Parliament, the trade union movement, and the constituency sections..." (*Morning Star*, 4 June).

Socialist Outlook appears — though it is not clear — to favour abstaining. "It is pointless standing on the sidelines putting

demands on Prescott or Robin Cook. People who argue for this approach misjudge the potential there is and the resonance of socialist answers to problems of full employment, defending the welfare state...."

Why stand "on the sidelines" to make demands? Why not in the middle of the field? How can abstaining be less "on the sidelines"? Why shouldn't the demands on Prescott be based on those "socialist answers" which resonate so well? If Marxists can make demands on Labour Party leaders like Kinnock and Smith — and *Outlook* has done that — then why is it "pointless" to put such demands on a leadership candidate who is standing as somewhat closer to the working class, and somewhat more left, than Smith and Kinnock?

Prescott is seen, not so much by the narrow circle of Labour and trade-union left activists, but by the broader millions who will vote in this contest, as the candidate in this contest closest to the working class and the trade unions. We cannot change that perception at will; if we could, there would already be a serious left candidate up and running, with a chance of victory.

Abstaining gives us nothing to say to those millions. With a "Socialist Campaign for a Soft-Left Victory" — roughly on the lines, with all differences taken into account, of the "Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory" which the left ran in 1979 to campaign simultaneously for its own ideas and for Labour (under right-wing leadership) to beat the Tories in the general election — we can organise some of those millions and give shape to their demands on Prescott.

In principle the same approach could be combined with critical support for Margaret Beckett. Prescott has nothing solid in his political record which places him sharply to the left of Beckett. Possibly

Prescott will not stand for leader and Beckett will, backed by some major unions.

However, as things stand, for the millions of the leadership electorate, Prescott is the man who stood as a soft-left deputy-leader candidate in 1988 and 1992, and won the backing of many left trade unions. When asked by opinion pollsters, many Labour Party members and trade unionists say that their political ideas are closer to Prescott's, or that they consider Prescott a "socialist" in contrast to Blair, a "social democrat".

What can they think of Beckett? She was right-winger John Smith's chosen deputy. She proposed compensating the rich speculators who have lost out in the crisis in the Lloyd's insurance market from public funds, at the same time saying that a

Labour government would only improve welfare services "as resources allow". Since becoming acting leader of the Labour Party, and being freed from constraints which might have tied her as deputy to John Smith, she has made no stand for anything left-wing. She presented Labour's Euro-election campaign by claiming that Labour stood halfway between the Tories' anti-Europe stand and the Liberal Democrats' pro-Europe position!

Is Beckett better than Prescott behind the scenes? Maybe. That sort of inside-knowledge, lesser-evil guesswork might be good enough for our private calculations about how to cast our votes in a low-profile contest with a small electorate, but it is no basis for a mass left campaign in this contest.

The third big question is: **what demands and issues should the left push?**

Plainly we must select and choose. To demand of any of the candidates that they adopt a full "socialist programme" — sweeping nationalisations, workers' control, and all the rest of it — would be like demanding of a broken-down, wheezing-along car that it immediately accelerate to full speed, instead of getting down to the serious business of repairing the car.

But we can seriously demand of candidates that they start campaigning vigorously against the Tories on the basis of the traditional minimum of Labour policies.

Socialist Organiser supporters have therefore canvassed trade unionists with five demands (see page 2):

- Restoration of trade union rights, including the right to strike, to take solidarity action,

and to picket effectively;

- Rebuild the Welfare State and public services;

- No Lib-Lab pact. Defend Labour-union links!

- A 35 hour work week with no loss of pay.

- A £4.05 per hour minimum wage.

The *Morning Star*, through an article by Ken Livingstone in its 6 June issue, proposes a very different list of demands. Its main demand is... more capital! "The central goal", it argues, "must be to sharply raise the level of investment in

the British economy". The measures it proposes towards this goal include tax concessions for bosses making investments! More tax cuts for the rich!

The other proposals are less objectionable, but inadequate: controls on dividend payouts, cuts in military spending, more government investment in infrastructure, exchange

controls, and higher taxes (but only for those on over £40,000 a year: Livingstone still, evidently, believes that John Smith was ultra-left to propose higher income taxes on £30,000 a year people).

This is a package for rejigging capitalist government policy, not for mobilising workers. It may serve Ken Livingstone for haggling with the other leadership contenders, but it can not serve the left as the basis for a campaign in the trade unions and the Labour Parties.

And that must be the decisive test: what approach gives the left the best basis for campaigning, organising, promoting our demands?

What you can do:

- Circulate the "Stop Blair" statement (see page 2) in your trade union. If you can, organise a leadership campaign committee on the basis of this statement in your union branch or district.

- Give Labour and trade union activists a chance to discuss the issues and be influenced by each others' arguments rather than the capitalist media. Get your District Labour Party or Trades Council to hold a public debate on the leadership, with all the candidates invited to attend or send representatives. If you can't do that, get your CLP, or CLP officers, to call an open members' meeting.

- Organise to circulate campaign literature to as many trade unionists and Labour Party members as possible.

"We can seriously demand of candidates that they start campaigning vigorously against the Tories."

Post Office: start the anti-privatisation levy now!

HESELTINE ANNOUNCED this Monday, 6 June, that the Tories are going to try and ram through Post Office privatisation on a very short timescale. Detailed plans will be put forward to the cabinet after the Euro-elections.

These proposals spell disaster for postal workers and users alike:

- 5,000 rural post offices and 1,200 rural delivery units are under threat.

- Postal charges will rocket - as have charges from privatised utilities like BT, Gas and electricity.

- Daily deliveries in isolated places will stop - further hitting the rural poor, particularly pensioners who cannot afford other means of communication.

- 50,000 jobs could go with the abolition of the second delivery.

This privatisation will be like every other privatisation - it will be an exercise in asset stripping to

line the pockets of the Tories' rich friends.

It is vital that the UCW's proposed £1 per week levy to fund the anti-privatisation campaign starts now.

It would be the first stage towards giving UCW members a sense that their union was serious about fighting privatisation.

Mass action at a local and national level, from street meetings and petitioning through to a

monster demonstration in central London and a one-day protest strike, should form one aspect of this campaign.

Simultaneously, postal workers must pursue their own demands over jobs and conditions with industrial action.

After all, a militant and self-confident workforce will make Post Office privatisation a less enticing prospect for potential buyers.

BT workers oppose Child Support Agency and support an equal age of consent

By a conference delegate

AT THE National Communication Workers Union (NCU) Conference in Blackpool this week the Child Support Agency was condemned.

Conference passed a proposition to repeal the Tories 1993 Trade Union Act and replace it with a law in line with ILO conventions, the European social chapter, TUC and Labour Party policy. This caused controversy because NCU already has policy for the right for us to determine our own rule books.

Conference voted to defend public services and called for restoration and expansion of the NHS. The same proposition included

a commitment to defend the right to universal benefits, and a demand that increased public spending comes from the incomes of the rich and from military spending.

NCU conference also passed a proposition regretting the action of Labour MPs who voted against the equalisation of the age of consent for gay men.

At a separate political fund conference an attempt was made to remove sponsorship from the one NCU-sponsored MP, Joe Benton. Benton had voted against 16, appears to have not succeeded (the result of the card vote is not yet available) but the vote has stirred up some long overdue debate on this issue and the general issue of the accountability of sponsored MPs.

UNISON witchhunt in Liverpool

A NATIONAL campaign to defend UNISON Liverpool branch activists from disciplinary action has been launched. A conference "Stop the Witchhunts" has been arranged for Saturday 2 July.

Information and a model motion opposing the disciplinaries are being sent to branches and activists up and down the country.

The background to the disciplinaries is an attempt by the local branch executive and shop stewards committee to hold accountable and deselect the branch secretary. This followed internal branch arguments over the handling of a number of industrial disputes.

Dissatisfaction with the actions of the branch secretary culminated in a no confidence motion being passed by the Branch Executive and by a branch members General Meeting.

The whole matter was due to be resolved by the AGM to be held in November 1993 and the annual elections for branch officers. If disputed the branch secretary would be elected by a secret ballot of all the branch members.

Instead the branch secretary, Judy Cotter, National Executive member and CP/Morning Star supporter, reported the matter for investigation to UNISON's headquarters.

Now disciplinaries have been set for 27/28/29 July. At present the charges and who is to be charged has not been announced. It is clear

the disciplinaries are about UNISON's leadership clamping down on democracy, accountability and witchhunting rank and file activists. Pass this motion!

"This branch expresses its concern with the disciplinary action being taken by the General Secretary against members of the Liverpool Branch. This action would appear to run contrary to UNISON's stated aim to 'promote and safeguard the rights of members to have an adequate opportunity to participate in the initiation and development of policy-making, through meetings, conferences, delegations or ballots, and to encourage the maximum democratic debate, together with the right to campaign to change policy...'

Since November no AGM or Branch elections have been held on the orders of the General Secretary.

This branch believes that disciplinary action is an unsatisfactory way to resolve branch disputes.

In the dispute inside Liverpool branch there is only one solution: let the members decide through an AGM and branch elections.

In line with this, the disciplinary hearings set for 27, 28 & 29 July should be dropped and the Branch be allowed to organise an AGM."

Details from — Liverpool Unity in UNISON c/o Fourth Floor, Housing Offices, Foster House, Canning Place, Liverpool L1 8HS

Sheffield teachers strike against cuts

Wendy Robson, Doncaster NUT

FOR THE last two years Sheffield NUT members have taken one day strike action to successfully stop compulsory redundancies due to council cuts.

This year the situation is worse — cuts and the closure of several

schools. Six NUT members face compulsory redundancy.

Members voted last week 6 to 1 for an initial one day strike and to force withdrawal of the notices. If that doesn't happen more prolonged action is threatened.

The strike will probably take place next week. NUT associations should send messages of support.

BBC: Keep up the strikes!

AS WE go to press it looks very likely that workers at the BBC will reject the companies very slightly improved offer on flexible hours and performance pay.

If so, the unions should press

ahead with the series of one day strikes that have been voted on. The action should not be called off until an offer has been voted on and accepted at a mass meeting.

Tories fail on TUPE

By a civil servant

LAST WEEK we reported that the Tories were attempting to get the "TUPE" European law which restricts the ability of private contractors to slash wages and conditions amended to open up the possibility of more drastic attacks on workers.

We are pleased to report that they have failed to achieve this, though they may get through some marginal changes which will make individual workers who are "contracted out" or "Market Tested" more vulnerable.

However, complacency would be very stupid. The Tories are on the offensive. In response, the European unions need to unite to press for the levelling up of terms and conditions across the European Union.

More killer bugs



LAST WEEK, I wrote about Streptococcus pyogenes (Group A), one of a group of pyogenic (pus-forming) bacteria. They are normally harmless dwellers in our noses and throats but are responsible for lots of sore throats ("strep throat"). However, they may cause serious illness if they find their way into wounds or if the victim has a low resistance due to some other illness. Despite the

tabloid press's tales of an epidemic of flesh-eating bacteria, there have been very few cases, perhaps a couple of dozen this year, not much higher than usual.

The "flesh-eating" killer bug is not the only problem bacterium at present.

Almost unreported is the rise in cases of infection of hospital patients by MRSA, Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. A recent survey of just 11 hospitals in the West Midlands found 346 cases of MRSA infection in a three-month period. Of these, at least 60 died, a mortality rate of 20%.

Staphylococcus aureus is another pus-forming bacterium found commonly in healthy people. Between 20 and 50% of the general public have these bacteria in their noses, (the proportion is higher among hospital staff). 10% have them in their armpits and another 5-10% in their perineal regions (that area closest to the bicycle seat!).

Normally, Staph. aureus is a commensal bacterium, harmlessly dwelling on the surface and perhaps keeping more dangerous bacteria away, but it can form infected spots, boils and abscesses on and in the skin. More seriously, if introduced into the body through wounds, it can cause blood poisoning, abscesses, bone infections and endocarditis (infection of the inside of the heart). The latter can be fatal but this would not be such a big problem were it not for the existence of strains of Staph. aureus resistant to not just one but to nearly all the commonly used antibiotics.

This circumstance arises due to a peculiarity of bacterial genetics. Normally, bacteria reproduce simply by splitting in two. If one bacterium develops a mutation in its DNA which enables it to resist an antibiotic, it will pass the resistance on to all its descendants. These will quickly come to dominate in the population if the antibiotic is present since

all the non-resistant ones die.

That is bad enough, but bacteria have another way of passing on their genes. Some have little satellite DNA molecules, called plasmids. These can be swapped between bacteria, including ones of different species. This leads to an extremely rapid rate of evolution. Plasmids have been around as long as bacteria have but it is only recently that bacteria have been exposed to natural and artificial antibiotics in large amounts. The spread of drug-resistant genes via plasmids is hence a recent addition to the evolutionary repertoire of bacteria.

It was, in fact, less than 40 years ago that multiple drug

resistance was first diagnosed.

A strain of a bacterium responsible for dysentery was found to have become simultaneously resistant to four antibiotics. A plasmid had picked up four genes for drug resistance and this was then passed around between bacteria of the species. It was soon realised that

the plasmid could be passed to bacteria of different species, an alarming prospect.

Many epidemics of multiply resistant bacteria have occurred throughout the world since then, partly due to indiscriminate prescription of antibiotics to humans and partly due to dosing food animals, such as cows, with antibiotics to increase their growth rate. The solution, of course, is to prescribe more carefully and this realisation led to a drop in the cases of resistant Staph. aureus in hospitals during the 1970s.

Now, the incidence is rising again. Is this because medical standards have fallen during the 1980s and 1990s? The recent epidemic is due to bacteria resistant to methicillin. This drug is usually given to combat Staph. aureus resistant to penicillin and cloxacillin (a drug introduced to combat bacteria resistant to penicillin!). MRSA must therefore be treated with yet another antibiotic and the only one available is vancomycin. Unfortunately, this carries with it an impressive list of side-effects, including hearing damage (tinnitus) and kidney damage. If Staph. aureus develops resistance to vancomycin as well, we will be in a real mess.

While we wait for drug companies to develop more antibiotics, it might be as well to see if there are other ways of preventing patients being infected in hospital! Bacteria are spread by people so overcrowding and hygiene are important issues. Is the way the NHS has been changed, with larger hospitals, privatised cleaning and overworked staff, etc., a factor?

"If Staph. aureus develops resistance to vancomycin as well we will be in a real mess."

DSS Market Testing strike delay

By a CPSA member

AT RECENT DSS Section conferences of CPSA and NUCPS delegates decided to ballot all members on a 2 day National Strike on 7 and 8 July to be followed by a 3 month ban on overtime. These decisions should be welcomed by all those who oppose Market Testing and want to fight against it. However, they do not go far enough.

Socialist Organiser supporters at the CPSA conference were instrumental in winning a third of all delegates to a position of a 3 day strike, non-cooperation ballot, and then a vote for all out action.

The fact that third of all branches in CPSA were prepared to vote for this action is encouraging. Nevertheless the 2 day strike is a step forward.

Unfortunately, the right wing leadership of CPSA also recognise that this strike would lead to a demand from the members for more action. Barry Reamsbottom, the ultra-right-wing General Secretary has refused to allow the strike to go ahead until he personally intervenes with Sir Michael Partridge to win concessions from the management.

The NUCPS leadership were furious, but wisely agreed to put back their ballot for 3 weeks whilst 'intervention' went ahead. They recognise the need for unity between both unions in taking strike action.

We need to build for the new days of strike action proposed for 28 and 29 July. If the CPSA right wing refuse to sanction action then we must work to support NUCPS. To do this we will need to argue for respect for all picket lines.

Will the merger survive?

AEEU

Next week sees the last annual conference of the electrical sector of the AEEU, formerly the EETPU.

It takes place against the background of the failure so far of the merger between the EETPU and the AEEU which set up the AEEU. These are still two unions in reality i.e. two headquarters, two membership systems, two budgets, and very little cooperation or unity on the ground.

A very rosey compromise has been thrown together to keep the merger afloat. All delegates to the electrical section conference who believe in basic trade union democracy should do everything they

can to throw out this deal. What is involved is the destruction of the democratic tradition of the engineers' union and the extension of the EETPU's appointed full-timer-run police state regime to the whole union.

In particular, the following must be defended:

- Elected lay standing orders committee
- District committees based on workplace representation
- Proportionality between the Engineering and Electrical sections. The EETPU do not have the right to 50% of the conference delegates when they are less than a third of the union!
- No full time officials as shop stewards.

SOCIALIST

Money for the shopping list

ORGANISER

By Hazel Grove

Signals strikes set for 15 and 22 June

Rail workers vote for action

By a railworker

SIGNAL WORKERS on the railways are organising industrial action for Wednesday 15 June and 22 June. This action will paralyse the rail network.

In the ballot called by the rail union RMT, 80% participated and 80.6% voted for action.

They are demanding an interim pay increase from their new employer, Railtrack.

This vote for action contrasts with the recent vote against action on the PT&R (Promotion, Transfer and Redundancy) agreements, which are threatened by privatisation. First of all the issue was clearly understood this time. The claim means around 11% extra in each pay packet — not at all a moderate claim. Secondly, signalling staff know their strength. Thirdly, the union tried to win.

In contrast to the PT&R ballot, the union organised letters to members' homes, numerous leaflets, meetings official responses to management's propaganda, phone-calls to reps with the latest information, and encouragement to branches to contact signalling members to explain the issues.

The union may win this claim. But there are dangers here of fragmenting the union.

The ballot over the PT&R was over an issue that affected every single railworker; successful action would have united the members and perhaps reversed the trend of a declining membership.

Nonetheless this is the best news in a long time. If Railtrack does not back

down — and nothing less than the full claim should be accepted — it falls to every railworker to do what they can to make the action as solid and successful as possible.

A victory will help all of us.

THESE DAYS a halfway honest Labour party political broadcast would have to open with a front bench spokesperson admitting "We haven't been much use lately, have we?"

Letting the Tories get away with dismantling the Welfare State, draconian anti-union legislation, privatisations and job cuts, massive overburdening of the poor with taxes to fund tax cuts for the rich and sheer crooked dealing.

A halfway adequate broadcast would go on to explain how Labour in government could put that right.

They would pledge to restore the Welfare State. They would increase spending on the National Health Service so that everyone benefitted as quickly as possible from all the latest healthcare advances and never had to wait for attention.

We would get free dental care.

They would introduce a national minimum wage to end low pay, and a work week of 35 hours to take millions off the dole and end the stress and overwork suffered by those in work.

Pensioners would get a decent pension.

They would pay for these with tax increases on the rich and cuts in defence spending.

They would free the unions to fight for their members' interests against the employers.

The possibilities are endless.

Fainthearts get anxious at this point and start muttering about "shopping lists" — to us in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, every item in that list is perfectly achievable by nothing more radical than a Labour government prepared to fight as hard for our class as the Tories have fought for theirs.

How are we going to get that kind of Labour government? The current Labour Party leadership contest gives us some opportunities to bring it closer.

Demands like the above are what we will put on Labour Party leadership hopefuls as the price of our support. They are demands around which we must organise the rank and file in the trade unions and the Party, regardless of whether the leadership contenders see the sense in promising them, because they are the very minimum of what our class needs to have a decent life and to begin to fight for human liberty.

They are the very minimum of what a Labour Government should be about. A half-respectworthy Labour politician wouldn't seek office unless he or she were prepared to fight for at least some of them.

We need funds to organise this campaign very quickly in the short time that the leadership contest will run so please send donations, however small, to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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