

# Socialist Organiser

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## Debating Socialism

August 23rd—26th

At Camden Tenants' Hall, Camden Square, off Peckham Road, London SE15.  
See page 10 for details.



No.241 August 21 1985 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

### RAIL

# STRIKE AGAINST SACKINGS!

By Rob Dawber,  
Secretary NUR Sheffield  
and Chesterfield District  
Council (in personal  
capacity)

INDUSTRIAL action by railworkers against imposed Driver Only Operation and sackings has now spread to the Southern Region, with strikes at four depots linked to Waterloo — Streatham, Norwood, Selhurst, and London Bridge.

In Glasgow, in Immingham, Lincolnshire, and at Margam and Llanelli in South Wales, management have given notice of what the future profitable railways mean for railworkers by sacking all those who will not bow to management diktat and the needs of 'the business'.

Driver Only Operation (DOO) is being introduced without the consent of the National Union of Railworkers (NUR). The very existence of the guard's job is threatened by the extension of DOO. Thousands of jobs are at risk.

Outbreaks of strike action and overtime bans will continue in the run-up to the NUR's ballot on national action on August 29.

It is not likely — desirable though it may be — that this will spread to national action by guards and other grades before the ballot result. But pressure can and must be built up for the NUR leaders to use a ballot mandate for a strike immediately, rather than dithering and quibbling.

This action must be combined with the dispute over rail workshops. NUR members in the workshops are being balloted separately, on September 5, about striking over jobs. Main Workshops are threatened with further decimation, and Regional Workshops with having their work handed out to private contractors.

In picking a fight with the NUR, British Rail is trying to follow in the footsteps of the National Coal Board. After the miners' defeat, they calculate, it will be easier to ride roughshod over other unions.

If they defeat the guards, then they will move against every other group of workers on the railways.

Concerted strike action must put a stop to their plans.

More on page 5.



Sacked guards in Glasgow Central. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

**Inside** Nelson Mandela p6-7 Rail p5 Liverpool p11 Miners p3

# 52 pc for NUM

52% of the 500 Notts miners questioned by 'Popular Polling' believed that the area leaders should stay within the NUM and fight for its objectives. Only 36% favoured a breakaway.

Some of the 52% may go, reluctantly, with the Notts leaders' breakaway. But the poll makes it clear that the situation is wide open.

The survey also showed how the national NUM leaders might have undercut Lynk. 95% were in favour of regular elections of officials. But the existing officials of both sides are there for life. (Any new officials elected by the NUM will be subject to five-yearly elections).

If only the NUM leaders had been prepared to make their recent rule changes a democratic reform — with frequent elections for all official positions — rather than giving grist to the mill of the right wingers' clamour about bureaucracy.

The Notts scab leaders are now scaling down their boasts about support in other Areas, saying cautiously that more will join after the scheduled votes at the end of September.

Despite isolated successes at Daw Mill in Warwickshire and among 200 Lancashire craftsmen, they have made no significant headway. They are losing ground with the NUM's right wing white collar section, cosa. At the weekend, the COSA EC issued a strong call to 'stay united'. It was absent from a meeting on Monday to finalise the rules of the so-called 'Union of Democratic Mineworkers'.

In Lancashire, a meeting of branch secretaries and presidents last Saturday reaffirmed the need for unity against the NCB. The main scab leaders there do not want to break away but only to use the threat to strengthen their hand within the NUM.

Everything depends on what happens in Notts in the next month, and the size of Lynk's breakaway after that.

Over the last weeks, the NUM campaign in Notts has forced the NCB to step back from its policy of blatant harassment in the pits, and promise at least limited facilities for distribution of material. It has forced Lynk and the other scab leaders to show themselves up as viciously undemocratic.

But the decisive middle ground, the floating voters, are not coming to the meetings the NUM is holding throughout the coalfield. About 150 miners came to hear Arthur Scargill speak at Blidworth on Sunday, but the pit has over 1000 men.

Some of the waverers can be reached directly through the pits; but campaigners also need to knock on every single pit village door in the county.



Arthur Scargill addresses NUM members in Blidworth, Notts. After he was refused the use of the miners' welfare, the meeting went ahead in a car park. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

# Notts campaign

The campaign against Lynk's breakaway has so far been hampered all along the line by management. They have threatened to sack men for distributing literature etc.

Apparently, we are now going to be allowed to go onto NCB premises, although we haven't had it in writing.

Despite all that, we have made inroads. The opinion poll returns suggest that Lynk has got no chance of winning a two-thirds majority, and he is going to be scratching to get his 50% plus one.

There are still attempts to hamper us. At Blidworth pro-NCB miners have been told that there are no facilities available.

Those rank and file miners whom I've spoken to who have seen Lynk's letter were amazed that he could send out anything like that. I think he has dropped another of his almighty clangers in sending that letter out.

The information we've got from South Derbyshire is that there is a growing gulf between Ken Toon [the area secretary] and the membership. South Derbyshire is not going to be the stronghold Roy Lynk first thought it was. We don't know about Leicestershire, although the Dirty Thirty are still active.

The Durham breakaway is

## Durham closure

The Coal Board plans to merge Eppleton colliery with Murton from next April. Surface operations at the pit will be stopped with the loss of over 400 jobs and underground seams will be linked with Murton. Miners will be offered voluntary redundancy or transfers to Murton.

At a special meeting 771 men who work at the pit voted to

## Paul Whetton, Bevercotes NUM

no major force to be reckoned with, so Lynk is really getting desperate to drag in the dregs and create some respectable-looking outfit. I think he'll fail miserably.

The new issue of the 'Miner' is out, leaflets are being prepared, rallies are being held and groups at each colliery are coordinating the campaign. It should go into top gear over the next fortnight. We're quite happy with the results we're getting.

### Appeal

Bevercotes branch president Mick Kyte has made an appeal saying that he and other branch officials had been brought to the depths of despair because the supporters of the Lynk breakaway were not turning up at branch meetings. He urged everyone to please turn up and support them.

Since then, Kyte has cancelled the last two branch meetings, and Bevercotes hasn't met since June. It's a breach of the rules.

We will appeal to the Area, though I've no doubt we'll be turned down.

They are frightened to

hold a branch meeting and are using the claim that we will disrupt it and close it down.

This is obviously untrue. If we are in a minority at the branch, then the meeting will go ahead with Kyte and co taking all the decisions. If we are in the majority then it is in our interests to see that the meeting goes ahead.

Ollerton branch met recently and passed a resolution that unless they were allowed to distribute their literature at the pit they would call a special meeting and invoke a 24 hour strike and that was supported by people who worked all through the strike.

Support groups and unemployed groups have offered to come in and help. The problem is the best way to utilise them. If we aren't allowed into the pits to distribute literature then we'll have to go into the mining communities to distribute door to door.

We could certainly use help from the broader labour movement to do that.

While quite a lot of resolutions to Labour Party conference talk about a general amnesty for jailed and sacked miners, nowhere was there a reference to non-recognition of the breakaway, so my Constituency Labour Party decided to put forward an amendment saying that the Labour Party would not recognise any attempted breakaway from the NUM.

I realise that if we lose the vote on this we are in trouble, but if we don't debate it and vote on it — and it must be supported — then we leave the way open for backdoor deals.

# A new women's conference needed

By Susan Carlyle

committee delegate from every area.

So one woman represents, for example 17 pits in South Yorkshire. This makes it physically impossible for a delegate to act in an accountable fashion.

Bridget Thompson from Hatfield Main argued that voting at future national events should be by one delegate from each women's group. This was greeted with unanimous support from the floor.

Other contributions from Liz French from Kent and Glynis Thomas from Mardy, showed their burning hatred of the capitalist system, and the inability of the labour movement to organise for jailed and sacked miners. They wanted to see a Women Against Pit Closures with a clear, determined programme of action to organise women nationally — to keep up the momentum. The platform shrank visibly from such talk.

### Officials

The Notts women appealed for help in their desperate struggle to combat the breakaway union. One delegate from Sutton shook visibly as she called on the conference to unite to fight Spencerism and asked groups to come and join them in Notts — to distribute leaflets, to organise, to help, to offer support, anything.

Nothing more from the platform than "we will note your points, ladies."

How often have workers heard that one? There was no date set for activity — a march or rally in Notts, for example, or a demonstration at a prison, or even plans for a definite national publication other than a page in 'The Miner'.

The fight for women's affiliation to the NUM has to be continued. The amnesty campaigns to free all miners has deep-rooted support but needs organising. The breakaway union can only be combatted with increased national support.

We need a constitution with a delegate structure, both representative and accountable.

We want:

- \*a national conference with voting rights,
- with delegates from every group.

- \*a national paid officer.

- \*a national newspaper.

- \*a national call for action to defend the NUM, free the prisoners.

- \*affiliate status for the women's groups with the NUM.

The Women Against Pit Closures conference at Sheffield on August 17 was a frustrating experience.

The platform tried to rule the day by overdoing the threat of "what the press might report" to beat down dissent, and by declaring that everything had been decided by the planning meetings.

The morning session started off as a conference of delegates from women's action groups.

None of the 400 delegates had received a published agenda until they arrived. They had been told on the grapevine it was a non-voting conference.

No voting was to be allowed. Why? Apparently because the conference was unrepresentative.

The Scottish delegates were very vocal in their support of the Communist Party-led national committee on this. They said their money had to go to sacked miners' families, and so they had only been able to send 22 delegates.

The South Wales delegate to the National Committee moved for a change in the agenda so that aims and constitution could be discussed without the press attending and with votes taken. Her proposal wasn't listened to. This led to conference floor barracking and women standing up all over the conference, waving papers and demanding the right to vote.

Ann Lilburn's high handed chairing clouded the rest of the day's proceedings.

And if the press wanted a field day, they got it as a result of this manner of chairing.

The attitude was that people should sit down and be told what to do. For a well-attended conference of women who have been at the forefront of a major struggle it was condescending and irresponsible.

Women who looked to the conference to give them a new lead, found it was confusing and demoralising.

However, informal discussions with women from most of the mining areas showed that their determination is still there.

The question of leadership was sharply in focus. The platform protested that decisions would be taken at another conference, this time with voting. But with the voting power remaining firmly in the hands of a small group — one national

## "OUR COAL, OUR JOBS, OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR FUTURES"

Public meeting sponsored by Notts Miners' Forum, Notts Women Against Pit Closures, and Nottingham Women's Support Group.

Saturday September 14, 1pm to 5pm, at Albert Hall Institute, Derby Road, Nottingham.

Speakers: Peter Heathfield, Dennis Skinner, Huw Beynon,

Socialist Forum: no. 1 on the 'British Road to Socialism', no. 2 on Ireland, no. 3 on Afghanistan — 50p each. Socialist Organiser specials — on the miners' strike 75p; on local government, 60p. All available from SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY: add 20p for postage.

# ON STRIKE AGAINST RACISM

## By Mary Corbishley

### Islington NALGO

Well into the third week of their strike 450 NALGO strikers in Islington remain firm.

The Labour Council has now conceded one of our demands, and dropped all threats of disciplinary action against us.

Our primary demand is that no worker found guilty of racial harassment be allowed to work with the public. The council has agreed that Irene Pledger and Steve Henney, two of the three staff in the Rent Accounts section found guilty of racial harassment in April 1985, will not work in positions dealing with the public. Steve Henney will not therefore be slotted in as planned to a job in a Neighbourhood Office. But on the third worker, Vi Howell, whose appointment to Quadrant Neighbourhood Office sparked off the strike, the Council is intransigent.

They will not move her to an alternative post.

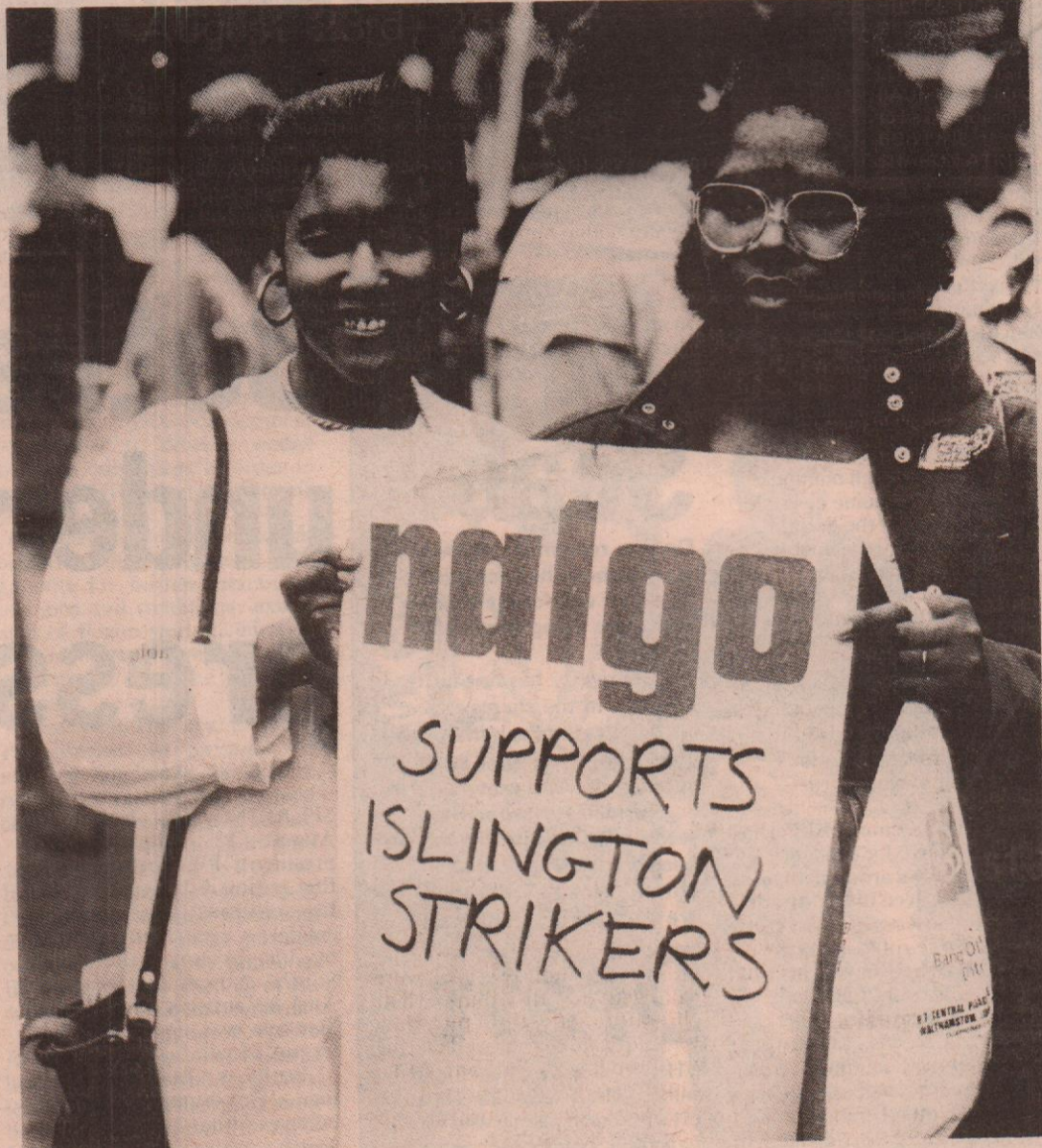
#### Guilty

Despite having found Vi Howell guilty of contravening the council's equal opportunities policy and racial harassment, the councillors dealing with negotiations, Sally Gilbert, Alan Clinton and Valerie Veness, are now saying that really she was just a bad manager.

Vi Howell was sub-section head of the section where systematic racial harassment forced out several black workers over a period of four years.

Last week the strike was given a massive boost by a demonstration and rally in Islington Town Hall. Jeremy Corbyn, Labour MP for Islington North, Sharon Atkin, a black Lambeth Labour councillor and other activists spoke.

Both Jeremy Corbyn and Sharon Atkin had been heavily lobbied not to speak by acting



On the march to support the strikers, August 14. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, IFL.

council leader Alan Clinton. Despite this they gave their full support to the strikers.

This is a historic dispute. It is a real step forward for the labour

movement that workers should take industrial action against racism.

It demonstrates the concern of a union which has been central to negotiating the council's equal opportunities policy to defend that policy and the gains that have been made by its implementation. We know, even if the council does not, that you cannot end racism by agreeing policy on paper.

#### Council

The implementation of these policies will be the measure of how far the trade unions and the Labour Party are prepared to go.

The councillors are politically isolated within the Labour Party. Both constituencies support NALGO's position. In addition the strikers and the NALGO branch have successfully opposed sections within NALGO

passed to councillors and Chief Whip Derek Hines photocopied and circulated it in the Labour Party and the manual unions to try to set them against the strike.

At the branch meeting speakers supporting the libraries motion made great play of attacking the NALGO branch leadership for its past and present inadequacies in fighting racism.

NALGO's allegedly bad record in the past, they said, means we can't be serious now!

They did not address themselves to the fact that 450 people have been out on strike for two weeks, fully committed to the strike on the basis of the facts of the case and of taking the side of black workers who were harassed out of their jobs by open racism.

#### Pressure

The fact that senior management are equally guilty does not make a racist less guilty. A victory for the strike will ensure that racial harassment cannot be continued in the same smug, self-confident way as before.

It will also mean that those who took heart from the mild disciplinary action of the council against Pledger, Heeney and Howell, and took it as a signal to step up racist and anti-gay/lesbian activities in the Housing Department will feel less confident in the future.

The left-talking rhetoric of the CP-inspired motion was merely a cover to undermine the strike and the present leadership of the NALGO branch. Fortunately the branch were not taken in by it.

The vote against was overwhelming.

The meeting then went on to call for a ballot for all-out strike action by the branch and for a rolling programme of industrial action in the interim.

Coupled with this, we agreed a list of proposals for stepping up the political pressure on the council including a public meeting; pressure to get a special Labour Group meeting called with a lobby of that meeting from prominent labour movement activists.

Support from trade union branches, Labour Party wards, councillors, MPs, community and political organisations is vital as well as donations to support those out on strike. Requests for speakers and further information from Islington NALGO, 135 Upper St, London N1. Tel: 226 8230.

whom the councillors have tried to put up against the dispute.

At a packed branch meeting on Friday August 16 a motion from the libraries department to end the strike and negotiate an agreement on how future incidents of racial harassment should be dealt with was voted down. The libraries shop stewards committee had previously circulated a document in which they attempted to argue Vi Howell's innocence or semi-innocence. They accused NALGO of incompetence in dealing with the racial harassment in the first place and said we were victimising Vi Howell as an easy way out. Very much in the line of the Daily Mail, this last bit — except that a major signatory to the document is a member of the Communist Party!

This document was then

The strikers ask labour movement organisations and office-holders to express their support by signing the petition below and sending it to Alan Clinton, acting leader, Islington Council, Town Hall, Upper St, London N1, with a copy to Islington NALGO, 135 Upper St, London N1.

"We the undersigned support the action taken by Islington NALGO in refusing to work with three officers found guilty of racial harassment in positions where they would work directly with the public.

"We would like to remind you of your commitment in the 1982 manifesto to "treat very seriously any grievance against a council employee connected with racial discrimination."

"We believe it is vital that a local community can have confidence that the service provided is fair to all, and urge you to settle this damaging dispute at the earliest opportunity."

## Liverpool: the brink of disaster.

By Kevin Feintuck

For a year now the 'Sam Bond affair' has continued to fester while the credibility of Liverpool City Council and the District Labour Party has crumbled within the black community.

Since the appointment of Bond, a building surveyor from Brent, as head of the Race Relations Unit, the council and the District Party have totally failed to heal the rift between themselves and the black and ethnic organisations in the city.

In the last few weeks, the position has become disastrous.

The latest turn for the worse started on July 30, when a meeting in Liverpool 8, due to be addressed by three councillors, collapsed amongst angry scenes. The supporters of Militant used the incident to implement their own poisonously divisive position of trying to bypass the Black Caucus — an umbrella organisation which represents all the city's black organisations — amidst a shrill chorus of bluff,

bluster and offended cries.

The District Party at a meeting on August 2 passed a wordy resolution breaking off any contact with the Black Caucus, declaring Bond's position non-negotiable, and threatening the funding of the local Community Relations Council. Obviously, the motion also promised the Liverpool 8 community a large "properly stewarded" meeting to be held in the area.

Given the vicious machismo which currently prevails in certain parts of the District Party, such "proper stewarding" means the use of what militant supporters disgustingly refer to as a "labour movement defence force" to intimidate would-be protesters. Alternatively the guardians of the 'bold socialist programme' may prefer to call the police who were used earlier in the year to eject black people from a council meeting.

At a public meeting in Liverpool 8 on August 13, well over 200 local people, overwhelmingly black, voted unanimously to keep up the campaign

against Bond's appointment.

Since then, the District Labour Party has come up with the staggering plan of a mass canvass in the area for Thursday August 22.

Riverside Constituency Labour Party, which covers the Liverpool 8 area, and in particular local ward Party have consistently stood firm against the District Labour Party and its increasingly divisive policy on race.

At the August constituency meeting, a motion disowning the District Party resolution was carried by about 39 votes to 7. A constituency aggregate on August 16 sent their officers to ask the District Party to abandon the potentially disastrous mass canvass.

The situation in Liverpool is now critical. If militant supporters are not prepared to see sense there is very likelihood that such links as exist between the labour movement and the black community will be smashed to pieces.

## Partial victory for Newham Seven

By Tim Anderson

THE four Asian youths convicted of 'causing an affray' on April 7 last year in Newham, East London, were sentenced last Tuesday, August 13, to 100 hours community service each.

Judge Neil Denison said in court that the four had "over-reacted to long-standing and extreme provocation".

"There are people still there in Newham who commit offences far more serious than yours. If you can help bring these people before the court so they can be properly dealt with it will be a great service to your community."

This outcome certainly represents a political victory for the Newham 7 Defence Campaign.

(Three of the seven were acquitted). But the four were right to say that they had done nothing wrong.

Over-reacted? The youths acted in response to a series of brutal attacks on the same day which included Asians being assaulted with a hammer. More recently Asian families in the area have been murdered in their homes by arsonists. Over-reacted?!

And what about "bringing these people before the court"? Asians have often complained to the police about racial attacks and ended up being racially harassed by the police themselves.

Eustace Pryce was stabbed and killed on the streets of Newham. The police arrived on the scene of the crime and arrested Eustace's brother!

The four stated that if similar circumstances arose they would do the same again, and that the Asian community "was read and able to respond very quickly". The labour movement must also be ready to support self-defence by the Asian community.

Meanwhile a report is being sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions on allegations that Parvaiz Khan, one of the defendants, was beaten up by prison officers at the Old Bailey on the first day of the trial.

The Newham Seven Defence Campaign is appealing for witnesses to the arrests of the demonstrators on April 27 and May 11 of this year. Many of the cases come up in court in the near future, and anyone with witnesses arrests on either of the two dates should phone 0555 8151.



# Catalyst for change

The Morning Star, following its split with the Communist Party, is campaigning hard for support in the labour movement.

But an article last Tuesday, August 13, illustrated clearly enough why its Moscow-line politics should not get that support.

"Prof. Vic Allen", the strap-line reads, "says Potsdam endorsed the spread of socialism in Europe". The Potsdam conference of July-August 1945 brought Churchill, Truman and Stalin together to discuss arrangements after World War 2.

Some people, Allen writes, "say that at Yalta in February 1945, and then at Potsdam, Europe was carved up by the great powers... But what [Yalta and Potsdam] did, because of the power and authority of the Soviet Union, was to endorse the spread of Socialism in Europe..."

"The Second World War was a catalyst for social change. Where the Red army was present, the forces of change were protected; where it was not present... they were crushed, or... as in Britain, betrayed..."

So if only Stalin's tanks had been in Britain too, we could have had socialism? No wonder only a few days before the Morning Star carried glowing reports of "Afghan youth" feting the benefits of Russian military occupation at the World Youth

Festival in Moscow.

What actually happened? The Yalta conference basically agreed zones in Europe to be militarily occupied by the victorious powers after the defeat of Germany. At Potsdam the big argument was about reparations from Germany.

The US, which had initially considered reducing Germany to a Third World economic level, now wanted to be more moderate. Stalin still wanted much bigger reparations. The big powers resolved the matter, essentially, by saying that the USSR could do what it wanted in the zone of Germany that it occupied, and the Western powers would do what they wanted in their zones.

Huge amounts of machinery were dismantled and taken from East Germany (and elsewhere in Eastern Europe) to the USSR. Most of large-scale industry in East Germany was run as 'Soviet holding companies' until 1954.

What about 'protecting the forces for change'? When the Allies entered Germany they found workers' or 'anti-fascist' committees running factories and local government. The US and British troops suppressed them — and so did the USSR's army.

"The Russian... military administrators", writes historian Gabriel Kolko, "quickly shocked the new Left by remov-

# Innocence

In April 1984 four Palestinians hi-jacked a bus in the Gaza strip (an Arab area occupied by Israel since 1967).

They were stopped, and two of the Palestinians were taken away by Israeli soldiers.

The army reported that the

Palestinians were dead — killed when the army stopped the bus. But an Israeli newspaper, defying military censorship, published a photograph showing that they had been taken away alive.

Brigadier Yitzhak Mordechai admitted that he had beaten the two prisoners with his pistol butt. They died from fractured skulls.

Last Sunday Mordechai was found innocent on all charges. He had not even been charged with murder or manslaughter, only with causing grievous bodily harm and 'improper conduct'. The army is expected to express its approval of him by promoting him to full general.

Pressure by ultra-chauvinist groups in Israel was influential in all this. The Chief Rabbi said that it would be a sin against Jewish law if Mordechai was not acquitted.

ing them from numerous offices and arbitrarily appointing unknown and hitherto uncommitted bourgeois. After a brief period of giving their troops freedom to rape and steal at will... the Russian leaders publicly differentiated between Nazis and Germans, a distinction they had not made earlier... and selected pliant careerists as their instruments.

After a couple of months they did allow trade unions — but not strikes. Through bribery of leaders and through manipulating workers' genuine desire for unity, the bulk of the Social Democratic party was merged into the Communist Party. Social Democratic dissidents and more left wing groups were suppressed. A Stalinist system was erected.

The story was the same elsewhere in Eastern Europe — or worse, as in Rumania, where the USSR chose many notorious fascists as its local instruments.

Maybe the Communist Parties were the "force for change" that the USSR's army was protecting? Not even them. After 1948 the USSR organised a vast wave of purges of the East European CPs. Gomulka in Poland, Kostov in Bulgaria, Rajk and Kadar in Hungary, Slansky in Czechoslovakia, were jailed or executed. Hundreds of thousands of members — generally the older worker militants who had some real ties to the class struggle — were purged from the CPs and driven from their jobs or jailed.

In East Germany a similar purge of CP members was organised after the workers' uprising of 1953, which was led in many places by long-standing CPers.

In the meantime, to be sure, nearly all industry in Eastern Europe was nationalised. But "the forces for change" — the working class — had been ruthlessly manipulated and suppressed.

Allen writes coyly, "If there had been no agreement, the social changes might have been more extensive, involving Greece, Italy and France..."

In Greece the CP-led resistance was the most powerful force in the country at the end of the war; the British army, from 1944 onwards, waged merciless war against it, while Stalin gave the CP no assistance at all. In Italy and France CP resistance forces were also strong; on Stalin's guidance they helped in the reconstruction of capitalism, fiercely opposing all strikes.

# Dirty tricks

Britain's secret state showed its nose again last Sunday, when the Observer revealed that MIS has been vetting people who apply for jobs at the BBC.

France's secret state is more spectacular in its dirty tricks. The Socialist-led government is currently investigating the possibility that France's secret police, the DGSE (formerly SDECE), was responsible for sinking a Greenpeace ship in Auckland, New Zealand, last month.

One crew member was killed aboard the ship, which was preparing for a voyage of protest against French nuclear tests in the Pacific.

SDECE has a long history of shady operations, especially in France's former colonies in Africa. The most celebrated case before the current one was the murder of Mehdi Ben

Barka, a Moroccan opposition leader, in Paris in 1965.

In August 1981, a police inspector, Jacques Massie, was murdered, and 12 members of the SAC — a sort of semi-official auxiliary police — were arrested. They included the director-general of the SAC and a man who was also a SDECE operative.

Police files on some of these men were empty because the cops had done a 'clear-out' before the Socialist government took office in summer 1981.

And France's state forces are willing to go further when they see good cause. Twenty-seven years ago the top ranks of the French army organised a military coup to bring General de Gaulle to power; three years later they attempted another coup, unsuccessfully that time.

# Low key operations

Could it happen in Britain? MIS monitoring the BBC, keeping tabs on peace and Labour activists, or even organising surveillance of ministers in a Labour government, is all more low-key than the French state's activities.

But what keeps it low-key? Nothing more solid than the fact that British politics has been stodgy and conservative enough to cause MIS little panic.

After all, the British police

were generally more low-key in their operations than police in other countries — until the miners' strike.

France's long and bloody colonial war in Algeria was the background to the military coups of 1958 and 1961. So far, at least, Britain's war in Ireland is much smaller-scale. Even so, it was recently revealed that MIS manipulated information to help the 1974 Loyalist general strike — and journalists have claimed

that British army officers in Northern Ireland defied Westminster government orders to act against that sectarian strike.

Britain's war in Ireland is a testing-ground for forces of repression which can later be used against the working class here. And the British state's activities against the left and the labour movement will remain relatively tame and low-key only as long as the left remains tame and low-key.

# South Africa



Arrest outside South Africa House. Photo: John Harris.

# Botha under pressure

SPEAKING in Durban on August 15, South Africa's president, PW Botha stressed the impossibility of 'simplistic solutions' — i.e. democracy — ever being granted by his, or any other white South African government. And he insisted that Nelson Mandela was not going to be let out of jail.

Botha is under great pressure. He himself probably believes that white racist South Africa will have to change if it is not to be destroyed altogether.

But many white South Africans are not prepared to budge an inch. Ultra-racist Andries Treurnicht last week warned that "the slumbering tiger of white South Africa's resistance is being awakened by the government's integrationist policies." So Botha has backed off.

Botha and his Western backers know that this is a dangerous policy for them. Botha's failure to offer much carrot to 'moderate' blacks, to go with the stick of the State of Emergency, has alienated even arch-compromisers. Chief Buthelezi has refused to negotiate with the state unless Mandela is released. And if Botha is going to negotiate with anyone, Buthelezi is his likely top choice.

Western governments are clearly scared. The 'Sunday Times' (August 18) explained their preferred political option: "The West's interest lies in promoting slow, steady and peaceful reform. Britain, more than any other country, would lose heavily from a violent upheaval. Britain is by far the biggest foreign investor in the republic."

The Tory government has been tripping over itself. First the Foreign Office put out a statement critical of Botha.

This so disturbed Thatcher's holiday in Austria that she was forced to intervene and get a second statement put out applauding the speech. The Foreign Office later insisted that the two positions were 'complementary'.

The big business magazine, the Economist, meanwhile, has been employing

trend-spotting political scientists to predict South Africa's future. They have come up with two 'models': 'Degenerative Collapse', and 'State of Siege'. The Economist holds out hope for the latter, commenting that "A state of siege regime may prove more authoritarian than classical apartheid. It would also be less dogmatic" and so, although unpleasant, it could "continue in power for a long time".

The Economist, like all others who in practice support apartheid, believes that African self-government would be a disaster.

The only alternatives are modified authoritarian white rule or anarchy. Therefore, support the whites.

The mass revolt of black South Africans points clearly towards the complete destruction of apartheid. The leading role in the struggle against racist oppression has fallen to the black working class, and in particular to the non-racial, independent trade union movement.

One of those unions, the NUM, will be on the front line after its strike begins on August 25. (See back page).

Money to SA NUM to: NUM, PO Box 10928, Johannesburg 2000; or 'Emergency SA strike fund', AAM, 13 Mandela Street, NW1.

# Save Moloise

As you read this, Malesela Benjamin Moloise may be dead. The South African state is due to hang him on Wednesday August 21.

A black South African poet, Moloise was convicted in 1983 of killing a policeman. The apartheid state intends to make an example of him, whether or not he is guilty. The ANC has itself claimed responsibility, absolving Moloise.

# RAIL JOBS AT RISK

## The meaning of DOO

WITH the miners' strike over, the BRB are in the mood to attack our jobs and conditions with renewed vigour. BR have made it clear that they intend to impose Driver Only Operation in certain areas this year, with or without union agreement.

The very existence of the grade of Guard is under threat by further extension of DOO. Management guarantees of job security are not worth the paper they are written on.

What can be guaranteed is that if BR get away with the re-introduction of driver-only freight trains, the concept will be rapidly implemented on virtually all other non-passenger trains. The conditions for DOO on these trains are very lax and do not even require the provision of radio equipment for the driver.

Where will the displaced freight guards go? Many are located at small freight-only depots, away from the passenger network.

The issues facing drivers are not so clear cut, and for many the money on offer will appear tempting at first sight. However drivers should bear in mind the following points before co-operating with the introduction of DOO.

### Accepted?

The DOO bonus per shift may sound reasonable at today's values, but it would quickly be devalued by inflation. Above all, the guard's job is not ours to sell!

Has DOO already been accepted by our unions? No. Although DOO is being operated on the Bedford-St. Pancras line, it has not yet been accepted as a general principle, and agreements apply only to that particular service.

The policy of the NUR is quite clear, and is embodied in the following resolution, adopted at the 1983 AGM.

"This AGM instructs the NEC ...to withdraw from all further talks on productivity, including one man operation of trains."

This policy was further endorsed at the 1984 AGM.

ASLEF policy states that its members will not cooperate to facilitate the extension of DOO whilst the NUR remains in opposition. Indeed, attempts by management to run trial trains in the Strathclyde area, to assess the siting of TV cameras, mirrors, etc., have been thwarted by local NUR and ASLEF members who have blacked such trains.

There is little doubt that our opposition to DOO will be denounced by management and press as Luddite. This assertion is a lie, and must be exposed as such. Many aspects of new technology will be of great value and contribute to safety and efficiency.

However, no amount of electronic circuitry can justify the de-staffing of trains. Radios and TV sets cannot lay detonators, they cannot open sliding doors, they cannot exhibit danger signals, they cannot smell burning or extinguish fires, they cannot detain passengers, they cannot prevent or deter vandalism and violence.

The technology associated with DOO could be beneficial to safety if used in conjunction with present manning levels. BR wants to use it as a crude means of cost cutting at the expense of safety.

DOO can only be effectively opposed by NUR and ASLEF presenting a united front to management. There is more at stake than DOO. Management would love to drive a wedge between our unions in order to use the "divide and rule" tactic to beat us.

Acquiescence to BR's demands on DOO will merely whet their appetite for further attacks on our jobs and conditions: extension of flexi-rostering, elimination of drivers' assistants, and implementation of the Trainman Concept.

Clearly the Tory goal for BR is Privatisation. At present, our national conditions of service remain as one of the greatest obstacles to bringing this about.

Now is the time to fight back and DOO is the issue to fight on. If a proper campaign is waged, this issue can provide a practical demonstration of unity between our unions and serve notice on BR that further worsening of our conditions will not be tolerated.

The Rail Federation (NUR-ASLEF) must be used to forge links between our unions at local level. Joint mass meetings must be held to organise the fight-back.

DOO can only operate with the co-operation of many different grades of staff. Drivers, Guards, Signalmen, Shunters, Technicians, Engineers, Workshop and Platform staff all have a role to play in ensuring that implementation does not take place.



Sacked guards at Llanelli. Photo: John Harris.

## Hard stance against Glasgow guards

Rail bosses stepped up their MacGregor-style tactics to force through the introduction of driver-only trains last Friday (August 16) by sacking all striking guards at Glasgow Central Station.

This hardline stance is part of the national BR effort to undermine support among NUR members who are being balloted on August 29 on a national strike against the introduction of the driver-only trains.

The strike at Glasgow Central began when a guard refused to travel out on a train equipped with the new door-opening mechanism to be used on the driver-only train.

The guard was suspended. The other 185 guards at the station came out in support of him and in opposition to Scot-rail's attempts to ride roughshod over union opposition to driver-only trains.

In Strathclyde alone, introduction of such trains would cost an estimated 500 jobs.

Management's response to the strike was to send out a letter to the strikers warning that they would be sacked unless they returned to work by the Friday (August 16) on the grounds that they were in breach of contract.

Despite the intimidation, only five of the guards went in to work on the Saturday, though a few others may have phoned in to arrange to return to work later in the week.

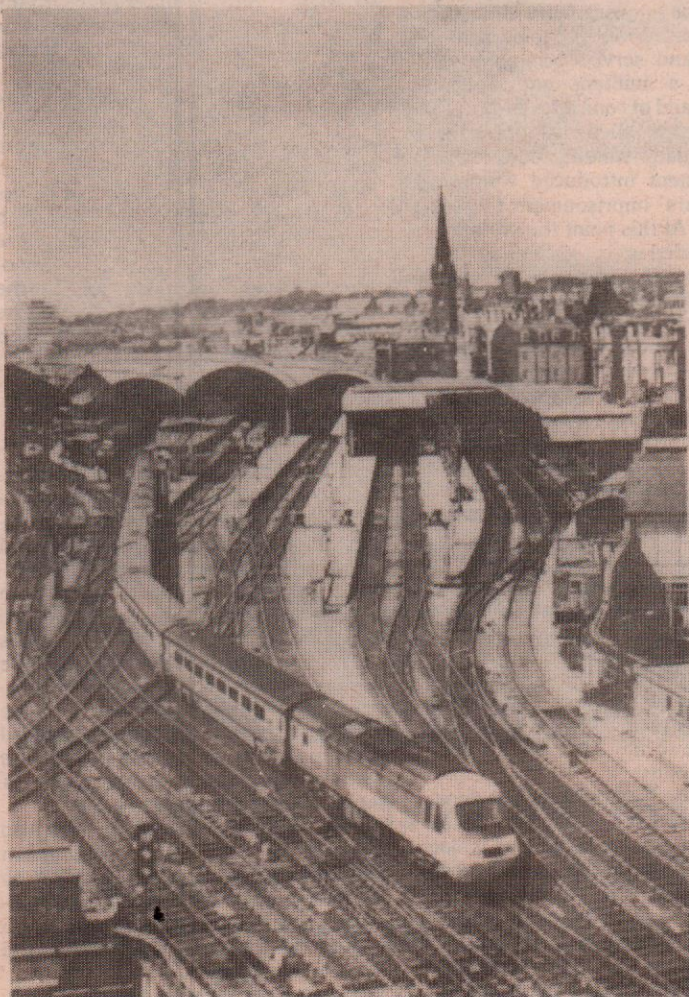
The Scottish media boosted the number of strike-breakers to 17, as well as falsely claiming that Welsh guards had voted to return to work on the Friday, in an attempt to artificially create a 'return to work' movement.

A further letter from management to the strikers, arriving the day after the "deadline", told the strikers that they could keep their jobs if they returned to work by the Monday.

In spite of all this, virtually all the strikers at Glasgow Central are refusing to back down, with the perspective that their strike will become a national one after the ballot on August 29.

As Alec Gibson, NUR representative at Glasgow Central, told Socialist Organiser: "We are locked out, and now management says we've been sacked as well. But the ballot is at the end of the month, and we have no doubt about which way the ballot will go."

"BR won't negotiate inside the machinery unless the NUR does not oppose driver-only trains. But BR won't negotiate on the NUR's terms, which are to oppose their introduction, for the safety of the staff and of the public."



Rail jobs under threat.

## An attack on safety

The NUR believes that Driver Only Operation will mean a less safe railway, and a more inefficient railway.

It will mean redundancy for many guards.

Last year 168 fires on trains were reported.

Under normal methods of working the guard would be expected to fight the fire, stop the train at a suitable place, get the passengers off the train when necessary, and protect the train.

Under Driver Only Operation all these responsibilities will fall on the driver.

A guard has an important part to play in safety in less

dramatic circumstances than a fire. The very fact that a uniformed member of staff is available on the train reassures passengers travelling alone, especially at night.

A deterioration in safety standards is also inevitable on freight trains. The chance of spotting loose doors, chains, shifting loads, etc. will rest entirely with the driver.

And what happens if the driver is taken ill or injured in an accident?

## Workshop ballot

The NUR is also balloting its members in rail workshops, on September 5, on industrial action.

14,000 workshop jobs have been lost over the last five years, with the workforce cut from 58,000 to 44,000. Thousands more are under threat, since British Rail plan

to put a lot of workshop work out to competitive tender.

The unions must make sure that the workshops' fight is tied together with the guards', rather than let British Rail get away with divide-and-rule.

# FREE NELSON

"The struggle is my life", wrote Nelson Mandela in a letter from the underground on June 26 1961. "I will continue fighting until the end of my days". On August 5 1962 he was captured after a tip off by an informer to the police. He was charged with inciting African workers to strike in 1961 and with illegally leaving the country. He was sentenced to five years' hard labour.

In October 1963 Mandela was brought to court from prison to join other underground leaders arrested at a farm in Rivonia. Eight men, including Mandela, were sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the government by violent means. They were taken to Robben Island to serve their sentence. Twenty-two years later Mandela is still in gaol.

From his prison cell Mandela has become an embodiment of black resistance against apartheid. The call to free Mandela is one which resonates from all sections of the liberation movement.

## Symbol

He is a living symbol not just of the repressiveness of the regime but of the capacity of the oppressed to fight back.

Many of the Western governments have joined in the call for the release of Mandela for their own reasons; they hope it will dampen the anger of blacks and provide a bona fide black leader with whom the South African government can negotiate a deal. Perhaps in their minds' eye lies the image of Kenyatta, drawn from prison to oversee a 'safe' transfer of power in Kenya.

Botha's position is that he will consider the release of Mandela — but only once he renounces the use of violence. Mandela himself, through his wife Winnie, has offered to meet Botha in prison to discuss the terms of his release. The offer has not been picked up. And so the matter rests.

Mandela is a leader of the African National Congress (ANC) and is reported by his daughter as replying to Botha's offer thus: "I am a member of the ANC...I am in prison as the representative of the people and of our organisation, the ANC, which was banned."

"What freedom am I being offered whilst the organisation of the people remains banned?...Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts..."

"Mandela was not convicted alone", writes the ANC in its journal, *Secheba*, "but with others...If Botha talks of release of Nelson Mandela, he must release Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners unconditionally." (The ANC's concern is certainly justified. I am no so sure, however, about their response. *The unconditional release of Mandela should not be counterposed to the unconditional release of all other political prisoners.* The one would be a great boost to the other).

Who is Mandela? What was his political role in the liberation struggle? Who was the man behind the image?

He was the son of a chief in rural Transkei. He received a privileged education (compared to most blacks) at a methodist school and Fort Hare College, where his political life began.

He is said to have rebelled against his family's attempt to arrange a marriage and returned to Johannesburg, where he studied law at Witwatersrand and then practised law with the current leader of the ANC, Oliver Tambo.

He was a middle class African who rebelled against the condition of 'the African nation'.

Mandela joined the ANC in 1944 as a

## The campaign to release African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, in jail for 22 years now, is internationally known. Bob Fine looks at Mandela's political career.

member of the radical Youth League. The ANC was a highly conservative organisation at this time, dominated by chiefs, legalistic in the extreme, thoroughly alienated from the working class.

During the war, for instance, they opposed all industrial action by black workers on the general grounds that they were illegal and would hamper the war effort. This was also the general position taken by the South African Communist Party. Doctor Xuma, the head of the ANC, took little interest even in the Mineworkers' strike of 1946.

The Youth League, of which Mandela was soon a leading member, was in favour of mass mobilisation and campaigns, but its political direction was African Nationalist rather than socialist. Its 1944 manifesto, which Mandela helped to write, declared that it was 'imperative for the African to view his problems and those of his country through the perspective of Race'.

It spoke of "the national cause" of Africans, the need to impart to the ANC "a truly national character", a belief in "the divine destiny of nations", a rejection of "foreign leadership and ideologies" and the unity of all Africans. It sought co-operation with Indian and Coloured national organisations. It saw South Africa as a country of four nationalities and claimed the right of 'African self-determination'.

It drew back, however, from the racism which it associated with Marcus Garvey's slogans of 'Africa for the Africans' and 'Hurl the white man into the sea'. It described itself as offering a 'moderate' nationalism which was "not against the European as a human being — but irrevocably opposed to white domination."

## Class

There was little or no class perspective in the Youth League's Africanism. Mandela himself voted for the expulsion of Communists, even though the position of the CP in its support for the South African war effort and its opposition to industrial or community activism during the war hardly displayed a deep class loyalty.

The defeat of the African miners' strike in 1946 was a terrible blow for the movement as a whole but especially so for the black working class.

On the side of the rulers, it paved the way for the defeat of Smuts' segregationist United Party and the rise to power of the hardline apartheid Nationalists in 1948.

On the side of the ruled, it paved the way for more militant forms of nationalism, expressed in the Youth League's take-over of the ANC, the 1949 Programme of Action, and a closer alliance between African, Asian and Coloured nationalist groups and the Commun-

ist Party.

The Programme of Action claimed the 'right of self-determination' for African people and the use of "boycott, strike, civil disobedience, non-cooperation" to realise it. No independent working class voice was to be heard in this programme.

The CP increasingly subordinated itself to nationalism, particularly after it disbanded itself following the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act. The trade union movement was at a low ebb.

"No easy walk to freedom". This was the title of Mandela's presidential address to the Transvaal ANC in 1953. The phrase was borrowed from Nehru.

## Uncompromising

Mandela had been 'volunteer-in-chief' of the Defiance Campaign, a campaign in which 8500 people had openly defied the government's race laws and suffered the penalty.

Mandela wrote of it: "Defiance was a step of great political significance. It released strong social forces...it was an effective way of getting the masses to function politically...a powerful method of voicing our indignation...one of the best ways of exerting pressure on the government...It inspired and aroused our people from a conquered and servile community of yesmen to a militant and uncompromising band of comrades-in-arms".

The campaign relied on self-sacrifice and was already winding down when the government introduced whipping and five years' imprisonment for acts of defiance. At this point the stream of volunteers dried up.

The campaign had great impact in arousing a moral conscience against apartheid, but it did not succeed in securing the repeal of any of the six or seven 'unjust laws' it was aimed at. More important, it offered little to the urban working class beyond the role of admiring onlookers.

For black workers violation of the law was an everyday necessity and their concern was to avoid the clutches of the police. Many must have been bemused as the volunteers offered themselves up to the police.

The non-violence of the Defiance Campaign was also a problem for workers. When in opposition to the recommendations of the ANC violent riots broke out in the Eastern Cape and a number of Africans were shot dead, the response of the ANC was to deny any responsibility.

As a leading Trotskyist of the time, Baruch Hirson, commented: "The philosophy of passive resistance is one that flows from a middle class leadership which places no reliance on the masses...It is a glorification of leaders and elevates them as political martyrs...It stems from the religious philosophy that there can be a moral re-

awakening of the rulers and it calls in effect for negotiations and concessions that exclude the broad mass of the people."

Mandela was not unaware of the problems. He wrote: "A political movement must keep in touch with reality...Long speeches, the shaking of fists, the banging of tables and strongly worded resolutions...do not bring about mass actions and can do a great deal of harm."

He also advocated the need to "fight unreservedly for the recognition of African trade unions" and called upon the ANC to "make the greatest possible contact with working people". Workers, however, were not seen as an independent force but as one element of the people's struggle.

"Freedom in our lifetime" was the slogan Mandela attached to the Freedom Charter approved by the 1955 Congress of the People. This provided the formal basis of the popular alliance between African, Asian, Coloured and White parties to the Congress Alliance.

In his review of the charter, Mandela emphasised its multi-racialism: "For the first time in the history of our country the democratic forces irrespective of race, ideological conviction, party affiliation or religious belief have renounced and discarded racialism". It was a great step forward in this respect, but Mandela underplayed the degree of racialism still present in an alliance based on racial groups and oriented to a future society based on "equal status...for all national groups and races".

The formal character of the Alliance as a coalition between races also obscured its class composition, that it was an alliance across classes. Mandela, however, stressed approvingly its non-socialist nature: "It is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings among the people on a democratic basis...Its declaration 'The People Shall Govern' visualises the transfer of power not to any single social class but to all the people of this country".

To all the classes, he argued, the struggle for democratic rights offered definite advantages. What was important was unity, "the united front".

Alliance and unity were certainly necessary, but on whose terms? What was really at issue in the coming years was the class leadership of the movement; was it to be by workers or by the radical petty bourgeoisie? Although Mandela saw that "the workers are the principal force upon which the democratic movement must rely", the strategies, tactics and goals of the movement were in no way determined by the working class.

## Election

A clear illustration came in the Election Strike of 1958. Mandela argued — totally correctly in my view — that boycott is an "effective and powerful weapon" but not a principle.

He wrote: "Some people regard the boycott as a matter of principle which must be applied invariably at all times...This is a serious mistake, for the boycott is in no way a matter of principle but a tactical weapon". Some people, Mandela continued, "regard participation in the system of separate racial representation in any shape or form" as impermissible.

This "inflexible principle" was also an error. It was vital to distinguish between "participation in elections by the people who accept racial discrimination...and participation...in order to exploit them in the interests of the liberatory struggle".

In principle, Mandela was absolutely

right. Unfortunately, the occasion was not.

Instead of pursuing demands for a pound a day and the end to the pass laws coming from within the ranks of the unions and instead of pursuing the militant anti-pass campaigns of the women's federation, Mandela called for participation in the white elections in favour of the United Party and against the Nationalists on the grounds that defeat of the Nationalists was the top priority.

The campaign backfired badly and the strike in support of the United Party was a flop. In the event, the Nationalists galloped home while the UP drifted ever more to the right.

The failure of the Election Strike fueled a new burst of Africanism and boycottism in the form of the Pan African Congress, which split off from the ANC.

## Trial

In 1960 Mandela offered his testimony at the Treason Trial. The government had arrested 156 political leaders following the adoption of the Freedom Charter, charging them with participation in a treasonable conspiracy, inspired by international communism, to overthrow the state by violent means.

The trial dragged on for over four years, the last of the defendants being acquitted in 1961...It served its purpose, however, in exhausting the financial and mental energies of the movement at a crucial time.

The court gave considerable space for political statements. Mandela reasserted his commitment to universal adult franchise, his distance from Communism and his non-racialism: "we are not anti-white, we are against white supremacy."

After his release, Mandela was heavily involved in the mass actions which followed the Sharpeville shooting. This was a tumultuous time in South African history, when tens of thousands of workers went on strike and took to the streets.

The Congress Alliance was not prepared for this level of working class militancy. It either left it to its own resources or made inappropriate calls for Days of Mourning and Stay-at-Homes which drew workers back from initiatives already taken. In 1961, for example, Mandela was still approaching the United Party, offering support to their opposition to the declaration of a Republic.

When the ANC finally called a general strike, it was far too late, the workers exhausted by their heroic efforts. It was also probably on the wrong issue. What was the Declaration of a Republic, the abolition of any position for Britain's Queen, to most blacks?

Mandela celebrated the response still forthcoming in the strike of May 1961; denounced the massive mobilisation of the state to quell it; attacked the opportunism of the PAC and pondered the question of the movement's non-violence: "is it politically correct to continue preaching peace and non-violence when dealing with a government whose barbaric practices have brought suffering and misery to Africans?"

The truth is that non-violence was never an option for the mass of black workers.

Mandela went underground to organise the May Stay-at-home. From there he issued the ANC calls for "a countrywide campaign of non-cooperation with the government".

The plan, he said, was to "make government impossible". But the workers had already suffered a defeat. The strikes were over. Pass burning had turned into queues for

# N MANDELA!

new passes. The government itself had severed the possibility of cooperation.

The ANC turned to armed struggle in the form of a sabotage organisation, Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation). Although it broke through the bounds of pacifism and legality, its guerrillaist orientation cut against the mass organisation of workers. Instead, reliance was to be placed on small groups of armed men infiltrating into the country.

Mandela, known as the Black Pimpernel, was picked up and tried for incitement to strike illegally. At the trial in which he defended himself, he challenged the validity of the court.

He was "a black man in a white court" and could not expect a fair and proper trial. He was not "morally bound to obey laws made by a Parliament in which I have no representation".

His case was democratic: "equality before the law means the right to participate in the making of the laws by which one is governed, a constitution which guarantees democratic rights to all sections of the population." He appealed to the Universal Declaration of human rights. The will of the people, he said, is the basis of the authority of government.

Mandela gave his African nationalism a radical democratic content: "all people, irrespective of the national groups to which they belong...whose home is South Africa and who believe in the principles of democracy and equality...should be treated as Africans". The problem in South Africa was "the conflict between conscience and law."

The government set the scene for violence and this could do "only one thing and that is breed counter-violence." These were the terrible choices he and his people faced.

Mandela was convicted only to reappear on sabotage charges at the Rivonia trial. Here he declared that "violence by the African people had become inevitable" and that "without violence there would be no way open to the African people...All lawful modes of expressing opposition...had been closed by legislation. There was no choice, it was a question of 'submit or fight'.

Violence was to be kept to the minimum, sabotage against property not terrorism against persons.

The object as far as he was concerned was not communism or a classless society, but rather the attainment of democratic rights: "I regard the British Parliament", he said, "as the most democratic institution in the world and the independence and impartiality of its judiciary never fail to arouse my admiration."

## Turn

Mandela never explored the particular form in which "the turn to armed struggle" was conducted in South Africa: its alienation from workers and mass struggles, its exclusivity, its cult of violence as *the* way forward. He never was able to investigate the reasons for the terrible defeats in the 1960s at the hands of the South African security forces nor of its connection with the annihilation of mass struggle in this period.

He never really understood working class politics or the class reasons for the defeats of the movement suffered at the point of his imprisonment. It was not for ten years or more that black workers found their feet again in the strikes of 1973.

In the wake of this movement Mandela has returned to the centre of the political stage, not as representative but as symbol. He has not been forgotten in gaol and he will not be.



**"From his prison cell Mandela has become an embodiment of black resistance . . . But he never really understood working class politics or the class reasons for the defeats suffered at the time of his imprisonment."**

# More Marxists in the councils

The issue of Socialist Organiser devoted to the local government left is a timely one.

Coming at a time when the fight against this year's round of cuts has, with one exception, collapsed, it details quite clearly the politics that lies behind that collapse — the politics that at the end of the day accepts that no real challenge can be made to the demands of the capitalist system for working class sacrifice.

## Doubly

The local government left stand doubly condemned — not just because they threw in the towel before any serious fight but also because they managed to create the illusion that this time they really intended to do something.

The cynicism that this will breed in the labour movement among serious militants, especially among council workers, will make any fight next year that much harder to organise.

John O'Mahony also correctly argues that far from drawing conclusions about the futility of being in the Labour Party, Marxists should redouble their efforts to build a powerful tendency that can prevent the retreats from happening. As revolutionary socialists we should not be surprised that reformists act in a reformist way. If, in doing so, they derail the movement, then that is because we aren't strong enough to stop them. The onus is on us to become stronger, not on our reformist leopards (or should it be tame pussies) to change their spots. Of course, some will

change under pressure, but it would be very foolish to base our strategy on it.

I would, however, go further. Not only is it necessary for Marxists to be in the Labour Party, it is also necessary for them to be in the council chambers.

In the next period the main challenge to the Tories is going to come from local government if the leadership is there to provide it. Local councils also have the resources and the links, both with the trade unions and the wider movement to launch mass campaigns.

Just as it is illogical to leave the Labour Party to the right and soft left, it would be equally illogical to leave the local government field to the likes of Livingstone and Blunkett.

In arguing for Marxists to be in the council chambers, though, it is vital to make sure that they don't end up acting like the reformists they are setting out to challenge. John states that the local government left behave the way they do because they are not part of a Marxist organisation. This is undoubtedly true, but it doesn't explain why several people who would claim to be Marxists have gone the same way.

## Strange

Militants who are elected to councils find themselves in a strange situation. Not only are they occupying a position in the labour movement, they are also part of an administration whose job is to administer part of the capitalist system. Added to that is the huge amount of work that councillors are

expected to do which makes it very difficult to do anything else.

Council work can easily become a way of life. Apart from the demands made on you by the people you represent, councillors are deluged in a torrent of paper work about the day-to-day running of a council — everything from re-grading claims to tenders for fish.

## Danger

Ending up accepting political responsibility for the administration is a real danger for Marxists on the council, especially if they are in an isolated position. Unless there is a forum where these councillors can regularly discuss the issues that arise and get guidance on them then there will always be the tendency to adapt to the surroundings that they find themselves in.

Less easy to deal with is the problem of the workload. It isn't something that you can just ignore or have nothing to do with.

Trotsky imagined that as foreign minister in the Bolshevik government he would publish the secret treaties, make a few speeches and then shut up shop. The reality of the situation proved quite different, and so it is with being on the council.

The labour movement, having put you there, expects you to know something about what's going on. Part of the point of being a councillor is the ability to get information that will be of use to people outside the council chamber. Tell them that all you're going to do is make revolu-

tionary speeches and that council papers are part of a plot to pull you off the straight and narrow, and you'll impress no-one.

Yet the sheer volume of the work can have an effect just as damaging as adapting politically to the situation. Council work can and does take up all the time available for political activity, and it is very difficult to lift yourself above the immediate tasks ahead. The tendency is to just get your head down and keep ploughing on.

In discussing the failure of the local government left to mount an effective challenge to the Tories and in mounting a challenge to the policies of that left, Socialist Organiser will need to do more than just criticise and put forward generally correct alternative policies. We will need to draw around us and sustain a sizeable group of councillors who will, in practice, provide an alternative to the reformism currently dominant in local government.

## Confused

Only when we begin to show that we are serious about doing this will we begin to attract the serious militants who are confused and disillusioned about the present retreats but who see no alternative.

If an issue is worth publishing a 40-page magazine about, then it's worth doing something about it. The discussion on the politics of the local government left is important. The discussion on what we are going to do about it is more important still.

PETE KEENLYSIDE

# Reformists or tricksters?

David Harris complains that I am unfair to Militant (SO 239). Contrary to my account, comrade Harris says, Militant do not believe in 'peaceful revolution', and are not 'soft on world Stalinism'. And, comrade Harris asks, are the differences between SO and Militant "really so fundamental that the advantages of keeping separate organisations outweigh those of forming one tendency?"

Yet Militant — virtually alone now amongst would-be Trotskyists — supports (or at least does not oppose) Soviet troops in Afghanistan. It supports them explicitly because they are 'progressively' napalming the Afghans into the twentieth century.

Not soft on Stalinism? Pretty soft, I'd have said.

No peaceful road, according to Militant? Yet Militant repeatedly insist that a 'peaceful transformation of society' is not only desirable but possible. Certainly, they warn about the power of the army, the police (and, indeed, as comrade Harris notes, the

monarchy). Militant believe, or say they believe, (and if they do not believe what they say it makes it worse), that all this power for violence can be neutralised by peaceful 'mass action', mobilised behind sweeping decrees of nationalisation carried out by a radical Labour government.

The actual strategy they propose for the labour movement is to elect a Labour government 'with socialist policies'. They say little or nothing about transforming the movement now, creating a new working class state and destroying existing bourgeois power. And they do say a great deal about the peacefulness of socialist change.

If they do believe what they say, they are plainly reformists. If they do not, they are cranky 'tricksters' who should not and could not be trusted.

Either way, the differences between ourselves and Militant are very fundamental indeed.

CLIVE BRADLEY



Militant leaders (from left) Tony Mulhearn, Peter Taaffe, Tony Saunio, Ted Grant and Pat Wall, with Les Huckfield (third from left)

# The waiting game

Most of what you say about Grant and Militant (SO 238) is valid and valuable, but at one point where you quote an ex-RCP member there is a dangerous — though unstated — implication which is totally erroneous.

"Ted's always been the same. Since 1945 he has been predicting a slump".

He has indeed, but whereas Healy constantly predicted one in the immediate future, for Grant it was always some time off.

I first came to know Ted in 1956. Ted at that time predicted a slump in 1964. Whereas Healy's "cataclysm tomorrow" analysis led to intense activism, Grant's insistence that it was eight years off produced a strategy of the waiting game.

Though I knew several

other members of the RSL, I lost contact with Grant after '57. By '62 I heard that Ted had redone his sums and that '68 was the date to expect the slump.

The fundamental theory, that there would be a slump of 1930s dimensions; that the pattern of the Thirties, when even Ernie Bevin and Herbert Morrison were calling for Councils of Action, would be repeated; that a sizeable centrist movement would arise in the Labour Party and that that would present the revolutionaries with their opportunity; remained constant.

Though for the wrong economic reasons, Ted was at least right in predicting a radical upsurge in '68 (if one bears in mind the Paris events, the Prague Spring and

reaction to these).

However, by '68 he had again redone his economic sums, and his group was predicting slump in the early to mid-70s. Once again the prospect of slump deferred made for inactivity in the present and Militant supporters explained their role in the LPYS, their non-involvement in anti-Vietnam War activities (or rather only partial involvement) and their coolness towards Paris and Prague events, on the grounds that the working class had yet to be roused by slump and premature involvement would build a barrier between Militant and the working class.

By 1970 the slump date was postponed to the late '70s; and no doubt by then they felt their predictions were fulfilled. However since

the coming of the slump coincided with a down-turn of socialist activity (the miners' strike last year would have provided an admirable occasion for Labour rightists to call for councils of action under Ted's analysis, but instead it saw Labour Leftists deprecating action) I don't know how Ted's theories are being borne out.

That Militant has blossomed at the time of the slump seems to be despite, rather than because of, Ted's success this time in predicting a slump. Given the SLL boom in the mid '60s and the IS one in the mid '70s, there is no real reason to assume that Militant's present strength will hold for more than a few years.

Fraternally,  
Laurens Otter

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# WHAT IS THE DEMOCRATIC SECULAR STATE?



Pre-1948 Palestine — as defined during the British mandate — is the territory to be liberated, the territory where the democratic progressive state is to be created.

The liberated Palestine will be part of the Arab homeland and will not be another alien state within it. The eventual unity of Palestine with other Arab states will make boundary problems less relevant and will end the artificiality of the present status of Israel, and possibly that of Jordan as well.

## Anti-imperialist

The new country will be anti-imperialist and will join the ranks of progressive revolutionary countries. Therefore, it will have to cut the present life-line links with, and the total dependence on the United States. Therefore, integration within the area will be the foremost prerequisite.

It should be quite obvious at this stage that the new Palestine discussed here is not

Socialist Organiser supporters are debating whether we should continue to back the mainstream Palestinian slogan of a democratic secular Palestine, or instead adopt a policy which would allow for the existence of a modified Israeli-Jewish state alongside a Palestinian state or a wider Arab federation. These two statements (below, from Fatah; right, from the more left-wing DFLP) summarise what the Palestinian movement meant by a 'democratic secular state' when it adopted the slogan in 1969.

Israelis since June 1967. The the occupied West Bank or the Gaza Strip or both. These are areas occupied by the homeland of the Palestinians usurped and colonised in 1948 is no less dear or important than the part occupied in 1967.

Besides the very existence of the racist oppressor state of Israel, based on the expulsion and forced exile of part of its citizens, even from one tiny Palestinian village is unacceptable to the revolution. Any arrangement accommodating the aggressor settler-state is unacceptable and temporary. Only the people of Palestine — its Jews, Christians and Moslems — in a country that combines them all is permanent.

All the Jews, Moslems and

Christians living in Palestine or forcibly exiled from it will have the right to Palestinian citizenship. This guarantees the right of all exiled Palestinians to return to their land whether they have been born in Palestine or in exile and regardless of their present nationality.

Equally, this means that all Jewish Palestinians — at the present Israelis — have the same right, provided, of course, that they reject Zionist racist chauvinism and fully agree to live as Palestinians in the new Palestine.

The revolution therefore rejects the supposition that only Jews who lived in Palestine prior to 1948 or prior to 1914 and their descendants are acceptable.

After all, [Moshe] Dayan [minister of defence] and [Yigal] Allon [deputy premier] were born in Palestine before 1948 and they — with many of their colleagues — are diehard racist Zionists who obviously do not qualify for a Palestinian status, whereas newcomers may be anti-Zionists and work ardently for the creation of a new Palestine.

## Welcome

In the interview referred to earlier [published in *al-Taleea*, June 1969], Abu Iyad, one of the officials of Fatah, reasserted that not only progressive anti-Zionist Jews but even present Zionists willing to abandon their racist ideology will be welcome as Palestinian citizens.

It is the belief of the revolution that the majority of the present Israeli Jews will change their attitudes and will subscribe to the new Palestine, especially after the oligarchic state machinery, economy, and military estab-

lishment are destroyed.

The call for a nonsectarian Palestine should not be confused with a multireligious, a polyreligious or a binational state. The new Palestine is not to be built around three state religions or two nationalities. Rather, it will simply provide freedom from religious oppression of any group by another and freedom to practice religion without discrimination. No rigidification of religious lines is desired by the revolution. No hard and fast religious distribution of political offices and other important jobs is envisioned.

Furthermore, religious and ethnic lines clearly cross in Palestine so as to make the term binational and the Arab-Jewish dichotomy meaningless, or at best quite dubious.

The majority of Jews in Palestine today are Arab Jews — euphemistically called Oriental Jews by the Zionists. Therefore, Palestine combines Jewish, Christian and Moslem Arabs as well as non-Arab Jews (Western Jews).

## THE VERSION OF THE DFLP

THE struggle for a popular democratic solution for the Palestinian and Israeli questions to be based on the liquidation of the Zionist entity exemplified in all the government establishments (army, administration, police) and all the chauvinistic Zionist political and labour organisations. The establishment of a people's democratic Palestine state in which the Arabs and (Israeli) Jews will live without any discrimination whatsoever, a state which is against all forms of class and national subjugation, and which gives both Arabs and (Israeli) Jews the right to develop their national culture.

## Arab

In accordance with the link of history and destiny that exists between Palestine and the Arab nation, the people's democratic state of Palestine will be an integral part of an Arab federal state in this area. The Palestinian state will have a democratic content hostile to colonialism, imperialism and Arab and Palestinian reaction.

The democratic solution put forward is capable of liberating the Arab and the Jew from all forms of chauvinistic (racist) culture — liberating the Arab from reactionary culture, and the Jew from Zionist culture.

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine calls on all the Israeli and Jewish elements and groupings who are hostile to Zionism and imperialism to support the above solution and participate in the common Palestinian and people's armed struggle for the implementation of this democratic revolutionary solution.

# UNITE ISRAEL AND PALESTINE?

SOME comrades have argued that the 'democratic secular state' cannot conceivably be made a reality. As an alternative they have put forward the idea of establishing a separate Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, (and may be some parts of present-day Israel), and a struggle for a modified Israel in which the rights of the remaining Palestinians would be protected.

There are, however, more problems with the two state theory than with the Democratic Secular State. Firstly, the establishment of a separate state would be opposed not only by the Israeli State, but by the Jewish working class.

A basic right of a Palestinian State would be the right of a standing army. Imagine what fears Jewish workers would have about a Palestinian State on their doorstep which would no longer be restricted to launching guerrilla attacks like the PLO so far, but would be armed with all the military hardware of a fully fledged state.

Imagine their fears being heightened by the fact that some 700,000 Palestinians would still remain trapped inside Israel, still denied democratic rights, and that such a Palestinian state

## Arthur Bough argues a third, minority, view

could hardly be expected to stand idly by when those Palestinians called on it for assistance.

In short whilst *in principle* the Palestinians could fight for the establishment of a separate Palestinian state, in practice there is no more chance of it being achievable than the Democratic Secular State. It also lacks a grip on reality.

On both sides would be capitalist states within which would be trapped national minorities. In Israel the racist, Zionist State would remain unchallenged, now with a large section of its most radicalised population, the Palestinian workers, hived off. With a new hostile neighbour on its border the Zionist State would be even more able to avert class antagonism by rallying Jewish workers around the flag. Meanwhile, the link between Israel and US imperialism would probably be strengthened.

On the other side of the border would be a feeble bourgeois Palestinian State, economically dependent on neighbouring Arab capital. Such a state could offer nothing to the Palestinian

workers, and even less for the minority Jewish population trapped within its borders.

We have a duty to advocate a programme which is aimed not just at the Palestinian workers, but at the Jewish workers too.

The first step in winning Jewish workers away from the Israeli state is to remove their fears. A basic position of any Marxist should be to say that we are opposed to any attack on Israel by the Arab States, and that we are opposed to the military campaign of the PLO other than where it is a matter of it acting purely as a self-defence squad against attacks by the Israeli State.

The military campaign of the PLO, like the military campaign of the IRA, is an *alternative* to political struggle, not an *integral* and *subordinate* part of it. It is a typical petit-bourgeois strategy.

If the Palestinian workers were to approach Jewish workers on the clear basis that they opposed that military campaign it would open up a powerful opportunity for political dialogue. The Peace Now cam-

paign showed that Israeli workers do not like being in a continual state of war.

That political solution has to be one that is consistently democratic, that provides for the rights of both nations to exercise considerable self-government in those areas where they constitute a majority, and which at the same time protects the rights of minorities. It requires the establishment of a federal United States of Israel and Palestine.

The Israeli state would obviously oppose such a solution, and so too, probably, would the bourgeois leaders of the PLO. Our job as Marxists, however, is to mobilise the workers of both nations against their respective bourgeoisies in the political struggle for the demand.

It is an algebraic demand — mobilising the workers without limiting in advance the scope and aims of that mobilisation. The demand for a United States of Israel and Palestine would have to be supplemented by other demands.

A Democratic Programme would have to be elaborated which would protect the rights of minorities. In addition we would need to raise various transitional demands such as the sliding scale of wages, disbandment of

the standing army and establishment of workers' militias, a crash house building programme financed by a massive reduction in the military budget, so that the Palestinian refugees could be rehoused, etc.

Put in this way the Jewish workers could see that they did not need a massive military machine, that their living standards could be improved if they were to come to a political settlement with the Palestinians, and that their potential for winning such improvements would be considerably strengthened if the Palestinian working class was fighting alongside them.

The demand for a United States of Israel and Palestine, therefore, by focusing on the Palestinian and Jewish workers as the only force capable of resolving the problem, establishes the basis for deepening the struggle into one for socialism in accordance with the theory of Permanent Revolution. In contrast, both the Democratic Secular State and Two State solutions mirror the Stalinist stages theory. Both see the necessity of a first stage whereby a bourgeois democratic solution to the national question is achieved before "normal" class struggle can take place.

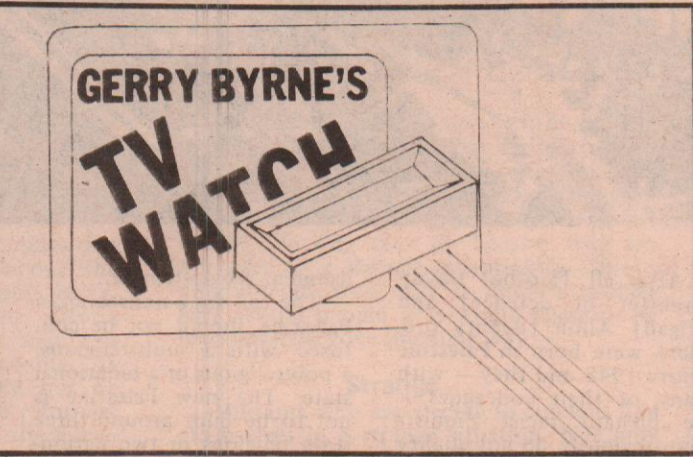
# Goodbye American Dream

It's a great shame I never caught "Connie" before. It is the tale of our times — designer-knit for Thatcher's Britain. A petit-bourgeois Dynasty with all the unrecognisable emotion and impenetrable plotting you expect from the grand operas of soap but set in our own backyard.

It's the story of a knitwear business, the cut and thrust of small shop-keeping. Sounds dramatic, eh? Well, you wouldn't believe the pathos, bathos and skulduggery they can wring from such humble material.

## Screams

Whereas in the homelier kind of soap, characters express themselves as much through their sulks and silences as through speeches, in Connie everyone screams and speechifies in a peculiarly articulate hysteria. Motivations are laid down with a flourish like hands in a poker game.



It's extraordinary just how many aces you can cram up those batwing sleeves!

The scriptwriters, very helpfully for persons like myself who can never follow a plot, liberally quote from previous episodes as from Shakespeare.

I've only seen a couple of episodes but already I must have heard the "gravy up to the elbow" and the "women in high heels" speech a dozen times.

It's a sort of social service,

this self-quoting, deserving of a grant from some august body.

We'd be lost without it, like dyslexic Scrabble players. Just when I'm totally bewildered, on comes Connie with "get your nose in that trough" and instantly all becomes clear. So that's why she's doing it, click.

They may have silicon sex Stateside, but Connie has "fellas". Now I thought this term existed only on the pages of teenage girls' magazines. Apparently grown women use it too.

If you were so disposed you might see some advance for women's liberation in the fact that men exist as appendages (and very pretty they are too!). They do the figures, design the jumpers, provide a little decoration and hang around inscrutably while the ladies fight it out. Mainly they act as a drag on overarching female ambition.

## Myth

Where would we be without the bitches? Some are born bitches, some are what "men and circumstance have made them". Do I spot a vicious myth in the making?

As a parable of Thatcherism, Connie carries a particularly noxious sting in its tail. It's one thing to betray and backstab to win the glamorous life-style and gorgeous garb of Joan Collins. In Connie, the gravy doesn't even smell very savoury.

They seem to derive precious little pleasure from their here-today-gone-tomorrow fortunes. It's a naked motiveless greed. Puritan masochistic driving for success. Long hours, sleepless nights and insecurity — as Connie sells it to her mugg-punters.

And the strange thing is we're expected to feel that it is all worth it. Goodbye American Dream, hello British nightmare. Beat me again.

All this is presented as a uniquely feminine phenomenon. The men may be grasping and ambitious but the peculiar high of raw pleasureless ambition is reserved for the women — hard bitches.

What a wonderful explanation for our current predicament. See what you get when you let women run the show! Pseudopsychology and anti-feminism coalesce. It's enough to make you cut your own throat.



## Songs of liberty and rebellion



### The Preacher And The Slave

(Tune: In The Sweet Bye And Bye)  
(by Joe Hill) (1911 edition)

Long-haired preachers come out every night,  
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;  
But when asked how 'bout something to eat  
They will answer with voices so sweet:

[Main Chorus] You will eat, bye and bye,  
In that glorious land above the sky;  
Work and pray, live on hay,  
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

And the starvation army they play,  
And they sing and they clap and they pray,  
Till they get all your coin on the drum,  
Then they tell you when you are on the bum: [ch.]

If you fight hard for children and wife —  
Try to get something good in this life —  
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,  
When you die you will sure go to hell. [chorus]

Workingmen of all countries unite,  
Side by side we for freedom will fight;  
When the world and its wealth we have gained  
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

[Last Chorus] You will eat, bye and bye,  
When you've learned how to cook and to fry;  
Chop some wood, 'twill do you good,  
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye.

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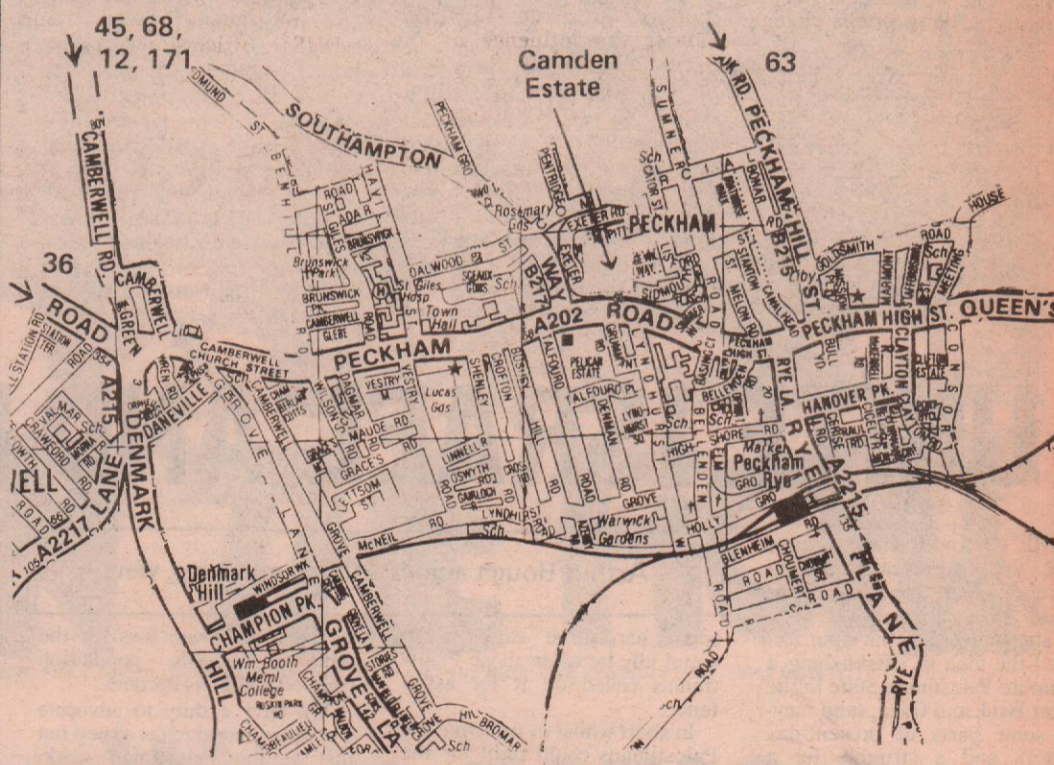
Speakers include:

MAREK GARZTECKI  
HILLEL TICKTIN  
GEOFF BELL  
MOSHE MACHOVER  
LOUISE CHRISTIAN  
PAUL WHETTON (yet  
to be confirmed)  
BOB FINE  
SHARON ATKIN

## Agenda

Friday	Registration and lunch		
12	Introduction		
12.45	What will socialism be like?	Socialism and Irish labour	Solidarnosc today (with Marek Garztecki)
1-2.30			
2.45-4.15	Labour and the police (with Louise Christian)	What is a revolution like?	The Labour Left today (with Sharon Atkin and Chris Knight)
4.30-6	The struggle for reproductive rights	Will the family vanish under socialism?	The Irish Republican movement
Saturday			
10.30-12.15	Zionism and the Middle East (with Moshe Machover)	Who was Marx?	Lessons of the miners' strike
12.15-1.45	Plenary session on SOUTH AFRICA, with Bob Fine		
1.45-2.30	Lunch		
2.30-4	The Arab Revolution	The nature of the USSR (debate with Hillel Ticktin)	The Protestants of Northern Ireland (with Geoff Bell)
4.15-6	Plenary session on THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AFTER THE MINERS' STRIKE		
Saturday evening:	social		
Sunday			
10-1	Plenary session: debate on PALESTINE, with Moshe Machover		
1-2	Lunch		
2-3.30	Who was Lenin?	Women and Labour councils	Scargill and the NUM
3.45-5.30	Plenary session: round-table discussion on THE LEFT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT		
5.30-6.30	Videos, including new videos on the miners' strike		
Monday			
10-11.30	Plenary session on NICARAGUA		
11.45-1.15	Who was Trotsky?	Why a federal united Ireland?	Anti-semitism
1.15-2	Lunch		
2-3.30	Plenary session on the way forward: campaigning for a general election: the fight against YTS conscription; and how Marxists must organise in the labour movement.		

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Ask for Camberwell Green on the bus to make sure you don't miss it. The estate is immediately opposite the AUEW offices on Peckham Road; the hall is in a courtyard in the middle of the estate.

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CPSA demonstration in Birmingham. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

# New threat at GCHQ

By Ben Plouviez (branch secretary, CPSA British Library London branch, in personal capacity)

EVER since the ban on union membership at GCHQ was announced in January 1984, the leaders of the Civil Service unions have been intent on keeping tight control of the campaign for a restoration of members' rights. But their 'campaign' of legal actions, public relations and humble petition has been a dismal failure in achieving its supposed aim.

The campaign has had three stages. The first was between the announcement of the ban and its imposition on March 1 1984 — the date by which GCHQ staff were required to sign one of the two "options" — to give up their union, or to seek a transfer to another Civil Service post.

During that time, the General Secretaries of the major unions involve (CPSA, CSU and SCPS), led by Alistair Graham of the CPSA and with Len Murray's involvement, were offering the government a "no disruption" deal at GCHQ. When the Tories kicked them in the teeth, Graham and Murray crawled off the fence to support — at three days' notice — mass industrial action on February 28.

In spite of the chaos caused by the leaders' confused and contradictory positions in the weeks leading up to that day, the day of action itself was extremely successful, mobilising workers both within and outside the civil service. But that aspect of the campaign was forgotten as quickly as it had been raised, and the second stage began... one of lengthy and complicated legal wranglings.

The only "victory" of this stage was the High Court's ruling that the government should have consulted the unions before pressing ahead with the ban. And this "victory" was soon overturned when the case went next to the Appeal Court and the House of Lords.

On the substantive issue — the right of the government to

ban unions at all — the unions unsurprisingly made no headway whatsoever.

The third stage, the one we are now in, arose somewhat accidentally as far as the union leaders were concerned. After the High Court's ruling that the ban had been illegally imposed, the unions recruited/re-recruited a number of members at GCHQ.

Some have again resigned, following the later court judgments, but the remainder — the 90 or so staff who in 1984 signed "Option A" to give up their rights and have since changed their minds — form the group now under threat of disciplinary action. It is widely expected that such action will involve sackings.

The union bureaucracy's response to this development has been, once again, to seek a deal. It appears, indeed, that a possible deal was discussed in secret talks between the General Secretaries and Sir Robert Armstrong (the head of the Civil Service) as long ago as May.

What was proposed was that a "ring fence" be erected around the existing union members at GCHQ: in return for the Tories not taking action against these individuals, the unions would promise not to try and recruit other staff. In other words, apart from continuing with their tiny minority of members there, the unions would accept the ban at GCHQ.

Now the government has apparently again rejected the union leaders' advances to them. Eighteen months after the original ban, it may be difficult to get an effective response from the labour movement to any sackings — but on the other hand, such a move might revitalise the campaign in a way that the bureaucracy would find hard to control. It is presumably on these calculations that the government's next move depends.

If there are sackings trade unionists be organise immediate strike action. But on their performance to date, we shouldn't anticipate a bold, clear lead from Alistair Graham and his fellow "New Realists".

# Strike against Fowler!

By Steve Battlemuch

THE DHSS section executive committee of CPSA has called a strike against the Fowler Reviews for Friday September 13, the last day of a national week of action against the Reviews.

The right wing leadership of CPSA's national executive committee has insisted on a ballot in line with the 1984 Trade Union Act but as yet has not vetoed the strike. (If the government declare it 'illegal' as a 'political' strike the right wing could change their tune).

It will be difficult to win the ballot for three reasons — the short time scale; members' dislike of one-day strikes; and it probably being seen as a 'political' strike. CPSA's right-wing national leadership will probably do nothing to help the Broad Left DHSS section leadership.

But Broad Left activists must work flat out for the strike. The campaign itself will be useful for raising

members' awareness and if we do win the ballot, it will be a big blow against Fowler. Members in DHSS have almost as much to lose as claimants from the reviews — we will have fewer staff, a more complicated system, and more 'hassle' from claimants.

SCPS, the other DHSS union, appears to have copped out from the strike. Under the influence of the Communist Party they seem more interested in 'public opinion' than working-class action.

The campaign for the strike should be built by linking the Fowler Reviews with the present crisis in the DHSS. Almost every DHSS office in the country is over-worked.

However, the government refuses to increase the staff. In fact, over the last five

years, while unemployment has doubled or tripled, the number of staff in the DHSS has decreased.

Action against understaffing has been widespread over the past year. Over 30 offices have taken strike action in the past six months.

## Guerilla action

A repeat of the three-month Birmingham/Oxford strike against understaffing cannot be far away. Four DHSS offices in Leicester

have recently been out for a week, and guerrilla action is continuing.

## Response

Much of the action starts as a response to the use of overtime working by a tiny minority of staff (usually non-members or SCPS members). CPSA and SCPS have a national ban on overtime working in DHSS as part of our campaign for increased staffing.

# No cooperation

NALGO members in all the branches affected by abolition of metropolitan authorities have voted by an overwhelming majority to continue non-cooperation.

At a National Delegate Conference in London, NALGO members from the metropolitan counties, metropolitan districts and London borough branches voted to turn their backs on any request to assist in the imple-

mentation of abolition and the creation of successor bodies.

NALGO is in national negotiations through the TUC for guarantees of staff protection.

Branches involved will continue to refuse co-operation until they receive assurances from the government that jobs and service conditions are protected.

# Fawley strike

Maintenance workers at Esso's Fawley oil refinery near Southampton, last week walked off the job in protest at management's blatant victimisation of TGWU shop steward Jim Sullivan.

The dispute started over the question of labour transfers involving contract workers. Site bosses are trying to shake out surplus labour after completion of the recent £100 million catalytic-cracking programme.

Employers have dangled the carrot of secure jobs outside the refinery. These jobs — assuming they exist! — are paid at £30 a week below the rates at Fawley. So far, not one worker has taken up this "offer".

But management are keen to press ahead and in addition seem determined to pick and choose likely candidates for their labour transfer market. In selecting brother Sullivan they are seeking to undermine both trade unionism and Fawley site agreements.

Maintenance workers obviously see it that way too. Before they clocked-on last Friday morning the day shift held a mass meeting and voted 75 to 1 for an indefinite strike pending reinstatement of brother Sullivan.

TGWU convenor Manny Jardin told Socialist Organiser: "The lads were very angry. Most of them worked 15 hour shifts for three months to put Esso back on schedule during the cat-cracker shutdown.

"Isn't it typical of the boss to not only reward us with a pay cut but to expect us to stand aside while an elected shop steward gets the sack?"

"Our decision is that victimisation is non-negotiable and we will stay out until brother Sullivan is fully reinstated. I think we've surprised them. The longer we stay out the more anxious Esso will get about delays in the production change-over to the new low-lead petrol."

The fact remains that erosion of site agreements combined with curbs on shop stewards is logically bound to increase casualisation of contract labour. Workers must demand solidarity from other sections via an emergency recall meeting of Fawley JSSC and the TGWU must give official backing to this strike with immediate payout of strike benefit.

There must be no repeat of the 1983 sell-out!

# Council takes on housing dept

By Susan Carlyle (Tower Hamlets councillor, in personal capacity)

Housing caretakers in Tower Hamlets last week agreed to return to work pending negotiations to solve a dispute about new rotas.

For four weeks they were locked out by the Labour-led council because they refused to work new rotas which entailed a loss of pay. They were offered 50p an hour for standby duty and would have had to increase their hours from 39 to 46 a week to maintain the same wage.

The background to the reorganisation is the handover from the GLC of properties to Tower Hamlets council. The terms of the handover are not completed and the two sets of caretaking staff are working with different agreements.

The council's new proposed rotas are a thinly disguised attempt to get more work for less money.

Residential caretakers were

threatened with losing their rent free accommodation during the dispute.

But the caretakers stuck out as a body and kept picket lines going. Rubbish became a real health problem. Solidarity from dust collection kept the rubbish collection kept the rubbish uncollected and no doubt contributed to a council rethink.

## Strings

A short occupation of the council chamber by caretakers before a full council meeting produced a meeting with the council leader and an apparent 'cooling off period' for negotiations. Six weeks were set aside during the summer recess for talks, but with strings attached that the new rotas would be implemented if the talks reached no solution.

The new rotas will not be implemented. The disputes panel, with reps from other boroughs, will be convened for immediate negotiations in the next six weeks, or until a solu-

tion is hammered out.

However, within hours of the truce the council leadership instructed estate officers and other housing officers to work to their contract. If not they will be put off pay, i.e. suspended.

This is a separate dispute arising from the victimisation of two NALGO members. As part of their protest NALGO were refusing to process council members' enquiries. The policy has been reaffirmed recently. (In fact it mainly hits those councillors actively working for local people and running advice sessions).

## Break

The percentage of time taken with these enquiries is minimal but the council leaders in their last year of office seem determined to break every union action going.

Backed by the Liberals who could not get all their own side to back their own motion, the right wing Labour element are more confident of smashing

union organisation.

Over 30 trade unionists were 'interviewed' about resuming members' enquiries. 18 stood firm. These officers refused to move from their desks and are continuing to work on a 'voluntary' basis because of their loyalty to tenants with whom estate officers have day to day contact and commitment.

## Uniform

In the allocations section, too, trade unionists have been threatened with breach of contract and put off pay.

Despite the members' boycott being fairly uniform across all the borough's departments, the council leadership is determined to pick on the housing section and isolate it. With the background of racial tension, fire bombings, homelessness and the highest rate of overcrowding, this council has chosen its time to pick on its housing department to hide its own shortcomings.

# NOTHING TO LOSE BUT THEIR CHAINS

The South African NUM, the largest independent union in South Africa, is due to go on strike on August 25 for a 22% wage increase.

As we go to press, negotiations between the NUM and the Chamber of Mines have resumed, after deadlock the previous week. The NUM is reported to have dropped secondary demands for shorter hours and longer holidays, and general secretary Cyril Ramaphosa has expressed "a clear intention to reach settlement with the Chamber."

The precise meaning of this development is not clear. The NUM is unlikely to budge on its 22% claim, legal strike action in support of which was agreed by an overwhelming majority of the union's members.

The NUM is at present recognised in 29 gold and coal mines, and has up to 150,000 members. The strike is expected to win wide support in unrecognised mines. Victory for the NUM — even more so victory merely from the *threat* of a strike, if the mineowners concede most of the union's demands before August 25 — would undoubtedly draw thousands more into the union's ranks.

The NUM has grown extremely rapidly since its formation in 1982, despite the severe recession in the gold and coal industries, and despite heavy-handed harassment by management, mines and national security forces.

After weeks of painful negotiation, it took legal strike action for the first time last September. Over ten workers were killed, and perhaps a thousand injured in the aftermath. But the strike was largely a success; as the South

## By Clive Bradley

African Labour Bulletin (October-November 1984) reports: "The strike was an important milestone for the NUM who gained membership and credibility from their first major battle with the Chamber of Mines and emerged intact". (p.14).

They also won solidarity from the smaller black consciousness union the Black Allied Mining and Construction Workers' Union.

Numerous other strikes have occurred, often meeting brutal repression. A worker described his experience of the East Driefontein strike in February this year to SALB (May 1985): "[the police] opened fire . . . live bullets, rubber bullets and teargas. Chaos broke out . . . There was smoke all over. It was like a war . . .



Black miners prepare for action.

the majority [of workers] went in the direction of the mountains and started gathering stones . . . regrouping to fight back." (p.118).

In mid-March, the giant Anglo-American Corporation responded to a strike by 17,000 workers by sacking the lot. Eventually negotiations with the NUM resumed.

A strike now by the NUM could threaten to rock not only the Chamber of Mines, but the racist state that stands behind it. Their own unity is precarious: Anglo arrived at a separate deal with the union last year, and threatened to do so again. Pay rises of 14-20% were awarded on July 1. But the Chamber insists it can go no further, especially since the 22% claim would mean much higher increases in practice.

The Chamber and the government are more concerned that the strike would lead to sharp, violent confrontation that would be a test of

strength between apartheid and the mass revolt, in the middle of the State of Emergency. If the NUM wins that test of strength, it will be a major blow to the racist state, and a deep encouragement to the whole of black South Africa.

We must prepare to support the South African miners, who will face clubs and bullets in their struggle for a decent wage and against racism. The NUM has no strike fund: it will be up to the international working class, as well as their South African comrades to help them the best we can.

The miners are in the front line now against apartheid. Their victory would be a blow also to British bosses who make fat profits on the backs of South African workers.

**Victory to the South African miners!**

# Workers of the world unite!