

The socialist case for PR, by Richard Kuper
Centre pages



Socialism and nationalism in South Africa
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For workers' liberty!
For socialist renewal!



Labour and the Gulf
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Greek students revolt
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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home

**DEMONSTRATE
US and Britain
out of the Gulf!**
Saturday 12 January

- London: Hyde Park, noon
- Manchester: All Saints, 12.30
- Glasgow: MoD, Brown St, 10.30

The bloody cost of war

Hundreds of thousands dead

The US has shipped out 100,000 body-bags for the deaths it expects in war.

The British government is clearing NHS hospital beds to accommodate 18,500 British casualties.

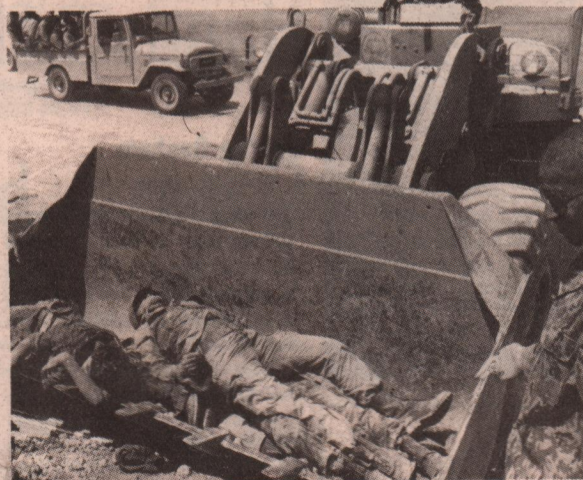
According to Denis Healey, writing in the *Observer* (6 January), "Washington estimates there could be 100,000 Iraqi casualties, mainly civilian."

And probably Iraq, if attacked, will send chemical weapons against Israel. Israel will hit back, possibly with nuclear weapons.

Ecological disaster

War is likely to lead to huge firestorms in Kuwait, as the oil fields burn.

Those firestorms would create devastating



Hundreds of thousands will die: mass burial during the Iran/Iraq war

gales across the region, as oxygen was sucked in to feed the flames. The clouds of soot rising from the fires would cut off the sun from much of the Middle East, ruining crops. They could even change the whole world's climate.

A new economic crash

Throughout the late '80s the leading capitalist

economies expanded on the basis of ballooning credit. Companies have a huge overhang of debt.

An oil price shock could bring the whole dizzy structure of credit crashing down, and push the world economy over the edge on which it is now teetering, into the abyss of trade wars.

A permanent war zone in the Gulf

The US wants permanent military bases in the Gulf. It wants to be sure of controlling the region and controlling Iraq.

The result will be long years of bloody conflict between the US occupying forces and local people — a new Vietnam in the Middle East.

Saddam Hussein must be ousted, and Iraq must be made to withdraw from Kuwait — but by the people of the region, not by an imperialist war which will cause ten times more misery than there is already.

Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

Food shortages continue, unemployment on the rise

USSR: drift to dictatorship

The Soviet Union is in a political and economic disaster area. As Gorbachev sends troops into the Baltic States Mark Osborn looks at the immediate background.

The Congress of People's Deputies meeting from 17-27 December passed a number of proposals demanded

by President Gorbachev, giving him further powers over the central state machine.

During the six week run up to the Congress there was a concerted hard-line campaign against the more pro-market/pro-glasnost reformers. Gorbachev helped or joined in; he appointed the 'conservative' Leonid Krauchenko as head of state television and radio. KGB chief, Vladimir Kryuchov accused unnamed foreign security services of trying to break up the USSR. The Defence Minister Marshal

Dmitri Yazov warned that the army would fire on separatist forces if attacked. And 400 'conservative' deputies threatened Gorbachev with a no-confidence vote at Congress unless concessions were made to them.

Congress was boycotted by some of the 15 republics' more separatist delegates.

Gorbachev's new powers include direct personal control over the government and Security Council — although proposals for a set of local inspectors to help enforce Presidential decrees were defeated

by the Congress.

Congress also saw the resignation of Gorbachev's longstanding advisor, Edward Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze resigned saying this was a "protest against the advance of dictatorship".

Gorbachev had a further blow when his Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov had a heart attack on 25 December. Ryzhkov had taken most of the blame for the dire state of the Soviet economy and had been under pressure for months to resign.

During 1990 the GDP fell by at

least 5%. Unemployment is still rising and there are major food shortages.

The Soviet government is currently considering an IMF and World Bank Report. This report is a critique of government tinkering with the economy; it urges staged privatisation of state industry, the auctioning off of smaller firms. The IMF recognise that the immediate introduction of free trade with the west would drive most Soviet firms bust because Soviet prices are so different from world prices. They propose a tariff wall of 30%.

Campaign launched against Soviet crackdown

By Mark Osborn, secretary, CSWEB

The Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) has launched a campaign against the threat of a military clampdown in the USSR.

CSWEB is circulating the following letter to the Soviet Embassy, which has already been signed by MPs Harry Cohen, Eric Heffer, and Alice Mahon.

"We are writing to express our concern at the increasing threat to liberty in the USSR. We are very concerned about the possibility of a clampdown.

The calls by President Gorbachev and by army and KGB leaders for strong, centralised authority pose a threat to those demanding further democratic changes and to working-class organisations which are pressing for increased rights and better living standards for workers.

We reaffirm our commitment to support those who demand full democratic rights in the USSR (free, directly elected, parliaments; free self-determination; free speech; freedom of association), and full rights for the independent working-class organisations (the right to organise free from state interference, the right to

strike).

We are committed to supporting workers' rights, West and East, and we will continue to make solidarity with the independent working-class organisations in the Soviet Union. As the threat of increased repression grows we will be campaigning in the British labour movement for active opposition to any clampdown in the USSR".

CSWEB is inviting you and your organisation to add your names to the signatories. It is also producing a briefing document on the background to the Soviet crisis, and holding public forums in Glasgow and in London.

Details of the USSR campaign and of two other CSWEB initiatives (raising money for the Socialist Political Centre in Poland, and a forthcoming speaking tour on abortion and lesbian and gay rights by a member of the Independent Women's Federation from the former GDR) are available from the Secretary, CSWEB, 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.

Crisis in the USSR CSWEB public meeting Monday 21 January 7.30 at the Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross, London WC1.



Women supporters of striking Turkish miners on a 150-mile trek to Ankara. Finding their way barred by the security forces, the women sing songs of defiance.

The workers fight back

Beginning of December 1990: 50,000 state-employed miners strike over pay and conditions. The pay claim is for 500%, they have already rejected a 100% offer. They are soon joined by 100,000 steel workers.

26 December: The government bans a general strike called by Turk-is, the largest trade union federation, with 1.5-2 million members.

3 January: Despite the government ban and injunctions under the 1982 Constitution (which outlaws political strikes) the first general strike since the 1980 coup is held. Turk-is hail it a success with a 90% response from their members. Lawyers' and doctors' unions also support the action.

5 January: 50,000 miners prepare for an illegal march in Ankara. Police and troops turn back their 1,000 bus convoy. The miners decide to march the 250km to Ankara but are turned back by troops armed with water cannon.

Strike wave sweeps Turkey

By Matt Cooper

Turkey, tipped to be one of the success economies of the 1990s, is experiencing the biggest strike wave in its history.

This is the first mass working class action since 1980s, when the workers were crushed by a military coup.

Since 1983 the civilian government of the Motherland Party and President Turgut Ozal has continued to increase the economy's international competitiveness by pursuing the anti-working class policies started by the military.

After 10 years of real wage levels being eroded, the inflation rate is currently 60%,

there is popular sentiment for a fightback. The situation is fuelled by disquiet with Turkey's role in the Gulf crisis.

The strike wave was started by the miners and steel workers, but now textile and paper workers, vital to Turkey's export economy, are looking likely to join the strike.

Hands off the T&G!

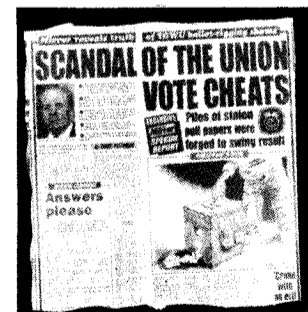
By Jim Denham

Fresh from its witch-hunt against Arthur Scargill and the NUM, Robert Maxwell's Daily Mirror has now turned its attention to the TGWU.

Last Wednesday's Mirror devoted nearly 2 pages to the 'exclusive' on "TGWU ballot-rigging shame". It was a pretty poor 'exclusive', consisting of quotes, allegations and hearsay that have already appeared in other papers.

Ballot-rigging did occur in last year's T&G NEC elections. But as soon as it came to light Ron Todd declared the ballot null and void and ordered a re-run. Todd also ordered an immediate internal investigation into the affair and when, after 6 weeks, this failed to bring the culprit(s) to light, the police were brought in.

Todd has acted impeccably throughout this affair, but the Mirror's story and accompanying editorial is in large part an attack on him and the left majority on the union's NEC. There is, as yet, no reason to believe that



the union's 'Broad Left' was in any way responsible for the

ballot rigging — indeed, some well-informed sources within the union believe that the fraud was so clumsy and obvious that it was intended to be discovered in order to discredit the left.

Both left and right within the TGWU have, in the past been guilty of ballot-rigging: it must be exposed and rooted out. But that is the task of rank and file activists in the union, not union-buster Maxwell's squalid rag. More on the TGWU, page 15.

Cannon St tragedy

It takes an accident, usually a big one, to bring attention to the absence of basic safety measures and dangerous cost cutting: the conclusion is always accidents are not accidents because they are totally avoidable, and anyone who cares to look can see the safety measures that need installing.

The Cannon Street train

disaster which left one dead and 248 injured is just the latest in a long line of tragedies that underline this point. As one railworker told SO. "This is a bit like the Moorgate Underground disaster. There was no mechanism to stop this train if it went on and on. No British Rail Station has a failsafe system which were installed in the tube after Moorgate. Even if the driver can't apply the brakes, they will be applied automatically. This is what we need on British Rail".



THIS WEEK

Troops out!

The man who was British Foreign Secretary when war broke out in 1914, Sir Edward Grey, later used a striking metaphor to describe how war came about.

The great powers did not want to go to war. Nevertheless they did. They were, he wrote, like mountaineers roped together. Once Austria determined to coerce Serbia, the other states, tied by treaty commitments, were dragged into the abyss, each one pulling another after it.

Now too, the powers are reluctant to go to war. Nevertheless, the world may be about to plunge into a war that will bring with it a new series of human, economic and ecological catastrophes.

Bush and Baker are concerned in their last-minute calls for peace to throw completely on to Iraq the blame for the war they intend to launch. They are also responding to real pressures against war. In America now there is tremendous resistance to war among the people and in Congress. Even the ruling class now sees the economic and ecological consequences of war as appalling.

But they have locked themselves into a series of moves and countermoves that lead straight to devastating war. Eager to flex US military muscle at this historic moment when the post-cold-war world is being shaped and defined, President George Bush rushed the US into a war posture that is probably irreversible short of an Iraqi climbdown.

And, like a yapping, belligerent little dog on the heels of its master, Britain's Tory government keeps pace with Bush.

They lock themselves into a corner by their talk, too. The Iraqi regime is indeed a terrible one. Its treatment of the people of Kuwait now — like their treatment of the Kurds when Britain and America were arming and making excuses for Saddam Hussein — is, on the testimony of Amnesty International, such as to earn it the undying hostility of socialists and even liberals everywhere.

But war will devastate, not save, Kuwait. The US "saving" of Kuwait will be the sort of "saving" described by an American general in Vietnam in 1968 after his forces had destroyed a small city: "We had to destroy the city in order to save it". He meant it seriously; and maybe Bush will come to mean it seriously.

The rulers of the West talk

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Newsdesk: 071 639 7965
Latest date for reports: Monday

Editor: John O'Mahony
Published by WL Publications Ltd, PO
Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Printed by Portobello CP

Registered as a newspaper at the
Post Office
Articles do not necessarily reflect the
views of Socialist Organiser and are in
a personal capacity unless otherwise
stated



themselves into a corner, too, with the argument that it must be either war now to destroy the Iraqi army at whatever cost, or else let Iraq develop its own nuclear weapons. It must be apocalypse now or armageddon tomorrow.

It is the same argument as was used in the late '40s and early '50s to advocate a quick Western showdown with Stalin's USSR, a Third World War. The war we are moving towards now will not be World War Three, but it will be immensely costly and destructive.

Socialists need to be clear on what is happening and where we stand.

We are against the war. It is a war for control of oil and strategic position. Otherwise the Western powers

would care as little about Kuwait as they do about the Kurds and the Palestinian Arabs.

Throughout this war we will oppose it by every means open to us. In practice that means we will explain what is happening and why, and help create an organised opposition to this ruling-class war.

Iraq is a brutal regional imperialist power, with a regime which has many features in common with fascism. Iraq should get out of Kuwait! Nevertheless, and despite the nature of the Iraqi regime, socialists and consistent democrats must oppose American, British, or any other attempts to recolonise the Arab states, including Iraq. The people of Kuwait and Iraq must be left to sort out their own affairs.

Reimposition of colonial or semi-colonial domination, and a newly strengthened Western alliance with all the most vile reactionaries in the Arab world, like the feudal rulers of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, is implicit in everything the West has done since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August.

The Americans intend to re-garrison the Gulf. They do not just want to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, but to reduce Iraq to a disarmed, subservient status.

It will be a good day for all the peoples of Iraq when the brutal military regime that oppresses them is smashed and destroyed; but if it is destroyed as part of an imperialist reconquest of the country, and the destruction of Iraqi independence, then that will be no progress. It will

be the beginning of a new cycle of the building-up of Iraqi nationalism and Iraqi militarism.

We are opposed to the conquest of Iraq. We support Iraq's right to defend itself against conquest. At the same time we believe that the Iraqi working class should, despite the war, overthrow the Ba'ath-Army regime of Saddam Hussein. We support the oppressed Kurdish people in their continuing struggle against that regime, war or no war.

If war comes, Iraq will make every effort to turn the Arab allies of the US against Bush by attacking Israel. Israel has every right to defend itself.

But Israel has no right to subjugate — or drive out — the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza. War may lead to a full-scale Arab insurrection in the West Bank and Gaza, in coordination with Iraq — and to a terrible bloodbath. We support the Palestinian Arabs in their struggle to drive Israeli troops out of the West Bank and Gaza.

In the event of war, the central rallying cry in Britain will continue to be: *Troops out of the Gulf!*

We need a real Opposition!

What is worse than having the Thatcher gang — with, or now without, the nasty lady — as the government of Britain?

Having the Kinnock gang as the main opposition! In fact the Tories have been able to do what they have done in the '80s only because Labour's leadership has been such a wretched, timid, uncertain, belly-crawling apology for an opposition.

The Thatcherites have never had the backing of a majority of the electorate. Much that they have done has been and is highly unpopular — the slow death of a thousand bleeding cuts which they continue to impose on the National Health Service, for example. The scope for massive all-out effective opposition was, and is, immense. And look what the Labour leaders have done with it!

They have done as little as any opposition possibly could. They have made war only on the left in the Labour Party, found vigorous words of denunciation only for poll-tax protesters and striking workers like, for example, the

miners.

They go around proclaiming their conversion to most of the principles the Tories claim to act on — except that Kinnock and his friends would like to do things a bit more humanely.

The Russian Tsar and his aristocratically led army retreated before Napoleon Bonaparte's invaders and relied on a "scorched earth" policy to make Russia uninhabitable for the French — whatever the cost to the Russian people. Kinnock and his team have likewise irresponsibly kept their powder dry and retreated, letting Thatcher apply the "scorched earth" policy herself and expecting it to backfire on the Tories. Their "strategy" has been to lie doggo and wait for the Tories to make themselves so unpopular that Labour will win by default.

It didn't work in the 1987 election. And the Tories have now regained ground by dismissing Thatcher.

Labour is recovering in the polls, and the coming months are likely to be very bad for the Tories. But

Labour continues to subsist on passive hopes and great expectations that the Tories will win the election for us.

The Labour leaders don't so much *oppose* the Tories as demur respectfully!

Now much of the Shadow Cabinet is plainly unhappy about the drive to a devastating war in the Gulf in the tank tracks of the Americans, but they don't *dare* come out against the war. They let themselves be bullied by the Tory press, and appear on TV like defensive, inwardly-quaking small boys caught smoking in the lavatory.

It is that way on every question, and has been so for many years. Thatcher may be gone, but her soul goes marching on in Kinnock's Labour Party almost as much as in Major's Tory Party.

The British labour movement should demand that the Labour leaders act as a *real* opposition. Come out against war in the Gulf! Demand the withdrawal of British troops! *Campaign* now for an early general election to drive the Tories from office!

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GRAFFITI

The dangers of thinking clearly

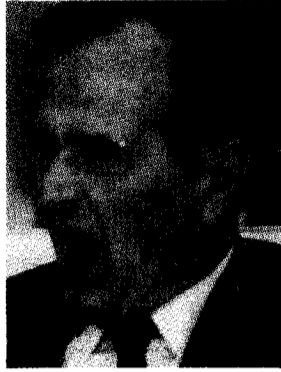
GRAFFITI

With half a million troops in the Gulf, you'd like to think that the leaders of the big powers are reasonably lucid and clear-headed. No such luck. Clear thought, and its companion, clear language, rank very low among the qualities prized in modern capitalist politics. "I'm sure people were impressed", said a US official about John Major on his visit to Washington before Christmas. "He has a way with words. In other words, he completes his sentences. In our politics that puts him in the upper 50% of politicians right there."

Major's sentences, like the official's, were not completed very adroitly. "Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait," he said. "There was no need for him to do that. It was a unilaterally nasty piece of nastiness." But at least Major did not tail off into complete gibberish, as George Bush so often does.

To be suitable for grooming for a "safe", "strong" image — which is what you need for success in modern showbiz politics, the politics of the "image" and the "soundbite" — you do not need to think clearly. Thinking clearly may even be a hindrance, because it can lead you to say things clearly, and that's a problem for your party managers trying to present you as an attractive figure for all classes and all persuasions.

And so we get George Bush and John Major with their fingers on the trigger in the Gulf.



95 businesses collapsed every working day last year. The total of 24,000 was the highest on record, nearly double the figure for 1980, and 35 per cent more than the 1989 total. According to specialists in business collapses, 1991 will be worse. The *Guardian* reports: "Cork Gully, the UK's biggest firm of receivers, predicted in its annual review that at least one of the country's top 100 companies would go bust in the coming year and that unemployment would rise by 500,000 or more."

The receivers themselves are doing a roaring trade. Steve Hill of Cork Gully complained to the *Guardian*: "I even missed our Christmas party because I was working. It's all getting too much."

And such are the ways of capitalism that the receivers are now worried that they will be drawn into "overtrading" — taking on more staff, more overheads, more commitments than they can sustain — and go the same way as their customers when the number of business crashes subsides.

A cushy job with long holidays? No, teaching is the most stressful of all jobs, according to a recent survey reported in the *Independent*. Of 60 teachers from a variety of areas in London, the report found that even after the summer holidays 45 per cent were showing physiological signs of fatigue. "Their body chemistry showed that they began the school year still showing the effects of chronic stress from the previous year."

Of 1800 across the country, 40 per cent were actively trying to leave teaching, 28 per cent were on anti-depressant drugs, 26 per cent were taking sleeping pills, more than 20% were drinking too much, and 20% showed "psycho-neurotic" symptoms.

So much for the government's idea that the national curriculum, increasing testing, new appraisals of teachers, and financial autonomy or "opting out" for schools will improve education rather than making an already ragged system more threadbare still.



A cushy job?

Making a stand for woolly liberalism

Guardian of the peace?

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Why do I dislike the *Guardian* so much? Is it because of the insufferably smug tone of its editorials? Or the embarrassingly self-conscious trendiness of its features? Or the nasty "modern" layout it adopted a few years ago? Or, perhaps, a lingering distaste at editor Peter Preston's craven cowardice over the Sarah Tisdale affair? Anyway, I was an instant convert to the *Independent* when that first appeared and have rarely bought a *Guardian* since.

Until now, that is. Whatever its faults, the *Guardian* has at least dared question the official Anglo-American line on the Gulf. Editorially this hasn't amounted to much more than what the paper itself describes as "calm dissent" (giving sanctions a bit more of a chance, basically). But even this stands out against the rabid blood-lust emanating from the rest of the press — including the Labour supporting *Mirror*.

Telegraph editor Max Hastings recently argued (on a radio programme) that papers should suppress objective reporting during a war, in the "national interest"; the *Sun* is already busy denouncing anyone who questions the war drive, as a "yellowbelly"; the *Star* advocates nuking Iraq. Perhaps most contemptible of all, the *Independent*



No more racist murders!

Last month there was a short memorial ceremony to mark the first anniversary of the racist murder of Tasleem Akhtar in Birmingham. It took place in Esme Street, by the alleyway

where she was murdered. The alleyway has since been sealed off, and the family and supporters, with the local community, are trying to get the street named after Tasleem. For more details contact the Tasleem Akhtar Memorial Committee at 021-708 1517. Photo: Mark Salmon.

Sunday admitted that a war would have nothing to do with defending "democracy" or the rights of little nations like Kuwait, but would be all about oil — and then went on to support a war on that basis.

Against this background the *Guardian's* woolly liberalism seems quite civilised. And the paper has given prominence to two outspoken anti-war articles — one by the long-standing leftist John Pilger (January 7) and the other by maverick right-winger Edward Pearce (January 2). Both are well worth reading and Pearce even dared to condemn the UN as a "meaningless wind band", a description that cuts right across the *Guardian's* editorial line.

John Pilger, meanwhile, recalled Lloyd George's words to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, CP Scott, during the First World

War: "if people really knew, the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don't know and they can't know." Pilger predicts something quite similar to WWI — "an inferno of which there was little public comprehension or warning [because of] the theatrical distortions and lies of the war-lords and their mouthpieces in the press." All credit to the *Guardian* for publishing these words: they have won back at least one reader.

How gratifying to see our charismatic new PM award Peregrine Worsthorne a gong in the New Year's Honours List. This is obviously a dramatic illustration of Mr Major's commitment to a classless Britain. Perry (as we all call him) has long been at the sharp end of the cam-

paign of classlessness: his *Sunday Telegraph* editorials are a shining beacon of egalitarian thinking, his Garrick Club headquarters renowned as a bastion of the new Britain as personified by Sir Perry and his circle of fellow progressives such as Auberon Waugh and Geoffrey Wheatcroft.

Mrs Thatcher, of course, dished out knighthoods to quite a few journalists: Larry Lamb of the *Sun*, David English of the *Mail*, John Junor and (in her resignation honours) Nicholas Lloyd of the *Express* and Brian Hitchen of the *Star*. But there was always the (no doubt unworthy) suspicion that these knighthoods were given more in recognition of loyal grovelling than for any worthwhile contribution to journalism. No such suggestion could possibly be made in the case of Sir Perry, of course.

A too real world

WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

At the beginning of May 1931 a young woman called Starr Faithfull either committed suicide or was murdered at Long Beach, New York state. Starr certainly intended to kill herself, but it may be that she was murdered before she could.

The story is tragic, and timely. I came across it in an

old book over Xmas. Starr was the victim of sexual abuse from an early age, and the abuser was alleged to have been a friend of her family, and a respectable man of apparently good standing. It was also alleged that the family accepted a large payout to keep quiet about the abuse, and then spent the money, partly on therapy for Starr, but mostly on keeping itself comfortable without the necessity of work.

At the time of the murder, or suicide, Starr was an attractive young woman who had visited Europe twice, with good clothes, and the world, technically at her feet. She was intelligent, and articulate, well-read and well-educated. But she was also highly neurotic, had a drink problem and was addicted to sleeping tablets and anti-depressants. She suffered from depression and an unrequited passion for a ship's doctor, to whom she wrote her final letters, outlining her

plan to kill herself. Starr's situation, the mixture of opportunity, and its lack when the money ran out, as it apparently had at the time of her death, coupled with her depression, was not unique. Nor was the mixture of sexual knowledge with self-loathing, and sexual insecurity. She wrote to the ship's doctor: "It's a great life when one has 24 hours to live. I can be rude to people. I can tell them that they are too fat or that I don't like their clothes and I don't have to dread being a lonely old woman, or poverty, obscurity or boredom."

She also wrote that she could eat a huge meal without guilt, attract men in the street without worrying about the consequences, and drink for pleasure. She could, and did, write to the man who had rejected her of her love for him, in the knowledge that although she would not see him again it would not matter, she would not suffer

it. Starr Faithfull's tragedy was that she would not overcome her own emotions. Every feeling assumed monstrous proportions. The world and its people and things were so strongly impressed upon her that she could not control her reactions to them. She was only able to put them in proportion by imposing a time limit upon her existence.

It happens. It happens at Oxford and Cambridge, to the daughters of the rich and famous, and to teenagers for whom the world is too real, too intense and too cruel to cope with. Life can be overpowering, even without the horrors of Starr Faithfull's experiences. But possibly the alternative is endless Neighbours and McDonalds.

Life has no "meaning" in and of itself, but it is possible to give it meaning, not by avoiding its horrors, but by struggling to make it something better.

Joint Arab/Jewish peace protest

Israeli left calls for peace

Adam Keller and Beate Kiezer report from Tel Aviv

A big section of the Israeli movement "Peace Now" has organised a protest for 12 January jointly with the Arab Mayors' Committee, the leadership of the Arabs in pre-1967 Israel.

It is the first ever such joint action. The intention is to have

thousands of Jews and Arabs making a living chain along a main road in the northern Triangle area, an Arab area inside the 1967 borders, to demonstrate for peace between Jews and Arabs and against the recent violence.

The action is linked to the Gulf crisis by its date — three days before the deadline — and two days ago, the Arab Mayors' Committee and "Peace Now" sent a joint telegram to prime minister Shamir calling on him to make an Israeli initiative for peace with the Palestinians.

The right wing of "Peace Now" supports the Americans in the Gulf, but the more radical groups are becoming more active.

Yesterday there was a meeting at Tel Aviv university initiated by some professors there who have published a manifesto on the Gulf. They are starting widespread petitioning, and plan demonstrations at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv and the American Consulate in Jerusalem on 14 January. On 15 January there will be an all-night

meeting at the Mapam Hall in Tel Aviv.

They are demanding Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. This is the most relevant demand for Israelis to make. "Don't start a war" is mainly a demand on the Americans. Withdrawal from the occupied territories is a demand on our own government.

Establishment figures are publicly debating what response Israel should make

to an Iraqi attack.

It is accepted now by the Israeli Establishment that Israeli will not make a pre-emptive strike. And a growing number of Establishment figures are saying that Israel should be careful in its response even if Iraq attacks. Yitzhak Rabin has spoken in that way.

The Americans are very concerned about Israel entering the war, because it could break the anti-Iraq coalition into pieces. Yesterday President Mubarak of Egypt said that if Israel enters a Gulf war it could change Egypt's attitude towards the anti-Iraq coalition.

Yasser Arafat's comment in Baghdad, that in the event of war the Palestinians would fight alongside Iraq, has made arguing for negotiations with the PLO a little bit harder.

But we have been over the arguments before, in the first months of the Gulf crisis. We concluded that we should continue the dialogue with the Palestinians even when we do not agree with them. That consensus will stand.

If there is a war, I expect there will be an intensification of the intifada, more clashes with the Israeli army in the occupied territories, and more attacks on individuals. It will not be like 1973 or 1982, when the Arab population were quiet during the war.

There have been several pro-Iraq demonstrations in the occupied territories. The united leadership of the intifada has called a general strike for 15 January, and an Arab nationalist organisation in Galilee has called a pro-Iraq demonstration for 11 January.

None of the Palestinians in the occupied territories have gas masks — and neither have the Jewish settlers. The government could not justify giving Jewish settlers gas masks and leaving the Palestinians without.

A few days ago I was interrogated by the police about the Campaign Against War in the Gulf conference in London on 3 November, where I spoke with a representative of the PLO.

A complaint had been lodged by an extreme right Knesset member [MP], Elyakim Haetzni. I have been released on bail. I may go to trial: it depends how much political pressure is applied by the right wing.

The judicial system is not very keen to enforce the law against contacts with the PLO. The Supreme Court is still to decide on the appeal on the first case brought under this law. One man has gone to jail for meeting Yasser Arafat, but he did not appeal.

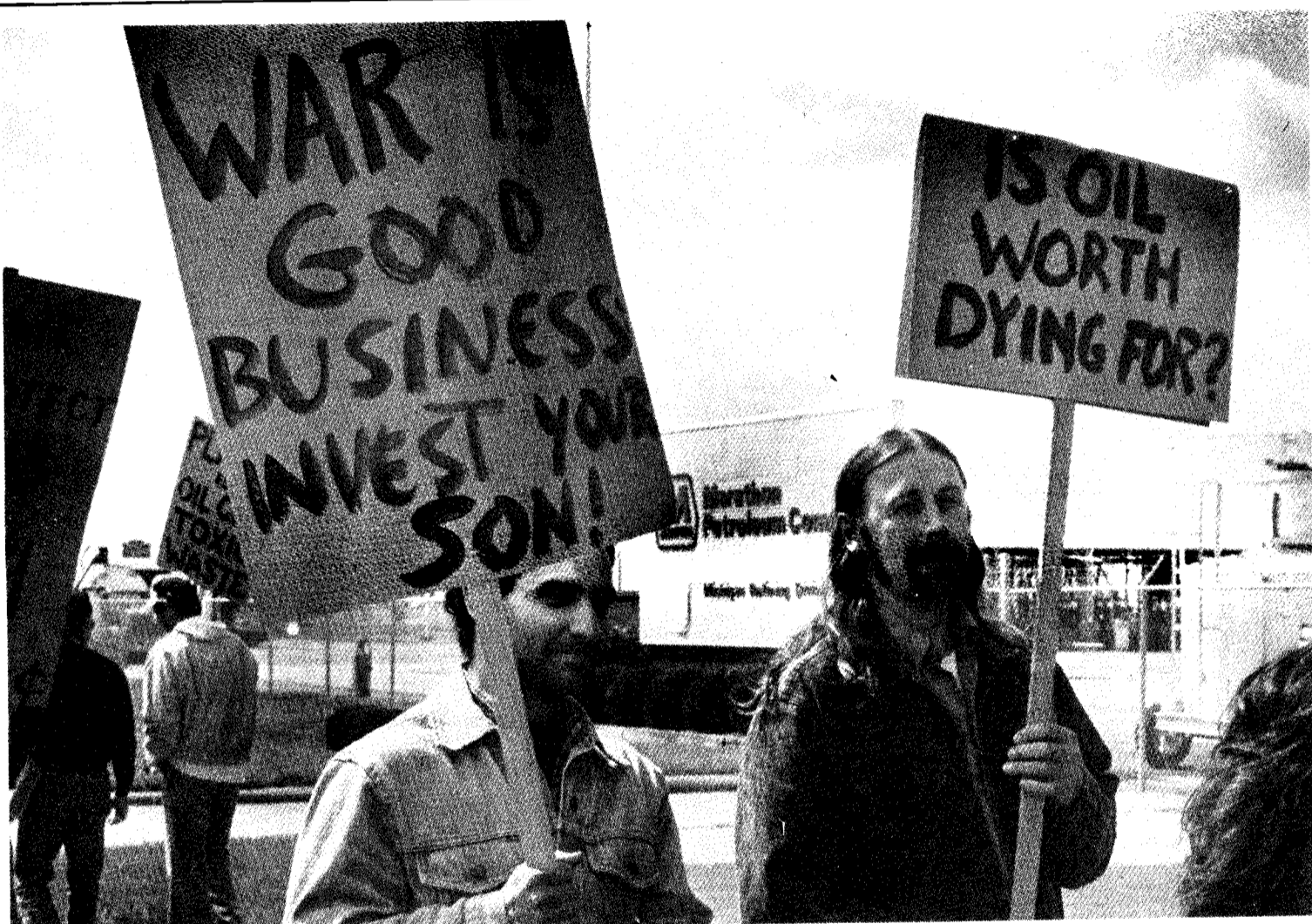
15 January is the deadline not only in the Gulf but also for the conflict between the Histadrut and the Government.

There was a two-day general strike in November over government proposals to cut the minimum wage and create worse conditions for pension funds. It was originally intended to be a total general strike, but the industrialists got an injunction against the Histadrut.

The result of that strike was that the government gave in over pension funds. The minimum wage issue was to be negotiated; but if agreement is not reached by 15 January then the Finance Minister will present the original proposals to the Knesset [parliament] again.

The Gulf situation has now created a smokescreen for the Histadrut to evade further action.

9 January 1991.



"Americans are getting more vocal and organised in their opposition to war"

Americans rally against war in the Gulf

By Liz Millward

As SO goes to press, a candlelight vigil against war in the Gulf is being held right across America, in all the major towns and cities. It is probable that the vigil will get favourable coverage from the press.

From the East Coast establishment to Black community groups, via the families and friends of servicemen and women, Americans are getting more vocal and organised in their opposition to war.

Recently a group of congressmen from both parties demanded and almost got a High Court injunction against the President, stopping him from a formal declaration of war. The judge said that the injunction would almost certainly be granted "nearer the time".

Leaders of both the Democrat majority and the Republican minority groups in the Senate have joined forces to declare that George Bush is acting illegally in proclaiming the necessity for war without first exhausting diplomatic channels. Even a leading American general has said publicly that the

troops will not be ready by the 15th, and that it would be madness to fight! It seems that the only people supporting Bush are the people he pays to tell him he's doing the right thing!

Over \$30 billion have so far been spent without a shot being fired. A coalition of government workers has been formed to protest against the money being spent in this way.

"Millions of Americans are convinced that the war is about oil. What they are not convinced of is the need to go to war"

These are the people who lost jobs, pay and hours 3 months ago when the government could not reach agreement on a budget — a budget based on cuts and more cuts. If the money is available for war, say American workers, why isn't it available for jobs, housing or

welfare programmes?

Other peace groups are based on the many churches, who don't seem to have the British churches less than literal understanding of "Thou shalt not kill". Yet other groups are organising on the basis that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait is nothing to do with the USA and American troops should therefore be recalled. This last group, and others, including black and working class organisations, are pointing out that the men and women who will die for the American Dream are not from the sections of society likely to benefit from it.

Millions of Americans are convinced that the war is about oil. What they are not convinced of is the need to go to war over it. The American Arab community holds no brief for the Kuwaiti Royal family, and increasing amounts of press coverage of the Palestinian plight serves only to point out to ordinary Americans that the issues are more complicated than George Bush would have them believe.

Media coverage of the Middle East has generally portrayed American interests as allied with the Israelis. Recent coverage has focused on the Palestinians, showing them not as pathetic refugees, and

violent, unshaven terrorists, but as a nation with a legitimate grievance. Such coverage (which has tended to push the Jewish lobby into support for the anti-war movement) has served to reinforce the view that America has no business sending troops to the Gulf.

It is worth remembering that although the American media is as subservient to big business as it is in Britain, there is a free press in the sense of genuine freedom of information. That freedom is being exercised now. There is a proliferation of discussion programmes on TV, all of which have sought to explain some of the political issues in the Middle East from a less US-centric viewpoint. Information, like the cost of war, which would be classified here is reaching the public.

It seems that the American public, particularly those who will lose most if war is declared, are not prepared to be conned into a war for "American interests" when it is becoming clear that "American interests" are not in the interest of the majority of Americans. It also seems that the American public is finding out that the Middle East does not simply consist of Israel and oil wells.

Fighting for union recognition

Support the Taylor and Francis strikers

By Stephen Holt, Taylor and Francis striker

The National Union of Journalists' strike at the London office of Taylor and Francis scientific publisher has now entered its sixth week. The strikers are demanding reinstatement of sacked editors, recognition of the union and bargaining rights.

The strike began on 30 November last year after management told seven of the twelve staff working on journal production that they were being made 'redundant'. The sacked editors were told to leave the building within an hour and were given only the legal minimum pay-off of one month's wages.

The five remaining were expected to do all the work previously done by 12, on the production of academic (mostly scientific and educational) journals. Management claims that the work done by the seven sacked editors could be sent out to freelance workers — but in reality nearly all the work that could

possibly be sent to freelancers already was, so that the bulk of the work of all 12 editors consisted mainly of administering freelance work. This 'reorganisation' would amount to a doubling of an already high workload for the remaining staff.

Why have management done this?

We believe that the sackings are mainly motivated by a desire to break the NUJ chapel. Since August 1990 the union has been seeking recognition at Taylor and Francis, having recruited 12 of the 14 NUJ-eligible workers (the other two being commissioning editors — one of whom has recently been promoted to a minor management position).

Management reacted with great hostility on being told that an NUJ chapel had been formed, and our FoC, Andy Smith, was disciplined for 'serious misconduct' for sending union recruitment letters to the Taylor and Francis staff employed at the Basingstoke site.

Progress of the strike

Three of the five remaining

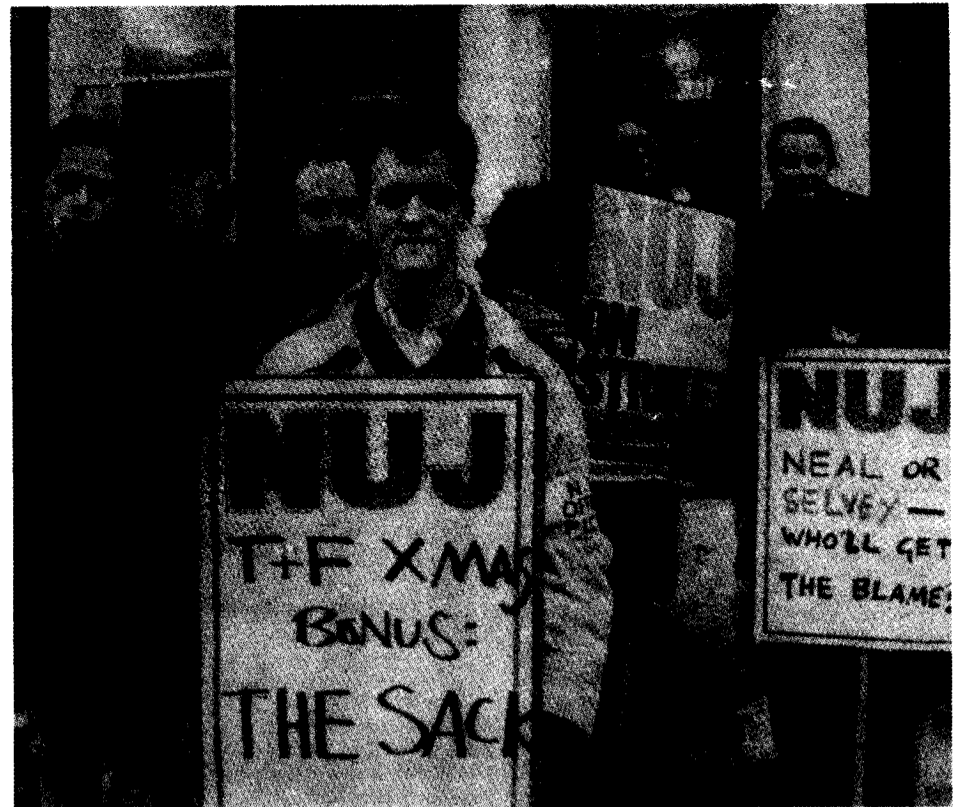
staff have shown solidarity by joining their sacked comrades on strike; these three have also been sacked. The strike has been made official by the NUJ and has received support from other branches of the NUJ, and other trade union branches.

We have been very successful in persuading freelance workers to withdraw their labour from Taylor and Francis, and are confident that production of most of the journals has been stopped or slowed down.

The two senior managers have sunk to the level of bringing in their wives and daughters to try to cope with the work — perhaps this explains what management meant by saying that we didn't need a union because the company was 'a small family business'.

We are calling on academics, students, librarians and workers in research labs to boycott all Taylor and Francis journals and books until the dispute is settled, and are confident of our ability to hit the profits of the lucrative journals publishing division of Taylor and Francis.

Background to the dispute



Taylor and Francis strikers

The sackings at Taylor and Francis come at a time of massive cuts in staffing throughout academic publishing, coupled with a bosses' offensive to de-recognise the NUJ across all sectors of publishing, replacing union staff by casualised labour working on short-term contracts or from home.

The NUJ is financially weak, but a greater problem has been the reluctance of union members to use their collective strength to take on management by fighting

to retain basic union rights and hence bearable working conditions.

Join the mass picket!

As with the Pergamon strike against Maxwell, our fight is for the right to work, to organise and to have union recognition as a basic right for all workers. We call on fellow trade unionists, students and other comrades to show solidarity by joining us on our mass picket of the Taylor and Francis London office.

Mass Picket

Wednesday 16 January
12.00-2.00

4 John Street, Holborn
London WC1N 2ET

Speakers include:
Emma Colyer (NUS)
Pergamon Strikers

Strike office phone:
071 278 7916 ext 229

School students all over Greece are occupying their schools in protest at government plans for education.

As the first term of the school year drew to a close just before Christmas, 2,000 secondary schools had been occupied by their students and demonstrations had taken place up and down the country.

School students were incensed by a government decree on school discipline, introducing a 'points system' of penalising students for bad behaviour. Students were not entitled to know when they were having points added to their record, or how many points.

Teachers were also required to monitor students' behaviour outside school. And a student who missed even a single lesson without a suitable explanation from parents or a doctor would have to repeat the whole school year.

The decree reduced the size of the school council from 15 members directly elected by the whole school to 5 members drawn from the class presidents.

The decree also reintroduced religious services, the raising and lowering of the Greek flag at the beginning and end of each week and, where staff and parents agreed, the return of school uniforms.

A week before Christmas the government made its first concession to the school students. The Prime Ministerial Decree was suspended for the rest of the school year.

In the New Year the government plans to introduce an Education Bill. The exact contents of the Bill are not known yet but the government is determined to legalise private schools and universities currently banned under the constitution. This will provide an opportunity for school students to unite with parents and teachers and fight for an education system that meets their needs.



Greek school students speak out

2,000 schools occupied in Greece

Before Christmas, two 16 year old school students, Irene and Artemi, spoke to Socialist Organiser

The occupations are about what school students want, not about political parties.

School students have made their demands without the political parties. The occupations have nothing to do with the political parties.

Artemi: The opposition parties wanted to help us with the occupation but we didn't accept their help because we knew that they would criticise us. So we rejected their offers of help. It isn't true that we

are being pushed by the political parties. We also reject claims that the occupations are being used for drugs and sex. We told them that if they want to be sure they can come to our schools and stay the night. They will see that nothing like that is happening.

Irene: In some schools people came and threw drugs over the wall and when the parents saw the drugs they accused us of taking drugs. But these people are trying to slander us. I think some of them are being paid to do this.

Artemi: We want a new education system.

Irene: But not the one this government is going to propose.

Artemi: When we started the occupations the government told us that they couldn't do anything because they had money problems. Now they can see they are in a difficult position they say "We have some money" and they tell us they are going to give us computers, like a sweet you give to a little child to keep it quiet.

Irene: The measures this government are proposing were in force when my parents and grandparents were at school. Then things improved, but now the government wants to go back to the past. During the elections, this government's slogan was "New Ideas" and "Steps towards the future".

That's, what we want. My

school occupation banner says "Steps towards the future, not leaps back to the past."

The government has agreed to suspend its new measures until next September. Why do you think you have won this concession when the trade unions have been unable to win any concessions on wages, pensions and anti-union laws even after three week-long strikes?

Artemi: I think they are afraid that they will lose popularity.

Irene: When the teachers struck the government told them that they would not be paid and they would have to spend the summer in the schools. But they can't do anything to us. They can't

scare us. They can't cut our wages. All they can do is extend the school year into the summer holidays. So what? Nobody else has occupied the schools like we have.

Artemi: They can't send in the police because the parents, whether they support the government or not, would protest.

Irene: In Athens they sent the riot police against a school students' demonstration. I think that was a very bad move. The parents remember the military junta, the Polytechnic, the events of 1973-4.

Irene: The government is afraid of uniting parents and school students against them. It's the worst thing that could happen to them.

Artemi: I think the government is also worried about the picture it is giving abroad. They are trying to improve relations with America and countries in Europe, so they can't have a war with school students.

Irene: I must say that I don't think the government are going to open a dialogue. You can see on TV and in the papers that they are unable to discuss. They don't really want a dialogue.

Artemi: Some people say there is no point in keeping the occupations over Christmas. I disagree. If people see that we are spending our holidays in the occupation they will know that we aren't doing it just for fun or to miss lessons.

Irene: The third year students who will be taking university entrance exams in the summer are a problem. They are beginning to complain to us. We are facing a lot of pressure from the government, some teachers, parents and students. We are all very tired. I think we should stop for the holidays and start again next term. We must carry on until the future of the Education Bill is decided. And we won't accept the postponement of the new measures until September. They must go.

Student conference votes to organise sixth forms

By Janine Booth

Thousands of 16 to 18 year olds who up to now have been blatantly ignored by the National Union of Students, are now able to get involved in NUS.

NUS's winter conference in December 1990 voted to allow the affiliation of sixth forms in schools. With over 2,700 such sixth forms, the strength and size of NUS can be increased quite dramatically.

Steve Mitchell, NUS Vice-President Further Education Union Development, proposed the motion, stressing the importance of involving young people in NUS. The dominant Kinnockite Labour Students faction in NUS half-heartedly supported Steve's proposals at conference, but their true opinion was made clear at a recent National Executive meeting when Lorna Fitzsimmons, Vice President Education, said: "We can't afford to let any more sixth forms or Further Education colleges affiliate to NUS".

The Left Unity fringe meeting at conference to discuss the imminent Gulf War had over a hundred activists attending. The meeting agreed to set up "No to war" groups all over the country, and condemned the National Executive for its lack of activity.

The left won sound policy on fighting racism and fascism, including opposition to all immigration controls, and blocked the right-wing alliance between the Organisa-

tion of Non-Aligned Executives and the National Organisation of Labour Students leadership on the issue of "reform of NUS".

As the conference unfolded, it became clear that the National Organisation of Labour Students faction which leads NUS was frightened.

Faced with the successes of Left Unity at this and the previous conference, they reacted in an undemocratic and dishonest way, sharpening their talents as carvers and witch-hunters extraordinaires. Without a shadow of doubt, NOLS are in a deeper crisis than at any time since they took control of NUS in 1982.

In reality they don't really control NUS at all, in the sense of being able to do anything positive. All they can do is hold on to power, defend their careers, and try to keep student opposition to the failings of a future Labour government to a minimum.

What's the solution? Certainly not just to complain about the leadership in a general propagandist way, and then line up with them every time the crunch comes. Yet that's the approach of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP).

The majority of the Labour Party members at conference were sickened by NOLS's carving and witch-hunting.

The SWP, on the other hand, didn't mind it. NOLS, *Militant*, and the SWP latched together to at-



Free the Birmingham Six!

Above: supporters of the Birmingham Six stage a pre-Christmas vigil to demand the release of the six men wrongly jailed for the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974.

The Devon and Cornwall police inquiry into their case is due to be completed by the end of January, and following a preliminary

hearing in early February the full Appeal is due to start on 25 February. The prosecution has already announced that it is abandoning as unsound the forensic evidence on which the original convictions were based.

Vigils were also held on Saturday 5 January at several cathedrals across the country. Photo: Mark Salmon.

tack Left Unity.

Before conference started, a gay Left Unity supporter was attacked in a Blackpool hotel bar in a manner which he considered homophobic. The delegate who caused the incident was a supporter of *Militant*.

The gay man who was attacked took his complaint to the conference Disputes Committee. Meanwhile *Militant* prepared their "defence". They invented a story about two

other Left Unity supporters — LU organiser Jill Mountford and NUS national secretary Emma Colyer — making insulting remarks about the *Militant* supporter's disability.

They did not take this through the regular disputes procedure. Instead, with the help of NOLS, they raised it in full conference on the last morning. Those accused got no hearing, no adequate right to reply. There was no evidence, not even a notification of the charges. The accusations were simply stated as facts, and hysteria was whipped up.

NUS president Stephen Twigg unilaterally expelled Jill Mountford from conference, and Emma Colyer was condemned by an indicative vote that was a mockery of any sort of justice. The whole spectacle was a kangaroo court staged for factional purposes by all those opposed to Left Unity.

It was not the only time that NOLS tried to manipulate the conference. The chairs of Conference, all NOLS full-time National Executive members, on no less than

five separate occasions attempted to give chair's rulings on how votes had gone, only to be shown wrong by counts following challenges from the floor.

We need to build a genuine democratic rank and file movement to call the NUS leaders to account and replace them where necessary.

And, most important, we need to tie that work to organising action on the ground where the National Executive won't.

Left Unity has consistently fought for and attempted to build the sort of students' union that can take on the real enemy, the Tories — the sort of union that delivers for its members. The fact that *Militant* and the SWP put their petty factional concerns before building a genuine rank and file movement helps NOLS hold on to the National Union — and rank and file students pay dearly for it.

Join the Club!

The winner of the £100 prize in the January draw from our "200 Club" is Ron Strong, of Leeds.

The way the "Club" works is that friends and supporters of the paper agree to make a regular donation towards its costs — say £5 a month — and each month we do a draw and pay part of the "Club" income as a prize to the winner.

New contributors to the "Club" enable us to make progress towards our £25,000 fund target for sustaining the expanded 16-page *Socialist Organiser*. Each £5 monthly contribution to the "Club" is equivalent to about £150 towards the £25,000 target, because it enables us to cover interest payments on a loan.

The latest "Club" contributors, plus £35 from a raffle at a London SO supporters' social and £25

from a reader in Nottingham, bring our total so far to £13,522.

It's more and more urgent to move quickly towards the full £25,000, because we already have the extra costs now. Each issue of SO in the new format — with 16 pages and with heavier paper — costs 50 per cent more to produce than the old format. Overheads have also increased.

Donations to, and "200 Club" forms from, SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Doctors get militant

By a junior doctor

The issue of junior doctors' hours of work and what is to be done about them had another muted outing recently. Overshadowed by the Tory leadership battle and the Gulf crisis, it didn't get much coverage.

The average working week of a junior doctor is still 85 hours a week. On-call time is paid at one third of the daytime rate (that's £2.50/hour for a house officer) and it is usual for juniors to be on-call for 80 hours at a time. The fight is about reducing hours to an average of 72 per week; twice the length of the standard week of many workers.

This latest attempt to force the government to recognise the crisis in morale and increasing dissatisfaction about hours of work was precipitated by the results of a survey of the 80% of junior doctors in the country which the Hospital

Junior Staff Committee (HJSC) of the BMA claims to represent.

The opinion poll asked doctors whether they would be prepared to take part in any form of industrial action and presented a list of possible forms of action.

Predictably, only 50% of juniors returned the questionnaire, despite the fact that a pre-paid addressed envelope was included. Nevertheless, the response rate was higher than the usual 12-15% usually achieved in surveys. 94% of the respondents agreed that some form of industrial action was necessary, the majority restricting themselves to the non-militant suggestions. More surprisingly, nearly half said that they would be prepared to provide an emergency services only and 15% said they would withdraw their labour entirely. The chair of the HJSC described this trend as "worryingly high".

On the contrary, this represents an encouraging sign that a traditionally non-militant professional group, which was previously rejected-calls even to discuss strike action, is finally realising that the government's supposed commit-

ment to reducing hours of work is a sham. The moral blackmail waged on doctors to prevent them from taking any effective action is no longer working.

Of course, this matter cannot be separated from the general crisis in underfunding and privatisation of the NHS, but there are other issues at stake. Consultants would have to play a larger role in direct patient care; radical alternatives to the present system of on-call hours, such as shiftwork, must be addressed; extra support staff will be needed to take on non-clinical tasks; and the ridiculous notion that a junior doctor will receive insufficient training if he or she works less than 90 hours a week must be opposed. All of these considerations challenge the conservatism of the profession.

Doctors often see themselves in isolation from other hospital workers. They must learn to fight together with all health workers and ancillary staff to improve patient care, whether it is by taking action to reduce hours of work, opposing ward closures or supporting the claims of other NHS workers for better pay and conditions.

Getting across the message on the Gulf

The demonstrations this weekend against war in the

Gulf will be a major focus for SO sellers.

Subscribe to Socialist Organiser!

£25 for a year;

£13 for six months;

£5 for ten issues.

Send cheques, payable to SO, to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Name

Address

Overseas rates (for a year): Europe £30, US \$90, Australia A\$120. Giro account number: 367 9624.

SO is the only socialist newspaper arguing for US and British troops out of the Gulf, and Iraq out of Kuwait; it's important to get our message across as widely as possible.

Street sales, pub sales, workplace and college sales, and sales at labour movement meetings, are restarting this week after the Christmas/New Year break. Friday evening sales have often been specially productive with the new-format paper. Sheffield supporters report that a Friday evening sale shifted 14 papers in three quarters of an hour, while their previous Saturday street sales had shifted only two or three.

The Christmas mail brought us a spate of new subscriptions and early renewals, as readers took advantage of our offer of cheap sub rates before 31 December. The offer is now closed, but even the new increased rates are a bargain — 48 issues for £25, i.e. effectively, post free.

Richard Kuper continues the debate on PR:

Who's afraid of democracy?

Richard Kuper continues the debate with a reply to Vladimir Derer

For much of the eighties the Tories were unstoppable. Yet their policies on a broad range of issues of vital significance to the labour and social movements have never enjoyed popular support.

A fundamental revulsion at the injustice of the poll tax was the key factor in forcing the Tories to ditch Thatcher. A stubborn collectivism continues to express itself in defence of the National Health Service.

The Tory programme of the 1980s was implemented by a party which had an unassailable majority in the House of Commons yet never achieved even 43 per cent of the popular vote.

Under no electoral system used anywhere in the world, other than first-past-the-post or one of its variants (second ballot, alternative vote) would such a result have been possible. We have to ask ourselves why we put up with it, indeed why some on the left, like Vladimir



Derer (*Socialist Organiser* 468), justify and applaud it.

One argument is that we need a Labour government at any price. The bourgeois state, in its stupidity, has allowed a system to survive which can give majority government on a minority of the vote. Let us take advantage of the possibilities this opens up and not worry too much about the lack of democracy. After all, "they" don't.

True, "they" don't, whether in Britain or in Chile. But socialists can ill afford such a cavalier attitude towards democracy.

There are at least two reasons for this. First, because socialism

without democracy is simply a contradiction in terms, in theory and in reality, as developments in eastern Europe have proved so powerfully in recent years.

And second, the left is seen as particularly weak in its commitment to democracy. Whatever the protests of individuals and groups against the barbarities of Stalinism, the very language of socialism was debased by it. Whatever our commitment to participatory democracy and workers' control, "actually existing socialism" in Britain was experienced as bureaucratic and paternalistic.

If we wish to build popular support for our project and win over some of those forces which might otherwise oppose us, we can't be too careful about being seen to be clean in our commitment to democracy. Yet in Britain we tolerate a system which functions on the negation of a principle so elementary as "one person, one vote, one value".

Some on the left accept this cynically, saying it's only Greens or Democrats who suffer.

That isn't even true, as 1.5 million Labour voters in East Anglia, the South West, and the South outside London, who together can rustle up two Labour MPs for their pains, are only too well aware. (The same number of votes in Scotland produces 49 Labour MPs).

Others accept that there are injustices in the present system but argue, nonetheless, our concern shouldn't be with mere arithmetical "fairness", but with real accountability. First-past-the-post gives us this, so it is said, with individual MPs accountable to a clearly defined electorate.

There is some limited truth in this but we need to be realistic. Who is the MP responsible to? In reality, to activists in the winning party; and, by and large, only to the extent that their wishes do not clash with the party programme. The more we insist — rightly — on the programme and on conference being sovereign, the less the reality of the individual MP's responsibility to the constituency can be.

The counterpart to this limited accountability is that a majority of



A Labour government at any price?

voters have no local MP from their own party. Who represents the interests of the unemployed worker in Tebbit's Chingford, or the poll tax resister in Thatcher's Finchley? And as a Labour vote in Gerald Kaufman's constituency, for example, who represents your anti-Gulf-war sentiment?

In reality Tony Benn does, elected, as it happens, for Chesterfield. But it needn't have happened like that, for nothing in the selection or electoral system guarantees a democratic distribution of left-wing MPs in proportion to left opinion in the Labour Party or in the country as a whole.

Indeed we rely on a version of the hidden hand, operating in the political marketplace, to produce a "fair" political representation. It works no better in politics than it does in the market place.

Vladimir Derer's argument is based on subordinating all concerns to a clear, but implausible, strategy for achieving socialism.

The essential "preliminary step" is to elect a Labour government, and he believes it doesn't much matter how we get it. Once it starts implementing its radical programme, it will arouse extra-parliamentary opposition from those who want to preserve the status quo. This, in turn, will be unacceptable to the vast majority of the population, who can then be mobilised behind the "legally elected government".

Experience is against such a scenario. The effect of capitalist opposition to the 1964-66 and 1974 Labour governments was not to radicalise them. Quite the reverse. Nor do European systems (where, contrary to disinformation, PR systems have produced majority social-democratic governments in Sweden, Austria and Spain, for example) suggest this as a likely course

of development.

No doubt I'll be told that what has been missing to date is the "reforming" element of the "reforming Labour government". The current Labour Party programme doesn't convince me that things are about to change. Nor is this accidental.

What Vladimir Derer ignores is how the first-past-the-post system has been a major factor in squeezing the left, undermining the likelihood of ever getting a left Labour government.

The pressure to capture the centre ground, not to "rock the boat",

"Quite simply what socialists need is the ability to organise independently of the electoral rhythms which obsess the Labour Party."

is intense, as we have seen in recent years. And the ability of the leadership to take the left for granted depends on the fact that it has nowhere else to go. Who believes, for instance, that Labour could so cavalierly have abandoned unilateralism had there been a credible alternative party able to take up the baton?

Labour leans leftward when there are socialist forces active in the wider society — in the trade unions, in the peace movement, in the women's movement and elsewhere. The stronger these forces, the more



Why do we put up with this undemocratic system?

Greenhouse gases

Half seas over

Les Hearn's



SCIENCE COLUMN

Other gases, such as methane, are present in smaller but increasing amounts. They have a disproportionate effect on global warming. Ince then looks at the evidence for global warming which he finds inconclusive but suggestive. Weather records show surface temperatures to have a gradual rising trend, giving a mean increase of about 0.5°C (1°F) since 1860.

He points out that this may be partly due to variations in the Sun's energy output, thought responsible for the "little ice age" of the 18th century. On balance, climatologists agree that greenhouse gas levels are having an increasing effect on top of that caused by changes in solar energy.

So how is the level of the sea affected by global warming? Firstly, water simply expands as it gets warmer. Further increases in the volume of the oceans come from melting of glaciers and of the Greenland and Antarctic ice-sheets. Perhaps surprisingly, melting of the Arctic ice-sheet would have no effect since this is just floating, displacing its own weight of water.

Paradoxically, some changes may lead to a decrease in the oceans' level. Loss of heavy ice layers will allow the land to rise, while increased evaporation from warmer water will lead to greater snow falls over mountains and other cold regions.

So much for theoretical uncertainty but is the sea rising and, if so, is this due to global warming? The answers appear to be "Yes, though slowly at present" and "Don't know"! However, it is generally agreed that future rises will be greater than the 20cm over the last 50 years and will be mainly due to global warming.

The effect this will have will be to increase pressure on fragile coastal eco-systems, such as mangrove swamps, barrier islands and coral reefs. Many of these protect regions important for subsistence. Ince details the problems in a series of case studies from the First, Second and Third Worlds.

The devastating floods seen by Bangladesh will be more common and widespread. Areas like the Nile delta, Venice, Hamburg, the Gambia, parts of North Carolina, East Anglia, etc., will be under greater threat. Agriculture and industry near the coast will run an increased risk of serious harm.

Small island nations in tropical regions will be in even more danger. Many, particularly in the Pacific, are based on coral, a rock produced by living organisms which may in any case be harmed by higher sea temperatures. Such islands are frequently no more than a few metres above sea level. Higher seas will reduce their surface area and flood them more often. Their fresh water supplies will be harmed and hence their economies and societies.

Solutions are many but are not universally applicable. Building sea defences, the basis for the existence of most of Holland, would be prohibitively expensive for poor countries. So would wide scale relocation of industry and agriculture. Ultimately, global warming has to be tackled through cutting emissions of greenhouse gases, especially the more effective "minor" ones.

This useful book puts flesh on the bones of the case against greenhouse emissions.

* *Earthscan*, 152pp, pbk. £5.95

progress can be made within the Labour Party, *whether it is in power or in opposition.*

Quite simply, what socialists need is the ability to organise independently of the electoral rhythms which obsess the Labour Party. This does *not* mean that, with PR, all socialists would or should immediately leave the Labour Party. Paradoxically, PR would be good for both the left and for the Labour Party.

Within the Party, it would put the fight for socialist policies on a somewhat fairer ground since the support of the left could no longer be taken for granted.

At the same time, it could reduce the stifling effect of Labour's near monopoly on the expression of left opinion.

At the same time, it could reduce the stifling effect of Labour's near monopoly on the expression of left opinion. We do not know our own strength because we are restricted in mobilising it openly. Yet we know that there are tens if not hundreds of thousands of socialists who are passive Labour Party members if members at all.

There is also a range of political forces which need to work together, not just in single-issue campaigns but on broader political questions: radical trade unionists, independent socialists and feminists, socialist greens, radical democrats, left nationalists, peace movement supporters etc. etc.

The Labour Party is one forum where some of these forces come together, but all too often they come together nowhere at all. PR would enable a new approach to the problem, allowing new alliances and working relationships to be formed, because it under electoral competition is no longer the sole issue around which all political definition hinges.

At the same time, PR would strengthen Labour's broad appeal. Vladimir Derer attributes the move towards support for PR to despair at Labour's inability to displace the Tories. It is no such thing. Indeed last year's conference resolution to open the issue came when Labour was riding high in the polls, with widespread confidence in victory soon.

It is, rather, a recognition that politics in Britain is changing and the coalition that is the Labour Party has got to respond to the changes. Failure to do so fast enough in Scotland has already seriously eroded Labour's working-class base as the SNP has moved in — on an increasingly socialist programme.

Labour has not only to strengthen its appeal to new constituencies. It has got to march out of its strongholds and regain support in areas where it has all but given up hope of winning seats.

The collapse of Labour in the South East is at least in part the product of the first-past-the-post system. Tactical voting for the Democrats makes more sense to millions of former and potential Labour supporters than wasting your vote on Labour. Deplored it doesn't change the logic of the situation these voters face. Under virtually any system of PR Labour would again have MPs in areas which have become virtually one-party Tory domains.

What we should be concentrating on is what kind of PR system the left should unite behind.

No system is neutral, and there are wide variations between PR systems, which I haven't space to discuss here. My own preference would be for a modified version of the German system, combining some individual constituency representation with topping up

from lists to ensure strict proportionality. What becomes crucial, then, is ensuring democratic control over the lists.

PR won't change the world, but it can create a wider space for socialist politics. The fight for it can help bring into being a new style of politics, a listening, questioning openness in place of the old authoritarian manipulateness. It's time to act now as we mean to carry on.

Richard Kuper's *Electing for Democracy: Proportional Representation and the Left* elaborates these arguments, and provides an extensive guide to alternative electoral systems. It is available post free at the special price of £3.00 (normally £3.95) from the Socialist Society, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL.



Richard Kuper

Trotsky and Ireland

AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna



Sixty years ago, Leon Trotsky had been deported from the USSR and was stranded near Istanbul, on the island of Prinkipo.

Prinkipo was the "isle of princes", where the many defeated brothers of whomever had made himself ruling Sultan in the old Ottoman Empire — which had no orderly rule of succession — were imprisoned or strangled.

Trotsky wanted to move west, for preference to France, or Germany, or even Britain. No one would have him.

Reactionaries raged and jeered at him. Winston Churchill, then a public admirer of Mussolini for having killed Bolshevism in Italy, wrote a vicious polemic denouncing Trotsky, "the sack of venom washed up on the Bosphorus". Trotsky ruefully wrote of "the planet without a visa".

According to papers just released by the Irish Records Office, in 1930 Trotsky tried to get refugee status in Ireland.

Ireland's leading trade unionist — Alderman William O'Brien, the general secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union — sought asylum for Trotsky, and discussed it with William T Cosgrave, the President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State (i.e. the leading minister of the Irish government).

Cosgrave had led the straightforwardly bourgeois faction of Sinn Fein to victory in the 1922-23 Civil War with the Republicans who refused to accept that Britain could compel Ireland to remain in the British Empire. His handwritten account of the discussion with O'Brien about Trotsky (which I take from the *Irish Times*) nicely catches the attitudes of the European bourgeoisie, big and little, and even when they had something of a revolutionary past, towards Trotsky and Stalin.

Cosgrave noted: "Told him [O'Brien] I could see no reason why Trotsky should be considered by us. Russian bonds had been practically confiscated. He said there was to be consideration of them. I said it was not by

Trotsky whose policy was the reverse.

I asked his nationality. Reply Jew. They were against religion (he said that was modified). I said not by Trotsky.

He said he had hoped there would be an asylum here as in England for all. I agreed that under normal conditions, which we had not here, that would be alright. But we had no touch with this man or his Government, nor did they interest themselves in us in his 'day'.

He said there had been IRA contact. I replied that if so it was [un]authorised and would not be approved if it were considered. It was like the policy in the North. That many things were done without authority.

He asked were we approached against Trotsky. I said no, not as far as I knew; that undesirable aliens could come in but the British reserve the right to refuse them.

I said if he wished I'd talk to Fitzgerald Kenney. He said no. If I were against it that finished it".

Trotsky got no Irish passport.

One odd thing about this episode is who William O'Brien was. He was the leader of the recently spawned bureaucracy of the new Irish trade union movement.

The mass Irish trade union movement had taken shape after 1907, led by the revolutionary socialist Jim Larkin, who was to be a member of the Communist International throughout the 1920s. In 1930, O'Brien was Larkin's most bitter enemy, and the bogeyman of the militants in the movement.

Larkin had gone to the US in 1914, and didn't get back until 1923, after a spell in Sing Sing jail. Meanwhile James Connolly, acting general secretary of the ITGWU in Larkin's absence, had led the union militia, the Irish Citizen Army, into the 1916 insurrection, and had been shot by the British. The union had expanded out from



Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it

The first Labour Government was installed in January 1924. A minority administration with Liberal backing, it lasted nine months before being chased from office by a 'red scare'.

Here are its leaders leaving Buckingham Palace after taking office:

from left to right, Ramsay MacDonald, railworkers' leader Jimmy Thomas, and Arthur Henderson. Henderson had supported World War 1, and represented mainstream Labour in the war government. MacDonald had opposed the war. He became the first Labour Prime Minister, but went over to the Tories in 1931.

Dublin to the small towns, and grown enormously. And O'Brien now had control.

Soon after he returned Larkin led a minority breakaway to form a new left-wing militant union (which finally reunited with the ITGWU a decade ago). Thereafter O'Brien personified the bureaucratized, more respectable wing of Irish labour, and Larkin the militant, "communist" element. (He broke with the Communist International when it turned ultra-left at the end of the '20s, but, so far as I know, never disavowed his old politics).

Larkin remained, and remains, the great charismatic hero of the Irish labour movement: an immense mass of Dublin workers followed his coffin in 1947. O'Brien was the founder of the bureaucratized post-Larkin, post-partition, labour movement that still exists in that form today.

O'Brien, too, was a socialist, a cautious reformist Catholic socialist (and Larkin, of course, was also a Catholic of sorts). He was bleakly and narrowly realistic, ultimately time-serving.

He had been a friend of James Connolly's, and probably thought of himself as Connolly's heir. In the 1940s he published, through the union which he tightly

controlled, a four volume edition of Connolly's writings.

Yet in 1944 he was one of the prime movers in splitting the Irish trade union movement along the lines of the border, a split which lasted 17 years.

Trotsky did get in to France in 1934. Expelled in 1935, he was let into Norway; but Norway was vulnerable to Stalin's pressure.

The Minister of Justice, Trygve Lie, interned Trotsky in 1936, deliberately reducing him to silence for six months about the first of Stalin's "Moscow Trials", in which old Bolsheviks like Kamenev and Zinoviev were sentenced to be shot and Trotsky was denounced as a German fascist agent and their inspirer. In this way Lie made himself acceptable to Stalin, and he was the first General Secretary of the United Nations, which the US, Britain and the USSR set up during the Second World War.

Finally Mexico gave Trotsky asylum, and he arrived there early in 1937. He was murdered three and a half years later, in August 1940, in a suburb of Mexico City.

The case for socialist feminism

"This pamphlet", as its introduction puts it, "attempts to put forward an alternative socialist feminism, a socialist feminism based on an understanding of the links between sex oppression and class exploitation."

"Today, the dominant feminism in Britain is a variety of cultural feminism with a bureaucratic bent. Much of what passes for socialist feminism is simply cultural feminism in a labour movement environment..."

"We examine the history

of the Marxist movement and women, and attempt to unravel the themes of modern Anglo-American cultural feminism. We attempt to do this not as sectarians outside of the movement, but in the spirit of revitalising and reorienting women's politics..."

In 64 closely-argued pages, this new pamphlet takes the debate from the prehistoric origins of women's oppression, through the interaction of capitalism with the social position of women and the classic Marxist analyses, to a critique of "modern feminisms", "rainbow coalition" politics, and the

The case for Socialist Feminism



A Women's Fightback pamphlet £1.50

varieties of socialist feminism which see two parallel systems, capitalism and patriarchy, to be tackled by two parallel struggles, socialist and feminist.

The price is £1 plus 30p postage (cheques payable to Women's Fightback), from WF, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

European elections?

AS WE WERE SAYING...

Simon Temple, *Socialist Organiser*, January 1979

Most people on the left opposed Britain joining the Common Market and don't want direct elections to the European Parliament...

The campaign against direct elections is purely diversionary, and makes no more sense than a campaign against Westminster elections. In or out of the EEC is not an issue

for the working class; international unity in the fight against EEC bosses, British bosses, and all other bosses, is.

Work by committed socialists in the European Parliament would be worthwhile, provided it is based on an international policy, not a nationalist one. The struggle for socialism has to be an international one, or it will fail.

An isolated socialist state in a hostile capitalist world will either degenerate into a hideous bureaucratic caricature — such as the Soviet Union is today — or, more likely, be crushed. Only the support of workers in other countries could save it and carry on the

closest possible political and trade unions links between workers throughout Europe. That's the only way to stop the multi-nationals playing off workers in different countries against each other, and to carry forward the fight against the whole bosses' system.

Socialist Euro-MPs could play a useful — if subsidiary — role in that struggle. But if the Labour members of the European Parliament make it their business to defend the least competitive sections of British capitalism, then that will be a positive hindrance in the fight for socialism.

The Tories would be prepared to disown Rushdie completely:

The betrayal of Salman Rushdie

By Jim Denham

The news that Salman Rushdie had agreed that there should be no paperback publication and no further translations of *The Satanic Verses* was surprising enough. But the author's announcement that he had embraced Islam was greeted with incredulity by friends and enemies alike.

Hard-line Muslim fundamentalists poured scorn on the "conversion" as a ploy to wrong-foot the campaign against *The Satanic Verses* and spread confusion amongst the Muslim community. From Tehran came the news that nothing Rushdie could say or do

would effect the *fatwah* issued by the Ayatollah Khomeini. Rushdie's supporters were thrown into dismay and there were resignations from the defence committee.

Rushdie replied to the criticism with evident passion: "This affirmation has implications for how I have to think, for my life as a writer. If I were not sincere it would destroy me as a serious person. No-one who is serious about the life of the mind would say something he felt to be intellectually dishonest. It is my conscience and I have to live with it."

It seems highly unlikely that the "conversion" (strictly speaking, not a conversion at all, since Rushdie was not a member of another religion beforehand) is simply a cynical ploy: religion, and the implications of an absence of religious belief have long been a

recurring theme in Rushdie's work.

He once explained his attitude with the words, "there is a God-shaped hole in me"; after the "conversion" he added: "For a long time I stressed the absence, the hole. Now I find it is the shape which is important". Certainly, the "conversion" is not the unbelievable *volte face* that some have suggested and comparisons with Galileo's capitulation to the inquisition are simply absurd.

Nevertheless, there has been a climbdown on Rushdie's part: whatever he says now, *The Satanic Verses* was — at least in part — an attack on religious intolerance and the growing influence of fundamentalism. Islam is not by definition any more intolerant or necessarily fundamentalist than any other religion, but Rushdie's change of heart does represent a major retreat

from the secular stance implicit in work up to now.

Rushdie's "conversion" is, of course, his own business and is quite understandable given the intolerable pressures he has been under; it is also quite legitimate for the author to attempt to reach an understanding with "moderate" Muslim representatives and to explain that his book is a complex, multi-layered work and not the straightforward attack on Islam that it is portrayed to be. Much more worrying is Rushdie's climbdown over the paperback and future translations: this does represent a serious danger to freedom of expression in the face of religious bigotry.

But before we join those who want to wash their hands of Rushdie, we should ask ourselves: if he has capitulated, who is to blame?



Salman Rushdie

The answer is surely the British government and its semi-official spokesmen like Norman Tebbit (who wrote a vicious, racist attack on Rushdie in the *Independent* magazine last year). They were at best half-hearted in their defence of the author and made little secret of the fact that they hated him every bit as much as did the fundamentalists. With the resumption of relations with Iran there seems little doubt that the Tories would be ready to disown Rushdie altogether, if necessary.

Why does Labour support wars?

THE POLITICAL FRONT

Patrick Murphy



Socialists who take to the streets to oppose war often find themselves in strange company. Coming demonstrations against the Gulf war will find labour movement activists mixing with bishops and pacifists, Marxists with mystics. Absent from this coalition, however, and indeed firmly ranged against it, is the official labour movement, which has been keen to stress its full support for the government's moves to launch a war on Iraq.

Even to hardened cynics the Labour Party's compliance might be surprising; they do have different policies on practically every major political issue, and the adversarial nature of parliamentary politics usually means that these differences are stressed, indeed exaggerated out of all proportion to make the divisions between the parties appear greater than they actually are. In the case of war the opposite occurs.

Labour do have a difference of sorts with the government, over the time given to all sanctions to work, but they have been at pains to minimise this difference and to stress instead their common front against the enemy, and their willingness to support war if necessary.

Of course the present Labour Party is particularly craven and frightened of the electoral consequences of even the most half-hearted stand on any principle. This, however, might explain the extent of their compliance, but not its fundamental causes. Labour's current stance is not unique. Harold Wilson's government supported the US in Vietnam, the old 'pacifist' Michael Foot supported Thatcher in the Falklands and, indeed, from the first years of its existence Labour, with the interesting exception of Ramsay MacDonald, supported the utterly pointless imperialist butchery of the First World War.

In part Labour's attitude can be explained by their lack of any independent politics, Labour accept things as they appear, rather than examine them as they really are. Thus they accepted that the First World War was



US Marines prepare for Anthrax attack

fought to defend the rights of small nations against German aggression, that the Falklands war was justified because it was conducted against a semi-fascist dictator, just as they accept the grotesque charade that a war which will destroy the Gulf region is to be fought in the interests of the Kuwaiti people and even democracy.

The pressure on them is great: Belgium in 1914, the Falklands in 1982 and Kuwait in 1990 were all invaded by aggressors, there was no immediate chance of righting these wrongs unless rival aggressors took action. But to accept this sort of surface picture, Labour have had to ignore huge chunks of reality; like the fact that Britain, France and Russia were, in 1914, by far the biggest oppressors of small nations in the world. Germany was a beginner and indeed that was her crime.

Equally, the notion that the US, Britain and their friends have any right to condemn Iraq, let alone to take charge of the region and insist on such fierce punishment can only be honestly held by those who don't understand the meaning of the world *hypocrisy*. Britain and the US have put people like Saddam in place, armed them, watched them massacre their own people with impunity and even taught them by example to invade when rivals threaten their interests (Grenada, Panama). The wars that result are about a breakdown in that corrupt international system, not democracy, liberty or national rights.

Labour leaders know much of this,

however, and if not they are reminded by the more consistent oppositionists in their ranks, like Benn, Corbyn and Heffer. Their support for war and promotion of the West's partial picture of its causes stems from a more fundamental political weakness.

Labour accepts the idea that there is a "national interest" which is at stake in all international conflicts; a classless, all-embracing economic interest which all British people should strive to uphold. So when anyone threatens Britain's status in the world, her trading terms, her supplies of oil, her most important allies, the whole nation, led by both major parties, must respond, if necessary with force. Never mind that the "enemy's" threat might stem from opposition to colonialism, a demand for democracy, or that Britain may have gained her trade, supplies and status by force, war and exploitation.

Between 1914 and 1918, most history text books will tell you, Labour gained respect as a potential party of government by supporting war and avoiding disruption. When the first Labour government took office in 1924 the press constantly expressed doubt as to their ability to govern in the national interest, rather than the interest of one class or section.

Labour, sadly, have always proved capable of this "duty". In their desire to help the unfortunate poor they have been careful not to hurt the rich too much. They are, after all, just another "section" of the nation, equally due respect and protection even if tiny in numbers and bloated in wealth and power.

War can, in fact, only be consistently opposed when we adopt a politics which attacks the role Britain and its ruling class have played in carving up the world; when the idea of a national interest, above and overriding the actual class divisions is completely abandoned. Not, in particular, because the idea of everyone in any country sharing the same interest is not attractive, in one respect it is the basis of socialism, but because it just is not true.

The reality is of class division with working people at the bottom of society. To defend the existing national interest, the improvement of the existing national economy on its existing basis is not to be neutral between classes. It is to subordinate the movement for working class demands to the interests of profit and the market. Such has always been the politics of Labourism.

It is no surprise then that, lacking any alternative way of viewing or understanding world events, Labour persistently collapses into support for war. National interest has come to be replaced with "Western interests" or "European interests" but Labour still believes that the reforms its voters demand can only be delivered if profits are boosted, by whatever means necessary.

It is still true that consistent opposition to war can only be based on opposition to imperialism — in other words, opposition to the system that determines human boundaries, governments, and futures according to the interests of international profits.

Uncovering the real history of workers' struggles

Socialism and nationalism in South Africa

Books

Gerry Bates reviews "Beyond Apartheid", a new book by Robert Fine with Dennis Davies

If this book is not very unpopular with the South African left then it will have failed in its purpose.

The book is a frontal attack on the prevailing left orthodoxies, an attempt to trace the real history of the working class and its organisations, untangling and separating that real history from the myths that have been woven around it.

As Robert Fine argues: "In the history of the liberation movement, nothing could be more erroneous than the image of black people as an undifferentiated mass united by a single political consciousness in their opposition to apartheid."

The history of class struggle has been one of debate and dissent, sharp breaks and abrupt turns, competing political organisations and traditions, ad hoc alliances and unpredicted outcomes. We should avoid the temptation to flatten artificially this rocky landscape by drawing a one-dimensional picture of a singular movement, hegemonised by this or that party, for ever advancing with the support of the people to the final goal of liberation.

Between the political myth and the real history lies not just a chasm but everything that makes the liberation movement in South Africa so wonderfully rich".

For example, Fine challenges conventional accounts of the rise of apartheid in the 1940s.

"The prevailing explanation on the left runs along the following lines. Starting in 1934, rapid economic growth, highlighted by the particularly rapid development of secondary industry, led to a vast and irreversible growth of the urban and industrial black proletariat. This provided the material foundation for the mushrooming of trade union organisation and the dramatic escalation of black militancy which occurred in the 1940s.

In open defiance of constituted law and order, there was an upsurge of black resistance against the racial capitalist system. The militancy of the African proletariat stimulated a steady growth of political opposition by the black middle classes during the war, marked especially by the revival of the ANC, the formation of the ANC Youth League and the waging of joint campaigns by the ANC and the Communist Party. The violent suppression of the 1946 African mineworkers' strike acted as a further catalyst to the radicalisation of black political opposition...

As a result of working class militancy, culminating in the miners' strike of 1946, South African ruling circles were shaken to the core. The crisis of the state was resolved through the rise of Afrikaner nationalism which despite its populist rhetoric functioned on behalf of capital to suppress the threat posed by the working class movement..."

Some of the assumptions underlying this orthodoxy are questionable. The number of black industrial workers and their social weight has been exaggerated, as has their real level of unionisation. Historians around the African National Congress, eager to show the radicalising influence of nationalism, have also tended to downplay both the hostility to working-class militancy of their own organisation and the common stand of all wings of the ruling class against black workers.

But most important: "What was at issue was the conscious element: how the black trade unions responded to these rapidly deteriorating conditions of struggle".

The trade unions did not exist in a political vacuum. Their policy was influenced by forces like the Communist Party, the white labour left, and the Trotskyists. And the twists and turns of Moscow diplomacy had a terrible effect on the policy of the Communist Party.

As the South African Trotskyist paper *Socialist Action* commented at the end of the



Black workers' protest march in the 1930s

war. "Ever since Russia entered the war in 1941, Stalinism has damped down any militant action on the part of the workers, has played the role of strike-breaker".

The CP was pretty badly discredited at the start of the '40s. It was paying for a series of crazy zig-zags in the 1930s, from ultra-left nationalism to popular-frontism and back again.

A measure of the CP's lack of influence in its brief "ultra-left" period of 1939-41, when it denounced the World War as imperialist, can be got from this confession by a leading CP trade unionist in 1940.

"The Trotskyists in Johannesburg can call a meeting of 10,000 Africans, but the Party can't. The Party has not the elementary conception on how to organise trade unions. We had strong unions in 1928 [before the CP's first ultra-left turn]. Where are they today? The Party had a sectarian left outlook — strike, strike, strike — that is all they heard and the result was that the African unions believed that the Communists brought them into trouble. The Trotskyist unions can raise the money. They have negotiated with the employers and the Labour Department. So the Trotskyists have succeeded..."

After Hitler's invasion of the USSR in 1941, the CP swung four-square behind the

"The trade unions did not exist in a political vacuum. Their policy was influenced by forces like the Communist Party, the white labour left, and the Trotskyists."

war effort of the South African ruling class, allied with Britain. They outdid even the most cautious Trotskyist union organisers like Max Gordon in their concern to remain legal, respectable and above-board. And worse: "total war" became the party's slogan. Production came first. Negotiation, not strike action, was the method of struggle. The *Guardian*, a CP-inclined paper, would greet the smallest concessions from the state to the workers with headlines like "Thank you, Mr Madeley." [Madeley was Minister for Labour.]

The CP actively and effectively opposed strike action in the mines during the war, the time when a strike would have been most effective. That was why the decisive battle came in 1946 at a time chosen by the ruling class. The result was a tragic defeat for the miners and for the working class as a whole.

The CP bears a great responsibility for the

defeat of the 1940s wave of working-class militancy. The orthodox-left attempt to present the crushing of the 1946 African mineworkers' strike as merely the prelude to the radicalisation of the masses under the banner of African nationalism is a cover-up and an evasion.

The Trotskyists played an important role organising the left in the trade unions during the war, but they do not escape criticism.

Fine points to their rather sectarian and formalistic attitude to the struggle for democratic rights, and also traces the intellectual roots of their later collapse into left nationalism. The Trotskyists, according to Fine, too often simply inverted the CP's position rather than work out an independent socialist view.

One of the strangest things about Martin Plaut's review of *Beyond Apartheid* in *Tribune* is that Plaut only sees criticism of the CP and the ANC and misses Fine's criticisms of the Trotskyists, the radical nationalists, and the white labour left.

Plaut writes: "Although Fine attempts not to fall into the cruder denunciations that Trotskyists usually pass off for analysis, one cannot help feeling that the leaderships of the liberation movements were predestined to fail, in Fine's eyes, even before he started reading their histories".

This is a cheap and all too familiar point. It's almost as if Plaut was predestined to write that even before he read Fine's book.

Plaut actually endorses the thrust of Fine's analysis — "Fine shows that reverses were exactly that, that failures were real setbacks and not simply a learning process for the oppressed" — but then shrinks from a serious thinking through of what that analysis implies. He wants to distance himself from Trotskyism, and insist that you don't have to be a Trotskyist to question the relationship between socialism and nationalism embodied in the ANC-CP alliance. Quite so! Let's see more questioning from Plaut and his co-thinkers!

Duncan Blackie, writing in *Socialist Worker Review*, seems to have missed the point of the book entirely.

Blackie is quick to praise Fine, yet very slow to think through the logic of his own comments. Blackie commends Fine's chapter on the '40s, for example, for its critical stance towards the CP, the ANC, the white labour left, and the Trotskyists. But he seems to miss the historical explanation for the working-class defeat.

Fine is at pains to stress, throughout his analysis of the '40s, the limited social weight of the black working class and the fact that if it was to assume leadership of the battle for democracy and socialism then it would need to enlist allies. Among those allies had

to be the white working class, or at least significant sections of it.

The established left orthodoxy denies that. For that school of thought, the '40s saw black workers radicalised under the banner of African nationalism and the white working class tied inextricably to the Afrikaner nationalist project which was to lead inexorably and inevitably to the rise of the apartheid state. An alliance was out of the question.

While praising Fine's chapter on the '40s, Blackie also describes its treatment of the white working class as the weakest part of the book. The white working class, he writes, was an "irrelevance". So Blackie, for all his desire to attack the ANC-CP tradition, stands on exactly the same intellectual ground as they do. He shares their framework, and their inclination to read back the last 50 years of racist and pro-apartheid attitudes in the white working class on to the '40s as an inevitable part of the defeats then.

Here we have a pattern typical of the SWP: verbal intransigence towards nationalism, Stalinism, liquidationism, you name it, combined with abject intellectual surrender to exactly the same forces.

Beyond *Apartheid* concludes with a short essay on political theory, trying to draw out the implications for working-class politics of the traditional dissolution of socialism into nationalism.

Neville Alexander, one-time Robben Island prisoner and author of the book *One Azania, one nation*, is identified as an intellectual pioneer in this respect. Fine shows how themes taken up by Alexander, a "Trotskyist" (semi-Trotskyist), have been adopted by the mainstream of the liberation movement. Despite their different politics, Alexander shares the same intellectual framework as Communist Party boss Joe Slovo.

Both see the fundamental task of socialists in South Africa as perfecting nationalism. The South African CP talks of an anti-apartheid alliance involving sections of the government, capital, and the liberation movement; the "Trotskyists" advocate a "national united front" against the government. Both ridicule the very notion of class politics, finding it impossible even to think of a socialist, working-class way of fighting racism and putting forward democratic demands.

This is how Neville Alexander argues. "According to [a] view held by a very small minority of people, our struggle is not a struggle for national liberation. It is a class struggle pure and simple, one in which the 'working class' will wrest power from the 'capitalist class'."

For this reason the workers should be organised regardless of what so-called [racial] group they belong to. This tendency seems to say (in theory) that the historically evolved differences are irrelevant or at best of secondary importance.

I find it difficult to take this position seriously. I suspect that in practice the activists who hold this view are compelled to make the most acrobatic compromises with the reality of racial prejudice among 'workers'. To deny the reality of prejudice and perceived differences, whatever their origin, is to disarm oneself strategically and tactically. It becomes impossible to organise a mass movement outside the ranks of a few thousand perhaps".

When the workers fight racism then they can only do it as nationalists. So says the orthodoxy. Alexander is certainly for socialism, but he sees it as coming out of radical nationalism, not class struggle. "The struggle cannot be halted at the mere integration of the black people into the existing economic relationships... Today any attempt at integration must infallibly bring about the more or less rapid disintegration of the capitalist system".

But integration and reform from above are being attempted right now, by the ANC leadership in partnership with the government. The capitalist system has not yet disintegrated. The left, however, is disoriented and marginalised.

If the South African left is to recover from this disorientation, then it needs to do some serious rethinking. *Beyond Apartheid* will be vital to that process.

THE CULTURAL FRONT

The best and worst of 1990

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews the films of 1990

1990 was a mixed year for the movies, a year in which the blood and guts films like *Black Rain* and *Die Hard 2* didn't make as much money for Hollywood as the hearts and flowers stuff (*Pretty Woman*, *Ghost*).

The surprise hit of the year turned out to be a no-stars, low-budget "family" feature called *Home Alone*, about a small boy left behind on a family holiday. I haven't seen it, so I can't judge, but I know enough of Hollywood to dread what will follow.

1991 will be the year of romance and the year of the family — not the real family, but the soppy, we-all-love-one-another family so beloved of Hollywood (and existing only in its box-office-obsessed imagination). More "heart-warming" fare is on the way to us in 1991 — expect Arnold Schwarzenegger as *Kindergarten Cop* among other treats.

Yet if 1990 showed anything, it showed that Hollywood alone can't satisfy. It's like a restaurant that serves only sweet things; you still leave hungry for something nourishing.

Of my top ten of 1990, three were made in Europe: the delightful look back at May 1968, *Milou in May* (France), the touching and nostalgic *Cinema Paradiso* (Italy), and the very original and scary *The Vanishing* (Holland). Three more were made outside Hollywood:

My Top Ten

1. Born on the Fourth of July
2. Milou in May
3. Cinema Paradiso
4. Total Recall
5. Fabulous Baker Boys
6. The Vanishing
7. Music Box
8. Roger and Me
9. An Angel at my Table
10. Strapless

Runners up (Points for trying hard)

1. Casualties of War
2. Enemies — a love story
3. Fools of Fortune

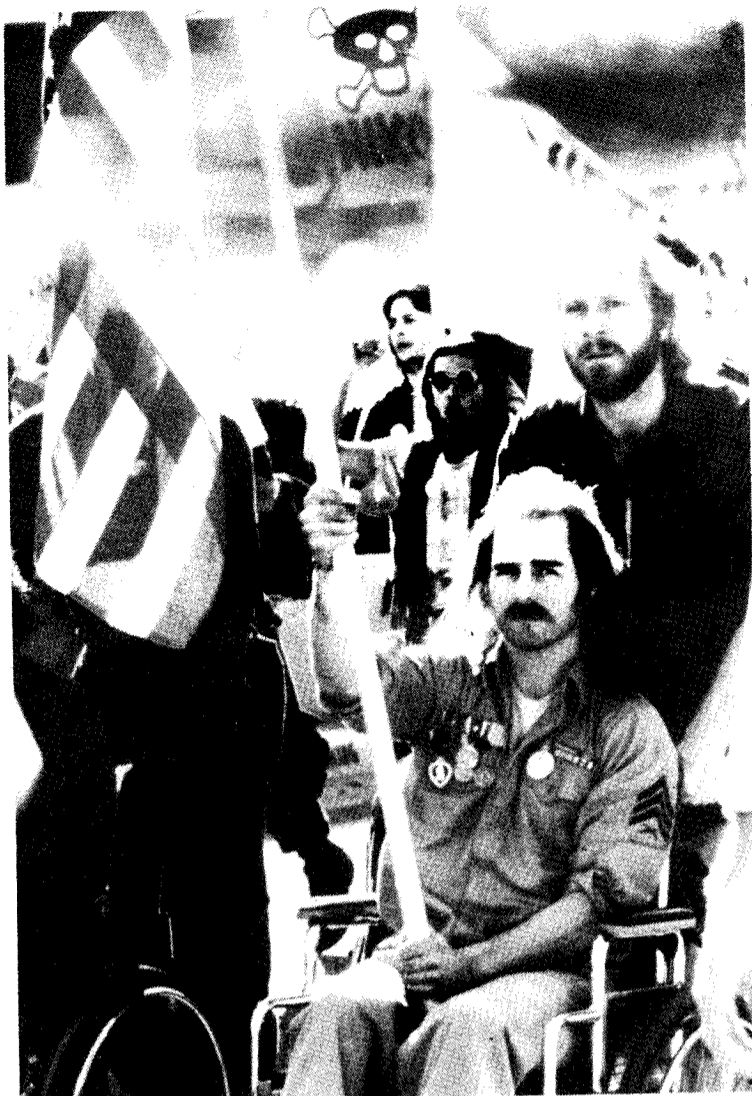
The worst of 1990

1. Black Rain
2. Steel Magnolias
3. Wild at Heart
4. Henry and June
5. Dick Tracy
6. She-Devil
7. Pretty Woman
8. Ghost
9. Look Who's Talking
10. War of the Roses

David Hare's story of a woman learning to stand on her own, *Strapless* (UK), the biography of writer Janet Frame, *Angel at my table* (New Zealand), and the off-beat documentary about General Motors' betrayal of its workers, *Roger and me* (US independent).

The other four are Hollywood all the way, which proves Hollywood can still entertain when it wants to, though of the four, only *Baker Boys* could be considered pure entertainment.

'Born on the Fourth of July', the



Best of 1990: "Born on the Fourth of July"

story of disabled veteran Ron Kovic, was long, harrowing, and sometimes over the top, but it also revealed the shameful treatment by America of its maimed war veterans, 'Music Box' tackled war crimes and family loyalties, and 'Total Recall' (usually dismissed with sniggers) was the film where Arnie forgot to read between the lines of the script and came out on the side of workers struggling for freedom. Okay, okay, there was a lot of blood and guts and bone-crunching too, but the message was there.

On the minus side, we had the merchandising films ('Dick Tracy',

'Ninja Turtles'), the romantic gush ('Ghost', 'Pretty Woman'), slop ('Steel Magnolias', 'Look Who's Talking' — though I must admit I laughed), black comedy that was neither black nor funny ('She-Devil', 'War of the Roses'), films that gave sex a bad name ('Wild at Heart', 'Henry and June') and top of the tree for racism, sexism, violence, anti-Japanese sour grapes, and all round poor taste — 'Black Rain'.

Apologies to some films I didn't get to see but which I know were popular ('Crimes and Misdemeanours', among others).

The fall of Parnell

Television

By Mick Ackersley

"Parnell and the Englishwoman" (BBC2, Wednesday, 9.25) is a glossy and expensive (£3 million) four-part account of the downfall of Charles Stuart Parnell.

Parnell was leader of the Irish Home Rule movement in the 1880s. He bound together a many-pronged movement, of farmers fighting bloodsucking landlords and Fenians who believed at root that only armed insurrection could win Ireland a government of its own, behind the Irish MPs at Westminster.

He welded the 70-odd Irish MPs into a tremendous fighting force, bound by strong discipline and revolutionary determination. Using techniques of disruption and filibustering pioneered by the Fenian Joseph Biggar, they again and again made it impossible for the government to operate normally. When the Irish Home Rule party held the balance of power after the 1885

election, they pushed the Liberal leader Gladstone into supporting self-government for Ireland.

Much of the credit for that tremendous victory was properly due to Parnell, himself a Protestant landlord from Wicklow with an American mother. It looked to friends and enemies alike as if Parnell would win Home Rule for all Ireland, sooner rather than later.

Though the House of Commons rejected Home Rule in 1886, a majority voted for it in 1893. (The Lords could still, and did, veto it). But Parnell was dead by then, and his party a broken ruin.

This undoubtedly great bourgeois politician was hounded from public life and driven to an early death after he was cited as co-respondent in a divorce case brought by one of the Irish Home Rule MPs, Captain O'Shea. Probably O'Shea did it on the urging of the Liberal Unionist (anti-Home-Rule) leader Joseph Chamberlain.

In fact Parnell had been living with Catherine O'Shea for a decade in a bourgeois marriage regular in everything but the legal papers. Her complaisant husband had not scrupled to benefit from the arrangement. It had been common knowledge in political

circles.

Now the politicians and the priests turned on him. Gladstone, keeper of the "nonconformist conscience", saw the chance to break the Home Rule party and increase his own room for manoeuvre. The Catholic Church took the opportunity to once more flex its political muscle in Irish affairs. Some honest Home Rulers, like Michael Davitt, were outraged at Parnell's "frivolity", and went against him for that reason.

The party split. Parnell refused to bend to the storm, and campaigned incessantly until he died in his early 40s. Thereafter for a quarter-century the Irish political party at Westminster was a house-trained appendage of the Liberals. The Liberals betrayed them in 1914 by agreeing to the partition of Ireland. Parnell's Fenian allies came back centre-stage with the 1916 Rising and after. The ruins of Parnell's party were destroyed in the 1918 election.

The fall of Parnell is one of the great watershed events in modern Irish history. The great myth-maker W B Yeats, who lived through the campaign which hounded Parnell to his death, wrote about it half a century later:

... The Bishops and the Party



That tragic story made,
A husband that had sold his wife
And after that betrayed;
But stories that live longest
Are sung above the glass,
And Parnell loved his country,
And Parnell loved his lass.

He fought the might of England
And saved the Irish poor,
Whatever good a farmer's got
He brought it all to pass;
And here's another reason,
That Parnell loved a lass.

(Come gather round me, Parnellites, from "Last Poems".)

I liked "Parnell and the Englishman", although the politics are rather vague and lavish "production values" dominate. Trevor Eve is less austere and more human than the Parnell of my imagination, but probably more true to life. Francesca Annis as Catherine O'Shea is bewitching — perhaps a bit too "liberated" for 1880, but, come to think of it, she must have been.

In defence of Dick Francis

Books

BJ Siddon reviews Dick Francis' 'Straight'

This Xmas, like every Xmas for what seems like forever, a new Dick Francis hit the streets in paperback. It is as eagerly snapped up as a Barbara Cartland and spends many months on the best seller lists. This stuff is popular. It is also good.

I would not like to compare Dick Francis to Ross MacDonald because he would come off very badly, but compared to the likes of Virginia Andrews whose 'Gates of Paradise' I reviewed for *SO* recently, Francis writes like Shakespeare. Francis's plots hang together and get resolved, you are never left wondering what happened to... The annoyances in the style are pretty minor stuff — so he's started splitting infinitives in the last couple of books — the rest of the grammar is better than in most "quality" newspapers.

It is true that Francis uses the same plot tricks in all the books, and that the leading character, though going under different names, is always the same person. Francis's repertoire is limited, but all its devices are of sufficient quality to bear repetition. You will gather that I am a fan.

I confess to welcoming Francis's protagonist like an old friend. In 'Straight' he is called Derek Franklin and he is, as always a decent chap. The joy of Francis's work is its comforting nature. The hero will always prevail, justice will be done, and in this case the jewels will be found, the racing fraud uncovered and I regret to say the dope dealer sent to jail. My regrets are only that Francis has been forced to make the bad guy a cocaine dealer, such people should have gone out with Agatha Christie, or be left to authors who can portray them in their full sleaze.

If you haven't read it, the plot sounds like pretty unlikely stuff. You'd be right. Francis does not deal in gritty reality. He likes to set his stories amongst the comfortably off, and he has used foreign royalty as characters once or twice. Retired Army officers are common, and the small businesses his characters occasionally run are never struggling. His heroes have sometimes even been very wealthy, but it doesn't matter, they are still honest, decent and they never boast.

The Jockey Club, and other havens of reaction are presented as being run by charming volunteers, giving up their time to regulate a sport which gives millions of people hours of innocent pleasure. Bookmakers are often tied in with the bad guys, but only small companies. The giants who rob millions of pounds daily from punters who think they can win are taken at face value.

'Straight' is set in an even more exploitative business, the jewel trade. Not an eyebrow is raised at the methods by which the jewels reach the shops or the cartels which keep diamond miners' wages low and prices high. Francis never questions the status quo. The bad guys are bad because they are bad, and the good guys are good whether they are rich or poor. A hard worker will always make it to the top and so on and so on. Francis's world is full of choices which don't exist for the vast majority.

But it's very easy, and lots of fun to slip into the world according to Francis. You won't be bored, and you won't be frightened. The best part is that they are almost instantly forgettable so that you can read them over and over again!

The Tribe of the Philistines

Call back the dead! — my hero friends of old

Who fled their place in our unequal war
And sank in private life; those who grew cold

To our endeavour, chilled by grief or fear,
Too old to bear — at twenty five or nine —
The forceful cutting winds that howl along
Our promontory; those anxious to step in line

With savage wage-slave masters looming strong.

"But Trotsky led to Stalin!" Self erasement:

No fine disinterested search for truth,
But a chicken-hearted knowing self abasement

Before the rooted power that still bears fruit!

Soul dead, they make their peace, poor contrite braves:

They praise the masters now, who would have freed the slaves!

Sean Matgamna

Right about Tariq Ali

WRITEBACK

Dear S.O.,
 You've done it again!
 Your recent article on the
 Campaign Against War in the Gulf

Write to SO, PO Box 823,
 London SE15 4NA

After reading both Sean Matgamna's review of Tariq Ali's 'Redemption' and the comments of SWP and Socialist Outlook teachers (SO, 30 November and 8 December), perhaps it is time to put down some facts about this media personality and try to account for his political trajectory, in the hope that the left press will return to sobriety on this subject.

I found it ironic that it should be me who should be writing this letter, because in the 1960s Tariq Ali's then group expelled me for arguing that its supporters take out membership in the Labour Party and trade unions.

Many years later, when Ali himself was applying to join the Labour Party, having stood against it in elections in the meantime, Max Morris, who had made a career for himself deriding the left in

the National Union of Teachers, joined in the witchhunt to stop him, and I wrote in *Tribune* to defend Ali's right to join, pointing out in my letter Morris's long and discreditable record. Now I find myself doing the same with Ali, who now apparently stands where Morris once did.

But let us start at the beginning, with his own myths. Far from Ali having "set up the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign" ('Francis Wheen's Diary'), *Independent*, 25 November), the chief part in its foundation was played by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, and the idea behind it came in fact from Ken Coates.

We in the IMG at the time remember Ali appearing on demonstrations along with other media notables such as Vanessa Redgrave, to our great embarrassment, in such stunts as wearing white head bands masquerading as Vietnamese mourners, and when Pat Jordan proposed Ali for membership of the IMG the whole London branch fell about laughing.

We still regarded ourselves then as a working class and entrant organisation, in spite of our student radicalism and our far from working class composition. Ali's further rise to prominence was as much a media creation as our own, though I have to admit that we went along with it.

I contributed inadvertently to it myself, for during the famous demonstration outside the *Daily Mirror* offices, the rumour went



Tariq Ali

around the crowd that he had been arrested, and it was I who shouted that they should lift him up on their shoulders to show that it was not true — producing the photograph that we have been saddled with ever since.

Although he can hardly be blamed for this piece of personality projection, he got caught up in it, such as his alleged part in the attack upon the Europa Hotel when Nixon visited London, at a time when he was in fact on the other side of Grosvenor Square.

As to his evolution, I think that Sean Matgamna hit the nail right on the head when he located his upper class radicalism in his Stalinist upbringing. He repeated as farce the tragedy of the upper class radicals of the 1930s, who joined Stalinism under the delusion that it was a

movement opposed to capitalism during its Popular Front phase. The position occupied by the CPGB in such politics from the 1960s onwards has been taken up with chic student radicalism masquerading as Trotskyism, then as now patronising a line of good causes — the Third World, feminism, ecology, and liberation for all and sundry providing the working class waits patiently at the end of the queue.

It is hardly surprising that he has followed where they trod when they realised that Stalinism was a non-starter, scrambling to denounce "the God that died" and pouring scorn on their own past.

Ali's repudiation of his own past coincides most aptly with the liquidation of the Communist Party and, apparently, of some of the Trotskyists as well, as Popular Front politics 1990s style move toward their logical conclusion. Their entering the Socialist Society, with its attempt to reduce the representation to the Labour Party and shackle it more or less permanently to the Liberals by means of proportional representation, brings them round in full circle to the CPGB of the 1930s.

Hopefully the working class movement will continue to defend its independence on every level, and they will come to grief just as the Stalinists have done. In the meantime, Ali's exit should clear the decks for talking about real class politics again.

Al Richardson
 London

The LCC's attempt to demonise SO

A poor rendition of an old tune

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Paul McGarry

Socialist Organiser's campaign against the ban placed on it by the Labour Party National Executive has been "very successful".

That's the message buried in a recent Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) mailing devoted to "examining the politics of SO".

Of course it doesn't "examine" anything seriously. It's just a witch-hunting screed in which the ex-leftists of the LCC do their bit to make the Labour Party safe for Kinnockism and, they hope, to advance their own hoped-for careers.

The five pages spin half-truths and innuendos to try to persuade CLPs and Labour Party members that SO has no place in the Party and they should "endorse the action of the NEC".

The authors try to paint a picture of SO as a "secretive" organisation run by an "autocrat", and in the Labour Party only to "win recruits". It is a poor rendition of an old tune, written by people who are either badly informed or just don't care, or both.

Take the assertion that SO's aim is to "seize power from the bourgeoisie on behalf of the workers". Even a casual knowledge of Marxism would inform the authors that revolutionary socialists of the SO school — that is, the Marxist school — believe that the working class itself must take power and create socialism. Marx put it like this:

"Revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew".

The idea that socialism can be imposed from above is something that SO has with justice denounced the crypto-Stalinists in the LCC for! While SO has tried to raise solidarity for the workers' and democratic oppositions in the Stalinist states, those LCCers used to support the Stalinist states almost uncritically. In so far as they are socialists at all, 'socialists from above' is what they are.

The LCC says that SO is organised "centrally, permitting little if any deviation... from the line". Evidently they don't read the debates in SO — recently, for example, about the Gulf crisis.

The authors reduce all political disputes to organisational questions or personal attributes. Their account is not dissimilar to a schoolbook history of the world awash with heroes and villains.

So the political split in the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV) in 1980 over the issue of rate

rises was not caused by the stupid "high rates" policy of the local government left led by Ken Livingstone, but by the 'autocratic' SO editor John O'Mahony. Alan Thornett's split from SO in 1984 was because he was denied "minority rights", although a quick glance through the files of the paper in the early '80s shows Thornett and his friends enjoyed free access to the pages of SO and took masses of space in debates which dominated the pages of SO for two years!

The authors say that the theoretical underpinnings of SO are located in the writings of the American Trotskyist leader James P Cannon. Apparently, according to the LCC, SO has adopted a dogmatic, intolerant way of functioning pioneered by Cannon.

But they can't get even the facts of a very well documented history rights. Cannon led a group in which he was sometimes in a minority, and where there was freedom for dissent and completely free access to the movement's internal bulletin.

That SO is not a single-faction sect is also well-documented. Look at the recent debates in SO on the Gulf, or proportional representation, or lesbian and gay liberation. The record does not match up to the description, "permits little if any deviation... from the line".

SO supporters take membership of the Labour Party very seriously. SO initiated the Rank and File Mobilising Committee (RFMC), which in 1980-1 grouped together the Labour left, ranging from the then Bennite LCC through to the *Militant* to fight for Labour Party democracy. Hardly the action of people who just want a few "recruits".

After giving an utterly garbled history of SO and the people involved with it, the authors conclude by calling on the Labour Party to "switch off [SO's] political life-support system that Labour presently provides", i.e. to pursue expulsions.

They pose as concerned Labour activists seeking to protect "our great Party". In fact they represent a layer of aspiring careerists who now infest the labour movement after learning their trade in the student movement.

It galls them that SO supporters have been successful in the National Union of Students. A transformed, democratic labour movement, based on the real aspirations and needs of working-class people, would cut off the oxygen to these cynical self-seekers.

The late American socialist Hal Draper remarked that John Burns, an early British trade unionist who broke with socialism to become a Liberal minister, is remembered "only because of the past he repudiated". For one of the authors who briefly flirted with SO, and is ridiculed in the briefing leading member, that's just about right.

WHAT'S ON

Friday 11 January. Nottingham Poly: anti-war meeting organised by the Labour Club and Nottingham CAWG. Speakers include Tony Benn. 1.00.

Friday 11 January. Nottingham University: anti-war meeting organised by the Labour Club and Nottingham CAWG. Speaker: Tony Benn. 2.30.

Friday 11 January. "Troops out of the Gulf". Socialist Organiser meeting. Speaker: Matt Cooper. 12.30, Hackney College.

Friday 11 January. Oxford Poly Student Union: anti-war meeting. 1.00. Speaker: Paul McGarry.

Friday 11 January. Glasgow University: anti-war meeting. 1.00. Speakers include George Galloway MP, Mark Osborn, and Jon Pike (Scottish CAWG).

Saturday 12 January. National anti-Gulf-war demonstration. Assemble noon in Hyde Park, march to rally in Trafalgar Square. Speakers include Tony Benn. Organised by CSWG.

Saturday 12 January. Manchester demonstration against war in the Gulf. Assemble 12.30 at All Saints. Speakers include Bruce Kent. Organised by CSWG.

Saturday 12 January. Glasgow demonstration against war in the Gulf. Assemble 10.30, Brown St. Organised by CSWG.

Saturday 12 January. Lambeth Labour Party Socialists social. 8.00 to 1.00 at Lambeth Town Hall.

Saturday 12 and Sunday 13

January. Convention for Democracy, organised by the Socialist Movement. Lambeth Town Hall.

Sunday 13 January. Islington Socialist Organiser meeting: "Troops out of the Gulf!" Keskidee Centre, Gifford St, London N1, 4.00.

Sunday 13 January. Haringey Socialist Organiser meeting: "Troops out of the Gulf!" Details from 071-639 7967.

Monday 14 January. Southwark Campaign Against War in the Gulf meeting. Speakers include Janine Booth, NUS national women's officer. 7.30, Southwark Town Hall.

Monday 14 January. Anti-war meeting at Manchester Pakistani Community Centre, Stockport Road. Speakers include Bernie Grant MP and Iqbal Sram.

Monday 14 January. Exmouth Community Centre — anti-war meeting. Speaker: Mark Sandell. 7.30.

Monday 14 January. "Fight the Poll Tax!" Southampton University Labour Club meeting. Speaker: Paul McGarry. 7.30.

Tuesday 15 January. Manchester University Student Union: anti-war meeting. Speakers include Mark Sandell. 1.00.

Tuesday 15 January. Anti-Gulf-war picket of army recruitment office, Derby Square, Liverpool. 12.30.

Tuesday, 15 January. Leafleting against war in the Gulf, Market Street, Manchester. 5.00.

Tuesday 15 January. York Universi-

ty Labour Club anti-war meeting. Speaker: Mark Osborn. 5.30. Followed by vigil outside York Minster at 7.00.

Tuesday 15 January. University College London Labour Club anti-war meeting. Speaker: Paul McGarry. 6.00.

Tuesday 15 January. Greenwich Committee to Stop War in the Gulf meeting. Speakers include Bernie Grant MP. 8.00 at the Cultural Centre, Bathway, London SE18.

Tuesday 15 January. Leeds anti-war committee meeting. 7.30, West Yorkshire Peace Centre.

Tuesday 15 January. Non-violent direct action against war in Parliament Square. 11.00 to midnight. Organised by the 11th Hour Committee.

Wednesday 16 January. Nottingham University "No Gulf War!" meeting. Speaker: Paul McGarry. 1.00.

Wednesday 16 January. Rally to support Taylor and Francis strikers, at T&F offices, 4 John Street, Holborn, London. 12.00 to 2.00. Speakers include Emma Colyer, NUS national secretary. Organised by the strikers.

Wednesday 16 January. "Stop the war" meeting at Bradford University. Speakers include Mark Sandell. 1.00.

Wednesday 16 January. Campaign Against War in the Gulf meeting at Newcastle Poly. 1.00.

Wednesday 16 January. Huddersfield Poly Labour Club anti-war meeting. Speaker: Mark Sandell. 7.00.

Wednesday 16 January. South

Yorkshire Area Left Unity meeting against war in the Gulf. 5.30. Sheffield Poly.

Wednesday 16 January. Campaign Against War in the Gulf London Forum. 7.00, ULU, Malet Street, London WC1.

Thursday 17 January. Anti-war meeting at Sheffield Poly. Speaker: Mark Sandell. 1.00.

Thursday 17 January. London Students Against a Gulf War. 6.30, ULU, Malet Street, London WC1.

Thursday 17 January. Debate on the Gulf crisis with speakers from Socialist Organiser and from the Free Kuwait campaign. 8.00, Luton College Student Union, Europa House, Vicarage Street, Luton.

Socialists and the trade unions A Socialist Organiser and Workers' Liberty weekend school

Saturday and Sunday, 9-10 February 1991
 Mandela Building, Manchester Poly Students' Union, Oxford Road, Manchester.

Cost: £5 waged, £2.50 unwaged. More details: phone 071-639 7965, or write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

INDUSTRIAL

CPSA officials sabotage PSA dispute

By John Moloney (CPSA, PSA, London)

The PSA strike has ground to a halt, while CPSA considers a revised offer, cooked up just before Xmas.

The dispute is about government plans to convert PSA, the department responsible for maintaining/constructing government buildings, into a government-owned company (GOCO). This would mean forcing civil servants into the GOCO and stripping them of their full civil service pension and redundancy rights.

Scots guards' strike

By Joe Motherwell, RMT guard, Scotland.

Guards at Glasgow Queen Street, members of the RMT union, struck on Monday 7 January over the bosses' failure to promote five guards to drivers.

The men involved had all passed aptitude tests — the final hurdle before becoming drivers — only to be turned down on the grounds of having alcohol-related offences on their work records. One of the guards had a clear record for over ten years, but was still refused promotion.

The RMT claimed that the refusal broke the "Traincrew Concept Agreement" worked out two years ago, and was also discriminatory, since the policy applied only to the Scottish Region.

At the heart of the dispute is management's practice of keeping individuals' records for life, and using them when and where they desire.

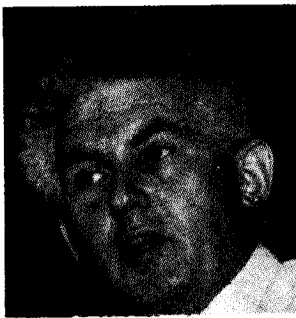
All 115 guards at Queen Street struck, after a ten-to-one ballot in favour of action. Further stoppages will take place next week, and the strike may spread throughout the RMT in Scotland.

The two unions involved in the dispute, CPSA and NUCPS, want all staff to be given a choice, whether to remain civil servants or to join the GOCO. Both unions called joint selective strike action over a 5-month period. This action hit PSA hard, costing the department hundreds of millions of pounds in lost income. Unfortunately, both union bureaucracies have played a disgraceful role in the dispute.

CPSA Deputy General Secretary John McCreadie, the leading Militant supporter in the CPSA, has been campaigning for the union to accept management's revised offer. This "new" deal is basically a three-page promise that senior management will do their best not to force staff into the GOCO. It is not a guarantee about anything.

McCreadie has two arguments for accepting the deal. One, in order to win the dispute it will require all member action and that we wouldn't win such a ballot. Secondly, that in the coming year, hundreds of civil servants from all departments will be made surplus. This will mean a crowded civil service job market. Therefore PSA staff should accept the deal and get onto the job market first, before the rush.

This is a complete reversal of the idea of leadership. The deal is not acceptable and we should campaign for the membership to reject it and vote for strike action. If the members refuse to fight, so be it. But it is not the leadership's job to recommend bad deals. Militant treat the members as a stage army to be brought on and off as they see fit.



McCreadie: pushing workers to accept "promises" from management

McCreadie has no conception of going to the membership to fight for what is right, for activating the membership, for campaigning for what is necessary, rather than going with the flow.

CPSA will be holding a members ballot on whether the deal should be accepted. On 10 January the Section Executive will meet to decide what recommendation the union will give members. Obviously all good activists — including some dissident Militant supporters who voted against McCreadie — are campaigning for a "no" recommendation.

Boost to DSS jobs fight

By Steve Hughes, NUCPS Branch Officer, Wallasey DSS

We are now into the tenth week of our dispute over staffing shortfalls brought about with the DSS's implementation of office computerisation.

The strike remains in the 11 offices across the country where NUCPS are taking action, and there are now moves nationally to ballot another four offices for action — possible two in Scotland and one each in the Midlands and Wales.

In the North West region the

DSS has been given an extra £1 million to spend on staffing by the end of March. The money comes without any commitment at all to increase or even maintain current staffing levels; basically, it will be used to pay for overtime to counter the effects of the dispute.

We are now campaigning to stop overtime. We are visiting all the offices in the country to explain our case, and where possible picketing out the people who are doing overtime.

Locally we got a real boost for the strike when the CPSA in our office balloted and won the vote to come out on all-out strike. Nationally the CPSA has not supported NUCPS by calling for joint action across the 11 offices. But they say that if local offices

can persuade them of a particular difficulty then they're prepared to sanction official local disputes — and that's what's happened in Wallasey.

The CPSA locally have wanted to come out from the start, but without an official dispute they wouldn't have got any strike pay. Now they're on 50% of net pay, and we're making every effort to make their money up.

We've pledged our regular amounts from our own strike pay, and we're setting up local levies of CPSA and NUCPS members and doing collections. We've also had great support from the Wirral Trades Council and local unions, with Wirral NALGO promising a regular donation.

In Brief

Michelin and Philips both plan to effectively cut their workers' pay this year by delaying negotiations on annual pay rises. This is the first set of 'pay raises' since the slump of the early '80s.

Actors have started to refuse work on TV commercials as part of an industrial dispute over fees for repeat showings.

Asian workers in Leicester earn 20% less than white workers. According to a city council survey Asian workers tend to be concentrated in the low paid, non-union hosiery and knitwear industry.

Manchester's Longsight depot beefed up their one-day-a-week action by winning solidarity from other maintenance workers. At least 500 of the depot's 800-strong workforce refused to cross a picket line. Within a week management had reprieved Longsight and Stafford depots which, up until then, had faced closure.

One of the contenders hoping to replace Eric Hammond as general secretary of the EETPU has made a clear call for the union to rejoin the TUC. Danny Carrigan, a national officer of the union, says he wants to see the union "brought in from the cold". Hardly proof that the EETPU has prospered during its three years outside the TUC.

Solidarity action from railworkers has forced management to retreat in the long-running overhead line dispute.

In late December, strikers at

Manchester's Longsight depot beefed up their one-day-a-week action by winning solidarity from other maintenance workers. At least 500 of the depot's 800-strong workforce refused to cross a picket line. Within a week management had reprieved Longsight and Stafford depots which, up until then, had faced closure.

Nevertheless, the reprieve is for four years only and another depot, Bedford, is still set to close. More action is needed for victory. An all-out strike ballot should be organised immediately.

Sacked for fighting for a shorter working week

By an AEU steward

Still relatively fresh from his stunning victory in the AEU presidential election (stunning, that is, because of the incredibly pathetic number of votes he polled — just over 60% on a 17% return, or about one out of ten members) Bill Jordan is currently plotting the winding up of the shorter working week campaign.

But with the recession starting to bite, now is not the time to retreat. Now is as good a time as any to argue and fight for shorter hours as an answer to the bosses' attempt to implement short-time work or redundancies. The bosses want us to pay for the mess they've put us in. We shouldn't accept their arguments.

We shouldn't let Brother Bill

leave those currently pursuing shorter hours in the lurch either. Currently, sixty five white collar workers have been sacked at South Wales Switchgears after a nine-week strike. 800 workers at William Press on Tyneside have rejected strings attached to their claim for a 37 hour week. The 37 hour week has been agreed at Rolls Royce. The hours issue is being taken up outside engineering, too. 5,000 process workers are claiming a 37 hour week at Rowntree Mackintosh. 640 craft workers there have already settled.

So now is the time to stand firm. Delegates to the forthcoming Confed Conference in February to discuss the campaign should not be taken in by Jordan's inevitable "the success of our campaign..." speech. If 'Phase 1' of the campaign is nearing its conclusion, then 'Phase 2' should start without delay. We can't wait until 1995 or whenever!

NALGO 1991 pay claim

The campaign starts now!

By Tony Dale, Manchester NALGO

The National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) sets to lead a big battle this year over local authority white collar workers' pay.

The union's Local Government Committee is proposing a claim for a 12 per cent increase and a minimum wage of £9,330.

In 1990 NALGO submitted a flat rate claim for £1,500 increase. When the employers responded with a 9.4% offer, a delegate conference voted to accept. The Local Government Committee now opposes the idea of a flat-rate claim.

They cite "an adverse reaction" to last year's claim. But where? The members who benefit more from percentage rises than flat-rate rises are mostly senior managers.

A 12 per cent rise would mean

£2,880 a year for managers at the top of the pay scales. A worker at the top of Scale 4 would get £1,314. All workers up to the top of Scale 6 would get more from a £1650 flat rate rise than from a 12% rise.

But any pay dispute will be won by the determination and militancy of that vast majority of NALGO members who are on Scale 6 and below.

The £9,330 minimum wage figure in the claim is taken from the Council of Europe "Decency Threshold". Earlier this year it was estimated that 250,000 fell below that threshold.

There must be no settlement in 1991 without winning a decent minimum wage.

Districts and branches have been given a deadline of 11 January to respond to the Local Government Committee's proposals. But even the committee's proposal will mean confrontation with the employers. The Tories have announced a 7% pay norm for public sector workers — with inflation at 11%.

To win we must prepare for industrial action.

Council round-up

South Tyneside: The Employment Appeals Tribunal is due to rule on whether NALGO can take union disciplinary action against strikers. Following the 1989 pay strike South Tyneside branch expelled 9 members who crossed picket lines throughout the dispute. The lines took NALGO to court, suing for compensation and damages under the Tory anti-union laws.

Tower Hamlets: 250 NALGO workers have been on strike for 3 weeks over the sacking of a race worker for excessive sickness. The strike follows a long-standing dispute over sickness procedure.

Greenwich: Talks are due in the 9 month old strike by Greenwich council workers over poll tax collection. At present 200 workers are involved in the action. If no settlement is offered NALGO is planning to escalate the strike.

Wandsworth: Wandsworth's Tory Council is considering proposals to prevent NALGO deducting union dues direct from wage packets. This anti-union attack is being debated by the council on 10 January. The action is in retaliation for NALGO's campaigning against cuts.

Westminster: Industrial action is pending over vacant posts. This follows a one-day strike in Social Services in December.

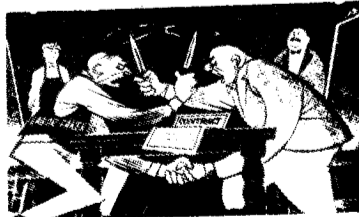
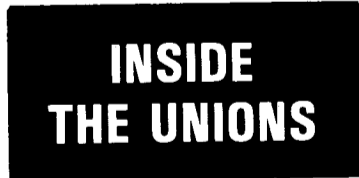
Big battle looms

Brace yourselves for a renewed outbreak of fratricidal warfare in the TGWU over the next few months. Britain's biggest union has been riven by a sometimes incomprehensible but always bitter behind-the-scenes struggle ever since Ron Todd was elected general secretary six years ago.

The occasion for the new intensification of hostilities is the forthcoming retirement of Todd and the election of his successor. Todd wants his successor in place before this summer's Biennial Delegate Conference and although the date of the ballot has yet to be announced, the two main candidates are already lined up and both are busy with unofficial electioneering.

Todd's favoured successor and the candidate of the union's amorphous 'Broad Left' is the present assistant general secretary, Bill Morris. Against him there is the man Todd defeated in 1985, the union's Welsh Regional Secretary, George Wright.

Wright is backed by the union's shadowy but influential right-wing faction which controls a number of key regions — notably Wales and the



By Sleeper

Midlands. This secretive faction has been waging an unrelenting war against Todd and the Broad Left majority on the National Executive Council for years.

They have close links with the industrial correspondents of a number of national newspapers — an advantage

they exploit to the full and which accounts for the remarkably detailed (if one-sided) coverage of the union's affairs that regularly appears in the press. Bill Morris, who happens to be black, has been subjected to a particularly nasty whispering campaign within sections of the union for several years. No-one, of course, knows where these whispers originate from...

Underlying the forthcoming battle is a serious financial situation that faces the union; there was a £9 million deficit of expenditure over contribution income in 1990. The right blame the NEC majority for not addressing this problem seriously until the end of last year when a fairly draconian package of economy measures was announced. There is a small grain of truth in the right's criticism — but, as usual, they want things both ways: Todd and the NEC are criticised for not addressing the financial problems...Then, when they do, their proposed economies are criticised as well.

The other crucial underlying issue concerns the union's role in the Labour Party and how it uses its substantial (1.25 million) block vote. Under Todd, the TGWU has been something of a brake on Kinnow's efforts to dump the

last vestiges of "socialism" from Labour's programme. TGWU policy diverges from the Labour leadership's on several crucial matters, notably in calling for the complete repeal of anti-union legislation, and in standing by unilateral nuclear disarmament.

A victory for the TGWU right would remove a major obstacle to the Kinnowites in these and other matters, even though Todd has often been fairly half-hearted in fighting for union policies at Labour Party conference while the TGWU representative on Labour's NEC — Eddie Haigh — almost always votes with the Labour leadership.

Bill Morris is, if anything, even less "hard" politically than Todd. Paradoxically, George Wright is quite capable of putting on a "left" face when it suits him. The forthcoming election is likely to be a re-run of the 1984/5 farce when Todd bent over backwards to prove how "moderate" he was, while Wright paraded his "radical" credentials. Nevertheless, a victory for Wright would represent a big set-back for the left within the union and the Labour Party and mark a significant gain for some people much more reactionary than George Wright would have you believe...

SOCIALIST Hospitals won't cope with Gulf casualties

ORGANISER

When leader writers for papers like the *Independent* suggest it will be a 'just war' in the Gulf, they

By Dr George Davey Smith

always forget to mention the dead and the wounded.

The Department of Health and the Defence Ministry have produced a 'Gulf Contingency Plan, NHS Planning and Procedure Guide' which outlines their thinking on what to do with the wounded. By assuming that the war will last five days at the maximum, the document obscures the full hopelessness of the preparations. Still, 18,500 casualties are anticipated, and all the Regional Health Authorities in England have been put on stand-by to receive these.

The NHS is currently unable to cope with its routine workload, let alone a massive increase on this scale, 2,300 hospital beds having been lost in London alone during the past year.

Dr Douglas Holstock, a consultant at the Ashford General Hospital in Middlesex, told the *Observer*: "If we have to deal with any extra emergencies, bearing in mind soldiers are likely to require intensive care, I just do not see how we will be able to cope. I don't think it's alarmist to envisage a situation where normal emergencies will have to be dealt with by local GPs or even at home."

According to the plan, serious casualties will be kept in the Gulf for four days before transfer to Britain, where they will be met at the civilian airports by 'reception teams' of doctors and nurses.

This suggests a strategy of 'triage' both in the Gulf and upon arrival in

Finish off the poll tax!

Cate Murphy surveys the growing resistance to the poll tax

Radical reform of the poll tax was promised by John Major in his leadership bid. Now safely ensconced in No. 10 he admits this was mere electioneering talk.

No radical changes look likely this side of a general election. At best, a bit more cash; enough to see the Tories through the May council elections and into power for a fourth time.

That's their calculation anyway. Abolition of the tax may be a manifesto pledge to tempt voters to back the Tories. But John Major has ruled out abolition in this government's lifetime.

Asked what his response would be if Michael Heseltine's review recommended scrapping the tax, the Prime Minister declared: "I am sure he won't suggest that. The situation won't arise".

While pressure — from both Tory backbenchers and some ministers — continues for a solution to the massive unpopularity of the poll tax, the Treasury is fighting plans for more cash.

At the same time the Tories are pumping billions of pounds daily into the Gulf to support the war drive in defence of oil profits. And the coffers will be emptied to fund mass slaughter when the shooting begins.

Poll tax bills look set to average £400 next year. And the government will employ its draconian capping powers to impose massive cuts in services.

Cuts won't keep bills down. Over the past 18 months Strathclyde council has pushed through cuts of £70 million; but the poll tax bills will rise by almost £80.

The message from the Tories is clear: pay up, or face court action, the bailiffs, wage and benefit arrearments, even prison. This is a message Labour councils are ready to heed. Daily, thousands of liability orders are pushed through the courts by Labour councils; bailiffs sent on to working class estates.

But as more and more working class people are hounded for non-payment, resistance grows. In Scotland, non-payment levels are higher in the second year of the tax than in the first.

A survey by the Rowntree Federation found three quarters of people thought their bills were too high; half "much too high". Discontentment runs high throughout Britain, the survey found.



Unemployed 21-year old building worker, Bryan Wright, was jailed just before Christmas for refusing to pay his poll tax. Grantham's Tory council sent him to gaol for 21 days but he was released early to avoid

the political embarrassment of keeping him in over Christmas. The picture shows Doris and Ron Wright leading a demonstration calling for their son's release.

Council workers throughout the country have taken action in defence of jobs and services and against the cuts.

As the date for setting budgets approaches, the campaign must be stepped up. Labour councils should capitalise on the ever-increasing hostility and stand with non-payers against the Tories. We must campaign for Labour councils not to

pursue non-payers through the courts; not to send in the bailiffs, or authorise wage or benefit deductions.

Where local council workers take action against the cuts and poll tax, Labour councils must stand with them — and fight for increased central funding, not pass on Tory cuts to working class people.

Major's honeymoon period is

over; the Tories brief rise in popularity is waning. Now is not the time to back off, but for Labour to go on the offensive to campaign for a general election now, not merely to put out a call, then back off.

In our Labour Parties and trade unions, as well as in the community, we must build a campaign that can force the Tories out.

"The NHS is currently unable to cope with its routine workload, let alone a massive increase... 2,300 hospital beds have been lost in London alone during the past year."

Britain. The casualties seen as salvageable are selected by the triage team for treatment while others — who could possibly be treated, but for whom there are not sufficient resources — are left to die.

A circular sent to senior NHS staff instructed them not to give the media the impression that hospital beds are being kept for military casualties, or that civilian health services will suffer in consequence. As usual, press and broadcasting agencies happily join in with the campaign of misinformation — thus on the Today programme of 9 January the ludicrous suggestion that military hospitals could cope alone with victims of biological warfare was presented as a news item.

The Cannon Street train crash demonstrates the actual readiness of the NHS to deal with emergencies. Despite what was seen as a well ordered and efficient response, the injured had to be examined on trolleys, even in Bart's, which is one of the hospitals on stand-by for the Gulf and the accident caused a 'squeeze' on the number of beds in Bart's, according to Dr David Skinner, the accident and emergency department consultant.

Dr Skinner said: "It's regrettable for the patients, but to us it's timely as it is a tune up for the Gulf." This 'tune up' demonstrates that the NHS will not be able to cope with war, which will be even more 'regrettable for the patients'.