

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

South Africa: Violence in the townships



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Telecom engineers' strike

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Liverpool Militant and racism: the truth.

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After police raid BBC

Meet your next



Photo: Martin Shakeshaft.

newsreader!



Thatcher

According to Thatcherism, 'socialism' is all about an Eastern European-style impersonal state, while capitalism is all about 'freedom'.

The Special Branch raid on the BBC shows how far the Tories and the British Establishment really believe in democratic freedom. For the sake of 'national security', any freedom can be sacrificed.

Trades unions can be abolished in GCHQ, Sarah Tisdall can be jailed, Clive

Ponting can be prosecuted, and now the BBC itself, the voice of respectability, can be raided to seize its series covering the Zircon satellite.

Assault

The supposed enemy, the USSR, of course already knows about the Zircon satellite — and many other 'state secrets'. The people denied access to information are the British public.

And to keep us in ig-

norance, the Tories and the Special Branch will freely undermine the media freedom that they are supposed to hold so sacred.

The assault on Auntie Beeb shows how far the Tories have gone. Norman Tebbit has alleged that the BBC is a hotbed of Marxist radicalism. Programmes like 'The Monocled Mutineer' have provoked torrents of outrage.

Anyone who has ever been involved in any sort of protest

or strike will find the idea that the BBC is biased to the left rather odd. The mass media routinely slanders the left and the working class movement. Mildly left-wing magazines like the New Statesman are minority exceptions.

But the Tories are building up a climate more and more like that of the '50s USA, when what was previously considered routine mild liberal

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WORLD Brief

LEBANON

Reagan goes to war?

Is the United States planning a military strike at Lebanon? Over the past week, in obvious connection with the current 'hostage crisis', there has been a big build up of US forces in the Eastern Mediterranean. The number of Marines in the area has been doubled, to approximately 3,800.

Meanwhile the plight of the hostages continues, with representatives of the Islamic groups threatening to kill all of them if the US does attack.

The disappearance of the Archbishop of Canterbury's envoy Terry Waite, is undoubtedly connected to the USA's recent escapades in the area. During the revelations about 'Contragate', it turned out that Colonel North, the man at the centre of the gun-running to the Nicaraguan Contras, had connections with Waite. His kidnap under these circumstances was almost inevitable.

Waite's disappearance is certainly the fault of Reagan for implicating him in the whole sordid affair.

And sending in the gun boats is not going to help the situation. From 1982 to 1984, the US, along with other Western powers, had its marines stationed in Lebanon as part of a multi-national force. Not only did these troops fail to bring peace to the war-torn country — they spent most of their time bombarding Lebanese villages in



an effort to quell resistance.

The US, or any other imperialist power will not prove any more helpful for Lebanon now or in the future than they have in the past. Indeed, a big part of the problems Lebanon has faced since it broke up in civil war over ten years ago has been too much outside interference, as each foreign force — from the US to Israel to Syria, has attempted to get whatever it can from Lebanon's crisis.

Sections of the Lebanese working class pointed the way forward last year when they crossed the Moslem-Christian (and

various other) sectarian divides to unite in strike action in protest at the endless communal conflict. For sure the Lebanese working class will not be able to show the way out of the crisis unless it can answer the society-wide issues that have tormented Lebanon. In particular a solution is needed to the Israeli-Palestine conflict, which lies behind the wars in Lebanon to a considerable extent.

But Reagan can do nothing to help. Any steps towards increased US involvement should be forcefully opposed by the international labour movement.

PHILIPPINES: AQUINO'S CONSTITUTION

The referendum on a new constitution in the Philippines has resulted in a big vote of confidence in the Presidency of Corazon Aquino.

As we go to press, it seems that there has been an 80% vote in favour of the new constitution, out of a high turn-out of voters. This demonstration of popular support for Mrs

Aquino follows last week's abortive coup attempt — the second in recent months — and the extent of it will probably deter would-be conspirators for the foreseeable future.

The constitutional referendum was attacked from both the right and the left. Among other reforms, the constitution

will keep Aquino herself in power until 1992.

Aside from the coup attempt, Aquino has faced other serious tests over recent weeks. Her soldiers gunned down 18 peasants demonstrating for land reform in mid-January; and the apportioning of blame has led to a split even with the usually pro-Aquino Cardinal Sin, the country's main religious leader. In addition, the 'Communist' guerrillas recently broke off peace negotiations with the government.

Nevertheless, Aquino's regime seems, especially in the aftermath of the failed coup, to be in a reasonably stable condition. Aquino can continue to expect support from the United States.

For the Filipino workers and peasants, this will not mean the democracy and justice they had hoped for after the fall of President Marcos. Aquino has stalled on much needed land reform; and the new constitution is undoubtedly undemocratic, despite the big vote in favour of it.

What is needed is an independent movement of the workers and peasants that can challenge both the right wing trigger-happy generals and the inadequacies of Aquino's government.

APARTHEID DETAINEES

Since the declaration of the State of Emergency in June last year, South African trade unions have been fighting for full pay for all detainees.

Despite 'liberal' rhetoric, many British and US multinationals have not been prepared to pay wages in full to detainees or their families.

The experience of three detained Cadbury's workers, members of the Food and Allied Workers' union, shows that international solidarity action can help these workers.

The South African Labour Bulletin reports:

"The Transport and General Workers Union in Britain, to which the British Cadbury-Schweppes workers belong, took up the matter

immediately and sent a telex to the management at Cadbury's London office.

"... In a memo to a shop steward less than a week later, the company said it had 'reconsidered' its position on the payment of detainees, saying it would continue to pay detained workers on the sick pay rate, but for 180 days instead of for four months, and would pay workers the difference in their wages on their release provided they were not convicted of an offence..."

"The shop steward said the workers were satisfied with the company's offer but were surprised 'they were only sympathetic to workers in detention after the British unions had complained' "

Shut down Fleet St!

By Carol Hall (MoC SOGAT clerical, in personal capacity)

THE leading officials of the News International striking chapels took a long stride forward on Friday 30 January.

They voted overwhelmingly to work to achieve a 24 hour shutdown of Fleet Street, and they called for an end to the handling of all Murdoch products — Elle magazine, colour pre-prints which are still used by the rest of the trade, and copy transferred across the wire to Wapping from the press agencies.

They are out to secure the non-handling of Murdoch's scab papers throughout the London area, to end cooperation regarding Times subscriptions, to build for bigger responses to the marches on Wednesday and Saturday from the London printing houses, and to avoid a sell-out by insisting that chapel officials are involved directly in future negotiations.

Whether or not these more positive policies will be accepted by the general secretary or indeed the National Executive Committee, is immaterial. The fact is that more and more strikers are seeing the need to directly involve Fleet Street in this epic struggle, and it is the job of us all to convince our fellow-members of the need for the utmost solidarity.

Despite the loss during the last year of thousands of jobs in London, and the erosion of terms of conditions, if Murdoch gains a straight victory this will look a children's tea-party. All the other proprietors will tear up agreements in their haste to compete with Murdoch.

Maxwell

Already Maxwell is not going to use the traditional London wholesale for the distribution of his London Daily News. Maxwell has a contract with National Carriers. The drivers being recruited are, it is strongly rumoured, being asked the question: 'If the News does not take off, will you carry the Mirror, People, etc?'

Shades of Murdoch! And Christopher Pole-Carew, the Wapping henchman, is the latest person enlisted. As if Maxwell wasn't bad enough on his own!

At this moment the MoC of the clerical chapel is suspended, along with the secretary of the SOGAT federated house chapel, for allegedly putting out subversive literature, i.e. challenging Maxwell's anti-union green paper.

Many printworkers are questioning if there is a Maxwell-Murdoch connection. Both, it is known, are out to break the print unions as we understand them, one by keeping the unions out, the other by more devious tactics — destroying the morale and the spirit of the trade unionists, using the courts at every turn to block any industrial action. This Maxwell calls the British way.

At the chapel officials' conference, the general secretary, Brenda Dean, told us that the boycott campaign is not working, and in any event the union has very limited funds to carry on with it. This after a year of telling us that it was the avenue that we had to go down, and it was really knocking News International's circulation figures.

Further, our Brenda explained that naughty Mr Murdoch was taking us back to court owing to several rushes to the gate at Wapping, stopping the movement to and from the plant on each occasion for several hours. The NEC had voted against her proposal to discipline members via the use of the News International scab surveillance video camera.

The crunch issue then came up — sequestration. Both Dean and Dubbins made it abundantly clear that under no circumstances whatsoever



The brother of jailed printer Mike Hicks calls for his release from prison. Photo Jez Coulson, IFL.

would they be prepared to take on the state. SOGAT's general secretary told the audience that the Biennial Delegate Conference decision had been taken, and that body was sovereign, so the policy on this subject was not for debate.

Paradox

No, she firmly said, we will not go in for sequestration. The paradox is that Dean also stated quietly that the dispute will go on. The danger is obvious that under pressure from the judiciary Dean will call the dispute off rather than go into sequestration, or she will give guarantees that demonstrations to Wapping are off the agenda.

Whichever way she decides, it spells big trouble for us strikers, unless of course another deal remarkably similar to the last one comes around.

One important aspect needs to be kept in everyone's mind. Although Norman Willis is to be allowed off the hook by Dean and Dubbins regarding the EETPU motion 11 at the TUC Congress, the TUC also committed itself to full support of all demonstrations to the Wapping plant. Will there be another TUC General Council side-step, a recall TUC conference on the matter?

Dubbins can't yet make his mind up, despite all the rhetoric, about disobeying the TUC parliament. He sits on his hands and does absolutely nothing, unwilling to lead a fight on this fundamental issue. After all, he only moved the resolution, and told us after it was accepted 'We now have the TUC fully behind us'

Now he sings a different tune. Truthfully, he states, we can't do anything. Willis can do more or less as he pleases.

What nonsense! If Dean and Dubbins really wanted to, a big campaign could be launched. For the simple fact is that the NGA and SOGAT are still powerful trade unions in the TUC. Moreover, they are both in the communications industry, along with the NUJ, which supports the proposition.

A determined struggle on this issue could do the trade union movement a power of good, because at the end of the day the TUC is bound to split, but the way things are developing it will be on Hammond's terms.

So the News International dispute is on the threshold. My way is very clear. I want all Fleet Street out and then a national print strike. That is the only way to stop the likes of Murdoch and Maxwell.

Courts

The other way is to capitulate to the Tory courts, tying the strikers' feet as well as their hands in order that Murdoch's juggernaut can roll all over us.

The union militants must fight for the first option. That way, the strikers will be rewarded for the brave and courageous year-long battle.

Finally, regarding the police riot on 24 January. If anybody has any evidence or information on police brutality, or on the throwing of the red dye, could they please send it to Caxton House, 13-16 Borough Rd, London SE1.

Viraj must stay!

Viraj Mendis is now entering his eighth week in sanctuary in a Manchester church, faced with deportation if he leaves the building.

The Viraj Mendis Campaign has built strong support among the local community and the labour movement and is attempting to pressurise Douglas Hurd to reverse Waddington's initial decision to deport Viraj.

The Labour Party NEC passed unanimously a motion condemning the deportation order and the campaign is now attempting to get CLPs to pass model motions in support.

The Labour Party NEC should send a delegation to the sanctuary and Gerald Kaufman, the Shadow

RACE AND CLASS

Home Secretary and a Manchester MP should be more vocal in his support for Viraj.

A national conference is planned for 11/12 April to discuss building a national campaign against immigration controls and racism in general. Contact VMDC on 061-234 3168. Send messages of support and donations: VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Manchester M15 5AL.

The politics that grow out of the barrel of a gun

THE SHOOTING of Mary McGlinchey last Saturday night as she was bathing her two small sons is enough to freeze the heart with horror for the children and at the downright savagery of the act.

Mary McGlinchey was the wife of Irish National Liberation Army leader Dominic McGlinchey — now in jail in Southern Ireland — and was herself an activist in the INLA. Her death seems to have been an episode in an armed faction fight between sections of the INLA, some of whom reportedly want to wind up the organisation.

Mary McGlinchey was the third to die in the INLA's internecine warfare. The signs are that there will be

others.

This highlights the tragic evolution of the INLA and of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, IRSP, with which it has been connected. Founded in 1975 by Seamus Costello, who was to be murdered in 1977 by the military wing of the present-day 'Workers Party', the IRSP proclaimed the principles of 'James Connolly's socialism'.

Instead it and the INLA have become increasingly desperate groups which combine talk of socialism and Republicanism with reckless militarist activities and sometimes with sectarian assassinations of Protestants. A section of the INLA was responsible for the killing of three Protestants during a church service in Armagh in 1983.

EDITORIAL

Where the Provisional IRA is restrained by the conventions of Republicanism, and the principle that the Protestants are ultimately Irish too, the IRSP/INLA has taken licence from its eclectic 'Marxism' to adopt ruthless attitudes supposedly derived from the revolutionary wars in China, Vietnam, Algeria, etc. In

practice it adds up to a reckless nihilism.

There is no reason to doubt that the following picture of the INLA, by Jim Cusack in the Irish Times, is accurate. He is explaining the point of view of those, recently released from jail, who want to wind up the INLA.

"These ex-prisoners have, for almost two years, been proposing that the INLA be wound up and a 'broad anti-imperialist front' be set up alongside the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein. They regarded the campaign which was being continued outside the prison by their former associates as 'degenerating' and being inspired largely by personal interests.

The past four years have been largely marked by internal killings,

sectarianism, and extensive racketeering. Some 20 Protestant civilians have been killed, as have 10 INLA or associated figures and four Catholics, including two children in a Divis Flats bomb and a 16 year old boy in the Ormeau area.

Thirteen British soldiers were killed by the INLA, 11 in the Ballykelly pub bombing of December 1982, which also claimed the lives of six young women and a teenage boy. They have also killed six RUC members, three UDR members, and one member of the Territorial Army."

The central lesson of the INLA story is this: it is not possible to combine socialist aspirations with the sort of gun-centred militarist 'politics' which came to dominate the INLA. Militarism wins out.

Photo Reflex



Above: Orangeists attack the RUC. Right: John O'Mahony makes a point. Left: part of the audience.



Labour should campaign against the Tory attacks

Meet your next newsreader

From page 1

dissent was called 'treachery' and a sell-out to 'communism'.

It is in fact the Tories who are dragging us down the road towards an 'Eastern European' state — a system where the State can control what the public gets to know.

The Labour Party should wage a massive campaign against the Tory attack on democratic rights. But unfortunately Neil Kinnock has been far less outspoken on the subject than the leaders of the Alliance!

When the Zircon affair first surfaced, Kinnock criticised the government...for failing to suppress the New Statesman report efficiently enough!

The BBC should show its 'Secret Society' series. And we also need a campaign to get rid of the Special Branch and the Official Secrets Act.

Project Zircon should be scrapped and the money spent instead on hospitals or housing.

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Debating Ireland

"Our proposal for a federal united Ireland is not advice to the British government or the United Nations. It is part of a transitional programme for Ireland, a programme to unite the Irish working class", argued Socialist Organiser editor John O'Mahony at a debate in London last Friday, 30th.

"The key problem in Ireland", he said, "is the existence of an Irish minority with a distinct national identity — the one million Protestants. British interference has worsened and complicated this problem, but British withdrawal now, on its own, would not resolve it.

"It would lead not to Irish national self-determination but to an attempt

Socialist Organiser debated the issue of Ireland with Workers' Power and Workers' Press (WRP) on Friday 30 January in London. Martin Thomas reports.

at 'self-determination' by the Protestants and bloody civil war. The Catholics could not defeat the Protestants in that civil war, even if it were desirable.

"To achieve a socialist or a democratic solution in Ireland we need a united working class. And for that we need a programme of consistent democracy, on the basis of which both Catholic and Protestant workers can honestly assure each other that they have no wish to oppress or subjugate the other community".

Keith Hassell of Workers' Power saw things differently. SO, he said, is telling an untruth when it claims to support the oppressed Northern Ireland Catholics, because it makes concessions to the Protestants.

And those concessions will not work. Keith Hassell interpreted SO's proposals for local autonomy for the Protestant areas as necessarily mean-

ing a *bourgeois* federal Ireland. Instead of that, he said, we need some *communist* propaganda directed at the Protestant workers.

Those workers must be "confronted with the awesome might" of the anti-Unionist working class, and forced to give up their privileges for the sake of class unity. Only after that can any sort of federalism be useful.

A further point of difference for Workers' Power was the evaluation of Southern Ireland. John O'Mahony had argued that Southern Ireland, with its refusal to support Britain in World War 2 or to join NATO, and its autonomous role in the EEC, is not a semi-colony but an independent capitalist state.

Keith Hassell insisted that Southern Ireland is a semi-colony, "prevented from any form of independent national development". It may be that British investment no longer dominates, but Ireland's big

foreign debt still defines it as a semi-colony dominated by a 'coalition of imperialist powers'.

The British Army in the North is potentially a force to intervene against Southern workers, and so the national struggle against Britain is central throughout Ireland.

Gerry Downing of the Workers' Revolutionary Party was the third speaker in the debate. He explained that his group is rethinking its ideas. Its predecessor, the SLL, distorted reality by talking about revolutionary Catholic/Protestant workers' unity as an accomplished fact in Northern Ireland and demanding a 'workers' and peasants' government at Stormont.

Much has to be rethought. But the basic principle is to support the Irish national struggle. A civil war is unfortunately probable, but there is no way round that. So Gerry Downing agreed more with Workers' Power than with Socialist Organiser.

Speakers from the floor included representatives of the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Spartacist League. Well over 100 people attended the debate, which was one of a series being held around the country. It is the first time since the early 1970s that Ireland has been debated much on the British left.

THE DEBATE ON IRELAND

A unique confrontation between views on the left. What sort of united Ireland could win the support of the Protestant workers? What way to working class unity?

Workers' Liberty no. 5 is available, price £1 plus 18p postage, from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

GRAFFITI

NHS

Waiting lists grow

Safe in their hands? National Health Service waiting lists grew by 66,000 to 803,000, between 1981 and 1985, while the number of hospital beds fell by 30,000 to 421,000. But private hospitals have done well. Their number of beds rose by 17,000 to 51,000.

(Figures from the government's annual publication 'Social Trends').



Photomontage: Peter Kennard

86 HOURS

Which workers work an 86-hour week? 86 hours is the total average work time for women who are full-time wage workers. Since this average also covers single women, daughters living at home, etc., wage-work plus housework must make up something like a 90 hour week for the many housewives who are also in full-time waged work.

Housewives who are not in waged work do an average of 77 hours housework a week, according to 'Social Trends'. Part-time women workers do an average of 61 hours housework on top of their 22 hours wage-work.

For male workers, the figures are: 78 hours

CARS

"December and January have been bumper buying months for second-hand Porsche dealers in London — and prices of this make of used car are falling".

After the Big Bang, competition is tightening belts in the City, according to the Economist magazine. The profits of brokers and jobbers are down from £69 million a month to £35 million.

Weaker firms will be going bust, and stronger firms will be going into riskier business. More Guinness-type scandals to come?



Why 'Perdition' is a racist play

Your editorial (SO 300), condemning the Royal Court's decision to ban Jim Allen's play "Perdition" raises several important questions for those socialists, such as SO, who are involved in opposing anti-semitism.

The play was staged with the intention of making a political point and it is this — rather than artistic merit — that caused such resistance to it being banned. This was admitted by many involved in the production, with Jim Allen actually affirming the former point.

You are at pains to stress that Allen has a long involvement in Trotskyist and anti-racist organisations and is not an anti-semitic. This may well be the case but it does not escape from the truth that the play embraces some of the strands so inherent in classical anti-semitic ideology.

"Collective guilt" is an anti-semitic theme running through a play which is full of gross historical distor-

tions and endless lies. It is claimed that Zionists sent Jews, or allowed them to be sent, to the gas chambers as a way of furthering their ambition to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This is not simply a delegitimisation of Zionism; furthermore, by implication, it offloads some of the responsibility for the Holocaust into the hands of Zionists (and, by implication, the vast majority of the Jewish people).

Right

Holocaust revisionism was an evil previously confined to the gutters of the fascist right until Lenni Brenner imported such ideas into (part of) the left's thinking. This play goes further than Brenner; accusations of Zionist unwillingness to resist and complicity in the Nazis' heinous crimes abound; Zionist-Nazi equations are made, such as with the sick idea that "blood and soil" was a Zionist, as well as Nazi, slogan.

Such Holocaust revisionism minimalises the significance of the event which serves as the greatest indictment of the evils of fascism and racism.

This is something that all those involved in the struggle against racism should be fundamentally opposed to. Further, it seeks to marginalise the Jewish experience, adding nothing but grist to the mills of anti-semites in this country, both on the right and the left.

As socialists, we should be in support of those denying a platform to racist ideas. Jim Allen may not be an overt, nor organised, anti-semitic, but many of the ideas developed in "Perdition" most certainly are anti-semitic. Now that SO has recognised much of modern day "anti-Zionism" for what it really is, our response to it should be the same to that which is applied to other forms of racism.

Yours fraternally,
GERRY ALLEN
Reading

NOLS: the left must unite!

I am indeed the 'ex-student visitor' mentioned in Polly Vittorini's press release. But I moved not that Campaign Student change its policy on the Middle East, but merely that it ditch support for a democratic secular state in Palestine as a criterion for backing NOLS candidates.

That provision made the criteria too stringent. If applied to NEC elections, it would preclude support for Benn, Heffer and Richardson and many others. I believe that, whether they consciously realise it or not, Campaign Student's motive behind promoting support for a democratic secular state as a condition for support was to split the Left.

The non-socialist side of the Labour Party never has any trouble presenting a united front and thereby giving an appearance of competence. As an illustration: many of the Right disagree passionately over Britain's membership of the EEC. This never means separate slates.

The same unity, motivated by the same overwhelming priority being to defeat the Left, manifests itself in the politics of the careerists in NOLS. I believe that the Left should be similarly single-minded.

All the more so given that the 'Sawyer proposals' to reorganise the Party's youth section aim to give Labour students a substantial say in



March on Pentonville Prison to free students. Photo: Andrew Wiard.

electing the youth representative on the NEC.

Neither Campaign Student nor SSiN are blameless for the current disarray. Campaign Student have put an astonishing emphasis on the Palestine issue, for all its importance in NUS terms, and Polly's vote for an LCC candidate in recent elections is beyond comprehension.

SSiN should not have got Socialist Organiser to veto a Labour Left Liaison rally taking place at NOLS conference because the Women's Action Committee refused to have SSiN on the platform, nor should they run

candidates against the Black Sections candidates.

Ideally, I would like to see a NOLS slate consisting of the Pollys and Kingsleys of this world, as well as the Michele Carlises and Jane Ashworths. A slate prepared to unite on the issues where there is agreement (which, although Socialist Action and Socialist Organiser will hate to admit it, is the vast majority of issues), and tolerate each other's differences (and the right to campaign on these differences) where there is dissent. But the acrimony and vitriol of recent meetings show that this is utopian.

Throughout the last nine months I have tried to promote the cause of Left unity in Labour's youth and student sections, only to have my hopes shattered by first one Trotskyist sect, then the other. Is this what the great man really wanted? I am resigned to the fact that arguing the case for a united Left in this context is in reality a matter of trying to reason with pre-programmed robots.

DANNY NICOL

Jane Ashworth comments:

Dear Danny,

You say we would "never admit" that there is agreement between Socialist Organiser and Socialist Action on "the vast majority of issues".

But in my article last week I too expressed the opinion that the only plank in Campaign Student's platform which divides it fundamentally from SO students (and from most of SSiN which is much broader than SO) is the question of Israel and the Palestinian Arabs — the issue you accuse Socialist Action of artificially overemphasising for the purpose of splitting the student left.

SSiN is broad enough — and democratic enough — to accommodate Campaign Student. Socialist Action's ultra-factional Campaign Student isn't big enough, or broad enough, or democratic enough to accommodate SSiN. That's the problem.

Unfair to Stoppard

Belinda Weaver's review of Tom Stoppard's 'Squaring the Circle' was unfair.

Of course, Stoppard's ideological motives were right-wing. But in dealing with the realities of Eastern European societies, 'right wing' opinion often simply tells the truth: that these societies are horrendously undemocratic, bureaucratically (and so incompetently) ruled — and less 'free' in the liberal sense than Western European societies.

And Stoppard's stylised and stagey account did, essentially, tell this truth. Belinda's criticism that it sounded like a Daily Mail editorial therefore misses the mark. For sure Stoppard is no expert on Poland, but within the limits of his knowledge, his narrative was honest.

The character of Kuron, for example, was honestly portrayed as a former revolutionary Marxist, committed (whatever he may think nowadays) to a democratic, socialist Poland.

While Belinda may be right to say that 'the masses' don't get much of a voice in 'Squaring the Circle', the ac-

count of conflicts within Solidarnosc is accurate. Walesa is seen as a 'moderate' with more militant (and right wing) — Stoppard doesn't suggest so) opponents.

The circle that Stoppard says can't be squared is 'the idea of freedom as it is understood in the West and the idea of socialism as it is understood in the Soviet empire.' Now, of course, this statement is ideologically loaded in that it implies that the 'West' is actually 'free'.

But you don't have to be a Cold Warrior to think that even so it is an idea with a germ of truth in it. Even the limited democratic rights we possess in Britain are incompatible with the systems in Eastern Europe, as Solidarnosc found out. It is impossible for a mass democratic workers' movement to coexist with the Stalinist bureaucracies.

Stoppard therefore tells the essential truth despite his ideological starting point.

You may not like the artistic style (personally I didn't much), but that's a different issue.

EDWARD ELLIS

South Africa: the 'necklace' and the struggle in the townships

Anne Mack looks at the response of socialists and trade unionists to the violence in South Africa's black townships and at the debate about 'necklacing'.

In 1986 a new word from South Africa entered our vocabulary: the 'necklace'.

A 'necklace' is a tyre, doused in petrol, placed round someone's head and then set alight. It is a terrible way to die.

Originally the 'necklace' was used only against collaborators in the black townships, but as 'ungovernability' extended to more and more areas many genuine and committed fighters in the liberation movement became victims of this practice.

Provocateurs

These comrades sometimes died as a result of the activities of agents provocateurs working for the state and posing as 'comrades', but more ominously, people have died as a result of the activities of certain groups within the liberation movement, who have chosen to label all who disagree with them as "enemies of the people".

Some muddleheaded radicals in Britain see the widespread use of the 'necklace' as a mark of the revolutionary tempo and nature of the struggle in South Africa. The reality is very different.

Serious socialists and trades union activists inside South Africa have campaigned against the 'necklace'. This extract from the latest edition of Azania Frontline explains why.

"On 28 April 1986 two members of the Electrical and Allied Workers Trade Union of South Africa were petrol-bombed to death. According to eye witness accounts they were travelling in a car on their way home from work at about 5.30 in the afternoon. They drove past the Crossroads squatter camp in Cape Town. Then a few young people threw stones at their car causing the driver of the car, Rashid, to accelerate.

The car picked up speed, skidded on the dirt road and smashed into a tree at high speed. While the two trades unionists were seriously injured and trapped inside the car, one of the young people who had been throwing the stones now threw a petrol bomb into the vehicle which immediately started to burn. According to the eye witnesses, Rashid was burnt to death — he was unable to escape because of his serious injuries and also because his chest was tight up against the steering wheel.

David Ndude, the other trade unionist in the car, sustained 80% burns. He was freed from the car by people who had gathered around the car. However he died a slow and painful death six days later.

A very close comrade of the two murdered trades unionists said that the workers in the region of the Western Cape were outraged by 'the seemingly meaningless killing of two workers who were themselves victims of exploitation and oppression'. He explained that 'their union felt it had a duty to mount a campaign to stop the kind of anarchy and chaos which has in some townships displaced the discipline and democracy of a movement of liberation'.

A number of people, among them one man who had served a long prison sentence on Robben Island, have been executed by 'necklacing'. The comrade of the deceased trades unionists said that their killings:

"...cannot be seen in isolation from the necklacing of genuine fighters for national liberation. What started as the killing of apartheid collaborators or sell-outs in time became, in the hands of certain groups, the killing of

progressive militants whose only mistake is that their views do not accord with those of the ANC or UDF. A number of good comrades were killed and removed from the scene in this way. The killing is not sheer madness because there is method in the madness. The anarchy to which the government contributed its terrorist vigilantes was used by certain groups to label virtually anyone a collaborator, resulting in immediate execution simply because the person so labelled held contrary views about the nature of our struggle. No discussion, no questions asked. People were just grabbed and a tyre doused in petrol placed around the neck and then set on fire to cause a most gruesome death imaginable."

At a recent press conference in Harare, Oliver Tambo, president of the ANC, said that he does not support the use of the 'necklace'. However he also said that he felt unable to condemn those who did use it.

Besides indiscriminate terror and the silencing of political opponents there is another dimension to the 'necklacing' phenomenon.

Very often, oppressed workers who have not been properly organised and therefore fail to support some call to action such as a consumer boycott, can find themselves facing very severe punishment. It has become common practice, for instance, for people breaking consumer boycotts of white businesses to be forced to eat the products from white stores that the 'comrades' may find in their possession. This often includes soap powder and cooking oil. According to the editorial in the

"A number of people, among them one man who had served a long prison sentence on Robben Island have been executed by the 'necklace'."

left wing South African journal Work in Progress:

"...There have been defeats too. Undisciplined comrades, often acting with no organisational basis or mandate, have divided communities, setting workers against the unemployed, children against parents, trades unions against community groups.

"Some of the rent boycotts have been enforced with a high degree of anti-democratic authoritarianism. The youth have often acted without the organisational structures necessary for democratic decision-making, and without adequate mandate or consultation. Recourse to 'discipline' — 'necklacings', beatings and other punishments — has come too easily to a group which often lacks a mandate to act on behalf of any major constituency."

The point here is not to oppose in principle the use of coercion in imposing the discipline of the popular movement, but to point out that most 'coercion' and 'discipline' is carried out by groups with no real democratic mandate.

This can apply at the national level of liberation movement politics as well as in particular cases in par-



A comrade flees from vigilante and security force attack.

ticular townships. For instance, the UDF leadership came out of hiding towards the end of 1986 to launch a 'Christmas Against the Emergency Campaign'.

This campaign involved a boycott of white shops. The Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (CCAWUSA), COSATU's shop-workers' union and one of the federation's most militant components was then placed in a very difficult position. Should it support a form of action that may endanger its members' jobs and union organisation, when the union had not been consulted, or should it put itself in conflict with the UDF, which is the largest force in the popular movement?

Mandates

These problems emerge in a large part because of the commandist and elitist styles of leadership dominant in certain sections of the liberation movement.

Implied by all of this is the need for democratic and accountable structures of struggle inside the townships.

This aim was pursued by militants from the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) when with others they tried to build a democratic and accountable organisation in Alexandra township, the Alexandra Action Committee.

Alexandra has been one of the storm centres of working class resistance in South Africa.

In February 1986 the 'six day war' left 27 dead and hundreds injured as a result of the actions of the security forces. Union activists and AAC members have been attacked by plain clothes policemen and vigilantes and have had their homes petrol-bombed and burnt out.

Moses Mayekiso, the general secretary of MAWU, who has been in detention since June last year and faces treason charges arising out of his role in AAC explained the aims of the Action Committee in this interview with South African Metal Worker:

"People were disorganised in Alexandra and they wanted to be united. There were meetings — little meetings — of residents discussing how to organise Alexandra. At the end of the day we held meetings street by street trying to hear how people wanted to organise Alexandra. People decided that they should form yard, block and street committees

Teading up to the Alexandra Action Committee.

Most of these people were workers so the structures were based along the lines of trade union structures — accountability, elections every year and so on.

The function of the Alexandra Action Committee is to coordinate the affairs of the township and to deal with the political and social problems. For example, we have begun to deal with the problem of unemployment. We are planning to have unemployed cooperatives in each and every street, so that everyone who is not working will be doing something for the community. We are also looking at the child-care structures, transport problems, cooperative buying and a first aid system — maybe in each street there will be one person who will learn first aid.

There are little courts and central courts. Each yard has a committee which deals with its own problems. If that committee can't solve the problem it is taken to the block committee. If it cannot be solved there it is taken to the street committee and then to the Action Committee. All those committees are acting as courts. People at the central court are delegated to receive complaints and to mediate. We are not really acting in the same manner as the present courts. We would like to get people to come together and discuss their problems.

Problems

In Alexandra, the question of sentencing is problematic, because how do you sentence a person? We do not believe in corporal punishment, but we have been lucky because people listen to whatever decision is made there. If the person listens then we don't need to implement any punishment. We have been discussing punishment for the person who does not listen, but we haven't reached a solution. However, the 'necklace' will never be used because we believe that the courts have an educational function. They are there to politicise the offender. Most crime in the area is caused by the capitalist and apartheid systems, so we tell the offender that he mustn't allow himself to be used by them."

The EAWTU echoed Moses' last point in a statement on the 'Stop the Killings Campaign'. The union said: "Our sense of justice must be higher than that of our oppressors."

WOMAN'S EYE

The circle of racism

One filthy wet day I was standing in a long bus queue, but was fortunate to be near enough the front to be under the shelter. Most of the people after me had to be content with getting soaked to the skin.

An Asian woman came along with a baby in a push chair and, instead of joining the end of the line, she walked past it and put her child under the shelter in the dry.

The woman next to me turned to look at me with raised eyebrows and a tut. I knew, from many experiences of such collusion amongst white people, that she would not have done this had it been a white woman who had jumped the queue. Her implication was that "these people" have no manners.

Every single white person reading this article will know what I mean and will have experienced such a situation on many, many occasions. It is a kind of hidden language that goes on amongst white people who are stupid enough to assume that the black people it is directed at don't see it, feel it, or know it is there: a nod, a wink, a tut, a shake of the head — a cowardly unspoken way of drawing "us" together in the safety of the crowd against "them".

Racism goes far far deeper than the attacks on the streets, the firebombs through letter boxes, the exclusion from jobs and houses. These actions are in the open. They can be fought. Black people can organise against them. But how do you join together to combat the tut; the weary look to the heavens; the hidden insidious body language and mental attitudes of practically every single white person who passes you in the street?

By Jean Lane

The majority of white racists in Britain are not attackers or firebombers. They are people who have been brought up to assume that they are naturally superior because they have white skin — fed on racist history, racist language, brought up on a diet of narrow mindedness and ignorance. They are people who, since racism has become an outspoken issue, feel compelled to say, "I am not a racist but..." and then go on to behave in the same arrogant, ignorant, supremacist way as before.

It is just as important to fight this aspect of racism as it is the overt discrimination, violence and immigration controls. It is not just a legal or economic battle. It is an ideological battle too. And it must be confronted wherever it raises its ugly head, however small the occasion.

White non-racists, when meeting this attempt at tacit collusion must break the circle, refuse to take part. There is nothing like the spoken language for bringing things out into the open; something which the "I'm not a racist but..." people among us fear.

When asked in a very loud voice so that everyone could hear what the woman in the bus queue was tutting at, she looked startled and embarrassed and denied any knowledge of communication between us. The wink and the tut had taken no more than a second. But her confusion and discomfort lasted the length of the wait in the queue and her entire bus journey. (I made a point of sitting next to her and asked her, again in a loud voice, if she had any objection to a woman keeping her baby dry). I'm not sure she'll do that again, though she may have difficulty in telling anyone what happened or in explaining to herself her own discomfort. At least she cannot assume that all white people feel the way she does and may therefore have to question the way she herself feels.

'We can win!'

Socialist Organiser talked to Ray Moon, chair, Tunbridge Wells NCU branch:

Tunbridge Wells is 100%, it is amazing. The strike is absolutely solid here.

Initially, it was a response from the rank and file to people being suspended. Now, after two weeks, they are not prepared to go back without a settlement. They have gone too far. They now definitely see it as a battle for trade union rights.

The national executive and Golding have been pushed down the road of the dispute by the rank and file, and not just by what many have seen as the most militant areas, like the London branches.

We are organising the strike through a strike committee, made up of branch officers and representatives, meeting regularly. Then every week there is a mass meeting. At the last one we had over 750 members, out of a branch of 840-850.

Overall, there are 22 scabs but we have also had 29 new members joining since the beginning of the dispute.

The key is the picket line. That is where the members receive information, hear the arguments and feel the solidarity and collective strength.

We have established a branch hardship fund, which already has £2500. Most of this has been raised from our own membership. We have also started to approach the Trades Council and the local Labour Parties for support and collections. Already, we are using the Labour Party office, as a strike headquarters and that has been invaluable.

In Tunbridge Wells the three-day clerical strike last week was not very well supported, with only a minority out. They were suspended on Friday. If they came out solidly with us that would be a real boost, and would cripple BT from both sides of the fence.

Amongst the STE there are a few sympathetic members who give us moral, verbal and financial support. But I do not think there is any chance of getting them all out.

They are not really a union. They represent management grades, and

they have been the ones doing BT's dirty work. It was STE members here who picked the names out of the hat and issued the suspension notices.

Whatever BT's propaganda we know the strike is having an effect on the network, both domestic and commercial. In Tunbridge Wells System X has still to be introduced and that, together with the severe weather in South East England, has helped the strike.

The action is also having an effect on the members, and it has raised the consciousness a lot.

Before the strike many did not believe what I and others were saying about what was happening during the miners' strike. But now, when they know the union here is operating a free, 24 hour life and death emergency cover and they see BT management coming on the TV and claiming they are running it, they begin to ask questions.

One difference from the miners' strike is that we are virtually 100% solid, and we have not got a Nottinghamshire eating away at us.

In the past it has been rural areas like Tunbridge Wells that have been the main support of the right wing in the union. I am sure that a majority of members here voted for Golding in the ballot for general secretary last year. But in this dispute Tunbridge Wells was out a day before London and already there is a tremendous amount of criticism at Golding's role.

At the beginning of the dispute it was clear that management did not expect the reaction they got all down the line. They saw Golding's election and the right wing executive and they thought they could get away with suspensions. Already they have started to move. Originally they said they would not talk unless we called off the action first, but there are talks going on now.

I am suspicious of what the leadership is up to. I did not like it when I heard them talking about 'winning, losing or drawing'. We are not out to lose or draw. We can win this strike. The membership are not contemplating losing. What worries me is that Golding will sell us short.

'Their weak point is the City and Stock Exchange'

Dave Hansell, Financial Secretary, Sheffield External Branch, talked to Socialist Organiser.

How is the strike faring in Sheffield? It's solid. We have only one scab — in the External Branch — in a workforce of 660. Morale is very high, even after a fortnight out.

How do you see prospects?

I can't see the Telecom system standing up for another 2-3 weeks. Despite British Telecom rhetoric, they recognise this. That is why they instigated talks with the union. They are worried.

Of course, they won't admit that. They've always talked tough all the way through, but certainly locally they've softened on a number of occasions.

For example, at the beginning of the strike, on 19 January, management were adamant that in order to be able to go back to work we would have to sign an agreement to work "as directed". By Friday of that week they were satisfied with a verbal agreement, which we obviously would not make.

Again, during the first week management were convinced they could cope with emergency cover. By the middle of the second week they came to us to try and get a deal on emergency cover as they could not cope.

In the Sheffield and Lincoln District they did not get that agreement because what they wanted to do was to have our members doing

the emergencies so that they could redeploy STE members to do our work on big business lines.

The major weak point we want to hit is the City of London Stock Exchange. The amount of money moved about on computer lines means that this is a target for us. London would lose business to Stock Exchanges in Paris, Hong Kong, New York or wherever, and so we would expect pressure on the government from them.

Is it enough just to stay out and keep the strike solid?

Yes, I think so. The telecommunications system cannot, at the moment, operate without us. We hear stories everyday, locally, of lines going down and thousands of phones being cut off.

It means not just domestic consumers but all businesses in an area being hit. For example, the Halifax Building Society Headquarters lost its computer lines last week temporarily.

Will you stay solid long enough?

Sheffield will stay solid, I think; likewise, the Sheffield and Lincoln area and the big conurbations. I foresee problems in the rural areas. The strength is in the inner city areas. We need EC members to tour around the weak areas.

If they won't, then representatives and branch officials of the big city branches should maintain links and give support to weaker areas. To some extent we can use the District Council structures to do this.

BT can be

By John Bloxam

TELECOM bosses and leaders of the National Communications Union (NCU) have been holding secret 'informal' talks since the weekend.

Only two things are known for certain about these talks. First, that the 110,000 NCU strikers are as much in the dark about them as anyone else. And second, that the NCU leaders would like to concede the bosses' demand for 'strings' on their pay offer.

One leak from the talks said that the NCU leaders were going to campaign among the members for a yes vote on a new productivity package. Another hinted at a two-year pay deal, with the strings attached to the 1987 pay increase and not the 1986 one.

NCU general secretary John Golding and other right-wing leaders have always said that they will negotiate on strings. But to accept strings would be a wretched sell-out.

The strike is virtually 100 per cent, and the strings are central to it. For the Telecom bosses, they are the rope to hang the NCU.

British Telecom want to win all their demands, now. The NCU leaders dare not agree to that at this stage. But BT can be shifted.

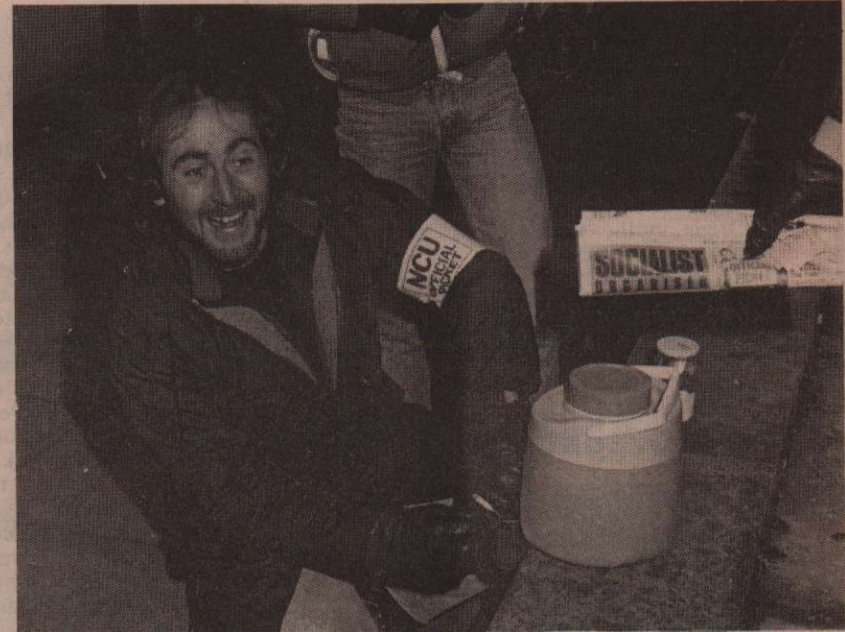
They were visibly taken aback by the workers' response to the suspensions. They said that they would not talk to the NCU until the strike was called off, but now they have seen the strength of the strike and they're talking. All that keeps the bosses confident is the attitude of the NCU leaders.

Throughout the country, strikers feel that they can win. They are strengthening the picket lines, keeping the members informed and solid, and arguing against a sell-out on the strings.

Pressure also needs to be stepped up.

The NCU executive should be bombarded with resolutions against any sell-out, and demands that the rank and file be kept properly informed. No secret talks!

The union leaders have already said that there will be a ballot on the offer. This should take place at mass meetings, where workers can hear the different arguments and feel the collective strength of the dispute. No postal ballot in the isolation of the



On the picket line at Gipsy Hill, South London. Photo Ian Swindale.

home!

Picket out the management union, the STE. They are the main strike-breakers, and there is evidence that many STE members do not like it. The City of London STE branch is said to have asked their executive to instruct all members not to cross picket lines.

- Link up with the clerical workers. The clerical workers struck for three days last week, with a 60 per cent turnout, but now their leaders have disappeared into separate talks with Telecom management. This division suits the bosses, who in most areas have not suspended the clerical strikers.

Clerical

The clerical workers should be out alongside the engineers. Local rank and file committees to link engineers with clerical workers should start to build unity.

Full rank and file involvement in the dispute.

Mass meetings are part of this, and so are organising good attendance on picket lines, and getting members out speaking at labour movement meetings and seeking financial support.

Local strike bulletins are needed, and inactive members should be

visited urgently.

The best structure to do all this is an elected strike committee.

• Maintain 'life and limb' emergency cover, under union control.

The longer the dispute and the greater the management obstruction, the more likely that members' frustration will focus on the emergency cover. Withdrawing that cover will seem a way to strengthen the strike.

But the fact of working-class people suffering will be used by the media with all their power to isolate the strikers. Scabbing will seem to be justified by human need. This can divide and weaken the strike.

• Stop the strike-breaking. Take over the exchanges.

British Telecom management are keeping the network going, despite real breakdowns; they have access to the equipment, and people to do repairs.

They can put up with new lines not being installed, and faults on most lines not being repaired, as long as they can keep the key exchanges functioning.

BT bosses understand this issue, which is why they have changed the locks and put security guards on many exchanges already. But for workers who know the buildings and can find allies inside, this should not be an insurmountable problem.



Copies of Socialist Organiser's four-page strike special are available for 10p plus 18p postage for one copy, or £1 postage free for a bundle of 10, from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

"The strike

JOHN CAMERON, secretary of the Glasgow NCU branch and the NCU West of Scotland District Committee, told SO:

"The strike is beginning to bite. Certainly, management is trying very hard to mask the problems in the network, but we know of two or three major breakdowns because we had to go in to restore the life-or-death services. But whatever is happening, management is keeping it close to the chest and not telling us.

As far as our lads are concerned, we are sticking to our guns. The strike is solid.

To get report-backs, and to keep members up to date, we had a stewards' meeting last Thursday, a picket organisers' meeting last Friday, and today (Monday 2 February) we had a meeting of stewards, picket organisers, and branch officials.

The talks are not being held

without a purpose. Golding would like to resolve the dispute quickly, but with BT it is another story. They are more concerned with getting the bills out than settling the dispute.

For example, they have got two scabs up from England, non-engineering personnel, taking meter readings in all the exchanges so that the bills can go out.

No way will we give up emergency cover. The STE have given clear instructions to their members that if we give up the cover, then their members should provide it. Even with the best will in the world, their members would start doing our work and scabbing on us.

As long as we are able to, we will provide emergency cover. Management has created obstacles, but we have managed to get round them so far. And if we did give up cover, then the STE would get the blessing of the TUC to go in and do our jobs.



THE FULL CLAIM!
NO STRINGS!

The strike around the country

STOKE

The North Staffs Trades Council at its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 28 January gave its full support to workers involved in the British Telecom dispute. The meeting was addressed by Bill Cawley, the Assistant Secretary of the Potteries Branch of the NCU.

Bill said that the dispute was not primarily about wages, but about the attempt of BT management to introduce changes in working conditions.

"They want to turn us into 'Martini people'," he said, "forced to work 'any time, any place, any where'".

"We are not Luddites, but we are not prepared to jeopardise our job prospects for a mess of pottage. If we let BT introduce the changes they are after then in the next few years there will be a jobs massacre in the industry. The average age of an engineer is 35. As new technology is introduced, therefore, it will not be possible to reduce the workforce through natural wastage, and retirement, they will go for compulsory redundancies. That is why they are taking us on now, trying to soften us up for the real battle."

Dealing with the accusations of BT that members of the NCU had refused to carry out emergency repairs, he told the Trades Council:

"It is not that we won't do the repairs, it's that we can't, because they have locked us out, and we can't get at our tools and equipment. In fact BT's concern for the emergency services is hypocritical. At the moment there is a system whereby repairs to the phones of doctors, nurses, the police, the fire brigade, etc., are dealt with as priorities but BT want to make these services pay a special charge for maintaining this priority treatment."

"That, of course, is one of the first results of privatisation of BT — all they are interested in is making as big a profit for the shareholders as they can. The other result of privatisation is the massive pay increases the top management have awarded themselves. Whilst they award themselves rises of up to 100% they have the nerve to ask us to show restraint!"

"This strike is a dynamic reaction from the grass roots of the membership to the stupid and insensitive way the new breed of managers behave. We have had two ballots before this strike which have backed the action. Despite the management sending out personal letters to our members we are solid, and we will stay solid until the dispute is won."

BIRMINGHAM

"Morale is very high and the turn-out for picketing and for our rally has been excellent," Birmingham NCU Internal Branch member Brian Andrews told Socialist Organiser, adding: "We're determined to stick it out, not just over the suspensions but also until all the strings are withdrawn. Nothing less will be acceptable."

The three NCU branches, covering 2,700 engineers began their action a week before the national strike, in

response to the suspension of 50 Birmingham engineers for refusing to work overtime.

The strikers are co-ordinating their picketing and other activities from a special office at the Trades Council. On Friday 30th, 500 NCU members marched through Birmingham, chanting "No strings!"

The mood was confident and high-spirited, and there were strong speeches at the rally from Internal Branch secretary John Holmes and NCU-sponsored MP Roger Stott.

John Holmes called for picketing to continue over the weekend, and warned the strikers that management were likely to try to sneak vans out over the weekend. He also told the rally that rumours of the NCU clerical section settling for 6% were untrue: they had, in fact, rejected the latest offer.

DURHAM

THE SUNDERLAND NCU branch, in the North-East, extends as far as Durham and Peterlee.

Dave Mitchell, chair of the branch, told SO that the strike was 'completely solid'. Many non-unionists had joined both the strike and the NCU, and there is only one scab in the area.

"The management has rejected even approaches about emergency cover. They are saying that they must make the decision about what an emergency is, and we are not having that."

"With Durham hospital, the bosses rang me and said they wanted cover for an 'emergency'. They refused to say what it was, so I said we could not provide cover."

"We found out later that the 'emergency' was a faulty light on the switchboard, and it was repaired by an ambulanceman changing a fuse. But that did not stop a media campaign about 'callous strikers endangering lives'."

Dave Mitchell was not concerned about the strength of feeling among the members, but he was worried about what the NCU executive is doing. "We need to keep strong tabs on them".

ABERDEEN

SO talked to some NCU members in Aberdeen.

The strike in Aberdeen is solid. There are about 1070 engineers out on strike and the 400 clerical workers have been out for three days this week and will be out again on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week.

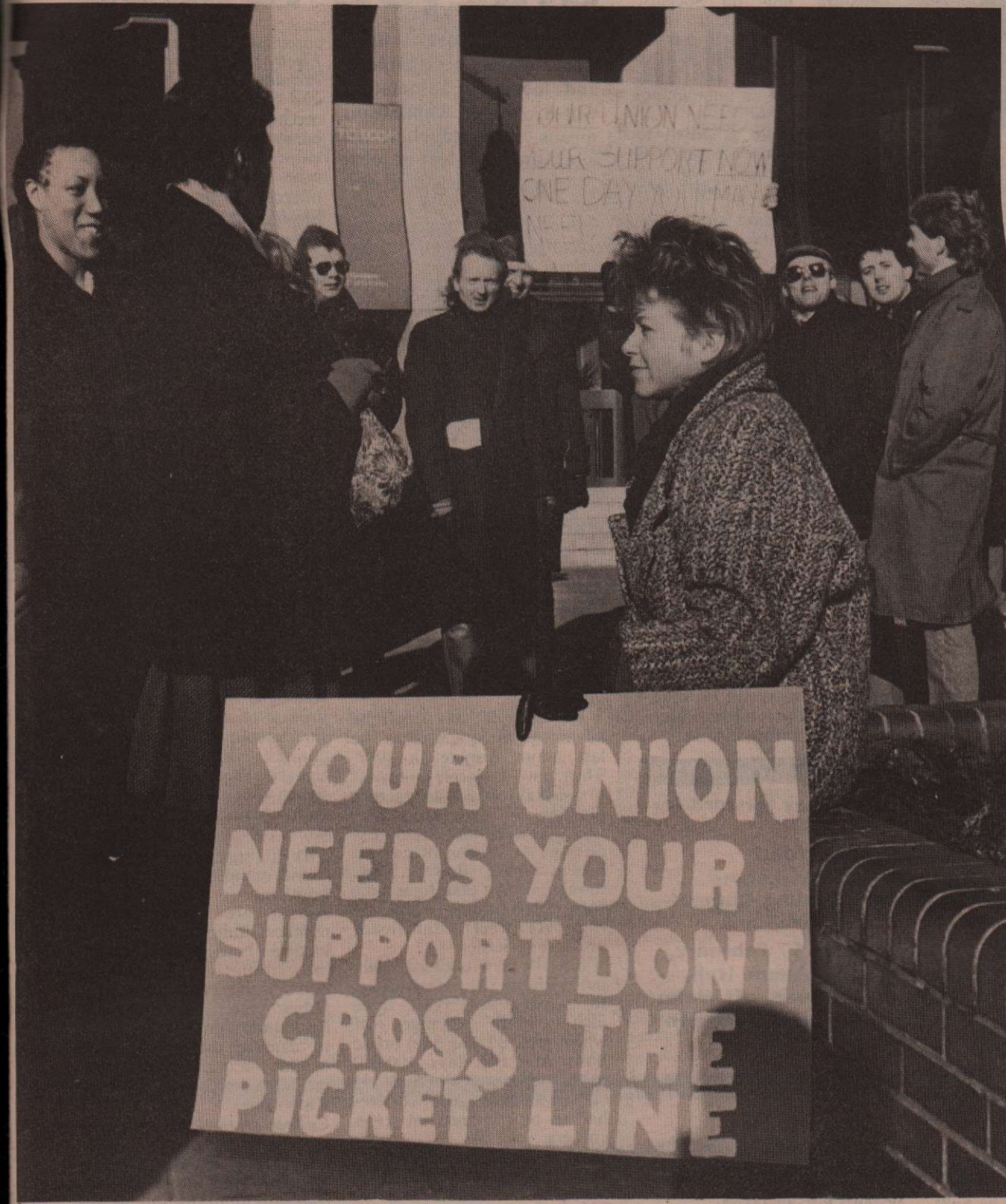
A strike committee is meeting daily and mass meetings are taking place once a week. Rotas have been organised for picketing, which is taking place at exchanges, engineering centres and BT buildings.

Some STE members are thought to be doing NCU work but clearly they won't be able to cover anything like a significant amount of faults. Emergency faults are being covered by volunteers, with one engineer going in per shift.

Relations with management in Aberdeen are reasonable but have got worse over the past couple of years with fewer ex-engineers in management grades and more new "accountant"-style managers who have been felt to be acting under direct orders from London.

The strikers see the new conditions as being by far more important than the pay rise. Overall they are optimistic about the outcome of the dispute and stressed it was the members who had set the ball rolling, not the executive.

e beaten!



NCU clerical strikers picket the British Telecom International building at Holborn Circus, London. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report.

is beginning to bite"

The members would not like to return to work on the basis of only lifting the suspensions, not settling the question of strings as well. Our main theme is that we want to see an outright settlement, and that means that the strings have got to be removed and separated from the pay deal. We are out now, and we may as well stay out.

Strings

We would sell our soul if we accepted the strings. We may as well pack up our tents and go home. Management are out to smash the union and everyone should realise that."

It was a similar story from pickets at one of the Glasgow city centre exchanges:

"There is not a lot happening at the moment. Management says that it

is not having any effect, we say it is. And the longer we are out, the more chance there is of exchanges going off the air.

Up to now we have maintained emergency cover, because the public would go loopy-loo if we stopped it. But there may come a time when we have to stop it — because of management.

It is up to management. We are willing to negotiate if the strings are separated from the pay, but management's line is that the pay and the strings are not separable. It was management who sparked off the strike.

There was no need to suspend our members for not doing overtime. The workforce is due to be cut by 200-plus in the West of Scotland through early and voluntary retirement, but they still force us to do overtime.

If the STE wants to call itself a

union, then it should start behaving like one and not do our work. But you cannot call it a union.

Then again, you could let them do our work, because everything would go down the swanney if they tried to.

If management lifted the suspensions, then Golding would recommend a return to work, but we would not be in agreement with that. Golding is a bit of a wimp. He is shitting himself. He never expected us to come out on strike in the first place.

There were 90,000 of us out on strike before he even called a strike. Golding says that the strike is nothing to do with him, that it is the members who are behind it — and he is right about that.

For NCU speakers and donations contact: NCU strike office, Glasgow Trade Union Centre, 1236 Maryhill Road, Glasgow G20. Cheques payable to Glasgow NCU Branch Hardship Fund.

Where is 'Socialist Action' going?

Anyone who fell into a deep sleep a decade ago while reading 'Socialist Challenge' would wake up now to find its successor, 'Socialist Action', a somewhat bemusing read.

For two decades at least this political tendency has been notorious for the bewildering zig-zags in its political orientation and line. Now it is zooming headlong on a direct course, that may be irreversible, into the swamp of Stalinism.

On the way it is kicking overboard what it had left of the ideological inheritance of revolutionary Marxism.

One openly displayed symptom of this degeneration is the use of straightforward lies about political opponents like Socialist Organiser. In this it follows also in the footsteps of Gerry Healy's so-called 'Workers' Revolutionary Party', which poisoned the atmosphere on the left in the 1960s and '70s with its lies and hysteria.

Polly Vittorini, the paper's current professional student, took Socialist Action to new depths of dishonesty and political weirdness in an article on the recent Student Council of the National Organisation of Labour Students (SA, 22 January).

While her account does criticise the generally undemocratic nature of the Council, it refers not at all to the particular bureaucratic stitch-up that guaranteed a small 'majority' for NOLS' Kinnockite leadership. It hails

By Gerry Bates

that grouping's victory at the council as a victory for the left.

The 'Democratic Left' faction is criticised, but ever so gently. Vittorini is silent too about the fact that she — the sole Socialist Action student with a vote in the 250-strong meeting — voted for the 'Democratic Left'. She voted to ratify the whole pre-meeting stitch-up, as well as for their candidates.

Her polemical fire is concentrated on Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) and on Socialist Organiser. SSiN and SO, she says, are "far from being a left-wing"; have "clashed head on with black and women's self-organisation;" and SO "capitulates to imperialism". This, she says, explains "the alliance in NOLS between SSiN and Militant."

She goes beyond this imprecise and wild general abuse to tell specific lies.

Socialist Organiser and SSiN, she says, stand "against (her emphasis) the national liberation movements in Palestine, Ireland and South Africa."

The "factual" basis for this statement is that we approach the questions of Ireland, Palestine/Israel and South Africa with independent working class politics, and while championing the PLO, the Catholic resistance and the South African blacks, we do not behave as mere parrots of the IRA, the PLO or of the



Socialist Action expounds the Marxist theory of the state.

ANC. While of course we support the ANC against the apartheid state, we also support the black trade union movement there and advocate that British trade unions form direct links with South African trade unions — whatever the Stalinist-influenced and often sectarian ANC-UDF say against direct links.

It is SO which has been put under a total ban in South Africa, not Socialist Action!

Socialist Action, it seems, has completely forgotten the elementary principles of socialism. Vittorini obviously cannot grasp that it is possible to support a national liberation movement while also trying to work out a socialist programme, fight for the independence of the working class (including independence from non-socialist organisations) — and think for

yourself. Vittorini's sole excuse is that the leaders of her group have trained her not to think, but to parrot demagogic half-truths — half-truths borrowed from the political arsenal of Stalinism.

If being in a "voting block" with Militant is supposed to be proof of capitulation to imperialism, how do Socialist Action explain their long-standing participation in those Militant-dominated voting blocks, the Broad Lefts? (Or has there been an unannounced change of line?)

What are we supposed to deduce from Ms Vittorini's recent "voting block" with the Kinnockite 'Democratic Left'?

Socialist Action supporters should think about their current direction. Some of you once understood that criticism of nationalist movements and support for socialists — for example in South Africa — was a principled socialist attitude and not equal to "standing against" the nationalist movement.

You once understood that people like the 'Democratic Left' are utterly undemocratic and not at all left; and you would not have allowed Gerry Healy-style factional zeal to lead you to indulge in hysterical lies about Socialist Organiser's political positions.

Most likely it is already too late for Socialist Action. For individual supporters who know anything at all of the revolutionary socialist tradition, there may still be time. Abandon this bilge water-logged ship before it sinks!



Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

BT: technology and job losses

Behind the BT lockout lies a story of new technology and increased automation which, under capitalism, means not reduction of work-time, but loss of jobs.

British Telecom is in the process of replacing old-fashioned, electromechanical exchanges with digital systems such as System X and is updating more modern electronic exchanges with microelectronic equipment.

Such systems are more efficient and need less maintenance. Resulting job losses could be as high as 15 out of every 16 engineers!

Undoubtedly, BT would have provoked a dispute sooner or later to help them "cash in" on their potential saving of labour but, according to New Scientist writer Peter Purton, BT's ability to keep telephone services going during the present dispute has been hampered by its failure to replace all the old exchanges. Only 300 of 600 scheduled new automatic exchanges have been installed.

However, BT has a definite advantage as compared to the last major dispute in 1977. Then, a work-to-rule and selective strikes led to a satisfactory outcome for the workers, particularly when the Stock Exchange's communication system broke down. Now, though, it may take some time for sufficient faults to build up that BT feels significant pressure to settle.

But the new exchanges are not without their drawbacks. In Sweden last year, three digital AXE exchanges (of which type BT has one) broke down over two days. 100,000 subscribers were completely cut off and emergency services had to be stationed on street corners.

BT's other innovation is optical fibre cables. These are as susceptible to accidental severing during road works etc., as the old copper cables, but as they carry more telephone calls the potential disruption is greater.

BT's old and new technology. Electromechanical exchanges (Example: Strowger). These have electromagnetic relays — switches that operate in response to electric currents, like car blinkers. They have lots of moving parts and require lots of maintenance. Without this, they quickly develop faults, like crossed or dead lines, but are unlikely to

completely pack up. Electronic and microelectronic exchanges. (Examples: TXE4A and System X). In these, the mechanical switches are replaced by transistors or by silicon chips. The TXE4A mixes both types but System X is fully microelectronic and digital. Electric currents are lower and there are many less moving parts. Therefore, they are faster and less maintenance is needed but they can fail and when they do, failure is likely to be more widespread than with Strowgers. Complete shutdowns are not that uncommon.

Modern exchanges can in fact completely shut down if they merely receive too many calls (even incompletely dialled ones). They then need resetting which is difficult if too many people are still trying to use it. This happened with the Stock Exchange's new computerised system recently.

Analogue/Digital. These are two ways of coding information (like the number being dialled or the sound of a voice) and passing it down a wire. Analogue signals are coded in the size of an electric current. Interference or poor electrical contacts can damage the signals. The result can be a switch not operated (and a wrong number) or a crackly line.

Digital signals are coded into a series of pulses which stand for numbers in binary code. Sounds are converted into numbers indicating pitch and loudness and dialling signals are similarly coded. The numbers can be transmitted as pulses of electricity or pulses of light. Interference is less likely to damage the signals as it would be ignored by the receiver unless it reached quite a high level.

Copper/Optical Fibres. Copper wires can carry either analogue or digital signals as electric currents but they need frequent amplification as the signals get weaker as they travel down the wire. Unfortunately, interference also gets amplified so the quality of the signal can decline quite drastically. Water getting through the insulation can also damage the signal.

Optical fibres, which are actually long fibres of a high quality glass, carry signals and pulses of laser light. These travel much further before needing amplification and are less likely to be interfered with since external light is easier to exclude in an underground cable.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign (South East Region) miners' benefit: Wembley Conference Centre, 7.30pm, Sunday 1 March.

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy regional conferences: Sheffield, 14 February; Edinburgh, 21 February; London, 28 February. Registration £3.50 waged, £1.50 unwaged, to Danny Nicol, CLPD AGM, 54 Southwood Lane, London N6.

Labour Party Black Sections. AGM, Saturday 14 March, in Nottingham. For further details contact Narendra Makanji, 41 Darwin Road, London N22 (01-889 7734).



Which way forward for the LPYS?

Debate: Youth Fightback, Labour Coordinating Committee, and Militant.

Tuesday 17 February, 7.30, at Anson Hall, Anson Road, off Walm Lane. Tube: Willesden Green.

Available from: 33, Hackworth Point, London E3, 25p plus 18p p&p.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight

to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrat's and management's privileges.

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socialist bureaucracies.

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Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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A phone graveyard. Photo: Nigel Clapp.

Salvador: made for the mass market and with a message

By Belinda Weaver

'Salvador' wasn't made by a left winger, but it may do more to win sympathy for the FMLN rebels fighting the US-backed government in El Salvador than other, more ideological movies.

'Salvador' is made for the mass market. It isn't trying to be a political statement, but it is one nonetheless. After watching the horrors inflicted by the right wing military on the Salvadoran population, you can't help being revolted and sympathetic.

It is a gutsy, forceful film that commands your attention all the way through, though some scenes were so frightful that I had to cover up my eyes. (And once, my ears, too).

Oliver Stone, 'Salvador's director, has been associated more with right wing, macho films like Year of the Dragon. So the critics on the right can't cry 'Bias!' when the FMLN come across as sympathetic.

Journalist

The central character, Richard Boyle, is a sometime journalist, an opportunist with a nose for crumbling regimes. Down and out, only one step ahead of the police for petty offences, deserted by his wife and child, Boyle is scraping bottom. He cons an old pal, Dr Rock, into going down to El Salvador with him, as an escape from the US. Doping, drinking and cursing, they make their way southward to the 'paradise', where dope is available and sex is cheap.

El Salvador, 1980-81, is chaotic, repressive and terrifying. But Boyle, the self-styled 'last man out of Cambodia', can handle it. Dr Rock whimpers like a puppy, but Boyle is soon out scrounging money and work, wheedling and ingratiating his way through the chaos and corruption.

Boyle is centre stage nearly all the time. And he's a pretty slimy customer. Yet his seediness keeps the film from being sentimental.

Boyle is interested in the guerrillas who are fighting the US backed repression, but his sympathy is all mixed up with getting a sensational



The sleazy Richard Boyle (played by James Woods, centre) with two other American journalists as the chief of the death squads gives a press conference in El Salvador

story to sell. He does have a Salvadoran girlfriend he's trying to save, and he sticks his neck out a bit for her, and even at a pinch, for Dr Rock, but basically, it's No. 1 he's interested in.

Boyle seems to be permanently speedy, his mind always racing ahead of his words. He's such a mass of contradictions that he's both offensive and ingratiating in the same breath. When he tries to con anyone, he keeps anticipating any possible objections so he can answer them first.

He's a fascinating character, well acted by James Woods. And watching him operate against the random violence, arbitrary killings, brutal rapes, tortures and the tears of those searching for the 'disappeared' makes it frighteningly immediate.

The bad guys — the US advisors,

Salvadoran military, and pro-US journalists — are generally plausibly presented. US Ambassador Kelly is even presented sympathetically. He is shown as terribly upset by the killing of the nuns, and tries to do his best even for the scurvy Boyle, whose big mouth gets him into plenty of trouble.

Assassin

Only the role of Major Max (based on death squad leader Roberto d'Aubuisson) goes a little over the top in the scene where he chooses Archbishop Romero's assassin.

The film is fictionalised, but incidents shown like Romero's murder and the rape and killing of American nuns tie it to reality. The film was co-

written by the real Richard Boyle.

Boyle probably echoes Stone's own views when he says he hates the US's involvement in Vietnam, El Salvador and the rest because it betrays American ideals, such as respect for human rights. So the ending, which would seem to put those beliefs into question, comes as a surprise.

Towards the end, the FMLN have made advances and seem to be directly threatening the regime. Kelly, a Carter appointee about to be replaced by the incoming Reagan administration, is pressured to release aid vital for the regime's survival. He does. In America, for all the Democrats' bleeding hearts, they are as viciously opposed as Reagan to the attempts by countries to throw off the imperialist yoke.

Recommended.

on the
Box

Defend Jules Holland!

By Tracy Williams

THERE'S been a lot going on recently. The live coverage of the Giants' victory (wasn't it great?) on ITV. And on the other side, Alasdair Milne, Director-General of the BBC, resigning.

Apparently he had too much to cope with. He'll have to wait at least 13 weeks until he can claim unemployment benefit. Poor Alasdair.

I'm thinking of applying for his job, you know. Don't laugh. Do you think the Beeb are equal opportunities employers? Maybe I'll send them some of my TV reviews along with my CV.

Anyway, further scandal was provided by the banning of the Zircon spy satellite programme. Surely a democratic country like ours can't do such a thing! But they can and they do.

Voici le soap est arrivé. It's a pity they didn't try to ban 'Chateaubillon — fortune and power'. The title is enough to make you run to the sink shouting for huey all the way.

It's a ritzy French soap opera for those who just can't get enough of the diamonds of Dynasty or the collateral of the Colbys.

I saw the dubbed version, or what I prefer to call the ventriloquists' version — words seemed to appear from behind closed mouths. And why they left the French pronunciation of names escapes me. Every now and then we'd get a Twever or something.

Alors, je suis aussi disturbed by the suspension of monsieur Jules Holland. Apparently our trendy, off-beat presenter had shocked the nation's youth by saying something offensive and outrageous whilst advertising 'The Tube'.

Scab

I'm not sure whether I can actually write it here. Already my hand is trembling. Oh, all right, then, I'll do it. He said 'Groovy fuckers'!!

Quick, let me throw this pen away and wash my hands of the sinful deed.

I mean, isn't it a joke? So what if he said 'Groovy fuckers'? What's the matter with being a 'groovy fucker'? I'd rather be a 'groovy fucker' than a scab. But I forget, the controversy is because he is influencing our younger viewers.

Who are these younger viewers? Do they live in a bubble where they don't see violence or hear swear words or have minds of their own?

Many parents give their little Johns guns, and Janets dollies, reinforced by the roles they see on TV. Kids watch the Benny Hill show. Now surely that's downright offensive! Come on, it's 1987, for god's sake.

Lastly, but not leastly: this has got nothing to do with TV, but if my editor permits — have you got your new Labour Party card yet?

Maybe it's just me, but don't you think it looks like a 20p-off coupon from your next purchase of sanitary towels?

A lesson in socialist principles?

Credit where it's due, I always say. This column is usually devoted to exposing the cant and hypocrisy of the capitalist press, and on more than one occasion the Guardian has been the target of my rapier-like shafts. So it is with genuine pleasure that I draw readers' attention to a really first class piece of political journalism from Hugo Young in Thursday's Guardian:

"If I had to nominate the single most depressing spectacle of the present parliament I would have difficulty in discovering anything to surpass a 15-minute period on Tuesday afternoon. There one saw encapsulated in a few brief exchanges what eight years have done to the idea of liberty and what has happened in that time to the role of the parliamentary opposition as liberty's defender."

Young was referring to the Zircon satellite affair, and the Labour front bench response to the government's attempt to keep it a secret, not just from the plebs like you and I, but from Parliament itself.

Young, a Wapping refusenik who contributes an occasional "Commentary" column to the Guardian on a freelance basis, is no revolutionary. He

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

accepts, for instance, that there is such a thing as "national security", and therefore information that "no editor or television producer or responsible reporter would wish to publish". What appalled Young was the willingness of the Labour front bench to swallow, hook, line and sinker, the government's definition of what constitutes "national security" and therefore justifies the suppression of free journalism. Worse still, the Windbag's terror of being criticised for lack of patriotism, led him to attack Thatcher for not suppressing information about Zircon effectively enough!

"It is perfectly true, of course, that the government has been incompetent in achieving its objectives. It was late in urging the BBC not to complete a film it knew was being made months ago. It was late with its injunction

against Duncan Campbell. But have we seriously reached the point where the Labour leader feels that he should be the one to make these points: to make them, indeed, the core of his attack: to demonstrate, it would seem, that an authoritarian prime minister is defective only in the sluggishness and caution she brings to the practice of authoritarianism?"

So what should have been an ideal opportunity to expose this government's innate hatred of free speech, and its contempt even for Parliamentary democracy, was turned into an embarrassing fiasco in which Kinnoek tried to out-jingo Thatcher, and — inevitably — failed. Now, as the boys in blue ransack the BBC's Glasgow offices, seizing film, sound recordings and scripts of the entire "Secret Society" series (of which the Zircon programme was just one of six films) Kinnoek and Kaufmann hold up their hands in horror. A bit late in the day, you might think. After all, this is more or less what the Windbag called for last Tuesday.

I'll leave the last word to the splendid Hugo Young — the consistent bourgeois democrat who could teach Labour's front bench "socialists" a thing or two about fighting Thatcher: "They have a real situation in which to show what they are made



Duncan Campbell

of. Given that test, they have revealed how malleable they are, and how slight is their grasp of the principles they pretend to believe in."

Nahuel Moreno

Martin Thomas spoke on behalf of the Editorial Board of Socialist Organiser at a meeting in London to commemorate Nahuel Moreno, the Argentine Trotskyist who died last week. This is the text of his address.

Every generation of revolutionaries stands on the shoulders of those before it.

We stand on the shoulders of those who maintained the Trotskyist movement in the difficult days of the 1950s and early '60s. Nahuel Moreno, an Argentine Trotskyist who died last week, was one of them.

1948-56 was perhaps the lowest ebb point for revolutionary Marxism since the 1860s. Most Trotskyists dropped out of activity. Only the most tenacious remained — people like Moreno. We all owe them a debt, whatever our political differences with them.

They were trying to grapple with great problems. In our view they failed to a large extent. That is why, as Moreno himself said in an interview last year, we have today a barbaric form of Trotskyism. It is easier to see now with hindsight than it was then in the maelstrom; but since we have hindsight we must use it and learn from it.

The root of the problems was this. After 1948, with the decline in the post-war working-class ferment, the cold war, and the Communist Parties' left turn, the Trotskyists were isolated. Yet at the same time, in Yugoslavia, China, Korea, and Vietnam, the revolution they had fought for, or some form of it, seemed to be going forward nonetheless.

Stalinism, so it turned out, was being revolutionary against capitalism while simultaneously counter-revolutionary against the working class.

The comrades tried to fit this into their perspectives. The answer they came up with at the Third World Congress of the Trotskyist movement in 1951 was this: there was an objective process of world revolution advancing, which would express itself through whatever force was at hand if no revolutionary workers' movement existed.

Blocs

This did not mean that they forgot about the working class. They thought that unless and until the working class intervened the revolutionary process would be delayed and distorted.

It did not mean that they necessarily failed to work in the working class — and Moreno built an organisation of some thousands in the Argentine working class.

It did mean, inescapably, that the class struggle became less central to their politics than a struggle of blocs or camps on the world scale. Politics was primarily a matter of the struggle between Imperialism on one side, and Revolution in all its forms on the other, with the working class as only one of the forces in the camp of Revolution.

This view has warped the perceptions of most Trotskyists over the last 35 years, and Moreno among them.

In his book on 'The Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat', for example, he says that the Stalinist states are a hundred times more democratic than the bourgeois democracies. I'm sure that what he

thought he was doing was defending the nationalised property relations, and the Stalinist-led revolutions, against the cold-war right-wing.

But what he said was wrong, and, despite his intentions, very far from the politics of Trotsky, who in the Transitional Programme described Stalin's political regime as differing from fascism "only in its more unbridled savagery".

In 1982 Socialist Organiser had a sharp difference with Moreno over the South Atlantic war. We gave him a page of our paper to explain his views, and we debated the issue.

We agreed that socialists must oppose Britain's war. For ourselves, we had 'The enemy is at home' as a banner on our paper throughout the war.

But we believed that Galtieri's war was equally predatory, equally imperialistic though at a lower level of capitalist power. The junta's war could not benefit the workers of Argentina, or in any way improve their conditions for struggle against the multinationals, the international banks and the Argentine capitalists who exploit them.

War

The war was only a political diversion and a power-play by the military rulers.

We understood that socialists in Argentina, finding themselves in the midst of a tide of mass nationalism, would have to adapt their agitation to the mood of the workers. But we could not agree with calling for national unity of all classes for the war, or for the unions to open recruiting offices for Galtieri's army, as Moreno did. Even if you supported Argentina, for a Trotskyist that should mean national unity with the junta — just as when Trotsky supported China against Japan in the 1930s, he did not preach unity with Chiang Kai Shek.

In his polemic against us Moreno said that the Falkland Islanders had no more rights than the Jews in Palestine or the English settlers — as he called the Protestants — in Ireland. We could not agree with this attitude to the rights of minorities. It is no part of the programme of socialism to sweep away such minorities.

But — to conclude — what was the significance of this dispute? There is no doubt that Moreno sincerely believed that his positions served the cause of anti-imperialism and thus of socialism. He was serving our common ideals as he saw best in the ideological framework that he had learned 35 or 40 years ago, the barbaric form of Trotskyism.

We are all still barbarians, more or less, compared to the classic Marxism of Lenin and Trotsky. That Marxism has only just begun its Renaissance after its Dark Ages.

What we need now is not only, and not primarily, an organisational regroupment of the forces of Trotskyism, but a political and theoretical regeneration. That will be a long task, possible only through patient and comradely discussion and comparison of experiences.



Nahuel Moreno

Lifting the veil off Liverpool Militant

By Alan Johnson

Simon Lawlor, unimpressed by Bas Hardy's review of 'The Racial Politics of Militant in Liverpool' (SO 296) asks us to find "someone who deals with facts" before we take on Militant's record on race and racism again (SO 297).

Simon says "On housing, in Liverpool 8, the Council has spent more on its housing budget than any other local authority's total housing budget." No one is disputing how vital and significant is the council's Urban Regeneration Scheme. But that doesn't settle the matter.

In 1984 a survey of housing in Liverpool, financed by the Commission for Racial Equality, was published by Liverpool University. It showed clearly that the city's system for allocating council houses concentrated blacks in limited areas of the city and gave them poorer quality accommodation than whites.

The team which produced the report, headed by the city's Housing manager Mr John King recommended a whole series of measures to combat what it called "conscious or unconscious stereotyping of black applicants by Housing Officers and the unintentional racist effect of allocation procedures and practices".

What has happened since? First of all the Housing Manager was suspended. Why? No formal evidence has ever been brought against him.

And "when the details of the new allocations system emerged there was practically no reference to race within it and no mechanisms whatsoever were adopted to ensure the new system was monitored, to remove the sources of proven racial bias, or to redress the balance of proven racial inequality."

Look at the way the council prevented the River Avon Street sheltered house scheme in 1984. The project, with 75% of its funding already agreed from central government, was to provide sheltered accommodation for elderly members of ethnic minority groups. After extensive consultation with community groups, at the last minute — when £100,000 was already spent — the council pulled the plug. The explanation can be found in Tony Byrne's words of two years before, opposing accommodation for elderly Chinese:

"This working party is of the opinion that hostels for the elderly should be provided to meet the needs of the local community as a whole and not for any particular ethnic group."

"On the question of jobs, over 20% of all new intakes have been black" says Simon. Now I'd like to know where you plucked that figure from. I'm looking at a set of statistics for Liverpool City Council appointments, June 1984 to September 1985. It says that 96.7% were white and 3.3% black.

I'm also looking at this year's Community Relations Council report which says that "no coherent information of black employment has been available for consideration either inside or outside the authority in the last 18 months"

Most depressing of all, Simon repeats all the myths about the Black Caucus: that it is 'unrepresentative', sides with the liberals and bishops and that it is just "cheesed off that they haven't landed a well paid job". What's the truth here?

The Black Caucus is simply those people from the black community who are elected, each year, by community organisations to represent



Liverpool city council march, June 1985. Photo John Smith, IFL.

them on the Race Relations Liaison Committee, a body fought for by the black community. They were held to be the authentic representatives by all political parties, including Labour, right up to the Bond appointment. Why else did they have three members with full voting rights on the interview panel? No, it was only after it vigorously opposed the appointment of a totally inexperienced building surveyor from Brent to the post of Principal Race Relations Advisor, that it became, literally overnight, 'unrepresentative', 'self-interested', a 'clique', etc, (and in the poisonous oral propaganda peddled by Militant amongst the youth, "pimps and gangsters").

The council argued: "The Tories oppose the City Council, the Caucus oppose the City Council, so the Caucus are Tories". Simon falls headlong into this trap.

It must be said that Militant were not the only "Marxists" to come out of the episode with a sullied reputation. The Socialist Workers Party will be permanently marked by their volte-face on the question.

In November 1984 the SWP were marching through Liverpool on the 'No more Bond-age' march organised by the Caucus. In May 1985 came the SWP's marriage proposal to Militant — "there is a basis for working together to build a viable socialist alternative. Do you agree?"

By Autumn 1985 they were writing such abject nonsense as "Militant have good reason for calling themselves revolutionary rather than reformist. In all respects, except their adherence to the Labour Party their programme and policies belong to the Trotskyist tradition".

By September 1986 Alex Callinicos, a leading SWP member, was describing the Caucus as "a group of community workers who have set themselves up as the representatives of the people of Toxteth". Callinicos demanded people take a stand on "the antics of the caucus".

He couldn't give a Castlemaine about where the council stood on the by now hostile and alienated black community — after all the organisational imperative was 'getting close to the Militant'.

And then, just recently, the SWP line changed again. All of a sudden, Militant had become "a small sect", which had "abandoned the Trotskyist legacy, i.e. the October Revolution and the first four con-

gresses of the Third International"; and after all, "building the revolutionary alternative in Britain requires making a complete break with their politics."

The whole episode was a sordid display of the art of tailoring your politics to the demands of the organisational manoeuvre, glorified as 'the art of stick-bending'. Ordinary SWP members should reflect on the leadership that supervised it.

Simon used to know that Militant operate on the basis of a crude, economic view of the world where the divisions that exist among British workers — especially of race and sex — are insignificant ones.

Where the structures of the movement, which are for us in need of drastic overhaul, are fine by them. Where only the continual propagation of the 'bold socialist programme' is needed.

Mixed into this brew is an organisational arrogance and a political method marked by its bitter and blinkered sectarianism to other groups and campaigns; techniques of distortion; and now the use of local government patronage as a means of political control.

This is part of the historical legacy of Stalinism. It is not Trotskyism.

That's what Bas Hardy meant when he wrote, in his flowery way to be sure, but with truth: "Militant is a semi-religious, crypto-Stalinist sect which pushes a half-baked brand of mutated Stalinism."

LIVERPOOL!

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Fighting 'socialism in one city'

MANCHESTER City Council's NUPE Housing Branch started indefinite strike action on Thursday 29 January.

The 280 members struck to support the demand for decent office accommodation for the Housing Aid section. The 21 Housing Aid NUPE members had walked out to avoid disciplinary action on Thursday 22nd.

In the week from the 22nd to the 29th, management had come up with no adequate proposal. In fact,

By Tony Dale

following orders from the councillors, they had refused to negotiate on office accommodation until Tuesday 27th.

The strike has also spread beyond the Housing Department. Some sections, such as the Information Centre, have walked out in support. Many other sections of the council have had meetings and sent messages of support.

Many council workers have

become increasingly angry at poor office accommodation and at the way the council has reacted to legitimate union grievances. The unions have been pushed aside or confronted if they get in the way of the council's scenario for 'socialism in one city'.

Since the left-wing Labour administration came to power a few years ago, relations have degenerated.

How far can the local Labour Parties continue to give the council a free hand? How far will the unions let themselves be split, divided and ig-

nored?

The council NALGO leadership has played a destructive role. At times their main aim seems to be to stop NUPE gaining a victory.

A minority of NALGO members have been refusing to cross the NUPE picket lines, but this minority has not been big enough to push NALGO into being more supportive.

The City Labour Party voted 28 to 19 at a poorly attended meeting to oppose NUPE Housing. But a revolt against the council may grow in the Labour Party.

SSiN Counterfeit charges

THE 'Democratic Left' campaign of lies about the Selection Conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) continues.

Snippets have appeared in both Private Eye and Tribune, obviously derived from the DL, which say that SSiN tried to cheat at the conference.

They allege that we used CPSA disco tickets as voting cards. Those tickets were apparently the right size and colour; and, more than that, we left them behind us for all to see.

The fact is that we didn't cheat. It is stretching anyone's credulity to ask them to believe that we had a supply of counterfeit voting cards with us when no-one (apart from the DL) knew the size and colour of the cards until a couple of hours before we voted.

Further — and the DL scandal-mongers know it — the number of genuine cards given out was recorded, and no votes went over that number.

It is odd that the DL have launched this campaign. It suggests that they have even more to hide than we thought.

Please tell SSiN if anyone from your college attended the conference who is not on your student union executive or delegated from the Labour Club.

Teachers

All out 5 March!

Meeting in London last Saturday, the largest gathering yet of the Local Association Pay Action Campaign agreed to relaunch the organisation as the Local Association Pay and Conditions Campaign (LAPACC). Armed with a new democratic constitution, this organisation of rank and file teachers will now be controlled directly by union members through their local associations.

Already, increasing numbers of Local Associations of the NUT are affiliating to this body as it becomes increasingly clear that NUT leaders are unwilling to defend our basic rights as trade unionists. If it continues to grow, LAPACC will have enough grass roots contacts to demonstrate to the leadership the widespread opposition among members to the defeatist strategy currently being pursued.

On Saturday LAPACC made it possible to discuss the organisation of a national strike on 5 March. At a time when the Baker Bill is about to become law and the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA) leaders face expulsion for organising strike action against it, mobilisation on a national scale is vital to defend the ILTA Council and develop a fighting strategy against Baker.

Although delegates reported uneven support for strike action, it was clear that enough areas outside London could be mobilised in time for 5 March.

Determination

Despite the determination of delegates to defeat the Baker Bill, the majority at LAPACC nevertheless recognised the need for a strategy to deal with its implementation. It was widely believed that many right wing local union leaders would allow local authorities, pressurised by government grant cuts, to introduce stringent contracts containing worsened conditions of service.

It might even be possible to replace many local leaders who are prepared to capitulate in the face of management dictat. Classroom teachers must be convinced that compulsory cover, attendance at meetings, and the completion of other duties, directed by the head, will only be possible if they agree to cooperate. If they refuse to cooperate it may be possible to build enough support to force national Conference at Easter to agree to a policy of 'absolute no cover' for absent colleagues, and recognition that all teaching duties are voluntary.

Already, NUT leaders feel directly threatened by LAPACC. They are currently trying to declare the organisation unconstitutional under Rule 8 of the union. It is further claimed that LAPACC was formed by the Socialist Teachers Alliance and is therefore a political body with no part to play in the union. This lie is being communicated to associations who are unclear about

By Liam Conway

LAPACC's origin.

Such a feeble attempt to undermine a body set up and funded by so many associations simply indicates bureaucratic fright at any attempt to coordinate activity at a rank and file level.



Nurses march to Wapping in support of the sacked printworkers. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL.

Crosville

Workers occupy bus depot

OVER 250 workers, mainly members of the TGWU, have been sacked at Crosville Buses Love Lane depot in Liverpool. They are now occupying the depot.

Crosville under-tendered for routes in Liverpool after de-regulation, and they have obviously decided to blame the workers for their problems. They want to teach the union a lesson by

By Lol Duffy

taking on Love Lane, which is seen as the best-organised depot.

They bought ten old buses from a scrap dealer who just happened to live a couple of doors down from the Crosville leasing manager. The buses were brought to Liverpool to be used on regular routes, even though the steering was heavy and dangerous.

When drivers refused to use them, they were taken off pay. The rest of the workers struck.

After two weeks management agreed to keep the buses off the road. Two days later they put them out again. The workers struck, were sacked, and then occupied the depot.

Other Crosville depots in the region struck in their support, and those who did not were picketed.

After talks at ACAS, the TGWU called on the other depots to return to work. The negotiations now seem to centre on redundancy payments rather than reinstatement.

Pete Cashman, a TGWU shop steward at Crosville's West Kirby depot who struck in support of the Love Lane workers, said:

"It was mad to call on the other depots to return to work. This is the first time in years that there has been even this amount of unity, and it has been thrown away."

Our depot is not known for its militancy, but when we heard that the drivers had been sacked we voted by over two to one to support them.

If Love Lane accept redundancy, management will be after the other depots next, with their plans for rationalisation. I would call on all the Love Lane workers to fight for reinstatement and to attempt to mobilise support from the other depots".

CPSA Broad Left

Candidate imposed

If Militant isn't careful and if it doesn't ease up on its heavy-handed factional control, good socialists are going to leave the CPSA Broad Left.

Broad Left conference voted to stand Terry Adams, a Militant supporter, in the forthcoming Deputy General Secretary elections. Recently the Militant-dominated Broad Left NEC met. It overturned the decision without consulting Broad Left supporters. The man they picked instead? John Macreadie, who — due to disgusting right wing tactics — failed to become CPSA president in the sham re-run election.

The Broad Left NEC could have called a conference to discuss this. But they chose to impose the decision on the rest of us.

Socialist Caucus — the left grouping

Offer accepted

By Ian McCalman

The 2½ year campaign of Scottish teachers is over. By a 70/30 vote EIS members decided to accept the pay and conditions package on offer, a deal very similar to that which they rejected by an 84/26 majority last November.

This dramatic turn-about was engineered through a skilful use of speed and secrecy by the General Secretary John Pollock.

He used every trick in the union bureaucrat's book — secret negotiations with management, changing the date of the ballot from that agreed at the National Executive, using campaign levies to pay for newspaper adverts to convince members to accept a rotten deal, threats of resignation, personal abuse of opponents. Almost every conceivable unscrupulous device was used to foist the package on the membership.

In all of this he "enjoyed" the support of the majority of the Executive, especially the Euro-Communists and the Morning Star Stalinists.

These same people, along with the Labour Party Kinnockites, have resisted every attempt over the last two years to change the basis of the campaign away from the demand for a comprehensive settlement on pay, conditions and resources to a straight pay claim and an entirely separate campaign and set of negotiations on conditions and resources.

The result is a disastrous settlement leading to an increase of 80 hours in the working year, phased in over the next two years (it will mean up to an

extra 180 hours for many primary teachers); contractually binding duties and a resumption of curriculum development without any guarantees of resources, to mention only a few of the odious features of the settlement.

The 16.4% increase recommended by the Main Committee will now be paid in two phases of 8.2%, meaning a substantially reduced wage award. A year from now the salary increase will be well behind us but the new conditions are here to stay.

The serious Left in the EIS fought to resist the deal. Six members of the Executive fought the deal and five of them openly campaigned against it. Four of the six were from Glasgow and are supporters of the Campaign for a Fighting Union (CFFU). The others were Norman Bissell from Lanarkshire and Martin Docherty from Ayrshire.

There was also opposition at an official level from Local Associations in Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Aberdeen and Midlothian and from Grampian Region.

At an unofficial level every Scottish school received an analysis of the deal circulated by the Federation of Scottish Socialist Teachers, an umbrella organisation of the various activist groups.

The main task now before us is to work at divisional, regional and Scottish levels to ensure that management attempts to unilaterally impose their interpretation of the new contract are resisted.

Already Strathclyde Regional Executive has passed a motion advising members to stand firm against any precipitate change in their working conditions. We are in a damage limitation situation and we must be seen to be effective in that.

The full claim! No strings!

British Telecom management and NCU leaders have been locked away in secret, 'informal' negotiations since the weekend. Ricky Houston, Edinburgh External NCU, explains how he sees the latest developments.

Ricky Houston, Edinburgh External NCU:

I do not know what is happening with the talks at the moment. All we get are rumours and more rumours. The attitude on the picket line is that they would be happy for any extra money, but they do not want strings.

Our other focus is on the picketing, to prevent any drift back to work. We had one go in yesterday but, after a big picket, he has not turned up so far today (Tuesday). With nearly two weeks on strike now, it is more important than ever to get support groups off the ground.

We contacted national officials about the need for support groups, but there has been silence since then. In Edinburgh, we organised street collections last weekend with local Labour Parties.

We know that a lot of the managers are sympathetic and we have heard that the City of London STE branch wants their executive to issue instructions not to cross picket lines. But at the moment their instructions are to cross. Everybody here wants to picket them out.

I also still see the danger lurking of private contractors being brought in to repair breakdowns, particularly from the big multi-national, non-union computer and telecommunications firms.

As far as we know, there is no further action planned by the clericals. None were suspended in Edinburgh after their three-day action last week. But there is a strong feeling from our membership about the need for joint action and, if the clericals do not join in I would imagine there would be a lot of recriminations afterwards.

Although the branch officials are still solid about the need to provide life and limb emergency cover, there is some frustration building up amongst the membership. They feel that if we withdraw it then management and the police would have to cope, and we could see the strike biting.

But the main point of concern is what is going to happen with the present talks. There are just rumours. We want to make sure that there are no strings.

The important thing is that any decision on a settlement should be taken at a mass meeting, so that the members can hear the different arguments before voting. It does not really matter if it is done by a show of hands or a secret ballot at the end of the meeting, as long as it happens at a mass meeting.



NUPE members support NCU picket in Birmingham.

Photo: Nigel Clapp

As I reported last week, we have made small but significant steps forward for the NUM at Bolsover pit. The Coal Board has acknowledged that the NUM are a majority at Bolsover, and are allowing the union to do safety inspections.

And at the forthcoming ballot for the NUM vice-presidency, we will be allowed a notice board and an office — a room or part of a room — to conduct the ballot on Coal Board premises.

It is just for the duration of the ballot, but it is a gain.

Last week Stan Orme from the Shadow Cabinet visited the Notts coalfield for three days. We had an assurance from him that he was there to talk primarily to miners. He talked to the NUM but refused to talk to the UDM; he said he would talk to all rank and file miners. In fact when he visited Thoresby colliery an attempt was made to blackmail him to talk to Roy Lynk, but he refused.

On Radio Nottingham, I believe,

A small step for the NUM

he made it clear that there should be only one mining union, the NUM, and that Notts miners, themselves faced with a programme of pit closures, needed a Labour government as much as anybody else.

For us, that was a small step forward.

Now that the Notts scabs are setting up their new 'Moderate Labour Party', the Labour Party leadership should wake up and listen to what we have been saying since halfway through the strike. These people are not friends of the working class or the trade union movement: they will do the dirty on anybody.

There is a significant threat to the Nottinghamshire coalfield. Some pits are already being told to cut or shut. There is the threat of privatisation. Already there has been an influx of private contractors underground, and the Tories are threatening to privatise pit top facilities, like can-

WHETTON'S WEEK



teens.

Last week in Parliament the Tories prepared for an increase in open-cast mining production by restricting the rights of local authorities to stop such developments. What they are after is to break the monopoly of the NUM, either with non-union labour or with members of another union (many workers in existing open-cast mines are TGWU members). More than that though — such mines are also very ripe for privatisation.

The press has been at it again, saying that Peter Heathfield's decision to retire at 60 is another blow for Scargill. It is just not true because

everybody knew before the strike that Peter was going to retire then — he said so in his election leaflet!

I hope that the NCU workers stick to their guns and that they do not allow any sort of sell-out or compromise. Any assistance we can give them we certainly will. Already we have given support on the picket lines in the Mansfield area and we were very well received. I understand a bit of coal happened to fall off the back of a lorry near picket lines.

The police invasion of the BBC in Glasgow I see as part of a general attack up and down the country, against trade unionists, against activists, and against the civil liberties of the people of this country.

Many are still not concerned by this because they think it will not hit them so we need to get across the

message that there is a major general attack on civil liberties. If they do not challenge it eventually it will affect them directly.

We need to make sure that protection under a Freedom of Information Act, and defence of civil liberties, is a major priority of the next Labour government.

My main industrial tribunal hearing was last November. I had to go back last Friday for final submissions.

The Coal Board have not got a leg to stand on, particularly after the Ellistown decision where they ruled it wrong to treat NUM members differently from UDM members at the same pit. Plainly I was dismissed because of my trade union activity.

Now we have to await the decision of the tribunal, which will take anything up to six weeks. More of the drawing out process.

I think I won hands down, but the decision is still with the tribunal and they have never been the best friends of the working class.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.