

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Tory election lies...

DON'T UNDO 8 YEARS WORK IN 3 SECONDS.

1. Lowest salaries for nearly 20 years.
2. Lowest growth in any major economy in Europe.
3. Lowest industrial output for 50 years.
4. Europe's growth in manufacturing productivity of any major industrialised country.
5. Record manufacturing output.
6. Record number of new companies starting.
7. Over 1,000,000 new jobs created since 1983. More than the rest of the EEC put together.
8. Unemployment falling faster in Britain than in any other major industrialised country.
9. Unemployment falling for the 10th month running.
10. Over a third of nationalised industry privatised.
11. Record profits for privatised industries.
12. Number of people owning shares doubled.
13. Basic rate of Income Tax cut to its lowest level for nearly 50 years from 33p to 25p in the pound.
14. Spending on the National Health Service up by £1,000,000,000 - 30% more than inflation.
15. 4,000,000 more patient cases treated each year.
16. 6,000 more nurses and midwives.
17. 15,000 more doctors and dentists.
18. Hospital waiting lists cut by 60,000.
19. Spending per school pupil up 10% more than inflation since 1979.
20. 2,500,000 more families owning their own homes.
21. Over 1,000,000 council houses sold to their tenants.
22. 65,000 more policemen.
23. Tax: Same day of average cancer up by 21% since the election.

For Workers' Liberty East and West

8 YEARS OF TORY HELL

- 1 The bottom 50% worse off than in 1979; the top six per cent 20% better off
- 2 Manufacturing output still below 1979 level
- 3 The most vicious anti-union laws in Western Europe
- 4 Intense speed-up for those in work while millions are jobless
- 5 Revenue from North Sea Oil used in handouts to the rich while houses, schools, hospitals, road and railways rot
- 6 Record numbers of factory closures and of new, spiv, non-union businesses
- 7 Four million unemployed
- 8 The official figure kept down to three million only by 17 successive fiddles on the statistics
- 9 Threats to stop the dole for young people and force them into cheap-labour schemes
- 10 Millions handed out to the well-off by state enterprises being sold off cheap
- 11 Telecom charges sharply increased for ordinary households, and reduced for big business



Photomontage: Cath Tate

- 12 Standard of cleaning and other services down in the Health Service because of privatisation
- 13 £9 billion cut from social security, £13 handed out in tax cuts to the rich
- 14 35 hospitals closed in London alone
- 15 NHS spending way behind what's needed for an ageing population
- 16 Nurses forced to quit or get second jobs because of low pay
- 17 £25 a week on military spending per family of four; enough spent on Trident to pay for 500 new hospitals
- 18 Private medicine booming because people can't get treatment on NHS
- 19 Teachers' pay kept down; percentage of youth getting higher education lower than in any other major advanced country
- 20 Record numbers of homeless
- 21 Government money for housing cut by half; councils starved of cash to build or renovate housing
- 22 Growth of the 'secret state'; increased police powers; increased harassment of pickets and black youth — and much-increased crime
- 23 Profits and poverty both booming.

VOTE LABOUR JUNE 11TH!

Thatcher's plan: nasty, brutish, and long

THE TORY manifesto published on 19 May promises a harsh, authoritarian, and unequal Britain.

A new Tory government would do its best to stop local authorities building any new council housing. As Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley put it at the manifesto launch, "We see little need for any increase in

council house building. The bulk of new housing for rent will come from housing associations and private landlords".

The one million people on council waiting lists will just have to do the best they can. And to help private landlords cash in on their plight, the Rent Act will be relaxed.

To further strengthen the domina-

tion of the dog-eat-dog free market in housing, council tenants will be encouraged to take their estates out of council ownership and put them under housing associations instead.

Local democracy will also be undermined by provision for schools to opt out of their local education authorities and put themselves directly under Whitehall.

And rates — which do, however

imperfectly, tax the rich more heavily than the poor — will be replaced by a poll tax under which everyone, poor and rich, pays the same, and businesses pay nothing at all.

The Tories have no proposals for ending unemployment other than trusting to the wonders of the free market. Instead they will victimise the unemployed: young people will

be forced into cheap-labour 'training' schemes on pain of otherwise having their benefit cut off.

Democratic rights will be under attack. New laws against 'sex and violence' on television will be used to censor anything that might offend Mary Whitehouse. And the unions will be bashed yet again.

Workplace ballots allow more discussion, and more members voting, than postal ballots. But the result, of course, is that they often produce results that the Tories don't like.

So the Conservatives plan to outlaw workplace ballots, and impose postal ballots for all elections of union officials.

And even if you have conducted a strike ballot in full Tory-approved style, and won a majority, a new Tory law will make it illegal for unions to impose any penalty on scabs.

Labour's manifesto contains several key policies decided by the labour movement around which we must rally to defeat the Tory threat:

- Increased public spending to create more jobs;
- Scrapping nuclear weapons;
- Increasing pensions and child benefit;
- A national minimum wage;
- Renationalisation of Telecom and gas.

On some issues the manifesto is vague: there is not the clear commitment there should be to restoring trade union rights, and the economic policy falls far short of what is necessary to replace capitalist chaos by working-class socialist planning.

These issues can and must be thrashed out within the labour movement: we need not only Labour votes, but also new Labour activists who will fight for a Labour leadership accountable to the movement and for policies to cut through capitalist power and privilege.

But the first step now must be to get the Labour vote out. The Tories have given due warning to every worker and to every person who believes in a free and equal society.

Birmingham

Right-wing attacks

By Jim Denham

THE RIGHT-wing leadership of Birmingham City Council has stepped up its attacks on all sections of the left in the city.

At a closed session of the Labour Group on Tuesday 12 May, council leader Dick Knowles and his right-wing cronies summarily sacked three 'soft left' councillors who chaired three council committees.

Theresa Stewart, one of the longest-serving councillors in the city, was removed as chair of Social Services; Lynne Jones lost the chair of the Housing Committee; and Trudi Livingstone was removed as chair of the Women's Committee.

The Women's Committee itself, together with the Race Relations Committee, has now been closed down altogether. It has also been noticed that all three of the sacked councillors are women.

These moves follow Labour's disastrous showing in the local elections, when the Tories took five key marginals from Labour. Knowles' response was to blame 'the activities of the loony left', despite the fact that the right wing is firmly in control of the council and what opposition does exist within the Labour Group is very much of the tame, soft left.

In fact, the election results were clearly the result of general dissatisfaction with the record of the Labour Group under Knowles' leadership, and of the bitter internal feuding that has raged within the Birmingham Labour Party for months — feuding that has been initiated on every occasion by Knowles and the right wing, not the left.



Students flee police attack.

AFTER his election victory is Botha about to launch a major clampdown on South Africa's militant black trade union movement? That is the question now being asked by many activists inside the country.

The signs of such a clampdown are certainly there. The government has branded the living wage campaign of the main union federation, COSATU, as a "Communist plot". There has been a definite increase in the numbers of trade unionists being detained. New laws, aimed at curbing the political militancy of the unions have been strongly hinted at by government officials.

Two weeks ago a bomb exploded in COSATU House, destroying the printing presses and making the union federation's headquarters structurally unsound and possibly unsafe for use.

The number of violent attacks on trade unionists is on the increase. Last month six striking rail workers were shot dead by the security forces. Over the last few months there has been a massive increase in the number of black vigilante attacks on trade unionists, especially in the mines. Two weeks ago an NUM official was killed inside a union office by thugs from the right wing Zulu 'union' UWUSA.

Union offices have been occupied and ransacked on numerous occasions over the last month. COSATU House was raided twice in one week.

Moses Mayekiso — general secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) one of South Africa's most democratic and political trade unions — faces a

South Africa: towards a new clampdown

treason trial and if convicted could hang.

Moses' 'crime' and by implication that of his union is involving organised workers in the township struggles. Unions are finding it increasingly difficult to hold open public meetings. Most May Day gatherings were banned, and the same thing happened to COSATU's "living wage" rallies.

The government has increased its harassment of foreign journalists. ITN and BBC reporters face expulsion. Jon Lewis, left-wing academic and editor of the South African Labour Bulletin — a popular survey of the trade union movement — faces deportation within days.

Pieced together, these developments make up a very ominous picture.

Over the last year the revolt in the townships has been on the decline — many organisations have been forced into a semi-clandestine existence. This has left the trade union movement as the major open focus for opposition. The last few months have seen a massive strike wave of unprecedented scope.

In part, the present strike wave has caught the unions of guard. They haven't necessarily got the structures and organisation to ensure that this explosion of black working class militancy leads to victory and to the consolidation of union organisation.

This is certainly what appears to have happened in the rail strike when the railworkers union SARHU found itself catapulted into a full

scale all-out confrontation with the rail bosses, SATS, before a real national union organisation had been consolidated.

Now, after the election, the Botha regime is relatively stable. As the township revolt has faded this has left the state's hands relatively free to apply more pressure on the trade unions.

A major turn to more repression — something not far short of martial law — could potentially derail the mass movement and create the conditions in which Botha could hope to introduce "reform" from above, to draw in black middle class support.

Murderous repression would make such reform a lot safer for Botha: the danger of reforms forming revolt would be much less and a white backlash would be more limited if Botha adopted the far right's "hard line" on the liberation movement.

Signs

The signs are not good for the liberation movement. Despite the heartening response to the stay-away call over the white election, exhaustion and demoralisation seem to be setting in. The almost continuous revolt since September 1984 has taken its toll. Unlike 1984-85 the immediate collapse of the regime no longer appears to be on the agenda in the eyes of the majority of black workers. Yet the people who argued that the regime was about to suffer a

Free Moses Mayekiso! Free all detainees! Send messages of support to MAWU, The Metal and Allied Workers Union, 4th Floor, COSATU House, 268 Jeppe Street, Johannesburg 2001, South Africa.
Send letters of protest to: The President, PW Botha, Union Buildings, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa.

Socialists and the election

An open letter to Tony Cliff of the Socialist Workers' Party

Dear comrade,

If the Tories win the general election, then reaction will be immensely strengthened in Britain. The Thatcherite onslaught on the labour movement and on socialism will continue and gain in power from the seeming endorsement, for the third time, of enough voters to give the Tories a majority in Parliament.

The prevailing political climate will continue to depress industrial militancy, curbed as it has been by mass unemployment.

You don't want the Tories to win

EDITORIAL

this general election. Like us, you want to counterpose to the Tories a revolutionary socialist alternative.

Unfortunately, the revolutionary socialists have yet to win enough working-class support for that — and we have, as you will probably agree, quite a long way yet to go. In favourable conditions and with the right tactics, we could cover that long way in a short period of time. But still, we haven't got there yet.

The alternative to the Tories is the Labour Party.

It is not an ideal Labour Party, by any means, even according to the reformist model of what is ideal. Eight years of Thatcherism have deeply affected the Labour Party, cowed its right wing and even sections of its left, and pressured the movement into scaling down its aspirations and its hopes.

Kinnock and Hattersley don't even promise to restore Thatcher's cuts fully. And no doubt the working class would have to defend itself against a Kinnock/Hattersley government.

But it would be immensely better able to do that than to defend itself against a re-elected Thatcher government.

You will agree with that. The SWP

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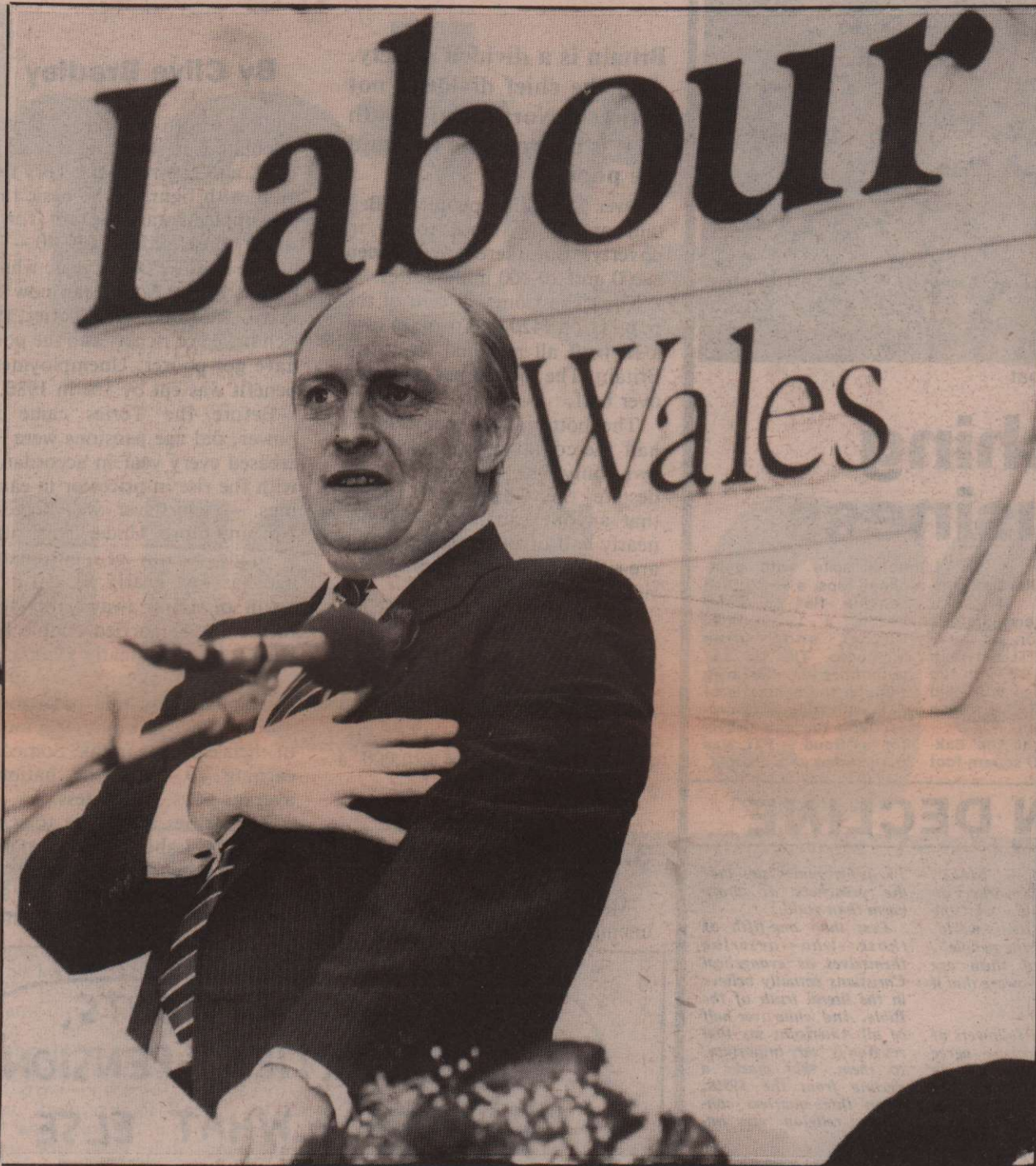


Photo Nigel Clapp

wants a Labour victory. One of your saving graces is that you are only 'peacetime' sectarians and opponents of the Labour Party — when the election comes you roll over and die as an anti-Labour organisation. Paul Foot put it candidly and well in 1979: "For the next three weeks I am a very strong Labour supporter".

You are right to recognise that your routine *pretence* that you are a party has to be abandoned at election time, or else you would isolate yourselves from working-class militants and bitterly antagonise them. You are right to rule yourselves out of order during the election.

But this is a knife-edge election. Every activist, every vote, every Labour canvasser counts, and may be decisive. Your usual 'play dead and fade into the background' passivity at election time is not enough. The Labour Party is, for now, the labour movement in politics — and the labour movement needs you, comrades of the SWP!

Canvass

Why then does the SWP not mobilise its members and canvass for the Labour Party? *Nothing less is*

serious, comrade Cliff. Either you have an alternative to the Labour Party, or you don't — and you don't. You admit you don't.

Either you put up your own candidates — that is, you act like the party you say you are — or you don't, and instead you accept that the Labour Party is the working-class party. You do the latter — and so you should throw yourselves into the campaign for a Labour victory.

But you don't. You have enough sense — or opportunism — to know that you can't do other than call for a Labour vote. But you continue to act out your pretence that you are a party able to compete with Labour by refusing to canvass.

Throughout the eight years of Thatcher's rule you have stood aside from the debates in the political labour movement. You have pretended that the trade unions are separable in politics from the Labour Party — that the unions are the workers' movement and the Labour Party is something else — though it was the CLPs that voted 83% for Benn against Healey, and the trade unions that enabled the right wing and soft left to win against the serious left.

When the left was in the ascendancy at the beginning of the '80s you stood aloof and said that it was all empty words because of the in-

dustrial downturn — as if the political prospects and the signals given out by the political wing of the labour movement were unimportant in stimulating or depressing industrial militancy! In the period of the soft left's and right wing's ascendancy, you have recently recruited a few dozen people from the struggle in the Labour Party.

You have thus behaved like jackals towards the struggle in the political organisation of the working class. You parallel the right wing, who agree with you that socialists should leave the Labour Party, though you want socialists to join you and the right wing want us to go to hell.

You have abstained throughout eight years of left-versus-right struggle in the political wing of the labour movement. You might have made a serious difference if you had been a force for strength — rather than a siren voice calling for abstention — on the left. Partly as a result of your abstention, you now face the choice of the Tories or the Kinnock-led Labour Party in the election.

You have enough sense — or, to repeat, opportunism — to say 'vote Labour'. But that isn't enough now. Campaign for Labour, comrades of the SWP! Put your energy where your votes will be!

Off the fence. Tony Cliff!

PRESS GANG

The mask slips

Horse-laugh of the week must surely be Norman Tebbit 'dissociating' himself from personal attacks on political opponents and calling for a clean campaign 'fought on policies and not on smears'.

Our Norman's dramatic transformation from semi-house trained pole cat to Care Bear is one of the wonders of recent British political history.

Of course Tebbit can afford to play Mr Squeaky-Clean, because he knows that the vast majority of papers will take no notice whatsoever of his stunts.

The Sun, the Star and the News of the World have already weighed in with lurid stories about David Steel's private life, emanating from last week's Scottish Tory Conference, and (according to the Guardian), 'being widely circulated by journalists as well as by Party Officials, one or two of whom were passing them on with relish.'

'The Tory press' is a phrase I generally try not to use. It smacks too much of Dave Spart-type ranting and implies certain paranoia that undoubtedly exists on the Left — a conspiracy theory that ascribes every setback in the struggle to the machinations of corrupt journalists, right-wing press barons and their Tory paymasters.

On the other hand there is no denying the plain facts of the matter: of the eleven national daily papers published in Britain, six are rock solid for the Tories (the Sun, Express, Mail, Telegraph, Times and Financial Times); one (the Star) is less predictable, but usually falls into line on the day; two (the Guardian and Today) are for the Alliance and tactical voting; The Independent has yet to nail its colours to the mast, but seems likely to come out for tactical voting aimed at achieving a Tory/Alliance coalition (which is also Today's favoured outcome).

By Jim Denham

Just one daily paper (the Mirror) backs Labour.

So talk of 'the Tory Press' is not so wide of the mark, is it?

In normal times the Mail, Express, Telegraph and Times retain a thin veneer of objectivity. Even the Sun — when faced with Thatcherite blunder like Westland and British Leyland — occasionally dares to criticise.

But now the election has been announced, the mask has slipped. They are blatantly, brazenly partisan, and any weapon that comes to hand will be grasped and wielded in the cause of Thatcherism.

David Steel fell victim this weekend. But he is not the main target: the Labour Party is. We have only, so far, had a mild foretaste of what is in store over the next couple of weeks. But take a random selection of front page lead headlines since the election announcement and you will see what we are up against.

'GAGGED: ban on election speeches by Neil's wife Glynis' (The Star, Wednesday); 'TORIES: WE'LL END SCHOOL TYRANNY' (Mail, Wednesday); 'ALLIANCE LEAD LABOUR' (Today, Thursday); 'Polls shock when veteran MP quits over left — DOUBLE BLOW FOR LABOUR' (Mail, Thursday); '81% say Maggie will win' (Express, Friday); 'Jobless drop boost for Conservatives' (Telegraph, Friday).

Friday's Mail led with 'TORIES GO FOR THE JUGULAR' — which was in fact a free plug for the Tories new poster campaign targeting Labour alleged 'corruption of Britain's school children': "One of the most emotive political posters yet seen will appear throughout the country next week, highlighting three notorious publications from London left wingers.

They are: Young Gay and Proud2, recommended for thirteen year olds by Haringey Council, Police: Out Of Schools, as advised by the Hackney Teachers' Association and the Playbook for Kids about Sex which Haringey — once again — is making available to local teachers", says the Mail.

The poster is only just going up now. So how did the Mail come to find out about it last week? Answers please on a postcard to Mr Squeaky-Clean, c/o Conservative Central Office.

GRAFFITI

BAKKER SCANDAL



The Bakkers' house and houseboat

Bible-bashing as big business

"YOU'RE NOT talking about people nudging over the line. There was absolutely no line. It was fiscal sin".

That's Jerry Nims, chief executive of the 'Praise The Lord' (PTL) television-evangelism business, talking about the money ripped off by

disgraced evangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker.

The Bakkers charged \$1.3 million in 'expenses' to PTL between 1981 and 1983, on top of the salaries they paid themselves (\$8.4 million since 1984).

PTL bought the Bakkers a 3,000 square-foot

hotel suite with gold-plated taps, a \$590,000 seaside flat in Palm Beach, a 1939 Rolls Royce and three Mercedes.

The US tax authorities are now going through the accounts of PTL with a view to prosecuting the evangelists for tax fraud — PTL was tax-exempt as a charity.

RELIGION IN DECLINE

REVELATIONS like the Bakker scandal make it seem very disheartening that fully one-third of adults in the US describe themselves as 'evangelical' or 'born-again' Christians. Are the working class of the greatest capitalist country in the world such easy dupes for bible-bashing charlatans?

A recent survey in the Economist magazine shows that the picture is

not quite so bleak. Millions of US workers do turn to religion as "the heart of a heartless world, the opium of the people", but many of them are aware or half-aware that it is opium.

54% of the followers of the TV preachers agree that those preachers are in their business mainly for the money. And 41% of those who watch the widely-popular religious

TV programmes say that the preachers do more harm than good.

Less than one-fifth of those who describe themselves as evangelical Christians actually believe in the literal truth of the Bible. And while over half of all Americans say that religion is 'very important' to them, that marks a decline from the 1950s, when three-quarters considered religion 'very important'.

BOSSES GO SOCIALIST

Capitalist competition is supposed to be justified by giving a greater spur to efficiency and innovation than any cooperative or collective organisation of production could.

But this claim has just been disproved once again, by the major companies in the US's high-tech semiconductor industry. They have decided to pool their resources for research and development, so that new technical ideas and projects will be worked out

by a jointly-funded, non-profit, non-competitive outfit.

Once new technologies have been developed and tested, they will then be made available to the participating companies, who will compete to make and sell them.

TORY

By enforcing council house sales, and denying local authorities money to build new houses, the Tory government has significantly reduced the proportion of households that are council tenants and increased the proportion of owner-occupiers.

And, despite the fact that opinion polls show that more voters trust Labour on housing than trust the Tories, this Tory housing policy seems to have been a vote-winner for them.

Among working-class tenants, 60% support Labour and only 19% back the Tories. But among working-class owner-occupiers, the Tories lead Labour by 42% to 35%.



Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

Thatche

Britain is a divided society. And the chief divide is not between North and South — it is between the rich and the poor.

Over 18 million people in Britain are living close to or in poverty. But there are between 6,000 and 20,000 millionaires.

The richest one per cent of the population (420,000 people) own a fifth of all personal wealth in Britain. The top ten per cent own over half.

The bottom fifty per cent — half the country's population — own only 7% of wealth. And despite the Thatcherite theory that anyone can make it good, nearly half of British millionaires are rich because their families are rich.

The Queen alone has a personal fortune of — at least — £4 billion. She gets £4 million as 'wages' every year paid out of our taxes. The lowest-paid member of the Royal family, Prince Edward, gets £20,000 a year.

3.6 million jobless

Meanwhile, under the Tories, unemployment has risen from 1.3

By Clive Bradley

million to 3.6 million — if you calculate it in the same way as in 1979, and ignore all the Tory fiddling with figures. The basic rate of supplementary benefit for a single householder is £30.40 — or a little over £2,000 a year, which thanks to the Tories can now be taxed. And under the Tories, the rich have got richer, and the poor have got poorer. Unemployment benefit was cut by 5% in 1980.

Before the Tories came to power, old age pensions were increased every year in accordance with the rise in prices or in earnings — whichever was biggest. Not any more. Under Tory rule, a single person of pensionable age has lost nearly £1,250 as a result of doing away with these increases. A married couple has been robbed of nearly £2,000.

And as for tax cuts: since 1979, a person earning half the national average wage now pays 9% more of their earnings in tax. Someone earning 10 times the national average pays... 22% less.

The Tories are trying to scandalise the Labour Party's policy of comprehensive education.

But top Tories don't have any personal experience of state

schools anyway. 15 out of 22 Cabinet Ministers went to public schools, and 15 out of 22 went to Oxford or Cambridge universities.

Geoffrey Howe, Nigel Lawson, George Younger and Viscount Whitelaw all went to Winchester public school — whose basic fees in 1985 were £5,760 a year. Malcolm Rifkind is a poor relation — his school only costs £1,860 a year to go to.

Two-class education

Current Education secretary Kenneth Baker went to St. Pauls (£4,878 a year), his predecessor Sir Keith Joseph's schooling included Harrow (£5,850).

State schools face difficult conditions. In secondary schools there is an average of 21.5 students per class. Each of these students receives an average £47.10 spent on books and equipment. On average public schools spent £129.30 per student on books and equipment.

State schools often have poor conditions — a report of the National Confederation of Parent Teachers Associations mentions "diabolical indoor toilets". "The fabric of the building is in very poor condition with leaks, rising floors, crumbling plaster, and inadequate heating" in some schools.

Kingswood public school in Bath has 520 students — and 12 science laboratories (one for every forty seven and a bit). Marlborough, with 870 students, has 30 music practice rooms. And a public school in Dorset has its own beach.

Britain is spending less on education than it used to (5.1% of gross domestic product in 1985, as opposed to 5.5% in 1981).

NHS unsafe in their hands

The NHS has done badly under the Tories too, of course, despite Thatcher's promises, and despite frequent Tory claims that the Health Service is in a better state.

NHS bed numbers have fallen from 450,000 in 1981 to 421,000 in 1985 — while waiting lists have increased from 736,600 to 802,000.

Prescription charges have been raised by one thousand per cent since 1979.

Meanwhile 1,387 pensioners died of hypothermia or cold-related diseases in 1985 alone. Yet the Tories last year gave a miserable £5 heating bonus.

Mrs Thatcher herself, of course, doesn't have to worry about the state of the NHS. On the three occasions since she became Prime Minister when she's needed to go to hospital... she was treated privately.

More homeless

And in Tory Britain, as financial sharks make their fortunes in property speculation, one million people are on council house waiting lists.



r's class war



In 1985 116,165 council homes were sold, and only 33,600 started to be built.

In 1981 there were one million people living in houses considered unfit for human habitation. In 1987, 10,000 people will be registered homeless; at the end of 1985 15,000 households were living in bed and breakfast, 5,000 in hostels and 6,000 in short-life dwellings.

Yet former Tory Minister, the Duke of Buccleuch owns four stately homes, each with some 3,000 acres.

Tories are racist

Black people are at the bottom of the pile in Tory Britain. Almost no black people are to be found in top jobs. Unemployment among blacks is twice as high as among whites, and black workers are concentrated in the lowest-paid jobs.

Moreover, the Tories are a deeply racist party. Fourteen Tory MPs, in-

cluding the recently disgraced Harvey Proctor and Norman Tebbit are members of the Monday Club. The club "supports schemes of assistance for those who wish to return to their family's country of origin" — i.e. 'voluntary' repatriation. And it opposes "any further large-scale permanent immigration from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan" — i.e. by blacks.

The Tory government has further restricted immigration with racist immigration laws.

So if you're poor in Britain, under the Tories you will just get poorer. If you're black it's even worse.

But if you're rich, you are doing very well thank you. And if Thatcher gets back into Number 10, the rich will go on getting even richer at the poor's expense.

Information: 'The Widening Gap', by Labour Research Department price £1.10, and 'Two Nations — double standards', by the Low Pay Unit, price £2.00.

Fiddling the figures

ONE of the Tories' '23 facts' in their adverts is that they have increased spending on the NHS by 31% more than inflation. This seems a funny claim if you're stuck on a hospital waiting list. So what are facts?

The Tories have increased spending. But their figures are misleading. Inflation in the health sector is different to the economy in general. Costs in private medicine were running at three times general inflation in early 1986, due to new medical technology. Drugs — often supplied by private companies at extortionate rates — cost a fortune too, and are increasing in price at a fast rate.

So the NHS has to spend a lot more just to stand still.

Moreover, people are living longer, so there are more potential patients. According to one expert, between 1978 and 1982, the number of people over 75 grew by a quarter of a million. £250 million would need to be spent on this age group — but only £135 million was available.

Fiddle

The 'Financial Times' (January 24 1986) commented that if you take all the adjustments into account, "the apparent real increase in spending (is) down... to just over 8 per cent, or barely 1 per cent a year, and even that may be overestimating the real gain."

And the Tories may not have

intended what growth there has been. For 1986-87 they planned only a 4% increase in local authority spending on health — which would mean a fall in the quality of the service, in real terms.

And Britain spends a lower proportion of its wealth on the NHS than many other countries.

The countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) — the rich industrial countries of the West — spend on average 5.8% of their gross domestic product on their health services. Britain spends 4%. To catch up with the biggest spender, Sweden (8.9%), Britain would have to raise public sector spending on the NHS by one fifth.

A child's world

'MY LIFE as a Dog' hasn't had much advertising or hype, but audiences leave the cinema happy. This Swedish film has no stars, and was made fairly cheaply, but it has won awards and praise from critics since its release.

It is genuinely touching, a film that can move you to tears or laughter without your feeling manipulated. Lots of Hollywood films tug at the heartstrings, but they achieve their effects dishonestly.

You know that your feelings are being worked on, and so you feel angry or silly afterward. You know you wouldn't have cried but for that emotive, swelling music on the soundtrack. 'My Life as a Dog' doesn't violate you in that way at all. You feel moved because it's genuinely touching and fresh.

It's a 'small' film, set in the 1950s, about a young boy, Ingemar, who is balancing between childhood and adolescence. The '50s don't look that much different from the '80s — maybe because the period has just been recycled in fashion. The decade is established by references to Sputnik and the Floyd Patterson/Ingemar Johansen boxing match, and Ingemar's uncle has a crummy old black-and-white TV.

An audience brought up on Rambo and Clint Eastwood might think there isn't much going on in the film. There isn't much of a story, but the mood is set exquisitely. It really draws you in, the way that books that have their own distinctive style and voice can do.

Child

Ingemar is a genuine character, and the child's performance is astonishing. It is rare to see a fully-rounded child portrayal on the screen. In most films, children are either shown as smart-talking small adults, or as impossible little darlings. You rarely get glimpses of a child's secret world.

But this film focuses on Ingemar and so we see the world from his

Belinda Weaver reviews 'My Life As A Dog'

point of view.

Ingemar is frightened about the future, so he consciously stays a child. His mother is dying of TB; his father is absent, somewhere on the Equator loading bananas. He hasn't much in common with his older brother, but he dotes on his dog, Sickan.

He dotes on his mother, too, and blocks out the truth about her illness. He uses all his strength to cheer her up and make her laugh, hoping to call her back to life.

In one oft-repeated scene, we see Ingemar fooling and flinging himself about for his mother, who is laughing and laughing. He tries to hang on to that image so that he can hang on to his hope.

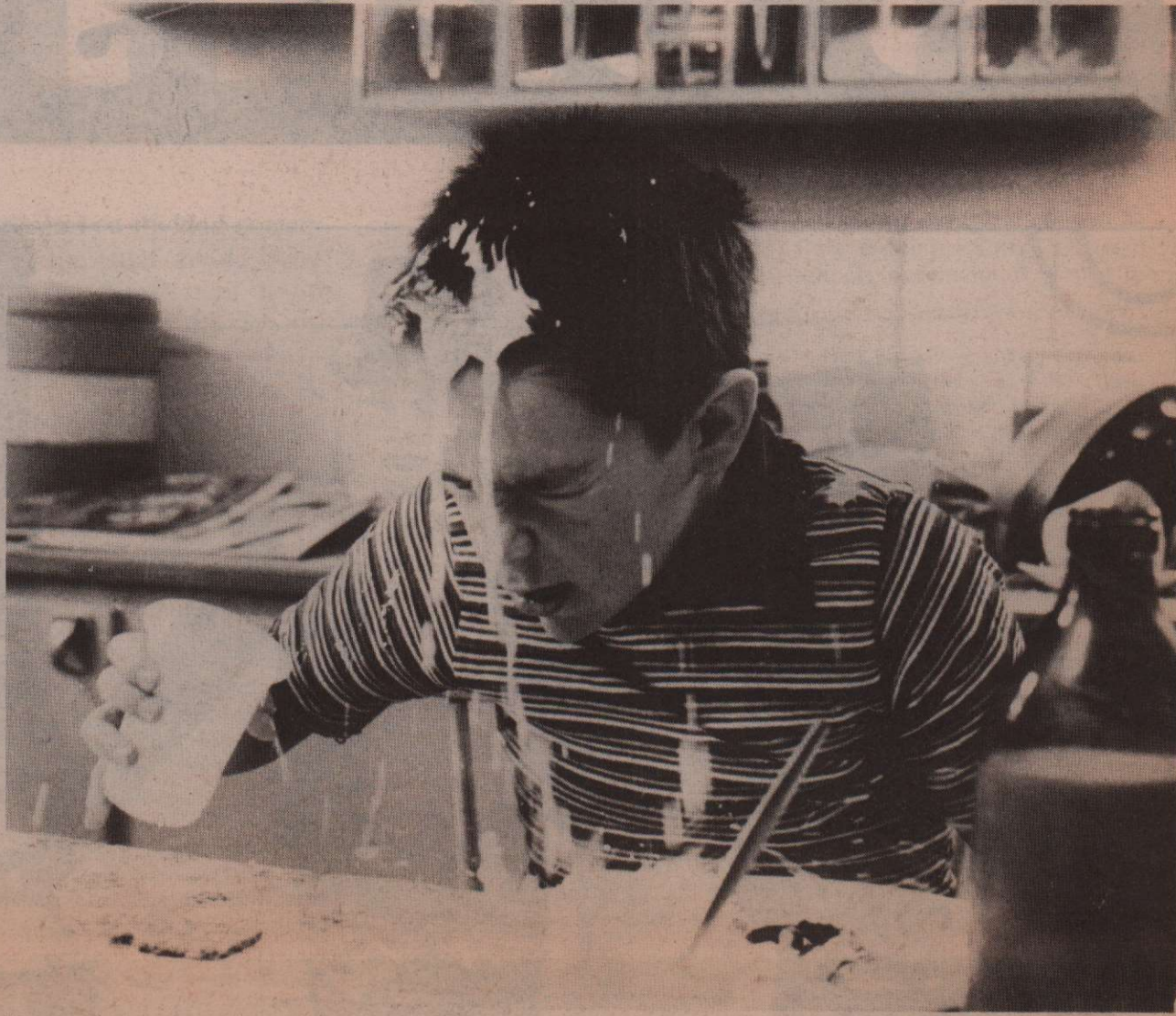
Ingemar is incredibly endearing, but he's not Hollywood-cute. You sense how he could drive a mother mad. Small disasters just attach themselves to him. He can light a small fire to keep warm and it will turn into a conflagration — he's just unlucky.

Sent off for the summer so his mother can rest, Ingemar seems to have found a soul-mate in his uncle, who goofs around and treats Ingemar as an equal. But it turns out not to be — the house is too small, and there's no room.

Ingemar feels rejected and unwanted, and like many unwanted children, guilty. He blames himself. Told over and over that he's 'killing' his mother, he really believes later that he has killed her.

Ingemar develops his own system for coping with his troubles. When he's really down, he explains, he tries to keep things in perspective. He thinks of people worse off, he keeps a distance.

He's particularly concerned with Laika, the Russian space dog put into Sputnik to orbit the earth. Laika went round and round the earth for five months until her doggie bag ran



Ingemar: endearing, but not Hollywood-cute

out and she died.

There are other unfortunates whose fates are worse than his, like the man crossing the sports arena who was pierced by a javelin.

Ingemar keeps parts of his life at a distance, too, until he's ready to cope. On his first visit to his uncle's

he can't cope with too much, with girls and touching and sex. He stays a child to protect himself.

But later, after losing his mother and Sickan, he opens up more, to reach out and replace what he has lost. His childishness always remains

there if he needs it.

The film rings true when it shows Ingemar blocking his ears to shut out his mother's tears and screams, when he's hiding out with Sickan because he's afraid to go home (who hasn't 'stayed out' or run away after some seemingly unforgivable crime, rather than face the row?), or when he's dancing around after a boxing knock-out heard on the radio. It calls up the joys and fears of childhood in familiar ways.

The film isn't sad or depressing, despite its subject. It is filled with funny moments. Ingemar's comments on the unfortunates, particularly poor Laika, are really funny.

But it is Ingemar himself who holds the film together. He is a true original. That's an achievement.

Research on animals

AFTER FOUR minutes without oxygen, the human brain suffers irreversible damage. This leads to varying degrees of physical or mental handicap, including mild or severe retardation, loss of memory, loss of senses, cerebral palsy or paralysis.

After about eight minutes, the brain will effectively be dead, and even though the body can be induced to carry on living the individual it accommodated can no longer be said to exist.

But why should this be? Why is there such a brief time to save a person from disability or extinction? Why doesn't the brain tissue just slow down, stop and wait for the blood supply to be restored?

Recent surgical research at Johns Hopkins Medical Institution, Baltimore, USA, has shown how the damage is caused... and a possible way of preventing it.

Radicals

The culprits are highly reactive chemical substances called *free radicals**. When oxygen is used to burn up food in the body, these substances are formed in small amounts. They are neutralised by special enzymes** called *catalase* and *superoxide dismutase* (SoD).



Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

If the oxygen supply is cut off, however, free radicals begin to build up, overwhelming the capacity of the enzymes to mop them up. These cause some damage, but it is when the circulation is restored that the major damage occurs.

Spread

When the blood flow is restored, during resuscitation, the free radicals are spread throughout the tissues.

Such interruptions of blood flow can either be local, due to a blood clot, for example (coronary thrombosis, stroke, etc.) or general, due to the heart's stopping (major heart attack, suffocation, drowning, etc.)

Other organs are also affected by free radicals, though less so than the brain. Organs removed from 'donors' for transplantation can deteriorate rapidly so that, for instance, lungs would be useless after a couple of hours.

• Earlier research at Johns Hopkins Hospital showed that lungs could be kept in good condition for up to 12 hours if they were treated with extra

catalase and SoD. Trying the same treatment on the brains of laboratory animals which had had the blood flow cut off increased the survival time of the brain cells by up to 10 times. Johns Hopkins researchers also found that heart damage after coronary thrombosis could be reduced by some two-thirds with the catalase/SoD treatment.

The implications of this research are obvious. Transplant patients may benefit from receiving organs in better condition. Patients suffering coronary thrombosis can have more of their heart muscle saved from death. Patients undergoing major heart and lung surgery may also benefit.

But, as the director of the Medical Institution says, "Perhaps the most exciting potential area of application is the treatment of cerebral ischaemia [lack of blood to the brain] caused by cardiac arrest or stroke".

At present, doctors do not consider it worthwhile to attempt to resuscitate a patient whose brain has been starved of oxygen for more than five minutes. That time limit could soon be extended to some 40 minutes.

Animals

Many socialists will feel uneasy about this breakthrough, achieved as it has been at the expense of many animals' lives. Gerbils and cats have

had the blood cut off from their brains and have then been resuscitated, some suffering brain damage.

Dogs have been made to have heart attacks. Some supporters of 'animal rights' would reject such research out of hand.

I would argue, however, that, while socialists should reject animal experiments for commercial or military reasons, where it involves extreme cruelty, where the results may be irrelevant to humans, or where alternatives exist, we should welcome this sort of research. It could well result in a saving of lives and an improvement in the quality of those lives.

Information from *New Scientist*.

* Free radicals are bits of molecules or free atoms. They are very reactive and will join with any nearby chemical, such as protein or DNA. This makes unstable molecules which break up to make more free radicals. A chain of damage is started, only to be ended when the free radicals are mopped up by special enzymes.

** Enzymes are proteins that help chemical reactions to occur. Catalase is found in all living tissues that use oxygen. Its purpose is to destroy hydrogen peroxide, formed when oxygen atoms (free radicals) join onto water molecules. If you want to see catalase at work, add some liquidised raw celery to hydrogen peroxide (obtainable from chemists). It will fizz away like mad, releasing lots of oxygen!

Letter ON ALL FRONTS

PAUL WHETTON says in SO 313, correctly, that the unions are the first line of defence for workers. But he's wrong in saying that 'the minority groups' come under attack next.

They're under attack now, and have suffered this continually, the black community's experience of racism being just one example.

The lesson is obviously that if the organised working class doesn't fight for all those oppressed under capitalism, a bleak prospect opens up — a class divided by racism, sexism, homophobia and every other ruling-class prejudice imaginable, unable to successfully repel attacks and move onto the offensive as a class.

Socialists must seek to unite the struggles of the wider working class with those of the most oppressed. This is no act of charity, but one of vital self-interest.

BARRY THOMPSON,
London E9.

Industrial Action on shorter working week

By Pete Keenlyside

THE UCW conference this week (17-22 May) voted overwhelmingly for action for a three-hour cut in the working week.

The motion from Liverpool and Croydon branches, carried against the recommendations of the Executive, called for a ballot on industrial action, stated that the reduction in hours should be at no cost to the membership, put a deadline of 1 September on negotiations, and called for a special conference to consider any offer that the Executive thought worthy of acceptance.

The Executive argued that to go for a three-hour reduction was unrealistic. As the Post Office have already offered a one-hour reduction — at no cost to themselves, mind — I don't know what the Executive think is realistic.

As far as most members are concerned, especially on the delivery side, anything less than three hours isn't worth going for. A 3-hour reduction would at least give a chance to go for a five-day week, which is what most members want. We have been getting up at 4.30am six days a week for far too long.

The imposition of a deadline and the call for a special conference were important. This means that the Executive can neither drag things out nor go straight to the membership with some sell-out deal, using everything at their disposal to ram it through.

The passing of this motion at conference is just the start. The Executive have already shown their lack of enthusiasm. We can't rely on them to lead the fight, although we should demand that they do.

The conference passed the motion with enthusiasm. That enthusiasm needs to be turned into hard organisation, not just to prepare the membership to take on the Post Office, but to meet any obstacle the Executive may put in our way.



Photo: J Billington

Solid at Salplas

"We'll stay here for 2 years if necessary."

"It's a common cause — we're fighting for the right to work with dignity."

So said strikers at Salplas, Eccles (Manchester) this week. Ten of the original 40 sacked strikers have left the strike and found jobs but the remainder are still out in the thirteenth week.

Another one of the dozen scabs was 'sacked' last week for fiddling his clock-card. Company boss, Barry Chapman, unable to produce finished hosepipe in the factory, has been buying from outside, some of it from Belgium. The strike committee has contacted Belgium trade unions and British dockers. However, Chapman's seasonal hosepipe trade will end in a few weeks. Then, it's almost certain that nothing will be turned out. That would leave Chapman three options. Either take the strikers back, or close the factory, or sell to another company.

The strikers are still waiting for the date

of their tribunal but say they'd go on picketing after the tribunal if they don't get the right result. But not everyone is clear what the 'right result' would be. Is it hefty compensation from Chapman? Is it winning all the jobs back (with pay and conditions acceptable to the strikers)? Chapman has cut the workforce from 140 three years ago to 40 in January this year. He reaped around £120,000 from the workers' sweat in 1984/85. He changes his Mercedes cars like you and I change our socks. It's not surprising that some strikers just want to drive him out of business. But that would leave many, or most, of them on the dole — and Chapman might flit elsewhere to ply his parasite's trade. The strikers must match their steadfastness with a strategy for winning the dispute.

There are regular collections locally, but with only £18 a week strike pay money is badly needed. Send to:—

Jim Billingham, Secretary — 6/196 Branch TGWU, 43 Abingdon Road, Urmston M31 1GW

CPSA conference

Soft left back the right wing

By Mike Grayson

NORMALLY, CPSA conference on 11-15 May should have heard the results of the annual elections for the President and Executive Committee of the union.

However, it is claimed that some ballot returns from branches have been delayed by industrial action, and the current right-wing Executive have extended their term of office beyond the end of conference. This has fuelled speculation that the left has made substantial gains in the elections. It is uncertain exactly when the results will now be given out.

At the conference itself there were some worthwhile advances, but it will not be remembered as a conference which took CPSA forward significantly. Internal factionalism was more dominant than genuine concern for members' interests.

One first-time visitor told *Socialist Organiser*: "It's like an LPYS conference for adults".

Internal CPSA politics are dominated by three groupings: the National Moderate Group, who have had control of the Executive Committee over the past year; the Broad Left (in which *Militant* is the biggest tendency); and the soft left/Stalinist 'Broad Left '84'.

BL84 have been drifting rightwards since their split with the Broad Left at the end of 1984, but this conference saw them

consolidate their position as the new mouthpiece of the right wing. The Moderates have little presence on the conference floor, so right-wing President Marion Chambers constantly called BL84 activists into debates in order to get her side of the argument heard.

Most BL84 speeches included attacks on *Militant*, 'the Trots', and the Broad Left in general.

Heads we win, tails we re-run

The Politbureau is nothing compared to the right-wing dominated CPSA National Executive. In Russia there is only one party to vote for; in the CPSA members are only allowed to vote for the right-wing — or the ballot will be re-run!

The Broad Left candidate won the General Secretary election last year, so the right-wing got it re-run, under the supervision of the defeated right-wing candidate.

Now the Broad Left has triumphed in this year's NEC elections, and according to the Times on 19 May, the right-wing NEC want a re-run again!

At CPSA Conference this month BL'84 (Kinnockite-Stalinist alliance) and the right-wing, opposed a Broad Left motion to make the Conference the sovereign body of the union. The current NEC is now able to do anything it likes.

Members must fight this move tooth and nail. The Broad Left will not be defeated again. We must smash these Tories.

BL84's blocking with the right ensured the defeat of rule changes aimed at enshrining the position of annual conference as the supreme governing body of the union. They also defeated moves to make the union journal *Red Tape* more accountable by establishing an elected editorial board.

In some instances it was not at all clear why BL84 were opposing certain motions — other than the fact that these motions were moved by the Broad Left.

One of the few progressive steps this year was an instruction to the Executive to hold a ballot on the question of affiliation to the Labour Party before the 1988 conference. BL84 opposed this, too, with their favourite argument — "the time is not right" — but the motion was carried

on a card vote.

However, BL84 did join with the Broad Left to demand successfully that CPSA should recommend its members to vote Labour at the general election.

A progressive motion was carried on South Africa, calling for direct links to be established with COSATU and a 'substantial donation' to the South African trade union federation. Another successful motion attacked the anti-gay hysteria generated around AIDS, and instructed CPSA to give financial support to the Terrence Higgins Trust.

Much important business was guillotined for lack of time, including motions aimed at extending union democracy and curbing the high salaries paid to senior full-time officials.

London

Jobcentres on strike

SIX London Jobcentres are presently on strike over cuts imposed on them over the last few weeks. Some of the strikers spoke to *Socialist Organiser* at the CPSA conference last week.

Debbie Sanders, a Whitley Committee member and Margaret Khay, a strike at Hackney Employment Office, told us:

"We had complained to management about the pressure and stress which faces Jobcentre staff. Jobcentre staff have been cut over recent months to accommodate the implementation of New Technology. The result has been that there are now

too few staff to meet the demand for service to the public. Management's answer has been to impose pilot schemes in some London Jobcentres, supposedly to alleviate the problem.

They have cut the hours of opening from 40 to 35 hours per week; cut 'follow-up' on existing vacancies, thus losing hundreds of placements; and reserved Community Programme vacancies for Restart teams only.

Rather than relieve pressure in Jobcentres, this action has increased the pressure by concentrating the work. A member at Kensington Jobcentre was assaulted when she attempted to close the Jobcentre at lunchtime.

These pilot schemes were imposed on the Jobcentres with only one week's notice. It is obvious that management has used them as an excuse to cut our staffing levels even more.

400 members walked out in the London area. 50 people are still on strike from six Jobcentres, on 50% of their net pay.

The National Disputes Committee of CPSA have supported the strike up to now. Pressure must be kept on them to continue their support.

The strike is likely to escalate from North London to South London. It is rumoured that the North-West of England will be next on the hitlist. It is important that we inform our members nationally, and prepare for national strike action.

Our traditional jobfinding and job-filling work is being axed. Our service to the public is being drastically reduced. If we lose this dispute, it is not only our members who will suffer, but the public as well."

Letters of support to Gerard Doyle, 12 Guerne Close, Stratford, London E15.

NUPE conference

Call on minimum wage

THIS year's NUPE conference has been dominated by the general election.

The debate has centred on what demands NUPE wants Labour to take up in the election. The mood of the conference was for unity to get Labour elected, but opposition was raised to some Labour policies.

Introducing the economic policy debate, general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe recalled Callaghan's attacks on the trade union movement in 1979, and said that we should not be ashamed of NUPE's role in the 'Winter of Discontent' — it was the result of the Labour government turning on the unions.

The NUPE leadership, however, continually urged conference not to rock the boat. Delegates were told to bury their differences in the interests of getting Labour into power.

NUPE reaffirmed its commitment to a statutory minimum wage, and overwhelmingly called for a campaign for a minimum wage of £120 instead of the £80 proposed by the Labour Party. There was outright opposition to any attempt by a Labour government to introduce an incomes policy designed to hold down wages.

In the Labour Party debate, Tom Sawyer made a call for party unity — but he attacked a resolution which defended the present selection procedure for parliamentary candidates, and openly sided with those in the party who want selection to be based on one member, one vote.

Delegates rightly pointed out that this would weaken the input by trade union delegates to constituent

Labour Parties. Against the wishes of the Executive, a composite defending the present selection procedure was carried.

The major battle at conference was over the recent ballot for the Executive Committee. In this year's EC elections, the EC unilaterally changed the election procedure to comply with the Tories' anti-union laws. The Executive ignored the union rulebook and held a secret ballot.

Bickerstaffe claimed that there was only one authority higher than the union rulebook — the Tory anti-union laws! He challenged delegates unhappy with the procedure to take the union to court. Instead, we appealed to conference, but a move to censure the EC was defeated.

The issue will be raised again later in the week.

DNS Durham

Workplace bulletin

SOCIALIST Organiser supporters in the North-East have produced the first issue of a bulletin for the Department of National Savings office in Durham City.

500 copies were produced, and the bulletin has generally been well received by the civil service workers.

The first issue dealt with the present pay dispute, with an article which called for all-out strike. Two shorter items stirred up some controversy.

One dealt with an ex-Branch Committee member crossing the picket

lines. The other condemned a strike-breaking tactic employed by management — allowing scabs to use the vacant car parking spaces so that they could drive through the picket lines instead of having to walk through them.

Part of the bulletin will deal with a political issue. There was an article advising civil servants not to vote for the SDP as they are the same as the Tories.

Issue 2 will be ready in time for the ballot on all-out strike action after 18 May.

NUPE/NALGO

Westminster against cuts

By Paula Watson

A MAJOR CRISIS has blown up in Westminster NUPE over the union's response to Westminster City Council's privatisation plans.

Local officers have so far refused to organise any effective opposition and did not support NALGO's day of action against cuts on 29 April.

Strike support CONFERENCE PLANNED

By Duncan Chapple

OVER 50 activists, representing many different groups in dispute, gathered in Leeds on Saturday 16th to organise a conference on strike support groups.

The two-day event, to be held in late October or early November, will be a working conference looking at trade union laws, lessons from disputes, etc. Activists from Wheelers, Silentsnight, miners' and printers' support groups were there, as well as people from current disputes at Senior Coleman in Manchester, HFW Plastics in Gateshead, etc.

Socialist Organiser, *Workers' Press*, and *Labour Briefing* were represented.

Some of those present expressed their disappointment at attempts by the organisers of the conference, the *Socialist Viewpoint* section of *Labour Briefing*, to stage-manage the affair. SV speakers argued against widening the organising committee to include comrades from other tendencies.

So frustrated have some of the members become, that a group of activists has formed 'Westminster Workers Against the Cuts' (WWAC) to organise the fightback themselves.

WWAC's aim is to mobilise the rank and file to fight the Council's plans and to force NUPE's officers to take action. They hope to amalgamate their own campaign against privatisation with NALGO's against cuts and against the council's decision to withdraw from the National Joint Council.

At a recent meeting attended by members from NALGO it was agreed to hold joint mass meetings, to establish a joint shop stewards' committee and to organise a massive publicity campaign to inform workers of the threat to their jobs and conditions of employment.

Uphill

The aim is to ensure that if NALGO's ballot goes in favour of a Westminster-wide strike to start on 27 May, NUPE will not only support the action but eventually join it. This is the only way to defeat the council.

But WWAC has an uphill struggle on its hands. NUPE members are frightened and demoralised by the defeat of the miners and printers and disheartened by the lack of leadership from their officers. WWAC's own members have had to face not only opposition from the union bureaucracy, but outright harassment and threats of expulsion.

Representatives from the newly-formed Westminster Labour Left were welcomed by WWAC, but there were a few blunt comments that 'it was about bloody time the Labour Party showed up'.

Hopefully the contacts now being made will encourage party activists to come out more strongly in support of WWAC and encourage NUPE branches to affiliate to the local Labour Parties.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

"The main issue is attacks on the trade unions"

WHETTON'S WEEK 

THORESBY colliery was out on strike last Friday. The men came out on an argument about heat payments.

Both UDM members and NUM members walked out. They were trying to resolve the matter over the weekend. I understand that it has now reached the stage where the manager has told them that they have lost their attendance bonus for the quarter, and there's some argument about that, too.

Selling off pits

I'm told the News of the World last Sunday reported that the Tories have been discussing with the Coal Board about selling off the open-cast sites if they win the election.

It's not all surprising that the Tories have got these plans in the pipeline. We've expected it, and in some respects we're surprised that they have held off until now. Obviously, with the return of a Tory government, those plans will be put through.

And it seems quite logical that they would go for the most profitable pits first — i.e. open-cast. I've no doubt that they would shut down what they consider to be the dead wood, the loss-makers, and just leave the profitable sector for selling off to private owners.

It's a danger that we have been warning about since the strike.

General election

The election campaign is only just starting. There are of course people like me who have been active in the Labour Party for years who have got differences with the Labour Party. But we recognise that, in the interests of getting rid of the Tories, those differences have got to be put on one side. We're going out and we're campaigning and we're fighting like hell to make sure that we get as many Labour MPs as we can.

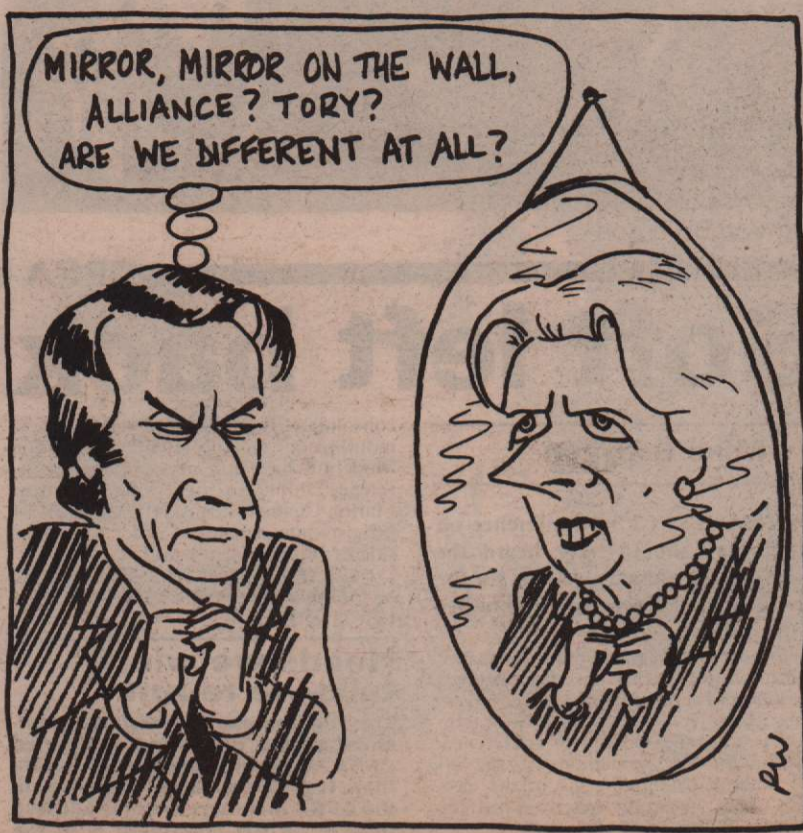
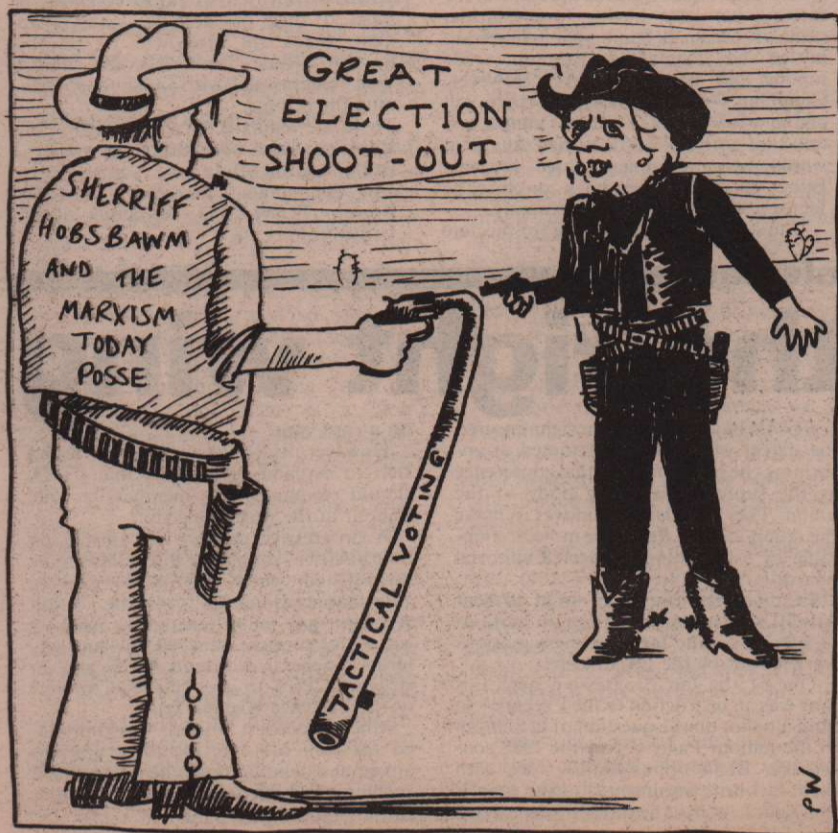
But those differences won't be forgotten. Issues that we want to sort out will be raised whether we win, lose or draw — issues like Sharon Atkin, like the failure to include the Justice for Mineworkers Bill in the manifesto. We have shelved our differences in the interests of unity for the time being, but that doesn't mean to say that we have forgotten them.

My view is that the main issue in the election is the attack on the trade union movement.

All the other issues are vitally important — education, health, defence... But if the Tories really succeed in neutering the trade union movement, that will make it all that much easier to carry out the attacks in those other sectors.

They will go for the trade union movement, and if they can in any way succeed, that will clear the way for all the other attacks. I see that as the greatest threat to working-class people.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.



LABOUR CAN TURN THE TIDE!

A GALAXY of labour movement luminaries, ranging from the *New Statesman* and Frank Field MP to the misnamed *Marxism Today* — have proposed that Labour voters should be asked to back the Liberals or SDP in some constituencies.

Their starting point was the defeatist idea that Labour could not otherwise stop a Tory landslide and had no chance at all of winning.

They based themselves on the massive lead the opinion polls gave to the Tories, and on the good showing made by the SDP and Liberals after the Greenwich by-election.

The opinion polls still say that the Tories are in the lead. They also say that Labour is catching up rapidly, and that the Liberals and SDP have fallen back. A Weekend World poll last weekend showed Labour about to overtake the Tories in 50 marginal seats.

Flux

Even without many marginal seats, the Tories could still form a majority government. But what the recent polls show is a situation in flux, and opinion swinging rapidly in Labour's favour.

There is a long campaign still ahead. It is perhaps too early to say with Neil Kinnock that Labour is heading for a landslide victory on the scale of 1945. But it can be said with

certainly that a Labour victory is within our grasp, if we go all out for it between now and the election — and if the Labour leaders refrain from inflicting any more self-wounding stupidities on the labour movement like the NEC-imposed uproar over the Sharon Atkin affair.

Betray

It can be said with certainty that those who continue to advocate tactical voting are betraying the labour movement.

They were always a dead weight on those who wanted to mobilise the movement to go all out to maximise the Labour vote, but while the polls they worship still predicted a Tory landslide the tactical-vote merchants could see themselves and present themselves as people who wanted a Labour government but, as rational beings, were prepared to settle for the second-best of stopping the Tories.

Now, if Labour can win — and the polls increasingly indicate that — those who refuse to go for an outright Labour victory cease to be a mere dead weight and become an active force fighting against a Labour victory. They are identical with the Stalinists who in 1945 called for a Labour-Liberal-Tory coalition.

If anything they are worse. The 'one-nation' Tories of 1945 were probably a long way to the left of David Owen!

There is a great deal wrong with the Labour Party. In the last five

years the left has suffered a series of setbacks, desertions and defeats. Labour's manifesto in this election is not even a half-way attempt to present Labour Party conference policies to the electorate. The working class would have to defend itself against a Kinnock/Hattersley government.

Nevertheless, the Labour Party is the only alternative the labour movement now has to the Tories. In many ways, the limitations of the official Labour Party are the limitations of the British labour movement as a whole.

After all, it was the trade union block vote that defeated the left in the Labour Party in the struggle of the early 1980s. For better and for worse, the Labour Party reflects the unions, the mass workers' organisations.

Licence

A tactical vote is a licence for the Tories — in coalition with the Alliance if necessary — to make war on the labour movement. A Labour victory means defeat for open reaction, and a government in power which has certain basic loyalties to the labour movement. It means a government which is open to the pressure of the labour movement and the working class.

A multi-million-strong labour movement fighting for socialism would be a better alternative to the Tories than the present Kinnock/Hattersley-led Labour Party.

We have yet to create such a movement. A Labour victory would perhaps be a step towards creating it.

It would encourage and stimulate a revival of industrial militancy, and put an end to the climate of militant anti-socialism which has dominated British society since 1979.

Advance

For all these reasons, socialists and trade union militants must work for a Labour victory in this election. It is the biggest blow we can deliver to reaction right now, the best immediate advance we can secure for the labour movement.

Opinion polls are treacherous. But for once they offer labour movement militants encouragement rather than discouragement. The current polls seem to be saying what we were inclined to deduce anyway from the basic facts of life after eight years of Tory hell: the working class and large sections of the middle class do not agree with Thatcherism and do not want a third Thatcher term. A majority of working-class people want revenge on Thatcher for her eight vicious years.

Of course, opinion polls can be wrong — as the polls which seemed to point to a Labour victory in the 1970 election certainly were. But what the opinion polls are saying right now is this: that if we push hard enough, we can topple Thatcher and her government into the black hole of history. Push!

Why is the working class going out of fashion on the left?

Workers' Liberty No. 6 provides an answer. Plus Bob Fine on the Freedom Charter, Vladimir Derer on the Labour Party, Martin Thomas on the Third World and much, much more. Available from PO Box 823, SE15 4NA. 90p plus 20p p&p.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

INSIDE: SOUTH AFRICA, WOMEN AND HOUSING, WHY WOMEN MUST VOTE LABOUR, A WOMAN IN A MAN'S JOB, PLUS LOTS MORE.

New series no1 10p

Thatcher must go!

Farewell Maggie!

Dear?? Mrs. Thatcher,
Don't count on my vote on June 11. You won't be getting it, at this election or at any other.

Why should a working class woman vote Tory? No reason at all.

I grant you, you've done the right thing by your own class. The rich have got richer; profits are booming. But working class people have been ground into the dust by you. So we're going to throw you out.

There used to be a few things in life you could rely on. If you got sick, there was the NHS. With a bit of waiting, you could get a council flat or house. The welfare state was there as a safety net.

But you've changed all that. You said the NHS was safe in your hands. Well, it's certainly been safe from growth or expansion, or having enough money to look after people properly.

You must have meant to say *private* medicine was safe with you. After all, it is simply booming. On the NHS, where you've starved the hospitals of money, people can wait years for operations they really need.

So, if you're waiting around for a hip replacement (and on the NHS, you can wait for two years or more), what do you do when you can't walk any more? Lie in bed for two years, or go private and pay? Many people do that, though it often means borrowing the money (which they can ill afford to do).

In some areas, private medicine does the bulk of abortions. Percentages can vary from 55% to 96%. Nurses are leaving the public sector because pay in the private sector is better.

St. Mary's Hospital in Paddington is building a new wing, but it won't

be able to open it when it's finished. Is this keeping the NHS safe? Other NHS hospitals are closing beds because they haven't the cash to keep them. The NHS won't survive another Tory term.

Council house waiting lists have also grown under this Tory government. Thousands of families are in bed and breakfast accommodation now, with very little hope for anything better for a long time to come. You Tories are busy selling off council housing, while you're starving councils of funds to build new ones.

Homeless

The numbers of homeless are growing. London's homeless are living on the streets, in tube stations, in cardboard and newspaper shelters. How would you like to live in a cardboard box? You've got No. 10, you've got Chequers, you've got your own houses — rather greedy, aren't you? Well, with luck, you won't have No. 10 for much longer.

You don't believe in the welfare state. You don't want Britain's 3 million unemployed to get anything. As it is, what they get is a pittance. What they want are jobs. But all you offer are training schemes and restart schemes, not real jobs. You only do that to cook the figures — to turn long term unemployed into newly unemployed in the statistics.

But you're solving nothing, and you don't want to. Working people are no concern of yours. You want business to be profitable and you don't care how that's achieved, so

Turn to centre page



Photo: John Harris

long as it is.

If it means depriving trade unionists of their civil rights, that doesn't worry you. If it means turning mining villages into places under police siege and surveillance, then you won't lose sleep over that. You don't mind paying huge sums to the police to stamp down on anyone demanding the right to work or a decent life — *you're only doing your job*.

You've sure given women a tough time. Things have got steadily worse for us. There may be more women barristers, women managers, women accountants, but Equal Opportunity hasn't meant much for the bulk of women workers.

In 1977, 53.6% of women workers were in a narrow band of 'women's jobs' — clerical, catering, cleaning, hairdressing and nursing. Today, after ten years of the Sex Discrimination Act, the figure is 52.7% — what progress.

And most women in those jobs are in 'women only' jobs — there are simply no men to compare wage rates with, so there is no hope for increasing pay rates through Equal Pay guidelines.

Women's pay used to be 72.1% of men's; today it's 74.1%. Not a great change, is it, Maggie?

Fifty per cent of women workers are part timers. That means lower hourly rates, fewer rights, less job security, not much hope for advancement, and let's face it, the most boring work. And women don't necessarily work part time because they *want* to. Often, that's all they can get. Or else, with kids to look after, they can't work longer hours.

The Tories haven't done a thing to

Why Thatcher must go

From front page

help working mothers with childcare and the rest. In fact, if you are lucky enough to get nursery facilities with your job, Tory skinflints tax it as a 'perk'.

Women are 42% of the waged workforce, but we're still doing the bulk of the housework too. Men have about nine or ten hours more leisure a week on average than women, simply because we're doing more housework and childcare. And women get stuck with nursing the sick and caring for the old as well as the usual burdens.

Now the Tories have cut women's maternity rights to the bone. Not only will women not get the money they used to, but the rights of pregnant women at work have been savagely cut.

Mrs. Thatcher, you must go. The 'two nations' in Britain aren't the North and the South. They're the nations of rich and poor; of the ruling class and the working class.

Working class people have nothing to gain, and everything to lose, from voting Tory, the party of the bosses and the rich. So, Mrs. Thatcher, working class people are giving you warning — your days are numbered.

South Africa women's struggle

Women are central to the struggle in South Africa as this article from the 'South African Metal Worker' explains.

The progress of any struggle can be measured by looking at the position of women in that struggle.

Looking at the weak position of women workers in South Africa it is clear that the struggle has a very long way to go. In addition to the exploitation they face as workers, women always have to cope with extra problems simply because they are women. One example of this is the fact that many women workers lose their jobs when they become pregnant.

It is the women who suffer most under the economic and social crisis facing Botha's regime. South Africa's massive unemployment affects both men and women but influx controls — which still prevail in one form or another — mean that more women than men are trapped in the poorer homeland areas where there are few roads and no water or electricity. Women are forced to spend hours every day carrying water, collecting wood and making fires. Factory and farm jobs in the rural areas are very poorly paid and minimum wage laws do not apply, while unions are prevented from organising in the homelands. Yet two out of every three workers in places like the Ciskei and Venda are women.

Even in towns or in 'border areas', women often work in low paying industries like clothing where they do the least skilled work. A bigger source of employment, however, is domestic work. Nearly a third of all working women in South Africa do domestic work for which there is no minimum wage nor a limit on the hours of work.

Nor are things much better in the townships. The lack of roads and services again hit women the hardest. They are the ones who have to travel long distances to shops and childminders because there are no proper shopping or creche facilities in the townships.

Impoverished townships present many difficulties for women. There is the problem of rape and violence



against them; there is the problem for some women of looking after children abandoned by their fathers. In addition, women are usually expected to work a double shift — at work and at home.

Women suffer exploitation as workers, oppression as blacks and then they have to contend with sex discrimination because they are women.

Women workers are so busy with their jobs at home and at work that they often have no time to actively participate and help lead the struggle to transform this country. Unfortunately, these women are often the victims of reactionary churches and organisations and are frequently used against progressive socialist organisations.

Despite these difficulties, many

women have in fact joined the struggle through unions, while community organisations have begun to include women in their fighting ranks. In some unions, like CCAWUSA, women make up 70 per cent of the membership.

Community

In the community, too, women have played an active role and have formed organisations such as the United Women's Organisation in the Western Cape and the Vaal Women's Organisation to fight alongside other organisations in support of rent boycotts and against community councils.

Although unions have taken up many issues that directly affect women, such as the living wage cam-

A Woman in a 'man's job'

A woman building surveyor is an oddity. There are fewer than 100 in the whole country.

When I applied to train as one in a Local Authority (a loony left one of course) I was asked whether I thought I could cope with it, were my maths up to it, could I understand plans, why wasn't I doing something else?

The basic assumption was that it is a man's job and therefore I would find it particularly hard. And of course, it is hard to deal with this assumption and do a course of training that lasts five years.

But it is very interesting: learning everything to do with how all the buildings that we occupy are put together is very important as they affect all of our lives. Particularly women's lives.

Women spend a huge proportion of their time working at home as well as in paid employment outside — so a good environment at home, for example a kitchen that is well designed, can make a huge difference to a woman's sanity.

One of the first jobs I was given as a trainee was to design a kitchen for a council rehabilitation of an old house. I thought this was really great. It was desperately important I got it right and I thought about it for ages.

It was only some time after that I realised that I'd been given this to do because the surveyor whose job it was thought this was an aspect of the design that didn't matter much. My efforts were criticised for having too many cupboards (how can you have too many cupboards in a kitchen?) by a 50 year old man who didn't know how to boil an egg and never ironed his shirts.

The construction industry is all about profit — buildings seem to be a by-product. What fascinates professional private practice building surveyors is Canary Wharf-like developments and more big shopping centres and office complexes in the City.

This attitude even permeates the

By Jo Thwaites

Local Authorities, where the lack of funding from central government results in mean, cramped housing (and the assumption that council tenants don't 'deserve' any better), under-equipped community centres with barbed wire around them and badly designed working conditions for public sector workers.

Aspiring surveyors are 'bored' with this kind of work and want to get into the big time and big money.

When you express amazement or doubt about these attitudes and say that perhaps what surveyors should be doing is providing decent housing and working conditions for all, with proper consultation with the people who will use the building, you hear sharp little gasps, you see eyebrows disappearing, then relieved glances — 'oh, it's a female', 'now there's no use getting emotional about this', 'we have to be realistic....where's the money going to come from?'. 'We're not the social workers, ha,ha.' 'Now I've always said women aren't temperamentally suited to this work....and she's a Scot.'

Woman in a "man's job"

EXPERIENCES OF A WOMAN BUILDING WORKER

The fight against sexism in the workplace, by Jean Lane. 50p.

From PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA 20p p&p

1. We aim to build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our own fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities, the right to work, the right to live in this country with the partner of our choice, the right to maternity leave and job security for mothers, the right to wages, benefits and legal status independent of a man, the right to organise as trade unionists and as women.

These rights and many other, many not yet won or consolidated, must be defended and extended in face of the onslaught against women by this government.

2. Such a mass campaign has to be part of a labour movement response to the Tory attacks. We aim to provide a focus for united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's move-

Where we stand

ment, and to involve women who do not relate to these movements.

3. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full

part at all levels. We fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter of Women in the unions.

We fight against the labour movement's reflecting in any way the oppressive ideas about a woman's role, which can undermine women's ability to fight back, and dangerously divide the movement. We ally with all those fighting for rank and file control, democracy and accountability, against those who hold back and sell out our fight. Never again a 'Labour' government that ignores party decisions, serves the bosses and bankers, and beats down workers' living standards and struggles.

4. We aim to co-ordinate and assist those women in the Labour Party, and the trade unions, who are fighting for these aims.

5. We are for direct action, solidarity as women and as workers, and for maximum mobilisation for all actions against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us.

a: a struggle too!



**A WOMAN'S PLACE
IS IN THE COSATU
LIVING WAGE
CAMPAIGN**



In the consumer boycotts, women were seldom involved in planning the campaigns although they were the ones who had to implement the boycotts. In some isolated cases women died after being forced to eat the shopping they had bought in town.

While conflicts between different groups in struggle are unavoidable, the important question is how to resolve them. Unions call for democratic, worker-controlled organisations. Through debate, agreement can be reached and conflicts resolved.

Although this is a sound system, it makes no allowances for women who have to juggle two jobs, which means that they often do not have time to attend meetings. Their voices are not heard, so the conflicts are not solved. It is very unusual to find women in leadership positions where they can influence and direct debate.

Many workers have come to the conclusion that the struggle in South Africa is a fight for socialism. They believe that only socialism can solve the country's political, economic and social crises.

Socialism is a worker-controlled system which aims to meet the needs of all people. But the question still remains: Who will decide which needs to be met first? If women are not participating in powerful working class organisations, then will their needs be heard and met?

Even under a different government, working under a different system, will more women than men be without jobs? Will they still have to settle for the worst jobs? Will rape, sexual harassment and prostitution continue? Will women be trapped in kitchens while men make the so-called democratic decisions? Who will implement their decisions? Many socialist countries have found that people not involved in decision making do not implement decisions.

The challenge to unions, community organisations and women workers alike is to organise, and this may mean a change in structures to meet the special needs of women. For example, more meetings will have to take place in working time to avoid adding a third shift onto women workers.

When women workers actively occupy their rightful positions at all levels of organisation, democracy will not be merely a goal but a right.

So, while unions have taken the lead on some issues, they have been silent on others. Also there has, on occasion, been direct conflict between the interests of men and women workers. At a sit in strike at a Germiston steel factory in 1986 one woman member was concerned about her young child at home when the decision was taken to 'siyalada'. A male shop steward insisted that she should stay with the other workers. Her husband then came to the factory and shouted at her because she had failed to fulfil her duties at home. The woman was caught between the male shop steward on the one hand and her husband on the other. The issue was never debated by the workers themselves.

Conflicts of this kind have also occurred in community organisations.

campaign, and the fight for better working conditions with job security, unions have, on the whole, been slow to take up problems unique to women — such as the need for maternity rights. However, this appears to be changing and in April this year the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU), with other unions in the metal industry, won a maternity agreement allowing for six months paid absence from work with guaranteed re-employment after confinement — the first nation-wide maternity agreement between unions and employers.

But there are other issues that need to be taken up, such as:

- time off for child care
- factory clinics
- unhealthy working conditions
- jobs for sex?

WHY WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK?

SOCIALIST feminism as a current is almost invisible in the fragmented women's movement of today.

What's on offer for women on the left is, on one hand, a Labour Party version of radical feminism, whose answer is largely to get more women into Parliament. On the other hand you can sign up with *Militant* or the SWP, who'll tell you that women's liberation will come with the socialist revolution, but until then, forget all that and join the workers' struggle.

Women who believe in working-class socialism, but who want to struggle around women's issues now, need a voice of their own. The earlier series of *Women's Fightback* was such a socialist feminist voice. But it was a casualty of the break-up of the women's movement into single-issue groups and equal-opportunity careerists.

Women's liberation is not

something we can 'put off' until after the revolution. Of course the things we're struggling for, like control of our own bodies, the right to work, and free childcare, can't be got short of a socialist revolution. But why should that stop us fighting now?

We struggle as workers for wage rises and other reforms — and so

should we struggle as women for what we want.

This issue of the new *Women's Fightback* has been produced by Cate Murphy and Belinda Weaver of *Socialist Organiser*, but our pages are open to argument, debate, letters and criticism. Write to us at PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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No room in the Tory housing market

By Mary Corbishley

CUTS IN personal income tax, tax relief on mortgages, rapid escalation of house prices, particularly in the South East — for high-income earners, life under the Tories has been one long bonanza.

Second homes, country cottages, and villas abroad are just some of the perks.

In sharp relief stands the rapid rise in homelessness over which Margaret Thatcher has presided for the last eight years.

About 146,000 people now live in board-and-lodgings accommodation, at a cost of £400 million a year. In London, with the greatest numbers of homeless, the number of households put into bed-and-breakfast by local authorities rose from 890 in June 1981 to 3,130 in December 1984, according to a 1985 GLC survey.

Hotel

One hotel, the Thorncliffe, near Heathrow Airport, was by 1986 a home for 850 families, including 555 children.

These homeless figures do not take into account the number of single people. In London, particularly, there are many whose permanent homes are squats, hostels, or the streets.

In contrast to the vast sums the Tories are prepared to see spent on keeping families in squalor in hotels, the money available for spending on improvement, repair and maintenance of public sector housing has been cut by 40%. 173,800 new council houses were built in 1975. By 1984 the number had fallen to 38,500.

The misery of homelessness has created vast profits for business speculators seeking to make money on the rising numbers of people now living in B-&-B accommodation. The Popat brothers, who bought the Thorncliffe hotel at Heathrow for £2 million in 1983, sold it eighteen months later for £6 million.

It is mainly women who have to bear the strain and degradation of hotel living, with black women and families being disproportionately represented. In London, two-thirds of homeless families are headed by women.

Tower Hamlets

In Tower Hamlets, 90% of families in B-&-B are Bangladeshi. Increasingly, one room in a hotel, sharing washing and cooking facilities with other families, is the only home available for the foreseeable future, as some local authorities can offer no hope of rehousing.

As a consequence of cramped living conditions, and poor washing and cooking facilities, accidents, malnutrition and illness become the norm for adults and children alike. Women and young girls in hotels also used by prostitutes suffer sexual harassment, and black families face racial abuse from other occupants and hotel managements.

The strain of coping with these conditions falls mainly on women, who are forced to stay cooped up with their children in one room 24 hours a day. The only alternative is to walk the streets in all weathers.

Play facilities for under-fives are few and far between, and in areas like Paddington in London, there are now not enough school places to cater for school-age children, who in some cases have gone without schooling for months at a time.

The Health Visitors' Association and the housing organisation Shelter, in a survey of health problems for people in Bed-&-Breakfast, found that children brought up in this way

are late developers, learning to walk and talk much later than other children.

Having nowhere to play or run about, it is common for these young children to lie on their beds all day. Their mothers are inevitably depressed, and have little desire to talk to their children and stimulate them.

Many GPs refuse to take on homeless families, and there are precious few interpreting facilities, so many ethnic minority families, particularly Asian families, receive no health care at all.

Many Tory authorities, notoriously Hillingdon, have always sought to avoid accepting their responsibility to rehouse homeless families; and Labour-controlled authorities are increasingly tightening up on their interpretation of the Homeless Persons Act so as to reduce the number of families they accept as homeless.

Housing homeless families is the number one priority, so single homeless people, overcrowded families in council housing, or people on the waiting list for council housing stand little chance of rehousing.

The recent racist decision of the Liberal-controlled council in Tower Hamlets to evict Bangladeshi families from B-&-B on the grounds that they have homes in Bangladesh is to be ruled on in the High Court. If the decision goes against the 23 Bangladeshi families, it will open the floodgates for similar racist decisions elsewhere.

Tower Hamlets' decision reached the headlines because it was so sweeping and blatantly racist. But every day even Labour councils are taking decisions to refuse to rehouse people on the basis of trying to manage the housing crisis within the boundaries of their authority.

Ireland

Families from Ireland who have suffered years of unemployment there, and have come to seek employment and housing in London, will be sent back if they have a house in Ireland. Last year Islington council declared a Turkish family intentionally homeless because they had left a home in Turkey.

The Homeless Persons Act was first introduced in 1977, and it was supposed to give homeless people a right to be rehoused by their local council. But it is no longer adequate.

It is now interpreted strictly to mask the hidden homelessness of single people, of people forced to live with parents or relatives, of those who have to remain where they can't find work because there is no housing where they can find work, and of women who have to stay with violent or abusive husbands rather than face the alternative of bed-and-breakfast living.

If Labour wins the general election, they must provide housing for all — where people want it and how they want it, with women in particular being consulted.

They must immediately end all racist discrimination in homelessness criteria, and ensure that all families and single homeless people are rehoused. A programme of investment in public-sector housing and construction of new housing is needed.

If Labour doesn't win, Labour councils must stop managing the housing crisis and hiding the reality of housing conditions today. A labour movement campaign on housing is long overdue.

Annual cost per family in B-&-B	£10,950
Annual cost per 9000 families	£99 million
Annual cost for a new council flat	£5,500
Annual cost for a new council house	£7,000
Total annual cost of 4,500 new flats and 4,500 new houses ...	£56 million
Estimated saving from ending B-&-B	£43 million

WOMEN MUST VOTE LABOUR!

Women's Fightback supports the demands of the Women's Action Committee for proper representation for women within the Labour Party.

The Labour Party's Women's Conference must have the right to submit motions to Labour Party Conference and to select its own representatives for the NEC. These demands come out of a need to gain a stronger voice for women in the Labour Party, but we must not lose sight of the reasons behind the WAC demands.

Like autonomy, these constitutional changes would give women a louder voice in the Labour Party —

By Michele Carlisle

but the really important thing is what women say with that voice.

Even the Labour Party leadership is willing to give women a voice. The proposed Ministry of Women is intended to be that voice.

As a symbolic gesture such a Ministry could play a part in highlighting the oppression of women and looking over the other Ministries, but until women's demands are seen as central by the Labour Party, the Women's Ministry will remain a mere symbol. Symbols, women can do without.

A commitment to a national minimum wage, 24-hour nursery pro-

vision, full restitution of the cuts in the Health Service, a massive programme of council house building, free abortion and contraception on demand — these are what's needed.

Unfortunately, none of these are really on offer from the Labour Party. Women's issues are still marginal to the Labour Party and the interests of working class women as a whole are definitely off-limits.

This is why the Labour Party is facing such a struggle in these weeks before the General Election. A bold, exciting, outgoing and political campaign on the key issues would not only help to build a strong and fighting labour movement, but would actually be a vote-winner. Issues which specifically affect women should be a

central part of this campaign, not shoved to the side.

Women must fight to get Labour elected. The Labour Party is our party. We can fight to change it and force it to carry out the decent policies it has.

We need a strong election campaign because it will be an uphill struggle to get Labour elected, and an even harder fight to get a Labour government to act in the interests of women and the working class.

With politics on everyone's lips at election time we cannot afford to lose this opportunity to start to build that movement of working class women who will transform and strengthen the labour movement and bring socialism that much nearer.

THE TORIES ARE THE REAL ENEMY

By Rosey Sibley

"Shut up." With these words Neil Kinnock opened and closed his dialogue with Nottingham East Constituency Labour Party on who would represent them as Labour candidate in the forthcoming General Election.

The National Executive Committee (NEC) removed our chosen candidate, Sharon Atkin, replacing her with Mohammed Aslam (a right-winger who didn't even make the original shortlist). All without one word of consultation with the Constituency Party. Even the "Shut up." came to us courtesy of the BBC and ITV.

It is not surprising that Nottingham East is not one of the NEC's favourite constituencies. It is left-wing and has one of the largest Black Sections in the country. Nottingham East's "crime" was to select Sharon Atkin, a Black Section supporter.

Sharon's "crime" was to refer to the Labour Party as "racist". It is easy to understand how such comments can be made. Labour governments have carried out racist policies — just one example is the 1968 act which prevented Asians who were being expelled from Kenya from entering Britain on British passports.

However, Sharon's remarks are not entirely justifiable either. The Labour Party is not a racist party; it is not a party whose majority membership is actively racist. Most importantly, it is the party of organised labour.

Incorrect and ill-thought out as Sharon's comments were, the NEC's response was totally unjustifiable. Sharon was removed not only over the head of the constituency who democratically selected her and wished her to remain, but also when she was unable to attend the NEC to defend herself. This was not only undemocratic, but extremely hypocritical. The same NEC meeting refused to even discuss the fact that Labour MP Frank Field has been calling for people to vote SDP. And it was all done under the guise of protecting Labour's election chances.

If Labour's election chances have been damaged, the NEC bears the blame. It chose to conduct an open fight with Nottingham East just before the election. However, the left must not go along with the NEC by boycotting the election campaign.

The policy narrowly carried at the last General Committee (GC) meeting was to fight the seat for Labour. This must be put into action. Firstly in recognition that the NEC is not our main enemy — the Tory government is. Our primary task is to remove that government and replace it with Labour. The Labour government will not be a major step towards socialism, but it will be a victory for the working class. It will put new heart into a labour movement that has taken a severe battering under eight years of Thatcher and thus open up new possibilities of working class struggles.

Secondly, the left must campaign in Nottingham East for its own survival; to, as far as possible, use the campaign to get its ideas across and to build itself. If it fails to do this, the right-wing, who are already organising, will certainly use the campaign to grow. To boycott is in fact to do as Kinnock says — to "shut up" and go away.

The left in Nottingham East must say to Kinnock you have not got rid of us, we're still here fighting for a Labour victory, fighting for our class and we will not shut up.

Why is the working class going out of fashion on the left?

Workers' Liberty No. 6 is available from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 90p plus 20p p&p.

MORALITY LECTURES: NO THANKS!

Young women have been at the sharp end of the Tory attacks on reproductive rights. In 1985, as a result of the infamous Gillick ruling, under-16s were prevented from receiving contraceptive and abortion advice or treatment unless they had their parents' permission.

Gillick's hope was that young women would stop having sex because they were too scared to tell their parents. Of course what did happen was that pregnancies among under-16s rose dramatically during the 10 months that the ruling was in force.

The Gillick ruling was overturned in a later judgement by the Law Lords. But that still left — and leaves — young women at the mercy of their doctors. Doctors do not have to inform parents of their daughters' sex lives, it's true, but nor do they have to provide advice or treatment on demand. Young women still do not have automatic rights to contraception or abortion.

They don't even have access to practical information about sex: the new Education Bill includes a clause relating to sex education which now dictates that this will be replaced by lectures on 'family morals'. As with the Gillick campaign, the intention is that if they know nothing about sex, young people won't do it.

In reality it means that women will be relying on myths and hearsay — 'you can't get pregnant the first time' 'it's safe if you do it standing up' — and the end result will be more unwanted pregnancies.

What young women want and need is comprehensive information about contraception, abortion, pregnancy, homosexuality — backed up with proper counselling services so that they can make informed decisions about their own lives and bodies. What they don't need is a Tory lecture on 'morality'.

Young women must get involved in the fight back against Tory attacks on reproductive rights. The ten point charter below details some of the areas that the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) will be campaigning around in the future. It is a charter that the labour movement — particularly Labour Party YSs and trade union youth sections — should adopt and use as a basis for their own campaigns to defend young women's rights.

- lobby local councils and MPs for better abortion facilities;

- join with health service workers to oppose attacks on the NHS;

- organise public meetings to raise the issues of women's reproductive rights;

- put resolutions through your trade union branch to get the charter adopted as national policy — and to get your union to mount a campaign around the issue;

- pile on the pressure in the Labour Party to ensure that the Party's policy commitment to a women's right to control her own fertility is put into practice by the next Labour Government.

Photo: Martin Shakeshaft



THE CAMPAIGN NUS NEEDS

The National Union of Students has just created the elected position of a national women's officer, and the first women's officer will be elected at the end of May.

The women's officer will have a busy year ahead of her. NUS is better than most national trade unions in terms of the number of women involved and the level of awareness on women's issues and sexual politics — among the activists — is quite high. For instance, the National Executive for next year will have either 9 or 10 women out of 20 or 21 members.

However, there is still a lot of work to be done — both in convincing the wider membership of the arguments for women's rights and women's liberation and in winning real material gains for women students.

By Colleen Fairbrother, South East Wales area convenor

For instance, as in the rest of the public sector, when cuts are being made they often particularly hit women students. For instance, the Government wants cuts in social science courses and more science and engineering places. Women tend to do arts and social science courses; therefore these cuts particularly affect women.

Or when cuts fall it may be plans for a new nursery which are shelved, thereby preventing women with children from going to that college.

The women's officer is going to have to work hard persuading the rest of the Union to highlight these kind

of attacks in an overall campaign against the cuts. And the women's officer should also work to build unity in colleges between women students and women workers whose jobs and conditions are also at risk.

As well as fighting the cuts, the women's officer will have to organise NUS to play a role in supporting single issue campaigns — like the National Abortion Campaign, campaigns for childcare and international solidarity campaigns.

NUS has so far done very little work on a national level to try to improve the lives of women while they are at college. And if the Union wants to involve its members and win their respect and allegiance, this will have to change.

In colleges which are primarily science colleges, then usually the provisions for women are very poor. It is not likely that there is a woman doctor, or even that there are enough women's toilets, let alone tampon machines in them. Most colleges also have problems with safety on campus — bad lighting, and so on.

In all colleges women suffer from sexual harassment — from fellow students and teachers who demand sexual favours for high marks. NUS needs to convince its male members that women should have the same right to be at college as them; it needs to work with the college trade unions to agree codes of practice in dealing with sexual harassment and also NUS needs to convince its women members that there are ways of dealing with the problem and that it is not their fault.

All that work, and much more, needs to be done. Unfortunately, the majority of the NEC are died in the wool bureaucrats who would not know how to campaign if their careers depended on it. The women's officer is going to have a hard year.

Young women demand:

1. The right to free and safe contraception and abortion on demand.
2. Adequate facilities and counselling services. We want to make the best decisions for us and be able to put them into practice.
3. The right to have a child. No pressure to have an abortion when what we want is a child. Free 24 hour nursery provision. Children with disabilities are not the problem, society is.
4. Confidential treatment. We decide when to talk to our parents about sex, contraception, pregnancy and abortion. Doctors and teachers should not decide for us.
5. The right to see a female doctor if we prefer to speak to a woman.
6. Comprehensive and unbiased sex education in schools. We don't need to be 'sheltered' from the issues of sex, homosexuality, contraception and abortion. We want facts and open discussion.
7. The right to define our own sexuality. Some of us are lesbians and we will all fight for the right to love women without discrimination and prejudice. Reproductive technology must be accessible to all women. Full rights for lesbian mothers.
8. An end to racism in the Health Service and the Education system. We will oppose racist doctors who force us to have contraception, abortions and sterilisations against our will. More money into research on sickle cell anemia. We don't want schools to teach us about white Christian families that don't exist for many of us.
9. The right to say no to sex. We don't all want to have sex and we don't all want to have sex with whoever asks (or doesn't ask) us. They're our bodies and we'll decide.
10. The right to say yes to sex. We'll decide when and where and with whom. We don't deserve to be called names. We deserve respect. Because we are deciding what to do with our bodies...and that is our right.

A YOUNG WOMEN'S CHARTER