

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

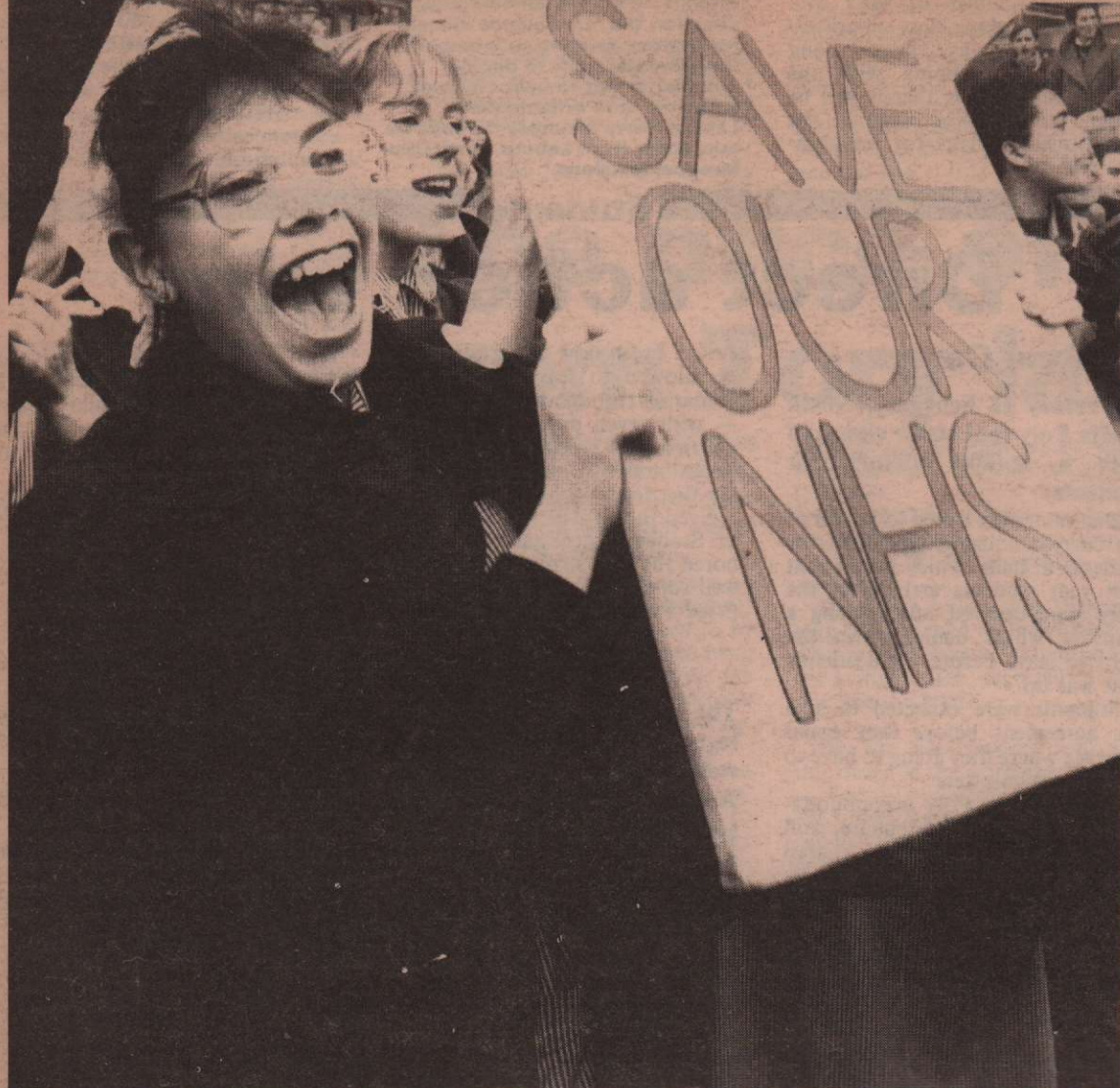
For Workers' Liberty East and West



## INSIDE

A history of occupation: The West Bank and Gaza see centre pages.

# Why we struck for the health workers



There is a real anger about the state of the Health Service. Everyone knows someone who has suffered, everyone has seen hospitals close.

But the health workers can only win if other groups of workers take action. We need a groundswell against the government, who control the purse-strings. Other groups of workers showing support could do that. That's why Vauxhall struck on the day of action.

Workers need a lead. At Vauxhall we are well organised and can give a lead from the stewards, rather than wait on the TUC nationally.

But support has to be coordinated. This is where the weakness of the TUC comes in. Workers don't like taking action on their own. We must coordinate where to spread solidarity action.

Health workers have to see themselves as workers in struggle and link up with other workers. NUPE and CoHSE must reach out and demand support from other groups of workers. They should be outside factory gates demanding solidarity action.

NUPE and CoHSE should also

**Kenny Murphy, Senior steward at Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port plant, explains why car workers came out on the NHS day of action last week**

be demanding the TUC fully backs and coordinates the action.

We should be wary of the militancy on the ground being diverted into a membership war with the RCN as a substitute for effective leadership of the dispute.

We have to turn Labour parties out to campaigning. There can't be many people in Wallasey who don't understand the issues because of the leafleting, marching, arguing and explaining we did before, during and since the election. We have to get every Labour Party turned out to this action.

Kenny Murphy was speaking in a personal capacity.

**More on the NHS crisis pages 4 and 5**

Photo S. Caballero

**WOMAN'S EYE**



**Violence at home**

By Lynn Ferguson

One crime our boys in blue have never taken seriously is domestic violence.

Bobbies who under normal circumstances would be only too happy to bop a suspect over the head and whisk them away for 'questioning' are notoriously slow to act on violence in the home.

This was brought home to me a few years ago. My sister had recently married and was living in our parent's house with her husband and small baby. We all knew her husband was short-tempered, and in fact he had previous convictions for GBH.

This particular day he flew off the handle for no real reason. We heard my sister screaming. I ran upstairs. He pulled a knife on me. My mother rang the police.

Enter, 20 minutes later, a friendly, avuncular community policeman. By this time we were all quite distraught and panicking. His response was to sit us all down and talk to my sister's husband about how difficult young wives could be.

But really, he said, it was a bit much to hit her. Then he left — after a nice cup of tea.

I suppose we were lucky. Quite often the police refuse to involve themselves at all.

Last year the Metropolitan Police, in response to complaints about their handling of domestic violence, contacted organisations working with battered women to ask for advice on new guidelines. Recommendations included police stations keeping the phone numbers and addresses of refuges on hand, and providing transport for women to refuges. Women police officers would always be on hand, the victim should always be interviewed separately from the assailant, and domestic incidents should be recorded in the same way as any other violent crime.

All well and good. But though the recommendations were circulated last June, a woman who went to a police station on New Year's Eve complaining of a domestic attack was simply handed a telephone directory and told to find the Women's Aid number herself.

Chiswick Family Rescue, who have attempted to work with the police over the issue, report that as far as they can tell nothing has changed since the guidelines were issued.

Women can't trust the police to take seriously the issue of domestic violence. The police force isn't really about protecting individuals from violence — it's about defending entrenched power within society.

We should demand that the police do treat women's complaints of violence seriously, and that special facilities are provided. But realistically, as usual, women are going to have to rely on themselves.

**After Alton**

A conference on Women's Liberation and Socialism into the 1990s. Discussions include:  
 • How can we build a strong, campaigning working-class women's movement?  
 • Fighting cuts in the NHS and in local government  
 • Defending abortion rights  
 • Building Labour Party women's sections  
 • Women in trade unions.  
 Contact: Lynn Ferguson, c/o 12A Canonbury Street, London N1 2TD.

**USSR troops out?**

Gorbachev has at last set a timetable for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Troops should start to get out on 15 May this year.

It is still impossible to be sure that this isn't bluff, but Gorbachev says the USSR troops will pull out regardless of whether a precise agreement is reached over who rules in Kabul.

There are 115,000 or so Soviet troops in Afghanistan now, eight years after the invasion. The Kremlin has been at war with the majority of the people, using the classical techniques of colonial repression such as the napalming of villages.

Socialists should welcome withdrawal from Afghanistan, as they should have condemned the invasion. Unfortunately, far too few on the left did.

Some, like *Militant*, still justify the Russian occupation. What will they say now?



Have the Afghan rebels triumphed?

Alton Bill

**Keep up pressure**

The Alton Bill is now in Committee stage in Parliament. As expected moves have been made to "soften" the bill, by amending 18 to 24 weeks, and by introducing clauses which could permit abortion after 24 weeks in very limited circumstances.

Both the BMA and the Royal

Australia

**Hawke gets in trouble**  
From Tony Brown in Sydney

In Australia, the beginning of February has been the culmination of months of turmoil for the Hawke government and the Labor Party machine.

In late December John Brown was forced to resign from the Cabinet because he had lied to Parliament. He had promised an American mate that he could build the Australian exhibit at Expo (Brown is the author of the Buy Australian campaign!) and was then overturned by a Parliamentary Committee.

Then in late January Telecom announced that it wanted to scrap the flat-rate charge for local telephone calls and charge by time of calls instead.

At the same time, Bob Carr, trying to ensure the greenie vote, announced that a national park would be created in a logging area on the South Coast. The logging company and the Liberal Party in New South Wales objected. Carr said that the only reason for the Liberals' objections was that the logging company, Harris, had contributed \$10,000 to the Liberals in the last election.

Unbeknown to Carr, Harris had also contributed \$10,000 to the Australian Labor Party. The reason he didn't know was because the New South Wales Australian Labor Party, in contravention of the Electoral Law, had deposited the money in its Administration Account and not declared it.

Just after all this, a by-election was held in Adelaide, and Labor was defeated with a 9% swing against. Adelaide is a traditional Labor seat. Then Mick Young (ALP President and a minister) resigned on the Harris affair. Within the next 6 weeks Labor has to go to the polls in its stronghold

College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists are in favour of a 24-week limit, on the basis that that is the bottom level of 'viability' given the present state of medical science.

We have to be firm in defending the 1967 Act, whilst demanding increased funding for abortion services, which will reduce the need for late abortions.

A 24-week time limit in law

would mean a 20-22 week limit in practice — doctors always leave a 2-4 week margin of error to avoid prosecution. On this basis 2-3,000 women a year would no longer be able to have legal abortions.

No woman wants a late abortion. Late abortions are highly distressing, and medically more dangerous than early abortions. Every woman who has a late abortion needs that abortion. Women have the right to make that decision about their lives. Any reduction in the time limit will affect the lives of thousands of women over the coming years.

The Women's Action Committee in the Labour Party has begun a campaign for the deselection of the 55 Labour MPs who voted for the Alton Bill at the second reading stage, abstained, or simply could not be bothered to turn up for the debate.

The 1985 Labour Party Conference voted overwhelmingly to abandon the 'conscience clause' for matters relating to women's fundamental right to decide whether or not to bear children. However the Parliamentary Labour Party jealously defends its autonomy from Labour Party Conference decisions.

Students

**Direct action wins**

By Paul Carey

On Friday 12 February, North Staffs Poly rent strike climaxed with a notable victory for students.

Our campaign aimed to get rid of the current housing agreement for students in halls, which meant that first year students arriving at the Poly were coerced into signing a contract which denied them the right to leave before the academic year was up.

Students were expected to sign the agreement before they could even see where they going to have to live for a whole year.

Much of the Poly accommodation is small and inadequate, and the majority of it is in shared rooms.

Last Friday there was a meeting of the Student-Governors Liaison Sub-Committee. We had already succeeded in getting the deadline suspended by which rents had to be paid, so we knew we were in a good position.

We won changes to the agreement which will make life a lot

easier. From now on, students will be allowed to leave Poly accommodation throughout the first term — with seven days' notice during the first four weeks, and with four weeks' notice throughout the rest of the first term.

Even though the National Union of Students' headquarters has ignored the rent strike, we have been well supported by Simon Pottinger (Vice President Welfare) who has

been up to help us with meetings on several occasions. NUS HQ has also lagged far behind the many student unions around the country who have written to offer us their support and solidarity.

We had the support from campus trade unions, above all the caretakers.

This is a momentous victory for direct collective action. We've shown that it works.

100,000 turn out on the 11th

The national shutdown of colleges last Thursday, 11th, went well where it was organised. Around 100,000 students took some sort of action. It was a good run-up to the big

Socialist Student — SSIN — are standing a team of sabbatical candidates in the forthcoming NUS Executive Elections to be held in April.  
 President — Simon Pottinger.  
 Secretary — Michele Carlisle.  
 Treasurer — Lachie Stuart.  
 Vice-President Welfare — Martin Pagel.  
 FF'ID — Dianne Morris.  
 Women's Officer — Liz Millward.  
 SSIN are also supporting Pat Young for Vice President Education.

demonstration against the Education Reform Bill on Saturday 27 February.

Many colleges were able to get a 70% turnout for the shut-down. At St. Martin's College in Lancaster the campus was 'dead'. Pickets were out from 7.30 am — using a petition against the Bill to turn back students, staff...and even the Union's beer delivery!

Given the way NUS leaders organised, it was a miracle that anyone came out at all. The response shows a real willingness to fight.

**Who's back in control?**

"We are tonight back in full control", said South African president P W Botha, adding quickly, "The president of Bophuthatswana is in full control".

A coup attempt in the South African 'homeland' of Bophuthatswana on Wednesday 10 February had been suppressed after 15 hours.

The coup — against President Lucas Mangope — was crushed with the help of the South African 'Defence Force' (SADF). Bophuthatswana is supposed to be an independent state. 'Separate development' is the watchword of the apartheid system — but not too separate, not if there is a challenge to apartheid's puppets.

At 2.30am rebel soldiers arrested Mangope with several members of his cabinet and over a dozen members of the the SADF. At 4.30 the official radio station was seized.

A military statement cited corruption and electoral malpractice as reasons for the coup, and said that "ruling powers had been entrusted to the (opposition) People's Progressive Party", led by Peter 'Rocky' Malebane-Metsing.

By 7.30, as the *Weekly Mail* reports, "hundreds of supporters at the University of Bophuthatswana — who had coincidentally planned a class boycott for Wednesday in protest at poor food — heard news of the coup and rejoiced on the campus, chanting 'Tyranny is out! Now we can enjoy freedom!'"

But eventually an SADF force of only 30 or so men quelled the rebellion.

One of the coup's leaders explained its causes to the *Weekly Mail* by referring to anger that all senior army posts in Bophuthatswana are held by white South Africans, allegations of fraud, and 'genuinely dictatorial' methods by Mangope.

Mangope is potentially, in many respects, the strongest of the 'homeland' leaders — less visible and physically dangerous than KwaZulu's Buthelezi, but with a large economic base. 'Bop' is typical of the bantustans — an artificial entity, where the majority of the inhabitants do not even speak its official language, based economically on prostitution and uranium mining.

## An old friend

By Jim Denham

Well, it was a bit of a shock, wasn't it? Like an old friend who has always worn crumpled cord trousers and a tweedy jacket with leather elbow patches, suddenly turning up in an Italian suit.

Not being a design expert myself, I'll reserve judgement on the purely aesthetic aspect of the Guardian's transformation. After all the 'new look' was the creation of David Hillman who works for Pentagram, which — as I'm sure you know — is London's trendiest design house. So who am I to quibble?

I certainly like two of the most obvious changes: the vastly improved picture quality and the 'modular' front page layout which means articles are arranged in neat squares rather than those infuriating columns running onto the back page.

Both these changes are strongly reminiscent of the Independent, which is surely not an accident. The rise of the Indy has coincided with a significant decline in the Guardian's sales (down from a peak of 520,000 in 1986 to 460,000 last year).

Taking a few technical and layout tips from the Independent is probably no bad thing (it is, after all, a very well-produced paper). But will the influence go deeper than that?

The Independent has quickly carved out a niche for itself as the standard-issue organ of Yuppies. Its news coverage is good, and the editorial line is by no means as loyally Thatcherite as most of the national press. But what really counts in the Indy is the 'lifestyle' content — the stuff about houses, holidays, cars...

### Issues

And money. The Guardian, whatever its faults, always eschewed such consumerism and gave a high priority to the Great Issues of our time — the nuclear threat, unemployment, the plight of the Third World. It tended to cover such matters in a somewhat woolly, do-gooding sort of way, but at least it recognised that there are more important things in life than equity bonds and the acceleration figures of the new Audi Quattro.

At the last general election it even managed a half-hearted call for a Labour vote.

There are worrying signs that this could change as the 'new' Guardian sets out to woo the yuppies. Editor Peter Preston recently told the New Statesman, "You have to bear in mind that your readers aren't static. For instance, 15 months ago 8% of Guardian readers had personal shareholdings. This year that's gone to 22%."

"We've now got roughly as many readers who've got personal shareholdings as the Financial Times has."

Another straw in the wind may be the recent promotion of Melanie Phillips to the job of 'policy editor'. Ms Phillips it was who caused a minor stir last year by writing a column defending the Dewsbury parents. She also admitted to sending her own kids to private school.

Meanwhile, a faction of the Guardian's staff around Deputy Editor Peter Cole is said to be pledged to resisting any drift towards Yuppiedom. Good luck to them!

With the Times and the Telegraph firmly in the Thatcher camp, and the Independent to all intents and purposes the mouthpiece of Doctor Death, the Guardian's leftism — woolly as it is — would be surely missed.

I for one prefer do-goodies to do-baddies.



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report

# Aimless and valueless

Truly, the dog days are upon us. No sooner had the row died down over David Steel's and Robert McLennan's "Voices and Choices" — a statement of Liberal/SDP aims that no-one in either party seemed to agree with, than Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley launched their 'Aims and Values' on an unsuspecting Labour Party.

The 3500-word document claims to set out the democratic socialist principles that will steer the Labour Party into power at the next election. But the authors' hopes seem to see no further than Thatcher's Britain — only nicer.

Socialism doesn't really get a look in. The statement offers a lengthy exposition on how socialists are for individual freedom, and goes on to wrestle with how the free market and the capitalist state square with this.

On the free market Kinnock and Hattersley are quite resolute. The free market is not at all nice when applied to things like health, social security and education. However, "The operation of demand and supply and the price mechanism is a generally satisfactory means of determining provision and consumption."

All the state has to do, according to messrs. Kinnock and Hattersley, is make sure "that competition is fair and that the necessary regulations exist."

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## EDITORIAL

So what do socialists do when the market mechanism leads capitalism into bone-crunching slumps?

Mr Hattersley should know. He was Minister for Consumer Protection in the Callaghan government in the mid-'70s.

But the price controls and market regulation of that period did nothing to help working class people.

Kinnock and Hattersley advocate the 'enabling state', but show a wilful ignorance of how the modern capitalist state works. Get a load of this:

"Socialists had always actively

upheld the view that there was a clear responsibility on government to protect and defend its citizens by maintaining effective armed forces, by civilian policy and by the rule of law."

Who were the RUC protecting and defending when they gunned down five unarmed men under the 'shoot-to-kill' policy? Who were the police protecting and defending when they ban Spycatcher and seize union funds?

Where have Kinnock and Hattersley been for the last eight years?

The document fails to tackle any of the issues facing socialists in the 1980s. It is as if written in another age.

It is weakest on social ownership (its coy gesture towards socialism).

Kinnock and Hattersley talk airily of producer and consumer co-ops, ignoring the fact that producer co-ops have provided jobs for only a tiny number of people. The last time they were tried on any scale — in the '70s — the largest of them collapsed when a Labour government pulled the rug from under them.

Many Labour MPs, normally four-square behind Kinnock — Bryan Gould, Robin Cook, even John Cunningham — have criticised the document's rosy view of market economics. It should be thrown out, and replaced through a discussion in which Labour will really 'listen' to the working class.

# The price of running from Tory laws

**The 1500 seafarers on strike at Dover remain solid; but the seafarers at the Isle of Man have been led into a deal that leaves them scarcely better off.**

In return for a management promise that the number of permanent redundancies will be reduced to 47 and redundancy money upped from £8,000 to £10,000 per person, the seafarers' union (NUS) leaders have breathed a sigh of relief and accepted the offer.

Already 50 workers have been sacked in Belfast, and the management now feel confident enough to withdraw their legal action against the union.

The NUS leadership have shilly-shallied throughout. At the beginning of the strike, NUS leader Sam McCluskie appeared on TV blustering that he was prepared to go to jail.

As soon as the bosses threatened a legal action and seizure of union funds, he scurried around the country urging workers to break the strike. He made a grovelling

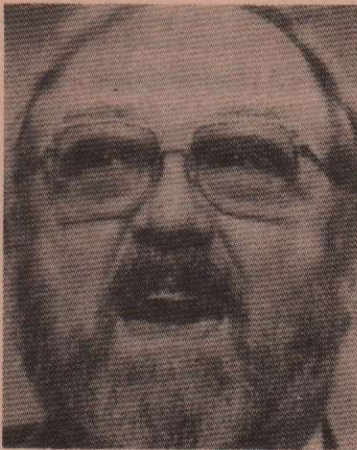
apology to the High Court which fined the union anyway, though only £7,500.

Now the leaders have grabbed at the first sign of management weakness as an acceptable compromise.

True, the union was threatened with the law, and after 8½ years of Thatcherism that is no light matter for a single union, especially a small one like the NUS.

But the NUS leaders dealt with this threat in the worst way possible — first by blustering as if it didn't exist, then running scared. The law can be defied if unions campaign properly. The Heath Authorities do not dare take the health workers' unions to court over their strikes because they know the result if they did would be even more strikes. Working class solidarity can defeat Tory laws.

Militancy among workers remains high. But there is a crisis of leadership in the unions. The seafarers went on strike despite their leaders: so did the nurses.



McCluskie

What we need now is rank-and-file organisation to challenge the leadership of bureaucrats like McCluskie — people who are prepared to huff and puff for the cameras, but who show not one-tenth of the militancy of their members when it comes to the crunch.

# A policy for unity

Health workers need a policy to unify the present struggles, linking pay and conditions to the defence and extension of the NHS.

- \*Support the health unions' demand for a 20% wage increase for nurses.
- \*For a £70 across the board increase in all health workers' wages and a minimum wage of £150 per week.
- \*Demand money to meet all

pay increases. Wage increases must not be paid for with cuts in other areas of health service spending.

\*Demand money to meet all costs increases, to deal with new diseases like AIDS and all new technological advances.

\*Take the money from the rich! Trident will cost as much as building 550 new hospitals. Before last Oc-

tober's crash, shareholders were coining gains at twice the rate of the entire NHS budget. Tory tax cuts for the rich amount to more than the whole NHS hospitals budget.

\*No privatisation. Re-nationalisation of all privatised ancillary services.

\*No charges on glasses, drugs, and dental care. No two-tier health service.



## Manchester

# Solidarity in Manchester

By Paul Woolley, North West Regional Health Authority NALGO, in a personal capacity.

Last Wednesday (10 February), thousands of workers demonstrated at hospitals throughout the North West. The Regional TUC had called for 'hospital vigils' at three hospitals in the North West. On the day, most of the region's 250 hospitals were covered.

In Manchester, nearly 1,000 people were vigilant at Manchester Royal Infirmary where management recently threatened 100 redundancies. Nurses, lab technicians, ancillary and office workers were joined by large numbers of local government and factory workers. The two-hour demonstration was noisy and cheerful.

At North Manchester General Hospital, hundreds of health workers

were also joined by local workers, including a hundred from ICI. The ASTMS branch at ICI has recruited a lot of new members on the basis of supporting the health workers.

Over 200 demonstrated at Withington Hospital, South Manchester, more than 300 at Wythenshawe Hospital. Over 100 protested at Stockport Infirmary. A hundred people, including Royal Ordnance Factory workers, gathered at Bridgewater Hospital, Eccles.

The Greater Manchester Health Workers' Stewards' Committee has expanded in the last week. Links now exist with stewards in Bolton, Wigan, Stockport, Trafford and Tameside. The Committee is building for the day of action in Manchester next Friday, 19 February.

Many health workers in COHSE, NUPE, ASTMS and NALGO are already set to strike from 10am onwards for the day. Others will attend mass meetings and branch meetings this week. Solidarity has been pledged by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, TGWU, ACTSS, Manchester City NALGO and Direct Works, workers at Massey Ferguson and several other workplaces. There will be a march through Manchester and a rally at which Rodney Bickerstaffe will

**Stop health cuts  
TUC National  
Demonstration  
Saturday March 5  
Assemble: 11am,  
Victoria Embankment  
March: 12 noon, via  
Parliament Square.  
Rally: 2pm, Hyde Park**

be amongst the speakers.

There have been hitches. For example COHSE regional office has sent a letter from management to all branches warning against industrial action. ASTMS is insisting that all its branches — even those which normally take a show of hands in mass meetings — must ballot on any action. Clearly, union officialdom wants to keep the lid on things.

This fact, and the question 'what do we do after the 19th?' have been discussed in the Manchester-wide committee. At the last meeting, a motion was debated. It supported the call for a national conference of health worker stewards to coordinate action and work out a strategy to pull the action together and to win the battle in the NHS.

The movers stressed the urgency of a stewards' national link-up, given that a) the union leaderships will not move unless under heavy pressure and that b) health workers do not have infinite reserves of energy for a prolonged struggle.

Those stewards against the motion said that a national conference would be premature just yet and argued for the building of stewards' committees on a local basis. This 'we must walk before we can run' mood was dominant. But it was agreed to hold an informal national meeting of health stewards on the evening of 5 March — the TUC demonstration in London.

In the run-up to 5 March, stewards' committees and coordinating committees need to discuss what to do after 5 March.

For now, health workers' anger and militancy is still on the up-and-up. But it won't last forever and rank and file bodies must set the agenda for a fight to win.

**DEMONSTRATION  
Friday 19 February  
Assemble All Saints, 11 am  
March to rally in Albert Square at  
12.30pm.**

## London

# London stewards call for conference

This Monday, 15th, a meeting of the All-London Strike Coordinating Committee voted to call London health workers out on strike on 14 March and to appeal for solidarity strike action from workers outside the health service.

There was a prolonged debate in the meeting about whether or not to go for 14 March, the day named by COHSE for a national day of ac-

tion, or to insist on action on 15 March, Budget Day.

The strangest thing about this debate was the attitude of the Socialist Workers' Party. They managed to combine the ultra-pessimistic argument that only the officials can call effective action with the diametrically opposite idea that the London stewards should not change the date of the action because it meant giving in to the COHSE leaders!

This argument was so weak that some members of the SWP even failed to convince themselves of it.

Later, the SWP proved their commitment to rank and file activity by voting against calling a national stewards' conference.

Thankfully the majority of delegates took a different view, arguing that the rank and file should use the COHSE call for action and turn it into a day of strike action, rather than allowing the movement to be split.

The all-London strike coordinating committee took the initiative of calling a national NHS shop stewards' conference for 26 March, with the aim of drawing together the shop stewards' committees, strike committees and coordinating committees into a national body capable of planning the kind of action needed to win and the kind of demands that can bring together the present dispute.

Other stewards' committees must back this call.

**Move this motion in your stewards' committee, etc.**

**1. ....resolves to support the calling of a national delegate conference of NHS shop stewards, strike committees and coordinating committees in order to:**

**\*develop national coordination of the present local/regional action;**

**\*discuss the action needed to win the present disputes;**

**\*discuss a series of demands that can bring together the present action.**

**2. ....resolves to sponsor and help organise such a conference on Saturday 26 March and agrees immediately to approach NHS shop stewards' bodies, strike committees and coordinating committees to do the same.**

## London

# Strike on March 14

Clive Tobutt (Assistant branch secretary, CoHSE, Maudsley Hospital) talked to SO.

We're out on strike (Feb 16) as part of a Regional Day of Action involving the whole of South East Thames Health Authority — in defence of the NHS. Is this connected to Maudsley coming out on February 2nd.

They're all interconnected. On the 2nd we came out because of low staffing levels and low pay and underfunding of the Health Service.

How are you going to link all the struggles together — victimisation, understaffing, London weighting issue etc?

We're linking together with other workers in Southwark. We're organising a delegate conference through Southwark Trades Council. We're visiting other trade unions in Southwark.

Were you at the London Coordinating Committee meeting last night? — they'll be organising a Na-

tional Shop Stewards Conference to organise national action.

On the 14th there'll be national action: CoHSE called the day. Hopefully the message is filtering through.

Do you think people are confused about the dates: demo on the 5th, strikes on the 14th and 15th?

I don't know. The 5th is TUC — its a demonstration. The 14th, I think is clear, is going to be a strike — a national strike — although its called a Day of Action. By striking, other people will follow; we've shown that already. There's quite a lot of hospitals out today.

If you look at Bickerstaff's role in 1982 and see rank and file workers organising for the full claim — do you think that this shop stewards committee this time, can take things forward in a way that the leadership will not do?

Yes, they could do. I remember '82. The main thing about '82 was that it was just too long and drawn out without any support. It could happen this way. Because the TUC, what are the TUC, they're General Secretaries. If the rank and file push them then they have no choice.

## Scotland

# Escalate the dispute

By Stan Crooke

24 February is the date set by the Scottish TUC Health Service Committee for the Scottish Day of Action in support of the NHS workers.

Members of the STUC and health service union leaders hope that it will be a one-off event to let off some steam. Union activists must ensure that it is the start of a real escalation of the dispute.

The focus of the dispute in Scotland remains the issue of privatisation of domestic and catering services in hospitals. This is obviously an impor-

tant issue, and the one which sparked off the current wave of unrest.

By itself, though, it provides no basis to link up with the action in the NHS in the South, where privatisation has already been implemented and other issues have been raised in the course of the dispute.

Moreover, the STUC is not making any real effort to win solidarity strike action from workers outside of the NHS on 24 February. Its leaflet for the day calls on "other workers" to "take part in demonstrations and rallies" being held on 24 February, and "whenever possible, to spend some time alongside NHS workers in their regular demonstrations outside hospital gates."

This is no more than an appeal for the traditional shop stewards' committee delegation and banner to turn up on local demonstrations, and to visit a local picket line.

Activists in the health service unions in Edinburgh have given a lead by campaigning for all-out strike action in the NHS in Scotland as of 24 February. Should the campaign have failed to gain sufficient momentum by the Day of Action, then the next focus for the demand should be 14 March, the national Day of Action called by COHSE.

Activists in the NHS unions and on Edinburgh Trades Council have also committed the Trades Council to campaigning for solidarity strike action on 24 February. Union activists, both in Edinburgh and elsewhere must take the lead in organising solidarity action, especially given the back-seat attitude adopted by the STUC and health service union leaders.

Rank and file control of the dispute is essential both to overcome divisions between the different unions involved and also to give it a correct direction and viable strategy, neither of which are forthcoming from Scottish NHS union leaders. In addition to organising rank-and-file control in Scotland itself, links must be built and action co-ordinated with the action in the South.



## NHS RIP

And again from the Young Conservatives' conference. Health Secretary John Moore gave a speech at the conference which made quite explicit the government's plans for the NHS.

Moore argued that it was never the intention of the NHS to provide free medical care for all. The fundamental tenet of the NHS, he said, was that everyone should be "free from fear of the ability to pay at time of health need."

Moore's speech makes it clear that the government have decided that the NHS should continue to exist simply as a third-rate safety net service for those completely unable to pay. The bulk of the population would be covered by private medical insurance.

We can only hope that, as 67% of Conservative voters are in favour of nurses going on strike, that Moore has scored an own goal with this one.

## Loonies

Remember "Maggie's Militant tendency"? The ultra-right, whose antics including going out and fighting for the Nicaraguan Contras, led the Conservative Party to close down the Federation of Conservative Students?

Well the little darlings have found themselves another home. Former members of the FSC have turned to taking over dead Young Conservative branches and transforming them from Tory dating agencies into right-wing power bases.

The YC conference last weekend saw a large presence of the ultra-right, brandishing banners in support of the Contras, for the smashing of the NHS, and for the legalisation of heroin.



## Alton's victims

As David Alton's nasty little Abortion Bill wends its way through Parliament, it is interesting to look at other Private Members' Bills that have been squeezed out through lack of time.

Brian Wilson, a Scottish Labour MP had put forward a Bill relating to the problems of over two million tenants in privately-rented accommodation.

A Department of the Environment report from a year ago reported that eight out of ten privately rented dwellings were in disrepair, and 81% lacked reasonable means of escape from fire.

In London the situation is particularly bad. Harassment by landlords is commonplace, and local authorities are

notoriously sluggish about using their powers against such abuses.

One disabled woman in North London reports being threatened with rape by a potential buyer of the property in which she has a flat.

The Wilson Bill proposed national minimum standards for repairs and amenities in private accommodation, to replace the existing tangle of different local authority regulations. But, due to lack of time, the Bill has disappeared. So while a bunch of self-righteous men debate the future of 6,000 women a year who won't be able to get abortions if the Alton Bill goes through, the rights of the living once again go by the board.

# Lessons of '82

By Martin Barclay

Once again health workers up and down the country are striking and marching to defend the NHS.

The issues — low pay, poor conditions, cuts in services and privatisation — remain the same.

The last brilliant burst of action took place in 1982, over the health workers' pay claim. It started with pay, but it was soon stoked up into a fierce debate which challenged the Tory government's commitment to the NHS and their plans for cuts and privatisation.

We had a unique opportunity then — unusually the nurses had made a common claim for a 12% pay increase alongside the other NHS workers.

With 1 April as a common settlement date we were able to march in to that fight in a way that was more united than ever before.

Divisions, of course, were still there. The COHSE leadership told branches to choose what action they wanted to take and the response was chaotic as some chose strike action, while others did nothing.

The NUPE leadership dithered, conducting a ballot of the membership and then recommending that branches should take whatever action they thought best.

(At the same time they were begging the government to take the claim to arbitration!)

The leaders of the other unions, like ASTMS and NALGO, were frantically stalling any call to action on the TUC Health Services Committee, the body that eventually co-ordinated the action.

What was clear was that the TUC and the NHS union leaders realised they had a tiger by the tail. Like today, these union bosses fought shy of effective, united action.

The prospect of one million NHS workers linked with powerful sections of the working class like the carworkers in a struggle for better pay and conditions terrifies them as much as it does Thatcher.

Under pressure from the members to step up the action in 1982, the work-to-rules and dinner-time demonstrations turned into one hour strikes in April and a series of one-day strikes in May and June. As each date was announced support for the action snowballed, and for a while it seemed that our leaders really meant it.

## NUPE

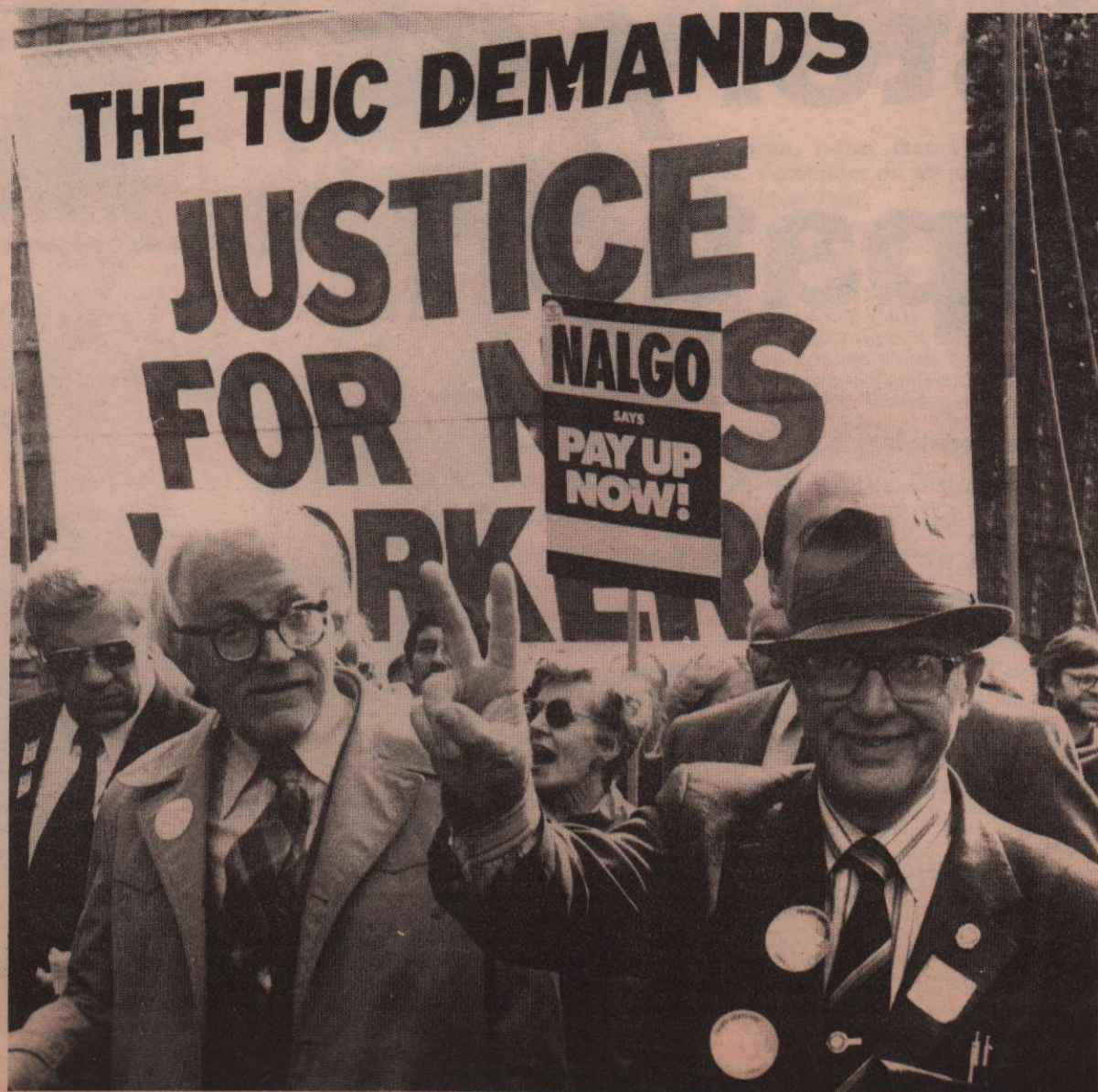
In May the NUPE conference unanimously carried an emergency resolution from Middlewood Hospital calling for a national, all-out, indefinite strike. The let-out, however, was that the resolution called for the action 'alongside other unions'.

The NUPE leadership was able to use this to veto any such action. They posed as militants while Albert Spanswick, the COHSE leader and a first rate buffoon, effectively headed off support for all-out action. Instead, we had the consolation prize of a three-day 'period of action' in July and five days in August. Then as now 'days of action' became the alternative to 'strike days'.

Outside the NHS, it seemed that everybody wanted to take solidarity action — dockers, seafarers, civil servants, transport workers, pensioners — all took some form of action — striking, raising levies or collecting petitions.

Most of all, support came from the miners, repeatedly and in force. Links were forged that lasted into 1986 and their own dispute.

The most significant solidarity action though was that taken by the London Press Branch of the EET-PU led by Sean Geraghty. The print unions had announced that they would strike in support of the



CoHSE's Albert Spanswick and Michael Foot

health workers. The Newspaper Publishers' Association, led by Richard Marsh (ex-NUPE full-timer and Labour Minister) threatened and then took out an injunction under laws introduced by Prior in 1980 to stop secondary strike action.

All the militant speeches and hollow words of the TUC leaders opposing anti-union legislation suddenly evaporated in the face of the need to support Geraghty and stand up to the courts. In a typical betrayal of working class solidarity Albert Spanswick on behalf of the TUC Health Services Committee asked the unions to call off the action.

This clearly showed the cowardice of the union leaders. The EETPU picketed all the newspapers and shut them down. Geraghty was taken to court. Health workers from all over the country came to demonstrate in support of him and against the Prior/Tebbit laws. None of the trade union leaders turned out and Frank Chapple, reactionary leader of the EETPU, disowned Geraghty.

The courts in the knowledge that strike action in support of Geraghty would be overwhelming were he imprisoned, gave him a derisory fine. Despite the precedent it set, it was a clear victory for the working class against the Tories' union-busting laws.

In the hospitals and districts Joint Shop Stewards' Committees sprang up to coordinate the actions. Some areas, frustrated at the lack of all-out action, brought out small groups of workers in vital areas on indefinite strike, making their wages up from levies of other hospital workers. One Health Authority after another failed to maintain a full service and declared themselves on 'Accident and Emergency status only'.

All the more remarkably, this was taking place against a tidal wave of patriotism unleashed by the Falklands War.

Of course, all this activity did not

just spring from the ground. The action was most solid where there had already been resistance to the cuts.

Under intense pressure to do something the TUC at its annual conference called a national day of action on September 22. They were still not prepared to actually put out the call for a one-day general strike and limited their support to a day of action.

The turn-out was tremendous. Millions of people took some form of action. A march in London had more than 150,000 participating and took 4½ hours to finish. 15,000 marched in Sheffield and there was similar action in a dozen other cities. Despite the restraint of six months by the TUC, the health workers were absolutely solid and had the massive backing of the working class.

## Strength

The will and the strength to win was apparent. Fowler was at pains to denounce the day as "irrelevant to working Britain". Millions of workers knew differently.

A lead from NUPE immediately after the 22nd could have changed the course of the dispute. Instead the TUC announced what turned out to be the death blow — a series of regional "days of action".

Even hardened militants could not believe it. All the strength which had been there on the 22nd was dissipated into regions trying to organise with no enthusiasm, for local action. There was no further strong national action. A planned Transport Day of Action on 8 November was called off at the last minute to please ACAS.

At the end of October the TUC decided to ballot members of each union separately on the question of all-out strike action. Meanwhile ACAS stepped in and on 9 November a 'new offer' was produced.

It offered only an extra half a percent for nurses and tied the

unions to a two-year deal. Suddenly the ballot on all-out strike became a consultation on the new offer.

The rank and file fought right until the end for a yes vote for indefinite action. The most cutting betrayal came from COHSE. Having opposed the call for action with emergency cover in June, the NEC recommended on the eve of a special conference that members should take indefinite action with no emergency cover. The strike ended on 15 December when the TUC Health Services Committee voted to accept the offer. COHSE and NUPE voted against the two-year deal and the differential settlement but were outvoted by the smaller organisations and the Tories won. Privatisation was soon to follow.

The lessons of the dispute are obvious. Despite the tremendous solidarity action there were no attempts to call even a limited, one-day general strike.

Other groups of workers were coming out on strike for their own reasons: BT workers against privatisation; steel workers; the water workers; the railworkers. These struggles were resolutely kept apart from the NHS dispute.

Whatever role the RCN played, the leaders of NUPE, COHSE, ASTMS and NALGO were always more concerned to divide and control the action. While we were able to build our network of militants through 'Health Workers for the Full Claim', it never became strong enough to resist the union leaders' attempts to sell out.

All out action with emergency cover was needed to win but it was never organised.

The answer, if the same mistakes are not to be repeated is to build a rank and file movement among health workers to link together the militant minority of activists. And to build up and co-ordinate the stewards' committees so that they can draw together the action to create a force that can pressure the union leaderships and call action if the union leaders refuse to act.

## Round-up

### Glasgow

After the mass walk-outs by ancillary staff at the Royal Infirmary and Stockville Hospitals in Glasgow last week, pressure on the Greater Glasgow Health Board will continue with selective strikes by key members in key areas this week.

Over 1000 ancillary workers walked out last week, and the incinerator staff have continued their strike. Mountains of rubbish bags have built up, especially at Stockville. At the Royal Infirmary, council cleansing staff are being used to clear rubbish away after a strike broke out in protest at health board plans to put a number of cleaning contracts at hospitals out to tender.

This would obviously mean job losses and a reduction in services at the hospitals. The Joint Trade Union secretary at Stockville Hospital explained the return to work by ancillary workers:

"This is an olive branch, and should not be taken as a sign that the protest has fallen flat. The emphasis is still there but we have toned it down so that the Board can react positively."

"So far, however, the signs are not encouraging. We have again asked for a deputation to be heard at today's health board meeting and received no reply."

### Liverpool

THE DAY of action last Wednesday, 10th, saw over 3,000 workers demonstrate in support of the health workers in Liverpool. Earlier, the marchers formed a human circle around the Royal Liverpool Hospital.

Nurses and auxiliaries from Walton, Park, Royal and Fazakerley hospitals led the demonstration. Firefighters, postal workers, striking seafarers, strikers from Ford's Halewood and Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port plants were among those supporting the demonstration.

The demonstration — the largest and most angry in Liverpool since the budget battles of 1984-5 — was also a shot across the bows of the Regional Health Authority which plans to axe five Liverpool hospitals in its drive to cut spending.

It is vital that this magnificent demonstration is built upon. Liverpool health workers must link up their resistance with other regions. Ballots should be held for strike action on 19 February side by side with the planned strikes in Manchester and Cheshire regions.

### Wirral

OVER 500 people took part in the Wirral march for the health service on the day of action last week.

There was a large contingent of workers from Vauxhalls, but the biggest contingent was Community Programme workers who had struck in support of the health workers.

Many of the Community Programme workers were threatened with warnings and other disciplinary action, but these threats were ignored.

300 nurses at Arrow Park also struck, along with ancillary workers from most of Wirral's hospitals.

The march ended in a rally at Birkenhead Town Hall, and all of the platform speakers emphasised the need for further action. The speaker from Vauxhall called for a one-day general strike on Budget Day, and received overwhelming support from the rally.

### West Yorkshire

The strongest points of the health workers' action in West Yorkshire on 3 February were Leeds and Wakefield. In Wakefield, where support for the strike was massive in the previous week's ballot, over 1000 nurses took some form of action.

Local nurses organised a team of pickets to go to the nearby Frickley colliery at South Emsall. There they leafleted and spoke to the morning shift. The men refused to go in and the pit was closed. The Frickley miners turned up later on the picket line in Leeds.

Like Wakefield, action was taken throughout Leeds hospitals. The centrepiece was St. James's near the city centre, where pickets at a mass rally at lunchtime included nurses, ancillary staff, doctors and the Frickley miners complete with banner. In both Wakefield and Leeds nurses were determined that this should be the beginning and not the end of the action.

## West Bank and Gaza

# A history of occupation

The West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel in 1967, along with the Egyptian Sinai peninsula and the Syrian Golan Heights. Before then, the West Bank had been ruled by the Jordanian monarchy, who had annexed it in 1950, and the Gaza Strip had been ruled by Egypt. In both areas the Arab ruling classes were just as oppressive as the Israeli occupiers have been.

In Gaza, for example, Palestinian Arabs were technically 'stateless', having to rely on special Egyptian permits as substitutes for passports. Independent Palestinian political organisations were repressed. The West Bank was firmly under Jordanian control.

The 'Six Day War' of June 1967 was a startling victory for Israel and a humiliating defeat for the Arab states. One of the consequences of the defeat was a rapid growth of distinctive Palestinian nationalist organisations, independent of the Arab states, motivated by the idea that the liberation of Palestine would depend upon independent Palestinian activity.

The biggest of these groups was Yasser Arafat's Fatah. Others, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Democratic Front (later, the Democratic Front) aspired to a more socialist view. But their base was amongst the refugees: on the whole, the Palestinians living in the newly-occupied territories remained under a more conservative leadership.

The total Arab population of the occupied territories stood by 1979 at 1,228,300 — 786,000 in the West Bank and 442,300 in the (much smaller, and so much more densely populated) Gaza Strip.

70% of the West Bank population is rural, whilst 85% of the Gazan population live in the urban centres — another indication of the differences between the two areas.

Social conditions are bad. David Mellor, the British Foreign Office man-on-the-spot, described Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza as an "affront to civilised values". It is. In 1978 only 33.5% of households in the West Bank had running water. In the Gaza, it was 13.9%. In the West Bank, 45.8% of households had electricity; in Gaza,

The uprising by Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza continues to meet with violent repression. Clive Bradley looks at the history of occupation and resistance.

35.7%.

Central to the politics of Israeli occupation has been the 'creeping annexation' resulting from the establishment of Jewish settlements. To the Israeli Zionist right wing, the West Bank is simply Judaea and Samaria — part of 'Eretz' or Biblical Israel. The land is theirs by historical right.

The right wing Likud group took power in 1977. Since then the gradual 'Judaisation' of the occupied territories has been at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But it began before, under Labour governments.

Fanatical claims to the land are not the only justification given for the military occupation and settlement of the land. 'Security' is also a powerful argument. It is essential, according to the Israeli authorities, to put as much distance as possible between their hostile Arab neighbours and the ocean.

### Repression

It is a spurious argument in fact. Neither in 1967 nor since have the Arabs states been in any position seriously to threaten Israel, which is immensely powerful militarily.

If the balance of forces were to change dramatically — by the US breaking with Israel, or the Arab states somehow getting united — then the West Bank settlements would not save Israel.

But 'security' is a big factor in the internal propaganda of the Israeli establishment.

East Jerusalem, conquered in 1967, was immediately annexed by Israel. The West Bank and Gaza have never been: it would result in the incorporation of 'too many Arabs' into the Israeli state. This issue — what to do about the Arabs — has remained central to Israeli politics, and is so now more than ever.

The settlement policy is part of the Israelis' answer. The idea, as

Moshe Dayan (a famous Israeli general) once put it, was to "create facts". The gradual settlement of Jews into the West Bank and Gaza (and the Golan and — before it was given back to Egypt in 1982 — the Sinai) is intended to create a situation where withdrawal would be simply impossible.

There are now 118 Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and 18 in Gaza, involving 70,000 and 2,000 settlers respectively.

This is by no means a peaceful policy of Jewish people moving into Arab areas. It is a violent, militaristic policy. The settlers are all the most right wing and chauvinistic elements of Israeli society (generally recent immigrants from America).

Settlement entails the forcible eviction of Arab families from their homes, where new, modern buildings are erected that are protected by armed groups of right-wing thugs. The government has taken over both 'state land' (previously owned by the Egyptian and Jordanian governments) for settlement purposes, and it has confiscated private land. By the early 1980s, 61,000 dunams of private land had been confiscated in the West Bank alone. (1 dunam = 1000 square metres).

It is estimated that in the first ten years of occupation, 20,000 Arab houses were blown up to make way for Jewish settlers.

Gush Emunim is one of the most active political groups among the settlers. According to Mr Gershon, the political secretary of Gush Emunim, speaking in 1979: "It is impossible for two people to have a right to the same piece of land. We have an absolute right to this land and the Arabs have none whatsoever." Asked whether their length of time there didn't give the Arabs some rights, Gershon replied, "No, not in relation to the importance of our right."

Gush Emunim and other settler groups carry out brutal repression on their Arab neighbours.

So too of course do the official military authorities. Repression is not a recent phenomenon. In 1982 a military court heard evidence against then-Defence Minister Ariel Sharon that he had urged Israeli soldiers to beat Arab schoolchildren in the West Bank.

According to top witnesses, Sharon gave instructions as to how to deal with demonstrators. "Cut off their testicles". It was not only Sharon.

General Hartabi led troops into a Hebron school where they beat the students with clubs. In another incident, Hartabi imposed a curfew on the Dheisha (refugee) camp after a stone was thrown at his car and ordered his troops to fire in the streets at the rooftop solar water



tanks, destroying the hot water supply..." (Noam Chomsky, "The Fateful Triangle", p.129).

One technique of repression is "collective punishments", intended to act as a deterrent. According to the authorities, by 1977 1,224 houses had been destroyed to punish the occupants for 'terrorist offences'. Other forms of punishment include the closure of universities, curfews, and travel restrictions for the residents of entire cities.

### Violations

In 1979 Amnesty International detailed 'grave violations of human rights' in the occupied territories. As Jan Metzger, Martin Orth and Christian Sterzinger comment in their book "This Land is Our Land", Israel is not as repressive as Chile or Guatemala, but "the fact that there are worse offenders against human rights does not make Israel's activities legitimate." (p.75).

Economically, the occupied territories are increasingly subordinated to what is in effect a colonial power. In Gaza, for example, Arab fishermen have been 'acted against' ostensibly for other reasons, but in fact to allow for Israeli competition or the development of tourist beaches. 80% of Gazan fishermen are refugees. In 1979, after the peace treaty with Egypt, 100 fishing families were evicted by the authorities.

Cheap labour is one economic benefit Israel gets from the occupation. Arabs go to work in Israel for low wages — and with no rights. They have to be back across the border by midnight or they are arrested. Their role as a 'reserve army of labour' can be seen in the box opposite.

Not all Arabs have suffered from occupation, and a layer of well-off Palestinians still exists. But it is a diminishing minority. In Gaza especially, a large percentage of the population is destitute.

After Israeli occupation, the West Bank Arabs remained under the domination of a pro-Jordanian, conservative leadership. In Gaza, too, a pro-Jordanian leadership emerged (due to trading links with Jordan).

Various opposition movements emerged in the late 1960s — Arab nationalists, the Communist Party and members of the different PLO groups. By 1976, this more radical movement had won the leadership of the West Bank Arabs. In municipal elections, candidates declaring support for the PLO won majorities almost everywhere. Organisations were formed linking the different groups together.

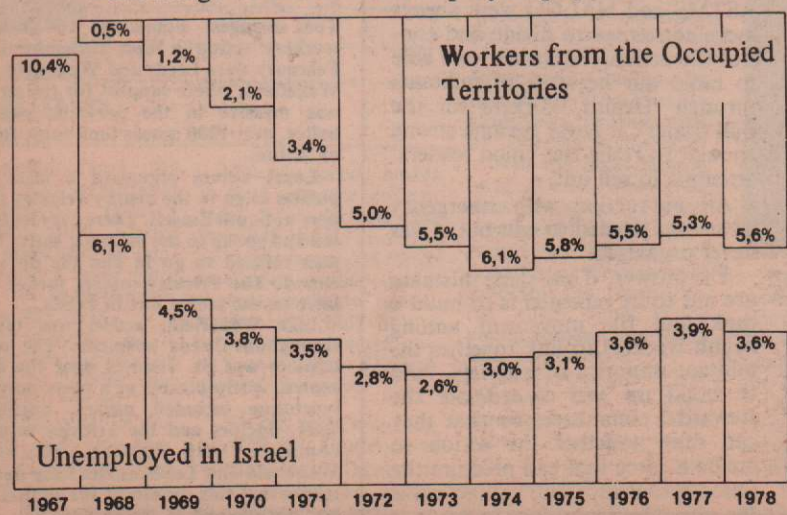
This was linked, of course, to a growing political consciousness and to escalating struggle against the occupation. The Palestinians were increasingly radicalised during the 1970s, and after the defeat suffered by the PLO in the early years of that decade, the exile leadership came to put more stress on the occupied territories.

The political movement in Gaza has tended to lag behind the West Bank, but — as recent events have shown — the same process of radicalisation has occurred.

In fact there have always been political differences between the leadership in the occupied territories and the PLO, despite clear and unequivocal support for the PLO as the 'sole legitimate representative' of the Palestinians.

The West Bank leadership has always put more stress on the 'two states solution', rejecting quite

Percentage of the civilian employed population in Israel



# A class alternative

## Nationalism, rather than class politics, dominates on all sides in the Middle East.

The Jewish working class in Israel is tied into a trade union movement, the Histadrut, which is also the biggest employer in the country.

The Israeli Labour Party, despite its name, draws its support mainly not from workers, on a class basis, but from the better-off middle class of European origin. Working class Jews, usually of Asian or African origin, are more likely to support the right-wing Likud alliance.

Among the Palestinian Arabs, would-be socialist or Marxist groups, and trade unions, function only as a left wing within the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The PLO, an umbrella cross-class movement, is dominated by the Palestinian bourgeoisie — for there are many wealthy Palestinians in the Gulf and elsewhere, and the PLO itself has a big business empire.

Elsewhere in the Arab world, appeals to the cause of the nation — and in particular of the nation's struggle against 'Zionism and imperialism' — rarely fail to stifle independent working-class politics.

What is the answer? How can socialists propose a solution to the real national grievances and fears that exist, and begin to unite Arab and Jewish workers?

The Palestinian Arabs have suffered terribly for more than 40 years. The anguish, bitterness and desperation generated among Europe's Jews by the Nazi mass-murder of six million Jews and the callous indifference of the Great Powers vented itself on the Palestinian Arabs in 1948. The Jews in Palestine, fired by a fresh determination to trust and to give no quarter to any but their own people, carved out their own state, taking the bulk of the territory which had once been Arab Palestine.

Since 1967 Israel has ruled over 1½ million Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza through an army of occupation.

Many people on the left interpret these facts by assuming that the Zionist enterprise was and is a 'conspiracy', identified totally with imperialism. General denunciation of 'Zionism' and 'Zionists' follows, in terms which imply that the 'Zionists' have no rights in Palestine, except possibly individual rights.

Class considerations therefore give way to national/communal categories. The Arab ruling classes have more than once massacred Palestinians, and willingly condemn them to be pawns on the political chessboard; but this outlook puts the Arab states on the 'progressive' side. The whole question is seen as a

mere item in the struggle between progressive and reactionary, good and bad, camps on a world scale. The problem is thus defined almost as a conflict of good and bad peoples.

But socialists should approach all questions of national and communal antagonisms from the viewpoint of the class struggle, and of the working class programme for solving such conflicts by way of consistent democracy.

The Palestinian Arabs are bitterly oppressed; but a Jewish nation exists in Palestine. We want democracy not revenge. We do not want to visit the sins of the Zionist fathers and mothers on their sons and daughters, or preach "collective guilt" of the entire Israeli-Jewish people for the deeds of their governments. A Jewish nation exists. It has rights. None of those rights mean anything unless they include the nation's right to have its own state on some territory of its own — for the Israeli Jews cannot be stopped from having their own state except by complete conquest and suppression.

## Champion

We champion the Palestinian Arabs' fight against oppression and displacement on a programme not of the implicit or explicit denial of Jewish rights, but of compensation, restitution, division of the disputed territory, and conciliation.

We say Israel should get out of the West Bank and Gaza. We advocate the immediate creation of a Palestinian Arab state alongside an Israeli-Jewish state (a modified version of Israel). We advocate an end to all discrimination against the Arabs under Israeli rule. We advocate full and equal citizenship for the Arabs, and the right to secede to the Palestinian-Arab state of the majority-Arab districts in Israel.

Revolutionary militants must approach this question from two viewpoints simultaneously, and integrate those two viewpoints. We are against chauvinism and national exclusivism everywhere, whether in Britain, Northern Ireland, or Palestine; and the Palestinian Jews are chauvinistic and exclusive. We support those in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza who fight for Jewish-Arab equality. But the ending of Jewish chauvinism and exclusiveness is not and cannot be, for us, a precondition for accepting that the Jews have rights in Palestine.

## Right

The Jews have the right to a certain portion of the territory of Palestine by virtue of the fact that they are there, and most of the Jews now there were born there. Their rights there cannot be made conditional on how they conduct themselves in that territory, any more than the openly chauvinist line of the Palestinian Arabs' leaders up to the late 1960s could nullify the Palestinian Arabs' national rights.

We recognise the right to self-determination of the Israeli Jews; we support those in Israel who fight chauvinism and exclusiveness and advocate equal citizenship of Arabs and Jews; we advocate an independent Palestinian-Arab state on the best terms possible which are compatible with Israeli-Jewish national rights. All these elements must be combined into one coherent working-class socialist viewpoint, and a fight for a socialist federation of the Middle East.



Israeli teacher and pupils in East Jerusalem

openly the democratic secular state advocated by the PLO since the late '60s. In part this is because of the material position of the West Bank population — for whom it is easier to settle for a West Bank/Gaza state than it is for the refugees — and in part it is due to the influential position of the Communist Party, which has a 'two states' position.

Israel has been heavily repressive towards this political movement — deporting mayors, imposing curfews, arresting activists and so on. The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was partly designed to deal with the political movement in the West Bank. It was, in the words of Israel's Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, a "war for Eretz Israel" — to consolidate their hold on "Judaea and Samaria" by destroying the PLO and thus beheading the political movement in the occupied territories.

## Disaster

The Lebanese war failed to achieve this result. In some respects, indeed, it was a disaster for Israel, opening wide cracks in Israeli Jewish society which are still widening today.

Different political, cultural, youth, women's and trade union organisations have developed in the occupied territories — generally with stronger roots in the West Bank. These have all faced repression. But in the current uprising, although its origins were clearly spontaneous, this Palestinian 'national movement' has been playing a vital role.

Although a substantial proportion of Palestinian Arabs are Christian, not Muslim, the old secular movement has been forced to link

up with the rising force of Islamic fundamentalism. The precise strength of the fundamentalists is difficult to gauge, but particularly in Gaza they do seem very strong.

Political fundamentalism goes back to the 1930s in Egypt in the shape of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is this tradition (much older than Khomeinism) that has spawned the new groups in Gaza.

Initially, the fundamentalist organisations were boosted by the Israeli authorities as an alternative to the PLO. Now they must regret it. But the current alliance between PLO factions and the Jihad group must be unstable. Will the Jihad outstrip the PLO? It is too early to say. Socialists would hope not.

What are the prospects in the occupied territories? Even the most intense struggle by the Palestinian Arabs is unlikely simply to drive Israel out. Israel is immensely

strong — and the settlers provide an extra problem. Support for Palestinian independence within Israel — among both Arabs and Jews — will be essential. Such support is growing.

The Israeli Arabs were long considered the most docile of Palestinians; now they too are mobilised against the occupied territories. Amongst Jews there is a shift to the right, but at the same time a growth of the radical left.

Although Israel has created a lot of 'facts' to obstruct Palestinian independence, it is possible. The current uprising has forced the issue to the heart of Israeli politics — the 'status' of the occupied territories will be the major issue in this year's election. Solidarity from within Israel and elsewhere can help see that the 'status' will be: a fully independent and sovereign Palestinian state.



Palestinian day labourers

# Contest the leadership!

The electoral college was won in 1981. Ever since then Labour's left has been reluctant to support CLPD's call for annual contests. Only such contest can ensure accountability of the leadership to the party and substantially reduce the elitist gap between Leader and Deputy and the rest of the NEC whose places are contested every year.

To inflate the importance of the two leadership positions is unhealthy in a democratic party: it encourages a cult of personality — undesirable in itself, but just pathetic, given the present incumbents.

There are now very pressing reasons to use the electoral college. Since 1982 when the Right came to dominate the NEC and Conference, and particularly since the election of the present leader in 1983, the Party has travelled a long way from democratic socialism. If the drift to the right continues Labour's next programme will not differ significantly from that of the merged Liberal and Social Democratic Party. This will reduce Labour's electoral chances.

Should the Tories be so unpopular that a Labour government were returned, despite everything, it would find itself unable to tackle the country's problems and would suffer defeat at the next general election.

The leadership's analysis of the cause of Labour's electoral failures is a mistaken one. Nevertheless, it has been swallowed, albeit sometimes reluctantly, by most Party members. The leadership's fundamental premise is that Labour was rejected because it clung to outdated beliefs about the way society should be changed.

The party must, of course, keep in step with changes in society, and gear its programme to them. It must also develop new ways of getting its programme across. This in no way necessitates, however, a retreat from Labour's basic objectives.

But this is the course on which the party leadership has embarked. Yet, it is impossible to ensure steady economic growth and the return to full employment without using the productive resources at present idle. This, however, inevitably involves government intervention in the economy by taking over the top

By Vera Derer,  
Vladimir Derer,  
Sarah Mann,  
Danny Nicol (all  
CLPD).

companies in each major industry, and financial institutions.

The present party policy, however, merely proposes unspecified forms of 'social ownership' based on hypothetical mass participation in economic decision-making. No amount of vague talk is a substitute for a programme of economic reconstruction and in any case genuine democratic management is only realisable in the public sector.

The leadership's policies amount to the acceptance of the capitalist economic framework. So much is also clear from Neil Kinnock's latest statement on the EEC, that "The prospects of withdrawal, in my view, are nil".

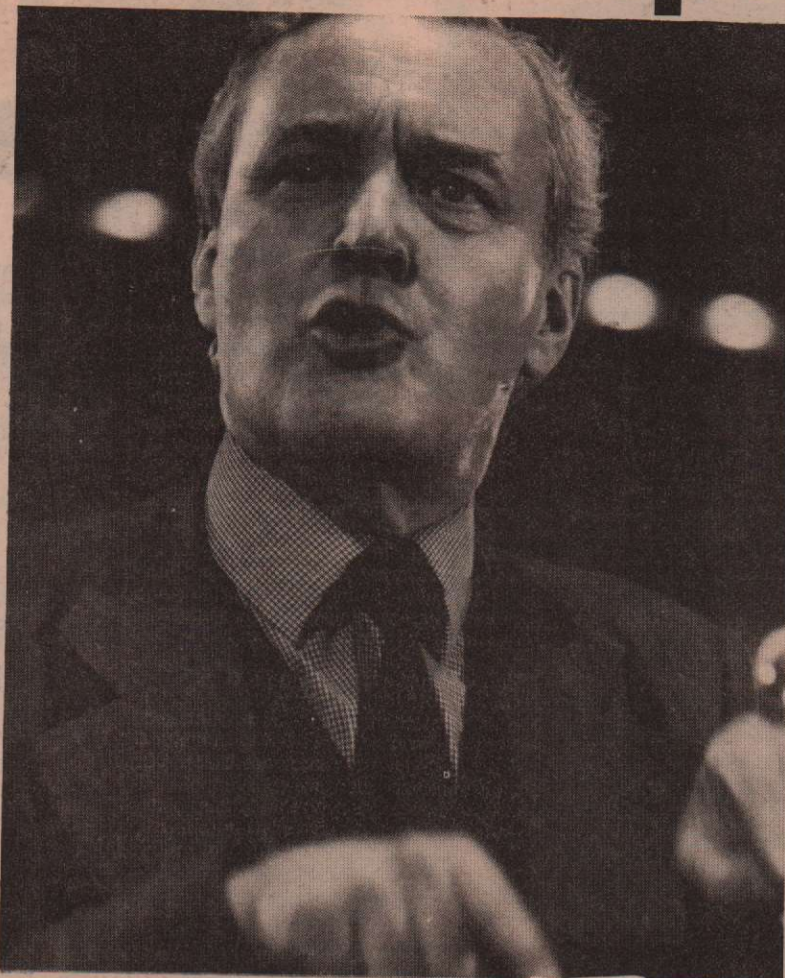
## Conflict

Thus any future Labour government which in rebuilding the economy came into conflict with Common Market rules would have to abide by them at the public's expense. Nor can industry be regenerated without a substantial reduction in defence expenditure. Yet the leadership opposes this.

The present reactionary climate does make things difficult for Labour but its roots are complex and run deeper than the attractiveness or unattractiveness of Labour's policies. It will not be overcome by making concessions to it.

The last two Labour governments helped create it. So have the statements of our Front Bench, who in their repeated attacks on the Left reinforced Tory propaganda that Labour is divided and under siege from a lunatic extremist fringe. So far as the general public is concerned, it follows that Thatcher alone can deal with the country's difficulties.

The Left can reverse the Party's disastrous course if it puts forward a comprehensive alternative and do everything to get it adopted. Only contests for Leader and Deputy, however, will ensure that the attention of members is focused on the



'The left has been reluctant to support annual contests.'

alternative Left programme. Failing this, the Left's criticisms will receive the same scant attention that they have had until now. It is encouraging that the Campaign Group of Labour MPs is at last coming round to this view.

As important is that any campaign for an alternative leadership is restricted to debate strictly within the party and labour movement press. Conscious effort must be made to reduce media interference to a minimum. When speaking to journalists or on TV those on the Left slate must limit themselves to attacking the Tories and refrain from making any comment on internal party affairs. Campaigning should be through the extensive distribution of literature within CLPs and union branches.

The Right may well make full use of the media, which is always willing to exploit Labour's disagreements or misrepresent its

normal democratic processes as civil war. The desire for party unity among rank and file party members and Labour voters must not be underestimated.

A contest should not necessarily be tied to an expectation of victory this year, next year or the year after. It may take some time before the Party realises that the leadership is on a hopeless course. For this reason, as well as to fulfill the college's original aims, this year's election must not be a one-off happening but the start of annual leadership contests as an integral part of the party's routine annual elections, no different from those for Treasurer and the other 26 members of the NEC.

It is up to the Left to establish annual leadership contests as a fully accepted democratic procedure in the party if it is to offer a focus of resistance to the drift from socialism.

## WHERE WE STAND

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

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

Socialism can never be built

in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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

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## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Wednesday 17 February. Canterbury SO meeting, 'Women and Socialism'. 7.30pm.

Friday 19 February. Sheffield SO meeting, 'Where We Stand'. Speaker: Lynn Ferguson. 1pm at the University.

Tuesday 23 February. Oxford SO meeting, 'Where We Stand'. Speaker: Lynn Ferguson. 8pm, East Oxford Community Centre.

Wednesday 24 February. Merseyside SO meeting, 'The Housing Crisis'. Speaker: Helen McHale. 7.45, Wallasey Unemployed Centre.

Thursday 25 February. Sheffield SO meeting: debate with Workers' Power on the Middle East. Speaker: Tom Rigby. 7.30pm.

Thursday 25 February. Support the BTR Strikers — new video and speakers, 6.30 at Lambeth Town Hall. Organised by South London Support Group, 01-274 4000 x 372.

Saturday 27 February. North London SO jumble sale. 2pm at the 'Red Rose', 129 Seven Sisters Rd, N7.

Saturday 27 February. Demonstration called by the National Union of Students against the Education Reform Bill. Assemble 12 noon, Embankment.

Tuesday 1 March. North London SO meeting, 'Support the Health Workers'. Speakers: Mark Nevill, Nik Barstow, Pete Gilman. 7.30, 'Red Rose'.

Tuesday 8 March. Newcastle SO meeting, 'Palestine: two nations, two states'. 8pm, Tyne Rooms, 10 Pilgrim St.

For further details of SO meetings, contact 01-639 7965.

Bristol District Labour Party are organising a conference on the weekend of Friday 26 February and Saturday 27th entitled 'Labour Fights Back! Organising against attacks on local jobs and services'.

On Friday 26th there is a rally at Bishopstown Community Centre, Gloucester Road, at 7.30 p.m. where David Blunkett, Dawn Primarolo, Terry Fields, Ted Knight, John Prescott and Bernie Grant amongst others will be there. There will be Namibian singers, a bar, and the admission is £2 waged, £1 unwaged.

On Saturday 27th at the Council House in Bristol, 10am to 4.30pm is the main conference with discussions and workshops. Speakers include David Blunkett, Judy Malabar, Pam Taplow and George Micklewright (Labour City Councillors). Chair: Dawn Primarolo (Campaign Group of MPs). Admission: free. Creche and deaf-signers at both events.

For further details contact Pete Crack, 182 Newbridge Road, St. Annes, Bristol 4.

## IS THE SWP AN ALTERNATIVE?

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# A nasty, spiteful lot

Belinda Weaver reviews 'White Mischief'.

'White Mischief' is rather an inadequate title for a movie about the decadent British in 1940s Kenya. These settler aristocrats not only drink and drug and get off with each other's spouses, but they aren't above a spot of murder too. Rather more than just mischief, one might think.

Why make this film at all? That is probably a greater mystery than the so-called mystery at the centre of the film. These unsavoury people aren't set against any background, so the film isn't really looking at the role of the British colonists in Kenya. The native population barely get a supporting role, except to do the classic walk-on parts of bringing in the drinks or the afternoon tea.

The film makers seem to have dispensed with a real story since the film is based on actual events — the murder of Lord Erroll, a notorious philanderer, even by Happy Valley standards, in the 1940s.

We see the young bride, Diana Broughton, with her ageing husband, Jock, and we know she'll get off with Erroll, and that Erroll will be shot. All that has come out in the press releases.

The film goes nowhere after that. Jock Broughton was tried and acquitted of the murder, but the film seems to say he was guilty anyway. The case is far from so open-and-shut. There were other people around with motives, but the film isn't interested in them. All it seems interested in is a fashion show.

Greta Scacchi's Diana is photogenic, and she does get to wear nice clothes, and live in a nice house. But so what? Who cares about these people and their sordid affairs? Not me.

You can't work up an ounce of sympathy for anyone in it. Everyone is either a nutter or just plain unpleasant. Jock probably was pathetic, but he's portrayed as such a crawly masochist that Diana seems to be doing him a favour by



The real Kenya: racism and oppression

treating him badly. Sarah Miles's Alice goes even further over the top than we're used to. All I can reveal is that she isn't bothered by normal standards of respect for the dead.

Everyone is either vicious or too stupid to be vicious. After Jock's trial, Gwladys Delamere mutters, 'I always thought Jock was a frightful man'. Considering how chummy she'd been to him before, this is a bit thick, but then they're a nasty, spiteful lot.

Most of the crowd jeer at Gilbert Colville, who became Diana's second husband. They think he has gone 'native' by being friendly with

the Masai and driving round with them. But the Masai tend Gilbert's cattle for free, because they love cattle. And Gilbert is laughing all the way to the bank. He's the richest man in the colony, so what harm is there in going a little native?

## Exposé

If the film is meant as an expose of the sordid British settlers, living it up in Kenya while the gallant Brits at home fought a world war, then it needs a little more contrast. But was there much contrast? Weren't the ruling classes at home

trying first to chum up with Hitler, then fighting him when it seemed he wanted what they considered their rightful share of the world cake? Wasn't the war partly about defending those very Happy Valley settlers and their way of life?

Bang goes the contrast! It's a relief to know that Kenya finally became independent from the British. But independence came twenty years after these events! Twenty more years of bringing in drinks to people like these before the Kenyans stopped playing supporting roles, and took the leads.

Maybe it still needs to be said that

colonialism was a brutal system, forcing the native population into servile roles and destroying their livelihoods. But this film doesn't really do that job.

Watching the film, I kept wishing for a few Mau Mau to come stealing up the garden path to teach this crowd a lesson. But it's twelve years too early for them in this movie. You'll have to see 'The Kitchen Toto' if you want the Mau Mau, though that film doesn't really do them justice.

'White Mischief' may do the Kenyan settlers justice, but does anyone really care?



## Derek the lad

Clive Bradley looks at Derek Hatton's book 'Inside Left' (Bloomsbury, £3.95)

Derek Hatton, as you might expect, is utterly contemptuous of the London 'loony left'.

"On one occasion", he recalls in his autobiography, "they spent hours discussing who should be on the platform for a national rally. Just when we had sorted it out, up they popped to demand equal numbers of men and women."

"I lost my rag, turned to John Hamilton and said: 'Hey, John, if you put a skirt on, that should solve the problem!' You can imagine the sort of reaction that aroused".

Hatton's frustration with "the London loony left, more concerned about black mayors and gay rights than about

building new houses" is expressed with all the self-important arrogance that we have come to expect from this 'great workers' leader'. It's not really a political criticism of the radical pressure-group politics of many Labour councils. It's Degsy proving himself to be one of the lads.

Judging by the extracts published (to great financial gain for Hatton, presumably) in the *Sunday Times*, the whole book's like that — less an analysis than an exercise in megalomania.

Hatton's precise relationship to *Militant* these days is difficult to work out. But it's hard to see how the *Militant* editorial board could be very happy with Hatton's book. Even though it describes *Militant*'s editor Peter Taaffe as "the greatest political thinker I have ever met", the book will be a delight to Labour Party witch-hunters.

# A cover-up

Martin Thomas reviews 'Liverpool, A City That Dared to Fight', by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn. (Fortress Books, £6.95).

Anyone can suffer defeats, the best socialists make mistakes. In hectic times, and under fire, even good Marxists often look at their own mistakes with a less coolly critical eye than they would wish.

But after the defeats, after the mistakes, after the emergency cover-ups for those mistakes, there has to come a time for learning lessons. People who cannot think critically even then are no Marxists at all.

In 1983 the avowed Marxists of *Militant* gained a dominant position on Liverpool Labour council. They promised to use it as a platform for mobilising workers to defeat the Tories, and up to May 1984 they made a reasonable start on that.

Since then they have been defeated. The council has been cut. It is now under more-or-less business-as-usual Labour management. 47 councillors have been surcharged. Numerous *Militant* supporters have been expelled from the

Labour Party.

Defeat was possible with the best policies, but in fact mistakes by *Militant* contributed heavily to the defeat.

\*After May 1984, with the miners' strike in full swing, they ran down their mass campaign and turned instead to getting a crisis-postponing deal with the Government.

\*In early 1985, when a number of Labour councils talked of defying the government, Liverpool sat back, keeping (so it thought) well within the law.

\*In June 1985 they stumbled into an unbalanced, illegal budget. And then for three months silence followed. There was only the most general, bland campaigning. Council workers could only guess when the council was going to run out of money and what the council leaders would do then.

\*In September the council leaders suddenly announced that they would run out of money in two weeks, and issued 30,000 redundancy notices... "purely as a legal device," they explained.

\*They withdrew the redundancy notices under union pressure. A ballot for all-out strike was lost — undoubtedly because of the redun-

dancy notices. Then the council sent out the redundancy notices again!

\*It continued to bluster about the struggle going ever onwards and upwards while it tried ever more desperate tactics — like planning to lay off the entire council workforce for a month! — before making a deal with the banks. It made cuts.

Despite the great and ponderous bulk of their book — over 500 pages — Taaffe and Mulhearn scarcely mention most of these turning points. They do concede that the redundancy notices were "a major tactical error", but all they say in explanation is that "perhaps if Liverpool City Council had been entirely made up of *Militant* supporters" the error would not have been made. That hardly explains why the redundancy notices were not only issued by the council, but also hotly defended by *Militant*.

In 500 pages of unremitting self-congratulation, Taaffe and Mulhearn hardly ever seem to recognise that there have been defeats. They even warmly defend Derek Hatton, whose antics since the council's fiasco have discredited him throughout the labour movement and among many *Militant* supporters.

**Les Hearn's  
SCIENCE COLUMN**

**Glasnost  
and green  
issues**

**Last week I looked at glasnost and pollution in the USSR. New anti-pollution measures are being introduced in the USSR, but they highlight how bad things were before.**

Yuri Izrael, chair of the USSR State Committee on Hydrometeorology and Control of the Natural Environment, is quoted by an official magazine.

Izrael estimates total air pollution in the USSR at 105 million tonnes per year (65Mt from industry and 40Mt from vehicles). This compares favourably with the USA's 150Mt until you take into account the USA's greater industrial base and its vastly greater number of vehicles.

Most illuminating is the way Useinova (and Izrael?) tries to explain the causes of the ecological crisis:

"The negative processes that manifested themselves in Soviet society in the '70s and early '80s were among the main underlying reasons. They included extensive-type development, the spend principle in the economic mechanism and insufficient openness and democracy in discussing and tackling problems. Consequently, departmentalism and commandist and technocratic approaches triumphed, hampering in the past decades the full use of the advantages of the socialist system and planned economy, especially in solving the problems of ecology."

"Departmentalism" is explained as "fulfilling narrow economic tasks such as growth of production", ignoring ecological and social problems. Russian laws for environmental protection have been unable to modify this situation.

The case of Lake Baikal is most blatant. Useinova describes how, for 20 years, "scientists, authors, workers and people of most diverse trades" had proved that Baikal was no place for a pulp and paper mill. They argued that the world's most beautiful lake and largest body of pure fresh water must be safeguarded against industrial pollution.

The ministry responsible partly resisted, partly acceded to these arguments, uprating pollution controls from time to time.

Overall they spent as much as if they had just built a new mill away from Baikal. They finally agreed to environmentalist demands but, emphasises Useinova, only after 20 years. In contrast, the public succeeded in changing the Lake Ladoga mill's output in less than 2 years. "Restructuring, openness and democratisation are bearing fruit."

She lists several other projects now subject to public discussion and then describes the new law on State Enterprise which has a special article on "The Use of Nature and Environmental Protection". This obliged enterprises to use natural reserves in a renewable way and to use non-waste technologies to keep the environment intact. Failure to do this will render an enterprise financially liable for any damage and may result in its shutdown.

No doubt, environmental protection is being used as a stick by one part of the bureaucracy to beat the back of the other part, but the opening of questions of control of industry to public discussion can only benefit the work of true socialists. How different from Czechoslovakia, where the authors of a critical report on the environment (see SO, November 7) have been rounded up by the police!

**Pornography perpetuates sexism**

**In SO 344, Lynn Ferguson asked "should we wait until socialism when we will be all terribly 'right on' and when we can produce non-sexist erotica?"**

Aside from wondering what non-sexist erotica might look like, the fact is that women's struggles shouldn't wait until socialism. The struggle against sexism has to be waged simultaneously with the struggle against capitalism. The two are inextricably linked.

So far, feminist arguments against pornography have rested on a total and absolute opposition. Lynn Ferguson allows this view some value when she states that 'material about sex in our society is more than likely to be sexist'.

That being the case, we should take *this* argument on board instead of asking 'Is there anything wrong with people reading about sex or

looking at pictures?' as if we were talking about some sort of neutral, harmless concept.

In research studies, pornographic literature has been suggested as a cause of rape. Rape has very little in common with sex and everything to do with power. Likewise with pornography.

**Commodity**

As soon as you exploit sex as a commodity, you end up exploiting sexuality. Furthermore, pornography isn't just a possible cause of rape. To some degree, it constitutes rape itself. How many 8-year old girls willingly consent to pornographic modelling?

Page 3 is possibly more complex. Pornography isn't just a symptom of sexism, it serves as a causal factor in perpetrating it.

The basic fact is that the arguments about pornography

haven't been won. While appreciating the problems of delivering censorship heavy-handedly from above, as Lynn outlined, I still think that if we wish to conquer sexism, we have to start somewhere and Page 3 might be as good a place as any...whatever happened to small, winnable demands?

Page 3 is more than "silly" and "demeaning"; it reflects exactly the level of tolerance that the objectification of women receives in our society.

There is no reason on earth why topless women should be used to sell a newspaper, other than a downright acceptance of sexism.

Women shouldn't have to tolerate sexism on any level and should fight it in all its various forms, while extending that struggle to its root cause. Separating its 'cause' and 'effect' places 'cause' in the abstract and offers us nothing but an ultra-leftist go-nowhere ap-

proach.

I'm sure that the author of the article knows these arguments inside out. Indeed, the article touched on some worthwhile points, which feminists might gain advantage from taking up. Sadly, however, Lynn's article proves just how little such ideas among feminists have been explored and articulated!

**Agenda**

The context in which Lynn Ferguson puts her points of discussion isn't the most helpful way of initiating the debate. No, we don't wait for socialism to have 'right on' sexual definitions, we fight against the artificial construction of our sexuality now, and a fight to ban Page 3 *might* be just the opportunity we need to re-address the existing agenda on our own terms.

**JO SPRINGTHORPE**  
Colchester

**Feminists are not moralists**

**It was good to see a reply (Penny Newell, SO 345) to Lynn Ferguson's article, "My Erotica, Your Porn" (SO 344), but the reply was still far too soft and missed the essential point.**

I always thought the idea of 'your erotica, my porn' meant that what is for men's sexual gratification is based on and perpetuated women's oppression.

I agree that Page 3 should not be banned for the one reason, and one reason alone, that we should not give the state that power, power they will inevitably abuse. We would be in favour of workers refusing to produce this material.

The fact that women's bodies are portrayed in a degrading way every day in newspapers which millions of people see is a serious issue. These images must shape, if not define, men's and women's view of women. It is something to be angry about, not to dismiss.

Is pornography the symptom, women's oppression the cause, socialism the answer? This is not a Marxist approach or one we would usually adopt. After all, golliwogs are surely a symptom of racism, but firstly we do not defend the right to distribute golliwogs and secondly we recognise that such things perpetuate and reinforce racism. To state glibly that something is only a symptom is posture politics and more familiar in the pages of Militant.

The article claims to be the beginning of a debate. The starting point for a debate about pornography is not 'what is erotica?' and 'what is porn?' but what exactly is the nature of pornography.

Where does it come from? What are its effects? Whose interests does it serve? How do we fight it?

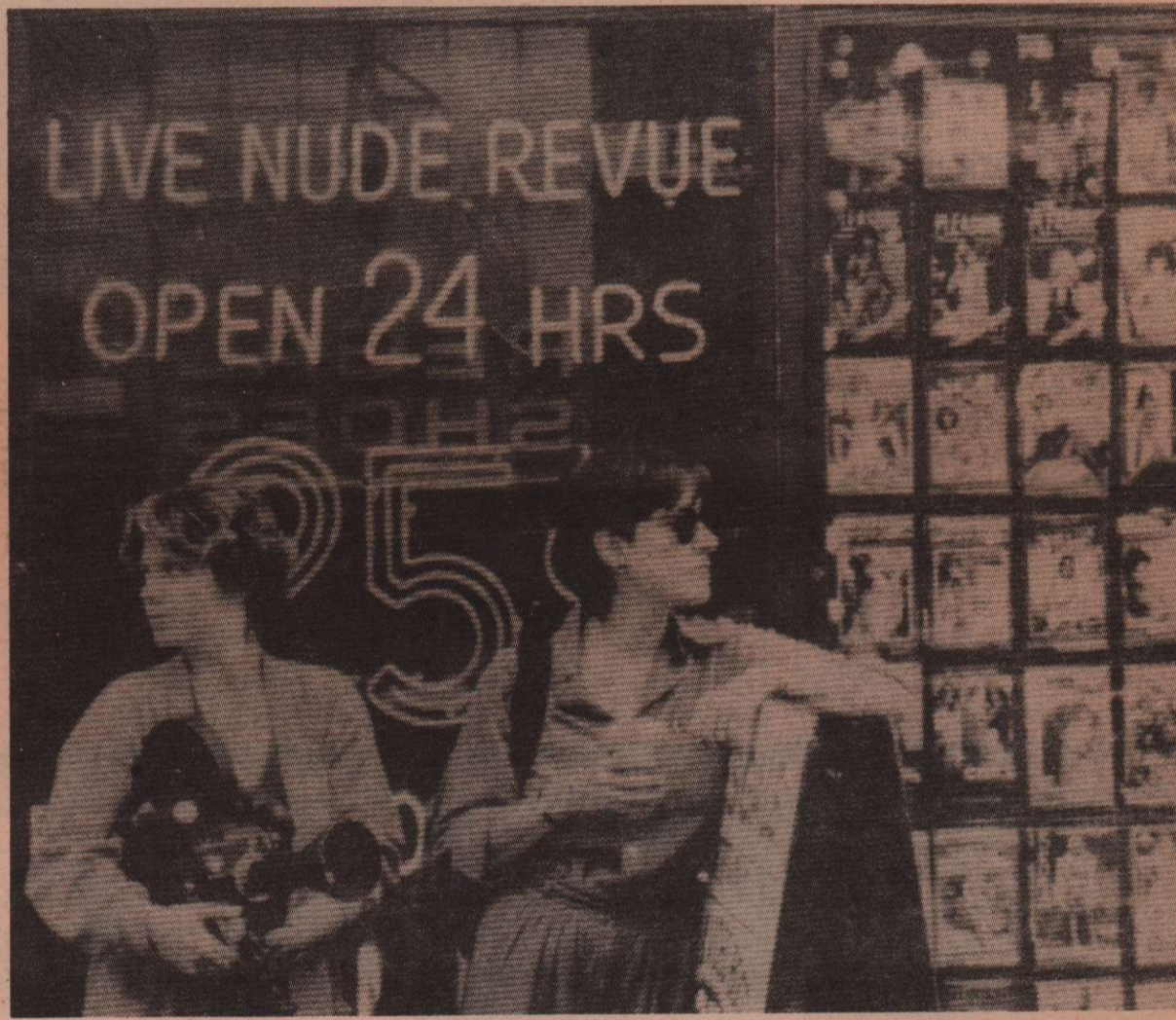
The fact that women are sexually aroused by pornography is totally irrelevant. It is undoubtedly the case that some women fantasise about rape. So what?

This is merely a reflection of the dominating ideas of male sexuality. It is not a starting point for sexual liberation.

I am not denying, for one minute, women's sexual drives. Women are sexual beings. They have a right to sexual gratification, just as much as men. Nobody on the left denies this.

The only people who paint women as moral, asexual, passive people are the Mary Whitehouse Brigade, the upholders of the family, the right wing. Feminists are not sexual moralists. Lynn is totally misguided in arguing against an idea that has no hold on the British left or the wider women's movement.

The idea that women want 'a nice screw' is not a new one. Men have



been telling women for decades that that's what they want and that's what they need. What is a nice screw? I always thought the term 'screw' suggested women as passive, men as active. Whatever the truth or merits of women wan-

ting 'a nice screw', one thing is certain, such ideas should not be linked in an article about pornography or in arguments about pornography.

Women's sexual liberation and pornography are opposites, not

part of the same. Just like we say rape is about violence and not sex, so porn is not about women's erotica.

**HELEN McHALE,**  
Manchester

**Class action against porn**

**Clare Short's bill proposing that Parliament ban Page 3 pictures raises a number of serious issues for the left. Unfortunately Lynn Ferguson's article (SO 344) fails to address these issues.**

Pornography is clearly not the "root cause" of women's oppression, but to dismiss it as a mere "symptom" is wrong.

Women's oppression is necessary for the survival of capitalism. In order to perpetuate women's oppression the ruling class need to create an ideology which tells us that this oppression is OK.

Pornography is part and parcel of that ideology, and as such rein-

forces the oppression of women. If the working class is to unite as a class, it has to take issue with pornography.

When women rip down Page 3 pictures from their workplaces, we support them — not because the pictures are "tacky" or "distasteful" but because to challenge men's right to ogle over women's bodies is to start to challenge working class men's perception of women as sex objects. And that is a step towards uniting the working class, men and women.

Demanding that the state ban Page 3 is no solution. We do not want the capitalist state to decide what we can or cannot read. Their idea of what we should not see

would be likely to include gay literature, feminist books, sex education materials for young people, etc. Anyway, they are unlikely to ban pornography so long as it sells newspapers and makes them millions.

Instead we should give full support to working class action against pornography, whether this be women taking down Page 3 pictures from workplace notice boards, or workers refusing to print and deliver porn mags.

Yours,  
**SARAH COTTERILL,**  
Manchester

**Lynn Ferguson will reply next week.**

# Behind the Ford strike



## A Ford striker spoke to Debbie Williams about the strike and about working at Ford's Halewood plant.

On the line they are timing us so that they can get 59 or 60 seconds a minute and 59 or 60 minutes out of every hour. That's their ambition. It's tedious, boring and sometimes it is very hard physically.

At Halewood we do a fortnight days and a fortnight nights. Nobody likes working nights. It seems to drain you more. People sleep differently. A lot of people have trouble eating meals when they are working nights. They get out of bed and they are going to work and it's your breakfast time really, but you are having an evening meal.

With the shifts changing fortnightly, I don't think you ever adapt to it properly.

Ford have been introducing so-called 'Japanese working practices' for a couple of years now at Halewood. What effect has that had on the shopfloor?

Ford's keep taking more and more every time. They think we are Olympic athletes. Every time there is a pay deal we have to go out and break the record, and do our jobs even quicker. But it has come to a crunch. You can only work so hard.

There is less demarcation now. A few years ago the unions agreed with Ford on more flexible working among the tradesmen — fitters, plumbers, welders. They were all given one job title, and they all move about covering one another's trades. They make maintenance workers go on the production lines. They are cutting labour down to the bone.

The union leaders have cooperated over mobility of labour, but Ford keep coming back for more all the time. You go in there in the morning, and you are not sure what job you'll be doing.

I think Ford's goal is to have one big pool of labour which is moved around the plant from pillar to post.

Why do you think there has been such a militant response to the proposed three-

year deal?

Ford negotiators and the union negotiators misjudged the mood of the workforce. We knew Ford have made massive profits over the years, but especially recently, when there has been a 40% increase in productivity in the two years since the last pay deal.

We've also seen Ford workers in Germany achieve a 37 hour week this year. We are on a 39 hour week.

Nobody wants a three year deal, because for three years we will not be

able to negotiate on holidays, pensions, or a shorter working week. They will be dead ducks for three years. It used to be an annual pay deal.

Then it was a two-year pay deal. Now they want a three-year pay deal. The next time we come back they'll want a five year deal, or maybe we'll have to sign up for life!

I think the original claim for a one-year deal, a 10% rise, and a shorter working week is the basis we should fight for. That's a basis to stick it out and stay solid.

## No sell out

From page 8

There should be no return to work until the company has withdrawn its changes in working practices and conceded the union's original claim — a one-year deal, 10% wage rise and a shorter working week.

Ford workers will be able to vote on any deal. They should insist that the strike continues until a decision is reached, and that mass meetings are held in

all the plants to discuss any deal before balloting takes place.

But the rank and file's ability to resist any moves to a sell-out, and maintain an effective strike, is hampered by the lack of strong rank and file organisation in the company. There is an urgent need to build such an organisation, both within and between the plants.

Strike committees should be set up in the plants. They should keep the strikers regularly informed and develop links between the plants.

## Cars

# Vauxhall could strike on pensions

Following a vote at Vauxhall's Luton plant on the company's latest 2-year pay deal, in which the TGWU were split down the middle and the AEU voted for acceptance, it seems certain that there will be no industrial action on the deal this time round. Both AEU and TGWU members at Ellesmere Port had already voted to accept the deal. However, action is threatened over a separate issue involving the company's pension fund. Richard Aplin reports.

Upset over company pensions is rarely the cause of national

strikes, but this week every General Motors (GM) worker in Britain, including the Vauxhall Luton and Ellesmere Port workers, will be voting on all-out strike action over GM's proposed changes in the pension fund.

All workers contribute to the fund and the company uses this money in a similar fashion to the way banks use deposits. An estimate is made on how much of the fund is likely to be paid out in pensions and the rest is invested.

However, as a result of a consistent over-estimate of fund withdrawals and the stock market boom the pension fund has a surplus of £217,000,000. The

government has told GM that this money must either be used or allocated within the next few months.

When GM announced that £58,000,000 would go straight to the shareholders, the workers felt cheated. Every penny of that £217,000,000 belonged to the workers who after all were the only ones who actually contributed to the fund; giving any of this money to the shareholders amounts to robbery.

There is also anger over the way the company proposes to use the remaining £159,000,000. GM wants to announce a 'contributions holiday' where contributions from the workers are reduced, without affecting pensions, until the surplus is used. However the union is demanding that the money be used to provide higher pensions on retirement.

It is generally thought that the company doesn't want a strike at this time and if the ballot goes strongly in favour of strike action the company will surrender very quickly. If so, 1988 will go down as a good year for Vauxhall workers: forcing an 18.4% pay rise out of GM, getting the company to back off over double day shifts and finally laying claim to their just pension entitlement.

## Rover out from the 22nd

The 6,000 hourly-paid workers at Land Rover Solihull are due to begin an all-out strike from Monday 22 February.

This follows the rejection of the company's 'final' pay offer in ballots of all the manual unions last week.

The action will be the first pay strike at Land Rover since a two day dispute in 1982. The 66% majority to reject the offer came despite the hard-line letter to employees from managing director Tony Gilroy, saying that no more money would be offered whatever the outcome of the ballot, and despite the total lack of leadership from full-time union officials.

The union's 'Joint Negotiating Committee' which includes the TGWU's Mick Murphy and the AEU's John Allen made no recommendation before the ballot, but let it be known that they accepted that the company offer was indeed final.

Rank and file militancy at Land Rover has been fuelled by speed-up and worsening of conditions on the tracks in recent years. The new paint shop, for instance, is known as the 'concentration camp', and all seating has been removed from the track areas to ensure that workers do not sit down except during official rest periods.

Land Rover claim that their offer is worth between £18.50 and £21.45 per week over two years. But an AEU shop steward explained to SO that much of this is consolidation of bonus payments. The real offer is more like £13-£15 over two years.

## NALGO

# Sell-out behind the scenes

By Gerry Bates

A secret document prepared by union officials is set to create a storm of protest in NALGO, the largest union in local government.

The document, marked 'confidential', and first released at NALGO's National Local Government Committee at the end of January, calls for the union to ditch its long-standing national strategy of action against cuts.

Official NALGO policy since 1982 has called on branches affected by cuts 'to take indefinite and total strike action in defence of jobs and services' because "the government would be forced to rethink its position if some local authorities were brought to a complete standstill by trade union action". Indeed, the national policy goes further and says "all branches are expected to take all-out strike action if a compulsory redundancy affecting one or more of their members is declared."

But now massive cuts are on the agenda — and a rotten block of SDP members, Kinnockites, and supporters of the 'Communist Campaign Group' in the NALGO bureaucracy have decided they don't want to be tied to a union policy that calls for a fight back.

Their secret document says that: "...the simplistic reaction of 'no cuts' may no longer be appropriate". In typically cynical fashion they call for 'industrial action...to force councils to agree their strategies with recognised trades unions.'

What are we expected to force the employers to do? To 'give appropriate reassurances about compulsory redundancies', to 'ensure that where redeployments are necessitated there is suitable protection for members concerned', to get

'agreement on enhanced voluntary retirement schemes', and 'to develop increased responsiveness of services and enhanced consumer involvement.'

Those phrases might sound familiar to council workers in Camden, where the Council recently threatened to terminate all their workers' contracts, to workers in Brent, Haringey and Lambeth, where thousands of jobs have been lined up for the chop

The coincidence isn't all that remarkable though: the bureaucrats' document rather gives the game away where it talks about 'national discussions with employers' organisations...to develop an atmosphere of co-operation'. Because it lets slip that "arrangements are in hand for a meeting between the executive of

the ALA (the Association of London Authorities — run by the pro-cuts Labour councils) and appropriate members of the National Committee."

What that really means is that the policy of one of the largest trades unions is being re-written by the employers — with the connivance of 'appropriate' trade unionists.

NALGO members who work for local councils should be fighting to put a stop to this sell-out. To do that we have to pass motions at branch meetings re-affirming support for the National Strategy of Action decided by the union in 1982, demanding that representatives on District Local Government Committees of the union abide by that policy — and by lobbying the next meeting of the National Local Government Committee in London on 5 May.

## De-privatising

# No loss of pay or jobs!

By Mick Cashman

Trade unionists in the Wirral are in conflict with the borough council because a previously privatised service has been brought back within the council — and the jobs of the workers employed by the private contractor are at risk.

Street cleaning, refuse collection and public lavatories have been run by Waste Management. The Waste Management workers got organised in the Transport and General Workers' Union and won a six weeks' strike to force the company to improve conditions.

Over the last four years union organisation in Waste Management has gone from strength to strength, and Waste Management agreed to a substan-

tial pay rise at the start of the new contract on 1 June this year.

Then Wirral Borough Council put in a cheaper bid than Waste Management. Everyone was pleased that the Council had won back the contract, including Waste Management workers, but then the problems started.

Certain members of the Labour Group argued that there should be no guarantee that Waste Management workers would get their jobs back under the new contracts, and that the council could not honour the pay agreement due to start on 1 June. The DLO is threatened with closure, and some councillors want council workers to take the jobs of the Waste Management workers.

NUPE is suggesting that council workers threatened with redundancy should have first call on all jobs. But the TGWU, which is the biggest union in the DLO and also organises Waste Management insists that all Waste Management workers are taken on without loss of pay. Paul Davis, TGWU

District Organiser and chair of Wirral District Labour Party points out: "NUPE has been involved in drawing up a tender with Wirral Borough Council officers, in effect negotiating pay cuts for members of the TGWU which will mean up to £13 a week loss of pay for the refuse collectors, up to £7 a week for street cleaners and up to £47 a week for toilet attendants. They can forget it."

Councillors who are supporters of the Campaign Group have tried to cover themselves by saying that re-interviewing Waste Management workers is necessary for the council's Equal Opportunities Policy. They also say that the principle of re-municipalisation is the first priority, and that attempting to pay the Waste Management workers may mean loss of contracts.

The principle for socialists is a clear one. It should be ABC that Waste Management workers suffer no loss of pay or conditions or job losses

# Not listening

Last Thursday I was one of three Newark Constituency Labour Party officials invited to attend a function in Loughborough, to be addressed by Neil Kinnock. It was a closed meeting, with no press, and we were invited to get everything off our chests and have a friendly, comradely airing of our disagreements. It was a total disaster.

For a start, it was better stage-managed than any Tory Party Conference. Despite the promises in advance, we were allowed to ask questions only on topics like acid rain, the arts, rural areas and the Alton Bill. The issues are important, but they could easily have been dealt with in an open meeting, in front of the media. The sort of questions that needed to be asked in a closed session were not allowed.

I wanted to ask a question about the UDM leaders Lynk and Prendergast — how come that people who went on the knocker and worked their guts out for Labour have been expelled, but people like Lynk and Prendergast who openly advised people not to vote Labour are still in?

When we finally managed to button-hole Kinnock at the evening social, he said that the Labour Party rule requiring membership of a bona fide trade union recognised by the TUC and the Labour Party was a "technicality"!

There was one question asked about workers taking action — the miners, health workers and so on. Kinnock's whole demeanour was cold and authoritarian, and completely unapologetic. He launched straight into the miners and how we should have had a ballot.

But it is heartening to see the workers who are taking action — health workers, teachers, car workers, seafarers. The problem they are facing is not a new one — it's about workers coordinating their action. We are seeing again that each union and group of workers are being left to their own devices.

We do need to pull things together, and if that happened we would begin to have the possibility of dealing with the cause of many of the problems working class people face — by bringing down this Tory government. We need a coordinated attack on the government and the ideas behind it. Then we can get away from individual groups of workers fighting an unequal battle with the Tories on their own.

Even if the health workers, on their own, win some concessions from the government, that is not going to solve the problems facing the NHS. At best it will put them off for a time.

The NACODS dispute is continuing. Not being in the pits I have to rely on second-hand reports, but the picture I get is that British Coal are trying to impose something on the deputies, and at least this time NACODS has had the bottle to stand up and say it's not on. I understand that British Coal has now backed off its attempt to impose new rosters on the deputies in Notts.

But that was not before British Coal got up to its old tricks again, and teleaxed all the other areas to inform them that NACODS in Nottinghamshire had broken away from the union! Totally untrue, because my picture is of the deputies standing generally firm even in Nottinghamshire.

I hope that this dispute brings NACODS and the NUM closer together, and that we can build on that in the next couple of weeks.

**NO TURNING BACK!**

Women and the struggle for socialism

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# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Ford bosses on the run

By John Bloxam

Last weekend, Ford bosses said they were preparing for a long strike at their 21 British plants. Today (Tuesday, 16th), two days later, the bosses are negotiating with a fourth 'final offer'.

They have apparently dropped their insistence on a three-year deal, offered more negotiations on changing work practices and promised a little more money.

The Ford bosses have clearly been shaken by the strength of the strike, now in its ninth day.

The Belgian plant at Genk was effectively shut down within a week of the British strike starting. Production has already been cut back and serious layoffs threatened at Ford's big West German plants. Union officials at Cologne, Saarlouis and Valencia have stated that they will accept neither additional production nor new sourcing of components to beat the British strike.

The Financial Times reported one union official as saying: "if it emerges during the negotiations that it was the unions which approached the company for talks, all hell will break loose, the convenors will be very angry and it could make a settlement much more difficult." Today's talks were apparently set up after a secret meeting between the company, Ron Todd (TGWU general secretary) and Bill Jordan (AEU president).

National union officials spent last week trying to re-establish their control over a strike they had been forced into. On Thursday Ron Todd declared that the TGWU, the majority union in the dispute, had put aside enough money for three months' strike pay.

On Friday the TGWU's 'strike committee' met for the first time, declared that it was going to meet weekly, and said there would be no deal unless the company withdrew its three-year timescale, improved its pay offer and "clarified and discussed" its proposed changes in working practices.

A confidential management document had been leaked spelling out major job cuts at the Dagenham plants (3,000 in all), and they insisted there should be no compulsory redundancies.

The 'strike committee' is made up of full-time officials, plant convenors and other members from the union's negotiating team. It is the same group of people as the 'anti-strike committee' who two weeks earlier recommended acceptance of the company's three-year deal!

The TGWU committee's conditions for a deal *concede the central part of the bosses' package* — the changes in working practices: introduction of 'quality circles', and team leaders, and putting skilled workers onto the production lines. Such changes, aimed to double output per worker within four years and weaken union organisation on the shop floor, do not need to be 'clarified' or 'discussed'. *They need to be thrown out.*

The Ford bosses are on the run, but looking to the union leaders to get the strike called off on the basis of relatively minor concessions. For the union leaders to accept such concessions, with the strike strong and winning, would be a blatant sell-out and should be rejected.

Continued p.11

# Stop the clause!

By Clive Bradley

The one good thing about Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill — which will ban the "promotion of homosexuality" — is that it has regenerated a lesbian and gay protest movement in Britain.

The demonstration this Saturday (February 20) in Manchester promises to be the biggest lesbian and gay rights march ever in this country — that is, bigger than the last one in January in London, which attracted over 12,000 people.

The anger is entirely justified. Clause 28 represents an immense attack on the rights of homosexual men and women.

## Dropped

Part of the Clause has now been dropped. The section which would specifically prevent the funding by councils of organisations "promoting homosexuality" has been taken out. In theory, if not in fact, the Clause's backers have insisted that no threat is intended to artistic freedom.

But the gist of it remains. And the gist is that homosexuals are not to be portrayed as equals in society. No one is to "promote" homosexuality; but in a society that depicts homosexuals as depraved perverts, corrupters and molesters of children, or at best simply immature wierdos, not to "promote" homosexuality is directly or indirectly to justify inequality, bigotry and persecution.

The supposed "promotion" of homosexuality is simply the insistence that lesbians and gay men are perfectly normal human beings; that lesbian or gay relationships can be as good, bad or indifferent as heterosexual; and that society should recognise equal rights for all.

The movement that has been galvanised against Clause 28 has already had an impact. Everyone has heard of Clause 28, and certain concessions have been made by the

government — although none very significant. But it seems certain that the Clause will become law.

It is important for the whole labour movement to understand the significance of Clause 28, for it is not an isolated instance of anti-homosexual bigotry. The Clause was slipped into the Local Government Bill late last year and received government backing (and the initial support — let it not be forgotten — of the Labour front bench). But a year earlier, when an almost identical Bill had been presented, Thatcher and co. had rejected it.

Over the last year, the 'moral majority' on the Tory backbench have got stronger, and the tide of anti-gay opinion in the country at large has risen. In part, the moral backlash has been connected to AIDS, although that has had contradictory effects. In its anti-AIDS propaganda, the government was forced to recognise the existence of homosexuality and extra-marital sex. When Princess Ann recently commented that the "real tragedy" of AIDS was the "innocent victims" (that is, not the homosexuals), there was widespread condemnation.

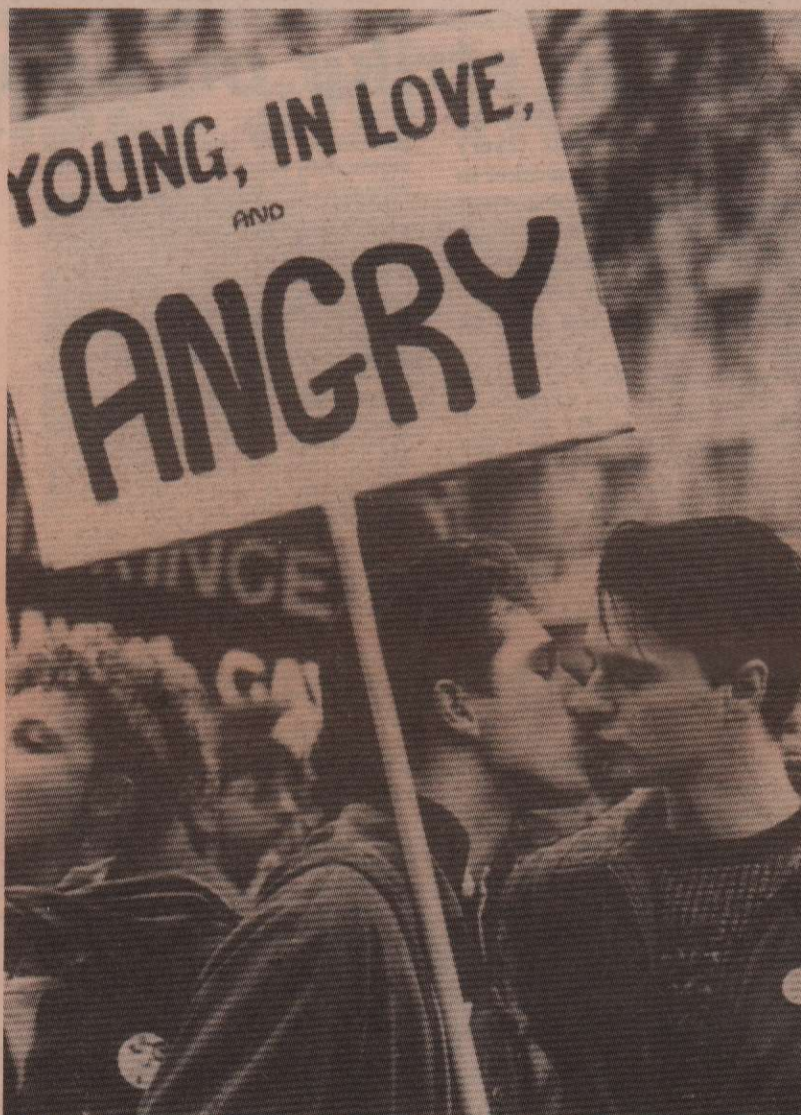
At the same time, AIDS keyed in to Tory preoccupations with 'morality' and the sanctity of the family, and helped give apparent force to their views.

## Press

The tabloid press has always been important in whipping up bigotry, and of late the Murdoch papers have intensified their anti-gay campaign.

Philip Lafferty, for example, was the lover of 'the spanking judge' recently exposed by the Sun. The source of the 'exposure' was a blackmailer. In the full knowledge that Philip Lafferty was being blackmailed, the Sun proceeded to hound and persecute him, and the judge, Martin Bowley, to the point where Lafferty attempted suicide.

Lafferty told the national "Pink Paper": "Paul Hooper and another Sun reporter came to my house. They knocked on my door for more than an hour and I eventually let them in... Their story, published a



No going back to the closet

week after I had spoken to them, was full of lies... All the following week after their visit, they had a photographer follow my every move. They were even taking pictures of me sitting on the bus... I took some pills and a large amount of alcohol and hoped that would be the end of it." (11.2.88).

Clause 28 is a licence for the real 'perverts' of the Sun and other gutter rags to destroy people's lives.

But in this climate of growing bigotry, Clause 28 is likely to be only a step down the road to yet more attacks. The recriminalisation of homosexuality could be on the cards: it is certainly what many on the Tory back benches want.

So Clause 28 must be understood as an attack on civil liberties in general. It will contribute to an atmosphere of fear and bigotry which ultimately will not only endanger the rights of lesbians and gay men. That is why the labour movement as a whole should take up the fight.

## Councils

Labour councils have made noises that they will refuse to comply with the law. Linda Bellos, leader of Lambeth council, promised to the January demonstration that her council would refuse to implement it. She and other councillors should be held to their word.

Undoubtedly the revitalised lesbian and gay rights movement will play an important role in forcing the labour movement into action.

The 'autonomous' gay movement in Britain has always been small and fragmented; unlike America, for example, Britain has no exclusively gay urban centres to provide the base for such a movement. Yet faced with the 'moral' backlash, the political self-organisation of lesbians and gay men is indispensable. The Clause 28 campaign needs to be held together to fight for homosexual rights more generally.

## Lobby

There has been a strong lesbian and gay rights lobby in the Labour Party for some years, which forced through a comprehensive policy at Labour Party conference in 1985. But without accountability in the Party, there is no way to make Kinnock et al stick by it. The same will be true to a greater or lesser extent of trade unions that pass progressive policies. The fight for labour movement democracy is an important part of the overall campaign needed.

February 20 must be a great success. So far the Clause 28 campaign has achieved a lot in terms of publicity and involvement. We need to build on that achievement.

## Palestine: two nations, two states!

The new issue of 'Workers' Liberty', out now, discusses the conflict in the West Bank and Gaza, and carries, for the first time in English, two articles by Trotsky on the socialist approach to disputes between nations.

Also in this issue: a feature on the Crash, Kowalewski on Poland, and debate on Ireland, Scottish nationalism, South Africa and the movies. 90p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



## Our fighting fund

A donation of £100 from Andrew Garms last week has helped to bring our fighting fund up to £5105.35. Our target is £10,000 by 31 March.

Merseyside SO supporters are organising a fund-raising social on 27 February, to be followed by a sponsored swim in March. Northampton SO supporters are planning a social. York supporters are collecting sponsorships for a sponsored swim. South London supporters have scheduled a jumble sale for mid-March and a sponsored cycle ride.

Write and tell us your plans. And send money to: SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.