

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

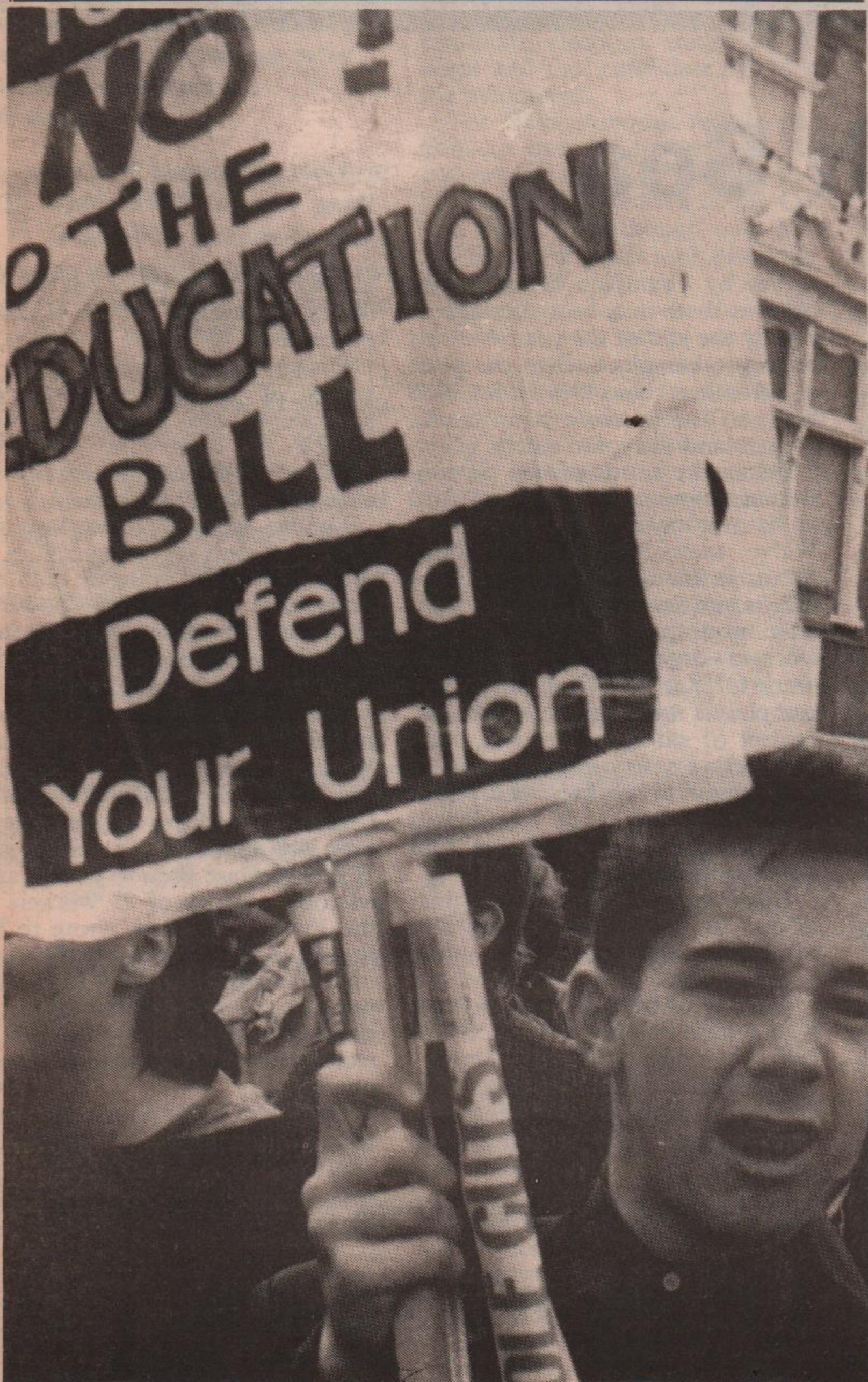
### INSIDE

Inside this 16-page Socialist Organiser, a 4-page Women's Fightback. Also articles on: Middle East, NHS, Lessons of the postal strike.

# Fight the Tories!

# Rebuild the left!

## Back Benn and Heffer!



Students march on Tory Conference, 1987. Paul Hermann.

## Beat the blues!

### Picket Tory conference October 13th

By Emma Colyer

We will soon have the spectacle of an arrogant, callous and triumphant Tory Party thrust at us by the TV and press as they report on Tory Party conference.

ference.

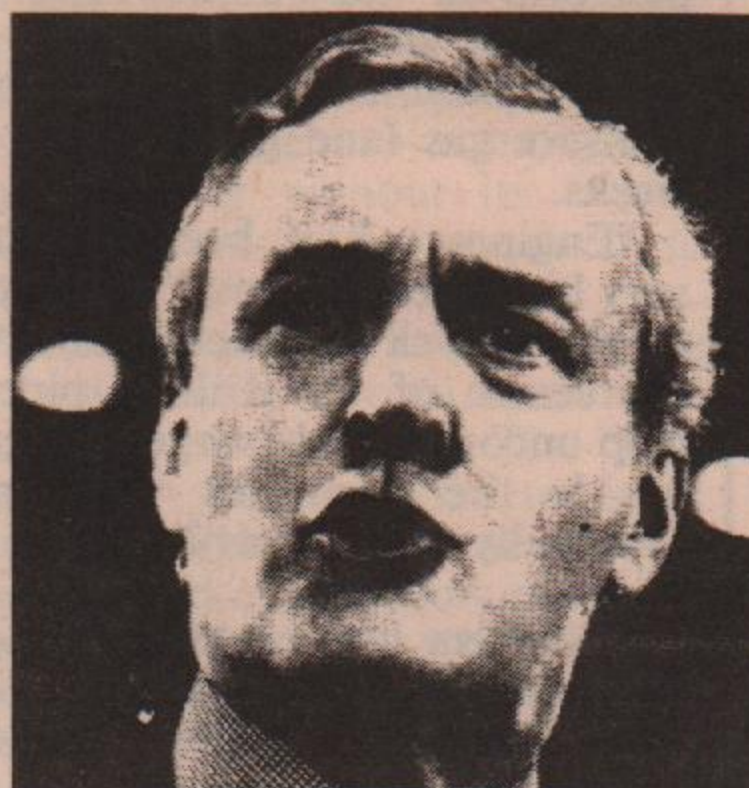
A Tory Party that has smashed whole mining communities, introduced one slave labour scheme after another, introduced more vicious immigration controls, decimated the National Health Service, privatised public-owned industries, introduced repressive and homophobic laws.

Naturally I want to see the maximum number of votes for Tony Benn and myself in the elections for Leader and Deputy Leader. That is very important politically. This election is not about individuals: the decision to stand was a political, not a narrowly personal, one. What is most important is to get the maximum support for the political positions on which Tony Benn and I are fighting Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley.

But more: at Conference we must concentrate on defeating the leadership's Review Documents, which are revisionist and anti-socialist. I hope that the Party delegates — who, incidentally, have not had sufficient time to study these documents — will mobilise to defeat them and support the many good resolutions on the agenda.

Then there is Agenda II — the re-written Rule Book. I call this the 'Secret Agenda' because it has only just come out and clearly there will not be time for the Party to study it properly. Despite that, I hope that key parts of this 'Secret Agenda' will be voted down if the document is not remitted because the Party has not had time to consider it and its implications. The first thing Conference

Eric Heffer surveys the issues before the Labour Party Conference which opens at Blackpool on Sunday, October 2nd.



will have to make its mind up about is the EETPU. I hope that it will take the issue head-on. Even people who say the

EETPU shouldn't be thrown out of the Party completely should vote against allowing them to sit in this Conference. Until there has been a proper, thorough investigation they should be suspended.

Members of the EETPU should be allowed to remain individual members of the Labour Party, but this organisation should not be allowed to remain affiliated to the Party.

If the Review Documents are all carried then clearly we on the left will have to look very carefully at the outcome of this Conference. If the constitutional changes are made, that will be quite a sea-change: and between now and the next Conference all sorts of serious things could happen in the Party — things even worse than what we have experienced in the past few years. That is all the more reason why the CLPs must organise and why the left as a whole must organise.

We must get Campaign

Continued on page 3

# The fastest drugs binge in history

By Janine Booth

**T**o most late night tele viewers, Seoul 1988 has been the Olympics of Ben Johnson, Florence Griffith-Joyner and Matt Biondi. But behind the inane commentary and pathetic nationalistic chest-beating, there are issues more interesting by far.

The order of the day was staying up at night, but spare a thought for the South Koreans. The starting and finishing times were determined not by the rising and setting of the sun in Seoul, but the rising and setting of American TV viewers. Yes, big bucks speak volumes, and NBC talks loudest of all. Perhaps if Manchester gets the 1996 games races will start at nightfall and come to a close at breakfast time.

Ben Johnson lost his gold medal for the fastest drugs binge in history; the Bulgarian weightlifting team were not far behind. Steroid-swallowing looks like the way to the top, and it is not entirely coincidental that muscle-boosters are paving the way to the professionalisation of athletics.

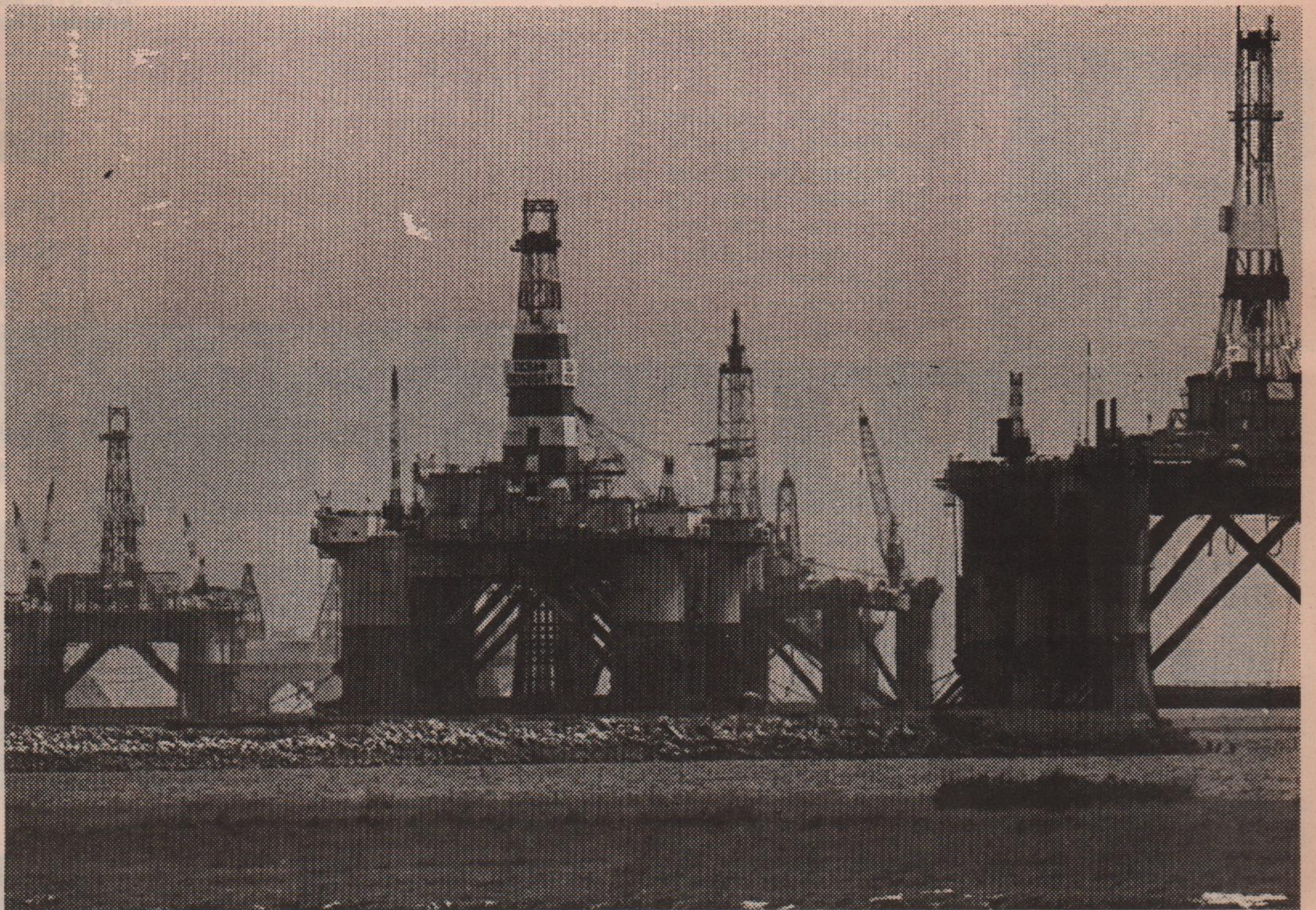
We should be all in favour of runners and throwers being paid — they are entertainers, workers, and should receive the full fruits of that labour. But does this mean that the best receive a packet and the also-rans a pittance?

And, as with all competitive enterprise, it matters not how they get to the top, so long as they get there. The tabloids, forever clamouring "higher, faster, further!" were the first to scream "Cheat!"

Over in the gymnastics hall, the American men's team were deducted 0.5 points after an eagle-eyed judge spotted that one of them, not competing at the time, had his foot marginally inside a prohibited area. The Americans missed out on a bronze medal and rumour has it that the judge is to be made Labour Party Youth and Student officer.

Meanwhile, in soccer circles, Mexico have been disqualified from the 1990 World Cup, as a result of fielding wrinklies in their youth team. Over-age players have ruled them out of the same qualifying group as the USA, who are due to host the World Cup in 1994. A coincidence? Maybe not.

Stick with the sports column for future stories of interest, including policing of football matches, the proposals to put local sport centres out to competitive tendering, women's sports and much, much more....



After Piper Alpha, Ocean Odyssey

## Hell in the North Sea

By Ray Ferris

**T**he gas explosion shook the 'Ocean Odyssey', killing a man in his 20's and setting the water ablaze, just as attempts were being made to exhume bodies from the Piper Alpha platform lying at the bottom of the sea. The coincidence could not have been sharper. It was the third gas explosion in the North Sea in less than 3 months.

The only reason more people weren't killed last Thursday was because the rig was already on alert. All non-essential personnel had prepared to evacuate an hour beforehand and 66 escaped alive.

At the time of writing the precise technical explanation of the explosion is unclear.

The rig operators admitted an equipment failure on Tuesday but did not admit a failure of the blow out preventer mechanism. No doubt media commentators will prattle on about the differences between drilling rigs and production platforms, like Piper Alpha. One common thread is clear though — capitalism's insatiable thirst for profits and contempt for the safety of the flesh and blood humans who produce those profits.

The semi-submersible drilling platform in the Fulmer Field 140 miles east of Aberdeen had obviously been struggling with high pressure gas (and possibly oil) for weeks.

\*Engineers had been pumping very high pressure 'mud' (a mixture of water, rock and chemicals) down the centre of the drilling pipe to stop uncontrollable surges of gas or oil. In the event this 'mud' may eventually have contributed to the disaster.

\*Workers had reported a string of gas leaks before the explosion. Jim Murphy, 'mud' engineer, claims he sent a telex to rig operators Arco detailing leaks two weeks beforehand. He adds that men had suffered physical illness

from gas fumes.

Billy Wood, a technician, reports persistent gas problems and repeated requests to abandon the drilling well — all ignored by the rig operators. It would have meant the loss of a £2 million investment.

\*The rig had already stopped drilling operations while engineers battled to control the situation.

Yet, incredibly, the Ocean Odyssey passed its yearly safety inspection only the week before the explosion!

This Monday brought further revelations from two workers in charge of daily inspections of the main pipe joining the rig to the seabed. They claim to have reported, in writing, leaks of hydraulic fluid from the main safety blow out preventer mechanism. Their warnings were ignored.

They also report faults on both the drive and reserve motors for the mechanism only days before the explosion.

It would be difficult to write a fictional indictment of capitalism more damning than its record in the North Sea.

The oil industry is the most dangerous in Britain. It is also the only one not covered by the Health and Safety Inspectorate. In Britain the same department (of Energy) is responsible both for boosting production and for safety!

Tory Energy Secretary Cecil Parkinson has already rejected renewed calls for an independent inspectorate. Campbell Reid, divisional officer of the MSF union, claims oil companies and the civil service even swap personnel.

Since the Piper Alpha disaster, the world's worst ever, killing 167 people, workers have been voting with their feet over these declining safety standards. Union sources report hundreds leaving for safer jobs ashore — on one occasion 90 men were due to start an offshore job but only three turned up! Unions fear skilled oil workers will be replaced by unskilled labour, sometimes with forged safety certificates.

The Department of Energy reports a new surge in offshore exploration in the North Sea. A

survey by Grampian Council even believes there may be a shortage of rigs by the end of the year. Yet this drilling takes place when the price of oil is less than 40% of its 1986 high, so the pressure is on to cut corners and disregard safety.

Or, in the words of one oil consultant, companies "cannot afford to be over-extravagant on safety." We've seen precisely what this means in the last three months — deaths and serious injury.

A meeting of hundreds of oil workers organised by the inter-union Offshore Oil Committee heard complaints of economy cutbacks, neglect of safety procedures, 'tidy ups' before safety inspectors arrive and threats to workers who report breaches of safety. If branded as troublemakers, they will not find other jobs.

Oil companies have used contract labour to drive down wages and conditions and to exclude union organisation.

Only 37 of the 223 crew of Piper Alpha were employees of Occidental. A 'hook-up agreement' established in the late '70s between unions and management greatly improved pay, leave and travel allowances for oil workers and

allowed unions to represent workers during grievance or disciplinary procedures.

Union figures showed drops in salary of nearly one third for equivalent jobs if workers were forced to leave the 'hook-up agreement'. So companies opt for cheaper contract workers.

Unions have a tremendous opportunity and a responsibility to organise workers in the oil industry. They have an immensely powerful argument for union 'interference' in policing safety on rigs and platforms following these tragedies.

Oil workers have a tremendous power over the country's economy. When workers in BP's West Sole gas field 'quit' en masse over safety (following the Piper Alpha tragedy) they won immediate concessions.

Workers are keen to get organised too; a group of 25 workers on the Fulmar Platform wrote to last Sunday's *Observer* saying they want union recognition. They have been threatened with victimisation for sticking to a union agreed ban on working more than two weeks at one stretch.

The trade union movement must seize this chance to unionise a relatively new industry.

## Lebanon's agony

By Gerry Bates

**N**o end to Lebanon's agony will come through last week's military coup.

The army seizure of power on Thursday 22 September removed the enfeebled government of Amin Gemayal. But the new command, under Michel Aoun, although it groups together representatives of the main religious groups, will not be able to put Lebanon back together again.

Disintegration set in in 1974, when the carefully-balanced

'confessional' or religious-based democracy fell apart, and civil war began. Continued civil war, a major invasion by Israel (and other lesser ones), and several effective repartitions later, Lebanon is a battered, empty shell of its former self.

Once the banking centre of the Middle East, it is now a bombed-out graveyard. Violence is an everyday event; kids grow up learning the art of machine-gun fire before they learn to read.

No Lebanese government can hold power over the whole country. Israel dominates in the south; Syria dominates in the east. Various militias control different suburbs of Beirut. A change at the top will change nothing fundamental.

# The left against Europe?

## EDITORIAL

**M**rs Thatcher is dead against an all-European state. She believes that the different nations in the EEC should preserve their own identities. The EEC is one thing, she thinks, but anything beyond it is too much to ask the 'British people' to accept.

The problem for much of the left is that it agrees with her, and would go further. Opposition to the EEC

and British membership of it has been, for a long time, a 'left-wing' cause. The campaign to 'keep Britain out' in the 1970s was led by no less a figure than Tony Benn. The sovereignty of Parliament, the 'independence' of the country — these are 'left-wing' themes.

Yet the fact that Thatcher echoes them should illustrate what dangerous themes they are. British nationalism — for that is what it is — should play no part in socialist argument.

Of course the EEC is a bosses' club, and any European megastate would be too. But Britain also is a bosses' club — just a more traditional and enfeebled one. The

socialist alternative to the EEC should never have been an 'independent Britain': it should be a socialist united states of Europe.

The capitalist system is completely international. Every part of the world, barring some tiny, very backward areas, is involved in trade with other parts. Capitalists invest the world over — the biggest capitalists literally choosing wherever is best across the globe. Increasingly, production itself has been internationalised: the different component bits of things we buy are manufactured in many different countries.

The international character of capitalism cannot be wished away.

A crisis in one part can mean a crisis in another. A crash in Wall Street can mean world recession. The only way ultimately to rescue the world from these knock-on crises is to change the whole system internationally.

Britain cannot withdraw from it. Any attempt to do so — economic isolationism — would be disastrous. So the task for socialists in Britain is to fight for international change.

Of course international socialism is easier to talk about than to achieve. We won't get socialist revolution in all the countries of the world simultaneously. But a

workers' democracy in one country would have huge effects in others.

Internationalism now can help secure international success in the future. 'Little Englandism' of the left wing or Thatcherite sort is no help. Workers in Britain need to build links with workers in other countries. If the EEC assist that's good. If a European superstate would assist that, even better.

We need not pretend that 'internationalist' capitalists are any better than nationalist ones. But from a socialist point of view, the more international the system is now the more unity is achieved, the easier it is to fight for socialism.

## Defend Labour Democracy

**The right to annual leadership elections is under serious threat. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy explains why the moves must be defeated.**

**T**he first leadership election since 1983 — and panic. The NEC intends to push through a constitutional amendment at this year's Conference requiring an MP to have nominations from at least 20% of the PLP before he or she can stand for Leader or Deputy Leader. In a similar vein a resolution from the National Union of Seamen would restrict Leadership elections to once every Parliament.

What would be the consequences of such a change? The 20% proposal would make it impossible for more than 4 candidates to stand and had these rules applied in 1983, only

Neil Kinnock but not Hattersley would have been eligible to stand for Leader. Under such a rule what is most likely to happen is what is intended to happen, viz. that one candidate elections would be the norm and that candidate would be the incumbent.

The NUS proposals restrict elections to one per parliament. This makes the position worse than before the introduction of the College when, even though only MPs had a vote, contests took place fairly frequently.

Both proposals treat the leader and the deputy leader as if they were on a higher plane than other party officers and far above ordinary party members. Thus both make those who have the most power, influence and patronage in the Party the least accountable to it, and thus in a powerful position to obstruct its decisions.

If Labour is to win the next election we must have credible policies. Yet this may require a change in the direction the party is taking. We cannot afford to do away with the procedures which allow this to happen.



## Fight the Tories!

Continued from page 1

We must get Campaign Groups set up throughout the country. We must work harder in the trade unions than we have been doing.

I hope and believe that the decision to contest the leadership elections this year will help in this vital process of organising the left.

Labour must learn the lesson of the polls, which still show some Labour decline as against the Tories. For this to happen now, in this political situation, that is quite an achievement for the present leadership! And, because of the effective press boycott of our campaign, they cannot even begin to blame Tony and myself for that, though no doubt

they'll try.

The real reason for Labour's continuing decline in the polls is that we are not providing a clear political alternative. People are disappointed. There is no clear socialist alternative. That's what the campaign of Tony Benn and myself has been about — providing a socialist alternative to the Tories, and to the incumbent leaders of the Labour Party.

Whatever happens at Blackpool serious socialists should go away from the Conference determined that the fight for socialist policies, and the fight to organise an effective left to fight for socialist policies, will go on.

Comrades, we can beat the Tories — if we want to!

Continued from page 1

The list is endless. A government whose whole philosophy is that of stultifying and repressing the majority's needs to the needs of profit.

We know the Brighton conference is going to be a demonstration of Tory arrogance and hostility to us and it is therefore the responsibility of students and young people all over the country to make a demonstration of a movement that is prepared to fight back against all the attacks by this Tory government.

Over the next few weeks

thousands of first time students will collect their NUS membership cards. Thousands of first time students will be identifying with the student movement — a movement that, with or without its elected leadership, must be prepared to fight back.

The Tories make us sick but the leadership of our own movement makes us feel no better. The 'Beat the Blues' demo needs to be a powerful display of the strength of students and other young people.

Many students and young people on October 13th will give the Tories the message that at least part of the student movement is out to grow and out to fight!

(See page 11: 'Labour students sabotage anti-Tory demo'.)

## OUT AGAINST THE BIGOTS

### Section 28 in Essex

By Liz Millward

**E**sssex council has begun to implement Section 28 by asking college principals not to allow lesbian and gay societies to meet on their premises.

Given that the Tory government which has instructed colleges to ensure the right of fascist groups to meet in colleges is the same Tory government which passed Section 28, it seems that 'free speech' now only applies to some.

Of course Essex had no need to send out the instruction — legal opinion varies as to what exactly Section 28 means in practice — so it is to Essex council that protests should be directed.

Colleges and student unions, especially in rural areas, are often the only places that lesbian and gay groups can meet, so the council has delivered a real blow to the lesbian and gay community there.

Student unions and area NUS should start organising to defy the instruction and to organise a fightback against the council's bigotry. Council and college workers should also demand that the instruction is withdrawn.

A number of mistakes appeared in Lol Duffy's article on the CLPs Conference (SO 372) during the production stage. We apologise for them.

The credit should have read: **Lol Duffy (Chair, Wallasey CLP)**

The following sentences should have read:

(col 1, para 7) 'Constituencies were given a chance that is rarely given in the Labour Party to get together and discuss where to take the campaign; there was a chance to discuss the socialist ideas which can take the Labour Party forward'.

(col 2, para 5) '• That we ask the Campaign Group of MPs to invite a representative from the CLP conference committee to their meetings;'

LP CONFERENCE FRINGE MEETING  
**CLPs IN DEFENCE OF  
 CLAUSE 4, UNILATERALISM &  
 PARTY DEMOCRACY**  
 Organised from the CLPs conference  
**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6th, 5.30pm**  
**CLIFTON HOTEL**  
**QUEENS PROMENADE**

# GRAFFITI

## Schools and businesses

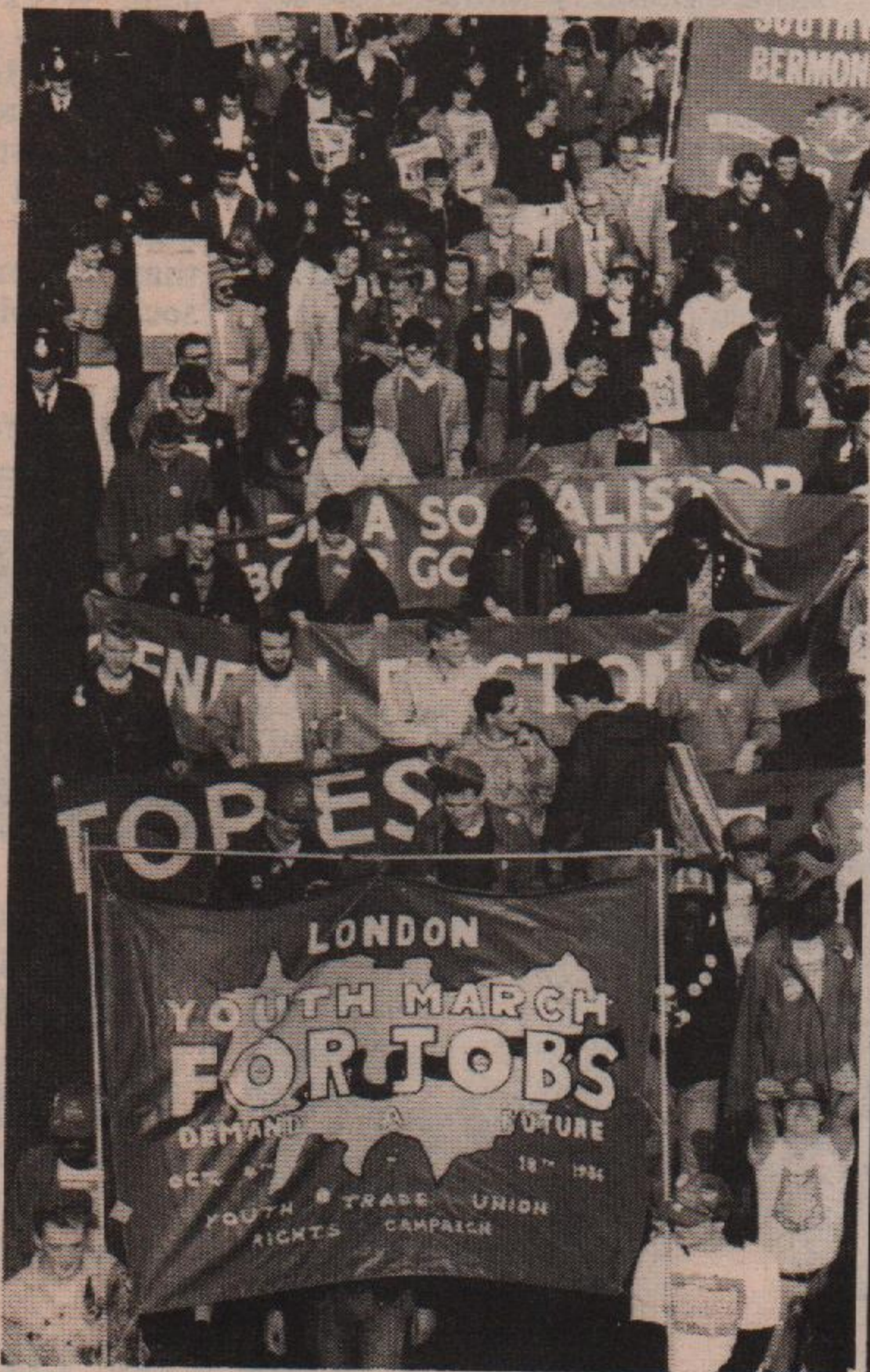
The Tories have launched plans to 'improve links' between schools and business. This follows a CBI report which shows, much to the bosses' union's chagrin, that only one in five schoolchildren has 'regular contact' with local business.

This week the government plans to launch a new initiative, aiming at giving all pupils 'work experience' before they leave school, and at ensuring that one in ten teachers has 'business experience' each year.

Even so, industry is, it seems, spending a large amount of money on promoting itself in schools — £85 million a year on direct costs and £250 million a year in staff time. They, and the government, obviously think it's worth the extra cost and effort to turn schools from educational institutions into sausage machines for industry.

A hint of what schools links with industry might mean.

BP, the oil giant, supplies 'educational' films to schools. One GCSE class in Birmingham, watching a film about coal, was confronted with nude shots of an artist's model. Further investigation by the science teacher revealed that a film on proteins had shots of a naked



woman having a massage.

Complaints to BP have produced a rather disingenuous response: "The films are not offensive and we certainly won't be withdrawing

them. The fleeting glimpses of female nudity are simply a device to tell a story."

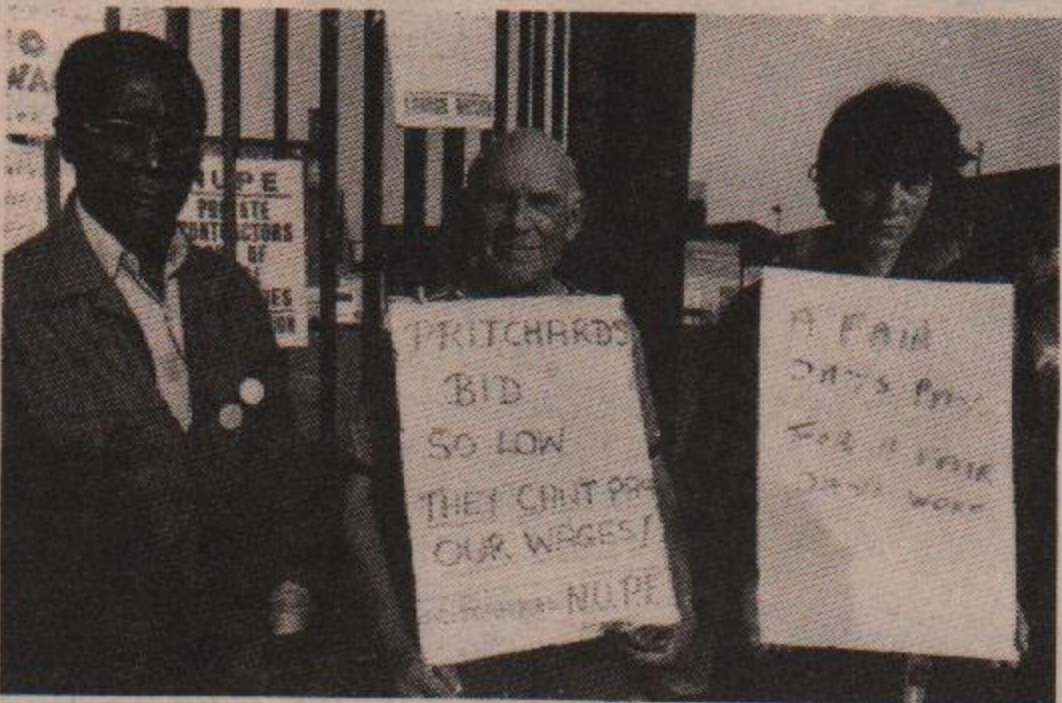
Now we know what the oil bosses mean by getting women into science.

## Cleaner education

Tory-controlled Hereford and Worcester council have come up with a novel way of getting over a shortage of school cleaners — they're paying sixth formers to do the cleaning after classes.

Droitwich High School is eight cleaners short out of a total of 18. Cleaners left earlier this year rather than take a 25% wage cut.

For years the education authority has discouraged school students from taking part-time jobs on the grounds that they would be distracted from their studies. Now they've changed their tune — the county education chairman is quoted as saying: "Is it not a good thing for an 18 year old to grasp the



opportunity of beginning to stand on his or her own feet and earn money because there's nobody else willing to take the job?"

Of course, he would think it a good thing. Not

only do the local authority get cheap labour, but the school students have got a few more pounds in their pockets to shell out on books that the education authority won't buy.

## Deregulated TV

Readers may have noticed a series of full page adverts in the national press last week, expressing TV South's 'concern' at the proposed deregulation of televi-

sion. The adverts, headed 'Italian housewives do it on TV' featured a picture of a pouting semi-naked woman, swinging her shoe by its ankle

strap. The advert's text self-righteously berated those lustful Latins for featuring TV programmes of 'viewers' wives (sic) baring their all for the country. This could be the result, they say, of increased competition on the airwaves.

TVS's bluff was called when the leader of the Italian Housewives Union launched a complaint. TV chiefs blushing admitted the woman pictured was not in fact an Italian housewife, but a British model.

Nice to see the prurient 'Look at this, isn't it disgraceful' tricks of TVS management flop so spectacularly.

## Twisted line

Socialist Worker of 24th September carries an interesting correction. Apparently an article 'How do we fight Hammond?' in the previous Socialist Worker contained a sentence: "The first task is to ensure the expulsion is carried through in every stewards' committee and join union body." This sentence was, they say, an "error in production". It

should have read: "The first task is to ensure the expulsion is carried through at official level but we must fight to maintain rank and file unity and keep EETPU members on every stewards' committee." Quite a radical error. The only question is, is it SW's typesetting staff who've got the line in a twist, or SW's leadership?

# Will Labour become Liberal?

I recently read through a copy of the SLD's introductory brochure entitled "Welcome to the Social & Liberal Democrats", which outlines their 'Policy Declaration'. As expected, the contents were a ragbag of nebulous notions and cosmetic concessions. Strikingly similar, in fact, to the 'Aims and Values' and Policy Review documents currently being foisted upon us by the Labour leadership.

Whilst "Democratic socialists believe in market allocations", and that "the operation of the market...is a generally satisfactory means of determining provision and consumption", the SLD state that they "will recognise the role and power of the market — but we cannot rely on market forces alone...". Will the electorate spot the difference? Would they bother to vote at all? In fact the only major differences between the SLD's vague vision of future freedom and fairness, and the Labour Policy Review's puny proposals for a "talent based economy" with "user-friendly services", are the old Liberal ideas about Proportional Representation and Regional Devolution — which we have yet to



adopt.

With no common ownership commitments, democratic socialists and social democrats themselves will obviously share a lot in common — capitalism for a start. Refusing to recognise all the evidence of exploitation around us, and thus failing to address the key question of ownership and control, such aims and values amount to a complete capitulation to capitalism.

When what's urgently required is a straight socialist challenge to capitalist control, Kinnock is instead preparing the ground for a merger with the SLD — or some such alliance arrangement — to

pose as a potential substitute for 'Thatcherism'. It's high time to realise — as Thatcher did years ago — that the welfare state has outgrown the capitalist system, and any return to the cosy Butskellite Keynesian consensus politics would be hopelessly inadequate.

This is not time to haul down the red flag of socialism and hoist the white flag of surrender. Defend Clause 4 and defeat the Policy Review — or Labour will become Liberal.

Richard Hanford  
Secretary, Mid Sussex CLP

## Martin Foran unjustly jailed

Martin Foran is currently serving an 8 year prison sentence for a crime he didn't commit.

Martin was arrested on 10th September 1984 and charged with a robbery of a pub in Birmingham. The publican described the robbers as 3 youths: one, half caste West Indian, male, light complexion, approx 17 years old, 5ft 6ins tall, dark wavy collar-length hair; the second, a West Indian male, well built, taller than the first, wearing a balaclava; the third unseen, but in common with the other two and with a Birmingham accent.

Martin is a white Irishman who has lived in England for a number of years but has an obvious accent and so fits none of these descriptions. Martin has 15 witness statements confirming his alibi and there was no ID parade.

In prison Martin protested his innocence by rooftop demonstrations and this has resulted in his solitary confinement. While in prison his health deteriorated but all treatment was denied him until he became so ill he had to be rushed to an external hospital where a colostomy was performed. However, to get this vital treatment Martin had to take a prison officer hostage. Three weeks later he was beaten up in his cell by prison officers and his colostomy was wrenched off.

The latest on Martin is grim. He has been sentenced to an extra six

years for 'false imprisonment' of a warder. This can only be described as state revenge.

Martin is now imprisoned 23 hours a day, his health is deteriorating, he's being refused proper medical attention and his mail is being tampered with as he is receiving support from outside.

An example of the petty and callous treatment Martin is receiving: recently the scissors he had used to fix his colostomy bag were taken. Faced with either fouling his cell or cutting it with a razor, he used the razor. For this 'crime' he was fined £5.

During his time in Long Lartin prison Martin came close to dying. His condition worsened, he had running sores across his stomach

and legs, and could only eat Complan. Martin is still ill and may have to undergo further operations.

Martin is demanding:

1. Immediate medical treatment in an external hospital.
2. A retrial.
3. Lifting restrictions on his letters.

Write to: Martin Foran C51796, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX with letters of support and solidarity.

The Governor of Parkhurst: address as above.

John Smithson, 'Rough Justice', Kensington House, Richmond Way, London, asking the RJ team to look into Martin's case.

This statement has been put out by friends of Martin Foran.

## NOLS cower before the Tories



Jill Mountford

Question: When are the Tories not the Tories?  
Answer: When they're a government! Or at least this is so according to NUS!

SSiN supporters on the National Executive proposed that NUS support the 'Beat the Blues' demo at Tory Party conference in Brighton on October 13th. The demo, organised and coordinated by Sussex Area NUS, drawing its support from as far afield as Tyne Tees and Wales, is set to be big and largely student based.

It is a demo against the introduction of loans, against attacks on student union autonomy, course closures, job losses, etc., etc., the list goes on.

Yet the National Union of Students will not be supporting it. Why? Because, according to National President Maeve Sherlock, NUS is not concerned with political

parties — NUS is against the government's attacks on education, not against the Tories!

If the implications of this nonsense were not so serious it would be funny. After all, even a small child could grasp the idea that, given the Tories won the last election, they now make up the government and therefore the Tories are the government and the government are the Tories!

Maeve Sherlock & Co., of course, grasp this, their refusal to support the demo is nothing more than factionalism against SSiN.

Sussex Area NUS is convened by a supporter of SSiN and it is SSiN who have for the last three years organised students to demonstrate against the Tories at their annual conference. By not supporting the demo, the DL leadership of NUS are saying SSiN is a bigger enemy to them than the Tories — with this kind of mentality it's clear the Tories have little to worry about from the leadership of NUS.

The Brighton demo, despite the spineless attitude of the national leadership, has the support of colleges and activists all over the country.

EASTERN EUROPE  
SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN  
with LABOUR FOCUS ON  
EASTERN EUROPE

## 'The Soviet Bloc Under Glasnost'

Tuesday, October 4, 8-10pm  
Opera House Circle Lounge  
Winter Gardens, Blackpool

Chair: Ron Keating (NUPE)

DISCUSSION

Admission: £1 (unwaged 30p)

# Stop the drive to Thatcherise Labour

Richard Aplin, secretary of Wallasey Labour Party, introduced the CLP conference on September 17, where over 40 CLPs discussed the fight for democracy in the Party.

If anyone here was involved in either a campaign committee, or was an agent or a candidate in the last election, they'll remember receiving a number of packages from the national Labour Party.

One was a model campaign plan based on the campaign that Nick Raynsford fought at the Fulham by-election.

The pack included a number of leaflets and photos. One particularly catchy one was 'Vote Nick Raynsford — he doesn't need an A-Z to find his way around Fulham.' Another one was 'Vote Nick Raynsford because he lives here'.

That was exactly the sort of candidate and campaign that Neil Kinnock wanted.

I was talking to somebody from Durham at the first Chesterfield conference. He said that they tried to launch this model campaign, but unfortunately their candidate seemed to spend most of his time in the Westminster bar. The only slogan they could come up with was 'Vote whatever-he-was-called, he's been here'.

The Labour Party spent a lot of money sending all this stuff out to constituencies.

The Labour Party leaders have done a lot of other things to try to change the way Labour Party activists operate on the ground. Then, when people don't do what the leaders want, when we don't adopt Cabbage Patch candidates you see them coming in.

The classic was when George Howarth was imposed. In Knowsley North people fought back against a Labour council that was imposing cuts on an

unemployed centre. They lobbied a council meeting. It was the normal democratic activity of any Labour Party activist or any trade union activist.

A number of those people were suspended on trumped-up charges, such as loosing a balloon in a public place, threatening use of a camera and starting a rumour. That's what took place in Knowsley.

Mandy Mudd stood up and fought against council cuts in Haringey, and she now sees herself made a target. Sharon Atkin said she disagreed with Labour Party policy on immigration controls and found herself losing the right to stand as a candidate. Her local Labour Party saw its right to choose its own candidate taken away.

I tried to get into a 'Labour Listens' event. It's easier to get into a Masonic lodge! Who are Labour listening to?

Out of that we got this thing called the Policy Review. Some of it really does throw light on what the leadership wants to do. One quote: 'Few will disagree that the market is the most appropriate means to ensure an efficient distribution of many goods, certainly in a modern industrial society.'

They say few will disagree. But official Labour Party policy on that is this, from 1981: 'We are committed to higher public spending. We will establish a publicly-owned stake in each important sector of industry and take back those sections of public industry which have been hived off by the Tories.'

'We will require major firms in each sector to enter into planning agreements. Common ownership is an integral part of a democratic economy because as long as large concentrations of capital remain in

private hands, then power too will be concentrated.'

That is the Labour Party policy on the question of public ownership. Now, by writing the Policy Review, they want to remove all that debate and simply say few will disagree that the market is the best way of ensuring the distribution of goods.

On trade unions the document says that 'we think trade unions should have the right to independence.' Then it goes on about securing workers' rights.

'Labour believes that workers should have the right to secret ballots on major decisions, including the right to strike and election of union executives.' Many here would disagree with that. But that is for members of individual unions to decide.

The document goes on to say, 'We must look at ways of translating this into union rules.' What that means is the state will interfere with trade unions, the state will write major sections of union rule books. That's a move away from the concept of independent trade unionism. That's what they want to do on trade unions.

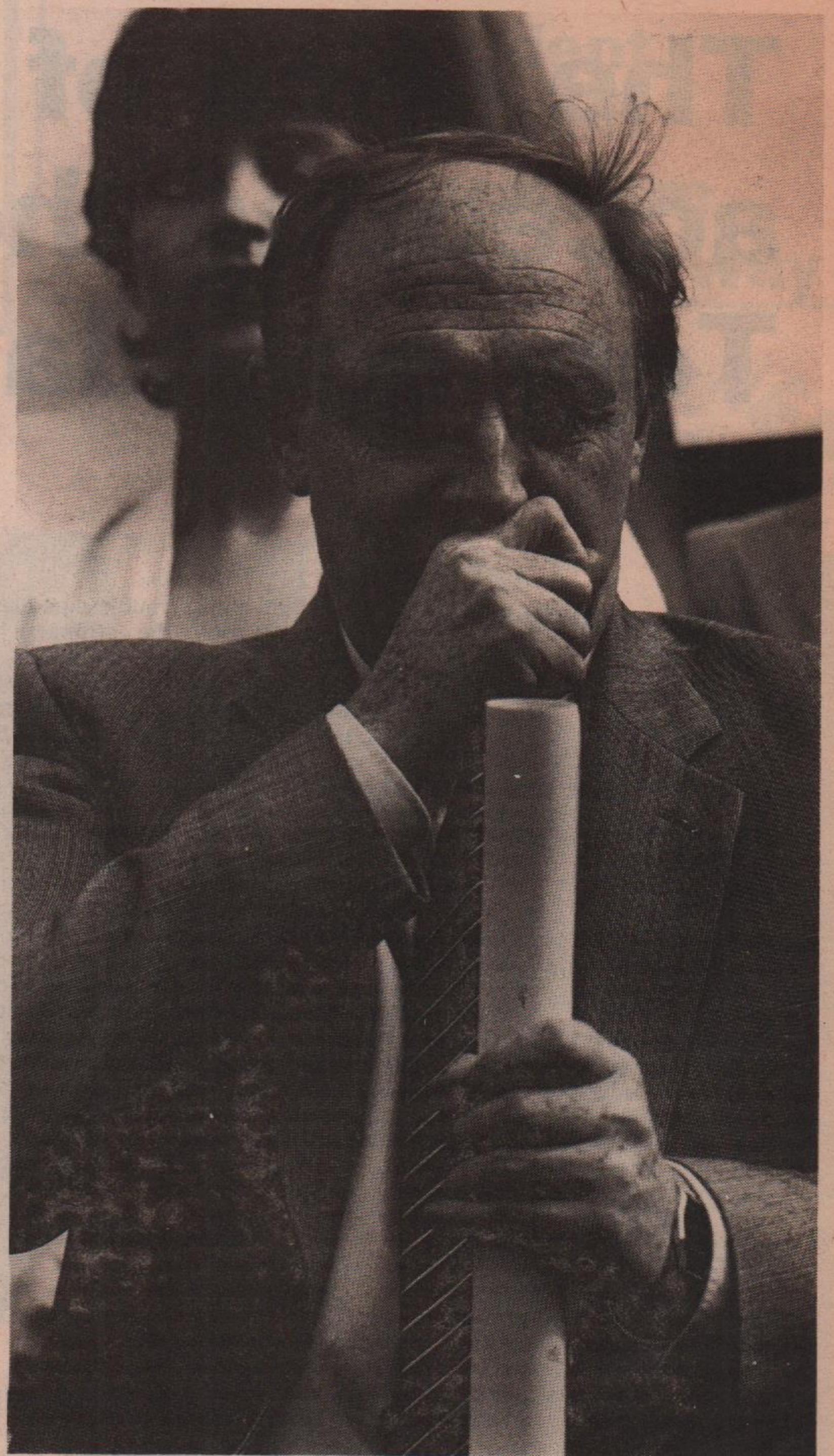
The Policy Review says: 'We do not think it is fair that all supportive action by other employees following a majority vote, should be unlawful.' What should be made unlawful? They say at certain times secondary action should be made unlawful. The whole document moves towards the idea of new realism, the ideas of Thatcherism.

In an interview, Tom Sawyer was asked why he thought people on the Left were suspicious of the Policy Reviews. He said the intention wasn't to get the Labour Party to adopt a programme that would appeal to people in the South East. In the North West 'we looked at all the seats that should have been won but weren't won.'

The idea is that the policy reviews could help us here in the North West. Now, if anybody wanted to come to the North West and look at the most significant things that took place here during the general election, they would go to Broadgreen, they would go to Wallasey. Neither of those constituencies have been contacted at any time since the election to find out how they managed to push the Labour vote up more than anywhere else.

Anyone who went to last year's conference will agree it was the most stage-managed Labour Party conference ever.

Speakers' slips are being in-



roduced this year, so the opportunity for ordinary Labour activists to take part in the debate will be severely reduced.

Neil Kinnock quite openly said that if he doesn't agree with conference decisions, he's going to ignore them.

The NEC now says that anyone who wants to stand in future for leader has to be nominated by 20% of MPs. That's an effective veto on any left challenge to the leadership.

With all that in the background, many people last year, myself included, felt that the Chesterfield initiative was very positive. We felt it was a chance for the left to get together and discuss all these issues.

The first Chesterfield conference was a bit of a disappointment. At the second one — partly because of the presence of members of other organisations outside the Labour

Party — there was an attempt, I think a silly attempt, to gloss over divisions inside the left, as if they don't exist. The fundamental discussion on how to defeat the rightward shift in the Labour Party, how to defend the gains of the past eight or nine years, and how to defend the basic principles of the Labour Party that we've all fought for, didn't take place. A great opportunity was lost.

Wallasey CLP decided to hold a fringe meeting at that second Chesterfield conference and see how many constituencies would be interested in coming to a CLPs conference and starting a fight inside the Labour Party.

From this conference we should start a fight against the rightward drift of the Labour Party. That's what this conference is about.

## NEIL TAKES A LEAD!



# Time for resistance in Brent

By Tony Jain

Last Sunday Brent Labour group voted 18 to 12 to withdraw the whip from Councillor Graham Durham for alleged improper behaviour actions in the Council chamber. The real reason for the witch-hunting of Durham is because he is one of the few Labour councillors to actively fight the Labour Group leadership's policies and urge unions, community groups etc, to take whatever action is necessary to stop the cuts.

Labour Party activists in Brent must demand Durham be allowed

to rejoin the Labour Group immediately and defend his right to campaign freely against the cuts.

Treacherous, behind the scenes, manoeuvres by local and regional union officials of the GMBU, TGWU, NUPE and NUT to do a deal with Brent Council's right wing Labour leadership over job losses and cuts in Council services have not stopped the growth of rank and file resistance to the cuts programme.

An NUT branch meeting called to discuss the union's response to the loss of 281 jobs in Brent was attended by over 300 teachers last Tuesday. Members passed overwhelmingly a motion criticising their leadership's inactivity over the last few weeks in resisting the Council's plans.

The meeting called on the leadership to ballot on further intended industrial action on top of the already planned ½ day strikes and

instructed all members not to cover vacancies for colleagues who are absent.

At a NUPE home helps meeting, last Wednesday over 200 angry members condemned their local union's collaboration with the Council in carving up jobs and home help services and demanded they organise resistance to the Council's plans.

NALGO are currently balloting their membership on going for an all out strike against the Labour group's cuts package.

Rank and file resistance amongst manual workers also seems to be growing particularly among those working the cleansing and refuse disposal services where 181 jobs are due to be axed.

An AEU shop steward told SO: "Up to now the council have had it easy picking on old people and kids but now they have decided to take on a section of the workforce that

has got a lot of economic muscle. And believe me we know how to use it.

I understand Mac Leland (Chair of Public Works) and other are moving out of the borough. Well he and all the other cuts merchants are going to run a fucking lot faster when my lads get hold of them!"

Anger at the Council's cuts package is not confined to Brent's workforce and seems to be spreading to other sections of the community also.

Last Thursday parents at the Crawford Centre for the mentally handicapped due for closure at the end of this month occupied the premises demanding it be kept open.

On Monday pupils from Neasden High, Copeland, John Kelly Girls and John Kelly Boys walked out of their lessons and marched on the Town Hall demanding that more not less resources be poured into

Brent's education services.

One pupil involved in organising the march told SO: "Everyone at our school is really pissed off at what the Council's trying to do. If these cuts go through it will mean severe cutbacks in the number of options we can choose when doing exams, not to mention larger class sizes".

Tenants associations on 8 Brent council estates have also voted in the last few weeks not to pay the £7 increase in rents passed by the Council in August. A further 16 TAs are also considering in the next few days what action to take against this savage rent rise.

Inside the Brent Labour Parties, activists in many wards occupied by supporters of the Council's policies are preparing to move motions at their October meetings demanding cuts Councillors resign and make way for people prepared to fight Thatcher and Ridley.

# The price of accepting the Tory agenda

By George Davey-Smith

After reading the first ten pages of Steve Iliffe's new book on the health service, published by the Communist Party's publishing house, you realise that something is strange. The word "agenda" appears more often than "and" or "the", and the term "the left" is used by Iliffe with the same vitriol and frequency as Al Pacino uses 'fuck' in *Dog Day Afternoon*.

All becomes clear upon reading the acknowledgements — the book has grown out of articles which appeared in *Marxism Today*, house journal of fashionable, ultra-modern(ist) new realism.

The gist of the book is that the traditional left has consistently advanced the wrong arguments and the wrong strategy for the health service.

Trade unionists, it seems, have been uncritical of the failings of the NHS, and have accepted what they have been given unquestioningly. All they can do is strike for more pay, or, exceptionally, take some action in unthinking defence of a service which they can't see to be the creaking, antiquated mess that it is.

Of course such people have no analysis except for "the widespread conspiracy theory that substitutes for understanding and examination on the left". The poor deluded souls who think they are fighting to defend and extend the NHS are quickly put right:

"Those socialists who think that they have a strategy that will allow us to develop a national health service out of the current dilemma are impotent, separated from power sources by their outdated assumptions and expectations. This applies not only to the ultra-left, for whom impotence is a defining characteristic, but also to the mainstream".

In place of this dinosaur we require an open, participatory, innovative left which understands that conservatism has "captured the political agenda" and can move on from the fundamentalist desire to turn the clock back.

To illustrate his thesis Iliffe outlines three future scenarios for the NHS. These pieces of soothsaying, which take us to the year 2012 (and take up an inordinate part of a short book), are uninteresting in their own right but demonstrate the central points advanced above.

Strike action plays virtually no role (except when the doctors ballot for industrial action) — pressure groups, consumer organisations and parliamentary lobbies being the main actors. In the most optimistic scenario, in which a Labour-SLD coalition gets elected in 1992, the pivotal event is a remark made at a City banquet about NHS funding by Prince Charles (presumably a member of the broad democratic alliance). The bishops aren't mentioned, but doubtless they will be kept busy fighting our battles for us elsewhere.

Unfortunately, between the time the original articles appeared in *Marxism Today*, and their assembly

into this book, troublesome health workers took the strongest industrial action since 1982.

Here we saw initial spontaneous strike action in Manchester spread through the country and involve many groups of workers outside the NHS. The demands were simultaneously for a better health service and for fairer pay and conditions for health service staff, and would seem to offer a model for uniting people in common cause.

However, since such action inconveniences the thesis of this book it must be down-played. In a footnote it is remarked that the action "rejuvenated those parts of the left that recognise only industrial action as genuine politics", but it was a "weak and unfocused dispute of limited impact".

Furthermore "we overestimate

**"It is a strange kind of Marxism which ends up advocating policies which are basically Tory, with a radical gloss."**

the nature of the political understanding of those who work in or use the NHS". Such misrepresentation is required to maintain the position that industrial action has no role in the future struggles for a socialist health service. This is seen to be so because strikes are sectional and generally only for more pay — and, naturally, the larger economic strategy for regeneration requires an incomes freeze.

Such an outlook is the mirror-image of that of some activists who maintained that the NHS strikes earlier this year should only be for improved pay and conditions for health workers, and that to fight for defence of the NHS would only encourage the working class to put trust in the state and crush the action's revolutionary potential.

Both positions underestimate the simultaneous importance that material well-being and the popular aspects of welfarism, especially the NHS, have; and both positions would fail to optimally unite workers in their opposition to the Tories.

The strategy offered does not look promising, especially since its crowning achievement is held to be the election of a Labour-SLD coalition — and Iliffe himself shows how Labour has failed the NHS in the past.

There is no suggestion of fighting for a change of perspective within the Labour Party, however. Instead, the main planks of Tory attacks on the NHS are taken on board. After apparently dismissing the notion of infinite demand for health care, beloved of John

Moore, essentially the same argument is advanced to explain why the NHS must set its sights lower.

Screening for cervical cancer is chosen as an example of the need to contain expenditure. Rather than extend the service and make real efforts to reach the high-risk populations who do not volunteer for screening, it is suggested that the available resources should be targetted out covering all over-35 year olds, and the demands for screening of "educated, young, articulate and sexually active women" who form a "powerful pressure group" with doctors for more resources should be resisted. This is an extraordinary position to adopt at a time when the trends in rates of early and established cervical cancer suggest that there will be a rapidly rising incidence in young women.

It is unsurprising that a policy for the NHS containing such a view should also support continued privatisation of ancillary services in the NHS. Direct charges for patients are also advocated, the much heralded participatory democracy here being seen in charging for diseases seen to be self-inflicted.

To make this seem more acceptable the first example is of the rich person skiing in Switzerland who breaks a leg and flies back for treatment. But quickly we are on to smoking, drinking and other "lifestyle" factors.

This ingenious suggestion — also advanced by the Presidents of the Royal College of Medicine and Surgery to the Commons Select Committee on the Health Service — would make people suffering from poverty-related conditions such as coronary heart disease pay for the privilege.

Similarly, unless you are well behaved you can't have the benefits of the health service. Dr. Iliffe thinks that women who don't attend for ante-natal care should receive no maternity benefit; that people who fail to prove the practice of preventive dental care should have no free dental repair work performed, and that childhood vaccinations should be compulsory.

But now we have a problem — how does the participatory democracy held up as the alternative to impotent ultra-leftism deal with such situations? Who decides whether your disease is your fault and you pay for your treatment (was your heart attack because you ate one too many plates of sausage and chips or because you'd been made unemployed?) or not. When researchers disagree as to their efficacy and safety, who decides which vaccinations should be compulsory?

Any why should ante-natal care be compulsory when some studies suggest it has no benefit on pregnancy outcome?

The experts appear to be back in charge.

In itself this book is of little interest. Its significance is as a practical demonstration of where the *Marxism Today* strain of (euro)communism leads. The much trumpeted claim to be NEW! leads back to surprisingly familiar grounds.

When the ritual attacks on "the traditional left", and the pseudo-academic style, are got past, the ideas are an unremarkable mixture



North Manchester nurses protest. Photo John Smith (Profile)

mixture of liberalism and populism.

The references to Marx and Lenin stand out in this milieu. The founding principles of the NHS are held to be communist by Iliffe, in that they follow Marx's dictum "to each according to his need". But Marx is quietly forgotten after that, as the book goes on to advocate the need to "make different social classes function as one civil society not...hostile interest groups".

For Marx and Engels, however, "it is impossible for us to ally ourselves with people who want to eliminate this class struggle from the movement...The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself".

It is a strange kind of Marxism which ends up advocating policies which are basically Tory, with a radical gloss.

For example, in the case of fee-for-service payments the policies

advanced would, in practice, be worse than those currently championed by the Tories. They would achieve the exact opposite of their

supposed aim of deprofessionalisation and individual empowerment, creating yet another sphere of professional control over people's well being — the decision as to whether illness is self-inflicted or not.

As social conditions, such as housing, unemployment and poverty are as important factors underlying ill-health as "lifestyle" factors, Iliffe's big stick method of inducing people to take responsibility for their own health — through a tax on getting ill — is merely another way of redistributing misery from the better off to the worse off.

Similarly his proposals regarding compulsory vaccinations, maternity benefit being removed from women who don't attend ante-natal clinics, and free dental care only being



# I was an Argentinian soldier...

**P**ablo was an Argentinian soldier during the Falklands war. He was taken prisoner by the British while fighting. Socialist Organiser spoke to him about his experiences.

**Q:** You were already in the army when the war started in 1982. What did you think when the war started?

**A:** I was in the army before the war. Nobody believed the English were coming. There was no information among the soldiers. We were in our barracks and couldn't go out. They were saying a strike had been called. Because the regime was afraid of a strike lasting a week, Galtieri told the soldiers to take the islands. So there was a lot of confusion. We were in the barracks for a week and then put in a lorry, then a plane, and went to the Malvinas.

There was a lot of confusion, so I couldn't think much. There were a lot of young men (*chicos*) about 18 years old. No one really knew what was going on.

**Q:** And what happened when you arrived?

**A:** I arrived on the 12th or 13th April. There still wasn't a war, because the English fleet wasn't there yet. So we just dug trenches, and followed orders that had no sense. There wasn't anything to do. Every day more soldiers came. We dug trenches and would then be told to go somewhere else and dig another trench.

**Q:** How did the officers run the war?

**A:** With or without dictatorship, the officers are the worst people — ignorant people, almost illiterate. They aren't logical or rational, especially the sub-officials (lower officers). But they have power and can give the most imbecilic orders. Really stupid, like, "Put this table over there." What for? You just have to do it, or they'll punish you. With or without dictatorship, now as well as then, in general to receive an order is to have an order without sense.

If you say to a sub-official, "Don't give me orders," you're just one person, without power. They'll punish you. But if lots join together and say "Don't give us any more orders..." For example, usually there was only one sub-official with various soldiers in the field. Everyone would join together and tell him, "If you give us orders,

you'll have a problem with us." And he'd be scared.

**Q:** And what did you think of the war?

**A:** The worst thing in the world. I didn't believe in anything — god, anything.

**Q:** Did it matter to you who owned the islands?

**A:** During the war, no. If you'd asked any Argentinians, they'd have told you "the Malvinas are Argentina's." But nobody wanted to die for the islands. During the war, it didn't matter to anyone. Everyone said, "I don't care. It's shit. It's cold — there's nothing. It's a piece of shit. I don't want it. I want to go back to my house with my family, and go back to normal life — work, study — not kill people, or be scared all day long." I didn't meet anyone who wanted to die for it, for this cause.

**Q:** Later you were a prisoner of war. What happened?

**A:** I was a prisoner for a month. At first I was on a boat in front of Port Stanley. It was actually a fridge, but one that wasn't working. There wasn't much infrastructure. It was dirty. Everyone slept on the floor. You had to defecate in a big tub.

But we ate well, we played cards, talked to other soldiers.

I don't remember how long I was in each place. After the boat I was in a house for three days. Then we were put on another boat — much better, not a war boat, a ferry. It had everything, sitting room, games room. We could say to the English, "we want more cigarettes," or whatever, and they always complied. There were hot showers.

They treated the soldiers better than they treated the officers, usually. They understood we were there because we had to be. For example, once an officer complained the bath was full of shit, and they made him clean it up.

**Q:** What did you think when, after the war, the dictatorship was forced to go?

**A:** It was great. There wasn't a revolution: the generals decided to allow an election. So many people think if it's so easy for them to allow democracy, it's just as easy to take it away again. There is always the possibility of a coup. There are a lot of problems because of the dictatorship, because of the IMF and foreign banks.



## 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.**

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.**

available to those who can prove that they brush their teeth and have regular dental check-ups take power away from people.

It is controversial whether antenatal clinics in themselves improve pregnancy outcome. Some authorities consider that certain

vaccination schedules could lead to delayed epidemics of disease later in life when it is more dangerous.

6-monthly dental examinations may, according to The Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin, cause more damage than they prevent.

In Dr. Iliffe's scheme these doubts and debates would remain the domain of the experts, to be imposed by suitably authoritarian regulations.

Iliffe's book demonstrates the outcome of applying the current CP scheme to the real world. When the theories remain at the level of ever so elegant discourse about "em-

powerment", "new social forces" and "style" they have a superficial attractiveness.

However, the bankruptcy of the ideas — as expressed in the recent CP policy statement 'Facing up to the future' — are evident once they try to engage with the way the world actually is.

Socialists wanting a guide as to how to fight for a fairer health service would do better reading either of two other recent books on the NHS — the London Health Emergency book 'Cutting the Lifeline' or David Widgery's 'The National Health: a radical perspective'. That is unless they are the kind of socialists who carry American Medical International cards in their Marxism Today filofaxes.

**"STRONG MEDICINE: Health Politics for the Twenty-first century" by Steve Iliffe, Lawrence & Wishart, 1988, £5.95.**

## 8 MIDDLE EAST

# Hal Draper on Israel, 1948: War of independence or expansion?

Here we reprint an editorial on Palestine from the US Marxist newspaper *Labor Action* and part of an article from magazine, *New Internationalist*. Both were written by well known author Hal Draper. The editorial, 'War of Independence or Expansion?', appeared on May 24th and 31st 1948, on the eve of Israel's Declaration of Independence. 'How to Defend Israel' appeared in July 1948 after the surrounding Arab states, led by British officers, had invaded Israel.

*Labor Action* and *New Internationalist* were publications of Max Shachtman's 'Worker's Party'. Like the other material we have so far published in this series from the 'orthodox Trotskyist' current, these articles show how far the dominant 'Marxist' attitude to the Middle East conflict today has travelled away from its starting point.

Draper's article is warped, though not quite vitiated, by the call that the Jewish nation, fighting for its life, should become the leader in a war of liberation for the Arab masses too — that Israel should take on the messianic role played by revolutionary France in Europe at the end of the 18th century, and lead a general war of liberation in the Middle East. Despite this, Draper has a firm grip on the realities. Forty years later, his article reads like prophecy.

Since the source of so much confusion about the Middle East on the left is the Socialist Workers Party, it is worth pointing out here that Draper's organisation was closely linked to the predecessor of the SWP, which sold its publications in Britain, until the American group collapsed around 1960.

**T**he UN, set up with fanfare to bring peace to the world is again showing that it cannot prevent or halt war even by fifth-rate powers, such as the states of the Middle East — let alone war by the major warmakers who control its deliberations.

Compelled by the falling apart of the British Empire to recognise the independence of Palestine on paper, the UN drew a braided line through that tortured country of mingled nationality, erecting a state-boundary wall between already suspicious and jealous peoples. The Jews were assured of a state of their own — a state completely outfitted with salients, corridors, enclaves and angles sticking into the sides of the surrounding Arab world, with military lines athwart each other and commercial routes interpenetrating. The Jews cheered.

Then Washington ran out on its own partition plan and the Arab leaders in turn were encouraged to proceed with their plans to enforce a Pan-Arab landlordism. When this had already gone virtually to the point of invasion, the White House flipfopped, backtracked and reversed gear again in a precipitous

recognition of the new Jewish state of Israel, again encouraging the Jews.

If meanwhile the British line was more consistent, it was consistently directed toward fomenting the Pan-Arab reaction against the partition.

As long as the two people can thus be "sicked" against each other, the shadow of imperialist domination does not leave the scene. This is the end of UN policy.

If there is to be peace at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and if the Jews and Arabs are to live in fraternal unity, no one can look toward the United Nations or to American and British imperialism to bring this about. If there is to be peace, it has to be made by the peoples.

Labor Action has made clear its belief that the partition of Palestine into two non-viable states was not calculated to achieve any real solution of the Palestine question, and cannot. We have reiterated that, before partition, the road to a basic solution lay only in the joint struggle by the socialist workers of the Jewish community together with the oppressed peasant masses of the Arabs to throw off the yoke of their common oppressor — **British imperialism** based on the two ruling



Above: the Mufti of Jerusalem visits the SS. Right: the Exodus arrives in Haifa

classes, Arab landlords and Zionist capitalists; and such Arab-Jewish cooperation from below could have forged a united Palestine in the fire of anti-imperialist struggle.

Now that partition is virtually an accomplished fact, this basic road only takes a different form.

There is a war on — not yet full-scale war as this is written, but not far from it. The socialist working class of the Jewish territory has chosen to follow its Zionist leadership in achieving a separate state. As Marxist socialists — that is, as the only consistent democrats — we believe in and accept the democratic right of all peoples (including the Palestinian Jews) to self-determination, to work out their own destiny as they see fit. We said this even while advising against the exercise of this right to the point of separation.

The politics from which the Pan-Arab war and threats of invasion flow is perfectly clear — the aim of depriving the Jews precisely of this right to self-determination. There is therefore not the slightest iota of common ground between the Arab landlords' opposition to partition and our own. While we are more firmly than ever of the opinion that the Jews' choice of separatism was a mistake and a setback for the only long-range solution, we believe that the imposition of "unity" upon Palestine by Abdullah, the Mufti or the Arab League would be a reactionary solution even more disastrous in its consequences and a

violation of the democratic rights of peoples.

To recognise the right of the Jews to self-determination, if it is not merely to be a pious obeisance to a formula, requires socialists also to recognise the right of the Jews to defend their choice of separate national existence against any and all reactionary attempts to deprive them of that right, whether by Arab feudal lords or UN imperialism. That is why we demanded recognition of Israel by the government, and why our British comrades particularly must demand similar action by the Labour government — as the concretisation of the demand that the imperialists keep out. That is why we demand the lifting of the imperialist embargo on arms to the new Jewish state.

But the defense of Israel's right of self-determination against a reactionary war of invasion is only one side of the picture. Surely even the Zionist leaders do not believe that the "Palestine question" will be over if only Abdullah stops short of Israel's borders! On the contrary, it only enters a new stage. On the one hand, the Jews face the possibility of permanent guerrilla warfare, unending "border incidents", and above all, such permanent national hostility with the Arab world as would make national existence a nightmare of the Jewish splinter state. On the other hand, the unproved demands by the Irgun and Stern gang for the conquest of all of Palestine raises the same ques-

tion of future relations. For the socialist working class of Palestine that question is posed in terms of the present struggle as follows:

**Are the Jews — socialist workers in their majority — to wage a war of nationalist expansionism, or a revolutionary war for the reunification of Palestine from below against both the Jewish and Arab ruling classes?**

Today their struggle is a war of defense in the immediate circumstance. But tomorrow their struggle will inescapably be transformed into one or the other!

Before this question can be answered, the first illusion that needs destroying is the illusion that the splinter state of Israel can "go it alone". To be sure, given Haganah military victories, Israel can succeed in maintaining its formal independence. But world imperialism — British, American and Russian — will remain on the scene with their fingers in the pie as long as the Balkanisation of the Middle East continues.

The present situation in Palestine, the fruit of partition and the end product of Zionist policy in the country can only continue to inflame nationalist hostility on both sides.

Even if the Arab legions' invasion is beaten back, the new state of Israel exists in an impossible economic and political situation. Its leaders will be forced to seek to fortify the stability of the new state in face of an encirclement of hatred

## How to defend Israel

This is an excerpt from an article printed in *New Internationalist*, July 1948.

**T**he present situation in Palestine — the fruit of partition and the end product of Zionist policy toward the Arabs — can only continue to inflame national hostility and chauvinism on both sides. On the one hand, there is the disgraceful portent of the Deir Yassin massacre of Arab women and children by the Irgun, unpunished by the official Israeli leadership and therefore, in the eyes of the Arabs, endorsed. On the other hand, there is the godsent opportunity for the effendis to inflame the antagonism of the mass of Arab peasantry toward the Jews as

such.

Under these conditions, with all its economic life intertwined with its Arab neighbours, with its supply lines and commercial routes interpenetrating, with its national life economically dependent and helpless — what can be the future of a splinter country separated from the world on all sides and surrounded by a wall of hatred?

Only a chronic nightmare existence, a new horror of the twentieth century, a state-wide ghetto, a death trap for the Jews!

This is the direction in which the present rightist-bourgeois government of Israel is heading. And along these lines, its only avenue of escape — no, not escape, but its only possibility of even alleviating that nightmare is complete capitulation to one of the predatory imperialisms; to become its outpost in the Middle East, the harlot Jerusalem.

This is not a chimera conjured up. This is a reality of Israel's adventure into statehood. From these vicious alternatives of destruction, imperialist overlordship or

permanent nightmare in a Balkanised Middle East, the Israeli people can escape only by relying on the only other force they can seek to lean on: the mass of Arab workers and peasants who are exploited and oppressed by the very same rulers who invade Palestine.

The key is right at hand. It is the 30-40 per cent of Israel which is now Arab. Israel's future will be determined in the first place by how it acts toward them. It is not enough to "leave them be." The Israelis must demonstrate that they seek the alliance of the Arab masses, that they are carrying on a social war — not Jew against Arab, but a war of classes.

It must seek to integrate the Arabs into the country on a completely equal basis with the Jews.

(1) An end to the Jim-Crow trade unions by which those Arab workers who are organised are kept in "parallel" unions.

(2) Stamp out the policy of *kibbush avoda* — the ousting of Arab labour — in every sphere.

(3) Stamp out the policy of boycotting Arab goods.

(4) An end to every other form of economic nationalism.

(5) Organise the state as the home of both peoples with equal national status: in schools, in the government, in the use and teaching of both languages, in every aspect of national life.

(6) State aid to the Arab peasants, as to the Jewish colonists.

(7) Distribution of all lands vacated by Arab landlords and under Israeli control.

(8) The formation of a binational army and police. This outcome can be made possible by the successful prosecution of the other steps.

Such a programme we are perfectly aware, means a complete overturn of the policy of the Jewish leaders. But only such a programme, of which the above points represent not the whole but a beginning and a token, can transform the war of defense into a social war a war with the dynamic power to tear apart the national unity behind the Arab rulers' legions. Only such a programme can prepare for the

reunification of the splintered land into a community where Jew and Arab can live in fraternity.

Such a reunited state cannot come about while the Arab effendi, landlord and militarists remains in control of his Arab vassal. It cannot come about while Zionist nationalism rules Israel. It can come about only if the working masses of both peoples unite, from below and tear themselves away from their own ruling classes. The working class movement among the Jews is powerful; the majority of it calls itself socialist, many even left-wing socialist. Here is the only consistent socialist programme for a reunited Palestine.

This is the programme for transforming the war into a revolutionary war against the Arab feudal masters — and striking down the perpetrators of Deir Yassin massacres who call for Jewish expansionism against the Arab people. It has to be fought for against the present leaders of Israel, dominated by the Jewish capitalist class and trailed by the bourgeois labour leaders of the Histadrut.





## The lessons of the postal strike Betrayed but not defeated

By Pete Keenlyside

**B**y the time that the **blast group of workers at Liverpool and Coventry had gone back the Post Office strike had lasted for 3 weeks. At its height over 100,000 were out and every Mechanised Letter Office except Belfast had shut down. For many postal workers this was their first real taste of industrial action. For most of us it was certainly the first time we had been out on an official strike.**

That a major blow-up should happen in the Post Office came as no surprise to those who work there. Industrial relations have got rapidly worse over the past few years. 65,000 days were lost last year in disputes, a fifth of the total for the whole of British industry. We are high up on the Tory's list for privatisation. What used to be a loss-making service has been turned into a money-spinner by a combination of a ruthless drive to increase productivity and a highly selective interpretation of the disciplinary code.

Despite little or no opposition at national level, branches have fought these attacks tooth and nail. Post Office workers have little fear of unemployment being in a growth industry. The UCW hasn't suffered a major defeat since 1971 and at local level have enjoyed a large measure of control on working practices. Attempts to erode this have been bitterly resisted by walk-outs, most lasting only a day or two.

The major issue at stake in this dispute was the Difficult To Recruit Area Supplements (DRAS) that the Post Office wanted to pay to some offices in the South-East. Compared to pay or the length of the working week the issue was an obscure one even for postal workers, although it certainly represented an attack on the national pay bargaining structure. Perhaps that is why the National Executive chose it for a ballot on industrial action. Nevertheless, the ballot showed a 2:1 majority in favour of industrial action and when the Executive called a 24-hour strike on August 31st the response was solid.

The strike was due to end with the return of the early shift the next day. It was only when we went back

in that we found that in certain selected offices throughout the country the management had flooded the place with casual labour. Casuals are an emotive subject for UCW members. Although there is no longer a closed shop in the Post Office, 100% membership is the norm. Casuals were clearly seen as an attempt to undermine this. The management's claim of a huge backlog of mail was simply a lie. They were using the excuse of the 24-hour strike to provoke a test of strength with the union.

If the management wanted a fight they certainly got one. 14 offices walked out immediately. The action then spread as other branches joined the strike through having members suspended for refusing to cross picket lines or handle diverted mail. In some instances branches came out simply because they were asked to. When pickets from Manchester went to Derby they were refused permission to go into the office to speak to the workers there. They put leaflets calling on Derby to come out in the letter boxes and the next day Derby was out.

By the end of the first week the strike had reached its peak. The support it enjoyed was entirely due to the activities of the rank and file at branch level. To my knowledge the Executive Council did not call a single branch out. In some branches such as Manchester and Liverpool Clerical and Counter staff had also walked out even though they weren't involved with the initial dispute. It was only after the publication of the Executive's agreement on Monday September 12th that branches began going back. Some didn't need any persuading, some like in London had to be dragged back, but a significant number still held out.

The centre of the resistance to the deal was in the North-West where the branches had voted not to return until they all did. Manchester, the largest branch in the country, threw out the management's proposals based on the deal with only 6 against in a meeting of almost 3,000. Even right at the end a sizeable minority, over 600 in a meeting of 1,500, voted not to return until Liverpool and Coventry did. In Liverpool daily mass pickets were held as management bussed scabs in. The militancy of the Liverpool branch became a powerful symbol for all of us.

If our Executive Council had displayed a tenth of the energy and commitment of the rank and file the strike could easily have been won.

Not only DRAS but a host of other issues could have been settled. Instead, all their energy went into undermining the action. They failed to anticipate that management might take advantage of the 24-hour strike. Instead of keeping all the branches out until everybody had gone back, the Executive did absolutely nothing. As branches were walking out almost by the minute they even offered to suspend industrial action over DRAS. Even with over two-thirds of the membership out they refused to make the strike national, insisting that branches should negotiate on a local level. Management of course were operating a national strategy. And then came the infamous agreement. This not only gave the Post Office what they wanted on DRAS but on casuals and diversions as well. No wonder management started quoting from it.

In the end not even the spirit and militancy of the rank and file could overcome the treachery of the union leaders. The organisation that could have brought the rank and file together, that could have developed an alternative leadership and countered the actions of the Executive, does not as yet exist in our union. Despite the fact that those of us arguing for such an organisation are still a small minority, that remains the major task for all those who have now seen our leaders for what they are.

The strike cost us three weeks' wages. We got very little in return. Yet we did not go back defeated. The management weren't able to impose their terms on us as a condition of any return to work. But they'll be back. There are plenty of other issues on the agenda. Privatisation, productivity, office closures, discipline. What is certain is that we won't have to wait another 17 years for the next big dispute.

Whether we win that or not depends on how well the lessons of this strike are learnt. Hopefully this pamphlet will be of no small help in that process.

**Lessons of the Postal Strike. Available from Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 30 pence + 20 pence p&p.**

and they will look for aid and comfort only towards the imperialists. Such will be the inevitable drift for these "practical politicians whose conception of statesmanship will consist of attempts to manoeuvre with the imperialist interests which hold Palestine in a net. And the price of such statesmanship can only be their willingness to act as an imperialist outpost in the Middle East for one or the other of the contending forces, hoping for protection and support in exchange.

Behind all this is the sorry fact that Israel cannot exist as a splinter state quivering in the flesh of the Arab Middle East without constant war-skirmishing or imperialist entanglements or both. This is guaranteed both for economic and political reasons.

This is why the only road that can save the Jews from subservience to imperialism or destruction by the Arabs is a course directed toward the reunification of Palestine on a basis which will permit the two peoples to live together in fraternal harmony. Such an outcome is simply impossible on the basis of the present policy of the Israeli leadership. And it is equally impossible as long as the Arab masses are under the unchallenged domination of their semi-feudal dynasties, landlords, effendis and militarists.

The reunification of Palestine and of the two peoples in it can take place only through a struggle from below. The conditions for such a struggle are present as they were before partition — the class struggle within Jewish society, and the grinding exploitation of the Arab peasants by their lords and masters.

We believe that the main (not exclusive, but the main) responsibility for taking the initiative in this direction lies with Jewish workers — precisely because, as the Zionist leaders boast on any occasion, it is the Jews who are the most advanced socially and culturally, because it is they who claim to be socialists, etc.

While opposing any attempt by the Arab landlord regimes to overthrow the Jewish state and impose their reactionary sway on the whole land, it is the duty of real socialists in Israel to fight for a policy, programme and a government of the working people which can bring about such reunification instead of deepening the nationalist gulf.

The key to such a programme is in the first place the policy of the people of Israel toward the Arabs now within their own borders. Israel must demonstrate that they are fighting not against the Arab people but against the Arab dynasts and landlords who are also the oppressors of the Arab people

themselves. It must demonstrate that it seeks the alliance of the Arab masses against their own exploiters — an alliance of classes.

It can demonstrate this only by sharply reversing the whole Zionist policy toward the Arab people — accepting them as equals and collaborators in the building up, not of a Jewish state but of a bi-national state. We use the term 'bi-national' (which has been used with various senses) to designate merely the aim of a state which is the home of two peoples and comports itself as such, the forms to be worked out in common agreement.

Complete equal rights to the Arabs within the state of Israel: equality, not Jim Crow, in the Jewish-controlled trade unions; the abandonment of the economic nationalism which has reigned in the Jewish community hitherto; the constitutional and de facto guarantee of the Arabs' fully recognised status as a national people — here are the elementary beginnings of such a programme in Israel which can demonstrate in action the basis for a reunited Palestine.

Only such a government in Israel could seek to stir up the Arab masses of the invading nations against their own oppressors, raising in the first place its sympathy with the demand for land to the Arab Fellaheen and the other social interests of the submerged masses of the Arab semi-feudal world.

Such a state, which appears in the Middle East not as the representative of Jewish nationalist chauvinism but of the social aspirations of all the people, Jewish and Arab, could fight for a reunited Palestine — and live.

Such a programme for a revolutionary war against the Arab feudal lords, not a war of nationalist expansion against the Arab people. Such a programme cannot be expected from the present rightist government of Israel, dominated by the Jewish capitalist class and tail-ended by the bourgeois labour leaders of the Histadrut, which in the longer run can only stumble from disaster to stalemate to subservience under outside imperialism.

Such a programme demands the fight for a workers' government in Israel as the vanguard of the future United Socialist States of the Middle East.

Without such a programme all the heroic sacrifices of the Jewish people and all the military victories of the Haganah will not be able to make of Palestine anything but a death trap for the peoples and a happy hunting ground of revived imperialist influence.



**LES HEARN'S  
SCIENCE  
COLUMN**



**P**CBs (poly chlorinated biphenyls) have been much in the news of late, what with ships sailing around Africa and Europe looking for a port to accept their cargoes of toxic waste, and suspicions that PCBs have played a role in the seal plague.

Though Britain was one country to refuse a berth to the Karin B, it seems that PCB wastes were getting into Britain — in the cargo holds of passenger aircraft.

PCBs are organochlorine pesticides, designed to kill crop pests. Unfortunately, they also kill or harm other animal life. This would not be so serious were it not for the fact that they are extremely stable chemicals. They do not break down easily and hence persist in the soil.

Once inside an animal, they tend to accumulate in the body fat. As smaller animals get eaten by larger ones, the amounts of PCB increase. Thus, seals, at the top of the marine food chain, contain concentrations of PCBs up to 10 million times that of the surrounding sea water.

Effects on seals are thought to include lowered resistance to infections, possibly a factor in the current epidemic of distemper in Northern European waters.

Effects on other mammals may include sterility. Tests on mink show that at 50 parts per million (ppm) of PCB in body fat (equivalent to 1 gram in 20 kilograms) they can no longer breed.

Attempts to re-establish breeding colonies of otters (related to mink) in Norfolk seem doomed for the same reason. An otter cub, recently released into the wild and killed by a car, was found to have 62ppm of PCB.

Since it could only have got the PCBs in its mother's milk, she must have absorbed a quite massive dose in her diet. It is therefore extremely unlikely that any further breeding could take place. Elsewhere in Britain, strong colonies of otters seem restricted to areas low in PCBs.

Use of PCBs as pesticides is declining, due to protests by conservationists and health and safety activists but they are still widely used as insulators in electrical equipment.

Getting rid of PCBs safely is quite a problem. Burying the waste in landfill sites is no solution as PCBs are slowly leached (washed) out by rainwater into surrounding land, river or sea.

Incineration must be done under carefully controlled conditions, else even more dangerous substances may be produced to escape in the fumes from the incinerator.

A breakthrough by some British chemists means that a powerful oxidising agent called ruthenium tetroxide can be used to destroy PCBs at relatively low temperatures. The ruthenium tetroxide is regenerated by adding bleach to the products of the reaction with PCBs and so the process is quite cheap.



**"Maus" is a combination of novel and memoir in the unusual form of a comic book. It has been widely reviewed and praised. We asked Thomas Carlyle, who is 10, to review it for us.**

**"Maus, A Survivor's Tale" is mainly a true story in comic book form. It is the story of what a Jewish family went through when the Nazis took over Poland in 1939.**

It is the story of Art Spiegelman's father and how he winds up in a concentration camp. This true story, which Spiegelman's father told to his son many years later, is mixed in with fiction.

Art Spiegelman draws the Jews as mice, the Nazis as cats and the Poles as pigs.

'Maus' is, I think written and drawn for more mature readers rather than for children. But the author does it so well that I could picture myself being there.

One strange thing about the story is that it ends when they get put in the concentration camp. Yet you know that the author's father didn't die in the concentration camp, because he lives to tell his story.

I thought 'Maus' was very good at doing what the author intended. Most people don't know much about history any more. In this book some people will learn the history of Hitler and the concentration camps.

Because it is in comic book form many more people can read it. That's the idea, anyway. It's a good idea.

**The first Lapp**

**By Edward Ellis**

**The first film ever to be made in the Lapp language may not sound like something you'd queue in the cold to see. Yet Pathfinder would be worth it, if only to see that no cinema queue could ever be as cold as the Lapplanders' frozen waters.**

The film recreates an old legend, in which peaceful, hunting folk who worship bears are murderously invaded by a warrior clan. A young lad skis home to find his family are dead and, narrowly escaping with his own life, goes off to warn

**Imagining sex abuse?**

**By Lynn Fergusson**

**A**mmunition for the likes of Stuart Bell, who believes the actual incidence of child sexual abuse is greatly exaggerated came from a new, and surprising source this week.

Psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell, one time golden girl of the women's movement appeared on a new Channel 4 series 'What is Truth' which consists of a bevy of user-friendly academics discussing the old chestnut, beloved of 1st year Philosophy courses, 'Does the real world exist, and if it does can we perceive it?'

Mitchell appeared to discuss memory — do we remember real events, or do we 're-invent' the past. In the course of her vigorous defence of the latter position she used the example of 'incest' (sic).

Most cases of father-daughter incest, she claimed, are imagined. Children's genitalia, she said, are stimulated during such innocent events as nappy-changing and bathing. Such incidents mesh with unconscious desires of girls to have sex with their fathers — and produce claims of incest.

Probably children do experience some sort of stimulation during such mundane caring activities. Children do have sexuality albeit very different from that of adults. In small children sexuality isn't parcelled off into separate compartments but is more diffuse, more integrated with their entire being, then a child's overwhelming desire and need for its parents will have some sort of sexual content.

But the idea that this will manifest itself **actually** as a desire of the girl-child to have intercourse with her father, or will produce detailed descriptions of this, is not only utterly ignorant of children but is an example of a vulgar, literalist caricature of Freudianism that taken from the real thing has been castigated by feminists for decades.

Incest does happen, far more regularly than anyone used to think. A young girl is far more likely to be abused by her father, step-father or uncle than by a complete stranger.

The essentially authoritarian power-relations within the family contribute to this — a man's daughter is, after all, his property. He feeds her, clothes her, can beat her if she's 'naughty' — is her ruler.

It is his choice how he uses that power — he can be a benevolent despot, but she's still essentially powerless. Sexual abuse is only one step further — it is a logical progression from our present family set-up rather than a step outside it.

Workers with abused children are unanimous that most children are simply not capable of having invented the events they describe — they simply wouldn't have been able to imagine/make up things in such detail. Most 4 year old girls don't know about anal/oral sex — or indeed any other sort — unless it's been done to them. So much for Mitchell's 'fantasies'.

Juliet Mitchell's quack Freudianism can only contribute to the post-Cleveland backlash. Her theorising may seem very neat in the University seminar room, but in the bedroom of an abused girl it's a different story.

**Saturday 1st October**  
March called by South Manchester Health Emergency, 11 am-1.00 pm outside Withington Hospital. Against the closure of the alcohol treatment unit.

**Sunday 2nd October**  
South London SO meeting. Lessons of the Postal Strike, 8.00 pm, Station Pub, Camberwell New Road, SE5. Speaker: Richard Moore, UCW.

**Monday 3rd October**  
Sheffield SO meeting. 'How to make the unions fight', 7.30 pm, SCCAU, West Street. Speaker: Jim Denham

**Tuesday 4th October**  
Sheffield SO meeting. 'What is Socialism and how can we achieve it?', 1.00pm, Sheffield University SU. Speaker Jim Denham.

**Wednesday 5th October**  
Manchester SO meeting. 'Where now for the Labour left?', 7.30 pm, Manchester University SU, Oxford Road.

**Sunday 16th October**  
South London SO meeting. 'Where now for Labour?', 7.30 pm, Station Pub, Camberwell New Road, SE5.

**Thursday 27th October**  
Liverpool SO meeting. 'Ireland — which way forward?', 12.45 pm, Liverpool University SU.

Stoke SO meeting. 'The Labour Party', 7.30 pm, Stoke Town Hall.

**Saturday 29th October**  
Regional Day School, Sheffield University SU, 10.30am start.

**Thursday 24th November**  
Stoke SO meeting. 'The Middle East — Israel/Palestine', 7.30pm, Stoke Town Hall.

**ACTIVISTS' DIARY**

# "Come home Eric, all is forgiven"

**A**fter Bournemouth, whither the EETPU? Two plausible scenarios present themselves: in one the electricians, freed from the constraints of the TUC and the Bridlington agreement, clean up with no strike deals in Silicon Valley, recruit dissatisfied members of TUC unions in droves, and establish a new federation of like-minded business unionists involving the UDM, the Professional Association of Teachers and the Royal College of Nursing. This is the outcome most widely predicted in the media and it obviously appeals to Hammond and his lieutenants.

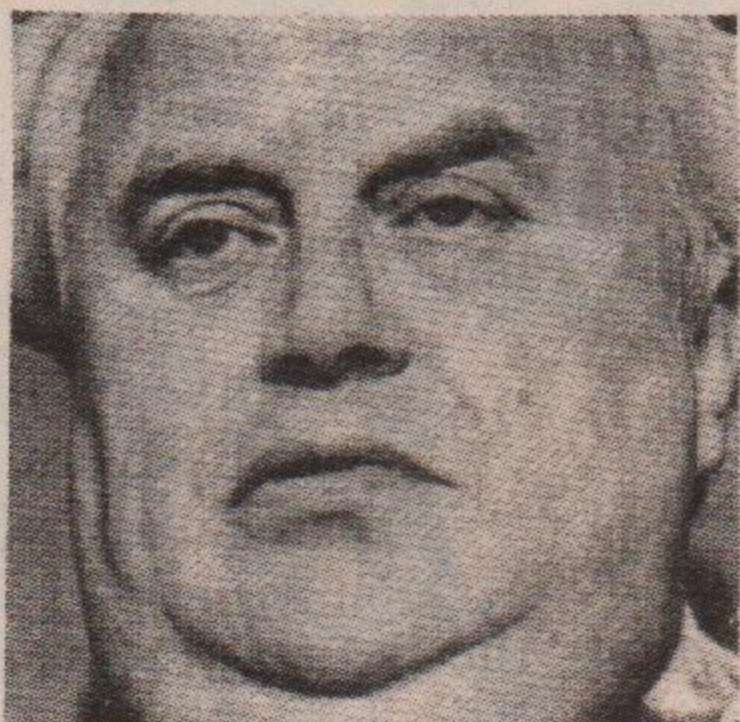
There is, however, another scenario that makes much more sense, both from Hammond's point of view and from the TUC bureaucracy's: in this, a rapprochement is achieved (after a short but decent interval) by a combination of concessions from the TUC and a merger between the EETPU and the AEU. This would not be so emotionally satisfying for Hammond (who enjoys a scrap) but

he is intelligent enough to see the advantages. For a start, outfits like the UDM, PAT and RCN (none of which recruit outside their own profession) are not exactly a very promising basis for an alternative federation. The collapse of the SDP has deprived Hammond of a potential political link-up. And it is by no means a foregone conclusion that the EETPU (who's membership in recent years has actually declined rather faster than the TUC average and many of whose members are a minority in multi-union plants) would come out on top in a membership war. And of course, a return to the TUC fold on the 'right' terms would be a pleasant moral victory for Mr Hammond...

**T**he idea of an AEU/EETPU merger has been kicking around ever since the mid-to-late 70s when the 'left' AEU leadership of Hugh Scanlon was ousted by Terry Duffy and John Boyd, backed by a shadowy right wing 'rank and file' group called Catholic Action. When Bill ('Duffy with brains') Jordan took over as President in 1986, the merger project gained a new impetus. But serious impediments remained, not least the AEU's relatively democratic constitution, in which

## INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper



the supreme policy making body is the National Committee, elected annually from the District Committees, which in turn are elected directly from the branches. By contrast, Hammond and his executive of 15 are the only full time officials in the EETPU who are elected. The rest are appointed.

Jordan (in the course of talks a couple of years ago with APEX and UCATT, as well as the EETPU)

proposed a solution that would involve tearing up the present rule book and starting from scratch with a new constitution for a new, merged, union.

This month, the AEU Journal carries an editorial by General Secretary Gavin Laird, that talks ominously about "the old structures" being "no longer applicable, just as branches meeting in draughty, dark halls in the evening is no longer acceptable..."

**A**t present, the AEU National Committee is controlled about 70-50 by right wingers, but even so it often acts as a brake on Jordan and Laird. Most AEU right wingers are gut trade unionists who value the democratic traditions of their union and hold a strong loyalty to the TUC. Last year, they effectively scuppered Jordan's agreement with the Engineering Employers Federation, to bring in total flexibility throughout the industry in exchange for a phased introduction of a 37½ hour week. Last May the National Committee put a shot across Jordan's bows by passing a resolution instructing the leadership to "pursue meaningful amalgamation with similar unions in the engineering industry on the basis of the

retention of our democratic structure" — decoded, that means, "no deal with the EETPU".

The basis for an impressive rank and file campaign in defence of the existing rule book and against amalgamation, clearly exists within the AEU. But the existing 'left' grouped around the paper Engineering Gazette and Stalinist Executive member Jimmy Airlie (he of Ford Dundee fame) haven't the faintest idea how to relate to the rank and file, let alone mobilise them.

The last meeting of the Engineering Gazette was little short of a fiasco. It attracted only about 150 activists (usually over 200 attend) and Airlie refused to take any resolutions from the floor. He became particularly incensed by speakers who referred to the gathering as a 'Broad Left': "we are not a Broad Left, we are the Engineering Gazette. We're after the centre ground and if I hear anyone else say we're a Broad Left, I'll hammer them. Get out and build your own so called Broad Left outside."

It is clear that Airlie's entire perspective is based upon keeping in with the majority of the National Committee rather than mobilising the membership. His attitude towards democracy was summed up in the memorable words, "the Gazette may not be perfect but I for one will not allow anyone to criticise it".

A campaign against amalgamation could be taken into the factories and branches. Local meetings could be held and leaflets produced. But Airlie will have none of it. After the performance of this discredited has-been (still living off memories of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders sit-in) the Broad Left/Gazette opposition seems certain to break up. Even AEU North-West Organiser John Tocher is unhappy with Airlie's bureaucratic inertia and is canvassing the idea of a 'new' Broad Left that goes to the District Committees and branches.

**B**ut with or without an AEU/EETPU merger the TUC top brass are determined to keep lines of communication open with the electricians' leaders. This year's TUC chair Tony Christopher is enthusiastically promoting the idea of amending the Special Review Body's rules on 'beauty contests' and no-strike deals (presumably after the trial run for them ends in March 1989) to facilitate the return of Hammond. And Norman Willis, writing in the AEU Journal comments, "the AEU has a special interest created by its historically close links with the EETPU and its current amalgamation talks. I wish those talks well and hope the EETPU relearns the value of being in the TUC's fold."

Willis has also written to the Labour Party NEC making it clear that he still regards the EETPU as a 'bona fide trade union'. Meaning that under Labour's rules, it can remain affiliated to the party.

Willis, who fancies himself as a vocalist (much to the embarrassment of all who have experienced his off key efforts) has added "You Made Me Expel You, I Didn't Want To Do It" to his repertoire and made a point of giving a rendition in the presence of Eric Hammond, at a recent reception hosted by the US Ambassador...

All of which looks like leaving John Aitkin — pro-TUC "Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union" (numbering at most a few thousand from the EETPU's 300,000 plus total membership) rather out in the cold. But then, Aitkin could always become the leader of a new "Electrical and Plumbing" trade group with the TGWU...

## NALGO needs a serious broad left

By Paul Wooley, NWRHA NALGO

**T**he Poll Tax. The Housing Bill. Cuts in local government spending. The Education reform Act. Employment Training.

These Tory policies are attacks not only on working class people but also on the jobs, pay and conditions of workers in NALGO. A real fight by NALGO members will be an essential part of any successful fightback. But NALGO's leaders still refuse to fight. It looks grim.

After last Saturday's (24th Sept) NALGO Broad Left national conference in Leeds? Well, it still looks grim. In fact, the conference was grim. Perhaps it had been publicised on page 10 of the Batley Evening Standard — certainly nowhere else. So 45 people attended (NALGO has over 600,000 members) and most were from the SWP or Militant. Grim is the word.

All the major attacks listed above — and more — were covered. But this was not a Broad Left thrashing out ideas for action, for resisting Tory attacks and building within the union. This was a Teddy Bear's picnic with squabbles. It was a quaint, caricature Broad Left — the kind which the right-wing describe.

The Militant teddies spoke of the rise and rise of the Broad Left as it engaged in new battles, attracting "whole new layers" of NALGO members (so why weren't they at the conference?). This would be reflected in the fall of NALGO's national executive to the Broad Left (the BL — ie. Militant — presently has 2 NEC members).

The SWP teddies disagreed. They said we cannot find "organisational solutions to political problems". The "political problem" is New Realism — read the TUC/Labour Party — read reformism. The answer is a "fighting alternative" — read the SWP, read socialist revolution. Attention to the union's leadership should mean attacking them for their new realism. Full stop.

It was the pathetic, infighting

Broad Left which the right-wingers depict. For example, Socialist Organiser supporters argued — in a debate on the merger between NALGO and NUPE — that the new union should have regional structures and election of officials based on industrial groups (like Local Government, Health, Electricity) instead of geographical groupings of branches. Militant opposed this because it "puts conditions" on the Broad Left's merger policy — they don't want to argue too hard with the right-wing over trivia like union democracy! The

SWP opposed it as "an organisational solution to a political problem".

It is perhaps as well that no new rank and file NALGO activists were there.

But the SWP and Militant did agree, though neither said so. They were both solely concerned with getting the Broad Left to adopt their own world outlook. They both see the Broad Left as an appendage — or potential appendage — of their own organisation. They're both wrong.

The Broad Left must be an open,

democratic, non-sectarian rank and file organisation. It must combine real grass roots campaigning with a real fight against the sell-out leaders. It must be built, but not as an electrical machine for Militant supporters. It will not arise by magic from the "fight against new realism."

Socialist Organiser supporters in NALGO (SOS NALGO) will help to build a real Broad Left. Contact: SOS NALGO, c/o Nik Barstow, NALGO Office, 23 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN.

## The EETPU and the Labour Party

**E**ric Heffer is right when he argues on the front page of this week's Socialist Organiser that the first thing Labour Party conference has to do is take up the issue of the EETPU head on.

Hammond and his cronies should not be allowed to sit in conference. They have broken from the TUC and should not be allowed a say in Labour Party affairs while that remains the situation.

It is dishonest and hypocritical for Neil Kinnock and the right-wing on the NEC to attempt to prevent this issue being discussed. However, Kinnock's motives are not hard to fathom. The presence of the EETPU at conference will strengthen the right-wing vote and provide added leverage for Kinnock to force through the decisions he wants.

This latest anomaly is just one of a whole series of bureaucratic bungles and fudges over the issue of the EETPU.

Though Hammond has been thrown out of the TUC, the EETPU is still allowed to participate in the Scottish TUC after the electricians threatened legal action if they were expelled. The CSEU — the campaigning and negotiating joint union body in shipbuilding and engineering — still allows the EETPU to participate.



So there are still plenty of links at a bureaucratic level.

Meanwhile, many ordinary rank and file electricians, including pro-TUC ones, who want to fight Hammond's business unionism from inside the EETPU, are finding themselves chastised by many activists in the broad labour movement.

Anti-Hammond EETPU stewards have been banned from TUC educational and safety courses.

Also, Manchester City Council's ruling Labour group has used its power as an employer in an attempt to de-recognise the EETPU and get it kicked off the council joint shop

stewards committee.

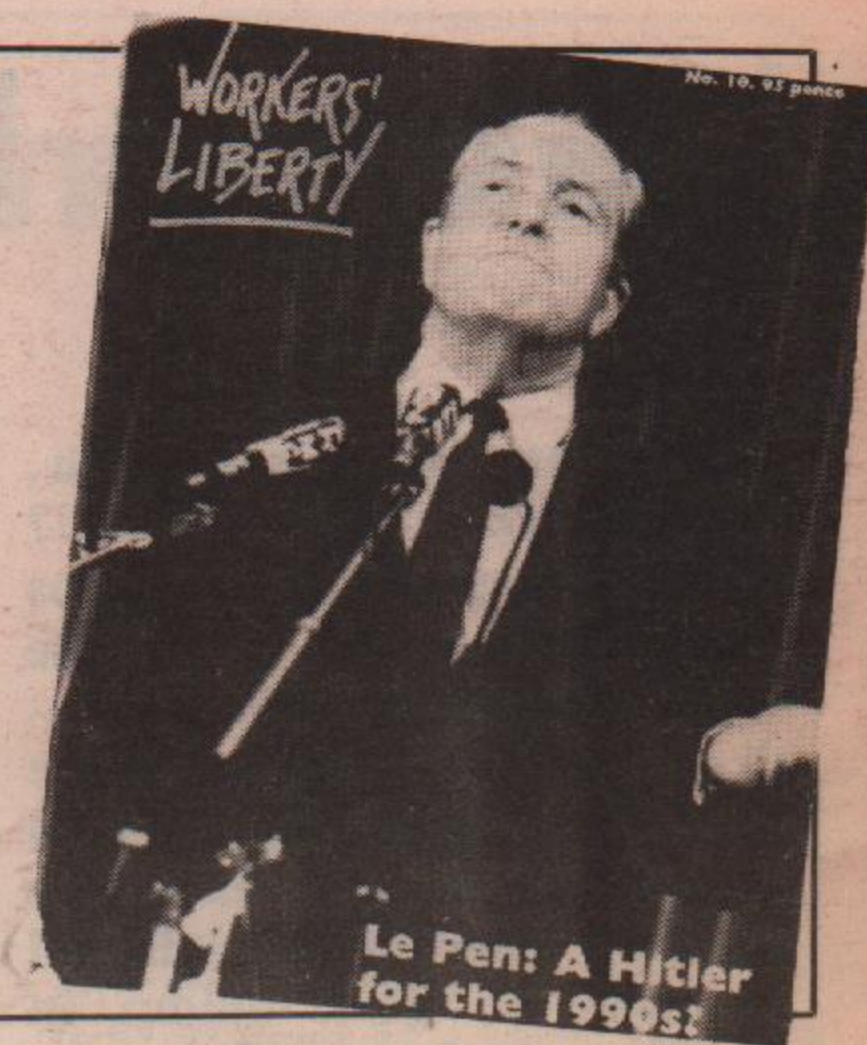
This is completely the wrong approach. We need to isolate Hammond and the bureaucrats around him and link up with rank and file EETPU members who want to clean out the union. That's the way to defeat business unionism.

Shop stewards committees, trades councils, union branches and Labour parties should still accept delegations from anti-Hammond EETPU branches and these bodies should add their strength and resources to a campaign inside the EETPU against Hammond's scab unionism and for re-affiliation to the TUC.

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

Workers' Liberty no. 10 includes articles on the Stalinist roots of left anti-Semitism, the Gulf War, France in 1968, Zbigniew Kowaleski on Poland. 90p + postage, PO Box 823 London SE15 4NA.



# Counter attack!

## New battles loom in Post Office

By a postal officer

**U**CW members on the delivery/sorting side of business are not alone in facing attacks on their jobs, pay and conditions. Those of us in the counter and clerical staff grades also have a struggle ahead.

Girobank is being sold off to the highest bidder. There are obvious threats to those who work for Girobank and Post Office counters from asset strippers and the demands for 'more efficiency'. In the counters, parcels and letters businesses, clerical staff face loss of jobs through regrading and further demands for increased workload from a particularly vicious management.

At the same time, the counters business propose closing 750 Crown Offices (half the Crown Offices nationwide) with a loss of 5,000 jobs.

The Post Office and UCW leadership have been proud of their industrial relations record following the 1971 strikes. Time and again the UCW leadership have caved in to the pressure from management. Union headquarters persistently argued we had to work together with management to secure the future of the business.

And, in 1983, the C and CS grades

were recommended a productivity deal which lost us 1,500 jobs (according to union figures) in 1½ years.

Again, in 1986, the executive proposed a deal to accept part-timers and more flexible working practices to 'protect the Crown office network by reducing costs.' They went so far as to produce a glossy brochure to put their case, including a letter from a Post Office board member echoing the executive's arguments.

The brochure urged us to exploit 'market opportunities' by becoming 'more competitive by reducing costs and prices' and by being 'more flexible and responsive to change.'

All the time the threat of privatisation was used to stamp on militancy. None of this compliance has prevented the Post Office from coming back for more. Last year the Tories sent in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to stitch up the counters business. They were to look for a way of increasing efficiency and standards of service without increasing costs, and to decide whether the counters business was operating against the public interest.

It was widely expected that their conclusions would not be good news for C and CS grades, yet all the decision got



Tuffin on UCW picket line

was a small mention in the News in Brief column of the December 1987 issue of the union journal.

Now the report is out and those expectations have been fulfilled. 5,000 jobs are to be lost.

On top of this, the Post Office will look at who does what work with a view to getting it done cheaper, either by using more part-timers or by changing the

grading structure.

The end product could be the near disappearance of higher paid full-time grades in parts of the business.

To begin with, the union responded to the threat posed by the MMC with sweet reason. It put submissions to the MMC explaining how the union bureaucrats could actually run the Post Office more efficiently and more pro-

fitably than the Post Office board.

Approaches were made to the Post Office for talks on the proposed closures, but the union was given the brush-off. The refusal of the Post Office to take part in negotiations finally spurred the UCW executive into action.

A ballot for industrial action was called for in September and a big effort made to get an overwhelming 'yes' vote.

There seemed little doubt that this was what would happen. But it appears that the executive wants a large 'yes' vote only as a bargaining counter with the counters management. They are peeved that management won't talk to them. This is clear, both from the tone in the union journal and from remarks made by the union's executive member responsible for counters, Ernie Dudley.

There are real problems facing the C and CS grades in the coming battle with the Post Office.

First, there is the executive's desire to use the 'yes' vote only to get back into negotiations with the Post Office. This can only raise false expectations amongst the members that we can avoid industrial action. Once in negotiations, what will we negotiate? What is an 'acceptable' number of closures?

Second, there is the problem of isolation. During the dispute over DRAS, the executive pulled out all the stops to keep the C and CS grades at work. Not only this; they put back the C and CS ballot until the DRAS action was over.

If we are to be successful we will need the power of the delivery/sorting workers alongside us. Or will they be told to cross our picket lines?

Last is the question of legality. The Post Office is now organised into four separate businesses: parcels, letters, counters and Girobank. The ballot on counters was a ballot of all C and CS grades in the Post Office. How will the union react if the letters business take out an injunction against its C and CS people going on strike over a counters business policy?

The fight against privatisation in Girobank is another case. Union policy is to oppose privatisation by all means up to and including industrial action. Will the Girobank workers be left isolated; and if not, does that mean going illegal? We cannot allow ourselves to be picked off and we cannot allow ourselves to be used as cannon fodder.

Our jobs are at stake.

## South Wales miners reject 6-day working

**I** was delighted to hear the news that the South Wales miners had unanimously rejected the Coal Board's attempt to blackmail them over the planned Margam pit. They supported NUM policy and rejected 6-day working at Margam, or any where else.

I fully expected that from the great rank and file South Wales miners. My one disappointment was that they debated it in the first place, because the national NUM already had a clear, democratically-decided policy on it.

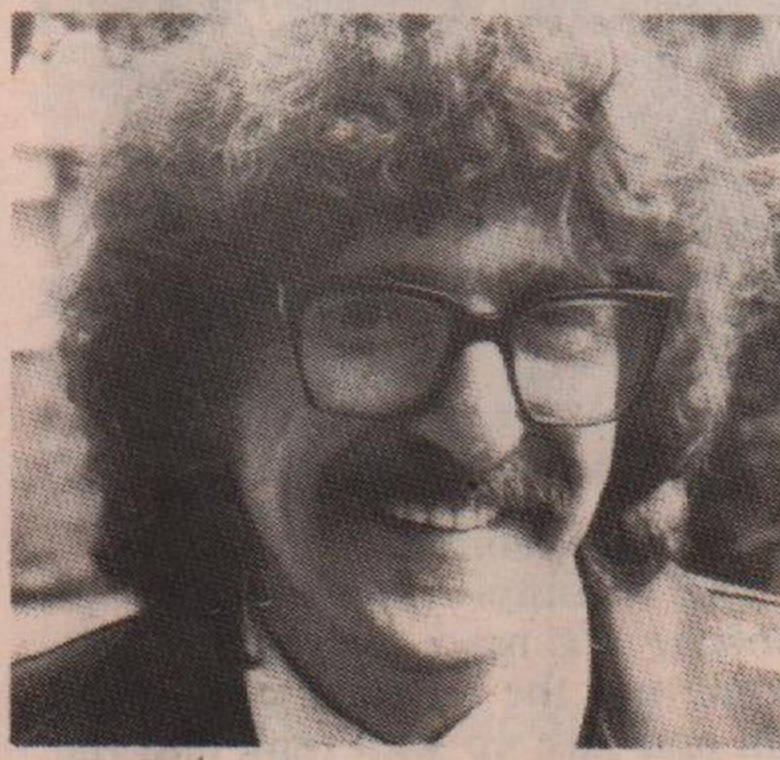
The South Wales NUM leaders said they were disappointed that the Coal Board had presented them with a take-it-or-leave-it deal, exactly the same deal as the UDM had accepted for Ashfordby in Leicestershire.

But why should they be surprised. They should have known that when they told the Coal Board that they were prepared to discuss 6-day working at Margam that would be taken as a sign of weakness by the Board, who were only too happy to exploit it.

The strength of the rank and file rejection should now make the position absolutely clear.

Roy Lynk of the UDM claims

### WHETTON'S WEEK



A miner's diary

that he will organise the pit — recruiting ex-NUM members and non-miners. I think this is pure waffle.

He might have been able to do it in the heart of Nottinghamshire. But in South Wales he will have very great difficulties.

Perhaps he will use some of the waiters he has supposedly recruited in hotels on the south coast, or

some of the laundry cleaners. In any case, there is no way that that pit is going to be handed over to the UDM. No way!

Labour Party Conference is taking place next week. Now that I am working again, it will be the first Conference I have missed for a number of years.

The present leadership are still pushing their line that democracy is a distraction. They are outraged that Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have decided to challenge them for the leadership. That sets a very bad precedent.

I have challenged Kinnock about the right of UDM members to hold Labour Party cards — they are not part of a bona fide trade union recognised by the TUC. Kinnock replied that it was a technicality. Now they are saying the leadership election is a distraction. How long before they say that Clause 4 is a total liability and needs to be got rid of completely. I think that is being prepared.

They want to rewrite the policies and rule book to suit them. It suits them to expel Militant; it doesn't suit them to expel or exclude UDM members. If it doesn't suit them it's a distraction.

Of course, it should go without saying that we have regular elections for the leadership. Don't Kin-

nock and Hattersley believe in democracy?

I have attended 3 of the so-called open 'Labour Listens' meetings about the Policy Reviews. They are purely cosmetic jobs. They say they want to listen to what we have got to say but they don't mean it. Having gone through the public relations exercise they then go away and totally ignore you. Then they write down in the Policy Review exactly what they were thinking in the first place.

It seems as if the leadership has enough block votes under their belt and the backing of enough CLPs to allow them to railroad through what they want to get through.

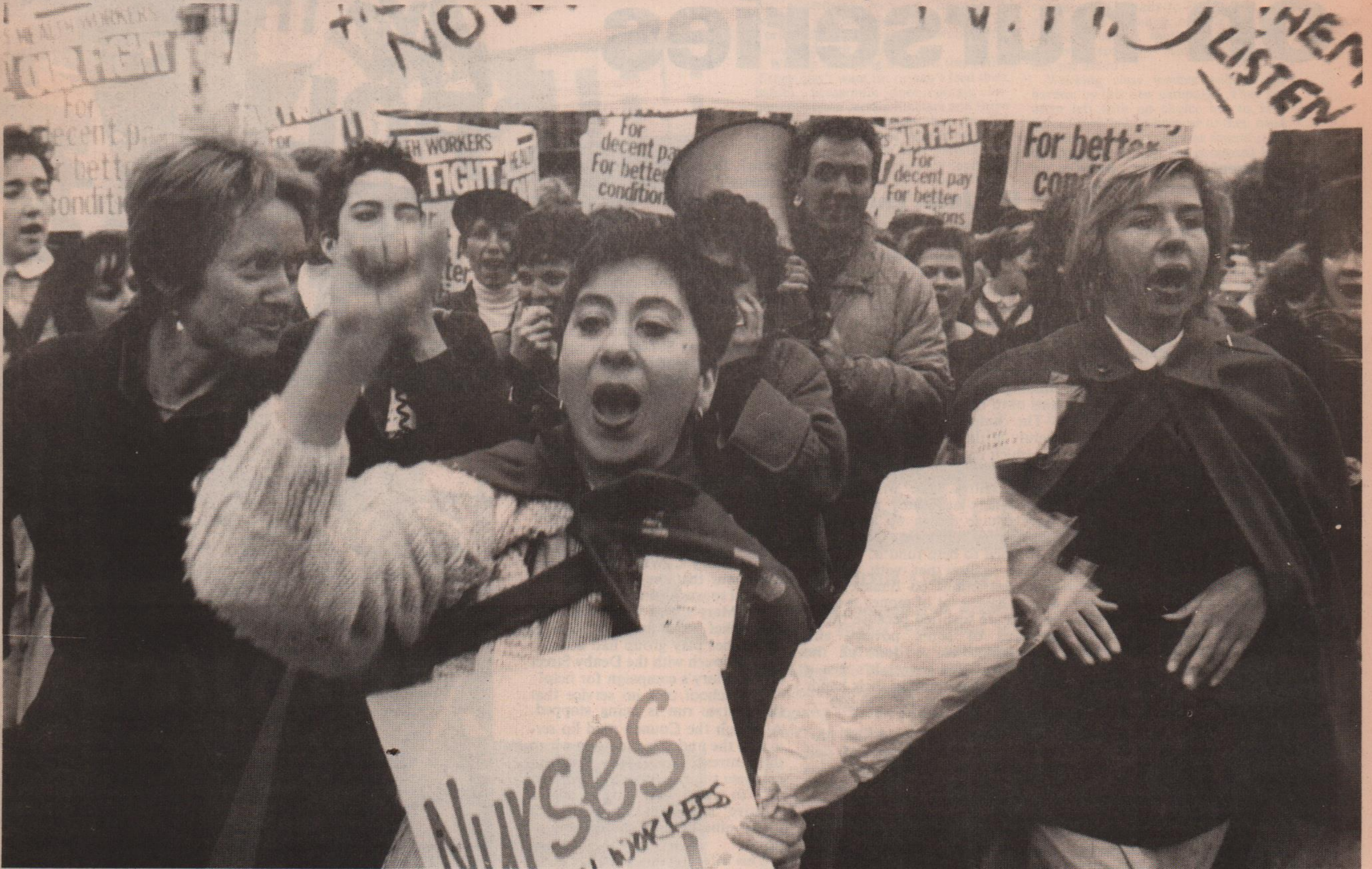
Now obviously, if Kinnock and Hattersley have got it right, then I would be prepared to apologise and throw my full weight behind them when they get to No. 10. The tragedy is that if they've got it wrong, and I've got it right, then the working class will be faced with another 5 years of Maggie Thatcher or her substitute. More anti-trade union legislation, continued ripping-off of the working class.

That might not effect Kinnock and Hattersley and most of the PLP too much — another 5 years on their pay and allowances — but the working class, who will have to suffer the brunt of it, cannot afford to let it happen.

# WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

**Inside:** Poll Tax  
Student  
Women  
Feminism  
loses its way

10p if sold separately



Nurses strike against Tory cuts in NHS, March 1988

## Resist the drift to the right — kick out Kinnock's Policy Reviews

# Reject the Reviews!

By Lynn Ferguson

**This year's Labour Party conference is a watershed for the left — and that means women too.**

This is the year that Kinnock and Co. are trying to railroad through 'Aims and Values' and the Policy Reviews, to undemocratically ditch any semblance of socialist principle from Labour's platform.

This is the year that the leadership have chosen to try and roll back the democratic advances we made in the early 1980s, to gut conference as a decision-making body, to begin the process of turning Labour into a thoroughly centralis-

ed, top-down machine a la Germany's SPD.

In short, this is the year that our 'leadership' want to firmly establish a 'new model Labour Party', distanced from its 'old-fashioned' image.

But ordinary party members are beginning to organise. Only three weeks ago, over 40 CLPs from around the country met in Manchester to discuss a rank and file response to the Policy Reviews, and the constitutional changes. This is a milestone in reorganising the left, in galvanising ourselves out of the demoralisation and flaccidity that has affected the left over the past few years.

Women have every reason to be angry and to join the fightback at

this year's conference.

- The Alton Bill was the biggest attack on women's abortion rights in years. Labour has conference policy of a woman's right to choose. Yet the only prominent Labour politician to make a stand on this issue was Jo Richardson. Where were the Labour leadership? The Bill eventually fell through lack of time — no thanks to our supposedly 'accountable' leaders.

- The poll tax will seriously affect women. Single mothers and women caring for ageing or disabled relatives will be particularly badly hit. Many women's refuges may have to close due to the crippling effects of poll tax bills, leaving battered women to walk the streets — or stay with bullying husbands.

Yet Neil Kinnock et al insist that any campaign against the poll tax must remain within the law — Tory law that is designed to bind us hand and foot. Neil may stay out of goal, but tens of thousands of women will be left to a much worse fate.

- The NHS dispute. Women are the biggest users of the NHS, as well as providing the bulk of nursing and ancillary staff. Our leadership may have made moving speeches in Parliament in defence of the NHS, but firmly refused to support the nurses' strikes.

The Labour leadership has consistently rattled on women over the past year. The Policy Reviews, despite their lip service to women, offer nothing in the way of dealing with the real issues affecting work-

ing class women. What does Labour intend to do about low pay, employment rights for part time workers, about nursery provision. They don't say anything up front, but the message between the lines is clear — they intend to do damn all.

We deserve a better leadership than this. We deserve a party that fights for us, alongside us, rather than using our needs as a rhetorical device in Parliamentary speeches. Tony Benn and Eric Heffer are challenging the leadership this year. We should vote for them. But whatever the outcome of the contest, we should organise to take back our party, to make it the party of the rank and file, including women, not the party of petty right-wing careerists like Kinnock.

# Tory axe falls on nurseries

Two children's centres providing nursery facilities in Sheffield are threatened with closure as a result of the government's Employment Training scheme.

This will mean the loss of 168 places for under-5s, 20 jobs for nursery workers and will jeopardise the jobs of many mothers whose children use the centres.

The two centres, Denby Street family centre and St Mary's children's centre, are currently funded by the MSC and provide free nursery provision, mostly for single parent families, parents from the black community and disabled women, who cannot manage the kids at home all day. The centres are in a very deprived inner city area of high unemployment and many of the children who use St Mary's are referred there by the social services.

A campaign to save the centres has been set up by women who use them. *Women's Fightback* spoke to Chrissie Meleady, involved in the campaign, when they came to London to present a petition against the closures to 10 Downing St.

"The ET scheme is an exploitation of unemployed people and has no relation to the needs of women and children. To be part of the scheme we have to run it at a profit, which means we would have to get rid of all the local children."

Also, under the ET scheme people only work for an average of six months, so there is no continuity of childcare. There is no training on the job for childcare workers, and those on the scheme receive only their dole money plus £10.

Hundreds of family centres in the region are collapsing as a result of this government policy. Denby St and St Mary's are the major ones, and the irony about the closure of

By Jean Lane

St Mary's is that it was in fact used as a show case for the government's nursery provision. Chrissie explained: "The children have been used as publicity fodder for the government; documentaries have been made about it, showing it to be a model of excellence. And now they are forcing it to close by taking its funding away and are turning those kids onto the street."

The campaign has been directed mainly at the Sheffield City Council, which has a committee to unify all the city's under-5s provision into family centres. The workers and campaigners at Denby St and St Mary's have drawn up a plan to amalgamate, and have asked the City Council to help fund it.

"We realise that with government restrictions on finance, they do not have a lot of money, but we feel we are justified because this is an area of acute poverty and deprivation. We've done all the groundwork for them. It's just a matter of them putting their hands into their pockets for £30,000 — which is minimal."

The council accepted the proposals of the campaign and said they would do a feasibility study into the proposed amalgamation of the centres. But they said that it would have to be at no further cost and with no additional workers, which, as Chrissie said, is not feasible at all.

Under the council's plans, children who are not from the immediate area will be evicted and told to find alternative provision. "But there is no alternative provision in the other areas because the council never set any facilities up

there! That's their fault, not the parents'."

Nurseries do not have catchment areas and people from all over Sheffield use St Mary's. If the council has its way children will be taken out of an environment they know. The parents will lose an input into the running of the centre. At the moment they have a very large input; controlling the anti-racist and anti-sexist way St Mary's is run and selecting the staff to run it.

The parents were treated patronisingly and with contempt at a "consultation meeting" with councillors.

The Council's proposals will turn St Mary's into a small play group. One councillor showed her ignorance at the meeting with parents when she referred to a small play group in another part of the city as a fine example of the plans they had for St Mary's. What she did not know was that the play group she pointed to was so under-staffed that the St Mary's staff were covering it with relief work to keep it going. This other play group had actually been in touch with the Denby Street and St Mary's campaign for help!

The school pick-up service that the centres run is being stopped. Although the Council paid lip service to the under 2s provision which the centres provide, they made no concrete statement about keeping it on. In fact they have made a positive statement that children under nine months should stay at home.

This affects many women's ability to work. Chrissie told us of a woman who has already had to leave work as a typist in an office. She had two children in St Mary's and now has been thrown back on to the DHSS.

Another woman, Alice Blackmore has 3 children at Denby Street. She had no school qualifications. She fought to get into University and did a degree and is now doing a PhD. "She has worked her arse off to get where she is, and now may have to leave because of this".

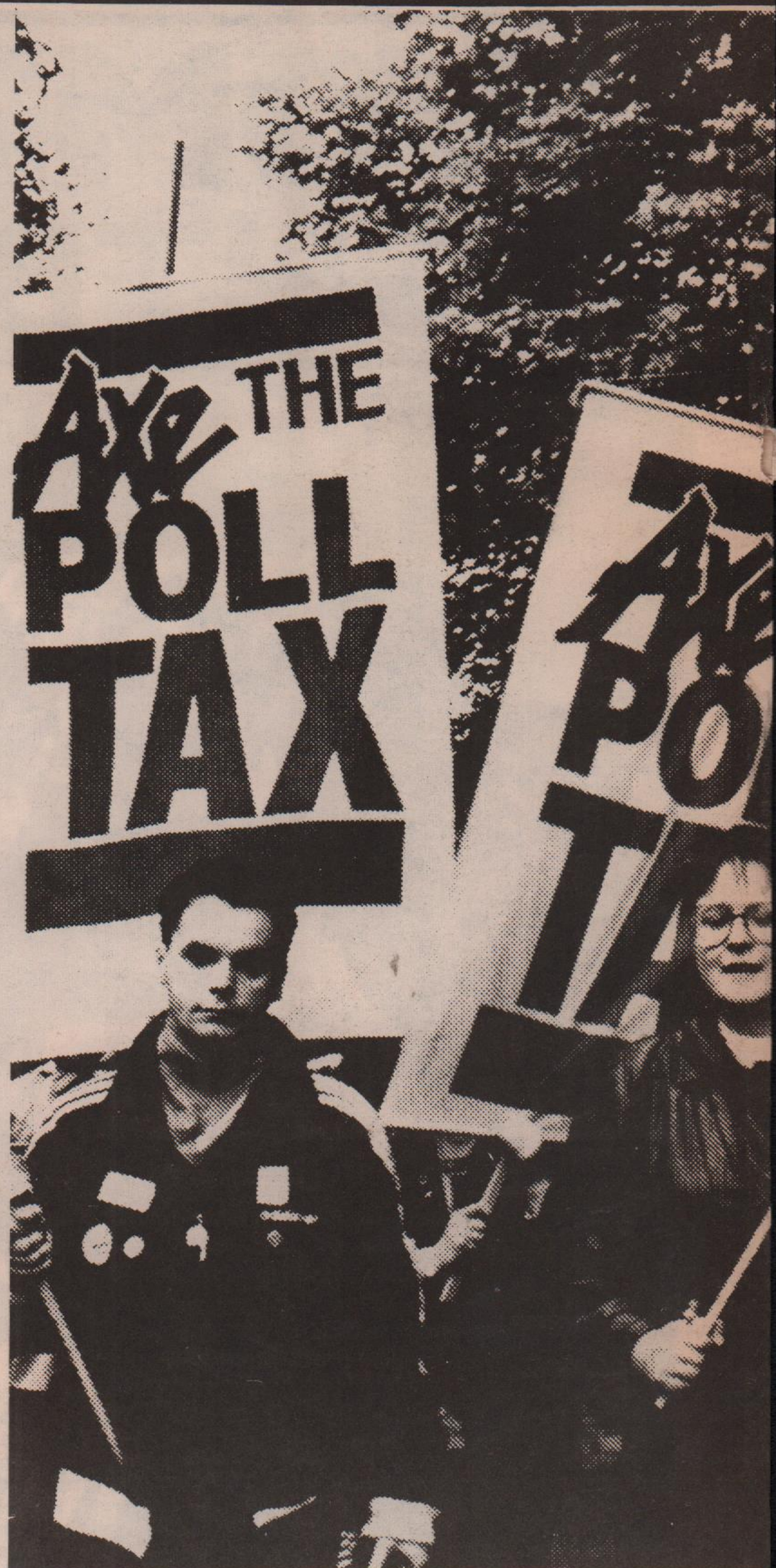
The CP schemes are continuing to run until 25th November but between now and then Denby St and St Mary's are losing staff, so the service is being reduced. For every member of staff that leaves 5 children have to go.

The campaign are producing their own document about how the centre's should be run including reports from child psychologists, from other under 5s campaigns and letters of protest at the council's plans. They are hoping that this will be sent out with the council's feasibility study report.

The campaign has received money and support from local trade unions including the TGWU, the NUM and NALGO which represent local council workers. They are asking also the CPSA to support them. Even despite this, though, they have had to sell toys from the centres to keep the campaign against closure going.

Send messages of support and money to: Chrissie Meleady, St Mary's Children's Centre, Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4UC.

Also if any similar fight is going on in your area, please tell Women's Fightback about it.



## Women p

When the poll tax comes into effect — in 1989 in Scotland and 1990 in England and Wales — women will be among the biggest losers. They will lose out financially more than most, but also in other ways.

The poll tax is a flat-rate tax on the individual, unrelated to ability to pay. Everyone over the age of 18 will have to pay, whether they are unemployed, a student, old, sick, disabled or just plain poor. Even the homeless seeking night shelter, or a woman escaping from a violent partner in a Women's Aid refuge, will be liable to pay a share of the poll tax on a daily basis.

The lower your income, therefore, the worse off you will be. Women make up the vast majority of those on low incomes — the average earnings of women are less than two thirds of the average male earnings and part-time jobs are almost entirely the province of women. Furthermore, more women are dependent on social security benefits and most single parent families are headed by a woman.

In addition, 70% of pensioners are women. And nearly one in three widowed or single women over 80 live with relatives. It is overwhelmingly women who bear the responsibility for caring for these people. The strain of caring will be made

even greater by the poll tax, as the more people live in one house, the more tax you have to pay.

Seventy nine per cent of workers living in their place of work are women, and they are often very low paid, eg. hotel and catering workers, healthworkers, workers in children's and old people's homes.

## Hob-nobbi

Many women in the Labour Party would have been surprised if they had heard the Shadow Minister for Women, Jo Richardson, speaking at a fringe meeting at this year's Labour Party Women's Conference.

Getting more women into Parliament is essential we were told, because women are less competitive and less macho than men and therefore debates in the house would be much more meaningful. Jo had had such a debate only two weeks before on Health. "I think it was introduced by the other side actually. It might have been Edwina". Anyway the fact that there were only a handful of men in the chamber

## Sisters of the Long March

The Sisters of the Long March begin their tour of Britain this week, and will be here until December. The South African group's tour is sponsored by NUMSA/SAWCO and supported by the TUC.

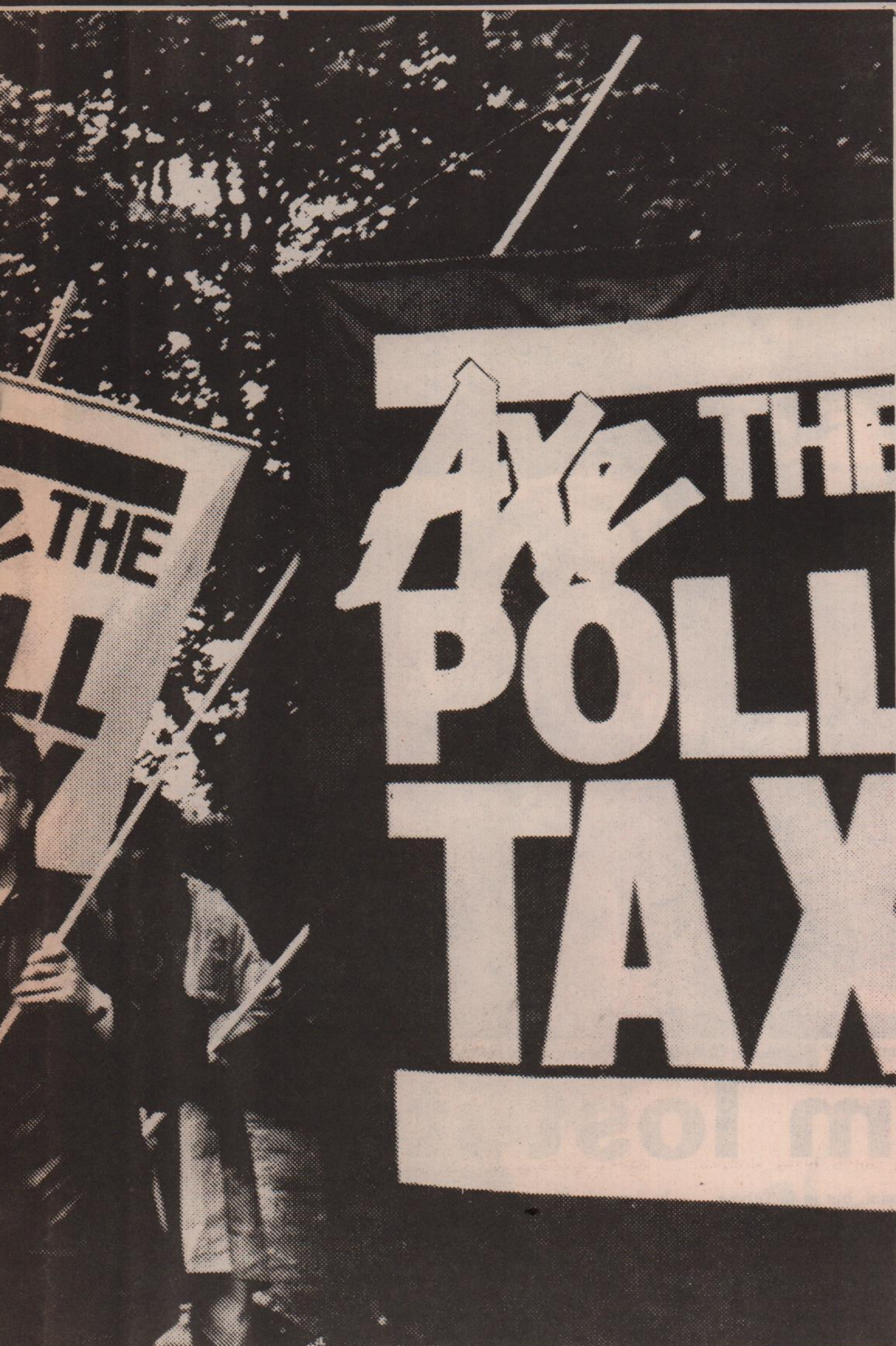
"We are an all-woman dancing and singing group from Mpophomeni. We call ourselves Sisters of the Long March. We compose our own songs about women's struggles in South Africa and we also collect songs from other countries, like Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. These songs tell different stories about the nature of life in each place.

"Initially we took our music as some kind of sport to make ourselves happy. But we soon realised that we would like our

skills to support our mothers and fathers in their struggle against BTR Sarmcol. As we developed our songs we saw that certain talents abounded within our group. People here in South Africa enjoy our performances as much as we enjoy performing them! Long live democratic forces! We shall conquer in unity."

Dates for the tour are:  
North West 26th September;  
East Midlands 4th October;  
West Midlands 11th Oct; East Anglia 18th Oct; Yorkshire 25th Oct; North East 1st November;  
Scotland 8th Nov; Wales 19th Nov; London Perimeter 22nd Nov; London Metropolitan 29th Nov.

For more information contact: NUMSA/SAWCO, PO Box 153, Leicester LE2 4FX.



# Pay the price

Under the present system, residential workers do not pay rates, but they will be liable for the poll tax and it is unlikely that employers will raise wages in order to foot the bill. Voluntary organisations will be unable to afford to compensate workers for their financial loss and may lose staff, resulting in closures.

Partners who are 'jointly and severally' liable for each other's tax will be able to see each other's entry in the register. A woman who flees a violent partner, therefore, will not be able to conceal her new address until legally declared separated, thus exposing her to the risk of further violence. And the first thing

women entering a Woman's Aid refuge will find is not sympathy and support, if the Tories have their way, but a poll tax registration form. Many black and ethnic women fall within the low income bracket and so will face problems with the poll tax. Given that many women live in extended families — 11% of West Indian households, and 29% of Asian households, contain more than 6 adults — they will be faced with massive poll tax bills, and may result in the break up of families and communities.

## Working with the enemy

By Jean Lane

and lots of women ensured that the debate was conducted on very hummy and it seems first name terms or as Jo put it herself, 'comradely'. Tell that to the women who have waited in pain for years for operations that they cannot afford to have done privately. Yes we do want more women in Parliament. But not so that they can hob-nob it with our class enemies. We want women with socialist politics who will put the case for working class women; who will refuse to get sucked into back-slapping, old pals act because they have a base of working class women behind them who know what they are up to and to whom they are ac-

countable. Many women will be surprised because of Jo Richardson's record of long standing for being a left wing organiser and fighter for democratic changes in the party. But the idea that we can be 'comradely' with someone like Edwina Curry because we are all women comes from a long tradition of radical feminism that, having no regard for class politics, has thrown many women in the Labour Party off the right track. Women are going to have to fight hard and recruit many working class women who are also prepared to fight if they want the Ministry for Women to be more than just a talking shop.

Local councils, facing a reduced income, will be under great pressure to cut services in order to save money. Nursery provision, help for the elderly or disabled, etc. will be the first services to go, again hitting women hardest. Labour-controlled councils which have declared their commitment to women's rights therefore have a clear opportunity to put that commitment into practice — by refusing to cooperate with any aspect of the poll tax legislation. We must also link up with the council and civil service workers in NALGO and the CPSA and fight for a policy of non-implementation. Women's sections must demand that the Labour Party nationally takes up and leads the fight against this vicious anti-working class attack.

## Letters

### Don't ban the bottle

In early 1989 the Tory Government will be introducing an advertising ban on baby's feeding bottles and teats. This is part of Edwina Currie's £10,000 breastfeeding campaign.

An advertising ban on baby milk powders has operated since 1983. The Tories believe that too many women still bottlefeed their babies.

Women are being made to feel guilty if they don't want to, or can't feed their babies. Breastmilk does contain immunities from certain illnesses and there is less risk of infection than bottled milk. But what about women who go out to work? Maybe they should feel doubly guilty because they are depriving their babies not only of breastmilk but also their time and attention.

This is the key to the Currie strategy — women should stay at home to look after their babies properly. This means breastfeeding. If as much attention was paid to the poverty and homelessness which many children are forced to grow up with, as to the way they are fed as infants, Edwina Currie's concern for babies would be more believable.

Baby milk manufacturers have now agreed to stop supplying maternity units with cut-price baby milk by the end of the year, a subsidy which amounts to £5 million per year. It is not clear whether this cost will be borne by the NHS, or whether, as is more likely, women will have to pay for their milk in hospital

just as they already have to pay for nappies and sanitary towels.

Edwina Currie says there is a 'growing' view among health professionals that the long established custom of giving away, through the health system, free samples to mothers and reduced price supplies of ready-to-feed milk to hospitals, is outdated, of little real help to bottlefeeding mothers and is no longer acceptable. How many women has she asked?

Working class women will be hit hardest by this new campaign. They are often left with no choice but to bottlefeed their babies because of their need to work. Women's sections should start campaigning against the proposed ban and its effects on working class women.

Unfortunately, when Stretford WS in Manchester proposed such a campaign, they were met by an 'unholy alliance' of the Militant and the right wing, who refused to campaign against the Tory ban because it would benefit the baby milk manufacturers!

Women should not feel guilty because they bottlefeed their babies. What is needed is a massive health education campaign about both bottle and breastfeeding. We should tell Edwina Currie to stick her campaign, and start addressing the real problems of poverty and deprivation which babies suffer from as a result of Tory policies.

Julia Coulton  
Manchester

## NUS Women

By Emma Colyer

Each year thousands of women start at Higher Education or Further Education colleges, enabling the National Union of Students to build a strong, outgoing women's campaign, in theory at least.

In reality this has not happened. Why not? There have been some achievements, such as the women's officer on the National Executive Committee, but the truth of the matter is, in most unions, arguments for women's liberation have not yet been won. One of the main reasons for this is the failure to turn the women's campaign out of the rarefied environment of HE student unions and into FEs and the wider community.

What is clearly needed is an NUS women's campaign with a political perspective which gives the campaign two major aims: to build support for women's demands and to involve more women in political activity, in and out of the student movement.

We must look to examples such as Women Against Pit Closures, showing us the potential of working class women organising. Here, we saw the women not only challenging the government, but the sexist attitudes of their husbands, boyfriends and NUM officials. It is this kind of movement we want, broadened out to take up all issues that affect women.

What is needed in colleges now is

a women's campaign that can really involve women students and campus workers in a fight around the issues that immediately affects their lives. We want to see a mass campaign against major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our own fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities and the right to live with a partner of our choice. The way to do this is by building a cohesive campaign that relates firstly to women on small-scale demands such as late night transport, and street lighting.

Socialist students believe one way of achieving this is to initiate Women's Fightback groups, turning the student movement out to the local community, building links with women's groups, Labour Party women's sections and women's strike support groups.

Creating these sort of outgoing women's campaigns are part of fighting for a working class women's movement. These groups would work on different levels in the various colleges, depending on how developed the union is. However, one thing that they all would have in common is an orientation to the labour movement.

NUS women's campaign must be forced to fight back, we have that chance to turn it around and make it the sort of campaign we want to see. So if you agree with us, want to find out more information, or want Women's Fightback speakers to come to your college, contact: Women's Fightback, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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Doing very nicely out of GLC-style feminism, Ann Pettifor congratulating Jo Richardson at LP Women's Conference. Photo John Harris (IFL)

# How feminism lost its way

By Katherine O'Leary

**What has happened to women's politics in Britain? Today, every bookshop has its selection of feminist books, local authorities have their equal opportunities policies, even some Tory women pronounce themselves to be feminists.**

But for the mass of women, little has changed. Feminism is respectable — yet the bulk of working class women are stuck in low paid work in non-union workplaces, juggling home and family against a background of declining welfare provision and increasing poverty.

What remains of the women's movement of the '70s is little more than a middle class milieu, a milieu, moreover, locked into semi-theological debates over hierarchies of oppression, debates which have little bearing on the lives and struggles of ordinary women.

What went wrong? How could the lively, dynamic movement of the '70s end up like this?

The modern women's movement in Britain was a vibrant radical movement. Women, whose expectations had been raised by access to higher education, vented their anger

on a society which still treated them as mindless 'dolly-birds', which denied them access, on an equal basis to men, to jobs in which they were undoubtedly qualified.

Women from traditional left organisations rebelled against the crass sexism of their male comrades and the secondary place they were assigned — typing up circulars rather than formulating theory. Eldridge Cleaver's often-quoted remark about the position of women in revolutionary struggles being 'prone' pretty much sums up the attitude of much of the '60s and early '70s male left.

The late '60s to early '70s were a time when radical young people — often students — felt they could do anything. There was a mood of optimism, a mood that 'we can change the world'. The women's movement was part of that.

In its early days the politics of the women's movement were broadly socialist. The movement was quite diverse in terms of ideas, but there was a unifying thread — the thread that said women's oppression was to do with the way that society is organised generally and that women's liberation is bound up with the struggle for socialism.

The slogan 'the personal is political' summed up this idea. Women may experience their pro-

blems as personal, but in fact these problems are shared by women and arise out of the condition of women in society.

In short, the early women's movement fused an elementary understanding that, to fully liberate women, the world would have to be turned upside down, with a concern to win democratic rights for women in the here and now — equal pay, the right for women to be treated equally when applying for jobs/promotion, etc. What happened over the following years, culminating in the GLC experience, was the pulling apart of the democratic and socialist strands, complicated by the input of US-style radical/cultural feminism.

By the late 1970s, the focus of the women's movement had shifted from demands around social issues to more personal questions around sexuality. The slogan 'the personal is political' was turned on its head — the solution to women's situation was seen more and more by a current in the movement as to be found in changing one's own lifestyle — at the extreme end by withdrawing completely from relationships with men, at the softer end by concentrating on 'personal growth' and development.

Oddly enough, it is in the politics of this radical/cultural feminist current that the approach of magazines like *Cosmopolitan* is rooted, its only one step from 'the political is personal' to the go-getting, sod everyone else, approach of *Cosmo* woman. The ideology of sisterly solidarity dissolves into a weird version of bourgeois competitive individualism.

1978 was the year of the last ever Women's Liberation Movement conference. The split was finalised between the radical and the socialist feminists. But the socialist feminist current too had taken on much of the ideology of the cultural feminists. Capitalism and patriarchy were seen by many socialist feminists as separate systems — the struggle of women against men and the struggle of women as workers against capitalism were to some degree seen as separable.

In the early 1980s, there was a big influx of socialist feminist women into the Labour Party. This meshed in with the rise of the new left in the Labour Party, a left motivated by the idea of 'never again' a Labour government like that of Wilson and Callaghan, and organised around constitutional changes and the 'Benn for Deputy' campaign.

This influx of feminist women into the Labour Party had enormous potential. It raised the possibility of re-uniting socialist and democratic demands for women in a new working class-orientated women's movement. Women from outside the traditional sluggish structures and routines of the labour movement could shake up the Labour Party. A fight to force the labour movement to take up 'women's issues' could have an immense impact on the party as a whole.

This potential, however, was never realised. The debacle of the GLC played a pivotal role.

Labour's new left made a big impact in local government. Between 1978 and 1983 left Labour administrators were elected in local authorities. In May 1981 Ken Livingstone was elected leader of the GLC.

The GLC's 1981 manifesto contained explicit commitments to fight the government, to demand proper funding and services. Livingstone personally pledged the support of the GLC to any workers in struggle. But it slid away from this very soon. In early 1982 the GLC decided to obey the courts over the 'Fares Fair' issue.

Livingstone's GLC abandoned its overt commitment to the working class, to socialist politics, for a variant of radical liberalism. It turned towards women, and other oppressed groups, in search of ways of being 'radical' that did not mean collision with the Tories and the courts.

But what did the GLC do for women? Equal opportunities policies, women's committees, handing out grants to women's groups and projects was all very good — but separated off from any commitment to fight for the working class,

including working class women, it became not only cosmetic, but potentially divisive.

Instead of overcoming sex-based divisions in the working class it tended to reinforce them. Equality in the workplace became a question of management-imposed initiatives rather than part and parcel of a fight to convince male workers through the structures of the labour movement. Male workers suffering from local government cuts were not necessarily wrong to ask 'What is this "socialist" authority doing, undermining our conditions and cutting services, and at the same time throwing money at "women's projects"?'

Meanwhile, for most women working for the GLC it was business as usual — low pay, the worst jobs — and the women in the typing pool still had to ask permission to go to the toilet.

The GLC experience decisively set back active women's politics in Britain. Equal opportunities pressure-group politics, combined with a variant of cultural feminism, has replaced real campaigns and real attempts to organise women, particularly working class women, to fight in the here and now for their liberation.

In reality, of course, events have proved the whole project to be valueless. What use is positive discrimination in hiring, when you are cutting jobs?

The way out of this mess doesn't lie in Militant-style 'women are just workers' politics. We have to reunite the fight for democratic rights for working women with the broader socialist perspective. We need to turn to working class women, to come up with answers for all aspects of their oppression — at home and at work.

Some women have managed to do very nicely thank you out of GLC-style feminism. Most women haven't. The fight for real equality for working class women is still at square one. Socialist women in the labour movement must get out of the municipal-feminist blind alley, and turn to working class women now.

## Women for Socialism

Fringe Meeting  
Analysing the Policy Reviews  
Norbrick Castle Hotel, Blackpool  
Monday 3rd October, 7-9pm

Speakers: Elean Thomas, Alice Mahon MP, Martha Osamor, Nadine Finch.

Free refreshments