

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

China Solidarity Campaign
Defend Chinese workers and students

- Speakers include
- Chinese Solidarity Campaign spokesperson
 - Tony Benn MP
 - Emma Colyer (NUS Exec, personal capacity)
 - Tariq Ali

Sunday 11 June, 3.00
Main Hall, Conway Hall, Holborn, WC1
Contact CSC, c/o CIAC, 68 Shaftesbury Ave, London W1

Chinese workers defy Stalinist butchers

By Cheung Siu Ming

The people of Beijing remain defiant and unbowed against deadly odds.

Three days after the troops of the 27th regiment of the People's Liberation Army started the massacre, Hong Kong estimates are that over 50,000 have been killed. The students and workers died defending the freedom they had seized, however briefly, from the barbarous rulers. The bravery and sacrifice will remain forever an inspiration to all who fight against repression, East and West.

Why have the hardliners used such excessive and lethal violence? If it was simply a matter of clearing Tiananmen Square of unarmed demonstrators, then force short of large scale slaughter could have been used. Yet people were being shot on sight not just in Tiananmen Square but all around the city.

There was indiscriminate killing of young and old, even of ambulance crews.

If the regime were in full control, it would probably weigh up carefully the political consequences and isolate the victims before using the iron fist. This is what happened in Tibet.

This week's atrocities in full view of the world betrayed the desperation of Deng, Li Peng and Marshall Yang — there is every indication that the hard-liners have failed to get full control of the state and party apparatus.

The lengthy delay after martial law was declared indicated that the ruling party and the army are deeply split. Every day of inaction gave the democracy movement a greater spur and power.

Just before the massacre, news reports indicated that the informal networks of students and workers were taking much firmer organisational form, and we were not far from formal declaration of a residents, students and workers' alternative city council. This situation was replicated throughout all of China's major cities.

Transport, food, health and barricades were organised with smooth efficiency by teams of students,



The picture that says it all. Unarmed students face tanks

residents and workers. Students from outside received full support from railworkers throughout the country when travelling to Beijing.

Political discussion and activity were intense. It was this development of dual power that eventually forced the regime's hand.

The 27th regiment used to murder the students was heavily armed, with hundreds of tanks and

even anti-aircraft guns. This could only mean that the hard-liners were expecting military action against them from other army units, and have struck first.

News as we go to press seems to indicate that other army units are starting to move against the hard-liner troops which are entrenched in defensive formations around the city centre.

The inner-party faction fight should not make us forget that both factions belong to the same corrupt despotic Stalinist regime, totally disdainful of real workers' democracy. The party in government has a long record of repression. Tibet is the most recent example of the long line of atrocities.

Before their break with the Soviet Union, the CCP gave full support

to bloody repression of the 1953 East German uprising and the 1956 Hungarian revolution. The long-sustained support for the Khmer Rouge is not just a balancing act against the Soviet Union, there are major similarities in ideology between the Chinese Party and the but-

turn to page 2



Butcher Deng

2 INTERNATIONAL

Strike in protest at murder by 'warlords' in South Africa

The South African non-racial metal workers' union NUMSA has issued this statement on the murder of one of their shop stewards and the three-day general strike called in protest in Natal.

Jabu Ndlovu, her husband and her daughter were murdered in the early hours of the morning in Pietermaritzburg.

So far 1,300 people have been killed in Pietermaritzburg. The death of comrade Jabu Ndlovu and 2 other members of her family is a further tragic and forceful statement on the need to end the killings in Natal.

Jabu Ndlovu was a senior NUMSA shop steward at Prestige. She was active in the COSATU local and community affairs in Imbali.

She had been threatened before. However, she was brave enough to represent the Imbali community at the press conference in Johannesburg where COSATU made very serious allegations related to the close co-operation between a man called Thulani Ngoobo and the police.

No action was taken against Thulani Ngoobo and the Minister of police continued to obscure the unacceptable conduct of his police force and such warlords by making false allegations against COSATU and the UDF.

At about midnight on Sunday 21 May, Jabu Ndlovu's house was attacked and burned to the ground. Her husband and daughter died, she was critically burned, and her 13 year old daughter and 20 year old nephew received serious burn wounds. Jabu alleged that Thulani Ngoobo and other identified warlords were implicated in the attack.

What steps have the police taken



The Sisters of the Long March

to prevent such attacks and apprehend the attackers? These questions are critical in view of the allegations made in March of this year by COSATU on the role of the police and vigilante violence in Imbali. The situation is intolerable. The matter is made even worse when death threats made to local chiefs prevented Jabu and her husband from being buried in their ancestral home in the Pietermaritzburg hills.

Police immediately tried to place restrictions on the funeral of Jabu's husband and daughter, but placed no such restrictions the week before on the funeral of a notorious

warlord, Mphumalanga Kheli.

These events have finally frustrated the people of Pietermaritzburg to the extent that they believe that some effective protest should be made to bring home to everyone that the violence must stop.

A peaceful protest action has been organised in Pietermaritzburg on 5 June to continue to 7 June.

The community is making the following call: the killing of our people must stop; police misconduct must stop; there must be an independent commission of enquiry into the role of the police in Pietermaritzburg; the warlords must be jailed; we must have the right to bury our dead without fear of restriction; the restriction of detainees must be lifted in order to ensure their safety.

NUMSA fully supports these demands. The failure of the police, army and courts to have any impact on these political killings has inevitably driven the people of Pietermaritzburg to take protest action.

The vulnerable position of detainees because of their known location and fixed reporting times is a

very serious matter. Many lives are at stake. The need for peace in Natal is absolutely vital.

NUMSA has once again communicated with Chief Minister Buthelezi on the need for a peace conference and an effective peace process. The constituencies of COSATU, UDF and Inkatha have to be brought into this process and that is why a neutral venue is needed. The political recognition of Ullunde can not be allowed to delay the peace process. What is essential is recognition by all concerned of the critical necessity for a peace process.

COSATU and NUMSA have also communicated to the British TUC and many unions and local councils in Britain who met comrade Jabu on a recent trip she took to the UK. She led a choir to the UK as part of the BTR Sarmcol campaign called Sisters of the Long March. Her warm and active personality made a lasting personal impression on many in the UK.

NUMSA has asked British unions to take supportive action in its demands for peace in Natal.

No coalition in Poland!

The Polish elections have proved a bitter humiliation for the bureaucracy.

Solidarnosc candidates have won a landslide victory, taking a big majority in the newly-created upper house and all 35 seats it was allowed to contest in the Sejm (parliament).

Now the Polish leadership has no choice but to move further down the road of reform; although they must be looking for any chance to backtrack, and there must be a real danger, at least medium-term, of a new clampdown.

The question now is: what next? Lech Walesa has promised not to accept any likely coalition offer. But he has called for people not to do anything to upset the 'reform process' and he reversed Solidarnosc's initial line to call for a vote for prime minister Rakowski.

The Solidarnosc 'selection process' was widely criticised as highly undemocratic. Sections of the opposition, like the PPS(RD) (see their statement) called for a boycott of the elections in protest at their farcical nature.

But the extent of Solidarnosc's victory suggests that the regime will now endure yet deeper crisis, as the degree of its unpopularity is plain for all to see. It's to be regretted that Polish socialists did not use the limited platform provided by the elections to advance a working class programme and oppose any coalition with the bureaucrats.

The problems of a postal ballot

WHETTON'S WEEK
A miner's diary

NUM members will shortly be getting a postal ballot form through our doors.

We are having a postal ballot for Vice-President, for the first time. In the past we have always voted at the pithead, but now the law has been changed.

We've always had a good return at the pithead — an average of about 70% — but postal ballots get notoriously bad results. So we need an extra effort to get people to participate and vote.

There are a whole host of candidates. Personally I will be supporting Ken Homer. There is also George Bolton from Scotland, George Rees from Wales and Johnny Burrows from Derbyshire.

There have been campaign meetings with Ken Homer, Arthur Scargill and various other people up and down the coalfields. They have had quite a good response.

The campaign hasn't really hit home yet in Manton. It won't be a discussion point until the ballot papers start dropping through the letter box.

When we had the ballot at the pithead there was a lot of talk, posters and so on. Now it's done through the letter box there are all sorts of outside influences.

It's going to be a different ball game.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire

If only there were a Hell to roast him...

Ayatollah Khomeini is dead. Every socialist or honest democrat has cause for celebration. It's a shame there's no Hell for him to rot in.

Khomeini was not, as the media has repeated ad nauseam since his death, the 'architect' of the Iranian revolution. He was its butcher. Khomeini and the Islamic fundamentalists defeated one of the most powerful revolutionary movements in history and erected their abomination of a regime on its ruins.

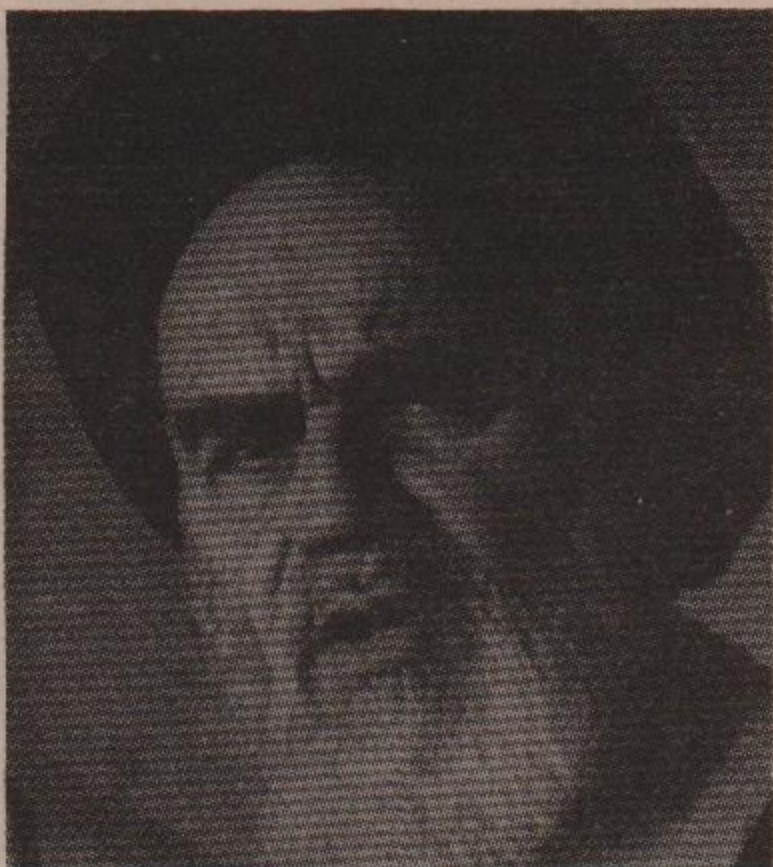
It was a defeat from within, but that is not so unusual.

The 1979 revolution that toppled the Shah was a genuine popular uprising. It brought together many different social and political forces. Khomeini's fundamentalists were one of these; at the time of the revolution there was a very-strong leftist movement.

The strongest force in the revolutionary movement was the working class.

Khomeini's rise to power was not inevitable. It depended upon the defeat of the left. That defeat was prepared by the left's own illusions. The biggest organisations believed — tragically — that Khomeini was their ally.

He was not. And he repaid support with a reign of terror. The left, worker militants, women, national minorities, all fell under the yoke of the 'Islamic Republic'.



Now there will be a faction fight to decide Khomeini's successor. President Khamenei is only a stop-gap. No faction stands for progress.

But it is to be hoped that all the faction fighting, the gathering political crisis, will create space in which the popular movement can be reborn, and the Islamic Republic overthrown.

Despite impressive funeral demonstrations, this is an unpopular regime. And the average Iranian is less religious after the experience of fundamentalism in power, than hitherto.

Let us hope that the left learns the lesson of Khomeini: to be against 'imperialism' is not necessarily to be for anything progressive. Let us hope we never have to experience another monstrosity such as Khomeini again.

Chinese workers defy butchers

From page 1

chers who turned Cambodia into a mass grave and slave labour camps.

Should hard-liners lose the civil war or faction fight we should have no illusions that the 'reformers' and the army supporters will give up their power and privileges to make way for socialist democracy. We must back the general strike and other actions of the workers and students. We must support the arming of the workers' and students' organisations and the full political and organisational independence regardless of how the army and party splits.

The response of Thatcher and Bush was typically cautious, watching over their large investments of the past decade. Demands are growing in Hong Kong for democracy to be extended and for a tearing up of the 1984 Sino-British agreement to hand over the colony in 1997.

The British government have no intention of granting entry passports to Hong Kong residents nor of jeopardising their market share in the Chinese economy by tearing up the treaty.

The worthlessness of a Hong

Kong passport is graphically shown by two incidents in Beijing.

A Hong Kong citizen taking money collected in Hong Kong for the students in Beijing has been seized at Beijing airport by the security police. The Hong Kong government could manage no better than asking for full information of his fate.

Then a Hong Kong television crew running away from the troops were turned away from the British Embassy in Beijing. Their fate is yet unknown.

The best safeguard for the people of Hong Kong is not continued British rule, but self-determination in Hong Kong and socialist democracy in China as a whole. Demands should be raised in Britain to break off diplomatic recognition of the regime in China.

In London the Chinese Solidarity Campaign is growing in strength and its 24-hour picket of the Embassy is gaining mass support. A national demonstration has been called for this Sunday and all UK organisations are invited to come with their banners in support.

The campaign can be contacted at 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1. Tel: 01 836 8291.



Link up with European workers

For a democratic and social Europe!

EDITORIAL

Tory party adverts warn: 'Don't let Labour in by the back door'.

They can see the importance of the European elections. The labour movement should take them just as seriously. A big win for labour would put the Tories further on the defensive.

The Euro-elections have aroused much less interest in Britain than in France, for example, where they are a major focus for discussion and activity for the left. There is a long history of 'little England' hostility to Europe. On the left, this hostility is often greater — although dressed up as opposition to the 'capitalist EEC', as if Britain was not capitalist.

The EEC is, of course, a bosses' club. So the labour movement needs to find ways to challenge big business on a European-wide level.

The much-discussed 'social Europe' would be a good start. Britain's benefit system is the worst in northern Europe (although better than the appalling system in, for example, Spain). Raising our dole levels, old age pensions, social security, etc. to those that exist in other European countries, would be an immense victory for British workers; or winning the trade union rights that other European workers enjoy.

Trade unions need to build links across Europe. Especially in companies that operate Europe-wide, joint organisations — and joint action — would help workers defend their interests. Multinational capital cannot be fought on a merely national basis: it can move to more profitable sites when it needs to. Ultimately, we need the broadest

possible international unity. But European-wide organisation would be a beginning.

The various socialist or labour parties in Europe already do organise together on a limited basis. We need to find ways for left-wing activists in different countries to link up and put pressure on the Euro MPs.

An important issue is democracy. The European parliament has little power; and many people seem to prefer it that way. But it's far better for power to reside in an elected authority than with faceless Brussels bureaucrats or in haggling between governments. So we should campaign for the Strasbourg parliament to have sovereign power over all EEC decisions. We must learn to think of the European arena of

politics, not just the British.

We want Euro-legislation to tackle the multinationals — establishing rules for health and safety, information to workers, trade union rights, women's and migrants' rights, and so on. We want the Euro-parliament to have the right to establish Euro-public-ownership of multinationals.

The issue of racism takes on a new dimension. Turkish immigrants in Germany are in an even worse position than black immigrants in Britain. They can't vote, for example. We must fight for the European labour movement to campaign for equal rights for these workers and against all immigration controls.

Surely, as with the Single European Act international labour

mobility increases, the old racist argument that immigrants take 'our' jobs looks less plausible. There is no more reason to oppose French people working and living in Britain than Scots people living and working in London; nor is there reason to oppose people from outside the EEC coming into it.

Unemployment is our common problem, which needs to be fought in common.

The Euro-elections present the labour movement with a double opportunity. We can give the Tories a hiding — and begin to build real international links.

We want a Socialist United Europe. And in Europe as in each country, the fight for socialism begins with the fight for democracy and for workers' social rights.

Storm at the Eye

By Jim Denham

Was that justice? Is Ian Hislop a banana? Or, to put it another way, is *Private Eye* worth defending? Certainly, the £600,000 libel verdict that now threatens the very existence of the satirical magazine is almost incredible.

The libel itself occurred in 1981 when Hislop's predecessor, Richard Ingrams, was at the helm of the *Mighty Organ*. It was a quite nasty attack on Mrs Sonia Sutcliffe, the unfortunate ex-wife of the Yorkshire Ripper. It was an example of the *Eye* at its most petty and snide, attacking a 'little person'

PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR

DAILY STAR

who had, one might have thought, already suffered enough. But was it really worth £600,000 — about the sort of sum you might expect for being totally paralysed in a motor accident and rather more than most people would get for even the most horrendous industrial injuries?

Most of the national press expressed outrage at the verdict. The *Daily Mirror* described it as 'verging on the obscene', presumably because Cap'n Bob only managed £200,000 when he sued the *Eye* a couple of years ago.

Like most people on the left, I have ambivalent feelings about

Lord Gnome and his *Organ*. It is often anti-gay; its attitude towards women is puerile in the most literal sense; until recently it was fairly openly anti-semitic. None of this prevents the SWP printing the thing (on a 'purely commercial basis', of course) or lefties as diverse as Ken Livingstone, Paul Foot and George Galloway, contributing occasional little titbits.

At its best the *Eye* can be brilliant, displaying an unerring nose for humbug and hypocrisy. Under Hislop it has become more sharply anti-Thatcher (and not just, I think, because she's a woman) and bitter against the likes of Murdoch and Maxwell. The present issue contains a spoof 'Auberon Waugh' report from China that made me laugh out loud (that was, of course, while it was still possible to extract any humour from events in China) and a 'Paul Johnson' column that manages to attack Neil Kinnock for backsliding on unilateralism and Paul Johnson for attacking him over it, if you follow my meaning.

Yes, on balance, I'd be sorry to see the *Eye* go under. Life would be that much duller without it. But I don't think I'll be contributing to their fighting fund and I do have this sneaking feeling that Ian Hislop is a bit like a banana.

State of siege in Argentina

By Clive Bradley

Food riots, beginning in the provincial Argentinian town of Rosaria and spreading to the capital, Buenos Aires, have led President Alfonsín to declare a state of siege.

Alfonsín is only sitting it out to December, when president-elect Carlos Menem will take office. In fact, Alfonsín has nicely offered Menem the chance to take over the job immediately, but Menem graciously declined.

Neither of Argentina's big capitalist parties wants to take responsibility for the desperate economic crisis.

Inflation has turned to hyperinflation — over 100% a month. Living standards are plummeting, and even Menem, elected by working class votes, does not promise wage rises to keep up with inflation.

Underlying inflation is the country's \$60 billion foreign debt.

So far, Argentina's coup-happy army has kept to the sidelines, even to the extent of leaving suppression of the food riots to the police.

Two coup attempts over recent years met with widespread popular resistance and failed to win support at the top. The generals perhaps still lack confidence after their discrediting both in the internal "dirty war" in which thousands disappeared (and for which the top 'gorillas' have yet to be punished), and for the Falklands/Malvinas humiliation. So they're prepared to see the politicians go on dealing with the mess.

Menem's Peronist party (the "Justicialists") may end up taking over before December, if Alfonsín's riding gets too rough. But Menem plainly has no idea what to do. His aim is to emulate the populist hero of the 1940s and '50s (and '70s), Juan Peron. But Peron's popularity was, literally, bought. Today the Argentinian government just doesn't have any money.

Argentina's problem is capitalism, now in South America enduring a crisis comparable to pre-Nazi Germany. The answer — it's not a solution even in its own terms — of the capitalist parties is austerity and yet more austerity. The workers are being made to pay.

In Bolivia, austerity has led to the almost complete obliteration of the once-mighty tin miners. Almost everywhere, political crisis is looming.

In Brazil in March, 35 million workers staged a two-day general strike. Strikes continue now.

Argentina's working class is also powerful — well-organised and militant. But its traditional Peronist leadership, whose aim is to regain the mutually-beneficial relationship they once had with the authoritarian state, is a crippling weakness.

The main would-be Trotskyist party, the MAS (Movement to Socialism) have made gains, but at the expense of enormous concessions to the Communist Party, with whom they have had an electoral pact, and bizarre sectarianism towards, for example, this year's march of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, which they refused to join.

The food riots in Argentina are not a hopeful sign. They suggest despair and disorganisation, rather than coherent working-class resistance. But there is no doubt that Argentina is now heading to a massive crisis in which the working class will have to play a decisive role or, once again, go under.

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

Karl Marx

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Section 28 takes effect

GRAFFITI

The anti-gay Section 28 of the Local Government Act seems to be having the desired effect.

According to a report by the Association of London Authorities (ALA), councils are confused about which activities or policies may be in breach of the Section, and consequently err on the side of caution. "Unnecessary self-censorship" is commonplace, and according to the ALA, "a whole range of equality steps might have been attempted in authorities now, had it not been for a loss of confidence induced by Section 28."

Examples of panic decisions include various councils banning the setting up of Lesbian and Gay societies in colleges, the banning of "suspect" plays being performed in schools, and the insistence by the London Borough Grants Scheme that voluntary organisations sign a declaration that they will not "promote" homosexuality.

Perhaps even more worrying are reports from the Health Education Authority that inquiries from teachers relating to sex education halved in 1988. The Health Education Authority feel that this is partly due to Section 28.

The ALA report comments: "The implication is that there is far less sex education being taught because of fears about infringing Section 28."

Thanks to the Tory bigots, "promotion" of homosexuality has been replaced by the widespread promotion of ignorance. (Info: Labour Research)

If you are in South London between now and 15 June careful which tapas bar you wander into.

Tapas, if you haven't been reading the Sunday colour supplements, is Spanish for pretentious yuppie snacks eaten over straight Schweppes and a portable telephone.

For if you go down to the tapas bar today you're sure for a big surprise. For every Tory that ever there was has been to the bar this week because there's only a week 'til the Vauxhall by-election.

Yes, the Don Miguel restaurant in Kennington Road has become the nerve centre for the Tories' Vauxhall election campaign. Apparently they've all been there. Every day a black ministerial Jaguar, with its Sun-reading chauffeur is seen outside Don Miguel's. George Younger, Norman Fowler, Kenneth Clarke or Norman Tebbit is inside. Apparently the latter didn't think much to "this tapas lark" and nipped outside for a quick look at the Sun with the chauffeur (but that's only hearsay).

The Tory candidate has said that he would welcome Uncle Ted Heath

or even Nigel 'Bunter' Lawson down to Vauxhall but it seems that for some strange reason none of these celebs have had the bottle to go out on the knocker.

It is especially understandable for Clarke. Local GPs are carrying out a survey of attitudes to the government's White Paper on health. The GPs want to present their report three days before the polling day, with the candidates being open to question.

The Tory candidate, Mike Keegan, says that he will meet the doctors privately. No doubt he realises that he would come out of that meeting with as much credibility as his namesake's challenge for the England managership.

Keegan prefers to use loony-left baiting to gain his votes.

It had no effect, however, on one young voter. Keegan asked if he could help him in any way and got the reply: "You could lend me some money."

The government is planning to force Asian families to pay to be reunited.

The last chance for many wives and children to prove their right to stay in Britain is to have a DNA "genetic fingerprinting" test.

The experience of the DNA test so far has shown that 90 per cent of Bangladeshi families refused entry to Britain were wrongly excluded.

But now the Home Office has said it will demand payment for the DNA tests — which cost £130 per person.

Families unable to pay risk being separated permanently.

Meanwhile, Home Office Minister Timothy Renton is planning further changes to the immigration laws. It will be made harder for elderly relatives to join their families in Britain, and people entering the country with visitors visas will no longer be able to become students.

The Tories' attitude towards trade unionism has come in for a roasting from, of all places, the Catholic Church.

On May Day the Catholic Bishops' Department of Christian Citizenship published a pamphlet 'A Threefold Case: A Christian Approach to Trade Unionism'. It argues that Thatcher and co's attitude to unions is "contrary to Christian teaching" and urges Catholics to get involved in their unions.

Clearly the next target for Tory "red infiltration rumours" will be the Vatican itself. Well, I suppose the Pope is Polish...

CLR James

CLR James — a famous writer, a revolutionary activist and a prominent figure in the Trotskyist movement from the late '30s to 1951 — died last week. The next issue of Socialist Organiser will carry an obituary.

Nothingness in the USSR?

LETTERS

Peter Burton (SO 391) reiterates the case that the bureaucracy in the USSR is not a ruling class.

He argues that the system is deeply untably; that there is no planning (although there is 'administration'); the bureaucracy is 'not a collectivity'; and that there is no mode of production in the USSR.

Peter convinces me that the whole theory (derived from the journal Critique) is deeply incoherent.

(1) "In 7 decades there hasn't been one decade of stability." You could say that about most of South America, of course. I think one of the issues exposed by debate on the USSR is the inadequacy of the concept of 'stability' in analysing different societies.

Often, in the framework Peter uses, or in 'degenerated workers' state' frameworks, the alleged instability of the USSR seems to imply permanently incipient revolutionary crisis.

But take China. The bureaucracy there is now unstable. But it hasn't been 'unstable' in the identical sense for 40 years, has it? You could argue, on the contrary, that it has been rather more stable than most regimes.

To understand forthcoming

revolutionary crises in the USSR we need greater theoretical precision than just to say it's been an unstable system all along anyway.

(2) Peter insists: "To decide [what exists in the USSR] as planning or even bad planning is to divest the category of planning of any real meaning for Marxists." But I don't see why.

Bourgeois governments — and enterprises — plan. Not all planning is socialist planning. You can call bad planning 'organisation' or 'administration' if you prefer, but we're still talking about the same thing — which is that production in the USSR is not completely anarchic.

(3) No class 'collectivity' independent of the state? Of course not. But that this is proof of the non-existence of a class is merely an assertion. The state, after all, is a 'collectivity'.

(4) To assert that there is no mode of production at all in the USSR reduces the entire framework of Marxist theory to a heap of rubble. Peter and his co-thinkers, if they really want to make such a wild and far-reaching claim, must answer:

a. What is a society which exists and produces goods for decades with no mode of production?

b. How can 'no mode of production' be duplicated across 30% of the planet?

c. If there's no mode of production, how can there be relations of production? How can there be a working class? What on earth does

it mean to talk of a "powerful working class" in conflict with the elite?

d. What, then is the state? If there's no ruling class, whose interests does the state serve? Nobody's?

e. Where does this 'no mode of production' stand in relation both to capitalism and socialism?

The whole Critique framework simply fails to address these issues. Yet it's these issues that underlie the apparently "terminological" debate.

Edward Ellis
Southwark



In and against the Poll Tax machine

Three workers from the council's Poll Tax office turned up to the first meeting of our anti-Poll Tax campaign in Canterbury.

They got a good response from other activists when they explained their position, and we felt it would help the campaign having supporters in the belly of the beast.

I have heard some socialists argue that we should tell people to refuse to take jobs in Poll Tax offices. I don't think this will work — in some areas, the Poll Tax offices are the only places where large numbers of new jobs can be found — and

workers in Poll Tax offices can contribute to anti-Poll Tax campaigns, just as workers in Social Security offices can contribute to battles against social security cuts.

Obviously we wouldn't take jobs directly pursuing non-payers, just as we wouldn't take jobs as social security snoopers.

Our meeting in Canterbury decided to set up a steering committee, put out a leaflet, start a petition, organise a public meeting and send a coach to the London Against the Poll Tax march on 4 June.

Many attempts have been made to set up a group in Canterbury but this meeting, organised by sup-



porters of Socialist Organiser, has belatedly started a living campaign concentrating opposition against the Poll Tax on all fronts in Canterbury.

Mark Sandell
Canterbury

French unions dwindle

WORLD BRIEFS

The annual conference of France's main trade union federation, the CGT, at the end of May, heard membership figures which make the TUC's losses over the last ten years look like minor wear and tear.

Between 1977 and 1987 the CGT's membership fell from 2.3 million to 1 million. The organisation has lost over half its members.

France's other main union federations, the CFDT and FO, have also suffered, though not so severely.

Since union recognition and representation in France is guaranteed more by the law than by strength of membership, French union membership figures are much more a tally of activists than British figures. That's part of the explanation why the decline has been so drastic.

During most of the period of decline, France has had governments led by the Socialist Party. The demoralisation caused by the Socialist leaders' attempts to manage capitalism has hit workers' organisation as hard as the outright assaults by the Tory government in Britain.

Lech Walesa has announced that a Polish-American millionaire will buy the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk and keep it open.

The Polish government wanted to close the shipyard, the birthplace of Solidarnosc, because it was making losses.

The buyer is Basia Pieasecka-Johnson, heiress to the Johnson & Johnson fortune. According to the Financial Times, she says she will recognise Solidarnosc but 'fire all the Communists'.

The agreement to buy the yard is still a long way from being finalised, and the shipyard workers may get some painful lessons about life under the rule of private profit.

Latest figures confirm that Government's boasts about British manufacturing recapturing its position in world markets are hogwash.

"Mechanical engineering is heading for a [trade] deficit this year for the first time in living memory. In the newer, high-technology industries, the UK appears to have settled into a position of long-term structural imbalance in areas such as computers and microchips," reports the Financial Times.

In 1982, for the first time probably since the Industrial Revolution, Britain imported more manufactured goods than it exported. The gap has grown since. Aerospace equipment is now the only major area of the metal-related industries where Britain exports more than it imports.

According to the Financial Times, "many industrialists argue that hopes of an enduring recovery in manufacturing exports may now depend critically upon the policies of foreign companies moving into Britain" and bringing new technology and big long-term investments from outside.

Why London busworkers want to fight

By a London busworker

If you'd have asked busworkers in London to go on strike a year ago, you'd have got a very rude response from most of them. People didn't want to fight, didn't think they could win.

In fact, last year we accepted a pay deal of 4.5% with strings you could knit a jumper out of! And the year before.

Over the last few years busworkers have lost a bonus and London weighting. The jobs have lengthened. The breaks are shorter. The amount of time given to cover the routes is shorter, too, so you don't have time to rest at either end.

You can be sitting in a cab for 5½ hours non-stop without getting out even to stretch your legs. And that's just the bit before your break. You've still got the rest to do.

the state of traffic now in London makes it worse. In 1987 alone there was an increase of 62,000 in the number of cars registered in London, bringing the total to 2¼ million. Add to that the 200,000-plus pouring into the city every day — in some parts of London the traffic moves at an average of 4mph! So we are increasingly forced to do overtime.

It's little wonder, really, that piles, heart disease, stomach and digestive complaints are common among bus drivers. Less easily diagnosed illnesses include stress that no-one wants to admit to because it looks as if you can't cope.

The bosses are getting more and more insensitive about illnesses and injuries caused by assaults, which are becoming more common. One driver at Camberwell garage was stabbed five times in his side by somebody after his money box. After a month off he was warned to come back to work.

At Peckham garage, a month ago, a new driver was stabbed with a dirty hypodermic needle. There was a spontaneous strike, as much because of management's attitude as the assault itself. One manager was reported to have described the driver's wound as "only a scratch" and complained about the money lost. They claimed 'sympathy' for the driver concerned who, of course, was sitting at home scared shitless that she might have AIDS.

The majority of assaults, I think, are a result of the public becoming increasingly angry and frustrated at an over-priced and every-worsening public service and clashing with increasingly angry and frustrated bus crews.

The buses aren't a public service now. They're a profit-making concern which is being sold off piecemeal to the lowest bidder — our wages and conditions (what's left of them) footing the bill.

It's going to get worse. The sell-offs have only just started. Our wages will differ depending on the area we work in — whether there's a lot of unemployment or not. Our wages are going on the market.

Midi-buses have been introduced at Peckham, with drivers paid £30 a week less than the ordinary one-person operation driver for about 10 hours more work. The only difference is the size of the bus. The job's the same. The midi-bus drivers are working for 9-10 hours a day.

Now the bosses want us to accept a wage offer which is in effect a cut. (7.5% on the basic pay). The dispute's over pay. But that's not what you'll hear about on any picket line.

You'll hear about all this other stuff that has gradually built up this mood of anger — sparked by the

pay offer and also (more importantly) by the fact that other workers are beginning to fight back; that there is a real mood of hope and that it's possible to win.

Our union has got two choices. It can plug into that mood of anger, lead it and fight to win, by linking up with other workforces, especially the Tube workers, and bringing London to a standstill. Or it can do what it looks to be doing at the moment, which is to let the militancy dribble away. They call a day of action, give out no information, change the date of the next day of action then decide not to hold it at all pending another ballot.

Our first day of strike action, on 15 May, shows what needs to be done. The Tubes and buses came out together. The papers next day talked about how well the commuters coped. But that was because it was like a day off, a holiday. Everyone knew it was going to happen.

I saw how well the commuters coped when the Tube workers had their fourth day of strike action, with less warning to the public so they couldn't come in with their bicycles and trainers, and the gung-ho spirit ready for the TV cameras.

I saw pin-stripes with collars open, ties awry and hair all matted up, elbowing their way to the front of bus queues like the first day of a Debenhams sale, and f-ing and blinding at the bus crews because we were full up and there were still a hundred people at every stop.

It was great. But we were scabbing really. We were covering the Tube workers' work. We should do it together and we should do it indefinitely and see how long the old gung-ho lasts then. We can stop the City!

To get that action we need mass involvement of a well-informed membership. The leadership should use the new mood to build that. It's much needed on the buses.

Many branches don't operate. Their meetings are inoperative. Information is got from the press. Local officials just pass down instructions from on high. They don't explain or involve the membership in discussion.

All London busworkers were in dispute weeks before the pay issue, over compulsory overtime. If you're stuck in a traffic jam and you're going to be late, you won't necessarily get paid overtime for the extra time worked. You may have to be half an hour late before you start to get paid. This causes a lot of anger.

All of a sudden a union instruc-



tion descends: work no more than your daily driving time. And take your full break. No explanation, no warning. More importantly, no involvement. The local officials just paste it up on a board, and when people ask them about it, they say it's voluntary. Drivers think: if I do it and I get disciplined, I doubt if I could trust them to back me up. So they don't do it. Half my garage follows the union instruction — no, a quarter — half don't, and a quarter don't know.

What we have to do is build an organisation of militants in the garages who are willing to campaign — 'Busworkers for the full claim' (£5 an hour and a 35-hour week). We must link up the rank and file

across London, and liaise with the rank and file on the Tubes so our action can be co-ordinated and so our leadership will be less able to try to defuse the situation.

We have a younger membership in the buses, same as anywhere else. Management think this is good because the new, younger workers don't have a history of trade unionism, of strikes, or of any other government but the Tories. But the younger workers also don't have a history of bureaucracy and trade union jargon, often used to confuse and keep the membership ignorant. Many are militant and want to have a go. It needs organisation and leadership — which is what a rank and file group-

ing can provide.

We need to make our demands political as well. We don't just want higher wages. We want a Labour government which will reverse the Transport Bill, stop deregulation and privatisation plans and reverse the anti-union laws.

If over the next period of trade union militancy an active, political rank and file movement is built and extends its struggle into the Labour Party, Kinnock's plans and Policy Reviews could be seriously shaken up. No more sitting on the fence like during the miners' strike! No more refusing solidarity! We'll reclaim our movement for the working class.

How Tube strikers organise

A Tube driver spoke to Ray Ferris

Who organises the strike action?

Local co-ordinators get together every week or so. They review how it's going and we communicate by word of mouth or leaflet.

There are several different people on different lines putting out their own leaflets to keep people informed.

A co-ordinating fund has been set up to pay for leaflets, etc.

Are there local meetings?

Yes. There has been quite a few local depot meetings. But at the moment there probably won't be any because the mass meetings are coming up in two weeks time.

Everything will be decided there and sorted out.

The local meetings and co-ordination meetings have lots of very heated discussions on every idea you could think of — how long to make the strike? Whether or not all-out? How to step up the action? And whether or not to accept the latest offer. Every view is aired, to say the least.

Any driver or guard can go to the co-ordination meetings. The co-ordinators aren't elected, but the meetings are generally known about. Anyone can come along and give their opinion and become active if they want to.

It's very open — as long as you have a pass and are known you have every right to vote and put forward resolutions and say what you want.

Is the law a big issue?

At first there was the question of whether it was legal and how the company would react. But since the first few weeks no-one has thought about it because it is legal because it is individuals withdrawing their labour in demand of the wage rises they should have had five years ago and in protest at the slave charter.

What about picket lines?

The general attitude towards picket lines was that because it wasn't an official dispute and because it was a question of people feeling so strongly and we felt we had the support then it wouldn't be necessary.

There is no precedent for this kind of action on the tubes. Action in the past has been very divided with ASLEF out and NUR working, or vice-versa, and

controlled through the official union structure. There has been no history of the blokes on the job acting unilaterally.

It is the first time you have got a democratic framework for running the strikes — with everyone having the right to have a say and having a right to object to things at meetings without the leadership just hijacking it.

It hasn't been left groups taking the initiative; many guards and driver operators vote Tory and are quite reactionary about a lot of issues but they are determined to get the rise.

They want their money. People have had enough. We've been constantly battered over five years in terms of productivity, one-person operation, deteriorating tracks, trains and safety standards, abuse from passengers. It's just worked up into the feeling that you've got to fight back.

Has there been any attempt by management to victimise people?

Not so far. Management are keeping an eye on who's saying what and what's being done by whom. Even if we win this battle, activists are in danger of losing their jobs in the long run, especially if they keep the victimisation clauses in the new package.

How do you build on the unity created during the strikes once the action is over?

People feel that there should be one union for train crews and many like myself believe there should be one union for all underground workers. A lot of people are recognising that the existence of two unions is a weakness.

When the dispute is over a lot of the involvement will probably die down, but we will be able to use what's happened as an example in the future.

The action of the train crews has given people the idea that they can fight back. Also the NUR ballot has given heart to the train crews. Confidence is growing. Management doesn't want to take people on. Victimisation would lead to an all-out strike.

The biggest lesson I've learned is that you don't have to wait for the leadership. You can take the upper hand by yourself and it seems an effective way at the moment of getting round trade union laws.

The power of tube workers to shut down London comes from our unity. If there wasn't that unity then the action wouldn't have been effective.

6 CHINA

Support the Chinese workers!

By Eric Heffer MP

The Chinese students, supported by workers, were demanding a genuine democracy and freedom, not any sort of counter-revolution.

China could now be on the brink of an upheaval which will involve widespread action throughout the whole of China. It is quite possible that even the armed forces will split.

China will be in the forefront of the struggle for democracy and freedom and it is our duty and responsibility as international socialists to give every assistance and aid that we can.

These centralised bureaucratic states with only one party have nothing in common with the ideas of socialism as developed by people like Rosa Luxemburg and others who didn't see socialism as the all-

pervading state determining every aspect of political and economic life.

I'm not certain whether you could call these societies capitalist, but what they certainly are not is socialist societies in the correct sense of the term. Public ownership in itself doesn't mean that you have got socialism.

We've got to have public ownership and control, but we've also got to have real democracy and freedom.

The Chinese bureaucracy are like ruling classes in capitalist societies. They really move out of control when they want to save their system. Sometimes peaceful change is and the answer, but quite clearly now in China there is no possibility of any peaceful change.

Change can be made now only by the workers in factories coming together with parts of the army and other sections of society to enforce change.

The Internationale

The demonstrators in Beijing sang The Internationale, the hymn of the world workers' movement. This is a literal translation of the French words of the song, written by Eugene Pottier in June 1871, in the midst of the repression of the Paris Commune.

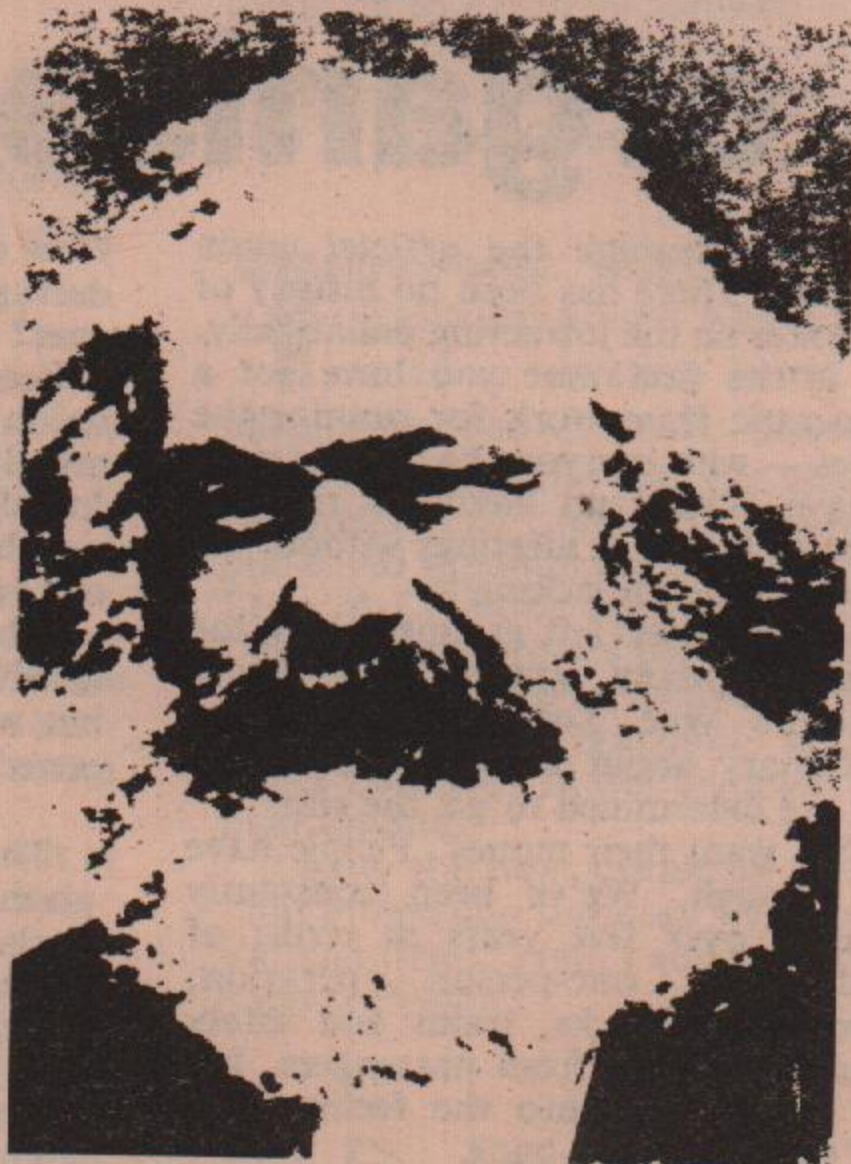
Arise, the wretched of the earth
Arise, the prisoners of hunger
Reason sounds in its depths
This is the outbreak of the end
Let's wipe the slate clean of the past
Enslaved masses, arise, arise
The basis of the world is going to

be changed
We are nothing, let us be everything!
It is the final struggle
Rally, and tomorrow
The Internationale
Will be the human race!
There is no supreme saviour
Neither God, nor Caesar, nor
tribune
Producers, let us make our own
salvation
Let us decree the common good
So that the thief makes restitution
To free the spirit from prison
Let us blow our forge ourselves
Let's strike the iron while it's hot

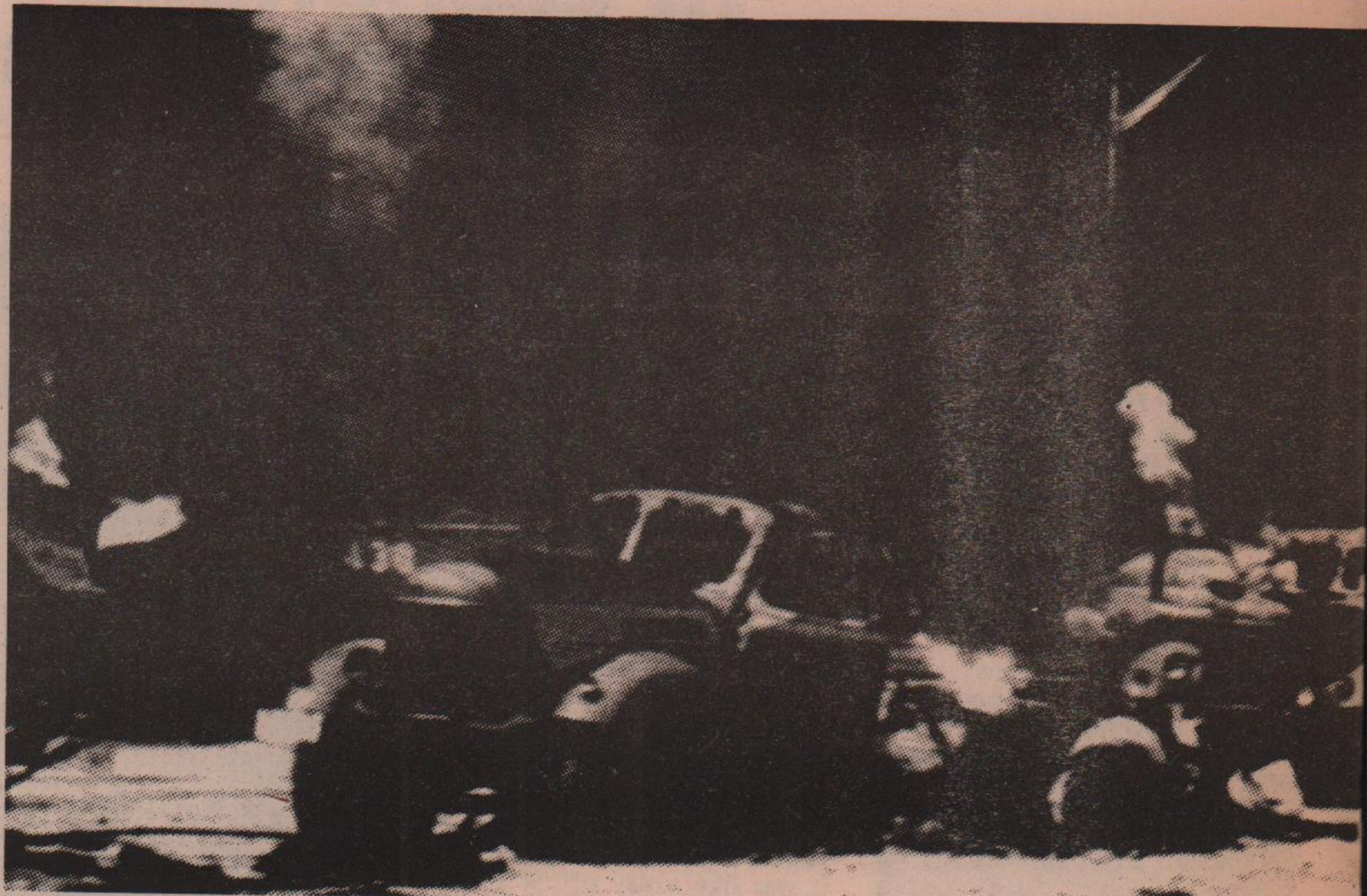
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Bloody Sunday

By John O'Mahony

Stalin's political apparatus does not differ from fascism save in more unbridled savagery".

Those words of Leon Trotsky's summed up the ineradicable truth about Stalin's police state regime in the USSR. The scarcely believable slaughter wreaked by the Chinese Stalinist regime on the unarmed people of Beijing proves once again that Trotsky got it right about Stalinism.

The savage, murderous old men who rule China decided to turn central Beijing into an abattoir not because that was the only way for them to clear the streets of students demonstrating for democracy. The mass of hundreds of thousands of students and workers occupying Tiananmen Square two weeks ago had declined down to a hard core of a few thousand.

True, the students were determined to stay there. They had built and erected a replica of the Statue of Liberty to symbolise the cause in whose name they were challenging Chinese Stalinism. But while they chose the Statue of Liberty — presented by the French Republic to the USA a hundred years ago to commemorate the liberating democratic revolutions in America and France at the end of the 18th century — as their symbol, they sang the Internationale, the anthem of international socialism composed after the defeat of the great working-class revolt in Paris in 1871.

They were serious revolutionaries against the Stalinist system, but there is no reason for us to believe that they wanted capitalism instead of Stalinism.

They were determined to stand their ground against the regime. But the regime had other weapons than mass slaughter.

The decision to unleash the troops was taken because the Stalinist rulers decided that they needed a bloody atrocity to terrorise the people of China back into submission. That's why the 27th Army — reportedly having been drugged first — was unleashed by the Chinese government on the people of its capital city, to behave like a conquering army of barbarians, shooting at everyone that moved, deliberately slaughtering and maiming.

Some reports say they killed dozens of unarmed soldiers who were in the square when they attacked. No-one knows the number of dead and wounded in this one-sided civil war in Beijing.

On Tuesday 6 June there was a general strike in Beijing, and the movement was spreading to other cities. Troops were surrounding Shanghai threateningly. It is like 1949 when the Stalinist peasant armies surrounded and occupied the cities — except that then the cities were passive and even welcoming. The working class was crushed and dormant.

Now the cities are vibrant and alive. As if by a miracle, the Chinese nation has come back to autonomous life, and the iron tombstone of the Stalinist regime has lost its power to hold it in stillness.

What happens now will be determined by two interacting factors — the degree to which the regime has lost its legitimacy with the people; and the degree to which the regime is inhibited, incapacitated, or shattered by its own internal crisis.

The regime had plainly lost all authority in Beijing and probably in the other cities too. Its writ did not run. The entire population of Beijing seemed to rally round the students with their demands for democracy and an end to corruption.

That's why the regime resorted to such spectacular state terrorism. The result can only be to shatter what legitimacy remains to it.

If the Stalinist state holds in place, its rule from now on will be rule by naked force as far as vast numbers of Chinese are concerned.

Russian Stalinism rose on the grave of the October 1917 workers' revolution, but the Chinese Stalinists led a revolution. As a result of that the Maoist regime had great credit with the people, despite its bungling and its repression. It was a powerful nationalist force which had restored self-determination to the Chinese people and unified China. It was a regime whose members were not individually corrupt, though the ruling elite was a privileged class.

All that credit has been exhausted over the last decade. Individual corruption has eaten into the party and the state machine. The old Jacobin egalitarian ethos which Maoism provided for the masses (though the elite did very well for themselves behind closed doors) has given way to a new ethos of self-enrichment.

Only a few have got rich. The resultant damage to the standing of the ruling party has been massive. Now its open resort to mass terror must surely destroy what remains of its legitimacy.

Even if a segment of the present regime succeeds in shifting the blame onto another segment and purging its rivals (Deng blamed

Mao's successor Hua for the small-scale suppression of a mass demonstration in Tiananmen Square in 1976 at Zhou Enlai's funeral), things will never be the same again.

The long historical episode of Chinese Stalinism in power as the leader of a great nation-reshaping revolution is over. The drive of the people to act for themselves and to slough off the carapace of the all-powerful state has been demonstrated mightily in recent weeks.

The students have organised independent student unions. Some workers have organised their own independent trade unions. The leaders of that movement were among the first to be arrested.

Now the gunfire in Tiananmen Square will have a tremendous ef-

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fect on the ordinary people of China, shaking them awake. It will be a massively enlarged repetition of 1925, when the gunfire of the German and British police on Nanking Road, Shanghai, shooting down a dozen striking workers and their student supporters triggered the second Chinese revolution, rousing millions and millions of people to political activity for the first time, in a movement that did not end until 1927.

The closest historical parallel outside China is the events of Bloody Sunday, 9 January 1905, in St Petersburg, Russia. The authority

'We are not free but we are not afraid'

A student from China spoke to Dave Barter

The Chinese government will try to take reprisals against the leaders of the student demonstrations.

For instance, the most important thing for students are their jobs, their future, because the Chinese system is quite different to the capitalist system. I can't find a job for myself, but only from the government. It is a problem if the government doesn't give you a good job.

And it is difficult to change jobs, you can't change jobs as you like. You have to get the agreement of your boss. If your boss doesn't agree you can't go: 'you must stay here and work for me, work for this unit!' The unit must agree if you are to change your job.

I think China's problem is not only the leaders — the individual government officials, but also the law. I think a Western multi-party system is useful — the Communist Party would have to do better, and if they don't another party will take over. We need to reform the political system.

But the Communist Party will not allow any other party to take over. They are very powerful in China. The army is controlled by the Communist Party, not the government.

When I first arrived in Britain I was surprised to be able to walk around the streets and not see any soldiers. In China you can always see soldiers: in the street, in the park, in a shop, in many places. Chinese soldiers can go anywhere.

In this demonstration many soldiers refused to beat students, especially the local army, because many soldiers are people's neighbours, friends or sons.

The Chinese students' demonstrations demanded more freedom, democracy, and press freedom. Press freedom would be a big step. Many people want to write something but they can't. Or if you write something you can't get it published — they refuse to accept your article, your novel, your writing. If we had press freedom, China would be another China...

The official students' union in China is different to students' unions here. In China the head of the students' union is not from the students, not someone the students like but someone the government likes. So the students also call for freedom to have a students' union where they choose the leader.

It is difficult because the official students' union has money — the University gives money to them, not to us! And if you are an official leader you will get a good job.

A few years ago if a student studied very, very hard, maybe they could go abroad, but now it's not easy. In this demonstration the leaders aren't officials from the official students' union. They are from the students and they organise very well. If they could continue...

But when there is no demonstration they will be back at their desks in the classroom. It is quite easy for Mr Deng Xiaoping to destroy the student movement. About two years ago there was another student demonstration — I was involved then. It was not so big as this one, and it was rapidly ended.

This time was different. The Chinese have many problems —

low wages, and price rises, very rapid price rises. I think if there were not so many problems the Chinese workers would maybe not support the students.

When I was in Peking the prices would rise every day! They would write the prices on a blackboard so that the next day they could rub them out and write up higher prices! And there are health and benefit problems. Maybe ten years ago workers would not lose their jobs. But now, with economic reform, there are workers who have lost their jobs as bosses of factories have reduced their number of workers.

A lost job isn't a good thing for anyone, but in China they get very little money when they have no job. A man might get enough just for one person's food, but he has a wife and children — what is he to do about them? And many Chinese people have older people — maybe their mother — living with them. There is not enough for life.

And there are housing problems. You have to get a house from the government. If you are lucky you will get a house with enough room. Many workers have not got enough room.

So when the students stand up for democracy, they support them. Last time they just watched the student demonstrations. This time they join in. That is a danger for the government. When the workers join you have another situation.

Last time the workers didn't join the student demonstrations, they only stood around and watched — because the government gave them special benefit money. But this time they join. This shows the Chinese crisis is growing. If this demonstration fails it still teaches many students. Next time they will always stay in Tiananmen square. And next time the workers will join them.

I think the solidarity you are organising is very useful to support the Chinese students. But the Chinese students don't know about it. So we have written to our friends in China to tell them. But the Chinese government check letters quite frequently.

Several months ago a few students wrote to a newspaper in China. But the newspaper editor sent the letter to the government and the government sent it to the Embassy! So all the students have it on their records that they sent this letter! So many Chinese students in Britain dare not do this. Everyone has a record at the Chinese Embassy and if you sign your name to an article or anything that goes down in your record.

This time 5000 students went to London to demonstrate there. They are very brave. I joined this demonstration — you cannot be afraid.

Chinese students abroad are not as free as you. And sometimes we have to take care for our families who might get in trouble. So you have to think before you can sign your name to any article.

So we are not free but we are not afraid. If everyone was afraid then China would never improve. If everyone stayed at home and did nothing for China then China would never change.

• Stop Press: 4,000 people attended a demonstration in Manchester on Tuesday 6 June to show solidarity with Chinese workers and students and condemn the massacre.



Burnt out armoured cars

in Beijing

of the Tsarist government was shattered when soldiers fired into a vast crowd of workers, led by priests, who were marching to present a humble and loyal petition to the man most of them thought of as 'their little father' Tsar Nicholas.

After Nicholas the Bloody's soldiers had done their savage work, a great wave of strikes and insurrections spread across the Russian Empire.

In China now the wave of strikes is spreading and developing.

The key to what happens is perhaps held by the farmers. The towns and cities are lost to the regime — though they may rally to a dissident bloc in the army which comes out against the currently dominant faction — but we do not know what is happening among the farmers.

They have had a serious degree of self-determination restored to them in the last ten years. They have had the benefits of a radical land reform carried out by the Deng regime. Many of them have known far greater prosperity than for a generation.

Will they follow the lead of the towns? Or will they support the regime — either the present one, or an alternative faction which continues the Stalinist system though it repudiates and maybe punishes the butchers who unleashed the 27th Army on the people of Beijing?

We don't know. We also don't know what is happening inside the army.

The speculation in the press and on TV now is that the army is about to fall apart into warring factions. Over 300,000 soldiers are said to be closing in on Beijing and may be about to clash with the 27th Army.

Much of the speculation is based on the idea that outrage at what is happening in Beijing will lead to other units of the army attacking the 27th Army. But this Stalinist regime has been killing upwards of 80,000 people a year for economic crimes like robbery. The military pillars of such a regime are not likely to be squeamish.

Any split in the army will reflect pre-existing factional divisions, and be a continuation of the factional fight which has plainly been raging inside the closed-off ruling elite for many weeks.

Speculation here is idle. The bureaucratic ruling class in China has a long tradition of internal struggle, and of combining intense internal struggle with keeping collective control. If they are unable to maintain that tradition now, it will be because they are irredeemably split about policy for the period ahead.

The regime has been divided on economic policy, on how much central command control to try to reimpose on their economy, which has had a substantial degree of market regulation during the last ten years.

The savage onslaught on the people had the marks of a desperate regime striking out to regain control while it still could. But it is improbable that it was done by an unrepresentative faction at the centre, lacking enough support in the ruling class to prevail.

It may be that a section of the party and army will move against the most hated figures, like Li Peng and maybe Deng; but one way or another it is probable that the regime will hold, for now.

If the wave of mass revolt spreads, spurred on by the slaughter in Beijing, then the working class will have to make giant leaps forward in self-organisation. The evidence is that they can and will do it quickly.

In Beijing the people flooded the streets, talked the first convoy of soldiers sent to control the situation out of any offensive, built barricades, held meetings, organised strikes and used factory equipment like trucks to build the barricades.

The Chinese working class have

come from being a crushed and atomised mass, ground under the state, to be a mighty force. The natural weapon of the workers in the Stalinist states is the mass strike. It was the weapon in East Germany in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, and in Poland in 1980.

A wave of protest strikes will take the Chinese working class a giant step towards self-organisation and towards beginning to act for itself as a class. It was thus in 1905 in Russia.

There is no democracy in China. The so-called National People's Congress is a rubber stamp, less substantial even than the Tsar's tame parliament of 1905. In these conditions the way forward is for the working class to organise their own parliament — workers' councils. The workers and students will also need to arm themselves and create their own military power against all the factions of the army hierarchy.

In China right now we are witnessing the greatest event in the struggle for human liberty and working-class power since the glorious days of May 1968, when the French working class rebelled and seized the factories.

Long live the Chinese workers' revolution!



Aftermath of slaughter

95 per cent oppose poll tax

POLL TAX

Over a hundred people turned up last week to a public meeting in Wallasey (Merseyside), organised by local anti-poll tax groups.

The good turnout for the meeting was a reflection of the strength of local opposition — a door-to-door canvas in the Liscard area of Wallasey found 95% of those questioned to be opposed to the poll tax.

Lol Duffy (chair of the local Constituency Labour Party) and Paul Davies (chair of Wirral Trades Council) both stressed that working class interests had consistently been advanced by workers being prepared to defy the bosses' laws, whether it be in Britain, Poland or, now, China.

And, as Lol Duffy pointed out: "Successful mass defiance of the law is no crime, because where you have mass defiance the law ceases to operate. And that's the situation we need to create to defeat the poll tax legislation."

Speaking on behalf of the local anti-poll tax campaign, Richard Aplin stressed that such mass defiance could succeed only if it were collectively organised and backed up by action from the labour movement.

We must build a mass campaign of defiance of the poll tax at all levels, a campaign based on direct



action rather than pompous speeches. The meeting needs to be followed up by:

- consolidating the local anti-poll tax groups in Wallasey and strengthening the links between them;
- expanding the base of the campaign in the local labour and trade union movement by winning affiliations from local labour movement bodies;
- campaigning to ensure that if Labour wins control of Wirral District Council in next year's elections, the Labour Group is pledged to refuse to continue implementation of the poll tax;
- mobilising for the TUC protest against the poll tax being held in Manchester on 1 July.

Revitalising York's campaign

By Claire Standing

A recent York Socialist Organiser public meeting on the poll tax brought over 40 people together to discuss how to revitalise the local anti-poll tax group.

Previously the group's activities had centred around a petition and a stall in the town centre, with no real base in the community.

It is dominated by the defeatist politics of the Communist Party — who

believe that the best way to beat the poll tax is by "chatting" to your neighbours about how bad it is!

We decided to go out to organise street committees and to leaflet local estates. We also decided to organise a mass street meeting, and invited Tony Benn to speak.

Women at the meeting agreed to set up a Women for Socialism group. Students at the meeting decided to organise an anti-poll tax activists group, linked to the Area National Union of Students, to co-ordinate student opposition. The first activity called is a mass lobby and queue-in at the poll tax registration office.

Slow on solidarity

By Cathy Nugent

Gorbachev and the Left' was the theme of a conference last weekend, 3-4 June, attended by around 300 people in Oxford.

It was sponsored by the Chesterfield Socialist Conference, and focused on how the left should assess Gorbachev's reforms. Unfortunately the assessment often displayed some profound illusions in Gorbachev and all that he stands for and a lack of urgency or concern about solidarity.

The political framework (or project, if you like) of the weekend was to debate with Soviet reformist bureaucrats, intellectuals and academic specialists from Eastern and Western Europe. Much of the audience was academically oriented and unconcerned, and indeed somewhat hostile to hard left organisations. Oppositionists and grassroots activists from Eastern Europe were rarely given a platform.

On the very weekend of Poland's election, no speaker from the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) was allowed.

The elitism of this approach was most clearly shown by the fact that no plenary session on solidarity was scheduled.

On Sunday we heard the news of the massacre of Chinese students and workers in Tiananmen square. A plenary session was arranged. But why not before? The events in China are the most important in world history for 20 years. They are, they should be, the most important political priority for the left. All that had been arranged prior to the event was one workshop with two academic speakers.

That plenary on China saved the conference from being little more than a platform for arguments for a rapprochement with Eastern Bloc reformist bureaucrats. The conference voted to support the Chinese Solidarity Campaign.

Two hundred and fifty Chinese and British workers and students demonstrated in Manchester's Chinatown on 4 June, in an immediate reaction to the carnage in Tiananmen square.

A shrine was erected in memory of the thousands of workers and students who were killed in their struggle for democracy and freedom.

Banners read in Chinese: "The heroes of Tiananmen square will never be forgotten — their spirit will never die", and floral tributes were laid.

More protests are planned for the future. Chen Hsing-yu, the representative of the Union of Chinese Students, said that it was a tragedy for the Chinese people and for all human beings, but that it was only the beginning of the democracy movement, which would continue to gain strength.

On 26 June people are marching from Chinatown to the Chinese Consulate.

Over 150 people came to a meeting at Leeds University on Monday 5 June to honour the students killed by China's rulers.

An emotional meeting, with speakers from China and Hong Kong, decided to denounce the atrocity and support the general strike in Shanghai and Hong Kong.

We decided to support the demonstration in Manchester and to call for a vigil in Leeds on Thursday 8 June, inviting Labour Party and Chinese speakers.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Thursday 8 June
Nottingham SO. 'Why industrial militancy is reviving'. Speaker Rob Dawber. ICC, Mansfield Rd. 7.30

Thursday 8 June
Manchester SO 'Support the workers and students in China'.

Sunday 11 June
South London SO 'Solidarity with Chinese workers and students' 7.30 Station Pub, Camberwell New Road

Wednesday 14 June
Polish Socialist Party (RD) Support Committee. 'Poland after the election'. T. Rachowski.

Wednesday 14 June
Northampton SO: 'Where we stand'. Speaker: Ray Ferris, 5.30

Saturday 17 June
Socialist Conference Third Conference (two days). Octagon Centre,

Sheffield.
Saturday 17 June
'Time To Go' Show (two days). City University, London

Sunday 18 June
London SO debate Simon Pirani (Workers Press) and Phil Hearse (Socialist Outlook) on the class nature of the Soviet Union.

Tuesday 20 June
Merseyside SO. 'A Summer of Discontent?' Speaker John O'Mahony.

Wednesday 21 June

Bristol SO. 'What's Wrong with New Realism?' Speaker: Martin Barclay.

Thursday 22 June
Southampton SO. 'Where We Stand'. Speaker: Ray Ferris.

Friday 23 June
Manchester SO: Debate on Ireland with Geoff Bell (Briefing) and John O'Mahony (SO). Millstone pub, Thomas St, 7.30

Saturday 1 July
TUC poll tax demonstration, Manchester.

Friday 7 July
Workers' Liberty 89 Rally: Workers of the World Unite! Speakers include Polish Socialist Party (RD), South African and Chinese socialists, Socialism and Revolution and SO. Caxton House, North London, 8.30-10.00

Saturday 8 July
Workers' Liberty Summer School (two days). Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19

Wednesday 26 July
Bristol SO. 'Socialism, Europe and 1992'. Speaker Neil Stonelake. Shephards Hall, Old Market. 7.30

Saturday 12 August
'Time to Go' demonstration on Ireland.

Wednesday 20 September
Bristol SO. 'Ireland: time to rethink'. Speaker Martin Thomas.

Saturday 11 November
Socialist Conference 'Building the left in the unions', Sheffield

WHERE WE STAND

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

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under

workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggle of

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Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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Which class rules in the Soviet Union?

Debate

- Sean Matgamna (Editor, Socialist Organiser)
 - Phil Hearse (Socialist Outlook)
 - Simon Pirani (Workers' Press)
- Sunday 18 June, 7.30
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

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Anti-Tory thriller misfires

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Paris By Night'

Drop an innocent man into deep trouble, have all his efforts to extricate himself only make things worse, and there you have the basis of a thriller.

There are usually a few old standbys — the police sniffing around asking awkward questions, a sense of time running out, ever increasing suspense and momentum as the trap appears to close around the hero, who's generally some poor sod we like and want to see survive.

'Paris By Night', though it's billed as a thriller, offers none of the pleasures of the genre. For a start, the central character, Euro MP Clara Paige, isn't innocent, and she's not particularly likeable either, since she's constantly spouting drivel about the virtues of Tory self-reliance.

Director David Hare doesn't want us to like her, since he's using her as a vehicle to show how corrupt and self-seeking the thrusting new breed of Tory women are. But it's a mistake, because we end up not caring very much what happens to Clara, instead of being on the edge of our seats cheering her on.

There's no-one else to like in the film either, so it's a pretty unpleasant 90 minutes. Clara's husband is a drunk, her Tory think-tank friend Adam is a selfish, twisted horror, and Clara's new lover, Wallace, appears slightly cold and sinister. He's meant to be charming, and he's the moral centre of the film, yet he's obscurely unsettling and ambivalent. I kept expecting him to be

revealed as a baddie.

The film isn't very fast paced, which is another mistake, since energy and momentum can cover up holes in the script or the kind of twists and implausibilities most thrillers hang on. In this film, we have too much time to think: Hang on, that doesn't make sense.

So it's a dud as a thriller. It also fails as the kind of moral tale that Hare is hoping to portray. He's not interested in seeing Clara locked up or punished for her crime; he's more concerned that she herself face up to her own selfishness and corruption. But is that enough? Can Clara come to any sort of moral regeneration without facing up to what her politics really mean?

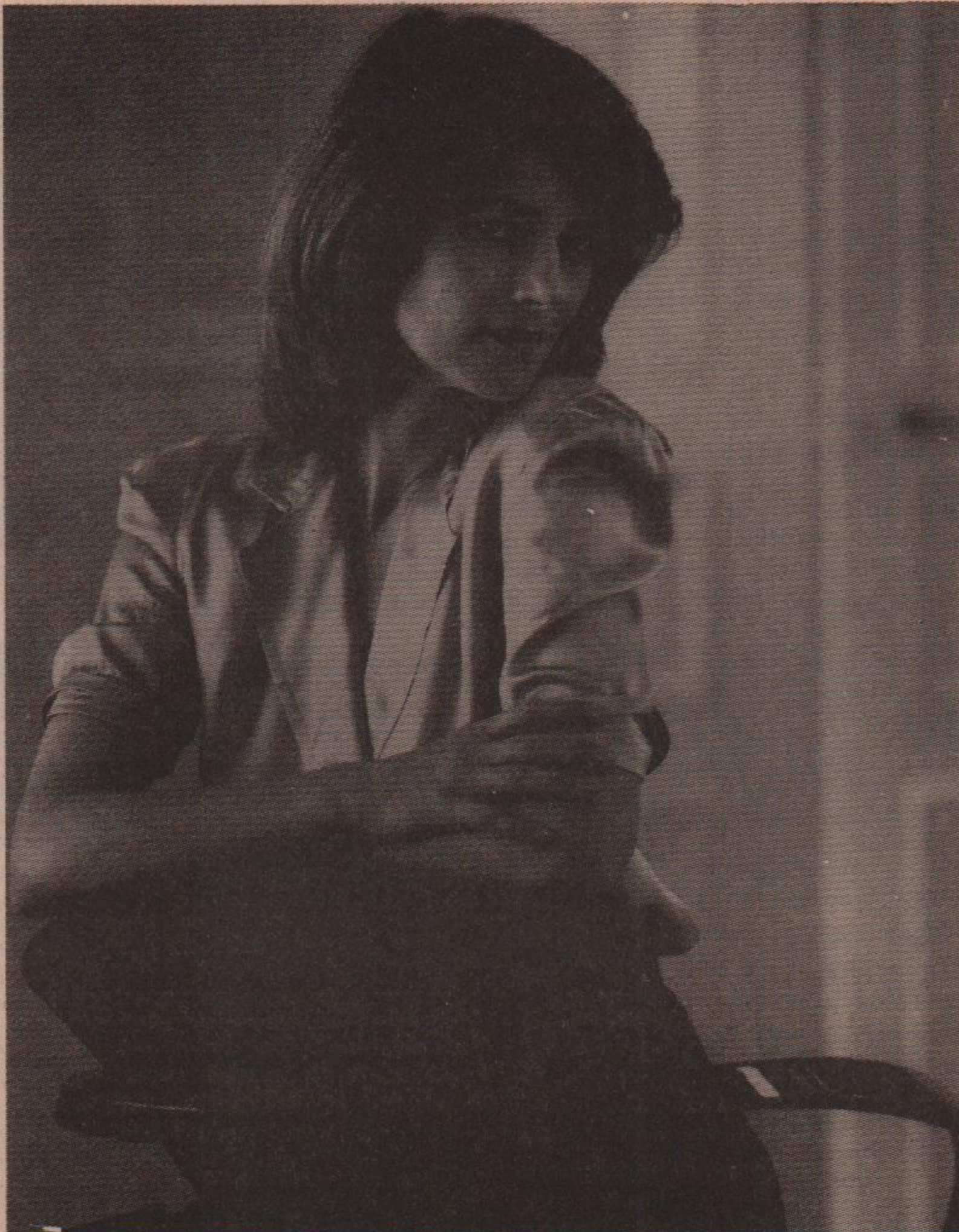
Hare seems to think that Clara will be saved if she only tells the truth. But even a truthful Clara would still be a Tory, and since her Tory politics have caused the moral rot in the first place, surely truth telling alone wouldn't save her. Hare seems to have painted himself into an ideological corner.

To help Clara confront herself, we have Wallace as the moral touchstone by which she recognises what she's become.

But the film collapses into implausibility at this point. Wallace would have needed second sight to piece together what Clara's been up to, and there's no explanation of his discovery, which borders on the truly miraculous.

Wallace isn't presented very clearly, but his balance is all wrong. He's much more censorious about Clara's neglect of her sick son than he is about her capacity for murder. And he's so joyless and judgemental that it's hard to see why she likes him.

Hare obviously loathes the Tories. That's a pretty understandable position, and the few enjoyable moments in the movie occur when he neatly skewers the relentless pomposity and selfishness of Tory politicians and their



Charlotte Rampling plays an evil Tory Euro-MP

chauvinistic arrogance towards Europe.

But by robbing Clara of motive for her actions, and by piling more and more blame upon her (is it really her fault alone that her husband's a drunk?), he ends up overstating his case, and making us almost sorry for shallow old Clara.

Charlotte Rampling does her best to bring a brittle edge to Clara, but she's not well saved by the rather

stilted dialogue and the general staginess and limpness of the production. It's obviously much more a play than a film.

The queerest part of the film is a scene where French people discuss what it means to be Jewish. Since the entire discussion is in French (unsubtitled), I can only assume Hare has thrown it in to prove how wrong the Tory position on the Lingua programme is.

A drop in the wine lake

TV

By Vicki Morris

I was glad that I didn't watch 'Psst...the Really Useful Guide to Alcohol' in colour because its opening sequence of flowing bubbling fluids would have made me feel even sicker than it otherwise did.

This fairly funny and well-meaning series is put out at an obscure hour so that uptight parents can't be shocked on behalf of their vulnerable offspring. Although the makers were coy on the subject of brewer's droop they were confident of their audience's capacity to titter politely at foulmouthed Harry 'Buggerallmoney' Enfield, who featured frequently.

Lots of more or less famous celebrities popped up amongst the ordinary pub-goers interviewed, to relate less than startling examples of their own debauched past and present abstinence.

For instance, can you believe that Tony Blackburn used to get aggressive when he had a few? Horrible thought.

With few exceptions, the programme tried a bit too hard to be palatable about the problems associated with drinking too much, and came across as flippant.

Also, because it was so bitty and so lightweight, it was hard to discern any particular theme in the programme, in spite of the fact that it was supposed to be concentrating on 'A Night Out with the Boys — Men and Alcohol'.

Nevertheless, the BBC is trying to do its bit in the struggle against the current tide of complacency on health issues, which starts with the government.

This week the medical profession criticised the Tories for allowing us all to be ignorant about the dangers of heart disease, and the Labour Party condemned them for allowing standards of hygiene in Britain's water, and on our beaches, to fall so far below EEC standards.

"67% of our beaches come up to EEC standards!" trumpeted some Tory Minister. Ah yes, but is the curve on the graph going up or down?

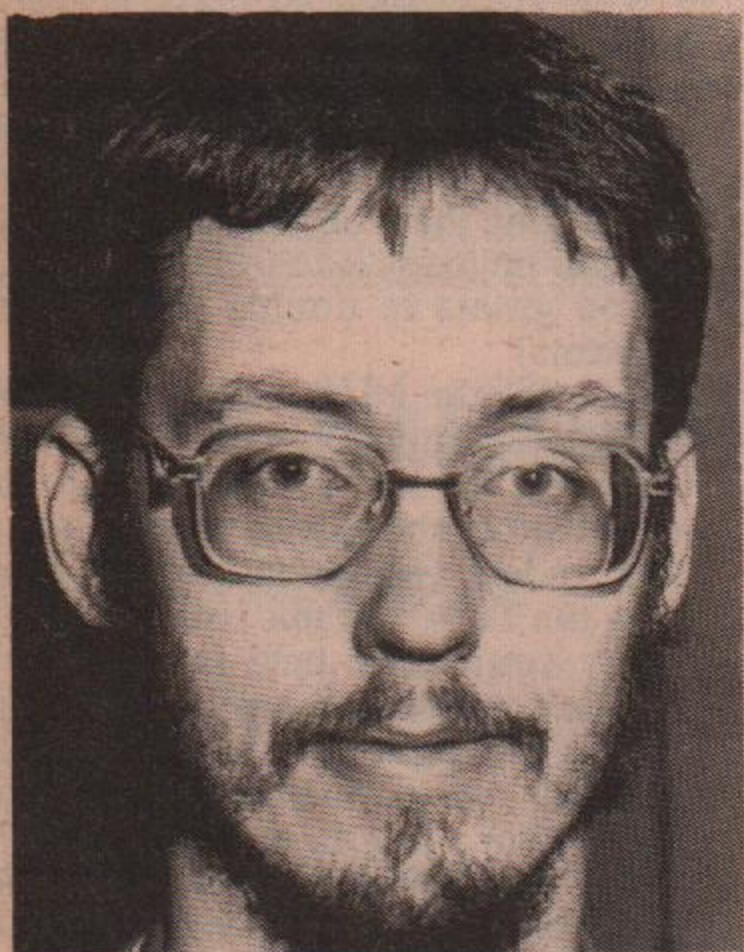
Tory spokespeople are beginning to sound a bit lame as they proclaim the inevitable march of progress in all spheres — the economy, the environment, education. Even the most trusting of citizens must be starting to question whether it's true that everything always gets better under a Tory administration.

I wouldn't rush to watch 'Psst' again, in spite of its generous comic content. I think it's about as useful as a health warning on a can of beer, especially as it goes out at 11pm when most of the people it's trying to reach are just rolling back from the pub too drunk to take notice.

But it's a worthy effort and similar films should be part of an adequate health education campaign in schools and local communities. The problem is, you couldn't get a brewery to sponsor it...and who else would?

Not the government. After all, publicity costs money. And there's no point in them spending a lot of money advertising the fact that they are running down the National Health Service and are shamefully complacent about the state of our environment.

Long-term weather forecast



LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Studies using US space and weather computing facilities suggest the following disturbing changes. Firstly, drought conditions will become more common at "middle and low latitudes". This includes England and Wales. "Dry" conditions, now taking up 16% of the time, will extend to take up 40% of the time after 2020.

"Extreme drought", now occurring one year in 100, will occur one year in ten after 2020 and perhaps every other year by 2050.

Secondly, other parts of the world will become wetter, with stronger, and more frequent, storms. As the oceans warm up, more moisture evaporates into the air. This takes up heat which is subsequently given to the air when water vapour condenses into rain drops. This causes stronger convection currents, making thunderstorms and hurricanes more intense.

The computer model predicts that the minimum air pressure at the centre of a hurricane could drop by 10%. Since the winds are driven by the pressure differences between highs and lows, the maximum wind-speed of a hurricane could increase from 175 to 220 miles per hour. The damage done by such winds increases as the square of their speed, so such hurricanes could be up to 50% more destructive.

The regions susceptible to hurricanes will extend further north and south from the tropics, so the entire US East coast could be at risk.

In Britain, the GHE should bring about a warmer, drier, Mediterranean-type climate.

What changes should we expect in the pattern of vegetation as a result of this? Plant ecology expert, Philip Grimes, of the University of Sheffield, described the results of his researches at the 2nd International Workshop on Plant Genetic Resources in Birmingham in April.

He thought we would see changes in British flora due to the GHE sooner than in continental Europe. This was because, as an island, Britain would experience more complex changes in climate.

Models of climatic change are a bit vague where it comes to areas as small as Britain, but, assuming that it gets hotter and drier, Grimes predicts a change in the proportion of various species. Test plots of land with a good mixture of grasses and leafy plants at 12°C (54F) lost all their grasses when warmed to 20°C (68F). They became dominated by just four broad-leaved species.

This could carry a warning for agriculture in Britain. Grazing animals feed largely on grasses. Also, grain crops are related to the grasses. Will they too be crowded out by broad-leaved weed species?

Mosses and liverworts will suffer as their moist habitats dry out. Instead of growing in spring and autumn, they will grow only in winter. Lichens, however, may flourish.

For many plants, the growth season will extend to autumn and

winter. There may be, though, a loss of growth at the height of the summer, when it is too hot and dry. The distribution of vegetation will change, too. Some plants will be able to move further north. This includes the lime tree, which at present grows as far north as the Lake District, but is unable to seed.

Plants such as lime trees must complete their growth in the summer when growing in cool climates. If the summer is too short, the plant may flower but not be able to produce enough nutrients to make mature seeds. At the workshop, it was said that British botanists would take the GHE seriously when Lake District lime trees began seeding.

With the longer growing season, other plants will start spreading from south-facing slopes and up hills. They will therefore compete for resources with plants specialised for more shaded or higher habitats. Many rarer plants may become extinct, including some alpine species.

Temperature and moisture determine when seeds germinate. While many will benefit from greater warmth, some seeds must experience frost before they sprout.

Drier conditions will lead to a greater incidence of forest and bush fires. Open spaces will expand, becoming more populated by plants with short life cycles (annuals) rather than perennials which tend to be larger and more bushy.

Weeds from warmer countries, now restricted to the south of Britain, will start to spread north, particularly colonising disturbed land.

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10 NALGO CONFERENCE

Build for all-out action

By Nik Barstow
(Assistant secretary,
Islington NALGO,
personal capacity)

Council white collar workers in NALGO begin balloting this week on industrial action in support of their £1,200 or 12% pay claim — and against a major employers' attack on national agreements.

The ballot — asking for support for a series of national strikes on 6, 11/12 and 18/19/20 July — was agreed at a special meeting of NALGO branch delegates on 1 June.

The vote for that action, proposed by the union's local government leaders was almost unanimous. It was a huge step forward for a union that has never before called for, let alone organised, serious national industrial action.

It is a sign of how serious the employers' threat to break down national agreements — and impose local 'flexibility' on pay grades is, and of the feeling amongst the membership against declining real wages.

But there were lost opportunities too in how the action is developed. Almost every delegate was convinced that to win we would almost certainly need to take all-out national strike action, but most, including the leadership, didn't think we could convince the mass of the membership that things were that serious.

They were, and are, wrong. Local fights in many councils over the last 10 years of cuts have helped change NALGO from a council 'officers association' into a trade union whose members see that you don't win things without fighting...but we still lack the organisation and arguments to turn that into action.

A wide range of branches at the 1 June meeting — Brent, Greenwich, Swindon, Nottinghamshire, Berkshire, Camden, Hampshire and Gateshead all backed a proposal from the Islington branch to argue the need for all-out action by the union and to bring forward a further ballot on all-out action to July so that it would happen when members were already involved in action and we wouldn't leave a huge gap in an industrial action over the

summer.

The support for serious action and the organisation of it, were impressive — but the arguments in the debate missed the point.

Some delegates, mainly SWP members, pushed their own pet view that what was really needed on the first day's action was a national demonstration in London. Though it's not a bad idea, it didn't go down well with activists outside London, who felt 'we've got a strike to run on the day'.

Concentrating on demonstrations, rather than the serious action, allowed the leadership to duck the argument. They proposed a national demonstration and lobby at the next negotiations on 6 July. A good idea, but it was a bit of a cheek — they opposed a call from

Islington for a lobby of the last negotiations where the employers threw down the gauntlet that led to the strike call!

The need for developing a serious campaign for all-out action hasn't gone away. It will grow if and when the employers refuse to budge. To make that campaign a real one, we need to organise far better than we have so far.

We need to draw together the branches that see how serious the issues are — and are organising on the ground — into a movement in the union.

The first step towards that — the launch of a new, national, activists' bulletin by the Islington branch, NALGO ACTION — has already won the support of a dozen other large branches of the union.

TOWN HALLS ROUNDUP

Southwark Council, in South London, is being used as a testing ground for the introduction of a whole series of new working practices which are essentially about making local authorities more like private companies.

It's a package very similar to the strings national employers want to attach to the 7% pay offer.

'Generic' job descriptions will allow managers to insist that workers move freely from one type of job to another. They go hand in hand with big cuts in jobs, the gaps being filled by what soon promises to be the exhausted 'flexible' workers.

The bosses want to scrap national negotiations on pay and conditions of employment and leave these matters up to the local employer and local managers, who will be able to decide which of their workers has 'deserved' a pay increase this year.

The whole package is inspired by the 'blame the workers' philosophy for dealing with the crisis caused by cuts in central government money for local authority services.

Southwark is a Labour council, but it is determined to impose compulsory redeployment and redundancy schemes on the workforce. If they are successful they'll be the first London-based authority of any political colour to do this. Other local authorities are already lining up to follow Southwark's lead.

The response from the workforce has shown a willingness to fight. The Housing Section and the Computer Services Division have already voted in favour of total walk-outs should redundancy

notices be served on their sections. At a well-attended branch meeting the members voted unanimously for a ballot to be held calling for all-out industrial action to be taken should the package of redundancies be introduced.

Support is being requested from all the London boroughs for lobbies of the Labour Group on 12 June and of the Council's Policy Committee on 19 June, as well as from NALGO's national conference. Financial and practical support will be much needed to sustain the long strike as will support of other trade unions.

Southwark NALGO is in the forefront of a crucial battle for the shape of local government in the period to come. Messages of support to and information from Southwark NALGO, 34 Peckham Road, London SE5.

The majority of Manchester City Council's housing offices were brought to a standstill on Thursday 1 June by a one-day strike over temporary contracts.

NALGO members will meet on Wednesday 7 June to consider a proposal for indefinite strike action.

This dispute was sparked off by the lay-off of a temporary contract worker employed with the Housing Aid rent registration team. It was the first time a temporary worker had been laid off for about 10 years.

The lay-off led to a week-long strike by the Housing Aid workers, and now the dispute has broadened out to a Housing-wide issue.

A few days after the worker was laid off, five vacancies in the Housing Department were advertised for temporary contracts. The City Council's aim seems to be to increase the use of temporary staff in the Housing Department.

Poll tax will be a major issue

Poll tax will be a major debate at NALGO Conference this year.

Almost 20 branches have submitted motions, many demanding that NALGO build campaigns of non-implementation and non-payment.

The debate is likely to concentrate around one composite favoured by the union executive, saying NALGO will support campaigns on non-payment only 'if and when they become viable options', and another saying that NALGO should take a lead.

The 1988 Conference overwhelmingly committed NALGO to mass campaigns of protest and defiance against the poll tax — and did not rule out defying the law. The local government leadership on the union executive then stopped branches trying to put into practice non-implementation policies that they had agreed.

Many key debates this year will be about the union itself and how it is going to organise to respond to anti-union laws and the current trend of mergers.

The leadership want to duck the issues. They are in favour of a merger between NALGO and NUPE but want us to leave its shape to them.

A key debate on the first day will be the detailed series of safeguards and principles for merger put forward by the Leeds and Islington branches which the Executive opposes.

Mind you, to protect themselves they've managed to timetable a rather more urgent discussion on the election of officials (which will be extended) so that the merger will fall off the agenda.

Another major debate on Positive Action in NALGO couldn't be fobbed off so easily. It will be taken towards the

end of Conference.

The union executive put off funding and official support for NALGO's National Black Members' Co-ordination Committee (NBMC) after last year's Conference where their own weak proposals on Positive Action were defeated in the face of opposition from the NBMC and other groups in the union.

Motion 116 from the Birmingham and Camden branches, which was supported by NALGO Women's Conference as well as the NBMC, will be the centrepiece of the debate.

On 1992 many motions rightly focus on the need for trade unions to come to grips with what the Single European Act will mean for jobs in Britain but the Executive and others concentrate on saluting Euro-bureaucrats like Jacques Delors and say nothing about trade unions in Europe.

At least one little flag of internationalism has been raised by the Metropolitan District in an amendment from the Islington branch which says that working with unions in Europe is more important than dealing with the EEC Commissioners.

**Socialist Organiser
Fringe Meeting
On China and the Eastern
Bloc
with speakers from
Chinese Solidarity
Campaign and eyewitness
from Poland
6.30pm, Clifton Hotel,
Blackpool
Tuesday 12 June**

Rebuild loans fight

SOCIALIST STUDENT

By Jill Mountford

As Maeve and Tommy pack their Ambre Solaire and bathing suits ready for their well-earned break from the hustle and bustle of very small but important lobbies of Parliament, the loans debate goes on.

Despite the organisation and mobilisation of thousands of rank and file students last November, little, if any, fightback has been called for by the leadership of the National Union of Students.

Once again the Tories are facing an obstacle to the introduction of top-up loans. Unfortunately that obstacle doesn't come from the wave of militant action that swept the campuses, but from an arm of big business — banks and building societies who are refusing to foot the bill for the administration of the top-up loans system.

Almost everyone recognises that the cost of operating loans is going to be far in excess of what the government have said. The banks are insisting that the Tories pay an estimated £530 million extra for the administration cost, the expense of establishing and running the debt collection agency that will inevitably be required, and cover for the losses from defaulters.

The Tories have to make a decision. Either they shelve their plans on loans and face an embarrassing defeat, or they find an extra £530 million for the Higher Education budget. Yet they claim that their objective for introducing top-up loans is to use the money saved on grants to double the number of students!

Even if the NUS leadership welcome the latest obstacle erected by the banks, rank and file student activists are under no illusions about who or what strength the student movement can rely on to turn the Tories on this issue. At the Left Unity conference held in April, where 250 left activists assembled to discuss building a fighting National Union of Students, we overwhelmingly supported the call for a first term demo at the Tory Party Conference, for building a 24-hour shut-down of education and a wave of occupations, pickets and strikes across the length and breadth of British campuses.

Activists from Left Unity clearly have the will to take on the Tories, building the necessary links with workers inside and outside of education. Left activists need to regenerate the wave of militancy that was witnessed in the first term of last year.

Left activists in colleges all over the country must unite in organising and mobilising against the attacks facing us. Already a large section of the left have made a commitment to work together on the tasks facing the student movement, but still many left activists remain outside.

We call on the members of Socialist Worker Students Society and Militant in particular to join us in Left Unity to defeat the right in NUS and take on the Tories.

For more information about Left Unity contact Emma Colyer of NUS Executive, Andrew Berry of Brunel Tech, or Louise Holloway of NUS London, who are the Left Unity convenors.

Use your head for more

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

A small but powerful group of highly privileged, politically motivated men bent on protecting their 'jobs for life' could hold the key to the outcome of a set of simmering industrial disputes. I refer, of course, to the judges.

Under successive rounds of government legislation it now seems to be nigh on impossible to organise an effective strike without falling foul of the law. But how should activists respond to this situation?

One obvious answer is to (literally) go for broke and simply urge outright defiance of the law. The problem with this is that after the experiences of the printers, the miners and the seafarers, not even the most 'left' union leader these days would countenance that way forward in their wildest dream/

nightmare. I for one wouldn't condemn Ron Todd simply for having made an attempt to protect the union's assets from sequestration under the 1982 Employment Act. I would condemn him for putting his concern for legality before the requirements of organising an effective strike.

Now we see the painful spectacle of Brother Ron being dragged through the courts by the Port Employers who claim that any strike over the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme is, by definition, 'political'. Poor old Todd had more or less promise in advance that he'd sell out in the end. Cross-examined by the employers' brief about the demand for 'terms and conditions no less favourable' than the existing scheme, Todd had to explain that this 'did not represent the final position...but merely the starting point for further negotiations since asking for anything else at the outset of the dispute would be ridiculous.' You can almost see him sweating, can't you?

The legal arguments at the disposal of the employers are almost endless: there's the whole issue of the wording of the ballot papers (remember London Underground); there's the question of whether a right to strike even exists under the 1947 Act. Then they can appeal — and they have already indicated that they'll pay all the costs (even the

union's!) if necessary. The employers' gameplan, of course, is to tie Brother Ron up in court until June 16, when the legal validity of the ballot result expires.

Representatives of the (semi-official) National Ports Shop Stewards Committee, speaking at labour movement gatherings, have indicated that they're not entirely happy with Todd's approach but that at this stage of the game maximum unity at every level of the union is the main priority.

Some militants, observing Todd's performance in court, have been attracted to the other obvious response to the Tory laws, as exemplified by the London Underground strikers — what might be called the World War Two Approach. In this model, you keep all your actions completely unofficial and bypass all the normal union structures, as a way round the law. Even so, of course, individual strikers can still be dragged through the courts and bankrupted for 'incitement to breach of contract'. Which is why the London Underground strikers were, to say the least, a little coy about publicity and giving people their real names. The Chair of Hull Port Shop Stewards is presently being done by the employers on precisely these grounds.

But apart from the risk of individual militants being picked off, the World War Two Approach is not really a

realistic option for any but the strongest, most tightly organised sections. Most workers need the official support of their union to sustain a serious dispute — and they have the right to expect it. The other great danger with the WW2 Approach is that it quite suits the bureaucrats, providing them with the ideal excuse for doing nothing in a dispute and then blaming the members if things go wrong.

So what do we demand of the union leaderships in the present round of struggles? Certainly not the silly slogan of 'Break the Law', as though that in itself was some sort of principle. Much better to demand that the leaders do what is necessary to mobilise the members for an effective strike, in the knowledge that one way or another this will mean breaking the law, as sure as night follows day.

And, despite all our enthusiasm for 'pure' militancy, we do need some politics as well. Now seems as good a time as any to start pushing unifying political demands like the sliding scale of wages and a charter for workers' positive rights (eg, to strike, to organise effective picketing, to proper consultation about changes in terms and conditions). The old slogan 'Use Your Muscle For More' is all very well as far as it goes. But we need to use our Heads For More as well.

Tories exploit casual labour at passport offices

By Stan Crooke

Passport Offices in Britain and Northern Ireland were shut down last Friday (2 June) when members of the Civil and Public Servants Association (CPSA) staged a 24-hour strike in solidarity with their colleagues in Liverpool.

CPSA members in Liverpool walked out on indefinite strike on Tuesday 30 May demanding an increase in the number of permanent staff employed in Passport Offices nationally. As Chris Johnstone, CPSA branch secretary at the Liverpool office, explained:

"At the root of the dispute is a new computer system which has backfired. The new system is 15% less efficient than processing passport applications manually. It now takes 14 weeks longer to process applications than at the same time last year.

"We have been demanding more staff for over two years, another 381 in total for all offices in the country, but the government has hidden behind an increased use of casual labour and overtime to get through peak periods. And this is despite the fact that their own figures show a substantial increase in the demand for passports in coming years.

"Over a hundred casual staff work in the Liverpool office. It is an example of the worst use and abuse of casual labour. The government is exploiting the unemployment situation in Merseyside, and in other cities, such as Glasgow and Belfast, where Passport Offices are located.

"Douglas Hurd has said that he will fill Liverpool with as many casuals as he can jam into the offices. We had always thought that incompetence in the Passport Offices stopped at senior management. But Hurd's comments show that it goes all the way up to the Home Office.

"This is not a dispute about pay, overtime or teabreaks. It is about a government department failing to fulfill its obligations towards the public and its employees. It is about providing jobs for unemployed people."

Matters came to a head in Liverpool when management, without any consultation with the unions, drafted in extra staff from London, instead of taking on more permanent staff to deal with the workload. A strike ballot amongst the CPSA members in the office produced a 87 to 2 majority in favour of indefinite strike action.

115 out of the 158 permanent staff are now out on strike. The casual staff are still going in to work — although some of them have said that they will not do overtime and will pay a weekly levy in support of the strike. Others are working as much overtime as possible.

Members of NUCPS (the higher-grades union) are also continuing to

work. This includes the full staff drafted in from London, whose arrival precipitated the strike.

A national ballot for a country-wide strike by CPSA members in Passport Offices last Friday produced an overwhelmingly positive response. Only in Glasgow did the vote go against a strike — on the grounds that a 24-hour strike was not enough. But, in line with the overall result of the ballot, the Glasgow office came out on strike as well.

The strikers in Liverpool are confident that they will win, especially in the light of the support which they have already received from the local labour movement. Chris Johnstone explained:

"The trade union movement response has been overwhelming. Messages of support and donations have been flooding into the local trade union centre where we are based.

"We have planned for a long-term dispute, but are optimistic that it will be a short-term one. We don't like our members being out on strike and losing money because of management's incompetence. This is a dispute we think we can win. We know we are right."

A further union-management meeting is due to be held as we go to press. If management refuses to accept the union's demand for more permanent staff, then the dispute should be escalated into a national one — what is being demanded, after all, is not just more permanent staff in Liverpool, but more permanent staff at all Passport Offices in the country.



• Messages of support, requests for speakers, and donations (cheques payable to Liverpool Passport Strike

Fund) should be sent to: MTUCURC, 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool. Phone: 051 709 3995.

Leaders sabotage jobs campaign

By a Notting Hill DSS worker

On Monday night, 5 June, London activists in the CPSA (Civil and Public Services Association) met to discuss the latest outrage committed by the right wing controlled DHSS Section Executive in the fight against Moodie (relocation of London Social Security Offices to other parts of the country).

There are 21 "Moodie" offices in London. DHSS Section Conference in May passed a motion calling for a ballot for all-out paid strike action in these offices.

Yet the Section Executive two weeks ago, announced a ballot of all 75 Social Security Offices in the old Greater London Council area for non co-operation with Moodie, followed by a strike ballot if the offices agree to non-co-operation.

This move is designed to result in a

lost ballot as the majority of offices balloted are not affected by Moodie. The ballot papers emphasise that strike action is unpaid. The Section Executive are not recommending a yes vote.

When the ballot was announced, London DHSS activists produced two leaflets and met immediately to organise leafleting and speakers in all 75 offices to win the ballot.

It has long been custom and practice for workplaces and branches to invite Section Executive speakers to balloting meetings if they choose to. When the Section Executive found they had not been invited into London North region, they demanded right of entry. London North refused. Last week the Section Executive announced that the ballot was off.

The Section Executive were looking for any excuse to postpone the ballot (perhaps indefinitely) in order to dissipate the mood which had been built up from the successful one day strike on 9 May. They were also aware that the left in London DSS was well-organised for the ballot.

When London activists met we needed to decide whether to allow Section Executive speakers into the branches and ask them to reinstate the ballot, or whether to take the initiative into our own hands, ballot the 21 offices unofficially, and use this to launch the unofficial all-out strike action which activists have always known will be the only way to win against Moodie.

Socialist Organiser and some Socialist Caucus supporters argued for the latter. The earliest the ballot is likely to be reinstated is the middle of July. The Section Executive do not want to hold a ballot and will use any excuse to postpone it.

And the timetable for 'Moodie' has

been brought forward. Regional teams have been in Ealing office since May. They will be put into other offices in the Ealing cluster very soon.

Later this month Ealing Social Security workers will be sent up to Glasgow for 'Moodie' training, and at the beginning of July the all-important 'Moodie' telecommunications system will be installed.

For these reasons, plus the fact that the left in DHSS London is well organised and that there is a genuine mood among rank and file members to fight 'Moodie' we argued for taking an unofficial ballot now.

Unfortunately SWP and Militant supporters argued for letting the Section Executive in and proceeding with an official ballot. This means that the Section Executive will have the power to delay the ballot until the momentum and mood is lost and make it more difficult to launch unofficial action.

Both Militant and SWP supporters argued that unofficial action is not the way forward. In reality unofficial action is the only way forward — the Section Executive don't want a ballot or a strike and will do everything in their power to prevent it.

The meeting voted to allow the Section Executive into offices. However the London activists forum is not a delegate body and individual branches will take their own decisions. It is vital that the left turns the London activists forum into a body with delegates from all Moodie offices which can take a co-ordinated approach to the fight.

Already the London activists' forum has become a body which draws in ordinary rank and file members and is actively keying in to the fight against Moodie — something the Militant-led London Broad Left has never done.

Maxwell sacks strikers

On 24 May, 23 members of the Pergamon Press NUJ chapel were sacked for staging an official one-day strike.

The strike was the culmination of a five months' dispute which started when the company sacked a NUJ member without going through any of the agreed procedures. More than that, according to striker Harriet Eisner, the company (which is owned by Maxwell) is arguing that the sacked member had "no right" to be represented by the NUJ because of the department she was in.

In other words, Maxwell is now deciding what union his workers can join and that in effect two-thirds of the NUJ chapel have had their union de-recognised.

"After five months of trying to reach a negotiated settlement the company told us there was nothing to negotiate,

but they did promise to sack us if we went on strike!

"The chapel was then faced with the choice of giving in to Maxwell's union bashing or going on strike and being sacked. We chose — overwhelmingly — to go on strike.

"Not because we wanted to make some heroic gesture, but because we felt that our most basic right to collective organisation was being challenged and we had to choose but to defend it.

"We are now on indefinite strike to secure reinstatement for all sacked members, recognition for the union throughout the company, and compensation for our original sacked member."

• Send messages of support and donations to NUJ Pergamon Press (a/c 0117299, sorting code 301251) c/o Jim Boumelha, 60 Cricket Road, Oxford OX4 3DQ.

Anger on the railways

By an NUR guard

Industrial action in the South East, starting on Southern Region with drivers' and guards' unofficial overtime and rest time ban, has carried on despite lacking official sanction or co-ordination.

Depots all around London have taken part in this action, which has helped to sharpen the campaign over the 7% pay limit amongst Train Staff.

The real spark for these actions has come from the London Underground drivers' one-day strikes. Their effect has been like an electric charge at a time when British Rail workers in Network South East are being pushed around more and more by management.

We are faced with wholesale Driver Only Operation in the next few years, for example at depots like Streatham Hill, Euston and Stratford.

At Streatham Hill earlier this year guards walked out in protest, and West Ham NUR has launched a campaign to fight Driver Only Operation in the Stratford area.

Then there are depot closures — Chingford, Enfield, Hertford East and Gidea Park are all earmarked to close, so it is not surprising that Chingford and Enfield Train Crews are the strongest advocates of the present overtime ban.

Despite the obvious setback of the ASLEF decision to pull out of the campaign, there is no reason why a massive 'Yes' vote can't be won in the ballot. For many guards and drivers in the South East area, an overtime ban is what they are already doing, so strike action has to be the only real option.

A pro-action vote will come from a number of factors in the South East — a protest about safety, conditions and Driver Only Operation with pay as a peg to hang it all on.

This has happened on the London Underground, with all the anger and bitterness of four years working without guards eventually exploding in probably the biggest surge of militancy in 50 years.

There is such a swell of militancy from the rank and file on London buses and tubes that the obvious next move is a rank and file London-wide co-ordination of these struggles.

IN BRIEF

Up to 2,000 construction workers on the North Sea Oil platforms took part in a one-day strike on 5 June. This is the second wave of strike action in a couple of weeks in which AEU construction workers have demanded a big improvement in their pay and conditions and the extension of Health and Safety legislation to cover the rigs.

The workers have formed a co-ordinating committee covering the whole of the North Sea. Pressure is building up from the rank and file for all-out action.

The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions is to hold a special conference this week to discuss the way forward in the current dispute with the employers over pay and a shorter working week. The conference, which allows substantial rank and file stewards' representation, should attempt to take control of the dispute and outline a plan for building on the limited selective action so far suggested. Sustained national action is needed.

Talks between the trade unions and BBC at ACAS have broken down. The employers have refused to increase their 7% pay offer. Union officials now say serious escalation of the dispute is inevitable. Activists across the different unions have launched an unofficial joint union caucus.

Action is brewing in the construction industry around London over pay. UCATT and TGWU officials have rejected the employers' 8% pay offer and an overtime ban looks likely. Meanwhile the 600 steel erectors who have already held a series of strikes recently are to meet again this week to discuss what action to take after rejecting a revised pay offer.

Merger talks look set to get underway between the MSF and the TGWU. This could create a union of 1.9 million members able to represent all grades in manufacturing.

Tory cutbacks behind disputes

By Trudy Saunders, CPSA

The current dispute by Passport Office workers in the CPSA (Civil and Public Servants Association) over staffing levels clearly illustrates the extent of Tory cutbacks in the Civil Service.

Since 1979, thousands of civil service jobs have been cut. In the DSS (Department of Social Security), for example, a minimum of 20,000 jobs will go over the next two years due to Operational Strategy (computerisation) and Moodie (relocation).

There has been a history of overtime bans and opposition to casual workers in the CPSA. Strikes demanding extra permanent staff have been won in the past. But the most crucial test for the CPSA came when Limited Period Appointees (LPAs — long-term casuals) were introduced to implement Fowler's social security reviews.

The then DHSS Section Executive Committee (SEC), which had a majority of Militant supporters on it, first ran scared from fighting the Fowler Reviews, then failed to build on the strike action already taking place in some areas to fight LPAs.

Since then, LPAs have been used to cover some of the shortfall in jobs. Apart from being an inadequate response to staff shortages, LPAs are a direct threat to the CPSA's ability to fight as they can be sacked at any time.

The use of casual workers is just one method the Tories use to paper over the cracks in a demoralised and run-down civil service, and keep already low wages down.

Since a right-wing National Executive Committee came to power, plans to increase the number of YTSers in the civil service are well underway. CPSA members voted to reject YTS in a ballot earlier this year — despite a right-wing recommendation to accept it. But no fight against YTS has been launched.

In the Department of Employment the introduction of ET (Employment Training) looms closer, with little evidence of any campaign of action to oppose it.

Management may well back down in the face of strike action among passport workers who have a certain amount of industrial muscle. But the union's biggest fight for more, permanent jobs must surely be in the DSS and DE.

We must begin to link the various struggles for more jobs in the different departments and put an end to casuals, overtime and all other Tory measures to rundown the civil service.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Vote Labour in Vauxhall!

Labour must win the Vauxhall by-election.

The imposition of Kate Hoey as candidate against the wishes of the local Labour Party, and in particular against their obvious wish to have a black candidate, was a disgrace. But if Neil Kinnock's bureaucratic stitch-ups are allowed to result in a Labour defeat, it will

be no less so.

If Labour loses Vauxhall, it will be a victory for Thatcher. And now — with Thatcher reeling from one crisis to another — that would be a boost for her and her government. A Labour win despite Kinnock would strengthen the overall trend in British politics, which is towards a Labour victory in the next general election.

Local Labour activists are right to be outraged. But their outrage must not lead to abstention or foolishness like booing Kate Hoey at public events (as some have done).

The outrage must be turned on Kinnock. A campaign saying, Vote Labour, but fight Kinnock's policies could help draw in new people to fight the right-wing. It could help secure a Labour victory, giving a lead to many local people who are severely disillusioned and might otherwise swell a futile protest vote.

A strong local Labour Party can put Kinnock — and Hoey — on the defensive in the future.

Support the dockers!



As we go to press it still looks likely there will be a national dock strike. If so, it will be the biggest challenge to the Tories and the employers since

the miners' strikew of 1984-5.

The whole labour and trade union movement must be ready to support

the dockers. The miners lost because there wasn't enough solidarity. That must never happen again.

Dockers support groups must be organised. Picket

lines must be supported.

We must get ready for industrial action alongside them. Support the dockers!

Bosses plan for docks strike

Even before the announcement of the result of the recent dockers' ballot in favour of strike action in the docks, shipowners and port authorities were busy making plans to beat the strike. Since the announcement of the ballot result, the strike-breaking preparations have been stepped up.

On the one hand, the employers have dragged the unions through the courts to try to get the strike banned.

Associated British Ports, the Port of London and Mersey Dock and

Harbour Company have taken the TGWU to court, while the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority has taken the GMB (which organises dockers in Sunderland, Newcastle, Blythe and Tees and Hartlepool) to court.

In both court cases the port authorities sought to have the dispute declared illegal on the grounds that it was a political, rather than a trades, dispute. As if the bosses weren't conspiring with the Tories and using Tory politically-motivated legislation!

Employers have also sought to soften up individual workforces in the docks. They have demanded that port-by-port results in the ballot be published, so that they can

find out where support is weakest. In Hull they have served a writ on the shop stewards' chair in a local dispute. In Ipswich they have done a mail-shot to every docker appealing for voluntary redundancies.

Last Friday (2 June) the shipping newspaper *Lloyds' List* reported that "shipowners, forwarding agents and road hauliers are finalising contingency plans to cope with a national docks strike."

The non-scheme port of Felixstowe has been flooded out with enquiries from companies wanting to transfer their trade to it. Shippers have also been busy stockpiling goods on the Continent, in line with the contingency plans drawn up by

the National Association of Port Employers.

There has also been a massive increase in shipbrokers' enquiries for coastal vessels of less than 3,000 tonnes deadweight, while shipowners have been surveying riverside wharves on the Trent, Ouse, and in East Anglia for alternative unloading sites in the event of a strike.

The bosses' preparations underline the need for secondary picketing and solidarity action from dockers abroad in the event of a national docks strike. The bosses have prepared for a no-holds-barred fight. The labour movement, here and abroad, must have the same attitude.

Fight for union rights!

By Eric Heffer MP

The Tories have announced plans for new laws to stop unofficial strikes. There were no strikes in Nazi Germany. There were no strikes in Mussolini's Italy.

There were no strikes in Stalinist Russia, no official strikes in Pinochet's Chile, no legal strikes in Franco's Spain.

Is that the kind of society the Tories want? They want to make it very difficult indeed, or almost impossible, for workers to take any strike action without it becoming immediately illegal.

Even when workers take official action through the present legislation then the courts find reason to stop even that sort of action. There is a very strong group of Conservatives who want to bring in legislation to stop any strikes at all in public services, like the Underground.

It is a very serious matter. It's got to be fought.

Yet there's been a lack of action from our front bench on the matter. Nobody has said much about it.

They say a Labour government will not get rid of all of the Tory anti-union legislation, they will only get rid of some of it. And some union leaders are so concerned with getting rid of Thatcher that they will accept almost anything coming from the Labour Party.

What they don't realise is that they are tying themselves up for the future.

Display this poster in your workplace

Why you need

Inflation

Prices are rising at 8% per year. They may well rise faster in the coming year. Electricity and water charges, and fares, will be pushed up further in the Tories' drive for privatisation.

The Poll Tax will add to the cost of living. In Islington, London, for example, it will make the average two-adult working-class household £10 a week worse off. If those adults take home £100 a week each, they need 5 per cent extra on their pay rise to stay ahead. 8 per cent plus 5 per cent makes a 13 per cent pay rise needed.

The figure of 8 per cent is an average calculated by the government. Some prices are rising faster, some are rising more slowly or even falling.

Mortgage payments have risen fastest of all in the last year — about 50 per cent. Rent-payers

have faced smaller rises. That will change in the coming years, as the Tories' new housing laws push up rents.

In 1988, these were the real rises in the cost of living for different households.

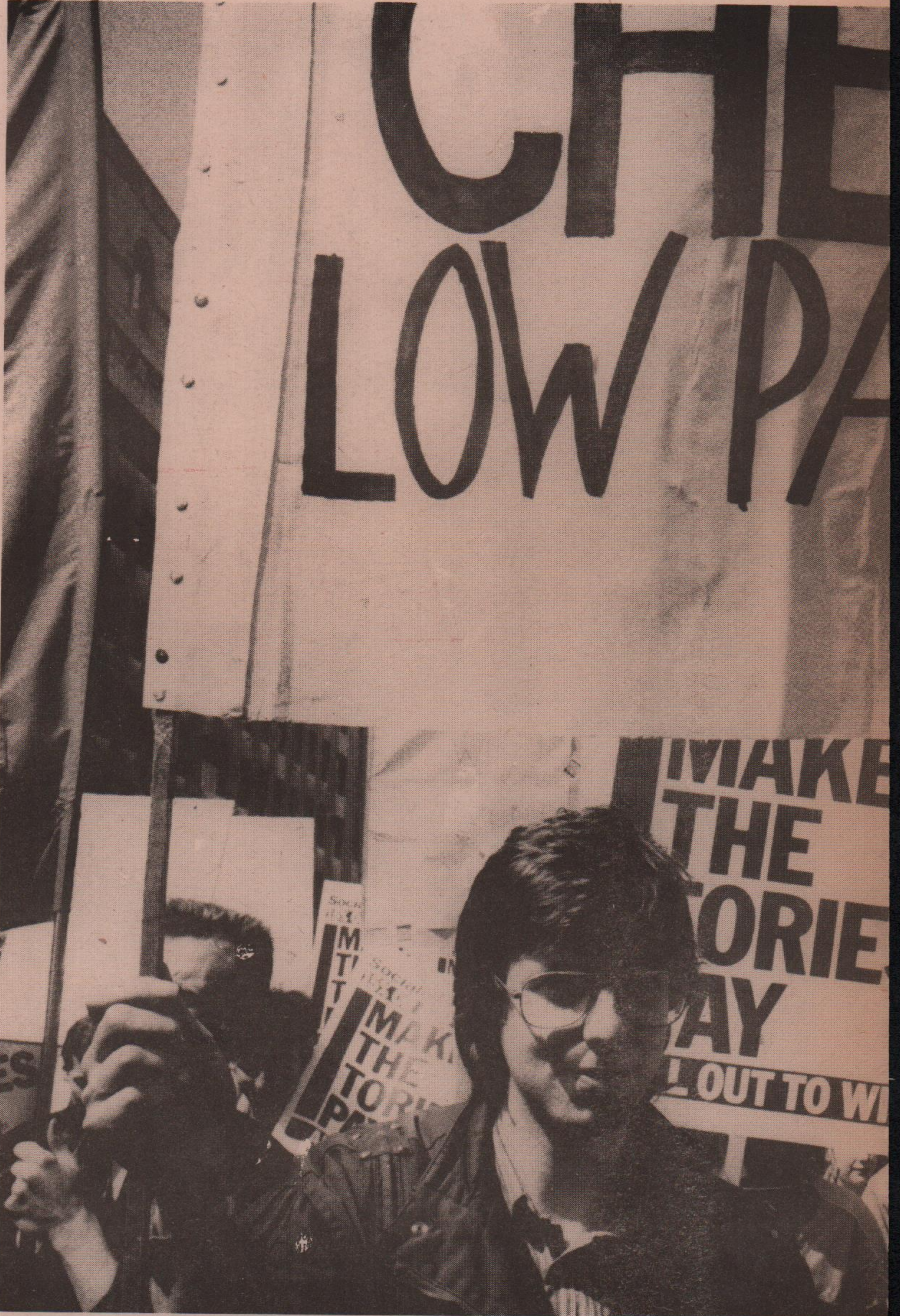
Household in the poorest 20 per cent, with a mortgage 14.6%

Household in the middle 60 per cent with a mortgage 13.1%

Household in the richest 20 per cent owning their house outright 5.7%

Household in the poorest 20% paying rent 6%

We need automatic inflation-proofing of wages — agreements which guarantee monthly pay rises in line with a working class cost of living index. In the meantime, we need pay rises adequate to keep pace with price rises.



Public sector workers have lagged behind the average over the 1980s. Direct pressure from the

Tory government has kept their wages down.

Rich get richer... poor get poorer

The richest one per cent of the population are about 70 per cent better off than ten years ago. The poorest four million households are 6 per cent worse off in real terms — the next eight million just 3½% better off.

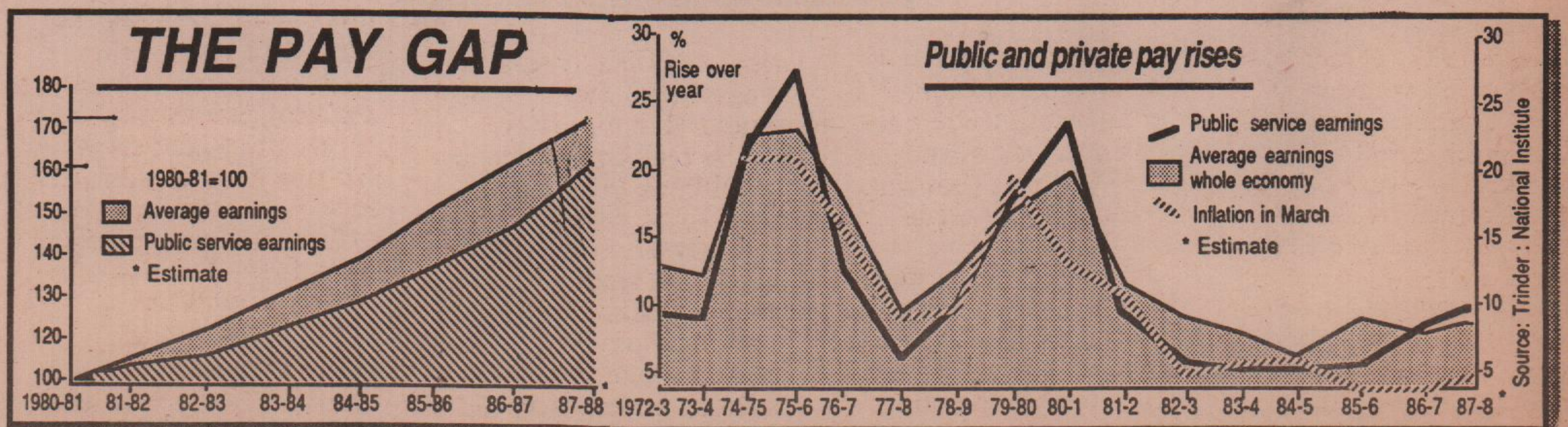
Another set of figures show the same picture. Between 1979 and 1986 the real earnings of professional, managerial and administrative staff rose 29 per cent, whereas assembly workers gained only 3 per cent and transport workers 4 per cent.

Put it another way: if the share of the top one per cent of taxpayers in post-tax income had remained steady between 1978-9 and 1988-9, instead of doubling, and the money had gone instead to the bottom 25 per cent, those lower-paid 25 per cent could have had a 25 per cent real pay

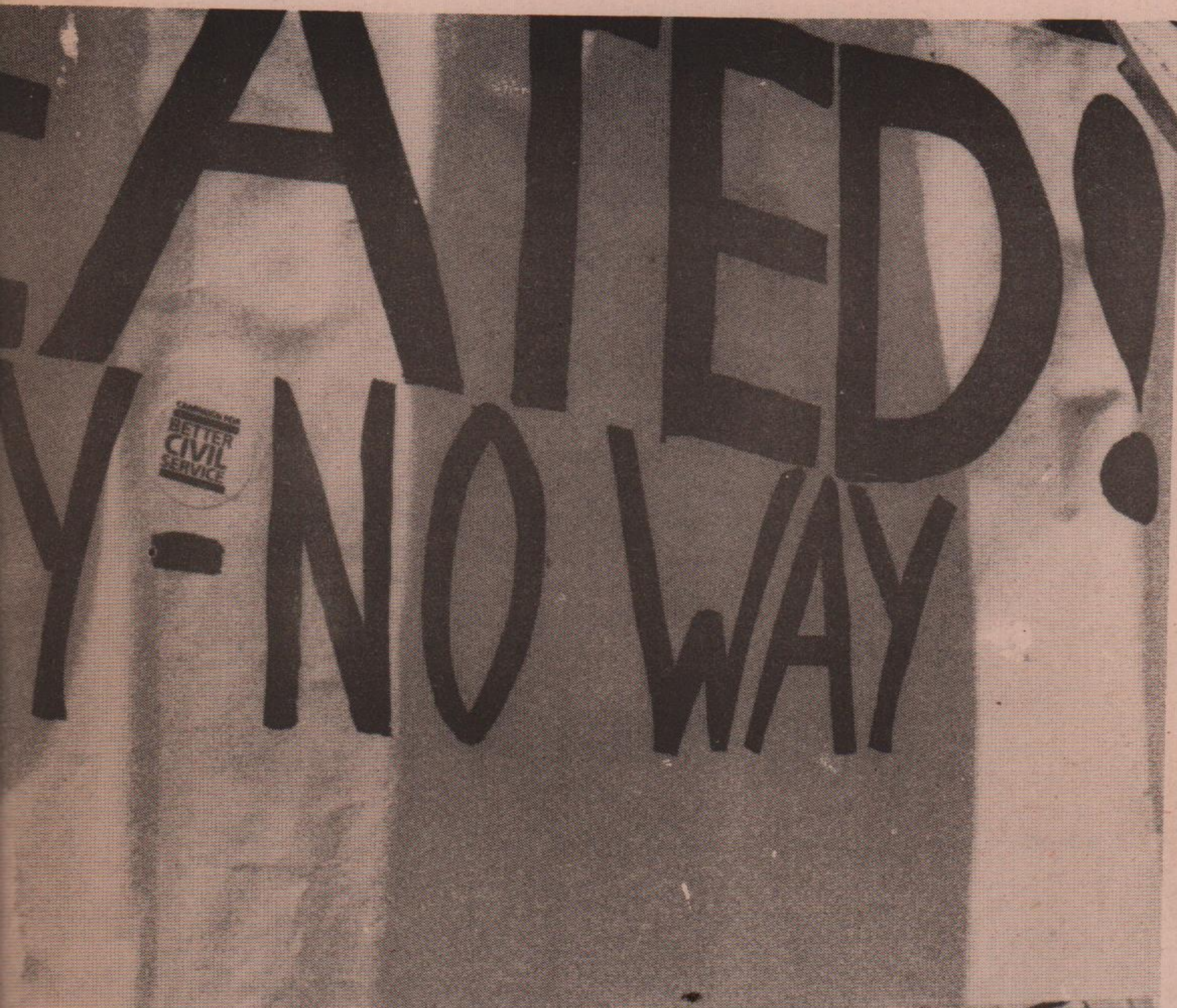
rise.

Last year Littlewoods boss John Clement gave himself a 167 per cent pay rise, while the company's shop workers got 6.5 per cent. British Airways chief Lord King got 238 per cent, the airline's technical staff 5.5%. Lord Hanson awarded himself 286 per cent, while tobacco workers at Imperial Tobacco (which he owns) got 6.8%.

Don't let anyone tell you there's no money around for pay rises.



ed a pay rise



The poverty trap

By 1987, 46 per cent of all workers in Britain — including 1/2 million full-time workers — were below the Council of Europe's low-pay level of £135 a week. For many of those workers, even big percentage increases aren't enough to keep ahead. In 1987, 96 per cent of the

value of any pay rise is lost through tax and National Insurance deductions and loss of means-tested benefits (housing benefit, family credit, etc). In April 1988, a married man with two young children on £100 a week would get only 1 1/2% increase in real spending power from a 10% wage

rise. A 44% increase in wages from £90 to £130 would give him only 9 1/2% real improvement. Millions of workers need to be pulled out of this poverty trap by a **minimum wage** of at least £135 a week. This is Labour Party policy: we should make sure the next Labour government is held to it.

Bosses' profits boom

Profits are booming, and the bosses can well afford to pay more.

The rate of return on capital for non-North Sea industrial and commercial companies has **multiplied by six** — from 2 per cent in 1981 to 12 per cent in 1988.

The share of national income taken by the pro-

fits of industrial and commercial companies (excluding the profits of banks, North Sea oil companies, etc) has gone up from 7 per cent in 1981 to 16% in 1988.

If that extra money going to profits had gone to wages instead, we could all have had a 25% increase in take-home pay.

We work, bosses benefit

Speed-up and job cuts have increased output per worker.

Between 1983 and 1988 output per worker in manufacturing rose at 4 1/2 per cent per year. There has been increased pressure on workers in other sectors too. Fewer transport workers, more journeys. Fewer social security workers, more claimants.

Just to keep our share of the wealth produced steady, without

improvement, workers would need a 4 1/2 per cent rise in living standards each year — or around 12 1/2 per cent wage rise this year, 8 per cent to cover inflation plus 4 1/2% real improvement.

In fact, many workers have hardly had a 4 1/2 per cent rise in real pay over the whole of the last ten years. The benefits of increased productivity have gone almost entirely to the bosses and to a minority of top-paid workers.

Now is the time to fight

Now is the time to regain lost ground on wages.

Profits are high. Workers' confidence is reviving. There is a good chance of several big groups of workers striking at the same time, thus more than doubling the impact of each action.

Power workers won 9.2 per cent just through the threat of strike action. No-one need settle for less. A concerted wages offensive now can begin to shift the balance of power in industry.

This poster was produced by Socialist Organiser. Contact:



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