

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Eric Heffer on:
**Socialists
and the
Labour
Party**

See centre pages

Why they hate Scargill

The yelping dog-pack of reporters from the capitalist press and TV are closing in on Arthur Scargill, howling in a shrill mixture of pretended moral outrage and altogether real triumph.

In March the *Daily Mirror* and ITV made implausible allegations that Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield, who led the greatest strike in modern British history, the 1984-5 miners' strike, were just a couple of crooks, out to feather their own nests — something nobody, not even the NUM right wing, would believe.

The inquiry by barrister Gavin Lightman into the allegations found that neither Scargill nor Heathfield had used union money for personal gain. Robert Maxwell's well-paid lynch mob in pursuit of Arthur Scargill were thus shown up to be a pack of yelping liars.

Are they silenced by the authoritative verdict that they lied when they said Scargill and Heathfield were on the take? Do they apologise? Admit they were wrong? Or even that they were probably wrong?

Of course not. They attack from a different angle. Scargill has been targeted and they keep on pounding away, in an incessant, unstoppable, unscrupulous trial by media.

They are out to smash Scargill and Heathfield. They are determined to make the NUM safe for the right wing. They want to do to the NUM what they did to the EETPU 30 years ago when the courts put a gang of right-wing mafiosi in control of the electricians' union.

That is the meaning of the calls by the Kinnockites — with the wretched Kim Howells as mouthpiece — for the police to be called in. The

Kinnockites are lining up with Maxwell and the lynch mob, and calling on the state to stick its nose into the NUM's affairs.

Now *Socialist Organiser* has serious political differences with Arthur Scargill, and we stand in the starkest opposition to Arthur Scargill's politics and activities concerning Eastern Europe and the USSR. In 1985, after having thrown everything we could muster behind Scargill in the great miners' strike, and while doing everything we could to help the NUM defeat Roy Lynk's scab union then being set up, we condemned outright Arthur Scargill's setting up of the International Miners' Organisation, an organisation whose chief members were the police state "unions" of the Stalinist states.

The new beginning of a working class movement in the Stalinist states, whose workers repudiate the official state "unions" Arthur Scargill recognises and works with, proves — irrefutably — that we were right and Arthur Scargill and his co-thinkers wrong.

But right now, faced with the unspeakable witch-hunt against Scargill, every honest socialist in Britain, every decent working class militant, will side with Scargill against the media lynch mob and their Kinnockite running dogs. This is nothing more than a brutal attempt to bludgeon the NUM. It is an attempt to settle accounts with Scargill for the miners' strike and the attempt by the NUM under the leadership of Scargill and Heathfield to stand up to the march of Thatcherism across working class life.

That's why they hate Scargill. They want revenge!

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Scargill leads mass picket, Orgreave 1984

Dying in the jungle

Those who live by the free-market law of the jungle, die by the same law.

11,600 small businesses went bust in Britain in the first six months of this year. High interest rates, inflation, and the general economic slowdown have led to late payments from customers which are fatal for many small businesses.

In the US, too, small businesses have been failing at a great rate, and recent research reported in the *Economist* magazine has disproved many of the myths of the 1980s about small businesses being the dynamo of prosperity.

Fans of small business made much of the fact that most of the new jobs in the US in the early '80s were in small businesses. But most of the jobs lost were in small businesses too!

In the US three out of five small businesses fail within their first five years. So at least three out of five jobs in small businesses go too.

Jobs in small businesses are 30 per cent lower paid than in bigger companies in the US. They are less secure, and they have fewer fringe benefits (and in the US some of those benefits, notably health insurance, are very important indeed).

The other claim made for small businesses was that they are more innovative than allegedly sluggish and bureaucratic big companies. It is true that small companies played a big part in new developments in computing and electronics in the '80s. But the general claim is cast in doubt by British figures showing that big companies are much more efficient than small companies, and increasingly so.

Bosses seek new forums

As the world economic summit of the seven top capitalist powers opens in Houston, the press is being instructed not to expect consensus.

"The US, Japan, West Germany, France, Britain, Canada, Italy and the European Commission no longer," according to the *Financial Times*, "seek to have a common view on many issues".

These are problems of triumph. The big capitalist powers have had vast new markets, reserves of cheap but trained labour, and chances for asset-stripping opened up by the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe. But who will get what share of the loot? And what will the world balance of power be when the dust dies down?

The "Group of Seven", with its annual summits, was set up in 1975. It aimed to establish a more flexible means of international capitalist coordination than the "Bretton Woods" system of fixed exchange rates and a gold guarantee for the dollar, which had collapsed in 1971. As such it has worked well.

Now the function and shape of all the international institutions is in flux: not only the Group of Seven, but also NATO, the European Community, and previously obscure bodies like the Council of Europe.

The flux has allowed long-standing disputes — like the quarrel over farm trade between the US and the EC — to gather more momentum.

The capitalist leaders must hope that through the period of flux they can feel their way to new international institutions and mechanisms of coordination attuned to the new economic flows and balances. The *Financial Times*, for example, suggests that a reformed United Nations should play a bigger role.

They may succeed; but they may not. They could bring disaster in their moment of triumph by tearing the delicate fabric of international coordination apart in their competitive rush for the spoils.

Yuri Budchenko — a statement

From the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc

Yuri Budchenko, a representative of the independent Soviet trade union, the Kuzbass Workers' Union, arrived in Britain on Saturday 16 June.

On Thursday 5 July Yuri Budchenko held a press conference with Roy Lynk. The conference was hosted by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. Chairing the meeting was George Miller from the pro-capitalist emigre organisation, NTS.

At the press conference Yuri Budchenko made a number of claims about money collected from Soviet miners for the welfare of British miners during the 1984-85 strike. Those claims have been amalgamated by the press with slanderous claims that Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield siphoned off NUM funds for personal gain — that is, used in the witchhunt against Arthur Scargill. At the conference Roy Lynk used Yuri Budchenko to encourage NUM miners to leave their union and join the UDM.

During the first week of Yuri Budchenko's visit to Britain the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc organised a number of meetings so that British workers could meet the representative of a major new independent union in the USSR. One of the basic aims of CSWEB is to encourage links between our labour movement and the independent organisations of the working class in the Eastern Bloc. We also wanted to persuade Yuri Budchenko that the only possible consistent allies of the Soviet workers are the workers of other countries.

One of the problems for those working for solidarity with the independent labour movements in the Eastern Bloc is the politics of many in the British labour movement. Often those in the British labour movement who are most opposed to Thatcher have also been those who have identified, to one degree or another, with the Soviet bureaucracy and the Soviet-type



Yuri Budchenko

systems, and who have signally refused to support the workers in the Stalinist states. For example, Arthur Scargill backed the suppression of Solidarnosc in 1981 and after. The NUM refused to support the pioneer USSR trade unionists and miners Klebanov and Nikitin, jailed in lunatic asylums for their work. The Soviet system is hated by Thatcher — so the Soviet system must be good — or so the theory goes for many on the British left.

But when Arthur Scargill supported the leadership at the official, state-run miners' conference in Moscow last winter he was seen by Soviet workers as siding with the Soviet state and management in the mines against the mineworkers. Seeing that Arthur Scargill is, in British labour movement terms, qualitatively better than Roy Lynk, who is a scab and a leader of scabs, will not come easy to many Soviet workers. The official "union" with which Arthur Scargill continues to

have links, has helped the state to renege on agreements made with the miners during last year's Soviet miners' strikes.

80% of delegates to the official miners' conference were functionaries; only 20% were workers. The workers walked out in disgust calling for the formation of a new independent miners' union. The new independent union was formed at a conference in June. Over 90% of the Soviet pits sent delegates. The bulk of the USSR's 3,000,000 miners now look to this independent union rather than the discredited state "union". The new union will be central to the general miners' strike which has been called for 11 July. The miners are demanding massive political and economic improvements.

This new miners' union wants links with both the UDM and the NUM. In part this is because of lack of knowledge; it is also because Soviet miners are deeply suspicious

of Arthur Scargill's relationship with the Soviet official miners' "union".

It is important that the British labour movement engages in a dialogue with the Soviet workers. We must not abandon them to Lynk and the right wing. We must realise that Soviet workers see links between our organisations and the official state "unions" as a betrayal. We must clean up our own movement and break all links with unreconstructed state "unions" in the Eastern Bloc. If we are seen to be opposing the Eastern Bloc state "unions" the workers in these countries will be more likely to believe what we say about the scab UDM.

Relations were broken between Yuri Budchenko and CSWEB when Yuri Budchenko demanded that CSWEB make a statement endorsing NTS, which we could not make. [NTS is a right-wing, pro-capitalist organisation active in the West and within the USSR.]

Many in the British labour movement will be turned against Yuri Budchenko and the movement he represents by his visit to the UDM and his connection with the NTS. But we should understand how these matters seem to trade unionists in the Eastern Bloc who know many left wingers in our labour movement as allies of their oppressive state bureaucrats, and who want to find out for themselves about different groups in the West. We should understand that Soviet miners are not willing to be silent about their questions on what happened to the money collected from them by their "official" trade union leaders because of considerations of internal British politics.

CSWEB feels that, in large part, the supporters of the Eastern Bloc bureaucracies in the British labour movement are responsible for the current situation. We have a large amount of sympathy for Soviet workers who are repulsed by the Stalinists in the British labour movement and who relate to the right in the labour movement as a consequence. We will continue to work for practical solidarity with the emerging labour movements of Eastern Europe — irrespective of their political ideas and affiliations, while reserving the right to disagree with them.

CSWEB national meeting
7 July 1990

Mugabe's state of emergency

L Jameson reports from Zimbabwe

In the same week that De Klerk lifted the state of emergency in South Africa (excluding Natal), the government of "socialist" Zimbabwe invoked emergency powers (a legacy of the Smith regime) to outlaw a wave of civil service strikes that have swept the country since late May.

Since the March general election, discontent has been growing amongst government employees. In April the nurses struck against poor pay and conditions and were briefly joined by hospital doctors.

The recent, unprecedented strike wave was initiated by teachers who walked out on 24 May to protest against a pay review which massively increased differentials between graduates and non-graduates (only 4% of teachers are graduates), and threats to take away teachers' leave entitlement without compensation.

The tame, pro-government teachers' union, ZIMTA, officially condemned the action and ended up supporting a government call for a return to work. The Zimbabwe Teachers' Union, supposedly a "left wing" split from ZIMTA, condemned the strike as a "ZIMTA mess", and had nothing to do with it. Although local ZIMTA militants participated in the strike it was weakened from the start by the lack of any clear leadership.

The strike's objectives remained unclear, and strikers in different areas employed different tactics. No attempt was made to picket schools which stayed open.

On 5 June the government took action and announced that any teacher who didn't return the next day could consider themselves dismissed. It was further announced that in terms of the emergency powers (introduced by Smith at the time of UDI in November 1965) all civil service strikes were illegal and any assembly of more than three teachers was unlawful.

Children were encouraged to inform on any teacher who didn't teach properly and any Zimbabweans with 5 'O'-levels were urged to report to the Ministry of Educa-

tion and enrol as replacement teachers for those who had been sacked.

The announcement embraced all civil service strikes because, by early June, the teachers' example had been followed by taxmen, the Salaried Staffs Bureau and employees of the Central Mechanical Engineering Department. Furthermore, artisans at the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel company, labourers at Mazowe fruit plantations, bank workers and even the police were either on strike or rumoured to be contemplating strike action.

The announcement that teachers' demonstrations were unlawful gave the green light to the police. Marchers in Harare and Bulawayo were charged and teargassed. In Bulawayo, children who refused to be taught by replacement teachers marched to the regional education office and were teargassed.

Police were called into a Bulawayo school when children refused to attend lessons, the children were chased across a playing field and batoned.

At the time of writing (10 June), it is difficult to judge the situation nationally because of a virtual news

blackout. Extrapolating from the situation in Bulawayo, with which I am familiar, it seems that many teachers have been forced back to work. Rumours that the Central Intelligence Organisation are collecting strikers' addresses will no doubt intimidate many more back into the classroom, especially as they are receiving no support or guidance from their union.

The SSB, Inland Revenue and CMED appear still to be on strike and there is a possibility of a police strike sometime in June.

Overall, though, the strike wave appears to be subsiding. However bleak the immediate prospects for Zimbabwean trade unionists may be, it is possible that the recent militancy will inject life into Zimbabwe's usually quiescent union movement. It seems possible that many people, cynical about the political system (turnout in the election was only just over 40% — very low for Zimbabwe), may be turning to trade unionism as an alternative voice for their discontent. If that's true, then Zimbabwean politics could be on the threshold of a new period of confrontation between ZANU(PF) and a growing army of opponents.

Why they hate Scargill

EDITORIAL

From front page

And who, after all, is it who is in pursuit of Scargill? Who cracks the whip for the media dog-pack? Who cries for "morality in public life" and accuses Scargill of financial chicanery?

None other than that embodiment of bloated and degenerate capitalism, Robert Maxwell.

No less an authority than a House of Commons committee condemned Maxwell for his own financial dealings and pronounced him unfit to manage any public company. That oafish megalomaniac is not morally fit to carry Arthur Scargill's briefcase.

On the question of Stalinism, Maxwell is worse than Scargill. Scargill combines a serious commitment to the working class interest in the class struggle in Britain with a blinkered old-fashioned Stalinism, with politics which are increasingly difficult to understand now that Stalinism has disintegrated before our, and Arthur Scargill's, eyes in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Scargill remains a Stalinist, still willing to go to the USSR — as he did recently — as a guest of the official police-state miners' "union" from which the members are flowing in hundreds of thousands now that, for the first time in over half a century, they have the chance. Arthur Scargill's politics here testify to a tragic confusion. But evidently they are the politics of a would-be honest working-class socialist. If they are remarkable it is because Scargill now embodies a once numerically very strong tradition, Stalinist would-be revolutionary socialism, which is now almost vanished into the mists of history. Scargill does and says what he does about the Stalinist states because he believes in it.

And why did Robert Maxwell publish libraries of obscenely lying propaganda for little Stalins like Brezhnev, Ceausescu, Husak, Jaruzelski and others? Why has his publishing house — which sacks trade unionists, as he did with the workers at Pergamon Press in Oxford who are still in dispute — been a main outlet for Stalinist propaganda in the West?

Because Maxwell believes in it? No, because he made millions from it. Robert Maxwell is not morally fit to look Arthur Scargill in the eye.

In this situation all honest socialists will say "Hands off Arthur Scargill!" It is for the miners to settle their own affairs, and if they think it necessary, to demand a detailed accounting from Arthur Scargill of the complicated financial jugglings with union and IMO funds. One consequence of the anti-Scargill witch-hunt is that it is likely to make mineworkers put the duty to defend Scargill from the lynch



Scargill arrested at Orgreave 1984. Photo: John Harris

mob first, and everything else second.

And rightly so, though serious issues are raised now about the running of the union. Over £1 million was made available by the USSR. It was not, could not, be made available by the miners' union there. There was no union. In 1985 the miners in the USSR had literally no rights inside the state-run "union" but to do what the bureaucrats decided they would do.

That money was a forced levy on the Russian miners, even if one they willingly accepted — and it is no wonder some of them bitterly ask

for an account of it from their own "union" leaders and from Arthur Scargill. If it was available, it is strange indeed that it was not used to alleviate the hardships of the strike and its aftermath.

Left to themselves, without the howling of the press, left-wing miners would probably have pointed questions to put to Arthur Scargill. Some will go on to ask the important basic question about the so-called International Miners' Organisation, the question SO raised five years ago: what the hell was a genuine workers' organisation like the NUM doing, splitting from

most other miners' unions internationally and shacking up with the police-state "unions" of Eastern Europe and the USSR?

As a paper which has given unstinting and unflinching support to the NUM in its great battles against our common capitalist enemy, we believe we have a right to raise these questions, and to suggest to militant miners that they too should raise them.

But right now the first task is to say and repeat to the capitalist media and their Kinnockite outriders: hands off the NUM! Hands off Arthur Scargill!

Scargill and the IMO: what we said in 1985

During the miners' strike, when scab Polish coal was pouring into Britain, Arthur Scargill said at a meeting in Sheffield that he "owed Lech Walesa an apology".

Scargill, of course, had been particularly hostile to the Polish trade union movement Solidarnosc, before and after it was banned by the Stalinist police state. I doubt that Scargill ever sent that apology to Lech Walesa.

In fact Scargill seems to have learned nothing from the miners' bitter experience with his scabbing Polish "socialist" comrades. Scargill is now in Moscow setting up an international organisation of miners — which will include the fake miners' unions of countries like Russia.

The Polish miners in Silesia who denounced the sending of scab coal to Britain had the official Polish miners' union imposed on them

after Solidarnosc was outlawed by brute military force. Miners struck and some miners died resisting martial law in 1981.

The Polish miners won't be represented in Arthur's new miners' international by Solidarnosc but by the official government fake unions which have nothing in common with real trade unions.

The nearest equivalent in Britain to Arthur Scargill's East European and Russian partners in the new international is not the NUM but the scab union of Lynk and Prendergast.

Except that the East European police state unions are not even scab unions. The exact equivalent in Britain would be if the government banned trade unions and locked up trade union militants, abolishing all the rights and liberties won in Britain over the last eight centuries, at the same time taking absolute control of the media and most other things in society including the economy and then set up "unions" staffed by state agents — "unions"

not for defending the workers but to help management carry out its productivity targets, and report dissident workers and "troublemakers" to the police, etc.

Not so long ago in the USSR the former head of the secret police became the head of the Russian "TUC". He just moved from one policing job to another.

The secretary of the new miners' international will be Alain Simon, general secretary of the French miners' union, the vice president will be Michael Strebny of the USSR miners' "union" and the president will be... Arthur Scargill.

A miners' international is an excellent idea — but it must be an international of real unions. This one won't be.

Militant miners got some idea of what a police state is like when Thatcher sent her militarised squads of police into the coalfields during the miners' strike. They should tell Arthur Scargill to stop hobnobbing with the anti-working class scab unions of the Stalinist police state.

Calcutt, Hattersley and press freedom

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

It is very tempting to gloat about the Calcutt Report. For years people have been warning the British press that unless it clears up its act, statutory controls would come in, as sure as eggs is eggs.

Calcutt stops just short of statutory controls but contains the clear warning that this is the very last chance: just one example of backsliding by a single paper and in comes a statutory Press Complaints Tribunal.

"And a good thing too. Serve the bastards right," I hear at least some of you saying. Most people despise the British press (especially the tabloids) and few tears would be shed at the thought of the *Sun*, the *Daily Star*, the *News of the World*, etc being forced to abide by laws enforcing some modicum of respect for privacy, accurate reporting and common decency.

So what's wrong with Calcutt's proposal for a tougher body, independent of the newspaper industry, to replace the present Press Council, backed up by the threat of legislation? Jake Ecclestone of the NUJ summed it up quite well: "The present government has demonstrated how it is prepared to abuse its powers of appointment in the case of the Board of Governors of the BBC. The greatest threat to press freedom in Britain today comes from government interference and the concentration of ownership. The Calcutt Commission has encouraged the one and entirely ignored the other."

Unfortunately, Mr Ecclestone's view is not typical of either public opinion or the mainstream of the British labour movement. Disgust at the repeated excesses of the tabloids and revulsion at the blatant sexism and thinly-disguised racism of much that appears in the *Sun* (especially) has made most decent people less concerned about press freedom than about press standards. Nowhere is this more the case than in the Labour Party and the unions.

Roy Hattersley is almost certainly more representative of mainstream Labour opinion when he says about the "primacy of press freedom": "I know the arguments but I think they are very much overstated. I don't think you can have a system of press freedom that does crucial damage to private individuals. The only restraint I wish to apply to the press is their treatment of private individuals."

The trouble with this (as Hattersley — no stranger to journalism himself — must know) is that all news involves "private individuals". It is impossible to frame a law that protects the ordinary citizen from unwarranted press attention that does not also protect the rich and powerful from legitimate investigative journalism.

Actually, it was Hattersley (interviewed in the *Independent*) who convinced me once and for all against both Calcutt and the Labour Party's proposals for statutory controls: if this man, with his record of miserable shilly-shallying over the Salman Rushdie affair, and his contemptible attitude towards democracy and free speech within his own Sparkbrook Constituency Labour Party, is so keen on statutory controls, then they must surely be opposed at all costs.

But doesn't something have to be done about the gutter press? Yes, indeed: make legal aid available in libel cases. This wouldn't solve all the problems surrounding the British press (eg. concentration of ownership) but it would at least give ordinary people some hope of redress. It's certainly preferable to giving increased control over the media to a government led by Mrs Thatcher...or, come to that, to one led by the likes of Roy Hattersley.

'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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GRAFFITI

The Socialist Workers Party, not for the first time, threw supporters of *Socialist Organiser* out of their annual 'Marxism' event in London.

This year's pretext was an open letter to SWP leader Tony Cliff, originally published in the latest *Workers' Liberty* magazine, and reproduced as a leaflet.

The open letter accuses Cliff of holding an implicitly anti-semitic position on the Middle Eastern conflict, expressed in terms of fierce anti-Zionism.

It says, "The left is now in the same moral position vis-a-vis individual Jews as the medieval Christians who could say honestly that they wanted to save the Jews from themselves. They wanted to convert them... (The anti-Zionist Left) at its heart proposes policies which amount to the murder of a nation." It is not a matter of name-calling. The open letter to Tony Cliff consists of about 3,000 words of reasoned argument explaining why, despite their intention, the SWP functions as an anti-semitic propaganda group.

And it argues that Cliff, as a Palestinian Jew with much moral authority on the issue, bears a special responsibility for this.

We are not surprised that the SWP are upset by the accusation that they are at least implicitly anti-semitic. The charge is intended to shock, to provoke thought, hopefully to provoke debate and reassessment. It would be a sorry state of affairs if it did not shock them.

But that the SWP's response to shock and outrage, rather than answer the charge and try to refute it, is to deny us the right to put it, is sorer still. Their reflex reaction to sharp criticism is to ban it. If they don't like what you say, they exclude you from their meetings.

Socialist Organiser have been excluded by the SWP in the past for alleged "Zionism". Some even gave this as an explanation, a few years ago, for their decision to refuse — after five or six years of a commercial relationship — to continue printing our paper (although others alleged falsely we weren't paying our bills).

Others on the left have also been excluded by them.

We and others have before met, as we did at Marxism 90, with physical force as the way of excluding us. They ripped up our literature and pushed us about.

This is not, or should not be, acceptable in the socialist movement. The charge of latent or actual anti-semitism is a serious one, probably more so in the current climate than ever. We mean it seriously. We want it discussed.

The SWP's programme for the Middle East conflict is that the Israeli Jewish nation, like no other nation, abolish itself. They propose this as an immediate answer to decades of national conflict.



Cliff — "bears a special responsibility"

They see all those, that is the majority of Jews, who identify in some way with Israel and with Zionism, as an enemy. Their attitude to Zionism, that is to mainstream Jewish nationalism, is one of uncompromising hostility. But it is not simply the uncompromising hostility of socialists to all forms of nationalism. They see Zionism as worse than any other form of nationalism. Opposition to Zionism is the touch-stone of 'anti-imperialist' politics.

For Jews who are Zionists, it means unconditional renunciation, not only of the policies of the Israeli state towards the Palestinians, which *Socialist Organiser* also calls for, but renunciation of every aspect of Zionism, including the identification of a distinct Jewish nation in the Middle East.

Jews who are not prepared to go so far are seen as an enemy deserving only extreme opposition.

Only a small minority of Jews agree with the SWP's attitude. So in practice they are hostile to most Jews, actively hostile, campaigning hostile.

Democracy for the Palestinians is obviously essential for peace in the Middle East. But the SWP explicitly deny that any but a tiny minority of Israeli Jews can play any part in winning that democracy. They propose socialist revolution in the Middle East without the Israeli workers.

This is not the same as traditional anti-semitism. But it seems to us to be a new kind of anti-semitism: and with anti-semitism on the rise in Europe, often disguised as anti-Zionism, it is extremely dangerous.

We wish most Jews had not been won to the Zionist movement. That they were was because of the failure of the labour movement to prevent the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the responsibility of fascism — and Stalinism, which miserably failed to fight fascism. It was not the responsibility of Zionism.

The left will be ineffective in fighting anti-semitism unless we clear up these issues. And we will only clear them up if we have open and democratic debate.

Kicking your enemies out of your meetings is a recipe for intolerance and an undemocratic future. As Rosa Luxemburg put it, democracy is the right for the one who disagrees. As our open letter said to Cliff, the SWP should cut it out.

1,000 besiege court

By Claire Richards

Anti-poll tax protestors in Warrington won a victory last week when a 1,000-strong demonstration halted court proceedings against non-payers.

Labour-controlled Warrington council had issued summonses against 5,000 non-payers, but the cases were abandoned without a single liability order being authorised, as a result of the demonstration.

More strikes by local government workers are planned as the poll tax capped boroughs meet to push through cuts budgets.

600 job cuts are threatened in Haringey, North London, as well as the closure of library, childcare and adult education services. Haringey workers are currently voting on strike action. Hammersmith council plans to make £11m cuts; Southwark meets this week to push through £14m cuts.

In Tory-controlled Ealing, 2,500 NALGO workers walked out for 24 hours over the threat of 200 redundancies. The Tories have already closed the Race, Women's and Lesbian and Gay units.

Following their recent one-day strike, Barnsley teachers are currently balloting on extending their industrial action. Greenwich housing workers are still on strike over claims for higher pay and better conditions relating to poll tax work.

In capitulating to Tory pressure and slashing jobs and services, Labour councils are certain find themselves facing increasing industrial action by their workforce, and rising non-payment levels.

The Tories have made it clear that there'll be no more money next year, either. The Cabinet review of the poll tax has come up with a mere £2.5 billion extra spending on the poll tax next year, most of which will be channelled into rebates. Not only will this have no serious impact on helping those least able to pay, it will mean much higher bills next year. Current estimates suggest 10-14% rises in bills in 1991, just to maintain this year's spending levels (after cuts!): that's an average bill of £400.

Which leaves the labour movement with two choices: to step up their role as Thatcher's henchmen — sacking workers; slashing desperately needed services; increased criminalisation and impoverishment of working class peo-

ple — or standing on the side of working class people and taking on the Tories and their hated class tax; fighting to make the poll tax unworkable.

Sadly, to date, our leaders show no stomach for a fight. Tory backbenchers have been more vociferous in their condemnation of the tax than most Labour MPs. Kinnock's spleen is vented on the poll tax campaigners, not Thatcher.

Trade union leaders such as the NUT's Doug McAvoy and NALGO's Alan Jinkinson have refused to co-ordinate and build the fight waged by their members in defence of jobs, conditions and services: all their energy has gone into undermining, and distancing themselves from, such rank and file action.

But the rank and file of the labour movement is prepared to fight. The newly-formed 'Councils Against the Poll Tax' proves that some of our elected Labour representatives won't do the Tories' dirty work. Rank and file teachers have just held a successful conference to co-ordinate the fight

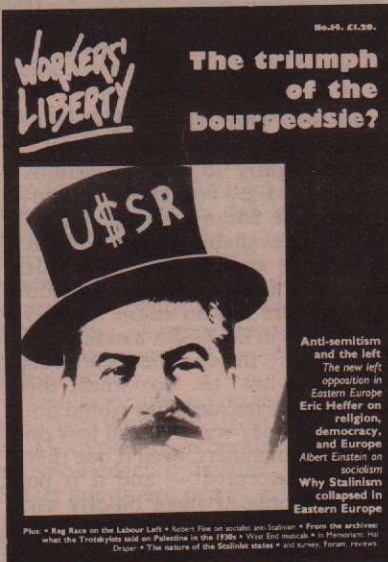
against redundancies throughout the country; the third NALGO Against the Poll Tax activists' conference will take place in autumn.

Such initiatives must be given the support of all anti-poll tax campaigners, and in particular, the National Federation. Links must be built between the community campaigns and the trade unions. Nor should we ignore the Labour Party: we must argue within the community campaigns for people to join the Labour Party, to take up the political battle against Kinnock and Co. and force them to back us against the Tories.

Industrial action linked to the political fight in the Labour Party can only strengthen the mass non-payment campaign; similarly, the strength of the anti-poll tax unions on the estates, and the success of the non-payment campaign, will encourage workers to take action against the cuts and poll tax.

A united strategy harnessing both the anger in the estates and the organised opposition of the working class through trade unions can beat the Tory tax.

Workers' Liberty



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The latest issue of Workers Liberty is out now!

The magazine hosts a wealth of material on Eastern Europe, including a survey of the left, an interview with the Polish Socialist Party and an editorial on the events of last year.

In a rave from the grave we reprint an excellent article by Albert Einstein on 'Why you should be a socialist' — a clear, concise and knowledgeable statement from a man renowned for revolutionising our understanding of the physical world.

Nearer to home, Eric Heffer discusses religion and socialism and Reg Race suggests a role for the newly formed Labour Party Socialists.

And in the light of the horrifying resurgence of anti-semitism across Europe, Sean Matgamna pens a controversial open letter to Tony Cliff of the SWP on anti-semitism and the left.



Uniting theory and practice

Workers Liberty 1990 took the trophy this year for clear debate and democratic discussion. The school had a wider choice of sessions than ever before, with big names from both the academic and activist left.

The school united theory and practice: poll tax activists

debated tactics; Polish and East German socialists shared their experiences; and we had a discussion around post-Thatcher British politics.

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— including the politics of football!

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Capital vs labour in East Germany

By Stan Crooke

On Sunday 1 July the East German mark was withdrawn as the currency of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and replaced by the Deutschmark, the currency of West Germany.

Control over monetary policy and the entire banking system in the GDR passed into the hands of the West German Bundesbank.

Contrary to the impression given by much of the left press in Britain and Germany, economists and bankers in West Germany (and elsewhere) are deeply divided in their predictions about the precise consequences of the monetary union of East and West Germany.

In recent months, for example, the West German stock markets, hoping for the best, have boomed. But the West German bond market, fearing the worst, has slumped. Some sections of West German capitalism would have preferred a slower and more gradual process of monetary union.

Even if the precise consequences of monetary union are still being argued about, the likely pattern of events in the East German economy in the months ahead is clear enough.

Unemployment will increase sharply as East German concerns go to the wall in the face of West German competition. In June alone (ie. even before monetary union) unemployment rose by 47,000, a jump of 50% on the May total. Even conservative estimates, such as those of the West German Economic Research Institute or the Industrial Bank of Japan, suggest that two million could end up on the dole. Other estimates go as high as four, or even six, million — out of a total workforce of just over eight million.

Prices will rise as well, and have already started to do so. The cost of phone calls has nearly doubled, whilst the costs of the parcel post have more than quadrupled. Most foodstuffs and other basic consumer goods are already as expensive in the GDR as in West Germany. Rents are set to treble from January.

West German bankers hope that the worst of the inflation can be staved off until after December, when the first all-German elections since 1933 are due to be held, for fear that high inflation would cost the ruling Conservative electoral support.

There are no plans for large-scale investment in the GDR. As the West German magazine *Der Spiegel* recently noted: "West German industry is holding back in a manner which surprises even the pessimists of German-German economic unification."

Banks, insurance companies and wholesale and retail trade have moved into the DDR, but not new productive capacity. 80% of West German investment in the GDR to date has been in the retail trading sector. West German capitalists see the GDR primarily as a new market for their goods, and as a bridge to other new markets in Eastern Europe.

Insofar as any investment takes place in new productive capacity in the GDR, it will be in order to profit from the low wages which continue to exist in the GDR after monetary union. Jobs could therefore be axed in West Germany as production is transferred to the low-wage economy of the GDR.

Such is the industrial backwardness of the GDR that sections of West German capitalism fear it could prove to be a black hole sucking in ever larger amounts of money. In order to guarantee wages (even at current levels) GDR fac-

ories need subsidies amounting to between 5 and 7,000,000,000 DM per month. The alternative is mass unemployment, necessitating enormous expenditure on unemployment benefits.

Whether West German capital can get away with pushing unemployment up and living standards down depends upon the level of resistance they meet from workers in the GDR, and how much support the latter receive from workers in West Germany and elsewhere.

Until recently the level of working class organisation and combativity in the GDR has remained weak, as the majority of workers looked towards unification with West Germany as the solution to the country's economic problems.

The FDGB (the old state-run "trade union" umbrella organisation) has lost members and now functions as little more than a financial administrator for the individual "unions" within it. But the leaders of the latter have also failed to lead a campaign in defence of jobs and living standards.

The West German DGB (equivalent of the British TUC) has begun to play an increasing role in the GDR. But its message to workers is to stay calm and keep their heads down, in case they frighten away West German investment in their workplaces.

The approach of the DGB mirrors that of West German capitalists. Opel boss Louis Hughes, for example, has warned that whether or not a car factory is built in Eisenach depends upon how much "wage restraint" East German workers show.

Attempts to build an independent trade union movement, such as those of the Initiative for Independent Trade Unions, have hitherto proved unsuccessful and attracted only a small minority of workers.

But as the date of monetary union drew closer and the danger of job losses became clearer, workers began to move into action to defend their interests. There have already been strikes in the leather and textile industries in particular. And as monetary union came into force, East Berlin refuse workers were out on strike. Pay-rises of up to 30% have been demanded by striking workers.

Hospital workers, workers in the water industry, the police, and, most importantly of all, by engineering workers (there are 1.6 million of them in the GDR, the biggest sector of the workforce) all have pay claims in the pipeline.



Queuing for D-marks

Employees of the Interflug airline are threatening to strike as of this week over proposed "rationalisation" measures.

Alongside of the strikes there are renewed attempts by members of the Initiative for Independent Trade

Unions and of left-wing groups such as the United Left to rebuild working class organisation in the workplace.

Socialists and workplace activists in this country could play a useful role in supporting such

developments by linking up with workplaces in the GDR and providing their workers with information about their own experiences of unionising workplaces, building rank and file groups, and leading disputes over pay and jobs.

Friendship across culture

WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

Someone once described the Americans and the British as two nations divided by a single language. We are also divided by common assumptions.

I assumed that my American friend would be able to take some time off to spend with me when I recently visited the States. She did — she spent a week with me — her entire paid holiday allowance for the year.

As in Britain, most Americans working outside the higher echelons of the public sector get the national minimum paid holiday allowance. In Britain that's 15 days a year. In the USA it's five.

My friend couldn't even pretend to be ill. American workers are entitled to five paid sick days per year. After that it is either insurance or nothing. A woman with children simply can't afford to be ill. Her five days are likely to be taken up with children's illnesses.

It doesn't do to be ill in the States. Even with insurance (and millions of Americans don't have it), the individual is responsible for 20% of the cost of a visit to the GP. Insurance only covers 100% of hospital treatment which is "non-elective". That sounds reasonable until you realise that "elective" doesn't just mean a nose job but such things as heart by-pass surgery. All the fabulous children's clinics which are at the forefront of treating disabled and seriously ill children are elective too...

Health insurance is related to work. When you start a new job, you strike a deal with your employer which specifies how much will be paid in insurance contributions and by whom. The insurance

cover also has to include provision for retirement — in other words has to continue as part of your pension. Otherwise, if you stop work, you stop being insured.

If you want to insure your children (without which they won't have any health care) that has to be done separately. A man's insurance doesn't cover his wife or vice versa.

There is some safety-net provision for the poor, elderly and people who find themselves uninsured for whatever reason (like people who can't get insurance, because they are "high risk" or non-working mothers, for example) but it only covers emergencies.

So if an old lady breaks her leg she'll get it set, but she won't get the follow up like physiotherapy or a health visitor calling round to see that she's OK. Such a person couldn't even buy insurance to cover herself — she'd be too high a risk for the insurance company to take on.

Until recently we took our health care for granted. The NHS does,

even now, provide a marvellous service by comparison to the American system, but for how long? Thatcher is determined to "Americanise" the health service and the new contract for GPs, based on cost-centering, is a step on the way.

Sparked by the discussion about the American health insurance system my mother told us bitterly about the days before the NHS. She can clearly remember agonising decisions about whether someone was ill enough to need a half-crown visit from the doctor.

The American system is cruel to the reasonably affluent. In one sense a choice exists about whether to pay for the best care for an ill child, or to buy a new car, take a holiday or send another child to college. But millions of Americans, inhabitants of the richest country in the world, have to watch their children die because they can't afford the doctor.

That is the "choice" the Tories want to give the British working class.

Socialists and the Labour Party

Eric Heffer MP discussed the Labour Party and the perspectives of the Left with John Bloxam and John O'Mahony

We've reached the stage where we have to reassess not just our labour movement here but throughout the whole of the capitalist world.

It's not happening just in Britain. We aren't even the first. It began immediately after the war in West Germany, then France, Belgium, Italy and — after the Franco dic-



Eric Heffer

tatorship — in Spain, the Spanish Socialist Party.

So what do we do? Some believe the answer is to fight within the Labour Party and if we do, then in a few years' time the party will swing back our way. I don't really know, but I think there will be change in the Labour Party, and I think there will be a move back to more left-wing concepts.

We have to begin to renew not only the party but the movement as a whole. I think it has to be done almost from scratch. We've got to go out again and begin with a lot of things. We've got to start socialist educational groups throughout the entire country.

I think we've got to have socialist education on a big scale, such as we've not had for a long, long time. We have to produce more and more pamphlets — discussion pamphlets which don't deal just with the immediate issues, though obviously they have to be related to immediate issues, but which have an underlying socialist message.

This is what has got to be done. We've got to work in the Labour Party, but we've got to work outside the Labour Party as well. I think there is a movement out there. I don't particularly like every aspect of it, but I think we have to be in it.

I'm thinking of the Socialist Movement. Some of it is just pure straightforward academic elitism, but nevertheless I think it does attract people. We've got to get involved in it, and discuss with them. Possibly something will emerge out of that. Possibly.

We've got to have a look at what we've been arguing for over the

years. We've got to learn the lessons of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We must argue very strongly for the democratic control of industry by the working people themselves. But — and I think this is fundamental — there has got to be a much greater effort towards a basic socialist educational message if we are ever going to be able to rebuild a powerful mass socialist movement.

You seem to believe that there was a "Golden Age" when the party was bigger, more socialist, with more workers in Parliament. Now you seem to say that the roots are being cut away.

No, I've never thought there was a golden age of Labour Party socialism. The Labour Party was created not as a socialist organisation, but as a broad working-class organisation. At the first conference, in 1900, the Social Democratic Federation moved that the Party should be socialists. That was defeated. It was decided that Labour should be a party for working-class representation in the House of Commons. That was carried because it was the trade unions that created the Labour Party.

Yet, when you read the speeches and listen to the arguments, there's a very powerful socialist influence in the Labour Party. In 1918 the Party got a more or less socialist constitution. It was always a reformist socialist party, never revolutionary socialist; but it did have socialist perspectives, and not just the idea of bureaucratically nationalising everything through the state. It talked of social and public ownership in varied forms.

The idea of a vast bureaucratic state-run society came from Fabians like Beatrice and Sydney Webb. It was no accident that when the Webbs went to Russia in the '30s they came back and wrote a book praising Soviet society as "a new civilisation".

When I was young I couldn't understand how those Fabian reformists and intellectuals could so praise the Soviet Union. Later I realised that Stalinism appealed to them because they too knew what was good for the workers, whether the workers wanted it or not.

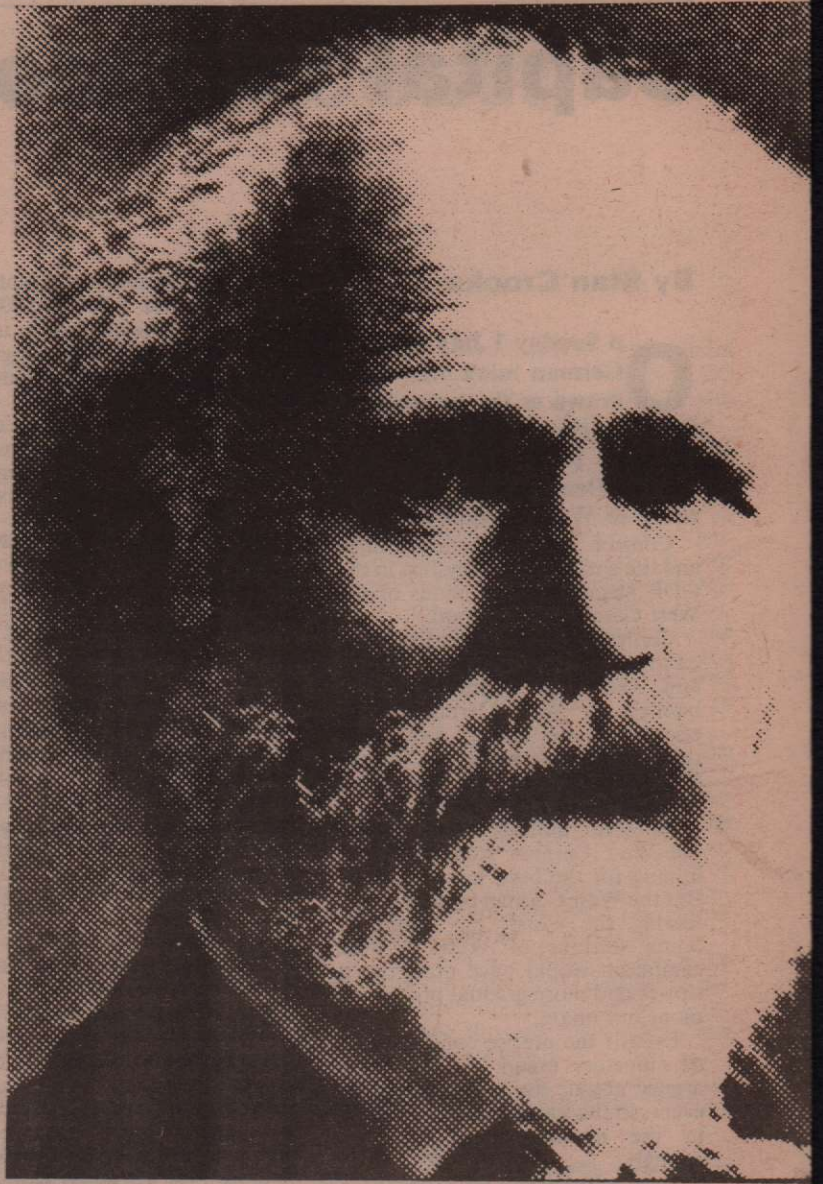
So, no golden age. But I think there was a better age.

But what happened was not that the Labour Party became socialist in 1918 with the adoption of Clause Four and the reorganisation of the party. Even right-wingers declared for "socialism", but only to head off a far more left-wing drive, stimulated by the war and the Russian Revolution and seen in such things as the very representative Leeds Convention of July 1917 which called for Soviets in Britain.

That is largely true, but the Party itself was also affected. Even the Fabian Society, with its "New Fabians" like G D H Cole, was preaching workers' control. All right, it was reformist. But there was a real difference, and it did affect the party.

You could see it in the Party members when I first became involved. OK, yes, they thought everything was done through Parliament, but you only had to be in their company for ten minutes to realise that they were real socialists. Their whole attitude was different.

I recently saw an article in a magazine about Jackie and Billy Charlton, which illustrates my



Keir Hardie

point. Jackie Charlton said: "When I was young I could argue strongly for the Labour Party and Labour politics. Now I don't know what they believe in. And I can't argue that any more".

Charlton would have been brought up in the North East, an area where they are very loyal to the Labour Party. Whatever the leadership said, they did. But on the North East coast you found the mass of the workers loyal not just to the party but to concepts which were basically socialist, to working-class solidarity. That, I think, is the difference.

Why did that loyalty dissipate? Why did so little come of it? Why did the right wing always get away with faking. There's always been a "faking culture", hasn't there? You said yourself that people come into the House reflecting their party, and then when the pressure is off they don't carry on with the same opinions. That is a faking culture. Why did all that generally socialist working-class consciousness lead to what it has led to?

In the last 20 or 30 years there's no longer been the educational effort that there used to be. Speakers used to come regularly and talk about the labour movement and the unions, and about socialist ideas. It was accepted as part of the life of the union. That's died away.

The National Council of Labour Colleges was absorbed into the TUC and killed stone dead. The Labour Party has not had any proper educational programme for 25 to 30 years. The Communist Party no longer has an education programme. It used to have various programmes, and issue pamphlets on wage labour and capital, on how you seized power, and so on. They educated a layer of workers. I'm in favour of all the socialist papers, because they help to keep the flame alive. But there is so much confusion! With so many competing socialist groups, people don't know where to go.

There's been no education. But it's not only that. Circumstances have changed. With the growth of the welfare state, a lot of the pressure on workers to build a new society was eliminated — not entirely, and it needn't have been at all if there had been a movement capable of giving a continuous working-

class education.

I think those are some of them, but I don't claim to know all the reasons why the movement dissipated.

So you'd say that with the attacks on the workers' living standards, the conditions are now being recreated for a working-class resurgence, and opportunities for mass socialist activity?

Yes, I think so.

Isn't the central problem the nature of the Labour Party? In one of your articles you say that Wilson sold out Labour's politics after the victory in the 1964 General Election. Now I remember the '64 election. Even the Economist supported Wilson and his "technological revolution"! If the Labour Party had been different then, you might have had a radically different outcome. It wouldn't have dissipated the feelings and attitudes of the class.

I can't remember saying that about Wilson selling out. But Wilson had a tremendous effect. In 1964 he was saying things which would be considered dreadful if he said them now by the leadership of the party. Of course the words he was saying before the election didn't match up with what he did after it.

I've got quite a respect for Wilson. The Americans wanted him to get us involved in Vietnam. Wilson made all sorts of statements of support for them, but he never sent any financial aid or troops. That's why they hated him. In the end they thought he was such a menace they wanted to bring him down.

I've had no illusions that the Labour Party was a socialist organisation. When Benn and others like myself were in a very weak majority on the National Executive Committee in the early '80s, we never really had a consolidated majority, except on certain issues. We nearly managed to get to the position from which Labour could have become an instrument of real socialism. Unfortunately we failed.

You see that period as the high point for the Left. What's happened to the Left since, and why?

We made a lot of mistakes at that period. At times we pushed it a bit

ONE NATION



Harold Wilson

Labour Wales



Neil Kinnock

o hard on issues where we should
ve tried to win greater support
d consolidate that support.

hat issues?

I think we shouldn't have rushed
to the deputy leadership contest. I
didn't think Healey as deputy
leader would mean anything. It was
a position of no importance. I
wasn't happy about making that the
central thing. I said so. But once it
was done the choice was either to
support the left candidate, or objec-
tively help the right. I certainly
wasn't going to do that!

I didn't think that it was good to
split the Tribune Group of MPs,
for example. By splitting it you handed it
over to the opportunists.

There are times when tactics are
very important. That's why now I
think it's very important that
socialists remain in the Labour Par-
ty and at the same time work very
hard to create an organisation or
organisations which can fight for
socialism inside the Labour Party
and work with organisations out-
side the Labour Party.

What do you say to those who con-
sider that because of the right
wing's victories, socialists should
leave the Labour Party?

This is not the time. I'm not say-
ing that at some time in the future
there won't be a new socialist party.
But this is not the moment. We
need to organise the left for
socialism, but within the Labour
Party.

That doesn't stop us col-
laborating with people in the
Socialist Movement and others who
are not in the Labour Party. It's
never like what happened after
1951 when the Socialist League was
expelled, and the Socialist League
worked with the Independent
Labour Party throughout the
period from 1932.

Isn't there a competition for
resources. For example, the SWP
"Leave the Labour Party".

Well, you're always going to get
it. I don't think there's any
power. If you created a new party,
you'd have all sorts of small
organisations becoming part of it in
order to win people from the party
to their organisation. It has ever
been thus.

*Of course we are socialists, and we
have fought for socialism in the
Labour Party. But isn't it true that
the reason for being in the Labour
Party has never been because of its
doubtful "socialism", but funda-
mentally because it is the mass
party of the class linked to the
unions? Isn't that the fundamental
thing? No matter how far it has
moved formally from socialism
now, it remains the mass party of
the class because of its trade union
roots. Serious socialists should
never voluntarily abandon the mass
party of the class to the right wing.
Isn't that the essential argument?*

If they marginalise the unions in
the party, then it's no longer the
mass party of the working class.

*And you think that's what is hap-
pening?*

It's beginning to happen. It's not
just the Conference block vote.
Some of the trade union leaders are
quite happy to see the trade unions
set aside, without any real in-
fluence. If they get away with that
— and they're moving in that direc-
tion — then it is no longer the mass
movement of the working class.

*So why should we stay in the
Labour Party?*

Because there's an awful lot of
people like us in the Labour Party
who've got to be organised to work
together. I don't think you can run
before you can crawl. We have to
take a step at a time. Maybe in the
end we'll get chucked out anyway.
In that case it'll be solved for us. It
would be far better to be thrown
out, if we are going to be thrown
out, as an organised force of people
working together for basic socialist
ideas, than to go out as individuals
one at a time with no perspectives.

*But you know the history of the
Marxist movement. You mentioned
the SDF at the founding of the
Labour Party. They had come
along with their programme to a
conference which was dominated by
Liberal trade unionists. They made
a motion that it be accepted, and
when, predictably, it was not ac-
cepted, they walked out.*

*Isn't it true that the Marxist
tradition in this country has been a
heavily sectarian tradition? The
consequence is that we've left the
mass movement to the right wing
and the soft left. Isn't that the*

dominant trend?

*Isn't that one of the problems we
have to face now — a resurgence of
self-defeating sectarianism in
response to Kinnock?*

Yes. I think I've made that clear
in all the books I've written. Had
the SDF remained in the Labour
Party it might have been a different
party.

*Isn't that sectarian tradition also to
be found in the Communist Party in
the '20s, when they didn't want to
stay in the Labour Party? Formally
they wanted to stay, but in practice
they didn't.*

It was very different circum-
stances. The Soviet Union was
coming into existence, and the
Communist International.

*But the Labour Party was a mass
movement which varied very much
ideologically. There was pretty free*

*political competition within it. You
had Christian Socialists, Marxists,
and Fabians — and the serious
revolutionaries outside, largely
because they excluded themselves.*

Because it was a wrong tactic
then, it may not be the wrong tactic
always.

*No, but there is this powerful sec-
tarian tradition.*

Yes. It is quite clear that the ILP
made a mess of it in 1932 in coming
out. But then the ILP had a lot of
strange people in it.

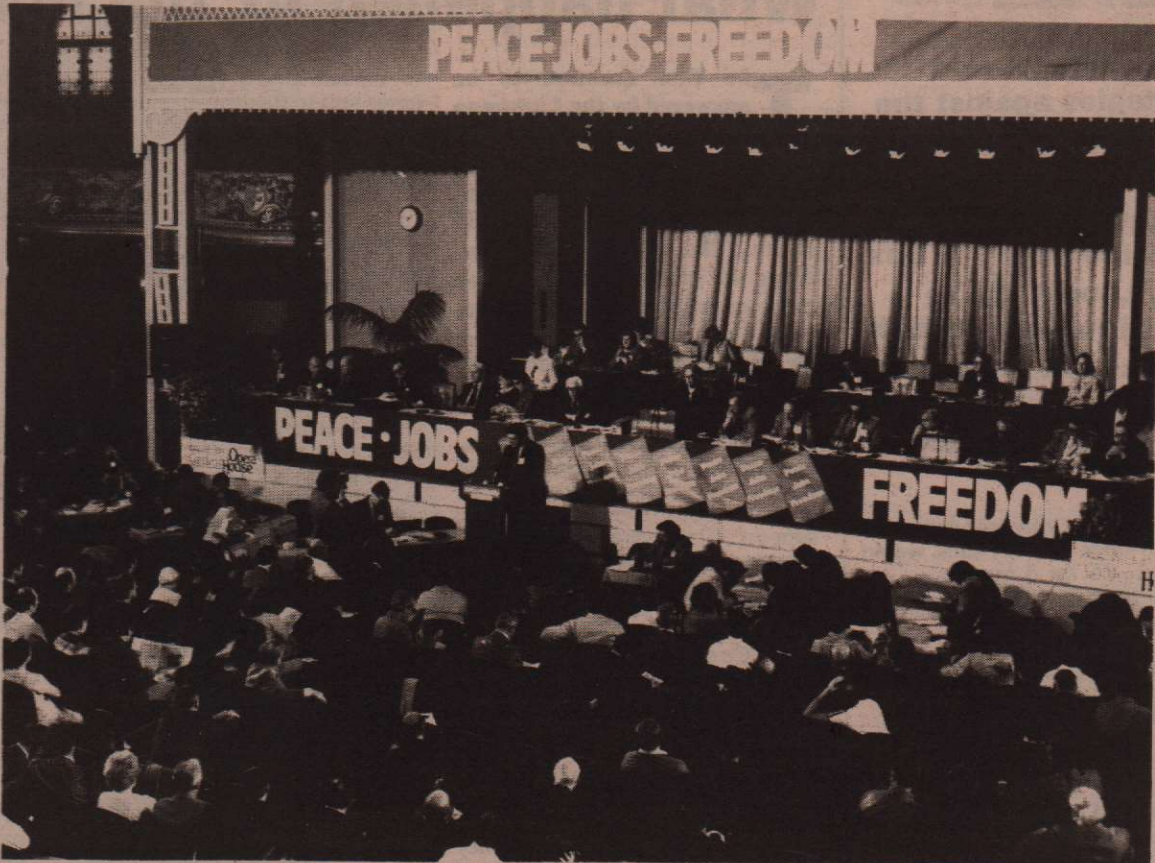
*It wasn't just one tendency. It is a
common thread through to today.
For instance, you mentioned the
great struggle in the Labour Party
in the '80s. Lots of sectarians chose
to stay outside when they could
have been immensely valuable in-
side. The SWP is the clearest exam-
ple.*

I suffered with that in the '50s. I

was involved in setting up the
Socialist Workers' Federation,
which was to try to attract people
from both the Communist Party
and the Labour Party.

*I'm not being pharasaical. We've
made sectarian mistakes as well, in
the late '60s, with criminally stupid
attitudes in relation to the Labour
Party during the attempt to bring in
anti-union laws in 1969 and after.
But we do have to establish that
there is in this country a tradition, a
persistent tendency to sectarianism.
Of course, you are right, the world
is changing. We may all be expelled.
We may have no choice.*

I don't think we should be ad-
vocating that people leave the
Labour Party. We shouldn't be
calling for a new party. We should
concentrate on building up a good
genuinely left wing movement
within the Labour Party.



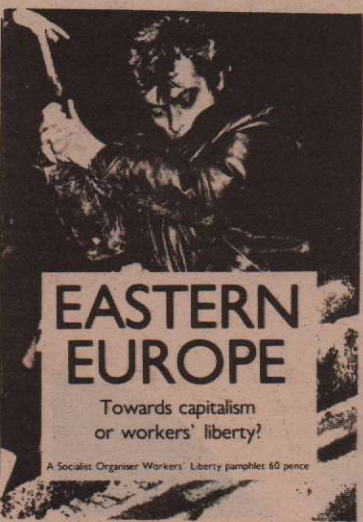
The Left was strong in the early '80s. Why has it suffered setbacks since then? Photo: John Harris

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The market in Czechoslovakia

LETTERS

I've just read two interesting items by Gerry Bates and Duncan Chapple (Letters, SO450), concerning the problem of re-introducing the market economy in the states of Eastern Europe, and responding to the articles by Sylvia Bolger and Tony Dale on the same question (Letters, SO499).

As a Czechoslovak citizen, I can only agree with Mr Bates, that no apology for Stalinism is admissible, although I can hardly appreciate whether the previous system in East European countries, so-called "real socialism" was in some aspect better than capitalism — I've never lived under capitalism.

It is also a fact that I've never been hungry, homeless; I could study, free of charge, at the University; I've had my job secure until now... as have most of my fellow citizens. I think that there are probably some people in the West who wonder what more we want...

Well, it is not the political and ideological violation by the huge bureaucratic apparatus and permanent control of different-minded people by invisible or visible State Security that I want to write about now. The discussion is about the market — so I could write something about everyday hunting for the ordinary goods, queuing for the things of daily use.

There's always something missing in our state shops. If there is anything in the shops, you'd better take it, whether you need it or not, you'll probably need it later.

I wonder if people living in a market economy can imagine how humiliating it is for those who earn their money in a normal "honest" way, who pay taxes and charges but, being the customers of the state shops, they are often in the ridiculous situation of "poor petitioners". Perhaps this is one, but not the only, reason why people in the East are expecting so much from the market economy.

Of course, Czechoslovakia, as compared with Poland or the Soviet

Union, has undeniably a higher living standard for working people — I am not sure whether it will remain true after the "shock cure" prescribed by the Finance Minister, Mr Klaus. Nevertheless, almost nobody in my country doubts that the "reasonable prices", which as a rule will mean higher prices, are justifiable, that the future dynamic development of the economy is connected with "economic prices". Almost all believe that the actual economic prices can be established only by the market.

To tell the truth, we don't know what the market is. The absolute majority of the population was born, or lived their adult life, after 1948, ie in the conditions of the planned economy, with the experience I've described above. That's why there are so many illusions, so many hopes in the market as a "universal medicine" for all ailments of our economy, so much trust in the market economy, moreover encouraged by foreign capital.

These notes are not intended to be an economic account, I only try to introduce, so to say, the "public opinion" of nowadays. Only the oldest section of the population (more exactly, one part of this section, having its own bad experience from the pre-war Republic) is warning against uncontrolled private undertaking, even privatisation, against leaving the planned economy. As a matter of fact, it is rather problematic to declare them simply "Stalinist". Many of them believe that February 1948 was a socialist revolution. It requires serious analysis to decide whether it was or not. Naturally many older people believe that the state-owned property is the real socialist property. We've just realised what a bitter half-illusion, half-mystification it was; how terribly misinterpreted and misused was Marx's economic theory by the bureaucratic apparatus, how big was the "alienation of labour" in the state monopoly enterprises, in the so-called "real socialism".

Here we have two extreme standpoints: an uncritical admiration of a market economy of the western type on one hand, not only by the potential private entrepreneurs, but



Bush tells Havel all about the market

mainly by people who simply want to be customers, not the "hunters" of goods: it is often emotional rather than rational.

On the other hand, there is a strict defence of the planned economy and rejection of the market as a principle; but, in fact, such a rigorous opinion has hardly any supporters now. And, finally, there is a large scale of opinion between these extremes — attempts at finding the real and lucrative balance between the plan and the market, thoughts of the "socially oriented market economy", of self-management and workers' control.

The question is: is any "hybrid of plan and market" actually possible? This can hardly be answered in a short time. All the main political groupings, the fresh winners of elections in Czechoslovakia, and even the defeated Communist Party, have raised in their election programmes the requests for equal rights for all forms of ownership and for the

establishing of a free-market economy.

It means people in Czechoslovakia, especially the young people, want the market and will have the market, because they believe that the market mechanisms really can "gear production to human need". Tony Dale, who visited Czechoslovakia recently, knows it quite well. They elected a market economy with all its risks. Unemployment still seems to be an unknown and rather underestimated phenomenon.

There really must not be an apology for Stalinism, because Stalinism, or "Brezhnevism", or so-called "real socialism" so terribly discredited the socialist idea, that people do prefer capitalism or "liberalism". The other question is, what can the "left" — another problematic term in my country — offer as a programme of "genuine socialism"?

Xenia Suchova
Zvolen, Czechoslovakia

What happened to the miners' missing money?

The first question to be answered by the Lightman inquiry into the NUM's finances was whether the NUM received money from Libya and the USSR during the 1984-85 strike. The results of his findings are inconclusive and raise more questions than they solve.

May I use your columns to give my own explanation (as states in my recently published book 'Across Frontiers')?

1. The NUM leadership had contacts with the Libyan government during the strike, and had no qualms about receiving financial support. They were not, however, prepared to issue a statement supporting Libya. As a result no money was received — as Scargill himself has stated.

2. Commencing end-August 1984, Soviet miners collected large sums of money amounting to more than R1 million. Apart from donating a quantity of food and three holidays for miners' families (two of which were after the end of the strike), no aid was received from the Soviet Union. This money later appeared in the accounts of the International Miners Organisation. What Mr Lightman is unable

to explain is why this money was never sent to the British miners during the strike.

To do so he needed to explore the wider field of Anglo-Soviet relations. These had been poor ever since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Exports of high-tech had been embargoed as a consequence. It was to repair this damage that Mikhail Gorbachev was despatched that autumn with a high-ranking trade delegation for talks with Mrs Thatcher. Mrs Thatcher

subsequently said that Gorbachev was a man "whom she could do business with". Why should his mission have been thrown into jeopardy by the sending over of huge amounts of financial support to her greatest adversary?

A final point. Mr Roy Lynk of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers has said that the Soviet miners' money should now be returned as the money has not been used for the purpose it was original-

ly intended. Few would disagree. By the same token Mr Lynk should use his influence with the leaders of the Iron and Steel Trades' Confederation to obtain an adequate explanation of the £300,000 they received from West Germany on behalf of the NUM during the strike and never properly accounted for. This provoked a scandal in Germany at the time but has never been discussed publicly in Britain.

Jonathan Saunders
Oxford

Time for a new socialist party

In time socialists will have to come together under one party banner. If not, then a constructive plan and programme for socialists in the 'nineties would never be an option for the British people.

Whether or not proportional representation is in operation by the mid-nineties, socialist parties would have to still outline programmes and manifestos for the public to know about, including hard left and soft left policies for changing Britain's economic position for future years to come.

Far too many socialists are leaving the Labour Party every month, giving up socialist campaigning to fight in other organisations and other political parties. Many have joined the Green Party, the Socialist Workers Party and various Communist (?) parties in Britain, seeing a new dawn for themselves and their political principles.

While the left in the Labour Party is squashed, pulled apart and re-defining its ideas and plans for campaigning, no real effort is 'channelled' into a success for the left, at Labour Party conference or elsewhere within the labour move-

ment. Socialists, committed to their beliefs and principles, may have to consider starting a new 'Socialist' option from present socialist parties, and labour movement campaigning groups.

A Labour government would never think of trying to put 'true' socialist principles and economic programmes into action. A socialist party would, come whatever in the short term.

So comrades, it's up to you!
Yours in unity for socialism,
Andrew Melville
Leicestershire

Selling hope, youth and nature

By Rosey Sibley

An advertising executive once said "cosmetic manufacturers are not selling lanolin, they are selling hope."

Skin cream advertisements suggest it's not so much hope they are selling as a pack of lies and distortions.

Or am I a cynic? Maybe it is possible to 'reverse the effects of ageing', 're-structure skin', and whatever else these ads claim.

Advertisers of skin care products have the problem of persuading us that we want to do something as unnatural and unnecessary as rubbing into our skin stuff of uncertain contents and dubious properties. One of the strategies they use is science.

In this society science is both highly valued and at the same time mystified. If it's scientific, it must be alright, and you don't need to understand it. Hence adverts blind us with pseudo-science.

One of these is for Helena Rubinstein's 'intercell'. As it claims to be an 'anti-time principle', it borders on science fiction.

The blurb purports to tell us about the product. In fact it mystifies with talk of micro-chemical signals through our intercellular tissue. Aren't all chemicals micro? And isn't all tissue intercellular?

This and similar ads go on about such substances as transglycanes, niosomes, biomedullin and ciblyocytes. I've never heard of any of these. They sound scientific, but how can I tell if they mean anything? Or if their outrageous claims are possible? Can you en-

courage cell renewal? Or rebuild the skin?

Another major strategy for skin care products is to sell them as solutions to problems which the advertisers invent. Oily skin, dry skin, tired skin, dull skin — there's a problem to suit you! And if you've got a problem, then you need a solution, in cream, gel, or lotion form.

One advert is laid out like a problem page. One problem: "I don't like complicated and expensive skin care routines". My idea of cheap and easy skin care would be soap and water.

But no, the advice here is to use Age Zone Night Moisturiser whilst you sleep — apply after cleansing and toning, and using age zone controller. One must be rich and idle to have such problems as these.

Many ads refer to beauty or skin care routines. The suggestion being that everyone has one (and you're a bit of a slut if you don't). Of course, the product advertised is a 'vital part' of this routine. The cheekiest one I've seen was for Evian water spray. I find buying water to drink quite hard to comprehend, but buying it to spray on your face is just bizarre.

Another great way of overcoming skin creams' unnaturalness is to use nature to sell them, insisting against all odds that the creams are natural. Timotei adverts are typical of this approach. The products are usually white, contain herb extracts, and are accompanied by a picture of a healthy peasant. The sub-text is that you need to use the products to look that natural!

I confess to buying the occasional tub of Nivea, and have even (though I blush to admit it!) indulged in the use of a face pack, but the



HYDRA-SYSTEME FOR THIRSTY SKIN

more I read these adverts the more I'm convinced that using skin care products is pointless and the claims made for them are very silly indeed.

I don't know all that much about skin, but I'm sure water cannot penetrate it (no matter how fine the 'micro-droplets') and, contrary to Chanel's belief, it is not dehydration that causes the ageing effect on skin, but loss of elasticity of collagen fibres.

After all, if Evian and Chanel

were both right, all we'd need to do to stay young would be to hold our heads under water for a few seconds each day. Inexpensive and uncomplicated.

Who are these adverts aimed at? Judging from most, at the mythical 'Cosmo-woman' who juggles career, home, baby, lover, and probably studies part-time and belongs to an environmental group too!

However, there are so few (if any) of those around that I'm in-

clined to think this image is part of the myth-world you buy with the product, and that really they are aimed at young working class women who might buy the odd item as a luxury.

Well, fair enough, we all need occasional treats to help us through our boring lives. But if you take my advice, sisters, you'll use the tap hydra-systeme (head under water) and treat yourself to something more worthwhile.

A very bourgeois workers party

NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

A small but leading group of Workers Party members resigned in the middle of this year's party conference in April.

Among them were some of the founders of modern Workers Party ideology, particularly Eamon Smullen, a leading recruit from the British Communist Party in 1973. The background to the split was a fierce debate about the identity and programme of the party in the post-Stalinist world.

The Workers Party has always been a fawning cheerleader for the Eastern Bloc regimes. As Party leader Prionsias De Rossa more dishonestly put it, "it is a valid criticism of my party that we did not more publicly criticise the defects we saw in communist countries!"

The combination of Stalinism's collapse and a significant increase in Workers Party parliamentary representation has accelerated the party's shift towards an even more mild reformist politics. At this year's conference De Rossa repeated his assertion of last year that support for state control of industry was finished while a programme for a mixed economy was essential.

De Rossa promised a new radical programme for industry "based on the existence of a mixed economy". As usual with 'socialists' who embrace this sort of politics the WP leader warned of the need for "able and courageous political leadership



Prionsias De Rossa

with a breadth of vision" in the period ahead. In other words, anyone concerned that all of this rhetoric is simply the abandonment of anything worth calling socialism lacks courage, vision and leadership.

So what of the dissidents? Were they defending some version, however distorted, of class politics? Sadly, no. The leadership's critics are the really open social democrats. They support a leading

party theorist, Eoghan Harris, who resigned when his document, 'The Necessity of Social Democracy' was published in a highly edited form in the WP journal. Harris and associates argue for social democratic rather than socialist values, a different party structure and the end of democratic centralism.

The split was damaging to the party, coming, as it did, in the midst of a televised and well-

reported conference, the most public in WP history. The acrimony is, however, hard to understand at first sight, given the slight political differences between the factions.

At least two main explanations suggest themselves. First, there is no doubt that the old leadership continued to use well-worn Stalinist methods in dealing with their opponents' views. They controlled and frustrated dissident views, used the theorists to abandon socialism and republicanism, then used the workerism of the rank and file to attack the "arrogant intellectuals". Much of the drama of the resignations can be put down to frustration at being out-manoeuvred.

Secondly, and I think more importantly, it does matter to the WP whether they are formally socialists or social-democratic; not substantially in terms of content but certainly in terms of party competition. In the Irish electoral market the WP's main competitor is clearly the Irish Labour Party. They are the social-democratic tradition in Ireland, firmly linked to Kinnock's and Mitterand's parties in the Socialist International. It would be much harder to justify the separate existence of two parties if both proclaimed an openly social democratic programme. This wouldn't matter to an honest reformist theorist seeking respect for their ideas, but it matters a lot to party bureaucrats whose sole concern is their own career and positions.

Lastly, the leadership's position is much easier to sell to the members in a faction fight. The total abandonment of socialism was too much for rank and file members of a party with a very recent attachment to some version of Marxism. De Rossa's rebuff to the social democrats recalls vividly an old trade unionist's advice to the original enthusiast for reformism

Eduard Bernstein, at the turn of the century. After listening with shock to a Bernstein speech extolling gradual piecemeal reforms, rather than militant class struggle, the wisecracker warned: "Eduard, one doesn't say such things in the movement; one simply does them." Such, exactly, is the difference between the Workers Party factions.

Little else has changed in the Workers Party. Their attitude to the North continues to be a bizarre inversion of their own past. "The biggest enemy of democracy in Ireland is the IRA," said General Secretary Sean Garland. Charles Haughey was condemned as an insincere advocate of democracy on the European stage because of a list of infringements of democracy in Ireland. Missing from the Workers Party list, however, is any reference to the rigid prohibition of Sinn Fein. Later in the conference there were a number of mentions for the notorious Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act. Under this provision no Sinn Fein representatives can be interviewed or reported on Irish TV or radio, a much more strict rule than any British measure. Last year a journalist lost her job for breaking the ban. Section 31 also has the honour of being the one policy which both sides of the WP faction fight firmly support!

Further than that, party leaders called for the more speedy extraditions of alleged terrorists and condemned Charles Haughey for his sluggishness on the issue. Haughey has been held back by public anxiety in Ireland in the wake of the Guildford 4, Winchester 3 and Birmingham 6 cases. Perhaps it is time for him to show more willingness to punish terrorists, however. I suggest he start by extraditing those suspected of the Aldershot Barracks bombing in 1972, in which seven civilians were killed.

Psychopaths, bondage and camp comedy

FILM

By Edward Ellis

Tie me up! Tie me down! (which in Spanish goes by the rather snappier title of 'Atame!') is, from the point of view of sexual politics, the most resolutely reactionary film to have been made for years.

A nutcase is let out of a mental institution (and if 'nutcase' isn't a very right-on term, I'm only following in the film's footsteps) and sets about pursuing a woman with whom he previously has had a one-night stand, and with whom he is in love. She is a junkie and an actress in unbelievably bad horror B movies.

Failing to engage her in conversation, he bursts into her flat, head-butts her, and takes her prisoner, eventually tying her up so she can't escape, promising to make her fall in love with him (shades of 'The Collector'). He explains that he will be a good husband and a good father to their children.

And does she fall in love with him? Of course she does. After an initial period of understandable error, she discovers that he's really quite a nice guy, especially after he gets seriously beaten up while trying to buy her some smack. And he is, it would seem, an amazing lay.

So when she eventually escapes (from the flat she's imprisoned in, and less metaphorically from bondage), she decides to go back to him. They meet, for some reason, at the top of an isolated castle, and live happily ever after.

The outrage with which the film has been met only goes to show that some people can't take a joke. Either that, I suppose, or that I am



Scene from another Almodovar film 'Woman on the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown'

too gullible to be able to recognise genuine sexism when I see it.

Pedro Almodovar is one of Spain's most popular film makers, director of camp sexual comedies full of absurd set pieces. In 'Law of Desire', a gay film director is pursued by a handsome young psychopath who kills his boyfriend. And he turns out to be an okay sort of guy too, if my memory serves me correctly. So Almodovar is into

psychopaths.

'Tie me up! Tie me down!' is so obviously wildly over the top that I cannot believe that it is meant to be taken even remotely seriously. That the heroine falls for the hero (and he is intended to be a hero) is so completely ridiculous, so utterly improbable, no-one can believe it to be a real comment on women's attitudes to tough-guy men.

That if it's not meant to be

serious, it doesn't really have much point at all, would be a fair comment. Except it made me laugh out loud, and that's quite an achievement for a film where you have to crane your neck to read the subtitles.

My main objection is that Almodovar should choose such an extraordinarily beautiful man as his leading character and put him in an exclusively heterosexual role. This,

I contend, is a cop out. Almodovar knows that gay men will flock to see his movies. To then ignore them is not on. Unless he thinks his gay influence can survive on camp alone.

Its subject matter, despite its absurdity, denies the film the gentler charm of Almodovar's earlier movies. So it is disappointing. But even when he's disappointing, Almodovar is good for an afternoon's entertainment.

All My Sons

TV

Mick Ackersley reviews Arthur Miller's play 'All My Sons', recently shown on TV.

Greek tragedy is about fate closing in inexorably on an honourable man.

For example, in Sophocles' play *Oedipus The King*, which is two and a half thousand years old, Oedipus King of Thebes seeks the cause of a plague which is laying waste the people of his city.

The gods have been angered because a great taboo has been broken: that is the cause of the plague. But what taboo? Who is guilty?

Oedipus must find the answer, and the play — concentrated in a short space of time — unfolds as the answer is revealed piece by piece.

Oedipus himself is the guilty man, the cause of the plague, the breaker of the taboo. He killed his father and has long been married, without knowing it, to his mother Jocasta.

When Oedipus was a baby a prophet predicted that he would do that — kill his father and marry his mother — and so the baby was exposed on a rock to die, staked by his ankles. But he was rescued and brought up far from Thebes. He



Cast of 'All My Sons'

went back as a young man, met his father on the road, and killed him in a quarrel without even knowing him for king of Thebes.

In Thebes, whose king had thus mysteriously disappeared, Oedipus answered the riddle of the Sphinx and, being made king as reward, marries the queen, Jocasta his mother. Fate...

Oedipus's search for the broken taboo unpeels layer after layer of the past until Jocasta and he confront the truth of who and what they are. She kills herself. Oedipus blinds himself in remorse and goes from Thebes with his daughters, who are also his sisters.

Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* is Greek tragedy in modern guise. Now fate, the gods, is capitalism and its workings, and what its workings do to people.

The tragedy unfolds layer after layer in one day, just after the end

of World War 2, in the home of an American capitalist, a war profiteer, Joe. One son is dead in the war, "missing", though the mother refuses to accept it, and waits for news from him that never comes. The other son was a pilot and now works with his father.

They are a loving family, Joe a good-hearted man.

Then the past catches up. Joe has stood trial and got off, and his former partner, their former next-door neighbour, is in jail for knowingly sending faulty aircraft parts to the US Air Force, thereby killing 21 pilots. Joe was sick at the time.

The arrival of the children of the jailed man, one of whom was the fiancée of the dead boy, begins the process of unravelling.

We see fate closing in on Joe, exposing him to his remaining son. He is finally destroyed by the revelation that he indirectly killed his own "missing" son. Joe's partner acted on his instructions.

As the layers peel away, the reality emerges of decent people caught up in the capitalist rat-race. Joe, confronted with what he did, explains it convincingly in terms of how things work, of the imperatives of survival in a market economy.

No brief summary could convey the power and force of Miller's great play. It has nothing of the crude bare-bones propaganda I've had to sketch in here. Yet the message is all there, and all the more effective as a picture of the built-in tragedy of human life under capitalism — the tragedy of people at the mercy of the ebbs and flows of the market-dominated social system as the people of the ancient

world were at the mercy of nature, which they idealised as the work of the gods.

It has the added tragic dimension

for us, unimaginable to the ancients, that we *could*, with socialism, control our social environment.

A bad mix

By Clive Bradley

Mixing it', Barry Simner's play about a comprehensive school undergoing the traumas of business-style educational change in the 1990s, was so staggeringly awful that I was never quite sure it wasn't being played for laughs.

An old-fashioned educationalist headmaster (Andrew Sachs of 'Fawlty Towers' fame, who really should stick to waiting), dismissive of multi-cultural vogue, is replaced by a go-getting Asian who is also a prospective Labour Party parliamentary candidate.

Trouble really starts when the new head discovers that a £20,000 cheque to help open a computer centre was given by a South African company.

More stereotypes have never been packed into sixty minutes of television. Nor have stereotypes managed to speak more clichés.

Humourless right-on union rep accuses burly PE teacher of both sexism and racism in under five

minutes. Old-fashioned headmaster tells on-the-fiddle black youth to "go back where he came from" unintentionally and gets caught doing it on school video. At conclusion, headmaster gets into fight with said black youth and accidentally socks the wrong one around the head.

Asian headmaster ("why is it that the ones we always have to watch are our own?") is persuaded by girlfriend in less than sixty seconds that it would be possible to accept South African money and use it to fight apartheid. Sceptical computer teacher, before she knows national origin of cash, gets enthused at prospect of money for education, apparently after new headmaster tells her "I hear what you're saying, okay?" in a voice reminiscent of Rik Mayall in the 'Young Ones'.

This was the serious drama equivalent of those sitcoms in which various stereotypes spout jokes that are considerably less funny than those of which most people are capable off the top of their heads.

What's happening to education is a worthy subject for a TV play. But this was the sort of thing that gives political drama a bad name.

Teachers launch united rank and file campaign

By Lesley Smallwood, Bradford NUT

Over a hundred delegates attended the Salaries and Redundancies conference organised by Nottingham Association on Saturday 7 July.

Delegates from 43 Associations described the effects that

Local Management of Schools (LMS), coupled with poll tax capping, were having on their members.

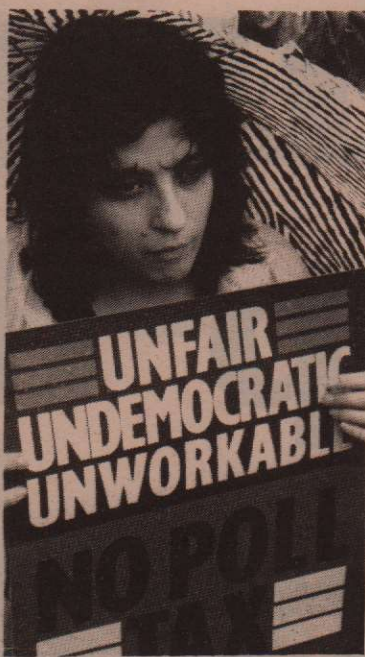
Hundreds of teachers across the country are threatened with redundancies and those whose jobs appear safe face an increased work load, worsening conditions of service and an ever-decreasing pay packet.

The conference, however, was able to key into a mood of

anger rather than demoralisation and a belief amongst teachers that we can mount a successful fightback against the attacks.

Two excellent motions were passed by the conference on redundancies and salaries: both putting pressure on the union right-wing executive to prepare now for a fight against redundancies and for a flat-rate pay increase of £3,000. The conference also set up a campaign to co-ordinate and promote the fight against job losses.

This campaign can unite the organised left in the union (the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union), and following the successful action in Barnsley and Avon, to build for national action to defend teachers' jobs.



Stand by Scargill!

WHETTON'S WEEK

A miner's diary

have the fullest confidence in the National President and the General Secretary.

I do not for one moment believe any of the gutter press speculation and stories and shit-stirring.

It is character assassination — and why should it come at this time and the quarter from which it is coming?

Why should the *Mirror*, a paper purporting to support the Labour Party, spend all its time and money attacking a trade union leader who has shown that his clear commitment to socialism cannot be deflected?

They are giving Maggie Thatcher one hell of a rest at a time when they should be attacking Thatcher and the Thatcher policies that have brought so much misery to the people in this country.

Who the hell is behind Maxwell doing the prodding and pulling of strings?

I have my suspicions that it's all to do with the prospect of a future Labour government that doesn't want Bolshie

trade union leaders standing up and demanding rights for workers. Scargill and people like him have to have their characters assassinated before a Labour government can get to work. We've already had a commitment that anti-trade union legislation will stay on the statute books.

People seem to have forgotten the massive marches and demonstrations in 1970 and '71 against the Industrial Relations Act. Here we have legislation that to my mind is worse than the Industrial Relations Act, and we've got Labour leaders saying that that legislation will remain on the statute book.

Most of the mineworkers that I've spoken to just won't swallow the stuff about Arthur Scargill. It wasn't Scargill that ran off to the South of France. It was Scargill who went to the police and asked them to investigate Roger Windsor.

But the media is trying the old trick: if you throw enough shit at someone it will stick. They are determined to keep throwing the shit at the fan and hoping that some of it will stick. I think Scargill enjoys the support of the vast majority of his members.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire

Avon union's poll tax protest

By Leon Edwards, Avon NALGO Press Officer

Bristol traffic was brought to a standstill on Thursday 21 June as 2,000 people lobbied Avon County Council against cutting services because of the poll tax.

Among the workers, parents and children (forming the largest weekday demonstration in the city for some years) were over 500 teachers on strike for the day following a local NUT ballot won by 60%.

The demonstration was called by Avon's Joint Union Liaison Committee to lobby the Council's Policy and Resources Committee — meeting to decide where to make £27 million cuts imposed through poll tax capping.

Despite pouring rain, the resolve of workers to fight jobs cuts was not dampened. Following the example of the teachers, Avon NALGO are preparing a ballot for strike action by its 4,000 members to ensure the swiftest possible response should job cuts be announced. Where any cuts may be made remains to be seen as councillors on Avon's hung council are playing a waiting game — wary of putting

political careers on the line by identifying budget cuts.

At the moment council workers appear to have the upper hand, though the rank and file need to organise more fully instead of allowing the union bureaucrats to meekly organise letter-writing campaigns. Already the action by Avon teachers flies in the face of NUT leader, Doug McAvoy, who, despite NUT Conference decision this year to fight poll tax-resulting job cuts with industrial action, tried to sabotage the decision by saying it was "illegal".

Avon nursery teacher, Kay Williams, told me of the support they were getting from parents and other workers:

"Far from alienating parents by closing schools today, most recognise the need for our action and many are here supporting the demonstration. They know that, even without capping or job losses this year, next year could see education and other services slashed under the poll tax. Our strike and this demonstration are not just against capping but against the totally harsh concept of the poll tax itself."

Plans for a bigger demonstration are being made for when the full council meets on 12 July. Local parents have formed a 'Parents Against Cuts' groups to oppose all cuts.

Support Birmingham hospital workers

Since 23 May, 50 members of NUPE, NALGO and CoHSE have been taking strike action in hospitals across Central Birmingham Health Authority.

We are administrative, clerical and secretarial staff and we provide an essential service to patients and to other health service staff — but our dedication has been rewarded with a disgraceful slap in the face by management. We submitted regrading claims over a year ago — after a long delay management decided to review the grades of all admin and clerical staff within the authority. When the results came out, surprise, surprise, only a handful of regradings but the majority of us left where we were, on paltry pay.

Limited industrial action began in March, but was suspended when

management and our unions agreed a formula designed to resolve the dispute.

The formula was barely on the negotiating table when management renege on it, and turned on union members who were reviving still limited industrial action. Intimidation by management, bullying and written threats of disciplinary action have brought 50 of us out on indefinite strike until the grading dispute is settled.

The financial facts are: Our claim is for a Grade 3 for Clerks — £6,908-£8,081 per annum. Grade 4 for Secretaries — £8,081-£9,832 per annum.

We will fight on, but we can only afford to do so with your help. All money should be sent to Christine Rogers, NUPE, 101 Sutton New Road, Erdington, Birmingham B23 6RE. Cheques should be made out to "Central Birmingham A&C Hardship Fund".

TOWN HALLS ROUNDUP

Housing benefit workers in York have voted to come out on indefinite strike over a poll tax re-grading dispute.

They are backed by their NALGO union branch.

The dispute concerns the vast increase in work that staff have had to deal with, due to poll tax. Thousands of unrebated bills were sent out by York City Council in April, despite claims having been lodged for rebates. A large backlog of work has built up, which is also delaying other benefit payments.

The workers are demanding re-grading and a substantial one-off "goodwill" payment, before returning to normal working. They are taking indefinite action following the failure of the Labour-controlled City Council to respond to a two-day strike at the end of June.

Four NALGO members at the Centre for Local Economic Strategies are being made compulsory redundant.

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies, CLES, is funded by councils up and down the country. The unit carries out research and consultancy work for councils developing local economic policies. CLES also advises councils on how to respond to changes such as 1992.

The unit is run by an administrative committee composed of representatives from Basildon, Dudley, Sheffield and Manchester councils and a representative from NUPE.

The administrative committee met on Friday 6 July to consider the compulsory redundancies. The workers at CLES took strike action on Friday to lobby the meeting.

Despite the protest, the Committee voted to make four out of the 16 workers redundant.

Although the staff are paid via Manchester City Council, they are not protected by the redeployment scheme. Neither Manchester nor any of the other sponsoring councils have offered alternative employment.

Many of the councils prominent in CLES are Labour authorities who have stated intentions to avoid compulsory redundancies. These councils are using the independent and charitable status of CLES to avoid local policies and local accountability.

Now, four NALGO members are facing the dole queue.

Workers in three Manchester City Council Area Housing Offices came out on strike last week over the issue of cover for vacant posts.

The refusal of the Labour council to fight over the poll tax, and the resulting cuts in services, have led to management trying to get workers to provide full cover or vacant posts without proper negotiations with the trade unions.

At Shanton Area Office, workers from NUPE, NALGO and ACTTS walked out when instructed to cover a vacant Estate Management Office post. The level of cover the management were demanding would have made it the best-covered post in the city! At Wilbraham office, management instructed staff to cover for an ACTTS member on strike due to the Shanton dispute — causing them to walk out. And at Burnage staff were also instructed to cover for a vacant post.

The NALGO branch officials were for once willing to make the dispute official, but before it was put to the vote at a mass meeting, the management backed down, withdrawing their threats of disciplinary action to the workers involved and agreeing to negotiations with the unions at local level over cover for all vacant posts.

But the whole issue arises out of the refusal of the Labour council to take on the Tories over cuts in local jobs and services and their complete failure to fight over the poll tax.

Local government workers will be forced more and more to take on more work to keep the already skeleton service on the rails. So strikes like this one by Manchester housing workers will be inevitable.

Haringey's Kinnockite cuts

By Mick O'Sullivan, Haringey UCATT

Haringey council has been one of the hardest hit by poll tax capping, the council having to find just under £14 million.

The impact on services is nothing short of a disaster. All of the services have had to make drastic reductions which will result in over 500 redundancies.

The squeaky-clean Kinnockite council and party has no intention of doing anything else but, however reluctantly, carrying out the government's bidding. So much for the much-vaunted role of the Labour councils as providing a dented shield against the Conservative government.

For large sections of the Labour councils and Labour Party the poll tax capping has provided an opportunity to settle accounts with the borough's unions. At the beginning of the 1980s the Labour council was forced into an alliance with the unions around raising the rates against the left of the Labour Party, who wished to confront the government.

Once that threat was over, the council has attempted on many occasions to downgrade the borough's unions. While the unions' power has been eroded, they still represent a force. Poll tax capping has provided the latest and the best opportunity for the council to break the unions and assert their authority over the workforce.

The response of the unions to these attacks has been to re-form their joint union committee and to present a united front to the council around their "bottom line" of no compulsory redundancies. This position gained a major filip last week when a NALGO branch meeting of over 1,000 voted for selective strike action.

Southwark's Labour council is planning to make £14 million cuts to comply with poll tax capping.

Schools, leisure centres, children's homes and libraries will close as a result. Large-scale redundancies coupled with a drive against union organisation can also be expected.

Council workers need to fight these attacks. Build for all-out borough-wide strike action, link up with workers in other poll tax capped boroughs!

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Oppose the
moves to ban
Socialist
Organiser!

Stop this purge!

Statement by the Editorial Board

We should not proscribe any organisation without the opportunity for the full facts to be heard and their case put forward," declares David Blunkett MP in a letter to *Socialist Organiser*.

That's the bare minimum of justice: charges, evidence, and a hearing for the defence before conviction or sentence. Yet, but for lack of time, the Labour Party National Executive on 27 June would have proceeded in exactly the opposite way: sentence passed before the "defendant" was even officially informed of any proceedings, let alone given a hearing.

A report from National Organiser Joyce Gould, mainly about the deselection of Frank Field MP in Birkenhead, also included the following proposal:

"That the NEC under Clause II (3) and 4 (b) and in pursuant of the conference decision of 1982, regards *Socialist Organiser* as declare [sic] *Socialist Organiser* as ineligible for affiliation to the party and inconsistent with the Constitutional Rules."

Presumably Labour HQ officials reckoned they could sort out the grammar and spelling later. The drift was clear: *Socialist Organiser* should be banned.

The National Executive in February decided to "investigate" our paper, because Frank Field had thrown accusations about *Socialist Organiser* "controlling" Wallasey Constituency Labour Party into his great ragbag of a dossier contesting his deselection. To this day no-one from Labour Party HQ has contacted our editorial staff, returned out phone calls, or even officially notified us of the "investigation"!

Yet Joyce Gould proposed the ban. The proposal is still on the NEC's agenda, and almost certain to be discussed at its next meeting on 25 July. We still have not been officially contacted or informed, though by unofficial means we do now know what's proposed.

Socialist Organiser's editorial staff have written to Joyce Gould and to all NEC members asking that we be officially supplied with copies of all charges and evidence against us, that we have a chance to present a reply to the NEC, and that representatives should be able to attend the NEC to put our case and answer questions.

Joyce Gould's "evidence" is very thin. In the body of her report she states: "Extracts from Discussion Bulletins published by *Socialist Organiser* clearly identify it as an entrant organisation". The back-up to that statement is just six sentences from an old discussion bulletin, quoted out of context, which form an "Appendix" to the report together with a haphazard list of some people who are on our editorial staff, some who aren't, and some who have been in the

past, under the titles "Secretariat" and "Executive Committee".

The relevant clauses from the Labour Party rules are II (3) and III (4).

II (3) states: "Political organisations not affiliated to or associated under a national agreement with the party on January 1, 1946, having their own programme, principles and policy for distinctive and separate propaganda, or possessing branches in the constituencies or engaged in the promotion of parliamentary or local government candidatures, or owing allegiance to any political organisation situated abroad, shall be ineligible for affiliation to the party."

III (4) states: "No member of the Labour Party shall engage in a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party...Where appropriate, the National Constitutional Committee shall have regard to involvement in financial support for and/or the organisation of and/or the activities of any organisation declared ineligible for affiliation...but the NEC shall not have regard to the mere holding or expression of beliefs and opinions."

The clauses were put in their present form in the course of the banning of *Militant*. First, *Militant* was found to be an organisation ineligible for affiliation. But thousands of Labour Party members belong to organisations ineligible for affiliation, from CND to the Catholic Church, and they can't all be expelled. So Clause III (4) was drafted on the understanding that *Militant* was a case where it was "appropriate" to regard support for a group ineligible for affiliation to "a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party". In other cases it would not be "appropriate".

So what do Joyce Gould's six sentences show about support for *Socialist Organiser* constituting "a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party"? These are the six:

"Sometimes in the past we have been sectarian towards the Labour Party. But in 1978-1979 we learned some new things about working in the Labour Party as the best militants inside the movement. We have to be the best militants. But we are also Marxists — not tied to the rhythms of the Labour Party, and working in a medium which isn't ours."

"We need to focus on building ourselves; use the period to educate ourselves and build; maintain our links with the Labour Party but don't get dragged down by it. We are not parasitic on the Labour Party — we have our own organisation, programme, etc. We need a 'sectarian turn' in the sense of bolder self-presentation, but without turning away from the movement."

They are in fact extracts from minutes of a National Editorial Board, snippets from what individuals (not the committee by resolution or any such body) said. But those individuals talk about "working in the Labour Party as the best militants inside the movement. We have to be the best



militants"!

Being the best builders of the Labour Party — that's "a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party"? Other comments in the same minutes include: "In my Labour Party membership has trebled. Healthy Labour Party branches can be built..." and "We can recruit people to the Labour Party via poll tax campaigns. One ward recruited 100..." Very "prejudicial to the Party"!

Joyce Gould's prize exhibit is doubtless the sentence: "We are not parasitic on the Labour Party — we have our own organisation, programme, etc." It seems to put us in the wrong under Clause II (3).

But that's more word play than substance. And even then it goes nowhere towards showing that this is a case where it is "appropriate" under Clause III (4) to consider support for group ineligible for affiliation as being "prejudicial" to the Party.

In context, what the "prize exhibit" sentence says is that where supporters of *Socialist Organiser* find Labour Party ward branches small and depressed — as unfortunately often happens these days — they should not be "parasitic", they should not passively sit back and moan: they should go out, sell the paper on the streets, on the picket lines, and door to door, and bring new people into the Party.

"Our own organisation, programme, etc"? Our paper regularly carries a "Where We Stand" column outlining our political platform — which is not a platform counterposed to the Labour Party, but a programme of policies to which we seek to win the Labour Party and the labour movement —

and asking readers to join our local supporters' groups. There is no mystery about that. Nobody publishes a paper like *Socialist Organiser* without having some distinctive ideas to argue, and nobody but a millionaire publishes such a paper without having an organised network for distributing, selling, and fund-raising.

Every one of the literally hundreds of pressure groups, campaigns and caucuses in the Labour Party has some distinctive programme and some sort of organisation. Otherwise those groups would not exist, levy subscriptions, elect committees, issue publications, organise meetings, as in fact they do.

If all such groups were banned, then every member of the National Executive would probably have to be expelled! If Joyce Gould were making a serious case, she would have to adduce evidence that the policies and organisational network of *Socialist Organiser* are of a particular type to be "prejudicial to the Party". She adduces no such evidence.

In fact, as far as we can see, our ideas and our ways of organising would make us entirely eligible for inclusion in the Labour Party's "register" of approved groups.

Our local group meetings are open to all Labour Party members. Our AGM is publicly advertised and open to all Labour Party members (this year, it was even filmed for television by BBC Newsnight). We are not conspiratorial. And we have said, and say again, that we are quite ready to consider changing the way we organise if the NEC finds it objectionable.

It's a frame-up. Joyce Gould is patching together threads and fragments in order to target the Marxist left.

If she gets away with this, every group and newspaper in the Labour Party is at risk. Or rather: every group and newspaper on the left is at risk — the right wing will continue to caucus and conspire at will, as always.

Labour Briefing, Labour Party Socialists, *Campaign Group News* and local Campaign Groups, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, *Socialist Outlook*, *Socialist Action*, Women for Socialism — all could be banned at will (and presumably without even being informed that charges had been tabled) if this precedent is established.

The issues are even more far-reaching than when *Militant* was proscribed. We said at the time, and we think we've been proved right, that *Militant* had been selected as an easy target to frighten the left and start a precedent.

But the official argument — and many people who are by no means right-wingers or devotees of a Stalinist one-faction party accepted it — was that *Militant* was a special case. It had special ways of organising and behaving which marked it out from all other groups in the party — tighter, more sectarian, more conspiratorial, in short, damaging.

No such special case is argued against *Socialist Organiser*. The case against us is a case against any attempt to publish and organise for left wing ideas in the Labour Party. Don't let them get away with it!

Pass emergency motions to the NEC, and send copies to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.