


Students, youth and Labour
Page 6



Peter Tatchell: A lesbian and gay agenda
Centre pages




For Socialist renewal!



For Workers' Liberty!

Ronnie MacDonald
Oilworkers fight for recognition
Page 13



Labour Conference debates the ban
Centre pages



Stop the warmongers!

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home!

Banned but unbowed

Some 300 copies of the new *Socialist Organiser* were sold at Labour Party Conference, and a number of delegates took out subscriptions.

The response from delegates to *SO* and to the campaign to 'End the Ban' on the paper was far better than you would think from Friday's vote on the ban, 5,247,000 to 488,000.

That huge majority would have looked quite close on a show of hands — which is why AEU leader Bill Jordan jumped in straight away to demand a card vote. There were only about 159,000 union votes against the ban — but some 329,000 Constituency Labour Party votes, or about two-thirds of the CLP delegates present on Friday.

Debate

The debate itself bore out the calculations. Applause for the speakers against the ban was louder than for Tony Clarke when he defended the ban, and indeed Clarke was heckled and booed, loudly and quite spontaneously.

On the evening before delegates identified with the 'End the Ban' campaign were accosted by dozens of others asking to be briefed in case they should get a chance to speak from the floor against the ban. In the event, unexpectedly, there was time for two speakers from the floor, and scores of hands went up instantly, ready to speak against the ban.

Many delegates of the 'traditional' right wing and soft left voted against the ban. The fiercest supporters of the ban were the middle-class turncoat ex-left around the Labour Coordinating Committee.

All that was testimony to the work done by 'End the Ban'. In 1986 the left only mustered 325,000 votes against the purge then

Turn to page 3

Adam Keller reports from Israel

There were two provocations behind the Jerusalem massacre — one by a small extreme-right group called the Temple Mount Faithful, and one by the Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir.

The "Temple Mount Faithful" have the aim of destroying the Muslim mosques on Temple Mount and building a new Jewish Temple. Over the years they have carried out all manner of provocations. The

authorities sometimes put restrictions on them, but leave them quite a lot of freedom of action.

Monday was a Jewish holiday, the Fifth of Tabernacles. The Temple Mount Faithful aimed to lay a cornerstone of the Jewish Temple they want to be built.

The police forbade them. But they went to the Supreme Court. The compromise that was made meant that the cornerstone could be placed not near the Temple Mount, but in the village of Silwan, which is outside the walls of the Old City but has some biblical sites which give it religious significance.

Meanwhile the Palestinians were becoming very alarmed. On Friday last week, the preachers on Temple Mount called on all the faithful to come to the mosques on Monday, to defend Temple Mount against the invasion of the unbelievers. They did not trust the Israeli Supreme Court.

The other provocation took place on Sunday, one day before the shootings, and involved the prime minister himself.

Turn to page 5



The truth about the massacre

West helps Khmer Rouge

The Khmer Rouge, the barbarous former regime of the Kampuchean dictator Pol Pot, are being armed and trained by Western governments, including the British, according to televised report by John Pilger this week.

He showed how Western arms are reaching Khmer

Rouge inside Kampuchea, and army training centres in Thailand — including one owned by the United Nations and leased to the US government.

He showed how neither the British nor the American governments are prepared to answer questions about their Kampuchean policy.

One Labour MP reports that during an official visit to Kampuchea she met top British security men there,

supposedly 'on holiday'. When she asked questions, she was told the information was classified.

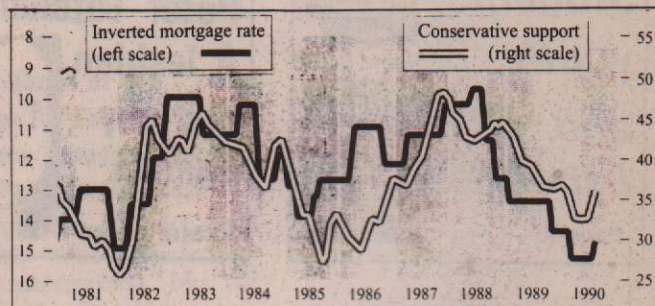
An Australian refugee worker told Pilger that according to her sources British soldiers were involved in training the Khmer Rouge.

And while the United Nations recognises the Khmer Rouge and is seeking to include them in a 'peace settlement' for Kampuchea, the country is being starved to

death by a trade blockade, made worse since the turn of the Russians westwards.

The Pol Pot regime was one of the most brutal anywhere in the world, ever. It richly deserves that overused word, 'genocidal'.

That British and other Western governments, currently so suddenly outraged by Saddam Hussein, can be aiding and training Pol Pot's forces, is an outrage and must stop.



ERM entry means more jobless

By Chris Reynolds

The short-term meaning of the Tory Government's decision last Friday, 5th, to enter the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, is more unemployed.

The long-term reason behind the decision — the reason why any British capitalist government was bound to enter the ERM fairly soon — is the increasing international integration of capitalism in Western Europe, and the fact that Britain is inextricably bound in to that integration. An integrated market obviously calls for reasonably stable exchange rates between currencies (which the ERM aims to guarantee), and preferably for a common currency.

But the immediate reason why the Tory Government entered the ERM now must be the Tories' worry about the opinion polls, and their desire at least to have the option of a general election in

1991.

High interest rates and high inflation have etched away the Tories' voting base in the middle class and better-off working class. ERM entry should help the government to bring down interest rates and inflation. The banks have to worry less about speculators (because there is less scope for gambling on exchange rates), and British inflation is tied to EC inflation.

The quid-pro-quo is no scope for the effects of international competition on the British economy to be softened by the value of the pound drifting downwards, as it has done for decades now: in other words, more speed-up, closures, and sackings.

The Tories must reckon that the rise in unemployment will be limited, and will only worry those who would vote Labour anyway. They could well turn out to be wrong if the looming world recession, pushed on by a Gulf war, turns into a slump.

The labour movement should prepare to fight for jobs — for a shorter work week without loss of pay, for increased public investment. We should not be diverted into calling for withdrawal from the ERM, which would be as futile as the now-discredited call for withdrawal from the EC.

Why Bush went bust

Last Friday the US federal government went bust, and started to shut down all its operations.

The shutdown was only a gesture by President Bush to put pressure on Congress, and by Tuesday a makeshift deal had been put together to end it. But there is a real crisis behind the gesture: the US capitalist class is unable to get to grips with the huge federal budget deficit, which in turn is one of the main factors in the US's balance-of-payments deficit.

Since the mid-'80s the US has lived by borrowing money from the rest of the world. Quickly and dramatically, it has moved from being the world's foremost creditor nation to being its foremost debtor nation. The cause: "imperial overstretch", combined with the rapid decline of the US's advantage in industrial productivity over Japan and Western Europe.

The imbalance was the chief background cause of the stock market crash of October 1987, has not been cured since, and could help turn the recession which all economists now see coming into a slump.



Protests grow against Bush's war

Not all Americans back Bush's warmongering. There have been protests in the US as well as in Europe. Photo! Joseph Ryan, Socialist Action/US

It's not too late to fight back

From page 16

These significant victories on defence and constitutional issues were possible because many unions faced both ways. They supported the NEC's proposals 'in principle' yet voted for resolutions opposing them. Thus the unions sought to show their strong desire to see a Labour victory while expressing reservations.

One reason why they did not voice their opposition openly — by voting against the NEC documents where they disagreed — was because of the pre-election atmosphere artificially generated by the NEC to get its way. Yet an election in 1991 is unlikely.

If the unions and, to a

lesser extent CLPs, were misled, the same cannot be said of the so-called 'soft left' on the NEC. Had they followed the view of the majorities in the unions and CLPs which they claim to represent, controversial parts of the NEC documents would never have reached conference.

But they faced both ways only in their rhetoric. They did not join Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner in opposing proposals which undermine the right of party members to participate in policy making. They solidly voted for reducing and destroying those rights.

Some of them even joined the vociferous lobby for proportional representation. Its introduction would abolish future majority Labour governments.

The NEC has succeeded in pushing through 'in principle' proposals which virtually do away with conference democracy and rank-and-file participation. But the constitution has not yet been changed.

If the NEC is to be believed this is due to happen at the first full conference after the next general election. This conference is unlikely before 1992 and may not be until 1993, but the NEC may try to pull a fast one next year.

Members are being lulled into thinking that the constitutional changes have already happened. This is not so. The rank-and-file can retain direct participation in policy making if they can firm up union policies by submitting resolutions to union conference.

Who pays for the Tory party?

Gerry Bates looks at the 'Panorama' TV survey of Tory finances

Question: The Tory party needs between £15m and £25m to fight the next general election; where is the money to come from?

Answer: From the ruling class. The BBC proved that quite conclusively. It analysed Tory party income for the year 1987. This was not easy, as the party accounts are 'sparse' and much of the information about donors is secret.

Of £15m, £1m came from consti-

tuency associations, £4m from PLCs, approximately £3½m from private companies and the rest from wealthy individuals, legacies, direct-mail donations (the Tories have been targeting new shareholders) and foreign individuals and companies.

What the BBC wanted to point out was that (excepting the donations from constituencies) donations could influence government policy, the handing out of 'honours' and other favours.

For example, of the 110 best performing companies quoted on the Stock Exchange, half donate to the Tories and half don't. Two thirds of the 'honours' go to the half that

do donate. Big surprise! The other one third probably went to company directors who had given money from their private wealth on the quiet!

The question of donations to party funds giving rise to favours from government ministers took more time. Obviously Tory big-wigs denied it. The BBC couldn't prove it, although they came up with some pretty suggestive examples. For instance, Peter Palumbo's company gives £100,000-plus to the Tories each year. In the teeth of opposition from conservationists, Prince Charles, etc., Palumbo has been given planning permission to develop Mansion House Square and

to demolish a lot of listed buildings.

It is probably a fair assumption that donations buy favours. But all the donors interviewed — from huge PLCs to wealthy individuals and privately-owned companies — said the main reason they gave money was because Tory policies favoured them or their company or both. They wanted the Tories to stay in power because the Tories would help them get richer.

The real laugh is that the Tory party is £5m in the red. It seems that a lot of people who've got rich under the Thatcher government are hanging on to their cash. That's the ruling class for you. Even their own side don't get a share in the profits.



Thatcher applauds 'bring back hanging' Waddington

Tories cheer the rope

The Tory conference which meets in Bournemouth this week is a gathering of the faithful for a party in trouble.

Eleven years in power, and all the much-touted achievements of Thatcher and her governments seem to be turning to ashes.

Inflation is higher now than when Thatcher came to power; the real economy is weaker; interest rates are high; the poll tax is alienating much of the Tory minority of the electorate; and unemployment is rising.

Labour is consistently ahead in the polls, despite Mrs Thatcher's attempts to strut through the Gulf crisis as a "great leader of high international standing".

The Tories know that they could lose the next election. They aren't beaten yet, of course. They worked a nice trick on the Labour leaders, their understudies, by stealing most of their economic policy just as Labour Party conference was ending.

Into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, a small cut in interest rates, and hey presto, Neil Kinnock and John Smith were left shivering in economic nakedness and embarrassment. They even showed a distinctly unstatesmanlike chagrin to the TV cameras when told the news.

But is the trick good enough to pull Thatcher out of her tailspin in time for the next election? The Tories are still deeply worried.

And, as always when they feel worried, they start baying and yelp-

ing about bringing back the hangman and about making the medieval conditions to which those jailed in Britain are condemned a lot worse.

The howling barbarians at Bournemouth now have a Home Secretary, David Waddington, who believes in bringing back hanging (as does Mrs Thatcher). The Tories are going to make a new attempt to vote back the death penalty.

Having brought us to a condition

of hordes of roaming homeless in the streets of London, and unleashed a tide of capitalist barbarism, the Tory leaders probably feel it is an anomaly that the rope is not now an accepted part of our way of life, with its refurbished Victorian values. There are probably people at the Bournemouth conference who would like to take us back beyond 1868 to the era of public hangings!

The filthy spirit of the governing

Banned but unbowed

From page 1

directed at *Militant*. At this Conference the 'hard left' vote was no more than 200,000. The other 288,000 votes, to make up 488,000 were won by campaigning.

But all the sizeable unions except the NUM voted for the ban. Sometimes the majority was narrow — one vote in the NCU delegation — but the union leaders who dominated the delegations were more inclined to take the word of the NEC than of a small group of Trotskyists, and the time between the NEC ban, on 25 July and the Conference was far too short for any rank and file pressure to be built up and influence the delegations.

Many trade union delegations were 'sold' the ban on the basis that it meant no more than an inquiry



Crossing the Pergamon workers' picket on Robert Maxwell's party at the Pembroke Hotel. Photo: Paul Herrman, Profile

into *SO*, or a formal vote to placate Frank Field, not a long and messy trail of expulsions of good Labour Party activists. But that long and messy trail is just what the ex-student apparatchiks now dominant at Walworth Road do want. The MSF delegation was recommended to vote against the resolution, and for the NEC, on the grounds that 'the inquiry was still proceeding'. NUPE delegates were urged to vote for expulsions on the grounds that *Socialist Organiser* supporters were 'misfits'!

John Wilton, PPC for Birmingham Edgbaston, started his speech against the ban by displaying copies of the *Times* and *Socialist Organiser* and saying "I support

party of modern Britain is most clearly expressed in Home Secretary Waddington's promise to bring in an additional ten year jail sentence for people who join revolts and protests while in prison. This summer's riots have taught these people nothing except to reinforce their well-developed Ceausescu complex — when the tortured victims get restive, pile on more repression.

The good thing about the Tories is that they are winning the next election for Neil Kinnock — who probably isn't able to do it for himself.



Paul Hill — wrongly jailed for the Guildford pub bombings — would have been hanged if Waddington had had his way

No expelling mandate

END THE BAN!

By Martin Thomas

The Labour Party's National Executive Committee wanted to ban *Socialist Organiser*, and have Conference confirm that ban.

However, the old 'proscribed list' was abolished in 1973, and has not been restored; and the relevant rules are now so tortuous that, despite the NEC's wishes, no clear mandate for expelling Labour Party members for association with *Socialist Organiser* has been established.

There are three main reasons.

Firstly, the decision can only cut against members of an organisation. Tony Clarke, speaking for the NEC at Conference, confirmed that:

"We're not talking about the right to publish a newspaper, we're talking about the right of a separate party to organise within our party."

Yet the formal organisation behind *Socialist Organiser*, the Socialist Organiser Alliance, has disbanded. By Tony Clarke's own argument, people cannot be expelled for association with a newspaper as distinct from an organisation.

Secondly: even if it is deemed (why? by whom?) that supporters of *Socialist Organiser* still comprise an organised grouping covered by the NEC decision — even then there is no clear mandate for expelling sellers of the paper.

The Labour Party press office has already told the *Liverpool Echo* and *Tribune* that no disciplinary action is contemplated against members of the Advisory Editorial Board being set up by *Socialist Organiser*. Yet if those with one organised connection to the paper — its Advisory Editorial Board — are not to be expelled, by what justice are those with another, the sellers of the paper, to be expelled?

The Labour Party now takes it as a rule that anyone regularly selling *Militant* or contributing financially to it, is deemed to be a member of 'the Militant tendency'.

But that ruling, right or wrong, applies only to *Militant*. It cannot be, and should not be, extended to other papers. Not everyone who sells or contributes to the *Morning Star* is a member of the Communist Party of Britain. Not everyone who sells or contributes to *Socialist Organiser* was, is, or is ever likely to be, a member of any organised grouping.

Thirdly: the case remains unclear even if an organised grouping is deemed to exist, and an individual is deemed to belong to it.

The decision, remember, "declares *Socialist Organiser* as ineligible for affiliation." Nowhere in the rules does it say that any member of a group ineligible for affiliation must be expelled; and indeed, if it did say that, it would be absurd.

CLPs therefore can and should respond to the Conference decision with resolutions along the following lines:

"This CLP (1) notes the Conference decision which 'declares *Socialist Organiser* as ineligible for affiliation';

(2) welcomes the statements from Walworth Road that no disciplinary action is contemplated against members of the Advisory Editorial Board of *Socialist Organiser*;

(3) considers that no disciplinary action against members associated with *Socialist Organiser* is appropriate at this time."

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823
London SE15 4NA
Newsdesk: 071-639 7965
Latest date for reports:

first post Tuesday

Editor: John O'Mahony
Published by WL Publications Ltd,
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Printed by Portabello CP

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office
Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of
Socialist Organiser and are in a personal
capacity unless otherwise stated.

GRAFFITI

Sun journalist comes clean



More conference graffiti

Kinnock's bully boys

GRAFFITI

The depths to which Party leaders and full-timers have sunk was shown during the Poll Tax debate.

Liverpool delegates at the back of the hall were surrounded by 20-plus stewards ordering them to sit in their seats. When one delegate protested she was told by a large male steward that if she didn't comply she "would get a kick in the teeth".

On Friday, the same delegate was walking out of the conference hall with an unlit cigarette in her mouth. A steward told her to stop smoking. When she protested that she wasn't smoking, she was grabbed and manhandled out of the hall.

Wallasey CLP wasn't allowed to correct a typing error in Resolution 41 (on women's representation) on the grounds that conference could only vote for what it had in front of it on paper. The proposals for NEC elections refer to holding "an annual ballet of eligible members". Must we now elect CLP Choreography Officers?

Prominent in the official conference guide was a full-page colour ad for Vickers' Challenger Tank.

Challenger 2 (no. 1 was designed for the Shah of Iran; with his demise, the UK army had to take hundreds off Vickers' hands) is now competing with US and German tanks for a big UK order.

Alas, it consistently flops in NATO gunning.

Vickers have been wooing Martin O'Neill (and now conference) hoping to fill their empty order books. The Gulf crisis (and Labour's gung-ho approach) has boosted hope in Newcastle, where Vickers employees face the dole.

Wouldn't Labour do better to back a massive arms conversion programme to civilian production?

On Thursday David Blunkett called on Labour councils to make further cuts ("difficult choices") to remain in power, just till a Labour government saves them. Yet on Tuesday he nodded sagely as Bryan Gould told the NEC's



Local Government fringe: "Councils cannot expect to be bailed out by a Labour government."

Next speaker: Cath Attlee" said Jo Richardson chairing the health debate. Then she looked up and asked, "Is Cath Attlee in the hall?"

Cath, the Brent South delegate, explained: "I nobbled Jo Richardson at the Tribune meeting."

Who else nobbled the chair? PPCs speaking from the floor had their speeches released by the conference press office before the debates even started.

According to the Guardian, Kinnock loyalists were "delighted" at how well Richardson followed the line and rigged debates.

Along with voting on the NEC for witch-hunts and bans, Richardson's role at this conference has destroyed any vestige of democratic credibility. She should be removed from the Campaign Group NEC slate.

Cannon to the right of us, poison peashooters to the left!

While people in the centre of the Labour Party, and not a few on the right, rallied to defend SO and Labour Party democracy in Blackpool, a bitter leaflet denouncing SO for lack of Bolshevik principle was handed to the delegates by our own obstreperous shadow, Workers' Power.

This is a singular group with strange initiation rites. Each new recruit is expected to write a polemic against SO. The moribund founding fathers of the group then slop in a douche of stale bile and venom, and the clumsy neophyte polemic, thus fortified, and full of misapprehensions, hasty debating points and plain tabloid press dishonesty, is published, unedited, in their "central organ".

They specialise in giving sage advice and information to others. Their anti-SO leaflet, for example, points this way forward for the Liverpool left: "Demand that right wing councillors in Liverpool and elsewhere resign their seats and make way for those who are prepared to fight the Poll Tax and the cuts. Such actions will force Kinnock to either split the party or halt the witch-hunts..."

Just the magic-working word "demand"! And into a conference where the witch-burners were desperate for evidence that SO is a "Leninist sect", and for proof that the Socialist Organiser Alliance has not disbanded, the Workers' Power leaflet threw their own pennyworth of aid to Kinnock with another "demand": "To SO branches we say — do not disband, defy the ban!"

It is not the first time they have done this sort of thing. Funny — peculiar! — Workers' Power is. Harmless it isn't.

WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward



It is true. There are no depths to which the Sun will not sink. Their centre spread last Wednesday was entitled 'My Dodgy Day with the Dykes — council-backed course tries to make me a

lesbian'.

Caroline Graham, a Sun 'reporter' infiltrated one of the courses at the Islington Women's Therapy Centre on the subject 'Am I a lesbian?'. She didn't even pay the full price — pretending she was low waged.

SO asked Caroline what she really thought of the course — not the rubbish she wrote in the Sun — but the article she would like to have written.

"I did write a different article actually," says Caroline, "but Kelvin McKenzie was furious and I had to change it all.

"I pointed out that the Women's Therapy Centre costs only £6884 a year — less than 20 people's poll tax. That's very cheap when you consider how many women there are in London who could benefit from the centre.

"I also said in my article how much I had enjoyed the day. It made a fantastic

change from a day at Fortress Wapping! No-one commented on my appearance, no-one called me a 'bird' all day, and I could wear comfortable clothes. I was given £200 for expenses for the day, to buy myself some 'dykey' clothes. I gave the money to the Women's Aid Foundation and just went in my normal, non-work clothes!

"The Sun wanted me to use the real names of all the women on the course, and say where they came from, what their jobs were, etc., and make them all out to be ugly. Of course McKenzie had no way of checking so I changed them all! In fact, all the women were attractive and warm, and I'm meeting one of them tonight..."

"What Kelvin McKenzie doesn't know is that I'm really infiltrating the Sun. I work for the Pink Paper and I'm very sympathetic to the left press, especially SO. I did worry about SO using my real name — but it's OK, no-one

at the Sun can read. I arranged to get myself sacked last week, with an enormous pay-off. My last act was the introduce a virus to the computers at Wapping."

Note to readers: This is a complete fabrication. SO did not speak to Caroline Graham, and we don't know anything about her sexuality. SO thinks Caroline's sexuality is entirely her own affair, as is her appearance, her clothes and whether she shaves her legs. We wouldn't dream of trying to dress up her personal story to make her look disgusting to titillate readers of trash newspapers.

We certainly wouldn't reveal her name, or her workplace, so that she risked victimisation. We also wouldn't begrudge less than £7,000 a year being spent on the Women's Therapy Centre. Part of the centre's work is helping women to sort out the problems created for them by the likes of the Sun.

A man obsessed

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Despite the best efforts of the Sun and the Daily Express, press coverage of this year's Labour Party conference was generally pretty dull. Almost as dull as the conference itself.

The standard-issue Sun/Express/Mail stories ('Kinnock humiliated', 'Damaging split', etc., etc.) somehow lacked conviction this year.

Anthony Howard summed it up well in a profile of Peter Mandelson in the Independent on Sunday: "Appearance or reality? The truth is that the two have now merged. Having started off in charge of the Wapping paper, Mandelson has now to all intents and purposes determined the contents of the package as well."

I decided to give up on the Labour Party conference as a suitable subject for this week's column and turned instead to the memoirs of Sir John Junor, serialised last week in the Daily Mail. This initially promised much more in the way of good old-fashioned entertainment value. 'Sir' John, a former editor of the Sunday Express who now pedals his wares in the pages of the rival Mail, has always liked to give the impression of being a friend and confidant of the rich, famous and Royal. The headlines above JJ's 'Column of a Lifetime' certainly looked enticing

enough: 'The man who called Selina Scott a hooker', 'What the Queen confided to me about Prince Andrew', and (most exciting of all) 'The two ministers who tried to bed Maggie'.

But Sir John's revelations turned out to be pretty poor stuff. He didn't even name the two ministers. On one subject, however, Junor did go into a great deal of detail: his old favourite 'homosexuality'. These people are everywhere — Sir Maurice Oldfield at MI5, Lord Boothby (despite his well-known affair with the wife of Harold Macmillan, "Bob's predilection was for boys"), even Macmillan himself ("phoney as a two-dollar bill").

Oldfield, Boothby and Macmillan are all now dead and therefore unable to respond to Junor's claims. The Columnist of a Lifetime was a little more circumspect about the living, but made it clear that he has his doubts (shared, it seems, by Mrs Thatcher) about none other than Ted Heath.

The root cause of Junor's long-standing obsession with this subject will probably never be known. But equally mysterious is the question of why the Daily Mail should think that these tedious 'revelations' are of any great interest to their readers, let alone worth publishing with such prominence every day for a whole week.

Regular readers of the

Junor column will know that the little highland town of Auchtermuchty often features in the Great Man's attempts at jocularity. The Sunday Correspondent visited the town last week and discovered that not all of its inhabitants appreciated Sir John's attentions. I'll leave the last word to Auchtermuchty's librarian, Caroline John: "Junor's too much, I think. Always making the women out to be over-sexed, forever luring boys to chase them across the fields. It doesn't happen — or if it does, I'm missing out. But there is a serious objection. His invented Auchtermuchty is really a vehicle for his own bigoted views and I do resent that."

NUCPS/CPSA a merger socialists should support

WRITEBACK

Dear S.O.,
 J'ou've done it again!
 Your recent article on the CPSA merger by G...

Recent issues of Socialist Organiser have carried articles opposing the proposed merger between the civil service unions, CPSA and NUCPS. It is unclear to me why merger is such a bad thing.

In general socialists favour unity within the same in-

dustry. Workers can better defend their interests without petty inter-union rivalries. The problems divisions between unions can cause are seen in the health service, where on one occasion NUPE and CoHSE called two separate days of action in the same week.

In local government, manual and white collar workers pursue pay claims separately, and deliberately avoid any joint campaigning to back each other up. The proposed merger between NUPE, CoHSE and NALGO could be the start of unity amongst workers in the NHS and in local government.

What's so different about the civil service? Why should socialists want separate unions? The main reason given is that NUCPS organises 'management grades' and the CPSA clerical workers. NUCPS organises

not only top civil service bosses, but also professional workers, graduates, and low grade supervisors. Many are on comparatively low pay. Surely the CPSA is weakened if its activists have to leave the union when they get a job at a slightly higher rate of pay?

NUCPS is clearly not a scab outfit. At this year's TUC Congress, it supported the controversial composite calling for a charter of workers' rights and repeal of the anti-union laws. The CPSA lined up with Norman Willis in opposing this composite.

As far as I can see, we should be supporting the merger, while arguing for the new union to be organised democratically with elected officials, branch autonomy, etc.

Sarah Cotterill
 Manchester

The truth about the massacre

From front page

One of the extreme right groups had bought a Palestinian house on the ridge between Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives. It is a strategic location which overlooks the Old City, and it is in an Arab neighbourhood where, until then, there was no Jewish presence. This particular right-wing group is not so much concerned with Temple Mount as with getting as many Jewish footholds as possible in East Jerusalem.

They inaugurated a new Yeshiva (a Jewish theological seminary) in the house, and Shamir spoke at the inauguration, saying that he hoped the house would be the beginning of a new Jewish neighbourhood. All the Arabs who lived in neighbouring houses regarded this as a threat.

"Many of the police in East Jerusalem have very right wing views. Many are racists. They were feeling very frustrated that they were not allowed to shoot. When they were given the opportunity they went wild"

On Monday morning thousands of Palestinians came to Temple Mount.

The police were there, but only a small force, maybe 45 policemen. They say they did not want to send in a big force because it could cause a riot, and anyway they had informed the Muslim religious leaders that they would not allow the Temple Mount Faithful to come to Temple

Mount, and they believed the incident was over.

The Temple Mount Faithful went to the village of Silwan — which is one of the centres of the intifada. The mosque loudspeakers broadcast a warning as they approached. The people on Temple Mount heard the warning, and then heard it again, broadcast on the loudspeakers of the Temple Mount mosque.

They thought the right-wingers were coming to Temple Mount, and started to throw stones onto the Wailing Wall plaza.

It is important to understand the geography. The mount where the Jewish Temple used to stand now has a mosque on it, which is the third most holy place of Islam. It is in a walled compound, and one of the outer walls of that compound is both a Muslim holy place and, on the outside, a Jewish holy place, the Wailing Wall. The ground is higher on the Muslim side than on the Jewish side.

Since it was a Jewish holy day, there were about 20,000 Jewish worshippers on the Jewish side. They panicked under the rain of stones. The police inside Temple Mount were also stoned, and ran away; the police station inside Temple Mount was set on fire.

Then someone, it is not known who, gave the police the order to go in shooting and retake Temple Mount. And that was how 21 people were killed.

The affair marked a very radical departure from government policy in Jerusalem since 1967.

The police have had strict orders to avoid killing Palestinians in Jerusalem, because of the international effect. Until this week far fewer Palestinians were killed in East Jerusalem than in the occupied territories.

Another reason for police restraint is that, officially, East Jerusalem is part of Israel. Many of the things which are legal in the occupied territories are illegal in East Jerusalem. However, many of the police in East Jerusalem have very right wing views. Many are racists. They were feeling very frustrated that they were not allowed to shoot. When they were given the opportunity they went wild.

The Israeli left is debating whether it was a deliberate change of policy by the government. My own opinion is that it was not a premeditated change of policy. Someone in authority lost his senses. But there are many on the Israeli left who think it was deliberate.

"Meanwhile, the Histadrut has threatened an open-ended general strike from 18 October"

There has been a very strong reaction among the Palestinians to the Jerusalem massacre — including the Palestinians inside



A Palestinian woman kisses a handprint in human blood at Temple Mount

Israel.

There was a two-day general strike in pre-1967 Israel. It was the first two-day general strike; normally they just last for one day.

One of the Palestinians who was killed was an Israeli citizen from Galilee. His funeral yesterday (9 October) became a national event. Thousands attended with Palestinian flags.

"Only the radical left has come out shouting, 'This is a massacre! This is a crime!'"

There were demonstrations everywhere where there are Palestinians in Israel. There was a curfew in the occupied territories; there were big demonstrations in Jordan.

The Jewish population has not mobilised in great numbers against the shootings. There was one demonstration in Jerusalem on the day of the massacre, and I have just returned from a demonstration in Tel Aviv.

The softer people in "Peace Now" are reluctant to come out in opposition. They demand an impartial investigation — but that is accepted by everybody. Only the radical left has come out shouting: "This is a massacre! This is a crime!"

The Gulf crisis is overshadowing the whole affair. Saddam Hussein's Islamic propaganda is tailor-made for this situation.

He can now say: look, the Americans are desecrating the holy places in Saudi Arabia, and their Israeli allies are doing the same thing in Jerusalem.

The Americans are in a dilemma. They will find it difficult to impose a veto on a UN resolution against Israel, because that would make it very difficult for the Egyptians and the Saudis. They are trying to make a compromise which will make it possible for them to support the UN resolution.

Although people fear the possibility of a gas attack, there is not widespread panic about the Gulf. The government is issuing gas masks to all Israeli citizens. Arabs in the West Bank will have to pay if they want gas masks.

Meanwhile, the Histadrut has threatened an open-ended general strike from 18 October.

This is unprecedented. The Histadrut has existed for 70 years, and as far as I know it has never before declared a general strike of more than one day.

The strike call is against the aggressive right-wing policy of the Finance Minister, which includes:

- abolition or lowering of the minimum wage,
- a tax on trade union pension funds which will cut the pensions workers receive,
- VAT on fruit and vegetables, which until now have been exempt.

This is connected with the immigration of Soviet Jews. The Finance Minister says that whether workers like it or not, wages will come down. There will be hundreds of thousands of new immigrants looking for work; for every job there will be five or six people needing work.

The Histadrut has said that it is an attempt to crush organised labour into the dust.

But the paradox of the Histadrut is that it is both an employer and a trade union. The employer part of the Histadrut, the so-called Workers' Corporation, is behaving like the worst kind of capitalist.

It is closing factories, sacking hundreds of workers; it has had bitter confrontations with workers.

Just two months ago an arms factory owned by the Histadrut wanted to fire 200 out of a workforce of 600. The workers occupied the factory. The Histadrut hired a private security company, and they came into the factory at night with Doberman dogs and evicted the workers.

My feeling is that the dual structure of the Histadrut is breaking down. The employers' side is becoming more like an ordinary employer. The trade union side is starting to behave like a trade union.

Subscribe

To *The Other Israel*. The journal of peace and radical politics which is edited by Adam Keller is available from: The Other Israel, POB 956, Tel Aviv, Israel 61008.

Institutions: £26; Waged Individuals £16; Unwaged and Students: £8.
By international money order.

Adam Keller visits Britain

Adam Keller will be visiting Britain for the Campaign Against War in the Gulf conference in London on 3 November



Not Kinnockite youth — school students' protest 1986. Photo: Mark Salman

Organising the left in the Labour Clubs

By Emma Colyer NUS National Secretary,

Labour Party Socialists (LPS) was launched earlier this year with over 300 Labour Party activists attending the founding conference.

Its aims are to regroup the Labour Left on a platform of building and supporting working class struggles (on the poll tax, for example) whilst organising for democratic and socialist renewal inside the Party.

Those supporting LPS include Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Alice Mahon and Jeremy Corbyn, Socialist Organiser and Labour Briefing.

From its peak in the early '80s, the left's strength in the Party has dwindled. The defeat of the miners in 1985 accelerated the gallop to the right of "soft lefts" like those in the Labour Coordinating Committee who today uncritically cheer Kinnock and egg him on against the left.

Already, LPS has established itself by campaigning on trade union rights in the run-up to Labour Party conference. The Kinnockites want to keep much of the Tory anti-union legislation, and they could be heard at Labour Party conference prattling on about the need for even-handedness between boss and worker!

In the sphere of economic and social policy LPS has produced detailed critiques of Kinnock's pink Thatcherism. It speaks out against the impending war in the Gulf. It supported the 'End the Ban!' campaign.

LPS offers the left in NOLS a good opportunity to re-organise and refocus its activities. LPS can act to change NOLS in a number of different ways.

It can call the Kinnockite clique who run NOLS to account on internal democracy. The abuses of democracy by Walworth Road (LP HQ) are

notorious, and have been documented over many years: LPS is promoting a 'Charter for Democracy in NOLS'.

Policy is the second area that LPS needs to focus on. NOLS has cravenly followed the Party leaders in ditching all remnants of socialist politics. They now agree to accept the market principle in the economy. They back the Party's inactivity on the poll tax, and they cheer on American imperialism in the Gulf.

LPS will be explaining basic socialist ideas about collective ownership of the economy, and about the principle of defending workers everywhere who engage in struggle.

We must warn about the dangers a Labour government will face if it doesn't decisively move against capital.

We must explain that it will be a re-run of the last Labour government, or the French 'socialist' government with its vicious austerity programme, which has fuelled the frightening rise of racism and fascism.

Thirdly, organisation. Organising the left is the key to rebuilding NOLS. NOLS has shrunk over the last few years. It has lacked an independent profile, opting instead to submerge itself into NUS's flaccid campaigns.

By pulling together the organised and independent left to organise its own campaigns and for socialist policies through LPS we can regenerate NOLS as a whole, and by linking up to the Labour Party proper, lay the basis for a fighting left in the years to come.

If you would like a speaker for your Labour Club, details about the Labour Party Socialists AGM in Sheffield on Saturday 27 October, or just more information, contact LPS Student at 37 Huddersfield House, Sumner Road, Peckham, London SE15 or phone Paul McGarry on 071 639 7965.

Wot, no youth?

By Mark Sandell, NUS Executive

A recent survey of Labour Party members has shown that out of about 300,000 members only about 11,000 members of the Party are under 25 years old.

This sorry state has two causes.

The Labour Party has destroyed the Young Socialists. Now we have the sick farce of the 'Labour Youth Conference', the LPYS's replacement. It is due to meet in November.

Last year there were hardly 300 delegates there, and the Kinnockite carving machine sliced its way through conference, allowing Kinnockite students to pretend to be trade union delegates. Just the sort of thing they do in the National Organisation of Labour Students, in fact.

This year arrangements for motions, delegates and candidates are even more complex than last, and the NOLS machine is again ready to carve out the left.

The destruction of the LPYS by Kinnock was like taking sweets from a baby, because, for 20 years, the LPYS had been run by the stultifying and deadening *Militant* group, under license from the leadership of the Labour Party who also thereby subsidised *Militant*.

It's odd that no enterprising bourgeois journalist has thought of working out how much money the Labour Party put at *Militant's* disposal during the decade and a half *Militant* ran the YS, including its Budget.

Then the Kinnockites revoked *Militant's* licence. After a minimum of fuss these brave 'leaders' of Labour's youth left the LPYS, which they had run with an almost Stalinist disregard for democracy, and set up their own front organisation, YTURC.

This defeat without a struggle has left most local

Parties with no Young Socialist groups. Little effort is made to draw young people into Labour Parties.

The second reason why the Labour Party lacks young people is the Party stampeded to the right. The 'pink Tory' policies being pushed by Kinnock can't attract young people, many of whom are raw with anger over the horrors of capitalism — about its racism, sexism and environmental destruction. Young people are at the sharp end of Thatcher's policies for the welfare state, and for education.

Youth are driven away from Labour by Kinnock's more-Tory-than-the-Tories attacks on poll tax protestors and non-payers, and by Labour's policies on the Gulf war and on nuclear weapons.

Those who would, 10 years ago, have looked to Labour now look to the Green Party or to pressure groups. A few drown themselves in sectarianism — of the SWP and *Militant* variety, for example. But most working class youth

are cynical of all politics, and have little hope of change.

Of course Kinnock wants young people to join Labour: Labour's 'mass membership' campaign aims to recruit them. But Kinnock's policies offer little to young people — except (they hope) to the snivelling little careerists of NOLS. No mass youth movement that!

Yet it is still up to the left to show young people that the only real hope for change is through the organised labour movement — which in our circumstances means through the socialist fight to change and remake that movement.

Thousands of young people have become involved in political activity for the first time against the poll tax. The left must win these people to the labour movement, and commitment to class struggle, and draw them into the fight to win the Labour Party and trade unions for class struggle socialism.

The events in the Gulf may turn into a tragic replay of

the Vietnam war. We must build a massive anti-war movement orientated to the labour movement, including the Labour Party. All such movements are mainly movements of young people.

The student movement remains the only national youth based movement. The left in NUS must unite around 'The Campaign for a Fighting Union' that provides not only the basis for building a fighting NUS but also of drawing in the hundreds of thousands of working class youth on FE courses or training schemes into political activity.

The left must face up to its responsibilities. We must turn Labour Parties out to these struggles, open up Labour Parties to young people.

A surge of youth into the Party would soon demand a real youth wing for Labour. It would swell the ranks of the left, regenerating the fight for a Labour Party able to fight for and with working class people.

Labour Party Conference Jobs for the hacks

By Paul McGarry

First time visitor to Labour Party conference, I found hordes of my ex-adversaries from the student movement there too — as baying Kinnockite witch-hunters! They haven't changed much!

It seems conference is a major social event for the aspiring bureaucrat. One ex-NOLS NC member told me: "I'm a ligger here, I've come to escape freshers week". Others confided that they were there to get pissed, find out who's sleeping with whom, and who's got which jobs.

For the record, it seems

that ex-NUS President Vicky 'Svetlana' Phillips is in line for London Labour Party supremo, whilst Phil 'Hunky' Woolas (another ex-NUS President) is moving into the GMB alongside pal Adrian Long (ex-NUS secretary) and a minor revolution in the Party's press office is promised following the departure of Peter Mandelson with some ex-NOLSies' heads on the chopping block.

Brother Paul Richards has been the target for a lot of abuse in the student movement recently, as a prominent NOLS member told me, he's there because "he's easy to control", but I must come to his defence. For the first time in years NOLS have managed to get their act together to get out a copy of *Labour Student* and it's nothing short of a corker.

Did you know who Alun Parry is? No? Well, he's the Youth Rep on the NEC and, in a column headed 'Alun Parry profile', you can find out "everything you never wanted to know about Alun from the largely irrelevant to downright pointless"...quite. And most of it is.

Elsewhere we're treated to the essential student A-Z of... "Q. Quarrelling is all part of the fun living in shared accommodation". Right on comrades! Pass the herbal tea!

Politics comes via Jack Cunningham and Clare Short and, yes, it's dull and right-wing.

An old NUS hack suggested to me that "at least they're making an effort", verdict: not bad for a set of pig-ignorant NOLSies, an unmitigated disaster by anyone else's standards.

Sheffield Poly occupation — we won!

By Nick Denton

After only one night in occupation Sheffield Polytechnic has given into all the students' demands.

This year the Poly increased its intake of first years by over 1,000 — with no concern about where they would live.

Over 300 students slept in emergency accommodation, two students to a single room. The Poly profited from the crisis by charging them each 75% of the usual room rent!

Lectures, too, are overcrowded, with students sitting on floors; canteens are chock full; already bad library facilities are stretched.

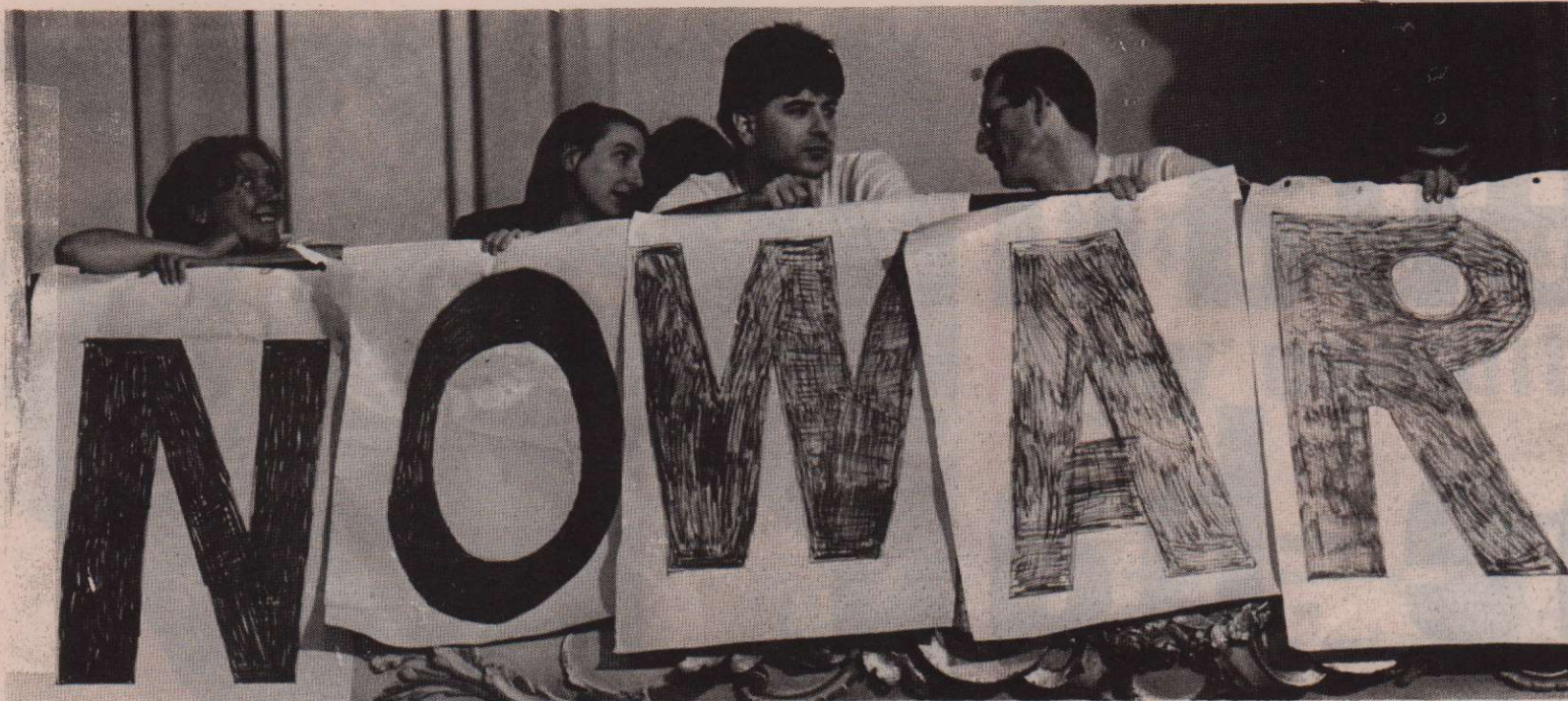
Some students packed it in and went home. Others were cut out because of a two-year nursery waiting list.

For all these reasons students were angry and wanted action. The union ex-

ecutive proposed an immediate occupation until our demands were met. 200 students attended the first occupation meeting, and over 50 stayed overnight to hold the main Poly building.

Management didn't know what to do. After only one night they gave in. All our demands were met:

- Half rent for those in emergency accommodation;
 - Reduced rent for all others in the halls affected;
 - A commitment to find decent emergency accommodation for those students;
 - Guaranteed places in hall to remain at the existing level of 25% for next year, rising to 35% in two years;
 - That the Poly will increase the nursery facilities.
- Ian Turner, a union officer, said: "It was brilliant. This shows that occupations and direct action can win. This is a good base on which to build further activity for the rest of the year. United we can win!"



LPS protest at Gulf warmongering. Photo: Paul Herrmann

Block vote saves Gulf warmongers

By Martin Thomas

Conference approved a National Executive Committee statement on the Gulf which explicitly praised George Bush and included not one word of criticism of the Tory government.

A weak opposition motion, calling only for "offensive" military action not to be taken unless approved by the UN Security Council, was trounced by the trade union block votes, 4,862,000 to 625,000.

This shameful result would have been impossible with more time for rand-and-file opinion to influence the trade union delegations. Constituency Labour Party delegates voted around 75% against the platform.

And the mood of the Conference was not in line with the vote. There was widespread resentment at the rigging of the debate.

Around 40 emergency motions had been sent in, ranging from the weak formula which reached the Conference floor (attack only with UN approval) to calls to get the British and US troops

out. All but the weakest were cleverly manoeuvred off the agenda.

The time allowed for the debate was cut to a minimum, and Jo Richardson, in the chair, refused to call Tony Benn or any prominent

'troops out' campaigner to speak.

Ken Cameron, moving the FBU motion, tried so hard to conciliate the warmongers that a casual visitor could have taken his speech as one for the leadership position,

and Dennis Healey's, following it, as one for the opposition.

Something of the mood of the rank and file was shown, however, by the response to the 'No War' posters displayed by LPS supporters

from the balcony during the debate. When the poster with the letter 'N' was accidentally dropped, a delegate immediately ran up to the balcony to restore it, without any stewards or delegates making any complaint at all.

Sharp suits and no principles

By Tim Cooper

It was a very right-wing and controlled conference. But, paradoxically, the platform was defeated six times:

- (1) On pensions;
- (2) On Pergamon;
- (3) On cutting military spending;
- (4) On the 'trigger mechanism' for parliamentary selections;
- (5) On electoral reform;
- (6) On the Black Socialist Society. (They had to recommend acceptance this year of what they recommended rejection of last year).

The leadership just ignored the votes they lost. And the trade union leaders whose votes had enabled the leadership to win on other issues let them get away with it.

On the Gulf and the ban on *Socialist Organiser* (and probably on some of the rule changes too), the CLPs voted heavily against the platform. But the block votes made the total an 80% or 90% majority for the platform.

The trade union leaders were willing to give Kinnock majorities on such issues, and to put up with him flouting their majorities on other issues, such as military spending.

Most of the trade union leaders are so battered and demoralised by 11 years of Thatcherism that they will settle for anything that looks

like giving an election victory. After a Labour victory they will begin to get their nerve back.

The CLP delegates were more to the right than in previous years, too. There was only the feeblest left showing in the debate on the economy, and there was a (small) right shift in the NEC elections. The defeat for the motion backing poll tax non-payers was a thumping one.

It may be now that inactive Labour Party members are to the left of active Labour Party members and Conference delegates. If so, Kinnock could get some nasty shocks

from the One Member, One Vote system.

But the new party structure which was approved in principle is so designed as to secure the leadership against nasty shocks from anywhere in the labour movement.

It is designed to make permanent what has emerged for temporary reasons in the last few years; the domination over the rank and file and over the trade union establishment of the party apparatchiks and politicians, the sharp-suited young men and women who mostly made their way by Trot-bashing in the student movement.

Union rights: the issue won't go away

By Tony Serjeant

For the third year in a row, trade union rights were a central debate at Labour Party Conference.

Over those three years, the platform-backed composite — moved in 1988 by the TGWU, in 1989 by the GMB, and this year by the TGWU again — has moved steadily to the right, accepting more and more of the Tory anti-union laws. The left-wing alternative — moved each year by a *Socialist Organiser* supporter — has remained steadfast on the right to strike, the right to picket, the right to take solidarity action, and the right for trade unions to decide their own rules.

Anna Mawson from Stoke-on-Trent Central CLP explained: "Restoring trade union rights ought to be Labour's first task on returning to power."

"But Tony Blair wants to keep most of the Tory shackles: bans on solidarity action, on picket lines of more than six workers, on strikes without court-approved ballots, and on the closed shop. He supports free, independent unions in Eastern Europe, but not in Britain."

"The North Sea oil workers' dispute shows why Labour must guarantee trade union rights,

Under Tory law, workers can be sacked for seeking union recognition — then barred from taking part in ballots on strike action."

Miners' strikes in support of nurses, she explained, would be unlawful under a Labour government if the platform got its way.

Fiona Winders (Liverpool Broadgreen CLP), Tony Dubbins (NGA) and Barbara Switzer

(MSF) also spoke strongly in favour of the essential right of workers to take solidarity action.

The issue won't go away. At the Labour Party Socialists end-of-week fringe meeting, Anna Mawson called for a conference of the left on the issue to plan a campaign through next year's trade union conferences and Labour Party regional conferences.

Labour Party survey

Labour's militant majority

According to a survey of Labour Party members, the results of which were censored by Joyce Gould for Labour Party News:

- 60% of Party members think "the Labour Party should always stand by its principles even if this should lose an election";
- 65% think "the central question of British politics is the class struggle between labour and capital";

• 81% think "workers should be prepared to strike in support of other workers, even if they don't work in the same place";

• Non-attenders at Party meetings are even keener on non-nuclear defence policy than attenders.

• Labour women are to the left of men on defence and Ireland. Members are well to the left of both leadership and conference.

Conference Diary

SUNDAY: Passes NEC's new proposals for parliamentary selection (one member, one vote, and a ballot vote of no confidence required as "trigger" before any contest where there is a sitting MP). Details to be decided next year.

Conference also passes composites insisting that union involvement be kept, and (by 3.1m to 2.7m) rejecting the "trigger mechanism": whether the NEC will take any notice remains to be seen.

MONDAY: Endorses the economic policy in 'Looking to the Future' (vague words about encouraging more investment and training; no return to public ownership except 2% of Telecom, the water industry, and the National Grid). Defeats NUM motion to phase out nuclear power.

Defeats call for a workers' charter which would include right to take solidarity action in favour of leadership policy which means keeping most Tory anti-union laws.

Overwhelmingly supports Pergamon 23 journalists sacked by Robert Maxwell, and a commitment to restore the relative value of pensions against NEC recommendations.

NEC elections: no big change, but left vote slips slightly.



Labour Party snubs poll tax non-payers

TUESDAY: Decides (with NEC support) on quotas for women, at least 40% in all Party committees. Defeats call for Labour women's conference to elect women's section of NEC.

Approves in principle NEC plans to create a National Policy Forum and cut down direct input from CLPs and trade unions to Conference. Composites calling for Conference to be able to amend NEC statements, and for CLPs and trade unions to be able to put in amendments as well as motions, are remitted.

A composite reaffirming the union's role in the Party is defeated.

Approved: rule requiring CLPs to hold individual ballots to decide their vote for CLP section of NEC; national membership structure; and 'National Association of Labour Councillors'.

WEDNESDAY By 4.9m to 625,000, approves leadership line on Gulf (no criticism of Tories).

Overwhelmingly backs cuts in arms spending to average European level.

Defeats unilateral nuclear disarmament by 3.6m to 2.0m.

Motions on environment, farming, housing, transport including a call for returning bus companies to public ownership.

A stronger motion on housing remitted.

THURSDAY

Votes to restore NHS.

Supports restored and reformed rates; rejects local income tax, heavily defeats support for poll tax non-payers.

Supports Black Socialist Society, rejects Black Sections.

Calls for Labour to discuss electoral reform for Westminster (2.8m to 2.6m).

Remits proposals for Bill of Rights.

Calls for case of Birmingham Six to be re-opened, and an inquiry.

FRIDAY: Supports state funding of political parties.

Rejects emergency motion against banning *Socialist Organiser*, 5.2m to 488,000.

Labour Party Socialists makes its mark

A new left alliance — Labour Party Socialists, launched in May this year — made its mark at Conference.

Two fringe meetings (one organised jointly with the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee) each attracted 250 people in competition with other major fringe events, and an end-of-week delegates' gathering brought together 60-odd to discuss future plans.

Campaigning for troops out of the Gulf, against the ban on *Socialist Organiser* and other witch-hunts, and for trade union rights, were three priorities mentioned.

LPS produced a daily bulletin which — certainly by the end of the week — was by far the most lively and punchy of the Conference commentaries.

LPS campaigned for troops out of the Gulf, and against the Standing Orders stitch-up which kept 'troops out' motions off the Conference floor, while Campaign Briefing was silent.

And LPS also led the fight on Conference floor and around Conference for trade union rights.

The LPS team at Conference was effectively a coalition of *Socialist Organiser*, *Labour Briefing* and non-aligned activists. Cooperation went better than, probably, any of us had dared hope.

Labour Party Socialists AGM

Saturday 27 October, 9.30 to 6, at Sheffield University. Registration £4 (£2 unwaged), LPS membership £8 (£4 unwaged), to LPS, PO Box 118, Chesterfield, S44 5UD.

Debating the ban

Last Friday, 5 October, the Labour Party Conference debated the National Executive's ban on *Socialist Organiser*. The NEC won the vote, with the support of the big trade unions; we believe the opponents of the ban won the argument. We print the debate.

A question of freedom of speech

Danny Nicol, Hendon South CLP, moving the emergency resolution

The emergency motion calls for freedom of speech in the Labour Party, and freedom of speech is an essential, not an optional extra, in a democratic socialist party.

The facts are as stated in the resolution: in July the National Executive agreed to ban a left-wing Labour Party newspaper, *Socialist Organiser*.

I think that it's monstrous that the NEC want to return to the days of the 1950s when the party proscribed socialist newspapers. We need a bigger left-wing press in Britain, not a smaller one.

I might add that almost no-one in my CLP had heard of *Socialist Organiser* — perhaps the newspaper

should be grateful for the publicity the NEC has given them!

But speaking for myself, I have read *Socialist Organiser* for quite a long time, and it's a very good newspaper. *Labour Party News* could learn a lot from it with regard to having a genuine and lively debate on its pages, in fact, the sort of debate we used to get much more in *Labour Weekly* before the NEC closed that newspaper down.

Now, I don't agree with all the political views in *Socialist Organiser*. Far from it. For instance, *SO* supports proportional representation, and, like Roy Hattersley, I disagree passionately with that, in fact, I think that is a very right-wing policy.

Many of you will disagree with me. But the point is that we in the Labour Party ought to be entitled to hold our own views. We shouldn't go around expelling people just because we think they have silly views. There wouldn't be anyone left in the party! Unless we pass this resolution, there is every danger that the Labour Party will become an intolerant, expelling party, expelling people whom Walworth Road regards as unacceptable. The party should be a broad church of socialist belief.

This conference has been about electing a Labour government. In



this context, conference should note that Wallasey constituency party is also under threat. The NEC claim that party members who support *Socialist Organiser* wield an unhealthy influence in that constituency. Well, did the NEC realise that in Wallasey we got the biggest swing to Labour in any seat in the UK in the last general election?

Lynda Chalker came within 250 votes of losing her seat. In 1983 Wallasey was the 71st most marginal seat. Now it's the fifth. That's how big a swing it was. The NEC's reaction is to in-



Delegates Elaine Jones and Anna Mawson defiantly wear 'End the Ban!' T-shirts

investigate the CLP. Is this the Labour Party's idea of gratitude?

Colleagues, the Labour Party should be a tolerant party. Democracy is not just about the will of the majority being carried out, crucial though that is. It's also about the rights of the minority to campaign to convince the majority to change their minds.

Finally, I make this point: isn't it faintly ridiculous that just at the time when democracy has broken out in Eastern Europe and the USSR, the Labour Party is clamping down on dissent within its own ranks?

For pity's sake, let's have some glasnost in the Labour Party. I move.

A minority case can be right

Stan Newens MEP, seconding the emergency resolution

I have not come to this rostrum to defend the political line of *Socialist Organiser*, with which I most certainly disagree.

I am, however, deeply disturbed at the fact that we are being asked to respond to it with a ban which has given it more publicity than it would otherwise have obtained in years.

This party once had a long list of bans and proscribed organisations, and any group which was seen to be sharply critical of party policy, or any individual associated with such a group was liable to be banned or excluded.

Even Aneurin Bevan, who is today regarded as the patron saint of this party, was nearly expelled at one time. We shall be making a big mistake if we allow ourselves step by step to return to such an intolerance. But once we start down that path it will be difficult to stop.

Some of us who were MPs in the 1960s were temporarily put out of the Parliamentary Party for such things as withholding our votes on the bombing of Vietnam. Today, it is nigh impossible to find anybody who supported the bombing, but I do assure you that at that time we were in a minority.

Does this not illustrate the fact that a minority can be right, that it should be opposed by arguments and not by bans, proscriptions and expulsions?

Many of the paragons of our

movement, I remind you, began as sectarians, communists and ultra-lefts. In fact, if bans really worked, we should be destroying a prolific seedbed for future Labour personalities, some of whom I remind you finish up as pillars of the right-wing anyway. I've seen a few make some spectacular leaps [from left to right] over my position as a Tribuneite in my time.

Our party has been singularly unsuccessful at sustaining its own journals like *Labour Weekly*. If some members promote a journal, whether *Tribune* or *Socialist Organiser* or whatever, to promote ideas, we need to be very careful before we suppress them. Because we drive out the very idealism and commitment that we should seek and take into the harness of this party.

I want the right to dissent. And if I want the right to dissent I have to award it to others.

I ask you — not because we support the views of *Socialist Organiser*, but because we are proud of our democracy — support this resolution!

We need all socialist views

John Wilton, PPC for Birmingham Edgbaston

Comrades, I am not a supporter of either of these newspapers!

[Holds up copy of *Times* and copy of *Socialist Organiser*]

This one supports the Tory party and says 'Vote Tory' at a general election. This one supports the Labour Party and says 'Vote Labour' at a general election.

Comrades, the consequence of what is being proposed by the NEC decision to ban *Socialist Organiser* is that if you write for this one and support it [holds up *Times*] there is no problem about you being a Labour Party member. If you write for this one [holds up *Socialist Organiser*] and support it, you cannot be a member of the Labour Party. That is what is being said!

Comrades, front bench spokespersons write for this newspaper: but I don't want them



Tim Cooper (Nottingham South CLP) challenges standing orders. Photo: Paul Herrmann (Profile)



scribed; we need all socialist
ews in this party. We need
erance if we are serious about
ity in this party. We need to
eed tolerance within the party.

Neil Kinnock said last month, in
his hall at the TUC, that we wanted
ot favours but fairness and justice.
Comrades, if charity begins at
ome, so does justice and fairness.
How can we promise fairness and
justice to the electorate if we don't
practice it in our own party?

Yesterday we debated and
supported the restoration of civil
liberties eroded by Thatcher. We
talked about the Birmingham 6.

Comrades, at least the
Birmingham 6 saw and heard the
booked police evidence. *Socialist
Organiser* did not see the evidence
that was presented to the NEC.

How can we persuade people that
we are serious about civil liberties
and justice if we don't practice it in
our own party?

PPCs have come to this rostrum
saying all week that this or that
resolution will help us win the next
general election and help us win our
seats. As a PPC I tell you this
resolution, this action by the NEC,
will not help us win the next
election. If we want to be taken
seriously as a fair, open and
democratic party we should support
this emergency resolution.

Change needs real debate

Ann Johnson, Birmingham
Melly Oak CLP

Comrades, this Labour
Party sets itself up to be
quite rightly the party of
the people. But people are not
static, they change and grow.

And if the Labour Party is to
survive it must change and grow
too. And indeed it does this.

The Labour Party of today is not
the same Labour Party that we
voted for or supported 10 years
ago, or even five years ago.

But for this change to happen in a
healthy and constructive way we
need debate, a real debate in which
all views are expressed, even those
views to which we may be totally
opposed. Indeed, I do not support
the viewpoint of *Socialist
Organiser*, but I do support their
right to print it.

It is not freedom of speech that is

dangerous, but the suppression of
that freedom.

Comrades, if you believe in
democracy, I don't see how you can
fail to support this resolution.

Caucus to influence Labour Party policy

Tony Clarke, replying for the
NEC

Conference, the NEC decision
to uphold the rules of
this party is reported for all
members of the party, and
especially delegates, to read on
page 18.

And when you read that you will
see the difference between what the
NEC decided and some of the
mythology that's already come out
from the very limited debate we've
had this morning.

We considered a report from our
Director of Organisation that
contains sufficient evidence that
Socialist Organiser is an organised
group of members within the party,
which, as stated in the report, has
its programme, has its principles of
policy for distinctive and separate
branches within the party for this
purpose.

That's the report you have in
front of you and that's what the
NEC considered. Having
considered the report, and having
considered the evidence — and I
want to stress a point; every piece of
evidence in the portfolio given to
every single member of the NEC
was published by, at various levels,
Socialist Organiser: and I say
various levels because we're not
talking about the right to publish a
newspaper, we're talking about the
right of a separate party to organise
within our party, and that's the
issue.

The report, and I would
emphasise, did not deal with
'individuals', it dealt with a
structure. It showed the programme
of *Socialist Organiser*. It was not an
isolated incident. It was a
comprehensive document that
contained various numbers of items
which — if some of my comrades
would keep quiet I'll tell them what
it was.

The report showed that *Socialist
Organiser* has an Executive

Committee that decides the political
positions and policies that are
promoted by that paper. [Heckling]

The NEC had this report which
contained details and it had copies
of discussion bulletins, *SO*
bulletins, correspondence, copies of
minutes of meetings of the Editorial
Board, details of the decisions to
organise and recruit membership of
Socialist Organiser among our
youth, the youth of our party in
Further Education.

There was also the decision to
produce the supporters' cards for
use in FE colleges.

We saw ourselves — without any
shadow of doubt — the reporting of
a discussion where they wanted to
set up regional committees.

We saw the record of group
committee meetings, references to
EC members, a group described as
a caucus needed — this caucus
needed — listen, because you
wanted to know why we made our
decision. Listen and I'll tell you.
We saw a record which described
the caucus.

They needed regular meetings to
discuss how to influence Labour
Party policy. Conference, as I said
earlier, the NEC were not consider-
ing a one-off situation. Alright, you
don't like it. But when someone
tells you the truth, have the
courtesy to listen.

Conference, a church without a
roof is still a church, but a church
without walls is a place where you
get trampled on. We're not in the
business of being trampled on by
outsiders.

The mover actually said that the
candidate in Wallasey got this huge
amount of votes. I tell you what,
conference, they wouldn't have got
a bagful of votes if they'd have
stood under the banner of *Socialist
Organiser*. They stood under a
Labour Party banner.

If you want to throw your rules
away, and it's something which you
won't, you know what the answer
will be, we'd be like these rag, tag
and bobtails who we want to see run
under their own banner.

Conference, any individual
knows that they get the right of
natural justice in this party. We're
dealing with a party within a party
which is contradicting the clause I
referred to in our constitution.

In your own interests, not in the
interests of any people on the NEC,
or anybody else, uphold the NEC
report and reject this emergency
motion.

This record of the debate has been slightly cut for
reasons of space. If you would like a full record
please contact Socialist Organiser.

A new strategy for lesbian and gay equality

Peter Tatchell advocates a
new strategy for lesbian and
gay equality based on
legislation to ensure 'equal
rights for all'



Peter Tatchell

The principles determining a
Labour government's
policies for lesbians and gay
men should be the same as those
determining its policies for
other disadvantages and
discriminated against groups in
society such as women, black
people and the disabled:

- (1) Full equality in law;
- (2) Legal protection against
discrimination;
- (3) Equality of access,
opportunity and achievement.

Strategy

Lesbian and gay rights should be
seen as an integral part of a Labour
government's strategy for equality
for all. Homosexual equality should
therefore be integrated into the
mainstream of Labour's equality
initiatives, rather than be enacted
through separate legislation which
would risk marginalising lesbian
and gay rights, and would leave the
Labour Party and its homosexual
rights policies vulnerable to media
vilification and electoral/parlia-
mentary opposition.

Written constitution and Bill of Rights

A Labour government should
enshrine the principles of equal
rights within a written constitution.

Legislation

There are four equality laws that
should be prioritised for enactment
in the first year of a Labour
government.

Broad-based Anti-Discrimination
and Prohibition of Incitement to
Hatred Acts are essential
mechanisms to outlaw all forms of
discrimination and prejudice. With
the specific inclusion of sexual
orientation, they can help to
establish a legal and social
framework which legitimates
homosexual equality and renders
homophobia contrary to public
policy.

A Co-Habitation Act, covering
heterosexual and homosexual
couples alike, is necessary to ensure
legal rights and protection for all
unmarried partners living together.
Judging from the low take-up rate
of lesbian and gay marriages in
Denmark, a comprehensive
sexuality-blind Co-Habitation Act
would be more effective than
Danish-style civil marriage legisla-
tion as a way of recognising and
protecting homosexual partner-
ships.

The introduction of a new Sexual
Offences Act is urgently needed to
stop the criminalisation of an
estimated 5,000 homosexuals every
year under the existing
discriminatory legal system. The
new legislation would remove all
distinctions between heterosexuality
and homosexuality from the penal
code and establish uniform laws for
everyone, regardless of their sex or
sexual orientation.

Co-Habitation Act

Any two people living together,

Shall, irrespective of their gender or
sexual orientation, be automatically
entitled to legal recognition as
partners and next-of-kin for the
purposes of visiting rights to
hospitals and prisons; inheritance
of wealth and property or tenancy
in the event of a partner's death; the
fostering or adoption of children;
residence rights for a foreign
partner of a British citizen; and
access to all the benefits which are
granted to married persons and
their spouses by employers,
including maternity/
paternity and compassionate leave
and corporate perks and
concessions.

Sexual Offences Act

As part of an overall revision of
sexual offences legislation, which
could include new statutes against
the rape of a male and rape within
marriage, sexual offences laws
should be rewritten to remove all
references to gender and sexual
orientation, making no mention of
distinction between male and
female persons or between
heterosexual and homosexual
behaviour.

Specific measures for lesbian and
gay equality should include the
abolition of the laws against gross
indecentcy, the procuring of
homosexual acts, and soliciting and
importuning in a public place; the
relaxation of the rules about the
privacy of sexual acts; the
legalisation of homosexual relations
for members of the armed forces
and the merchant navy during off-
duty hours; the requirement for all
prosecutions to be based on
complaints from identified persons
independent of the police; and the
introduction of a common age of
consent of 16 for all.

Ministry for Women and equal opportunities

The splitting of equal
opportunities enforcement between
different government departments
would fragment Labour's equality
strategy, hamper the effectiveness
of documenting and combatting all
forms of discrimination, and could
encourage divisions and rivalries
between different disadvantaged
social groups.

So far as lesbians and gay men
are concerned they have a right to
expect that the inequalities they
experience are tackled on an equal
basis with the inequalities
experienced by others.

A Labour government should
therefore adopt an 'all-in' approach
to implementing equality by
establishing a Ministry for Women
and Equal Opportunities with
cabinet rank and executive powers.

THE CULTURAL FRONT



Those who do not learn from history are likely to repeat it.

"The emancipation of the proletariat is not a labour of small account and of little men; only he who can keep his heart strong and his will sharp as a sword when the general disillusionment is at its worst can be regarded as a fighter for the working class or called a revolutionary".

Antonio Gramsci, 24 September 1920

Italy, Autumn, 1920. The powerful workers' revolt that had shaken the country for two years — the 'Red two years' was over.

The workers of Turin — who had occupied the factories behind an armed cordon of Red guards — were in retreat. The national union officials called off the action and settled for small concessions. The rank and file

were disoriented.

Within two years, Mussolini was to lead his 'March on Rome'. By 1926 Gramsci, the greatest thinker of the Italian Marxist movement, was in gaol. He died soon after his release in 1937. The fascist prosecutor at his trial declared "We must stop this brain functioning for 20 years!" Gramsci's ideas live on,

The secret network that runs Australia

Books

Janet Burstall reviews 'A Secret Country' by John Pilger, Jonathan Cape, 1989.

Shady secrets of Australian history and society are the topic of Pilger's book. He wants us to recognise the problems and issues that many would rather forget.

He aptly quotes Czech novelist Milan Kundera: "The struggle of people against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting".

Pilger is on the side of the underdog, and he is angry with Bob Hawke and the Australian Labor Party for siding with a group of the wealthy at the expense of the less well off. He is certainly prepared to confront Hawke with some harsh questions, and in the chapter on Mates, to throw the spotlight on Hawke's connections with the bosses. The Mates form a powerful network, including senior Labor politicians, CIA officials, media magnates, property developers, transport bosses, public officials and other wealthy charlatans.

Pilger laments that so few journalists in Australia have confronted Hawke and the Treasurer, Paul Keating, with questions about how their policies have benefited the wealthy. He attributes this at least in part to the way the Mates control the media — both commercial and public.

The best chapters of the book are 'A whispering in our hearts' about progress, and lack of it, towards justice for Aborigines; 'Heroes unsung' about migrant labour and multiculturalism; 'The coup' about

the role of secret police, particularly the CIA, in the sacking of the Whitlam Labor government in 1975; and 'Mates', about the wealthiest and most powerful few, and their links with members of the Labor government.

The strength of the book is represented in these chapters. They show Australia as a class society that doesn't match up to the myth that everyone is more or less equally well off here. They also give a picture of how the ruling class rules, through its network of ownership, connections with government and the state apparatus.

The weakness of the book is that Pilger seems to have a romantic idea of what it means to be Australian, and that everyone used to be more or less equal until Bob Hawke came along and messed up both the ALP and the distribution of wealth and power. Until then the problem was that Australia wasn't truly independent enough of Britain and the USA.

Pilger cites approvingly the records of previous Labor leaders, ignoring some terrible anti-working class actions. Jack Lang, New South Wales Premier in the Great Depression, is seen as fighting for independence by refusing to pay interest on a loan from the Bank of England. But what of his campaign against the socialisation units in the Labor Party? Ben Chifley, PM during World War II, "embodied the ethos and mythology of Australianism...fair-minded man who believed that a system of 'them' and 'us' was an absurdity." But what of Chifley using troops against striking miners?

In arguing that Australia is not truly independent, Pilger does reveal the very close co-operation of Australia with the British and US governments, secret police, military operators and investments. But Pilger suggests that this is a betrayal of Australia national interests, rather than a mutually beneficial pursuit

of the interests of the capitalist class of all these countries. He seems to believe that independence from US and British policies can be achieved by commitment to Australian interests, whatever they might be.

Australian troops sent to join forces with the US in Vietnam is seen as Australians fighting another country's (the US) war. Pilger doesn't see the invasion of Vietnam as a policy of the ruling classes of the US and Australia in the interests of the workers of neither country. Pilger tells how Prime Minister Menzies made a secret request to the South Vietnamese puppet regime to ask for Australian troops, and when it was not forthcoming, he lied to Parliament. But he sees the significance of this being Menzies' slavishness to the US, rather than a zeal to 'fight communism'.

Two instances that we can join him in condemning are the British atomic bomb explosions at Maralinga in the 1950s, and the CIA involvement in the sacking of the Whitlam government. But Pilger does not discuss Australian capital's international expansion, and Australian military presence in the South East Asia and Pacific region. He just complains that Murdoch has given up Australian citizenship to become an American, as though this is a betrayal.

The romantic nationalism of the book is expressed in irritating journalistic points. For example in the chapter on Mates, most of the Mates are called by nicknames which are not all common currency in Australia. There are frequent hyperbolic claims that Australia is the first, last, only, best or worst in the world on a number of scores which lack credibility.

The nationalism is tempered by a sense of justice and solidarity with the underdog the world over. He does appeal for a sense of internationalism, even though his understanding of Australia is nationalist.

Socialism and PR

Socialism and democracy are indivisible

In 1985 a fringe meeting at Labour Party conference about Proportional Representation (PR) attracted about half a dozen people. By 1989 PR won one-third of the vote. But this year, against the leadership's advice, conference voted to examine the whole question.

There is now a widespread recognition that the 'first past the post' system is grotesquely undemocratic. For example:

- In 1951 the Labour Party won 50% of the electorate, got more votes than the Tories — and yet lost!

- In October 1974 Labour won a mere 28% of the electorate and stayed in office until 1979. In February 1974 the Liberals won 6 million votes and yet only 14 seats.

- In 1983 the Alliance almost got more votes than Labour — 7¼ million to 8½ million. As reward the Alliance got 23 seats and Labour 209.

- In 1989, at the Euro elections, the Greens received 2 million votes and no seats at all.

As things European become more known and more important there has been a growing awareness that other European countries do things differently in this as in many other things. People are also aware that not one of the newly emerging democracies of Eastern Europe has opted for the 'first past the post' system. As Jeff Rooker put it at conference: "they've had enough of dictatorships — elective or otherwise".

A second reason for the swing of opinion



THE POLITICAL FRONT

Alan Johnson

toward PR is the Thatcher governments. With only a minority of votes cast in each of her three election victories, with a smaller share of the national vote than any of the other 17 heads of government in Western Europe, she has ruthlessly exploited the absence of checks to her parliamentary majority. That majority, delivered by a dodgy electoral system, has licensed every hated measure from the Poll Tax to the dismantling of the National Health Service. This brute fact has fuelled the growing movement not just for PR but for a thorough democratisation of the ancient, walled off, and undemocratic machinery of British government.

Against PR Roy Hattersley advances two arguments. First, that PR means that "no party would ever achieve an overall parliamentary majority". Second that the existing system provides 'strong government' or, as Gavin Laird put it, "Roy's elective dictatorship".

Both arguments are a disgrace. If it is impossible for a socialist party to win over 50% of

the popular vote — what pessimism! — then we might as well pack up and go home anyway, because socialism will be either the movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority or it will be nothing.

It cannot by its nature be imposed from above whether by tanks or parliamentary majorities which represent actual minorities. It can only be created from below by the self-activity and creativity of millions of working people as they resist the old and build the new.

That is also why the 'strong government' argument is so ridiculous. The existing government machine in Britain, growing up as it has alongside capitalism, is 'strong' for certain purposes and certain interests. It is strong for enforcing the priorities of capital, for shielding the power and privilege of the wealthy, for locking people up, etc. But it is not an instrument which we can simply wield for our own very different purposes.

For encroaching on the power and privilege of the wealthy, for empowering working people it would not be strong. It would not be strong for socialism, but would be its implacable enemy.

The standard left-wing objection to PR — often voiced by Peter Hain — is that the link between voter and accountable MP would be broken. But surely Hain romanticises the links that exist or could exist out of all recognition?

MPs are less useful than local councillors or welfare rights workers for most of the issues which send constituents to their

surgeries in the first place, having no legal or administrative jurisdiction.

A quarter only hold surgeries monthly. 1 in 10 only visit their constituencies monthly. A survey in the 1970s revealed that 1 in 2 voters could not name their MP and only 1 in 4 could name a single thing they had done in Parliament. For MPs elected once in five years from constituencies of 60,000 people on average it is difficult to take this argument seriously.

Even in straight electoral terms it is possible that Labour could do better under PR. Labour gets 1½ million votes in the Home Counties, south coast and South West, but only two seats. In a PR system it would get not only more seats but a lot more votes as it would not be squeezed as a 'third party'. Once you unpack the decline in the Labour vote since 1951 the 'first past the post' system can be shown to be itself a significant factor.

In 'unwinnable' seats Labour's vote has declined from 33% to 7%. In 'safe' seats Labour's vote has declined from 79% to 56%. In marginal seats Labour's vote has gone down only eight points over the same period, from 49% to 41%.

Socialism and democracy are indivisible. Socialists should unreservedly support a new and fairer electoral system.

Quotes of the week

Clare Short: 'Neil is a democrat'

Neil Kinnock: 'I'm more interested in realities than resolutions'



Clint Eastwood as John Huston:

The film-maker as colonialist

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *White Hunter, Black Heart*

Film-making on a grand scale is mini-colonialism. Rapacious movie crews take over a place, use it, waste it, bend it to their will, then abandon it to move on to the next project.

They're drawn to the picturesque, the unspoiled, but their presence in a place wrecks the very thing that tempted them there. They ride roughshod over other races, other cultures; they move through like a hurricane, wreaking irreparable damage.

White Hunter, Black Heart is less about the disastrous effects of film-making than about one film-maker's obsession with shooting an elephant, but it can stand in for the other. John Wilson (played by Clint Eastwood, and based on the real life director John Huston) has the same search-and-destroy attitude to his hunting as he has to the film he is about to make, *The African*

Queen.

Africa is there to serve him, to feed his obsessions. He has a lordly attitude towards the country and the people there; they exist to provide him with the experience he wants.

Though he lectures a woman about anti-semitism and gets into a fight with a racist hotel manager, Wilson/Huston is hardly right on.

"Africa is there to serve him, to feed his obsessions. He has a lordly attitude towards the country and the people there."

He ignores everything but his own wishes and desires, even when it puts both his hunting companions and his film crew at risk.

The film crew which reconstructs the 'authentic' Congo village in the later part of the film is just the

logical extension of Wilson's attitudes. He cares nothing for the African people, for their traditions, their lives; they're never there to be used.

White Hunter, Black Heart never really gets started, so it's hard to know if Eastwood was trying to show the destructive nature of film-making generally or just trying to put one man's obsession on screen.

Either way, it doesn't add up to much. The fault is partly in the casting. Eastwood is not an actor who invites you into his private thoughts; he's too closed off from the audience. He doesn't communicate.

If we're to watch and identify with someone's obsession, we need to be drawn into it; it has to have a kind of logic for us in the audience, or we're left out of things. That's what happens in *White Hunter, Black Heart*. We know Wilson/Huston wants to kill an elephant, but why does he want to? How does it link into his supposed self-destructiveness?

After a while, do we really care? I don't think so. Like Wilson's much put-upon producer, we want Wilson to stop messing around too; we want to see *The African Queen* made. There's more of a story in that.

Clint Eastwood may simply be too familiar to us to seem credible in the role. We've seen him too often as a tightly-wound loner to find him credible as a larger-than-life, fast-talking, Irish-American charmer. John Huston was that type, and he had a magical voice, a real tale spinner's voice. Eastwood seems smaller than life. He doesn't inhabit the role.

The film is structured almost as a thriller, with a kind of countdown — will Wilson kill the elephant before filming starts, or will he miss his deadline, and wreck the movie?

But this is a flop as a plot device. We already know the answer to that — Huston settled down, the film got made — so the tension is fake. It doesn't add up to anything.

And at the end, we're still outside Huston/Wilson. In one throwaway line, it seems he is sadder and wiser, but we still don't know him or feel for him. We're still outside looking in. And from there, there isn't a lot to see.

Bambatha's Children

From the killing fields of Natal in South Africa comes a new play, *Bambatha's Children*. This is the third production of the SAWCO players following the highly successful UK tours of *The Long March* in 1987 and *The Sisters of the Long March* in 1988. Written and performed by black workers sacked by the British multinational BTR in the

longest strike in South African history, *Bambatha's Children* will be touring Britain from October to December. It tells the story of three generations of struggle against colonialism and apartheid and sheds important light on the origins of the present violence.

For more information contact BTR Workers Support Network/SAWCO. UK address: PO Box 328, Cambridge CB1 2RQ.

Liverpool Council: A very rotten borough

Television

By Stan Crooke

In Volume 4 of her autobiography the late Simone de Beauvoir wrote that she never watched TV. The recent Panorama programme 'Showdown on the Mersey' will doubtless have driven others to share in her aversion.

The programme lacked any clear focus. It lurched from scenes of Labour Party conferences to shots of rundown areas of Liverpool, interspersed with interviews of members of Dingle Ward Labour party (which, with all due respect, is hardly the hub of the political universe).

Although the programme was a hatchet job on the *Militant* its brief portrayal of the Liverpool labour movement could have been lifted from the pages of *Militant*! That of a united working class constantly struggling against the bosses at every stage in its history.

There was no mention of episodes such as the labour movement campaign at the turn of the century to keep Chinese people out of Liverpool, the white working class riots against blacks after the first and second world wars.

Despite its obvious bias against *Militant* (and the Labour Left in general), the programme ignored completely *Militant's* hostility towards the voluntary sector in general and housing associations in particular.

Militant's ingrained sectarianism and its encouragement of Liverpool parochialism, and the infamous Sam Bond affair (when *Militant* antagonised blacks in Liverpool by trying to fix up a job for one of their supporters as principal race relations officer).

According to the commentator: "Militant still splits the local Party in Liverpool". There is no suggestion that what now splits the Party in Liverpool is the right-wing's control of the Labour Group and the

anti-working class politics which it is railroading through the council: rent rises, cuts in voluntary sector funding, attacks on the unions, the use of the Tories' anti-union legislation.

The concluding section of the programme dealt at length with allegations of corruption in relation to the sale of council land in Liverpool, but failed to cast any fresh light on a long-running saga — the current police investigation is the third in recent years.

"Derek Hatton, the former deputy leader, who now lobbies councillors and council officials on behalf of property developers, stressed his innocence."

No charges have been made as a result of earlier investigations. The programme did not mention if any councillor is about to be charged as a result of the current investigation; or tell us if other councillors will be implicated in illegal dealings as a result of the initial prosecution.

Derek Hatton, the former deputy leader, who now lobbies councillors and council officials on behalf of property developers, was interviewed in a perfunctory manner. Naturally, Hatton stressed his innocence — but, as former councillor Kevin Feintuck commented: "Things can be perfectly legal and still disgusting."

By a curious coincidence, two days after the programme was broadcast Hatton's City Centre offices were burgled and filing cabinets in the offices ransacked. Hatton has promised full co-operation with the current police enquiry. It would be a tragedy if documents he intended to supply to the police had gone missing as a result of this burglary.

Love in May

Books

By Clive Bradley

'Love in the Days of Rage' by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

The 'days of rage' are April to May 1968, in Paris. An American artist and a much older Portuguese anarchist who is now a wealthy banker fall in love, and participate, if rather marginally, in the dramatic events unfolding around them.

There are some vivid descriptions of the student movement that gave rise to the general strike, and Ferlinghetti conveys sometimes effectively the revolutionary quality of the times.

"And at the end of the second week in May there was a great march to occupy the theatre of France at the Odeon, with famous poets, playwrights, professors, and editors side by side marching with the students up from the Metro Odeon, where they had met underground; so then at the Odeon another free revolutionary commune sprang into existence with day-and night sessions on every conceivable subject from dope to free love to de Gaulle and back again."

The novel is written in a self-consciously poetic style (no paragraphs, but short chapters), and is centred firmly on the role of the artist in this kind of movement. The text is replete with literary allusions; you can tell they're allusions, because a lot of them are in French; I only really recognised a few references to TS Eliot.

And that's the first irritating thing. The second irritating thing is the

amount of imagery based on quite a detailed knowledge of painting (the author is, apparently, a painter), some of which was just lost on me, some of which got on my nerves (I thought, if a read the word 'light' just once more...)

Third irritating thing: the anarchist banker, obviously, had to justify his current occupation. The justification takes about three quarters of the book to be revealed — and then guess what? He's working within the system to beat it.

Well I ask you. Someone unable to speak except in tones of great profundity might have thought of something a little more original.

And even more irritating is the writer's severe political ignorance. I presume he was there in '68; but some of it was obviously as incomprehensible to him as his artistic references are to me: "old fart Marx and his ideas had been severely rejected by the student movement, which was anarchist and Trotskyist and visionary". This passage culminates in a long list of well-known intellectuals who were alive in '68, but whether all of them were relevant to it, I couldn't say.

The climax of the story, in which the arm-chair anarchist turns out not to be so arm-chair, but just plain daft, is almost as hard to stomach as the idea that his American lover would flee to the Pyrenees for no recognisable reason at all, to wait for him.

Love in the Days of Rage has its moments, and is agreeably short, but an accessible or reliable account of France in '68 even from the point of view of doubt-stricken artists, it isn't; and 'wise and dark', as the *Times Lit* apparently called it, it certainly isn't. (I think we can conclude the *Times Lit* critic had to look 'anarchist' up in the dictionary and so found this book a source of intellectual discoveries).

The South African Communist Party and the unions:

'Forward to Socialism?'

By Robert Fine, author of 'Beyond Apartheid'

Among the bad news coming out of South Africa is that of leading trade unionists in COSATU having joined the South African Communist Party.

In itself this comes as no surprise, since leading COSATU officials like Sydney Mufumadi — who came out of the UDF — aligned General and Allied Workers Union and oversaw the attempt to carve up the left leadership of CCAWUSA (the Commercial and Catering Union) — were strongly suspected of being party members. What is more unexpected is the SACP's recruitment of trade unionists associated with the old FOSATU tradition and previously identified with a more democratic and anti-Stalinist socialism.

The best known of these is Moses Mayekiso.

Mayekiso, the current general-secretary of NUMSA, the large and traditionally left metal union, said that he has 'long' been a member of the SACP. His version is that he was already thinking of joining when he was in England in 1986, a time when he consorted mainly with left groups. He joined on his return to South Africa.

Since he was detained for three years immediately on his return, he must have either joined the party in gaol or on his release, late in 1989. The surprise is compounded by the fact that the 'Free Mayekiso' campaign over here was led by the left and strongly opposed by the Anti-Apartheid Movement with its links to the ANC-SACTU-SACP nexus.

Mayekiso's membership was not a one-off wonder. There are other ex-FOSATU recruits: Chris Dlamini, originally a shop steward in the Sweet Food Union and then president of FOSATU in 1982, a time when criticism of FOSATU as 'workerist' reached a peak; Alec Erwin, one of the 'intellectual' founders of the new unions in the 1970s and education secretary in FOSATU; and John Gomomo, who was the lieutenant of Freddie Sauls (considered to be an arch 'workerist') in the FOSATU Automobile Union.

All these top COSATU officials are now labelled part of the 'internal leadership' of the SACP. Trips to Russia are included in the package.

At a time when the old Communist Parties around the world are either in decline or a state of collapse, how is it that the SACP — a particularly loyal servant of Moscow ever since the late 1920s — should now be extending its grip in the South African labour movement?

The first answer is that there must be a collective folly at work among otherwise independent and militant trade unionists. This is true but it explains nothing. It is important to understand, not simply to denounce. We should certainly recognise the right of trade unionists to join the party of their choice, even if we deplore the choice.

What then are the factors? First, the SACP itself has verbally disavowed Stalinism. The theme was set in a paper by party boss Joe Slovo called 'Has Socialism failed?'. Ever faithful to Moscow, Slovo is now a confirm-



4,000 shop and distribution workers rally in Johannesburg in protest at an attempted Communist Party takeover of their union and in defence of the elected leadership. 'Phants' roughly and politely translated means 'down with'.

ed Gorbachevite. He glosses over the Stalinist history of the SACP, assures his readers that 'the spirit of democracy' finds expression both in the party and in the relations between the party and 'fraternal political forces', appeals to the traditions of independent trade unionism by declaring that 'no political party should interfere with such independence', and affirms the need for a mass, democratic workers' party alongside the ANC.

Since then, other party aficionados like Jeremy Cronin have argued that the SACP was only 'mildly Stalinist' since to the best of his knowledge it did not physically eliminate its political opponents.

Second, the line of the independent trade unionists seems to be summed up by a recent NUMSA bulletin. It calls for 'a democratic, broad-based socialist party which enjoys the support of a large section of the working class'. It admits that the SACP does not 'currently have all these credentials' but assures us (but where's the evidence?) of 'clear indications of a willingness to transform itself'. The image is that of the SACP becoming 'the effective catalyst for unifying the left'.

The 'skeletons' in the SACP cupboard are aired: its support for Stalinism over the years; its support for suppression in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Afghanistan, etc. (but no mention of Ethiopia); its dogmatic insistence on the theory of 'colonialism of a special type'; its sectarian attitude to critics; its purges and authoritarian attitudes; and not least its attempt to stop the growth of socialism in the unions.

But all this is in the past. The new Communist Party must abandon 'vanguardism', become open and broad-based, democratic and accountable, and respect the independence of the unions. The bulletin is confident that Slovo and most of the leaders 'have already endorsed many of these principles'.

The task as the NUMSA bulletin sees it is to convert or push aside a few old Communist dinosaurs who remain addicted to dictats and encourage individual socialists within the unions (but not the unions themselves) to make joining the party their 'first option'. This is characterised not as an 'entryist' position — 'which advocates joining a political party with the aim of transforming it or destroying it on the basis of some hidden agenda decided by a secret clique' — but as an agenda for transferring trade union democracy to the party.

NUMSA now declares its support for the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance and for the establishment of an Alliance Forum between

them as an organisational base for negotiations with the government.

Readers of *SO* may wonder whether this love affair with the SACP is a case of stunning naivete or a rationalisation for having given in to the very real pressures placed on trade unionists to toe the party line or be damned as a 'counter-revolutionary'. Doubtless a bit of both. In my view, a large part of the problem is the traditional tendency of the old FOSATU unionists to reduce political questions to organisational procedures.

The same naivete was present in 1983-4 when FOSATU leaders were convinced that they could dominate the new COSATU by virtue of their stronger organisational base in the unions. What happened was that they were overtaken by politics, or rather by a party line within the unions which had a definite political line and access to power within the liberation movement.

Another image of how the SACP operates in the unions has been recently offered in an article by Jan Theron on the take-over of the Food Union (FAWU) by a faction associated with the SACP (he did not know whether they were actually SACP members).

Any leadership, he points out, can claim to be building workers' control and democracy, but 'where there is no workers' control and democracy there will be no-one to contradict them'. In FAWU, he argues, these fine names have been the cover for Stalinist forms of top-down nomination.

Without entering into the details of his step-by-step account, Theron says that the faction used its power on the NEC of the union and its support from within COSATU to purge any branch officials and shop-stewards who opposed it, slander them as 'counter-revolutionary' and 'enemies of the people' and close down branches which refused to accept these decisions. Jan Theron himself has been illegally denied re-entry into the union after taking a sabbatical leave to write.

The key problem as Theron sees it is to re-assert control from below. To this end a Campaign for Democracy in FAWU has been formed with his support. He writes:

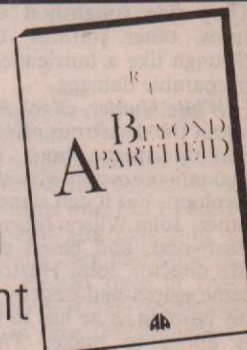
'The experience of the Campaign for Democracy shows that it will not be easy to safeguard democracy, given the authoritarian political culture still prevailing. Indeed, the viciousness of the attacks on the Campaign seem in part to be because it is trying to operate as an open faction. Yet what alternative is there for workers who are looking

for democracy in their union? What alternative is there if unions are to continue to contribute to an alternative political culture and if workers' control and democracy are to be more than a slogan?...Unity from the bottom up cannot be built in a culture of fear where there is no workers' control and democracy...Workers, look what is happening to your organisation and take control.'

In evaluating the growing influence of the SACP among union organisers, officials and the new breed of full-time shop stewards, one can understand their preference for being 'in' rather than 'out' of the new order which they have fought so hard for; one can also see why they should deceive themselves and others that such is the path to socialism.

But despite its gains, the political position of the SACP remains precarious. I have the impression that many of the new recruits are holding the door ajar for a later retreat.

Class politics and the liberation movement



In the history of the liberation movement, nothing could be more erroneous than the image of black people as an undifferentiated mass united by a single political consciousness in their opposition to apartheid. The history of class struggle has been one of debate and dissent, sharp breaks and abrupt turns, competing political organisations and traditions, ad hoc alliances and unpredicted outcomes. We should avoid the temptation to flatten artificially this rocky landscape by drawing a one-dimensional picture of a singular movement, hegemonised by this or that party, for ever advancing with the support of the people to the final goal of liberation. Between the political myth and the real history lies not just a chasm but everything that makes the liberation movement in South Africa so wonderfully rich.

From Bob Fine's forward to 'Beyond Apartheid'. Available from most bookshops.

Glossary

COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions, million-strong trade union federation founded in 1985, including large miners' and metalworkers' unions. Closely aligned with Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC).

FOSATU: Federation of South African Trade Unions, largest single component of COSATU. In the early '80s FOSATU was independent of the ANC and labelled 'workerist'. Its spokespersons talked of the need to build an 'independent workers' political movement', and were suspicious of broad multi-class alliances.

SACTU: South African Congress of Trade Unions. Dominant trade union federation among black workers in the 1950s. Very closely aligned to the ANC. It collapsed after the ANC's disastrous turn to 'armed struggle' in the early 1960s.

UDI: United Democratic Front, open, legal mass organisation which provided the above-ground focus for the ANC in the early '80s.

Oil workers' leader speaks out:

'We are into a long campaign'

Ronnie MacDonald, Chair of the rank and file based Offshore Industry Liaison Committee, describes the way the Tory anti-union laws make it very difficult to organise a successful ballot in the North sea, and sets out what he sees as the way forward in the battle for union recognition.



"Our ability to organise has obviously been affected by the widespread sackings"

ing into the winter — it is true that engineering and construction work will continue through the winter, but nevertheless there will be a certain drop off.

But when we get into next year around March and April there will be a big increase in the manpower needed; welders, beaters, steel erectors, pipe fitters, etc.

The petro-chemical industry in Scotland is extremely buoyant and looking for a major expansion.

There is going to be a big extension at Grangemouth and the next door Kinneil petro-chemical plant is also expanding as are other places.

There is also the oil rig building that will be competing for this same labour.

There aren't the skills to go round so the oil contractors and the companies will be competing.

In that context there is a very strong case for picking the time to fight.

Life before profits!

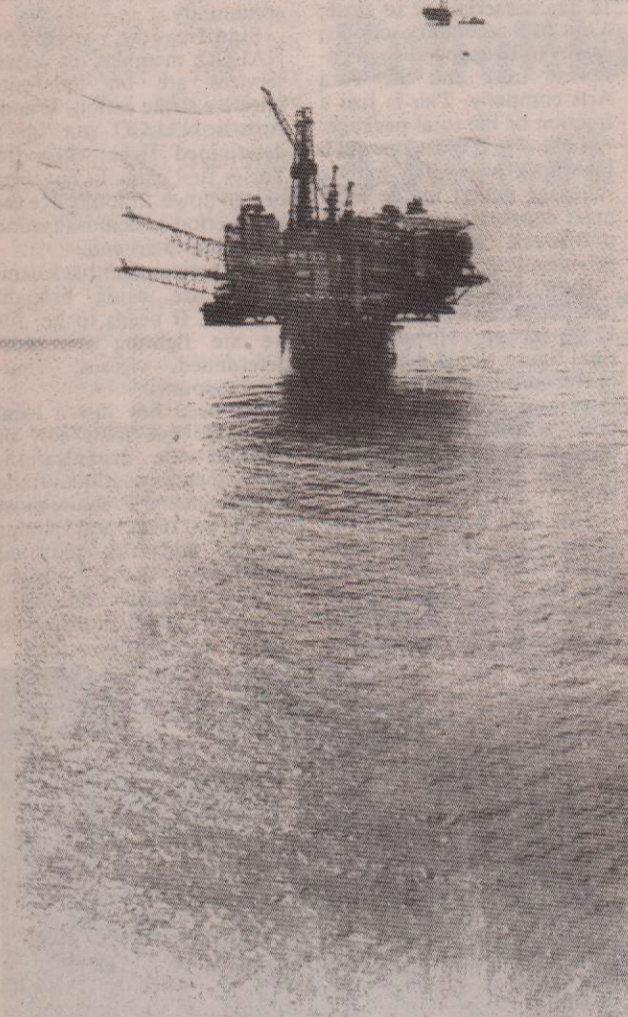
Safety is a central issue in the offshore workers' struggle.

One OILC (Offshore Industry Liaison Committee) activist explained: "I get £300 a week for one of the most dangerous jobs around. So far 500 of us have died. The multinationals' propaganda goes on about 'high risk and high reward', but that's a load of rubbish as far as I'm concerned.

"Safety risks are built in to the rigs to save money and increase profits. Even the helicopters which take us to and from the rigs are death-traps. We call them egg-beaters. They bounce us around and rattle about. The doors sometimes swing open in mid-flight over the North Sea".

The OILC has compiled a list of six closely typed pages detailing the major accidents since 1988. Tragedies like the Piper Alpha disaster in which 167 died are well known, but there are three or four major incidents every month, on average.

"When we win this dispute", explained an OILC activist, "we will set down the health and safety procedures and we will decide everything, including which helicopters to use. We want to have control and make the decisions. Human life must come before profits".



frustrate the ballot.

They are refusing to give us accurate lists of their employees. They can then have the ballot declared invalid as some people are likely not to have been balloted.

A very similar thing happened during the 1989 dock strike at Tilbury. Management found one person who had not had their ballot paper on time and managed to get the whole ballot declared invalid.

This is a subtle point of the Tory anti-union laws. It is assumed that the employers will cooperate with the ballot, you can even go to a tribunal to get them instructed to cooperate, but you have no way of enforcing them.

One think you must say about the Tory legislation is that it is very effective for the employers.

Take the injunctions. Employers can get injunctions to make people desist

from some activity or another but you can't get an injunction to make them do something.

The power of enforcement is with the employers all the way down the line.

Nevertheless, we are going ahead with the ballot and will follow it through all the way. We are going out for maximum registration.

The time has come now when the labour movement has got to look to changing the legal set-up, to redress the balance. To give workers some statutory rights.

Where now? The men are a little battle weary to say the least. Our ability to organise has obviously been affected by the widespread sackings. It's taken out a lot of our best activists and organisers.

We are in a long-term campaign. Looking at strategy — we have to see what resources we have and what is the best time to use them. We are go-

Hemmed in by the laws Kinnock wants to keep

The history of the 'official' labour movement's response to the Tory anti-union laws can be roughly divided into three phases: Phase One (1982-84): outright opposition accompanied by genuine — if woefully inadequate — efforts to mobilise the rank and file; Phase Two (1985-88): formal opposition accompanied by de facto acceptance; Phase Three (1989-present): craven acquiescence.

If only, if only...if the TUC top brass had stood by their fine words at the famous Wembley Conference of 1982 and not ratted on the NGA at Warrington...if the miners had not been left isolated and disowned in 1984/5...things might now be very different. But the moving finger writes and having writ, etc., etc.

The whole question of how serious militants should respond in practice to the Tory laws is no longer a simple matter. Of course, while the Congress House fat cats were still formally committed to opposition, unqualified defiance of

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

the law was the order of the day. But by the time of the July/August 1989 dock strike dispute, simply shouting 'defy the law' was clearly not adequate.

By then the laws were an established fact of life and careful thought had to be given to matters like whether or not to confront the law or try to get round it by exploiting loopholes (as the London tube strikers did last summer); Ron Todd, for instance, made many mistakes during the docks dispute,

but his reluctance to sanction outright defiance of the law was not one of them in that situation.

But acknowledging the laws as an established fact of life is not the same as simply accepting them and limiting all action accordingly. The present dispute on the North Sea oil rigs shows what we are up against. The unofficial Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC) organised a series of 24-hour strikes throughout August, demanding a comprehensive wage agreement for all North Sea workers, union recognition and a new safety regime, with responsibility being taken away from the Department of Energy and given to the Health and Safety Executive.

OILC's leaders initially modelled their strategy on that of the London tube dispute, by-passing the law by keeping everything unofficial and depending upon the cohesion of their informal rank and file 'grapevine' to ensure coordination and solidarity. It worked well, up to a point. But by the end of last month, the 24-hour strikes had begun to lose their impact and over 1,000 workers had been sacked. The OILC leadership had hoped for widespread occupations of platforms in response to the victimisations, but apart from in the Shell

Brent field, these did not occur.

This impasse looked like being broken when 2,000 catering workers voted by six to one to strike over pay — an action that could have brought North Sea oil operations to a halt in hours. But it was not to be: all it took was a catering contractor to threaten the OILC with legal action over a technicality in the ballot, and the officials took fright and persuaded the catering shop stewards to call off the action.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the six offshore unions (TGWU, MSF, AEU, EETPU, GMB, and RMT) finally got round to offering official support to the main dispute, and agreed to hold a ballot for the all-out action that is so obviously now the only way forward. But...not only will the ballot take at least a month to complete (by which time vital maintenance work can be completed) but, worse, up to 2,000 of the best militants in the industry will not get a vote because they've been sacked!

Incidentally, it's worth noting that the balloting laws which are presently being used in such a blatantly undemocratic manner against the oil workers are precisely the aspects of the Tory legislation that Kinnock and the TUC are determined to hang on to.

Pollution disaster in the USSR

Perils of beryllium

One feature about the new regime in the Soviet Union is that we hear about their accidents as they happen. Thus it was that we heard of the contamination by beryllium* of perhaps more than 100,000 people in Kazakhstan.

On 12 September, there was a hydrogen explosion at the Ulbinsky metallurgical works in Ust-Kamenogorsk. The resulting fire lasted for two hours and released dust clouds containing beryllium oxide.

Unfortunately, the Ulbinsky works are situated close to residential areas and the dust filled the air breathed by the working people of the town, contaminating the lungs of up to 120,000. Dust was said to be still on the streets days later, with water tankers spraying it to keep it down. *Izvestia* reported an insufficiency of tankers for this task.

The extent of risk to the public is difficult to assess. People exposed to the dust on the ground must have been disturbed many times, adding to the risk. The central authorities admit to five people having been injured in the explosion and to 32 people having had their lungs contaminated with beryllium.

Clearly, there has not been sufficient time for all victims to have been examined.

The chair of the regional environmental protection committee described the Ulbinsky works as "a bomb in the centre of our city" and

Les Hearn's



SCIENCE COLUMN

accidents involving the nuclear industry include contamination of ground with nuclear waste near Brest. This was due to spillage while waste was being transferred between trains. Why the waste was not in strongly sealed containers is not clear.

Discharges from a nuclear power station at Tomsk are said to have contaminated the River Tom and nearby wildlife. Seven people are said to have been harmed by the radioactive material.

Grass-roots protests have led the Union government to announce closure of the Semipalatinsk underground nuclear weapons testing site in 1993. The campaigns involved the election of a Kazakh poet to the Congress of People's Deputies on an anti-testing ticket. 50,000 attended a rally against the site on the anniversary of the Hiroshima bomb.

A common thread running through such accidents and disasters as Ust-Kamenogorsk and Chernobyl seems to be the poor design and careless siting of potentially dangerous industrial plants. Poor management and low pay assists the occurrence of mishaps by allowing dangerous work practices from demoralised or poorly trained staff.

In the past, police state methods would have kept the resulting accidents out of the headlines but the weakened bureaucracy can no longer achieve this. Unfortunately, they also seem to lack the resources to rectify the faults with their out-of-date industries.

* Beryllium is a light, inflammable metal with some similarities to magnesium. Its use is as a 'moderator' in nuclear power station cores and in nuclear bombs. This means that it slows down and reflects back into the fuel the neutrons that keep a nuclear chain reaction going.

Thus it enables the power of a bomb to be maximised.

Beryllium is highly inimical to humans. Its main target of action is the lungs. Acute exposure leads to progressively worsening breathing difficulties and pneumonia. Infections and heart failure precipitate deaths in the worst cases. Beryllium also causes damage to liver, kidney, skin, muscles and lymph nodes, the whole spectrum of symptoms being known as berylliosis.

Chronic exposure can lead to symptoms as severe or milder. There may be a delay of 10 years before illness occurs.

Treatment with steroids alleviates the symptoms (and may save lives) but there is no cure. Berylliosis seems to be a hypersensitisation of the body which may start making antibodies to its own proteins.

Most of the victims of beryllium exposure in Ust-Kamenogorsk are likely to have had a low dose. These may suffer little or no ill-effects. Doubtless, those nearer the plant are likely to have suffered greatest exposure. These are more likely to show acute symptoms which may be serious for young, old and those already suffering lung conditions.

Wandsworth fights back

By Dion D'Silva

What does a poll tax of £148 mean? The simple answer is cuts.

In Wandsworth, 11 out of 18 day nurseries are to close; 4 out of 9 secondary schools; grants to be stopped for Pensioners Link and the Tara Arts company. This is just a fraction of the total package.

The Wandsworth Fightback campaign put a full-page advert in the local press consisting solely of the proposed closures and privatisations.

Even with these cuts, the poll tax would be increased to £250 next year. However, the final figure would depend on 'government grants, interest rates and other factors'. In other words, the council is begging for more money just to keep the increase below 70%.

This time it looks like the council has a real fight on its hands. The voluntary sector was the first target — as seems the case throughout the country. They organised a

march and rally of over a thousand local people. Recently the teachers had a one-day strike. Council workers walked out in support for the afternoon. Both actions have received tremendous support from the local community.

Significantly, some 50 NALGO members in social services are on indefinite selective strike action. Wandsworth NALGO put up a determined fight when the Tories first came in but were beaten down. It looks like the long period of demoralisation is coming to an end.

The various fightback campaigns are being brought together. It needs to be, for we are fighting the most determined, vicious, Thatcherite council.

We need not just a local campaign but some sort of London-wide organisation, not to mention national trade union backing. Pressure must also be put onto local Labour parties and the national leadership to make it a high-profile political campaign. Thatcher's jewel in the crown can be shown to be a fake.



The way forward: teachers in Bristol on strike against poll tax cuts and job losses. Photo: John Harris

WHAT'S ON

Friday 12 October. Women for Socialism, 1pm, Kent University.

Friday 12 October. Women for Socialism, 4pm, Canterbury Tech.

Saturday 13 October. Women for Socialism forum on the Gulf, 12 to 6, 52-54 Featherstone Rd, London EC1.

Monday 15 October. Women Against the Poll Tax, 7.30, North Staffs Poly. Speaker: Janine Booth.

Monday 15 October. Campaign Against War in the Gulf, 6.30, Teesside Poly.

Tuesday 16 October. End the Ban on Socialist Organiser! 1pm, Nene College, Northampton.

Tuesday 16 October. Fight the Poll Tax! Left Unity meeting, 7pm, Essex University. Speaker: Mark Sandell.

Wednesday 17 October. End the Ban on Socialist Organiser! 1pm, North Staffs Poly. Speaker: Richard Love.

Wednesday 17 October. Fight for women's liberation! Workers' Liberty meeting, 2pm, Newcastle Poly.

Wednesday 17 October. Fight the Poll Tax! Left Unity meeting, 1pm, Longlands Tech.

Thursday 18 October. Fight the Poll Tax! Left Unity meeting, 1pm, Cleveland Tech.

Saturday 20 October. Poll Tax march reaches London.

Wednesday 24 October. "Poll Tax: don't pay, don't collect!" Student demonstration. Assemble noon, Woodhouse Moor, Leeds. Details from West Yorks Area NUS: 0532 452312.

Wednesday 24 October. Fighting anti-semitism. 8pm, Ilford Synagogue. Speakers: Ray Hill and Graeme Atkinson (Searchlight).

Saturday 27 October. Labour Party Socialists AGM, Sheffield University.

Monday 29 October. Forum on the Gulf, 7.30, Conway Hall, London WC1. Speakers from Socialist Organiser and Socialism and Revolution (Iran).

Saturday 3 November. Campaign Against War in the Gulf labour movement conference, London.

ment conference, London.

Saturday-Sunday 17-18 November. Socialist Movement conference, Manchester.

Saturday 24 November. Stop the War in the Gulf! National demonstration, London.

The ideas Walworth Road wants to ban



Subscribe to Socialist Organiser at special rates: £16 for a year, £3 for 10 issues

You can also subscribe to Workers' Liberty magazine — £5 for 4 issues.

Name

Address

Paid: £16 for a year

£3 for 10 issues

£5 for Workers' Liberty

Total

Return to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Engineers hours campaign intensifies

The engineering unions' shorter working week campaign is to be intensified over the coming weeks.

Strike ballots are to take place at GPT in Liverpool; Hotpoint in North Wales; Schlumberger in

Manchester; MO Marsden and Cameron iron works in Leeds; South Wales Switchgear and Anderson Longwell in Motherwell.

This is to be followed by strike ballots at seven other companies. The summer lull in the campaign is over.

Land Rover hearing victory

After a refusal by the management of the Birmingham Land Rover factory to carry out

hearing tests, shop stewards organised their own successful health and safety.

Tests organised by the union showed a huge level of industrial deafness amongst the workforce as well as early signs of hearing impairment in younger workers.

Armed with this evidence the union demanded new health and safety checks involving facilities for the union to carry out hearing tests and to have access to information about noise surveys.

Land Rover eventually backed down on a number of key issues, agreeing to new equipment for hearing tests and to the employment of a full-time nurse.

The victory involved in this campaign was around monitoring the disablement of workers through noise as an on-going process. The practice of demanding compensation, although important, does not, in itself, give control to workers over important health and safety issues as well as not preventing the future disablement of other workers.

NEW PROBLEMS NEW STRUGGLES



A handbook for trade unionists by Socialist Organiser and Workers' Liberty £1

£1 plus 24 pence p&p from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

1917

How the workers made a revolution



What really happened in 1917
60 pence plus 24 pence p&p from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA



NCU pay dispute, 1987. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

By a Central London BT engineer

A nasty set of strings

Balloting is now taking place on British Telecom's 1990 pay offer. The NEC of the National Communications Union (NCU) is strongly recommending a yes vote on the offer of 10% plus minimal improvements in clerical grades and annual leave improvements for some staff.

Most importantly the NEC is recommending agreement to new shift-working arrangements and direct recruitment to technical officer grades as a necessary part of the pay package. It is on these last two strings attached to the pay offer that many NCU members feel the NEC has let them down.

These strings affect only engineering grades directly and it is mainly in the engineering branches that most opposition has come.

So far, all London engineering branches have recommended a vote 'no'. This is hardly surprising when you consider what these new conditions will mean. Direct recruitment of technical officer grade effects drastically the promotion prospects of people presently on low engineering grades. What it means to BT management is less money on training. The new shift-working agreement means in reality a pay cut for those already on 24-hour, 7-day shift-working of between £2,000 and £3,000 a year due to loss of overtime and allowances.

And, significantly, the new shift working agreement allows for an extension of shift-working into new areas of the double-day shift.

Under the terms of the agreement these double-day shifts anytime between 6am in the morning and 10pm at night can be brought in where there is customer demand or an economic reason for them. The real reason is different: shift-working is cheaper than overtime.

For BT management this means less money in overtime payments and the ability to control workers hours in order to offer a more competitive service on the

Rebellion spreads against Telecom deal

"The new shift-working agreement means in reality a pay cut for those already on shift-working of between £2,000 and £3,000 a year due to loss of overtime and allowances."

cheap. Workers will pay with the destruction of their lives volunteers. But we all know what that might mean.

They are saying that agreements will be subject to local negotiation but have framed the agreements in such a way that they will be within a national straitjacket. They maintain that direct recruitment is necessary but already there are agreements for exceptional cases.

Not only this, but underlying the whole pay package is a cooperative clause that the NCU will work with BT in the interests of the business. Already they are talking of next year's pay deal, discuss-

by a shift system and the loss of choice of working or not working anti-social hours. They will also be worried about safety.

To add insult to injury the pathetic shift-working allowances offered would not be enough to tempt even the most mortgaged consumer-hungry stereotype new-realist Thatcherite worker.

What game do the NEC think they are playing? It is our living they are talking about. They are selling us the shift-working on the basis of ing attendance patterns which will threaten the prized scheduled day off (SDO), an agreement that has been hard

fought for and is still held on to.

The deal divides clerical and engineering workers. The only contentious parts all affect engineering grades only. Yet all members are being balloted and it is not clear whether the ballots will be considered separately. Even clerical branch secretaries have not been fully informed of the strings on the pay offer, never mind the broader membership.

This bodes ill for the five yearly December rules revision conference when, hopefully, a closer amalgamation between clerical and engineering workers will become a reality.

How can the NEC of a trade union negotiate a deal that is so detrimental to the working conditions and pay of so many of its members when the company can afford to pay its shareholders a dividend of 12.4%?

Rank and file Telecom workers — both clerical and engineering grades — should reject the offer and call the NEC to account.

Hewitts striker speaks:

'We are not going to give in'

By a Hewitts striker

We've been on strike since July. All 200 of us refused to bow down to Nurfie the new owner of Hewitts when he tried to impose a 3% pay rise.

There is about 100 scabs going in at the moment, but only two of those actually worked for Hewitts before the dispute. The 100 scabs tend to be young people who've never had a job

and who don't know much about unions or solidarity. They had better learn quickly if they are going to survive with a firm like this one.

There has already been one person injured because health and safety have gone to the wall. We know that they are producing much less than usual because none of the people in there are properly trained.

With pickets on all three gates we are having some success. One thing is for sure, we are not going to give in. We know how long we're going to have to stay here.

We're getting a lot of support. Collections have been made at several of the pot-banks and at Labour Party meetings and at Hem Heath pit.

We're hampered by union laws. Years ago a dispute like this would have been won by now with the picketing of the pot banks and the Hewitts bosses would have backed down. These days we get warned by the police for saying the word 'bloody' on the picket line outside our own workplace. What we need to do is to get rid of the Tories and get rid of their bosses' laws.

NUCPS/CPSA: Stop this merger!

By Trudy Saunders, DH HQ, CPSA

How would you like to be in the same union as your manager — the same person who has the power to sack you and is instrumental in determining your wages?

How would such a union look? Whose interests would be represented?

These are some of the questions which will be raised over the next few weeks as CPSA (Civil and Public Services Association, low paid clerical and secretarial grades) and NUCPS (National Union of Civil and Public Services, lower to senior management and office support grades) members ballot on whether to merge the two unions.

The different attitudes taken by members in both unions give some answers to the above questions. The vast majority of NUCPS are in favour of the merger, and the NUCPS Executive is calling for a 'Yes' vote. In CPSA it is an entirely different matter with opinions divided across political factions.

Socialist Caucus, the Broad Left and the 'Moderates' are against this merger — for a number of different reasons (Militant favours a merger, but not this one), while the Kinnockite/Morning Star alliance, 'Broad Left '84', are in favour.

Amongst ordinary members there is a great deal of suspicion and unease at the thought of belonging to the same union as line managers.

So why are NUCPS happy to merge? Is it because in the parts of the Civil Service where, for historical reasons, executive grades (who would normally be in NUCPS) are in the CPSA, these executive grades dominate the union structures?

In the Lord Chancellor's Department (LCD), for example, clerical and secretarial grades are grossly under-represented on the Section Executive Committee (SEC). All major posts and the majority of the SEC posts are filled by executive/managerial grades. It is no coincidence that LCD clerical/secretarial grades are amongst the most vehement opponents of the proposed merger.

So are the NUCPS pushing the merger because they know that despite being in a minority in a merged union, NUCPS grades would dominate? If so, what does

this mean for CPSA grades who need union representation against NUCPS grades? How will merged branches work? Union reps could and are likely to also be bosses — the very people with whom CPSA grades are constantly in dispute.

These questions are crucial at a time when the Tories are viciously attacking jobs, services and conditions of civil servants — and NUCPS grades are implementing these cuts. Of course, it's true that being in the same union as CPSA grades may galvanise some NUCPS grades into taking action against Tory attacks and refusing to implement cuts, but such members would probably do so anyway, with or without a merger. There is no escaping the fact that in the here and now CPSA and the majority of NUCPS members have different interests to defend.

Fundamentally, and in the long term, CPSA and NUCPS members are fighting for the same things. But now NUCPS members sack and victimise CPSA members, implement staff cuts and worsening conditions of service and cut CPSA grades' wages.

A merged union would certainly not see an end to these problems, and CPSA members would suffer for it.

And as if this were all not reason enough not to merge, NUCPS are forcing undemocratic rule changes on a merged union. CPSA members have a long history of fighting to democratise the union. The terms of the merger mean that the democratic rules we have fought for and won would be replaced by bureaucratic and undemocratic methods.

Working with NUCPS members to fight the Tories is an entirely different matter. There is no reason why we cannot, for example, respect picket lines and pool financial resources. We do not need a bureaucratic merger to do this. Nor is there any reason why joint CPSA / NUCPS campaigns cannot be run on the number of issues which affect both sets of members. The strength of the CPSA lies in the fact that it is a union which does not include executive grades. It is vital we keep it this way.

The 'Stop the Merger' campaign is a broad-based campaign set up by CPSA members to campaign to defeat the merger. For more information contact Steve Battlemuch, 191 Burford Road, Forest Fields, Nottingham.

Sacked oil workers speak out

Sacked oil workers based in the Merseyside Trade Union centre in Liverpool are being kept busy with invitations to speak at local trade union meetings.

The workers, members of the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC), are remaining in Liverpool to build support for their dispute until its demands have been met: union recognition, implementation of the Health and Safety Act, and reinstatement of all sacked workers.

"We have had a lot of support from Trades Councils," said one

of the victimised workers. "We had an invitation from Birmingham Trades Council and went to speak there last Thursday. We expect to be speaking at Liverpool Trades Council next month."

"We have also spoken at meetings of workers on the ferry boats, members of MSF, Vauxhall shop stewards, members of the TGWU at Fords, Merseyside Docks Board shop stewards, and workers at the Stanlow oil terminal."

"Last week some of us were in Blackpool for the Labour Party conference and spoke at fringe meetings there as well. When we have spoken at meetings we call for moral and financial support."

"Oil workers will also be sup-

porting the demonstration in Glasgow on 20 October in support of the Ravenscraig workers.

"On the rigs themselves, the 24-hour stoppages have been called off because we are still working to contract — no more than 12 hours a day for 14 days. Balloting for strike action is underway at the moment, and the deadline is 16 October. After that we will have 28 days in which to call a strike."

"Hopefully we will get the result we want from the ballot and then away we go, because we will be official then."

Trade union and Labour Party activists in Liverpool should help the OILC members get a hearing in as many workplaces and

labour movement meetings as possible. If Liverpool Trades Council were to set up a support committee at its October meeting, it would be a big step forward in building support for the OILC members.

Donations for the OILC/invitations for speakers should be sent to OILC, c/o Merseyside Trade Union Community and Unemployed Resource Centre, Hardman St, Liverpool. Phone: 051 709 3995.

Correction: In an article on the OILC dispute in last week's SO, Eugene Rutherford was wrongly described as "secretary of the Liverpool branch of the OILC". In fact there is no such position as "secretary" and we apologise for this mistake.

News in brief

The engineering bosses look to be preparing for a possible offensive against the unions. The employers' federation has produced a pamphlet warning of 80,000 redundancies in the next year as a result of the coming recession. Already redundancies have been announced at GEC in Edinburgh and NEI Parsons, Newcastle.

After losing the hours battle to the unions, management now seem to be regrouping for an offensive aimed at worsening working conditions.

A new ballot is to be held for the post of general secretary of the National Union of Journalists. Daily Mirror

reporter Steve Turner, the right-winger who was the original ballot winner, was not prepared to accept the terms and conditions offered him. Left-winger Jake Ecclestone is to contest the election.

Railworkers have started a series of 24-hour strikes in protest at the closure of 25% of the maintenance depots in the London Midlands region.

The maintenance staff who are taking the action say that cuts on this scale will make the railways a more dangerous way to travel. Maintenance workers will be tired after travelling greater distances and working longer hours.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER



It's not too late to fight back

Vladimir Derer of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy assesses the Labour Party conference

The outcome of most votes at this week's conference was determined by the

widespread feeling that any departure from policies pushed by the leadership would rock the electoral boat.

However, the effect on electors of Labour's new image, assiduously promoted by Walworth Road, must remain in doubt.

For it is the collapse of confidence in the Thatcher government and the Alliance debacle which are responsible for Labour's current opinion poll lead and by-election victories. Labour remains credible, even though the party's economic and industrial policies are not going to work.

But is total abandonment of socialist objectives the price that has to be paid for credibility? The answer is no. There are no grounds for such a retreat.

If Labour's public relations 'experts' have failed to convince the electors they certainly convinced Labour Party members: NEC documents were endorsed, almost without dissent. While some decisions reflect genuine conviction, others — such as on trade union laws — were carried because the leadership had made them votes of confidence.

Nevertheless, members' confidence in our present leadership is strictly limited. They may have given the party leader a standing ovation, but on a number of issues he and the NEC were defeated.

Conference overwhelmingly reaffirmed last year's decision to reduce defence spending to the average level of other West European countries. Only Jo Richardson's refusal to allow a card vote prevented the confirmation of the NEC's constitutional obligation to include this policy in the party programme.

Conference also rejected the NEC's proposal — the so-called 'trigger mechanism' — to do away with mandatory reselection. Conference called for the next Labour government to reinstate the link between state pensions and average earnings, and defied the leadership by supporting the Pergamon strikers.

On other issues the NEC either changed its position or asked for remission. Thus on the question of retaining the vote of affiliated organisations in the final selection of parliamentary candidates, the NEC did an about-face.

The same can be said on the question of the Black Socialist Society and Labour women's demand for equal representation. But it took years of rank-and-file campaigning to make these breakthroughs.

On composites defending the right to send amendments to Conference and calling for the right to amend NEC statements, the Executive merely asked for remission. This despite the fact that these proposals are quite inconsistent with the new procedures outlined in the NEC's document 'Democracy and Policy Making in the 1990s'.

Turn to page 2

SAS shoots to kill

By Clive Bradley

Is Britain once more operating a "shoot to kill" policy against suspected Irish Republicans?

There is strong ground for suspicion. The latest killings — of Desmond Grew and Martin McCaughey, last Tuesday, 9th — were carried out by the SAS, which had been conducting a surveillance operation and seemingly had a policy of "no prisoners". It has many of the marks of the old RUC "shoot to kill" policy, exposed by John Stalker and others.

Mrs Thatcher herself may have given the game away in a recent speech. In an outburst after Ian Gow MP was killed, Thatcher said that between Britain and the IRA there was "war".

Officially Britain pretends that the war is just a police operation. It treats Irish Republican Army soldiers as criminals, not prisoners of war. Thatcher hastily corrected her slip. But it is the plain truth.

And the British Army seems to be escalating the war. The British people are keyed up for it by the tabloid press. Said the *Daily Star*, next to a photo of one of those killed: "This IRA assassin murdered at least 12 people. One was a baby shot in the face... Yesterday he was put down by the SAS".

Put them down. The IRA are animals who deserve to die. That is the message. They are a bunch of



murdering madmen. Their actions are inhuman, without rhyme or reason beyond pure "evil".

Thatcher's slip was closer to the mark. There is a war. What makes men like Dessie Grew take up the gun and point it at British soldiers — and others whom they believe to be linked with them — is not insani-

ty. It is a political response to a deep political problem. It is a political problem that will not go away just because the SAS have shot Dessie Grew dead.

Perhaps it could be said that Grew and others like him knew the risks. If you fight a war, you must expect to be killed.

But if the British army is given free rein to shoot on sight anyone they suspect of being a terrorist, then it will not only be the staunchest IRA cadres who are shot.

The security forces make mistakes. They lock up the innocent for years. If the army were allowed to "put down" suspected IRA members at will, the Guildford Four would now be dead.

The British army knows, and has said, that it cannot defeat the IRA. That is not because it lacks the security apparatus to locate IRA members. It is because the IRA has roots in the Catholic ghettos. The more the army tries to wipe it out, the deeper will be the resentment in those ghettos, and the more recruits there will be to fill the places of those dead.

There cannot be a military solution to this political problem. For over twenty years, British governments have been trying to find a military solution. And all they have done is to make the problem more intractable, harder to disentangle.

The problem is that one third of the population of Northern Ireland does not want the state of Northern Ireland to exist. They want a united Ireland.

The existence of the unviable Northern Ireland state has meant, from the beginning, that the Catholic minority faces discrimination. Protestants are poor, but Catholics even poorer; Protestants have bad housing, Catholics even worse.

So long as this situation continues, there will be those prepared to take up arms to fight against it.

NUM Conference backs Scargill

I was pleased to hear that the Special Delegate Conference to discuss the Lightman report came out the way it did — in support of Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield.

I don't accept the Lightman Report because there are inaccuracies in it. I am very pleased that we have still got a commitment to the International Miners' Organisation (IMO). But people like Kim Howells and Kevin Barron are still trying to stir up the shit. Miners should take note of the activities of these people.

The NUM General Secretary has written to the Coal Board requesting negotiations over wages. The Coal Board has written back saying that unless we accept the majority-minority principle, and the conciliation — consultative machinery that goes with it, they will not sit down and talk with the NUM.

We do not accept this principle.

WHETTON'S WEEK



A miner's diary

It goes back to 1947 when we signed the original conciliation — consultation agreements, which the Coal Board ended with one blow.

We stick by our principles. The NUM is the majority union in the

country. It is the majority union in the majority of areas.

Even in Nottinghamshire in the pits where the NUM has got a majority of members, the Coal Board does not recognise that fact.

We are saying that we should negotiate the wages for mineworkers. The Coal Board is saying that they will sit down with the UDM: but they are refusing to sit down with the National Union.

We have a choice. Either we sit back and accept whatever Roy Lynk "negotiates". Negotiates is in inverted commas because all Roy Lynk does is rubber-stamp the Coal Board's decisions.

It is now six years after the miners' strike. We have never had a say in negotiating wages, because of the Coal Board's attitude.

We are saying that it is about time we had some industrial action. And that is what the ballot is going to be about.

We are balloting about negotiating rights and wages.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

Oil workers' leader defends SO

The ban on *Socialist Organiser* must be resisted. Just looking at the issue from the context of the oil industry, it strikes me that there is no way that the next Labour government would want us to disrupt production. So you need a strong and effective voice for workers' rights speaking out within the Labour Party.

For that reason *Socialist Organiser* has got to be defended.

Ronnie MacDonald
Chair, Offshore Industry Liaison Committee