

Where now
for the
unions?



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wreckers
in NUS



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For Socialist Renewal!



For Workers' Liberty!

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The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth
40p

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learn
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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Worst
slump since
the '30s

Tory lies hide jobs massacre

After nearly 13 years of Tory rule, Britain is now bumping along the bottom of the worst economic slump for 60 years!

Who says that? The Treasury, whose job it is to monitor the economy says it. The experts say it. The experience of millions of unemployed workers, whose jobs

have been, and are being massacred, says it.

And what do the Tories say as the General Election draws near? They say — that is, their newspapers say — that one member of Kinnock's shadow cabinet has been having an affair! That Kinnock was once on the left and a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Now they say that Neil Kinnock has

had "suspicious" contacts with the Russian secret service!

Already this is one of the dirtiest Tory election campaigns on record. The offensive against Labour around the charge that a Labour government will tax the sweets out of children's mouths, did them good in the polls. But nothing like enough.

Their response is to get dirtier

and dirtier. The Tories are said to have built up dossiers on large numbers of Labour candidates. Membership, however long ago, of CND or of some left-wing campaign or group, will come back to haunt many a Labour candidate.

Such is the Tory demand for

Turn to page 2



Tommy Sheridan jailed over poll tax and freed on appeal

Militant launch Scots "party"

By Jim Kearns

Last Thursday, 30 January, saw the official launch of Scottish Militant Labour (SML) with a rally in Glasgow.

Ronnie Stevenson, a leading organiser for SML, announced from the chair that this was "the beginning of a new, open and democratic organisation in Scotland, committed to driving out the Tories".

Anyone with any knowledge of Militant in Scotland (or anywhere else for that matter) would take a bit of convincing about Stevenson's pledge.

It was obvious that Militant had built heavily for the event throughout Scotland. In the end, about 350 people turned up. The jailing of Tommy Sheridan two days before the rally gave further prominence to Militant in the media. (Sheridan was subsequently released on Friday 31 January pending an appeal against his vicious and politically-motivated six month sentence.)

By any standards it was a strange event. Given the reasonably big crowd and the fact that it was supposedly the launch of a new self-styled "Scottish revolutionary party", you would be justified in expecting something a bit different.

However it was the usual monotonous, mind-numbing affair that only Militant can really produce.

Alen McCoombes, speaking on behalf of the Editorial Board of SML, did his best to excite the crowd by explaining the much-vaunted "Scottish turn".



Albert Reynolds, the next Prime Minister of the 26 County Republic of Ireland. He is expected to win the vote in the election to succeed Charles J. Haughey as leader of Fianna Fail, the main party in the ruling coalition.

Charles J. Haughey, whose parents fled south from Ulster to escape an Orange pogrom 70 years ago, retires, vastly rich and surrounded by an aura of political and financial scandal.

the Labour Party which will welcome them with open arms as returning heroes. If that doesn't convince anyone they can always play semantics by calling themselves Militant Labour, Real Labour, etc. — stupid, political delusions using word games.

It would seem that Militant in Scotland is now leading their whole organisation into political oblivion. That is not to say that they will not remain a sizeable group or even grow in the short term. What is certain is that they will become increasingly irrelevant in terms of real politics in the Scottish labour movement.

As for the pledge to be an open and democratic organisation, there seems to be little chance of that if the expulsion of the Grant faction or their monolithic control of the Anti-Poll Tax Federation is anything to go by. Militant might have broken from some of their past, but they are still definitely the rigid, Stalinoid sect they always were in terms of their organisational methods.

The writing is clearly on the wall for SML and Militant as a whole — and it says in big letters "here went the SLL and the SWP". Both of which, in the past, set out on similar roads to that of Militant, only to end up in a sterile, sectarian world of toy-town Bolshevism.

Scottish Militant are only the latest organisation to set off on a binge to "build the revolutionary party". A binge from which they cannot return.

The strange political spectacle of the SML launch rally is merely a foretaste of a lot more strange politics from that particular organisation in the months and years to come.

The reasoning seems to go as follows: Scottish capitalism is in deeper crisis than anywhere else in Britain. Linked to the poll tax and the worst housing in Western Europe, this has driven the Scottish working class to the left. The Labour Party has simultaneously moved to the right. SML will therefore build as an organisation independent and in competition with the Labour Party. SML will grow and return to the Labour Party at some unspecified date in the future. Meanwhile, Tommy Sheridan is going to stand in Pollock against the right-wing, witch-hunting MP Jimmy Dun-

nachie. All of the above will contribute to "driving out the Tories"! Membership cards were then made available at the back of the hall for anyone interested in joining the new organisation.

Now by any reckoning this represents a dramatic shift in the politics of Militant. It would appear that established dogmas, decades-old have been dumped as easily as old Ted Grant himself.

There were also strains of continuity as well as change in McCoombes' speech. What held

all this new "analysis" together was the same old Militant dirge: that is, an exposition of the horrors of capitalism counterposed to the wonders of the socialist transformation of society via the election of a "socialist Labour government".

The obvious contradiction here hits you straight in the face: what is the connection between SML and their stated aim of creating a "socialist Labour government"? The answer is, of course, none!

Militant are now trying to square the circle by spinning daydream scenarios of the day when they return en masse to

The lie machine



So you thought it was the Tories who were organising a smear campaign against Labour? No, no, says the Express. This is the thief shouting "stop thief" to confuse the issue!



The Mail leads with the Liberal Democrats' attempt to turn the increasingly dirty campaign to their own advantage, coming forward as the Clean Party. They have just had a clutch of Tower Hamlets councillors thrown out for electoral malpractice!



"It is nice to know somebody out there doesn't believe the press", writes Fergie to unexpected friends... front page news!



Today is getting itself a name as Rupert Murdoch's emissary to the Labour Party — being nice to Labour now to buy off the next Labour government from acting about press barons like Murdoch. Can that be the explanation for putting on the front page this ten-year-old scandal about an ex-Tory Thatcherite minister, who is leaving Parliament at the next election? Maybe they should try harder.

New axings bring chaos in Liverpool

Another eight members of the Labour Group on Liverpool City Council were suspended by the Labour Party NEC last week.

One result of the latest suspensions is the reduction of the official Labour Group on the City Council to a minority rump. The official Labour Group now numbers 33, whilst the number of expelled and suspended Labour

councillors amounts to 35. The combined impact of the right wing's blatant manipulation of the re-selection procedure and of its ever more savage attacks on the council workforce — a special council meeting held on Christmas Eve voted to sack over 200 street cleaning workers — will be to undermine Labour's prospects in the council elections in May. The benefits are likely to go to the Liberal Democrats rather than the "Liverpool

Labour Councillors" (LLC). The latter, which consists of expelled Labour councillors, is increasingly split between the Militant faction (Broad Left) and the non-Militant faction (Liverpool Independent Labour Party). The ILP announced last week that it would be contesting at least nine wards in Liverpool in the elections in May. Three of the wards, at least, will also be contested by Militant candidates — as well as the official Labour candidates.

Labour can beat the Tory liars

From front page

"dirt" on Labour candidates that — according to the Guardian — there has been a large number of break-ins of their premises or of their solicitor's premises, where some of them keep papers!

The Tories are desperate. The British electoral system gives the government lots of constitutional advantages over the opposition. Yet only one government in the history of the country — william pit's government — has lost an election. — in fact themselves, they can also manipulate the economy to sway voters. The Tories did all this shamelessly in 1962 and 1970. Plainly, they will not be able to do it this time.

The state of the economy dictates and condemns the Tories, and nothing they can do now will change or soften that condemnation. Time is running out. Constitutionally, they can not push the election further back than July. Ditching Thatcher has not saved them: they know they face the serious possibility of defeat.

So they get dirtier and dirtier. Just how shameless and unscrupulous the Tories are was shown this week in Hong Kong. While the Tories were raising

a ridiculous fuss about Kinnock and the Russian KGB, 18 Vietnamese boat people detained in Hong Kong died because of the savage conditions they and others are kept in by the British-controlled administration carrying out a policy that pleases the neo-Stalinist Chinese government!

Faced with this growing Tory electoral malpractice, all Kinnock and his friends can do is squeal and protest and ask for "fair play". They have let the Tories justify their own malpractice.

"defence" that they dare not answer "charges" about CND membership with "So what?" — any more than they dare advocate the massive arms cuts most British voters could be persuaded to support after the collapse of Stalinism in the ex-USSR. All Kinnock can do is wait in hope.

The good news is that the Tories are probably right to feel vulnerable and desperate. Despite Kinnock, they might be in their last weeks of controlling Britain.

Red Scare nothing new



There is nothing new about the Tory tradition of using the Red Scare to frighten voters. The use of the "Communist Party" is a constant.

The first Labour government was elected in January 1924. It was a minority government, dependent on Liberal votes. Forced to the polls after 9 months, Labour faced a vicious election campaign in which a forged "letter" from the President of the Communist International, Gregory Zinoviev, was used to whip up a red-scare election.

Above: Zinoviev, who was later shot during Stalin's purges of the 1930s.

Irish workers march against violence

As we go to press, three people were killed in a new sectarian attack in Northern Ireland, this time on Sinn Fein's headquarters.

Today (5 February) several thousand workers have marched in Belfast to protest against sectarian violence. The march was called by the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and supported by TUC General Secretary, Norman Willis.

Hope for Northern Ireland depends on uniting workers from the Protestant and Catholic communities on a class basis. Last year, a protest strike brought out one factory's workers from both communities against the sectarian murders of some workmates.

Violence against almost arbitrary by both sides in the conflict only splits the working class and thus makes living and working conditions worse for all workers.

The march needs to be the start of a serious campaign.

Birmingham Poly 400 protest: No to expulsions!

By Mick Duncan, Birmingham Poly Student Union Labour Club

About 400 students and trade union members gathered at Birmingham Poly on Tuesday 28 January.

Students are angry about the appalling conditions faced at Birmingham Poly, and in education in general. The directors' decision to expel students for their part in an occupation outraged staff and students alike.

The demonstration is just part of an ongoing campaign at the Poly which will include a national demonstration through the city centre.

Speakers at the rally included Terry Fields MP, and NUS NEC member and Socialist Organiser supporter Alice Sharp, as well as Student Union reps.

The directors' response has been to start procedures to expel two more, bringing the total so far to 7, and it may not end there.

Keep the messages of support coming in to the Student Union, Birmingham Poly, Franchise Street, Perry Barr, Birmingham.



Uniting across Europe

We can learn from the bosses

Last Saturday (1st), and again on Tuesday 4th, the front-page lead headline in the *Financial Times*, the daily bulletin of big business and the City, was about the German steel workers' pay dispute.

Whatever the rest of the press thought, from a hard-headed

capitalist point of view, that was the most important story. Whatever the theories of ex-left academics and dilettantes about the industrial class struggle becoming outmoded, the practical men and women of the profit system know otherwise.

The German steel workers voted 87 per cent for strike action, in a 95% turnout. The strike was avoided at the last minute, when the bosses backed down and offered a 6.35% rise.

According to the *FT* the steel workers are likely to accept this reluctantly — "nursing their grievances" — but the increase is large enough to alarm German bosses.

Bank workers are coming next. They will be less likely than ever to accept their bosses' 4.5% offer. 2.7 million public service workers are demanding a 9.5% increase — including catch-ups for low-paid workers — and four million engineering workers also want 9.5%.

All the short-term prospects of European capitalism hang on these battles. If the workers win big rises, then Germany's central bank, the Bundesbank, will retaliate by raising interest rates (or not cutting them when

otherwise it would have done).

With Western Europe's currencies closely tied together in the Exchange Rate Mechanism, the Bundesbank's decisions, by regulating the deutschmark, regulate financial policy in Bri-

"Whatever the theories of ex-left academics and dilettantes about the industrial class struggle becoming outmoded, the practical men and women of the profit system know otherwise."

tain and France, Italy and the Netherlands, too.

Europe's capitalists develop their strategies on a continental, not a national, scale.

More and more urgently, Europe's workers and Europe's labour movements need to do the same. In the war of words

leading up to the German steel workers' strike vote, the bosses' main argument was always that the German wages were becoming too high compared to other European countries.

In Britain, where wages are lower, Ford bosses have recently been trying to put the squeeze on their workers by using the fact that productivity is higher in Germany.

The European Community's Single Market means that workers' wages and conditions will tend to level out across Europe. The differences have already narrowed a lot: the spectrum between Spain and Germany was index 42 to 145 in 1970, and only 82 to 120 in 1991, with most other EC countries clustering in between.

The question is, will it be levelling-down or levelling-up? European workers and trade unionists must organise across national borders to level up.

The nationalists and the "Little Britain" enthusiasts in our own ranks have been allowed to set the tone on these questions for too long. People like the Alf Garnett of the left, Dennis Skinner; the now shrivelled and incognito one-time "Communist

Party"; the trade union officials dreaming foolishly of their pre-Thatcher days of cosy relations with Whitehall officials; and the shameless chameleons and mimics of the "revolutionary left" who echoed the others — these people and their prejudices have too long inhibited the left where Europe is concerned.

Learn the lesson from the bosses' Euro-strategies and the beginning of a revival of German working-class militancy: unite the left in Europe!

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

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STUDENTS

Left Unity candidates for student elections

Socialists challenge Kinnockite leadership



Hammond: victim of a bureaucratic stitch-up

Hard done-by Hammond

Poor old Eric Hammond has been the victim of a thoroughly unfair bureaucratic stitch-up. No, don't laugh: this is quite serious, actually.

Last week's Labour Party NEC voted to disbar 11 EETPU delegates to Birmingham Ladywood Constituency Labour Party. No reasons were given, apparently on the novel grounds of "personal privacy". Objections from Nigel Harris, the AEU representative on

the NEC, were brushed to one side and Neil Kinnock spoke against the EETPU with the kind of vehemence usually reserved for the *Militant* tendency.

As it happens, there is a *Militant* connection to the harsh treatment meted out to Eric and his boys: the EETPU was attempting to oust Clare Short MP as Labour candidate for the safe Ladywood seat; Clare, of course, has distinguished herself as Kinnock's most useful anti-*Militant* "left wing" witchhunter.

Now, it is certainly true that in the run-up to the Ladywood selection process there was a sudden influx of EETPU delegates to the constituency. It may also be true that many of those delegates had little apparent connection with the electrical or plumbing trades. But in the past, the Labour Party has been quite happy to accept the *bona fides* of such unlikely EETPU members as headmasters, interior design consultants, and advertising executives: this was, according to accepted practice on the NEC, an "internal matter" for the union not the Labour Party. In Ladywood, it seems, the accepted practice no longer applies.

Bro. Hammond has particular reason to feel hard done by, given the same NEC meeting's decision regarding the role of the GMB in another Birmingham constituency, Small Heath. Ever since the selection of one Roger Godsiff in November 1990, there have been complaints that the Small Heath selection process was, to put it mildly, irregular. For a start, Mr Godsiff (a former officer of APEX, now merged with the GMB) appears to have had remarkable fore-knowledge of the decision of incumbent MP Dennis Howell (an APEX/GMB member) to stand down.

Shortly before the selection process began, a large number of GMB delegates, representing a hitherto unsuspected GMB mass membership in the Small Heath area, appeared on the party's membership list. With the support of these "delegates", Mr Godsiff secured the Small Heath nomination.

However, documents were leaked from the GMB's regional headquarters showing that all these "delegates" had had their GMB membership dues paid for by Mr Godsiff personally and that none of them worked in the hotel or catering industries (they "represented" a Hotel/Catering branch). The Secretary of the GMB branch involved stated publicly that she had no knowledge of these people, either as union members or as Labour Party delegates.

Finally, the individuals concerned told BBC's *Newsnight* that they were not aware of being GMB members and did not understand how it was that they were being invited to Constituency Labour Party meetings.

The Labour Party's Joyce Gould conducted no less than two investigations into this affair, both of which substantially confirmed the facts described above. Nevertheless, last week's NEC confirmed Mr Godsiff's nomination. The "irregularities" were, apparently, an "internal matter" for the GMB, of no concern to the Labour Party.



INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

By Steve Mitchell, VP FEUD (personal capacity)

Left Unity met last weekend and agreed to stand a slate of candidates for the forthcoming National Union of Students (NUS) executive elections.

Janine Booth, NUS Women's Officer, will be standing for President, with Mark Sandell and Kevin Sexton also contesting full-time positions. Alice Sharp's candidature for NUS Women's Officer was also endorsed.

The campaign will focus on the record of the Labour Student (NOLS) leadership over the last decade. Instead of



Janine Booth: Left Unity candidate for President

building a fightback amongst the rank and file against the Tories, NUS has relied on the support of right-wing saboteurs. Last term, when thousands of students took action against student poverty, NUS preferred to organise for NUS reform.

Left Unity's campaign will be arguing for basic student unionism and for socialism. The last few years have seen ideas of collectivity and participatory democracy under attack as right-wingers see student unions as small businesses of which they can play at being manager.

Janine will be defending those ideas and linking them to a perspective of students joining with the labour movement to stop the attacks on students and workers, and fighting for an open, democratic education system.

Already the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) have said they will vote for Kinnockites and Independents rather than Left Unity can-

didates. They would rather see the right-wing lead NUS, with the sort of politics which are ruining the union, than a socialist "competitor" in a good position to help students fight debt and education cuts.

Even after only a few days, messages of support for Janine are coming into the Left Unity office. Rallies and meetings are planned in thirty colleges. Pledges of support from Irish and Scottish colleges are particularly encouraging.

For more information about the campaign, for speakers etc. write to 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5 or 'phone 071-639 7965.

Defend student democracy

Stop these

By Alice Sharp, NUS NEC (personal capacity)

The date and place have been set for the Extraordinary Conference of the National Union of Students: 4 March, Wolverhampton. Only the third in the last 20

years of NUS history, this Extraordinary Conference will cost something in the region of £60,000 to £100,000. It will discuss and pass policy not on any emergency or urgent issue of the day, but on "reform" of the union's internal structures.

Why the fake "emergency"? Why call such a conference at such great ex-

pense? It will only be 12 weeks since the last national conference (including the Christmas break) and only five weeks to the next national conference (mid-April).

In short: why blatantly ignore and side-step the constitution of the national union in order to push these "reforms" through? That is what is happening.

For six years now, the NUS leadership has been trying to "reform" the union's structure. Time and again, at 11 NUS conferences, they have been knocked back. Demoralised and desperate, the NUS leadership still see no alternative strategy for harsh times, so now they hope to capitalise on the weariness of the membership and ram through "reform" mob-handed.

At the NUS conference in December, the "reforms" once more failed to get the required two-thirds majority. The NUS constitution states that no issue decided at an NUS conference can be re-opened at the same conference. NUS President Stephen Twigg flouted the constitution and forced a "re-vote" which got the two-thirds majority for abolition of NUS's Winter Conference.

Such constitutional changes require a two-thirds majority at two successive conferences. Especially after their outrageous bulldozing at the December conference, the NUS leaders knew they were unlikely to get their two-thirds majority at the forthcoming April conference.

They have called an emergency conference because they are much more likely to get a two-thirds majority there. Delegates can be appointed, not elected; and Further Education college student unions, short of cash, are unlikely to send delegates at all. The emergency conference is therefore certain to be unrepresentative, dominated by union officials from the universities and polytechnics.

Those are the people most likely to support the "reforms", the gist of which is to transform NUS from a union organising students to campaign for their demands





NUS needs a leadership that will fight student debt and education cuts

Tackling anti-semitism on the left

FIGHTING RACISM

By Kevin Feintuck

Up to now I have always thought that *Socialist Organiser's* campaign against "left" anti-semitism exaggerated the way in which anti-Zionism is used as a form of anti-semitism.

Events at the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) conference last Saturday have made me re-examine the issue.

A resolution was moved which dealt with "the growth across Europe of physical attacks on blacks, immigrants and, in Eastern Europe in particular, Jewish communities". The motion proposed affiliation to the Anti-Racist Alliance.

During the debate two comments were made which sharply illustrated the existence of thinly-veiled anti-semitism.

Early in the debate a speaker, someone newly appointed to the CLPD EC, made a disturbing remark. The speaker, apparently from an East London constituency where the fight against racism is a life and death issue, said "Arabs in Britain are the victims of racism from Zionists".

I objected to the crass irrelevance of such remarks. If Arabs are attacked it is by racists rather than people with a particular opinion on the Israel/Palestine question.

But the issue was not settled. Ray Sirockin, of Socialist Action and Deptford CLP, defended the original contribution, declaring "many Jewish people hold deeply racist views towards Arabs and have done so since the Six Day War of 1967".

This prompted Sophie Nicol, also from the CLPD EC, to object to the way Jewish people were being discussed. Quite correctly, Sophie said that in a debate on combatting racism the only references to Jews in the discussion were as perpetrators rather than victims.

Neither the chair nor any of the senior officers saw fit to pursue the matter.

A few points are worth making. Firstly, "Zionism" was used as a code word for "Jews".

Secondly, while we deplore attacks on Jews in Eastern Europe — at least in writing — not only are attacks on Jews in Britain not worthy of mention, but Jews are castigated for their own alleged racism.

Thirdly, this debate took place in a respected organisation of the Labour left. I believe that these issues need dealing with. I am sending a copy of this report to CLPD. I will be including a copy, with any reply received, in the report to my CLP.

wreckers now!

into a services agency with a bit of parliamentary lobbying.

The NUS leaders thus hope to get abolition of the (large and representative) Winter Conference finalised by this (small and unrepresentative) emergency conference. They also hope to get a first two-thirds majority for other "reforms" — regionalisation (meaning the destruction of NUS Area organisation) and changes in NUS Executive (to cut out minority left-wing representation).

With the wind behind their sails, and the opponents of such "reform" demoralised, they reckon to get the second two-thirds majorities for those further "reforms" at the April conference; and then NUS will be safe for careerism and bureaucratic services-agency "unionism" for a long while.

The proposed reforms are basically aimed at closing down democracy and accountability in NUS. The best activists in NUS understand this and have fought hard against the "reform"



NUS's leadership, Stephen Twigg, Lorna Fitzsimmons: they break the constitution and flout democracy. They want to get rid of all accountability in NUS

proposals. Indeed, some of

us have been opposing "reform" since it was first proposed back in 1986.

Now, after six years and 11 NUS conferences of debating and defeating the right's "reforms", many activists are bored and tired with the whole affair (preferring to build campaigns to fight the Tories) — so much so that even outrageous actions by National President Stephen Twigg and his friends go largely unacknowledged by the left.

The constitution clearly states that to call an Extraordinary Conference 25 colleges must submit motions requesting one and stating the topic for discussion. Each motion should be passed by the union's recognised governing body.

Stephen Twigg accepted 34 motions, only 19 of which had been passed in line with the rules stated. Twigg had once more broken the constitution.

The student movement, like the labour movement, has suffered defeats under the Tories. It has been weakened and demoralised. The right wing in NUS has come up with answers like those of the right in the labour movement.

They go something like this. The nature of the movement has changed over the last decade or so. We now live in new times. We have to alter the structures to reflect these changes. NUS needs to be modernised. The old structures are cumbersome and expensive.

In fact, the proposed "reforms" will weaken NUS further. They are, in part, a reaction to the Tories' threats to restructure NUS on a basis of individual voluntary membership, but they will close the union down to rank and file activists, and to the largest section of the membership, working-class

youth in the FE sector. Already carved out and under-represented, FE students will have what little say they've got snatched away.

The national union will become a services agency for the rich and powerful university and polytechnic sector. The reforms will extend and consolidate a transformation — from real student union to student services business — already underway in many universities. Once carried out they will be extremely difficult — almost impossible in the current climate — to reverse. Those best able to fight them will, in effect, be excluded from the new structures.

"The abolition of Winter conference will seal off the leadership from the membership. Accountability will become a thing of the past."

NUS, despite its leadership, is by and large a democratic and open organisation. Its structures, by they Area organisations or the National Executive Committee itself, are open to all its membership.

For sure, the structures could be improved and strengthened. The abolition of the card vote would be an immensely positive reform: it is regularly abused by the big right-wing universities at the expense of larger, but less powerful, sections of the membership. Left Unity has proposed and supported a number of positive reforms over the years, and has fought hard to defeat those reforms that will weaken the national union's strength.

Successful occupation at Bradford College

On Tuesday 4 February, 100 students occupied the director's office at Bradford College.

The demands of the occupation were for £10,000 for childcare provision, and support for the NUS's student charter. The occupation followed a year-long campaign to improve childcare.

The occupation was successful, and all the demands

were met within four hours of the occupation starting. Gloria de Piero, President, said: "The occupation was a definite victory, and shows childcare is an issue we can win on".

50 people signed up for the National Demo and the campaign will continue if the decisions are not carried through. Numerous messages of support were received from local colleges and the Left Unity NEC members.

Dangerous liaisons



The latest "open letter"

GRAFFITI

A story of unrequited love: in 1985 *Socialist Worker* penned a letter proposing a liaison, perhaps even marriage, with *Militant*.

As is usual under these circumstances, many suspected that *SW* was driven by more base desires; they wanted to get their hands on *Militant*'s members.

Time moved on and the two went their separate ways, the *SW* flitted around a series of one night stands — Time To Go, the Alton Bill, and, most memorably, their 1986 flirtation with the Ayatollah Khomeini. *Militant* meanwhile became infatuated with the Poll tax and had eyes for nobody else.

But a few weeks ago *Militant* finally received the decree absolute on its divorce from its long time love, the Labour Party. The relationship had been on the rocks for years, and *SW* often begged *Militant* to end the increasingly oppressive relationship. As ever with these affairs, *Militant* left a little bit of their heart behind.

SW acted fast; another letter, two weeks away from Valentine's Day, appeared in the pages of *SW*. Is it love? Will *SW* and *Militant* get together?

Probably not. The letter is devoid of any real romance, and just boasts about "our party, with its 6000 members..." Size, as they say...

Labour Party full-timer, John McTiernan, delivered some political advice to last week's Labour Students Council on campaigning against the Liberals.

Don't let Paddy Ashdown get away with telling people he is above politics, McTiernan warned his audience. He used to be a unilateralist, he used to be in CND, why, he cynically backtracks to gain votes like every other careerist politician. Sounds like someone else we know, doesn't it Neil?

This week's *Independent on Sunday* marked the forthcoming 40th anniversary of the country's premier social security claimant, one Elizabeth Windsor, with a feature on the chattering class's view of the monarchy.

A few stout Royalists withstanding, the answers were broadly republican, from Nigel Dempster's prediction of a gradual sinking below the waves, through John McVicar's nostalgia-riddled republicanism, to Margaret Drabble's attack on the whole underlying value system — the dinner party crew would seem to want a new picture on their postage stamps.

So how nice to see Bernie Grant asked to comment. Surely the radical Labour MP could cut through the idle speculation of the

intelligentsia with a call to action for the masses...

"I have no difficulties with the existing monarchy", says the member for Tottenham. "A lot of people like and believe in the monarchy; it's one of the institutions that form the British way of life."

So presumably anything which is (a) popular with a section of the population, or (b) institutionalised in the "British way of life" is OK then?

John Major's new caring Conservatives, a party of equal opportunity and fairness to all, doesn't seem to have made it very far.

At least not as far as Cheltenham. The Tory image makers breathed a huge sigh of relief last year when local Tory Bill Galbraith, due to stand trial for incitement to racial hatred for calling the local Tory prospective parliamentary candidate "a bloody nigger", died.

It seems that the ghost of Galbraith still stalks the streets of Cheltenham. Former Tory mayor Dudley Aldridge said last week: "John Taylor won't win Cheltenham. Not only because of his colour, which will affect some people, but because he's not local".

Aldridge is not totally innocent in this — he is planning to stand against Taylor as an independent Conservative...presumably he'd stand against any candidate who wasn't "local".

Aldridge, despite being "local", has some handy career advice for Taylor: "He should have been a candidate in places like Wolverhampton where his colour would have been more appropriate."

But surely, John Taylor isn't local to Wolverhampton Tories, either?



John Taylor: victim of Tory racism

Georgia is getting out of the USSR in a big way. They didn't want to be in the union, so they left.

There were no soviets, nor was there any socialism, so that was easy. That just leaves the republic bit to stamp on.

It seems that the new Georgian leadership has got that sorted, too. A representative of the Georgian National Democratic Party, along with another from the Monarchist Party, has flown to Spain in search of the Bagratons, the Georgian royal family.

The current pretender to the throne, Jorge Bagration, lives near Marbella, and is a consultant to the motor industry. But at 46 he is considered too old to be a king for the first time, although his inability to speak the language of his subjects is not uncommon amongst monarchs.

But the Georgians are seeking to take more pliant material back with them. A younger generation of Prince Regents to be — Jorge's sons Irakly (19) and David (15) — are considered the stuff democracy is made of.

Kinnock eats babies — official

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

There is, of course, nothing new about anti-Labour smears in the British press — especially in the run-up to a general election.

Four days before the election of October 1924 the *Daily Mail* published the infamous "Zinoviev letter" (now known to have been a forgery) that played a significant part in the defeat of the first Labour government.

In the run-up to the February 1974 election MI5 fed stories suggesting close links between Harold Wilson and the KGB to journalists like Chapman Pincher of the *Daily Express*.

What is different about the recent spate of anti-Labour smears in the national press is the direct involvement of Tory Central Office and the skillful use of news manipulation to ensure a knock-on effect throughout the media.

How it works is this: Chris Patten, the Tory Party chairman, liaises with the editor of the *Daily Mail* over the next day's anti-Labour front page lead; Tim Collins from Central Office then distributes a press release containing comments from Ministers on the next day's *Mail* lead; the rest of the press and the broadcast media then carry the story, ensuring a coverage and credibility that carries far beyond the readers of the *Daily Mail*.

The role of the BBC radio news is particularly important, given its reputation for impartiality. As David Hill, Labour's Director of Communications, says, the *Mail* is treated (by the BBC) "as if it is a serious newspaper and not one doing its best to win the election for Conservative Central Office". Apparently, the BBC have now decided, when referring to the *Mail* and the *Express* that they "normally support the Conservative Party" — a description that might be considered to err somewhat on the side of understatement.

The *Sunday Times*'s "Kinnock's Kremlin Connections" scare-story seems not to have originated in Central Office. Indeed, John Major is said to be a little embarrassed by it and has decided to play down the whole "Kremlin Connection" angle — presumably because a very similar story could have been written about Mrs Thatcher and her friend Mr Gorbachev.

The *Sunday Times* story came from Tim Sebastian,



the BBC's former Moscow correspondent turned spy fiction novelist. Mr Sebastian's revelations include the earth-shattering news that Neil Kinnock spoke harshly about Arthur Scargill in the presence of Soviet diplomats: it might have made a better story if Kinnock had praised Scargill, but there you are — you can't have everything.

Mr Sebastian is an enterprising journalist who knows his market. He reckoned, correctly, that the time was right for a good old-fashioned red-scare story against Kinnock and that Andrew Neil, the smarmy right-winger who edits the *Sunday Times*, would snap up this

rather banal material. Neil at first attempted to defend the story (and, more particularly, the hype that preceded it) by claiming that this was "an entirely legitimate journalistic exercise" and vehemently denied any attempt to "smear" Kinnock and Labour.

Mr Neil's protestations were rather undermined when it came to light that the *Sunday Times* circulation department had written to wholesalers that "the subject matter is most timely as speculation surrounding the election is gathering pace and our revelations could have a dramatic effect on events".

Unionists defeated on lesbian and gay rights

OUT AND PROUD

By Kevin Sexton, NUS National Executive Committee (personal capacity)

Last Wednesday (29 January) Queen's University, Belfast,

passed its first policy on Lesbian and Gay rights.

This year the level of awareness of lesbians and gays at the university has been much greater than ever before.

The debate outlined the attacks that lesbians and gays have faced under this Tory government, and what lesbians and gays are demanding from the next government — such as the Repeal of Section 28, Section 30, the equalisation of

the age of consent, etc. The debate was extremely heated, with the Unionists denouncing homosexuality as unnatural, obscene and perverse. The Unionists, claimed that all homosexuals were paedophiles, sexual abusers, and much more.

The two-hour debate finished with a vote that showed the Unionists that students at Queen's University supported lesbian and gay students in the fight for liberation.

Clothes for tiny adults

Apparently that venerable purveyor of underwear, Marks and Spencer, has started selling a range of "sexy" knickers for little girls.

The range includes such garments as French knickers, camisoles, cropped vests and the like. These are miniature versions of adult women's clothes — and the sort of flimsy bits of fabric that I am sure are more often bought than worn!

Of course, M&S, and other "respectable" shops have been selling impractical girls' underwear for years. Despite medical evidence that they contribute to cystitis, nylon pants are on sale to children (boys as well as girls). Walk down any shopping street and you will see short skirts, nylon tights, and miniature high heeled shoes for girls. Once out of baby-grows and nappies the pressure is on for a child to look like a tiny adult. "Sexy" underwear is the logical next step.

The media interest in M&S's latest range (the *Independent*, *Woman's Hour*)



WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

is because M&S is perceived not as a business out to make profit, but a sort of benevolent institution.

We expect good old M&S to be above mere fashion! The truth is that M&S will sell anything that can make a profit on, and if that means bras for girls without breasts — fine.

High Street retailers are not concerned with the ethics of what they are selling. The

earlier they can interest their customers in fashion, the better. Fashion demands constant new purchase: to "keep up", so if children can be persuaded to look fashionable, the retailers have created a whole new market.

Even so, with a vast increase in reported cases of child sexual abuse, any added pressure on children to look "sexy" inevitably sets off alarms. It makes me afraid that children will be thought to be "encouraging" abuse by their clothing, and give abusers an excuse for their abhorrent behaviour.

Children cannot understand the complicated signals associated with silky knickers, and I worry that they may be unknowingly put at risk.

It is more likely that an abuser will abuse a child however she is dressed, but I cannot help being concerned that in breaking down visible barriers between child and adulthood abuse may increase.

Children are going to want adult clothes, no matter what is stocked by M&S. Watching

children sloshing around in unlaced trainers is evidence of that! If adult women buy bits of silk, lace and satin for underwear, their daughters will want the same. The problem is not that parents are under pressure to buy expensive, unsuitable, impractical garments for their children but that they are under so much pressure to buy the adult version for themselves.

"Once out of baby-grows and nappies, the pressure is on for a child to look like a tiny adult."

Fashion is the manipulation, for profit, of otherwise fairly rational beings. Perhaps when M&S starts selling suspender belts and black stockings for toddlers, people will begin to see sense.

Behind the Middle East peace talks

Shamir faces a dilemma

Adam Keller in Tel-Aviv analyses the background to the Middle East peace talks. (From *The Other Israel*, 15 January)

The most profound effect of Madrid was in the Occupied Territories. In general, even those Palestinians who supported the conference expected little to come of it.

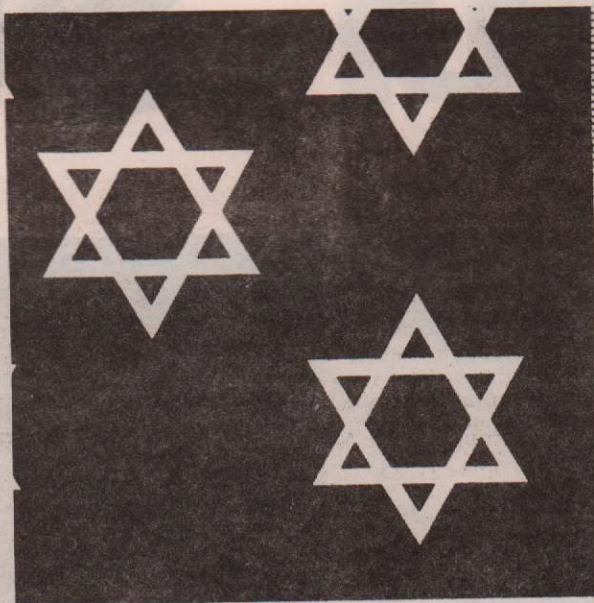
However, the sight of their people's representatives being received by the great powers of the world created a wave of enthusiasm, and even of euphoria, throughout the Occupied Territories.

The returning delegates were given a hero's welcome; Palestinian youths went out into the streets, holding olive branches in their hands, giving them to the laughing soldiers they had been fighting but days before, and even decorating Israeli military vehicles with them — to the great consternation of the Israeli Army High Command.

The time was particularly fitting for what diplomats term *confidence-building measures*. This would have involved Israeli willingness to announce a freeze of settlement activity, a release of prisoners and the legalisation of political activity in the Occupied Territories.

Such steps on the Israeli side would have enabled the Palestinian leadership to proclaim a suspension of the armed struggle, and the Arab states to lift their trade boycott against Israel. This should have been a lucrative deal for any reasonable Israeli government, but it implies a definite abandonment of the "Greater Israel" dream — a price the Shamir government is totally unwilling to pay.

By the middle of November, the government had definitely shaken off the Spirit of Madrid and resolutely embarked upon a series of what Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashwari termed *confidence-destroying measures*: the Palestinian "olive-branch demonstrations" were proclaimed to be "propaganda gimmicks of the terrorists" and soldiers were ordered to disperse them; unofficial promises to reopen Bir-Zeit University (closed since the beginning of the Intifada) were withdrawn;



Shamir faces the threat of US aid cut-offs

settlement activities were increased throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and a considerable slice of the 1992 government budget earmarked for the same purpose and to top it all, the Israeli police evicted Palestinian families from their homes at East Jerusalem's Silwan Village to make place for Jewish settlers.

Palestinian opponents of the Madrid Process contributed their share to the escalation. In particular, George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine embarked upon a series of well-planned ambushes at the sides of main roads in the Occupied Territories — ambushes scheduled to coincide with each stage of the Madrid/Washington talks and leaving numerous Israeli settlers dead and wounded.

The settlers reacted by launching massive retaliation raids upon Arab towns and villages, as well as by extending their settlements beyond the boundaries approved by the government. The army, for its part, responded to the armed attacks by increasingly repressive measures: mass detentions, and the imposi-

tion of prolonged curfews.

The first round of the bilateral negotiations, held in December in Washington, was overshadowed by this escalation.

While the talks were going on, the town of Ramallah — where several Palestinian negotiators have their homes — was under tight military curfew, with armed settlers allowed to rampage in the streets.

The talks were soon bogged down in procedures and

"Soldiers were ordered to disperse olive-branch demonstrations"

technicalities; their main achievement was the creation of a cordial personal contact between the respective heads of the Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian delegations. Chief Israeli negotiator Elyakim Rubinstein, a relative moderate and the only Israeli veteran of Camp David involved in the present talks, was reportedly chafing at the extremely limited mandate he got from Shamir.

In January, the next round of bilateral talks was preceded by a new Shamir provocation: deportation orders against 12 Palestinians. This provided the Palestinians with a United Nations victory largely nullifying the effect of the earlier Israeli success — the UN *Zionism is not racism* certificate.

Things came to a head as the delegates convened in Washington. The procedural deadlock was finally broken and the Israeli and Palestinian delegates were at last able to sit face to face. This breakthrough was followed immediately by a new armed

attack upon settlers in the West Bank and new retaliations by the settlers.

At Washington, these events had the effect of making negotiators on both sides abandon diplomatic language and engage in half an hour's emotional outburst, where all traumas of the Israeli and Palestinian past were laid bare. At the end of this, however, one very concrete step was taken: the Israeli delegates handed to their Palestinian interlocutors a document in which the Israeli government officially undertakes to negotiate on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.

Though the document contained no details, the ministers of the Techiya and Moledet parties — who regard any kind of self-government as inevitably leading to the creation of an independent Palestinian state — were quick to offer their resignation, thus depriving the Shamir government of its parliamentary majority.

For all the provocations which Yitzchak Shamir is willing to countenance or actively support, there is one thing which he cannot afford: to be saddled with the responsibility for the failure of the negotiations.

Over the past year, Yitzchak Shamir has undertaken two incompatible sets of promises and obligations: one towards the hardline Israeli nationalists, inside and outside his own party; the other towards the President of the United States. Soon, he will have to decide on which promises to renege; probably not even Shamir knows himself what his choice will be.

But one thing seems certain: the choice will be connected with the amount of pressure to which Shamir will be exposed from different quarters. For peace-seekers in Israel and abroad, now is the time to mobilise all available forces.

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How to stop

Down but not out

The unions are in retreat. Strikes are at the lowest level for 50 years. Trade union membership has fallen by one quarter since 1979. TUC affiliates now have some 8 million members, 38% of the labour force.

This decline has been structural, not cyclical, reflecting the inability of the movement to recruit and build in the expanding sectors of the 1980s and '90s, particularly private services where union density stands at a mere 7.7%.

The only national strike last year, involving the entire membership, the Card Setting Machine Tenders' Society.

The Tories have succeeded in imposing the most draconian labour laws in Western Europe. This has restricted the unions and severely limited their ability to fight back. The miners, printers, dockers and seafarers have all been pummelled.

New laws aimed at unofficial action on the tube, post office and elsewhere have been relatively successful as stewards know that their

national officials will not back them up.

The Tories have succeeded in one of their central political intentions: they have put the trade union barons out in the cold. Or at least they have made it appear so in public. In reality talks, particularly at lower levels, still continue.

"There are still more trade unionists as a percentage of the workforce in the UK than in the US, Japan, France and Germany."

Perhaps most worrying of all the recent jobs massacre has seen a very limited fightback from the unions. There is now something like 3.6 million people unemployed but only a few groups of workers like those at GEC Openshaw have dug their heels in and fought back. The

limited revival in wages militancy that went with the Lawson boom is over.

But it would be wrong to be overcome by pessimism: there are limits to the retreat.

There are still more trade unionists, as a percentage of the workforce, in the UK than in the US, Japan, France and Germany. Stewards' organisation has remained remarkably resilient though their ability to negotiate over non-wage issues like staffing, redeployment of labour, speed of work and overtime has declined.

Pay levels outstripped inflation in the 1982-9 period, demonstrating that, despite the Thatcherite offensive, the unions are still able to defend their members. Attempts to impose pay freezes like that at Rolls Royce last May have been beaten back.

The last year has also seen new groups of workers move into action for the first time. For instance, Barclays Bank strikers in Cheshire sent out flying pickets as far afield as Gloucester, Poole and Manchester in an attempt to shut down some of the bank's key operations. All is still very far from lost.

A perspective for the rank and file

Despite all the Tory attacks there is still tremendous strength in the labour movement. If we learn from the lessons of our defeats we can change the whole industrial and political situation.

The alternative is for the working class movement to roll over and die in the face of the biggest slump for sixty years.

What do we need to do?

1. Repair the ravages to shop floor organisation, only this time on a higher political basis. Shop stewards' must be equipped with socialist perspectives and a programme for trade union democracy which also concerns itself with the broader labour movement. Initiatives like *Trade Union News*, which seek to link together union activists providing information and socialist perspectives, must be supported.

Is it whistling in the dark to talk like this when the movement is still in a period of retreat?

Remember how the Minority Movement, the most effective, integrated, and comprehensive rank

and file movement ever, started! It was launched amidst the collapse of militancy in the early '20s and was effective thanks to a strong political backbone.

2. Continue the fight in the Labour Party. The Labour Party is still the political arm of the labour movement. A Labour victory in the next election is vital; all diversions and protest candidates are counter-productive. There is no serious alternative to continuing this fight. Kinnock has control for now, but he has no answers.

Immediately, that means fighting for a minimum wage, and a charter of positive rights for trade unionists to replace the Tory anti-union laws. At the same time we need to build up trade union opposition to any incomes policy which will be used by Kinnock, Smith and Willis to make workers pay for the crisis.

3. The entire labour movement must be regenerated and renewed, and given the objective of taking power, in place of its old, merely reformist, objectives.

4. The struggles in the Labour Party and in the trade unions, the struggle of black people and

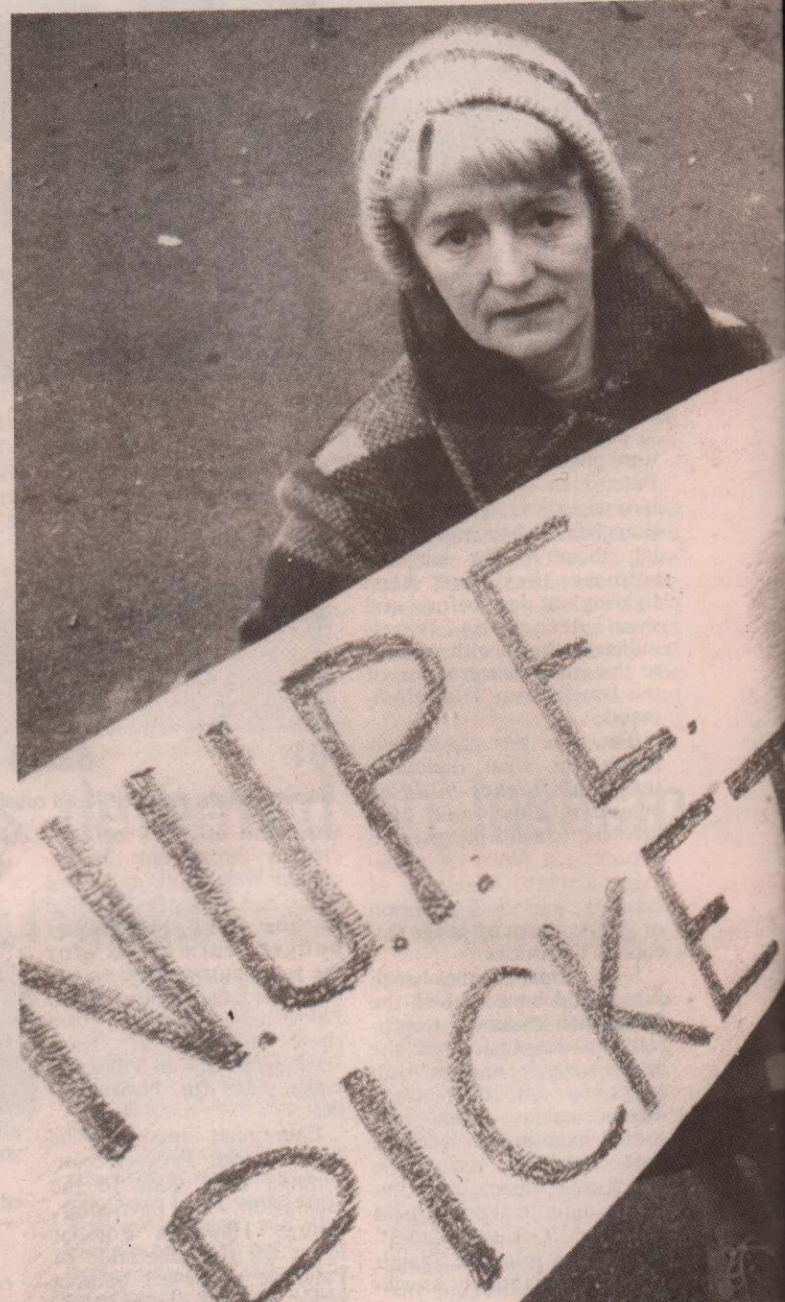
women, must be linked together and integrated into a movement with a coherent strategy not only against the Tories but against capitalism itself.

One of the lessons of the miners' strike is the great need for a national network of rank and file militants, linking up across the unions and capable of delivering the solidarity denied by the union leaders. Right now, militants should work within the existing Broad Lefts, inadequate and bureaucratic though they are, but with the perspective of creating a genuine broad democratic rank and file movement on the model of the Minority Movement. The next step must be an attempt to link up the existing Broad Lefts. This is policy agreed by the 500-strong Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee conference in 1989, but not acted upon by the committee. A joint working conference under the auspices of the SMTUC and the Liaison Committee could start this work.

5. We must organise and regroup the revolutionary socialists in the labour movement. This is the precondition for everything else. "Build the revolutionary party" has become one of the most discredited of the sectarian catch-cries. Those who counterpose this slogan to the existing labour movement, and to the task of changing it, deserve to be discredited.

But still, despite the ferocious Kinnockite witch-hunts, socialists must, and can, intervene inside the Labour Party. The trade unions are vast and politically heterogeneous organisations. The only agency that can overcome the fragmentation and political incoherence of the working class movement and the movements of the oppressed is an organisation of socialists with a clear-cut, comprehensive strategy.

That is what the Alliance for Workers' Liberty seeks to do.



Policies to rebuild

The long industrial retreat which began with the Wilson and Callaghan government and turned into a rout in the Thatcher years can be reversed.

But the left in the unions must do some serious strategic re-thinking. In particular, the left needs to re-integrate politics — in the straightforward sense of who makes up the government and what laws they enact — with the industrial struggle.

For too long, the left has pretended that all we have to do is revive 'the old-fashioned methods' of workplace-based industrial militancy and everything will be alright.

This is a thoroughly one-sided way of looking at the problem. Recent years have seen the balance of forces in the workplace change decisively.

The Tory anti-union laws have dramatically narrowed the arena for effective action. Sometimes, particularly strong groups of workers can side-step and evade the law, or even defy it in small ways, for instance the tubeworkers in 1989. But most groups of workers have to reckon with the law as an establish-

ed fact. For now, it is highly unlikely that a general upsurge in direct action will smash the anti-union laws in the way that mass solidarity strikes destroyed the Industrial Relations Act and freed the Pentonville 5 in 1972.

If the vice-like grip of the anti-union laws is to be removed in the period ahead, then it will be by

"We need some serious strategic re-thinking."

parliamentary action. That means the laws will be removed by:

- (i) electing a Labour government and
- (ii) pressing that Labour government to implement a legislative programme of positive rights for workers, and fighting it if it refuses.

Unfortunately, no amount of hot-air about "Defiance not Compliance" can reverse this situation. Nor does the slogan "Defy the Law" serve any purpose whatsoever for trade unionists concerned to organise effective action in a



Bank workers' flying picket

the retreat



the unions in the '90s

situation where they are fenced in by the laws. Such situations need flexibility, imagination and discipline on the part of activists.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, trade unionism was strongest in areas of industry where workers had strong, direct workplace-based leverage over profits.

Many of the car factories, pits, shipyards and docks have been shut; the building industry is depressed and ill-organised. New manufacturing and private services operations are often weakly unionised, or not unionised at all.

The mainstay of trade unionism today is white-collar and ancillary workers in the public services — workers organised in large units which have not been smashed up by the slumps of the 1980s.

These workers do not have the immediate economic bargaining power that the militant industrial workforces of 15 years ago had.

Bosses have used the chances given to them by the slumps to put more and more of their workforces on a part-time, casual or temporary basis, with few legal rights and little organisation.

Despite this, there are sections of the private services sector like the

Barclays Bank workers [referred to elsewhere on this page] who do have economic clout and who are prepared to adopt militant tactics to utilise it.

Trade union strength must be rebuilt — with strategies which allow public-service workers to bargain effectively, and which equip trade unions to reach out to the unorganised.

In this context, workers need increased centralisation and a campaign for positive legal rights.

Centralisation

Even at a local level, the bulk of bargaining strength for a group of public service workers, like school caretakers or home helps, is to be found outside of the individual workplace in borough- or city-wide organisation. In reality, the broader the concentration, the better. That is why it is so important to defend national bargaining and why it is so irrational for left-wingers to oppose the NUPE/COHSE/NALGO merger.

Legal rights

Karl Marx once described the

laws that limit and regulate the working day as “the product of a protracted class war”. Laws provided “an unbreakable social barrier to exploitation”. Unlike many of today’s left-wingers, he could see the value of legal protection for workers, and he fought for such protections.

In the 1990s, too, in order to provide a barrier to rampant exploitation, workers need laws. We need a whole series of legal rights and guaranteed minimum standards which would allow workers to organise more securely and effectively in conditions of mass unemployment when the army of jobless reduces the already minimal economic leverage of groups of workers like part-time office cleaners.

This is the only way to shift the balance of forces back in favour of the class and to create the conditions for a revival and spreading of militant, direct action-based trade unionism.

That is why the ‘Workers’ Charter’ of positive rights for trade unionists is so important.

A European strategy

This weekend’s *Financial Times* front page lead story concerned the

threatened wages strike by German steel workers.

Bosses across Europe — if not worldwide — were concerned to see that the steelworkers didn’t win too much and set a precedent for others. Our rulers know the importance of international coordination and class solidarity. They wanted the German bosses to win.

It’s a pity that many people in our movement have not learnt the same lesson.

For instance, the same day’s *Morning Star* bemoans the loss of 2,000 “British jobs” and called for controls against “cheap Third World coal imports”. That is, it proposed turning British miners against South African miners rather than working out an international working class response.

It’s high time the British trade union movement abandoned this crazy policy.

- We should come out as the boldest campaigner for a united Europe. Leave ‘little England’ and ‘national sovereignty’ to the Tories!

- A united Europe means west and east. Solidarity with all real workers’ movements in Eastern Europe. A united Europe will be created only by the overthrow of both capitalism in the west and the bureaucracies in the east.

- Immediately, our united Europe can only be a united European workers’ movement to fight both the bosses’ EEC and the bosses’ national governments.

- Workers’ unity for:
 - A 35 hour week throughout Europe

- ‘Levelling up’ to generalise throughout the EEC the best wages, conditions, services and rights won by workers in individual EEC countries. Europe-wide agreements with multinationals on wages and conditions.

- Work-sharing at full pay, to create jobs for all.

- A clause in all wage agreements to guarantee monthly pay rises in line with a working class price index.

- Defend all jobs. Open the

books of all the EEC wide operations of the multinationals.

The trade unions in cars, steel and other industries should prepare for a European workers’ government by working out their plans to develop and reorganise their industries throughout Europe. Fight for workers’ control and for EEC-level public ownership, without compensation, of the main multinationals and monopolies.

- We should base our policies on the reality of international capitalist integration, rather than trying to turn the clock back. That does not mean approving the existing EEC institutions; on the contrary, we must put the fight against them on a proper footing.

- Immediately — full sovereign powers for the EEC Parliament over the bureaucratic machinery of the EEC, annual elections.

- Replacement of the existing capitalist Common Agricultural Policy by a plan drawn up by workers and small farmers at the expense of the bankers and the bosses.

- European labour movement support for anti-imperialist and national liberation movements in the Third World; opposition to overseas intervention by the armed forces of the EEC capitalist states.

A socialist Europe should hand over the property in the Third World of EEC multinationals to the people of those countries, cancel the Third World debts to EEC banks, and plan together with the workers of the Third World countries for a massive programme of reparations and aid.

- Expel US bases, remove all nuclear weapons from Western Europe.

- End all immigration controls. Full voting rights for migrant workers throughout the EEC.

- For a European workers’ government. No working class policy today can be a solution to the problems of any single European nation if it does not pose the working class reorganisation of the European economy (at least) and build European working class unity to achieve it.

Support the Workers’ Charter!

Labour Party Socialists are campaigning for a charter of positive rights for workers.

The basic demands contained in the Charter include:

- The right to belong to a trade union for all employees including those employed at GCHQ, the police, and the armed services.

- A legally recognised right to strike, to picket effectively, and in whatever numbers is chosen, and to take other forms of industrial action.

- The right to strike for all trade unionists, including secondary or solidarity action, without fear of dismissal, fines, or sequestration of union assets.

- Legally enforceable rights for unions to gain access to workplaces to organise, for workers to join unions, and for unions to gain recognition.

- The right for unions to determine their own constitutions and rule books in accordance with their own democratic procedures, free from any interference by the state.

- The right to stop work whenever health and safety are threatened.

- The right of workers and their unions to be fully consulted and informed by employers on all decisions relating to working conditions, job prospects, strategic investments and mergers/takeovers.

- The right to employment free from discrimination on grounds of gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation or political persuasion.

- Full-time rights for part-time workers.

- Rights for short-term contract workers.

- Inclusion of homeworkers in employment protection legislation and financial sanctions on those who illegally exploit them.

- The right of trade unions to take political action and collect a political levy.

Already the Workers’ Charter has received widespread support. It received two and a half million votes at the 1989 Labour Party Conference and is the national policy of NALGO and, in slightly amended form, of the RMT.

Copies of the Charter can be obtained from Cate Murphy, LPS Trade Union Officer, 58 Florence Road, London SE14.

Militant's misspent youth

The *Militant* group has now left the Labour Party and decided to build its own SWP Mark 2. For nearly two decades, though — from 1969 to 1987 — it owed most of its growth to the fact that it controlled Labour's official youth movement.

Previous articles in *Socialist Organiser* have traced some of the history of Labour's Young Socialists (YS) in the 1960s, when it was the major arena for left-wing politics in Britain.

The sectarian but energetic Healyite SLL (later the crazy WRP) won the leadership of the YS, but then, facing a limited witch-hunt, decided to bolt in 1964-5 and pursue the fantasy of building a mass revolutionary youth movement outside the Labour Party.

In 1965, the YS was left shaken and diminished; but the next few years would bring a big youth radicalisation. The different responses of the left groups remaining in the YS — *Militant* and *Young Guard* (the future SWP) — would shape the development both of those groups and of the whole labour movement.

By Jack Cleary

1. How Militant gained control of the YS

After the *Keep Left* breakaway in February 1965, many thought it possible that the YS would be scrapped entirely. The NEC reorganised it instead.

The Blackpool conference of the Labour Party, meeting in October 1965, accepted proposals from Labour's NEC to change the constitution of the LPYS so that:

- YS NC members would be appointed by the regional Labour Parties, not elected by conference;
- There should be no discussion of politics, no general political resolutions for conference, only motions dealing with special youth problems;
- Delegates to YS conference would have to be ratified by their local parties.

The first conference under the new constitution was set for November 1965, at Malvern. 234 branches sent delegates (there had been 347 delegates at the last YS conference, at Brighton, Easter 1964). In the course of the conference the delegates went a long way towards ripping up the new constitution, thus preserving the YS as something of a political youth movement.

At a private session the delegates, by a very large majority, rejected the new constitution — on all points.

The platform had to respond to the determination of delegates to deal with politics either by closing down the conference or by bending. It bent, for the most part. On the second day the platform successfully blocked resolutions being taken on Vietnam, Rhodesia, and anti-union laws (which the government was threatening) — but the LPYS had survived.

The Malvern conference registered 605 YS branches in existence, 117 less than the 1964 conference. Since in many areas rump branches survived despite severe losses in the split, and a number of dead branches would still be on the books, it would be misleading to judge the effects of the split only from the absolute fall in the number of branches. Actual numbers of individual members are difficult to get hold of. In 1970, the official report said that the average membership of YS branches was 12; in 1972 it was said to be 18, in 1973, 8. An average of 12 in 1965 (perhaps on the high side) would give a figure of about 7,500 left out of a claimed 25,000 at the Easter 1964 conference (which was also probably an inflated figure, in terms of real membership).

The Cliff tendency (the future SWP) began to focus more and more on work directed to industrial militants.

By 1967-68 *Young Guard* had drifted out of the YS (without the IS/SWP ever formally deciding to leave).

The YS now was left to Wilsonites, Tribunites and to the *Militant*.

In 1967 there were 532 registered YS branches, but only 216 delegates at conference. In 1969, there were 386 branches, dead branches having been removed from the lists: since there were only 150 delegates to conference, perhaps the pruning was not ruthless enough. *Militant* became a majority on the NC in the regional elections between the 1969 and '70 conference. In 1970, at the first conference in which *Militant* had the NC majority, there were only 126 delegates (457 branches registered). The YS had declined and shrivelled — and *Militant* had come into its own.

2. The YS under Militant

Between 1969 and 1987, *Militant* had full political control of the LPYS, colluding incongruously with the bureaucracy for a decade and a half.

Previously, leftists had been at daggers

drawn with the bureaucracy (*Keep Left*) or shared an edgy mutual contempt with it (*Young Guard*). *Militant* worked out a modus vivendi with the bureaucracy. Through years of responsible work, it won their tolerance to put its own resolutions, and their confidence that nothing much would come of it.

Before *Militant* took control, John Ewers, an (appointed) NC member wrote in *Militant* (September 1967): "The YS should aim to recruit youth to its ranks on a mass basis. It can only do this effectively with a national, regional and local organisation, elected by and responsible to the YS themselves... The NC must be elected by the members themselves, at YS conference, at which there should be no restriction on the topics discussed..."

In 1968 the curbs were eased and regional elections were introduced for NC members. John Ewers hailed this as "half a step forward" (*Militant*, April 1968). But once *Mili-*

"Militant stood at the opposite pole to the positive qualities of youth in socialist and working class politics — ardour, combativity, willingness to take risks... the impatient belief that they themselves, here and now, can accomplish something in the class struggle and for socialism. With Militant it was 'all talk and revolutionary activity'."

tant got control in 1969, it agreed, hand in hand with Labour Party HQ, to exploit the bureaucratic structure whereby a National Committee not elected at conference dominated it completely.

Until about 1974, a sizeable Tribunit group still existed in the LPYS, debating with *Militant*. After that, it declined sharply. After 1970, Labour was out of office and no longer a millstone around the YS's neck. The class struggle intensified until it blew Heath out of Downing Street in 1974. This was still an industrial struggle, in its methods and in its focus. Nevertheless, the Labour Party, far from opposing it, was often in support, mending its fences with the unions. A trickle of militants and socialists began to enter the Labour Party.

The LPYS's incapacity to relate to the radicalised youth in 1967-8 and after meant that it was less strong than it might have been for the struggle against the Tories. But the 1970s were very favourable times for the YS to grow. It did grow a bit.

But the *Militant* YS did nothing remotely like what should have been possible for a Marxist-led national youth organisation affiliated to a mass labour movement which was engaging in sometimes semi-revolutionary struggles against the Tory government.

The YS was a propagandist extension of *Militant*, not a fighting youth movement concerned with the struggles and the interests (social, intellectual, sexual, cultural, as well as political) of the working class youth around it.

The YS was a strangely backward political backwater. Conferences in the '70s rejected resolutions in favour of gay rights that would have got through a Young Liberal conference with ease.

In 1974, the YS, following *Militant* arguments about 'working class unity', failed to give support to black strikers at Imperial Typewriters, Leicester, locked in conflict with racist white workers (though in 1977, the YS did turn to attempting to organise black youth, in the very peculiar form of the

British youth branch of the Jamaican People's National Party).

When the Anti-Nazi League mobilised youth in 1978 on a bigger scale than anything since the Vietnam movement or CND (and working class youth particularly), only the left-wing minority in the YS showed any interest in intervening. The *Militant* majority were content to reassure themselves that only the mass labour movement, armed with a socialist programme, could finally deal with racism and fascism.

Even when *Militant* supporter, Andy Bevan, was made official Labour Party Youth Officer, it made little difference to the dullness and passivity of the YS.

Militant stood at the opposite pole to the positive qualities of youth in socialist and working class politics — ardour, combativity, willingness to take risks and shake up old structures, the impatient belief that they themselves, here and now, can accomplish something in the class struggle and for socialism. With *Militant*, it was "all talk and revolutionary activity".

Year after year, *Militant* boasted about "the best YS conference ever". It was all hollow and feeble, and collapsed very fast in the mid '80s, when *Militant* fell victim to the defeat of the left and the rightward lurch of the Labour Party.

In 1987, the YS had its structures shattered, and the maximum age limit for membership reduced, breaking *Militant's* control. *Militant* put up no fight against this destruction of the YS, tamely accepting it. Today, the LPYS is a small, shaky, shadow organisation.

3. Militant and the class struggle

The *Militant* period of the LPYS was shaped by the politics of *Militant* in the formative years of the late 1960s.

In the middle and late '60s, the role of giving a political lead to the working class (in so far as one was given), against 'its own' party in power, fell to the shop stewards movement and then to the TUC, who were forced into a head-on clash with the Labour Government over its attempted anti-union legislation, 'In Place of Strife' (1969). The YS made oppositional sounds about the Government's policies, but played little role in the decisive struggle.

Militant's reaction to the Donovan Commission, which provided the Government with guidelines for anti-trade union action, for example, was a lead article saying 'No to Legislation', but explaining that there was no point organising any campaign. "The hollowness of the employers' threats is evident... They dare not lift a finger at the present time" (*Militant*, December 1965/January 1966). *Militant* supporters who tried to start organising a campaign were quickly rebuked. Some of them (who later founded *Socialist Organiser*) produced a comprehensive critique of *Militant's* theory and practice: "What we are and what we must become". (They were refused the right to circulate it inside the *Militant* group).

In its April 1967 editorial, commenting on the YS conference, *Militant* wrote: "...although a syndicalist interpretation could be given to the last paragraph of the Hornsey resolution, which used the formula of 'rank and file committees at the point of production', both at the *Tribune* meeting and the *Militant* meeting, supporters of this journal explained that this was an incorrect course to recommend to a YS conference. [It is of course very important for revolutionary socialists to warn the Parliament-oriented Tribunites against syndicalism!].

"While it is obvious that all independent action by the working class, including the formation of rank and file committees, deserves the support of every YS member, it is incorrect to hold out the prospect of activity 'at the point of production' as an alternative to the struggle for a political, socialist



The *Militant*-led YS of the late '70s and early '80s showed no interest in intervening in YCND, which attracted thousands of working class youth. Labour CND rally, 1983. Photo: John Harris



Derek Hatton outside Labour Party HQ. *Militant* wrecked their base in the Labour Party by their fiasco in Liverpool. In 1983 they gained the leadership of the City Council Labour group and started a mass campaign against cuts. In 1984, at the height of the miners' strike, they shelved

the campaign for a rotten deal postponing the council's financial problems for a year. In 1985, they dithered and then collapsed, sending out 24,000 redundancy notices as a "tactical move". In 1986, they did a deal with the banks and made cuts.

"Militant turned irreplaceable ideas into caricatures."

People's Front who, giving lip service to nationalisation, remain in reality agents of capital; (3) we call upon the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength; (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of seizure of power by the workers and farmers."

Militant required centrally of its supporters that they accept a *view of the future*. This "perspective" would inspire them while they made general socialist propaganda, integrated themselves as citizens of the labour movement, and waited for it to "evolve".

The *Militant* saw themselves as waiting for "the perspective" to *grow, develop, mature, ripen*. In this process the class struggle could be at best the excuse for a sermon about socialism.

"The perspective" said that as the labour movement ripened, the "next stage", which was inevitable and could not be bypassed (the big crime of the Healyite SLL was seen to be that it tried to bypass it) was the development of a "mass left wing" probably around *Tribune*. The *Militant* could only wait, doing routine work and making propaganda for this development. "Premature" struggle, conflict with the bureaucracy, or even attempts to go out and organise the Labour left would be more harmful than useful. The "Perspective" would be its own midwife.

This was their big difference with the proto-IMG, who tried to organise this expected Labour broad left.

Essentially the Grantites believed themselves to exist before their proper historical time. (Their "perspective" was like the sort of view of the world, and their own place in it, which the most pedantic of the Russian Marxists drew from the conviction that the Russian Revolution could only be bourgeois, and that the preordained protagonists in it were the bourgeoisie. The *Tribune* left was *Militant's* "bourgeoisie"!)

Militant really did not think there was much they could do in the Labour Party. In the '40s, their tendency had refused to join the Labour Party; they eventually gave up and joined only on the basis that nothing much could be done *outside* either. They had a strange combination of dull passivity in the present, and bland optimism about the day after tomorrow. Witness the headlines in *Militant*: "Rhodesia; White settlers forced to come to terms" [Julian Silverman, May 1966]. June 1966 editorial: "a Tito solution" for Vietnam [i.e. a neutral, independent Vietnam] "as predicted in *Militant* and then later by De Gaulle and [Robert] Kennedy". February 1967 editorial: "Imperialism trapped in Vietnam", etc, etc, ad nauseam.

This combination was the basis for the incredible "patience" *Militant* prided themselves on in the late '60s.

Militant believed itself to be embedded in an unfolding "deformed world revolution". "Workers' states" were multiplying fast — Syria in 1963, Burma in 1965, and subsequently many others, in Africa and elsewhere.

Militant placed a very high value then and later on their accurate powers of prediction!

Ted Grant could be heard describing Marxism as "the science of perspective and prediction". Passive propaganda and a labour movement routinism, combining propaganda for "socialism" with passionate belief in Ted Grant's picture of the evolution of large parts of the world towards socialism, and of the British labour movement towards active commitment to socialism. That was *Militant*.

5. The débacle

Militant's growth from the LPYS in the 1970s and early 1980s was limited, but it was enough to make it one of the bigger groups on the left.

Militant's political ideas served it as rationalisations rather than cutting tools. Abstract and essentially preposterous general propaganda — like "Labour to power with socialist policies" demanding nothing less than the full socialist programme from gentlemen like Wilson and Callaghan! — was often counterposed to the day-to-day nitty-gritty details of the necessary struggle against these people.

Its abstract propaganda notion of the socialist struggle — calling for nothing less than the "nationalisation" of everything, while doing nothing about it — could appear very radical and Marxist to young people in the YS and also, paradoxically, avoid conflict with the Labour Party leadership.

Militant thus turned irreplaceable ideas into harmful caricatures — for example the idea that socialists must relate strategically to existing mass labour movements, with the long term perspective of transforming them, was rendered by *Militant* into absurd, precise, detailed timetables and scenarios and Old Moore's Almanac-type predictions for the future. And *Militant's* practical conclusions from these scenarios and "perspectives" was to settle into waiting in the Labour Party and YS as one waits for a train to a desired destination. But politics does not run on pre-laid tracks!

Militant solaced its youth, and reconciled them to its dull routines, with the myths of an ever-expanding *working class revolution* spreading slowly across the globe, albeit "for now" led by the Stalinists and others.

It was all myth and nonsense. But the network of Labour Party YS branches connected to the constituency Labour Parties gave *Militant* a large base for its propaganda and a trelliswork — subsidised by the Labour Party! — on which to thread its own growing organisation, together with a stable routine of meetings and national affairs.

Its manner of growth, its links with the Labour bureaucracy while it grew, must be unique in the history of self-proclaimed revolutionary organisations. Made unstable since 1987, it is now jettisoning its past, and its long-time prophet, and striking out into political — and organisational — terra incognita.

programme within the broad labour movement. Indeed, the industrial struggle of the working class will inevitably spill over into the trade union branches and the wards, CLPs and Trades Councils..."

"Despite the numerical weakness", *Militant* continued, "this conference can assist the regeneration of the YS. If the political issues are clarified, a clear programme (particularly on youth demands, etc.) is worked out, and the YS refrain from indulging in the infantile 'leftism' characteristic of previous years, it can help to invigorate the TU branches and the CLPs. It can disseminate the ideas outlined at the Llandudno conference to the active layers of the movement". The YS — the entire body of an allegedly mass youth movement — was only to make abstract socialist propaganda.

Activity in the CLPs and so on was counterposed to the real class struggle of that time, and used as an excuse to keep the YS distant and aloof from it. *Militant* counterposed (propaganda for) 'the socialist programme' to the class struggle at the point of production (or, as it was to be in the following years, in the streets).

True, the great industrial victories were unable to change society even after bringing down Heath, because the *political labour movement* was in the hands of the Lib-Lab reformists. The militant workers who defeated the Tories had no political alternative to them, except the right-wing Labour leaders.

But those who, like *Militant*, had counterposed passive propagandist politics to the direct action struggle, contributed in their own small way to that great defeat. In an active and explosive labour movement crying out for an organisation capable of providing an all-sided integration of the class struggle — of the political, economic and ideological dimensions — *Militant's* passive propagandist version of 'politics' was the mirror image of 'pure' direct-action trade unionism.

Militant's approach would cripple the YS as a youth movement — it would help ensure that the great youth revolt of the late '60s was too often channelled into pseudo-anarchism and petit-bourgeois "leftism".

In 1967, a mass opposition to the Vietnam war took to the streets, hundreds of thousands strong. It had the dimensions of the CND movement which had aided the growth of the early YS — but it was a great deal more militant.

In the course of 1967-8 these rebel youth came out solidly for the Vietnamese against US imperialism. Then, in May 1968, the general strike in France demonstrated once more the power and potential of the working class. In August, the invasion of Czechoslovakia brought home to the radical youth the nature of Russian Stalinism. It was a concentrated sequence of dramatic world

events that might have been designed as an effective crash course in revolutionary politics (all that was 'missing' was an experience showing up Mao-Stalinism and populism). And the youth learned.

But the YS could make nothing of the opportunities. The spontaneously revolutionary youth were raw and 'ultra-left'. A serious socialist youth movement would have dealt with this by immersing itself in their struggles, for example on Vietnam. The LPYS, shrivelled and afflicted increasingly by *Militant's* passivity, could do nothing of the sort. It did not participate in the Vietnam movement (unless you count a few sellers of *Militant* on demonstrations). The years of the upsurge were the years of the organisational nadir of the YS. They were also the years when *Militant* gained the NC majority. The *Militant* 'Marxist' YS was born away from the struggles and storms of that period.

4. "The perspective"

The specific and distinguishing political idea of *Militant* was the view — they called it a "perspective" — that in its future evolution, the broad labour movement, and the Labour Party, too, would become a mass revolutionary movement. They would sometimes point to the many toothless "socialist" resolutions passed by trade union conferences to show that the movement was well on its way. It would become *effectively* socialist with time, and *Militant's* propaganda.

Their model of socialism was that of 1940s-style bureaucratic "nationalisation", summed up in slogans about "nationalising" "the 200" or "250 monopolies". In YS branches in the mid-'60s there would be passionate debates between *Militant* and supporters of the future SWP about which was central: "nationalisation" or "workers' control". Dogmatically "Trotskyist", *Militant* ignored such passages in the 1938 programme as this:

"The socialist programme of expropriation, i.e. of political overthrow of the bourgeoisie and liquidation of its economic domination, should in no case during the present transitional period hinder us from advancing, when the occasion warrants, the demand for the expropriation of several key branches of industry vital for national existence or of the most parasitic group of the bourgeoisie. The difference between these demands and the muddle-headed reformist slogan of 'nationalisation' lies in the following: (1) we reject indemnification; (2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the

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GEC strikers

"Our aim is to crush xenophobia"

In response to "Sleeper" (SO 25.1.92), this article impugns our integrity and political expediency in suggesting that the trade unions at GEC-Alstom Openshaw are deploying a discourse informed by "nationalist impulses".

Implicit in this charge are two obvious conclusions. On the one hand, that we have been the passive subjects of an axiomatic ideology and have assimilated uncritically the legitimacy of campaigns articulated around slogans such as "defending Britain's manufacturing base", or "British jobs for British workers".

"It is a picture we are all familiar with, union militancy quelled by effective legislation, unemployment and an induced change of ethos."

Alternatively, that we are conscious of our strategy and are engaged in an exercise which is both patronising and esoteric, directing our message to the xenophobic in order to maintain a hegemonic position with our membership.

We utterly repudiate both inferences.

Our analysis of this dispute is in part informed by cross-cultural studies of both the UK and France, and in part by a meta-perspective of UK organised labour. The former demonstrates clearly how specific historico-cultural, political and social factors interact with capitalism to produce differing organisational consequences, power relations and patterns of control.

These then inform the practice and style of management. The latter delineates a

construct of UK trade unionism, cultivated by the Tories and projected abroad to aid inward investment. It is a picture we are all familiar with, union militancy quelled by effective legislation, unemployment and an induced change of ethos.

In combining these conclusions, it offers us a way to perceive, understand and judge this dispute and order the material we communicate. French capital, whilst obviously embracing the same dynamic as does capital universally, is a different beast in terms of our employment relationship, the membership need to know that and why.

Similarly, they need to know how they are perceived by French capital, and what the consequences of that are. They are disempowered second class employees, soft-targets. French labour, on the other hand, is empowered not just by legislation but by the fact that the CGT is still permeated by the ethos of revolutionary syndicalism, an uncompromising militancy.

Our employer is therefore in the possession of both a perception and an experienced reality. This dispute will reinforce that perception. The dispute material currently in circulation bears the CGT logo at the heading, alongside the five UK unions on the site.

The aim of our discourse is to crush, not fuel, any xenophobia towards French labour, and to demonstrate that by concrete action.

The article also suggests the correct strategy to adopt: readers should refer to the interview on page 15 (SO 23.1.92) for the answer to that. The strategy, however, cannot be simply dismissed as "a good start" for that is a fundamental misreading of our decision space, the forces impacting on it, and our power. It will be a long, hard and complex struggle to establish our objectives.

Rick Hesketh on behalf of the Joint Site Unions Publicity Unit



GEC workers: not nationalist

A welcome blow for socialist commonsense

Interesting as I find *Socialist Organiser*, I have for some time despaired of the paper as a good general socialist paper.

It is too full of sectarian infighting for the average reader.

However, your Editorial

(SO 513), which argues that the fight against racism and fascism is too important to be diverted by petty squabbling between the Anti-Racist Alliance and the Anti-Nazi League and that both organisations should be supported, is a welcome blow for socialist commonsense. Keep it up!

John Broadhouse

British human rights record worst in Europe

British rule in Ireland

As the French Resistance fought the German forces of occupation during the Second World War, so the IRA will continue to fight the British forces of occupation in Ireland today.

British rule in Ireland, over

the centuries, has been a brutal experience, resulting in the murders of tens of thousands of innocent Irishmen. In 1798 many Catholics and Protestants fought side by side, against the influx of British troops sent to secure Ireland as part of the British empire.

However, it was only after considerable effort that the

British ruling class managed to install the racist style bigotry that still remains today; and which has secured a minority of the total Irish population to swear loyalty to the British flag.

This loyalty, in many ways, was bought by removing Catholics and Republicans from the best of land, and delivering it into the hands of

loyalists. Such affairs may seem insignificant today when looking at it in terms of land ownership.

But the blatant prejudice of the British establishment, is relentless. It was only three months ago that the British government was forced to answer questions at the United Nations, because of a report submitted by Amnesty International in which they alleged the RUC had tortured countless Republicans and engaged in vicious campaigns of terror, undisputedly aimed at Republican communities.

The many questions asked at the UN were, why has Britain the worst housing record anywhere in Europe, in Republican communities? Why has Britain the worst unemployment record anywhere in Europe, also in Republican communities? And why has Britain the worst human rights record anywhere in Europe, again also in Republican communities?

Well, I think one could safely say that the answers are not likely to be found by watching the BBC. If the answers were available via the BBC then everyone would be aware of systematic anti-Republican and anti-Catholic discrimination in the north of Ireland today.

Paul Boardman Doncaster



The RUC has engaged in a vicious campaign of terror against the Catholic community

Weird and dangerous

Last week's *Socialist Organiser* reported that one Trotskyist group in Algeria — the "Lambertist" PT — is calling for an "all-party government of crisis".

The demand is weird, and dangerous too. In fact, it is a sort of compendium of idiocies that have infected the Trotskyist movement in recent decades.

In practice, as far as I can see, the demand amounts to "power to the FIS" [the Islamic fundamentalists]. The PT lists the desired partners in the "government of crisis" as the FIS, the ex-ruling FLN, the UGTA (the FLN-aligned trade union federation), and the FFS (the Socialist Forces Front, the major party opposed both to the old regime and to the Islamicists).

The FLN is a discredited and decaying force, so the FIS would be the strongest partner. Including the FFS could serve only to abort the chances of the FFS leading any democratic or working-class fight back against the Islamicists.

The whole of the PT's policy seems to be shaped by the desire to have their canoe carried along on the crest of the Islamicist wave. They dismiss all talk of a threat of Islamicist dictatorship as imperialist propaganda, protesting that the FLN has already imposed some Islamicist policies, such as a strict family law. To the PT, evidently, the FLN are the "social-Islamicists" rather as the German Social Democrats were "social-fascists" to the German Stalinists in the 1930s.

Likewise, the German Stalinists attempted to deal with the Nazis by mimicking and outdoing their nationalist fury against the Treaty of Versailles; the PT focuses its agitation on Algerian "national" issues, such as repudiating the foreign debt, rather than class or democratic issues.

Wishful thinking about nationalist or populist movements has fogged

up Trotskyist politics too often. 13 years ago, almost all of us, to varying degrees, fell victim to illusions about the progressive potential of the movement behind Khomeini in Iran. The PT has learned nothing. Its slogans amount to: "After the Algerian Khomeini, our turn next".

What makes it all weirder is that the PT's line is packaged in

terms of typical "Lambertist" democracy-fetishism — "the Constituent Assembly" as cure all. The "all-party government" — a coalition of the ex-totalitarian FLN and the would-be totalitarian FIS — is supposed (in the PT's scheme) to have the sole function of organising elections to the Constituent Assembly, which assembly will sort out the problems between the forces now edging towards

civil war, and between them and the working class!

The PT's slogans — like many other cod-"Trotskyist" slogans, for example the traditional "Labour to power with socialist policies" — amount to packaging a weird and contrived private scenario in supposedly popular but actually mystifying form.

Colin Foster Islington

Debate: Leninism or democracy

In a recent issue of *Socialist Organiser*, Tom Rigby wrote a lengthy reply to a short piece I wrote on Leninism and democracy.

May I in response take this opportunity of restating what I believe to be obvious:

(1) The structures of political domination developed under Stalinism were rooted in the undemocratic practices of Leninism in power (1917-23). (This is not the same as saying that Stalinism inevitably arose out of Leninism nor does it mean that all of the excesses of Stalinism can be laid at the door of Leninism).

(2) The undemocratic practices of Leninism in power were a product of both the material conditions pertaining in the Soviet Union at that time and the ideology of Leninism.

(3) The ideology of Leninism contained a Jacobinical element which asserted itself in the course of 1917-23. (This does not preclude the existence within Bolshevism of many other elements including those of a democratic nature.)

The above points are sustained by a huge body of research produced by historians of both a left-wing and a right-wing persuasion. A useful recent compilation and re-assessment from a left-wing point of view is Samuel Farber's *Before Stalinism* (1990).

"...the failure of Bolshevism before 1917 to address sufficiently the institutional factors involved in the process of transition was one of its major weaknesses."

The weight of this evidence and body of opinion is so overwhelming that it is surprising to find Tom Rigby take issue with it and there is nothing in his article that throws fresh light upon the matter.

To continue to belabour this point is as of little value as debating whether the now defunct Soviet Union constituted some form of "workers' state".

What would be more pro-

ductive would be to analyse the significance of what happened in the Soviet Union in 1917-23 as a contribution to understanding the processes of change towards a socialist society in Britain today, eg:

(1) What would the relationship be between workers' councils and a national legislature elected on universal suffrage?

(2) How can the notion of freedom of the press be guaranteed and extended?

(3) What is to be the relationship between established trade unions and factory committees which may well arise in a period of revolutionary change?

(4) How is the democratisation and independence of the judiciary to be addressed?

(5) What form of political party is best suited to carrying forward such changes?

As Farber indicates in his book, the failure of Bolshevism before 1917 to address sufficiently the institutional factors involved in the process of transition was one of its major weaknesses. Socialists today should learn from that experience.

Ian McCalman Glasgow



"Laforgue half-teases, half-condescends...The film doesn't make much of the conflict of cultures"

Peter Sellers on Channel 4 Television

By Gerry Bates

Last Saturday night, Channel 4 put out a long profile of Peter Sellers as a promo for its season of Sellers films.

There was, naturally, a lot of talk about "I'm alright, Jack" in which Sellers starred.

This was a nasty anti-trade union film made in 1960 by the Boulting brothers who specialised in toothless "satires". "I'm alright, Jack" had bite, not to speak of anti-working class spleen and venom.

It was also very funny. The upper-class twit of a hero goes to work in a factory and falls foul of both crooked bosses and the trade union organisation there.

The crooked bosses are cartoon spivs, socially weightless, engaging in unbelievable plots and conspiracies; they are there to give a semblance of balance and "fair play", but they don't. The film targets trade union organisation.

The workers are lazy — when they should all be keen to work harder — conniving, mob-handed bullies. The shop stewards convenor is Fred Kite (Sellers), an insecure, posturing, pretentious, power-mad "little man" with a Hitler moustache who speaks the best "Trade-Unionese" — a botched, pompous, clumsy jargon made up mainly from jaw-breaking phrases out of rule books outlining procedures.

Kite is in the Communist Party. Sellers' Kite is a brilliant creation — convincing, a real person, pathetic and vulnerable as well as being unpleasant, dictatorial, obstructive and, in practice, stupid. The Trade-Unionese is tape-recorder sharp and accurate.

In principle, there is no reason why trade unionists should not be the target of satire; in principle, we should defend the right to satirise trade unionists, especially when it stings! But satire does not exist in a social vacuum.

"I'm alright, Jack" was an early part of the vicious drive to cut down the unions. The class spite and venom behind it was memorably expressed in an interview with film director, Sidney Gilliat, in the form of an anecdote.

An electricians' steward in the film industry had said to Gilliat's brother (probably in a Cockney accent!), "there ain't no interegity [sic] no more. Ev'rythin' today is com-prom-is, com-prom-is".

Gilliat, with distaste, gave the words their peculiar articulation in his own upper-class accent. Because the electrician's accent was odd and his English shakey, he wasn't fit to have a point of view, and the workers who would elect such a man were not fit to have a say in the way their own industrial lives were organised! Middle-class spite and resentment! Yet, because of Sellers' performance as Kite, "I'm alright, Jack" is brilliantly done and with something of life in it.

The first of the Sellers' movies in the series, "Only Two Can Play", (Sunday evening), made in 1962 from a Kingsley Amis novel, brought out with horrible immediacy the smugly striving lower middle class, know-nothing philistinism — proto-Thatcherism, in fact — with which the work of a large and influential current of post-war British cultural icons, such as Amis himself and his buddy, the poet Philip Larkin, is awash.

God knows what Sellers believed. As well as playing Fred Kite, he played the demented Dr. Strangelove in the anti-nuclear bomb movie of that name, a character supposed to be based on Henry Kissinger. Oddly, Sellers' name appears in the WRP newspaper in the late '70s as someone scheduled to open one of their bazaars! Make of that what you will!

Next Sunday (9th), "The Mouse That Roared", Channel 4, 10pm.

A film with a hole

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *Black Robe*

Black Robe is National Geographic filmmaking; lovely scenery, shame about the plot. Actually, the film has no plot, and there are no real characters either. Actors appear and say their lines, but nothing resonates; there's no drama.

Set in Canada in 1634, the film follows the hazardous, 1500-mile canoe journey of a Jesuit priest, Father Laforgue, from Quebec to a mission to the Huron Indians. Escorted by a group of Algonquin Indians, Laforgue is accompanied by a young Frenchman, Daniel, who is lusting after one of the Algonquin girls.

The film is adapted by Brian Moore from his own novel, so you wonder who threw the story overboard — Moore, or director Bruce Beresford? They must have decided

that scenery, not drama, sells. The film is full of shots of mountains, shots of autumnal trees, vast overhead shots of rivers with canoes like tiny squiggles across their polished surfaces.

To them, landscape is holy. In one scene where Laforgue is lost in the forest, he sees the trees around him as natural cathedrals, as lofty and beautiful as the man-made churches of France.

Only this is all wrong. Seventeenth century man didn't see nature as we do; he didn't cherish wilderness. Nature to him was untamed, terrifying. The Canadian wilderness was doubly so to aristocratic priests like Laforgue; not only was it bigger than anything in the old world, but it was peopled by "savages" out to kill.

The film sets us up for hardships — snow, intense cold, fear of death — then downplays them. No-one goes hungry, though there's no game to be caught in the snow-bound landscape, the rivers are frozen and the canoes aren't full of provisions. In howling blizzards, Laforgue is lightly dressed. When he's abandoned by the Algonquins in the depth of the wilderness, without food, water or shelter, he's only mildly peeved.

The film half-heartedly aims at a conflict of cultures, but it doesn't make much of this either. Rather than try to convert the Indians head on, Laforgue half-teases, half-condescends to them. He's interested in converts, not conversation; he doesn't take them seriously.

"What should have been a fairly intimate encounter between two different value and belief systems gets lost in soaring scenery and obsession with detail."

The film might have worked as a kind of surreal quest, for there is something absurd about the Jesuit determination to convert the Indian tribes to Christianity. Their intellectual snobbery, their unshaken belief in their own superiority over mere "natives", their rigidity, all combined to make them insensitive to the cultures on which they imposed themselves.

Which is not to say that the Indians were perfect, and that only white men were vile (as Kevin Costner was saying in *Dances with Wolves*). The film clearly shows the limitations of the Indian way of life. Their superstitious faith in spirits and sorcery, in "signs", the constant warring with other tribes — this is not civilisation either. But

one can see why the Indians, with their creed of sharing and their sensual enjoyment of pleasures, were revolted by Laforgue, a stern individualist with a taste for self-denial.

Black Robe could have been an interesting movie, but Beresford concentrates on the wrong things. What should have been a fairly intimate encounter between two different value and belief systems gets lost in soaring scenery and obsession with detail — the painstakingly "distressed" costumes, the feathers, the bear grease on the face. After all, *Black Robe* is about a mismatched group of people travelling up river in bark canoes. What could be simpler? This would have been a better movie if they'd had to forgo the scenery (lovely as it is) and figure out what they were trying to say.

But scenery and detail wouldn't damage a good story. *Black Robe* simply doesn't have one, just a bunch of half-explored themes that don't develop. To make matters worse, we never get inside Laforgue's head (or anybody else's). Maybe, like the Indians, we're not "worthy" enough to share his thoughts. When Laforgue kneels to make his confession, the camera cuts away.

The film sits on the fence, neither endorsing Laforgue nor plumping for the Indians. (Daniel, who wants to be a priest, but likes sex too, simply doesn't register.) The most likeable character is Chomina, the Algonquin chief, whom Laforgue eventually comes to pray for. Chomina is the "good" Indian, just as the Iroquois, who take the small band of travellers captive, are the baddies. But since the film ends with a footnote declaring the unconverted Iroquois triumphant over the converted Hurons, what is the film trying to say? That getting religion saps your fighting spirit? Too much turning the other cheek makes you a weakie?

A Brave New World

Periscope

Def II, BBC2, Wednesday 12 February

Third World ghetto cities, attached to some of the richest cities in the richest country on earth; the growth of a US underclass, many of whose members are outlaws because they are illegal

immigrants; the eruption of racism across much of Western Europe — our world is experiencing a creeping tide of racial barbarism.

A Brave New World examines race relations in Europe and the USA, and discusses what the *Radio Times* describes as "the increasing racial apartheid" in the USA.

"Exploitation of wage-labour is the heart of capitalism" We stand for workers' liberty!

The politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

We live in a capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private.

Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private".

Those who own the means of production buy the labour-power of those who own nothing but their labour-power, and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, its very heart-beat.

Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation decrees the judgment of all things in existence by their relationship to productivity and profitability.

From that come such things as the savage exploitation of Brazilian goldminers, whose life expectancy is now less than 40 years; the working to death — it is officially admitted by the government! — of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism; and also the economic neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" areas like Bangladesh and parts of Africa.

From that comes the cultural blight and barbarism of a society force-fed on profitable pap.

From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" and a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture.

From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos, and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions.

From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by its ruling classes around the principles of anarchy and the barbarous worship of blind and humanly irrational market forces.

From it come wars and genocides: two times this century, capitalist gangs possessing world-wide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it come racism, imperialism, and fascism.

The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produces societies like Britain now where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents.

From the exploitation of wage-labour comes our society in which the rich, who with their servants and agents hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a condition to accept their own exploitation and abuse, and to prevent real democratic self-control developing within the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in the 1984-5 miners' strike — savage and illegal police violence, as they need to. They have used fascist gangs when they need to, and will use them again, if necessary.

working class — the wage-slaves of the capitalist system — to fight for socialism.

Socialism means the abolition of wage-slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common co-operative ownership. It means the realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Under socialism the economy will be run and planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms will cease to be our master, and will be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational social goals.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control.

The working class can win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power — that is, the monopoly of violence and reserve violence — now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The

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

What are the alternatives now? We may face new wars as European and Japanese capitalism confronts the US. Fascism is rising. Poverty, inequality and misery are growing.

Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane, democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all — we will be dragged down by the fascist barbarians or new, massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. The choice is socialism or barbarism.

Socialists work in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement to socialism. We work with presently unorganised workers and youth.

To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

To join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

The dodgy sex test

Les Hearn's

SCIENCE COLUMN

The controversy over sex testing of athletes is hotting up as the Winter Olympics open in Albertville. Following a petition to the French Health Ministry from scientists, the French Medical Association has advised its members not to take part in the updated femininity test.

It seems that the International Olympic Commission (IOC) has learnt little and understood less. As I wrote last week, the IOC's original test was to search the nuclei of cheek cells for evidence of a second X chromosome, using a microscope. The updated test also uses a scraping of cheek cells (buccal smear) but now evidence for the presence of a Y chromosome is being looked for.

Unlike the second X, visible as a little dark blob, the Y is undetectable by sight. Modern genetic engineering techniques are used to make lots of copies of the chromosomes and then the larger quantities of Y chromosomes (if present) are detected by special probes.

The technique used is that of gene amplification. In it, an enzyme called DNA polymerase copies the DNA in the chromosomes and then copies the copies. This is called the polymerase chain reaction (PCR).

In a short time, there are millions of copies of all the DNA, including that from the Y chromosome.

Now, reagents that "recognise" and stick to parts of the Y chromosome are added. These could be antibodies. The clumps formed by the Ys and these reagents are identified and the person will be found to be male.

But does a positive test prove masculinity? As I wrote last week, most women have two Xs and no Y and most men have one X and one Y but there are exceptions.

There are some women with a Y. These XY women may have a faulty Y with the male-determining gene missing. Or they may be insensitive to male hormones, therefore developing as women.

There are some men without a Y but with two Xs. One of the Xs has a little bit extra that got lost from a Y in the past (see above) and that little bit is the gene that determines maleness.

Therefore, the IOC's new test will eliminate some competitors who are to all intents and purposes women while letting through some men (if they are able to pass as women in other ways).

The proposed new test has caused alarm among scientists who argue that it is the presence of male hormones that gives males their advantage in athletic sports, not their possession of a Y chromosome. In their petition, a group of scientists (including two Nobel prize winners) argue that the IOC tests violate the spirit of the constitution of France, host to the Winter Olympics. The FMA has threatened to discipline any of its members who take part in the tests. A group of 22 geneticists has also written to the IOC, demanding withdrawal of the test.

Fighting racism

Move this motion in your Labour Party:

"We note the alarming rise of racism and fascism all across Europe. We believe that the labour movement should unite to fight fascism and racism in all its forms, including resurgent anti-semitism.

We resolve:
1. To affiliate to both the Anti-Racist Alliance and to the Anti-Nazi League, and to call on the National Executive Committee to affiliate to both.

2. To urge the ARA and the ANL to meet with other interested organisations of the labour movement and of the black and Jewish communities to discuss merging in to a broad and democratically-organised united campaign.

3. To increase our local campaigning, both against racism and fascism and for positive socialist answers to the social and economic ruin which lays the basis for racist scapegoating."

Poly.

Anti-racist action

Thursday 6 February

ANL/TWAFA meeting at Newcastle University, 6.00.

Monday 17 February

Lambeth Anti-Racist Action meeting, 7.30, Lambeth Town Hall, South London. Speakers include Tony Benn.

Friday 21 February

Anti-fascist benefit at Sunderland

Saturday 22 February

"Close the BNP HQ" march, 12.00, St Nicholas Church, London SE18. Mass picket against the BNP, Bridgen Shopping Centre, Sunderland, 12.30-3.00.

For your information

Anti-Racist Action, PO Box 2578, London N5 1UF.
Anti-Nazi League, PO Box 2566, London N4 2HG.

Saturday 29 February

March Against Unemployment. Assemble: 12.00, Clerkenwell Green, London. Rally: 3.00, Trafalgar Square

Picket

Protest for democracy in China. 12.00-4.00, Sunday 9 February in Chinatown, Soho, London. Organised by the Chinese Solidarity Campaign.

Conference

The Women for Socialism AGM will be on Saturday 29 February, 10.30-5.00. Women's Centre, 4 Wild Court, London WC2.

Demonstrate!

Wednesday 12 February

Students demonstrate against debt. National NUS have organised a demonstration to oppose student poverty. Assemble: 12.00, Battersea Park, South London.

Socialist Organiser — our meetings this week

Thursday 6 February

"Ireland: the socialist answer", Leeds SO meeting, 7.30, Swarthmore Centre. Speaker Pat Murphy
"What can we expect from Labour?", Kent University SO meeting, 1.00, Eliot College.

Tuesday 11 February

"Algeria: Islam and the Army", Manchester University SO meeting.

This week

Thursday 6 February

"We need a fighting NUS", Left Unity meeting, 7.00, UCL Student Union, Euston, London. Speaker

1.00.

"Fighting Racism and Fascism", Liverpool Institute SO meeting, 12.00.

Wednesday 12 February

"Ireland: which way forward?", SO London Forum, 7.30, Room S75, LSE, Houghton St, London WC2 (Holborn tube). Speakers include John O'Mahony.
"The case for socialist

Janine Booth.

Wednesday 12 February

"Pornography and Censorship", organised by Feminists Against Censorship, 7.30, Conway Hall, Holborn, London.

feminism", Essex University SO meeting, 6.00.

Thursday 13 February

"Ireland: a socialist answer", North London Poly SO meeting, 1.00, Kentish Road site.
"The state and revolution", Newcastle Poly SO meeting, 2.00.

These meetings are sponsored by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. For details of Socialist Organiser in your area, phone Mark on 071-639 7965.

Our fund drive

Socialist Organiser's fund total stands at £7,084.34.

We received £231.72 this week. Thanks to supporters in SW London for £24 from a social, from supporters in Manchester for £25 and Newcastle £140 in fundraising.

We are raising £10,000 to help the paper buy new equipment.

How you can help

If you read Socialist Organiser regularly why not make a donation to help the work of developing and spreading socialist ideas.

Send small or large donations to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA (cheques and postal orders made out to "Socialist Organiser").

200 Club

Socialist Organiser needs more regular money to help

us expand. We want to take our message to more workers.

We are running a "200 Club" draw with a monthly prize of £100.

Surplus money goes to the paper. You can enter the "200 Club" for as little as £1 per month.

The winner of this month's draw is Jim Denham. Congratulations!

A few new "200 Club" members joined last week.

Socialist Organiser supporters are continuing the drive to increase our regular income.

Why not join? Get details of the "200 Club" from your local SO seller.

Fighting the right, selling the paper

Comrades increased sales in the colleges this week. One-hour sales included the following: 5 papers sold at Harrogate Tech; 6 at Monkwearmouth Tech; 5 papers were sold at Brighton Poly and 6 at Leeds University last week. 3 copies were sold at Park Lane Tech in Leeds.

Students who want to sell Socialist Organiser write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



After Stalinism: has socialism a future?

Socialists answer the New Right

Participate:
Agnis: Sussex (Brighton College)
Kamran: Glasgow (Glasgow School of Commerce)
David: Middlesbrough (New London Institute)
Martin: Thurston (NUS)
John: Walsby (Glasgow: Socialist Organiser)

£1.50 plus 18p postage from AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA



British Museum closed by strike. Marx would have approved

Civil service pay: where now?

By a London civil servant

Last Friday's strike by LONDON CPSA and NUCPS members over London weighting gave a clear message to the Treasury and to our union leaders. We want to fight!

Museums, Job Centres, Social Security offices were all closed across London as thousands of civil servants protested at the Treasury freeze on London weighting and the Tory proposals for civil service pay.

We now need to step up the fight. If the Tories are allowed to implement their pay proposals, it will be the beginning of the end of national pay bargaining in the civil service. Our pay will become increasingly performance-based and our ability to fight will be severely weakened. This is a battle to defend our pay and our union.

It is vital that we force our union leaders to lead a fight. The CPSA "Moderate" executive, in particular, have shown in the past that they are happy to sit back and let the Tories do what they will. They are responsible

Build Pay committees

Failure of the civil service union leaders to organise and lead a fight over pay, local activists from CPSA, NUCPS and IRSF should unite in Pay Action Committees (PACs) to campaign amongst union members for a fight against the Tories' pay proposals and for a decent rise in 1992.

Pay Action Committees have already been formed in Sheffield, Nottingham and the South West. London is to hold its first meeting shortly.

We need to bring in as many rank and file members as possible. PACs must not be the domain of one faction or another. Our strength lies in bringing together the many civil servants who are angry about pay.

It is therefore saddening to see that, last month, *Militant* supporters in the CPSA Broad Left put their own petty, sectarian interests before the interests of activists when they held a BL Pay Rally on the same day as a NUCPS Broad Left national meeting.

The one NUCPS BL member who did attend was denied voting rights and only allowed speaking rights after an uproar from those attending!

So why all this anti-NUCPS feeling from *Militant*? Maybe it's because they don't have a majority in the NUCPS BL?!!

Members of the SWP who, at the CPSA Broad Left rally made a big deal about the need for a united fight to defend national pay bargaining, haven't lived up to their own rhetoric.

They have refused to even discuss organising an unofficial pay campaign when approached by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty which has a number of activists at rank and file level in the CPSA.

Instead of talking to us, and working out a joint plan of action for intervention into the union, they instead opted to produce a "fact-sheet" on pay.

for the ease with which the Tories were able to begin the process of abolishing national pay bargaining.

CPSA members must ensure our executive sign no secret deals with the Treasury. We should campaign now for a rejection of any lousy deal offered to us and

argue now for a campaign to build for the strike action needed to win.

NUCPS members should use their Special Pay Conference in March to pass motions calling for a campaign of industrial action to secure a decent claim and to defeat the Tories' proposals.

Civil service activists across the country must unite to put the pressure on our union leaders and to build the confidence of union members in the branches to prepare for a fight with the Tories.

Will the Tories abolish DE?

800 jobs will be axed in the Department of Employment under the latest Tory-inspired plan.

Although DE management are refusing to release full details, a series of leaks suggest that the cut jobs in the Training Enterprise and Education Directorate (formerly Training Agency) will be split roughly evenly between the Regional Offices and the Sheffield Head Office.

The declared purpose of the cut is to cut loose the unaccountable TECs (local Training and Enterprise Councils) from any central policy direction. Such a move will make it impossible to deliver any effective and worthwhile national training package via the DE.

Many union activists suspect a more sinister, underlying motive — the total dismemberment of

This would be achieved by removing the rest of the monitoring/directing functions with relation to TECs; lashing up the Employment Service Agency (Job Centres and dole offices) with the DSS's Benefits Agency and shuffling off the remaining functions such as HSE and ACAS to other departments.

The first sign of the cuts has already hit staff with management moves to forcibly redeploy 100 clerical and executive workers before April 1. The brutal and arbitrary way in which management has gone about that exercise has alerted many hitherto passive DE workers to the fate which the Tories are planning for them.

The response from the national union leaderships has so far been predictably sluggish. It will depend on activists in the DE as a whole to build a campaign from the grass roots upwards.

Southwark council workers strike

By Roy Webb, Southwark NALGO

Southwark NALGO members in the Borough Treasurer's (BT) department have been on all-out strike since 17 December 1991 over threats of redundancy.

The council issued 38 redundancy notices on 14 December. Prior to this, nearly 70 people had volunteered for severance pay, but not one of these was targeted for redundancy. Instead, management seem to have targeted mainly black staff in a very discriminatory procedure.

The BT's members are battling to continue the strike until all threats of compulsory redundancy are withdrawn, together with the much-hated redundancy and redeployment policies, this last one to be replaced by a new policy — this time properly agreed with the unions.

An emergency branch meeting is being held on Thursday 6 February to call for:

- other sections affected by redundancy threats (eg. Borough Solicitors, Housing, Education departments) to be balloted for all the branches;
- a political campaign to be launched for full financial support for those on strike.

A ballot started on Monday 3 February for a branch-wide one-day solidarity strike in support of the Borough Treasurer's department strikers.

The Labour group has threatened to refuse to recognise NALGO for negotiating purposes, and to stop deducting union subs from salaries.

A council Labour group meeting has discussed the possibility of employing agency staff to do the work of those on strike and of sacking all the strikers!

- Send donations and messages of support to: Southwark NALGO, 34, Peckham Road, London SE5.

Camden strike

Camden social workers have been on all-out strike for eight months in pursuit of the implementation of the national agreement for social work grades.

Camden council have refused to acknowledge this agreement — the only Labour council to do so.

Recently, the council have threatened to sack all the strikers unless they return to work under new job descriptions in a completely reorganised service.

Camden social workers have remained absolutely solid in their action over this time. Their courage and determination have forced the council to abandon its deadline for the sacking threat once — and, now, an extremely quorate branch meeting has voted to ballot other key sections to come out on all-out strike in their support.

Strathclyde council: action escalates

By Mary Cooper, Strathclyde NALGO

NALGO members in Glasgow Community Education Department have been on strike for four months.

The dispute resulted from the suspension of three community workers for refusing to undertake work associated with redundant posts.

The employers, Strathclyde

Defend Dalzell and Ravenscraig! Defend Frank Shannon!

By a West of Scotland ASLEF member, Motherwell Freight depot

Around 50 labour movement activists met on Monday to discuss the future of the Scottish steel industry.

The meeting was called by Hamilton Trades Council and had two stewards from the Dalzell steel mill on the platform. A model motion was put forward which argued for the retention of a plate-making facility at Dalzell (the "Dalzell

September this year, but it could be closed by March, and so the work of the campaign must start immediately.

The campaign has made a start — not before time, but faces an uphill battle. One problem is the tendency of the SNP to play off Dalzell against Ravenscraig. Instead, it's essential to challenge the framework in which the BS closure programme has been put forward and regenerate the fight against Scholey.

Meanwhile, Frank Shannon, executive member of the ISTC, is facing victimisation and expulsion from the union. Shannon has argued that Craig workers should by-pass their stewards in the fight to save the plant. A militant stance by the Dalzell stewards has been successful and craft convenor Alan Raby has argued that it has stayed open because of "the people like Shannon who fought closure".

It makes no difference that the Dalzell stewards are supported — for their own ends — by the SNP, in a fight to save both Dalzell and Ravenscraig. But trade unionists must bring the ISTC and Labour leadership to book for their opposition to any fight. And an opposing Labour government must be forced to renationalise the steel industry.

"Trade unionists must bring the ISTC and Labour leaderships to book."

option") and this was firmly linked to the need for a campaign amongst the Ravenscraig workers to retain the "Craig" as well.

The motion also called on the STUC to convene an all-Scotland shop stewards conference in addition to an appeal to the Craig workers to fight the closure programme. It argues the need for the Scottish Labour Party to recommit itself to the renationalisation of the steel industry in Scotland.

The discussion that followed agreed on the necessity of targeting the Ravenscraig workers. But time is short to put pressure on the labour movement through model motions and this can only be a back up to attempts at intervening in the Craig.

A steering committee was elected to coordinate the suggestions from the meeting and get the Ravenscraig workers, or at least a section of them, involved in the campaign. Central to this is getting literature into the works to counter the disinformation of the previous years. Ravenscraig has in theory until

Action called off

By a Pently London BT engineer

Westminster National Communications Union (NCU) branch has been forced to call off industrial action against the sacking by British Telecom (BT) of workers aged over 60.

At the debate at the 29 January branch meeting, it became clear that, in the words of branch secretary, Bob Glover, "...the campaign must be turned from local to national to have any chance of success, as no more could be achieved at branch level".

The action called by Westminster branch had involved an overtime ban which was supported solidly by the members, but such action could only be effective if carried out by all the branches.

The month-long campaign has not been without some achievement, since the bosses have been forced to concede *ex gratia* payments, and an extra 3 or 6 months before sacking, to workers aged over 60.

The NCU nationally is holding a consultative forum on Thursday 6 February at the TUC to decide what to do next.

It seems that, after the failure of their legal challenge to BT's sackings, the National Officers will put the case for a sell-out rather than organise the necessary escalation of action.

What looks like an impending victory for management over their sacking of older workers has ominous implications for the future, when other groups of workers will be attacked.

Activists should organise to put all possible pressure on the National Officers not to sell out.

The industrial front

Vauxhall workers' national negotiators have rejected a pay offer at 5% this year and the inflation rate in the second year. Mass meetings will be held this week to be followed by a ballot on industrial action short of a strike.

500 outfitters at Belfast's giant Harland and Wolff are on indefinite strike over shift and qualification payments.

250 compulsory redundancies have been announced at GPT and 600 at VSEL Barrow. But still the Confed refuse to relaunch the campaign for a shorter working week. Why?

400 cleaners at Cardiff's Ely hospital are on all-out indefinite strike for union recognition. They are fighting a private contracting company. Nurses have voted to take solidarity action if hospital management bring in scabs.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

AEU/EETPU ballot:

Vote no to merger!

The leaders of the engineers' and electricians' unions are getting bolder as each day

passes.

Voting started this Monday, 3 February, on the proposed merger

between the AEU and the EETPU. As the ballot commenced, a joint statement signed by both sides was released, containing a thinly veiled threat to the TUC:

"Gavin Laird, General Secretary of the AEU, and Eric Hammond, General Secretary of the EETPU, have invited other unions representing skill at all levels, particularly in the manufacturing industry, to join the new super-union".

What this means was then spelt out: "Immediately following the result of the ballot, we will be writing to other unions in the manufacturing industry inviting them to join the process of formulating a new rule book, designed to create a new super-union... We shall also be writing to the Engineering Employers Federation seeking national negotiating rights for our new white collar section."

This underlines the need for a resounding "no" vote in the ballot.

This is a clear threat to squeeze out the pro-TUC while collar and technical engineering unions, particularly MSF. As you would expect from the people who have pioneered "no strike" deals, the AEU/EETPU leaders are hoping to do this with the help of the engineering bosses.

Laird and Hammond have declared war. Why is Congress House so silent?



10,000 students marched against student poverty last October on MANUS-organised demonstration

Support the GEC strikers!

By Dan Judelson

The dispute at the GEC-Alsthom Switchgear plant in Higher Openshaw, Manchester has now entered its fifth week with the morale amongst strikers remaining high.

Initially called to oppose 95 compulsory redundancies on January 3, the determination of the strikers remains absolutely solid.

Management (including a brand new plant director) have provoked the dispute from the very start:

- Unions informed management (after a mass meeting and strike ballot) that if one worker was sacked then the rest of the workforce would walk out in support.

- One week into the dispute, in a clear attempt to intimidate the strikers, another 130 compulsory redundancies were announced.

- In response to a mass march/trespass round the plant last week, management have decided to remove the meagre resources allowed the strikers — telephone and toilet facilities at the gate lodge have been removed.

Clearly, management have no real interest in resolving the dispute. In a strike deliberately provoked by them, they have failed to contact the strikers' representatives and seem to have more interest either in union busting or in closing the plant altogether.

The strikers are prepared to settle in for a long dispute and are continuing to visit other factories to gain moral as well as financial support.

Money and messages to: Dave Hughes, 23 Prince Edward Avenue, Denton M34 1AS; cheques payable to: AEI Shop Stewards' Committee Fund.

We can end student debt!

By Janine Booth, NUS Women's Officer

It's time to kick out the Tories! That's the message students will be giving as they march against government

policies on education in London on 12 February.

The demonstration called by the National Union of Students (NUS) will be a national focus against student hardship, and cuts in education.

The last 13 years have seen students' living standards hit. The

**Vote Labour!
Kick the Tories out!**

basic higher education (Universities, Polytechnics, etc) student grant has been cut by a third; all benefits have been removed; while Further Education students receive little or no financial support.

If the Tories get in again things will get worse as they continue with their privatisation of education.

The wave of occupations last term showed the opposition to the Tories. Unfortunately, the right-wing NUS leadership didn't support the action, letting the Tories off the hook.

Even now the Kinnockite-led executive are not putting all their energies into building the student hardship campaign, and linking it to getting a Labour government. They are too busy organising a special NUS conference to discuss NUS's internal structures!

Students should be campaigning for Labour. With an April election likely, activists should be setting up "Students for a Labour Victory" groups; organising voter registra-

tion campaigns, and postal votes so that votes can be targeted at marginal constituencies.

This kind of activity must not be counterposed to keeping action such as occupations and rent strikes going. Some people on the left didn't link building action with voting the Tories out. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) say nothing about the election until it's too late, and oblige with saying vote Labour on polling day, while the Kinnockite Labour Students' leadership won't be arguing for action, merely concentrating on Labour's official election campaign.

Activists must combine the two. The best way to help Labour win is to build a big campaign around student hardship.

Neil Kinnock isn't promising students much, though, so the fight to make Labour deliver is an important part of the campaign to get rid of the Tories. However, a Labour government — even under Kinnock — will help break the log jam that has stymied the student movement over the last decade.

Left Unity and Socialist Organiser supporters will be making sure NUS calls a national shutdown as agreed at its last executive meeting.

This will act as a focus to ensure that the campaign isn't scaled down and that students play their part in driving the Tories from office.

Arguing for socialism



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