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# SOCIALIST

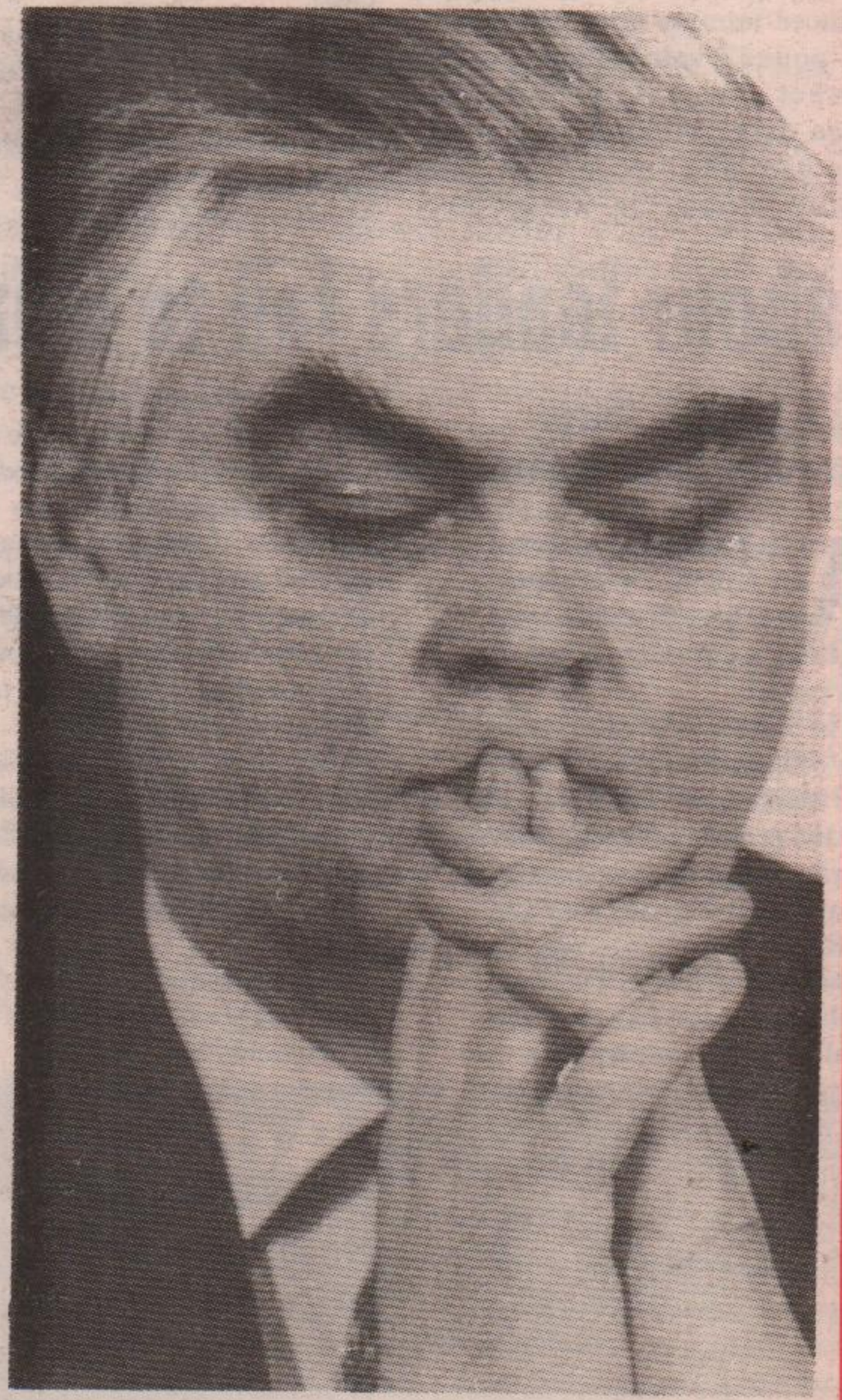
**ORGANISER**

*Unite the left!*

**Despite  
Tory lies,  
crisis  
deepens**

# FIVE MILLION

# FACE THE



Labour should take advantage of the Tory crisis

There could be five million jobless next year. Three million are already unemployed on the official figures, four million in reality. For all the ballyhoo about lower interest rates, manufacturing industry is still crumbling. British Aerospace, Ford, and Rolls Royce have announced big job cuts. And the Government plans to cut one million public sector jobs in the coming years.

Longer dole queues are certain even if things go well for capitalism. If the system lurches into further crises - and it may well do so - the real jobless figure could reach five million.

**Fight back now!**

- Unemployment: Tory policies and socialist alternatives - pages 4-5.
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# DOLE

**LABOUR MUST FIGHT!**



# Workers fight back in Italy

**Following Italy's devaluation of the lira, the Government there is already carrying out what is likely to be the Tories' new strategy after the devaluation of the pound: huge public spending cuts, and attempts to keep down pay so that prices rises due to devaluation feed into cuts in real wages. Katrina Faccenda reports on the fight back by Italian workers.**

'Fool' and 'sellout' are the words which greeted the leaders of Italy's main trade unions at last week's demonstrations against the Government's handling of the economic crisis. Since Giuliano Amato, Italy's latest prime minister devalued the lire and launched a massive programme of public service cuts, the labour

movement in Italy have mobilised massively to oppose these moves. In turn, the chickens really have come home to roost for the trade union leadership.

The Italian labour movement is dominated by the three party-affiliated union federations, Cgil (Communist and Socialist Parties), Cisl (Christian

Democrat Party) and Uil (Social Democrats and Republicans).

The anger of workers the length and breadth of Italy is aimed doubly at the sellout leaderships of their unions and the Government. In July, the union leaders signed away the 'scala mobile', a sliding scale of wages attached to inflation, with no consultation of the workers who were about to lose massively from this.

There is no common ground between the anti-Government demonstrations of the workers and those of Umberto Bossi and the reactionary Northern League. The workers are campaigning for the reinstatement of the 'scala mobile', better wages, and no health service or pension cuts. Above all, the

workers are expressing class protest at the response to the economic crisis which makes them bear the brunt of the effects of the ruling class's mismanagement of the economy.

The union leaderships have tried to avoid an all-out nationwide general strike because of its feared potential and have organised regional and sectional general strikes. People are already comparing the strength and anger of the workers' movement with the great days of Italian working class militancy. Many say that these demonstrations are bigger and more politically motivated than anything that has happened in the last 20 years.

Bruno Trentin, the leader of Cgil, was chased from the plat-

form at a demonstration of 100,000 in the Piazza Santa Croce, Florence, under a barrage of coins, bolts and punches. In Milan, Silvano Veronese of Uil was forced to abandon the platform after four minutes at a demonstration of 200,000 workers, and in Turin hundreds of workers walked out of a rally when Pia Lai, the regional officer of Cgil tried to give a speech.

Franco Grisolia, a Milan-based socialist, reported to Socialist Organiser that the central Fiat plant in Turin was solid during the strike - for the first time since 1969.

Hundreds of thousands of workers will demonstrate in the squares of Italy's towns and cities over the next few weeks.

The workers are angry and confident of their strength, they have turned their backs on the union leaders, not on their unions. The trade unionists will not allow Amato's Government to dismantle the welfare state and will not allow the union leaders to sign away the gains of decades of struggle.

Last week, seven politicians and their business associates were arrested in Rome for accepting 32 billion lire (about £160 million) of bribes over ten years for the awarding of contracts. The workers' movement cannot be led or represented by union leaders who are subservient to a Government which is harsher on workers than it is on criminal politicians.

## Economic crisis divides Tories

By Colin Foster

The Tories' cut in interest rates to 9 per cent is unlikely to produce a big industrial recovery, and very likely to store up big problems for the Tories.

Theoretically, a cut in interest rates can boost industry by enabling businesses to borrow more easily to expand (or to avoid bankruptcy) and by giving mortgage-payers spare cash. But a lot can go wrong with that scenario. British Aerospace, Ford, and Rolls Royce workers certainly have not been helped by the interest rate cut.

Industrial recovery or no, reduced interest rates will mean the pound's value slipping even further. That, in turn, means price rises on imported goods. The gap between imports and exports, already big, will get big-

ger, at least in the short term; and that "balance-of-payments" problem will create pressure for either further slippage by the pound, or interest rate increases, or both.

The Tory Government will try to counteract these effects by squeezing public spending, and public-sector pay especially. The cut in interest rates makes little economic sense; the motives for it must be mainly political, to shore up political support for the Tory leadership.

But, as Major and Lamont flounder, they are opening up explosive divisions within the Tory Party and within the ruling class.

Two years ago, almost the whole ruling class, and almost all the Tory Party, supported, or at least was reconciled to, Britain joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism. It looked as if the

EC was moving steadily towards a single currency and an integrated market, and the British bosses and bankers wanted to be on the inside.

Now the Maastricht Treaty is wrecked and the ERM is wounded. The Thatcherites and the capitalist "Euro-sceptics" feel confident in demanding that Britain should oppose further European integration and keep only loose links with the EC.

Yet their policy increases the chance of France and Germany going ahead with a "mini-Maastricht" of their own, with Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg, pushing Britain into the "slow lane" of a "two-speed Europe". There must be enough "Euro-enthusiasts" left in the capitalist class and in the Tory Party for this scenario to cause alarm and conflict.

## Labour leaders fail to seize on Tory crisis

By a Labour Party conference delegate

At its Blackpool conference, the Labour Party should have been discussing and planning a campaign to get the Tories out.

The Tories' economic strategy has collapsed into chaos - taking £10 billion down the drain with it. All the promises they made in the April general election have been shown up as lies; and they are split.

But, as I write (on Tuesday 29th), so far the Labour Party conference has mostly been one big yawn, with little sense of people wanting to stand up, speak out, and fight for what they believe.

The conference did not begin well. Dennis Skinner is off the National Executive, and most debates have gone according to the platform's recommendations. There has been one notable exception: conference demanded the scrapping of the Children's Support Act, which forces absent fathers to pay mothers on benefit even if the mother does not want it, and even if this drags the father below the Income Support level. It forces women to name their child's father even if the woman wishes to have nothing to do with him.

It is obscene that the NEC was not prepared to commit itself to opposing such a law; but on this we defeated the NEC.

Not so with the Workers' Charter, which demands the repeal of the Tory anti-union laws and positive rights for trade unionists. Although there was substantial support from the floor, the majority went along with the platform's directive and opposed the resolution. Maybe they trusted Robin Cook's vague pronouncement that the Labour Party and the TUC are already committed to labour law reform, but what reforms are in mind, and in whose interests, was not made clear.

Perhaps some of the fire of previous years will be rekindled later in the week, but I doubt it.

The fringe meetings have been rather more interesting than the conference sessions. There have been well-attended meetings on the witch-hunt, union links, trade union rights, and Europe.

We can build on the wide support for Labour's link with the unions, and maybe through that for positive trade union rights, by the time the next conference arrives.

Labour conference 1992 offers little hope for working-class people, but we may be able to build on the disgust at the Labour Party leadership expressed so clearly by many members at the fringe meetings.

## Adebo must stay!

A model motion from the Anthony Adebo deportation campaign

"This... notes the immediate threat of deportation hanging over NALGO member Anthony Adebo.

Anthony has lived in Southwark for over four and a half years, is married, and has two children. He and his wife are expecting the birth of a third child soon.

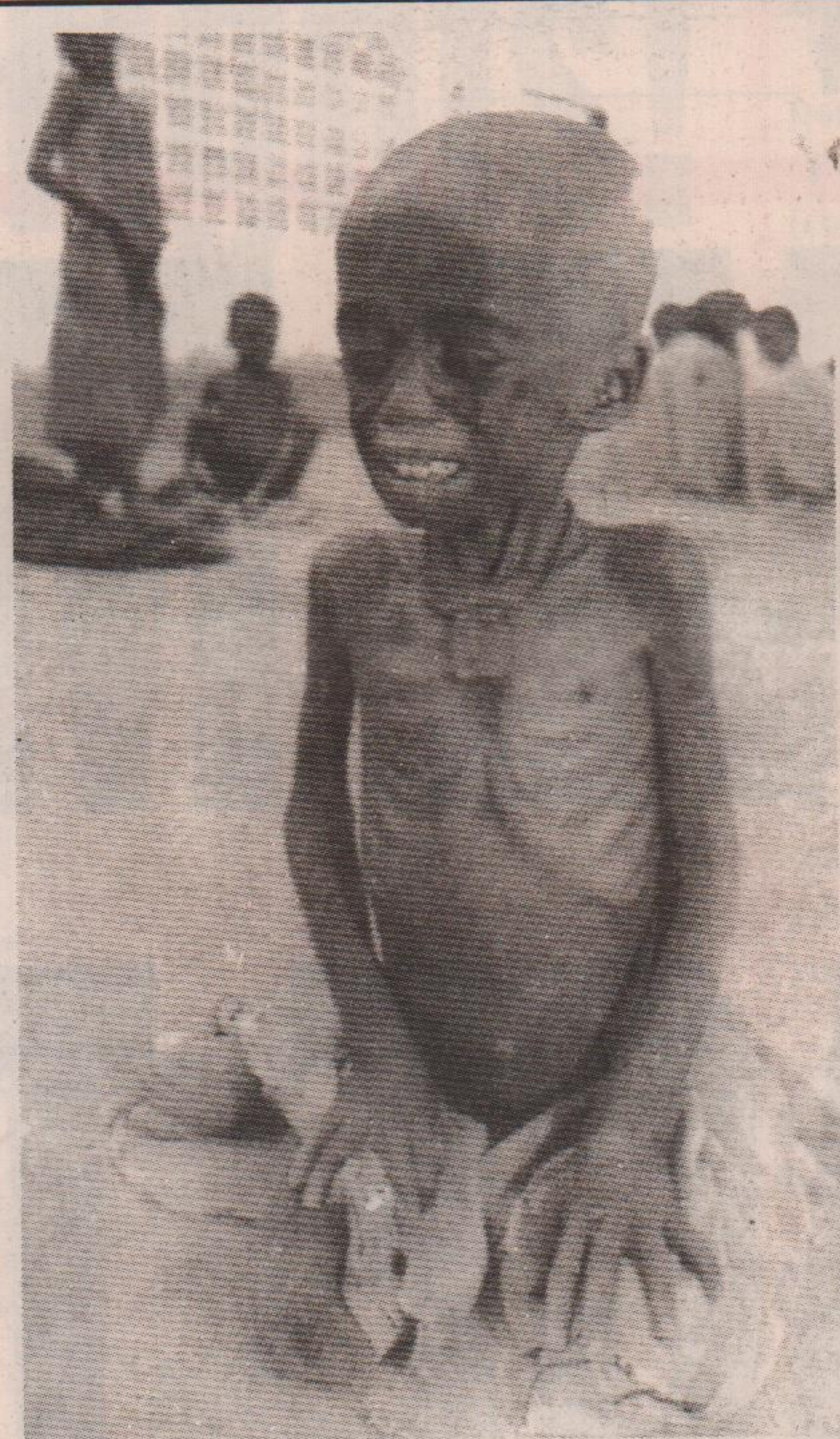
The Home Office is threatening to deport him for allegedly breaking one of Britain's racist immigration laws.

This... is opposed to all

racist immigration laws, and supports Anthony's fight to have the right to live and work in Britain free from harassment.

This... affiliates to the Anthony Adebo Family Defence Campaign and donates £... to the campaign funds."

Please send all motions, messages of support, and donations to: Anthony Adebo Family Defence Campaign, c/o Southwark NALGO, 177-179 Walworth Road, London SE17.



## Two million are starving

According to the United Nations, up to two million people are starving in Somalia. Western aid is scanty. A tiny fraction of the £10 billion wasted by the British Government alone on trying to prop up the pound would be enough to make every child, woman and man in Somalia well-fed and prosperous. But in the "free market" the whims of one rich profiteer count for much more than the desperate needs of millions of penniless people

## Greek socialists face jail for speaking out

Five Greek socialists face trial for producing a pamphlet about Yugoslavia and Macedonia. The five are members of the British SWP's sister organisation, OSE, and face up to fifteen years in jail.

The Greek government oppose the right of the Macedonian area of Yugoslavia to self-determination. They clamp down on those speaking out for Macedonian rights. A

number of people have already been jailed.

You can help by writing to the Greek Embassy, 1a Holland Park, London W11, and demanding the right of free speech, the release of those jailed and the dropping of the charges against the five.

Contact the Committee to Defend Greek Socialists, PO Box 27, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.

## Don't be fooled by Gould!

Bryan Gould has fallen out with John Smith. But don't believe Gould is a left-winger!

Ken Livingstone, on BBC2 TV's "Newsnight" (28 September), was claiming that Gould's resignation was the most important event in the Labour Party for many years, signalling that a section of the "soft left" had moved decisively to the left, away from the right-wing Labour leadership.

But after the April General Election, Gould was the first Labour leader to call for scrapping Labour's links with the trade unions. Frank Field, one of Labour's most right-wing MPs, nominated Gould for Labour leader. Only one issue separates Gould decisively from Smith: his opposition to the EC.

That opposition Gould learned not from any left-wing source, but from Peter Shore, a now-faded hardliner of Labour's right wing. Gould was Shore's PPS after 1974, backed Shore for Labour leader in 1983, and worked under Shore on the front bench after 1983.

Shore is a member of the Bruges Group, the ultra-Thatcherite group of Tory "Euro-sceptics".

Nationalist opposition to European unity, even to European capitalist unity, is not left-wing! It is a cause which belongs to the Thatcherites, and should be left to them.

Many Labour activists must be desperate for any sign of opposition, dissent, or radicalism at the top of the Labour Party, and eager to welcome almost anyone who seems to offer something more vigorous than Smith's grey-suit brigade. But don't be fooled by Gould!

## Connolly and 1913

We will resume the story of the 1913 Labour War next week.





Getting ready for the Tory boom, ten years too late

**Labour grooms itself for the yuppie boom - as it collapses into crisis!**

# What decade does John Smith live in?

This week's Labour Party conference reminds us of the much-told story about a legendary academic, a shambling, ramshackle old professor of history who was notoriously absent-minded. Dwelling in the archival tunnels of the past rather than in the present, his mind sometimes got lost there. As he gets older he gets more and more remote, until one day he has to ask a colleague: "What decade is this?"

There is nothing shambling or sartorially decrepit about the sharp-suited men and women running the Labour Party conference at Blackpool this week. No: they

are dressed and coiffed and colour-coordinated as if they have just stepped off the set of "LA Law".

Some of them are known to owe their place at the head of the political wing of the labour movement to the possession of the same attributes that win actors their roles in the soaps: good looks, bearing, "sincerity", the ability to read an autocue.

Every speech is a series of sound-bites, every gesture a gesture to camera, every expression designed by professionals, the whole as deliberately and self-consciously "fresh" as this evening's 10 o'clock news, at which it is aimed.

The Labour front bench won't ask what decade it is! They should. The labour movement should insist on asking them what decade they think this is. Mentally, they are stuck deep inside the early 1980s, and things have moved on since then.

Our legendary professor of history, his mind in the past, could not possibly have been as out of touch with his own world as this bunch of middle-class nonentities on the platform in Blackpool are out of touch with theirs.

The capitalist world, and Britain with the rest of it, is being convulsed by a series of economic and political crises of immense immediate cost and even greater potential destructiveness. Nothing like it has been known in peacetime for over 60 years.

Take unemployment. Britain now has nearly three million officially unemployed. By the method of counting in operation for

decades before Thatcher rigged the figures, we now have four million jobless. Even right-wing economists predict a further rise over the next year, perhaps by half a million. The increase could even be one million.

***"The socialist critique of capitalism has rarely been so immediately, not to say crudely and brutally, pertinent as it is now."***

Other advanced capitalist countries are similarly affected. The official forecasts tell of a deepening economic crisis everywhere.

Take European unity. The alternative to unity is renewed national antagonism and conflict. National conflict between Germany and other powers, in the first place Britain and France, ruined Europe twice in the first half of this century. Now, after decades of slow integration, European unity is no longer the certainty it has long seemed.

German reunification, the power vacuum in the East and the opportunities for economic expansion there, the rise of nationalism within the major EC states, in the first place Germany - all are combining to disrupt the smooth consummation of European economic union.

The old bourgeois rivalries and antagonisms and conflicts are still there, expressed now in conflicts over the ERM, the role of the Bundesbank, and the speed of progress towards integration.

Almost certainly the EC will not now unravel into the old national entities. A two-tier Europe, however, would mean that most of the present EC would proceed to unity around the core of the German economy, leaving an outer tier.

And the events in Europe take place in a world of increasing economic chaos.

Take fascism: powerful reactionary nationalistic currents which define themselves as fascist have sprung up all across Europe, not only in the territory where the Stalinists ruled and fascism gained credibility from being the great enemy in the propaganda of the old oppressors, but in Western Europe too, even in France. Almost everywhere, the oldest and deepest disease-bearing sewers have opened, to flood the streets under our feet with filth and contagion.

The labour movement does not pose an immediate threat to the ruling class, and therefore there is no immediate motive for the ruling class to turn to the fascist gangsters and give them power to repress the labour movement. But there are now powerful mass fascist movements, should they need them.

History does not repeat itself - not exactly. But history is already repeating, or looking as if it is about to repeat, the economic chaos and the political antago-

nisms out of which the horrors of the 1930s and 1940s grew.

After nearly half a century of faltering but sustained economic growth during which capitalism has expanded enormously - raping and pillaging and even endangering the survival of the common basis of human life, the earth, and damaging it perhaps beyond repair in the process - where are we? In terms of social and political and economic relations we seem to be back in the 1930s.

The socialist critique of capitalism has rarely been so immediately, not to say crudely and brutally, pertinent as it is now. Capitalism is wasteful, chaotic, savage, destructive, undemocratic, dehumanising.

**Continued on page 7**

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

Karl Marx  
Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA  
Newsdesk: 071-639 7965

Latest date for reports: Monday

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

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser and are in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated.



## The final showdown in the pits

The Tories' attitude towards the miners has not always been entirely rational. The Ridley Plan (a strategy for the defeat of key unions, culminating in the NUM, drawn up before the 1979 General Election) made sense from the point of view of the Thatcherite class warriors. The Tories' preparations for the 1984-5 strike and their

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

determination to inflict a lasting defeat on the NUM also made sense. But the latest proposals for shutting down 30 of Britain's remaining 50 pits, sacking 25,000 miners, can only be motivated by irrational malice

The Government's Rothschild Report last year estimated that it would cost £2,100 million to shut down 30 pits. Redundancy payments, dole payments, legal claims and so forth could easily bring the cost of closure to £8,000 million a year.

If that weren't enough, the devaluation of the pound makes the prospect of continuing cheap imported coal even less dependable than before.

In other words, even from the narrowest profit-and-loss accountant's-eye view of the world, this is the economics of the madhouse. It is also a body-blow to the Tories' favourite "union leader", Roy Lynk, and his Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM).

Not so long ago, Lynk and his boys were being feted by the Coal Board. They had Michael Heseltine at their conferences, and were looking forward to their promised position of favoured bidders in the privatisation of all or part of the coal industry.

Now Lynk's dreams lie in tatters. Nine of the proposed pit closures are to be in Nottingham, the UDM's heartland. It will be the end of the UDM as any sort of serious organisation. That is the thanks they've finally been given for splitting the NUM and helping to defeat the 1984-5 strike.

It must be tempting for NUM loyalists to gloat over the imminent destruction of the UDM. But the plan will be disastrous for all miners, UDM and NUM alike.

The NUM also has a big problem in deciding how to respond. A special NUM conference is to be held on 15 October. Clearly, industrial action is called for, but what form should it take? After the terrible bruising that NUM members took in 1984-5, a straightforward call for all-out strike action is not (yet) on the cards. Arthur Scargill's favourite alternative, the overtime ban, has not proved effective in recent years. A programme of one-day strikes could be the answer.

Dave Cliff, then of Hem Heath NUM, argued in this paper after the last overtime ban ballot went down: "There are good reasons why the NUM needs to adopt slightly more sophisticated tactics than banning overtime. The ban that would have been effected if that vote had succeeded would have been one that gave British Coal safety cover. The last time such a ban was operated, everybody and his dog worked overtime giving safety reasons as their excuse.

"To operate an overtime ban without safety cover also has massive drawbacks. The shafts are not inspected for work to commence on Monday mornings, the result of this being many miners losing at least one shift a week. Incentive payments fall to almost nothing during such bans, the result being a huge reduction in earnings even for those men who never work overtime.

"As anyone who has been in such a situation knows only too well, you are better off on strike. Nobody expects to get paid then, while if you are still earning everyone wants paying. Perhaps it's time the NUM learned a few lessons from the railway, with their days of action and area strikes of short duration".

And maybe the NUM should go one step further and grasp the nettle, overcome the understandable bitterness it still feels over the 1984-5 strike, and offer some sort of united front to the UDM - or at least to rank-and-file UDMers.

# Real jobless four million

## The Tories' answer: cut the figures, cut the dole!

Students and 16/17 year olds are now denied any welfare benefits. The index-linking of pensions to wage increases has been abolished.

The Tories have introduced "Availability for Work" tests, "restart" interviews, "Restart" course, and a host of similar innovations are used to deem stop people getting benefits.

And there is worse to come.

Legislation is already in place which allows the welfare benefits of single

mothers to be cut if they fail to name the father of their children.

New regulations currently being considered by the Social Security Advisory Committee propose cutting off Hardship Payments (equal to 60% of Income Support) for single people and childless couples who are deemed to be "not actually seeking work".

New forms are to be introduced for new claimants and those attending the six-monthly "Restart" interviews, providing new pretexts for depriving claimants of ben-

efits for allegedly "not actively seeking work".

Week-long "Restart" courses, currently obligatory - under penalty of loss of benefit - for claimants out of work for two years, are likely to be made obligatory for claimants well before they reach the second year of unemployment.

The Tories are also considering proposals to reduce the period of payment of Unemployment Benefit from 12 months to 6 months, and to replace the £35 weekly training allowance for YTS trainees by additional Child Benefit

of up to £9.65 a week.

The creation of "one-stop" benefits offices, where claimants will be able to apply for a range of benefits at a single office, will also not only lead to job losses but also to increased policing of claimants' efforts to find work.

Some of these measures involve a direct cut in spending on social security. Others, by providing pretexts to remove claimants from the unemployment register, will conceal the real level of unemployment as well as "saving" money.

## "A Thatcherite swot"

"A pathologically discreet swot whose disproportionate cranium gives him the appearance of a Thunderbird puppet. A profound believer in the elixir of pure monetarism he probably regards the Leaderene as a 'wet' but would never be caught saying so".

This was the verdict of one political commentator on Peter Lilley, the current Secretary of State for Social Security, on his election to Parliament in 1983.

Lilley had already established his Thatcherite credentials well before he became an MP. One of his first acts after become chair of the Tories' "Bow Group" in 1973 was to call for cuts in public expenditure in order to

combat inflation, a refrain he regularly repeated in subsequent years.

Throughout the crucial years of the 1970s and the transition from Heathite to Thatcherite leadership of the Tories, Lilley remained at the helm of the "Bow Group", steering it remorselessly in the direction of the new monetarist orthodoxy.

Running true to form, Lilley had no sooner entered Parliament after the 1983 General Election than he called for cuts in public expenditure in his maiden speech.

Lilley moved on from the "Bow Group" to a series of far more right wing Tory cabals: the Carl Menger Society, the Adam Smith Institute and the "No

Turning Back" group, of which he became a founding member in 1985.

Some of his more memorable contributions to raising the level of political debate in this country include the following:

1985: Claims that development aid was not the answer to the problem of the world's starving millions. Free enterprise would be of greater benefit.

1987: Opposes compelling local authorities to build caravan sites for gypsy travellers.

1988: Claims that a reduction in inheritance tax would, in the long run, produce more revenue for the government.

1989: Denies that increases in interest rates have any-

thing to do with increases in the number of homes being repossessed.

1989: Stages a Wake for the Monarchy Party on the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.

1992: Confronted with figures showing that the poorest 10% of the population suffered a 6% cut in real income during the 1980s, claims: "It would be a mistake to think that this necessarily reflected a drop in real living standards."

Appointed Secretary of State for Social Security after the 1992 General Election, Lilley finds himself in charge of a government department which, given his Thatcherite philosophy, he does not really believe should exist.



The real jobless figure is already close to four million. Photo: John Harris



## UNEMPLOYMENT

## figure is

## The Tories' "Training"

When the Tories scrapped welfare benefits for 16/17 year olds, they claimed that enough "Youth Training" places would be available for everyone in this age range. But an estimated 70,000 youth have been unable to find a "Youth Training" place.

The number of youth leaving a "Youth Training" scheme with any kind of qualification continues to decline, and now stands at just 35%.

The "success rate" of "Employment Training" for older claimants is equally uninspiring. Over 60% of those who begin an ET scheme fail to complete it. Only 25% of ET trainees have their course with a qualification. And only 25% of ET trainees find permanent full-time jobs.

The more recent "Employment Action" initiative is a complete failure. Though originally

intended to take 60,000 claimants, "Employment Action" - which means claimants working for their dole and £10 extra has attracted just 23,000 claimants.

*"As unemployment has increased, Tory spending on "training schemes" has decreased both relatively and absolutely."*

As unemployment has increased, the Tories' spending on such "training schemes" has decreased both relatively and absolutely.

Spending on "Youth Training" has fallen from £1,333 million (1987/88) to £848 million (1990/92). Spending on "Employment Training" has fallen from £1,757 million (1987/88) to £849 million (1991/92).

In the last five years the Tories have slashed expen-

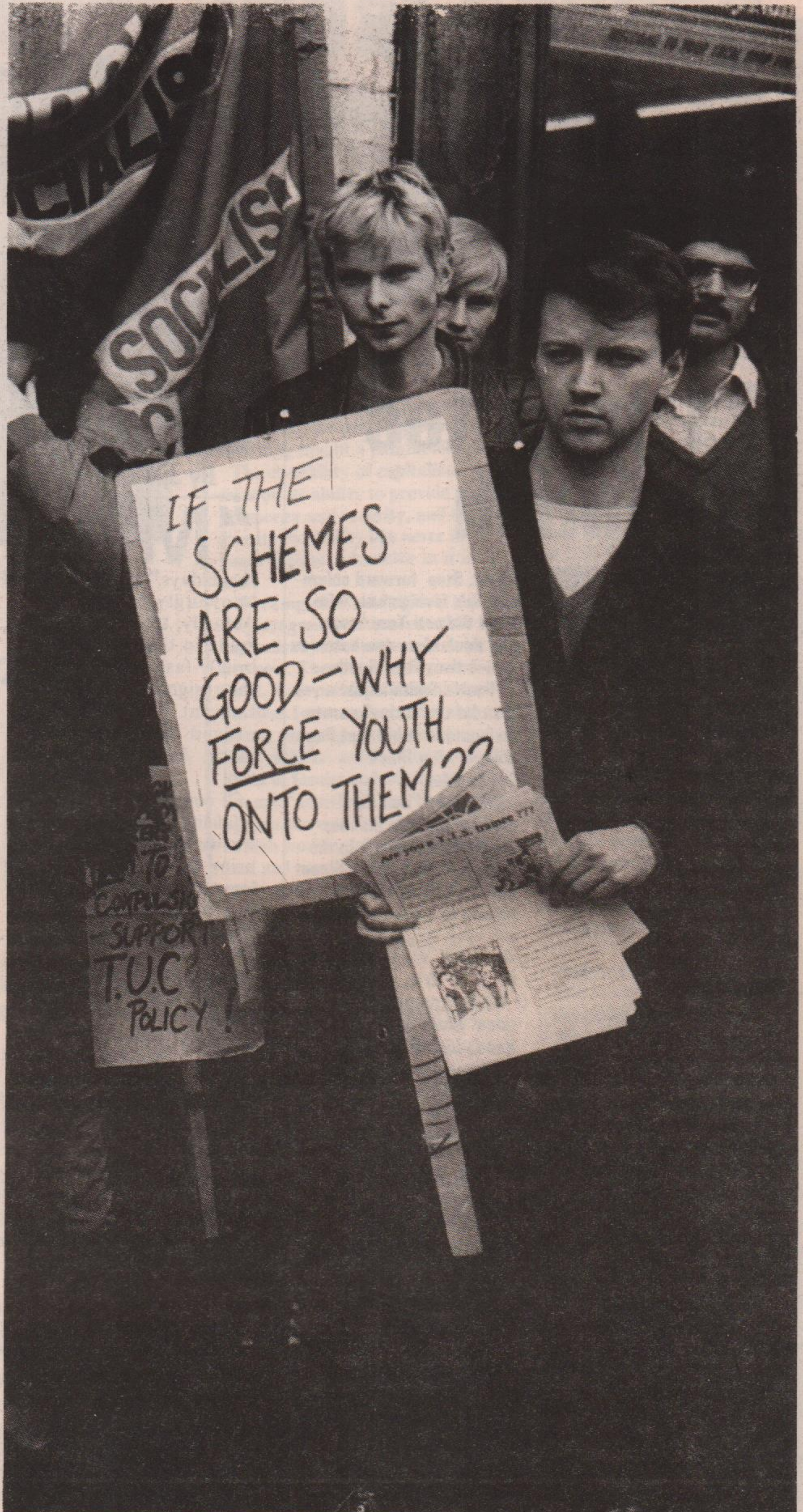
diture on all "training schemes" by 45%.

Many Tory MPs want American-style "Workfare" schemes, forcing the unemployed to work for their dole. But they would, at least in the short term, be highly expensive.

Many employers want the Tories to improve their training schemes, in order to improve the skills of their future employees. But that again would cost money.

The Training and Enterprise Council, which administer the government funded "training schemes" are unhappy about claimants being disruptive for the schemes.

But the likely outcome of the Tories current review of "training schemes", is more cutbacks in expenditure, a lower quality of training and more unemployed people being forced to register for such schemes.



Youth "training" schemes mean cheap labour and no real training. Photo: Jez Coulson

## Our alternative

Unemployment is not the product of there being "too many" workers, any more than hunger is the product of there being "too many" people in the world.

Under capitalism the right to work, or even the right to eat, is subordinate to, and dependent upon the "right" of the capitalist to make a profit. If there is no profit to be made, then workers can rot on the dole and go hungry.

Technological advance creates new labour-saving techniques of production. Rather than share out the work available, and cut

working hours, capitalism consigns millions to unemployment and increase the work rate,) and sometimes even the hours, of those still in employment.

The inevitable result is mass unemployment. To fight unemployment effectively, TUC Congress should not waste their time listening to the director of the CBI.

The Labour Party should stop performing as Her Majesty's "loyal" opposition.

The labour movement must fight for: work sharing with no loss of pay; opposition to every job loss and work-

place closure; training on full pay and with a guaranteed job at the end of it.

The fight for full employment must be linked to the fight to scrap all immigration control. Immigrants are victims of unemployment not its cause.

The labour movement should stop pretending it knows how to run capitalism better than the bosses themselves do. We need to fight for full employment on the basis of work-sharing with no loss of pay as part of the struggle for the socialist overthrow of capitalism.

According to government statistics, unemployment in Britain increased by another 47,000 last month and now stands at 2,807,500.

The real figure is closer to four million. Official statistics do not include the estimated 500,000 women who are unemployed but do not register because they won't get benefits; or the 400,000 claimants on the Tories' so-called "training schemes".

August was the 28th month in a row to show an increase in unemployment. Since May of 1990 registered unemployment has increased by over 1,200,000. In some parts of the country, such as the South-East, unemployment is now at a post-war high.

Britain has the fastest rising unemployment in the whole of Europe. On average, there are

over 25 claimants for every job vacancy in the country. In London the figure is even higher with 50 claimants chasing every vacancy.

The increase in the number of long-term unemployed has been particularly sharp. For the first time since 1988, over 900,000 claimants have been out of work for a year. Long term unemployment is now higher in all parts of the country than it was a year ago.

In the first seven months of this year the number of long term unemployed aged 18 to 24 increased from 16,500 to 184,700.

Even at the most conservative estimate, official unemployment will reach 3 millions before the close of 1992, and 3.25 or even 3.5 millions by the end of 1993.





Ken, whatever colour suits, Livingstone

## 21 minutes for lunch

### GRAFFITI

**21** minutes for lunch, 11 minutes for teabreaks, and six minutes for the toilet - those are all the breaks that the average British office worker gets in the average day, according to a new survey.

74% of the workers surveyed said that work pressures had increased over the last two years.

The more people are jobless, the more work and strain and stress is packed into the days of those who still have jobs!

As Marx put it: "The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve, whilst conversely the greater pressure that the latter by its competition exerts on the former, forces these to submit to overwork and to subjugation under the dictates of capital."

The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by the overwork of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalists..."

**O**ften a good radical bourgeois paper can be ruined by one right wing columnist. Take the new, transformed, anti-Tory Sun. The Sun has done a lot of Tory-hashing recently. They defrocked David Mellor all the way down to his true blue Chelsea shirt and socks, and they have led with headlines like "Now we've all been screwed by the Cabinet".

They went on to point out how many hospitals could have been built with the money wasted on the ERM crisis and the pipe dream of London being the financial centre of Europe - though they did also suggest the money might have been better spent on armaments. All this on top of a growing anti-Royalism.

But someone had to keep the spirit of the real Sun

alight. Step forward columnist Ken Livingstone, who amid the anti-Tory howls can think of no-one better to attack than John Smith.

"Feeble Smith is just a yes man for the Tories", wrote Livingstone in his first Sun column after Black Wednesday.

Why does "Red Ken" choose this as his message to Sun readers in the middle of the paper's recent anti-Tory binge? There is no hint in his article that the Labour Party could be changed if people fought for it.

Its only purpose is to boost whatever-colour suits Ken in his new role as Parliamentary champion of the Sun's Europhobe cause.

**"D**efending the past attracts no votes", opines Margaret Hodge, Labour leader of Islington Council, in this week's Tribune (read: any dream of locally provided and democratically controlled high quality services should be forgotten).

The passing of control over services from local government into private hands is no reason to mourn, she continues. "We will fail if we just look back".

Hodge has been looking to the future herself. She is quitting her job as leader of Islington council and taking a job as a consultant with city accountants Price Waterhouse.

She will not want her new bosses to look back to when she first became Islington council leader, in 1982, and the council flew the Red Flag over its Town Hall and put a bust of Lenin at the door of the council chamber; nor even to 1985, when she promised to "go right up to the brink" in fighting the Government over rate-capping.

We will look back - and learn the lesson that we should never trust Labour politicians who promise to go "up to the brink" in struggle, but never over it.



### PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

**"M**inisters simply don't resign over anything these days" I wrote, oh-so-knowingly, last week. Actually, the statement was made in the context of the briefly-fashionable calls for the resignation of Norman Lamont but, still, it has proved to be wide of the mark. And I'm very glad, too.

Of course, Mellor's marital infidelity is not the issue that we would have chosen to bring him down over - still less would we have targeted his apparently innocent friendship with the daughter of a PLO leader. His penchant for freebies strikes me as an altogether more serious matter and a perfectly proper subject for press investigation.

But, ultimately, it was the manner in which he responded to the various revelations (rather than the revelations, themselves) that marked him out as unfit to hold high office: by turns, smug, self-righteous, petulant, shifty and - above all - breathtakingly

hypocritical. Who can ever forget Mellor's appeal to be left alone for the sake of his children - prompting the question of why he did not consider that when he embarked upon his affair

**"But spare a thought for poor 'Tinker' Bell: all his ploys (like the disastrous family photo-call at the home of Mellor's father-in-law) may have misfired badly, but would you want to be David Mellor's PR person?"**

with Ms De Sancha? Or his brazen insistence that there was "no question of impropriety" involved in accepting the loan of a £300,000 flat and £60,000 chauffeur driven Mercedes from a property developer?

Still, the question remains: why did the tabloids target Mellor and keep the revelations coming thick and fast after he'd weathered the initial De Sancha storm? I've heard and read a number of possible explanations, of varying degrees of plausibility; you can pick 'n mix from the following:

1. It was all a Mossad plot, stemming from the occasion when Mellor told off an Israeli soldier for ill-treating Palestinians.

2. It was all a Thatcherite plot, due to the fact that

most tabloid editors have never forgiven Mellor for his role in Her downfall and, additionally, regard him as unacceptably liberal.

3. Having "wounded" Mellor over the De Sancha affair, the press had to "kill" him because he's been in charge of the Government's inquiry into possible press legislation.

4. The Tory tabloids knew that the Labour-supporting *Mirror* and *People* would run with the story regardless, so politics took second place to the circulation war.

Personally, I think Mellor's fate was sealed when Kelvin MacKenzie heard that he owned a large collection of classical CD's and was being supported by the *Guardian's* Edward Pierce.

Mossad plots and other such conspiracy theories aside, it is a fact that the entire Mellor vs The Tabloids battle was a proxy-war between two PR gurus - Tim Bell (Mrs Thatcher's favourite PR man, in Mellor's corner) and Max Clifford (an old friend of the tabloids, now handling Ms De Sancha's career).

Max, it seems, thought up many of the more imaginative details of Ms De Sancha's "story" (eg the Chelsea football strip business) and sold it all to the *Sun*, pretending it came from a "friend" (another client). Brilliant!

But spare a thought for poor "Tinker" Bell: all his ploys (like the disastrous family photo-call at the

home of Mellor's father-in-law) may have misfired badly. But would you want to be David Mellor's PR person?

**T**here may be some doubts (misplaced, I think) about cheering on the tabloids against Mellor. But on one question, at least, there can be no problems for even the most scrupulous and fair-minded reader: Mellor's freebies.

The tabloids themselves seemed to sense that here they had hit upon an absolute, sure-fire winner and set about their coverage with renewed verve and confidence. I particularly like the *Mirror's* front page headline on Thursday: "If it's free, it's for me"! And I like *People* editor Bell Hegarty's quip after hearing the news of the resignation: "He warned us that we were drinking at the Last Chance Saloon. We said, at least we buy our own drinks!"

Of course, there are aspects of this business that a sensitive like me should find disturbing and distasteful. But, overall, the tabloids have done a good job on behalf of the public and for democracy. Left-wingers who are tempted to use the Mellor business as ammunition in their campaign to introduce press legislation (the well-meaning but misguided Clive Soley MP springs to mind) should think again. Two cheers for the tabloids.

## GRAFFITI

# Two cheers for the tabloids

## Why mothers get desperate

### WOMEN'S EYE

By Sigrid Fisher

**S**ome friends of mine have just started teacher training courses, and, as part of their introduction week, had a session on discipline. They were told that smacking was no longer an acceptable form of punishment, and that recent legislation in Scotland has brought parents into line with professionals such as teachers, childminders, etc, making smacking illegal.

The arguments against smacking are clear and indisputable: displays of violence by someone in a position of trust and power over a vulnerable minor are abuse, and can only teach children that aggression is condoned in adult behaviour as a way to succeed in confrontational situations. But what all the debate and propaganda against smacking fails to address is the circumstances of the "smacker".

While there are some parents/carers who believe in the

old-fashioned doctrine of physical punishment as the best way to teach a child a lesson, most cases of smacking or other similar acts are an expression of desperation.

In a society that places (predominantly) women in the isolated and devalued position of sole carer for their child/ren, a prolonged and continuous bout of having practical and emotional demands made upon them can drive many women to behave in a way that is completely out of character and against everything they believe in and want to be.

The image of the always capable, loving, patient, educating and entertaining mother in her clean and tidy house with the dinner in the oven comes into stark contrast with the reality of most women's lives. Faced with the day-in, day-out tasks that are part of getting you and your child through the day in a constructive manner, you sometimes look around and see only failure in everything you try to do.

The job of full-time carer calls for superhuman levels of sacrifice, compromise and understanding, impossible to sustain when dealing with

poverty and lack of support and recognition in society. The most visible cause of this daily stress and struggle can easily, though wrongly, be seen to be the child screaming and clinging onto your leg. The hand can fly out against this child before you even realise what is happening.

The answer is not to increase the pressures on

**"What all the debate and propaganda against 'smacking' fails to address is the circumstances of the 'smacker'."**

women in this situation by providing a loud and clear "tut" from society, but to give those women freedom from the trap of poverty, and to make available opportunities for women and children to have time for themselves away from each other. But

we see no increase in benefit levels, and cuts in nursery provision. And to cap it all, this week in my area, is enrolment week for adult education courses where those at home and out of work can pursue interests and learn new skills. None of these courses have childcare provision. If you want a morning or afternoon off to study or engage in an alternative activity, you have to find someone to look after your child/ren yourself. Or pay the full amount for the childcare worker - something completely impossible on benefits or low income.

So, it's back to the home where you and your child get bored, frustrated and resentful. Your child only has you to take these feelings out on - where do you turn? Against your child? It is the capitalist system that imprisons women within their own four walls, with nowhere to turn and no escape. It is the capitalist system that deserves to get the full force of these women's anger at their situation. It is the capitalist system that should be imprisoned, beaten and buried once and for all.





The "Revolutionary Guards" who died in thousands in the war against Iraq are now being unleashed against women. Photo: Kaveh Golestan/Reflex

**"Moderate" government turns to "hardliners" to counter mass protest**

# Conflict grows in Iran

By M Razi

The ruling faction in Iran, the Rafsanjani-Khameneii clique, has been forced to change some aspects of its internal policy.

In July, Ali Khameneii, speaking to militia leaders, called on the Hezbollah to intervene in politics. The resignation of Khatemi, the "moderate" Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, was accepted by Rafsanjani and a supporter of the "radical faction" was put in his place.

Since late July the Islamic militia has started a major widespread attack on "badly veiled women" in the streets of Tehran.

Following widespread corruption and bribery among the pasdars ["Revolutionary Guards"], the government recently replaced them with Islamic militia mainly recruited from the provinces. These "mobilisation forces of resistance" have been let loose on the people, especially women.

The "moderate" faction of the regime is not very different from the "radical" faction. The two factions of the regime are far more worried about the people's struggles than their internal differences.

In the face of popular opposition, the "moderate" faction became "hardline" overnight and called on the Hezbollah to suppress the "criminals and undesirable elements" who had caused trouble, and temporarily forgot its "liberal" allies. The "hardliners" can also become moderate for a short time.

Their only difference lies in the preferred "style" of organising a capitalist economy: one faction favours a revival of modern capitalism, similar to that of the Shah, the other faction favours a clerical (semi-feudal) type.

The Rafsanjani regime cannot fight back a popular uprising with a few technocrats, capitalists

and royalists who have recently returned to Iran — it needs the criminals of Hezbollah. Amidst all the problems, the brief reconciliation between the two factions was a necessary tactical measure which will not jeopardise the general situation and the policy of rapprochement with the West.

The economic crisis facing the regime is so severe that even if the Rafsanjani clique gains full control, the initial stages of economic reconstruction will take many

**"Since late July the Islamic militia has started a major widespread attack on "badly veiled women" in the streets of Tehran."**

years.

War damage, runaway inflation, unemployment, and the speed with which the regime has turned towards imperialism's policies (demanding huge loans from the IMF, an open door policy towards foreign investment), together with mismanagement, internal conflict and chaos, has put the government in a position

where it cannot respond to the problems facing Iranian society.

The economic crisis has also left its trace on agriculture: food and agricultural imports have increased by \$6 billion over the last year. The migration of the peasants to the cities has risen, and the population is growing at a frightening rate.

The number of the urban poor living in shanty towns is increasing daily. The majority of the population in Iran have become poorer, while a small number are getting richer.

The recent uprisings of the urban poor are reflections of this situation.

The brief success of the uprising in Mashad proves the importance of organising and forming workers' and toilers' organisations. The experience of the recent riots demonstrates the necessity of forming clandestine local committees, together with their coordination and expansion, in preparation for the forthcoming mass struggles to overthrow the capitalist regime in Iran.

(Adapted from the editorial in *Workers' Socialist Notebooks* no.11: contact BM WSN, London WC1N 3XX).

## "Mullahs fled the area"

In the wake of the oil workers' strike and the following demonstrations and riots in Chahar Mahal Bakhtiari and Khorrambad, the cities of Shiraz and Mashad witnessed major uprisings in late May.

Two youths were killed when the residents of the shanty town of Kooye Tollab, near Mashad, stood up against the regime's bulldozers, and an army support unit, sent to destroy their homes. The slum-dwellers took up the two bodies and carried them in a demonstration.

Gradually thousands joined the demonstration and the streets

came under the control of the demonstrators. Major government offices such as the offices of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Tax Office, banks and police stations were occupied and burned down by the people. Mullahs were seen fleeing the area and the security forces were only capable of regaining control of the town well after midnight.

The next day, the wave of arrests and executions started. Four people charged with "inciting riots" were executed immediately. Thousands were arrested.

# What decade does John Smith live in?

From page 3

Hundreds of thousands of people in Britain who believed in Mrs Thatcher's fantasy of "people's capitalism" are being taught a painful lesson.

The credibility of capitalism rests on its ability to provide jobs, prosperity and security, and therefore its credibility has never in 50 years been so vulnerable as it is now.

Working-class socialism is the only progressive answer to this capitalist system under which we live now. There is a crying need for it. Vast numbers feel a desperate need for answers, and if they do not get progressive working-class socialist answers they will listen to fascist and other reactionary "answers", and be turned against the working class. The British working class needs socialism; and conditions are making it ready to understand that once again.

**"The proper politics for these conditions are socialist class struggle politics, not the Thatcher cast-offs marketed at Blackpool by John Smith's pathetic gang of failed Tory understudies."**

But at the Labour Party conference, the platform is still auditioning for the role of Her Majesty's understudy Tory Government, all tooled up and ready to go - into the conditions of years long gone by! They have spent a decade, the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions, letting themselves be bludgeoned and kicked to the right by all the moulding forces and pressures and promises of reward at the disposal of the vastly rich and powerful bourgeois enemies of the labour movement.

They have accepted so much of the Thatcherite counter-revolution against the welfare state that very little now separates them from the Tories.

And then what happens? The latent lunacy of the capitalist world is breaking out in mayhem all around them! The mesmerisingly powerful Tories who overawed Labour for so long can no more control these forces than the

Tories of the 1920s and '30s could. The Tory Party itself shows signs of a self-rupturing division over Europe.

The truly representative figure at the conference is not the always right-wing Scottish advocate (QC in England) John Smith, nor his deputy, the once-fashionably "socialist" Margaret Beckett, nor Tony Blair, nor Gordon Brown, but Neil Kinnock, sitting with the delegates. Acknowledging the ritual stage-managed standing ovation, he looked curiously unreal and prehistoric, like a man embalmed, like someone who had benefitted from the services of Lenin's beautician, thrown out of work by the change of masters at the Kremlin.

Kinnock led the party to its present state of unfitness to deal with the capitalist convulsions that now threaten to overwhelm us. He is the living embodiment in today's politics of the truth expressed in an old Irish proverb: "Is maing do ghni go holc agus bhios bocht ina dhiaidh". Woe to him who does evil and is poor after it!

This is true for all this wretched gang of Labour leaders, but especially true for the ex-socialists amongst them.

At the top the Labour Party is politically dead. Faced with the need to struggle, trade unionists and rank and file Labour Party members will slough off the rule of these pink Tories and begin again.

We do not know how long this will take. Socialists will best help the labour movement revive politically by boldly arguing, inside the labour movement and outside it, for an immediate socialist solution to the horrors that threaten to engulf us as capitalism goes into its worst fit of convulsions for decades. We will best help the working class get its political bearings by initiating and supporting the fight back now, wherever we can, however limited it may be to start with.

The labour movement lives amidst world slump, economic catastrophe in Britain, mass unemployment, and a growing threat of fascism. The proper politics for these conditions are socialist class struggle politics, not the Thatcher cast-offs marketed at Blackpool by John Smith's pathetic gang of failed Tory understudies. The labour movement will find its way back to socialist politics.



Failed Tory understudies



**Profiteering without the legal, 'civilised'**

# The Mafia and

**In the recent Italian general election the MSI (Fascist Party) and the reactionary Northern League both made significant electoral advances. In addition to the growing threat from the right, Italian workers have a longer-standing enemy to contend with: the mafia. Katrina Faccenda looks at the history and the power of the mafia in Italy.**

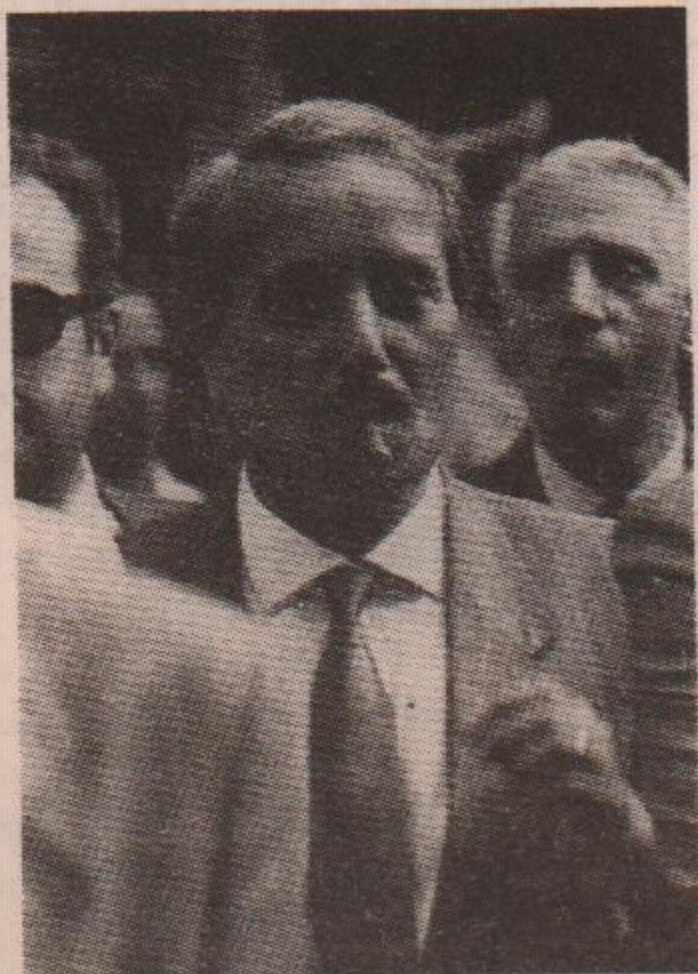
**T**he Italian mafia has the power, the organisation and the connections to withstand almost any attack on its unique position in Italian society. The recent assassinations of the anti-mafia prosecutors, Falcone and Borsellino, eliminated two principal adversaries of the mafia, but at the cost – from the Mafia's point of view – of renewing and strengthening anti-mafia campaigns throughout Italy.

The murder is the latest in a long list of attacks aimed specifically at those who threaten the power and privileges of organised criminals in Italy.

In the early '80s Pio La Torre, an anti-mafia campaigner and PCI (Italian Communist Party) deputy was assassinated by the mafia. His death prompted the passing of new but limited anti-mafia legislation. It led to the posting of General Dalla Chiesa to Sicily.

Dalla Chiesa was sent by the government to be the "cutting edge" of its drive against the mafia. He was chosen on the basis of a reputation gained in the Italian government's ruthless campaign against the Red Brigade. He was in the tradition of Cesare Mori, Mussolini's man in Sicily, back in the '20s, who claimed that the best method was to "convince them that I am the most powerful mafioso of the lot".

Within a few months of his posting General Dalla Chiesa was gunned down on the streets of Palermo!



Giovanni Falcone, an anti-mafia magistrate killed by the mob

These political assassinations are always followed by huge demonstrations, an outcry in the national press and empty promises from the government of stern new anti-mafia campaigns and legislation. But this time around there is a new edge to the campaigns.

The anger thrown up by the mafia's ability to carry out assassinations with such ease and apparent immunity from prosecution has merged with the anger at the post-general election scandals. A wave of political and financial scandals unknown since the Second World War have rocked Italy, exposing deep of political and financial corruption implicating all of the major political parties, including the party of the Democratic Left (the renamed PCI).

The Italian working class is more angry than ever with the corruption and chaos which cripples Italian society. In Sicily, the Rete (Network) Party did well on a platform of anti-mafia campaigning. This anger is so strong that it has the potential to go beyond demands for more state intervention and anti-mafia legislation and straight to the heart of the political dealings which grant so much power to the mafia.

**O**rganised crime is not unique to Italy but the Italian mafia are the original model of international big time crime. The mafia has fascinated Hollywood filmmakers into presenting a selective and often romanticised image of the "men of honour". The idea that the mafia is a secret society with initiation rites, rituals and codes of honour has never been that close to the mark. Basically the mafia is a web of kinship relations and established dealings in units of extended families, which are also known as *cosche*.

The mafia, which is known by different names in different regions of Italy, must be looked at as a product of capitalism and this helps explain the situation where an organisation of four or five thousand members can enjoy such power. The 20th century mafia has developed in tandem with capitalism, to create a modern mafia which has little in common with the mafia of the early 1900s.

It is what Pino Arlacchi, a mafia expert and criminologist, has described as the "entrepreneurial mafia", a mafia which understands modern capitalism and how to get the best advantages from it.

*The mafia and its financial power have become an essential component of the financial bourgeoisie on an international level.* One measure of this successful adaptation is that in 1986 12.5% of the Italian gross national product came from criminal activity ranging from drugs to extortion and kidnappings!

A typical mafia entrepreneur has 2 areas of business activity which merge with each other: the legiti-



A Mafia revenge killing. The Mafia kill not only gangster rivals and uncompliant judges, but also rebellio

mate and public activities, and the illegitimate business activities which are completely criminal, like drugs. In his legitimate operations a mafia entrepreneur has obvious advantages over fellow non-mafia businesses in his complete disregard for the legal restraints.

All big businesses disregard the law when necessary, but the mafia businessman is unrestrained and absolute in his willingness to use

***"The mafia and its financial power have become an essential component of the financial bourgeoisie on an international level."***

whatever means he finds necessary to achieve and keep financial supremacy.

A mafia firm discourages competition simply by choosing a particular area of business – construction work, for example. This means that a mafia firm will gain complete monopoly rights. Judge Falcone's report (1982) showed that the mafia controls all construction work in the city of Palermo.

Another advantage which the mafia firm has is its ability to super-exploit a terrorised workforce. They can squeeze wages down to an absolute minimum,

evading national insurance and social security payments, not paying for overtime and using their own caporale (foremen) to recruit gangs of workers.

Women agricultural workers are the worst exploited: they are paid as little as 50% of the contractual rate.

Many multi-national companies find these employment methods ideal: Coca Cola franchises are often mafia-controlled in southern Italy.

The third main advantage which mafia businessmen possess is access to a variety of financial resources.

Mafia firms can raise money through the production and sale of heroin, kidnappings, the arms trade, extortion, etc and invest this money in their legitimate enterprises. The ransom paid for Paul Getty Junior was used to buy trucks to establish a transport monopoly in the construction of a new industrial port.

In early capitalism robbery, trade and piracy were often aspects of one and the same profession. The English state under Queen Elizabeth I financed itself by piracy on the high seas. The mafia continue this tradition within our supposedly well-ordered capitalism. It brings them immense advantages.

The Italian mafia has an advantage not even enjoyed by its US counterpart: its ability to invest illegal money in its business operations is virtually uncurbed. In 1982, anti-mafia legislation created a few ineffectual barriers to the legal investment of mafia money, but it was deliberately designed to

be ineffectual: it is not in the interest of the Italian government to interfere with the mafia's ability to make money.

Mafiosi are also linked in a complex network of friendships and contacts with the managers of leading national banks, giving them special access to loans on demand in a way denied to other account holders.

**I**n the immediate post war years the mafia went into decline. Modern mass political parties and a labour movement developed in the Italian south, where they had never existed before, threatening the mafia's ability to recruit new members. Southern Italians were migrating to the industrial North for jobs in the factories. By the '60s a mafioso had lost much of his "respect". He was sometimes tolerated by the state – when it was convenient – and sometimes repressed.

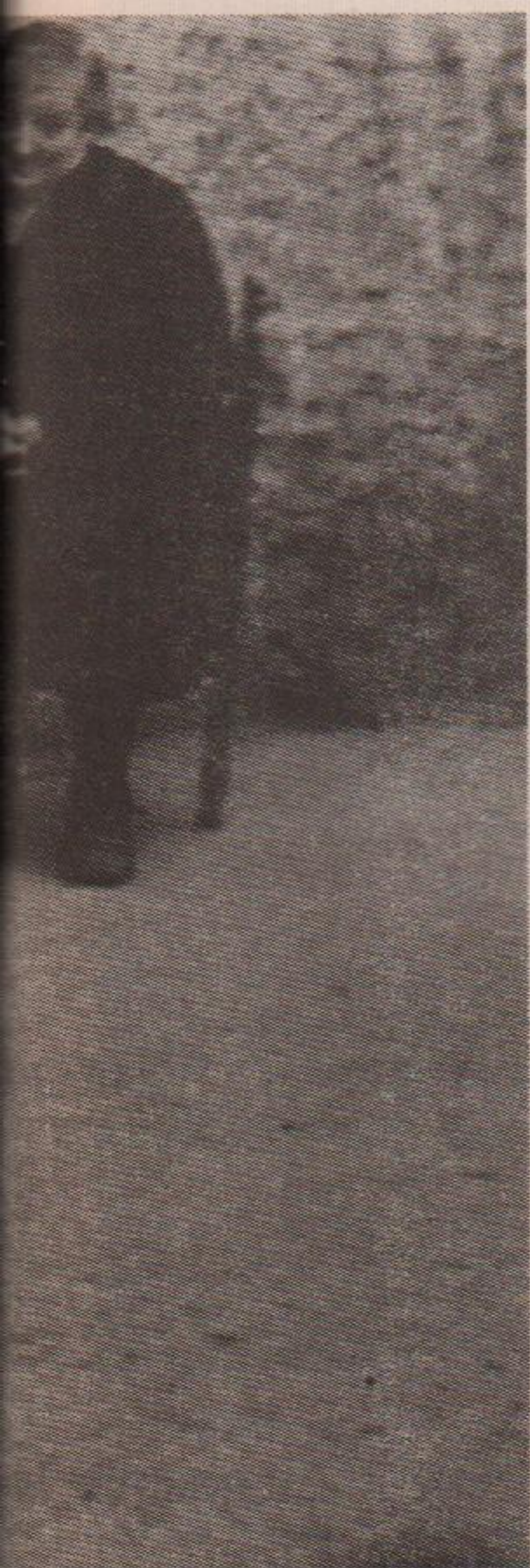
In a famous trial in 1968 the average age of the 117 mafiosi on trial was over 50. The mafia was in such a weak state that some thought it would eventually disappear. But the mafia learned. As the Christian Democrat Party – backed by the Italian state power – displaced the mafia in some areas as the organiser of patronage, "favours" and graft, the mafia began to seek greener pastures. The "capitalist" mafia was born.

The modern mafia has made itself so enormously useful to Italian capitalists that many firms now encourage and protect the power of the mafia. The mafia can offer unbeatably cheap labour, and



d' mask

# Capitalism



... trade unionists.

avings in protection money. In southern Italy, for example, the mafia and big businesses have formed an alliance to inflate the cost of public investment, siphoning off enormous profits from the contracts awarded for road building and other public services.

In the old days a mafioso defined himself as a "man of honour". This "honour" had little to do with wealth and more to do with violence and power. Modern mafiosi have adopted money as the basis of their reputation, and wealth has become a measure of honour.

The most financially successful mafia are the Palermo families, a group of about 100 who are still active in the heroin trade, though they have crossed into the world of big bourgeois power and wealth.

A mafioso is constantly in conflict with the legal system and with competing families. The judiciary has become a less homogeneous social group, and thus not so easy for the mafia to control. They have been forced to recruit teams of legal experts.

The most accurate feature of the Hollywood version of the mafia is the sometimes spectacular violence by way of which they compete. When mafia family comes up against mafia family they both have the same business advantages, and so violence becomes the only weapon they can use. In recent trials some mafiosi have tried to use this basic feature of their existence as a defence. An amenable psychologist invented the idea that criminals who are in constant fear of their lives developed an "insane paranoia syn-

drome".

Danger aside, the lifestyle enjoyed and flaunted by the modern mafiosi has become a model for some unemployed youth and students, who are drawn from poverty into crime and power.

**B**ut the partnership between the mafia and the state goes beyond finance. One feature of the mafia which hasn't changed since the days of the traditional mafia is its role in repressing those whose behaviour threatens the interest of the ruling class.

Some describe this as the real power of the mafia, the ability to substitute for the state and to offer to the ruling class services which

**"Socialists must argue against the reactionary reflexes of those who want to strengthen the state to fight the mafia, and favour reintroducing the death penalty."**

the "democratic" state is not always in a position to provide for them. The weakness of the Italian state in the '70s and '80s is well known: the mafia found in this an opportunity to reclaim some of its lost power. It seized the chance with both hands.

In mafia areas the mafia and state have often collaborated to crush threats to the establishment, and "disturbances" by small-time criminals, rebellious peasants and trade union activists. A classic example is the life of Salvatore Giuliano, the hero of Mario Puzo's novel "The Sicilian".

In real life Giuliano started off as a small time bandit competing with the mafia. He then became a bandit chief in alliance with the mafia. He was killed by the mafia collaborating with the state - after he had done their dirty work.

Take this horrible example. In 1947 the peasants of 3 villages gathered to celebrate May Day at Portella Delle Ginestre in the province of Palermo. The celebrations were not long after the People's Bloc had made a good showing in the regional elections. Salvatore Giuliano and his men opened fire from the surrounding hills. 11 were killed, and 65 were injured.

Despite such attacks on workers and peasants, Togliatti, the leader of the then great and powerful PCI, was anxious not to rock the boat. Officially, the PCI's line was to support the southern peasants who were occupying land and driving out the landlords. But the leadership wanted to avoid too much radicalisation at a time when they were manoeuvring with the

Christian Democrats for a share of power in the government. So, as Italy's poorest and most oppressed organised against the landowners and the mafia, the PCI abandoned them. From the time of Italian unification up to WW2 the Sicilian peasant movement had fought against a mafia/bosses/state alliance; and the new PCI failed it at a vital point in that struggle.

In the late 1940s the mafia was responsible of the murder of at least 40 trade unionists and militants.

The Italian workers cannot rely on the state or the judiciary to deal with the mafia, though the courage of people who fight the mafia, like the Judges Falcone and Borsellino, has to be admired. The mafia do not hide their power and a mafia lawyer will often use phrases such as "My learned friends, the innocence of the accused proclaims itself as loudly as a shot from a Magnum 44", or "If I were you, your honour, I would not refuse the request I am making much longer". They know that it is impossible to be completely safe from the mafia.

Pio La Torre realised that one of the most effective way of striking a blow against the modern mafia was to attack its methods of accumulating wealth. The La Torre law was passed, but, many of its intended powers were removed as it moved through Parliament, as we have seen, making it essentially ineffective in the drive to root out mafia money from legal activities. This was typical.

Members of anti-mafia commissions have constantly come up against mafia-protecting governments whenever their investigations get too close to exposing

mafia-state alliances. During his investigations Falcone consistently came up against the regional government in Sicily, and the central government in Rome.

Since his assassination, Falcone has become an icon for many young Italians who are desperate for an end to corruption. Italian students speak of the arrogance of young mafiosi who do no work at school or college because they know that no one will have the courage to fail them, and of threats and violence against students who will not cover up their absences. Jobs and university places are still influenced by a network of personal recommendations and nepotism.

While hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets to demonstrate against corruption, many Italian socialists feel that these demonstrations lack direction and strategy. These are not the first anti-mafia mobilisations: the left will have to fight to maintain and build on this anger.

Socialists must argue against the reactionary reflexes of those who want to strengthen the state to fight the mafia, and favour reintroducing the death penalty. Italian workers have a huge and dangerous struggle on their hands to defeat the mafia. This struggle involves workers internationally, since the mafia is international.

While progressive anti-mafia legislation can weaken the mafia, the post-war entrepreneurial mafia, entwined in a thousand places with "legitimate capitalism" can only be smashed in the context of an anti-capitalist struggle. The mafia merely presents us with the brutal, bloody, piratical face of capitalism, without the legal, "civilised" mask.



The left must build on anti-Mafia anger

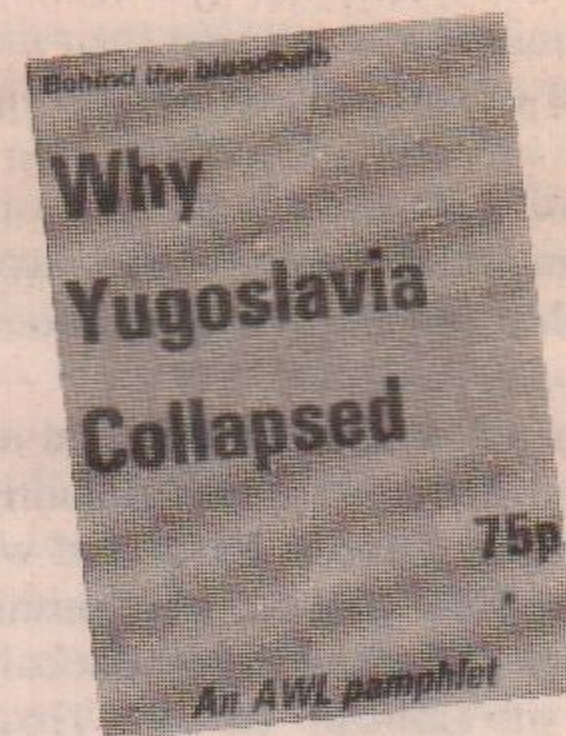
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# The case for defending and democratising the block vote

*The noted labour historian Lewis Minkin is a key member of Labour's Working Party on the relationship between the unions and the party. This article by Minkin, abridged from 'New Socialist' magazine, September-October 1981, explains the history of the block vote; shows how the right-wing outcry against it is more sour grapes than a push for democracy; and suggests one possible way of making the block vote more flexible and democratic. We do not know if Minkin still supports the views presented here.*

The "block vote" was not an organic growth within the TUC; up to 1890 the affiliated trades societies and trades councils voted by show of hands – one person one vote.

This arrangement involved various anomalies and caused resentment amongst some of the largest unions who felt that their membership should automatically entitle them to greater voting rights. Existing trade union practice gave them precedents for instituting a mechanism which ensured votes according to membership and entitled each union to display organisational unity.

But the thrust of reform also had a sharp political edge. Socialists, predominantly from the Independent Labour Party and working mainly in the New Unions, were pushing the TUC towards an independent political representation of Labour in the House of Commons. The Lib-Labs, who were particularly strong in the older and larger unions, sought means to hold them back.

Following the Congress of 1894, there came what Beatrice Webb at the time described as a *coup d'état*. Without the prior approval of congress, except for an innocuous procedural resolution, the parliamentary committee (forerunner of the General Council) suddenly initiated three major changes in the TUC standing orders – each of which involved a set back for the socialists.

Under the new standing order no.8 delegates to the congress voted by cards on which the voting weight was equivalent to the number of members affiliated.

Thus the mechanism which the Labour Party was to inherit was instituted as part of an attempt by Liberals and anti-socialists to

abort the infant party.

These procedural changes could not stop the spread of collectivist and socialist ideas nor, given the actions of the judiciary, did it halt the move towards independent representation.

The Labour Representation Committee, which became the Labour Party, was set up after a resolution of the 1899 congress and the new party had an overwhelming majority of trade unionists as its affiliated membership. Consequently, it took over many existing trade union procedures as it evolved a constitution and standing orders the first being:

*"Voting shall be by a show of hands but on a division being challenged delegates shall vote by cards which shall be issued on the basis of one card, for each thousand or fraction of a thousand, paid for to the Committee by the Society represented."*

This was, and still is, compatible with an affiliated organisation splitting its votes. But in practice the unions (or most of them) cast their votes as blocks. Acceptance of these arrangements was eased by the fact that as some of the largest unions tended to stay aloof from the party there were no huge disparities in the votes or organisations.

In 1900, out of 568,000 members represented, only five unions had more than 20,000; even the socialist societies of the ILP and the Social Democratic Federation could cast 'mini' block votes of 13,000 and 9,000 each. Also, the arrangements for elections to the executive were remarkably favourable to the socialist societies. At the first conference they took five of the twelve seats on the committee – plus the party secretary.

However, in 1917 a majority of the unions pushed through a rule change which in effect gave them complete control over the composition of the Executive.

Under the constitution of 1918, all seats on the committee, including those allotted to the new divisional ("constituency") Labour parties based on individual membership, were to be voted for by the whole conference and not by individual sections. And conference was markedly more trade union dominated as a result of the affiliation of larger unions and the growth of trade unionism. In January 1918 the socialist societies cast 48,000 votes, the divisional parties 115,000 and the unions 2,471,000. Union affiliation remained high until after the 1926 General Strike, whilst the divisional parties were relatively slow to expand.

At the drafting stage of the new constitution, in the conferences of 1918 and at the various conferences of the early 1920s, attempts were made to loosen the trade union grip and to undermine what was seen by some as the 'tyranny of the block vote'. They were all easily defeated.

A new situation emerged in the 1930s as union affiliation languished at a much lower

figure whilst the divisional parties grew in membership. The Home Counties Labour Association and the Constituency Parties Movement sought primarily to secure an independent and increased representation of local parties on the executive. Union resistance stimulated reformers to seek a wide range of other objectives. There was an attempt to secure a national meeting of the divisional parties – in some eyes a move to counter the union block vote with a divisional parties' block vote. And there was a wave of proposals designed to deal directly with the union block vote.

In the agendas of the conference of the late 1930s were resolutions that:

- all delegates should have one vote;
- all organisations should have one vote;
- all votes should be hand votes unless a majority of not less than one third demanded a card vote;
- trade union representation should be confined to local affiliation;
- the votes of the constituency organisations should be expanded;
- the vote of individual unions should be split proportionate to members' views.

As it happened the unions proved to be more flexible than was thought; a new method of election and an increase for the constituent

***"The Labour Representation Committee, which became the Labour Party, was set up after a resolution of the 1899 congress and the new party had an overwhelming majority of trade unionists as its affiliated membership."***

party was agreed in 1937. But on the issue of the block vote the reformers got nowhere; not one of the proposals was navigated through the agenda controls. Nevertheless a range of options had been defined several of which were to re-emerge when antagonism again developed between union leaders, backbench MPs and constituency activists.

After 1948 gratitude and loyalty felt towards the Attlee government for its social and industrial achievements, plus a fervent anti-communism, led leading figures on the General Council to organise their Labour Party activities to a much greater extent than previously. The organisation was based on meetings between leaders of the three largest unions, Arthur Deakin of the Transport and General Workers, Will Lawther of the Mineworkers and Tom Williamson of the General and Municipal Workers.

Their strength lay not only in the support they could elicit within their own unions but also amongst a wide range of smaller bodies.

And, much more than the left was prepared to acknowledge, they had support also within the constituency organisations. Political divisions ran through all sections of the party.

The overall strength of the right – an aggressively self-confident right – was the dominant feature at the conference. And it was reflected in a cross union alignment which outlived the union leaders who crated it.

The clearest sign of their effectiveness was that after 1948, with the exception of a minor vote in 1950, not one defeat was suffered by the platform at conference until 1960!

The executive was overwhelmingly dominated by supporters of the parliamentary leadership – a position achieved mainly through trade union votes.

The block vote of those days was extremely intolerant and could be very harsh indeed when operating in tandem with leading members of the Parliamentary Party, one of whom was usually the chairman of the organisation sub-committee. For example, 1953 saw an official attempt by the General Council to stifle criticism of union leaders by *Tribune*, then edited by Michael Foot. In the same year Mrs Eirene White, a 'moderate' member of the executive by anyone's definition, declined to stand for re-election because of the pressures which had been put on her by union leaders to toe the line.

Any MP who voted in parliament contrary to the decision of the Parliamentary Party risked expulsion from the party; controls over constituency party activities were tight.

It was in this context, with the block vote strikingly dominant and under severe criticism, that a change was instituted in the voting procedure at Conference. To appreciate the significance of the change it is important to note two little known points.

First, *procedure for card voting at the Labour Party Conference was up to 1953, exactly the same as that still in use at the TUC*. A union was normally issued with only one card; in a card vote union leaders showed the card to the tellers after the chairman had called out first 'for' then 'against'. The vote was therefore public and fellow delegates could usually see which way a union was voting.

Second, though it was common practice for a union to cast its votes as a unit, there was a *party facility for unions to have cards sufficient for them to split their votes and up to the early 1950s some of them did so*.

The extent of this practice of split voting is difficult to unearth as there are no available party records. But it appears that the federal unions – the Mineworkers and the textile workers – occasionally did so.

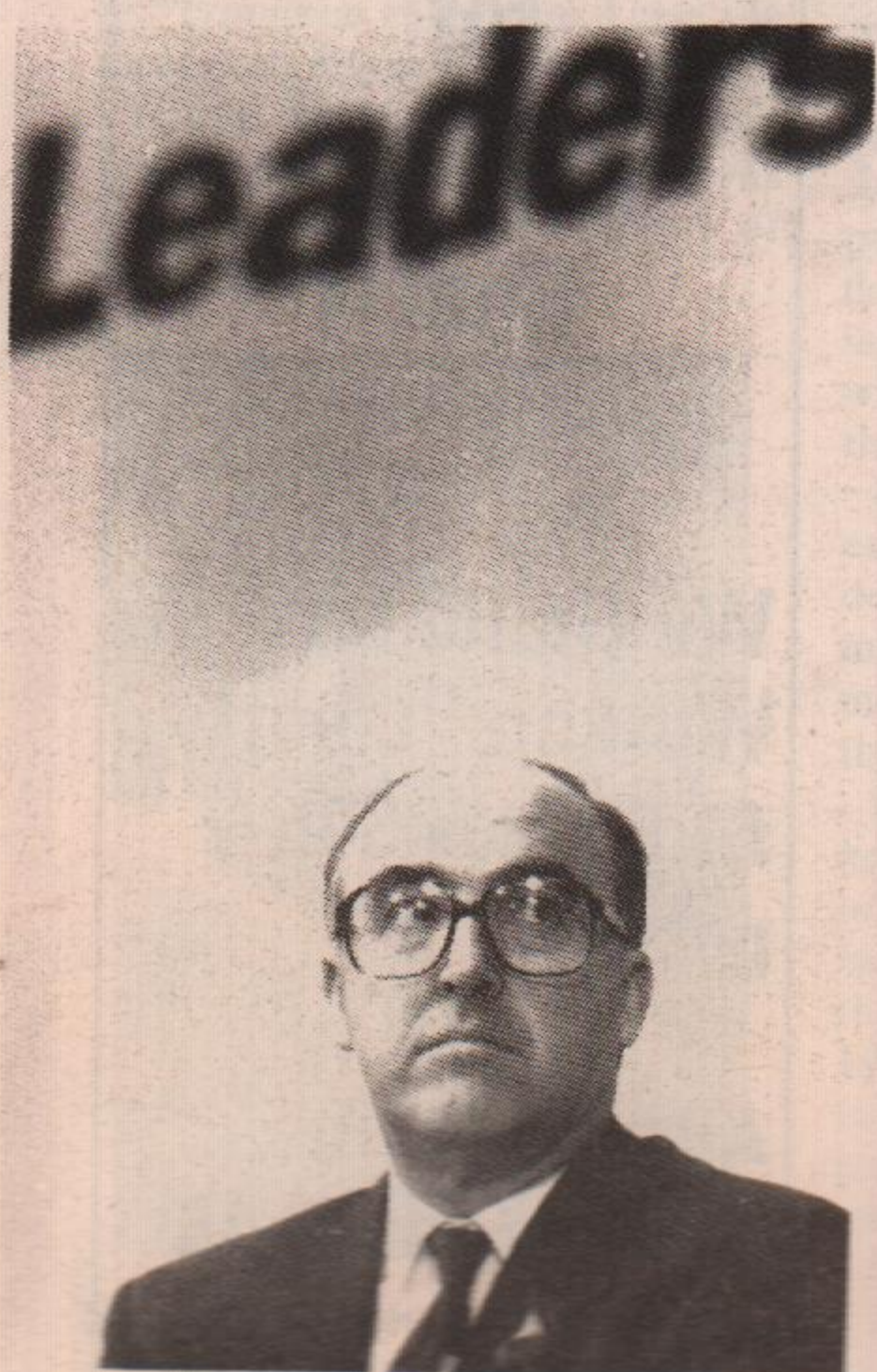
More significantly, one of the oldest craft unions regularly split its vote.

The Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers claimed a card or each of its seven-man delegation who apparently voted in line with union regional opinion.

However, by 1953 a change in procedure initiated by the party made the facility much more difficult. That summer the BBC approached both major parties with a request to telerecord their conferences for the first time.

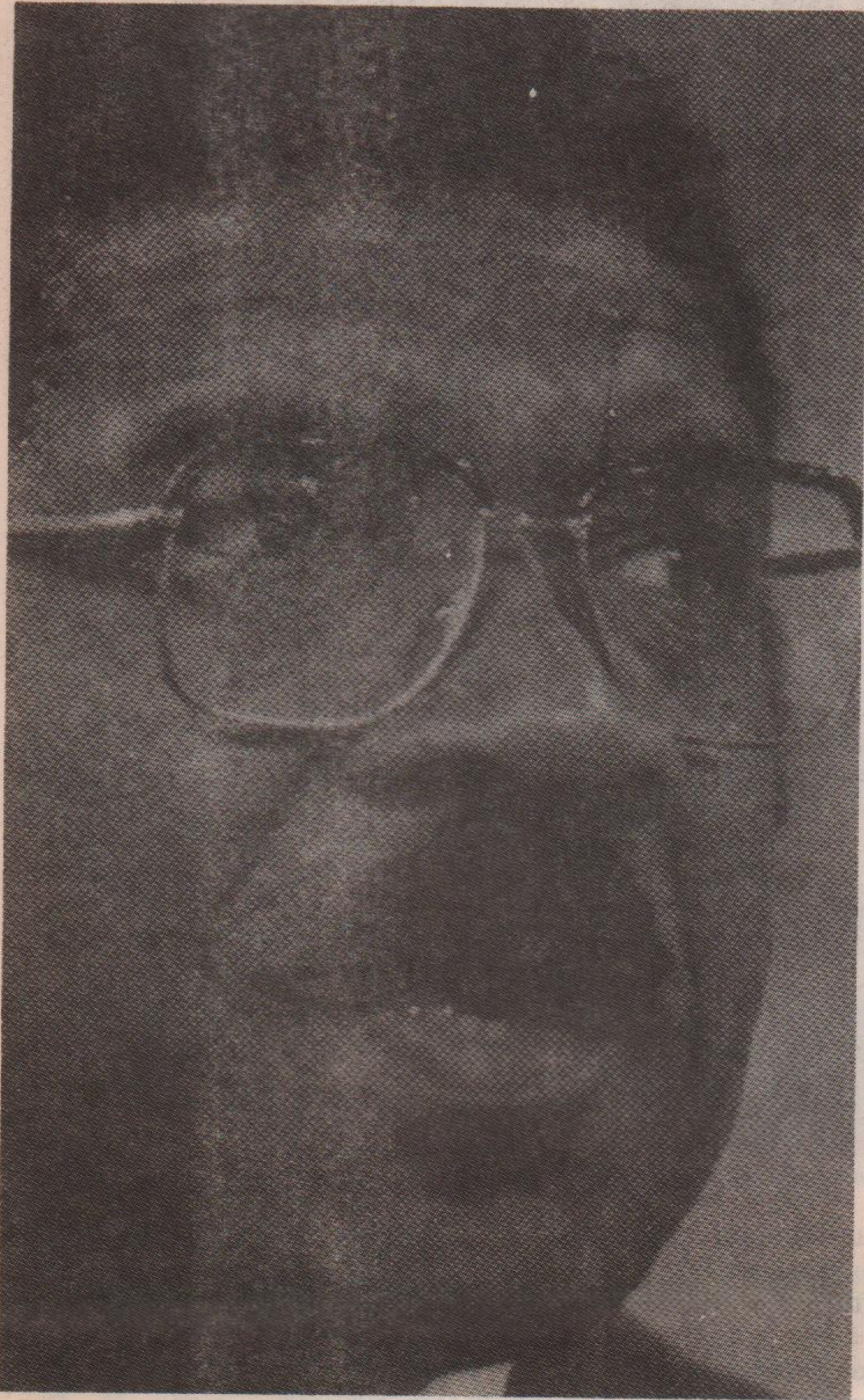
Morgan Phillips, the party secretary, was unhappy at the possibility that there might be 'embarrassments' if union leaders casting large votes appeared on the screen and he recommended the adoption of a system of ballot boxes, to make voting more discreet.

The executive agreed to leave the change to



John Smith





Bill Morris

him and the conference arrangements committee and it was implemented at the 1953 conference even though by this stage both the executive and the conference had rejected the presence of the cameras! It was not until 1955 that they were finally admitted.

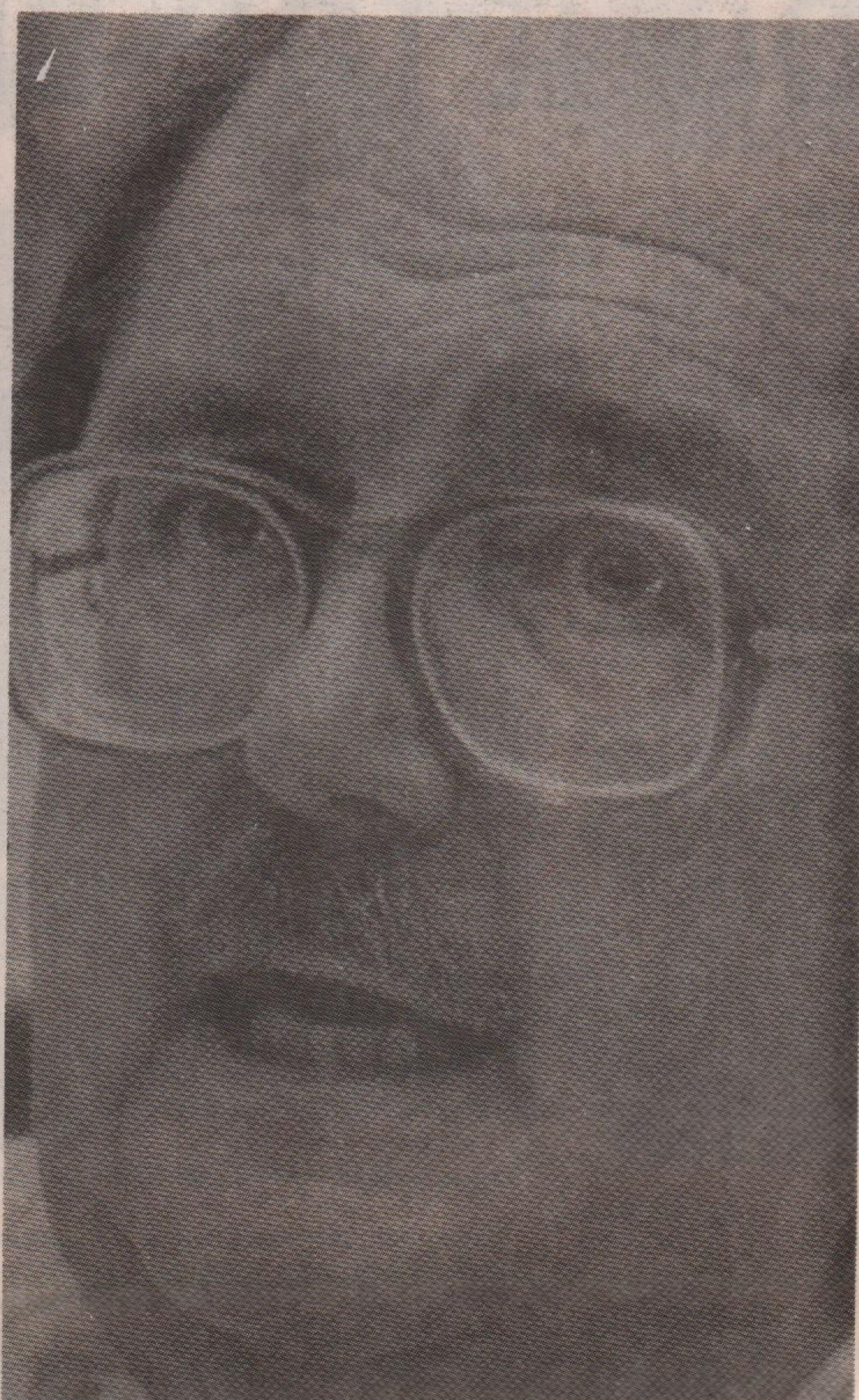
This change in procedure had several consequences. It speeded up the process and made it more accurate. It also (once only one ballot box was in use) made it more difficult for delegates to see how their colleagues were voting. And it made it more difficult on grounds of practicality and expense for a union to claim a separate vote for each of its delegates.

Today, where once there was one card to each voting union eighty are used (40 for and 40 against). And where once it was accepted custom at head office that each union had the right to claim what cards it needed, it has now become conventional wisdom that splitting a delegation's vote between individuals "just can't be done".

Then as now, most union leaders defended the block vote system on strong traditional grounds. It was an expression of the party's genesis as a trade union party. It was commensurate with the unions' financial contributions and it was an expression of trade union solidarity in line with their industrial practice.

For the politicians the argument had a much more partisan character. Whilst the left, so often in a minority, openly explored the iniquities of the arrangement, the right tended to view its use in terms of realpolitik... not perhaps the ideal way of deciding party policy... a bit anachronistic when viewed from the perspective of a modern social democrat... but nevertheless it preserved stability and continuity... it helped keep the annual conference in harmony with the parliamentary leaders and it kept at bay those forces which Sydney Webb immortalised as "unrepresentative groups of non-entities dominated by fanatics and cranks and extremists".

This comfortable perspective was suddenly shattered in 1959 when Frank Cousins encouraged his union to oppose Hugh Gaitskell's policy on nuclear weapons and



John Edmonds

public ownership. Overnight the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union became "the bully with the block vote", and in the next two years a variety of proposals emerged from the right designed to neutralise or circumvent the manual worker unions' dominance over the conference.

On the left there continued to be objections to the block vote but now they gave a much reduced priority to reform. It was a tendency which, with some notable exceptions was to become even more marked in the 1970s.

The Wilson government embarked on a range of economic, industrial and foreign policies which not only alienated many constituency members, it stimulated a powerful reaction within the unions. There was a significant shift to the left in the policy and

***"In the 1950s the right wing saw the block vote as not ideal, but preserving stability and continuity. But when Frank Cousins of the TGWU opposed Hugh Gaitskell, overnight he became the bully of the block vote!"***

leadership of several unions; this was reinforced by the pattern of union growth, amalgamation and contraction.

By 1969, the old rightwing block vote had been shattered. Though in some important unions, notably the engineers, there has been a further change of leadership, the stable base of support for the parliamentary leadership has never been recreated.

A second less obvious development has been the changing pattern of power within

the affiliated unions. It is common for one senior official (usually the general secretary) to play a key role in policy making. But this personal power of the boss can easily be exaggerated both by intra-union critics and by a mass media always prone to personalise issues and discover ogres in the labour movement. In even the most centralised unions, the most skillful and prestigious general secretary operates within a range of institutional and cultural constraints.

Since 1966 there have been defeats for the parliamentary leadership at the conference on a scale which has no parallel in party history. And the powerful campaign for constitutional reform has been a factor shaping the choice of leader and encouraging the departure of the Social Democrats.

If we are to seek root causes they can be found in the attitudes and policies of the parliamentary leadership in the 1960s, but there is no doubt that institutionally the crisis in the party has been a crisis of the block vote.

How this will now develop is difficult to foresee. It is doubtful whether the domineering and closely integrated block vote of the post-war years could be resurrected. It was a product of peculiar cold war circumstances and a set of attitudes towards authority which are fast being eroded. It absence may dismay those nurtured within its security, but for most of the party it is a liberating experience which opens up the possibility that the movement's rhetoric and its practices will move more into line.

Since the mid 1950s there has been a major change in the concentration of the votes at the conference. In the first place, there has been a transformation in the relative voting weight of the sections. In 1953 when the constituency parties' vote was at its peak of 1,307,000 it was 472,000 votes larger than any one single union.

Today as a result of the disastrous decline of membership in the late 1960s and the recent rise in union affiliation the constituency vote at 689,000 is not much more than half that of the Transport and General Workers alone.

Another disparity is likely to continue to increase in the next decade. Amalgamations

have reduced the number of unions represented at the conference from 88 in 1955 to 52 in 1980. Eight unions between them now cast 4,561,000 out of 6,450,000 union votes.

Contraction of union membership will reduce the affiliation of some unions but it is likely also to give added impetus to amalgamations which concentrate membership in a decreasing number of unions. Thus the practice of unions casting their votes as units which do not register minority votes is likely to look more incongruous and bring the practice itself increasingly into question.

This practice has a long history but as I have indicated it is not as long as is often supposed. It appears natural to trade unionism, but its inception at the TUC was a political manoeuvre which aroused considerable hostility for many trade unions. It has been the common practice but not as all-pervasive as is often thought. And if the traditions of distributing votes within a delegation died out in the 1950s, this had as much to do with the party as with the unions.

In future elections for leadership and deputy leaderships there is a pressing case for minorities to be registered. It is not the process where the trade union preponderance is at its greatest but it is the one which has the most public impact and the least industrial consequences. The media now give us the votes of particular candidates at union conferences; there is no evidence that this information harms the industrial solidarity of the unions concerned.

Apart from factional self-interest all previous attempts at block vote reform have been destroyed on the rocks of union autonomy. For this reason it is essential that any initiative for change comes from trade unionists, that each union interprets for itself its obligation to consult its membership, and that a system of split voting allows each union the flexibility to specify which decision-making forum will register its split votes.

What the party can do is what it did in 1953. It can change the system of card voting or at least in the case of electing the leadership specify how that procedure might evolve with union agreement. There is nothing to prevent the party suggesting a future ballot paper which not only specifies a total unit vote for checking purposes but gives a facility for organisations (constituency parties as well as unions) to write in the division of their votes.

I am aware that there are more comprehensive and neater solutions to the whole problem of the block vote. But in this area we have to work with the grain of the movement's traditions. The Labour Party is always likely to appear an untidy and peculiar patchwork of individual and collective representation and of disparate governmental processes within a confederal structure. To wish it were otherwise is also to regret a labour history of unparalleled institutional creativeness.

# Keep the Link!

***A campaign has been launched in the Labour Party and trade unions to defend the unions' right to a say in the Labour Party.***

**Contact: KTL, 120 Northcote Rd, London E17, or phone Bob on 081-520 5386 or Tom on 071-277 7217**



# Truth about the slave trade

By Gerry Bates

Slavery and the slave trade are themes conspicuous by their absence from many of the books recently published in response to the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage of 1492.

Two books going on sale this week, however, have the questions of slavery and the slave trade as their central concern.

Not by chance, both books are published in Liverpool — a town which grew fat in the eighteenth century from the slave trade, and even fatter in the nineteenth century from the importation of slave-produced cotton.

*Liverpool — Capital of the Slave Trade* covers all aspects of the town's involvement in the trade, ranging from how Liverpool battled its way to become Europe's slave-trading capital, through to how local pamphleteers poured out a torrent of racism in justification of this profiteering from human misery.

Particular attention is paid to the town's relentless campaigning against proposals to abolish the slave trade, a campaign in which Liverpool Council distinguished itself by its commitment to the slave traders' cause.

The concluding chapters of the book rubbish many of the myths, half-truths and outright lies which historians of Liverpool have concocted about the town's role in the slave trade.

Liverpool's abolitionists, for example — portrayed by some local historians as national leaders of the abolitionist movement — are shown up for what they were: "a timid and numerically insignificant band

of do-nothings".

Another myth dealt with in the book is the idea that Liverpool withdrew from slave trading after its Parliamentary abolition in 1807. In fact, Liverpool merchants were not prepared to allow the law to stand between themselves and making a nice profit from slave trading.

*Myths of the Slave Power* is also concerned with challenging myths: those spun by "revisionist" historians in their treatment of the American civil war and the attitude of British workers towards it.

Myth number one is that abolition of slavery was not the central issue in the war, a myth dealt with by reference to the diverging economic development of the Northern and Southern states, backed up by the contemporary writings of Karl Marx and the American Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

Myth number two is the glorification of the escapades of the Confederate raider "Alabama", built in the Laird shipyard in Birkenhead in 1861/62 in breach of Britain's professed neutrality in the war.

(What could be more appropriate than the Confederate government employing the ship-building facilities of Merseyside, given the extent to which local shipbuilding had flourished the previous century in direct response to the needs of the slave trade?)

The "Alabama", commanded by a self-professed white supremacist, spent virtually its entire life at sea attacking only unarmed vessels belonging to the Northern states — facts studiously ignored by the ship's historical admirers.



The pro-slavery American Confederate cause is still honoured in Liverpool

Myth number three, is that workers in Britain, especially in Lancashire, rallied to the cause of the Confederacy. An elementary respect for historical accuracy, as *Myths of the Slave Power* shows, demands the opposite conclusion.

Liverpool's connections with slavery and the slave trade continue to be honoured down to the present day — funny men dress up in Confederate uniforms and fire military salutes over the graves of Confederate agents in Liverpool, whilst the middle class eccentrics of the Anglo-Ibero-American Society stage an annual wreath-laying ceremony at a statue of Christopher Columbus.

But the real legacy of Liverpool's role in slavery and the slave trade is racism — used

as a justification for slavery in the eighteenth century and still a potent force in Liverpool right down to the present.

These two books can play a role in raising the issue of such racism and helping to challenge it.

They can certainly fulfil such a role much more effectively than the so-called "500 Years of Resistance" campaign, which found no better way of marking five centuries of post-Columbus racism than to import an anti-Semite rabble rouser from the United States for a speaking tour in Liverpool.

*Liverpool — Capital of the Slave Trade* by Gail Cameron and Stan

Crooke. Price (including p&p): £4.40. Available from G Cameron, Flat 2, 51 Egremont Promenade, New Brighton, Merseyside L45. Cheques payable to: "WL Publications Limited".

*Myths of the Slave Power*, by Tony Barley. Price (including p&p): £5.30. Available from: The Coach House, 1a Windermere Terrace, Liverpool, L8. Cheques payable to: "Tony Barley".

## The left and the ERM crisis

### POLITICAL FRONT

By Martin Thomas

"Socialist Worker immediately printed 20,000 'Major and Lamont must go' posters", boasted Socialist Worker of 26 September, reporting how they responded after the pound crashed on Wednesday 16 September.

If only their ability to think about politics were as good as their printing press!

The Daily Telegraph was calling for Lamont to resign. The Mail was calling him "The Devalued Chancellor". What did Socialist Worker mean? Did they want Thatcher back? Or Heseltine in?

They meant, of course, that they wanted the whole Tory Government out. To spell it out, they wanted Labour and the TUC to campaign to force the Tories to resign and call a new general election.

But this is Socialist Worker, dedicated to the idea that general elections and the Labour Party are irrelevant and unimportant! And so they prefer the vague populist slogan, "Major and Lamont must go".

They had to spell their ideas out a little in Socialist Worker of 26 September, but only a little: "We have a right to demand Labour and union leaders stop allowing Major off the hook and fight to get rid of this government".

The gist of Socialist Worker's coverage was that the Labour and union leaders would not fight. Socialist Worker would argue for socialism, support workers in

struggle, and "explain why Labour does not fight".

Socialist Worker carried no programme or policies for struggle - no proposals to deal with inflation, rising unemployment, or public service cuts - and no ideas about a perspective to unite workers across Europe in what is (though you would not know it from Socialist Worker) a European, not just a British, crisis.

As ever, Socialist Worker was limited to the old "mini-max" approach - calls to resist the bosses now, calls for socialism in the future, and no "transitional demands" which make a bridge from immediate resistance towards generalised socialist class struggle.

Militant had much the same "mini-max" approach, though it was bolder - "Tories' Crisis:

Get Them Out!" - and capable of saying that meant a general election without gagging on the word election.

Its editorial headline of 25 September, however, was "No to Maastricht". The argument under the headline was weird.

The Maastricht Treaty was dead, said Militant: "European capitalism in recession... will never achieve the international cooperation needed to reach the goals of Maastricht". This shows that "real, lasting European integration" cannot be achieved under capitalism, but only "in a socialist united states of Europe".

And so... Militant would side with the Thatcherites and the other capitalist "Euro-sceptics", and try to stall or reverse the limited bringing-down of frontiers

that has already been achieved! Militant would make campaigning against the dead Maastricht Treaty its editorial priority!

It makes no sense. Militant just wants to jump on the anti-European bandwagon.

Already seated on that bandwagon is Socialist Outlook. Outlook's response to the crisis was feeble - it could not even summon up enough vigour to call for kicking the Tories out - and it told its readers that the wreck of the Maastricht Treaty would ease the pressures on the working class.

Bryan Gould, it also said, 'now has the same position on [Maastricht] as Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, and Socialist Outlook'. Or, to put it another way round, Outlook has the same line on Europe as Labour's little-Englanders,

whether left-wing like Benn and Skinner or right-wing like Gould, Austin Mitchell, or Peter Shore.

That's what Outlook itself says.

If Outlook, Militant (and Socialist Worker) think "No to Maastricht!" is a left-wing slogan, why don't they give their arguments a more radical edge by re-raising their old slogan "Britain out of the EC!"

They campaigned for "Britain Out!" through most of the 1970s and the early 1980s. Why not now? If the slogan is wrong now, when did it become wrong, and why wasn't it wrong in the 1970s?

In fact the socialist slogan should always have been: "In or out, the fight goes on", or "No to the bosses' Europe, no to bosses' Britain, yes to European workers' unity!"





Madonna and Co: the film is not quite in a league of its own

# In the junior league

**Cinema**

**Belinda Weaver reviews**  
*A League of their own*

**"A** league of their own" is a film with a very soft centre. It's funny and appealing and it tugs the heartstrings in places, but it's amorphous. It doesn't say anything clearly. It doesn't shout its intentions; it whispers them from behind a hand.

Though it's about women in sport, stridently feminist it's not.

In the 1940s, with America in the war, the professional baseball leagues were short of players. Like industry, they filled the gaps with women, and professional American women's baseball had arrived.

There were good players around, but the league managers didn't want toughies. They wanted ladies, and pretty ones at that, to draw the

crowds. With teams called the Peaches and the Belles, "all-girl" baseball had a hard time getting taken seriously.

"A league of their own" shows all this, but doesn't take a stand on it. Whenever it seems about to make a point (for instance, what the players felt about the silly uniforms and the girly poses; the fact that black

*"Though it's meant to be largely about women playing a sport and gaining confidence, it doesn't show much of the love of the game for itself, about the joy of excelling, of the physical challenge. All the joy seems to come from winning."*

women were excluded), it shies away.

The film is made by a woman,

Penny Marshall, but she doesn't seem to know any more about women than her male director peers. The point of view isn't specifically female.

Though it's meant to be largely about women playing a sport and gaining confidence, finding themselves through their success, it doesn't show much of the love of the game for itself, about the joy of excelling, of the physical challenge. All the joy seems to come from winning.

This is a flaw, because the central character, Dottie, who's meant to be the star player of the team, is never established as best, and we don't really know how she feels about the game. She's meant to be torn between playing and being a wife to her soldier husband, but she isn't torn, or she doesn't appear to be. Marshall constantly lets things slip. If the other characters didn't tell us how much Dottie loves to play, would we even know?

The film is also poor on the history. At first the league games were ridiculed, and attendances were low. But with shrewd promotion, audiences picked up, and the games were a success, drawing crowds of 6,000 or more.

Marshall puts it all down to promotion, to advertising, not to the skill of the players themselves. Did it only succeed because it was advertised? Or did a reluctant public finally concede that these "girls" could play ball?

Some of the scenes have mould on them. In one, the drunken coach, Dugan, himself an ex-star, berates Dottie for leaving the team. The scene has appeared in about ten other

movies I can think of, and underlines Marshall's conventional handling of the material. It's as if she thinks in cliches, or can only see conflicts the way other films have treated them.

When she can't think of what else to do, she throws in a laugh, piles on the sentiment, or hypes up the audience by having them root for the Peaches to win a game. The whole thing is cast in a winning/losing mold.

The conflict between the paragon, Dottie, and her kid sister, Kit, who's always lived in her shadow, is no exception. To find herself, Kit has to beat Dottie.

The film could have been more punchy. The baseball women came from farms and small towns and were suddenly thrust into the national limelight. Once the boys came marching home, they didn't want to take their bats and balls and head home; they wanted to keep playing. There must have been pressure about doing a man's job, about becoming "unwomanly".

But Marshall glides over that. No-one in the movie has any serious adjustment problems because Marshall never lets them take a stand. She blands out the characters so that they can do what she wants, so that she can make the story her way.

That would be fine if she had a vision. She doesn't. She probably wanted to tell a story about women learning that they're as good as men, but then she edged away from it, and made this mish-mash instead.

It's not terrible. At times, it's a lot of fun, but in a league of its own, it's not.

## No answers to racism

### Television

By Jeni Bailey

**O**n the whole, "Black and Blue" ("Screenplay", BBC1) was quite progressive, as it tackled the issue of racism within the police force. But it did not go far enough, nor did it offer any solution. And once again all the black characters either took drugs, were thieves, or were "community figures".

The "hero", the black undercover copper from Devon, is sent into a black neighbourhood to find out who killed the local community leader, but uncovers police corruption. While doing this he is harassed and abused by his "fellow officers".

The play steamrolled through institutionalised

*"Racism is rife in the police force, and everyone knows it. It needs to be tackled seriously."*

racism, corruption, riots and murders (there was a lot to take in!) What irritated me about it was that it offered no solution apart from the advice to "lodge a complaint" and to learn to ride the system.

Riding the system won't change anything as long as the police are controlled by the state and continue to do their dirty work.

Racism is rife in the police force, and everyone knows it. It needs to be tackled seriously.

The only way we can eradicate racism is to smash the system, united for socialism.



The police do the state's dirty work. This includes terrorising the black community

## Eyeball to eyeball

### Periscope

Thirty years ago the world went through an unforgettable week during which nuclear war seemed to be on the point of breaking out. The US placed an embargo on Cuba and threatened to attack Russian ships sailing towards the island.

"The Cuban Missile Crisis" (a special two-part edition of

BBC2's "Timewatch") will tell the story. "Defying Uncle Sam" (Wednesday 7 October) traces the numerous US attempts to topple Castro ranging from assassination attempts to a sponsored invasion by Cuban exiles. "Eyeball to eyeball" (14 October) tells the story of the showdown, when US president Kennedy forced USSR boss Nikita Khrushchev to remove Russian nuclear missiles from Cuba.



# Join the AWL!

By Elaine Jones

I do not think people become socialists because they read Karl Marx. Marx's writings helped to give a backbone to my socialism, and helped to keep me going when times were hard, but they did not make me a socialist. No, what made me want to change the world was nuclear weapons. I didn't want the world to be blown up. Disgust with the way the world is run is the beginning of all wisdom. Look around you: children living in sewers in Calcutta, hundreds of thousands dying in Somalia, people living on the streets in London - all this suffering in a world where a sizeable minority are very rich indeed. But hatred for inequality does not take people very far. In fact, there are many organisations - from religious charities to Greenpeace - who are worried about the state of the world. The point about the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is that we have thought through what needs to be done, not just for piecemeal change, but to transform the world for good.

Look at Britain. 10% of the pop-

**"The point about the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is that we have thought through what needs to be done, not just for piecemeal change, but to transform the world for good."**

ulation own 50% of the marketable wealth. The top 1% own the great bulk of privately-owned shares and land. Here is the capitalist class.

They own and control industry, and their ownership makes them richer and richer. They run society. They have a powerful state machine - the police, army, judges, prisons, bureaucrats - which protects them and helps them continue exploiting the working class.

The police and courts are regularly used against strikers. In the 1970s, when great strike waves shattered a Tory Government, there was serious talk among army officers about organising a coup to "restore order". In 1973, the army overthrew an elected left-wing government in Chile - a country with a long tradition of parliamentary democracy - and killed 50,000 workers to make

Chile safe for profiteering.

The Tories claim to be democrats. In fact there is very little democracy in Britain. If we elected a real left-wing government, then the unelected state machine would obstruct any radical measures. The powers of the Queen, the House of Lords, the judges, the civil service bosses - and if they failed, the police and army chiefs - would be used. We would find out very quickly that real power lies outside Parliament.

And there is no democracy at all in the workplace. At work, the capitalist is boss. No-one elects their managers.

Our socialism means thorough-going democracy. We want the majority - the working class - to have control. We want workers' control, from the workplace to the government, and an end to unaccountable, uncontrollable power and privilege.

The British ruling class do not rule by daily use of bayonets; day to day they rely on workers accepting capitalist rule as normal and unchangeable. They have a powerful, seemingly coherent, set of ideas to justify their system. They control the media and the education system. They have their own politicians and intellectuals to explain their every move.

For instance, they say that workers get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. Liars! Workers get ripped off and bosses get profits!

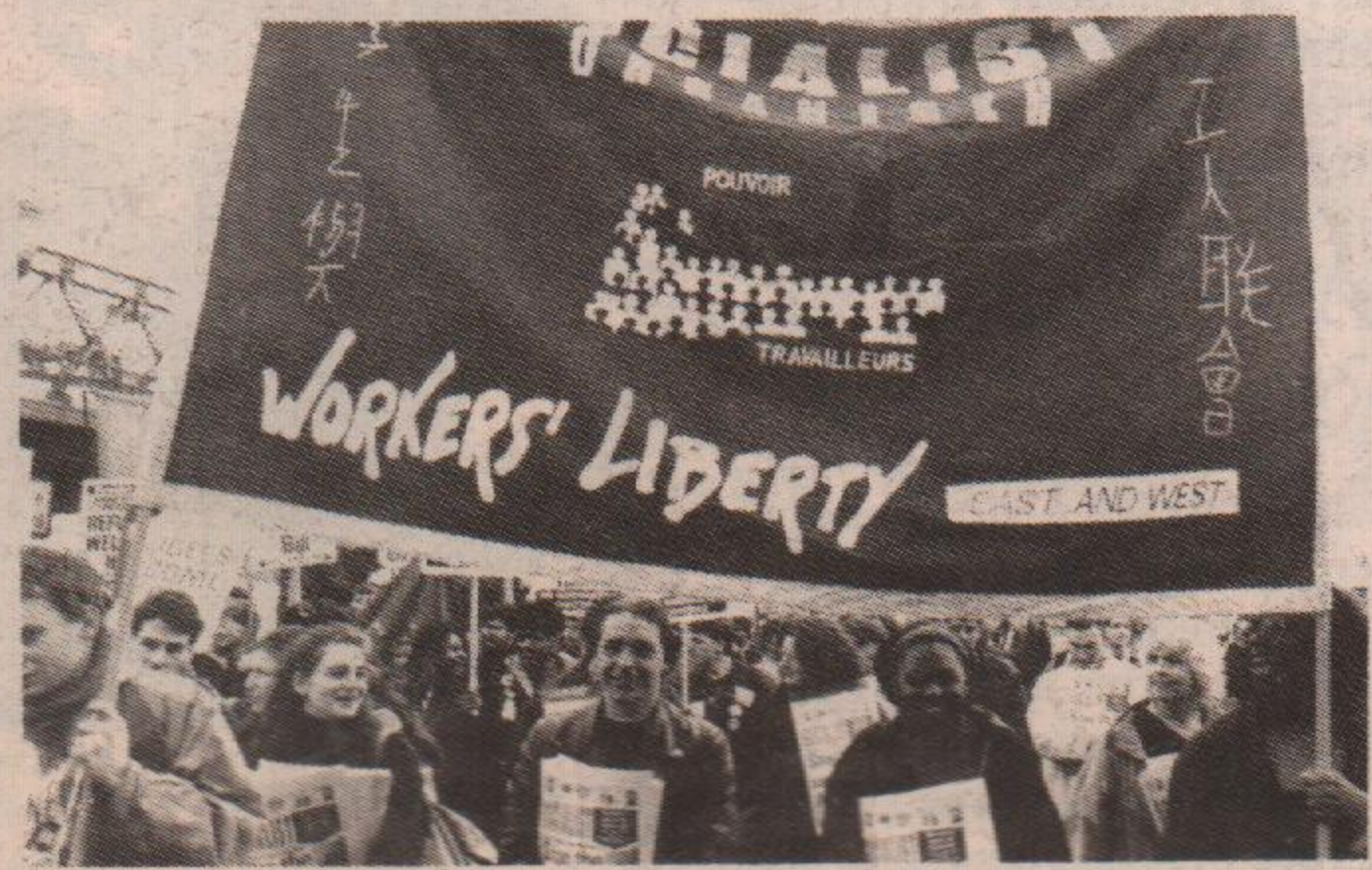
Socialism will be made by the working class. The working class must become conscious of its position, shedding the old ideas, the ideas of the capitalists. The central job of the AWL is to help this process.

The major problem we face today is that a whole generation of youth have never seen big working-class battles. The history of the industrial battles of the 1970s, or the great miners' strike of 1984-5, is not taught in school. Many people have forgotten the revolutionary movements of the last 25 years - in France, Portugal, Chile, Iran, and Poland.

The AWL keeps the memory of those battles alive. We want to use the lessons of history in the class struggles of the future.

If workers want better wages, they join a trade union. If you want to get rid of the Tories, join the Labour Party. If you want socialism, you need to be part of a socialist organisation. Join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, and sell *Socialist Organiser*!

Phone Jill on 071-639 7965, or write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, for details.



# ORGANISING No cross-party alliance on Maastricht!

## AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna

Using his seat on the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, Dennis Skinner told the TV reporters that he would go on representing the left outside the NEC as he had done for twenty years inside it.

He spoke with restraint but with evidently strong emotion. In fact, Dennis Skinner personifies the crippling contradictions of the official Left - the contradictions which have wasted it down to its present sorry state.

Where raw direct working-class interests are involved, Dennis Skinner is a man of the left - a sincere, passionate, honest and incorruptible representative of working-class people in the Parliament of their exploiters and oppressors. That is what he knows himself to be, and what he wants to be. His removal from the NEC is therefore a blow for the left and a victory for the right.

But Dennis Skinner is also an opponent of the EC and, it seems, of any European unity. He has campaigned for decades, on and off, against "Brussels" and against "Europe". Skinner, who is something of a showman, presents himself in the House of Commons and to the press as a proud and unashamed Little Englander, someone who can't bear even to visit "Europe".

On this issue, Labour's best working-class left-wing leader comes across like a Daily Express blimp from the early 1950s, muttering into his tea about "foreigners".

Here too, he is sincere and passionate and incorruptible. But his politics are the opposite of working-class politics.

There is nothing left-wing about them.

The John Smiths, the Gordon Browns, the Tony Blairs and the Margaret Becketts are in general not fit to polish the boots of Dennis Skinner - or of Tony Benn. But in their support for European unity they are right and the official left is wrong. They are progressive - where the ruling class is progressive - and the left is regressive and reactionary.

The only available bourgeois alternative - a divided Europe of narrowly egotistic nations and blocks of nations - is a great deal worse than the EC, and we should never forget it. It is not so long ago that wars like those we see now in ex-Yugoslavia were fought all

We have been here before, back in 1975 when the Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson held a referendum on Europe. His objective was to derail the then very powerful Left in the Labour Party and the trade unions, which was fresh and confident from a recent great victory over the Tories.

Wilson succeeded, with a vengeance! Led by Michael Foot, Tony Benn, the Communist Party, and *Tribune* - and followed, with wild and incoherent enthusiasm, by the politically boneless "revolutionary" left, such as *Socialist Worker* and the predecessors of *Socialist Outlook* - the left threw itself into campaigning for a no vote, in alliance with Tories and all sorts of freelance little-England nationalists.

While victory in the referendum would have gained nothing for the left or the working class, crushing defeat demoralised it, and discredited and weakened its political leaders. It was the turning of the tide for the Labour Left. Its later upsurge, in the early 1980s, took place against an unfavourable economic background, under the guns of a relentlessly attacking Tory government.

Commitment to European unity does not mean that socialists passively go along with everything the ruling class decides, for fear of lining up with the little Englanders, or that we should resign ourselves to leaving the particulars of how European unity is achieved, in the hands of an undemocratic, manipulating ruling class.

That is why *Socialist Organiser* has called for a referendum on Maastricht.

But not to fight for European unity in 1992 is to show yourself to have learned nothing from the history of this terrible 20th century. On this issue Benn and Skinner line up with reaction. We should not let them lead the left into another disaster like that of 1975.

The Left must say "yes" to European unity, and work to unite the labour movement across Europe so that we can one day make it a socialist Europe.

**"A cross-party campaign against European unity would tie the left to the most backward part of the Tory party".**

across Europe.

Now that European unity looks a great deal less certain than it has in decades, this needs to be said again, plainly and clearly.

But Tony Benn talks about leading the left into a cross-party nationalist alliance to campaign against "Maastricht" and, in effect, against European unity! Nothing could be more calculated to poison the left and postpone its revival and recovery than this proposal. It would tie the left to the most backward part of the Tory Party, and spread chauvinism and confusion - incongruously laced with talk of socialism - inside the working-class movement.

# AWL public forums

**Thursday 1 October**  
"The legacy of Malcolm X"  
Middlesbrough AWL meeting.  
7.30, St Mary's Centre

**Sunday 4 October**  
"Why the economy is in crisis"  
North London AWL meeting.  
7.30pm. Queen's Head, Acton Street, Kings Cross

**Monday 5 October**  
"The legacy of Malcolm X"  
Sheffield AWL meeting. 7.30pm  
Nelson Mandela Building

**Tuesday 6 October**  
"The legacy of Malcolm X"  
Sheffield Poly AWL meeting.  
1.00 Colegate Site.

**Wednesday 7 October**  
"The legacy of Malcolm X"  
Merseyside AWL meeting. 7.45,  
Wallasey Unemployed Centre.

**Thursday 8 October**  
"Drugs - is legalisation the answer?"  
Brighton AWL meeting. 7.30,  
Unemployed Centre.

**Marxist schools**  
**Saturday 24 October**  
**Nottingham AWL dayschool**

10.30 ICC, Mansfield Road.  
**Saturday 7 - Sunday 8 November**  
"Socialism or barbarism"  
AWL student weekend school.  
Manchester Town Hall.  
**Alliance for Workers' Liberty Conference**  
Saturday 28 - Sunday 29  
November. Conference details from The National Secretary, AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

**Also coming up...**

**Fighting racism**  
**Saturday 14 November**  
Anti-Racist Alliance conference against racist attacks. 9.15 to 6 at Greenwich Borough Hall, London SE18.

**Inside the unions**  
The Trade Union News conference will be held at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester on Saturday 10 October. 11.00 - 5.00

**Conference of the left**  
**Saturday 17 October.**  
Winding Wheel, Chesterfield. Organised by Chesterfield Labour Party and the Socialist

Movement.  
**Lesbian and gay**  
**Saturday 31 October**  
The Lesbian and Gay rights Coalition is demonstrating for equality. Assemble 12.00, Hyde Park, London

**Labour Party**  
**Friday 2 October**  
"Stop the witch-hunt" rally. 7.30. Grapes Pub, Sheffield. Speakers from Socialist Organiser and Sheffield, Lambeth and Brighton Labour Parties.

**Wednesday 7 October**  
Brent Campaign Group meeting. 8.00. The Case is Altered pub, High Road, Willsden.

**Student demonstrations**  
**Demonstrate against student debt outside Tory Party conference!**  
Brighton, Wednesday 7 October. Organised by Sussex Area NUS. Details from Garry Meyer, 0273 671057.

**Fight student debt!**  
March in Manchester on Wednesday 4 November. Details from Manchester Area NUS, 061-275 2973.



## Met NALGO calls action: national response needed against cuts

# All out on 4 November!

A day of local government action against cuts in jobs and services is set for Wednesday 4 November.

NALGO's Metropolitan District Local Government Committee is calling for branches to give as much support as possible. There will be a central London demonstration and rally.

The job now is to get as many local NALGO branches as possible to ballot for strike action for 4 November.

Local issues can be tied in. The day of action must be spread to other council unions and involved workers right across the public sector.

London hospitals, in particular, face the prospect of huge cuts. 4 November is an opportunity to tie the struggles together.

The chair of the NALGO Committee, Chris Morey told Socialist Organiser that 'this will be part of a long-running campaign against cuts in jobs and services.'

Inside NALGO, the national executive and other district committees should endorse the district day of action and call for NALGO members up and down the country to turn the 4 November into a national day of action.

There are battles all across the country over compulsory redundancies in local councils. White-collar workers in Newham, Greenwich and Islington are taking strike action. This week, Sheffield NALGO staged a one-day

strike against threatened redundancies.

The local councils, many Labour-run, are taking the gloves off in their attempt to break councilworkers' resistance. Newham attempted (but eventually failed) to break the NALGO strike through court action. In Bury, the local council are trying to break NALGO's anti-cuts campaign by victimising the Branch Secretary, Rob McLoughlin.

The local government

employers are involved in a national cuts offensive. Target number one is the 'No Compulsory Redundancies' line held by NALGO.

The Tories have made it plain that they want to get rid of huge areas of public services, and have local councils meeting once a year to hand out contracts to private firms for reduced services.

Local union branches should not be left to fight alone. A real national anti-cuts campaign is needed.

**NALGO BROAD LEFT NATIONAL MEETING**  
Employers' offensive: how we fight against it  
Saturday 3 October at 11am-4pm  
Memorial Hall (back of City Hall), Bakers Pool, Town Centre, Sheffield  
Speakers will be invited from NUPE/COHSE and current strikes.  
Registration from 10.30am.

## Sheffield: no option but to fight!

By a NALGO activist

Over 7,000 NALGO members took part in a one-day strike against redundancies on Monday 28 September. Many manual and craft employees, APT&C staff in NUPE and APEX, and other employees of the council took supportive action. In addition, over 1,000 people marched through Sheffield City centre to protest at the threat of around 1,000 redundancies across the council.

At the time of going to press, negotiations were under way between all the APT&C and manual and craft unions and the council in an attempt to avoid redundancies. This attempt revolves around employees giving up days' pay in order to 'help' the council fund a voluntary early retirement scheme.

The idea of a pay cut was sold to a meeting of 3,000 NALGO members last week by the officials of the branch who see no alternative to the unions helping the council manage the running down of local government. The latest rumour to come out of the negotiations is that the council would like everyone to take 9 days unpaid leave, have the pay dates moved back by 6 days and take a further cut in car allowances. The unions went in offering 'up to 5 days unpaid leave'. It also does not appear that the council will make any guarantee of no

compulsory redundancies. This was the sweetener that was used to sell the pay cut idea to the members. In any case, such a guarantee would not be worth the paper it is written on. The council are facing a £47 million 'gap' next year, which equates to 2,000 further redundancies.

Should the negotiations result in a terms and conditions cuts 'package' that the officials feel they can get away with selling to the membership, it will have to be voted on. If this happens, the left should campaign for a no vote and for a fight to defend jobs and conditions.

When, earlier in the summer, the works department manual and craft unions negotiated a £4.1 million cuts in conditions package to postpone redundancies, they only narrowly won it on a ballot and that was with the 'left' shop stewards such as Paul Davidson, a Socialist Outlook supporter, pushing the package as the best thing since sliced bread.

Another ballot run the by APT&C unions in the works department a couple of weeks ago on the question of giving up three days pay in order to save 8 out of a threatened 50 redundancies was easily, but not overwhelmingly, won. The shop stewards and the left in the union would have a chance of winning a rejection of a package in a ballot and this could lay the basis for starting a fightback.

## Councils round-up

**Newham:** Newham NALGO went back to work on Tuesday 29 September to await yet another ballot. This time, the union's legal eagles have got their way because the ballot paper for the strike which was in progress til this Tuesday did not include the question of a return to work agreement. So the whole branch is now to be balloted on the question of recommencing the strike to win a return to work agreement! It's necessary to strike to win a proper return to work agreement, then the question must be raised: why did NALGO's national

leadership instruct its members to return to work?

**Islington:** The strike at Islington council against compulsory redundancies remains solid. 700 workers are out. This Monday, NALGO's emergency committee deferred any decision on a ballot for all-out strike action on full pay. The committee did agree to sanction much more limited action - 250 more workers on all-out action - if the employers tried to discipline members for refusing to scab or to work with scabs. According to leading branch activist, Jane Doolan, the strike is very solid, and morale is high.

## The Industrial Front

The BBC have announced that 1,250 more jobs are to be cut. This brings to 7,000 the number of jobs lost since 1986. But where is the fightback from the union? This spring's one-day strike was a success. More are needed.

The Burnsall's strikers are standing firm. They still need your support. Send messages of support, donations and requests for speakers to: Burnsall's Strikers c/o Jo Quigley, GMB, Birmingham Road, Halesowen B63 3HP

Attempts by management at the Spartan Redburgh rolling mill in Gateshead to bring in scabs were defeated when workers stopped management using the old town hall as a recruitment base. A solidarity demonstration is planned for 9 October.

As we go to press, NALGO members in Bury are discussing how to defend victimised branch secretary Rob McLoughlin. Options to be reviewed by the branch include one day branch-wide strikes and all-out action by selected key groups.

## Tubeworkers: together we can win!

By a Central Line guard

The pace of events is hotting up. This Wednesday sees the final meeting of the new top-level Central Negotiating Committee. At that meeting, all the unions are set to reject the Company Plan. This is, at long last, a real step forward.

Unity is the key to defeating the Plan. Management look set to start playing tough as well, though. Once our unions reject the Plan, all the signs are that Management will try to bypass them and intimidate people.

On October 1 it looks like we will be told we must sign the new contracts or we'll be out of a job. Of course, twelve weeks from October 1 runs out a few days before

Christmas for added arm-twisting. Also there is the much bandied-about date of November 23 for Company Plan D-day for train staff. Loughton's TCM already put

### MASS MEETING TO STOP THE COMPANY PLAN

Thursday 1 October  
Camden Centre,  
Bidborough Street,  
Kings Cross  
10.00am and 7.00pm  
Called by the co-ordinators

this forward as the date for Loughton to close although he was told off for letting the cat out of the bag too soon.

So, Management are gearing up to take us on and sooner rather than later. All the much-heralded negotiations gave us an increase that meant a pay cut for many of us and the destruction of conditions for all of us. There was no compromise from Management on any issue.

Well, if they're gearing up for a fight, we've got to as well. The most important thing is that the co-ordinators have started meeting again.

When Thatcher was at the height of her power in '89, we gave London Underground Limited and the Tories a bloody nose. Major and Co. are reeling now and their weakness is our strength. We were strong in '89 because we didn't leave it up to the union head offices. We organised ourselves - if we can do that again, we can beat the Plan.

Of course the situation isn't identi-

cal with '89. Unemployment is even higher than then - we're in a recession now. That means we are playing for higher stakes - we can't afford to lose. Unity is the key to beating the Plan - uniting rank and file tubeworkers across grades and unions. Together we can win!

**Revive the "Drive for 35"!**  
Coordinated fight needed to save jobs

Last week saw the loss of 5000 jobs at British Aerospace, Ford, and Vickers/Rolls Royce, and the announcement that British Aerospace's Hatfield plane-making plant would be closed.

In the car industry alone, something like 70,000 jobs have been lost since the current slump began in 1990. Since the Tories came to power in 1979, the number of workers in manufacturing has been cut from 7.2 million to 4.4 million.

Yet there is little sign that the trade union leaders are interested in coordinating any kind of fight back.

Jimmy Airlie, the main AEEU spokesperson on Ford, is typical: "There is no doubt that the industry is in deep crisis."

"Anyone with the brains of a rocking horse would know that a further cut in interest rates is essential if the industry is not to be damaged beyond belief."

Workers in the car and engineering industries, who unlike Jimmy possess human rather than wooden brains, would be better off relying on their own struggle instead of hoping that the Thatcherite faction wins out in the current Tory squabbles.

Despite the slump, a jobs fightback is still possible - but it requires coordination. A start could be made by reviving the Confed's "Drive for 35" shorter working week campaign and spreading the message of work-sharing on full pay as an answer to unemployment.

## Piccadilly Four need support

The train crew grades executive of the railworkers' union, RMT, has agreed to call a conference of train crew grades to discuss the implications of the victimisation of four guards at Manchester Piccadilly.

The problem is that the central leaders of the RMT are

none too keen on the idea. For instance, they prevented the circulation of an official circular on the matter for nearly a month after the sackings on the grounds of fears about the anti-union laws.

Whether or not the grades conference happens, rail

activists need to rally support for the Piccadilly guards' call for a national meeting to discuss the issue.

RMT leader, Jimmy Knapp, has to be told that if he won't lead a fight, then he should make way for people who will.

## CPSA DHSS elections: Vote Broad Left!

By a CPSA member, DH HQ

The CPSA DHSS section election re-run takes place this week. The original election took place in May when the Broad Left won a resounding victory over the right-wing Charter/Moderate group.

The right-wing National Executive Committee (NEC) then refused to allow the election scrutineers to release the results and set about engineering a re-run. The reasons given for the re-run were fairly minor and, applied to all elections, would ensure re-runs of them all!

These elections are crucial to the future of the union. Civil servants are facing mass contracting-out of jobs. The NEC is refusing to give a lead. A Broad Left-controlled DHSS Section Executive Committee (SEC) could ensure a centre of resistance in a pivotal area of the Civil Service. The DHSS SEC is the second powerhouse in the CPSA. The struggle between left and right for control is more marked than in any other section and the right-wing 'moderate'-controlled NEC are desperate to prevent a Broad Left takeover.

All the stops have been pulled out to help the right win. Broad Left supporters on the ballot form are marked as 'Broad Left/Militant' (most are not, in fact, Militant sup-

porters); the sex of candidates is not shown (few of the right-wing candidates are women, in comparison to Broad Left candidates); in DH HQ branch, a motion carried by the branch executive committee to recommend that members do not vote for Charter/Moderate candidates was unconstitutionally ruled out of order by an unelected full-timer in DHSS Section office. The Charter/Moderate branch secretary in DH HQ was happy to comply!

It is vital that the Broad Left launches an intensive campaign during this re-run election over both the issues facing CPSA mem-

bers and the totalitarianism of the Charter/Moderate group.

The right-wing - who controlled the SEC since 1987, losing it last year to the Broad Left but retaining the Chair which they used to prevent any meaningful discussion/action - will use the SEC to scupper any fightback in the DHSS and to help General Secretary Barry "I'm stable" Reamsbottom in his witch-hunting of troublesome left-wingers i.e. anyone who doesn't want to work with the Tories. If the right wins, members in the DHSS could well spend as much time in fighting them as they will in fighting the Tories!

## Post workers protest at sell-off

The UCW Brighton branch has organised a demonstration on Tuesday 6 October at the Tory Party conference.

They are protesting against Government plans to privatise the postal service.

One of the branch's leading activists told Socialist Organiser: "The support we have received from the branches in the South East has been overwhelming."

"26 branches in the region are building for the demo, and we've also received support from many branches around the country, including in London, Liverpool, and

Manchester. We have had amazing support from the London Parcels section, who are using the demonstration to launch their campaign against the privatisation of Parcel Force. The NCU postal section is also supporting the demonstration.

"The feeling in our branch is that people want to see the union doing something against privatisation."

"We see this as the first step in the campaign against privatisation. We feel that we have encouraged other branches to do something, but what is really needed is a

nationally coordinated official UCW campaign.

"The RMT in Brighton, and the Trades Council, are supporting the demonstration, but our campaign cannot be a real success until all public sector workers - in the post, on the rail, in the civil service - who all face similar attacks by the Tories, are united on the scale seen recently in Germany."

"Then we will really be able to gain some ground for workers and the unions".

• Assemble 1pm, Tuesday 6 October, The Level, Brighton.



# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

# Help our fund drive!

## Scrap the Tory anti-union laws!

# Labour must fight for workers' rights!

*Eva Elliott, delegate from Manchester Withington CLP, moved a composite at Labour Party conference calling for a Workers' Charter of trade union rights. It won wide support, but was defeated by the platform. This was Eva's speech.*

Trade unionists in Britain have never had the right to strike; but the need for it is clearly illustrated by the Burnsall strike, which is going on at this very moment.

The workers have worked for miserably low pay, under conditions which the Health and Safety Executive warned would be dangerous. Mainly Asian women, they were treated in a shocking manner by their bosses.

A heavily pregnant woman was refused antenatal leave, and was still expected to do heavy lifting. Another woman had to go sick on a Friday, and came back the next week to find that the whole of the previous week's wages had been docked from her pay.

Yet another worker was phoned late at night to ask if he would work overtime. He protested, and so he was dismissed.

Clearly, this is a workforce who need the support of a union. The employers say they would rather close down than recognise a union, but, to their credit, the workforce are still fighting for recognition.

Of course, the strongest can win recognition. But what about the weakest? We need legal rights to empower all workers. It is often the lowest-paid and the most badly treated workers who feel the least able to join a union. They need the law to ensure that they can call on the powers of a union to protect their interests.

Without that, there will continue to be thousands and thousands of injustices heaped upon working people.

The unions themselves seem powerless on the right to take industrial action. The Manchester Piccadilly rail dispute illustrates that we do not have that right.

In August, four rail workers belonging to the RMT were sacked for trying to hold the management to a previous agreement. Their dismissals were made in front of their fellow workers and in full public view. The other workers walked out with them in support.

Afterwards the union balloted its members on strike action. They voted in favour, but the management got an injunction before any strike could take place. Because of the unofficial walkout, any subsequent action became illegal.

Sometimes, as in this case, a spontaneous walkout is the most appropriate response, but current legislation means that once there has been unofficial disruption, any action is auto-



Burns all strikers in Blackpool. photo:Mark Salmon

matically illegal, however democratically the union tries to gain the support of its members.

Employers are given licence to treat workers as they like, but, under Tory legislation, workers have no means of taking effective action.

I want to reaffirm a principle which lies at the heart of the labour movement: solidarity. We must be able to support each other when the odds are stacked against our comrades.

What economic muscle do the nurses or the ambulance workers have? I heard just the other day about a hospital ward which was shut down. The nurses were moved to another ward without consultation, and all of them were downgraded. We need to be given powers to protect people like them, workers whose services are so valuable to our society and who are themselves vulnerable to the whims of management.

We need the power to offer solidarity to our fellow workers, and we need the solidarity of

the Labour Party itself. That is why, for instance, we call upon the Labour Party to introduce the minimum wage.

Comrades, we are the largest voluntary organisation in the country, and yet no other force is policed in the way we are. Employers are not called to account for their actions.

Big business can do what it likes. Sunday trading is forbidden, and they still do that. The speculators risking millions of pounds are left to their own devices, and the Tory ministers who spend ten billion pounds of our money on a failed venture are not called to account - and yet we are told that the trade unions must not have too much power or they will ruin the fabric of our society!

Comrades, I ask you to support this resolution so that we can become an effective labour movement!

• More on Labour Party conference - pages 2 and 3.

**S**ocialist Organiser and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty are raising extra funds to help our expansion plans.

We want to build a stronger organisation, fighting for socialism, in the working-class movement.

We aim to raise £5000 by the end of January 1993. So far we have received £762 in donations and fundraising from our supporters.

Thanks this week for £50 from Glasgow AWL.

Please send donations (cheques payable to "Socialist Organiser") to AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

### 200 Club

Our 200 Club is a monthly draw for £100. Entries are made by paying £1, £2, £5 or £10 into the 200 Club. For each extra £1, you stand an extra chance of winning the £100 prize. Entry forms from 200 Club, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, or from your Socialist Organiser seller.

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