

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

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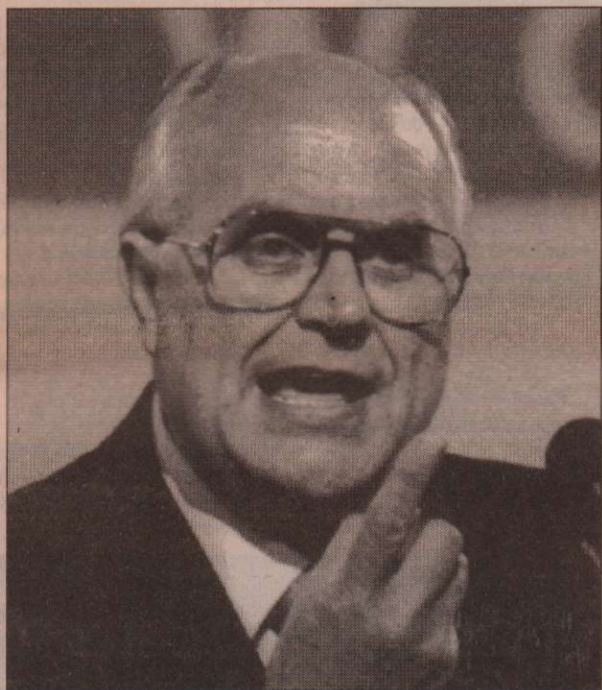
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STRIKES SHOW WE CAN BEAT THE TORIES



Norman Willis



John Smith

LAST WEEK on a miners' demonstration in Central London TUC General Secretary Norman Willis found himself surrounded by a group of very angry women.

The women were all from Women Against Pit Closures. They pleaded, they argued and then they demanded that Norman Willis and the rest of the trade union leaders *do something* to back the miners.

They wanted the TUC to throw its weight — the power of nearly 8 million trade unionists — behind the miners' and railworkers' joint strikes. They wanted to see the TUC calling solidarity strike action for the miners.

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Why won't they fight?

2 April strikes win wide support Breaking the logjam on action

By Tom Rigby

THE SYNCHRONISED strikes by the miners, railworkers, and London busworkers last Friday, 2 April, were a big success. The labour movement is waking up!

Outside a few UDM strongholds, no coal was cut. The smaller rail unions, ASLEF and TSSA, told their members to cross RMT picket lines, but British Rail was practically shut down. Up to six million people did not go to work. The impact was increased by the third one-day bus strike in London, which turned out to be the best-supported so far.

Other groups of workers - mainly white-collar council staff and civil servants - took some form of unofficial strike action, particularly in coalfield areas like Yorkshire and South Wales.

2 April saw the largest number of workers on strike on any

single day for four years. In fact, apart from the high point of the council, rail and Tube strikes in late spring and early summer 1989, last Friday's was the most widespread industrial action seen in Britain since the defeat of the miners over eight years ago.

We have clearly entered a new stage in the revival of the labour movement.

However, whether or not this revival gathers pace depends decisively on the national leaderships of the trade unions.

Activists organising unofficially and independently of the official union machinery can contribute to the revival through organising walk-outs and unofficial strikes, but in the absence of a powerful shop stewards' or rank-and-file movement, the official union structures are the only existing mechanism that could unite the various struggles taking place into one coherent force.

We can see the importance of the national leaderships con-

firmed both positively and negatively by last week's events.

The basic strategy embarked upon by the National Union of Mineworkers after its special delegate conference last October has borne fruit. After a long period of political campaigning, and by pulling the RMT union leadership into united action, the NUM leadership created the conditions where it was possible to win a strike ballot in the pits.

This is a remarkable achievement given the fact that virtually every activist in the NUM believes that a strike ballot last October would not have delivered a majority for action.

Miners voted yes because they could see the prospect of coordinated class-wide industrial action.

With the RMT also balloting, the miners felt that they would not have to fight alone as they did in 1984-5.

The NUM's success provides positive proof of the pivotal role of the national leadership;

the civil service gives negative proof.

In several areas, activists in the low-paid civil service union CPSA pushed for strikes on 2 April, linking the miners' and railworkers' fight for jobs to the public sector pay freeze and contracting-out in the civil service.

Where activists managed to win the arguments for action among the rank and file, they then had to face open sabotage from their union leaders, who put out a statement to management saying that the union would not back any strike on 2 April and would not defend anyone victimised by management for involvement in such strikes. Management, of course, made full use of this open sabotage to attempt to

bully people into not striking.

The question of leadership therefore remains central. However, the action that has taken place already is starting to have reverberations. It could break the logjam.

In October only the NUM leadership stood for class-wide industrial action, but now the RMT and a section of the TGWU leadership have been drawn into action. This in turn has placed massive pressure on the leadership of the train drivers' union ASLEF. And ASLEF are now balloting their members for action. The Fire Brigades Union have already verbally committed themselves to coordinated action.

Instead of being a single block, united in their opposi-

tion to coordinated action, the national union officials are starting to differentiate from one another.

As soon as the national officials start to give even limited and timid leadership, it will give confidence to the rank and file of the unions to take action themselves.

For instance, despite the pitiful "campaign" launched by the bureaucrats at Unity House, the RMT got a massive majority in favour of action. Last Friday's strike saw large numbers of new, fresh faces on the picket lines, including many people who have never attended union meetings before.

The self-activity of the workers renews the workers' movement itself.

CPSA closure fight sabotaged by "Moderate" management stooges

Andrew Lloyd, secretary of Merthyr Tydfil DSS CPSA branch, spoke to Socialist Organiser about how the branch's fight against an office closure, alongside the miners, has been met with open sabotage from the CPSA union leadership

MANAGEMENT are determined to close the DSS office in Bargoed.

Closure will mean that every claimant in the valley - and this is an area of industrial decline and mass unemployment - will have to travel several miles to the nearest office. Our members will have to face increased travelling times too.

We decided to mount a campaign of strike action to save Bargoed.

We had a one-day strike on 19 March, and then decided to follow it up with a week-long strike starting on Monday 29 March.

Last Friday, 2 April, we held a branch-wide strike, involving the other Merthyr Tydfil offices, in support of Bargoed and alongside the miners. Our

action was backed by walk-outs elsewhere in South Wales, and in total 14 DSS offices were out on the day.

After receiving such strong backing, the branch members at Bargoed voted to stay out.

From the point of view of the rank and file, everything was going fine. But then our union leaders stepped in.

They completely disowned the action on 2 April, and made it clear to management that they would not defend anyone facing disciplinary action.

As if that weren't bad enough, the CPSA leadership then insisted that we meet

"We need a union leadership made up of people like Mark Serwotka who will relentlessly and unconditionally support all workers in dispute. Mark is the only presidential candidate who we would have complete confidence in to back us up every time and at every turn.

We know this about Mark because he was our branch secretary for eight years. He helped us build up one of the most effective and active

management this Wednesday, 7 April - and we weren't the first to hear about this: management and the handful of scabs were!

Management then told us that the union had told them that they were withdrawing support for the strike!

I can't find words to express how angry this has made us.

Local management were on the ropes. Our action was having an effect. And the CPSA leadership comes along to rescue them!

We are determined to fight, not just to save Bargoed but to throw out the rotten CPSA leadership.

branches in the union.

He is the only candidate who really means it when he says he supports the miners. For Mark, support will mean active practical solidarity strike action, not just signing petitions and passing resolutions. What's more, he has proved that by his action.

I didn't see Albert Astbury or any of his supporters fighting for action on 2 April".

Andre Lloyd

Union leaders block solidarity

Mark Serwotka, the left candidate for CPSA president, explains how DSS workers in Rotherham organised for strike action alongside the miners on 2 April, and how the union's national leadership backed management in their attempt to stop the action and intimidate the rank and file.

WHEN WE called the action, we used the opportunity of the ballot on pay, where the union Executive was recommending that the members accept one per cent.

We held meetings in every office. Convincing people to vote no to one per cent took 30 seconds, which left us with half an hour to discuss the miners' day of action.

We put it to each meeting that they take a day's strike action on Friday 2nd against Market Testing.

By the time we'd done two offices, management had caught on to what we were doing. By the time we got to the third office, I'd had a statement read over the phone to me which confirmed that management were declaring our action illegal under the 1990 Trade Union Act and that our union HQ had discussed the action and would not represent anyone who was victimised.

Management also had the audacity to tell me to ring in to union HQ, saying that the message had been given to them by our HQ.

We decided to proceed, although now we needed to talk about the actual management threats, not just have an abstract argument about the law. The next meeting was unanimous for strike action. It was in a small office in Goldthorpe, in the heart of the Yorkshire coalfield.

We went on to complete the ballot. The issue of the law became more and more important. Support for the miners was taken increasingly for granted. Our union meetings became more and more political.

At the last meeting we had a majority of 81 to 50 in favour of strike action. By that stage members had been issued with individual three-point notices from management pointing out (a) the action was illegal, (b) the union had disowned it, and members had no right to appeal, (c) "CPSA HQ have stated they will not support any member against whom disciplinary action is taken". This caused a lot of concern and confusion.

It was four o'clock on the day before the strike, and it became clear that people threatened with sacking might come in the next day, so we decided to reconvene meetings on the Friday at nine o'clock.

At the Friday meetings people were very angry at the management threat, but more angry that their union leaders were collaborating and colluding to stop the strike action. A meeting of 93 people in a car park unanimously carried a motion in support of the miners, requested the union launch an immediate campaign against Market Testing, and condemned the National Executive Committee - but it was clear that the momentum of the day before had been lost. The strike didn't happen.

The union could have called a legal official strike for 2 April, and we would have weighed the yes votes by the sackload. But as soon as action appeared spontaneously, the union leadership collaborated with management to stop it.

This shows very starkly the bankruptcy of the current leadership. They claim to be moderates. They are not moderates but collaborators with management who stop action, and this needs to be exposed throughout the union.

The experience also raises the issue of who the left are in this campaign. My campaign for union president has been about solidarity, Market Testing, and taking action. It will be very interesting to find out where the Broad Left and Albert Astbury stand on this.

By Elaine Jones

LAST WEEK'S Conference of the National Union of Students was dominated by elections, elections and more elections. There was only one policy debate in the four day conference meeting from 9.30am until 11.30pm every day!

The Labour leadership and the Liberal Democrats stitched up that debate, on voluntary membership, claiming to have taken votes when they hadn't and shifting any real debate of the issues.

Their carving, cheating and witch hunting of the left was kept down to a bare minimum. The model NUS President,

Fitzsimmons, insisted "the eyes of the world are on NUS". Recently Fitzsimmons, who was not at the time speaking from a stool in the bar, made the public claim "I'm the most important woman under 30 in Britain". Stories that Fitzsimmons has entered her name for Nobel Peace Prize are possibly untrue.

Despite a general move to the right in the student movement, Conference voted to elect Arthur Scargill as an honorary Vice President.

Left Unity came away from the conference in good shape with over 30 new recruits in colleges all over Britain and the north of Ireland.

Left Unity are in a strong

position to lead the fightback against voluntary membership. We maintained our position on NUS Executive, Kevin Sexton was elected as Vice President Welfare against the official Labour and independent Labour candidates, Elaine Jones and Richey Carrothers were elected as part time NEC members.

WE REPORTED a couple of weeks ago that Siobhan Edean, the candidate for the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) in the Women's Officer election, had been accused of cheating.

A formal complaint has now been made by Elaine Jones

and others, together with a request for a full investigation to the NUS Elections Committee.

At NUS Conference, Left Unity produced a two page document outlining the reasons for the allegations. Written evidence was dis-

tributed widely at the Conference.

Siobhan Edean and NOLS refused to comment formally. Paul Hewitt, the Chair of NOLS, responded with the statement that NOLS had no case to answer and that Left Unity is "making it all up".

Labour must fight!

Why won't Willis and Smith fight?

From front page

What was Norman's reply?
"I can't, I just can't!"
The exchange of views ended with Norman beating the retreat. He left the demonstration and took up position on the pavement as a spectator, an exact symbolic representation of his role in the real world.

Faced with the real possibility of organising a fightback, the official leaders of both the political and industrial wings of the labour movement refuse to lead.

They behave like spectators looking on impassively as working class people see their jobs, wages and public services destroyed.

Everything in the present political situation points to the need for workers across both the public and private sectors to stand together and strike together. Everything also points to the need for a broad based political campaign of rallies, protest action, parliamentary disruption and mass demonstrations aimed at getting the Tories on the run and eventually driving them from office.

But Willis and Smith refuse to fight.

Why?
They say that the anti-trade-union laws make solidarity strike action illegal and impossible. If other workers struck alongside the miners their unions would have all their funds seized.

That is not true.
It is possible for every single one of the three and a half million public sector workers to be drawn into an entirely legal "trade dispute" with the government over their 1.5% pay limit.

That's what the public sector union leaderships should be doing. If it happens it would be entirely legal — and it would be even bigger than the 1926 General Strike.

Local strikes and walk-outs alongside the miners only come into conflict with the Tory laws for one reason: the national officials refuse to sanction action over issues like job cuts, sell-offs and the pay freeze. It is not the anti-



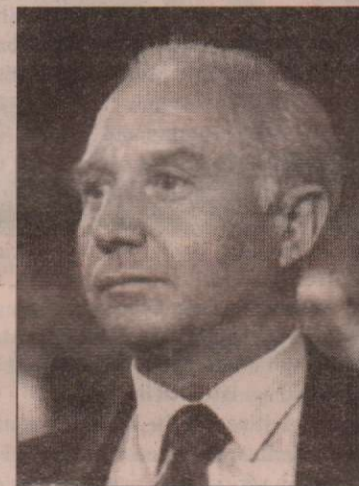
THE 320, mainly women, strikers at Timex (above) are an inspiration to us all. They have fought back against the bosses with a vigour and determination second to none.

So how have their union leaders responded? By threats and gags!

Engineering union AEEU General Secretary Gavin Laird (right) has banned convenor John Kydd from speaking and has written to every striker opposing their mass pickets and telling strikers to stay within the law:

"Some union members persist in disobeying instructions already given. Failure to obey these instructions (to stay within the law) of the executive council will render you liable to expulsion from the union"

No, Mr Laird. It is you who is a prime target for expulsion from your position!



union laws that rule out solidarity action. So when Willis says he can't, he really means he won't. This refusal to lead a fight can also be seen in the behaviour of the Labour Party leadership.

Smith, Brown and Blair seem to think that they can replace the Tories some time in 1996 or 7.

All they have to do, so they believe, is to sit back, do nothing, accept the Tory agenda on crime, workfare or other issues under discussion and make mild complaints about the Tories' "incompetence".

This ingenious strategy was developed by Neil Kinnock. Working class people have spent the last ten years experiencing first hand the effects of its failure.

As Arthur Scargill has correctly pointed out, even an old fashioned opportunist Labour leader like Harold Wilson would do better than that. Wilson would have sensed the Tories' political weakness and gone on the offensive.

But not the leaders of the new model Labour Party. Along with the TUC tops the Labour front bench hold the key to the present political situation.

The pressure of the anti-union laws and the slump on grass roots rank and file union activists, combined with the class-wide attacks the Tories have launched, all point to the need for an industrially coordinated and political working

class fightback.

But the leaders refuse to lead.

We have seen that the 'good' causes they put forward for their own inactivity are false. The Tories' crisis provides a great opportunity for a Labour campaign.

WHAT ARE the 'real' reasons? Why won't they fight?

Willis and Smith are the two main leaders of an institution which is now well over a century old, the British labour and trade union bureaucracy.

The basic organisations of the working class — the trade unions, are dominated by a layer of professional full-time union officials.

They earn considerably more than the average in the trade they represent. They adopt a middle class life style and lose touch with the realities of life on the shopfloor or in the office.

These people come still, in the main, from the ranks of the working class but over time their practical role as negotiators between the workers and the bosses starts to shape everything else.

The trade union bureaucracy is therefore a major channel for the consolidation of pro-capitalist ideas inside the working class. Because it is the job of people like Norman Willis to bargain within

the system, they start to treat the system as if it is the only possible kind of society. They are organically linked with the capitalists who own and control industry. Both work together to maintain the system.

The leaders of the Labour Party are in all essentials no different.

They merely do the job of bargaining across the whole of society, at the level of government, rather than in any one particular industry.

Together the professional leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions are the biggest single internal impediment to the development of the labour movement.

In a country like Britain where the traditional organisations of the working class are still millions strong, nine tenths perhaps of the job of fighting for socialism amounts to fighting to free the working class from the influence of people like Smith and Willis.

This job will not be done by shouting and sloganising from the sidelines.

It points to the need for socialists to get into the labour movement to organise, to demand that Labour and the TUC fight, and to build rank-and-file movements which can oust or outflank them when they don't.

The "Labour Must Fight" campaign launched by the Alliance for

Workers' Liberty last December is more relevant than ever. It calls for the Labour and TUC leaders to deliver:

* Solidarity with the miners. The TUC should call official days of action to back up the miners' strikes.

* Rebuild the Health Service! Stop the Tory cuts! Labour must commit itself to reversing all Tory cuts in health, education and other public services.

* Support all workers in struggle! Smash the Tory 1.5% pay limit. Occupy to stop closures!

* Free our trade unions! Support workers in conflict with the anti-union laws! Labour must commit itself to repealing those laws and replacing them with laws guaranteeing the right to organise a union, to strike, to picket effectively and to take solidarity action.

Recent press leaks of secret cabinet papers show irrefutably that the Tories have an industry-wide strategy for dealing with the trade unions. They want to isolate the miners and railworkers and pick off other groups one by one.

When they act, they act together, they act quickly and they act decisively. They function like the determined class fighters they are.

What does Norman Willis do? He sits on the sidelines and watches the miners' banners go by.

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

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Politics will out

THOSE OF YOU who are as long in the tooth as me will remember chanting "Occupy, Organise, Fight for the Right to Work!" It used to be a very popular slogan back in the days when flares and tank-tops were *de rigueur* on any demonstration. We haven't heard much about occupations in recent years, for the simple reason that there haven't been any.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Back in the '70s it was a different matter: the much-hyped Upper Clyde Shipbuilders' occupation/work-in and the Manchester engineering sit-ins of 1972 had put the occupation tactic on the agenda, even if it was more often used as a threat in negotiations over redundancies than as a serious proposition. And the famous UCS sit-in (featuring those legendary class-struggle heroes Jimmy Reid and Jimmy Airlie) wasn't, in fact, such an unalloyed victory as Stalinist mythology would have you believe.

Nonetheless, the occupation is a useful tactic, with a good track record of success not just in Britain but throughout Europe and America this century.

When Leyland-DAF hit the skids a couple of months ago, the possibility of a co-ordinated national occupation was raised by some officials and convenors. It was rejected as "not militant enough" and the official joint union response was to call for a strike ballot — that everyone knew would fail. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, all the Leyland-DAF unions (TGWU, AEEU, MSF and GMB) were busy negotiating with local bosses for management buy-outs. The result has been the collapse of resistance and the steady draining-away of jobs in the plants. Only Albion in Glasgow shows any remaining will to fight.

Something similar has been taking place in the pits. Heseltine's initial announcement, last year, of massive closures was met by an astonishing public outcry that forced a humiliating "U-turn" (who says public opinion doesn't matter?) but even the best NUM militants counselled against a strike ballot.

Heseltine and the Tories have played it cleverly, letting the initial public outrage subside before coming back with a very slightly modified version of their original plan.

The NUM militants who argued (rightly) against going for a strike ballot last year, were talking about pit occupations as the alternative. So far, these haven't happened — apart from Roy Lynk's pathetic publicity-stunt at Silverhill.

The UDM continues to crawl to its executioners. The leaders called a ballot for strike action, but called it on 2 April, the day of the NUM's first one day strike — thus obliging UDM members to scab in order to vote for action against the closures. The truth of the UDM's position is well-expressed by a report by one D. Graney, UDM Branch Secretary at Bevercotes pit: "Mr Budge stated he was very interested in leasing Bevercotes plus Clipstone... Richard Budge is already in the coal market, being an operator in open cast mining... it is no good sitting back stating that we wish to stay under the umbrella of British Coal. We would all like this but the vote in Parliament clearly states we are one of the collieries they do not wish to retain".

As at Leyland DAF, the search for a new owner seems more 'realistic' than occupations at the moment — and not just to UDM members. There are some obvious reasons for this: the threat of losing (relatively) large redundancy payments, and the sheer practical difficulty of occupying a pit (water and electricity can easily be cut off, making conditions pretty unpleasant).

But the real problem is more basic — and more political: once you occupy, what do you demand? Under a Labour government, the call for (re-)nationalisation of the pits, under workers' control, would be a runner. Under the Tories it seems ridiculous. It might seem rather less ridiculous if John Smith and the official opposition were giving their full support to the campaign against pit closures. Or if the TUC were giving a national lead to direct action against redundancies. Crazy? Just remember, in 1972 the TUC called for a general strike.

Italian left must organise

By Katrina Faccenda

THE NEVER-ENDING revelations of state and party corruption in Italy have now linked ex-prime minister Giulio Andreotti to the mafia. Although the media are reporting these allegations against Andreotti and their implications for the Christian Democrat party in which he plays a central role with some surprise, many will not share this surprise.

Among those who will not be surprised are the victims

of the 1980 earthquake which left 130,000 homeless; large chunks of the money allocated for relief in these Christian Democrat administered regions disappeared into the pockets of the mafia and some was filtered back into the Christian Democrat party.

The scandals have already led to the complete collapse of Craxi's Socialist Party, and the disintegration of the ruling coalition, to the extent that the prime minister Amato is filling cabinet vacancies himself instead of attempting to find new

members "clean" of bribery scandals.

This vacuum was highlighted by fascist violence in Rome and Naples. Fascists went on the rampage, wrecking trade union offices. An April Fools' joke broadcast by a radio station reporting the movement of a column of tanks from Bologna towards Rome was all too believable for many Italians.

The fascists in the MSI are well-organised and have largely managed to remain unimplicated in the "tangentopoli" scandals. Along with

the Northern League they pose a dangerous threat from the far right.

"The left must organise to fill the vacuum created by the discredited ruling parties."

The PDS (ex-Italian Communist Party) is supporting the idea of a national government led by Giorgio Napolitano, one of their members. This repeat of Berlinguer's "compromesso storico" may get the PDS temporary government positions, but it will not challenge the ascendant right.

The days of the Seventies when socialists and trade unionists were forced to live in fear of their lives, prominent communist youth leaders slept in a variety of safe houses, and the left had to defend itself against violent attacks could easily return.

Last year's massive mobilisations by Italian workers sparked off a new confidence which has been built upon with regular industrial action. Last week they responded to the European-wide day of action with widespread strike action.

The task for the Italian left must be to organise to fill the vacuum created by the discredited ruling parties.

The stakes in Italy are high and the left must stop the right from taking advantage of the crisis.

Israel

Discrimination increases

Hanna Zohar reports from Tel Aviv on unemployment and anti-Arab discrimination

VIOLENCE HAS FLARED recently. There have been stabbings and killings here. Both Jews and Arabs have died.

Israeli employers have been under pressure from two sides — first for employing Arab labour and second from the threat that is supposed to come from Arab workers.

But still they use Arab labour — they are good workers and they are cheap.

Something under 100,000 Arab workers now cross the Israeli border from the Occupied Territories to work. It is government policy to reduce this figure.

Arab unemployment in the Gaza Strip runs at around 70%; in the West Bank the figure is around 60%. The situation in the West Bank is slightly better because there is some agriculture.

Except in exceptional circumstances, unemployed Arab workers in the Territo-

ries get no benefits at all. This is despite the fact that National Insurance is deducted from these workers in the same way that it is deducted from Israeli workers. But Israeli workers do get unemployment benefits and pensions.

We estimate that in this way the Israeli government took 2 billion shekels from Arab workers during the last year.

In addition, the Histadrut takes 1% of these Arab workers' wages. This amounts to 10 million shekels per year. All the workers from the Occupied Territories have their wages channelled through a payroll department where the 1% is deducted. They see little benefit for this money.

General unemployment inside Israel averages 10%. This means that the Jewish rate is around 8% and the Arab rate about 15%.

Hanna Zohar is co-ordinator of the Israeli workers' organisation Workers' Hotline which campaigns for workers' rights.

Workers' Hotline, 78 Allenby Street, Tel Aviv, Israel.

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Why won't Labour fight?

The Tories are in crisis and could fall if the labour movement put up a fight. We debate the Labour right and take on their ideas. Why won't they fight? Are they the champions of individual rights? Is Labour a working-class party? Is Marxism out of date? We look at the current debates inside the unions — about the Labour and union link, about the issues in the workplace.

Questions of race...

- Where do racist ideas come from?
- What are the roots of anti-semitism?
- Where are the black communities going?
- Is black and white workers' unity possible?
- Black nationalism — what should socialists say?
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and much, much more...



NUS Conference: SWP go "as quiet as pink mice"

R-r-revolutionaries aid the right wing

By Jill Mountford

The SWP is of course "the Revolutionary Party". They are the great "To-ory haters!" Haters too of Labour's right wing, who crawl to the Tories. They want to "tear the head off" capitalism — and off the Labour Party. Do they? Yes, so they say. And say. And say.

So what was the r-r-revolutionary SWP doing last week at the National Union of Students [NUS] conference? Allying with the right wing Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders of NUS, against the serious left!

Before NUS conference, the SWP's student leader Seth Harman had a private caucus in London with Paul Hewitt, who is Chair of the right wing controlled National Organisation of Labour Students, and with NUS President Lorna Fitzsimmons.

He had another private get-together with them in Blackpool on the Sunday before conference began. What did they talk about? The prospects for the NUS in face of Tory plans to destroy its structures, and what should be done about it.

They agreed, the right wing Labour careerists and the intransigent young representative of r-r-revolutionary socialism, SWP-style, that... the Tories are the main enemy. And? What followed from this great common breakthrough in political understanding?

The Labour right wingers got the SWP to agree to "behave" at conference, that is, to accept the NUS right wing's "strategy" for dealing with the Tory threat: don't "provoke" them, don't "rock the boat", don't make the NUS appear "too political".

They failed, it seems, to persuade the SWP to go the whole hog and back their attempt to get NUS conference to elect ex-Tory MP William Van Straubenzee as NUS Honorary Vice President. Lorna Fitzsimmons voted for the Tory, and the SWP with the left for Arthur Scargill. Apart from that they kept up a tacit common front all through this crucial NUS Conference, united in a bizzare sectarian/right wing lock-step.

This was no routine conference. It was probably the last conference before the Tories try to scrap existing NUS structures. The Tories are poised to strike down the NUS. And how is the NUS leadership responding? The Labourites and Liberal Democrats in control of NUS are doing everything they can to truss up students and gag them! By doing that they hope to placate the Tories.

The NUS leadership, dominated by the National Organisation of Labour Students has spent the year grovelling to the Tories, begging them not to attack student unions. Their "Charter for Student Unions" proposes the end of political

campaigns by NUS and local student unions. The NUS leadership has called no national mass action and denounced action when taken by local unions. In this context the priority for left activists at NUS conference was to demand action in defiance of the leadership and to prepare the ground for building a rank-and-file fightback.

Throughout NUS Easter conference, as Left Unity fought the right wing, scarcely a whimper could be heard from the usually very loud SWP. They were quiet as pink mice.

Neither of the two issues of *Socialist Worker* sold at conference had a word to say about the conference, or about the struggle facing students. On the floor of conference and in committees the SWP backed the Labour right wing in keeping the hatches battened down against demands for political discussion. The SWPer on Steering Committee voted to cut a scheduled discussion on Israel/Palestine. Normally, they can't get enough of such discussions. Why? That was what their allies wanted. That is what the Labour right wingers' strategy called for. That is what the SWP had agreed to beforehand with the right wing NUS leadership which is doing this dirty work in the NUS for the Tories those same Tories that the "To-ory ha-ters" hate so much!

NOW, SOCIALIST principle would not rule out an alliance with the right wing to fight the Tory assault on the NUS, if the right wing were in fact willing to fight the Tories. What makes this alliance extraordinary is that the right wing are not fighting the Tories, they are trying to stifle the NUS. To make sure nobody else fights the Tories either.

As we have detailed in *Socialist Organiser* time and again over recent months, the right wing strategy is to convince the Tories that it is not necessary for them to smash up the NUS — Lorna and Paul and the other blind-puppy careerists can control NUS for them, depoliticise it, smash rank-and-file control, suppress the implacable left.

In pursuit of this idiotic and suicidal strategy they have abolished one of the two annual conferences. They cheat and hound the fighting left — Left Unity. At NUS Women's Conference 3 weeks ago they used blatant cheating and trickery to gain control of the key position of NUS Women's Officer.

The SWP/NOLS "agreement" at this NUS conference took place entirely on the basis of the SWP accepting this Labour right wing "policy" for "fighting" the Tories!

The extent of the SWP's submission to the right wing was visible in the bar of the Winter Gardens where the conference was held. Posturing r-r-revolutionaries — who



Students marching alongside the miners in Manchester last November on a demo organised by supporters of Left Unity

would more usually be found, leather-jacketed, looking for some young Jew to harass ("are you a Zionist-racist or aren't you") — could be seen hanging out with the dull-spirited little careerists and would-be future MPs of NOLS, the people who are doing the Tories' dirty work in the NUS.

The SWP are no novices in the

"SWP always transfer from their own token candidates to right-wing Labour, not to Left Unity".

sell-out game. For years their student leadership has targetted not the right wing, but the main left opposition to that right wing leadership, Left Unity. SWP votes always transfer from their own token candidates to NOLS, not to Left Unity. In major battles over the future and structure of NUS, NOLS chairs always pick SWP speakers knowing that they will make asinine speeches attacking Left Unity not the right wing.

But this conference saw a new low in SWP crawling to NOLS.

The SWP acted as the left link in a chain of betrayal. This chain links Tory threats to close down student unions with NOLS's response of dropping real student unionism in favour of a services organisation and ends on "the left" with the SWP not rocking the NOLSies' boat — and joining them in attacking the left opposition to NOLS's plans!

What is the logic that explains such behaviour by self-proclaimed revolutionaries? What else, but the

sectarian logic of SWP's single aim — building the SWP.

Time was when the SWP focussed much of their work on students. "Marxism for Students" was a major SWP event. At NUS conference the SWP were the first to rave about the need for demonstrations. Despite their sizable resources, however, they never took it upon themselves to organise action, or dirty their hands by taking leadership positions in local unions.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the broad group we are in, Left Unity, takes every chance to lead action. We fight the right at every level of the union. Left Unity supporters have organised a student demonstration every year. This academic year our Manchester demo was 10,000 strong.

The SWP have never aimed to organise opposition to bad NUS leadership, but to recruit students on the basis of propaganda and demagogy.

SYMBIOSIS IS the biological name for a relationship between two organisms that work together for mutual advantage. NOLS and the SWP are an excellent example of political symbiosis.

NOLS relies heavily on the SWP to play the irresponsible left clown, discrediting the left's case and acting as an ever-present warning of "what the left is really like". Abstract, propagandist, footloose and fancy-free, the SWP pose no real alternative and therefore no real threat to the right.

NOLS acts as a foil to the SWP. They represent the sectarian ideal Labour Party. "Either you are with these sell-outs or you are in the SWP. It's that simple". The NOLS-SWP relationship works on a basis

of ascribing stereotyped roles to each other.

Now, this symbiosis would work very well if only everyone would play. But the serious left doesn't want to play. Unlike the SWP we don't need the right wing in control of NUS. Left Unity do organise action on the ground, we do fight for the leadership of the student movement. Result — Left Unity has grown, the SWP has shrunk.

When NOLS and the right in NUS have attacked the left with witch-hunts, usually the SWP has posed as people above the sordid battle. Left Unity have borne the brunt of the attacks. The SWP have publicly abstained, while actively spreading dirt about Left Unity — and given their votes to the incumbent right.

It is all remarkable like the SWPs attitude to the Labour Party: general routine denunciation while in fact accepting — especially at election time — that working class politics is the prerogative of the Labour Party.

The sad truth is that whilst NOLS and the right wing desperately want to smash the activist left in NUS, the SWP for their own reasons are only too happy to see them clear out the rest of the left.

The SWP's failure to attack NOLS for the right wing sell-out of students unions' very right to exist, their routine transfer of votes to NOLS, their tacit block with them this Easter — these are all part of the SWP's unwritten deal with NOLS. We'll recruit, you lead the union, but together we'll attack the activist — that is, the real — left.

At this conference the SWP was so engrossed in its Richard and Judy act with NOLS that it failed to notice that NOLS is now helping the Tories kill the NUS!

GRAFFITI

One Foot in the Grave



Perot: political Kangaroo

Not Irish but very English

GRAFFITI

THE PEOPLE who have organised and attended the peace demonstrations on Northern Ireland are almost certainly a mixed bag. While some may be dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries wanting to bring back hanging for anyone with an Irish lilt to the voice, most are people who want reconciliation in Ulster and can see nothing but futile waste in the lives lost in the conflict and now in the mainland bombings.

The demonstration organised in London last Sunday under the banner "Irish in Britain Rally for Peace" made a call for peace on all sides — perhaps naive — but nonetheless expressing genuinely humanitarian concerns.

So it might seem strange to see the peace demonstration invaded by a counter-demonstration of supposed left-wingers. Strange, that is, until you discover that this was a demonstration organised by the "Irish Freedom Movement". This of course, is not Irish, but very English. It is not concerned with freedom but with knee jerk "anti-imperialism". And this is no movement, but a front for the idiot provocateurs of the "Revolutionary Communist Party". (Which in turn is not revolutionary, not communist and not a party).

Who do these people think they are? Their semi-military contingents tacked on the back of demos are reminiscent of nothing so much as a slightly trendier middle class version of the BNP.

The RCP has a bizarre position on any question you care to mention — disregard for trade union struggle, favouring "voluntary membership" of student unions, opposition to safe sex. This and such antics as their support for the UDM scabs against the NUM during the 1984-5 strike have led many to believe that the RCP is an MI5 outfit run by people with an assignment to make the left look ridiculous. The one strong argument against this is that the glorified PC plods of MI5 could never have created such a perfect parody of a left-wing group.

THE PROGRESSIVE face of middle class radicalism was on show last Saturday at the first national demo of the "Save Radio 4 Long Wave Campaign". The favoured chant of the demonstrators was "What do we want? Radio 4. Where do we want it? Long Wave. What do we say? Please". So much more cultured than those horny-handed sons of toil on miners' demos.

YOU MIGHT remember Ross Perot hopping in and out of the US election campaign last year like a hyperactive kangaroo. So you

might well question how sincere Perot is when replying to the idea that he might stand in 1996, "I'd rather bungee jump without the cord". On his previous record perhaps Perot should play it safe and take that one small step for Perot (a giant leap for mankind) before he changes his mind.

NEXT TIME you're in a meeting and someone stands up to say "just a few short points" and goes on to make 27 points, spare a thought for the delegates to the Inkatha Congress. Chief Buthelezi stood up to start his speech on March 12 and he finally finished it on March 29 — 18 days later. Delegates could only absent themselves for "very urgent business", and then a substitute had to be left to take notes. The refreshed audience then rose for a spontaneous standing ovation.

THOSE TORY enthusiasts for market testing — letting the market decide which goods and services are supplied through the price mechanism, the best goods demanding the highest price — should have a look at a couple of forthcoming events in the Conservative Party diary.

April 22 — Conservative Group for Europe gala dinner, guest speaker John Major. Tickets £55.

April 25 — Conservative Women's National Committee's blue ribbon dinner. Guest speaker Kenneth Clark. Tickets £75.

Is the market try to tell Major something?

AS PREVIOUSLY reported in this column, the diners at the *Tribune* fundraising do last week were expecting to wash down their Terrine of Three Fish Marseillaise with a few glasses of Coteaux du Salores 1990. They were in fact served up a wine called "Far Enough" — a little hard for the soft left *Tribune* to swallow who have never gone far enough, let alone drunk it.

Worse was to come — the wine was South African. The assembled soft left in time-honoured fashion did not let any minor principle get in the way of the urgent task of the day — drink as much as possible before the speeches start.

THERE ARE minimum standards of building insulation enshrined in law that all new buildings have to conform to, so as to keep down fuel bills and stop energy being needlessly squandered. But now the Government is succumbing to pressure from the building industry to do away with these regulations.

Doubtless, the fact that 17.5% of all wasted fuel bills now find their way into the Exchequer has nothing to do with their decision.

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

READERS OF THE *Daily Mirror* may have wondered at the exact purpose of the self-congratulatory page two statement ("we're the best team in the land") in Monday's paper. There is nothing unusual, of course, about a tabloid wasting space plugging itself. But this was a signed statement by editor David Banks — the clear implication being that this was something of particular significance and importance. But what?

The fact that the *Mirror* "team" includes "Marge Proops, the Great Aunt of agony aunts"? Or "James Whitaker, the Prince of Royal reporters"? Or that "These famous *Mirror* names are joined by Anne Diamond, already famed for her campaigning"? Surely not? The key section

of Mr Banks' statement was the following: "But the famed *Mirror* reputation for unrivalled political opinion and honest reporting, for fierce campaigning and battling for the underdog is stronger than any individual".

As most people would immediately recognise, that could only be a thinly-veiled reference to the departure last week of the *Mirror*'s star columnist Paul Foot. Most people would have read about Foot's resignation in their daily newspaper. But not those who depend upon the *Mirror* for their information.

Alone amongst Britain's national newspapers, the *Mirror* has published not one word about Mr Foot's acrimonious departure. It didn't even carry Mr Banks' libellous press statement effectively calling Foot a madman. So the only people in the country who wouldn't have understood what Monday's statement was all about are those who only read the *Daily Mirror*.

That fact alone tells us an awful lot about the present state of a once-great newspaper.

BUT FOOT doesn't come out of this business exactly smelling of roses. A fortnight ago

(when his column denouncing Banks, Montgomery and the rest of the present *Mirror* management was spiked), Foot vowed to make a fight of it: "I'm not one to slink away", he declared to the *Guardian* and anyone else who'd listen. He also promised to "confront" Banks with another critical column the following week. In the event, he threw in the towel

Mirror's previous boss. It's easy to be holier than thou about Foot's record at the *Mirror*. He always justified working for the Captain on the grounds that it gave him a unique platform from which to put across a basic socialist message. That's an argument that carries weight.

"Press Gang" (and the rest of *Socialist Organiser*) resisted the temptation to have a pop at Foot when the full extent of the Captain's villainy became public. But if he was prepared to grit his teeth and carry on under the monstrous Maxwell — and Foot must have known at least something of Maxwell's life of crime — then why not under Montgomery?

Even conceding the argument that Montgomery's attack on the *Mirror*'s NUI Chapel is a more important matter than the robbery of the Maxwell pensioners, why then resign instead of forcing Banks and Montgomery to sack him?

The only conclusion is that Foot's promise of a "High Noon" type showdown with the new regime at the *Mirror* was so much hot air. If Foot's own defence of his role under Maxwell is credible (and I think it is), then his capitulation to Montgomery is inexcusable.

"Foot's promise of a 'High Noon' showdown with the new regime at the Mirror was so much hot air."

(slunk away, even) before his next column was due.

A showdown with union-basher Montgomery and his side-kick Banks was certainly inevitable. But I for one had my doubts as to whether Foot had chosen the right ground for a fight — especially given his record of silent acquiescence under the

We can do that!

WOMEN'S EYE



By Jean Lane

IT IS during periods of struggle that the 'natural order of things' tends to get questioned by ordinary people. One evening during the 1984/5 miners' strike a group of friends sat around discussing how society could be organised differently: how we would be able to have more leisure time when everyone had work; how we would have enough to live on because fat, lazy capitalists would not be creaming off the profits of our hard labour; and how we would have the freedom to travel without immigration controls putting up barriers between people and stirring up racial hatred. As we warmed to our new society and as our thoughts of the possibilities got more and

more daring, one man, a retired miner who had worked down the pit from when he was a very young boy, periodically smiled and shook his head. Eventually he said, "You'll never get it. It's just a dream". No amount of talking would convince him that it was possible. Someone asked him, "What would you have liked to have been if you had not been sent down the pit, and could have chosen anything at all in the world?"

It's difficult to make such a choice if you cannot see beyond the limits of the

"It's difficult to see beyond the limits of the system you are living in"

system you are living in, but eventually he said, "I can think of nothing better than to have been a doctor. It must be wonderful to be able to heal people who are sick". But, according to him, this could never have been possible. Doctors are born with the intelligence and the ability to heal. He was born to work down a pit and that's all there was to it.

We could not convince him that with opportunity and

training, he could have been a doctor. Even the fact that rich people have their places in Eton booked for them before they are born, and end up running society in some capacity or other, whether they are clever or not, would not change his mind. They are born to rule and we are born to slave.

A STORY TOLD on television last week would have told him otherwise. An Australian couple set up a clinic in Ethiopia to help women with fistulae. A fistula is a hole in the wall between the vagina and the bladder. It is caused by prolonged childbirth, usually culminating in the child being born dead and the woman permanently damaged.

The couple discovered that these women, because they could not control the flow of urine from their bodies, often were thrown out of their homes by their husbands and were living as outcasts on the edges of their villages. As word spread across the country of the existence of the clinic, women travelled hundreds of miles to get there, some taking months to make it, still grieving for the loss of their child, and still suffering from the damage caused to their bodies.

One such woman was carried by her family over

mountains for 200 miles and she was cured. When she recovered she did not return to the village, but stayed at the clinic to help other women. As the years went by, despite having no formal education and having been very poor, she learned to carry out the operation which was by now world famous and

"Only by changing the system will the waste of human talents be stopped."

which doctors from all over Africa and the world came to learn.

Our retired miner could have been a doctor. If the money spent on lining rich people's pockets went into health, education, training and leisure for working class people we could learn to be whatever we wanted. But there's no profit in it, and profit determines the 'natural order of things'. Only by changing the system from one of profit to one of need will unnecessary deaths from things like fistulae and the waste of human talents be stopped.

Twenty-five years after the death of Martin Luther King

Not just the prizewinner

There was much more to Martin Luther King than the Nobel Peace Prize winner and the respectable, legal, non-violent campaigner for modest civil-rights improvements for African-Americans. King was part of a mass movement, and towards the end of his life, argues Dion D'Silva, he was moving on the issues of class and poverty.

IN THE DAYS AFTER the leader of the non-violent civil rights movement, Dr Martin Luther King, was shot 25 years ago, the black population in over 125 cities of the United States rose up in violent rage.

Today he is often remembered as the Nobel Peace Prize winner of 1964 who preached good, honest Christian values. Many High Schools are named after him in the USA and his birthday is a national holiday. Partly this is the liberal establishment saying thanks.

For most of his activities, Dr Martin Luther King Jr. was fighting for the realisation of the American dream. That wasn't a challenge to the capitalist system. Indeed, in many ways, King put a brake on the movement developing in a radical and militant manner. But that isn't the complete story.

In the late '50s and early '60s, King didn't have many friends in even the liberal establishment, although King himself looked to the federal state for help. It was his so-called allies, the Kennedys, who had him followed and his phone bugged. The fact that there is now a national holiday is only because of a long struggle.

He came to prominence as the spokesman for the Montgomery bus boycott which started in 1955 and lasted over a year. At first their demands were meagre but as time went on the movement became more confident. Initially they demanded: "guarantee of courtesy by the bus drivers; seating on a first-come, first-served but still segregated basis; and some Negro drivers". King was jailed for driving 30mph in a 25mph zone and his home was bombed. Yet still the boycott continued, disciplined as ever. As one activist put it: "We got our heads up now and we won't ever bow down again". The boycott was a success and similar actions spread right across the South.

In 1957 King helped set up the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Obviously this followed his non-violent Christian doctrine but it was also different. It consciously tried to build a mass movement.

As President of SCLC King called on blacks to "assert their human dignity" by refusing "further co-operation with evil... We call upon them to understand that non-violence is not a symbol of weakness or cowardice, but, as Jesus demonstrated, non-violent resistance transforms weakness into strength and breeds courage in the face of danger". This was patently wrong and disarmed the movement politically as well as literally.

King did not have it all his own way. NAACP local activist and ex-marine Robert F Williams organised armed defence of civil rights workers in Monroe, North Carolina in 1956. In 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama, the home of King's brother was bombed during a campaign against segregation. In September a car drove up to a Sunday school — and threw a bomb in. It killed four black girls. "We give love — and we get this!" one boy screamed. "Love them? Love them?" another cried, "I hate them!" That night the black population reacted violently. There were riots in Harlem, New York in 1964. The next year there were 9; 38 in 1966; 128 in 1967; and 131 in the first six months of 1968. They were more like uprisings than riots. One survey suggested that 15% of the Watts population were actively involved in the 1965 riots with a further 30-40% watching.

Many activists in the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee became frustrated with the reliance on non-violence. Later on the leadership became influenced by Malcolm X and Black Power. Even in 1963 there were rumblings. At the march on Washington, John Lewis for the SNCC wanted to say: "We will march through Dixie like Sherman leaving a scorched earth with our non-violence".

In response to this and other criticisms of the Democratic Party

King began to question the whole system "maybe America must move toward a democratic socialism."

other speakers threatened to walk off the platform and so the speech was cut.

THE DUTY OF socialists is to side with the oppressed, as in the case of the Los Angeles riots this year. Politically we should make the point that this system is hypocritical, corrupt and violent. The leaders of the US army received medals for killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. Further, it was and is impossible for the mass of black people who are oppressed not to fight back physically at some point. A mass movement cannot be sustained on individual acts of "heroism" such as those of the civil rights workers in the South. All were physically threatened and not a few mur-



King was killed when he was at his most "dangerous", in challenging the system

dered. It cried out for a self-defence force.

Underlying King's non-violent approach was his Christianity. However it also fitted in with his strategy to fight discrimination and segregation especially in the South. The blacks were a minority and a minority without control of the local police or media and without guns. In truth, if there was "race war" they would be massacred. That is why it was central to King to win allies in the white population. Unfortunately he looked to the federal state and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

We would agree that the Civil Rights movement needed allies in the white population — namely white workers. Groups like the Nation of Islam talked militantly about "an eye for an eye", etc. — but they did nothing. This was because they simply had no strategy to win white support, unlike King.

In 1964 the Civil Rights Act was passed and in 1965 the Voting Rights Act. Some in the movement were tired of marching and there was an impasse. The northern ghettos had erupted in violence. There, there had *already been* the guarantee of formal equal rights. Yet there was still tremendous racism.

King must be credited with recognising the problem. He wanted the SCLC to focus on the northern cities where "progress for the Negroes... had been relatively insignificant, particularly in terms of the Negro masses. What little progress has been made... has applied primarily to the middle class Negro". Nevertheless, even he was shocked by the racist reaction he got when trying to organise in Chicago [aided and abetted by the political machine of the local Democratic Party].

It made Dr. King quite depressed. At the same time the slogan of "Black Power" was gaining strength. Others were scared to

rock the boat. King realised that the issue of class and poverty had

"It has never been so necessary to reclaim the ideas of 'integration' and 'black and white unity'."

to be addressed. Quite controversially he came out explicitly against the Vietnam War. The SCLC adopted a resolution opposing all candidates who supported the Vietnam War. King said he would go "all out" to defeat Lyndon Johnson in the 1968 presidential election. This made him many enemies.

King began to question the whole system. As he said the "society is still structured on the basis of racism". The movement would raise class issues — "issues that relate to the privileged as over against the underprivileged". Further, "something is wrong with the economic system of our nation... something is wrong with capitalism". "I am not going to allow anybody to put me in the bind of making me say, every time I said there must be a better distribution of wealth, and maybe America must move toward a democratic socialism, [that] I am saying that we must be communist or Marxist".

King organised the Poor Peoples' Campaign in 1967-8. The idea was to march poor black and white people onto Capitol Hill in Washington. They would camp there until they received concrete answers to their demands for decent housing, jobs and a guaranteed income for all. Sadly King was never to see the march arrive in Washington (and the camp being smashed up by the police

some months later).

He was shot in 1968 while on a speaking tour in Memphis, Tennessee, for black sanitation workers on strike.

Some commentators have argued that King was preaching socialism in his last two years — rather similar to the story of Malcolm X. He was certainly questioning the way the system was run. He argued for black and white unity, the end to segregation and discrimination. Towards the end of his life I think he became disillusioned with former "friends" in the Democratic Party and looked to "poor whites" as his natural allies. Moreover, he was the leader of a mass movement which had thousands and thousands of activists.

WITHOUT QUESTION he was a brave and heroic figure. He was arrested and jailed many times. He was threatened daily and in the end was assassinated. "I choose to identify with the underprivileged. I choose to identify with the poor. I choose to give my life for the hungry... If it means suffering a little bit, I'm going that way. If it means sacrificing, I'm going that way. If it means dying for them, I'm going that way because I heard a voice saying, 'Do something for others'". And he meant it.

Like Malcolm X, Dr. King was killed when he was at his most 'dangerous' in challenging the system. The tremendous potential of organising the poor black and white populations petered out after splits and confusions in the movement following King's death. It has never been so necessary to reclaim the ideas of "integration" and "black and white unity".

King was head and shoulders above the current leaders of our labour movements. But it was the movement that made Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Our duty is to rebuild a movement of black and white to fight racism and all oppression.

Building the left in

The Civil Service clerical workers' union CPSA will be at the sharp end of the Tories' new offensive, their drive against the public sector. Up to one million jobs could be axed by the Tories' moves to "contract out" chunks of government business to private companies.

The CPSA — a union whose members are mostly young, low-paid, women workers — also has a relatively strong organised left wing.

In this year's election for CPSA President, *Socialist Organiser* supporter and Alliance for Workers' Liberty member Mark Serwotka is the left candidate, campaigning for strike action to stop "Market Testing" (the first stage of contracting out).

Mark's candidature has opened up a big debate on the left of the union.

The independent socialist left see it as a big step forward. Others on the left, especially Militant and the *Morning Star* — the factions which dominate the CPSA's "Broad Left" and "Broad Left 84" — are opposing Mark and backing maverick right-wing/soft leftist Albert Astbury as a 'unity' candidate. They argue that ousting sitting right-wing President Marion Chambers will open up the union for progressive change.

Here we print extracts from two speeches: one by Steve Cawkwell, a prominent CPSA Broad Left member who is backing Astbury, the other is by Mark. They are from a debate sponsored by the CPSA Socialist Caucus in London on 24 March.

Steve Cawkwell and Mark Serwotka also discuss the upcoming election for Deputy Chair in the DsHSS (Departments of Health and Social Security) Section of the union. Mark Serwotka was the Broad Left candidate for this election, but Steve Cawkwell has now won Broad Left approval to run against Mark.

"The unity candidate can win. That will change the mood in the union".

IN NINE OUT OF THE last ten years the national Moderate group have won the national elections in CPSA. They are probably the most vicious and deeply entrenched right-wing grouping anywhere in the British labour and trade union movement.

On issue after issue the Moderates put up no opposition to the Tories whatsoever.

The Moderate National Executive Committee [NEC] are debating the Tories' 1% pay offer this week, and they are going to receive more in "subsistence" payments for attending the NEC meeting than I will get in my pay packet for the next 12 months if they accept it. But still they are determined not to put up a fight.

A divided left

IN LAST YEAR'S GENERAL Secretary election the right-wing candidate Barry Reamsbottom got 13,000 votes.

The Broad Left candidate John Macreadie got 10,500 votes.

The Broad Left '84 [BL84] candidate Frank Campbell got 3,500 votes.

10,500 and 3,500 votes added together is 14,000. 14 is more than 13.

We've seen exactly the same situation repeated over and over and over again. There is no right-wing majority in this union and there never has been. There is only a divided left.

It is reasonable under those circumstances to try and pull together those who can establish common views on the left of centre in the union.

At conference in 1992 the Broad Left and BL84 worked well together.

The attempt to pull together people with common ground on the left inevitably led to suspicion, to people who would not countenance it, to people with bitter memories.

Despite this, it has proved possible to reach a situation where both groups are prepared to put together a unity slate, but a unity slate which only includes the President and the

two Vice-Presidential candidates.

I regret that. I would have preferred a joint slate all the way down.

But the decision to stand a limited joint slate was done in an open way, with report backs to two Broad Left conferences and two regional groups.

The candidate that has been chosen for President by the Broad Left and BL84, Albert Astbury, is not in my opinion the key to this issue.

A bridge to left unity

ALBERT ASTBURY WILL be the means by which we can provide a bridge which will build towards left unity.

If everybody's efforts were put behind this candidate he would have a good chance of winning.

"Why didn't you argue that everybody had to stand against the Labour Party in the last election, on the basis that you are the only ones genuinely against Maastricht".

Steve Cawkwell

That victory will massively change the mood in this union. It will enormously swing the confidence of the members and the activists.

It would be tremendous progress towards building that unity and giving ordinary activists the confidence to believe that they can defeat the right wing.

It wouldn't change everything but it would



CPSA members can be mobilised to join the industrial fightback now developing on the rail, a

be a blow to the right wing.

Astbury has been many years as a rep. We know that he argued against last year's pay agreement, that he opposed the threatened expulsion of the Newcastle Eight [victimised Broad Left members].

I empathise with those who say that his status as a Grade 7 (£28,000pa manager) is a real problem in a union for clerical grades.

But it is not an insurmountable problem.

If it was then the NUCPS executive — largely made up of Grade 7's — would not have rejected the pay deal this afternoon and sent emissaries to our headquarters to try and encourage ours to do the same. Grade isn't the only factor in the situation.

Astbury is an agreed candidate on policies agreed by both the Broad Left and BL84.

Unity around policies

MARK SAYS THAT HE'S THE only candidate calling for a vote for national strike action against Market Testing, and that's the key issue facing the members.

Fine. My election address in the DsHSS election calls for a national strike on Market Testing.

I don't understand why you have to stand for President in order to raise that call. No-one's socialist credentials are going to be tainted by supporting the unity slate.

I don't understand why you didn't argue that everybody had to stand against the Labour Party in the last election, on the basis that you are the only ones genuinely against Maastricht.

Left opportunism?

IN THE DsHSS SECTION ELECTION the Broad Left have correctly exercised the right of recall over Mark and removed him from the Section slate and replaced him with myself as the Deputy Chair candidate.

It is absolute hypocrisy to believe that you can take support and comfort from the Broad Left at one level and campaign

against it at another level.

I oppose absolutely and completely Mark's expulsion from the Broad Left. There is room for all opinions in the Broad Left. I don't believe anybody has the right to deem anybody to have been expelled.

Nobody should be expelled without the right to appeal to a full Broad Left conference.

There is a suspicion of opportunism about what you are doing. It is understandable that people suspect you of out and out blatant exploitation of the situation in order to fur-

What

WHAT WE THINK

THE DEBATE IS about much more than which candidate to back.

It is a debate about the type of left we need in the CPSA and the broader trade union movement.

Mark argues that the left should concentrate on mobilising the members in struggle and that out of that struggle it will be possible to build an open, democratic and non-sectarian left. He believes that there is far more to serious socialist activity in the trade unions than trying to capture important positions and committees.

Elections are, of course, important, but are not ends in themselves. They are merely a means to an end — mobilising workers to fight for their interests.

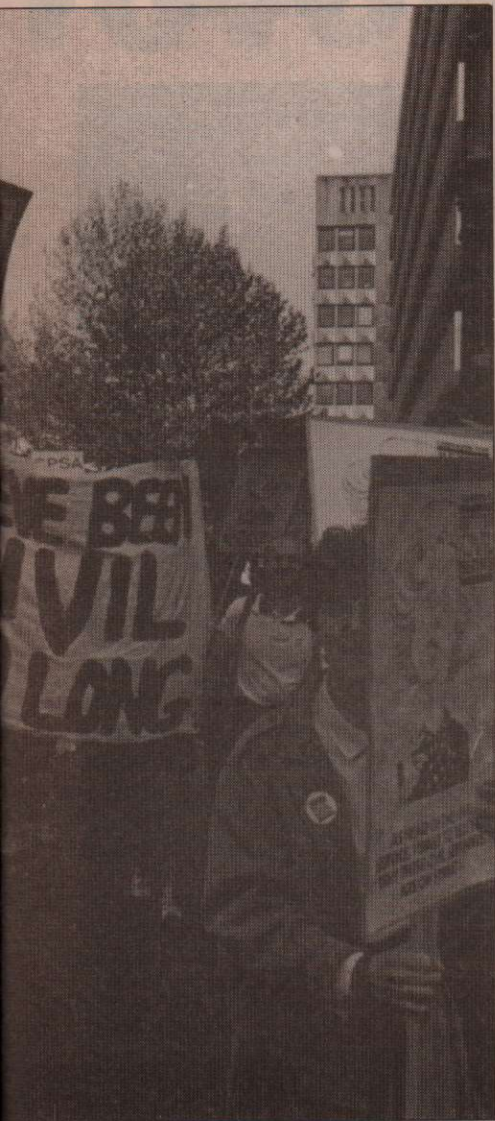
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Timex, and elsewhere

“This is the worst time to dilute the politics of the left”.

WE CANNOT LOOK at the CPSA in a vacuum. We must look at the Civil Service in the context of events elsewhere.

The Timex workers in Scotland have been on strike for a number of weeks and have taken on the anti-union legislation. The Fire Brigades' Union looks set to confront the Tories' pay freeze. The miners and RMT Union are taking strike action on 2 April. ASLEF are considering balloting their members over jobs. The white-collar workers in Ford's, including the salesmen and women, have voted to strike over compulsory redundancies. NALGO and many others have taken strike action at a local level.

This is the context.

Market Testing is a momentous attack

IN THE CPSA we have the threat of Market Testing. We face privatisation, mass redundancies, and union derecognition. Rights we have long held such as flexi-time and part-time working will be out of the window.

We need to face these attacks head-on. This is the worst time to dilute the politics of the Broad Left.

In essence, this debate is about whether the CPSA Left should realign to the right in the hope of electoral gains at a time when we face massive attacks.

The Moderates do not have an overall right to rule the union as they do. They get 14,000 votes out of a union membership of 120,000. Most members do not vote or get involved in the left organisations of the union.

Why? I think it's partly because the left organisations have concentrated far too much on electoral politics at the expense of raising real politics in the workplace. This is highlighted by the decision to back Astbury. Those members who do get involved find the CPSA Left sectarian and intolerant. At Broad Left

conferences, if you cannot win by 50% plus 1 you have no minority rights. Oppositions are trampled on, and slates are dominated by whoever can get 50% plus 1 of the vote.

The Broad Left U-turn

THE LEADERSHIPS of the Broad Left and BL84 (backed by badly attended conferences) decided that this was the time to back Albert Astbury in order, above all else, to get right winger Marion Chambers out of office.

This has involved an amazing U-turn by those in the Broad Left who in 1991 refused to have unity with BL84 if they crawled on their hands and knees, and said that we could not have unity with scabs.

In 1991, no unity on any basis; in 1993, unity with anyone to get rid of Chambers.

“We face privatisation, mass redundancies, and union derecognition. This is the worst time to dilute the politics of the Broad Left.”

Mark Serwotka

No agreement on Market Testing

WHAT DO WE HAVE NOW? Electoral unity for the three senior positions in the union and no agreement over the issues facing members. Market Testing is the litmus test.

There are BL84ers backing Astbury who are in favour of using in-house bids to fight Market Testing. If we had a left unity slate on the basis of Astbury's programme it would not survive the first meeting of the National Executive Committee, because those backing Astbury have fundamentally different views as to how you approach Market Testing.

We would say we should strike against it. They would say we should negotiate and get involved with in-house bids. I don't believe this is unity. It is a misnomer to say Astbury represents left unity. Astbury represents an opportunistic anti-Marion Chambers bloc which says “worry about the politics after the event”.

This is not serious. It is not what the members want to hear at a time when we should be campaigning for national strike action to defeat Market Testing.

Another reality of Astbury's candidature is that the decision was made by the factions who control the Broad Left and BL84. Never mind the independents in the union or the Socialist Caucus to whom it was presented as a *fait accompli*. It's a recipe for making the CPSA Left even less democratic than it is now.

A stitch-up

ASTBURY'S CANDIDATURE is about stitching up a false form of “left unity” at the expense of those serious people on the left who want to get involved and who want to discuss politics.

We want an open conference of the left in the union which would democratically elect any joint slate on the basis of proportional representation after full political discussion.

Left unity without the politics isn't unity of the left at all.

The ‘Moderate’ bureaucratic machine

IF YOU GET Marion Chambers out of office and Astbury in, it will not get rid of the right wing. The power behind the throne is not Chambers but the right-wing machine.

We need to get back to the basic issue. We need a strike to stop Market Testing.

What we are doing is very important. The campaign we have run has picked up an echo amongst wide layers of people. That's why we got more branch nominations than we were expecting: closer to 40 than 30. That's why we've won nominations in the branches of the key Militant supporters. When the members hear the debate, they realise that our candidacy is very serious.

Astbury has divided the left

I WOULD LIKE to ask Astbury's supporters some questions: how is it that something that is supposed to unite the left has actually divided it?

How does it help left unity that I've been *de facto* expelled from the Broad Left and dropped from the NEC slate for standing against Astbury?

And then “in the interest of unity” we get a DsHSS Broad Left conference to decide to stand one left winger against another?

“If we had a left unity slate on the basis of Astbury's programme it would not survive the first meeting of the National Executive Committee.”

Mark Serwotka

How can you have unity at national level behind a Moderate Grade 7 who stands for sod all, and in the DsHSS you allow the right wing in so as to teach me a lesson?

How can 25 people in a room in Manchester decide that it's okay to let the right wing in (by standing Steve Cawkwell against me for DsHSS Vice Chair) if that's the only way to assert Broad Left discipline? Is there any left unity in that?

Let's remember: the Broad Left's and BL84's favoured candidate for President was Margaret Kaye — well known witch-hunter and Moderate, who made a vitriolic speech about the Newcastle Eight only two years ago.

That really exposes Astbury's supporters: this is not really about left unity or fighting back in the workplace, it is about an opportunist manoeuvre to get Chambers out at any price. It is of no relevance to the task of defending the members against the attacks that they face.

sort of left?

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For a serious rank-and-file movement to have any hope of success, it could not possibly be treated as the backyard of any particular political organisation.

Inevitably, the rank-and-file orientation represented by Mark's campaign has come into conflict with the politics of both Militant and the *Morning Star*.

Both groupings and their fellow travellers see socialist trade union work as being primarily concerned with capturing official positions.

Once the union apparatus is captured, so their theory goes, it can be wielded in the interests of the working class.

Unfortunately, it is usually the union apparatus which captures these socialists rather than vice

versa. Maintaining prominent positions in the unions tends to become the first priority of people who adopt this approach, the struggle comes second.

In fact the demands of the struggle *today* are seen as putting at risk the possibility of mere electoral gains *tomorrow*.

It is the conflict between a rank-and-file and electoralist orientation that lies at the heart of the debate between supporters of Mark Serwotka and Albert Astbury.

Mark's supporters want fighting unity and fighting leadership *today* around the burning issues facing the members: Market Testing and the pay freeze.

Astbury's supporters want an electoral pact today to give them a chance of capturing the union apparatus *tomorrow*.

Can there be a "Black

Especially in the 1960s, the Black liberation struggle in the US was much influenced by the battles through which former colonies in Africa and Asia won their independence. Many African-American activists — like Malcolm X until the very last few months of his life — see their struggle as one of "national liberation". But how far does the analogy go? Leon Trotsky, in the 1930s, argued that although the African-Americans ("Negroes" was the word then used by Black activists themselves) were not a separate nation, their movement might take the form of *striving to become one*, and if so socialists should support them. Some Marxists hold that Trotsky's view, though arguable in the 1930s, became outdated with the mass shift of the African-American population from the rural South to the big cities, the basic industries and the North.

Here we present a contribution to the debate, abridged from the American socialist monthly *Bulletin in Defence of Marxism*. The SWP referred to in the article was the American Trotskyist organisation, no relation to the British SWP: since the debates reviewed in this article it has degenerated into a Stalinist-type group devoted to praising Fidel Castro and Kim Il Sung.

By Peter Johnson

BLACK LIBERATION is a key strategic question of the American revolution. Next to the self emancipation of the working class, it is the key question. If Black and white workers struggle together for socialism and Black liberation under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party they can win both. If they do not, they can win neither. This truth about the American revolution has been accepted in the communist movement, at least in words, since the Communist International first intervened to insist that the "Black question" in the U.S. was more than just an aspect of the "class question." But there have been important differences in the way revolutionary Marxists have analysed Black oppression and posed the concrete goals and tasks of the combined struggle for socialism and Black liberation.

The two main poles in the discussion in the American communist movement have been "revolutionary integrationism" and "revolutionary nationalism". Revolutionary integrationists argue that the concrete goal of the struggle for Black liberation is to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to Black equality and integration, so that Black people, individually and collectively, can decide how they want to participate in building socialism in a unified workers' state. Revolutionary nationalists argue that the concrete goal of the struggle for Black liberation is to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to a separate Black nation-state, so that Black people can exercise the right of self-determination in the Marxist sense, the right to secede or not to secede, as they decide.

In this article I want to present an argument for the revolutionary integrationist view. In this I see myself as following in the footsteps of Richard Fraser, who defended revolutionary integrationism in the Socialist Workers' Party in the 1950s and 1960s.

Development of the SWP's position on Black liberation

THE AMERICAN Communist Party (CP/USA) held a revolutionary nationalist position, at least on paper from 1928 to 1959. The CP/USA distinguished between the so-called "black belt," the agricultural area of rich black soil (from which the name is derived) and poor Black farmers extending across the inland South from Virginia to Louisiana. At the time, 86 percent of American Blacks lived in the South, 74 percent of Southern Blacks lived in rural areas, and half of these lived

in "black belt" counties in which they constituted a majority of the population, about a third of the black population in the U.S. The CP/USA called for "full social and political equality" for Blacks outside the "black belt" and "national self-determination" for Blacks in the "black belt"

The first exchange between Trotsky and his American followers on Black liberation was a discussion between Trotsky and Arne Swabek in Prinkipo, Turkey, in February 1933. Swabek criticised the revolutionary nationalist position of the CP/USA and presented a revolutionary integrationist position, although one marred by the American Trotskyists' lack of Black comrades, lack of practical experience in the Black struggle, and apparent passivity in the face of these weaknesses. Trotsky countered with the following argument:

"The point of view of the American comrades appears to me not fully convincing. The Negroes are a race and not a nation. Nations grow out of the racial material under definite conditions..."

"In the 1930s it seemed possible that Blacks in the U.S. would develop into a nation."

"We do not, of course, obligate the Negroes to become a nation; if they are, then that is a question of their consciousness, that is, what they desire and what they strive for. We say: If the Negroes want that, then we must fight against imperialism to the last drop of blood, so that they gain the right, wherever and how they please, to separate a piece of land for themselves... I would in this question rather lean toward the standpoint of the [Communist] Party; of course, with the observation: I have never studied this question and in my remarks I proceed from the general considerations." [Uncorrected transcript of a discussion with Trotsky, February 28, 1933, in Leon Trotsky *On Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, edited by George Breitman, New York: Merit Publishers, 1972, pp.12,13,15.]

The next and last major exchange between Trotsky and his American followers on Black liberation was a discussion between Trotsky and a delegation of Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) leaders including J.R. Johnson (C.L.R. James) in Coyo-

can, Mexico, in April 1939. By this time Trotsky had learned much more about the situation of Blacks in the U.S. through his interaction with the American comrades, particularly after he arrived in Mexico in January 1937. Also, the information provided by Johnson and the other SWP leaders was more complete than that provided by Swabek six years earlier. Like Swabek, Johnson presented a revolutionary integrationist position overall, but he proposed the following formulation on national self-determination:

"I therefore propose concretely: (1) That we are for the right of self-determination. (2) If some demand should arise among the Negroes for the right of self-determination, we should support it. (3) We do not go out of our way to raise this slogan and place an unnecessary barrier between ourselves and socialism. (4) An investigation should be made into these movements; the one led by Garvey, the movement for the 49th state, the movement centring around Liberia. Find out what groups of the population supported them and on this basis come to some opinion as to how far there is any demand among the Negroes for self-determination." [Uncorrected transcript of a discussion with Trotsky, April 4, 1939, in Leon Trotsky *On Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, edited by George Breitman, New York: Merit Publishers, 1972, p. 26.]

Trotsky no longer held the CP/USA position of raising the slogan of national self-determination for the "black belt" South. He agreed with Johnson's formulation.

The SWP adopted the Trotsky-Johnson position at its July 1-4, 1939 National Convention. The resolution "The Right of Self-Determination and the Negro in the United States of North America" supported the right of Black people to form a separate nation state, if they wished to do so, but opposed the SWP's raising the slogan until large numbers of Blacks began raising it themselves.

This remained the SWP's position on Black liberation through the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1960s, however, the SWP sharply revised its position in a nationalist direction. George Breitman was the main theoretician of the change. The document "A Transitional Programme for Black Liberation" adopted by the 1969 National Convention reflects four major shifts of position. First, Blacks in the U.S. are identified as "an oppressed nationality." This is presented as a reality, rather than a future possibility. Second, "self-determination" is presented as the goal of the "nationalist" aspect of the Black liberation struggle, rather than a possible future goal. Third, "self-determination" is advocated by the SWP, rather than held as a possible future slogan. Finally, and most



The mass civil rights (integrationist) movement led by Martin Luther King was far bigger than any Black nationalist movement

revealing, "self-determination" is redefined. It is no longer used in the Marxist sense of the decision by a nation whether to secede and form a separate state, but rather in the "Bundist" sense of "control of the Black communities and all the institutions within them."

Fraser's 1955 position

THERE ARE TIMES in the development of Marxist science when revisions of position and even method are essential. By the mid-1950s the SWP needed to revise its position on Black liberation, using the method of the 1939 discussions with Trotsky and the National Convention resolutions that derived from them. The necessary revision, however, was in the opposite direction of the one the SWP actually made in the 1960s.

In 1939 the SWP had adopted a dual perspective: a revolutionary integrationist struggle in the present and a possible revolutionary nationalist struggle in the future. In their discussions with Trotsky, both Swabek and Johnson had supported the right of national self-determination for a possible future Black nation, but they were more skeptical than Trotsky that such a nation would develop. By the mid-1950s it was obvious that they had been right.

The SWP needed to revise its position, maintaining the general proposition that any oppressed group that wished to separate had the right to do so, but that Black "self-determination," in the sense of state secession, was almost as irrelevant to Black liberation as secession of a Jewish state from the U.S. was to Jewish liberation or secession of a women's state to women's liberation.

Richard Fraser was the most prominent voice in the SWP demanding a change of position in the 1950s and early 1960s. His 1955 document "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle" was a landmark. While the document has secondary problems, such as the view that Jews outside Israel are "a nation without a territory", it is correct in its main propositions. Fraser

summarised these as follows:

1. The Negro question in the United States is not a national one, but is a question of racial discrimination.
2. I disagree with the proposition that the study of the national question in the Russian revolution gives specific illumination to the Negro question in the United States, except that it reveals a qualitative difference between them.
3. Essentially, only the complete victory of fascism in the U.S. could transform the movement for direct assimilation through immediate equality into one of racial independence.
4. The dual nature of the Negro struggle arises from the fact that a whole people, regardless of class distinction, are the victims of discrimination. This problem of a whole people can be solved only through the proletarian revolution, under the leadership of the working class. The Negro struggle is, therefore, not the same as the class struggle, but in its independent character is allied to the working class. Because of the independent form of the Negro movement, it does not thereby become a national or separatist struggle, but draws its laws of development from its character as a racial struggle against segregation and discrimination.
5. The question of self-determination is not the question which is at stake in the Negro struggle.
6. We have in our resolution and in the party consciousness on the Negro question, as expressed by Comrade Breitman, a conception of Negro nationalism and the importance of the idea of Negro self-determination. I believe that this should be combated and eliminated. First, because it is dialectically incorrect. Second, because most Negroes are hostile to it on a completely progressive basis. Third, because it teaches white workers nothing but tends to confirm their traditional race prejudice." ["For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle," in *SWP Discussion Bulletin* A-30, August 1955, original emphasis].

revolution" in the US?



The eviction of black tenant farmers

In the 1930s African-Americans lived mainly in the South, suffered under a system near to apartheid, enforced by racist terror

The actual course of development

IN THE 1930s it seemed possible that Blacks in the U.S. would develop into a nation to which the right of self-determination, that is, the right of state secession would apply. The most likely way for this to have happened would have been for the Black population of the "black belt" to cohere on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up; attract Blacks from the rest of the South and the North; develop urban centres, industry and an industrial proletariat, and in the process build national consciousness and a desire for a separate state on the part of large sections of the population. This would have meant the "black belt" South developing as Quebec, at the time another poor rural area inhabited by a distinct, oppressed people, actually developed.

The possibility of this development underlay the CP/USA's 1928 position, Trotsky's 1933 position and, with some qualification, Trotsky's and the SWP's 1939 positions. The qualification is that by 1939 the likelihood of the development of a Black nation in the "black belt" South was receding. Trotsky knew this and proposed two other hypothetically possible

scenarios for the development of a Black nation:

"Under the condition that Japan invades the United States and the Negroes are called upon to fight they may come to feel themselves threatened first from one side and then from the other, and finally awakened, may say, We have nothing to do with either of you. We will have our own state"...

"Blacks are now the core of the multiracial American working class."

"There is another alternative to the successful revolutionary one. It is possible that fascism will come to power with its racial delirium and oppression, and the reaction of the Negro will be toward racial independence. Fascism in the United States will be directed against the Jews and the Negroes, but against the Negroes particularly, and in a most terrible manner. A "privileged" condition

will be created for the American white workers on the backs of the Negroes. The Negroes have done everything possible to become an integral part of the United States, in a psychological as well as a political sense. We must foresee that their reaction will show its power during the revolution. They will enter with a great distrust of the whites. We must remain neutral in the matter and hold the door open for both possibilities and promise our full support if they wish to create their own independent state." [April 4, 1939 transcript, pp. 30-31].

The development of a Black nation in the U.S. was a historical possibility in 1939, but it did not occur. The rural Black population concentrated in the "black belt" South dispersed to cities across the South and North and became proletarianised. Japan did not invade the U.S. (This had been only a very hypothetical scenario, since Trotsky knew and wrote in other places that Japanese imperialism was too weak to wage the sustained war necessary to drive U.S. imperialism back to its mainland.) And fascism did not triumph in the U.S., driving Blacks out of the working class and the cities.

Fraser analysed the changes in the material situation of Blacks in the U.S. and also the character of the struggle for Black liberation as it was actually developing. The union-

organising drives and sitdown strikes that built the CIO in the 1930s had been battles for integrated industrial unionism. Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s the U.S. ruling class had been forced to make many concessions to Blacks. In its own self-interest for domestic and international political reasons and to allow the development of industrial capitalism in the South, the capitalists were even moving slowly to eliminate the Jim Crow system of legal segregation. Truman's 1948 executive order ending official segregation of the armed services and the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* declaring legal segregation of schools unconstitutional indicated a shift in the relationship of forces between the Black working class and the white ruling class.

The mass civil rights movement for equality and integration that opened with the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott was based on this shift in the relationship of forces and quickly became far larger, more powerful, and more effective than the 1920s "back to Africa" movement of Marcus Garvey, the largest Black nationalist movement in U.S. history. Fraser recognised this emerging reality and urged that the SWP draw the necessary conclusions.

Revolutionary integrationism today

THERE IS NO Black nation in the U.S. today, no "historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." On the contrary, Blacks are now the core of the multiracial American working class, particularly the industrial proletariat, and of the population of most major American cities. There is no possibility of Black national self-determination today, in the Marxist sense of secession of a Black nation state, without a massive population regroupment which Black workers are, to say the least, extremely unlikely to undertake voluntarily.

If a population regroupment should occur and large sections of the Black working class should demand the right of national self-determination, Trotskyists should support that demand, although almost certainly we should oppose actual secession, since separation of the Black and white working classes would limit what either could do. Following the approach Trotsky suggested in 1939, Black Trotskyists should participate in the nationalist movement and say, "The Fourth International says that if it is our wish to be independent, it will help us in every way possible, but that the choice is ours. However, I, as a

Black member of the Fourth, hold a view that we must remain in the same state as the whites."

The possibility of this is so remote, however, that Trotskyists today should base our policy on Fraser's correct observation, "The question of self-determination is not the question which is at stake in the Black liberation struggle."

If a separate Black nation-state is not the question in the Black liberation struggle, what is? In fact, the question is the same as it would have been in most areas of the country if the hypothetical Black nation had developed and separated: revolutionary integrationism, the removal by revolutionary means of the obstacles to Black equality and integration.

The struggle for equality and integration, that is, the struggle against discrimination and segregation, will not be easy, since racism runs deep in the U.S. But the socialist revolution will provide the political and economic basis for success: the proletarian dictatorship of democratically elected workers' councils and the collectivized, democratically planned, worker-controlled economy, both on a world scale. In the U.S., Black and white workers will have had to fight together to defeat and overthrow the capitalists. Politically conscious Black workers, "convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class," will have become an integral part of the revolutionary leadership, the Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, and will have played a vital role in the revolution. For the first time in history, the American and world working class will be in a position to control the destiny of society. And for the first time in history, Black people in America will be able to demand and get what they need.

Some Black activists have expressed alarm that an "integrationist" position, even a revolutionary integrationist position, means dictating to Black people and trying to force Blacks who do not want to integrate or to associate with whites to do so. Their fear is misplaced. It is not possible to say now what the future socialist society will look like. As Marxists we can observe that the development of the social forces of production tends to break down all barriers, to unite and mutually assimilate nations, races and cultures. This suggests that the future socialist society will be more international and more interracial than the present capitalist society, that the revolution will foster integration and mutual assimilation.

The object of the socialist revolution is freedom, however, which includes the freedom to separate, as well as to unite. We can leave it to future generations that have grown up without political, social or economic coercion to decide for themselves how they, as truly free people, will relate.

The struggles of the Minneapolis truck-drivers in the 1930s

The real Teamsters

The film *Hoffa*, on current release, uses the early history of the US Teamsters (truck-drivers) as raw material from which is created a mystical labour leader called "Hoffa" in the film. The "Hoffa" of this powerful pro-labour film is not the Hoffa of history. The real story is told in four volumes of reminiscences published in the '70s by one of the great organisers of the American unionisation drive of the 1930s, Farrell Dobbs. Dobbs, who left the union to become secretary of the American Trotskyist organisation in 1939, organised the Teamsters' unionisation drive in ten Mid-West states. On the eve of the US entry into World War Two, union leader Dan Tobin set out to break the militants on behalf of the American government, using Hoffa as one of his goons. Dobbs was jailed along with 15 other union leaders and Trotskyist organisers.

Simon Armstrong looks at Dobbs' account of the Teamsters' Union of the 1930s.

IN THE EARLY 1930s, the narrowly craft based organisations which dominated the American trade union movement were losing members rapidly. This was due partly to the depression but also to the inability of these unions (organised in the American Federation of Labour) to organise effectively in basic industry.

The Minneapolis Teamsters were one of three groups that started the revolt in 1934 and paved the way for industrial unionism. The others were the Electric Auto-Lite workers in Toledo, Ohio, and the West Coast dockers.

In three hard fought strikes between February and August 1934, the General Drivers' Local (branch) 574 won union recognition, first from coal merchants and then from most other transport concerns.

In the course of the strikes car loads of pickets toured the streets stopping any scab trucks they found. A picket dispatcher at the strike headquarters could rush reinforcements to any picket line where there was trouble. A canteen was established so that pickets did not have to go home to eat; and a temporary hospital was established to prevent injured strikers being arrested at the regular hospitals. A Women's Auxiliary was formed which staffed the strike headquarters, and throughout the later part of the strike published a four page daily paper *The Organiser*.

Minneapolis was at the time a notoriously anti-union town, and the bosses' organisation, the Citizens' Alliance, organised a



Farrell Dobbs

number of attempts to beat down the pickets by brute force. When that failed, the police turn to cold blooded murder, shooting several dozen pickets and killing two of them.

But despite all this and even the intervention of the National Guard, the transport firms couldn't break the strike and had to give in. Minneapolis was on the way to becoming a union town.

Over the next few years the drivers won big improvements in conditions, including paid holidays and a seniority system for lay-offs. Wages were pushed up from an average of \$11 for a 60-hour week in 1933 to \$33 for 44 hours in 1940.

THE GROWING MILITANCY within the ranks did not go down at all well with Daniel J. Tobin, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. In April 1935 he revoked the Local's charter with the intention of splitting up the membership and expelling the militants.

He reckoned without the base which Local 574 had built for itself in the labour movement around it. His various attempts to isolate the Trotskyist leadership of the drivers failed completely and the alternative branch that he set up — "Local 500" — never had more than a few dozen members. Even when AFL president William Green sent a special representative to Minneapolis he was unable to break the strength of the drivers' union.

After 18 months Tobin gave up and they were reinstated, as Local 544, on terms that were, in effect though not on paper, a complete victory over the bureaucracy.

Despite continued sniping from Tobin, an organising drive was launched which culminated in the creation of an 11-state Area Contract for long distance drivers, signed in August 1938. This campaign alone recruited 200,000 members to the IBT, compared with a total membership of 80,000 in 1933, and put the Teamsters on the road to becoming America's largest union.



The police shot dead two pickets during the 1934 strikes

FROM THE START, THE Trotskyists recognised the need to unite the struggles of employed and unemployed workers.

Many of the unemployed had joined the picket lines and fought alongside the drivers during the 1934 strikes. Afterwards an auxiliary section of the union with its own offices and regular meetings was formed to organise the unemployed. It fought a series of battles with the city relief authorities and the managers of federal "make work" projects — to such effect that Minneapolis soon had the highest relief rates in the country.

When a fascist organisation, the Silver Shirts, tried to organise in the city, Local 544 established a Union Defence Guard which drilled regularly and prepared to deal with any fascist attacks. The one attempt of the fascists to hold a rally in Minneapolis was called off when the Defence Guards occupied the hall where the meeting was to be held.

"The Trotskyists recognised the need to unite the struggles of employed and unemployed workers."

After that they had to seek other towns, where the workers were not so well organised.

Through most of the period after 1934, the local union published a weekly paper, *The Northwest Organiser* which played an important role in the organising drives of the late 1930s.

But as well as dealing with everyday trade union matters, the *NWO* right from 1937 was warning of the danger of a new imperialist war. It denounced the course the Roosevelt administration was taking which led towards US participation in the slaughter.

The paper argued that war would come about as the capitalists of different countries sought to get a bigger share of the world market and that the workers had no interest in such a struggle.

As *Northwest Organiser* put it, "JP Morgan [a leading banker] has a gun. He just returned from a sojourn in Scotland where he was shooting grouse. If he wants to defend his investments let him take his gun and fight. And don't let him try to lie about any fake 'war for democracy'."

But by 1940 the tide was turning against Local 544. The great organising drives of

the mid-1930s had largely come to an end, and the government's war preparations were being stepped up. The majority of the trade union leaders and especially Tobin were lining up to support Roosevelt, despite the hostility of many of their members.

Tobin tried to impose dictatorial powers over the Minneapolis Teamsters. Under these circumstances, a mass meeting of 4,000 members voted in June 1941 to go over to the alternative trade union federation, the CIO, where a section of the leadership around United Mine Workers president John L. Lewis was opposed to Roosevelt.

But the CIO leadership would not sanction the national organising drive among transport workers that could have created a mass revolt against Tobin and his jackboot methods. Instead they were left to the tender mercies of Tobin's hired thugs, who signed "sweetheart" contracts with the employers and force the workers to pay dues to the IBT — often at gunpoint.

AT THE SAME TIME, the FBI was preparing to frame up 29 people, including the entire leadership of Local 544 and several of the national leaders of the [Trotskyist] Socialist Workers' Party [no relation to the British SWP]. The Party's national secretary James P. Cannon was among them.

They were charged with conspiring to overthrow the government and advocating such an overthrow by force and violence.

After a lengthy trial before a loaded jury they were all cleared of conspiracy to overthrow the government. But 18 were convicted of advocating violent overthrow and jailed for terms of between a year and 18 months.

The law was used for the purpose was the 1940 Smith "Gag" Act, and the case brought a storm of protest from trade union and liberal sources. They included the national CIO, the United Auto Workers, the United Rubber Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers as well as the American Civil Liberties Union and various black organisations.

Although, in the end, Local 544 was smashed, its history is full of valuable lessons in trade union and revolutionary tactics — most of which can still be applied today.

The basic point is one made by Farrell Dobbs himself at the end of *Teamster Bureaucracy*, where he says: "The principal lesson for labour militants to draw from the Minneapolis experience is not that, under an adverse relationship of forces, the workers can be overcome; but that, with proper leadership, they can overcome."

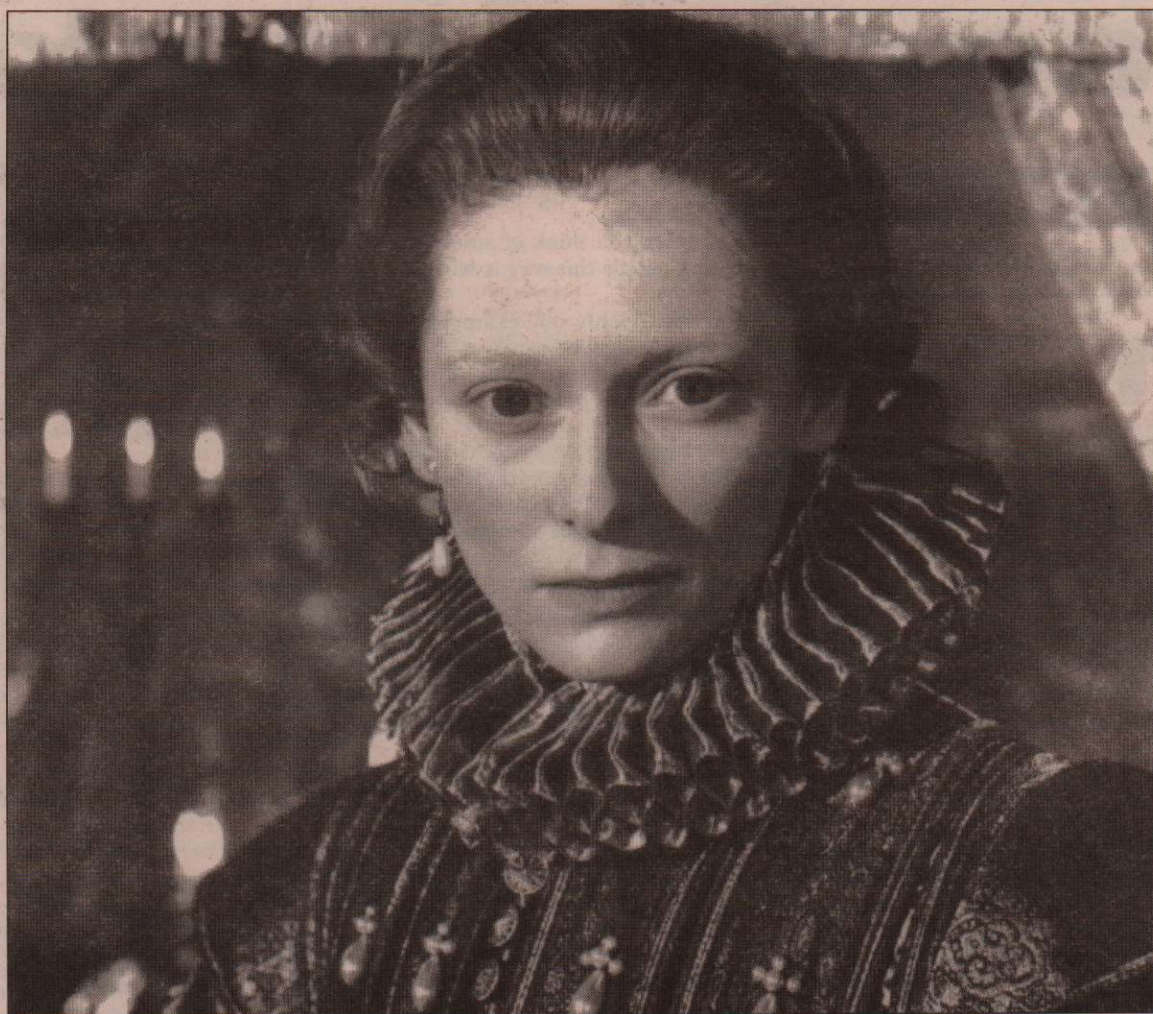


The Minneapolis strikers organised a Union Defence Guard

Dressing up the obvious

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews Orlando



Tilda Swinton as Orlando: learning almost nothing in 400 years

ORLANDO IS RATHER like sociology; it states the obvious in a needlessly ornate manner.

It's National Trust film-making, designed to appeal to people who troop over old castles and marvel at the furniture! the clothes! the vast number of rooms!

The film is based on a book of the same name by Virginia Woolf, who based the character of Orlando on a friend of hers, the aristocratic Vita Sackville-West, who lived in two grand manor houses in her life (one of which is now a National Trust property).

The film looks yearningly back at feudal times, when the clothes, furniture, etc. were enormously elaborate, provided, of course, that you were lord of the manor, as Orlando is.

The film starts out in 1500, with the ageing Elizabeth I on the throne. Orlando takes her fancy, and she bestows a magnificent house on him, provided that he never grows old.

He doesn't. He lives for more than 400 years, has various adventures, and changes sex along the way.

"Same person," muses Orlando in front of the mirror, "just a different sex."

Only nothing is the same. As a woman, Orlando cannot hold on to the house she's been given. Without a male heir, she stands to lose everything.

The film wants to say something about women's rough deal in life, but doesn't go beyond the vaguest hints. The 1750 scene where the newly female Orlando meets Addison, Pope and Swift, and is shocked

by their views on women is simply silly; the camera is much more interested in everyone's clothes and hair than in what they've got to say.

Orlando's horror at their views also brands her as a dummy, as someone who's learned nothing in 250 years. Writers are not divorced from society. Unless they are revolutionaries, they reflect the views of their day.

Having met these men at a literary salon in society's drawing room, what could she expect but the prevailing wisdom?

Orlando's brush with politics is also shallowly conceived. His 1700 diplomatic mission to the East seems more of a style choice — turbans are so becoming! — than anything else.

There's one reasonable point made.

Orlando learns he doesn't want to kill people, but he doesn't mind letting other people do it. Aristocrats have always had other people do their fighting for them.

The film ends with some fairly trite sentiments. Orlando learns to accept what she is, and to stop hankering for the past. Result? Contentment. What's weird is that we've never seen any such hankering from Orlando; the love of the past comes from the film-makers, not from the main character.

The film is simply odd. If director Sally Potter really wants to change minds, why not put her message in a popular film, rather than an art house film that relatively few people will see? And why dress it up in such a lot of frippery? It would be easy to leave Orlando with no message but this one: Join the National Trust.

Potter's view that women get a raw deal also needs development. That part is hardly news; what else does she think?

If she does think women are all weak and downtrodden, how does she explain the four all-powerful queens (Elizabeth I, Anne, Victoria, and Elizabeth II) through whose reigns Orlando lives? Weren't they women? Did their sex ever stop them wielding enormous power?

No, it didn't, and they well knew it. When Orlando's father welcomes Elizabeth in 1500, he says to her: "All I have is yours, for your enjoyment."

She gives him a jaundiced look, and replies: "All you have is mine anyway."

Exactly. It's class, not sex, that really determines what you can have, what you can be, and what you can do in life. Sally Potter hasn't grasped that yet. For her, class is something enviable (provided that you get into the top bit, not the unmentionable parts lower down).

The film is watchable and easy on the eye, but it's all froth. It doesn't give you anything but the spectacle.

The anti-fascist composer

Music

Geoff Ward looks at the work of Polish composer Henryk Gorecki, featured in last Sunday's South Bank Show (ITV)

UNTIL RECENTLY, modern classical music had never entered the pop charts. That changed a few months ago when a Polish composer, Henryk Gorecki, reached the top ten with his "Third Symphony", written in 1976.

Sunday's South Bank Show profiled the composer, overlaying a performance of the work with harrowing scenes, ranging from the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz to contemporary footage of crimes like the starving people of Somalia.

Gorecki lives in Silesia just a few miles from Auschwitz, and this profoundly moving work was inspired by the Nazi extermination of the Jews. Of the symphony's three movements, the second uses an inscription written by an 18-year old woman prisoner on the wall of the Gestapo headquarters in Zakopane — a prayer to the Virgin Mary.

"A powerful reply to Le Pen who would have us believe that places like Auschwitz were a mere detail in history."

When the Nazis came to power in Germany they banned the music of Mendelssohn and Offenbach, among others.

The Stalinists too censored music and persecuted musicians.

Though performances of Gorecki's works have taken place in Poland since the 1950s, his music has at various times been subjected to Stalinist repression.

They attempted to write Gorecki out of official culture, persecuting him for the religious and political content of his music.

Anti-semitism is still rife in Poland despite the extremely small remnants of its pre-Nazi millions of Jews who remain. With fascism rearing its ugly head in Europe again, this symphony is a powerful reply to the likes of Le Pen who would have us believe that places like Auschwitz were a mere detail in history.

Gorecki lives a reclusive life in one of the heavily working class districts around Katowice. Whether he knows it or not, that too is emblematic. It is only the working class that will put an end to fascism once and for all.

Places like this

Book

Cathy Nugent reviews Some Lives by David Widgery (£5.99, Simon and Schuster)

FORTY MINUTES this week (Tuesday 6 April) films the late David Widgery on his rounds in the Limehouse area of London's East End. Widgery was a GP, writer and a member of the Socialist Workers' Party. He died in October of last year.

The film will cover the same ground as Widgery's last book, *Some Lives*. It is a rambling but effective indictment of the Tories' "wild west" style "redevelopment" of London's dock area.

Widgery mourns the passing of the vital collective spirit of the people who lived in the tenements and streets around the dock areas of the Isle of Dogs and Tower Hamlets, demolished by "developers". What remains cowers now in the shadow of a monstrous erection to a billionaire's ego — Canary Wharf.

Widgery does not deal with the issues in a big-P political way. Rather he tells us stories about the people he has met and the effects on working class lives of poverty, disintegrating social services, bad housing and an

underfunded health service.

This is the "Silk Cut" culture. Endless fags, bad nerves, bad backs, insomnia. And — the modern equivalent of 19th century "consumption" for British children — asthma and its terrible twin, eczema. The malnutrition of our times is now obesity: but ill-health is common to both. Inevitably there is drinking and other sorts of drugging, followed swiftly by assaults and bruises.

But perhaps the most telling facts of all about Tower Hamlets' residents' health are the facts concerning birth. London's poorest borough has the highest fertility rate of any London borough. Infant mortality and abortion rates are much higher than average. Life revolves around not work or leisure but the begetting and getting rid of children. Contraception, as Widgery points out, is still not a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

Widgery says people have always been poor, but never *this* poor. At least in the past some "East End values" lifted people up out of their despair. "East End values" are now disappearing. In the past people thought "you shouldn't jump the queue, that you are not just in it for yourself, that it's right to help people in trouble and that loyalties matter more than cash".

Normally I grow suspicious when I hear about people's attachments to particular places, especially when it is

middle class people being romantically nostalgic for someone else's "good old days". But in this case I can see Widgery's point.

East London is a special place. Perhaps because it is so solidly working class, or perhaps because of its wonderful mix of cultures and immigrant communities: Irish, Jewish, Bangladeshi, Vietnamese, Somalian, Algerian, Kurdish and Chinese. And what the Tories have done to the East End is indeed a disgrace.

What I find disturbing in Widgery's tale is its lack of hope, of a sense of perspective, of the essential awareness that class struggle was the ingredient that gave East London its character, and that it will be reborn out of future class struggle.

This complete lack of perspective comes from the weakness of his political ideas.

Nowhere in the book, for instance, does he mention the fact that Tower Hamlets council is run by Liberals with a stinking and well-deserved reputation (not least for racism in their housing policy).

What happened to the tradition of the Poplar council of the 1930s? What went wrong? These questions are left unspoken and unexplored. All we are left with is shock and outrage. But this won't help us fight the poverty or the cuts, or beat the rising tide of racism and the growth of fascism in East London.

ORGANISING

Alliance for Workers' Liberty meetings

Tues 13 April

"What next after 2 April?"

Edinburgh AWL meeting. 7.30 Trades Council, Picardy Place.

Thurs 15 April

"What next after 2 April?"

Glasgow AWL meeting. 7.30, Partick Burgh Halls.

Weds 21 April

"Abortion rights — the debate."

The AWL debate SPUC on a Woman's Right to Choose. ULU, Malet Street, London.

AWL weekend school

Sat 17 - Sun 18 April

"An introduction to Marxism"

Hosted by: Newcastle AWL. Details: 091-284 6347

Labour Party

Sat 17 April

Socialist Campaign Group Conference 11.00-5.00, Sheffield Hallam University
Details: Jeremy Corbyn MP, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7.

CPSA

Weds 7 April

CPSA Presidential campaign meeting Manchester Town Hall, 6.00. Speaker: Mark Serwotka

Miners

Sat 1 May

NUM Benefit show 8.00, Hackney Empire, East London.

Pro-choice

Sun 25 April

"Cabaret for Choice" a benefit for NAC. 7.30 Hackney Empire, East London

Why the anti-smoking campaign is bad for you

Stop the crusade against smokers!

PLATFORM

By Richard Love

I SAW HER outside the new Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, a patient in her early sixties, dressed in a night-dress in the cold, with a cigarette in one hand and her catheter bag — to catch her urine — in the other. She needed to smoke. But smoking is banned in all parts of the hospital or its grounds. If any patient or member of staff wants a cigarette then they must go out into the street for it!

The Chelsea and Westminster is a big general hospital. It isn't yet fully open, but already there is always a large group of patients and staff outside it smoking.

If you are a smoker you are addicted to nicotine. Forcing people not to smoke during a stressful time in hospital is not doing anyone any good (least of all the patients getting hypothermia outside). Anyone who has tried to give up smoking will know it isn't easy and health dictatorship frankly isn't helpful.

In a way, the woman with the catheter was lucky. At least she could get outside (although not without a small amount of difficulty). I bet she felt a lot better after the cigarette. If you have never smoked it is probably difficult for you to understand that when you really need a cigarette you really

do need one, and you feel a lot better afterwards.

Whatever you think of smoking, treating people this way is barbaric.

But this is only one example of the crusade against smokers. New adoption guidelines effectively rule out smokers as potential adoptive parents. Most *Intercity* trains have half a carriage (always packed) for smokers (and that will go eventually). Virtually no local public transport has any facility for smokers now. The council on the *Isle of Wight* is banning smoking in public places. Taxation on cigarettes is monstrous. And so on and on and on.

MUCH OF the campaign against smoking is a good thing. Few smokers want to be smokers. Everyone knows it is bad for you. Smokers know this better than non-smokers — you can feel it being bad for you; all the health warnings and pontifications of health freaks don't tell you anything you don't already know. Smokers also know how much it costs them. And now that smokers are a minority group there is, for many people, considerable peer group pressure to stop smoking.

Of course smokers have to consider the rights of non-smokers. Provision of designated non-smoking areas is something with which few people would disagree: but it is increasingly the case that there is no provision for smokers.

But what is really wrong about this crusade is that it is all directed against the smoker. The smoker is made to feel second class, often evil and increasingly a danger to others. If the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital wants people to stop smoking they are not in a bad position to offer free therapy, support groups and other aids to people wanting to stop.

I have just given up smoking, I consider myself to be a rational and emotionally robust person, but to be honest, it was murder giving up. If previous experience is anything to go by, I stand a reasonable chance of starting again.

GIVING UP smoking is not easy and many people will require support to do it. Driving people into social ghettos does not help; if anything it helps lower the smoker's self esteem, raises stress levels and thus increases dependency on props like smoking.

Virginia Bottomley has joined this crusade (or so she tells us). But if there is one simple step the Government can take to help cut down smoking, it is to ban cigarette advertising. Virginia has yet to be convinced that this will do any good!

Tobacco companies are run by intelligent (but nasty) people who are unlikely to spend vast amounts of money each week on advertising that doesn't encourage people to smoke.

Their advertising works. Each

time I look at a cigarette advert I take it in, and I often think "gasp!"

The Government clearly wants to protect the tobacco industry to safeguard treasury and/or Tory Party revenue. They will not take action that seriously affects it. Yet they are happy to join any sort of crusade against smokers.

"Driving people into social ghettos does not help; if anything it helps lower the smoker's self esteem, raises stress levels and thus increases dependency on props like smoking."

The good news for smokers is that at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital there is absolutely no way they can enforce their policy. The fire alarms will be going off every five minutes, and, sooner or later, rooms for smokers will be set aside. The bad news for smokers everywhere is that it is bad for you (but you know that already) and the crusade against you will continue.

Campaign Group Supporters' Network

Labour left meets in Sheffield

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Martin Thomas

LABOUR'S LEFT WING will meet on Saturday 17 April, in Sheffield, for the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network Conference.

The first Network conference, in Leeds last June, drew 500 people: it was the biggest Labour left conference for many years. This conference will continue the effort to build a coordinated network of local Labour left groups linked to the Campaign Group of left MPs.

At its committee meeting last Saturday, 3 April, the hard-left coalition Labour Party Socialists reaffirmed its commitment to trying to build the Campaign Group Network, and decided to produce an LPS broadsheet for the 17 April conference.

The broadsheet will carry LPS's proposals for the conference: calling for an open, action-oriented network; for a fight against the Tory

attacks on the public sector; for opposition to any electoral alliances or coalitions with the Liberal Democrats; and for a campaign against the witch-hunt.

LPS believes that the Network must have a life of its own, with the ability to decide its own policies and

"The Network must have a life of its own, with the ability to decide its own policies and campaigns, rather than just being a chorus for the left MPs."

campaigns, rather than just being a chorus for the left MPs. Anyone who calls themselves

"left" will oppose the Tory cuts in the public sector — but some of those same "left-wingers", sitting on Labour councils, will push through those same Tory cuts. They say that there is no realistic alternative, and that their Labour version of cuts will be less drastic than direct Tory cuts.

LPS argues that this approach only demoralises and discredits the Labour Party. Labour councils and Labour Parties should instead unite with public sector trade unions and community groups to fight the Tory Government. The failure of that policy in the early 1980s — when many Labour council leaders talked about it — is down to the gutlessness of the council leaders, not the impossibility of fighting back.

The 17 April conference officially has two themes — "Building the Network" and "Maastricht and the Future of Socialism". Unfortunately, the way the conference is organised will make adequate debate difficult: the "policy" session, which gets about one hour, will be a series of workshops, introduced by MPs, each one of which is to cover all the issues.

Socialist Organiser supporters will be there, arguing that the Labour Left should not continue down the nationalist and diversionary blind alley of seeing opposition to the Maastricht Treaty as the key to defence of public services. The anti-Maastricht sections of the boss class are just as intent on cutting services, jobs, and union rights as the pro-Maastricht people.

Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network
Recall conference

Saturday 17 April
11am to 5pm

Students' Union, Sheffield Hallam University, Pond Street, Sheffield.

Registration: £5 waged, £2 unwaged, to Jeremy Corbyn MP, 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7.

INDUSTRIAL

Gagged convenor John Kydd talks to SO

Timex: "Every member of the working class has a role in this dispute"

AFTER TEN weeks on strike morale amongst the sacked Timex workers in Dundee remains high. The attempts of the factory manager Peter Hall to recruit a scab force have been a failure. He claims to have recruited 200, although he originally

claimed that he would have recruited 280 scabs by this point in the dispute. In fact, the real figure is much lower. The buses which bring the scabs in are half empty, with a sharp fall-off in the number of scabs after the first week of mass picketing.

And only about a hundred scabs have been unearthed by Hall.

The kind of people being recruited by Hall were described by one Timex worker as "the scum of the earth — they're not part of the working class", and include drug-pushers and one member of the fascist BNP.

The quality of the output produced by the scabs has slumped: "they are producing bucketloads of scrap, there are customer returns all over the place, it's like one big graveyard in there," said the Timex convenor John Kydd.

In a recent television interview Hall described the quality of output as "adequate". When a man who usually talks in superlatives describes something as merely "adequate" you know he has problems.

One bleak spot on the horizon, however, is the failure of MSF members in the factory to take action in support of the workers. According to John Kydd:

"There is no chance of getting the MSF members out. We have had support from MSF members the length and breadth of the country, but there is always one section of

workers you don't get support from. The MSF Executive has declared that there is no dispute on that involves their members."

The regular Monday morning mass pickets of the factory are continuing, with the full support of the Timex workers. As John Kydd put it:

"We welcome workers and supporters from all political parties and all political persuasions to join us on the picket lines. Those who denounce such people as outsiders are detracting from the dispute, not the people who turn up on the picket line.

"But the AEEU is completely opposed to people like the SWP or Scottish Militant Labour turning up on the picket line. You ought to phone Jimmy Airlie and ask him what his list of proscribed organisations is as far as picketing is concerned.

"Every member of the working class has a role in this dispute. Labour MPs have taken it up in Parliament, councillors have taken it up on their coun-

cils, and political activists have turned up to support the picketing."

Having saved between £2-3 million in redundancy payments by sacking the workforce, Hall hopes that once the legal 90 days' redundancy notice has expired he will be able to re-employ about half of the sacked workers.

John Kydd stressed that Hall was in for a disappointment: "We will be saying that no one should go back. If you go back it will be on Hall's terms of worse working conditions and less pay. Our members have not gone through everything they have been through to go back on Hall's terms."

The immediate priority remains that of building the Monday morning mass pickets, and of ensuring the biggest possible turnout for next Monday demonstration.

Mass picket: 7.00am, Easter Monday, Timex Factory.

Demonstration, called by STUC, midday, Easter Monday. Assemble at Timex factory.

Manchester Housing goes for a one-day strike

MANCHESTER housing workers have voted for an official one-day strike in support of two colleagues facing gross misconduct charges and over written warnings against eighty workers who were involved in an unofficial strike in February.

The result of the NALGO ballot was a narrow yes vote, 80 to 177. This was the second ballot on the proposed one-day strike. The first ballot had also produced a yes vote, but only by a narrow majority.

Despite the closeness of the vote, NALGO members did

vote twice in support of their colleagues, and against the mass disciplining of unofficial strikers.

The Housing Department is the scene of a wide-ranging management offensive involving disciplinarys, name badges, dress code, offices without screens, and harassment of trade union activists.

A date has yet to be set for the strike. Given an effective campaign by shop stewards and the branch, the one-day strike could be the biggest departmental strike seen by Manchester Housing Department.

AWL Trade Union School
Marxism and the trade union struggle
Sessions on • Connolly and the sympathetic strike •
Classic Marxism and the unions • unofficial strike
action • Solidarity and the law • The state of the move-
ment today
10.30am onward Sunday 25 April
Sheffield
Details phone Tom 071 639 7965

Teachers: test the Tories

From back page

* We need a leadership that sees the SATs fight as a lever to jack-up resistance against other government attacks, like Performance Related Pay and job cuts.

* We need a leadership that understands that if national action alone can defeat SATs then national action alone can defeat PRP and job cuts.

* Most of all we need a leadership that will initiate and participate in a general working class fightback to defend public services from the

deprivations of the ruling Tory vandals.

In the past years the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) and the Campaign for a Democratic, Fighting Union (CDFU) have been a major force at Conference, pushing the kind of policies the union needs. Now a time when delegates and union members need a united front and a serious fight, the STA and CDFU must join forces to ensure that the union come out of this Annual Conference having shed the leadership's bankrupt policies and set about getting itself into fighting shape for the battles to come.

Why RMT and ASLEF must strike together

By RMT and ASLEF rail workers

THE RMT has now named Friday 16 April for its second one-day protest strike over jobs.

It looks like the NUM will call action on that day. So, with ASLEF — the traindrivers' union — set to release its own ballot result this week, what tactics should the two main rail unions adopt in their fight to save jobs and stop privatisation?

On the picket lines last Friday some RMT activists argued not for joint ASLEF/RMT strike days, but for separate ones.

The argument went like this: strikes by either RMT or ASLEF will more or less shut down the railway system. Therefore, if each union struck on a separate day, say ASLEF on Wednesday and RMT on Friday, this would create much greater problems for BR management and the Tories than if both unions struck together.

It sounds attractive, but AWL railworkers disagree.

We want to see ASLEF and RMT members standing on the same picket lines together rather than crossing each others'.

We think that a couple of days of united strike action and the building of genuine rank and file joint strike committees between members of the two

unions is far more important than the significant but limited increase in pressure on BR represented by the separate strike days strategy.

Railworkers need to face the brutal truths that the long-standing rivalry between ASLEF and RMT serves the interests of nobody except management and the Tories.

That is the central lesson of

the pointless defeat without a fight of the tubeworkers last November.

Not even two days of strikes and two of chaos are going to force the Tories to back down over pit closures and rail privatisation. We will need more than that to make them capitulate this time.

Unity is strength!

Standard Assessment Tests, or SATs, are the tests that the Tories plan to introduce for every school student by 1995. All students will be tested in the different subjects of the national curriculum four times — at 7, 11, 14 and 16.

The test so far has created uproar for several reasons:

- * the huge extra burden that the tests create for teachers;
- * The results of the tests are published in school "league tables" supposedly allowing parental choice, but the government has refused to take any account of different levels of ability in the school intake or the effects of the social and economic background of the students;
- * the league tables take no account of special needs teaching — it will no longer be "economic" for schools to cater for these students;
- * John Patten has given the green light for secondary schools to use the tests as a means of selecting pupils — this means the reintroduction of grammar schools.

Lecturers' leaders sell out

By a NATFHE member

THE FURTHER EDUCATION teachers' union, NATFHE, last week called off a planned day of action for 1 April. The union had already exempted many branches from the action, against threatened new contracts, because their management had given paper commitments not to introduce the contracts. The retreat by the union was in spite of a two to one vote in favour of action, and the exempted branches clamouring to be brought

back into the action.

The NATFHE NEC called off the action when the College Employers' Forum finally agreed to meet NATFHE negotiators rather than imposing the new contracts.

The climbdown by NATFHE will achieve nothing less than giving bosses the green light for attacks, and confuse and demoralise union activists.

Meanwhile, new posts in many colleges are already being filled with people on worsened conditions and terms of employment.

Happy birthday, LSD

SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

PLAYING the anniversary game, I note the report in the *Independent* of the synthesis fifty years ago last Wednesday of that (in)famous drug, LSD. Despite its mythological status, LSD is merely one member of a group of compounds, many naturally-occurring, many deadly poisonous, some useful medicines.

LSD is related to the ergot alkaloids, a group of about twenty compounds produced by the fungus *Claviceps purpurea*, which used to occur quite commonly on rye. If flour from contaminated rye grains was eaten, the result could be the terrifying disease ergotism, known as Holy Fire (*Ignis Sacer*) or St. Anthony's

Fire. Ergotism occurred in two forms, convulsive and gangrenous, perhaps as a result of differences in the diet.

The symptoms were gruesome. The onset was marked by a feeling of lassitude and oppression, a livid colour of the skin, and painful muscular spasms. In the convulsive form, a severe itch, pins and needles and "formication" (like ants crawling on the body) were accompanied by powerful spasms, forcing the victim to curl up in a ball or become as rigid as a statue. In the gangrenous form, alternating unbearable sensations of heat and cold in a limb were followed by numbness. The part became dry and mummified, eventually falling off with little or no loss of blood. This could affect anything from fingers to whole limbs. Hallucinations and epileptic seizures could also result, as could spontaneous abortion and the drying up of breast milk.

These experiences, perhaps reminiscent of the descriptions of hell familiar to many in the Middle Ages, were often thought to be divine retribution for sins. The order of St. Anthony, founded 900 years ago this year, set up houses with walls painted red for the treatment of those suffering from St. Anthony's Fire. It became associated with many miraculous cures, probably due to a change in diet from the contaminate rye flour. This no doubt added to the authority of the church.

Ergotism has been known of for a long time. Both the Assyrians and Parsees wrote about it hundreds of years BC, the latter referring to its effects in childbirth. In the first well-documented outbreak, 999 years ago in France, up to 40,000 people are said to have died. It has been associated with outbreaks of "witch"-hunting, including possibly that at Salem, Massachusetts, 302 years ago.

Here, many accusers spoke of hallucinations and crawling sensations in the skin, both symptoms of ergotism. The weather at the time, early rains and a hot humid summer, seem to have been conducive to the growth of the ergot fungus. The following year was a drought year and the "bewitchings" came to a sudden end.

The climate was favourable for the growth of ergot in France in 1789. Late July saw the Great Fear (*la Grande Peur*) in which thousands of peasants undertook an "orgy of destruction" aimed at large landowners. Though possibly just the rural accompaniment of the French Revolution, some saw this as a result of many peasants having gone mad, this being attributed to "bad flour".

Rare in Britain because of the non-cultivation of rye to any great extent, one of the few outbreaks in the world this century was in Manchester in the late 1920s.

Some Jewish immigrants were affected mildly by ergot-infected rye grown in Yorkshire. Ergotism had greatly declined by the 19th century partly because of the growth in cultivation of the potato and partly because of greater cultivation in inspecting rye crops. It still occurs in Eastern Europe and parts of India occasionally. Incidentally, the Ministry of Agriculture book, *Poisonous plants in Britain**, states that ergot became more common in the UK in the 1980s. The authors are worried that "a return to simpler living" by some people "who grow and grind their own grain" could lead to a recurrence of human ergotism.

But the news about ergot is not all bad. It has medical uses in small amounts, on which more next week.

* A fascinating book — it seems to me that an inordinate number of the plants in my garden feature in this book!

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Labour shuts down Wallasey

By Dale Street

LABOUR'S NATIONAL Executive has suspended Wallasey Labour Party.

The MP, Angela Eagle was imposed on the local party just before the last election. Now the party has to be made safe for her. Like Berthold Brecht's totalitarian government which grew displeased with the people and decided to elect another one, the Labour Party bureaucracy wants to elect a new membership in Wallasey to render its wingless eagle of an MP secure in her nest.

Last Wednesday's NEC (31 March) voted in favour of a resolution drawn up by Eileen Murfin, the North West Regional Organiser, which suspends the GC and EC immediately, handing control of the constituency over to the Regional Office.

The constituency officers weren't informed beforehand, of course. The first they knew of the planned shutdown was through the local evening newspaper, which claimed grounds of "intimidation".

No officer, or other party member has actually been charged with "intimidation", though leaked papers show that a handful of right wingers have made vague claims about "intimidation" in remarkably similar letters!

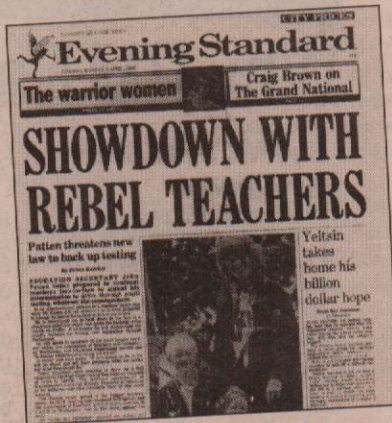
Although theoretically the wards are continuing to meet, those not controlled by the right wing are being organised by the region.

The trumped-up charges are ludicrous. The real reason why Wallasey has to be shut down leaked through a PS to one of the letters written by the witch hunters: the Labour Party want to make sure that Angela Eagle is still the Labour candidate at the next general election. A democratic selection procedure in Wallasey is too risky. Better to risk letting the Tories regain the seat than to have a left-wing candidate committed to the fight against the Tories and everything they stand for.

Resolutions of protests to the Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT, with copies to Wallasey CLP, c/o Lol Duffy (Secretary), 11 Egremont Promenade, Merseyside L44 8BG.

Dump all SATs... and the rest

Teachers: test the Tories with action!



THIS YEAR'S Conference of the National Union of Teachers represents a cross-roads. The success of the NAS/UWT Standard Assessment Tests' boycott shows that the government is vulnerable — yet the NUT leadership refuses to get stuck into them despite the overwhelming clamour for action from teachers.

The NUT executive could have used the indicative ballot on English SATs as an opportunity to inflict a major blow on government education policy. Instead they made daft excuses to avoid a fight

When the miners and transport workers were on strike on 2 April, we could have been on strike with them. We should have been on strike with them!

An NUT circular tells us that such action would be illegal. So why were the RMT able to come out that day and remain 'legal'? They came out to fight job cuts, and in fighting to defend themselves they were also giving the best possible solidarity to the miners.

Have we no job cuts to fight? Have we no services to defend? Delegates to this year's NUT conference should recognise that the 'do-nothing' strategy of our recent past has failed and failed miserably.

There is an enormous reservoir of anger out there ready to be translated into action. Ask any teacher in any school. If there is demoralisation it is induced by the failure of our leaders to harness and focus this anger.

The SATs is one way this can be done — and it's a sure fire winner. But we need action on jobs and pay too.

McAvoy described the recent pay award as "one of the biggest insults ever paid to teachers... there really is the threat of personal contracts developing." It would "get rid of national pay scales... teachers would have to speak for themselves." So what did he propose to do about it? Call a day of action? A special pay conference? Not a bit of it. He suggested a series of regional meetings to "ascertain the mood" of the members. If he kept in touch, he'd know what mood we are in! So much for leadership!

So what kind of lead do we need now? We need a leadership willing to strike a fatal blow at SATs — not just this year's SATs, but all SATs, for all time.



Class law in the class room

TORY EDUCATION Secretary John Patten is preparing to take on the teaching unions over their plans to boycott the new Standard Assessment Tests (SATs).

Last Friday, 2 April, the High Court ruled that it was legal for the teaching unions to boycott SATs. In response this Monday, 5 April, Patten announced that he was prepared to change the law to force teachers to follow his orders.

Patten's militant stance reveals how futile it is for the leadership of the teaching unions to attempt to base their strategy on "staying within the law". Even if you do stay within the law, the Tories will change the law to make action illegal.

Patten's determination to force new legislation through parliament is entirely consistent with the way the Tories have been prepared to wield state power against the labour and trade union movement over the last 14 years.

During the heroic 1984-5 miners strike Thatcher announced that "We shall introduce measures in parliament to give the police what they need". In other words, she was saying that the Tories are

prepared to change the law as they see fit so as to better prosecute the class struggle against the workers.

Patten's latest announcement is firmly in this tradition. The Tories have no loyalty to the law as such. They only support the law to the extent that it can be made to serve their interests and the interests of the bosses they represent.

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