


SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

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in the

'90s

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SCRAP THESE RACIST LAWS



Above Myrna Simpson (left), mother of Joy Gardner, and Joy's sister Claudia

ON 28 July a large group of police and immigration control officials arrived at the home of Joy Gardner with an order for her deportation. They wound up killing this Jamaican woman in front of her five year old son!

The large gang of beefy men — neighbours say there were up to 20 of them! — decided that Joy Gardner needed to be physically "restrained". In the course of "restraining" her they killed her. Reports suggest that Joy Gardner died because they trussed her up and rammed a gag into her mouth. The 40 year old woman collapsed while struggling with them, and died after three days in a coma.



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Trade unionists back inquiry into SWP violence

What the wise old man said to the flea

By Mark Osborn

A campaign has been launched by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty demanding a labour movement inquiry into violent attacks by Socialist Workers' Party members on AWL supporters at the Marxism '93 "week of discussion and debate".

Jason Bonning and Mark Sandell were both assaulted. Bonning was battered repeatedly against a wall by leading SWPer and Anti-Nazi League National Organiser Rahul Patel. The issue is being taken up with Patel by many ANL sponsors, including ANL founder Ernie Roberts. Roberts told *Socialist Organiser* that violence inside the labour

movement must not be tolerated. The Broad Left of the civil service union NUCPS has backed the call for an inquiry and is writing to left organisations and newspapers to underline a commitment to rational debate rather than violence.

The leadership of the SWP have ignored a letter of protest sent by AWL.

Mark Sandell, talked about it to Tony Cliff, prophet and caliph of the SWP, on the telephone. Excerpts:

(3 August 1993)

Cliff: Hello.

Sandell: I am ringing up about a letter I wrote to you. At Marxism '93 I was knocked to the floor and kicked — did you receive the letter?

Cliff: No! I never got a letter from you. What's your name?

Sandell: My name is Mark Sandell.

Cliff: I am sorry, I never got any letter.

Sandell: Well it was outside the final rally at Marxism. I was having a row with some members of the SWP when I was knocked to the floor and kicked in the back five times by several of your members, including Yunis and Ian Mitchell from Newcastle... there must have been some sort of discussion at your Central Committee about it.

Cliff: I've never heard of it!

Sandell: You've not heard of it at all?

Cliff: I knew that *Socialist Organiser* found a real exciting

job not to care about Timex, not to care about any activity but like little parasites coming to meetings with leaflets. I never even read the leaflets, and I don't believe in bloody physical fights. I don't believe it happens, and that's all. I didn't know about you, I heard about Rahul Patel — I know Rahul you know.

Sandell: This was another incident, mine occurred on Friday when I was petitioning about the incident with Rahul. I think that sort of violence isn't acceptable.

Cliff: Of course it's not acceptable. If it happens it isn't acceptable — but I don't believe it, full stop. I know Yunis, he's not a nasty piece of work and Ian is not a nasty piece of work. It cannot be said to me that five people

attacked one person. It's stupid.

Sandell: Why not have some sort of investigation, why not agree to a labour movement...

Cliff: Why don't you...

Sandell:... investigation.

Cliff:... care about ...er... what happened in Timex. Why don't you...

Sandell: I do!

Cliff: ... do anything ... you are bug... you're doing absolute bugger all, you are a little flea... little flea. Because one of you came to my meeting in Chalk Farm, two of them actually came, and I said to them — you are little parasites, what are you doing here — why do you care about that, why don't you care about, God knows what, about other much more important things...

Sandell: Because...

Cliff: You are little parasites. Cliff then hung up.

This edifying dialogue is in its own way the SWP's portrait in spluttering miniature. Cliff believes himself to be infallible. Investigation is not necessary: he knows. That's enough. It is the same with political questions. And where reason fails, ladle on the abuse — SO does not care about Timex! His questioner, Mark Sandell, who was knocked down and kicked by a group of SWPers — why he is just a flea...

Support the Campaign Against Violence in the Labour Movement. Send a s.a.e. for the broadsheet to PO Box 823, London, SE15 4NA.

Maastricht is dead

By Colin Foster

THE MAASTRICHT project of a single Euro-money is dead. It was already a lame duck after Britain and Italy dropped out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism in September 1991, the latest crisis has made it a thoroughly dead duck.

The Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), set up in 1979, was supposed to draw the different currencies more and more into line with each other. After the European Community's decision on 1 August to loosen it drastically, it now has very little grip or meaning.

The left should draw conclusions. Illusions that the drive for

a united Europe is powerful enough to rescue us from the horrors of British Toryism should be rejected; so should tilting at windmills. Campaigns against the dead duck of the Maastricht Treaty are not the way to defend public services and welfare.

Frontiers should be brought down in Europe. Europe should be integrated. This crisis shows that the bosses, with their rival drives for profit, cannot integrate Europe, or at best can do it only slowly, falteringly, wastefully, and at great cost.

We need a united European working-class movement, fighting on a programme of social levelling-up across the continent.

Free the M25 Three!

THE COURT of Appeal has dashed the hopes for freedom of the M25 Three. Lord Justice Watkins' judgement is a sick joke. One of the most important issues, the black/white issue, is not even mentioned.

Margaret Napier, one of the robbery victims described the M25 gang as two white and one black: the M25 Three, Rowe, Davis and Johnson, are all black.

Shattered by the racism of the Appeal Court, Raphael Rowe shouted from the dock as he was dragged away "No, we're innocent! Didn't you listen to the witnesses? The men were white and had blond hair and blue eyes. We are black."

Joanne Rowe has told us that the campaign is now preparing itself for the long haul, for a House of Lords and European Court case. This will take years.

Contact the campaign at 75 Scylla Road, Peckham Rye, London SE15.

Write to the Three:
Raphael Rowe, MP3660, HM Prison Gartree, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7RP;
Michael Davis, MP3661, HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs, DuCane Road, Shepherd's Bush, London SW12; Randolph Johnson, MP3903, HM Prison Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcester, WR11 5TZ.



The Muslim-led Bosnian government has had to bow to established facts and agree to Bosnia being partitioned into Serb, Croat, and "Bosnian" states. Even this victory for Serbia and Croatia's land-grabbing will not, however, be the end of the massacres. Each faction will fight to get the "best" partition for themselves. The Western powers, having blundered and bungled all along until they ended up brokering the dissection of Bosnia, now talk about bombing the Serb forces threatening Sarajevo. Only unity of workers from all the different nationalities of ex-Yugoslavia, on a programme of consistent democracy, offers a way out.

Link tops Labour agenda

The Tories' defeat in the Christchurch by-election shows that the Government is widely hated and despised. Yet Labour still stands at only 41% in the opinion polls. The Labour leadership's grey men in suits offer no credible alternative. Labour's ranks want something better, as Chris Reynolds finds on looking at the resolution book for this year's Labour conference.

Labour Party. Many oppose the "trigger mechanism" which Labour's leaders want.

The most important resolutions in this section of the agenda are no.371, from the TGWU, saying that "the voice of trade unionists in affiliated trade unions should continue to be heard... in all stages of the selection of parliamentary candidates", and no.401, from the building workers' union UCATT, specifically rejecting the "trigger mechanism".

The most dangerous are nos.408 and 409, from NUPE and the GMB, with the unworkable proposal for a register of all levy-paying trade unionists to be used for postal ballots.

The resolution-book shows clearly that the Labour and trade union rank and file wants to keep Labour's union link and its collective, representative, federal democracy at all levels.

The bedrock issue of trade union rights appears under the discreet agenda heading, "Rights At Work". Two resolutions here call for a Workers' Charter ensuring the right to strike, to picket, and to take solidarity action, and many others condemn Tory anti-union policies.

The campaign to defend "First Past The Post" has got only two resolutions into the section on Electoral Reform, while nine resolutions advocate reform in one way or another.

The section on Youth Organisation, though small (five resolutions), may be very important for the future: Labour's prospects are dim unless it can attract and organise youth. Three resolutions are versions of a proposal backed by *Socialist Organiser*, to enable Constituency Labour Parties to set up active youth sections with a higher age limit, and the two others are on similar lines.

The closing date for amendments to the resolutions is Friday 13 August.

Danger in Ireland

By Steven Holt

The Tories are generally not keen on local democracy. Still, it seems that they might make an exception of Northern Ireland. The Ulster Unionists helped vote through the Maastricht Treaty. In return, they want more "local democracy" in Northern Ireland. For them that means more Protestant rule. Without a general settlement any increase in such "democracy" will stoke the fires of intercommunal strife and bloodshed.

Treated to death

By Janine Booth

On 18 August, the inquest will be held into the death of a psychiatric patient in York in July last year.

Munir Yusef Mojothi was given an injection whilst in Bootham Park psychiatric unit. Very soon afterwards, he was transferred to the Westdale ward of Clifton Hospital where he was given a second injection, as a result of which he died.

The death was investigated by CID, who, believing there were grounds for possible criminal prosecution, passed the case

onto the Director of Public Prosecutions. The DPP let the incident drop.

On average, one person a week is killed during psychiatric 'treatment'.

A disproportionate number of those killed are black. Black psychiatric patients are much more likely to be 'treated' with medication and restraint, rather than being allowed to discuss their problems or involved in more progressive therapies. This is the product of a psychiatric establishment that fails to address the needs of ethnic minorities.

Students prepare for battle

By Mark Sandell

WITH THE government preparing to break up student unions and the National Union of Students it is vital that student activists prepare now for the battle to defend our unions.

1. Get your students' union to contact as many students as possible and build links with local trade unions, trades councils and campus trade unions.

Organise some action locally, a picket of the local Tory HQ, a lobby of your local MP's surgery.

Get your union to start organising a campaign as soon as term starts.

2. Make sure your union

books coaches for the MANUS demo on 3 November, and had plans for getting the maximum number of students involved in the campaign.

4. Set up a Save Our Union club or society and ensure it has a prominent place at union events and societies fairs.

5. Contact local trade unions, student unions and school sixth forms offering to talk to their members about the attack on student unions.

6. The Tories have extended the 'consultation period' on their proposals for student unions until the end of November, but NUS's failed policy has shown the Tories will not listen to grovelling. So let's start fighting back instead!

South Africa: death toll spirals:

Workers' movement can undercut Inkatha!

By Tom Rigby

THE DEATH TOLL in South Africa's black townships is rising. Over 200 people have died in the last few days since Inkatha attacked and killed 37 people near Johannesburg on 31 July.

The root of this violence is

Inkatha's drive — coordinated with far-right elements in the security forces — to prevent next April's promised elections. Chief Buthelezi and all the other Bantustan leaders know they face crushing defeat if the polls go ahead.

Instead of pleading with DeK-

lerk for the creation of a joint "peace force", South Africa's independent trade union movement — and in the first place COSATU, the giant federation — should organise disciplined non-tribal workers' defence guards in the townships.

Workers' self-defence should

then be linked to a political campaign to win the support of those Zulu workers who still back Inkatha. This should involve the liberation movement making it clear that if they want to, Zulu areas could have federal rights within a unified, democratic South Africa.

Israel out of Lebanon!

ISRAEL'S SHELLING of southern Lebanon has stopped, after seven days of bombardment. This was the Jewish state's version of the 1992 US-UN war from the air against Iraq.

The Israelis act from a position of absolute technical superiority. They rain death and destruction out of the air, or from a great distance at little or no risk to their armed forces. They act with a sovereign indifference to the human cost of what they do found only in gods, generals and heart-numbed chauvinists.

Here they have acted like power-mad maniacs out of control.

The Israeli leaders themselves have said that they wanted to flood Beirut, Lebanon's capital, with refugees. A quarter of a million have fled for their lives out of southern Lebanon, so in that they have succeeded. Why do they use such tactics?

Israel's leaders think they can compel Syria and Lebanon to suppress the Iran-backed Hezbollah, the organisation of blood-crazed Muslim bigots who wage war on unarmed Jewish civilians and guerrilla war on Israel's borders and inside the Israeli-occupied ter-

ritories.

There are signs that Israel may be successful here too. Despite the standard Arab rhetoric about Arab brotherhood and Muslim solidarity, it is Arab states — Jordan and Syria — which have perpetrated the great modern slaughters of Palestinians. Israel wants them to do the same sort of thing again.

Hezbollah reject any talk of Palestinian Arab — or any other Arab — peace with Israel. Nothing but Israel's extirpation will satisfy them either as Arabs or Muslims. Living in a mediaeval-minded world of religious obsession they deal in Jihad — Holy War — not in rational politics.

Israel's rulers probably see the growth likely for Hezbollah as a result of this savage blitz, as a plus for them. The more dominant in the Arab camp grow the crazed religious bigots — with their rejection of anything but the complete destruction of Israel — the less pressure for a comprehensive settlement will the Israelis feel.

They know very well that one reason the present situation has dragged on for so long a time is that for decades the

PLO's programme made provision for nothing except the destruction of Israel and its replacement by an Arab secular state (in which conquered Jews would, so they were solemnly promised, enjoy religious freedom).

THEY KNOW THAT the PLO's belated acceptance of a two-state solution — a Palestinian-Arab state alongside Israel — has massively increased the pressure on them to get out of the West Bank, which they have occupied since the Six Day War of 1967.

Paradoxically, this action may in part be intended by the Israeli government — whose leaders say they are committed to the "peace process" — as a means of covering their backs from the ultra-chauvinist Israeli right: they may see the "tough" image this action will give them as a help in reaching an ultimate peace with the surrounding states — a peace involving withdrawal from the West Bank. Such a withdrawal would cause uproar in Israel, whatever the details.

Amidst the widespread bourgeois condemnation — and it is very widespread — socialists have to keep the basics in



The human cost of Israel's actions

mind. The Palestinian Arabs have a right to a state of their own; Israel has a right to exist; the general political-historical framework in which awful and indefensible things like the blitz on Lebanon happen is set not only by Israel but also by

the unremitting hostility of the surrounding Arab world.

The way out of this situation is Arab recognition of Israel, Israeli withdrawal to the pre-'67 borders, and the setting up of an independent Palestinian Arab state alongside Israel.

Scrap these racist laws!

From front page

British immigration laws kill! That is the first lesson the labour movement needs to learn from this monstrous affair.

Britain's immigration laws kill because they dehumanise black immigrants. It is only one short, brutal step from the British Parliament's racist immigration laws to last week's action by the large, state-licensed gang of brutalised men who descended on Joy Gardner and her five year old son, trussed the woman like a beast being readied for market, rammed the gag in her mouth to stop their victim's verbal protests, and reduced her to a comatose state from which she would never emerge.

All that was done legally. Things like it are done routinely. Gagging those who make a fuss while being deported is, it seems, now commonplace. If they had not taken it "too far" and killed her, no-one would have known about it — nor care about it now.

In 1990 Joy applied to the Home

Office for permission to stay in Britain, where her family have lived for over 30 years. The Home Office response was to start proceedings to deport her and her five year old son.

This child was born in Britain but he faced expulsion together with his mother. Why? Because he is black!

They killed this woman because she got angry and maybe abusive at being hunted down for expulsion as if she and her child — her British-born child — were not human beings at all, but vermin to be cleared out, or livestock the farmer did not want.

That does not happen every day, but the brutal hounding of decent black working people which led to it goes on all the time.

British immigration controls have just been tightened up. All across Europe, just as in Britain, the walls against foreigners and immigrants are being raised higher and higher. The razor wire is being woven denser and sharper, and made as deadly as possible.

When politicians denounce immigrants — meaning black immigrants, people like Joy Gardner and her son — they point the finger at all black people in Britain.

When they denounce black "immigrants" everyone knows they also mean British black people.

When they pass immigration laws such as the Asylum Bill they are making racist laws which whip up racism.

When they resort to savagery, like that unleashed against Joy Gardner and her son, to throw two of them out, then they set the tone and the example for the unlicensed thugs who attack and sometimes kill black people on our streets.

All the hype against immigration has nothing to do with the real levels of immigration into Britain: it has to do with race.

Immigration laws are inevitably and inescapably racist laws!

They should all be scrapped. They will not be scrapped by "mainstream" politicians.

Now with the rise of racism and fascism across Europe — think of

the rise of the neo-Nazis and the savage eruption of racism in Germany — political leaders of the capitalist mainstream are being pulled deeper and deeper into the bloodstained mud of outright racist ideas. Shame is the first casualty.

John Major makes shameless racist statements about the need to keep immigrants out of the new Europe. The German Social Democrats have voted to bar asylum seekers from Germany — in direct response to the neo-Nazis' murder campaign against refugees.

This will only fuel the sulphurous fires of racism and help the new Nazis burgeon and grow.

The labour movement must stand up to the racists and make it clear that it is the bosses who are our enemy, not immigrants. Their capitalist system is falling to bits around us. Our only defence is working class unity across all countries and colours.

The Labour Party should take a stand against immigration laws. But instead they offer the Tories their support to pass racist legisla-

tion like the Asylum Bill! Shame is the first casualty...

The labour movement must tell the British state: stop sending your thugs in uniform to brutalise people like Joy Gardner. Stop hunting down black people! Stop deporting them. Repeal the racist immigration laws!

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

Karl Marx

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

Latest date for reports: Monday

Editor: John O'Mahony

Sales Organiser: Jill Mountford

Published by: WL Publications Ltd,

PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Printed by Eastway Offset (TU),

London E9

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office

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

LETTERS

Mouthing and militancy

SOCIALISTS ARE often asked why we bother so much with the political differences on the left. The short answer is that we need to win the class struggle, and to win we must get our ideas straight.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



A local struggle in Islington over the last three months has illustrated that truth for me, in a way that merits a bit more than a brief report.

The round-the-clock workers' occupation at Harvist nursery has now ended: the workers, faced with the threat of the sack, have accepted redeployment, and the nursery will close.

By Martin Thomas

An occupation continues, run by parents, at the other council nursery fighting closure, Springdale.

The occupations started on 5 May. We soon won the support of 13 out of 20 local Labour Party wards, but we lost by just three votes at the meeting of the council's ruling Labour group on 7 June.

We needed wider industrial action to win. We had a good chance. The nursery closures were part of £8 million cuts across education.

Islington branch of the National Union of Teachers is dominated by the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). The SWP were very active in supporting the nursery occupations. Although, predictably, they had opposed the campaign through the Labour Party, and their organiser was delighted when we lost on 7 June (it proved how bad the Labour Party was!), they would surely support industrial action.

They were talking very militant, and the NUT had a 72% ballot majority to strike against the cuts.

Then, through technical adjustments and before any action, the council drastically reduced the number of compulsory redundancies involved in the cuts. The NUT claimed victory. It called a token one-day strike on 17 June and left it at that. The cuts continue.

The one-day strike was, for the SWP's militant image, what the family photo on a leaflet is for the caring, reliable image of the average cold-hearted, double-crossing bourgeois politician.

We appealed to NUT branch official and leading SWPer Shaun Doherty to support the nurseries. We proposed (it needed proposing!) that they meet with Islington NALGO for a concerted campaign against the education cuts. We invited them to our campaign committee. We put out a leaflet on 17 June. No response!

The national leadership of the nursery workers' own union, NALGO (Unison A), had condemned the occupations as illegal. NALGO conference (on 18 June) backed the occupations, but even then the NALGO/Unison leaders delayed for a month before issuing any strike pay.

The Islington branch supported the occupations, but wider action there was difficult because the branch had only recently ended a long campaign over compulsory redundancies.

The branch leadership (*Outlook* supporters) were supportive, but (I think) sluggish. The SWP, with dozens of members in the branch, might have been able to make a difference. They did nothing much but denounce the branch leadership - and then call for a half-day branch strike on 22 July.

This call allowed the SWP to appear militant, but for the campaign it served only as a show of weakness.

There was never any chance that the council meeting on 22 July would reverse the cuts, and no follow-up was proposed to the half-day action. The branch meeting on the strike call was grossly inquorate; and, realistically, there would have been a poor turnout anyway.

That was the background to the Harvist workers' enforced decision to end their courageous stand.

I argued for the campaign to get the best deal we could before Harvist had to retreat.

My proposal fell because the Springdale nursery parents all voted to fight to the end for full victory or nothing. I understand and respect their view, and they should continue to get full support. What I understand only too well, but do not respect at all, is the SWP's support for the Springdale parents' view.

Never in the last three months has the SWP proposed any strategy for winning the nursery campaign. Their organiser explained it to me: they have never thought the campaign could win anyway, and their purpose in getting involved is to recruit rather than to win.

They offered no argument about how the Springdale campaign can win more as it is now, without any link to trade union action, than it could in the remaining days of the Harvist occupation. Yet - for the sake of the image - they cheered on militancy.

The SWP's combination is typical: cynical concern for their "image" above the real struggle; mouthy militancy when they run no risk of being called to account; utter feebleness when real action is possible and they are put on the spot; nothing consistent, nothing thought through. Imagine what it would mean in a big workers' struggle - let alone a revolution - if the SWP were in a position to influence it.

No SWPer active round the nurseries whom I have spoken to has defended the NUT branch leadership's action. Disconcertingly, none of them had any notion that they, as ordinary SWP members, might have any control over Shaun Doherty and the NUT branch officials. Not only is the SWP uninterested in strategies to win the class struggle, it has no democratic channels through which SWP members who are interested in winning can budge the "party" hierarchy.

That is why we have to bother with the differences on the left, and why we have to build an organisation with policies to win.

Donations and messages of support to: Springdale UFEC, 15A Springdale Rd, London N16; phone 071-923 0263.

No gay genes in prison overalls

LETTER

LES HEARN'S column on homosexuality and genes was as suspect as the unscientific techniques involved in the research itself. Because what is defined as a homosexual, a sodomite or gay man has changed throughout history, it is unlikely that all of us who have sex with men will have a common gene or group of genes. The question is one for sociology not the laboratory.

We know by our own experiences that environment is crucial. Prisoners, single-sex school children and members of religious orders have a high level of homosexual activity and much of this is carried out by people who do not lead gay lifestyles before they are put in these environments, or afterwards, unless they return to specific single-sex environments.

There is nothing in the suggestion that homosexuality runs in some families to suggest that it is to do

with genes. It is far more likely to be connected to the environment shared and the gender models followed.

Some gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals consider themselves born 'that way'. I think this is unlikely because the common thread is gender identity which is a social construct, not sex or sexuality. The scientists are approaching the issue from the bigoted premise that straight is normal, gay abnormal. But humans are not natural beings. We are all social constructs, especially in issues of gender.

Any 'facts' that the recent research might throw up will be reactionary and quite simply, bad science. Their definitions of homosexuality are too literal; labels are put on individuals, not on behaviour.

Much of their findings would be proved false just by taking a more realistic view of what kinds of people have gay sex and for what reasons. A minority of men who have sex with men do it for purely financial reasons, and a large



Lesbians and gay men: not just defined by genes

amount of men having sex with men do not identify themselves as gay.

It is not unlikely that genetic tests could show which male children will be feminine and which female children masculine, but these attributes in themselves do not determine sexuality: many heterosexuals fit into such categories. Long live chicks with dicks!

Gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and all socialists should be arguing against this research on the grounds of its inevitable intellectual flaws and because it will be used by the right as a political tool in the area of gender politics to attack gay men and panic homophobic parents.

Christopher Barnes
Newcastle

Republicans do not call for an irresponsible troop withdrawal

FORUM

By Vincent Wood

THERE ARE SOME comments and assertions that John O'Mahony made that need to be challenged. He says that "the Provisional IRA's targets are mainly Protestant Irish people who play some role in the state". He also says that the IRA made war on the Protestants. This simply is not true.

A factor of British tactics has been the "Ulsterisation" of the war, whereby much wider usage of those parts of the British security machine called the RUC and RIR (UDR) has inevitably led to greater

confrontation between Irish men and women whilst the British Army remain largely garrisoned.

This is a deliberate policy to pit the Irish, of both traditions, against each other. The vast majority of RUC and RIR members are Protestant, but it is their role as British security personnel and not as Protestants which brings them into conflict with Republicans.

John O'Mahony's flippanant dismissal of Mitchell McLaughlin's historical account of Orange violence cannot go unchallenged. That somehow a "muted" Orange violence is acceptable. To who, Mr O'Mahony? Certainly not to working class nationalists who had to accept the status quo or face the very real threat of that violence.

The Orange violence of the late '60s certainly wasn't muted and just what do you expect the nationalist population to do? Have they no right to defend themselves, let alone dare challenge the underlying problem which was then and remains now, the British military and economic interference in Ireland?

Why is Catholic and Protestant discussion on a common Ireland after withdrawal "sheer fantasy"? All up to date coverage suggests that the Republican movement is not calling for an irresponsible withdrawal. There need only be an acceptance that the Irish people, as a whole, have the right to self-determination. The mechanics of British withdrawal must include continuous dialogue at

every level and provisions will have to be made to demilitarise the situation. The Republican movement is increasingly taking a more flexible approach in terms of a timetable for withdrawal and accepts that interim arrangements may have to be put in place.

Talking up the bloodbath scenario with references to the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia does not progress the debate. Clearly, everybody should aspire to the active de-militarisation of the conflict. There is a debate within the Republican movement vis-à-vis the armed struggle and it must be acknowledged that the nationalist, Republican people of the Six Counties, perhaps more than most, want to see a lasting peace.

BEHIND THE NEWS

How the left let the real villains off the hook

The tragedy of Burnsall

In the last edition of *Socialist Organiser* we attempted to present a rational analysis of the ending of the Burnsall strike, a year-long battle of mainly black workers in Birmingham over the issues of health and safety, slave wages and union recognition.

We argued that it was *wrong* for the GMB union regional officials to call off the strike without putting the issue to a vote. We also said that if the majority of workers wanted to continue the fight they deserve unconditional support, but we attempted to present *all* the relevant facts about the affair. In particular, we based a lot of what we had to say on the account of one of the black strikers, David Brown, who told us: "Yes, it was right to finish when we did. We'd fought for over a year and the union had tried everything possible to win. Everyone at the (30 June) meeting agreed that there was no point in continuing the strike... As long as my name is David Brown I will deny that the strikers were threatened or blackmailed by the union. The support groups just wanted to attack Jo and Danny (union officials) and horrible lies are being told now."

"I'm proud of our fight but these people are determined to make it look dirty now. What encouragement is that to other workers? I'm disgusted".

Tom Rigby takes up the story.

RECENTLY attended a meeting of the London Burnsall Strikers Support Group. By the time the meeting was finished I was convinced that everything Jim Denham said in *SO569* about the ending of the strike was not only accurate but, if anything, understated.

The leadership of the London Burnsall Support Group are behaving in a way that is objectively and inescapably anti-trade union. Not anti-bureaucrat, anti-trade union!

Asian bourgeois press denounce union

THE CLEARST example of this is the coverage of the dispute in *Eastern Eye*: "Britain's best Asian paper" (13 July 1993) which was based on a

press release produced by the London group. The message of this coverage falls only just short of calling on Asian workers to leave the "white" "racist" trade unions.

Under the front page lead headline "Dumped", Iqbal Nandra makes the bizarre allegation that the GMB had threatened to have the strikers arrested:

"Nineteen women strikers who have been out for over a year in protest over appalling working conditions have been intimidated; blackmailed and threatened with arrest — by their own union."

On page 6 of the same edition, a cartoon presents the image of three Asian women facing the ringmaster whip at the GMB Circus while one white man in a suit tells another

The stock criticism of the GMB officials' handling of the Burnsall dispute is that they did not fight for a workers' boycott of Burnsall products because this was against the law.

If you look at this leaflet it sails very close to the legal wind in suggesting such action, without actually calling for it.

Perhaps Quigley and Parry should have stuck in some "illegal" wordings just to show how r-r-r-revolutionary they are? After all, they could have done so in the safe knowledge that their "superiors" in the GMB would never have allowed such a leaflet to be published. They could then denounce the GMB top brass for refusing to adopt the view that "defying the law" is a matter not of judgement and assessment but of principle.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Make sure your management know the full facts: About who they are doing business with What you think about it
2. Ask your shop steward to put the facts of the Burnsall strike to your management.
3. Invite the strikers and their Union Organisers to address a meeting at your factory.
4. Urge your management to meet a delegation from the Burnsall strike.
5. Send regular delegations to join the strikers' picket line.
6. Make a donation to the Strike Fund.

Strike since 15 1992

"I'm bored, get me a new act".

The net effect of this kind of newspaper coverage is to frighten away from the trade unions those Asian workers who read it. But then perhaps that's quite in the interest of the sweatshop owners who help fund *Eastern Eye* through advertising.

During the public meeting itself, Amrit Wilson — the spokesperson for the London Support Committee — did not devote a single minute of a rambling and overlong speech to the key subject in the dispute: how the strikers could get their union, the GMB, to reinstate the strike as an official dis-

pute.

In fact one white GMB member who *did* have some practical suggestions to make on this point was ignored and implicitly accused of racism by the Support Group's translator.

Support group have no strategy

Ms WILSON also had nothing significant to say about the strategy needed to take the dispute forward. All she did was to use repeatedly the entirely empty and vacuous phrases "new strategies" and "unorthodox tactics" without at any time spelling out what these fine phrases might mean.

YOUR MANAGEMENT DO BUSINESS WITH PEOPLE WHO DID THIS

THIS IS THE BRUTAL FACE OF VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY SCAB WORKERS AT BURNSALL

On Tuesday night, May 25 at 6.30 p.m., workers taken on after strikers had been sacked, came out of the Burnsall factory in Smethwick. Armed with knives, an iron bar and wooden staves, they attacked a lawful un-armed picket line.

In fact, the only *practical* suggestion to come from the London Support Group's leading "theorist" was the bizarre proposal that the GMB should have rented a disused factory next to Burnsall's so that the pickets could site a brazier there. Hardly the key question facing the dispute in the middle of summer! (Especially as the GMB had already procured a heated caravan for the strikers!)

Amrit Wilson's parting shot was to accuse Jo Quigley and Danny Parry of behaviour which amounted to a "racist attack" on the strikers. She then called for the two GMB officials to be "brought to justice one way or another".

The middle class ignoramuses in the audience from *Socialist Worker*, *Socialist Outlook*, *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* and *The Weekly Worker* all took this as good coin. They applauded enthusiastically and added their own tuppence worth by repeating the ridiculous lie that the GMB did nothing to get a workers' boycott of Burnsall (see above).

Supporters of *Socialist Organiser/AWL* were deliberately prevented from speaking by the chair, who told us it was because we had published an article critical of the Support Group. The article was ripped up in our faces.

I went to the meeting prepared to listen to the Group's side of the story and prepared to change

my view. I left feeling depressed and frustrated.

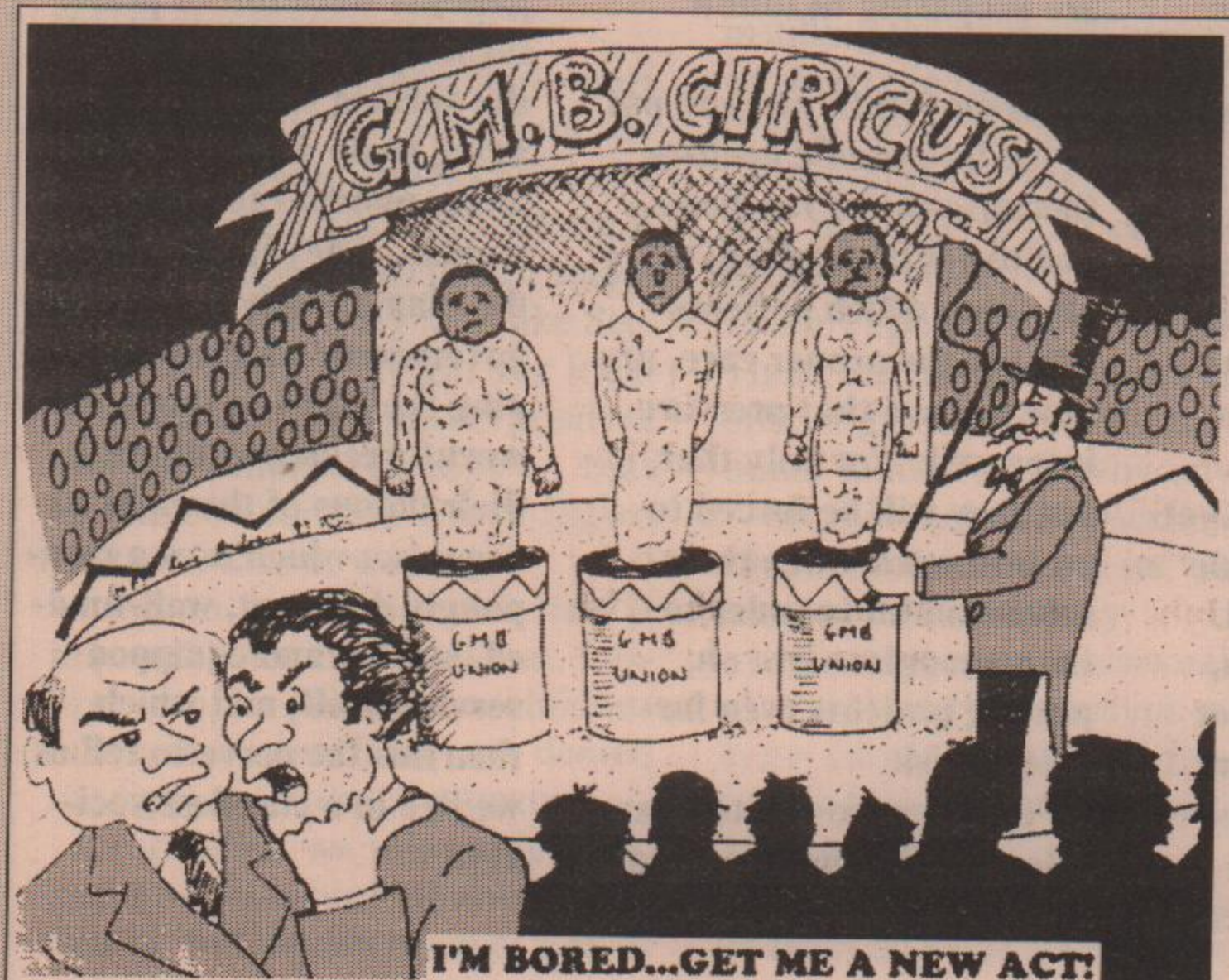
Most of the left have joined Mrs Thatcher's anti-union bandwagon without realising it! They have nothing to offer the working class.

The real lessons SUPER-EXPLOITED workers like those at Burnsall need a campaigning labour movement that has a serious strategy for organising the sweatshops. The Burnsall strike for instance could have been used as a springboard for just such a drive in the West Midlands metal industry. In sweatshop Britain today the existing mass organisations of the working class have to be turned out to reach the two-thirds of the working class who are now outside the unions. This has to be supplemented by a political campaign in the Labour Party to commit the next Labour government to abolition of the anti-union laws and positive legal rights for workers such as the right to join a union, strike, take solidarity action, stop an unsafe job.

These are the valid lessons to draw from the Burnsall strike. It's a tragedy that the GMB's national and regional leadership didn't seize the opportunity presented by the Burnsall's strike to launch just such a campaign, and it's an even bigger tragedy that the vast majority of the left have let the real villains off the hook.

The Asian bourgeois press was delighted to use the London Support Group's material to encourage non-unionism amongst Asian workers.

But that is not all. Unfortunately, over the top denunciation of the unions could also encourage a backlash amongst some white trade unionists.



DUMPED

'First our bosses treated us like animals - now the unions have betrayed us...'



NINETEEN women strikers who have been out for over a year in protest over appalling working conditions have been intimidated, blackmailed and threatened with arrest, by their own union.

The dispute at Burnsall's new plant in Smethwick, Birmingham, came to a bitter end when the General Municipal Bismuth Union (GMB) refused to support the Asian group any longer because it was "racist".

The striking Union has left the women, who have been picketing the factory for over 24 weeks, feeling lost, betrayed and utterly disappointed.

The strikers wanted of the decision as an open press meeting called by GMB officials in Birmingham where the women were told bluntly "We are ending the contract there as nothing you can do about it".

The double-crossing GMB then had down a list of controversial demands to the women:

- None of the strikers would attend a mass picket, held in their homes, to mark one-year of their struggle.
- If they failed to do this they would be blacklisted for the Burnsall Strikers Support Committee.

EXCLUSIVE by IQBAL NANDRA

Under the front page lead headline "Dumped", Iqbal Nandra makes the bizarre allegation that the GMB had threatened to have the strikers arrested:

"Nineteen women strikers who have been out for over a year in protest over appalling working conditions have been intimidated; blackmailed and threatened with arrest — by their own union."

On page 6 of the same edition, a cartoon presents the image of three Asian women facing the ringmaster whip at the GMB Circus while one white man in a suit tells another

"I'm bored, get me a new act".

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POLITICAL PAVES: The Burnsall strikers carried the GMB flag for over a year before being told they were no longer needed.

"These women have made enormous sacrifices to continue their fight on the face of constant police harassment and vicious assaults by strike-breakers."

abused

Despite being rejected by the GMB, one of the Burnsall strikers told *Eastern Eye* that the women felt "betrayed".

WE'VE BEEN SCROGGED

Many would complain of suffering daily spite, severe breathing difficul-

ties and other health problems.

Their supporters are furious with GMB's betrayal and have now signed out and demanded the union's overall handling of the case.

"We have a long list of complaints against their conduct and how through out the dispute they've blatantly ignored the needs of those exploited workers," revealed the Burnsall Strikers Support Committee.

GMB bosses failed to even give the strikers proper legal advice when they were arrested in the picket line.

"We will support the picket line in any way we can," said the spokesman, stressing that "the right is on our side".

EE December '92

From Mao to Mammon

GRAFFITI

CHINA'S Stalinist dictator Mao was a lot of things in his time, some of them monstrous, but never a public symbol of conspicuous consumption. Now the public ethos of China is that of the piggish of capitalists — greed is good! Not for everyone, you understand, only for some. The hundredth anniversary of Mao's birth is being celebrated by a Chinese company, the Jinwan Communications Group, with a limited edition of 100 18-carat gold, diamond-encrusted, Swiss watches. The company took out a full page ad for the watch in the *Liberation Army Daily*. Each watch costs £10,890.



The East is in the red

IN A NEVER-ENDING quest for the truth your intrepid *Socialist Organiser* reporter braved the bitter weather of a Saturday in late July to attend the *Militant Labour Weekend School* at the University of London Students' Union.

Second floor, this must be it — rooms full of young people rapt with interest, talking about making the world a better place and about their superhuman powers. Superhuman powers? Surely some mistake? Oh, *Militant*? They're on the third floor. This is the annual meeting of the Legion of Superheroes. Sorry, my mistake.

Meanwhile, on floor three *Militant Labour* have started without me. Actually they seem to have started without the bulk of their membership. They claim 3,000 members. I wander into the workshop on *Scottish Militant Labour* — 15 people. They seem to be less interested and have fewer ideas about changing the world than the would-be Clark Kents downstairs. Adding the rest of the sessions together, there are fewer than 150 people here. Quite a lot fewer than the Superheroes. They are also older — they mainly seem to be middle-aged men incapable of tucking their shirts in properly.

In the shadows in a corner I glimpse the figure of Peter Taaffe, a Superhero of yesteryear. Just as Superman had his powers destroyed by Kryptonite, Taaffe too has his weakness-

es. Hanging around his neck is a lump of Sectarianite, reducing his powers to a fraction of their former strength. Even the *Militant's* secret weapon, their paper, has been affected by this decline. *Militant* — like *Socialist Organiser*, alas — will be published fortnightly instead of weekly "until early September".

ANYONE flicking through the resolutions to this year's Labour Party Conference cannot help but notice the unusual line of the motion from Stoke Central:

"Conference recognises the right of employers to have fair and independent trade unions"

A typographical error, or a Freudian slip from a Walworth Road functionary?

IF FUEL TAX is the son of poll tax, then prepare yourself for the grandson of poll tax. The Tories deny that they have any plans to bring in VAT on books and newspapers. Isn't it a little strange therefore that Conservative Party Chairman, Norman Fowler, has banned the *Hands off Reading Campaign* stall at Conservative Party Conference? After all, this is an organisation that supports current Conservative policy of zero-rating VAT on reading matter.

BRITISH TELECOM management have told switchboard operators that they cannot give blood in work time this summer. They claim that people have been abusing the system — and that visits to the dentist, optician or doctor will have to be made up by working unpaid overtime.

Precisely why BT bosses want their workers to have the full complement of blood is unknown — but I hear that some BT workers have taken to eating garlic and wearing crucifixes.

FINALLY, A competition. Before the collapse of the ERM, the finance minister of Germany, Theo Waigel, said "We want to, we must, and we will find a solution". Meanwhile international money dealer George Soros said "I don't believe the system will be there on Monday". Which man has more power? Answers to the "You Can't Buck the Money Markets" competition at the usual address. The winner will receive a basket of European currencies (don't worry — it's quite a good basket).

Another bastard conspiracy

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

SO, JOHN Major swears, bears grudges and often feels thoroughly pissed off. I almost started to like him.

One quite widely held theory about the "bastards" tape is that the Tories leaked it themselves, in order to beef up Major's image. The same school of thought had it that the entirely groundless rumours of an affair were put about in a desperate bid to make the PM seem interesting.

Much as I am drawn to this logically sound conspiracy theory, I have been forced to reject it if only because Sir Norman Fowler and his minions at Central Office are plainly too stupid to come up with anything that imaginative.

The "bastards" tape

does, however, reveal a demonstrable conspiracy: the collusion that exists between the government and certain journalists. How was it that ITN's political editor Michael Brunson was able to elicit such frank admissions from Major in a cosy off-the-record chat, but allowed him to lie through his teeth on the air? To ask the question is to answer it. Brunson is one of the chosen few, who enjoys the privileges and favours conferred by the parliamentary lobby system. Under this thoroughly corrupt arrangement, journalists are granted off the record briefings from senior government representatives, on the understanding that everything remains unattributable and that some information will not be used at all. Any journalist who doesn't play ball is frozen out.

Thus, Major refuses to be interviewed by BBC *Newsnight's* Jeremy Paxman (noted for not taking any bull from politicians) but is only too happy to go on air with nice Robin Oakley, the BBC's political editor.

The lobby system, and the network of informal, cosy relationships surrounding it, reached its

nadir in the 1980s when Thatcher's Press Secretary, Bernard Ingham, virtually dictated the editorial line of papers like the *Mail*, *Express* and *Sun*. In those days the broadcast news services were the main source of independent, un-nobbled information and analysis — which is precisely why Thatcher targeted them for attack.

Now the boot seems to be on the other foot. The Tory press, for its own reasons, has fallen out of love with Major and refuses to toe the line. But with people like Brunson and Oakley in charge of the broadcast news, the government can be sure of an easy ride on the airwaves.

THREATENING the wrath of the press can sometimes come in very handy when dealing with uppity members of the lower orders. I myself once got served at one minute past closing time by claiming to be the food and wine correspondent of the Birmingham *Evening Mail* and threatening a bad write-up.

Judith, daughter of *Express* proprietor Baron Stevens of Ludgate, tried something similar last year when she couldn't get ser-

vice at Harrods. "Who the hell is going to serve me?" she bellowed and then threatened the store with bad publicity in her father's newspapers.

A sales assistant was sacked on the spot, but — strangely — the ensuing industrial tribunal case has not been widely reported in the national press.

Now we hear of the case of Lady Foster (wife of architect Sir Norman Foster) and her daughter Mrs India Langmead, who are suing HM Customs and Excise for false imprisonment and "slander by conduct" arising from being marched across the public concourse at Heathrow following their arrest for obstructing a search of their baggage.

Mrs Langmead, who works for the *Mail on Sunday*, admitted that she had lied when she told Customs officers she worked for the *Times*. "I had worked for the *Times* in the past but I was desperate to say something which might just make them behave", she told the High Court. Can this mean that Mrs Langmead considered the *Mail on Sunday's* reputation insufficient to bring the Customs jobsworths to heel?

Performing the impossible

WOMEN'S EYE



By Jean Lane

MY FATHER nearly died not very long ago. He had been rushed into hospital with a stone in his kidney. It was not from this or from the ensuing operation that he was in danger, however, but from the post-operative lack of care.

He had been rushed in by

a friend, and was writhing and vomiting with the pain. He was put on a stretcher in a corridor while a search for a free bed ensued. After several hours he was given a bed and treated.

Just one or two days after his operation the search for a free bed to accommodate someone stretchered in the corridor for several hours recommenced. My Dad was deemed the safest person to send home.

Two days later, I rang him for a chat and to see how he was. He was lying on the floor, clutching the telephone having, half an hour before, rung for an ambulance which hadn't yet arrived. He was in terrible pain and very frightened.

Again he was rushed in, this time with a blood clot on his lung which we were told is common in old people who have undergone surgery if proper after-care

is not given.

Fortunately, my Dad survived the ordeal. Today I read that there is a plan, in a trust hospital in Ayr, to introduce performance-related pay to nursing staff. It will mean payment by cash bonuses for faster patient turn-over. NHS trusts across the country are preparing to follow suit.

Nursing staff, already put in the intolerable position (because of too few beds and too little funding) of choosing which patients will get the proper care, are now to have that pressure increased. Not only that, but they will be forced to go into work when themselves unwell in order to earn enough to live on, putting patients even further at risk.

Performance-related pay allows individual trusts to set their own pay structures

and rates, leading to divisions in the workforce and weakening the union, making sure that they can't fight back against the attacks on their ability to provide good, well-funded, preventative health care.

My Dad said that, despite the conveyor-belt atmosphere in the wards, all the patients were full of praise for and very sympathetic to the nursing staff for managing to do what they did under unbelievable circumstances. They knew where the blame really lay: with a government which is stripping the NHS of funds, its workforce of any dignity, their unions of the right to organise; which uses a completely different, well-funded, staffed and equipped service itself; and which then has the nerve to tell us we live in a classless society.

Immigration raid kills Joy Gardner

Demand justice, fight police racism

THE MURDER OF JOY GARDNER by a gang of police and immigration officials who broke into her home to serve a deportation order is just one example of police racism and violence.

And yet the investigation into the murder of Joy will be carried out by the Police Complaints Authority — staffed by the police.

The Youth For Justice campaign demands:

- An independent and elected police complaints body.
- Elected bodies to control the police with power over operational policy and budgets.

For more information about our campaign, contact: Youth For Justice, c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

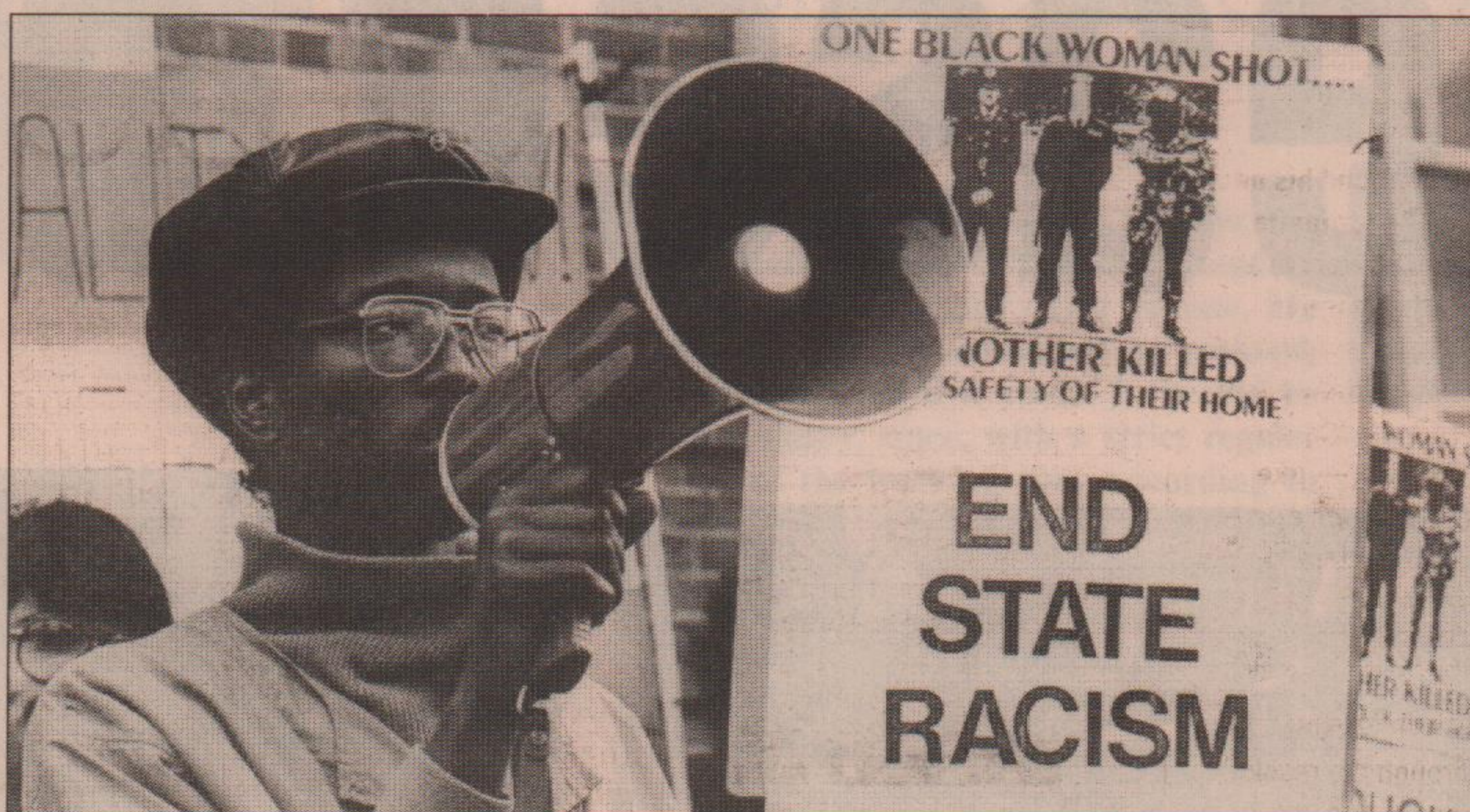


Photo: Lanre Fehinzola

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth. This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967

for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Youth Fightback is... Reactionary git of the week

ICE CUBE, WHO LIKES TO be known as "Bitch Killer", is our reactionary git of the week.

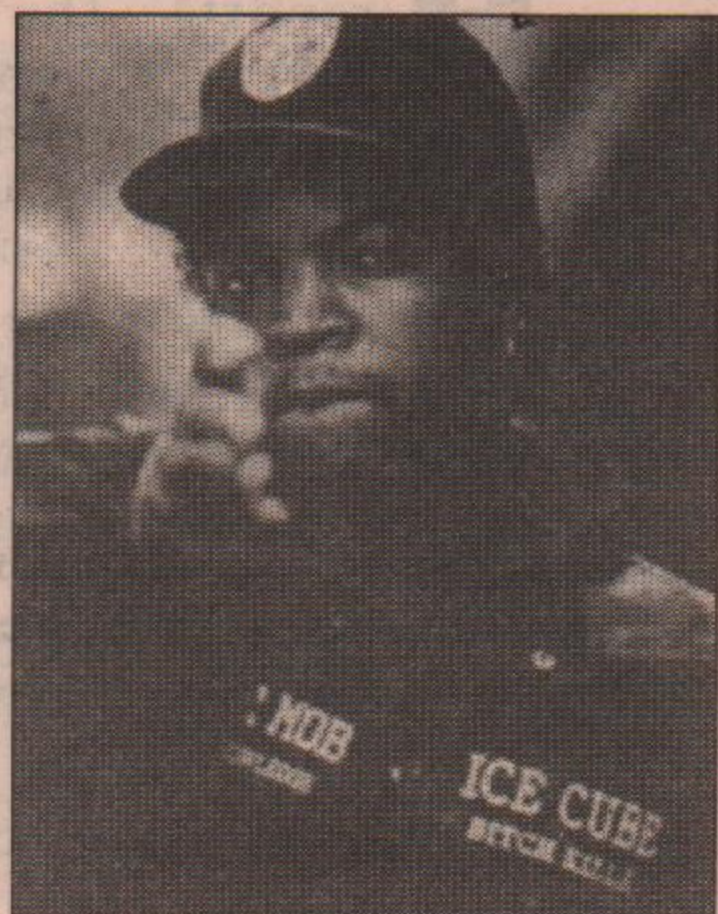
His raps include such gems as "A Bitch is a Bitch". Bitch appears to be Ice Cube's favourite word for women.

He told the *Independent* that the kids in his audience were addicted to sex and violence and to attract them away from this he had to use sex and violence.

Now the American Right are calling for bans on Gangsta Rap records. We oppose this censorship, but at the same time we are not letting sexist off the hook just because they are rappers.

As with Gangsta Rappers like House of Pain and 2 Live Crew, misogyny reigns. Women are pieces of sexual meat for these boys.

There are even worse raps from bands like Geto Boys, but Ice Cube is at the top of the pile in rap and gets rich on sexism.



Ice Cube

Labour Party: youth are not sheep

By Karen

IAN J HAWORTH, THE Labour Party's National Youth and Student Officer, has written me a letter, but unfortunately it shows no understanding of how to win youth to Labour.

Ian invites young people to "Questions with Neil" — yes, Neil Kinnock, the leader who, in the course of his attack on the Labour left, shut down the Labour Party Young Socialists' structures and left the youth section of the party to die.

Even the Labour leaders admit that only 5 per cent of the Party membership are under 25 years old, whilst 34 per cent are over 56 years old. This is the fruit of Neil Kinnock's period as leader of the Labour Party.

The LPYS was undemocratic and sluggish, but Neil Kinnock's LPYS is close to being dead. Socialist youth having a "question and answer session" with No Guts "Neil" is like vegetarians interviewing a butcher about vegetarianism.

Ian sends a questionnaire for youth — dominated by questions about 'computers in elections', 'telephone canvassing' and 'taking numbers at polling stations'. Clearly Ian knows what will attract youth to Labour!

Labour's leaders have learnt nothing from their failure to attract young members.

Now they plan to stamp out any hope of a democratic Labour youth movement by replacing the LPYS with "Young Labour Groups". Local Labour Party

bureaucrats will have the power to shut them down at will. To curb the left they stifle all life. Thus they make Labour's youth movement safe for the right wing!

Ian J Haworth says he wants to improve Labour's service to young members. Well, Ian, carry on like this and soon you will be able to invite the whole youth membership round to your place for tea! Labour's leaders can either set up a properly funded democratic youth structure — such a youth movement will certainly be to the left of the Party leadership. Or they can treat Labour's thinning youth membership like sheep, and see youth vanish almost completely from the Party.

We will continue to fight for a democratic youth movement. If

he wants to win youth to Labour, Ian Haworth should do so too.

Land of the Free?

There's a country to the west that claims to be the "Land of the Free". For some it's not free, look at its history.

One of the greatest capitalist hypocrisies was the murder of millions of people in tribes like the Apache.

Most tribespeople were not killed face to face. They were starved, their food source, the Buffalo, wiped from the place.

What was left of the tribes were moved to lands that were rough. There the tribespeople lived a life that was tough.

The Capitalist came, speaking more words of hypocrisy. "Although you tribespeople own the land, any gold on it belongs to me. You tribes may try to fight it with legal might? You haven't a chance: I own the mineral rights!"

Recently, four policemen beat a man in the Land of the Free. Even with positive proof, they were not found guilty. It seems that justice is the privilege of some. For ordinary people, justice will not come.

So if you go to the "Land of the Free", keep an eye on those in authority. Watch what they do, and watch what they say. Especially those who say, "Have a nice day."

Chris Messam, Brixton

Gay genes and sex bigots

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

IN THE VAST MEDIA coverage of the so-called gay gene, one vital question has not been discussed. While debate rages about what it is that determines that some people are lesbian or gay and others "straight", the other vital question has been ignored: what makes some people so strongly prejudiced against lesbian, gay and bisexual people? Yet, for socialists, this is by far the most important issue.

Lesbians, gays and bisexuals face systematic prejudice and, frequently, violent attacks. The law enshrines prejudice by making it illegal for homosexual men under 21 to have sex. Tory laws like Section 28 make it illegal for local authorities to promote positive images of homosexuality — that is, to teach children not to regard gays as freaks or worse.

Lesbian or gay couples find it impossible to adopt children. Lesbian couples often have children taken into care. They are denied the right to fertility treatment.

As socialists we support lesbian, gay and bisexual liberation — that is, full equality: equal age of

consent for all, and equal rights in every sphere of life. Socialists fight for the most thoroughgoing range of human freedoms. So long as a person's actions do not harm or exploit others, we support their right to do what they like with others who agree to it. Not so with the bosses!

The capitalist ruling class, as a tiny minority, stays in power in most circumstances not by force but by dominating the ideas of those they exploit, and of all society. The media, state education and the family are the arenas for instilling the values of our capitalist society in the citizen. The family also saves the bosses a fortune by bringing up the next generation of workers and catering for people's needs privately, and not as an expensive social service. These are the real reasons for the official glorification of "the traditional family", and why anything — in this case, homosexuality — which threatens it and its "values" is treated with hostility.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people can not fit into their stereotype family and so they are treated as an enemy of their "moral order".

This "moral order" is taught to us from day one of our lives. We

are told that only one kind of sexuality is right. From the youngest age we are taught to feel guilty about many of our most natural feelings. For many people, the ingrained social prejudice against the "sin" of homosexuality is brought to a vicious intensity by the fear that they too might be attracted to someone of the same sex.

As fighters for freedom, socialists must be at the forefront of fighting for sexual liberation. The fear and hatred created by the moral norms of capitalism weaken our class by dividing us.

No one can tell exactly what sexuality will be like in a socialist society, but here and now we can fight for tolerance and freedom against bigotry. We can look to the good example of the 1984-85 miners' strike when lesbians and gays supported the strike and won miners — who started out prejudiced — to supporting their struggle for liberation. This relationship was symbolised in 1985 when the NUM banner headed the lesbian and gay pride national demonstration.

Gay gene or no gay gene, people have the right to sexual freedom. The bigots are the enemy of our class and human liberation.

Diseased by ine



A large and growing minority in Britain does not even have the basics of life. Photo: Nigel Clapp

By Colin Foster

“**A**T A SECONDARY school in Birmingham”, reports the Labour Party’s ‘Commission on Social Justice’, “we asked sixth form students whether they thought Britain was a fair society.

“Only one thought it was. When we asked them what they thought was unfair about Britain, *class* was the first thing they mentioned. Those students were right”.

The first report of the Commission, published recently, lists damning facts.

The most wealthy five per cent of the population own 37 per cent of all

wealth. The top 10% own 50% of all wealth. The bottom 50% own just 8%.

Even those figures understate the reality. The wealth owned by anyone outside the top 10% will be little more than the house they live in. The top 5% own and control almost all the *wealth that brings power* — company shares, privately-owned businesses, large cash fortunes.

In short, they own and control *the means of production*. And all the rest of us have to *sell our labour-power* to them in order to live.

That fundamental inequality shapes many inequalities and injustices not covered in the ‘Commission’ report — long, exhausting, soul-sapping, servile



The richest 10% have become over 50% better off, while the average real income of the po

hours of work by the many in order to feed the wealth of the few.

It also shapes the inequality of *income*. In 1991 the top 20% got about 43% of total income (after taxes and benefits), and the bottom 20% got only 6%.

Both inequality of wealth and inequality of income have increased under the Tories. Between 1979 and 1990-1, the average real income (after housing costs) of the poorest tenth of the population *fell* by 14%, while the richest tenth became over 50% better off.

Of the £31 billion in tax cuts between 1979 and 1992, £15.2 billion went to the 10% with top incomes. The poor and the averagely-off now pay *more* in tax (including VAT and other indirect taxes) than in 1979.

The problem runs deeper than wage-workers having less cash than company directors. Today around 40 to 50% of workers are frightened of losing their job. Three million are officially unemployed, and the real figure is over four million. The Commission reports that two million men of working age are now “economically inactive” *in addition* to the 1.7 million officially unemployed.

As the bosses try to squeeze more labour out of fewer workers, insecurity hits almost every working-class household.

Every household that is just managing to get by is at risk of being thrown over the edge by job cuts — thrown into the great and increasing pool of those who cannot even “get by”.

In 1979, 7.74 million people lived on or below the level of Supplementary

Benefit/Income Support. In 1989, 11.33 million were on or below that minimum level.

A survey in 1991 found that the average couple with one child on income support spent £26 a week on food, when the estimated *minimum cost* of a healthy diet was £33.

Water disconnections have risen dramatically since privatisation in England and Wales (they are illegal in Scotland) — and the rate of dysentery has risen exactly in line.

About two million people are homeless, according to the housing group *Shelter*: 68,500 homes were repossessed in 1992 because people could not pay their mortgages. Of those who had homes, *seven million households* (in 1991) could not afford to keep their homes warm.

A large and growing minority in Britain does not even have the basics of life — warm housing, adequate food, clean water.

The structure of inequality — with a rich few exploiting a majority who just about “get by”, and throwing a large minority on the scrapheap — affects the whole of life.

Infant mortality is twice as high among the poor (group E on the government’s A-to-E scale) as among the well-off. People in the poor areas of Sheffield and Glasgow live, on average, *eight years* less than those in the well-off areas.

One child in three from semi-skilled and unskilled workers’ families has no garden to play in, but only one child in ten from professional families misses out; the children from poor families are also less likely to have access to a

equality



rest 10% has dropped. Photo: John Harris

safe public play area near their home. Children from unskilled workers' families are *four times* more likely to be killed in road accidents than children from well-off families.

Britain has publicly-funded nursery places for only one-third of three and four year olds. Private nursery places in London cost about £150 a week: which social classes use them?

The school system offers little to many working-class children. Although fee-paying schools take only 7% of students, they score over half the successes at getting three or more A-levels. Meanwhile, in 1991, *one in five* 21 year olds was illiterate.

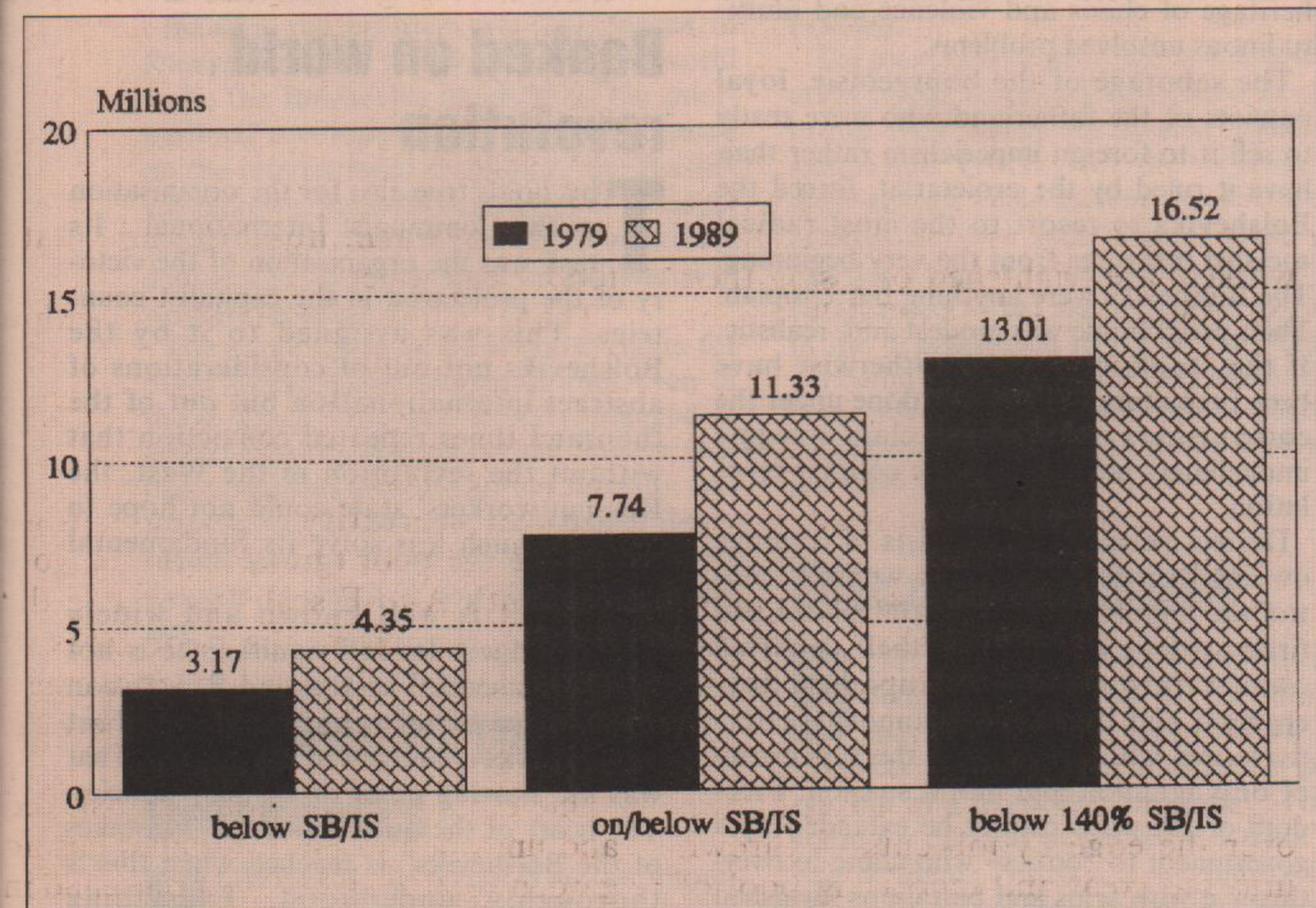
One class, the working class, is confined to a mean, hard, laborious life, with only a small chance of achieving something better through education and training and a much bigger chance of being thrown down below the liveable minimum, into the "underclass". The other class, the wealthy class, has all the advantages of ease, comfort, education, good health care, and security.

The Commission records many of the *symptoms* of class inequality in Britain, but not the root of the disease. Its figures on the inequality of wealth are tucked in almost as a footnote, without any recognition that this inequality shapes and structures all the rest. It proceeds by setting up a philosophical norm of social justice, then listing all the ways in which Britain fails to meet the norm, rather than analysing the basic economic structure.

Because of that, none of its proposals for action measures up to the issues it reports. So far it has proposed only ten general principles for policy. The most radical is full employment; but the Commission offers no idea about how to achieve it.

Another principle suggested is "a widening of access to wealth" — which turns out to mean wider home ownership, regulation of pension funds, and employee share-ownership. None of these small-change schemes will do anything fundamental.

The wealth of an industrial capitalist society like Britain, consisting primarily of machines, buildings, and facilities which have to be created and operated *collectively*, by *collective* labour, should also be owned and controlled *collectively and democratically*. That is the only way to strike at the root of the disease of inequality.



Poverty has increased fast since 1979 — numbers below Income Support level, at that level, and below Income Support plus 40%, have all increased.

Why children should work

EDUCATION FOR BARBARISM

By Colin Waugh

IN 1875 MARX attacked the German Socialist Party (SPD) for demanding the prohibition of child labour. He argued that this could not be realised, and that, even if it could, it "would be reactionary, since, with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety measures... an early combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society". Why did he say this, and is it relevant now?

From early in the industrial revolution here children worked in factories. The 1833 Factory Act required owners to send them to school (either provided in the factory or by the church outside), usually for three hours a day. This was called the 'half-time system'.

The ruling class reformers who pressed for this system claimed that factory work made children 'immoral', and they saw school attendance as a way of correcting this, not of teaching knowledge or skill. This concern with morality was partly hypocritical; for example, they did not make the same outcry against children being used as servants in their own houses, where their exposure to abuse would have been greater. But it was also something more. Machinery was still fairly primitive and production would be disrupted unless children crawled inside to do running repairs. But children also posed problems of order in factories. So the 'morality' taught in schools under this system was really labour discipline. In Bury, Lancashire, there was even one school where children were sent explicitly to be punished for indiscipline in the cotton mill nearby.

A UNION POWER GREW FROM the mid-century, it developed two central demands: that skilled male industrial workers should be paid enough to release women and children from factory work (the 'family wage') and that better-off workers should get the vote. When the vote was won in 1867, MPs, previously against state schooling, switched around, in the belief that it was now necessary "to compel our new masters to learn their letters". Full-time state primary schooling started in 1870 and soon became compulsory.

So state schooling was set up not to train future workers in skills needed for production but rather to counter union power. Children were to be segregated for most of the day in special institutions. Through a regime of beating and moralising these institutions — the schools — were meant to drive into the next generation of workers attitudes that would inoculate them against the culture of resistance which had already infected their parents and which they would later be exposed to in the factories.

But why, then, did these schools put so much emphasis on 'letters', on basic reading and writing; that is, on teaching working-class children something which it had hitherto been thought too dangerous to social order for them to learn? Why didn't they stick to religion and drill, like church and factory schools had done up till then?

BY DRAWING PEOPLE FROM villages into cities, industrialisation broke the church's power to control them through their beliefs. Worse still, many taught themselves to read, and it was often socialist or radical books and papers they chose. This had gone too far for the ruling class to stop it amongst adults, but they could hope to prevent it becoming a popular tradition. By making learning to read compulsory in childhood, they could turn liberation into drudgery. So if future generations read at all after leaving school, it would be for relaxation, not to challenge their minds. This would soften them up for the mass circulation press, so that the control previously exercised through the church would be re-established through the papers.

Although it survived in a few places up to 1918, the half-time system hampered this strategy, because it cut across the segregation of children from adults. Whereas before it had been claimed that half-time was almost as good as full-time schooling, reports by teachers and inspectors now emphasised how half-timers in state schools were infecting other children with surly attitudes learnt in the workplace. Part of the problem was that schools were funded and teachers paid by results, and half-timers were counted as full-timers for this purpose. But the half-timers threatened the whole set up; many strikes by school children coincided with strikes in local factories.

So, given also that more reliable machinery was now available in many branches of industry, the bosses were turning against the half-time system. At the same time, union leaders must have been glad to get rid of children (and women) from factories because they were hard to control and likely to be militant.

State prohibition of child labour doesn't stop it; it just moves it from organised industry into sweatshops, service industries and homeworking. More and more children world-wide now work in these areas at the same time as young adults are infantilised by unemployment.

We should demand that the state education system offers those older children and young people who want it work experience under union supervision on union negotiated rates of pay, linked both to technical education and to general education which allows them to reflect on that experience.

The 'mistakes' of the Bolsheviks

The October Revolution was the greatest event in working class history. Our class seized state power and held it for a number of years. Then the Stalinist counter-revolution buried that revolution — and almost every socialist who made it — in blood and muck. Having rooted up the very seeds of socialism in Russia and exterminated Lenin's Bolshevik Party, for reasons of its own the Stalinist tyranny continued to call itself socialist and Bolshevik. To sustain that lie, the Stalinists built a great swollen edifice of subsidiary lies, all of which buttressed, gilded and deodorized the central lie: Stalinism is Bolshevism. That gross lie has survived the Russian Stalinist state, which spawned and spread it. It has been taken over by the bourgeoisie and by the myriad ex-socialists and ex-Stalinists who have recently gone over to the bourgeoisie. Stalinism grew inevitably out of Bolshevism's mistakes, the less malicious of them say. They lie! In the following article — published originally in a longer version in 1943 — Max Shachtman discusses this incomparably important question.

THE CAUSES FOR the decay of the Russian Revolution are often sought in the "mistakes of the Bolsheviks." If only they had not suppressed freedom of speech and press!... If only they had not established a one-party dictatorship!...

This is the tenor of most of the criticism levelled at the Bolsheviks in the labour movement. Consistently thought out, they boil down to the idea that the real mistake was made in November 1917 when the Bolsheviks took power. This judgement is based essentially on the same factors that generate the fundamental theory of the Stalinist counter-revolution — "socialism in one country" — and differs from it only in that it is not on so high a level.

The bonds by which czarism held together the Russian Empire were brittle in the extreme... [In 1917]. With czarist despotism gone as an integrating force, who was left to keep the nation together and maintain it as a power, economic as well as political? One or two hundred years earlier in similar circumstances, it was the bourgeoisie... In Russia, however, the bourgeoisie had come too late. The solving of the problems of the democratic revolution had been too long postponed to permit a repetition of the French Revolution. This was the theory held in common by Lenin and Trotsky.

The period of the revolution in which

czarism was overturned tested the theory to the end. The bourgeoisie did come to power, but it was quite incapable of mastering the centrifugal tendencies which czarism, in the comparatively peaceful days, had been able to hold in precarious check...

It is unbelievable, but it is a fact, cried Lenin, that a peasant uprising is growing in a peasant country, "under a revolutionary republican government that is supported by the parties of the Social-Revolutionists and the Mensheviks". The peasant rising did not come to strengthen the bourgeoisie and its pallid democracy, but was directed against it. The bourgeoisie was unable to deal with it in any better way than the czar had discovered. At the same time, a proletarian power, the soviets, not at all Bolshevik, grew up spontaneously by the side of the bourgeois power and threatened its existence.

No bourgeois solution

THE BOURGEOIS democracy was incapable of seriously approaching a single one of the social and political problems at home... The country ruled by

the bourgeois republicans was about to be overrun by foreign imperialism as a prelude to its partition among the great powers. This problem, too, the "revolutionary democracy" was unable to solve, or even undertake seriously to solve. The country faced complete economic ruin, political disintegration, chaos, dismemberment and subjugation from abroad, the imminent triumph of counter-revolution and reaction, with all the consequences flowing from them. The bourgeoisie, the bourgeois democracy, was impotent in dealing with the situation, notwithstanding the support it received from the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists.

To say that they might have solved these problems democratically if the Bolsheviks had not interfered is not only to ignore an overwhelming mass of facts but to stand the question on its head. The "interference" of the Bolsheviks was made possible only because the bourgeois democrats, plus the social-democrats, could not solve the problems... The alternative to the "risky" seizure of power by the working class under Bolshevik leadership was not the painless flowering of "democracy" but the triumph of savage counter-revolution and the partitioning and colonisation of the country...

The Bolsheviks cannot, and therefore must not, be judged as if they were untested masters of a situation in which they could calmly and undisturbedly plan a campaign of social reorganisation. The disdainful critics like to overlook the fact that they, or at least their friends and patrons, left no stone unturned or unhurled to prevent the new state power from working out its destiny. Class interest came before "scientific interest" in the "new social experiment."

Chaos and treason

BOTH CZAR AND bourgeoisie left the Bolsheviks, who took power almost without shedding a drop of blood, a heritage of chaos and violence and multitudinous unsolved problems.

The sabotage of the bourgeoisie, loyal patriots of the fatherland who were ready to sell it to foreign imperialism rather than have it ruled by the proletariat, forced the Bolsheviks to resort to the most radical socialist measures from the very beginning. The Bolsheviks were anything but Utopian. Their programme was modest and realistic. If they took what would otherwise have been premature steps, it was done under the compulsions of the bitter class struggle immediately launched by the counter-revolution.

Decrees permitting capitalists to continue owning their factories under workers' control are impotent against shells loaded and fired at these factories by their departed owners. Terroristic attacks upon the government and its officials cannot be effectively met with sermons on the superiority of oral agitation and moral suasion. Freedom of the press cannot be extended by a government to "critics" who come to overthrow it with arms and battalions furnished by czarists and foreign imperialists. Freedom must be defended from such critics, and with all available arms.

Not only the bourgeois democrats like Kerensky, but the Mensheviks and SRs resorted to arms against the democratic



Max Shachtman

Soviet power. Nor were they too finicky about the company they kept in their crusade against the Bolsheviks. Alliance with the Bolsheviks against their reaction was inadmissible in principle and beneath the integrity of these democrats. Alliance with reaction, with the czarist generals, the Cossacks, the Clemenceaus and Churchills against the Bolsheviks, that was good practical politics, realistic, tolerable by democracy.

In any country, such "practical politics" are commonly known as treason and treated accordingly. Against the Soviet power, this was not merely "treason to the nation," but treason to the working class and the working-class revolution.

What is downright outrageous is the impudence of the criticism of Bolshevism's dictatorial measures levelled by the very persons or groups which acted in such a manner as to leave the Soviet power no alternative but stern decisions of sheer self-defence.

Banked on world revolution

This holds true also for the organisation of the Communist International... Its task was the organisation of the victory of the proletariat in the capitalist countries. This was assigned to it by the Bolsheviks not out of considerations of abstract internationalism but out of the thousand times repeated conviction that without the revolution in the West, the Russian workers' state could not hope to survive, much less solve its fundamental problems.

This fact is well known and widely acknowledged. Its full significance is not always grasped. The Russian Revolution was the first act of world revolution. That is how it was conceived by its authors. That was the starting point of all their policies. The heart of the question of the "mistakes of the Bolsheviks" is reached when this is thoroughly understood. Everything remains mystery and confusion if the question is studied from the standpoint of Stalin's nationalist theory.

The programme of the Bolsheviks called for establishing the widest possible democracy. The Soviet regime was to be the most



Lenin during the civil war



Bolshevik fighters in Crimea, January 1918: the revolutionary government faced not only Russia's right wing but also 14 invading armies.

democratic known in history. If a state power, that is coercion and dictatorship, was needed, it was to be directed only against the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie

Was so much concentration of dictatorial power and violence needed against the Russian bourgeoisie, that is, against a bourgeoisie described as helpless and hopeless? On a Russian national scale, the answer could easily have been in the negative. But as the world bourgeoisie understood, and immediately showed, the Russian Revolution was directed at international capitalism. Without world capitalism the Russian bourgeoisie could have been disposed of by the Soviet power with a wave of the hand. With world capitalism behind it, the bourgeoisie of Russia, which is only another way of saying the danger of a victory for the counter-revolution, was a tremendous force against which the greatest vigilance was demanded.

Because the problem was only posed in Russia but could be solved only on a world scale, the Bolsheviks counted on the international revolution. Because they counted on the international revolution, the Bolsheviks allowed themselves all sorts of infringements upon the standards of political democracy, and even upon the standards of workers' democracy.

The suppression of democratic rights for other working-class organisations, even of those which were not directly engaged in armed insurrection against the Soviets, was first conceived as a temporary measure dictated by the isolation of the Russian Revolution and in virtue of that fact by the dangers to which it was immediately subjected...

Mistakes of the Bolsheviks

HOWEVER, IF THIS is so, an important conclusion follows. The proletariat that triumphs in the next wave of socialist revolutions and triumphs in several of the advanced countries will have neither wish nor need to repeat all the measures of the Russian Revolution. It is absurd to think otherwise. It is much more absurd for

the revolutionary movement to adopt a programme advocating the universal repetition of all the suppressive measures of the Russian Bolsheviks. This injunction applies most particularly against the ideas of a single, legal, monopolistic party... The workers' power in the advanced countries will be able to assure the widest genuine democracy to all working-class parties and organisations, and (given favourable circumstances, which mean, primarily, no attempt at counter-revolution) to bourgeois parties, and this assurance cannot be confined to a ceremonial pledge on holiday occasions, but must be reflected in the daily political practice of the revolutionary vanguard party. In the concrete case, critical re-examination of the Russian experience.

There were "mistakes" imposed upon the Bolsheviks by the actions of their opponents and by conditions in general. There were mistakes, without sceptical quotation marks, that cannot be sheltered under that heading.

The most critical and objective reconsideration of the Bolshevik revolution does not, in our view justify the attacks made upon Lenin and Trotsky for the violence they used against their violent, insurrectionary adversaries. Nor even after all these years, can the excesses in repression and violence be regarded as having been weighty factors in the degeneration of the Soviet state. To condemn a revolution for excesses is to condemn revolution; to condemn revolution is to doom society to stagnation and retrogression.

One party system

BUT AFTER HAVING been compelled to overthrow all the non-Bolshevik parties, the leaders of the party in power made a virtue, and then a principle, out of a temporary necessity. "There is room for all kind of parties in Russia" said one of them, Tomsy, if we rightly recall, "but only one of them has power and all the rest in prison". Tomsy merely expressed what had become the rule and principle for the other leaders.

The idea of one party in power is one thing, and not at all in violation of either bourgeois or workers' democracy. The idea

that all other parties must be, not in opposition, with the rights of oppositions, but in prison, violates both bourgeois and workers' democracy, and it is with the latter that we are concerned here.

Even if every non-Bolshevik group, without exception, had resorted to armed struggle against the Soviet power, it was a disastrous mistake to outlaw them in perpetuity. From every point of view that may legitimately be held by a revolutionary party or a revolutionary government, it would have been wise and correct if the Soviet power had declared:

"Any political group or party that lays down its arms, breaks from the foreign imperialists and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie at home, adapts itself in word and deed to soviet legality, repudiates armed struggle against the government and those who resort to armed struggle, will enjoy all democratic rights in the country, equal to those of the party in power."

The Bolsheviks made no such declaration. Instead, the kind made by Tomsy gained prevalence. There can be no question in our mind that the adoption and enforcement of the "Tomsy policy" contributed heavily to the degeneration of the revolution and the victory of Stalinism. From the prohibition of all parties but the Bolshevik, only a step was needed to the prohibition of all factions inside the Bolshevik Party at its 10th congress. Anyone acquainted with the history of the subsequent developments knows that this decision, also taken as an "emergency" measure, was a most powerful weapon in the hands of the bureaucracy against the Left Opposition. Disloyally construed, disloyally used, it smoothed the road to the totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy. The whole Bolshevik Party was politically miseducated and ideologically intimidated against the very idea of more than one party in the country. And for this miseducation none of its leaders can escape his share of the responsibility. It is enough to recall that from the time of Zinoviev's first capitulation to Stalin in 1927 to the time of the last of the capitulators, every desertion from the Opposition was motivated to a considerable extent by the cry, "No two parties in the country!"

The Bolshevik revolution was betrayed and crushed by the Stalinist counter-revolu-

tion... Not the least important lesson is the need to return to the principles set forth by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*. Especially in the light of what has happened, the heaviest emphasis must be laid upon the dictatorship of the proletariat as the democratic rule of the workers; as the widest and most genuine democracy the workers have ever had; as the equitable enjoyment of democratic rights by small groups, political opponents of the government included, and military opponents alone excluded; as the safeguard of the principle of electivity of officials, above all of the trade unions and soviets.

The revolutionary Marxists must learn, and then must teach, that the struggle for democratic rights is not just a clever device for embarrassing the undemocratic bourgeoisie, that the struggle is not confined to the days of capitalism. On the contrary: it is precisely when the new revolutionary power is set up that the struggle for democratic rights and democracy acquires its fullest meaning and its first opportunity for complete realisation.

The revolutionists after the overturn of capitalism differ from the revolutionists before that overturn not in that they no longer need democratic rights and no longer demand them, but in the fact that they are for the first time really and fully able to promulgate them and see to it that they are preserved from all infringement including infringement by the new state and by bureaucrats in it. The right of free speech, press and assembly, the right to organise and the right to strike are not less necessary under the dictatorship of the proletariat but more necessary and more possible.

Socialism can and will be attained only by the fullest realisation of democracy. The dictatorship of the proletariat must be counterposed to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in this sphere because the latter denies the people access to and control over the material base whose monopoly by the bourgeoisie makes its 'democracy' a formality not really enjoyed by the great masses.

That is what the revolutionary Marxists should teach. But first of all they must learn it, and thoroughly. It is one of the most important lessons of the Russian Revolution and its decay.

Party or sect?

"Sect" and "sectarian" are two of the most abused words on the left. So is "party" as in "The Party". Sect and sectarian are frequently just abuse words for those you don't like; "party" is usually a word of approbation for those you like and approve of above all others. These words have exact meanings for Marxists and the meanings are important. One way to explore what they mean is to go back to the founders of our movement, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, as we do with this, the first of a series of texts on the subject. It is part of a letter Karl Marx wrote in 1868 to Johann Baptist Schweitzer, the leader of the Lassalle sect in Germany. See notes for explanations.

THE LASSALLEAN Association was founded in a period of reaction. Lassalle — and this remains his immortal service — re-awakened the workers' movement in Germany after its fifteen years of slumber. But he committed great mistakes.

He allowed himself to be governed too much by the immediate circumstances of the time. He made a minor starting point — his opposition to a dwarf like Schulze Delitzsch — into the central point of his agitation — state aid versus self-help. In so doing he merely took up again the watchword which *Buchez*, the leader of French *Catholic socialism*, had given out in 1843 [seqq.] against the genuine workers' movement in France.

Much too intelligent to regard this watchword as anything but a temporary makeshift, Lassalle could only justify it on the ground of its immediate (as he alleges!) practicability. For this purpose he had to maintain that it could be carried out in the *near* future. Hence the "State" transformed itself into the Prussian State.

"Instead of looking among the genuine elements of the class movement for the real basis of his agitation, he wanted to prescribe the course to be followed by this movement according to a certain doctrinaire recipe."

Thus he was driven into making concessions to the Prussian monarchy, the Prussian reaction (feudal party) and even the clericals. With *Buchez's* state aid for associations he combined the Chartist cry of universal suffrage. He overlooked the fact that conditions in Germany and England were different.

He overlooked the lessons of the Second Empire with regard to uni-

versal suffrage in France. Moreover, like everyone who maintains that he has a panacea for the sufferings of the masses in his pocket, he gave his agitation from the outset a religious and sectarian character. Every sect is in fact religious. Furthermore, just because he was the founder of a sect, he denied all natural connection with the earlier working-class movement *both inside and outside of Germany*. He fell into the same mistake as Proudhon: instead of looking among the genuine elements of the class movement for the real basis of his agitation, he wanted to prescribe the course to be followed by this movement according to a certain doctrinaire recipe.

Most of what I am now saying, post factum, I had already told Lassalle in 1862, when he came to London and urged me to place myself with him at the head of the new movement.

You yourself have experienced in your own person the opposition between the movement of a sect and the movement of a class. The sect sees the justification for its existence and its point of honour not in what it has in *common* with the class movement but in the *particular shibboleth* which *distinguishes* it from the movement. Therefore when at Hamburg you proposed the congress for the formation of trade unions you were able to smash the opposition of the sect only by threatening to resign from the office of president. In addition you were obliged to assume a dual personality and to announce that in one case you were acting as the head of the sect and in the other as the organ of the class movement.

The dissolution of the General Association of German Workers gave you the opportunity to take a great step forward and to declare, to prove if necessary, that a new stage of development had now been reached, and that the moment was ripe for the sectarian movement to merge in the class movement and make an end of all sectarianism. As for the true content of the sect it would, as was the case with all previous working-class sects, be carried on into the general movement as an element enriching it.

Instead of this you actually demanded of the class movement that it should subordinate itself to the movement of a particular sect.

Those who are not your friends have concluded from this that whatever happens you want to preserve your "own workers' movement."

With regard to the Berlin Congress there was in the first place no rush as the Combination Law had not yet been passed. You therefore should have come to an understanding with the leaders *outside* the Lassallean circle, worked out the plan conjointly with them and convoked the Congress. Instead of that you only left them the alternative of either *joining you* or *opposing you*. The Congress itself had the appearance of merely an enlarged edition of the Hamburg Congress.

"You demanded of the class movement that it should subordinate itself to the movement of a particular sect, whatever happens you want to preserve your 'own workers' movement'."

As for the draft Rules, I consider them erroneous in principle, and I believe I have had as much experience in the trade-union field as any of my contemporaries. Without going further into details I only want to remark that *centralist* organisation, although very useful for secret societies and sectarian movements, goes against the nature of trade unions. Even if it were possible — I state outright that it is impossible — it would not be desirable, and least of all in Germany. Here where the worker's life is regulated from childhood on by bureaucracy and he himself believes in the authorities, in the bodies appointed over him, he must be taught before all else to walk by himself.

Your plan is also otherwise unpractical. An "Association" with three independent powers, each of different origin: 1) the *Committee* elected by *trade unions*; 2) the *President* (a wholly superfluous person here), elected by *universal suffrage*; 3) the *Congress*, elected by the *locals*. Hence everywhere collision, and that is supposed to promote "prompt action"! (In the Rules of the International Working-men's Association there was also a *President* of the Association. But in actual fact he never had any other function than that of presiding at the meetings of the General Council. On my motion this office, which I had declined in 1866, was totally abolished in 1867 and replaced by a chairman elected at every weekly meeting of the General Council. The *London Trades Council* also has only a chairman. Its Secretary



Marx believed the German workers needed to free themselves from the hold of subordination to bureaucrats; Rosa Luxemburg fought the bureaucrats who stifled and betrayed the German labour movement.

is its only permanent official because he performs a business function requiring continuity.) Lassalle committed a gross blunder when he borrowed the phrase "elected by universal suffrage" from the French Constitution of 1852. And to have this now in a trade-union movement! The latter revolves largely around money questions and you will soon discover that here all dictatorship comes to an end.

However no matter what the mistakes of the organisation, it may perhaps be possible to eradicate them more or less by a rational practice. I am ready, as Secretary of the International, to act as mediator between you and the Nuremberg majority, which has directly affiliated to the International, of course on a rational basis. I have written to the same effect to Leipzig. I fully appreciate the difficulties of your position and am ever mindful of the fact that every one of us is dependent more on circumstances than his own will.

Notes

Ferdinand Lassalle launched and built the "General German Workers' Association", the first real workers' movement in Germany, in a brief campaign of agitation between spring 1863 and his death in autumn 1864.

He was criticised by Marx and Engels for centring the movement on two proposals, presented as *cure-alls* — *universal suffrage* and *state aid for workers' cooperatives* — and for his undemocratic way of organising, which gave unlimited power to him as "president" of the movement. (Schulze-Delitzsch was a bourgeois "progressive" politician who advocated workers' cooperatives *without state aid*.)

Soon after Lassalle's death, the leadership of the movement was taken over by J B Schweitzer. In

1865 Marx and Engels broke with Schweitzer because, they declared, he was veering towards an alliance with the Prussian bureaucratic-landlord state, and its chief minister, Bismarck, against the liberal bourgeoisie.

(Prussia was the strongest of the then divided German states. The 'Second Empire' in France was the dictatorship of Napoleon III, 1848-70. Here universal suffrage was used to mobilise peasant and other support against the organised workers.)

In 1868, however, Schweitzer moved closer to the First International founded, under Marx's leadership, in 1864. At the Hamburg congress of the German Workers' Association, in August 1868, he won a mandate to set about organising *trade unions* with a congress in Berlin.

Schweitzer faced strong opposition from many Lassalleans who — like a lot of other socialists at the time — thought trade unions could never achieve anything. Lassalle had argued that an "iron law of wages" must inevitably keep wages down to starvation level. To win the vote Schweitzer had to threaten to resign as president of the Association.

Marx saw the shift to organising trade unions as a crucial break from the old Lassallean method of organising workers only around some blueprint laid down by a self-proclaimed leader; but he criticised the over-centralised structure proposed for the new unions, and Schweitzer's plan to organise them as mere auxiliaries of the German Workers' Association.

The Lassallean movement eventually merged with a group organised by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht (here referred to as the "Nuremberg" group) to form the German Social Democratic Party in 1875. Marx wrote his famous *Critique of the Gotha Programme* to explain what was wrong with the platform on which they unified.

Hopelessly funny

Theatre

Jean Lane reviews *On The Ledge*

ALAN BLEASDALE'S new play, *On The Ledge*, is hilarious. It's one of those plays it would be better to see twice because as you are laughing over one line you are missing the next.

The entire action takes place on the roof and on the ledge outside the window of the top floor of a tower block, in Liverpool, on 5 November.

The characters are all on the ledge for different reasons and all surviving Tory rule in Britain in different ways. There are the two scallies, unemployed, painting graffiti. There is the young woman, hiding from her building contractor-boyfriend with the evidence of his corruption in a plastic bag. The boyfriend himself, a smooth duck and diver with his two hammer-wielding henchmen, is reminiscent of *GBH*'s Michael Murray.

The middle-aged, office-working man, the only one there with the intention of throwing himself off, has till now only managed to survive by keeping and constantly reading to himself news reports which show how completely mad the world has become. As long as he knows they are mad, then he must be sane. The woman's other boyfriend and father of her two kids, who is married to someone else, weak-willed, gutless, can't make his mind up which one he will throw his lot in with, is victim to the need to 'get on' and 'be a success'.

Finally, there is the cynical, seen-it-all fireman with the thankless task of trying to get them down off the ledge while, below, riot-ridden Liverpool burns.

Picking the characters over the many years it took Bleasdale to

write the play must have been hard. There had been several others who were either dropped — like the alcoholic priest who had taken up climbing called Mick the Mountain climber — or who got shunted into other plays. Michael Murray began life on the ledge. The ones he chose provided a rich, filthy-mouthed (every other word is "fuck" or "bastard", much to the middle-aged man's distress), witty portrayal of surviving Britain in the '80s and '90s.

The audience was almost as entertaining as the play. Much tutting could be heard coming from the most well-heeled sections, used to more refined forms of entertainment, and the opening of the second scene was greatly improved by the whisper from someone on the row behind that they had been to the management to complain about the bad language!

The acting was brilliant and a gymnastic feat. The scenery and props were stunning. First sight of it, as the curtains opened, made you gasp. The dialogue was hilarious. Only a message was missing — or rather a message of hope.

Bleasdale in *On The Ledge*, as in his other plays, only sees characters as helpless responders to a situation beyond their control. In *GBH* there were either victims or copers. The working class don't appear or are mere actors on a capitalist stage where the direction is controlled by those in power. To change the direction, you have to take power. 'Ordinary people', hilarious, remarkable, resourceful, pathetic as Bleasdale can so beautifully portray them, are merely bit players in some one else's play, rather than the people with the power to change society.

For a great night out, and for a brilliant and even poignant portrayal of capitalism in Britain, go and see *On The Ledge*, but don't go expecting any answers.



Last Action Hero is what is known as a "star vehicle". The film is less important than its star, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Here Arnie's character is a pastiche of his previous hard man roles — this time as farce. This character is the hero of a film-within-the-film who is thrust into the "real world" of the film. (Got that?)

Last Action Hero is both too clever and too puerile at the same time. It is in love with the image of "Arnie". Unless you intend to hang around "cultural studies" seminars and talk about how the boundaries of reality and fiction are disappearing in the "postmodern epoch", or some other such twaddle — stay away!

Young, gifted, black and female

Cinema

Matt Cooper reviews *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.*

FIVE YEARS AGO Leslie Harris, a young black woman working at an advertising agency, decided to do something about the role of black women in American films. Spike Lee's films offered very few strong roles for women, and the work that began to seep out through the cracks in the film industry opened up by Lee offered fewer.

These films at their best began to

look at the tensions and dynamics of the American black community (*Do the Right Thing*, *Boyz n the Hood*, *Juice*); at their worst they did little more than mirror the violence-as-entertainment and machismo of the mainstream film industry (*New Jack City* is the best example of a genre of forgettable films), but nearly all focussed on the male characters.

More black female leads were not Leslie Harris's goal (or Whitney Houston in *The Bodyguard* would have been a great step forward), but characters which attempted to represent the reality of life for black working class women.

So Harris wrote a script and set about producing it. Five years later, having quit her job and scraped together \$130,000 in grants and loans from arts and community foundations, she directed the film herself, on a shooting schedule of 17 days.

The film — which cost slightly less than 17 seconds worth of *Jurassic Park!* — is impressive, if uneven.

Chantel (Ariyan Johnson) is young (17), gifted (the brightest in her year at high school) and black. She lives in a New York ghetto, the Bronx.

The IRT is the subway line that goes from the Bronx to Times Square, to Wall Street in Manhattan. The IRT will one day take her out of her dead end, to success and to freedom. She wants to go to medical school, become a doctor, be her own boss, so that no-one will push her around.

There are flaws in her dream. She has an attitude with a capital A and a mouth to let everyone know

it. She is self assertive to such an antagonising degree that her teachers will not let her graduate and go to college a year early even though her grades would allow her to.

The (black) principal of the school makes it clear that if she really wants to leave the ghetto she will have to leave its norms of behaviour behind as well. His advice — "you have to learn to be a lady" — may jar with us as sounding outrageously sexist, but he is right: those who keep the gate for the professional classes will not allow just anyone to pass through. As the adage goes, it is easier to take the girl out of the ghetto than the ghetto out of the girl.

That Chantel is not as completely in control as she would wish to think is brought crashing home to her when she discovers that she is pregnant. When she tells Tyrone, her boyfriend, his reaction is predictable — "Bitch. I don't need this shit". His way of responding to this new reality, which he cannot cope with, is just to deny it. He

turns his back on her.

Chantel seeks counselling and tries to think her way out of the problem, but in the end she takes Tyrone's position — she too denies that she is pregnant. No more able to cope than Tyrone, she ignores her pregnancy and hopes it will go away.

Harris shows how the welfare system completely fails this pregnant 17 year old.

She cannot get welfare; she can't leave home; the federally funded counselling service is forbidden to tell her about abortion. That sex education in school is grossly inadequate is shown by her belief in the contraceptive potential of a bottle of soda!

Just Another Girl... is a lot more than an educational film for Planned Parenthood. Its rough edges are all too noticeable, the dialogue often drags, the plot is sometimes laboured, but in the end it is a film that repays your attention. It is funny, moving and perceptive.

Television

By Paddy Dollard

The hype-merchants compared Billy Roche's "The Wexford Trilogy" to Sean O'Casey's three great plays about the "people

on the ground" in Dublin during Ireland's War of Independence and I did not believe them.

O'Casey or not, the first of them, "Poor Beast in the Rain" was a splendid play. I urge you to see the others — BBC2 Saturdays, 9pm.

Sacco and Vanzetti: class-war martyrs

"That agony is our triumph"

By Paddy Dollard

ON 23 AUGUST 1922, two Italian born American socialist anarchists were strapped into the death chair in Massachusetts and electrocuted by order of the Supreme Court. Victims of anti-red hysteria and racial and religious bigotry, they were Nicolo Sacco, a shoemaker, and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, a fish-peddler.

They were seven years in jail before the state killed them. In those years the names of Sacco and Vanzetti became a byword in the labour movement of the whole world for ruling class justice and a symbol of the way the US capitalists used the courts to frame up and lynch rebel workers.

Sacco and Vanzetti believed that they had been victimised because they were foreign-born radicals. They saw themselves as representatives of one class, the working class, being judged in the hostile courts of their class enemies, the bourgeoisie. They conducted themselves as class-conscious men throughout their long years in jail, fighting for their lives.

They felt themselves to be class war prisoners. "I am and remain for the emancipation of the working class", said Vanzetti firmly in 1926, after the Massachusetts Supreme Court had refused a new trial.

Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested in May 1920 and charged with armed robbery and murder.

This was the period of intense anti-Bolshevik hysteria. Thousands of socialists, radical trade unionists, communists and anarchists were harassed and jailed, or, if foreign-born, deported. There were lynchings by vigilantes and murders of prisoners by police.

In May 1920 a radical friend of Sacco's and Vanzetti's, Solseda, was found dead outside a building where the authorities had detained him. Alarmed, Sacco and Vanzetti attempted to borrow a motor car to move incriminating radical literature, thus attracting the attention of the police. They were arrested and charged with shooting the paymaster and a guard during a robbery on the main street of South Braintree Massachusetts, in April 1920.

The legal case against them rested on identification by eye-witnesses and on ballistic evidence which the prosecution interpreted as proof that a bullet fired in the robbery came from a gun found in Sacco's possession. Modern experts consider the ballistic evidence inconclusive; and Sacco

When man is wolf to the man

This is the famous last speech of Bartolomeo Vanzetti, the class war prisoner who, alongside Nicolo Sacco, died in the electric chair in August 1927. This speech despite its broken English, is so beautiful and moving that it falls naturally into verse form. No-one has ever expressed more splendidly and with such stirring, simple language the aspirations and hopes of all those who fight for a better world. Once read, these words form part of every socialist's heritage. This typographical arrangement of Vanzetti's speech first appeared in *Labour Action*, an American socialist weekly.

I have talk a great deal of myself
but I even forget to name Sacco.
Sacco too is a worker,
from his boyhood a skilled worker, lover of work
with a good job and pay,
a bank account, a good and lovely wife,
two beautiful children and a neat little home
at the verge of a wood, near a brook.
Sacco is a heart, a faith, a character, a man;
a man, lover of nature, and mankind.
A man who gave all, who sacrifice all
to the cause of liberty and to his love for mankind:
money, rest, mundane ambition,
his own wife, his children, himself
and his own life.
Sacco has never dreamt to steal, never to assassinate.
He and I have never brought a morsel
of bread to our mouths, from our childhood to today
which has not been gained by the sweat of our brows.
Never...

Oh yes, I may be more witfull, as some have put it;
I am a better babbler than he is, but many, many times
in hearing his heartfull voice ringing forth sublime,
in considering his supreme sacrifice, remembering his heroism
I felt small at the presence of his greatness
and found myself compelled to fight back
from my eyes the tears,
and quench my heart
troubling to my throat to not weep before him:
this man called thief and assassin and doomed.
But Sacco's name will live in the hearts of the people
and in their gratitude when Katzmann's bones
and yours will be dispersed by time;
when your name, his name, your laws, constitutions
and your false god are but a dim remembering
of a cursed past in which man was wolf
to the man...
If it had not been for these thing
I might have lived out my life
talking at street corners to scorning men.
I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure.
Now we are not a failure.
This is our career and our triumph. Never
in our full life could we hope to do such work
for tolerance, for justice, for men's understanding
of man, as now we do by accident.
Our words, our lives, our pains — nothing!
The taking of our lives — lives of a good shoemaker and
a poor fishpeddler —
all! That last moment belongs to us —
that agony is our triumph.

had a weighty alibi. At the time of the robbery he had been in Boston making arrangements for a passport at the Italian Consulate. The Consulate corroborated his account.

No matter. Sacco and Vanzetti had given false information about themselves to the police. They had carried guns, and the police said they had got the impression that Sacco and Vanzetti had been inclined to use them when they were apprehended.

All this showed clear knowledge of their own guilt.

But the defence council had a different explanation: Sacco and Vanzetti were aware of being foreign-born anarchists, the sort of people who were being arrested,

jailed and deported daily in 1919-1920. Their friend, Solseda, had just been killed, perhaps by the police.

To the prosecution this explanation was as good as an admission of guilt. Appeals were made to the religious, political and national prejudices — Protestant Anglo-Saxon and Irish Catholic — of the New England jury, against these Italian anarchists, who opposed the ruling class, and who had opposed world war 1.

They were found guilty of first degree murder in July 1921.

The conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti aroused a great protest throughout the USA and around the world, and then a campaign to save them. Millions of workers protested and demonstrated "For Sacco and Vanzetti". In Britain, the TUC, the Labour Party and hundreds of local organisations of the working class protested, as did the working class movement in many other countries. Opposition to the impending legal murder of Sacco and Vanzetti spread from the labour movement to liberals and others prepared to take a stand for justice.

But this only strengthened the obstinate blood lust of the Massachusetts establishment. The US Supreme Court refused to interfere. In 1925 an already condemned man, Madeiras, made a confession which indicated that the South Braintree raid had been the work of professional gangsters. That made no difference.

To whitewash the trial and the convictions an advisory committee was set up in mid-1927 by Massachusetts Governor Alvin T Fuller consisting of the President of Harvard University, the President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a retired judge.

This committee felt obliged to censor Judge Thayer, who had presided at the trial, for a "grave breach of decorum" in uttering prejudiced remarks outside the court against Sacco and Vanzetti.

Nevertheless, the committee concluded that this prejudice had not influenced Judge Thayer in court!

After seven years of refined torture, during which all the possible legal appeals were exhausted, Sacco and Vanzetti were, according to the American practice, brought to court for sentence.

Before the sentence, Vanzetti said to the prejudiced, vindictive, class-warrior Judge:

"You are the one that is afraid. You are the one that is shrinking with fear, because you are the one that is guilty of attempt to murder."

After it, he said: "Now we are not a failure... Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man as we do now by an accident. Our words — our lives — our pains — nothing! The taking of our lives — lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler — all! That last moment belongs to us — that agony is our triumph."

Sacco and Vanzetti's revolutionary attitude in court made the trial a test case and a trial of strength. They looked not to bourgeois justice but instead to the labour movement for their freedom.

There were the mass demonstrations, and strikes and great meetings. But the protests were not strong enough to stop the work of the executioner.

With Boston under virtual martial law, Sacco and Vanzetti were electrocuted in the early hours of the morning of 23 August 1927.

Their cause did not die!



Sacco and Vanzetti

Dundee, 6am, Monday 9 August

Back the Timex mass picket!

A MASS PICKET of the Timex factory in Dundee has been called for Monday 9 August by the Timex Strike Committee.

On the Saturday before the mass picket Timex Support Groups throughout Britain are staging a Day of Action to build support for the dispute, by picketing shops selling Timex watches and appealing to consumers to boycott them.

In recent weeks the focus of the Timex workers' campaign has

shifted abroad, partly as a result of the Timex factory currently being closed for the holiday fortnight.

Shops stewards have been visiting the United States, France, Germany, Denmark and Norway, calling for support from trade unionists and an extension of the consumer boycott.

Timex has announced that the date of intended closure of the factory will be brought forward from the end of the year to November or even October. Customers

have begun switching their contracts elsewhere.

The Day of Action and the mass picket can mark a revival of the campaign to save the Timex workers' jobs after the inevitable lull of the July holiday month.

The Scottish TUC, the General Council of which is meeting at the time of going to press, must step up support for the strikers. The support which the strikers have received so far from the rest of the trade union movement has

often been less than whole-hearted.

The STUC should campaign for a refusal by workers to handle Timex products in the workplace, and call a Day of Action to link up the Timex dispute with

the struggles of other workers, especially those in the public sector.

Labour MPs in Scotland should also be more up-front about supporting the dispute rather than regarding it as an

embarrassment. One Labour MP failed to attend the last Timex rally on the grounds that he had "too many Gala Days to attend in my constituency!"

Mass Picket — 6.00am, Monday 9 August, Timex factory,

Middlebrook Mushrooms

"They underestimated the power of the women"

By Janine Booth

LAST MONTH around 400 people marched through Selby in support of the Middlebrook Mushrooms sacked women workers.

Eight months ago, Middlebrook attempted to impose a pay cut on its workforce. The workers refused to accept this, and took strike action. 69 women workers were sacked. Since then, the fight for reinstatement has been kept up. Saturday's demonstration, which followed a picket at Middlebrook Mushrooms in Whiteley, showed evidence of strong local labour movement support, with banners present from the T&G, GMB, RMT, UCATT, Musicians' Union, COHSE and Selby Labour Party.

Geraldine Martin told *Socialist Organiser*: "Because we were part-time workers and women, management thought we would just go away and get other jobs. But they underestimated the power of the women. The women had not had that much to do with the union before — you don't realise how few rights

you have until it actually happens to you."

The women and their supporters have been leafleting supermarkets, speaking in union meetings, and successfully demanding that local shops refuse to sell Middlebrook Mushrooms. From here, the plan is to continue building public support, building the pickets, and appealing directly to other groups of workers to refuse to handle Middlebrook Mushrooms and other products.

T&G officials are issuing abstract calls for a boycott of all Booker products — Booker being the multinational that owns Middlebrook (and sponsors the famous literary prize). For maximum effect, though, what is needed is an appeal to other groups of workers not to help Booker beat the Middlebrook women, by refusing to handle their products. For example, the women believe that Middlebrook are importing mushrooms from Ireland to make up for lost production at the Whitley farm. The women are asking dockers not to

unload the scab cargo.

The stakes in the dispute have not been raised, with 165 workers (both women and men) being made redundant by the same employer at nearby Gateforth Farm — though a T&G official made the bizarre comment that he thought this was a separate issue!

Having felt the stripping away of the women workers' rights by anti-union laws, Geraldine Martin wants to see a fight against them: "The Labour Party says that they will 'review' the anti-union laws, but they should let people know what they would actually do with these laws in government — they should make a stronger commitment.

"I'd also like to see the Labour Party using the situation across Europe to campaign harder for rights for working women — such as better rights for part-time workers, and better nursery provision."

Requests for speakers, messages of support and donations to: S Wright, 61 Manor Garth, Kellington: 0977 662923

Unions fight Market Testing

By a DoE/DTP worker

ON FRIDAY 30 July, thousands of civil servants in the Department of Environment and Transport were on strike for the day. The strike, called by both NUCPS and CPSA, was solid throughout the country.

This was the third one day strike involving civil servants in July. Earlier strikes hit DsHSS and the Home Office. In all, more than 40,000 people have been striking against Market Testing this month.

We need to look towards

national action up to and including all out action involving all the unions. In the balloting period civil service workers themselves were raising this demand. They could see no reason why the unions were fighting Market Testing in such a half-hearted fashion. There are rumours that all civil servant unions or at least the administration grade unions are thinking about calling a one day strike on 5 November. We have to fight to make that a reality.

At the same time vague promises of national action should not be used to delay the

fightback in particular sections.

And we should not forget the political aspects of the campaign against Market Testing.

We must make it clear that we are being attacked by Tories. The Tories have a deliberate policy of smashing the unions and the public sector. Mobilising voters and running political campaigns would immediately open the question of Labour Party affiliation and campaign against the right wing in the party who support Market Testing. We need to stop the Tories in their tracks.

Why two lobbies of the TUC?

MANY LABOUR and trade union activists are desperate to see some kind of lead from the national union leaderships and the TUC.

We should be pushing for a public sector wide one-day strike

in the autumn over the issue of the pay freeze, cuts, privatisation and contracting out. This could link up workers across the public sector who are presently fighting piecemeal.

For that reason, trade unionists

should support both the lobbies that have been called on separate days — at this year's TUC conference — and argue for them to merge.

The Militant-dominated Public Sector Alliance (Monday 6 September) and the *Socialist Worker* front "Start the Fight-back" (Wednesday 9 September) should get together and hold a unified event on the same day.

The PSA is at present nothing more than an empty "Militant" front while "Start the Fight" doesn't even pretend to be more than a convenient front for *Socialist Worker*. (Last year's TUC "Start the Fight" rally had as its keynote speaker none other than *SW* editor Chris Harman, hardly a well known trade unionist).

The perils of luminous paint

SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

SCIENTISTS WERE not the only victims of radioactivity in its "early days". Catherine Caulfield, in her history of the age of radiation*, writes about the first industrial disease caused by radioactivity. The victims were mostly young women, employed by the US Radium Corporation to paint the dials of watches with a special paint called "Undark". This was a mixture of harmless zinc sulphide and small quantities of radium. The gamma rays from the radium would strike the sulphide and make it glow in the dark.

The developer of "Undark", Dr Sabin von Sochocky, envisaged houses painted inside with "Undark" and painted his own luminous oil paintings with it. He helped found the US Radium Corporation in 1915 and, with the USA's entry into World War One, there were soon some 250 young women painting watch and other instrument dials for US soldiers.

In order to paint the finest lines on the watch faces, the women found it easiest to lick the brushes. Being paid by piece work, they found this the quickest way of pointing the fibres.

After the War, the radium paint business flourished, with upwards of 2,000 painters producing millions of watches, as well as luminous fish bait, dolls' eyes, gun-sights, stick-on labels and crucifixes. But, by 1924, nine of the USRC's painters had died, apparently of natural causes.

Causes of death given included stomach ulcer, syphilis, trench mouth, phosphorous poisoning, necrosis of the jaw, and anaemia. Many of the living painters were seeing dentists about problems

with their teeth and jaws.

Scrutiny of USRC's health record began, initially by a voluntary group interested in the employment of women and children. They noted that the jaw problems of the living painters had been experienced by some of the dead ones, but were assured by the company that the problems were caused by poor dental hygiene, radium being quite safe. However, a doctor had seen one of the dial painters and had suggested that her jaw infection had been caused by radioactivity. His idea caught the attention of Dr Harrison Martland, medical examiner for the area in which USRC had their factory. Martland decided to carry out autopsies on any USRC workers who were to die.

Independent work by an insurance company statistician, Dr Frederick Hoffmann, established (with the help of Sochocky who had become alarmed at the deaths and resigned from the Corporation) that the illnesses and deaths could not be coincidences. He saw it as a new occupational disease, announcing this in 1925, at the annual meeting of the American Medical Association. The company continued to maintain that the small quantities of radium could not be responsible for these illnesses.

But USRC did not reveal that, a year before, they had commissioned their own study, by Cecil Drinker and his colleagues at the Harvard School of Public Health, of working conditions at the plant. They told Drinker that the illnesses were the result of a "hysterical condition brought about by coincidence"! He found, however, that the workplace of the painters was extensively contaminated by radium.

Meanwhile, Martland was able to perform autopsies on two workers who had died after developing jaw necrosis (partial death) and anaemia. There were high levels of radioactivity in their bones and organs. Living painters breathed out enough

radioactivity to make zinc sulphide screens glow.

Martland's work revealed much about how the body treats radium, similar as it is to the natural body constituent, calcium. Its concentration in the bones and teeth explained the occurrence of anaemia (from damage to the blood-producing marrow) and jaw problems. This was relevant to the current practice of treating people with radium for all sorts of conditions, ranging from schizophrenia to waning sex-drive.

It was now possible to diagnose radium poisoning in its early stages, while the victim was enjoying a paradoxical good health. Inhalation of radioactive substances was also shown to be dangerous in itself. One victim of radium, Edwin Lehman, USRC's chemist, had absorbed some 70 cents' worth of radium (the then price being about \$3 million an ounce). This was enough to cause his death from acute anaemia (and for his bones to X-ray themselves!)

Eventually, after at least 15 deaths, some very ill workers took the company to court. In 1927, five women suffering from crippling bone diseases sued for \$250,000 damages. The case dragged on for a while, the company not denying liability but arguing that the claims were out of time. Eventually, an out-of-court settlement was negotiated. The company, "actuated solely by humanitarian considerations", gave the women \$10,000 each plus a pension of \$600 a year. This did not need to be paid for long. Sochocky was also to die, his body containing even more radioactivity than the dial painters.

As a result of the case of the dial painters, exposure limits and various other protections were brought in for workers with radiation. This benefited such as those who worked on the first atom bomb.

* *Multiple exposures*, Penguin, £5.99

Local government round-up

By Maxine Jordan, Manchester UNISON Car allowances dispute

Former NALGO members in UNISON are currently in dispute over car mileage allowances. Car users were balloted on withdrawing use of their car when the national employer refuse to back down on plans to reduce the amount car users can claim on their mileage.

The employers intend to scap the lump sum paid to Essential Car Users and reduce the mileage rates for casual car users, so everyone is worse off.

The action, which started on 19 July, has been very successful, despite attempts by some Councils to intimidate members, threats not to reimburse bus fares,

and refusals to provide adequate transport for disabled members.

The success of the dispute seems to have taken everyone by surprise, relative to the scale of attacks being carried out on the public sector, the issue seems small. But if the plans are allowed to proceed, it will be the first of many attacks on our nationally negotiated agreements.

Manchester Direct Works — CCT kills tenant

Following the tragic death of Albert Mason, a Manchester Council tenant, by carbon monoxide fumes from his heating system, the Council faces prosecution from the Health and Safety Executive.

It appears that 89% of nearly 2,000 new heating systems fit-

ted by Manchester Direct Works as part of a programme were wrongly installed.

The fiasco has prompted the resignation of the Director and the announcement that 70 workers face discipline. The individuals who carried out the work cannot be identified as no accurate records were kept, so it has serious implications for those responsible for keeping those records and for training the workers.

However, it also has serious implications for the future of Direct Labour Organisations and for Manchester in particular. But Tory policy forces DLOs to make a profit and compete for the work they already carry out. Contracts such as this one are awarded basically according to whoever can do the work cheapest, and there are no criteria for judging quality or for accountability.

Rail pay ballot lost

By an RMT member

The rail union RMT have lost their ballot for strike action against the Tories' 1.5% pay freeze.

Responsibility for the ballot defeat rests entirely with Knapp and the rest of the hard right majority on the council of executives.

Their cynical attempt to use the ballot simply as an occasion to organise the switch of union dues payment from the check-off to direct debit did not inspire confidence in their willingness to lead a fight.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

"No lessons needed from the modernisers" says Bill Morris

Council workers, firefighters, ambulance workers:

Strike to smash Tory pay freeze!

By Chris Croome, Sheffield
UNISON

THE GOVERNMENT'S 1.5% public sector pay limit has been categorically rejected by white collar workers in local government. There is now a real chance to defeat the government's attempt to make workers pay for the bosses' economic difficulties.

Low pay is a serious problem: a survey earlier this year indicated that 44% of members earned poverty pay.

Now is the time to regain lost ground and reverse the downward slide in our standard of living. Striking to smash the government's pay limit!

Despite a lacklustre campaign by the national leadership, UNISON and APT&C members voted to reject the employers' offer of 1.5%. There is now to be a ballot for six days of national strike action. The result is due on 27 September. If it is positive, action will start in the week commencing 4 October.

It is intended that two days of action will be taken to start with and the four other days as appropriate.

The first UNISON Executive meeting voted to limit strike pay to a maximum of £62.50. By contrast full pay was provided in the selective indefinite action of the successful 1989 dispute. However, this is not a bad thing. It would be naive to think that the employer will react with kid gloves, as in 1989. If they lock out workers unable to work because key personnel are on strike it would put the union on the defensive; escalating the action on full take home pay would not be feasible.

Selective action by key groups of workers will not shift the government. We need an active rolling programme of national action.

UNISON should be organising a national demonstration and march on parliament to coincide with one of the strike days.

UNISON is due to start consultations very soon about what form of action should be taken after the six days. This is premature.

Branches should be calling for a national meeting of branch delegates to be convened immediately after the two days action to discuss the direction of the dispute.

The timetable for the ballot of council white collar workers is sufficiently strung out to allow for the possibility of other groups of workers taking simultaneous action.

Local government manual and craft workers and ambulance workers have not yet settled this year's pay claims. The firefighters are committed to defending their pay formu-



UNISON should link up with the firefighters. Photo: John Harris

la and their union conference is meeting on 2 September, when industrial action will be considered.

It is essential that all the public sector unions in dispute over the pay limit co-ordinate their campaign for action at both national and local level.

Members will feel more confident about taking action if they know that they are not isolated and that enough other workers will be taking action to ensure that the pay limit is swiftly broken. The possibility of UNI-

SON linking up with the firefighters should be explored. Joint rallies and demonstrations against the pay limit should be built.

In local government a lot of work is going to have to be put in by activists in order that the vote for action is successful.

To supplement national publicity, branches should be producing local leaflets and organising workplace and departmental meetings on the pay limit.

The Tory government could be in for a rough ride this autumn!

Bill Morris, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union [TGWU], has hit out at the attempts by the right wing of the Labour Party to exclude local trade union branches from the selection of parliamentary candidates. Though still cautious in tone and conciliatory, this article originally published in *Tribune*, is the clearest statement of opposition to have yet emerged from the leadership of Labour's biggest affiliated union.

IT IS SAID THAT TRUTH is the first casualty of war. In the debate over Labour-trade union links it is certainly a victim in the hands of the spin-doctors. Consider the facts. The "modernisers" claim to be fighting for the right of every Labour Party member to vote in candidate selections and leadership elections to extend democracy in the party. I have news for them: every party member already has the right to vote in all those democratic procedures. The unions fought for them to gain those rights and would fight to protect them.

So the practical effect of the so-called "OMOV proposal" is not to extend democracy but to restrict it, by removing the unions from the electoral colleges that choose parliamentary candidates and the party leader and deputy. The modernisers have short memories. Individual party members won the right to vote in leadership elections only when the unions backed the campaign to extend the franchise in the teeth of opposition from the modernisers of that period.

One member one vote is not being advocated in any case. The leadership electoral college proposals would make each MP's vote equivalent to that of more than two constituency parties. Less than 300 Labour MPs would have the same share of the vote as more than 200,000 individual members — and that is before MPs exercise their right to vote as individual members of local parties as well as trade unionists. What the modernisers really want is: one MP loads of votes; one individual member one vote; 4 million trade unionists no votes.

The TGWU needs no lectures on democracy from the college of spin-doctors. We believe in the value of individual participation collectively expressed for union members. Anyone in the Labour Party who has a problem with the idea of a democratically expressed collectivism has clearly strayed into the wrong party.

The TGWU has proposed the drawing up of a binding code of practice to ensure that the collective input is democratically conducted, imposing obligations on affiliated organisations and closing any loopholes. Discussion on this idea could surely lay the basis for agreement on the remaining points of difference.

It is now clear that the alternative agenda is the salami-style removal of the unions from the Labour Party, slice by slice. When a senior Shadow Cabinet member proposes that trade unions should be stripped even of their right to nominate the leadership of the party, one doesn't need to be paranoid to see a conspiracy. Such colleagues are on the run before Tory-inspired propaganda, bending before the anti-union wind.

This article — slightly abridged — reprinted from *Tribune*, 30 July 1993.

If you want to help the campaign to defend the trade union link, write to: Keep The Link, 120 Northcote Road, London E17 7EB.

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SOCIALIST Inside this week
MALCOLM Behind the hype
see page 13

Buses, rail, pits, public sector

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Unite to beat sackings, sell-offs, cuts