

SOCIALIST

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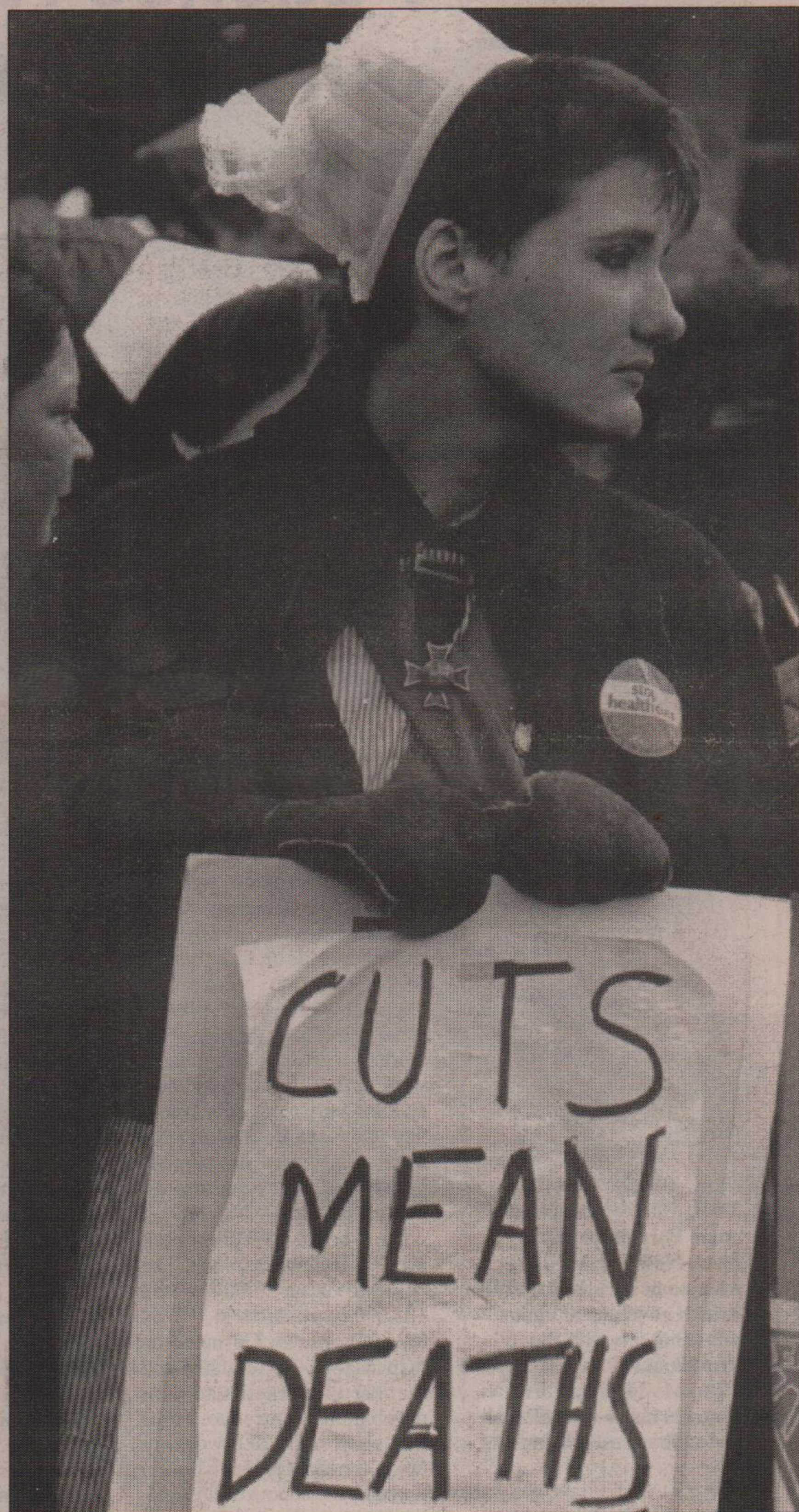


ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

Make Labour and TUC fight!

Bring back the NHS!



THE HEALTH Service is being chopped to bits by the Tories. Large parts of it have gone already.

To bring it back, we need action on three fronts.

FIRST, organising trade-unionists, activists, and community groups to support every local demonstration, protest and strike against the cuts.

SECOND, pressing the trade union leaders to organise a coordinated national campaign.

After 20 November, the next national focus should be a TUC day of action on a working day, including strike action.

THIRD, socialists must press for a political campaign. We must fight to commit the next Labour Government to restoring the Health Service — scrapping the “internal market” and making good all the financial cuts since 1975.

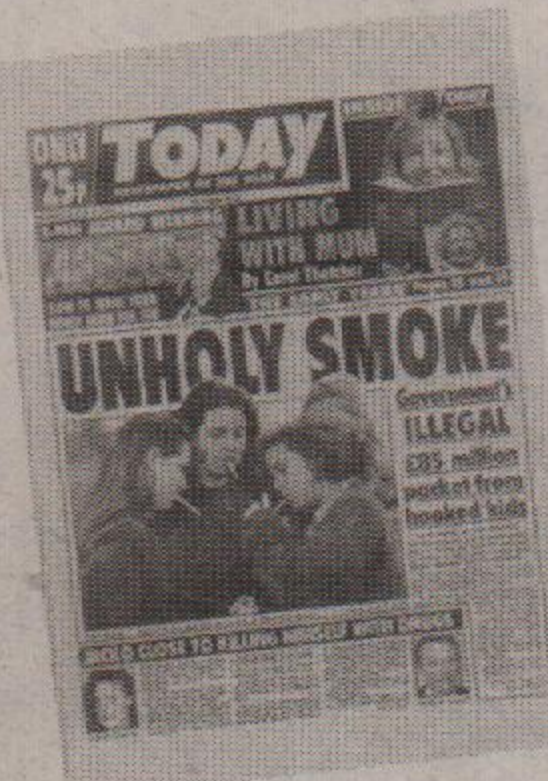
More on the NHS: pages 3, 4, & 5

SUPPORT STRIKES AGAINST CUTS!

The lie machine



The Star does its bit to keep the level of prejudice high — "the sponging bully" is an African political refugee brought to court in a case of domestic violence. A editorial on page 2 ("A soft touch — Britain!) says: "his appeal for asylum is as hollow as a bongo drum." They recommended instant deportation.

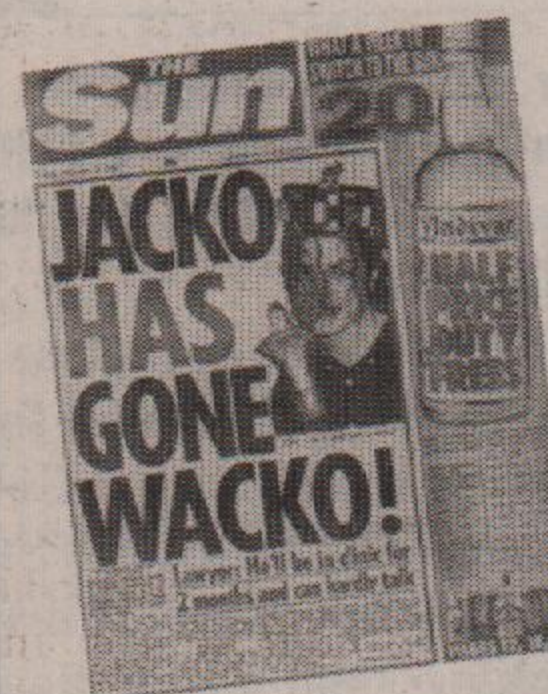


Hypocrisy from Today. Concern for youngsters hooked on tobacco is fine. Today is silent about the fact — no small part of the story and a major scandal in itself — that the government continues to permit tobacco to be advertised and through sporting sponsorships, glamorised.



Mock surprise from The Mail, which often acts as a crude Tory propaganda sheet. Now The Mail pretends to be surprised that the British government maintains contacts with the Provisional IRA.

The Mail has excellent contacts inside the political and military establishment.



The Sun reports the story of a disturbed young Afro-American accused of a serious crime!

For a united Ireland with federal rights for the Protestants!

Ireland: open talks now!

By Frank Higgins

SIGNALS FROM both the Dublin and London governments suggest that the Hume/Adams initiative for a settlement in Northern Ireland is far from dead.

Prime Minister John Major has said publicly that Sinn Fein could not forever be barred from the negotiating table around which a settlement

in Northern Ireland would be discussed. This is an implicit rejection of the stance of Unionists such as Ian Paisley.

It is too early to judge how seriously it is meant. It might be the beginnings of a British government determination not to be bound by the traditional Orange Unionist veto on change.

Last week Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds —

who heads a coalition government including the Labour Party — publicly explained the thinking that he probably shares with John Major, describing the present situation as a "historic opportunity" for an escape from the cycle of violence in Northern Ireland.

Both Dublin and London are insisting that an indefinite IRA ceasefire is the precondition for Sinn Fein's eventu-

al inclusion in "peace talks". Even if he wants to, Gerry Adams may not be able to deliver that.

What is perhaps still hopeful in the present situation is that all the participants, apart from the Orange Unionists, are now juggling publicly with "peace proposals" that have many key elements in common.

Gerry Adams has revealed that secret contact between

the British Government and Sinn Fein has been maintained for many months. Contact has now been broken off, he says, at the dictat of the Tory Government's Orange allies.

The signs, however, seem to indicate not Tory preparation for surrender to Orange demands, but maybe — and it is only maybe — the very opposite, for the first time in twenty years!

Patience runs out in Germany

LETTER FROM GERMANY

By Sandra Robinson

CHANCELLOR Kohl is not the most popular of people in Germany. Recently, I taught a class of German students and we conducted a balloon debate. The poor soul who had to justify himself as Kohl stood little chance as criticisms were thrown at him from all sides.

What about all the problems following unification, unemployment, the rise of the far right? and so on. No sufficient answers were forthcoming and Herr Kohl was rather unceremoniously but justifiably thrown out of the balloon.

And it's not just the students who are angry at Kohl and his government. It is the 100,000 builders and construction workers who took to the streets of Bonn at the end of October.

As the government tightens the belt on spending in an attempt to weather the storms of recession, they came up with the idea of scrapping "Schlechtwettergeld" (SWG) come 1996. This is the money the workers receive when unable to work outside due to bad weather. Not only does rain, snow and hail mean no work for the men and women in the construction industry but also no compensation.

The workers at Volkswagen are also feeling the pinch. The company sees 30,000 of the 103,000 workplaces in the six VW factories in Germany as dispensable. By reducing the number of workers and with negotiations to introduce a four day week with 28.8 working hours (reduced from 36 hours) the company hopes to sell 1.4 million cars next year in order to

increase profits. A reduction in hours also means a reduction in net wages, possibly between 16 and 20%.

The new works director Hartz likes to describe this concept of cutbacks as "Kosten statt Kopfe" (costs rather than heads). The workers must suffer a little more financially but be happy that they do at least have jobs. Hartz hopes the concept reaches as far as Audi and VW's subsidiary concerns abroad. Kosten statt Kopfe is really cold comfort to the workers in the car industry.

It would seem that the VW company gives the union IG Metall little choice in the matter but to accept the situation: after all, say VW, we could follow Daimler's example and reduce the workforce by thousands more.

The economic policies of Kohl's government are trying the patience of the German people. On every building site one sees posters demanding that SWG stays plus demanding "The Red Card for Chancellor Kohl".

The high school students see straight through the lies and false promises, and even the children at Kindergarten have been protesting against planned cutbacks in education by raising the banner asking, "I learn at Kindergarten. Where do the politicians learn?"

The German people's patience could soon run out as the government's economic policies hit the unemployed, poor, pensioners, children and the most vulnerable.

Enough is enough. Or, as they say in Germany... "We've had a nose full!"



Anti-racists and Jewish groups protested last Sunday, 14 November, as Germany's Chancellor Kohl and President von Weizsacker dedicated a new war memorial. They complained that the dedication put Jews and other victims of Nazism on the same level as the soldiers who died in the world wars, sometimes after being tools of Nazism against the Jews. Ironically, Kohl's memorial is a replica of a statue by the Communist sculptor Kathe Kollwitz.

Workers' Aid reaches Bosnia

By Nigel Foster

THE THREE remaining lorries of the International Workers' Aid convoy to Bosnia reached Tuzla on Monday 8 November.

They delivered medical supplies and the solidarity and support of the working people of Europe.

The convoy had left Dundee on 8 August. Within the month, nine lorries and one van were in Dover for the crossing to Dunkerque.

Then we headed for Lille, where we met with the leader of the local CFDT trade union federation, who pledged political support as well as use of union premises for a public meeting and a donation. Two regional newspapers and local television gave the campaign coverage.

From Lille, the convoy moved to Antwerp via Kortrijk. Our arrival was filmed for national TV broadcast. Encouraging support came from the Socialist trade union federation, the ABVV.

Next to Oberhausen, a town with a strong working-class tradition in the German industrial heartland of the Ruhr. An impressive array of speakers appeared at the public meeting, including trade union leaders, representatives of the Bosnian community, and members of the regional parliament.

Hannover, where we arrived the following day, had been able to set up International Workers' Aid there at extreme-

ly short notice, thanks to the hard work of local supporters of the United Secretariat (Fourth International).

The following day contacts in Hamburg informed us of a plot by Stalinist trade union officials to lead a boycott of the public meeting of Hamburg International Workers' Aid. We were asked to come and defend the position of the convoy on lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia.

We travelled to Hamburg, and the claim that we were demonising Serbian forces, as they put it, was countered by an eye-witness report from a convoy member who had been in Croatia during the Serbian invasion. The Stalinists walked out.

We took a short break, then set off for our next scheduled stop, Berlin.

At 11am, we held a photocall and gave interviews outside the Brandenburg Gate, having met up with the Swedish and Danish comrades. Meetings were held at the PDS offices and later with the Bischofferode miners' support group. In the evening we met with members of the Bosnian community of Berlin, and personal gifts and letters were taken for delivery in Tuzla.

I will continue with this brief diary next week, covering the convoy's arrival in ex-Yugoslavia and our battles to get through red tape and United Nations opposition, but this week I must finish with a brief word on the Workers' Aid con-

ference in Manchester on 30 October.

A short-sighted attempt by the Workers' Revolutionary Party to keep the Workers' Aid organisation "ad hoc" and undemocratic was passed. Their resolution also effectively narrowed the campaign to calling for the opening of one particular route to Tuzla, the Brko corridor.

They refused to support the convoy members who were still trying to reach Tuzla via Split (and subsequently succeeded). They implicitly reversed the "official" opposition of Workers' Aid to Western intervention (who else could open the corridor?)

Most serious of all, they then refused to recognise the International Workers' Aid conference the following day, and walked out of it.

The reason why the WRP repeatedly blocks a democratic structure for this organisation is that they don't want to lose control of it. They see themselves as synonymous with the working class, and consequently cannot see the purpose of cooperation with other Trotskyist groups.

The purpose of cooperation in this context is plain to see: in the success of the campaign to date in getting the political message across, building a permanent international workers' aid organisation, and getting aid to those who need it.

I do not doubt the sincerity of the WRP, but I have to seriously question their judgment.

Socialism or barbarism

Alliance for Workers' Liberty Student Weekend of debate and discussion 4-5 December

Manchester Town Hall, Albert Square, Manchester

Discussions include: Roots of racism • Why we need a working class women's movement • South African — after apartheid, civil war • 1917 — a flash in the pan? • Why students should be socialists for life • and lots lots more.

Registration: £3 with grant, £1 without grant
More details: 071-639 7967

Make Labour fight to restore NHS!

THE TORIES want to take us back to the sort of free-market capitalism we had before Labour — in the 1940s — built the modern welfare state. They are close to success in their drive to smash up the National Health Service. They are close to making Britain once again a society where the majority of working-class people have to live in discomfort or pain, and die early, because they cannot afford care.

Ten or even five years ago that would have sounded 'alarmist' or even 'crazy'. Today the facts speak for themselves. The NHS — the greatest achievement of the British labour movement — is bleeding to death.

The Tories are bringing market economics into the Health Service. At present it is only an "internal market", a sort of pretend-market — but that is the first step to an open market.

And markets, pretend or real, have one basic principle. If you have the money, you get what you want. If you don't, you don't. If you don't get in enough money, you go bust.

A market in health care means hospitals and doctors' practices going bust, and sick people being turned away for lack of money. Without those "budget constraints" there is no market.

The Tories' health policy is a fundamental attack on what the labour movement has achieved to make capitalism more civilised. It is an assault on those imprints of "the political economy of the working class" (as Karl Marx called it) made by over a century of working-class activity.

What can be done about it? A successful fightback calls for action on three fronts.

FIRST, organising trade-unionists, activists, and community groups to support every demonstration, protest and strike against the cuts.

Rank-and-file action can stop cuts. The Tories are discredited, disoriented, and divided. Their health policy is unpopular even among Tory voters.

Strikes against health cuts can win wide support. On this issue trade unions can successfully defy the Government's anti-union laws.

SECOND, pressing the trade union leaders to organise a coordinated national campaign.

The demonstration on 20 November should be the start of a campaign, not the end of it. It should be followed up with leaflets, pamphlets, local rallies and meetings.

The trade unions' research departments and their networks of full-time officials, should be put to work organising this campaign!



A market in health care means sick people being turned away for lack of money. Photo: Phil Maxwell

The next national focus should be a TUC day of action on a working day, including strike action. It would encourage and give double weight to all the local struggles.

"We must fight to commit the next Labour Government to restoring the Health Service."

THIRD, socialists must press for a political campaign. The Labour Party should join with the trade unions in a campaign of leaflets, pamphlets, meetings and demonstrations.

And we must fight to commit the next Labour Government to restoring the Health Service — scrapping the "internal market" and making good all the financial cuts since 1975.

While local strikes and protests can reverse cuts here and there, we can bring back the NHS in full vigour only by forcing action at government level. That means getting a Labour Government, and forcing that Labour Government to restore the NHS.

And not just to restore the NHS! There was plenty wrong with the NHS in 1975. It was leached by profiteering drug companies and by the use of NHS facilities for consultants' private patients.

It was hidebound by antiquated hierarchies. It was overwhelmingly geared to treating illness rather than promoting health and preventing illness. Local Health Authorities were

under little democratic control. All these issues will be taken up in a political fight to restore the NHS.

This part of the fightback is a long, hard job, but it is vital. The fight

"The TUC should call a day of action on a working day, including strike action."

inside the Labour Party and its affiliated trade unions is a central part of working-class politics. If we duck out of that fight, then we duck out of working-class politics in favour of

militant piecemeal trade unionism.

It is a long, hard job, but Labour can be shifted. At the Labour Party conference in October, Labour's leaders made promise after promise — to make solidarity strikes legal, to scrap "compulsory competitive tendering", and more. They did it because they wanted to sweet-talk trade unions into backing their "one member, one vote" carve-up.

As soon as the pressure on them slackens, they will weasel out of any promises. Just last week, barely a month after Labour Party conference, Labour leader John Smith was disavowing the Euro-socialist manifesto's call for a 35-hour work-week.

But if the trade unions and the constituency Labour Party membership push the issue, consistently and sharply, then Labour's leaders can be shifted — or thrown out and replaced by new leaders.

"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 reports Monday)

Editor: John O'Mahony
Sales Organiser: Jill Mountford
Published by: WL Publications Limited
Printed by: Eastway Offset (TU) London E9

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

WE SAY

"The socialists" in conference

"THERE is still a massive allegiance to Labour... It would be a mistake to think Labour cannot shift to partially reflect workers' anger... [we should note] the large audience which Labour has".

What's that? An editorial from *Socialist Organiser*? No, Lindsey German from the Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee, as reported in *Socialist Worker's* account of the recent SWP conference (*SW*, 13 November).

If you read the *SW* report carefully, you see that she must have been replying to a debate. Some SWP members take seriously *SW's* routine talk about the Labour Party being dead and irrelevant, and the SWP being "the [only?] socialists". Honest and sincere people — unlike the leaders of "the socialists" — they draw the indicated conclusions. They want the SWP to stand against Labour in elections.

German said no: "What is important is selling papers and organising those who want to fight. That is the way we will develop into a genuine mass working-class party". This little snippet tells us a lot about the SWP.

Typically, *SW* "reports" the debate without giving any indication at all of the opposition's arguments, and without even stating plainly what the issue in dispute was.

That sort of coverage will do if the function of a socialist paper is just to allow a few "experts" to hand down a pre-packaged "line". It will not do at all if the aim is to educate an organisation, and as large as possible a periphery around it, in such a way that they can fight effectively for ideas, find new answers to new situations as they arise, and become "experts" themselves.

If a socialist paper is to do that, then it must examine the alternatives and show the process of reasoning which leads to one proposal and away from another which perhaps seems at first sight to respond just as well to the basic anger fuelling the struggle. In short, it must encourage its readers to think, and if necessary, teach them to.

BUT *SOCIALIST WORKER* does not aim to educate in that way. Lindsey German sums it up quite aptly: "What is important is selling papers and organising those who want to fight. That is the way we will develop into a genuine mass working-class party".

If so, then the "line" is whatever will sell most papers and attract the greatest number of those who want to fight. Whether it is consistent, logical, responsible, or capable of showing how to win, is quite secondary.

That is how the SWP actually operates. The Labour Party question discussed by Lindsey German is one example.

Week after week, *Socialist Worker* says that the Labour Party is dead and irrelevant, and that the SWP are "the socialists". Some SWPs take this seriously, and argue for the SWP to stand candidates in elections.

The SWP leaders say no because they know better — they know that they are not giving the full picture in *SW*.

They say "no" because they know that at election time the mood of "those who want to fight" swings round, and SWP bluster about elections, parliament and Labour being irrelevant will repel them. They know that at election time they will want to cover the streets with SWP fly-posting saying "Vote Labour", because then that will be the way to sell papers to "those who want to fight".

To judge from the SWP conference report, the SWP has parallel problems in its trade union work. A chunk of the report is about how socialists "need to keep up pressure on the trade union leaders... need to pressure union leaders to start a fight... We have to understand that trade union leaders... can be moved... We have to seize any chance given by the union leaders".

Who disputes it? Why did the SWP leaders need to labour this point to their very small and select band of conference delegates? It must be that some SWPs take the stuff about Labour being dead and irrelevant seriously, and apply it also to the official trade-union machines, which are, after all, the core of that "dead and irrelevant" Labour Party. Again, the SWP leaders step in to stamp on consistent or logical thinking!

THERE are many other examples of the SWP devising its "line" according to what is best to sell papers or to attract "those who want to fight". At the time of the big protests against pit closures in October last year, *SW* suddenly appealed to the TUC to call a "General Strike Now!"

The protests showed the labour movement just beginning to revive from years of heavy defeat. To propose an immediate, semi-revolutionary, "smash-or-be-smashed" assault on the Government was daft. More accurately, it would have been daft if the SWP had made any serious effort in the trade unions to get a general strike going. They did nothing of the sort. The "General Strike Now!" slogan, which lasted only a few weeks, was for SWP "image-making", not for serious trade-union use.

Or take Ireland. Sometimes the SWP is very militant about "Troops Out Now". Other times, as at present, it leaves that aside and claims that workers' unity in Northern Ireland against the Tories on issues like VAT on fuel "show[s] there is a way out".

In fact the SWP leaders are neither naive Irish nationalists, nor believers that trade-unionism can solve all political problems. They simply adopt one stance or the other depending on what will "sell papers and organise those who want to fight".

The SWP approach is criminally short-sighted. An organisation built by political corner-cutting cannot be "strong" in the ways that matter most. It cannot stand firm in political crises, and it cannot lead the working class to victory in those crises.

Market m
cuts destA tragedy
for patients

FIFTEEN consultants from Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool this week publicly condemned the lack of staff and beds at the largest specialist children's hospital in the North of England.

Their public fears reflect what patients already know. Despite the Tories' "facts and figures" people are being forced to wait longer and are often treated worse when they need vital operations.

All the Tories' cant about Patients' Charters has not stopped horror stories from the NHS becoming more and more common. An elderly lady 'lost' in Greenwich District Hospital Intensive Care, patients from Manchester shipped 50-60 miles on a regular basis because of lack of beds, children denied treatment because specialist units have closed.

But behind the horror stories are the more regular, now routine, individual hor-

rors. Patients admitted to hospitals for operations sent away on the day because the theatre is overstretched, treatments regularly cancelled, patients being discharged quickly to save money and then being re-admitted because they don't recover.

The Tories' policies are undermining and demoralising our NHS through a policy of constant cutbacks. Patients' individual complaints have more than doubled in the last two years, not because the Patients Charter makes it 'easier to complain' but because the system can't cope and their lives are being disrupted or wrecked as a result.

Health Service staff feel the pressure too, trying to cope with reduced nursing levels and budgets pared to the bone. On top of trying to cope they have faced clamp-downs on pay and attacks on conditions from Trusts that are sending the NHS into a spiral of demoralisation.

We have to stop the rot.

Who benefits
from the new
NHS culture?

HEALTH bosses often try to justify their attempts to make deals with the private sector on the grounds that it brings money into the NHS.

The truth is the opposite. Even the government's National Audit Office has criticised the massive waste of NHS money which has resulted from the use of outside consultants. In one region of the NHS — Wessex — a massive £43 million was lost over 6 years when "enterprise and initiative" was used as the reason for developing a computer system that didn't work, because the health authorities virtually let the private contractors write their

own contracts.

In the West Midlands, private consultants brought in to 'improve' the supplies department at a cost of £2.5 million arranged frequent air-travel for themselves and paid out lunch expenses to themselves and then had to be paid off when the authorities ended their contract.

Who pays for the mistakes? Not the managers who make them. The government's own Comptroller and Auditor General described Mr Chris Watney of the West Midland RHA as having "a cavalier disregard" for standards of public conduct. Despite this, the Regional Health Authority were found to have overpaid him by £41,500 when he left their employ-

.....By Richard
Bayley
and Nik Barstow

THE Tories' health market is shutting down hospitals and severely restricting other NHS services.

Underpinning the crisis is the underfunding of the NHS; the "internal market", however, ensures that the crisis hits patients in the most perverse ways.

Cash for providing NHS services is held by local Health Authorities and those GPs who have become "fund holders". They then "purchase" services from hospitals and community units, the majority of those being NHS Trusts.

The cash-strapped Authorities have been merging with each other to increase their buying power, playing off one hospital against another, in a bid to get cheaper services. Increasingly, they are also placing restrictions on what they will and won't fund. Whole services have become unavailable on the NHS in some areas, whilst consultants' definitions of clinical need are being over-ridden by Trust managers anxious to work exactly to contract.

If an Authority decides to move its business elsewhere, the effects on a local hospital are devastating. University College Hospital in London cancelled all its non-emergency admissions after the local Health Authority cancelled its contracts with it recently!

GPs who want to wheel and deal within the new-style NHS have been encouraged to hold their own funds for patient treatment. They are not restricted by their local Authority contracts in where they send their patients (including the private sector) and can bargain with hospitals over both the cost of treatment and patient admissions. Much like "opted-out" schools, GP fund-holders were feather-bedded financially by the government, so as to push GPs into running their own budgets. But despite this, the majority of GPs do not wish to be fundholders and have so far resisted it.

For the first two years of the reforms, the main fear has been of a "two-tier" service: patients being treated not on the basis of clinical need, but on the basis of which purchaser has the cash. After this Christmas, this will be a stark reality, as perhaps as many as half of the Trusts exhaust the cash available to them in this financial year for non-urgent treatment.

And the bubble may have burst for GP fundholding. Earlier this month, a fundholding GP in Lancashire was forced to cancel all non-urgent surgical referrals because it had

run out of money!

Within the Trusts, commercialisation goes on apace. An army of management and accountants have been brought in to manage contracts and keep staff who actually care for patients in line. There is an informal job freeze in most hospitals now, with vacancies left unfilled and staff being asked to work harder to keep within contract guidelines. Despite widespread revulsion at the number of Tory grandees and businessmen running the Trusts, ridiculous appointments go on and on. The new Chief Executive of Scarborough NHS Trust is an ex-US Army Colonel!

The lunacy of the Tories' 'internal market' adds a vicious and senseless twist to a policy that — above all — is about less money for the NHS.

The Tories are cutting across the board, and they're making the deepest cuts in the areas where people need health services most.

IN a system devised alongside their market 'reforms' the Tories decided to change NHS funding to a 'capitation' (head-count) system and ignore people's health and social needs altogether.

A 'poll tax in reverse', it gives less money to areas that need it most, as if inner-city areas were 'over-provided-for' by the NHS.

Among top ten losers from the Tories' new policy are areas recognised on any scale as some of the most deprived in the country: some of the central areas of Manchester, Birmingham and London, as well as areas like Sheffield and Newcastle.

Manchester, for example, is set to lose £10 million of NHS funding over the next three years — a cut of 5% in cash terms, even more (over 10%) when inflation is taken into account.

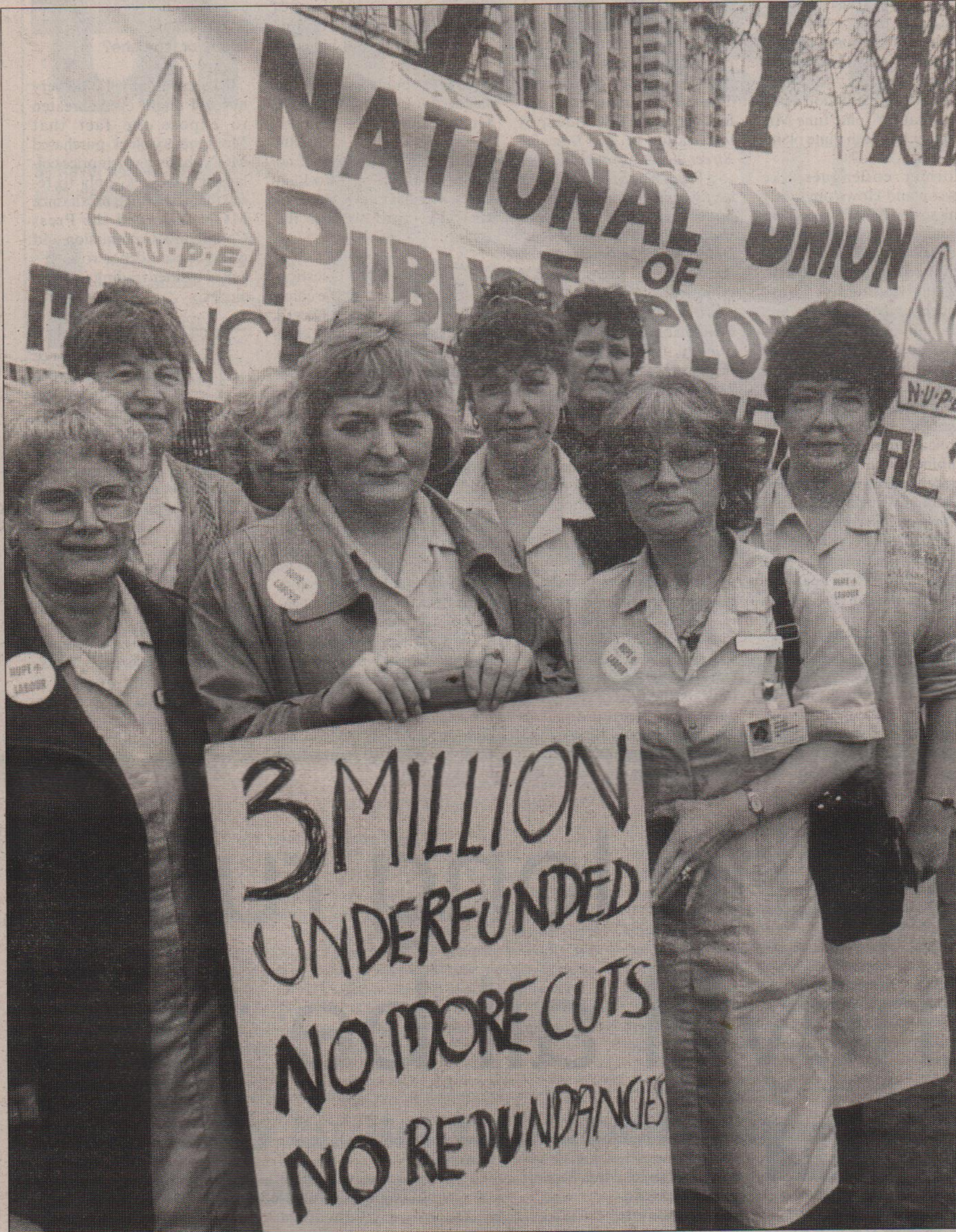
The cost will be hospital closures, bed closures, loss of services in the community and chaos for the NHS already thrown into confusion by the Tories' market.

Doubtless the Tories will say it is the 'invisible hand' of the market that is forcing cuts, not their deliberate policy of cutting the NHS in some of the places it is needed most.

Figures produced by the Department of Health on 15 November showed that the areas of the country with the most 'excess deaths' — above the expected numbers — are precisely the ones losing most money: the Northern Region (13.5% more deaths), the North West (10.5%), Merseyside (8.3%), Yorkshire (3.5%), West Midlands (3.1%) and Trent (2.5%).

The Tories know they are condemning more people to an early grave — it is their 'back to basics' policy for the

Madness and mayhem destroy the NHS



Manchester faces 10% cuts in NHS funding over the next three days. Photo: John Smith

Market will bite after April 1994

By April 1994 almost every part of the NHS will be run by Trusts and the internal market will really start to 'let rip'. The government won't be bailing out hospitals who become 'losers'. Hospitals will start to go to the wall in an explosion of 'price cutting' to attract business from the

Health Authorities.

The language used by managers sums up the new business approach. The North West Thames Regional Health Authority talk about the need "to justify early hits (whole sites)" in secret reports on "agency-preferred providers" (hospitals) and the rest.

One Trust general manager from St Mary's, Paddington

said "We will begin to see winners and losers in the market. That has not happened yet, but the sooner we have our first loser the easier it will be to pass the emotional barrier." The emotional barrier is, of course, your local hospital.

For health bureaucrats and managers this system is a dream. Who is to be held to account for this lunacy? No one, it's the

market!

People's health cannot be looked after by a market system — the 'consumers' do not have any choice anyway.

The only 'consumers' (i.e. the patients) who do have a choice are the wealthy who 'opt out' altogether and use private medicine. The rest of us are being used as guinea pigs in a mad experiment.

What is Labour Party policy?

WHILST David Blunkett and the rest of Labour's Health team have made noises about NHS cuts, there is a huge gap in Party policy about how the NHS is run.

Implicitly, Labour now appears to accept the principle of the "internal market" within the NHS, whilst arguing that it should be more regulated.

Labour leaders have abandoned opposition to Trust hospitals as a "dead duck" and have said little about how Labour would control them (if indeed, they would). The word "democracy" occasionally gets an airing without any clear indication about how they would go about introducing it into the

NHS.

Most damningly, Labour have jumped into line with the Tories over major policy issues in the NHS. The most glaring example is their shared belief in the need to run down large inner city hospitals to pay for improved primary services (e.g. GPs and Health Centres). This was the most clearly seen over the Tomlinson enquiry, where there was little or no opposition from the Labour front bench to the proposed rundown of hospitals in London.

GPs and hospital workers have led the fight against the decimation of London's hospitals; they should now direct their fire at the Labour front bench by taking their campaign into the Party, both through their unions and as members.

Linking together rank-and-file NHS workers

By Nik Barstow,
UNISON NWRHA branch

UNISON activists from health branches across the country, from Bournemouth to Aberdeen, met in Manchester on 13 November.

The network is still small but it provides a chance to get to grips with the problems faced by NHS activists.

Clive Bass, a member of UNISON's National Health Committee, introduced the discussion by outlining the problems of isolation that branches and workplace organisations face in UNISON because a merger 'on the ground' hasn't yet taken place. The danger, unless we move fast, is that our disorganisation ties in with the aims of NHS bosses to divide the NHS workforce into "bite-sized chunks".

One of the things that the activists agreed to follow up on was issues like rule changes which will be needed for the first conference in May 1994 to make the union's health group more accountable.

The main theme was how to build up confidence and organisation in the face of a wide range of attacks. Regional and National NHS agencies face virtual closure or sweeping 'market testing'. Hospital Trusts are trying everything from employing £10 a week 'volunteers' to forcing all staff to

re-apply for their own jobs on new contracts outside national conditions. But reports showed that they certainly weren't winning everywhere and that there were a lot of lessons to be learnt.

Simple, practical proposals like demanding that the union's own stewards' paper, *UNISON week*, should have a 'bulletin board' on NHS issues, were agreed and will be acted on. But some longer-term plans were thought through too.

Perhaps most important will be for UNISON in the NHS to find a national and local focus to unite members against a bewildering array of local attacks.

The importance of bringing together union activists across a range of hospitals to prevent members being dragged in the 'price war' that will take place from April 1994 was recognised.

To tie the local struggles together nationally we will need a vigorous campaign for a national pay increase next year for all NHS workers to break the 'zero' pay freeze we face.

To build for that a fuller activist conference is planned for early next year.

Contact UNISON Health Network:

Caroline Bedale,
123 Coppice Street,
Oldham OL8 4BH
(UNISON Manchester Health No3 Branch).

Tricks of a sick trade

LIFE can be so very hard at the top. Take the case of Martin Levitt. From 1969 to 1988 he was one of the US's top union-bashers. Now Levitt has published his autobiography, *Confessions of a union buster*.

The book explains the tricks of his trade. His spies in the unions would inform him of a unionisation drive, whereupon he would ring up the management of the company targeted and offer his services as the only man who could save them from a well-organised workforce. Equipped with a huge expense account, he would foment trouble in the workplace in order to find out who in the workforce had any fight about them (these people are technically known as "troublemakers") and then sack them. Worse still, some of the troublemakers were "persuaded" to act as his agents in the workplace to stir up more trouble and spy on their workmates. The union's recruitment drive would then be blamed for the unpleasant turn in the workplace, usually causing it to fail.

The portrait of Levitt that his autobiography paints is a tragic one. He becomes an alcoholic, his wife leaves him and joins a Californian love cult, he is diagnosed as a manic-depressive. Levitt, in his own words, ends up a "fat, middle-aged man puking up eggs in a motel bathroom". He eventually gave up union-bashing, racked with guilt and shame.

So remember, don't bash trade unions, it can screw you up.

FAIR, impartial and democratic (part one). As nominations close for the forthcoming elections in Russia, not everyone agrees that Boris Yeltsin is the saviour of democracy. Take the nationalist "Russian All-People's Union" (admittedly, not a group of people you'd want to share your Parliament with).

Their leader, Sergei Baburin, one of those who seized the White House, claims that he collected the 100,000 signatures necessary to stand in the elections, but the police raided his party's offices and confiscated 22,000 of them. Given the raid was the day before the deadline for registration for the elections, the All-People's Union feel a little aggrieved.

FAIR, impartial and democratic (part two). Of course, election rigging could never happen in the home of Western democracy — no, not EuroDisney, but the USA. They have much more sophisticated methods.

The incumbent Democratic Governor of New Jersey, Jim Florio, was beaten by his Republican challenger, Christine Todd Whitman. The winning margin was 40,000 votes, so every little counted.

According to a senior Republican strategist, Ed Rollins, they made sure that every little did count. A slush fund of \$500,000 was used to stop the New Jersey black vote being mobilised for the Democratic candidate. Black churches found

GRAFFITI

VIVELA REVOLUCION

By Cyclops

unprecedented amounts of money in the collecting dish in return for not backing Florio. Black campaign workers for the Democrats were offered the same wages to go home and watch TV. As a result the black vote fell from 12% of electors to 8%, which could well account for Whitman winning.

The day after Rollins spilled the beans, he retracted his comments. Presumably someone had given him a large wad of dollars.

THE good news: Labour is launching a campaign against VAT on fuel in 82 marginal constituencies. (OK, it's only a petition, but it's better than nothing).

The bad news: Labour is refusing to commit itself to repeal the fuel tax when it's next in office.

So if your Labour Party is one of those 82, remember to keep a copy of that petition — you may need it after the next election!

GOOD to see those sturdy defenders of the public interest, journalists, scribbling away to tell us the causes and solutions of public disillusionment with politicians. A recent poll found that politicians are widely disliked and distrusted. They apparently are seen as self-seeking, economical with the truth and generally untrustworthy.

Of course journalists are the people to lead us out of this malaise. Funny that most forgot to mention that a little lower in the public ratings than politicians you can find... journalists.

THE governor-elect of New Jersey may have a stomach for corrupt election tactics, but when the going gets tough her guts can let her down.

In a country run by a man who apparently doesn't know you have to inhale when you smoke cannabis, the Republican governor is in an altogether higher league. "Unlike the president, I inhaled. And then I threw up", she said responding to reports that Sunday dinner hadn't been her only experience with joints. When is a politician going to emerge who can prove their competency for high office by first mastering the relatively simple skill of smoking dope?

LAST Thursday John Patten was due to appear at an educational conference to talk to school teachers about truancy. They waited in vain. He did not show up. A badly written note purporting to be from John Major saying John had an important Cabinet meeting did not convince anyone. Did anyone check behind the bicycle sheds?

Mad as well as bad

PRESS GANG

THE INDEPENDENT TODAY
The Guardian Sunday PRESS

By Jim Denham

EVEN NOW I hesitate to say it, let alone write it in a Marxist publication.

We're not supposed to concern ourselves with such matters and, anyway, it's beside the point. But still, don't you agree that for some time Mrs Thatcher has been quite plainly... well... mad?

Former colleagues like Lawson and Howe obviously think so and have come as near as dammit to saying so in public. Auberon Waugh and Richard Ingrams wrote articles questioning her sanity throughout the late '80s — but, then, both of them are notorious misogynists, as well as being self-consciously "outrageous".

A couple of years ago the *Guardian's* Edward Pearce, in a typical outburst of honesty combined with priggishness, called her "a vulgar, mean, emotionally unstable, brazen and hysterical woman whose government has left a bad taste that will outlast the knuckle-end of this century". The *Sun's* occasionally entertaining Richard Littlejohn has called her "barmy" and "barking" as well as noting a "strange stare" in her eyes.

But I think it was the former Tory MP Matthew Parris, now the *Times's* political columnist, who first spelled it out in print. "She has gone mad", he

wrote in his review of *The Downing Street Years* last month.

The fact that Parris survived, unsmitten by either writ or thunderbolt, seems to have emboldened at least some of the rest of the "serious" press. Thatcher's extraordinary performance in the BBC's four-part television of *The Downing Street Years* brought matters to a head. The question of her sanity could no longer be swept under the carpet. But how to broach this ticklish subject? Enter those licensed jesters of the "serious" press, the TV critics.

Critic of the Year, Allison Pearson of the *Independent on Sunday*, neatly moved from discussing *If You See God, Tell Him* — a new BBC "comedy-drama" about an old man who can't distinguish between advertisements and reality — to "another tragic pensioner" who can't recognise "an outbreak of sanity when she sees one".

Craig Brown, in the *Sunday Times*, watched the studio audience in *The Hypnotic World of Paul McKenna*, who had been hypnotised into believing they were criminals, film directors, John Travoltas and so forth. "I was reminded of the stare-eyed, self-dramatising look on the face of Margaret Thatcher throughout *The Downing Street Years*. Could it be that Margaret Thatcher requires hypnosis before she

can fully believe herself to be Margaret Thatcher?"

Best of all was John Naughton in the *Observer*. "Three weeks ago, writing about the first episode, I said that Baroness Hacksaw, though clearly barmy, was not clinically insane. Having now seen all four episodes of this riveting case study in paranoid delusion, I think we may safely say that, at the very least, here we have a lady who is a fit case for care in the community".

Now, either this kind of stuff is irresponsible and libellous — in which case there is no excuse for publishing it, even in the guise of a TV review. Or, the editors of the "serious" newspapers believe that Mrs Thatcher's sanity is at least open to question. In which case, why have they left it to their TV critics to raise the issue?

ON THE question of sanity, we come to Mr David Montgomery, chief executive of Mirror Group Newspapers. No-one doubts that the monumentally ill-advised decision to publish the secretly-taken pictures of Princess Di in her leotard was Montgomery's, and his alone. And no-one doubts that the equally foolish decision to brazen out the opprobrium of the rest of the press, up to the point of resigning from the Press Complaints Commission, came from the self-same megalomaniac.

But when it came to climbing down, eating humble pie, and admitting to "errors of judgment", Montgomery was nowhere to be seen. Instead, his pathetic *Daily Mirror* editor, the tragi-comic David Banks, had to take the flak.



Is she or isn't she?

If I were Banks, I'd be very upset. I might even threaten to expose the fact that Montgomery block-purchased MGN shares as their price collapsed last week, only to resell them at a huge profit once MGN re-joined the Press Complaints Commission and investor confidence rose. It's called insider trading in some circles.

THE *GUARDIAN* newspaper was once legendary for its typos — misprints to you and me. These have largely disappeared in recent years, thanks to new technology. However, last week the *Guardian* returned to form with a classic "typo".

I missed it when it originally appeared, but my attention was drawn by the following apology. "Owing to an editing error, Hugo Young's column yesterday described Michael Portillo as 'a conman of a different order of seriousness and coherence from any of his rivals'. What Hugo Young wrote was that Portillo is 'in command of a different order of seriousness'. We apologise to both".

In the long run they'll all be five

WOMEN'S EYE

By Claire Jones

"THE BASIC building block for the rest of the education system", says the National Commission on Education when recommending universal nursery education for three and four year olds in its report issued on 15 November.

Almost everyone agreed except the Tory Government. Tory minister John Patten said that universal nursery education would be too expensive.

It would cost £860 million — or about 1.7 per cent of the £50 billion budget deficit currently being run by the Tory Government.

According to research done in the USA, each £1 spent on good nursery education can yield a return of between £4

and £7 in reduced crime, reduced need for social services, and the children becoming

better-educated and more productive adults. British research indicates that the under-five years are the decisive ones for education: children who are lagging when they start school at the age of five rarely catch up.

There is also an additional "return" through the parents of nursery children being better able to go out to work. Universal nursery education would immediately undercut much of the

Tories' froth and bluster about single mothers, by enabling

many single mothers to go out to work.

Long-term, spending the £860 million on nursery education would bring a financial return of over £4 billion. West European countries like France and Belgium provide publicly-financed childcare for up to eight hours a day for 95 per cent of three-to-five year olds without being financially crippled by it. Britain provides publicly-aided childcare for only 54 per cent of three-to-five year olds,

and that mostly in playgroups with short hours. Only one per cent of three-to-five year olds

have public childcare for the whole working day. If a tremendous amount of money is being saved by this shortfall on childcare, who is raking it in?

The human and social benefits of greater nursery provision are more important than the financial benefits. Children who grow up better educated, more productive, less inclined to crime, and less needy of social services, are also happier! Parents who have a chance to go out to work, instead of being cooped up with small children in small flats all day (or almost all day), are happier too.

But happiness means nothing to the Tories. Even long-term financial benefits do not mean much. Short-term gain, the bottom line, is what matters.

No number of reasoned studies or research reports is going to budge the Tories. Only a determined campaign by the labour movement will do that.

Save our student unions!

By Kevin Sexton, National Union of Students Vice President

In this Thursday's Queen's Speech (18 November) the government looks set to announce the destruction of the biggest youth organisation in Europe — the National Union of Students (NUS). The NUS is the national union for nearly two million students who, through their university or college student unions, vote to affiliate to NUS.

Student unions and thus indirectly NUS too, are funded through grants from universities and colleges. This is vital for their existence, because students are now so poor. Most student unions run welfare and social facilities.

The government plans to destroy the campaigning part of student unions and to shut down the National Union of Students.

The Tories do not want to shut down the rugby clubs at Oxford and Cambridge. They do not want to close every student union bar. Their plan, outlined in a Department of Education document, is to strangle any political campaigning activity by student unions.

Unions will be fined and even prosecuted if they use any union funds or union facilities — printing or union officers' time for instance — to campaign or to affiliate to campaigning organisations like NUS.

The Tories are also pushing college bosses to start charging student tuition fees.

By smashing NUS they hope to prevent organised opposition by students to this fundamental attack on



The Student Union Establishment's line: "Don't demonstrate! Defend your union positively! Write to your MP!" Manchester Metropolitan University Student Union leaders try to sabotage the 3 November demonstration. Photo: Mick Duncan

education.

The right-wing Labour leaders of NUS and their co-thinkers in student union offices round the country have made it clear that they do not want to lead students into action against these attacks. They plan to sit tight and hang onto their bars and union buildings as student service businesses.

They tried to placate the Tories by promising to make NUS into a non-political charity.

The bankruptcy of the Labour Student leadership is now so complete that they have not even run a campaign against tuition fees.

The Labour Party leadership, too, now accepts the idea of tuition fees paid for by 'Graduate Tax'. To keep in with these leaders their apprentices in NUS oppose any fightback.

Many right-wing student union sabbatical officers see themselves as 'managers' of 'businesses'. As long

as the bar, the sports clubs and the union shop are safe, and they can strut around being 'boss', they will not oppose the Tories.

Activists from the National Executive of NUS, NUS Area organisations, student union executives and local student union memberships are organising a real battle against the union bashing of the Tories. We built a 2,000-strong demonstration in Manchester on 3 November and we are now taking the fightback to Parliament.

On 25 November we are organising a lobby of Parliament.

Only an active movement can beat the Tories. Build for the mass lobby. Start the fightback in your college!

How to build the lobby in your college

- Make sure publicity is out as soon as possible. (Camera-ready artwork available from Kev Sexton: 071-272 8900/071-639 7967)
- Book transport today! Book a coach if the campaign goes well. Book another one next Tuesday.
- Call a General Meeting for this Friday — or as soon after the Queen's Speech as possible. Explain to students what the Tories' attacks will mean.
- Use the meeting to build for the lobby, sell tickets for the coach.
- Contact MPs in the constituencies surrounding your college. Tell them students will be in the Commons on Thursday and arrange a meeting.
- Organise a press stunt that involves students in the build up to the lobby.
- Contact local papers, radio and TV. Use the weekend and evenings to visit student halls/accommodation. Do a door-to-door sale of tickets for the coach to the lobby. Take around a petition against the government's attacks.
- Organise meetings in halls/bars/common rooms, or just make announcements for the lobby after Top of the Pops, East Enders and Brookside when most people will be around.
- Have a stall every day in the hall, bar or foyer of the library. Advertise the lobby, sell tickets, collect names on a petition.
- Organise a meeting a couple of days after the lobby on "building the campaign to save student unions". Give out leaflets advertising the meeting on the coaches to the lobby.
- Keep the name, course and address of everyone who buys a ticket, books a place on the coach or signs the petition. Get these people involved in the campaign to Save Our Student Unions.

Lobby of Parliament

Thursday 25 November

Assemble: 1pm, Parliament Square

Called by "Save our Student Unions"

Contact: Kevin Sexton, Elaine Jones or Richie Carrothers on 071-272 8900

YOUTH FIGHTBACK
Rebellion

... 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.

7

Stop the deportations now!

On Saturday 27 November the public service trade union UNISON is calling a national demonstration in Birmingham in support of Prakash and Prem Chavrimootoo's right to stay in Britain.

Prakash entered Britain 'legally' as the spouse of a British citizen but left the marriage after she and her son Prem suffered both physical and psychological abuse.

The Home Office wants to deport Prakash and her 10-year old son. The Home Secretary is refusing to hear appeals.

For more details, please call UNISON on 021-643 6084.

Bigot of the week

FATHER JAMES Morrow is a member of the American-style 'direct action' anti-abortion "Rescue" group. He said this week:

"God said go forth and multiply. If he didn't want us to do that, he would come back and tell us, but he won't because his revelation is now complete."

Father James does not believe that women should have control of their own bodies. He claims that he has rescued a hundred babies from 'murder', but that he does not physically stop women who want to have abortions.

However, he has been convicted of assaulting a pregnant manager of an abortion clinic.

Women should have the right to decide whether they want to terminate a pregnancy or to go through with the birth.

Northern Ireland: who will fight for a democratic

Could a Labour Party help

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty has recently re-discussed the idea of a trade union based Labour Party in Northern Ireland. Tony Dale outlines our provisional conclusions. We invite contributions to a discussion on this very important question.

SOcialist ORGANISER'S proposed policy for Ireland is a federal, united Ireland. This idea of a federal settlement is a proposal for a democratic solution to the conflict between Unionists and Nationalists in Northern Ireland. If this were to be implemented by the British and Irish governments then we would support that settlement. But we do not advocate "federalism" now as a piece of advice to the British and Irish ruling classes.

We put it forward as a policy for the workers' movement, as a basis on which workers' unity can be built and the Protestant/Catholic division in the Northern Irish working class overcome.

Marxists advocate consistent democratic settlements to national and communal conflicts. We aim to remove obstacles to the

development of an independent, united workers' movement.

In Britain and Southern Ireland it is clear where we fight for this policy — in the labour movement, that is in the Labour Parties and in the trade unions.

We also need to look for ways to put this policy forward within Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, it is difficult to see any democratic settlement being achieved without some reconciliation within the working class, without some progress being made towards workers' unity.

If our federal policy is about working class unity and not constitutional advice to the establishment, then we need to also look at complementary ways of building working-class unity, trade union action against sectarian murders for example.

Another way is to advocate that the trade

unions fight the Unionists and nationalists by putting up Labour candidates in elections. How will the working class ever fight for a federal united Ireland if it is not capable of creating a political wing i.e. a Labour Party?

Our political strategy for Northern Ireland is, like our strategy everywhere, to build a workers' movement capable of ripping the head off capitalism. That needs a united working class. Federalism is not an end in itself, but a means to remove the obstacles to working-class unity. Our aim is working-class unity. Federalism is part of our programme and so should be the call

for the trade unions to launch a Labour Party.

Despite the division in the Northern Irish working class the trade union movement is not fundamentally split along sectarian lines.

Of course, many workplaces are predominantly Catholic or Protestant. Given the communal divisions this is no surprise.

What is surprising is that trade unions and trade councils organise and represent workers across the sectarian divide. By and large you have one unified trade union movement.

The trade union movement has avoided taking overtly political stances for fear of disrupting this unity. Sometimes bureaucrats are cynically trying to keep politics out of the unions, but often this abstention comes from the sincere concerns of serious trade union activists.

Consciously ignoring the political question, the trade unions reinforce the constitutional status quo by omission. If the workers' movement is going to intervene to break the sectarian log jam, then this abstentionist policy needs to be replaced by a political approach which recognises the democratic rights of both sides and attempts to reconcile the aspirations of both sides.

Many who call for Labour to organise in the North are integrationists — that is Unionists. They want Northern Ireland to be fully integrated into the UK and have the same status as Scotland or Wales. They hope sectarian division in the working class will thus disappear and Northern Ireland grow to be the same as the rest of the UK.

Instead of recognising and relating to the sectarian divisions by policies of conciliation and consistent working class democracy, the integrationists try to wish the problems away. Their solution is effectively, that everybody must become British! In their mouths calls for workers' unity become little more than calling for Irish Catholic workers to forget their national identity. "Socialism" here is just Unionism in disguise.

This is a condemnation of the arguments and goals of some of those who advocate that Labour should organise in the North of Ireland. It does not answer the question: what form of political organisation can take Northern Ireland workers — Catholics and Protestants — forward. It does not answer the question troubling many Northern Irish workers: should they stick with the existing parties, or advocate a trade-union-based Labour Party in Northern Ireland?

Kevin McNamara, Labour front bench spokesperson on Northern Ireland, and two other Labour MPs, Roger Stott and Bill O'Brian, have recently published a

pamphlet on this question, *Oranges or Lemons?*, arguing against Labour organising in the North. They make points similar to the ones I've made above, but the pamphlet falls flat when it comes to proposing any alternative to the present murderous status quo.

Oranges or Lemons? argues that, since the SDLP has "exactly the same goals, [as Labour's] our organisation would be superfluous." But the SDLP is a middle class Catholic nationalist party! To argue that the workers in Northern Ireland should tail end the SDLP is to give up any idea of independent working class politics.

Kevin McNamara's arguments are born out of pessimism about Northern Ireland. He thinks the Northern Irish unions are better off staying out of politics. He argues that "The work of the major unions in combating national and ethnic strife, and in preventing political violence leading to the complete collapse of the economy, depends on maintaining impartiality on constitutional or party political issues."

This is to call for working class political abstention within Northern Ireland because the situation is so hopeless that it is best to do nothing.

Instead of this defeatism, socialists should advocate that the trade unions within Northern Ireland must attempt to put forward a working-class alternative. An integral part of this should be advocacy of trade-union-backed Labour candidates in elections and the formation of a Labour Party.

What links should any Labour Party in Northern Ireland seek with the British or Southern Irish Labour Parties? Such a Labour Party should have close links with both the British and Irish Labour Parties. In the spirit of internationalism, workers' unity and reconciliation, this is the only possible arrangement socialists could argue for.

What politics would such a Labour Party have? A trade union-based Labour Party would inevitably at the start reflect the present politics of the trade unions. It would, most likely, argue for a vague amalgam of workers' unity and an end to sectarian murders. Even on this basis such a Labour Party would be a step forward.

More importantly, it would create a new dynamic in the workers' movement by forcing politics on the agenda of trade unions which now, as trade unions, abstain from politics. It would also create an arena for socialists to argue for an anti-capitalist working class solution to the Troubles.

Some Northern Irish advocates of a Labour Party see the creation of a Labour Party as itself the solution, *Militant*, for example.

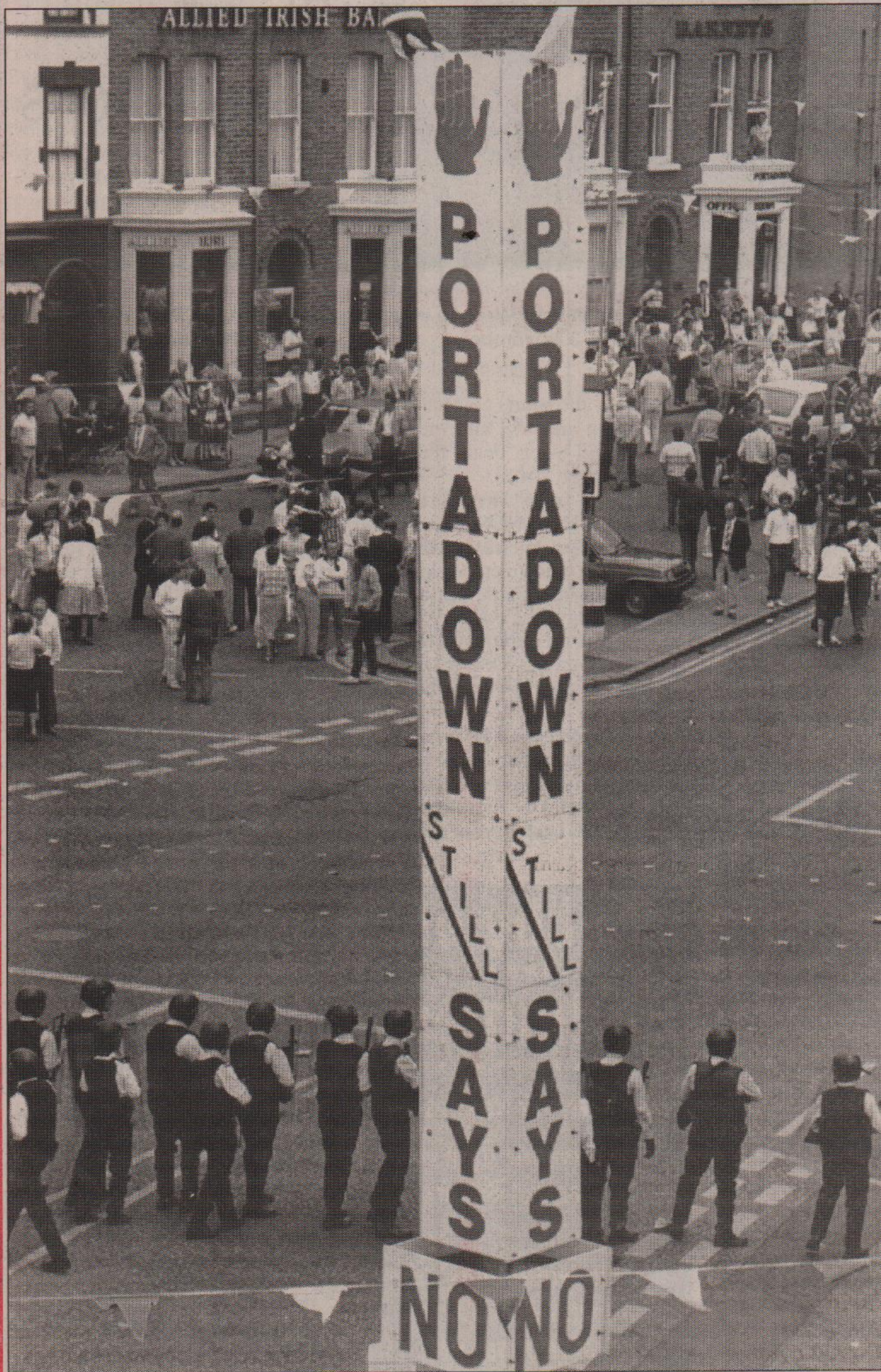
A trade union-based Labour Party would be a healthy step forward: any form of workers' movement in which the workers begin to organise as a class, on however limited a political platform, would be. But if the workers' movement is going to decisively intervene and create the possibility of a solution, then the political stance of such a Labour Party is crucial.

Socialist Organiser would argue for socialist policies and advocate that a Labour Party propose a settlement based on consistent democracy, one which gave the Protestants/Unionists the self-rule they want now and as a guarantee for the future.

Would we make the adoption of federalism a condition of our involvement and support in such a Labour Party? Such a stance would be sectarian nonsense.

Obviously there is some point at which the politics of such a Labour Party would lead socialists to break from and condemn such an organisation — but not while it was still open and did unite workers across the communal divide.

"A Labour Party would create a new dynamic in the workers' movement by forcing politics on the agenda of trade unions."



RUC confront Loyalist bigots. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft

way out?

Can workers' unity?



Socialists must strive to unite workers politically across the communal divide. Above: the 'peace line' fence that divides Catholic and Protestant areas in Belfast. Photo: Andrew Moore, Reflex

In 1974 Protestant workers utilised the greatest weapon in the armoury of the workers' movement, the general strike, for sectarian purposes, to bring down the power sharing Executive. That general strike was organised and led by Protestant paramilitaries.

If Protestant — or for that matter Catholic — sectarians and paramilitaries took over the Labour Party, then socialists would split from and condemn that organisation. But this scenario is not very likely.

The success or failure of a Labour Party will depend on its ability to rally Protestant and Catholic workers around proposals for a democratic settlement.

Of course a new Labour Party might follow the road of the old Northern Ireland Labour Party.

From its formation in 1924, the NILP was "neutral" on partition. They saw this as the best way to build workers' unity. They did manage to mobilise substantial support, especially in Belfast and the main urban areas. In many areas they became the effective opposition to the Unionists.

In 1949 the NILP accepted "the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and the close association with Britain and the Commonwealth."

The backdrop to this was the proclamation in Dublin of a republic outside of the British Commonwealth and moves by the (Southern) Irish Labour Party to organise in the North.

The dynamic and lesson in all this are very important for socialists.

The decision of the NILP to become "Unionist" did not make them a toothless campaigner against the Union-

ists. In 1962 the NILP obtained 26% of the vote, the main issue in the election being unemployment. Following this success Brookeborough, the Unionist Prime Minister, resigned in 1963 under pressure from Labour. In 1964, Labour polled 103,000 votes.

The NILP mainly campaigned on economic and social issues such as unemployment, but they also denounced discrimination in housing. The NILP coined the slogan "One Man, One Vote"

which was to be taken up by the Civil Rights movement.

The NILP was washed away by the Troubles. Its attempt to combine support for the Union with being a working-class alternative was a contradiction and doomed the party to failure. In the heat of the early '70s the party soon melted.

Many socialists look at the history of the NILP and conclude that it is pointless and mistaken to advocate a trade union-based Labour Party. Surely, the correct conclusion is to look at the history of the NILP and say, yes it is possible to organise Protestants and Catholics together as workers; yes it is possible to put forward Labour candidates and win support from workers both sides of the sectarian divide; but a Labour Party and the broader trade union movement cannot ignore the national question. To do so is to plant the seeds of their own destruction. If the NILP had developed with a consistently democratic programme on the national question then the course of Northern Irish history might have been different.

The NILP floundered because it opted — after 1949 — for a Unionist answer to the "constitutional question" dividing Northern Irish workers. The NILP had no answer capable of bridging the communal divide and mounting working class unity. Socialist Organiser's policy of consistent democracy — which is crudely expressed as "federalism" — would allow a trade union-based party to offer a political answer.

Anti-racist groups still shirk unity



RACE AND CLASS

By Dion D'Silva

IN A RECENT press statement the Anti-Racist Alliance national executive committee has offered unity in the fight against racism. This is good news! The ridiculous, destructive, scandalous division of the anti-racist movement can be ended. Well, not exactly.

They end their statement: "the ARA believes in black self-organisation and is open to all anti-racists who are able to participate in the democratic processes of the Alliance." In other words we can unite by joining ARA on the ARA leaders' terms!

To all those who don't wish to join the ARA they offer the chance to join their new campaign "Speak Out Against Racism."

This campaign will organise an ARA demonstration on 19 March 1994 and will demand a new law to make racial violence a criminal offence, together with a state ban on the BNP. In other words, the current demands of the ARA!

ARA's statement says "unnecessary splinters and divisions can only aid the fascists of the BNP and racists of every ilk."

Quite right! But the ARA will not budge an inch to heal the splits, even after the fiasco of two national demos on 16 October 1993.

Unfortunately the Anti-Nazi League [ANL], Youth against Racism in Europe [YRE] and Anti-Fascist Action [AFA] are not doing much to heal the division and splits either. The ANL, for instance, is what it always was — a Socialist Workers Party front.

The time when people used to hide the divisiveness of having many campaigns by pretending that they all played a different role is well and truly over. The demonstration on 16 October killed that hypocritical nonsense stone dead.

The divisions make a small and fragile anti-racist movement needlessly ineffective and less capable of building the labour movement-oriented mass movement we need.

The tragedy is that the various anti-racist grouplets seem determined to carry on the division, each claiming to be "the movement".

None of them has the politics necessary to win! None of them, not even the Anti-Racist Alliance with their many trade union and Labour Party links, focuses on a labour movement campaign.

The Nazi candidates in next year's local and European elections will be a major focus for anti-racists, yet ARA will not call for a Labour vote against the Nazis. They want to build a common front with "anti-racist" Liberals and Tories.

The ANL has also refused to campaign or call for a Labour vote.

The anti-racist movement is not only divided and weak, it also lacks a serious political strategy.

The political strategy ARA pursues cannot possibly build a powerful working-class movement against racism.

It is high time that labour movement leaders and bodies that support the various campaigns demanded a democratic unity conference to unite the groups into one campaign that can hammer out a strategy for mobilising the labour movement.

John Maclean, 18 agitator, educator

John Maclean died 70 years ago, on 30 November 1923. He was perhaps the greatest revolutionary the British labour movement has so far produced.

During World War 1 he was Britain's counterpart to Germany's Karl Liebknecht. These two socialist heroes, in the great warring powers, stood against the tide of war fever and nationalism, insisting (in Maclean's words) that "the only war worth fighting is the class war".

Maclean's stand earned him many prison sentences, landing him in jail for most of the later years of his life. Unfortunately, many leftists today copy what was weakest in Maclean's politics, from his disoriented last years. Dale Street offers a critical review.

“STAND IN the Gorbals and before the world as a Bolshevik, alias a Communist, alias a Revolutionist, alias a Marxian. My symbol is the Red Flag, and it and I shall always keep floating on high.”

This quotation, taken from John Maclean's election address of 1922, sums up Maclean's personal and political strengths: his commitment to revolutionary socialism, his refusal to compromise, and his hatred of capitalism.

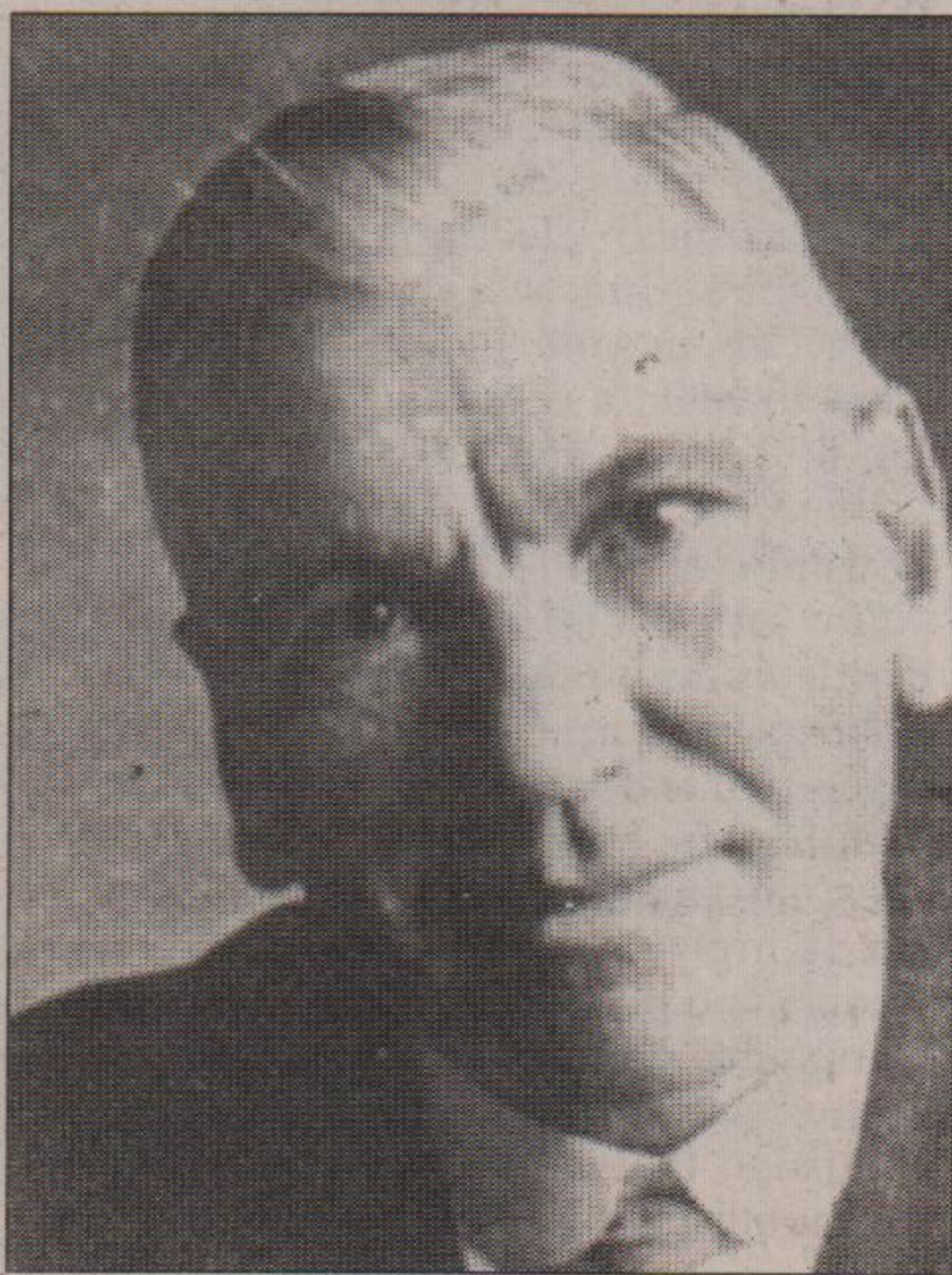
Such qualities won him the respect of many fellow socialists. *The Socialist*, newspaper of the Socialist Labour Party, wrote of him as:

"The indomitable fighter; the fearless exponent of an unpopular cause; the man who knew no defeat. On 30 November 1923, the world lost a MAN [emphasis in original] and the revolutionary movement a true and trusted worker in the cause of human freedom."

And yet, despite his full commitment to the struggle for socialism and the profound respect he enjoyed amongst many of his contemporaries, Maclean died in a largely self-imposed isolation.

Maclean's talent was in popularising socialist theory rather than in developing it. His writings were agitational rather than analytical.

He left behind no viable political organisation. The Scottish Workers' Republican



John Maclean



The Red Flag is raised in George Square, Glasgow, in 1919

Party which he founded shortly before his death was largely confined to Glasgow, and failed to make any impact.

The legacy of Maclean's educational classes were equally short-lived. The Scottish Labour College, which he had helped found, quickly abandoned Marxism completely and became an appendage of the Labour Party.

The political isolation which Maclean faced in the closing years of his life, and his failure to leave a fruitful political legacy were essentially the product of his own political evolution.

IN the early 1900s Maclean had been a member of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), a sectarian Marxist organisation which sometimes adopted right-wing positions under the influence of its leader, Hyndman.

In 1910, for example, Maclean advocated a vote for the Tories:

"To vote down the Liberals we are by circumstances forced to put a cross opposite the Tory man." On occasion, Maclean even endorsed Hyndman's notorious anti-German chauvinism.

But well before the outbreak of war in 1914 Maclean had begun to play a leading role in the opposition to Hyndman's jingoism. He had also established himself as a talented agitator, a highly gifted public speaker, and a tireless worker for the socialist cause.

"Socialists" around the world lined up with their own ruling classes on the outbreak of war. Maclean adopted a class position:

"The only real enemy to Kaiserism and

Prussian militarism was and is German social democracy. Our first business is to hate the British capitalist system."

The Scottish press denounced Maclean as "a representative of a poisonous set of parasites who talk treason instead of working." He was arrested six times and imprisoned five times. Of the last seven and a half years of his life, three were spent in jail.

"The only real enemy to Kaiserism and Prussian militarism was and is German socialism. Our first business is to hate the British capitalist system."

John Maclean

In recognition of his anti-war activities Maclean was elected an Honorary President of the first Congress of Soviets, along with Lenin and Trotsky, after the Russian Revolution of 1917. In 1918 he was appointed Bolshevik Consul for Scotland.

Maclean's refusal to compromise, and his defiance of state victimisation, made

him a popular figure on Clydeside. Thousands of workers spontaneously downed tools to welcome him back to Glasgow after one of his spells of imprisonment. The scene was described by one socialist newspaper:

"... the slowly moving carriage being dragged through the thronged streets by a score of muscular workers who had taken the places of the horses, the surging, exultant mass of people, the incessant cheering and singing... and standing upright in the carriage, the challenging figure of John Maclean waving a red flag with an air of defiance and triumph."

ALTHOUGH THE WAR had brought to the fore Maclean's strengths — above all, his refusal to compromise and his anti-militarism — political developments after the war exposed Maclean's political weaknesses.

Maclean refused to join the Communist Party, founded shortly after the end of the war. He dismissed it as "a heterogeneous mixture of anarchists, sentimentalists and syndicalists, with a sprinkling of Marxists; unity in such a camp is likely to be impossible."

Some of Maclean's criticisms were undoubtedly valid. But the Communist Party was then a real revolutionary party, nothing like what it became under Stalinism. Any serious Marxist had to be in the CP, fighting against its weaknesses.

Maclean's isolation was reinforced by his failure to appreciate the consolidation of the Labour Party's influence in the West of Scotland. When Labour made major

1879-1923: A man, internationalist



Glasgow was one of the main centres of industrial militancy during and after World War 1

gains in Glasgow in the 1922 General Election Maclean regarded this as a temporary phenomenon, rather than the start of long-term voting patterns and political loyalties.

Maclean also largely ignored the trade unions in the closing years of his life. His writings in 1922-23 were largely silent on the question of trade union organisation and workplace struggles. His focus was on the unemployed rather than the employed.

Maclean's increasingly conspiratorial view of the world added to his isolation. Whilst not mentally unbalanced in any clinical sense, he became a mouthpiece for the most outlandish of allegations.

Typical examples were Maclean's claims that Lloyd George wanted him to organise a general strike, that the government had ordered his release from prison so that he could embarrass Labour Party candidates, that the leaders of the Communist Party were controlled by Lloyd George and that the government had ordered the killing of a Glasgow policeman to justify arming the police on the eve of the 1919 General Strike.

Such accusations could only add to Maclean's isolation, and even make him a figure of fun. His obsessions were parodied by one socialist paper:

"Willie Gallacher is a clown and gets £10 a week. Wee Campbell is a spy and tried to steal Maclean's unemployed. Somebody else was a spy an' tried tae steal Nelson's monument so that Maclean couldna get hawdin' meetings up against it.

"Tae be called a spy by this circus is a sort a' Socialist Order a Merit. According tae them there are two classes in society —

workers' republicans and police spies."

The focus of Maclean's political activities in the years immediately prior to his death was the demand for a Scottish Workers' Republic. This too added to his isolation. Maclean argued that independence for Scotland would help break up the British Empire, frustrate plans for imperialist intervention in Soviet Russia, prevent Scotland being dragged into a forthcom-

"Maclean refused to join the Communist Party... then a real revolutionary party, nothing like what it became under Stalinism. Any serious Marxist had to be in the CP, fighting against its weaknesses."

ing war between Britain and America, and undermine Britain's ability to sue military force in Ireland.

(Maclean's enthusiasm for Sinn Fein's struggle against British imperialism led him to a scathing dismissal of the Protestant minority: "If the minority cannot stand up for themselves, let them emigrate... If Ulstermen cannot tolerate an

Irish republic, let them take a taste of emigration.")

But Maclean vastly over-estimated the potential impact of campaigning for Scottish independence. There is no similarity between the history of Ireland and the post-1707 history of Scotland.

And although there had been a brief upsurge of labour movement support for Scottish Home Rule — but not an independent workers' republic — in the immediate aftermath of the war, by 1923 this had largely died away. Instead, the labour movement was turning to political solutions at an all-British level.

THUS IT WAS that Maclean died in isolation and devoid of a legacy, having cut himself off from the Labour Party, the trade unions and the mainstream revolutionary left, turning instead to a conspiratorial view of the world and the championing of an irrelevant and diversionary demand.

At the end of the day, Maclean was a tragic figure. His personal commitment to socialism was beyond question but, especially in his later years, his politics lagged far behind. His commitment deserves admiration. His politics deserve a more critical response.

Unfortunately the shortcomings of the bulk of the far left today make it incapable of delivering such a response. In fact, it shares in the weaknesses of Maclean: a sectarian attitude towards the labour movement, a conspiratorial view of politics, and in Scotland at least, a sometimes crazy scenario-mongering about Scottish self-government.

John Maclean (1879-1923)

By Hugh MacDiarmid

All the buildings in Glasgow are grey
With cruelty and meanness of spirit,
But once in a while one greyer than the rest
A song shall merit
Since a miracle of true courage is seen
For a moment its walls between.

Look at it, you fools, with unseeing eyes
And deny it with lying lips!
But your craven bowels well know what it is
And hasten to eclipse
In a cell, as black as the shut boards of the Book
You lie by, the light no coward can brook.

It is not the blue of heaven that colours
The blue jowls of your thugs of police,
And 'justice' may well do its filthy work
Behind walls as filthy as these
And congratulate itself blindly and never know
The prisoner takes the light with him as he goes below.

Stand close, stand close, and block out the light
As long as you can, you ministers and lawyers,
Hulking brutes of police, fat bourgeoisie,
Sleek derma for congested guts — its fires
Will leap through yet; already it is clear
Of all Maclean's foes not one was his peer.

As Pilate and the Roman soldiers to Christ
Were Law and Order to the finest Scot of his day,
One of the few true men in our sordid breed,
A flash of sun in a country all prison-grey.
Speak to others of Christian charity; I cry again
For vengeance on the murderers of John Maclean.
Let the light of truth in on the base pretence
Of Justice that sentenced him behind these grey walls.
All law is the contemptible fraud he declared it.
Like a lightning-bolt at last the workers' wrath falls
On all such castles of cowards whether they be
Uniformed in ermine, or blue, or khaki.

Royal honours for murderers and fools!
The 'fount of honour'
Is poisoned and spreads its corruption all through,
But Scotland will think yet of the broken body
And unbreakable spirit, Maclean, of you,
And know you were indeed the true tower of its strength,
As your prison of its foul stupidity, at length.

To posterity

By Berthold Brecht

HE playwright Berthold Brecht stayed loyal to the German Communist Party all through its history of inadequacy, betrayal and — reconstituted after World War 2 — Stalinist rule. He was mildly, and sometimes not so mildly, critical. He wrote the famous Aesopian fable of the 1953 Berlin workers' uprising as a comment on the suppression by the Stalinist East German government. In Brecht's fable the government grows dissatisfied with the people and proposes to "elect a new people".

After wartime exile in America, Brecht was driven out by the anti-Communist witch-hunt (in 1947, the year this poem was written). He went to live in Stalinist East Germany, typically ensuring himself a line of retreat by holding on to a foreign passport. He died there, greatly honoured, in 1956.

In politics, Brecht embodied the accommodationist spirit that destroyed so many of his generation of would-be communists. They bowed — grumbling sometimes, it is true — to the power of Stalinism. They made their peace, suppressed their own judgement, and told lies, or were collusively silent about lies. Brecht portrayed himself and all the others in this condition in his play about the 70-year old seventeenth century astronomer Galileo who was forced by the Inquisition against his own better knowledge to affirm that the sun revolves around the earth and not the earth around the sun.

He himself played a very unheroic, evasive role when he appeared before the witch-hunting House of Un-American Activities Committee and then caught a plane out of America.

And yet, Brecht's work is — as in this poem — sometimes true and moving. Here he portrays the predicaments that, in one way or another, destroyed so many of the socialists of his time.

Sean Matgamna

Indeed I live in the dark ages!
A guileless word is an absurdity. A smooth forehead betokens
A hard heart. He who laughs
Has not yet heard
The terrible things.

Ah, what an age it is
When to speak of trees is almost a crime
For it is a kind of silence about injustice!
And he who walks calmly across the street,
Is he not out of reach of his friends
In trouble?

It is true: I earn my living
But, believe me, it is only an accident.
Nothing that I do entitles me to eat my fill.
By chance I was spared. (If my luck leaves me I am lost).

They tell me: eat and drink. Be glad you have it!
But how can I eat and drink
When my food is snatched from the hungry
And my glass of water belongs to the thirsty?
And yet I eat and drink.

I would gladly be wise.
The old books tell us what wisdom is:
Avoid the struggle of the world, live out your little time
Fearing no one,
Using no violence,
Return good for evil —
Not fulfilment of desire that forgetfulness
Passes for wisdom.
I can do none of this:
Indeed I live in the dark ages!

I came to the cities in a time of disorder
When hunger ruled.
I came upon men in a time of uprising
And I revolted with them,
So the time passed away
Which on earth was given me.

I ate my food between massacres.
The shadow of murder lay upon my sleep.
And when I loved, I loved with indifference.
I looked upon my nature with impotence.
So the time passed away
Which on earth was given me.

In my time streets lead to the quicksand.
Speech betrayed me to the slaughterer.
There was little I could do. But without me.
The rulers would have been more secure. This was my hope.
So the time passed away
Which on earth was given me.

Man's strength was little. The goal
Lay far in the distance,
Easy to see it for me
Scarcely attainable.
So the time passed away
Which on earth was given me.

You, who shall emerge from the flood
In which we are sinking,
Think —
When you speak of our weakness,
Also of the dark time
That brought them forth.
For we went, changing our country more often than our shoes,
In the class war, despairing
When there was only injustice and no resistance.

For we knew only too well:
Even the hatred of squalor
Makes the brow grow stern.
Even anger against injustice
Makes the voice grow harsh. Alas, we
Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness
Could not ourselves be kind.

But you, when at last it comes to you
That man can help his fellow man,
Do not judge us
Too harshly.



Hitler at a rally just after the anti-Jewish Nuremberg decrees

Eyewitness to disaster

Alan Johnson

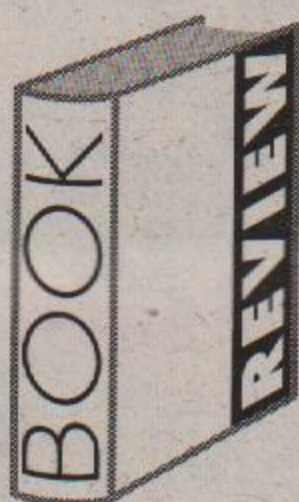
reviews

Eyewitness

To Disaster

£2.95

Revolutionary History



THE EDITORS of *Revolutionary History* have performed a service to all socialists with the publication of *Eyewitness To Disaster*. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the disaster: the victory of Hitler's Nazis over the German working class when, despite the mass support of the Communist and Socialist Parties, and the great fighting spirit of the workers, a combination of sectarianism and timidity allowed Hitler to triumph.

The witnesses are Sam Gordon, then a young Trotskyist of the American Socialist Workers Party, and Hippolyte Etchebehere, an Argentinian Marxist. The most riveting part of this issue of *Revolutionary History* is the eye-witness reports these two sent back to their comrades from Germany in 1929-30 and 1932. The reports of Etchebehere from Berlin in 1932 — translated into English for the first time — are required reading for today's anti-fascist movement. They chart the tragic failure of the working-class parties to unite in the face of Hitler, their bloody and avoidable "defeat without combat".

For those who scoff at the importance Trotskyists attach to the question of leadership in the workers' movement these articles make for sobering reading. The articles present a picture of a Germany sliding into an abyss while "the same phenomenon persists for months. Such courage, such extraordinary political bravery; but in class terms, an unbelievable paraly-

sis. But there we are, isn't that a matter of parties, and of organisations?"

We are taken by Etchebehere to the mass Communist demonstrations, called as Hitler's power grows, at which "the mass listens quietly, a way out. It returns home empty handed." We are shown Socialist Party youth handing out leaflets which declare that they "will stand with both feet on the ground of constitution and legality. Social Democracy will not make the first move to leave it".

We see the great desire amongst the workers for a united front of the workers' parties to defeat Hitler. A demonstration spills over into a spontaneous united front march upon a Nazi HQ:

"And on the corners it is said with surprise: They are marching together! The SPD and the KPD have united! God be praised, now we fear no Hitler! It was a little old lady who said this. She lifted her fist: 'Red Front!', and her eyes were full of tears. Ever they advance. Now they are taking over the Dresdenstraße. Four shupos are on guard in front of a Nazi headquarters. We see a mass of brown shirts pressing themselves up against the glass of the closed doors."

But the unity never developed. Without agreement between the parties it never could. While Trotsky wrote his desperate pleas to the German workers to unite in the face of fascism, warning of its character in prophetic terms, the communists Etchebehere talked to in feverish street corner meetings offer only a litany of sectarian and light-minded excuses for inaction which betray their failure to understand the nature of the fascist threat: "Anyway Hitler will be rapidly worn out. He cannot keep his promises" — "Hitler means war and war means revolution" — "The Nazis will not dare drive the parties into illegality" — "The masses need

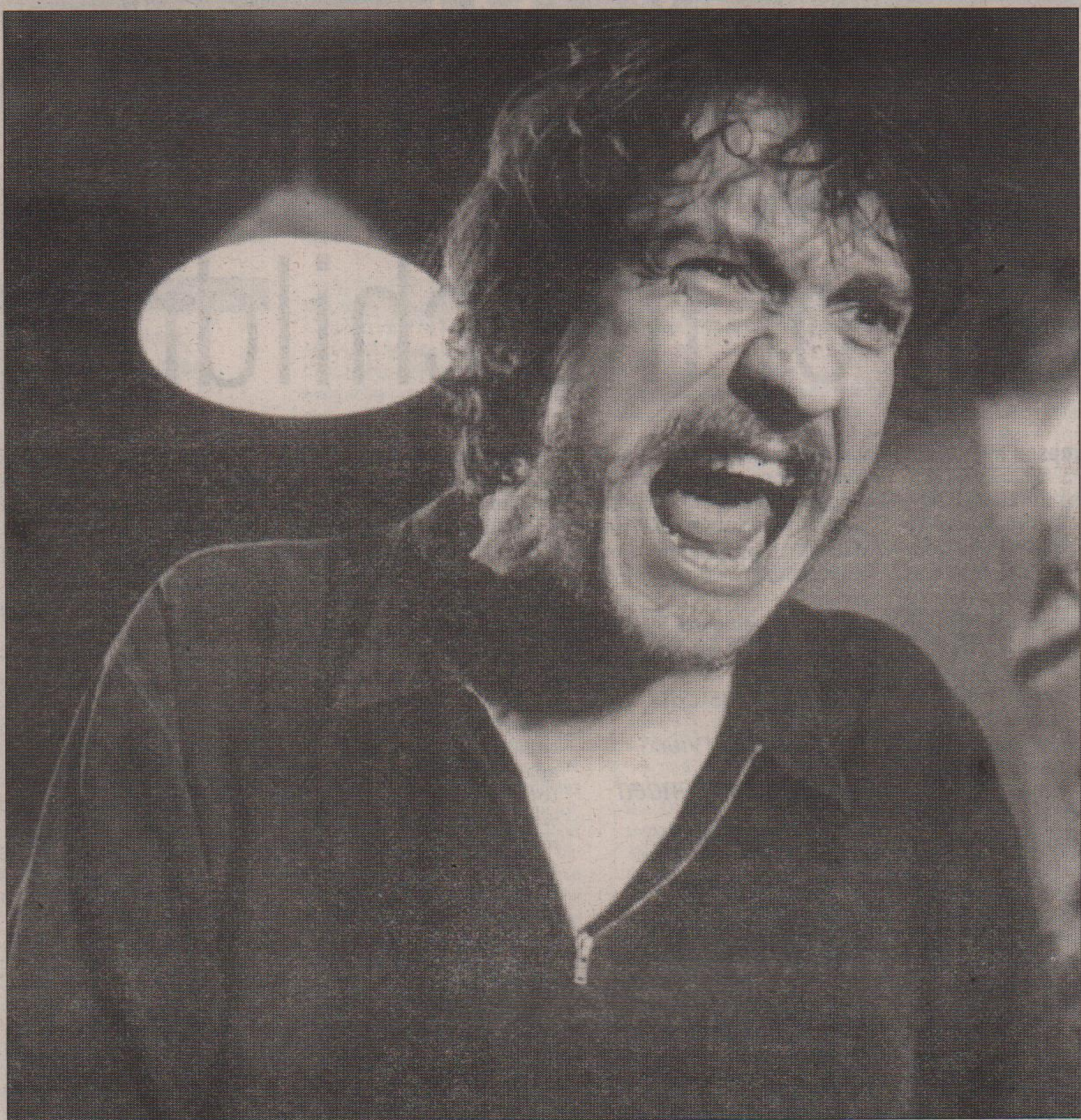
the experience of Nazism and afterwards they will come back to us". These articles tell of the price of disunity among anti-fascist forces. As such they are important not only as history but as guides for today.

Revolutionary History is a journal dedicated, as one of its reviewers puts it "to revolution and not the Trotsky Heritage Industry". One of its strengths is that every issue contains a lively reviews and news section, with surveys of new books, conferences, details of the left press, and debates. Of interest in this issue is the plea by Al Richardson that Joe Jacobs' reissued *Out of the Ghetto* be recognised as "the true story of the Communist Party's involvement in the Battle of Cable Street" when Mosley's fascists were repulsed, as well as a "joy to read" and "a socialist classic".

Al Richardson also contributes a review of a newly published collection of the writings and speeches of the founder of American Trotskyism, James P Cannon, from the 1920s. In my view the review is unfair to Cannon, implying he only embraced the Trotskyist movement for shoddy reasons, faking a "road to Damascus conversion" only after he lost the faction fight in the Communist Party and lost the endorsement of Moscow.

James P Cannon gave up a lot to found a movement which was immediately under physical attack by the Stalinists. Nothing could have motivated him to give up his comfortable CP office for the tiny and resourceless Trotskyist movement other than a conviction that Trotsky's ideas were the way forward for the working class. And nothing else did.

Richardson offers no reason to doubt Cannon's own reminiscence that it was a case of "What the hell! Better men than I have risked their heads and their swivel chairs for truth and justice".



Johnny: life is bitter

A million places to go, nowhere to stay



Matt Cooper
reviews *Naked*

Directed by
Mike Leigh

WITH *NAKED*, writer/director Mike Leigh returns to the scene with renewed power and pessimism. Johnny (David Thewlis) is a clever, articulate, smart-talking Mancunian. His bitter cynicism can leave anyone at a loss for words.

Fleeing the prospect of a beating in Manchester, he ends up on the streets of London, homeless, jobless, penniless and hopeless. Armed only with a sharp wit and a bottomless pit of cynicism, he drifts in and out of other people's lives.

The ex-girlfriend, Louise (Lesley Sharp) whom he drove from Manchester, has found a dead-end job in London, with a dead-end life to match. A drowning woman, she grabs at the passing Johnny.

But Johnny spends the night with her flat-mate Sophie (Katrin Cartlidge), who also latches onto Johnny's residual humanity, buried under layers of misanthropic scar tissue. Sophie decides she loves Johnny.

He tells her she doesn't and goes.

It is all too unbearably claustrophobic, false and pointless for him. This 'love' is a product of desperation.

Despite his misogyny, both Louise and Sophie want Johnny. As Louise explains, she wants a relationship, a relationship being "a man who talks to you after a bonk." To Johnny, life on the streets seems preferable.

So he embarks on an Odyssey, drifting on through the lives of other no-hopers. This is no voyage of self-dis-

covery. There are no answers left to look for, just somewhere warm to sleep without any commitments.

Along the way he explains himself in a mixture of half-baked armchair philosophy and world-weary resignation. There is no future, no good, no point in hoping.

When asked if he has anywhere to

go, he replies "I've a million places to go, it's just that I've nowhere to stay."

To Johnny, Leigh counterposes Jeremy, a Porsche-driving Thatcherite. His cynicism, misanthropy and misogyny notwithstanding, he is the opposite of Johnny.

While Johnny keeps his strongest loathing for himself, Jeremy is humourless, narcissistic and self-possessed. Johnny hates himself but everyone hates Jeremy: he is the symbol of a class with no soul which has destroyed so many people's futures that it has destroyed its own in the process.

While Johnny shows his contempt for the future by rejecting today, Jeremy shows his nihilism by throwing money around, knowing that one day there will be no tomorrow.

Naked is still recognisably a Mike Leigh film but surpasses his previous work both in power and pessimism.

Leigh's last two films, *High Hopes* and *Life is Sweet*, were portraits of the dispossessed of the Eighties struggling to survive. Through their humour and resilience the characters managed to keep their heads above water, if only just, and even to force a smile.

With *Naked* the humour is of a different kind, that of the-condemned prisoner.

Leigh could have called his film "No Hopes" or "Life is Bitter". Miss it at your peril.

"Leigh could have called his film 'No Hopes' or 'Life is Bitter'."

Cycle of despair in the Middle East



Paddy Dollard
previews *States of Terror*

Israeli intelligence agency Mossad embarked on a drive to kill PLO leaders, assassinating at least ten of them.

States of Terror (BBC1, Wednesday 24 November) tells the story.

BBC1

Wednesday 24 November

AT THE Munich Olympics in 1972, 11 Israeli athletes were massacred by the Palestinian organisation known as Black September. (It was named after September 1970, the month in which King Hussein of Jordan slaughtered thousands of Palestinians). In response to the Munich killings, the

"Arabs, Jews and Socialism": £3 plus 52p postage.

"Two Nations, two states": 20p plus 19p postage.

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The best cop show in town



All police life is here



Mick Ackersley
reviews *Between the Lines*

BBC1
Mondays 9.30pm

COP SHOWS come in all shapes, sizes, tones and flavours. "Between the Lines" is left-wing, with a probing scepticism towards the police built into its foundations.

The men, and one woman, who go "between the lines" are those whose job it is to investigate police malpractices and crimes which involve, or may involve, serving police officers.

You may think it ridiculous and medieval for complaints against the police to be investigated by the police and not by an independent body; but as a formula for a cop show it works

very well indeed. All police life is here.

One episode dealt with the senior policeman who cold-bloodedly killed his wife, deliberately copying a case he was involved in years back. In another episode a "high-flying" young policeman infiltrated a fascist organisation with far too much enterprising enthusiasm, and got drawn into its thuggery.

Last week police incompetence led to the death of four anti-cuts demonstrators in a police cavalry charge in a North of England town. The investigators are always there to probe and harass and expose.

"Between the lines" is produced by Tony Garnett and directed by Roy Battersby, both of them one-time luminaries of the Gerry Healy WRP and both immensely talented at their jobs.

"Between the lines" is the best cop show for a long time. By far.

Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

LONDON

Wednesday 24 November

"Should we defend the welfare state?"

Martin Thomas of the AWL debates Tory academic David Marsland

7.30, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Gray's Inn Road, King's Cross

Saturday 11 December

"The revolutionary paper"

Education school.

Details from Mark: 071-639 7965

LEEDS

Thursday 25 November

"Women, sex and morality"

7.30, Adelphi pub

YORK

Tuesday 23 November

"How do we solve the education crisis?"

7.30, Goodericke College, York University

Monday 6 December

"Ireland - what should socialists say?"

Pat Murphy (AWL) debates George Thompson (Socialist Outlook)

7.30pm, Priory Street Community Centre

EDINBURGH

Monday 29 November

"Crisis in Russia"

7.30, Windsor Bar, Leith Walk

HALIFAX

Thursday 18 November

"Ireland - what should socialists say?"

12.00, Calderdale College

SHEFFIELD

Thursday 18 November

"How to fight the racists"

7.30, SCCAU, 73 West Street

BIRMINGHAM

Thursday 18 November

"Fascism: what it is and how to fight it"

Speaker: Mark Sandell

2.00, University of Central England

BRIGHTON

Thursday 9 December

"Homes for the homeless"

With Liz Millward (AWL), Nicky Fisher (19 year old homeless woman), and speaker from Firstbase Daycentre introducing a video on homelessness in Brighton

7.30, Brighthelm Centre, North Road

By Alan Simpson MP

"DEAR GRAN, I'm sorry to hear that your gas bill has shot up so much since they stuck VAT on it. I suppose the electric bill will be just as bad. To make matters worse I've had to enclose some bills of my own in this letter. The social have told me that because I'm a single parent, they've brought in new rules that mean my benefits also take account of what you and mum earn. Mum hasn't anything, but they said you had a small works pension and a bit put by, so I've got to get you to help out with my bills! I'm really sorry about this but apparently it's all to do with the government believing in the extended family.

Your loving grand-daughter Karen"

This is the sort of letter which could become all too common if the government presses ahead with its wacky idea of making single parents financially dependent on their own parents and grandparents.

I must say that for a government short of cash and longing for others to blame it's a real belter of an idea. But the truth of the matter is that it's not their own.

During a parliamentary debate earlier in the year, some of the Tory back-benchers were urging their government to look at an experiment taking place in Wisconsin, America. Its target was not the lone parent that our government is having a go at, but all young people up to their mid or later 20s.

What the Americans had realised was that young people who were poor were often

unable to get financial help from their parents, because the parents were poor too. Parents generally do not stand by and watch their own children (and grandchildren) live their lives in poverty.

The state was in trouble, they

"Enormous cuts in public services could be expanded to make it the Grandchild Support Agency."

either had to come up with programmes which gave people independent rights (and support) or they had to find other people to pick up the bill... enter gran or granddad. Many pensioners had managed to put a little by as a buffer against their own fears of poverty in old age.

By including the grandparents in the 'eligibility' assessment, they found that a lot more people could be told to look elsewhere for financial support.

In the USA this has important implications. It would affect your access to education, health care and the complete spread of welfare benefits.

Taken seriously in Britain, its impact would be no less profound. Enormous cuts in public services could be expanded to make it the Grandchild Support Agency (or even the Great Grandchild one!) There could be years of fun in the corridors of Downing Street as ministers watched families

tearing each other apart for the scraps of savings or earnings that any of them had.

It could, of course, be heralded as a great moneyspinner and a boost to the economy. Camcorder sales could rocket if people were encouraged to record their family feuds on video. Jeremy Beadle could run a whole new series of *You've Been Framed* where relatives ritualistically tore each other apart, but could win the £1,000 for the best bust-up of the week. And just think how much could be saved if real television programming were replaced by home-made compilations of society's collapse: "This week and every week we bring you *Lord of the Flies* — the video."

I listened to the minister explaining the thinking behind this latest variant of Happy Families. On the same broadcast it was reported that this had been an excellent year on the Stock Exchange; that some of the main City brokers were reporting record profits. It struck me that, if this is such a

"Camcorder sales could rocket if people were encouraged to record their family feuds on video."

good idea we ought to see how it works at the top of the social ladder before we land it on anyone else.

So, if there were to be no access to public finances if your

own parents and grandparents had money tucked away, I want to leave you with another possible letter from a grandson to a gran. The only difference being that the grandson is called Andrew and the gran is the Queen Mum.

"Dear (Grand) Ma'am: Times are rotten. They've stopped all my allowances and when I went to sign on they told me that I shan't get a penny because of all the investments in land and property that you and mother have. They said some dreadful things to me, even describing dad as a 'benefits tourist', just because he's Greek.

Surely that is no way to address the monarch's husband?

Worse than that, I've now got that blasted Child Support Agency on my back and they're saying that even with no money of my own all of the children will have to be supported by you.

I had to give them your address so they could send the attachment of earnings forms to you.

They are sending forms to mumsie as well and I can tell you she's really not amused... another *annus horribilis* or what?

Anyway, you know how desperate I get when I can't get a cruise on the Carib at this time of year, so could you let me have a bracelet or necklaces on tick? I promise I'll repay as soon as my emergency loan comes through from the social.

Your loving grandson (HRH) Andrew"

You tell me whether this is the average family, locked into a depending culture, that the government has in mind for clobbering?

SOCIETY

Savings? Not in front of the children



Why you should be a socialist

TODAY ONE CLASS, the working class, lives by selling its labour-power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the social means of production. Life is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes unemployment, the maiming of lives by overwork, imperialism, abuse of the environment, and much else.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty fights to convince and mobilise the working class to overthrow capitalism. We aim not to create a new labour movement, but to transform the existing workers' movement, trade unions and Labour Party.

We want socialism: public ownership of the major enterprises, workers' control, and democracy much fuller than the present system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We stand:

- For social planning, for a sustainable use of natural resources.
- For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working-class-based women's movement.
- For black and white workers' unity, organised through the labour movement, to fight racism and the despair which breeds racism. For labour movement support for black communities' self-defence against racist and fascist violence; against immigration controls.
- For equality for lesbians and gays.

- In support of the independent trade unions and the socialists in Russia and Eastern Europe. We denounce the misery caused by the drive to free-market capitalism there, but we believe that Stalinism was a system of class exploitation no better than capitalism.
- For a democratic united Europe; against the undemocratic and capitalist European Community, but for European workers' unity and socialism, not nationalism, as the alternative.
- For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.
- For the Palestinians' right to a state of their own, alongside

Israel, and for a socialist federation of the Middle East with self-determination for the Israeli Jews.

- For national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide.
- For a workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, to take solidarity action, and to decide their own union rules.
- For a rank and file movement in the trade unions.
- For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.
- For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

INDUSTRIAL

CPSA Broad Left misses opportunity

CPSA

By Trudy Saunders,
CPSA DsHSS Section
Executive member

FEWER PEOPLE than ever attended the conference of the Broad Left in the low-paid civil servants' union CPSA, in Blackpool on 13-14 November.

In the face of Market Testing and a right-wing union leadership who are refusing to lead a fight, the low attendance of just 140 is a tragedy.

Supporters of Militant, the leading faction in the Broad Left, have consistently failed to argue for and build for the all-out national strike action necessary to defeat Market Testing. Although they have the majority on the Section Executive in DsHSS, the biggest and most active section of the union, Militant and their allies threw away the opportunity to build for all-out strike action in the section after an unprecedented well-supported one-day strike on 2 July.

Now, after the massive success of the 250,000-strong one-day strike across the Civil Service on 5 November, their view is that the way forward is now through selective action, not national action.

Selective strikes have been proved time and time again not to work in the Civil Service. The Tories' attempts to split Civil Service trade unionists by introducing Market Testing bit by bit make unity even more essential. Only national all-out strike action can defeat Market Testing.

Militant supporters say they agree, but vote against motions putting forward this view.

Militant's reluctance to argue in practice for all-out national strike action to defeat Market Testing can partly be explained by their search for electoral unity with the soft-left grouping BL84. Desperate for electoral success, Militant have shifted their politics to the right and are prepared to do deals even with right-wing witch-hunters like Margaret Kaye.

This is coupled with a sectarian attitude to the left in the union, the Socialist Caucus, with whom Militant refuse even to discuss electoral unity.

Yet when the Socialist Caucus stood Mark Serwotka for President on the platform of all-out national strike action to defeat Market Testing, the results showed clearly that the Socialist Caucus can deliver more votes than BL84. The "Unity" candidate, Albert Astbury, standing on vague and meaningless policies, failed to mobilise those members who are not "natural" left

voters.

Electoral unity would be an important step towards beating the right wing — but it should not be pursued at the price of ditching policies to defeat the Tories' Market Testing plans. The way forward is through an open conference to unite all left groups and non-aligned activists who are serious about a full-scale fight to force the Government to abandon Market Testing.

Instead of that, the Broad Left majority around Militant agreed to pur-

sue talks with BL84 with a view to drawing up a "left unity" slate excluding Socialist Caucus. In other words, they voted for left unity without the left!

The most frightening thing about this year's Broad Left conference and Militant is their continual failure to learn from mistakes — from the shrinking Broad Left, from the failure of the Astbury candidature, from the mistakes made by the DsHSS Section Executive over Market Testing. Those who do not learn from history are likely to repeat it.

Broad Left 84 splits

BL84, THE soft-left/Kinnockite grouping in the CPSA, has at last split.

A minority, based around talented right-wing careerists in the DsHSS, has walked out of the organisation. This tiny rump will either merge completely with the ultra-right "Moderate" group or function as a wrecking operation for the "Moderates" under the guise of presenting themselves as "mainstream Labour" or some other such tag.

Meanwhile, the more serious trade unionists in BL84 — based

in Customs and Excise and the Department of Employment — will now be pulled closer to the genuine left in the union.

This opportunity should not be missed. A serious and properly broad opposition movement could now be built in the CPSA.

We must understand that the genuine trade unionists in BL84 have at last moved against the hard right in their grouping because they are at least in part reflecting the desires of the ordinary members who want to fight Market Testing.

Nostalgia's not what it used to be

MIXING WITH OLD, experienced union activists can be a very useful thing to do. On occasions it can be inspiring. Some of these people devoted their lives to the movement and have a fund of knowledge and wisdom that they're only too happy to share with younger militants.

But it can also be a thoroughly miserable and demoralising experience. One such occasion was the Saturday before last, when the Somnolent One was trapped in the bar of his local Trades and Labour Club by three old stalwarts of the AEU.

As the pints went down, the conversation became more and more depressing. The days when the "left" (i.e. the Communist Party) was a force to be reckoned with and Hughie Scanlon and Jack Jones led the two biggest unions in the land were conjured up as some kind of golden age of British trade unionism. Even the corrupt, ballot-rigging Stalinists who ran the EETPU in the 1950s were held up as working-class heroes whose downfall was the work of sinister right-wing forces (i.e. the membership).

Now, there's no harm in old codgers having a wander down memory lane. But these guys were not just talking tosh — it was dangerous and reactionary tosh.

Underlying everything they said was the assumption that young workers today aren't interested in trade unionism and have been bought off by Thatcherism. Ironically, their viewpoint was remarkably similar to the "post-Fordist" analysis put forward a few years ago by the trendies of *Marxism Today* — people these old codgers hated to the point of apoplexy.

I had to remind myself that only the day before one quarter of a million Civil Service trade unionists had been on strike against Market Testing and privatisation. And a wander round the picket lines in my locality had revealed one very obvious fact: almost all the pickets were young, mostly in their early to mid-twenties. Quite a few of them had never been on strike before, except, perhaps, in the national DSS strike on the same issue in July.

They were full of enthusiasm and very open to political discussion about the whole issue of privatisation. You had the sense of a whole new generation of workers flexing their industrial muscle and discovering their potential strength for the first time.

Meanwhile, down in London, an even more remarkable struggle was taking place. Turkish, Kurdish and Indian workers at the Galina clothing factory revolted against sweatshop conditions and lousy wages. They formed a strike committee that cut across the traditional ethnic divisions, and went out to leaflet other sweatshops in the area.

The bosses were terrified and conceded virtually everything — improved wages, a shorter working day, and an end to Sunday and late-night working. Amazingly, these workers were not even in a trade union!

Just lately, we've seen a spate of relatively small but very significant victories: the London Underground (over victimisation), Tyne and Wear Metro (against increased workloads), Beatson Clark glassworks in Barnsley (victimisation), and Smithfield market electricians (over non-payment of wages).

Some were official, some unofficial. Some were quick "downers", others involved days of picketing. None, of course, received much publicity.

But all of them are proof that the point-of-production struggle goes on, regardless of all the rubbish you read about "the end of the class struggle" and regardless of the even more pernicious defeatism you can get from old trade unionists sitting around in Trades and Labour Clubs.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Yarrow strike stays solid

YARROW

By Mary Cooper

WHITE-COLLAR workers at Yarrow shipyard in Glasgow are still solid, in their third week of strike.

The workers, who have not had

a pay rise for two years, had been offered 1.8% across the board plus an element of performance-related pay, with strings attached. In February, hourly-paid workers at the yard got 3.7% plus a £300 bonus after a month-long strike.

After talks with the unions, management offered some minor concessions. These included dropping

their plan to scrap the 5% new technology allowance for draftsmen and increasing the rate payable for Sunday overtime.

Last Thursday, 11 November, a mass meeting at the yard of the 500 striking workers agreed unanimously that the strike should go on. Management then carried out their threat to withdraw the improved

pay offer. Despite pressure on individual workers by senior management — some of them have been phoned at home — and scare stories about lost orders, the workers are standing firm.

The strike is solid, and the workers are determined to continue until they get an acceptable pay offer.

NUCPS Broad Left meets

NUCPS

By a NUCPS member

WITH MEMBERS under the hammer of mass Market Testing and privatisation, this year's Broad Left AGM in the middle-grades Civil Service union NUCPS is the most important for many years.

Those NUCPS members who care — and those who care to think — know full well that they should be part of a nationally-led public sector fightback, and minimally a cross-union Civil Service campaign.

Such a campaign should be built on sustained industrial action, with a view to all-out action. The Broad Left has a special responsibility to argue this intelligently. Silly chants of "all out now", at a 500-strong strike rally where everybody knows that this cannot now be won among the membership, help nobody.

The vast majority of Civil Service trade unionists are plainly not yet ready for all-out action, yet there is a groundswell for further action. This will be dissipated unless the official campaign moves forward. How this is done is a matter for serious discussion and urgent decision.

The NUCPS Broad Left may play an important role here. Of all the Civil Service union leaderships, the NUCPS is the most likely to move for further action, and they may be pushed into pressuring the tax-workers' union IRSF with whom they are in merger talks. If NUCPS and IRSF move, so may CPSA.

A lot of "ifs" there, but the NUCPS Broad Left has little option but to fight to shift the union machines. In doing so it should talk to all "influential" individuals and groups within the NUCPS

and other Civil Service unions. The approach should not be arbitrarily restricted to the NUCPS Stalinists ("Unity") or "sister Broad Lefts" (code for excluding CPSA's Socialist Caucus). We must determine our relationships by what people are prepared to do on Market Testing, not by what they call themselves.

The Civil Service Campaign Against Market Testing should be crucial here. Unofficial, branch-based, and crossing four unions, it has a potential appeal far beyond the Broad Lefts and the other blocs.

The union branches are key to defeating Market Testing, and so our priorities must be clear: rebuilding the structures, recruiting members, retaining them in face of the threat to abolish the check-off, establishing functioning and representative groups, districts and local "Council of Civil Service Unions" committees.

IRSF/NUCPS merger should be fought for as a better basis for opposing Market Testing, and preparatory to merger with CPSA. Merger should not be rejected if we fail to win new democratic rights, but only if the merged union would be markedly less democratic than NUCPS and IRSF now.

There is much to fight for and much to lose. The "informal" SWP/Militant pact to take eight out of the twelve NUCPS Broad Left committee seats, knocking out those independents who have kept the Broad Left alive for the last few years, is an utterly counterproductive move.

This informal pact is not based on any common programme to fight Market Testing and cannot take the Broad Left forward. Instead, Conference should elect a balanced committee, representing all shades of opinion, but with a

majority for those who support Broad Left policy on how to fight Market Testing and a serious role for those independents who have carried the Broad Left for years.

Sacked Middlebrook Mushrooms women workers

Anniversary rally

Assemble: 1.30pm, Saturday 20 November, at BOCM Pauls, one mile north of Selby Toll Bridge, on the A19 towards York.

Further information: Carol Westerman, 2 Tylthe Barn Way, Kellington, Goole, North Humberside (0977 661923 or 662923).

Camden housing strike

CAMDEN NALGO has organised a one-day strike in the Housing Department against the effects of Compulsory Competitive Tendering for Thursday 18 November.

Management are restructuring the Housing Department and are refusing to give guarantees that there will be no job losses.

Camden NUPE (the branches have not yet merged) has instructed members not to cross picket lines.

Save our nurseries: Demonstrate 22 November

PARENTS AT Springdale nursery are calling for support on a demonstration at Islington Town Hall (Upper Street, London N1) on Monday 22 November, from 7pm.

They will be lobbying a joint meeting of Islington Council Labour Group and Islington Labour Local Government Committee to keep the nursery open.

The parents have been occupying the nursery for six and a half months now to stop the closure. They have won the support of 15 out of the 20 local Labour Party wards, but a big demonstration on the day is necessary to swing delegates and councillors to vote the right way.

Contact: Springdale UFEC, 15a Springdale Road, London N16 (071-923 0263).

Wandsworth car allowances

WANDSWORTH COUNCIL

THE CAR allowances dispute between local government and UNISON has been settled nationally, but it looks as if workers in Wandsworth, south-west London, will have to fight on.

The Tory council wants to put its own "local" interpretation on the deal, which would mean that most essential and casual car-users would lose out.

They say it is for environmental reasons, to encourage people to use smaller cars, but they have no plans to swap the mayor's limousine for a mini.

They just want to take £143,000 out of our pockets.

At the very least the branch must win a ballot to re-establish the car boycott.

SOCIALIST

Help our budget!

ORGANISER

Tories to scrap safety laws

Licence

to kill!



Rafiq Mughal

By Steven Holt, NUJ Book Branch

THE RECENT court finding against journalist Rafiq Mughal's claim for damages from his former employer, Reuters news agency, has ominous implications for huge numbers of workers.

Mughal had to stop work four years ago because of crippling pain in his wrists, arms and shoulders caused by RSI - "repetitive strain injury", also called "over-use injury". He is just one of thousands of journalists, computer operators, and supermarket checkout workers who have lost the ability to work, and in some cases been crippled for life, by having to perform repetitive tasks quickly for a long time without adequate breaks or suitable working conditions.

RSI has been known since the 18th century, and is not limited to keyboard workers. Women employed in a chicken-processing factory have been among recent groups of workers claiming compensation and trying to pin the blame for the disease where it belongs - on the bosses who impose speed-ups and unsafe working conditions.

The bosses have been able to get

away with crippling their workers because in many workplaces union organisation is weak or non-existent, and workers are frightened of losing their jobs if they complain or insist on taking breaks. The bosses have often accused RSI sufferers of being lazy, or dismissed RSI as a psychological problem which the company is not responsible for.

The verdict against Mughal comes at a time when the Tories are about to scrap even the existing, often feeble and not properly enforced, health and safety regulations for industry. Neil Hamilton, the Trade and Industry Minister, says that when appointed he was urged to "behave like an absolute bastard", and no doubt many workers will soon agree about that.

The changes range from the annoying (removing the requirement on employers to provide soap and toilet paper in lavatories) to the life-threatening (removing safety regulations in favour of relying on companies to supervise health and safety themselves).

Deaths and injuries among young people forced on to Government cheap-labour "training" schemes, which are not covered by health and safety laws, are far higher than else-

where - proving, if proof were needed, that the laws do make a difference. Now the Tories want to "cut the red tape" for their friends in business, at the expense of workers' lives and health.

Union organisation is vital to prevent employers imposing literally crippling speed-up and unsafe working practices. Trade union and Labour leaders are speaking out against the Tory plans: they should be forced to campaign, and to undertake to restore the health and safety laws when Labour returns to government.

AT THE END of the month, the Tories will be announcing their Budget cuts.

A tighter squeeze on the Health Service and more welfare cuts are certain. And it will all be wrapped up in nauseating sermons about "traditional values" and "individual responsibility".

Socialist Organiser will be in the forefront of exposing the Tories' lies, reporting struggles against the cuts, and arguing and debating strategies to win.

But to do that we need our own "Budget". Unlike the Government, we can't print money or play the City markets to cover a deficit. We need to pay for producing and distributing our paper - the recent increase in postal charges alone has set us back about £80 a month - and we have no large income from advertising and no wealthy backers.

We need donations, from everyone who supports our ideas and from everyone who recognises the need for a healthy, lively working-class press.

Thanks this week to Nottingham AWL, £70; Glasgow AWL, £50; South-West London AWL, £50; South-East London AWL, £5; and Jenny Evans, £5.87.

Send money to Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, with cheques payable to "WL Publications".

AWL Xmas raffle

The tickets for our Alliance for Workers' Liberty Xmas raffle are out now.

- FIRST PRIZE: VIDEO RECORDER •
- SECOND PRIZE: COLOUR TV • THIRD PRIZE: A CASE OF WINE • FOURTH PRIZE: A £20 BOOK TOKEN.

Tickets are very easy to sell. And there is a big political reason for doing so: all the profit from the raffle will go to help extend the influence of *Socialist Organiser* and help the Alliance for Workers' Liberty grow.

We ask readers and supporters to take books of tickets to sell in Labour Parties and trade unions. Books of tickets are £5 each. Phone Mark on 071-639 7965 for full details. The draw will be on 30 December.

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