

VOTE LABOUR **MAY 5th**

SOCIALIST

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Bill Morris calls for £4 minimum wage

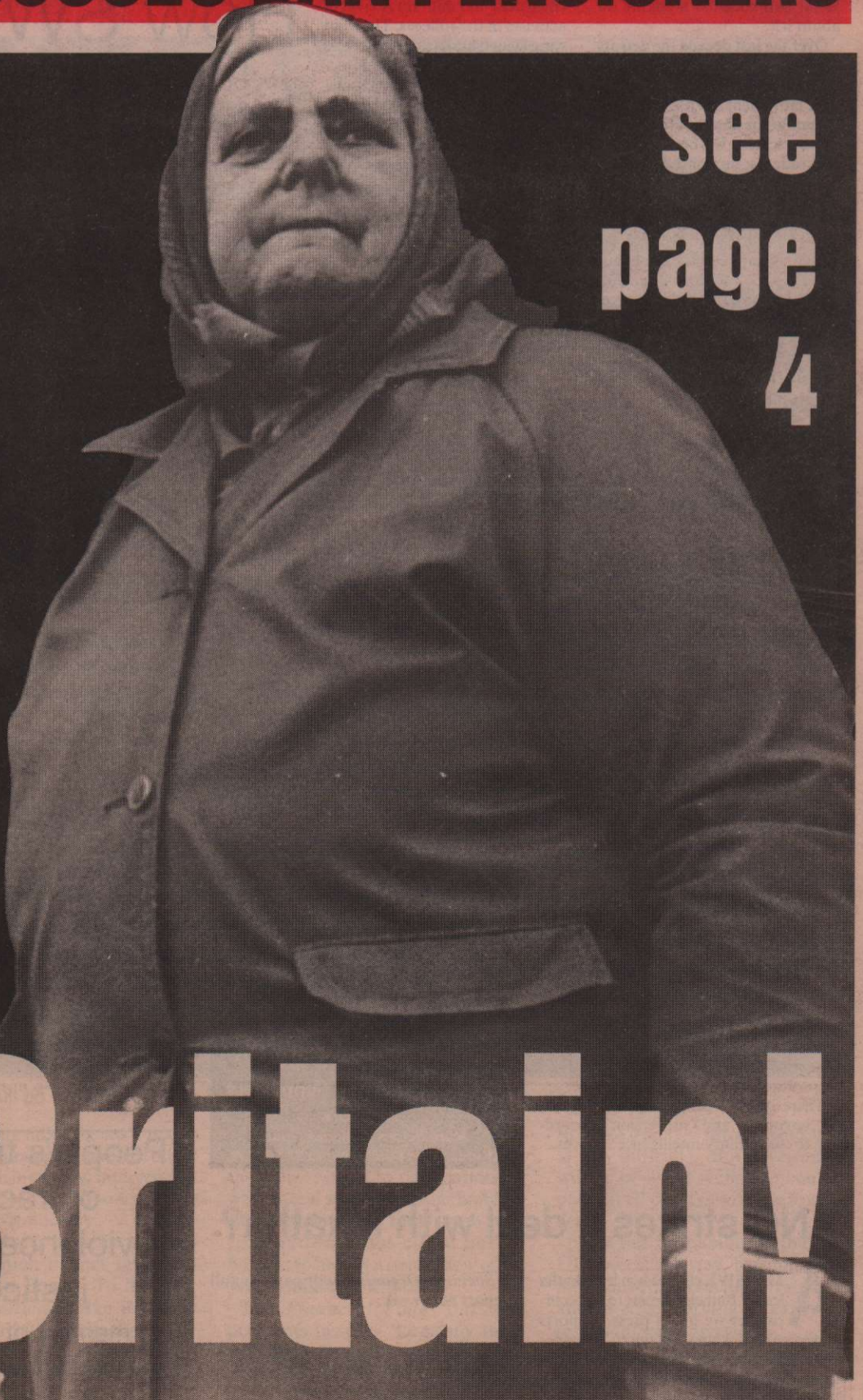
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**Don't
grow
old in
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BRING BACK THE NHS

Students: back to the grass roots

By Elaine Jones

MOST students have no idea that their National Union has just had its annual conference. Neither will most students know that the NUS has just cancelled the only national action that the union's leaders have so far proposed as a means of expressing student anger at Tory plans to cut student grants by 30% — a national demonstration on 4 May.

They announced this demonstration as a cynical manoeuvre to undermine the big unofficial anti-cuts demonstration on 23 February. But the right wing dominated last week's NUS Conference and now the leaders feel safe enough to cancel the demonstration they never wanted in the first place. These wretched leaders will not fight even against a massive 30% cut in income for their members!

Why is the NUS in such a mess? What can socialist students do about it?

Over the last decade the defeats of the labour movement have deeply affected students. The student movement has itself suffered defeats at the hands of the Tories: a loans scheme has been imposed on students; students have lost their rights to receive state benefits — a major defeat that plunged students into continued poverty crises.

Like so many of the defeats suffered by the labour movement, these defeats of a student movement were also defeats without a serious fight — which is the worst and most demoralising sort of defeat. The NUS did not use mass action, mass mobilisations against

the Tories. Its right wing Labour leaders relied instead on a quite lobbying campaign and the prospect of getting a Labour government elected.

The tragedy now is that this right wing faction of Labour students and their 'independent' friends retain control of NUS at a time when the Tories are launching the biggest attack on students yet — the 30% grants cut.

When students desperately need to mobilise for a fight back they find themselves saddled with a do-nothing leadership.

The state of NUS reflects the picture on the ground. Increasingly student unions have little democratic involvement, union meetings are badly attended and student unions concentrate on making money and teaching management techniques to the aspiring bosses who often as not now stand to be union officers.

What is desperately needed is a consistent and militant revival of activism in the colleges. The right wing leadership can and will bend when students demand action.

On a local level, many 'independents' and right wing Labour student union leaders backed the 23 February National Student Alliance demonstration. Nationally, the NUS leadership felt the pressure and announced their own national demo on the 4 May.

Yet, locally and nationally, once the pressure was off these right wingers fell back into inaction. They backed the NUS leaders at conference and the NUS leaders called off the 4 May demonstration.

It is an old story, but one that

the left must learn from: we need to build a network of activists who will fight, systematically, against the grant cuts:

* who will link up with the labour movement,

* who will unite to democratise our student union at every level, from local general meetings to the national conference and the running of the national union.

The student movement's veins must be flushed with new blood, with new activity, with a new spirit and with the spirit and the ideas and the militant traditions of working class socialism.

That is why one of the most important events in the student movement this year was the creation of the National Student Alliance. Inspired by the recent French student and workers victories, the organisers of the 20,000 strong 23 February demonstration has set up a National Student Alliance committed to building a



Students marched on 23 February, but the NUS leaders did nothing. Photo: Garry Meyer

grass roots network of activists.

In the course of mobilising students to fight the grant cuts we

will revive and transform the student movement!

To join the National Student

Alliance send £2.50 (HE) or 50p (FE) to NSA, 15a Langham Road, London N15.

How SWP student leaders scab

SOcialist Worker students spend all year telling anyone who will listen how bad the National Union of Students' Labour Student leaders are. But when it comes to the crunch they are always prepared to vote these careerists back into office rather than see a member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty — in this case Kevin Sexton — get elected to NUS Executive.

But the SWP leaders cannot do this openly. People on the fringes of the SWP and their more sensible members can see the sense in

the left sticking together.

Here is how the SWP stopped Kevin Sexton, a revolutionary socialist, being elected Vice President Welfare at last week's NUS Conference.

First preference votes: Sexton 416, Moss (Labour Students) 434, SWP 56, Re-open nominations 29. These elections are done by single transferable vote. SWP transfers were: 16 to Moss, 17 to no-one and 23 to Kevin Sexton. The "re-open" votes transferred 20 to Moss, 3 to Sexton, 6 no-one.

This gave the final result: Sexton 442, Moss 470.

What the SWP had done is get their 16 most boneheaded and controllable members to transfer to right-wing Labour. 17 of their looser members were told not to vote for anyone. And their loosest members and supporters were allowed to vote for the person that they naturally would vote for, the left candidate, Kevin Sexton.

They did this rather than instruct their whole membership caucus to vote for the right winger, because they knew that would split their membership and start a massive row. They would not be able to justify such a thing to some of their

members.

Not many votes were involved — 33 out of 935 cast — but it was enough to lose the left the election.

Why did the SWP do this? Because they are a sect and put damaging a "competitor" organisation above the general interests of the student movement. And because Labour student gave them votes in a Steering Committee elections.

Never mind though, they'll make up for it by proposing a "march on Parliament" next time we organise a big student demonstration!

Stop terror in Columbia!

AMNESTY International have launched a campaign against state terror in Colombia. According to Amnesty 1,500 people have "disappeared" whilst being detained by the security forces between 1978 and 1992.

In Colombia 10 people die each day in politically motivated murders. There were 4,434 assassinations of this type in 1992.

The general level of murder in Colombia is one of the highest in the world. There were 20,327 murders during 1992 alone. In Britain there are less than 1,000 murders each year.

Many of the killings are the direct responsibility of criminal gangs, the police or other state forces or paramilitary gangs allied to them. There is a big overlap between organised crime and the police.

In the middle of 1992 the government declared a "state of internal commotion" against "terrorism". The pretext of a war against drug-trafficking has been used to terrorise trade unionists and political oppositionists.

There are 3,751 people in prison accused of "terrorism" and "subversion", according to the military intelligence services.

The right to legal defence and habeas corpus have disappeared. "Secret justice" is now handed down by "judges without a face".

The security forces now have massive powers to break into homes, and make arbitrary arrests.

For more details: Colombia Committee for Human Rights 37 - 39 Great Guildford Street, London SE1 0E5

Conference
Socialism and full employment
Speakers include Tony Benn MP, Arthur Scargill and Dennis Skinner
Manchester Town Hall
11.00 — 5.00 Saturday 11 June
organised by Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network
More details: 3 Blades House, Kennington Oval, London SE11 5TW.

ANC strikes a deal with Inkatha?

AMASSIVE climbdown by Inkatha leader Buthelezi seems to be occurring as we go to press. Reports indicate that Inkatha is about to announce that it will, after all, take part in the forthcoming South African elections.

The threatened Inkatha boycott carried with it the threat of an escalating post-election civil war.

The deal that the ANC has struck with Inkatha would, according to the reports, effectively leave Inkatha in control of Natal.

Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini will be recognised King of KwaZulu-Natal within the South African state, having the same powers within his kingdom as the UK's Queen Elizabeth II has in hers.

Socialist Organiser will carry a full report next week.

Labour Party NEC elections

THIS YEAR the election of the constituency division of the Labour Party National Executive Committee will be by postal ballot.

In order to vote, members must pay 1994 membership fees by 13 May.

The Socialist Campaign Group slate is Diane Abbott, Alice Mahon, Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone, Dawn Primarola, Alan Simpson and Dennis Skinner.

A Lebanese solution in Ireland

POLITICAL FRONT

By Jack Cleary

ALBERT Reynolds, leader of the conservative, nationalist party Fianna Fail (FF), heads a Labour-FF coalition government in Dublin. He would prefer, it seems, to head an all-Ireland, FF-Ulster Unionist coalition.

Speaking at the Young FF conference last weekend, Reynolds proposed a new solution to unionist-nationalist relations in Ireland: institutionalised North-South power-sharing in a government controlling the whole of Ireland.

Speaking in a personal capacity, Reynolds offered a guaranteed 30% share in such a government — and in the "public service" — to the people of Northern Ireland, the 30% to be shared out proportionally between Catholics and Protestants.

These, Reynolds argued, are better terms than the Northerners are ever going to get from London: "No one from Northern

Ireland standing as a unionist or a nationalist has any real prospect of participating in a British government, yet both could play an important part in governing the whole of Ireland."

Looking back over the 108 years since Prime Minister Gladstone first proposed to give Ireland "Home Rule", Mr Reynolds said that it was time to shed the stereotypes of the past and close the yawning political gulf that had existed in Ireland since 1886.

The Official Unionist Party and FF were, said the Taoiseach, the two biggest parties in Ireland...

Mr Molyneux, OUP leader, quickly dismissed Albert Reynolds' idea with the dubious assertion that the Northern Irish people are happy in the UK, thank you very much, Mr Reynolds. Ian Paisley bitterly accused him of trying to destroy Northern Ireland...

Reynolds' proposal is, of course, the recipe which successive British governments have prescribed for the six counties of Northern Ireland for the last 22 years, since the Belfast Parliament was abolished, but now applied to the whole of Ireland. The majority of the

Protestants in the six counties have refused to accept institutionalised power-sharing with the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and so, for over two decades, Britain has denied self-rule to Northern Ireland.

Institutionalised power-sharing would make a lot more sense over the whole island, between the natural majority and minority, than it ever could in the artificially carved-out six counties. In fact, though, it is the worst sort of "federal solution" — political federalism.

If it were ever set up, the main problem with such a system would be inherent instability. Such a system between Christian and Muslim in Lebanon lasted for a long time, but it tended — repeatedly — to break down into civil war.

Federalism based on territory would answer the needs of the situation much better, giving minorities real self-rule within the security of a common framework.

Reynolds' idea has very little chance of ever being established, but the fact of his proposing it is evidence that minds are more open in Ireland now than for many decades past.

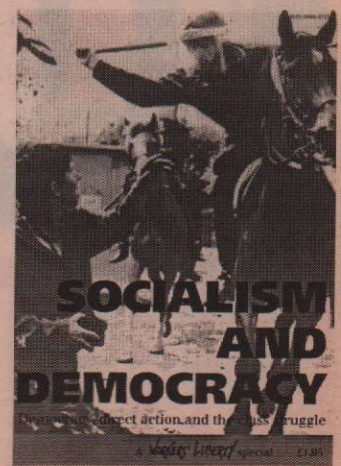
People's tribunal on racial violence and justice.

In memory of Stephen Lawrence murdered on 22 April 93.

Speakers include Bill Morris and Paul Gilroy. 10.00 - 5.00, 23 April, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London

Socialism and democracy — Marxists, the class struggle and Parliament

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Why the NATO air strikes did not stop the Serbs

THE NATO air strikes against Serb forces in Bosnia on 10 and 11 April have proved to be just another episode in the cynical and bungled intervention in ex-Yugoslavia by the big powers.

The air strikes were supposed to halt the Serb assault on the Muslim-majority town of Gorazde, but by Sunday 18 April the Serbs had taken the town. Yakushi Akashi, the United Nations representative in Bosnia, was talking about withdrawing all UN forces from Bosnia, and US president Bill Clinton was saying that further air strikes would not "have the desired military effect".

Serbia won its basic victories in Bosnia long ago, and all the fighting now is an endgame concerned only with the details of the carve-up which will cut territory out of Bosnia for a "Greater Serbia" and leave the rest as a loose federation of Croat and Muslim areas. Yet the endgame could go on for a long time yet, and claim many more lives.

Yugoslavia began to fall apart in the 1970s, as the state-monopoly bureaucracy responded to economic and political difficulties by introducing a system of increasingly elaborate checks and balances between the different nationalities. More liberal than traditional Stalinist ultra-centralism, the Yugoslav policy nevertheless institutionalised bureaucratic nationalism. Increasing economic troubles added life, energy, and bitterness to that nationalism.

In the late 1980s, as Stalinism crumbled in Eastern Europe, the central authorities in Belgrade, capital both of Yugoslavia and of Serbia, tried to pull power back into their hands. They organised coups to take control of the previously autonomous areas of Kosovo (which has a 90% Albanian majority) and Vojvodina (which has a mixed population). They reorganised the federal armed forces so as to disarm the minority nationalities and concentrate control in Serb hands. They used Serb nationalism as a tool to build a political base.

Alarmed, Slovenia and Croatia declared themselves independent in June 1991. Serb and federal armed forces were unable to stop them, but, by mobilising the Serb minority in Croatia, Serbia was able to seize (and still holds, under formal UN supervision) one-third of Croatia.

Bosnia, with its mixed population, was vulnerable. As soon as it declared



People demonstrate in Sarajevo against the assault on Gorazde

independence, Serbia, mobilising the local Serb minority, started war.

In the abstract, the Bosnians had the right to call for aid from outside powers. In the abstract, a clear commitment by the big powers to the right of self-determination of all ex-Yugoslavia's republics, and the dispatch of troops to help guarantee the borders, would have helped.

In fact, the big powers had no objection to Serb mini-imperialism as long as it kept stable conditions for profitable trade and investment.

Their intervention was never designed to stop Serb imperialism. No big power was likely to intervene with enough force and energy to

reshape events unless it saw a major economic or strategic interest in doing so — in which case its intervention would have been aimed to serve that interest, not democracy.

The big powers kept up an arms embargo which in fact favoured Serbia against Bosnia. To this day, Western politicians like Britain's Douglas Hurd still advise the people of Kosovo to submit peacefully to terroristic Serb rule rather than cause trouble.

The NATO air strikes on 10 and 11 April did not signal a last-minute change of basic policy. The Western powers' limp acceptance of the Serbs' conquest of Gorazde proves that.

Rather, the air strikes seem to have been generated by exasperation at the Serbs' refusal to tidy matters up with a final settlement, and inability to understand that these small warring nationalities could not be brought to heel by a quick show of the West's military technology.

The *Financial Times* puts the prospects lucidly: "Logically there are now only two options left.

"One is for [the UN forces] to be called out and the Bosnians left to fight their own war... The other is for [the UN forces] to be massively reinforced and equipped to fight.

"Neither option is likely to be adopted. The Serbs are in a position

to make [the UN forces'] withdrawal very difficult... But governments will be even less willing to contemplate an all-out war with the Bosnian Serbs.

"The sad probability is that [the UN forces] will stay, becoming ever more constrained in [their] relief role and in effect serving to ratify the results of Serb aggression".

Socialists should do all we can to help the beleaguered Bosnian Muslims and the people of the multi-ethnic cities like Sarajevo and Tuzla. The only way out is through working-class unity across the communal divides and consistent democracy for all the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia.

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

Karl Marx

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WE SAY

Unite the left! For unity in action and honest dialogue about our differences.

Don't grow old in Tory Britain!

NOW THEY are turning old people away from NHS hospitals untended, uncured — and without hope!

One more stage in the inbuilt logic of Tory "reform" of the National Health Service reveals itself in its barbaric awfulness.

You can have a universally free health service in which each citizen is entitled to whatever treatment he or she needs. The right to life rules here.

Or you can have it like it is in the USA — healthcare as a straightforward commodity: you can't have what you can't afford to buy. There, money rules.

In Britain now we are in transition between healthcare based on the one principle and healthcare based on the other. For the well-off everything is straightforward: they buy the healthcare they need. For the rest — there is a fund-starved NHS and its Tory-imposed "internal market".

NHS administrators and doctors have each year an inadequate but fixed amount of scarce treatment to dispense, and increasingly they find themselves playing God with it, deciding more or less arbitrarily who will be healed or allowed to live, and who will be left to suffer or die.

Some doctors recently succeeded in establishing a medic's right to refuse NHS treatment to people who will not — in practice it is likely to be *can* not — stop smoking. Smokers now can be excluded from healthcare and in effect pronounced morally unfit for and undeserving of care. Poor smokers, that is.

Inhuman though this is, it is an attempt to make less arbitrary the God-playing which NHS administrators have forced upon them and to give it some sort of rationality and uniformity.

Now come the first attempts to establish the same sort of principle — for elderly people. Healthcare experts predict that the elderly poor will more and more be excluded from desperately needed healthcare.

A recent report predicts that an open rationing of healthcare will be formalised in a two- or three-tier NHS; that certain expensive medical treatments will simply not be made available to large parts of the population; and that elderly patients will be excluded even from less expensive treatments, for example, dialysis for those with defective kidneys.

Inuit (eskimos) living in the Arctic had to dispose of the old and feeble by driving them out to starve and freeze. But they lived in stone-age scarcity. This Tory savagery takes place in a rich society where immense sums are consumed by a comparatively small group of rich parasites, and spent on such things as armaments — and in an NHS where vast millions are wasted on unproductive bureaucrats, some of whom are now exercising the power of life and death over the ailing poor.

The only civilised principle is this: full, free, comprehensive healthcare — for all or for none!

Toryism is barbarism. Don't grow sick, and don't grow old in Tory Britain!

Who's left in Italy?

ITALY, WHERE the right-wing victors in the general election are still trying to form a government, is now of great interest to socialists.

So, of course, is the Italian left. For that reason we publish on page 8 two short pieces by the veteran Italian Trotskyist, Livio Maitan. These also, if indirectly, tell us about the politics of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, of which Maitan has long been one of the central leaders.

Here, as often with the version of "Trotskyism" adopted by Maitan — a "Trotskyism" which is very different from ours, and, in our view, from the Trotskyism of Trotsky — the assessment seems very "soft".

Even if the Party of Communist Refoundation [PRC], a party whose core is the left wing of the old Italian Communist Party, is, as Maitan says, some distance from classic Stalinism, it is unquestionably reformist: its leadership has no objection of principle to the PDS's "progressive alliance."

Internationally, the PRC is friendly to the ruling parties of North Korea, Cuba, and so on — bureaucratic machines which are not in any way "working-class parties". It might be shrewd for a small Trotskyist minority in the PRC not to pick a big fight on this question at this time, but for Trotskyists in their own magazine to call the PRC's international orientation "clear" and "appropriate" is abject confusion and self-cancelling-out.

Nevertheless, readers will find Maitan's articles useful and informative.

Southend & District Trades Council

March and rally

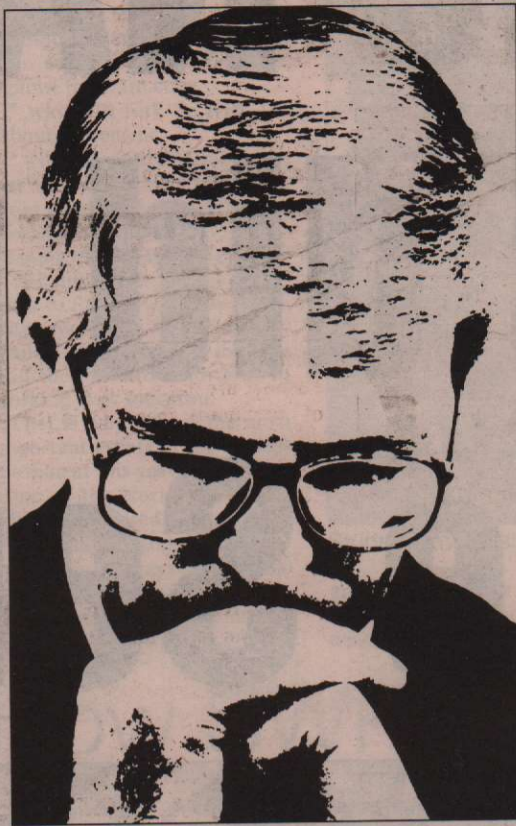
UNITE AGAINST RACISM!

Saturday 30 April

Assemble: 11.00, WH Smith's, Southend High Street

More details: 0702-366273

Ideas For Freedom



Workers' Liberty '94

Friday 8-Sunday 10 July

Caxton House, Archway, North London

Workers' Liberty is an annual event to promote political debate on the left.

All major issues which face socialists — from the politics of beating the Tories to issues of sex and sexuality — are discussed.

Cheap food, entertainment, a bar and accommodation are available. There is a professionally staffed creche.

More details from Mark on 071-639 7965, or write to: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

This year at Workers' Liberty...

TORIES IN CRISIS The government is beset by scandals. The Tory press has turned on Major. The Tories are weak. What will it take to make Labour fight? We debate the politics of the Labour right and the question of how Marxists should relate to the Labour Party.



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS Including after the elections, where next for South African workers? Where is Europe going?

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT Are legal strikes possible any more? Ten years on from the great miners' strike, will workers' militancy revive in 1994? How has the working class changed?



Sex and morals — should parents choose the sex of their child? Adultery of Tory MPs — an issue for the left? **Social questions** — how can crime be stopped? Should drugs be legalised? **Race and class** — how do we beat the neo-Nazis? How is the Asian family changing?

COURSES INCLUDE...

Talking socialism — can people really change? What will socialism be like? **Socialism from below** — why a working-class revolution? Must socialism mean state tyranny?



For full agenda / ticket fill in and send to: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Name:

Address:

Enclosed: £

TICKETS ARE CHEAPER IN APRIL: £6 unwaged; £10 low-waged/students; £14 waged [delete as applicable]. Subtract £1 (unwaged) and £2 (other) for Saturday-Sunday tickets only. Cheques payable to "WL Publications."

LOCAL ELECTIONS

Defeat the Nazis on 5 May

Work for Labour!

ALLIANCE for Workers' Liberty members are working hard to maximise the Labour vote in the local government elections on 5 May.

A massive defeat for the Tories in these elections will help to revive working-class confidence. A big Tory defeat will further damage Major's credibility and help to weaken the government's offensive against the labour movement.

AWL members are also helping to co-ordinate canvassing against the several dozen fascist candidates who are standing on 5 May. The most serious threat is in Millwall, in Tower Hamlets, where BNP member Derek Beackon was elected as a councillor last September. If the BNP get Beackon re-elected, and two other candidates elected, they will grab control of the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Council and a £25 million budget.

To canvass for Labour phone Labour Party National Office on 071-701 1234.

TOWER HAMLETS

By a Tower Hamlets UNISON member

Tower Hamlets UNISON have sponsored Council Workers Against the Nazis. A recent meeting attracted 60 union activists. Despite the fact that the SWP/ANL argued hard for their "Don't vote Nazi" campaign, many members came up to me after the meeting saying that they wanted details of how to canvass for Labour — it is, after all, the obvious thing to do.

Canvassing for Labour in Millwall ward now takes place each weekday evening, and during the day on weekends.

Over 100 Labour Party members turned up for the last mass canvass in Millwall on Sunday 10 April.

On Saturday 9 April members of the AWL did a street meeting against the nazis in Whitechapel. 100 names were collected on a petition demanding that Labour campaign for



The best way to beat the fascists is to work for Labour

jobs and homes for all. 15 papers were sold.

LEEDS & HALIFAX

Labour Party, AFA and AWL activists are travelling to Todmorden, to canvass for Labour against the BNP, on Saturday 23 April.

ELTHAM

In Eltham, in south-east London, the local Labour Party is worried about the threat of fascist violence after the constituency's Ethnic Minorities Officer, Carl Booth, was assaulted by a gang of white men.

BNP candidate, William Hitcher, is up in court for the attack on Carl Booth.

The Labour Party has responded by sending all constituency Labour Party activists on a mass canvass of the area two or three times a week.

Details of canvassing: 081-850 4187.

MANCHESTER & ROCHDALE

By Jeni Bailey

A co-ordinating committee has

been set up in Manchester to help Rochdale Labour Party campaign to defeat three BNP members standing in the local elections on 5 May.

The co-ordinating committee has produced a statement, signed by many trade union activists, calling on the labour movement to actively campaign for Labour.

Transport is taking activists from Manchester to Rochdale every Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday.

On Saturday 30 April Manchester Trades Council has called an anti-racist rally at 12.00 in Ladybarn Park, Burnage.

SUNDERLAND

By Ray Bell

Nazi candidate Kevin Scott, standing in the solidly Labour Silksworth ward in Sunderland, has provoked a massive turnout for counter-leafleting sessions, by Tyne and Wear AFA, ANL and the YRE.

The labour movement has also reacted quickly with Northern Region UNISON organising their own anti-fascist propaganda aimed at answering the social concerns of white workers.

Newcastle Young Labour activists are helping Sunderland Labour Party canvass the ward.

SHEFFIELD & BARNSELY

By Ed Whitby

Sheffield Against Racism and Fascism are organising a series of community meetings in the run-up to our local demonstration on Saturday 30 April. Marchers will be assembling at Devonshire Green at 10.30.

Activists will be travelling to Halifax, where two BNP candidates are standing, to canvass for Labour on Sunday 31 April.

In Barnsley the local Trades Council has organised a May Day rally in opposition to racism and fascism.

LANCASTER

Lancaster AWL are organising students and youth to help canvass for Labour in Rochdale. Minibuses have been booked to take activists over to help the local Labour Party with the work.

BIRMINGHAM

Labour Party and Birmingham AFA members have been leafleting the Northfields Shopping Centre. National Front activist Louise Holland is standing in the local Bartley Green ward.

NOTTINGHAM & DERBY

By Pete Radcliff

Young Labour and AWL activists will be doing an anti-racist canvass for Labour on Sunday 24 April in the Derby ward where National Front candidate Graham Hardy is standing.

Derby anti-racists have a day of action set for Saturday 23 April.

In Nottingham, activists are leafleting for the May Day march on 30 April, which has an anti-racist theme.

Bring back the bureaucrats!

YOU DON'T need me to tell you that, by definition, all union bureaucrats are venal, cowardly and treacherous. But of course, they also have to put up a fight now and then: if they were simply agents of the state and/or the gaffers, they'd serve no purpose for either their members or the ruling class, and soon be brushed aside. That's why even such dyed-in-the-wool right-wingers as Eric Hammond and Bill Jordan periodically threatened (and even delivered) militant action in defence of wages and conditions.

But something seems to be happening to today's 'modern' bureaucrats: they don't understand what their historic role is. TUC General Secretary John Monks makes overtures to the Tory government without even a token threat of industrial disruption if his overtures are rebuffed, "left-winger" Jimmy Knapp (of the RMT) fails to campaign over a crucial strike ballot even though he must understand that its loss will seriously undermine his own position.

In these circumstances, it's strangely reassuring to hear about a bureaucrat who knows what is expected of him. John Sheldon, General

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Secretary of the civil service union NUCPS, recently circulated all Branch, District, Group, Section and Regional Secretaries of the union with a scarcely disguised tirade of frustration against the passivity of the TUC and the other public service unions.

Sheldon (who is not considered particularly "left-wing" in TUC terms) describes how he wrote to John Monks to emphasise the success of the 5th November civil service day of action (involving all civil service unions in strike action) and proposing "the possibility of a co-ordinated, national one-day strike across public services against privatisation and contracting out" as a follow-up in "mid April".

Of course, the proposed "follow up" never happened, mainly due to the opposition of the loony-right leadership of the CPSA and the Labour-loyal Bickerstaffe / Sawyer leadership of UNISON, on the TUC's Public Sector Committee. The CPSA leadership's motive was that they didn't (and don't) support any form of action against the government under any circumstances. The UNISON opposition stemmed from the idea that action in April would jeopardise Labour's chances in the May local government elections (wrong: all the evidence is industrial action in defence of the public sector, welfare state etc. is very popular.)

Sheldon is an honest bureaucrat who understands that if things carry on as they've done so far, there will soon be little "public sector" left to defend. He genuinely wants a scrap, but is frightened of committing the NUCPS to action without backing from at least the CPSA (the other main civil service union) and, preferably, UNISON as well. His letter proposes a "week of activity... in the Autumn", with the support of the Council of Civil Service Unions and TUC: "We will be working hard to turn these ideas into reality and the (NUCPS) NEC at its meeting in April will be giving detailed consideration to our approach." The trouble with this is that civil service pay levels are decided in April: delaying action until autumn is, in reality, an admission of capitulation over this year's pay round.

What with market testing, job losses and the pay freeze, the situation in the civil service and the public sector in general is now desperate. Sheldon at least recognises that, and wants to do something about it. We should support him.

Sack the grinning idiot!

By Dan Katz

TONY Blair is a wretched man, a disgrace to the labour movement.

This is not hot news, exactly, but now, after Blair has led Labour's pitiful capitulation to the Tory Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, Labour Party members should demand Blair's removal as Shadow Home Secretary.

Blair was central to ensuring that this awful Bill, which further cuts away at our already very limited civil liberties, had an easy passage during its third reading in the Commons, when he — leading a majority of Labour MPs — abstained!

The job of fighting the Tories — acting like a real opposition — was left to a small number of Labour rebels, who voted against Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and the government.

Blair has promised to be "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime." The reality is that

he has collapsed behind the clamour of the Tories for a clampdown on criminals while sitting on a Front Bench which has very little to say about the underlying social causes of crime — unemployment, poverty and the misery capitalism creates.

The new Criminal Justice Bill includes clauses which will effectively end the right to silence, allowing a court to infer guilt from an accused person's silence in a police station. It was only during the last week that Blair has argued clearly, on principle, against the removal of this very, very basic right.

Roy Amlot QC — the man who prosecuted the Tottenham Three for the state — has made a more spirited defence of the right to silence than Blair, believing that the Bill would make "the onus of proof on the prosecution semantic nonsense."

Other parts of the bill will make trespass on private property a criminal offence. According to the *Observer* this would allow councils to use the law against

protests on Town Hall steps, and companies to stop a picket.

Tony Blair has come a long way from the time in the early '80s when he used to argue that trade unionists had a perfect right to take illegal industrial action to defend themselves.

Blair, a TGWU sponsored MP, was elected to Parliament in 1983. At that time he had the standard left views — unilateralist, sceptical about the EEC.

He was privately educated and went to Oxford before qualifying as a barrister. Blair worked for Alexander Irvine QC — the man who helped Kinnoch deal with Militant.

Blair made the Labour Front Bench within a year. In 1988 he was elected to the Shadow Cabinet, with heavy backing from Kinnoch's office.

In December 1989, Blair made a public statement saying that Labour's support for the closed shop was at an end. It was only some time later that abandonment of the closed shop became Party policy.



Tony Blair

Bad news for cats

Tired of rising insurance premiums? Want to get your own back on the insurance companies.

Although it would be irresponsible to suggest law breaking, for information only you may like to know the latest insurance fiddle. Firstly, find a cat and put it in the freezer. For this it is preferable (although not essential) that the cat be recently deceased.

Secondly, take out a cat insurance policy with one of the seven insurance companies currently raking in £100 million a year for pet policies. Thirdly, take your cast to the vet (making sure it is fully thawed first) and clean up on the insurance for your deceased companion.

Lastly return moggy to the freezer, wait a respectable time for mourning, and repeat using a different vet and insurance company.

With the Tories' low standing in the polls, the Conservative Party must face a real problem. They have all those highly paid positions on quangos to fill with their supporters, but are there enough supporters to go round?

Health Secretary, Virginia Bottomley has come up with a novel solution. She has appointed a Conservative party member, Anne-Marie Nelson, to chair both the West Kent Health Service and the Special Hospitals Service Authority, with a combined salary of £33,000.

There is only one slight snag: it's illegal for anyone to be a member of more than one Health Authority.

So County Hall, former home of the Greater London Council, is to become a hotel and leisure complex. Wait before you condemn it, because the complex will include London's first walk through aquarium and sea-life centre, which will fill a void in London's cultural life and is more than adequate compensation for the loss of local democracy.

The owners cheekily intend to invite Ken Livingstone to open the centre, an offer he will

GRAFFITI

VIVELA REVOLUCION

By Cyclops

clearly refuse. The thought of him accepting that free publicity, a few photo call opportunities and some cheap press coverage, on the grave of local democracy is unthinkable.

Graffiti owes its readers an apology for misleading them. Last week we suggested the Conservatives would have to find a new scapegoat after evidence showed that young offenders were more likely to watch Neighbours than "video-nasties".

Not so. Michael Howard has backed down in the face of an alliance of the Labour Party with God's representative in the Liberal Party, His Holiness, David Alton and outlawed video releases of films deemed by the powers-that-be as unsuitable for family views.

According to the *Independent* (13 April), the new banning procedures "which helped to buy off the Tory rebels were suggested by Tony Blair, Labour's shadow Home Secretary, at a private meeting at the Home Office with Mr Howard".

Smart work, Tony! You'd make a great Tory Home Secretary.

The government has decided to halt a Health Education Authority HIV-AIDS awareness campaign indefinitely because they contained too much mention of, dare we say, sex.

That well known defender of public morals, Esther Rantzen, commented that "Your Pocket Guide to Sex", banned last month, failed to mention love. However, there have been no known cases of love transmitting HIV, which is good news for Britain's cats, in whom most of the country's love is invested.

It's bad news for the country's adolescents, who have to make do with a quickie instead.

The government should, to coin a phrase, not kill the people with ignorance.

Ticketed from the terrace

PRESS GANG

THE INDEPENDENT TODAY
The Guardian Sunday PRESS

By Jim Denham

Which is why we should not be indifferent to the Watkins clarion call against the proposal to bar journalists from the terrace of the House of Commons. The Terrace is a favourite trysting-place for MPs and their mistresses, as well as for plotters and malcontents of the Heseltine/Lilley/Portillo variety. Strangely enough, it was opened up to journalists in the late 1960s by one Robert Maxwell (then the Labour member for Buckingham). It is surely a sign of the times that MPs of all parties (but especially the Tory Party) now want the hacks booted out. The final straw, according to Watkins, was an "artists' impression" in the *Sunday Express* of a group of Tory MPs on the terrace plotting against Mr Major: but "the offence was not... so great as to prevent the conspirators from requesting copies of the

drawing from the newspaper."

DAVID Banks, the worst editor the *Daily Mirror* ever had, has been booted upstairs. He is now 'Editorial Director' of Mirror Group Newspapers, a role that allows him to "make recommendations and walk away from them and greet people and not have to listen to all their moans" (as he told the *Guardian's* Media Supplement).

It must be a great relief for the sad Oliver Hardy look-alike who, in 18 months as *Mirror* editor, succeeded in losing all the paper's best know journalists, destroying its reputation with the Princess Diana "working out" photos and losing 220,000 in circulation.

But never mind the nose-dive in circulation and the destruction of the reputation

of a once proud title: Mr Banks has helped turn a "debt-laden, doomed company" into a profit-making City favourite for his master, David Montgomery.

In an interesting analogy, Banks blames the *Sun's* price cut for the *Mirror's* circulation decline: "We're talking about Wonderloaf trying to sell against Sunblest when Wonderloaf is selling for 30p and Sunblest is at 20p. It's a testimony to our readers that they stick with Wonderloaf."

REMEMBER "Gotcha"? The *Sun's* war-mongering image seems to be undergoing a profound change. While papers like the *Guardian* and *Independent* (denounced as lily-livered "conshies" in the *Sun* during previous conflicts) call for stepped-up UN action in Bosnia, the *Sun* says: "This damn fool nonsense has to stop. British troops are sitting ducks in a war that has nothing to do with them. We must show the Serbs we mean business — or get out quick."

The passing suggestion of showing the Serbs "we mean business" is, of course, a face-saver. The real message is "Get out quick." Funny old world, isn't it?

Once upon a time (or The princess and the pea)

WOMEN'S EYE

By Maxine Vincent

ONCE upon a time in South Africa lived a girl called Winnie. She was very beautiful. She was so beautiful that she won a beauty contest... and the heart of an older man called Nelson Mandela who fell under her spell.

He belonged to the African National Congress, which took up a lot of time, but he always had time to see Winnie. He loved her very much.

Winnie was dazzled by her handsome hero, and when she was twenty-four they got married.

They were both very happy. One day Nelson was taken away by the government. Just four years after they were married, he was imprisoned in a place called Robben Island. The prison was far, far away and guarded by night and by day.

Winnie was heartbroken. But she vowed to carry on Nelson's fight. She became as brave as her husband. When the government banished her, she defied them.

She campaigned tirelessly for the release of her husband. The government banished her

again; and, again, she came back.

All the ordinary people thought Winnie was beautiful and good because she fought for them, and they too fell under spell.

Soon, people all over the world heard about Winnie Mandela, the brave woman who was fighting for her husband's freedom and for the freedom of all the black people in South Africa.

To them she was a heroine, "mother of the nation," the most famous woman in the world. Everybody loved her. Time passed.

Nelson was still in prison. Slowly, Winnie began to believe all the media myths surrounding her, that she was truly great, a queen. She formed her own "Mandela United Football Club" for the boys of the township. Together they sang songs, played games and did whatever Winnie wanted them to.

One day their games got a bit rough and they killed a little boy called Stompie Seipei, but Winnie didn't cry because she'd just heard the news that Nelson was going to be released!

Winnie and Nelson were reunited.

That was in 1990. Winnie took Nelson to the big palace she had built for

him in Soweto. Nelson thought: "Now we will live happily ever after."

But, just then, the government came for Winnie! They tried her for the kidnap and assault of Stompie.

Now, Nelson loved his wife, and he told everyone that she was innocent — the court would prove it! But the court found Winnie guilty.

Nelson was heartbroken. He needn't have worried! The kind judge reduced her sentence of six years — he knew that Nelson and Winnie couldn't bear to be apart again.

But the spell was broken. People spread rumours that Winnie had taken lovers while Nelson was away, and that she had stolen money!

Nelson was shattered. In front of the world he announced that he and Winnie had parted. He could not stop the pain from showing in his eyes.

But he still fought on, and became a very important leader.

Of Winnie you could find neither sight nor sound, not in the newspapers, not even on television.

Then, in 1993, a magical event happened! Nelson Mandela announced that, for the first time ever, South Africa would hold free, demo-

cratic elections, and the ANC, which he led, would stand for government.

Nelson would be the President... and Winnie herself would return to public life as a Parliamentary candidate!

Once again Winnie toured the country, talking to poor people, comforting them "in their hour of greatest need." Winnie was "mother of the nation" once more.

Everything was just the same as it had been before that unfortunate incident with the over-boisterous "football club."

Well, almost the same, because nothing stays the same forever.

Winnie no longer walked hand-in-hand with Nelson.

No harsh words passed her beautiful lips, but people could tell that she thought Nelson had gone soft. Winnie let people know that she was still hard and brave and left-wing.

In a week's time South Africans will vote in their first free and democratic election and Winnie will become an elected representative, even though "the mother of the nation" won't be toeing the party line laid down by the new nation's father.

Neither, most likely, will they all live happily ever after.

Youth do need sex education

SEX IS good. It is an important part of a full and healthy life. It is natural, therefore, that the life-hating, money-mad Tories should begrudge us a full and natural sex life, and that they should try to stop young people acquiring the knowledge that will help us have a full, satisfying and safe sex life.

The Health Education Authority (HEA) has this week withdrawn 10 sex-education publications, some aimed at 16 to 25 year olds. Why? Because Health Minister Dr Brian Mawhinney finds one of the HEA booklets, *Your Pocket Guide to Sex*, "smutty".

If this old prat thinks such a natural human action as sex, any sort of sex, is "smutty" then he should be struck off as a doctor and dismissed as Health Minister!

In January an anti-AIDS campaign was blocked by junior Health Minister Baroness Cumberledge, because she thought the adverts were unacceptable.

These people will spend billions on weapons — they spent billions on the Gulf war that killed over 100,000 Iraqis — but thinks hon-

est and useful sex ads "unacceptable"!

They just don't care about young people needlessly dying of AIDS, or having to learn about sex through painful and dangerous experience.

It's not just information that the Tories want to deny youth. They now plan to start charging for the contraceptive pill, and, a matter of weeks ago, MPs, including some Labour MPs, voted to deny gay men an equal age of consent of 16.

Socialists don't pretend that proper sex education, free contraception, free abortion on demand and an end to all repressive laws will lead to sexual liberation.

Only the destruction of this vicious capitalist system of exploitation, intertwined as it is with sexism and backward ideas, and its replacement by socialism, can win full liberation.

But here and now socialists must fight for everyone to have decent, honest sex education and the right to do anything they want to do sexually, as long as it hurts no one else.



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.

Youth Fightback is...

Why I should have the vote



Heather, Essex

I AM 16 and think that I am capable of voting. I should have the vote! I am legally able to get married, have a baby, join the army, smoke, have a

parents' footsteps.

The danger of political education is that the teacher can indoctrinate. So there should be a set syllabus just to give people the facts. With better knowledge we could make better choices.

I am quite sure I know more about politics than some adults I know. When I talk to people who have been voting for years I discover they know nothing about what state the country is in.

Young people have a better idea of what is going on because it affects them directly, like fascism and education cuts. A lot of other people are blind to these things but, still, young people who are not blind to them, don't get to vote.

I say we need to lower the age of voting and educate young people through school and organisations such as the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, because otherwise people are going to repeatedly screw it up by voting Tory.

full time job.

I have to pay full-price fares on trains and buses. But I have to wait two years until I can vote!

I have to make big decisions about school at my age, whether I should stay on and do GCSEs and A levels — but I can't affect decisions about how the country is run.

The decision made by those elected to run the country shape my life, but I have no voice or vote in electing them.

A lot of 16 year olds don't have a clue about politics, so before we can vote schools should be changed to make them more democratic.

Having a vote in running our own schools would be good practice for learning about politics.

When my fellow students are 18 they will probably vote Tory because there is a mainly Tory population where I live, and without political education they will follow in their

NATIONAL MEETING OF YOUNG LABOUR GROUPS

Open meeting called by the Campaign Group Supporters' Network for the left in Young Labour

Saturday 7 May, 1pm University of London Union, Malet Street, London.
(Nearest Tubes: Euston Square, Goodge Street)

Guest speaker: Tony Benn MP

Discussions include: • Organising the left in Young Labour • How to build Young Labour Groups • Democratic rights for Young Labour

For more information, contact Elaine Jones, 15a Langham Road, London N15 3AX

PC 98

When Bobby was a little child
His intellect was weakish,
And all his deeds, to put it mild,
Were just a trifle sneakish.

He preached unto his dad each day
About his little brother
And spied upon his sister May,
And went and told his mother.

Thus by the time he entered school
It quite became his passion
To sneak and spy and fib and lie
In every form and fashion.

His playmates in the schoolyard he
Would coax to some offence,
Then tell the teacher secretly
To shine at their expense.

His every act confirmed the truth
That nature had bestowed
The slimy brains upon a youth
Intended for a toad.

For when his 'prentice days began
He bred the same dissension,
For sneaking on each fellow man
Engrossed his whole attention.

Till Bobby's 'prentice time was
wrecked
Through liberties abused
And men who valued self-respect
To work with him refused.

Now Bobby was a strapping wight,
And strong in bone and sinew;
He sought a job wherein he might
His dirty work continue.

A sort of job where brass and bone
Are qualities admired,
Where belly-crawling graft alone
Makes manhood unrequired.

Performing filthy duties that
The most abandoned swine
Disgustedly would boggle at
And gruntingly decline.

And Bobby had not far to seek:
It soon became his fate
To pry and spy and lie and sneak
As PC ninety-eight.

By J.S. Clarke

From Ray Challinor's biography of J.S. Clarke, who was a communist, a lion tamer and, at his death in 1959, a Labour MP.

Italy: which way for the

“Progressive alliance” is not the way to beat the right

In this article, translated and abridged from the French weekly *Rouge*, Italian socialist Livio Maitan analyses the state of the left as it faces the victorious right-wing alliance of the fascists, the media magnate Berlusconi, and the Northern Leagues

FOR THE Senate, the right got 39.9%, the left 32.9%, and the centre 16.7%; for the Chamber of Deputies, the right got 42.9%, the left 34.4% and the centre 15.7%.

The national averages are the result of markedly different regional situations. The right had considerable successes in numerous provinces of the North, especially in Lombardy (around Milan), while the left held its ground and sometimes improved its score in the traditionally ‘red’ regions of central Italy and in some southern regions.

“The choice of the progressive pole has proved false. A radical change of course is dictated by experience itself.”

The right is markedly stronger among young people — which explains the difference between the Senate and the Chamber results, the minimum voting age for the Senate being 25.

The PDS (ex Communist Party, now ‘Democratic Left Party’) had imposed its strategy of a coalition of ‘progressives’, mixed with an alliance with some by no means marginal fractions of the industrial bourgeoisie. It can put out some flags, since it gained 4% by comparison with April 1992. But, since its leaders were hoping to gain a majority, criticisms are inevitable.

The PDS has emphasised two points: formation of united parliamentary groups including all the ‘progressives’ elected, and an agreement with the centre on opposition to the right-



PDS leader Occhetto

wing government.

The PRC [Party of Communist Refoundation, a left-wing split] has rejected this proposition.

Its results are considered fairly satisfactory — 59 seats as against 55 in 1992, and a small increase in the vote for the Chamber, to 6%.

The leadership’s analysis has been summarised in an editorial, where [Fausto] Bertinotti [PRC general secretary] reaffirms the soundness of the choice of an alliance of progressives, but notes:

“The left has been beaten because it did not appear consistently as an alternative force with a clear political and programmatic profile, and because, as a whole, it did not act as a united movement”.

Those who criticised the majority line of the PRC congress (of supporting the ‘progressive’ alliance) reckon that the choice of the progressive pole with the orientation that the PDS imposed has proved false, since its declared aim — stopping the right — was not achieved. A radical change of course is thus dictated by experience itself.

Refounding the

With the PDS (ex-Communist Party) insisting that it had no wish to see left-wing or socialist ideas prevail in Italy, the PRC, Party of Communist Refoundation, is the main force aspiring to lead working-class militancy against the bosses and the Right. What sort of a party is it?

This assessment is, by Livio Maitan, abridged from an article in International Viewpoint magazine. Maitan is a veteran Trotskyist and member of a group which is linked to Socialist Outlook in Britain.

AT THE Italian Communist Party’s last congress in February 1991 it abandoned its name, symbols, and historic identity. The majority formed the Party of the Democratic Left. The minority opposition formed a new Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC).

Whatever the wishes of the Party of Communist Refoundation’s (PRC) founding leaders, the party was born as a pluralist formation. For sure, the overwhelming majority of members came from the former Italian Communist Party (PCI), but a significant number have emerged from other origins, and have passed through a wide variety of different experiences.

Following its June 1991 congress, a majority of Democrazia Proletaria — the only significant far-left tendency to have survived the 1980s — joined the PRC.

Given these diverse origins it is easier to understand why, at its first congress in December 1991, there was broad agreement in favour of the name Communist Refoundation. The objective was to underline the need for critical reflection on the past experience of the communist movement on a national and international level, and the need for a new beginning.

There are indeed those in the PRC who have



Italian workers have organised many strikes and protests — but still lack a clear class-struggle political voice.

been, and still are, nostalgic for the days of Stalinism. However, this is only a small current and, moreover, it does not systematically defend Stalinist methods and conceptions. Rather, it is that they are attached to what they see as a positive image of the PCI in relation to the Party’s post-Stalinist drift.

For the PRC’s president, Armando Cossutta, and his closest supporters, the Stalinist label is not particularly appropriate. In fact, from the beginning of the 1960s onwards, in the Milan federation, Cossutta was among the most active in the ‘de-Stalinisation’ of the PCI. While twenty years later he criticised Berlinguer’s final break with Moscow, this was not in order to defend Stalinism, but rather because he believed that the gains of ‘socialism’ still persisted in the Soviet Union and that it was therefore wrong to break off all ties with the Soviet Communist Party leadership. He later made a self-criticism on this point.

One final remark can be made concerning the PRC’s membership. While the large majority of those with formal membership status [some 120,000] originate in the PCI, the proportions are different on the level of the active membership, and even more so on the level of party workers. Here the presence of those of non-PCI origin is much greater.

In line with PCI tradition, most members of the Party are not active and only pay for their membership card. About 30% of members participate in some small way or another in the life of the Party, through its local structures.

It should also be recalled that following the last national congress, where three different motions were put to a vote, minorities were given proportional representation both on the national political committee and on the leadership. Only the secretariat is composed solely of members of the majority.

As for the PRC’s social composition, it is undoubtedly a party with a popular base, and a relatively high proportion of workers. Moreover, it has proved its ability to organise mass mobilisations on several occasions. It was

the driving force behind two major national demonstrations of more than 100 thousand people with radical social and political demands.

Nonetheless, three of the PRC’s weak points must not be obscured.

Firstly, while the PRC may have the support of working class sectors and can count of a core of workers in large and medium-size enterprises — such as Alfa Romeo in Milan, FIAT in Turin and militant factories in the south — its organisational presence in the workplace remains quite limited.

Secondly, the social implantation of rank and file community organisations is entirely inadequate. And even where it exists, there is no consistent activity.

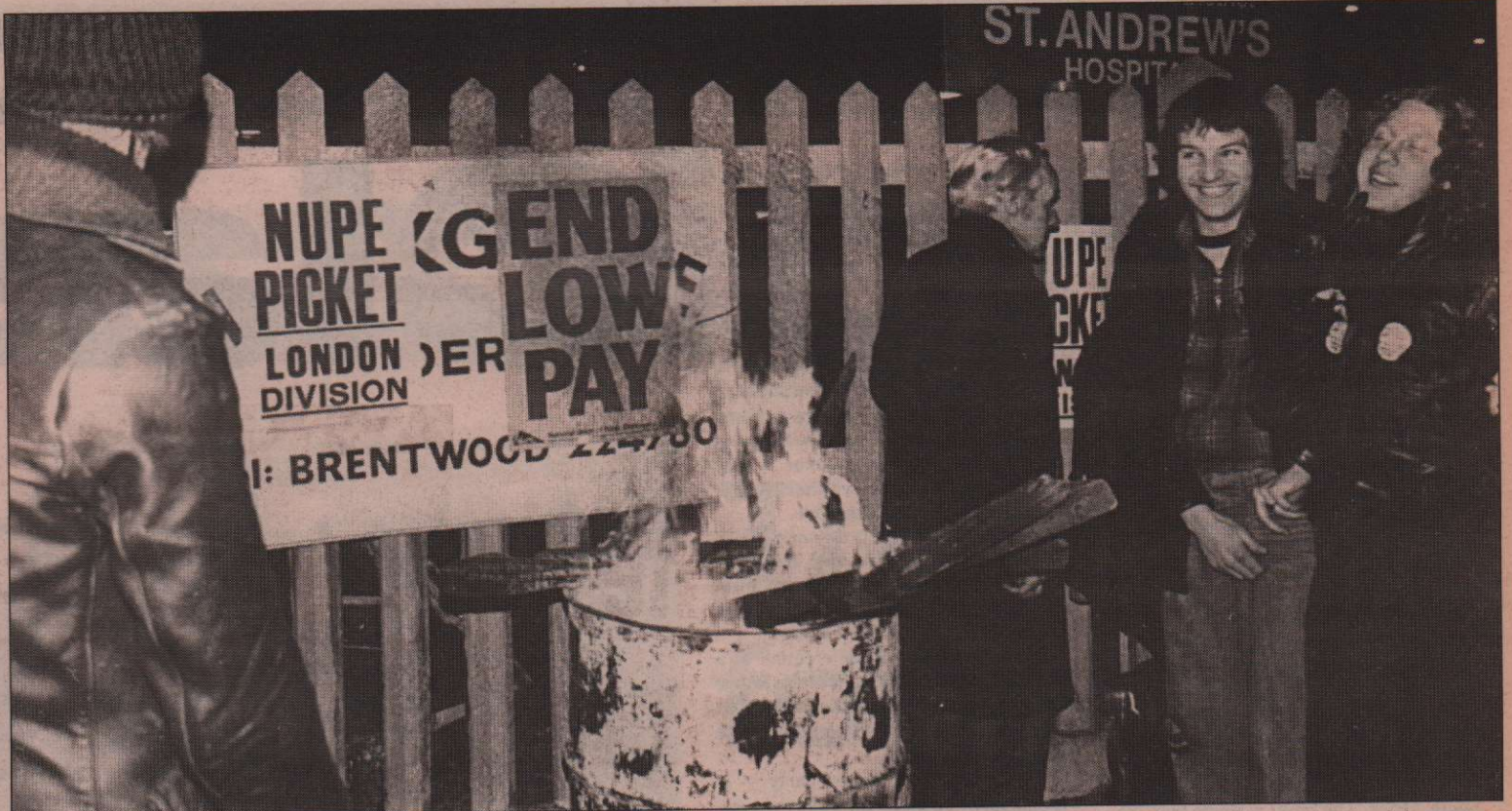
“The PRC has emerged as the only left-wing opposition in the country. This is especially so following the decision of the PDS to accept the cancellation of agreements between the government, employers and the trade unions confederations.”

Thirdly, while last year’s big demonstrations — particularly on 25 September 1993 — had a satisfactory and active participation from youth, the percentage of youth in the party is very low. Up until now there has been no co-ordinated effort on the national level around questions of specific interest to the younger gener-

left?



Antonio Gramsci, one of the founding leaders of the Italian CP. The CP and PDS leaders misused Gramsci's polemics against sectarian and syndicalist ideas to justify craven reformism and class collaboration.



With contracting out and the creation of "trusts", more and more Health Service workers are being driven into low-paid poverty. A minimum wage should be fixed by law.

"Tax the rich to pay for the minimum wage" says Bill Morris

Labour must fight for £4 per hour minimum

By Bill Morris, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union

THE Labour Party will not win the trust of the British people by tinkering with the margins of a battered welfare state.

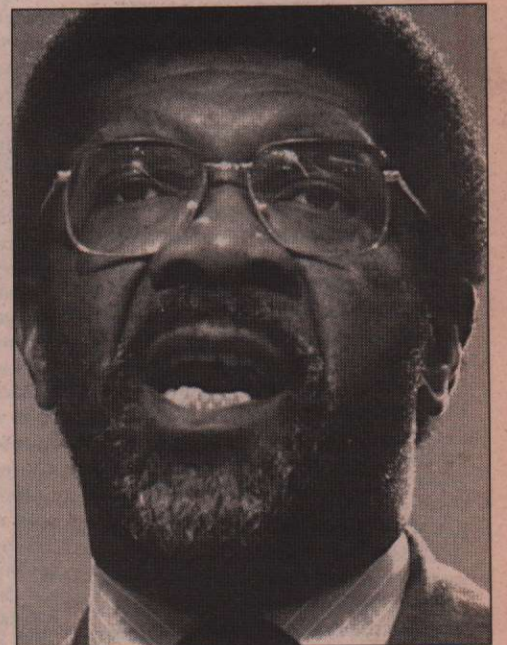
Labour must commit itself to systematic, planned and co-ordinated policies for a strong economy. And Labour must plan now to win social justice. That means a firm commitment to universal benefits — including Child Benefit.

It means a firm commitment to the restoration of the link between pensions and average earnings. It means a statutory minimum wage of not less than £4 an hour, so the state no longer needs to subsidise, through

the benefit system, the bad employer who pays poverty wages.

And it means freedom and choice for women through a massive programme of affordable childcare facilities to deliver independence. It means putting a stop to deregulation and privatisation — and, let's make it clear that just as this movement has fought tooth and nail to prevent the privatisation of Scottish Water, we will fight tooth and nail to take it back when Labour is in power.

If these goals are to become a reality, Labour cannot afford to throw away the potential weapon of fair tax and Labour must win the argument for fair and progressive taxation — in simple terms, the rich must pay more.



Bill Morris

Labour-affiliated unions push for campaign on trade union rights

OFFICIALS AT Labour's Walworth Road HQ are blocking the circulation of a campaign pack for activists which is designed to get the party to raise key issues of concern to trade unionists.

The campaign pack — which has the backing of the TGWU, GMB and UNISON leaderships who wield nearly two million block votes at Labour's conference — merely says that Labour should — fight for policies on trade union rights and the minimum wage that have been passed at Annual Conference.

Nevertheless, it has provoked a wave of hostility from the incompetent and talentless bureaucrats and PR cronies who 'masterminded' Labour's "campaign strategy".

The trade union leaders are pushing for Labour to do the following.

"...give all workers a set of basic legal rights which are easily understood and readily enforceable. The Charter will cover:

"• Equal status. Everyone at work will be covered by a basic contract of employment with a full range of employment rights regardless of the number of hours worked, their length of time with the employer, size of the company or whether they are classified as full-time, part-time or temporary.

"• A minimum wage. Labour will introduce a national minimum wage.

"• Health and Safety at work. Employees and their representatives will

have increased rights at their workplace. We will ensure that employees do not face dismissal if they refuse to do dangerous work which is a genuine and serious health and safety hazard.

"The Health and Safety Executive will be given the resources it needs to enforce the present law — as well as playing an active role in improving health and safety at the workplace. It will become responsible for Health and Safety Inspectorates throughout industry.

"We will also ensure that employers are clearly responsible for improving unhealthy working conditions.

"Our prosecution policy will be designed to ensure that the courts are used to proving a clear deterrent. Companies and individuals directly responsible for breaches in health and safety laws will face penalties which match the gravity of the offence committed. And this will include, in the most serious cases, the use of imprisonment."

Significantly, the only trade union leader that the Walworth Road spin doctors can find to fight their corner and to attack Bill Morris for his support for a minimum wage is Bill Jordan, the man with the TV manner of "I speak your weight" machine. Surely it's time for the trade union rank and file of the party to turn the quiet lobbying into a serious drive to get Labour's leadership to fight for its full existing policy on trade union rights.

left?

ation.
The PRC has emerged as the only left-wing opposition in the country. This is especially so following the decision of the PDS to accept the agreements between the government, employers and the trade union confederations — agreements which have been disastrous for working people. The PDS has also, to a large degree, supported the Ciampi government in its work of "cleansing", restructuring and conservative and anti-worker overhauling of State institutions and legislation.
The PRC was the main force opposing — unfortunately without success — the anti-democratic reform of the electoral code, whose consequences have been very serious. Unlike all the other parties the PRC actively participated in the wave of struggles in autumn 1992, against the government measures which gravely affected the standard of living of broad layers of the population.
On international questions the PRC has made its positions clear against the Maastricht Treaty; participation in the mobilisation against the Gulf War, and denouncing, in no uncertain terms, the neo-colonial adventure in Somalia. It declared itself opposed to any type of military intervention in ex-Yugoslavia, and has called for lifting the embargo on Iraq, Libya, and Cuba. Solidarity with Cuba has been a central theme of its anti-imperialist propaganda and activities. The PRC condemned the August 1991 aborted coup attempt in Russia as well as the bloody repression unleashed by Yeltsin last October.
The organisation's relations with working class parties and anti-imperialist movements in other countries has been appropriate in the current context, that is to say it has not privileged relations with any one group or current. Rather, it has established relations with a range of communist parties, socialist movements and groupings. It has also made links with working class and anti-imperialist organisations in underdeveloped countries, and even with certain far-left formations.

Why working-class political independence is a principle

WHAT WE SAY

THE TWO articles on this page, reprinted from the South African magazine *Work in Progress*, show contrasting sides of the South African left.

Salim Valley and Brian Ramadiroo are comrades seeking a road to the working class and fighting to organise on the political plane. They sketch out the background which led to the decision to stand a list of socialist candidates — the Workers' List Party — in this month's elections.

Terry Bell represents everything bad in the South African left: the combination of closeted, inward-looking elitist sectarianism with its alter ego, a public kow-towing towards and ideological subordination to middle class black nationalism.

Bell combines everything bad in the South African left with everything that is bad about the British SWP — the parent organisation of the International Socialists of South Africa. The result is worse than the sum of its parts.

Bell's main thesis can be quite honestly paraphrased as this: "A mass workers' party would be reformist, so vote for the bourgeois black nationalists of the ANC!" But Bell raises some important questions.

1) *Socialists would work to give a mass workers' party a revolutionary programme, but what if the mass workers' party were reformist? Would a mass reformist workers' party represent a step forward for the workers? Would it be worse or better than the present working-class support for the ANC? Bell is evasive, but the whole thrust of his piece is that it would be worse.*

We consider that an independent working-class party, even initially on a reformist basis, would represent a major step forward for the South African working class in the direction of independent class politics.

Working-class self-emancipation and self-organisation are inextricably linked. You can't be for working-class self-liberation and for voting ANC at the same time.

Without a party the workers do not exist politically. If you call for a vote for the ANC and oppose an initiative like the Workers' List Party, you are saying that the workers should not even try to mount a political challenge to the dominant politics or bourgeois black nationalism, not until they are revolutionary enough to satisfy Bell. They can be critics, but only critics from within a populist multi-class alliance in which the guiding ideas are provided by self-conscious bourgeois nationalists like Mandela.

Until the workers register "revolutionary" on Bell's thermometer, politics (i.e. the overall running of society, the passing of laws, the electing of MPs etc.) should be the preserve of other classes! The workers cannot attempt to put their imprint on events directly and independently. That is what Bell is saying when he argues against the idea of a mass workers' party and for a vote for the African National Congress.

Historically, this approach is "Martynovism", after the Martynov against whom Lenin fought at the beginning of the Bolshevik movement, and the same Martynov when he worked as a Stalinist agent in China helping to compel the communists to submit suicidally to Chiang Kai Shek's bourgeois nationalists in the mid 1920s. The historic parallels are a big subject on their own.

Bell's opposition to independent working-class politics is linked to his failure to understand what working-class reformism is.

In essence working-class reformism is simply a political extension of the basic framework of trade unionism — i.e. bargaining within the system — from the level of individual industries and unions to the level of the overall government of society.

Working-class reformism is politically bourgeois, but it is a bourgeois politics rooted in and based on elementary independent working-class organisation. i.e. trade unionism. As such it is an infinitely higher form of working-class political involvement than support for the ANC.

A mass reformist workers' party is a workers' organisation with bourgeois politics; the ANC is a bourgeois black nationalist organisation which subordinates the working class to its alien class interests.

2) *Is it possible to build a mass revolutionary party in South Africa?*

The way Terry Bell argues about the issue of a workers' party, it would seem that he believes that it is impossible to build a revolutionary socialist organisation with any kind of mass base in the country.

He says of a mass workers' party: "its path will almost inevitably be that of reformism". And this in a country, South Africa, for which the SWP has often chanted the slogan: "One solution, revolution!" This "revolutionary" is rotten with pessimism!

We think it is possible for socialists to build both a genuinely broad mass workers' party and simultaneously to arm that party with a clear socialist programme. Valley and Ramadiroo have outlined the objective circumstances making it possible.

The basic method here is the one outlined by Trotsky when he advocated in the late 1930s that the US industrial unions form their own workers' party rather than support Roosevelt's New Deal Democrats.

"Are we in favour of the creation of a reformist labour party? No. Are we in favour of a policy which can give to the trade unions the possibility to put its weight upon the balance of forces? Yes.

It can become a reformist party — it depends on the development. Here the question of programme comes in.... We must have a programme of transitional demands, the most complete of them being a workers' and farmers' government. We are for a party — an independent party of the toiling masses which will take power."

Bell could argue that in the particular circumstances of South Africa this method is not applicable — but he doesn't. Bell argues as if it is wrong in principle to try to launch a mass workers' party, or even a movement for a mass workers' party.

Bell can only do this by completely garbling the positive argument for why a revolutionary socialist organisation is needed. He does that in such a way that he ends up with political conclusions which are utterly defeatist — i.e. vote ANC and talk about a revolutionary socialist party in the distant future. This point can be drawn out by posing another question.

3) *Are mass reformist parties reformist solely because they aim to organise the majority of workers, or because the reformists have won the battle of ideas against the left inside these parties?*

Obviously, each case has to be looked at concretely. The fact that the Bolsheviks in Russia built a revolutionary party which did have majority working-class support shows that Bell's view is wooden, schematic, undialectical, and very pessimistic.

In reality the purpose of a tight revolutionary socialist organisation is to organise a minority on a firm ideological basis so that they can build an organisation which fights to transform and revolutionise the mass workers' movement. Clarity of ideas is required to allow the revolutionary minority to win the support of and lead the majority, not so that the minority can seal itself off from that majority.

Obviously mass support for fully-developed revolutionary ideas has to be built "painstakingly", as Bell says, but he does not say why a movement for a mass workers' party is not one way of painstakingly building that support. He forgets that workers in action can make tremendous leaps in consciousness in a brief time, especially if there is an organisation of educated Marxists to help them. (Read Leon Trotsky's comments on the German KAPD in "The First Five Years of the Comintern, Volume 1", comrade Bell!)

Bell's position makes sense only if "painstaking" means not doing anything too dramatic right now — in particular, not doing anything to challenge the dominance of the ANC in the townships and the unions.

4) *What is Bell's strategy for "the construction of a revolutionary socialist party?"*

It is not possible to tell from Bell's articles. As with other SWP argument about "building the party", the phrase is devoid of any content other than "join the SWP, or join the ISSA".

Today the SWP/ISSA do not argue with workers about ideas at all. They simply say "Yes we agree with you. We too will be voting ANC, so why don't you join us?"

The SWP/ISSA are interested neither in hard ideological debate (unless it is of the polite academic kind — which will not win raw township youth or black workers from the ANC), nor in building a real movement around working-class demands.

No. What the SWP/ISSA are interested in is moods. There is a very strong pro-ANC "mood".

For serious socialists mass moods are important. But building an independent workers' political movement is a principle.

South African elections: Workers' List

Class

Now is the time for a workers' party

By Brian Ramadiroo and Salim Valley

THE DEBATE and support that has greeted the call for a Mass Workers' Party [MWP] comes as no surprise. After all, it is clearly an idea whose time has come.

As the urban and rural poor grow disillusioned with the negotiations process, the limitations of black nationalism are being exposed vividly to workers.

Shop stewards and other workers in the independent trade union movement, workers active in other organs of civil society, and many democratic socialists are questioning whether any of the existing political organisations are advancing working-class interests.

There has emerged a need within the workers' movement to set in motion a viable alternative to the disastrous strategy of negotiations for power-sharing. Within the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) we are trying to clarify such a new road.

Why for a workers' party? Why not encourage workers to join the main national liberation organisations like the ANC and the PAC?

What we need is an independent organisation of socialists that will advance the long- and short-term demands of the working people — within the national liberation struggle and without any compromise.

Inside the nationalist organisations this was possible to a limited extent only, and mainly during the period of armed propaganda. But it remains possible for democratic socialists to work with nationalist formations on issues that affect workers, issues such as the fight for one-person, one-vote. After all, most members of these organisations are workers.

We cannot forget, however, that all nationalist organisations are multi-class. And, in the anti-apartheid struggle (except for a short period in the mid-1980s), the voice and interests of the black middle class have tended to dominate those of the working class.

Nowadays we are told that workers have to help put the (capitalist) economy of our country "back on the road" to profitability and efficiency. We have to help it become competitive internationally, so more jobs can be created. This is wishful thinking.

It is precisely the power of such illusions and deceptions that confirms the need for an independent workers' party that will constantly and without compromise promote the interests of the workers. It will certainly not support such class-collaborationist policies. It will expose the deception behind the "unbundling" of some monopoly companies that suddenly are discovering that "small is beautiful." It will refuse to pay an apartheid debt (that runs to billions of rands) to foreign banks and agencies which all

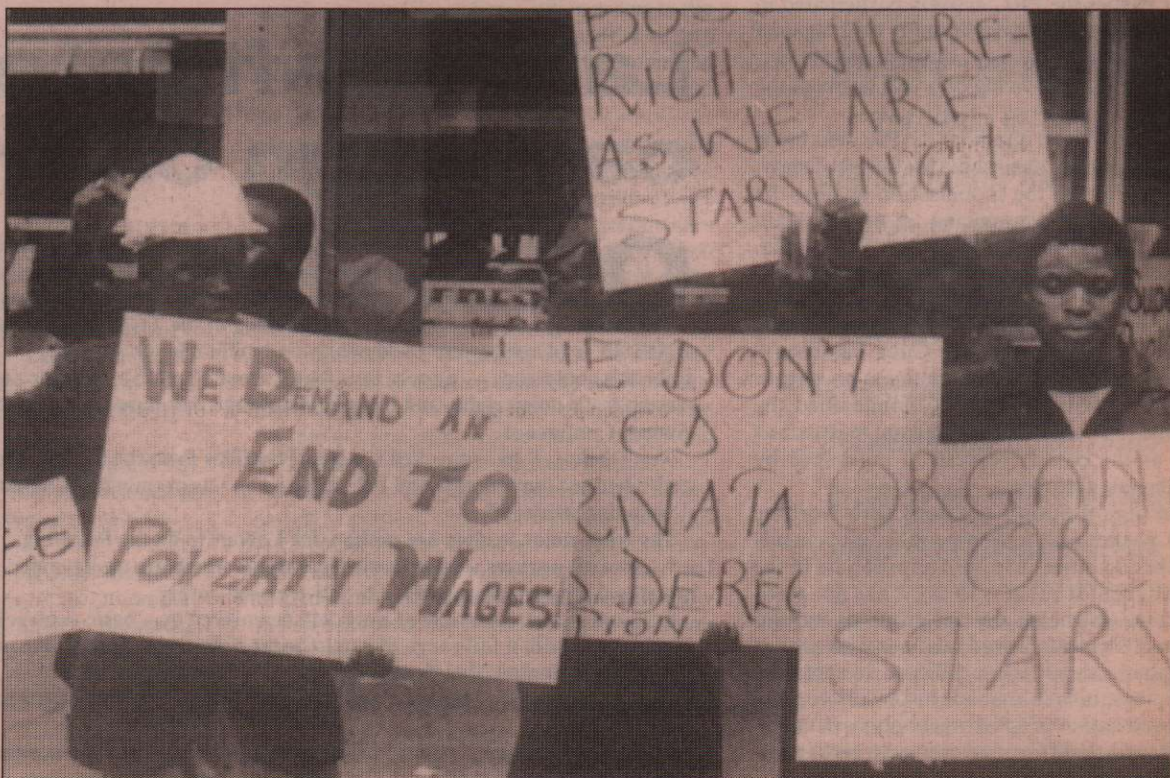
along financed the apartheid system.

Rather, it will take a new road to continue the struggle of working people for emancipation, food, jobs, peace, land and liberty; a struggle that inevitably is waged against the capitalist class and its allies.

It is today quite obvious that the strategy of negotiating for power-sharing has forced the nationalist organisations into deep compromises with the apartheid state and capital. Indeed, we hear the voice of the capitalist class speaking from within these organisations in the ex-liberation movement. "Realism" has become the watchword.

Even the demand for one-person, one-vote stands compromised by the decision to tie the nationalist organisations and SACP into a so-called "Government of National Unity". Leaders of the liberation and trade union movements will be allowed to take office. But calling shots from the wings will be capital and its imperialist allies in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and various US, European Community and East Asian interests. It is with these class forces that the national liberation movement is expected to "transform," "restructure" and even "liberate" SA!

The truth is that the middle class and a tiny layer drawn from skilled organised black workers are being absorbed into a restructured ruling-class alliance that has the task of res-



"The voice and interests of the black middle class have tended to dominate those of the working class."

or ANC?

or nation?



"Black nationalism can no longer promote (even inconsistently) the interests of the poor."

cuing the decaying capitalist system in SA.

Black nationalism has walked its last mile. Forced to compromise with the capitalist class on all the major aspects of social policy, it can no longer promote (even inconsistently) the interests of the urban and rural poor. Instead, it finds itself trying to drum up faith in policies which only yesterday it was denouncing as reactionary and untenable.

Scores of workers still believe in the promises of the nationalist leaders. Hence they remain members and supporters of the ANC, the SACP, the PAC. They will leave those parties if and when they lose faith in their effectiveness.

This means that, in the short term, a workers' party will necessarily be an opposition movement. It will fearlessly promote what it considers to be the real interests and demands of the

working people of our country. In doing so it will hinder the ruling parties' attempts to implement their class agenda. In the longer term, it will build the capacity to take over state power and to transform society along radically democratic lines.

We call on all democratic socialists, trade unionists and civic activists who realise the urgency of the hour to establish a movement to promote the Mass Workers' Party.

We are not calling for its immediate establishment, comrades are encouraged to form committees for a workers' party at their workplaces in the townships and educational institutions. In some provinces, regional interim committees have been set up already.

We hope to see these initiatives lead to the formation of an interim national steering committee. It will convene a national conference of the Mass Workers' Party early in 1994, where the movement for such a party will be launched and equipped with a programme of action.

It is obvious that such a party can only be launched on the crest of a campaign around some of the fundamental demands of South African workers. So the conference will also have to focus on practical campaigns.

Building a Mass Workers' Party is without doubt an idea whose time has come. It presents left-wing groups in SA with an historic opportunity to coalesce rather than fragment. If we miss it, we will only have ourselves to blame.

It is crucial that we begin the process now — while the space still exists. It will become much more difficult once the Government of National Unity consolidates itself. For, at that point, with the bureaucratic labour and civic leadership co-opted, we can anticipate much more direct coercion being directed at struggles on the ground and at the Left in general.

• The authors are members of WOSA. This article has been edited.

The case for voting ANC

By Terry Bell

FAR FROM being an idea whose "time has come," calls for a mass workers' party are merely an old reformist notion dusted down and presented anew at a time of widespread confusion.

An MWP is a blind alley; a manifestation of the fact that much of the Left has lost direction. This loss of direction — a result of theoretical inadequacy — has given rise to a mixture of desperation and not a little opportunism. The call for an MWP is one result.

The idea acknowledges the widespread confusion on the Left, and seeks to overcome this through combining the disparate groupings and ignoring those differences.

United only by a commitment to some vague notion of socialism and the "defence of workers' interests," this is a recipe — to use Rosa Luxemburg's term — for a swamp. It is also the recipe for reformist parties the world over.

The rise of reformism

If the proposed MWP manages to create a pole of attraction for a substantial number of workers — and becomes mass in more than just name — its path will almost inevitably be that of reformism. And any revolutionary socialists within the party will find themselves under pressure to compromise with reformism to get out.

Why? Because an MWP aims to organise the mass of workers on the basis of uneven consciousness, forsaking revolutionary clarity for the lowest common denominator. This is a recipe for reformism writ large, the sacrifice of the revolutionary goal on the altar of possible immediate mass support.

Of course all revolutionary socialists want mass support for ideas which can transform society. But this support has to be built, painstakingly, in the real world. That's why Marx and Engels referred to the "most advanced and resolute section" of the working class forming the revolutionary organisation. They recognised the unevenness of consciousness within the class, and the need for the revolutionary minority to persuade the majority of workers about the way forward.

And their theories, as Lenin taught us, must be verified in revolutionary practice. They should be measured against everyday reality, uncluttered by Stalinist distortions or dogmatic readings of Trotsky, to assess whether they provide a useful guide.

Proponents of the MWP tend to equate Left unity with support for an MWP, and contrast this with disuni-

ty and factionalism. This is false. There can be unity in action among various groups: political parties, trade unions, civics and Left movements. And there will often be the need for umbrella organisations to co-ordinate campaigns for social change.

The genuine Left should be at the forefront of such campaigns and battles. It is within such "wars of position" that the contestation of ideas takes place. This is revolutionary action — and it can only be based consistently on revolutionary theory. This requires clarity — the kind which can only be provided by revolutionary Marxism.

Today, the working class is bigger than it has ever been; capitalism is facing the biggest crisis in its history; the filth of Stalinism has been swept away. The objective conditions for an advance to international socialism are better than ever before.

In such conditions, revolutionary socialists should learn from the past in order to understand the present — so as to clear a path to a socialist future.

There are no quick fixes. Socialists will have to work hard, with clarity of thought, to persuade the majority of the working class of the way ahead.

Confused action

A lack of clear theory leads at best to confused action. An example of this was the timing of the MWP initiative (and much of the rhetoric which has surrounded it.) Arguments to boycott the April 27 election — made by WOSA, Azapo and the New Unity Movement — equated the liberation movements with the National Party. So do most of the arguments calling for an MWP slate for the election.

But it is nonsense to equate the ANC alliance, which is based on the hopes and aspirations of the working masses, with a party which is the overt champion of the ruling class.

This does not mean accepting or encouraging illusions in either the alliance or parliament. In this particular battle, the working class is lined up behind the ANC alliance against the NP.

A massive alliance victory would boost the confidence of the class and encourage demands for change.

Since revolutionary socialists stand for the self-emancipation of the working class, the Left should argue that we vote — without illusions in party or parliament — with the class on April 27. And we should do so while arguing (with clarity) about the best way forward to real social transformation.

In Leninist terms, this will mean the construction of a revolutionary socialist party.

• Bell is a member of International Socialists, South Africa (ISSA).

What is the Mass Workers' Party?

WE SEE the MWP as a party of the workers, for the workers and controlled by the workers. It will function openly and transparently. Everything from the formulation of its programme of principles to membership lists, finances or campaign planning will be open to all members and the general public.

Membership will comprise workers and their allies who have transcended "mere" trade-union consciousness and who are prepared to struggle for an independent working-class position on all issues, not only so-called 'bread-and-butter' questions. Hence, the party will not be a party of the trade unions, not even in the style of the British Labour Party. Nonetheless, many, if not most, of such a party's leaders will come from the organised ranks of COSATU, NACTU and unaffiliated unions.

Its programme of action will focus on the tangible issues that affect the working class such as retrenchments, unemployment, jobs, housing, healthcare, a living wage, price increases, education, self-defence, women workers' rights, environmental issues and socialist measures, such as nation-

alisation under workers' control.

Will it be a "vanguard" party? Any group of politically conscious people who band together to promote a certain world view or programme are by definition a "vanguard" of sorts. But the question is really only answered once the struggle has been won.

The MWP will be the creation of workers who stand united in their opposition to capitalist exploitation and continued racial oppression. They will not have the same idea of what the post-capitalist society should look like.

The right of tendencies to exist is the essence of inner-party democracy, so there will be different and changing tendencies or "platforms." They will constitute themselves around questions of goals and objectives, strategies and tactics. The flip side to that right is the duty to adhere to decisions arrived at democratically.

To define the shape and content more precisely at this stage would be to pretend we have a blueprint, which we in WOSA don't. Instead, much more debate is being invested in clarifying the many issues that surround the MWP among ourselves and others on the Left.

75 years since the founding of the Communist International

Revolutionaries and parliament

This excerpt from a public letter which Lenin sent to Sylvia Pankhurst in 1919 deals with the same questions Pankhurst addressed in her account of the Second World Congress of the Communist International, held a year after she received this letter [see *Socialist Organiser* 594 and 595]. It deals with them from the point of view of those who argued that British communism should seek to affiliate to the Labour Party and should take part in parliamentary elections.

Dear Comrade,

HAVE no doubt at all that many workers who belong to the best, most honest and sincerely revolutionary representatives of the proletariat are enemies of parliamentarism and of any participation in Parliament. The older capitalist culture and bourgeois democracy are in a given country, the more understandable this is, since the bourgeoisie in old parliamentary countries has excellently mastered the arts of hypocrisy and of fooling the people in a thousand ways, passing off bourgeois parliamentarism as "democracy in general" or as "pure democracy" and so on, cunningly concealing the million threads which bind Parliament to the stock exchange and the capitalists, utilising a venal, mercenary press and by every means exercising the power of money, the power of capital.

There is not doubt that the Communist International and the Communist Parties of the various countries would be making an irreparable mistake if they repulsed those workers who stand for Soviet power, but who are against participation in the parliamentary struggle. If we take the problem in its general form, theoretically, then it is this very programme, i.e., the struggle for Soviet power, for the Soviet republic, which is able to unite and must now unite without fail all sincere, honest revolutionaries from among the workers. Very many anarchist workers are now becoming sincere supporters of Soviet power, and that being so, it proves them to be our best comrades and friends, the best of revolutionaries, who have been enemies of Marxism only through misunderstanding, or more correctly, not through misunderstanding but because the official socialism prevailing in the epoch of the Second International (1889-1914) betrayed Marxism, fell into opportunism, perverted Marx's revolutionary teachings in general and his teachings on the lessons of the Paris Commune of 1871 in particular. I have written in detail about this in my book *The State and Revolution* and will therefore not dwell further on the problem.

What if in a given country those who are Communists by conviction and by their readiness to carry on revolutionary work, sincere partisans of Soviet power (the "Soviet system", as non-Russians sometimes call it) cannot unite owing to disagreement over participation in Parliament?

I should consider such disagreement immaterial at present, since the struggle for Soviet power is the political struggle of the proletariat in its highest, most class-conscious, most revolutionary form. It is better to be with the revolutionary workers when they are mistaken over some partial or secondary question, than with the "official" Socialists or Social-Democrats, if the latter are not sincere, firm revolutionaries, and are unwilling or unable to conduct revolutionary work among the working masses, but pursue correct tactics in regard to that partial question. And the question of parliamentarism is now a partial, secondary question. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were, in my opinion, correct when they defended participation in the elections to the bourgeois German Parliament, to the constituent "National Assembly", at the January 1919 Conference of the Spartacists in Berlin, against the majority at the conference. But of course, they were still more correct when they preferred remaining with the Communist Party, which was making a partial mistake, to going with the direct traitors to



London matchgirls' strike, 1888: their fight inspired Sylvia's conversion to socialism

socialism, like Scheidemann and his party, or with those servile souls, doctrinaires, cowards, spineless accomplices of the bourgeoisie and reformists in practice, such as are Kautsky, Haase, Daumig and all this "party" of German "independents."

I am personally convinced that to renounce participation in the parliamentary elections is a mistake on the part of the revolutionary workers of Britain, but better to make that mistake than to delay the formation of a big workers' Communist Party in Britain out of all the trends and elements listed by you, which sympathise with Bolshevism and sincerely support the Soviet Republic. If, for example, among the BSP there were sincere Bolsheviks who refused, because of differences over participation in Parliament, to merge at once in a Communist Party with trends 4, 6 and 7, then these Bolsheviks, in my opinion, would be making a mistake a thousand times greater than the mistaken refusal to participate in elections to the bourgeois British Parliament. In saying this I naturally assume that trends 4, 6 and 7, taken together, are really connected with the mass of the workers, and are not simply small intellectual groups, as is often the case in Britain. In this

respect particular importance probably attaches to the Workers' Committees and Shop Stewards, which, one should imagine are closely connected with the masses.

Indissoluble connection with that mass of the workers, the ability to agitate unceasingly

"The workers' party will be able to keep its own parliamentarians in hand, to make of them real revolutionary propagandists, such as Karl Liebknecht was, and not opportunists, not corrupters of the proletariat with bourgeois methods, bourgeois customs, bourgeois ideas, bourgeois poverty of ideas..."

among them, to participate in every strike, to respond to every demand of the masses — this is the chief thing for a Communist Party, especially in such a country as Britain where until now (as incidentally is the case in all imperialist countries) participation in the socialist movement and the labour movement generally has been confined chiefly to narrow upper strata of the workers, members of the labour aristocracy, in greater part thoroughly and hopelessly spoiled by reforms, held captive by bourgeois and imperialist prejudices. Without a struggle against this stratum, without the destruction of every trace of its prestige among the workers, without convincing the masses of the utter bourgeois corruption of this stratum, there can be no question of a serious communist workers' movement. That applies to Britain, to France, to America and to Germany.

Those working-class revolutionaries who make parliamentarism the centre of their

attacks are quite right inasmuch as these attacks serve to express their denial in principle of bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy. Soviet power, the Soviet republic — this is what the workers' revolution has put in place of bourgeois democracy, this is the form of transition from capitalism to socialism, the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And criticism of parliamentarism, its connection with capitalism and capitalism alone, of its progressive character as against the Middle Ages, and of its reactionary character as against Soviet power.

But the critics of parliamentarism in Europe and America, when they are anarchists, or anarcho-syndicalists, are very often wrong insofar as they reject all participation in elections and parliamentary activity. Here they simply show their lack of revolutionary experience. We Russians who have lived through two great revolutions in the twentieth century, are well aware what importance parliamentarism can have, and actually does have during a revolutionary period in general and in the very midst of a revolution in particular. Bourgeois parliaments must be abolished and replaced by Soviet bodies. That is undoubted. It is undoubted now, after the experience of Russia, Hungary, Germany and other countries, that this will absolutely take place during proletarian revolution. Therefore, systematically to prepare the working masses for this, to explain in advance the importance to them of Soviet power, to conduct propaganda and agitation for it — all this is the absolute duty of the worker who wants to be a revolutionary in deeds. But we Russians fulfilled that task, operating in the parliamentary arena, too. In the tsarist, fake, landlord Duma our representatives knew how to carry on revolutionary and republican propaganda. In just the same way Soviet propaganda can and must be carried on in and from within the bourgeois parliaments.

Perhaps that will not be easy to achieve at once in this or that parliamentary country. But that is another question. Steps must be taken to ensure that these correct tactics are mastered by the revolutionary workers in all countries. And if the workers' party (that is, connected with the masses, with the majority of the working people, with the rank and file of the proletariat and not merely with its upper stratum) if it is really a party i.e., a firmly effectively knit organisation of the revolutionary vanguard, which knows how to carry on revolutionary work among the masses by all possible means, then such a party will surely be able to keep its own parliamentarians in hand, to make of them real revolutionary propagandists, such as Karl Liebknecht was, and not opportunists, not corrupters of the proletariat with bourgeois methods, bourgeois customs, bourgeois ideas, bourgeois poverty of ideas...

With communist greetings,

Lenin, August 28 1919



Lenin

New Age twaddle



Matt Cooper
reviews *Fearless*

Directed by
Peter Weir

FEARLESS attempts to work on two levels. On the first level it stabs at a psychological study of fear and bereavement.

Max Klein (Jeff Bridges) is a thirtysomething architect with a fear of flying. When his business partner persuades him to take a flight to clinch a business deal even the prospect terrifies.

The plane crashes but Klein is unharmed. He is a hero, leading survivors of the crash out of the smoke-filled wreckage to safety before it explodes. The experience transforms him.

He adopts a Zen-like detachment from the world around him — his wife, his children, his job. Instead, he becomes fixated on another survivor, Carla (Rosie Peers), who lost her baby son in the crash.

Whereas Klein feels liberated by the crash, Carla feels damned, blaming herself for her son's death, and withdrawing from the world.

The plot on this first level is a depiction of how the two survivors help each other to heal the wounds of bereavement and overcome the emotional impact of the crash. But it constantly meanders into the implausible and singularly fails to address its subject in a serious way, despite fine action and cinematography.

The reason for this weakness is the film's second level — what is best described as New Age mystical twaddle.

Now, of course, there is a strong tradition of kitsch religiosity in films — David Niven sitting on the 'stairway to heaven' in *A Matter of Life and Death*, waiting to appeal against his death; an angel called Clarence showing James Stewart what the world would be like if he'd never been



A New Age angel: Jeff Bridges

born in *It's a Wonderful Life* etc.

But in such films religion is just a stage prop. You can take it or leave

it without diminishing the film.

Fearless, however, purveys a deeply ingrained mysticism.

Musical 'Back to Basics?'

By Hannah Wood

THE HECKLERS had an outing on 14 April. A group of about 20 people went to a Royal Opera House performance of Harrison Birtwhistle's "Gawain". However, they were there not to listen to the opera, but to stand up at the end and shout "Boo, fraud, rubbish".

The Hecklers, led by Frederick Stocken, claim to be dedicated to "exposing" a music establishment which worships only the 'avant-garde'. Stocken's favourite composers are Elgar, Beethoven and Schubert.

As a self-styled "romantic futurist" composer he wants to re-create the styles of these composers in his music. The word for that is pastiche!

Beethoven was a great composer,

but he didn't write great music by trying to write like the recently dead Mozart.

"They prefer music which reflects a certain past rather than an uncertain future."

Art (as opposed to pastiche) breaks new ground and creates new forms. History has shown us that purely derivative music written in the style of others is quickly forgotten.

Many great composers were, in their day, considered dangerously radical, their music written off as cacophonous.

Stocken and his allies are reactionaries. He is clearly educated and yet he does not think about the world. His co-thinkers in the Tory government are launching the 'back to basics' attacks on single parents.

In the 19th century, capitalist ideologues eulogised about progress because capitalism was developing. In 1994, the future seems a lot less certain so they would prefer music which reflects a certain past rather than an uncertain future.

Capitalism is no longer progressing, so any talk of progress implies a new form of society.

Stocken is the musical equivalent of John Major, clinging to a past he does not understand as a defence against a future which does not contain him.

Central to the plot is the idea that Klein has passed through death and thus his spirit is liberated from earthly concerns. His relationship to Clara is one of angel to mortal.

The audience is force fed with a kind of Californian love cult philosophy for beginners.

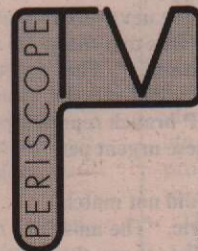
Both Bridges and Weir are huge talents who could do something to lift this film out of the ordinary. But it is ruined by the twaddle-factor.

Dismal Exports

Fred Bloggs

previews

Everyman



BBC1
Sunday 24 April 10.20pm

FOR 150 YEARS Ireland has been exporting people on a gigantic scale — tens of millions in the USA alone claim Irish descent.

Ireland also exports abortions. Abortion is still completely illegal in Ireland and Irish women — at last a hundred of them a week — who want to avail themselves of "the dismal right" have to come to Britain.

This programme shows their plight.

Big is beautiful, perhaps



Geoff Ward
reviews
The South Bank

ITV
Sunday 17 April

Show

ON The South Bank Show Dawn French gave Melvyn Bragg the night off so that she could present us with a "personal programme" celebrating big women. She hoped it would change people's negative perceptions about those who are 'fat'.

Pointing the finger at the fashion and dieting industries, she accused them of imposing on society the image of thinness as the ideal norm of physical perfection, to the detriment of almost half all women, who cannot possibly match this false ideal.

Strangely, however, Dawn turned to this very same fashion industry to provide her with new, beautiful images of the big women they have ignored for so long.

"Fashion and dieting industries have imposed the norm of thinness, to the detriment of almost half all women, who cannot possibly match it."

Unsurprisingly perhaps, they managed to disappoint her — relying for inspiration on famous old paintings by Rubens, Matisse and Picasso, whose images they merely parodied.

Some of the would be serious contributions were — unintentionally — as funny as the comic ones. American feminist Camille Paglia thought that men who had close relationships with their mother would grow to favour big women. A photographer thought his camera put several pounds on women. So what? And did you know that Marilyn Monroe apparently wore size 16 dresses? No? Oh well.

Most of the men on the programme were overly keen to stress how they preferred bigger women. Only one admitted that if a "wobbling mess" came stumbling down Carnaby St. the last thing that would enter his mind was the idea of sex. Clearly the old feminist rallying cry — "Don't judge me on appearance! I'm a person, not a sex object!" — has still not sunk in.

Dawn French has been criticised for turning big women into male sex objects, but I think she was aware of this danger.

Throughout the programme Dawn delivered a consciousness-raising monologue to a silent Alison Moyet until finally Alison replied: "What you're basically saying is that we have got to replace one stereotype with another, and to be successful women you've got to be shag-worthy. That's bollocks!"

Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

GLASGOW

Thursday 21 April

**"Israel and Palestine:
what's the solution?"**

Speaker: Jim Kearns
7.30, Partick Burgh Halls

EDINBURGH

Wednesday 27 April

**"South Africa in crisis:
what should
socialists say?"**

7.30, Trades Council,
Picardy Place

LANCASTER

Wednesday 27 April

**"How do we get
socialism?"**

The AWL debates the SPGB
Yorkshire House pub

MERSEYSIDE

Wednesday 27 April

**"How do we beat
the fascists?"**

Speaker: Elaine Jones
6.30, Edge Hill College

"Italy: a warning for us all"

Speaker: Gail Cameron
7.30, Unemployed Centre,
Wallasey

HALIFAX

Wednesday 27 April

"How to beat the Nazis"

12.30, Calderdale College

LEICESTER

Thursday 28 April

"Labour must fight!"

7.30, Castle Community Rooms

SHEFFIELD

Thursday 28 April

"South Africa in crisis"

Speaker: Tom Rigby
7.30, SCCAU, West Street

Saturday 30 April

**"Socialism and the fight
against fascism"**

1.30, after the anti-racist
demonstration;
SCCAU, West Street

BOLTON

Thursday 28 April

"How to beat the nazis"

12.00, Room 110,
Chadwick Site, Bolton Institute

LONDON

Wednesday 27 April

**"Is there an alternative
to the police?"**

Speaker: Mark Sandell
7.30, Two Eagles pub,
Austral Street, Elephant & Castle

Thursday 28 April

"How to beat the nazis"

Speakers include CAFE
and Tower Hamlets UNISON
7.30, Red Rose Club,
129 Seven Sisters Road, N7

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 11 May

**"Where next after
the May elections?"**

7.30, Unicorn pub, Church Street

LETTERS

Sex selection debate

More choice for women

FEEL that Maxine Vincent's article (SO595) on sex selection is severely flawed. The issue is surely primarily about the right of a woman to control her own body, and if she wishes to utilise the advances of modern science.

There is, in my opinion, a large overlap between this and the abortion issue. Maxine is wrong to argue that sex selection is an example of adult authoritarianism over children, for the child does not exist at the time of selection.

Maxine scaremongers about where this advance in science might lead suggesting it might be "eugenics by the back door" and citing Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. We as socialists, how-

ever, should analyse each issue on its own merits. Many inventions have the potential for misuse. We do not argue that they should be banned. We argue against the misuse.

The article states: "Many women will be forced into 'choosing' the sex of their child against their wishes. When they might want as little interference from doctors and the state as possible."

What of those women who themselves wish to choose the sex of their child? Maxine argues for the state to prevent them.

The likely result of a ban is that the rich who feel strongly enough about the sex of their child will be able to purchase sex selection on the black market

while the less well-off will not.

There are numerous cases of women who are discovered to be carrying female foetuses being forced to have an abortion. We do not argue against the right of women to have an abortion. We argue against sexism in society.

Socialists should argue that the sex selection treatment should be available to everyone who wants it regardless of wealth. We should support the right of women to control their own bodies without interference from the state. We should fight against the prevalent perception in capitalist society of both women and children as objects.

Duncan Morrison,
South London

Middle East

Argue in good faith

SOCIALIST Organiser ascribes to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International the view that the entire Israeli nation is in part responsible for the Hebron massacre. Of course this is not the view of the International, as well you know.

The comment you indicate as being the editorial comment of the editors of *International Viewpoint* was clearly signed by Michel Warschawsky, a comrade whose articles in *International Viewpoint* are frequently reprinted without acknowledgements in *Socialist Organiser*.

You are lying and you know that you are lying.

Duncan Chapple,
North London

John O'Mahony comments:

LET THE reader judge. The illustration published here shows that the sentence we quoted from *International Viewpoint* did appear as an editorial introduction to Warschawsky's article. We do not know who wrote it, but since it appeared as "editorial matter" in the official magazine of the USFI, it is, for this discussion, of no great consequence who wrote it.

Nor can private "information" conveyed on the telephone — moreover, information which we have no way of judging for our-

selves — change something that appeared in public as "editorial matter" into something less than that.

And even if it had appeared under someone's by-line that might, perhaps, have made it less authoritative, but not less strange or worthy of comment. Was the sentence in the editorial blurb a "bad formulation"? They don't want to say what the blurb in fact says? Then why not just say so? Why impute bad faith unjustly?

Whatever about the origin of *International Viewpoint's* editorial blurb, the truth is that what was said there does express the real politics of a part (I don't know how large a part) of the USFI, and, as it happens, of most of the left in Britain. That is why it was worth commenting on.

Here, as in other exchanges we have had with *Outlook* people, there are real issues; and here yet again *Outlook* prefers not to deal with them. Not for the first time, Duncan Chapple shows himself incapable of reading plain English — even the plain English published by his own organisation.

And thus, once more, we get an idiot-level dialogue of the deaf. Instead of useful discussion about real issues which would not rule out collaboration, we have "how-dare-you" bluster, silly evasions and pseudo-scandal. Once more, *Outlook* conveys the impression that its people

lack the confidence to formulate their beliefs clearly and defend them, and even the impression that they are no longer quite sure what they believe.

Hebron r

AS we went to press, the death toll of the Hebron massacre was the following: 47 Palestinians killed in the Ibrahim mosque by the settler Baroukh Goldstein — and no doubt by soldiers also — and 19 Palestinians killed by the army during the demonstrations that followed the massacre. To these figures must be added the Palestinian killed by a settler in Bethlehem while a bus was being stoned by young demonstrators. There are not words to describe such a crime, for which the entire Israeli people is in part responsible. To say Goldstein was mentally disturbed is an easy way out, and lets the assassin and all those who allowed the massacre to take place off the hook. We asked our Jerusalem correspondent for his initial reaction.

MICHEL WARSCHAWSKY
Jerusalem, 1 March 1994

IT was inevitable. Two months ago we had already alerted public opinion and warned the

Where is the SWP going?

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Martin Thomas

"BRITISH politics is changing sharply. Now it's into battle!" was the headline on the centre pages of last week's *Socialist Worker* (16 April). *SW* urged its supporters to boost their activity in "the next seven weeks". "Everything points to a sharp turn in the overall situation..." The article reported that they had called a special meeting of SWP branch representatives to discuss these urgent perspectives.

The practical details did not match up to the excited rhetoric. "The most effective way for socialists to use their energies in the next few weeks is by doing the utmost to stop the rise of the Nazis... action through the Anti-Nazi League... Anti-Nazi League carnival on 28 May".

The SWP's calculation must be that it can recruit people by putting on a show of anti-Nazi energy. However, campaigns on a liberal-consensus basis ("don't vote Nazi") in the 50-odd wards (out of 5,000 contested) in which Nazis are standing cannot be the stuff of a sharp turn in the whole political

situation.

Socialist Worker also argues that the council elections on 5 May and the European elections on 6 June will be important because "they will be like a referendum on John Major". Indeed, victories for Labour and a thrashing for the Tories in those polls would boost working-class confidence considerably; it's a pity that the SWP is not sufficiently motivated to campaign actively for Labour, even in wards where fascists are standing.

But even a big poll boost for Labour falls short of a drastic change in the whole political situation. If there is anything substantial to the SWP's hype, it must be based on the speculations in their article about increased trade-union struggle.

"The tax increases will cause a storm of anger in every workplace and it is not at all certain the unions will be able to control it... This anger will build just as union leaders are finding it more difficult to abide by the anti-union laws. As judges increasingly refuse to allow strikes even where there is an overwhelming ballot vote, growing numbers of workers are going to see no alternative to ignoring the law".

However, this speculation — and there is some truth in it — stops very

far short of predicting anything definite. It certainly stops short of advocating that SWP members in workplaces fight for immediate illegal strikes for wage rises. Why is that, do you think?

The biggest SWP-led union branch in the country, Sheffield UNISON no.2, has recently voted at a mass meeting to negotiate pay cuts. That setback was shaped by the SWP's bluster about illegal strikes — at a previous, crucial, mass meeting, they joined with the right wing to vote down a call to ballot for branch-wide strike action, declaring, "We need a campaign, not a ballot".

Wages is one of the issues where legal strikes are still possible, and rhetoric about great strike waves defying the law in future is no substitute for serious campaigning to get legal action where possible now. Indeed, in this case, it undermined it.

At the end of the *Socialist Worker* centre-spread, it remains clear that *SW* is excited about "the next seven weeks", but entirely unclear what they expect to happen in those seven weeks and what they hope to do to influence it. They want to push their people into action, but they cannot give a rational perspective of what the action is for.

Who was Jesus Christ?

Was Jesus born in Bethlehem?



By Rob Dawber

MATTHEW in Chapter 2 makes the claims about Jesus being born in Bethlehem and, as with most of Matthew's recounting of incidents in the life of Jesus, ties them in with prophecies drawn from the Old Testament.

Thus we have the following in Matthew (2:6)

"And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of

Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor,

that shall rule my people Israel."

— a reference to the Book of Micah (5:2).

Matthew goes on to recount how Herod called the wise men together to ask them when the star appeared and then asked them to find out where the child was so that he also could go and pay homage. But having found the child in "the house" they were warned by an angel not to tell Herod. When Herod realised that the wise men were not going to report to him, he had all children in Bethlehem and the surrounding area under two years old slain.

Why? Was he frightened that this child might grow up and preach forgiveness and turning the other cheek? Did he fear that the boy could encourage others to forgo this world and hope instead for a better one after death?

Herod was not a Jew. He owed his position to the favour bestowed on him by the neighbouring great power which had yet to put Israel directly under the control of Rome; he was a local potentate holding office under the "protection" of Rome. He tried to ingratiate himself with the local population by marrying a Jewess of Royal descent. Yet he remained unpopular.

Maybe he had reason to fear a child born in Bethlehem of the line of David.

So Matthew makes his usual reference to the texts of what became the Old Testament to say that the Messiah needs to be born in Bethlehem. He begins Chapter 2 with "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem..."

This isn't good enough for Luke. He is much more the storyteller. To him we owe much more of the details of the "Jesus story" as he wasn't writing for Jews who had some knowledge of the texts of the Old Testament, unlike Matthew, but for Gentiles who believed in Greek Gods, Roman Gods, Persian Gods, virgin births, raising of the dead, miracle cures, the lame walking, and so on. Most of the lasting details of the Jesus story, in so far as they can be traced back to the New Testament, can be traced to Luke's Gospel.

It is to him that we owe the story of the census that required Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem while Mary was pregnant.

Next week: Luke invents the "born in Bethlehem" story.

Why the rail ballot was lost

By a RMT member

THE ballot by the rail union RMT to defend the railway's Promotion, Transfer and Redundancy Agreement was lost. There will be no strike now to defend it and therefore no fight against the Government's break-up of BR. At least not on this issue right now.

It was the RMT's first ever postal ballot for strike action following the most recent round of Tory legislation. You might reasonably have expected that all the stops would have been pulled out: leaflets, meetings, letters to the members' homes. In fact the opposite happened. There was one letter to each member, a reasonable enough letter in fact, and that was all.

48,000 papers approximately were sent out, which is 17,000 down on the RMT's BR membership this time last year before check-off ended. Of the 21,529 returned 10,193 voted "Yes" to strike action but 11,336 "No". In one sense this is the first

casualty of privatisation; the tearing up of a major national agreement by the government and BR while the only union with a leadership apparently prepared to put up any sort of fight is frustrated in its intentions.

ASLEF and the TSSA have already accepted the loss of this agreement. However, the RMT and Knapp have not really fought or sought to rouse the membership. The "campaign" has been non-existent and the loss of the PT&R represents the last of a series of major agreements or procedures, the rest of which were simply signed away by Knapp and Co. This has created an atmosphere of resignation.

Privatisation isn't something that just happens overnight. It is a process of long preparation in the public sector where agreements and conditions of service built up over decades are eroded or wiped out so as to turn workers' half-decent conditions into future shareholders' profits.

All the rail unions have acquiesced. The RMT has made more

fuss than the others but then signed anyway.

But blaming the leadership is not enough. The left must take its share of the blame.

A major opportunity was missed in not standing a left candidate against Knapp. We might have won, but more importantly we took the pressure off Knapp over this ballot. Had he been faced with a challenge from the left then he would have been under greater pressure to campaign for the right result in the PT&R ballot. With an official campaign trying to win then a different result could have followed; and with that a serious challenge to the privatisation programme of a government seriously in trouble.

The Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union, the major campaigning, left force in the RMT, needs to look seriously at this. Denouncing the leadership, condemning their failings, exposing their machinations and manoeuvrings, is necessary but not enough. We must instead begin to take control.

For a start the Campaign needs a structure. Right now meetings are called as and when someone thinks it is a good idea, usually but not always around grades or national conferences. Decisions need to be taken and implemented.

The last time this was suggested, at Manchester a few weeks ago, the chair of that particular meeting was berated by, principally, a member of *Socialist Outlook*, a group which supposedly supports the adoption of structures by the CDFU.

We also need a strategy. How do we force the leadership to carry out union policy; how do we improve it when it is not good enough; how do we prevent Knapp losing a ballot as a way out of fighting?

With aims, decisions taken to pursue these aims, and a structure to ensure that they are implemented the CDFU has a chance of turning the situation round on the railways. Otherwise it will remain a talking shop, and an increasingly stale one at that.

UNISON left needs a serious strategy

By Tony Dale, Manchester UNISON

UNISON Fightback met in Sheffield last week to discuss the left's response to the pay freeze, cuts and redundancies.

UNISON Fightback is an initiative sponsored by 25 UNISON branches. The key branches behind the initiative are Newcastle, Sefton and Sheffield. Unfortunately, the event was dominated by the SWP.

On pay the meeting agreed to circulate a motion calling for a UNISON-wide one-day strike over pay, and for national delegate meetings to control the pay claim.

Both ideas should be welcomed and supported, but the meeting failed to sort out the details necessary if the left are going to seriously challenge the national leadership.

The meeting voted to call on UNISON to organise a one-day strike. But how, precisely, are we demanding UNISON organise this strike?

Are we calling for a national ballot? Are we calling for Jinkinson, Bickerstaffe *et al* to call a national, unofficial, one-day strike? Are we calling for a UNISON "day of action"? All this to the SWP is probably bureaucratic detail, but to any serious UNISON activist it is essential.

UNISON's local government conference in March voted for a

day of action. Unfortunately, the conference voted down proposals to ballot the membership on one-day strike action. In the run-up to national conference the proposal for a UNISON-wide one-day strike sanctioned by a ballot should be re-raised. At the same time, the UNISON leadership must be asked — what happened to the day of action agreed at the local government conference?

Saturday's meeting presented an opportunity where the left could hammer out an agreed strategy for fighting the pay battle. *Socialist Organiser* supporters proposed the meeting discuss adopting a strategy of advocating a rolling programme of strike action of at least six days.

Yet, the SWP voted that no discussion or decisions be taken on this. The opportunity was missed. The meeting restricted itself to a vague call for a one-day strike.

Most of the discussion on pay was dominated by "consciousness raising" speeches about the importance of stickers and displays. The discussion on cuts and redundancies also lacked the sharp edge of national strategy.

UNISON Fightback could be an important initiative organising the left based on branches. To succeed, a wider layer of UNISON activists needs to be involved. Also, it needs to set itself the task of organising the left around a thought-out alternative strategy to the national leadership.

Hospital staff in strike ballot

HEALTH

PORTERS and cleaners at Glasgow Royal Infirmary have imposed an overtime ban and are balloting for strike action over proposals by a new private company to slash their pay and conditions.

The Royal's cleaning and portering services were originally put out to tender about five years ago. The contract was awarded to a private company called Mediguard. Greater Glasgow Health Board have now accepted a lower tender from Executive Health Care which will save them £300,000 and will come into effect this July.

To achieve this saving Executive Health Care are proposing: • a reduction in porters' wages from £3.45 to £3.24 an hour and in cleaners' wages from £3.14 to £2.94 an hour; • axing overtime rates with all overtime at a flat hourly rate; • holidays for porters reduced by a week.

The workers' union, the GMB, called an immediate mass meeting. Many workers at the meeting demanded unofficial strike action, some calling for an immediate walk-out. Full-timers from the GMB did their best to dampen support for unofficial action. Instead, an immediate overtime ban was imposed while an official strike ballot is held. This will take about a fortnight and a decision to strike looks almost certain.

The union are also arguing that TUPE regulations, which protect workers' pay and conditions when transferring employer, apply in this

case and that the private company is breaking the law.

Support for the stance of the workers and anger at the way they are being treated is very strong. Ambulance workers have already pledged not to cross picket lines and workers at Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital are also threatening strike action.

Workers at the Infirmary are threatened with disciplinary action by their current bosses, Mediguard, for refusing to work overtime but the workers will stand firm until the ballot result is known.

Bureaucrat tells low-paid workers they can't vote

UNISON HEALTH

AN official from the giant public sector union, UNISON, wrecked a recent UNISON branch meeting at St. Thomas's hospital in London.

The meeting could have acted as a springboard for organising united action with workers at Guy's hospital (part of the same trust) facing redundancies.

Also, low-paid domestics wanted to discuss threats to their jobs, pay and conditions with the imposition of new contracts later this month.

The official broke up the meeting after it elected a left winger chair. He told cleaners and domestics — ex-NUPE members — not to vote or participate and to get out of the

meeting as it was only open to ex-COHSSE members.

One union is alright, it seems, until there is a chance of it mounting a united fightback.

CPSA

ELECTIONS for the CPSA National Executive Committee (NEC) and Officer positions begin next month.

The misnamed "Moderates", who have run the union for the last 7 years and allowed the Tories to get away with job losses, wage cuts, worse conditions and privatisation, face their most serious challenge for a number of years.

The Broad Left and BL' 84 are running a "Unity" slate based on broad agreement on a number of key issues. The CPSA Socialist Caucus agreed to back the slate when "Unity" included national strike action to defeat market testing in its manifesto.

The right wing have already begun a vicious smear campaign against "Unity" recognising its threat to main positions, expenses and fat salaries. A victory for the "Unity" election slate is the best chance we've had in years of defeating the Moderates and organising a serious fight back against the biggest threat to civil servants — market testing.

Getting the "Unity" slate elected is a priority for all union activists who want to take on the Tories. In the event of the Moderates being ousted from power, our job will be to ensure that a "Unity" NEC sticks to its manifesto pledges and organises a fight to defeat Tory attacks on civil servants.

How life developed from clay

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

THE intricacy of life, revealed more and more as scientists lay bare the way our genes work, is a powerful argument for all those who say: "We cannot have arisen by chance!"

Materialists reject such "special" explanations for life. For us, life arose naturally from the particular chemical and physical conditions obtaining on the Earth some four billion years ago and then evolved blindly, driven this way and that by an ever-changing environment.

Several scientists, some self-proclaimed Marxists, like JBS Haldane and the Russian Alexander Oparin, tried to show how the primitive atmosphere and oceans could produce many of the molecules necessary for life, with the aid of the Sun's heat and ultra-violet rays and of lightning.

Laboratory experiments came up with some of the "molecules of life" from passing sparks through mixtures of ammonia, methane, steam and carbon dioxide.

But, as AG Cairns-Smith points out in *Seven Clues to the Origin of Life (A Scientific Detective Story)**, only some organic (carbon-based) molecules were made in the simulated conditions of the early Earth and most of these were not "molecules of life". In particular, nucleotides, the basis of our genetic code, are never found in these simulations.

Cairns-Smith points out how difficult it is to synthesise these from scratch, even with the aid of a fully-equipped laboratory — and the simplest organism has several thousand nucleotides joined in a precise order.

Cairns-Smith concludes that the chemical evolution model currently accepted has had virtually no success in explaining the origin of life. He summarises the problem with the following three facts:

There is life on the Earth. All known living things are at root the same.

All known living things are very complicated.

He goes into quite a bit of detail to show the truth of the last statement in a chapter entitled *Build Your Own E. Coli*, this being a rather simple bacterium found in billions in the average person's gut.

Spending about £2 million

on coloured beads (at 1p) to represent different types of atoms, and sticking them together (in the right order) at one every five seconds, a thousand people working 40 hour weeks should be able to build a scale model in about 35 years. *E. coli* itself manages to produce a copy every thirty minutes.

Cairns-Smith does not despair of a natural origin for life, treating the problem as one suitable for a Sherlock Holmes, looking for clues and seeing where they point. His clues include the following: (from biology) genetic information evolves through natural selection but could be held in various chemical forms; (from the building trade) to make an arch of stones needs scaffolding, which can be subsequently removed;

(from chemistry) crystals assemble themselves and could be a sort of "low-tech" genetic material; (from geology) the Earth makes clay all the time, tiny crystals that grow into solutions from weathered rocks.

He discusses the various behaviours of clay crystals: they grow spontaneously and fracture, the fragments continue to grow; small "defects" arise at random and are then perpetuated as the crystals grow and divide.

He speculates that some crystal shapes would be more successful in growing, perhaps because they allowed "nutrient" solutions to permeate more easily.

Some clay minerals attract metal ions which are then capable of reacting with CO₂ (a primitive photosynthesis) or with nitrogen (nitrogen fixation). This could aid the production of organic molecules needed for life.

Other clays attract organic molecules, which seem to enable them to grow better. Cairns-Smith thinks that "life" began when the organic molecules made with the assistance of clay crystals and which were assisting the clay crystals to grow started to pass on their own genetic information.

Eventually the interaction became dominated by the organic component and our form of life had its beginning. He does not get too bogged down in speculation, necessarily wild and ill-informed at this stage, but has, I think, done enough to show that there is a way across the vast unknown tract between the simple chemical building blocks of the "primordial soup" and life as we know it.

* Canto, £5.95

SOCIALIST

Defend democracy! Vote Labour in Millwall

ORGANISER

Liverpool postal workers' victory

Solidarity walkout beats victimisation

By Gerry Bates

A WEEK LONG unofficial strike by Liverpool postal workers has yet again proved that the old principle of working class solidarity, "an injury to one, is an injury to all," is the only serious basis on which trade unionists can act to defend their workmates who are under attack.

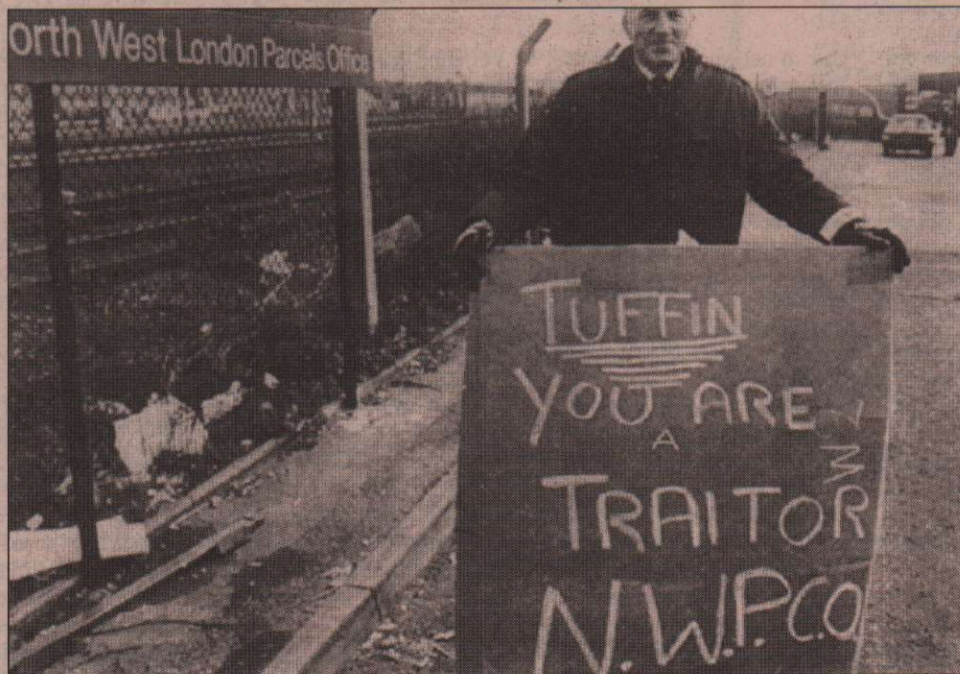
Last week, a worker at the giant Mount Pleasant sorting office in Liverpool was suspended after an altercation with his supervisor. The supervisor did his best to provoke the worker into hitting him by imitating his stutter, but failed. Nevertheless, the worker was suspended while the supervisor got away scot free.

Immediately everyone else walked out, shutting down the main Merseyside sorting office. The action quickly had a big effect. Management tried to divert mail to Manchester for sorting, but despite no official lead from the postworkers' union executive, local union reps made sure that most rank and file Manchester postalworkers did not volunteer to sort any Liverpool mail.

The strike was finally called off after a strong two-hour mass meeting this Monday, 18 April.

Management agreed to reinstate the sacked worker and follow the established disciplinary procedures.

Union activists say they will strike again if management try again to push through



The last national postal strike, in 1988, saw the UCW leadership play a disgraceful role. This week Alan Tuffin's successor, Alan Johnson, did his best to isolate and bludgeon back to work the Liverpool strikers

the sacking. This strike is an important victory for the basic principles of working class solidarity.

Meanwhile the union executive have yet again shamed themselves in the eyes of ordinary postal workers by telling people not to support Liverpool because of the

Tory anti-union laws which outlaw strikes without a ballot.

The Liverpool case shows that to stop victimisation an instant walkout is the quickest and shortest route to victory.

The Liverpool victory will also put the wind up Royal Mail managers who have been trying it on all over the country.

By Mark Osborn

LABOUR ISSUED a special manifesto for Millwall — "Pulling together on the Island" — on Thursday 5 May. The manifesto identifies some of the overriding social problems on the Island.

- Cuts have been made in local services while the government have poured £1.6 billion into the London Docklands Development Corporation, the quango responsible for the area.
- Of 13,000 jobs created under the LDDC, only 3,000 have gone to the residents of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Southwark. Meanwhile 15,000 jobs have disappeared. Unemployment in Millwall has risen from 10% in 1981 to 20% in 1991.
- Of 3,055 homes built recently on the Isle of Dogs, only 583 have been at rents working-class people could possibly afford.

Labour says it has six overriding priorities — better homes at affordable rents, new jobs, better education and health services, cleaner streets and good leisure facilities.

Labour has promised 1,000 new homes in Tower Hamlets if it takes over the council on 5 May. Importantly, it is committed to housing as "a right which should be available to all, regardless of income, class, creed, colour or gender."

The manifesto ends "The BNP offer only the prospect of division. Only Labour can defeat the BNP. We urge everyone who cares for the Island's future, whatever their past political allegiance, to join us in ensuring a victory for democracy, decency and common-sense."

Phone London LP for details of how to help campaign for Labour in Millwall: 071-490 4904.

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Behind the hype

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