

SOCIALIST

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No politics, please — we're UNISON

WANT TO SEE something really outrageous, ultra-left, and divisive? Try this:

"This Conference reaffirms that the policies of UNISON are as determined by the Annual Delegate Conference and as interpreted and implemented by the National Executive Committee, and that these policies should direct any delegation, group or individual representing UNISON on any external body, including the Labour Party".

Scandalous, isn't it? Well, it must be, because the Standing Orders Committee of the UNISON public-services union Conference ruled it out of order.

However, the sinister forces beyond the resolution, the Strathclyde branch of UNISON, are the sort of fanatics who don't give up easily: there may yet be moves to get the motion put back on the agenda. That is why, at a recent London Regional meeting of the union, a senior officer was busy handing out a tract denouncing the Strathclyde motion.

The arguments against the motion are really too obvious to require going into here, but just in case you haven't worked them all out for yourself, here are a few of the best ones.

- "The resolution would effectively mean that UNISON as a whole determines Labour Party policy..."

- "The majority of delegates at UNISON conference are likely to be ex-NALGO. So their views will dominate the decisions".

- "Many supporters of the Strathclyde resolution are members of other political parties opposed to the Labour Party, such as the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers' Party".

It's obvious, when you think about it, isn't it? The majority of delegates at the UNISON conference are not fit and proper people to make any decisions affecting the Labour Party, because most of them belonged to the wrong pre-merger union and some of them might even have sympathies towards left-wing groups. So any resolutions affecting the Labour Party should be ruled out of order at the main UNISON conference and all such matters should be left in the capable hands of the "Affiliated Political Fund Conference".

There are only two small problems with the impeccable logic behind this argument.

- Almost any resolution could be said to affect the Labour Party: motions on the minimum wage, defence of the public sector, abolition of anti-union laws, etc. etc., have also been ruled out of order on the same grounds.

- The "Affiliated Political Fund Conference" will be dominated by the old NUPE bureaucracy and in particular by Mr Tom Sawyer, not a man who has ever concerned himself over much with accountability to any democratic body of the trade union movement.

What lies behind all this nonsense is the dog's breakfast of an agreement on the question of the "General" and "Affiliated" Political Funds reached between the officials of NUPE, NALGO and CoHSE in the run-up to the merger which created UNISON.

The merged union has two Political Funds, "General" (i.e. non-Labour-Party) and "Affiliated" (i.e. Labour Party). This bizarre arrangement suited the officials of all three of the old unions: NALGO did not have to risk antagonising its Tory members by committing itself to Labour Party affiliation, while NUPE and CoHSE could carry on with their usual bureaucratic manoeuvres within the Labour Party without the NALGO lefties poking their noses in.

What's more, the UNISON rule book states that this arrangement cannot be amended until 1997 at earliest. Ex-NALGO branches cannot even discuss the matter until then, and ex-NALGO members cannot pay into the "Affiliated" fund even if they want to!

It also means (if you accept the bureaucratic mentality behind this byzantine arrangement) that UNISON conference cannot discuss any real "politics", or even mandate its Labour Party delegates.

This ridiculous state of affairs needs to be overturned, and well before 1997. Like now.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Sheffield youth campaign against police racism

No justice, no peace!

ON bank holiday Monday 2 May, a gang of around 30 white racists armed with bats and planks went on the rampage in Darnall, a Sheffield area which has a large Asian community.

"They caved in Kashaf Walayat's car windscreen, smashed the side panels, and were running up and down Stanniforth Road with bats and planks trying to beat any Pakistani or Asian guy they could see," Nisar Ahmed Jaffar, the secretary of the Darnall Defence campaign, told Socialist Organiser.

In response to this the pub from which the racists emerged had its windows put in by the youth in the area. When the police turned up later in the evening they started making arrests.

Kashaf was arrested by the police while trying to report the damage done to his car. Three other people were also arrested.

The following evening, angered by the racist intimidation, a crowd of youth gathered in the area and the police arrested a further four people, one of whom was savaged by a police dog. Two of the arrested were charged with criminal damage, three with breach of the peace and three with threatening and abusive behaviour.

The police then subjected those arrested to violence and racist abuse and held them in custody for up to 20 hours.

Monaim Kahan is 13, and he was held for several hours without his relatives being informed. At midnight he was moved from the police station and detained overnight in a children's home.

Those arrested were denied food and legal representation for several hours.

"Basically it's pure racism", said Nisar, "we're going to root out the racist police and stamp them out."

Angered and outraged by their treatment, the young people arrested set up the Darnall Defence Campaign which is calling for an end to police harassment, the dropping of the charges against the 8 young men who were arrested, and an independent inquiry into racist policing at the Attercliffe police station.

"If we don't stand up for ourselves now and help these young ones who's going to help them?", asked Nisar.

"We're not taking this any longer, but our elders love them. Our elders are feeding them tikka and we're taking kicks."

Nisar explained, "we're saying, you have listened to your elders and these community leaders, now



Time to fight police racism! Photo: Andrew Moore

please give our youth a chance. The elders have been in the police pockets for too long."

On Saturday 7 May an angry meeting attended by over 200 youth heard the stories of those arrested. The police were also invited and Superintendent Swan of Attercliffe Police station gave a pledge to "root out bad policing", a hollow promise which does not even begin to recognise the problem. He met angry derision at the meeting and left.

The campaign is already having an effect. Shocked by the size and anger of the meeting, "the police have offered to drop all the charges now if we don't do the picket" says Nisar. "The head of South Yorkshire police rang me up and

said 'we'll drop the charges. Are you going to stop this picket?' I said: 'Look, you have been getting away with this for years and years and years.'"

The Darnall Defence campaign needs your support on the picket on the 16 May.

They also want, donations, affiliations, invitations to meetings, letters to go to MPs urging them to support the campaign. They can be contacted at 447 Redmires Road, Lodgemoor, Sheffield, S10 4LF. Jawed Siddiqi, the secretary can be contacted on 0742 746551 and Nisar Ahmed Jaffar, the chair, can be contacted on 0374 232361.

• Picket Attercliffe police station on Monday 16 May at 6.30 pm.

AWL-initiated campaign tips the balance Beating the racists in Rochdale

By Douglas Vespa

"IF YOU'RE not voting BNP then at least vote Liberal — then you're voting for a white man not the Paki!" That was the BNP message in Rochdale's Smallbridge and Wardleworth ward in last week's local elections.

Making Rochdale their focus for the North-West, the BNP stood in three wards, bringing fascists from all parts of the North for their 'campaign'. Their chance to make the greatest racist impact was in the ward — Smallbridge and Wardleworth — represented by Rochdale's only Asian councillor, Labour's Abdul Chowdry. This was the seat where they put up BNP regional organiser Ken Henderson, a figure well known to anti-fascists and with a history well documented by Searchlight.

Rochdale council is run by a coalition of the Liberal and Tory parties. Its recent policies in education, for example, included cutting the funding for both English language support teaching and mother-tongue teaching in Rochdale's schools.

Rochdale's Liberals — the establishment party in the town —

are, like their Tower Hamlets counterparts, no strangers to racism. Their local membership in Smallbridge includes more than one figure whose previous Labour Party membership was ended under something of a cloud. Rochdale's Tories too are notorious: one former Tory councillor in the area was an ex-member of the National Front.

The Liberal-Tory coalition in the council chamber was carried over into the elections, with Tory and Liberal parties withholding their own candidates in each other's support in seven wards.

This was the scene into which the BNP pitched its racist activity in the North-West: 'canvasses' late at night with ten to a doorstep, an impromptu 'march' through an Asian area involving a desperate run down the street with a Union Jack, race-hate stickers plastered on walls overnight. In fact all-in-all it was a pretty pathetic performance, but one with three clear aims: to stir up trouble, to recruit from some of Rochdale's most alienated white unemployed, and to unseat Abdul Chowdry.

Socialist Organiser sellers and AWL members in Manchester urged anti-racists from across

Greater Manchester to go to Rochdale to help turn out the Labour vote. An organising committee was formed, supported by leading figures from the TGWU, NUT, NUS and UNISON as well as local Labour activists. The BNP had to be stopped. The best way for anti-fascists from other parts of the North-West to help is to work for Labour votes, argued the organising committee's appeal:

"Voting against the Nazis means voting for someone else — voting for Labour.... You cannot win voters away from the fascists by calling on them to vote Tory or Liberal". Transport was booked, the appeal circulated, and squads of volunteers sent to Rochdale three times a week during the campaign. Sheffield AWL sent a vanload over for a Sunday afternoon canvass in a key Asian area of Smallbridge ward. In Lancaster, AWL members initiated similar volunteer squads.

On election night when the result was announced it was clear the AWL-initiated activity had tipped the balance. Chowdry beat the Liberal by just 12 votes, with the BNP's 208 beating the Tories into fourth place. The BNP only polled 309 for their other two can-

didates put together. Their attempted election night stunt later that was effectively put a stop to by activists from Anti-Fascist Action.

In Rochdale the local branch of the Campaign Against racism and Fascism (CARF) had been providing valuable anti-fascist agitation from long before the election period. But how did the existing anti-racist groups in Greater Manchester measure up to the fascists' challenge?

The Greater Manchester branch of the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) managed only a leaflet calling for Michael Howard to ban the BNP (and asking for donations for ARA). Even worse was the SWP's Anti-Nazi League (ANL) who put up more 'Don't vote Nazi' posters in the parts of Manchester where there were no Nazis standing than they managed in Rochdale. Where the Nazis were trying to unseat an Asian Labour councillor they could still not bring themselves to call for a vote for Labour. Their call to "not vote Nazi" (by voting Labour, Tory, Liberal, or not voting at all?) was worse than useless in the face of the BNP's attempt to mobilise a racist vote behind the Liberals to unseat "the Paki".

Where is Rochdale left now? This is how one Asian youth put it to a canvasser in Smallbridge: "A couple of years ago it was really bad here. We couldn't go to the white area and they couldn't come here. There were lots of fights. Its not been so bad lately, but the BNP could start it again. Youth here will defend themselves — they're getting ready now for if the BNP come again. We need to unite. Unemployment, housing and welfare are the important issues facing all of us. But I don't like to see all the different anti-racist groups fighting each other and not saying what needs to be said. I'm going to vote Labour, but I don't believe Labour is going to make it all perfect. I hope the BNP get smashed in London as well as here."

They did. The issue now is for those people who were brought into activity fighting the BNP to dedicate themselves to transforming the labour movement and making it fight.

Labour Club coup in Lancaster

By Rosie Woods

THIS YEAR'S President of Lancaster University Students Union, Sarah Carpenter elected on a Labour slate, has joined forces with the rest of the careerists at the union to start up a Labour club in opposition to the existing one.

The constitution of the new club excludes all those who disagree with Labour Students leadership. Included in this definition are run-of-the-mill Labour lefties who openly criticise Labour. Supporters of Socialist Organiser have been informed that people like us are the reason that Labour doesn't attract new members.

Unsurprisingly, this attack on the left comes with full support from the Labour Students nationally. Also

unsurprisingly it comes after the General Secretary of the Union, Emily Lomax, received a humiliating 11 votes for the 'block of twelve' elections at NUS conference. Her last hope of a career boost comes from getting well in with Labour Students and getting rid of the left.

Carpenter, Lomax and co. are gloating and bathing in their own sycophantic adoration of themselves at the moment. Let's see how long that lasts. Next year, they will have to justify themselves to a larger membership than just the little clique they control. Thankfully, most of the wider membership do not support their anti-democratic actions.

These Labour Party careerists really are a vile breed. But they have a terminal illness — their politics. Their stupidly vindictive attack on the left will not succeed.

Labour must campaign for a general election

Get the Tories out!

JOHAN MAJOR is the political equivalent of Graham Taylor, and he too is in big trouble. Labour and the Liberal Democrats made big gains in the 5 May local government elections. Almost three in four of those who voted cast their ballots against the Tories, and the Tory vote was only 27% — their worst-ever showing in council elections. As a result, open civil war is breaking out inside the Tory party.

If, as is probable, the Tories do badly in next month's Euro-elections, then the Tory crisis may flare up out of control.

John Smith has said that that he will call for a general election if there is a Tory leadership contest. But why does he wait? The Tories have lost an immense amount of authority. Now is the time for a massive Labour offensive aimed at winning a general election and driving the Tories out of office!

If Smith were a serious Labour leader, he would lead an all-out assault on this miserable "27% government", which has clearly now lost all right to rule.

A series of rallies and demonstrations, coupled with canvassing and leafleting in defence of the Welfare

State on the issues of health, education, housing and jobs, could do tremendous work in rallying and organising those who have suffered under Tory rule.

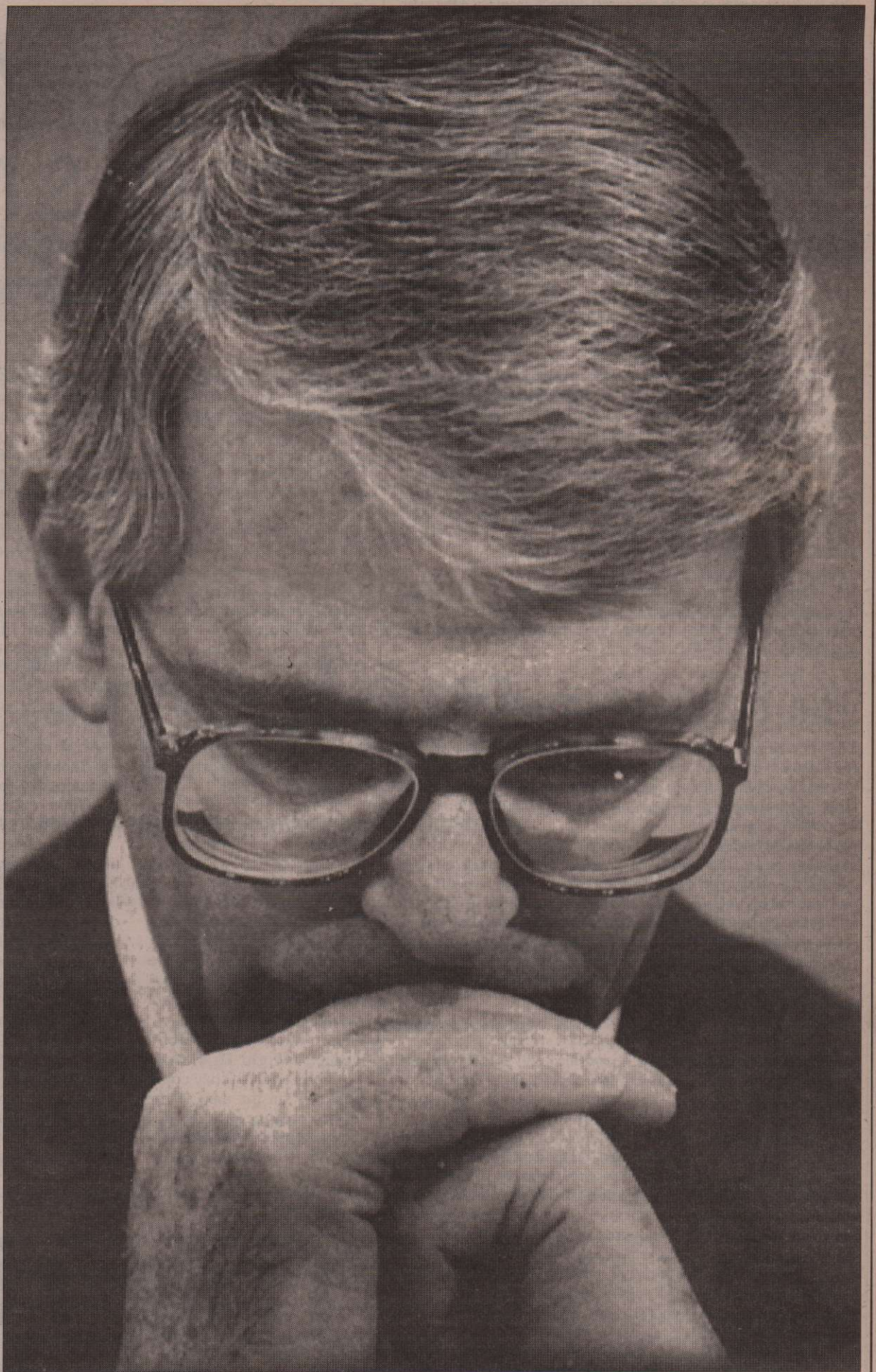
Whatever the Tories do, Smith should demand a general election. Labour's leaders should gear up the party and campaign as if an election had been called.

But John Smith seems to be content with the policy which lost Labour the 1992 election — sit back, do not say anything controversial, wait for the gods of election averages to drop victory into Labour's lap.

In the year after the poll tax was introduced, Kinnoek and Labour's front bench denounced both the anti-Tory "Can't Pay" campaigns and Margaret Thatcher, Thatcher became very, very unpopular in the country. In her own party fighting broke out on the question of Europe.

Kinnoek's obsession with Thatcher was misplaced. As Tony Benn, Socialist Organiser and others warned at the time, the Tories could ditch Thatcher, swing the press behind a new leader, and, at a stroke, undercut most of Labour's Thatcher-focused propaganda.

Between the general elections of 1987 and 1992, Labour played a miserably passive waiting game, expecting the ripe plums of office to fall in



John Major is on the way out. But we need to kick out the whole Tory crew!

good time. It proved a disaster in the general election of 1992. Like a snake, the Tories shed their unpopular Thatcher skin and put in Major as a less odious face of Toryism. They will try to do it again, with "colourful" Heseltine or bluff Ken Clarke. They must be driven from office! For that, a campaigning Labour Party and TUC are essential.

Smith should learn the lesson. The signs are that the Tories will get rid of Major. Labour should concentrate on policy issues, persuading British workers that all the Tory leaders are anti-union, anti-Health-Service and responsible for mass unemployment.

A clear statement of commitment to restore the Health Service and to increase taxes on the rich to pay for it would be a vote-winner for Labour.

Instead Smith tries to hide policy differences, even on such issues as the minimum wage. This too is the sort of issue that could bring hundreds of thousands of voters out to the polling stations for Labour.

Instead of attacking the substance of Tory policies, Labour too often complains that their implementation has been bungled or that they are "ill

thought out." But some Tory policies are only too well thought-out — to serve the interests of the ruling class. Labour should work out policies that will serve the interests of the working class. The voters are not stupid! They want to know what Labour will do.

Of course, it is true that the Tories under Major are talented only with incompetents. Almost everyone sees that now. Nevertheless — how much will Labour spend? On what? How will Labour raise the money? These are the questions people want answered.

Labour should answer boldly and clearly that it will defend and restore the Welfare State and restore full rights to the trade unions.

A more basic issue emerges once more from the local government elec-

tions. It is posed in the following question: how is it that a tremendously unpopular government, which got only 27% of the vote in the local government elections, may well stay in power for three more years?

Our democracy is so limited and inflexible that an opportunity for new elections rests in John Major's hands rather than with the electorate which has just said plainly that it wants the Tories out — and will say it again in the Euro-elections, gutting the government of all political and moral authority but powerless to remove it.

Even so, these elections are important for the working class because they will have boosted workers' confidence and thus speeded up the likelihood of a labour movement revival.

The Euro-elections are coming up. Out onto the doorsteps and work for Labour!

"Now is the time for a massive Labour offensive."

"A clear commitment to restore the Health Service and to increase taxes on the rich would be a vote-winner for Labour."

"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.

Release Malcolm Kennedy!

MALCOLM KENNEDY is one of thousands of innocent people languishing in Britain's gaols.

Kennedy was arrested for being drunk and incapable on 23 December 1990. He was placed in a cell with another equally drunk man, Patrick Quinn. The next day Quinn was found kicked to death in the cell - he had 23 fractured ribs and a crushed larynx.

Kennedy was found guilty of murdering Quinn in 1991, but following the disclosure of new evidence a retrial was ordered.

The defence suggested that a policeman, Paul Giles, did it. Giles left the police in 1991 and has since succumbed to paranoid delusions that the IRA is out to get him. He was arrested after hanging around with alcoholics in central London, using his old warrant card to impersonate a police officer.

Giles, the prosecution claimed, is now on such medication that he could not give evidence. The desk sergeant on the evening of Quinn's murder, Edward Henry, was also unwilling to give evidence at the trial.

There is strong evidence that the police records for the night of Quinn's death had been tampered with.

With a situation like this the British legal system was left with no alternative. The judge said that Kennedy had sought to smear the good character of police officers who "...have been accused of being murderers, perjurers and conspirators to pervert the course of justice... Those people have been entirely vindicated". Oh yeah?

Nevertheless, the judge reduced Kennedy's previous sentence from life to nine years. Could it be that he had a bad conscience about sending an innocent man to prison?

The British system of "justice" stinks in the nostrils of honest people. Release Malcolm Kennedy!

The battle of ideas

LENIN ONCE used a story which, he said, came from Leo Tolstoy, to explain an important aspect of what Marxist socialists do.

A man is walking along a road and sees another man in the distance. He is crouching, his body moving rhythmically. He seems to be gyrating senselessly.

Ah, says the man watching him, a poor lunatic. However, when he gets closer he sees that the man is sharpening a knife on a flat stone.

Marxists too sharpen their political weapons, not by whetting steel on stone but by whetting minds and wits on fact, argument, debate, and polemic. Only thus is political clarity achieved and sustained.

The working class is the majority in Britain and in many other countries. The day the big bulk of the working class understands its own condition as the exploited wage-slaves of capital - on that day, the bell begins to toll for capitalism.

The battle of ideas is therefore a central part of our activity against the ruling class: it is a key front in the class struggle.

But the battle of ideas can not be confined only to the battle with open bourgeois ideas. Ideas are malleable things, and they are porous. Their real meaning and content changes according to circumstances.

The seemingly same ideas, even "socialist" ideas, can become imbued with other and alien content. What ideas are really revolutionary, really capable in the given circumstances of helping the working class achieve its emancipation - that is determined by experience and by debate and argument.

Inevitably, then, socialists disagree among ourselves. That is one proof that we are a living movement capable of reflecting, learning, responding, that we are not one or a cluster of sterile sects. Those socialist organisations which suppress debate in their own ranks or between themselves and other socialists are indeed sterile sects. The SWP is the latest British example.

We argue with the SWP because it is a big organisation of socialists, consisting of comrades whose main drives and goals are identical with ours; because we confront it as a rival in the trade unions and among youth; because it behaves in the affairs of the labour movement as a destructive sect (see pages 8-9 and 14); because its character as a closed middle-class-led sect has made it into one of the great destroyers of socialists in Britain today. Potentially good socialists are ruined politically after a passage through Tony Cliff's machine for maiming militants.

Polemics with the SWP are necessary and unavoidable because we are engaged in building an organisation rooted in the working class and free from the defects of the SWP and similar sects - an organisation which really is what the SWP spuriously claims to be, and at best is a grotesque caricature of - that is, a revolutionary party.

Our weapon is reason. We appeal to the reason of honest SWPs against their SWP-incited prejudices and, where necessary, we appeal to the reason of the broader labour movement against the SWP.

Experiences like the SWP's treacherous bungling and posturing in Sheffield (see pages 8-9) are important for the left.

Only by way of reason and debate can our weapon be sharpened, and revolutionaries be trained. What are revolutionaries? Revolutionaries are people who can keep in the forefront of their minds a picture as sharp as the first time they saw it of what capitalism is, alongside a will-sustaining socialist vision of the world that humanity will attain when, led by the working class, it emerges from class society. Serious revolutionaries are people who can remain revolutionary without losing touch with the realities of the world in which we live, the world we must grapple with and change if there is ever to be socialism.

Those who are distressed by polemic and debate between socialists are like the man who mistook the sharpening of a knife for the senseless gyrations of a madman. But they are a necessary part of the battle. They are anything but senseless.

There is no other way to move other socialists. There is no other way to reach and sustain clarity. And without political clarity the chances of working-class setbacks and defeats are massively increased. The SWP has just proved that in Sheffield.

Italian government attacks women's right to choose

Katrina Faccenda reports from Italy

ONE OF the first legislative moves of Berlusconi's new government may be to amend Law 194, which after hard-fought battles granted Italian women limited abortion rights in the '70s. This law will be most likely bargaining material between the government and the Catholic establishment, not only as a thanks for the votes delivered in the elections but to secure the Catholic vote in parliament. Although the Christian Democrats/Popular Party gained few seats in the House of Deputies and the Senate their votes may become important, especially in the Senate.

The main mover for reform is Carlo Cassini, a Christian Democrat and President of Movimento per la Vita (Movement for Life). Cassini is a perennial campaigner for reform, but the real fear this time is that his demands may have more resonance in a country which has just elected a government which will include fascist ministers.

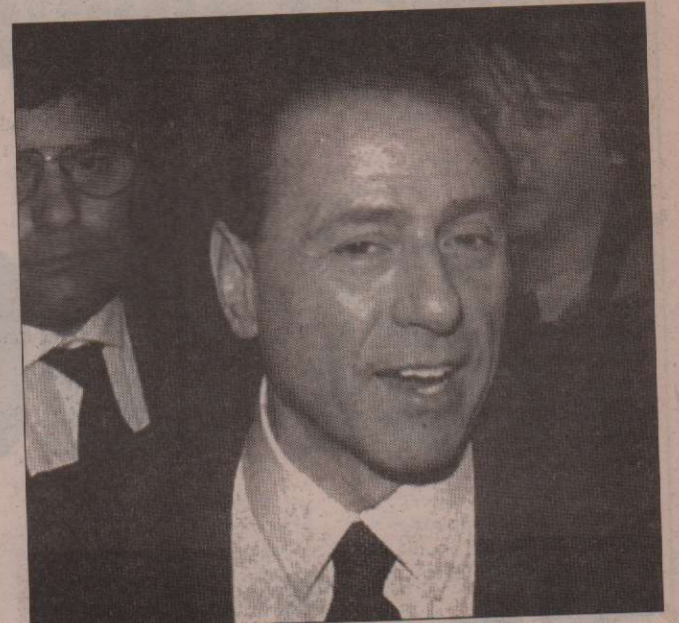
The battle to defend women's right to choose would be easier if they could fully rely on the men of the left to support them, but many women of the Pds (ex-CP) and Rifondazione (ex-CP

left) have been voicing their concerns that support of their comrades in this fight is by no means secure. They are afraid that many of them will use this as a way to launch a backlash against women.

Law 194 did not give women the right to choose. It was similar to the '67 act in Britain. The left is more in a position to defend present legislation than put through new law. However, some women on the left do believe that decriminalisation would be an approach which could also have support of Catholics; it would remove state intervention, and many Catholics cannot tolerate living in an "abortionist" state but could tolerate living in a country where more abortions take place.

Rather than being a positive step, this to me seems to play only to the hypocrisy of anti-abortion campaigners.

The amendments to 194 proposed by Cassini and Enrico Ferri of Psdi will overturn the law and remove any right to choose which Italian women have. They will place many obstacles in the way of women and give legal rights to the foetus, making it equal to a child. Instead of giving doctors the right to allow termination, the regional health authorities will intervene to ascertain the age of the foetus. The woman would then have seven days "to think about it" (an enforced seven-day



Berlusconi's government: bad news for women

wait) when she will be pressurised to continue the pregnancy.

The rights of the father will also be taken into account and these will not necessarily be secondary to those of the woman. The eventual go-ahead would come from the Juvenile Court.

Termination for therapeutic reasons will also come under attack. Any abortion after 90 days must be due to incurable/fatal malformations which would then be confirmed through autopsy on the foetus. An abortion for psychological reasons must be proved by a psychiatrist or

psychologist.

Under 194 the conscience clause allowed medical staff to refuse abortions and created hospitals and cities where it was impossible to get an abortion. The new amendments propose an extension of the conscience clause to the courts granting abortion and those involved in the sale of abortion products.

In compensation for this huge loss of rights they are proposing a social fund for pregnant women and a special points system in the allocation of houses - ironically enough, things which are being abolished in Britain.

The right win in El Salvador

ARMANDO Calderon Sol, the National Republican Alliance candidate won the second round of elections in El Salvador, beating Ruben Zamora, the candidate, for the FMLN, by roughly two to one. Calderon Sol will replace the existing ARENA President, Alfredo Cristiani, in June.

Many people did not vote; voting booths were arranged according to surname, not home district, and hence some had miles to travel to vote.

The elections were part of the 1992 peace agreement, signed by the FMLN and ARENA, which stopped the civil war in return for elections, land reform and changes in the legal system. The latter two have already stalled, and the election of Calderon Sol is bad news for the people of El Salvador. ARENA under Cristiani has moved away from its death-squad policy of the 1980s (because El Salvadorian capitalists believed that they could get on with making profits now that the population had been terrorised), but the 'respectable' lawyer and mayor, Calderon Sol, represents a lurch to the right.

His personal history is instructive. Calderon Sol was an early member of the Salvadorean Nationalist Movement (MNS), whose members, with their blood oaths against communism, their black steel sword emblem and their admiration of Hitler, had all the attributes of a fascist movement. In 1979 when the civilian-military junta started land reform, the MNS launched a campaign of destabilisation against the government.

Their leader, Roberto D'Aubuisson, organised death squads which were responsible for killing 70,000 people. When he formed the ARENA party to front these killings in 1981, Calderon Sol was his private secretary. MNS was the core of ARENA. According to US investigative journalist Craig Pyes, and US State Department documents released recently, Calderon Sol was present at meetings to discuss bombing the Ministry of Agriculture, and accompanied Ricardo Valdivieso (now vice minister of the interior) to the detonation point.

The people in government now are the people who terrorised the El Salvadorian people during the 1980s. Some sections of

ARENA do not see the FMLN as the threat they once were, the faction around Calderon Sol is said to want to end the détente.

During the election, the main propaganda of ARENA centred on the "threat of communism". FMLN activists were harassed throughout the election. Since the peace plan, more than 50 members of the FMLN have been murdered, including, last December, Trotskyist Jose Mario Lopez. Just before the election, two FMLN radio posts were attacked and their vice-presidential candidate Francisco Lima received telephone death threats.

No-one expects Calderon Sol to stop this, nor that the land reform programme will restart. The prospects for parliamentary democracy and the rule of law in El Salvador are not promising.

Although the FMLN showed that they still have widespread support, the campaign they ran was strong on abstract commitments like 'social justice' and 'social values' but far from concrete about what it will do to tackle the underlying poverty of the majority of the population.

Students occupy against cuts

By Kevin Sexton

STUDENTS AT the University of North London went into occupation last Thursday 5 May, against course cuts at their college. 400 students packed the meeting hall at the Kentish Town site of UNL and voted overwhelming to occupy that site.

The college management want to cut two courses,

Classics and South East Asian Studies. They also want to cut teaching time across the board by 20%. This represents a total cut of £750,000 in the Humanities department.

The college management also want to introduce a new student profiling system — students in UNL's occupation see this as an attempt to introduce a 3 year job club rather than a 3 year degree.

The occupation is still going strong and campaign

activists are going around the other sites of UNL arguing for occupations there. The occupation has meetings at 11am in the morning and 6pm in the evening.

Activists should send letters of support to UNL and send delegations to join the delegation. The majority of the Student Union Exec. are supporting the occupation, however the President has failed to attend and support the occupation.

Ideas For Freedom

Workers' Liberty '94 Friday 8-Sunday 10 July

Caxton House, Archway, North London

GUEST SPEAKER Neville Alexander, a leader of the South African Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), and a Workers' List candidate in the recent elections, will be speaking on Saturday 9 July at Workers' Liberty '94

This year at Workers' Liberty...

THREE SHORT COURSES introducing Marxist politics.

A • Why does capitalism have crises? • What is imperialism? Introduced by Martin Thomas

B • Can people really change? • What will socialism be like? **C** • Why a working class revolution? • Does socialism mean state tyranny? Introduced by members of the Socialist Organiser Editorial Board.

RUSSIA Hillel Ticktin and Bob Arnot from the journal Critique discuss the crisis in Russia. Where is Russia going?

OTHER INTERNATIONAL SUBJECTS Include briefings on • Brazil • Mexico • South Korea • Nigeria.

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Living on the edge

LETTER FROM MEXICO

By Pablo Velasco

EVERY TIME I travel on the metro into the centre of Mexico City, there is a man, whose name I don't know, who gets on and sings beautifully for money. Not unusual, where 30% of the population are either unemployed or working in the "informal" economy — everything from fire-eating to selling chiclets at major road junctions, selling drinks at coach stops and, of course, begging.

The difference with this man is that he cannot walk, has no chair (and even if he did he could not get it down the steps to the platform), and so he literally drags himself along the floor, on and off the train and along the platform. And according to friends of mine with medical knowledge, his condition could be helped immensely with surgery or crutches. But then this waste of human talent just sums up the absurdity of late twentieth century capitalism.

There are no unemployment benefits in Mexico, and many people work in two jobs, for example, school teachers often work shifts with different children at different times of the day. And even if you have a job, the minimum wage of \$15 (£3) a day will hardly buy you beans, milk and bread.

Another example is the pepenadores, who have been cruelly called the vanguard of Mexico's recycling programme. Militant environmentalists they are not, but rather some 16,000 people who scrape out a living by collecting rubbish from the 18,000 tons of "basura" in the metropolitan area. One man, Eduardo, who is 22, has been working the Nezahualcoyotl dump for eight years, finding plastics, metal and glass which might make him \$150 per week if he is lucky, working every day for 14 hours.

Pepenadores and their families, young children included, search through tons of rubbish with sticks, or with bare hands, looking for anything which might be re-usable. Aluminium is especially prized, but egg cartons, plastic bags and bottles are all acceptable.

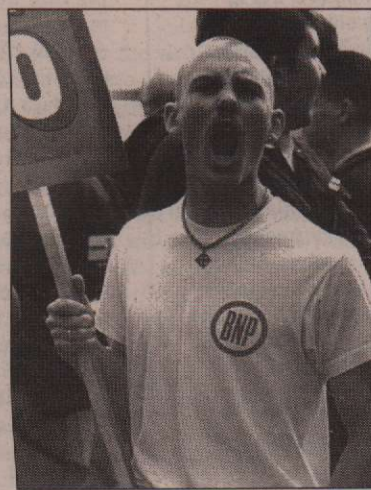
Some parents save old books to give their children some kind of education when the day is over.

Apart from the stench of rotting waste on the dumps, the dust, which is whisked up into whirlwinds, makes it difficult to see, and the burning sun doesn't help either. The rubbish is sorted out into piles, and then taken away to various recycling plants. This is a business in which one family, the "Garbage Kings", make a fortune off the backs of the pepenadores.

The former "King of the Garbage," Rafael Gutierrez, was reckoned to be making \$80,000 (£16,000) per day in profit from this.

There is even a union, but it is part of the CTM and therefore in the pocket of bosses and government — and with more and more garbage being produced in the capital, they are unlikely to change the basic conditions of the workers.

The local government of the capital has built some housing for the pepenadores, but most still live in the shanty towns built on the dumps, or simply in the street. Housing, like unemployment, is just another big problem which the PRI government has neither the desire to address nor the power to resolve. Meanwhile, the capital is stifling, the environment deteriorating and the system crying out for change. Late 20th century capitalism...



6 Splitting the vote

In Dingle ward, Liverpool, the Liberals beat Labour by 137 votes in the local government election. The Militant Labour Candidate polled an unimpressive but very Liberal-friendly 277. Militant Labour got 140 votes more than the difference between a Liberal and a Labour win.

But don't jump to hasty conclusions about whom Militant Labour takes votes from. In Merkinch, Inverness, Labour scrapped home against the SNP by 8 votes — and Militant Labour claims the credit. Militant Labour polled 278 — but says in this week's *Militant*: "the SNP thought they'd won it at one point. We reckon they would have walked it if we hadn't stood. We stopped the nationalists getting in."

In Scotland, of course, it's *Scottish Militant Labour*.

Having concentrated its forces on only 30 seats, Militant Labour won only one — and there their candidate was originally a Labour candidate, expelled during the election campaign. Most of the voters thought he was still the Labour candidate. The average Militant Labour candidate gained a shade over 300 votes.

Militant Labour declared themselves "over the moon" at the results. Yes, but of which planet? Beam me up, Taffey.

AFTER HE promised to stand against John Major and open up a contest for the leadership of the Conservative Party, Luton Conservatives moved within twenty four hours to disown their MP, John Carlisle.

They raised not a finger against John Carlisle when he claimed to have been attracted into politics by the racism of Enoch Powell in the late 1960s. They showed tolerance when he used his platform in Parliament — since 1979 — to support the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Carlisle, who is now acting as an agent for tobacco companies in the Commons, attempting to block controls on cigarette advertising, led a blameless life in the eyes of his local Tory party until the day he committed lese majeste against his leader.

Scratch a Tory, and what do you find? Even if it sounds ultra-left to say so, the true answer is: in a lot of cases, an incipient fascist.

OH WHY can't Labour Councils be as efficient as those nice Conservatives from places like Wandsworth?

How come, with an open and impartial mechanism like the Standard Spending Assessment overseen by the

GRAFFITI

VIVE LA
REVOLUTION

By Cyclops

clean-living nouveau-Catholic John-Paul the Third, that Wandsworth has so much more spare cash than anyone else?

Just in case you don't know, it is done through two grants. One is called the Spending Assessment Reduction Grant, for councils whose SSAs have fallen; the other is Transitional Payments Grant to save councils with low Poll Taxes having to charge the voters too much in Council Tax.

Wandsworth gets £26m from the first and £21m from the second, nearly 12% of the total handed out in to the entire country through the two grants. Wandsworth contains only 0.5% of the country's population, and not exactly the poorest 0.5% either. Next week, how to buy a rotten borough.

ATRAGIC and little-recognised disease has struck again Reagan's Selective Pseudo-Amnesia is a clearly documented ailment which afflicts the rich and powerful when forced to give evidence about their wrongdoing to courts, tribunals, and sundry other committees of investigation.

It has now tragically struck down Alan Bond. The one-time Australian tycoon can't remember a thing. Under cross-examination in court, he has lost all memory of hiding millions in Swiss bank accounts just before going bankrupt. He has no recollection of a trip to Jersey to sign the letters authorising the transfer of funds. And the poor thing can't even remember the name of his accountants.

As if all of this was not bad enough, Bond is also suffering from Guinness Trial Courtroom Psychosomatic Disorder, another malady whereby corrupt business folk become afflicted with life-threatening diseases while in court, only to be cured after only a few days on the yacht.

Bond has apparently suffered several strokes (he forgets how many), and has been left with an IQ reduced from 150 to 90.

The good news is that someone seems to know where Bond's missing millions are; that someone has paid Bond's lawyer's A \$400,000 and bought his daughter Suzanne a holiday home in Europe.

New challenge for Mr Charisma

THERE'S one big problem with being a print journalist: you don't get recognised in the street. If you crave celebrity status, TV is the place to go. Mr Andrew Neil has always believed that his irresistible charisma, rugged good looks, smouldering sex-appeal, suave man-of-the-world persona, towering intellect, etc etc, were wasted editing a mere newspaper. TV is the natural medium for this multi-talented latter-day Adonis. So it is no great surprise to hear that Andy has vacated the editor's chair at the *Sunday Times* to become the star presenter of Mr Murdoch's Fox TV operation in New York.

Let us hope that Andy comes over better on Fox than he ever did on British TV, where his not infrequent appearances have been, to say the least, unfortunate. No doubt the Fox make-up department will deal with the sweatiness. And — who knows? — perhaps the American viewers will not mistake (as we did) trenchant and incisive commentary for ignorance, pretentiousness and insufferable smugness.

Though TV stardom and the adoration of the habitués of New York's top night-spots now beckon, Andy can still

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

look back on his eleven years at the helm of the *Sunday Times* with pride. When he took over from Harold Evans in 1983, he inherited a boring, fuddy-duddy old paper with a reputation for political independence, factual accuracy and investigative journalism. Yet he quickly stamped his authority and personality on the paper, throwing it full-square behind Mrs Thatcher and New Britain. The new, thrusting *Sunday Times* dispensed with tedious investigations into big-business corruption or so-called abuses of civil rights: it was more concerned about trade union power in the run-up to the bold move from Fleet Street to Wapping. When our

brave lads in the SAS dealt with IRA terrorists in Gibraltar, had no time for liberal whinging about the details of whether or not they'd been gunned down in cold blood: the MoD's version of events was good enough for the *Sunday Times* and its crack "Insight" investigative team.

But even more important to the paper's persona is the "Lifestyle" element. Never before has a newspaper devoted so much space to telling its readers where to go on holiday to avoid the proles, which powerful sports car to be seen driving, which trendy night club to dance the night away in, which exotic restaurant to patronise, etc etc. Finally,

"Never before has a newspaper devoted so much space to tellings its readers where to go on holiday to avoid the proles."

A steep hill to climb



WOMEN'S EYE

By Jean Lane

LIKE MOST sports at championship level, snooker involves women playing against women and men playing against men. Also like most other sports, the men's championships are the ones that get the swish venues, the financial backing and the national coverage on television, whilst the women ferret away in the background with little promotion or recognition for what they do.

Watching the run up to the nail-biting finish between Stephen Hendry and Jimmy White in the hushed and hallowed halls of the Crucible at Sheffield, one could be forgiven for thinking that lifting a cue and having the co-ordination to point it might be beyond the capacity of women. The back rooms of pubs and clubs up and down the country tell a different story.

A few years ago I arranged to meet an old friend, I had not seen for quite a while, in a local pub to chew over old times. We met in the bar which in itself is unusual for

me. I usually head straight for the lounge with the excuse that I wouldn't want to invade the brotherhood of beer-bellies' bonding room. As if the lounge, where you had to make sure you had a book to read if you were on your own so it didn't look as if you were giving anyone the "come on", was any different.

Anyway, as we got our drinks and walked towards our table, my friend slapped 20p on the side of the pool table, booking herself a game.

All the players were men, all completely at ease, spending the best part of their social lives around that very table.

After a while someone lost and it was my friend's turn to play. She was to take on a tattooed member of the aforementioned brotherhood, who smirked confidently when he saw what he was up against.

I never got to speak to my friend again that night till closing time. Not only did she wipe the floor with Mr. Sneer, she held the table against every other player in the room, causing, it must be said, not a little amount of resentment. She did it with complete confidence, diffidence and aplomb.

"Where the hell did you learn to do that?" I asked in astonishment as we left.

"You sound just like the men", she answered. "Why

should it be so surprising to you?"

What's surprising is not her ability in itself but how she got the opportunity to learn it. Women don't usually get a look in and, in fact, some fifteen years ago a campaign in snooker clubs took place where women had to occupy the tables to demand the right to play. And, having learned, women don't get the promotion, the publicity or the funding to get on in the sport.

As Stephen Hendry's brilliant championship finished, another was taking place: the World "Ladies" Snooker Championships. Despite the fact that it included players who are many times world champions, it took place in a town social club in Northamptonshire, situated between a run-down betting office and a boarded-up shop that used to sell (appropriately enough) windows. It has been watched by very small groups of people, mainly the families and friends of the players, and the blokes at the bar had to be repeatedly asked to keep their voices down (obviously members of the brotherhood).

By contrast, when the next round in this championship — the quarter finals — happen in New Delhi (a country which, as we know for a fact, we in Britain could teach a thing or

Andy made sure that there are always plenty of pictures of scantily-clad young lovelies, modelling the latest gear from the catwalks of the world, and in-depth articles about which racial group your girl-friend should belong to. And all the time, the *Sunday Times* got bigger and bigger, until now it's got more sections than any other paper in history! Truly, an heroic achievement, entirely in keeping with the stature of the man himself.

Of course, the liberal-left establishment, jealous of Andy's achievements, derided the *Sunday Times* and tried to make out that a once great newspaper had been dragged down-market by a right-wing Murdoch lap-dog with no journalistic principle and an enormous ego. Well, they would say that wouldn't they?

We say: good luck in the Big Apple, Andy! And welcome to the new editor, Mr John Witherow, who says "There won't be any dramatic policy change. I'm in broad agreement with Andrew on Europe, the free market, how companies should have freedom to operate. We will stick by the principles."

Who said Andrew Neil and his team don't understand the words "journalism" or princi-

two about women's liberation), they will play to a packed hall, and will get coverage from national Indian TV as well as from Sky.

The women who have made it into the sport have had a real hard battle to fight. As any woman who has worked in a so-called "male" job will know, demanding the right to do something when you're not even sure you'll be any good at it, and when, anyway, all the blokes are standing around just waiting for you to fail so they can say "women can't do this", is a steep hill to climb.

Women must have the right to take part, whether good or bad. Otherwise only the small, accomplished elite, like my friend, will be allowed into the "male world" rather than that world belonging to all.

But even if women's snooker does make the well-publicised and moneyed heights the men's, why don't they play against each other? There is nothing at all about the game of snooker that says men are better built, equipped or mentally fit for the game.

And if it's right that women and men be allowed to compete against each other on an equal footing in snooker, why should women boxers not be allowed to fight the men? Wait till next week for the next exciting instalment.



USDAW members on the picket line. Photo: Paul Hermann, Profile

Youth: unionise now!

By Angie, Brighton

AS A MEMBER of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty who works for a particular supermarket "giant" (which gave £30,000 to the Conservative party last year), I have been finding it increasingly difficult to reconcile my socialist ideals with the necessity of working for a capitalist infrastructure as I do. In order to end these qualms I began trying to unionise the store some months ago. To begin with, I confess, I was doubtful that the shopworkers' union USDAW would be a receptive union to work with. I was put off by the knowledge that USDAW supported John Smith's OMOV initiative at Labour Party conference last year. However, these qualms aside, I began my campaign. Most workers previously believed that USDAW could do nothing for

them. This view has developed largely because the union has had nothing but a minimal presence — 2% of the workers — in the store for the past few years. In addition, faced by a totalitarian management, many members of staff were simply afraid to join the union in the face of bosses whose answer to every misdemeanour is a disciplinary interview. My original approach to the problem was the "soft sell." I would talk to individuals about the benefits of union membership. I achieved very little success. For a couple of months not one person signed up! I decided that the only way to promote interest in the union was to provide concrete proof that it can help the average worker. Though not yet an official shop steward, I invited myself to present the case for the defence at three disciplinary inter-

views. The most recent of these resulted in the repeal of one worker's final written warning after she called for union representation from the area organiser. Interest in the union has risen significantly. So far, only three new people have joined, but even this is a big improvement in my eyes. I have been given a great deal of back-up by the area office who have organised recruitment drives in the store and given me a lot of practical advice on various aspects of unionising and acting on grievances. Our latest campaign within the store is an appeal against changes in Sunday pay rates which the company has just instituted, breaking its Sunday trading agreement with USDAW. This could become a national issue. It constitutes the first step towards making Sundays a part of the normal working week.

As far as I am concerned, as long as the union keeps on showing itself to be concerned with the real-life problems of the workers, our membership will continue to grow. At last the staff of this store will win the right to self-defence and the proper grievance procedure which they have been denied for so long.

Unionise now!

Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW):
061-224 2804

Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union (MSF) offers free membership to unemployed workers:
071-267 4422

We need more socialist education

This is an extract from Tony Benn's speech to Socialist Campaign Group Youth last Saturday

THE LABOUR Party has absolutely abandoned any analysis of what is happening; we don't explain, we simply say it's all due to that awful Kenneth Clarke or Michael Portillo. Every day the Labour Party demands the resignation of another minister. One day Blunkett demanded the resignation of a minister I had never heard of!

By Elaine Jones

LAST SATURDAY, Tony Benn was the guest speaker at the national launch meeting of Socialist Campaign Group Youth, the youth section of the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network. Delegates from across the country came from as far as Newcastle upon Tyne and Southampton. The meeting was a great success with

We did not build the welfare state and the health service — very limited gains compared with the ultimate objective of a decent society — just on attacking Lloyd George or Winston Churchill. We built it because for more than 100 years we put into the public consciousness an understanding of what capitalism was; and enough people understood it to get out to the rest and to say unemployment is deliberate, the means test is deliberate, wars are deliberate. We have completely abandoned that. And therefore if you are activists, as you are, there is a tremendous educational role to play. "Kick out the Tories" and "Smash the BNP" is not of itself a sufficient answer to this problem. I am for both, but it is not an adequate explanation. We need to know how this system works. Socialists are, after all, supposed to be people who study the laws of society in the way that scientists study the laws of nature. We ought to be doing more education than we are doing now. But to get through to people we have to relate to people's immediate concerns — student grants, student loans, unemployment, anxiety about all the things that worry young people. That is a product too of capitalism, because what they have succeeded in doing is making it look as if public expenditure, which is needed to finance grants, to finance education, is of itself bad. Of course public expenditure is of itself good if it is spent on the right things! The Labour Party has got itself into a ridiculous tangle about cutting taxation. If I hear about a tax I ask two questions. What's it for? And who's going to pay? Until you have answered those two questions you can not make

many interesting debates. A basic set of socialist ideas on policies and action for local Young Labour Groups were developed. Delegates went away committed to building a fighting socialist youth section in the Labour Party and to building support for Socialist Campaign Group Youth in Young Labour. For more details contact: Elaine Jones, 15a Langham Road, London N15 3QX.

sense of it. If you tax the rich to improve the health service — fine. If you put VAT on fuel for pensioners to buy another bloody Trident that's mad. We've been brain-washed now as a party leadership into thinking you can't put up taxation on the rich because you will lose votes. All we would lose would be the support of the *Financial Times*, and the *Mail* and the *Express*, and they never support us anyway! We really need to look at this because if you ask yourself how you are going to get full employment then one of the ways is, of course, public expenditure.

Reactionary Git of the Week

HARRY GREENAWAY, Tory MP, is our Git of the Week. During an education debate in the House of Commons he said: "Sex education and good housekeeping is best taught at 13 or 14. Telling young girls how to have sex is not the best way to discourage them."

The fact that Harry Greenaway is an ex-school headmaster makes his coming out with this drivel really worrying. Youth don't need hung-up Tory sex bigots telling us what to do! We need proper sex education and free contraception on request.

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...

What's the big idea?

By Mark, South London

THE NEW Young Labour magazine for the better red has been called *The Big Idea*. Thank god most young people could come up with a better idea. Out of 19 articles maybe 4 were worth reading. The magazine is a mixture of bad jokes and poor articles. It has lots of facts but no answers. There are lots of celebrities mentioned, the "big idea" presumably being that the more rich and famous people who support Labour the more working-class youth will be won over.

Ah... Mick Hucknall supports Labour... well, it must be relevant. Now I'll get a job and benefits and a decent education and a home. Among the articles on fashion and interviews with Labour youth who will be tomorrow's entrepreneurs, there is an article on crime detailing Labour's view of its causes and a police-friendly approach to combatting crime. I suppose young people will have forgotten Tony "lock-'em-up-and-throw-away-the-key" Blair's demand for harsher punishment for youth crime. This is not the kind of magazine youth want. There is nothing in this pile of paper that inspires youth to do things for themselves, nothing that gives us any "big ideas." We want a magazine which is written by us, not by a bunch of bureaucrats and aspiring Labour politicians at Walworth Road. If this patronising attempt to relate to youth is Labour's biggest idea, then I can only say, no wonder most of Labour's members are over the age of 40.

Anatomy of a tra

Chris Croome, Sheffield UNISON no. 2 branch, looks at the lessons to be learned from the collapse of the Sheffield council unions' fight against cuts.

SHEFFIELD COUNCIL has got away with £30 million of cuts. There has been yet another round of voluntary redundancies and early retirement, and in most departments the unions have agreed, under threat of pay cuts, to huge numbers of vacant posts being unfilled and productivity increases to cover for the vacancies.

Now, despite the council's appeal for the Government to allow various financial adjustments, the council is set to go for another £5.5 million cuts.

Cross-council action will be necessary to defend jobs, conditions and services. Unfortunately it is going to be harder to get after the first £30 million cuts have gone through. Yet that defeat was in large part a product of mistakes of leadership, mistakes which must be learned from.

In the last couple of years drastic cuts in jobs and services have been pushed through by the Labour council with only a few token stoppages by the council workforce. There has been no properly organised political campaign or sustained industrial action.

In 1993-4 Sheffield council workers voted for 3.25% pay cut as a pay-off for no compulsory redundancies for a year.

This followed a similar deal the previous year, in which workers agreed to have three days' pay docked.

All that was pushed through by council union leaders who were right-wing Labour or in or around the Communist Party.

But this year things could have been different. The left took the leadership of the largest council union, the ex-NALGO branch of UNISON, which has approximately 6,000 members.

This change did not reflect a mass mobilisation of the members; the branch AGM was

"This year's cuts battle was a major test of the SWP's ability to go from militant slogans to actually leading workers' struggles."

incurate, and the new officers were chosen by the branch executive. Annette Carey, a member of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), became branch secretary unopposed.

But Brendan Wood, also SWP, defeated a right-winger to become executive officer. Control of the branch had shifted from right to left. Sheffield UNISON no. 2 became probably the biggest union branch in the country to be led by the SWP.

This year's cuts battle was thus a major test

of the SWP's ability to go from militant slogans to actually leading workers' struggles — and a test which, sadly, they have failed dismally.

It was clear from the outset that the only way the unions could stop the cuts was serious industrial action across the whole council. Cuts of the magnitude proposed could not have been stopped by sectional or selective action.

It was also clear that it would not be easy.

The other council union branches were still controlled by the right wing. UNISON no. 2 would have to give a lead. But it had the weight to do that.

What went wrong? *The SWP failed to raise the call for branch-wide all-out action, and indeed they worked actively to sideline and stifle the call for all-out action.*

Instead, the SWP continued the strategy of the old right-wing — departmental action — adding only a lot of militant rhetoric and breast-beating.

At a mass meeting for UNISON members on 25 January, pay cuts and redundancies were opposed and a departmental action strategy was agreed. This strategy had been written by the right winger who lost the vote for executive officer, but it was supported by the SWP.

In fact the SWP branch secretary ordered the agenda in a way so as to ensure that a proposal from the Libraries Department for a ballot across the whole membership for all-out action had no chance of winning, and did a deal with the right wing so that a motion for a one-day strike on the council's budget day (10 March) could also be carried without contradiction.

The branch leadership agreed (with the SWP abstaining) to call for a ballot on this one-day strike, in order to make the action as solid as possible. In the event the Regional Office ran the ballot in such an incompetent way that it had to be abandoned — thousands of people who shouldn't have been balloted were, and hundreds who should have been were not.

The SWP then made a virtue out of this setback, and much of their subsequent militant talk would revolve round the fact that the 10 March protest was "illegal" and thus, supposedly, somehow more revolutionary. In fact there was never any real likelihood of the council going to court to ban the strike.

A second mass meeting was held on 8 March, just before budget day. Three thousand strong, it was the best chance the UNISON no. 2 branch leadership could ever have to win support for a fighting policy.

Two departments, Land and Planning and DEED, had delivered very good ballot results for strike action against redundancies, though the Land and Planning stewards were also proposing a ballot to accept a 3.25% pay cut (in return for no compulsory redundancies). The dangers of "divide and rule" were clear; so was a substantial mood for action.

Yet the SWP branch leadership used the mass meeting for nothing more than to repeat the existing departmental-action strategy — the same strategy which they had taken over from the right wing.

The executive, under SWP guidance, ruled that an amendment for all-out strike action had to be taken as a separate motion; and then the chair of the mass meeting ruled that if the motion from the branch negotiators (i.e. the common SWP/right-wing policy) were carried, then the motion for all-out action would fall.

No wonder members came up to me after the mass meeting to say: "That was a stitch-up."

The SWP spoke against a pay cut and against a ballot of all members for strike action. Annette Carey, the SWP branch secretary, said: "We need a campaign, not a ballot." This was especially ironic: at a national conference of all UNISON Local Government branches a few days before, the national leadership had opposed a motion from Sheffield for a national ballot for a one-day strike against cuts with the same phrase: "We need a campaign, not a ballot."

In the afternoon after that meeting, the second departmental ballot result came in, for



A tremendous turn-out for a one-day protest

the department of Design and Building Services. It was a narrow no vote on a poor turnout. The right wing's industrial action strategy, which the SWP had fought so hard to defend that morning, already looked like a dead duck.

Intensive negotiations with the council followed, and came up with a proposal which involved departmental negotiations which could include pay cuts to balance the council's budget.

It avoided both immediate sackings and an immediate across-the-board pay cut, but would involve the same attack on jobs, pay, and conditions, only more deviously and piecemeal.

THE UNISON no. 2 branch executive met on 28 March to decide what to put to a members' meeting on 30 March. The SWP proposed rejecting the deal and continuing with trying to get sectional action. They also proposed reaffirming branch policy of a walk-out for one day if compulsory redundancy notices were issued and extending it to "variation of contract" (pay cut) notices. They spoke against a ballot of all members for strike action.

At this executive meeting, for the first time, the SWP put forward a serious political argument against a ballot for all-out action.

They wanted council-wide action, so they explained, but, as executive officer Brendan Wood put it: "If we went for a branch-wide ballot, I think we'd lose it." So they would try to get the stronger sections to take action first, then spread it.

Yes, a ballot might have been lost. Nevertheless, all-out action was necessary and could only have been got with a ballot. Socialists should have fought for it, could have fought for it, and might have won it.

No department would feel strong enough to take on the whole cuts package by itself. Libraries, Land and Planning and DEED voted in March for all-out departmental action, but all backed down when the council readjusted its programme of cuts for these departments and no wider action looked likely.

The SWP did not pursue their own argument seriously. They did not organise ballots for all-out action in the big departments where they are strongest, Housing and Social Services. In reality, they gave up in advance on the fight for all-out action.

By 28 March, reality had hit home, and the executive meeting decided, by 11 votes to 11 (against the SWP), to propose a branch-wide



"No cuts!" read the placards, but the branch leadership obstructed the action that would be necessary to win

Trade union disaster



10 March; but the branch leadership failed to take the struggle further. Photo: David Bocking

campaign and ballot for strike action.

But it was all too late. The chance for getting members to vote for a ballot for the whole branch was missed at the meeting on 8 March. Members voted for departmental negotiations on cuts.

The SWP contributed to their own defeat with executive officer Brendan Wood's report from the negotiations. Instead of going all-out to argue the executive's policy for rejection of the deal, he presented the deal more "even-handedly" and coolly. And SWP speakers made no positive argument for the ballot for all-out action. They denounced the deal but offered no clear way forward.

The SWP were plainly losing their nerve and confidence and will for a fight.

They blamed the union's regional officials for the defeat; and of course, those regional officials did push for a sell-out, as everyone knew they would. Yet the fact is that the new left branch leadership mobilised nothing decisively more against the cuts than the old right-wing leaders had done. To put the whole blame for that on the regional officials is for the SWP to duck its own responsibility.

Two things are necessary now. Socialists must support and build the maximum action possible against the new round of cuts. And we must learn the lessons from the defeat in March and April.

Learning those lessons requires a serious and honest discussion of the sort that, unfortunately, the SWP refuses to carry out.

They claim a limited victory! "Action forced the council to retreat..." (SW, 9 April); "workers' resistance is forcing [the council] to retreat from its threat to impose wage cuts" (SW, 7 May).

In fact, the council never insisted on a pay cut. They used pay cuts as a threat to get what they wanted. They were happy with — indeed preferred — piecemeal erosion of jobs and conditions. They have got what they wanted.

Certainly, this piecemeal erosion *accepted without a fight* is not a lesser evil than the council imposing a pay cut and being met with struggle.

The following points may help to start the discussion on the real lessons of the Sheffield fiasco.

1. Big trade union struggles against local government cuts immediately involve high political stakes. The councils have no "profits" from which to meet workers' demands. Usually they do not even have large reserve or contingency funds. The cash limits are set with an iron hand by central government. It is possible to force councils to scrap use-

less "prestige" spending or readjust budgets, and it is possible to force central government to pay out extra cash to councils (as they did to Liverpool in 1984). But to win that sort of victory we need to combine trade union action with a political campaign in the Labour Party (especially where the council is Labour) and in the communities. Beyond small-scale readjustments, battles against cuts cannot be won as simple "economic" struggles.

The Sheffield UNISON SWP's sole foray into political campaigning was utterly off-beam. When the council went to the government to ask for permission for a higher council tax, they welcomed it!

In a leaflet given out on 8 March they argued that: "Our stand has forced the council to go back to the government for another £8 million. But the budget gap is £38 million. Mike Bower [the council leader] and the Labour councillors should be standing along-

How the cuts were forced through

November: Sheffield UNISON no. 2 elects a new left-wing leadership dominated by the SWP. Council proposes £30 million-plus cuts.

25 January: Mass meeting votes to oppose pay cuts and compulsory redundancies but to rely on department-by-department strike action — i.e. continue the strategy devised by the old right-wing leadership. Motion for a ballot on all-out strike falls.

8 March: Second mass meeting reaffirms same policy. Motion for a ballot on all-out strike deemed to have fallen.

10 March: One-day protest strike on the council's budget day.

30 March: Branch leadership finally — and reluctantly — proposes a ballot for all-out strike, but mass meeting votes for department-by-department negotiations on cuts.

April: Cuts forced through voluntary redundancies, early retirement, and huge numbers of unfilled vacancies.

May: The council is set to come back for another £5.5 million of cuts.

side us, fighting for the full amount."

In *Socialist Worker* of 26 March Annette Carey, the branch secretary, was quoted as saying: "The only reason they [the council] have gone for this now is because the workers won't lie down and accept the cuts. But they are asking for £5.5 million. Why not the £39 million they need? Even if they get the extra money they are still looking for service and job cuts."

But the council — unlike Liverpool in 1984 — was not asking for any more money from central government! All it was asking for was permission to make the people of Sheffield pay more for reduced services!

No serious struggle against cuts can afford the SWP's blustering indifference to the Labour Party and local government politics.

2. In every struggle there is a place for rousing speeches, colourful phrases and morale-boosting. But they are no substitute for hard-headed policy and honest assessment.

The SWP hailed the one-day strike on 10 March with great enthusiasm — "Sheffield strike shows how to fight" was the big headline in *Socialist Worker* — yet the same *SW* article concluded simply: "Sheffield's workers are waiting to see what the council does after last Thursday's strike." [emphasis added]. And what was the SWP doing?

The SWP lacked the nerve to fight for all-out action, and covered this up with loud bluster about how militant and illegal the limited protest action was.

This was not just, nor even mainly, a personal failing of the individual SWPers in the UNISON branch. It is a failing of the SWP's whole policy, in which ultra-militant slogans like "General Strike Now!" and "March on Parliament!" — slogans which the SWP leaders know will not be acted on seriously — are used to "advertise" the SWP, to the detriment of the workers whose needs the slogans purport to answer. Trade unionists trained in such light-minded sloganising are unlikely to be much good in struggles where everything depends on making your slogans into serious, practical commitments.

"A ballot might have been lost. Nevertheless, all-out action was necessary. Socialists should have fought for it, could have fought for it, might have won it."

Exactly the same syndrome maimed an anti-cuts fight by what is probably the second-biggest SWP-controlled union branch, the Islington branch of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), last year.

The branch leadership won a 72 per cent ballot vote for strike action, and made a great noise about how they were going to fight £18 million education cuts imposed by the Labour council. Then, through predictable technical adjustments, the council drastically reduced the number of compulsory redundancies involved. The NUT called a token one-day strike (after the council's adjustments), claimed the adjustments as a great victory ("our action defeated the cuts"), and left it at that.

Nursery parents continued to occupy a nursery (and eventually won its reopening); school parents continued to protest at the Town Hall; but the NUT organised no more action, not even Town Hall lobbies or speakers to Labour Party wards. Once the SWP had a bit of "militancy" to crow about, that was enough. As in Sheffield instead of honestly stating what was necessary and fighting for it, the SWP leadership went for whatever would produce some "militancy."

3. A fighting policy should not be made dependent on piecemeal reaction to the council's initiatives (in the style of the Sheffield workers "waiting to see what the council does...")

The standard, predictable tactic of Labour councils pushing through cuts is to start by threatening huge redundancies or pay cuts, then to duck and weave (as they always can, even within a cuts budget). The SWP/right-wing strategy in Sheffield left the door open — as no other halfway militant-sounding strategy could have done — for the council to put pressure on individual departments, department-by-department, to accept piecemeal cuts as a "lesser evil."

A serious socialist organisation should be a school to debate, absorb, and carry forward such lessons. One thing the Sheffield setback proves, however, is that the SWP is not such an organisation.

What Socialist Worker said

15 January: "Growing anger among council workers was reflected in the election of two socialists to the leadership of the UNISON branch... A campaign against the attacks is being launched."

5 February: "Sheffield council workers last week voted to strike if the Labour council presses ahead with a drastic cuts package... 'It was the biggest meeting we've ever had,' one council worker told *SW*, 'and the mood was good'." *But the vote was for a one-day strike and departmental action; a motion for all-out action had fallen.*

12 March: "Sheffield strike shows how to fight... Local union officers who backed last year's pay cut have been thrown out and replaced by people who want to turn the anger into a fight."

19 March: "Over five thousand council workers in Sheffield struck last Thursday in a fight to defend their pay, jobs and services... they were also out in defiance of the anti-union laws... Sheffield's workers are waiting to see what the council does after last Thursday's strike."

26 March: "Workers in several departments have now voted for all-out action if the council issues any redundancy notices."

2 April: "It is essential that we fight to stop the council dividing us and pushing through... cuts'... [said] Brendan Wood, executive officer for Sheffield's UNISON council workers' union..."

9 April: "The fight against cuts in Sheffield suffered a severe setback last week when the Labour council, helped by some union officials, persuaded council workers to accept a divisive deal."

South Africa's first black President

Who is Nelson

Nelson Mandela is without doubt the most popular political leader alive today.

He is perhaps the most famous black politician of all time.

Mandela has become a living symbol of the long struggle of South Africa's black majority for political rights.

He has endured a very hard life indeed, spending 27 years in jail as well as making many other sacrifices.

He is a man of principle. He has been quite prepared to stand up against the mass militant township youth with their chants of "Kill the Boer! Shoot the farmer!" and assert the rights of white Afrikaners to live alongside blacks in the new post-apartheid South Africa.

But the principles Mandela defends are those of classic bourgeois liberalism.

He wants equal rights, but equal rights within a capitalist framework. He wants the white mineowner and the black maid to have the same formal political rights to vote, but he does not support the overthrow of the capitalist system which creates, and recreates every day, the huge social gulf between the majority of blacks and a tiny white and emerging black capitalist class.

Everyone who hates racism must see as a victory the fact that black people in South Africa have at last won the vote. There cannot possibly be any doubt about that.

But people cannot eat their vote. That means that the struggle in South Africa is far from over. Black workers will want to do something about poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and the terrible level of crime in the townships, and create decent housing, schools and health services. That will create major struggles against the very people Nelson Mandela wishes to form a government of national unity with — the capitalists and former apartheid bureaucrats of the National Party.

Last month's elections have simply opened up a new phase in the struggle of

South Africa's oppressed black workers and in the political career of Nelson Mandela.

Bob Fine — author of *Beyond Apartheid* — takes a look at Mandela's past and his role in the ANC since the late '40s.

"THE STRUGGLE is my life," wrote Nelson Mandela in a letter from the underground on 26 June 1961. "I will continue fighting until the end of my days."

On 5 August 1962 he was captured after a tip-off by an informer to the police. He was charged with inciting African workers to strike in 1961 and with illegally leaving the country. He was sentenced to five years' hard labour.

In October 1963 Mandela was brought to court from prison to join other underground leaders arrested at a farm in Rivonia. Eight men, including Mandela, were sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the government by violent means. They were taken to Robben Island to serve their sentences.

Mandela stayed in jail for 27 years, until 1990. From his prison cell he became an embodiment of black resistance against apartheid.

Who is Mandela? What was his political role in the liberation struggle? Who was the man behind the image.

He was the son of a chief in rural Transkei. He received a privileged education (compared to most blacks) at a Methodist school and Fort Hare College, where his political life began.

He is said to have rebelled against his family's attempt to arrange a marriage and returned to Johannesburg, where he studied law at Witwatersrand and then practised law with the Oliver Tambo.

He was a middle-class African who rebelled against the condition of "the African nation."

Mandela joined the ANC in 1944 as a member of the radical Youth League. The ANC was a highly conservative organisation at this time, dominated by chiefs, legalistic in the extreme, thoroughly alienated from the working class.

During the war, for instance, they opposed all industrial action by black workers on the general grounds that it was illegal and would hamper the war effort. This was also the general position taken by the South African Communist Party. Doctor Xuma, the head of the ANC,

took little interest even in the mineworkers' strike of 1946.

The Youth League, of which Mandela was soon a leading member, was in favour of mass mobilisation and campaigns, but its political direction was African Nationalist rather than socialist. Its 1944 manifesto, which Mandela helped to write, declared that it was "imperative for the African to view his problems and those of his country through the perspective of race."

It spoke of the "national cause" of Africans, the need to impart to the ANC "a truly national character," a belief in "the divine destiny of nations," a rejection of "foreign leadership and ideologies" and the unity of all Africans. It sought co-operation with Indian and Coloured national organisations. It saw South Africa as a country of four nationalities and claimed the right of "African self-determination."

It drew back, however, from the racism which it associated with Marcus Garvey's slogans of

"What was really at issue was the class leadership of the movement; was it to be by workers or by the radical petty bourgeoisie?"

"Africa for the Africans" and "Hurl the white man into the sea." It described itself as offering a "moderate" nationalism which was "not against the European as a human being — but irrevocably opposed to white domination."

There was little or no class perspective in the Youth League's Africanism. Mandela himself voted for the expulsion of Communists, even though the position of the CP in its support for the South African war effort and its opposition to industrial or community activism during the war hardly displayed a deep class loyalty.

The defeat of the African miners' strike in 1946 was a terrible blow for the movement as a whole but especially so for the black working class.

On the side of the rulers, it paved the way for more militant forms of nationalism, expressed in the Youth League's take-over of the ANC, the 1949 Programme of Action and a closer alliance between African, Asian and Coloured nationalist groups and the Communist Party.

The Programme of Action claimed the "right of self-determination" for African people and the use of "boycott, strike, civil disobedience, non-co-operation" to realise it. No independent working-class voice was to be heard in this programme.

The CP increasingly subordinated itself to nationalism, particularly after it disbanded itself following the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act. The trade union movement was at a low ebb.

"No easy walk to freedom." This was the title of Mandela's presidential address to the Transvaal ANC in 1953. The phrase was borrowed from Nehru.

Mandela had been "volunteer-in-chief" of the Defiance Campaign, a campaign in which 8,500 people openly defied the government's race laws and suffered the penalty.

Mandela wrote of it: "Defiance was a step of great political significance. It released strong social forces... it was an effective way of getting the masses to function politically... a powerful method of voicing our indignation... one of the best ways of exerting pressure on the government... It inspired and aroused our people from a conquered and servile community of yesmen to a militant and uncompromising band of comrades-in-arms."

The campaign relied on self-sacrifice and was already winding down when the government introduced whipping and five years' imprisonment for acts of defiance. At this point the stream of volunteers dried up.

The campaign had great impact in arousing a moral conscience against apartheid, but it did not

succeed in securing the repeal of any of the six or seven "unjust laws" it was aimed at. More important, it offered little to the urban working class beyond the role of admiring onlookers.

For black workers, violation of the law was an everyday necessity and their concern was to avoid the clutches of the police. Many must have been bemused as the volunteers offered themselves up to the police.

The non-violence of the Defence Campaign was also a problem for workers. When in opposition to the recommendations of the ANC violent riots broke out in the Eastern Cape and a number of Africans were shot dead, the response of the ANC was to deny any responsibility.

As a leading Trotskyist of the time, Baruch Hirson commented: "The philosophy of passive resistance is one that flows from a middle-class leadership which places no reliance on the masses... It is a glorification of leaders and elevates them as political martyrs... It stems from the religious philosophy that there can be a moral re-awakening of the rulers and it calls in effect for negotiations and concessions that exclude the broad mass of the people."

Mandela was not unaware of the problems. He wrote: "A political movement must keep in touch with reality... Long speeches, the shaking of fists, the banging of tables and strongly worded resolutions... do not bring about mass actions and can do a great deal of harm."

He also advocated the need to "fight unreservedly for the recognition of African trade unions" and called upon the ANC to "make the greatest possible contact with working people." Workers, however, were not seen as an independent force but as one element of the people's struggle.

"Freedom in our lifetime" was the slogan Mandela attached to the Freedom Charter approved by the 1955 Congress of the People. This provided the formal basis of the popular alliance between African, Asian, Coloured and white parties to the Congress Alliance.

In his review of the charter, Mandela emphasised its multi-racialism: "For the first time in the history of our country the democratic forces irrespective of race, ideological conviction, party affiliation or religious belief have renounced and discarded racialism." It was a great step forward in this respect, but Mandela underplayed the degree of racialism still present in an alliance based on racial groups and oriented to a future society based on "equal status... for all national groups and races."

The formal character of the Alliance as a coalition between races also obscured its class composition, that it was an alliance across classes. Mandela, however, stressed approvingly its non-socialist nature: "It is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings among the people on a democratic basis... Its declaration 'The People Shall Govern' visualises the transfer of power not to any single social class but to all the people of this country."

To all the classes, he argued, the struggle for democratic rights offered definite advantages. What was important was unity, "the united front."

Alliance and unity were certainly necessary, but on whose terms? What was really at issue in the coming years was the class leadership of the movement; was it to be by workers or by the radical petty bourgeoisie? Although Mandela says that "the workers are the principal force upon which the democratic movement must rely," the strategies, tactics and goals of the movement were in no way determined by the working class.

A clear illustration came in the Election Strike of 1958. Mandela argued — totally correctly in my view — that boycott is an "effective and powerful weapon" but not a principle.

He wrote: "Some people regard the boycott as a matter of principle which must be applied invariably at all times... This is a serious mistake, for the boycott is in no way a matter of principle but a tactical weapon." Some people, Mandela continued, "regard participation in the system of separate racial representation in any shape or form" as impermissible.

This "inflexible principle" was also an error. It was vital to distinguish between "participation in elections by the people who accept racial discrimination... and participation... in order to



Nelson Mandela studiously ignores his estranged wife Winnie as the new parliament meets. Winnie Mandela now represents the wing of the ANC willing to play with slogans like: "One settler, one bullet."

Mandela?

Who was Jesus Christ?
So what does
Jesus Christ
mean?



By Rob Dawber

JESUS IS THE Greek version of the Hebrew name Joshua. Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah." Christ Jesus is the rendering into the educated language of the Roman Empire of 2,000 years ago of the phrase "Messiah Joshua."

Messiah means "the anointed one." The greatest King of Israel (according to the Old Testament), David, was anointed by the priests to legitimise his rule in the eyes of God. The Jewish people believed themselves to have a special covenant (Testament) with Jahweh which the priests watched over so as to ensure that the people kept their side of the bargain. That way God could be counted on to keep his. All kings in their turn were thus anointed.

Jewish history, as recorded in what Christians call the Old Testament, is a record of failure or success by the Jewish people and their kings in the keeping of that covenant. In the book of Deuteronomy, for example, each king in his turn is assessed as being good or bad "in the eyes of Jahweh," and the fate of the people rests on that.

Israel, a land on a crossroads for trade between Egypt, Europe and the empires of the east in India and China, was subject to the interests of neighbouring imperialists interested in a share of the market. The comings and goings of the Assyrians, the Syrians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and so on are recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy as so many punishments for failure to observe God's Law.

At the time of our "Jesus", or Joshua, Israel was part of the Roman Empire. Rome was no less cruel than the rest — and Israel was no less inclined to produce leaders, "messiahs", who presumed to lead the Jews to insurrection against the invaders. Perhaps they could succeed in ending the people's oppression, perhaps they could claim descent from David. There was no harm in letting them try. If God was with them then they would succeed. And if they weren't the real Messiah then they would fail. Already quoted is the piece above where Jesus is made to refer to various false Messiahs:

"Take heed that none lead you astray.
Many shall come in my name,
Saying "I am the Christ";
And shall lead many astray."

If such a would-be-Messiah was also called Joshua then he had all the more credibility. Why?

According to the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua, Moses led the Jews for 40 years from out of slavery in Egypt to Canaan, the promised land. But he himself never reached it. He died overlooking it and handed the leadership of the Jewish people over to someone, his understudy, who did deliver the Jews after battles and wars to defeat the indigenous people, the Canaanites. This new leader's name was Joshua.

That such a leader was being looked for is also shown in other non-Christian writings such as the Sybilline Oracles, composed and circulated underground about 80AD as an act of defiance of the Roman authorities:

"Then shall one come again from heaven, an excellent hero./He who spread his hands on a tree of beautiful fruitage/Best of the Hebrews all, who stayed the sun in his course once/Bidding him stay with words that were fair and lips that were holy."

It was Joshua who was said to have made the sun stand still and here he is identified with a crucified messiah. Christian legend has it that an eclipse happened on the occasion of Jesus's crucifixion. Yet another connection is the fact that Joshua is recorded as being the son of 'Nun' which in Hebrew means 'fish' — an early symbol of the Christians.

Next week: was Jesus the "King of the Jews"?



The strikes of 1973; the Soweto revolt of 1976; the rise of non-racial unions in the early 1980s — these mass struggles broke apartheid. But the ANC leaders always focused instead on diplomatic pressure and token military action by armed groups organised outside the country.

exploit them in the interests of the liberatory struggle."

In principle, Mandela was absolutely right. Unfortunately, the occasion was not.

Instead of pursuing demands for a pound a day and the end to the pass laws coming from within the ranks of the unions and instead of pursuing the militant anti-pass campaigns of the women's federation, Mandela called for participation in the white elections in favour of the United Party and against the Nationalists on the grounds that defeat of the Nationalists was the top priority.

The campaign backfired badly and the strike in support of the United Party was a flop. In the event, the Nationalists galloped home while the UP drifted ever more to the right.

The failure of the Election Strike fuelled a new burst of Africanism and boycottism in the form of the Pan African Congress, which split off from the ANC.

In 1960 Mandela offered his testimony at the Treason Trial. The government had arrested 156 political leaders following the adoption of the Freedom Charter, charging them with participation in a treasonable conspiracy, inspired by international communism, to overthrow the state by violent means.

The trial dragged on for over four years, the last of the defendants being acquitted in 1961. It served its purpose, however, in exhausting the financial and mental energies of the movement at a crucial time.

The court gave considerable space for political statements. Mandela reasserted his commitment to universal adult franchise, his distance from Communism, and his non-racialism: "We are not anti-white, we are against white supremacy."

AFTER HIS release, Mandela was heavily involved in the mass actions which followed the Sharpeville shooting. This was a tumultuous time in South African history, when tens of thousands of workers went on strike and took to the streets.

The Congress Alliance was not prepared for this level of working-class militancy. It either left it to its own resources or made inappropriate calls for Days of Mourning and Stay-at-Homes, which drew workers back from initiatives already taken. In 1961, for example, Mandela was still approaching the United Party, offering support to their opposition to the declara-

tion of a Republic.

When the ANC finally called a general strike, it was far too late, the workers exhausted by their heroic efforts. It was also probably on the wrong issue. What was the Declaration of a Republic, the abolition of any position for Britain's Queen, to most blacks?

Mandela celebrated the response still forthcoming in the strike of May 1961; denounced the massive mobilisation of the state to quell it; attacked the opportunism of the PAC and pondered the question of the movement's non-violence: "Is it politically correct to continue preaching peace and non-violence when dealing with a government whose barbaric practices have brought suffering and misery to Africans?"

The truth is that non-violence was never an option for the mass of black workers.

Mandela went underground to organise the May Stay-at-Home. From there he issued the ANC calls for "a countrywide campaign of non-co-operation with the government."

The plan, he said, was to "make the government impossible." But the workers had already suffered a defeat. The strikes were over. Pass burning had turned into queues for new passes. The government itself had served the possibility of co-operation.

The ANC turned to armed struggle in the form of a sabotage organisation, Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation). Although it broke through the bounds of pacifism and legality, its guerrillaist orientation cut against the mass organisation of workers. Instead reliance was to be placed on small groups of armed men infiltrating into the country.

Mandela, known as the Black Pimpernel, was picked up and tried for incitement to strike illegally. At the trial in which he defended himself, he challenged the validity of the country.

He was "a black man in a white court" and could not expect a fair and proper trial. He was not "morally bound to obey laws made by a Parliament in which I have no representation."

His case was democratic: "Equality before the law means the right to participate in the making of the laws by which one is governed, a constitution which guarantees democratic rights to all sections of the population." He appealed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The will of the people, he said, is the basis of the authority of government.

Mandela gave his African nationalism a radical democratic content: "All people, irrespec-

tive of the national groups to which they belong... whose home is South Africa and who believe in the principles of democracy and equality... should be treated as Africans." The problem in South Africa was "the conflict between conscience and law."

The government set the scene for violence and this could do "only one thing and that is breed counter-violence." These were the terrible choices he and his people faced.

Mandela was convicted only to reappear on sabotage charges at the Rivonia trial. Here he declared that "violence by the African people had become inevitable" and that "without violence there would be no way open to the African people... All lawful models of expressing opposition... had been closed by legislation. There was no choice. It was a question of 'submit or fight'."

Violence was to be kept to the minimum, sabotage against property not terrorism against persons.

The object as far as he was concerned was not communism or a classless society, but rather the attainment of democratic rights: "I regard the British Parliament," he said, "as the most democratic institution in the world and the independence and impartiality of its judiciary never fail to arouse my admiration."

Mandela never explored the particular form in which "the turn to armed struggle" was conducted in South Africa: its alienation from workers and mass struggles, its exclusivity, its cult of violence as the way forward. He never was able to investigate the reasons for the terrible defeats in the 1960s at the hands of the South African security forces nor its connection with the annihilation of mass struggle in this period.

He never really understood working-class politics or the class reasons for the defeats of the movement suffered at the point of his imprisonment. It was not for ten years or more that black workers found their feet again in the strikes of 1973.

Yet it was the black workers' struggle which eventually cracked open the apartheid regime and forced De Klerk to free Mandela and, now, to hand over governmental power to him.

The tragedy is that those workers' struggles never found an independent working-class voice, and so they have ended up giving power to a man — brave, determined, principled — whose political horizons go no further than reformed capitalism.

What's left of the CPSU?

By Marilyn Vogt-Downy

AFTER THE Communist Party of the Soviet Union was banned by Boris Yeltsin in August 1991, those who claimed loyalty to it formed a number of new organisations to try to replace it. The programs of these parties reflect the various currents that existed inside the CPSU before its dissolution.

There are parties adhering generally to:

1. The CPSU programme of the pre-reform years (the Russian Communist Workers' Party, the Union of Communists, and the All-Union Communist Party-Bolsheviks);

2. The more reform-minded currents that subscribe to a programme similar to that of the CPSU during the early Gorbachev years, when democratisation and marketisation measures were integrated with the old system of bureaucratic apparatchik control (the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Russian Party of Communists); and

3. The final stages of the reform era, represented in the programme adopted by the party at its July 1991 Plenum (the Socialist Party of Toilers).

This last current advocates a social-democratic "mixed" system of private and state-owned property with strong social programmes and guarantees.

Although the combined membership of these new formations is tiny compared to the size of the former CPSU, these parties have a strong advantage over new, fledgling organisations in the workers' movement that do not have their roots in the old CPSU and tend to have opposed it. The descendants of the CPSU have not only the old networks and posts the former CPSU members had, but greater experience and access to greater resources by force of their origins in what was previously and for decades the ruling party.

Because of the vacuum of leadership in the workers' movement, these CPSU descendants by default still play the dominant role in the opposition to the government throughout Russia.

Some observers, when assessing the political spectrum in Russia, characterise the descendants of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, banned in Russia by Boris Yeltsin following the failed coup



Some fragments of the CP still defend the name and the policies of Stalin

attempt in August 1991, as part of the "left." One of these descendants, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), came in third after Zhirinovskiy's Liberal-Democrats and Gaidar's Russia's Choice, garnering some 13.23% of the vote in the December 1993 elections.

The CPRF, also known as "Zyuganov's party" after its central leader Gennady Zyuganov, is the largest of the CPSU's five main descendants, claiming to have more than 600,000 members. It was founded in February 1993.

While the CPRF claims loyalty to "Marxism-Leninism," what it advocates is a re-establishment of the pre-reform bureaucratic centralisation with a "state based on soviets," or local councils. There are no worker-controlled democratic councils as yet. The councils that exist are still under the control of local apparatchiks.

The CPRF calls for a "multi-system market economy combining various forms of property with the state and collective property playing the leading role," which is much like Gorbachev's early reform proposals that failed.

Its main political orientation initially was toward a "bloc of left and patriotic forces," which was the basis for the often-referred to "Red-Brown" — or Communist "red" and fascist "brown" — alliance. A key force in this "bloc" sought by the CPRF was the Front for National Salvation (FNS), a reactionary, Russian-patriotic organisation — banned following the showdown in Moscow in early October — which included rabid anti-Semites. Zyuganov, in fact, was the co-chairman of the FNS. The CPRF's political programme could coincide with that of the FNS because of the CPRF's commitment to "state patriotism."

This state patriotism has its roots in the deep Russian chauvinism fostered by the Stalin regime against non-Russians in the 1930s but particularly during World War II, the "Great Patriotic War."

This type of chauvinism is a logical consequence or by-product of the Stalinist project of allegedly building "socialism in one country," with conservative Russian chauvinism replacing the proletarian internationalism that inspired the revolutionary period. In fact, this chauvinism runs directly contrary to the principles of proletarian internationalism advanced and advocated by Marx, Lenin, the Bolshevik Party and the October 1917 Revolution.

The CPRF's patriotic stance and its support for maintaining Russia's territorial integrity and an "all-union market" not only put it at odds with these founders of communism, but also, more immediately with non-Russians inside Russia who want to separate from it. The CPRF's alleged concern over the fate of Russians in the non-Russian former republics also lines it up with the Russian chauvinist forces in these regions against the local movements for national rights. With respect to the former Baltic republics, Moldova, and Tajikistan, for example, this has definitely been the case.

It is this patriotism of the CPRF

that willy-nilly led the CPRF into an open alliance with anti-Semitic reactionaries of the FNS. The CPRF has also worked closely with the All-Union Communist Party-Bolsheviks (AUCPB), often associated with its key spokesperson Nina Andreeva, who is a fervent admirer of Joseph Stalin and his ferocious methods of the rule. The CPRF has the largest number of local organisations across Russia of any of the CPSU's descendants. Zyuganov had been elected to the Central Executive Committee of the CPSU in 1989.

CPRF's founding members include leaders of the failed coup attempt in August 1991, Vladimir Kruchkov, Anatoly Lukyanov, and Vasily Stardubtsev, the latter two of whom were actually elected to the new parliament on the CPRF slate in December.

ALSO FOUND in alliance with patriotic forces, largely because of its Russian chauvinist position is the Russian Communist Workers' Party (RCWP). The RCWP, whose principal leader, Viktor Anpilov, was imprisoned as a result of the October 1993 events, is also loyal to the pre-Gorbachev CPSU policies.

Within the parliament, the interests of deputies representing unreconstructed apparatchiks of the old order and the factory directors of Civil Union have often coincided. They both stand to lose a great deal if the IMF's shock therapy/marketisation measures cause factories to close down. But neither the former nor the latter represents the interests of the mass of the workers, whose independent organisations and voices they have long helped suppress.

The RCWP has organised rallies in Leningrad/St. Petersburg with monarchist organisations and even with Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party.

The Socialist Party of Toilers is a centrist CPSU offspring. It is often known as "Medvedev's party" after one of its founders, historian Roy Medvedev. Medvedev is best known for his unofficial history documenting the crimes of Stalin, *Let History Judge*, written during the Brezhnev period and denied publication in the Soviet Union. Medvedev, however, is not the leader of the party and is not active in the party's day-to-day work.

The SPT has taken a greater public distance from Stalin and his methods than have the other former CPSU groups. However, its "anti-Stalinism" has led it into an alliance with Christian Democrats, the new "entrepreneurs" and factory directors of Civil Union (a "pink-beige" block) and not towards revolutionary Marxism and efforts at building an alliance with the workers.

The fear of foreign domination and usurpation that is felt in the social circles where the SPT seeks its alliances has led the SPT to adopt a Russian patriotic stance.

The Russian Party of Communists, founded in late 1991 by some supporters of the Marxist Platform — a reform movement that had developed inside the CPSU in the late Gorbachev period — also seeks to distance itself from the more blatantly bureaucratic methods and abuses of



1993: troops loyal to the parliamentary leadership defend the Russian parliament (the "White House") against Yeltsin

the party and government.

The same is true of the Union of Communists, formed in October 1991, which also calls for the re-establishment of the USSR, implicitly denying the legitimacy of the national movements against Kremlin domination that have fuelled the centrifugal forces in the non-Russian republics.

All of these forces, including their local creations like the RCWP's

"Just because the ex-CP parties oppose aspects of Yeltsin's and the IMF's policies, that does not mean they are left-wing."

"broad fronts" on the local level like Working Moscow, Working Chelyabinsk, etc., rely on the workerist rhetoric of the Stalin and even post-Stalin periods and have not broken in any significant way with the clearly-exhausted and discredited policies and bureaucratic methods of the past. They all support the anti-Marxist orientation of "building socialism in one country," and appeal to bureaucratic, military intervention instead of international workers' solidarity.

All these forces have ended up in Red-Brown (or "pink-beige")

alliances with reactionary Russian patriots.

The CPSU had a membership until the late 1980s of some 19 million. The combined membership of all the descendants today is not one million, and most of these are not new members but were previously members of the CPSU — that is former apparatchiks. Just because these descendants are often opposed to some aspects of Yeltsin's and the IMF's policies does not mean that they are "left" or that they have suddenly become advocates of genuine workers' rights that had heretofore been anathema to them.

Genuine worker-based organisations will need to be built by a new layer of militants who advance a programme which offers ways for organised workers to take more and more control over the use of the resources and the wealth and over how production and the economy are organised and run. This does not mean a return to the old discredited bureaucratic order or variations of it like the descendants of the CPSU offer. Nor does it mean the restoration of capitalist rule. It means a third course of a worker-controlled government that is now only a vision. Prerequisites for this vision to become a reality are democratic openings, international workers' solidarity on our part, and a little time. Using terms like "left" and "right" to define "friends" and "foes" in the context of the former Soviet Union only confuses the issue.

Abridged from the US-Soviet Workers' Information Committee Bulletin. The Information Committee can be contacted c/o PO Box 1890, Stuyvesant Station, New York, New York 10009.



"Germinal is pure evocation of 19th century class struggle"

Class struggle in the movies



Matt Cooper
reviews
'Germinal'

Directed by
Claude Berri

ONE IMAGE, the image of a class — the working class — in battle, dominates Berri's realisation of Emile Zola's great nineteenth century novel, *Germinal*. It is a pure evocation of nineteenth century class struggle.

The look of the film is overwhelming. The miners' village and the pit interior are constructed by an obsessive eye. This is, perhaps, a weakness as well as a strength. Not only has Berri not completely lost the rural romanticism that has characterised his films to date (notably *Jean de Florette* and *Mamon des Sources*) but he brings this film to the verge of being

a costume drama.

The film offers a picture of workers' suffering that is at times more like the coal dust on their skins — which can be washed away — than the unwashable dust deep in their lungs, eating their lives away.

The film opens with Lantier (Renaud), a worker with union experience who arrives to work in the industrial hell of the Voreux pit.

Befriended by Meheu, (Gerald Depardieu), an archetype of the honest, Lantier responds to the bosses' attacks by unionising the workforce.

When the bosses seek to pass the costs of economic crisis on to the workers rather than the shareholders, Lantier, supported by Meheu, organises a strike.

The force of the story carries the

film. Through this story are intertwined images of struggle and suffering; the opulence and callousness of the rich who stand on the starved backs of the workers; the rapacious petit bourgeois shop keeper; the mentality of the scab.

"And very soon their germination would crack the earth asunder"

The film does not fudge politics. Lantier is a sympathiser of Karl Marx's First International (although his politics are tinged with what would later grow into reformism).

Against Lantier is pitted an aloof and terroristic Bukuninite anarchist, a cold, cruel and ultimately self-interested man, a characterisation with resonance for anyone who knows those anarchists of today more interested in "purifying" themselves, remaining apathetic towards the real movements of class against class.

The flaw that stands in the way of this being a truly great film is the script. Literary adaptations are often criticised for departing too much from the original. Berri has made the inverse mistake.

This film follows parts of the book very closely. But films are not books. The film lapses into being episodic and lacks a strong logic and drive in its own narrative and instead leads to melodrama.

Despite its flaws, Berri has made an excellent film. Its message is clear — *Germinal* is the month of germination in the French revolutionary calendar. The film closes with the final words from Zola's novel.

"Deep down underfoot the picks were still obstinately hammering away. All his comrades were there, he could hear them following his every step. Beneath this field of beet was it not Maheu, bent double at her task, whose hoarse gasps for breath were coming up to him, mingled with the whirring of the ventilator? To left and to right, far away into the distance he thought he could recognise other friends under the corn, the hedges, and young trees. The April sun was now well up in the sky, shedding its glorious warming rays on the teeming earth. Life was springing from her fertile womb, buds were bursting into leaf and the fields were quickening with fresh green grass. Everywhere seeds were swelling and lengthening, cracking open the plain in their upward thrust for warmth and light. The sap was rising in abundance with whispering voices, the germs of life were opening with a kiss. On and on, ever more insistently, his comrades were tapping, tapping, as though they too were rising through the ground. On this youthful morning, in the fiery rays of the sun, the whole country was alive with this sound. Men were springing up, a black avenging hose was slowly germinating in the furrows, thrusting upwards for the harvests of future ages. And very soon their germination would crack the earth asunder

The 'have-a-go' villains



Geoff Ward
reviews *'Taking Liberties'*

BBC 2
5 May 8pm

TAKING LIBERTIES examined the alarming growth of vigilantism in Britain and the increasing support it is getting from the police, the courts, the media, and from communities.

The programme covered some of the most horrific cases. People on the receiving end of vigilante action have been maimed for committing petty crimes; tortured for information they do not have about crimes about which they know nothing; stripped naked and left tied against lampposts — as an example to others.

Hysterical vigilantes have ended up killing innocent people. Judges have sentenced them to prison terms pointedly short when compared to crimes against property.

Much of the media has uncritically painted them as 'have-a-go heroes', portraying their victims as 'villains'.

The programme fell short, however, in its analysing of why this is happening.

"Vigilantes pick up on the propaganda of the Tory 'hang-them-and-birch-them' brigade"

Fifteen years of relentless class warfare by the Tories has massively increased deprivation. Large numbers of youth are marginalised and atomised. There is mass unemployment. At the same time the ruling class and sections of the middle class are like happy pigs at the swill with their conspicuous consumption. This is why there are high crime levels and low police clear-up rates.

When crimes happen frequently without detection, it heightens the fear of crime and generates a desperate concern that something should be done.

Vigilantes pick up on the propaganda of the Tory "hang-them-and-birch-them" brigade and go on to do something about it.

The now common use of military-type tactics by the police legitimised brutality in dealing with 'criminals'. Strong-arm remedies gain appeal because people feel so impotent, and, the police failing so miserably, there is no normal means to redress grievances.

Vigilantism is an individualistic response to the brutalisation created by a rotting capitalist society. It is a clear example of the breakdown in social order, a partial return to the "wild frontier days", without the rule of law.

But vigilantism is no argument against self-policing by organised, disciplined communities that is ultimately the only way to stamp out vigilantism.

The Black Tower

Say that the men of the old black tower,
Though they but feed as the goatherd feeds,
Their money spent, their wine gone sour,
Lack nothing that a soldier needs,
That all are oath-bound men:
Those banners come not in.

There in the tomb stand the dead upright,
But winds come up from the shore:
They shake when the winds roar,
Old bones upon the mountain shake.

Those banners come to bribe or threaten,
Or whisper that a man's a fool
Who, when his own right king's forgotten,
Cares what king sets up his rule.
If he died long ago
Why do you dread us so?

There in the tomb drops the faint moonlight,
But wind comes up from the shore:
They shake when the winds roar,
Old bones upon the mountain shake.

The tower's old cook that must climb and clamber
Catching small birds in the dew of the morn
When we hale men lie stretched in slumber
Swears that he hears the king's great horn.
But he's a lying hound:
Stand we on guard oath-bound!

There in the tomb the dark grows blacker,
But wind comes up from the shore:
They shake when the winds roar,
Old bones upon the mountain shake.

W.B. Yeats

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE SWP

How do we build a real revolutionary party?

I WAS A MEMBER of the SWP from January 1991 to September 1993. I joined the SWP and left the Labour Party because the SWP was against the Gulf War while Neil Kinnock supported the slaughter of the Iraqis.

The SWP seemed to be on the side of workers, while the Labour leaders were accepting the Tories' attacks on us. While Kinnock denounced the poll tax non-payers, the SWP supported the fight against the Tories.

I joined the SWP because I was disgusted by the Labour leadership's craven attitude to the ruling class.

But over the course of time it became apparent that the SWP was starting to lose its political bearings.

In October 1992 the Tories launched a massive attack on the miners. The SWP's response was to demand that the TUC launch a general strike. This call was dropped soon afterwards with no discussion the SWP branches as to why. It is clear, in retrospect, that the general strike slogan was simply not meant seriously. The SWP raised the call in order to recruit as many angry demonstrators as possible.

If the SWP had been serious about a general strike they should have tried to bring out their workplaces, and build a general strike from below, based on the rank and file working class. Instead, by making it a demand to be placed on the TUC general council, they removed all responsibility from themselves, and claimed they were "exposing" the bureaucrats.

Lenin would call this slogan-mongering "fake ultra-leftism." He was uncompromising in his attempts to expose and eradicate it in the workers' movement.

Of course, both Lenin and Trotsky explained the existence of ultra-leftism as the price the workers' movement paid for opportunism. But they also argued that you don't defeat opportunism by systematically counterposing your own organisation to the existing labour movement.

They also didn't argue that you build



When 20,000 students marched against grant cuts on 23 February, the SWP talked about hi-jacking the demonstration for a "march on Parliament" — and ended up with only a little half-hearted shoving at police lines by a couple of hundred marchers. Photo: Garry Meyer

up your organisation by simply proclaiming the most left sounding slogans that you can think of. Instead, they argued that Marxists build their organisation by systematic work in the organised labour movement. Surely the example of Gerry Healy's Workers' Revolutionary Party confirms Lenin and Trotsky's strategy.

More recently, on the student demonstration in London this February, the SWP called for a "march on Parliament" to "bring down the government." Having discovered that the working class would not go on a general strike and remove the Tories from office, the SWP now decided that students could do the job!

Were they serious? If so, why didn't they fight through the police lines and invade Parliament? Or was it just another case of raising a left-sounding slogan in order to recruit as many angry demonstrators as possible?

This leftish posturing is simply not seri-

ous.

The election in the Isle of Dogs of the Nazi Derek Beackon has also demonstrated the bankruptcy of the SWP. For the election of 5 May the SWP and their

"The so-called revolutionaries back a bourgeois nationalist party abroad and refuse to fight for a class vote at home."

front organisation, the Anti-Nazi League, put up posters saying: "Don't vote Nazi." In other words, it's okay to vote for Tory and Liberal racists!

This is nothing more than liberal moralising: vote for a "respectable" party but please don't vote for a Nazi. Serious Marxists would fight for a Labour victory in the elections as the best way to defeat the Nazis and propagate class politics.

As if this wasn't enough, the SWP called for an ANC vote in South Africa rather than fight to build a democratic mass workers' party. The so-called revolutionaries back a bourgeois nationalist party abroad and refuse to fight for a class vote at home.

Surely this shows that the SWP has moved away from the most basic class politics. Without an independent workers' party, the working class — the agent of socialism — will always be tied to bourgeois ideology and capitalist politicians.

And while the SWP is becoming more and more politically disorientated, its

internal regime is becoming less and less democratic.

Comrades who disagree with the Central Committee line find themselves expelled. In many cases this has involved leading members who have sustained the organisation throughout the eighties. There has been no real democratic discussion of the issues raised, nor of the expulsions of members.

Trotsky equated democracy with oxygen. Just as oxygen is necessary for an organism to survive, democracy is necessary for a revolutionary party to survive. How long can the SWP continue without democratic discussion?

At the SWP conference in 1992, the Central Committee made a disastrous decision — it pushed for the abandonment of Marxist education for new members. The combination of the expulsion of leading cadre and the lack of education has resulted in the mass of SWP members not knowing the basic arguments of Marxism, and very few members know the history of the Marxist movement.

But didn't Lenin call the revolutionary party "the vanguard of the class"? Isn't the revolutionary party supposed to be "the memory of the class"?

It has become clear to me that the SWP has moved far away from Lenin and Trotsky's conception of the revolutionary party. Socialist Organiser/the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is the true heir of the Marxist tradition. The AWL is the only group on the British left to have a full internal democracy, which consistently organises on class issues, and which does not capitulate to bourgeois nationalist movements. I urge all genuine, principled socialists in the Socialist Workers' Party to leave and work with us in SO/AWL.

Yours fraternally Dave Donnachie,
Edinburgh



October 1992: tens of thousands march against pit closures. The SWP "advertised" itself with the slogan "TUC call a General Strike now!", but does nothing to actually get a General Strike. Photo: John Harris

UNISON conference: Bournemouth 15-18 May

For a fully-merged, fighting union!

UNISON CONFERENCE

By Tony Dale, Manchester UNISON

UNISON, THE NEW one-and-a-half million strong public sector union, meets for its first national conference in Bournemouth from 15 May.

The union, created from a merger of NUPE, NALGO, and CoHSE, has been formed at a time of a Tory offensive against the public sector. Pay freeze, privatisation, cuts, trade union rights, the Health Service, and the future of the Welfare State, will dominate the week's debates.

So far the merger has been half a merger. The name has changed, a new logo has been produced,

the machine at the top has come together, but so far not a lot has changed at ground level. In fact, the technical details of the merger have become a nightmare, making it easier for the officials to stitch up the rank and file.

At this conference UNISON faces a choice: go towards full merger, and organise to defend public services and public sector workers; or continue in the world of half-merger, half-mess.

Public sector workers need a united response to the Tories' public sector pay freeze. And it gives us an opportunity to act in union.

Last year the unions responded in a divided, dissipated way to the 1.5% pay limit. Each section, each trade union, was left to fight the battle on its own.

At stake was a central plank of

government policy, but the trade unions responded with a sectional mentality when what we needed was a general political campaign. The result was round one to the Tories.

This year is round two. At stake is a pay freeze for three years. As a start, UNISON should coordinate a public-sector-wide one-day strike. A number of motions call for this, and it is likely to be one of the biggest debates at Conference.

The National Executive opposes any proposals for UNISON-wide action over pay, and instead proposes "to continue its vigorous campaign in support of Public Services". This is not good enough.

Motion after motion has been sent in by branches opposing the

Tories' campaign against the Health Service and the Welfare State. As one motion puts it, "The internal market, coupled with Trust status, has seriously eroded a patient's right to treatment on the basis of need". Calls are made for an end to means-tested benefits and a commitment to universal benefits.

UNISON is ideally placed to launch a major campaign to defend the Health Service and the Welfare State. Such a campaign could turn UNISON from being a lumbering giant into a mass campaigning force for services and jobs.

The conference will also see a major debate on the anti-union laws. Crucial here will be the proposal to adopt the Charter of Workers' Rights initiated by

Socialist Organiser and previously NALGO policy.

The anti-racist/anti-fascist debate is likely to be a low point of the conference, dominated by petty bickering between supporters of the Anti-Racist Alliance and of the Anti-Nazi League, as both claim to be the sole effective campaign against racism and fascism. So far UNISON has sided with the ARA, condemning the ANL as a front for the Socialist Workers' Party. Fortunately, a number of branches are calling for unity and the building of one anti-racist/anti-fascist campaign.

Whatever the weather in Bournemouth, a cloud will be hanging over conference on democracy and accountability. Motion after motion has been ruled out of order. Members in

Liverpool may face disciplinary action over their attempts to hold their branch secretary accountable. A rulebook that members had little input into will be defended by the National Executive against calls for democratisation.

A democratic and campaigning UNISON is what is needed, and the left must organise to fight for it. So far, the left has been divided and badly organised. A number of initiatives, such as UNISON Fightback, Campaign for a Democratic Fighting UNISON, local left caucuses, and the Unity bulletin, exist, and need to be pulled together into a broad, open, umbrella organisation. Unity will be producing a daily conference bulletin.

• See Sleeper, page 2

Civil Service unions in conference

CPSA

By a delegate

THIS YEAR, delegates to the conference of the low-paid civil service workers' union CPSA had two surprises even before the main conference opened on 9 May.

First, we discovered that no meaningful debate will be allowed on this year's pay offer. A couple of days earlier, the National Executive Committee had agreed to recommend an offer from the Treasury that amounts to a pay cut in real terms. They now want to push this offer to a speedy ballot, preventing Conference from discussing the offer or any campaign to win a better one.

Surprise no.2 was finding that there would have to be a re-run of the annual election for President. Under complex and contentious circumstances, the name of Alan England, a maverick right-winger, was excluded from the original election.

For the second year running, Conference has passed a motion on Market Testing that contains some good general points but fails to tie anyone down to specific action. It calls for "a sustained programme of nationally coordinated industrial action alongside other Civil Service unions". But does this mean that if other unions won't fall in behind CPSA's proposals, then no action will take place?

If "Unity" does win the Executive, its most urgent priority will be to progress the fight against Market Testing before more jobs come under the hammer.

IRSF

THE TAX workers' union IRSF holds its annual conference in Llandudno next week against a background of mounting Tory attacks.

Despite the massive threat to jobs, terms and conditions represented by Market Testing (contracting out) the IRSF leadership have done nothing to help workers who want to fight back.

As one BL activist put it: "The leaders don't think their 'strategy' can stop market testing and privatisation will work, and have effectively abandoned those members to their fate. Their main con-

cern is to protect union recognition, and thus their own salaries."

The other main issue up for discussion is the proposed merger between IRSF — which is a top to bottom union covering all grades in the Inland Revenue — and NUCPS, which organises executive and support grades in the rest of the civil service.

The IRSF Broad Left will be arguing for any merger ballot to take place only after the draft rule book for the new union is published.

They want to cut down the huge and overpaid bureaucracy which afflicts both unions but in NUCPS accounts for one-third of all union subs being used just to pay full timers, the bulk of whom are unselected.

Nevertheless, most IRSF activists back the general idea of merger and want to see CPSA, the low paid civil service clerical union, brought into the process as soon as possible.

Transport: stop the jobs massacre

TRANSPORT

By a DOT worker, Manchester

THE TORY minister for Transport, Patrick Brown, announced on 9 May that the Department of Transport and its Agencies would seek to make 20 per cent "savings" by the end of March 1996.

As the majority of the Department's costs are wages, this means some 3000 job cuts.

The majority of the staff in the Department are employed in Agencies (the Tories' half-way house to privatisation): the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the Vehicles Inspectorate, the Driving Standards Agency, and the newly formed Highways Agency. It is vital that opposition to the cuts is coordinated right across the Department.

The right-wing Executive of the low-paid civil service workers' union CPSA, as part of its policy of splitting up the active left-wing sections of the union, has removed the DVLA from the Department of Transport section of the union. This can only help management.

BBC workers ballot for strike

Tony Lennon, president of the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU), spoke to Socialist Organiser.

WE ARE currently in dispute with the BBC over two issues. First, the threat to introduce performance-related pay — meaning pay will be related to what your boss thinks of you.

Second, the attempt to bring in a conditions-of-service package which will cut earnings — for

example, overtime earnings and antisocial hours payments.

All of our 10,000 members at the BBC will be affected. We have just balloted our members, and out of the 3,900 who voted we got 61% for strike action and 82% for some action short of strike action.

The AEEU's 500 members, and 2,500 NUJ members in the BBC, are also being balloted. The result will be announced on Thursday 12 May.

We are confident that these unions will vote "yes" to strikes at the BBC. We will use our mandate to begin action.

Victory at the Royal

HEALTH SERVICE

WORKERS AT Glasgow Royal Trust won a decisive victory last week in their dispute over pay and conditions. The threat of strike action by the cleaners and porters was enough to cause management to back down completely. On July 3 the workers will transfer to a new contractor with their wages and conditions intact.

A second round of competitive tendering run by Greater Glasgow Health Board, prior to the Royal Infirmary becoming a Trust, resulted in the contract being awarded to a new company, Executive Healthcare. By ignoring the Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) Regulations they managed to beat the tenders of three companies, including the existing contractor. The savings come from

cuts in wages, holidays and the removal of overtime rates.

A ballot resulted in a huge majority (92%) in favour of strike action to defend pay and conditions. All sections of the labour movement had pledged to support the threatened workers. Support among other workers at the hospital was particularly strong.

On the eve of the strike, management at the Trust accepted that TUPE regulations apply.

It is still unclear where the £300,000 shortfall will come from. The health unions must ensure the £300,000 does not come from cuts elsewhere.

The threat of militant action by the workers at the Royal is an example to workers throughout the Health Service, the public sector and beyond — the only way to win is to stand together and fight.

Traincrews' anger grows

By a railworker

AT THE traincrew grades conference of the rail union RMT, at the end of April, there was a growing anger at the union leadership and a feeling that the anti-trade-union laws would soon have to be dealt with in the appropriate manner.

Delegates were angry at the failure of the leadership to have an effective campaign — or any campaign — for a yes vote in the ballot for action over the PT&R agreement. Executive members stayed away, from these sessions, and Vernon Hince turned up only on the final morning of the conference, hoping to avoid harassment.

Two motions were passed on the "Manchester Four", and one will go to the union AGM. It condemned the inaction of the union's solicitors, Patterson and Brewer, who failed through incompetence to get interim relief for the four victimised guards. It took 18 months to get a first hearing at an industrial tribunal.

The big majority of the conference also condemned union General Secretary Jimmy Knapp's appearance in BR's alcohol and drugs video. A move to reform BR's alcohol and drugs policy, and to stop them using it to victimise workers, by giving a minimum 24 hours' notice of screening, was narrowly defeated (41 to 55) in favour of scrapping the whole policy.

Claw back the cash!

By Ian Hollingworth, Newham NUT

RANK AND FILE teachers across several inner-London borough are meeting to discuss the fight to claw back the £822 Inner London Supplement, swallowed up in the recent derisory 3.5% national pay award.

The NUT nationally has sat on its hands over this year's pay award, meekly accepting the continuing humiliation of negotiating rights being confiscated by "Sir knows best" Tory governments.

Small wonder, then, that rank and file teachers are building on the tradition of successful past strikes for a realistic London allowance.

Postal strike spreads

THIS WEDNESDAY 11 May post office workers in London and Oxford are to strike in protest at office closures. This action by counter staff comes after a wave of unofficial walk-outs on the delivery and sorting side.

Management are trying it on everywhere with victimisation and the use of casuals.

Last month saw successful walkouts in Liverpool and Whitby and action at other places as far afield as Dumfries, Glasgow, Southend and Kilburn. UCW conference later this month looks set to be a stormy affair as rank and file postal workers ask some difficult questions of their executive.

MSF leaders shot down in flames

By Mark Sandell, MSF

THE LEADERS of the Manufacturing, Science, Finance union MSF have not had a good conference.

On the very first day (7 May, in Brighton) they saw their flashy business-union document, "Into the 21st Century", shot down in flames.

Delegates showed that they wanted a union which faces the real issues of defending its members' pay and conditions.

But the battle is not over yet. The MSF leaders have signalled their intention to carry on regardless, using backdoor methods.

Last year's conference voted overwhelmingly to keep trade union votes for selecting Labour parliamentary candidates, against the opposition of union General Secretary Roger Lyons. Yet

at Labour Party conference the MSF delegation abstained, allowing the Labour leaders to win abolition of the trade-union say in local selection.

MSF conference voted to condemn the delegation for breaking union policy, and resolved that MSF will fight for the re-establishment of a trade-union say in parliamentary selections.

The left did well on these basic issues, but was a minority in the conference. Signs of a revival in support of socialist ideas were there, such as a 150-strong public meeting of the "Network 90" caucus addressed by Dennis Skinner MP and Dawn Primarolo MP.

"Network 90" produced a very popular daily bulletin, but there is still a need for more unity between "Network 90" and the other left caucus, "Unity Left".

Contact "Network 90" c/o Jennie Twydel, 80 Pembroke St, London N1 0DP.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

National Conference

Youth **UNITED** against racism

11.00 - 5.00
Saturday
14 May

- Speakers include:** Achim — Fun-da-mental • Asian Youth Connection • Phil Maxwell (East End Labour councillor) • RMT member, Glenroy Watson • Sarah Wellings, NUS Women's Officer • Neil Gerrard, Labour MP • M25 Campaign • Action for Black Justice (Moss Side) •

Davenant Centre, 179 Whitechapel Road, London E1.

5 May Derek Beackon defeated by Labour, but Nazis gain more votes

Anti-facist fight must continue

By Mark Sandell

THE GOOD news from the local government elections on 5 May is that the BNP won no seats. Derek Beackon lost his seat in Millwall. The bad and tragic news is that support for the Nazis grew.

Beackon's vote went up to over 2000. In Newham, a borough next to Tower Hamlets, the BNP got 32% in Beckton and 24% in Custom House and Silvertown.

This level of support for fascists is an indication of deep-seated racism and the contin-

uing despair of many working-class whites with the savage reality of unemployment, homelessness and poverty in Tory Britain. It is also a direct physical threat to the local black communities.

The BNP is not just an electoral machine. It builds up groups of Nazi thugs, and day-to-day incites race hate. That is why racist attacks have gone up by nearly 300% in the Isle of Dogs since Beackon's victory.

The fascists are still a very real threat and they can grow in Britain as they have done across Europe.

The British state continues to whip up racism. The week before the local elections immigration police raided over 100 black Southwark council workers homes on "the suspicion" that they might be illegal immigrants!

This was nothing but gross racist harassment by the state. Simon Hughes, a local Liberal MP, commented that every job taken by an illegal immigrant was one less job for local (read white) people.

The threat of fascism is one of the reasons why it is vital to build a united anti-racist

movement that bases itself on working-class answers to the fascists, fights for jobs and homes for all, and mobilises the labour movement and young people against all racism.

That is why Youth United Against Racism has called a national conference to organise a drive by youth for unity in the anti-racist movement and to fight for the labour movement to take up serious anti-racist work. Only the labour movement can give real answers to working-class people and the problems which they face, and undercut the racists and fascists by exposing their scapegoating lies.

Tories finish fourth in Scotland

By Dale Street

THE TORIES slumped into fourth position, with less than 14% of the poll, in the 5 May Regional Council elections in Scotland. It was their worst result since the local government reorganisation of 1974.

But Labour had little to cheer about. Their share of the vote fell by 2%. They lost seats on six Regional Councils, and were ousted from minority control or coalition control of three Councils.

The main gains went to the Liberal Democrats, who increased their number of Regional Councillors from 41 to 64, and to the Scottish National Party.

The SNP increased their share of the poll to 27% and won new seats throughout Scotland, including in traditional Labour

strongholds such as West and Central Scotland.

One SNP gain was in Labour leader John Smith's own Monklands East constituency. If last Thursday's voting patterns are repeated in the Euro-elections, the SNP will win the North-East Scotland Euro-constituency from Labour.

Labour's lacklustre performance was the direct result of the party leadership's strategy of pushing still further to the right in the hope of stealing Tory voters.

In Scotland this strategy is combined with pretending that the Liberal Democrats do not exist and accommodating to the SNP by using the rhetoric of Scottish populism.

The SNP has attacked Labour from the left, and has been boosted by Labour's own pandering to Scottish nationalism. Thus discontent with the Tories' record produced

an electoral swing towards the Liberal Democrats and the SNP.

Instead of mindlessly patting themselves on the back over last Thursday's results, the Scottish Labour Party leadership should radically change course.

Instead of passively waiting for the next

general election, it should launch an offensive against the Tories, based on non-cooperation by Labour-controlled local authorities and defence of the Welfare State.

Failure to do so will play into the hands of the Liberal Democrats and the SNP.

The Defence of the Welfare State

A day conference: 10am to 4pm, on Saturday 25 June, at the Lothian Regional Chambers, Edinburgh.

Speakers include: Dawn Primarolo MP, Campbell Christie (STUC), Malcolm Chisholm MP, Val Little (Morning Star), Alex Falconer MEP, and Rosina McCrae.

Registration: £5 organisations, £3 waged, £1 unwaged, to Welfare State Campaign, c/o LTUCRC, 12a Picardy Place, Edinburgh EH1 3JT.



Timex workers on the picket line: Labour should build on workers' struggles.

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