

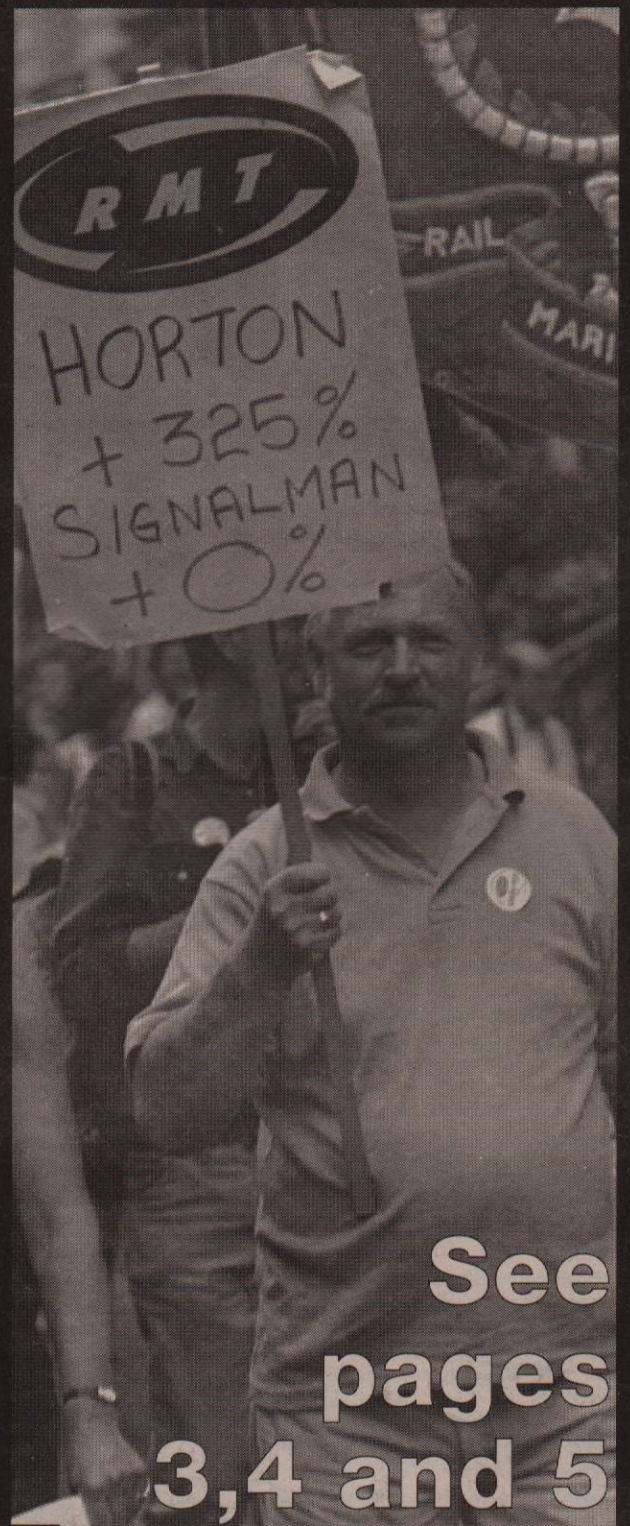
SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

**Tories
bankroll
Railtrack
union
busters**

**Stand
by the
signal
workers!**



Defend the rail union

New York's war against the poor

LETTER FROM NEW YORK

By Mark Lickley

NEW YORK is a city of enormous wealth. It is also a city of enormous and sickening contrasts. To take a bus from upstate New York would bring you past the South Bronx and through Harlem, areas of intense poverty and desperation, and yet within two or three blocks the bus turns and takes you onto Madison Avenue and past some of the most expensive apartments and stores in the world.

Yet even in this, the most exclusive neighbourhood in one of the richest cities in the world, you are confronted everywhere by the sight of homeless people begging on corners and in store doorways.

Soon after gaining office, mayor Giuliani announced a programme in conjunction with the Metropolitan Transit Authority to tackle the problem of beggars on the cities' streets and subways. What resulted was a crackdown by the authorities, a "campaign against the poor".

The campaign against the poor has taken on a tri-partisan nature. Firstly, direct and repressive measures are being brought against the poor. The transit police have begun to enforce the laws against begging, with a \$50 fine or ten days in jail as punishment.

The District Attorney has put into place mechanisms by which "panhandling" arrests can be processed quickly and smoothly. The city has also been in consultation with local Business Improvement Districts, who have hired private security firms to carry out "sweeps" (harassment of homeless people to clear them away from shops and businesses).

Secondly, in case New Yorkers should continue to have any human feelings towards the homeless, the Transit Authority launched a "public information" campaign to try to convince subway users not to give money to beggars. The posters are often so worded as to try to make not giving seem to be a civic duty and a virtue.

Finally, the city authorities are denying the homeless the right to shelter. As a homeless person in New York, you can claim shelter, although it is usually bad, and only lasts for 90 days. Now the Governor of New York State, Mario Cuomo, is pushing to reduce it to 60 days, to cut costs.

Meanwhile Giuliani continues to attack the jobs of city workers, as he pursues his policy of "market testing" all city departments, with the exception of the police.

The unions, in their fight against Giuliani, should take up the issue of the campaign against the poor, demanding no lay-offs, no wage cuts, end the war against the poor!

This issue of *Socialist Organiser* will last for four weeks and is therefore 'heavier' and more magazine-like than the usual issue. No. 612 will be out on 7 September (not 31 August, as previously scheduled). The unexplained absence of our 'Jesus' column has provoked a number of readers to ask us if God is finally dead? In fact he is involved in an industrial dispute — or rather his prophet, Rob Dawber, is. The series will resume when the RMT has won.

General strike in Nigeria

By Mark Sandell

A PRO-DEMOCRACY strike wave is shaking Nigeria to its roots. Last week oil workers who have been on strike for five weeks were joined by a General Strike, called by the Nigerian Labour Congress, the sole national trade union federation.

The oil strikes have bitten hard in a country where 90% of export

earnings are from oil production. Oil, petrol and gas shortages have brought much of the country to a standstill, while demonstrations in the capital have led to the police killing at least six protesters.

The strike's central demand is the release of political prisoners and the recognition by the military junta of the presidential elections of June 1993, when Moshood Abiola's electoral victory was annulled by the

military. The General Strike was called off for two days for talks between the Nigerian Labour Congress and the Government but the leaders of the NLC — even the President Paschal Bafyau, a self declared friend of the military regime — have been forced to act under pressure from their members.

The strikes were sparked by the arrest of Abiola on treason charges after he declared himself the President

at a rally in June. It is obviously vital that the Nigerian labour movement fights against military rule and for democratic rights. However, Abiola is a multi-millionaire boss and free market enthusiast and the '93 Presidential elections were far from free. Most candidates were barred from standing and the remaining parties and candidates, including Abiola, were lined up by the military.

The workers' movement must combine its fight for democratic rights with independent working class politics and not fall behind the "pro-democracy" Nigerian bosses who oppose the military. There is the danger that the whipping up of ethnic tensions by the military to weaken the strike could lead to major ethnic conflicts if the workers' movement doesn't offer an independent lead.



Gush Shalom - the Peace Bloc - protested for a democratic settlement in Jerusalem and against Olmert, the Likud mayor, on 22 July.

They are talking about Jerusalem

David Ball reports on a visit to Israel, where he interviewed peace movement activist Adam Keller

THE FIRST THING that struck me in Israel is the huge number of posters, banners and stickers you see, telling the government: "Don't leave the Golan Heights". This is the territorial issue (more even than Jerusalem) that agitates Israelis. The concern is almost entirely about security, not national rights for the people living there. Most Israelis support the peace process and the moves towards self-determination for the Palestinians. But most Israelis fear the prospect of Syria once again shelling northern Israel from the Golan, as it did before 1967. The current deadlock in the Israel / Syria peace talks needs to be seen in this context.

You see quite a number of soldiers on the streets, but many are off duty national service men and women who have nowhere to leave their guns. The most repressive things I found in Israel were the heat and the fact that you can't get a bus on Saturday!

ADAM KELLER TOLD ME: "40 Gush Shalom (peace movement) people demonstrated outside Jerusalem City Hall on Friday 22nd July in protest against new government legislation banning Palestinian organisations in East Jerusalem and against deepening discrimination against Arabs under the direction of Ehud Olmert, Jerusalem's new Likud Mayor.

The PLO and the new Palestinian National Authority are now forbidden to organise meetings in East Jerusalem. The government can now close down Orient House (the PLO's headquarters in East Jerusalem), though it seems unlikely that they will go this far. The threat will help keep up pressure on the PLO.

Jerusalem is the cornerstone of Israeli nationalism; it is also the biggest taboo in Israeli politics. Though our demos and actions, Gush Shalom is trying to create cracks in the consensus among Israeli politicians that Jerusalem is effectively non-negotiable.

I think we should be talking about a solution for Jerusalem which maintains one municipal

authority to provide local services, but which recognises East Jerusalem as part of the West Bank and as the capital of a Palestinian state comprising of the West Bank and Gaza.

The Old City (where most of the holy places are) could be under joint sovereignty and also involve other interested religious authorities.

Bosnia: West puts on pressure for dirty deal

By Dale Street

NATO aircraft bombed Bosnian-Serb targets around Sarajevo on Friday 5th August. This was NATO's first direct intervention into the Bosnian war since April of this year, when NATO aircraft attacked Bosnian-Serb positions around Gorazde.

The latest attack was presented as retaliation for a Bosnian-Serb seizure of weapons from a UN-guarded depot. A more likely reason for the attack was that it was a warning to the Bosnian-Serbs that they should accept the latest "peace-plan".

Since war first erupted in Bosnia in April of 1992 Western governments have had their tactical differences. But, in general, they have been prepared to allow Serbia to emerge as a local "mini-power" in the Balkans.

Western governments hoped that Serbia would be able to keep the lid on the tinder-box of the Balkans, and would prevent the instability unleashed by the break-up of Yugoslavia from spreading further afield.

Given Serbia's access to the armaments of the former JNA (Yugoslav People's Army), the arms embargo gave Serbia and its Bosnian-Serb allies an easy advantage in the war.

By the end of 1993 Western governments, backed up by the Russian

government, were increasingly determined to bring the war to an end.

The Serbs had grabbed as much of Bosnia as they were likely to be able to hold (70% of the territory), and the growing Yugoslav refugee population in Western Europe was an additional unwelcome burden on crisis-hit economies.

According to the current "peace plan", 49% of ex-Bosnia is to remain Serb-controlled, and is to be allowed eventually to fuse with Serbia. The rest of Bosnia will be a Muslim-Croat federation (established earlier this year), with economic ties to Croatia.

The collapse of ex-Yugoslavia has unleashed the forces of nationalism and poisoned relations between the different peoples of the Balkans. The "peace plan" effectively gives international legitimacy to the bloody achievements of the forces of nationalism.

(Those socialists who believe that the "solution" in the Middle East is to undo the wrongs of the 1940s and settle old scores dating from half a century ago should look to the Balkans to see where such a "solution" leads.)

For socialists, the key issue is how to break down the hostility and distrust between the peoples of the Balkans which have been whipped up to fever pitch in the course of the wars generated by the collapse of ex-Yugoslavia.

Defend Ronald Thomas! Drop the charges!

ON 18 SEPTEMBER 1993, a black man, Ronald Thomas, was attacked by three white men at the Showcase cinema in Nottingham. Ronald Thomas and his wife, Sharon, who were celebrating their sixth wedding anniversary, received racial abuse and intimidation by the group of white people sitting behind them at the cinema. Then at the end of the film, Ronald was set upon by the three men who held him and punched and kicked him in the face and ribs. Ronald did his best to defend him-

self against the attack.

After police had taken statements from all the people involved, they arrested Ronald and charged him with ABH, GBH and affray but brought no charges against his assailants. This is yet another example of blatant police racism. Ronald will have to stand trial in September.

A campaign has been set up in Ronald's defence. Please send messages of support to: Ronald Thomas Campaign, PO Box 179, Nottingham, NG1 3AQ

Murderous stalemate in Haiti

By Colin Foster

MISERY AND despair are becoming deeper and deeper in the Caribbean state of Haiti, as a stand-off continues between Haiti's military rulers, with their dreaded Ton-Ton Macoute terror gangs, and the American government.

In December 1990 a reformist priest, Jean-Baptiste Aristide, was elected president of Haiti, with the support of two-thirds of those voting and the huge majority of Haiti's workers and peasants. In September 1991 he was deposed and expelled from the country by a military coup.

The Americans tried to broker a deal between the Haitian military and Aristide, and it was finally signed in July 1993. Aristide was to return in October 1993, but the military top brass would have guarantees.

The coup leaders would not even accept the agreement they had signed.

As 30 October approached, they murdered more and more people, including wealthy and prominent people who were close to Aristide. Aristide did not return.

Haiti has been given over more and more to simple plunder and terror. The American capitalists who used Haiti's low wages for sub-contract work have almost all moved their operations elsewhere in the Caribbean.

The Americans want to restore conditions for normal capitalist profit-making in Haiti. They also, probably more urgently, want to stem the huge and embarrassing flood of Haitian "boat people" trying to get into the US, for whom they have opened a huge internment camp near the American military base of Guantanamo, in Cuba. But they also want to avoid destroying the armed forces of the Haitian state, and opening the way to mass mobilisations. This dilemma explains the current stalemate.

Students plan first-term demo on grant cuts

By Alison Brown

WHILE STUDENTS spend the summer scraping together pennies for food, grovelling for any job they can get and wondering if they will get through the next academic year on a grant 10% smaller than the one they couldn't survive on last year the National Union of Students National Executive is getting on with some stirring work on their behalf.

The Vice President Welfare, for example is putting all his energies into a Healthy Eating Campaign — telling students how to scrape by on £2 a week and still get enough vitamin C doesn't sound like much of a strategy for a fightback. Will we be having recipe books sponsored by the potato marketing board, and pizza awareness weeks, we ask.

Out-of-touch schemes like this aside, the Labour students leadership seem to be having a few problems with their overall strategy.

One of their members, Richard Hewison, has left their group and bickering has broken out as the

others all bustle for the favours of their increasingly heavy-handed leader, NUS president, Jim Murphy. He is ruling the roost, like a true right-wing-cum-Stalinist bureaucrat.

There is one saving grace in all this. Pushed from below by students involved in action around the Grant Cuts, last year NUS has called a first term demonstration over the issue. This is good news and will act as an important focus at the start of term. Student Unions and activists should be planning local action to build up to the demo. The National Student Alliance has already called a regional demo in Leeds and a lobby of Tory Party Conference for the build up.

Students need a real fightback and unity with other sectors of society to crush the Tory Government's attack on the Welfare State. All those who think that NUS is about fighting for students rights should organise and build action in the first term against the government and force the NUS Executive to open their eyes and look what is going on in the real world.

Victory to the signal workers!

THE SIGNALLING workers' dispute is now entering a critical phase. The failure of the RMT's signal supervisor ballot passes the initiative to management.

Railtrack management are cautiously, but deliberately, moving towards a situation where they can try to impose a pay "offer" by locking-out the hard core of determined strikers who continue to reject their terms.

Already they have lost an estimated £180 million fighting the signal workers, when a settlement would cost just £4 million. This is proof that the Tories are funding what could quickly become an open union bashing exercise in which the main goal is to defeat the RMT.

For the Tories there is more at stake here than the price of a wage deal the signal workers would accept. Defeat for the RMT would, they believe, pave the way for privatisation to be a "success". It would create the conditions for taking the industry out of the limbo it is in now where it is neither publicly nor privately owned. Defeat for the RMT would further encourage big business to buy up sections of the railways.

More and more Tory MPs and right wing journalists are raising the idea of a lock-out. Slowly the conditions are being created for a major escalation of the dispute.

Adverts for new signal workers' jobs have already appeared in many local papers over the last couple of weeks.

How can we beat the union busters? By a resolute stand from the signal workers themselves.

By an intensification of the dispute amongst other railworkers.

And by an increase in general solidarity action from other trade unionists, and from the travelling public.

If the RMT does not now take back



RMT leader Jimmy Knapp should realise that his whole union is at risk. Photo: John Harris

the initiative Railtrack will press ahead.

Elsewhere in this issue (pages 4 and 5) we discuss the ways in which signal workers can work to ensure that the action stays solid and deepens.

How? By promoting the active involvement of all strikers by way of: strike committees; picket rotas; and large lively meetings.

It is also vital that other rail workers — particularly train crew and track maintenance staff — be called out by RMT on days when signal workers strike. Their safety and that of rail passengers is at risk.

Stepping up the dispute on the railways is vital. Just as important is the building solidarity and broad support.

Every town and city needs its own signal workers support group. Organise collections. Set up workplace meetings to hear the railworkers' case and leaflet the travelling public about the dispute!

There is a huge reservoir of support — but it must be mobilised.

There are over seven million trade unionists, and just four and a half thousand signal workers. There is no reason on earth why the signal workers cannot continue with their action for as long as it takes to break the bosses if proper collections and levies are organised by other trade unionists.

We also need a national TUC march and rally to back the signal workers.

Jimmy Knapp should use his posi-

tion as President of the TUC to call an emergency meeting to make sure this happens! Why hasn't he?

Finally, the Labour leadership should be told by the labour movement to stop sitting on the fence over this dispute.

They should back the strikers and point out how Railtrack and the Tories are preparing the ground for a lock-out if they think they can get

away with it.

No trade unionist or socialist should underestimate the importance of this dispute.

The railways are the most strongly unionised sector of the economy. The workforce have yet to suffer a serious defeat, despite a long-term management offensive.

A defeat for the signal workers would change all that. The single most

powerful group of RMT members (ASLEF has the majority of drivers) would have been broken. Management would be cock-a-hoop.

But this doesn't have to happen. A solid strike over the weekend of 12 August coupled with a burgeoning solidarity movement could stop the union busters in their tracks. They will be stopped!

Victory to the signal workers!

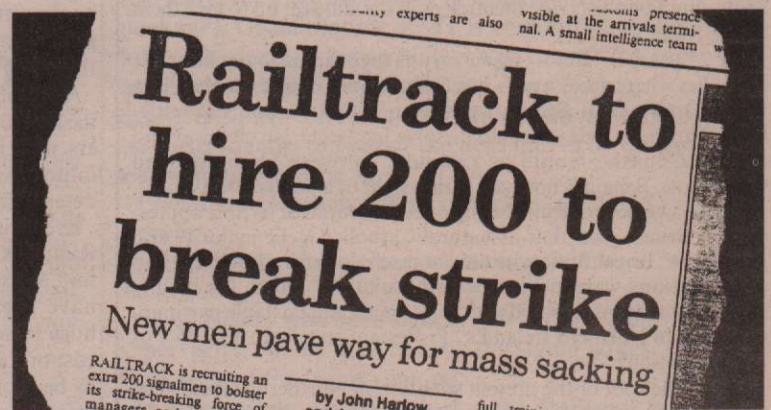
Murdoch says: sack the strikers

This is how the *Sunday Times*, owned by the Blair-friendly Rupert Murdoch, is advising Railtrack management to organise a lock-out.

"Now is the time to play hardball. If the RMT is determined to persist on its disruptive course, Railtrack should get tough. In 1981, when American air traffic controllers went on strike, President Reagan fired them. Military personnel were brought in and new controllers trained.

There are clear parallels between the air traffic controllers and Britain's signalmen. Just as America got tough then, so the time has come here to stop pussy-footing around.

Railtrack should set out the terms of its latest offer, the details of which should be sent to the RMT



and to every signalman. But there should also be an important postscript to the offer: those who do not accept it and report for work will be deemed to have dismissed themselves. Railtrack has been able to provide enough signalling staff for a third of services to be run on strike days without the signalmen. A combination of the existing emergency arrangements, together with the contribution of the many

signal men who would accept a Railtrack offer, would allow near-normal services to be provided during the 11 weeks it takes to train new signalling staff. It would be a serious attempt at settling an obsolete industrial battle which is threatening to drag Britain back to its worst days of industrial chaos. Above all, it would be infinitely preferable to the present unsatisfactory drift."

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"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.

Northern Ireland after twenty five years

BRITISH SOLDIERS have been on the streets of Northern Ireland for exactly twenty five years! For a full human generation, a province of the United Kingdom has been in a state of latent, and sometimes simmering, civil war, kept at bay only by the steel grip of the British army.

When that army 'went in', on 13 August 1969, Northern Ireland had already broken down and fallen apart into the beginnings of out-right civil war. The army "froze" the situation. That is what it is still doing, 25 years later. Progress has been nil.

In August 1969 there was a Home Rule government in Belfast. Run by Protestants and Unionists, it had an armed police force, the RUC, and a large force of armed special constables, the B-Specials, which was in fact an army. The RUC was overwhelmingly Protestant in composition; the B-Specials were entirely and jealously Protestant — a sectarian militia, in fact.

The Catholics, second class citizens for fifty years, were unarmed, except for stones, improvised petrol bombs, and an illegal gun here and there. Those Catholics fought the forces of the Protestant state, backed up by freelance Protestant sectarian mobs. Only a very feeble and shadowy IRA existed and it had long ago disarmed. It played no important part in the fighting. The present IRA came later, a product of impasse.

In Derry, police, B-Specials and civilian sectarians tried to invade the Bogside — a Catholic ghetto outside the walls of Derry City — where they had, some months earlier, beaten one man, Samuel Devenny, to death during a police riot. The Catholics resisted, built barricades to keep them out, and used stones and petrol bombs — against guns — to deter them.

They beat them; weeping and hysterical policemen, unused to resistance from the despised "Taigs", retreated from the conflict with the angry Bogside.

When the fighting spread to Belfast, where some hundreds of Catholic families were burned out of their homes, and seemed to be on the point of spreading to other towns, the British army was sent in to act like an iron scaffolding holding things together.

The army presence — vehemently welcome to the Catholics — was seen by the British Labour government as a short-term affair, while emergency reforms were rushed through aimed at satisfying the indisputably just demands of the Catholics.

Reforms were quickly made in the electoral system; the RUC was disarmed, the sectarian special constables disbanded; British civil servants were sent to understudy their sectarian-tinged Northern Irish equivalents and ensure "fair play" for the Catholics. A better Northern Ireland seemed in the making.

But it was all illusion. Less than a year on from August 1969, when Catholics welcomed British soldiers with the much-referred-to cups of tea, the IRA — now split in two and revitalised — fought a gun battle with the British army in West Belfast.

A few months later, in February-March 1971, the newly-formed Provisional IRA launched an all-out military campaign. Two years on, in August 1971, the British and Northern Ireland authorities brought in internment without charge or trial — exclusively for Catholics.

Less than three years on, in March 1972, Britain scrapped the Belfast Home Rule parliament and assumed direct rule.

In May 1974, a General Strike brought down the Catholic-Protestant power-sharing government which had been set up as a short-lived replacement for the Protestant Home Rule government which Britain had been forced to scrap. It has been British direct rule ever since — 23 years of it.

What went wrong for the hopes of a new start in Northern Ireland which accompanied the Labour Government's deployment of British troops 25 years ago? The Northern Irish sub-state proved unreformable. The convulsions of 1969 were not a passing difficulty, but a terminal breakdown of the Partition settlement imposed in 1920-22.

It has proved impossible to put Northern Ireland back together again as it was before August 1969. Britain does not dare let the Protestant Unionists rule themselves in the state set up to give them Home Rule!

For 25 years Britain — using very savage repression against the Catholics where necessary — has held the Six Counties of Northern Ireland together. If Britain were to go without a political settlement, Northern Ireland would dissolve into sectarian civil war and the Six Counties would be redivided between Catholics and Protestants. Britain is not even within sight of a political settlement.

Ireland's basic problem, coming out of centuries of terrible oppression by Britain, was that its natural Catholic/Gaelic majority and Protestant/"British" minority did not reach a modus vivendi, but had their relations warped by a British "solution" which for mainly imperialist reasons imposed a brutally unjust and unviable partition. Catholics in Northern Ireland's "Protestant state" are now 45% of the population!

That is the root of the present situation in Northern Ireland. The Six-Counties entity is a blatant piece of nonsense. That is what the last 25 years prove. Northern Ireland long ago broke down. It is kept in being — and murderously sectarian civil war is being staved off — only by the power and the inertia of the British state, at a tremendous cost to Northern Ireland's people, all of whom, Catholic and Protestant, are now victims of what the shrinking British Empire and its Irish bourgeois collaborators, North and South, did in Ireland.

We think that the Provisional IRA should call off its futile and counterproductive military campaign. But if it does call off the war, in the not too distant future, that will create only the illusion of a solution. Unless radical changes are made in the state structures in Ireland, another Provisional IRA may well arise in the future.

The solution is simply stated, though — while Ireland's workers are divided along sectarian lines — far from simple to achieve: a federal united Ireland, with self-rule for the Protestant majority areas, coupled with closer, perhaps confederal, links between the UK and independent Ireland to reassure the Irish minority. If the present conflict ends with less than that, then it may prove to be just a lull in the long, long war.

SIGNAL WORKERS

An open letter to the RMT executive

Regain the initiative: step up the action to win!

Dear comrades,

MANY RMT members have been pleasantly surprised by the way in which the council of executives have so far conducted the campaign around the signalling dispute.

It's good for once to see the union's leadership prosecuting a dispute in a way which suggests that they actually want to win it!

This contrasts sharply with the behaviour in the recent past of the General Secretary and other senior elected officials over the 1993 strikes alongside the miners — when we left the NUM on their own. It also contrasts favourably with the disastrous non-campaign over this year's promotion, transfer, resettlement and redundancy agreement ballot.

In both cases major opportunities to defend jobs and job security were thrown away by a minority in the leadership who, lacking the will to fight the employer, were determined to wreck the possibility of a united fightback by RMT members.

Stand firm: fight for the full claim!

IN THE wake of the failure of the signalling supervisors' ballot it is absolutely vital that the unity so far publicly demonstrated by the council of executives is maintained.

Only in this way can we ensure that the union regains the initiative in this dispute.

That means that the union must continue to insist on the winning of the signalling workers' claim in full. The claim is for 11% up-front. There must be no settlement and no suspension of action for less than that.

Anything else will be a slap in the face for the signalling workers who have maintained an impressive level of unity and determination.

Every railworker knows that Railtrack, the service operators, and the Tory government, have been prepared to face huge losses (over 45 times the cost of the full claim) in order to beat our union. We know that they can afford to meet that claim in full.

It is our task to make sure that they do.

Full accountability to the signalling workers

THOUGH final authority in the union rests with our elected representatives on the council of executives, it is undeniable that the success or failure of the dispute will depend, first and foremost, on the extent to which ordinary rank and file signalworkers mobilise and organise themselves.

The executive must ensure that the full time and lay officers of the union at divisional district and branch level do everything in their power to help the self-organisation of the signalling workers.

That means that they should be made to help rather than hinder the setting up of proper report-back meetings in every area open to all signalling workers.

The way to deal with the lock-out threats is not to crawl back to the negotiating table looking for 'face-saving' formulas.

It means that they should help and not hinder the setting up of strike committees consisting of both signalling workers and other grades.

It is vital that the signalworkers themselves are allowed to dictate the pace and extent of the action. Their views must be expressed and represented by themselves and not by right-wing divisional organisers. Some organisers would seek to present a bleaker picture than is accurate in order to strengthen the hand of the employer and those national officers who may wish to end the dispute without a satisfactory settlement.

Solidarity with the signal workers: stop the job on safety grounds

THE COUNCIL of executives must give a clear instruction to all RMT train crew, PWay, S&T, OHL grades not to work on strike days when there is — as there usually is — a safety risk to both themselves and the travelling public.

This is the logical way to step up the action. It is simply a more forceful and effective version of the existing policy of the executive which has already instructed the general secretary to "advise our members of their legal rights under the 1974 Health and Safety Act and the relevant section of TURER."

Those legal rights include a provision to be compensated by an industrial tribunal for "unfair dismissal" if it can be shown that the worker stopped the job "in circumstances of danger which he reasonably believed to be serious and imminent."

It is obviously much better for the union to exercise the right

collectively — in the same way as it can call a work to rule — rather than exposing individual activists to the risk of victimisation by doing it themselves.

This kind of escalation would destroy Railtrack's strike day operation and cement the bond of solidarity between signalworkers and other railworkers.

Some people may claim that such a course of action would open the union up to the risk of sequestration in the courts.

Such "legal advice" would be a counsel of despair. Though no-one could sensibly guarantee that the Tory judges wouldn't try to attack the union, the reality is that Railtrack would have to attempt to prove in court that their strike day services are safe. Everyone knows they are not!

And even if Railtrack managed that they still couldn't get at the union's funds because "leaving the dangerous part of a workplace" (TURER) is not legally the same as "industrial action in furtherance of a trade dispute" and so outside the scope of the existing anti-union laws.

Attempted lock-outs must be met by total shutdown of the railways

MUTED THREATS of a lock-out of strikers have been published in various Tory papers. They have served only to strengthen the resolve and determination of the signalworkers. That's been clear from every strikers' meeting held in the last few days.

Railtrack could soon be approaching individual signalworkers offering personal contracts based on term offered to but rejected by the RMT — just as BR did with S&T grades in 1991.

Workers will face an ultimatum: get back to work on the new contract or be sacked.

But right now, it is impossible to say whether they will do this sooner or later.

It is vital, however, that the

council of executives does not allow this speculation about an "industrial Armageddon" to lead to a loss of will by the union's leadership.

The way to deal with the lock-out threats is not to crawl back to the negotiating table looking for "face saving" formulas, but for the executive to make it clear that any attempt to sack our strikers will be met by an immediate and total shutdown. Legally if possible, illegally if necessary!

It's impossible to know for certain exactly how serious the possibility of a lock-out is. But even people who judge it unlikely have a duty to prepare for the worst.

Reach out to other rail unions

THE RMT leadership should break from the traditional stance adopted on these questions and openly appeal to both the rank and file and the leadership of the other main rail unions — TSSA and ASLEF — to bring forward any disputes they may now have on the basis that co-ordinated action is likelier to bring results.

ASLEF drivers and TSSA signalling staff should also be told to stop the job on strike days.

Comrades! The council of executives now has the opportunity to play a vital part in winning an historic victory — not just for the signalworkers themselves but for the whole labour movement.

Railworkers are showing the rest of our class that despite the defeats and misleadership of the last two decades, despite the formidable barrier of the anti-union laws which now guard the interests of the employers, the Tories and the bosses can still be defeated.

Yours in solidarity Alliance for Workers' Liberty railworkers

Signalworkers solid in Scotland

By an Scotrail driver

EIGHT WEEKS on the signalworkers seem determined as ever to win their interim claim.

It is now crucial that the District Council and divisional organisers organise serious support work. Clear directives must be issued by the DOs to avoid divisions within the

boxes. These should reflect the growing militancy that has seen signalworkers stop work as soon as the strike deadline has arrived, irrespective of where trains happen to be. This is not necessarily good, as it alienates the drivers, but shows increased determination which is not being matched by many of the District Councils.



Photo: John Harris

Knapp appeals to railworkers to build support groups

"I am aware that in many parts of the country, signalling support groups have been set up. If you do not have one in your area, please get involved. I know that you have all been working extremely hard during the course of the dispute, however there is now a serious need to redouble our efforts to ensure a successful conclusion. I know by all working together we can achieve the long awaited just settlement for signalling grades." **Jimmy Knapp, General Secretary RMT union**

The "PACTO model" for union -busting

By Gerry Bates

The *Sunday Times* (7 July) has called for Railtrack and the Government to sack the striking signal workers.

Its model is Ronald Reagan's sacking of the US air controllers in 1981.

The 12,000 members of the US air controllers' union PATCO were sacked two days after striking on 3 August 1981 for better pay, a shorter work week, and earlier retirement. The Government said they had broken a US law banning strikes by government workers.

At least five union leaders were jailed; the union's strike fund was seized and the union was "de-certified" (deprived of the rights to recognition which unions have under US law); strikers were denied welfare benefits.

There were many protests and there was a little solidarity action.

Yet Ronald Reagan won. The airports supplemented the small number of non-union air controllers and strike-breakers with military controllers, supervisors, and staff brought back to scab from retirement or sick leave. Private and military flights were cut back, and about 75% of scheduled flights went ahead.

Gradually the scab workforce was consolidated, flights were brought back to normal, and the union was eventually smashed.

Sacking the signal workers would be more difficult than sacking the American air controllers. PATCO was a union of air controllers only, and thus weaker than the signal workers' union, the RMT, which organises a wide range of workers across the rail and

transport industries. The American trade unions were weaker than British unions are now, and PATCO was ill-placed to seek solidarity because it was a maverick "professional" union — only ten months earlier it had officially backed Reagan for president! The US government could use military air controllers, but there are no military rail signal workers for Railtrack to use.

But we should not be complacent. What was done to the US air controllers can be done to the British signal workers — unless trade union solidarity blocks it.

Even if at first, after sacking the signal workers, the railways could only run one-third of their scheduled services with supervisors and scabs, that breach could be enough for them to win.

If Railtrack sacks the signal workers, the rail unions

— ASLEF and TSSA, as well as RMT — must respond by shutting down the whole rail network, immediately. They should be able to do so legally by refusing to work on safety grounds, but they cannot let the whims of lawyers and judges limit them. Legally if possible, illegally if necessary, they must act.

If they do not — if they limit themselves to angry speeches — then the balance will shift decisively towards the bosses. Inevitably, some signal workers will drift back to work. New scab workers will be trained. Rail services will gradually be restored, as flights were in America.

And the prize, for the Tories and the rail bosses, will be far greater than the crushing of a small "professional" union was for Reagan: it will be the crippling of the RMT, one of the strongest industrial unions left in this country.

Strike co-ordination set up

A southern signalworker spoke to *Socialist Organiser*

"WE ARE NOW trying to set up a network with a rep from every box to report to the committee. Every other district should do the same.

This strike has gone well so far. We have been 100% behind the strike and will continue to be.

Everyone is disgusted by management. The way they have behaved during this dispute has strengthened our resolve to win.

The RMT leadership have been very good. At no point at all could you accuse them of trying to sell us out. Some signalworkers think that the union leadership could have had more contact with those of us on strike. I agree. They should have pushed the idea of us having meetings more regularly to keep everyone in touch. My district council have organised a strike co-ordinating committee to do this type of thing.

Management are definitely worried and under pressure now that the dispute have

been escalated to two days a week.

It seems to me that they have started to back down. But the government will make sure they don't.

I don't think they will try a lock-out.

They can't really organise a proper signalling system without us, so the cost of pissing everyone off is too great.

We will win this dispute by keeping up the pressure as we are doing.

Some people want an all-out strike. Others want to stick to one day per week. I suppose two days one week, one day the next, with an overtime ban, will totally disrupt the whole service. We will win even if it takes forever."

West Midlands signal workers discuss all-out action

ON WEDNESDAY 3 August, West Midlands RMT called a meeting to discuss the signal workers strike. John Tilley, the signal grades member on the RMT national executive, spoke and answered questions from the fifty or so signal workers at the meeting.

The majority of the signal workers supported the call from the Coventry branch for an all-out strike in order to bring the dispute to the crunch.

The issue of supervisory grades being bullied into running boxes was discussed and the

meeting supported full solidarity with a manager victimised for refusing to run a signal box. Safety was also a major issue, but there was only condemnation of the Health and Safety executive. No-one pointed out that the RMT should be telling drivers and other grades to refuse to work in unsafe conditions.

Tilley and others roundly condemned the failure of the Labour and TUC leadership to fully support this strike.

The meeting showed the anger and determination of the West Midlands signal workers to win this strike.

Time to stop pussyfooting around

FROM INCOMPREHENSION to mild irritation to howling rage: the ruling-class reaction to the signal workers is, above all, that *this sort of strike just shouldn't happen any more.*

After fifteen years of humiliation and defeat, the unions are supposed to be a spent force. Union membership is down from its late 1970s high point of 12 million (TUC-affiliated) to 7.09 million. For the last three years, strike days have been at an all-time low.

Then along come four thousand signal workers with an eleven per cent pay claim, a rock-solid ballot majority for strike, and it's as though the last fifteen years had never happened.

The fact that the signalers are a relatively small and traditionally "moderate" group of workers has only served to fuel ruling-class rage: after the defeat of the miners and the traditional militants of the print and the docks, how dare these pygmies attempt to turn back the tide of history?

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

The clumsy tactics of both Railtrack management and the government over the 5.7% "offer that never was" and the surprisingly high level of public support for the strikers, makes it all the more imperative that the RMT is not just defeated, but crushed.

Increasingly, the Tory right-wing and papers like the *Sunday Times* are urging the "PATCO solution" upon Mr Major and his beleaguered government. PATCO, you may recall, was the American air traffic controllers' union broken by the Reagan administration in 1981 (see editorial and article opposite).

Last week's vote against strike action by RMT signalbox supervisors makes the "PATCO solution" — or something very like it — a real possibility in the immediate future. Before the vote, the media was playing down its importance, claiming that 500 supervisors made little difference to the balance of forces in the dispute. When the result was announced, it suddenly became a "major setback" and "crushing defeat" for the RMT.

Actually, the earlier assessment was more accurate, and few signal workers were particularly surprised by the result. Nevertheless, it has given Railtrack and the government a window of opportunity, if only psychologically.

Railtrack has already circulated all RMT members with a letter urging them to demand that Jimmy Knapp call a fresh ballot on Railtrack's "new" offer (actually, the existing money in a slightly rejigged package). Given that the RMT is committed, by ballot, to the demand for an "interim payment" for past productivity before discussing any new "package deal", this ploy will certainly fail. You do not have to be Nostradamus to predict the next moves by the government and Railtrack:

- Personal contracts will be offered to all signal workers.
- When these are rejected, all strikers will be sacked.
- Ex-strikers who have signed, new recruits, and supervisors, will be used to keep the signal boxes working and the trains running.

In other words, a classic "lock-out". Railtrack is already placing adverts in regional newspapers, offering "a good job and improved prospects" with full training at Railtrack's Crewe technical base.

In face of such a lockout, RMT and ASLEF drivers could take solidarity action, perhaps using health and safety legislation to stay within the letter of the law. RMT supervisors may change their minds. Even the despised TSSA, which organises the bulk of the supervisory grades, might be persuaded to take action.

But, crucially, the rest of us have to get organised in signal workers' support committees and start building for solidarity action throughout the movement. Like the *Sunday Times* says, the time has come to stop pussy-footing around.

Policy, Blair-style

By Colin Waugh

ONE OF Tony Blair's first acts after becoming leader has been to misrepresent Labour's education proposals to the media and, in so doing, to gut them of their stronger points.

The proposals are in a 'White Paper' titled 'Opening Doors' to a 'Learning Society', drafted by shadow education spokesperson Ann Taylor, approved by the party leadership under Smith, and launched by Taylor and Blair on 26 July.

Although this document is a bit more rightwing than the draft leaked some weeks ago, it contains some commitments which Labour certainly needs to be making. These include: providing nursery places for three and four year olds; improving pupil/teacher ratios; scrapping the existing tests at 7, 11, 14 and 16; replacing the National Curriculum with a looser 'framework'; ensuring that new teachers will continue to be properly qualified; replacing A levels with a broader General Certificate of Further Education; abolishing the Assisted Places Scheme (in which middle class children get state handouts to go to private schools); returning opted-out ('Grant Maintained') schools to a 'local democratic framework' and abolishing the separate Funding Agency for them; reviewing the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs).

Some of these proposals are vaguer than they should be. For example, the nursery school commitment will be implemented 'as resources permit'; target class sizes are not specified; 'a local democratic framework' for the ex-grant maintained schools does not necessarily mean control by an elected local authority; reviewing the TECs may not entail abolishing them.

The document contains a number of other proposals which could mean anything or nothing. For example, it puts forward suggestions which, taken together, are clearly meant to provide an alternative to the Tories' league tables of school-by-school exam results in terms of making schools accountable to parents. Labour, then, will give parents rights under a new Freedom of Information Act to know

details about local schools. It will also establish an Education Standards Commission, survey schools for their 'effectiveness' and consult about setting up 'community education forums'. The problem with all these ideas, as with the proposals about the curriculum and testing, is that they could boil down merely to shifting control back from central government to local bureaucrats and head teachers, rather than opening it up to classroom teachers and working class parents as Labour should be aiming to do.

Given the totally undemocratic way it was produced, it's not surprising that the document says nothing about reversing fifteen years of cuts, restoring teachers' bargaining rights over pay, reinstating Section 11 funding or scrapping the charitable status of private schools.

But still, timid though it is, and brave though he may be when it comes to attacking single mothers, the White Paper was clearly too leftwing for Blair, and he used the launch press conference effectively to rewrite the policy it contains.

He left out all reference to the GCSE and referred throughout to broadening 'A levels'. He stressed the need to strengthen discipline and sack 'unfit' teachers. In line with his attempts to hijack such Tory themes as 'family values', he played up the suggestion of 'home-school contracts' which could make it easier to blame parents for children's disruptive behaviour, failure to do homework etc. By talking about volunteer 'teaching associates', he re-opened the door to the Tories' schemes for bringing in unqualified teachers. He emphasised that local authorities would not be under pressure to scrap selection at 11. He invited opted-out schools to discuss any fears they might have with him and refused to clarify whether Grant Maintained status would actually be abolished. He refused to say that league tables would be scrapped.

Above all, he assured the people who elected him leader — the Tory press — that there would be no return to the sort of thing that went on in schools under the last Labour government.

Murdoch and Black, philanthropists to the nation

LORD COPPER will go to any lengths to boost the circulation of the Daily Beast and outdo his deadly rival Lord Zinc, owner of the Brute. In this crazy world, the Poet Laureate is commissioned to write an ode to the Beast's sales figures, the war correspondent is sacked over the date of the Battle of Hastings and the nature correspondent is mistakenly dispatched to cover an African civil war.

Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* was, of course, a wild satire bearing no relationship to the sober realities of the newspaper industry of his time or since. The truth is that Rupert Murdoch decided to cut the cover price of the *Times* last year to 30p (losing himself a mere £50 million) simply in order to give the public better value and to increase the overall market for broadsheet papers. Drive any rivals out of business? Heaven forbid!

Such philanthropic sentiments surely also motivated Conrad Black this June when he decided to follow Murdoch's example and cut the price of the *Telegraph* down to 30p. It had nothing to do with the fact that the *Telegraph's* sales had fallen below the million mark for two months running while the *Times* was steadily closing the gap. Again, it was simply the

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

desire of a public-spirited proprietor to give his readers better value in these difficult

times. Not content with reducing the *Telegraph's* price, Conrad decided to beef up its editorial content as well: "wet" Tory deputy editor Trevor Grove was summarily sacked and replaced by one Simon Heffer, a man whose contempt for John Major and hatred of all things European has already enthused retired colonels and their good ladies throughout the Home Counties.

But Mr Murdoch was not to be outdone: in a truly breathtaking act of generosity, he sacrificed a further £40 million and reduced the *Times* to 20p — meaning that his company now gets only

2.5p in revenue from each copy of the paper sold at the news-stands.

Naturally, in this cynical age, some people have been only too eager to ascribe base motives to Mr Murdoch and Mr Black. The former is described as a ruthless debt-junkie bent on world media domination and the latter as a vain, foolish fel-

low motivated by jealousy and greed, fighting out of his league. Some people have even started re-reading *Scoop* and are saying silly things like: "Evelyn Waugh wasn't far wrong, was he?"

DID HE JUMP or was he pushed? Either way, poor old Kelvin MacKenzie, former *Sun* edi-

tor and Murdoch rottweiler, is out of a job. You may remember that he left Fortress Wapping in January to take over as managing director at BSkyB, where it was widely predicted that *Sun*-style journalism would soon be the order of the day.

It seems that Kelvin met some fairly determined resistance to his exciting plans, especially from the snobby journo at Sky News. They would insist on covering boring foreign stories like Bosnia and Rwanda and put the block on Kelvin's attempts to live things up with proper news like exclusive interviews with Lady Bienvenida Buck and the Harkess family. Finally, it seems, Kelvin was driven out by chief executive Sam Chisholm whose uncouth, foul-mouthed tirades of abuse were too much for the refined sensibilities of the shy, quietly spoken man from Wapping.

LATE NEWS: Rupert Murdoch says he can "imagine" his papers supporting Tony Blair's new improved Labour Party at the next general election. Some people have said this just goes to show what an unprincipled, treacherous, carpet-bagging opportunist he is. But then again, he didn't ask for Mr Murdoch's support, did he?

"It's crazy isn't it?"



WOMEN'S EYE

By Jean Lane

WHEN A male postal worker's wife went into hospital for long-term treatment for cancer, leaving him to look after their four year old son, he discovered new things about himself.

Till that time, his only involvement with his son had been to play football, pretend-box, and all the other manly things a man is expected to carry out with his son.

The last night they were alone in the house together, the little boy got into his pyjamas after his tea as usual. The father was sitting in his armchair reading the paper, when his son climbed onto the chair, snuggled in beside him, stuck his thumb in his mouth and said "read me a story".

"I have to admit, I really liked it," said the father, "and

I wasn't at all embarrassed. I had never experienced that kind of closeness before, not with my brothers and certainly not my Dad. It's crazy, isn't it? All he wanted was a cuddle before he went to bed and for the first four years of his life, I never ever gave him one."

Despite the fact that single fathers are likely to be better off financially (according to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, single fathers are generally older, more likely to be working and on average earn more money than single mothers), in divorces custody of the children is still most often granted automatically to the mother.

It may not necessarily be the case that this happens because the courts and divorce lawyers hold an old fashioned and prejudiced view that women are nurturers while men provide. If the postal worker's example is anything to go by, children are usually brought up — get their practical care and emotional warmth — from their mothers more than

their fathers. In such cases, it would be unlikely for the father to go for custody, and it would be unlikely he would get it if he tried, since the child could be shown to get its necessary support to date from its mother.

In such cases the courts would be quite correct in granting custody to the mother, the care and emotional well-being of the child being far more important than the state of either parents' bank balance.

But if it is true that more mothers are actually doing the caring than the fathers, this is not because it is natural, so much as that it is the social norm. The obstacles placed in the way of single fatherhood are one of tradition and social stereotyping rather than of capability.

Single fathers turning up to "mother and toddler" play groups or collecting kids from school are looked at sideways or stood on pedestals. Nappy-changing facilities are always in the women's public toilets not the men's. In the latest British Attitudes survey, 30%

of those questioned thought a single mother could bring up a child as well as a couple, but only 23% thought a single father could do as well. And gender stereotypes prevent many men themselves from seeing themselves in a nurturing role.

It would be interesting to know what the response of a government whose attitude to single parenthood has been a moral crusade against "loose women" and a blatant attempt to reduce benefit payments, would be to an increase in male single parenthood. Almost all single fathers have been married, and are therefore single now "through no fault of their own" rather than by personal choice. And maybe more of them could provide without recourse to state benefit than can women.

Government prejudice against women and social stereotyping against men's abilities are irrelevant to the needs and desires of children, whose choice in the matter of custody should also be taken into consideration.

We won't let the Tory bastards grind us down!

THE TORIES are planning a further major assault on benefit rights. In a White Paper to be presented to the next session of Parliament, they plan to replace Unemployment Benefit with a "Job Seekers' Allowance."

And it now looks likely that the new Employment Secretary Michael Portillo will be pushing for the Government to introduce a "Workfare" scheme.

According to the *Morning Star*, the work scheme would give claimants a small increase in benefit, but if claimants reject any work offered they will have their benefit stopped.

If these schemes are introduced it will mark a return to the ethics of the workhouse, with forced labour on poverty-level wages as punishment for the unemployed.

Portillo, together with the Social Security Secretary Lilley (another right-wing fanatic), is

planning to test out the scheme on younger claimants first.

This disgusting duo of Portillo and Lilley are planning to announce the scheme at the Tory Party Conference in October. It is vital that it is met by a gale of protest and action from the labour movement.

When the Tories made Youth Training Schemes compulsory by withdrawing benefits for 16- and 17-year olds the Labour Party leaders and the trade union movement did virtually nothing.

The labour movement cannot afford to and must not be allowed to stand idly by this time. The use of the unemployed as a cheap and semi-forced labour force will give the bosses the ideal weapon against employed workers to drive down wages and even to replace employed workers with the "unemployed" on the "skivvy scheme."

Of course this will do nothing to reduce unem-

ployment, but it will be a savage attack on millions of unemployed workers and a powerful weapon for the bosses. Labour and the unions must oppose it and fight it all the way.

To do this Labour must make it absolutely clear that a Labour Government would create millions of jobs on proper rates of pay with trade union rights. Massive public investment is the only way to achieve that.

The Labour leadership must stop looking for gimmicks based on the Tory agenda.

The Labour leaders' appalling idea of a three-month "citizens' service" that would pay unemployed youth a pathetic £50 a week for just three months, is a pathetic and gimmicky idea that insults the millions of youth who are unemployed and feeds into the "workhouse ethics" of the Tory right-wing.

Labour and the unions must oppose the savagery of Portillo and Lilley's plans, and start fighting for a better deal for youth. That's why *Youth Fightback* campaigns for the Youth Rights Charter.

7

**YOUTH
FIGHTBACK**

Rebellion



Youth Fightback is...

... 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.

Ideas in revolt

Three days of socialist debate for youth

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For more details, or to register (£2; cheques to "WL Publications"), contact: AWL Youth, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA; tel: 071-639 7967.

Youth rights charter

The labour movement should campaign for:

1. Scrap YT — Proper training on trade union rates of pay with trade union rights, ending in a guaranteed job.
2. Benefits for all — Return of full benefit rights for students and all youth over 16.
3. Grants for all — A minimum grant of £70 a week for all students over 16.
4. Housing — A legal requirement for councils to house anyone who applies, including single young people, in decent affordable council property. Guaranteed Government funding for the building which is required.
5. Amenities — The provision of free sports and leisure facilities in every area — scrap the charges.

Bad tab award

WHILE SOME are off on their holidays, Mo Mowlam MP is off on a bad trip. Much of the British public are increasingly coming over to the opinion that the British Royal Family are expensive but pointless parasites. Mo Mowlam, Labour Heritage spokesperson, wants to build the Queen a new palace.

Her brainstorm is to sell off Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle to the National Trust and issue "Palace Bonds" to pay for building a spanking, up-to-date palace for the Queen.

Ms. Mowlam said: "Our most powerful symbol of nationhood, the monarchy, could do with such a gesture of self-confidence."

Mowlam wants to bring the British monarchy up-to-date. After all, it's difficult to get a feudal institution to keep up with the times. She says: "I want something new so in 50 years time we can look back and say as we went into the 21st century we as Britain celebrated our monarch in a different way."

We say that where the monarchy is concerned, the best way to celebrate the coming of the 21st century in Britain is to follow the fine example of the English Republic in 1649, which abolished the monarchy altogether (it was restored in 1660).

Building these parasites a new and very expensive nest when so much building is vitally needed for people without decent housing, in collapsing hospitals and crumbling schools, is not only crazy, it is sick.

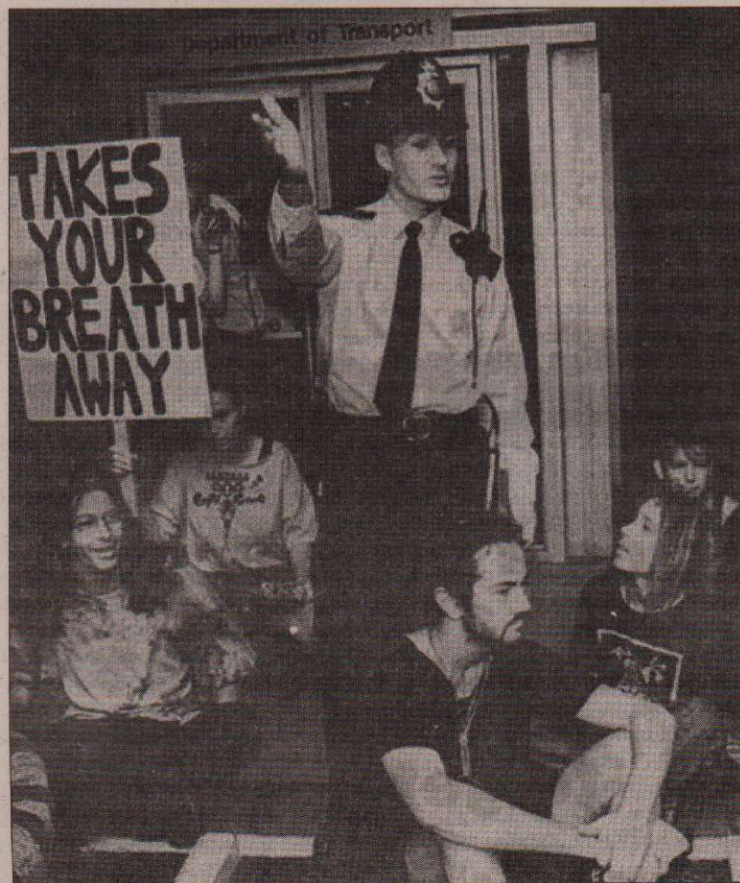
The fact that a Labour MP could come up with this plan should worry us about what the hell Mo Mowlam is on, and it should spur on socialists in the Labour Party to fight the right-wing idiots who currently run the Labour Party.

Our advice to Mo Mowlam is:

- a) resign; and
- b) stop taking the tablets.

Stop the M11 Link!

DEMONSTRATORS protesting outside the Department of Transport — and direct action continues in East London, on the route of the proposed motorway. 350 homes and an ancient woodland could be wiped off the map for the sake of saving seven minutes on car journeys.



Contact "No M11 Link Campaign", 66 Claremont Road, London E11 4EE; tel: 081-558 2638

Taslima Nasrin: "the moral responsibility to protest"

TEN DAYS ago 100,000 people in Dhaka, Bangladesh, marched against "murtads" — atheists and people who have renounced Islam. They carried placards of a woman — Taslima Nasrin — with a rope round her neck, chanting: "Yes, yes, this is what we want!" The platform speakers promised a holy war against the West and called for the hanging of the feminist author, Taslima Nasrin.

Taslima Nasrin is confined to her flat, which is surrounded by police. Islamic bigots have offered money for her death and the state is prosecuting her for blasphemy.

What has she done? In June she was quoted in an Indian paper saying: "The Koran should be revised thoroughly." She says she was misquoted.

Nasrin was already known as an opponent of Muslim chauvinists. Her book *Lajja* (Shame) — which tells of violence and rape used against Bangladesh's Hindu minority — was banned by the government as a book "offensive to Muslims."

In many ways Taslima Nasrin is everything a bigoted cleric would hate. She is an educated woman who told the *New York Times*: "Some men would keep women in chains — veiled, illiterate and in the kitchen."

"There are 60 million women in my country, not more than 15% can read and write. How can Bangladesh become a modern country when it is dragged backwards by reactionary attitudes towards half its people? It is my conviction that politics can not be based on religion if our women are to be free..."

"Everywhere I look I see women being mistreated and their oppression justified in the name of religion. Is it not my moral responsibility to protest?"

Yes, it is. And it is our moral responsibility to do what we can to defend her.

Workers' Liberty and *Socialist Organiser* organised a picket of the Bangladeshi High Commission on 30 June to coincide with a general strike demanding Nasrin's death. I phoned round to drum up some support and got this response from a worker at an East End, secular, Bengali organisation: "Yes, I support her. But a lot of people round here don't agree with what she wrote."

You did not hear his *tone*, so let me explain what he meant — yes, I support her. But, understand, this makes my position very awkward. It would be ill-advised for me to stick my neck out.

Pick up the papers and see the liberals squirm around.

"Taslima has a lot of support among a small group of progressives... but they are saying nothing." (*Observer*)

"I know what Taslima has said is true and necessary... But they don't think through the consequences of their actions or how it can rebound." (A teacher, in the *Independent*)

"The trouble with Taslima is that she likes washing dirty laundry in public." (A student, in the *Guardian*)

"We welcomed what she was saying, especially about male chauvinism... while we talk about freedom, we also have to behave responsibly." (Magazine editor, *Independent*)

Let me sum this up — she is right, but she should keep her awkward



mouth shut. The clothes are dirty but they should be worn anyway. As a woman I dislike discrimination, but as a member of the middle class, I am deeply conservative and dislike conflict.

The spineless, wretched middle class! The "intelligentsia", coveting their "independence" in order to bend towards the reactionary "mass movement" which shouts the loudest. If there is one thing the "chattering classes" could reasonably be asked to defend it is *free speech!*

Taslima Nasrin has become a symbol — the best known case in the West, although there are many other victims — of a political struggle taking place in Bangladesh. Khaleda Zia's right-wing government is under intense pressure from a backwards-looking Islamic mass movement.

The changing position of Bangladeshi women — due to economic changes and educational and

contraceptive campaigns — has produced a reaction against the clerics, and a reaction from the clerics.

It is necessary to understand what this movement is. *Newsnight* last week showed a 12-year old girl who had fled her village because the local religious leader had sentenced her to 101 lashes for adultery. She had been raped.

There are some on the left — *Socialist Worker* for instance — who are taken in by the anti-Western fundamentalist rhetoric. Anti-West in this case means to be against some of the most basic democratic rights won in the modern age — free speech and rights for women.

These movements of Islamic bigots are deeply reactionary — as Nasrin says, wanting to drag societies back into the past. Against them we should defend "the 20th century."

The last word should be from Nasrin herself: "I will not be silenced."

THE TASLIMA Nasrin case has much in common with the Rushdie affair. Back in February '89 Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the killing of Salman Rushdie over Tehran radio: "I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that the author of the *Satanic Verses* book, which is against Islam, the Prophet and the Koran, and all those involved in its publication who were aware of its content, are sentenced to death."

It took all of a couple of weeks for the outrage to die down enough to allow a number of invertebrates to have their say.

Well, you would expect Auberon Waugh, in the *Spectator*, to write something like: "Just how much should we exert ourselves, as deeply stained white imperialists, to pro-

tect [Rushdie] from his own people." Roald Dahl accused Rushdie of being a "dangerous opportunist" who had engineered the matter (his own possible murder!) to boost the sales of his "indifferent book."

Chief Rabbi Jakobovits added — idiotically — that all books which "inflamm[e] the feelings or beliefs" of any section of society should be banned.

This is not surprising. But then John Berger proposed in the *Guardian* that Rushdie should cease publication of the book. This, Berger argued, was a reasonable response to all the violence the book had caused (the book, you note, not the religious bigots). Lots of letters followed, agreeing. Thank God, the liberals whined, someone has found the way out of this embarrassing mess.

The duty of the Lesbian fighting

Janine Booth surveys the struggle for lesbian and gay equality since the 1980s. An earlier article (S0604) looked at the history from 1969 to the 1980s.

The left in local government

During the early 80s, Labour local councils began to take up the cause of lesbian, gay and bisexual rights. The Labour left, in the Greater London Council and others, funded Gay Centres and Lesbian and Gay Switchboards, appointed posts in Equal Opportunities Units and established sub-committees.

Laudable though these initiatives were, they soon became an alternative to taking on the Tory government. And when Labour councils fail to fight to defend local jobs and services, then their support for lesbian, gay and bisexual initiatives becomes tokenistic and can even provoke a backlash — when Labour councils cut services and axe jobs, then the people who suffer the harsh consequences may point to those who receive Town Hall patronage and cry "preferential treatment."

Last year, sadly, the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, set up by the GLC, lost its long battle to stay open without the finances of its now abolished founder.

Section 28

The Tories targeted local authorities' work for lesbian, gay and bisexual rights in 1987. Originally known as Clause 14, an amendment was proposed to the Local Government Bill which outlawed the intentional promotion of homosexuality, and referred to same-sex lifestyles as "pretended family relationships."

Drafted by Tory MPs Dame Jill Knight and David Wilshire, it was a pernicious attack both on lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and on local democracy. The Labour Party leadership took a while to realise that it should be opposing this new law, whilst the Tories were near unanimous in their support. Those in the lesbian, gay and bisexual movement with short memories should be reminded that one of the Clause's supporters was Edwina Currie, now heralded in some quarters as a champion of gay equality.

The lesbian, gay and bisexual communities responded with an impressive mobilisation of protest. Ironically, a law that sought to ban the "promotion" of homosexuality actually prompted the largest promotion of homosexuality that Britain has ever seen. In Manchester, activists formed the North West Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Equality, which organised a demonstration of around 30,000 people in early 1988. The coined the defiant "Never Going Underground" slogan with its tube-station logo. And they chartered a train which carried over a thousand protesters to join the national demonstration in London in April.

The "Stop the Clause" movement also involved some very impressive direct action. While the legislation was being debated in the House of Lords, lesbian demonstrators abseiled down from the balcony into the chamber. And one evening's six o'clock news broadcast on BBC1 began with nationally transmitted shouts of "Stop Clause 28!" from dykes who had chained themselves to Sue Lawley's desk.

In May 1988, what was by now known as Clause 28 was passed into law. It was the first law to proscribe homosexuality as an identity, rather than criminalising same-sex sexual activity. Since its addition to the statute books, no local council has been prosecuted under Section 28. Its main effect has been self-censorship — cowardly Labour councils backing off from their previous support for lesbian, gay and bisexual projects for fear of the law (Tory councils had nothing to back off from). Edinburgh Council, for example, had previously provided grant money for childcare provision at the National Bisexual Conference. After 1988 they refused.

The AIDS crisis

In the early 80s, a disease was discovered that seemed to affect gay men disproportionately — AIDS. This news was greeted by the tabloid press with a binge of homophobic hysteria, AIDS being described as a "gay plague", as "divine retribution", as "proof" that gay sex was "unnatural." When the government realised that heterosexuals could die too, it belatedly began an AIDS "education" campaign. This campaign, though, was vague, moralistic and uninspiring. By contrast, safer sex initiatives from the gay community emphasised that people could protect themselves whilst



The search for a cure for AIDS has been dominated by a race for profit

the labour movement

ans and gays ng for equality



The Tories' "Clause 28", the first-ever law against homosexual identities, paradoxically stirred up the biggest-yet affirmation of those identities. Photo: Peter Walsh (Profile)

still enjoying an active sex life.

The government, though, allowed anti-sex moralism to prevent effective action against HIV. At one point, Margaret Thatcher cancelled a planned major survey of British people's sex lives. Some of the most effective safer sex information (originating from the gay community rather than the government) has suffered censorship.

Moralists from the Conservative Family Campaign called for restrictions on the rights of people with HIV, including demands that all HIV-positive people declare their status, and be barred from working with children, sick people or food. People with HIV or AIDS are routinely denied housing, employment, reproductive rights and the healthcare and benefits that they need. And the search to develop effective treatments or find a cure is a race more for profits than for humanity.

AIDS activism took off on a large scale in the USA, and soon followed in Britain. Groups such as ACT-UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) organised direct action. Protesters demanded more research, more resources, and action against AIDS that tackled rather than reinforced prejudice.

Outrage!/Queer Politics

A new direct action, lesbian and gay group, Outrage! was set up, basing much of its rhetoric and structure on US organisation Queer Nation. New "queer" politics was brash and proud. It rejected the notion that we should be seeking respectability. And it placed a political challenge to straight society — we're here, we're queer, get used to it. Bursting onto a scene increasingly dominated by polite, inoffensive "celebrities", Outrage's direct approach

was widely welcomed.

But "queer" was not without its problems. Debate raged over how far it was possible to reclaim terms and symbols which had been used against us. Although this had worked well with the pink triangle (originally used in Nazi Germany to brand homosexual men), many people were unsure that "queer" could be reclaimed in the same way.

Debate raged also over the tactic of "outing." The threat to "out" various famous people was made in Britain by a group called FROCS (Faggots Rooting Out Closet Sexuality). It was met by hysterical denunciations from a tabloid press that has never had such qualms about outing anybody if it could sell newspapers. But "outing" could easily be considered to be stooping to their level, and to go against the principle of confidentiality that we often have to defend. In addition, "outing" seemed to suggest that it matters whether famous people are gay or not. For us, surely, liberation is about equality and freedom in the lives of ordinary people.

"Virgin births" and donor insemination

In 1990, the Embryology Bill included statutory licensing for clinics which provided donor insemination, a method favoured by many lesbians wishing to have children. At the same time (coincidentally?) the press began a binge of "virgin birth scandal" stories, reporting the activities of clinics which had the audacity to provide donor insemination to lesbians and single heterosexual women. The press hysteria and right-wing speeches in Parliament shared the same themes — children should be conceived "naturally"; children should be brought up in "nor-

mal" families, and needed two parents, one male, one female; and if fertility treatment were to be provided, then it should only be to heterosexual, married couples "blighted" by infertility. Amendments to the Bill talked of prioritising "the welfare of the child", including "the need of the child for a father." One amendment was concerned solely with fears about members of the nobility being unsure of who would inherit their title!

The Embryology Bill also attracted amendments which attempted to reduce the time limit for abortions. The Stop the Amendments Campaign (STAC) was set up, and active campaigning began. Important and effective though this campaigning was, many of those involved refused to campaign in defence of donor insemination as well. Socialist Action and the Socialist Workers' Party both argued that the campaign should be a single-issue defence of abortion rights. The most patronising and dangerous of their arguments was that working-class people could be mobilised to support abortion rights, but not to support lesbians.

The Campaign for Access to Donor Insemination (CADI) kept up campaigning on this issue, but without the resources, profile or support from large sections of the left which it should have received.

This perhaps illustrates why a deep distrust exists between the lesbian, gay and bisexual movement and the organised left. It seems to many activists, and with some justification, that left organisations pick up and drop issues opportunistically — their support can not be relied upon consistently. Faced with this, together with repeated let-downs by the Labour Party, it is a sad but understandable reality that many lesbian, gay and bisexual activists take

an approach which is either separatist, or anti-political, or both.

Hat-trick of hatred

New Year 1991 ushered in a three-pronged attack on lesbian, gay and bisexual rights. Paragraph 16 of the guidelines to the Children Act sought to prevent local authorities considering as potential foster parents anyone other than married heterosexual couples. Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill created stiffer sentences for certain sex offences. Rape and child abuse were placed alongside public displays of same-sex affection. Such "obscene behaviour" could now be punished by five years' imprisonment followed by five years' compulsory psychiatric supervision. Operation Spanner reached its conclusion with the conviction of 16 gay men for taking part in consenting sado-masochistic sex.

It seemed that the government and the police were striking at the most vulnerable sections of our community, at the weaknesses in what support we enjoyed. For sure, most people might say "I don't mind people being gay", but, with monotonous regularity, this would be followed by a qualifying "but..." This triple attack was hitting at the three things that perhaps most often followed that "but...": "But they shouldn't be allowed near children"; "But they shouldn't flaunt it in public"; "But some of the things they do are disgusting."

As with three years previously, protests kicked off up and down the country. An ad-hoc Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition organised a large and lively demonstration in London, "Liberation '91" took our campaign to the streets of Manchester. In many towns, local groups organised public meetings, lobbying, action and participation in national events.

Although all these attacks should have been linked in a united campaign, a pecking order seemed to emerge, with Clause 25 at the top, and Operation Spanner hidden away at the bottom. The reluctance to prioritise Operation Spanner was in part due to radical feminists' political objection to sado-masochism; part was probably a conservative desire to present in public only the "respectable" aspects of homosexuality. The state's tactic seemed to be working as some people failed to appreciate that to fight

for liberation, we need to defend everyone who is under attack for consenting sexual activity.

The priority given in some quarters to Clause 25 over Paragraph 16 was a reflection of the continuing male dominance in the lesbian and gay movement. Although both issues affected both men and women, Clause 25 was perceived as primarily concerning men, Paragraph 16 primarily women. The favouritism for Clause 25 was not universal, however, as many activists strove consciously for a more equal priority.

Age of consent

As we approached 1994, it became apparent that Parliament would hold a vote on reducing the age of consent for sex between men. By now, Britain was the only country in Europe to maintain an unequal age of consent.

A spoiler from early on was the idea put about that a reduction to 18 would be some sort of acceptable "compromise." The lesbian, gay and bisexual movement stood firmly by its conviction that only equality, only sixteen was acceptable — 18 could not be a compromise, but a sell-out.

The campaign for 16 was largely based on parliamentary lobbying. Compared with 1988 and 1991, there was a noticeably lower level of local and national protest action. This is not to take anything away from those people who worked and lobbied hard — and the demonstrations that did happen — but it seemed that lobbying had come to largely replace demonstrating, instead of complementing it. Despite the well-organised lobbying, the majority of MPs voted against equalising the age of consent. However persuasive the arguments of lobbyists, what really affects MPs is the power of mass mobilisation.

The Labour Party, despite having conference policy commitment to equality, refused to apply a three-line whip to Labour MPs. 35 voted against 16 — 35 votes which, if cast in favour, would have won equality. Labour even allowed Edwina Currie (who had supported Section 28) to place herself at the forefront of the campaign. The labour movement must realise that it has a duty to champion causes of equality and liberation, and not allow the banner to be stolen away by people who do not support any other part of the agenda for liberation.



Cutting the age of consent for gay men to 18 was not an "acceptable compromise." The minimum acceptable is equality! Photo: Garry Meyer

Stalinism: "Totalitarian regime of decay and falsehood"

Natalia Trotsky's 1956 broadcast

ON THE eve of the Second World War, on 25 August 1939, Hitler and the French ambassador to Germany, Coulondre, try to frighten each other with the dangers of the looming war.

Coulondre says to Hitler: "The real victor [in case of war] will be Trotsky. Have you thought that over?"

"I know," Hitler replies, "but why did France and Britain give Poland complete freedom of action [to reject German demands]?"

Thus, by the end of his life, the name of Trotsky — the 54th anniversary of whose death at the hands of a Stalinist assassin we here commemorate — had become another word for the proletarian revolution. In a world awash with fascist, Stalinist and democratic imperialist reaction, Trotsky personified socialism:

the past of socialism, whose greatest achievement, the Russian Revolution of October 1917, he, together with Lenin, had led;

the socialist present — fighting against overwhelming odds;

and the hopes and aspirations for a socialist future. Hitler and Coulondre knew this, and so did Stalin, who therefore had Trotsky murdered. Trotsky's voice was silenced on 20 August, when he was struck down. He died the following day.

The small forces of Trotskyism were crushed by fascist and Stalinist reaction. Some became politically disoriented. The Stalinist and social-democratic parties in Europe retained their hold on the working-class movement after the war and there was no advance to socialism. Capitalism survived and expanded.

Trotsky's political legacy of implacable hostility to Stalinism was continued by, among others, his companion of 38 years, Natalia Sedova (who lived until 1962). We print here the text of a speech Natalia Sedova broadcast into Stalinist Russia in 1956. It is as if the voice of Trotsky himself, though 16 years dead, was trying for the last time to reach the workers of the USSR.

As far as we know, the speech has not been published in Britain before. (It appeared in the American weekly *Labor Action*.)

The occasion for the speech was the ferment that followed the so-called 20th Congress of the Stalinist Party in the USSR. Stalin died in 1953. In February 1956 Nikita Khrushchev, one of those jostling to succeed Stalin as supreme

dictator — he succeeded in 1957 — denounced Stalin as a paranoid mass murderer in a secret speech that was soon "leaked", and published all over the world.

Khrushchev and his colleagues had — every one of them — been part of Stalin's bloody entourage. They shared his guilt; they represented the bureaucratic ruling class he had led.

The ferment stirred up in Russian controlled Eastern Europe by Khrushchev's speech led to Hungary's attempt to break Russian control and to the USSR's bloody suppression of Hungary, in October-November 1956. In that way Khrushchev, the first reforming Stalinist tsar, quickly demonstrated that though Stalin was dead, stalinism was still very much alive — as Natalia had implacably insisted in this speech, broadcast in May 1956.

THIS IS Natalia Ivanovna Sedova, widow of Leon Davidovich Trotsky, speaking from Mexico City. I am addressing myself to the workers and peasants and, in the first place to the young people in Soviet Russia.

The present rulers, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan and others, having inherited the Stalinist dictatorship, are conducting an intensive propaganda campaign so as to distract from themselves the powerful wave of dissatisfaction and hatred for the thieves of the victories of the proletarian revolution, a wave which grew in your hearts.

They are the same men who supported Stalin in all his bloody massacres, the aim of which was to frighten you with terror and thus to retain power in the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The very method of the campaign through which these men hope to absolve themselves of responsibility for their heinous crimes bears witness to the fact that the ruling clique is Stalin's faithful successor.

Stalin always followed the "scapegoat" method for failures of plans and orders arbitrarily enforced from above. Local bureaucrats tagged the blame on helpless workers and peasants and the GPU (secret police) did the rest.

Stalin himself did not spare even his most devoted servants especially if they betrayed any trace of indecision or doubts. Stalin forced them to confess uncommitted crimes and heaped on them the blame for the decay and



Natalia Sedova with Leon Trotsky in their exile in Mexico

corruption of the regime. This method was already devised during the period of the old struggle against the Left Opposition headed by Leon Trotsky and this method subsequently became the chief characteristic of the Stalinist system.

What then is the present campaign if not a continuation of the same method but with one serious difference — today's scapegoats are really guilty of crimes of which they are accused.

Beria was first. Then three years passed — three long years — before the present bosses dared to expose the criminal in the corpse of their leader. Now they declare to the entire world that in the process of building up the "cult of the personality" Stalin lost his mental balance. His ailment, it appears, consisted in lacking complete confidence in the Molotovs, Khrushchevs, Kaganoviches and their like who were nonetheless completely devoted to him.

Just try and think: Who are these direct heirs of the unbalanced Stalin who declared themselves collective leaders of Soviet Russia? They admit, they admit to the entire world, that for many decades not one among them, among

the collective leaders, dared — for fear for his own life — to come out with a proposal for steps which would have saved the lives of millions of workers and peasants who were banished to concentration camps.

These are the nonentities who dare to demand from Russian workers and peasants unimaginable sacrifices in the struggle for a great cause.

How long will they hold on under the pressure of great events? All their lives they showed no interest in improving the lot of the toilers; they were interested only in holding onto power and to all the privileges that go with power.

Besides, the training they received from Stalin makes the realisation of a collective leadership unlikely even in the imperfect form they have in mind. How can they trust each other knowing full well that while Stalin was alive each one among them would have been happy to sacrifice all and everything just to hold onto his own power and position? Events unfold slowly but it is unlikely that this leadership will last long.

I realise with bitterness that many of my listeners were brought up completely in a Stalinist spirit. Young people were taught history which was thoroughly permeated with lies. Even those grains of truth which the rulers were forced to admit now make impossible the use of old history textbooks.

Yet the new textbooks which are now being prepared, will they be more truthful than the old ones? The rulers of Russia are in a dilemma: which lies to admit and which lies to retain intact?

How can Khrushchev admit that the campaign of annihilation of the Stalinist leadership of the Ukraine, including Kossior, Antonov-Ovseyenko and others — a campaign which Khrushchev himself conducted while Stalin was alive — was based on lies?

How can Voroshilov, this venerable chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dare to admit openly that while signing the death sentences of the Red Army commanders Tukhachevsky, Yegorov, Gamarnik and others, he knew full well that all this was nothing but lies and frame-up.

And the statesman Molotov — will he tell of the beautiful friendship with Hitler and Ribbentrop which culminated in Stalin's signing of the Hitler pact and which gave a green light to a world war?

The murder of Kirov in 1934 gave impetus to an unequalled campaign of executions and slander directed against entire strata of the Russian population. Will the leaders of the present regime tell us who is guilty of this crime? Will they admit that behind this bloody affair and all its consequences stood the sinister figure of the "father of the peoples" who organised Kirov's murder?

Should they admit this fact, then the entire campaign of slander which was directed at that time against Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and hundreds of others will fall to pieces and the entire affair will reappear as it was in reality, as a nightmare and a frame-up.

"...Life is beautiful... cleanse it of evil, oppression and violence..."

The testament of Leon Trotsky

February 27, 1940

My high (and still rising) blood pressure is deceiving those near me about my actual condition. I am active and able to work but the outcome is evidently near. These lines will be made public after my death.

I have no need to refute here once again the stupid and vile slander of Stalin and his agents: there is not a single spot on my revolutionary honour. I have never entered, either directly or indirectly, into any behind-the-scenes agreements or even negotiations with the enemies of the working class. Thousands of Stalin's opponents have fallen victims of similar false accusations. The new revolutionary generations will rehabilitate their political honour and deal with the Kremlin executioners according to their deserts.

I thank warmly the friends who remained loyal to me through the most difficult hours of my life. I do not name anyone in particular because I cannot name them all.

However, I consider myself justified in making an exception in the case of my companion, Natalia Ivanovna Sedova. In addition to the happiness of being a fighter for the cause of socialism, fate gave me the happiness of being her husband. During the almost forty years of our life together she remained an inexhaustible source of love, magnanimity and

tenderness. She underwent great sufferings, especially in the last period of our lives. But I find some comfort in the fact that she also knew days of happiness.

For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again I would of course try to avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth.

Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression, and violence and enjoy it to the full.

L. Trotsky

All the possessions remaining after my death, all my literary rights (income from my books, articles, etc.) are to be placed at the disposal of my wife, Natalia Ivanovna Sedova.

In case we both die [the rest of the page is blank]

March 3, 1940

The nature of my illness (high and rising blood pressure) is such — as I understand it — that the end must come suddenly, most likely — again, this is my personal hypothesis — a brain haemorrhage. This is the best possible end I can wish for. It is possible, however, that I am mistaken (I have no desire to read special books on this subject and the physicians naturally will not tell the truth). If the sclerosis should assume a protracted character and I should be threatened with a long-drawn-out invalidism (at present I feel, on the contrary, rather a surge of spiritual energy because of the high blood pressure, but this will not last long), then I reserve the right to determine for myself the time of my death. The "suicide" (if such a term is appropriate in this connection) will not in any respect be an expression of an outburst of despair or hopelessness. Natasha and I said me than once that one may arrive at such a physical condition that it would be better to cut short one's own life or, more correctly, the too slow process of dying.

...But whatever may be the circumstances of my death I shall die with unshaken faith in the communist future. This faith in man and in his future gives me even now such power of resistance as cannot be given by any religion.

L. Tr

cast to the workers of Russia



Trotsky speaks in Red Square soon after the Revolution. After Lenin's death, Stalin led a counter-revolution, forcing Trotsky into exile

The government leaders are in a dilemma. Where should they stop? They have already begun to put the brakes on further unmasking of lies.

The reason for this clear: their own power is based on this truly monstrous tissue of lies — of lies of the bureaucracy against Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and hundreds of other members of the Opposition. They dare not continue repeating the lies nor denounce them.

Here they try to divide the Stalinist period into two periods: the first period during which they enthusiastically elevated Stalin to the dictator's throne, and the second period when Stalin elevated himself to the status of a deity and thrust on his followers the "cult of personality". The world press is full of quotations from the old speeches of Khrushchev, Mikoyan and others. It is impossible to repeat these speeches without revulsion. Besides I am sure that you in Soviet Russia are familiar with these quotations even better than the world press.

No, the crimes began not from the moment the leader became mentally unbalanced. The so-called "cult of personality" was a natural consequence of the entire period after the death of Lenin and the banishment of Trotsky.

Everything you were taught about Trotsky since that time is vile slander. Those who participated in the revolution and went through its first heroic stages could not believe those lies. But serious changes in the balance of social power will be required before you, young people, will be able to uncover historical truth.

In his testament, Lenin warned the party as follows: "I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man... more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc." These lines were written on the 25th of December 1922. Further, on the 4th of January 1923, Lenin condemned Stalin's position on the Georgian

problem and entrusted Trotsky with launching a fight against it. And in a third document Lenin declared that he breaks off all personal and comradely relations with Stalin. While Lenin was still alive, Stalin concentrated in his hands tremendous power by placing his men in important posts. Lenin's testament was not carried out and its publication was forbidden.

Lenin and Trotsky not only recognised collective leadership within the party but also acted in complete accordance with this principle. To them collective leadership meant not only discussion in upper party echelons where decisions were made by a majority of votes after a broad exchange of views. They could not envisage collective leadership without an active democratic party organisation, from leg to bottom.

And not just in peacetime either. Animated discussions sharply expressing different views existed even in the most critical periods. It was the suppression of party democracy and the subjugation of the weakened party to the Stalinist sham of a monolithic party organisation which tolerated no disagreements, which resulted in the destruction of the party as a Bolshevik party and in the establishment of a dictatorship on the summit, that is, in the "cult of personality."

Leon Davidovich (Trotsky) understood that by continuing the exposure of the counter-revolutionary regime he was undoubtedly risking his own life. Yet this consideration did not prevent him from merciless criticism (of the regime). Day after day, until the last hour of his life, he continued to appeal to revolutionary workers of the world to rise against these oppressors.

The plan for the industrialisation of the country was worked out by Trotsky. However, at that time Stalin and his clique put their stakes on the peasants and fought this plan. Only after Trotsky was exiled to Alma-Ata and after the opposition was suppressed was Stalin forced to begin the industrialisation of the country. He did it in his own manner with

unheard-of cruelty and at the cost of tremendous sacrifices on the part of the population.

Trotsky sharply condemned this method, as well as the forced collectivisation of the peasants, which was accomplished by savage repression, mass deportations and arrests and which resulted in the general famine in the Ukraine during which millions of peasants died. Trotsky also fought against the system of slave labour in the concentration camps.

His unmaking and condemnation of these evil doings of Stalin and, finally, his eloquent response to the sham Moscow Trials, enraged the Stalinist clique which decided to get rid of Trotsky. This was done by the dictator's henchmen on the 20th of August 1940.

It is unlikely that the news of the famous commission which investigated the Moscow Trials, the chairman of which was the noted American philosopher John Dewey, has reached you. This commission, which heard the testimony of Trotsky and others, which carefully examined all the accusations, arrived at the conclusion that Trotsky and his son Leon Lvovich-Sedov, who were accused during these trials, were innocent. The press throughout the world closely followed the work and the verdict of the commission.

From my distant exile where I have already spent so many years I find it difficult to estimate the number of people in Russia who would believe the accusations against Trotsky and others. Abroad no one believes any longer in the vile slander that Trotsky allegedly was linked with fascists, foreign powers, espionage and the like.

Russia's present rulers look into the future with some confidence. They know that during the reign of the Leader all the heroic figures of the proletarian revolution were done away with. They believe that nowhere in the world are there any forces that might threaten them. Among themselves they have signed a temporary truce under the guise of collective leadership since the only danger they see in discord among themselves.

But they are wrong. Even a weak blow is the myth which they themselves created, even a partial unmaking of the falsehood of the regime on which their rule is based, cannot but sow doubts and discord among the new growing generation. Idealism was always the characteristic and the strength of youth. I am convinced that the doubts will crush the hard convictions and that youth will not abandon its search for truth until it will find all the truth. Woe then unto the false leaders!

Lately the press throughout the world has been busy with the so-called anti-Stalinist speech of Khrushchev which he made at a closed meeting before the end of the 20th Congress. Foreign delegates were not permitted to attend and the speech itself was not published in Soviet Russia and hence you are not familiar with it.

In his speech, which lasted for a few hours, Khrushchev continued the downgrading of Stalin. It was a terrible and at the same time a pitiful speech. The enumeration of crimes could not fail to shaken the listeners, and later also readers.

How could this happen? How could one reach such a monstrous downfall? "Cult of personality" they say... Yet an individual is linked to the environment which supports him. And the environment devoid of lofty ideological motivations was unable to say no to the master in the Kremlin, to criticise the totalitarian regime of decay and falsehood in front of the Leader.

Stalinist bureaucrats are now forced to rid themselves at least of part of the load by passive admissions, and, out of fear of the masses, by the slogan "back to Lenin." Stalin also claimed verbally Lenin's mantle, but in his actions he contradicted Lenin.

In the end no admissions and promises can save the decayed Stalinist oligarchy. The task of overthrowing Stalinism is the task of the Russian workers and peasants.

I send you my greetings and fiery confidence in your victory.

Mexican left debates policy as PRI regime wobbles

Mexico in crisis

By Pablo Valasco

MEXICO GOES to the polls on 21 August. For most of the last 60 or 70 years, elections have meant little in Mexico: although other parties could and did contest them, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) always won.

But changes are underway. The ruthless economic restructuring carried through by the Mexican government, on behalf of the international banks, since Mexico first ran out of cash to make its international loan repayments in 1982, has ravaged workers' living standards.

The North American Free Trade Agreement which Mexico has signed with the US and Canada will further speed up economic change in Mexico.

The PRI government was shaken by a major peasant uprising in the southern province of Chiapas earlier this year. And in the election the PRI will be seriously challenged by the right-wing PAN and by the populist-nationalist PRD of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas.

The tragedy is that the Mexican left is almost entirely behind Cardenas, and has thus for now given up on the road of independent workers' and socialist struggle in the same way that

much of the left in South Africa by backing the ANC or in Ireland by backing Sinn Fein.

Ten years ago, the left — the Communist Party (PSUM), the Mexican Workers' Party (PMT) and the smaller Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT), an avowedly Trotskyist group linked to *Socialist Outlook* in Britain — had their own presence in parliament, built on the leadership of opposition movements in the unions, the women's movement, peasant struggles, and action to support earthquake victims. They also had a creditable record on the fight for freedom of expression and against repression.

Even after the PSUM and PMT combined to form the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS), which dropped its own candidate to support Cardenas in the summer of 1988, the PRT could still claim 3500 members, and members in parliament.

Yet now the PRT is in ideological retreat and organisational decline, and its two main factions back Cardenas, raising hardly any independent demands.

Much of the left in Mexico was demoralised by the collapse of Stalinism in the USSR and Eastern Europe because they had stuck to the idea that these were (degenerated and deformed) workers' states. Their politics also suffered from an ambivalence about nationalism, which Cardenas has exploited. The theory that Mexico is a semi-colony, unable to develop in the world economy and by definition "anti-imperialist" as long as it opposes the US, has allowed them to back Cardenas in the illusion that he will provide the democratic first stage of a self-propelling escalation of nationalism and anti-imperialism towards socialist revolution. But some groups are starting to rethink.

The need for class independence

By Julio Munoz Rubio of the socialist group *Revuelta*

IT IS AN UPHILL struggle for the PRI to govern, as it is discredited and lacking legitimacy... Lacking other attractive offers, the government, with its loyal ally, the enor-

Cardenas, father of Cuauhtemoc.
PAN: National Action Party (conservative).
Para-state parties: PFCRN, PAS, PARM & PT, all satellites of the PRI.
salinismo: supporters of Salinas, current President
ejido: state-owned land rented to peasants, an important gain from Zapata's fight during Mexican revolution 1910-17. No longer to be created, and can be used as capital after 1991 amendment to article 27 of constitution.
Zapata: great peasant leader during the revolution 1910-17, assassinated by government in 1919.

"Much of the left in Mexico was demoralised by the collapse of Stalinism"



The "Zapatista" revolt in Chiapas met brutal repression, but then forced concessions



Salinas claims to be leading Mexico into the "First World," but mass poverty remains

Who's who?

Cardenas: organised Democratic Current within PRI 1986-88, stood as National Democratic Front candidate in 1988, beating Salinas but officially receiving 31%. Cardenas then created Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD). Standing again as candidate of National Democratic Alliance (ADN)
EZLN: "Zapatista" movement which led peasant uprising in Chiapas.
PRI: ruling party for 65 years, based on union federation (CTM) and peasant front (CNC). Most famous President, Lazaro

mous telecommunications consortium "Televisa", have dedicated themselves to large and irrational celebrations of fanatics on the city streets over the triumphs, draws and defeats of the Mexican football team in the World Cup in the USA, with the intention of diverting the attention of the people...

But the combative spirit of the masses has not appeared until now with the clarity and confidence of other times. Cardenas summons Mexicans to repeat for the PRI the lesson of six years ago and to develop it in the ballot boxes, but it is not clear if he will achieve it, still less if the masses will be disposed to mobilise themselves to defend his triumph. We must add that all the combativity which Cardenas and his party (the PRD) normally show before elections, collapses after they have finished...

But what must make us view these things with scepticism is the situation of the left. After a long period of fifteen years of electoral participation, practically all the great organisations of the left disappeared or found themselves in a crisis from which there is no way out. The Mexican state started from the beginning of the 1970s on a long march, intending to neutralise the vanguard of '68. After twenty five years it has achieved this. Today in Mexico there does not exist any political force (with the exception of the EZLN) of weight in society which has a line and a practice of class independence. All the subversive potential and rebellion of these organisations has channelled itself and disappeared into supporting pragmatically the immediate option of bourgeois nationalism, represented by Cardenas... Socialist discourse has almost disappeared from the national scene, and the profile of the left, reformist and revolutionary, has been lost.

A new social pact

By Lucinda Nava, from *Bandera Socialista* the paper of the PRT (Rodriguez) biggest of the PRT splinters

CUAUHEMOC Cardenas declared himself the protest candidate, in a magnificent ceremony on October 17th. The occasion prefigured the character of the electoral campaign which Cardenas is leading: popular, plural, combative and with the initiative from below. Pure poison for the party-state system and for those who have played the game of salinismo. No surprise then the virulent reaction which the event elicited from the hacks of the PRI and PAN.

"All the subversive potential and rebellion of these organisations has disappeared into supporting pragmatically the immediate option of bourgeois nationalism."

Undoubtedly the message of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas has an historical character, and here the adjective does not decorate, it defines...

Salinas and his clique have broken the prevailing constitutional order. They have liquidated the social pact which emanated from the Mexican revolution. The defence of the ejido and of free, non-religious education for all are not a return to the past but the base and the historical root, from which a new social pact will start to be instituted, expressing a Mexico free from the dictatorship of the PRI.

We must say that we did not support the candidature of Cardenas in 1988 as we were distrustful; we thought that his origins in the PRI would lead to negotiation of a pact with the PRI and to a backdown.

Today the objectives are very clear. During the last five years Cuauhtemoc Cardenas has sustained a principled position against the usurping Salinas group, and our doubts have dissipated.

Dynamic of democratic confrontation

By Edgar Sanchez, PRT (Refoundation)

THE DIFFERENCE that has opened in the perspective of 94, compared with the experience of 88, is that today a majority of people believe in the possibility of really disputing the government by supporting the candidature of Cardenas, really confronting the basic, anti-democratic structure of the party-state.

It is because we anticipate the dynamic of democratic confrontation which will result from the 94 electoral campaign, that it is our conviction that we must participate their actively.

Femme fatale for the nineties



Bridget (Linda Fiorentino) and a colleague

Matt Cooper
reviews
*The Last
Seduction*

Directed by
John Dahl

THE LAST *Seduction* is a pacy, humorous and thoroughly entertaining modern film noir. New Yorker

Bridget (Linda Fiorentino), having drained all the available credit from her unemployed doctor husband Clay (Bill Pullman), persuades him to risk life and liberty in a big-time drugs deal.

Bridget celebrates the success of the deal by disappearing with the money, leaving Clay to face the snapping teeth of the loan-sharks. She then lies low

in the hick country of middle America, the antithesis of New York. There, as Bridget discovers, a woman has to say please before she can get served in a bar.

She meets Mike (Peter Berg), a naïve small-town boy, and draws him into a web of deceit. Her estranged husband comes after her and the money, and inevitably there are crosses and double crosses. Around this scenario an effective thriller is constructed. But *The Last Seduction* is more than a thriller. By playing with the archetypes of the noir genre it mines a rich vein of humour.

Film genres, like history, tend to repeat themselves — first tragedy, then farce. While never falling completely into farce and self-parody, Bridget's sheer self-seeking heartlessness is the source of some great lines, and her hard-boiled manipulation is also highly amusing.

The *femme fatale* corrupting the

innocent country lad is a classic ploy from forties noir, as is the contrast between small-town America and of the moral degeneracy of life in the metropolis. But this is the nineties, not the forties.

Bridget is an assertive nineties woman. The film has, through her, a rather misogynist tinge of comment on the assertive woman as "ball breaking bitch."

On one level this film could be criticised as an anti-feminist backlash film that identifies independent women with predatory female sexuality — Bridget carries "maxi" condoms and conducts pre-coital quality-control inspections. She uses her husband hitting her as an ideologically acceptable excuse for running off with the loot, although such a bunk was already planned.

Such criticisms would be on the whole misguided. The film takes no moral high ground against Bridget. She is played almost sympathetically. Both the men are such pathetic specimens in their enthrallment to Bridget's sexuality that you rather feel they deserve what they get.

In general it replaces the moral ambivalence of forties noir with outright amorality (which is a trend in films that I'm sure someone braver than me will link with a continuing decline of self-confidence in the American psyche). In short the film has an amusingly amoral regard for the bad girl.

Bridget is played as an ingenious harridan rather than a hate figure for men with problems. She is at least two-dimensional enough to make her more than a straightforward backlash figure.

In places the plot stretches so tight over plausibility that you can see right through it (particularly in an unnecessary *Crying Game*-derived twist). Nevertheless, as a thriller it does its job wonderfully well. If you think films should be morality plays, give this a miss, but if you want a good modern thriller with a smile on its face, this is for you.

John Maclean (1879-1923)

By Hugh McDiarmid, in memory of the Scottish Marxist John Maclean who was perhaps the most outspoken socialist opponent of the First World War. His health broken by spells in jail, he died in 1923.

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

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

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

Stand close, stand close, and block
out the light
As long as you can, you ministers
and lawyers,

Hulking brutes of police, fat
bourgeoisie,
Sleek derma for congested guts — its
fires
Will leap through yet; already it is
clear
Of all Maclean's foes not one was his
peer.

As Pilate and the Roman soldiers to
Christ
Were Law and Order to the finest
Scot of his day,
One of the few true men in our sordid
breed,
A flash of sun in a country all prison-
grey.

Speak to others of Christian charity;
I cry again
For vengeance on the murderers of
John Maclean.
Let the light of truth in on the base
pretence
Of Justice that sentenced him behind
these grey walls.

All law is the contemptible fraud he
declared it.
Like a lightning-bolt at last the
workers' wrath falls
On all such castles of cowards
whether they be
Uniformed in ermine, or blue, or
khaki.

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

Scavengers

Geoff Ward
reviews
Scavengers

ITV
Saturday 6 August

MOST gameshows are cheap, cheerful, mindless programmes designed to fill up the schedules. Only a few of them ever get into the top ratings. *Scavengers* is different. ITV spent millions of pounds building a set in Pinewood Studios to play this futuristic gameshow.

Two pairs of contestants compete against the clock and each other to retrieve salvage from an abandoned spaceship. We watch "maturely challenged", sweaty-bodied adults, dressed like a cross between a skateboard enthusiast and a *Mad Max* extra, wallow around in pretend toxic waste.

Unlike Channel 4's *Crystal Maze*,

there is little variety in the separate tasks faced by the contestants.

Former *Blue Peter* host John Leslie goads them on. Shedding his "Mr Nice Guy" image he delights in humiliating competitors who fail to measure up to the challenges. "Menacing aliens" roam the ship striking daft and far from threatening poses, ready to pounce on unlucky contestants.

All the money went on the set, so there are no prizes to be won.

Games like this were familiar to me, as a Boy Scout playing in school yards.

Carlton will probably dismantle the set after the show is over. But since they have given a few adults the opportunity to rediscover their "inner child" why not turn the set over to children?

They would find much more interesting and exciting ways of using it. So long as Carlton doesn't televise it, I'd be happy. Carlton is so crappy, no doubt it would.

Heroic Warsaw against the Nazis

Alliance for

WORKERS'
LIBERTY

Meetings

EDINBURGH

Wednesday 17 August

"How to defend the Welfare State"

7.30 Windsor Bar, Leith Walk

LEEDS

Monday 22 August

"The case for socialist feminism"

7.30 Albert pub

LANCASTER

Thursday 18 August

"How to defend the NHS"

Speaker: Richard Bayley

7.30 Adelphi pub

LONDON

Wednesday 17 August

"Blair's victory in perspective — a look at past Labour leaders"

Speaker: John O'Mahony

7.30 Calthorpe Arms, 252 Gray's Inn Road

Wednesday 31 August

"Union rank and file movements — lessons from our history"

Speaker: Jim Denham

7.30 Calthorpe Arms

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In Warsaw, the 50th anniversary of the 1944 uprising against the Nazis is being celebrated in the presence of invited guests from Germany and Russia. That is good because reconciliation is better than festering national animosities.

We too celebrate the heroism of Warsaw, and in the first place of the workers of Warsaw, who three times in five years hurled themselves against the Nazi barbarians — in 1939, in 1943 when the remnants of the Jewish ghetto rose, and in 1944.

On 1 September 1939 the Nazis launched a blitzkrieg on Poland. Two weeks later Stalin's army, according to secret agreements with Hitler, moved in from the east. Poland was crushed and partitioned between Russia and Germany.

The Nazis treated all Poles as an inferior people, and the three million Polish Jews were marked for extermination, herded into a ghetto from which they were deported in batches to the extermination factory at Auschwitz. Finally the Jews rose in arms and fought to the last person able to hurl a missile.

In August 1944, the Nazis were retreating and the Russian Army advancing. It came as far as the banks of the Vistula near Warsaw, and at that point Warsaw rose once more, expecting to link up with the Russians — against whom they also wanted to assert Poland's trampled national rights. But the Russians halted their advance and for weeks camped within the sound of the Nazi guns exterminating Poles. Then they advanced, and occupied Poland for the next half-century.

This appreciation of the heroism of Warsaw by A Rudziński, appeared in the US socialist paper *Labor Action* on the fifth anniversary of the 1944 rising.

Molotov was the Russian Stalinist leader who signed the infamous German-Russian pact of 1939, which set the scene for the invasion and partition of Poland.

THE IMPERIALIST war passed through Warsaw at its beginning, at its climax and at its end, leaving in its wake dead and barbarous ruins that have not been seen since the remote times of Attila and Genghis Khan.

When Hitler invaded Poland, it was Warsaw which bore the whole weight of the Nazi military machine for three weeks. It was neither the government of the Colonels nor the Polish military and bureaucratic organisation that stubbornly resisted the Nazi fascist invasion but the people, the proletariat of Warsaw.

It was this same people and proletariat of Warsaw that resisted Molotov's infamous declaration that "Poland, this bastard of the Versailles Treaty has been wiped forever from the map," and that resisted the Nazi-Stalin military pact which, said Stalin, was "sealed with blood."

The people and proletariat of Warsaw resisted and struggled not only against the Nazi-fascist offensive in a national war against the invader. They also fought a spontaneously social war against the totalitarian reaction in which they included the national reaction of their own Polish "Colonels". None of Pilsudski's generals, colonels and ministers were heroes of this popular war.

It remained for a civic official, a leader of the Socialist Party named Niedzialkowski, and another named

Rataj, a member of the Peasant Party, to identify themselves with the movement of popular resistance. They stayed in the trenches and on the barricades to meet the invader with arms in hand, representing in a way, a popular government born in the heat of struggle. They died with other fighters before a Nazi firing squad.

The uprising of the Jewish ghetto in 1943 marked the second time an isolated and despairing Warsaw rose up against the Nazis. The extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazis, in the face of an almost complete indifference on the part of the great and "humanitarian" democrats, belongs to the most degrading, horrifying and infamous pages in human history. The United States, Great Britain and Russia did not have the planes with which to bomb and pulverise Berlin in defence of 6,000,000 Jews; repressive measures against the Nazis were not at hand in the United States, Great Britain and Russia; against the Nazi prisoners of war in order to save millions of lives.

Although it was a question of thousands of pilots and prisoners of war, Anglo-Saxon blood was too precious, too costly, to spend to save millions of humble Jewish workers and artisans in the ghettos of Poland. "The tragedy of the Jews was conceived of as something fatalistic in its frightfulness by Polish public opinion and even more so because the civilised world did not react in an active way." (*Information Bulletin of [Home Army] 29 April 1943*).

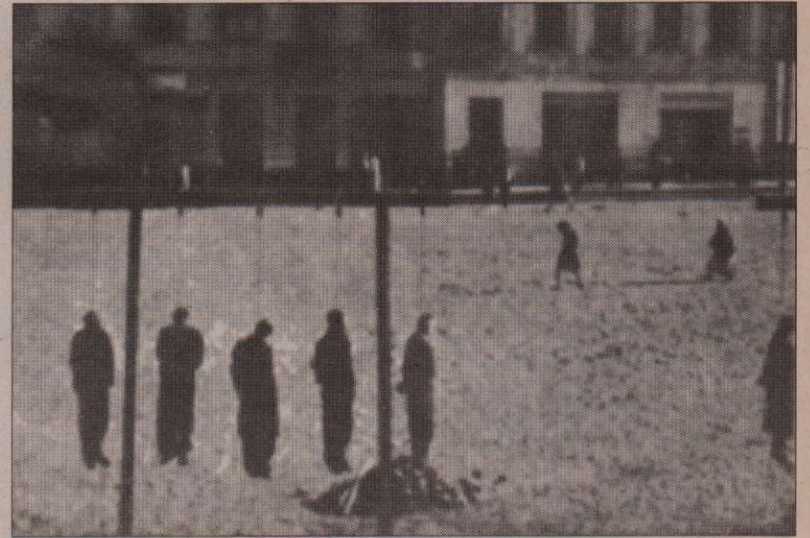
The hopeless resistance lasted from April until August. At the end of June, the organ of the underground "Nowe Drogi" (New Roads) describes the situation thus:

"The Germans met with desperate armed resistance. Two or three thousand fighters forced them to retreat and when they returned with their machines, guns and tanks a bitter battle ensued at many points. Defence to the last grenade, to the last cartridge. The revolt proper did not last long. It was, of course, drowned in blood."

In the ruins left by the 1939 campaign, in the old labyrinths, tunnels and sewers, the remaining few hundreds of a people condemned to death by "capitalist civilisation" still resisted. While the great "democracies" and the "first socialist country" looked on indifferently, the cowardly Nazis burned and crushed them to death under the ruins and drowned them like rats in the sewers. The ghetto, the Jewish section of Warsaw, was levelled with the earth. The last few thousand insurgent Jews lie under its ruins.

Only the workers' underground movement of Warsaw tried to help its brothers trapped in the ghetto, with arms, munitions and food, but faced by the concentration of Nazi might and the total indifference of the "democracies", this poor and limited help could not save the ghetto insurrection of 1943. As in 1939, Warsaw struggled alone and hopelessly, abandoned by its democratic "allies" to its own tragic fate.

In 1944, notwithstanding the two previous crushing defeats, the people of Warsaw rose up for a third time against the Nazi hordes. The Warsaw insurrection broke out when the Russian armies were already massed on the left bank of the Vistula in the Warsaw suburb of Prague and while the Moscow radio and the Polish Stalinist radio were calling on the peo-



Warsaw resistance fighters hung during 1944 uprising

ple of Warsaw to rise up against the Nazi invader promising the aid and support of the Russian army. Mikolajczyk, who was then in Moscow, received a solemn promise from Stalin that Warsaw would be liberated by the Russians in the first days of August.

Nevertheless when the revolutionary action occurred and dislodged the Nazis from a good part of the city, the Russian press and radio began to slander it as a "bluff and an adventure" without popular support and later as a "fascist" and "anti-Soviet" action. The Russians stopped their advance and the Polish detachments that wanted to come to Warsaw's aid were disarmed. The Allied and Polish planes could not land behind the Russian front in order to help the insurrectionaries.

"Only the workers' underground movement of Warsaw tried to help Jews trapped in the ghetto."

The Nazi general staff, which had begun to evacuate Warsaw, was given fresh courage by the halt of the Russian offensive and proceeded to the systematic destruction of the embattled city. They used mortars, heavy artillery, tanks and serial attacks against the insurrectionaries, basing themselves on the costly experience of the destruction of the ghetto. The city was wiped from the face of the earth.

The fighters who had descended to the modern catacombs, the network of subterranean tunnels dating back to medieval times were exterminated with gas, drowned like rats in the water and filth, burned and crushed to death under the ruins. Approximately 300,000 people were killed and 600,000 interned in the Nazi death camps. Faced with the Russian betrayal, with the new and silent Nazi-Stalinist pact, and with the indifference of the "democracies", the Warsaw Commune succumbed after 63 days of unequal combat.

Warsaw had been abandoned to its own fate. The powerful Anglo-American forces, which were able to defeat Hitler and demolish the cities of Germany, could not find the planes with which to help save the Warsaw

insurrection. So had it been in 1939 and 1943.

The explanation of the Anglo-American position is to be found not only in the secret imperialist pacts signed with Stalin at Tehran and Yalta, but in the character of the Warsaw revolution as well. As in 1939 and 1943, Warsaw struggled on two fronts: not only against the Nazis as invaders, but also against the Stalinists.

In the 1944 insurrection the struggle on two fronts becomes a much more clearly defined characteristic than in the two previous instances. Now it is not only a question of a national war against the invaders, but of a social uprising against the totalitarian reaction.

The organisers of the Warsaw revolution were the leaders of the anti-Nazi underground, in the first place the Warsaw organisation of the PPS (the Polish Socialist Party), the workers' militia, the illegal trade unions and the Stalinist militia, the AL (Armio Ludowa). The Warsaw proletariat was the backbone of the insurrection, supported by the impoverished "intelligentsia", students, intellectuals, white-collar workers and peasants. Politically, the insurrection was represented by the petty-bourgeois democracy in arms, the alliance between the PPS and Mikolajczyk's Populist Party.

The underground government headed by the socialists recognised the factory delegations as the legal and public administrators of the factories. The petty-bourgeois democracy in arms, caught up in an anti-totalitarian insurrection, contained the seeds of a socialist revolution in mortal combat with the Nazi and Stalinist counter-revolution. It represented a great danger in the forward march of the victorious Stalinist counter-revolution, the only force capable of subduing a rebellious proletarian movement confronted by the decay and ruin of European capitalism.

For this reason all the reactionary forces, dying Nazism and victorious Stalinism, democrats and priests, the agents of the GPU and Wall Street's mercenaries, joined together against the people of Warsaw in arms, combined to crush the seed of the socialist revolution in Europe. With reason, the *London New Leader* wrote: "One of the most revolutionary episodes in modern history ended as a tragedy."

In the Europe of 1944 not one proletarian force could recognise the essential character of the Warsaw Commune. But today, the third socialist force [that is, anti-Stalinist and anti-capitalist socialists] renders posthumous homage to Warsaw.

UNISON witch hunts must be ditched

By a Liverpool UNISON member

SEFTON

NIGEL Flanagan and Martin Murphy, Secretary and Chair of Sefton UNISON respectively, were each fined £1,250 by Manchester Crown Court on 5 August for organising "unlawful action" in defence of their members.

The branch had voted at a mass meeting to take one day's strike action against externalisation plans by Sefton Council (where Labour is the majority party).

They refused to give an undertaking that they wouldn't organise or participate in unofficial action in future. After all, as elected representatives, they argued, their job was precisely to defend their members' jobs and conditions, and to support them when the members decided to take action.

UNISON nationally was also fined for not repudiating the action

according to the intricacies of the law — though they tried everything they could to stop Sefton members fighting the threatened privatisation. Now the union nationally has sent a letter to every branch telling them not to send money to the Sefton Two Defence Fund — as this could be construed as supporting illegal action.

The Executive is also proposing an investigation into Martin and Nigel at its meeting on 10 August — reporting back to the September Executive, when the result of the Liverpool disciplinary is discussed.

Send resolutions to your Executive representatives locally calling on them not to proceed with the Liverpool or Sefton disciplinary: their energies would be much better put to fighting for a better pay deal.

If the union nationally got off its knees and devoted a fraction of the time it spends witchhunting left-wing activists or attempting to stop industrial action into actually fighting for its members, the employers would think twice about attacking.

Show your solidarity — send donations to Sefton UNISON, 38 Crosby Road North, Liverpool L22 4QQ. Tel: 051 920 6140, fax 051 928 0298.

LIVERPOOL

UNISON is proud of its equal opportunities policies, its defence of autonomous self-organisation and its record of fighting discrimination. Overt sexism or racism is an expellable offence...

The dispute at Fairfield Day Centre, Liverpool, shows these policies aren't worth the recycled paper they're written on.

Seven workers — black and white — walked out on unofficial action in the face of persistent racism from other staff which management refused to acknowledge or deal with.

These workers were supported by four shop stewards within their shop stewards within their department (Social Services). Although the other 13 members of staff continued to cross the picket lines,

when the regional office finally organised a ballot to make the dispute official, 11 of these 13 voted for action. Now whatever happened to that ballot result? Why wasn't the dispute made official as the members requested? Or do the Executive only make disputes official when they like the stewards involved?

The union will argue that it was only a minority of members making the original complaint about racism, and that democracy demands that the majority view prevails.

Yet in cases of discrimination and harassment, it is very often the case that it is the minority who are persecuted by the majority. Do we therefore refuse to support members facing racial, sexual or homophobic abuse until we have won the political argument with all the members?

To argue that is to condone discrimination, not to fight it.

Or what about a minority of workers in a workplace facing compulsory redundancy, pay cuts, or worsening conditions? What do they pay their dues for if it isn't

to have their union defend their interests in just such cases?

The argument about "democracy" is a cover for the Executive to do nothing — and it makes all their arguments about equal opportunities a sham.

You notice that the Executive don't follow their own rule by supporting the call by the majority of members in the Liverpool branch to hold an AGM.

In refusing to support the Fairfield workers, the union claimed there was only "residual racism" at Fairfield. Whatever that means, Council bosses, meanwhile, disciplined the manager of the Day Centre as a result of the dispute, claiming they were "completely satisfied that there is more than enough evidence to support the contention that there has been a failure to address anti-racism and equal opportunities at Fairfield. I regret that it was the Trades Union that put this on the 'collective agenda' rather than the concern emanating from proactive management environment." Management are obviously more progressive than the union that

prides itself on its equal opportunities policies.

As a result of this dispute, four senior Social Services Shop Stewards face disciplinary action for "organising or participating in" unlawful industrial action. The message is clear: racism is bad, until challenging it means coming into conflict with the Tory anti-union laws — then, tough luck, you're on your own. The union's behaviour over the Sefton Two has set a precedent. The union nationally will do everything to disassociate itself from its own members rather than take on the unfair laws.

Liverpool Unity in UNISON is calling on every branch to support its campaign. If our stewards are disciplined for supporting unofficial action, then what hope do members have of beating CCT or improving the pay offer?

Drop the disciplinary! Let the members decide: allow Liverpool to hold an AGM. Donations to, and information from, Liverpool Unity in UNISON, Fourth Floor, Foster House, Canning Place, Liverpool L1.

Local government pay:

Stop wasting time!

UNISON

By Maxine Jordan

UNISON should be on the verge of a big pay dispute covering all council workers. Instead it is bogged down in a consultation exercise likely to kill off the dispute.

The employers and the unions representing council workers met on 21 July. The employers made a marginally improved offer. The offer is based on 1.7% plus £75 now and 1.4% plus £75 from 1 July 1995. With the next pay rise due on 1 April 1996 the offer is well below the going rate. Most worrying is the employers attempt to force through a two year pay deal based on the present low inflation rate.

The unions immediately told the employers the offer was unacceptable. UNISON's Local Government Group Executive voted on 22 July to recommend rejection. So far so good, but this is where the problems start.

The Local Government Group Executive then voted for a consultation exercise based on workplace meetings which will run up to 23 September! Following this there will be a recall delegate conference to be held at the end of September or the start of October. Any ballot will be running just before Christmas, on a pay claim which for white collar council workers was due for settlement on 1 July. Maybe the first strike could be 25 December and we could call for all other workers to stay at home that day in solidarity.

This strategy is not a serious attempt by UNISON to organise a pay fightback. A local government conference should be organised immediately to give the go ahead for a ballot on a rolling programme of one-day strikes. Letters/motions protesting at the consultation exercise should be passed by branches and sent to Districts, Service Group and National Executive.

Hostel workers face redundancy

40 WORKERS at Peterloo Housing Association in Manchester face redundancy, and the two projects they run face closure as result of alleged financial mismanagement.

Workers at the projects, members of the T&G, are meeting to

discuss what action to take.

One of the projects provides specialist support for heavy drinkers, and is the only one of its kind in Manchester. The other is a men's Direct Access Hostel. Its closure has been justified by the fact that it 'duplicates' the service provided by the City Council.

In the meantime, the organisation is paying £400 a day to a private consultant to look into the finances.

There is one body interested in taking over, and they are clearly interested only in the assets and do not have any commitment to carrying on the service Peterloo currently provides. That is why the job cuts have been announced.

The financial mess could be resolved. Staff say any takeover must involve a full commitment to the existing service and no job losses.

Staff and residents at the projects have launched a campaign for public support. A public meeting has been organised for 10 August at the Shamrock Club, Gt Western St., Rusholme at 7.30 pm. For more info about the campaign phone 061-881-0999.

Knowsley care workers strike against private contractors

OVER 150 UNISON members in Knowsley have been balloted for strike action over proposed pay cuts of over 36%. The staff voted overwhelmingly for a programme of 24 hour strikes over 12 weeks. The strikes were due to start on 2 August.

The homes have been run since 1991 by Knowsley Care Society, who took over from the local authority. The had given assurances that terms and conditions would not be affected by its winning the contract.

As local authority services are contracted out to the private sector, there is an increasing number of disputes over attacks on terms and conditions. The TUPE regulations, which give protection at the point of transfer to a private organisation, offers no long term protection and cannot be relied upon. It is vital that a level of trade union organisation is maintained as services are contracted out to the private sector, so that members continue to fight to defend their jobs.

Tube clashes on jobs and pay

By a Central Line guard

YET AGAIN tubeworkers are faced with further cuts and attacks on our job security.

Not content with the 5,000 job losses inflicted by the Company Plan, the Tories have told Tube bosses to cut £48.3m off their annual budget. This would mean the loss of another 1,000 jobs. As yet management have given no details of where the cuts will come from. However, they have announced that all areas of the Underground will be reviewed. Bits can be contracted out in the interests of efficiency — meaning cutting job and wages.

Clearly the Company Plan wasn't the last round of attacks on tubeworkers, it was just the start. And this latest threat is even more fundamental.

If the permanent way, signal engineering, depots and train maintenance can be contracted out — and that process is already under way — then why not have security companies providing station staff? And if contractors are shunting trains in depots, then why not drive them on the lines? And if they get away with that — what's left to be privatised anyway?

The most immediate threat of contracting out is on the

Northern Line. ABB, the engineering company which produced the disastrous new stock for the Central Line, has presented LUL with a leasing deal to provide new trains for the Northern Line. The catch is that they take over the maintenance as well. ABB is already advertising for train technicians for "a major new contract in the London area," despite LUL claims that no decision has been taken yet.

The contracting out of maintenance would mean a the loss of 1,000 jobs and would be a real step forward for the creeping privatisation of LUL. A ballot of depot and maintenance staff is planned.

The other issue which may see action being taken is pay. RMT has rejected the 2% pay offer, while the ASLEF executive first accepted 2% then was told by their conference not to accept less than 4.6%. ASLEF is now going to hold a referendum on the 2% and if there is a vote for rejection then there may be a ballot. The RMT's position is that they will ballot if ASLEF does. A lot of ifs and buts and maybes, but it does leave open the possibility of a synchronised ballot from RMT and ASLEF over pay. And any resulting action could be coordinated with the strikes on BR.

Vote yes for strike action in the Midland Bank

By a bank worker

STAFF GRADES in the Midland Bank are presently being balloted by the Banking Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU) for a series of one-day strikes over pay.

The bank offered an insulting 2.25% increase in pay, which staff rejected by three to one in a high-poll ballot.

This after the bank announced record profits and other grades settled for significantly higher awards.

Senior management had previously promised significant increases once the bank returned to profitability after their disastrous lending decisions led to hundreds of jobs being shed.

If anything, BIFU's claim for a 5.5% increase was a touch generous, considering that we all require 3.9% to stand still and that we have all suffered job insecurity and declining living standards as a direct result of bad decisions by senior management.

It has also emerged that senior management also has plans to break collective bargaining and introduce some form of performance related pay.

For many this could mean no more pay increases!

Enough is enough. Translate the rejection of the pay offer into effective strike action, and use this opportunity to show senior management that we are not a push over! Vote yes to the strike action.

Support the signal workers!

SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

Leicester wins publicity

By a Leicestershire Labour Party member

A COMMITTEE to organise support for striking signalworkers in Leicestershire has been launched, at a public meeting which brought us to the attention of the national news. Viewers of the *Nine O'Clock News* on 2 August saw our meeting in full swing, and also shots of us distributing leaflets and collecting money for the strikers outside Leicester station.

Over the last seven weeks of the strike, we have been producing a weekly 'Strike Update', linking the demands of the signal workers to commuters' concerns about privatisation, the closure of stations, safety and so on. We seem to be having an impact: most of the letters published by the local newspapers on the strike have been supportive of the signalworkers and many of the arguments we use in our bulletins appear later in these letters from the public!

We've also been collecting money, both at the station, and from the labour movement.

We intend to visit the signal boxes in our area, telling the strikers about our activities and seeking to get them involved, as well as stepping up our presence at the Leicester power box, which is being run by scab signal workers on strike days. The Trades Council (which hasn't met since the dispute began!) meets soon and we will be using that meeting to step up our activities.

Keeping in touch in South London

THE RMT Southern District Council Signal Workers' Support Group, based in South London but stretching as far as Sussex, was set up six weeks ago — the first in the country!

It has organised collections (raising £3,000), picket line rotas, speak-

ers at workplace and labour movement meetings, street collections and stalls at local events, as well as leafletting commuters at main BR stations raising the issues of safety and the public sector pay freeze.

At every stage the group has kept ordinary rank and file signalworkers directly in touch via faxes of its activities.

The leaflet telling the public it is not safe to travel on strike days prompted BR management at Waterloo to stick up their own propaganda in response!

Future events include a benefit and a social night for signal workers to meet members of the support group. A rally and demo is planned in the near future in Brighton.

Building in Sheffield

"EVERYBODY HERE has a role to play. It's up to us to build support for the signalworkers and to make sure that they win. That's why we need a support group." This was the message from one of the speakers at a meeting organised in Sheffield two weeks ago to launch a signalworkers support group.

Over 60 people came together to discuss the issues around the signalworkers' strike and to plan local support work. The meeting was addressed by Bill Ronksley (Sheffield Trades Council), Rob Dawber (Sheffield and District RMT) and a local signalworkers.

A local Labour councillor chaired the meeting and emphasised that despite the shameful failure of the Labour Party leaders to come out in support of the signalworkers many rank and file party members are actively backing the strike.

The support group will meet every Monday at 6pm in the Trades and Labour Club to plan activities for that week. Successful bucket collections have been held outside local government and civil service workplaces. A demonstration was organised by the Support Group on Wednesday 3 August outside the train station to show our support for the signalworkers just as the 24 hour strike was due to begin.

The group can be contacted on Sheffield 555784 (RMT) or c/o Sheffield Trades and Labour Club, Duke Street, Sheffield.

SOCIALIST

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ORGANISER

Workers launch action against Mandela's Government of National Unity

Strikes sweep South Africa



After the anti-apartheid protests, now it is class against class

A MASSIVE strike wave is sweeping across the "new" South Africa. In the last three weeks supermarket workers, court translators, platinum miners, car workers, textile workers and public servants have all taken action.

The strikes have been met by fierce repression from the security forces. Over 800 workers have been arrested, while the riot police have fired baton rounds into unarmed groups of pickets and demonstrators.

Amazingly, the person responsible for the police in the new government is leading Communist Party hack and ex-trade unionist Sydney Mufumadi!

The battles have been so fierce that even strongly pro-ANC figures in the trade union movement like Sam Shilowa, General Secre-

tary of the giant COSATU trade union federation, have said that: "We are being asked by our members if democracy will ever mean anything more than the right to vote every five years."

South African socialists organised in the Workers' List Party have been circulating this leaflet on the picket lines of union meetings and on demonstrations:

WLP supports strikers

The Workers' List Party's involvement in strike support committees throughout South Africa will continue. The demands of the workers for a living wage, against racism, for job security, social benefits and for accountability are just. Workers in the commercial,

catering, mining, construction, municipal, public and auto sectors are using their only legal weapon to fight for the interests of the majority of the people of South Africa. These interests include the right to work under decent working conditions at a living wage, an end to retrenchments and the keeping of election promises made by parties which are now in government.

Hands off strikers!

We condemn the actions of the state and bosses in using the police to put down the strikes. We also strongly oppose the hypocrisy of the government and certain sections of the media who have referred to the strikes as "selfish", "against the nation's interests", and "scaring away investments." The ones who are selfish are those jumping on the gravy train, those carrying hundreds of thousands of rands as cabinet ministers or MPs, and the bosses who continue making huge profits and throwing people onto the streets.

Election promises

During the elections the WLP emphasised that the vote will not bring real change. Democracy is not about voting every five years. We can't eat the vote. Democracy is about controlling the fruits of our labour. We also said that as long as economic policy puts profits before the people, basic needs will not be met. Events have shown us to be correct. The "new" South Africa is clearly more and more the old South Africa in a new jacket. The solution lies with the activity of the workers, the unemployed and their allies. The present struggles of different sections of workers and the unemployed must be co-ordinated so that they are not defeated or hijacked. For this to occur we need our own party, a Mass Workers' Party.

By Joan Trevor

MY OLD headmaster was obsessed with Victorian times. In school assemblies we regularly sang *The Song of the Shirt*, pretending to be small girls with failing eyesight stitching a dozen shirts for a shilling.

In music and movement, we sang sea-shanties, bawling across the hall to each other: "Were you ever in Quebec/stowing timber on the deck?", and I lose count of the times we enacted the plight of the boy chimney sweeps, scuffing their knees on the sooty brickwork of the new urban middle class.

Where today's youth sell jumble to raise money for vital safety improvements to the school minibus, all our efforts targetted on helping Doctor Barnardo's orphans (now updated for these less paternalistic times to plain "Barnardo's").

The thinking, I'm sure, was that we could identify with the youngest victims of unchecked capitalism and the early industrial revolution, and in so doing thank someone — they never said who — that we had come so far.

I don't know that it worked. It wasn't much comfort, I'm sure, to the poor 1970s girl in my class who had 10 sisters and one dress, or to the Bengali girl, quiet as a mouse, who endured the spite of our ex-colonial form teacher.

We could boast that we were better fed than our young comrades of a hundred years before, and that once a year the nit nurse came round and once a year the school photographer. But there was still a long way to go.

In 100 years' time, what will children sing about, and learn about today's youth?

That they lived in clapped-out housing estates with not much more to do for entertainment than steal clapped-out old cars and drive them around 'til old Robert Peel's boot boys in blue, equipped for the late 20th century with the new, longer baton, pulled them over and sent them to Young Offenders' Institutions.

That they left dingy, overcrowded schoolrooms to join cheap, Workfare schemes. That, when in work, the burden of taxation fell on them, not the rich.

That more and more of them, unable to afford housing, slept on Britain's dirty, polluted, traffic-clogged streets.

That once every five years they got to put a cross on a piece of paper and call that democracy.

The children of Victorian times grew up to take their place in the young labour movement which won all the reforms we are now learning we cannot take for granted. The youth of today must also take their place in the labour movement so that the youth of tomorrow can forget all about poverty, past, present and future and just get on with enjoying life.

In the Alliance for Workers' Liberty we try to orientate youth to the labour movement, and to change the labour movement so that is relevant and accessible to young people. On page 7 you will see an advert for "Ideas for revolt", a school we are organising with exactly that aim in mind. If you think that goal is important, and you have some money to spare, you can help us organise such events by sending cheques, payable to "WL Publications", to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

The honeymoon is over

Salim Valley reports from Johannesburg

EVERYTHING WE said during the elections is now being vindicated. Workers have definitely decided that the honeymoon period for the Government of National Unity is over. They expected the elections to mean some real change but are starting to become disillusioned.

It is dependent on the forces of the left and in particular our comrades in the Workers' List Party to deepen the workers' understanding of the relationship between political and economic issues. That way it will become much more difficult for other forces

in the workers' movement to hold back the struggles.

Already the media over here are attempting to portray the strikes — particularly those in the retail sector where our comrades are strong — as the work of agitators. One newspaper talked of a "small group of Trotskyists behind the strikes", while another named myself specifically as responsible for one dispute.

The workers aren't so dumb as to believe all that propaganda. Our comrades have been in the forefront of every march, picket and mobilisation and have received a very good response to our message.

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SOCIALIST Inside this week
MALCOLM
 Behind the hype
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Buses, rail, pits, public sector

STRIKE TOGETHER!

Unite to beat sackings, sell-offs, cuts