

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

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SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

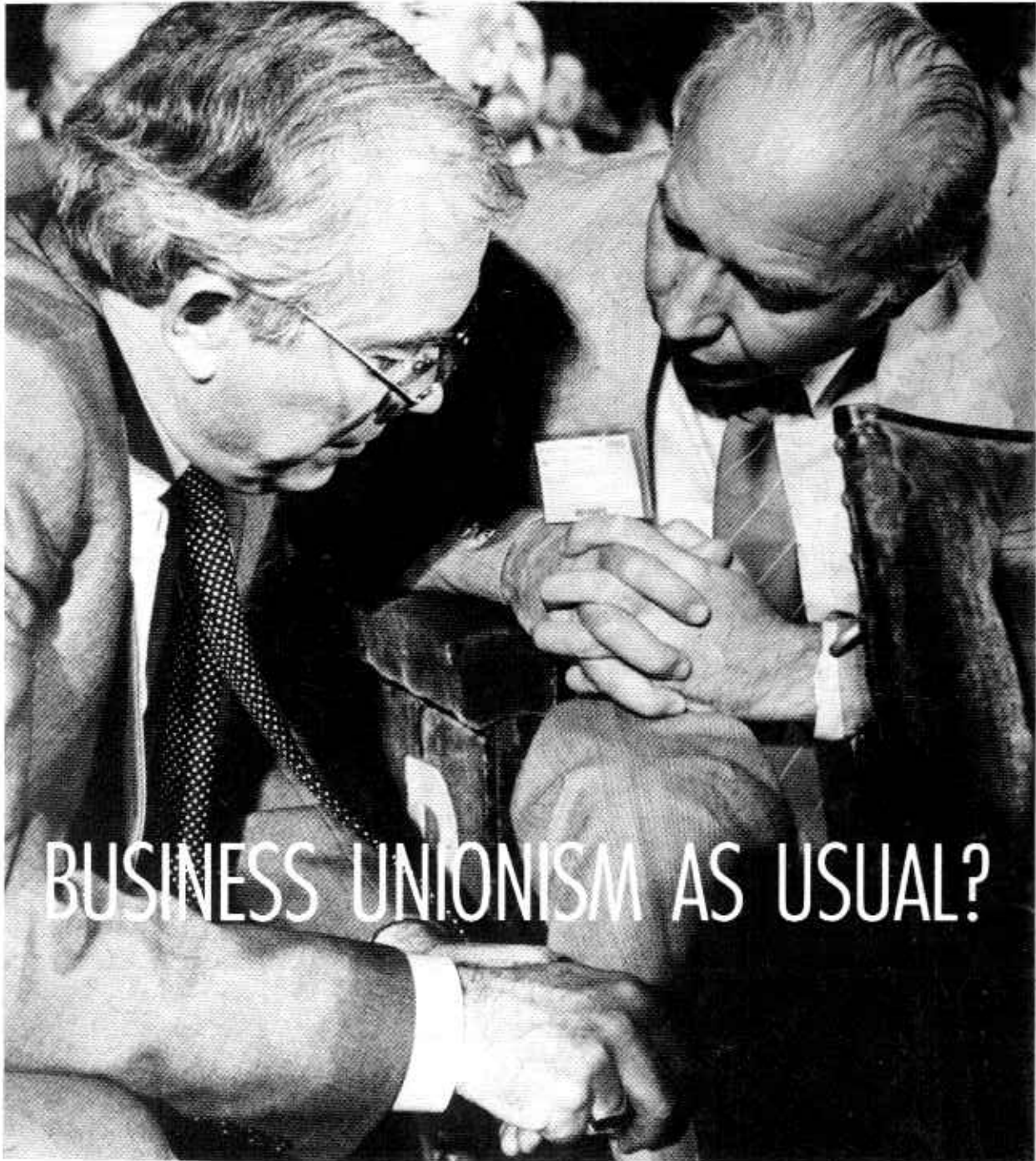
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BUSINESS UNIONISM AS USUAL?

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P A L E S T I N E

SPECIAL FEATURE: BRITISH FEMINISM TEN YEARS ON



Wayne Edgington

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Texas chain saw review?

MIS-USED WORD of the year must be 'review'. Once a harmless term for 'reassess', it has taken on a new sinister meaning — more akin to Stalin's 'review' of the old Bolsheviks and Hitler's 'review' of the Jewish question.

Thatcher's hatchet-team is furtively 'reviewing' the NHS; the TUC is 'reviewing' its old policy against single-union deals; and Neil Kinnock's cohorts are conducting their 'review' of Labour's last few vestiges of socialist policies.

One difference is that Thatcher appears to be backing off her initial plans to demolish the NHS as we know it, while nothing seems to deter the Kinnockite stampede to the right.

The security on the Kinnock policy review has been selectively tight. While *Guardian* correspondents have had access to all the texts, most Labour Party members have yet to see any of them. Indeed even front-bench defence spokesperson Denzil Davies was not in the magic circle of policy-makers, and resigned in protest after hearing new policies on defence for the first time on the television — as Kinnock made them up.

Phase one of the policy review has already been steamrollered through the party's national executive — lining up key union support in the process, effectively guaranteeing it will pass through conference. Phase two is now underway.

In each of the texts, the ideological source of the new thinking is transparently obvious, as the phraseology of Thatcherism slips out time and again. The Kinnockites are obsessed with ideas of 'the market', 'choice', 'competition' and 'the consumer' as supposed driving forces of progress. The traditional references to social need, socialised ownership, planning and collective provision have all been relegated to the status of 'old fashioned'.

Among the early casualties of the first cull of socialist and left-reformist policies have been nationalisation, re-nationalisation of privatised firms, any pledge of job-creation, and any commitment to repeal the Tory anti-union laws (only sections may be repealed). Out has gone opposition to nuclear power.

The various policy papers are also at odds with each other: while the economics group has focussed on

moves to make the workforce 'more competitive' (a polite term to cover fresh redundancies and speed-up), the social security group has argued that the benefits system cannot cope with even the present high level of unemployment.

While talking of 'equality', the discussion on taxation has centred on keeping down the rates of tax paid by the top earners: socialist solutions to the funding of public services have not been considered.

Among the many concessions to Thatcherism comes the occasional blast from the past, among them workers' participation, the great disaster that helped wreck sections of the shop stewards' movement during the last Wilson government, which makes an unwelcome reappearance. Of course any real form of workers' control is dismissed with scorn and horror, since workers 'simply do not have the expertise to scrutinise company plans, especially in workplaces which do not have strong union organisation'.

All this 'reviewing' is being done in the name of winning elections: but just which voter is being targeted by such a ragbag of timid, half-baked, tinkering reforms is never explained. Certainly the mythical '£400 a week dockers' is more likely to be attracted to Thatcher's tax cuts in his hand than John Smith's feeble promise of achieving equality through taxation.

The demoralised unemployed and low-paid are hardly going to gallop to the polls on the basis of Bryan Gould's promise to prioritise competitiveness and 'adopt a more sophisticated definition of full employment'!

The abject refusal to confront the naked capitalist logic which drives on the Tory government, and the attempt instead to produce a 'Thatcherism with a human face' is simply preparing a fourth successive electoral catastrophe.

Fortunately Labour and trade union activists do not have to wait until then before beginning the long-overdue 'review' of the Kinnock leadership. They can join with *Socialist Outlook* supporters in throwing their weight now behind the Benn-Heffer campaign, and take up the fight in every CLP and union body against the new policies and for a consistent socialist alternative ●

Bureaucrats plan NHS birthday fiasco

WITH FEW policies on offer but hot air a-plenty, it is no surprise that the Labour Party leadership should offer as its celebration of the 40th anniversary of the NHS an event combining inflatables and Neil Kinnock.

Party die-hards wishing to mark four decades of a health service free at time of use have been urged to fork out a hefty £5 per head for the 3 July new realist 'Family Fun Day' in the remote reaches of Alexandra Palace.

A motley collection of jazz-hands and has-beens have survived Walworth Road's vetting procedures and been booked to entertain the modest handful of loyalists who are likely to patronise this event — for which the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) has coughed up a huge £25,000.

There may be no politics on offer, but with the smallest stall on hire charged at £250, there should be bags of room to walk around.

Meanwhile trade union and Labour leaders, satisfied with their flurry of angry speeches in February and March (and terrified of any renewed industrial action) are doing nothing to oppose a new round of spending cuts taking shape in hospitals across the country.

While the TUC organises its half-cock 'torch' marches with 'rallies' of handfuls, it has been left to rank and file activists to fight for strike action and political meetings on 3 July, the actual anniversary of the NHS.

Union leaders have once again discarded any notion of industrial action to defend the NHS. In preventing any repetition of the February movement, the health bureaucracy has been assisted by this year's nurses' pay awards, which have proved big enough to defuse wage militancy, and sufficiently complex in the new grading structure to absorb much of the time and energy of union activists at local level.

The bureaucracy has also been unwittingly helped by the cross political line of sections of the hard left, especially the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

and Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP).

The SWP has now reverted to being the most defeatist of all those on the left, arguing against any renewed call for strike action, and insisting instead on the need simply to 'build in the workplaces'. It shares with the RCP the ludicrous line that the February workers somehow a 'dispute' over pay, and that the wages issue must now be the driving force to unite and mobilise health workers.

Though the RCP derives this line from their ultra-sectarian

refusal to defend the NHS ('part of the capitalist state') against privatisation, the SWP line is simply a regression to crude syndicalism.

Hemmed in to the right and 'left' by bankrupt policies, it is scarcely surprising that health workers appear to have lost the momentum of the struggles earlier this year.

The harsh fact remains that national-level campaigning on the NHS has always been hampered by the lack of sufficient locally-based fightbacks against cuts and

closures. The bush-fire spread of strike action after the Manchester nurses' strike could not skip over this weakness: it needed to be backed up by more sustained campaigning and the building of local leaderships prepared to use industrial action to fight the cuts.

It is not too late to begin: but it means battling to defend every bed, every job, and seeking to link local campaigns into a serious national-level fightback. That would be the best way to mark the 40th anniversary ●

TERRY SMITH

French hospital workers show the way

FRENCH HEALTHWORKERS, who have been battling against a wave of cutbacks imposed under the now-ousted Chirac government, will no doubt be looking with interest to see if there is any change of policy under the new government.

As the general election approached, over 1,000 nurses, doctors and support staff at the giant 1,100-bed Perray-Vaucluse psychiatric hospital on the outskirts of Paris set a new record for the longest-running strike by French healthworkers.

For over a month pickets had been controlling all traffic in and out of the hospital gates on the vast, sprawling site. While patients in the hospital were still being cared for under 'emergency cover' provision by the unions, all other work — catering, cleaning, maintenance and other services — was at a standstill. And though ex-patients who referred themselves back for further treatment were being looked after, the hospital had closed to new admissions from other hospitals or outside doctors.

This cross between a strike and an occupation, supported by all three of

the main healthworkers' unions (CFDT, CGT, FO), had already won back 82 of the 92 threatened jobs.

And when two Socialist Outlook supporters visited the strike in mid-May, talks were taking place at ministerial level over the outstanding 10 jobs and the other main demand of the strikers — extra funding to provide adequate support services for patients discharged into the community.

The Perray-Vaucluse strike is just one of a series of disputes now breaking out in French hospitals as cutbacks and growing pressures on services make themselves felt across the country. In the south of France, healthworkers in Cahors walked out on indefinite strike on 9 May.

Low pay, affecting all grades of staff, is just one of a number of common problems affecting hospitals in both France and Britain. Despite the much higher cost of living, French nurses with 10 years experience earn only £9-10,000 a year, with comparable rates for qualified technicians and support staff; nurse care assistants earn a mere £7,500, and ancillaries and clerical staff can expect only £6,600.

French healthworkers, as in Britain, complain of plunging hygiene standards, worsened since cleaning out has been contracted out to private firms.

Despite the fact that waiting time for operations in France is measured in days rather than the British system of months or years, the French service based on payment for treatment partly from social security and partly from non-profit 'mutuelle' insurance schemes is cumbersome and bureaucratic.

A CFDT survey found 50 per cent of France's 710,000 hospital workers still don't feel able to carry out their work properly; 44 per cent want improved conditions, while 25 per cent singled out low pay as their main complaint.

The fighting spirit of the French healthworkers in combatting cutbacks could yet connect with their anger over wages and spill over into nationwide action. In any event, the French hospital strikes offer a useful example to British health activists as they face another wave of cuts and closures ●

HARRY SLOAN

Fighting section 28

THE CLAUSE is now law as section 28 of the local government act 1988, and the stop the clause campaign must turn to the next stage of the struggle. The next task is defending lesbian and gay equality work against the operation of section 28.

Two factors will help in consolidating and building the broad-based united front campaign which is key to taking the struggle forward. First, even though the clause was not stopped, the campaign achieved an historic success in mobilising, on 30 April, Europe's largest and most political demonstration ever for lesbian and gay rights, with significant support from all levels of the labour movement.

Second, the labour bureaucracy, taking its lead from the Association of London Authorities (ALA), has not collapsed at the first whiff of the law.

The section can be used either by the district auditor or by any individual asking for a judicial review. Such a legal challenge will take months to run its course.

The more immediate problem is one of self-censorship. Local authorities may water down commitments to lesbian and gay equality work now, hoping to avoid threatened legal challenges being pursued. Also, without a clear lead from either their employer or their trade union, workers will face the same dilemma for fear of their jobs.

The ALA statement — that equality work with self-identified lesbians and gay men is safe — is a positive stand. However, it leaves open the question of work in the education and youth services (in particular positive images), which is the main target of the legislation, and where the first legal challenge can be expected.

Nor have the ALA and the bureaucracy as a whole organised to bolster local authorities against the impact of the legislation.

Demands raised over the



Philip Core symbolically smashes a replica of Michelangelo's 'David' at an arts lobby demonstration against Clause 28

next period must be first and foremost on self-censorship, and secondly on repeal of the legislation. Only when an authority is legally challenged do we need to move on to addressing non-implementation and non-

compliance — present calls for which are not only premature but also threaten, unnecessarily, the unity of the campaign.

To this end we need a set of demands which flow from the situation and which can unite

local authorities, trade unions and the lesbian and gay movement to hold local authorities to the ALA position and prepare for the next stage of the struggle. These should be:

- campaign for repeal of section 28;
- defend any person victimised as a result of section 28;
- call on local authorities to make public statements reaffirming, strengthening and developing lesbian and gay equality work;
- defend policies on lesbian and gay equality in the courts if necessary.

We must be able to back these demands with mass mobilisations, particularly of the labour movement, to defend authorities that take a principled stand and are threatened with the legislation. To achieve this we must be clear about the basis of the united front for this next period in the struggle ●

TOM LOUCAS

Anglo-Irish discord

THE FACADE of harmonious relations between the British and Irish governments, as presented by the Anglo-Irish accord, is cracking open yet again.

The current rift has been caused by the bringing to court of the first test-case of the newly-agreed extradition treaty between the two states.

It has taken six long months of heated argument between the attorney-generals of Britain and the twenty-six counties for an agreement to be reached on the issue of extradition. Now, the shambles over Britain's attempt to extradite Patrick McVeigh has brought further embarrassment to the proponents of the viability of the agreement.

Britain has accused Dublin of backing down on demanding stipulations beyond the requirements of Irish legislation. This has provoked anger in Dublin, and such disagreements between the attorney-generals

are bound to lead to challenges in the courts, thus severely hampering the extradition of Irish republicans wanted by the British government.

Thus, in turn, the relationship between the Thatcher government and Dublin which has been constructed through the accord has been subjected to further pressures.

Recently the British government has resorted to heightened levels of state violence against the nationalist community, after the failure of the accord to quell nationalism in the six countries.

The Gibraltar shootings provoked indignant, defensive statements from the Irish government; yet their failure to break from collaborating with Thatcher's projects in Ireland illustrates how well Thatcher has succeeded in making the Irish bourgeoisie carry out her dirty work for her.

In fact, although it is clear

that the accord has utterly failed to achieve its stated objectives since it was agreed over two years ago, the one way in which we could say it has succeeded is that it has brought the constitutional nationalists of the twenty-six counties out of the shadows and into the forefront as the cutting-edge against republicanism, acting in conjunction with the British government.

The British government has demonstrated, through the Gibraltar murders that it has a 'shoot-to-kill' policy. The Dublin government continues, however to exercise its solidarity with the accord.

So the logic of the accord becomes increasingly more evident, and the Tories' solutions for stabilisation in Ireland come down to Gibraltar and the same old story: British state violence against the Irish people ●

KARINA HOLLYOAK

Tories declare open season on press freedom

Third-term Thatcherism has many precise objectives. One chilling facet of Thatcher's drive to reinforce the powers of the state has been her attempt to exercise a firmer ideological control on what can or cannot be broadcast.

Fierce opposition — including a 24-hour strike by broadcasting and journalist unions — met Leon Brittain's blatant attempt to coerce the BBC board of governors to stop the showing of the *Real Lives* programme. Mindful of this, the Tories have since spent considerable time and effort softening up their targets before declaring open season on press freedoms.

Norman Tebbit, then chair of the party, masterminded a skillful campaign to denigrate the 'left bias' of the BBC and demanded redress at every opportunity. In the favourable climate thus created, the spectacular police raid on the BBC studios in Scotland to seize untransmitted material in the Zircon case took place without any significant ripple.

This was followed by the *Spycatcher* affair, where the farcical flight of government lawyers from courtroom to courtroom created a convenient diversion from a far more sinister set of rulings.

In an unprecedented and so far untested extension of the contempt laws, the judiciary has granted government requests to gag both the BBC and Duncan Campbell. The injunction served on Campbell — ordering him to return GCHQ documents; to name those to whom he had passed the secret documents, and forbidding him to publish anything obtained from GCHQ employees — applied to all other journalists.

In the case of *Spycatcher*, the injunction forbidding one newspaper to publish certain material also extended to all newspapers. The fact that any injunction can be extended to other unnamed parties on the say so of a judge shows to what extent the judiciary is

prepared to rubber stamp the government drive towards more effective censorship.

To assume control through the courts is only one aspect of Thatcher's strategy. She also wants to deal with material that falls outside the ambit of state security. The appointment of William Rees-Mogg — former vice chair of the BBC and ex-editor of the *Times* — to head the newly

created Broadcasting Standards Council is the first step in a precise plan to regulate the media.

Twice beaten as a Tory candidate, Rees-Mogg holds perfect credentials. In 1985, he pressed BBC governors to view the programme *Real Lives* in advance and called vociferously for its banning — for the sole reason that it included an interview with an

IRA supporter.

He will undoubtedly link arms with Marmaduke Hussey (current chair of the BBC and another Thatcher protégé) to ban anything they — or the Tories — dislike as a piece of intolerable subversion.

Already the controversy surrounding *Tumbledown* points to the harsh time ahead. If a play which challenges the Tory version of events has to be cut, Thatcher's dream — that one day all political opposition will be branded 'subversion' — is nearly here. ●

JIM BOUMELHA

Axing the poll tax in Scotland

AFTER BEING rushed through parliament immediately before last year's general election, implementation of the poll tax is due in Scotland from April 1989.

The process of compiling a list of those eligible is currently in full swing. In Strathclyde region, which includes half of the country's five million population, the chief registration officer has taken on an army of 1000 temporary workers, mostly culled from the young unemployed.

Rates were easy to administer, insofar as every property had a legal owner or tenant who was liable. The poll tax, on the other hand, demands the compilation of a register of the entire population over 18 years of age.

This means forms being completed by a 'responsible person' in each household — usually the owner or tenant — who is legally bound to include every person liable for the tax. These are then to be collected and sent in within 21 days. Fines for non-collaboration are an initial £50 and £250 thereafter.

This process has led to a welter of protest, both spontaneous and co-ordinated. In Glasgow alone there are now 29 anti-poll tax campaigns meeting regularly.

Their composition is extremely heterogeneous — including activists from tenants' and community associations as well as a wide range of members of political parties from the Liberals leftwards.

In Pollockshields, for instance, it includes the Scottish National Party (SNP), the Communist Party (CP), the Labour Party, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), and the Scottish Labour Action Committee (a left split from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee).

Meetings are attended by up to 100 people and the whole area is regularly leafleted with a news bulletin giving up-to-the-minute news on the campaign.

In general these campaigns deliberately try to remain as flexible as possible. Over the registration period they have all followed the Labour Party in advocating the maximum frustration of the process by sending back forms with queries of all kinds.

They also clearly state that the most effective means of opposition is a mass campaign of non-registration and, come next April, non-payment. This is where they diverge from the leadership of the Labour Party in Scotland.

The Scottish TUC and the Labour Party have called a demonstration in Glasgow on 17 September against the poll tax. No doubt, like last September's rally for a Scottish Assembly, they will do little or nothing to build it.

It will therefore be essential that the anti-poll tax campaigns

around Scotland mobilise to ensure its success.

The SNP must also be pressurised into reversing their sectarian stance of last year. A feeble turn-out on 17 September would be used as an excuse to ditch finally any non-payment campaign.

Meanwhile, Labour Party activists must also mount continued pressure on regional councils to end all collaboration with the process. The latest scandalous example of such collaboration was a Strathclyde regional vacancy list special supplement in May advertising dozens of temporary positions to be filled from August to January for collectors of the tax.

The unions must also be called on to instruct their members not to apply for these positions. It will also be essential to campaign now to ensure a position of non-collaboration is taken by unions across the board with the impending attempts to collect fines for non-registration or non-payment by deductions from wages and benefits.

Opposition in Scotland to the poll tax is overwhelming. The Labour and trade union leadership must be forced to take the line of mass non-payment. The mushrooming Benn-Heller campaign groups must make building the anti-poll tax campaign a central priority, thus giving an example in action of the kind of politics they would pursue as Labour leaders. ●

TONY SOUTHALL

Will the TUC break with Hammond?

The TUC could be on the eve of a historic split. Barring a last-minute and desperate attempt at a fudge, there is now a real possibility that Eric Hammond's EETPU could be suspended, or even eventually expelled, from the ranks of the TUC. ALAN THORNETT writes.

AT THE CENTRE of the latest crisis is a key point of principle: the question of single-union deals with employers and their implications for the working class. However, the problem is that while the Electrical, Electronic and Telecommunications and Plumbing Union (EETPU) position is in open violation of trade union principles, the TUC majority is far from upholding a principled stand.

A TUC special review body is currently discussing a proposed code of conduct through which the TUC could control — rather than prevent — the introduction of single union deals. No agreed text has yet been produced, since TUC officials are keen to reach accommodation with the leaders of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) who have already said they will not accept anything which restricts their right to enter into such agreements. Much of the discussion is whether such a code should be compulsory or advisory.

The TUC has developed a dual position over single union no-strike deals. They are declared not acceptable (or more precisely *in some cases they are not acceptable*) in existing work places where other unions are already organised, but they are deemed *acceptable* on new or 'greenfield' sites.

This ignores the reality of single union deals, on greenfield sites or otherwise. The problem with them is what they represent as a method of organisation. With this type of deal, union officials approach the employer with a proposition for a single union arrangement, rather than the 'old fashioned' traditional approach of recruiting workers to union membership, and then demanding recognition.

This type of arrangement of course prevents from the very outset any strong shop stewards' organisation; the union structures created are bureaucratised and under the thumb of full-time officials from the beginning, with union membership seen as a means of delivering subscriptions to the head office rather than a way of



improving workers' pay or conditions.

This is the method that most of the general unions now see as an easy way to boost their flagging membership figures.

General secretary John Edmonds at the General, Municipal and Boilermakers (GMB) conference recently said that single union deals 'are the way of the future' for

the trade union movement. But he said 'We have got to make sure they are respectable and that they are signed by unions who will represent members properly'.

It is very difficult to have good agreements under such conditions, however. This is because in order to convince employers that it is in their interest to sign an agreement with a particular union, the union has to offer something the employers want — and it is easy to see what that is.

Single union deals are essentially a collapse into class collaboration. However, while they show the union leaders desperately seeking collaboration from the employer, they offer no guarantee that the employer will offer any real cooperation in return. The deals do not even necessarily result in the workforce joining the chosen union. In Nissan in the north east the AEU has a single union agreement covering the plant, but only a minority of the workforce has ever joined the union — and thanks to the deal, the rest remain unorganised.

On Tuesday 10 May the EETPU refused to accept a TUC directive requiring them to withdraw from two single union no-strike deals — one signed with the Japanese electronics firm Orion near Port Talbot, and the other with the haulage firm Christian Salvesen, based in Warrington. They also decided to ballot their 330,000 members, calling on them to endorse this decision.

At the same meeting the EETPU decided to refuse to appear in front of the TUC

general council to receive a formal censure for breaching a previous TUC directive which instructed them not to organise or recruit membership at Rupert Murdoch's News International plant at Wapping.

It is of course a scandal that the EETPU was not expelled for its scab-herding role in the Wapping dispute, but TUC general secretary Norman Willis has fought long and hard to avoid any disciplinary action against them. In the end, he only decided to support a 'strong censure' of the union to head off calls from the print unions for its expulsion.

Willis had the same attitude over the single union deal signed by the AEU in respect of the proposed Ford plant in Dundee. Willis defended Bill Jordan and the AEU, accepted the principle of the agreement (which involved jeopardising every existing union agreement with Ford in Britain), and even flew to Detroit to try to get Ford management to accept it.

The Orion and Salvesen deals, however, are a bit more difficult for Willis to ignore. Like Wapping, they involved the introduction of new deals into existing workplaces where other trade unions already exist. In each case these deals were signed over the heads of other trade unions already organising in the workplaces, who were overridden by the new agreements. Those unions have naturally protested strongly to the TUC, and it is this pressure which Willis has been forced to take into account.

Suspension or even expulsion of unions from the TUC is not a new thing in Britain. Many unions were suspended in the early

1970s, for example, for registering under the Heath government's industrial relations act. But if the EETPU are expelled it would represent a more decisive break than in the past.

This is because the EETPU — along with the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) and to a lesser extent the AEU — represents a development in Britain of US-style 'business unionism', which is to the right even of the 'new realism'. The hall-mark of business-unionism is not just rightwing, collaborationist policies, but a qualitatively different relationship to the employers, which shows itself most clearly in being willing to join openly and directly with employers to destroy other trade unions.

A split in the TUC is now a very real possibility, and it is a necessary development if the trade union movement is to be defended. It is true that a split would be the end of a unitary trade union federation in Britain, and as such will bring new problems. But there are higher issues at stake. Unity is important, but not at any price — and the cost of unity with the Hammond leadership would be that the TUC remain hamstrung, drifting rightwards towards the policies of the EETPU, while Hammond plots with ever-more employers to destroy genuine trade unionism. This is what 'compromise' on this issue really means.

This is shown clearly by Hammond's actions even while these things have been under discussion at the TUC. The EETPU has concluded an agreement to work alongside a consortium of construction

EETPU: the left and the ballot

IF ERIC HAMMOND, rightwing general secretary of the Electrical, Electronic and Telecommunication and Plumbing Union (EETPU), cannot get open season for business unionism within the TUC, he wants out of the TUC altogether.

At the time of writing, the results of the ballot of EETPU members on future TUC affiliation are not known. Hammond is seeking endorsement, through the ballot, of his whole strategy of single-union, no-strike and sweetheart deals. It is more than likely that there will be a majority behind him and the executive.

How should the left within the union respond?

Hammond is openly floating the idea of a rival union

federation, involving the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the Royal College of Nursing. However, it is not ruled out that he will use a successful ballot result to put pressure on the TUC to capitulate, rather than break away immediately.

It is certainly possible that TUC leaders will indeed reach agreement with Hammond, especially given their willingness to take on board the principle of single-union deals. One thing is clear, there will be an awful lot of toing and froing in the run up to the TUC congress in September.

Socialists in the EETPU have campaigned hard against the executive, defending basic trade union principles and the organisational integrity of the labour movement.

If, as we expect, the ballot goes against us and moves are set in train for the split of our union from the TUC, the position of socialists — and all principled trade unionists — within the EETPU would become untenable. Shop stewards from other unions have already said that they would refuse to work with non-TUC stewards.

Active stewards from the London Electricity Board have agreed that they will call depot meetings and argue strongly for an organised transfer of all EETPU members into a TUC union. This procedure will have to be fought for across the board if workers currently in the EETPU are to face up to the imminent threat of privatisation and other attacks on wages and conditions ●

AN EETPU SHOP STEWARD



Eric Hammond: seeks endorsement of his single union, no-strike deals through the EETPU membership ballot

companies to train workers for the London docklands development project. The possibility, therefore, looms that the EETPU will be moving beyond plumbing into other building trades such as bricklaying and plastering!

Even Union of Communication Workers (UCW) leader and hard-line right winger Alan Tuffin, speaking at their conference in June, has added his voice to the calls for the EETPU to be expelled from the TUC.

Hammond knows that leaving the TUC is a very difficult option. Once outside the TUC he will lose the protection of the Bridlington agreement (which outlaws the poaching of members between affiliated unions) and the EETPU would be immediately vulnerable to recruiting campaigns by other unions.

Even now, left wingers inside the EETPU are beginning to mobilise, in the first instance to deal a blow against Hammond by building the biggest possible vote against any move to leave the TUC. If (as seems certain) this fails to halt the split, the fight will be on to prepare the best conditions to break off whole sections of the union to join appropriate TUC-affiliated unions.

The EETPU would also be seriously isolated once outside the TUC. If, as seems likely, the AEU stays in the TUC — since the AEU membership is too vulnerable to poaching from unions like the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) for Jordan and Laird to risk leaving — Hammond could be left to seek a new alliance with a ragbag of ill-assorted scab organisations like the UDM and even the 'pro-

fessional' strikebreakers of the Royal College of Nursing.

However Hammond may try to put on a brave face to dress up such an arrangement, he knows that this type of coalition is scarcely likely to attract substantial support or enthusiasm from even right wing unions.

This isolation should be compounded by the disaffiliation of the union from the Labour Party as well. It is an outrage that Michael Meacher has declared himself opposed to kicking out the EETPU. This is something which needs to be fought out at this year's Labour Party conference.

Only by taking the hardest line against the EETPU can the worst effects of a split in the TUC be combatted. Those who look for compromise with business unionism must be rigorously opposed ●

P&O strikers stand firm

SINCE SEAFARERS' leader Sam McCluskie ordered Sealink back to work in May, one thousand P&O strikers have been left to fight alone. They are determined to continue the struggle, and mass pickets still attract hundreds. *Socialist Outlook* spoke to P&O striker JASON GROOMBRIDGE.

What is the latest situation with the strike?

We've come to a brick wall at the moment. We are waiting for the next move by P&O who are going through the courts to get the picket line at Dover removed. We have got six people on the line and the rest demonstrating. The judge calls this intimidation and says it is against the law. He wants the picket line removed and until it is removed he will not lift the sequestration.

We won't lift the picket for anything because we know we are in the right.

How do you see the role of the leadership since they sent Sealink back to work?

McCluskie should be putting his job as leader of the NUS before being treasurer of the Labour Party. He should be leading us. If he had Arthur Scargill's head on he would be all right!

I think McCluskie would have liked to continue the secondary action but he didn't call for a national strike which he should have done. He said the rest of the country was rebelling and that rather than see the union split he would see people go back to work.

I don't think it was the rank and file but the delegates who argued for stopping the secondary action — about three-quarters of the delegates voted for a return to work. A leader of a union should have put his foot down instead of going along with it. McCluskie keeps trying to act within the law but the law is against him.

The rank and file are not bothered about the funds being sequestrated — we know the union is its membership, not just its funds. The funds could be built up again once the



Thousands demonstrate in support of the P&O strikers, May 1988

strike was won. Before I go back to work I'd eat grass.

How strong are the mass pickets now?

We've still got about 1000 sacked and refusing to go back. We are standing firm. The people left on strike realise that the ships sailing are unsafe and that people going on board are risking their lives.

There's a mass picket between 7.00 and 10.00 every morning and we are asking for other unions to show their solidarity by turning out on Saturdays to the picket. We're getting about 400 to the morning pickets.

How do you see the right to picket after the judgement and the refusal to lift the sequestration?

We feel that if it's true and we are not allowed to demonstrate then this applies to every person in Britain. That's why we feel we are right. If the judge was right, the police would have moved in on us by now and they haven't.

How is the support coming in?

Before the Labour Party and the TUC set up the fund administered by the TUC, support was coming in fine. Now everywhere we go people say they're sending funds to the TUC. So things are getting hard.

We have built up the kitchens and there is a community around them now. We would like to see the funds still going to the support

groups. Since the strike started we've had £320 (of official money) in total — including £120 last week from the TUC fund. The rest came from the NUS which said we couldn't get more because of the sequestration.

There are six different support groups. Here in Deal we are feeding 300 families a week — so we need about £4000 a week. We need money sent directly otherwise the support group will run out of funds.

What are the main things you need in solidarity?

We need financial and moral support. We would like political support too. It would be tremendous if people could come down on the Saturday pickets and join us ●

● *Rush financial support to: Aylesham Support Group, 61 Castle Drive, Whitfield, Dover, Kent. Tel: 0263-840202.*

Canterbury Support Group, 75 Tenterden Drive, Canterbury, Kent. Tel: 0227-66768. Deal Support Group, Magness House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. Tel: 0304-367840.

Dover Support Group, 210 London Road, Dover, Kent. Tel: 0304-214113.

Folkestone Support Group, 7 Tennyson Place, Folkestone, Kent. Tel: 0303-51997.

Thanet Support Group, 147 High Street, Ramsgate, Kent. Tel: 0843-387990.

Cheques payable to the groups named above.



Step up the fight in the unions!

Every passing day brings a new policy statement or bureaucratic measure from Neil Kinnock which proves how necessary it is for Tony Benn and Eric Heller to challenge for the Labour leadership. **PETE FIRMIN** argues.

LONG GONE are the days when 'new realism' could be said to be creeping. Only those who don't wish to face facts can now deny that it is rampant.

But the Benn-Heller leadership campaign shows that it can be challenged from the left. There can be no doubt that it is the leadership contest which has set the context for the recent setbacks suffered by party leader Neil Kinnock and his fellow new realists.

Kinnock's dramatic double U-turn on disarmament (from unilateralism to 'multilateralism' and back again in the space of two weeks) is a case in point. The failure of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) executive to nominate the Kinnock-Hattersley ticket and its decision, instead, to nominate nobody for the time being, unquestionably had a major impact on the Kinnock camp. Such a decision would have been most unlikely had it not been for the fact that the party leadership is being challenged this year.

In a sense, then, we have Benn and Heller to thank for the fact that moves to abandon unilateral nuclear disarmament have been temporarily held in check. But Kinnock's initial willingness to abandon this policy should serve as a warning to party and trade union activists; this is what they can expect if they do not throw their support behind the Benn-Heller campaign.

The isolation of the PGO strikers in Dover after the short-lived national strike in their support by the National Union of Seamen (NUS) is a reminder to every worker that the differences between the left and union leaders like Sam McCluskie who support Kinnock are not the niceties of abstract debate but vital issues in the defence of pay, jobs, safety and trade union rights.

Benn and Heller intervened just in time. The longer a challenge was put off, the

Wayne Edgington

freer had been Kinnock's hand to do as he pleased with party policy. Benn is right to warn that the new policy papers emerging from the various working groups represent a further serious shift to the right.

Maybe Benn and Heffer stand no chance of winning against Kinnock: but an enthusiastic campaign in their support, taking up all the policy issues and reaching out to those in struggle can begin to forge links and organise a serious challenge to all the Kinnockites who are ditching socialist policies in their grovelling to the press barons.

Local Benn-Heffer campaigns have been set up in many areas, and Tony Benn has already addressed extremely large rallies in places including Liverpool and Edinburgh. Yet organisational and political problems are limiting the impact of the campaign.

Despite the existence of democratic, non-exclusive local campaigns, regional organisers have simply been imposed, often with no connection to them. Some of them, such as *Socialist Action* supporters, initially opposed any challenge for the leadership.

Nor is there any sign that the campaign has prioritised the crucial fight to win support and strengthen the left at rank and file level in the fight against 'new realism' in the trade unions. The National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), for example, is balloting its membership on the leadership issue: but no Benn-Heffer coordinator has yet been appointed to make sure the left's argument is heard.

The Benn-Heffer fringe meeting at NUPE conference was poorly organised and held at a lunch-time, meaning that it attracted only 120 from a conference of over 1,200 in a union holding one of the largest block votes. The National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) is one of the few unions deciding its position on the leadership at conference: yet Benn and Heffer pulled out of a planned fringe meeting at that conference in Swansea!

These episodes are symptomatic of some of the political problems of the campaign. They stem from an underestimation of the crisis of leadership in the labour movement.

When Tony Benn ran for deputy leader against Denis Healey in 1981, there was a strong mood throughout the movement against any return to the right wing poli-



Wayne Edgington

Eric Heffer at Chesterfield

cies that had brought disaster to the Wilson-Callaghan government. That mood even influenced sections of the union bureaucracy, who supported Benn. Large rallies could be called at the drop of a leaflet and there was little need to urge activists to campaign.

Now after eight years of defeats at the hands of Thatcher and retreats by the union bureaucracy, and five years of Kin-

'Kinnock moved from unilateralism to "unilateralism" and back again'

nock building on these defeats to push back the left wing policy gains of 1981, the mood is very different.

No union executive can be expected to declare its support for Benn and Heffer (even the new 'left' executive of the TGWU will not push matters this far for fear of losing the support of the 'middle ground'), and many activists have become demoralised.

All this means that the campaign has to

be taken out into the union memberships, and those sections newly brought into activity such as the seafarers, abortion rights activists and those fighting section 28. Links must be made — for instance between the fight for abortion rights and the issue of women's representation in the Labour Party; between opposition to immigration controls and the fight for black sections; and between all these issues and the need to build a new leadership in the labour movement.

Above all this requires a frontal challenge to Kinnock's real power-base: the union bureaucracy. This means a fight to put forward class struggle policies around which the employers can be resisted, and showing how the union leaders have consistently retreated in the face of their attack. A real leadership challenge in the Labour Party has to align itself unashamedly with those left wing oppositional forces in the unions fighting for such policies and against the sell-outs and bureaucratic manoeuvres of the present leaderships.

Instead, a reluctance to go as far as is necessary in challenging the union bureaucracy — and indeed a conservative attachment to some middle layers of the

bureaucracy itself — is holding back the Benn-Heffer campaign.

This same reluctance sharply to confront the labour movement bureaucracy has marked the Campaign group since its formation. Breaking with the Tribune group in disgust at those who refused to support Tony Benn in the deputy leadership campaign (like Kinnock, who abstained), it was a positive break from being simply a loyal opposition caucus within the parliamentary Labour Party. The Campaign group declared its intention to link with campaigns and activists outside parliament and decided on some basic issues of policy (such as, importantly, opposition to the witchhunt).

Yet this commitment was always more real from some than from others. During the miners' strike, some like Denis Skinner and Tony Benn spoke at hundreds of meetings in support of the miners. But the Campaign group has always operated by consensus, which meant that it could be held back by its right wing some of whom were clearly only in it to keep their constituency parties happy and some of whom were allied with anti-Scargill forces in the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and other unions.

This has meant that on occasions no clear policy has been offered. The Campaign group could hardly call for a three-line whip against the Alton bill for example when it accepted that some of its own members would not vote against

because of their 'consciences' as practising Catholics!

The conflict over how far to go in opposing Kinnock finally came to a head over the decision to mount a challenge for the leadership this year, with sections of the Campaign group deserting (several of whom clearly considered their own positions as shadow spokespersons more important than policy). Its aim to link up with forces in the unions has never happened outside of a few individuals (like Scargill) because the Campaign MPs looked chiefly to those holding national executive positions — at a time when very few in these positions are prepared to sharply oppose 'new realism'.

The challenge this year is vital, and needs to be built as widely as possible, but the left also needs to look to the longer term and the lessons of the campaign. This means that the left itself must recognise that a challenge will only be successful when it is across the board, taking on the policies not only of Kinnock but also of those who wield the block vote in his support.

To do this a united democratic left needs to be built, campaigning around the policies and actions which can defeat Thatcher and throw aside those in the ranks of the labour movement who hold back that fight. The linking of the leadership challenge to the 'Chesterfield current' can begin to create such organisation for the battles ahead ●

SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

Two thousand people gathered in Chesterfield in June for the second Socialist Conference, **MANDY MUDD** reports.

THE POLITICAL landscape had changed considerably since the first conference last October — the struggles in the NHS, Fords and at Dover, the victory for the left in the Transport and General Workers Union, the mass mobilisations against clause 28 and the Alton Bill and the leadership challenge inside the Labour Party: all contributed to a mood of revitalisation and a sense that there is something to fight for.

The progress made between October and June was reflected in the structure of the recall conference. The first attempt was very much a rallying call to the left with the great and good speaking to the masses.

This time the emphasis was on participation and development of policy from the base up. The amount of time devoted to policy workshops showed a serious commitment to develop a detailed and coherent alternative to Labour's policy review. The regional workshops moved the organisation forward at grassroots level and gave steering committee representation to the established regional conferences — a welcome democratisation of the conference's structures.

The importance placed on the development of the trade union Solidarity Network, Women for Socialism and the involvement of Black Sections in the Chesterfield network was illustrated by the make up of the platforms in the plenary sessions and by the space afforded for those groups to meet and discuss separately during the conference.

So what is the potential of the Socialist Conference and what can be achieved by it?

The forces involved show an important link between left intellectuals and activists and an attempt by elements of the Campaign group to orientate to all who support a socialist programme — not only left Labour Party members. This affords a real opportunity to develop socialist policies out of the experiences of those in struggle and at the same time to use formulated policy to sustain and develop struggles and raise the horizons of those involved. Developing strong links between regional organisations, Women for Socialism, the Solidarity Network and the policy groups is essential for this to develop in

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practice.

The regional conferences are where Chesterfield will be seen to act and intervene in struggle. The existing groups all have different forms and focuses — responding to the particular needs in each area. These must remain open to all, with democratic structures, and they must be seen to give active support to campaigns not just to be a talking shop or dissolve into sectarian wrangling.

The Socialist Conference should support and co-ordinate the work of existing campaigns, not take over or substitute for these initiatives. However, there are certain initiatives it is well-placed to take — a national campaign against the poll tax and a conference on the future of local government, for example.

The Benn-Heffer challenge to the Labour Party leadership is seen correctly as central to the development of the Socialist Conference. The battle of ideas unleashed by the challenge has opened up valuable space for the Socialist Conference to exploit, but building the Socialist Conference must mean more than a challenge to the Labour Party leadership. The aim behind the challenge was to initiate a debate and to strengthen the organisation of the left — the Socialist Conference is the logical means to take this forward after the vote at party conference in October.

But there are considerable difficulties involved in establishing any new movement and the Socialist Conference will not be exempt. Its relationship to existing groups and campaigns must be worked through carefully and alliances built on principled policies. We must recognise that the alliances built between groups coming from different political traditions are fragile. The best way to consolidate these is through the experience of working together in struggle — though there must also be respect for the differences between these groups which should not be papered over in attempts to offer a false unity.

A particular point of conflict is the various analyses of the oppression of women, black people, lesbians and gay men and the recognition of the rights of these groups to self-organisation within a class-based perspective. The idea of counterposing a 'class' analysis to self-organisation of the oppressed is false and will only serve to drive away the hundreds of women, black people, lesbians and gay men who have already voiced their support for self-organisation — without them the movement will be weakened.

The Socialist Conference offers a real

A real opportunity for the left



Mandy Mudd addresses the Labour Briefing fringe meeting at the Chesterfield socialist conference



Ex-Silentnight striker Janet Seymore speaking on behalf of the trade union Solidarity Network at the Chesterfield conference

opportunity to develop a movement that links together all sections of the left. Its structures are becoming more open and democratic, there does seem to be a real

commitment to build from the base and to take on and respond to criticism. It is important that this opportunity is not wasted ●

Anti-social, less security



Mike Abraham/Network

Claimants wait at the Hackney Housing Office, East London

The Tories' 1988 social security act has attracted widespread opposition across the political spectrum — **IAIN GAULT** asks how the outrage be translated into victory.

FOR MANY PEOPLE, the social security changes introduced on 11 April have highlighted the heartlessness and cynicism of the present administration. This is particularly the case since their introduction took place just a few days after Chancellor Lawson had announced a package of tax cuts amounting to some £2 billion.

Public discussion of the changes in social security and housing benefit has tended to focus on how many claimants will 'lose out' as a result of the new regulations. Individual cases of extreme hardship have been used with some effect to expose the immediate consequences of the government's 'reforms'. However, for the left it is equally important to understand the long-term implications of the recent changes, and, in doing so, begin to develop an alternative socialist response.

Since their election in 1979, the Tories have made no secret of their hostility to certain aspects of the social security system inherited from their post-war predecessors. In a series of legislative

changes, beginning in 1980 and culminating in the 1988 act, the government has developed a specific agenda for social security based on the following 'principles':

- Direct cuts in benefit levels and entitlement. De-indexation of benefits from average earnings. Freezing particular benefits or failing to raise them in line with prices (child benefit for example). Increasing entitlement periods for certain benefits. Withdrawing a proportion of benefit from strikers' families.
- Privatisation. Transferring central government responsibilities to private agencies of one sort or another: insurance companies and financial institutions in the case

of pensions, employers in the case of statutory sick pay.

● Attacks on 'universal' benefits and increased means-testing. Overall a reduction in scope of social security provision and increasing stigmatisation of claimants.

● A stepping-up of attacks on individual claimants. Increased staffing of 'fraud squads' and 'specialist claims control units'. Introduction of the so-called 'non-prosecution interview', designed to intimidate people into withdrawing claims.

● Stripping claimants of legal rights, under the guise of 'simplifying' the system. Replacement of legal entitlement to 'single' and 'urgent needs' payments with a discretionary cash limited 'social fund'.

Given the scope of the Tories' offensive, there is a clear and pressing need to mobilise the maximum possible number of individuals and organisations against particular attacks and on specific issues. Coalitions such as 'Action for Benefits' can — despite their limitations — play an important role in uniting claimants, voluntary organisations, and those trade unionists directly involved in administering the system, on a programme of opposition to cuts and restructuring.

However, in opposing the government's plans for social security, we should be wary of falling back on an uncritical defence of the previous system; a position which both the Labour Party and the major civil service unions have tended to adopt.

Such a stance is an untenable one for socialists for the simple reason that the

entire post-war social security system, despite embodying some real gains, is profoundly flawed from the standpoint of the working class and the oppressed. In reality Thatcher's social security 'reforms' represent not only a discontinuity and a break with the post-war 'welfarist' consensus, but also, in many essential respects, a continuation and exaggeration of the most divisive and inequalitarian aspects of the system it established.

From the time of its introduction, the

'we should be wary of falling back on an uncritical defence of the previous system'

post-war social security system has presented an unstable compromise between working class demands for 'welfare' and capital's need to discipline the working class and maintain its 'incentive' to labour. Thatcher clearly recognises this, and is determined, within the framework of the present system, to alter the balance of forces even more decisively in favour of her class. Socialists must also recognise it and, with equal determination, promote policies in the field of social security and income maintenance which consciously unify and strengthen the working class.

Four elements of such a socialist alternative can be mentioned briefly. First is a rejection of means-testing and of the 'insurance' principle in relation to income

maintenance, and a recognition that these serve to reproduce the existing divisions within the working class, particularly between the employed and the unemployed.

We should be promoting an alternative system based on a guaranteed income for all.

Secondly, a rejection of the family as a unit of assessment and of the consequent reinforcement of the dependent status of women.

The third element of a socialist alternative to the social security system demands a critique of the racism of the existing system both in terms of its day-to-day operation and of its close connection with immigration control.

Finally, we need an analysis which is capable of illuminating the connections between the operation of the capitalist system and the social marginalisation of groups such as the elderly and the disabled. Support for the self-organisation of these groups and an acceptance of their demands, not least for a decent standard of living, is a priority for the left as a whole.

An alternative of this kind, supported and advanced by the labour movement and organisations of the oppressed could go some way towards seizing the agenda for 'radical reform' of the social security system back from the Tories and into the hands of those whom it most directly affects. The self-confident promotion by the Tories of their ideology opposed to the 'dependent society' may yet prove their weakest link ●

Realignment in the CPSA

AT THIS year's Civil and Public Servants Association (CPSA) conference the right smashed the left electorally. Last year the left virtually wiped out the right. What may seem from the outside to be a random game of swings and roundabouts is more predictable from the inside, where a long process of realignment continues.

The 1984 split in the broad left, when Kinnock loyalists and communist party members formed their own broad left 84, allowed CPSA's right wing in to run the union.

In just two years the broad left was back, electing *Militant* supporter John Macreadie as general secretary (although he was eventually ousted), and sweeping to power on the NEC in May 1987 with a majority

of 18 to eight.

Militant supporters misunderstood this situation, arguing that the Kinnockites were decisively beaten and CPSA was back to a straight left/right polarisation.

In fact the realignment was continuing. A soft left bloc, based primarily in the bureaucracy, was forming — the type of force which characterises most of the major TUC unions.

The remnants of the old guard right wing are merging with the rightward-moving Kinnockite forces. The electoral victory of this coalition is the significant result of this year's conference.

Its representation is, however, patchy: ruling the DHSS section executive since 1987, but less manifest at

national level — only three of the eight Kinnockites elected to the new NEC ran on a 'joint' ticket with the right wing.

Basing itself solely on opposition to the broad left may be electorally popular, but is not a policy for running a union. Indeed, the broad left is seen as the body prepared to organise against the Tories; and conference continued to support most of its policies.

The broad left's problem is how to mobilise the membership's will to fight (shown by the high incidence of industrial action). Last year's tactics failed, as the CPSA full time machinery outmanoeuvred a broad left more open to bureaucratic solutions than relating to activists.

The broad left, historically controlled by *Militant* supporters, must change to regain power. With the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) blaming the CPSA broad left for every defeat since Tolpuddle, but otherwise not participating, the main impetus for change comes from the rank and file-based socialist caucus.

A mainly independent hard left grouping, including *Labour Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser* supporters, its strategy couples democratic reforms in CPSA with class struggle politics outside.

This is the way to halt the creeping soft left bloc and build a fightback against the Tories. The broad left must recognise this if it is to survive ● FERGUS LEE

Lessons of the Polish strike movement

The spring strike wave in Poland rocked the Jaruzelski regime, argues **ZBIGNIEW KOWALEWSKI.**

THE STRIKE movement, which began in Poland on 25 April and finished on 10 May was the strongest and broadest since the December 1981 defeat.

It began by paralysing for one day the public transport system in Bydgoszcz and Inowrocław. Then it spread immediately to the largest factory in the country, the Lenin steelworks in Nowa Huta. It lasted two weeks there. At the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, it lasted nine days.

Short strikes or other protests occurred in at least a dozen other large enterprises in several regions. The strikes were accompanied by street demonstrations, which were brutally repressed by the police, and by student mobilisations in several cities.

For the first time since 1981 the bureaucracy violently repressed workers inside a factory. During the assault on the Lenin steelworks the elite troops of the ministry of the interior used bloody physical violence to crush the strike and the morale of the strikers.

The spirit, symbols and ideas of Solidarity emerged again as both a reference point for, and an expression of, the movement.

A number of lessons can be learnt from this new experience of struggle in Poland.

First, it is clear that the resistance of the working class to the economic reforms of Jaruzelski is still intact. The first expression of this in a mass way was the defeat of the regime in the November referendum.

The majority wings of the leadership of Solidarity and of the democratic opposition had declared themselves in favour of reforms which would allow the economy to be based on market forces. Only the recently-formed Polish Socialist Party condemned Jaruzelski's economic reforms as anti-worker and called for them to be fought by means of mass struggle.

Nevertheless, the working class, which had suffered considerable reductions in its standard of living, increasing wage differentials and growing social inequalities, experienced a contradiction between this reform and its class interests.

Secondly, the tendency towards solidarity and the unity of the working class through the process of social resistance continued. The economic reform was directed at dispersing resistance and containing industrial action within individual factories and isolating them from one

another.

In several factories the bureaucracy managed to demobilise the striking workers by conceding significant wage increases.

The Nowa Huta strike committee played an exemplary role against this tendency. Its central demands were for a 100 per cent rise in wages to compensate for the rise in prices, and a sliding scale of wages for every worker in the country including those in the education and health sector and pensioners. This could have laid a basis for overcoming the dispersed nature of the social struggles.

Thirdly, the student-worker alliance — one of the gains of the 1980-81 revolution — has reached a new level. On 3 May Cracow was the scene for a combative demonstration of some 10,000 people, the majority of whom were students and young people, under the slogans of solidarity with the workers of Nowa Huta and spreading the strike.

Taking the form of fierce street battles, it lasted until dawn next day. In response to the police assault on the Lenin steelworks and the savage repression of the striking workers, the university students and secondary school students of Cracow declared a general strike. Movements of solidarity with the workers in struggle began in the universities in several cities.

Fourthly, the immediate socio-economic demands made by the workers took on a strong transitional dynamic. From the defence of the standard of living of all Polish workers called for by the workers of Nowa Huta, the strike movement went on to call for free trade unions and the legalisation of Solidarity.

The general assembly of the Cracow university students adopted a declaration which gave full support to the demands of the workers and called for university autonomy and political and trade union pluralism.

Students from secondary schools in the city supported this declaration overwhelmingly. In the Lenin shipyard, a general meeting of the strikers rejected any accord with the administration while the regime refused to recognise Solidarity there.

Fifthly, the absence of a coherent political leadership has appeared as the main weakness of the mass movement in Poland today.

In Nowa Huta, the strike was launched by one lone worker, Andrzej Szewczuwaniec. Through his own determination he gained in 24 hours the support of a majority of the 30,000 workers in the plant for the strike. Under the direction of Szewczuwaniec, the strike committee led the struggle tenaciously.

Three old leaders of Solidarity in Nowa Huta acted in the same way. Sacked from the steelworks after 1981, they too became involved in the strike committee. In Nowa Huta, this combination of old and new activists contributed to the shape of the strike.

In Cracow a united front was formed between various groupings of Solidarity, the Independent Association of Students (NZS), of pacifists, socialists and nationalists, to mobilise the masses in solidarity with the workers in Nowa Huta and call for the extension of the strike. This front played an important role in unleashing the student mobilisation.

In the Lenin shipyard, the leadership of the strike was weak. Lech Walesa took an initially vacillating attitude. The first night of the strike was marked by a fierce argument between Walesa and his traditional rival Andrzej Gwiazda. As a result of the weaknesses of the leadership, the strike was confined to a minority: only ten per cent of the shipyard workers continued the strike — mainly the younger workers, who were very radical.

The national leadership of Solidarity was paralysed, not only by the arrest of its members by the police but by its attitude to the economic reforms of the regime, its ambiguous and passive attitude to the defence of the standard of living of the masses and its expectations of the possibility of negotiation with Jaruzelski.

Faced with the strike in Nowa Huta, Jacek Kuron declared that only the formation of a coalition government with representatives of the regime and individuals who had the confidence of Solidarity and the catholic church would be able to ward off the danger of a social explosion.

The development of the mass struggle was brief and partial. But it has weakened the bureaucratic regime, paralysing it with a feeling of powerlessness. Significantly, the weekly magazine *Polityka*, politically close to the Jaruzelski team, had an editorial on 7 May under the headline 'vicious circle' ●

Palestinians feel their strength

After seven months of widespread rebellion, the united leadership of the Palestinian uprising continues to develop increasingly sophisticated means of struggle. JACK GOLDBERG reports.



Palestinians work the land beneath Grata settlement, West Bank: now the Zionists plan to destroy their crops

'RABIN VERSUS the cucumber' ran the headline of a Hebrew magazine describing the latest attempt by the Zionist state to stop the Palestinian uprising — *intifadah* — in all its manifestations.

In the early days, it was necessary to shock the Israelis through a mass upsurge, through acts of defiance and heroism. Thousands of children, youth and women stood shoulder to shoulder to confront the elite of the Israeli defence force (IDF), ready to die and show the world what they are capable of doing.

The bloodbath was inevitable as the IDF — led by Labour defence minister Rabin — ruthlessly carried out premier Shamir's wish to 'crush them like grasshoppers'. The death toll reached more than 300, with another several thousand wounded. The 'broken bone' police tactics designed to keep the demonstrators off the streets brought in a record 600 hospital cases in just two weeks! This was the confrontational period at its high point: eyeball to eyeball.

The Palestinians knew that the price was going to be high. But the emotional impulse of the collective act of tens of thousands of demonstrators rising as one was necessary. They needed to feel and test out how weak and vulnerable were their conquerors.

'The soldiers are afraid of us. They run away like rabbits.' Capturing an Israeli soldier, disarming him, stripping him naked and running him out of sight was the ultimate — almost religious — ritual to cleanse oneself of the decades of fear, humiliation and exploitation.

Having tested the combativity of the Palestinian masses, the next crucial test for the united leadership was to create a bridge between the spontaneous movement and the organisational structures and coordination vital to the survival of the *intifadah*.

The response of the Palestinians to the political directives issued by the leadership in the leaflets was an important dimension of the new situation.

The communique no.1 called for a general strike, and the response was overwhelming. The general strike — also involving Palestinians from the occupied territories who work in Israel — proved beyond doubt that the whole Palestinian population was united behind the new leadership, which reflected the confidence and maturity of the Palestinian masses.

Having proved to be the authoritative voice of the *intifadah*, the united leadership was soon faced with enormous challenges. Obviously they had to keep the uprising alive, finding the correct pace from demonstration to demonstration, from general strike to the next general strike. They also had physically to survive the Zionist army's onslaught on the Palestinian towns and villages.

One way of shackling the leadership has been to detain Palestinian youth *en masse* — as many as the state structures can cope with. Currently several thousand are held in jail — some 3,000 at Ansar 3 alone, a makeshift concentration camp in the



Negev desert. Another form of collective punishment has been the round-the-clock curfews which, at times, affected over half a million Palestinians. Having cut them off from the rest of the world, the Zionist state hoped to make their conditions so intolerable as to drive a wedge between them and their leadership.

Needless to say, the Zionists underestimated the level of Palestinian maturity and politicisation: instead of breeding disunity and submission, the deprivation, hunger and anxiety in fact cemented the grass roots organisations into a huge solidarity movement that reaches deep into Israel itself.

It is here that the *intifadah* has inflicted the most damaging wounds. Unlike the war in Lebanon, which was generally seen as a 'foreign policy' issue, the uprising struck at the heart of the Zionist state. And it came on the eve of the celebration of Israel's 40th anniversary.

As Israel started making lavish preparations to convince the world that all was quiet on the eastern front, the *intifadah* precipitated the worst moral crisis in Israel's history. However, this does not mean that there is an even division between the friends and enemies of the Palestinians. When Shamir promises to crush the Palestinians, the majority of Israelis ask for more.

The country has polarised to the right, with Likud's 'no quarter' policies enjoying unprecedented popularity. The recent incident in Beita, where a settler ran amok in a Palestinian village, killing two Palestinians, wounding several others and in the process shooting by mistake a young Israeli girl, is a chilling reminder of the mass hatred that can be unleashed at will. Under pressure from the far right calling for swift revenge, 14 houses were demolished, hundreds of villagers detained — six of them deported — and the village sealed off.

Despite the occasional eruption of such extreme hysteria, the dominant consensus remains within two main political perspectives. Likud has opted for apartheid — continued settlement of the territories coupled with a denial of Palestinian political and civil rights. Labour has opted instead for bantustans — hoping to co-opt King Hussein of Jordan in a joint project to police the Palestinians.

Whatever the future of either project, the fracture resulting from the *intifadah* is working its way through Israeli society.

As Peace Now's political limitations prevented it from developing into a movement that would identify with the Palestinians, the anti-Zionist left became the engine of the protest movement calling for the withdrawal of the Israeli troops. Despite their small number, their resonance and periphery is growing by the

day.

The two main groups, Dai la-Kibbush and Hala ha-Kibbush, are now organising on a national scale. Yeshi Gul, organising in the ranks of the army, has stepped up the movement of refuseniks among the reservists, on a platform of refusing to take part in suppression of the uprising.

The Israeli elite in the universities has been stirred to its roots by the events in the West Bank and Gaza. Meeting after meeting in campuses demanded the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops. The 21st year charter, youth against occupation, the women in black (who assemble every Friday in Paris Square in Jerusalem) are the thin edge of a broader movement that will sooner or later threaten the national consensus.

Another important segment of Israeli society, the oriental Jews, have also been affected by the uprising. Several groups have boldly come forward, shattering the old myth that the 'backward orientals', are 'Likud fodder' and started to challenge some of the norms imposed by the Israeli state. More than 100 oriental Jews were prepared to break the laws banning any contact with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO); in the event the second meeting with the PLO in Hungary was composed mainly of oriental Jews.

The mushrooming of small groups such as the 'Committee for Israeli-Palestinian dialogue', the 'Oriental Front' and 'East for peace' will pile up further pressure on the national consensus.

Alarmed at the activities of the peace movement, the Israeli state launched a counter-offensive in April, primarily aimed against the far left. They needed, however, to cast the net far wider, attacking journalists, including the foreign press as well as Palestinian journalists, newspapers and agencies.

Most important was the closure of *De-rekh Hanitzotz* in Israel proper, which developed into a full-scale witchhunt. Five members of the Hanitzotz organisation, Ribhi al-Aruri, Ya'acov and Roni Ben Efrat, Michal Schwarz and Hadar Lahar have now been charged among other things with membership of the Democratic Front — a 'crime' which carries up to a 40-year jail sentence.

The move to criminalise Israeli political activists is calculated to cut off the far left from the rest of the protest movement. When it seemed merely a question of press freedom, a number of liberals were prepared to stick their necks out to defend those charged; but use of the terms 'state security' and 'terrorism' have deterred any public display of support.

However, the main preoccupation of the Israeli government remains the Palestinians inside Israel. Despite four decades of attempting to erase all sense of

Palestinian identity, the Zionists have had a rude awakening. The nationalism of the Palestinians inside the green line has resurfaced with a vengeance.

The general strike called for Land Day was observed by more than 80 per cent of the 700,000 Palestinians inside Israel. Another worry for the regime is the extent to which Rakah (the Israeli communist party) seemed overtaken by events. More and more Palestinians are rejecting the view sustained for decades by Rakah that

'the main preoccupation of the Israeli government remains the Palestinians inside Israel'

they are loyal Israeli citizens, and begun looking instead to a future linked with their brothers and sisters in the occupied territories.

This challenge to Rakah is reflected in the increased weight of the Abna al-Balad movement within the green line. While for many years this largely nationalist movement concentrated in the villages and rural areas, the uprising has given it the impetus to grow and turn into a fully-

'the Zionists underestimated the level of Palestinian maturity and politicisation'

fledged political organisation. The litmus test remains to what extent Abna al-Balad would be able to challenge Rakah for its role as sole arbiter of the Palestinian destiny inside Israel.

For this, the organisation has to sharpen its profile (the launch of a weekly paper still leaves it behind the enormous resources of Rakah's publishing houses), popularise its political programme, and play a more aggressive political role — not

'the ultimate test for the new leadership is how to take the uprising forward'

just as a junior partner in a coalition with Rakah. One of the most important questions is whether they will run in the Knesset election next November.

Among the Arab electorate it is important that Abna al-Balad runs on a programme distinct from the Progressive List for Peace (an early right wing split from Abna al-Balad), but also a programme distinct from the Rakah-led list of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality.

Of course it is easier for Rakah to campaign on its two-state solution than it is for Abna al-Balad to run on its own programme; they would not be allowed to do this anyway. But to understand fully the importance of state elections is a key part of the political development of the organisation as a whole. For the time being, the old arguments for abstention remain popular within the movement.

The question of the political leadership of Palestinians within the green line is inextricably linked to the leadership of the uprising itself. The united leadership has proved its ability to lead a popular rebellion for seven months in a model united front between different organisations, even including the Muslim Brotherhood.

They have withstood the murderous onslaught of the Israeli army, and partly dismantled the surrogate leadership and local structures that the Zionists tried to foist upon them. They forced the mass resignation of the 1,000-strong 'native' police force, though only a handful of the 22 mayors have actually resigned, and communique no.19 repeated the early call for resignation of Israeli-appointed council members.

Despite the fact that the *intifadah* involved mainly workers and poor peasants, the movement was largely followed by the shopowners who, so far, have strictly observed the united leadership's directives for opening times and also refused to pay their taxes and VAT returns to the Israeli state. However, the bourgeoisie and their conservative political leadership tied to King Hussein are waiting in the wings.

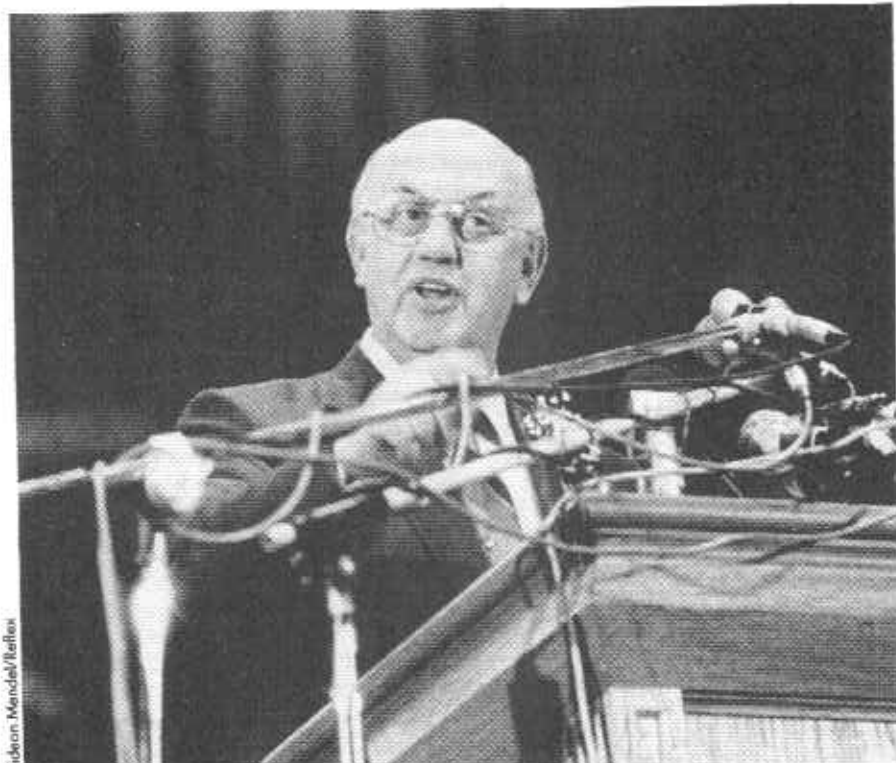
The ultimate test for the new leadership is how to take the uprising forward. The pro-Jordan elements, the PLO leadership and the Stalinists, concur in their short-term perspectives. For them, the *intifadah* has succeeded in raising the issue internationally, and will ultimately force the world powers to convene an international conference to resolve the conflict.

This is all they want, and they are not trying to steer the uprising in any other direction: Rakah is therefore trying to put the brakes on the militancy inside the green line.

The Palestinian masses have no confidence in an international conference, the Arab ruling classes or the superpowers. They hope the united leadership will give a clear alternative political perspective. The latest call for economic self-sufficiency and a boycott of Israeli goods is for many the best way to consolidate and dig in for victory.

This is why Israeli soldiers have now declared war on Palestinian cucumbers — and tomatoes. For them it means nipping in the bud any new form of self-organisation, which for the Palestinians will be the next stage of their struggle ●

Stayaway success unites opposition



President Botha



A COSATU organiser in Pietermaritzburg

The three-day stayaway in South Africa on June 6, 7 and 8 marked a new high level of consciousness among the working class in the land of apartheid, writes **CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN.**

THIS WAS BY far the biggest and most extensive action of its kind in South African history and the only one to last three days. It was called in protest against the labour relations amendment bill and against the repression of the opposition. Previous calls for a three-day stayaway by the African National Congress and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in 1958 and 1961 collapsed for lack of support on the second day. The organised black working class has given notice to the regime and to the bosses that the battle against apartheid goes on despite the continuous state of emergency and despite the full might of the racist state apparatus.

On the first day of the protest, 6 June 1988, over two million workers responded to the call from the trade unions. Throughout the strike the Congress of South

African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the rival federation National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) co-ordinated their actions. Although the numbers were somewhat less on the second and third days (see box), the momentum continued. This despite the fact that the bosses warned that no wages would be paid for workers who absented themselves and threatened other disciplinary measures.

Only the draconian threats from the chamber of mines — dominated by the 'liberal' Oppenheimers and Anglo-American — succeeded in keeping the miners, still suffering from the defeat of last year's strike, at work. Even here not all miners were intimidated. The National Union of Miners claim that 35000 joined the protest. A chamber of mines spokesperson admitted that at least six coal mines and two diamond mines lost production. Nevertheless, the minimal support from this vital sector reflects the demoralisation among the miners after the strike.

All the car plants and thousands of mainly white-owned factories and places of business were closed although the usually militant retail sector was affected by the split in CCAWU. The initiative for calling the stayaway was taken at a special conference

of COSATU in May. This bold move was taken despite all the omens being unfavourable, that is, in a period of protracted repression with restrictions placed on trade unions and political organisations, and regulations in force making such actions illegal. In addition, the past success of work stayaways has been dependent on joint organisation by the trade unions and community organisations. Also, with some exceptions, they have been called to coincide with recognised days of commemoration such as Sharpeville or May Day.

June 6 was not such a commemoration and as a result of emergency restrictions, community and township organisations such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum have been greatly weakened.

Robert Godsell, a representative of big business and a strong supporter of the labour relations amendment bill, asked confidently in an interview with foreign correspondents, 'you can take a number of people away from work for three days, but when the sun rises on Thursday morning what has changed?' Some hours later, Godsell was in Cape Town for talks with manpower minister Piet du Plessis to discuss COSATU's demand to submit the bill to

arbitration; and when the sun rose over the South African horizon on the Thursday after the stayaway, the minister had offered to suspend part of the draft law.

The Labour Party, which had previously supported the bill, announced support in the 'coloured' house of delegates, for a motion requesting that the bill be sent back to the parliamentary standing committee for 'scrutiny of certain conditions'. (The bill must pass through all three houses of parliament — 'white', 'coloured' and 'Indian' — or be referred to the president's council before it becomes law.)

There were other clear signs that the stayaway had achieved one of its objectives — to force a re-think of the anti-union legislation which had had the fulsome support of big business. On that same Thursday, COSATU met with the South African consultative committee on labour affairs (SACCOLA), which represents the major employer federations, to discuss the technicalities involved in submitting the bill to the scrutiny of an independent tribunal. Also significant is the decision taken by COSATU's executive committee to consult NACTU about its planned meetings with SACCOLA.

That the government has expressed willingness to discuss the content of the law — in response to an action which is expressly prohibited under existing and proposed legislation — is an oblique recognition of the power of the organised forces of labour.

The three-day protest was to be the beginning of a campaign against the government clamp-down on opposition groups. After considerable debate COSATU's special conference decided to convene a 'conference of a broad range of anti-apartheid organisations to focus on opposing apartheid repression'. In addition to the call for three days of 'national peaceful protest' it was also decided to hold demonstrations at factories every Tuesday to protest against the labour relations amendment bill. This legislation will entrench racial divisions in the unions. It also aims to prevent the unions from engaging in 'political activities'.

The decisions taken at the emergency conference give the appearance of stretching out a hand to 'other sections of the population which are gravitating toward a tendency to act in union against a common enemy'. According to reports from delegates, the central debate revolved around the question of whether NACTU and groups which include white liberals, such as the Five Freedoms Forum should attend the anti-apartheid conference.

NACTU affiliated unions did not come into COSATU when it was formed because of disagreements over the question of white leadership within the trade union movement. Since then, NACTU has modified its position. It remains hostile to white leaders drawn from middle-class intellectuals but

PWW area

(African workers absent from work)

Total workers	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Manufacturing:	81%	78%	72%
Commercial	67%	52%	48%
Public			
Stayaway ranged between:	0-62%	0-50%	0-30%
Transport:	11%	28%	28%

Total number of employees covered by survey:

78,856

Natal

Figures for black (African and Indian) workers staying away.

Sectors	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Food	65	66	65
Footwear	51	48	47
Chemical	82	82	82
Clothing/Textiles	93	89	86
Metal/Motor	84	81	84
Paper	43	29	24
Shop and Retail	68	77	75
Transport	57	57	56
Survey workforce total			43,750
% away	80%	78%	72%

Total number of employees covered by survey in Natal and PWW region: 122,606

PWW: Pieteria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging — the industrial heartland of South Africa. 30 per cent of economically active blacks are employed in this area and more than half of industry and commerce is located there.

has declared that it has no objection to white leaders emerging from the ranks. There is, however, another major stumbling block. At its last conference, COSATU adopted the Freedom Charter as the basis for its political platform. NACTU has grave doubts about whether the Freedom Charter is a sufficient expression of the aspirations of the working class. It has also refused to endorse the Azanian Manifesto.

In the same speech in which he appeared to open up to 'other sections', COSATU president, Elijah Barayi went on to emphasise that the broad anti-apartheid front should be based on the principles of the Freedom Charter. In this Barayi seems to be taking a harder position than the leadership of the African National Congress. A recent meeting between the ANC and NACTU issued a joint statement in which it was stressed that the issue of the Freedom Charter should not be a stumbling block to unity.

There appears to have been a thoroughly-aired debate over the issues involved from which three main positions evolved. One block of unions argued that COSATU's drive to create broader unity in the face of the government crack-down should focus on worker organisations and other township-based organisations. A second group urged that it should embrace all anti-apartheid organisations including those with 'white liberals' in their ranks. The third position insisted that COSATU should build on its

existing alliance structure with affiliates of the United Democratic Front and that the proposed anti-apartheid conference should not be seen as an alternative to this.

What was finally agreed would appear to be a compromise between the three positions. It instructs COSATU's central executive committee, together with its 'traditional allies', to set up a planning committee which will draw up a programme of action and which will invite organisations to attend the conference.

This would, according to one delegate, 'allow COSATU together with its allies to draw up a programme that will be consistent with its support of the Freedom Charter but with the authority to invite groups such as NACTU and the Four Freedoms Forum to participate'.

What remains in doubt is whether organisations outside COSATU, such as NACTU, will be prepared to take part in such a conference if they are to be excluded from the drafting programme of action. There can be no doubt, however, that there is a growing demand for a united front against the increasing repression and this demand was forcefully expressed by many delegates at the emergency conference. It was expressed even more forcefully by the close co-ordination between COSATU and NACTU during the three day stayaway and by the high level of support in Natal despite the opposition of Buthelezi and his reactionary movement, Inkatha ●

From civil rights to socialist republicanism

JOHN McANULTY of People's Democracy looks back at twenty years of struggle since the founding of the civil rights movement in Ireland in 1968.

ONE OF BRITISH conservatism's catch-phrases in its pontifications on Ireland is the call for a 'return to normality' in the north. It is worth remembering what that normality consisted of. Before 1968: a one-party state controlled by a unionist junta.

Behind the scenes it was in turn ruled by a secret society — the Orange order. Nationalists were denied the vote in local government. There was a pervasive and institutionalised discrimination at every level. Mass poverty and unemployment were the norm for nationalist workers. A protestant militia — the B specials — roamed the streets, armed and given uniforms by the British. The special powers act gave such sweeping powers that the South African premier Vorster offered to exchange all his repressive laws for one clause from it.

In many ways the situation today is worse. Twenty years of British 'reforms' have simply gone to show that oppression and repression flow inevitably from partition and British rule in Ireland.

1968 in Ireland is significant not because it brought victory but because it brought hope. That hope, despite twenty years of death and suffering, is a thousand times preferable to the peace of the graveyard that preceded it and which the British government seeks to re-impose. 1968 brought a vision of an alternative and a confidence in our own strength and organisation. As a participant, I saw 1968 as the 'birth of our power' and its promise has lived on in the twenty years since.

Many analyses of the Irish struggle present it as a thing in itself, in some ways disconnected from the world-wide struggle of the classes. In fact it was the example of other struggles — the international dynamic — which provided the impulse for the '68 explosion.

The greatest impact came from the civil rights struggle in the US. The organisation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and many of its tactics, were certainly taken from that movement.

Influences on the young people who formed Peoples Democracy were much broader. The Vietnam solidarity movement helped us to develop an anti-imperialist consciousness and solidarity



1969: British troops go into the north of Ireland

with the Prague Spring developed an anti-stalinist libertarian leftism which would eventually cohere into trotskyism.

We had many shortcomings. We were utopian and idealistic. We carried the idea of direct democracy so far that we refused to have a membership — at one university meeting the Rugby club successfully voted down a plan of action and we had to meet again without them!

These shortcomings were overcome by the power of imagination. We continually threw up new methods and tactics against state forces ill-prepared for opposition outside traditional republicanism. Above all we had the collective power and solidarity of mass struggle. What was theory one week was tested in practice the following week by tens of thousands of people.

The spontaneity of the '68 movement was its great strength, but this could not survive the state's mobilisation of the unionist right in pogroms or the direct intervention of the British army to 'aid the civil power' and maintain partition.

The middle class leadership of the civil rights movement and the strategists for reform in the communist party faded to the sidelines. The movement went on because it was able to link to a continuity of struggle against British rule represented by the republican movement. The combination of a history of struggle linked to experience of mass action combined to produce a revolutionary consciousness so strong that 20 years of bloody repression have failed to break it.

On a smaller scale the same factors applied to Peoples Democracy. At its core

was a group of activists from the Young Socialist Alliance. We were flexible enough to be the firmest supporters of the movement for youth radicalisation but we had a history and a programme that went back to Connolly and which retains its importance today — the central role of the demand for national independence and the need for working class leadership.

Twenty years ago we demanded civil rights. We got pogroms, internment, torture, the H-blocks and shoot-to-kill. At that time many militants looked to the government of the south of Ireland for support. Today Irish capitalism is in the forefront in supporting British rule, has launched its own savage austerity against the working class and is driving Irish youth into the immigrants' boats.

Only one demand is possible now — the immediate withdrawal of British troops and self-determination for the Irish people.

One element of '68 that is worth remembering is that it was a time when capitalism was at its strongest. The northern economy was booming. Catholic unemployment was at its lowest since the foundation of the six county state. I was one of a generation of nationalist youth, the children of the 1948 education act, able to attend university.

Young people and workers saw capitalism at its best and rejected it. Since then capitalism and imperialism have become a great deal more vicious, but they have not become stronger. We have not forgotten. We have not gone away. And we still want our freedom! ●

British feminism ten years on

Melanie Friend/Report



Women cutting the fence at Greenham

VALERIE COULTAS looks at some of the political questions that have arisen in the British women's movement in the ten years since the last national women's liberation

conference. A more detailed assessment of the development of women's struggles in the trade unions in the same period will appear in a later issue of *Socialist Outlook*.

1978 SAW THE last national women's liberation conference in Britain. The debate represented a central political clash over orientation.

Were women oppressed primarily because of their social position in society or was women's oppression a product of a male conspiracy to subordinate female sexuality? Socialist feminists saw social causes as the root of women's oppression and perceived sexual subordination flowing from that. Fighting for the four demands of equal pay, education, nursery provision and fertility control was seen as vital to ending women's oppression.

While supporting the fifth demand — an end to the

discrimination against lesbians and a self-defined sexuality for all women — they did not want the 'social' demands demoted in importance in campaigning activity.

Radical feminists took a different view. They wanted to force questions of lifestyle, sexuality and sexual violence by men to the top of the agenda. The argument was fierce — and no one wanted to call another conference.

These political differences were not new. They had always lain beneath the surface of modern feminism. Were individual men the primary enemy or was it class society and the capitalist state?



Although this is a slight simplification of the debate, because all agreed that men should be challenged for sexist behaviour, it did inform women's attitude to campaigning and making alliances with the labour movement.

Differences over political orientation had torn the suffragette movement apart earlier in the century, and so this open clash was not so unexpected. But unity had been possible up to the end of the seventies because an energetic movement of primarily young women had been able to act around unified demands, despite differing over the nature of women's oppression.

The demands for equal pay and equal educational opportunity were the initial spurs to action at the end of the sixties. During the mid-seventies the tremendously successful National Abortion Campaign (NAC) was established which forced the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party to take a pro-abortion stance and mobilise trade unionists to oppose attacks on abortion rights. Campaigns to improve childcare, to provide centres for battered women, to win child custody for lesbians, to challenge sexism in the media, to support black women's struggles, and to organise solidarity around women's strikes for equal pay, all continued throughout the seventies.

Then in 1979 came the Thatcher government and the political counter-offensive of the ruling class. This jolted an already divided women's movement, as it did the labour movement as a whole, whose leadership was left reeling and unable to respond. As sections of the working class fought back, the women's movement began to take part in the new battles and recompose itself.

But today nearly ten years of Thatcherism have taken their toll among feminists. The ground is shifting to the right among women as it has among the mass of the working class. The British women's movement is no longer polarised between radical and socialist feminists. Bourgeois and reformist feminism have more sway today than they did a decade ago.

THE POLICIES of Thatcher and the general economic crisis have played no small part in this political evolution among women. The ruling class in Britain has not engaged in a frontal assault on the women's movement to date although a sustained ideological offensive has been mounted against the welfare state, feminist values and for the family. In a speech in 1982 to the Institution of Electrical Engineers she argued that 'the battle for women's rights has largely been won', insisting that there was no need for the strident tones of some 'women's libbers'. However, the economic and political policies of Thatcher have had a very direct effect on the mass of women.

First, they have increased the social divisions between women of different classes and within the working class. Tax relief for those able to afford nannies, alongside the closure of council nurseries, reveals which women Thatcher thinks should aspire to equality with men.

Secondly, the policies of market capitalism aim to exploit low-paid semi-skilled and unskilled women workers to the

full. Casualisation, part-time work, no union protection and some of the most repetitive jobs in the new technology industries are the 'opportunities' Thatcher's business friends have opened for this layer of women. Cutbacks in the welfare state and the privatisation of many social services have put many women out of decent jobs and increased their burden of domestic labour.

Finally, Thatcher has made no secret of her willingness to challenge the post-war consensus on social provision for the poor, the elderly, the sick, youth and the unemployed. In a speech to the British Jewish Community in 1983 she said 'I was asked whether I was trying to restore Victorian values. I said straight out I was. And I am'.

Despite these attacks on the mass of women, Thatcher herself is a not an unimportant role model for certain layers of women in Britain today, nor has the Tory Party this century been indifferent to winning the women's vote. She has articulated an alternative image of womanhood that is conventional and pro-family in contrast to the unconventional image of feminism. Her personal success — through education and marriage as she sells it — stands as an emblem of the 'go-for-it' message of personal social mobility marketed by 'popular' capitalism. These ideas have appealed to the individualistic aspects of modern feminism and found an echo in the still small number of women in higher professional jobs who can afford nannies to ensure uninterrupted careers even when they decide (as Thatcher herself did) to reproduce.

As voting patterns at the last general election show, this influence is not confined to these very privileged layers of women, despite the fact that social mobility is ruled out for many working class women who voted for Thatcher. As she told the BBC world service in 1984, 'Many women ... are too easily contented with the job they are doing and do not necessarily make the effort to climb the tree ... sometimes it's thought to be unfeminine. It isn't at all, you know'.

Thatcher has also been prime minister as a new layer of women have entered British politics. Many of these women would claim the feminist mantle. Thatcher herself has rejected it. 'I don't notice that I'm a woman. I regard myself as the prime minister,' she told the *Daily Mirror* in 1980. But she has promoted a tiny layer of right wing women who share her general views.

Thatcher's political strategy has had an important impact on the feminist movement. Unity around gender oppression is clearly inadequate when a government led by a woman is attacking the welfare state as well as Labour councils who have promoted feminist campaigns, the rights of women as trade unionists, tenants and black people. The political fragmentation of the feminist movement becomes almost inevitable under this kind of assault given the loose structures of that movement and the lack of political homogeneity among women.

A VERY WIDE diversity of views claim the label 'feminist' in Britain today and debates among feminists are no longer confined to exclusively 'women's issues'. Thus it is difficult to discuss the state of the women's movement as a single entity: there is a lack of unified forums and unified campaigns. Instead this article will try to assess a number of themes of debate and activity, highlighting where the political retreats seem to have occurred and where some steps forward have been made.

The defeat of John Corrie's abortion amendment bill (which tried to restrict the availability of NHS abortions) in 1979 was one of the few victories the British labour movement can claim over the last ten years. This private

member's bill was defeated after the TUC called a protest of over 60,000 people. It did not win the support of enough MPs, including Thatcher herself.

Ironically however, NAC split a few years later. The debate involved many questions but reflected the general crisis in the movement. Women supporting a change in name to 'Reproductive Rights Campaign' argued that to focus so exclusively on abortion on a defensive basis was wrong. NAC should campaign on all issues of reproductive rights emphasising women's right to a free sexuality. This campaign should be women-only because fertility control was a 'women's issue' not a 'class issue'.

Other women, among them trotskysts, disagreed, pointing out that winning the right to terminate a pregnancy was a key advance for women at this stage of the women's movement, and that the attacks on the 1967 act had to be fended off if women were to advance. While NAC had a 'women's right to choose' declaration which related to other issues around fertility rights, abortion was the central issue for NAC and they argued that the name should not be changed. These women also argued that NAC should be a mixed campaign because the mass of women were organised by the trade unions and previous activity had shown that trade unions would fight for abortion rights.

Reproductive Righters claimed the banner of anti-racism in the debate and said that NAC had ignored black women's experience of forced sterilisation, lack of rights to have children, and forced contraception through Depo Provera injections. The NAC loyalists refuted this charge citing the establishment of an international campaign by NAC as an example. But the accusation, although opportunist, was not without some basis. NAC had not involved black women in Britain to the degree that it possibly could have. The women's movement as a whole had failed to listen to the emerging black women's movement.

The test of time has shown the political cost of the split. The divide was really about whether to run a women's health information service or a political campaign on abortion. When Victoria Gillick launched her attack on young women's contraceptive rights, and the MP Enoch Powell put his embryo rights bill to parliament in 1985, it was NAC that led the response. The response of the traditional feminist layers was weak. In contrast to the huge mobilisation six years earlier against Corrie, 5,000 people marched in protest, with large numbers coming from the far left rather than independent feminist groups.

The so-called Yorkshire ripper's horrific murders of women in the early eighties provided ample grounds for feminist campaigns around male violence. Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), led by radical feminists, took the initiative to lead protests in many towns, seeing this as an issue that united all women against all men. When police urged women to stay indoors or ensure they were escorted home, WAVAW countered with the demand that men should be kept off the streets not women, and also that women are most likely to be attacked by men they know, often in their homes.

Radical feminists toured the country with films showing pornographic images of women to sell the message that 'porn is the theory, rape is the practice' and that all men benefit from the threat and fear women have of rape. Political solutions offered ranged from uncontentious proposals such as women's taxi services and self-defence provision to the banning of pornography and longer sentences for rapists. Many socialist feminists kept silent in this debate — identifying with the outrage women felt, but reluctant to support 'law and order' solutions.

The mass mobilisations at the Greenham women's peace camp in Newbury, Berkshire in protest at the siting of cruise missiles turned out 30,000 women at their high point, denting the Tory government's confidence in its ability to defend their policy on nuclear arms.

The appeal of Greenham contained contradictory features. Greenham became a very useful focus for the building of a women's peace movement. But while some women in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and labour movement activists saw Greenham as a way of mobilising women to fight against cruise and to oppose the Tory government's warmongering, the radical feminists in Women Oppose the Nuclear Threat were interested in a more specifically 'radical feminist' analysis of war and male violence generally. Yet another group of feminists opposed Greenham altogether, arguing that the mobilisations celebrated motherhood and this had nothing to do with feminism. Even *Spare Rib* was quite slow to develop a campaign in support of the women's peace movement.

IT WAS AT this point that the influence of what has been called 'populist' feminism began to grow in Britain. A new kind of simplistic radical feminism emerged from writers like Andrea Dworkin, Dale Spender and Mary Daly, which said that women were good and men were bad. Women were caring and civilised, men were violent and aggressive. The social construction of femininity and masculinity was sometimes recognised only to be forgotten.

'Take the toys from the boys' was an amusing slogan, but behind the wit lay a faulty analysis of why peace was a women's issue. Some women at Greenham argued that wars were fought and nuclear missiles were being imposed because men liked to be macho and fight wars. Women, on the other hand were concerned with reproducing life not destroying it.

The essential point that wars are fought because the imperialist ruling classes need to dominate sections of the world to protect and expand markets and profits is lost in this analysis. Wars have historically affected men and women differently, women sometimes predicting the social costs of war before men, although many soldiers get disillusioned with actual combat.

But just as men's masculinity has to be socially constructed, so soldiers (today, male and female) have to be constructed by the capitalist system. Some women active in the labour movement put forward this emphasis as they mobilised for mass actions at Greenham. But their ideological impact was weak and the academic inclinations and sectarianism of some socialist feminists prevented them from participating in the debate as it was unfolding at the gates of Greenham.

At the base of the labour movement a different but related debate was unfolding. Many socialist feminists had begun to organise in the Labour Party and the trade unions as the Tories stepped up their attacks on working class women. Women workers form 44 per cent of the workforce in Britain today and their proportion is rising. Some predictions sug-



Morris Seckman/ITF

'the ground is shifting to the right among women as it has amongst the mass of the working class'

gest that women workers will secure two thirds of all new jobs created in the next five years. Part-time work accounts for this. Women part-timers are expected to hold 22 per cent of all jobs in 1990 as compared with 17 per cent in 1985. This, alongside the campaigns of feminists, has increased the pressure on the unions: if they are to survive, they have to recruit women workers.

But the new realism that is now dominant in the British labour movement, which accepts 'popular capitalism' and enters into no-strike deals with the bosses, has influenced the thinking of many feminists in the labour movement.

Posturing and the idealism of the sixties is rejected by a more practical approach which emphasises minimum and winnable demands. A shorter working day is pushed but never without loss of pay. Sharing of housework is advocated but collectivisation of housework is downplayed.

Eurocommunists like Bea Campbell advocate a feminist incomes policy which argues for a new kind of social contract where higher-paid male workers accept pay curbs to redistribute their wages to low-paid female workers.

Campaigns which challenge women's oppression within the family are harder to win support for in this climate. A defensive stance is almost inevitable given the defeats suffered over the last ten years in Britain but it is only class struggle methods that will defend any gains that women workers have won. This reformist layer attacks the class struggle methods of unions like the National Union of Mine-workers (NUM). Bea Campbell, for example, argued that mass picketing was 'macho' in the 84/85 miners' strike, and defended the Kinnock leadership of the Labour Party, which she characterised as 'feminist' in the London weekly magazine *City Limits*. She also publicly attacked the print unions at Wapping with similar arguments.

Where the ideas of the reformist feminists and the new populist feminists overlap is at the level of rhetoric in denouncing 'maleness', in accepting that a fundamental change in society is impossible and that women have to concentrate on winning small victories.

These examples give a picture of the retreats that have taken place in the Thatcher years. On the other hand the class polarisation in British society has radicalised women who have borne the brunt of the Tory offensive and fought back with mass mobilisations. We will look at three groups in particular.

WOMEN TRADE unionists have fought back against Thatcher ever since she came to power. The largest groups of women workers that have moved into struggle are in the public sector — healthworkers, teachers, local government workers, school cleaners and dinner ladies — resisting low pay, cuts and privatisation. But in manufacturing and textiles women workers have also resisted attacks on their industries and in the miners' and printers' strikes we saw women's support groups set up to involve wives of strikers in the dispute.

The trade union movement has been forced to make many concessions to women, adopting a TUC women's charter, campaigning on sexual harassment and abortion, and now proposing to establish a women's department at the TUC. But while trade union leaders may be willing to make gestures to recruit women they are reluctant to support any

real fight against the Tory government.

This is why the independent organisation of women in the labour movement and the pressure of feminist campaigning is so crucial. Women Against Pit Closures was a very important development in this regard because it was directly linked to a fight against the Tory government to defend jobs and was also able to use the forms of organisation the women's liberation movement had developed in the previous years.

Women's support groups, with their own bank accounts, banners and network of communication mushroomed in every mining area and were able to mobilise quickly for demonstrations and picket lines to confront the police.

The identification with other women's campaigns such as Greenham, strip searching, and black women's groups was important for developing the political awareness of women in mining communities.

The loss of the vote for affiliation to the NUM made it harder to consolidate these gains. But some of the most militant women's support groups and the memory of this form of organisation continue to exist in preparation for the next battle. This movement of working class women shifted the terrain of debate in the women's movement to the left as the strike showed that sections of the labour movement could stand up to the Tories and these groups of workers were prepared to support the demands of women.

BLACK WOMEN have been organising in Britain in the trade unions and black community for the last 20 years. But towards the end of the seventies a black women's movement emerged to challenge the oppression of black women in society and racism in the women's movement.

This movement had a sharp political and ideological thrust around racism on all levels — reflecting the growing self-confidence of young black British women who had grown up in Britain and did not accept the second or third class status imposed on them by white society. The Tories have fostered racism by tightening up on immigration laws and strengthening police powers, using overtly racist themes in their recent election campaign.

National conferences of black women have taken place over several years and black women have campaigned against deportation orders, separation of black families, racist harassment, discrimination in education, in the health service and at work and established battered women's centres for black women.

The political critique of the priorities of white feminists has influenced nearly every feminist campaign and journal over the last period. Campaigns around violence against women have been taken to task for holding demonstrations in black areas of the inner cities and raising demands for more police on the streets. The *Spare Rib* collective, the *London Women's Liberation Newsletter* and the women's peace camp at Greenham have all had clashes on the subject.

As the black women's movement has developed it has become clear that political differences exist among black women too. But because of the special discrimination black women face in society they have been able to challenge the false 'unity of women' imposed by many radical and populist feminists who prioritise gender oppression in an artificial way, ignoring or playing down class and racial discrimination.

'black women forced anti-imperialist issues into the centre of feminist debates'

Black women also forced anti-imperialist issues into the centre of feminist debates. Recognition of Britain's imperialist role and the racism of the British state has been reflected in conferences and campaigns around Namibia, South Africa, central and Latin America. A key area of this activity has been making links with women in Ireland. A protest demonstration on international women's day in 1979 outside Armagh gaol in Northern Ireland united Irish and British women in a common protest against the strip searching of women political prisoners.

Since that time a national campaign has been mounted in Britain and Ireland which has had an important impact on Irish republicanism and the British labour movement. Sinn Fein women have been organising throughout this period but the links with British women have helped boost their struggle. The campaign mounted in Britain provided the necessary pressure to win first the Labour Party women's conference and, later, the Labour Party conference to oppose strip searching and the non-jury courts and to support self-determination for the Irish people.

A recent Labour Party women's conference called for a Labour government to set a date for withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland. Feminist activity on Irish questions has been in advance of the rest of the British labour movement.

IN THE LABOUR Party, socialist feminists have thus been able to play a role in campaigns wider than what are traditionally viewed as women's issues. The women's section of the Labour Party has been transformed into a militant, campaigning and feminist forum demanding more power for women in the party as a whole. The left's power at this conference is a threat to Neil Kinnock's project of shifting the party to the right. The labour bureaucracy has had to devise some complex tactics to dull the campaigning strength of the women's organisation.

What Kinnock offered women was a women's ministry if Labour came to power and a slight increase in the number of women MPs. But simultaneously he has moved to undermine the Labour women's conference, by suggesting that trade union women are under-represented. This is an attempt to shift the debate away from the demand that women should elect their own representatives on the NEC, into a complicated debate over restructuring women's conference itself.

With the aid of the trade union bureaucracy, Kinnock aims to silence the critical voice of women and line them up behind the leadership. Leaders of the Women's Action Committee, a group fighting for more power for Labour Party women, and which at first won a lot of support among women at the high point of the Bennite reforms in the party, have since become accessories to sections of the bureaucracy, and actually welcomed some of Kinnock's manoeuvres rather than fighting them head on and refusing to allow the NEC to interfere in the women's organisation.

The local women's sections in the party have also come under attack, as the centre and rightwing try to restrict their activities by blocking off funds and depriving them of representation. Women activists at the base of the Labour Party are not politically homogeneous and are divided on what attitude to adopt to the party leaders. But if links with trade union women can be strengthened at the base of the trade unions and with women outside the party, the women's

'the appeal of Greenham contained contradictory features'

'Women Against Violence Against Women, led by radical feminists, took the lead in many towns'

organisation will remain a strong focus of resistance to the rightwing drift in the party.

THE PICTURE painted here of the British women's movement is one where mass struggles of women still take place, but the feminist movement is more fragmented, more polarised, less collectively involved in women's struggles than ten years ago. But the influence of feminism is still strong in Britain. Feminist journals like *Spare Rib* and *Outwrite* have a wide circulation. Women's campaigns continue to emerge that attract press attention. There are now more women in parliament than ever before, and 21 are Labour women who have already called a conference on rape. At the base of the Labour Party and the trade unions it is possible to debate and advance feminist campaigns. Battles over women's representation surface annually at Labour Party conference. Battered women's centres exist in many areas of the country.

Over the last year, perhaps as a by-product of the boost socialist feminists received from the emergence of black feminism and Women Against Pit Closures, we have witnessed a rebuff of some of the simplistic notions of populist feminism. In her book, *Is the future female?* Lynne Segal recognises that a more conservative feminism has gained ground during the Thatcher years. This claims for women 'a separate special knowledge, emotion, sexuality, thought and morality', pitting masculinity and femininity against each other.

Segal rejects the biological, psychological and social celebration of women's difference, pointing out its similarities with a traditional view of feminine power. This does not correspond to the reality of women's lives, nor does it focus their energies on changing the world around them. Instead she argues that we should work towards a future that rejects 'most of the social distinctions we draw between women and men', reminding us that this was the original aim of the modern women's movement.

This political counter-offensive by socialist feminists is welcome, if a little late in coming. The problem is that it is pitched very much at the level of literary debate. The lack of involvement of this layer of women in mass action initiatives — like Greenham and the demonstrations of Women Against Pit Closures — makes it unlikely that many young women will know this debate even exists.

Socialist feminists criticise themselves for academicism but fail to do anything about it. Left currents hostile to the women's movement such as *Militant*, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) are attracting young women who may otherwise have joined the women's movement — but educating them against feminism. At Greenham, for example, busloads of SWP men arrived outside Newbury court to chant slogans to try and drown out the women's peace movement.

The problem in Britain is not a lack of willingness on the part of the mass of women to fight back against the Tories, as the example of the miners' wives and Greenham show. The key problem is the failure of the traditional socialist feminist layers to respond quickly to these movements, whatever problems they reveal, and develop a strategy to intervene to counter the influence of currents hostile to feminism or those who are ultimately hostile to class struggle methods ●

What lies at the end of the 'rainbow'?

What attitude should socialists have towards Jesse Jackson and the 'rainbow coalition'? In *Socialist Outlook*

no. 6 David Grant argued against the politics of the 'lesser evil'. Here **MIKE MARQUSEE** takes up the debate.

GRANT'S ARTICLE includes some errors of fact and, in my opinion, analysis.

The US communist party has never been 'inside the Democratic Party'. Apart from backing Roosevelt in 1944, the CPUSA has either stood its own candidates for president or backed various third party initiatives, such as the Progressive Party in 1948 and 1952, whose object was to win workers and 'progressive forces' away from the Democrats.

The notion that the Democrats would even allow the CP inside their party is risible.

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) did not support US imperialism in Korea or Vietnam — for the simple reason that it did not come into being until the early 1980s!

Both organisations have at various times endorsed attempts to influence the Democratic Party from the left. But neither showed any enthusiasm for Jackson during his first tilt at the nomination in 1984.

I hold no brief for either the CPUSA or the DSA. But these errors of fact are symptomatic of a fault in Grant's approach and his understanding of the Democratic Party and the primary system.

The Democratic Party would not pretend to have a democratic structure. It has no members, branches or dues; its national committee is more or less self-perpetuating; its elected representatives are under no obligation to adhere to party policy — which hardly exists.

The conduct of the big quadrennial nominating conventions makes the Labour Party's annual bash look like an exercise in soviet democracy.

The primaries are run by individual state governments. To vote in the Democratic primary in most states you are merely required to 'register' as a Democrat when you place yourself on the electoral roll. In some states you can vote in either Democratic or Republican primaries.

The intricate mysteries of delegate selection make it possible to score heavily in the popular vote in the primaries and still end up a big loser at the convention — as happened to Jackson in 1984 and will happen again in 1988.

The primary system is a wonderful asset for the US ruling class: a winnowing process disguised as an exercise in popular democracy. That process has now produced the kind of choice the US bourgeois dreams about: Dukakis versus Bush — no choice at all.

Paradoxically, precisely because of the anomalous character of the primaries, it sometimes backfires. The classic example is New Hampshire, 1968. Mass opposition to the Vietnam war was expressed in a big vote for Eugene Macarthy; within weeks Lyndon Johnson withdrew from the race. Four years later, George McGovern, running on a clear anti-war platform (and not much else) decisively defeated all comers in primaries across the country and won the nomination. Of course, Democratic bosses took flight and helped ensure a Nixon victory in the autumn.

These are historical facts. They are not tantamount to an argument in favour of entering the Democratic Party or in favour of either of these two candidacies.

The Jackson candidacy is different from previous candidacies (including Macarthy and McGovern) because it is self-consciously part of a process of building a mass oppositional movement — what is called the 'rainbow movement'.

Jackson himself has made this clear, as have Ron Daniels, the executive director of the 'rainbow movement', and other prominent 'rainbow' activists.

Of course there are other, powerful voices in the Jackson camp, notably black petty bourgeois politicians, for whom the campaign is a mere bargaining counter in the battle to secure personal advancement in a Dukakis administration.

The closer we move to the convention, the more intense the debate within the Jackson camp will become. Already black marxist Manning Marable has called on Jackson to declare publicly the necessity of breaking with the Democrats to establish a new, mass-based, left-wing movement.

Marxists are perfectly entitled to reject Marable's strategy, though for this rejection to carry weight it must be ac-

companied by a convincing alternative — not just formalistic assertions that 'we must build an independent workers' party'.

Jackson's historic breakthrough in winning white working class voters; his ability to win near total support in the black community by offering hope of social change; his ability to unite black and white workers behind a radical programme show us the possibilities latent in the US working class.

On disarmament, central America, the middle east, education, women's rights, lesbian and gay rights, health care, AIDS, jobs and above all what he calls 'workers' rights', Jackson's policies are far to the left of his Democratic rivals. They do not amount to a socialist programme, but Jackson does represent a qualitative difference. Not a professional politician, with no corporate bankroll or media acceptability, he offers the promise — or threat — of profound social change.

I cannot see how David Grant can assert that the Jackson candidacy has demobilised those in struggle. On the contrary it has given them courage and awakened them to their potential strength. The contradictions of Jackson's political character cannot be denied, but his success — especially his triumph in Michigan, based on a rank and file carworkers revolt against the UAW bureaucracy — needs to be studied with care.

The failure of union bureaucracies and the Democratic Party to challenge 'reaganomics', has opened up a space for the left. Jackson has stepped into that space. Revolutionaries may say 'we always knew that space was there' but it is the Jackson campaign which has demonstrated its existence to millions.

The basis for the Jackson campaign was laid by the struggles of the US left over many years. That left is often localised, fragmented and ideologically heterogeneous to the point of chaos, but it has its own strengths and traditions. Revolutionary marxists must make a greater effort, not to accept uncritically, but to understand this reality and to intervene more effectively ●

New realism or a woman's right to choose?

In the light of the defeat of David Alton's anti-abortion bill, should pro-choice campaigners accept that there is a general consensus for the proposal to reduce the abortion time-limit to 24 weeks? Definitely not, argue **GILL LEE** and **ANN POTTER**. Now is the time to go on the offensive in support of a woman's right to choose, under any circumstances and at any point in the pregnancy.

THE DEFEAT of the Alton bill in parliament represents a fragile victory for women and the working class.

It was based on a history of mass campaigning by the National Abortion Campaign and on the work of the Fight Alton's Bill (FAB) campaign, which attempted to lead a mass, labour movement-oriented campaign in defence of the 1967 abortion act, organising demonstrations of up to 20,000 people.

In 1979 the TUC called a 60,000-strong demonstration against John Corrie's anti-abortion bill. By 1988, things had changed. The labour movement today is dominated by the idea that you cannot stand and fight, and win. New realism has been used systematically to demobilise the struggles of the working class in defence of jobs and conditions. The influence of new realism has made it extremely difficult to mobilise the base of the unions on a controversial social issue such as abortion time-limits.

We should celebrate the first victory of the women's movement in the face of the recent wave of attacks on women's rights. But we should also be prepared to confront the new situation opened up by Alton's unsuccessful bill. Particularly worrying is the assertion of the new realists that there is a general consensus around a time-limit of 24 weeks.

Even erstwhile champions of a woman's right to choose have found themselves putting their name to amendments which would lower the time-limit to 24 weeks. Labour MP Joan Ruddock has called for a parliamentary committee to consider the issue of abortion and thereby come up with a 24 week limit.

Twenty-four weeks is seen as an adequate compromise by those defeatists who fear repeated outright battles between the

bigots and those who favour choice: battles in which they will not be allowed to sit on the fence.

One of the arguments used is that such a compromise is based on the scientifically objective idea of 'viability'; that is, the stage at which a foetus becomes able to be kept alive outside the woman's body.

'Viability' is a fake debate. The current law already allows, through the infant life

choice movement, of the viability argument occurs at the very time that foetal 'rights' are again up for discussion, this time in the form of legislation to be introduced in the next parliamentary session concerning the Warnock report. This report proposes an end to experiments on foetuses after fourteen days — thus implicitly advocating legal rights for foetuses. The connection is obvious.

The next step in the campaign has to be to force the labour movement into a clear position of support for a woman's right to choose. This is necessary both to prepare for possible future attacks from the anti-abortionists and to ward off the danger of new realist compromises.

There has already been some discussion over what the pro-choice movement's attitude would be to a bill giving abortion on demand up to 12 weeks, but including a reduction in the time-limit to 24 weeks.

Women must reject any such argument which accepts that abortion is a matter for criminal law. The woman concerned in any situation is the best to decide whether or not to continue with a pregnancy.

We must also reject any argument that divides women, saying that the rights of a few women to late abortions should be sacrificed to the needs of many women who need early ones. Any reduction of the time-limit will lead to pressure for further reductions and restrictions.

The victory conference of FAB took up a number of proposals around an offensive on the issue of 24 weeks. One of the most important was to put together a pro-choice charter which can be used to campaign for a woman's right to choose and to fight against the concessions that the new realists in the labour movement seem willing to make on our behalf ●



A campaigner lays a carnation outside St. Thomas hospital at a FAB rally before the second reading of Alton's bill

preservation act, for a limit at 28 weeks of viability. At present, doctors make their judgement on the basis of viability.

A 24 week bill would lift the decision out of the hands of doctors — one reason why many doctors are opposed to a change.

Putting the time-limit into the law allows it to be continually lowered as science advances — a recipe for the continual reduction of the time-limit.

The move to link viability with women's abortion rights is extremely dangerous, implying that immediately a foetus is theoretically capable of living independently of its mother, she loses all rights over her own body.

The whole issue of abortion needs to be lifted out of criminal law. Women must have an unconditional right to choose, under any circumstances, at any point in the pregnancy.

The increasing acceptance, by the pro-

Poll tax precedents

The collection of poll tax registration forms is currently causing the authorities in Scotland a certain amount of difficulty. In a light-hearted trip through history **CRAIG BINNS** argues that, for the 'community charge' officers, the worst is yet to come.

MARGARET THATCHER has singled out Adam Smith as one of Scotland's greatest sons. It is easy to understand her admiration for the founder of capitalist economic theory. Smith's statement that the function of government is 'to secure wealth and to defend the rich from the poor' could have been made with the present administration in mind.

In her poll tax proposals, however, Thatcher leaves her mentor far behind: not only are the rich to be protected from the poor, it is the poor who are to pay for this service.

Smith has important things to say about taxation. In his *Wealth of Nations* he lays down four fiscal principles: equality, certainty, convenience and economy.

That the community charge is neither convenient nor economical hardly needs to be argued. To make its collection 'certain' would involve the introduction of a police state, as I will show from precedents in the sorry history of poll taxes.

But is it 'equal'? Its supporters say it is; after all, a millionaire and the woman who scrubs his floor will pay equal amounts. What could be fairer? However, this is not what Adam Smith (or any other sane person) understands by equality:

'The subjects of every state ought to contribute ... in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy', he states.

During the Victorian era, which the prime minister wishes to recreate, Adam Smith's principles were seen as absolutely fundamental to the theory of taxation. They form the core of the relevant entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* 1888 edition, which dismisses poll taxes with these brief and contemptuous words:

'Capitation taxes are chiefly of interest historically, as illustrated by the poll taxes levied at various times'.

A hundred years ago, then, poll taxes were dismissed as historical curiosities. But, since the prime minister likes to rake through history's middens to find ideas on how to run a country, let us do likewise to see what we find.

The most famous of all poll taxes was the one which provoked the English peasants' revolt of 1381. It was not intended as a normal revenue-raising device, but as an emergency measure to pay for a war against France.

In 1377 parliament agreed to an emergency levy of 4d per person over fourteen years old. The commons insisted that all the money so raised was to go direct to pay the starving English army in France. They even proposed the appointment of special commissioners to collect it, separate from the officials who collected other taxes, but this was finally agreed to be impracticable.

In 1379, after further military setbacks, the government came back to parliament looking for money and, as an obviously astonished chronicler informs us: 'In this parliament there was granted a subsidy so wonderful [i.e. amazing] that no one had ever seen or heard of the like'.

'a hundred years ago poll taxes were dismissed as historical curiosities'

It was indeed 'wonderful' and I commend it to the attention of the chancellor of the exchequer. It was a graduated poll tax, based on social class. Examples of

'Peter the Great had his son flogged so severely that he died'

rates include: Dukes, £6-13s-4d; Earls, £4; Barons, £2; Knights, £1.

Merchants paid 2s, 1s or 6d depending on the scale of their operations. Farmers paid 6s8d, 3s4d, 2s or 1s. Everybody not included in the list of ranks, over sixteen years of age, paid 4d, except beggars and those living solely by alms.

All this seems much fairer than the community charge. In any case it must be remembered that it was enacted by parliament during what seems to have been one of the occasional bouts of foaming war-hysteria which afflict that assembly. Nor was it intended to be permanent.

What of the sums involved? How much did 4d represent to an unskilled labourer?

In 1351 the king decreed a statute of labourers. Workers were in such short supply owing to the black death that

wages had risen sharply. Employers were annoyed at this manifestation of market forces so the government decided to help them out with a decree fixing wages at pre-plague levels.

Roughly speaking, skilled workers were not to receive more than about 4d or 5d a day, and labourers 1½d. If we assume that these rates prevailed in 1380 (and the statute was not particularly successful in keeping wages down) we can easily calculate that a skilled worker was being expected to contribute a single day's pay and a labourer about three days' pay. Not only was this tax fairer than the community charge, it was a much lighter burden on the poor.

In 1380 the situation in France became worse. The government begged parliament for help. The army in France had not been paid for months. There was rebellion in Ireland and trouble on the Scottish border. A revolution in Flanders had disrupted the vital wool trade. French galleys were raiding English ports.

Apart from rebellion in Ireland, the present government can offer none of these excuses. On the contrary, we are told how sound and successful the economy is, and how peacefully we live under the nuclear umbrella.

The parliament of 1380 finally agreed after long and heated debate to grant the subsidy at the very high rate of 1s per head. (Three days' pay for a skilled worker, eight days' for a labourer.) But the principle of fairness had not been abandoned, it being decided that, 'For the sum reckoned for each township the sufficient shall (according to their means) aid the lesser, providing that the most wealthy do not pay more than 60 groats [one pound] for themselves and their wives and no one at all should pay less than one groat [four pence] for himself and his wife'.

A modern historian notes that this provision 'obviously penalised the inhabitants of poor townships', a feature not only reproduced in the community charge but actively desired by the government. In 1380 its injustice was recognised and deplored. 'The sufficient shall aid the lesser' indeed! What a gang of whingeing wets!

Voting poll taxes into existence is much easier than collecting them. The king's

commissioners ran into trouble right away. Faced with demands for the 1379 levy based on social status, people responded by reversing their normal habit of pretending to be of higher rank than they really were, or of claiming distinguished ancestry.

In the next year things were even worse. Who was 'sufficient'? Who was 'lesser'? The collectors' difficulties were increased by the urgent and pre-emptory orders they received: 'You are to collect the required information by the means which seem best to you'. 'You are to seize all those who act in opposition or rebellion and you are to keep them safely in our prison.'

The tax collectors obeyed their orders to the letter. The sufficient did not come to the aid of the lesser. Do they ever? Harassed by officials, aroused by a sense of injustice, the lower classes rose in a bloody rebellion.

Poll taxes acquired a bad reputation in government circles as a result of this salutary experience. Only very reluctantly, in times of national emergency, were they resorted to thereafter.

Such an occasion arose in 1641 when it became necessary to pay off a Scottish army which was occupying the north of England. The 1641 poll tax was graduated like that of 1379. In 1688, a year not merely of national emergency but of revolution, a (graduated) poll tax was raised. After 1698 it was dropped and from that time on the idea of such taxes mouldered quietly in the archives until it was exhumed by the present government.

Up to now we have considered poll taxes only as temporary measures, as in mediaeval England, or as means of social control. But a few examples of states using them as permanent and major sources of revenue can be found. What are the social effects of such a fiscal policy?

By the end of the third century, political instability, inflation and civil and foreign wars had reduced the citizens of the Roman empire to such a state of desperation that they gave total power to a bull-necked general, Diocletian.

This soldier saved the empire by running it like a military camp. He introduced a form of taxation based partly on property and partly on a poll tax or '*capitatio plebeia*' which was levied on all those who had little or no property. But the only emperor who was daring enough to impose this on the urban poor was Galerius, Diocletian's successor.

This individual (another soldier) is credited with persuading Diocletian that the christians would make a suitable scapegoat to bear the blame for the empire's ills. He is best remembered for his persecution and his taxes. In 311 AD, after a reign of three years, he fell ill and, attributing his

affliction (probably cancer of the groin) to the vengeance of the christian god, he reluctantly granted a measure of religious toleration. To no avail. He died a few months later, unlamented by his subjects.

The Roman empire's tax collectors faced the same problems as were later to baffle those of mediaeval England. People concealed themselves, sold their property and moved from place to place. Diocletian was only a simple soldier so he produced a simple solution. Everybody must stay put. Peasants were bound for life to the farms they worked on. Artisans were bound to their trades, and their children after them. In this way originated the serfdom and caste system of European feudalism.

If peasant bondage began in the Roman empire, it enjoyed a late flowering in the



The peasants' revolt of 1381: the year of the last attempt to levy a poll tax

Russian empire during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The cause of this bondage, and the means by which it was perpetuated, was a poll tax, introduced by Peter the Great in the 1720s. With typical Russian religiosity it was referred to as a 'soul tax', and Peter's contemporaries, even those friendly to him, regarded it with dismay.

'The soul is something intangible and incomprehensible and has no price', one of them wrote, 'Prices should be fixed only on tangible goods'. It was this writer who invented the term 'soul-destroying' to describe the effects of the tax.

Assessment and collection of this imposition were accompanied by the violence and repression inseparable from capitation. Souls were 'salted away'. Even the holy synod was forced to threaten recalci-

trant clergymen who concealed taxpayers with 'merciless corporal punishment to be followed with forced labour, even in cases of old age'. We also learn of 'severe decrees, torture and confiscations, to get the rusty administration machinery into motion'.

How did Peter's fiscal system work? Before that time there were various legal categories of peasants, some more free than others, who paid various taxes, and a minority class of slaves, who did not. Peter created a new unitary system of absolute bondage for all peasants. Previously employers or masters, landowners now became slave-owners. They were responsible for collecting the soul tax and to enable them to do this, all right of movement was removed from the peasantry. They were bound to the land, and their owners were given total power over them. Peter introduced this system in order to pay for his wars against Sweden without having to borrow money.

His popularity may be judged from the fact that when his son confessed as a sin that he wished his father's death, the priest replied reassuringly that everybody else did too. Peter later had his son flogged so severely that he died.

One of his biographers remarks that the damage done by his taxes would hardly have been paid for even if he had conquered five Swedens. Nonetheless, the slave-owning landlords acquired a vested interest in maintaining the poll tax, and it continued unchanged until 1861. They were later annihilated by a vengeful peasantry.

This sort of response to unjust taxation is by no means peculiar to Russia. The French revolution was provoked by resentment at the fact that the ruling classes were not paying their fair share of tax. It is not the level of taxation but its perceived unfairness which causes the trouble.

The duty on tea which ignited the American revolution was, at 3d a pound, an absolutely trivial imposition. But the Americans rebelled against it because they had not voted it on themselves. 'No taxation without representation.' The Scots are equally entitled to adopt this slogan, for the community charge was imposed upon them against the wishes of the majority of their representatives in parliament.

Now that the English Tories, who imposed it upon Scotland without a murmur, are being asked to inflict it on their own constituents, they are much less enthusiastic. It can be predicted with confidence that their enthusiasm will wane still further when attempts are made to collect it.

That, we learn from history, is when the real trouble always starts ●

'WORKERS OF THE world unite!' This theme of international working class action and solidarity is found throughout the main marxist texts. The *Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels in 1847-48, is still probably the most popular of all marxist literature, with its ringing declaration that:

'The working men (sic) have no country ... In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to.'

The capitalist system has internationalised production, bringing every nation into its sphere of activity, creating a world productive system. The world economy — and today's world-wide multinational corporations — dominate national markets.

This unites the interests of the bourgeoisie internationally, so that the various struggles by the working class in different countries also affect all capitalist countries. To maintain their system of international exploitation and oppression, the capitalists organise politically at an international level through military and economic alliances (such as NATO and the EEC) and intervene to destabilise governments and attack movements which they see as a challenge.

Imperialism

LENIN described the capitalism since the turn of the 20th century as 'imperialism', which he summed up as 'the highest stage of capitalism' — an epoch of wars, crises and revolutions. On the level of economics, imperialism is characterised by the domination of monopolies, the development of finance capital, and a tendency to stagnation. Gone was the period in which capitalism had played a dynamic role of developing the means of production: now the capitalist system of production for profit had become an obstacle to further development.

The imperialist powers sought to escape from this and increase profits by expanding into new fields of investment through colonial and ex-colonial countries and zones of influence.

Rosa Luxemburg identified two features of this capitalist crisis — militarism and protectionism. Indeed war has been an indispensable feature of capitalist development:

- as a means of struggle for defence of 'national' interests in competition against rival national capitalists;
- as a profitable method of placement for capital;
- as an instrument of class domination

B T O A S I C S C K

Internationalism and the working class

over the working class inside the imperialist countries.

In two world wars, contending imperialist powers tried to modify the distribution of territory, world markets and zones of influence in their own favour. These were wars for new fields of investment, wars for sources of raw materials, cheap labour or potential markets — but the motives of the capitalists were certainly not defence of democracy or opposition to fascism.

**'when the war broke out in
1914 most parties of the
International capitulated
before the wave of
chauvinism'**

Racism

PROTECTIONISM was used at first to build up large-scale industry. Once established, tariff barriers served only to push up production costs and restrict trade, so were abandoned. Today, social democratic reformists, allied with weaker sections of capitalists in flagging industries, propose import controls in a chauvinist defence of 'our' jobs at the expense of workers overseas.

Meanwhile capitalism imports labour to encourage mobility and foster racism inside the working class. Huge migrations of labour have occurred since the industrial revolution. Capitalists count on the passivity and lower wage expectations of 'imported' labour, and on differences in customs and traditions compared with the 'indigenous' working class, hoping this will hold back the development of real class solidarity and unity.

The working class can struggle effectively to free itself only if it rejects the racist, chauvinistic and xenophobic prejudices which help divide it. This is essential to the building of the international class struggle.

Internationalism

WORKING CLASS internationalism is based on the interdependence of national economies in the world economy. Under capitalism the working class has time and again been compelled to seek unity on an international level or suffer defeat in even elementary struggles with the capitalist class (a current example is the P&O ferry strike).

The employers exploit the national differences among the workers: in the face of working class militancy the capitalist classes of different countries, while remaining rivals, are quick to combine to defeat their common enemy, the working class.

Yet there is a material base to working class unity: whatever country it may inhabit, the working class — or proletariat — is an exploited, propertyless class, which does not own significant wealth or the means of production, and is forced to sell its labour power in order to live.

Based on this understanding, Marx helped found the International Working Men's Association, the First International, in 1864. Its aims were to weld the working class into a huge, militant force to fight for reforms and overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie. However conditions were not ripe for it then, and it never became a mass organisation.

The growth of the working class in the 1880s provided a material basis for constructing a new international leadership. Influenced by Engels, the guiding theory of the Second International (formed in 1889) was marxism, and this time the International won the allegiance of many

mass parties.

It fought to educate and mobilise the working class against the threat of war. Workers of all countries were reminded that they had common interests and should stay out of ruling class quarrels over the distribution of profit snatched from the workers and colonised peoples of the world. Unfortunately such rhetoric was not enough to protect the Second International — especially its mass parties, which had begun to succumb to parliamentarist illusions — from bureaucratic degeneration. When war broke out in 1914 most of the national parties of the International capitulated before the wave of chauvinism unleashed by the bourgeoisie.

Each social democratic party under pressure of an actual war lined up behind the war effort of its 'own' capitalist class. The chauvinistic collapse into national defence of the imperialist 'fatherland' spelled the end of anti-militarist and socialist propaganda.

The search for reforms within capitalism had led from social democracy to social patriotism, dragooning workers into the ranks of the bosses' armed forces along with acceptance of worsened living standards and working conditions for workers and a fresh boost in profits for the capitalist warmongers.

Only a handful of revolutionary socialists rejected this social patriotism and remained faithful to proletarian internationalism, refusing to take up common cause with their own bourgeoisie — among them Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Trotsky, MacLean and Lenin, the key figure of the internationalist left.

Lenin based his analysis on the certainty that the war would intensify all of the contradictions of the imperialist system and open up the possibility of a large-scale revolutionary crisis. While he opposed the capitalist war effort, he was no pacifist, and rigorously distinguished between the armed struggle of the oppressor and the oppressed.

There is an inter-imperialist war. With that war we have nothing to do. But there are also wars of national uprising by oppressed nationalities. The Irish uprising is 100 per cent justified. Even if German imperialism tries to profit from it, even if leaders of the national movement link up with German submarines, this does not change the just nature of the Irish war of independence against British imperialism.

Lenin's analysis laid the basis for the Bolshevik Party line during World War I, and this in turn was vindicated by the 1917 Russian revolution and the immediate post-war upheavals. The Bolshevik victory gave enormous impetus to the

revolutionary wing of the working class internationally and led to the creation of a new, revolutionary Third (communist) International in opposition to the discredited Second International.

'Socialism in one country'

UNDER LENIN, revolutionaries — now proclaiming themselves communists — were educated in a principled rejection of the idea of 'national defence' or 'defence of the fatherland' in the imperialist countries. However from the mid-1920s onwards the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian revolution under Stalin was marked also by a retreat on internationalism.

The stalinist leadership, breaking from Marx's methods, held that 'socialism' could be built on the basis of a single national state — even one as economically backward as Russia.

In pursuit of this goal, the Third International was transformed by Stalin increasingly into an instrument of foreign policy for the Kremlin rather than a revolutionary leadership for the international working class.

The task it allotted to the communist parties was not to struggle directly for power but to help pressurise the world bourgeoisie against military intervention aimed at the Soviet Union. This led to various zig-zags of policy, leading to the theory of the popular front — an alliance between communist parties and 'progressive', anti-fascist bourgeois parties — which brought disaster to the Spanish revolution in the late 1930s.

Permanent revolution

TROTSKY'S THEORY of permanent revolution, derived from Marx's analysis of the 1848 revolutions, was argued as a direct opposition to the stalinist strategy of building socialism in one country, insisting that:

'The socialist revolution begins on the national arena; it unfolds in the international arena, and is completed in the world arena.'

Those who uphold Trotsky's approach stress the underlying unity of the world's working class, but recognise that the specific tasks facing the workers in the advanced capitalist countries, the oppressed and colonised countries of the 'third world', and in the stalinist states can only be resolved if the working class seizes power, while the creation of a classless socialist society can be realised on a world scale.

International solidarity

IN EACH COUNTRY, the working class and revolutionary marxists have the task of supporting revolutions happening else-

where, while actively preparing to make a revolution in their 'own' country. To abandon the first task in the name of the second is to abandon the banner of proletarian internationalism, to retreat to national communism.

International working class support is a powerful tool in a workers' state's defence against imperialism. Supporting the developments of the world revolution helps break the isolation of a workers' state and counters the tendency towards bureaucratisation.

International solidarity with the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions were material factors in defeating US imperialism and ensuring their victory and survival. The insistence by Fidel Castro and other leaders that the Cuban revolution was only the first step towards the liberation of Latin America underlined their belief in the international character of the revolutionary struggle and ran counter to the traditional lines of stalinism and reformism.

The call to 'create two, three, many Vietnams' found a real resonance. In March 1968 a million people marched in Europe in solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution: in West Berlin they carried portraits of Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

The struggles of the working class in any one country must never be subordinated to some supposed 'higher' interest: for revolutionaries and marxists there is no contradiction in supporting both the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and Solidarnosc in Poland.

The Fourth International

FIFTY YEARS ago this year Trotsky fought to rebuild the international movement whose revolutionary spirit had been crushed by stalinism. A new, Fourth International was formed, rallying the minority forces of proletarian internationalism around a transitional programme based on the early methods and texts of Lenin's Communist International.

This current has remained a focal point of internationalism ever since, combatting stalinism and social democracy, and offering a marxist banner to the workers movement. Among the basic principles reasserted was that: 'An uncompromising disclosure of the roots of race prejudice and all forms and shades of national arrogance and chauvinism, particularly anti-semitism, should become part of the daily work of all sections of the Fourth International, as the most important part of the struggle against imperialism and war. Our basic slogan remains: Workers of the world unite!' ●

STEPHANIE GRANT

JANE WELLS

John Lister, *Cutting the Lifeline*, Journeyman Press, £3.50 (£3.00 to LHE affiliates/readers, £2.50 for bulk orders of 10 or more). Contact London Health Emergency, 335 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

AT THE HEIGHT of the healthworkers' action last February, when nurses seemed to be taking as many strike votes as there were broadcast news bulletins, the *Times* ran a story under the headline 'Left-wingers accused of driving the nurses to strike' ('accused', it must be said, only by the *Times*).

The article concerned in the main one John Lister: his political career, his job with London Health Emergency, and his articles written for this journal. The huge, spontaneous militancy of the nurses — and other sections of healthworkers — was deliberately ignored. There was, argued the *Times* in the best tradition of wacky conspiracy theories, a happy band of far-left activists beavering away behind the scenes of industrial unrest in the NHS — with Lister himself feeding the angels' discontent into an ever-expanding network of strike action.

Well, he's at it again. *Cutting the Lifeline* is an impressive round-up — in the LHE's typically racy style — of the history and current crises facing the NHS, together with a collection of short articles by over 20 experts, workers and campaigners in the field, to fill out the detail, and to give some first-hand accounts.

Its publication is well timed. With a lull in the periodically high-profile campaigns conducted by the leaders of the labour movement (and usually last-minute efforts, latching onto and attempting to contain the real struggles, at that), with only 'burning torch' relays, a 'fun' day of action, and the possibility of only a forty minute (!) token strike to be called by the health union leaders to mark the fortieth anniversary in July, the day-to-day fight by NHS workers and service users goes on.

Cutting the Lifeline, focuses and highlights the important issues to be addressed by those campaigning for the NHS — and brings together some of the



Nurses demonstrate on 5 March 1988

Defending the NHS

leading activists.

The first section of the book, written by Lister, sets the scene with an introduction to the history of the NHS at a breakneck pace which keeps up your interest and keeps in all the important facts and analysis.

Seven chapters chart the development of today's NHS: from the concessions made at its establishment in the 1940s by the Labour government to the all-powerful consultants and private medicine; through under-resourcing and cuts (both Tory and Labour); the numerous re-organisations, and, under Thatcher, the suppression of the Black report (which linked poor health to poverty); the implementation of Sainsbury supreme Sir Roy Griffith's 'business plan' for the NHS: the blatant stuffing of health authorities and boards with trusted Tories, to the newly-respectable radical right's stated aim of wholly dismantling the NHS as a tax-funded service available to all, and free at the time of use.

It also records the effects on the lives of those failed by the

NHS women (and especially black women) as both workers and users of the service; the elderly, and those suffering mental illness.

Lister then goes on to document some of the struggles of the many thousands of low paid health workers, who, since the seventies, have fought for decent pay and for a decent service; recording too, the campaigning links forged with workers in other industries, with patients, and with local health groups concerned with defence of the NHS. And, it must be noted (as is recorded by the final contributor to the book, Dave Shields, in an instructive article) many of them won.

Exactly how to win now, facing as resolute an adversary as Thatcher, is an urgent problem for health campaigners and, centrally, for healthworkers and their leaders.

Cutting the Lifeline outlines some strategies for defending the health service. It advocates a health policy which would provide a democratic and secure financial foundation for a responsive health service, possible even within the

constraints of a capitalist economy (whilst pointing to a more thoroughgoing socialist approach). It also addresses the problem of how a health service trade union movement which is divided by professional jealousies, by competition for members, and weakened by nearly ten years of Tory attacks which have directly hit key sections of the NHS workforce and the core of trade union membership and militancy, the ancillary workers, can wage and win that fight.

The evermore new realist health union leaderships have cynically translated a real experience of weakness and fear into the defeatism of 'can't fight — won't fight'. They would rather go along with the *Times*' 'reds under the hospital beds' scare than admit that a real change of mood — to militancy — is staring them in the face. Despite this, health service workers continue to struggle and, albeit locally, continue to notch up some notable victories.

This book, unlike, unfortunately, most of the healthworkers' current trade union leaders, recognises the central importance of those struggles. 'Whatever tactics are employed, there is no doubt that the union role is central, and the longer this fight is delayed, the worse the conditions for winning will become. Healthworkers must take care that their proper concern for the immediate well-being of today's patients does not become a weapon used to prevent them taking industrial action to protect tomorrow's health service for us all', warns Lister.

It is a tribute to the vision and determination of thousands of healthworkers and campaigners that their struggles, many recorded in this book, have been sustained and in many cases won against vast odds. And the evidence — from the pages of this book, from the testimony of its contributors, and from the action taken by campaigners around the country — is that the *Times* and its friends cannot afford to rest easy under the illusion that the struggle to defend the NHS is all a trotskyst conspiracy. There are thousands more out there ready to take up the fight ●

REVIEWS

Politics, sex and sexual politics

STEPHEN SMITH

The Unbearable Lightness of Being, a film dir. Philip Kaufman.

THIS IS A bewitching film in every respect, one in which the senses of the viewer are slowly beguiled and then consummately seduced.

The concerns of the film are profound enough: politics, sex, sexual politics, the politics of human desire. The manner in which these themes are dealt with, in a beautifully ironic and sensitive tone, faithfully reproduces the work on which the film is based, the prose of Milan Kundera.

But first, an aside. Comrade Jeff Sawtell is a film reviewer for the *Morning Star*. Comrade Jeff reviewed this film and found it 'politically reactionary'. The film contains, apparently, 'crude anti-communism' and to cap it all, 'cynical references to communism'.

Comrade Jeff meditates on why this film has been let loose to corrupt the unsuspecting film-going proletariat: 'Could it be anything to do with ideologically combatting the successful offensive of glasnost/perestroika?' muses Comrade Jeff.

As you have probably gathered by now, the film is a quite savage indictment of stalinism. We have Comrade Jeff, straight out of the stalinist film-school of falsification, to thank for giving the game away.

The film deals with the final flowering of the Prague Spring, its brutal crushing and the aftermath.

The story is woven around the personal lives and the sexual dance of three central characters: Tomas, a typical Kunderian male sexual libertine; Tereza, gauche, repressed, dependent; and Sabina, the antithesis of Tereza, fiercely but wryly self-possessed, as studied a practitioner of 'erotic friendships' as Tomas.

The ultra-smooth Tomas is a successful brain surgeon. Tomas' existential state is 'the lightness of being', no permanent

attachments, no commitments, a life of erotic pleasure and sexual comedy.

Sabina, an artist prospering from the wave of Prague Spring modernism, is engaged in a suitably modernist relationship with Tomas, amongst others.

The balance is upset with the entrance of Tereza. Her emotional needs, the 'heaviness' of her being, prove unaccountably irresistible to Tomas, who — defying his own libertarian code — chooses to marry her.

Tomas, however, is unwilling to end his series of 'erotic friendships', and, as a consequence, Tereza is forced to live a pained and tortured existence, unable to accept Tomas' rationalizations about the separation of love and sex.

The intervention of Russian tanks forces the three to flee to Geneva. Before long, however, Tereza is drawn back to the politically repressed country of her birth, stating that she belongs in 'the country of the weak'.

Tomas chooses to surrender his comfortable exile existence in order to be with her.

After a 'serious' affair with a Genevan academic, Sabina emigrates to America.

By the end of the film, Tomas and Tereza are forced through political victimisation to retreat to a rustic farm existence in the Bohemian countryside, where they eventually find a measure of tranquillity.

One sequence from this part in particular remains in the memory. We see Tereza working scythe in hand in the fields, whilst in the distance we see a smiling Tomas approach driving a tractor.

As the two get closer, we see them gradually through their poses transforming into the hero and heroine of the stalinist socialist-realist motif, a beautifully observed parody of their existence.

The dramatic centrepiece of the film in terms of spectacle is the invasion of Prague. A Zelig-like mix of archive library film, intercut with crowd scenes



of Tomas and Tereza taking part in the spontaneous but ultimately doomed display of street resistance.

For me, this is one area in which this adaptation transcends the original work. Successful adaptations of major literary works are not very common, but there is no question that the film will not suffer by any comparisons made by critics.

The film ends with a lyrical restatement of the central intent of Kundera's metaphysics: the transcendence of human existence.

We see Tomas and Tereza,

content at last, driving along a country lane, heading inexorably towards a white expanse in the distance.

In the previous scene we have been informed of their impending deaths by Sabina. To the enchanting music of Czech composer Janacek, we watch and witness the final absurdist irony of the lives of Tomas and Tereza — the scene played out without the slightest hint of tragedy — with our resigned knowledge of the lightness of being ●



Which model of socialism?

OLIVER MACDONALD

Abel Aganbegyan, *The challenge: economics of perestroika*
Hutchinson, £8.95.

THIS IS BY far the best guide yet available in English to the economic dimension of the current Soviet leadership's drive for *perestroika*.

Aganbegyan writes clearly, vigorously and, within the limits of what is a manifesto, very frankly. His book can form the basis for serious discussion among socialists here attempting to make sense of and evaluate economic *perestroika*.

It is important to bear in mind that within what might be called the Gorbachev coalition there is not one single conception of the desired economic strategy and ultimate aim; and the variety of views is even wider in the field of tactics and tempo of economic reform. But for the last three years, the views of Aganbegyan and his Novosibirsk school of economists have been the dominant influence upon Gorbachev himself and his immediate circle of advisers.

Too much of the discussion on the left here over these issues either assumes that the most extreme marketisers (called 'monetarists' in the Soviet Union) represent the 'real' programme of Gorbachev or that once market indicators are introduced, an iron logic of the market leads 'inevitably' to the conclusions of the monetarists.

The very extensive east European experience of degrees of marketisation shows that this is far from being the case.

What is true is that the introduction of market indicators decentralises decisions about economic allocations and leads to increased social differentiation within the working population by comparison with the formal-legal (as opposed to parallel-market and corrupt network realities) egalitarianism of centralised command planning.

Aganbegyan's platform is a wholesale assault upon the



traditional stalinist system of economic management, which he describes as administrative, and a call for 'economic' methods of management, by which he means the use of market indicators of performance by state enterprises, along with the development of co-operatives and individual enterprises.

We should be quite frank in acknowledging that when we face a choice between these two systems, commandist centralised planning of exchanges between producers and consumers is not in principle in any way superior to the use of market indicators.

Neither Lenin nor Trotsky ever gave the slightest indication after 1921 that they would have supported Stalin's administrative regimentation of economic relations as being in any way superior to NEP. Those in the Soviet Union who are currently claiming that Stalin followed Trotsky in 1929 over economic policy are either ignorant fools as far as Soviet history is concerned, or liars.

Some on the left here, on the other hand, argue that today, unlike in the 1920s, the USSR has a highly advanced economy, has freed itself from the contradictions of backwardness that made NEP necessary in the 1920s and consequently an adoption of market indicators is a retreat from advanced, more socialist positions.

This is simply not the case. The fact is that the commandist system has for decades operated not only alongside, but to a considerable extent through a very large market: a parallel

market.

Furthermore, the measure of how advanced the soviet economy is in this debate must be a relative one: the strength of the Soviet economy vis-a-vis the world capitalist market. And here it remains pitifully weak, and consequently subject to enormously strong material pressure.

As Trotsky argued, the Bukharin-Stalin fantasy of overtaking the west and reaching advanced socialism in isolated, autarkic development would lead to an impasse. And as he also argued, the more advanced such an isolated economy is, the more acute its difficulties would be.

None of this means that planning has failed. With an open public life and democratic accountability the Soviet commandist planning system would indeed have worked very much better. And no socialist economic policy of any sort can abandon strategic planning. Trotsky's argument in the 1920s was precisely to combine plan and market with the voluntary development of co-operative forms of ownership alongside the state and individual-family sector.

In the current deep crisis of the Soviet economy, there is no viable alternative to a policy of this kind. On the other hand, just as the commandist plan has great costs attached to it, so does the market. These costs of marketisation are not adequately faced by Aganbegyan.

They include the inevitable growth of social inequalities, threats of poverty for sections of

the population, the domination of the consumer by producer cartels, speed-up and erosion of rights at work, the dangers of powerful centrifugal pressure thanks to the accompanying opening up to western capital, new forms of corruption as a result of this, the emergence of a new 'red bourgeoisie' as workers in Poland called those who made a killing in the increasingly marketised Poland of the 1970s.

The effects of this kind of marketisation and opening to western capital in Poland in the 1970s led to ferment and revolt among the working class in the big factories, especially the workers in the Polish communist party, a revolt that eventually erupted in the form of Solidarnosc.

Aganbegyan believes that with workers' self-management and greater political freedoms, together with a large strengthening of the levels of provision in social services, that kind of egalitarian revolt can be avoided. Yet the results of the selection of delegates to the June party conference show that the industrial workers have not yet swung into action in a decisive way to destroy the hold of the Ligachev wing of the party leadership on the big plants. They haven't moved because they remain suspicious of *perestroika*.

The answer to this crisis of the Soviet reform movement is for the reformers to genuinely take the Soviet working class into their confidence: to open the books to the workers, explain to them the scope of the crisis, the need for austerity, the way that austerity will involve the destruction of the privileges of the bureaucracy, as Veltsin has demanded, and then put the package of measures to the democratic vote of work-place delegates.

This is the answer which trotskysts should argue for: a socialist, democratic way forward; not a defence of stalinist commandist planning against the introduction of co-operatives and market indicators ●

'They do not love your neck, unnoosed and straight'

TRACY DOYLE

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, Chatto & Windus, £11.95

'EVERYBODY KNEW what she was called but nobody anywhere knew her name. Disremembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no-one is looking for her ... Beloved.'

Toni Morrison, brilliant author of *The Bluest Eye*, *Tar Baby*, *Song of Solomon* and *Sula*, has written a beautiful and complex new novel, at times more poetry than prose, with a depth of imagination that has the power to carry you through 300 pages without a pause.

Set in north America in the mid-1800s, as slavery comes under attack from the abolitionists, *Beloved* describes the struggle to escape of a woman called Sethe. This struggle for freedom is only just beginning as she takes her children and flees the south. Sick, beaten, feet raw and swollen, Sethe gives birth to her fourth child, Denver, in a boat crossing the Ohio river, drawing on the strength and spirit that characterise many of Toni Morrison's heroines.

'I did it. I got us all out. Up till then it was the only thing I did on my own. Each and every one of my babies and me too. I birthed them and I got them out and it wasn't no accident ... it was me doing it, me saying Go on and Now ... me using my own head. It was a kind of selfishness I never knew nothing about before.'

But the freedom of the north is little more than an illusion. Faced with the threat of recapture, Sethe can see only one sanctuary for her children. 'If she thought anything it was No No No No No No No ... she just flew and collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no-one could hurt them ...'

While the horrors he faced drove her husband insane, Sethe chooses death as the only place of safety for her first baby daughter, a daughter whose name is the one word on her tombstone 'Beloved'. Yet Beloved returns to claim her life and her mother. For Sethe there is no escape but to exorcise the past and turn her righteous anger back towards the evil thrust upon her life.

Building layer upon layer, blending past and present, the story moves on inexorably. Morrison's technique is to bind you, to seize and rivet you while she plunges you into pain and horror; only to hold and lift you, to show you how Sethe stands firm and fights. 'As the reader you can take comfort in knowing whatever it is has already happened so you don't have to be too frightened. You're going to find out about it, but it's not going to be a big surprise, even though it might be awful. It may hurt you but I don't want to pull the rug out from under you,' writes Morrison elsewhere about her work.

Many black writers, male and female, have written to celebrate black survival. Toni Morrison, and other black women writers such as Ntozake Shange, have given their attention to a specific and distinct aspect of this tradition — following the tears and battles of those who fall.

Like Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, and Sula in the novel of the same name, Sethe is a woman who is cast down or outcast; having killed her own child she now faces retribution as that child returns to haunt her life and home. Once her house was a happy place, full of visitors and friends. Now it is cold and empty and the very floors and boards will shake and shudder as the ghost vents childish anger and frustration.

When the ghost appears in human form, the girl Beloved succeeds in capturing the heart of Denver, Sethe's surviving daughter and all that remains to her of the family she tried so

... someday somebody'll
Stand up and talk about me.
And write about me —
Black and beautiful —
And sing about me,
And put on plays about me!
I reckon it'll be
Me myself!

Yes, it'll be me.

Langston Hughes 'Note on
Commercial Theatre'

hard to free. 'To be shown the dark in Sethe's past is not to judge her or see her as a victim but to learn how we ourselves can learn to fight. In doing this Sethe is required to acknowledge the source of her pain, to reconcile herself to the results of her own actions and then to turn her energy to shaking herself free. Free of the taint of slavery, and free of the ghost that haunts her.

Finally Sethe comes to find self-confidence and self-affirmation, to rejoice in herself as no-one else will, least of all those who beat her, destroyed her husband, caused the death of her child. Sethe learns to heed the words of her mother-in-law: 'in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it, Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh; they despise. They don't love your eyes, they just as soon pick them out. No more do they love your back. Yonder they flay it ... And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight.'

Beloved is a beautiful and moving book. Following a struggle by black writers, *Beloved* became the first novel by a black author to win a major literary prize in the USA when it was awarded the equivalent of the Booker Prize this year. Long marginalised and silenced by society, in their writing black women provide a powerful focus for reclaiming and resistance that holds a thousand messages for us all, but which is uniquely theirs ●

'Well it's a grand old play to go to ...'

'The Celtic Story', Wildcat Theatre Company, Pavilion Theatre, Glasgow.

'THE CELTIC STORY' is a new departure for Wildcat. Formed in the late seventies as a breakaway from the 7:84 company, they've devoted themselves previously to pungent left political commentary on contemporary events like the miners' strike or the Nicaraguan revolution.

A high quality of writing, acting and musicianship have assured them a wide audience for shows put on mainly in community centres and welfare clubs throughout Scotland.

This piece by contrast was produced to mark the centenary of the football club founded by a priest in Glasgow's east end in 1888 and having recent Irish immigrants as its main support. Sponsorship by Celtic carried a potential veto on material, but in the event author/directors Dave McLennan and David Anderson produced an acceptable show that's now playing nightly to packed houses.

There's a problem here, however. As usual Wildcat are attracting many people new to live theatre: Celtic supporters clubs throughout Scotland are making block bookings and running buses. What the majority of the audience wants, therefore, is a eulogy to the club's achievements, like the first European cup win for a British club in 1967. Indeed the biggest cheer awaits the emergence of one of the present team from a giant birthday cake at the end of the show.

Events in the history of the club are loosely woven around the story of a family of late nineteenth century immigrants whose grandfather is also just 100.

One of the best moments is when the latter (played by Dave McLennan) leaps to his feet and near throttles his grandson. The boy has been making racist comments about Mark Walters,

the black Rangers player whose debut in an 'old firm' game was marked by a deluge of bananas thrown onto the pitch by Celtic supporters. That, he says, is exactly the way us 'paddies' were treated 100 years ago!

As the story of the club unfolds so does that of the twentieth century with its wars and economic depressions — members of the family go away to fight and die or are out of work for years. But the club goes on.

It's the women relations who have the best lines here about the pointlessness of their men's blind fanatical support — especially when it combines with the apparent acceptance of war and recession. Their sentiments are overwhelmed, however, by the continuing tale of Celtic's triumphs.

The conditions surrounding this production made it impossible to do a political job that would have told the relevant truths about the club: that Celtic were an important product of the nineteenth century immigration and played a key part in giving an identity to a discriminated-against minority. That Celtic have never had the same sectarian employment policies as Rangers — Kenny Dalglish, Danny McGrain and Jock Stein are a few recent non-catholic employees. And that in the late twentieth century Celtic's success depends, however, on maintaining a religious bigotry that, in the words of Bill Murray, author of a recent book on the old firm, 'has been the source of the success of the two clubs. It has brought them the best players in Scotland, the most supporters and consequently the biggest profits'.

One of the saddest sights to be seen is a mass of young Celtic supporters at one end of the ground waving tricolours and singing republican songs confronting, at the other end, the union jacks and the cries of 'god save the queen'.

And it's true, consciousness is a little different at each end: we'd get more money for a strike at the Celtic end, and the fascist BNP's attempts to get a foothold in Scotland include leafletting Rangers supporters.

Up in the directors' box,

however, the builders, the garage owners, the bookies and the priests and ministers are laughing all the way to the bank. To do a play exposing the real nature of the old firm would have been more in the Wildcat tradition. Meantime go and see 'The Celtic Story' — if only for Terry Neason's magnificent singing — and support Partick Thistle! ●

TONY SOUTHALL

Mai Si!

Alain Krivine & Daniel Bensaïd
Mai Si/ La Brèche, 1988. (This book is only available in French. Available from La Brèche, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil-Sous-Bois, France. 75FF plus postage.)

THE PREDOMINANT media image of May '68 is of over-energetic students running riot while waiting to graduate and grow up. Analysis of the real significance of the events of that year is hard to find.

Mai si! is an exception. Beginning with a cool analysis of the significance and potential of the general strike of May 1968 in France this book leaves memories of personal exuberance well alone.

Krivine and Bensaïd, both leading members of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire then and now, point out that there were between six and nine million workers on strike in 1968, compared with three million in 1936 (at the time of the Popular Front) and two-and-a-half million at the peak of the widespread strikes of 1947.

'It was without doubt the biggest strike in the history of the French labour movement.' But real self-organisation on the part of strikers was relatively rare and the negotiations at Grenelle which eventually ended the strike brought little of historic significance.

Power vacuum perhaps there was not, even when de Gaulle slipped off to Baden Baden on 29 May. But for a regime dependent on tight control of almost all aspects of French life, extreme governmental confusion at the end of May indicated

serious injury. (De Gaulle withdrew from office the following year after being defeated in a plebiscite-like referendum.)

On the question of whether there was a revolutionary situation in May, Krivine and Bensaïd give an eminently sensible answer; you cannot talk of a situation being 'objectively revolutionary' but lacking the 'subjective' element (the party), because the two are indissociable.

Mai si! is actually more about the far left and political events since 1968 than about the events themselves. But the authors deal with so much that it reads in parts like a whistle-stop tour of the 1970s and 1980s: on your left, Nicaragua, terrorism; on your right, Afghanistan, François Mitterrand, and so on.

The most lasting overall impression from the book is the difficulty of being a revolutionary socialist in France today.

Over the past twenty years many former revolutionaries have been sucked into an ever rightward-moving Socialist Party because it, at least, seemed likely one day to govern, if not fulfil the hopes of May 1968.

The communist party's popularity has declined from 22 per cent of the vote in 1968 to 7 per cent in 1988. And marxism among intellectuals is decidedly out of fashion. But *Mai si!*, in its attempt to objectively but critically analyse May and its legacy, plays a small part in helping to understand the past and therefore understand how to carry on the struggle in the future ●

NICK HEWLETT

Bookends

THE SOVIET bureaucracy appears increasingly torn between 'capitalist' reforms and centralised inertia. This problem is not new. It beset the bureaucracy's historical predecessors, the tsarist autocracy. It is shockingly apparent to the visitor to the Soviet Union (forget Spain and go there!) how the same old structures reasserted their presence in the bureaucratising

backwash from 1917. Newly republished, Peter Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a revolutionist* (Century Hutchinson, £6.95) sheds light on the options arising from the previous crisis of the *ancien régime* — brought about by Tsar Alexander II's attempts to reform from above.

● Remember the MOVE incident of May 1985? The MOVE commune — a group of radical black communes — occupied a fortified house in a 'respectable' part of black Philadelphia. At dawn on 13 May 1985, the Philadelphia police, acting on orders of black mayor Nelson Goode, began their assault. The attack culminated at 5:25pm when a large improvised bomb was dropped from a police helicopter onto the roof of the MOVE building. It demolished the house and started a fire which destroyed 61 more houses in the street. Eleven MOVE 'members', six adults and five children, were killed in the bombing. Only one adult and a thirteen-year-old survived. *Attention, Move! This is America!* by Margot Harry (Banner Press, £5.95) is a detailed account of the MOVE bombing and the subsequent trial of the only adult survivor, Ramona Africa, for aggravated assault on police officers and resisting arrest! After conducting her own defence she was found guilty and sentenced to up to seven years in prison.

● Onto 'high theory'. A collection of Claus Offe's essays *Disorganised capitalism — contemporary transformations of work and politics* (Basil Blackwell, £8.95) is just out. Offe's work dovetails with the ideas of post-Althusserian 'structural functionalist' marxists like Lierpietz and fellow Germans, Hirsch and Essen, and their attempts to construct a new abstract 'ideal type' of 'post-Fordism'. As expected it's fairly indigestible fare. Some of the phenomena he addresses, however, notably increased differentiation and cleavages in the labour market, are in urgent need of examination from a revolutionary standpoint. For this reason I suggest at least some of you give this a try, especially the first essay 'The political economy of the labour market' ●

REVIEWS

Wall Street

HELEN
MACDONALD

Wall Street. A film directed by
Oliver Stone.

WHEN 'WALL STREET' first opened there was much noise about this exposure of stock exchange dirty dealing.

Inhabitants of the stockbroker belt could be heard on television and radio either disclaiming the whole film, or, more often, hailing it as a devastatingly accurate portrayal of their own dirty dealings — shaking their heads solemnly over the shame of it all.

I think that their tongues must have been lodged firmly in their collective checks. If this is the worst that monopoly capitalism has to offer us, I reckon that we'll live happily after all.

But it's a fairly enjoyable way of spending a couple of hours at your local cinema. Just don't expect anything vaguely political — this is more of a moral tale for our times than a critique of the machinations of big business and insider dealing.

Were you to take this film too seriously you might end up slightly confused — why is Terence Stamp infinitely preferable to Michael Douglas when it comes to having your company taken over by some rampaging entrepreneur?

The general impression is that Wall Street may have the odd



(large) puddle of corruption, but your average broker really is a fairly decent chap. Somehow this seems a contradiction in terms.

The performances are good, although biased towards the evil. Michael Douglas as Gordon Gekko of the 'greed is good'



philosophy stalks around in a suitably malevolent manner and proves that if you're going to be a bad buy, it pays to be a *really* bad guy as his somewhat nicer acolyte Charlie Sheen seems never to emerge from wimpdom, even in his moment of glory.

Martin Sheen is struck with a dog of a part as the honourable (albeit class collaborationist) trade union leader, but to his credit still manages to convince. Apart, that is, from a hideous hospital scene where *Wuthering Heights* meets high finance with a swing.

It would be pleasant to be able to write about the women leads, but the film's main failing is that it appears to have forgotten that they exist. As

people that is. (We all know that they exist as girlfriends, loose women and mothers.)

The only woman with any sort of role is Daryl Hannah, the interior decorator who specialises in making your flat look like a building site. But then she is allowed special significance as belonging to both Gekko and Charlie Sheen one way or another, and being a sort of sub-plot to their power struggle. Yuck.

This film is probably more about men and their struggles with both power and each other than it is about high finance. As when Gekko says to Charlie at one point 'I gave you your manhood'. And that folks is what it's all about ●

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AUTUMN 1988

A monthly Socialist Outlook!

MORE TOPICAL. More detailed analysis. Sharper. A clearer line of policy. More debates, more polemics. These are among our objectives in moving towards a monthly *Socialist Outlook* this autumn.

We think we have produced a varied and interesting magazine so far: our growing base of readers and supporters shows we have been doing pretty well. But we know we could do better: a monthly would mean much more than simply twice as many issues a year.

Now we have raised the cash and purchased new desk top publishing technology, we are determined to use it to improve the magazine in many ways.

When we launched *Socialist Outlook* a year ago, we knew the limitations of the bi-monthly schedule. Events move much faster than we can cover them; even our most up-to-date articles soon appear dated. Articles needed to be written in a relatively 'timeless' style to last almost three months from commissioning to the end of the magazine's sales life.

Our ability to present detailed analysis of current struggles has also been restricted, and because of this, there has been little scope to argue for more than the most general points of tactics and policy.

Debates and discussions have also suffered from the time-lag between issues, as have polemical articles criticising the politics of other currents, and even a proper letters page.

We aim to change this. The new monthly will not only be more frequent, but the gap between writing and publication date will be reduced. There will be scope to alter some articles almost up to the point of going to press.

We aim to produce a magazine that is punchier, with more, shorter articles, more comment and criticism,



and more policies argued out.

It will be a more active, combative magazine, still aimed at that section of the hard left that sees the necessity of a real fight for new leadership throughout the trade union and labour movement, but also recognises the importance of building the campaigns and struggles of the oppressed — women, black people, lesbians and gay men,

and youth.

We think you will like it.

We will use the summer period to prepare these changes: so this will be the last issue until the relaunched monthly *Socialist Outlook* hits the streets at the end of September.

You can help! We need as much support as we can get.

● Send a donation: we are launching a new appeal fund,

this time a 12-month appeal for £20,000 towards a new office where we can produce the magazine. Already over £1,700 has been donated by supporters attending the successful 68-88 rally at the end of May. We urge all readers to send us a donation — large or not so large — towards this target.

● Take some copies to sell: the new monthly will need extra sellers, at union and Labour Party meetings, demos, conferences, etc. Why not take a few copies to sell in your workplace or local campaigns? Contact *Socialist Outlook* or your local sellers to arrange delivery.

● Make sure your local bookshop stocks the monthly *Socialist Outlook* — and ask your library to order it.

● Send us articles, reviews, your local news cuttings, leaflets, photos, cartoons — anything to help us link our coverage to the struggles and debates in your area. Write to our letters page — or just send us comments or ideas for articles you would like to see in the new monthly.

● It's *your* magazine: with your help we can make it better! ●



Daniel Bensaid addresses the Socialist Outlook '68-'88 rally, seated (l to r): Tariq Ali, Valerie Coultas, Michael Farrell