

17
Published fortnightly

50p

Solidarity price £1

Strikers and
claimants 25p

No 17

Feb 29, 1992

socialist OUTLOOK

Scrap Tory health market!



THE PLEDGE by Labour's leadership to scrap the Tory 'reforms' to the National Health Service is perhaps the most radical policy commitment they will make for the election.

Kinnock's team has been forced to the conclusion that the Thatcherite reforms – which have marketised and bureaucratised the NHS, establishing unpopular opted-out Trusts and fund-raising status for GPs as it paves the way for more privatisation – cannot be amended and must be swept away.

Labour is now committed to:

- SCRAP the anarchic 'internal market' system, which has cost £1 billion, bringing a bonanza for accountants, a paperchase of invoices, and the growing threat of haphazard hospital closures, all at the expense of patient care;

- SCRAP fund-holding status for family doctors, through which a tiny minority of GPs have used their privileged position to ensure their patients jump queues for treatment, bringing a two-tier system into the NHS;

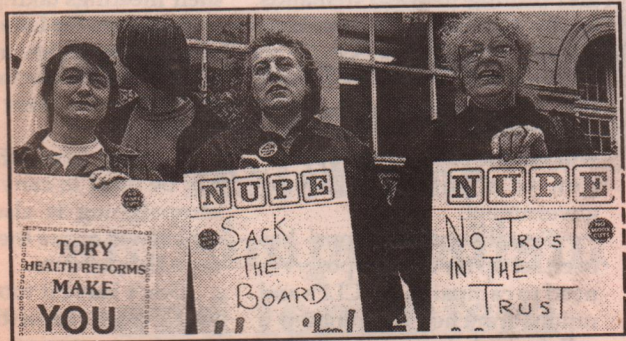
- SCRAP the opting out of hospitals and services, abolishing the secretive and expensive apparatus of 'Self Governing Trusts', and bringing them back under the control of local health authorities;

- OPEN UP district health authorities, which the Tories reduced to tiny rump bodies, by bringing back local councillors and by amalgamating them with the Family Health Service Authorities which run GP services.

All this falls far short of a socialist programme for the NHS: there is no pledge to democratise the health authorities, only vague commitments on additional funding, no reference to nationalisation of the hugely profitable drug companies – and not even a pledge to abolish the prescription charge which 13 years of Tory rule has pushed up from 20p to £3.75.

However there is still a real choice on offer, between a catastrophic fourth term of Tory offensive against the NHS – which would drive further wedges of privatisation, means-testing and commercialisation into the most popular of public services, – and Labour's commitment to halt that process. Under the Tories the battles would all be defensive, while under Labour health workers and campaigners could fight for additional demands.

If only Labour policy on the Tory anti-union laws and a host of other issues were half as bold and forthright as the new NHS policy, perhaps Kinnock's party would be ahead instead of lying neck and neck in the polls with the Major mafia!



Defend the NHS!

VOTE LABOUR!

Fight for socialist policies!

Ecological catastrophe?

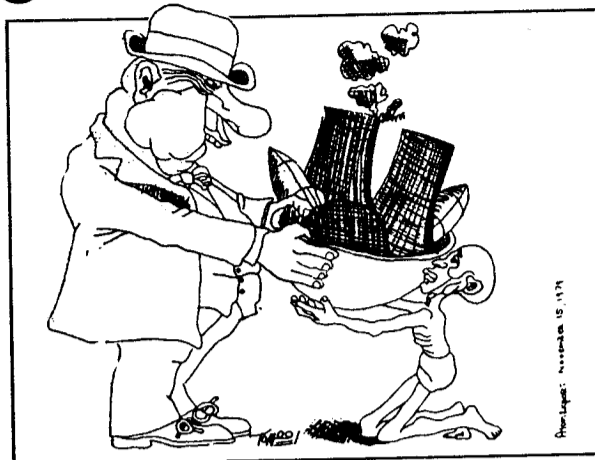
The plot of the film 'Highlander 2' revolves around the disappearance of the ozone layer, and the building of global shield to keep out ultra-violet radiation. It is fast becoming clear that the science fiction lies in the building of a shield, not the possibility of the destruction of the ozone layer.

Scientists have discovered a new emerging hole in the northern hemisphere to add to the one over the South Pole. The area affected covers the northernmost parts of the US, Europe, Canada and Russia.

Previous findings had shown ozone depletion of between four and eight per cent in this area. But the new studies predict a decline which by this spring will be 40 or 50 per cent - far worse than anyone could have imagined in such a short time.

The causes of this potential ozone catastrophe are not in dispute. It is the high concentrations of chlorine monoxide, a by-product of CFC chemicals, which are eating the ozone layer.

If the ozone hole emerges and remains in place, the effects will be catastrophic. A huge bombardment of ultra-violet (UV) radiation will hit the earth, causing a vast increase in cancers, damaging human immune systems, wrecking agriculture and harming marine life



in the Atlantic.

What can be done? Only the banning of CFCs and the prevention of the emission of fossil fuels into the atmosphere could, over a long time, create the conditions for repairing the ozone layer. But little or nothing is being done.

In 1987 many governments world-wide met in Montreal to discuss action on CFCs. They decided to phase out these gases by the year 2000. Even this was too little, too late; and in any case, there is little evidence that this target will be reached.

To stave off ecological catastrophe, defending the ozone layer is just one, admittedly important, step. The other major task is stopping

global warming.

There is now a mountain of evidence about the shift in global weather patterns because of warming. The desert is spreading, rain belts are moving northwards. Agriculture in southern Africa is being devastated; in Zimbabwe it will take a generation to recover, even assuming that normal rain patterns return.

This summer in South Africa temperatures of up to 45 degrees have been recorded, way above normal.

Climatic changes are worsened by the methods of agro-industry, and the consequences of third world poverty. Rain forest destruction and intensive forms of cultivation causing permanent soil erosion threaten new dustbowls. As the climate changes it will be the poor of Africa, Asia and Latin America who suffer first.

Defending the planet means international action and international planning. World capitalism will not and cannot take the necessary action. The imperatives of short term profit are always too great. Which means that, whatever steps are taken to lessen the dangers of global catastrophe, until a more rational social system is created, the danger will remain.

The struggle to defend the environment can mobilise a huge coalition. Enabling it to conquer permanent victories means the destruction of the capitalist world order.

Don't let Kinnock lose us the election!

By Pete Firmin

With all the news of rising unemployment, house repossessions, cuts in education, failure of the NHS 'reforms', Labour should be a long way ahead in the opinion polls.

But things seem to have been stuck at 'level pegging' with the Tories for months. This could produce a hung parliament, or possibly even another Tory victory, given that Labour needs an 8% majority to ensure victory.

Why? While the Tories or secret services may have engaged in dirty tricks, they have no real need of them when Labour refuses to put forward anything more than half-measures (at best) as its alternative.

Having spent several years attempting to prove that it is no threat to capitalism by removing the last vestiges of 'left' policies, the Labour leadership

has very little to offer that might fire the imagination of the millions who have suffered under the Tories.

Where are any signs of Labour's policies against job losses, such as the closure of Ravenscraig, let alone support for a struggle such as that at GEC Manchester?

Labour could only offer its 'total support' when the Tories said they would have to back-date legislation to allow the liability orders against millions of poll tax payers to go ahead.

Retreats

Even when Labour does have half-way decent policy, such as making the well-paid pay National Insurance contributions or the introduction of a minimum wage, it runs a mile when attacked by the Tories and their tame media, claiming they will be 'phased in' or watering them down further.

Come the election, the Labour Party leadership will expect its members to turn out enthusiastically on the doorstep to say how wonderful Neil and the Party are.

But they have spent years undermining these same activists, expelling critical ones, removing their right to elect their representatives and make policy, and changing the policy themselves whenever they felt it expedient (when the press got too hot for them). The deep sense of demoralisation and even betrayal indicates that members will not turn out like the robots



Kinnock and Smith - a disastrous duo
Walworth Road expects.

But the need to kick out the Tories could not be greater. On top of the damage they have inflicted on the working class and oppressed over the last 13 years, they have made it clear that they have plenty more of the same in store for us.

Further anti-union laws, the Asylum Bill, privatisation of British Rail and the post are only some of the things they have told us about, let alone what they would introduce after the election.

Only alternative

Labour is the only alternative we have to the Tories, despite its policies. Established by the unions, it is still (against its leaders' wishes?) the only party expressing the independence of the working class from the bosses.

Others, such as the Greens, SNP or Plaid Cymru which

have better policies on many issues (not least the right of the Scottish and Welsh people to determine their own futures) do not have this independence.

This means that socialists must hold in their stomach muscles and campaign for a Labour vote, while being sharply critical of Labour's policies and putting forward demands in the interest of the working class.

These will need to be fought for, even against a Labour government. Such a campaign will lay the basis for an opposition to a potential Labour government.

'Socialists for Labour' has been set up for this purpose. We need to campaign for CLPs and union branches to combine a call for a Labour vote with a fight on the anti-Tory issues which the Labour Party leadership won't touch, such as anti-racism and unshackling the unions from the Tories' laws.

Links have to be made with struggles and campaigns, promoting them while arguing for a Labour vote - as well as fighting around their issues.

Opposition has to be built amongst the labour movement where fascists such as the British National Party are putting up candidates to prevent their meetings taking place.

Socialists for Labour is planning rallies in several cities in advance of the election, and it is not too late for them to be built elsewhere.

A cheap broadsheet which can be used in canvassing and campaigning is also planned, which will argue the Left's case for a Labour vote.

Don't leave it too late, don't let Kinnock throw the election away!

Socialists for Labour can be contacted c/o 1 Gorefield House, Canterbury Road, London NW6 5TA.

Socialists for Labour
**Keeping
socialism
on the
agenda**
Sat 14th March, 7.30pm
Camden Town Hall
Judd Street WC1

Rolan Adams' parents join the 4,000 strong march to demand the closure of the far right British National Party headquarters in Welling on February 22. Their 15 year old son was stabbed to death by racists a year before in Thamesmead, just nearby. A wreath was laid outside the racists' offices.

Racist attacks have increased by over 140 per cent since the BNP HQ was set up, and pressure is mounting on the Tory council to have them removed. Some BNP supporters heckled and attacked the marchers, resulting in six arrests.



Why left should back public sector union merger

By Doug Thorpe
(Islington NALGO)

MERGER MADNESS' seems to have seized the union bureaucrats in their desperation to overcome falling membership, and their consequent financial difficulties.

For many, defending the apparatus is more important than mounting a real fight against Tory attacks.

Socialists can't take a position of principle for or against this current phase of mergers. The proposed AEU-EETPU merger would clearly create a powerful, highly undemocratic business union within the TUC, strengthening new realism. Such mergers must be opposed.

Divisions

The proposed NALGO-NUPE-COHSE merger has the potential to strengthen workers' ability to take on the employers, by overcoming divisions between manual, craft and white collar workers. But only if activists within the



Three men in a big union

Photo: Andrew Wiard

three unions can get the right rules, conditions and structures before amalgamation.

NALGO's 1991 conference laid down 'baseline' conditions much more positive than many activists thought possible.

The principal demands were that in the new union annual conference should remain the supreme policy making body; branches should retain similar financial control as exists now in NALGO; that the new union should be under lay control and membership led; and the right

of individual branches and groups to organise and campaign in the union be recognised.

In addition, demands were made for the rights of self-organisation for women, black members and lesbians and gay men; and for the rapid integration of manual and white collar structures.

A new report by NALGO's leadership goes to a special conference on 4 March (NUPE and COHSE's leaders have chosen not to have conferences) contains substantial advances.

It provides for an annual delegate conference, concessions over the level of branch finances, some provision for self-organisation and a commitment to integration of structures.

Amendments submitted from branches include demands about branch financial autonomy, and the proposal that branches collect dues themselves.

Stumbling block

Central collection of dues would ensure adequate branch

financing; but it is a major stumbling block, since NUPE and COHSE are resolutely opposed to branch dues collection.

The left will also be fighting to guarantee the right of groups and individuals to organise within the union.

The fear exists that the document's references to 'un-representative groups within the union' and a requirement of adherence to the 'agreed policy of the union' might be used to attack militant branches or rank and file political groupings.

Unfortunately there are no amendments proposed that would strengthen the commitment to women's self-organisation alongside the much-vaunted commitment to proportionality of women on elected bodies.

Opinion on the left has veered from the SWP, who seem to be moving to a position of opposition to all mergers, to advocates of 'One Big Union' who back merger in any circumstances. But most activists, including Socialist Outlook supporters, have reserved judgement depending on the conditions.

There is still a lot to be fought for to make the conditions for merger right; but the process of merger should be supported. The left in the three unions, now woefully divided, must work towards the formation of a democratic broad left encompassing all three unions.

Whatever the outcome of NALGO's special conference, the wider membership of all three unions remains to be persuaded. Many manual workers see NALGO members primarily as managers.

Affiliation to the Labour Party is rejected by many NALGO members. And inter-union rivalry in workplaces is common.

The way to overcome division, and create a stable basis for unity, would be to mobilise the three unions in a common fight against low pay, cuts and jobs losses, and in favour of harmonising pay and conditions for manual and white collar workers.

NALGO, NUPE and COHSE combined would have immense potential power. It remains to be seen whether the leaderships want to use it to throw back all the Tory attacks on the public services.

Anti-Racist Alliance launched in Manchester

By Rachel Newton

APPROXIMATELY 250 people attended the launch meeting of the Greater Manchester Anti-Racist Alliance (GMARA) held in the Pakistani Community Centre, in Longsight on 13 February.

The meeting was addressed by various religious leaders, including an Imam from Eccles who is himself under threat of deportation.

Also in the line up were black community leaders: representatives from Labour Party Black Sections, the trade union movement, local radio, and representatives from the ARA nationally.

The launch must clearly be seen as a success and a step forward for the anti-racist movement in Manchester, as it was able to draw a wide layer of people, including many from the local Asian community.

As with the national launch of ARA however, the meeting was marred by the speakers from the national campaign.

Marc Wadsworth and particularly Bhatti Patel both used the opportunity to impose the national preoccupation of counterposing the ARA to the SWP dominated ANL, utilising as many false arguments and moralistic imperatives as possible in the process.

Aside from this, the main problem with the launch was that because the list of speakers was too long, the plan to have open discussion afterwards had to be abandoned and no future meetings or any other kind of activity was organised.

There are many good activists attracted to the ARA who must be supported in order to make sure that Manchester's ARA achieves its huge potential.

Women for Socialism AGM
500 years of
resistance
anti-imperialism
and feminism

Saturday 29th February, 10.30-6pm
London Women's Centre
4 Wild Court, London WC2
(nearest tube Holborn)

New anti-union laws planned Tories promise 'right' to sue strikers

By Alan Thornett

ANYONE NEEDING a reminder of the grim implications of a fourth term Tory government only has to look as far as their latest plans for extending the existing draconian anti-trade union legislation.

Tory Employment Secretary Michael Howard has already drafted a fresh round of new laws, to be pushed quickly onto the statute book should they win the election. His proposals are based on 'Industrial Relations in the 1990s', the Green Paper published last year. The principle measures include:

- **COMPULSORY** postal ballots for all strikes, except the very smallest, reversing the legislation of the 1980s which allowed workplace ballots as the acceptable method of taking decisions.

- a minimum of **SEVEN DAYS** strike notice after completion of the ballot, and a legal obligation to give the employer full information on any ballot either planned or carried out.



Nurses protest at underfunding

- the **RIGHT** of members of the public to sue strikers in the public service industries. This goes way beyond the existing situation where a union can be sued and its funds sequestered if it steps outside of the existing Tory laws.

- **PERIODIC** renewal of the authorisation for deduction of union dues from wages. This is designed to undermine unions who rely heavily on such agreements for their membership levels.

- the **'RIGHT'** of workers to

join any union they wish, in defiance of membership agreements. This does not include the right of recognition for the union the individual chooses to join, simply the 'right' to break up existing agreements.

One original proposal in the Green Paper - to make collective agreements legally enforceable - has been dropped from the Howard proposals. This follows opposition from employers, who feared it could be used against them in some circumstances to enforce agree-

ments they wanted to abandon.

In all other respects the Green Paper is incorporated to the full. It shows a continuation of Tory tactics in progressively introducing further anti-union laws once the previous package has been accepted.

For most unions, the most dangerous of these new measures is the right of members of the public to sue strikers directly, rather than the union. This is a direct response to the strikes in public transport over the summer of 1989.



Obviously it has particular implications for workers in public transport, hospitals, and a range of public services. Any member of the public claiming actual or potential damage or loss as a result of such a strike could go to the courts and claim damages from the strikers concerned. Failure to pay up would land workers in jail.

All these new measures not only show the importance of electing a Labour government, but also show the importance of the campaign to force Labour to repeal all anti-union laws.

Britain now has more repressive employment legislation than any other EC country, and at the same time fewer positive rights for those at work. We cannot allow a Labour government to preside over such a situation.

Labour courts disaster on anti-union laws

By HARRY SLOAN

LABOUR'S refusal to repeal the whole gamut of Tory anti-union laws has landed them in deep

water not only with socialists but also with Tories and top judges.

They have latched onto the Kinnock team's plan to establish a special court to hear legal challenges to trade

unions under the remaining Tory laws. Labour has suggested that such a court would have no power to sequester the assets of unions.

Attorney General Sir Patrick Mayhew, conveniently forgetting the precedent set by the notorious Industrial Relations Court set up by the Tories under Edward Heath in the early 1970s, has claimed that Labour's proposal would represent 'alarming interference'. The same point has been echoed by Lord Lane.

Neither is of course in the least concerned with upholding the freedom of trade unions; their objective is to preserve the untrammelled 'right' of High Court judges to threaten and sequester them.

Sequestration, argues Sir Patrick, is 'the only means by which a court can enforce an order when it is being defied'.

And he is above all determined to ensure that the personnel sitting in judgement in any court would maintain the present anti-union bias, excluding anyone likely to support the union point of view.

A quick response from shadow employment secretary Tony Blair showed that it is not the Tories but the labour movement that should fear the Labour proposals.

The industrial relations court will be a division of the High Court, chaired by a senior judge, he argued, while denying that Labour has any plans to prevent employers taking injunctions against unions or to scrap the restrictions on numbers on picket lines.

It is clear that Labour's plans embody the worst of all worlds, antagonising the establishment while enlisting little if any support from the working class movement.

Journalists hit back at union bashers

By Patrick Baker

Now on strike for over 15 weeks, Rotherham Advertiser journalists are as united as ever. 'This is exactly the right time to hit back with united action' said Phil Turner, the journalists' FoC (shop steward).

The fourteen NUJ members, on strike against union derecognition, have waged a militant campaign to fight for their union rights. Support from local unions has been a big factor in keeping the strike going. 'Practically every factory in Rotherham is having a weekly collection for us now' Phil explained.

But the stumbling block has been the majority union in the plant - the GPMU print workers' union. Phil is at pains to explain that it's not the 200-plus GPMU members in the plant that are to blame, but the national leadership.

'The GPMU inside the plant are solidly behind us - but the leadership won't let them take secondary action. But you can't win any strike these days without confronting the union laws' he said.

The strike has kept its public profile high by producing a paper, the *Real Advertiser*. 'It really galls management that we can produce a better paper than they can, even without any resources. Eight issues of the paper have been produced and sold around the town to provide funds for the dispute.'

The journalists have also organised days of action to rally support from outside, attracting delegations from local factories and NUJ members from all over the country.

The strikers are determined to maintain their struggle for union rights. But they need support.

Donations and messages of support to: *Rotherham Advertiser* dispute, c/o *ISTC*, Edgcumbe House, Doncaster Road, Rotherham. Cheques to: *Rotherham Advertiser* NUJ Social Club.

"UNSHACKLE THE UNIONS"

"We demand the complete repeal of all anti-union legislation and that the British Government comply with the Conventions and Principles of the United Nations International Labour Organisation for the full restoration of trade union rights."

"We do not accept the criminalisation of trade union activity and the attacks on civil liberties."

"We reject the argument that a trade union movement of 8 million members has no alternative but to comply with anti-union legislation."

"We support trade unionists threatened by use of the laws and all those who challenge the laws to defend their interests".

"Unshackle the Unions" is a campaign launched by the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, the Haldane Society Employment Committee, Solidarity Network, Labour Party Socialists and Trade Union News. The above statement is being circulated in the labour movement for support from activists.

I/We Labour
Movement

position personal/official capacity

Address

..... Phone

I support the Unshackle the Union statement.
Please make cheques payable to Socialist
Movement (TU) and send to Carolyn Sikorski 53a
Geere Road, London E15

THE REAL Advertiser

INCORPORATING THE REAL RECORD

MINERS RESCUE

MINERS FIGHTING to save 200 jobs at Thurcroft Colliery could have been thrown a lifeline, by local councillors and the National Union of Mineworkers.

The pit - which was officially closed by British Coal in December - has been the first colliery in England to be run as a workers co-operative, following the move to a pit in Scotland, owned by British Coal.

Abbey comes alive

The ruins of Rotherham Abbey could be alive to the sound of a new stage. The project is being led by the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Rotherham Heritage Trust. The project is to restore the abbey to its former glory and to use it as a centre for the arts and community activities.

No pre-election truce in witch-hunt

By Steve French
(Suspended Lambeth Councillor)

THE LABOUR Party NEC has decided that the witch-hunt will focus on rooting out left candidates for the General Election.

All other expulsions have been postponed. Even with the threat of a hung Parliament, the NEC is doing the best it can to demobilise Labour activists in key marginal seats, riding rough-shod over their right freely to select candidates.

In three Parliamentary seats, Hattersley's NEC election panel have rigged the short lists which will be put to a postal ballot, removing members' rights to interview candidates and reach a collective decision.

Rewarded

In Coventry South East and Liverpool Broad Green, individuals who gave evidence at the NCC to expel Dave Nellist and Terry Fields are rewarded with a place on the short-list.

In Wallasey, Lol Duffy (former leader of the Cammell Laird strike) has been excluded even though he received twenty ward and union nominations. Duffy had the best result in a Tory held seat in the last General Election reducing Linda Chalker's majority from 6,700 to 279.

NEC hatchet man Eddie Haigh



Dave Nellist MP said that he was very impressed with the imposed nominees. The local Parties won't be!

The same meeting imposed a postal ballot on Nottingham East CLP but the Party will be allowed to shortlist, for what it's worth. The popular choice Hassan Ahmed has already been banned from standing. (The Tory majority in this seat is only 456!)

Thirteen Lambeth Councillors have been suspended for a year for voting against cuts, poll tax and the Gulf war. Their NCC hearings have been postponed until after the general election and 'Lambeth Against the Witch-Hunt' is winning support for the demand that the charges and suspensions should be dropped.

The witch-hunt has divided the Streatham Party which needs to be

united to win this key marginal seat from the Tories. Two recent council by elections in the constituency indicate that the Labour vote has collapsed.

Twenty-six Party members face expulsion in Brighton. The two CLPs remain suspended, despite NEC pledges, for supporting councillors who opposed the Poll Tax. Council Leader Steve Bassam has drawn up a wide ranging hit list of 50 people for the NEC.

Soft left

This has angered the soft left who have threatened legal action and Bassam has given an apology to one, not so left wing, member included on his list. Brighton Kemptown is a key marginal.

Manchester Councillor John Clegg has been suspended from the Group which could rule him out of the next council elections in May. John's ward is firmly behind him and refuses to select without him. His 'crime' was to visit a constituent in Walton jail at the same time as Lesley Mahmood. The NEC say this means he supported her candidacy! He emphatically did not.

Frustrated that this charge was unsustainable, Gerald Kaufman asserted at the NEC that the suspension must remain because of John's 'association' with the SWP. John opposed the SWP at a public meeting arguing for people to join the Labour Party!

In Bedford the NCC has gone as far as to expel councillors for supporting Labour Party policy in opposing a pact with the Liberals!

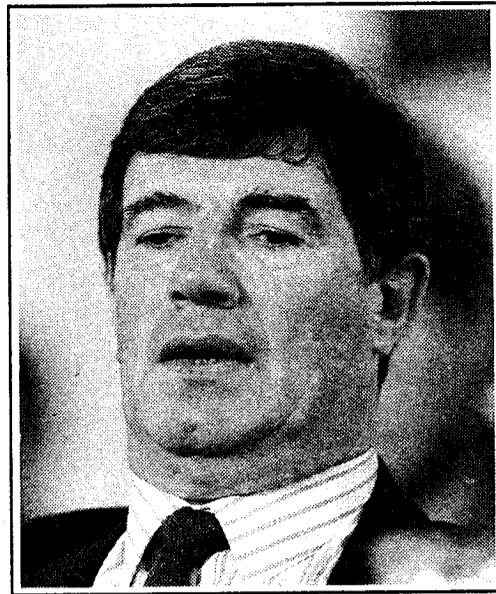
Eight more Liverpool councillors have been banned from the Group, many purely for abstaining or even being absent when the votes on privatisation were taken. The minority Labour administration is now a rump with only 34 members (33 have been suspended), and depends on the Liberals to get votes carried.

The Regional office is now gearing up to impose twenty candidates for the May elections. However a number of campaigns to reinstate left wingers on the panel of candidates have been successful.

Last year in Leeds, Patrick Hall was banned from the council 'panel' because his phone number was on an anti-poll tax leaflet. Council Leader John Trickett led attacks on Patrick's University Ward, calling for an investigation into why they were allowing the 'Militant' to be sold!

Postal ballot

Whilst this charge could equally be levelled at the right-wing CLP officers,



Eddie Haigh, Kinnock's right hand witch hunter

the EC referred the case to the NEC. The ward has been suspended and the region will run a postal ballot for its council candidate.

Trickett has fuelled a media witch-hunt against the ward, and a candidate for the seat has been questioned by the local paper about her poll tax.

We need to build the Campaign Against the Witch-Hunt to fight these attacks.

CAW is a non sectarian campaign sponsored by those facing the expulsion in Nottingham, Sheffield, Brighton, Lambeth, Birkenhead, Wallasey, Liverpool, Manchester and by a number of union and Labour Party branches. Join us! Please send the appropriate affiliation rate (trade union branches or CLPs £15, wards or shops £5, individuals £3, unwaged £1.50) to CAW, 56 Ashby House, Loughborough Road, Brixton, London, SW9 7SL.

Labour sacks Camden NALGO strikers

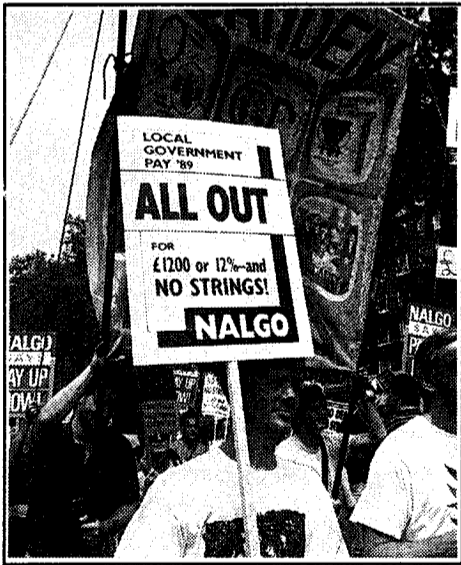
By Carolyn Sikorski

CAMDEN'S Labour council, after threatening to sack striking social workers since last October, this week dismissed all those on strike.

220 Social workers, Social Care workers and others have been on all-out indefinite strike action since June 4. This followed a successful ballot with a 76 per cent majority for action. The issue is Camden Labour council's failure to implement a nationally-negotiated regrading agreement which affects the pay and status of social workers and social care workers.

The council signed the agreement in February 1990, but unlike fellow employers in other London boroughs failed to implement it. The strike raises issues of national concern. If employers successfully renege on a nationally negotiated agreement, the whole power balance between staff and employers will shift to the detriment of every NALGO member.

The employers used the strike to radically restructure the social services provision within the borough. They plan to institute the 'purchaser/provider' model currently causing havoc in the NHS. This will mean massive



Camden NALGO on the march in 1989

job losses and increased privatisation.

Staff on strike were locked out of any consultation process and the new structure deletes all their posts. In line with an increasing use of the sack to intimidate strikers, Camden council have issued sack threats since October 1991 in the national and local media.

They have used every opportunity to prevent other trade unionists in their employment discussing the issue. The threats intensified on December 20 when the council made an 'offer' to the social workers of one increment (half of the National Agreement). This was conditional on completely changed job descriptions and

new conditions of service involving a series of strings.

The 'offer' was exposed as an ultimatum by the council's further demand that to show acceptance of the new conditions, strikers had to return to work. Social workers were issued with letters spelling out the sacking threat.

It is clear that the council were using the smokescreen of new contracts as a means of breaking the strike, and as a final desperate bid

to shirk their duties under the 1990 agreement.

Strikers voted overwhelmingly not to bend to this intimidation. Their resolve was strengthened by the predicament of 24 social service workers who were also on strike.

In the new restructured social services department many of their jobs would disappear. They would face certain redundancy if the conditions for a return to work were accepted.

The militant Camden strike has been run democratically from the start. They have made contact with other strikers, including the Pergamon strikers in Oxford.

But unfortunately the strikers have generally been left to fight alone. There has been no attempt by the NALGO leadership to build solidarity with the strike, despite its national importance.

This is clearly linked to a situation where anti-union legislation has led many trades unionists to doubt that solidarity action is possible. But it is clearly essential if such attacks are to be rebuffed.

It is this isolation that may in the end defeat the strike, combined with the tactics of Cam-

den council. Union bureaucrats have also attempted to ensure a quiet run-up to the election for the Labour Party.

A pattern seems to be developing where potentially embarrassing disputes are settled or finished. It is important that the Camden strikers are supported to bolster them against the prolonged attack from both the council and the union leadership.

Messages of support to: Camden NALGO office, 7th floor, Town Hall Extension, Argyle St, London NW1. Tel: 071 278 4444.

Conference

Which way for socialists in the trade unions?

July 18-19

Manchester Polytechnic Students Union

Speakers include **Arthur Scargill**, **Tony Benn MP**

Details: Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Road, London E15

Outrage at Irish ayatollahs Women challenge bigots' constitution

By Ann Conway,
People's Democracy

IT IS JUST over eight years since the anti-abortion amendment to the Free State constitution was passed. Those eight years have witnessed a continuous and escalating series of attacks on women's reproductive rights.

First the pregnancy counselling and abortion referral services of two Dublin women's clinics were closed down through rulings in favour of SPUC, the anti-abortion 'Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child'. Then British magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* had their Irish editions censored after advertising abortion clinics.

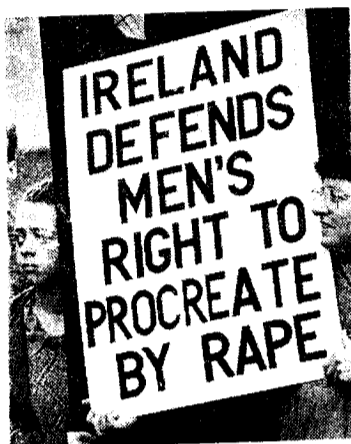
In the last few months books such as *Everywoman* and *Our Bodies Ourselves* were removed from libraries. Now a 14 year old rape victim has been injunctioned by the courts from procuring an abortion in Britain.

This has provoked a major political crisis for the Irish government, and a number of militant protests organised by feminists and student activists. LIFE, an offshoot of SPUC, have offered to care for the 14 year old until she bears the child.

Fanatics

But their cynicism has alienated supporters. They are now widely viewed as 'bigots and fanatics', as Ireland's leading broadcaster Gay Byrne put it.

The case presents the government with a major political problem, and they are aware of



the depth of public outrage at the case. New Taoiseach Albert Reynolds has been forced by popular outrage to attempt to resolve the matter.

They are clearly pushing for the Irish Supreme Court to lift the injunction, another 'Irish solution' to the problem.

But there are growing demands for a repeal of the amendment - a popular radio programme showed a large majority in favour. Now the Workers Party has backed the repeal, and have called for the resignation of the Attorney General.

The amendment was carried against a background of political instability in 1983. Challenged from the left, the main parties were looking to the right for some stability.

Fianna Fail - the main bourgeois nationalist party - readily agreed with SPUC to hold an anti-abortion referendum. They hoped to gain votes on a Catholic conservative ticket. But today populist Catholic nationalism has run its course.

Since 1983 the working class - and particularly women,



NAC demonstrate outside the Irish Embassy

youth and the rural poor - have suffered unemployment, emigration and diminishing civil rights.

This has led to unprecedented political instability and alienation from the main parties - witnessed in the election of Mary Robinson as President and the sizeable left vote.

SPUC, LIFE and others are contributing to the instability and damaging Ireland's profile in Europe. The politicians who once coveted them now want to take their distance from them, as does the Church.

Europe

Because of the case Reynolds is now confronted with difficulties in relation to Maastricht. Although Ireland was granted a derogation (a let-out clause) from the treaty around the issue of abortion, there is now a real fear that the backlash from the present case could mean problems in ratification.

This is exerting major pressure on the government to get the amendment repealed.

It is vital that feminists and activists throughout Europe and internationally organise protests in support of their Irish

sisters. Demands for the lifting of the injunction and the repeal of the amendment are particularly important.

Dutch parliamentary complaints to the Irish government have received widespread coverage, and this is another channel for pressure.

As we go to press the rape victim's family are appealing against the injunction to the Supreme Court.

The strategy of both govern-

ment and opposition parties seems to be to sugar-coat the amendment enough to take the heat out of the situation, without offending the church.

But such an outcome - which SPUC claims to favour - will not appease the forces of the right who will broaden their assault on women's rights as soon as the present crisis is over. Nothing less than repeal will do.

Urgent solidarity needed!

OVER THREE hundred people turned out to picket the Irish embassy in London within days of the tragic story hitting the tabloid headlines.

The picket was called by *Women Against Fundamentalism*, and supported by various women's organisations - National Abortion Campaign (NAC), Irish women's groups, Women for Socialism, student women's groups - as well as individual women and men and small numbers from the left.

The extremely good turnout showed that, even in these seemingly passive days, possibilities for mobilisation around women's demands really do exist.

There has been widespread condemnation of the Irish Supreme Court decision. Wherever anti-abortionists have attempted to 'justify' this nightmare they have been roundly and soundly condemned. Support from passers-by on the picket strongly indicated this general mood.

Time is not on our side though. The young Irish woman in question is in a desperate situation, and the clock ticks on.

Solidarity action is both urgent and vital if the Irish pro-choice movement stands any chance of emerging from the political turmoil of this tragedy able to make the gains for Irish women that are so clearly needed.

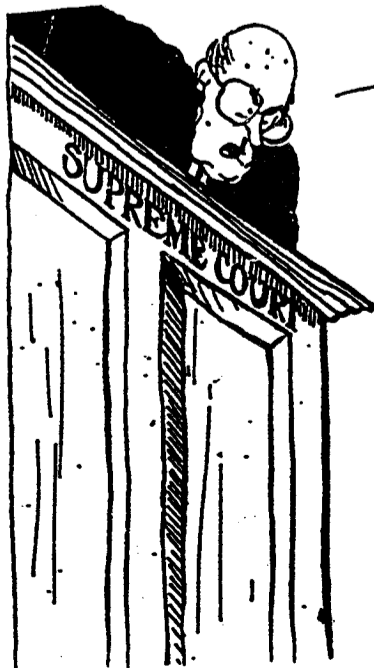
As NAC have said, 'make no mistake, anti-abortion organisations have made it clear that they want Ireland's law everywhere. They do not believe that rape or incest is a reasonable ground for abortion.'

What has happened in Ireland is a natural and foreseeable consequence of their draconian law.

A further victory for anti-abortionists in Ireland would fuel the bigots here. It will also be used to strengthen anti-Irish racism in the British state, and pour petrol on the fires of reaction in the Six Counties.

Women's organisations, trade union and labour movement bodies must show their support now for their sisters in Ireland, and link up with NAC and other fighters for women's choice here.

For campaigning details/ messages and financial support contact NAC, 4 Wild Court, London, WC2B 5AU. Tel: 071-405-4801.



IT IS THE POSITION OF THIS COURT, YOUNG LADY, THAT A FETUS IS PRECIOUS AND SHOULD NOT BE ABORTED, EVEN AFTER RAPE.

ONCE BORN, HOWEVER, THE CHILD MAY BE GIVEN INADEQUATE HOUSING, EDUCATION, NUTRITION, DEPRIVED OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, AND IF SHE REALLY MESSES UP, MAY BE RAPE, GET PREGNANT, BE REFUSED AN ABORTION.....



I will resign and go now...

By David Coen

They bade Charles J. Haughey farewell with quotes from Hamlet: 'good night sweet prince and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest'. It must have been galling to listen to such royalist raiillery in a republican parliament.

Haughey's dubious reputation as a republican rested on two events. In 1969 he was sacked from the Cabinet by Jack Lynch and tried for attempting to import arms, said to have been for the IRA.

In 1979 he ousted Lynch with the support of Sile de Valera and a number of TDs from the West who were more sympathetic to the republican cause. Republican rhetoric for Haughey, like Fianna Fail, was never more than a useful tool during the frequent economic crises of the past 13 years.

Historical settlement

Cynics claim, with some justification, that the hate headlines were designed to bolster his position as leader of the largest party and so the best chance for doing a successful deal on the North. He certainly saw himself as being entrusted with a historical mission to bring about a settlement.

After his first talks with Thatcher, shortly after both came to power and to her extreme annoyance, he oversold the outcome to the media. The result was a distinct cooling of relations.

Haughey remained silent during the Hunger Strikes. In June 1981 he lost the general election, partly due to the election of two H Block candidates. In 1982 he won back some popular support by refusing to back the Malvinas War.

He was out of power during the process which led up to the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985

and threatened to repudiate it. But on returning to government he implemented it faithfully.

But what brought Haughey down had little to do with his politics or with the stream of corruption scandals which constantly assailed him. His undoing was a combination of the economic crisis of the 26 County state and the suspicion of him from the Free State's ruling class.

Fianna Fail's dominance of Free State politics since 1932 relies more on clientelism than ideology. 'Parish pump politics' means a job or a grant often depends on how you vote. This worked reasonably well during times of prosperity but support ebbed during recession, in spite of the occasional boost by 'mainlining' from Brussels.

No majority

Haughey never won a majority in the five elections he fought between 1979 and 1992. To maintain his base he needed to bang the republican drum, but given his reputation, the ruling class feared that sections of his base would take him at his word and take an openly anti-British line.

The combination of republican rhetoric with economic crisis could become a dangerously potent brew and so he was constantly denounced for his 'flawed pedigree'.

But why now, you may well ask. After all, the period of worst danger to the Southern ruling class was when the rise of Sinn Fein following the Hunger Strikes combined with the Free State's runaway debt crisis.

They panicked and there followed the New Ireland Forum and the Anglo Irish Agreement - both designed to stem the rise of a radical political alternative.

The threat from the left has receded, at least in the short term. But the economic crisis has returned with a vengeance.



Charles Haughey, symbol of corrupt Irish politicians

Despite all the monetarist slashing that occurred during the 1980s the economy is in a spiral of decline.

With emigration slowing down, unemployment is above 20 per cent and the total number at work is contracting - in spite of low inflation and rapid growth of GDP.

Abstainer

Haughey's successor, Albert Reynolds, the first Taoiseach born west of the Shannon, is a typical member of Fianna Fail. A total abstainer, he made his money from running dance halls in the 1950s and '60s and then started a pet food business in Longford.

He appears to be without strong political beliefs and, in the charisma stakes, stands in about the same relation to Haughey as John Major does to Margaret Thatcher.

Despite the show of unity by Fianna Fail behind Reynolds, the political problems facing the Dublin ruling class will not go away. Haughey was a populist wheeler-dealer, caught once too often helping his friends. They need someone more exciting than the cautious Reynolds to try to stem the loss



of Fianna Fail support to the left.

Support for both the main parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, is falling to the benefit of

'left' parties such as Labour, the stalinist and now divided Workers Party and a variety of independents and Greens.

Europe

A significant part of the Southern ruling class has given up the idea of independent statehood. They see European union as the solution to their economic and political problems. They want to change articles One and Two of the Free State constitution which define the national territory as being the whole island.

To carry a referendum they need to be sure that Fianna Fail will not oppose the change. By replacing the adventurer Haughey with Albert Reynolds they have moved a step closer to that goal. But they may have, at the same time, hacked away some of the political fabric which held the state together for 70 years.

And so the 'Boss' must away to his island on the west coast of Kerry, there to end his days in quiet contemplation of its desolate beauty. Like St Brendan, after journeying to the New World and back. And long before that fella did in 1492!

New Israeli blitzkrieg

By Paul Clarke

THE LATEST Israeli incursion into Lebanon, attacking the villages of Kafra and Yater, was patently aimed at damaging the 'peace process' opened up at the insistence of the United States.

Israel's actions over the past two weeks have utilised all the casual ruthlessness and brutality with which the Zionist state typically operates against Arabs - the bombing of refugee camps, the assassination of Hezbollah leader Abbas Masawi and his family, the destruction of hundreds of Arab homes, the wrecking of villages.

But beyond the headlines Israeli leaders are infuriated by the peace negotiations and want them to fail. The reasons for this are primarily connected with internal Israeli politics.

In the aftermath of the Gulf war, the US seized the initiative to force the hands of both Israel and its Gulf coalition Arab allies to conduct the peace talks. The US aims had nothing to do with giving

justice to the Palestinians; rather they aim to impose 'Pax Americana' on the region, tying the Syrians especially to US policy aims.

The US expects the peace negotiations to be long and drawn-out. For the US that is not necessarily a disadvantage, so long as the US dominates the political agenda in the region. But for that to happen the talks have to at least appear to have the possibility of a realistic outcome.

What does that mean in practice? It can only mean demobilising the PLO and Arab resistance to Israel in return for some kind of political autonomy (not necessarily independence) for the West Bank and Gaza strip. It is here that US political objectives clash with domestic Israeli politics.

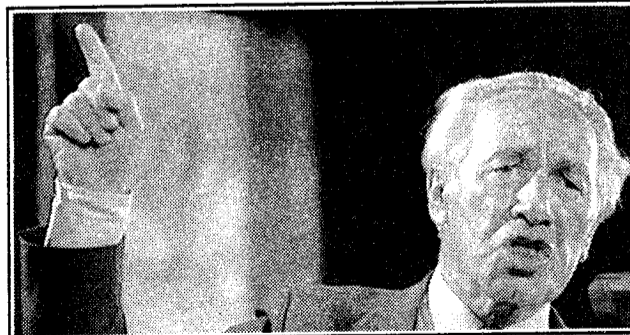
Far from preparing to cede any kind of autonomy, Israel is settling tens of thousands of new immigrants, mainly from the Soviet Union, in new settlements on the West Bank. Arab homes are being bulldozed to make way for new Israeli villages. The aim is to permanently change the

population structure of the area.

Housing construction is in the hands of extreme right-winger Ariel Sharon, who as defence minister personally organised the massacres in the Lebanese Palestinian refugee camps in 1982.

Israeli politics has been inexorably shifting to the right for more than a decade. The election of Yitzak Rabin as Labour Party leader is one more sign of this shift.

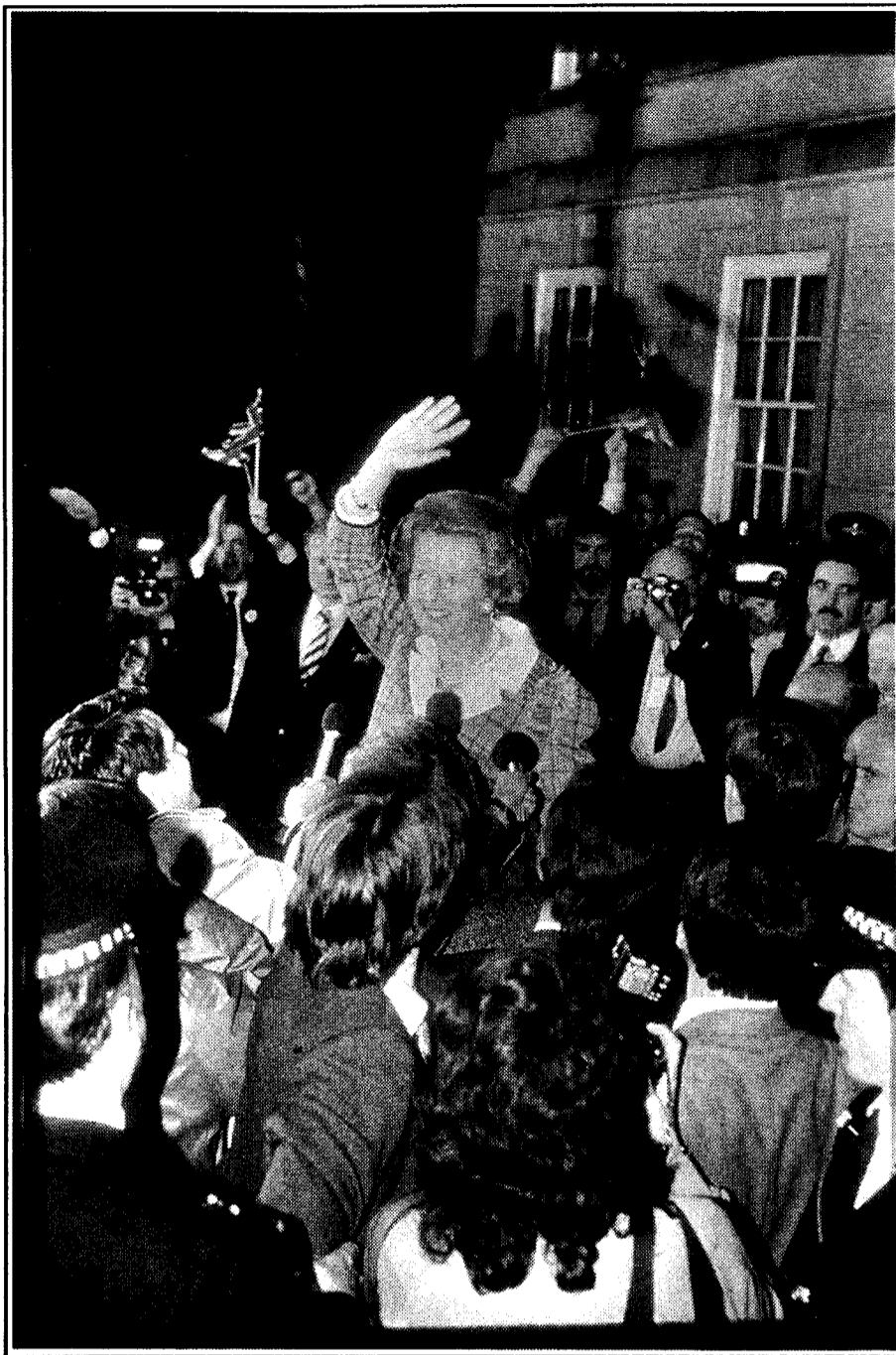
The lessons are clear. Peace talks are going nowhere, because the US lacks the clout to impose on Israel even limited autonomy for the Palestinians. Neither side will want to be seen to pull out of the talks. But on the ground nothing will change. The broad consensus in official Israeli politics is for maintaining the iron hand



Shimon Peres: lost the Labour election

against the Arabs. And that means more air raids, the continuing detention of hundreds of Arab prisoners, and brutal repression in the occupied territories.

There is no road to freedom for the Palestinians in the current talks. Neither is there any road forward in isolated military attacks. Only by linking the Palestinian struggle to a regional strategy to defeat both reactionary Arab regimes and Israel's Zionist leaders can a new phase of the Palestinian liberation struggle be begun.



Towards a hung parliament?

IT'S OFFICIAL. Britain is in the grip of the biggest recession this century, something which should, in all logic, ensure a Tory election defeat.

But poll after poll puts the two main parties level pegging, just weeks before the general election. Ever since detailed opinion polls were started, the election campaign itself has never greatly altered the relative strengths of the parties.

Unless something changes quickly, the most likely outcome of the general election is a hung parliament. If that is indeed the outcome political developments will move rapidly. The left must arm itself to intervene in the political crisis that would follow.

Disappointment

A hung parliament, let alone a Tory victory, would be a big disappointment for the labour movement and for millions sickened by 13 years of Toryism.

That there is now substantial doubt about whether Labour can win is entirely the responsibility of the Kinnock leadership.

Kinnock's accelerating move to the right has created a situation where many voters see very little difference between

By
Ben Wolfe

all the main parties. This is also a consequence of the Tories ditching Margaret Thatcher. If she had stayed, it is difficult to see how the Conservatives could have rebuilt their position.

But now with Major at the helm, and Kinnock's ultra-blandness as the main opposition, and in the absence of clear alternative policies, it often comes down to traditional loyalties, or hunches about who would best manage the economy.

Even the kind of crusading spirit generated by Harold Wilson in the 1964 election, although his policies were entirely pro-capitalist, escapes the dead hand of Kinnockism.

The situation in a hung parliament depends entirely on which party is the largest minority, and the attitude of the Liberal Democrats.

Liberal leader Paddy Ashdown would demand a pledge to implement electoral reform, some form of proportional representation, as the price of agreeing a coalition. If the Tories were the largest party, agreement on PR is

almost certainly ruled out. The chances of a Tory-Liberal coalition seem slim.

Much more likely is a Lib-Lab coalition. How far Kinnock would go to agreeing proportional representation is as yet unclear. Socialists inside and outside the Labour Party must demand that Labour forms a minority government if it is the largest party.

A coalition with the Liberals would be a permanent guarantee that only the most openly right-wing pro-capitalist Kinnock policies could be implemented. It would be a permanent obstacle to any pressure from the ranks of the labour movement on the new government.

A minority Labour government would be under the threat that at any time it could be brought down over a major issue, or a vote of no confidence.

But the Tories and Liberals know full well that the history is that minority governments rapidly brought down stand a good chance of re-election. Labour should insist, if it is the largest party, on forming the government and carrying out its programme.

Undemocratic

None of this means Labour should reject proportional representation, but that should not be part of a coalition deal with the Liberals. The British electoral system is outrageously undemocratic.

The argument against PR in the labour movement is entirely a pragmatic one, that PR would make the election of a Labour government very difficult, and rule out the possibility of progressive or left-wing legislation.

But to implement any meaningful pro-working class reforms, especially in a period of acute capitalist crisis, requires building a majority.

The idea that a left Labour government could sneak into power with a minority vote, and implement substantial left wing reforms is a non-starter. A Labour pledge to introduce electoral reform would seize the mantle of democracy from the Liberal Democrats.

If Labour were already pledged to PR its election at this general election would be assured. The actual implementation of PR would mark a major democratic opening in British politics, while also ensuring that for the foreseeable future a Tory

government could not be elected.

The coming general election will be a major watershed for the future of the Labour Party. Failure to get enough seats to form the government would put question the whole of Labour's credibility as a party of government. Losing four elections in a row means being out of government for more than a generation.

The rock of Labour's position as one of the two main parties is not just mass support, but its position as the party of the labour bureaucracy, especially the trade union bureaucracy. However, a party which seems never able to gain power has declining usefulness to union bureaucrats.

Block vote

Now that merger between the AUEW and EETPU looks certain, the grip of the new realist right on the TUC will be deepened. Union leaders like Garry Laird, Bill Jordan and Eric Hammonds could easily back stronger links with the Liberal Democrats, and the ending of the union block vote in the Labour Party.

If Labour loses, the Liberal Democrats will go on a huge offensive, claiming to be the only party capable of becoming an alternative government to the Tories. Sections of the ruling class could see blood and try to deal Labour a knockout.



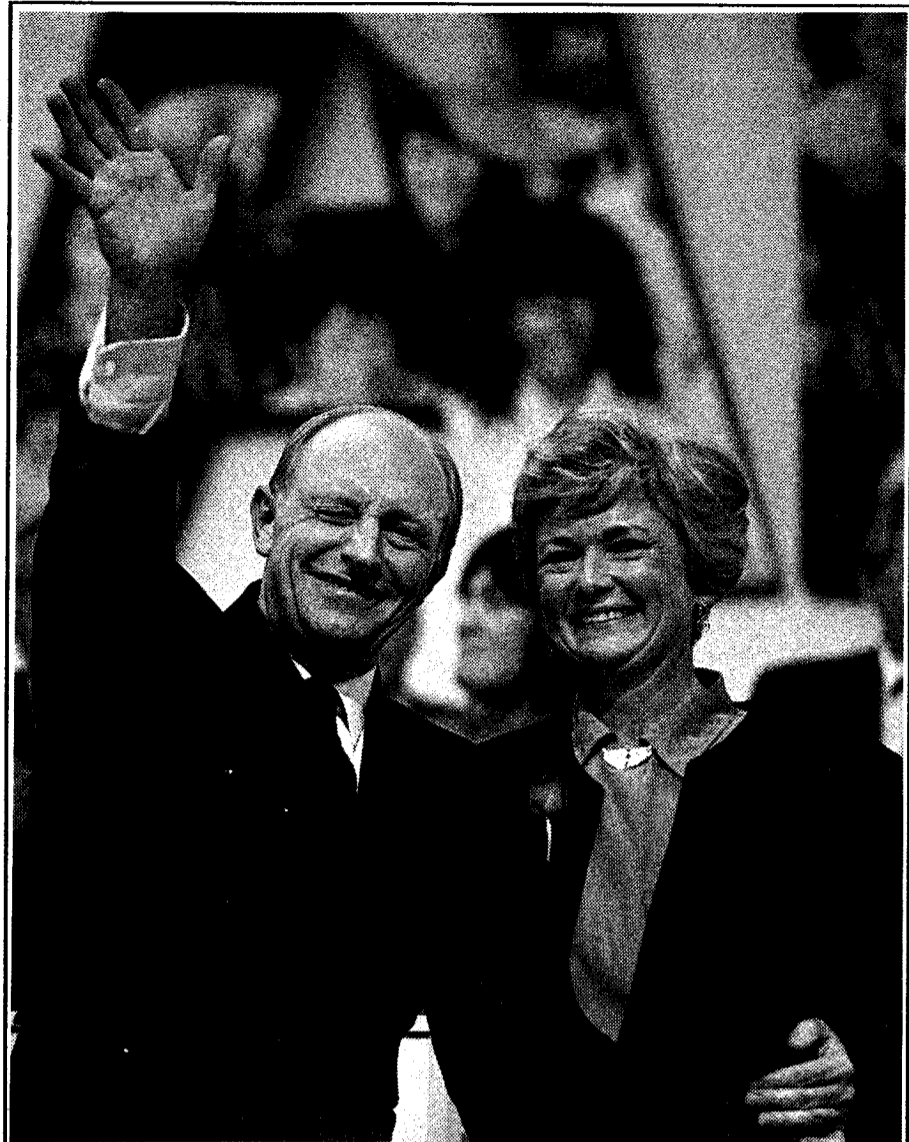


Photo: Andrew Wlard

blow. Although by no means certain, PR could be part of this process. The disadvantage for the ruling class is that in the short term PR would create big difficulties for the Tories, their tried and trusted team. But this might be a price worth paying to deal Labour fatal blows.

Democratic or not, clearly PR does form part of agenda of sections of ruling class opinion which wish to 'modernise' the political system, pushing the Liberal Democrats into second position and marginalising Labour in the short term.

But socialists cannot respond to that challenge by defending the indefensible. Rather, the arrival of PR would be an enormous challenge to the labour movement. Building a majority under PR would require methods of mass mobilisation around popular goals, methods that are quite alien to Kinnockism and new realism.

Whatever the result of the election, enormous strains will be put on the Kinnockite project. Kinnockism is a quite

brittle creation, devoid of ideas, and built for one purpose only - to win an election.

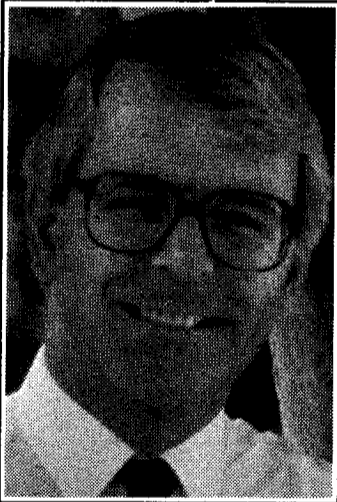
Failure to do that will put Labour in an absolute spin, opening up a new debate about the direction of the party.

While there could easily be a left leadership challenge as a result, probably headed up by Ken Livingstone, it would amount to a new political divide in a period of defeat.

Such circumstances would be very unfavourable for the left. Much more likely would be a further lurch to the right in the party, and a growing crisis of confidence in Labour as a party of government.

A Labour victory would certainly see a hardening of labour movement opposition to Kinnockism applied in government, as happened under the 1974-9 Labour government.

And it would take place in a situation where the possibility of a substantial remobilisation at the base of the labour movement could occur, as the heavy weight of the Tories was lifted.



Time to party?

By Will McMahon

WILL IT be possible or desirable to launch a new socialist party after the elections? Apparently the Socialist Society think so, according to New Times.

The candidatures of Terry Fields and Dave Nellist, the possible transformation of Labour into a euro-socialist party, the disintegration of the USSF, the fragmentation of the British left and the prospect of PR all raise this question.

Any developments will depend on the election result. A Tory victory would further demobilise the struggles of the oppressed and the working class and all discussions about a new party would be off the agenda.

A Labour victory or Labour-led coalition would open up wider possibilities. The Labour leadership would move very quickly, using the authority of an election victory, to close down any channels of dissent within the Party.

It is likely that Kinnock will provide on a national scale what has been delivered in local government - social, economic and political attacks on the oppressed and the trade union movement.

Alongside defensive struggles, some left growth and regroupment might be possible. Further debates around the creation of a new socialist party would be inevitable. In the event of by-elections, one, two, three or many Coventry South Easts might take place.

Smaller

So a call for a new socialist party may attract many activists who want to fight the Labour Government, which will appear indistinguishable from the Tories. How many could be brought under such a banner? In present conditions, perhaps a couple of thousand. Probably a new socialist party would be smaller than the SWP or Militant.

Such a small and politically incoherent organisation would be no solution to building a real alternative to the crisis and decay of British social democracy.

For any new party to succeed three conditions would be crucial. First, that a substantial section of the left of the labour movement will have concluded that the Labour Party is no longer useful.

A new socialist party without the likes of Benn, Skinner, Scargill, Corbyn and others would be dead in the water. Second, that the new party will have shown itself to be an alternative to Labourism in practice.

Majority party

Third, that the economic and social struggles after the elections will have been deep enough to break the hold of the Labour Party on millions of workers. It is worth noting that even in Scotland, Labour (poll tax and all) is still the majority party of the working class.

This is crucial. It will not be enough for a few thousand activists, from different left fragments, to want to fight the Labour leadership at election.

It will take millions of workers to have reached the same conclusion. This will only be possible off the back of mass struggles against the labour

bureaucracy in government.

The reason is that any mass struggles against a Labour government will inevitably involve tens of thousands of Labour Party and trade union members. It will also include other left activists not yet convinced that a socialist party is a panacea.

More importantly, those workers who vote Labour will not give up on their old organisations easily. Their first port of call to demand action will not be the headquarters of the new socialist party in formation but in Waltham Road and Congress House.

Their priority will be to win their struggle and to win wide support. They will not yet be interested in forming an alternative to Labour - but in putting demands on the Labour government.

Splitting

The strategy of splitting the labour movement when they will require maximum solidarity will not be very appealing. This is why launching a pre-emptive left party would be a mistake. There will be enough organisations out there claiming to be the socialist party already.

Instead, what is needed is a political formation that will support and organise mass struggle against the labour bureaucracy (and aim to split it) and capital. This could be done through a series of united front campaigns that would present no obstacles to unity in action.

United front campaigns could bring together many activists disillusioned with Kinnockism, the remnants of the Bennite Left, those socialists outside of the Labour Party and tens of thousands of working class and oppressed people.

Such campaigns would be most effective if they integrated a twin-track strategy (inside and outside the Labour Party) and moved towards a national coordination. This would pose the question of forming a national left wing movement (not analogously intended) with socialists from all current.

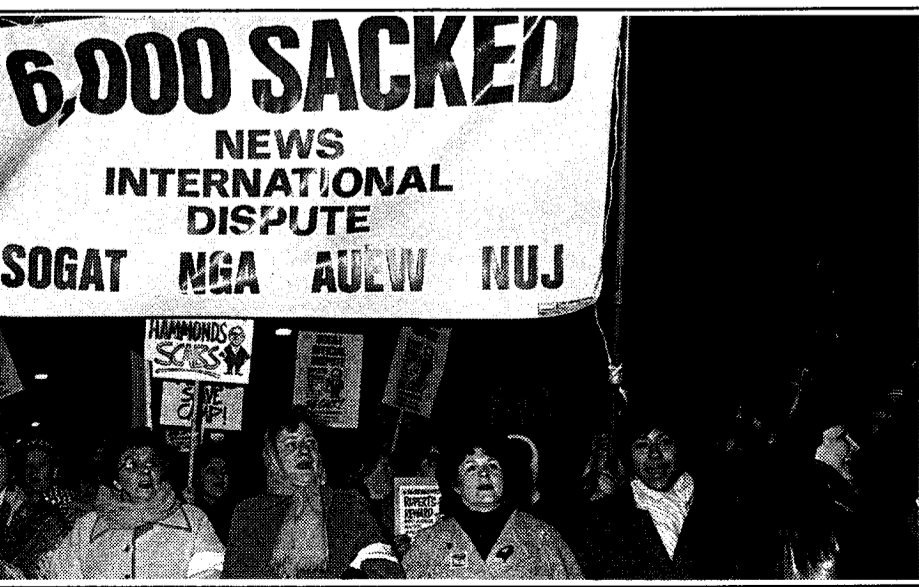
Alternative

A mass, democratic movement would be the vital ingredient of left recomposition. If it proved useful to the oppressed it would begin to challenge labour movement leaders from within and to pose the question of an alternative to Labour - even to many Labour Party members.

While a new party was being debated, this movement would not cut itself off from those who were prepared to fight against a Labour Government, but unable to break from their traditional organisations. It would also help to clarify in action who on the left was serious about unity and class struggle politics.

Such a strategy, combined with a united front orientation, is there in embryo in the Socialist Movement. The Socialist Movement should take a political lead in coordinating the kind of united front campaigns that could lead to a national left wing formation.

The Conference of the Left in October of this year should concentrate on this. The next step is not to bring a new socialist party into being but to create the conditions in which that step might be possible.



Amazon sisters need your support

The last issue of *Socialist Outlook* carried a review of Channel 4's 'Amazon Sisters', now being used to build support for the Brazil Network Chico Mendes Solidarity Fund. Here, the film's director, ANNE MARIE SWEENEY, looks at both the experience of making the film and probably the most immediate struggle in need of solidarity – that of the rural workers of Tucuruí.

MAKING documentaries is a strange occupation. It is not easy to be aware if you are changing people's political consciousness and awareness to the point where action around the issues will be significantly altered.

Of course the truism that television is the most powerful means of communication is right. The old maxim that 'the pen is mightier than the sword' no longer rings true. Not because computers have replaced the pen, but because time-based information is replacing that of the printed word.

When I went to Brazil, I carried with me letters of solidarity for the trade unionists of Amazonia from Oxford and District Trades Council, Women Against Pit Closures and South Wales NUM.

I was invited to address meetings of women strikers in the fish-processing and Brazil nut industries, trade unionists in the public sector, education and health, and the annual assembly of women trade unionists in South Para. Not invited as a Channel 4 television director, but as a 'companheira', a sister trade unionist and socialist.

My awareness of the great responsibility I carried in making the film became clear whenever I was presented to a group of rural women workers as 'the comrade who is making our film, who will tell our story'.

Clearly, the most important judges of whether we fulfilled our responsibilities in this respect, are the women of Para and the trade unionists whose struggle we covered. We discussed the script and coverage of their struggles with the women themselves. They now want to show the completed video and production photos throughout the movement, wherever they can get hold of a video. Other Brazilian trade unionists are also requesting copies.

But our responsibility does not end here, now that the programme has been finished and shown on Channel 4. We have to ensure that it is seen, discussed and acted on, for a whole range of reasons. But the primary reason is that the struggles seen in the film are urgently in need of interna-



Health workers fight epidemics and cuts

tional support.

One of the most immediate of these is that of the rural workers in Tucuruí. Their fight centres around the Tucuruí dam, completed in 1984 by the state electricity company Electro-Norte. It was the first major hydro-electric dam in the Amazon.

The dam's reservoir covers 2,430 square kilometers of tropical forest and required the forced resettlement of 23,871 people, including indigenous peoples. It was the dam that 'inspired' the film 'The Emerald Forest'.

Capemi, a pension company, won the contract to clear the forest before flooding. Though it was paid, they in fact failed to clear the area. If ever there was a case that warranted the demand to 'open the books', this mega 'development' project is it!

Submerged rotting vegetation left behind, caused a proliferation of mosquitos that makes living and working in nearby areas unbearable. It has also caused an epidemic of diseases like malaria.

Led by the Rural Workers' Union of Tucuruí, local people are demanding – yet again – relocation with full compensation to an area where they can farm.

Women have played a leading role in the occupation of Electro-Norte's offices. After August 1991, when the company obtained a court order against the occupation, the protesters left the offices but set up camp outside the company's main gate. Around 8,000 women, men and children have vowed to stay there until Electro-Norte enters negotiations with them to resolve the prob-

lem.

Jaide Barreiros from the trade union federation CUT in South Para said in a recent letter:

'They want new land that is not contaminated by mosquitos. But Electro-Norte denies this right and is passing responsibility on to the state governor, Jader Barbalho, who denies the responsibility is his.'

Meanwhile hundreds of rural workers – men, women and children – are facing major difficulties; children are being born but there is no way they can return to their old lands as nothing much exists there – the mosquitos have taken over

Photos: Anne-Marie Sweeney



Women protest for land rights

everything.

The situation is really worrying. The Rural Workers' Trade Union is leading the struggles, but besides these difficulties they face the most serious question of lack of money.'

Other major hydro-electric dams are now planned in Brazil and the Amazon area. Forced relocation is once again being proposed as a solution.

Meanwhile, in June 1992, Brazil's capital Rio will host one of the world's biggest conferences – the United Nations Earth Summit on the Environment and Development.

Socialists and internationa-

lists have a central responsibility not to continue the left's traditional neglect of these fundamental concerns, and leave issues of enormous importance – affecting the lives of millions of workers and peasants throughout the world – to be dealt with by the same politicians and bureaucrats who are central in creating the problems in the first place.

There are sixteen regional conferences throughout Britain that will be discussing issues for the Earth Summit. The issue of Tucuruí, among many others, could be raised here.

Chico Mendes Fund

Fighting back for forests and unions

By Sam Stacy

NAMED AFTER the rubber tappers' union leader assassinated in 1988, the Chico Mendes Solidarity Fund aims to support Brazilian trade unions. Many of these, particularly in rural areas, are impoverished as well as facing constant violence from land owners and big business.

The fund has already singled out aid projects and started to link up unions. They aim to raise money to improve the unions' communications (Brazil is 32 times the size of Britain) and photographic equipment to chronicle their struggles.

Contact has now been established between British rail workers and the Transport Federation of the CUT (the Brazilian TUC), while the Sao Paulo metro workers are keen to develop links with London Underground unions.

While for many unions in rural areas the money is crucial to their struggles, the fund is also aimed at developing these direct links between equivalent unions in the two countries. Links at shop steward and factory level have been important for



building solidarity, particularly in multinational firms.

These direct links are also important because to learn from experience of the class struggle in other countries. Brazilian trade unionists are keen to learn from our experience in Europe and we could certainly learn a great deal from them. But there are many worthy causes for financial and other forms of solidarity. Why Brazil?

First, it is the giant of Latin America, the eighth largest economy in the world. It has the largest, most organised, and probably most militant working class on the continent. The

success or failure of its struggles has a great bearing on the whole continent.

Second, most people are now aware of the implications of the destruction of vast areas of the Amazon rain forests for the global climate.

This is the result of rapacious Brazilian capitalism and its drive for profits, as well as the impact of the multinationals. They are squeezing the oppressed people and exploiting natural resources, regardless of the consequences for Brazil or the global environment.

Whether or not this destruction is halted will largely depend on the outcome of the struggles of rural workers and indigenous peoples to defend the forest on which their livelihood depends.

Solidarity with the Brazilian unions links international working class solidarity with the struggle to halt the degradation of the global environment.

Contact and send donations to Chico Mendes Solidarity Fund, Brazil Network, PO Box 1325, London SW9 0RA. Affiliation to the network is £10 (min) for organisations, £10 for individualist (£5 low waged, £2 unwaged).

Contact the Earth Summit offices on 071 930 5893 for details. SUPPORT AND DONATIONS for the Tucuruí Rural Workers' Union can be sent direct (if possible in Portuguese, enclosing a cheque) to: Sindicato Dos Trabalhadores Rurais de Tucuruí – STR, Av. 7 De Setembro, No. 125, Tucuruí, PARA, CEP: 68460, Brazil.

If you missed AMAZON SISTERS on Channel 4, or you miss the showing at the Women for Socialism, AGM on 29 February, make sure you or your organisation get hold of the video, available, for sale or for hire, from Oxford Film and Video Makers, The Stables, North Place, Oxford, OX3 9HY. Tel: 0865 60074.

Far right victories threaten Mitterrand government

By Patrick Baker

France's 'socialist' Prime Minister, Edith Cresson, is certainly good at one thing. Nailing the lid on the coffin of the French Socialist Party government.

Cresson, France's least popular Prime Minister in decades, appears incapable of opening her mouth without losing the Socialists a few more points in the polls. Now a major victory for the far right Front National looks almost certain in the coming local elections.

Debacle

The latest of Cresson's spectacular botch-jobs has been the 'Affaire Habache'. The simple facts might lead you to the conclusion that this was a complete non-event. But Cresson's skill managed to convert it into a full-scale governmental crisis.

George Habash, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), was flown into France for a vital operation after a cerebral stroke, fixed up by the Red

Cross/Red Crescent. Then he was flown out again. Hardly the stuff of front-page headlines.

But within hours resignations and sackings were declared left, right and centre in Cresson's administration, as the hapless PM collapsed before the howlings of the right. That the right-wing declared Habash a 'terrorist' is no great surprise; and nor is their hypocrisy in demanding that he be refused medical attention.

It is the reaction of the Cresson/Mitterrand duo that is of interest. The fact that they immediately collapsed into the racist agenda of the right is symptomatic of an administration in deep crisis.

This crisis is not something that was born with the arrival of Edith Cresson, though she has done a remarkable job at worsening it. Rather it is the consequence of the lengthy degeneration of a party that started with lukewarm policies, and has ended up with a similar agenda to the right-wing RPR and UDF.

This is a fertile breeding-ground for the extreme right.

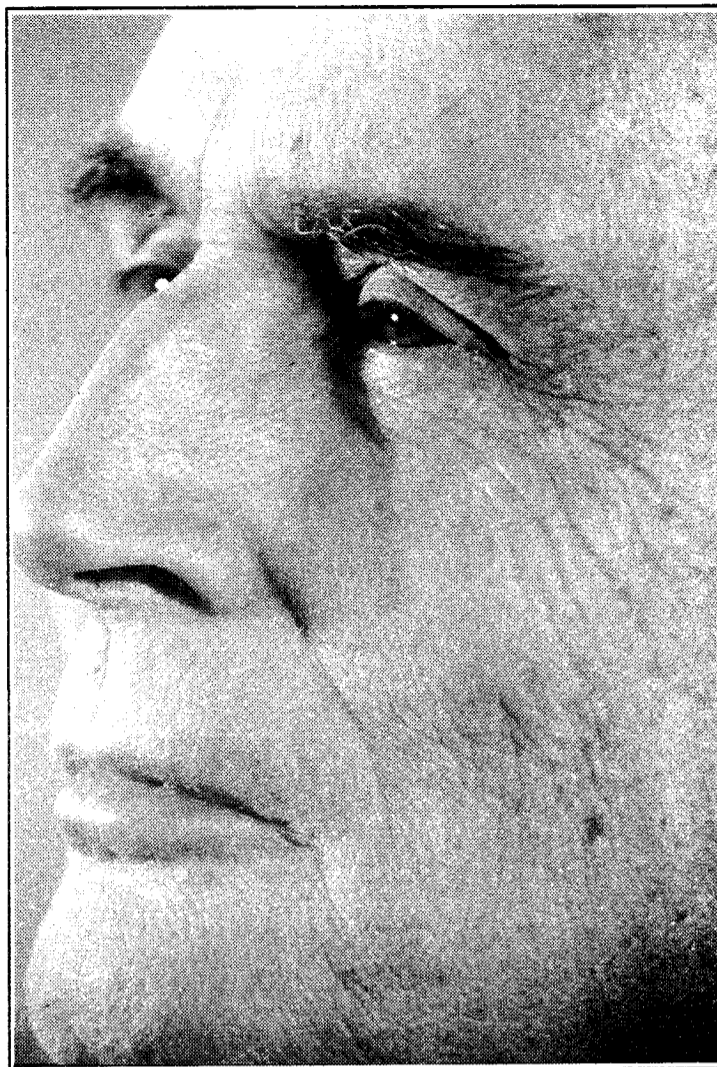
And there is no doubt which party is on the rise in France today. Le Pen's Front National have scored a few victories over the PS in recent weeks, and are sure to win more in the local polls, particularly in Paris and other centres of urban poverty.

Le Pen himself looks on course for election in Nice/Marseille, even if his prediction of 70 per cent-plus is over optimistic. Meanwhile the PS are scraping around to get their vote above 20 per cent.

Fascist victory

Preliminary results from the first round of one local election in Nice are still worse: the Socialist vote dropped by nearly half to 12 per cent; and the FN candidate Jacques Peyrat scored almost 40 per cent.

The elections are shaping up to be a pretty gloomy affair; but elsewhere things are looking brighter. The 100,000-strong anti-racist protest on January 25 was a promising display of unity between France's black communities, youth and students and the trade union movement. It is



Francois Mitterrand: not so sanguine these days

certainly outside parliament that things are moving on the French left.

The anti-racist fightback is now getting organised and building up to a mass demonstration against the

Front National on May Day. It is here that French leftists are concentrating their energies.

And it is among these forces that a positive alternative to the discredited leaders of the PS lies.

Freedom march highlights Kashmir freedom struggle

By Bala Kumar

THE GREAT freedom march from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to the Indian-held part of that country has been met with bullets and tear-gas by Pakistani troops.

But it has succeeded in focusing world attention on a forgotten conflict. And the size of the march has demonstrated the mass support for the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

For two years an 'intifadah' has been raging in the Indian-held part of Kashmir. In that time 3000 people have been killed. Thousands of suspects have been tortured, and women systematically raped.

The victims are nearly always Muslims and the culprits invariably the Indian police and army. But the scale of the uprising has shown the overwhelming support among the people for Kashmir's independence.

The roots of the conflict lie in the historical domination of the Kashmir Muslim masses by a Hindu aristocracy.

In 1947 when India gained independence and the partition with Pakistan took place, Kashmir's Hindu rulers opted to join India.

India and Pakistan have subsequently fought two wars over Kashmir. In 1948 Pakistan captured part of Kashmir. There a puppet government has been installed, waiting for reunification and union with Pakistan.

While this 'government' has been throwing banquets, refugees fleeing Indian terror are thrown into camps with little food and no medicines.

Poorest state

Forty years after the partition, the situation in Indian-held Kashmir is no better. Kashmir is one of the poorest states in the Indian union. Tourism provides 60 per cent of its income, while the Indian government has actively undermined its agriculture and industry, thus encouraging a dependent relationship.

But unification of Kashmir within Pakistan is no solution. Indian dominance would be replaced by that of the Punjabi ruling class. Kashmir would be thoroughly 'Islamised' leading to stepped-up oppression of women and the Hindu and Buddhist minorities.

Pakistan's shameful role is shown by its attitude to the march. Although pressured by popular opinion to support a



one-day strike in solidarity with the march it did all it could to prevent it taking place. Near the border Pakistani troops killed 16 people and wounded 350.

Among the Kashmiri resistance there are a number of Muslim fundamentalist groups. Hezbollah has substantial support and other fundamentalist groups have links with the Afghan Mujahadeen, and are armed by Pakistan.

But the fundamentalists are usually in favour of joining Pakistan. It is the JKLF which until now at least put forward the project of an independent Kashmir. The Kashmiri people have the right to self-determination, and their struggle deserves the active solidarity of all socialists.

Major Blowtorch shuffles off this mortal coil Debonair psychopath heads for Boot Hill



Roberto D'Aubuisson, charismatic leader of the ruling ARENA party in El Salvador, has died of cancer. D'Aubuisson was the leader of the infamous death squads, who personally ordered the murder in 1980 of Archbishop Romero, who angered the extreme right by his human rights campaigning.

D'Aubuisson was certainly charismatic. He was brilliantly portrayed as a debonair psychopath in Oliver Stone's movie *Salvador*, handing over a silver bullet to a death squad killer chosen to assassinate Romero.

For his role in the death squads and his favourite method of torture he was dubbed 'Major Blowtorch'. His torture skills were doubtless picked up during his training at the US national police academy in Panama.

Long before his physical death D'Aubuisson was being politically sidelined.

Adored by the San Salvador middle classes for his 'firm hand' with communists, he had become an embarrassment to the United States.

When ARENA won the 1984 election, it was Alfredo Christiani, a man with a more moderate image, who became president. Under strong American pressure the ARENA government has been forced to accept negotiations and a ceasefire with the FMLN rebels, a move which D'Aubuisson was forced to go along with.

During the El Salvador war more than 80,000 people have been killed. Tens of thousands were murdered by death squads, hacked to death with machetes, tortured, mutilated, their bodies dumped on rubbish tips.

D'Aubuisson was the conductor of the death squad orchestra. A large part of the Salvador population who lost friends and relatives in his terror will see his terrible death from cancer as poetic justice.

Feedback

We welcome letters on any subject but please keep them brief. Letters over 350 words will be cut. Send your letters to: *Socialist Outlook* PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU

Are two parties always better than one?

Charlie van Gelderen forgets that soviet multi-partyism existed between the February and October revolutions in Russia and did not resolve the question of government. The Bolshevik insurrection did not resolve this, creating a Bolshevik Party government and a soviet state.

The German, Polish and Hungarian revolutions also demonstrated that soviet (i.e. socialist) democracy *without* a strong revolutionary party capable of forming a government, could not succeed.

It is true, as Charlie says, that in the 'Transitional Programme' Trotsky calls for multi-party soviets but at the end of that section he says: 'There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection - the party of the Fourth International!'

Can 'multi-partyism' achieve this task? No, and our criticisms of Stalinist 'one-partyism' must not create illusions that 'multi-partyism' is really a substitute for a single revolutionary party that unites all class-conscious workers and socialists.

Both Lenin and Trotsky understood that in the concrete conditions of the early Soviet state the dictatorship of the proletariat had to take the form of a Bolshevik Party dictatorship.

But it was hardly the product of Trotsky's alleged 'concept which substituted a Party dictatorship for a class dictatorship' as Joe Slovo suggests whilst trying to forget that it was his former mentor Stalin who both practised and theorised the real substitution - a class dictatorship of a personal clique based on a bureaucracy

Wot? No stunts?

Your criticism of *Outrage*, namely that it concentrates on stunts (SO16), is of course quite politically correct. No doubt there is a high level of frustration at the general level of political apathy behind the strategy of stunts.

You are, however, too censorious by half. At least *Outrage* want to do something and are doing something. The job of socialists is to patiently explain why alongside 'actions' the laborious work of winning support in the labour movement is the key to longer term change. The two do NOT need to be counterposed.

Keith Flett
London N17

for the class dictatorship of what had been the most democratic party of the proletariat in history.

Charlie unfortunately repeats Joe Slovo's mistake of searching in the realms of *formal democracy* for a cause of the bureaucratic degeneration rather than attempting to understand Trotsky's explanation.

It is, for instance, wrong to link - as Charlie does - the March 1921 banning of factions with the later victories of Stalin over the Left Opposition and the Bolshevik Party.

The driving force of the degeneration was a shortage of basic necessities etc. allowing a relative affluence for only a minority.

The essence of democracy was destroyed when policy deviated from a proletarian line, i.e. when it began to prioritise minority interests above those of the majority. Formal democracy of both state and party played *no independent role* in this tragedy - it simply became one of its victims.

Roy Rudditt
London

Look who's being impressionistic!

Dave Shepherd writes to take issue with my article 'The bitter fruits of marketisation'. He calls my piece 'impressionistic and superficial'. Methinks he protests too much.

His criticisms concentrate on two points - national autonomy and marketisation.

I largely agree that a major reason to welcome national independence - as I did - is that it reduces the potential for conflict. There is no doubt that things would have been much worse without it.

Dave points out that this is one reason why comparisons with Yugoslavia are inept. True, this is why I made no such comparison. But I stand by my assertion that the potential for national conflict is considerable.

The independence gained after the August coup has not prevented conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan; it has not solved anything for peoples such as those in Chechen-Ingush who claim the right to national autonomy; it did not stop *extreme right wing nationalism* from becoming very popular.

The innumerable problems caused by decades of national repression by Great Russian

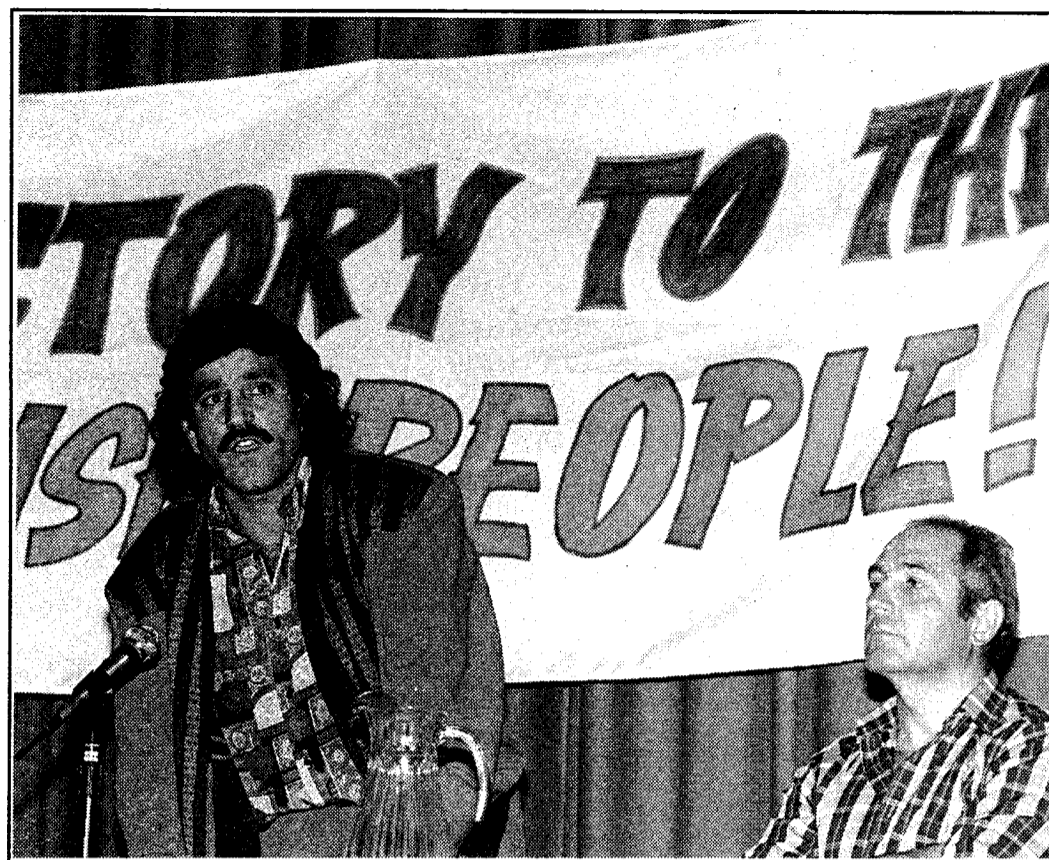


Photo: Mark Salmon

Hitting the right targets?

I wish to take issue with some of the points raised (and not raised) in SO 11 on Ireland. In neither Liam Mac Uaid's article nor the back cover article do the authors put the revolutionary marxist position - unconditional (but not uncritical) support for the armed struggle.

I'd like to take up the specific points raised in the articles. Liam's article accuses the IRA of 'deteriorating into adventurism'.

Liam cites 'bombs on protestant estates' and 'protestant business - people have been killed on the grounds that they were supplying goods to the British Army or the RUC.'

To say the killing of capitalists for collaborating with the security forces is 'deteriorating into adventurism' is

false. This is part of a long-standing campaign that attempts both to isolate collaborators and the repressive security forces.

In Liam's article, this tactic is cited with 'bombs on protestant estates' as a description of the IRA's 'adventurism'. Surely we recognise that there IS AWARE of national liberation in Ireland. Within this war we support the linkage of national and democratic and working class and anti-capitalist goals.

Why then should we oppose the targeting of capitalist collaborators? On a class basis we might question the tactic of 'bombs on protestant estates'. Liam negates such class criteria by putting these two things together.

On the back page, 'last Saturday's bombing of Belfast Military Hospi-

tal...Not even the firmest friends of the republican movement could claim that this was a well-chosen target.'

In the course of pursuing a campaign against the morale of the occupying forces the liberation movement states that no repressive forces are safe anywhere. Do the authors believe a military hospital to be sacred?

Our tasks are twofold: To explain our position of unconditional support for the liberation movement in Ireland; and to participate in the building of a mass movement in Britain for withdrawal. Without addressing ourselves to these tasks we become commentarists.

Name and address supplied

the Soviet workers - any favours.

Finally, Dave quotes a poll to try and show that socialism, rather than the market, is the popular political force in the ex-USSR. Let's not kid ourselves. In every one of the independent republics, ultra pro-market forces are in control; nowhere is there any sign of them being replaced by left forces. There is no left party in the ex-USSR of any significant size - at best

they number in three figures, but mostly two.

Yes, when good things happen, when workers rise, we should say so. But we shouldn't ignore harsh realities because we don't like them. The real, complete picture is the only basis on which we can positively intervene and contribute to the situation.

Patrick Baker
London N4

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Mouthwatering meals at the delicatessen

Delicatessen

Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, showing in Cannon cinemas

Reviewed by Geoff Ryan

Delicatessen is set in a bleak, post-apocalyptic landscape of rubble and bombed out houses. Food – especially meat – is in short supply; money no longer exists and trade is carried out by barter.

Lentils are a major form of currency. A perpetual mist adds to the gloomy and menacing atmosphere. The delicatessen of the title is the ground floor of an apartment block, inhabited by half-crazed boarders. Into this delicatessen wanders the rather naive Louison (played by Dominique Pinon). Very soon, from the way in which the butcher – the owner of the apartment block – and the other tenants look at him it becomes clear how the butcher gets his meat.

Julie (Marie-Laure Dougnac) the cello playing daughter of the butcher falls in love with Louison and together they resist the murder attempts, as well as finding time to play a cello and

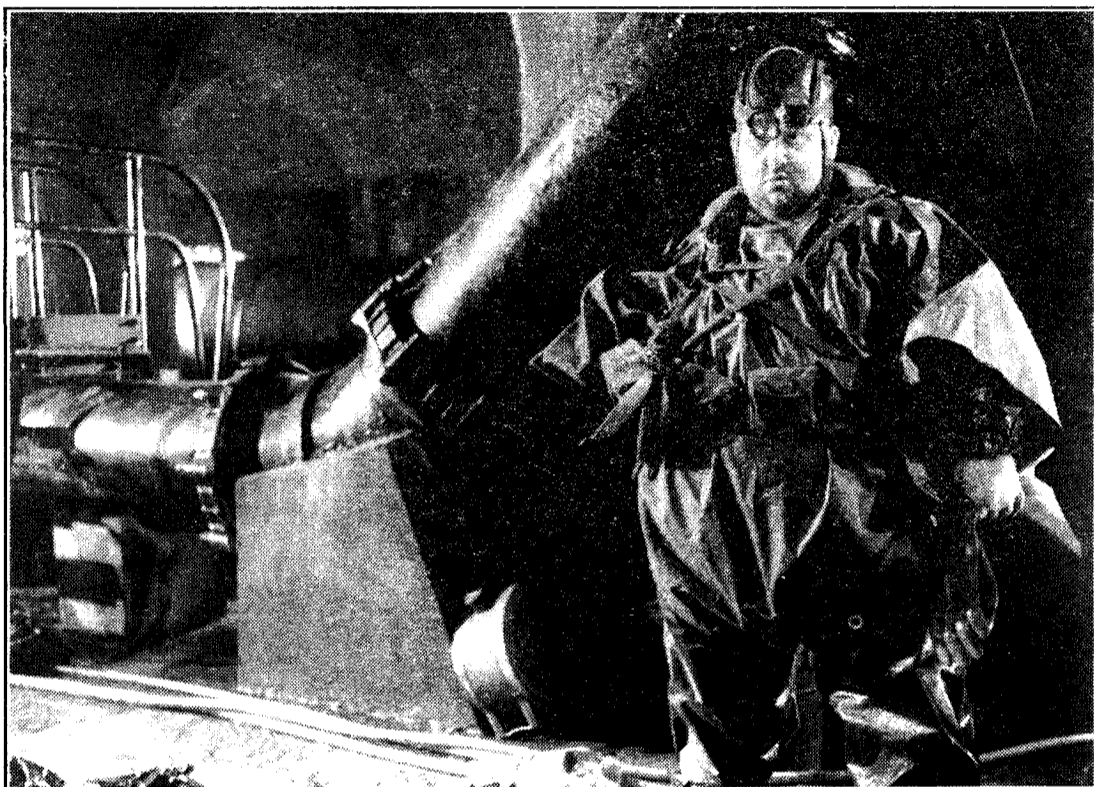
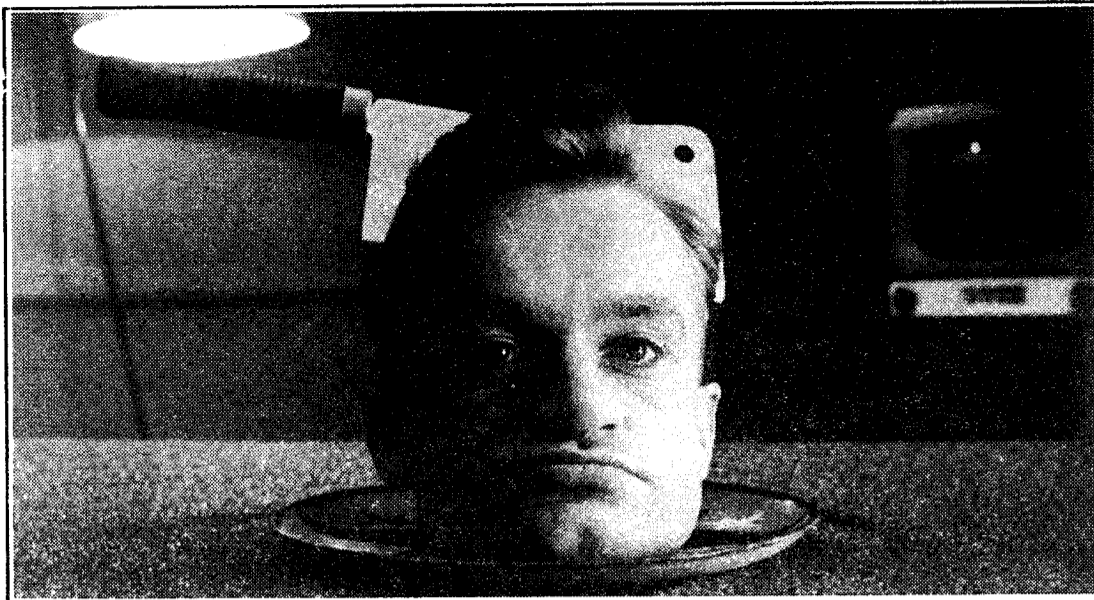
musical saw duet on the roof! Julie seeks help from a bizarre, vegetarian 'underground organisation' – the Troglodytes – who, naturally, live in the sewers!

Meanwhile, another of the tenants, constantly tormented by voices encouraging her to kill herself, devises more and more elaborate methods of committing suicide.

There are some wonderfully inventive moments, such as a brilliantly orchestrated and choreographed series of counterposed scenes. A couple making love on a bed with very squeaky springs, Julie playing cello, a woman beating a carpet, Louison painting – which combine their disparate elements, both visually and audibly, into an exhilarating, climactic whole.

Delicatessen portrays how hunger and deprivation can drive humans into barbarous acts. It doesn't provide any solutions other than 'love conquers all' but you can't have everything, I suppose.

What you do get is extremely funny and imaginative farce played at a frantic pace with many memorable scenes – most of which are impossible to describe as they rely so much on the combination of visual and auditory images.



MUSIC

Supergroup of the Nineties?

Little Village

Little Village, WEA WX462, all formats

Reviewed by Dave Osler

The name Little Village may be unfamiliar, but the musicians that make up the band – Ry Cooder, Nick Lowe, John Hiatt and Jim Keltner – are anything but.

The 'first supergroup of the nineties' tag is record company exaggeration, but their three concerts at Hammersmith Odeon this week are all sell-outs. A look at their track records will explain why.

Ry Cooder has rightly enjoyed cult status – especially in Britain – since his late '60s guitar work with Captain Beefheart and the Stones. His solo albums and film soundtracks since then have explored the whole range of American music from blues and jazz to country and R&B, with 'Bop 'Til You Drop' attaining classic status.

British bassist Lowe is best known for his long string of production credits, including Costello, the Damned and the Pretenders. His own record-

ings, predominantly too-clever-for-its-own-good pseudo-pop, remain an acquired taste.

They are joined by two long-time Cooder collaborators, vocalist/guitarist John Hiatt and session superstar drummer Jim Keltner, who has kept time for Costello since the demise of the Attractions in 1986.

These musicians have long recorded together in various permutations. Their debut album as a band, unimaginatively titled 'Little Village' is essentially conservative, in as much as it could have been recorded at virtually any time in the last twenty years.

The songs are all harmonically simple, solidly built around standard chord progressions. But when it comes to working within those kinds of self-imposed musical limitations, this band prove themselves past masters. No needless technical virtuosity here; understatement is very much one of the album's strengths.

Within this framework, Cooder is exemplary; this man plays with all the taste of a large doner kebab with everything, somehow stealing the

show without overwhelming the proceedings. Essentially simple figures are broken up rhythmically to produce a feel that makes him easily one of the most distinctive guitarists in rock.

Lyrical Little Village break no new ground, in the main, sticking to straight ahead traditional rock celebrations of sex, dancing, fast cars, and the agonies of relationships. Indeed, the words to such puerile sexist crap as 'Solar Sex Panel' are probably best forgotten.

The only song that gets vaguely political is one of the album's highlights. 'Do you want my job?' deals with the plight of third world dockers that end up disposing of the west's nuclear garbage.

Unfortunately, they seem essentially resigned to their fate and probably not about to join the local section of the Fourth International. But by way of compensation, the music features some astonishing Tex-Mex style guitar licks.

You already know whether or not you'll like this album. If you're into Cooder, buy it. Otherwise you'll live without it.

Benn hits back

A Future for Socialism

Written by Tony Benn
Published by Fount
Paperbacks, £2.99.

Reviewed by Patrick Baker

Tony Benn's 'A Future for Socialism' is a powerful assertion of democratic socialism. There are no concessions to post-modernist retreats from class politics, and none to the 'post-communist' association of socialism with dictatorship. It is a welcome counter-blast.

Turning from Stalinist Russia to Nazi Germany, Tony Benn draws on sources as varied as Adam Smith, Karl Marx and Jesus Christ to reinforce his case for a campaigning, participatory socialism in the twenty first century.

British state

The case for democratising the British state is powerfully made. From the disestablishment of the monarchy to freedom of information, Benn argues throughout that the undemocratic bastions of the state must go.

And he is clear that the force that must impose this is the mass of the people, explaining how mass movements have achieved more on the streets than a thousand parliamentarians.

But there are areas of the book that are either thin or confused. Perhaps this is inevitable in a 64-page book. But sections such as that on the Russian revolution are superficial, as is the discussion of PR. To claim that PR inevitably leads to 'smoke-filled rooms' is a rather old and discredited argument, which would be better left out.

Other sections are less than convincing. For example, Benn argues that 'Democratic socialism must be built gradually, brick by brick... Thus the National Health Service, a socialist innovation... is now almost universally supported.'

But next he says 'Admittedly, people do not now attach the label 'socialist' to the NHS, so future socialist measures cannot bask in its warm reflected glow.' Contradictory sections lessen the impact of the book.

But its impact is overwhelmingly positive. It is not helpful – or true – to say, as do *Socialist Worker*, that Benn says what is wrong, but has no recipe for how to overthrow it.

Formally they have a point. But the important thing is that Benn – unlike most – has brought together some of the most important elements for a counter-attack against the dominant right. He insists on the importance of class and of mass mobilisation. And he is prepared to organise against the Labour leadership on that basis, in the Socialist movement – which he strongly advocates here.

This is a big step in the right direction, even if it's not the answer that *Socialist Worker* would like.

Confronting the capitalists' 'war engine'

By Harry Sloan

1992 is election year. Labour politicians are dusting off their less and less radical pledges to reform British capitalism, allowing us to recall how wide is the gulf between social democracy and socialism.

Of course the Labour Party, unlike many of the European social democratic parties (which in their early years paid at least lip-service to the Marxist programme), has never been a socialist party.

Labour's sights have never been raised above the target of obtaining a majority in parliament through which – if the capitalist economy will allow – to legislate reforms and concessions for the working class.

As a result, none of the Labour governments that has been elected has posed the slightest threat to capitalism: indeed they have defended and even strengthened the state apparatus which is key to upholding capitalist rule.

The fact is that winning a majority in parliament is not the same as taking control of the state. Tony Benn's revelations of the ways in which Labour ministers were given the run-around by top civil servants in the 1960s and 1970s, and the evidence in *Spycatcher* and elsewhere of secret service phone-tapping and covert activity against Labour ministers remind us of this fact, as does the bitter experience of the military coup that ousted Salvador Allende's elected 'marxist' government in Chile in 1973.

While socialists have to make use of what Lenin and Marx called the "pigsty" of bourgeois parliamentarism, they must also recognise the limitations of parliamentary activity.

The main support for capitalist rule is not parliament – a body whose personnel can be changed by the electorate every five years – but the permanent state apparatus, combining the armed forces and police with the judiciary and courts and the permanent elite which runs the civil service.

Friederich Engels explained how the form of the state apparatus has evolved in history and dramatically strengthened to suit the needs of capitalism:

"The state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful economically dominant class, which through the medium of the state becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class."

The state machinery in a capitalist democracy is an instrument of class rule, the 'war engine' of the capitalists against the workers. At its disposal are bodies of armed men – as Engels quipped, behind the fine phrases of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity lurk cavalry, artillery and infantry.



Marx, Engels and Lenin developed the analysis of the bourgeois state. They recognised – at first in theory, and then through the experience of revolutionary struggles in 1848, 1850 and the Paris Commune of 1871 – that the state machinery cannot be reformed or used by the working class. It must be smashed and replaced by a new form of state.

As Lenin summed up:

"All previous revolutions perfected the state machine, whereas it must be broken, smashed. This conclusion is the chief and fundamental point in the marxist theory of the state."

Lenin drew two further points from this which underline the gap between the marxism which overthrew capitalism in Russia and the reformism which has upheld it everywhere else.

The first was that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible through parliamentary means alone. The state which was created by the ruling class cannot be made to abolish itself any more than the bourgeoisie will voluntarily give up its property, power and privilege: it can only be destroyed through a violent revolution.

The second was that the working class needs to replace the capitalist state machinery with a new form of state, one that would act to uphold the rule of the proletariat:

"The state is a special organ of force: it is an organisation of violence for the suppression of some class. What class must the proletariat suppress? Naturally only the exploiting class, i.e. the bourgeoisie."

Majority

A key difference is that while the capitalists as a small minority need a large armed force to protect their interests against the majority, the working class has the advantage of numbers, and does not need a specific, professionalised standing army.

The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' means that for the first time in history the vast majority should arm itself to impose its will and authority over a small, exploitative minority of the population.

Step one towards establishing a genuine workers' state is therefore the combined step of smashing the military backbone of the old regime and erecting a completely new armed authority:

"The first decree of the [Paris] Commune was the suppression of the standing army, and its replacement by the armed people."

We can gauge how far today's social democracy has degenerated from even the paper promises of 'socialists' at the turn of the century when Lenin tells us that in 1917 "This demand now figures in the programme of every party calling

itself socialist". Today's Labour leaders won't even scrap Trident, let alone disband the armed forces!

The proletarian state must function on a completely different basis from the old capitalist state. Its main weapons must be democracy and the mass movement that created it. Marx explains the exemplary actions of the Paris Commune:

"The police... was at once stripped of its political attributes and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable instrument of the Commune. So were the officials of other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, public service had to be done at workers' wages."

"The privileges and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the dignitaries themselves...."

Ironically the leading advocates of MPs being paid a worker's wage – Terry Fields and Dave Nellist – are both expelled by Kinnock, while no top civil servant, general or judge will fear for their jobs or inflated salaries should Labour be elected.

The Commune also acted to "break the instrument of spiritual oppression, the power of the priests," and to make judges elective, responsible and subject to recall.

Lenin underlines how these changes created a qualitatively new form of state, based on the armed power of the majority, the workers and the oppressed, and strengthened by an unprecedented extension of direct democracy.

It was this model which the Bolsheviks were consciously to emulate after the October Revolution – until the rot of Stalinism set in and destroyed the Bolshevik Party.

With tongue in cheek, Lenin also argues that proletarian dictatorship, by disposing of the costly standing army, police and state bureaucracy, paying even top functionaries only a worker's wage, is the epitome of the bourgeois ideal of 'cheap government'.

If Labour really wanted a radical answer to the Tory jibes about taxation, they could follow the route mapped out by the Paris Commune, scrap the expensive paraphernalia of the capitalist state, make huge cuts in taxes on working people and still spend additional billions saved on something useful, like health, housing or education.

Those of us who feel that Kinnock's party is unlikely to make this kind of dramatic turn must continue to battle within the labour movement for a socialist alternative based on the lessons of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Useful pamphlets:

Lenin *The State and Revolution*
Marx *The Civil War in France*

Asylum Bill scrapped – for now

ANTI-DEPORTATION campaigners celebrated as Kenneth Baker's racist Asylum Bill recently bit the dust. Baker explained that the Bill had not been withdrawn, but was merely a victim of a lack of parliamentary time.

But there is no doubt that the massive campaign against the Bill – which provoked united opposition from the black community, trade unionists and priests – was the real reason for its demise. The Tories had already retreated on a number of its key provisions, extending the time allowed for appeal against deportation and extending the legal aid net.

But the pressure must be maintained. Baker has made it clear that he will reintroduce the Bill if he gets a chance. There is no doubt that the Tories will carry on using the racist rules of 'Fortress Europe' to attack black immigrants at every opportunity.

The campaign against the Asylum Bill shows that the only way that the racists can be beaten back is a united fightback, mobilising the black communities and the labour movement on the streets.

Fascists scuppered in Rochdale

By Janet Watson

ACCORDING TO the British National Party up to 100 of their supporters were expected at a Rochdale city centre rally on February 16th. The rally was to be addressed by one of the BNP's central leaders Richard Edmonds. The event was intended to be the launch of their campaign leading up to their leading hatemongers contesting the Rochdale seat in the election.

The landlord of the pub where the rally was to be held was forced by the brewery not to allow the meeting to take place. When several fascists turned up they found the place occupied by hundreds of anti-fascist activists. Some supporters of the BNP attempted to meet in another pub nearby, but were likewise prevented from doing so.

Around 300 anti-fascists took part in the occupation of the pubs in the centre of Rochdale as well as distributing thousands of leaflets on the streets.

The mobilisation was a success in the limited time available for mobilisation – 3 days. However, what was also shown, were the problems caused by disunity within the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement.

The mobilisation was the result of the activity of individuals involved in various different groups, including, Anti-Fascist Action, the Anti-Nazi League/SWP, the Blackley Anti-Racist Group and to a lesser extent the Anti-Racist Alliance. Unfortunately the SWP/ANL claimed that the event was an ANL mobilisation and proceeded on that basis, showing little regard for the other forces involved.

Pressure must be exerted on all organisations especially the SWP, not to allow sectarian rivalries or differing opinions on tactics to take precedence over the building of the strongest possible opposition to the rising threat of fascism.

Sahitharan murdered by racists
Deane family brutalised by police
MARCH FOR JUSTICE
Demonstrate against racist attacks and police harassment
Assemble 12.30pm
Saturday 28 March
Plashef Park, East Ham, London E6

Organised by Deane Family and Sahitharan Memorial Committee, in conjunction with Newham Monitoring Project

Students fight poverty

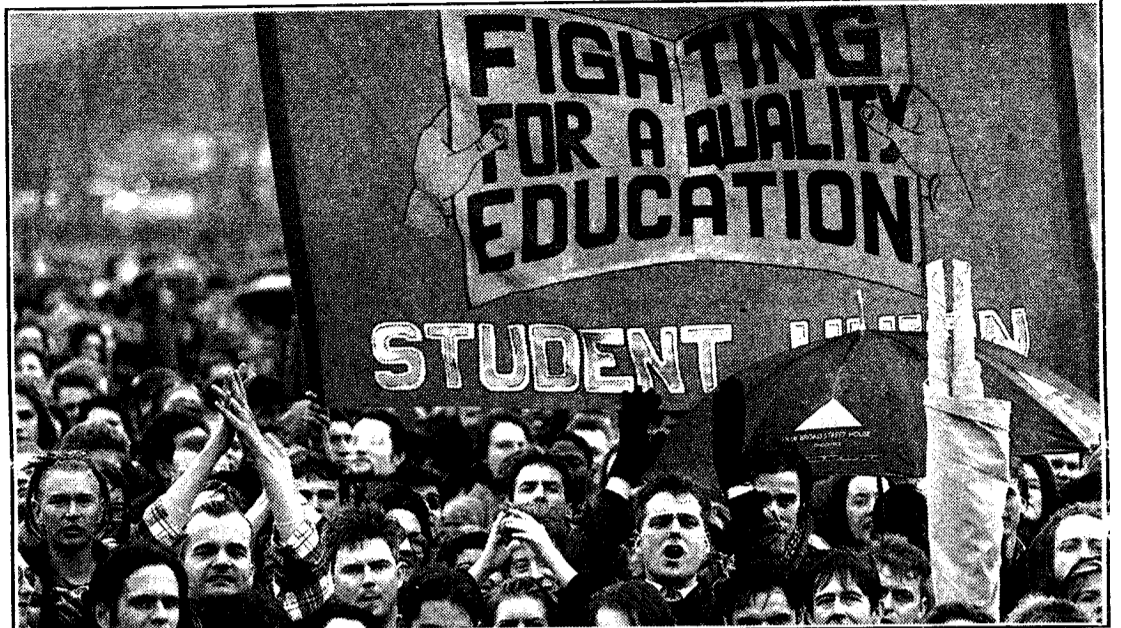
OVER 20,000 students demonstrated against cuts in their living standards and educational facilities on February 12th.

The demonstration had been called from a London NUS-organised activists conference in response to the biggest wave of student action since the anti-loans campaign.

Speakers at the rally included a representative from the teachers' union AUT and Tony Benn. Stephen Twigg, the president of NUS also spoke and was continually heckled and booed by the students present, who clearly felt that the NUS leadership had failed to offer them anything.

Students were demanding a decent grant; restoration of benefit entitlements, affordable accommodation, restoration of education services that have been cut (i.e. libraries, teaching staff, support staff etc), and an extension of these services to meet the growing number of students.

On March 3rd and 4th, the NUS leadership will be holding a 'Reform Conference' to seek ratification for its proposals to cut one of NUS's conferences. All students must mobilise to ensure that this attack on the democracy of the NUS is defeated.



Students on the march against poverty

Photo: Andrew Wliard

Vauxhall workers win strike ballot

VAUXHALL car workers have overwhelmingly rejected management attempts to attach strings to their latest 5 per cent pay offer.

Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) members at Ellesmere Port – the largest union in the plant – voted by 3-1 in favour of strike action.

Despite increased profits, Vauxhall are attempting to push ahead with local negotiations and attacks on working

conditions. Team working – otherwise known as japanisation – has already been introduced.

But the TGWU claim that it has been unsuccessful in dividing the workforce. 'There is a long road between introduction of team working and making it stick' the union office said.

Now the TGWU has a clear mandate for action and its members in Luton look likely to endorse the move.

AEU engineers at Ellesmere Port and Luton are also expected to reject the strings.

The only stumbling block has been the EETPU, whose members voted to accept the deal, but there is now going to be a fight to reverse the vote.

The first move looks like being an overtime ban. AEU and TGWU workers should argue to escalate the action.

GEC strikers sold out

INTIMIDATED by management and undermined by national union officials, 400 strikers at GEC Alstom in Manchester have voted 2-1 to return to work.

Echoing the situation facing the Camden social workers' strike, the GEC workers were threatened with the sack if the action continued. And offi-

cial from the engineering and ship-building workers' federation, the CSEU, let it be known that they thought the strike was heading for disaster.

In this situation shop stewards at Higher Openshaw were unable to turn the tide, despite an impressive tradition of solidarity among the workforce. It is a classic example of a real opportunity lost.

The GEC workers had maintained pressure on the company, operating a 24-hour picket and touring the country to win support. GEC itself was not invulnerable: the company had just won orders worth over £2.5 billion and would have faced problems if the action had spread.

Now the workers face not only the original 12 sackings that provoked the action, but also a wave of 13,500 across the whole of the GEC Alstom group over the next year. The workers made it clear that they would try to maintain the solidarity that had been built on the picket line inside the factory. But this is easier said than done in a situation of retreat.

'New realist' union officials have shown once again that for the Kinnockite agenda, beating back the jobs massacre is less important than 'heads down for the general election'.

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Hello to the working class!

ISN'T IT old-fashioned to talk about the working class and class struggle, like the 'postmodernists', not to mention the Kinnockites, claim?

Not according to British workers. A survey by the US *Wall Street Journal* found that more than 65 per cent of British people say they are working class, 28 per cent think they are middle class, and 1.4 per cent 'upper middle class'. Another 2.5 per cent said they were just 'poor'.

True or false? Probably a chunk of those who said they are middle class are better-paid workers. The middle class is probably a lot smaller than 28 per cent.

But identification of themselves as 'working class' seems almost universal among the core sections of workers. The same survey found that the richest 20 per cent own 42 per cent of the wealth, and the bottom 20 per cent own 8 per cent.

How would the averagely intelligent person interpret these figures? Do we live in a capitalist society? Do classes still exist? Or is all this a figment of the imagination of the hard left?

Answers on a postcard to N. Kinnock, House of Commons, London SW1.

Telecom slash jobs

True to form, British Telecom (BT) have just announced yet another package of job cuts. Despite escalating profits – currently around £100 per second – BT has sacked around 20 per cent of its staff in the last two years.

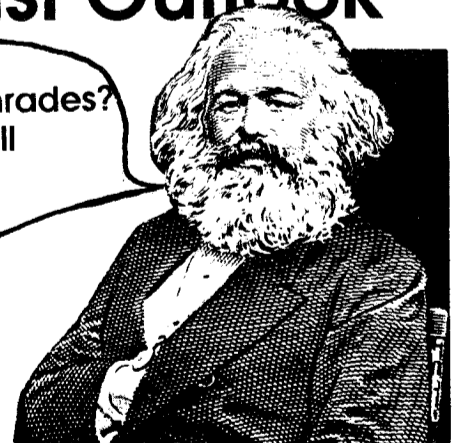
Now your caring, sharing Telecom has declared that the 7,500 redundancies among operators announced last year was not enough. Another 3,000 plus operators are to lose their jobs.

The two packages – a result of digital technology combined with directory enquiry charges – will reduce the number of operator staff from 16,000 to just 6,000.

What's the betting over whether Telecom chairman Iain Vallance (he of the six-figure salary) will suffer from the jobs axe? Or whether directory enquiry services will improve in cost or efficiency? Answers on a postcard to your Tory party offices, Smith Square, London.

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Beat back the bigots!

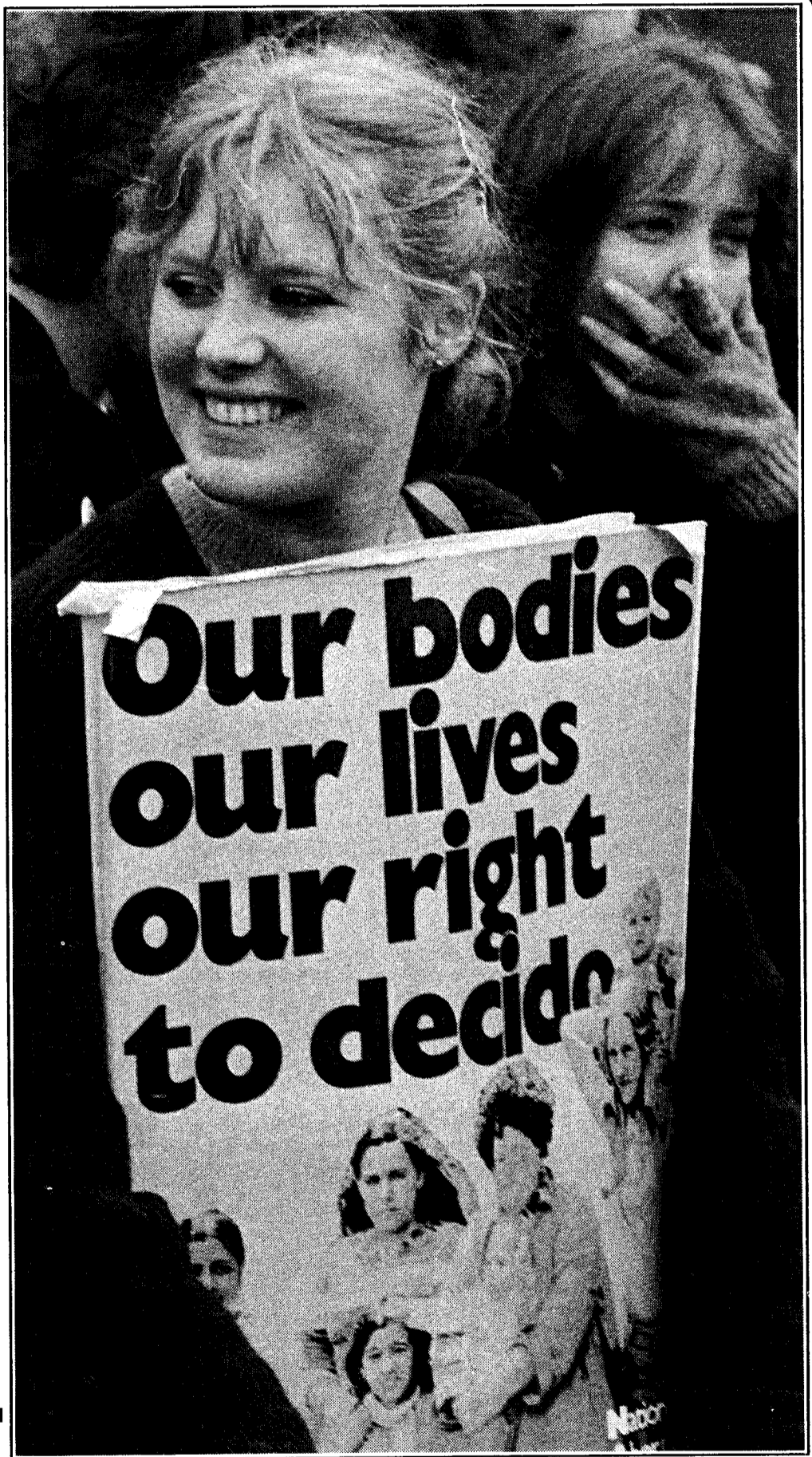
ALL OVER the world abortion rights are under attack. The injunction against a 14-year old rape victim in Ireland, preventing her from getting an abortion in Britain, is just the tip of the iceberg of anti-abortion attacks internationally.

The Polish Sejm (parliament) is about to pass the Unborn Child Protection Bill, banning all abortion unless the mother's life in danger.

In the US abortion rights are under legal threat in several states, and anti-abortionists have started using guns in their attacks on abortion clinics. George Bush's main Republican contender, Pat Buchanan, would severely restrict abortion.

In Germany the moratorium on changing East Germany's liberal abortion laws will expire within two years.

In a period of capitalist crisis attacks on women's rights are multiplying, especially in eastern Europe. The right to abortion is central women's ability to control their lives. An international campaign is needed in solidarity with women under attack. Defend abortion rights!



Defend abortion rights

Inside: IRELAND campaign p6 ● Haughey goes p7