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# socialist OUTLOOK

## New realism brings catastrophe

# Don't get sore: get even!

YES, the April 9 election result was a disaster for the working class. YES, Major's vicious gang will now try to put the boot in. YES, Labour's spineless leaders, learning nothing, are determined to drag the party further down the same dead-end of right wing policies and class collaboration that has only led to election defeats.

Though Kinnock has gone, the other architects of failure are still in office, the Goulds, Smiths and Cunninghams in the Labour Party and the Sawyers, Edmondses and Lairds in the unions. They have already stitched up the leadership election, with their 50-signature rule for candidates ensuring only Kinnockites will be allowed to stand.

It's a bad situation. All socialists are feeling angry, betrayed, frustrated, not least because we always warned that new realism would lead to disaster.

But the battles go on. We still have to defend our unions, jobs, the NHS, education and public services, living standards and the working class as a whole against the Tory onslaught.

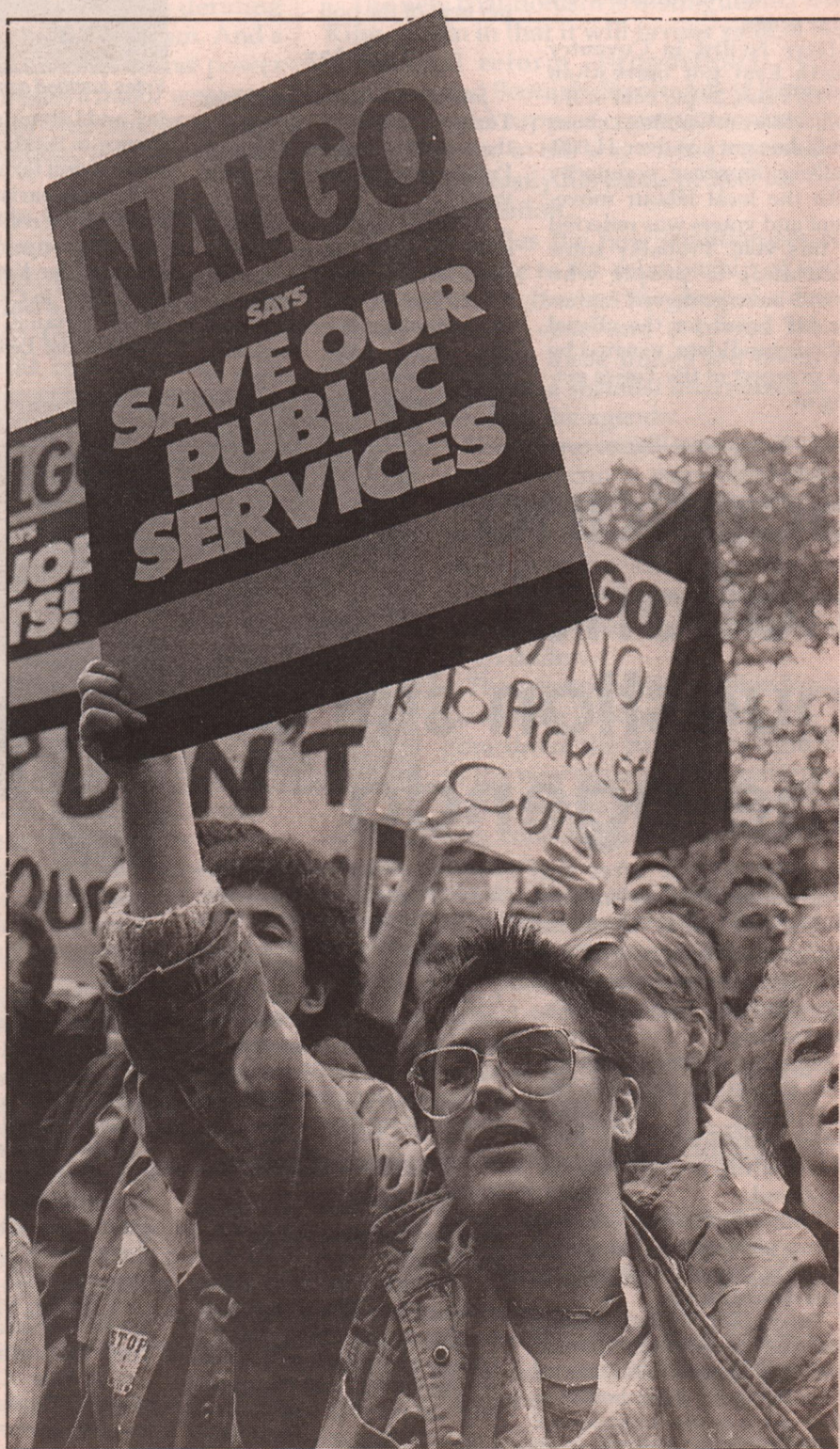
The longer the labour movement wallows in despair, the easier it will be for the employers to exploit Major's election victory. The longer the left holds back on the fight that's needed, the more the post-mortem will be dominated by the defeatist right wing - those same new realist bureaucrats who got us into this mess today.

The left, like the working class, faces a straight choice: fight back, or go under. At every level of the labour movement the finger must be pointed at the responsibility of new realism for allowing this defeat.

Each union, each section under attack must fight its own struggles. The left must prove its worth by building a class struggle leadership, working to regenerate the class consciousness and the spirit of solidarity which Kinnockism tried to eradicate.

This underlines the importance of the July conference called by the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, and the October Conference of the Left called by the Socialist Movement.

Organisation, education and agitation can help to clear away the debris of new realism and rebuild the fighting strength of the workers' movement.



John Harris



## Leadership contest: can the left stand?



Bryan Gould

WITH THE DEPARTURE of Neil Kinnock, the Labour right is moving to rapidly impose an undemocratic selection procedure on the

party, with the aim of forcing through John Smith as the new leader.

In the present relationship of forces in the party a left candidate couldn't possibly win. But

any potential left candidate faces the insuperable obstacle of the undemocratic requirement that they be proposed by at least 50 MPs.

The election for a new leader

should be the occasion for a thorough debate about the disastrous consequences of new realism.

But by slipping through the new election procedure, in the wake of the Benn-Heffer leadership challenge, the right wing has prevented the possibility of a democratic discussion and debate.

How should the left respond? First, the push for a special one-day conference in the early summer to elect a new leader should be resisted. This is a shot-gun procedure designed to close down democracy.

Second, the Campaign Group MPs and other left leaders should follow the

example of Arthur Scargill in launching an all-out attack on the new realist right.

It is vital in the new situation that the voice of the left is heard, and that the debate is not confined to the narrow right-wing space between Bryan Gould and John Smith.

Third, the left should launch a campaign in the labour movement for the right to stand. The undemocratic election procedure is part and parcel of continuing strong-arm new realist leadership on the party. Whether or not a campaign for the right to stand was successful, it would point the finger and expose what the right wing is up to.

## Big votes for Nellist, Fields and Sheridan

THE DECISION by Dave Nellist and Terry Fields to stand against official labour candidates after being expelled by the party was more than vindicated by their votes.

Dave Nellist in Coventry South East got more than 10,000 votes, 29 per cent of the poll, while the winning Labour candidate got just over 11,000. Nellist's immense popularity with the local labour movement and voters was reflected in this vote. Probably some thousands of people who would have preferred him as the MP voted for the official Labour candidate, worried by the prospect of the Tories getting in.

In Liverpool Broad Green, where the political polarisation and the witch hunt have gone much deeper than Coventry, Terry Fields scored nearly 6000 votes, around 14 per cent of the poll.

### Poll tax

Jailed poll tax campaigner Tommy Sheridan got more than 6000 voted in Glasgow Pollok, over 19 per cent of the vote.

All these scores are remarkable for non-Labour candidates seen as part of the far left. While Nellist and Fields had the advantage of being the sitting Labour MPs, Sheridan's vote represents the depth of disillusionment with the poll



John Harris

Votes justified campaigns by Fields and Nellist

tax, and Labour's abject performance in Scotland in refusing to back poll tax non-payment.

By comparison miserable scores were recorded by small far left groups, the low point being 48 for Keith Thompson of the RCP in Oxford East, and 56 by Brian Grogan of the Communist League in Southwark.

## Scotland: national question still on the agenda

IMMEDIATELY after the election result was known, it became clear that the national question will not disappear from the political agenda. Six Labour MPs, including George Galloway, Denis Canavan and Gavin Strang took the initiative to organise demonstrations calling for a referendum on self-rule for Scotland.

Their Scotland United group proposes a campaign for this objective including civil disobedience.

Despite this initiative being derided by Scottish Labour and SNP leaders (SNP leader Alex Salmond described it as 'hot air') several thousand people joined a quickly-organised demonstration last

Sunday, on the theme of 'Scotland united against the Tories'.

The election result in Scotland did not confirm a fall in support for Scottish home-rule. The Tories, by taking the national question head-on, managed to successfully mobilise the ranks of backward Unionism in Scotland, and thus firm-up their vote.

### Increased vote

The SNP vote increased, despite the defeat of Jim Sillars in Govan.

Labour's vote in Scotland actually fell. This is testimony to the unpopularity of Labour's opposition to poll tax non-payment, and the generally 'do nothing' approach of Labour's Scottish leadership, exemplified by its refusal to



Donald Dewar

campaign to defend Ravenscraig steel works from closure.

The net result was a loss of votes to the SNP. The unpopularity of official Labour politics was also shown by the 6000 votes picked up by Militant's Tommy Sheridan.

That Labour held its position in terms of MPs elected is due to the fact that Labour was given one last chance as the party which could at least deliver a Scottish Assembly.

In Britain as a whole three out of five voters did not vote Tory. In Scotland it was four out of five. Once again the people of Scotland have an unwanted government imposed on them.

## Loyalist votes defeat Gerry Adams

SINN FEIN leader Gerry Adams' defeat in West Belfast at the hands of the SDLP was the result almost entirely of a tactical shift by loyalist voters away from the official Unionists towards the SDLP.

In fact Gerry Adams' share of the vote actually went up from 41.2 per cent to 42.1 per cent. The 7.8 per cent increase in the SDLP vote was accounted for by the nearly 7 per cent drop in the Unionist vote.

While the name 'West Belfast' conjures up an image of a republican stronghold, in fact sections of the loyalist Shankill Road area are in Adams' constituency.

Adams was the victim of a big media campaign suggesting that thousands of loyalists were 'expected' to shift voting allegiance and vote tactically.

## How votes swung for the left

THE NEW intake of 40-odd Labour MPs is the result of careful screening; hardly anyone with any left credentials got through the net.

Two who did, and seem likely to join the Campaign Group are Billy Etherington, formerly secretary of Durham NUM, elected in Sunderland North; and Alan Simpson, returned in Nottingham South.

Labour Briefing supporter John Wilton, standing against dame Jill Knight in Edgbaston, achieved a 5.8 per cent swing, but failed to win by 4000 votes. Most of his extra votes were picked up through a decline in

the Liberal Democrat vote.

Winning left candidates who picked up big pro-Labour swings were Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North, where the Labour vote share went up 7.5 per cent; Bernie Grant in Tottenham where the Labour vote increased 12.9 per cent; and Ken Livingstone where the Labour share went up 10.2 per cent.

The highest percentage votes for Labour (each between 67-70 per cent) were in the mining constituencies of Barnsley and Hemsworth in Yorkshire; and several Glasgow and South Wales constituencies.

## Post-election blues

BY 2am last Friday morning millions of people were utterly depressed and in a thoroughly bad temper as the election results came in. Evidently none more than

Labour Party General Secretary Larry Whitty, who was arrested on the way home and charged with failing to stop, drink driving and assaulting the police.



John Harris

Defeat means an end to old-style 'new-realism'

# In defence of class politics

EVERY SOCIALIST and every labour movement activist knows in their heart that last Thursday's election defeat is going to make things more difficult – more difficult to organise working class resistance and more difficult to build a socialist alternative.

It also means the beginning of rapid political changes in the labour movement. After the 1983 and 1987 poll defeats, the union bureaucracy and Labour leaders moved sharply to the right. With the departure of Kinnock this will happen again, but in a totally different way.

Socialist Outlook has persistently argued that Kinnockism was a brittle construct, an advertising executive's creation, with no ideas other than respectability and image; we also argued that in or out of government it would politically unravel. Now its emptiness is obvious to everybody.

But the 'wide ranging enquiry' being talked about in the Labour leadership will not reaffirm socialism. The right-wing agenda is now being set by those who argue that Labour on its own cannot win.

This case was set out most clearly in a keynote article by Will Hutton in last Saturday's *Guardian*. Simply summed up it says that social changes make the working class too small a base for an assault on the Tories; class war is out. What is needed is a new left-of-centre realignment, which means a pact with the Liberals.

In this scenario Labour must rapidly adopt a position in favour of proportional representation. It must embrace 'communitarian capitalism'. Most of all it must get rid of any policies which frighten the middle classes. Anti-Tory Britain, as ex-SDP ideologue David Marquand puts it, must hang together or hang separately.

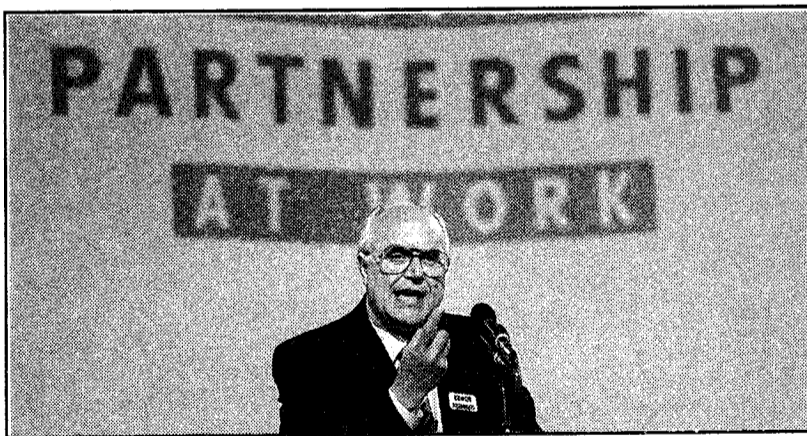
The attractive power of such a course should not be underestimated. What it has going for it is that appears utterly realistic. This kind of thinking can make huge inroads not only into the ideas of the union bureaucracy, fed up with being shunned by government, but also into important sections of the political left.

When the election results began to be declared last Friday morning the first impression

was that it would be a hung parliament, with the Tories the largest party. Immediately Roy Hattersley and other Labour leaders began to talk of a 'government of national unity and consensus' – a de facto coalition with the Liberals.

The left is not going to be alone in deriding Kinnockism and old-style new realism. And a coalitionist project will have attractive power because it *correctly* identifies a major weakness of old-style new realism – its lack of a 'hegemonic' vision for imposing a new order on Britain.

The new coalitionists are also right in arguing there have been important social changes under Thatcher, with the creation of a larger middle class and a better-off working class, deeply indebted through high mortgages and other credit commitments. The



What next for union new realists? A partnership with the Liberals?

issue is precisely *how* to create a new consensus for radical social change, capable of making deep inroads into the millions who voted Conservative.

Indeed there are really just two internally coherent responses to the debacle of Kinnockism. The first is the new coalitionism, the second is that defended by broad sections of the hard left. The only answer to Kinnockism's critics from the right is to fight for the rebuilding of working class combativity and a radical socialist alternative capable of putting the working class on the offensive.

For the working class is still hugely the most massive class in Britain. With that power mobilised behind a labour movement on the offensive, the hard-core pro-Tory forces in Britain would be exposed for the tiny minority they are.

In this new situation talk of a return to 'tradi-

tional Labour values' is profoundly ambiguous. The model of the 1960s and '70s Labour governments lacks all credibility; the failure of those governments led directly to Thatcherism. Only a vision much more radical is capable of big social forces.

The new coalitionism is distinguished from Kinnockism in that it will favour radical constitutional reform – proportional representation and Scottish devolution at least. Socialists should support constitutional reform; but on its own, in the way often presented by Charter 88, it easily fits into a project for capitalist modernisation.

What underlies the new coalitionism is a fatalistic attitude to the relationship of social forces in Britain. It takes for granted a demobilised working class and a cowed labour movement. Once these things are taken for granted, a socialist alternative is indeed off the agenda.

There is no socialist way out of this crisis without a remobilisation of workers struggles, inevitably at first defensive. With the collapse of Kinnockism millions of people under attack from the Tories and the bosses will first a stark choice; either fight or go under.

The argument of the union leaders – wait for a Labour government – has gone down the pan. Every fightback in the new situation, no matter how small, will pay immense dividends

in rebuilding confidence and combativity in the working class.

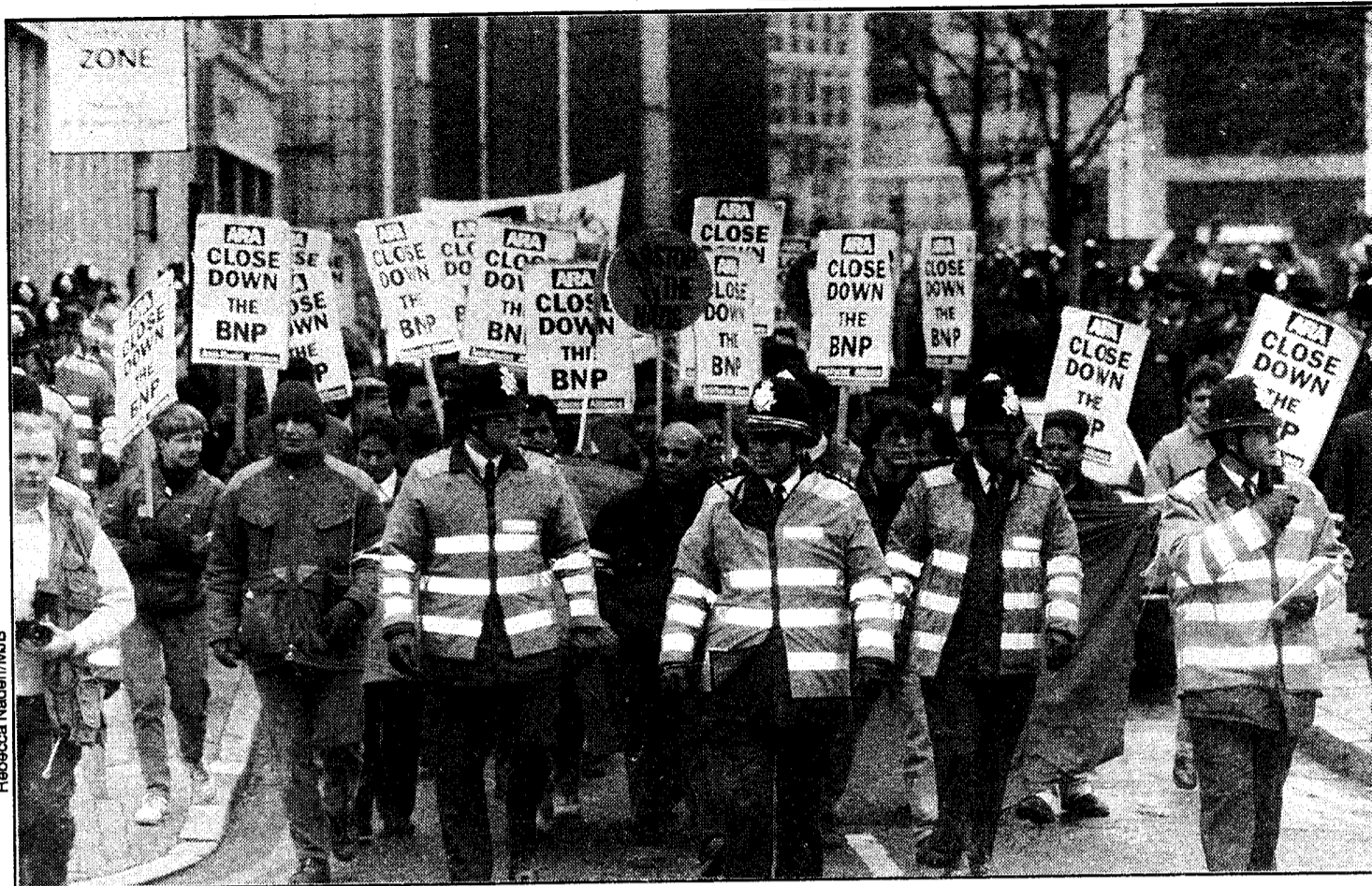
Socialists face a long and hard battle in the next period. What is crucial is that the socialist left does not bend to 'left' or 'right' versions of coalitionism. Both are a dagger pointed at the heart of radical socialism and working class independence.

The blame for the election defeat must be put where it belongs, with Kinnockism and new realism. But there is no future for socialism in replacing Kinnockism with even a 'radical' pro-capitalist project.

When working class loyalties shifted from the Liberals to the new Labour Party at the beginning of this century, it represented an important advance in creating an independent labour movement. That will be put in danger by the adoption of 'anti-Tory consensus' coalitionist politics.

John Harris





Rebecca Naden/MJB

Divisions marred anti-BNP demo in East London

## Hunger strike reopens frame-up case

THE RACIST frame-up murder convictions of Prem Sivalingham and Sam Kulasingham could soon be overturned after outgoing Home Secretary Kenneth Baker last week ordered a fresh police inquiry into their cases.

The move comes after a two-month hunger strike by Prem and pickets of both the Home Office and Wormwood Scrubs prison, where the men are being held, organised by supporters of the two Tamils.

On 14th November 1986, a Newham, East London house inhabited by Tamil refugees was firebombed, killing three people. Police investigations connected the crime to a feud between two rival local Tamil groups.

### Arrests

Large numbers of Tamils were arrested and interrogated, many claiming police threatened deportation if they failed to give information. Five people were eventually charged with murder.

At the trial in 1988, the prosecution case relied solely on two 'witnesses' who claimed the defendants had told them they were responsible.

The testimony was contradictory and full of holes. The judge directed that three defendants be acquitted, but Prem and Sam were found guilty and given life sentences.

Both men maintain their innocence, and deny any involvement in the murders. After a four year wait for a hearing, the outgoing Chief Justice Lord Lane rejected their appeal last February despite continuing doubts about the witnesses' credibility. Sam Kulasingham went on immediate hunger strike.

On the evening of April 6th, Sam agreed to start eating again after 55 days without food, longer than IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands took to perish in 1981.

Friends persuaded him that despite the speed of his conviction, it was going to take far longer to overturn it. If Sam died, Prem would have adopted the same tactic in the struggle for justice.

While the Home Office have made a concession by instigating an inquiry from Essex police force, pressure now needs to be built and maintained. Labour movement bodies are urged to invite speakers from the campaign and pass resolutions in support of Prem and Sam.

Write to Kenneth Clarke, Home Secretary, the Home Office, 50 St Anne's Gate, London SW1 and Prem and Sam at Wormwood Scrubs. For further information contact the campaign c/o 23b Mildmay Rd, London N1.

## BNP's North West failure

THE BRITISH National Party's hopes of taking 'great strides forward in the North West' in the general election ultimately came to nothing.

Having pulled out of standing in Manchester Gorton, it retreated to neighbouring Rochdale, a traditional stronghold which it hoped to use as a stepping stone to the rest of the region.

But even playing at home, anti-racist pressure took its toll. February's BNP campaign launch rally was aborted due to mass action by anti-fascists.

A projected election rally in Rochdale Town Hall was thwarted by the council's decision to ban it from holding meetings in public venues.

### Challenged

Ultimately it was forced to meet in a pub in an outlying area. Even these modest efforts were challenged when anti-fascists arrived en masse both at the redirection point and the venue itself.

The BNP managed to assemble a mere 25 of its most ardent supporters, a sharp contrast to the 100-plus turnout expected.

Some 150 supporters of Anti-Fascist Action, the Anti-Nazi League and other organisations besieged the pub. The protest attracted many local young people.

Police attacked the chanting demonstrators; ten activists were arrested, nine of them subsequently charged with offences ranging from 'obstruction' to the more serious 'incitement to violence' and 'affray'.

Despite the arrests, the outcome was a real success for us and a total failure for the fascists. The demonstration successfully carried out the principle of 'no platform for fascists', something anti-racists must strive for every time the far right attempts to organise.

# Fascists gain from splits among opponents

By Jeff Lowe

Splits within the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement are not only politically disastrous; last week's mobilisation against the British National Party in east London proved they can be physically dangerous as well.

Local activists in the broad-based Stop Tyndall - Stop The Fascists Campaign (ST-STF) spent weeks building a demonstration against a major BNP election rally in support of its leader's candidature in Bow and Poplar.

Shortly before the nazi meeting on Monday 6, the ST-STF affiliated Anti-Racist Alliance decided to form an "Ad hoc Committee" to organise the demo.

Correctly, ST-STF decided not to get involved in long arguments, supporting the committee despite its dubious origins.

The Anti-Nazi League, also affiliated to ST-STF, initially backed a common demonstration.

Within days it unilaterally called on activists to picket the fascist meeting directly, rather than meet up with ST-STF and ARA in the local Altab Ali park and march on the venue. The main effect was to split anti-fascist forces.

Despite this, there was supposedly agreement on ste-



Sam Inman

warding and a commonly-accepted senior steward. In practice, each organisation decided on its own stewards and there was no attempt to agree on common actions once the marchers arrived. There wasn't even any way of passing information around.

Virtually the only agreed move was the ARA and ANL leaderships' decision to end the picket, taking about two thirds of the 800 protesters with them.

But that left those who wanted to remain until the 100 or so nazis emerged at the mercy of the police and possibly the BNP's notorious 'bonehead' thugs too. As a result a number of people were arrested.

Incidentally, the fascists' venue, York Hall, is owned by Tower Hamlets' racist Liberal

Democrat council, who did not follow Labour Rochdale's stand of banning the BNP from municipal premises.

ARA, ANL and Anti-Fascist Action (barely visible on the picket, presumably preferring their own methods of fighting the far right) are unlikely to resolve their differences and build a unified anti-fascist movement in the near future.

But such disagreements should not be allowed to seriously endanger activists.

We have to argue inside all the existing anti-fascist and anti-racist organisations for effective and democratic decision-making and stewarding procedures, and agreed common aims in united mobilisations against the nazis.





# Will teachers' union fight Tory attacks?

By Stuart Jenkins

In the aftermath of the Tories election win, the National Union of Teachers' general secretary, right-winger Doug McAvoy, immediately warned the press of the danger of industrial action by teachers.

In fact McAvoy will as usual be doing everything possible at next weekend's NUT conference to head off militant action, at a time when thousands of teachers face jobs losses, and when Tory education reforms threaten to throw education back to the 19th century.

## Fixed agenda

The first conference battle will be over the agenda; the conference arrangements committee has engineered a fix so that all policy questions will be dealt with first, but action decisions will be relegated to a couple of hours at the end.

In the last couple of years McAvoy has succeeded in sabotaging effective action. In 1990 conference passed positions for industrial action against redundancies and local management of schools, but none was called.

Last year's ballot on industrial action against Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) was undermined by the extraordinary wording of the ballot paper, which warned teachers of dire consequences if they took strike action. Now SATs have been extended to include 14 year olds as well as 7 year olds.

The reactionary changes in education are going to be followed by thousands of redundancies among teachers. The background to redundancies is the opting-out of schools to put them in charge of their own budgets, and the impact of poll tax capping in the coming financial year.

So far compulsory redun-

dancies have been largely avoided by voluntary redundancy and redeployment. But the scale of the cutbacks next year makes this impossible: thousands of teachers will just lose their jobs.

The NUT faces a further challenge from the impact of the Tory victory. As more and more schools opt-out and become employers, the service will be fragmented. Maintaining trade unionism in this situation will be a hard struggle.

Now that Labour has lost the election, the Tories will push on with their restructuring of education.



Doug McAvoy's leadership disastrous for NUT



Graham Day

The effects of that are clear. Testing and the national curriculum are undermining post-war education reform, reasserting class divisions among pupils and impoverishing the content of education all around.

At the same time, teachers' pay and conditions are being drastically attacked.

Performance-related pay, and regular appraisal of teachers work will reinstate 'payment by results', a literal

throw-back to the 19th century.

## Flexibility

Graham Day, the chief executive of British Aerospace, who heads the Teachers Review Body, has made it clear that next on the agenda is a move away from substantial national pay increases towards local 'flexibility'.

The Doug McAvoy leadership has shown itself prostrate before the Tories' attack on education and teachers; now it is about to show itself incapable of defending the organisational base of the union.

# Knapp brings Underground workers to brink of disaster

By Pete Williams

THE 'new realism' of RMT leader Jimmy Knapp is now poised to create the biggest disaster for London Underground workers and their trade unions since the war.

The RMT London Transport District Council has been fighting since last November against the company plan, which proposes the loss of over 5,000 jobs - but is really about the destruction of effective trade unionism on London Underground.

Management has consistently refused to negotiate any aspect of the plan and from its launch made it clear that they were going to impose it, come what may.

They were prepared to discuss implementation with local union representatives but the main planks of the plan were only to be presented to the unions and were not up for discussion.

The RMT London District Council immediately instructed its NEC repre-

sentatives Bob Crow and Dave Hatt to argue for a policy of total opposition to the plan, no negotiations at local level and for an industrial action ballot unless the company backed off.

Of course the company did not back off. But the rank and file trade union representatives also stood firm.

They went to presentations as instructed by management under the existing machinery of negotiations but refused to enter into any discussions. Then in February the company decided to test the resolve of the national union leadership, by instructing key groups of engineering supervisory staff to apply for their own jobs.

Supervisors would now be called 'team leaders'. Seniority in the grade would no longer apply, and all suitable LUL staff and outside applicants would be considered.

The District Council sent its NEC members back to demand an immediate ballot.

Dave Hatt broke the mandate and supported a furious fight by Jimmy

Knapp to call off any balloting until after the general election.

With the LUL District Council NEC members split for the first time in living memory, and with enormous pressure being brought to bear by Knapp, the NEC rejected the ballot call by 18 votes to 2.

Knapp made much of the commitments he had been given by John Prescott - who of course was supposed to be the next Minister of Transport. As it happens the DC later got a much stronger commitment through direct pressure on Prescott himself! After 9 April the activists have a mountain to climb.

The NEC voted the day after the election for a ballot for all out strike action against the plan. This time the vote was unanimous!

Balloting in the workplace takes place from 22-29 April with another week allowed for postal votes. The result will be known around 6 May.

All RMT members on London Underground will be balloted. The

Confed unions are also balloting. Utterly predictably, ASLEF and TSSA are not.

Management will undoubtedly speed up imposition of parts of the plan and will promise to sack anyone taking strike action, as they did during the last ballot in April 1991.

The District Committee organised a mass meeting for Tuesday 14 April to mobilise for the ballot. We can only organise from there for an all out fight.



Jimmy Knapp

# NALGO election blow

NALGO's executive elections saw important defeats for the left. In London leftwingers Jean Geldhart and Chris Eades were defeated, together with leading Morning Star supporter Ivan Beavis.

In the North West Militant supporter Roger Bannister from Knowlesley branch was also defeated.

Despite the defeats suffered by NALGO through cuts and redundancies, it seems unlikely that the basic cause of these defeats is a sharp shift to the right.

Rather it reflects the organisation of the right wing, especially in the

London Metropolitan District, as opposed to the weakness of the organisation of the left.

Left organisation in NALGO has suffered from the lack of a viable broad left, despite the large numbers of left wingers in the union.

Organisational warfare between the Militant and SWP, as well as the persistent refusal of the various remnants of the Communist Party to be involved in left organisation, is at the root of this problem.

Meanwhile the executives of NALGO, NUPE and COHSE have agreed terms for the proposed merger. The new union will be called Uni-

son. Merger is likely to be put to a ballot of the three union memberships in the autumn, and 'vesting day', the creation of the new union, will be in the spring of next year.

Unison will be the country's largest union with 1.5 million members, two-thirds of them women.

Despite ambiguity about the principle of self-organisation for oppressed groups, which has been won in NALGO, the new union will implement 'proportionality' in leadership elections, ensuring that a big majority of the incoming executive will be women.

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SOCIALIST  
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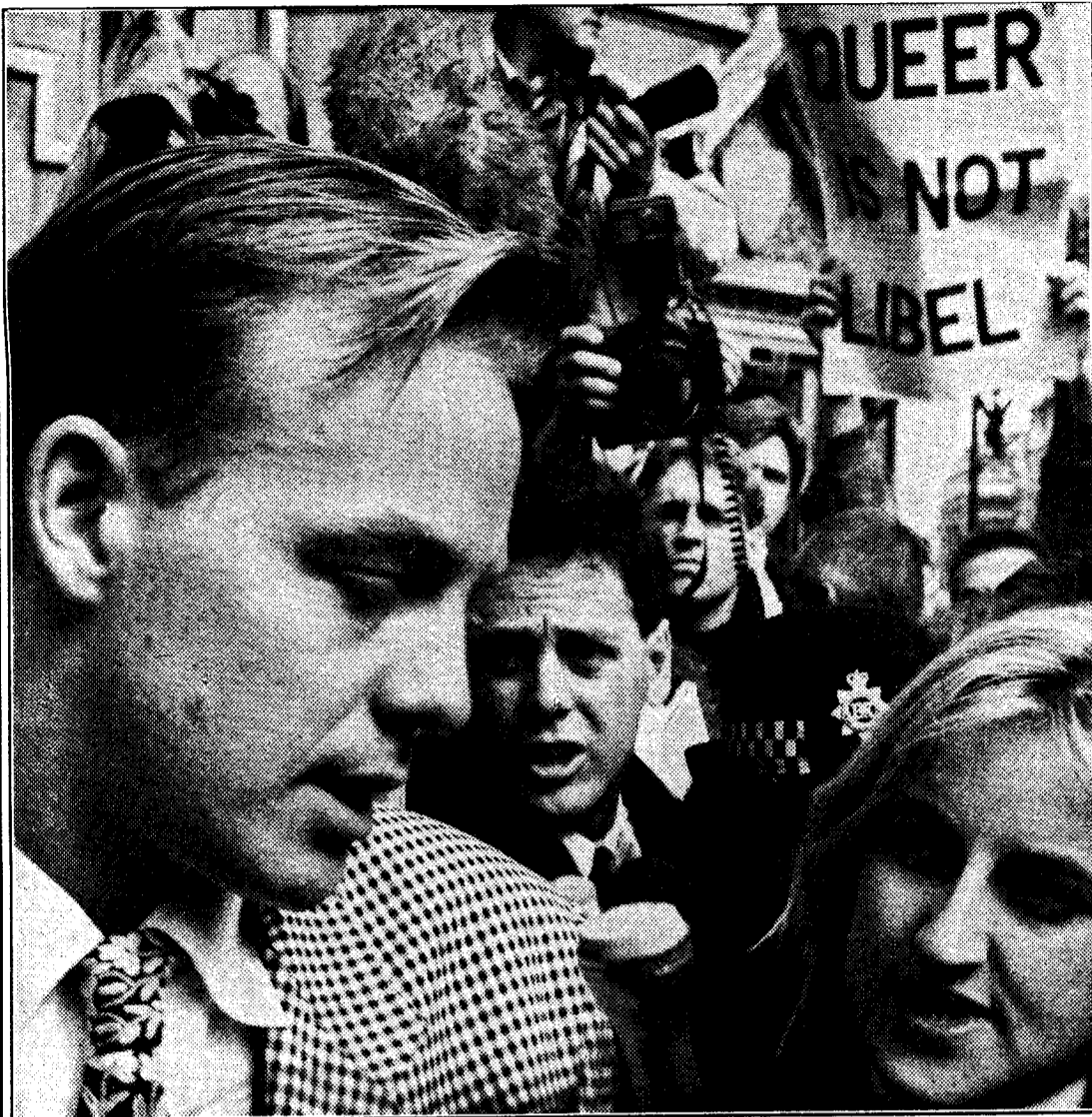
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Golden Fleece is no evidence that Jason is gay.

## Jason's outing fuels homophobia

By Sam Inman

WHY ANY lesbian or gay man would see Jason Donovan as an ideal gay role model escapes me. But some clearly did – they 'outed' him.

One magazine that covered the story, *The Face*, now has to meet huge damages for libel, as does the article's author, associate editor of the *Pink Paper* Ben Summerskill.

Of course, far more reactionary elements of the press had also run stories around the nature of Donovan's sexuality. But, as the man himself said in court, one needs to keep on good terms with the tabloids.

Donovan, always the nice guy, tried to argue in court that it was not the accusation that he was gay which offended him. It was the accusation that he had lied.

### Not libellous

Even the judge agreed that to be called gay is not libellous, but to be called a liar is. This explanation is itself a bit of a fib.

Before the case got to court, *The Face* offered to make a full retraction and apology. In turning this down, Golden Boy and his promoters can only have wanted the publicity of a court case to reassert his clearly dented heterosexual identity.

His lawyer also made it clear what he saw as defamatory, 'this sort of libel tends to spread. Poison spreads as people talk'.

OutRage! were outraged enough to picket the court over the homophobia the case generated. They were accompanied by throngs of adolescent girls, whose motives were

a million miles away from combatting heterosexism.

Is 'outing' a legitimate tactic in the fight for lesbian and gay rights? Many socialists find this a tricky question, after all sexuality is a private affair – isn't it?

But saying that outing is out of order in all circumstances is a liberal response, not a socialist one. It depends on who is outed and why. It is also a decision for lesbians and gay men to take, as part of a wider discussion on tactics and strategy for building a liberation movement.

It is perfectly obvious that there are more than a few gay men who would desperately like Jason Donovan to be gay.

### Closet

Who knows? The court case proves nothing on this score – it would not be the first time that someone stays firmly entrenched in the closet. But being gay has nothing to do with lemon-bleaching one's hair!

Who cares whether Jason Donovan is gay or not? If he is, he has obviously shown that he's prepared to use his money and power to assert a comfortably straight identity.

Why not first go for all those closets in politics who consistently use their *political power* to attack other lesbians and gay men, or those who refuse to defend them?

But outing must never be used merely to outrage. It can only be done to expose closet hypocrisy.

And as a tactic it is absolutely vital that it is subordinate to the overall aim of building a mass campaign for lesbian and gay rights that wins the solid backing of the labour movement.

## POWs charged after resisting strip-search

# Defend Maghaberry women!

By Kerry Green

'EACH OF US spent the entire day listening to comrades being sexually abused, before and after our turn came'. This was how women in Maghaberry Prison described last month's brutal mass strip-search.

For nearly ten years, women Prisoners of War in the North of Ireland have been subjected to strip-searching. But this latest attack is unprecedented. The women POWs who resisted this mass strip-search have now been charged with assault.

In a statement released after the assaults, the women describe how they endured 'ten hours of sexual, physical and psychological torture' as gangs of screws in riot gear, and armed with batons and shields, entered their cells.

### Women's Day

It would be horrific at any time, but the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) chose March 2 – as the women were preparing for International Women's Day – to step up their attempts at trying to force the women into submission.

The women were told that a search of the gaol was to take place, and each would be subjected to a strip-search.

Women described how the screws dragged each POW down, pushing her face to the floor, and forcibly removing her clothes until she was totally naked.

All 21 women who resisted sexual assault sustained injuries. One was temporarily transferred to an outside hospital and others are awaiting tests to determine the extent of their physical injuries.

### Psychological scars

As the statement explains though, it is not just the physical aspect of the attacks that women have to bear, but also the psychological scars that are left.

Women now 'have to spend years in the very cells where they were violated with such vigorous enthusiasm'.

Strip-searching was introduced in November 1982 at the time of the hunger strikes. It has been conclusively shown to have no security value. Only in the women's gaol are prisoners expected to strip totally naked when being searched.

That this particular event

had nothing to do with security was shown when one woman was backed up by a doctor in her refusal. She was searched instead by medical officers using metal detectors – something the women say they would not have objected to.

A spokeswoman from the London Irish Women's Support Group told *Socialist Outlook* that tension in Maghaberry has been high since last year's vicious assault on Pauline Quinn, strip-searched after being doubly bereaved.

The women themselves say that the feeling of tension and anger within the gaol is 'impossible to describe'.

They say that since the latest Governor has arrived at the top-security prison, women have been cut off from each other through denial of association; cut off from their families through worsening visiting conditions; cut off from their communities by increasing censorship of literature and letters.

*The London Irish Women's Support Group has called a meeting on 12 May at the Roger Casement Centre, St Johns Way, London N19, to discuss what course of action to take.*

## Council takes cover New tabloid war on lesbians

JUST A WEEK before the election, the *Evening Standard* ran a front-page story 'How can they do this to a child?' about a decision to place a young child in the care of a lesbian with a criminal record.

Clearly, it was all about whipping up homophobia in order to put Labour-controlled Haringey council on the defensive.

The *Standard* claimed that the child had been taken from foster parents and placed with the woman because she was a black lesbian.

And what was the Labour response? Leader of the council Toby Harris passed the buck, saying that it was a High Court judge who made the decision and not the council.

True, the decision was taken by a judge. But placement decisions always involve submissions from social workers on the welfare interests of the child.

Social workers, employees of local authorities, work within the

framework of council policy. Haringey does have a policy of equal opportunities for lesbians and gay men. Toby Harris should have defended it.

In an attempt to stop the *Standard* from running the story, Haringey sought to win a High Court injunction. They lost and costs were awarded against the council. There is now to be a High Court review of the wardship proceedings, carried out before 27 April.

It is highly likely that more homophobia will be whipped up as the case goes to court. But who will be fighting it? The lesbian and gay weekly *Pink Paper* – dominated by the politics of gay men – has not yet seen it as an important enough issue to cover.

The case is not only about defending an imprisoned lesbian mother, her lover and her child – important though that is. Anti-lesbian prejudice stirred up in cases like this affects the lives of all lesbians.



# Peru heads for civil war

By Eamonn Smith

PERU'S president Fujimori has carried out a military coup, closing down both houses of the Congress.

On Sunday evening the army arrested hundreds of opposition and trade union leaders, as Fujimori proclaimed a 'Government of National Emergency and Reconstruction'. Alan Garcia, president until last year and leader of the main opposition

APRA alliance, has gone into hiding.

Last Monday Congress deputies attempting to meet were tear-gassed by troops.

Fujimori has denounced 'corruption' in the Congress and among judges.

His real complaint against the judges is that they have recently freed suspected leaders of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), the semi-Maoist guerrilla organisation. Sendero controls large parts of the country; no government has been able to inflict major defeats on it.

Although Fujimori won last year's presidential election, he does not control the Congress. Savage austerity policies have reduced inflation but worsened the already miserable situation of thousands of impoverished city dwellers and peasants.

Above all, Sendero Luminoso remains an intractable problem for Peru's rulers. For more than a decade the organisation has met the



terror of the army with its own terror, creating an impossible situation for hundreds of thousands of peasants caught between the warring sides.

## Repression

Now Sendero is extending its influence and organisational network in the towns, especially in the capital Lima. Part of the reason for Sendero's growing success is both army repression, and the failure of the Peruvian left to create a viable national alternative.

Many peasants, faced with army massacres, are forced to choose one of the warring sides for their own protection. Even

left wing intellectuals, formerly critical of Sendero, have gone over to it as the only hope against poverty and repression.

Sendero Luminoso is far from the exemplary revolutionary communist party its apologists pretend it is. It is utterly authoritarian, and has frequently resorted to assassination of peasant leaders and leftists who oppose it. It has become deeply enmeshed in the drugs trade as a source of finance.

But Sendero continues to get massive support because, simply, it seems to work. Its military organisation and its fanatical discipline have

enabled it to survive against all attempts to crush it.

The danger now is that Fujimori intends to try a 'Guatemalan' solution - a fearful massacre of the peasantry in areas controlled by Sendero. Any such move would be met by fearful counter-violence from the guerrillas.

Fujimori's coup, together with the attempted coup in Venezuela, shows the fragility of the newly 'democratic' regimes in Latin America. Austerity and the debt crisis, and the effects of mass poverty like the cholera outbreak, could easily force the ruling classes in the region to go for a new wave of military coups.



# Italy, Germany - far right monsters grow

By Patrick Baker

Italy's corrupt 'partitocrazia', the 4-party coalition stretching from Christian Democrats to Socialists, was given a nasty shock at the polls last Monday, losing substantial popular support. Only the far-right Lombardy League made major gains.

In years gone by, the Com-

munist Party would have been the natural alternative. Not long ago, the PCI was the largest single party in the country. But the collapse of stalinism dealt the death blow to what was already a party in decline.

So the partitocrazia will continue, without an overall majority of votes behind it, but with enough seats to govern. One option being discussed by

the ruling coalition is to make an approach to the major remnant of the Communist party, the so-called Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) which got 16 per cent of the vote.

The Party of Communist Refoundation, the left wing split from the PDS, got six per cent in the parliamentary elections, but nearly 8 per cent in elections for the Senate.

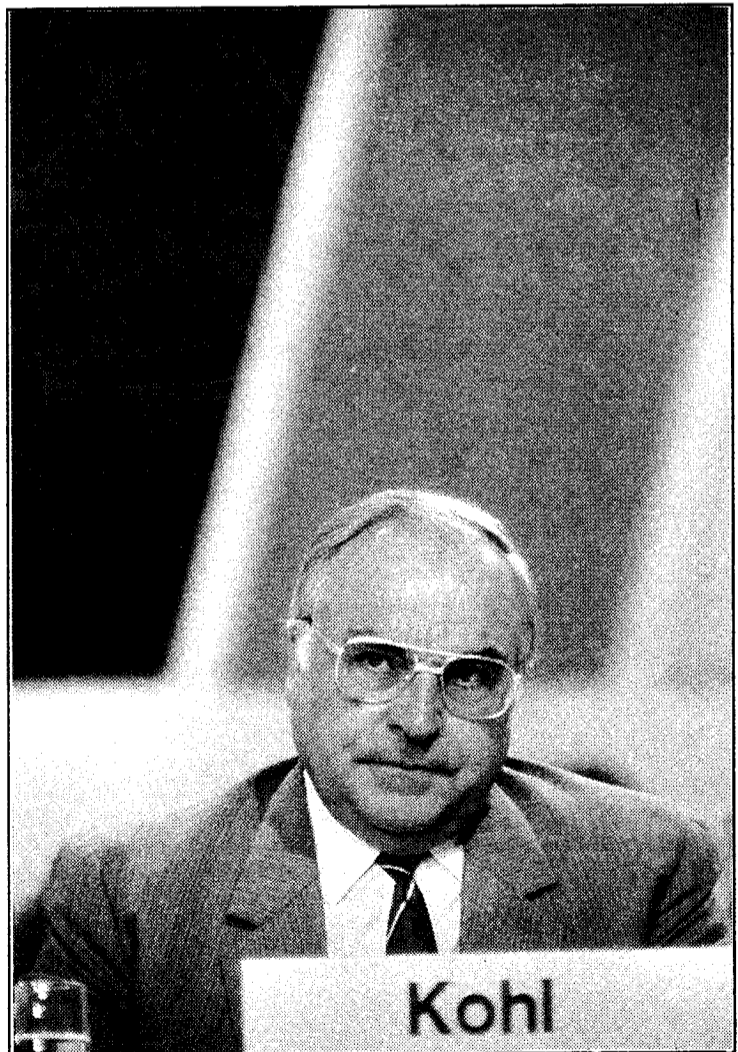
The traditional fascist party, the Italian Social Movement, (MSI) did not pick up votes. Despite Alessandra Mussolini's victory in Naples, achieved after a campaign combining page 3 pin-ups with reminiscing about her grandad getting the trains to run on time in the good old 1930s, overall the MSI got only 5%.

But the results of the right-populist Lombardy League were more impressive. With a national total of 9 per cent, the League scored 20 per cent of the vote in many towns in northern Italy.

In Germany there were also gains for the far right. With a fertile breeding ground in the east, racist attacks have been on the increase for some time.

Now they are clearly beginning to transfer into votes and gain ground in the west, with 11 per cent and 15 seats for the far right in Baden Wurttemberg.

The far right's growth, and the weakening of Helmut Kohl's government, has led to a flurry of speculation over whether Kohl's CDU and the social democratic SPD will form



Helmut Kohl

a 'grand coalition'. This is hardly likely, other than perhaps on a local level.

Such a coalition would be anything but grand. Whichever party was dictating the agenda, it would be a weak and amorphous bloc. And it is the last thing that is needed to beat back the far right Republikaner and DVU (German People's Union).

Given that any such coalition would mean more of the same in terms of the economic crisis in the east, it would be more likely

to exacerbate the problem.

But the far right do need to be fought. And Germany is a long way from building the mass movement that is necessary to beat back the threat. SPD activists would be better occupied in this than in trying to hatch deals with the CDU.

Otherwise Republikaner leader Franz Schonhuber's prediction 'Today they are 1,000, tomorrow 10,000, and the day after tomorrow 100,000' could prove true.

## Milosevic attacks Bosnia-Herzegovina

FOLLOWING his war against Croatia, reactionary Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic has unleashed stage two of his plan to create a 'Greater Serbia' - an attempt to seize large areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The republic, whose independence has just been recognised by the EC, is ethnically mixed between Croats, Serbs and Muslims.

A referendum on independence saw a huge majority of Croats and Muslims voting in favour.

Milosevic's response has been to launch a military offensive to seize territory, while (as in the war against Croatia) he combines arming local Serb militias with an advance of the Serb-dominated Yugoslav federal army.

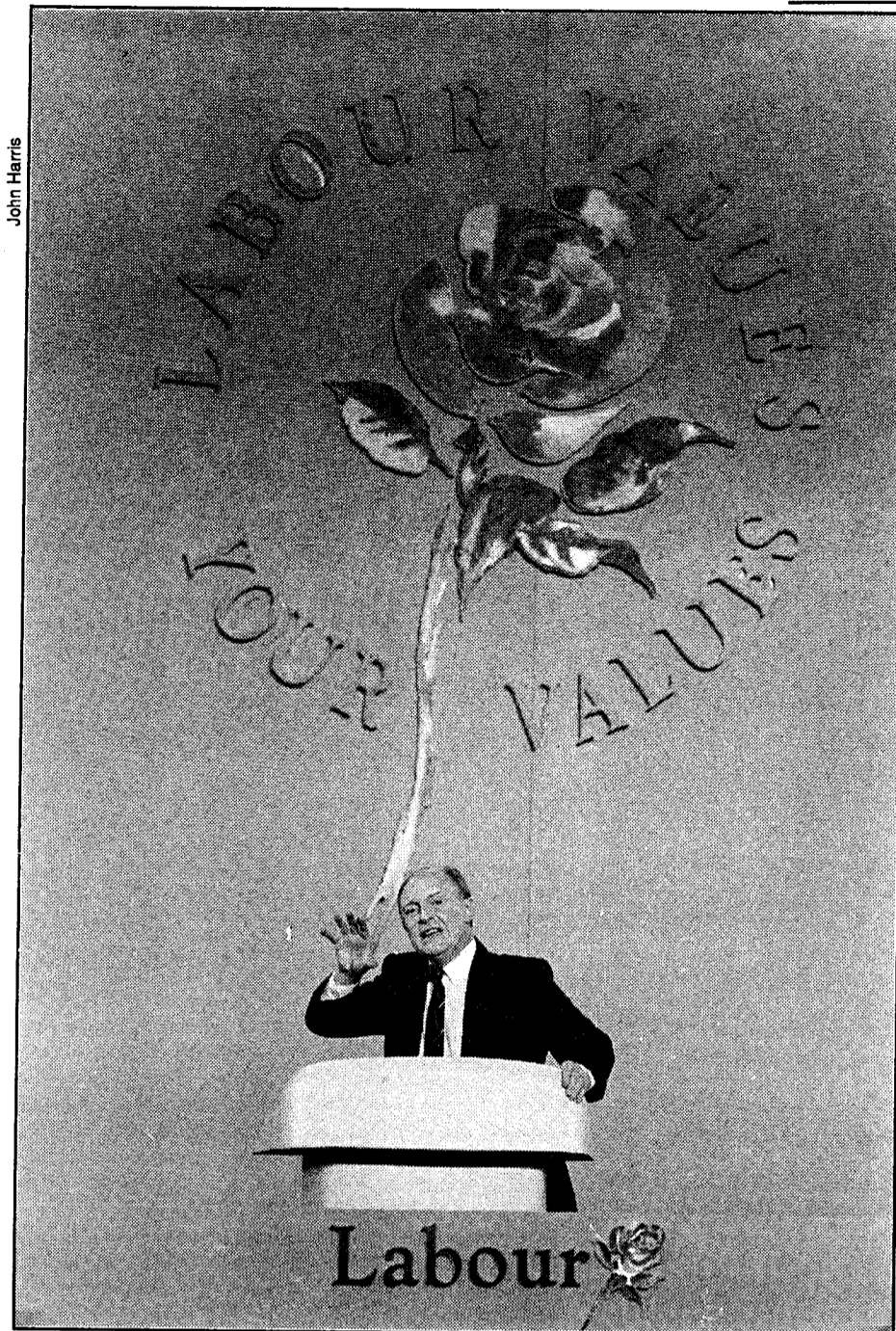
Last Friday Bosnian president Alija Izebegovic said 3000 people were being held prisoner by Serb irregulars in Zvornik.

The scene is being set for a huge military attack on Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital. Unlike Croatia, Bosnian forces are not well-armed and in a position to fight back against the federal army.

The basic issues in Bosnia are identical to those in the anti-Croatia war. The degenerate Serb-nationalist Milosevic leadership is waging another aggressive war to seize territory from a people who want independence.

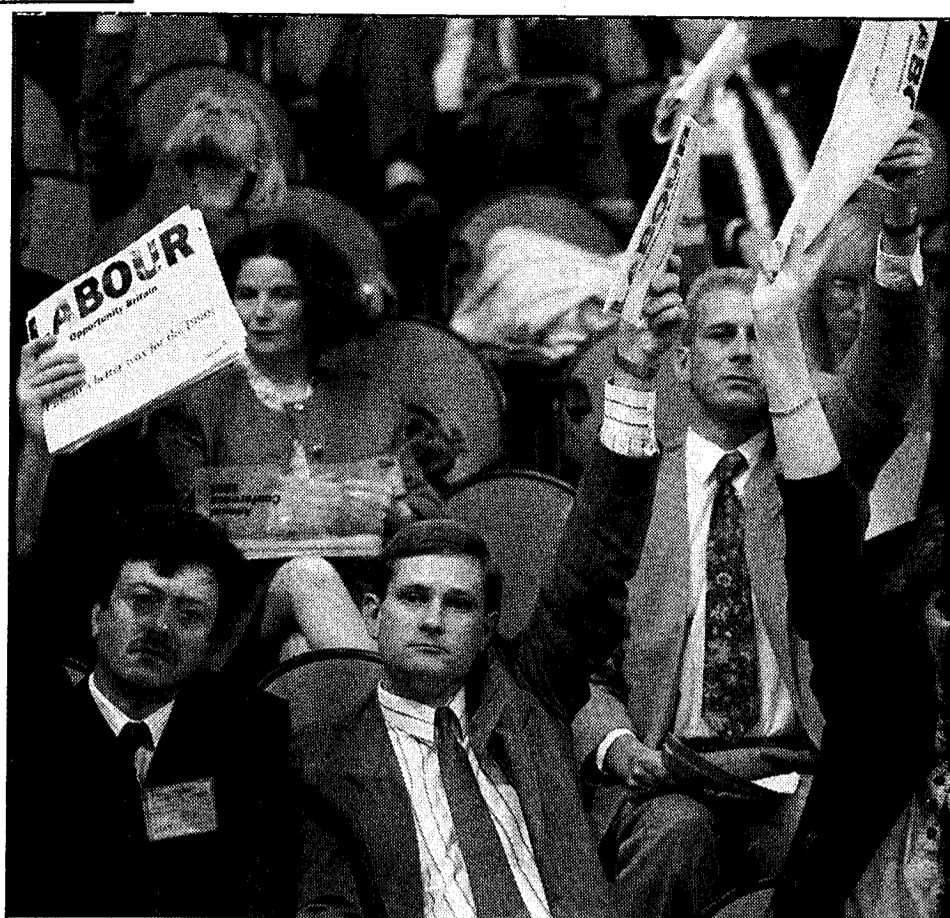
Socialists must demand the withdrawal of the federal army and defend Bosnia's right to self-determination.





John Harris

Kinnockite values: a sunken empty vessel



Next suits didn't give them the next government

'...The election was not just lost during the campaign. It was a result of the decade-long imposition of new realism.

The new realist Labour and trade union leaders, by failing to back working class struggles like the historic miners' strike, by conceding the political debate on the market economy to the Tories, by undermining working class confidence and combativity everywhere, totally undermined any project for radical social change...

# The debacle of new realism

THE ELECTION result shocked the expectations of the whole labour movement. After 13 years of Tory attacks Kinnock's New Model Labour Party was incapable of generating the real crusade needed to force the Tories out. Here PAUL CLARKE looks at the reasons for the defeat.

At the end of the campaign there was a huge turnout. Clearly the Tories succeeded, with the help of the tabloid press, in bringing about a reactionary mobilisation of sections of the middle class, and better off sections of the working class. These people felt that despite recession they had done well out of the 1980s, and had no confidence in Labour to stabilise the economy.

The Tory campaign against the danger of tax increases, and their offensive against the Liberal Democrats played a role here. The decline in the Liberal Democrat vote generally meant a swing to the Tories.

## Mobilised

Major's Conservatives succeeded, through their campaign against the dangers of a Labour government, in massively mobilising their base. In retrospect, even their campaign in Scotland against the dangers of devolution, hugely mobilised the middle class forces of reactionary Unionism.

After the low-points of 1983 and 1987

it would have been astounding if Labour had not won seats. What has to be explained is that despite recession, after the poll tax, after the cutbacks in the NHS, and after attacks which millions of people suffered, the Labour campaign was unable to fundamentally shift the situation.

## No philosophy

The basic issue is the policies, the form of campaign and the overall credibility of the Labour leadership. Kinnockism and Labour new realism were constructed for one thing, and one thing only: to win a general election. In fact Kinnockism is without any deep philosophy or project for renewing society; it is the brittle construction of advertising experts and 'spin doctors'.

The much-vaunted 'modernisation' of the Labour Party has narrowed the real gap on policy between the parties to a narrow band within the same overall political outlook.

In the election campaign this resulted in obvious incoherence in Labour's political answers. Numerous examples could be given. Kinnock and John Smith claimed there would be no increase in interest rates, which would immediately reduce living standards. But by proclaiming loyalty to the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM) they signed away control of any deflationary policy dictated by the German Bundesbank.

This incoherence was perhaps a little obscure for most electors. There were much more important ones. Labour argued that it would rebuild the NHS, public services, education and industry. But no explanation of the funds for this

process was forthcoming. The argument that these things would be financed by 'growth' was not convincing. Anybody with any sense knew that Labour had no answers to the recession.

Irrespective of the Tory offensive on tax cuts, millions of employed workers doubted that Labour would deliver them better living standards, or manage recession any better than the Tories. Probably mostly voters thought Labour would find a way of putting a few more resources in the NHS. But marginal altruism could not win out over hard-headed economic calculation.

## Just glitz

So overall what Labour's campaign lacked, for all its glitz and professional presentation, was a clear-cut alternative to the Tories, a realistic project for reconstructing Britain on a socialist basis. This was not just a fault of campaign presentation or timing; it is in-built in the whole basis of Kinnockism and new realism.

Indeed the election was not just won or lost during the campaign. It is the outcome of the whole decade-long process of imposing new realism in the labour movement.

The new realist Labour and trade union leaders, by failing to back working class struggles like the historic miners' strike, by conceding the political debate on the market economy to the Tories, by undermining working class confidence and combativity everywhere, totally undermined any project for radical social change.

The result of new realism has been the fall in trade union membership by one third since 1979, and the departure of

tens of thousands of activists from the Labour Party. All the most determined fighters against Toryism—the miners, the people of Scotland and elsewhere defying the poll tax, those who wanted to resist rate capping—have been spurned and witch hunted.

By demoralising and attacking the most fervent fighters against the Tory attacks, the Kinnockites and union new realists have sapped the will to resist. By conceding political argument after political argument they have disarmed themselves in front of media hostility to socialism and radical alternatives.

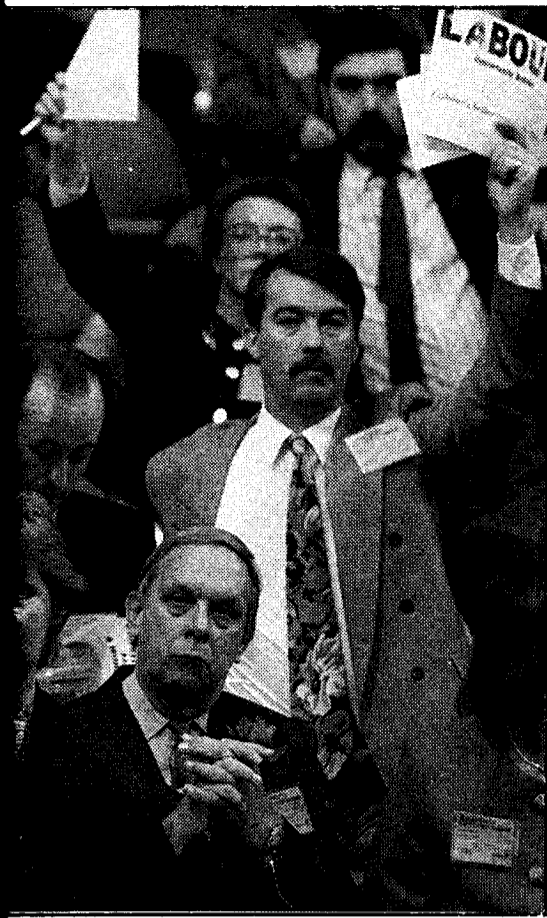
This has had a lamentable effect on the whole culture and combativity of the labour movement, and cut it off from many sectors of workers, especially youth. There are millions of young people, millions of people in service industries, and many of the poorest and most oppressed, who have never been in a union, and who don't see the relevance of the labour movement to their problems.

On election night John Prescott, shadow transport minister, was asked whether Labour's campaign presentation had obscured rather than clarified the differences between the parties. Diplomatically, as an official spokesperson on election night TV, he replied that this would have to be examined in the light of the election result.

But the whole basis of the campaign was a determination to steer clear of sharp conflict and controversy. Ironically, the high point in the Labour opinion poll ratings came after the row over its NHS election broadcast.

The precise way that the broadcast was done can be questioned. But despite





John Harris



John Harris

Roy Hattersley: his old style social democracy is finished

the ferocious Tory and gutter-press counter-attack, it forced the issue of the NHS onto the agenda, with a leap in Labour's poll scores. But in response Walworth Road campaign mangers cancelled a second NHS broadcast.

Fear of controversy, fear of appearing radical, fear of being sharply attacked by the media permeated Kinnock's approach. But to no avail. For the ruling class and its Fleet Street rotweilers, anything was ammunition against Labour. The party was bound to be savagely attacked whatever it said.

The only way to counter that was to resume the offensive, to rip apart the Tory record, and to propose a wholly different programme of government to that of the Tories.

Worse, the US-style image advertising philosophy of Labour's campaign risked treating the electorate as stupid, always a fatal mistake.

Put at its simplest, Labour's campaign said that with very marginally different policies to the Tories, a Labour government would make a massive difference to the daily lives of ordinary people. That was frankly incredible; and not many people believed it.

The swing to Labour was biggest in areas which have felt the impact of the recession and specific Tory attacks most. Tory marginals fell to Labour in the North West, the Midlands and London, all areas hard hit by recession, unemployment, poverty and cutbacks in services.

### Swings

Labour's victories in Birmingham Northfields and Selly Oak showed Longbridge car workers faced with the crushing of the industry turning back to Labour.

There was a big swing to Labour in Oxford East, site of the Cowley car plant which faces near destruction.

In the mining areas of Nottingham the savaging of the local coal industry, despite the scabbing role of the UDM in 1984-5, enabled Labour to make gains.

Recession in London and the Midlands mean that the Tories did worse in those areas. In the north, Manchester and its surrounding towns have fared worse in the recession than many areas. So while Pendle and Hyndburn fell to

Labour, the swing to Labour in most of Yorkshire was very small.

In most areas where there were strong left wing campaigns, Labour candidates did better. Jeremy Corbyn, Dennis Skinner and Bernie Grant all did well. Of prominent Campaign Group MPs, only Alice Mahon in Halifax in Yorkshire saw her majority go down.

At the same time expelled MPs Dave Nellist and Terry Fields both did well (see page 2). Scottish Militant Labour candidate Tommy Sheridan got over 6000 votes in Glasgow Pollok, pushing the Tories into third place.

The results for Nellist, Fields and Tommy Sheridan, and for the left wing MPs, showed there was a basis for radical campaigning, and it worked.

These results in recession-hit areas and where there were left campaigns represented an elemental class polarisation. But these results were overwhelmed by other much more negative factors on a nationwide basis.

### Hatred

Of course more than 11 million people have voted Labour. Hatred of the Tories ensured that. But how many people who voted Labour did so because they believed a Kinnock government would usher in a totally new situation for working people?

The lesson of the campaign is that to shift a mountainous Tory majority it was necessary to wage not a media campaign but a political crusade. A political crusade doesn't just mobilise a vote, it inspires people, it pulls them into action, it gives them a clear vision of a radically different future. Kinnock gave not a clear and inspiring vision, but blurred, confused and insincere promises.

**"The results for Nellist, Fields and Tommy Sheridan, and for the left wing MPs, showed there was a basis for radical campaigning, and it worked"**

class is so small a base to build a popular majority. This argument will undoubtedly be reflected on the left; it should be resisted.

From a purely factual point of view it is untrue. Britain remains an overwhelmingly working class country; more than that recent survey show that at least 80 per cent regard themselves as

working class.

In some inner-city constituencies, Putney is a classic example, there have been social changes which have brought in more 'yuppified' middle class voters, and where high housing prices have pushed out the traditional working class. But these changes have a marginal effect on the election outcome nationwide.

What will now be the outcome of Kinnockism's debacle? For British capitalism it creates more stable political conditions, but solves none of its underlying economic problems. The slump will continue. This will translate into more sustained attacks on the working class, in a situation with a stable Tory majority.

Inside the Labour movement as a whole, especially in the new-realist dominated trade unions, the immediate reaction is likely to be of scepticism and demoralisation.

### Demoralised

Workers under attack will most likely feel that the balance of forces in society has moved against them once more. How this will pan out in the longer term is more problematic. Against the immediate demoralisation, there is the fact that the argument of waiting for Labour is no longer credible; those under immediate attack will have to fight back or go under.

The left must now be prepared to pile in to support struggles wherever and whenever they break out. The long task

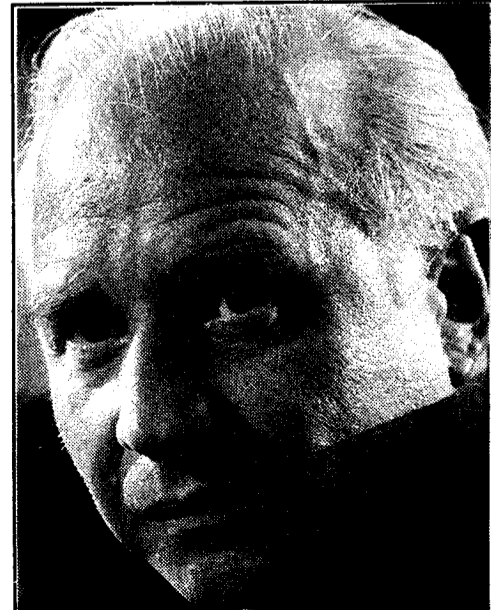
of rebuilding confidence in struggle will probably start around small strikes and low-key campaigns. But generalising and popularising any struggles which do break out will pay immense dividends in the long term.

In the Labour Party Kinnockism faces a crisis. The right wing will want to go further to the right, and probably elect Smith as leader. But the opportunity exists now for the left to go on the offensive and vigorously point out the balance sheet of Kinnockite new realism. Comments by Jeremy Corbyn, Dennis Skinner and Ken Livingstone after the election result show that such an offensive is on the cards.

The debate on new realism must go much deeper than 'policies' and 'image'. It is a question of completely renovating the labour movement, from top to bottom, to make it a movement which fights, rather than a movement which hides and prays for future electoral success.

The relationship between election results and the class struggle is always complex. In certain conditions defensive fights can turn rapidly to the offensive. The task of socialists is always not to lament present defeats but to prepare the future. Through the tough struggles ahead, that is now our task.

In the current situation only a minority is likely to heed the critique of Kinnockism and new realism made by the left. But forging a socialist alternative in every sector of the labour movement, based on that minority, is essential to socialist advance.



John Harris

Architects of failure: GMB leader Edmonds, Engineers' chief Laird



# Socialists and parliament Sharing the struggle, not the illusions

By Phil Hearse

ONE of the aspects of the general election campaign which got little publicity was the 'don't vote' campaign run by Class War and other anarchist groups.

If voting changed anything they'd abolish it', the title of Ken Livingstone's first book, reflects a common sentiment. After all, parliament is part of *their* system, which reduces the participation of working people in government to putting a cross on a piece of paper every five years.

Lenin in *The State and Revolution* called capitalist parliamentary democracy a 'diaphragm between the masses and politics'.

## Different system

Revolutionary socialists argue for a different system of government which would put power in the hands of the working class through elected workers' councils, with delegates instantly recallable. It would be a system involving the active and regular participation of millions.

In addition, revolutionaries argue that the key struggle for the transformation of society is the direct class struggle between workers and bosses, and not parliamentary debates. So is parliament an important arena for socialist activity?

Actually there are two questions here. First whether who forms the government matters to socialists, and second what socialists should do if they have the possibility of being elected to parliament.

Both these questions are determined by the fact that whether or not revolutionary socialists consider parliament to be the key area of struggle, the masses see it as the site of official politics.

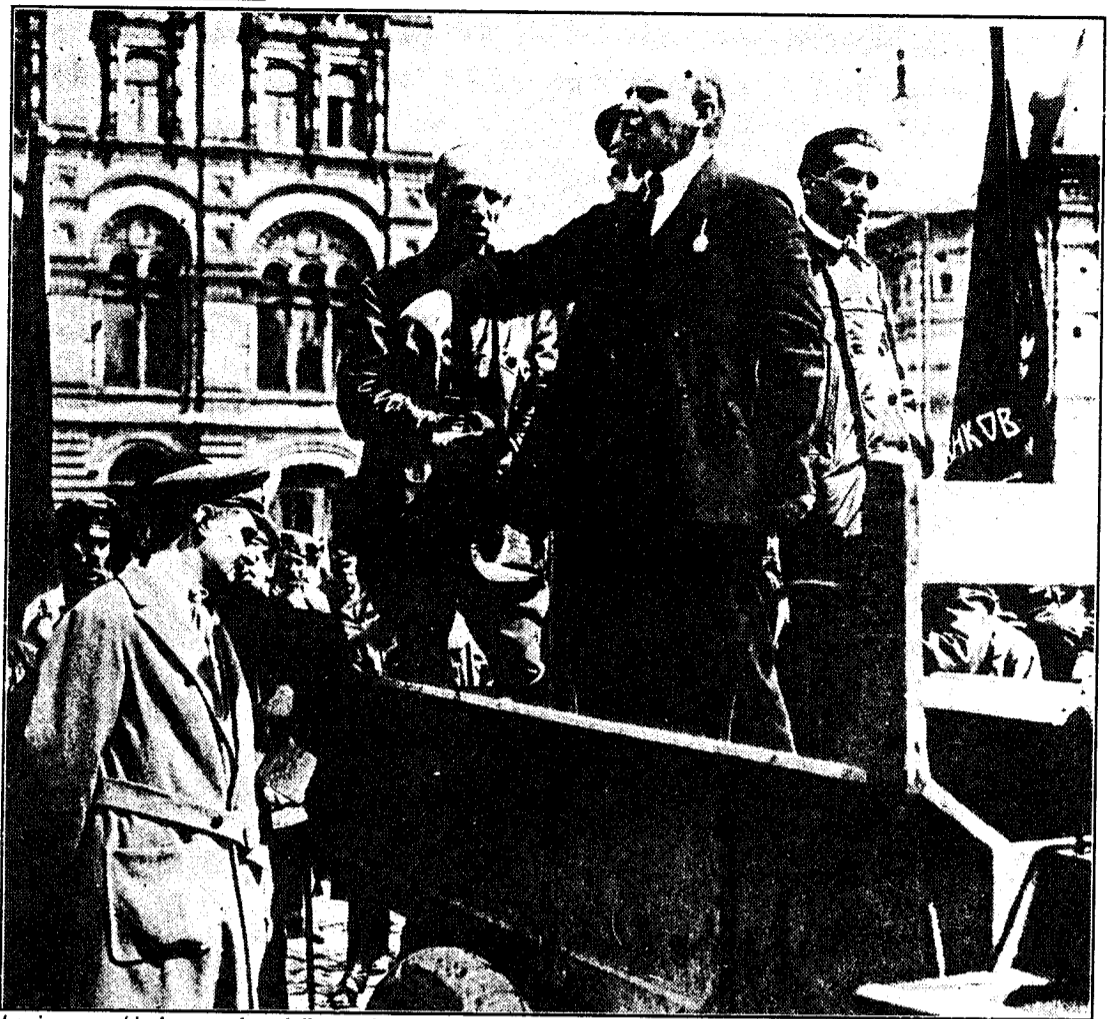
## Government

Who forms the government, whether it is an openly bourgeois party or social democratic reformists, does matter. The most advanced workers always strive to elect a government based on the workers' organisations.

Trotsky argued that socialists should 'share the struggle, but not the illusions'. This means fighting alongside reformist workers to elect a social democratic government, while warning that they will not carry out socialist policies.

Labour in power enables the workers to test out the reformist misleaders of the class. Socialists therefore are always in favour of a class vote.

Lenin, in his famous *Left wing communism, an infantile disorder* argued strongly against boycotting parliament or elections. He argued that Communists should use all the platforms that



Lenin argued in favour of socialists using parliament

capitalist society gives for the expression of revolutionary views.

But this is quite different from playing by the rules of the parliamentary game.

## Expose

The task of Marxists would be to *take the class struggle into parliament*, to utilise parliament to expose the capitalists and argue a revolutionary socialist position.

Revolutionary socialists in parliament, Lenin argued, should be 'tribunes of the



Red Ken: does voting change anything?

Graeme Cookson

those who allow the monopoly of 'official' politics who are playing their game. Socialists should utilise parliament, while combating parliamentary illusions.

Could we get socialism through a left-wing parliamentary

majority? In theory it is possible to get a militant left wing majority and pass sweeping anti-capitalist measures.

## Coup

The task then would be to make them stick against the resistance and sabotage of the ruling class, including possible attempts at a military coup.

Anti-capitalist measures by a socialist-dominated parliament could only be imposed by a mobilised working class, fighting to establish its own power. In that process, it would inevitably create a system of democratic participation and representation far more democratic than anything ever seen in the realm of parliamentary democracy.

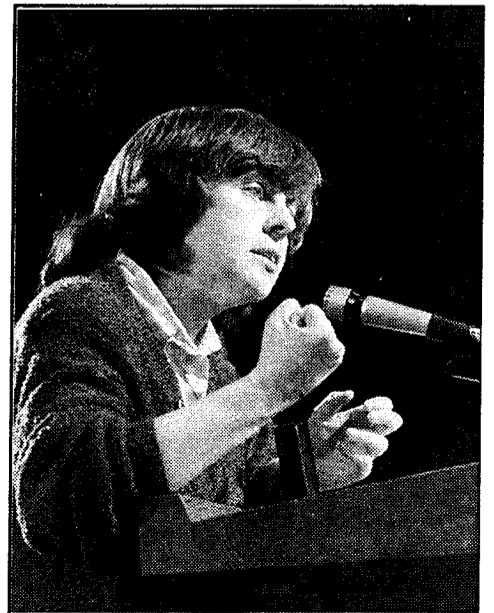
## Discipline

But the deputies were subordinate to the party, and under its discipline. Their wages were paid to the party, and in return they were paid the wages of party full timers, pegged at levels of workers' wages.

There are no revolutionary socialists in parliament today, but there are left Labour MPs who utilise parliament in a similar way, as an arena for propaganda and mobilisation. This is a big gain for socialists and the left.

Lenin's 'Left Wing Communism' was written to attack groups in the Communist international who wanted to boycott both parliament and work in the reformist trade unions. He turned the argument of 'playing the bosses' game' on its head.

No, said Lenin, it is



Bernadette: Tribune of the people

# New issue of International Marxist Review

The new issue of *IMR* is devoted to the developments in the ex-Stalinist states, and their implications for the left.

David Seppo, a frequent contributor to *International Viewpoint* and other journals, contributes a detailed discussion on the course of Boris Yeltsin and the other leaders of the republican governments in the ex-USSR.

His piece is published together with a detailed resolution outlining the positions of the Fourth International on the USSR in the wake of last August's failed coup.

Well known Marxist writer Michel Löwy follows up the two pieces on the Soviet Union with a discussion of the significance of the new rise of nationalism in eastern Europe.

Since the 1989 events in Tiananmen Square, there has been little discussion on the left on developments in China. *IMR* contains a discussion on the new course of the Chinese leadership by veteran Trotskyist Livio Maitan. The current issue also contains a long examination of the evolving consciousness of the Polish working class by Jan Malewski, and an examination of the conflicts in Yugoslavia by Catherine Verla.

Finally Socialist Outlook writer Paul Clarke casts a critical eye on Alex Callinicos' book *Trotskyism*.

For individual copies send £3 (inc. p&p) to Socialist Outlook (IMR), PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. For subs send £10 cheque made out to 'PEC', to IMR, 2 Rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.





**John Major's victory has produced the smallest Tory majority since 1951. JOHN LISTER dug through the history books to see what happened then.**

HAILING the news that John Major had won the election with a majority then estimated at 17 seats, Margaret Thatcher was quick to argue that this would be no obstacle to a full five year period of office.

Winston Churchill governed from 1951-55 with a majority of only 17, she said. There was no reason why the Tories should not do the same again. This was the start of their infamous 13 years of government until beaten by Wilson's Labour campaign in 1964.

However it may come as quite a surprise to those of us who have grown used to Thatcher's vicious brand of Toryism red in tooth and claw to find that Churchill's final period of office was very different in character from the last 13 years. Nor was this because he lacked an adequate majority.

**Polarised**

In 1951 British politics had almost completely polarised between the two main parties, which between them shared a massive 96.8 percent of the votes cast, leaving the Liberal rump debating whether to merge with Churchill's Tories. By contrast the two parties' share in 1992 was 76 percent. However the policy disagreements between them were far slimmer than might be expected.

So right wing and timid had Clement Attlee's Labour government been that there was little it had done which Churchill's 1951 government wished to reverse.

Labour had held office for six years after sweeping to power with a landslide majority of 146 in July 1945, and then clinging on by the skin of their teeth to win a 5-seat majority in 1950.

**Shattered hopes**

The hopes of wholesale social change they had kindled among the workers and middle class had failed to materialise in the harsh realities of managing bankrupt British capitalism; despite their huge majority Labour never intended more than to reform the capital-



Winston Churchill



John Major - dubbed 'Monsieur Ordinaire' by French press

**Major: following Maggie, not Winston's footsteps**



Bevan (left) and Hugh Gaitskell

ist system.

They barely altered the class structure and achieved no significant redistribution of wealth.

The four leading lights of the Labour government, Attlee, Herbert Morrison, Ernest Bevan and Hugh Dalton had all been ministers under Churchill in the wartime coalition, and came from the right of the party, while the two left wing cabinet ministers, Aneurin Bevan and Emmanuel Shinwell, were easily marginalised.

Attlee's government fired an early warning shot of its intentions when it invoked the hated Emergency Powers Act of 1920 to attack a dock strike which broke out within weeks of the election.

It was this same Labour government which committed bankrupt Britain to higher per capita spend-

**So right wing and timid had Clement Attlee's Labour government been that there was little it had done which Churchill's 1951 government wished to reverse.**

ing on defence than the USA; which tied British foreign policy firmly to the coat-tails of the USA, which secretly decided in 1947 to build a British atomic bomb; which introduced peacetime conscription (National Service), and played the leading role in creating NATO. In 1950 it was Labour that took Britain into the Korean War and embarked on a long-running anti-communist war in Malaya. Churchill found it hard to disagree.

**Nationalisation**

Labour's nationalisation programme was not socialist in conception but designed to improve capitalist efficiency. It centred on bankrupt infrastructure industries - coal, electricity, gas and the railways, along with road transport, steel

and the Bank of England. The Tories did not even contest nationalisation of the Bank of England, Churchill declaring it did not involve any issue of principle.

By the 1950 election, Labour had virtually dropped any further proposals for nationalisation, its manifesto including only a limited extension that would cover industries employing a mere 500,000 workers. This list was promptly dropped after the election, and neither nationalisation nor socialism were mentioned in the 1951 manifesto.

Though the Tories had opposed the nationalisation of electricity and fought unavailingly to stop Bevan's nationalisation of hospital services to form the National Health Service, the only two industries Churchill's government moved to privatise were steel and road haulage.

Steel only had been finally nationalised in 1951, with the old companies taken over *en bloc*, so it was a simple matter for the Tories to reverse. Only part of road haulage was eventually privatised - for lack of buyers.

**Health service**

The Tories made no attempt to dismantle the hugely popular NHS, though they went further than Labour Chancellor Hugh Gaitskell's 1951 budget (praised as a 'Tory' budget by the *Daily Express*) which had imposed charges for false teeth and spectacles; Chancellor Butler introduced prescription charges.

On the unions, Churchill took if anything a more conciliatory line than Labour, deciding not to appoint the most hawkish advocate of anti-union legislation. His Minister of Labour Walter Monckton earned the praise of the Transport Workers' (TGWU) right wing leader Arthur Deakin for giving the union 'a square deal ... we have been able to do things that were difficult to do under our own people.'

On defence and foreign policy, Churchill again followed on and praised what had been done by Labour in office. Meanwhile in opposition, Labour's right wing leaders offered little resistance to the Tory government, leaving left wingers to make the running.

The early 1950s of course saw the heyday of the Bevanite left wing revolt in the Labour Party, which led in 1952 to left victories in the Constituency section of Labour's National Executive and in 1953 to Conference adopting a policy document including further nationalisation, comprehensive education and the abolition of NHS charges.

**Ineffective**

However the right wing kept control of the Party and in 1955 Gaitskell defeated the left challenge from Bevan to take the leadership - helping to ensure another period of ineffective opposition, until Wilson took the helm when Gaitskell died in 1963.

Major's government, by contrast, takes over from Thatcher the mantle of radical, class-war Toryism, a commitment to extending privatisation, marketisation of the NHS, new anti-union laws and a further redistribution of wealth from poor to rich.

But like Churchill, it will be up against a demoralised Labour leadership shorn of hope and purged of any involvement with socialist policies, which will remain determined to suppress and contain what remains of its left wing.

The discipline of the Tories - which prevented all but an insignificant handful of renegade rebellions by backbench MPs even when Thatcher enjoyed a majority of 101 - can be expected to prevail even more effectively under Major.

For Labour, the task remains to learn the bitter lessons of the past. The fight must be redoubled for a Labour leadership as committed to the working class as the Tories are to the bourgeoisie.



# American hands off Libya!

SIX YEARS ago, British and US warplanes appeared in the sky over Libya. In the ruined buildings that they left behind in Tripoli and Benghazi, one hundred lay dead. Now they are threatening the same and the deadline is once again April 15.

If the Libyan authorities don't hand over the men that the US considers guilty of the 'Lockerbie bombing', then unspecified 'action' will be taken. 'No Intervention in Libya!', a

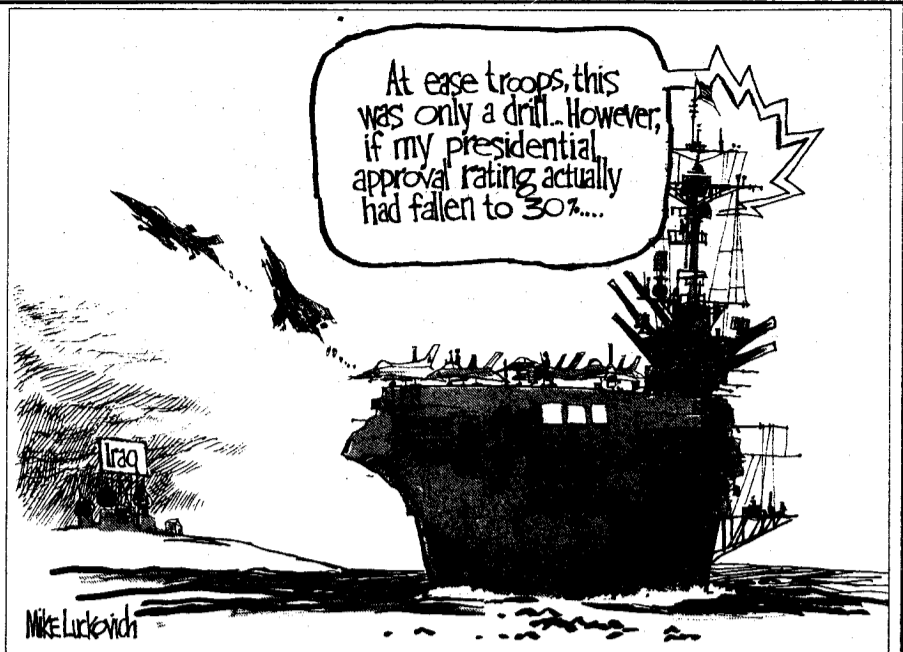
broad-based campaign including parents of Lockerbie victims and MPs set up in response to US sabre-rattling, has now accused the West of 'declaring psychological war' on the north African country.

The deadline that the UN has set clearly ignores the fact that the International Court of Justice is considering the 'Lockerbie case', and its findings would be binding on both parties. But it is certain to take some weeks to reach its judgement.

George Bush's aim is clear,

and justice forms no part of it. Rather, it is to assert a 'Pax Americana' in the Middle East. Anybody who steps out of line, like Gaddafi's regime in Libya, is a target for repression.

Whether the two Libyans who have been picked out as the scapegoats over the Lockerbie bombing were involved or not is a moot point. To say the least, it is very doubtful. Some



of the families of Lockerbie victims are convinced that Syria or Iran were involved in the bombing.

But the USA aren't interested in what the International Court of Justice have to say. They are determined to make

Libya toe the line.

*NIL!* are planning a series of protests, starting with a vigil outside the US embassy on April 15, to draw attention to the US bully-boy tactics.

Contact them on 081 880 3591 for further information.

# Oddball Brown challenges Clinton

THE RACE for the Democratic nomination for US President has been both messy and inconclusive. But it has been remarkable.

It is not so much that there have been prolonged rounds of fractious infighting - this is something the Democrats have frequently proved themselves good at. Rather, it is the candidature of Jerry Brown, 'Governor Moonbeam'.

Brown is an oddball. From his announcement that there was more truth in the music of Linda Ronstadt than the whole of Plato to his nomination of Jane Fonda to the California Arts Council, he has always been a little unusual.

But this is hardly what makes him really interesting. No, it is rather his politics, and the chord that they have struck in the popular consciousness, that has made Brown's campaign remarkable.

Every other candidate in the Democratic primaries could be

described as a fairly run-of-the-mill Democrat. From Tom Harkin to Paul Tsongas, none could be described as offering anything out of the ordinary. The variations - in style or policy - have been minor.

But Governor Moonbeam's campaign - even if it stands very little chance of winning - has stood out a mile. By the standards of US mainstream politics, his platform put him somewhere to the left of Mao Tse Tung. While in office as Governor of California, he liberalised dope smoking, decriminalised homosexuality, supported publicly-funded abortion, and opposed nuclear energy.

Now he calls for a \$150 billion cut in defence spending, increased funding for public health and education, non-nuclear energy, and more funding for AIDS research. But the policy that has been picked out as particularly whacky is his call for a 13 per cent, flat-rate tax.

Seen from a European viewpoint, this indeed sounds nutty. But given low US taxes and even lower levels of

public services, it begins to sound a little saner.

In the end though, Jerry Brown's chances of taking the nomination must be small, with around a tenth of Slick Bill Clinton's votes. But if he can insert some of the ideas that he has raised into US politics, his campaign won't have been wasted.

## Campaign Buttons:



# Earth Summit hopes will be dashed

By Sam Inman

MASSIVE ROWS are expected to sully the much vaunted Earth Summit taking place in Rio, Brazil in June. The event is still expected to be the world's largest ever summit, with 160 heads of state anticipated to pay a visit for at least one day of the 11 day affair.

But prospects for solving the rapidly escalating global ecological disaster are effectively nil. Fifteen weeks of intensive preparations for the event have shown the real barrier to ecological progress.

The US administration's line - that free trade and the environment are separate issues, and that free trade must prevail - is not officially questioned.

Maurice Strong, director general of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) has admitted that there will be 'serious failures' at the Earth Summit.

Many environmental and 'Third World' campaigners had hoped that the summit would chart a course for a new era of sustainable development, linking global economic well-being with ecological common sense. Their hopes will be dashed in Rio.

There was never any prospect that this Earth Summit would produce a radical strategy for solving the world's ecological crisis in tandem with an equitable economic development

plan for 'Third World' countries.

Both can only be solved by taking on the real roots of the problem - free trade, finance capital, the transnational corporations (TNCs), and imperialist foreign policy.

It is worth looking at some details of what UNCED - hardly a hotbed of revolutionary socialists - wanted, and who is opposing these minimal demands:

- banning of shipments of all toxic wastes across national borders. US and EC lead opposition.

- TNCs must accept environmental liability. Opposed by US, Britain and Japan.

- country of origin of plants and animals to share in commercial benefits from their use. Opposed by US and Britain.

- safety standards in development of new products. Opposed by US, Britain and others.

- ending the testing of fertility drugs on women in developing countries. Opposed by US, Britain and others.

- acceptance that over-consumption in developed countries is a cause of environmental degradation. Opposed by US.

- acceptance of role of military in environmental

degradation. Opposed by US, Japan and India.

- for a world convention on desertification. Opposed by Britain and others.

- for the rights of indigenous peoples to determine their own development. Substantially diluted.

This last point will be the subject of intense lobbying at the summit. The largest ever gathering of indigenous peoples will be taking place in Rio to push their case.

1992 is the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas. There are now huge popular movements on the continent to defend their rights.



# Chinese union fight

DESPITE THE repression meted out since the Beijing massacre, free trade unions are 'emerging everywhere from the land of China like bamboo shoots after a spring rain', according to a recent leaflet.

The leaflet is published in the name of the Preparatory Committee of Beijing Free Trade Unions, and reflects a defiance in the face of the Stalinist regime.

Quoting clauses from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention which stipulate the right to form independent trade unions, the leaflet argues against any truck with the official Communist Party-led 'unions', which have no independence.

The officially condoned All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) is not only a tool of the Chinese CP and the ruling regime. It is a feudalistic

body of a small minority of scabs, who have betrayed workers' interests and been scorned by them, it argues.

It goes on to point out that ten years ago the Solidarity Union was set up in Poland, and despite being banned and suppressed eventually won.

Urging readers to build underground union networks themselves, beginning with 'friends who share similar goals and principles', it says that:

'The free trade unions should carry out safe and effective activities in possible legal ways ... and organically combine ... above-ground and underground activities.'

But it also counsels caution: 'Do not try to look for a free trade union to join. Do not be discovered by the CCP secret police in the course of expanding our network. Do not treat the free trade union as an organisation for idle talk.'



# 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

## How Flett sees the left

IT WOULD take rather more than a letter to effectively challenge some of the assumptions behind Pete Firmin's analysis of the post-1979 Labour left in SO 19. Even so, here are a few points to be going on with.

With the Kinnock leadership the right has clearly hit back against the Bennite wave of ten years ago, as Firmin suggests. Except that this is to look at things through the spectacles of 1992.

In fact, when Kinnock was elected to the leadership, he had some of the most impressive left-wing credentials of any Labour MP.

His subsequent shift to the right is a feature of Labour politics which has arisen again and again in the last ninety-odd years.

Equally, it is not just that the Bennites failed to organise support on the ground until it was too late to stop the left's retreat. In fact, by moving to the right themselves, important sections of the Bennites were central in turning the retreat into a defeat.

There are a number of reasons for ex-leftists ending up on the right of the Labour Party. But in all likelihood the bottom line is

the obsession with electoral politics, the Parliamentary Road so effectively exposed by Ralph Miliband 30 years ago.

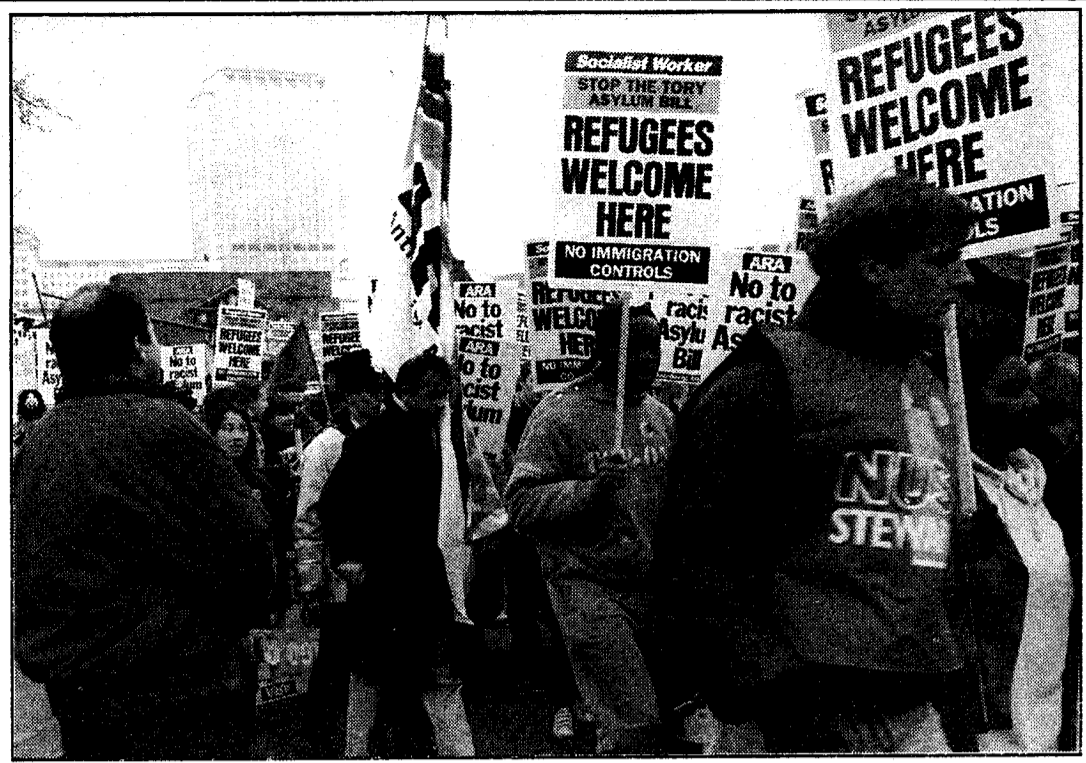
Does this mean that the left is kaput? I would not be so sure as Firmin. The left in the Labour Party is very weak, but it may well recover as material circumstances change.

Outside of the Labour Party the left, nowadays primarily the SWP, is holding up well. I would suggest that a balance sheet of the period since 1979 would indicate that those outside of the Labour Party have achieved far more, and are in a better position now, than those inside.

That, however, is hardly a matter for triumphalism since the left as a whole could do with being much stronger than it is. The task at the moment is not to worry too much about the last thirteen years, but to look forward to the next few.

That means a period of consolidation to make sure that no more on the left decide that, on the whole, they would rather dig their gardens or pursue their careers, rather than fight the system.

Keith Flett  
London N17



## Does Anti Nazi League ignore state racism?

I AM dismayed at Pete MacDonald's 'criticism' of the SWP pamphlet 'Killing the Fascist menace' in SO 19.

If you begin with the thesis that it was Thatcher's 'swamped' speech which dented the NF vote in 1979, then you eliminate the Anti-Nazi League's impact on the far-right in the 1970s. It was Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech that gave the nazis such a massive spurt.

In France, the Front Nationale's growth was encouraged by the fact that their equivalent Conservative parties and Edith Cresson's 'Socialists' echoed their racist sentiments. There was a stage when any anti-fascist presence on the streets would have sent

the FN scurrying back into their sewers.

Pete states that the specifically anti-fascist dimension is one-sided. But you can only state this to be true if you limit our activity to massive confrontations on the streets. Admittedly, the level of black self-activity is a lot higher now than in the 1970s. This is all to the good.

The old ANL set itself the limited aim of separating the hard-cases from the 'I'm not racist but...' crowd. But there is no way that the new movement can be said to ignore institutional and state racism.

How is it that on the same page as Pete's article, saying that the SWP ignores state racism, you have a photograph of their activists marching against the Asylum Bill?

There are other aspects to the anti-fascist struggle, as there are to the fascist beast itself. Fascism poses a threat not only to black people, but also to trade unionists, women, lesbians and gay men amongst others. The task of the moment is to create a fighting unity against this threat.

As a member of both the local anti-racist group in my area and the re-formed ANL, I cannot say that I do not care about how you shout each others' heads off in London. But here we really are going places!

Apart from the criticisms, SO 19 was excellent - especially the supplement sections on women and lesbians and gay men.

John Johnson  
Chelmsford



## SO - allies of ruling class?

SOUTH AFRICA - I am trying to work out what SO's headline in issue 19 (De Klerk's landslide victory shores up white power) might have been if white South Africans had voted an overwhelming 'NO' in the recent referendum. No doubt something like 'Stunning victory for the revolution'.

The trouble with ultra-leftists like yourselves is that you are constitutionally unable to identify good news for socialists and humanity when it *does* occur.

For this reason you always act as a brake on real progress and, whether you like it or not, a reluctant ally of the ruling classes.

In spite of your gloom and defeatism, things can and do sometimes actually change for the better, under the pressure of mass action. If Kinnock and his crowd win the election, no doubt you will be saying 'Working class betrayed again'.

Michael Wippell  
London NW5

## Which way for Irish republicans?

IN RESPONSE to the debate in SO's letters' page on the IRA's military campaign, I agree with P. Devenny (SO 19) that construction workers involved in rebuilding military installations are legitimate targets.

The use of civilians is a deliberate policy of the British government who could just as easily use such people as the UDR or police reserves. I also agree that language such as 'tit-for-tat' is politically loaded and problematic.

What concerns me, however, is the political direction the IRA and Republican movement seems to be heading in.

The message received can often seem confused with Gerry Adams, on the one hand, saying he is willing to talk peace with the British government and the IRA, on the other, carrying on in a fashion as though Adams was living on another planet.

In the past the IRA has admitted that they cannot beat the British by military means alone, and Adams seems to reflect this

thinking. However, I feel that he needs to do more in his attempts to win support from the Southern Irish working class. I have not seen much evidence of Sinn Fein's involvement in the trade unions and labour movement of the South, or in the recent struggle over abortion rights in the 26 counties.

If the IRA is serious about forcing Britain to withdraw from Ireland it will have to realise that bombs and bullets alone will not do this job.

While the IRA may have immediate relevance to the Catholic working class in the six counties, to many workers in the South it is an irrelevance.

To some extent the Republican movement has to take the blame for this state of affairs. It urgently needs to re-address itself to winning the support of the Southern working class.

Kieran McNulty  
Birmingham

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# The Boss looks back at the workers

By Dave Osler

RECENT WEEKS have seen two major events eagerly awaited by millions since 1987 – the general election and new recordings from Bruce Springsteen. Both inevitably promised more than they could possibly deliver.

As a musician and vocalist Springsteen is a limited talent. As a songwriter, the sustained brilliance of 'The River' and 'Nebraska' is more than offset by multiple mundane reworkings of 1960s R&B standards.

But politically, it's fascinating to see an artist who consciously bases his work on the concerns of rust belt America's male blue collar proletariat become universally popular. While it's rare for socialists to have a good word to say about the boss, with *The Boss*, it's a different matter.

The Springsteen songbook is casually littered with poignant first person tales of manual employment: 'I got a job working construction', 'I work five days a week girl/loading crates down on the dock', 'I'm working on the highway laying down the blacktop'.

The immortal couplet 'now I swing a sledgehammer on a railroad gang knocking down them cross ties/ working in

the rain' both scans dreadfully and descends into self-parody.

Springsteen's working class alter-egos have invariably 'got a union connection with an uncle of Wayne's' and even met their latest girlfriend 'at a dance down the union hall'.

Unfortunately, when the US economy dips and double-dips, the 'connections' prove worthless: 'Lately there ain't been much work/on account of the economy', 'they closed down the auto plant', 'I got laid off at the lumber yard'.

Not one Springsteen song celebrates organised workers fighting back. Instead, we get individual acts of desperation from passive victims of capitalism.

A typical example is 'Johnny 99 from Nebraska', where a laid-off car worker in mortgage arrears gets blind drunk and accidentally kills a night watchman while trying to pull off a burglary.

The ultimate message is, sure the system stinks bud, but there ain't much people like us can do about it. But now Bruce is a happily-married daddy living that California lifestyle, even this level of understanding seems to have eroded.

On 'Human Touch' – the more rock-orientated of the two new releases – he laments 'I bought a bourgeois house in the Hollywood hills/ with a trunkload of hundred



*The Boss: scans dreadfully and descends into self-parody*

thousand dollar bills'. Fine – just don't expect too much empathy from the proles.

Overall, 'Human Touch' is well crafted, with up to half the tracks catchy enough to stick in your head after a few plays. But given the five year interval, that's hardly good enough.

The better of the two new albums, the autobiographical 'Lucky Town', invites comparison with Dylan's recent output.

'Leap of Faith' employs strong religious and sexual imagery, while 'Souls of the

Departed' movingly hits out at the Basra massacre from the viewpoint of a new father angry over the murder of other men's sons.

● A QUICK plug for the new Gary Moore album 'After Hours'.

Air guitar stuff for sure, but air guitar of the highest order. Blistering heavy blues at its most pleasurable best, with clever injections from brass and string sections and guest appearances from blues veterans BB King and Albert

Collins lifting the material well above the cliches inherent in the genre.

The songwriting reveals the former Skid Row and Thin Lizzy guitarist is not what you'd call a new man, but that's true of the entire blues idiom from Blind Lemon Jefferson to the present day.

Musically, 'After Hours' is even better than Moore's 1990 classic, 'Still Got the Blues'. If there's anything of the closet headbanger in you at all, you won't be disappointed.

## Universal talent

Isaac Asimov  
1920-1992

By Julia Stevens

*'If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years how would men believe and adore, and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God?'*

Emerson

So reads the quote from which Isaac Asimov wrote perhaps his best known story *Nightfall*.

Asimov is best known for his science fiction writing, but in fact wrote on over fifteen different subjects ranging from Biology to History and including annotations of famous works, text books and limericks.

Born near Smolensk in Russia in 1920, Asimov came with his family to America when he was three years old. His writing career began at the ripe old age of nineteen, when his first story *Marooned off Vesta* was sold to *Amazing Stories* magazine.

His output was prolific, having in his lifetime produced over 400 books as well as innumerable articles and short stories. He is justly

famous however, for two remarkable accomplishments in the field of science fiction; his Foundation series and the Laws of Robotics.

Asimov once said that he did not plan anything. His writing success was as much of a surprise to him as to anyone else. And he continued that impulsiveness into the beliefs he had in today's world as well as tomorrow's.

He was vehemently opposed to nuclear weaponry and wrote many stories and articles suggesting the drastic consequences of using such weapons. He was also firmly convinced that one of the most pressing problems facing modern America was that of racism and intolerance towards those who did not fit the perceived norms of behaviour.

He was however hopelessly naive in his thinking on the answer to these questions and had, in common with much of his generation, little understanding of sexism and the place of women in society.

He was a truly great writer and brought immense pleasure to his readers. As one of the visionaries of science fiction writing he will be sorely missed.

## In a right pickle on sexual politics

*Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*

Starring Jessica Tandy, Kathy Bates, Mary-Louise Parker and Mary Stuart Masterson

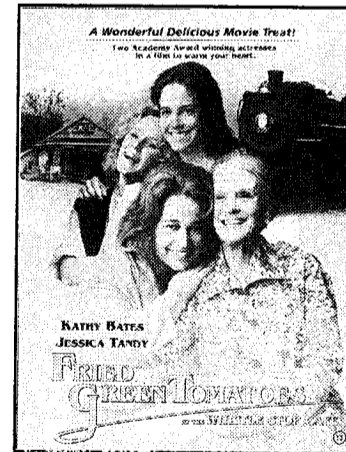
Reviewed by Kate Ahrens

I knew very little about this film before I went to see it. I hadn't read any reviews, nor had I read the book upon which the screenplay was based. I thought it was going to be just another film expressing women's friendships in a mushy, sentimental, Hollywood fashion.

I was wrong, for although it does express the friendship and love between the leading characters in a very mushy, sentimental way, it also has a very exciting and strong storyline and there are sufficient humorous scenes to give light relief from the tension of the plot.

This film has everything: humour, pathos, nostalgia, food fights, murder, not to mention the fried green tomatoes of the title.

Set in the American South, the film traces the lives of two young women, Idgy (Mary-Louise Parker)



and Ruth (Mary Stuart Masterson), and their relationship through the tales that Ninny Threadgoode (Jessica Tandy) tells to Evelyn Couch (Kathy Bates).

The stories begin as a way of passing the time, but soon become a catalyst for friendship between the two women and also provide a role for Evelyn to begin to take control of her own life.

Idgy and Ruth, brought together through the death of Idgy's brother slowly grow from friends into lovers as the story progresses. The stories are told to us in flashback, stopping at the most exciting bits and returning to the present, leaving both Evelyn and film-goers on the edge of their seats.

I enjoyed this film immensely. It followed to glorious effect in the

footsteps of *Thelma and Louise* in having strong women as the central characters with men as the supporting cast. This trend in films is a welcome change from the norm and one which I hope will be continued for a very long time, especially if they are all as well written, directed and acted as *Fried Green Tomatoes*.

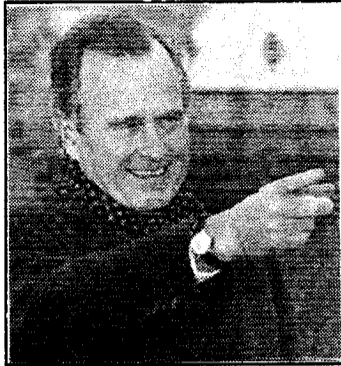
The setting of the story in the deep South of the United States inevitably led to racism being an important part of the plot. However, the message was clearly one of white, liberal tolerance rather than actively supporting the fight of black people against their oppression. The black characters were totally dependant upon the kindness of good white folk and the film did nothing to address the question of why this was the case.

Good as this film was, it fell down in another very important aspect; for whilst it will be clear to almost everyone living in the real world that the story is about two women in a lesbian relationship, this fact is never explicitly stated. Indeed it almost goes out of its way to avoid the issue.

When films come out of Hollywood with a positive open image of lesbians and gay men we will really know that society has changed drastically for the better. But it is to the shame of the film makers (even if it is only to be expected) that they bowed under the threat of the censors and hid this aspect of the story in order to get a lower age certificate.



# Barzani stabs Kurdish struggle in back



By Geoff Ryan  
MASOUD BARZANI, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) has denounced the 'savagery' of the 'terrorist' Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK) following last month's brutal repression by the Turkish government of the Newroz uprising.

He went on to add that such 'incidents' do not help resolve problems 'through brotherly and peaceful means'. No wonder Barzani is Jeffrey Archer's favourite Kurd!

There is no denying Barzani's personal bravery in his struggle against Saddam Hussein's genocidal oppression of the Kurds in Southern (Iraqi)

Kurdistan. But his political judgements are another matter.

## Betrayal

The KDP has always sought deals with the imperialism. Despite their cynical betrayal of the Kurds at the end of the Gulf War, Barzani still clings to the fond illusion that Bush and Major will somehow persuade Saddam to grant 'autonomy' to

the Southern Kurds. With this latest announcement, Barzani has sunk to new depths. He has now allied himself with the vicious Turkish regime in its brutal war against the people of North West (Turkish) Kurdistan.

## Offensive

Nearly three weeks before the Newroz uprising, the Peoples' Labour Party (HEP) warned that the Turkish government and army were preparing a massive spring offensive.

Immediately before, thousands of soldiers, tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery and helicopters were moved into Kurdistan. They were accompanied by massive bombing, leaving between 500 and 700 people dead.

It is extremely unlikely that Barzani was unaware of the situation. These manoeuvres were broadcast on Turkish



Turkish PM Demirel

radio and television.

Nor could he be unaware that Turkish army death squads operate in Kurdistan. At least 60 people were killed by these in the six months prior to Newroz, and villages, even health centres, are under army occupation.

Barzani's support for the Turkish government stems not from ignorance, but from outright hostility to the struggle of the PKK.

Barzani supports imperialism, while the PKK claim to be marxist. Barzani accepts 'autonomy' within a divided Kurdistan, while the PKK fights for an independent, united Kurdish state.

In the current war between the PKK and the Turkish state,

socialists must resolutely stand on the side of the PKK.

Such support does not imply agreement with the politics and actions of the PKK - not least the grotesque 'cult of personality' surrounding its leader, Abdullah Ocalan. But it is a recognition that the PKK is currently in the leadership of the fight for Kurdistan.

So far, the labour movement in Britain has been slow to raise support for the Kurdish struggle.

Many believe that the Kurds are only oppressed by Saddam Hussein. The issue needs to be raised throughout the labour movement. A start would be to call for a complete ban on arms sales to Turkey - a demand even put into practice by the right-wing government in Germany.

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## Tragic death of Poll Tax activist

### Debby Hall

DEBBY HALL, anti-Poll Tax campaigner in Camden, was tragically killed on 13 March in a traffic accident.

Debby was one of the moving spirits behind the Poll Tax legal appeals confirming that computer evidence was not admissible in magistrates' courts. She also helped defend those arrested at Trafalgar Square.

While she was a gifted violinist, playing with the National Youth Orchestra, Debby chose to devote her energies to campaigning. Her final gig was an anti-Poll Tax benefit two days before her death.

She was active at 14 against the Vietnam War, then in solidarity with Palestine and against the bomb. She was also a regular on the non-stop picket in front of South Africa House for the release of Nelson Mandela.

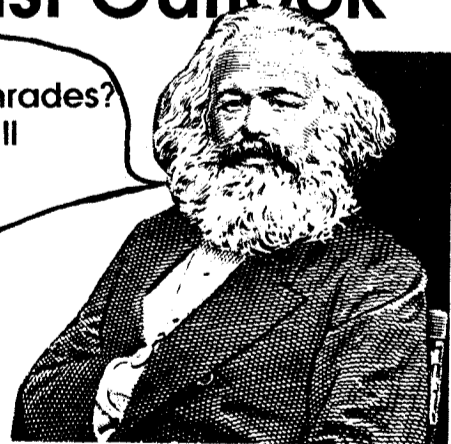
A single mother, Debby leaves two daughters, Rebecca and Martha. Her tireless campaigning is an inspiration for all who knew her. She will be sadly missed.

Donations should be made to the Debby Hall Memorial and Anti-Poll Tax Fund, c/o 30a Carlingford Road, London, NW3 1RX.

Fred Leplat and Adrian States

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# socialist OUTLOOK

## Major offensive to follow election

# Countdown to crisis!

THAT NICE Mr Major will soon have to get very nasty indeed unless the Tories are to abandon their economic policies. Preoccupied with cosmetic measures and pre-election bribes, his government has allowed its public spending to run out of control, facing a £28 billion deficit in 1992-3 and an even bigger £38 billion in 1993-4.

This year's borrowing requirement is almost two thirds the total raised from VAT, and half the yield from income tax.

Pledged as he is to look after the interests of the rich, Major must look to make savings through public spending cuts and possibly through additional privatisation, though a further rise in VAT is not out of the question.

There will certainly be no help on the way for the unemployed. Even on the government's own fiddled figures the jobless total is expected soon to top 3 million, adding a huge burden to public spending.

THE RETURN of the Tories means that the crisis in the NHS unleashed by their market reforms can now be expected to develop rapidly on several fronts.

- A third and fourth wave of opt-outs will fragment the NHS into a chaotic patchwork of rival businesses, destroying any pretence of planning.

- The first and second wave Trusts will lead the onslaught on the nationally-negotiated pay

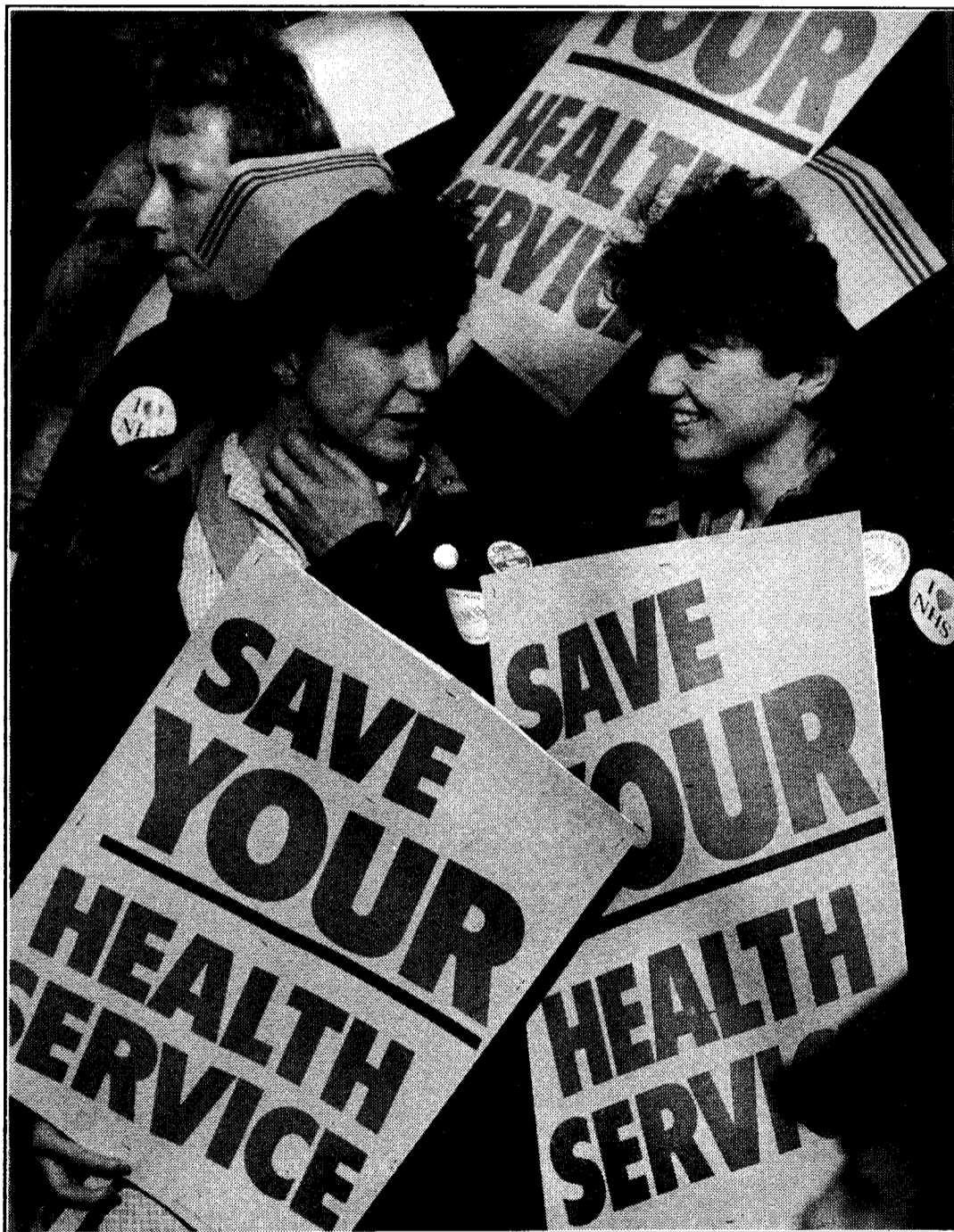
and conditions of 1.2 million NHS staff: ambulance Trusts have already led the way by lengthening hours, cutting wages and derecognising trade unions.

- The underlying financial crisis within the NHS, concealed until after the election, will trigger a wave of far-reaching cuts and closures.

- In London, a secret inquiry being conducted by William Waldegrave's appointee Sir Bernard Tomlinson is almost certain to recommend the closure of at least two teaching hospitals – prime candidates being St Thomas's and Charing Cross – to trim over 2,000 beds in the capital.

- Tory plans for community care come into force next April. This will lead to a rapid closure of NHS beds, and the privatisation of most continuing care for the elderly, which will be subject to means-tested charges.

Wayne Edgington



Tories covered up the scope of the NHS crisis: now the fight is on to save hospital beds

WITH MANY councils still financially wrecked by years of government restrictions and then by the Poll Tax – another year's payments on which are now due – there is even worse to come. Already many councils have embarked on new, brutal rounds of spending cuts hitting schools, social services and old people's homes.

Michael Heseltine's wacky 'council tax' will, in the words of the Tory *Daily Telegraph* 'produce just as many anomalies, revolts and howls of rage as the poll tax'.

With the threat of new anti-union laws, more privatisation of Post and Rail services, more attacks on education, and renewed moves to push through the racist Asylum Bill, there will be no shortage of fights to be waged by the labour movement in the year ahead. There is no time to be lost.