

Published fortnightly

50p

Solidarity price £1

Strikers and

claimants 25p

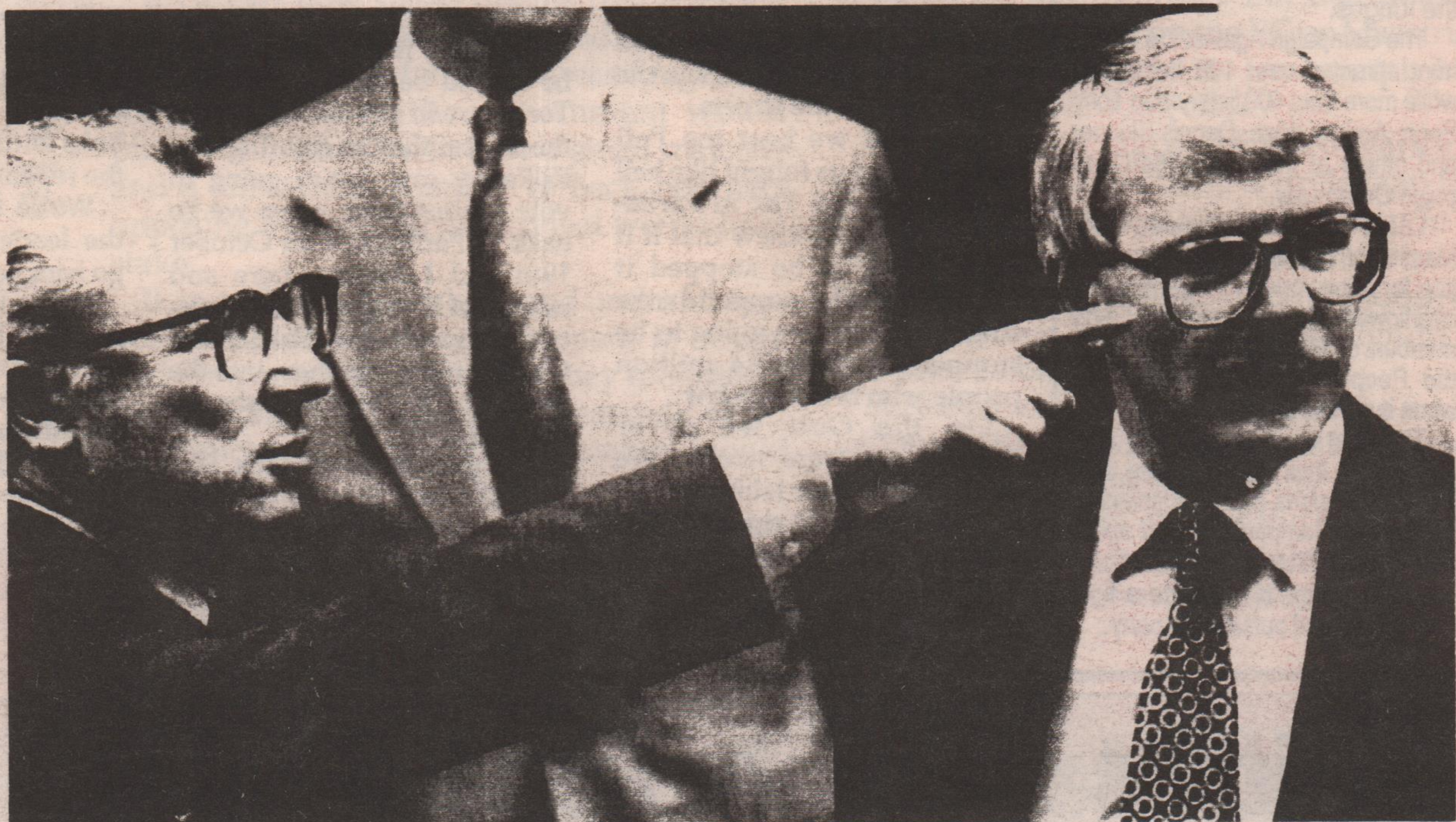
No 29

October 10, 1992

socialist OUTLOOK

Major, Maastricht

On
the



way out?

Labour could
topple Tories!

Dullsville on sea

Most of the time John, Smith's first Labour Party conference was extraordinarily dull. Delegates were carefully allocated to specific seats to make sure the chair didn't accidentally call a delegate who might question the lack of opposition to the Tories.

Labour leaders were able to steer through a new policy-making framework intended to reduce the importance of conference. They also won an important victory on rejecting calls for a referendum on Maastricht, with the active connivance of the trade union bureaucrats. How many trade union members were asked their views on Maastricht isn't known.

Dennis Skinner lost his place on the national executive, while appalling duo Gordon Brown and Tony Blair were elected. At least yuppie lawyer Blair knows who to thank: he was seen shaking hands with every available journalist muttering: 'Thank you, thank you. I would never have made it without your help'.

Fringe benefits

Some life was still to be found on the fringes.

The Campaign Against the Witch-hunt attracted over 100 delegates, while more than 400 listened to Tony Benn, Audrey Wise, Dennis Skinner and others at the successful Campaign Group rally.

Large numbers attended anti-Maastricht meetings while the Justice for Mineworkers fringe meeting overflowed into the corridors. Large numbers of delegates also supported the People's march for jobs rally when it arrived in Blackpool.

The right were undoubtedly able to maintain their grip but there is at least some signs of a willingness to fight back. Campaign Group speakers stressed the need to start building local groups to organise a fight both inside and outside the party.

We're the ones who'll fight

Here we re-print extracts from DENNIS SKINNER'S speech to the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference this year.

WHEN THEY got the dockers out of jail at Pentonville we knew we were changing the very nature of government.

That was an Act of Parliament and it was stopped by the people, by millions of trade unionists up and down the country. There was something in the air.

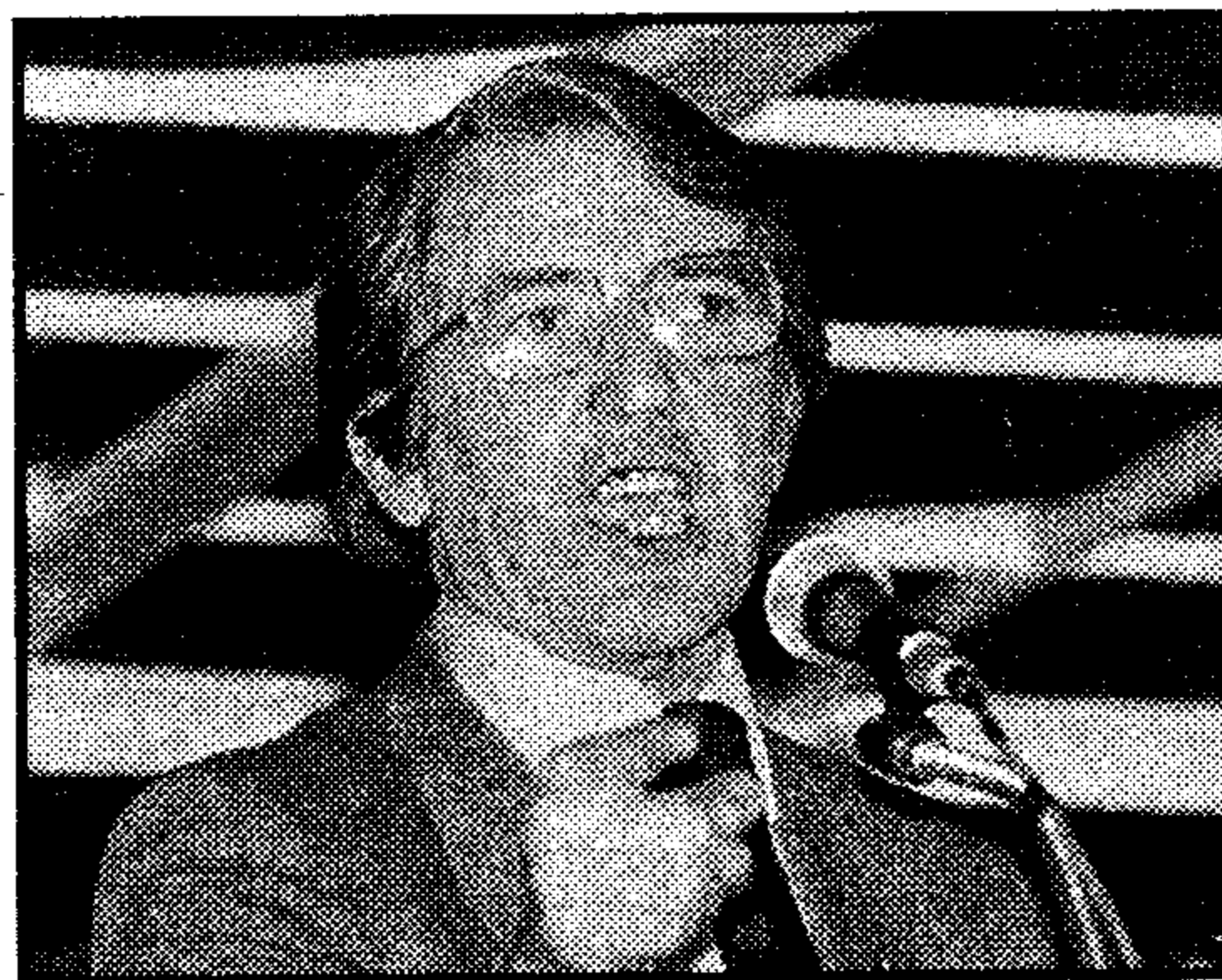
That's why we got the victory for the miners' strike in '72 and the next one in '74.

No wonder that me, and people like me, were thrust into these positions [on the NEC] because we were part of that campaign and we were just lucky to be able to get there. You win the real battles on the streets.

How did we beat the Poll Tax? Some of us fought like hell against the Poll Tax in Parliament but we all knew that if it were going to be stopped it were going to be stopped on the streets and it were going to be stopped by those 14 million people who broke the law.

On the Gulf we never thought we were wrong. We walked into that lobby knowing that we were right. And it was the same in the Falklands war.

The German public sector workers did a great job last year



Skinner

when they fought their bosses to a stand-still and got 7 per cent. I don't think they'd got the 'Social Chapter' - it'd not quite got to 'em 'ad it? They had to fight for it.

I refuse to accept that the only way in which this Labour Party can get Socialism is by going and knocking on Helmut Kohl's door and at the German Bundesbank and saying "deliver it for us free!" It can't be done.

Anyway, I heard John Smith today. Why is he not saying, as he should be saying, that "the Tories are in a mess, they're on the ropes, they're fighting like Kilkenny cats, we're going to vote against them when we go back to Parliament on October 19th and I declare, here and now, that if they put the Maastricht Treaty before Parliament we're going to run them into the ground". That's what he should have said.

The growth of the '50s, '60s and '70s isn't there any more. Capitalism's in a real old mess. I can visualise right throughout the '90s, or the greater part of it, mass unemployment and neo-fascist parties mushrooming up

all over. That'll be the battle-ground.

No, I don't feel down. The Campaign Group's in business and it's the only one that can put socialism back on the agenda.

We're the only ones that are going to call for stopping the witch-hunt, we're the only ones that'll call for realistic economic policies against Maastricht

and the Exchange Rate Mechanism.

We're the only ones that are saying quite clearly "no pacts with the Liberals and all the rest of those tin-pot little armies in Parliament".

We call for troops out of Northern Ireland.

We're the only ones that are saying clearly "no to proportional representation".

We're the only ones that are calling for the maintenance of universal benefits.

We're the only ones that are calling for the defence of the links with the trade unions and the repeal of those laws.

We're the only ones saying the leadership contest should go back to 5%.

We're the only ones that are going to fight the anti-racist battle, we're the only ones saying that you've got to cut defence expenditure.

We'll deliver those votes in Parliament but we shall always know we're doing it against a backcloth of people fighting outside at every level and we shall be there to join 'em.

Good in places

Although the leadership was clearly in charge they didn't get things totally their own way. One stunt in particular misfired.

A resolution on pensions was deliberately timed to cut short the debate on trade union links.

Conference showed their contempt for this move by voting for the pensions resolution (against the advice of the NEC) and then going on to support Composite 9.

This called for continuing input from the unions into every level of the Labour Party, including selecting MPs.

It's a serious set-back for Smith and Co in their attempts to distance themselves from the trade unions.

Scargill

Conference came to life with a fiery speech by Arthur Scargill denouncing coal privatisation and the reply for the NEC by Dennis Skinner.

Delegates finally arose from their slumbers and gave both a standing ovation. To rub salt in to the wound they also loudly booed Bill Jordan as he tried to interrupt Scargill.

This mood continued when delegates yet again defeated the NEC by continuing to support reductions in defence spending.

The NEC had tried to influence the debate by cynically scheduling a resolution opposing job losses at Swan Hunter ship-yards on Tyneside - a result of Tory defence cuts - immediately after the moving of the resolution calling for cuts in defence spending.

Smith's new Agenda rules socialism out of order

By Dave Osler

The cover of *Agenda for Change*, Labour's first policy statement under John Smith's leadership, is coloured three shades of grey with a stripe of Liberal Democrat orange running through the centre. It could be read as a textbook illustration of a sub-conscious desire for a coalition with the centre.

Between the covers, the politics get even worse. What is almost certainly the biggest shift in nominal decision making power away from the ordinary member in Labour Party history is cloaked beneath the verbiage 'extending individual participation'.

In the past, where left resolutions to Labour's conference - theoretically its supreme policy-making body - have not been crushed by the block vote, the leadership has generally been able to ignore them anyway.

But under the proposals in *Agenda for Change*, carried at Blackpool last week, socialist posi-

tions won't even make it onto the conference floor.

A National Policy Forum is now to be established - even weaker than the one envisaged when the idea was approved in principle at the 1990 conference.

Finances

Labour's dire financial state is wheeled out as justification for the Forum to have just 100 members instead of 200. Only 22 will be from constituency parties. Its role will be merely consultative.

Real control will lie with a steering group, the Joint Policy Committee, with around 20 members, 16 of them from the shadow cabinet and national executive. The chair will be Labour's leader.

The JPC will commission policy positions from subsidiary Joint Policy Commissions, given specific area briefs. Their membership will contain 'a strong nucleus of members nominated from the NEC and shadow cabinet'.

The NPF will initially meet annually rather than quarterly as first

proposed, and will be limited to recommending amendments, with no capacity to initiate policy. This is 'extended party democracy', Walworth Road style.

Elsewhere, the language of *Agenda for Change* is not only bland but frequently ungrammatical and littered with spelling errors.

On the economy, it is marginally interventionist, repeatedly stressing the need for 'active' government against the Tories' 'free market dogma'.

There is even a cautious nod to full employment, the first mention of the idea in a Labour policy document for several years. The commitment is, however, qualified in the extreme: 'our aspiration is to make full employment a central objective of economic policy'.

On constitutional reform, the PR buck is once again passed to the party's Plant Committee. Existing commitments to Scottish, Welsh and regional assemblies, a Freedom of Information Act and 'real equality - regardless of race, sex, disability or sexuality' are reinforced.

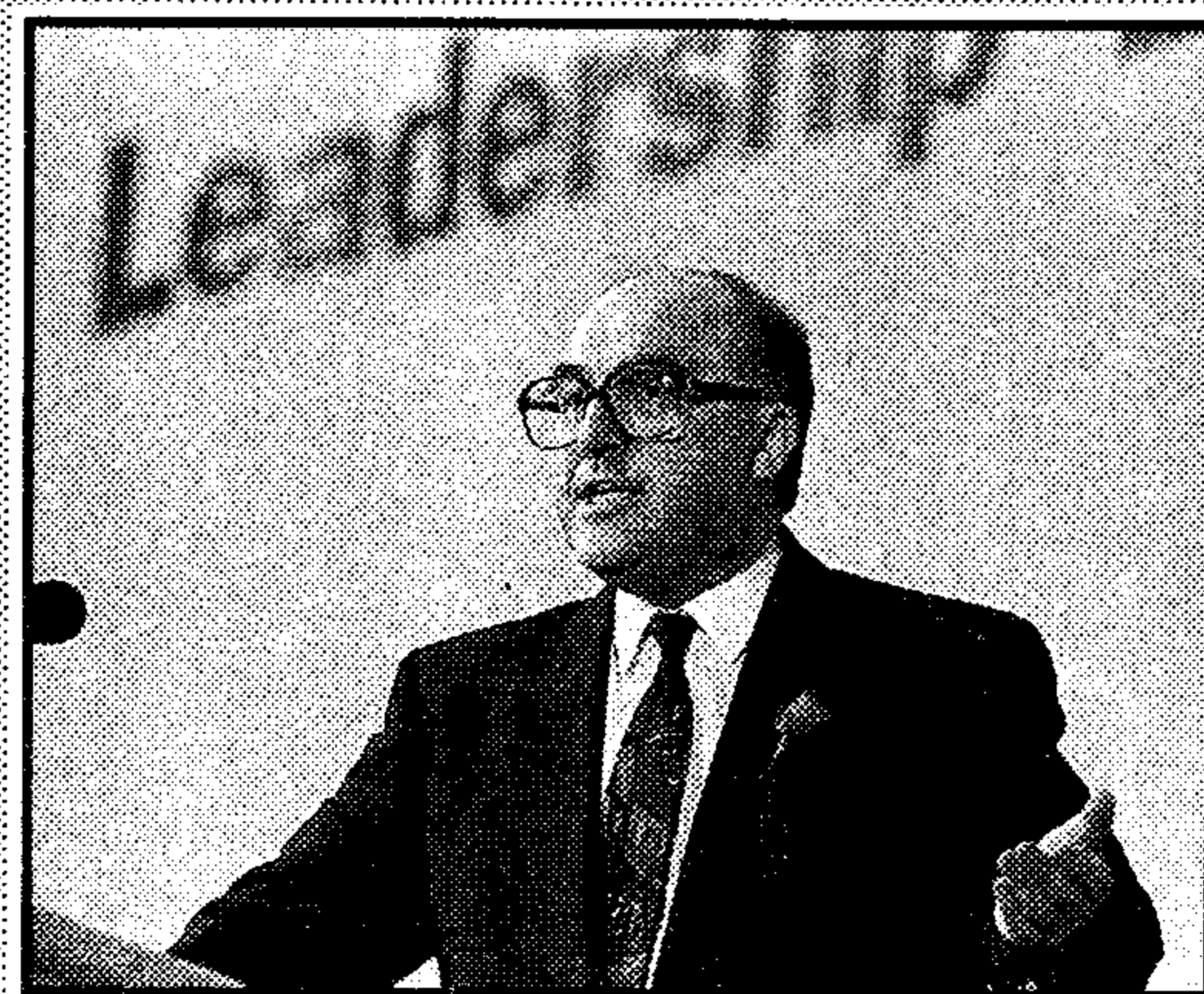
Shadow home secretary Tony Blair's current attempt to steal the Tories' law and order clothing is also stressed.

The catch-all section 'Building a Stronger Community', encompassing areas such as health, education and housing, embraces the rationale behind some of the crackpot rightwing think tank schemas that found their way onto the statute books in the eighties. Labour would merely level the playing field for competent local authorities.

The idea of a Commission of Social Justice, floated in Smith's *New Paths to Victory* leadership campaign manifesto, is endorsed as party policy.

Agenda takes no position on Smith's promise that the commission will open to members of other parties; its composition is unspecified.

Progress in green issues is seen as coming through 'a new Euro-



pean Environmental Charter, along similar lines to the Social Charter. The provisions of the social charter, incidentally, will not apply to Britain even if the Maastricht process is eventually ratified.

The 'Britain in the World' section displays Labour's utter confusion about what the economic convergence clauses of Maastricht would mean in practice.

By capping public spending far below even current Tory levels, Maastricht's convergence clauses enshrine monetarism in international law.

Mildly social democratic, let alone socialist, job creation policies would effectively be illegal. But nobody in Labour's new-style leadership will worry too much about that.

Fight against Maastricht! Kick out the Tories!

JOHN MAJOR'S decision to bring the Maastricht bill back to the Commons by the new year represents a desperate move. The Tories' European and monetary policies are in shreds; day after day mass redundancies are announced, further wrecking manufacturing industry.

Recession and the collapse of the ERM have brought about the biggest Tory crisis since the ejection of Thatcher in 1990. The crisis stems from the simple fact that to implement the 'Europeanist' option of those who removed Thatcher requires a savage deflationary course to achieve monetary and ultimately economic union.

All the traumatic wounds of the Tories' deep divisions between 'Europeanist' and 'Atlanticist' options have been reopened; there is open talk of bringing back Thatcher.

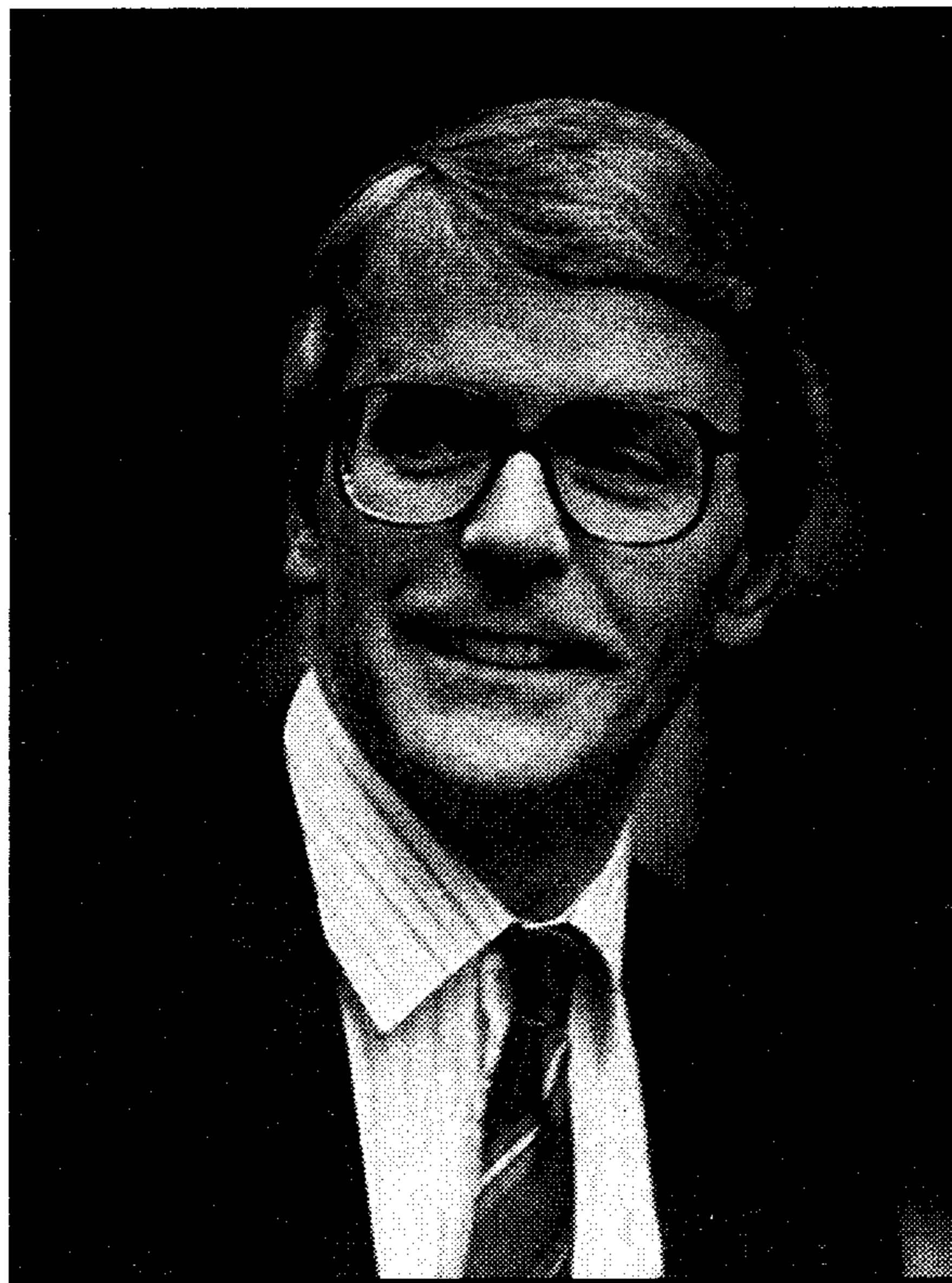
Panic

The devastation of small businesses and manufacturing industry is spreading alarm bordering on panic in Tory ranks. This government is in deep, deep political trouble. Both Lamont and Major are surviving by the skin of their teeth.

This should now be the occasion for a tremendous anti-Tory onslaught from the labour movement. The balance sheet of 13 years of Tory rule is now so utterly clear that the Tories themselves hardly bother to deny it.

Disarray, crisis and panic pervade the back benches. Tory papers openly talk about the 'biggest defeat for Britain (read: British capitalism) since Suez.

If this prime minister and this government survive it will be in large part because of the able assistance rendered by John Smith, and the Labour and trade union leaders. Instead of putting the boot in they are throwing Major a lifeline.



Auf Wiedersehen, arriverderci, au revoir??

If Labour now stated openly that it would vote down the Maastricht bill, and if the popular demand for a referendum was fought for, the credibility of the government would plummet further. With only a small majority and a substantial number of back benchers opposing Maastricht, its survival would be at stake.

If, in addition, the Labour and union leaders openly called for the government to resign and for a new election; and if they mounted a serious campaign against the cascade of redundancies, a new political situation would be opened.

Campaigning against redundancies means not just cracking jokes at conferences or moaning and whining, but organising a fight, de-

manding worksharing with no loss of pay, the banning of overtime and occupations and work-ins to resist redundancies being declared.

The present Tory crisis, and its intractability, is a product of the whole post-war cycle of decline of British capitalism. Searching for a new international orientation in an epoch of deep recession, the ruling class find that there is none on offer which implies anything other than further decline.

Exports

Staying out of Europe when such a high proportion of exports go there would be disastrous; going with Europe has its own massive deflationary overheads, as the past three weeks have shown.

The 'fault line' over Europe is as deep in the modern bourgeoisie as that which divided the ruling class over free trade and the Corn Laws in the 19th century.

Socialists are of course totally neutral over which capitalist option is chosen historically by the ruling class; we are neither Atlanticists or capitalist Europeanists. But that does not mean we are neutral on the EC or Maastricht. Both the institution and the treaty imply huge attacks on the working class.

The fact that a ragbag of reactionaries are also opposed to Maastricht is irrelevant; from a working class point of view *Maastricht is a class issue*. The defeat of the motion at Labour party conference calling for a referendum was a blow against any serious campaign to use this issue to bring down the Tories.

However, this is not the end of the matter. Labour's attitude to a parliamentary vote on the treaty is not finalised. Many Labour and Tory MPs will vote against the bill. In every labour movement body the fight to defeat the Maastricht treaty must be raised anew.

Italy rocked by anti-Maastricht strikes

By Paul Clarke

HUNDREDS of thousands of workers struck on 23 September in Italian cities, as the wave of industrial action against austerity measures continued.

The austerity package is a direct result of premier Amato's preparations to meet the terms of the Maastricht treaty. Together with the massive strike wave in Greece, these are the first anti-Maastricht strikes.

During the one-day strike 100,000 people marched through Milan and 50,000 demonstrated in Bologna. The day ended with clashes with the police in Milan.

A few days later 250,000 pensioners demonstrated against the raising of the retirement age and restrictions on state pensions. A one-day strike of all public sector workers is set for Friday 2 October. Given the size of the state sector this amounts to an effective general strike.

Despite the suspension of the lira from the ERM, Italy intends to plunge ahead with ratification of the treaty. This means reducing the huge public debt, and slashing state expenditure on welfare and the big Italian state industry sector.

Next year it is intended to cut state expenditure by £41 billion.

A key step has been the abolition of the scala mobile, the partial sliding

scale of wages which has protected Italian workers from the worst ravages of inflation. Pensions will be cut and 20 million people will lose free health care; and the retirement age is to be raised by two years for both men and women, an unprecedented move in an advanced capitalist country.

Union bosses signed an agreement to scrap the scala mobile in July. This has led to a huge fight in the major trade union federations, especially the CGIL, traditionally controlled by the Communists, and now strongly influenced by supporters of the ex-Communist PDS (Democratic Left Party).

CGIL leader Bruno Trentin, himself a PDS supporter, was booed and subject to a barrage of bottles and rotten eggs when he tried to speak at the Milan rally. He escaped with police protection.

Militants of the left split from the Communists, the 140,000-strong Party of Communist Refoundation, have played a leading role in the campaign in the defence of the scala mobile and in the strikes.

The resurgence of workers struggle in Italy, the biggest mass strikes for 20 years, is the best guarantee against further political advances by the right-wing populists in the Lombard League, who scored heavily in Milan and other cities in elections earlier this year.

● *Mass strikes are planned against austerity moves in Sweden for 6 October.*



Not happy with Maastricht: Italian pensioners

We say:

The debate on Maastricht has been fierce on the left, and not only in Britain. French Trotskyist organisation Lutte Ouvriere called for abstention in the referendum, while the FI section, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, campaigned for a 'no' vote.

With or without Maastricht Europe remains capitalist - that is absolutely obvious. But the Maastricht road to European unity is not a matter of indifference for the working

class. Monetary union means massive deflation and the destruction of state welfare systems. It means a huge attack on basic working class gains.

The strike wave in Greece and Italy is the proof of the pudding. How can the left be against austerity measures but neutral or indifferent to the political measures which give rise to those austerity measures?

The debate on Maastricht closely parallels the debate on capitalist restoration in the ex-USSR and eastern Europe. Austerity and deflation

there is a direct result of attempts to restore capitalism and the market economy.

Many on the left say the restoration of capitalism amounts to a 'move sideways' or even historical progress (!), while at the same time opposing privatisation and austerity measures.

Such chop logic is ridiculous. Maastricht and the restoration of capitalism in the East represent direct attacks on the working class. Since when have socialists been neutral on such matters?

The 'third period' of Labour's council betrayals 'Dented Shield' Hodge changes sides

In the middle of a major NALGO strike, Islington council leader Margaret Hodge has announced her resignation. She has a new job with, would you believe, city accountants Price Waterhouse as a consultant on local government!

Nothing could be more symbolic of the utter collapse of the so-called 'dented shield' approach to countering Tory attacks on local government. Margaret Hodge has changed sides - and so have Labour councils *en bloc*.

This summer has seen a swathe of strikes against Labour councils as NALGO and local government unions have fought back against sackings and cuts.

In addition to strikes in Islington, Tower Hamlets, Birmingham and Hampshire county council, major new redundancies have been announced in Sheffield.

There be no doubt about the



Hodge hedges

significance of the latest round of cuts. The Tories' aim is the reduction of local government to a 'buying in' agency for privately provided services.

Since the mid-1980s advent

of rate capping the soft left and right wing among Labour councils have argued a simple case: don't go for confrontation with the government which could lead to disqualification.

Stay in power, duck and weave, go for 'creative accountancy', manoeuvre to avoid the worst of the cuts.

This approach led directly in 1985-6 to the isolation of Liverpool, and Lambeth as the only two councils which, in the end, stood out against setting a rate-capped budget. And of course it led to the defeat of the anti-rate capping struggle.

This 'dented shield' approach then underwent a none-too-subtle change; it became 'caring cuts'. Labour councils would be forced to cut back, but this would be done in such a fashion to defend the most needy. This was of course a complete fantasy.

Now, as exemplified by Islington, we are into a new 'third period' of Labour local government betrayal - the period of pre-emptive cuts and privatisation, privatisation *in preparation* for expected government legislation.

One of the most pernicious aspects of the ideological change in Labour councils has

been the attempt to set the interests of local government workers against those of the local community. This goes under the name of 'service delivery', but in reality means rationalisation and new management techniques.

Local government workers must do more with less personnel and resources, all in the name of providing a service to the poor and needy. Inefficiency in council services is nothing to do with cutbacks, but the fault of those greedy inefficient council workers.

Where does all this leave 'municipal socialism'? It is not only dead, it has got rigour mortis. Anti-cuts councillors are few, isolated and being witch hunted. Many others have either dropped out or lurched violently to the right.

Now the defence of local government, whatever auxiliary role might be played by left councillors, is in the hands of the local government unions and the wider labour movement.



Hot air, but no fight against cuts: Islington Council

NALGO Islington Strikers solid

by Doug Thorpe

Despite the resignation of council leader Margaret Hodge, there is no end in sight for Islington NALGO's fightback against compulsory redundancies.

Some 750 members are already on strike, and the union is set to bring another 250 people out if the authority tries to force non-strikers to cover strikers' work or co-operate with scabs. It also seems likely that the computer section will walk out as compulsory redundancy notices are issued.

As a result of the escalation threat, limited talks have taken place despite the council's public refusal to negotiate.

The dispute is becoming increasingly bitter. Islington is stepping up the use of agency staff as strike breakers and started sacking strikers on temporary contracts.

Scabs are being supplied by a

company called CSL, largely owned by the pension funds of British Rail and the National Coal Board, which operates extensively in local government.

It is currently bidding for local government contracts where white collar services are being privatised. NALGO is calling for a boycott of CSL.

The Islington strike committee has responded with mass pickets where agency scabs are being used, which has led to confrontations with the police.

Mass picketing has been successful both in raising strikers' morale and in intimidating scabs. The council is threatening to apply for an injunction against NALGO nationally if numbers are not reduced.

With Newham NALGO strikers' forced return to work, the Islington dispute - now entering its fourth month - is the largest and most sustained resistance to the Tory assault on local government.

Despite occupation of union HQ NALGO's Newham sellout

by NALGO activist

Newham NALGO strikers were ordered back to work on Monday last week after the union's national emergency committee caved in to the threat of anti-union laws without them even being used.

Events began to unfold the previous Thursday when the branch received a phone call from NALGO top brass calling off the dispute. There had been no consultation with the branch.

National officials apparently feared that employers Newham council would obtain a House of Lords judgement stopping the strike because outstanding demands - a no compulsory redundancies deal and a no victimisation clause in the return to work agreement - were not on the ballot paper.

Following the phone call, four coach loads of Newham NALGO

members went down to the union's Mabledon Place headquarters in central London and occupied the building, discovering a private bathroom suite for general secretary Alan Jinkinson.

After seven hours of direct negotiations with Jinkinson, assurances were given that the strike would continue until Monday's meeting of the national executive.

Despite the promises, the following day the branch secretary received a letter instructing him to call off pickets, and members were told to go back to work on the following Tuesday.

On Monday, activists turned up at Mabledon Place to find the door locked and their way barred by police. Some protesters nevertheless got into the building but withdrew after the executive threatened to stop its meeting unless they left.

Eventually the branch secured agreement that they would be re-

balloted on remaining demands. Activists expect to win and resume the strike by the end of this month.

NALGO's leadership want to see the result go the other way. They have even delayed handing over money owed the branch for strike pay.

Their cowardly capitulation - without even a writ being issued - is in contravention of NALGO national policy to support those who defy Tory anti-union laws in defence of their interest.

The lack of a return to work agreement leaves activists open to discipline by the authority, as some of the strikers have already discovered.

As part of Newham NALGO initiated campaign to censure the executive, striker Monica Dixon is standing for the committee in a by-election. All London NALGO activists should try to ensure their branch nominates her.

Fun and games axe Sheffield jobs

Sheffield's Labour-controlled city council is threatening 750 blue collar redundancies as part of a £7.25m cuts package, after losing at least £10.4m thanks to incompetent handling of last year's world student games.

As one of the city's largest employers, the authority has around 27,000 staff. Employees in works, cleansing and cleaning will bear the brunt of the sackings.

Areas to be hit include libraries, council house maintenance and school clothing grants to hard-up parents, while some public toilets and a swimming pool will be closed.

Yet according to a district auditor's report leaked to local paper *Sheffield Star*, key student games decisions were made without proper financial information, while councillors failed to impose their will on officers.

NALGO staged a one day walkout last week, with the possibility of further strike action later. Many members of other unions refused to cross picket lines.

Unfortunately, NALGO's Democratic Left leadership is calling for workers to take unpaid leave in order to finance an early retirement scheme, effectively a call to fund your own redundancies.

Paul Davidson, senior UCATT steward in the work's department, told *Socialist Outlook*: 'All such pay cuts will do is demoralise people against the real fightback which is obviously going to be necessary.'

Currently isolated struggles in local authorities across Britain have to be linked up into national action, with users of council services drawn in, he argued.

In the middle of the 1985 struggle against ratecapping, Sheffield - then

led by David Blunkett and branded the 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire' - ditched its refusal to set a rate and became a prominent exponent of Kincock's 'dented shield' strategy for local government.

It borrowed heavily, on a deferred repayment basis, in the hope of being bailed out by Labour government. Now the creative accounting chickens have come home to roost. Next year could see cuts of up to £40m on some estimates.

Taking on responsibility for funding community care for the elderly and the disabled from next April will add to local government's financial burdens.

Yet plenty of money is available to save council jobs. English councils alone now hold £7,000m in accumulated capital receipts, largely from sold off council homes, but Tory legislation means it can only be spent on repaying debt.

Manufacturers churn out jobless future

by Celia Murphy

The dole queues steadily lengthened throughout September, with almost 13,000 job losses announced by major employers in one two-week period alone. Among companies shedding

workers were some key names in the crucial manufacturing sector. These included British Aerospace, the UK's largest manufacturing exporter, and Rolls Royce, where the company has slashed its workforce by 57 per cent in just two years. With almost 108,000 redun-

dancies announced by June, this year's redundancy rate is set to top last year, which stood at 18 per thousand workers in spring 1991. Manufacturing was hardest hit, with a rate of 28.6 per thousand workers.

This was almost double the rate for the service sector (11.9 per thousand) which itself saw redundancies at more than twice their 1990 rate of 5.6 per thousand.

The haemorrhage of manufacturing jobs represents a serious blow to the economy and sets back any prospect of recovery. The UK's manufacturing base has been devastated under the Tories, with manufacturing jobs slashed by 36 per cent to under 4.5 million since 1979. Over 2.5m workers in the sector have lost their jobs.

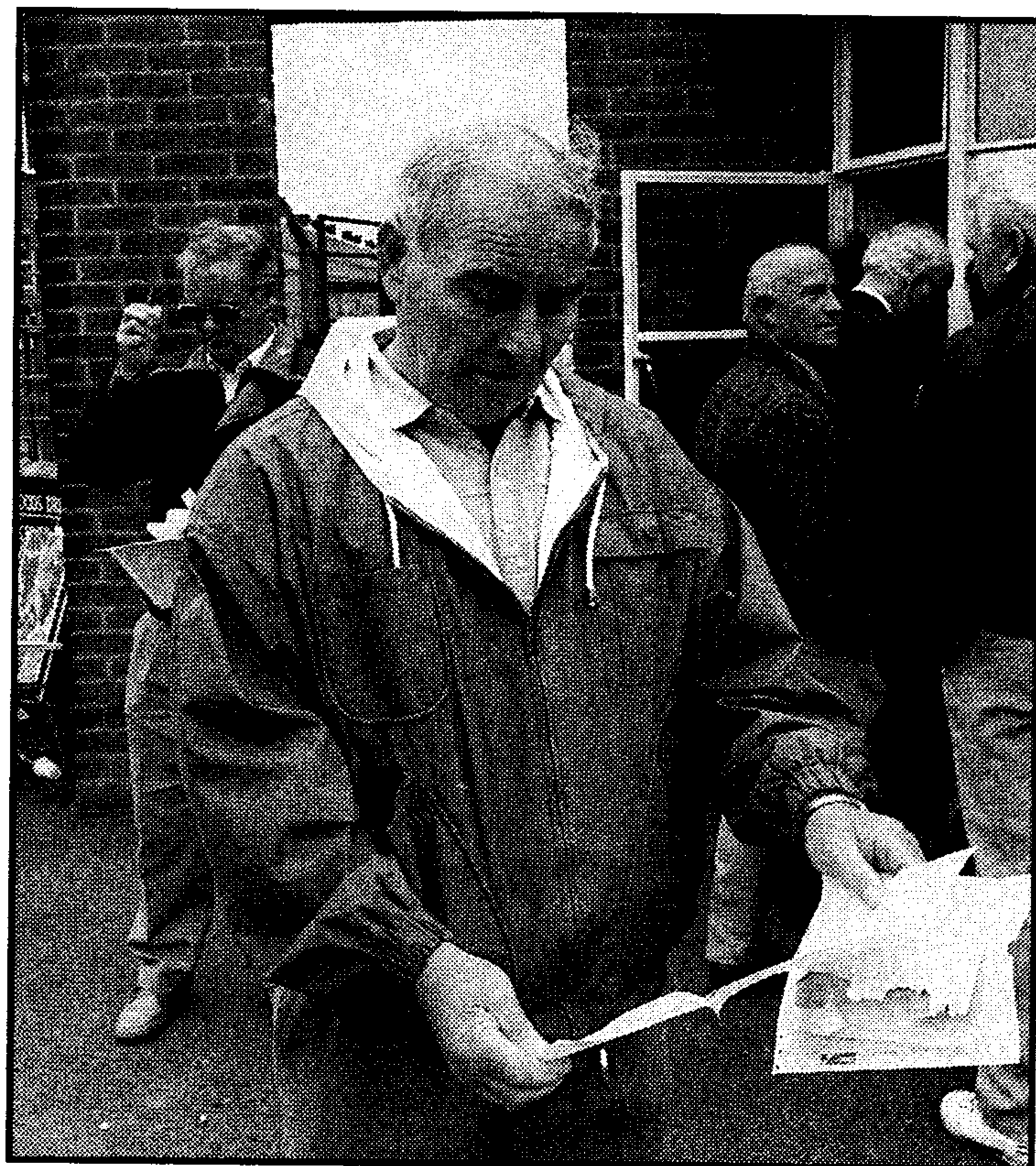
The car industry has been particularly badly hit by the current recession. In the last three years the UK car market has shrunk by 700,000 vehicles and one estimate puts job losses in the industry at around 70,000.

Unemployment has been rising steadily for the last two and a half years, with the official figure set to hit three million by the end of this year.

In August the official count of those out of work and claiming benefit stood at 2,846,000 - 9.9 per cent of the workforce. This was a 47,000 increase on the previous month which was itself the highest July figure for five years.

Around a third of those out of work are long term unemployed, jobless for twelve months or more. In the year to July, the number of long term unemployed rose by one million, the largest recorded annual rise for ten years.

This is despite government schemes which temporarily remove the unemployed from the official register and count them as 'fresh' statistics when



All news is bad news: another engineer made redundant

they return.

Although unemployment levels are highest in the North, the rate of increase over the last year has been greatest in the South. In the year to June, the rate rose by 32 per cent in the South East, 30 per cent in East Anglia and 28 per cent in Greater London.

The industrial collapse of the South is highlighted in a report by business analysts Dun and Bradstreet, which revealed that a quarter of the 46,000 companies which have collapsed so far this year were in the South East.

Young people are particularly suffering under the latest jobs onslaught, with under-25 year olds now accounting for around 30 per cent of the official unemployed.

This is despite the fact that unemployment among this age group actually fell between 1985 and 1990 as a result of removing 16 and 17 year olds from the register.

The European Community's statistical office, Eurostat, which calculates unemployment on an internationally standardised definition,

showed unemployment among under 25s to be as high as 17.4 per cent in July, compared with 10.8 per cent for the UK population as a whole.

Official statistics understate the real depth of joblessness in Britain today. The Tories have made over 30 changes to the way figures are compiled since 1979. Whole groups of unemployed workers, such as those under 18, have simply been removed from the register.

Sixteen and seventeen year olds are no longer entitled to benefit since they are expected to take up a place on a government training scheme.

Thousands of people have been intimidated and threatened out of claiming benefit by the hurdles which they have to jump to prove they are 'actively seeking work'.

The Unemployment Unit provides a more realistic figure for the real extent of unemployment by calculating the rate according to the method officially used before 1982. On this basis the August figure stood at 4,045,000, or 13.8 per cent of the workforce.

Just some of the major job losses announced in the last month:

BRITISH AEROSPACE	3,000
ROLLS ROYCE	2,500
DEFENCE RESEARCH AGENCY	2,000
SEARS (Britain's largest shoe shop chain)	1,800
BRITISH COAL (and related enterprises)	900
PROPERTY SERVICES AGENCY	900
IBM	600
CADBURY	450
NORTHERN TELECOM	400
VSEL (shipbuilders)	390
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL	387
BOULTON AND PAUL (Britain's largest joinery firm)	347
NATIONAL POWER AND POWERGEN	215
BIRDS EYE WALLS	180
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRAINING BOARD	156
LONDON BUSWORKERS (Hanwell garage)	130
BBC	129
RESEARCH MACHINES (computer manufacturer)	120
ITN (technical support and administrative staff)	112
NESTLE ROWNTREE	100
EASTERN ELECTRICITY	90
TRAINLOAD FREIGHT	90
GEC ALSTHOM	76
MARINE PROJECTS (Plymouth boatbuilders)	65
SUNBLEST BAKERY	65
3i (venture capitalists)	60
BUTTERLEY BRICKS	60
YARDLEY LENTHERIC (perfume manufacturers)	50
JOHNSON WAX	30

Aerospace crash sends jobless total flying

British Aerospace has axed its factory in Hatfield, Herts, at a cost of 2,060 jobs. Some 940 jobs at two plants in Manchester are also to go. The company also announced that much of the work done at Hatfield would be transferred to a joint venture in Taiwan.

Knock-on effects of the closure could see another 3,000 on the dole in the town. Unemployment is already 9 per cent - up to 17.5 per cent in some areas.

The latest sackings are in addition to 3,000 BAe job losses already this year, with warnings of up to 4,000 more to come. Plants at Kingston in Surrey and Preston, Lancashire also face closure.

The stock market knocked 43 per cent off the value of the company's shares as it clocked up pre-tax losses of £129m. Nevertheless, one BAe boardroom salary last year reached £338,000, and sacked chairman Sir Roland Smith got a £1m pay-off after he bungled a share issue.

Speculation continues that GEC may take advantage of its rival's difficulties to mount a takeover bid.

The company, one of Thatcher's first privatisations, is Britain's largest engineering employer and its biggest

manufacturing exporter.

It has been an inordinate beneficiary of Thatcher's largesse. In 1987, it was allowed to purchase state-owned munitions manufacturer Royal Ordnance for just £190m, after hundreds of millions of pounds of public money had been pumped in to make it a viable proposition.

Some £50m worth of intellectual property rights on missile data and design went for just £1m. Profits on selling off surplus Royal Ordnance land - at the height of the property boom - were massive.

A five year contract to supply the government with ammunition and explosives, valued at the time at £1500m, was thrown in. The deal gave BAe a commanding position in Britain's armaments industry.

The following year, BAe got volume carmaker Rover for just £150m when its assets were valued at £1,300m. Even then the Tories gave back £44.4m secret sweeteners, hidden from the EC to skirt anti-state subsidy rules, and wrote off Rover's £547m debt.

Since then, BAe sold a 20 per cent stake to Japan's Honda, with press reports that the rest will be put on the market next year at an asking price of up to £800m.

End of line for car workers

Britain's continuing slump has pushed the car industry into deep crisis. Ford bosses are chopping 1,500 jobs and demanding a 40 per cent cut in lay off pay while most of the workforce is already on short time.

They are also pushing a six month pay freeze, prompting a mirror image response from BAe subsidiary Rover. Meanwhile, there are to be 950 redundancies at the Rolls Royce plant in Crewe, Cheshire.

The latest Ford sackings come on top of the 2,100 announced only last February. Albert Caspers, vice president of Ford of Europe, has already publicly stated that the company's British plants could be at risk of closure.

The company is negotiating with the Polish government to transfer production of seats currently made in the UK. It is understood to be considering contracting out sub-assemblies, janitorial and security. Agreements on the ration of engineering done in Britain rather than Germany have been scrapped.

Around 740 jobs are to go at Halewood, and 700 at Dagenham. Some 47 jobs at Bridgend engine plant, where there were 188 voluntary redundan-

cies earlier this year, are also at risk. Southampton is also affected. Any compulsory redundancies at Ford would be the first for 25 years.

Convenors have raised the possibility of industrial action, although an official union response is not due until October. There has been no lead from the unions nationally.

Ford - still Britain's largest car maker - has shed an average of 3,600 jobs every year since 1980. Last August it put Dagenham and Southampton on three and four day weeks respectively and announced a one-week shutdown at Halewood, blaming the continuing slump in the UK car market.

Workers still get their basic wage, but lose bonuses, allowances and overtime. Now they face a further 40 per cent cut in income.

The Rover freeze comes after the company announced £31m operating loss for the first six months of 1992, a better

performance than the year on year figure of £43m. Unions only recently agreed a major 'new deal' package of Japanese-style working practices despite extensive opposition by the rank and file. Wage talks are to go ahead as planned, but any rise not take effect until next May, six months after the anniversary date.

The move comes just months after Trade Secretary Heseltine opened a new £200m manufacturing facility.

Rolls Royce bosses want 950 voluntary redundancies among the 3,200 Crewe workforce. Over 1,700 jobs have already gone: after this round of cuts, just 2,100 workers will remain.



Major step towards restoring capitalism

Privatisation blitz hits Russia

By Paul Clarke

The world's biggest ever privatisation programme has begun in Russia. Each Russian citizen will be issued with vouchers worth 10,000 roubles (about US \$40); by the end of the year 6500 major industrial enterprises must draw up plans to become joint stock companies, exchanging shares for vouchers.

In reality the majority of people are expected to immediately exchange their vouchers for cash, as happened with a similar voucher scheme in Czechoslovakia.

This means that a few wealthy individuals and groups will end up owning the majority of shares, and indeed the companies if the auctions go ahead as planned in November and December.

Foreign companies are expected to take a major stake in some more potentially profitable companies. However, the scheme allows for firms to



Yeltsin and friends discuss where to spend their share vouchers

become worker co-operatives, and for management buy-outs.

A big international campaign is to start explaining to foreign firms how they buy-in to the Russian economy; only some firms in the defence and energy sector are excluded from foreign takeover.

The privatisation scheme takes place against the background of a major slump in the economy, and huge struggles inside the leadership and the old *nomenklatura* over economic plans.

According to official figures production fell by 18 per cent in



Russia: guns but no butter

the first half of 1992; inflation is expected to be anything from 1600 per cent to 3000 per cent by the end of the year. Runaway inflation has wiped out the savings of most ordinary people.

The slump and inflation has had a drastic effect on personal consumption by ordinary workers. Spending on clothes and shoes

is down by 50 per cent and on milk products by 25 per cent. Half the population is living below the official poverty line; a recent poll found that 40 per cent of people in St. Petersburg said they were 'constantly hungry'.

Spending on health and welfare has been slashed; one result is a 9 per cent increase in infant mortality.

Yeltsin's 'shock therapy' and the general dislocation of state planning have thrown many firms into effective bankruptcy. Since they are only kept going by increasing state subsidies, a major battle has been raging between economic ultra-liberals around Yeltsin and his premier Gaidar, who want to force through the privatisation and bankruptcy laws, and hundreds of enterprise managers, supported by Yeltsin's deputy Rutskoi.

The old *nomenklatura* is caught in a trap of its own making; the West in general and the

IMF in particular will not come to Russia's aid without radical economic reform.

But reform means thousands of enterprises going bust, and millions being made unemployed. In May the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, desperate to stop the destruction of state industry, founded a new political party called 'Renewal'.

Renewal in turn is part of the 'Civic Union', which includes Rutskoi's Peoples Party of Free Russia. Both the Rutskoi and Gaidar factions are operating within a pro-capitalist, authoritarian, framework - liberally dosed in Rutskoi's case with appeals to Great Russian chauvinism and reactionary nationalism.

Catastrophe

If privatisation and the bankruptcy laws are pushed through, social catastrophe awaits Russia. The mass unemployment which would ensue would give rise to a social explosion. But despite the strike wave earlier this year, the new workers movement remains extremely weak. According to Nikolai Preobrazhensky, a leading activist in the new Party of Labour: 'The old trade unions enjoy no confidence, by and large; the new ones with the exception of those in the mining regions are very weak. There are no serious organisations expressing the interests of the workers movement nor parties which the mass of workers could consider their own, to be counted on without fear of betrayal or deception.'

Sri Lanka NSSP leaders arrested

Eight leaders of the Nava Sama Samaja Party, the Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International, were arrested on 1 July while participating in a Jana Gosha ('people's noise') demonstration against the government's IMF-imposed austerity programme.

During the protest thousands of people lit firecrackers, banged pots and blew horns in a lunch-time protest.

The eight included party General Secretary Vickramabahu Karunaratne ('Bahu'). All are due to appear in court on 19 November charged with violating Emergency Regulations.

According to Reuters 'police

armed with machine guns, batons and tear gas violently dispersed demonstrators and were particularly vicious towards women demonstrating on behalf of the hundreds of 'disappeared'.

Vickramabahu Karunaratne is speaking soon at a meeting in London - see advertisement on this page.

Hear Sri Lankan Trotskyist leader

General Secretary of the NSSP (New Socialist Party), Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International

Vickramabahu

Karunaratne ('Bahu')

speaks at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC2

Wednesday 14 October 7.30pm

The working class in Sri Lanka faces bitter struggles against austerity and the senseless war waged by the government against the Tamil people. The NSSP has played an important role in the anti-austerity struggle, in the fight for self-determination for the Tamil people and in the movement in defence of the 'disappeared'. The NSSP affiliated to the Fourth International in 1992. Bahu's visit is a unique opportunity to hear about the Sri Lankan struggle and the role of Trotskyists.

Unholy alliance in Romania

By Joe Pass

Romania's neo-stalinists are set to go into coalition with the far right after an unexpectedly strong showing in last week's elections.

Preliminary results give the Democratic National Salvation Front 28 per cent of parliamentary vote. The party is built around the remnants of the old state apparatus of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, who was toppled in the revolution of December 1989.

The main opposition, the 18-party Democratic Convention (DC), won 27 per cent on an explicit free market platform and 'a clean break with communism'. It has the support of most of Romania's ethnic Hungarians, intellectuals and the middle classes.

The Front is now well placed to seek co-operation with the Socialist Labour Party and the openly anti-semitic and xenophobic nationalists in Romania Mare.

In the presidential elections, the Front's candidate, sitting president Ion Iliescu won 48 per cent of an early official return, against 30 per cent for DC's Emil Constantinescu. Two years ago, Iliescu took 85 per cent of the poll.

Radical nationalist Gheorghe Funar took 12.3 per cent, with three minor candidates. A French-style run off between the top two candidates is scheduled for October 11.

The Democratic National Salvation Front has secured widespread support among sections of working class and the peasantry that have most to lose from a return to capitalism. Yet it too is overtly restorationist, albeit advocating a slower pace of change.

Under Iliescu, privatisation of state enterprises has already begun, and prices allowed to rise by 800 per cent. A million people have lost their jobs over the last two years. There is nothing for workers to choose between either camp.

The twilight of monetarism Why Keynes isn't the answer

As the disastrous consequences of super-free market policies become apparent, voices are being raised in capitalist and social democratic circles demanding state intervention to revive the economy. But is it really an alternative; and would a new round of state economic intervention and debt-financing of growth have beneficial effects for working people? Here ERNEST MANDEL argues that traditional Keynesian reflationary policies must be distinguished from the budget deficit policies of Thatcher and Reagan; and that capitlaist reflation only brings short-term advantages for the working class, and inevitably ends up in a new recession.

The fundamental idea of Keynesianism is the state spending, a national budget deficit can be used to combat economic crisis and recession.

From a theoretical point of view raising overall demand in a given country will facilitate a recovery insofar as there is disposable productive capacity (unemployed workers, stocks of raw materials, machines working below capacity). These unused resources are mobilised by the additional purchasing power created by the budget deficit. Only when these reserves are exhausted do you get the fatal onset of inflation.

But there is a snag. In order for the budget deficit not to fuel inflation before full employment is reached, direct taxes must increase in the same proportion as income.

Tax burden

Given that the bourgeoisie prefers to buy state bonds rather than pay taxes, and that tax evasion by the bourgeoisie is endemic, the higher tax burden implied by Keynesian policies falls on the workers.

As the public debt grows, servicing this debt eats up a growing part of public spending, so there is a tendency for the budget deficit to grow without any corresponding beneficial effects on employment.



Running huge deficits: Thatcher

So in the end Keynesian expansion tends to undermine itself through growing inflation and diminishing returns from the initial budget deficit-driven 'push'; a new recession is the result. And the growing tax burden tends to redistribute income towards the bourgeoisie.

The historical balance sheet of Keynesian policy is clear. The most extensive experiment, Roosevelt's New Deal in the United States during the 1930s, ended in failure.

Unemployment

Despite the rise in public spending, it ended in the crisis of 1938 when unemployment reached 10 million. It was the massive rearmament thanks to the war which reduced mass unemployment.

There is something bizarre in the way in which neo-liberal dogmatists contrast their 'supply-side' policies to those based on creating demand through budget deficits. Never, in fact, have budget deficits been higher than under the neo-liberals' champion Ronald Reagan.

The same is true to a large extent of the reign of Mrs Thatcher. They implemented record-breaking neo-Keynesian programmes while all the time professing quite the opposite faith. The real debate was not about the size of the budget deficit but what it was to be used for.

The facts speak for themselves. Reagan/Thatcher neo-Keynesianism has brutally reinforced the austerity offensive everywhere. Social spending and spending on infrastructure have been cut; arms spending has expanded massively in the USA and Britain and to a lesser extent in Japan and Germany.

Subsidies to private enterprise have increased. Unemployment and widening social inequalities have been stimulated. In the last 20 years the number of unemployed in the OECD countries has risen fourfold.

The overall social effect has been disastrous. You can learn on any college course on

economic development that the most productive long-term investments are those in education, public health and infrastructure.

However the neo-liberal dogmatists overlook this elementary truth when they approach problems from the point of view of a 'equilibrium' which must be re-established at any cost. Their favourite targets for cuts are precisely education, health care, social security and infrastructure, when the inevitable harmful effects, including on productivity.

Does this mean that socialists prefer traditional Keynesianism and the welfare state to the poisonous cocktail of monetarism and neo-Keynesianism currently on offer? If our answer is positive, it must be heavily qualified.

Traditional Keynesianism implies various forms of the exercise and division of power within the framework of bourgeois society. This leads to various forms of social contract and consensus with those who currently hold economic power, on their terms.

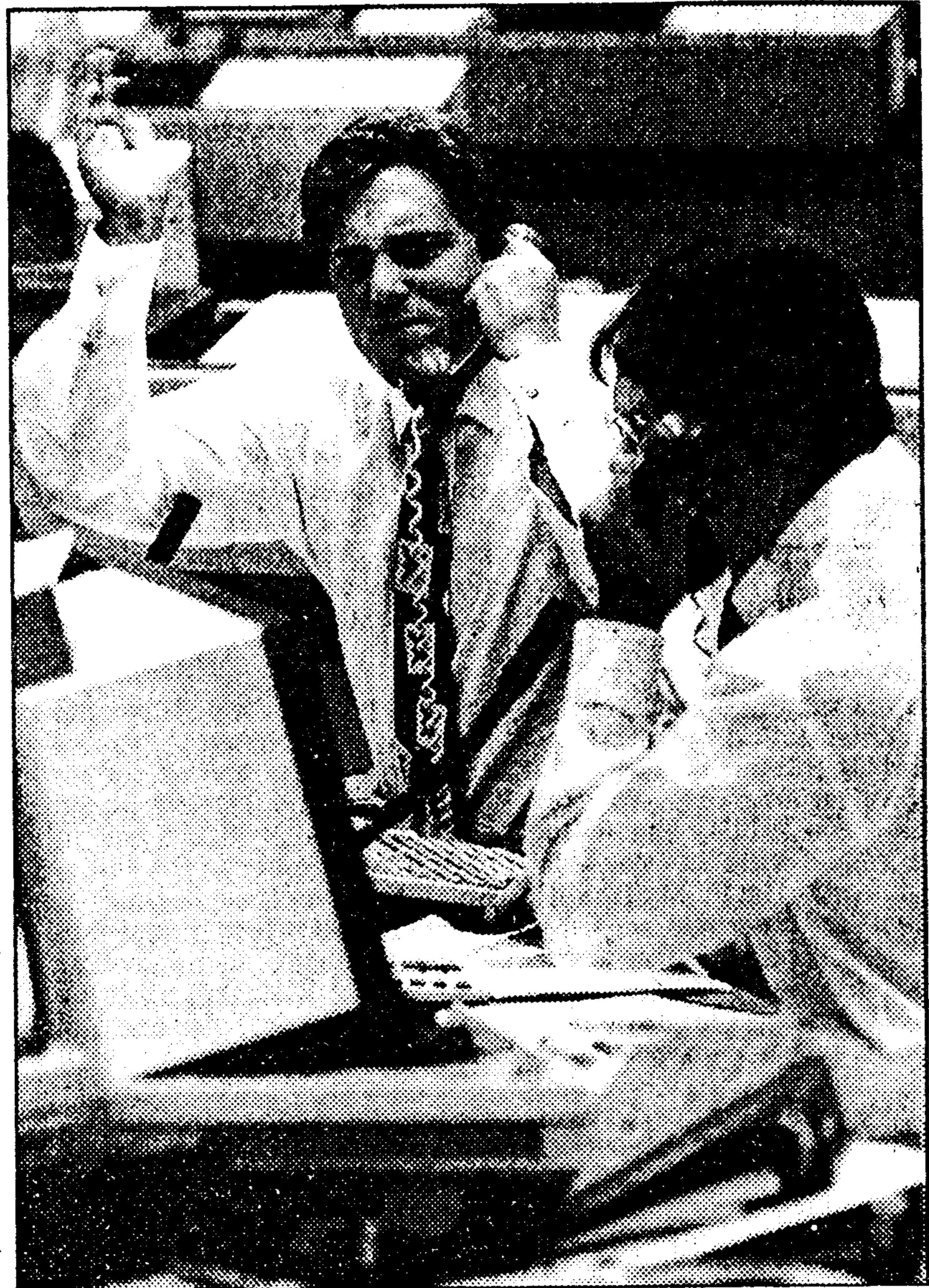
Lesser evil

This is a purely one-way consensus and it runs counter to the interests of the working class. Traditional Keynesianism is only the lesser evil in that compared to a deflationary policy insofar as it promotes an immediate and rapid fall in unemployment.

However, in present conditions neo-Keynesianism is leading to an increase in unemployment and marginalisation of growing sections of the population, with all sorts of reactionary consequences.

Furthermore, advocates of traditional Keynesian policies have to deal with a fundamental awkward fact; the effectiveness of their approach is being greatly reduced by the growth in the power of the multinational corporations. While of course it is ridiculous to say that state intervention today is powerless, it is of course much less powerful than during the 1930s and the 1950s.

Faced with the growth of transnational enterprises, the national state is no longer an adequate economic instrument



for the dominant factions of the bourgeoisie. Thus an effort is being consistently made to substitute supranational institutions for it, the classic case being the various institutions of the European Community.

But many obstacles have to be overcome if supranational institutions are to take on the characteristics of a real supranational state, for example in Europe.


European unification remains suspended between a vague confederation of sovereign states and a European federation with some of the characteristics of a state, with a single currency, a central bank, a common industrial and agricultural policy, joint army and

police forces and finally a central government authority.

In the process of European capitalist unification there is a time bomb, which is beginning to explode in the strikes in Italy and Greece. It is the simple fact that the 'budgetary stabilisation' required for monetary union will have an enormous deflationary and austerity effect. This in itself should be cause enough for the workers movement to reject the Maastricht treaty.

Maastricht offers nothing more than an excuse for a continuation and toughening of austerity policies. It is more vital than ever to continue the fight against it.

socialist
OUTLOOK



75 years of the Russian Revolution: hear

ERNEST
Mandel
(United Secretariat of the Fourth International)

Friday OCTOBER 23

KINGSWAY COLLEGE, Sidmouth St
off Grays Inn Rd, London WC1

7.30pm (Kings Cross Tube)

Tories create 3-way NHS crisis

The economy and Maastricht are not the only questions on which the Tories are vulnerable and the Labour opposition bankrupt.

As hospital wards close and health workers lose their jobs in a wave of cuts and crisis measures across the country, HARRY SLOAN looks at the crisis the Tories have created for themselves in the health service.

In our next issue, a special feature 'What is to be Done about the Health Service' will look at the kind of policies socialists should be raising.

Market madness

THE TORIES' ideological insistence upon creating an anarchic 'internal market' in the NHS is turning into a bureaucratic nightmare.

By separating 'purchasers' of health care - the fund-holding District Health Authorities and GP fund-holders - from the 'providers' - hospitals and units delivering front-line care - Thatcher's reforms spawned a monster.

Each side of the split has now developed its own bureaucracy, with the biggest expansion coming among the provider units, sub-dividing into competing copied-out Trusts, each of which carries the trappings and overhead costs of a Board of Directors, new tiers of senior management, and mushrooming finance and personnel departments.

In place of productive nursing, medical and support staff, hospitals are clogging up with parasitic platoons of highly-paid senior managers and accountants, while thousands more clerical staff are required to administer the cumbersome pricing and billing structure which now dominates the new system.

With no overall increase in resources, the Tory reforms have diverted cash from patient care into bureaucracy.

Planning abolished

By abolishing any pretence of planning and forcing hospital units into competition for referrals in which price is the key factor, they have also triggered a war of attrition against staff.

70 percent of NHS spending is on pay, so the only way to reduce prices is to cut the numbers and quality of staff (carrying out 'skill mix reviews' designed to reduce the numbers of more expensive qualified staff employed) while pushing patients out of hospital beds even faster, whether or not they are ready to go.

Certain losers in this new market are 'centres of excellence', in which qualitative care has been provided at slightly higher than average cost. Already the victims of this include London's Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for Women and Sheffield's King Edward's orthopaedic

hospital. Others are threatened including Yorkshire's Killingbeck Hospital.

In the battle to compete by cutting costs and asset-stripping 'surplus' sites, big cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield and elsewhere face massive 'rationalisation' plans involving the loss of beds and well-loved hospitals.

The biggest of these shake-ups is in London, where inflated property values and the cost pressures of the capital routinely add 20 percent to the cost of services.

Finding their prices under-cut by hospitals in outer London and in the Home Counties, the inner London teaching hospitals are being driven towards bankruptcy, revealing multi-million pound deficits. Every attempt to tackle these shortfalls by cutting services simply pushes up the unit cost of treatment.

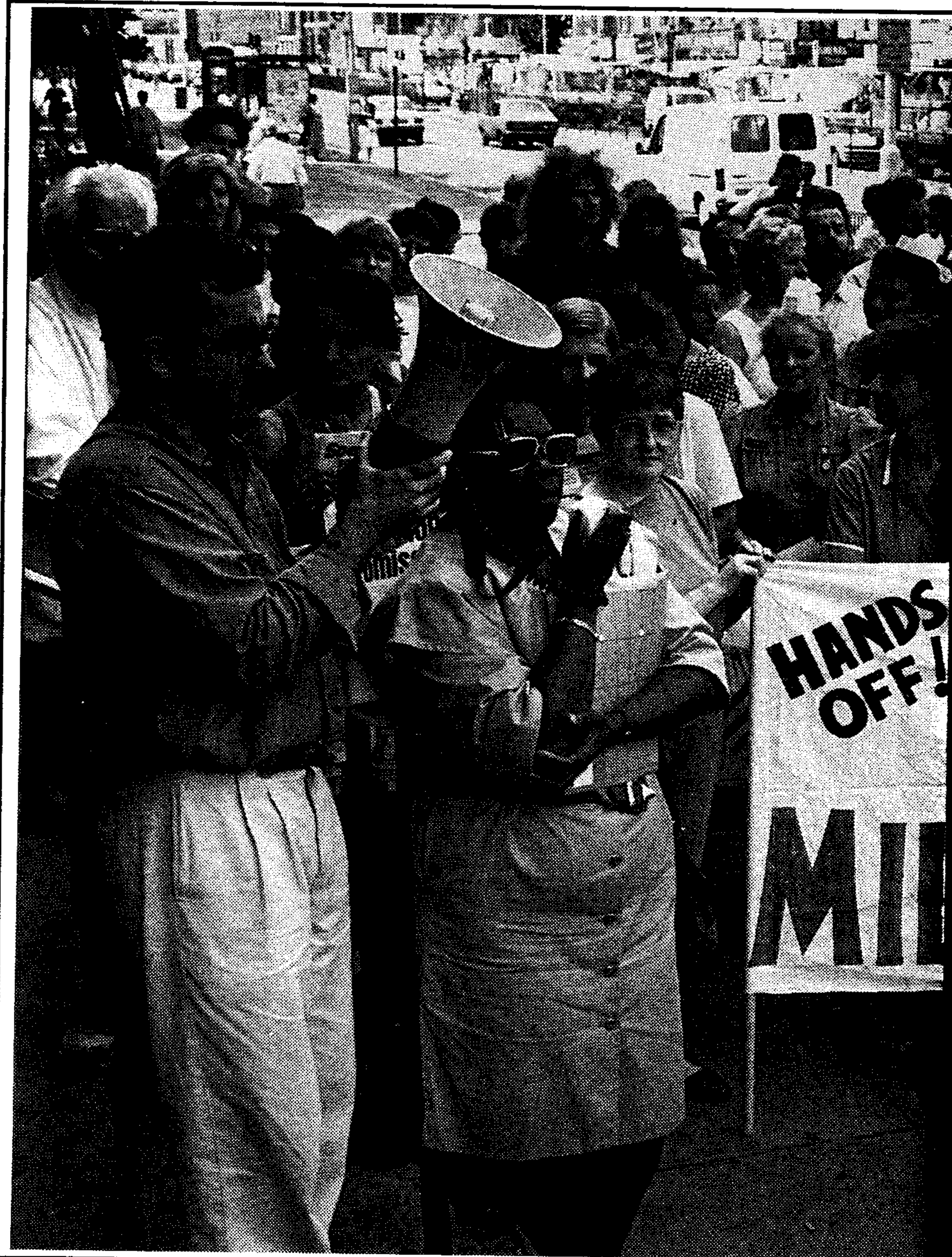
Hit list

The Tory response to the London crisis has been to set up the Tomlinson Inquiry with a brief to draw up a hit list of 'planned' closures.

Eager to win 'performance related' pay bonuses, managers from all four Thames health regions have rushed to volunteer draconian cuts in beds: their combined proposals would axe anything up to 9,000 London beds in the next five years. This is almost 50% of acute hospital capacity in the capital, but there are no proposals on where the 450,000 displaced in-patients could hope to find treatment.

A campaign against Tomlinson and the Regional closure plans is being proposed by pressure group London Health Emergency. An early and unexpected victory was notched up when the stridently Tory London Evening Standard abruptly switched course from all-out support for Tomlinson to declare itself committed to campaign in defence of Barts and other teaching hospitals.

A London-wide meeting on November 10 at Camden Town Hall will launch the LHE campaign, which is hoping to link health and other trade unions, Labour Parties, pensioners' groups and community organisations around a 5-point plan of resistance.



Andrew Ward

Battling against market forces: protestors oppose Mile End hospital closure

Community care: the to privatise health ser

VIRGINIA Bottomley's announcement of a meagre £540m to local councils to implement the government's community care reforms from next April will trigger six months of crisis and confusion.

The money - of which £140 million is a one-off payment for set-up costs - is just half the amount the councils and originally asked for.

The Tories are stipulating that 75 percent of the cash must be spent on purchasing care from private residential and nursing homes: a maximum of a quarter can be used to finance council-run services.

Assessment

This makes quite explicit a factor that until now had been overlooked or wilfully ignored by Labour and trade union leaders. Behind the rhetoric of 'community care' - in theory caring for people in their own homes or small, friendly units rather than in big hospitals and institutions - the Tories have been embarked upon the biggest-ever exercise in privatising health care and imposing charges.

Under the new regulations, local councils are supposed to take over from health authorities the lead responsibility for continuing care of the frail elderly.

Care which was provided free at point of use in NHS beds and day centres is from next year to be subject to means-tested charges.

Councils and social services will take on the task of assessing the needs of frail elderly clients. They will be responsible for purchasing appropriate residential, nursing home or domiciliary services - but whatever the assessment, the client

will have no right to any specific level of care.

Many councils, fearing government financial penalties, have begun closing or selling off their own homes for the elderly, while health authorities have been rushing to shut their geriatric beds in order to unload the problem (and expense) onto the councils.

The community care reforms will mean that even more elderly people, a generation who have paid taxes and National Insurance all their lives expecting comprehensive health care when they grow old, are to be forced to raid their savings or sell their homes to pay for their own care.

Already forced sales of houses by elderly owners obliged to meet residential or nursing home fees are estimated by the *Financial Times* at over £2 billion a year - while the clients themselves are being

The £2.5 billion a year in fees which pay for care in residential and nur £2.8 billion market in private medical statistics on private health care.

obliged to shell out a massive £2.5 billion a year in charges over and above their Social Security income support entitlements.

Elderly people coming into the new system after April (an estimated 110,000 in 1993-4) will have their entitlement to social security cancelled out by the new reforms.

Instead they can receive only discretionary support, administered by local councils which are themselves subject to



Spending freeze heralds new cuts

THE NHS reforms are not the only factor driving health services into crisis.

With many purchasers and providers already facing major deficits this year and embarking on cuts, the billions squandered in the sterling crisis have made it even more certain that this year's autumn statement from the government will herald new cutbacks next year.

The reforms themselves were Thatcher's twisted response to the press headlines highlighting the brutal impact of spending cuts on services for children and cancer patients in the winter of 1987-88.

Falling behind

Despite a slightly more generous financial settlement for the election year 1991-92, the Tories have persisted in systematically underfunding the NHS, offering annual 'increases' in spending which in most years fail to keep pace with real inflation and cost pressures.

Estimates vary on the dimensions of this underfunding. A recent conservative assessment by the Office of Health Economics, suggests a cumulative 'gap' of £1.6 billion between actual Tory spending and the amount that should have been spent to keep pace with the rising numbers of elderly people requiring health care, new technology and cost inflation in the 1980s.

Other European countries spend a far higher proportion of (larger) GNP's on health services than Britain: one consequence is that most of them run largely without the British phenomenon of waiting lists.

It seems clear from Virginia Bottomley's miserable settlement on community care that the main NHS budget is likely at best to stand still compared with this year.

To make matters worse, following the well-publicised CBI call for public sector pay to be frozen, with any increases 'paid for' only by increased productivity, Major has floated the notion of a two percent pay limit.

If the Tories incorporate this with their NHS cash limits, then 1 million health workers are likely to have a battle on their hands to defend their living standards - while management wring their hands and argue that any pay increase must mean job losses and cuts in services.

The battle for the NHS must be carried out on all three fronts - against underfunding, against the ruinous market system, and against the wholesale privatisation embodied in the community care proposals.

To complicate matters more, the deliberate fragmentation of the NHS into competing 'businesses' (self-governing Trusts) means that hundreds of thousands of health workers are no longer employed by the health authority that holds the purse strings and takes policy decisions on their work.

Pay agreements

Each Trust also has ambitions of smashing up and breaking from the hard-won NHS national pay and conditions agreements and establishing its 'own' terms and conditions.

Health workers have never needed their unions more. The establishment of ad-hoc inter-union links between branches and stewards' committees across Trusts and health authority boundaries is more important than ever.

Now is the time for the left in the labour movement to play its required role in supporting and broadening the fight to defend the most popular and universal of all our public services.

biggest-ever move twices

rigorous government charge-capping and other restrictions. The 'assessment' by social workers of the 'needs' of any client will therefore take place against a background of rigid cash limits.

Many health authorities have seen this coming, and have been quick to close down their elderly care beds, fearing that cash-strapped social services might 'assess' more and more clients as needing hospital care.

Mapped out in 1988 by Thatcher's right hand advisor on health policy, Sainsbury's supermarket boss Sir Roy Griffiths, the community care reforms represent the most dramatic and audacious attempt at privatisation yet proposed by the Tories. It is transparently designed to force the burden of expenditure and of care on to individual elderly people and their families - almost inevitably women relatives (daughters,

elderly clients are forced to
living homes almost equals the
cine: but it is left out of official

wives, etc).

In one master-stroke the Tories thought they could remove a costly area of care from the NHS, forcing the users to pay much of the cost themselves or to do without any proper care at all, while foisting the blame onto local councils for the inevitable failure.

Incredibly enough, the Labour leadership, beginning with the more inept council leaders and careerist social service chiefs, but soon including Robin Cook

and the front bench MPs publicly endorsed this policy, and even urged the Tories to implement it more quickly!

When even bully boy Kenneth Clarke (then Health Secretary) backed off, postponing the implementation of the reforms by two years to ensure it would come after the election, Labour's leaders opposed the delay.

Bi-partisan

Instead of using the threat to elderly care as a mighty electoral club with which to beat the Tories and underline their claims that the NHS is being privatised, Labour allowed the issue to become yet another in a long list of 'bi-partisan' policies.

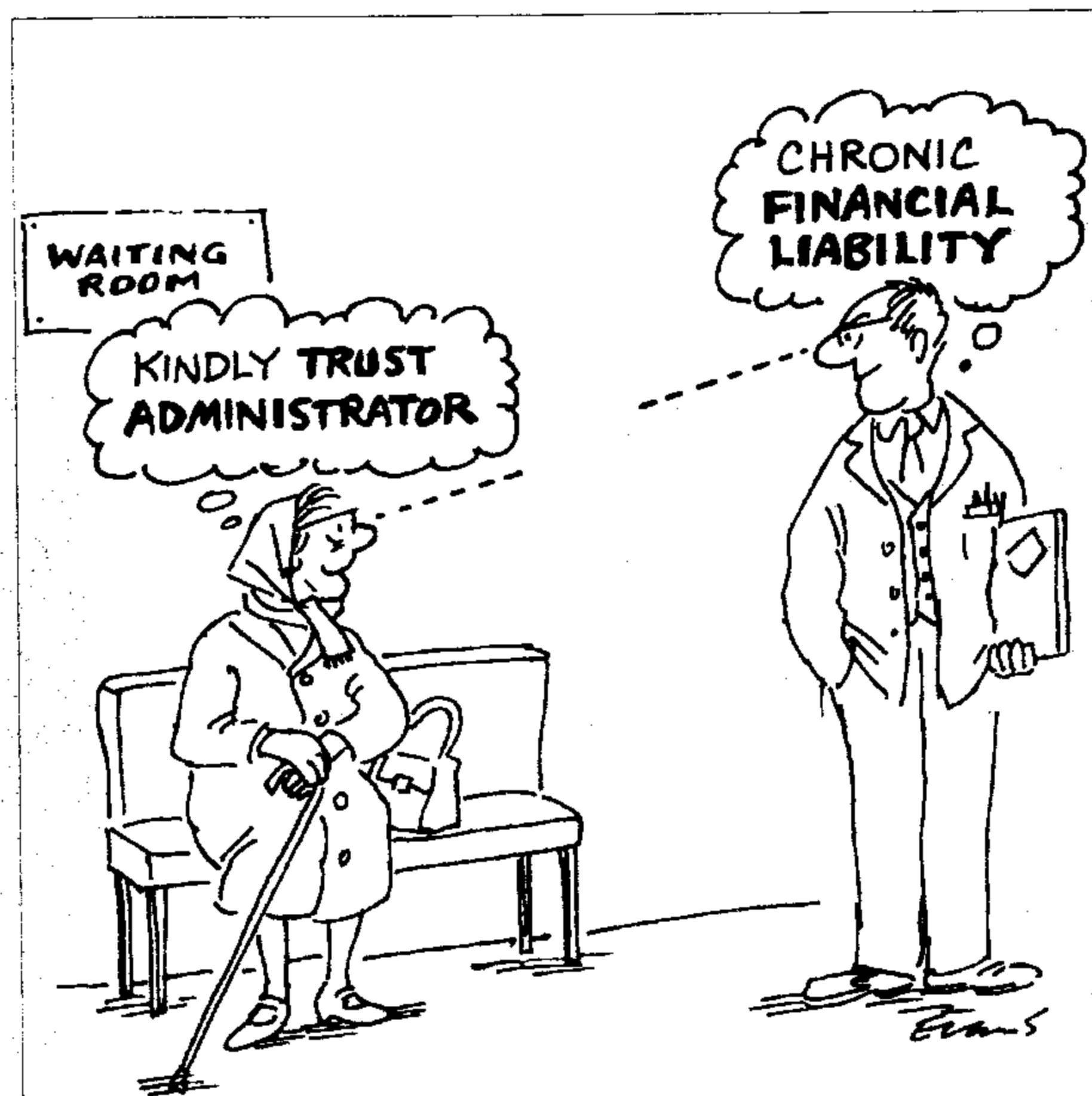
It was not until the day before Bottomley's announcement of the cash allocation that Labour's new community care spokesperson Dave Hinchcliffe belatedly announced a complete reversal of policy - to oppose the reforms.

Why it has taken Labour four years to spot the obvious is a mystery. But the policy switch must now be followed through with full-blooded campaigns in every town and city against the closure of elderly care NHS beds, through which health chiefs are dumping not only the frail elderly, but also elderly mentally infirm into private, profit-seeking homes which lack the qualified nursing staff and therapeutic services that are a vital part of hospital care.

Pensioners groups, relatives and organisations for the elderly should be mobilised to combat this frontal threat to our NHS, alongside the other battles against cuts and closures.



Forking out for her own care? Tory reforms bring in means testing



After Tomlinson?
London Health Workers Conference
Saturday 31st October, 10-6
Camden Town Hall,
Euston Road
Registration fee £5
For details ring 081 840 7000

Meeting called by London Health Emergency
Defend London's Health Services
Camden Town Hall
November 10, 7pm

????????????????????????????????????

**What
is to be
done
about...**

~~~~~

# The press

by Dave Osler

The night before the Minister of Fun finally quit, he posed the question: 'Who decides who should be a member of the British cabinet - the prime minister or the editor of the *Daily Mail*?' Paul Dacre 1, John Major 0.

With Mellor tittle tattle dominating the news-stands for the last three months, attention is again focused on Britain's tabloid press.

Many Mellor revelations were unarguably in the public interest. Mellor had free use of a chauffeur driven car and a luxury love-nest, provided by a property developer he put onto lucrative business deals; accepted expensive holidays as gifts without declaring them to the register of members interests; and ideologically exploited his wife and kids in the promotion of phoney 'family values'.

Even protestations that his phone conversations were taped - 'one wondered whether one was living in Ceausescu's Romania rather than John Major's Britain' - are rich from a minister in a government that routinely taps 35,000 telephones.

## The Fourth Estate

But Mellor is not the only tabloid victim. Health secretary Virginia Bottomley, Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown, Labour general secretary Larry Whitty, the Princess of Wales and the Duchess of York have all recently been done over by the Fourth Estate.

In the run-up to the general election, then Labour leader Neil Kinnock was linked with prostitution, the KGB, and a businessman on the run from the fraud squad. Presumably he was just too busy to fit any Devil worship in. Kinnock ultimately attributed blame for Labour's defeat on 'the Tory press' rather than his own disastrous political course.

Yet 'Tory press' allegations are somehow acceptable as evidence in expulsion hearings, as two Lambeth councillors recently discovered.

From the 'exposure' of socialist car-workers at Cowley as red moles in 1983, to 1990's 'Scargill in Moscow/Tripoli Cash Shocker', to the hounding of individuals like Mandy Mudd, Rachel Webb, Linda Bellos, Peter Tatchell and 'IRA-loving, poof-loving, Marxist

leader of the GLC Mr Ken Livingstone' himself (thank you, *Sunday Express*), the left is constantly under hack attack.

Libel laws let the rich and powerful sue. But defamation cases do not get legal aid, making action financially impossible even for the relatively well-off, let alone working class people.

Sir David Calcutt QC's inquiry into the press and privacy in 1990 led to the formation of the industry-based Press Complaints Commission (a reworked Press Council stripped of lay members and the brief to promote press freedom) as a final opportunity for newspapers to clean up their act voluntarily.

## Criminal

The penalties for failure were to be stark, Calcutt warned. A powerful, government-imposed Press Tribunal and three new criminal offences stopping journalists' attempts to obtain personal information would be introduced.

The advent of the PCC - whose 16 members include editors of the *News of the World*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Star*, all deeply partisan Tory papers - occasioned Mellor's infamous remark that the popular press is drinking in the Last Chance Saloon. Ironically, his departure could hasten kicking out time.

Sir David is due to give a verdict at the end of this year. Major may use the shaming of his close friend as a pretext for tough new legislation.

Whatever the left has suffered from press harassment, it would be wrong to agree. Our starting point must be greater press freedom, not less. We are for the right to know.

The first amendment to the US constitution reads 'Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.' In Britain, over 100 laws make disclosure of information a crime.

The mere existence of restrictive legislation is itself a massive deterrent to investigative journalism. Further measures would shut up the John Pilgers, Paul Foots and Duncan Campbells, not the anonymous young wannabes from the provincial press moonlighting on the nationals and ready to do anything for the big break.

As in so many other areas, Labour's last manifesto substantially concurred with the Tories' position on Calcutt. It also joined the Liberal Democrats in promising a Freedom of Information



Act. That much is essential, but not enough.

The left should demand that a Labour government scrap all repressive limitations on journalism, including the Official Secrets Act, the D-Notice system of voluntary self-censorship on defence questions and the Sinn Fein broadcasting ban.

Only socially desirable limitations on matters like identifying child sex abuse victims or publishing material which could prejudice jury trials should stay in place.

Much of present press bias is rooted in virtual monopoly ownership. Three groups control over 70 per cent of national daily circulation and 80 per cent of Sunday circulation, and are extending empires into broadcast media.

## Expropriation

A socialist government would ensure diversity by expropriating the mass circulation press from its present capitalist owners, and use the resources to allow all legal political views access to print. Real diversity and democracy cannot happen while the rich and powerful have a stranglehold on ownership.

Not only political parties, but mass organisations of all kinds would be given the resources to produce their own papers; such moves would have to be backed up by democratising access to broadcast media, especially television.

In the here and now, the labour movement urgently needs to build its own mass circulation press, making the basic socialist case in a professional,

popular and appealing fashion to counterbalance Wapping.

## Potential

Despite the disaster of *News on Sunday*, largely attributable to the incompetence of those behind it, the potential circulation is probably there.

But socialist papers don't get advertising revenue from capitalist businesses. Many distributors refuse to circulate them, either from ideological considerations or because there is insufficient profit in it.

State financial support for minority viewpoint publications, with no political strings attached, and a legal right to nationwide distribution, are already in place in some capitalist countries. Papers of the Fourth International benefit accordingly.

A socialist government would also improve the education system that has left six million adults (disproportionately working class) with reading difficulties. A transition to socialism will raise political awareness and interest in real issues beyond recognition. The ramifications for press standards are obvious.

Labour MP Clive Soley, working with the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, is to introduce a private members bill effectively giving right of reply to demonstrable lies.

An independent statutory body would investigate complaints of distortion, and be empowered to order corrections at least as prominent as the offending story to be published where appropriate. This sensible initiative should certainly be supported.



# All girls together

## A league of their own

Starring Geena Davis, Lori Petty, Tom Hanks, Madonna

Reviewed by Kate Ahrens

In 1943, the All American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) was established due to fears that because of the war, men's professional baseball would have to be suspended.

It turned out not to be the case, but the AAGPBL lasted until 1954. 'A league of their own' is a commemoration of the first year, when the biggest obstacle was overcome, that of getting the American baseball watching public to accept the idea of women professional baseball players.

It's not important to care, or even know anything, about baseball in order to enjoy this film - what is essential however, is to be the sort of person who stays in specially to watch slushy American TV films.

### Suspense

Viewed as an exercise in acting technique, it is very good, and the subject matter is an interesting one, but there is no suspense, no involvement in the story to make the audience feel for the characters.

Dotty (Davis) and Kit (Petty) are sisters who are discovered by a baseball talent scout.

The film follows Dotty through the tryouts for the league and the subsequent tour of the country with their team the Rockford Peaches.

Jim Duggan (Hanks) is the manager of the team, an ex-baseball player who fell out of the game and into the

bottle. As the film progresses, Duggan sobers up, and begins to take an interest in the team - a rather simplistic view of the problems of alcoholism.

This is not a feminist film. It only marginally recognises the dilemma that was raised by bringing women into the workforce during the war.

### Cheap laughs

When one woman is forced to take her son on tour with them, this is only a device for a few cheap laughs, not as an example of how hard it really was for the women who worked during the war to get the material support they needed.

'A league of their own' is a nice film, nothing very hard hitting, but enjoyable enough if what you're looking for is an undemanding, reminiscence about the way it was.



Geena Davis struts her stuff

# Riding high in the saddle

## Unforgiven

Starring and directed by Clint Eastwood

Reviewed by Liam Mac Uaid

Westerns are not popular with socialists. Faced with a choice between an acknowledged masterpiece like John Ford's 'The Searchers' and a low budget account of the 1911 Melbourne gaslighters' strike, I suspect most *Socialist Outlook* readers would plump for the latter.

The fact that westerns are white America's own mythology causes an almost irrational aversion to them on the part of lefties. In defence of the genre I have found myself arguing that the 'Magnificent Seven' is an analogy for the revolutionary party leading



closest recreation of the West you are ever likely to see on the cinema screen.

The legendary gunslingers are revealed to be murderous drunks with strong nerves and quick reflexes. Gene Hackman's sheriff keeps order by bullwhipping offenders and suspects - the sort of policing the film's star is usually accused of promoting.

Yet we have no sympathy for the defender of order when confronted with the paid killer. Eastwood is first seen rolling around in a pigsty and can no longer mount his horse.

His accomplice Morgan Freeman loses his nerve after putting one bullet into his first victim, and Eastwood - with whom the audience is meant to identify - has to finish the job. The myopic Schofield Kid renounces killing after shooting his first victim in a toilet.

The theme of killing - how the victim feels, how the killer feels - recurs throughout the film. Eastwood murders two strangers to make money for his children, and kills indiscriminately to avenge his murdered friend.

His character has a practical and idealistic conception of his trade. This was not how Gary Cooper used his gun.

A review can only reveal a fragment of such a complex work. The second time I saw the film was better than the first. 'Unforgiven' will repay a dozen viewings.

the masses in their own liberation.

But with Clint Eastwood's new film, 'Unforgiven', it is not necessary to resort to such contortions to describe what will come to be judged as one of the finest westerns and one of the best films ever made.

'Unforgiven' is in the mould of such classic westerns as 'High Noon' and 'Red River' rather than the violent stylised films that made Eastwood's name.

It is far more grimly realistic and amoral than the conventions of the day permitted directors to be in the forties and fifties. All the traditional elements of the western are turned upside down to give the



A radical change of image for Eastwood

300 Club - more fun than Sun Bingo!

# Money, money, money!

For just £5 month you get the chance to win £50 in our monthly draw.

We give better odds than the football pools and we're a more deserving cause than Littlewoods! So get your standing order in now to be sure of a chance to win.

This month Sean Tunney wins the first prize of £50, while Glenn Sutherland walks away with second prize.

## Yes, count me in!

My bank \_\_\_\_\_  
Bank address \_\_\_\_\_  
My full name \_\_\_\_\_  
My bank sorting code \_\_\_\_\_  
My account number \_\_\_\_\_  
My address \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay to the Co-operative bank PLC 78/80 Cornhill, London EC3V 3NJ (sorting code 08-02-28) for the account of Socialist Outlook Supporters fund (account number 70186297) the sum of:

\_\_\_\_\_ (in words)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (in figures)  
on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ (month)  
1992 and thereafter every month until countermanded by me in writing.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete and return to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Do not send directly to your bank.



## 25 years after murder of Che Guevara, John Lister explores

ON OCTOBER 8, 1967, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara was wounded and captured in Bolivia when the small guerrilla force he was leading was ambushed by troops. The next day, on orders from the CIA and Bolivian top brass, Guevara was murdered. He was 39 years old.

Guevara was a man of consistent courage and revolutionary dedication. He had been one of the core fighters who sailed with Fidel Castro in 1956 to launch the guerrilla struggle that ousted the Batista dictatorship in Cuba.

He had held top government posts under Castro as capitalism was overturned – head of the Industry ministry (INRA), head of the National Bank. He had negotiated key trade agreements for sale of sugar to Peking and to Moscow that ensured the survival of the Revolution.

Yet none of these roles grabbed the attention of the world's youth as dramatically as his tragic death on a failed and ill-conceived expedition in Bolivia.

Indeed the death of Guevara was also the birth of the Guevara legend; the image of the courageous, selfless revolutionary internationalist was perpetuated.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when opposition to the Vietnam War reached mass proportions, the walls and doors of countless students and youth throughout the world featured posters bearing the handsome features of the slain martyr to the struggle against imperialism.

### Trotskyists

Even those whose Trotskyist politics should have made them more critical set aside some of their usual criteria and mistakenly proclaimed Che to be (unconsciously, of course) one of theirs.

It had been Che Guevara who summed up the need for international solidarity, with his immortal call for 'Two, three, many Vietnams' to break the isolation of the Vietnamese fighters and break the grip of imperialism.

But those who have sought to make Guevara a political model as well as a splendid example of a committed anti-imperialist fighter are forced to overlook Che's real weaknesses, and ignore the lessons to be learned from his struggles.

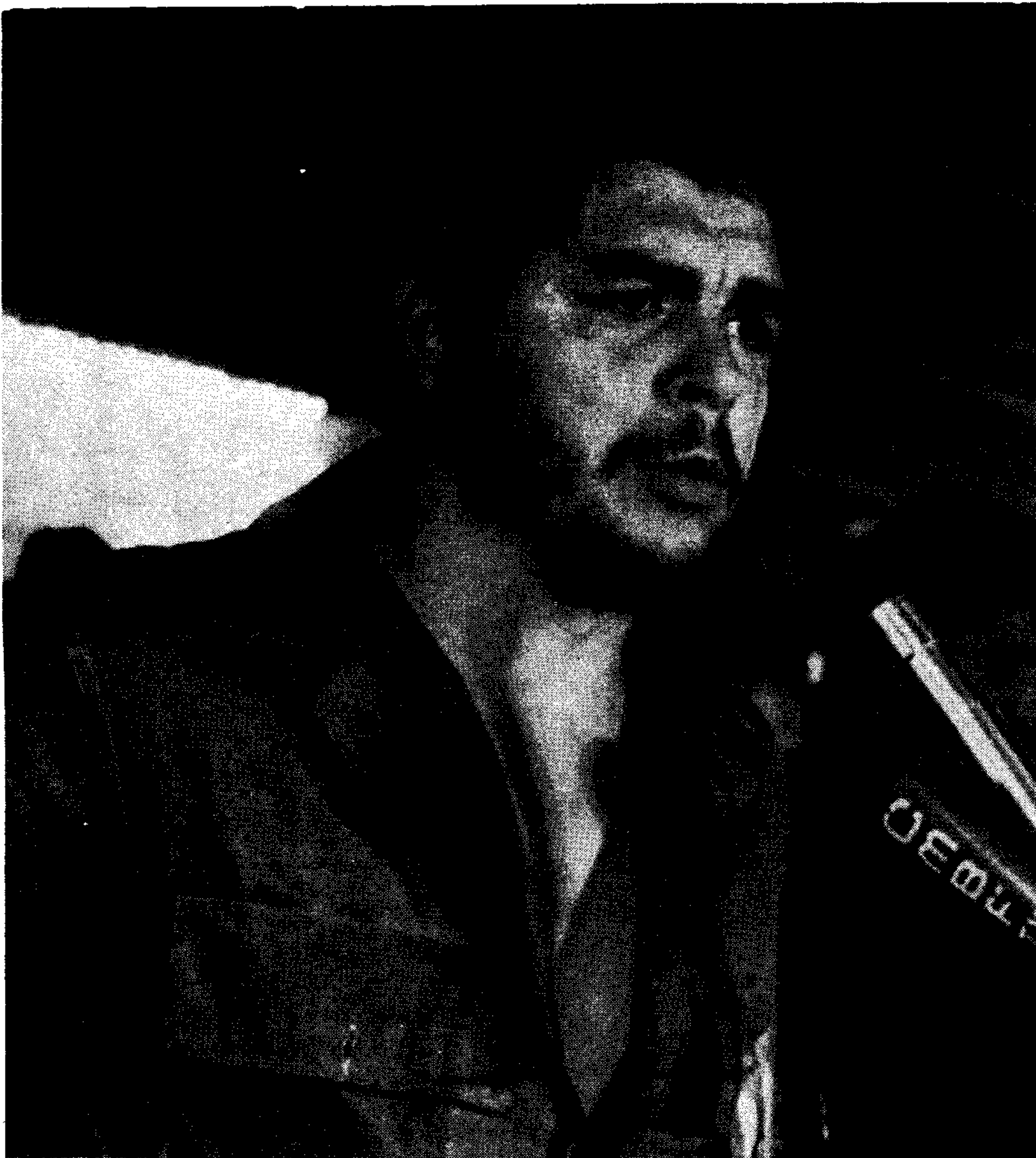
Che Guevara was by birth an Argentine, born in 1928 in Rosario, the eldest of five children in a liberal, left wing family.

After qualifying as a doctor in 1953 he travelled northwards through Latin America, he arrived in Guatemala, where the democratically elected Arbenz government had expropriated uncultivated land from the US United Fruit Company, and was facing a mounting offensive orchestrated by the CIA.

Che, who had read Marx and Lenin (but apparently no Trotsky) made contact with left wing circles and attempted to join the feeble resistance to the US invasion. But the Arbenz regime refused to arm the workers and peasants to fight imperialism, and the Guatemalan Communist Party, hand in glove with Arbenz, did little more.

Forced to flee Guatemala, but clearly learning little about the politics of Stalinism, Che moved to Mexico, where he met up with exiled Cubans, including Raul Castro, brother of Fidel.

On hearing of the proposed guerrilla expedition to Cuba to overthrow the brutal and corrupt Batista dictatorship,



# The lessons behind the legend

Che signed on as the third of the band to sail in the *Granma*.

He became a commander in Fidel Castro's Rebel Army, which began its struggle in the teeth of political opposition from the Cuban Stalinists, organised in the so-called Popular Socialist Party.

The old Communist Party had from 1938 to 1944 played a despicable role in alliance with Batista, who saw them as a convenient means of controlling the working class through the Cuban Confederation of Workers. The CP even had two ministers in Batista's government from 1942.

The Cuban Stalinist strategy in the 1950s was to seek an alliance with sections of Cuban capitalists against Batista. This policy was only dropped late in 1958, when it was clear that the armed campaign waged by Castro's and other guerrilla forces was winning the upper hand.

Despite this, after the Revolution it was not the Stalinists, but the small Cuban Trotskyist forces who were repressed in 1961. Activists were jailed for selling literature.

Guevara, while conceding that the smashing of their printing press had been a mistake, in 1962 defended the repression of the Trotskyists whose call for the working class to exert pressure on the government 'was prejudicing the discipline necessary at this time.'

He insisted that 'You cannot be for the revolution and against the Cuban Communist Party.'

Indeed Guevara himself went out of his way to identify himself with the wretched PSP tradition. He even spoke at the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the PSP's newspaper *Hoy*, which had begun life under the legal protection of Batista, claiming that the party 'was the ideological precursor of our revolution'.

Politically, Guevara's version of Marxism was a Stalinist version. He described the Stalinist-dominated Communist parties without qualification as 'Marxist-Leninist'.

In formulating his theoretical views on 'Building a Party of the Working Class' (1963) it is clear that his party model is a *Stalinist* model, with no internal democracy, no right to form tendencies and factions: none of Trotsky's critique of Stalinism and bureaucratism in the USSR was taken on board.

There was a contradiction here, of course. Unlike the official Communist Parties, Guevara was no fan of alliances with the national bourgeoisies in Latin America or elsewhere: his view was in fact much closer to the Trotskyist conception of 'permanent revolution':

"Faced with the dilemma of choosing between the people or imperialism, the weak national bourgeoisies choose imperialism and definitively betray their country. In this part of the world the possibility is almost totally gone for there to be a peaceful transition to socialism."

As late as 1967, Che appeared to embrace the same tacit commitment to

a conception which implied permanent revolution:

"...the indigenous bourgeoisies have lost all capacity to oppose imperialism – if they ever had any – and are only dragged along behind it like a caboose. There are no other alternatives. Either a socialist revolution or a caricature of revolution."

But though he sided with left guerrilla splits in Latin American Community Parties, Che never followed through the logic of this argument to challenge the official line emanating from Moscow, or to study the writings of Trotsky.

### Peasantry

One obstacle to him embracing a clear perspective of permanent revolution was his persistent focus upon the method of guerrilla warfare, and thus on downplaying the role of Latin America's growing urban working class and emphasising the peasantry as the key revolutionary force.

Summing up the Cuban revolutionary experience as early as 1960, he insisted that the lessons for the whole of Latin America were:

"1. Popular forces can win a war against the army.

2 It is not always necessary to wait until all the conditions for revolution exist: the insurrectional centre can create them.

3. In underdeveloped Latin America the arena for struggle must be basically the countryside."

Going further, he argued that 'The guerrilla fighter is above all an agrarian revolutionary'.

In these one-sided conclusions, which he never revised, we can see the seeds of Guevara's own tragic and wasted death. It is a particular irony that his own guerrilla grouping in Bolivia was betrayed by local peasants who saw them as strange intruders and reported them to the police.

No other Latin American country was as rotten-ripe as Cuba for the regime to be toppled by a voluntaristic guerrilla struggle.

Thousands of brave anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist fighters went pointlessly to their deaths trying to apply the 'Cuban model' in countries where it stood no chance of working.

Despite this final failure most genuine socialists, however, will feel a glow of affection for Che's heroic effort to put his own revolutionary, internationalist convictions into practice. As the barbarism of the US onslaught on Vietnam seemed unchallenged, Che spoke for millions:

"Let us develop genuine proletarian internationalism, with international proletarian armies. Let the flag under which we fight be the sacred cause of the liberation of humanity, so that to die under the colours of Vietnam, Venezuela, Guatemala, Laos, Guinea, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil – to mention only the current scenes of armed struggle – will be equally glorious and desirable for a Latin American, an African and even a European.

So Che the Argentine, having renounced his honorary Cuban citizenship, died stateless under Bolivian skies.

He deserved not to be patronised and adapted to with grovelling tributes proclaiming him a 'revolutionary of action', but politically challenged on his basic misconceptions so that millions more could learn the correct way forward.

Today's youth can be urged to celebrate Che's struggles and successes, and emulate his dedication and his courage: but not his politics.



# Latin America Can the military come back?

By Phil Hearse

The vote to impeach Brazilian president Fernando Collor de Mello on corruption charges opens up a period of acute danger for the ruling class in that country.

In the 1990 elections Collor, an unknown businessman who had been 'invented' in a huge advertising and TV campaign, just managed to shake off the challenge of the leader of the Workers Party (PT), Ignacio de Silva - universally known as 'Lula'.

## Mass leader

Lula, mass leader of the early 1980s workers upsurge in the Sao Paulo industrial region, came a very close second, getting millions of votes. The PT is the most radical mass party in Latin America, with 600,000 members; it dominates the CUT trade union federation, and has supporters ranging from radical Christians to influential Trotskyist currents.

A new presidential election would undoubtedly see another big PT campaign. The bourgeoisie, aided by the imperialists, will do everything possible to keep Lula out. For the first time in years there is

open discussion about the possibility of a military comeback; the army took power in Brazil in a 1964 coup and maintained its grip for twenty years.

## 'Democratisation'

In the past decade a much-vaunted 'democratisation' process has swept the Latin America. The military regimes which took power in the 1960s and '70s have faded from the scene. Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Brazil now have civilian governments. In El Salvador negotiations between the left-wing FMLN fighters and the Christiani regime have led to the start of a shaky and uncertain 'democratisation' process.

But the attempted coup in Venezuela, the military overthrow of Aristide in Haiti and the army-backed 'auto-coup' by president Fujimoro in Peru have raised again the danger of a military comeback. But most of all the danger lies in the catastrophic economic and social situation affecting the continent.

## Powerless

The new 'democratic' governments are powerless to resolve the situation, which arises mainly from the debt crisis and

IMF-imposed austerity programmes. Chile is a typical example.

Here the generals who overthrew the Allende government in September 1973 imposed a savage deflationary and privatisation programme, advised by the 'Chicago boys' - US economists under the spell of Milton Friedman.

This did indeed 'stabilise' the economy and reduce runaway inflation. The main monument to this process was the creation of a sizeable middle class, with instant access to all the consumer toys of advanced western countries.

But for the workers, the price has been unemployment and mass poverty.

Numerous theories about the role of the military have been devised. But the reality is that the spate of military coups - Bolivia in 1971, Chile and Uruguay in 1973, Argentina in 1976 - had their roots



in the inability of normal 'democratic' politics to constrain the struggle of the workers.

There is no great hidden secret here; military dictatorship, like fascism, is a last resort for a ruling class threatened with the loss of its power and privileges.

The mass movement continent-wide is now at a much lower ebb than in the early 1970s. The Cuban-inspired guerrilla groups have collapsed and the workers' movement has suffered some spectacular defeats.

## Out of step

But Brazil is out of step with many of these trends. Struggle during the twenty-year military dictatorship was at a low level. Meanwhile the partial industrialisation of the country immensely strengthened the social weight of the working class.

The rebirth of Brazil's workers' movement, especially the development of the PT and the CUT, has produced a radical generation of workers who have not experienced massive defeats.

## Impeachment

The campaign for the impeachment of corrupt yuppie Collor has renewed mass radicalism among youth and students.

A radical left government in Brazil would be a tremendous blow to imperialism. It would knock back the myths of the complete defeat of working class struggle; it would have an enormous impact world-wide.

In Latin America itself it would shake-off the demoralising effects of the overthrow of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the stalemate in El Salvador.

## US aid

For this reason the Brazilian bourgeoisie can expect massive aid from the US to keep Lula and the PT out of power.

But the military - already primed up with generous pay increases from the bankrupt regime - is waiting in the wings if media manipulation and electoral fraud should fail.

As the experience of Allende proved in the 1970s the question of government in Latin America cannot be abstracted from the question of *power* - and to secure power, a parliamentary majority is not enough. The mass action of the working class is essential - together with a leadership prepared to carry through the fight for a workers' government.

## Revolutionary

The PT is a mass radical socialist party - way to the left of European social democracy. It has a powerful revolutionary component.

But for all that it has a growing social democratic wing, based on the parliamentary fraction and some of its numerous city and town councillors.

Much will depend on the outcome of the political struggle over the future course of this party.

## Welsh Labour discusses future of the valleys

by Ed George

For many people the South Wales Valleys are synonymous with coal mines. The idea owes more to tradition than current economic reality.

In 1920 some 270,000 people were employed in the deep mining of coal in South Wales. Today the industry employs less than 1,000.

Traditional Welsh industry has been increasingly replaced by low wage, low skill jobs and a growing reliance on the service sector. The social and economic fabric of the Valleys is on the point of collapse.

### Conference

This reality formed the backdrop to the conference, 'A Post Mining Culture - A New Agenda For The Valleys', held in Neath on September 12.

The conference (organised by Neath Labour MP Peter Hain) was attended by over 200 people, most of them labour movement activists. It coincided with the publication of the Neath Declaration, which calls for a 'social and economic plan for the Valleys ... rather than simply accepting gratefully any job offered.'

Central to the Neath Declaration's demands is the call for a democratic

assembly for Wales, a view supported by speaker after speaker at the conference.

'The demand for an assembly is not a diversion from bread and butter issues,' said one. 'It signals our determination to address them.'

### Unemployment

The Maastricht treaty was also discussed. The Declaration argues against Maastricht's insistence on monetarist convergence, which would lead to a Europe run by bankers, with mass unemployment permanently entrenched in areas like Wales.

Some speakers at the conference took a different view. In particular, Wayne David, MEP for South Wales, described Maastricht as an 'internationalist' response to the dangers of 'rampant nationalism' in Europe.

Although recent events place a question mark over the precise future of Maastricht, issues such as the drive towards Europe-wide price stability and the construction of Fortress Europe are very much alive. The conference indicated that a big debate on these questions is opening up in the Welsh labour movement.

The current economic and social transformation of the Valleys could, in the words of the Declaration, 'lead to a weakening of the ties of labourism,

if not a complete break, is the absence of socialist renewal.'

The Declaration is a response by the most forward thinking section of the Welsh labour bureaucracy to this possibility. In essence, it represents an attempt at a renewal of labourism of Wales.

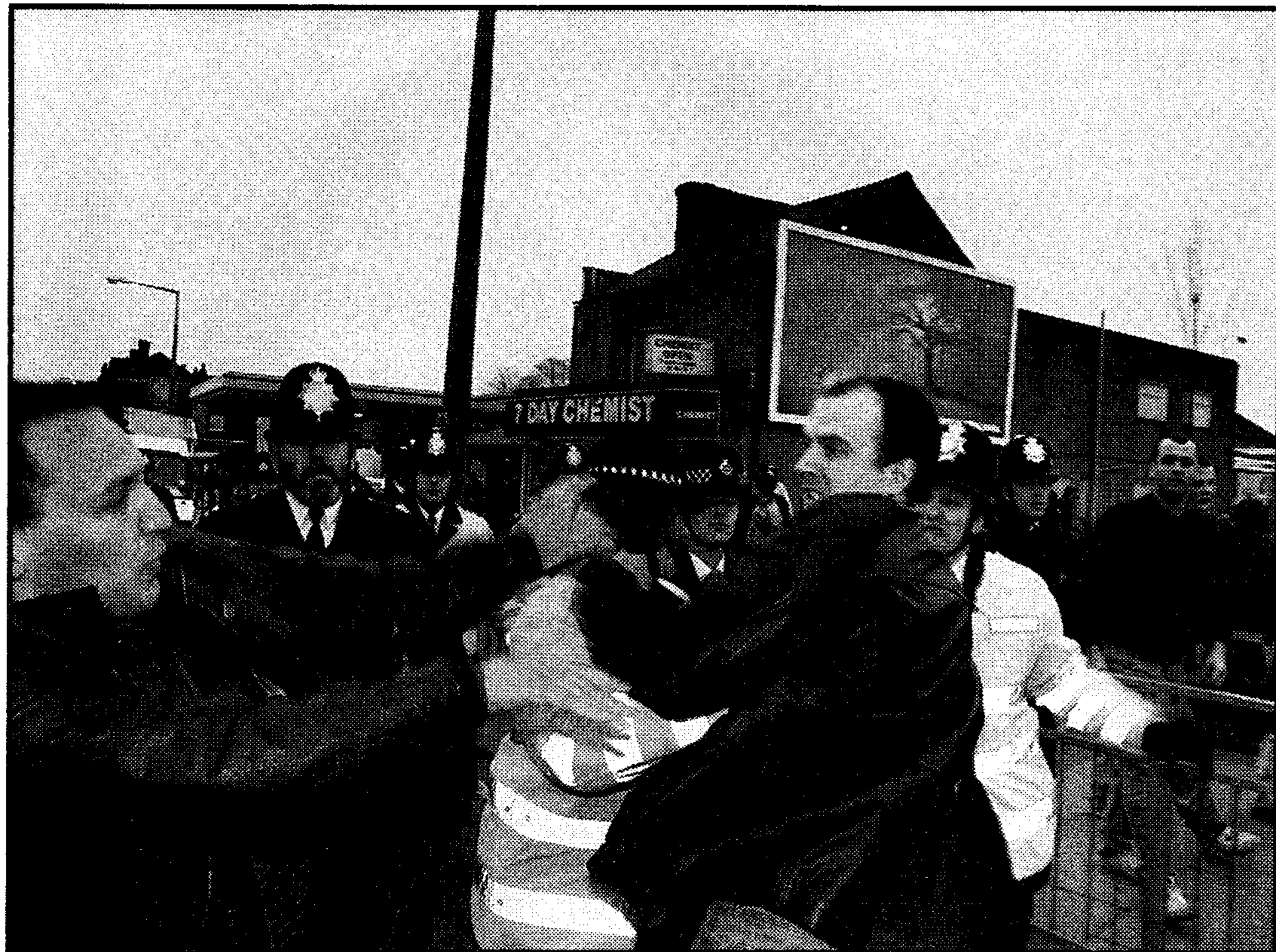
The Declaration's very ties to labourism, however, mean that ultimately it falls short of what is needed in practical terms by the Welsh working class.

It calls for the regeneration of the Welsh economy through better training, state intervention and EC regional aid. While this approach is radical compared to government policy, it amounts to little more than the post-war state-led restructuring of the Welsh economy which signally failed to reverse the long term decline of the Valleys.

But the Declaration's demand for a Welsh assembly and its call to 'sweep away the old paternalism' of the Welsh labour movement means that the conference was the best opportunity in years for socialists to discuss the key issues facing Welsh workers.

Hain made it clear that the conference marked the beginning of a process. Its is a process that all socialists in Wales should both welcome and participate in.





Taking it to the streets: how to deal with the fascist threat

Paul Mattsson

## BNP take 20% in East End by-election

by a local activist

The Isle of Dogs is the bit of London's East End that fills the horseshoe bend in the River Thames on the 'Eastenders' intro.

What TV hasn't told you is that in the council by-election of October 1, the fascist British National Party candidate polled 657 votes – 20 per cent of the poll.

Liberal Democrat-run Tower Hamlets council has been prosecuted by the Commission for Racial Equality for aspects of its housing policy.

A more subtle policy has reduced the numbers of black families moving into the Liberal north of the borough and sharply increased numbers moving into Labour's heartland in the south.

Liberal Democrat 'community politicians' working as 'the Liberal focus team' have used this policy to their own advantage on the Island, blaming 'homeless families' for the poor housing conditions of 'Island people' and 'sons and daughters'.

Their tactics undoubtedly contributed to the high BNP vote, while

winning only 1,178 votes for themselves.

Labour scraped a victory with 1,275 votes. The Smithites who hogged control of the campaign will probably be satisfied with the result. However, a large part of their campaign pandered to racist pressure.

Labour's first leaflet put across the message that under the decentralised housing system, they had housed more 'sons and daughters' than the Liberal Democrats in their areas.

Labour's failure to repudiate the racism of their opponents also bolstered the BNP vote.

### Shock

It's been a shock to see the BNP marching 40 strong through council estates, chanting 'stop the Asian invasion' while teams leaflet blocks along their route, just down the road from Cable Street.

With little prospect of official support from the mainstream parties, the local community is organising to take on the BNP.

Contact Island Committee Against the Fascists c/o Island House, Roserton Street, London E14.

## Asian taxi driver murdered

AN ASIAN taxi driver in Birmingham was brutally knifed to death by three racist thugs after going to the aid of a workmate being beaten up outside the Red and White taxi base in the city centre.

Two days after the killing last month, some 3,000 people attended a prayer ceremony at the Central Mosque, with 1,000 taxi drivers forming a procession to the scene of the murder.

Unfortunately, the Anti-Nazi League (led by the Socialist Workers Party) have pre-

turely called a demonstration for October 10 without even consulting relatives, in a sectarian bid to outflank CARF, the Anti-Racist Alliance and Anti-Fascist Action.

This will only alienate the black community and the labour movement. Birmingham CARF believes they should cancel the demonstration and participate in a united front memorial committee.

For more information, contact TAMC/CARF, PO Box 1854, Camp Hill, Birmingham B11 1NJ.

## Beat back midlands fascists!

by Jack Starkey and Pete Bloomer

Labour movement activists in Walsall, West Midlands, have called an anti-Nazi march and rally in Bloxwich – a series of isolated and impoverished local housing estates – after a frightening rise in organised racist activity in recent months.

Meanwhile, an action committee against police harassment is gaining wide support in nearby Sandwell following an alleged police assault on an Asian family.

Fascists are operating openly, mounting Klu Klux Klan-style cross burnings, Blood and Honour gigs, distribution of literature inciting race hate, and street paper sales in a bid to recruit unemployed and frustrated local youth.

The far right has had a base in the area since Tory MP Enoch Powell's notorious 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968, and is currently being reinforced by resources sent in from outside.

Walsall borough Labour Party and the trades council are mobilising on October 31 to drive the British National Party and National Front rats back to their sewers.

Bloxwich is no Rostock, but unless the local black community is defended now, the fascists will gain in confidence and use the

area as a base to spread its activity in the Midlands. Support from all over the area is essential to build the largest possible turnout.

In Sandwell, anti-racist activists are accusing West Bromwich police of physically attacking six members of an Ahmed family after breaking into their home following a complaint about noise from a white neighbour.

A four year old child was violently shaken and a 60 year old woman assaulted as the officers shouted racist insults, it is claimed. The family's mother and an independent witness were apparently detained for five hours and denied access to a solicitor.

Serious charges – including assault – have now been laid against four members of the family. Two days after the incident, some 1,000 people attended a protest meeting, leading to the formation of the action committee.

A public rally has won support from Labour councillors, the Indian Workers' Association, the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, and the NALGO local government union. Pickets of the family's court appearances have been up to 70 strong.

**Bloxwich demo: Assemble 12.30, King George's Park, Bloxwich, and march to Walsall town hall for a rally. Further information: telephone 0922 22586. Ahmed family information: Sandwell Racial Equality Council 021 525 1488 or Indian Workers' Association 021 551 4679.**

## 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**

## Bad press for bikers

I AM disgusted and indeed mystified as to why your 'cartoon' in the July/August issue portrays a biker as a stereotype Nazi thug. While there are undoubtedly racist bikers, there are no more, proportionately, than in any other section of society.

If anything, bikers are less prone to racism, and more often victims of discrimination rather than perpetrators.

Some bikers do still wear Nazi regalia, but this is almost invariably purely for the shock effect, or, increasingly, simply because the wearers have seen the same gear worn in old photographs dating from the sixties and seventies.

It is this era that wearers are identifying with and trying to recreate, not the third reich.

I have been a biker since the age of 17. I was sacked from my last job

for organising a trade union. At the industrial tribunal, the bosses attempted to procure photographs of me in my motorcycle leathers to demonstrate that I was not fit to work for their posh company.

This despite the fact that I changed into a suit on arrival every morning and wore my hair short.

The Motorcycle Action Group prohibits the sale or promotion of racist merchandise at its functions. Moves are afoot to deny membership to those actively involved in promoting racist or fascist activities.

In future, send your stereotyped junk copy to the Tory shit-sheets of Fleet Street, *The Sun* and *Daily Mail*, where it belongs. Don't print it in a publication which calls itself socialist.

**Neil F. Liversidge  
National Chairman,  
Motorcycle Action Group  
West Yorks**

## Help build Socialist Outlook - the politically literate Socialist Worker

Come on you tight bastards. Send some money to the *Socialist Outlook* fund drive.

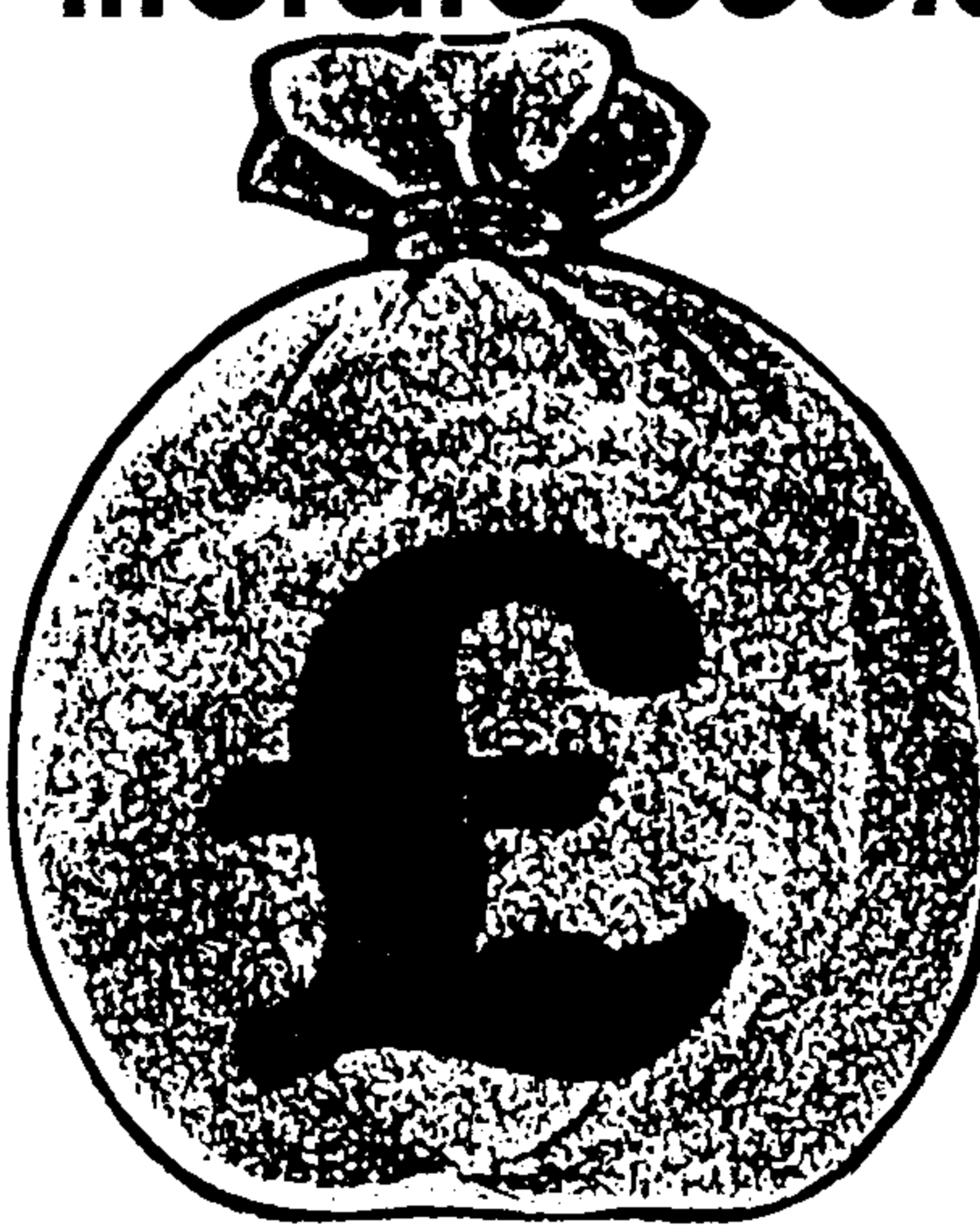
Britain's best left wing paper is being produced on equipment that would shame your local free-sheet. NUJ minimum wages? Don't make us laugh.

One of our computers broke down in Blackpool; at best it'll cost a packet to repair, at worst it will need to be replaced altogether.

Not only does *Socialist Outlook* give you the same

old 'kick out the Tories!' front page banner headlines you already get everywhere else, we give you the facts, figures and analysis to make the case.

Not only do we tell you that the historical



crisis of mankind objectively reduces to a question of proletarian leadership, we actively avoid Trot jargon in doing so.

Our coverage of international issues – frequently written by Fourth Internationalist socialists active in the country concerned – is second to none. Okay, so we don't publish any of Sean Matgamna's poetry. Nobody's perfect.

We need eight grand fast. If the inflow of funds continues at the current rate, Britain will be out of the recession before we get there.

It's down to you, the readers, to cough up. You can (a) send large cheques/postal orders/bundles of

tenners to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU; (b) join our 300 Club regular prize draw for a small monthly stake (details on page 11); (c) take a regular bundle of the paper to sell at labour movement meetings.





## Getting the low down

### Real thing

In the last issue Low Down whinged about the pay of GEC chairman Lord Weinstock. But his four hundred thousand is nothing; the chief executive of Coca Cola earns £37 million a year, according to figures released last week.

### Loony

Loony right 'libertarian' Tory MP Teresa Gorman has made a practical demonstration of her contempt for the all-powerful state. She appears on Monday before Camberwell magistrates charged with speeding, and driving without a license or insurance.

### Workhouse

More on the loony right. Pet Thatcherite economist Prof. Patrick Minford comes clean in last Monday's FT. Victorian workhouses, he says, 'were very enlightened for the time' and could be revived to cut public spending. The learned professor also likes the Sun.

### Enlightened

As the Manchester Piccadilly sackings show, BR is a very enlightened employer. Rail worker of 46 years Alex Bryson discovered this when he went out for a lunch-time half of shandy on his last day before early retirement. He got sacked, losing his £20,000 golden handshake.

Eventually he was reinstated. But colleague Andy Lockwood (30 years service) who had a pint of shandy stays sacked.

Meanwhile a corruption trial at the Old Bailey has been hearing of the lavish bribes (booze, fags, slap-up meals, trips abroad, that sort of thing) doled out to BR executives.

### Integrity

One of the remarkable things about British capitalism is the integrity of its public life. Two examples came up this week.

The US senate sub-committee investigating the collapse of the BCCI bank, which resulted in tens of thousands of people losing their all, found that the Bank of England 'colluded with the suppression of the true facts' about the bank. Including the fact that it was widely used to launder drug money.

And last week an accountant working for the Serious Fraud Office on the BCCI case was jailed for trying to sell documents to one of the suspects.

### Panic

Thousands of Italians withdrew their savings from banks in a panic last week amid rumours that the government was going to freeze deposits. Rich families with suitcases full of cash headed for Switzerland. Others crossed into France to open deposit accounts denominated in French francs.

### Cynic

Outlook's computers have a very intelligent spell-checker. Alternative spellings it flags up are 'cynic' for Kinnock, 'lament' for Lamont and even more politically astute, 'bluer' for Blair.

### Nuclear shit

In April the sewage plant at the Trawsfynydd nuclear station twice overflowed into a nearby stream, according to the Health and Safety executive. Why does a nuclear plant have its own sewage works; and why is it a potential nuclear hazard? Presumably there is something about the workers' natural discharges which means it has to be segregated.

# Unions hang on ... against the odds

By Dave Osler

TRADE unions are down but a long way from out, two new industrial relations surveys demonstrate. Resilience is most marked in the public sector, with union influence weakest in private manufacturing.

The results of the semi-official 1990 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey - sponsored by the Department of Employment, the Economic and Social Research Council, the Policy Studies Institute and conciliation service Acas - have just been released.

Union membership in the national workforce declined from 58 per cent in 1984 to 48 per cent. A majority of manual workers, 51 per cent compared to 66 per cent in 1984,

are still unionised. The figure is 43 per cent for non-manual workers (1984:51 per cent).

Since workplaces with fewer than 25 employees are excluded from the survey, these may be overestimates of up to 10 percentage points.

Numbers of workers covered by collective bargaining arrangements, and shop stewards, closed shops, and strike days are all fewer.

Some 13 per cent of workplaces are still 100 per cent unionised (1984: 18 per cent). The closed shop still covers 4 per cent of manual workers.

Some 10 per cent of workplaces experienced a strike (1984: 19 per cent), with pay the main issue.



Burnsall: struggle at the point of production

This figure, however, reached 25 per cent in the public sector - mainly in local government and higher education - but was just 3 per cent of private sector workplaces. About one third of strikes involve picketing, considerably more than in 1984.

### Recognition

Collective bargaining still covers 54 per cent, down from 71 per cent. According to WIRS, unions are still recognised for collective bargaining in 53 per cent of workplaces, with marked declines in engineering and the print.

Yet some of the WIRS findings are contradicted by

a cross-European survey by Cranfield business school and accountants Price Waterhouse, which found that seventy per cent of larger British employers still recognise unions. This figure is broadly in line with the European average.

The preliminary findings state: 'The much-vaunted predictions of the terminal decline, or even death, of the trade union movement seem, to say the least, much exaggerated.'

The three year comparative study of 12 European countries embraced 5,500 workplaces with over 200 employees in both the private and public sectors.

However, in many cases, only a minority of staff are unionised. Only in Denmark, Spain, Ireland and Portugal found more than have of respondents reporting union density of over 50 per cent. The UK figure is closer to 40 per cent.

British bosses take more industrial relations decisions independently of headquarters than their continental counterparts, with a higher degree of centralisation evident in southern Europe.

## Burnsall strikers to call for demo

by Bob Smith

STRIKERS at Burnsall metal finishing in Smethwick near Birmingham - now out for 17 weeks - have called a demonstration and rally in conjunction with their union GMB, the local black community and the labour movement.

A date has not yet been finalised.

GMB general secretary John Edmonds and his TGWU counterpart Bill Morris have both agreed to speak.

The two unions, now holding exploratory merger discussions, are to start a joint recruitment campaign in metal finishing plants in the area.

Pay, hours, conditions and health standards are some of the worst in Britain, with very few workplaces organised. Typical wages are £100 for a 40 hour week.

The strikers received a boost last week with a victory in the courts after six of them faced a frame-up. A scab mutilated himself after a heated discussion on the dispute and claimed strikers had done it.

The police as usual supported his claims, then

found they could not create any evidence. The case collapsed in court.

Channel Four, Guardian and Independent journalists have now discovered the dispute, and the increased media profile can only help embarrass firms like Jaguar that still deal with Burnsall, and may even provoke secondary action.

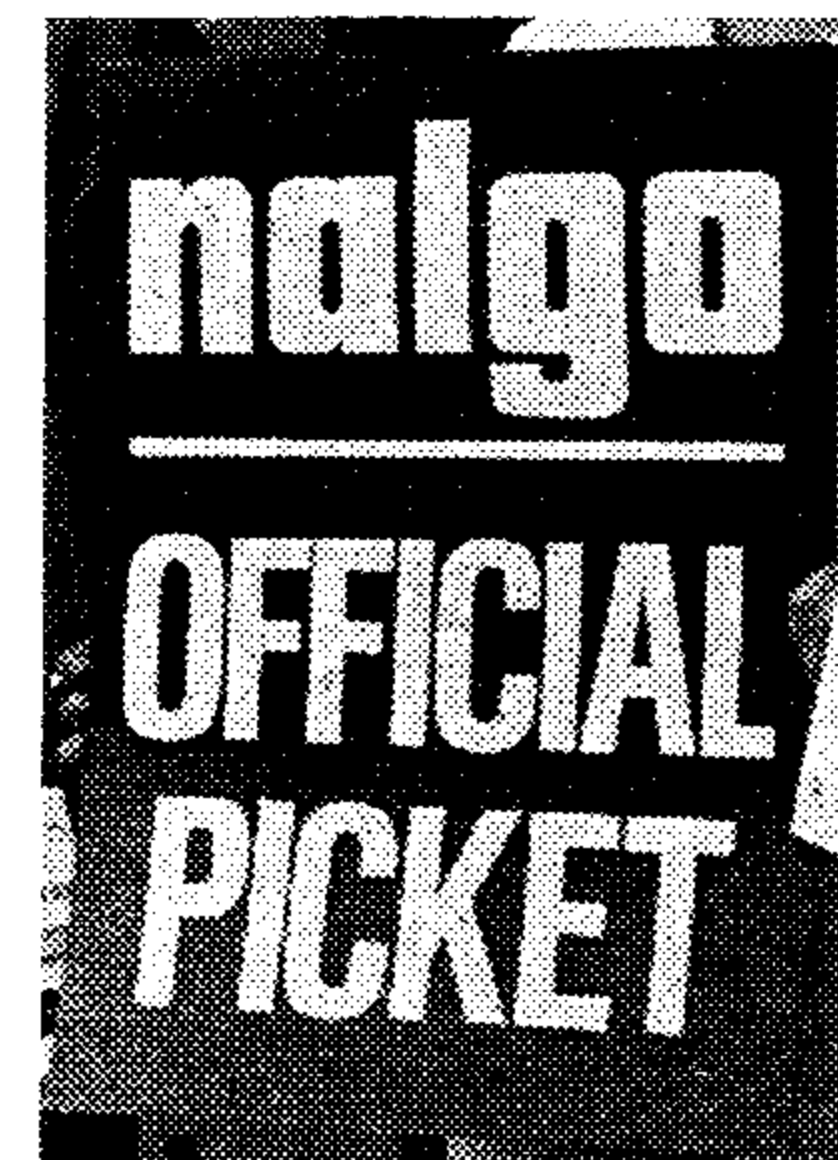
Tribunals for equal pay, unfair dismissal, deductions and injury compensation look well placed, with Burnsall bosses not having a leg to stand on.

Unfortunately the Socialist Workers Party have been excluded from Friday evening solidarity meetings.

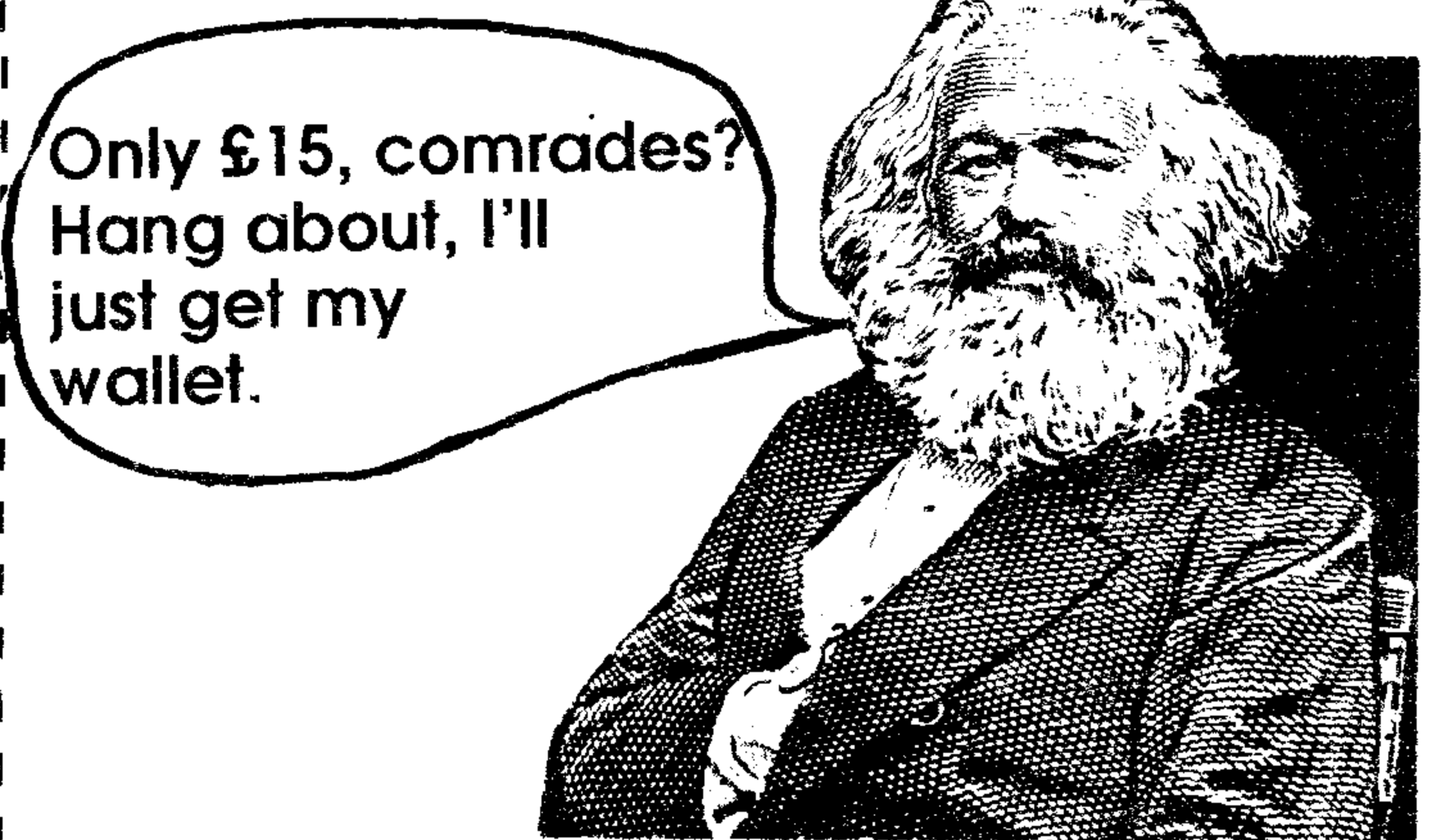
GMB official Jo Quigley took exception to their 'doom and gloom' perspective on the dispute and their portrayal of him as a self-seeking, cynical bureaucrat.

The SWP's solidarity effort has been very successful, bringing in lots of cash and messages of support. But secondary action and mass pickets have never been on GMB's agenda.

Donations, messages of support, speakers from Jo Quigley, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen, B63 3HP. 021 550 4888.



## Subscribe to Socialist Outlook



I would like to take out a subscription to Socialist Outlook. I enclose £.....

### Subscription rates

- EC Europe (including Britain): 1 year's subscription (24 issues): £15  Six months' subscription (12 issues): £8
- Non-EC Europe: 1 year £20  Six months £11
- Rest of the World: 1 year £24  Six months £13

I'd like to know more about Socialist Outlook

I include a donation of £.....

Name.....

Address.....

Return to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU



Published fortnightly

50p

Solidarity price £1  
Strikers and  
claimants 25p

No 29

October 10, 1992

# socialist OUTLOOK

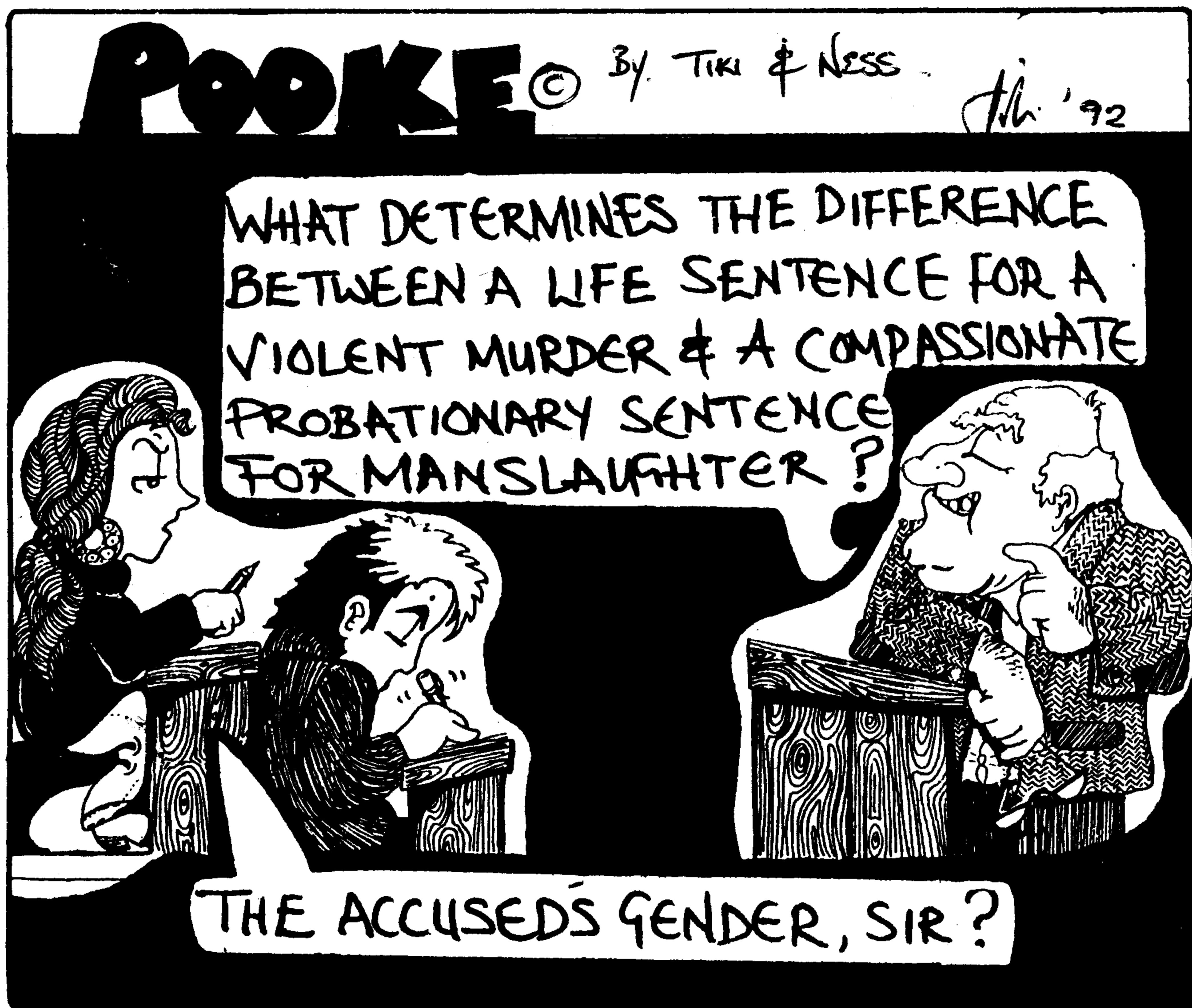
## Women and domestic violence Ahluwalia out – now free Thornton

Kiranjit Ahluwalia was released on Friday September 25 after having served three years in jail for the 'murder' of her husband. An Appeal Court accepted her plea of guilty to manslaughter after, at her original trial having been found guilty of murder.

But Kiranjit Ahluwalia is not the only woman who has been languishing in jail after killing her violent husband. Sara Thornton and many others are still awaiting justice.

Until women are provided with a safe way out of violent relationships, many are still going to be left with choosing between jail and being trapped into a life of fear and pain. And with local authorities cutting back on funding for women's refuges, the choice becomes even starker.

Congratulations to Kiranjit for her victory in the courts. The next step is to free all those other women, both those in jail and those in violent relationships.



### Stop violence against women

National Demonstration

Saturday 10th October

Assemble 12 noon, Temple Gardens, Embankment, London

For further information contact: 071 231 0415 or 071 375 2680. Called by the Campaign Against Domestic Violence