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**Everybody's
fight!** *All out April 2*



Mark Salmon

Young people, parents and trade unionists took part in a recent demonstration against Labour-controlled Leicester city council's attempts to close down three adventure playgrounds; Braunstone, Saffron Lane and Highfields. NUPE banners were especially prominent.

The march, which took place on March 13, was reportedly the biggest (and definitely the noisiest!) to take place in the town for a long time.

Scrap the Child Support Act!

Tories pick on single mothers

By Sam Inman

FROM 5 April one of the most repressive laws in recent times, the Child Support Act (CSA), comes into effect.

Unlike the Poll Tax though, there is no effective mass campaign against it. Yet it affects some of the poorest and most marginalised women in Britain.

The CSA aims to enforce maintenance from absent fathers; women who are judged to have refused to identify

the father can have their Income Support cut.

To administrate the implementation of the CSA, a brand new wing of the DSS has been created - the Child Support Agency. The Orwellian powers which have been invested in this agency are staggering.

If a single mother on Income Support refuses to co-operate and provide information on the 'absent father', she faces losing £8.80 a week (20 per cent) of benefit for the first six months, then

£4.40 a week for another year. Anyone struggling on state benefits will know what a colossal sum that really is.

The effect of this of course is force many women who don't want further contact with the 'absent father' to maintain it, whatever the cost in terms of emotional damage or even physical safety to the woman and her children.

Those who refuse to make this unwanted contact, will be compelled just to lose money.

Tracking down 'absent fathers' will not provide a single extra penny for single parents, 95 per cent of whom are women, but will go straight into Treasury coffers.

The Act is a direct attack on the economic independence of women, and thus their ultimate ability to make choices about their lives.

In this the Act follows through the anti-lesbian, anti-gay Section 28 (which forbade local authorities to 'promote pretended families') and the anti-lesbian aspects of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill.

The state will now openly penalise those who do not or will not fit the mould. Those under immediate attack from the CSA are those who always have to struggle to survive: single parents families (who are 42.4 per cent of black families, 11.8 per cent of white); working class single mothers who've ditched violent and abusive men; lesbian mothers; the kids who are being scape-goated for every social problem going.

Lesbian mothers face a double bind. Those who conceived their children in a previous heterosexual relationship could face custody battles with former partners, seeking 'value for money' for the maintenance they are now forced to pay.

And in some circumstances, women who've conceived their children through donor insemination, will be forced to identify the man, who'll be treated as an 'absent parent'.

Millions of single women in Britain face a day-in, day-out battle to keep their families afloat. Their families do not 'need' fathers, they need the right to be economically independent.

They need the right to live their lives free of economic dependence on men; and free of being forced into unwanted contact with former partners, and state interference with their lives.

Single parents do not have their own powerful union or campaigning organisation - the left and the labour movement must take up this fight.

Let's get Labour off its knees!

By Kate Ahrens

JOHN SMITH is hoping to regain the 'moral high ground' with his speech on returning to christian values, Jack Straw is calling for removal of Clause IV from the Labour Party's constitution, and the only argument the Labour front bench can put against Tory policies is that they thought of them first.

As can be easily seen by the moves to break the Labour-union link, and the adoration of Clinton's Democrats, the Labour leadership is politically running the party into the ground, and the Labour left is fragmented, weak and unable to mount a serious fightback... yet.

With the Socialist Campaign Group's successful conference in Leeds last June, the left saw a new opportunity appear for united action in the party.

Already, new, local Socialist Campaign Groups have been set up around the country. In Birmingham, for instance, there is now a united group on the Labour left for the first time in years.

The recall conference, on April 17th in Sheffield, will be discussing the structure for the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network and developing ideas on united campaigning work in a number of areas.

The Network has the potential to build genuine united action on the left inside the Party.

As *Socialist Outlook* and others have argued for many

years, the only way to fight back against the rabid, right-wing politics of the Labour leadership, with all its associated attacks on democracy in the Party, is for the left to fight together against them.

It won't, of course, be all plain sailing from now on! Dramatically weakened by the witch-hunt, and the drift out of the Party of many long-time activists, the left has a long, hard struggle to achieve any confidence in its own abilities to fight.

And years of division on the left will not be overcome in one conference. But the possibility is there. Whether that potential is turned into reality depends on the effort of left activists.

The Socialist Campaign Group of MPs has a vital role to play in that process too.

Their support of the Network can start to bridge the gap between grass-roots activists in the constituencies and the left in parliament, and the authority of that support can give an extra boost of confidence to the left that it so badly needs.

That has to mean a firm commitment to building the Network with a democratic decision-making structure, and to united action in campaigning.

Confronting the Labour leadership's hopeless rhetoric on the pit closures dispute, organising around the public sector pay freeze, fighting against all job losses, and campaigning against all witch-hunts in the Party - these things can only serve to strengthen the Labour left.

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Action now can break the logjam

Mobilise with the miners!

The appeal by the NUM executive to other workers to join them in strike action on 2 April could not be more timely. Over the last few months a long battle has taken place inside the Tory cabinet over what concessions to make on pit closures. All the signs are that the concessions to the miners will be absolutely minimal – a handful of pits from the original 31 kept open.

In the present context of huge attack on the public sector, of wage freeze and mass redundancy, it is vital that workers in other areas join the miners on 2 April.

The political situation in Britain is characterised by a deep contradiction which only industrial action can begin to shift. On the one hand the economy is in deep crisis, and the Tories are in deep trouble over Maastricht and pit closures. There are also signs, with the London bus workers' strikes, the Timex struggle and the miners' strike, that the industrial mood is shifting.

But on the other hand, attacks by the bosses and the Tories are deepening all the time – they are literally getting away with murder.

As we report elsewhere, the Child Support Act, a massive assault on single mothers, is just about to become law. Lamont's VAT on domestic fuel bills next year is a classic of taking it out on the poor and the aged.

More than 100,000 public sector workers, especially in local government, will lose their jobs in the next year. Over a vast range of issues, from school exclusions, to teacher sackings, to the destruction of the NHS and rail privatisation, the Tory steamroller continues.

Despite Tory political turmoil, the level of resistance, while rising, nowhere meets the level of the attacks; never has such a weak and rudderless government been able to get away with so much.

What lies behind this situation is of course the craven cowardice of the Labour and union leaders, combined with the atmosphere of fear which is generated by mass unemployment. This is of the course a situation in which

fight the Tories is to hit them with 'religious values'.

But there are two new factors in the situation. There is at least one union leadership, the NUM, which is prepared to fight and to give a lead. That is an immense step forward. The response to their ballot for strike action shows the basic truth, that if you give a lead then you get a response.

Then there is the issue of the 1.5 per cent pay freeze. Pay freezes are always difficult to hold; historical experience shows that pay norms are much easier to combat than redundancy or attacks on the welfare state. The Fire Brigades Union appears willing to mount the first concerted challenge on this front; they were the union that defeated Labour's pay laws in 1977-78.

So union militants have to prepare for a summer of discontent, starting with 2 April. That is the key to halting the Tory attacks in their tracks, and of shifting the relationship of forces inside the labour movement as a whole.

The Smith-Blair-Brown agenda inside the Labour Party is one whose logical end-point is the destruction of the party as an expression of working class politics. That may be a far-off conclusion,

but the trend is there.

To generate a culture and dynamic of resistance it is necessary that the activists take the lead for action now. Time is short; but in every sector of the working class movement, especially among public sector workers, the message – that striking with the miners is the best way to defend your own jobs and conditions – has to be hammered home.



Sweeping changes in the class struggle

bureaucratic inertia and obstructionism thrive. Nothing is simpler for the union bureaucrats than the tired old refrain 'you know you can't get your members out, you know they won't vote for action'.

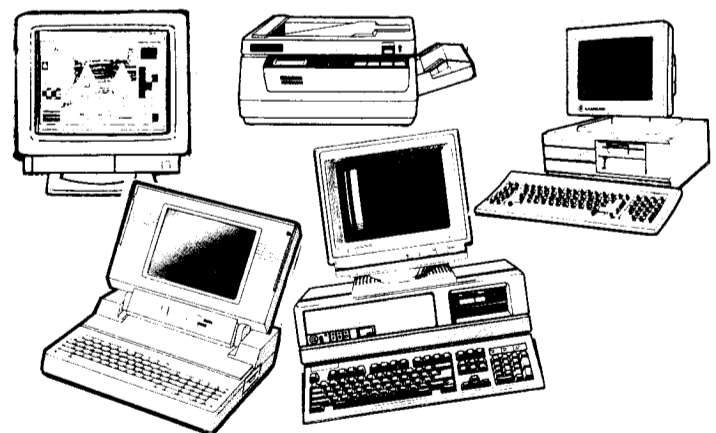
This is reinforced by the stunning sleepwalking philistinism of the Labour leadership; it takes real buffoonery of almost genius proportions for John Smith to think the way to

Get ready for the new-look Socialist Outlook

THIS COMING May Day, exactly two years after the launch of our paper as a fortnightly, Socialist Outlook is being relaunched with a new design and format. To complete this revamp, we are taking a short break – our next issue will be out on 28 April. Why are we taking this step? Since the Gulf War,

a newspaper-style Socialist Outlook has helped us to reach out to new forces and win greater influence in the labour movement and mass campaigns. We are proud of what we have achieved; with small resources, always much less than we needed, we have managed to build the circulation of a

campaigning voice of revolutionary marxism. Virtually alone on the left we have championed united action to defeat the Tories, consistent internationalism and support for the movements of the oppressed. The initiative for a change has come from the newspaper staff. The staff



have always been the biggest critics of the weaknesses of the paper, and that's just as it should be. Put bluntly, we think the format of the paper is getting stale, and that we can do much better. So we are buying new computer equipment and design software, revamping our equipment and there will be some staff changes.

We want the paper to be politically sharper and to look better. *There is just one small matter with which you can help us. We need to rapidly complete our relaunch fund.* Send any donation you can to: Socialist Outlook PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU, cheques made payable to 'Computer Fund'.



Timex women get wound up at scabs

Timex workers confront scabs

AN ATTEMPT by Timex management to stop locked-out and sacked workers meeting at the Dundee factory gates was defeated in an Edinburgh court in mid-March.

The company had argued that there had been vandalism inside the factory and that pickets were intimidating scab labour. Of the 340 workers, 80 per cent are women.

Lord Cullen, presiding at the court, said he was not convinced that a nuisance was being caused.

Meanwhile two Timex convenors, John Kydd and Willie Leslie, face jail after management accused them of defying a previous court interdict preventing them organising mass pickets, and ordering them not to go within half a mile of the court.

The dispute at Timex stems from wage cuts and lay-offs. When management wanted lay-offs, the workers proposed that hour-reductions be shared equally. But management insisted on 140 workers of their choice being laid off for six months.

Workers responded with a series of stoppages forcing an agreement. But then management came back with more demands for wage cuts, and when workers voted not to accept these demands they were locked out. The workers have since been sacked.

Timex management have been bussing in scabs; they usually run 24-hour working, but so far have only been able to mount a day shift.

For donations and speakers contact: AEEU, 2 Union St., Dundee. Tel: 0382-22406.

Stormclouds gather over British Telecom

By a correspondent

OPERATION CRISP (Customer Repair Service Improvement Programme) is British Telecom's (BT) acronym for its total re-organisation of its Personal Communication Division (PCD) which deals with the local network and residential customers.

Proclaiming the need to beat the fledgling but real competition from Cable TV and Mercury, managing director Ian Vallance, has declared BT to be a "seven-day-a-week" company.

At present BT staff work 37.5 hours Monday-Friday between 7.15am and 6.15pm, with many on nine-day fortnights or similar patterns. All other attendances attract overtime or shift payments.

BT wants to change all that. They are proposing 7 day working from 6am till 10pm with longer working days, flexible working hours, "in return for" fewer daily attendances (a four day week?) and an unspecified reduction in the working week for all BT engineering staff.

Management clearly hopes to divide PCD employees from the rest. They want it implemented by October. No additional payments are on offer. Unsurprisingly these proposals have provoked uproar amongst union members.

The National Communications Union's (NCU) right wing leadership, desperate as usual to do a deal, has been thrown into confusion.

They know that any agreement now would spell certain defeat in April's NEC elections and, less importantly for them, a drubbing at Annual conference in June.

They are still manoeuvring on the NEC, voting down the

Broad Left's proposition insisting on 'existing or improved' benefits for voluntary weekend working, in favour of 'compensatory' arrangements. Their clear hope is to survive the elections, ignore conference and to sign up afterwards.

The Broad Left is campaigning for a complete rejection of the deal, and for any attempt to impose it to be met with industrial action.

Shameful retreat

The new realist leadership has had a shameful record over the last year. They have actively encouraged members to go under BT's 'Release 92' and '93' voluntary redundancy schemes under which 29,000 staff left last year and 15,000 are due to leave this year.

BT aims to reduce its staff from its present 200,000 to around 100,000 by 1997-8, aiming to contract out much of the work to companies like Manpower (sic) UK.

The NCU's membership has fallen similarly. So, directly against conference decisions, a

recognition deal has been signed with Manpower UK to recruit people doing jobs normally performed by direct labour!

This year elections will therefore be decisive. The Broad Left, which organises the entire union left, has got the bit between its teeth. Even traditionally right-wing branches, fed up with the right-wing's betrayals, have been nominating Broad Left candidates.

The present balance is 23-12. Prospects look good in the 23 engineering seats where many of last year's runners up were Broad Left candidates.

The 12 Clerical seats present more problems, since these have been traditionally controlled by a small number of large clerical branches in league with the opportunist ex-Broad Left Clerical leadership.

A Broad Left victory would have the added significance of being the first clear victory for the left outside the NUM in the unions for nearly a decade. Whatever the outcome of the elections, rough times lie ahead for BT staff.

Building bosses first with pay ceiling

By Bill Sutcliffe

Building and civil engineering employers imposed a wage freeze on 600,000 construction workers last week, without even waiting for the unions to submit a pay claim. But the potential for rank-and-file fightback is real, UCATT activists believe.

Representatives of the Building Employers Confederation and the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors declared they were 'unable to offer an improvement in pay and conditions this year' because of the depth of the recession in the industry.

An official joint statement from UCATT, TGWU, GMB and FTAT argued: 'The employers' call for a wage freeze is totally unacceptable. Construction workers understand only too well the toll of closures and job losses inflicted by the recession. But we expect a wage increase to cover increases in the cost of living.'

'Building workers have already endured earnings cuts through the widespread reduction in bonus pay, while basic wage levels remain appallingly low. A labourer's basic rate amounts to only £7067 a year.'

'The construction unions will be submitting a responsible wage claim as normal and we would expect the employers to negotiate in good faith.'

But such is the bitterness among construction workers that activists believe even the smallest upturn in economic activity could trigger an industrial action, despite the leaderships' 'responsibility'. The miners' strike decision has significantly boosted morale.

A UCATT member told *Socialist Outlook*: 'The national agreement only exists on paper - it's really a case of the going rate. On most building sites now, the money is very, very low.' In London, bricklayers can expect £45-48 a day before tax, and labourers £30-35: 'The lowest is, well, how desperate can you get?'

Many activists in the Joint Sites Committee, the rank-and-file grouping that successfully organised unofficial stoppages at several London sites last year, now hold branch official posts in UCATT, and are starting to reorganise in derecognised sectors.

The latest push is in the exhibition industry, once a tight closed shop, where the union has been all but broken. Eighteen workers in the sector re-established an exhibition industry committee two weeks ago.

Ealing school teachers lead angry cuts protest

By James Lee

OVER 1500 parents and pupils joined striking teachers in a march on Ealing town hall as the Tory council met on March 9 to set the council tax for the coming year.

They were protesting against education cuts of £6m, and the loss of over 150 teaching and non-teaching jobs. While over 550 jobs across the borough will be axed, it is the schools budget which has

provoked the most intense resistance.

In a year when education in Ealing faces massive reorganisation, most schools will see the loss of two or more teachers, and soaring class sizes.

Teachers fear they will not be able to meet the statutory requirements of the national curriculum, and there has even been talk of part-time education for some pupils.

Parent governors meet on a

regular basis to plan their opposition, and some governing bodies have already passed resolutions condemning the cuts and redundancies.

There is a desperate need to link up with anti-cuts struggles in other areas. Early March saw strikes from National Union of Teachers members in at least four London boroughs. Yet calls for co-ordinated action across the capital were ignored by the national leadership.

NUM calls for support on April 2 strike

“Power workers, public

sector, join the fight!”



Public sector workers fighting for jobs

Despite management threats, and the pressure to take voluntary redundancy, the miners voted 6-4 for the one-day strike on 2 April. BILLY PYE, a member of the NUM national executive from Parkside colliery, talked to GLENN VORIS of St. Helens' Miners Support Group about the strike.



Flashback to 1974 strike ballot

“THE MASS anger which has been apparent since the pit closure announcement has put an end to the myth that people are not prepared to fight.

Miners have shown that where a positive lead is given, you'll get a positive response. The vote to strike was not unexpected, but it was an outstanding vote and a commitment from our members to battle against the closures. At Parkside we got an outstanding 78 per cent vote in favour of strike action.

So the last NEC decided on 2 April as the strike day, and we are getting positive feedback from the RMT about the vote among railworkers for a strike. In any case, even if they don't join us on 2 April, other sections of workers will.

General call

The NUM has made a general call to other trade unionists to come out with us on 2 April. The key sectors we would like to see coming out with us are the power workers' unions and public sector unions; these are key not only to defence of the miners, but also to throwing back the whole government offensive against the unions.

The NUM is producing a national leaflet appealing to all unionists to join us. After 2 April we'll have to see from the reaction of the membership and the government what kind of action is necessary as a follow-up.

As far as the miners' support groups are concerned, they have been invaluable in mobilising support and getting our message across to other workers.

Broaden fight

But now, my view is that they can help further by broadening out the struggle and linking the job of saving the pits to the attacks taking place on the whole of the public sector, services like health and education, and workers in a wide range of industries.

They need to continue this, using rallies and demos, and of course by supporting the women's pit camps.

The women's pit camps have been a major influence on lifting the morale of our members. The camps are also a visual reminder to us and to British Coal that this struggle is not just about miners' jobs. It's about our families, the future of our children and the quality of life in our communities.

Every effort must be made by all those who back the NUM's fight to support the pit camps in every way they can. Already different trade union branches, trades councils and groups of unemployed workers have visited the pit camp at Parkside, and this has been a tremendous boost to the women and the campaign

The pit camps are very much the day-to-day focus of our campaign; it is especially useful to get other women workers to come and give them a boost.

I'm a socialist and have been in the Labour Party for several years. In the party there has

been a fundamental shift to the right, orchestrated by people like Kinnock, who portrayed it as the only way to win power.

But if there's one thing this policy has achieved, it is to put in people's minds that there's no real difference between the two main parties; both seek to replace policy and principle in the pursuit of being in government.

Socialism

The Labour Party need to adopt and put forward a full and open programme for socialism based upon the hopes and aspirations of the working class as a whole.

And we need to make sure that people in the Labour Party learn from the mistakes of 1984-5, when the Labour leadership didn't support the miners.

This means that the Labour left has to get itself organised to defend the trade union link; it also has to fight for policies which would defend Clause 4,

and scrap all anti-trade union laws.

These things are the basis for going further forward, reintroducing policies in favour of public ownership, and bringing back all those industries privatised by the Tories into public ownership.

To get this left fightback, the different currents of the left have to co-operate among themselves, forming groups which support the Socialist Campaign Group at constituency level.

Since October the miners' campaign has gathered pace; I'm sure that we'll continue to gather strength by linking up with others under attack. But the TUC leadership has no understanding of the situation.

The problems of the working class will not be solved by doing deals with the government or the CBI. The only weapon we have to force a change is mass strike action. It's through that we'll show that we won't accept any further attacks on our class.”

Build solidarity with the miners

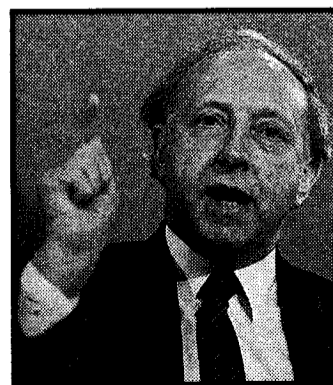
By Alan Thornett

THE MINERS have voted for strike action and it looks as if RMT members have followed suit and may strike on the same day.

These decisions are a huge boost to the campaign to save the mining industry and thousands of mining jobs.

They provide the best focus yet, around which a wider movement can be built in defence of the miners and towards a more generalised fightback - which now shows real signs of getting off the ground.

The Tories remain split over the pit closures, although all the indications are that those arguing for the closure of the bulk of the 31 pits are gaining the upper hand. The White Paper the Tories are prepar-



Calling for support - Scargill

ing on the “future” of the mining industry is long overdue but could be published by the end of this month.

We are moving towards a confrontation over the future of the pits, the related jobs on rail and the defence of the public sector more

generally.

It is these developments which make the recall conference called by the Socialist Movement Trades Union Committee and the National Miners support Network in Sheffield on April 24th so important. The decision to hold a recall conference was taken at the first conference on January 9th.

The conference will present a new opportunity for the movement more generally, the miners support groups and the women in the pit camps to assess the situation and discuss the form that support should now take and the next steps for the movement.

The conference can also provide an important platform for other unions in the public sector to discuss the widening the struggle and developing the fightback and helping to unite the public sector.

Playing for high stakes in Russia's last chance saloon

Yeltsin's bid for power



Muscovites protest at cigarette shortage

By Mick Woods

BORIS YELTSIN'S March 20 declaration of presidential rule, and his attempt to sack officials opposed to him, has its roots in the deep crisis of the Russian economy.

The deadlock between Yeltsin and the Congress of People's Deputies is over the proposals for a deepening marketisation and privatisation of the economy, without which further Western economic aid will not be forthcoming.

Key to Yeltsin's proposals is a law on bankruptcies, which will allow 'unprofitable' enterprises to go bust. Until now, while the disruption of the state planning system has thrown the economy into chaos, nationalised firms have been kept afloat by state

subsidies, which has resulted in rocketing inflation.

Yeltsin's proposals on the other hand would turn chaos into total collapse. A wave of bankruptcies would put tens of millions on the dole.

Who is resisting Yeltsin in the Congress of Deputies? Far from being blinkered 'Bolsheviks', his opponents around Khasbulatov represent the key layer of the bureaucracy - factory managers, enterprise directors, the economic hierarchy. These people are tied to the nationalised industries, and have no short-term future if the nationalised sector is hung out to dry.

Jobs at stake

Doubtless the sympathies of many industrial workers is with these people; despite collapsing living standards, state credit is keeping the

enterprises open, and keeping millions in work.

Yeltsin's alternative is to subject enterprises to the full rigours of the market, allowing the 'unprofitable' to go to the wall, in the hope that this will trigger a further \$24 billion promised by the West, and a transition to full-scale capitalism. This scheme is wild, in the end completely impossible.

To regenerate the Russian economy on the basis of profitability, judged at world prices, means a huge capitalisation of the Russian economy.

So far Russia has had just promises from the West - further aid is by no means guaranteed. Any attempt to force these measures through would reduce Russia to penury and 'third-world' conditions.

Many comparisons are made between potential Western aid and the

Marshall Plan which poured billions of dollars from the US into Europe after the second world war. But that aid came on the back of a growing boom in world capitalism, not a growing collapse.

Yeltsin's decision to resort to presidential decree, and go for a referendum, is a desperate gamble. Whatever the result of the referendum, the country will be remain in political chaos with the army waiting in the wings. Opposing Yeltsin are not just the economic elite, but reactionary Russian nationalist forces, of whom the leading representative is Yeltsin's 'deputy' Rutskoi.

Evolution

The present struggle casts a spotlight on the evolution of Russia and the rest of the CIS since the collapse of the USSR. Certainly Russia has a pro-

capitalist government, but free market capitalism has not been established.

The weight of the state enterprises in the Russian economy is still absolutely decisive; it is just that the collapse of the bureaucratic command system, which set goals and overall plans, has made the functioning of the staid system even more irrational and chaotic.

Now there is a hybrid social system, a system in limbo and collapse. Such a state of affairs can continue to exist for a long time, but not forever. Sooner or later there has to be a fundamental resolution of the conflict.

The independent workers' movement, and the Russian left, are today far too weak to impose a socialist solution. The way is becoming clear for dictatorial authoritarianism. A Yeltsin victory in the referendum will only accelerate that process.

French Socialist Party crashes to polls defeat

THE SWEEPING victory of the right-wing in the 21 March French elections is a huge indictment of the 12 years of government dominated by the Socialist Party (SP). For the central issue in the campaign has been the 3 million unemployed; on this front Mitterrand has done no better than the British Thatcherites.

While racism and the far right have grown, Socialist Party government has done nothing to check the effects of

austerity and recession on the working class.

At the same time, trade unionism has rapidly declined to around 5 per cent of the workforce, and there is a low-ebb of struggle.

The net effect has been bitter disillusionment with official politics and the whole traditional political class. This is reflected in the vote for the two ecologist currents, the Greens and Generation Ecologie, and the strong, but declining vote for the fascist Front National.

The effects of the right wing victory are yet to be seen. 'Tough' right-wing policies on immigration and 'law and order' are a certainty. But it is not yet clear whether the right-wing RPR (Gaullist) and UDF parties will go for a full-scale programme of privatisation.

Both RPR leader Chirac, and UDF leader Giscard D'Estaing have their eyes on the presidential elections in two years time. Whether they will risk rapid change and confrontation before that is an open question.

From 1986 to 1988 the right wing controlled the national Assembly, with prime minister Chirac 'co-habiting' with

Socialist president Mitterrand. Very quickly there were huge mobilisations of students, hospital workers and others against the government.

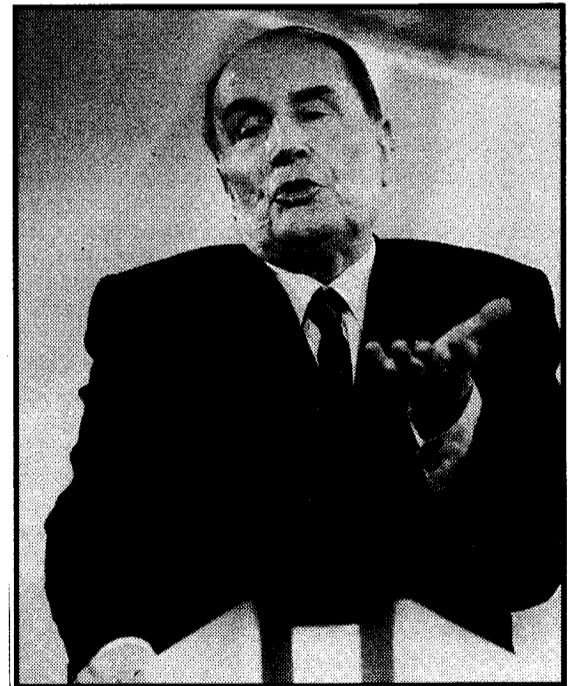
In opinion polls, a large number of people voting for the RPR-UDF alliance said they didn't expect much to change. Even the two currents of protest, the ecologists and the Front National, have a tired and worn-out look.

The French Greens are a far cry from the radical wing of the German Die Grunen. And the leaders of Generation Ecologie are largely opportunist refugees from the Socialist Party, hoping to cash in on Green sentiment.

The fascist Front National is being squeezed by the official right-wing parties, which have adopted much of Le Pen's anti-immigrant rhetoric.

During the 1980s Mitterrand pushed through various proportional representation schemes with the deliberate aim of boosting the FN, the better to divide the right wing.

But for the moment, FN resilience seems confined to its bastions in the south, especially



Architect of failure: President Mitterrand

in the Cote D'Azur, the politically most backward part of the country.

As we go to press it seems unlikely that Le Pen will have more than a couple of deputies in the National Assembly.

On the left, there are signs that the Communist Party (PCF) has for the moment stemmed its long decline. PCF leader Marchais, while deeply mired in his party's traditional nationalism, has distanced his party from the SP government to the left.

On the far left, major campaigns were run by Lutte Ouvriere (Workers Struggle), and by an alliance 'A Gauche Vraiment' (Really to the left), which included the LCR, French section of the Fourth International.

Central points of the LCR campaign included the fight for a 35-hour week with no loss of pay, and for full equality for immigrant workers.

The Socialist Party came to power in 1981 on basis of an alliance with the Communists in the Union of the Left, and behind rhetoric of major social change. Since then, the SP has declined numerically, and all its main leaders are looking towards 'centre-left' alliances with the right.

In the coming years the main 'choice' on offer to French workers will be between centre-left and centre-right alliances.

A real anti-capitalist force for socialism will need new forces and new leaders. And that will need new waves of struggle, which are certain if the right stays in power.

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Rumours of death of class struggle greatly exaggerated

European workers fight back

FRANÇOIS VERCAMMEN, a Belgian Trotskyist and a leading member of the Fourth International, was one of the featured speakers at a successful *Socialist Outlook* event 'Europe's Crisis: Socialist Answers', attended by over 200 people in London on March 13-14. He echoed the general theme of building new leadership in the workers' movement for the struggles to come. Here is an edited version of his speech.

OVER THE past three years, the world working class suffered some very serious defeats. The offensive of European capitalism against the working class stems from its own crisis. Nevertheless, the relationship of forces worsened for the working class.

All of this took place in the context of an offensive of the ruling class world-wide, with an attempt to dismantle the welfare state. This has caused a disarray among the natural vanguard of the working class, those thousands of workers on the shop-floor who understand how to defend their working conditions, and lead the workers in their day-to-day battles.

Because of this crisis of working class perspective, the credibility of the socialist alternative, the viability of anti-capitalist transitional demands were put in question.

As the German comrade here explained, this allowed the fascists and far-right forces to take advantage of the situation and to make important gains in several countries.

Nevertheless there is some exaggeration in the talk of the crisis of socialism. The situation was worse among the intellectuals, on the ideological terrain,

By François Vercammen

than the deterioration in the relationship of social forces between the classes in the real world.

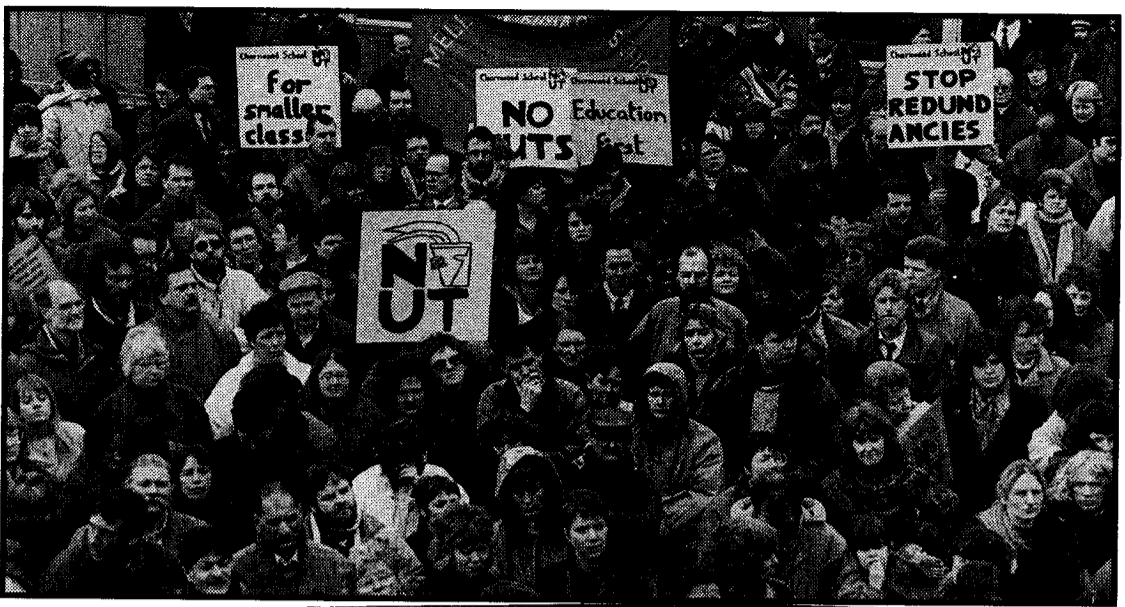
Today there is a turn in the situation. First, it is clear that no rapid capitalist reconstruction in eastern Europe will take place. It is one thing to introduce markets, it is a totally different thing to completely introduce capitalist social relations, to have big investment to create real capitalist enterprises. And world capitalism simply can't do it.

Deepening crisis

Capitalism will not succeed on that level. This is a major boomerang against the capitalist system. This doesn't automatically aid the workers, but it worsens capitalism's crisis.

The second thing is that as a result of the depth of the crisis, millions upon millions of people have become convinced of one thing - that those at the top of the system become richer, and they don't give a damn about those beneath them.

There are 40 million unemployed people in the ad-



Upsurge of the class struggle will reinforce struggles against racism and fascism



vanced countries, to which you have to add all those left out by the official statistics, and those forced into part-time or marginal work. So this means there are tens of millions of people who see no hope and no future in this system.

The third element in the weakness of the economic levers of the capitalist states, as a result of Reagan-Thatcher 'liberalism'. This means that the capitalist state has fewer and fewer means to control the dynamics of the crisis. They are aware of this, and we can be sure that Clinton will try to do something about it, to generate some investment for economic growth.

All of this adds up to one thing. There is now a massive anti-capitalist, or rather *anti-system*, feeling among millions and millions of people. But which political direction will that take? Hostility to the system can go either to the right or the left.

As Marxists we know that not just ideas, but the reality of the class struggle will decide.

Let's look at that. The fear that many people had, after all these defeats, that the working class, youth, women and immigrant workers would not

take the streets again in struggle for a long time, proved to be false.

Today, there is an important re-emergence of struggle in a number of European countries, including of course, in a modest way, in Britain. I will talk mainly of Germany and Italy.

The German comrade already explained how millions of people last November took the streets in Germany to fight against racism and fascism. And this is very important.

Italian struggles

In Italy in the last two weeks there was a huge demonstration in Rome, 200,000 people against austerity and corruption. This demonstration was organised not by the official union structures, but by the factory councils.

The main political force behind this was the Party of Communist Refoundation, the left split from the old Communist Party, the mainstream of which has now joined the Second International.

One week after this demonstration was another, of 50,000 women on International Women's Day. The significance of these mobilisations is this: when the mass mobilisations against austerity took place in Italy last autumn, a lot of people offensive it was a 'one-off', a last gesture by many tired activists who would afterwards return home. But this turned out not to be the case; the mobilisations continue.

We don't know what the outcome will be; or whether the PCR will become a revolutionary party - our analysis is that it won't. None the less, this remobilisation, this gathering of militant forces prepared to fight back is extraordinary.

Look at the situation in Germany. Here you have the strongest working class in the world; and the one with the highest living standard.

But there is a problem; the big blows dealt by unemployment to the working class in former

East Germany, and the effects of the recession on industrial workers in western Germany. But now we have both a big mobilisation of the steel workers - there will be 200,000 in Bonn at the end of March.

And already the IG Metall, the biggest union in the world, is building the protest mobilisations in the former GDR against mass unemployment. So there too we have a remobilisation of the working class.

Of course we have to be aware of the limits of this remobilisation, the limits of the reformist perspectives of the working class leaderships. But we have to deal with this reality and intervene with our programme.

What can the Fourth International do towards in relation to this remobilisation? As an International we have advantages, even if we are small. We are not just the sum of co-ordination of different national organisations; we are a common tradition, a common programme, a common analysis and activity. And we have a broad and unitarian outlook.

Today the Fourth International is particularly involved in Europe-wide anti-fascist and anti-racist initiatives. And in the coming months we are involved in an attempt, through a big European conference of the anti-capitalist left in Paris, to pull together left Socialists, Communists, Greens and others towards the formation of a common front to fight the bosses' offensive in Europe.

We must have the conviction that our class will fight back, is fighting back; that the new generations will stand up and fight; and that because of the deep, deep, crisis of capitalism socialism will be put on the agenda again.

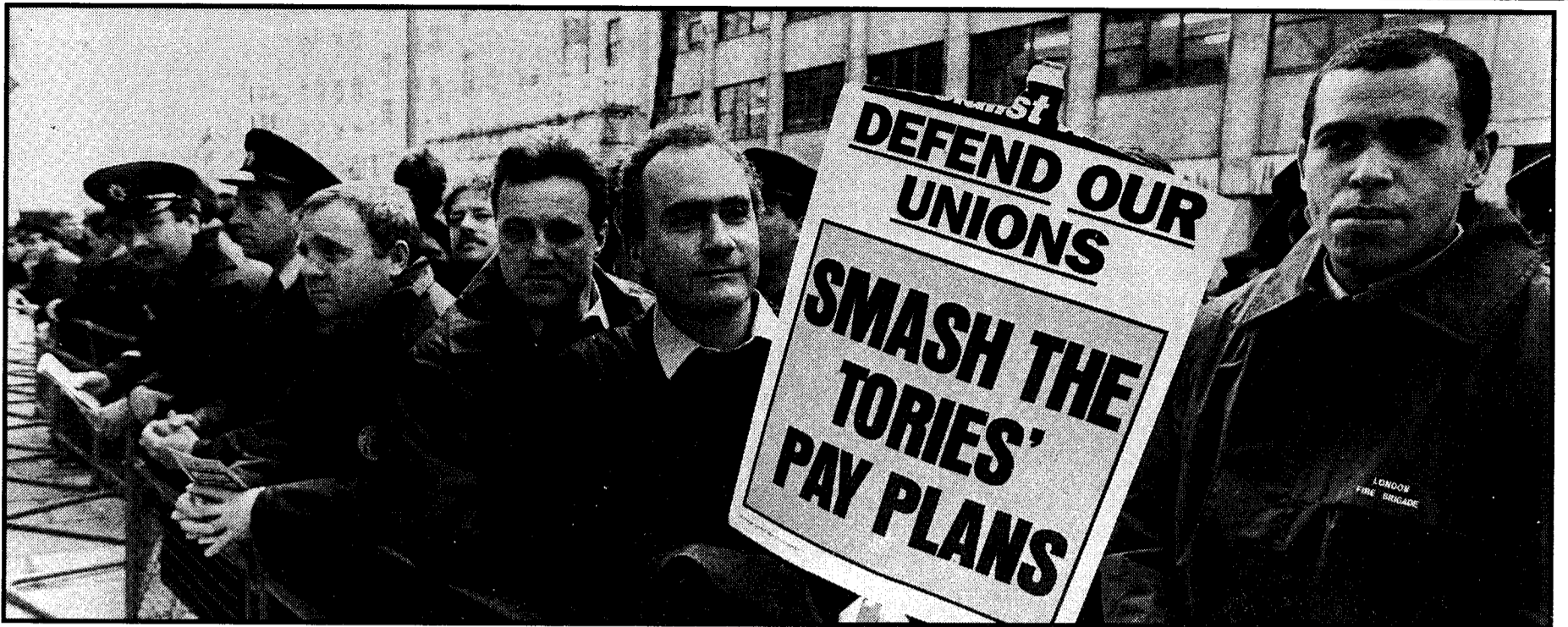
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Pensioners campaign in Brussels against austerity



Andrew Ward

Firefighters lobbying Home Office against 1.5 per cent pay limit

Secret papers reveal class-wide strategy

How Tories size up the prospects for pay freeze

A CONFIDENTIAL Cabinet Office paper on the current pay round – seen by *Socialist Outlook* – shows how the Tories map out a cohesive industrial relations strategy on a class-wide basis, and underlines the need for our side to do the same.

The government, it is apparent, systematically monitors the mood of all key groups of workers. Its assessments generally confirm reports from left activists in the relevant unions.

The document, dated 26 February, was tabled to a sub-committee chaired by former energy secretary Lord Wakeham. But its contents will interest every trade union militant in Britain, proving once and for all that pay is a political issue.

Tories fully realise that the outcome of all pay struggles – including the current attempt to hold a 1.5 per cent public sector pay limit – depends on the balance of class forces and that working class morale has the potential to shift

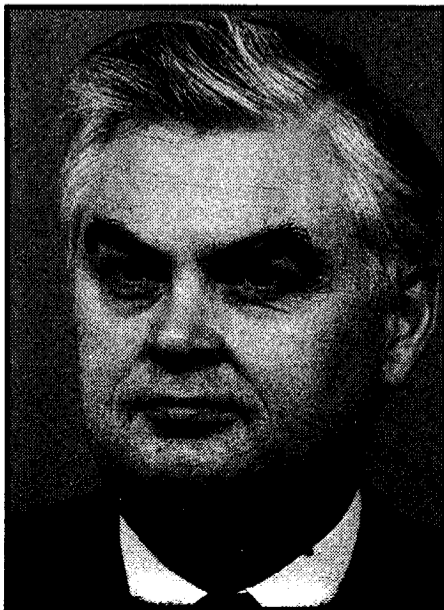
rapidly after significant industrial victories.

An appendix covers all public sector workers, showing whether or not ministers have agreed a strategy, what the risk of those workers breaching the pay norm is, and what the chances of industrial action are.

Detailed attention is also paid to the private sector, which according to prevailing Tory *laissez-faire* ideology, should be of no legitimate concern.

THE FIRST group tackled is those workers who have pay awards determined by review bodies. These are listed as armed forces (258,000), doctors and dentists (111,000), nurses and midwives (481,000), professions allied to medicine (43,000), school teachers in England and Wales (465,000) and 'top salaries' (2100).

All are being kept within the new pay norm, with the unsurprising exception



By Dave Osler

of the top salaries group. The government will pay them 2.9 per cent from 1 April, a figure which is technically the deferred second stage of their 1992 award. In public relations terms, this can be dressed up as no rise in 1993.

The report comments archly: "The announcement of the awards drew predictably harsh comments from some unions though there has been little talk of industrial action ... The Unison group (NALGO, NUPE, COHSE) are ... planning a public campaign aimed at forcing the government to abandon its policy. NASUWT have warned that the teachers' award will increase the likelihood of a vote in favour of boycotting English testing in their forthcoming ballot.

Action

"The dramatic drop in the annual RPI increase to 1.7 per cent could help to make the awards more palatable. So far, despite the strong words, the prevailing impression is one of resignation to the awards. Nevertheless, it may be premature to rule out some form of token industrial action."

The last paragraph proves that the Tories are unfazed by the prospect of the sort of tokenistic campaigning perspectives on offer from most trade union chiefs, and a serious fight is needed to

win. The risk of industrial action is graded "low/medium" for teachers, NHS admin and ancillary staff and ambulance workers.

The next part of the report examines NHS workers not covered by review bodies. These are administrative, clerical and secretarial staff (151,800), ancillaries (108,500), professional and technical grades (43,000) and ambulance workers (22,000).

Rejected

"All these groups have now rejected offers of straight 1.5 per cent increases, generally in response to claims for 'substantial' improvements to pay and conditions.

"Management sides have stressed that the offers are final and that they want staff sides to consult their members on that basis. The next meetings are scheduled for 1 April (ancillary staff) and 7 April (administrative and clerical staff). Similar 1.5 per cent offers will be made to other groups on the day that claims are lodged.

"Ministers agreed a 1.5 per cent remit for these negotiations within which there could be some skewing of increase in favour of the lower paid.

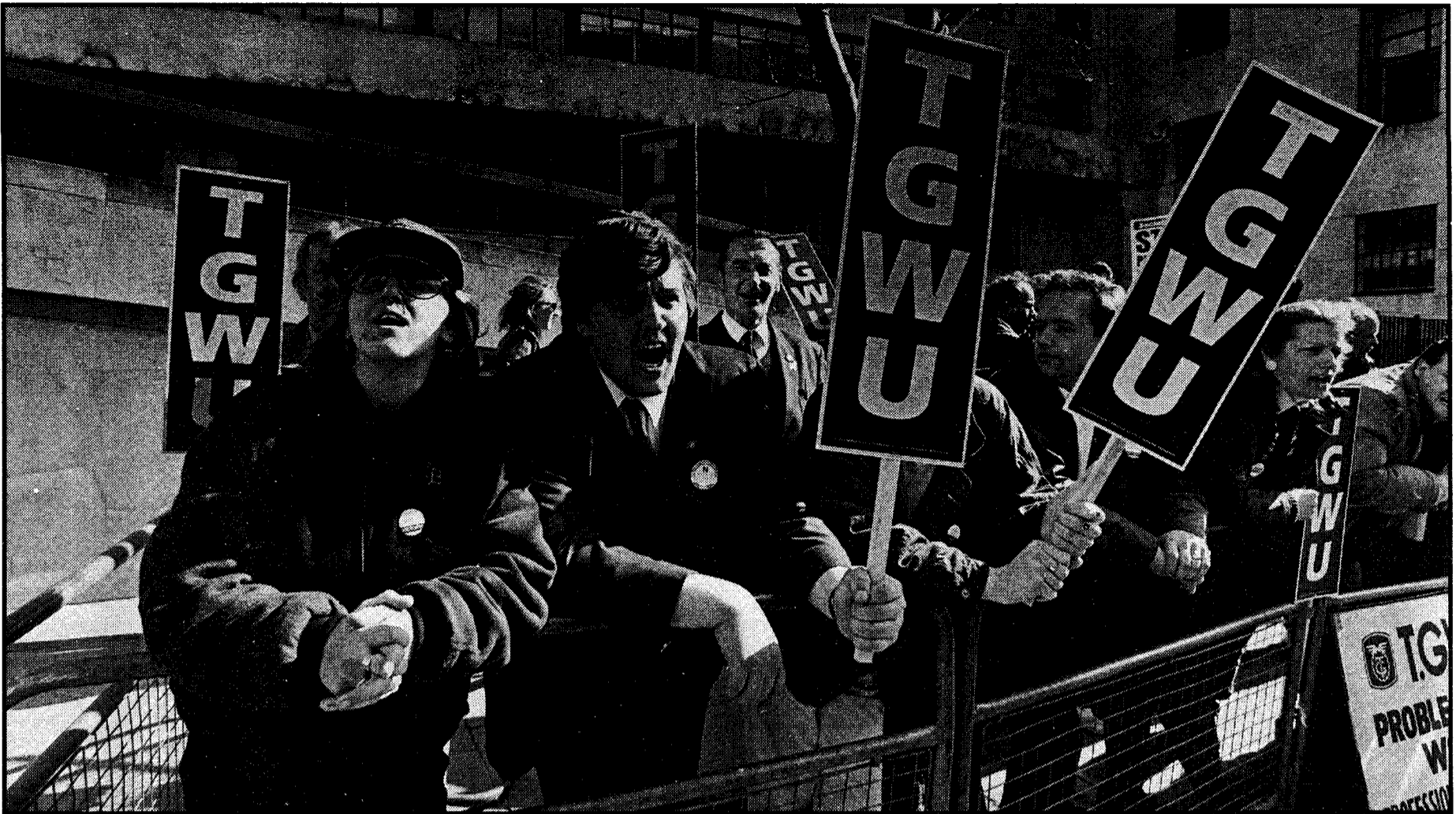
"The unequivocal opposition of the administrative and clerical staff side to the 1.5 per cent limit persuaded the management side that skewing the offer in favour of the lower paid would not increase the chances of securing a settlement.

"The unions are unlikely to make any further move until the review body awards have been digested by the unions and professional bodies concerned.

"It seems unlikely that union members would back any call for industrial action if the 1.5 per cent policy is implemented successfully for the pay body review groups and elsewhere."

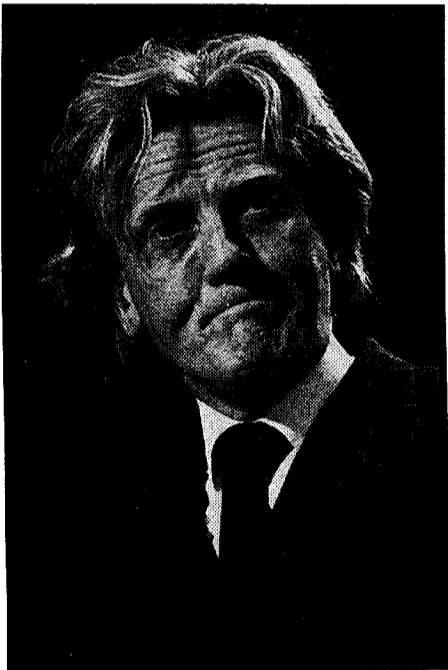
In the same way that Marxists understand that a victory for one part of the working class can boost confidence among other sectors, the government clearly sees that defeats can damage morale across the movement. Both take a clear class-wide view plainly lacking

"In the same way that Marxists understand that a victory for one part of the working class can boost confidence among other sectors, the government clearly sees that defeats can damage morale across the movement"



Paul Mattson

Fighting for survival: London busworkers are thought likely to take only one-day strike action



Heseltine's pit closures "crucial factor"

among union tops.

Talks with some 68,000 Inland Revenue staff are then considered. While these are continuing, the document notes that the main union involved, IRSF, has secured a vote in favour of non-co-operation with a proposed performance management scheme.

"The IRSF's change of position is linked to the 1993 pay restraint and has become muddled by their stance on market testing, all of which, they say, makes it more difficult for them to reach an agreement."

Claim

The paper moves on to 750,000 local government administrative, professional, technical and clerical staff. NALGO "has already informed employers' representatives ... that it intends to frame this year's pay claim without regard to the 1.5 per cent public sector pay limit. A similar line has been endorsed by the manuals' unions.

"As demonstrated in 1989, the union has the ability to organise effective selective strike action, including indefinite strikes by key staff in financial departments. However, circumstances have changed since then; local authority budgets are more constrained and employers appear more prepared to stand together to resist union pressure.

"Leaders of the local government employers' associations, including the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, have already warned of the necessity of a virtual pay freeze this year.

"The local government management board believes that the big issue this year will be jobs. A recent much-publicised survey by the *Local Government Chronicle* has forecast that over 30,000 posts in local government are likely to disappear by 1994."

The NALGO strike risk is probably contained on one of the two sheets missing from the copy of the report seen by *Outlook*. Local authority manual workers in England and Wales, totalling 805,000, are rated a low risk.

Negotiations

British Coal's pay settlement date was 1 November last year, but negotiations have unsurprisingly been postponed: "The achievement of a settlement within the 1.5 per cent limit threatens to be difficult given the background of pit closure and privatisation issues ... The outcome of the current review of pit closures is likely to be a crucial factor in setting the tone for negotiations."

The government has not yet agreed on a strategy for miners, and rates the risk of industrial action as high.

The situation at British Rail, where 140,000 workers are affected, is a cause for Tory concern: "BR received formal claims from the union on 22 February which centred on the usual 'substantial increase' in pay. No offer was made at the formal meeting on 23 February. The next meeting is on 23 March.

"The rail unions are amongst the more militant of the public sector unions and may be more disposed than some others to seek to defy the 1.5 per cent pay limit.

"At present, however, their main focus is on prospective job losses and the implications of privatisation. Disruption over these issues could affect the course of pay negotiations.

"Informal talks will take place to discuss the possible structure and distribution of whatever money is available within the 1.5 per cent pay limit. The Secretary of State for Transport will consult colleagues on a remit for these negotiations before any offers are made."

Regarding 21,000 London Underground Ltd workers, we are told: "The Department of Transport is currently considering proposals for this year's

strategy from LUL. LUL settlements have traditionally followed those at BR, although it is proposed to consider breaking this link."

There is a medium chance of industrial action at BR, LUL and some 7,500 employed by the Civil Aviation Authority, it is reckoned.

At London Buses Ltd, which employs around 12,000, new contracts which lower pay and attack conditions and pensions rights after planned privatisation have been introduced. The TGWU has already organised two one day stoppages in protest.

"Some 3000 out of the 7000 employees directly affected have already signed new contracts. It remains to be seen if this group would join any action that might take place. Any action is likely to take the form of one-day strikes ... no remit for this year's pay negotiations has yet been considered."

Other important public sector groups are not considered in the main text, but are graded in the strike risk appendix. Scottish teachers, who number 50,800, are seen as a low strike risk. Atomic Energy Authority industrial grades (some 1,950 people) are a low/medium risk, while workers at British Nuclear Fuels (15,000) and manuals at Nuclear Electric are rated medium.

There is thought to be a low/medium possibility of action from 185,000 in CPSA grades and 129,000 in NUCPS support and executive grades, while industrial civil servants (61,000) are rated low.

Firefighters

Firefighters are considered a high risk, because the 1.5 per cent norm is obviously a direct threat to their pay formula, which was established after national action in 1978. The government admits they have a "medium" chance of breaching the limit!

Attention then switches to the private sector. The cumulative average private sector pay settlements is 2.75 per cent, we are told, but this figure conceals wide variations: "Some public sector groups could seek to compare themselves with settlements at the higher end of this range."

There are hopes for a low settlement in banking sector, with increased emphasis on performance pay. Then the situation at Peugeot Talbot car plant, Coventry, is examined.

Peugot twice voted heavily for strike action recently, but ultimately accepted a marginally improved offer backed by TGWU officials: "The workforce has been in militant mood since the company announced recently that it wished to make a 12 minute reduction in the 42 minutes per day rest period. Unrest coincides with the imminent launch of a new mid-range model."

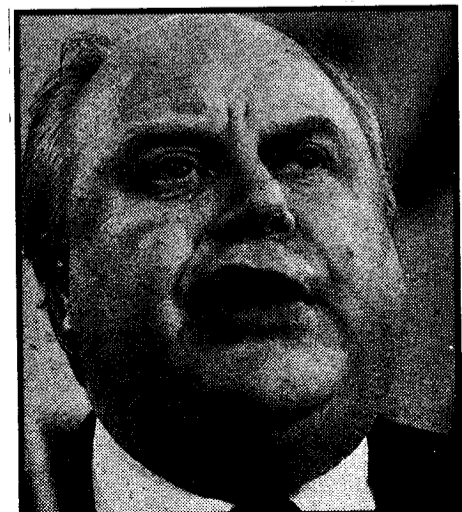
Timex

At Timex in Dundee, scene of mass picketing following the dismissal of the entire shopfloor workforce, the report notes "the workforce's rejection of a package of measures (presented as a peace offering) which included profit sharing counterbalanced by a 12 month pay freeze. A new workforce is being recruited.

"The US-owned company has made threats of sacking before and not acted on them but, since it no longer needs all its present complement of 400 employees because of the state of business, the present situation has given it an opportunity to put its threats into effect."

It also correctly predicted that management at Yarrow warship yard on Clydeside would sit out the recent strike, as in fact happened.

"The strike began at shopfloor instigation but national union officials, having been accused of lack of leadership by the membership, are not giving it their support. The last strike was 22 years ago. Dispute has similarities with those at Peugeot Talbot and Timex."



No strategy: TUC chief Norman Willis



Strangely silent on Tory tax fiddles...

Unanswered questions over £150m donations

Revealed – tax dodging slush funds that fill Tory war chest

By Dave Osler

THE CONSERVATIVE Party has been accused of accepting vast sums of money from three possibly illegal tax haven-based slush funds, collectively worth over £200m, by a top business magazine. Most of this money has come from arms dealers, it is alleged.

The Tories consistently refuse to publish full auditable accounts. But the information it does make available shows that by March 1992, it claimed to be over £10m in the red. Given the cost of fighting the last general election, that figure may well have doubled since.

A single line lists donations of £19m for 1992, a sum fifteen times greater than that received from local parties and members' subscriptions, which came to £1.2m.

Labour Party research shows that Britain's top 1500 companies gave £2,812,906 in 1991. The best available estimate for 1992 is £2.9m, leaving £16m in unidentified income. Around £150m of Tory cash since 1979



No need to put his hands in his own pocket: John Major

has never been accounted for.

Without this money, the Tories could not have won the last four elections and probably would not even exist. The labour movement should be asking just who is paying the piper.

An article by investigative journalist Kevin Cahill in *Business Age* magazine (February 1993) claims the mystery cash represents interest received on principals abroad.

Cahill argues that Paul Judge, the party's recently appointed new director general, has been hired with the specific brief of sorting out the financial position.

Judge is the multi-millionaire finance whizz-kid behind the management buy-out of the food division of Cadbury-Schweppes. Three years later he sold up for twice what he paid, reputedly picking up £40m in the process.

Despite subsequent business setbacks, Judge endowed a new business school at Cambridge University with a straight £8m in cash. With no financial worries, his concerns now seemingly centre on getting a knighthood.

Honest

"The problem for Judge is that he is an honest man who values his reputation," writes Cahill. "The slush fund may not be entirely legal."

He goes on to detail the three funds. The first of these was established as long ago as 1910 and has mostly been based in Switzerland. It is relatively small and is said to contribute £500,000 a year to the party.

It was set up by landowning aristocrats lobbying against compulsory land registration. To this day, England and Wales are virtually alone in the industrialised world in not enforcing compulsory registration of land, which facilitates landowners' tax avoidance.

The second fund is shrouded in mystery. Cahill says he was able to do no more than establish that it existed.

The third and largest fund is managed from London by N M Rothschild, and had grown to £200m by 1988. It was legally resident in Grand Cayman until 1990, when it switched to Switzerland after it began to attract journalistic interest.

"Most of the money that came into this fund appears to have come from people and organisations associated with the weapons trade. Why arms dealers in particular should indirectly subsidise the Conservative Party is open to conjecture," Cahill states.

Tim Smith MP, joint treasurer at Conservative Central Office, wrote a three line rejoinder in the latest *Business Age*, stating categorically: "No such funds exist or have ever existed."

But it is noticeable that while

John Major moved to sue *New Statesman* over allegations concerning his private life, in this case the writ has not hit the fan.

There is much circumstantial evidence which lends credence to Cahill's contentions. It is known that many donations to the Conservatives are made offshore. Sir Brian Wyldbore-Smith, the party's head of finance for 22 years, set up a special account with Barclays in Jersey to receive these payments.

This enables individuals with assets controlled from various world tax havens to avoid repatriating money to the UK directly, which could generate (presumably unwelcome) inquiries from the Inland Revenue.

Cahill also asks why so many foreigners pay money to a British political party. Part of the answer is that the UK has become a tax haven for the super-rich. Around 4,500 wealthy individuals live in Britain without paying any tax at all, thanks to their so-called 'non-domicile status'. The arrangement is entirely legal.

Dinner

Reportedly, John Major held a dinner for nine non-domicile billionaires who had previously donated to the Tories on the first anniversary of his becoming prime minister in November 1991.

Major assured those present that their privileged status would remain unchanged if the Conservatives won the forthcoming election, and tentative moves in this direction were duly scrapped.

Elaborate Tory funding scams have been going for decades. The party has operated a secret network of companies named after British rivers since 1949, which were allowed to receive donations from wills, trusts and deeds of covenant at a time when political parties were banned from doing so.



Suffer little children... Thatcher with lunch

This position changed following a court case in 1976, which enabled unincorporated associations to accept these type of donations. Labour and the Liberals both have this legal status.

The Conservative Party does not, making it not liable for corporation tax. But thanks to the companies, it still ultimately benefits in full from wills, trusts and deeds of covenant. The system was uncovered by Rosie Waterhouse in *The Independent* in 1988.

The eight companies involved were named by alphabetical order from A to H. The first six – the Arun, Bourne, Colne, Darent, Eamont and Fleet Associations – were all formed in 1949. Their memoranda of association say their aim is “to support and further the objects of the Conservative and Unionist Party”.

Two more companies, the Garry and Hamble Associations, were established in 1962 “to promote the democratic way of life”.

The river companies are thought to have taken in almost £2.6m from UK companies between 1954 and 1963, well over a third of the party’s £6.2m income from donations between these years.

Full Companies House records are only available for 1968 to 1982, and show that they declined in importance in this

period, handing just £885,000 over to Central Office.

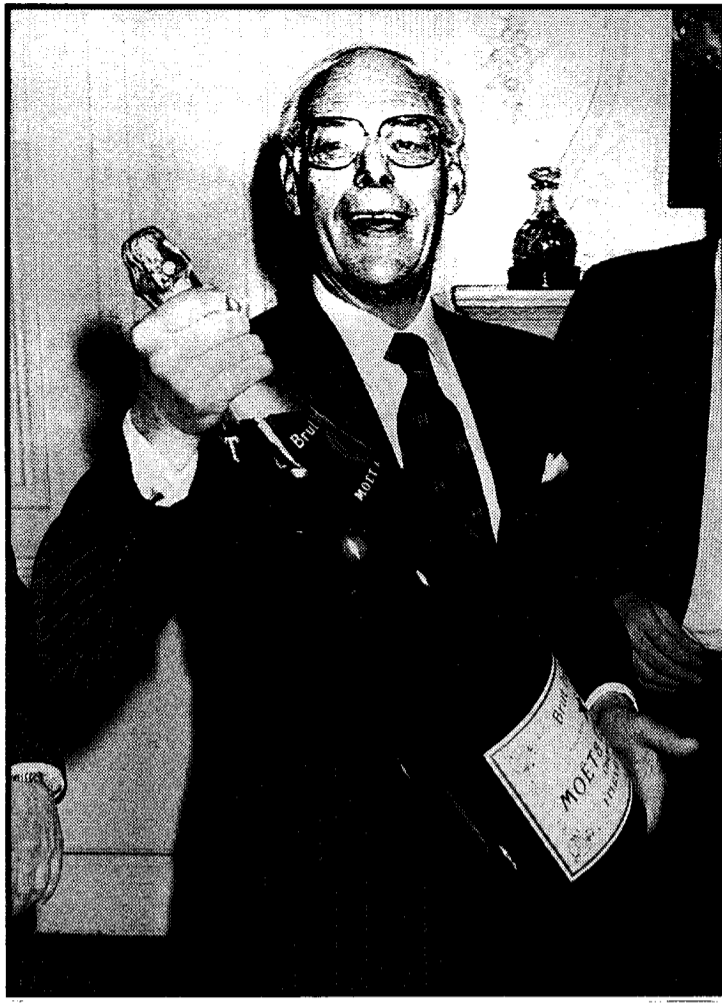
Five of the river companies were dissolved in 1984, with all documents relating to them ordered to be destroyed in 1989. All assets were passed to the Arun, Bourne and Colne associations.

The Bourne Association bought the freehold on Conservative Central Office from Tory-controlled Westminster council in 1981. It resold it at a profit, passed on to the party, while retaining a lease on the property. A council internal inquiry denied Labour suggestions that the site had been undervalued.

Conservative politicians often jibe at Labour’s “union paymasters” and have forced unions to ballot on maintaining the political levy. Indeed, many on the Labour Party right seem almost ashamed of trade union financial support.

Let us answer loud and clear. The labour movement is not dependent on overseas trusts, shadowy companies and secret hand-outs from convicted criminals, businessmen on trial on corruption charges or fascist sympathisers (see box).

Labour movement funding is clean money, with every penny properly accounted for. Balance sheets are open for public inspection. The Tories should either open their books or shut their traps.



Make mine a large one: Denis Thatcher

Why Labour should be proud of union money

Crooks pay Tory piper

● **JACK LYONS**, a Leeds-based financier convicted of fraud in the Guinness affair. Lyons was fined £3m and stripped of his knighthood, but avoided prison.

It is thought he gave over £500,000 to the Tories, which clearly bought him influence in the upper echelons of the party. On his invitation, then prime minister Margaret Thatcher attended a lunch with Guinness advisors Bain & Co as its takeover bid for Distillers was in progress.

● **GERALD RONSON**, founder of the Heron Corporation, who was fined £5m and sentenced to 12 months in jail for his part in the Guinness scandal. While he has now almost certainly stopped donating, he is said to have boasted of handing over millions of pounds.

This is impossible to check. Ownership of Heron Corporation has been transferred to the British Virgin Islands, where companies do not have to reveal political donations. Thanks to a loophole in the 1981 Finance Act, BVI companies can also generally reclaim 25 per cent withholding tax on UK dividends.

● **ASILNADIR**, former chief of the collapsed Polly Peck empire, which went bust leaving debts of over £1000m. Nadir faces charges of stealing £123m from the company; he gave the Tories £1.5m.

A political payment of £443,000 was made by one Polly Peck subsidiary without the legally-required declaration. The Conservatives refuse to return the money, on the grounds that it was accepted in good faith.

● **NAZMU VIRANI**, formerly the major shareholder in Control Securities, Britain’s largest Asian-owned business. He was sub-



Boat trip: Diana

sequently sacked, and currently faces fraud charges alleging that false loans from the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International were booked through Control Securities.

As the Tories’ main ambassador to the Asian community, he helped raise over £1m and gave substantial sums himself.

● The Bank of Credit and Commerce International – perpetrators of the biggest theft in history – also gave to the Tories. Moreover, five Tory MPs including Sir Julian Ridsdale, who sits on its board of finance, acted as paid consultants to BCCI.

● **JOHN LATSIS**, a Greek shipowner and sometime arms dealer, with banking interests in London, gave £2m last year. Latsis was tried for collaborating with Nazis after World War Two, and was a major backer of the military regime which usurped power in 1967.

He is a personal friend of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and also moves in British royal circles, once lending Prince Charles and Princess Diana his luxury yacht for a ‘second honeymoon’.

● The Tories have blatantly traded honours for cash. Around two-thirds of industrialists honoured by Thatcher contributed to Tory funds, up from one-third under Heath.



Carrying a lot of weight among Tory donors: BA boss Lord King

Backing from big business

Well-known companies listing donations to the Conservative Party in their 1991 annual reports include:

- Allied Lyons (£110,000);
- ASDA Property (£2,200);
- Barings (£100,000);
- British Airways (£40,000);
- Capital and Counties (£15,000);
- Charter Consolidated (£25,000);
- Coates Viyella (£7,500);
- General Accident (£35,000);
- GKN (£25,500);
- Glaxo (£60,000);
- Guardian Royal Exchange (£35,000);
- Hambros (£51,000);
- Hepworth (£15,000);
- Higgs and Hill (£3,000);
- Highland Distilleries (£5,000);
- Inchcape (£28,000);
- Kingfisher (Woolworth) (£25,000);
- Kleinwort Benson (£25,000);
- Legal & General (£28,000);
- Lucas Industries (£25,000);
- Alfred McAlpine (£10,000);
- John Mowlem (£33,000);
- Newarthill (£56,000);
- P&O (£100,000);
- Pearson (Financial Times) (£25,000);
- Provident Financial (£15,000);
- Racal (£25,000);
- Rank Organisation (£25,000);
- Rank Hovis McDougall (£20,000);
- Ratners (£25,000);
- Reject Shop (£1,000);
- Scottish & Newcastle (£50,000);
- Sedgwick Group (£20,000);
- Smith New Court (£2,600);
- Smithkline Beecham (£50,000);
- Smiths Industries (£15,000);
- Sun Alliance (£50,000);
- Sun Life (£20,000);
- John Swire & sons (Cathay Pacific) (£25,000);
- Tarmac (£55,000);
- Tate & Lyle (£25,500);
- Taylor Woodrow (£90,975);
- Thorntons (£5,000);
- Trafalgar House (£40,000);
- Trust House Forte (£80,000);
- United Biscuits (£130,000);
- United Newspapers (£6000);
- Vickers (£55,000);
- Whitbread (£30,020);
- Willis Coroon (£25,000).

The following companies donate to British United Industrialists, a rightwing organisation which in turn funds the Conservative Party and other ‘pro-free enterprise’ groups:

- Anglo United (Coalite) (£20,000);
- Marks & Spencer (£25,000);
- John Menzies (£10,000).

Source: Company donations to the Conservative Party and other political organisations, Labour Party Policy Directorate November 1992.

Break the coalition: fight the redundancies!

Irish capitalists bounce on Labour's weak Spring

By Kieran McCaulity

IRELAND'S LABOUR-Fianna Fail coalition government elected in January has witnessed a very short honeymoon period.

Until last November Fianna Fail had been in coalition with the right-wing Progressive Democrats, but then ditched their erstwhile colleagues and called a snap general election, hoping to form a new government with an overall Fianna Fail majority.

But the election turned out to be a disaster for Fianna Fail, who lost a substantial number of votes to Labour, the latter having spent most of the campaign attacking the record of Fianna Fail over the last five years.

Shock

It was therefore something of a shock when Labour agreed to form a coalition with Fianna Fail, a party which many Labour voters saw as the class enemy. But at a special conference on 11 January only 50 Labour delegates out of 1,500 voted against the coalition.

Within six weeks of coming to power the new coalition government faced a crisis of credibility. By 1 March, an opinion poll found 46 per cent dissatisfied with the new government against 45 per cent satisfied.



Unemployment, now (at 300,000) a fifth of the workforce, was the main source of complaint. Labour's opinion poll rating has fallen from 22 per cent to 16 per cent, while party leader Dick Spring has fallen from a 71 per cent approval rating at the election, to 36 per cent today.

But while Labour's popularity has fallen, Fianna Fail's rating has actually gone up from 39 per cent to 42 per cent.

What these figures signify above all else is Labour's failure to capitalise on its election performance. The result of the November election was a major breakthrough for Labour, recording its highest ever vote in the history of the Free State, returning 33 TDs to

the Dail (Irish parliament), more than double the previous total.

But unless radical measures are taken urgently the chances of recovery in the Irish economy look even more remote.

Emigration is no longer a realistic option for tens of thousands of youth, given the level of unemployment in Britain and other advanced capitalist countries. With 30 per cent of the population under the age of 15, 30,000 jobs would have to be created a year to keep unemployment at its present level.

Hammer blows

Any illusion that a coalition including Labour would be able to stimulate recovery were

soon dashed when the economy was dealt a series of hammer blows.

First the value of the Irish punt plummeted as it came under siege from speculators; resulting in a 10 per cent devaluation. Then came the news that the state airline Aer Lingus, with its highly skilled maintenance section would be laying off 900 workers, and would ask for a 10 per cent wage cut.

The response from the union leadership was predictable. SIPU, the largest national union, and the largest union in Aer Lingus, refused to back demands for an all-out strike, backing only a one-day stoppage.

In February the American computer company Digital announced the scaling down of its manufacturing operation in Galway with the loss of 780 jobs out of a workforce of 1,150.

Finally, at the end of February the coalition government delivered its budget which included a temporary one per cent tax levy on earnings of more than IR£9,000 a year, plus the introduction of VAT on clothes, shoes and newspapers.

Instead of defending the working class against such savage cuts in living standards, the Labour and union

leaderships have acted like willing accomplices.

When faced with the possibility of up to 40 firms reneging on the final phase of pay increases agreed under PES (the Programme for Economic and Social Partnership) Peter Cassels of the ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions) said: 'I don't think we should panic. I don't think there can be a wage freeze!'

The devastated condition of the Irish economy is caused by the failure of successive governments to invest in infrastructure, jobs and services, instead relying on multinationals and private industry to create jobs.

Rapid growth

What is even worse is the knowledge that in GNP terms Ireland is only outstripped in growth rates by Japan; last year GNP grew by 3.6 per cent to IR£24.252 billion. But this represents huge profits taken out of the country by transnational conglomerates like Guinness, Jafferson-Smurfett and Apple computers.

Only the working class movement can break Ireland from this impasse. It means demanding that Labour break from the coalition and ends its collaboration with the enemies of the working class.

Instead there must be direct working class action, including occupations, to stem the flood of redundancies.



Greek workers in 24-hour General Strike

By Maurice Starr

ATHENS came to a standstill during a 24-hour general strike against a third year of public sector wage cuts from the rightwing New Democracy Party last Thursday.

The protest was called by the million-strong General Confederation of Greek

Workers, the country's biggest union centre.

Sectors participating included transport workers, dockers, postal workers, teachers and health workers, and staff at Olympic Airways. The key demand is for a 17 per cent wage increase.

The Mitsotakis government is intent on tackling Greece's ballooning budget deficit

by slashing the living standards of the low-paid.

In January 1991, it started a three year drive to keep public sector wage cuts below inflation, which is the highest in the EC.

Thousands have been sacked as part of a major privatisation programme, while unemployment has rocketed to 9.2 per cent.

Justice for the Casement Park accused!

By Steven Hepburn

The Justice for the Casement Park campaign has been set up in response to a series of trials in Belfast, which have resulted in a new interpretation of the law which poses a serious threat to civil liberties.

The trials followed the killing of two army undercover soldiers who drove into a Republican funeral in March 1988.

Although nobody has been charged with the killings, five people have received life sentences for their part in disarming the soldiers. Their conviction rests on the grounds that by attending a Republican funeral they shared a 'common purpose' with the IRA unit which shot the two men.

41 people still face charges concerning the March 1988 events.

The Haldane Society, Liberty and the Committee on the Administration of Justice have all criticised the trials. The doctrine of 'common purpose' could be used as a catch-all to convict people with no connection to crimes; it is an obvious threat to civil liberties.

Get your union/ Labour Party/ campaigning organisation to invite a speaker and affiliate (£10 organisations, £5/£2 individuals). Write to: Justice for the Casement Park Accused, c/o Green Ink Bookshop, 8 Archway Mall, N19 5RG.

The thinking comrade's headbanger

The Extremist,

Joe Satriani,
Relativity Records, all
formats.

Reviewed by Phil Hearse

THE OTHER week Eric Clapton walked off with more Emmi awards than a normal person could carry. Even Clapton was embarrassed by the absurdity of it.

Those who think he's still a guitar god are wallowing in nostalgia or too lazy to listen to anything new. For the truth is that the most technically accomplished rock guitarists today come from the 'Hard Rock' school - Heavy Metal for short.

Mention Heavy Metal to average socialist and they'll go into the nearest corner and puke.

Of course a lot of Heavy Metal bands are junk, but for

every ten headbangers abusing themselves with a fretboard, there's someone who can really play.

At last year's Freddie Mercury concert *Metallica* played everybody else off the stage. Compared with Eddie Van Halen, Steve Vai, Nunno Bettencourt and Joe Satriani, Clapton is a very average guitarist.

Of the new wave hard rock guitarists Satriani ('The Professor') is the acknowledged genius, alone in shooting to stardom on the basis of purely instrumental albums.

The tens of thousands of US teenagers learning guitar no longer want to play like Clapton or BB King, but like Satriani and Vai.

His breakthrough in the US was the 1990 album *Surfing with the Alien*, and the single from it *Always with You*.

He had to wait for the Seville Expo guitar festival to become widely known in Europe. Already a superstar in France, in Britain he's had

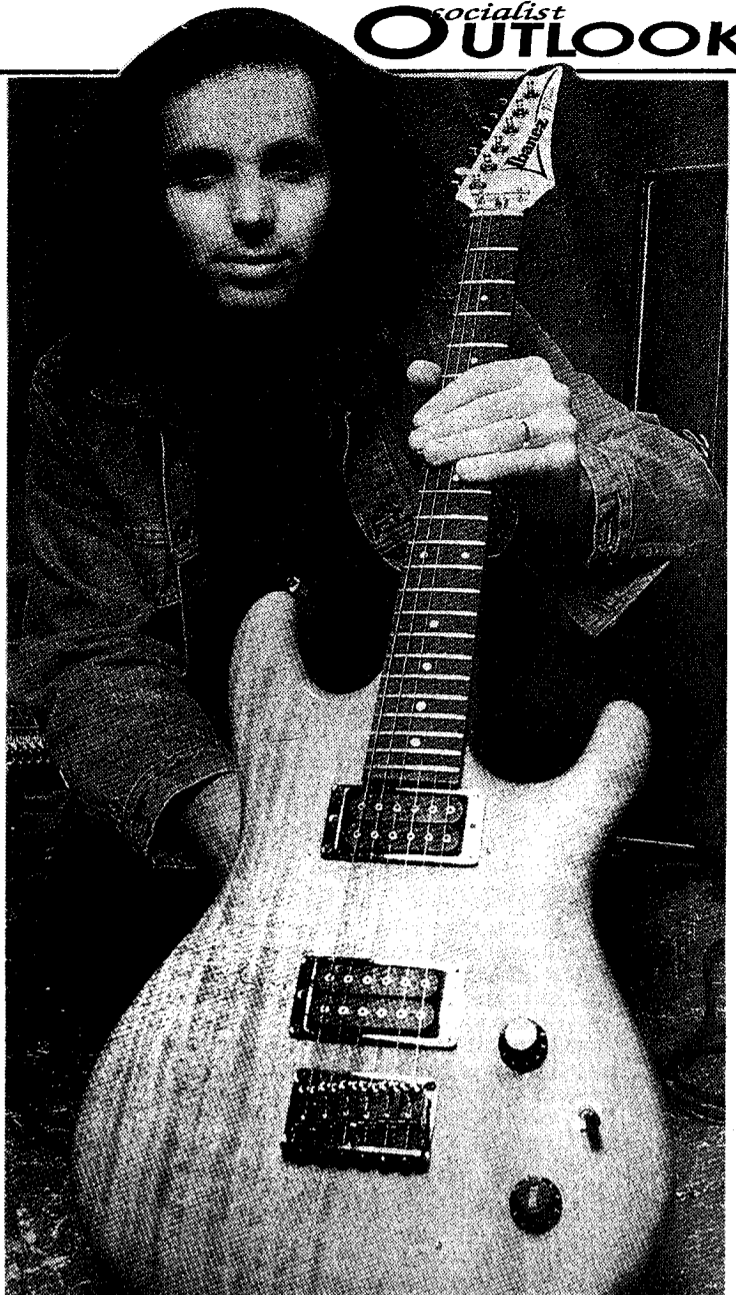
to wait for people to stop raving about the 28th version of *Layla*.

What's Satriani got to offer? A technical bag of tricks and virtuosity to be sure. Numbers like *Crushing Day* on the *Alien* album would have been thought technically impossible even five years ago.

But there's also an unrelenting lyricism, full of gentle touches which go way beyond the bounds of the traditional heavy metal vocabulary.

The Extremist combines some straightforward hard rock numbers with jazz and blues inflected pieces, the best of which is *Why*. It's not his best album, but it's a good place to start for newcomers to the genre.

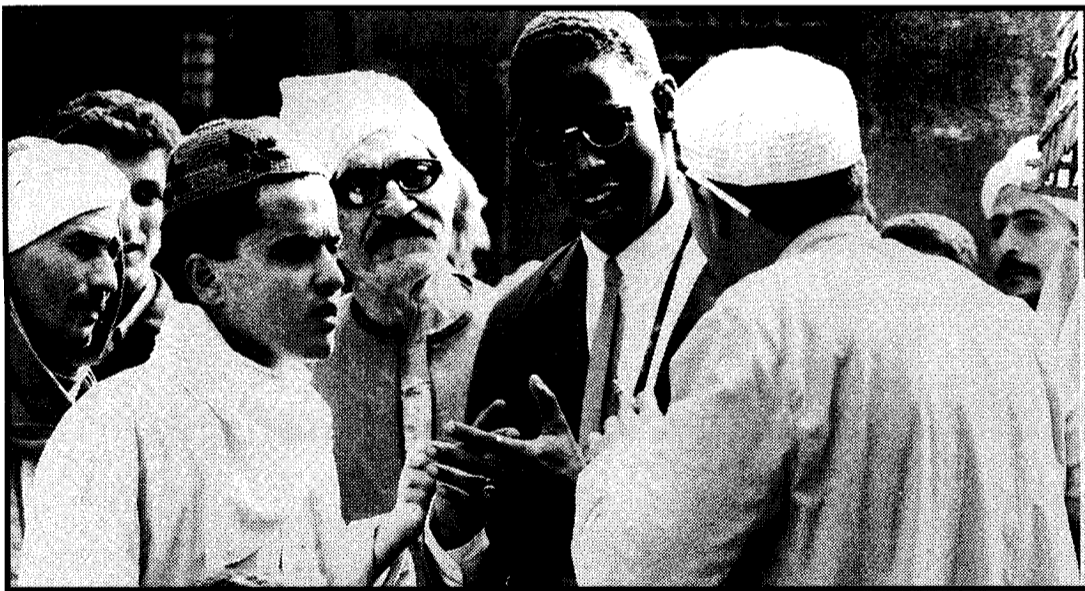
People who don't like anything which isn't 12-bar blues won't like it of course. Neither will those who think rock guitar stopped with Clapton, Hendrix and Jimmy Page.



But people prepared to try something new, and get beyond the 'metal' packaging, should listen to it. Either that, or get booked in to the next 43-night Albert Hall Clapton run and wait for the 29th version of *Layla*, probab-

ly with strings and a 500-voice choir (yawn).

Joe Satriani: Albums - *Not of this World*, *Surfing with the Alien*, *Flying on a Blue Dream*, *The Extremist*. Video: *The Satch Tapes*.



A scene from *Malcolm X*

Getting it wrong on Malcolm X

With all the hype surrounding Spike Lee's film of *Malcolm X*, I looked forward to reading Steve Smith's review (*X* misses the spot SO39) with anticipation. However, I am afraid to say it came as something of a disappointment.

Far from the thoughtful analysis of art formed in a capitalist society, which I have come to expect from *Socialist Outlook*, Smith seemed absurdly upset that Spike Lee had not managed to produce a big budget bio-pic of *Malcolm X* from a Marxist standpoint!

It seems clear to me that the biggest implication of this film, will be the political direction it pushes black youth. Whether the black middle classes get to 'sleep easier in their beds' is a very secondary question to the increased numbers of black working class youth

who will read Malcolm's speeches, his autobiography and possibly even Breitman's *The Last Year of Malcolm X*.

Surely socialists should welcome this increased interest in Malcolm's writings and his life, whatever motivation inspired Spike Lee to make the film.

As for condemning Lee for his lack of class content, since when has 'middle class' been part of Marxist terminology? Middle class is a bourgeois sociological definition that has nothing to do with a clear understanding of people's relationship to the means of production.

In that sense, Lee is correct to say that Malcolm's message does not 'exclude the middle classes'. Neither does Marx's message. What Malcolm did do was recognise that there are different

layers of privilege and oppression within oppressed layers. Just as socialists should.

The black 'middle class' does encounter racism on a daily basis, just as women encounter sexism every day of their lives whether they are working in the home, on a factory floor, or an executive office.

To think otherwise is to trivialise the nature of specific oppressions as groups like the SWP and Militant have done in the past.

Socialist Outlook has always been one of the best on the left in reaching a clear understanding of the relationship between class oppression and specific oppressions. It is unfortunate that this article did not demonstrate it.

Julia Stevens
London N22

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

Oslerism is everywhere!

Keith Flett's unsubstantiated assertion that he has appeared in more leftwing periodicals than me (Oslerism or optimism? SO37) cannot go unchallenged.

I have written articles or letters in *Socialist Outlook*, *Socialist*, *Tribune*, *New Statesman*, *Labour Briefing*, *The Morning Star*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Review*, *Trade Union News*, *New Times*, *Marxism Today*, *Unite and Fight!*, *Socialist Action* (both early 80s UK and current American versions), *International Viewpoint*, *Rouge* (France), and *Internationales* (Sweden).

Moreover, I have been attacked by name in *Workers News*, *Workers Press*, *Workers Power*, *Analysis and The Leninist*, and by implication in *Workers Hammer* and *Casablanca*. Depending on what Flett defines as left, I could throw in *Time Out*, *City Limits*, *Outlook* (the other one), *New Musical Express* and *Nicaragua Today*.

When we come to commercial pub-

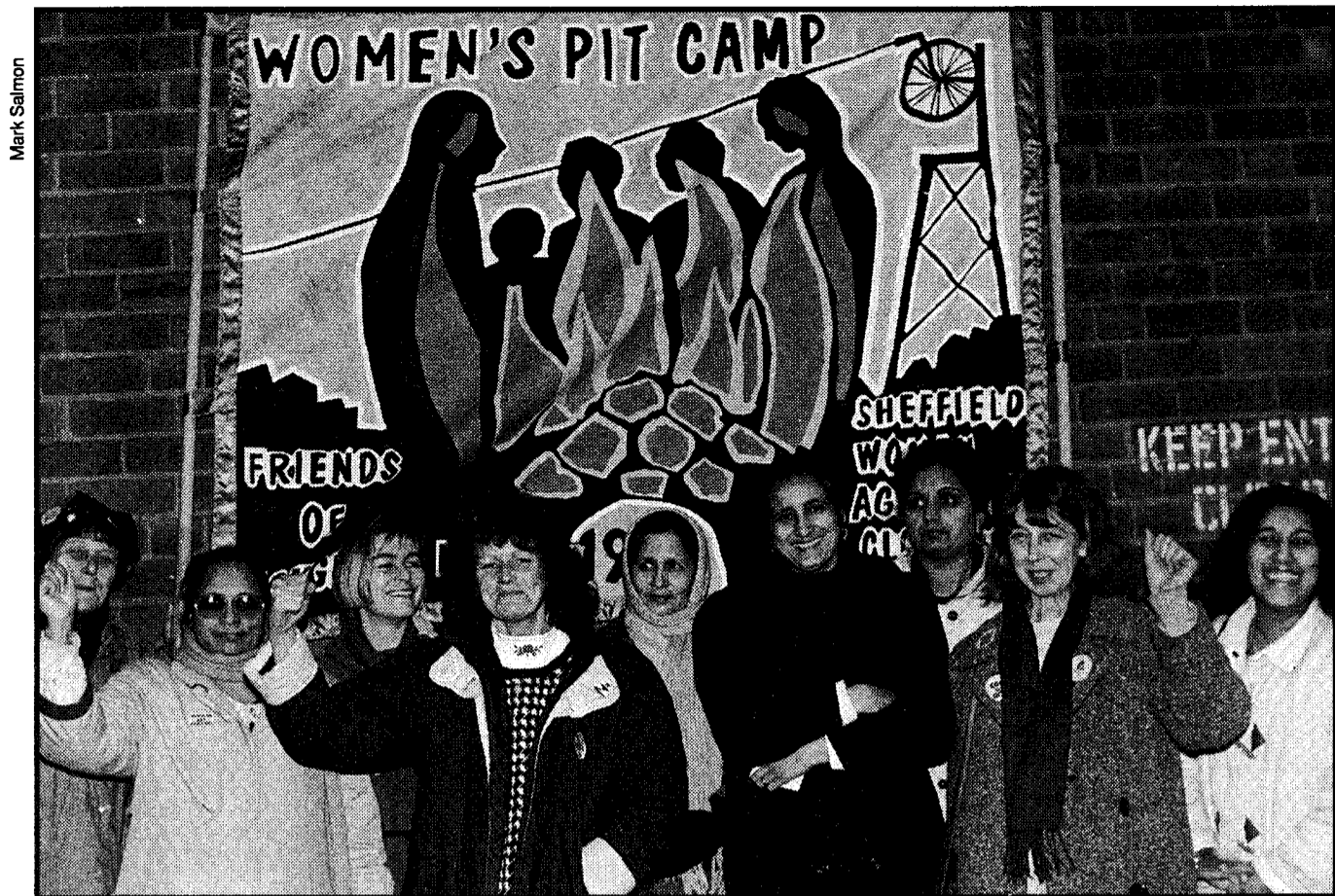
lications, it's a safe bet that not even Keith can boast front pages splashes in the *Waltham Forest Guardian* and *Gazette*, *International Freighting Weekly* and Tokyo-based *Shipping and Trade News* (I'm still their London correspondent), or 6000-word features for *Lloyds List*.

This is before we get to my broadcast work and contributions to *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Financial Times*, *International Musician and Recording World*, *Caterer and Hotel Keeper*, *Retail Week*, *Camden and St Pancras Chronicle*, *Sounds*, *International Marine Business and Tradewinds* (Norway). Need I go on?

Still, keep up the good work, son. You might get there one day.

Dave Osler
London SW4

(Dave Osler is available to fill up letter columns in other left papers for a modest fee. Ed)



Mark Salmon

Burnsalls strikers plan Day of Action

The Burnsalls strikers, mainly Punjabi women, who have been fighting for decent pay and conditions at the Smethwick electroplating factory for nine months, plan a day of mass action to coincide with the miners on 2 April.

On that day a mass picket of the factory is being called, and delegations of strikers will visit other workers taking action. Miners from Trentham and FBU firefighters are among the groups expected to attend.

The day of action is the latest stage of an increasingly successful campaign for the strikers, whose terrible pay, unsafe working conditions, compulsory overtime and long hours is symbolic of the sweatshop exploitation of black workers in many industries.

For details of the day of action and other activities, contact Burnsall Strikers' Support Group, tel: 021 551 4679. Donations should be sent to GMB Burnsall Strike Fund, GMB, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Rd., Halesowen, West Midlands.

Choice for teachers: fight or go under

By Dave Wahl

Easter will see hundreds of delegates from Britain's largest teaching union, the NUT, meeting in the face of a massive Tory offensive against state education.

The comprehensive system is at a crossroads, with cuts threatening thousands of teaching jobs, an effective pay cut for teachers, and a massive political and ideological offensive culminating in the National Curriculum tests (SATS).

The Education Bill currently working its way through parliament establishes a framework for a two-tier selective educational system.

With funding following pupils, and government plans to increase the number of grant maintained schools, the linking of school funding to performance in national league tables of test results (SATS and GCSEs), will create an educational 'market'.

Competition between schools for limited resources

and the introduction of performance related pay, will set school against school and teacher against teacher, resulting in the undermining of collective resistance to the Tory educational agenda.

SATS represent a concerted ideological attack aimed at reversing the gains of comprehensive education. They are a culmination of moves through the National Curriculum to end pupil-centred learning, critical thinking and anti-sexist and anti-racist education.

In their place the Tories want a return to rote learning and the idea of a fixed and homogeneous national culture which expresses the values of Major's 'classless society'.

The branding of children as failures at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16 will provide a justification for underfunded 'sink' schools to receive them in the educational market place.

Opposition to SATS and the pressure for a boycott is also a product of increasing anger amongst teachers and a willingness to fight. Recent years have seen a massive increase in teachers' workload and a steady erosion of pay.

Changes brought about by the imposition of the National Curriculum have increased administration, record keeping and meetings, while cuts and redundancies have seen class sizes soar and non-contact time plummet.

So far, compulsory redundancies amongst teachers have been limited, in part, by a scramble for early retirement.

As money for this runs out and alternative jobs dry up in the recession, sackings are now the only option for the Tories, and for Labour councils unwilling to confront the government. Thousands of teachers now face redundancy.

The NUT needs to break out of the straight-jacket of isolated

local action.

Although local strikes have had some impact in preventing redundancies, the scale of the problem is now exposing the limitations of this policy. NUT Conference must commit the union to a national strategy for the defence of state education.

The initiatives taken around SATS have shown the way forward, linking parents' concerns about education, with teachers' anger at their own worsening conditions and the negative impact of Tory reforms on their pupils.

While Conference must commit the NUT, like the NAS/UWT, to a boycott of all SATS, it must launch national action on class size, and against redundancies, and the performance related pay needed by the Tories to underpin the educational 'market'.

It must also determine to work with parents and pupils to formulate an alternative agenda for education.

Women's TUC backs action

By Marian Brain

The TUC women's conference, held in Blackpool from Wednesday to Friday last week, saw both widespread support for the a trade union fightback against the Tories and lengthy discussion of social policy.

The most contentious motion was on the Child Support Act. While the resolution did not support the act directly, its emphasis was off-beam.

Nevertheless, the part of the resolution that called on the TUC women's committee to monitor the act in operation is obviously important.

There was also discussion on the welfare state and Labour's 'independent' commission on social justice. The general council was instructed to ensure that any submission maintains the longstanding TUC policy of backing universal benefits and the contributory system, in opposition to targeting/means testing.

The important question of state retirement age was also raised. Given government intentions to equalise pensionable age at 65, and even suggestions that it should be raised to 67,

conference endorsed the setting up of the State Pensions at 60 Alliance.

This group campaigns for retirement on full pension at 60 for both men and women.

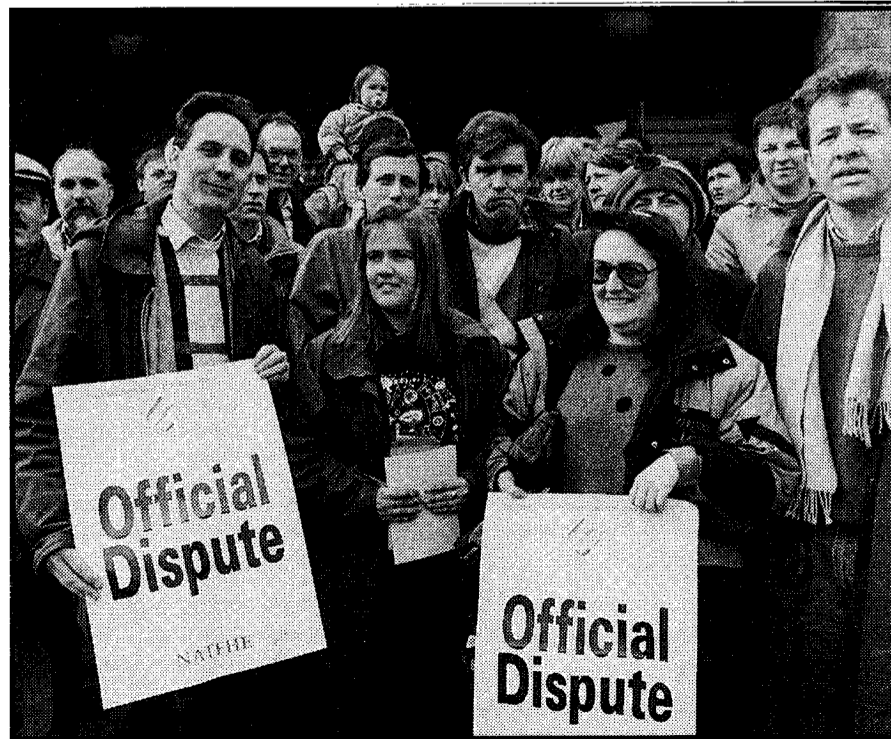
31 pits

The highlight of the conference was the intervention of Women Against Pit Closures. WAPC's Christine Sumner received a standing ovation after arguing forcibly that not one of the 31 threatened pits should close.

Calling on other workers to join the NUM on April 2, she emphasised that the movement should be building for a Europe-wide day of action on that date.

A delegate from the NCU argued that the time for action had come, and was backed by a delegate from the NUJ. A speaker from RMT said that every union should be taking up its own issues and then co-ordinating any action with others unions.

Motions in support of the firefighters and against the Tomlinson London NHS cuts were both carried. There were also calls to ban sex-chat lines and for legislation to safeguard women against toxic shock.



Mark Salmon

Birmingham NATFHE members held a one day strike against new contracts earlier this month, forcing colleges across the West Midlands to cancel classes and send students home. The March 10 protest against increasing the current 30-hour working week and halving the 14 week holiday entitlement hit colleges in Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall and Birmingham itself.

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Maastricht and the future of socialism

Organising the left in the Labour Party

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Firefighters ready to fight pay freeze

By Bill Sutcliffe

Firefighters are set to fight the Tories' 1.5 per cent pay limit after union leaders last week threatened strikes in defence of their pay formula.

Ken Cameron, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, called for industrial action unless local authority employers adhered to existing arrangements, won after a nine-week national strike in 1979. The last Labour government used

troops to break the dispute.

"This government seems hell-bent on confrontation. We will take strike action, if necessary, and we will carry on until victory," Cameron argued.

He was speaking after some 2000 FBU members lobbied the Home Office in London, where a delegation from the union met home secretary Kenneth Clarke.

Clarke reportedly argued that the government was not directly involved in firefighters'

pay talks, but added: "I cannot agree that firefighters should be an exception to the government's policy."

Under the current rules, firefighters' earnings are linked to the upper quartile of full-time male manual workers' pay as defined by an annual government survey. Pay rises are automatic every November.

While no formal decision has been taken to axe the formula, implementing it would almost certainly breach the 1.5 per cent limit. Last year it yielded a 4.9 per cent rise.

The FBU executive will ask the union's conference in May to authorise a strike ballot. As Cabinet Office documents seen by *Socialist Outlook* reveal, the government sees firefighters as a high strike risk.



Firefighters can put out Tories

When FBU hosed down Labour's pay limits

By Harry Sloan

THE ROLE of vanguard fighters against government pay restraint is not new to the Fire Brigades Union.

In the autumn and winter of 1977, wage militancy among the fire fighters ran into conflict with Phase 3 of Labour chancellor Dennis Healey's pay limits, which set out to restrict all public sector workers to a 10% increase.

The pay limit had been imposed by Labour with full parliamentary support from David Steel's Liberal party, eager to exploit the openings from Jim Callaghan's right wing government. Callaghan was attracting praise for his stand on pay from right wingers including the *Sunday Telegraph's* Peregrine Worsthorne, who declared him the best Prime Minister since Churchill!

30 percent claim

The fire-fighters, who had sunk far down the pay league, demanded a 30 percent increase, to bring an average firefighter up to £86 for a standard 48-hour week.

Militancy and self confidence was increased by the fact that their pay talks followed on militant struggles by Ford workers and by Scottish lorry drivers, both of which secured settlements in excess of 10 percent.

A strike wave was developing, including Rolls Royce workers (who stayed out three months), Vauxhalls and a continuing fight by power workers.

At the beginning of November, despite opposition from General Secretary Terry Parry and a 2-1 vote against by the FBU executive, firefighters voted for a national strike. Parry immediately denounced the decision as 'tragic', and began talking of a settlement involving simply a promise of extra money in the following pay round.

Mass scabbing

Labour's Home Secretary Merlyn Rees promptly declared that 12,000 untrained troops, driving antiquated 'green goddess' fire tenders would

scab on the strike - the biggest state scabbing operation since the 1926 general strike.

As the firefighters took solid action, TUC leaders heading other unions with claims outstanding all stepped smartly back to leave the FBU isolated.

NUPE postponed any decision, then ignored a ballot vote for strike action by 1 million local council workers, while the NUM also retreated on a £135 per week claim for miners.

To rub salt into the wounds, the TUC in December called on the FBU to accept a 10 percent increase and return to work - even while Labour ministers, in cahoots with right wing union chiefs, prepared a Phase 4 of wage controls, to include a permanent pay board.

New formula

During December a formula was proposed which would give the firefighters an immediate increase of 10 percent followed by guaranteed increases to put them and keep them in the top 25 percent of skilled male manual earnings. This was rejected.

After a Christmas on the picket lines, in which the strength of labour movement support for the firefighters had grown dramatically, the TUC voted 20-17 against backing for their strike, with the TGWU delegation split three ways and others defying conference mandates.

In January, Terry Parry eventually won the day for acceptance of the deal which had previously been rejected. FBU militants denounced the settlement because it had insufficient immediate cash on the table.

Boost

But in retrospect the guaranteed link with top earnings has turned out to be a major boost to the living standards of FBU members.

No wonder firefighters, whose union was transformed by the dispute and is now led by a relatively left wing leadership headed by Ken Cameron, are so determined to protect this pay formula* against Norman Lamont's brutal pay freeze.

EC blow to privatisation

HEALTH AUTHORITIES and local councils which have handed vital services over to wage-cutting private contractors could face multi-million bills for compensation as a result of recent court judgements.

And public sector workers facing imminent redundancy as cowboy firms move in could find themselves relieved.

Panic has been growing among ministers and employers vulnerable to compensation claims after the Welsh Office withdrew from a crucial test case, effectively conceding the field to trade unions who have been taking the government to court.

European law protects employees from the imposition of poorer pay and conditions when transferred from one employer to another. The Tory government, alone in the EC, had attempted to amend this to allow local authority and NHS services to be privatised.

Slashed wages

On the basis of the Tory interpretation of the law, a huge wave of privatisation axed tens of thousands of public sector jobs during the 1980s, and slashed the wages of tens of thousands more low-paid staff.

Now the courts have found retrospectively in favour of the EC

legislation, many employers are caught midstream.

Many contractors face a massive increase in their costs if they pay existing rates to staff transferring, and huge bills for any staff they make redundant; and health authorities, NHS Trusts and councils which had counted on cash savings from privatisation, could have to cope with increased costs, the possible withdrawal of contractors and claims for compensation from staff long ago privatised.

While dependence upon EC legislation is no way to defend jobs against attack, public sector unions must lose no opportunity to use this crack in the Tory armour to fight back against privatisation.

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Student unions under threat



Kick out the NUS right!

By Duncan Chapple,
Manchester Area NUS Student
Council (personal capacity)

THIS WEEK the National Union of Students conference will discuss plans from the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) to dissolve NUS as it currently exists.

It is essential conference delegates stop this attempt to collaborate with the Tories in blocking potential student protest.

To cut unemployment the Tories plan to have one young person in three going on to further education by the end of the decade. At the same time they are

cutting students' money and the cost of education.

Mass teaching universities on the cheap have been created out of the old polytechnics, while a handful of the old universities get the bulk of research funds.

Worried that the potential is there for student unions to become centres to organise resistance, the government has threatened to end automatic membership of student unions, limit campaigning and set the scene for student facilities, shops and bars to revert to college administration.

The NOLS NUS leadership, with their tiny material privileges and supplication-form swelling experience of financial and personnel management under threat, have rushed to surrender.

They propose optional union membership and placing campaigns under Charity Commission control – similar to Margaret Thatcher's proposals for NUS reform!

Weak response

Faced with this attack, the left response is weak. The Socialist Worker Student Society (SWSS) has responded to downsizing campaign work and stepping up propaganda. It abstained on attempts to set up a network of college-based miners' support groups, and has failed to advance a programme linking college struggles with those in the community.

Left Unity, the grouping reflecting the positions of Socialist

Organiser, grew through aggressive propaganda and unprincipled interventions in NUS conference; but it is now in decline, demonstrated by the surprise failures of their candidates to be re-elected as NUS women's officer and NOLS Executive member.

Two new coalitions appear at this NUS conference – Clause 4 sponsored by Labour Briefing, and Campaign for a Broad Left sponsored by Militant. Socialist Outlook supporters will argue for these forces to build real unity, on a common programme for students' struggle. A Socialist Outlook slate of four is also standing to propose a strategy of an independent fightback and linking up with community struggles.