

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Kick out the Tories in '87!

Labour must win Greenwich



The Palestinian struggle today

See centre pages

Tories jail youth in AIDS panic

By Clive Bradley

YOUNG people carrying the AIDS virus are being locked away in secure units and community homes. A spokesperson for the DHSS said: 'If youngsters in care have the infection and a history of... promiscuity, it would be appropriate for them to be held'.

Legally the teenagers must be released when they are 18 — but until then they do not have the legal



AIDS vigil. Photo Simon Grosset.

minimum rights available to adults.

This is a particularly brutal example of the loss of civil rights faced by AIDS victims, or HIV carriers. Professor Norman Tutt of Lancaster University told the Daily Mirror: "I think ultimately we will cast out civil liberties and if courts believed a child is likely to go back to a promiscuous lifestyle they will incarcerate him or her".

Imprisoning young people who have tragically caught the AIDS virus will not prevent the spread of AIDS. Rather than locking youth up, the Tories should be spending money on research to find a cure or vaccine.

Of course, methods are needed to prevent the spread of AIDS. Clear and explicit information should be available so people know how to limit the risks when having sex. What is needed is not moral lectures and reactionary calls to people to stop having sex, but clear information on safer sex.

It is madness to lock up AIDS virus carriers. About 30,000 people have the virus. Are all of them to be locked up? Or just the 'promiscuous' ones? Judged by what standards, and by whom?

How would this mass imprisonment be enforced? How would AIDS virus carriers be detected?

It is only possible to catch AIDS through sexual intercourse or direct mingling of blood. So AIDS virus carriers are not a risk to the public in general. And AIDS virus carriers have rights too — including teenagers.



Junior health minister Edwina Currie recently commented that the best way for businessmen abroad to avoid AIDS is to 'take their wives'. We need money spent on research, not this idiotic reactionary rubbish.

Don't forget the sacked miners!

Terry French, freed on Monday 23rd after two years in jail for picketing in the miners' strike, spoke to John Bloxam.

MY FIRST priority now is to everything I can to assist sacked and jailed men.

I'm no longer in jail, but of course I'm still a sacked miner. I want to do all I can for young Dean and Russell who are still incarcerated in Gartree on seven year sentences. They are coming up for their first parole hearing in August this year, but I can't do the state giving them anything. I want to help them.

We can all remember Des Warren the building worker who was jailed in 1973 for picketing in the 1970s builders' strike. We all know what happened.

There was a miners' strike and the Labour Party was returned to power. And yet Des Warren still languishes in jail, and served his full term.

There were all sorts of promises before the election that he was going to be released, and he never was.

I am hoping that if the Labour Party are returned to power the Campaign Group of MPs, who should be in a far stronger position after the election, will make them use their power rather than abrogating their responsibilities. But I do not hold much faith. We can't rely on the Labour government to get the miners out of jail.

Forgotten

There are 400 miners still out there at the gates, and we are starting to be forgotten. Here in Kent, it is between seven and eight per cent of the workforce outside the gates. That is a big percentage compared with Yorkshire, which has something like 0.002%.

We are finding it very difficult to get down here. We have a membership of under 800 — and for that amount of men to keep 50 victimised miners anything like a half-decent way of life is very, very hard.

This morning, I had to go and get a couple of bags of coal to keep the house warm. This is what you

Turn to page 11

Hard times for Irish workers

PROBABLY the most surprising thing about last week's election in the Irish Republic was that the small Labour Party, discredited by four years as junior partner in a conservative-dominated coalition government, did so well.

Its leader, Dick Spring, scraped home in North Kerry by only four votes, but Labour, which went into the election with 14 seats and expecting heavy losses, came out of it with 12. Its vote was down 3 per cent.

The great loser was Fine Gael, the dominant party in the outgoing coalition, which lost 17 seats, after campaigning on a platform of £200 million cuts. The main winner was the Progressive Democrats, a Thatcherite breakaway from Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail (FF) party. The PDs went from 5 to 14 seats. Paradoxically, they seem to have taken far more votes from Fine Gael

By Paddy Dollard

than from FF.

Fianna Fail won 81 seats, and will now form a minority government, three votes short of an overall majority. Charles Haughey, the incoming Taoiseach (prime minister), will bid for the support of some of the four independents elected.

Economic

Haughey, who refused to spell out his economic policies during the election campaign, has started a round of consultation with employers' organisations and with trade unions to try to create a 'consensus' of support for the economic measures of the new government, which will take office in the second week of March.

A vast barrage of propaganda about the need for cuts was kept up by FF, Fine Gael, and the PDs

Fianna Fail	81 seats — up 10
Fine Gael	51 seats — down 17
Labour	12 seats — down 2
Progressive Democrats	14 seats — up 9
Workers' Party	4 seats — up 2
Democratic Socialist P.	1
Independents	3



Legal lynching

The use of the death penalty in the United States appears to be arbitrary and racially biased, and clearly violates international treaties signed by the US government, according to Amnesty International.

Amnesty says the penalty has become "a horrifying lottery" in which politics, money, race and the location of the crime could play a more decisive part in sending a defendant to the death chamber than the circumstances of the crime itself.

Launching a worldwide campaign against the US death penalty, Amnesty International said the rate of executions is accelerating — 57 prisoners have been executed in the past three years against 11 in the previous seven. A record 1,838 prisoners are on death row waiting to see if they too are to be electrocuted, gassed, poisoned, hanged or shot dead — the different methods of execution.

Those executed and the inmates still on death row include mentally ill or retarded people and prisoners who were still under 18 or who had been juveniles when their crimes were committed, it said.

Imposing death sentences on juvenile offenders is barred by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights, both signed by the US in 1977.

The execution of mentally ill prisoners contravenes guidelines set by the United Nations in 1984. But in 1985, for instance, a black farmworker in Virginia was executed for murder after he had been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic with a mental age of 8.

Blacks convicted of murdering whites have been found more likely to be sentenced to death than any other category of offender — but whites have only rarely been sentenced to death for killing blacks. Over 40 per cent of death row prisoners are black.

Between 1977 and 1986 nearly 90% of prisoners executed had been convicted of killing whites — although there were nearly as many black victims as white ones.

It took 14 minutes to kill one prisoner in the electric chair in Alabama in 1983 and during his electrocution, smoke and flame

erupted from his head and leg.

Another had convulsions for eight minutes while he was being gassed in Mississippi, also in 1983.

In Texas, a prisoner complained of pain for ten minutes as he was being killed with an injection of poison in 1984.

Of 50 US states, 37 have death penalty laws. 12 have executed prisoners since 1976 and another 21 have prisoners on death row.

Amnesty International's report says that chance can play a big part in death sentencing, and points to the wide discretion given to US prosecutors, juries and judges.

A sentence might hinge on where the crime was committed and there are wide disparities in death sentencing across the nation — more than two-thirds of all executions since 1977 have been in the southern states of Florida, Louisiana, Georgia and Texas.

Amnesty's call for the abolition of the death penalty should be supported by the labour movement in America.



Protests about the banning of Sinn Fein from Irish radio and TV at (above) the Department of Communications and (below) the parliament building, Leinster House.

throughout the election campaign. Fine Gael has promised to support Haughey in any unpopular economic measures he decides to take. This means that the minority Fianna Fail government can expect at least a year in office.

The Irish working class faces grim prospects. The 26 Counties economy is in a very bad way.

Today 20% of workers in the Republic are unemployed. The National Debt is £22 billion, or 10% of gross national product. (Britain's is 5% of GNP). It was £9 billion only five years ago. There is serious talk of the IMF stepping in to take control of the finances as it has done in many Third World countries, putting Ireland on short rations.

Up to 200,000 young Irish women and men are estimated to have entered the USA without visas, and they work there now as illegal immigrants. In the last month tens of thousands of people have applied for visas to go to the US.

In the last year not many fewer than 1,000 people a week have left the 26 Counties. These are just some of the most startling statistics of the Great Irish Disaster over which the Labour/Fine Gael coalition government presided from November 1982.

In the last 30 years southern Ireland has gone through a cold social revolution. Industry has grown, and so has the number of industrial workers; people have flocked to the towns; living standards have risen; after 1970 emigration stopped and Ireland's population began to grow for the first time in a century and a quarter. Ireland had the youngest population in Europe, with 50 per cent under 25.

Circle

And at the end of 30 years of capitalist development we have come full circle. Emigration is now around the level known in the terrible days of the '40s and '50s, when whole generations left school and within a year or two headed for the boat train to Dun Laoghaire and sailed across the channel to Holyhead, where we dispersed to the far corners of England.

The choice that Irish workers had in this election was a choice between two aggressively capitalist possible governments. There are differences, though.

While Fine Gael and the PDs are brutally Thatcherite, Fianna Fail, de Valera's party, still has some populist concern for 'the people'. It is a party controlled by big business, and it has been Ireland's biggest political party and therefore the 'natural party of government' for decades; but Fianna Fail still retains roots among the rural poor and the urban working class.

In office it will cut and slash and serve big business, but it will try more than a Fine Gael/PD coalition would to soften the effect of the cuts. Many workers expressed their intense hatred of the coalition — of Fine Gael, of the PDs, and of Labour — by voting for 'Charlie', the millionaire who leads Fianna Fail. They will probably get the chance to

Bigot out

ONE VERY encouraging election result was the defeat of Alice Glenn, the leading Catholic bigot in the last Dail.

Late last year she put out a bulletin to her local Fine Gael party which denounced all the minority churches in the South as 'enemies of the people'. As a result she lost the support of a majority of her local Fine Gael party, and stood in the election as an independent.

The Dublin Central electorate saw her off.

reflect ruefully on that in the period ahead.

Labour

The crying need is for the Irish labour movement to have its own mass party, a party which, unlike the shrivelled coalitionist Labour Party, has independent working-class politics.

The working class will face bitter onslaughts from the Fianna Fail government. That may lead the Irish working class, which has a long tradition of industrial militancy, seriously to set about the work of building such an independent working-class party.

The left

THE WORKERS' Party is the former 'Official' IRA/Sinn Fein, now a semi-Stalinist organisation which accepts partition.

In Dublin City and County the Workers Party got more votes than the Labour Party, whose vote dropped 3.4%. The WP got 36,828 votes, or 7.5%, as against Labour's 35,000, or 7.1%.

One of the Labour TDs elected is Michael D Higgins of Galway, a socialist and public critic of the party's coalitionist politics.

The Democratic Socialist Party Dail deputy is Jim Kemmy, a Limerick City stonemason. He regained the seat he lost in 1982. Kemmy is anti-nationalist, believing that Dublin should recognise the existing Northern Ireland state as a legitimate democratic institution which

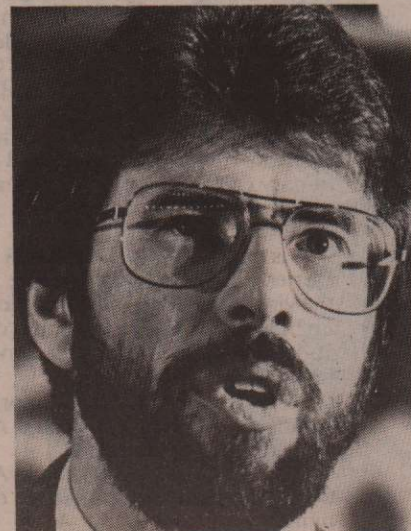
	Votes	TDs	% '82
Workers Party	67,263	4	3.8 + .5
Labour Party	114,553	12	6.4 - .3
Dem.Soc.Party	8,269	1	

expresses the democratic rights of the Six County pro-Unionist majority. He has been bravely outspoken for civil rights, including the right to abortion.

One of the independents is Tony Gregory of Dublin, a sort of left-wing Republican, once linked to the Irish Republican Socialist Party. In 1982 he publicly sold his vote to the short-lived Fianna Fail minority government in return for a government agreement to spend a large amount of public money in his constituency.

Moves are being made by Gregory and others to create a 'Left Alliance' in the Dail, in an effort to promote a left/right realignment in Irish politics.

Sinn Fein flops



SINN FEIN has fought many elections in the 26 Counties — but on the basis of a pledge that any SF deputies elected would not take their seats. During the Six County hunger strikes at the beginning of the '80s, two

'H-Block' abstentionist candidates were elected to Dail Eireann.

In 1987 Sinn Fein fought its first election for 65 years intending to take any seats it should win. It did very badly, getting only 1.9% of the vote.

Sinn Fein was hindered by the government ban which keeps all its representatives off TV and radio. But all in all, it was a feeble beginning for the new, political, SF in the South.

In the Six Counties the party commands over one third of the Catholic vote.

SF's constitutional nationalist rivals in the Six Counties, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, were quick to say that the vote shows that SF has no mandate at all to make war in the name of the Irish people.

What will the poor showing in the election do to SF itself? Last November the old leaders of the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein, David O'Connell, Rory O'Brady, and others, split and formed a new organisation, 'Republican Sinn Fein', in protest at the decision to abandon abstentionism.

Many who voted with O'Brady and O'Connell remained behind when they walked out. This vote will probably make them feel vindicated and boost 'Republican Sinn Fein'.

Labour needs a message

59% of Tory voters believe that a Tory government would pay no attention to what they think. And 45% think that a Tory administration would not give people like them a better chance in life.

Working class Tory voters obviously have few illusions about the class interests that the Tories serve. Why do they still vote Tory? The same survey, by Marplan, indicates that 83% of Tory voters reckon that the Tories will "govern Britain strongly".

Labour's weaknesses are also highlighted by the poll. 36% of all voters think that Labour would listen to their views, while the Tories score only 19% on this question; 35% think that Labour would give people like them a better chance in life, and only 24% hope the same from the Tories.

Strong

But on "governing strongly" the Tories get 56% confidence, and Labour only 26%.

Neil Kinnock's line of trying to make Labour appear all things to all people will lose votes for Labour, not win them.

Jobs are, and have to be, central to Labour's message. Neil Kinnock talks about creating one million new jobs. But how? Labour's promises remain vague, and no wonder most voters don't believe him.

By cutting working hours? But Labour's nominal commitment to a 35 hour week has vanished from view.

By restoring Tory cuts in public services, and expanding them? Kinnock has specifically refused to promise to restore Tory cuts.

Labour councils are supposed to provide a lot of the new jobs, but they have been told in so many words that they will not have their money from central government restored to 1979 levels, and they will not be bailed out from their huge debt burdens.

Since the Labour leaders now want an increase in military spending (supposedly to reassure voters that nuclear disarmament doesn't make Labour 'soft' on military matters), this can only mean that many Tory cuts in public services will stay, or that more will be made.

Support

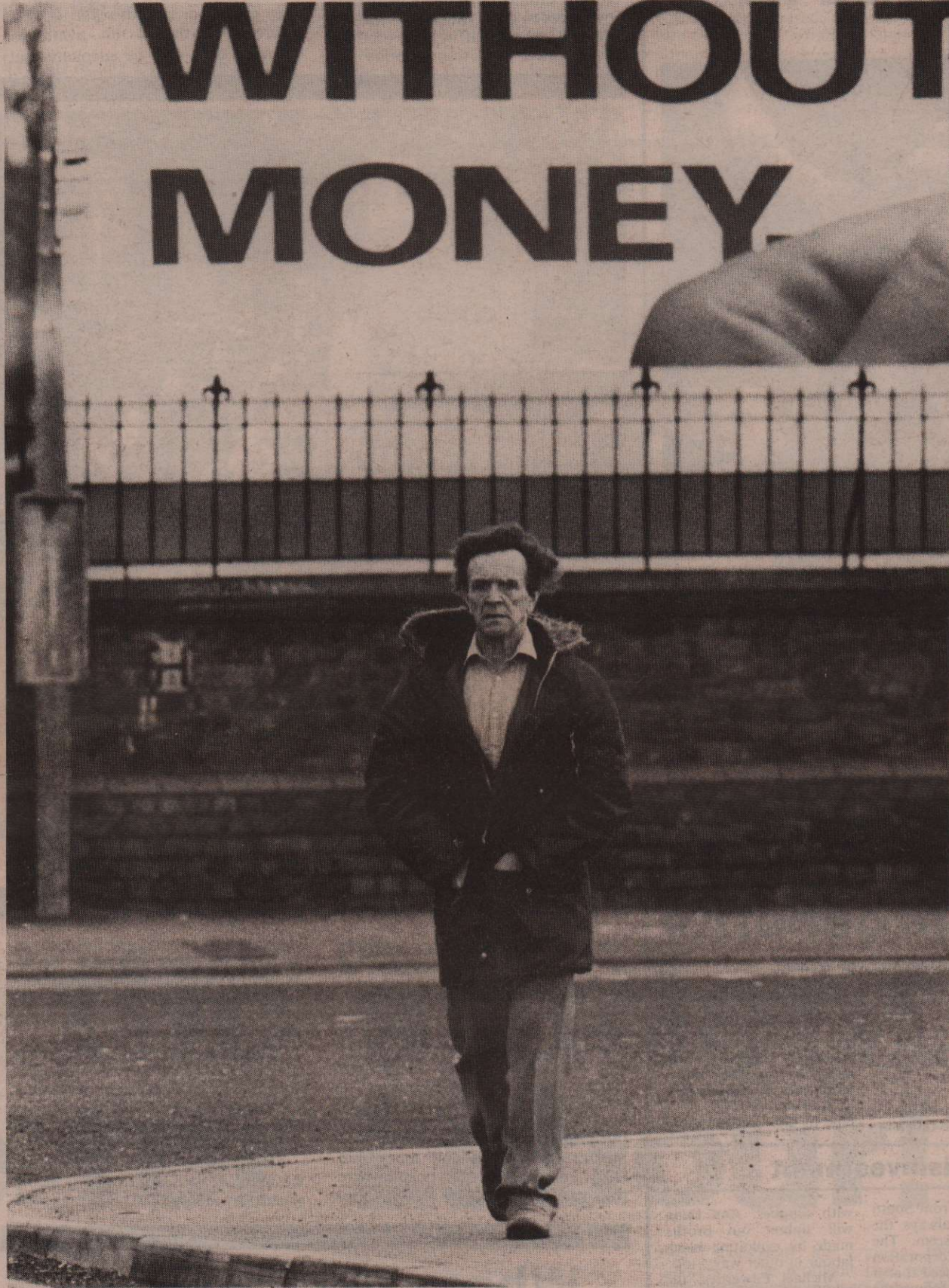
Will a Labour government support workers who occupy their workplaces to fight cuts and closures, by underwriting continued production under public ownership and workers' control? Will it launch a big programme of training and re-training at trade union rates of pay?

No: even the notion, briefly floated last autumn, of a Labour government making nationalised industries restore jobs cut under the Tories, has been dropped after protests from the bosses. Renationalisation of job-cutting privatised enterprises like British Telecom has been postponed to never-never.

The only definite thing about Neil Kinnock's jobs programme is that it calls for keeping wages down. As Labour Weekly put it, "His message was that jobs would come first and the price to be paid might have to be restraint by some unions in pay bargaining."

This is no way to win working class

WITHOUT MONEY



Unemployed in Kirkby. Photo: John Harris.

votes, and certainly no way to beat unemployment.

Capitalism — the rule of profit — has to be replaced, not nudged, manipulated and cajoled.

Under capitalism men and women do not control our own social life. We are tossed around by economic forces, of human construction but beyond human control — supply and demand, profit and investment, credit and liquidity.

The system knows no way to adjust to changes other than by the travail of trade wars, slumps and de-industrialisation.

Remedy

The remedy? We must take control of the means of production we have created and run them by democratic

planning for need. We must replace the crazy patchwork of national rivalries with a co-operative international system. In place of the rat race, we must run society on principles of solidarity.

Struggle

The struggle for jobs can be brought to completion only by the working class taking power in society. But we can start now with a fight for workers' control, for unity of the employed and unemployed, for a shorter working week, and for work-sharing without loss of pay.

We must start the fight against the Tories; and we will have to continue it against a Labour government that ties itself to managing capitalism.

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Wet Blunkett

Newspaper headlines, like those French "Golden Delicious" apples, are a constant source of disappointment. They look so crisp and tangey and green (the apples, I mean) and then you bite into them to find...soggy blotting paper.

Last Tuesday's headlines looked very tangey indeed: "Neil won't win" storm hits Labour" was the Express front page lead; "Storm over Kinnock 'to lose'" said the Mail.

What could all this be about? Apparently, David Blunkett had given an interview to that well-known journal of in-depth political analysis, Women's Own. According to the Express, "a row was waging last night after labour chief David Blunkett was claimed to have given his own party the thumbs down as election no-hopes." The Telegraph put it rather more literately: "A leading left-wing ally of Mr. Neil Kinnock was involved in an embarrassing row over a prediction that Mrs Thatcher could win the next election."

This sounds like real dynamite, doesn't it? Unfortunately these journalistic apples turned out to be of the Golden Delicious variety. Nowhere, in any of the papers, could I find a single quote from Blunkett to justify the dramatic headlines and opening

By Jim Denham

paragraphs. Plainly, Blunkett said something to Women's Own, and whatever it was, it must have hinted at less than 100% confidence in a Labour victory at the next election. But what the hell were his actual words?

After extensive investigations by my research team, I can reveal the truth. Blunkett said:

"If someone had said in 1979 that she could have three terms as Prime Minister everyone would have said it was impossible. Now it is not inconceivable that they will win the next election. If I had to put my last £5 on the election, out of evangelical faith I'd put it on Labour, but my head tells me I might end up starving."

Well now, that hardly adds up to giving Labour "the thumbs down as election no-hopes", does it? It's what every Labour supporter knows to be true at the moment, with the Tories leading by a couple of points in the opinion polls at a time when, to be confident of victory, Labour ought to be storming ahead. And any election agent will tell you that complacency is no way to rally the troops.

So why did Blunkett rush to denounce the Women's Own article as a "terrible and offensive distortion", instead of just pointing out that his words did not justify the lurid headlines? Maybe because he really was misquoted. But I doubt it.

Blunkett knows that his perfectly loyal and reasonable admission of doubt about Labour's prospects really amounts to a terrible indictment of everything Kinnock (and Blunkett himself) stands for. Kinnock won the leadership on the "image" ticket. He's been steadily eroding the more radical aspects of conference policies (defence — so far — being the partial exception); he's expelled "undesirables" like Militant supporters, lowered the red flag and adopted the thornless rose. For Neil, respectability and slick packaging is everything. Policies (at least, socialist policies) are nothing. And yet, still Labour is lagging behind this terrible government, and victory seems far from certain. How can this possibly be?

Perhaps the answer is that people don't like soggy politics any more than they like soggy apples.

GRAFFITI

The Daily Maxwell

Forward with Red Ken?

When Robert Maxwell took over the Daily Mirror he changed its masthead from 'Forward with the People' to 'Forward with Britain'. It might as well have been 'Forward with Maxwell', because he has used the paper shamelessly as a publicity sheet for himself.

Now union-basher Maxwell's new London Daily News will be going 'Forward with Red Ken'. Ex-GLC leader Ken Livingstone will be writing a regular column.

Will Livingstone be getting the socialist message into the camp of the enemy, in the same way that Trotsky occasionally managed to get articles in the Daily Express? Any such ambition seems to rate lower for 'cuddly-leftist' Livingstone than the money.

He has already contributed a column to a Maxwell publication attacking the lampoon magazine Private Eye. Livingstone has a long-standing grievance against Private Eye because it published embarrassing suggestions about the links of Labour Herald, which Livingstone co-edited, with Gerry Healy and his Libyan slush-fund.

In fact, though Private Eye had put itself out on a legal limb with extravagant claims about



Photo: Report

money coming from Libya direct to Livingstone and Knight, its allegations were substantially true. Livingstone and Knight ran a weekly paper, Labour Herald, which was subsidised by Gerry Healy's WRP and technically edited by a WRP Central Committee member, Stephen Miller. The WRP was being subsidised by Libya (and at the time, by Iraq too).

Livingstone and Ted Knight made a few bob at

Private Eye's expense.

Perhaps Ken is now trying to ensure himself some financial fallbacks in case a motion debated recently at Brent East Labour Party might yet be carried, calling on him to accept only a skilled worker's wage if he is elected as the constituency's MP. Livingstone had assured Party members that he supported the motion, but it was the loyal Livingstone supporters in the Party who voted it down.

Strikes

The Northern Ireland Protestant working class certainly has a great deal of right-wing bigotry running through it. But it also has a lot of basic economic working class militancy.

A recent study suggests that if you adjust the figures to take account of the fact that Northern Ireland has no coal mines or steelworks, then Northern Ireland had 70% more strikes (in proportion to the number of workers) than Britain between 1958 and 1984.

Northern Ireland had 110% more strikes (per worker) than Britain in 1980-84. Its strikes were, however, smaller: the rate of worker strike-days was the same as Britain for 1980-84, and only 30% higher for 1966-84.

The figures were compiled by Boyd Black, an 'Orange Marxist', but he identifies mainly-Catholic Derry and Newry as high-strike areas.

The rich

Fringe benefits

Perks and fringe benefits for top managers in Britain are worth as much as their salaries, according to a survey by the Economist magazine. A manager on £50,000 a year actually gets something nearer £100,000 when all forms of pay are taken in-

to account.

Most managers can buy shares in their companies cheap; they get free private health insurance and life insurance; they have company cars; and 30% get golf or tennis club fees paid by the company.

Disinvestment

Disinvestment from South Africa is not always the boon it may seem. The Delta Motor Corporation has just announced that it will no longer follow the Sullivan anti-apartheid code to which it subscribed when it was General Motors South Africa.

GM will continue to have profitable business with Delta, providing it

with supplies. And Delta will siphon out profits made by exploiting black labour in other ways, too.

Michael Edwardes, the former union-bashing, job-cutting boss of British Leyland, is to become a director of Delta, while also keeping his job as boss of Chloride.

Death

A new survey has confirmed official figures showing that working class people die younger and get ill more often than the rich.

A health gap between rich and poor has been growing rapidly since 1979, according to figures from the 'Heartbeat Wales' project. The unemployed suffer especially.

Poor diet is part of the cause. Other factors are heavier smoking and more alcohol.

The problems of breast feeding

I was upset to read Mary Ireson's attack on my article on breast-feeding. Starting with a cheap jibe, she seizes on individual points, making me wonder if she actually read the whole article.

I agree that the problems of breast-feeding are more than just not being able to feed in public — I mentioned four others, the point being that rarely is there a free choice of how to feed your baby.

If it is true that breast milk is the best food for babies, as Mary agrees, then we should try to make it possible for babies to get it. But that is *not* the same as saying that nursing mothers should have sole responsibility for

getting up at all hours.

Equally, providing facilities for baby care at work does not mean that mothers should have to take their babies to work. That was why I mentioned the possibility of "expressing" milk for future use. There are pumps available for doing this and fathers or childminders could then give babies bottles of human milk.

Alternatives

Nowhere was it suggested that women should *have* to breast feed. If they cannot or do not want to, safe alternatives should be available. Formula milk may be adequate, but

there are some babies who are allergic to it. Also, I am not as convinced as Mary that bottle-feeding is always "hygienic and safe in Western society". Diseases of poor hygiene are on the increase in Britain and, even in hospitals, babies die from outbreaks of gastro-enteritis.

Therefore, we need a system of milk donors for such babies, as I suggested. Perhaps this would be a step towards the "socialisation" of breast-feeding Mary mentioned.

In any case, I hope Mary will agree with the conclusion of the article that there should be no place for profiteering in the area of baby feeding.

Yours,
LES HEARN



Health workers under attack

National Health Service workers in the Yorkshire valley of Wharfedale are under attack.

In recent years both Wharfedale Children's Hospital and Grassington (Geriatric) have disappeared off the map. The threat of permanent closure hangs over Middleton (two years) High Royds (four years) and Scafe Park (six years), resulting in the virtual death of hospital based psychiatric services and many job losses in areas where the hospitals are the main (in some cases sole)

employer. The remaining hospitals in the area are either also under threat of closure or continue to lose important departments to 'main' hospitals in Leeds, a minimum of ten miles away.

At HighRoyds local management admit that it is at least 163 full time nurses short of being able to provide a reasonable level of care (TUC unions would argue that even this figure is inadequate).

The financial allocation from the Regional Health Authority is being slashed by at least £163,000 each year

on the basis of minute reductions in 'long stay' patients, instead of using this money to improve standards of care in run down wards and assist those being therapeutically re-introduced into the community.

Domestic staff have already suffered privatisation — porters, hairdressers and gardeners are under a similar threat.

COHSE stewards are building the fightback. Campaigns are growing amongst workers in each hospital — with support and assistance from each other and other workers throughout hospitals in West Leeds.

Important lessons have been learnt the hard way — whilst actively welcoming support from the local community, full control of the fightback must remain in the hands of workers directly involved. More important is solidarity from workers locally and if required nationally.

We do not oppose the closure of large remote Victorian 'Asylums' full stop. Given the full transfer of staff and resources to local based health units providing true community care, we would welcome it.

However we will not forget those who place financial motives above people's health.

Yours in solidarity,
SHANE WALSH
COHSE steward, HighRoyds 227,
(in a personal capacity)

Whose geography?

For a long time the term Middle East has bugged me. It is used in Socialist Organiser a lot.

Middle East — viewed from where, I want to know.

Geography's never been my strong point but I do have this old school atlas and looking at a map of the world I can see two huge clumps of land. One is called Africa and one is called Asia. There is a little clump near it called Europe, too small for all the letters of the word Europe to fit on it.

To me Egypt is in North Africa and Iran in West Asia, for example. So where does this Middle East business fit in?

It strikes me that it is an imperialist term developed from a view of the world that saw or still sees Europe as the centre. Using that view, yes,

Israel is East of Britain, but so what? So is China and Russia. We don't call them the Far East do we?

I probably wouldn't have got round to writing this letter for some time but was prompted by a disc jockey on Capital radio, Charlie Gillick. He challenged someone he was interviewing on his Sunday evening programme who used the term — Middle East.

On the programme he plays mainly African music including North African and some Asian. It is well worth listening to for those comrades who can get London stations. Can I suggest we also have a few maps to illustrate where countries are in relation to each other when an article is written?

PENNY NEWELL,
London SE14

UK IMMIGRATION CONTROL



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Please keep your letters under 300 words.

More letters, page 10.

Labour's left miss an opportunity



Vladimir Derer

The election for the National Constitutional Committee — the Labour Party's new disciplinary body — gave the right wing a majority. Vladimir Derer argues that the left and 'left of centre' candidates could have done better.

437 out of 633 CLPs took part in the election, making a "turn-out" of 69%. (Abstentions were

highest in the South West 50%, Scotland 46%, and the South 40%.

In contrast, in the Trade Union Section the "turn-out" was 99%, both in their own section and in the women's section. The explanation for this discrepancy between the CLPs and unions probably lies in the way the decisions were made about who to vote for.

As regards the unions it was their executives and, in a few cases, possibly only the union's general secretary who decided this. Unions were not therefore hamstrung in the same way as some CLPs by the tight timetable.

The CLPs generally decide how they vote at the General Committee and only after discussion at branch

level. As in the majority of cases voting had to take place in December — a month when not all GCs meet — some CLPs may not have found it possible to do so given the limited time scale.

No doubt other factors contributed to the abstentions: for example, the difficulty of choosing 3 out of 151 names on a ballot paper — a daunting prospect, particularly as not even rudimentary details were given about the candidates.

In not a few cases there was reluctance to take all the trouble involved in going through the procedures when it was apparent that the structure of the NCC would be such that opponents of expulsions were sure to be in a permanent minority.

Analysis of results, however, show that future NCC elections deserve to

be treated far more seriously by the left. The 7-4 outcome in favour of the right may seem decisive. But this result was by no means inevitable. A very small shift by the centre unions in favour of 'left of centre' candidates would have ensured that this group held the balance.

The GMWU and the Boilermakers (650,000 and 75,000 votes respectively) supported Alan Quinn, the TGWU nominee, in Division 1 (Trade Union Section) but did not support the TGWU nominee, Joan L. Bridge, in Division IV (Women's Section). Had they voted for her and not Dianne Hayter, she would have been elected.

Similarly only 174,000 separated Owen Briscoe from the ISTC's DK Brookman. Had ASTMS (132,000) and SOGAT '82 (76,000) voted for him instead of using only four of their five votes, he would also have been elected.

The voting in the CLP Section is indicative of the influence at grass roots level of the various pressure groups. There were three competing slates:

1. *The CLPD/Campaign Group/LLL Slate.* Constituency Section: John Burrows, Mandy Moore, Ken Slater. Women's Section: Vera Derer, Margaret Vallins.
2. *The Forward Labour (Right Wing) Slate.* Constituency Section: Adrian Bailey, Roy Shaw, Barbara Hawkins. Women's Section: Rose Degiorgio, Dianne Hayter.
3. *The LCC Slate.* Constituency Section: Robert Middleton, Mike Goodman, Ken Slater. Women's Section: Joan Burbidge, Hannah Folan.

Of those voting in the Constituency Section: 55 CLPs (13%) voted for the complete CLPD/Campaign Group/LLL Slate; 4 CLPs (0.9%) voted for the complete Forward Labour Slate; 4 CLPs (0.9%) voted for the complete LCC Slate.

The total votes cast for individuals on the different slates were as follows:

CLPD/Campaign Group/LLL
Mandy Moore, 135,000 (30.9%); Ken Slater, 108,000 (24.7%); John Burrows, 101,000 (23.1%).

Forward Labour
Adrian Bailey, 43,000 (9.8%); Roy Shaw, 34,000 (7.8%); Barbara Hawkins, 12,000 (2.7%).

LCC
Ken Slater, 108,000 (24.7%); Robert Middleton, 32,000 (7.3%); Mike Goodman, 10,000 (2.3%).

(Ken Slater appeared on both the CLPD/Campaign Group/LLL and the LCC slates).

In addition to the three main slates, certain individual candidates were promoted by other groups. Militant sympathiser Ray Apps received 34,000 votes (7.3% of the total) and Paul Astbury 31,000 (7.1%), and Briefing supporter, George Lindfield, 6,000 (1.8%).

The analysis of the 'performance' of the various slates in the NCC elections demonstrates that (as in the NEC elections) votes cast for candidates not included on any of the slates are completely wasted.

Even though the votes cast for the candidates on the CLPD/Campaign Group/LLL slate were sufficient on this occasion to ensure a decisive victory over the Forward Labour runner-up, the low percentage (26%) of the average total votes cast for the CLPD/CG/LLL-backed candidates indicates that, given better organisation on the right, they could have been outvoted without much difficulty.

Indeed, in the Women's Section the right wing candidate, Dianne Hayter, received 110,000 votes from CLPs (29%). Had she stood in the Constituency Section she might have won there too.

If comrades sympathetic to Militant and Labour Briefing believe that it is important who is on the NCC, they must reconsider whether they would wish to split the vote again next time.

(All figures taken from the Record of Voting published by the Labour Party).

This is an abridgement of an article in this month's CLPD Bulletin.



Student anti-cuts demo, 1982. Photo: Carlos Augusto, IFL.

Win the student vote for Labour!

By Jane Ashworth

The student movement is in a dire state. The national anti-loans demonstration held last Saturday had a turn-out of only about 20,000 compared to almost 40,000 in 1985 and 1986.

Labour Students conference comes at the end of a miserable year for the organisation which runs NUS.

NOLS have failed to provide an effective political leadership to unite students to fight the Tories and reactionary college authorities.

NOLS itself remains adamantly opposed to allowing working class, part-time students to join the organisation and to increasing part-time student representation at NUS conferences. It refuses to allow those students most hit by the Tories to have a proper say in what should be

their natural organisations.

NOLS, through NUS, has failed students, particularly those Further Education students without a grant, and it has failed the activists by not providing a strategy which can involve the mass of students in an outgoing political campaign.

Failed

NOLS National Committee has failed to run the organisation in a manner which befits a socialist student group. The NC has only met three times in a year and as usual there are delegates who have been ruled out for no reason other than the fact that they are opposed to the current bureaucratic, right wing leadership.

It is an essential part of running a socialist youth movement to ensure that the rules encourage participation, that there are adequate forums for debate and discussion and that campaigns are planned with the maximum input from those who are car-

rying them out.

But the "Democratic Left" leaders of NOLS and NUS have not run NOLS like that. In fact, in repeated debates, Rob Minshall, the National secretary has complained of them being a waste of time. There have been no real open forums, and worst of all, no campaigns.

Running NUS with its 1.25 million members from a NOLS membership of about 8,000 should give us the opportunity to ensure a huge youth vote for Labour. But beyond trying to get students to run the necessary electoral registration campaigns absolutely nothing has been done.

The youth vote can be won by organising political activity which looks like it has the chance of winning. While the "Democratic Left" are right to encourage links with Red Wedge this is not a substitute for political campaigns.

Disillusionment with past Labour governments is the key factor we have to overcome and NOLS and NUS could play a part in combatting

their scepticism by arguing for answers to the problems that youth face and convince them to fight with us for the policies we want.

What NOLS is heading for is a passive election campaign, where we argue Kinnock's line on defence and little else.

Unfortunately, arguing for right wing policies, refusing to run campaigns and playing it quiet in the hope of wooing the SDP will not build NOLS and will not return the maximum possible student vote for the return of a Labour government.

The future for NOLS is bleak; not many people belong to it; it has not done anything to build itself; and to compound that, no-one trusts a word its leaders ever say.

NOLS members should take it in hand before it is too late. At the head of the agenda must be action to put a stop to the present system of "guided democracy" under which the manipulators on top cynically rig all conference votes by unjustly ruling out opposition votes.

RIMA MILHIM, secretary of the General Union of Palestinian Students, talked to Socialist Organiser about the situation in Lebanon, on the West Bank, and about the objectives of the PLO.

What is the background to the situation in Lebanon?

After the evacuation of the PLO in 1982, there was a period of about nine months, when for the first time in years — since 1976 — the Lebanese state came into existence again. The army was very prominent, and oppression was very intense.

In February 1984, there was a major, mass uprising among the Shi'ite population of Lebanon, more or less headed by the Amal militias. On the popular level, people supported the Amal uprising because it freed them from the oppression of the Israeli army and the Deuxieme Bureau, the Lebanese intelligence. Also historically, the Shi'ites — although the largest single sect — have always been the underdogs, politically, economically and socially — the most oppressed. They have had least share in the sectarian division of power in Lebanon.

After that, Amal started to develop better relations with Syria, and, to be sure, came under direct Syrian control and finance. They began to depend on Syrian arms. Smaller groups, like Hizbullah — and others: there are about twelve altogether — developed also, and grew, some standing with Amal policy, others against it.

Amal, since January 1985, became more and more obviously linked to official Syrian regime policy.

In April 1985, for the first time since 1982, Amal — helped by Syrian intelligence — attacked the camps which are under attack now (Burj el-Barajneh, Sabra and Shatila). Then, too, there was a siege, a blockade, lots of attacks. Shatila was very badly hit. About 60% of Shatila was destroyed, I think, and all of Sabra. The siege was lifted: Sabra was not allowed to be rebuilt again; about 10,000 people had to find an alternative place to live.

What is the relationship between Amal and pro-Syrian factions among the Palestinians?

When Amal first started attacking the camps in April 1985, they said they weren't attacking Palestinians, but were attacking the pro-Arafat PLO leadership. All political groups in the camps, including those now established in Syria and the official leadership, immediately said this was not true. The refugees were being attacked as Palestinians.

There is no direct link between these groups. One of the Palestinian organisations, Saiga — which is under total Syrian control: arms, finance, is based there and has always been — started to have relations with Amal, but broke them when the camps were attacked.



Since the attacks in 1985 and now, there had been no direct military attacks on the camps. But what had been happening was that Palestinians, especially young males venturing out of the camps, would be immediately kidnapped at any roadblock, and sent to detention centres in Beirut or in the south, and in the great majority of cases tortured and killed. So that affected people because they could not get out of the camp and work.

So the camp population, and especially young males, were, if you want, 'hostages' inside the camp for the last year.

What does the PLO hope to do about the current situation?

On an immediate level, the PLO is trying very hard to put international pressure on Syria, mainly, to lift the siege to get the basics in. Last year a very, very small amount of food got through into Burj el-Barajneh. Whatever was sent has already run out. Shatila still hasn't received anything, and the siege of Shatila has been going on for longer.

On a wider level, the PLO wants to solve the camp problem. And of course the PLO wants to solve the basic political problem — a settlement of the Palestinian problem, not only in Lebanon but as a whole.

Unless a general settlement in the area is found, things like the siege will keep happening every year.

What do you think should be done for Lebanon itself? In so far as you can separate Lebanon's problems from the general conflict, what is the answer?

What theoretically might happen is a period of relative calm in which the different groups could arrange some sort of temporary relations that will make Lebanon work again. The Lebanese economy is now totally, totally shattered. In 1982 £1 sterling was about ten Lebanese pounds. Not it is 120. So the economic crisis is extremely serious.

There is very serious poverty on a scale that did not exist before 1984.

In the longer term, the whole Lebanese issue, even if you wanted to separate it from the Middle East issue, cannot be solved by recreating the old state system, which was an artificial creation of the old colonial powers and has failed. It is not going to work again.

What's happening in the Israeli-occupied territories on the West Bank?

Just two days ago, an alternative information centre in Jerusalem which produces a bulletin called 'News from Within', was raided by the army. The group consists of progressive Israeli Jews and Arabs, producing a monthly news bulletin. Four people were detained, two Arab women and two Israeli men. They haven't been charged yet, but they will probably be charged under a new law which says that a person who has any minimum contact with the PLO — even sharing a platform — has committed high treason and is liable to 6-7 years in jail. Or they will be charged under Israel's equivalent of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

It is quite a significant event. It is the first time, really, that Israeli journalists have been detained and are probably going to be charged with high treason.

I think that what has been happening in the occupied territories has been increased oppression, and in a lot of ways much less subtle oppression than even a few years ago. Since the Labour Party came to office in



THE PALESTRUUGGL

1984 (as part of a national government) the state has carried out an 'iron fist' policy in the occupied territories. Oppression is very, very blunt now.

Bir Zeit university was closed two days ago after a demonstration in protest at what's happening in the camps. It's been closed indefinitely. Other universities have been shut. The army used water jets at Gaza University last month, likewise at Ramallah.

The Israeli state wants to destroy the PLO, and has tried to set up 'alternatives'. How successful have they been?

Their first attempt to create an alternative leadership in the occupied territories was the so-called 'Village Leagues'. All such attempts have so far failed. They will continue to fail. There's no way you can impose a political programme and a way of thinking — it's not just a leadership — on a people.

Recently, a poll was done on the West Bank — a scientifically done poll — where over 90% of the population said that they support the PLO. A lot of Israelis, and the Israeli state, are starting to realise that there is no way they can impose an alternative — neither they nor the Jordanian regime actually.

Israel tried again in 1982 to kill the PLO. Their attempts have definitely failed. The PLO has its weaker and stronger moments. But it's now at the point where it is alive and well again. Neither Israel nor any Arab regime



Israeli police on the West Bank. will be able to eradicate the PLO, although it is a pain in everybody's neck.

Lots of people point to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, including in the West Bank. How powerful is it?

Not on the West Bank. The Islamic groups are stronger in the Gaza strip rather than the West Bank. In the Gaza strip there is a growing Islamic fundamentalist movement. It's not very major yet. It is itself quite split — luckily, for someone of my point of view.

It's split on different grounds. There's one faction in the Gaza strip who have been related to the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt — who traditionally (in the 1950s) were related to the British, actually. They are well financed, but I don't think they'll manage to get anywhere. They are not part of the national struggle that's taking place.

There is also, to be fair, a more nationally 'progressive' movement in the Gaza strip. But there is not much of an Islamic movement in the West Bank, and I don't think that there is a danger (if you want to use such a word) there of a growth of a move-



PALESTINIAN TODAY



among the West Bank population?

All Palestinian organisations are illegal. But all political organisations that exist within the PLO are found in the occupied territories.

What about trade union organisations?

There is a growing trade union organisation. They function a bit like half-way between the French and the English system. They operate both on trades and political lines.

Unionisation has grown in the last ten years. Their problem is that although they exist and they are functioning, they are often illegal. According to the ILO, out of 137 trade unions, 112 are illegal. The ones that are legal are the ones that used to exist under Jordanian rule, before Israeli occupation.

What happens is that the unions set themselves up, but their offices get raided, the stuff gets confiscated, trade union activists have been put under arrest or deported.

These measures have mainly been used against trade union activists, probably because trade union officials haven't committed acts which are illegal. So measures are used where the person detained, deported or whatever, is never tried.

Are there many strikes?

Strikes are common on the West Bank. There have been a number of strikes, mainly symbolic protests

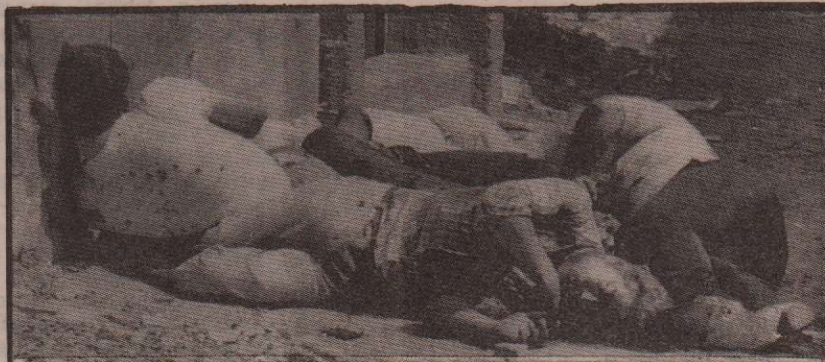
about what is going on in Lebanon. Strikes often happen after land seizures, or the closure of trade union offices.

Trade unions have more of a double role, both for the workers and as political organisations.

The most oppressed workers are the migrants, who go inside the Green Line to work, legally, or generally illegally. They are difficult to organise. They need the protection of unions, and people are attempting to organise them; but they haven't succeeded yet.

Is there any possibility of meaningful joint action with Israeli Jewish workers?

There have traditionally been links with groups like MATZPEN (Israeli Socialist Organisation). It would be to the advantage of both Arab and Jewish workers to have joint



Victims of the Beirut massacres

cooperation. Not within the Histadrut structure, which does not really allow Arabs from the occupied territories to join. But within a different structure, yes definitely.

People in the occupied territories pay between 25% and 40% of their income in 'defence tax'. But they're not eligible for unemployment or health benefits, or maternity benefits — they have no right to social security.

What are relations like between different factions in the PLO? In 1983 there was a civil war between some of them. What's the situation now?

In 1983 there was a split within Fatah, the largest group, which resulted in a 'civil war' in the Tripoli area. Without Syrian intervention it would not have escalated into such a nasty military attack, and eventually a siege of Tripoli by the Syrian factions.

The situation has improved a lot since. There hasn't been a Palestine National Congress yet, but there have been a number of meetings in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere, between all factions of the PLO. Last week there was the conference of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists in Algeria, where all political organisations were represented, and are represented on the new Executive Committee.

In a lot of ways, the extremely difficult and sad situation we went through in 1983 and a bit later is more or less over. It's a matter of a few months, probably, before there will be solid unity again.

How do you assess the so-called 'peace process'?

There is no way that the whole Middle East crisis is going to be solved unless you solve the Palestinian problem, and this is becoming more and more obvious to everybody. Whether you are talking about Libya or Syria or whatever, the Palestinian question is central.

The PLO is pushing for an international conference on the Middle East, held under the auspices of the UN, attended by all permanent members of the Security Council, and all parties involved in the conflict, including the PLO.

So far Israel and the United States have refused to have the PLO involved in any international conference. Obviously the PLO has to be represented.

But this would be an important step forward, even to promote discussion or different ideas about what can be done.

On a wider level, since 1974, all political organisations within the PLO have been asking for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the right of return for refugees — which we feel is very important.

A lot of people still feel that in the long run a democratic secular state, or a democratic non-sectarian state, is what is needed. It would be the most sound solution.

What do you mean by the difference?

A non-sectarian state would allow each community to continue its civil matters. Each community will be able to carry on civil affairs — marriage, divorce, etc., through religious bodies, rather than through state bodies.

The democratic secular state formula has been criticised for

implying that the Jews are just a religious group, whereas in fact they are a nation.

I don't think a secular democratic state does imply three religious groups. There is a Hebrew-speaking nation. I don't think anyone can deny that, or has denied it for a long time. The PLO is pushing for an independent state that will co-exist next to Israel.

Of course the Israeli state will have to be politically quite different in order to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Speaking personally I think it is basically racist to say you can't have a united, democratic state. I think it is entirely possible for two peoples to coexist within the same state structure while keeping their own national/religious identity.

But there's been such a level of conflict over nearly 40 years at least. Is unity possible?

There has been conflict in Europe, too.

But no one proposes to unite France and Germany in the same territory.

History has proved that people can live together. There has been conflict, but people can live together, especially as the Jewish and Arab cultures are extremely similar in a lot of ways.

But I think one of the problems with an immediate programme of a single state is that immediately, the Israeli Jews will reject it.

And that is why since 1984 the PLO has been saying, okay, let's drop this idea and think of something more practical — which is a two-state solution.

So unity would have to be voluntary?

Yes.

What is GUPS doing in Britain?

Generally speaking, GUPS is doing two things. First, like any other students' union, we deal with the problems of Palestinian students in Britain. There are fewer students in Britain now, since they changed the fees from £200 to £3,000. A lot of students have extremely serious financial problems.

There has recently been very strong anti-Arab feeling, on the official level and on the street level. This was especially so after the Libya raid. People were threatened with deportation and faced many other problems.

The role of GUPS is also to promote the Palestine issue among the British student movement — and also the trade union movement, which we feel is very important.

Our role is very important because there is so little coverage of the Palestinian issue in the British media. Often people don't know what is going on unless they go out of their way to find out.

There is a student conference on March 7 organised by ourselves and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, to discuss various issues — academic freedom in the occupied territories, women, trades unions.

We also want to debate the Palestine issue in NUS and NOLS. For the last God-knows how many years the Palestine issue has been cropping up at every NUS conference — but it has been extremely negative and unhelpful. It has been pushed on us by unimportant discussions, instead of discussing the Palestinian problem we've been discussing ridiculous things like badges. So we feel it is extremely important to have a proper debate.

The banning of Jewish societies has focused the whole thing wrongly.

At South Bank Poly, people didn't even consult with GUPS. Instead of having a proper debate on the Middle East, it has been diverted into something totally different — to our disadvantage. So we're pushing for a proper debate.

ment. They do exist in the universities.

The social base of the fundamentalist groups in Egypt seems to be very middle class. Is that the case in Palestine?

Apparently in places like Bir Zeit, the fundamentalists come from the most dispossessed social classes. More radical people — sympathisers of the Communists of the PFLP, for example — are more middle class, university-educated.

What kind of organisations exist

A programme for Labour's youth

The national Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) conference will be held in Blackpool between 17 and 20 April.

Among the issues at conference a number stand out. Why has the LPYS National Committee failed to build a socialist campaign for Labour? Why has there been virtually no campaign against the Sawyer proposals to hamstring the YS?

Why has the YS's campaign against apartheid consisted of the production of a pamphlet and little else?

Many delegates will want to express dissatisfaction with the present leadership in the election held at conference for YS representative on the Labour Party National Executive Committee.

Steve Jomoa from Black Sections Youth is standing against Militant, and calling on all the left to back him. But Youth Fightback is standing its own candidate. Why?

Youth Fightback is the revolutionary opposition to Militant in the LPYS and has a good record of campaigning with working class youth and building LPYS branches. We are the major left wing alternative to the Militant and have been seen to be so at the series of regional conferences and YS events, (summer camp, demonstrations, etc.).

In contrast, Black Sections Youth (BSY) currently consists of three voting members from two London Black Sections. Despite running a campaign around last year's YS elections which promised work on such

By Mark Osborn

issues as racism on YTS, BSY has not done this work. In fact, between last LPYS Conference and December 1986 it hardly ever met. BSY is not a campaigning force. Youth Fightback supports the struggle of Black Sections for Labour Party recognition and our supporters have attended the Youth Committee meetings to argue for policies to win black youth to Labour. These have not been adopted or implemented; BSY remains tiny.

Secondly, Youth Fightback's platform is clear; Steve's is muddled and, in YS terms, right wing.

Steve's support for Labour Left documents such as Andrew Glyn's "A Million Jobs a Year" place him to the right of the Militant on central economic issues. Comments such as 'Militant are pro-imperialist' are very odd. OK, so Militant have a bad position on Ireland. They fail to give solidarity to the republicans and prefer abstract talk about socialism to talking about troops. But it is a quantum leap to suggest that they are in favour of British policy in Ireland or imperialism in general.

Steve's platform emphasises South Africa but has no mention of direct links with workers and trade unions in South Africa. On women's liberation, it says only that support must be given to the constitutional demands of Labour's

women's conference.

In an interview with Youth Action Steve demands that Labour abolish YOPS. Kinnock will not find this hard: YOPS was replaced by YTS three years ago.

Now anyone has a right to disagree with our politics and agree with Steve's. But I was labelled 'racist' by Steve for stating that political differences would stop me supporting him. One of Steve's supporters went further. "How can you call yourself a socialist? Why don't you go and join the National Front?"

These are the politics of guilt tripping and irrational demagoguery. Argument, debate, reason, are ditched in the process.

In fact, for a 'racist' organisation, Youth Fightback has managed rather a lot of work with black youth organisations like the Sheffield Asian Youth Movement, and a lot of effort in solidarity with black workers and youth fighting apartheid.

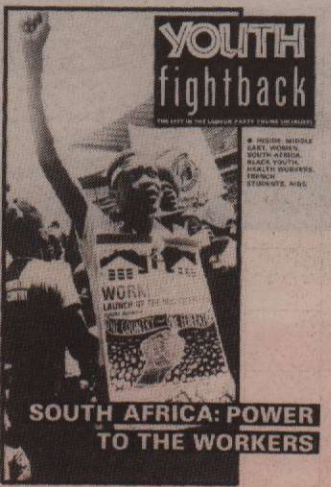
For instance, the YF-affiliated LPYS in Basingstoke held a benefit gig last week. It was attended by 250 youth and raised £170. Some of the

Socialist Organiser is holding its 1987 AGM on 28-29 March in London. We'll be discussing Ireland, women's liberation, South Africa, and plans for next year. If you're interested in coming, contact PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

money will go to South African workers. This really showed the way to build solidarity — and build the LPYS at the same time.

Youth Fightback has provided publicity posters and speakers for South Africa solidarity. The Basingstoke disco is not an isolated event. Our tour has already raised hundreds of pounds. In the next couple of weeks Tom Rigby, a British rep. of the Electrical Allied Workers Trade Union of South Africa, will be speaking and raising money at further meetings in colleges, and at LPYS branches in Manchester, Sheffield and Glasgow.

We have both a strategy and the politics to build the LPYS. That is the reason we will be standing in the LPYS election for the NEC position.



Available from: 33, Hackworth Point, London E3, 25p plus 18p p&p.

Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

Poverty and stress

Britain has the highest rate of heart disease in the world (with Scotland the worst region). The reasons are manifold:

Smoking, drinking, fatty diets, high sugar diets, and lack of exercise are the most obvious ones. These problems are not new but whereas such countries as the USA and Finland have been taking steps to reduce their rates of heart disease for years now, the British government has done little.

Now everything is about to change — or is it? In election year, the Tories are about to launch *Look After Your Heart*. This caring Conservative campaign is to be aimed at working class and unemployed people living in the inner cities — precisely those people on whom the Tories have a history of crapping. But "looking after your heart" clearly involves a complete change of lifestyle. Many of the diseases of workers and unemployed are diseases of poverty and stress.

Fatty diets and sugary foods are cheaper. The London Food Commission estimates that opting for healthier varieties of food costs 35% more. Exercise also costs money, even where local authority facilities have reduced charges for claimants of social security, etc. Suitable clothing and shoes have to be bought, for example.

Smoking and drinking are two activities for which many poor people are criticised, usually by better-off smokers and drinkers. Indeed, it is true that they cost money. Smoking harms the health of smokers and their close contacts. Drinking harms the health of the drinker, but only in excess. Alcohol is a food as well as a drug.

But the critics ignore the facts that:

*People smoke and drink as a response to stress, and unemployment and poverty are major sources of stress.

*People smoke to reduce the pangs of hunger.

*These activities do afford some pleasure, sadly lacking

otherwise.

*Nicotine and alcohol are addictive drugs and it is no simple matter of making a choice as to whether to indulge or not.

With all these factors to consider, it is clear that any advice from the government to "Look After Your Heart" needs to be backed up by:

*An attack on poverty — unemployment and low wages.

*An attack on the ubiquitous and iniquitous advertising of nicotine and alcohol.

*An end to subsidies on the production of fat which masquerades as meat and milk.

*Encouragement of the production of healthier foods such as lean meat and whole grains.

*An attack on the pouring of sugar down the throats of children (even including babies).

*The labelling of foods with accurate and clear information on their contents.

*Encouragement of sports and exercise, by subsidies where necessary.

*Health screening before illness develops, so that people are aware of how their bodies are faring and can perhaps take appropriate action.

So how many of these approaches does the government's campaign adopt? None! Instead, it has:

*Refused to ban sponsorship of sport by tobacco companies — the most pernicious way of recruiting the young to smoking.

*Cut the Sports Council's budget, hitting the community sports programmes.

*Cut the Health Education Council's budget.

*Elbowed out its current boss, Dr David Player, known for his opposition to smoking and appointed advertising executive Anne Burdus, known for her links with the tobacco and drinks industry.

My prediction is that this new campaign will have zero effect on heart disease but leave the government, who are responsible for much of the illness of Britain's poor, able to say "we told you so" and "we did our best". They must not be allowed to get away with it.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Viraj Mendis will stay. Stop all deportations now! Conference, Church of the Ascension, off Royce Road, Hulme, Manchester. 10.30 am, Saturday 11 April to 5.00 p.m., Sunday 12 April.

Manchester Socialist Organiser meeting. 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory'. Speaker: John Bloxam. Sunday March 1, 7.30 p.m. at the Millstone pub, off Tib St.

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy regional conferences: London, 28 February. Registration £3.50 waged, £1.50 unwaged, to Danny Nicol. CLPD AGM, 54 Southwood Lane, London N6.

National Justice for the Miners Campaign. Sacked miners benefit concert, Sheffield City Hall, Thursday 5 March at 7.00 p.m. Tickets: £5 from Barnsley NUM office. Tom Robinson, Alan Hull, Mal Finch, Speakers: Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner.

National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign (South East Region) miners' benefit: Wembley Conference Centre, 7.30pm, Sunday 1 March.

Labour Party Black Sections. AGM, Saturday 14 March, in Nottingham. For further details contact Narendra Makanji, 41 Darwin Road, London N22 (01-889 7734).

"Hear AZAPO Speak". Friends Meeting House, 52 St Martin's Lane, London WC2. Friday 6 March. 7.30 p.m.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight

to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrat's and management's privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand: For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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Provos, Protestants and working class politics THE DEBATE ON IRELAND

A unique confrontation between the views on the left. What sort of united Ireland could win the support of Protestant workers? What way to working class unity?

Different feminisms

Martin Thomas reviews 'Is the Future Female?' by Lynne Segal (Virago, £4.95).

We are all feminists now. Even the staid Sunday Telegraph carries a survey on feminism today, featuring new 'Tory feminists'.

But what sort of feminism? According to Lynne Segal, "the feminist writing which is now most popular in this country, which is always listed among the best-sellers in progressive literary magazines, is a new form of radical feminism."

"Mostly from North America, where it is known as 'cultural feminism', it celebrates women's superior virtue and spirituality and decries 'male' violence and technology. Such celebration of the 'female' and denunciation of the 'male', however, arouses fear and suspicion in feminists who, like me, recall that we joined the women's movement to challenge the myths of women's special nature."

Lynne Segal demolishes the new feminist theories on their own chosen terrains. Rape is not a conspiracy by all men to keep all women in subjection and fear. "This explanation of rape ignores the absence of reported rape in some societies and provides a very strange analysis of power relations in general..."

"If sexual coercion really were the ultimate and characteristic instrument of men's power, it is hard to see why women would not long ago have acquired the physical skills and equipment to 'disarm' rapists — unless we assume women are both blind and stupid".

Pornography is not the "theory" for which "rape is the practice". Indeed, pornography has boomed as male domination has weakened. Anti-pornography legislation and direct action supported by some feminists are likely to strengthen the moralistic right wing.

Peace is not specially 'female', nor war specially 'male'. Women have often supported, and fought or wanted to fight, in wars. "It was through appealing to the symbols and values of women as mothers and housewives that women of the Chilean right played the decisive role inside Chile preparing for the fascist

coup of General Pinochet in 1973..."

At best, argues Lynne Segal, the project of nourishing a separate 'women's culture' is "toothless liberalism". Worse: dissolving women's oppression today into timeless generalities about male aggression, some new feminists entirely dismiss the material gains for women that have been made. They resort to the politics of despair and mysticism; they reproduce the ideas of right-wing thinkers who argue that the brutality and competitiveness of capitalist society are the inevitable result of unchangeable human (or male) instincts.

Such despair could help right wing politicians in a drive to take back women's gains.

Why, when feminism has spread so widely, are so many feminists so disoriented? Theoretical socialist feminism is in disarray both practically and theoretically; the new radical feminism has overwhelmed it even among socialists.

Lynne Segal's answer is that "Political engagement 'with' and 'against' men, whether in the Labour Party, the trade unions, the autonomous black, anti-nuclear, ecological, anti-racist or other progressive social movements and groupings of the left, is the umbrella strategy feminists need to pursue". She sees Ken Livingstone's politics as "the only hope for socialism".

Yet this coalition-of-interest-groups type of socialism has nurtured precisely the sort of feminism which Lynne Segal criticises.

'Feminist Review', of which Segal is an editor, organised a round-table last year in which Elizabeth Wilson put it sharply: "One disturbing aspect...is the way in which some radical men have taken up the question of pornography. Half of those on the left who think they are sensitive to feminism have taken up the pornography issue without being aware that it is one on which socialist feminists disagree. Ken Livingstone, for instance, can say that Andrea Dworkin is the most wonderful feminist living as if there had been no debate at all about her book". (Andrea Dworkin's book 'Pornography' is one of the best-known expositions of the sort of ideas that Segal criticises).

Elizabeth Wilson herself does not have much of an alternative: she is a Morning Star Stalinist. The real lesson from Lynne Segal's book is the failures of the Marxist left.

We talk a great deal about the importance of theory for revolutionary politics. Probably the most serious



Appealing to the values of motherhood?

effort at revolutionary theory for 40 years the debates and researches of socialist feminists in the 1970s.

Dozens of talented writers turned to Marxist ideas to find answers. They came looking for bread and the organised Marxist left, on the whole,

offered them stones — sectarian boneheadedness or passive mimicry. It is about time that the left emerged from the sterile alternatives of condemning all feminism as a 'diversion' from the 'real' struggle, or mindlessly cheering 'women's autonomy'.

Ordinary people as freaks

True Stories is featherweight entertainment. You forget about it five minutes after it's over, but it is reasonable fun at the time. Not belly laughs by any means — narrator David Byrne is too restrained for that — but you can smile.

The film is David Byrne's search for America. He looked for it, but didn't find it, so he created his own version instead — the town of Virgil, Texas.

He has peopled Virgil with the kind of oddball characters you read about in the tabloids. Virgil is about to celebrate its 150th anniversary in a 'Celebration of Specialness'.

The people in Virgil are both special — and ordinary in the 1980s US as Byrne sees it. They are a quirky bunch. There's Louis, the main character, who longs for a wife. He has a big 'Wife wanted' sign flashing on his lawn. He goes on TV to plead his case, and he goes wherever women gather to try his luck.

The Lying Woman tells enormous lies — that she was mixed up with Kennedy, that she wrote all Elvis's

Belinda Weaver reviews 'True Stories'

songs. There's a woman who stays in bed all the time, being fed by machines, and switching TV channels by remote control. She's rich and lazy — why get up?

Byrne seems to be saying that they're the essence of ordinary too. At the big celebration, Louis sings a song he's written called 'People like us'. The words go 'People like us, we don't want justice, we don't want freedom, we just want someone to love.' Byrne implies that these people may be oddballs, but their wants are banal and ordinary, the kind of wants the tabloids push as being paramount.

Ugliness

It's hard to know just what Byrne is trying to say, since he tries so hard not to say anything. He even seems to be pleading for the people of Virgil and to be trying to explain away the absurdities and ugliness of much of

their lives.

But it's not really convincing. He isn't pointing and urging us to sneer and laugh, but the way he presents the material makes it impossible not to feel superior to these people.

It's a mandarin's view of ordinary people. Byrne condescends to examine their territory, but he does it as an outsider, who stays an outsider. When he defends shopping malls, for example, he says they have replaced the village square as the place to meet, that people go there to compare prices and have a choice about shops, that they can park easily, that there is always music playing, and so on.

But Byrne's own music is the antithesis of this synthesized pop muzak, and his ex-architecture student's eye has singled out the horrors of Texan architecture, even while he says it's not so bad. Byrne is a well-known avant-gardist, an aesthete. In looking at Texas, he's

pulling a giant tease when he defends it.

Byrne wrote the script from stories he picked up from the tabloids. And what we see is the kind of detail the tabloids love — grotesque, absurd, over the top details. But we also get the onesidedness of that as well. That's the limitation of the film. It's just Byrne having a go at aspects of Texan life, with its shopping malls, miming contests, parades and oddities, from the Olympian heights of his arty fame.

He's having a go at ordinary people too. These 'ordinary people' mostly work in the town's one industry, the computer factory. We see most of them working on the production line, and Louis in a sterile assembly room.

Byrne presents ordinary workers as a strange spectacle for the trendy few. And undoubtedly there are bits that are funny. But for all that, ordinary people don't just want love, as Byrne seems to think. They do want freedom and justice too. It was those ordinary people in the US who stopped the Vietnam War, and those ordinary people today who stop Reagan invading Nicaragua.

on the
Box

A soap covers South Africa

Cagney and Lacey has been a huge success in Britain. I love it. Not quite as much as "Cheers", but nearly.

With this present series they have tried to cover specific issues in a deeper light, and judging by Saturday's episode they have been successful.

The issue was apartheid. Three white South Africans who were taking part in an important race in New York had received death threats. The police were called in to protect them by running alongside them throughout the race.

Petri, the black police sergeant in the unit, was the only one who had any views or understanding about apartheid — mainly that it was wrong. Faced with the dilemma of running to protect a white South African and pressurised by his peers to run or lose his chance of promotion, he finally ran with a South

By Tracy Williams

Africa solidarity t-shirt on. Good on you, Petri.

I was surprised that neither Cagney nor Lacey had much idea about what was happening in South Africa, but by the end of the programme they were convinced that it was an unjust regime, to say the least. You can imagine them buying SWAPO badges and singing freedom songs, but you can't turn everyone into working class militants in one episode, can you?

Anyway, on with the plot. The two male runners dropped out, leaving Kathy Wade determined to make money and run for South Africa. Her coach despised Kathy's arrogance and ignorance. "When she runs for South Africa, she runs for apartheid."

He decided to teach her a lesson, by faking a kidnapping of her son. Kathy faced a choice. If she crossed the finishing line her boy would die. She did.

I thought it was good that Kathy came across as ruthless and heartless but bad that the anti-apartheid groups came across as really severe in their campaign tactics. The nearest our local anti-apartheid group has got to direct action is leafletting outside Sainsbury's on a Saturday afternoon, but that's TV for you.

Vote

The programme highlighted the fact that black South Africans have no vote. Of course they should have votes. However, votes alone will not radically change the nature of oppression, as the Freedom Charter would have us believe. I can vote, you can vote, but it doesn't instil us with any great feeling of democracy. We don't actually run things, and those who do don't depend on votes.

There are some 'left' groups in Britain who argue that we should support the ANC uncritically and ignore other forces such as the Cape Action League and the black trade unions, but non-racial trade unions like COSATU are the ones who have been trying to develop working class politics.

What is needed in South Africa is a workers' political party developing a strategy for working class revolution.

A war that should never have happened

Stan Crooke reviews the response of the left press to the recent Ireland versus Scotland soccer international

Grief-stricken anti-imperialists looked on in helpless horror last Wednesday (18 February) as bloodily oppressed nation battled with bloodily oppressed nation on the sacred turf of Hampden Park.

Scotland, ground down under the jackboot of an army of English middle class expatriates since the Anschluss of 1702, clashed with Ireland, a colony of Britain since before Britain even came into existence, in a European Football Championship qualifying game.

Not since the workers' states (totalitarian deformations notwithstanding) of Vietnam and Cambodia went to war in the 1970s had anti-imperialists been faced with such a dilemma: whose side are you on?

Socialist Action raised the time-honoured slogan "The enemy is in the home camp". Given the diabolical performance of Leighton in goal and Cooper in the forward line, many Scottish fans thought they had a point (which is more than can be said of the defeated Scottish team).

Labour Briefing, true to its ultra-non-sectarian policies, could not understand why there were two different teams anyway. Any differences were of a secondary, tactical nature and could be easily contained in a single organisation, provided that Alan Thornett was accepted as team manager.

Failed

Socialist Organiser supporters, of course, failed to support the cause of national liberation. Instead, they capitulated, again, to Yankee imperialism, by staying at home and watching "Dallas".

Tartan Trotskyists looked on aghast as Ireland exocetted in what turned out to be the winning goal just six minutes into the game. It might not have been Ireland's tragedy, but it was certainly Scotland's disgrace.

Outside the gates of the ground a Socialist Worker seller commented: "Manager Andy Roxburgh's bureaucratic methods of struggle guaranteed defeat. Victory could have been achieved only through bringing into play the 30,000 rank and file Scottish supporters. But Roxburgh's capitulation to the rules of bourgeois democracy, and football, meant that they were left standing on the sidelines. By the way, mate, wanna join the SWP?"

A corpulent teacher domiciled in the vicinity of the ground provided a different analysis: "Even one of those bloody women primary school teachers must recognise that this tragedy is a direct result of abolition of the tawse. Only mindless dogmatists will now fail to understand the pressing need for a Scottish Assembly."

Whilst a battered and bloodied Scotland fled the field of battle in disgrace, Irish anti-imperialists, intoxicated by the pervasive anti-imperialist atmosphere, and by more bodily substances as well, staged a two-minute silence in memory of fallen comrades: Moran, McCarthy and Lawrenson, booked for English-style war crimes.

"Fianna Fail's victory in the Irish general election on the Tuesday, and Ireland's decisive win at Hampden Park on the Wednesday — this is the living force of Permanent Revolution at work, comrades," commented a Socialist Action supporter after the event.

Women and class struggle

Jane Ashworth's article on women and socialism misses several important points. The first concerns an issue which she raises throughout the piece but does not adequately resolve.

She hits back at sections of feminism and at the left generally, at a trend which I for one find disturbing (and oppressive). Jane discusses the inversion of the personal/political slogan, and states that it has changed to mean that outside power relations inevitably occur within personal life.

This has always been part of the meaning of the slogan. The real change of meaning is to state that the political is personal, i.e. that the political arena has shifted into personal life.

The implications of this are serious for all women active in politics, giving women one more shove into the realms of emotionality and away from objectivity.

There is a trend within feminism which asserts that women and men (because of both "nature" and "nurture") are irreconcilably different. This trend identifies women's values as innately superior to male values. After all, such feminists argue, women did not start two world wars, invent the nuclear weapon, do not rape and do mother children.

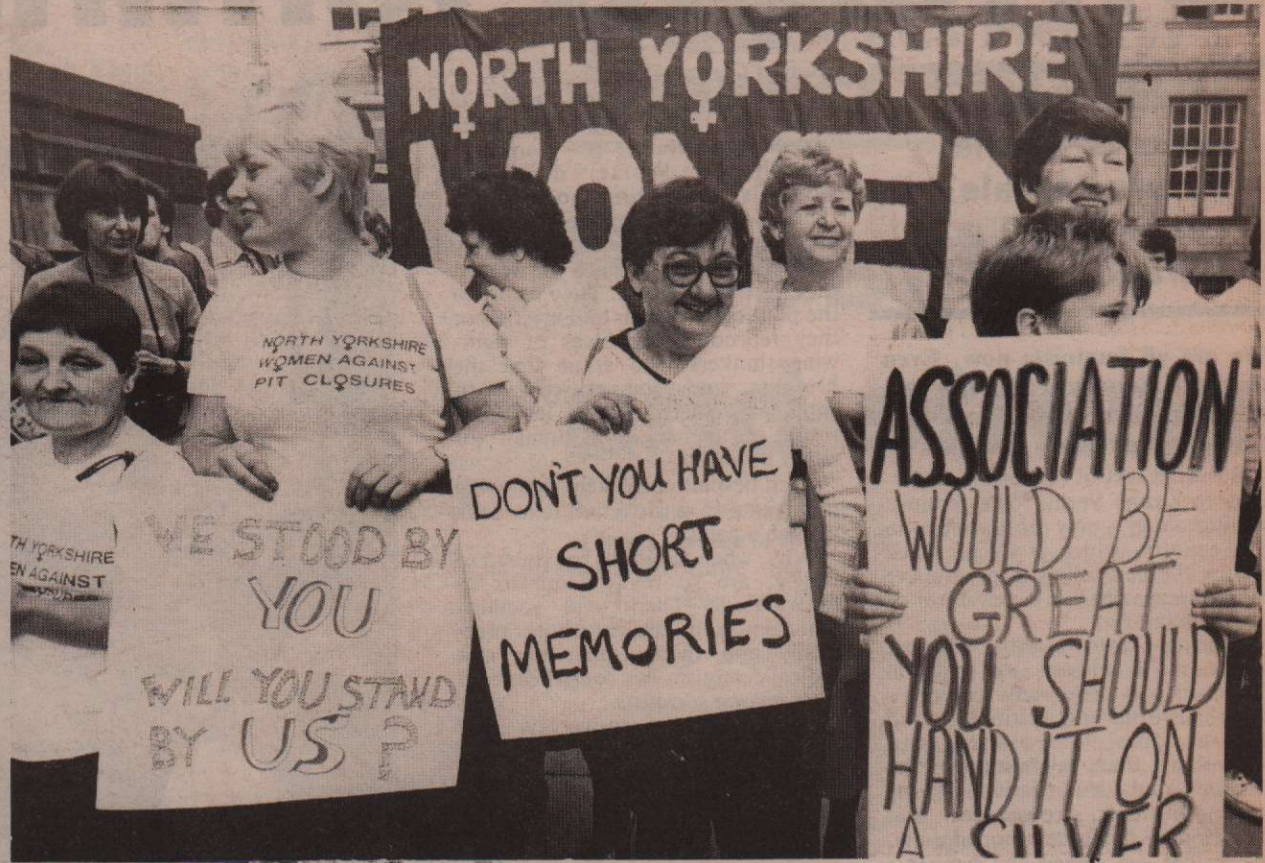
To my mind this analysis fits against much of the evidence. Women supported as well as suffered fascist dictators, and there are no doubt women who would perpetuate atrocities given the material resources to do so.

Most women do mother children but many do not, and many more would not, given the choice. Mothering is a burden for many women, as well as a joy. Our capacity to bear children is a major factor in our daily oppression and our availability as childcarers benefits both men and capital. (Which is not to imply that society should not be changed to meet the needs of childcarers).

Rape is not a women's crime, and men increase their property rights over us because of it. Male violence is a complex issue within feminism, despite efforts to oversimplify it.

As well as being an obvious facet of patriarchy, male sexual violence is related to concepts of property, materialism and class.

It is not enough to say that women are superior to men because men rape and women don't. Rape will not end with capitalism which is one of the reasons why demands for women's liberation must not be subsumed into



Miners' wives lobby NUM conference

the class struggle. Any analysis of women's oppression cannot be based on patriarchy or capitalism alone, one paying lip service to the other, but must explain the supporting connections between the two.

Thus a radical feminism, engaging primarily with patriarchy and defining class as just another oppression, does not provide a satisfactory way forward.

These points have been raised many times by socialist women, but when left women are labelled misogynist and attempts are made to silence them, the point is clearly not getting through.

To argue that women's values are superior to men's, and to express women's values in terms of non-aggression, mothering and caring is to effectively silence many women, who reject those values as potentially oppressive. I speak here not only for women on the left defending so-called "male" political positions, but also for the millions of women trying to escape from Victorian values everywhere.

None of this however should imply that women must fight alongside men for the overthrow of patriarchy and capitalism, as I feel Jane suggests.

Clearly women's involvement can only strengthen working class struggle, but women have the right to work autonomously, without men.

Autonomous organisation strengthens women, and the struggle for women's demands, as well as being liberating for individual women. I would support the right of any woman to attempt to withdraw from mixed politics, but I do not feel that by this alone they will change the world.

The class struggle is by definition mixed, and without it capitalism will stay right where it is, supporting patriarchy. But the working class movement must change, or many women will stay outside it. Autonomous organisation is one way to promote change — but autonomy does not imply the "women's values" approach dealt with above.

To change positively the labour movement must take on not "women's values" but *women's material demands*.

There is clearly a case for arguing that individual sexist behaviour and the structures which support it must change for women to raise demands on equal terms with men. The fight for these changes is an important

fight and should not be belittled. But it is not an end in itself, as some feminists appear to believe. These women have been labelled "femocrats" by SSiN, because their political position goes no further than self-benefitting bureaucracy. They are supported by some men on the left because the "women's values" approach is no threat to their own entrenched beliefs about women.

What I believe socialists should be arguing for is structural and individual male change, as a *means* to real material change in women's lives. We must continue to argue for women's right to organise autonomously as one of the ways to involve more women in the struggle for liberation. Women socialists should be prepared to fight with and without men as the situation demands.

For women to have genuine equality we must have economic independence and freedom from institutionalised moral superiority for centuries. I will gladly give it up for material equality.

LIZ MILLWARD

Briefing and Livingstone: the truth

Keith Spencer (SO 303) is wrong. Briefing did not lead the fight against Ken Livingstone's climb-downs. Instead it constructed pseudo-Marxist rationalisations.

Right from the start Briefing was a central part of the local government left, endorsing, supporting and justifying its refusals to stand up to the Tories. Briefing gloried in the allegedly socialist character of high rate rises and other ploys used by the Livingstones to try to avoid confronting the Tory government. That was what distinguished Briefing then from Socialist Organiser.

Breakaway

Briefing was set up as a breakaway from SO in early 1980. Briefing's initiators argued that Labour councils must raise rates to 'gain time'. The majority on the SO editorial board said that rate rises meant running away from a fight and that if we ran away then we would never stand up and fight the Tories.

As early as July 1979 Ted Knight in Lambeth had proved us right by go-

ing from rate rises to a proposal for cuts. He was forced by the Lambeth labour movement to cancel those cuts. But those who would later start Briefing excused him: "when comrades such as those now leading Lambeth council feel obliged, under pressure, to make concessions...it is not because they want to: it is because...we lack the physical power enabling us to overthrow the whole system of big business..."

The Briefing editors delighted to talk about the vast "struggle for power" in the future; but only to prove that before "the revolution", Labour had no choice but to trim, compromise and manage the system. But, of course, for the Livingstones, the trimming, compromising and managing was the whole game.

Briefing was launched as a Livingstone fan magazine, centred round the GLC campaign. When Labour won the GLC election in 1981, Briefing's headline was "London's Ours!" — though, politically, it might have been more appropriate for County Hall to fly a flag saying "Briefing's Ours!"

Briefing followed Livingstone in the GLC's crucial collapse, on cheap fares in January 1982.

That collapse prefigured everything else.

It was too early for confrontation, said Briefing: for the time being "The task is to stay in office and add to our power by winning, first, the borough elections..."!

As late as January 1983, Graham Bash, editor of Briefing then and now, reckoned that "The GLC campaign has been a success. The GLC is generally seen to be under the control of the left..." But the harsh truth was that the Briefing left was under the control of the GLC "left".

Usefulness

Of course Briefing and Livingstone did eventually part ways. But it was Livingstone deciding that Briefing's usefulness to him was ended, rather than Briefing fighting Livingstone that led to the rupture: Livingstone kicked Briefing away from him.

Today Briefing can posture cheaply as part of the serious left — but when it mattered, when it was a case of practical immediate questions of the class struggle they were only as 'left' as Ken Livingstone was: when it mattered, Briefing counted for

nothing politically.

Anyway, the old Briefing has now been replaced by a new one, made up of a mish-mash cluster of small groups — International, Socialist Viewpoint, Chartist Minority — and a few "independents". It has no coherent politics. Of today's Briefing you could justly say, what Trotsky said long ago:

"I have never put a low value on small organisations merely because they are small...The mass organisations have value precisely because they are mass organisations. Even when they are under patriotic reformist leadership one cannot discount them. One must win the masses who are in their clutches: whether from outside or from inside depends on the circumstance. Small organisations which regard themselves as selective, as pioneers can only have value on the strength of their programme and of the schooling and steeling of their cadres. A *small* organisation which has no unified programme and no really revolutionary will is less than nothing, is a negative quantity".

(Leon Trotsky, Open Letter to an English Comrade, April 3 1936).

GERRY BATES, Camden.

Liverpool relies on financial juggling

By John Bloxam

It was denounced as 'unconstitutional' by Peter Gilfoyle, the official appointed by Labour's leadership to run Liverpool Labour Party, but Labour Party members went ahead with a meeting last Wednesday to hear a report from Council leader Tony Byrne on the Labour Group's proposed budget for 1987.

Because the District Labour Party is still suspended, the meeting was 'consultative' only.

The Labour Councillors may be disqualified after their final appeal is decided in the next two weeks, so they want to deprive a rump Liberal administration of the chance of presenting a 'no cuts' budget just before the May local elections.

According to Byrne, Labour is now in a position to put forward a budget in line with Party policy — no cuts in jobs or services, no rent increase, and no "massive rate increase".

The council has been saved, Byrne said, by an unexpected windfall of £15 million from the de-regulation and the abolition of the County Council. £6 million has been saved through 'creative accounting'. The rest of the predicted £40 million shortfall is to be made up by getting £19 million through "devices and techniques".

Byrne would not tell the meeting what the rate increase would be, except that it would not be "massive". Later in the week Militant said it would be "in the region of nine percent."

Byrne was deliberately vague about where £19 million would come from, and probably — as in the past — some of the savings will come through 'secret' cuts. Liverpool Labour Council has now become indistinguishable from other left Labour Councils.

Militant used to describe the City Council as like a workers' state. Now they justify the 600 unfilled council jobs by reference to the normal 'vacancy factor' in other councils.

Robbed of massive resources by the Tory government, betrayed by the Labour leadership, derailed by their own criminal mistakes, the Council leadership are in trouble. They have responded by giving up on any campaign to get the necessary resources from central government and are relying on clever financial tricks instead.

They have no strategy. Alone at the meeting, SO supporter Kevin Feintuck argued for urgently rebuilding a campaign to force the necessary money out of central government. He spelled out what it would need. The council must start telling the truth about what is going on and change its relationship to its own workforce and the community, particularly the black community.

As an inevitable result of its attempts to manage the local state, the Militant-dominated council leadership has had a series of clashes with its own workers. Two weeks ago they even threatened NALGO with an injunction if they did not hold a ballot in line with Tory anti-union legislation!

At Wednesday's meeting Byrne accused trade unionists of being "mischievous", and denounced the Black Caucus as "bourgeois" and "gangsters".

Militant supporters dominated the meeting. And they behaved like Stalinists, denouncing those who have "engineered" strikes against the Council, lying about what the Council is and has been doing, and freely slandering anybody who disagreed.



Terry French at the 1986 TUC. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report. NEXT WEEK IN S.O.: Terry French on his experiences in prison.

Terry French speaks out

From page 1

welcoming the returning hero! It is not the fault of the rank and file. They are all in the same boat.

We have got lads who will do anything. They are painting the club. My own house has been decorated completely since I have been away by my comrades in Kent.

Our problems start when you get to the Area level. We are now an embarrassment, and I think they just wish we would go away. Well, they had better soon learn that we will not go away.

I will tell you — if it comes right down to the bottom line and there is one sacked miner left in Kent and still fighting, it will be me, because I won't quit.

I have been advocating for 18 months that sacked miners should get together on a national level, and there are moves afoot to do it. I don't think the Area hierarchies will like it, but the general feeling is that it is being forced upon us. We are all loyal NUM members.

The Coal Board knew exactly who they were sacking. If these leaders of ours need any guideline about who their real friends are, the Coal Board have done it for them. That should tell them who their friends are. But we are starting to feel deserted.

TUC

The NUM leadership was an exception. My quarrel is not with them, but with the rest of the trade union leadership and the TUC.

I remember going to some soiree put on by the TUC for the Canadian TUC during the strike, I think in November 1984, to ask them what

Yorkshire miners

By Richard Bayley

THE SELBY coalfield in North Yorkshire was completely shut down last week by the NUM, in a response to the withholding of bonus payments by management.

The dispute arose after a series of walk-outs by miners in various pits. One centred around a visit by a local Tory MP to one of the pits.

Another walkout occurred when a particularly hated British Coal manager arrived in the coalfield.

Management have tried to withhold bonuses as a form of punishment, prompting a week-long strike across the whole coalfield.

The action has cost British Coal about £1.5 million in lost production, and remained solid throughout the week. Details of management's response to the strike are not yet available.

they were doing in Canada to help the miners. There was a beautiful spread put on — salmon, caviar, drinks were flowing.

When I was trying to tell these people — not the Canadians, the British — that our lads were out there freezing their bollocks off on picket lines and going hungry, all they did was laugh at me. These are the sort of people I am talking about.

Willis was there. When he saw me — he knew what I was by the badges I was wearing — he just turned turtle and went the other way. He would not speak to me. That was in the middle of the strike.

I was talking to two TUC leaders there — a Scottish fellow in the AEU, not Laird, a regional bloke, and someone in the CPSA, a little fat bloke. They had their double gin and tonics down them, what I call the gabby water, and in so many words they said to us: 'You get back to bloody work. You're wasting everybody's time'.

That's what they said. Things like that I don't forget.

Message

It has got to come back to the union leaderships. I don't mean the NUM. It was the other unions who were responsible for our defeat.

I personally fought as hard as I knew how, and so did the others. But these people like Willis and company — we have got no faith in them. They are just there to feather their own nests.

Take the Silentnight dispute, and how their own union leadership has now sold them out. As soon as the company talks of sequestration, about getting the courts to take the union's assets, they just fold up. They have got no backbone, no guts at all.

A union leader says: 'We are going to sell you out to stop them sequestrating our funds' — but what is the point of having a union if they are not going to fight for you? It just reinforces my view that they are there for their own ends. They are not

there for the likes of me and my comrades.

They have forgotten what it is all about. They are part of the Establishment. They are just no good to us. We have to start and get more rank and file involvement, not only in my own union but in all the unions.

Take an example. In the TGWU, unless they are really naive, one of the biggest lessons they should have learned from the miners' strike is just how many card-of-convenience holders they have got. On picket lines throughout the country during the miners' strike, we were getting an average of six out of ten TGWU drivers going through — scabbing.

It points to the fact that the union leaders have just been taking the money and neglecting the political, social job of a union, which is to educate the members. They have not been doing it. They have just been taking the money and having a nice time of it.

Educate

There are three words on our Kent banner: Agitate, Educate, and Organise. To me, if any union can follow those three words and fulfill them, then that is what trade unionism is all about.

It is not about taking the money and having nice big expense accounts. You see the likes of ex-steelworkers' leader Bill Sirs with his mohair suits. It's all right for him as a person, and for the others like him, but what about his members? We're the ones who pay the bills, and I think we should have more of a say in what goes on.

I know it is easy said, and a lot of people before me have easily said it, but there is one thing I will never do — I will never sell out. I have been through too much, and I have seen too much.

As far as I am concerned, two years in prison have finished my education in full, the 'education in life'. I have seen it from one end of the scales to the other. You can't get that out of books.

Reality of rape

By Penny Newell

On Channel 4 on Saturday night, Robert Kee interviewed a woman about rape. I only caught the last couple of minutes. She was telling him that in law, only vaginal penetration is rape. If a man forces his penis into a woman's mouth or backside it is not rape. It is a crime, but it is not rape. I was quite shocked — I didn't know that.

Robert Kee started on about the Bible and Adam and Eve, which I didn't quite get, but I think it was about the nature of sex. The woman corrected him and pointed out that rape is not sex. 'What kind of men raped women?' he wanted to know. 'Not normal men, surely?' 'Yes,' she said. 'Very few men convicted of rape had been diagnosed mentally sick'.

The interview petered out with about ten seconds of why men rape women and men's power over women.

WOMAN'S EYE

Well, it was better than nothing, but Channel 4 is not exactly peak viewing on a Saturday night at 7 pm.

With all the recent news reporting and outrage at the sentences of the men found guilty of raping a woman in a vicarage, I started thinking about the way rape is dealt with on popular TV series.

Sometime ago in Brookside a woman was raped and it was dealt with seriously. The programme showed the inability of her partner to help her over it. Now East Enders has an attacker on the loose. No one says what the attacker does — we're just left to guess it's rape.

Incidentally, in the past few episodes of East Enders the level of violence generally has increased.

Pete beat up his ex-wife Pat because she was too mouthy about his current wife. Wicksie, her son, hit her too when she made a racist remark. Mehmet was beaten up because he cheated Cath out of some money.

And who is complaining? Colin, the middle class gay guy. We are supposed to think that this is a normal working class way of dealing with things and everyone working class accepts it. The only working class dissent is from the women and that's very weak.

The last episode ended with Pat being grabbed, presumably by the attacker.

Taste

Talk about sensationalism! I used to quite enjoy East Enders but all this leaves a very bad taste in my mouth. To devote several episodes to mindless violence, which serves as a backdrop for a woman to be raped/attacked...Pat, the woman who has been grabbed in the dark, is portrayed as a vicious, spiteful woman who — I suppose the line goes — "deserves all she gets".

When programmes like East Enders deal with violence and rape in this way it distorts the arguments about rape. It seems they are saying it is part of working class culture to behave like that, unlike sensitive middle class people who have feelings.

Working class women are fearful enough about walking the streets without sensationalised violence and rape.

This dramatisation also reinforces the idea that rape is done outside the home by attacks in the dark. But most women who are raped know the rapist, and often it is a family friend or acquaintance. That is what makes it so difficult to get people to believe you have been raped.



TGWU strike at the Parkinson Cowan plant in East Birmingham, owned by Thorn EMI. 920 hourly paid workers walked out on their first major strike in 28 years after the bosses decided to close the spare parts division and move to Edmonton, London, without consultation. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Vote Labour in Greenwich



Deirdre Wood canvassing in Greenwich. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL.

THE TORY gutter press has given the labour movement a foul taste of the General Election campaign the Tories will run.

They have spent weeks sniping at Greenwich's Labour candidate, Deirdre Wood, and they have misrepresented her throughout the election campaign, proving once against that Britain has the most politically one-sided and biased press in any capitalist democracy.

Murdoch's News of the World was preparing to cap it all last week with an exceptionally vile personal attack on Deirdre Wood, accusing her of responsibility for the death of her alcoholic father.

That outrageous salvo in the Tory election campaign backfired when it received advance publicity and the News of the World thought it better to retreat.

Opinion polls seem to be showing that the general press barrage is having some effect. But the voters of Greenwich have not decided the matter yet.

Tribunal victory

It has taken me virtually a year to the day from my sacking to get a result in my tribunal case, but now it has come through.

Last Friday I heard that the tribunal had decided unanimously that I had been unfairly dismissed, and by a majority that I had been dismissed for my trade union activities and that I had done nothing at all to merit dismissal.

Naturally I was delighted! In these days it is nothing short of miraculous for an NUM member to go before a tribunal and get that sort of decision.

But now I face still more waiting, to find out what the Coal Board will do. By next Friday we should have the full verdict in writing, and we will know then whether the tribunal has ordered my reinstatement. My solicitors will now be asking the Coal Board to give me my job back. If they refuse it will be back to the tribunal to get an instruction. If they still refuse we will have to look at the situation then.

The reaction to the news has been amazing. People have come up to me in the street to shake my hand; it has been the same in the pubs and clubs. Everyone is highly delighted with the result, and that includes some UDM members, and complete strangers. It will certainly give the NUM in Notts a boost.

The Coal Board's reaction to the tribunal decision will be an important test: will Coal Board boss Haslam keep his word and reinstate men who have won their tribunals, and who have not been "involved in violence". My result will help focus attention on the other outstanding tribunal cases — Mick McGinty's and Geoff Poulter's.

UDM in confusion

The UDM had their annual conference last week at Sutton-in-

WHETTON'S WEEK



Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

Ashfield. Their president, Greatorex, said that the 'honeymoon' is over. That is indeed true, but Greatorex's speech was full of absolutely ludicrous statements.

For example, he explained the increase in accident rates in the Nottinghamshire coalfield by saying that men had other things than safety on their minds, like redundancy payments! The bit about the 'honeymoon' being over, though, was an attempt to find an excuse about why they are losing members and haven't settled their pay rise yet.

The NUM has not settled its pay rise because the Coal Board refuses to talk to us until we have accepted their new conciliation machinery — which is something we just will not do. The procedure would take away a lot of our rights and put virtually everything in the hands of the colliery manager. But the UDM has accepted this machinery so that is not an obstacle to them settling, or the reason why they haven't.

In fact, the UDM are talking about having a ballot and about calling for rejection of the Board's pay offer of 2-3%. The leadership are playing games. If the recommendation to reject is turned down, they can blame the UDM membership. If, however, the membership agreed they will then use that to go back to the Board for more. But where will they go from there? They are in a hole.

They are declining while the NUM is recruiting, and they are up against a Coal Board that wants to boost production, hold down wages, bring

in privatisation and close pits. All they have got left are excuses.

UDM men join NUM

The Notts NUM has won another victory, too: all the winders in the Area — between 150 and 200 men — left the UDM and joined COSA, the clerical section of the NUM. They were sick of the UDM because they realised they were getting nowhere. It is an important indication of a growing attitude to the UDM, and naturally it has also given us in the NUM a boost too.

Yorkshire NUM on strike

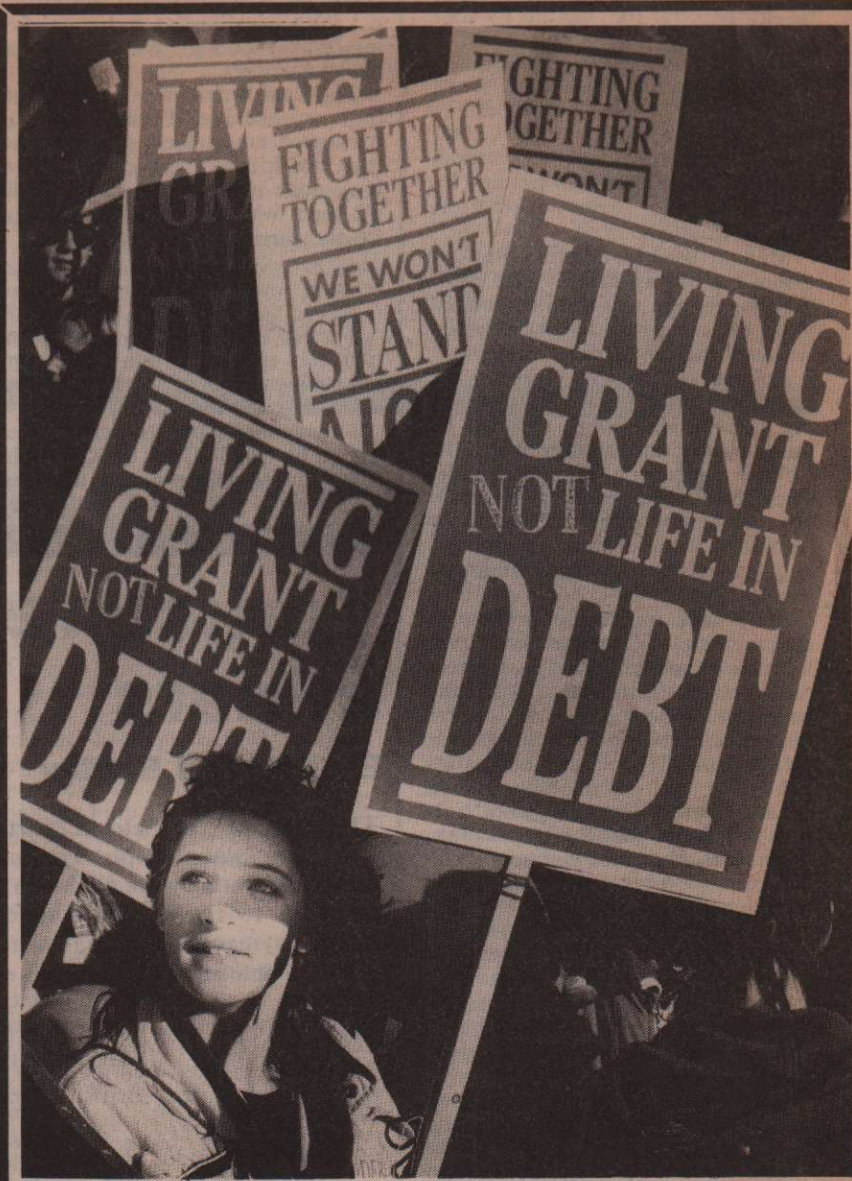
Over the past weeks, the strike centred on the Selby pits has shown that NUM members in North Yorkshire are prepared to stand up and fight the Coal Board over its dictatorial attitude.

This action, together with numerous other strikes in pits up and down the country, shows how much anger and frustration the rank and file miners are feeling — it lays the lie put forward by some of the union leadership that the men are not ready for industrial action. Yes they are! With the conciliation machinery ripped up, they have got nowhere else to go but towards industrial action.

Vote Labour!

Despite the media trying to confuse the issue with all their talk of tactical voting, I am still looking forward to a good Labour victory in Greenwich on Thursday. People are pig sick of Thatcher and the Tories.

But I wish the Labour leadership would stop hedging and trying to appeal to the middle ground. If the Labour Party were committed to a clear appeal on socialist policies and showed a convincing determination to implement those policies if elected, then I'm sure we could secure a massive vote to kick the Tories out.



20,000 students demonstrated in London last Saturday in opposition to loans. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL. See also page 5.