

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Kick out the Tories in '87!

Labour after Greenwich

See centre pages



Labour can still win!

Stop the retreat! Start campaigning! Rouse the working class to fight the Tories!

That's what Labour must do to regain lost ground and win the coming General Election.

Nigel Lawson's tax cuts will not persuade anyone to forget the Tory Government's record.

*Three million unemployed, by official figures — in reality more than four million.

*The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Over 18 million people in Britain live below the poverty level of supplementary benefit plus 40%.

*Housing gets worse. One million people are on council waiting lists, but councils are allowed no money to build new housing or to do the £19 billion worth of repairs needed on existing stock.

Even Tory voters know about this record. A recent survey showed that only 19% of voters (and only 41% of Tory voters) believe that a Tory government will listen to what people like them think; only 24% of all voters, and 55% of Tory voters, reckon that a Tory government will give people like them a better chance in life.

Decisive

Millions of workers still intend to vote Tory — because the Tories seem to be brutal, but decisive and resolute enough to deal with the terrible decay of British capitalist society.

Labour cannot win by being the party of muddling through, of consensus, of the tired old wisdoms, of business as usual. If we offer voters a second-rate SDP, then they will go for the real SDP or for the Tories.

Only a socialist programme of common ownership and workers' control in the decisive sectors of industry and finance can offer real hope to the millions of unemployed and the low-paid.

And Labour must start by campaigning, by organising protests and demonstrations and support for struggles — by proclaiming loud and clear that Tory bleakness can be resisted and replaced by something better.

At present Labour is retreating — running scared from any halfway radical policy we have. The more we retreat, the more the Tory media will come after us. Labour cannot win if our leaders are ashamed of everything that distinguishes Labour from the Alliance and the Tories.

Fight back now!

More on Labour: turn to centre pages



Strikers address mass meeting

Strikes sweep Spain

A huge wave of industrial struggle has swept Spain, and there has been serious fighting between workers and police. In the northern industrial town of Reinosa, workers took prisoner the police sent to break their strike.

The steel mill workers, who were protesting against redundancies, had already imprisoned the plant's manager and other executives.

Madrid, the Spanish capital, has seen massive demonstrations demanding a change in the economic policy

of the Socialist Party government of Felipe Gonzalez. 400,000 marched on 12 March. The marches and widespread strike action were called by the Communist Party-led Workers' Commission (CC OO), one of the two main trade unions. The Union General de los Trabajadores (UGT), is associated with the Socialist Party — but it, too, has called for opposition to the government.

Recent weeks have seen many big strikes, including action by hospital workers, agricultural workers and heavily exploited agricultural day-labourers.

Miners at Hunosa protested at plans to cut jobs. Car workers at Renault struck for collective bargaining rights. National rail workers have taken action.

The government of Gonzalez is extremely unpopular. According to a poll carried out by the Spanish news magazine Cambio 16, only one in five Spanish people support the government.

The current wave of struggle by workers was sparked by a massive

Turn to page 2

A wave of workers' militancy across Brazil

Following the Brazilian government's decision to defer part of its interest repayments to the banks, it now faces the biggest wave of working class action since the military stepped down two years ago.

A two-week long strike by seafarers, a dock strike, and a threat of action by 55,000 oil workers, have provoked panic in the government of Jose Sarney.

Troops were sent in to forestall the strike in the ten oil refineries owned by the state company, Petrobras, where action was threatened. The full-scale invasion of the refineries by soldiers, police with dogs, armoured cars, jeeps and tanks, evoked images of the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 to early 1985.

The seafarers' strike, affecting 200 ships and already costing \$25 million, was declared illegal under the repressive legislation inherited from the junta (and indeed from the earlier dictatorship of Getulio Vargas in the '30s). Strikers ignored the court order to return to work.

Mass resignations of the seafarers have been reported, for example in the main port of Santos. Two small shipping companies secured a return to work with 120% wage rise. Petrobras have asked for the troops to be withdrawn.

700,000 bank workers — who also took action last September — are planning strikes next month. 100% pay rises are demanded by bank workers in the main industrial centre of Sao Paulo, and national action is threatened.

The workers' action is all in response to the failure of the government's 'anti-inflation' plan. Like all such plans, it tried to make the working class and the poor in general pay for the crisis of Brazilian capitalism — and it failed to bring inflation down: consumer prices have risen by over 33% since the start of the year, according to official figures.

The government ran into serious problems immediately after the congressional elections last November. A big victory for the main pro-government party was followed by the announcement of big price increases in essential goods. Widespread working class action



stopped the government in its tracks.

Then last month Brazil suspended interest payments on \$68 billion worth of its debt. Sarney's government is asking for \$4-6 billion in new loans.

But its plans to rescue Brazilian capitalism have to be at the workers' expense. And the Brazilian working class is an increasingly powerful force

— with many parallels with the workers' movement in South Africa.

The radical Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT) union federation has been at the forefront of recent struggles. And the left wing Workers' Party (PT) — who dominate the CUT — did quite well in the November elections, winning 17 seats. This was a small minority (the PMDB won 258 seats) — but

significant.

Inevitably, the sight of the troops in the oil refineries has led to speculation about possible right-wing coup attempts: the comparison has been made with Chile before the coup in 1973. At the moment a coup does not seem very likely, although the Brazilian workers should be on their guard.

West Germany

Riot cops defend nuclear plant

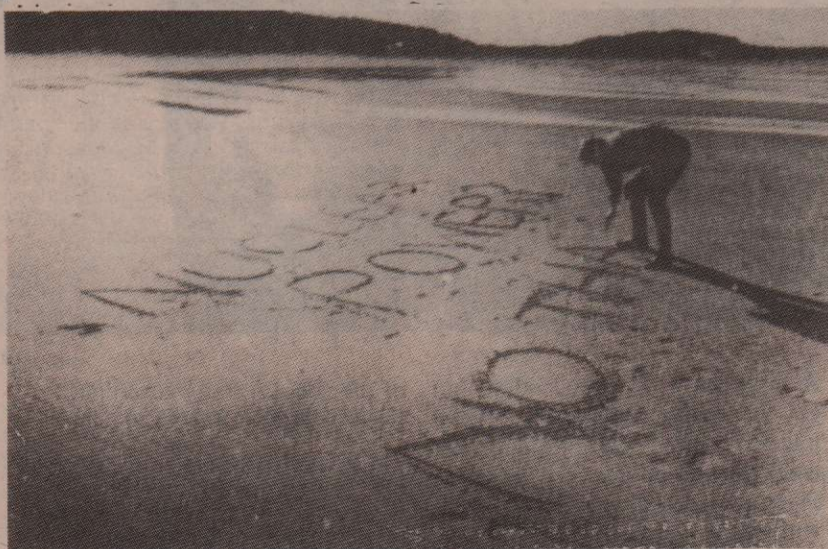
By Giles Stacey

Protests have been going on for over a year against the building of a nuclear reprocessing plant (like Sellafield) in Wackersdorf, West Germany.

The resistance started with two occupations of the site and a vigil on New Year's Eve in 1985, attended by over 30,000 people. The demonstrators were cleared in January 1986, and since then a fence has been constructed, the site levelled and foundations laid.

The police have used CS gas frequently, and two people have died through asthma attacks brought on by the gas. Many have received eye and chest injuries.

Austrian demonstrators were turned back from the German-Austrian border in the summer of 1986 and at New Year's Eve 1986, directly violating the Helsinki Agreements on Freedom of Movement. The government banned the Christmas and New Year's Eve 1986 demonstrations which meant that they were considerably smaller than the previous year.



Further, the Bavarian anti-atomic magazine "Radi-Activ" has been repeatedly confiscated and its editors prosecuted.

The reprocessing plant is dangerous, even apart from the possibility of an accident. It has been decided on financial grounds that it is not possible to stop the emission of

radio-active gases. The danger will just be spread over a large area by the use of a two hundred metre high chimney.

One per cent of the processed plutonium will escape through the chimney. A recent commission calculated the possible involved pollution and found the problem

unacceptable to German safety standards.

But the ten billion Marks to be spent on the WAA could be used to prevent the emission of sulphur dioxide gas, a primary cause of acid rain, from every single coal-fired power station in West Germany.

Another worrying and cynical tactic is the use of day-paid workers in the repair of "hot zones". Such day-labour often involves the shameless exploitation of Turkish workers.

Wackersdorf is in Bavaria, governed by right-wing politician Franz Josef Strauss who was responsible as Minister of Defence in the 1950s for the rearmament of West Germany. It is no great secret that he wants Germany to have a nuclear device.

The scheduled completion date in 1995 of Wackersdorf, which produces plutonium, coincides with the expiry of a treaty which bans Germany from having atomic weapons.

I am organising a petition against WAA Wackersdorf and would appreciate help with getting people to sign. If you would like to get involved write to Giles Stacey, Flat 21, Room 170, Aberdeen House, Whitworth Park, Oxford Road, Manchester.

Yugoslavia

Workers strike against market socialism

'Market socialist' Yugoslavia is facing a big growth of working class unrest. Thousands of workers have struck against a government-imposed wage freeze.

The freeze was imposed in an attempt to lower inflation, now standing at around 100%.

The President of the Croatian unions has openly criticised the Yugoslav federal government for freezing wages while prices of foodstuffs have continued to rise.

35 strikes took place in the Croatia region last week.

This rise of working class action puts the lie to those who believe that Yugoslavia is a socialist haven. Like elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the workers are repressed and oppressed by a self-serving bureaucracy.

Action like that now taking place points the way forward. A 'social explosion' is being predicted in Yugoslavia — which could put an end to the system that rules there and put a real workers' democracy in its place.

Strikes sweep Spain

from page 1

struggle by school students against changes in university entrance rules — a similar struggle in many ways to that in France that prompted widespread working class action over the New Year.

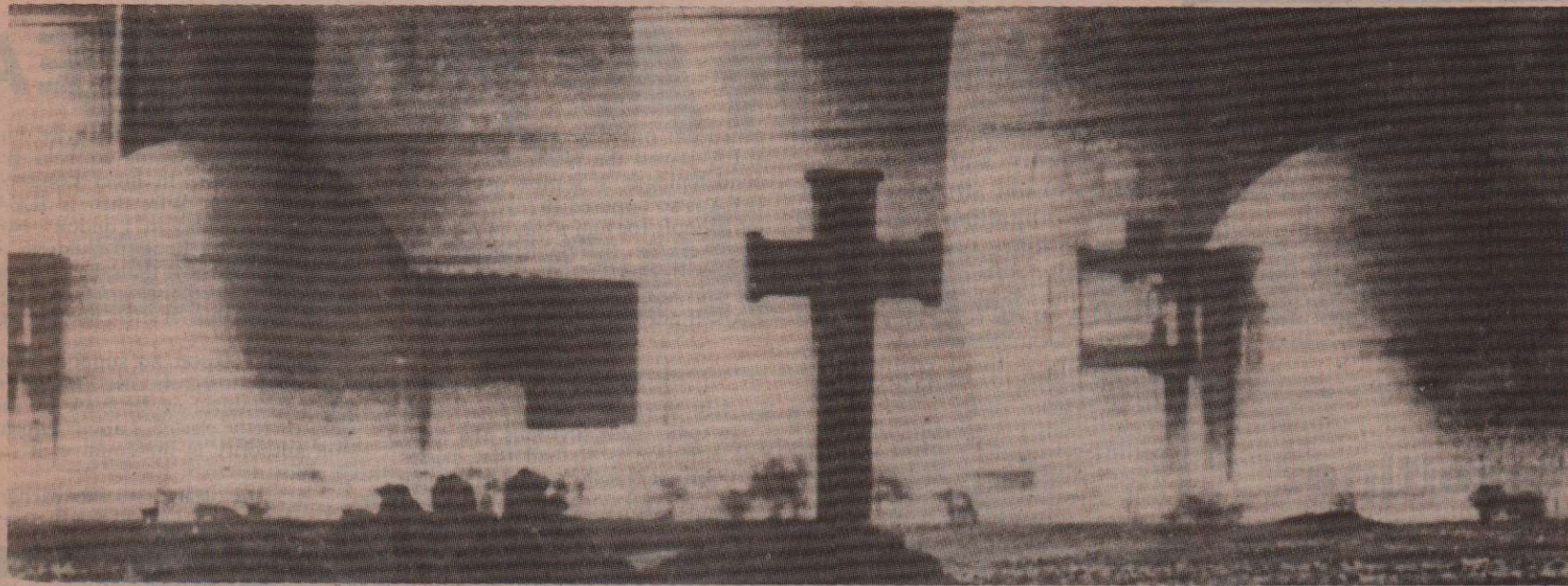
The school student movement was initiated by the school students' union (SEM), which is led by a group, 'Nuevo Claridad', who have links with the British Militant group. In addition there were broader-based 'co-ordination' committees in the schools, within which the dominant force seems to have been the Juventud Socialista Revolucionario (JCR) — whose British equivalents are Socialist Action and International.

Both sides claim significant responsibility. According to Militant the 'coordination committees' disintegrated in the later stages of the struggle and adopted an adventurist posture. The JCR, on the other hand, insist that the SEM was less of a broad base.

For certain, the SEM played the decisive role in calling the demonstration of 150,000 youth that signalled a retreat from the government. But the SEM's call for the youth "to return to class and await the results of negotiations" was more questionable.

After the wave of workers' struggles, the government faces a major crisis. It is exacerbated by continuing unrest in the Basque region — representatives of the militant basque nationalist group Herri Batasuna to the basque parliament have 'declared war' on the Madrid government.

As the working class moves into opposition, it is also forcing a greater degree of unity on the two union federations. On big workers' demonstrations, CC OO and UGT banners have been prominent.



Sizewell: whose decision?

LAST week the Tory government announced the go-ahead for the Sizewell B nuclear power station and a whole £6 billion nuclear power programme. The announcement had been a certainty since the Layfield Inquiry reported in favour of Sizewell in January.

It means big profits for many contractors. But what does it mean for safety? The long and detailed Layfield Inquiry was supposed to settle any doubts. But after the disasters at Chernobyl and at Three Mile Island in the US (where the reactor was a PWR, like the one planned at Sizewell), the doubts obviously are not settled for most working-class people.

Despite the bluster of the nuclear industry, there are real risks to workers and the public. Monitoring radiation doesn't stop workers being exposed and there have been many cases of illness and death. The industry has so far managed to avoid public blame by settling actions for damages out of court with no admission of liability.

The greatest threat to public health was the Windscale fire of 1957 which has certainly caused many cases of cancer. Areas around Sellafield and Sizewell A are now showing increased rates of leukemia.

Let us suppose that it is possible to avoid risks to workers and public by properly applied safety precautions. Would there still be objections to nuclear power?

Well, apart from the fact that placid Britain is susceptible to odd earthquake (recently confirmed in Wales) there is still the matter of the waste.

In power stations, uranium fuel rods with low levels of radiation are turned into highly radioactive waste. This is then transported by road and rail through major population centres to Sellafield, where some is allowed to escape to the surrounding seas, beaches, and fields.

EDITORIAL

At present, no-one knows what to do with this waste, which will remain dangerous for thousands of years.

Sea-dumping was stopped by the united efforts of the environmental and trade union movements, and attempts to bury it in the ground have run into community opposition. One problem is that containers would corrode in quite a short time, allowing the waste to contaminate ground water. Casting the waste in blocks of glass or synthetic rock might fail through leaching by ground water which slowly dissolves the blocks.

One alternative suggestion is to fire rockets full of waste into the sun or out of the solar system: but what if the rocket blows up on the launch pad? A better solution would be to bury the waste in containers made of gold, which does not corrode and is also very good at stopping radiation passing through it! But then nuclear power would be off the capitalist agenda.

Whether nuclear power can possibly be made safe or not is an issue which can only be settled by detailed scientific studies. The labour movement should fight for full public scrutiny and workers' control of safety in the nuclear power industry. We want the decisions about nuclear power to be based on human welfare, not on profit.

That means the shutting down of nuclear power until and unless safety is ensured; and if safety is impossible or too expensive, the scrapping of nuclear power. This policy has to be

linked to developing alternative energy sources and to safeguards for jobs.

In Britain at present, however, nuclear power is run under a blanket of 'national security', mainly because of its military connections. The Atomic Energy Authority (AEA) has its own private armed police force, answerable not to the Home Office but to the AEA. It has the power of armed pursuit, the right to enter any premises at will, and the power to arrest on suspicion.

Most AEA employees come under the Official Secrets Act, and are not allowed to give out information about their work.

The fight for workers' control will be necessary even if nuclear power is completely scrapped: for scrapping a

nuclear power station poses as many safety problems as running it. That, indeed, is one of the main objections to nuclear power: after its useful life is over, a nuclear power station leaves a vast mass of dangerous radioactive material to get rid of.

There is much more to the nuclear power issue than the choice 'for' or 'against'. To stop civilian nuclear power while nuclear weapons are still being built would be a hollow victory: yet we will not get rid of nuclear weapons until we get rid of the warmongering ruling classes and bureaucracies who wield them.

The fight for a socialist energy policy — for cheap, available, safe energy for human needs — has to be part of a fight for workers' control and for workers' power in society.

Lesbian and gay rights

Support Gay Pride '87

In view of the mounting hostility towards lesbians and gays this year's Lesbian and Gay Pride Steering Committee has decided to appeal for support from predominantly heterosexual organisations.

They hope that as many working people's organisations as possible will be represented in the solidarity contingent of the carnival parade. To this end they have drafted the resolution below.

Their slogan is: 'Equal rights for all — defend lesbian and gay rights!' This.....rejects the attempts of the gutter press, bigots and right-wing politicians to make use of the fear of Aids to whip up hostility against gay men.

We are deeply concerned that the denial of rights to lesbians and gay men, and the

increasingly common calls for greater repression are now being justified as legitimate 'public health' measures.

In view of the mounting violence, discrimination and hatred being directed against lesbians and gays we believe that it is imperative for this branch/ward/committee/council to stand up and be counted.

We support the initiative of the Lesbian and Gay Pride Weeks Committee in working for the most widespread attendance of working people's organisations at the Pride Carnival parade.

We support the organisers' standpoint of: 'Equality for all — defend lesbian and gay rights' and we resolve to send our banner and as many of our members as possible to march in solidarity behind the lesbian and gay organisations in London on 27 June 1987.

If the standing orders and funds permit, please add a clause pledging a donation. Cheques to LGPWOC (Lesbian & Gay Pride Weeks Organising Committee).

Please return a copy of the resolution signed by the chair of the meeting to: Mary Harper, c/o 11 Rushton House, Albion Avenue, London SW8 2SE.

Socialism, Zionism and Palestine

Debate between Lenni Brenner (author of 'The Iron Wall' and 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators') and John O'Mahony (editor, Socialist Organiser)

Friday 21 March, 7.30 at the 'Plough', Museum St, London WC1.

PRESS GANG

A sick gimmick

Friday's Sun's front page rather surprised me: "Boy George sings for The Sun fund victims". What could Boy George possibly be doing singing for the Sun?

He always struck me as quite a decent fellow and given the treatment he has received at the hands of that particular publication it didn't make any sense at first.

Then it clicked. The Zeebrugge Ferry. Of course. The next day the front page was: "McCartney on song for the Sun". "As the biggest record since Band Aid got ready to spin, Princess Di's favourite Rocker, Dire Straits guitar wizzard Mark Knopfler agreed to play his heart out on the charity single.

"And megastar Michael Jackson telexed from Los Angeles to say: 'Go ahead and make a fortune!' The stars will sing the moving Beatles anthem Let It Be..."

The recording studio was to be "packed wall to wall with big, big names" including Mel and Kim, Bananarama, Ben Volteliere with Curiosity Killed the Cat, Bonnie Tyler, Mark King, Mick Kamen, Erasure, Jaki Graham, Nick Hayward, Ruby Turner, Pepsi and Shirley, Siouxi, etc., etc., etc.

The "chorus with a cause" would also include assorted East Enders and from "the beautiful world of the Sun's page three will come stunning Suzanne Mitzi and luscious Linda Lusardi."

By Jim Denham

No prizes for guessing where the idea for Ferry Aid came from. Now, I've always felt the left was generally a bit too eager to sneer at Band Aid and point out — correctly but glibly — that it wasn't really any solution to the Ethiopian tragedy.

I remembered James P. Cannon's moving account of "the men who gave their skin" — about how ordinary working class people volunteered their own flesh to treat victims of a New York factory accident.

Weren't the millions of people who gave to Band Aid overwhelmingly working class and wasn't it a powerful testimony to basic decency and generosity of ordinary people? So why does Ferry Aid strike me as so grotesquely revolting?

For a start, of course, there's the fact that it is being organised by the Sun, that populist tribune of the very "spirit of free enterprise" that gave the vessel its name and almost certainly was the real cause of the tragedy.

But there's more to it than that: at least Band Aid did make some tiny short term contribution towards alleviating suffering. What good will Ferry Aid do? How will the suffering of the bereaved be eased by money — except in the way that money would help any other randomly selected group of Western European people?

This is just cashing in. It's as cynical and cheap as that. Even the record cover is sick — a photo of the capsized ferry and a bizarre logo featuring an anchor and a bass clef. Plus the Sun's own logo, of course.

Monday's Sun (headline "Let it be number one") gave a detailed report of the recording session. I noticed that "Breakfast TV golden girl" Ann Diamond was present. How appropriate. Her interviews with survivors had been on a par with the Sun's sick gimmick: in one of them, she asked a lorry driver what the people around him had been doing as he fought his way to safety. He looked at Ann as though she was mad: "Well, actually... most of them were drowning", he replied after a long pause.

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.
01-639 7965
Latest date for reports: first post Monday or by phone, Monday evening.
Editor: John O'Mahony.
Typesetting: Upstream Ltd (TU).

Published by Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.
Printed by East End Offset (TU), London E2.
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser.

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GRAFFITI

Witch-hunt

Entrists for Heseltine?

"Fresh loony Left threat" headlined Today last Tuesday, 10th, raising a red scare about Socialist Organiser.

The story, evidently fed to Today by right-wing Labour MP Frank Field, said that "moderates and the 'soft Left' have finally discovered the threat of a group with almost identical aims to the outlawed Socialist Workers Party..."

The shocking "discovery" of this foul conspiracy was made by reading Socialist Organiser's 'Where We Stand' column, printed every week in the paper! This revealed that we stand for direct democracy, national liberation struggles, workers' resistance to Stalinism, and a planned economy.

An unnamed member of Labour's National Executive was quoted as condemning these "outlandish views".

Outlandish? Tum from Today to the Financial Times (16 March), and we read in a column by John Plender, no loony leftist:



TODAY

"Anyone who believes that the British Labour Party's industrial policy... is left, should think again. Most of it would well be implemented by a future Tory government — especially if Mr Michael Heseltine's political star is due to rise again."

"Indeed, those parts of Mr Heseltine's new book entitled 'Where There's a Will' which relate to mak-

ing British industry more competitive could almost have been written by Labour's Trade and Industry spokesman Mr. John Smith."

Labour's right wing has "almost identical aims" to someone too — almost identical to more moderate Tories!

And why is Frank Field going to Eddie Shah's Today when he wants to get a story published?

Identical aims

More on "almost identical aims": who do you think this is? "His... is a politics which is classless ('I am not susceptible to class arguments'), anti-collectivist and oppose to what he calls 'unattractive' concentrations of power — even in the trade unions, which he calls 'as dangerous as any'."

David Steel? David Owen? No, it's Bryan Gould — election campaign coordinator and man in charge of employment policy for the Labour Party! He gave an interview to The Independent on Friday 13 March, arguing that Labour should not be hitched to the trade unions "a force which is declining

in political influence and power."

Worse

Worse and worse from Labour's leaders. The National Executive's home policy committee has deleted Labour's commitment to £27 a week for every full-time student over the age of 16.

A new policy document will talk about an allowance for students, but it will omit any hard figures and say that the allowance will be meanstested according to the parents' income.

Mexico

Recent figures published by the Economist magazine show that since the mid-'70s Mexican capitalists have spirited some \$53 billion out of their country much of it to the United States. That's enough to cover the major part of Mexico's huge foreign debt.

Uneconomic

We've all heard about uneconomic pits. But the Coal Board has some pretty 'uneconomic' top managers, too.

Ronald Davenport, head of the subsidence section in the North Nottinghamshire coalfield, was jailed last week for taking £34,000 in bribes from businessmen. Remember that the money the Coal Board lost through Davenport's corruption will have appeared in the loss figures for the pits they have been closing.

Poverty



While Nigel Lawson gives away millions to the super-rich in the form of tax cuts, millions of pensioners and the unemployed have to eke out an existence well below the poverty line.

This queue is waiting for EEC milk and butter in Birmingham. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

Stabbed in the back by ILEA

Liam Conway in SO 306 called for solidarity and support for teachers in our struggles against Baker's appalling anti-union education bill.

This call for support should be read by the so-called socialists who run ILEA. ILEA is the only directly elected education authority in this country and is firmly controlled by the Labour Party with Frances Morrell at its helm.

But is this Labour authority supporting its workers? No, it is doing all it can to frustrate the struggle for decent wages and conditions by rank and file teachers. When the ILTA

called our one day unofficial strike, ILEA joined the NUT executive in condemning it. It is most ironic that ILEA is so opposed to teachers closing schools for half a day in London this week in the fight against the Tories when classes all over London are sent home every day because ILEA will not recruit enough staff.

Staff

In some ILEA divisions, the staffing situation is so bad that classes from primary schools are sent home daily for weeks on end.

Is the pitiful salary increase and

ludicrous conditions of service imposed by Baker going to help get teachers to work in Inner London? Of course not. Why then is ILEA opposing teachers in London? Not for the sake of London children — more likely it is for the sake of some political compromise with the anti-union leadership of the Labour Party.

Teachers expect no support from Tory education authorities. But when you get stabbed in the back by the only directly elected Labour education authority in the country, it's a disgrace.

Rank and file teacher, Hackney



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Back Black Sections

The Black Section National Executive discussed the Labour Party Young Socialist election issue at our meeting on February 1 and instructed me to write to Socialist Organiser.

You will know that we have decided to run a candidate for the second consecutive year. He has the support of black people in grassroots campaigns, Labour Left Liaison and the left which stands for the struggle against racism, the fight against the oppression of women, lesbians and gay men and those committed to defeating imperialism in the Third World and Ireland — policies which the Militant Tendency do not pursue. His indisputably socialist platform is clearly set out in the interview he gave to Labour Briefing. Black papers like the Caribbean Times and the West Indian News have also carried prominent editorial material projecting his stand.

Left

When Kingsley Abrams ran last year he achieved our objective of uniting most of the left behind his candidature and picking up one of the highest non-Militant votes in recent times. You will recall we were nevertheless forced to publicly criticise Socialist Organiser for running a candidate against Kingsley despite the fact that you knew your comrade had no prospect of winning and, in the event, could only manage a derisory number of votes. What SO's intervention proved was that a group like yours, which claims to support us, can act as a spoiler thus playing into the hands of Militant and the reactionary politics which currently prevent the left from building a mass-based and truly "militant" Labour Young Socialists movement. All this at a time when working class youth are crying out to step up the struggle against capitalism and the way the Tories have used it to destroy their lives.

Black youth have proved themselves the most militant section of the class in this country and in

racist South Africa. For this reason we believe our candidate, standing on a solidly socialist platform, has a special contribution to make. This year it is even more urgent that the Black Section undertakes this task given the way the LPYS's current NEC representative Linda Douglas has used the post to attempt to smash the rank and file demand for black political self-organisation by joining the right-wing's discredited "Black and Asian Advisory Committee."

Differences

If SO genuinely believed there were irreconcilable ideological differences between us then your comrades on our youth committee should have stood for nomination and thereby give members the opportunity to choose between the politics of two candidates. This they refused to do. Having failed to put up at that stage, it would be deeply cynical of you to do so now. Such an act would be viewed as a slap in the face for black youth and other socialists in the movement who yearn to break free from the stranglehold grip of the

bureaucrat enemies of youth in struggle.

We want unity on the left because, being among those who suffer the most oppression, we stand to make the greatest gains from it. That is why we are calling on SO not to repeat the error you made last year by fielding a candidate against us in the LPYS contest.

We should be discussing joint work in the many areas where this can be fruitful, not an all-out war. Our door is open. We have shown with this letter a willingness to communicate with you in a comradely fashion. What is needed now is a similar demonstration of good faith from SO.

Join

Join the Black Section in our campaign to transform the LPYS into a weapon of the working class capable of striking a telling blow against the capitalists and imperialists.

Yours in socialism,
NARENDRA MAKANJI,
Secretary, Labour Party
Black Section

Solidarity in Basingstoke

Basingstoke YS started as a result of last year's anti-apartheid demonstration. There were a lot of young people on the coach who we talked to about the lack of facilities for youth in Basingstoke.

Eight months later it is a thriving branch, having good political education at our meetings held twice a month. Comrades have been organising around Wapping and the YS march.

We have organised a disco as a joint benefit for the YS and for MAWU, the South African metal workers' union. The bands played for nothing and we got the disco and

PA, as well as the room at cheap rates.

It was a brilliant night — 160 people came and we sent £80 to MAWU. We also had a speaker on the need to build for a Labour victory and on the solidarity we should show to the trade unionists in South Africa. The next step is to make these regular events and build towards a major event in the summer.

It has not only recruited a few more activists but also given a boost to other comrades within the branch. We are now canvassing for local elections.

Comradely
ELAINE PUGH
Basingstoke LPYS

South Africa: the NUM and working class politics

The recent congress of the 360,000-strong National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), South Africa's largest and potentially most powerful union, represented a further step in the development of the politics of the independent trade unions.

The NUM committed itself to the struggle against capitalism in South Africa and stated quite explicitly the link between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for working class rule. This is how the preamble to the adopted conference resolution on political action described the struggle:

"The workers' struggle in the mines cannot be separated from the struggle in the community...apartheid and capitalism are two inseparable evils that must be smashed."

The conference saw a giant banner unfolded bearing the words "Socialism means freedom". By all accounts, the mood of the worker delegates and shaft stewards at the conference was militantly anti-capitalist.

There was much talk from the delegates of "a democratic socialist society controlled by the working class". The model on which this talk of socialism is based is the experience of rank and file worker control in the independent unions, the only real democracy black workers have experienced.

Charter

Probably the most important political development was the increased identification of the NUM with the dominant African National Congress (ANC) tradition of resistance politics, represented today inside the country by the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The conference adopted the Freedom Charter of the ANC which calls for a society in which:

- *The people shall govern.
- *All national groups shall enjoy equal rights.
- *The people shall share in the country's wealth.
- *The land shall be shared among those who work it.
- *All shall be equal before the law.
- *All shall enjoy human rights.
- *There shall be work and security.
- *The doors of learning and culture shall be opened.
- *There shall be houses, security and comfort.
- *There shall be peace and friendship.

Cyril Ramaphosa, the NUM general secretary, described the Charter as "a guiding document in the struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation". And he went on: "the Congress of the People which was held in Klipfontein on June 26, 1955, was representative of all patriotic forces in our country when the Congress adopted a programme of minimum demands which came to be known as the Freedom Charter".

A giant poster of Nelson Mandela, who is the union's honorary president, was also displayed at the rally after the conference.

Winnie Mandela, addressing the conference, said that it was an "illusion" that the miners or the workers' movement as a whole could distance themselves from the 'mass struggle, or the popular people's movement for freedom'.

In addition the union committed itself to fighting for a living wage (an across the board increase of 55%) and for an end to the migrant labour system, for workers' self-defence and

Anne Mack takes a look at some of the implications of the political line recently adopted by South Africa's giant National Union of Mineworkers

an end to the 'induna' system in the mine hostels.

The NUM threatened a day of action against the State of Emergency.

The task of the union in the words of President James Motlatsi, was to encourage mineworkers to 'take control' of every aspect of their lives. All this points to a major confrontation between the NUM and the government and employers in the near future.

The oppressed black workers have a powerful urge for unity. And the methods of working class organisation and struggle — accountability, democracy, mandates, report-backs, rank-and-file control and discipline — have shown themselves to be the most successful means of sustaining the liberation movement as a whole in the face of repression.

Unity in the struggle, even in some cases between working class and non-working class organisations over specific issues is to be welcomed.

Nor should socialists bemoan the adoption by the NUM of the Freedom Charter.

Socialists should be critical of the Freedom Charter — but not because there is anything wrong with a democratic programme. The problem with the Charter is that it is not democratic enough, and it spells out no clear working class demands. Furthermore the strategy that often accompanies the Charter, the two-stage revolution — first democracy, then socialism at some time in the future — is flawed.

The problem and danger is that the unity that is being created at the moment appears to be a long term strategic unity without there actually being agreement on long-term strategic goals.

Part of the cause of this problem lies in the limitations of the initial political line taken by COSATU.

That policy was spelt out by Cyril Ramaphosa:

"Workers' political strength depends upon building strong and militant organisation in the workplace.

"We also have to realise that organised workers are not representative of the working class as a whole but are its most effective weapon...It is important that the politics of the working class eventually becomes the politics of all the oppressed in this country".

Ambiguities

This advanced position also contained ambiguities.

COSATU's founding political and economic statements, though more concrete and detailed than the Freedom Charter which at times they evoke, and containing specific working class rights such as the right to strike which is not contained in the Charter, still maintained a deep ambiguity as to the class nature of post-apartheid society.

This is how Jay Naidoo, general secretary of COSATU, explained the union's policy:

"So change does not just mean only a new government with a different colour skin. It must be a change to a real democracy that benefits the people who produce the wealth of the



Black miners have massive potential power

country — the working class.

"Workers must lead the struggle for freedom. And after liberation they must be the leaders in the making of a new society."

Naidoo is clearly implying socialism here. But his argument can also be compatible with that of some South African Communist Party (SACP) theorists who stress the 'linked' nature of the democratic and socialist tasks in the South African revolution. These same writers do not specify if the 'new society' would be a workers' democracy.

The alternative to the workers' movement specifying the class nature of post-apartheid society is strategic incoherence.

Is it possible to say that the working class should lead the political struggle, and take power through their own organisations and at the same time allow another class to rule economically? The entire history of the international workers' movement suggests that such an option is impossible. Either the workers would be forced to go on and establish their own economic rule, or working class political power will be replaced by reestablished capitalist power.

COSATU and all the independent trade unions have to address this dilemma. A coherent working class strategy must include a struggle for a workers' government and a break with the power of capital as an immediate objective, i.e. as the governmental alternative for the workers' movement to the crisis of apartheid today.

The problem is that the search for clarity on this question on the part of unions like the NUM or MAWU — which has adopted a socialist programme — will inevitably be interpreted as 'divisive' in terms of the strategic goals of the struggle as defined by forces in the popular movement such as the ANC and the UDF. For the ANC/UDF leaderships are clearly not in favour of a struggle for socialism.

ANC leadership, the capitalists came away with the strong impression that the ANC's model for a future South Africa was a 'mixed economy' on the lines of Sweden. Tambo has said nothing to contradict this. Joe Slovo of the SACP has underlined this approach by calling for the support of patriotic businessmen of 'good faith'.

This is clearly a conception of a new society in which the working class would not rule. Further, some of the 'socialists' in the ANC/UDF camp have a model of socialism — Eastern Europe — which the most advanced forces in the unions rightly find repellent.

Advocates of a 'convergence' between the unions and the UDF/ANC as part of a socialist strategy in South Africa are therefore faced with a problem.

The different components of this long-term alliance have very different goals. This points to a second problem with COSATU's basic position as expounded by Ramaphosa. The NUM leader talks at a time when working class politics "eventually become the politics of all the oppressed in this country".

Given the differences that obviously do exist between different forces within the liberation movement, it is difficult to see how Ramaphosa's position does not necessarily entail a struggle of different "class politics" for leadership of the liberation movement.

The question is how best to pursue the struggle for working class leadership.

One of the alternatives to a 'convergence' of the popular movement and the trade unions, is to build a mass workers' party based on the trades unions.

A workers' party would not summon strategic differences into existence. They exist already. What such an organisation could potentially do is provide a specifically political vehicle for ensuring that "the politics of the working class eventually becomes the politics of all the oppressed."

Conscious

Because of its social nature, the working class needs conscious, open political organisation like no other class in history has needed it. The working class cannot grow organically to the position of dominant class as a result of economic development in the sense that the bourgeoisie did in the period preceding the great bourgeois-democratic anti-feudal revolutions.

Nor can the working class come to power semi-spontaneously as a result of the collapse or partial disintegration of the existing state.

The working class can only triumph consciously. This means that the workers can only become "the leading class of the nation" through a process of political, ideological and economic struggle. This struggle will first and foremost have to be directed against the old order; but working class leadership necessarily implies a struggle against other classes who project themselves as "leaders of the nation".

Conversely, it is difficult to see how a capitalist, post-apartheid South Africa could be created without a section of the popular movement in alliance with South African and international capital attempting seriously to defeat and disorganise the workers' movement.

So, the recent political turn by the NUM should not be seen as closing down the option of building a workers' party. Rather it has made that task more urgent.

Strategy

This sums up Mandela's strategy: a broad, multi-class alliance against apartheid, with the working class as a stage army rather than the leading class, and a model of post-apartheid South Africa which is explicitly capitalist.

Oliver Tambo has reiterated on several occasions recently that this is still the basic strategy of the ANC.

According to Anthony Sampson after the famous meeting in Lusaka between 'liberal' capitalists and the

Labour after

Labour's right-wing is trying to use our bad showing in the opinion polls and at by-elections for their own purposes.

They say Labour needs unity on their terms, and Labour needs to drop or play down any radical or controversial policies.

But the facts do not bear out their arguments.

Labour's poor showing is not due to left-wing candidates or left-wing campaigning. Labour does a lot less left-wing campaigning now than it used to, yet that has not helped matters. Labour did badly in Greenwich with a left-wing candidate; and just afterwards we did equally badly in the West Midlands Euro by-election with a right-wing candidate.

On the whole left-wing candidates do no better and no worse than right-wing candidates. What really makes a difference is how bold and confident and relevant the whole party is.

Left-wing policies shunned and badmouthed by Labour's leaders lose votes. Left-wing policies which offer real answers to the problems facing the working class, campaigned for properly, win votes.

Labour's poor showing is not due to the working class disappearing. Class divisions have got sharper, not softer. Traditional industries have declined — but the unemployed, and the workers in the new industries, are no less working-class than those in the traditional industries.

Labour's poor showing is not due to masses of people being convinced by Tory arguments and moving to the right. A recent large-scale survey showed that on redistribution of income, on nuclear weapons, on military spending, on the welfare state and nationalisations, and on abortion rights, opinion has shifted to the left since 1983.

Labour's poor showing is not due to the left dividing the party. The left has been very much in retreat over the last few years.

Hostile

But as the left has retreated, the right wing has come after us. So Labour still looks divided — and, what's worse, Labour's leaders show themselves to be ashamed of, embarrassed by, and hostile to the Party's policies and its rank-and-file activists.

The Tories and the Alliance have divisions enough. But they ride over them easily because their leaders are open and whole-hearted about promoting the interests of the class they represent.

And when Labour's left was confident and moving forward, in 1980-1, Labour rode high in the opinion polls despite fierce internal battles in the party.

All the evidence is that Labour loses out by being weak, irresolute, and apologetic.

Since 1945-50 the political stock-in-trade of the labour movement has been a promise to complete the work of the Labour government of that period. What has passed for socialism has been state-capitalist nationalisation plus welfare services.

The inadequacies of those politics have now been starkly exposed.

'1945 socialism' has been a decaying force in the working class for many, many years. Cynicism and disillusion about Labour's promises has increased. Repeatedly pundits have interpreted this trend as 'the decline of working-class politics'. In truth it is more a matter of the increasing irrelevance of the avowedly

Martin Thomas takes a look at the prospects facing Labour after the Greenwich by-election defeat, and at the latest moves on the Labour left.

non-class, 'national interest' politics offered to the working class by official Labour leaders.

Two factors have turned the longstanding cynicism and disillusion into a big decline for Labour in recent years.

First, the depth of Britain's economic and social crisis has led working class voters to look for new answers. Vague talk from Labour leaders about 'tried and tested' methods of Keynesian reflation is not enough.

Labour's leaders, too, have lost faith in '1945 socialism' (if they ever had any) and increasingly offer no clear message at all.

Second, the existence of the Alliance as an apparently viable, apparently new, anti-Tory option means that Labour does not automatically get the anti-Tory vote.

Showbiz

Gimmicks, pastel shades, direct mailing, expensive advertising, and other showbiz politics cannot substitute for real political answers to real questions. Labour has to offer answers — and, centrally, answers on the big bread-and-butter questions of jobs, housing, education, health, racism and women's rights.

That requires democratic planning of the economy — to guarantee everyone a useful and properly-paid job — and therefore public ownership and workers' control of the decisive sectors of industry and

finance. The working class has to take over the wealth now monopolised by a small minority, and use it for human need, not for profit. Social provision has to be not only rescued from Tory cuts, but greatly expanded.

Restore

Yet Neil Kinnock will not even undertake to restore Tory cuts. Renationalisation of enterprises sold off by the Tories has been put off to the misty future.

Most of Labour's left has never really fought the right wing on the central economic issues. It has seen greater possibilities of achieving something if it concentrates on issues like nuclear disarmament or lesbian and gay rights, and leaves open the field on economic questions.

But that does not work. As those policies become radical excess baggage, they are generally treated as an embarrassment and finally ditched.

The Greater London Council managed to keep a fair level of support for two reasons. It had a lot of money, because it could draw income in rates from the huge properties of the City and Westminster. And alongside its policies for a variety of special oppressed groups, it was able to make improvements in the basic service it ran for everyone, transport.

Other left-wing councils are running into trouble now because they have no money and they can't do



Kinnock and Deirdre Wood. Photo

The r

anything to improve their basic services, like housing. When council estates are decaying, basic repairs don't get done, and the council does not even campaign for more resources, then radical gestures in other fields have less success.

The more feeble the radical gestures — and most of them are very feeble — the smaller their chance of winning support and overcoming prejudices.

RADICAL policies are best won as part of a convincing comprehensive programme to change the whole society, rather than as 'single issues'.

Unfortunately, much of the organised left has retreated from any radical overall programme. In Tribune of 13 March Nigel Stanley of the Labour Coordinating Committee argued that "there is still no alternative to realignment". 'Realignment' means the rallying of the soft Left to Neil Kinnock after March 1985.

Some 'realigned' soft-leftists have become a bit disillusioned. They thought that by rallying to Kinnock they could pull him leftwards. But Stanley says that "those who saw Neil Kinnock's election as a chance to construct a kitchen cabinet of right-on Lefties" were always wrong. The point of 'realignment' was simply to increase Labour unity — apparently by silencing the Left.

"Although it is possible to disagree with individual decisions taken by the leadership, a clear alternative strategy has not been established... I suspect this is because there isn't really one available".

"A good example of this new concept of unity", for Nigel Stanley, "is provided by the new defence campaign" — Which had buried Labour's commitment to nuclear disarmament in a mass of flag-waving, support for NATO, and pledges to increase military spending!

Stanley is arguing against an alter-

Labour Coordinating Committee

Singing two songs

Dave Barter reports on the Labour Coordinating Committee's 'Spring Offensive'.

"I'll tell you what matters at the General Election. What matters is that we are all singing from the same song-sheet." Richard Caborn MP was speaking at the first rally in the series that the LCC call their 'Spring Offensive'.

The LCC's chair, Paul Thompson, took up the tune. "We should all be singing from the same song-sheet, but we have got to know which song

to sing off the sheet." Paul's point seemed to be that we should emphasise the best policies in Labour's manifesto to counter the appeal of the Tories' 'popular capitalism'.

"I don't want to question Labour's policies — I'm happy with them. But there are a whole range of policies that we can push to the fore. Like the 'New Rights, New Responsibilities' document — it's a version of popular socialism." Labour's got union laws too!

David Blunkett said: "Every time people in the Labour Party attack each other, it gives concrete basis to the media's distortions." But his tune changed: "Liverpool Labour Party is run by liars and anti-socialist cheats". Oh well, one rule for us and one rule for the NEC.

Our front bench employment spokesperson, John Prescott insisted: "If anyone believes that we will get full employment, even in five years,

they are kidding themselves." And the promise of a million jobs in two years? "How the hell did we arrive at one million jobs? Someone said about two years and it sounded about right — we never start to think how we are going to achieve our targets."

But John's been doing some thinking. The key word in Labour's jobs programme seems to be 'partnership'. "That partnership means problems... Union problems... Tensions in the movement," he told us darkly.

He related a tale of some workers who got uppity when there was expansion. I think some of us got the message.

So that is what is so good about the 'New Rights, New Responsibilities' document, and that is why Blunkett is singing two songs at once. This 'partnership' means that job creation involves union bashing. Expansion involves keeping the workers down. Now that is a familiar tune.

Greenwich

The view of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy



Andrew Wiard, Report

Retreat to 'realignment'

alternative view on the soft Left, represented by an article by Ken Livingstone in Tribune three weeks earlier.

Livingstone wants to reconstruct a soft Left independent of Kinnock. His formula is an alliance between left MPs, the Labour Coordinating Committee, and Labour Left Liason (a committee including the Women's Action Committee, Black Section, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Socialist Action, Labour Briefing, and Socialist Organiser); it is not said in his article, but he wants Labour Left Liason purged of its more left-wing elements.

According to Nigel Stanley, when LLL was first set up "we were assured that the troublesome Trotskyists of Briefing and Socialist Organiser would not be involved this time, leaving only the cuddly side of the old man's thought", and "some influential individuals associated with the realigned left were impressed".

Sketches

Livingstone sketches out a platform for his left alliance. It does not include withdrawal from NATO — identified by Nigel Stanley as one of the most objectionable policies of Labour Left Liason. It does include "an end to all witch-hunts", the other LLL plank most disliked by Stanley: but how firm will Livingstone be about that?

Nigel Stanley reckons that "part of realignment is putting gender and race centre stage as well as class";

Livingstone agrees, but defines the reorientation as a redefinition of class politics rather than a turn away from it. In practice both have a very limited programme: constitutional reform within the Labour Party for women and blacks, and laws against discrimination.

What will they do about capitalism? Livingstone wants "to build on the job-creation policies of Labour councils" and "to toughen policy towards control of the financial sector"; Stanley finds such ideas "hard to disagree with", but not detailed enough. All strands of the

soft Left would do no more than tinker with capitalism: they would leave the ruling class and its ruthless profit-drive still dominating society, with all the class, sexual, and racial inequality that it brings.

The Left needs to regroup, and organise for a socialist voice within Labour's election campaign: but to do that, the Left needs to have socialist answers as clear-cut and decisive as the Tories' capitalist answers. As Arthur Scargill has put it: we need to organise and work for a government as loyal to our class as the Tories are to their class.

The result of the Greenwich by-election demonstrates what should have been obvious for a long time. Wining the next General Election requires both Party unity and a programme that would make Labour a credible alternative to Thatcher. The present parliamentary leadership has failed to provide these requirements.

Its retreat from reforming, let alone socialist, policies has made Labour's programme almost indistinguishable from that of the Alliance. Instead of seeking to close Labour's ranks in the face of the very real threat of another five years of Thatcher, the leadership is dividing the Party by its continuous attacks on the Left.

Pathetic

Its pathetic attempts to distance itself from the Party's left wing has not produced electoral benefits but merely an image of a divided party.

Much has been said about the vicious press campaign against Deirdre Wood, Labour's candidate in Greenwich. On Polling Day, Vincent Hanna (Newsnight) let the cat out of the bag when he said "...there was a period of three or four weeks when there was a lot of jockeying for position, and many interesting things were said about Deirdre Wood by prominent people in the Labour Party to political journalists, as part of the jockeying to get various candidates considered.

"And I think a lot of smears about Deirdre were well-placed in Fleet Street long before she was actually selected...So it is not completely the press's fault, though there is nobody I think, among the regular by-election commentators...who would condone some of the disgusting things that were said in some of the newspapers."

Whoever furnished Fleet Street with damaging information about Deirdre Wood, this would not have happened had the leadership not condoned public attacks on Party members who hold left wing views. Marginalising the Left is hardly conducive to Party unity, but it does damage Labour's prospects.

The leadership's decision to reopen the issue of reselection must be seen in this context. It is a decision which will again divide the Party, and is also in defiance of the 1986 Conference decision on Resolution 39 (carried by 3,549,000 votes to 2,603,000) which reads:

"Conference recognises that the issue of reselection is both complex and divisive, and that to reopen the argument over new proposals would seriously damage Party unity and divert the Party's energies from the overriding priority of working for a Labour victory. Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Committee to refrain from bringing up such proposals before the

next General Election".

Yet only 7 weeks later we read in the minutes of the NEC (26.11.86) that:

"Consideration was given to the draft consultation paper relating to widening the franchise for the selection and reselection of MPs.

"During a lengthy discussion it was reported that the closing date for the receipt of views from parties and affiliated organisations had been amended to 31 July 1987.

Dennis Skinner then moved, seconded by Joan Maynard, 'That the consultation not take place until after the General Election'.

"An amendment was then moved by Neil Kinnock, seconded by John Evans, 'That we proceed with the consultation and await the responses from affiliated organisations and Constituency Parties before further action, which will not in any event be before the next General Election.'

"The amendment moved by Neil Kinnock, seconded by John Evans, was then carried by 16 votes to 12, voting being as follows:

"FOR: Ambler, Boothroyd, Tony Clarke, Colling, Dunwoody, Evans, Hattersley, Hough, Kinnock, McCluskie, O'Brien, Rogers, Sawyer, Short, Turnock.

"AGAINST: Benn, Blunkett, Eric Clarke, Dalyell, Douglas, Jeuda, Maynard, Meacher, Richardson, Skinner, Tierney, Wise."

In the aftermath of Greenwich, Neil Kinnock has appealed to the Party not to indulge in recriminations — an appeal to which we hope all will equally respond. He is also reported as saying:

"I have no time, and this Party has no time, for those who would rather win an argument with friends than win an election against enemies."

Pity

It is a pity that he did not remember this when he induced the NEC, in this pre-election period to reopen the internal Party argument about reselection.

The consultative document has now gone to secretaries of CLPs and affiliated organisations. It reopens "the argument over new proposals". Ten proposals are made in the document. The NEC decision to initiate this consultation is in breach of the Conference decision, and a blow to Party unity.

But why is the NEC so determined to ditch the present system that it is prepared to damage Labour's electoral chances and to ignore the Party's clearly expressed feelings on this issue? The answer is that under the present system, the body that makes the decision on whether or not to reselect is also the body that monitors the political performance of the MP on a monthly basis. This alone allows accountability to take place.

Without the pressure that the present form of reselection makes possible, a Labour government will be free — just as it was before 1979 — to treat the views of the unions and constituency parties with contempt.

From CLPD bulletin

For the Left there is still no alternative to realignment

our putting people

Part of realignment is putting gender and race centre stage as well as class

Woman in a 'man's job'

IN A NEW pamphlet published by Socialist Organiser, Jean Lane describes her experiences as "a woman in a 'man's job'." For five months Jean worked on a demolition site, where all her workmates were men.

The men found her presence difficult to get used to. Some found it threatening. One worker used prolonged verbal sexual harassment in an effort to crush her spirit.

Jean describes both her personal feelings and the ways she found to fight back.

The pamphlet shows how sexist attitudes run very deep down into the working class — how often women workers have to deal not only with the bosses, but also with male workers.

This sexism can take many forms. One of Jean's co-workers, for example, "even knew all about sexism and would explain to me patiently despite the fact that twice a day I would have to tell him "fuck off" for telling the others not to swear in front of a "lady". Others would just go on

about their "bits of stuff" — until they were challenged. "...when he was talking about her again, he stumbled over what to call her... He said, "Well, what should I call her?" I asked what her name was. Mary, he said. "Well, that's as good a name to use as any."

But one worker, Alan, began to subject her to a daily battery of sexual harassment — verbal, but no less humiliating and awful for that. "If he had ever put his words into action he would have been a rapist. But sexual harassment is not just about bruises and tears. Verbal harassment is just as difficult to deal with."

Eventually, Alan's treatment of her made Jean physically ill — unable to sleep, a nervous wreck. Once she had faced up to this and started to talk about it, she managed to deal with Alan.

In the end, another worker was convinced that she was being sexually harassed, and he and some others "had taken him outside and threatened him with a beating up if he didn't pack it in."

Jean comments: "It might not have been a very orderly way of dealing with the problem and it might not have been for the best of motives... but it was heaven for me."

The pamphlet shows very clearly what sexual harassment means in practice, and points to some answers. The unions should take up issues helping prevent harassment, and deal with it when it occurs.

"Women in a 'man's job'" is an interesting account of one woman's experiences. It deserves to be widely read; and it could help contribute towards changing the kinds of conditions that it describes so graphically.



Woman in a "man's job"

EXPERIENCES OF A WOMAN BUILDING WORKER

'Woman in a 'man's job' is available for 50p plus 18p post from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Tuesday 24 March, 7.30 p.m. Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign rally. Westminster Central Hall, Storey's Gate SW1.

Debate between Socialist Organiser and Socialist Worker: The Labour Party and the General Election. Thames Poly SU. Wednesday 23 March, 2.30.

Socialist Health Association

conference. Saturday 21 March, 10.30am, Camden Town Hall, Euston Road. NW1.

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.

Sixth International Book Fair, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, Kings Cross, 26-29 March. Radical, black and Third World books (Also Manchester 18-21 March, Bradford 1-5 April. Including films; exhibitions; concerts.

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.



Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

Why ferry travel is risky

The disaster of the Herald of Free Enterprise was neither unexpected nor unavoidable. Several factors — some design, some practice but all to do with "free enterprise" and competition — conspired to consign some 140 people to a watery grave.

The scene was set when the Herald was designed for maximum speed, minimum turnaround time in port, maximum vehicle capacity and maximum attractiveness to passengers. Optional safety features, including warning systems were left out.

Stability was the key to the tragedy. For a ship this depends on the relation between two points — the centre of gravity (COG) and the centre of buoyancy (COB).

The COG is where the ship's weight seems to be concentrated. It "tries" to be as low as possible. The COB is where the upthrust of the water seems to act. If the COG is not below the COB, the ship will capsize.

Now you might think the safest thing would be to make the COG as low as possible by putting lots of heavy things low down. Such a ship would be impossible to capsize but would also be prone to pitch about a lot. The top of the ship, being relatively light, would be more easily affected by the waves. This would have many passengers reaching (retching?) for the paper bags.

Townsend Thoresen opted for greater comfort and a COG nearer to the COB. Loading the vehicle decks would raise the COG nearer still to the COB.

The next problem — ballast tanks at the bows were loaded to lower the entrance to the vehicle deck for ease of access. Ordinary ships spend hours adjusting ballast so they are evenly laden before sailing. Ferries cannot afford this valuable time and usually adjust ballast after sailing. Thus the Herald left with its bows lowered

...and with the bow doors open, there being no automatic warnings of this.

As the ferry turned sharply to port out of the harbour, it listed to starboard. This seems to have submerged part of the entrance, allowing water in. As it straightened up again it would have listed to port. This water would have surged across the deck without hindrance, making the list greater and allowing more water in. Finally, the unsecured vehicles would have slid across and the list became a capsizing.

No-one in the ferry business can say the Herald disaster was unexpected. Marine consultant Dag Pike wrote some 18 months ago in *New Scientist* of various problems to do with ferries. These included danger of collisions (the Channel is the busiest waterway in the world), the difficulty of evacuating hundreds of frightened passengers from high-sided ships in the prescribed 30 minutes, slipshod attitudes to safety and the question of stability of high-sided ferries, such as the Herald. Pike wrote of their proneness to capsize, particularly if they shipped water. Already European Gateway had capsized following a collision. In 1985 the International Marine Organisation was supposed to be looking at the safety of ro-ro ferries (roll-on, roll-off) but have still not reported. As Pike said, "the authorities seem to have their heads in the sand. It may take a disaster to effect any major change in that attitude."

Solutions to the dangers are not hard to find. For the Herald, warning lights for ballast distribution and open doors could have saved 140 lives. A vehicle deck in compartments or movable bulkheads might have stopped water sloshing around. Vehicle decks below the water-line, lower passenger decks for easier evacuation, automatic ballast adjustments and other changes that are possible.



On 25 August 1984 the ferry Olav Britannia collided with the Mont Louis, loaded with uranium hexafluoride. The Mont Louis sank, the ferry was barely dented and a few passengers were treated for shock. But suppose the accident had happened the other way?

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Women's sexuality

Belinda Weaver reviews 'She's Gotta Have It'.

Who defines a woman's sexuality — the woman herself or the person/s she is involved with? That question is bothering Nola, in the film 'She's Gotta Have It'. The film is set in Brooklyn, and has an all black cast, including the film's director Spike Lee, who shot the film in twelve days on a shoestring budget.

Nola is attractive, and is involved with three different men. She also has a lesbian admirer, Opal, whose advances she rejects. Nola is happy with her situation but the others aren't. Opal keeps trying to win her over, and all three men want Nola to choose between them. Each wants her for himself alone. Each man bad-mouths the others to Nola, while stressing his own qualities. And each, to some extent, implies that there's something wrong with Nola that she should want three men — it's just not normal!

The pressure begins to wear Nola down, and she begins to wonder if she's normal or not. She seeks advice, sees a therapist, tries to please each man in turn, then tries to choose between them.

In the end, she chooses the only sensible thing — to please herself, to define herself, and not let others do it for her.

This may sound like a feminist fable, but heavy it isn't. If anything, it's too light, too flippant. The film seems like a game, so you don't really care what happens. When Nola speaks at the start of the film about why she is allowing this investigation into her affairs, she's grinning as if it's all a joke.

The film also seems slightly voyeuristic in this look at a woman's sexuality. There are several sex scenes in the film, which serve to show Nola's different relationships with all three men. But the camera really lingers on Nola, and not on the men. Nola's body gets a much closer camera scrutiny than the men's do. Of course 'She's Gotta Have It' isn't the only film to do this. All too many films use female nudity as titillation. But in a film about a woman's sexuality, it is rather worrying to have the camera treat her as an object rather than a subject.

The lack of funds for the film-making is obvious, but not a drawback. Still photos are used in the beginning to set the scene, and it is

"FRANK, FUNNY... CANDIDLY EROTIC" THE FACE



She's GOTTA Have it

'A Winner'

The Sun

"You Gotta See It!"

NME

"A bonafide Hip Hit"

ELLE

"The new face of American cinema"

TIME OUT

"Funny, pertinent... Deliberately provoking"

DEREK MALCOLM - COSMOPOLITAN

shot mostly in black and white photography. There is one disastrous colour sequence that looks like it belongs in quite another film altogether. It should be speedily edited out.

A few other bits could go too. In a few scenes, characters speak directly to the camera to explain their feelings

about Nola. These are cheap ways of advancing the plot — scenes don't have to be set up, there's no cross-cutting needed. But these scenes are really weak, and slow down what little plot there is. The interaction Nola has with other characters tells us much more than their self-conscious 'witness' scenes.

The film's basic problem is a weak plot that isn't really developed or taken seriously. Lee has proved you can make films on the cheap, and that a film with an all black cast made on the cheap can be a runaway box office hit. But it's not enough, if he's had to sell sex to prove it.

Viraj Mendis sanctuary attacked

*Last week 6 men attacked the church in Manchester where Viraj Mendis, threatened with deportation to Sri Lanka has been taking refuge.

The attackers' aim was to snatch Viraj. A supporter of the Viraj Mendis Campaign was stabbed in the back of the head and is now hospitalised.

The apparent cause of this racist attack is the appointment of Mendis by Manchester City Council, who are supporting his campaign, to the £10,000 post of immigration and nationality officer for the council. Mendis's role would include helping others facing deportation to set up campaigns.

The six attackers were detained and then quickly released, 'pending further enquiries'.

This attack was followed by another vicious attack on a woman

RACE AND CLASS

leaving the church. Three men wearing balaclavas burst into the church, painted a swastika on an internal door and then slashed a swastika on the back of the woman's wrist. She has been taken into hospital suffering from shock.

*Meanwhile, a third juvenile defendant has been acquitted at the

Old Bailey Broad Water Farm trial.

The boy, aged 16, has a mental age of 7. He was held in a cell for four hours before his interview and was not allowed access to a solicitor or his mother. A teacher who sat in on the interview was told that the juvenile's mother had refused to attend the interview, although the police had not spoken to her when the interview began.

At first the boy had denied taking part in PC Blakelock's killing, but about midnight on the day of his arrest he told an officer who was about to lock him up for the night that he 'cut' Blakelock.

The judge, Justice Hodgson, decided that this 'confession' evidence obtained during the interview was legally inadmissible.

So far three juveniles have been cleared of murder charges, although

one still faces a riot and affray charge. This leaves three men in the dock — Winston Silcott (27), Engin Raghup (20) and Mark Braithwaite, who all deny the charges arising from disturbances occurring in October 1985 in Tottenham.

*The Home Office is planning to turn a disused car ferry into an immigration detention centre for refugees. The horrific plan involves the buying of a 23 year old roll-on, roll-off ferry which is presently moored at Weymouth. If implemented, it would be another slap in the face to the already badly treated refugees.

on the **Box** Women starting to feel strong

By Lilian Thomson

'She'll be wearing pink pyjamas' was the rather odd and putting title of last Thursday night's Channel 4 film. (I didn't wear them till right at the end!) But the film itself was good, so I hope you watched it.

It was a fictional account of the first women only Outward Bound course in Britain, and the women who signed up for it. Outward Bound is a physical survival course, and the mere thought of it gives me the tremors. Even watching the women going through their traditional paces made me yearn for a bath and a comfy bed.

The women underwent the kind of physical misery usually reserved for army recruits who don't get their choice in the matter once they've signed up — shinning up ropes, lying in icy water, climbing steep rocky slopes and hiking and carrying gear in all weathers. A hell of a lot for masochists, one might think.

A motley crew signed up for it: housewives of different ages, a mistress, a bossy businesswoman, a doctor. I forget what Julie Walters who played Fran, did, but she was the central character. Tough, funny and outspoken, she initially alienated some of the women on the course.

Discovery

But the course forced them to face up to themselves, so it became less a hike than a voyage of discovery. Each woman found her own reserves to go beyond her ordinary endurance. The course not only helped each face up to her own strengths and look again at the choices she'd made.

Men got discussed a lot. Fran first seemed the most interested in men. Only later did we learn that she had been celibate for three years to prevent any more hurt from a previous relationship with Tom, a man who had cheated on her. (The film did cheat and hint at a future relationship with Tom, a man who had cheated on her. Fran, an organiser of the course — he met her over her earring).

But self-image rather than men at the root of most of the women's problems. None feels strong enough in the world to take her life and men for what she wants. The course gave the sense of achievement it brings and the discussions with, and support of, the other women help all achieve greater confidence.

It may all sound pat — women climb hills, and achieve the confidence to leave hubby — but the true of the film is that it makes it so credible. The film carried you along and convinced.

The women did a fair bit of head-banging and complaining and a few tried to shoo off from the hard bits. The course leader Anne had to do the boring, but tinged with feminist tones. 'Don't do it for me, do it for yourselves'.

It was good to see a film with good, strong roles for women of different ages. It was also good to see women stepping out of normal and looking unglamorous. The film showed well the way women support each other and give each other confidence.

Wednesday 15
March

and Kamenev, returning from
take over the editorship of
da from Shliapnikov and
otov. The new editors declare
will support the Provisional
Government "in so far as it struggles
most reaction or counter-
revolution...Our slogan is pressure
on the Provisional Govern-

Petrograd the Central Commit-
tee of the Bolshevik Party publishes
its first issue against the defamation of
the workers by bourgeois newspapers:
In recent days a whole series of
bourgeois papers...has carried out an
intensive campaign of dishonesty
against the workers' social-
democratic paper Pravda, linking it
to "Germans" or
"vocateurs"..."

The Petrograd committee of the
Bolsheviks decides to create a bureau
of the committee for agitational work
amongst women, and to renew
publication of the magazine Woman
Worker. In Petrograd and Moscow,
Central Bureaux of Trade Unions are
established.

The Moscow Soviet publishes the
list for election of delegates to it:
factories with more than 500 workers
(one delegate per 500; a maximum of
10 delegates); factories with bet-
ween 400 and 500 workers (one
delegate); factories with less than 400
workers to link up and send one
delegate; Bolshevik, Menshevik and
Socialist Revolutionary parties (5
delegates each); the Bund (3
delegates); Social-Democrats of
Lithuania and Latvia (one delegate);
trade unions (two delegates for the
first 5,000 members; one delegate for
the next 5,000 members after that).

Thursday 16 March

The Provisional Government
confiscates all land, property, industrial
plants and capital belonging to the
nobles (the dynasty of the Tsars)
and estate property.

Friday 17 March

The Soviet of Workers' and
Soldiers' Deputies of the Narvsky
District (Petrograd), learning of the
Kronstadt factory management's in-
tention of cutting its workforce,
gives permission for the sacking of
the factory management to reinstate
the workers already sacked.

A meeting of the Petrograd Society
of Industrialists and Factory Owners
decides to complain to the Petrograd
Soviet about conflicts and strikes in
factories and to appeal to it to
restore normal working.

Saturday 18 March

The Bolsheviks protest again at the
defamation of Pravda and
demand to open legal proceedings against
the right wing paper Russian Will.

The workers' section of the Petrograd
Soviet discusses the situation in the city's
factories. It is reported that "the number
of conflicts grows every day" and that
factory-managements are ignoring
arbitration tribunals which have been
set up.

The Kiev Soviet of Workers'
and Soldiers' Deputies and Mensheviks
decide on the question of the eight-hour
working day. The Mensheviks advocate
extreme caution, lest precipitate action
be the ground for counter-revolution
and call for extension of the Petrograd
Committee (between the Petrograd Soviet
and Petrograd industrialists) on the
question of the 8-hour working day. The Bolsheviks call
for immediate introduction of the 8-hour
working day, to be achieved through
workers' struggles. The Mensheviks win
the vote, by 195 to 67.

Sunday 19 March

1,000 women demonstrate in
Petrograd in a demonstration called by
the League of Equal Rights for Women,
with the slogans "A place for women in
the Constituent Assembly", "Without
participation of women in the Consti-
tuent Assembly, the Franchise is not
universal".

The Provisional Government appeals to
the workers in the Donets Basin to increase
the productivity of labour. "The
country believes that you will lend
powerful support to your army and



The fight for the eight hour day

facilitate its difficult struggle with the
enemy." In Ivanovo-Voznesensk, the
local Soviet bans propaganda on the
streets and amongst soldiers against the
war, "so that the spirit of the combat-
ants, the defenders of the free mother-
country, is not confused."

"Indiscipline" continues in the army.
On the Western Front soldiers refuse to
take the oath of allegiance until their old
regimental banners bearing the Tsar's
monogram are replaced. On the South-
Western front commanders report a
growing agitation for the conducting of a
purely defensive war, and the breakdown
of soldiers' trust in officers.

Monday 20 March

On the Northern Front soldiers of the
55th Siberian Rifles Regiment demand
dismissal of officers responsible for the
shooting in January 1917 of 37 soldiers
who had refused to follow orders to at-
tack in December 1916.

A meeting of soldiers in Moscow passes
a resolution condemning the dispatch
of soldiers of the revolutionary army to the
front, and demands that the first to be
sent there should be the police. The
meeting also calls for "the Soviet of
Soldiers' Deputies to meet with the Soviet
of Workers' Deputies, as our tasks are the
same." (In Moscow, unlike Petrograd,
the workers and soldiers continued to
send delegates to separate Soviets).

Tuesday 21 March

Under the title "The Basic Programme
of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies at the
Front", a resolution adopted by the ex-
ecutive committees of the 443rd, 434th,
436th, 537th, 538th and 742nd regiments
is published, calling for: mobilisation of
soldiers for the struggle against counter-
revolution; election of a Constituent
Assembly; peace negotiations; control
over military operations by soldiers' com-
mittees; freedom of speech, press and
assembly; 8-hour working day;

The Archangel'sk Soviet of Workers'
and Soldiers' Deputies passes a resolution
opposing a separate peace and calling for
continuation of the war until victory.

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

Similar resolutions, calling for contin-
uation of the war until "the final victory,"
are passed by the Orel and Tashkent
Soviets.

At the Kharkov locomotive factory a
mass meeting of 6,000 workers resolves to
begin working an 8-hour day as of the
next day. The meeting also calls for im-
mediate dispatch to the front of gen-
darmes and police officials.

Wednesday 22
March

The Riga Soviet resolves to introduce
the 8-hour working day in all factories
and workplaces in Riga as of 18 April. (1
May by the Western calendar). The
Nizhny-Novgorod Soviet resolves to in-
troduce the 8-hour working day as of 27
March, with no loss of pay, and overtime
subject to the control of factory com-
mittees in consultation with the employers.
The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies
calls on the Provisional Government to
introduce the 8-hour working day
throughout the country, and appeals to all
Soviets to support this demand.

The military commission of the
Bolshevik Petrograd Committee proposes
that the admission fee to join the
Bolsheviks be fixed at 75 kopeks and
monthly dues at 25 kopeks.

Thursday 23 March

800,000 march in Petrograd in memory
of those who died in the course of the
revolution. The march begins at 9.30 in
the morning and finishes after midnight.
A commemoration march of 50,000 is
held in Kronstadt under the slogans
"Long live the soviets of workers' and
soldiers' deputies!", "Peace to the cot-
tages, war on the palaces!", and "Long
live the social-democratic republic!"

At a press conference Miliukov, foreign
minister of the Provisional Government,
announces the goals of the government in
the war: Constantinople, Armenia and
Galicia.

At a mass meeting in Moscow, soldiers
belonging to the 185th Reserve Regiment
resolve: not to leave for the front until in-
structed to do so by the Moscow Soviet of
Soldiers' Deputies; to stress that Russia
must be defended not only against the
Germans but also against the Russian
bourgeoisie and landlords; to demand
that supporters of the old regime should
be the first to be sent to the front. The
Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies
demands that former police and gen-
darmie officers should be sent to the
front.

The Moscow Soviet of Workers'
Deputies demands that all workers called
up as punishment for participation in

strikes should be immediately recalled
from the army.

Friday 24 March

Riga is brought to a standstill by a pro-
cession in memory of those who died in
the course of the revolution. The pro-
cession finishes with the singing of the
Marseillaise.

The Kiev Soviet of Soldiers' and Of-
ficers' Deputies resolves to print in Ger-
man 500,000 copies of the Petrograd
Soviet's statement "To the Peoples of the
Entire World".

A 4,000-strong mass meeting in
Kronstadt adopts a resolution demanding
immediate transfer of all land into the
people's hands, immediate equality for
women with men, and that the Provi-
sional Government announce the condi-
tions for an end to the war without annex-
ations and confiscations. A mass meeting
of Moscow workers demands workers'
control on the railways. A mass meeting
of the Baku oilfield workers calls for in-
troduction of the 8-hour day, establish-
ment of trade unions, creation of arbitra-
tion tribunals, and translation of Soviet
documents into Armenian and Azerbaid-
jani.

Saturday 25 March

The conference of the Cadets (the
liberal capitalist party) opens in
Petrograd. It condemns the situation of
dual power and calls for full powers to the
Provisional Government. The All-
Russian Congress of Co-operatives (a
peasant organisation) opens in Moscow
and pledges full support to the Provi-
sional Government. The Moscow region
Conference of Soviets opens in Moscow,
with representatives from 108 Soviets,
and calls for peace without annexations
and confiscations and recognition of the
right of all peoples to self-determination.

A mass meeting of Kharkov building
workers resolves to establish a trade union
and introduce the 8-hour working-day as
of 27 March with no loss of pay.

Sunday 26 March

Pravda publishes resolutions of the
Bureau of the Central Committee of the
Bolsheviks "On the Provisional Govern-
ment" and "On War and Peace". The
former defines the government as imperi-
alist and incapable of solving the tasks
posed by the revolution; the Soviets are
the focal point for the revolutionary
forces. The latter resolution stresses the
imperialist nature of the war and calls on
Soviets to demand of the Provisional
Government that it renounces all expan-
sionist goals.

Monday 27 March

The 8-hour working day is introduced
in Nizhny-Novgorod, despite opposition
from the factory owners. In Samara a
joint meeting of the garrison and workers
adopts a resolution that the 8-hour work-
ing day be introduced henceforth with no
loss of pay. A mass meeting of tramway
workers in Vladivostok demands in-
troduction of the 8-hour working day,
one rest-day per week, overtime to be paid
at 1½ times the normal rate, and better
working conditions.

On the Western Front, the commander
of the 51st infantry division informs his
superiors that offensive action is impossi-
ble due to the state of the troops' morale.
The commander of the 112th infantry
division informs his superiors of a
weakening of discipline, a breakdown of
trust between soldiers and officers, and a
collapse of any "offensive spirit" in his
units.

In Bikhov, in line with a decision of the
Committee of Soldiers' and Officers'
Deputies, the commander of the brigade,
the commander of the 711th regiment, the
commander of the 1st battalion, the com-
mander of the 7th company, and the com-
mander of the machine-gunners' regiment
are arrested.

Tuesday 28 March

In Vladikavkaz the Executive Commit-
tee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies ar-
rests the director of the local tramway
company for coarseness towards his
workers and for refusing to introduce an
8-hour working day, thus provoking a
strike and thereby depriving the town of
transport.

In Petrograd soldiers in a company of a
Reserve Battalion adopt a resolution to
give up half a pound of bread out of their
rations each day for the poor, and call on
the rest of the garrison to follow suit. In
Moscow, delegates of the 55th Reserve in-
fantry regiment warn local industrialists
that should they cut production or stage
any lockouts, then soldiers will intervene
to requisition their factories and arrest
them.

Compiled by Stan
Crooke

Black sections meet in confident mood

By Dion D'Silva

Labour Party Black Sections met
last Saturday, 14 March, in Not-
tingham to discuss many issues
ranging from our immediate
tasks to policy matters including
education and immigration.

A big turnout — over 100 — were
all united in condemning the racist at-
tacks made by the media on black
sections.

There was also recognition and a
willingness to fight the powerful op-
position within the Labour Party.
Patricia Hewitt's letter was seen as an
attack on the left as a whole, in-
cluding black sections. Indeed, there
have been reports that action could
be taken against black sections. Some
of the Labour leadership view the
meeting as being unconstitutional.

A speaker from Birmingham ex-
plained that local opposition from
the right-wing Labour leadership had
forced the black section to build city-
wide in the community and made
them stronger for it.

A great deal of emphasis was plac-
ed on the structure of the organisa-
tion. In a movement of this size and
with its aims it should be more flexi-
ble. In the debates priority and voting
rights were given to the delegates,
who were outnumbered by the
number of observers present.

Racist

Black sections confirmed its pre-
sent position of calling for the aboli-
tion of racist immigration controls. It
also called for the dismissal of racist
immigration officers.

A minority of speakers pointed out
that immigration controls are racist
in themselves, not just in implemen-
tation. However concern was ex-
pressed over the possible influx of
over 1,000,000 white South Africans.

There was no real debate about this
issue. It seemed that the delegates
placed their hopes on the state to use
laws to halt the influx of racists
rather than in a strong anti-racist
movement.

Objective

It was clear that the main objective
was seen to be that of representation.
Great play was made of the election
of the black parliamentary candi-
dates and their subsequent account-
ability. When we said that the main
task should be the building of a mass
base in the black working class that
was rejected.

A speaker from the Wheeler's
dispute support group explained how
the workers' struggle was undermined
by their union. She also stated that
black sections had been rather slow
in recognising the importance of the
strike and organising national sup-
port.

The conference was in a determind
and confident mood. Nevertheless
black sections must support the strug-
gles of the community and integrate
them into the labour movement.

This will aid the development of
building a base in the grass-roots that
can tackle racism more effectively. A
greater degree of participation will
lead to a greater degree of representa-
tion.

Safety abandoned for profit in zones

By Nic Brereton

Workers' health and safety are being abandoned to profit in government development zones, according to information leaked to Socialist Organiser.

Instructions never to inspect

workplaces in these areas are given to all factory inspectors, leaving the bosses in these areas free to impose filthy and dangerous conditions.

The system of factory inspection as it stands is completely inadequate in any case. 15 inspectors serve an area from Newcastle to Hull. Many weeks notice is given of impending visits so management have time to cover up

real conditions. Even when dangerous or unhealthy conditions are discovered, a recommendation of action to be taken 'within 12 months' is all that is likely to come of it, and rather than spend a couple of thousand pounds improving conditions, management tend to ignore it.

There are no provisions for letting the workers know the results of the

visit, whatever the risks to health and in some cases life expectancy that are uncovered.

The factory inspectorate is no more than a sticking plaster on the system, designed to cover up a few of the cracks and show that capitalism can care. In reality, profit still comes first, and workers and their conditions a poor second.

NALGO

One-day strike in Islington Council

By Nik Barstow, (Asst. Sec., Islington NALGO, in personal capacity)

Friday the 13th was an unlucky day for Islington Council. Almost all their 23 Neighbourhood Offices were totally closed as NALGO members held a one-day strike to show their support for 30 Housing Advisory workers locked out on Monday 9th.

The Housing Advisors, who provide the council's service to the homeless, were suspended without pay for working to rule in support of a local pay claim, and Islington NALGO has quickly rallied to their support.

More surprisingly, perhaps, NALGO nationally has acted quickly to make industrial action official and to make it clear that the work to rule has official national backing too.

The leaders of Islington's 'left wing' Labour councils are now in direct confrontation with their largest union over trade union rights and not just over the lock-out.

In February the council ripped up an agreement made in December to cut the hours for staff in Residential and Day Care centres to the 37 agreed for manual workers. Council leader Margaret Holdge argued to throw out the agreement because it would cost too much.

To beat back these attacks Islington NALGO is organising protest and planning further industrial action. A mass lobby of the council's rate-making meeting will be held at Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 at 6.30 p.m. on Thursday 19 March to defend trade unionists' rights to organise and negotiate.

A branch-wide strike is being prepared for Friday 27 March, and other council trade unions are being urged to join in industrial action.

All the council's trade unions have agreed to support the Housing Advisory workers and are planning further action.

Despite national strike pay being agreed, it is only £40 a week (it barely pays the rent in inner London), and locked-out NALGO members face real hardship.

Donations, messages of support and invitations for speakers should be sent to: Islington NALGO, 23 Compton Terrace, London N1 (tel: 01-354 7470).

Teachers

ILEA attacks teachers' rights

The Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority has imposed a scheme for moving teachers from school to school and has refused to negotiate with the unions. This will lead to confrontation and industrial action in Inner London schools in the coming months.

Head teachers have been instructed, under threat of disciplinary action, to name "teachers above authorised numbers" (TAANs) from their staff. Over 1300 teachers, mainly in secondary schools, will receive letters informing them they are no longer needed in their schools next September.

This is a very large number — 1 in 4 of state secondary school teachers in Westminster; over 1 in 3 in some schools such as Warwick Park in Peckham, and Stockwell Park in Lambeth. The curriculum in most secondary schools will be severely dislocated if teachers are lost on this scale.

Why has the Labour-controlled ILEA taken such a drastic move? They claim that primary schools are starved of teachers because secondary schools are overstaffed. They intend to save £19 million in one year through the TAAN scheme, and point to the fact that ILEA is being ratecapped.

The scheme will offer those who take part in the "voluntary" phase

By Cheung Siu Ming, Lambeth NUT (Personal capacity)

retraining to teach in primary schools or in a shortage subject, an extra scale if they become supply teachers, and a disturbance allowance of £1000 to move into an existing vacancy. These offers are the same as last year. The unions accepted that individual teachers should be able to opt for voluntary transfer, while opposing the resultant overall loss of jobs in the schools.

What the unions object to is the naming of individuals and the compulsory element. This has previously been fought off, and we even won the London Labour Party to a position against what was then known as "compulsory transfer".

The TAAN scheme brings all this back — plus the power to move teachers any month in the year, not just at the end of the summer term — and involving a much greater number of teachers.

The shortage of primary school teachers is caused by Keith Joseph's cutback on teacher training, low pay and poor conditions, rising numbers in primary schools and the resultant additional stress in primary schools — and the previous schemes to retrain primary teachers to work in



secondary schools!

The previous drop in numbers of school-age children is now going through the secondary sector which has stronger union organisation and have defended job loss and working conditions more successfully. Even after the peak of the past period of industrial action, Inner London secondary school teachers have refused to cover for absences.

The government cuts are only partly to blame — they have made ILEA resort to retraining teachers between the primary and secondary sectors like yo-yos instead of employing more teachers. However, with its refusal to negotiate the ILEA's real intentions are clear — to break the back of union resistance once and for all.

ILEA wants total flexibility in personnel levels and re-organisation of

educational provision, with changes such as the forthcoming 16-19 tertiary colleges and the integrating of special schools into the mainstream.

It claims to have a mandate to introduce equal opportunities policies as a "socialist" education authority. What happens in practice is that the ILEA dictates to its workforce (its new head of personnel is recruited from the Ford Motor Company), stifles real debate on race, sex and class, and refuses to lead a fight against the Tory government.

ILEA, in the name of building "socialism", governs in a similar way to an East European bureaucracy, if less drastically.

The tasks of teachers is not only to fight the Baker Bill, but also the ILEA TAAN proposal. What is at stake in both cases is our right to union organisation and the right to negotiate.

Notts teachers

By Dave Gore (South Notts NUT in personal capacity)

AT LAST, back into action. Teachers in the NUT and NAS/UWT, angry at Baker's Bill to remove their negotiating rights and impose worsened working conditions, breathed a sigh of relief when they were finally told by their leaders that we could come out on strike — together and at the same time.

Last Wednesday saw 3,000

teachers march in Nottingham to demonstrate our anger at "being treated like slaves". The rally was full of fine words and fighting talk. Sadly, however, it was empty rhetoric.

It soon became obvious that the leaders of both unions had no clear strategy at all for fighting Baker.

It was a predictable let-down. The mood was pitifully summed up by the final speaker, Burt Crapper, who praised the nice weather and the nice sense of unity. It all sounded more like a Teddy Bear's picnic than a joint union action.

Members were not satisfied. It must be made clear that joint union action can be achieved. If the leadership is devoid of ideas, then it is up to rank and file members themselves to take initiative and carry through the fightback against both the Baker Bill and the ACAS agreement.

WHAT MUST WE DO?

•The NUT executive is utterly compromised by the ACAS deal. We must call on them to repudiate it — it should now be dead and buried and a new start made.

•We must make united action real and not token, with joint NAS/UWT marches and rallies, joint action in schools, etc. Joint action committees should be set up to force our executives to fight. This must involve an immediate and escalating level of strike action.

•Action must begin with a policy of non-cooperation with all aspects of

the Baker Act.

This means.....

**NO MORE COVER
NO MORE ADDITIONAL HOURS
NO TO WORKING AN EXTRA 5 DAYS**

These actions may be breaking the law. The union has already lost one court case. However we must face up honestly to the task ahead. Either we accept Baker and the disastrous effect this will have on us all, or we prepare to fight for something better — something we could have won last May if our union leaders had not been sidetracked by the ACAS talks. The choice is ours.

Labour Party

South West Conference

By Ian Hollingsworth

Private nursing homes recruiting off the streets and kitting out staff in different coloured uniforms to make believe there were grades of training — this was one of the horror stories greeting delegates at the South West Regional Labour Party Conference in Exeter last weekend, 14 March.

But apart from odd incidents like this there was little to stir the blood. Delegates obviously felt the conference format was due for a change.

Against the wishes of the Regional Executive, conference will now take

place over two days, with time set aside for policy workshops to encourage more participation from ordinary members.

"I'm now a socialist. I wasn't in 1971, but now I've got socialist responsibilities." So spoke Bob Brookes, the welder trying to prove faulty work during the construction of Hinkley Point Nuclear Power Station in 1971.

"I've presented myself to the CEBG with an admission of guilt, and they are spending all their time trying to prove me innocent!"

Bob appealed to us all to step up pressure on the CEBG in anticipation of personal attacks to destroy his credibility. "I know I was wrong, but deal with me later. Support my fight now so that others can come with their stories too."

Students Occupy in Newcastle

By Duncan Chapple and Nic Brereton
Newcastle College of Arts and Technology Students' Union have been occupying their union offices since last Friday following a General Meeting decision to reaffiliate to the National Union of Students.

The union, the largest not affiliated, has been run by an anti-NUS executive since 1983, and the students were forced to occupy to enforce their decision, which has been followed up by the sacking of the old executive and a successful campaign to win recognition from the college

principal for the re-vamped union.

An emergency governors' meeting on Friday, lobbied by 300 students, agreed to fresh executive elections. If, as looks certain, the new executive is pro-NUS, affiliation will go ahead immediately following the elections.

Both the teaching and support staff unions fully support the students' actions.

and Sunderland

Students at Sunderland Polytechnic this week took direct action against their administration and the local council in response to a threatened cut in funding.

The Polytechnic is to lose 86 jobs and the Education Faculty Library is to close.

After a General Meeting last week, 400 students went into indefinite oc-

cupation of the college's administration block, and of two of the three telephone exchanges in the college.

The occupation continues — demanding that the college refuse to pass on the cuts and keeps the Library open.

Supporters of Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) were present at the occupation's first meeting and argued for taking the occupation out to as many students as possible and for ensuring that rank and file students — not just the Executive — were involved in the organisation of the occupation.

Later in the week a group of students from the occupation went to the offices of the Local Authority, having been told that the Labour Council were to agree to implement the cuts. Having occupied the Council Chamber, the students used bicycle locks to trap themselves in the chamber.

When the police arrived they had to use oxy-acetylene torches to open up the Chamber.

Get the Tories' backs against the wall!

By Liz Williams

In Wallasey we have a Tory MP

who is also a Minister — Lynda Chalker. In 1979, when she was a junior minister, it was reported,

“Lynda Chalker has promised to review the death grant — with possible increases for certain groups,”

On 6 April this year the Tories will be cutting the death grant from £30 to nothing as well as cutting maternity benefit and ending the measly £25 maternity grant.

Wallasey Labour Party and the Women's Section decided to call on Chalker during her surgery to remind her of her promise. About 50 of us assembled on Saturday with placards and banners outside the local Tory Party headquarters, Churchill House, to draw attention to these vicious cuts.

We had anticipated that the event would be quite low-key. It turned out to be just the opposite.

Police

The police would not let us stand outside the Tories' headquarters because we would block the pavement — but we were allowed to stand across the road and block the other pavement! We weren't allowed in to see or local MP although it is supposed to be a public surgery.

When we moved over the road and decided to stand in the Tories' driveway, the lone police inspector felt he couldn't deal with this violent overthrow of the capitalist system so he sent for reinforcements. Two meat wagons and another 15 officers arrived.

We were then physically pushed back across the road with cries from the police of “backs against the wall”. Many passers-by were shocked and outraged at the heavy-handed police response to the protest.

As far as Wallasey Labour Party is concerned we've just started the campaign to ensure that it's the Tories' backs against the wall!

This is Tory democracy!

By Alan Johnson

Five unelected Tory lawlords have banned 47 elected Liverpool Labour councillors from office for five years, surcharged them and imposed court costs of around half a million pounds.

Eric Heffer, Labour MP for Liverpool Walton, said: “That's the sort of people we are dealing with. It's the most class conscious government we have known for years. Now people are surcharged because they have pursued policies in favour of their class.”

The city now has a caretaker administration run by the Alliance until fresh elections on 7 May.

True to form, the Liberals got down to the really important tasks. They brought back the Lord Mayor. She is Lady Doreen Jones, who just happens to be the wife of Sir Trevor Jones, the Liberal leader.

The City Council's unions have pledged themselves to a policy of non-cooperation with the Alliance if they try to change Labour's policies before May.

G&M leader Ian Lowes insisted: “We have to say to Trevor Jones ‘you are in office by default for six weeks. We do not expect you to introduce your policies which the people of Liverpool have not voted for’. There will be full resistance from all the authority trade unions. If necessary it would mean a strike.”

Liverpool NALGO voted 3 to 1 in favour of a non-cooperation policy.

There must be a massive campaign up to 7 May to keep Liverpool Labour. The return of a Liberal/Tory administration — bringing privatisation and the run down of services — would be a disaster for working people in the city.

The whole labour movement also must be roused to show solidarity with the disqualified Liverpool councillors. Money is needed. Only 30 councillors qualified for legal aid, and even that won't cover all their costs. Their personal property stands

Socialist Organiser will miss a week next week. No.308 will be dated 2 April, not 26 March. This is to enable the paper's staff to work on our magazine 'Workers' Liberty', which will appear early in April.

Liverpool councillors banned and surcharged



John Smith, IFL.

to be seized.

The Labour Party nationally should follow the lead of the North West Regional Labour Party conference which this weekend voted to urge a future Labour government to remove the five year ban and reimburse the councillors' surcharges.

Kinnock's role has been a disgrace over the four years. Now he calls for a ‘caring’ Alliance administration for the city, as if the Liberals ever cared in the past.

The Liverpool councillors will not be served by bluff and bluster about what went wrong in Liverpool. The Militant newspaper is content to put on rose-tinted glasses and conclude that: “the attacks, the expulsions, the suspensions of the District Labour Party have reinforced support for the councillors and for the ideas of Marxism.”

In fact there has been, according to these ‘Marxists’ “an overwhelming shift to the left in the labour movement.” One can only say to Militant's writer: “And how do you feel about the tooth fairy?”

The reality is that the last weeks of the Labour council saw almost every trade union in the city in dispute with the council. The very same Ian Lowes

led his members into a protest occupation of the Town Hall in February.

NALGO housing benefit workers and NALGO social workers were in dispute and being denounced by the council for bringing distress to the claimants. The NUT held a three-day strike after the council had docked pay of teachers refusing to cover for absent colleagues.

The 1987 budget settlement was based on capitalisation, a windfall from the abolished County Council and creative accountancy.

There needs to be a sober balance sheet drawn up of the experience of the Liverpool struggle. Militant and their supporters cannot provide this. They are rewriting history, trying to dress up NALGO as the scapegoat for the defeat.

The tragic break-up of the joint shop stewards committee in 1985, for example, is now put down to “NALGO's sabotage”, and its “decision to pull out”. And here was me thinking that all those Militant supporters riding around the city in taxis handing out 30,000 redundancy notices had something to do with it!

In 1984 30,000 marched to the Town Hall in favour of a deficit

Left win at NUS

IN A dramatic election result, Socialist Student supporter Simon Pottinger retained the post of Vice-President Welfare at the National Union of Students conference this week, against the ‘Democratic Left’/‘official’ Labour candidate Jo Gibbons.

In the election for Vice-President Education, DL votes were split between the SDP and Eurocommunist candidates,

and independent black left-winger Pat Young won and Socialist Student (SSIN) candidate Liz Millward came a good second.

In the rest of conference, the DL drift to the right became a stampede. Backed up by the SDP, they pushed through a motion to effectively junk NUS's ‘non-implementation of cuts’ policy.

Full report in next issue.

budget, the miners and the dockers were out, and workers were ready to fight. If the council had confronted the government then it would not have ended this way.

But, after many retreats, the council finally fell because... Tony Byrne got his dates wrong by about a week when calculating to concoct a budget based on the behind-the-scenes deals going on with the international bankers. All the time the District Labour Party was arguing about the redundancy notices, the deal with Phillips and Drew was being tied up in London.

The Liverpool labour movement can settle accounts with such politics in its own time and in its own way.

For now, however, the priority is the return by a massive majority of a Labour council in May.

SOUTH WALES SHOULD RETHINK



AS I commented last week, I was dismayed at the South Wales NUM's decision on Margam and six-day working, and the reaction among rank-and-file members in this area is one of disbelief and amazement.

I would hope that the strength of feeling will be conveyed to the South Wales executive and that they will have a serious rethink.

We're quite aware of their problems, but some of us think that the price that the Coal Board are asking in exchange for 800 jobs is just too much.

Whether the matter will be raised at the special delegate conference that's coming up next week, I don't know, but I hope they have a rethink. If they want Margam, then we're prepared to back them in the fight for Margam, but on the understanding that we're not talking about lengthening the working week but shortening it — not lengthening the shift but shortening it.

Tribunals

Mick McGinty's tribunal case is still going ahead. The Coal Board have submitted virtually all their witnesses — I think they have only one to go, and then it is our turn.

There is no move in my own case. We are still waiting to see what the

Coal Board have decided. Geoff Poulter's tribunal starts on 1 April.

UDM vote

The UDM voted 90% against the Coal Board pay offer. But 90% of what? That seems to be the magic figure that we can't find out. Is it 90% of 1000, 90% of 10,000, or what?

I believe that the reason why they will not release that figure is that they are embarrassed by the number of people who didn't vote. And I want to know where the UDM leadership is going to go now.

We told our members to keep away from that ballot — to let them have their ballot and not in any way to be seen to be interfering or obstructing.

They, on the other hand, the supreme democrats, have taken a decision in their council chamber that they will disrupt the NUM ballot by any means possible short of physical violence. We went yesterday to the High Court for an injunction to restrain them from interfering in our ballot, and it was thrown out of court.

The Budget

They've chucked a bit of corn down hoping that the people will pick it up, give three good cheers, and return them for another five years. I believe the General Election will be in May or June, and this is a blatant attempt to bribe the British electorate.

But that they have put virtually nothing in the pockets of those who are in real need.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.