

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

The power to destroy apartheid



Centre pages

Martin Luther King See page 8

Coal bosses bite off more than they can chew

Miners defy the Tories



South African miners shot

These wounds came from rubber bullets fired at striking miners at Anglo American's Western Deep Levels mine last week. Anglo claims to be a "liberal" employer.

More on the miners' strike page 2.

The 3 to 1 majority in the ballot on industrial action against British Coal's vicious new disciplinary code says clearly what rank and miners feel. They are saying loud and clear: 'Haslam, back off!'

Various unions leaders and the bosses' bought-and-paid-for scab press have said — no, they have gloated! — that the NUM is finished. They have just learned how wrong they are.

Miners are very bitter. We are prepared to stand up and fight British Coal again. We will fight unless Haslam backs down.

The 1984-5 strike was only one battle, though a tremendous one. They won that battle. They haven't won the war. That's what miners have just told Haslam, and Thatcher.

British Coal is in for a bloody nose unless they come down and sit at that table, prepared to talk and prepared to give way. That means withdrawing the code or accepting the NUM's four basic demands:

*The right of members to be represented at disciplinary hearings by union officials of their choice.

*A simple, easily understood procedure that lasts no longer than 14 days.

*A return to the system of jointly agreed 'umpires', with the power to order reinstatement.

*A joint working party with the NUM to rid the new code of all anomalies and iniquities.

The ballot result reflects miners' rejection of the code. British Coal have already begun to backtrack. They have now agreed to have discussions at ACAS on it. They are trying to play down the result of the ballot.



By Paul Whetton, secretary of Bevercotes NUM, writing in a personal capacity.

They are lying when they say they were always willing to talk to the NUM. No they were not!

The result of the ballot is a knock to the plans of both the government and British Coal. Both are still intent to push on with the privatisation of the British coalfield. They dream of a privatised, badly organised, high productivity, 50 super-pit industry. After the ballot, both Haslam and Thatcher will have to do some serious thinking about their tactics.

They have learnt many times that the miners are prepared to stand up and fight. After the strike they thought they had knocked the stuffing out of us. The long list of strikes

Turn to back page

Wednesday 19 August

After a mass meeting, 2,000 strikers ignore threats by Anglo American to close Vaal Reef No. 6 shaft if they do not return to work. Miners pack their bags to go home instead.

7,000 men return to work at Landau colliery following a company threat to close the pit. The NUM backs the return to work in this case.

The "systematic dismissal" of 14,000 striking postal workers — members of the Union POTWA — begins. 5,000 workers in the milling industry — members of the Food and Allied Workers' Union — go on strike over wages.

Rumours spread of a possible strike by railway workers in solidarity with the miners.

Thursday 20 August

Miners at Vaal Reef herded into a football stadium and told to stand in two lines: those that do and those that do not want to work. The miners refuse to give in.

Anglo American close the Vaal Reef shaft and threaten to close another in the Orange Free State.

Friday 21 August

One miner killed and 20 injured when mine security open fire at the Libanan gold mine, South-west of Johannesburg.

22,000 miners opt to go home after 4,000 threatened with the sack at Western Holdings mine in the Orange Free State.

So far 7,000 miners have been sacked and 40,000 threatened with the sack as part of management's attempts to weaken and undermine the strike.

This strategy is having little effect, the strike remains solid.

Anglo American issues dismissal notices to 4,000 coal miners at a pit near Welkom.

Saturday 22 August

Stockmarket analysts estimate that as much as one tonne of gold production a day is being lost as a result of the strike.

The Central Executive Committee of COSATU (the largest black union federation) meets to discuss solidarity action with the miners.

Two strikers killed by strike breakers at Western Areas when they attacked an NUM strike committee meeting.

Workers sacked by Anglo American at Randfontein sing freedom songs in defiance as they leave the pits.

Sunday 23 August

Miners evicted from hostels at Vaal Reef's Saal Plaas and Western Holdings. Security forces attack on miners continue.

Monday 24 August

Three more miners killed. 19,000 miners at Welkom face ultimatum to return to work or face the sack. 14 miners seriously injured by security police shooting in the Orange Free State.

The NUM says that more than 320 strikers have been seriously injured since the strike began and more than 300 arrested.

The total dead stands at at least six.

Anglo negotiators give out ambiguous noises. They admit that the strike is costly and that an "honourable settlement is required". It is estimated that the mining houses have lost some R190 million (about £65 million) since the strike began, including losses which they can't now recoup.

In the postal strike, management brings in 1,600 scabs to try and break the strike.

Support the South African NUM! Send donations to: NUM, St. James House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield S1 2EX. (Make cheques payable to SANUM).

Send messages of support to: NUM, PO Box 2424, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa. Telex 095 9 450 654. Telephone 01027 11 337 6660.

Miners' strike solid

"Leadership, don't come back to us until you have a better offer from the bosses".

Those are the words of a song composed during the current miners' strike in South Africa.

The words reflect the determination and militancy of the miners who are standing firm after 16 days on strike.

According to the miners' union, the NUM, and the Johannesburg Labour Monitoring Group, the strike is holding firm with very few miners returning to work.

The last week has seen an escalation of security force and mine security violence against strikers as the number of miners killed so far rose to six, with over 300 being seriously injured since the strike

Bosses forced to negotiate

began.

The violence has taken many forms. Road blocks have been erected and miners searched and beaten up. Attempts have been made to drive the miners back down the shafts to work at gunpoint. Miners have been teargassed in their hostels; groups of strike-breaking vigilantes have been armed and directed by mine security to attack miners.

However, the violence has not suc-

ceeded in driving significant numbers of miners back to work though the violence could well escalate as the strike continues and passes the point where the mine bosses start to make losses they cannot recoup.

Though the immediate issue of the strike is the 7% difference between the union's 30% wage demand and the highest offer on the table, the dispute is about more than that.

Many rank and file miners see the dispute as a battle against poor health and safety conditions and the institutional racism of the mining industry.

They consider demands like danger pay, 30 days' paid leave and five years' pay as death benefit to be very important.

On Tuesday 25th the NUM went into negotiations with the Chamber

of Mines. The Chamber made concessions on the question of death benefits, danger pay and holidays but still would not budge on wages. Negotiations are to continue.

This willingness to negotiate shows that the mine bosses have been surprised by the scale of support for the NUM's strike call and the way the strike has held together.

However there are dangers in the situation for the NUM.

Last week the NUM failed to pull out the majority of Gold Fields of South Africa's 75,000 workforce.

This means that the country's richest mines have not been hit and the NUM's ability to push the Chamber of Mines into an industry-wide offer has been weakened.

The NUM must at all costs avoid separate negotiations on pay with the different mining houses. This would open up the danger of a split settlement. The miners must stick together.

Any other approach could leave the strikers in the more hardline mining houses in a weaker position if the bulk of miners, at Anglo for instance, make a separate settlement.

The strike is now entering its decisive phase.

If the NUM and COSATU can find ways of quickly generating solidarity action then a major victory can be achieved. There is plenty of pressure on the mine bosses.

A split settlement would confuse and demoralise those still on strike, and open up the possibility of more direct state intervention against isolated pockets of mineworkers' resistance.



Anti-apartheid activists picket the London offices of the South African mining company Gencor in support of the South African miners. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report.

Massive strike wave

Some half a million workers are now engaged in strike action across South Africa. On top of the 320,000 miners other disputes include:

*A nationwide postal strike of 14,000 workers. The battle started over the dismissal of three workers, but demands have broadened to include a living wage and full parity for black workers.

*A strike by 200 chemical workers at Mathey Rusterburg Refiners in Wadeville, East Rand, against company plans to move to the anti-union Bophuthatswana bantustan.

*A national strike in the milling industry involving some 4,000 members of the Food and Allied Workers' Union.

FAWU members are also involved in strikes in the tea-picking, food processing and wine-making sectors.

*100,000 metalworkers are preparing for local level strike action after the union's national living wage strike was declared illegal last month.

*The metal union, NUMSA's, four week old strike at Mercedes Benz, East London, could spread as shop stewards discuss the possibility of solidarity action in support of 188 dismissed strikers.



Ron Todd, Chair of the TUC International Committee, hands over a cheque for £20,000 on behalf of the TGWU to Norman Willis for the TUC's May Day Centenary Fund which will be used for legal assistance and humanitarian relief purposes in Southern Africa. The TUC should campaign now for a labour movement blockade of all South African coal, steel and mineral shipments. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report.

*A series of spontaneous walk-outs over the recognition of the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union.

£More battles are on the cards from the shopworkers' union CCAWUSA.

A whole series of factors have come together to create this strike wave:

*Victories after management climbdowns in recent strikes on the railways and at OK Bazaar chain stores.

*Significant victories in the living wage campaign, including wage rises of up to 100% in some firms in the chemical sector.

*Years of drought, unemployment and poverty in the 'homelands' which has given a particular edge to the militancy of migrant workers.

*A management offensive in some sectors to restore profitability in the midst of recession and to attack war-weary and battered unions. To an extent this is happening in the engineering and car industries.

The current wave of industrial militancy has involved vast numbers of newly organised workers such as miners, railworkers and agricultural labourers. Their determination has surprised even the most optimistic union organisers.

Namibia miners strike

Striking miners in Namibia are being subject to police harassment, victimisation and intimidation.

4,000 mineworkers downed tools after negotiations concerning wages, racial discrimination and poor living standards broke down with Tsumeb Corporation Ltd. on 5 August. TLC are refusing to talk to the Mineworkers Union of Namibia and have tried to evict the workers.

The mineworkers have responded by occupying their hostels at Tsumeb, Otjinase and Kombat mines. Management have now turned to the Supreme Court and the ruthless state police.

The Namibian trade union movement is growing, inspired by the success of COSATU across the border in South Africa.

Many trade union organisers are supporters of the black liberation organisation SWAPO which has recently faced increased repression, with a spate of detentions last week.

Namibian miners' leader Ben Ulenge returned home this week from Britain, facing almost certain imprisonment.

The Mineworkers Union of Namibia calls for the immediate and unconditional release of its deputy national chair, Mr Asser Kapere, and of all the miners detained and for settlement based on the union's reasonable demands.

Messages of support and donations should be sent to the Namibia Miners' Strike Fund, c/o Namibia Support Committee, PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW.

Fighting discrimination in Northern Ireland

EDITORIAL

Catholics in Northern Ireland are less likely to get jobs in what little industry there is left than are Protestants. But Protestants, too, suffer mass unemployment.

Under capitalism, there aren't enough jobs in Northern Ireland. There never have been. Tackling discrimination against Catholics, socialists have a choice to make. Do we advocate that Catholic and Protestant workers fight each other to redivide the existing jobs — or do we advocate the creation of enough jobs for everybody?

Back in the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement raised the slogan "One man, one job", "One man, one house", "One man, one vote". It was understood by Protestant workers as a demand to share out what little there was.

A far better approach would have been demands to build more houses, create more jobs.

The approach embedded in the MacBride Principles is precisely that of the late 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Having lived longer, they should know better.

Socialists must fight anti-Catholic discrimination in Northern Ireland because such discrimination is wrong and outrageous. Socialists struggle to unite the working class on a basis of equality. This has to be done with a programme that offers all sections of the working class a way forward to improve their conditions. But proposals that set Catholic and Protestant workers quarrelling over the crumbs from the capitalist table will not help any Irish workers.

What programme has the possibility of uniting the Northern Ireland working class?

*A united Ireland on a federal basis, with regional autonomy for the mainly-Protestant area;

*Work-sharing without loss of pay. Cut the hours and share out the work!

*Factories shut down by their owners to be taken into public ownership without compensation and run under workers' control.

*A programme of public works, under workers' control and at trade union rates of pay.

Within this framework a workers' fight for jobs for all without discrimination is possible. This is better than appealing to multinationals and the British state to give more favour to Catholics — an approach which, with unemployment already very high even among Protestants, is likely to make communal tension worse and class politics more dif-



Lunch for this Catholic family is bread, jam and tea

ficult, and may even disrupt the trade unions.

Socialists should support the aim of ending discrimination expressed in the MacBride principles, but seek to commit trade unions to fighting discrimination within the framework of the general programme for jobs for all outlined above.

Socialists should oppose the drive for disinvestment in Northern Ireland which accompanies the campaign for the MacBride Principles in the USA. This can help neither Northern Irish Catholic nor Protestant workers. It will accelerate the destruction of the economy of Northern Ireland and hasten the mutual ruin of Protestant and Catholic alike. A campaign for disinvestment is inescapably a Catholic sectarian policy.

If this is Trotskyism, then I'm a...

Newspapers, from the *Financial Times* to the *Morning Star*, carried mocking articles about the meetings held in London by different fragments of the "Workers' Revolutionary Party" to commemorate Leon Trotsky on the 47th anniversary of his death under the ice-pick of Stalin's assassin, Mercader.

"Marks and sparks at the start of a new party" headlined the FT in its "light relief" report on page one. "WRP splits three ways to mark Trotsky's end" chortled the Stalinoid *Morning Star*.

The humour was weak and feeble, to be sure. But there was no mistaking the common basic feeling of triumph from their different angles, that Trotskyism had been reduced to a joke.

Now the declining *Morning Star* is itself the result of a recent split in the Communist Party. It depends for its survival in part on the practical support of the heirs of Trotsky's murderer — over one-third of its small sale is to Eastern Europe and the USSR. It is easy enough to jeer back at them.

Yet the stark truth is that it is impossible not to concede that they, and all the others who stopped to

The MacBride principles

The MacBride Principles are designed to combat sectarian employment practices in Northern Ireland. They have the basis of legislation in a number of US States decreeing that State funds only be invested in firms which accept the MacBride Principles.

*Increasing the representation of individuals from under-represented religious groups in the workforce including managerial, supervisory, administrative, clerical and technical jobs.

*Adequate security for the protection of minority employees both at workplace and while travelling to and from work.

*The banning of provocative sectarian or political emblems from the workplace.

*All job openings should be publicly advertised; and special recruitment efforts should be made to attract applicants from

under-represented religious groups.

*Layoff, recall and termination procedures should not in practice favour particular religious groupings.

*The abolition of job reservations, apprenticeship restrictions, and differential employment criteria, which discriminate on the basis of religious or ethnic origin.

*The development of training programmes that will prepare substantial numbers of minority employees for skilled jobs, including the expansion of existing programmes to train, upgrade, and improve the skills of all categories of minority employees.

*The establishment of procedures to assess, identify and actively recruit minority employees with potential for further advancement.

*The appointment of a senior management staff member to oversee the company's affirmative action efforts and the setting up of timetables to carry out affirmative action principles.



Gerry Healy: giving Trotskyism a bad name

jeer, have a point. Not about "Trotskyism" as Trotsky would have understood it — and as it should be understood — but about the vast range of sects calling themselves Trotskyist.

The "new party" referred to by the *Financial Times* is the "Marxist Party" which has just been launched by Gerry Healy (75 going on 6) and Vanessa and Corin Redgrave. It's a silly little personality cult around an old scoundrel.

The truth, of course, is that in the 47 years since Trotsky's death, almost everything weird and wonderful in politics and on its fringes — including varieties of Stalinism — has

been absorbed or annexed by people who want, for various reasons — in Healy's case for personal pride and perhaps sentimentality — to call themselves Trotskyists.

The mere name has ceased to have any precise meaning — except as a historic reference point.

A whole wide range of vastly different politics has been evolved by people more or less honestly trying to base themselves on the politics of Trotsky and the early Communist International, and apply them and develop them in the practical politics of the half century since Trotsky's death.

If Militant, for one example, or Socialist Action, for another, are Trotskyist, then Socialist Organiser isn't, and vice versa.

What Trotskyism knew as "Trotskyism" is still irreplaceable to the working class movement — if it is ever to be master of society — of a democratic socialist society in which wage slavery has been abolished and the power of the state drastically cut down.

Today it has to be defended against many people who call themselves Trotskyists. It has to be developed in analysing and understanding the world. That's why we publish Socialist Organiser and the magazine Workers' Liberty.

PRESS GANG

Glorious colour

By Jim Denham

Press Gang's award for most tasteless, insensitive and voyeuristic coverage of the Hungerford massacre does not go, as might have been expected, to the Sun, but to the Murdoch stable's other tabloid, Today.

We have already had cause to note how quickly the Digger has dragged his recently acquired title downmarket. But Thursday's edition marked a new low.

For a start, Today won hands down in terms of sheer space devoted to Hungerford: 8 pages, compared with 6 in the Sun and 4 in the Express. And most of those 8 pages were given over to photographs which, of course, is where Today really scores.

The front page carried a huge, full-colour, close-up of a body covered by a blanket, slumped behind the wheel of a car. They published the body's name as well: Douglas Wainwright.

On the centre pages another blanket-covered corpse lay on a kitchen floor, splattered and smeared with bright red blood.

The Sun, still limited to black and white photography, simply couldn't compete, though it scored high marks for bad timing, choosing the day after what it called the "Rambo massacre" to advertise 20,000 free tickets to see "hunky Mel Gibson as a tough, risk-taking CIA cop trained as a ruthless killing machine" in a film called Lethal Weapon.

Soft Porn

The Sunday Sport celebrated its first birthday last week. It is a depressing thought that of the new generation of national papers only the Sport can be called an unqualified commercial success. Today has changed hands twice since its launch, and the Sunday edition has closed. The News on Sunday's troubles are too well known to need reciting here. Even the Independent, excellent though it may be journalistically, is having difficulty meeting its target circulation figures.

Meanwhile, self-professed pornographer Sullivan's baby sells half-a-million each week and made a profit of £500,000 in its first year.

Next year he plans to launch the Daily Sport in direct competition with the Sun and the Star.

Murdoch is obviously worried. His transport firm TNT won't handle the Sport and the Sun refuses its advertising.

The Sunday Sport is a vile, sexist publication but having more topless models than the Sun or the Star doesn't, in my opinion, make it more sexist than those "respectable" publications.

And strangely, what little editorial comment the Sport contains is usually relatively inoffensive. It has never come close to the filthy racism, homophobia and all-round bigotry of the "Mills" column in the Star or some of Kelvin McKenzie's Sun editorials.

I do not, of course, wish the Sport well, but I don't wish it any worse than the Sun or the Star.

Mind bending

The famous bender of spoons, Yuri Geller, this week takes to the skies in a hot air balloon to radiate a beam of concentrated psychic energy across the land. It is his greatest ever experiment to demonstrate the amazing power of his mind.

Yuri has chosen to exercise his mind control techniques on the minds of Sun readers! The Sun predicts "some incredible things are bound to happen" but does not specify what. Perhaps sales of the Guardian will leap to three million overnight. Now that would make me a believer.

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GRAFFITI

Bad deal council house sales

Still reckon it's a good deal to buy your council house or flat? Consider the experience of Mrs Debbie Parker of the Avondale Square Estate, South London.

She bought her flat in 1982, and now she has to pay £3,695 a year in service charges to the estate landlord.

The estate is run, not by some 'loony left', 'wasteful', Labour council, but by the City of London Corporation, which is elected by the bankers and financiers of the City.

Like many other estates of the 1960s, it is built in huge concrete blocks of flats. Big building firms put a lot of pressure on councils to build that way, because it enabled the firms to make most profits, quickest. But those 1960s blocks now need a lot of very expensive maintenance.

Of course some council house-buyers have been lucky and got good, problem-free houses very cheap. Which is all very well — except that it means that there is less good, cheap rented housing

available, and finding a home becomes a choice between buying (for those who have the money and can offer the necessary guarantees to get a loan) and sordid, run-down estates (for the worse-off).

Mrs Parker's experience shows that home-ownership isn't the universal cure-all. So do the rapidly rising numbers of homes repossessed because of mortgage payments not being met, and of owner-occupied houses in bad condition because the owners can't afford to pay for repairs.



This is the liberal press's view of the South African miners' strike

The contras' friends

Israel, Brunei, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and South Africa — that was the rogue's gallery of governments approached by the US administration three years ago to send money to the contras.

Israel refused, Brunei sent \$10 million, and Saudi Arabia sent \$25 million. South Africa seemed willing, and talks began, but — according to the latest revelations from the Irangate investigations — the

Reagan government decided not to do a deal. It would cause too much trouble if it came out that the US's favourite 'freedom fighters' relied on support from the world's most hideously racist regime.

Small factory union busting

Perhaps for the first time since the Industrial Revolution, small factories have been displacing large ones in recent years.

In 1979, 41% of all workers in manufacturing in Britain worked in factories employing more than 1,000 people. By 1982, those big factories accounted for only 35% of the workforce.

Similar trends have been observed in other countries.

But recent figures from the National Institute for Economic and Social Research indicate that the trend has more to do with class struggle

calculations than changes in technology.

The NIESR finds that in 1979 productivity in factories employing more than 1500 was 23% higher than in factories employing 99 or fewer. So it was not the least efficient factories that were shut or run down. Moreover, big factories have increased their productive superiority over small ones since 1979: in 1984 they were 35% more productive.

Large factories were closed or run down because they were less profitable. They had lower profits despite higher productivity

because they were more vulnerable to union organisation, strikes, and wage rises.

The shift to smaller factories is much more to do with union-busting than with new technology.

Pyromania

Six per cent of secondary-school teenagers see "little or nothing wrong" in setting fire to buildings, according to a survey reported in the Observer last Sunday.

Nine per cent think torturing cats or dogs is more or less OK, 34% can't see anything very bad about vandalising bus shelters, and 64% think damaging plants in a garden is acceptable.

But why? The teenagers put the blame on unemployment and the lack of things for young people to do.

Poverty wages

More than 85% of British companies operating in South Africa are paying some black employees below the official poverty level.

The average minimum wage reported by British companies was £117 a

month (R394). The University of South Africa estimates the poverty level at R482 a month, and the trade union federation COSATU reckons that a minimum living wage is R850.



Klebanov and other working class activists

The case of Vladimir Klebanov

The case of Klebanov highlights the urgent need to build a campaign inside the British labour and trade union movement to establish solidarity with all oppressed workers in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

Klebanov, whose struggles have been well documented, particularly in John Cunningham's excellent pamphlet, was a Ukrainian miner working in one of the most productive coal mining regions of the USSR, the Dombass.

During the 1950s, Klebanov became increasingly concerned at the declining health and safety conditions in many mines in the area. Much of the decline had to do with the chronic underinvestment in the region by Moscow, but also because the mine managers were cutting corners to reduce costs and boost productivity. For instance, Klebanov discovered that many miners had to share one pit lamp when underground.

Klebanov took up his concerns with the local trade unions which supposedly existed to protect miners' interests. After a series of letters and personal visits to see local officials nothing was done.

Undeterred, he took up his case with the national union in Moscow. Still, he got no joy.

This is not surprising because in the USSR, unions are not independent organisations. They are run by the government and act as one of its arms, policing workers and sorting out the labour market.

Klebanov's personal crusade, which enjoyed the support of his colleagues, increasingly annoyed the mine management and he was sacked in 1964. In a country where the state controls all property, this was very serious indeed and meant enormous hardship for both himself and his family.

However, despite three years unemployment, Klebanov continued his struggle now both for his own reinstatement and for decent health and safety conditions for his workmates. His activities soon came to the notice of the Soviet secret police, the KGB. In early 1964 and 1967 he was incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital for a short time by the authorities.

The use of such disgusting institutions is a favourite device used by the Kremlin bureaucracy then and today under Gorbachev, to cow and beat down the resistance of any opponents of the regime.

In 1968 Klebanov was reappointed by the mine authorities, not in his old job, but in a more administrative role.

Despite this victory of sorts, he continued his personal one-man crusade writing now directly to the Central Committee and Brezhnev himself. Not surprisingly he received

Tony Jain tells the story of Ukrainian miner Vladimir Klebanov's 30 year struggle for workers rights and for free trade unions in the Soviet Union.

no replies to his frequent letters, only visits from the KGB.

From around 1973, Klebanov, as a result of his frequent trips to Moscow, now began meeting other disgruntled workers from other branches of Soviet industry who shared many of his concerns and disenchantment with the existing trade unions.

In February 1978 Klebanov and around 43 other people established themselves into their own independent trade union, the Free Trade Union Association (FTUA).

In their founding statement they listed their aims as fighting for free trade unions, independent of the state and run by the workers themselves, along with the right to strike.

The FTUA was initially open to all Soviet workers irrespective of region or industry. Its full membership at this time was approximately 200.

Not surprisingly the KGB moved in and arrested Klebanov and other leading members of the FTUA and whisked them off to a mental institution for a few months.

On their release, Klebanov and his group of supporters attempted to get publicity for their cause by hastily arranging a press conference with some Western media representatives in Moscow.

While on his way to the press conference, Klebanov was picked up by agents of the KGB and detained indefinitely for interrogation.

Very little has since become known of his whereabouts. All we know is that Klebanov has been transferred from one psychiatric hospital to another and has been subjected to horrific mind-bending drugs by the Soviet authorities in order to finally beat down his resistance.

Some sources suggest that Klebanov still remains incarcerated in a Soviet mental institution. If this is so, then we should launch a campaign immediately demanding his release. Other sources suggest he is dead. Amnesty International say he is still alive and was seen this year.

What was the response of the British labour and trade union movement to Klebanov's heroic struggles? In short, a disgrace.

Whereas the CGT and a number of their French unions recognised the FTUA and called for an end to its persecution, the TUC and its affiliates literally sat on their hands

over the issue.

Inside the NUM, Gormley, then president, raised Klebanov's plight with the Soviet trade unions, but foolishly accepted their explanations made up mostly of slanderous personal attacks on members of the FTUA which are not worthy of mention here.

His successor, Arthur Scargill, refused to discuss the matter, instead urging people like Cunningham, who raised the issue with him, to concentrate on human rights violations elsewhere in the globe like Latin America. (This is a favourite Stalinist trick — shifting the grounds of debate when you are cornered).

Much of the reluctance of the TUC and unions to support the FTUA stems from the continuing strength of Stalinist ideas within the labour movement. Other factors cannot be ruled out, like their bureaucratic hostility to independent, unofficial organisations — it took the TUC months to recognise Solidarnosc and then only because they realised it was a movement of some 10 million workers and their position was looking increasingly ridiculous.

In the build-up to the conference on November 7, we should remember the struggles of figures like Klebanov whose case is probably symbolic of hundreds of such struggles throughout Eastern Europe. We need to ensure that in future, such struggles do not go unheeded and unsupported by the British labour and trade union movement.

For, if organisations like SMOT and FTUA are to develop into mass organisations like Solidarnosc they need and deserve our solidarity.

**Solidarity
with workers
in the
Eastern bloc**

**A conference
November 7
11 - 5
Conway Hall, Red Lion
Square, London WC1**

An appeal for unity

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

Can Labour's left reunite? This draft platform was put out last week by seven leading activists from Labour Left Liaison (a coalition which includes SO) and the left wing of the Labour Coordinating Committee (set up in the early '80s as a 'Bennite' group). SO welcomes the statement.

For six years Labour's Left has been divided. Developments since June 1987 show this division to be a luxury we cannot afford.

The need to overcome it does not flow from narrow inner party considerations but from the outcome of the election, the crisis in the Alliance, and the opportunities for Labour. Two developments in particular mean that Labour's Left must take clear choices: first the attempt by certain sections of Labour's Right to shift party policy to a pact with the Liberals and, secondly, the decision of the Tribune Group to reject a joint slate with the Campaign Group of MPs for the Shadow Cabinet.

Since the general election, the New Statesman and Marxism Today, and leading Fabians have openly argued for a Labour-Liberal pact. This could become a hidden agenda for the party as some members who may reject such a pact are nevertheless caught up in internal developments with the same political dynamic.

The decision by the Tribune Group to reject a joint slate with the Campaign Group symbolised this process, and encouraged serious rethinking on the Left.

The proposed joint slate gave the Tribune Group virtually blank-cheque terms. It included eight members of the Tribune Group, four Campaign Group members and three Tribune Group incumbents. Yet it was rejected by the majority of the Tribune Group, who, in practice, preferred to align with Centre-Right MPs.

Dynamic

The political dynamic of this is clear. Although generally loyal to the party, the Right has an agenda with potentially much common ground with the Alliance. While modernising Labour's class appeal and policy renewal is necessary, this must not be used as an excuse for jettisoning socialist principles — as was proposed by some after the 1959 election defeat.

The practical meaning of an alliance with the Alliance is evident. Liberal/Alliance terms for agreement with Labour would include continuation of the existing Tory framework of trade union law, maintenance of privatisations, rejection of social or public ownership, and a defence policy based on nuclear weapons — by 1991, in practice, Trident.

This is a programme for maintaining, not overturning, the essential changes brought about by Thatcherism. A Labour-Liberal pact might appear to be an "anti-Thatcher coalition" but in practice it would be a coalition for perpetuating Thatcherism.

The alternative is preparing for a Labour victory through pushing back the Alliance — which requires re-establishing unity on Labour's Left to pose a serious alternative to a slip-page by default into coalition — and also winning over those potential Labour supporters who in the last elections have voted for Thatcher.

Such unity on the Left is a principal goal that must be worked towards.

Disagreements between various trends on the Left cannot be resolved immediately. However, a joint campaign on the following issues would help the party to adopt a programme capable of winning majority support



Where now after the election? (Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report).

for Labour and would go some way to overcome these differences:

- *Building the Labour Party and rejecting any pact or coalition with the Liberals or Alliance.

- *Commitment to maximising Left unity in the party both outside parliament and by working for a joint Left slate in the next Shadow Cabinet elections.

- *Developing a socialist economic policy, including the extension of common ownership into the financial and manufacturing sectors, and the radical extension of democratic control into industry.

- *Re-establishing the legal right to effective trade unionism.

- *Strengthening links between the unions and Labour, and rejecting "business unionism".

- *Strengthening links with socialists in unions not affiliated to the Labour Party.

- *Support for the campaign to organise part-time and temporary workers launched by the TGWU, GMB, NUPE and other unions.

- *Radical democratisation as a key policy to be pursued in politics, the economy, and society.

- *For a Scottish Assembly and an Act establishing a Scottish Assembly to be passed in the first year of a Labour government.

- *Commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, a nuclear-free Europe, and elimination of nuclear weapons world-wide.

- *Labour in government to pursue an independent socialist foreign policy.

- *Adopting radical measures for the defence of the environment, including ending nuclear power.

- *Promoting the policy of a Women's Ministry with Cabinet rank, women's self-governing organisation in the party, and the right of women to elect the women's places on Labour's National Executive Committee.

- *Support for the 1984 TUC Congress resolution on black self-organisation in the unions and establishment of constitutionally recognised black sections in the Labour Party.

- *Introduction of radical measures to break up press monopolies, establish journalistic freedom, and introduce a Freedom of Information

Act. Whatever our different views of the actions in Liverpool, we do not believe that a new wave of disciplinary actions can perform any positive role in rebuilding Labour and we will not support it.

We further believe that socialism in Britain can be built only by a combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary initiatives and activity; and that the parliamentary Left must strengthen its links with progressive movements and the Left outside parliament.

Unity

Unity on the Left cannot consist simply of organisational steps. Organisation must flow from a developed political agenda. But we pledge to work within our existing organisations to maximise support for the above principles. We will liaise regularly to decide the next steps in this process.

Why I signed the statement

Vladimir Derer comments:

Some members of Labour Left Liaison and the LCC have signed, in personal capacities, a statement that contains demands with which most people would actually agree. The one exception to this is possibly the extension of public ownership, which would be a departure from the policy of the LCC as an organisation.

The statement's significance, therefore, is not so much in what it says but what it represents. The initiative for it came from members of the LCC, and it is very important that they have

A meeting will be held at the party conference to discuss these issues. A copy of this document has been circulated to Labour Party pressure groups and members of the Tribune Group and the Campaign Group. We invite them to append their names and to attend the meeting at party conference.

Vladimir Derer, secretary, Labour Left Liaison.

Ann Pettifor, co-chair, Labour Left Liaison.

Marc Wadsworth, co-chair, Labour Left Liaison.

George Galloway MP, executive member of Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

Peter Hain, executive member of Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

Ken Livingstone MP, executive member of Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

Joan Ruddock MP, executive member of Labour Co-ordinating Committee (all in a personal capacity).

been prepared to establish some form of communication with the so-called hard-left — just as the 27 Tribune Group MPs did when they voted for a joint slate with the Campaign Group of MPs in the recent shadow cabinet elections.

It is also a step forward that some LCC members have declared themselves against further expulsions from the party.

At long last at least even some of the 'soft left' have begun to wake up to the political reality to which the policies adopted by the majority of the LCC and the Tribune Group are leading.

Before Kornilov's attempted coup

Monday 7 August

The workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet, meeting for the first time after a month's break, passes resolutions demanding abolition of the death penalty and release of all arrested Bolsheviks who had not been charged with having committed offences. The factory committee of the Nevsky paper-manufacturing plant (Petrograd) informs management that the imposition of fines in the plant has been abolished by order of the union. The Central Executive Committee of Soviets convenes a meeting in Petrograd to discuss strengthening the country's defences; Bolsheviks denounce the meeting and its aims and then walk out. A meeting of the Rogozhsky regional soviet (Moscow) passes a resolution condemning the vacillating attitude of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets and of the Executive Committee of peasant soviets. Meetings of the Vladimir Soviet and Zhizdra Soviet demand dissolution of the State Duma and Council of State.

Tuesday 8 August

A meeting of the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet demands abolition of the death penalty. The War Ministry orders the commander of the Petrograd military district to shut down the Bolshevik paper "Worker and Soldier". 15,000 workers in the Moscow rubber industry begin a strike for higher pay. 12,000 building workers in Moscow begin a strike for higher pay.

The Gorlov regional soviet calls for dissolution of the State Duma and Council of State and abolition of the death penalty. In the Ekaterinburg Duma elections, the Bolsheviks win 18 seats, the Social-Revolutionaries 44, the Cadets 10, the Mensheviks 3, and five other organisations 9 seats.

Wednesday 9 August

The Gordoskoy regional soviet (Moscow) condemns the forthcoming Moscow State Conference on 12 August, and advocates a one-day general strike throughout Moscow in protest. A joint meeting of representatives of the Central Bureau of Moscow trade unions, the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and political parties calls for a one-day general strike on 12 August in opposition to the Moscow State Conference. In the Kaluga Duma the Menshevik-Social Revolutionary bloc vote down a Bolshevik resolution advocating a boycott of the Moscow State Conference.

The military section of the Voronezh Soviet agrees to begin publication of "News of the Military Section" as a daily newspaper. A meeting of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet condemns the conciliatory attitude of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets, and also the holding of the Moscow State Conference. By order of the Provisional Government the Kazan Bolshevik newspaper "Worker" is shut down. The Ekaterinburg Soviet overturns an earlier Bolshevik resolution and passes a vote of confidence in the Provisional Government. A meeting in Ekaterinoslav of soldiers of the 127th Infantry regiment condemns the conciliatory attitude of the Social Revolutionary-Menshevik majority in the soviets.

Thursday 10 August

The Bureau of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets resolves to participate in the Moscow State Conference. A joint meeting of the Executive Committees of the Moscow Soviets of Workers' Deputies and Soldiers' Deputies adopts a Menshevik resolution advocating active participation in the Moscow State Conference, and opposing strikes or demonstrations against it. A joint meeting

Turn to page 8

The power to destroy apartheid



Miners rally in Soweto (Photo: IDAF)

Here is this mammoth creature which they mocked!
That it had no head and certainly no teeth!
Woe unto you oppressor
woe unto you exploiter

We have rebuilt its head
we lathed its teeth on our machines.

The day this head rises
Beware of the day these teeth shall bite.

On that day:
mountains of lies shall be torn to shreds
the gates of apartheid shall be burst asunder
the history books of deception shall be thrown out.

The Tears of a Creator. Poem composed for the Launch of COSATU by Mi S'Dumo Hlatshwayo and Alfred Temba Qabula

That mammoth creature has begun to bite. Across South Africa today some half a million black workers are involved in the largest strike wave in South African history. On top of the 320,000 mineworkers who are now in the third week of their strike, metalworkers, postalworkers, municipal workers, brewery workers and agricultural workers have all joined battle.

The origins of the present workers' movement lie in the Durban strikes of 1973. In January and February of that year some 100,000 workers — shipbuilders, stevedores, drivers, brick and tea workers — struck over

The black unions that now represent such a threat to the Botha government in South Africa did not just fall from the sky. They were built over years of struggle. Anne Mack tells the story.

pay. This marked the beginning of the new wave of resistance to white supremacy in South Africa, one to which black workers and their trade unions have become central.

In 1969 there were about 16,000 black workers organised in independent unions — outside of the control of the state and the officialdom of

the racist white unions. Today that figure stands at well over one million.

Why has this development taken place? The underlying cause is that the growth of capitalism in South Africa has also meant the growth of the black working class. And the concentration of capital into ever larger factories has meant the concentration of workers into large collective units.

The development of manufacturing industry has brought with it the concentration of resident black workers in large urban townships and has made possible a rise in the level of education and skills of black workers. Many black workers in manufacturing industry have largely cut their ties with a rural past.

All these causes have contributed to the growth of worker organisation and consciousness.

Black workers have had a long tradition of trade union organisation and activity in South Africa. In 1920 there was a strike of some 70,000 black mineworkers; in the 1920s the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union grew to over 100,000 members; in the late 1920s and 1930s industrial unions like the Garment Workers' fought against the racial divisions which the state was fostering in the workforce; in 1946 there was a massive strike of mineworkers

organised by the African Mineworkers' Union and backed by growing industrial unions; in the mid-1950s the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) rapidly mobilised black industrial workers culminating in mass demonstrations and stay-at-homes around the time of Sharpeville in 1960.

However, each of these waves of trade union militancy was eventually contained by the state and the capitalists, and met at times with terrible defeats. These defeats have in part been self-inflicted as independent working class politics was subordinated to the protest politics of nationalism.

Most recently, after SACTU was driven underground and then into exile in the early 1960s, the level of organisation and activism among black workers collapsed for a decade, while South African capitalism grew at an unprecedented rate. But it was organising its own gravediggers.

Out of the Durban strikes of 1973 a small but solid base of working class organisation was built — mainly in the Natal region around Durban — but starting to set roots elsewhere.

In 1976 South Africa was shaken by the Soweto uprising — a revolt of students and youth against "gutter" education — which managed, despite difficulties, to draw in working class support in the face of protest strikes or "stayaways".

The unions turn reforms against the bosses.

In the wake of Soweto sections of big business and the government decided that reform of apartheid was needed to protect white privilege and capitalist profits.

In 1979 the Weibahn Commission reported. It proposed the gradual dismantling of "job reservation" in the colour bar and the granting of limited union rights to a sec-



Jubilant miners at the launch of COSATU (Photo: IDAF)



Workers strike for the release of jailed trade unionist Moses Mayekiso.

(Photo: IDAF).

workers may be submerged. They stress the need for patient organising, educating and building on the shopfloor.

In 1984-5 this debate was seen as a debate between different unions and union federations. Basically between those unions which were affiliated to the UDF and those which were not.

However, after the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) at the end of November 1985 this conflict has continued, though in a muted and less direct form inside COSATU.

COSATU adopted the organisational methods — industrial unions, shop stewards structures etc — of the old FOSATU "workerist" unions. Its political policy was less clear cut.

Since early 1986 the COSATU leadership has gradually drawn the federation closer and closer to the 'populist' ANC tradition. At its recent congress in July this year, COSATU adopted the ANC's Freedom Charter — the banned movement's programme for post-apartheid South Africa.

In fact, as the township struggle has declined — as a result of state repression and popular exhaustion as it became evident that the state was not about to give up — more and more the trade unions have moved to the centre of the struggle. A massive strike wave has developed — in part as a response to employers' attacks, in part spurred on by other workers' victories — to create a situation where the unions are now the main, legal, open form of opposition to the apartheid regime.

COSATU has now clearly overtaken the UDF as the main opposition force to the government. It is now perceived as standing firmly in the Congress tradition.

Yet at the same time the development of COSATU has decisively discredited the old strategy of the ANC according to which South Africa was a fascist dictatorship and change could only come about through external pressure, from the guerrilla war or international sanctions.

The gravediggers of South African capitalism had risen up.

What is needed now is a clear socialist strategy to lead forward the mighty movement of the South African workers.

This lead can't and won't come from the ANC which is committed to an alliance with "patriotic" anti-apartheid bosses, including the mine bosses.

It will have to come from those in the unions and elsewhere who are committed to a socialist future for South Africa.

A regroupment of working class forces is necessary to fight for this goal.

The populists are organised and determined to swing COSATU 100% behind the ANC line. The left in the unions and outside need to get organised.

DAF)

tion of the black working class — permanent urban workers — known as "section tenners".

The aim was to create a buffer between the majority of blacks and the whites, a relatively privileged layer separated off from the mass of black workers.

One leading mineowner has since described the Weihahn reforms as "letting the genie out of the bottle".

In a sense he is right. The unions utilised the state's reform programme to create a space for working class organisation.

At first the union movement was far from unanimous about how exactly to respond. This debate came to a head over the issue of state "recognition", i.e. registration of black unions.

The more 'orthodox' trade unionists like the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), which was aligned to the Black Consciousness movement, welcomed the state's proposals with few reservations and sought registration roughly on terms laid down by the state.

The General Workers Union (GWU) which was strong on the docks, argued that registration would mean the kiss of death for independent and democratic trade unionism and called for a boycott of any official machinery of state recognition of the unions.

The more nationalist trade unionists (like those in the South African Allied Workers Union — SAAWU) also rejected what they regarded as a recognition of apartheid and made an alliance with the syndicalists on a boycott platform.

The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), which had powerful metal, car and textile industrial unions in its ranks, came nearer to a working class political perspective. They argued that new restrictions which registration threatened against independent unions — like a ban on the registration of multi-racial unions or unions which include migrant workers —

should be boycotted; old restrictions on trade unionism to which registration makes no or little difference — like restrictions on strike and political affiliations — should continue to be fought against; and that new rights afforded by registration should be exploited by the independent unions and, whatever the intentions of the government, could be turned to advantage by the unions.

In practice this meant that FOSATU unions applied for registration on their own terms; that is, as non-racial unions comprising all categories of workers. It also meant that FOSATU maintained their commitment to fight for unrestricted rights of free association for black workers.

This strategy met with considerable success. The government gave in on the question of banning 'mixed' unions and migrant workers from registration. Registration allowed the unions to side-step management excuses about refusing to recognise non-registered unions.

At the same time registration de facto did not subject the unions — as

some of the boycotters feared — to levels of control by the state which would stop them being militant and democratic.

The use of flexible and realistic tactics by FOSATU showed that most of the moralistic, middle class talk of "non-collaboration" with the apartheid state and its machinery of domination over black people represented a blind alley. It certainly wasn't a serious option for building a workers' movement.

"Non-collaboration" for the trade union movement was as ridiculous as the idea that because socialists are against capitalism and the wages system we should not fight for higher wages.

The unions grew steadily in the early 1980s. There were strike waves in the car and metal industries in 1981-2. At the end of 1982 CUSA formed a miners' union (NUM) and appointed a lawyer, Cyril Ramaphosa, as its secretary.

The unions consolidated their position by fighting for small but winnable demands, often around issues like wages, hours, union recognition

or maternity rights. Over time a considerable base of working class organisation was created.

The unions and politics

The black townships exploded in the autumn of 1984. A nationwide urban revolt quickly developed. Initial issues like rents, racist education, and police brutality were soon subsumed into an all-out assault on apartheid. Township youth — the "comrades" — really believed that the state was about to suffer a gigantic loss of will, Mandela would be released and apartheid's days were numbered. This perspective was summed up in the Slogan of the school boycotters: "No education before liberation!"

In November 1984, black trade unions joined with student, youth and community groups in the Transvaal to call a two-day stayaway. Up to 800,000 workers participated. Moses Mayekiso, a trade unionist and socialist who now faces trial for his life in South Africa, was one of the stayaway organisers.

The unions were now drawn into politics all the way. This intensified the debate inside the unions between the so-called "populists" and "workerists".

The "populists" identify with the nationalist political tradition of the banned African National Congress (ANC), represented inside South Africa by the semi-clandestine and just legal United Democratic Front (UDF) they tended to favour high profile political campaigning to build general community-based unions. They advocate a multi-class alliance of all forces opposed to apartheid.

The "workerists", though committed to the wider struggle against apartheid do not favour alliances with non-worker controlled groups in which the independent voice of the



The township revolt: Duduza 1985. (Photo: Afropix)

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

From page 5

in protest at its decision to elect delegates to the Conference. A meeting of the Kineshma garrison passes a resolution demanding that the Conference be banned.

By order of the Provisional Government the Petrograd Bolshevik paper "Worker and Soldier" is shut down. In the Odessa Duma elections the Social Revolutionaries win 66 seats, the Cadets 15, the Jewish bloc 14, the Menshevik-Bund bloc 8, Ukrainian Socialists 5 and the Bolsheviks 3.

Friday 11 August

By 364 votes to 304, a joint meeting of the Moscow Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies adopts a Menshevik-Social Revolutionary resolution opposing strike action against the Moscow State Conference as unproductive, and advocating instead meetings in factories and workplaces. A meeting of the Central Bureau of Moscow trade unions reaffirms its decision of 9 August to call a one-day general strike on 12 August. The commander of the Moscow military district issues a decree declaring that all members of the Moscow garrison are obliged to defend the Moscow State Conference.

The Kostroma Bolshevik committee resolves to call a strike on 12 August. A joint meeting of the Kiev Bolshevik committee and local union representatives agrees to call a strike on 12 August.

The Voronezh Bolshevik committee publishes the first issue of "The Path of Life" newspaper, in place of the banned "Voronezh Worker". 2,000 members of the 5th reserve machine-gun regiment demonstrate in Voronezh with placards bearing the slogans "Long live the International", "Peace to the Cottages, War on the Palaces" and "War until Victory over Capital". In the Tashkent Duma elections the Ulema clerical party wins 62 seats, social democrats 55, Social Revolutionaries 24 and Progressive Muslims 11.

Saturday 12 August

The Moscow State Conference opens in the Bolshoi Theatre, convened by a decision of the Provisional Government of 31 July, and attended by more than 2,500 representatives of landowners, capitalists, military officers, the clergy and the higher levels of the state administration. On behalf of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets Chkheidze pledges full support for the Provisional Government. A Bolshevik statement condemning the conference as counter-revolutionary is not read out.

400,000 workers strike in and around Moscow in protest at the conference. 12,000 strike in Kostroma. 22,000 strike in Kiev. The Nizhny Novgorod Soviet calls a demonstration in opposition to the conference. The workers' section of the Samara Soviet condemns the conference for pursuing "counter-revolutionary" goals.

Sunday 13 August

The first issue of "Proletarian" is published, replacing "Pravda", banned by the Provisional Government on 5 July, as the central organ of the Bolsheviks. The first issue of "Soldier" is published, replacing "Worker and Soldier", shut down by the Provisional Government on 10 August.

5,000 demonstrate in Sormovo in protest at the Moscow State Conference, under the slogans "Down with the Moscow State Conference", "Down with the Death Penalty" and "Long live the International"; Mensheviks boycott the demonstration. Workers and soldiers demonstrate in Omsk in opposition to the policies of the Provisional Government and calling for decisive struggle with counter-revolution.

In the Nevsky regional Duma elections (Moscow) the Social-Revolutionaries win 38 seats, the Bolsheviks 6, the Mensheviks 3, and the Cadets 3. In the Narvsky town Duma elections, 3,517 vote for the Bolsheviks, 1,275 for the Black Hundreds, 779 for the Social-Revolutionaries, and 300 for the Cadets.

Monday 14 August

By 94 votes to 16 the Blagush-Lefortovsky regional soviet (Moscow) adopts a Bolshevik resolution on the Moscow State Conference in preference to a Menshevik

Continued on page 10

A dream of freedom

Dion D'Silva looks at the black movement for Civil Rights in the US in the 1960s, and its leader Martin Luther King

On 28 August 1963, over a quarter of a million Americans, mostly black, marched on Washington demanding freedom and equality. The last speaker was the eloquent Rev. Martin Luther King, who moved the crowd to tears as he explained his hopes:

"I have a dream — that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by their character.

I have a dream — that one day, on the red hills of Georgia the sons of slaves and the sons of slaveowners will sit together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream — that one day, even the state of Mississippi will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice."

Slaves

Black people arrived on the American continent as branded slaves in chains. The slaves were declared free in 1863, and liberated by Abraham Lincoln's armies in the civil war which ended in 1865.

Legally free, in fact blacks for the most part remained on the land — poor, terrorised and fiercely exploited.

In practice they soon lost the right to vote in most parts of the South.

A black man who didn't "know his place" would be taken out and lynched. Specialist organisations like the white-hooded Ku Klux Klan, were created to terrorise the newly "freed" blacks into submission. Thousands of blacks were lynched by hanging and burning.

Some blacks slowly began to move into the cities, especially during the two World Wars, when demand for labour was high. Racism followed them, even to the cities of the North.

In the South, segregation not much less severe than South Africa's was the lot of blacks everywhere.

Martin Luther King led the black revolt which shook this system to its foundations.

1963

1963 had been a year of freedom rides and sit-ins, in which black and white activists challenged segregation in restaurants, parks, etc. In 115 Southern cities, there had been 930 protest demonstrations and over 20,000 people arrested. In Birmingham, Alabama, the racist police used water canons and turned their



Martin Luther King



Bigoted white murderers

dogs loose on the crowds that were protesting about segregated lunch counters. Hundreds were arrested, including King, but still the demonstrations grew. In the face of bad publicity the authorities finally gave in.

Origins

The origins of the Civil Rights Movement could probably be traced back to one incident that occurred in Montgomery, Alabama on 1 December 1955.

After a hard day's work as a seamstress, a slight, bespectacled black woman boarded a bus to go home. By law and custom white people sat in the front and black people at the back. In the middle, black people could sit, only if the seats were not required by whites.

This day Rosa sat in the middle section. As the bus got more crowded the driver asked her, not very politely, to give up her seat for a white man, but she refused. She was tired. She was also tired of being treated like this. Finally, she was taken away by police and charged.

The same day word spread in the black community. Everyone had their own story to tell. That evening, men and women heard Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church call for a boycott of the buses beginning on 5 December, the day Mrs Parks was to come to trial.

Immediately organisations and committees set about making the boycott work and provide alternative transport. On 5 December Rosa Parks got up early and gazed out of her window. She saw the first bus go past. Normally it was full of black domestic workers. That day it was empty.

After a year-long boycott the Supreme Court ruled the segregation on the buses unlawful. A 26 year old minister named Martin Luther King Jr had played a leading role as he was to do for the next 13 years. He declared "We are tired — tired of being segregated and humiliated, tired of being kicked about by the brutal feet of oppression. We have no alternative but to protest."

Black working class conditions were worsening and racist provocation was not decreasing. The move-

ment, led by the articulate, black middle class, reached its climax with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Formal equality was granted but the black community was no better off.

Dr. King was greatly motivated by his Christianity. He told black people to love their enemies. In common with Gandhi, who fought for Indian independence, he believed in non-violent resistance, regarding violence as both immoral and impractical. Even so, he did call for "new methods of struggle, involving the masses of the people...If the injustice requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law".

With all its limitations, and there were many, the Civil Rights Movement brought a dignity, self-awareness and confidence to blacks. As King said, "We got our heads up now...and we won't ever bow down again".

Riots

Not all blacks opted for non-violence. The black working class erupted into riots that might without too much exaggeration be called insurrections — in Harlem (1964) and Watts, Los Angeles (1965).

The action of the protestors was used as a bargaining tool to negotiate within the system. In some ways, this was not surprising as it was the large corporations who seemed liberal and progressive while the labour movement wasn't hospitable to blacks.

Though there were some attempts at independent political action, Dr. King initially placed his faith in one of the big two bosses' parties, the Democratic Party, and in Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Voter registration was a major part of the campaign but its aim was to forge a black power bloc in the Democratic Party.

During the 1960s the struggle intensified. Many militant black people took a separatist route. They blamed everything on white society. By comparison, Dr. King, who was conservative, and who truly believed in the American Dream, was in fact open to and became radicalised by the movement.

He was highly critical of the savage

war the USA was then waging in Vietnam and began to draw the links between oppression and class society. Black workers, especially in the more industrialised areas, realised their own powers as workers.

A solidarity march was organised in support of striking workers in Memphis. The Poor People's Campaign and the Freedom Budget attempted to draw the white working class into the black struggle.

The Civil Rights Movement had laid down the basis for building a mass independent working class movement. Unfortunately the opportunity was missed due to the political leadership and the mistakes made by the left.

Part of the movement continued militant direct action, sometimes using violence, but it wrote off the labour movement and with it any chance of changing society.

Others developed a Rainbow Coalition type of politics in which various groups got together and supported each other's demands — this is the opposite of class politics.

In this scheme of things the black community was to become just another important group demanding its fair share.

Nevertheless we owe a great deal to people like Martin Luther King. He was no Marxist but he was a brave leader of a mass movement that fought for basic democratic demands. He played a positive role in the organisation of the initial period of self-awakening of black workers.

However his background and political beliefs meant that the movement didn't develop into one that could fundamentally change the basically racist character of American society.

Assassinated

On 4 April 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated. The death of this man who preached non-violence was met with anger and bitterness. There were serious disturbances in 125 American cities. On that night the sound of fire and police sirens were commonplace. The sky surrounding the dome of the White House in the capital city, Washington, was thick with clouds of smoke. From now on the new slogan was "Black Power".

Increasing dangers of cancer research

In June 1986, it was revealed that five out of fifty scientists in two cancer research labs at the Institut Pasteur in Paris were actually suffering from cancer themselves. Recently, a sixth was added to the list. Dr. Ditta Bartels, a lecturer in social implications of biotechnology in Sydney, discussed the issues in *New Scientist* last month. Les Hearn fills in the background.

The genetic engineering industry is booming so much these days that it seems almost incredible that, shortly after its birth, research was halted for a year over safety fears.

By 1975, techniques had developed to the stage where fragments of DNA containing genes could be taken from viruses, bacteria, frogs and flies and inserted (recombined) into small

DNA molecules from bacteria, called plasmids. These plasmids were being introduced into the common gut bacterium *E. coli*, a favourite of the lab. The bacterium would grow and multiply, giving rise to a clone of descendants, each containing the inserted DNA (hence cloning).

Committee

It was at this point that a committee of leading US molecular biologists, chaired by Paul Berg and including James D. Watson (co-discoverer of DNA's structure) issued an open letter, *Potential Biohazards of Recombinant DNA Molecules*.

This drew attention to the dangers of creating infectious DNA elements (artificial plasmids) whose biological behaviour could not be predicted. The use of *E. coli* was seen as a problem as it inhabits the human gut and can exchange genes with other



Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

bacteria, some harmful to people.

As a student of biochemistry at the time, I can testify to the concern we felt on hearing of experiments putting genes for antibiotic resistance and for cancer into *E. coli*. The letter called for a moratorium on precisely these experiments until the hazards had been investigated. It also called for procedures to minimise the spread of recombinant DNA molecules in natural populations.

Unique

This so far unique display of responsibility by scientists was initially successful. Committees (Genetic

Manipulation Advisory Group — GMAG — in Britain) established guidelines for research. Levels of containment (P1-4) were devised to ensure that altered organisms did not escape from labs. Specially weakened ("disabled") versions of bacteria were to be "constructed" so that even if they "escaped" they could not survive.

Fairly soon though, the climate of opinion among researchers swung towards favouring a virtually unfettered approach. Some who had supported the moratorium publicly repudiated their former stance. Watson was to say "I was a jackass". And yet there was much evidence of sloppy attitudes to safety. A proposal to build a highly secure P3 lab at Harvard was somewhat discredited by the revelation that the building was infested by radioactive ants that could not be got rid of!

There was the case of a request for samples of a virus from one lab. The

requester claims to have obtained the virus from the letter of refusal. The author must have had the virus all over his hands. (Pity the poor postal workers). More serious was the escape of smallpox virus at Birmingham University in 1978 with one death.

Nevertheless, by 1980 the only restriction on working with cancer genes (oncogenes) was to require labs to follow "good microbiological practice" while Watson could gloat in 1983 "now we're free to do exactly as we want".

The prevailing attitude was that recombinant DNA work was quite safe and researchers were scathing about critics. Watson described opponents as "shits, kooks and incompetents".

So if alarm bells did not ring in June 1986, it was because they had been disconnected. But the probability of five out of 50 cancer researchers getting cancer purely by chance is about one in ten million. Indeed, the death of one has been attributed officially to "occupational disease".

Revolutionised

Now, research into cancer has been revolutionised by recombinant DNA techniques. The discovery of cancer viruses led to identification of particular genes that give rise to cancer — oncogenes. Then it was found that normal human DNA contains genes very similar to oncogenes. When functioning normally, they regulate cell division by synthesising (or not synthesising) proteins that "instruct" the cell to divide. If a mutation "activates" the gene, uncontrolled division occurs and a tumour grows. Activation can be caused by radiation or by carcinogenic chemicals or by infection with a cancer virus.

Essential to understanding cancer is to identify oncogenes and the proteins they make. Experiments in this area have progressed from inducing cancer in animal cells to inducing cancer in human cells in culture — including lung, skin and colon cells. The methods used are precisely those targeted by the Berg Open Letter and yet the precautions have been the minimal P1 ones.

One of the Pasteur researchers, Françoise Kelly, died after experiments to induce cancer in human skin cells. Bartels points out that we don't know if she succeeded — she died before publishing her results. Bartels speculates however that she did succeed but that the cancer viruses she used transformed her own cells.

Supporting this theory is the fact that plasmids currently used are more easily transferred to other bacteria and are designed to maximise production of the oncogene's protein. They are also designed to infect mammalian cells.

Commercial

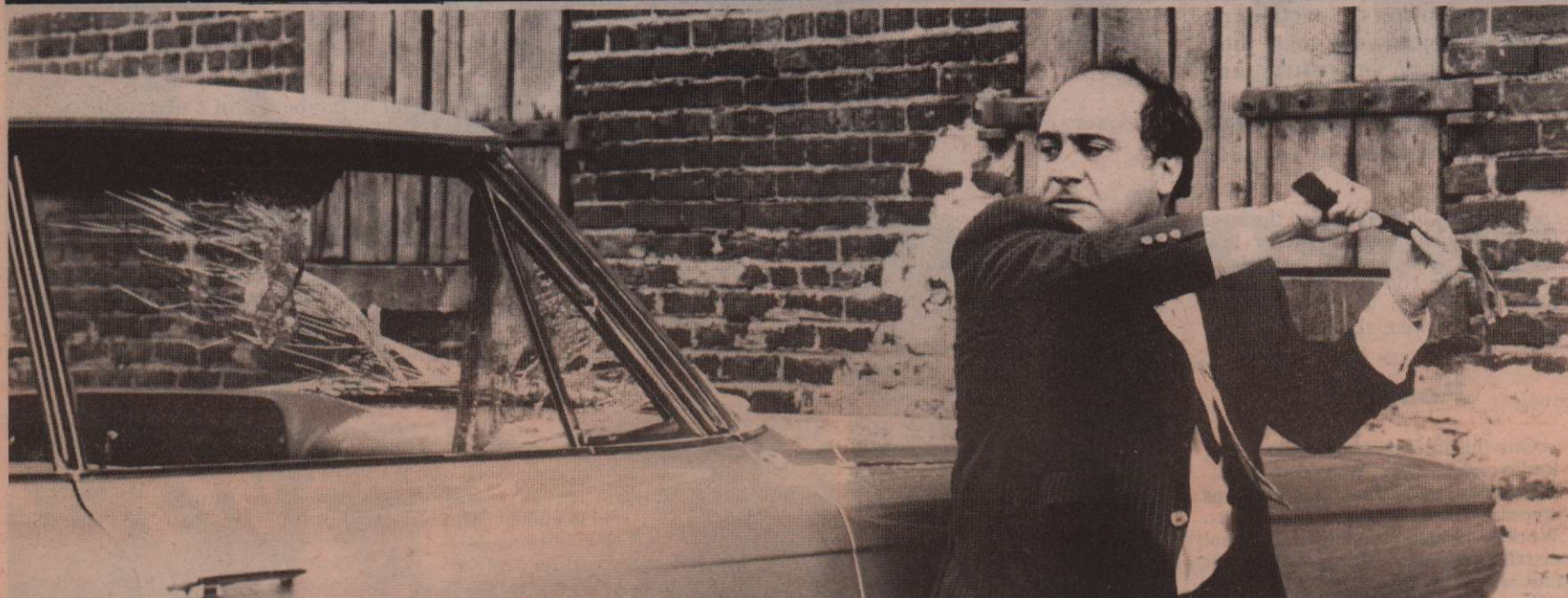
These plasmids have been designed with commercial interests in mind and the make-ups of many of them are trade secrets. Any of these properties is enough to put a human at risk of cancer should experimental material be inadvertently swallowed and with only P1 containment this is easily done.

It is known that laboratory strains of *E. coli* can survive for six days in the human gut (ten weeks if the person is taking anti-biotics), long enough for oncogenes to spread.

Use of oncogenes to produce medically useful chemicals is booming so the population of scientists at risk is burgeoning. The research is valuable both for this and for the insight into cancer it gives.

The answer is therefore for scientific unions to insist on more stringent (and more expensive) precautions unless these can be proved unnecessary.

Current procedures should be tested on animals to see if cancer can be induced. Also, so that the nature of the cancer-carrying plasmids can be revealed, unions must demand the opening of the books.



Aluminium siding salesman Ernest Tilley (Danny De Vito) smashes up the new Cadillac belonging to his rival BB.

But where's the story?

Belinda Weaver reviews the film 'Tin Men'.

Tin Men is about as deep as a made-for-TV movie. Set in the US city of Baltimore in 1963, it's about aluminium siding salesmen

(the 'tin men' of the title) hustling for a buck. They'll try every trick in the book to sell their 'home improvements'.

These guys are not nice; they'd cheat widows and orphans to make a sale. They dream up even wilder rip-off routines to impress the other tin

men in the bar or the diner at the end of the day.

Like actors, they ham it up for the customers, fooling them with sob stories or promises of money and fame. But they are playing their parts for a purpose; they want to rip off suckers.

Working on commission, the men are desperate to make sales. They have no job security, and many are in debt. They're trapped in their jobs, which are going nowhere.

To make matters worse, the Home Improvement Commission is on their backs. The Commission bureaucrats are out to gain names for themselves by cleaning up the aluminium trade. They're prepared to take away the salesmen's licenses (and livelihoods) to set an example.

A man from the Commission infiltrates an aluminium company. Posing as a salesman, he plays on the tin men's camaraderie and love of a good story to extract evidence for the Commission's hearings.

All this could have made a good story, but it gets shoved into the background. Up front is the story of the feud which develops between two tin men, BB and Tilley, from rival companies. When Tilley runs into BB's brand new Cadillac, the duel begins, with each man out for revenge. The duel rapidly escalates; soon BB is seducing Tilley's wife.

The men don't know when to stop, and resist all efforts by their partners to settle the quarrel.

This story just doesn't ring true. It's a strident distraction from what could be interesting in the movie. Director Barry Levinson doesn't know what to do with the tin men, so he puts in the kind of noise, destruction and mayhem (plus a barely credi-

ble love story) that supposedly delights mass audiences. He's playing down to the audience.

Tilley and BB end up losing their salesman licenses, and Tilley comes up with the line that they were done over because they were hustling for nickels and dimes. The moral of the story is that it's better to hustle for big bucks instead. That way the authorities leave you alone. BB and Tilley just set their sights too low!

Some moral! Society does punish small-time theft and illegal practice much more severely than it does big corporate criminals. But is the answer for BB and Tilley to try for bigger rip-offs? That would be a pretty bleak conclusion — if the film had a serious conclusion, which it hasn't.

Levinson has a good ear for the way men communicate. He captures quite well the incidentals of conversation, the long-running gags, the small irritations. Each man is a distinct character. They are presented as likeable, if limited, characters.

The scenes of the tin men working over gullible customers are often quite amusing, but we're laughing at poor guys robbing still poorer people who trusted them. The tin men were con men.

Levinson presents them as ordinary guys pushed by circumstances into making a dishonourable living. And he even approves them for it; he's on their side. He presents their small time crookedness as an endearing feature, and as evidence that they're not really bad.

The film could have worked either as a more straightforward comedy, or as a more serious picture of petty capitalism. But the Tilley/BB story isn't going anywhere and you're left with a blank.

The Long March

The Long March is a unique play, for its actors are involved totally with the production — it is about their lives and their struggle.

Their story is shocking. Sacked after years of employment at low wages by the British multi-national British Tyre and Rubber for forming a union, MAWU (now NUMSA), the 950 mainly Zulu-speaking workers, who traditionally come from the area around Howick and Natal were faced with malnutrition.

So the strikers formed a workers' co-op (SAWCO). They planted crops and produced T-shirts — employing most of the strikers in the cooperative. They receive support from the trade union movement across South Africa. Dunlop workers, also in the BTR group, struck in sympathy. The Co-op responded to the interest in their struggle by producing the play *The Long March*.

The play was organised by an extraordinary theatrical talent, Simon Ngubane, a shop steward, who by his inspired movements, mime and characters, set the style of the show. Performances of the production are

legend across South Africa.

In late 1986, Simon Ngubane, along with the Chairman of the shop stewards, Phineas Sibiyi, and two other activists, was assassinated by the right-wing Inkatha thugs who terrorized the whole of Mpophomeni township in which many of the strikers lived.

The funerals of the fallen comrades were conducted within a ring of steel imposed by the South African Armed Forces, who refused union members access allowing only the families to attend the funeral, which they themselves conducted.

A play formed in such circumstances is unique and it continues to be so. For what BTR's Chairman, Sir Owen Green, dismissed as only a local affair, is now coming to Britain as guests of the TUC and is performing in London's Hackney Empire from September 15 — 19. Tickets £5 (concessions £4).

Donations to the BTR strike fund should be sent c/o M. Murphy, 12 Manor Rd. Extension, Leicester, LE2 1FF.

The play is showing at the Notts Miners Gala, 5 September at Mansfield Leisure Centre.

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

From page 8

resolution. By a majority of two votes the Kiev Soviet adopts a Social-Revolutionary-Menshevik resolution. By a majority of two votes the Kiev Soviet adopts a Social Revolutionary-Menshevik resolution on the conference. A general meeting of soldiers of the 2nd Reserve Infantry regiment in Petrograd supports Finland's right to self-determination and condemns the Provisional Government's intention of shutting down the Finnish Parliament. An extraordinary meeting of the Camara Soviet drops proposals to call a demonstration in opposition to the Moscow State Conference.

The Elabuzhsky district commissioner appeals to the provincial commissioner to send troops to put down the peasant movement. The Moyovikh Soviet condemns the Moscow State conference and the Provisional Government's repression of socialist tendencies. The Presidium of the Belorets Soviet condemns as illegal a strike by workers in the local iron and steel works, and demands an immediate return to work.

Tuesday 15 August

The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks issues an appeal in connection with the Moscow State Conference calling for disregard of rumour-mongering and refusal to react to provocations, and for no demonstrations unless sanctioned by the Bolshevik Central Committee. The Petrograd Bolshevik paper "Proletarian" commences agitation for the Petrograd Duma elections of 20 August.

The Helsingfors Soviet passes a resolution opposing any attempt to dissolve the Finnish parliament. Officers on the Western front are instructed to confiscate and destroy all copies of the socialist paper "Trenches Tocsin". A mass meeting of 4,500 workers of the Kharkov General Electricity Company demands dissolution of the Moscow State Conference. Workers, soldiers and peasants demonstrate in Poltava, and demand dissolution of the Moscow State Conference at the concluding rally. A 3,000 strong soldiers' meeting in Samara condemns the Moscow State Conference.

Wednesday 16 August

The Executive Commission of the Bolshevik Petrograd Committee appeals to all members to step up activity in preparation for the forthcoming elections to the city Duma. The Bolshevik Central Committee issues a leaflet appealing to soldiers to vote for Bolshevik candidates in the Petrograd Duma elections: "We shall fight for the defeat of the bourgeois counter-revolution and for the transference of all power into the hands of the worker and peasant poor".

The Vasilostrovsky regional soviet (Petrograd) condemns the Moscow State Conference and any dissolution of the Finnish Parliament. The Kronstadt Soviet passes a resolution of protest against the Moscow State Conference. The Druzhkov Soviet expresses its opposition to the Moscow State Conference and calls for an end to the war.

110,000 leatherworkers in Moscow and surrounding districts go on strike for a minimum wage, two weeks holiday per year, and workers' control over sackings. The Mogilev soviet demands immediate abolition of the death penalty at the front.

Thursday 17 August

The Bolsheviks' Petrograd committee publishes three leaflets, each with a print-run of 100,000 directed at soldiers, women and citizens in general, appealing for support in the forthcoming Duma elections.

In the Vendensky Duma elections the Bolsheviks win 14 seats, the Social Revolutionaries 12, and the radicals and national-democrats 5. The Executive Committee of the Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies sets up a committee for defence of the revolution, with representatives from the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies and the Ukrainian Central Council. At an extraordinary meeting of the Yaroslavl Soviet the Bolsheviks call for the establishment of Red Guards to combat counter-revolutionary activities.

The Executive Committee of the Manglisi garrison soviet confiscates copies of the Bolshevik newspaper "Caucasian Worker". The Stavropol provincial governor requests the despatch of 350 soldiers and 150 Cossacks to crush peasant unrest.

Women workers' muscle

During the Second World War women entered industrial jobs in the US at a rate never seen before. But, as SUE HILL explains in this second part of an article begun last week, the unions were tied by outdated sexist ideas, and after the war women had to fight to hold on to what rights they had won.

Within the trade union movement the initial reaction to new women workers, particularly those in traditionally male jobs, was one of hostility and resistance. A large number of union branches made unsuccessful attempts to exclude women.

The influx of women into the large industrial unions did however lead the labour movement as a whole to an increasing concern with the problems of women workers. The left wing unions were the most responsive.

Positive

One third of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers organising staff were women. But that was atypical. It was the United Auto Workers which tackled the sexual discrimination most vigorously. It had a quite successful equal pay policy; it sought to end separate seniority lists for men and women; and it drew up a model maternity clause for its contract negotiations.

One of the most positive aspects of organised labour's relationship to women workers was the movement's support for equal pay. State and Federal governments had taken up the issue in a limited way. The trade union movement had at first been mainly concerned to maintain male rates of pay in the face of the influx of women. They weren't bothered about women's right to equal pay.

Before Pearl Harbour and the stepping up of war production, the UAW had even tried to exclude women from male jobs, to maintain rates of pay. After Pearl Harbour, the UAW demanded from General Motors 'equal pay for comparable quantity and quality of work'. Naturally the greatest advances were made where women took over male jobs because the men did not want low paid competitors for their jobs and thus the interests of male and female trade unionists converged.

Some war industry capitalists had endorsed the principle, their resistance undercut by the financial security given them by government cost-plus contracts which guaranteed profit. Their security was increased also by the small effect such government rulings had in practice, since sex-based job classifications went unchallenged, and women were rarely found working on the same job as a man at the same time. In practice they could thus support the principle of equal pay, without having to pay men and women equally.

Face up

Because the trade union movement did not really face up to the problems created for the existing equal pay policy, of the sex-based job-classification system, women carried on earning less than men even in the new industrial jobs. Some unions even allowed jobs to be reclassified to



More power to her elbow

stop women receiving the same rate of pay as the men who had done the same job before.

While the trade unions did not challenge the entire structure of job segregation, women could only benefit from equal pay policies where their immediate interests coincided with those of the men. The trade unions failed to take the issue of women's pay beyond the parameters of the government's guidelines.

Women also lost out in seniority arrangements. Some union contracts operated separate lists for men and women employees, others limited the seniority privileges of women — especially married women — to the duration of the war. In others, seniority was applied only to traditional women's jobs after the war. So women who had transferred to "men's jobs" during the war gained seniority only on their old jobs.

Such a lack of commitment to women's seniority indicated that the unions were committed to women members only for the duration of the war.

Where women's seniority rights were violated openly — such as where one General Motors plant put all its women workers on the midnight shift — women were inadequately supported by their union. The labour movement turned its undivided attention to the problems of inflation, strikes, internal struggles and impending anti-labour legislation.

Because working class women were not in a position to mobilise, the trade union movement ignored their grievances. The best channel for unifying working class women's interests would have been through the organised labour movement, that is the industrial unions. But tragically it was a movement still inherently sexist and racist although the basis of industrial unionism had supposedly been to organise all the unorganised.

The majority of women workers at the end of the war wanted to keep their jobs. But women were disproportionately targeted in the lay offs. A month after the end of the war 600,000 women had been laid off. Women were laid off at a rate 75% higher than men. Revealingly, the highest voluntary quit rate for women was in the traditional female sector of the labour force. The women in the higher paying "men's jobs" wanted to keep their jobs.

Women workers in the Detroit area actively disputed their exclusion from the post-war auto labour force. They picketed both plant employment offices and the headquarters of the UAW, in a partly successful protest. The women emphasised that the violations of women's seniority threatened the whole basis of the seniority principle for all workers — who were then coming under attack as the bosses, now that the war was over, made a big drive to take back advances won by the workers.

Recognition

But despite some national recognition of the legitimacy of the protests, discrimination against women in lay offs continued. It was management which attacked the women workers, but the UAW's dilatory response indicated that the Union did not seriously consider fighting the sexual stratification of the workforce.

With the reconversion of industry to peacetime production, the new workers taken on were overwhelmingly men. Industry wide, most of the laid off women were able to find jobs, but only after a period of unemployment had persuaded them to accept lower paid jobs. Women's average earnings dropped as they moved back into traditionally female jobs in light industry, and into work

in the clerical and service sectors.

The war period had presented an opportunity to challenge the sexual division of labour. But for a challenge to have been organised a greater class consciousness would have been needed in the labour movement. Organised labour would have had to take on board the concerns of the specially oppressed women and be prepared to fight on them.

The issue should not have centred divisively on men's or women's rights to jobs (or as it came to be seen, women's right to jobs versus the right to work of the veterans returning from the war), but on the right of all workers, women and men, to jobs in a full-employment economy.

When laid off, women went to the United States Employment Service seeking similar industrial jobs to their wartime positions. But women had never been considered permanent workers in the new industries they had entered.

So these women were often denied unemployment benefit because they were said to be limiting their employability by seeking unsuitable employment! Theoretically, claimants had the right to refuse jobs outside their previous occupational classification, but officials had definite preconceptions about what was 'women's work', and decided accordingly.

With the onset of the 1950s a positive public image of women workers was lost once again — to society in general and to women themselves too. The working class women who had been employed before the war and still could not indulge themselves in the 'pleasures' of domesticity were once again faced with only the option of low pay. Such women were joined by increasing numbers of married women taking jobs in the burgeoning service and clerical sectors.

Postworkers fight for 40 hour week

The Post Office has refused to meet the union's demand for a 40 hour week, and union leaders must now call a strike ballot. John Bloxam reports.

According to postal workers' union general secretary Alan Tuffin, talks between the UCW (Union of Communications Workers) and the Post Office are near to breakdown on the union's demand for a 3 hour reduction in the working week.

Working a 43-hour week — including Saturday — postal workers' basic hours are longer than those of most other groups of workers. Year after year a reduction in the working week has been a major issue for the rank and file, only to see their union leadership, again and again drop the demand at the first opportunity.

At the 1987 UCW Conference the executive was pinned down by a resolution from Liverpool demanding a shorter working week — a three hour reduction for all sections — with no strings. A deadline of 1 September was put on negotiations. The union was committed to ballot members about industrial action if the Post Office did not concede.

As Billy Hayes from the Liverpool Amalgamated branch explained to Socialist Organiser, the 1 September deadline was important. It tied the

executive to a particular date and "if we are going to fight the Post Office it is best to do it in the run-up to Christmas."

With postal workers coming under increasing pressure to work harder, productivity increasing and Post Office profits blossoming, feeling among the rank and file is running high. They already have behind them a whole series of successful local strikes against the Post Office's attempts to introduce casual labour.

There will certainly be considerable anger at the Post Office's offer of a one-hour reduction, with the costs to be shared jointly by the workers and the customers in the form of a stamp price increase.

The EC blatantly overturned one conference decision already, so the UCW rank and file can have little confidence that they will fight for a shorter working week. But they cannot avoid having a ballot. The executive is likely to hold this, using a weak campaign to signal their reluctance to fight, and hope that a resigned and disillusioned membership will get them off the hook by turning down industrial action.

The rash of successful unofficial action that has taken place shows the clear feeling on the issue amongst the rank and file. The Post Office can be defeated on this issue. The campaign must start now by rank and file activists for a clear 'yes' vote for the industrial action that can make that happen.

YORKSHIRE MINES

Reinstate Ted Scott!

Yorkshire miners will meet on 26 August to discuss action against the new disciplinary code. Richard Bayley reports.

Ted Scott, the victimised Selby miner, has rejected British Coal

Rolling strikes?

Before Wednesday's delegate meeting of all Yorkshire pits to decide on industrial action in support of Ted Scott, Socialist Organiser spoke to Johnny Stones, the Frickley branch delegate:

"There is a chance of some legal action from British Coal, apparently because last Wednesday's delegate meeting was chaired by a member of the NUM executive. They are hinting that the union's officers might therefore be responsible for any action decided.

"Next Wednesday's meeting is a direct result of last week's, to decide after all branches have been consulted and mandated. The favourite looks like the idea of rolling strikes in the four old panel areas, each in turn. My branch mandated for all-out strike, but it is not likely to happen. Rolling strikes could create some division.

"The ballot result on the disciplinary code is good. But without Frickley we would not have got 77%. We gave it all the publicity".

management's 'offer' of a pit transfer instead of a straight sacking.

Ted, secretary of Stillingfleet NUM, was sacked last month for 'gross misconduct', but was not even given a proper charge sheet in time for his appeal. British Coal sacked him for publicly standing by NUM policy of not cutting coal in overtime.

Regional British Coal management offered Ted Scott a job at Wheldale, a Yorkshire pit with only 9 months coal left. The offer was conditional on Ted Scott signing an undertaking that he would not be involved in any industrial action. Ted rejected this and has stated his intention to fight to get his old job back.

There is a delegate meeting of all Yorkshire pits at Kellingley on Wednesday, 26 August, to decide on industrial action in support of Ted Scott. The bosses have responded to this by threatening pit closures if strike action is taken. Albert Tuke, North Yorkshire Area Director, has announced a hit list of 7 pits that British Coal are prepared to close. They say they are adamant that Ted Scott will not work in the key Selby complex again.

Wednesday's delegate meeting will be deciding what form of industrial action should take rather than whether there should be any. The Selby pits have been arguing for a programme of rolling strikes covering the whole Yorkshire Area. At the weekend Frickley branch voted to support all-out action of the whole Area. Other South Yorkshire pits will be supporting an Area overtime ban. Already Hatfield Main has started such a ban.



Pickets at Peckham garage in South London. Photo: Ian Swindale.

Bus bosses retreat

After two 24 hour strikes by London busworkers, the bosses have backed down slightly — but not for long. The breathing space must be used to prepare for wider strike action, argues John Payne.

All of London's red buses were put off the road again last Friday by a 24 hour strike by garage engineers.

These were joined, at the last minute, by the drivers and conductors, when Norbiton Garage workers were told to either accept the new deal and stop striking or get the sack. The new deal involves a slight change in the wage cuts (£3.55 an hour instead of £3.30) and the lengthening of hours (39.6 hours instead of 43).

Despite the sacking threat, Norbiton voted on Friday to reject the deal and stopped work with the rest of the fleet.

Their strength and determination to fight has been proved right. Management — London Buses Ltd. (LBL) — have handed the routes back to London Regional Transport (LRT) to be put out again to tender. They could not impose the worsening of conditions on the bus workers.

When a company tenders to run a bus route, they present LRT with their costing for the amount of mileage they intend to cover. When they win the tender and run the routes they are penalised (fined) by LRT for any mileage not covered.

London Buses Ltd. were being fined thousands of pounds over the lost mileage at Norbiton and the strength of the workers there was such that LBL had to hand the jobs to LRT rather than make the workers pay.

LBL had used the fact that it was compelled to compete for the tendered routes in Norbiton as an excuse to try and cut wages and lengthen hours. But it is clear that there had been no real competition. When LBL handed the routes back to LRT on Friday, they were immediately asked if they could continue to run the routes on a temporary basis, with no fines, while new offers to run the routes were looked for.

The situation now, therefore, is that LBL are still running the services in Norbiton and it is unclear either whether or when the sacking notices will go out.

It is certain, however, that LBL will not give up yet. The plans for

London's buses cover the whole fleet and are laid years in advance. Norbiton has been a setback for them, but the union must be prepared to fight again.

They have between now and when the sacking notices go out at Norbiton to build up a solidarity and determination across the fleet to stop management's plans in their tracks.

The union should be balloting the members now for indefinite fleet-wide strike action from the moment any sacking notices are received. They should be campaigning amongst the branches very clearly for a "yes" vote by speaking at emergency branch meetings all over London and by sending out regular and clear information bulletins about the situation at Norbiton and about the plans for the rest of the fleet.

And they should be starting a vigorous public information campaign to explain to bus-users what is being planned for their services and why they should support the bus workers.

Members in some garages, Peckham, for example, are becoming restless and demoralised by the way the strikes have been handled so far.

Last Friday's action was called at the very last minute and many people did not know about it until they turned up for work.

The lack of information from the union meant that few people understood exactly why they were out. And many are fed up with the 24-hour stoppages that they feel have little effect except to lose them wages.

CPSA

DHSS strikes isolated

By Steve Battlemuch, CPSA DHSS section executive (in a personal capacity)

Plans to spread the strike action now going on at individual offices to all DHSS offices have been thwarted by the Broad Left-led CPSA DHSS section executive.

The action is against the use of casual staff in the changeover from

Even despite this sorry state of affairs very few people crossed the picket lines on Friday across the whole fleet and no buses left the garages at all.

The union leadership now has a breathing space in which to put these matters right; to build the strike, not to dampen it down. If it doesn't then there is an urgent need for a rank and file organisation to do that job.

**On Thursday 27 August all of London's buses will be off the road again in anger at the murder of a conductor, Babu Shah, who was stabbed to death on his bus three weeks ago.*

The day of action, on the day of his funeral, is also a mark of respect to the family of Babu Shah who was murdered just for doing his job.

It is also to indicate that we do not accept attacks and murder as a normal part of our job.

Many garages will be sending buses carrying bus workers and wreaths to the funeral and some will be organising marches in their own areas.

**London Country Buses Ltd, which runs services to the south-west of London, are now telling their workers to accept conditions similar to those at Norbiton. This is proof that different managements confer over wages and conditions. They no doubt believed that by now, LBL would have foisted the new deal on Norbiton workers and that the fighting would be over.*

But they didn't reckon with the strength of the workers there and they will now find it much more difficult to attack their workforce.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Miners ballot in van

By Paul Whetton

Despite the fact that the Coal Board allowed us no facilities to carry out the ballot in Notts, about half our members voted. 92.7% were in favour of action!

At Bevercotes we had to hire a furniture van to hold the ballot at the top of the pit land. Even then, instructions were issued to bus drivers not to stop the buses going into the pit to let members off to vote. And they say they believe in democracy!

Despite all that we still got the sort of turn-out which shows the depth of feeling on the issue.

It has come on the news since the ballot result that Notts has asked for a dispensation from any action. It is not true! What the media have distorted is a statement made by Henry Richardson when he expressed the hope that the NEC, in deciding any action, would take the difficult and unique position of the Notts NUM members into account.

We are the only coalfield in which the NUM is a minority. But there is no question but that, once the NUM NEC decides the course of action, the Notts Area will go along with it — whatever special problems we might face. We will continue to stand by the national union as we have done all along.

Miners defy the Tories

From front page

in the different coalfields, and now the ballot result, will show them that they have to think again.

Despite British Coal's harassment, despite the hostile media, despite all the prophets of doom and gloom, both the turnout to vote and the size of the majority for action show that the rank and file have the determination and the confidence to fight back.

The spark that lit the flame was the strike action by Frickley miners against the disciplinary code. It was spread by picketing throughout South Yorkshire. It put the spotlight on the issue and shows us that we had an alternative to just lying defeated in a ditch and letting them walk all over us with their nasty new code. It also put pressure on the National Executive, and at the same time gave it an issue around which it could unite miners.

Rank and file miners throughout the industry recognise what British Coal is up to.

We know they want to use the code to 'discipline' miners into submission.

We know that immediately they are preparing the way for six day working and nine hour shifts.

We know they want to be able to sack at will activists and union officials for doing their job, in an attempt to destroy the NUM.

So we are saying 'enough is enough'.

That's why this week Yorkshire miners will be voting on what form of industrial action to take in protest at the sacking of Ted Scott, the NUM branch secretary at Stillingfleet in North Yorkshire.

That's the meaning of this magnificent ballot result. Having got the result we wanted, now we must act on it.



Strikes in South Korea

Strike wave engulfs South Korea

EVERY CAPITALIST dream is stalked by its own inbuilt nightmare — working-class revolt.

South Korea is the capitalist dream realised. Since the end of the Korean war in 1953, the South Korean capitalist economy has grown and developed phenomenally. Since the early '60s it has grown, probably, faster than any economy has ever done before for a sustained period.

Stimulated by the economic spin-offs from the Vietnam war, South Korea has become a model of how a Third World country can develop a

By John O'Mahony

modern economy. But in building capitalist industry South Korea's rulers were also, and inescapably, creating a working class in South Korea.

Korea's 'economic miracle' was built by exploiting the Korean working class. Now the Korean workers have revolted: the capitalist nightmare bursts in on the capitalist dream of success. The future gravediggers of Korean capitalism are becoming a force to reckon with.

For six weeks South Korea has been in the grip of a rolling strike

wave. Dockers, carworkers, busworkers, shipyard workers, fishermen — wave after wave of workers have struck for better wages and conditions.

The Korean economy has thrived on workers doing long hours for miserable wages. Now the contributors of that cheap labour say it won't be so cheap any more. They are demanding wage increase of 40 per cent, and cuts in the working week, which at present is about 60 hours, including compulsory overtime.

Since 1980 labour productivity has doubled, but wages have gone up on-

ly 40%. Korean capitalists have kept the difference. In Korea as elsewhere, women workers are treated even worse, being paid considerably less than men.

Strikes are illegal in South Korea, and the only unions allowed legally are strictly controlled by the government. Only one in eight of Korea's industrial workers is in a union.

The workers have been encouraged by the dramatic political changes won by the courageous waves of student protest which swept through South Korea earlier in the year. In June the military dictatorship gave ground to the struggle for democracy which had swept through South Korea's cities. A general election for the presidency is to be held in December.

The workers have learned from the students. And they are saying that if there is to be democratisation, then they want to benefit from it.

The question now must be whether the military government will intervene and crack down heavily on the workers. So far the government's response — by the standards of a country where strikers have always faced brutal repression from police and private company thugs — has been restrained. It will not stay restrained for ever.

British workers should do everything we can to help the Korean workers rise off their knees. It is a great boost to our cause that the new working class in countries like South Korea, which have emerged as industrial powers in the last two or three decades, are joining the ranks of international labour.

We should establish direct contact through our unions with the South Korean unions; and give them every practical assistance possible.

AUSTRALIA

MINERS SET TO STRIKE

Tony Brown in Sydney, Australia, spoke to Socialist Organiser about the Australian coal-miners' fight for jobs.

Australian miners are set to strike to save jobs.

On Monday 23rd, mine-owners at Warkworth, in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, suspended 300 miners for refusing to work longer shifts.

Three weeks ago, Bob Hawke's federal Labor government fixed up a 'moratorium' for one month on sackings and strikes. But the mine-owners have continued to sack small numbers. The moratorium ends on Friday 28th and mine-owners have given notice of 3,000 sackings from that date. They want to cut another

5,000 jobs in the pits (out of 30,000) in the next 18 months.

The Miners' Federation called a 24-hour strike after the 300 were suspended at Warkworth, but put it off after Bob Hawke intervened to get the suspensions postponed to Friday.

Export

But strikes seem certain after Friday.

Australian coal-mining is not a declining industry. Coal is Australia's biggest export. The pits are mostly owned by a few big private companies, which make large profits.

But 50% of Australia's coal exports go to Japan. Japan has been

cutting down its demand for coal and the price it will pay, because of the decline of its 'smokestack' industries and the lower price of oil. Because of diplomatic pressure, it has also agreed to buy more coal from the US.

The mine-owners want to make the workers pay for these difficulties.

The union has demanded that the government set up a national marketing board so that the companies do not negotiate with the Japanese separately, but the Labor leaders are born-again free-marketeters.

Australia's last big national coal strike was in 1949 demanding nationalisation of the mines, a 35-hour week and a pay rise. Then, too, there was a Labor government, but it sent in troops against the strikers and jailed union officials.



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