

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

## South Africa: miners go back

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Photo IDAF\$ Report

# DON'T FORGET SACKED MINERS!

## A message to the TUC from victimised miner Paul Whetton

The ancient Romans, who conquered much of Europe had a saying to sum up how they dealt with those they had defeated — "Woe to the vanquished".

Enslavement, taxes, harassment, exploitation, divide and rule — that was what the saying meant.

That idea also sums up the way the Tories have treated the miners since the defeat of the great strike early in 1985.

Enslavement? Not quite — the Tories haven't got round to reintroducing slavery yet. But they have done everything they can to rub our noses in it and tighten the screws. The latest example is the foul new disciplinary code.

Harassment? They have harried and bullied honest trade unionists going about their usual trade union business. The case of Ted Scott is now under the spotlight. He was sacked for being a good trade unionist.

## Profits

Exploitation? They are relentlessly pushing through a drive for vastly higher productivity in general but especially for a few super pits employing only a fraction of those who are now miners. They are preparing to 'privatise' the mines, that is, sell off the most productive and profitable mines to their big business backers.

Divide and rule? They have done that alright! They have used the narrow and selfish attitude of most Notts miners — "Don't bother us about the rest of the industry, we're doing alright here" — who scabbed in the strike. They have split the NUM, using scab-herding scumbags like Roy Lynk as their agents and tools.

"Woe to the vanquished!" For 2½



Notts sacked miners and wives at the Tolpuddle Martyrs demonstration. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL

years they have tried to rub it in. Truth to tell, they have often got away with murder. Not any more — the big ballot majority in favour of fighting back now marks the turn of the tide.

Opposition to the code of discipline is the issue that has united miners around Scargill and convinced a big majority that if we don't fight

back now, they'll grind us under their heels even further.

But there is another big issue and we should never forget it. **Two miners are still in jail with years to serve and over 350 miners are still victimised 2½ years after the end of the strike.**

There is an unanswerable case for the reinstatement of every victimised

miner, whatever particular category they fall into. Really there are only two categories.

There are those dismissed, who nevertheless ended up with no charge to answer, either in a court or in front of British Coal. There are those who were charged and then had their charges thrown out.

There should be no question about

any of these miners. They should be immediately reinstated with full compensation. It is a question of elementary justice.

Then there are those found guilty of some 'offence'. But they are not 'ordinary criminals'. They broke the law in the fight for their jobs, pits

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WHETTON'S  
WEEK



## Solidarity with black miners

**I was terribly disappointed to see that the South African mineworkers have been defeated and gone back.**

We have to recognise the terrible difficulties they organise under. They withstood the difficulties for three weeks. I hoped they would be able to withstand them for longer. But I am sure that the experience — both for the mineworkers and the South African NUM will lead to future action.

They have made mistakes and they have learnt invaluable lessons. I hope those lessons are built on and they continue to fight to build the union and for the reinstatement of all their sacked comrades.

We should certainly continue our solidarity and raise money for them.

## British Coal's code

I do not think the NUM in Britain has a great deal to talk to ACAS about on British Coal's new disciplinary code. We have made our position quite clear, and that now includes the reinstatement of miners sacked under the code.

It is British Coal that has to do the talking, to get itself out of a tight corner. I think the simplest way out for them is to abandon the disciplinary code that they foisted on us. They should sit down with the national union and find something that is mutually acceptable.

The NUM has a massive mandate for action, and I am sure that we will not fall into the trap of NACODS — get a massive mandate and then leave it lying useless on the table. We have got 28 days to implement the action, or else re-run the ballot.

Some rank and file miners I have spoken to hope that the Coal Board will see sense and back off, and avoid a fight. But others are spoiling for a fight. They have got some old scores to settle.

I need to repeat a point I made in last week's diary, to help ensure it gets well known. The Notts NUM took part in the ballot and got over a 92% majority for action. There is no question of us fudging.

We will take part in any action decided, whatever the consequences. If we lose members as a result then we will have to live with it, but we are not ducking out of anything.

## Reinstate sacked miners!

Discussion in Yorkshire on action over the sacking of Ted Scott, the Stillingfleet branch secretary, seems to be thrown in with national action over the disciplinary code. The Yorkshire leadership — and the national union — cannot allow British Coal to get away with sacking Ted Scott.

If we are seen to weaken in any shape or form over Ted Scott, then in a very short space of time leading activists, branch officials and committee men all over the Yorkshire coalfield will be in the same situation. We have got to put our foot down now.

My own case is very similar to Ted Scott's, and we are going back to the Tribunal on 9 September to argue for reinstatement at my own colliery. Haslam needs to be told that deportations, sackings and such victimisation are not on. Reinstatement is the only answer.

But I do not want us to be talking about the reinstatement of just a few individuals, when we still have over 350 miners still sacked for the crime of fighting for their jobs and communities. We do not want individuals to be paraded off until we get down to a hard-core with no chance of getting their jobs back.

The NUM should insist on a complete review of all the cases, with the right to sit in on that review. We do not want any more so-called reviews behind closed doors. We want every single case dealt with.

## Rally in Notts

This Saturday, 5 September, the Notts miners have their gala in Mansfield. We hope that miners from all over the country will come, demonstrate their solidarity with the Notts miners, and shake a fist underneath the nose of Lynk, Prendergast and British Coal.

We need to show them that the NUM is united and prepared to stand up and fight. I would urge everybody to come — by bus, train, bike, even walking!

# Australian cops kill Aboriginals

**Fiona Martin reports on how Australian Aboriginals are fighting back against racism.**

**Young black Aboriginals, mostly men, are being arrested and summarily killed all across Australia. In 1987 alone, 14 Aboriginal men have died in police custody. That is the equivalent of over 1000 non-Aboriginal prisoners.**

The Committee to Defend Black Rights has documented 70 black deaths in custody during the '70s and '80s.

Every effort is made to hush up the facts. Police and prison warders refuse to answer questions. Government departments hinder the collection of evidence. Legal authorities offer 'expert opinion' as to the cause of deaths (which invariably blames the victims). The media is indifferent or lukewarm on the issue.

Relatives of the victims, backed by the Committee to Defend Black Rights and the Aboriginal communities and their supporters have made strenuous and consistent efforts to bring those responsible to justice.

In September 1986, six relatives toured the country, speaking of their own tragedies and calling for relatives of other victims to come forward with information.

## Deaths

Local Watch Committees have been established across Australia to monitor Aboriginal deaths in custody and to report and prevent abuses of the human rights of Aboriginals held in custody. They have drawn attention to those responsible and condemned them.

Together they form a united voice of outrage demanding a Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody with its terms of reference to be decided in full consultation with

Aboriginal communities.

In Western Australia relatives had to wait until after the state elections before enquiries were begun. Clyde Holding, Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, has said a Royal Commission is too expensive. Instead there is to be a Parliamentary Enquiry with 'broad terms of reference' decided without any consultation with Aboriginal communities.

Holding's terms of reference implicitly blame the victims.

The enquiry is intended to reduce the 'chronic tendency among Aboriginals towards repetition of criminal and anti-social behaviour problems'. It is not Aboriginal anti-social behaviour that needs addressing but that of white racists, particularly amongst police and jailors.

The Parliamentary Enquiry will also examine the 'role of Aboriginal Legal Services'.

Finally, in case you're wondering, the Enquiry does promise to investigate 'some' Aboriginal deaths in custody. There is a huge gap between

Holding's proposed enquiry and the just demands of relatives and Aboriginal communities.

Holding's proposed enquiry is an attempt to whitewash a racist issue yet again. It is the racist white society and its systems that need rehabilitating. Australian society sends Aboriginals to jail in disproportionately high numbers and allows informal apartheid to operate socially, economically and in the legal system and parliament.

## Inquiry

The Campaign Against Aboriginal Deaths in Custody has already reduced the brutality and bashing in some lockups.

But until a full public enquiry into black deaths in custody is held, and those responsible are brought to justice, Aboriginals throughout Australia will continue to fear that a jail sentence could end as a death sentence.

(Adapted from Socialist Fight).

## Philippines

# Coup is symptom of instability

**A weekend of violence in Manila, capital of the Philippines, followed an attempted coup by army officers led by Colonel Gregorio Honason, a close associate of sacked Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrilo.**

The right-wing rebels bombed TV and radio stations and took over the military base of Camp Aguinaldo. Two days of street fighting followed which left 55 dead and over 300 injured. Colonel Honason fled the country with government troops being ordered to shoot to kill.

The attempted coup followed the country's first general strike. On Wednesday 26th transport was brought to a halt, and factories and offices badly affected. The May 1 Movement (KMU), the country's largest left-wing union, called a one-day strike in protest at government plans to impose huge increases in the price of fuel.

Under pressure from the union, President Corazon Aquino reduced the proposed rise from 20% to 15%. However, this failed to satisfy the strikers and the protest went ahead.

In the course of the dispute police fired on demonstrators. They arrested two union leaders and 55 union members for sedition.

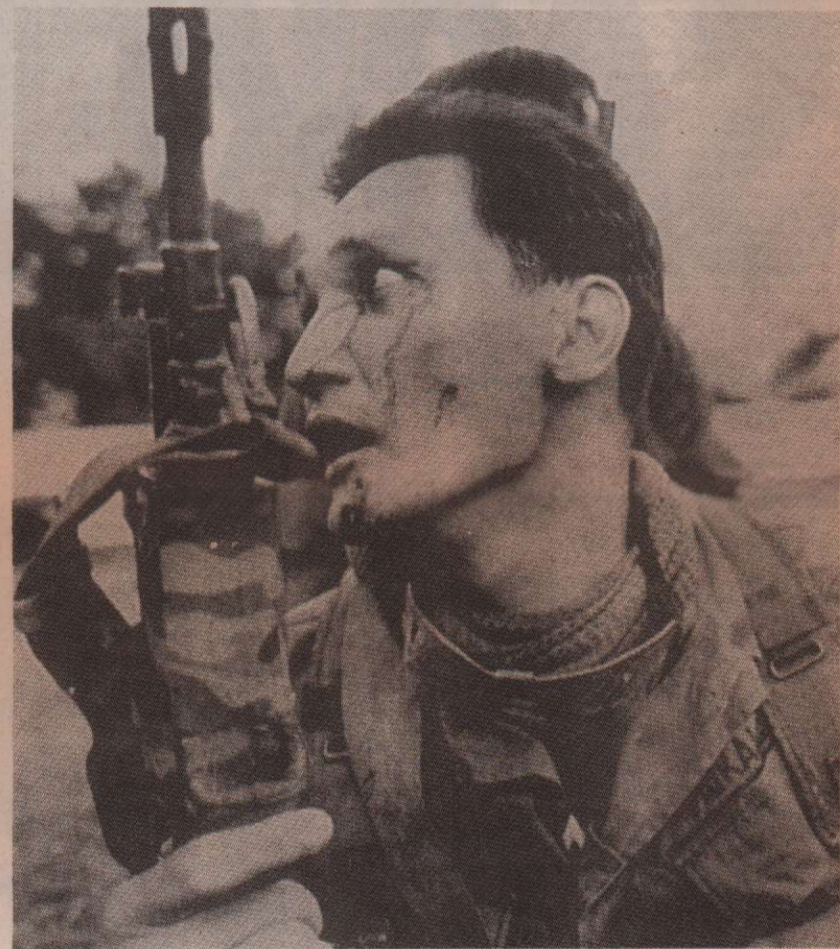
In the town of Bocoor, 1000 demonstrators blocked the roads.

Aquino's attempt to placate the

US and pursue anti-working class policies while maintaining a liberal democratic facade is doomed to failure. Calls to face the 'economic reality' of the situation fall on the deaf ears of a working class which still pays the price for a worsening economic crisis.

Meanwhile, the army is smarting from escalating losses in its campaign against left-wing guerrillas. Discontent about pay and conditions of service is growing in the ranks.

The attempted coup is a symptom of growing instability. The strike, while it only lasted a day, is a sign of something even more significant — the growing strength and militancy of an increasingly strong and confident working class.



## Baltic states

# Demonstrations against occupation

By Tony Jain

**Last week hundreds of people protested in the Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia to mark the 48th anniversary of the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939.**

That was when these three nations were forcibly incorporated into Stalin's Russia.

Despite evidence that Stalin got the three nations in return for giving the Nazis a free run in western Poland,

the Soviet authorities today still maintain that Stalin only entered into the pact because of the reluctance of Britain and France to make an alliance with Moscow.

The protests in the Baltic come hard on the heels of a series of others in recent months by a number of

minority nationalities including Jews, Kazakhs, and Crimean Tatars.

The demonstrations bring a number of important political issues sharply into focus. One of the most important of these is: how far will the policies of glasnost (openness) be tolerated by hardliners within the Kremlin bureaucracy?

Recent evidence suggests that many Politbureau members, including Ligachev, Gorbachev's deputy, believe glasnost is going too far and should be curbed.

It is perhaps not surprising that Ligachev and others are concerned that the lid should not be lifted too far. For if it were lifted, it would reveal a shameful record of mass suppression of whole nations and discrimination against minorities.

The USSR today contains within its borders well over 100 different nationalities and ethnic minorities. These include the largest oppressed nation in the world — the Ukraine — and other smaller minorities like the Jews and Volga Germans.

In the run-up to the 7 November conference on 'Workers in the Eastern bloc', Socialist Organiser will carry a series of articles about these nationalities and their struggles.

## Ireland

# Haughey retreats over no-jury courts

**The Dublin government of Charles J. Haughey has given up on its demand for three judges, rather than one, in Northern Ireland's no-jury courts.**

Under the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed in November 1985, the British government is obliged to listen to what Dublin says on such questions and seek to reach agreement. But the British government has refused to budge, and Dublin has settled for some smaller change in the system,

which it hopes to see agreed at the talks in October.

The biggest Catholic party in Northern Ireland, the SDLP, has joined with the opposition parties in Southern Ireland in criticising Haughey's climbdown. SDLP deputy leader Seamus Mallon said that "The Anglo-Irish Agreement is in danger of dying of boredom."

Since the Agreement was signed practically nothing has been done to improve things for Northern Ireland's Catholic minority. But,

partly because of the vehement Protestant opposition to the Agreement, Catholic support for it is still pretty solid, if unenthusiastic.

From the British government's point of view, the Agreement has made progress by forcing the Unionist political leaders into talks with Westminster on terms not at all of the Unionists' liking.

The government sees no reason to prejudice that progress by carrying out any reforms that would inflame Protestant prejudice.



# A charter for workers' rights

## EDITORIAL

Next week the TUC meets. It should be putting down markers and mapping out guidelines for a fight against the Tories. It should be discussing a working class perspective, philosophy and vision to counterpose to the Tories' dog-eat-dog 'enterprise culture'.

Instead, the union leaders will be continuing their retreat. They will be talking 'new realism' and deciding how to scale down their demands.

A rank and file movement is urgently needed which links up militants in different unions, fights for solidarity, and shows a different direction.

The TUC used to talk about resisting the Tories' anti-union laws. Vaingloriously, union leaders said they would ignore the laws and continue 'business as usual'. Now they have given up. They do no more than make formal protests against the Tories' plans to bring in more laws.

The job of arguing for a workers' alternative to those Tory laws has been left to the rank and file. *Socialist Organiser* proposes the "Workers' Charter" below as a basis for discussion. Most of it is adapted from a pamphlet published earlier this year by the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers.

### The right to strike

There must be a clear right to strike and to withdraw co-operation from an employer. The right to take industrial action is an internationally recognised right, and should be clearly recognised in law.

Under previous trade union law, which has recognised the right to strike only in a back-handed way, by granting unions 'immunity' from other laws, workers have suffered from the ability, and often the determination of the judges to 'discover' new forms of 'unlawfulness' on the part of workers and their unions taking or organising action.

At present, workers taking industrial action are in breach of their contracts of employment, and in theory may be sued for damages. More unfortunately, it is a civil wrong to induce a breach of contract of employment, or interfere with the contract's performance, except where immunities are still provided by statute.

We think it wrong that the exercise of a basic right should be held to be unlawful in this sense. Therefore, we



New realism was no answer at Wapping. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report.

propose that the contract of employment should be *suspended* during the period of the action.

The existing employer's right to sack strikers — used by Rupert Murdoch against the printworkers on his newspapers — should be scrapped.

The families of those taking part in industrial action should be able to claim supplementary benefit without deduction on account of strike pay. Any person whose contract has been suspended because of a strike or other industrial action, should be entitled to basic state benefits like anyone else if their requirements exceed their resources.

And where workers are locked out by their employer they should receive full unemployment benefit as well as supplementary benefit.

### The right to picket

There should be an unequivocal legal right to take part in picketing outside any workplace or employer's business in furtherance of a dispute involving industrial action. This right would not be subject to restrictions on the number of participants, and lawful picketing would not be subject to restrictions on the number of participants, and lawful picketing would not constitute obstruction of the highway.

The right to picket would include the right to stop vehicles and speak to driver and occupants for a reasonable period.

Pickets, or workers occupying a workplace, should have a right to defend themselves against strike-breakers.

### The right to organise

Union officials should have a legal right to access to workplaces, unionised or non-union. Individual workers should have a legal right to distribute union literature and recruit to the union.

Where no union is recognised, the following individual rights should be guaranteed by law and need to be considerably strengthened from the present complicated position:

1) the right of every employee to membership of an independent trade union and to participate in trade union activities;

2) improved time off for union members and officials for union duties, activities and training.

Unions should have a legal right to get the workforce balloted on union recognition, with the result of the ballot legally binding on the employer.

Where there is a recognition agreement, the law should guarantee the right of officials of the recognised union to use the employer's premises to hold union meetings during working hours, and to use facilities including notice board, room, desk, telephone and storage facilities.

### The right to negotiate

Employers should be legally compelled to negotiate with a recognised union on any grievances or issues it raises.

A recognised union should have the right to be consulted in advance of key company decisions and the right to information on any matter relevant to collective bargaining, with a presumption of relevance in the union's favour.

### The right to safety

Workers should have a 'right to know' about all risks and hazards associated with machinery or materials they are working with.

Accredited safety representatives should have the right to stop the work where there is a risk of serious injury, disease or other harm. The job would stop until a satisfactory in-

dependent report had been received by the Health and Safety Executive. (This is similar to the position in Sweden). Employees should enjoy full earnings protection while the job is stopped.

### The right to trade union independence

The law should remove restrictions so as to permit a trade union to undertake any lawful activity decided upon by itself which is intended to benefit its members. This would mean, in particular, the repeal of the Trade Union Acts 1913 and 1984 which only permit *political activity* to be carried out by trade unions subject to heavy restrictions.

It is unacceptable for statute to prescribe the appropriate form of democracy in any union. Self-regulation and guidance from the TUC should take the place of the balloting provisions of the 1984 Trade Union Act, and trade unions should move the emphasis back to workplace and branch discussion and decision-making. Participation in the union at workplace and branch level should be encouraged by all means possible, and should be supported by the law.

\*The Haldane Society pamphlet, 'A Workers' Charter', is available, price £1, from John Hendry, 15 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, London WC2A 3UH.

### Don't forget sacked miners

From page 1

and communities. Thatcher used semi-militarised police squads to break the strike and with scant regard for the letter of the law. One law for the government and the bosses, another for striking miners!

They have already been punished once, by fines, by imprisonment or by some other sentence. This society has extracted its 'debt'.

**They should get their jobs back now!**

As a rank and file miner, as a trade unionist and as a member of the Labour Party, I find it totally unacceptable that some of those miners might be separated off, and given their jobs back while the rest — the 'convicted' — are left to rot.

Gross injustice has been done

against these mineworkers for taking their proper part in an industrial dispute. That is something the labour movement should never accept.

We must fight to get *all* victimised miners their jobs back.

These men are martyrs to Thatcherism and heroes of the labour movement. They are in jail now or on the dole because of the miserable failure of the rest of the labour movement to rally and help the miners fight Thatcher in 1984.

Don't abandon them. Never forget the men in jail and the men on the dole! They are there for you and for the rest of the labour movement.

**Paul Whetton is the secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts. He was sacked by British Coal for putting up an NUM poster at work.**

## PRESS GANG

### Raging ego

By Jim Denham

Press coverage of the SDP's bitter internal feuding has been entirely devoid of political content.

For once the reptiles cannot be accused of trivialising things or of ignoring great issues of principle; the battle itself has been a bizarre ritualised showdown with no discernible ideological content on either side.

The real issue is Dr David Owen, is he Man of Destiny or Raging Ego?

The Guardian had no doubts; 'The only conclusion is that Dr Owen is against merger not because it would be ideologically incompatible for him but because he judged in June (quite possibly wrongly) that he would not be elected leader of the new party...'

Dr Owen in majesty is no longer the SDP. That is a personal tragedy of sorts, but it is no bad thing in the long run either.

The other paper that supported the Alliance at the last election, Today, takes the opposite view, 'Dr Owen is the politician with a long future before him. He is the only SDP personality with the courage, intelligence and that vital spark of political magic that the party needs to go places with the voters. Yesterday's vote to pursue merger talks with the liberals was a triumph of the drips over the rushing torrent of Dr Owen'.

The Independent which has never nailed its political colours to the mast, seemed to agree; 'What is now perfectly clear is that a merger will take place, but that it will involve no more than about 60% of the SDP and that those left behind will include many of the party's most vital and attractive members... the new merged party will be a weaker thing than the Alliance which it is designed to replace'.

In a desperate bid to uncover some sort of political coherence on one side or the other of the SDP split the Guardian unleashed Beatrix Campbell, the prominent Euro-Communist advocate of a cross party parliamentary popular front of women's MPs, to interview Rosie Barnes.

Unfortunately all Dr O's sidekick could come out with by way of political philosophy was, 'nostalgia for old fashioned labourism'.

This, predictably, did not go down at all well with Ms Campbell, who accused her of invoking "a tradition that was nothing if not patrician, sexist..."

Rosie Barnes was forced to admit that this did represent "a lack of logic" on her part, which is probably the nearest thing to honesty we'll ever have from either side of the SDP.

### Spanish lies

The Star's annual attack on the Spanish this year concerned King Juan Carlos' insulting remarks about drunken British tourists lowering the tone of his lovely holiday resorts.

Last year it was Blackie the Donkey (remember him?) and the Star held poor old Juan Carlos responsible for that business as well.

Anyway, a delegation of indignant Brits, organised by the Star, descended upon Juan Carlos' palace and extracted an apology from him last week.

His remarks had been taken out of context. He loves British tourists really.

The Star, usually so deferential towards royalty, reckons Juan Carlos is fair game because, of course, he's Spanish and therefore not a real king at all but just some 'jumped up foreigner'.

But why does Juan Carlos appear to be frightened of the Star and always apologise to it?

Could it be that he reckons bad publicity in the Star will affect the tourist trade? Doesn't he know that nobody believes the Star, not even its readers

**Socialist Organiser.**  
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.  
01-639 7965  
Latest date for reports: first post Monday or by phone, Monday evening.  
Editor: John O'Mahony.  
Typesetting: Upstream (TU) Ltd.,  
01-358 1344.

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



# GRAFFITI

## Miners face dole

500 miners will be added to the dole queue, already 20% of the workforce, next week. Their pit is being closed because it is not economic.

Where? Not in Thatcherite Britain but in 'socialist' Yugoslavia. A new bankruptcy law was brought in on 1 July, intended to force the closure of unprofitable enterprises. A construction company employing 1600 has already been shut down.

## Poll tax

Local authorities in Scotland have decided to cooperate with the government over introducing the poll tax.

The Councils will have to build up sizeable bureaucracies to collect the tax. A concerted refusal to cooperate by all Labour local authorities in Scotland could make it practically impossible for the Tory government to impose the tax.

But at a conference on Friday 28th, Scottish local authorities decided to go into consultations with the government about the tax.

## Casualties

According to Stephen Westaby, a surgeon in Oxford, more than 5,000 people die needlessly in Britain each year because of inadequate casualty services.

He called for a helicopter ambulance service for the most urgent cases, better staffing of casualty units, and an end to transfers of casualties from hospital to hospital.

The Tories' policy has been to concentrate casualty services in bigger hospitals, closing down many casualty units and making patients travel further for treatment.



Wapping security. Photo: Ian Swindale

## A scab's lot

Rupert Murdoch's printworks at Wapping is a hell-hole — according to one of the leading scabherders who recruited EETPU members for the plant before Murdoch sacked all his Fleet Street workers.

Stephen Seaman is the son of the secretary of the Southampton EETPU official who organised

the scab workforce, and he was chair of the Salaried Staff Council.

Now he has walked out, declaring that "Industrial relations have become progressively Victorian", the management has a "Ned Kelly attitude to the workforce", and it has "reneged on virtually all undertakings made to the workforce".

## State banquets cut

China's rulers seem to be weakening on Joseph Stalin's doctrine of the necessity of social inequality in the transition to socialism.

State banquets in China are to be cut to 90 minutes in length, and no more than five dishes. There used to be up to 40.

The government is also halting its drive to build luxury hotels in Peking. Even if Chinese workers

could afford to use these hotels — a cheeseburger and a Coke cost an average month's wages — they wouldn't be allowed to. They are reserved for foreigners.

The government may be trying to pre-empt workers' discontent. After decades of stable prices for basic goods, China saw vegetable prices rise 18%, and meat and poultry prices 11%, in the first half of this year. Top officials admit that workers' living standards are falling.

## Maternity

A recent survey in the Economist magazine shows that women workers in Sweden get 38 weeks maternity leave at 90% of normal earnings. They are entitled to another 46 weeks leave unpaid. And fathers have similar rights to take paternity leave.

Britain compares poorly. It is the only country in the EEC giving parents no legal right to time off to look after babies outside maternity leave. It gives no legal rights to paternity leave, though some trade unions have negotiated it.

Women's legal entitlement to paid maternity leave in Britain is only six weeks, at 90% of normal earnings. And nearly half of British women workers are not even entitled to that six weeks. You have to have been continuously employed for two years before the child is born.

# Tories attack the teachers

In Scotland the Tory government have decided to establish school boards for each school with more than 100 pupils. There will be a built-in majority for parents on each school board.

This is supposed to bring more democracy. But the real aim is to restrict teachers' autonomy and capacity for collective action.

School boards will have powers to raise money, control their own budgets, and 'hire and fire' staff.

The Tories are banking on parents refusing to employ union activists or teachers with progressive educational ideas.

The recent long-running dispute indicated the strength of teacher trade unionism. Infuriated by their helplessness in face of this and the cumbersome (to them) nature of the present system of sacking teachers, the Tories are banking on pressure from parents acting in their favour.

The situation is potentially a minefield. Teachers could become in-

involved in innumerable grievances against the school boards.

There will clearly be a conflict between the school board and the General Teaching Council (GTC) which acts as a watchdog of professional standards and on which the teachers' unions, especially the EIS, are represented.

The Tories apparently intend thereby to weaken the powers of the GTC.

## Boards

They hope that the school boards will be dominated by middle-class parents, mainly concerned with academic qualifications or vocational training in the narrowest sense of the term. The boards will therefore be hostile to teachers who stress a child-centred approach and are concerned to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds get a fair deal.

Scottish schools have traditionally

been slow to get parents involved, and socialists need to give much more thought as to the mechanisms to establish democratic control of education.

We need to think much more in terms of schools being run by committees on which parents and teachers and pupils and non-teaching staff are represented. In any such set-up, however, teachers must be in a majority position. In what other industry or service would socialists conceive of a system of self-management whereby the workers in the industry or service did not have overall control?

The EIS will campaign against the Tory proposed changes but the Tories are no doubt determined to put them into effect by 1990. Then we will probably have to try to ensure that parents elected to the school boards are sympathetic to teacher trade unionism, teacher autonomy and progressive education.

IAN McCALMAN, Glasgow

## Hungerford

## Tighter gun laws no answer

It was a pity that last week's SO did not comment on the clamour for tighter gun laws after Michael Ryan ran amok last week in Hungerford, shooting dead 16 people.

At first sight the US provides conclusive arguments in favour of their demand. Gun laws there are lax, and the murder rate is over twice as high as Britain's in proportion to population.

In Detroit it has become commonplace for teenagers to shoot each other dead. In Los Angeles motorists have been known to shoot other drivers because they are driving slowly or badly in the city's huge traffic jams.

At second glance, however, the issues are more complicated.

\*Countries with tighter gun laws do not always, by any means, have lower murder rates. West Germany has very tight gun laws, and a murder rate considerably higher than Britain's. France has a lot of guns used for sport, and a murder rate about the same as West Germany's.

\*The number of certificates in Britain for pistols, rifles and revolvers

## Where Ryan bought death off the shelf

by JOHN MERRITT

**Westbury Guns**  
Peter J. Michels  
12 Edward Street, Westbury, Wiltshire  
Telephone, Westbury 88

in the pretty market town of Westbury, which nuzzles the Wiltshire chalk downs and where flower shows take place throughout the summer, Michael Ryan had entered a little shop and bought what the

has gone down considerably in recent years, while the use of these weapons in violent crime has gone up. The number of shotgun licences has gone up slightly, but much less than the rate of violent crime.

Violent crime is not caused by guns, any more than it is caused by knives or poisons. It is caused by the way society is organised. The US has a high rate of violent crime not because there are a lot of guns there, but because it is a harsh, heartless society.

## Scotland

## Assembly is a diversion

In the aftermath of the General Election, the question of a Scottish Assembly has now become a major issue in the labour movement in Scotland. In recent issues of Socialist Organiser Ian McCALMAN has argued that we should support the call for an Assembly. I think he is wrong.

The most left-wing argument for an assembly is that it will provide a "pole of opposition" to the Tories' attacks on the Scottish working class. But the Tories have got the same attacks in store for all other workers as for Scottish workers.

There will be no shortage of "poles of opposition" to the Tories' attacks in the period ahead — the poll tax; enforced council rent rises; conscription onto YTS; anti-union laws...

Either socialists are able to develop such potential poles of opposition into real ones — in which case, an Assembly won't help. Or the leaders of the Scottish Labour Party and Scottish TUC will succeed in betraying the struggles — in which case they would also make sure that a Scottish

Assembly led no struggles.

The psychology and politics behind the call for an Assembly is not one of preparing for all-out battle with the Tories, but one of cutting and running.

Not "fight for an Assembly so as to better organise an all-out fight with the Tories" but "fight for an Assembly, to avoid an all-out fight with the Tories".

There is no class-struggle case for an Assembly — and no valid nationalist case either.

I have no brief for existing capitalist borders. But Scotland is not an "oppressed nation" (or even a nation) in any meaningful, Marxist sense. There is nothing progressive in the Scottish labour movement hived off from the overall British class struggle.

The idea of devolved government throughout Britain may arguably have some merits, but the isolated demand for a Scottish Assembly panders to Scottish nationalism and is more of a diversion from than a route to working class struggle against the Tories.

The Tories are taking Britain the same way — and that will mean more violent crime, however strict the gun laws, and however loud the calls for harsher sentences in court.

Most of that crime will not be (and is not) like Michael Ryan's rampage, and it would be foolish to base any policy on the idea that crime is mainly about deranged people running amok and killing at random.

Tighter gun laws might reduce the damage such people can do. Certainly it makes sense not to have guns just sold over the counter in supermarkets. But to want to go further, and have it made almost impossible for the ordinary person to get a gun, is to prescribe a cure — or, rather, possible quarter-cure — which is worse than the small part of the disease of violence which it might alleviate.

For such laws would not mean abolishing guns. They would mean making guns an even tighter monopoly of the police and army on one side, and determined criminals on the other. They would mean granting a total monopoly of armed violence to the forces which sustain the capitalist system. And that system — through the diseases and accidents caused by ruthless exploitation in the workplace, and through its wars — is guilty of vastly more murderous violence than the 50 or so recorded murders by shooting in Britain each year.

When the 'gun lobby' in the US talk about it being a fundamental right of the citizen in a democracy to bear arms, they have a point. We do need more social control and restraint over violence — but we will only get that by changing society.

GERRY GILBERT, CAMDEN

Send letters to Socialist Organiser PO Box 823, London SE15

ALEX CASEY, Glasgow



Maternity rights

## Realism

...so they have... up with... Cleaning Ser... and the GMB... single-union... agreement... so the... ports, the... est



# Miners retreat to fight another day

**The miners' strike in South Africa ended this Sunday (30th) with the NUM ordering its members back to work and accepting a small increase in fringe benefits. The mine bosses made no concessions on the central issue of wages and have not guaranteed all the strikers their jobs back. Anne Mack looks at the outcome.**

For three weeks some 320,000 black miners held out. It was the greatest strike in South African history. But in the end the miners were defeated.

They faced terrible odds. They had to do battle with the guns, tear gas and armoured cars of the police and mine security. The miners had only sticks, spears, pangas and machetes.

And the mine bosses had an even greater weapon than brute force — the threat of mass sackings. Though the strike was legal, so too were the mass sackings carried out by the Chamber of Mines.

In the last few days of the strike Anglo American — the largest mining house in the dispute — threatened to sack some 44,000 miners.

The sackings, and the big recruitment of scabs in South Africa's "homelands" and in the neighbouring black state of Lesotho, placed tremendous pressure on the strikers. Yet thousands of miners were still prepared to face unemployment, poverty and hunger in the rural areas rather than break the strike.

**Mass sackings late last week turned the tide against the NUM.**

Earlier in the week the Chamber of Mines had been forced to negotiate with the NUM. But after the strikers rejected the Chamber's offer, the mine bosses quickly switched to a more aggressive stance.

The strike was not helped by the fact that during the second week of battle the NUM was unable to pull out the majority of the 75,000 miners working for Gold Fields of South Africa.

That halted the NUM's plan to gradually increase the number of miners out on strike, and meant that some of the country's richest mines had not been hit.

The NUM had to fight alone. Though small groups of workers like the building union CAWU promised to black all work on the mines for the duration of the dispute, there was never full scale solidarity action from COSATU, the giant black union federation.

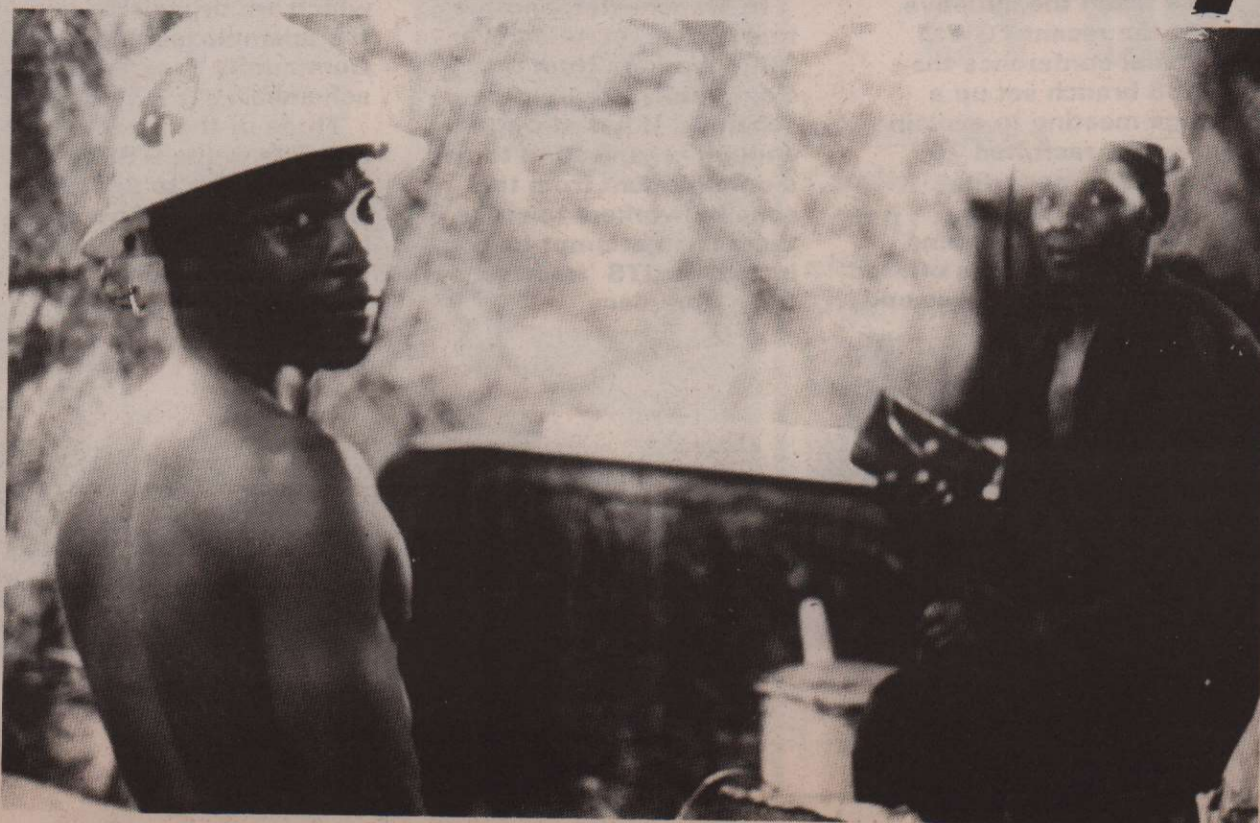
Organising solidarity for the miners was no simple task.

Isolated groups of workers on the docks or the railways risked having their action declared illegal and the full force of the state deployed against them if they took action such as a boycott of coal and gold shipments.

Isolation could have been avoided by a general strike. But that had problems, too. It could quickly catapult the workers' movement into an all-out, all-or-nothing conflict with the power of the state.

The balance of forces was not favourable for such a revolutionary showdown. The South African state has an almost complete and unchallenged monopoly of the means of violence, and few political restraints on using it.

In South Africa today, no general strike can be called lightly or without serious preparation — including military preparation.



Preparing for future battles: Photo: IDAF/Report

But if piecemeal solidarity was difficult, and a full general strike premature, what was the alternative? Could the miners hope to win on their own, simply through their economic pressure on the mine bosses' profits?

The dispute became a test of strength between the Chamber of Mines and the NUM. But the Chamber had a number of cards — mass sackings, large-scale scabbering and further state intervention — up its sleeve. The NUM had no further cards to play — especially after it had failed at Gold Fields of South Africa.

The only way the miners could have given themselves more cards to play was by campaigning to make preparation for solidarity action — up to and including a general strike — part of the preparation for their strike.

In the circumstances the NUM found itself in towards the end of last week, the union leadership was right to call off the action with the union intact rather than risk "a painful process of disintegration".

But it would be wrong to draw the lesson that the unions should avoid all big confrontations and, for the indefinite future, stick to cautious

small-scale action. The state will not allow the unions to build up strength gradually and peacefully for ever. Unless the unions prepare and organise for decisive battles now, when the ruling class is still in some disarray, they could find all their hard-won gains wiped away by repression.

## Time

It is possible to draw the conclusion from this defeat that the miners fought at the wrong time. The NUM leadership should have tried to postpone the battle for a few more years until more miners were organised and the union stronger.

But workers' struggles cannot be planned with the precision of a military campaign. The spontaneous, burning militancy of the miners drove towards confrontation.

Workers' Liberty magazine wrote five months ago:

**"Neither the NUM nor the Chamber of Mines have yet squared up for an all-out confrontation.**

**To a certain extent such a confrontation would not be in the interests of the NUM or the mine bosses. Anglo American, for instance, is anxious to maintain its 'liberal' and 'anti-**

**apartheid' image, while the NUM has built itself through sectional, guerrilla action, utilising at times the already existing tribal/communal structures in the compound.**

**This pattern can't go on forever. No matter how cautious the NUM leadership is, it is difficult to see how, at a certain point, it will be able to avoid a full scale confrontation, spurred by the appalling conditions that mineworkers face.**

**In order to face such a confrontation the NUM will have to learn the lessons of the major defeat of the African Mineworkers' Union in 1946.**

**And the central lesson is that an all-out confrontation in the mines poses, at least implicitly, the question of who rules South Africa. The NUM has to prepare for such a confrontation."**

In a few years' time the general political climate may be less rather than more favourable to the unions.

The miners could have won a limited economic victory this time, though the odds were weighted against them. They certainly had the Chamber of Mines very surprised and worried.

If the union leaders had continued to postpone a battle with the Chamber, it could well have undermined the confidence of rank and file miners in the NUM.

The union leadership were probably wrong to advise workers to go home at the start of the strike, and the rank and file committees right to vote to stay put, to organise to stop scabbing, to try to picket and to defend themselves.

But it would be wildly off-beam to describe the union leaders as a bureaucracy — separate from and divorced from their members — in the way that the leaders of British trade unions are.

South African union leaders' concern to hold their unions together — and to retreat in order to save and preserve union structures and activists — is a totally different thing from the timidity of British union leaders.

Of course there is a tendency towards bureaucratisation in some of the independent unions. But that was not central in shaping the NUM's strategy.

In South Africa, the apparent opposite of bureaucratic timidity — wild adventurism — can be far more dangerous.

## More attacks to come

**The outcome of the strike may well be a prelude to more open and sustained attacks on the workers' movement.**

Already the COSATU headquarters in the Western Cape have been bombed. 16,000 postal workers on strike have been dismissed and large numbers of scabs recruited to take their place.

The other battles going on across the country are now taking place in a situation where the bosses have won an important though costly victory and in which renewed attacks are being made by Botha on the radical press and student activists.

However, the defeat is not as serious as that of the 1946 miners' strike.

Union organisation has not been destroyed. It is a defeat after a fight in which the miners got more than a glimpse of their collective power and of the might of their adversaries. It is a defeat from which the unions

should be able to recover in the relative short term.

Nonetheless the initiative has for the time being passed to the state and the bosses.

The workers' movement will have to work out a strategy to consolidate the gains that have been made during the present phase of unprecedented strike action and move on from that basis to work out a coherent and realistic strategy for working class power.

One thing at least should be clear from the outcome of the miners' strike. The supposedly 'liberal' mine bosses like Anglo American are not serious potential allies for the workers' movement. Hopes of winning them to a broad anti-apartheid front is a populist illusion. The slogan of the shopworkers during their battle early this year with the supposedly 'liberal' OK Bazaars is even more relevant today. That slogan was 'Anti-apartheid bosses are not our friends'.

### Tuesday 24 August

Negotiations between NUM leadership and Chamber of Mines. The Chamber offers no increase in basic wages, but offers to double death benefit from two to four years pay and to add two days onto annual leave.

600 miners gather in the centre of Johannesburg outside the Chamber of Mines building chanting "We demand 30%" and "Away with the Chamber of Mines".

Ultimatums to the miners to give up the strike continue. Anglo American give another 10,300 miners one day to give up or face the sack.

180 workers at Anglo's head office go on strike demanding the right to leave the company's staff association and join the NUM.

Anglo claim that significant numbers of miners are returning to work.

### Wednesday 26 August

NUM strike committees meet and vote to reject the Chamber's offer despite the fact that union leadership made no recommendation for or against the offer.

NUM general secretary Cyril Ramaphosa admits that during the negotiations, the union leadership "modified" the original demand for a 30% across-the-board wage increase. According to the Guardian, the NUM leadership put forward the figure of 27% during the negotiations.

Rumours circulate that Ramaphosa in fact favoured a settlement on Tuesday and had been overruled by other members of the NUM executive.

COSATU, South Africa's largest union federation, promises solidarity action to back the miners. This is to include a boycott of all work related to the mining industry. Cyril Ramaphosa hints at the possibility of a general strike.

Namibian miners' leader Ben Ulanga is detained as he arrives home after a visit to Britain to raise support for striking Namibian miners.

Anglo admit that workers who had returned to work on Tuesday were now back out on strike at two of the company's shafts.

### Thursday 27 August

Anglo American announce they are sacking 20,000 more miners. GENCOR also announce that they are sacking 20,000.

In response 3,000 miners at Western Deep Levels stage a sit-in underground after mine security try to drive them back to work at gunpoint.

The Chamber of Mines switches tack and pushes for mass sackings and the large-scale recruitment of scabs.

Cyril Ramaphosa says that the mine owners are "bent on destroying the NUM with the assistance of the state".

It is estimated that the strike is costing the mine bosses £10 million a day.

The Chamber of Mines says that the offer made on Tuesday has now been withdrawn.

### Friday 28 August

The mining houses seek court orders to evict strikers from their hostels. The Transvaal leader of the National Party, F.W. De Klerk, hints at stronger state intervention against the strike.

NUM officials hold talks late in the evening with Anglo officials. Rumours circulate that they are about to call on members to return to work on Monday.

### Saturday 29 August

Talks with Anglo end. NUM begins talks with the Chamber as a whole.

### Sunday 30 August

NUM accepts the same deal as was on offer on Tuesday, i.e. no increase in pay but small concessions on death benefits and holidays.

Miners return to work after the largest strike in South African history.



# How to rebuild the

Next week's TUC annual congress in Blackpool will open with a 7 minute promotional film aimed at ditching "an unattractive image of trade unionism". After that the keynote will be blandness.

According to top TUC leaders, this is the way to rebuild union membership. In this feature, three TGWU activists explain a different policy — based on practical experience.

At the TUC, controversy will be kept to a minimum. Already there is talk of a manoeuvre to avoid a vote on a TGWU resolution, which simply calls for a working party to report back to the 1988 congress on ways to outlaw no-strike agreements.

The GMB is reported to be furious that TASS has been allowed to table an amendment opposing wage controls! Top officials will attempt to shield the EETPU leaders from serious criticism.

Even general secretary Norman Willis's proposals about giving the TUC a role as an organising centre for union recruitment has been quickly dropped. Union leaders concerned to maximise their own takings rebelled at the threat of TUC arbitration.

The Tories' offensive, Labour's election defeat and declining membership have battered the union leaders into giving up. Instead of organising to win better wages and conditions for their members, they will just exhort each other to recruit new members by giving trade unionism a more attractive 'image'.

Youth threatened with the government's new work-for-your-dole Job Training Scheme will only be won to trade unionism if trade unions do something to implement their declared policy of stopping the scheme and replacing it by real jobs and real training. The TUC has declared for a boycott. But nothing has been done about it, and the scheme is reported to be growing at 2,000 a week.

And there is on the TUC agenda only one resolution reaffirming the boycott.

The TGWU has launched a 'Link Up' campaign, aimed at recruiting among part-time and temporary workers, in particular women and black workers. It is an excellent idea. There has been a lot of publicity and packaging. But the top union officials have done nothing about it.

There have been real

recruiting campaigns only where rank and file activists have taken the initiative.

At the recent TGWU biennial conference the 6/688 branch set up a fringe meeting to explain how they recruited 700 members among the unemployed and on Community Programme schemes. They have offered workers not blandness and

slick 'images' but "a bit of dignity".

In Manchester, another branch has recruited over 1000 workers from the Community Programme schemes. It has strong enough organisation to get a commitment from the scheme workers to strike if there is an attempt to introduce JTS 'trainees' at their workplace.

A national conference is planned of TGWU branches which are organising among the unemployed and on Community Programme schemes.

Three of the leading activists in the 6/688 branch spoke to Socialist Organiser about how they had recruited new workers to the trade union movement.



Schookids demand a decent job



Young Socialists protest against the J

## Turning bitterness t

### Peter Clee and Andy Cleary are two activists in the TGWU 6/688 branch.

**Peter Clee:** "We have 2000 Community Programme workers across the Wirral — spread over more than 100 sites.

Andy and I have been stood down from other jobs, on a voluntary basis, to recruit and service among Community Programme schemes. I am the chair of the 688 branch, the Community Programme and unemployed branch; Andy was the senior steward on a large Community Programme scheme. We have both been active within the Unemployed Centre and trade union movement for years.

A lot of the workers on the schemes are 23 or 24 year olds who have never worked before being on a Community Programme scheme except possibly on a YTS. Those people do not see a Conservative government as doing anything for them; but they have not seen the labour movement as particularly concerned for them either.

We are trying to get in there and show them that their bitterness can be turned around and changed into enthusiasm.

If you do not introduce them to the labour movement a huge pool will develop of young people who have never been in a trade union, and who are used to temporary, part-time

employment at extremely low rates of pay.

By recruiting them, we are not just looking after their interests but also looking after the interests of all workers."

Organising is especially difficult among Community Programme workers. They are in small workplaces. They are never there for longer than a year. They start at different times, and they only work for part of the week.

Although it is cheap labour, the work is also 'community oriented' — work with handicapped children, housing refurbishment schemes and so on — so the workers sometimes feel a moral commitment to the job.

The schemes are often badly organised with incompetent, inexperienced management, or with sponsors who insist on dictating how the work is run. Negotiations to get improvements on this front are often the first opening for the union to show that it is worthwhile.

### Sunday

One of the largest schemes in the Wirral is the Wirral Christian Centre, run by the Elim Church on the site of the old Leasowe Hospital. The sponsors are very anti-union.

**Peter Clee:** "The management of the Elim scheme had agreed with us to provide boots, safety equipment, donkey jackets and wet gear for the workers. After the management had agreed the pastor of the church, the Reverend Epton, said no.

So we lobbied the congregation outside his Sunday service. He was not very pleased about it. We came in for a lot of abuse and he phoned the

police.

But it did the job. He agreed that the work-wear should be provided.

Now the agreement is there on paper. But the workers have not got the clothing yet, so we might have to go back there."

Andy Cleary was a senior steward on a housing refurbishment scheme in Seacombe.

"We had a strike on that scheme. They decided to bring in extra painters to paint the outside of the houses. We had an agreement from the sponsor, and the MSC, that the labour would be recruited locally because it was a community scheme.

### Strike

On the Monday morning I went down to the painters and labourers and introduced myself. Some always say come back later, because they are trying to sus you out.

I found out that two of them were from Birkenhead, although we had stacks of application forms from the local community wanting to work on the site.

I went to the project manager and said he had been telling lies. The two places had to be filled by local workers. He said he could not do it because he had promised these lads jobs weeks ago.

We called a site meeting and asked the lads and girls their feelings. They agreed because they all had brothers and sisters who wanted to work on the scheme. So we went on strike.

We called a meeting at Wallasey Town Hall. We asked the MSC to make a waiver to bring two extra people onto the site from the local area. They agreed.

Then they asked us how we would

go about getting rid of the two people from outside. Our reply was: 'You've employed them. We have the waiver to get the two local people in. We would not be happy to see the two from Birkenhead go down the road.'

So we got the two extra jobs and kept the two who had been brought in from outside the community — it was not their fault they had been given the job.

When we went back to the site the following day they were the first two up to me with pens, wanting to fill in the forms and join the union because they could see what it could do for them."

Andy and Peter calculate that over 700 workers have been recruited to the TGWU since the 688 branch started organising on the Community Programme schemes in 1986. It is far from a paper membership.

A shop stewards committee has been built on the sites of the two major sponsors on the Wirral. Regular shop stewards' courses have been run from the TGWU office in Birkenhead. Workers from the schemes were active in the Wallasey general election campaign. They have also been attending picket lines.

### Picket

**Peter Clee:** "Contract cleaners have been on strike at Speke airport. We have regularly been able to take 30 or 40 people from the Wallasey area alone on weekday evenings to the picket line — through some of the worst conditions of the winter.

They go over there, give up their free nights and stand around for five to six hours, when they have only been in the trade union movement three months. That shows there is a



# he unions



Training Scheme. Photo: Ian Swindale.

# to enthusiasm

degree of commitment."

Unions have some extra leverage on Community Programme schemes by having to agree them when they start or are extended. But rather than use this as part of the fight for better conditions many unions just sign the documents in return for the membership.

**Andy Cleary:** "Any union can sign approval as long as it has just one member on the site. Other unions will sign when the TGWU will not, and the sponsors will take that as union recognition."

The reason other unions do it is to get the membership themselves. It is a bad situation where trade unions are going against each other; we should be fighting for the same thing."

Even the TGWU does not put proper resources nationally into the recruitment campaign.

## Paper

**Peter Clee:** "It would have been easy for us to go on an all-out recruitment drive for paper membership."

But we wanted to set up a network which would outlast us when we finished and which would include solid systems of communication and education.

We regard education as a priority. The job has been to get together and develop stewards who will then go out and recruit.

More and more pressure is coming on us just to recruit and spend less time on servicing.

At the moment I feel there is a real 'middle management' within the trade union movement that looks at recruitment and servicing in terms of its 'cost-effectiveness', and takes decisions simply on that basis.

In many cases that goes right to the top. Ron Todd is a case in point. Certain TGWU officials are more business people than trade union officials.

In some established workplaces trade unionists get annoyed about recruiting part-time temporary workers. The part-timers are paying a little bit less for their membership, and still demanding services. There are more disputes in the areas where we are recruiting.

Even where recruiting might not be 'cost-effective' from the point of view of trade union finances, we cannot afford not to do it. We cannot afford to have a large pool of very poorly paid workers in bad conditions. They will undercut the jobs of our better-paid members.

## Teams

In general we need far more commitment from within the TGWU for recruitment among the unemployed and the low-paid, far more resources given to the TGWU's 'Link Campaign', which at the moment seems to us a paper campaign, an agreed boycott of JTS, and some policy on Community Programme schemes.

For example, we should press for an increase in the time that people can spend on the Community Programme — at least to two years and hopefully to three years. We need a real improvement in the weekly average wage — £67 is a joke. £135 a week should be the minimum wage, but a realistic step forward would be £80 or £90 a week.

Proper resourcing means proper staffing. Overworked officials are not going to be able to go out and recruit on a major scale. You need

full-timers who have the skills and experience to organise recruiting teams.

I think it is inevitable that YTS will be made compulsory. Young people will have to work for their benefit.

The Community Programme will end up being restricted to people over 25 on the basis of supplementary benefit plus £15 for the week's pay. In some cases that will mean a considerable improvement — for example, for people who are married with five kids.

It will hurt us quite a lot because one of the main services we have been able to provide so far — negotiating round wages — will fall if these measures are brought in. And the under-25 group will be very obviously thrashed.

They won't have any say in things: they will be told that if they don't do the jobs they will starve.

Also, there has been a lot of talk about removing trade union reps from MSC altogether so that trade unions do not have to sign for schemes.

Our say will be restricted to what we can organise on the site, and how we get on then will depend on the groundwork we are able to lay now.

A boycott of JTS is right. But the real problem is that the stand was not taken a long time earlier.

We should not have been agreeing to YOPs under a Labour administration; we should not have been agreeing to YTS; we should not have been agreeing to Community Programme. But we have done.

We cannot allow it to go any further. The next step after JTS is implemented is a retreat into the American system of 'workfare'."

# What we promised was a bit of dignity

In 1986 Mick Cashman was the TGWU 6/688 branch official in charge of organising on the Community Programme schemes in the Wirral on Merseyside.

The TUC starts off with the view that they are going to work with the Manpower Services Commission. They support all the Tory job schemes, which are schemes to hide unemployment, not to create real jobs.

The justification the TUC gives for the wage levels on the Community Programme schemes is that they are 'trade union rates'. But the reality is that nearly all Community Programme jobs are part-time. 'Trade union rates' means taking home £67 a week or £60 a week. It is still a low wage, a low paid job.

The whole reason for these schemes, as far as the government is concerned, is to teach people to accept low wages.

The TUC's first collaboration in supporting these schemes was a bad thing. But they were brought in, and we had a lot of people on these schemes. They might have been low paid, but for single people they were still better than the dole.

We can't ignore the workers on these schemes. We cannot just say that, because they are on these schemes and we do not agree with the schemes, we are not going to organise them.

We had to go out and organise those workers. We did it through our Unemployed Centres and our TGWU unemployed branches.

The TUC has set up Unemployed Centres — but with MSC collaboration. They just give welfare rights advice and tea and sympathy to the unemployed.

## Campaigning

On Merseyside we attempted to do something a bit different. We attempted to organise political Unemployed Centres, campaigning Unemployed Centres. That is why we do not get MSC funding, and why I am on the dole!

Various trade unions are now changing their position on their attitude to the unemployed. But until recently most trade unions refused to recruit the unemployed, including the TGWU.

In the North-West Region of the TGWU we were recruiting the unemployed by getting round the rules.

On Merseyside, around the first People's March for Jobs, activists in the Unemployed Centres set up an unemployed trade union branch in Liverpool called the 612 branch. This was not a holding branch, but an active branch that would support workers in struggle.

We adopted a similar model on this side of the Mersey when we formed the 688 branch of the TGWU.

Even so, after a couple of years work, we still only had about 60 people. It is easy to talk about recruiting the unemployed, but doing it is quite difficult.

Then we decided to make a big push on Community Programme schemes. We started that roughly 18 months ago. Since then we have grown from about 60 members to about 700 members, and we are still recruiting.

As soon as we went into those schemes, NUPE or some other union would get on the phone and say 'what are you doing, poaching our members?' But they had made no attempt to organise those workers.

If you are going to unionise these schemes, you have got to do it from the bottom up. You have to go in there and convince the workers.

And you have got to give them the means to organise. These are people who have never been in a union before. They do not know how to negotiate with management. They do not know how to organise a branch meeting, how to elect a shop steward, or how to build the machinery necessary to fight the employer. But they learn quickly!

At first people said, 'What can the union do for us? Can it get us a wage increase? We're all finished in 12 months anyway.'

We didn't promise to get them wage increases. We said that the branch has a minimum rate of £2.60 an hour for all the schemes and we would try to push that with the employer. But we could not promise any wage increases.

## Representation

We could ensure that there is proper health and safety on the schemes. We could ensure that workers get proper representation and find out what their management is about.

But most of all what we promised them was a bit of dignity.

On most MSC schemes the managers are very patronising. They treat the workers — mostly between 18 and 30 years old — like schoolkids.

In my view that was the biggest winner on most of the schemes in recruiting the workers. They wanted to stop the bosses treating them that way.

We plan to follow it all up by forming an all-Wirral shop stewards committee of Community Programme schemes, and then forming a list of demands to launch a national campaign.

We view the workers on these schemes as basically unemployed who have temporarily got a bit of cheap work — and the end result of our effort will be a boost to our recruitment of the unemployed.

It is important that we recruit those people. The Tories' aim is not just to drive down wages, and create a low wage economy, but also to teach a whole generation of youth that the trade union movement is old fashioned, out-dated and no use.

If these people get jobs, after their schemes have finished, they will go into those jobs as trade unionists, with an understanding of the need for solidarity.

But the trade union movement itself has got to change.

We must fight for accountability and democracy in the unions. Unless we can build a leadership in the trade union movement that is capable of fighting the class struggle, we are not going to get anywhere.

We can put 'workers' charters' to Labour governments, but we all saw the record of previous Labour governments. At the end of the day, all we can rely on is building a trade union movement that is committed to the class struggle and to fighting for the interests of the working class.



# Lenin and the October Revolution

Jack Cleary introduces a new pamphlet from Socialist Organiser — 'Lenin and the October Revolution', by Andrew Hornung and John O'Mahony.

was often the fate of revolutionaries that after their deaths their names were made into legends to console the oppressed, while their ideas — their real politics, what they had stood for in life — were thrown out and replaced by something else.

Something very like that has happened to Lenin himself. It happened to him almost immediately after his death. The bureaucracy which ruled the USSR mummified his poor physical remnants, built a great 'Lenin Mausoleum' and created an obscene national shrine around the mummy.

Lenin had stood for maximum working class democracy. The rulers who made him — and Marx — into a holy ikon of their pidgin-Marxist state religion, proceeded in the decade after his death to build an anti-socialist totalitarian state on the groaning backs of the people of the USSR. Lenin had

Who was Lenin? He led the workers of the Tsarist Russian Empire to make the most profound revolution in history 70 years ago. He was the leader of the Russian Bolshevik Party, without which the workers would have been defeated.

What does the name of Lenin stand for today? Lenin is today the patron saint of one of the worst systems of tyranny that has ever existed anywhere — the USSR.

Of Karl Marx's fate at the hands of his alleged followers in the early socialist movement, Lenin wrote that it



Lenin

liberated the many oppressed nationalities of the Tsarist empire: Stalin put them back under the control of Great Russian chauvinist jailers and oppressors.

Lenin had stood for the international socialist revolution. Stalin tried to build 'socialism' in backward Russia, substituting 'socialism in one country' for Lenin's programme of international socialism.

Lenin had defended the right

of independent trade unions to exist in the USSR: everywhere Stalinists rule such organisations of the working class are systematically and brutally rooted out.

At every important point the Stalinists, who lyingly called themselves Leninists, radically cut away what Lenin had really stood for and adopted anti-working class policies — the very opposite of those which Lenin spent his life fighting for.

Socialist Organiser has published this pamphlet as an introduction to what Lenin — the man who led the greatest working class revolution so far — really did in his life, what he said and what he fought for and against.

'Lenin and the October Revolution', by Andrew Hornung and John O'Mahony. 50p plus 13p postage from Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



## Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

### Dangerous erosion

**In the Third World, loss of forest cover on hills and mountains is recognised as a cause of serious erosion. The Himalayas are affected by this, for example. The erosion occurs for the following reasons.**

Soils are made up of small particles of stone, sand and clay with a certain amount of dead and living plant material — roots, humus, etc. Under the influence of gravity, the soil on a hillside tends to run downwards, particularly when heavy rain falls and streams overflow.

The presence of the extensive root systems of trees holds the soils together and slows down the process of soil erosion. Trees may be removed for human use as long as not too many are taken. If the increase in soil erosion is not too great, natural weathering of the rocks and the regrowth of trees will stabilise the soil.

But if too many trees are taken, the torrential rains of the monsoon season can loosen the denuded soil and wash it away by the tonne, destroying an environment that may have taken millions of years to develop.

The rain water, no longer delayed by the sponge-like action of the soil, rapidly overfills the rivers, causing devastating floods in the plains below.

This removal of trees is generally the result of the intrusion of capitalist instability into peasant societies. Logging companies may plunder the forests to satisfy a demand for hardwoods etc., that can no longer be met from the depleted forests of Europe. Peasants may clear the forests for crops, having been displaced from better lands where agri-businesses grow cash crops. The rural poor may take the trees for fuel unable to afford the fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal), mainly consumed by the West.

But, surprisingly, it is not just the Third World which suffers this problem. A few weeks back, landslides in the Alps killed at least 27 people. Torrential rains ran straight off higher slopes into mountain rivers. These breached protective dams and swept through lower forest, gathering tonnes of mud. The river of mud killed 22 people in the north Italian village of Tartano and swamped other villages. In Alpine Austria, rivers burst banks, brought down bridges and swallowed up houses. Hundreds of people were evacuated from the disaster zone and several millions of pounds worth of damage was caused.

Earlier, a mud-slide near Annecy, in France, killed a large number of people, and, only last week, more land slips were reported in the Alps.

Floods, landslides, and avalanches are common in the Alps but the problem seems to be worsening. The reason seems to be an accelerated loss of trees on the higher slopes of the mountains but what lies behind that?

One answer is undoubtedly acid rain. In the Tyrolean forest, more than two-thirds of

mature trees were declared irreparably damaged by acid pollution in 1986, a fifth up on the previous year.

Most scandalous is the other answer — ski slopes! Many mountain sides have been denuded of trees to make way for more and more ski slopes. As a leading member of the Austrian Greens said, "The railway network in Austria covers 5,800 km, but we have 6,000 km of ski slopes. This madness must stop."

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) recently declared a halt to commercial whaling, following mounting evidence of the near extinction of many whale species after 50 years overfishing.

Supporters of the ban included outright opponents of whaling as well as those who wanted to safeguard the long-term future of whaling. Opponents included companies concerned to maximise their profits before abandoning the industry to invest in something else. Most abided by the decision, though Norway and Japan flatly refused to.

Two exceptions were allowed by the agreement. Eskimos were allowed to take a few of the highly endangered bowheads, this being important to the survival of their culture. Some (capitalist) whaling nations are now claiming that whaling is important for their culture.

Also allowed was the killing of whales for "scientific" purposes — to investigate the age structure and health of whale populations. It is obviously important to see if whales are breeding fast enough to rebuild their populations. However, suspicions were aroused that "scientific" whaling was merely a way of carrying on as before, cutting up whales and selling the products once the information had been collected. These suspicions were confirmed when Norway and Japan announced they were going to start "scientific" whaling.

In July, the IWC's Scientific Committee heard some of the data obtained by the "scientists". South Korea took 69 minke whales, 52 males and 17 females, last year. They did not weigh the females' ovaries, though this could have told about pregnancy rates. They did not analyse stomach contents for evidence of diet. They collected few ear plugs, layers of wax whose thickness can tell the age of a whale. The Koreans had also undertaken a "population survey" by just sailing and counting the whales they saw. Since they only saw three and didn't measure the distance travelled, this survey was useless. The committee decided the Koreans had achieved nothing except to further endanger the minke population.

Japan's plan for "scientific" whaling involves killing 825 minke and 50 sperm whales in the Antarctic each year. They

The IWC should immediately stop this loophole, telling countries to assess whale populations without killing them. Whaling nations should be encouraged to develop alternative work for whalers.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

from The Socialist Conference Office, The Socialist Society, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. 01-734 8501.

Shelter presents 'Housing Matters', a weekend of debate, new ideas and enjoyment. University of Nottingham, 4-6 September 1987. For further information contact Delyth Morgan, Shelter Campaigns Unit, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9HD. 01-253 0202.

The Socialist Conference. Sponsored by the Campaign Group of MPs, the Socialist Society and the Conference of Socialist Economists. Chesterfield — Winding Wheel Centre, 24th and 25th October 1987. Themes: The problems of peace, internationalism and development; the ending of discrimination against all oppressed groups; visions and strategies for a socialist economy; extending democracy and curbing state power; now is the time to fight back. Details and booking form

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For more information contact Angela Fraser, Basingstoke Labour Party, Sandys Rd., Basingstoke. Tel: (0256) 462933.

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

Socialism can never be built

in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

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

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For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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



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Humphrey Bogart (centre) and John Huston's father Walter (right), in 'The Treasure of the Sierra Madre', a film directed by John Huston and adapted from a book by the socialist writer B. Traven.

# John Huston

At 81, Huston was still working in movies. Forced by illness to give up his latest film role to Robert Mitchum, Huston battled his worsening emphysema and returned to the set as co-producer. By then, he needed a special oxygen supply just to keep going, but he didn't give up.

Huston's first job as film director came at the age of 35, when he directed Humphrey Bogart in 'The Maltese Falcon'. You don't get better starts than that.

The film embodied what would be the strengths of Huston's distinctive style, good script, good actors, good technical crews. That might sound simple, but it worked.

Huston insisted on good actors — something that would cause him problems with film studios in future. He sneered at the studio heads' ideas on casting. For all major roles, he said, "they'd rather have a star. I hate stars. They're not actors."

Huston's choice of Bogart for the tough guy role in 'The Maltese Falcon' was a wise choice for both. Bogart could show there was more to him than just a tough hood. His character, Sam Spade, embodied the Hemingway ideal of 'grace under pressure'.

Short, slight and not conventionally handsome, Bogart as Spade represented a more human hero for audiences — a tough guy, but one who could also be soft without appearing weak.

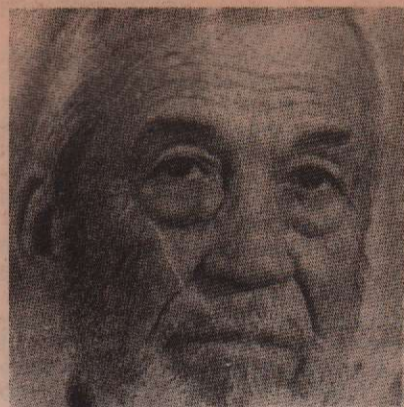
Bogart went on to star in other Huston pictures — successes like 'The African Queen', with Katharine Hepburn, 'Key Largo', with Lauren Bacall, and 'The Treasure of the Sierra Madre', which also starred Huston's actor father, Walter.

Huston's film career spanned several decades, but his projects usually had one common denominator — a good story. The stories might be very different, but he had to care for them to want to work on a project.

One project he sweated blood for was the filming of Stephen Crane's book 'The Red Badge of Courage'. This Civil War story tells of a young soldier's first frenzied flight from battle, then his later return to the fighting where he distinguishes himself by acts of heroism. Huston wanted to show the emotions of men in war, and the ironically thin line between cowardice and heroism.

Huston was anti-war. Like other Hollywood directors, he was assigned to war documentaries by Hollywood during World War 2. He was relieved of duty when his films showed only the horrors and ugliness of war. It

**Belinda Weaver looks at the work of the film director and actor John Huston, who died last week.**



wasn't the 'patriotic' spirit the government wanted.

MGM's studio head, Louis Mayer, hated the 'Red Badge' project and wanted to stop it. But Dore Schary, the head of production, liked it and backed Huston. Huston got the green light, but Mayer made sure the works gummed up.

To start shooting, Huston needed 1200 uniforms, 600 Union, and 600 Confederate. But somehow, MGM wardrobe weren't making the uniforms. Huston realised then that he was in for trouble.

Casting soon caused problems. Mayer complained that 'the story had no standard plot, no romance, and no leading female characters, and, if Huston had his way in casting it, would have no stars'. Huston stuck out for the casting of Audie Murphy, the shy American who had been the most decorated soldier in World War 2. Murphy was unknown as an actor then, but Huston thought he was right for the part.

"They just don't see Audie the way I do," Huston complained. "This little, gentle-eyed creature. Why, in the war he'd literally go out of his way to find Germans to kill. He's a gentle little killer."

Huston got Murphy for the part, but Mayer had his revenge. While Huston was in Africa filming, Mayer had the picture re-edited, cutting out the complexities of the story. The studio hardly advertised the picture at all, and encouraged rumours that the film was a dud they didn't dare release.

Huston was to be punished for bucking the system, and so was Dore Schary. Schary was a liberal who wanted to make films with a social conscience, as opposed to Mayer's soft-hearted family films. Huston and Schary were shown, the hard way, that integrity could and would be punished.

The mutilated film of 'Red Badge' was released and did modest business, but it was claimed as a failure by the studio.

Ironically, the film is currently being restored, and will soon be released in the version Huston wanted, but just a little too late for Huston to appreciate his victory.

Huston was also an actor of considerable power. One memorable role was the part of Noah Cross in Polanski's thriller 'Chinatown'. Huston played Cross as an affable, smiling old fox. Anyone could do that. But under that smiling exterior, Huston conveyed the rot and corruption of Cross, the cruelty of his incestuous harassment of his daughter, and his evil in seeking both money and power by any means.

Huston's films turn up all the time on the cinema revivals circuit, and occasionally on TV. He made many memorable films 'The Asphalt Jungle', 'The Misfits', 'The Man who Would be King', 'Fat City' and the recent, much praised 'Prizzi's Honor', which starred his daughter, Anjelica.

We'll probably see a Huston season on TV now, as the networks rush to cash in on the publicity of his death.

That will be our gain though, so if you haven't seen his films, now could be your chance. In the days of the formula films we see now, it can be a refreshing change to see films with a good story, to see real actors, not 'stars', and to see films made by a director with a sure grasp of his craft. If a few Huston films don't live up to that, it's because he had to accept inferior projects just to pay his bills.

Politically, Huston was a liberal. In the fifties, he defended actors who had been conscientious objectors during the war, and he was outspoken against the Hollywood blacklist of alleged communist sympathisers. It wasn't all words, either — he cast John Garfield in a movie soon after, although Garfield was on the blacklist. Huston risked his own career with that stand.

Huston was larger than life. His own life would make a 'good story'. He triumphed over early illness to become a boxer, he gambled away fortunes on horses, married five times and died in the tradition of 'The show must go on'. He's left a lot of good movies to remember him by.

## All Power to the Soviets!

# 1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

After the "July days", when only the influence of the Bolsheviks persuaded the Petrograd workers not to try a premature seizure of power, revolutionary Russia swung sharply to the right.

Lenin had to go into hiding; the Bolsheviks' papers were suppressed; and the Bolsheviks were reduced to a small minority in the Soviets.

It was at the end of August that the situation began to change. Emboldened by the Provisional Government's and the Soviets' moves against the Bolsheviks, General Kornilov tried to launch a right-wing coup.

It was in the fight against Kornilov — in defence of the bourgeois democratic rights won by the February Revolution — that the Bolsheviks won a majority of the working class to their programme of workers' democracy or "All Power to the Soviets!"

The Bolsheviks put themselves in the front line against Kornilov. They were willing to fight alongside Kerensky and the Provisional Government. But they denounced the compromising leaders for their weakness in fighting the counter-revolution.

They called on the workers to take the struggle against Kornilov into their own hands, through workers' militias. They argued that Soviets should take full power in their areas in order to ensure an effective struggle against counter-revolution.

On 31 August, the Petrograd Soviet passed a Bolshevik resolution on the fight against Kornilov. From then on, both Bolshevik influence within the Soviets, and the strength of the Soviets themselves, increased rapidly.

### Friday 18 August

The Petrograd Soviet demands abolition of the death penalty at the front, but rejects the Bolshevik resolution to condemn the Central Executive Committee of Soviets for failing to support this demand. The first conference of the Petrograd Union of Working Youth is held, representing 13,000 young workers, and declares as its main goal raising the class consciousness and level of culture of young workers in order to strengthen this role in the struggle for socialism.

On the South-western front a meeting of the printworkers' committee of the XII Army resolves not to print any material for the Cadets as "enemies of freedom and the revolution" and appeals to all print unions to likewise boycott Cadet material. In Simbirsk soldiers in the 44th reserve infantry brigade refuse orders to leave for the front. The Executive Committee of Soviets of the Eniseysk province appeals to all soviets in the province to prevent implementation of orders calling up members of Soviet executive committees for service at the front.

### Saturday 19 August

The Pskov Soviet calls for abolition of the death penalty. A joint meeting of the Sevastopol Soviet of Military and Workers' Deputies and of the Sevastopol Soviet of Peasant Deputies demands abolition of the death penalty. The Novonikolayevsk Soviet calls for abolition of the death penalty.

The Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet of workers' deputies adopts a resolution lifting the ban on Bolsheviks visiting military barracks. The Gorodskoy regional soviet (Moscow) calls for fresh elections for the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in protest at its attitude towards the Moscow State Conference.

A joint meeting in Tsaritsyn of the Executive Committee of the local soviet and representatives of factory committees and trade unions demands withdrawal of the detachment of troops sent to Tsaritsyn to "restore order". A meeting of soldiers of the 162nd regiment stationed in Perm resolves not to leave for the front.

### Sunday 20 August

The Bolshevik Petrograd papers "Proletarian" and "Soldier" carry an appeal for support for Bolshevik candidates in that day's elections to the Petrograd Duma. In the elections the Social Revolutionaries win 75 places, the Bolsheviks 67 places, the Cadets 42 places, and the Mensheviks and other parties eight places each.

In the Tver Duma elections the Bolsheviks win 22 places, the Social Revolutionaries 21, the Mensheviks 15, and the Cadets 12. In new elections to the Lykkinovo Soviet the Bolsheviks win 24 places, the Social Revolutionaries 11, and the Mensheviks none. War Minister Kerensky telegrams the government's

commissioner on the Northern front ordering a fresh crackdown on unrest among the troops, including a banning of all meetings and of publication of Bolshevik papers.

Soldiers belonging to the Porkhov garrison free arrested soldiers from the guardhouse and local prison. Soldiers belonging to the 1st Division of the 2nd Artillery brigade stationed in Kazan disarm and arrest their officers. Soldiers in the 498th regiment on the South-western front refuse orders; three of them are court-martialed and shot.

### Monday 21 August

The Petrograd Soviet votes down a Bolshevik resolution condemning the Moscow State Conference and the participation of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets in it. 200 representatives from 65 factories attend a Petrograd conference of unskilled workers and call for the replacement of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat, and for unskilled workers to support the Bolsheviks. Riots break out in Kostroma over food-shortages.

The Samara Soviet votes unanimously for abolition of the death penalty, and votes by 97 to 72 in support of a Bolshevik resolution calling for decisive measures in the struggle against counter-revolution. Workers in the local iron foundry in Ufimsky district hold a one-day strike in protest at the Moscow State Conference.

### Tuesday 22 August

The Bolshevik Central Committee launches an appeal for 100,000 rubles to be collected in a week for the Bolshevik central organ. Mass meetings of workers of the Skorokhod factory and Admiralty shipyards in Petrograd pass Bolshevik resolutions condemning the Moscow State Conference. Mass meetings of workers of the United Cables Works and Petrograd Optics factory pass resolutions declaring that the previous day's breakthrough by German troops on the Northern front was the result of the indecisive policies of the government, and condemning press reports placing the blame for the German successes on the failure of Russian soldiers to fight.

The Minister of Labour issues a circular declaring that the powers of hiring and firing are in the hands of factory-owners, save where factory-owners and factory committees have reached a mutually acceptable alternative arrangement. Soldiers stationed in the Simbirsk district refuse orders to requisition grain from the local peasantry. The Executive Committee of the Tashkent Soviet calls for the re-election of the soviet, on the grounds that "the party composition of the soviet does not at present correspond to the party groupings amongst voters."

Turn to page 11





Jews demonstrate at the reading of 'Perdition' at the Edinburgh Festival on 17 August

# Why 'banning' is folly

**LAST YEAR** Socialist Organiser carried a discussion piece and correspondence about the question of free speech in student unions. We discussed how the left should handle those with whom we profoundly disagree.

Now the results of the campaign against Jim Allen's play 'Perdition' — a play which, in our view, is obnoxious propaganda — allows us a valuable chance to test our ideas. We think those results prove us right. The supporters of 'Perdition' have gained from being able to present themselves as the target of a 'ban', and their critics as opponents of free speech.

Last year we argued that on principle socialists must support free speech — and that in practice this means free speech for those with whom we profoundly disagree, or even those whom we detest.

We advocated counter-propaganda leaflets, mass pickets of odious gatherings, and so on, rather than blanket bans and proscriptions by student union authorities, for example, or Labour-controlled councils.

## Principle

Free speech is a matter of principle — though there are other principles, like the principle that you do not let racists terrorise their targets. But we argued for our approach on tactical grounds too.

An attempt to ban anyone puts many who may detest the target of the ban on their side because they want to 'defend free speech and democracy'. Timid supporters of the target of the ban can be encouraged to rally to them under the banner of free speech.

It is stupid — and doubly so in the political climate in Britain today — for the left to give the banner of democracy and free speech to our opponents.

One of the biggest anti-fascist rallies ever was organised by the Trotskyists of New York in 1939. It was not mobilised under the banner of 'no free speech for fascists', but under the banner of protesting against the fascists and defending their targeted victims, the Jews, the labour movement, and so on. It stopped a planned fascist rally from going ahead: and that shows that you do not have to brand yourself as an opponent of free speech and democracy in order to curb fascists' ability to organise.

What about 'Perdition'? In this play Jim Allen set out, to quote his own words, to deliver "the most lethal attack on Zionism ever written, because it touches at the heart of the most abiding myth of modern history, the Holocaust. [The play] says quite plainly that privileged Jewish leaders collaborated in the extermination of their own kind in order to help bring about a Zionist state, Israel, a state which is itself racist".

Allen's drama focuses on events in Hungary in 1944. His play takes the form of a libel hearing in a case brought by a former leader of

## Jane Ashworth and John O'Mahony look at the rights and wrongs of the attempts to stop Jim Allen's play about Zionism, 'Perdition', being performed

Hungary's Jews against someone who has accused him of collaborating with the Nazis in the extermination of his own people. 'The Zionists' helped the Nazis kill six million Jews because that would help prepare the moral and political climate for setting up the state of Israel.

Allen's real concern here is not history but present-day Middle East politics — the attitude that socialists should take to the Arab-Jewish conflict in the Middle East and in the general debates about Zionism and Arab nationalism which grow out of that conflict.

Allen bases himself on the work of Leni Brenner. Their message is this: Some of the victims of the Nazi race murder — 'the Zionists' — shared responsibility for the attempted genocide, and therefore Israel, constructed by Zionists, does not have the right to exist. Zionism was always the central enemy not only of others, but also of Jews.

That is no small allegation! But neither Allen nor Brenner come anywhere near making a serious or coherent case for it. It is a reading-backwards of today's commonplace demonisation of Israel on to the entire modern history of the Jews, and an attempt to smear Israel with some of the responsibility for the blood of the six million — the blood-libel to end all blood-libels!

For Allen, like his source of wisdom Brenner, 'history' is just a quarry in which to mine material to back up a pre-conceived and one-sided polemic.

The play — like Brenner's work, but more crudely — effectively said of Hitler's victims: "It was their fault, or at least the fault of their leaders. And, look, the Zionists (this time the entire Israeli Jewish nation, not only the Zionist leaders) are still pursuing the perverse racist doctrine which helped bring the Nazi catastrophe down on their heads."

This can only be brought to a proper end if they consent to dissolve the Israeli Jewish nation or, failing that, they are overwhelmed".

In Brenner's historical writings, the trick is to blame the Zionist movement — presented as some sort of diabolical power outside the ordinary Jewish people — for the

Holocaust as if 'the Zionists' in Europe did not go to the death camps too. The argument ranges from the possibly reasonable point that if the Zionist movement had devoted all its energies to opening the doors of the USA, then that might have made a difference, all the way to the libellous nonsense that 'the Zionists' would rather have the European Jews dead than have them go anywhere but Palestine.

The Brenner-Allen school of thought is a left-wing part of a general movement known as 'Holocaust revisionism'. The right-wingers of this movement — who are often outright fascists — say that the Jews were not massacred in Hitler's death factories at all. The whole story is an exercise in 'Zionist' propaganda.

The 'blame-the-Zionists' revisionists say: yes, the Jews did die, but they died partly because of the machinations of their leaders whose successors now rule Israel. A candid anti-semitic, indifferent to the massacre, might say: the Jews got what they deserved. The left 'anti-Zionists' say: they got what the leaders decreed, or at least connived at. The different versions are, of course, not identical, least of all in their motives: but the parallel exists independently of anyone's good intentions.

On the left, Zionist complicity in the Holocaust is now increasingly an article of faith in a movement which has adopted an attitude of comprehensive hostility to Jews, in Israel and outside it, who will not 'convert' to anti-Zionism and adopt the demand that Israel cease to exist.

The memory of Hitler's massacre of the Jews acted for a long time as a bulwark against anti-semitism, forcing it underground. Even today, in most circles, it dare not bear its own name. It disguises itself.

The attempt to put part of the blame for the Holocaust on Jews does more than attempt to discredit Israel and to buttress the Arab chauvinist case that Israel has no right to exist in any form. It breaks down that bulwark completely.

## Ferment

Allen's play, like Brenner's books and the often hysterical anti-Zionist agitation of organisations like the SWP, is part of a cultural ferment which is generating a new 'left-wing' anti-semitism. That is not what they want or intend, but that is how things stand.

The left-wing Zionophobes of today may well be playing the same role in that ferment that 'socialist' anti-semitism played at the turn of the century in the creation of the lethal racist anti-semitism that led to the slaughter of six million human beings.

So those Jews who were outraged had a right to be outraged. The version of the play due to go on stage at the Royal Court Theatre in January contained extremely crude denunciations of both Zionists and Jews.

This is a grievous matter. And for that reason it is a good test of the principles and the practicalities of

how such issues should be handled.

The play wasn't 'banned'. The Royal Court just decided not to stage it. Nevertheless, a skilful campaign, backed by the left, presented the matter as if it had been banned.

The image was conjured up by the play's advocates of an immensely powerful 'Zionist' conspiracy against 'Perdition'. All subsequent difficulties experienced by the author and director in finding an alternative theatre were presented as proof positive of this conspiracy — and certainly some of the difficulties were in fact the result of the outcry, and probably of private lobbying.

Seven months after the outcry began, what is the result for the opponents of 'Perdition'?

## Notoriety

A play which might have attracted routine reviews in the national press and the attendance of a few thousand people has been drawn to the attention of hundreds of thousands. It has been given an immense notoriety. It has been given the glamour of martyrdom as 'the banned play' (even the BBC described it thus), and bathed in the sympathetic light of defence of free speech and artistic freedom.

Anti-semites — including those too timid to come out openly — have been given an issue to focus on. A Jewish gravestone has been daubed with their new rallying cry: 'Perdition'.

A (drastically rewritten) version of the play in book form has been assured of a very big audience. It has been read to a capacity audience at the Edinburgh Festival. The play will have a big audience when it is produced, as it will be.

Most ironic of all, perhaps, is the fact that 'Perdition' is a far better play in its published (fourth) version than it was at the beginning — and that is because of the outcry.

The original version was full of crudities ("Zionist knife in the Nazi fist", sneering comments about "the chosen people", etc.) which would have alerted people averagely concerned with this matter to the hostile propaganda that is the play's content. These have been cut.

True, the large number of changes amounts to a tacit admission by Allen that much that his critics said was true. You cannot nail your colours to the mast, as Allen did in his declaration that the play was "the most lethal attack on Zionism ever written", and then make changes under pressure as he has done, without totally destroying the moral and factual basis of your own case. But to be aware of that you need to compare the texts.

The upshot of the whole campaign has been to make 'Perdition' more effective as Zionophobic propaganda, give it an immense boost it would not have had otherwise, give courage to timid anti-semites to rally to 'Perdition' "in defence of free speech", and to brand the Jews as intolerant, conspiratorial, and immensely powerful.

Is there any greater example of a campaign so helping its target and wounding the campaigners?

The Zionist historian David Cesarani wrote, in the 'Jewish Chronicle' on 3 July:

"Was it worth all the fuss? Had the play gone on, it would have been seen by around 2000 people... and then disappeared".

The whole issue is only one example of the general case made in Socialist Organiser. It was perfectly right and necessary to respond to 'Perdition'. Leaflets, pickets, and so on, would have been perfectly in order. The fatal error lay in allowing the matter to appear as a question of free speech.

The affair is not finished. It seems that there may be attempts to stage it or hold 'readings' at certain colleges. It is still possible to learn the lessons of the business so far.

There are two main arguments put forward as to why Jews should campaign to ban such performances.

• To let it be staged or read peacefully, with its poisonous message, will generate so much hassle for Jewish students — especially those who do not know what time of the political day it is — and create such an atmosphere of witch-hunting 'anti-Zionism' ('where do you stand on Zionism?'), that it would be better to try to get it banned.

Not so. There will probably be 'anti-Zionist' witch-hunting anyway, once a group of students decides to stage or read the play. To try to ban it is to give them the banner of free speech. It will give them the support of waverers, and deflect attention from the arguments and issues.

David Cesarani made this point in the 'Jewish Chronicle'. "Attempts by journalists and historians to expose the play were caught up in a political dogfight: calm, objective criticism was inexorably turned into polemic."

## Educate

It is far better, if hassle is unavoidable, to fight on the issues — by way of leaflets, counter-meetings, and pickets — without appearing as suppressors and enemies of free speech and democracy.

Arguing and debating the issues will politically educate and inoculate thinking students, and will therefore be a better defence, and a less costly one, than a ban.

• The issue can be neatly and efficiently dealt with by a majority vote at a student union General Meeting to ban the play.

It simply isn't true. The 'minority' will be able to deflect attention from the content of 'Perdition' to the issue of free speech. This general approach, anyway, leads to the ludicrous spectacle of tit-for-tat banning, according to whoever, even accidentally, has the majority. Each college has its own 'majority dictatorship'.

Free speech and argument, and vigorous protest where necessary, are far better.

Free speech is important for itself. And in this case defence of free speech is also the best way to deal with those who abuse it to promote Judaophobic demonology. Effective use of free speech is the best reply to them.



# Stop sweetheart deals!

Alan Fraser surveys the fight against the sort of single-union deals promoted by the EETPU.

This year's TUC congress will bring the issue of single union agreements to the fore. The right wing-led EETPU is the main union — though not the only one — involved in such agreements. The TGWU, GMBU and AEU have followed suit. Unlike the EETPU, the TGWU and GMBU have not yet signed any 'no-strike' agreements.

How weak the response of trade union leaders is on this major issue of single union agreements is shown by the fact that the TUC is thinking about setting up new procedures for unions which want to enter single union agreements.

The EETPU leaders have a distinct philosophy. This is a belief that thriving capitalism — high profits — equals high wages. The EETPU feels that today, with anti-union laws on the statute book and general attacks on the working class, that the time has come to devise a new strategy for protecting their members.

That strategy is based on offering employers something new in return for job security, improved conditions, good wages and fringe benefits for their members. And what could be better than a no-strike agreement, pendulum arbitration, greater use of part-time workers, variations of hours, mobility of labour, demarcation lines removed — and "no problems" in collective bargaining.

The obvious gain for the EETPU is increased membership. But General Secretary Eric Hammond says that single status does more than this. It removes differences in working conditions for blue and white collar workers, generates improved sick pay, better pension arrangements and increased consultation on company policy.

In other words, according to the EETPU leaders we become one big happy family with harmonious relations in industry. The company makes good profits and the workers make good wages. But in fact Hammond and other EETPU leaders could not be further from the truth.

At the point of production, the single union, 'no-strike' agreements effectively destroy the independent role of shop stewards committees in relation to the rank and file. This is one of the central goals, of course.

Unilateral EETPU deals with Japanese electronic giants like Toshiba, Hitachi and Sanyo not only outlaw strike action but place unique emphasis on the idea of a common interest between labour and management, between the exploiters and



**Workers leafleting drivers as they pass through the main entrance to North Manchester General Hospital. The workers, members of NALGO, CoHSE, NUPE and ASTMS, were on strike for half a day on 26 August in protest at low pay in administration and clerical jobs. Photo: Peter Walsh, Profile.**

those they exploit.

The most typical example of such ideological mobilisation is the "three P" system — productivity, participation, prosperity. The central feature is the setting up of joint union-management quality control committees. At Toshiba these meetings are held at four levels:

1. A twice-yearly central liaison meeting to discuss long-term company plans.
2. A plant meeting, also twice a year, between company executives, EETPU national officials and plant convenors on issues related to efficient operation of the company.
3. A plant liaison meeting held once a month between management, local officials and convenors to decide production schedules for the month.
4. A further monthly plant wide briefing on how best to attain production schedules.

It is significant that decision on matters such as size of workforce, labour efficiency and pay and job

conditions are made behind closed doors in secret negotiations between top union officers and managers. At no stage are such negotiations subject to rank and file ratification at mass meetings.

Shop stewards are not subject to immediate recall and thus it will be difficult for workers to use the shop stewards as a focus for opposition to what is decided at the top. This system operates to make it difficult to organise unofficial strikes for trade union principles, work conditions or wages.

It is estimated that no more than 10,000 to 20,000 workers are already

covered by these agreements. However the signs are ominous. Many cowed union leaders, desperate to replace lost membership and lost funds may very well seek to sign such deals.

The rank and file must not let them. Build a militant rank and file-based movement within the unions to ensure that class collaboration policies are replaced with a genuine fight for workers' rights.

The philosophy of Karl Marx is as true today as it has always been — that there is no such thing as an "agreement" between the bosses and workers, only a temporary truce.

## SALPLAS

### Sit-in blocks sell-off

By Paul Woolley

Strikers at Salplas, Eccles staged a two-day sit-in last week (Monday and Tuesday 24th-25th). The previous week company boss Chapman had sacked all 18 scabs. This was followed by an number of visits by strangers to the factory.

It looked very much as if Chapman was planning on selling some machines, if not the whole factory. He presumably wants to plead poverty when the strikers' tribunal is heard.

Sure enough, when five of the strikers got inside the factory at midnight on Sunday 23rd, they found a number of machines dismantled and others freshly painted.

They also found their lockers had been smashed open while they had been on strike. They built a 12 foot barricade

across the factory gate and appeared on local TV news.

Salplas got a writ against the sit-in, and the cops tried to bluff the strikers out, telling them that the law had been changed and they must get out. As one striker said: "It says something about the law. It takes six months for our tribunal to come up. Yet inside two days the company gets a writ and drags us into court."

The strikers obeyed the court and left the factory.

The tribunal hearing is on 14-16 September. The strikers are still picketing round the clock and are organising another march.

The strikers have been out since February - don't forget them! Send money and support to: Salplas Strike Fund, c/o Jim Billington, Branch Secretary, 6/196 Branch, 43 Abingdon Rd, Urmston, Manchester M31 1GW.

## SHEFFIELD

### Paid £40 a week

By Rob Dawber

Six workers are still on strike at Auto Start, Zion Lane, Attercliffe, Sheffield against wages of £37.50 to £42.00 a week.

They get no sick pay, no holidays until they have worked a year (after which they get ten days!) and appalling working conditions.

They were sacked on 29 July for refusing a 5% pay increase as a basis for returning to work. As John Dale told a local Socialist Organiser meeting, "5% of

nothing is still nothing. Even if they offered us a 100% rise it would still put us on only about £70 a week".

Support is needed on the picket line from 9.30 to 5pm in Attercliffe (Zion Lane is just down from Banners supermarket). Invite the strikers to your meeting and give whatever help you can. Build for the mass picket on Thursday 10 September from 9 am.

A victory for these young workers will act as a beacon for all youth faced with a choice between such sweat-shop jobs and compulsory working for your dole money on the JTS.

1917  
YEAR OF REVOLUTION

From page 9

Wednesday 23 August

War Minister Kerensky orders the commander-in-chief of the Petrograd military district to shut down the newspaper "Proletarian", central organ of the Bolsheviks, and also orders immediate closure of the Minsk Bolshevik newspaper "Star", and seizure of its printing presses for military purposes. In Kurgan workers wreck the printing presses on which the local Cadet paper "Kurgan Free Word" is printed.

The Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet and the Kineshma Soviet call for the introduction of a minimum wage.

Thursday 24 August

A joint meeting of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets and the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet of Peasant Deputies votes down a Bolshevik resolution on the continuing crisis, and calls instead for all democratic organisations to support the Provisional Government.

The paper "Proletarian" is shut down by order of the Provisional Government, as too are "Star" in Minsk, and "Urals Pravda" in Ekaterinburg, paper of the local Bolshevik committee. The Provisional Government bans the holding of any demonstrations on 27 August in connection with the overthrow of Tsarism six months previously.

Friday 25 August

At a meeting in Mogilev, General Kornilov, supreme commander-in-chief of the Russian armed forces, declares that the country can be saved only by transferring to him "all military and civil power". He names General Krymov commander-in-chief of the Petrograd army, the Baltic fleet, and the Petrograd military district. The latter orders the establishment of military courts in all garrisons, and bans all meetings and strikes and imposes a curfew on all cities subject to his authority.

"Worker" replaces "Proletarian" as the central organ of the Bolsheviks. The Kovrov Soviet resolves to call a demonstration on the six-months' anniversary of the February Revolution under the slogans "Long Live the Third International!", "Free All Arrested Revolutionaries!" and "Down with the Gang of Romanov and Tsarist Generals in the Rear and at the Front!"

Saturday 26 August

Printers in Mogilev refuse to typeset General Kornilov's appeal to troops, but do so after a detachment of the Tekinsky regiment threatens to shoot them if they persist in their refusal. In his "Manifesto to the Russian People" Kornilov declares that he is taking power into his own hands and urges disobedience to orders of the Provisional Government. Kerensky orders the arrest of Kornilov's emissary Lvov (a member of the State Duma) after the latter demands that Kerensky hand over all military and civil power to Kornilov.

Sunday 27 August

The Bolshevik Central Committee issues an appeal for Petrograd workers to save the city and the gains of the revolution by mobilising for battle against the advancing army of General Kornilov, pointing to the inability of the Provisional Government to do so. The Central Executive Committee of Soviets sets up a Committee of Popular Struggle against the counter-revolution of Kornilov; the Bolsheviks enter the committee for the purposes of gaining information, while maintaining an independent political line. 40,000 workers in Petrograd sign up for the Red Guards established under the control of factory committees. Kornilov refuses orders from Kerensky to resign as supreme commander-in-chief.

The Tsaritsyn Soviet sets up a revolutionary committee to organise against Kornilov; in the Tsaritsyn Duma elections the Bolsheviks win 45 of the 102 seats. A unit of Red Guards is organised in Simbirsk. A joint meeting of the Kiev Soviets of Workers' Deputies and Soldiers' Deputies establishes a Special Committee for the Defence of the Revolution. A metalworkers' general strike begins in Smolensk.

## TEACHERS

### Union cuts back in secret

By Ivan Wels

If it had not been for the Sunday Times blowing the gaffe on a secret NUT executive meeting on 20 July, members of the National Union of Teachers would have been kept in the dark until Easter next year about drastic proposals to cut back on union facilities and the membership's rights.

This is the bureaucrats' response to a 20% drop in membership since 1985, and the return of a Thatcher government for its third term. It is a fair reflection of their concern for union democracy.

One third of the office staff — 47 jobs — are to be cut at union headquarters. Legal services and the education department are to go. And members rights are directly threatened. Conference is to be held every two years instead of annually and policy committee of senior officials will make major decisions between conferences.

Their negotiating role will be taken away from Local Associations (NUT branches) and Divisions, and the money available to Local Associations will be cut.

The chair of the union's Action Com-

mittee has said there is no money crisis at the moment, but there could be a £4 million deficit by 1990 — three years' time. So why the rush?

The Executive have seized a chance to shift the union towards a model of low subs, no action and glossy peripheral services, like the EETPU.

Associations should pass resolutions demanding that the executive come clean and tell the membership everything that is going on. This must be the beginning of a campaign to make the union more, not less, democratic; and more, not less, effective.

SINCE the mid-'70s the gap between rich and poor has widened from 5:1 to 6:1.

In 1976 the best-off 20% had 5.1 times the income, after all taxes and benefits, of the worst-off 20%. The 1985 figures, just published, show that the ratio is now 6.0:1.

The top 20% now take 40% of all take-home income.



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Solidarity with workers in the Eastern Bloc

# BACK TO THE SLUM LANDLORDS



Damp and cold for how many more? Photo: Nigel Clapp

By Neil Stonelake

**Tory Housing Minister William Waldegrave thinks that councils should no longer build any houses at all.**

Last week he said: "I can see no argument for generalised new build by councils, now or in the future."

He went on: "The next great push after the right to buy should be to get rid of the state as a big landlord."

Waldegrave's 'next great push' goes even further than the official Tory manifesto. It will push thousands of working class people out into the streets.

Shortly, towns built out of cardboard boxes will be springing up in Britain's cities. Homelessness, especially among single people and the young, is already growing rapidly.

Far from there being too much of it, council housing exists for only half of the younger people who need it.

Waiting lists are huge. The old fare no better: sheltered accommodation is becoming scarce as councils stagger under increasing government cuts.

40% of over-60s will have to spend the winter without central heating.

Waldegrave calls for a return to private renting. Rents are to be deregulated, allowing landlords to charge whatever they like — regardless of the conditions of the property.

As more and more people are made desperate by cuts in house-building, sales of council housing and the increased council rents which will result from Tory legislation the ghost of Rachmanism walks again.

In the 1950s and 1960s slum landlords like Peter Rachman bought up old, crumbling houses, divided them into flats and rented them out at extortionate rents. They got rid of previous occupants who had a legal right to controlled rents by a mixture of bribery and intimidation. This is the sort of housing which the 'enterprise culture' offers us — decaying, overcrowded slums in which we will be charged huge rents and face violence by hired thugs if we can't pay.

William Waldegrave has a very comfortable house; Thatcher will eventually retire to a bijou residence in Dulwich.

These people have a 'right' to live where they choose because they and

their class have the money and the power in capitalist society. Now is the time for the working class to fight back.

A campaign is needed for decent housing at affordable rents, a cam-

paign which links in the labour movement with local residents and tenants' associations.

**Fight back now — don't let Waldegrave lower the tone of our neighbourhoods.**

## Defend abortion rights!

**A new Bill that aims to limit abortion rights by banning abortions later than 20 weeks of pregnancy will be introduced in Parliament in the autumn.**

It has been sponsored by Liberal MP David Alton. This latest attack comes only shortly after another Bill that aimed to reduce the time limit to 24 weeks. It also comes in the 20th anniversary year of the 1967 Abortion Act — which was pushed through by Alton's party leader, David Steel.

Since the mid-'70s, a whole series of attacks have chipped away at the already inadequate 1967 Act. The long term plan of many campaigners is to outlaw abortion altogether.

The present legal time limit is 28 weeks. Delays in the NHS often make abortions late, but only 2% of abortions are conducted after 20 weeks. Many doctors are unwilling to perform abortions beyond 20 weeks.

By Cathy Nugent

Some women have to wait so long for an abortion on the NHS that their pregnancy becomes so advanced that doctors will refuse to carry out an abortion.

One of the worst aspects of Alton's Bill is that women who are carrying foetuses with disabilities will be unable to choose to have an abortion. Diagnostic tests are unavailable until after 20 weeks.

Underpinning this Bill is a contempt for women's right to choose. The self-proclaimed pro-Lifers' have no interest in the health or circumstances of women's lives. The labour movement and the women's movement must unite against this attack and ensure that Labour MPs are there to vote it down.

7 November 1987 is the seventieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. There could be no more appropriate time to hold a labour movement conference in solidarity with workers in the Eastern Bloc.

Even the mild Soviet thaw under Gorbachev has left hundreds of political prisoners in Soviet jails and psychiatric hospitals. All across the Eastern Bloc workers are denied basic rights — the right to form political organisations and unions free from state domination.

The British labour movement must help to fight for the rights of these workers. This conference will be one step in that direction.

Get your organisation to sponsor the conference and send a delegation. Write to Mark Osborn, 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15 for further details, leaflets, etc.

**Sponsors include:**  
Zbigniew Kowaleswski (exiled former leader of Solidarity).  
David Blunkett (Labour MP).  
Paul Boateng (Labour MP).  
Vladimir Derer (Secretary of Campaign for Labour Party Democracy).  
Eric Heffer (Labour MP).  
Chris Mullin (Labour MP).  
John O'Mahony (Editor of Socialist Organiser).  
Clare Short (Labour MP).

Dr. Alan Campbell (Industrial Relations Department, University of Liverpool).

Bob Fine (Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, author of 'Democracy and the Rule of Law').

Bernard Foley (Department of Economics, University of Liverpool).

Dr. Merlyn Jones (Department of History, University of Liverpool).

John McIlroy (Department of Extra Mural Studies, University of Manchester, author of 'Strike!').

Scott Meikle (Editorial Board of Critique).

Phil O'Brien (author of works on Latin America).

Dr Steve Smith (Department of History, University of Essex).

David Solomon (Department of Social Administration, University of Manchester).

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All in a personal capacity.

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