

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Thatcher and Baker

Assaulting education

Tories promise misery

By Liam Conway

The Blackpool Conference has now confirmed that the Tories intend to launch an attack on education from which it may never recover.

Thatcher is taking over from Kenneth Baker in setting the terms of the agenda. Baker started by saying that only a few schools would "opt out" of LEA control, but now he is being forced to accept Thatcher's view that most schools will opt out.

These schools will be directly funded by the government — funding based on pupil numbers, not on the special needs of particular schools. If they need extra money they will have to get "private" funding from local business. In the real world, parent power will be the power of capital to control teachers, students, parents and the curriculum.

But just in case they need help, the Tories have other, equally vicious proposals on testing at 7, 11 and 14. And what will these tests be used for? This is not clear as yet, but it takes little wisdom to realise that those who pass these tests will go to the "opted out" schools with the most private funding.

And who will pass these tests? These tests will be no different in practice to the eleven plus exam. They will discriminate against working class children, particularly girls and black pupils.

Slums

And what will happen to working class children? They will be left in slum schools where they will be forced to study British imperial history, and a few practical subjects in preparation for life on the dole or cheap labour schemes. Musical instrument lessons, field studies and many other worthwhile activities will cost extra — too much extra for the children of the poor. This is the prospect for education in Tory Britain.

In such circumstances one would expect the teaching unions, in alliance with the Labour Party and the whole trade union movement, to be preparing to do battle in defence of state education. Not so! Instead of fighting the Tories, the NUT leadership has called off *all* industrial action. A lobby of about 50 petitioned Tory Party conference — it was a laughing stock.

So what strategy will the NUT adopt in lieu of a mass campaign, including industrial action. The answer is low key propaganda through the media, and calling upon teachers to educate the public in their spare time. It is a strategy doomed to failure and the leadership know it.

Sadly, the leaders are currently much more concerned with attacking the democratic rights of their own members than with fighting this battle against the Tories. Under the pretence of solving a financial crisis, the NUT Executive is proposing to limit annual conferences to biennial events, and cut the number of delegates. In short, conference will meet less frequently, and be less representative. The Executive did not consider cutting the first class travel and accommodation expenses of the

Stop



Thatcher's Fans

Thatcher!

Thatcher's Tories plan an "irreversible" revolution in Britain — to wipe what they say is socialism clean away.

Echoing the Labour Party manifesto of 1974, Thatcher promised "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power in favour of working people". Significantly, Thatcher omitted the word 'wealth' from the original.

Yuppies

What Thatcher wants is a nation of yuppies. But in fact it will be two nations — the very rich and the even poorer.

The poll tax will put an unbearable financial burden on the shoulders of working class people living in already hard-hit inner city areas. At the same time, it will put more cash in the pockets of the rich.

In fact, the poll tax will probably lead to thousands of people losing their right to vote (despite Tory assurances to the contrary), and facing the threat of arrest because they cannot pay.

Yuppie Tory-voters in their leafy gladed boroughs will do very nicely thank you.

Other big Tory reforms include the dismantling of state education — the so-called right of schools to 'opt out' of local education authority control. In fact, of course, some schools will find themselves in receipt of more money than others — and it will be run-down schools in run-down areas that suffer.

'Parent power' will be another Tory myth. Instead of LEA control there will be *national* control.

Thatcher's vision of the future is a callous one. The rich will get richer, and the rest of us will go to the wall.

Vision

It's a vision the labour movement must refuse to accept. What we need is a massive campaign of demonstrations, publicity and education — including support by the Labour leaders for workers taking industrial action — against the Tories. We need to challenge Thatcher and Thatcherism.



Back to the bad old days

The Tories must not be allowed to get away with it. They must be stopped — and they can be, if we organise.

To mount a real challenge, the labour movement itself needs to change course and present a real alternative. We need to change

society completely and build a movement that can do it. Instead of this dog-eat-dog society of parasites, we need a workers' democracy, where working-class people control their own lives at every level from the workplace up to the state and government.

Tories attack Sinn Fein

By Paddy Dollard

It looks as if the Tory government is going to try to drive Sinn Fein out of politics.

Plans have been announced to force all candidates in Northern Ireland elections to make a declaration renouncing and condemning illegal political violence. Sinn Fein is the political wing of the paramilitary IRA.

In the last six years the Republican movement has moved into politics in a serious way. It now gets one in three of the Catholic votes; the rest go to the constitutional nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).

Not so long ago it seemed that Sinn Fein might become the majority party of the Catholic community and that the SDLP might be marginalised. But with the Anglo-Irish Agreement the fortunes of the constitutional nationalists have revived. Sinn Fein's vote was down a little in the General Election, the SDLP's correspondingly up.

Now the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Tom King, wants to stop Sinn Fein standing in elections by forcing Sinn Fein candidates to denounce the

IRA.

Whether this ploy will succeed is another matter. Sinn Fein says it will not be driven out of politics because of "a form of words". This means that Sinn Fein may decide to have its candidates make any declaration necessary — treating it with cynical contempt.

Not too long ago the Republican movement would have seen such a response as a sell-out — something reminiscent of the Fianna Fail breakaway from the Republican movement, whose leader, Eamon De Valera, went into Dail Eireann in 1927, despite the necessary oath of allegiance to the British King. De Valera said that it was a mere formality.

But the Republican movement has changed. The Republican leaders are far more sophisticated these days — and far more cynical too. It is possible that divisions will arise in the Republican movement — but the leaders are likely to decide to make any declaration King demands and then simply ignore it.

All the Unionist parties have come out against King's proposal and the probability must be that King will drop it. Almost certainly it will not achieve what King wants it to — drive Sinn Fein out of politics.

Tragedy in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's Indian-sponsored peace accord has broken down. Indian 'peace-keeping' troops have become embroiled in a horrible renewed bout of blood-letting between Sinhalese and minority Tamil communities.

Tamil 'Tiger' guerrillas have carried out brutal massacres, and Sri Lankan security forces and Indian troops launched a vicious crack-down. Thousands have been made into refugees.

The deal signed in August was the brain-child of India's prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, anxious to bring an end to communal slaughter that threatened to spill over to the Indian mainland, where the majority of Tamils live. A surprising turnabout in the previously hard-line attitude of the Sri Lankan government, the deal provided for a semi-autonomous Tamil area in the north and east of the island. In return, the Tamil guerrilla organisations — mainly the Tigers — were to hand over their arms. Tamil guerrillas in Sri Lankan jails were to be released.

For a while the transition seemed relatively calm. There was a Sinhalese backlash against Junius Jayewardene's government, and anti-Tamil violence, but it was contained. Tamil guerrillas were released; the Tigers seemed to be delivering their arms to the 11,000-strong Indian force sent in to police the operation.

But it was always unlikely to remain stable. The Tamil Tigers inevitably did not trust the Indian troops. And the legal arrangements were never likely to contain the deeply-felt communal antagonisms. Now the ugly realities of sectarianism have exploded back on the surface.

The deal itself carried a strong element of Indian imperialism — a point not missed by other states in the region, alarmed at India's ease in establishing so many troops in Sri Lanka. Ostensibly to help the oppressed Tamils, the Indian military presence has now demonstrated its real purpose, moving into action against the Tamil guerrillas.

Nothing short of full Tamil independence will ease the conflict in Sri Lanka. Autonomy will not suffice.

But other lessons need to be learned. In the past, the Tamils or at least a significant section of them, were not at all an oppressed minority. Under British colonial rule, many Tamils constituted a privileged elite.

After independence a radical nationalist movement emerged, culminating in widespread nationalisations, anti-imperialist rhetoric and so on in the early to middle sixties. It was a course of development quite similar to that in other 'Third World' countries.

But it was a radical nationalism with a strong Buddhist-Sinhalese chauvinism. The Tamils were transformed by it from a privileged elite into a bitterly oppressed national minority — over a relatively short period of time. Now that about-turn has reached such levels that nothing short of complete separation will heal the wounds.

For the left, the lesson must be the necessity of consistent democracy. The oppressor peoples of today can be the oppressed and dispossessed of tomorrow. Knee-jerk 'anti-imperialism' is no guide. The least we can do in face of the long tragedy of the Sri Lankan Tamils is to learn this lesson.

Continued from front page

union big-wigs. What a surprise!

The Executive also intends to limit the financial independence of local unions, by centralising the collection

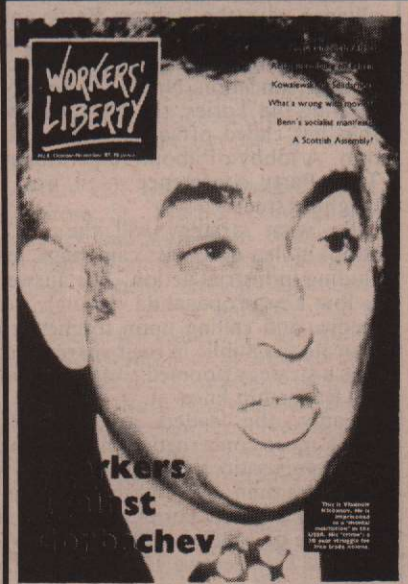
of all membership dues. Associations will only get grants if they satisfy national guidelines. Campaigning associations like Inner London, the only association actually increasing its membership, will have their activities strictly curtailed. The leadership hopes associations will make less noise, meet less frequently, and generally carry out the orders of the National Executive.

The Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA) must mount a campaign to defeat the executive proposals at next year's conference.

But the STA and socialists throughout the labour movement must help build a campaign to defeat the Tories. We must clarify our thinking about education and develop a coherent alternative to the flagrant elitism of the Tories. This means more than just defending the status quo. In general terms it will mean arguing for a public education service based on all the special needs of working class children with no financial restrictions.

Socialists must start putting pen to paper and feet to streets in defence of education. The fight against Tory education policy is now in the front line of the fight against Tory reaction.

This campaign must start now, so that next year's NUT conference turns first on the executive and then on the Tories. We need a mass campaign of action, including strike action, against what the Tory thugs and vandals plan to do to our children.



Workers' Liberty no. 8: out now, with features on workers in the Eastern bloc and on South Africa; Rosa Luxemburg on Britain; and much more. 90p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15.

Liverpool: no retreat

By Debbie Williams

The new Liverpool administration has passed its first major test. Following a series of discussion meetings involving all six Liverpool CLPs the Labour Group agreed that they could not run the risk of having the shape of next year's budget dictated by the Tories, and therefore they would not apply for 'redetermination' of the expenditure limit.

This means that there is now a gap of £40-£50 million between the amount they would be allowed to raise and the amount they would need to run the city.

Following the six constituency meetings the Group must make sure that the other measures already decided upon to extend the discussion must happen as soon as possible. These include discussions with the Council joint shop stewards' committee (unfortunately much reduced in scope since 1984), the broader based joint trade union forum and the regional secretaries of the Local Authority trade unions. In addition the Group has also agreed to issue a bulletin directly to all council workers.

This opening up of the discussion will necessarily start from a very low level, particularly given the crisis that has existed in the city's labour movement since the autumn of 1985 when the crass elitist error of issuing the redundancy notices gave the green light for the right wing to launch their attack on the local authority struc-



Demo in support of City Council, 1983 Photo John Smith (IFL) tures.

The new council is also firmly committed to restructuring services in such a way that the users of the services will identify with the council both in the struggle for adequate resources and also in the fight against privatisation.

Meanwhile the replacement of Harry Rimmer by Keva Combes as Leader, and Keith Hackett as Chair of Finance and Strategy reaffirms the ascendancy of the non-Militant left within the Labour Group. This leadership must now use every means

to ensure that the Tories' fine words about 'inner city regeneration' must be turned into the firm resources that the city needs.

As for the 18 strong rump around the Militant newspaper within the Group, many Party members would like to know why they and their misnamed 'Broad Left' spent several weeks slandering the rest of the Group with allegations that the majority had already decided both to apply for 'redetermination' and also to raise the rents.

Massive cuts in Haringey

By Phil Sinnott

A joint meeting of Haringey's Labour Party and the Council Labour Group on Monday night elected a new right wing leadership to implement the Council's decision to make a massive £15 million cut in this year's budget. The programme of cuts has received support from both the LCC and the local Labour MP, Bernie Grant.

The previous Council leadership was forced to resign after refusing to make cuts which included the sacking of hundreds of temporary staff, a freeze on vacancies, £4 a week rent increases, increases in school meal prices and charges for social services.

'Councillors Against the Cuts' has been formed as an affiliate of Haringey Fights Back. Its aim is to draw together both the users of Council services and the trade unions to make it as difficult as possible for the right wing to implement the cuts.

The Council has already come into conflict with its workforce which is angry at the lack of consultation as well as the threat to their jobs. NALGO have called a day of action against the Council cuts for 22 October which looks likely to gain widespread support.

A vociferous lobby of the meeting on Monday night, called by Haringey Fights Back, was attended by both Council workers and users of Council services. First for the axe is the Council's three play groups. Anita O'Donohan, speaking for the Playgroup Users, said: "This isn't a cut, it is a total wipe-out. Working mothers, kids with speech problems, and disabled kids will all suffer. So much for the Council's so-called Equal Opportunities Policy."

A sacked social worker from Child Guidance, who spoke to the meeting, said: "The services we provide are not expendable, the children who receive the service are not expendable, and I'm not expendable."

Another ex-employee recounted how she was informed her contract would not be renewed on paper headed 'Defending Rights, Extending Ser-

vices'. The campaign against the cuts is being headed by Haringey Fights Back to which Labour Party wards, union branches and separate campaigns are all affiliated. Haringey Fights Back needs now to build max-

imum support for the 22 October day of action. The campaign will stand a better chance of victory if the anger in the union and community campaigns, which already exists, can be successfully linked to the political fight in the Labour Party.

A labour movement conference

SOLIDARITY

with workers in the Eastern Bloc

Saturday November 7th, 11 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

New Sponsors for November 7 conference include:
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Barnburgh NUM branch
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John Battle MP
Harry Cohen MP
ASTMS 615 branch
Newington Labour Party Ward
Limehouse Labour Party Ward
Grainne Monks, President
Lambeth NUT
Sheffield City NUR
Bill Michie MP
Islington ACTTS
Stockport CLP
Anne Matthews, leader of Southwark Council

SOARAWAY
SANCTIMONY

By Jim Denham

The Sun has always been a bit schizoid when it comes to 'standards', 'morality' and such like: it pioneered topless page three girls, has been condemned by a judge for breaking the rules governing coverage of rape cases and has more than once been censured by the Press Council for its racism.

But periodically, the Sun sounds off about "moral standards" and (gawd help us) religion.

Recently it has taken to carrying little boxed endorsements from "respectable" people like Derek Jameson, Jilly Cooper and Glenn Hoddle. The message is, in effect, that while the Sun may be "cheeky" and even "saucy" it's all in the best possible taste, really, and quite harmless. People who knock the Sun are "the toffee-nosed brigade" and "the wallies".

Norman Tebbit went so far as to say he couldn't see the difference between "a chap enjoying page three" and someone going to the National Gallery — except that the latter person is probably a bit of a snob!

This curious, populist mix of sanctimony and prurience is, of course, characteristic of the Thatcher approach to moral and sexual matters — a balancing act between the Mary Whitehouse brigade and the Cecil Parkinson/Bernard Halpen school of "healthy", "red-blooded" (etc) sexual adventurism.

This schizophrenia seems to have come to a head with the arrival on the scene of the new-look, soft-porn Star. Thursday's 'Sun Says' editorial addressed itself to some pretty weighty matters: "What is happening to Britain? Our society is sick and getting sicker each day," intoned editor Kelvin McKenzie, closing with a series of interesting questions: "Is the cause the loss of religious belief? The destruction of family life? The undermining of moral standards?"

Answers, please, on a postcard to Kelvin McKenzie, c/o Fortress Wapping. You might win one of the new Page Three calendars featuring "sizzlers the whole year through."

Congratulations

Well done, Isabel Horn, landlady of the Trafalgar Hotel, Blackpool!

This splendid woman decided she had had enough of a boorish man who left her a rude note about his sheets and was upsetting other guests. The final straw came when he arrived back at the hotel in an excited condition at three a.m. and kicked up a rumpus because he'd been locked out.

Quite rightly, Mrs. Horn kicked him out. The unsavoury character in question turned out to be former "rent-a-mouth" Tory MP Peter Bruinvels, whom the wise electors of Leicester East had also kicked out at the last election. Since then he has found his true vocation — as a Sun columnist.

In his (predictably abysmal) column last Saturday, "rent-a-mouth" had the cheek to lecture seaside hotel keepers on how they "must ensure that standards remain high if we are to attract tourists to resorts like Blackpool." Surely, that was exactly what Mrs Horn was doing when she ejected him?

Congratulations (2)

Another journalist has been sacked from the 'new look' Star — chief leader writer David Buchan.

Buchan's crime? He described the paper as "nothing more than a soft porn rag" at a Labour Party conference fringe meeting.



There is no alternative to the fight to transform the Labour Party

Stay with Labour

EDITORIAL

"Order reigns in the Labour Party". If Neil Kinnock were a military commander reporting to his superiors on the suppression of a rebellion that would be his account of this year's Labour Party conference. After the years of turmoil, the Labour Party seems to have settled down — for now.

Many of the rank and file delegates were unhappy about it, but the right and the soft left — using the trade union block vote as a club — dominated this year's Conference. Nobody could be in any doubt about that. There was no revolt against Kinnock's abject failure to lead a working class crusade against Thatcher and Thatcherism.

There was no recognition that Labour's defeat in the election — despite an impressive final three week campaign — provided the bankruptcy of Kinnock's approach.

The Party's spiritual condition was summed up in both the defeat of the serious left winger Eric Heffer in the

elections to the NEC and the election of Bryan Gould and Ken Livingstone. Gould is an honest and reasonably candid right wing 'socialist', who believes in 'designer politics' — he believes in saying what he thinks the electorate want to hear; Livingstone is a cynical career 'left'. The Party that rejects Heffer and elects Gould and Livingstone is a long way from being a serious force for socialism in Britain.

Does it follow, then, that for socialists the Labour Party is a waste of time?

No it does not. It cannot, because the Labour Party remains the mass political party of the British labour movement.

The setbacks for the left in the Labour Party are part of a series of defeats and setbacks the entire working class has experienced in the 1980s. The mass of the working class has not seen through Labour and its inadequacies and gone on to serious

socialist politics. A large part of the working class has regressed, gone backward from Labour to the Alliance and even to the Tories.

The responsibility for that regression rests squarely with the Labour Party leaders, and with reformism in general. It is the shameful record of Labour in government in the '60s and '70s which has made possible the Thatcherite backlash we are now living through. Better things were possible. The tremendous wave of working class militancy during the 1960s and early 1970s could have led to a socialist revolution — if there had been a competent socialist movement to link up with it.

But the consequences of reformism and of the defeats it leads the labour movement into are something the entire labour movement has to live with, the socialists too.

Socialist Organiser argued for different policies. We argued against the suicidal — and very stupid — policies

pursued by the local government left. We were right, but we were a minority. The history of socialism this century is a tragic story of people who were right — read, for example, Trotsky's writings in the early 1930s on the threat posed by Nazism, before Hitler took power — but who could not win enough support in the working class to seriously affect events. So the socialists too have to pay for the working class defeats they fought to avert — and live with the consequences of those defeats.

Labour today falls very far short of the working class party we need. But in Thatcher's Britain Labour is quite a long way to the left.

The socialist way forward lies through the Labour Party, through the discussion and arguments within the mass political organisation of the British working class movement. Socialists have yet to win the argument within that movement. The forthcoming conference at Chesterfield will be discussing these questions. It could be an important event for socialism in Britain. That is why Socialist Organiser is supporting it.

The end of a story

This year's Conference sees the end of a story which began in the seventies. It is a story about the advance of the rank and file and the left in the Party, and of Labour's adoption of a radical programme.

It is the history of the efforts of the rank and file to ensure that this programme was carried out by the 1974-9 Labour Government. Its failure to do so led to the introduction of democratic reforms designed to make

By Vladimir Derer

the PLP more accountable to the Party and to bridge the gap between Labour's programme and the Labour Government's actions.

The story since then is one of defeat. First the newly-won rights of the rank and file to participate in the Party's policy determining processes were undermined. The potentiality of further developing accountability was thwarted by the widespread adoption of shortlists of one and the failure to make the leadership contest a routine annual event.

The forward march of Labour's right started with their gradual capture of control of the NEC and ended at this year's conference with the destruction of the accountability of Labour MPs and the explicit renunciation of Labour's socialist aims. For, in the last analysis, this is what the introduction of the local electoral college and the rejection by conference of Composite 36 (which reaffirmed the Party's commitment to Clause IV) amounts to.

For good measure Conference also voted to close down Labour Weekly, failed to support Labour women's demands, confirmed the sentence on Sharon Atkin and expelled Felicity Dowling.

It is clear that a large part of the party's membership and the trade

union leadership has so far failed to digest the lessons of the 1987 election, as well as those of the 1979 election. These were: that capitulation to the capitalist status quo as practised by the last Labour government and now vigorously promoted by the present leadership, neither produces Labour governments nor does it help them to remain in office.

Still, the illusion that it does persists. This, however, is not because the 'new' individualistic ideology peddled by the present leadership has a powerful appeal, but rather because the left was not up to the task which confronted it after its victories in 1979-81. Its failure to adopt a strategy appropriate to the situation created by the 1979 defeat and subsequent disunity ensured the left's marginalisation.

Now many of those on the left who misguidedly supported the present leadership or opposed from an ultra-left position are having second thoughts. This has already led to the beginning of a dialogue between sections of the left who previously would not speak to one another. The setting up of Left Labour Liaison (LLL) and the joint statement of four members of the executive of the Labour Coordinating Committee and three officers of LLL is among the most recent examples of this.

Another is the cooperation established between the Campaign

Group of MPs, LLL and CLPD which this year produced a joint left slate for the NEC elections. The left's losses in the women's and trade union sections are obvious, but are offset by the relative success of the left slate in the Constituency section. A significantly larger number of CLPs than last year voted for the whole slate. The previously secure position of Michael Meacher has been marginalised and Tam Dalyell, who owed his election last year to his inclusion on the left slate, has lost his seat. The left must build on this modest success.

It has been suggested that the defeat of Audrey Wise and Eric Heffer as well as the left's candidates in the Women's Division was due to slating. This view ignores that, unlike the left, the Party's right has for years successfully organised. The left must do the same. If it does not it will suffer a similar fate in the Constituency section to that which has befallen it in the trade union and women's sections.

With the introduction of OMOV, conflict between the right and left in the constituencies will be intensified. Now that the right has had its way on OMOV the left's response must be to improve its effectiveness, not to abandon political struggle. If it accepts this challenge then the 1987 conference may be merely the end of a bad chapter, not the end of the story.

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WHERE NOW

Socialist Conference

On 24 and 25 October, the Campaign Group of MPs, the Socialist Society and the Conference of Socialist Economists are sponsoring a "Conference for Socialists" in Chesterfield. 1000 are expected. Over 100 CLPs and many trade union organisations have already registered delegates. We reprint below the Organising Committee's statement to the Conference.

The Socialist Conference in Chesterfield has been convened by those who believe that it is now necessary to establish a strong and independent initiative to renew the ideas of socialism in Britain, and bring such ideas up-to-date in order to meet the needs of today and the 21st century.

The sharp swing to the right that has taken place in Britain, and in most other Western industrialised countries, has destroyed many of the gains made in earlier years by the labour, socialist and trade union movements, and has re-created mass unemployment, undermined essential public services, local democracy and civil liberties. It has created militarised societies which have contributed to the threat to world peace; and socialists have been forced back on to the defensive everywhere.

What we are now witnessing is the re-appearance, on a national and international level, of the crudest form of class politics, instigated by those who now wield economic, industrial and political power. This initiative is designed to enrich their privilege and influence and to suppress any form of challenge.

Socialist ideas offer the only practicable alternative, and have their roots in the experience of working people. They have been expressed mainly through the trade union movement and the Labour Party; they have also been argued for by those in other socialist parties and radical movements; and a number of non-aligned socialists and intellectuals have combined to develop and enrich them, in the process of making links throughout the world.

Great gains have been made: but the world in which we operate has seen capitalism develop also. The challenge to socialist ideas requires us to grow too; serious thinking is required if we are to see socialist ideas become dominant again and to offer a practicable alternative.

A theory of personal betrayal will not do.

One of the commonest explanations offered for the loss of socialist influence has been that a succession of individual Labour politicians and trade union officials have betrayed the cause of socialism when they have — personally — enjoyed periods in office.

Such theories of betrayal do not however, offer an adequate explanation for what has happened, since they are based on the (false) idea that socialism can be built from the top. This belief runs contrary to the most basic of all socialist ideas: that socialism can only be constructed by working people themselves on a wide and popular basis.

To draw up a list of heroes and traitors is, therefore, a gross and dangerous oversimplification, and diverts us from making the effort

needed to create socialism by concentrating our attention on the actions of a handful of leaders, which constitutes a form of personality politics.

The movement needs leadership, but leadership also needs a movement and it is the re-creation of that relationship that is needed.

Electoral politics tends to put tactics above strategy.

Another obstacle that has been identified as standing in the way of progress has been that short-term electoral considerations have tended to inhibit the long-term development of programmes and ideas.

From the time of the Chartists and the Suffragettes, it has been accepted that the vote should be used to seek political power through election to Parliament, or local authorities.

But it must be recognised that the price that has often been paid for that strategy has been that some candidates for elective positions have argued that discussions or debates about the nature of socialism may harm their electoral prospects, and should therefore be discouraged.

No-one denies the importance of electoral victories, to defeat those who are opposed to the interests of working people and replace them with others more likely to be sympathetic to their needs.

But there is another position: we argue that widely heard discussions of socialist answers to the problems of unemployment, the environment, health, education and discrimination on grounds of sex or race, far from losing votes, are likely to provide a long term base upon which electoral victories can be built. In fact, arguments for socialism must be heard if socialism is ever to be achieved.

People will only vote for parties if they believe that the policies put before them are in their own interest, and the development of plans for winning power cannot be held up until the middle class can be persuaded to change.

One of the issues that has never been faced is that to win elections, socialists must be able to appeal to the 20 per cent of the population, most of them standing to benefit substantially by the adoption of socialist policies, who never vote because they do not see any advantage to themselves by doing so.

Whereas electoral factors are essentially tactical, the spread of support for socialism is essentially strategic, and unless that support can be achieved, electoral success can only bring office and not power. It must be obvious to all in the labour movement, after a succession of electoral defeats, that a deeper analysis is required.

It is, however, now being argued that electoral considerations are the only ones that matter, and that there can be no place for any public campaigning in support of socialist principles or of those in struggle; yet

unless this is done people will never be persuaded that voting will lead to the adoption of policies that will meet their needs.

It is partly because there has been so little strategic thinking that Labour's electoral results have been so poor, and its prospects now look so bleak.

It has often been the same story in many trade unions where the important but tactical arguments about how to deal with a particular industrial situation has obscured the need for a deeper political analysis to discover the root causes of exploitation and how to end it.

In today's situation, compromise dictated by the need to advance within the limits of power that is currently available, however understandable, cannot be allowed to obliterate longer term thinking about ways in which society can be transformed.

The Chesterfield Conference

The Chesterfield Conference provides us with an opportunity for moving forward in our thinking about socialism and to make explicit the policy issues upon which we should be concentrating.

We should also seek to agree on draft Aims and Objectives, to be discussed more widely, and arrange to set in hand policy work in areas where it is needed.

And we should also prepare a Socialist Directory, listing those who might be interested in this work.

We have now acquired an enormous amount of experience of the successes and failures of socialist policies and socialist organisations in Britain and in many parts of the world, and we have also witnessed the development of many new technologies that have transformed our own societies, and altered the nature of the working class.

We have also seen the emergence of important new campaigns: by women in pursuit of their rights, by environmentalists, by the peace movement, by the Black communities. But there has never been, alongside these, a strong and non-electoralist movement of comparable influence devoting itself to the advocacy of socialism. This gap cannot be filled by fierce personalised, internal battles within the socialist parties and between them.

We should be looking at society as it has developed; at the needs that have emerged; and providing up-to-date socialist policies to meet these challenges. We must also challenge the forces of conservatism by going behind their own lines and showing the fraud that lies behind the argument that market forces can distribute resources efficiently and fairly. The arguments of conservatism are little more than the use of state power to protect the rich.

Individualism and the pursuit of voters' individual interests is incapable of solving the complex problems of modern society. We cannot deal with the questions of poverty, wealth, health care, acid rain, nuclear power or women's rights by a policy which emphasises the primacy of individual rights and responsibilities. What are needed are collective solutions. And it is a fallacy to assume that individual share ownership is anything but a recipe for the continued concentration of economic power in private, unaccountable hands.

It may have been because of that gap in our structures that socialism has tended to be pushed off the agenda of the Labour and trade union movements, and hence off the national agenda.

Aims and objectives

The Socialist Conference must not be regarded as a mere talking shop. If our aim is to contribute to the creation of a socialist Britain and an in-



Benn after his election

ternational socialist order in our lifetimes, it is essential that discussion should be followed by concrete action.

Set out below are proposals on which the Conference will be asked to agree at the plenary session on Sunday afternoon. They include a set of draft aims and objectives; specific action proposals and a proposed means of carrying these proposals forward.

The Socialist Conference's purposes will include:

- *The defence and extension of democratic and trade union rights, civil liberties, social justice and peace, both in Britain and in a world-wide context.

- *To give practical support to organisations representing working people, women and oppressed minorities, in their campaigns for:

- *useful work under good conditions and with a decent income;

- *health care, education, homes, recreation and dignity in retirement, on the basis of social need and under democratic control;

- *an end to poverty and inequality;

- *an end to all discrimination based on sex, race, class, life-style or beliefs.

- *To disseminate knowledge and understanding of the origins, history and experience of socialism, and how such knowledge can be spread through the creative arts and media.

- *To maintain contact, and work with, all those in Britain and in other countries who share similar socialist objectives.

- *To offer a realistic vision of the nature of a socialist society, and how it could be achieved by consent in our lifetime.

- *To construct a new socialist programme, including policies and action, which could have as its main

features commitments to end the drift to authoritarianism in Britain, and specific policies to create a fundamental shift in the balance of power and wealth.

Specific action proposals.

There is an urgent need for immediate action to implement these general proposals, if we are to put socialism back on the agenda of politics in Britain. Specifically, therefore, we propose:

- *The creation of Policy Discussion groups on a wide range of subjects, whose tasks will be to create new socialist strategies, perspectives and policies for the 1980s and 1990s, including proposals for making such ideas popular and relevant. They will prepare papers for discussion and submission to the next Socialist Conference.

- *To organise a vigorous campaign throughout Britain in order to argue the case for socialism; the campaign should be constituted immediately.

- *To create a Socialist Directory in order to put socialists and campaigners in touch with one another on a more regular basis.

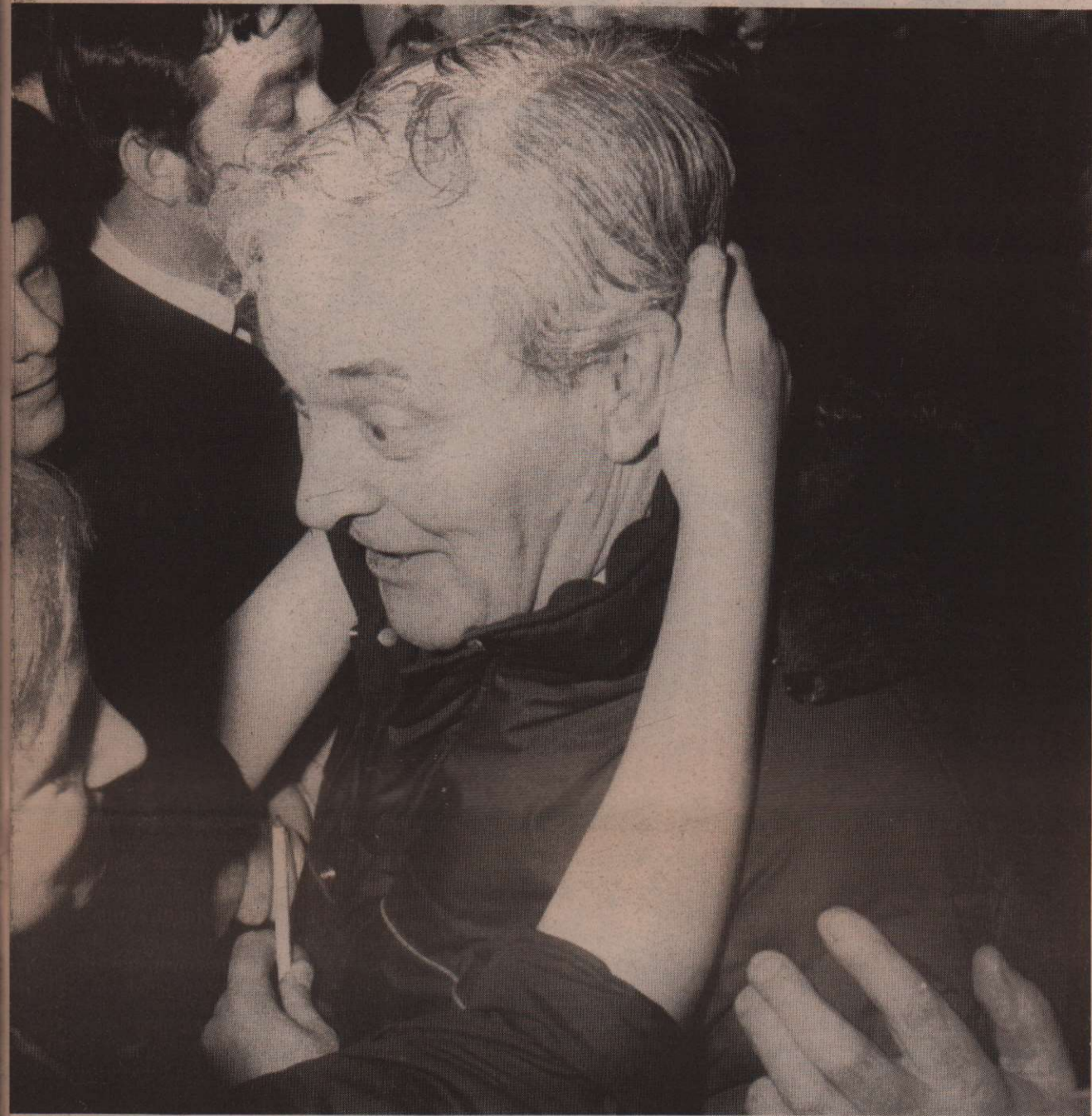
- *To hold a recall socialist conference, at an appropriate time and place.

- *To resource, in practical ways, campaigns mounted by the movement, by giving advice, providing material, and organising support for struggles.

Implementation

- *Clearly, such a programme of work will not happen of itself. We propose, therefore, as an interim measure, that the existing organising committee should continue to work together for these purposes.

FOR THE LEFT?



No time to retreat

Labour Party Conference registered a very clear shift to the right. But it was a flat conference. It was flat because when serious issues were touched upon they were not discussed seriously. There was no open and frank discussion. There were two reasons for that.

I think the leadership wanted to avoid such a discussion, and they did avoid it by proposing a general review of party policy. 'Everything is up for review'. What does that mean? It could mean either that everything will be changed. Alternately, it gave the impression that socialist policies would be strengthened. I think it was a very clever tactic.

Secondly, I think people in the Party still feel a worry about how we conduct ourselves in front of the TV cameras. People wanted to avoid giving the impression that the labour movement is split from top to bottom.

All this was used effectively by the leadership of the party to move the party further and further to the right.

Policy making decisions are being taken slowly but surely away from Party Conference. It is interesting that, immediately after the conference, the shadow cabinet — not the National Executive — is meeting to begin the review. It is the Shadow Cabinet that is making the running, Party Conference and the National Executive are being relegated.

A lot of people have not

Eric Heffer talked to Socialist Organiser about his assessment of this year's Brighton conference.

understood how far the Party has moved and how far we have gone from basic socialist ideas.

The Party leadership is still careful to talk about socialism, almost in every breath. They have learned the lesson from the past. It reminds me of a letter sent by the German Social Democratic Party secretary — in the days when 'Social Democratic' still meant Marxist — to Eduard Bernstein, who proposed to drop socialism as the goal of the German workers' party.

Bernstein had written to him saying: 'We've got to have all these matters discussed; we have got to change and openly put forward a revisionist policy'. This general secretary wrote back to him saying: 'No, no, don't let us have a discussion like that. I agree with you but what we should do is to keep the constitution and policy ostensibly as it is, but never put it into operation. We will slowly but surely move away from it.'

I think that is what is happening in our party. I don't think they will make a frontal attack like Gaitskell did in 1959-60 on the basic concept of the Party. They have learned that lesson. They are going to move stage by stage, weakening the policy. 'Yes we still agree with Clause 4 but we have got to have new ways of doing

it. We need to develop the concept of share ownership.'

Similarly on nuclear disarmament. 'We still agree with unilateral nuclear disarmament, but the Tridents will be in existence and they have got to be used as bargaining weapons' — rather than say we will clearly get rid of them. Of course that takes the edge off all the policies; slowly but surely they are changed.

'Of course we agree with increasing housing, but we still accept the selling of council houses. We also need to look at different forms of ownership and control of council estates. We should encourage the cooperative sector in housing.'

All this means that the agenda for Labour is being set by the Tory government — what the Tories do is then endorsed by the Labour Party. *It won't work.* The more Labour moves in that direction, the less people will want to support us as an alternative — because if you go that way you might as well have the real thing.

As I say the conference has been a clear shift to the right, a weakening of socialist ideas in the Party. But with the membership of the Labour Party, the rank and file are very concerned and very disturbed about what is happening. But at the moment people are not clear what sort of alternative can be put forward, or how to organise.

Where does the left go now?

I think it is good to have conferences like the one in Chesterfield on October 24-25. But I do not think

it will be good enough if it is just a discussion conference producing more discussion. We need to be much more positive.

At Chesterfield I think an alternative perspective to that of the Labour Party leadership has got to be put forward. We must discuss all the issues, clarify them, developing socialist ideas.

There is no objection to bringing our ideas up to date and modernising them. All that is important. But what we need now is a wider base for a socialist programme around which people inside the trade unions and the Labour Party, and some outside the Labour Party can unite and fight in the next few years.

I think we need a revival of something like the Socialist League which existed in the 1930s. A United Socialist League — something of that kind. It does not have to be too rigid. Perhaps it could be something like CND, which people could join in their localities to work together for the socialist policies that are required.

The Socialist League existed in the '30s after Labour Prime Minister Ramsey Macdonald betrayed the Labour Party and helped the Tories form a so-called 'National Government'. Although the whole Labour Party moved to the left it was felt you still needed a really strong socialist propaganda organisation. They united with the then Communist Party in a unity campaign — and with the Independent Labour Party, which had then left the Labour Party. They organised around a minimal programme on which to fight within the movement to advance socialist ideas. It was led by people like Cripps and included people like Nye Bevan and George Strauss.

Nye Bevan, Cripps and Strauss were all expelled from the Labour Party at one stage — although we now hear how good they were. I am not saying that we should put ourselves up for expulsion, but we do need that sort of organisation to bring people back to the movement, particularly young people, and develop new ideas.

There has been speculation about a deputy leadership contest — talk of John Prescott, Michael Meacher or even Bryan Gould standing against Hattersley. What significance?

I think John Prescott is quite serious. It is interesting to note that he has been under pressure from his union leadership and the Party leadership not to stand. Perhaps some people are using John Prescott as a way to get other people in — I am not certain about that. Obviously the left will have to discuss it seriously. At the moment I do not think we should rush into any quick decisions along those lines, but we should certainly consider it.

Do you think it has been a weakness of the left in recent years that, despite talk, nobody has been put up for the leadership or deputy leadership?

We could not do it when the election was looming. The left could not have put up an alternative just before a General Election — we should then have been blamed for the defeat. We didn't — so we can't be blamed. Now it is different.

But we must have people who have the backing of some trade unions as well as in the Party.

One of our problems, and I have to be blunt about this, is that we put people on the so-called left slates who, after a period of time, just disappear. We have already experienced that in the past and I feel it is going to happen again. I really do mean that we need people who can be guaranteed to give total and full support to basic left wing ideas. There are a lot of opportunists around, unfortunately. It is difficult to know who the opportunists are sometimes

and who the genuine people are.

Neil Kinnock describes the new NEC as a 'marvellous NEC'. You stood again and didn't get on. Your vote declined. Audrey Wise got kicked off. Gould and Livingstone got on with quite high votes. What's your assessment?

I think the vote I got was about the the vote of the clear left within the Party — the real left. People voting for me knew who they were voting for. They voted for someone who had stood up and clearly, publicly walked off the platform on the question of Liverpool. Not just Liverpool but a whole series of issues. It is not a personal thing, but in voting for me they were voting for someone who epitomised the left who has stood against the drift to the right. That is not to denigrate Tony and Dennis, but both were not in the situation I was in.

In relation to others, there is a lot of opportunism about. It is interesting that some people were on both lists — the LCC lists and the Campaign Group list. The so-called soft left centre are really a kind of Praetorian Guard for Neil Kinnock, so if you are really on that list you cannot be considered to be too serious in fighting what has been going on. In other words you are going to compromise and go along certain lines.

The leadership made it quite clear last year that I was the one they really wanted off. I believe they made it equally clear this year, through MPs and so on.

The kind of vote I got, around 200 CLPs, is the figure we have got to work from to rebuild the left — that reflects the strength of the left within the Party.

The shift to the right was basically delivered by the block vote, which was fairly solid throughout conference. The CLPs were generally on the left. The block vote was put very much in the service of Kinnock.

I agree absolutely. One of the most interesting things was the vote on Felicity Dowling's appeal against expulsion. The overwhelming majority of the Constituency Party delegates, having heard the case and not already being mandated by their CLPs, voted against the expulsions. But overwhelmingly the unions voted for expulsion.

In the public ownership debate on a show of hands even rank and file union delegates voted for the NUM resolution, which was not exactly revolutionary, but it summed up Party principles. It was carried on a show of hands. Then the block vote was wheeled out and it was defeated.

Increasingly the block vote is being used as it used to be used in the old days.

The analysis has been put forward by Vladimir Derer that this year's Conference saw the end of a whole period. That period, started with the campaign for democracy and reached its high point in the early 1980s. Since then we have suffered cumulative defeats. This year even a reaffirmation of Clause 4 and mandatory reselection was gutted with the OMOV proposals. Part of the analysis is that sections of the left were ultra-left in the past. It says we now need to focus on 'political struggle'.

I think it is quite right to say that it is the end of an era, that's clear. Also, in all movements there is a danger of ultra-leftism. But ultra-leftism has not been a serious danger in my opinion. It has been there amongst some groups and individuals, and expressed itself in speeches and some resolutions. But that has not been a problem.

The serious problem has been the fact that the left has been broken up and divided, and that a section of the left has moved rapidly to the right. The genuine left has been isolated.

Rank and file

In the second part of this series John McIlroy tells the story of the way rank and file trade unionists built a powerful movement in Britain in the years after the First World War and the Russian Revolution.

Now the impact of the Russian Revolution, war weariness, peace propaganda and severe food shortages all led to a growing working class opposition questioning the continuance of the war itself.

This mood found a focus when at the start of 1918 the government introduced the Military Service Bill to take men from the munitions factories to the trenches. The National Conference of the shop stewards movement, meeting on January 5 and January 6, 1918, decided to sound out the feeling in the districts. The conference recommended strike action against the bill and called on the government to consider peace terms.

Clyde, Barrow, Coventry and London supported the call but crucial districts such as Sheffield and Manchester who had tested workshop opinion said, 'They were opposed to strike action against the war'. The movement drew back from a confrontation with the state into a sectional demand for exemption for the skilled.

Despite its involvement in the 40 hours strike on Clyde in 1919 the stewards' movement never recovered the initiative and disintegrated with the collapse of war production and full employment.

The shop stewards' movement contained two elements: a militancy by privileged workers to defend their threatened position and, within that, strains of opposition to the trade union tops, the war and the state.

In the end the former tendency won out.

None the less, the movement was important in popularising and illustrating key ideas which were to remain vital as a bequest to future generations; the idea of a movement; of powerful organisation at the point of production, where the workers are strongest; and, going beyond this, an organisation to link workplaces at local and national level and establish

an independent bulwark directly answerable to the workers against the official union leaders who tended to be incorporated by the employers and the state.

Where they were weakest was in sometimes believing that a small but key section of workers could take successful action by themselves; in their neglect of work within the wider union; and in their lack of examination of wider political problems. They never solved the key problem of how socialists could bridge, both organisationally and ideologically, between day to day militant trade unionism and the problem of removing the exploiting class from power.

In a limited way the British shop stewards had developed one essential of a socialist approach, the idea of workers' councils. What they lacked was an understanding of the need for a political party which could mesh with and develop further the rank and file movement and prepare the way for the conquest of power.

Many of the leading shop stewards were now to take the struggle further by joining the new Communist Party.

At the workplace level itself, the war-time experience represented a development. As Cole points out, 'While the number of stewards was thus rapidly increasing throughout practically the whole range of the munitions industries, their positions and duties were also rapidly transformed. The war-time steward became, to a large extent, a negotiator on workshop grievance, a representative of the workers by whom he was appointed in dealing with the foreman and with management over all manner of workshop problems.

More and more the stewards undertook these daily problems of workshop administration calling in the union official only when they were unable to bring about a direct settlement by formal or informal negotiation...It became more and more necessary for all the stewards to

act in regular cooperation and to devise a common organisation within each department and for each establishment as a whole.

Consequently, shop stewards' committees, workshop committees and work committees all alike based on the shop stewards' system began to develop on a considerable scale...

Usually the stewards in a particular shop appointed from their number a secretary or convenor who had the power to call meetings of all the stewards...In the large establishment consisting of a number of considerable shops or departments...an inclusive body was often constituted to represent the trade unionists as a whole. Sometimes the convenors from each of the shops were appointed usually by a meeting of all the stewards in the establishment to form a workplace committee'.

GDH Cole, *Workshop Organisation*

In 1920 an agreement with the Engineers Employers' Federation gave shop stewards formal recognition and a place in procedure. But this system with its close parallels in present steward organisation was short lived as unemployment soared.

As the Sheffield stewards' leader J.T.Murphy said in 1922, 'In England we have a powerful shop stewards' movement. But it can and only does exist in given objective conditions. These necessary conditions at the moment in England do not exist. How can you build factory organisations in empty and depleted workshops while you have a great reservoir of unemployed workers'.

Unemployment was 27% in engineering in 1921. After the employers' victorious lockout in 1922 the AEU, as it now was, had lost a quarter of its 1920 membership.

In industry generally the erosion of shop floor strength led to dependence of national collective bargaining and the official union leaders were back in the saddle.

Victimise

The shop stewards' leaders were ruthlessly victimised. As early as 1920 Arthur Gleason wrote, 'The unofficial shop stewards' movement is at ebb tide because of the percentage of the unemployed in the metal trades. The man at the gate determines the status of the man at the bench.'

It was precisely during this downturn that Communist Party militants were able to take up and transform the earlier traditions of rank and fileism. They provided in the Minority Movement, which they sponsored, the clearest programme yet developed for an organisation within the unions which can act as a bridge from the trade union organisation of today to the working class organisation of tomorrow.

Founded in August 1924 the programme of the movement began for improvements in hours and wages, the spread of trade unionism, the democratisation of the union and the building of factory committees. It then went on to place demands which would stem from struggle over these issues on the future Labour Government. It stated clearly the necessity for the removal of the capitalist system, constantly warning that the question of Government was vital (a warning that might be observed by today's neo-syndicalists such as the SWP).

'This is not a question outside trade unionism but the central question for trade unionism. On every side it is realised that trade unionism is not enough and that only a workers' government can solve these problems.' (Report of the First Minority Movement Conference).



Troops on the streets



The story of the Minority Movement is a big subject and deserves to be told in detail, elsewhere. At its foundation it grouped together representatives of 200,000 workers and in the depression the Minority Movement did not concentrate purely on the 'little things' like factory organisation but on the democratisation of the union and the TUC and the forging of links with workers in other countries.

But the Minority Movement was soon derailed by the defeat in the General Strike and the degeneration of the Communist Party. For reasons

of Russian foreign policy the CP in the mid-20s got too close to those who sold out the General Strike then, and from 1928 to 1934 it tried to build its own sectarian trade unions, ducking out of the mass movement.

From the beginning of the Minority Movement we can learn that it is possible to organise the hardest militants together even when the economic tide is firmly antagonistic. That it is essential to do this on a firm political basis and that it is essential to give such a grouping trade union-wide, class-wide and international perspectives.

e revolt

1917
YEAR OF REVOLUTION

Bolshevik influence in Soviets grows

Sunday 24 September

A meeting of soldiers' wives of the Vyborg region (Petrograd) calls for an immediate end to the war and the transfer of all power to the soviets. The same demands are adopted at a meeting organised by the laundry-workers' union in Petrograd. In the elections for Moscow's 17 regional dumas, the Bolsheviks win 51% of the votes and 350 seats out of the total 710. The Cadets, Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks win 184, 104 and 31 seats respectively.

The Vladimir Soviet declares its support for the railworkers' demands. The Kaluga Soviet of soldiers' deputies declares that no troops may be withdrawn from the town without its permission. On the Western front artillery is used to break up fraternisation between Russian and German soldiers. Artillery is also used to end fraternisation on the South-western front. By 81 votes to 48 the Kiev Soviet agrees to a Bolshevik proposal that the Soviet Executive Committee be re-elected. In fresh elections of the Ekaterinodar Soviet Executive Committee, the Bolsheviks win 20 places, the Social-Revolutionaries 10, and the Mensheviks 5.

Monday 25 September

A meeting organised in Petrograd by the Bolsheviks' women's newspaper "Woman Worker" condemns the Provisional Government and calls for an all-Russian congress of soviets. Major-General Verkhovsky issues a decree banning soldiers from entering Petrograd unless they have the permission of their commanding officer. Representing 60,000 sailors, the second congress of delegates of the Baltic Fleet opens in Helsingfors; it calls on the Central Executive Committee of Soviets to organise an all-Russian congress of soviets, and, should it fail to do so, proposes that the Petrograd Soviet take the initiative for such a congress.

On the Northern front the 54th Siberian Rifles regiment refuses to obey orders and prevents the arrest of those who instigated the refusal. Workers go out on strike in all factories in Shuya after the local association of industrialists refuses to respond to demands for higher pay. 5,000 demonstrate in Teykovo under the slogan "All power to the soviets!". A joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the Kiev Soviets of workers' and of soldiers' deputies calls on the Provisional Government to meet the railway strikers' demands. The Samara Soviet of workers' deputies calls for the transfer of all power to the Soviets.

Tuesday 26 September

The Provisional Government makes a series of concessions to the striking railway workers, on the basis of which their union calls off the strike, although the question of pay is left unresolved. The Minister of the Interior appeals to provincial and regional commissioners to take decisive steps against committees for the salvation of the revolution, set up at the time of the Kornilov coup but often still functioning. The Kronstadt Soviet adopts a Bolshevik resolution declaring the new coalition government to be a union of Kornilovists and conciliationists. The Bogorodsk Soviet issues a statement calling for an all-Russian soviet-congress and the transfer of all power to the Soviets. Rioting breaks out in Tambov over food shortages. A 10,000-strong meeting of soldiers in Gomel calls for an end to the war and for soviet power. For the second time in a week workers at the Kharkov General Electric Company works arrest management. All meetings are banned in Tashkent, and those involved in opposition to the Provisional Government are threatened with court-martial, as the town is placed under martial law. A meeting of local factory committees in Rostov-on-Don agrees to the formation of Red Guards and the arming of workers.

Wednesday 27 September

In a number of areas the rail strike continues, despite the decision of the Vikzhel (All-Russian Railways Committee) to end it. The Krasnoyarsk Soviet votes by 85 votes to two to continue support for striking railworkers. The Ufa railworkers' strike committee call for an all-Russian railworkers' congress to organise further action. By the decision of the Tashkent Soviet Executive Committee the general strike in the town is called off. A strike throughout the Baku oilfields begins, ending in victory on 3 October.

Soldiers' wives demonstrate in Perovsk under the slogans "Give bread to hungry children", "Send us back our husbands!" and "Down with War!". Rioting breaks out in Azov after the price of bread and flour is raised. The Ekaterinoslav Soviet writes to the Central Executive Committee of Soviets appealing for weapons and ammunition for its Red Guards. A meeting of the 155th Reserve Infantry regiment in Eulashevo unanimously calls for the transfer of all power to the soviets. The Revel Soviet, the Estonian district soviet, and a joint meeting of the Executive Committees of the Moscow soviets of workers' and of soldiers' deputies pass Bolshevik resolutions advocating the transfer of all power to the soviets.

Thursday 28 September

The Narvsky Soviet calls for an all-Russian congress of soviets, to be convened by the Petrograd Soviet should the Central Executive Committee of Soviets fail to do so. A general meeting of the Pskov metalworkers' union condemns the Provisional Government as a government of counter-revolution and calls for the convening of an all-Russian Soviet congress. By 364 votes to 274 a joint meeting of the Moscow soviets supports the demand for soviet power. A meeting of the Moscow council of trade unions supports the city-wide strike by chemists' employees, and calls for the municipalisation of chemists' shops under social control. Armed troops are sent to the Epifansky district, Tula province, to crush peasant unrest. In the Bezhitsa Soviet Executive Committee elections the Bolsheviks win 15 places, the anarchists 5, the Social Revolutionaries three, and the Mensheviks two. Tramway workers in Rostov-on-Don and sawmill workers in Maimaks organise Red Guards.

Friday 29 September

The Novotorzhok district commissioner appeals to the Tver provincial governor for the withdrawal of the 293rd Reserve Infantry regiment from the area after it takes over the local arsenal and wrecks all the weapons stored there. A joint meeting of the Ryazan Soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies, factory committees and trade union representatives calls for the transfer of all power to the soviets. By 57 votes to 28, with 17 abstentions, the Bryansk Soviet adopts a Bolshevik resolution of no support to the Provisional Government. After receiving orders to leave for the front, 800 soldiers in the 101st Reserve Infantry regiment in Saransk are given leave by their commander after they threaten to kill him. Fraternisation on the South-western front is broken up by artillery fire. On the Rumanian front a meeting of soldiers of the 117th Infantry division demand immediate conclusion of peace as does a joint meeting of the 62nd, 183rd and 185th reserve infantry regiments in Nizhny Noygorod. In the Nikolayevsk Soviet Executive Committee re-elections the Bolsheviks win 13 of the 15 places.

Continued on page 8



Striking railworkers during the 1926 General strike

The re-emergence of shop stewards' organisation from the middle thirties as the economy picked up has grim lessons for Thatcher today. Far from producing a lasting change in attitudes the beating that they had taken produced in trade unionists a vociferous determination to take advantage of the new economic conditions. The story will put the present trials and tribulations of the shop stewards' movement into its proper historical perspective.

From the mid thirties there was a renewal of shop steward activity. AEU Districts showed a large increase in the number of accredited shop stewards from 1934.

Lesson

But — and here is another vital lesson for us today — the real force for the renewal came from the ability to implant union organisation in the 'new' industries such as vehicles and aircraft production and from the unskilled. These were often organised by the left, as in the strike which organised the Press Steel Fisher, Oxford, for the TGWU in

1934 (the AEU declared the strike unconstitutional). By 1938 there were 40 TGWU stewards in the factory and two and a half thousand members.

The roots of renewed confidence could also be seen in the other industries, in the London busmen's rank and file movement, and in the rank and file activity on the railways. In the forefront of the upturn were the engineering apprentices who were involved in two waves of strikes during 1937.

Richard Croucher shows the broadening out of shop stewards' activity at the strongly organised factories. "...the main matters reported on were the employment of unskilled labour on toolroom machines, back pay for five workers on being reclassified as toolmakers, payment for a shop steward suspended from work, reinstatement of a girl sacked for fighting a wages dispute in the battery shop...Between 1935 and 1937 no doubt partly through publicising their successes in the pages of their lively journal, the stewards were able to develop membership to an exceptionally high level approaching 100%...the ques-

tions they were able to take up in 1937 were wider also in terms of the numbers involved. The matters dealt with included an increase for capstan setters in one department, the provision of adequate sanitation in another, a number of problems relating to the cable shop, the factory holiday rota, apprentices' wages, a wage increase in the milling shop and two sectional piecework disputes. (Engineers at War).

Exception

However, factories like this were the exception. Prior to the war, raising grievances remained a dangerous business. But there were major achievements in the thirties such as the key strike at Hawkers Brockworth factory in 1935 which laid the 'basis' for a national aircraft shop stewards' movement. This in turn established the Aircraft Shop Stewards' National Council with its own paper, New Propellor. The flames were rekindled. What was done in the '30s provided a platform for a new take-off when war commenced.

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

From centre pages

Bolshevik influence in Soviets grows

Saturday 30 September

Bolshevik and Menshevik delegates clash at the Moscow regional congress of soviets, attended by representatives of soviets in 14 different provinces; the congress adopts a Menshevik-Social Revolutionary resolution opposing the formation of Red Guards, but adopts a Bolshevik resolution on tactics towards the Constituent Assembly. The Kuntsev regional soviet condemns the Democratic Conference, and calls for re-election of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets. On the South-western front soldiers in the 2nd Turkestan Rifles regiment and in regiments of the 126th division refuse orders to relieve troops in the trenches, and protest at newspaper reports of improved morale amongst soldiers.

Miners in the Donets Basin demand withdrawal of all Cossack troops stationed in the area by 10th October, or else a strike throughout the Basin will begin. After the Astrakhan Soviet adopts a resolution advocating soviet power its Menshevik-Social-Revolutionary Executive Committee resigns; Bolsheviks and left Social Revolutionaries win the fresh elections. A congress of soviets of the Turkestan region supports the recent actions of the Tashkent Soviet and condemns the Turkestan regional soviet for failing to support the former.

Sunday 1 October

The commander-in-chief on the Northern front orders the arrest of any soldiers spreading rumours about an end to the war. Soldiers and workers in Torzhok demonstrate under the slogans 'Down with the War, Down with Violence!', 'All power to the Soviets!' and 'No Trust in the Provisional Government!' in opposition to the dispatch of troops stationed in the town to the front. On the Western Front leaflets calling for an end to the war circulate amongst soldiers in the 2nd Army, and soldiers in the 513th, 514th and 711th regiments refuse orders to take up new positions. On the South Western front soldiers in the 4th Infantry Division fraternise with the Germans. The removal of the 45th reserve Infantry Regiment from Nikoleyev is ordered, due to their political activity among the population. In the Samara Duma elections 34 Bolsheviks, 32 Social Revolutionaries, 18 Cadets and 2 Mensheviks are elected. A meeting of Samara railworkers condemns the Vikzhel for prematurely ending the railworkers strike, and calls for an all-Russian railworkers' congress.

Monday 2 October

The Basmanny regional Soviet (Moscow) passes a resolution to mobilise all forces for struggle under the slogan 'All Power To The Soviets!'. The Presnensky regional Soviet (Moscow) declares that only Soviet power can end the current crisis and calls for the convening of an all-Russian congress of soviets. The strike by chemists' employees in Moscow goes to arbitration. In response to an appeal from the Rzhev Duma for troops to discipline revolutionary soldiers stationed in the town, the committee of the 5th reserve regiment of the Staritsky garrison resolves not to permit the despatch of any troops to aid counter revolutionaries. A meeting of the Bryansk district soviet adopts a Bolshevik resolution that the Executive Committee be elected on the basis of proportional representation. Soldiers in the 7th and 8th Siberian rifles on the Western Front, and in the 466th Malmizsky regiment on the Rumanian Front refuse to obey orders. Soldiers in the 147th and 148th infantry regiments stationed in Kutnetsk adopt a resolution calling for an end to the war and transferring of all power to the soviets.

No care for consistency

Stan Crooke's heartfelt cry for enlightenment on the question of the Socialist Workers' Party's contradictory positions towards the Scottish Assembly moved me to venture an answer.

The trick of holding two logically incompatible positions on the same issue is not a new one for the SWP, and to give credit where it is due, they really have it off to a tee. The SWP calls for socialists to leave the Labour Party whilst claiming to campaign against expulsions; they support Black Sections in the Labour Party but oppose them in their own ranks; they backed Brent Council over the 'McGoldrick affair' whilst condemning bureaucratic 'anti-racism from above'; they say 'Troops out now' is the central demand for Ireland in one breath and then call for 'workers' unity' in the next...etc., etc. The list is endless.

Leadership

The truth is that the SWP leadership *doesn't care* about consistency. They have two programmes: one for public consumption (whatever is popular in the petty-bourgeois leftist milieu they want to relate to) and the other for internal consumption (the real "line", which may not be so popular...).

The SWP appears to be incoherent



and self-contradictory to any rational observer. In reality, its leaders know exactly what they are doing — even if the membership doesn't — and it can be summed up in a single word: opportunism. Or as Trotsky once defined "centrism", it is "crystalised confusion".

I rather suspect that comrade Crooke knows all this already, but I thought I'd spell it out, anyhow.

Yours,
JACK MCGARITY

Football

Socialist soccer

Unfortunately I had arranged a Brighton Conference Fringe Meeting on "A Socialist Policy for Sport" for the same time as the Socialist Organiser "Back to Basics" meeting. Thankfully both were well attended.

I think it is vital to politicise every aspect of our cultural environment, and sport has often been neglected. Just think of the number of people playing and watching football every Saturday. Each Stadium has a grandstand with comfortable, often lavish, facilities in the Directors' Box.

Recently there have been many demonstrations by the supporters who regularly line the rugged wind —

swept terraces, frustrated as their favourite clubs' fortunes nosedive. Up goes the chant "Sack the Board, sack the Board". But who can sack the Board? It is the Directors themselves who do the hiring and firing, they have bought control.

Why should all the football clubs be mismanaged by small bands of businessmen? The supporters should be shown that the only lasting solution will be a socialist system with clubs owned and operated by the players, staff and supporters themselves.

Yours fraternally,
RICHARD HANFORD

Haywards Heath,
Sussex

Movies

Hard on 'Comrades'

Why does some of the left always find films like 'Comrades' hard to take? Don't comrades know that you can still make political films and also provide a beautifully photographed film which is not necessarily direct.

To describe the film-maker Bill Douglas as being self-indulgent is looking at films not as art but merely as communication. The excellent photography which sets the atmosphere so clearly and the stark difference between the stormy, wind-swept fields of rural England and the barren, harsh land of the Australian outback was a point in itself.

Douglas himself said the film was not political, however. Throughout, the film either directly or ambiguously brought out the political issues of the time. And in the end drew the conclusion and presented the Tolpuddle Martyrs not just as heroes of their time but of ours.

Comrade Grayson's description of the travelling lantern man and his guises as a bit of a waste of time is beyond me. It wasn't anything deep or clever. In fact probably one reason the director used the role was because during the 19th century the lanternist was a main source of entertainment and news for the labouring classes. And believe it or not comrade, the figure was actually quite amusing and linked the film from one scene to another.

At the end of the film I felt that you can take up the issues of the 'working man' of the 19th century and bring it into relevance for today and the importance of solidarity amongst working people.

Douglas might have made more of the campaign which was taking place back in England, but I've yet to see a film that is 100 per cent revolutionary perfect. I enjoyed it and suggest other comrades should see it.

MARK NEVILLE
North London

Labour Party

Don't back reformists

Every Trotskyist knows that left reformism does not show the way forward.

Yet year after year we have to vote for left reformists in the National Executive election because there is no credible Trotskyist list of candidates. The argument against having one is that if we do not vote for the left reformists we will let in Kinnockites or right wingers.

May I suggest that to cover this objection but also to ensure that a beginning is made with a Trotskyist

list, as soon as possible agreement should be reached that Terry Fields MP, Dave Nellist MP and Lol Duffy will stand. That would leave four places for which "honest" left reformers like Dennis Skinner and Eric Heffer could be given critical support.

DAVID HARRIS
West Sussex

Send letters to Socialist Organiser PO Box 823, London SE15

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Marx's capital

Geoff Ward reviews 'Marx in London' by Asa Briggs

With a plethora of books on the market designed for the visitor to our great capital, don't be fooled into thinking that 'Marx in London' is only of use to tourists.

Originally published in conjunction with a BBC programme it is partly a tour guide — complete with maps and bus routes — and also a well illustrated, concise biography of Marx's life.

Marx's long period of exile in London began in 1849 when he, his wife Jenny and Engels were kicked out of Europe following the revolutions of 1848.

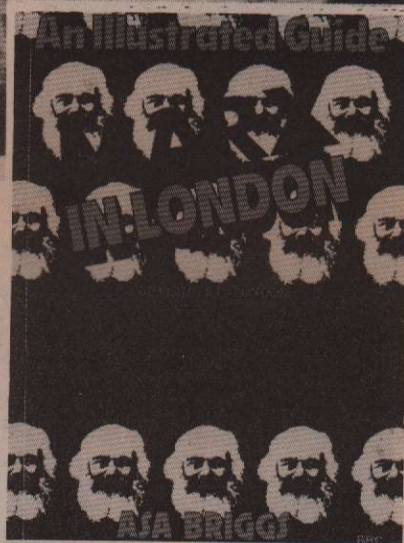
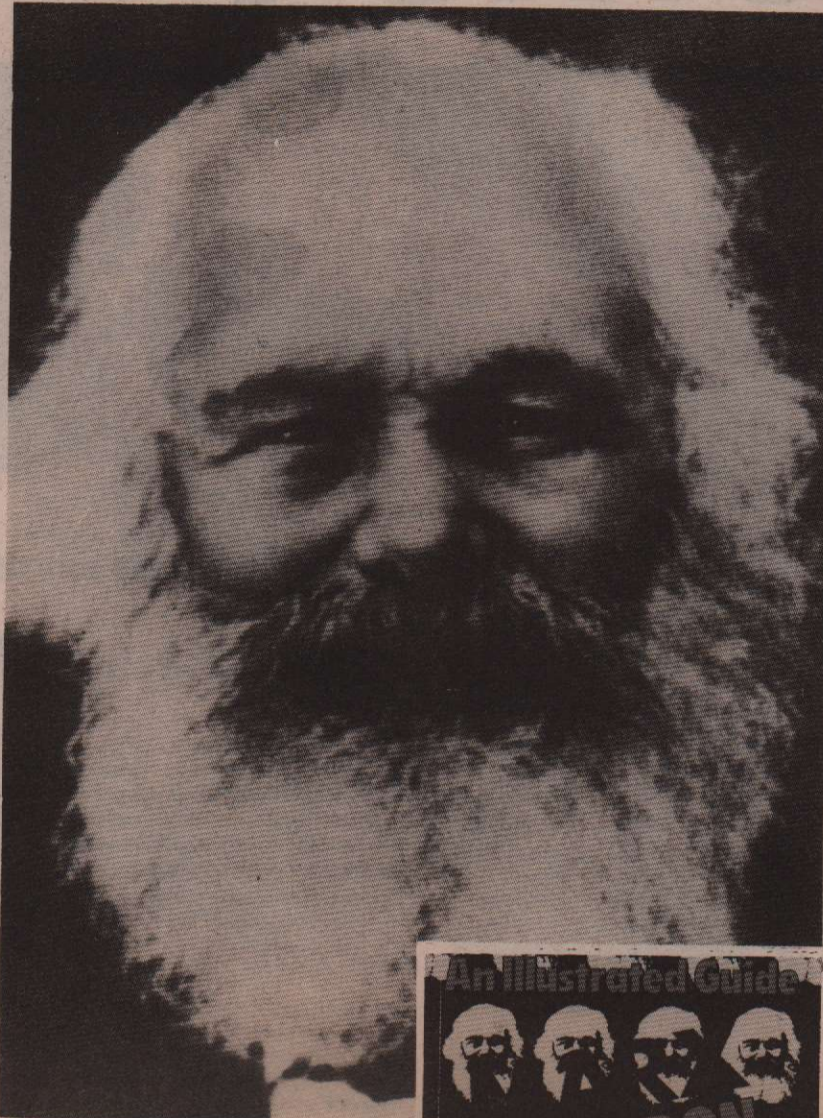
In good tour-guide fashion, the booklet describes Marx's surroundings in Victorian London and leads you around the various family homes. Occasionally the odd banality creeps in: "There is no evidence that Marx...wandered round the famous Covent Garden fruit and vegetable market."

The book does give you a good insight into Marx's life. Things like Marx sitting 'mute' during the first meeting of what became the International Working Men's Association in 1864 and one of Engels' favourite pastimes being fox-hunting came as a surprise.

Less surprisingly though was the fact that a GLC-erected plaque on the Marxes' first family home in Dean Street got the dates wrong.

The Dean Street house highlights a problem with trying to follow Marx's trail around London today — it's been turned into a restaurant. Though you can still visit places like the British Museum and see the desk where it is alleged that Marx studied — wow!

The most famous place of interest — Marx's tomb in Highgate cemetery — now contains the monstrous monolith which was unveiled in 1956. Soviet leader Krushchev visited it,



presumably to pay his respects, in the year that the USSR sent tanks to level the working class districts in Hungary.

If you don't fancy trampling around London getting sore feet, 'Marx in London' is worth buying for the biography and the photos. A useful starting point before tackling Marx's works proper.

I wonder if you can pick up a copy of Das Kapital in Covent Garden? That would be progress!

Blood and slime

Edward Ellis reviews 'Hellraiser'

Blood is boring. Or so horror film makers seem to think. We do, of course, still get buckets of blood. But now we get a lot of this sticky, mucky stuff as well. The point, it would appear, is not just to scare us out of our wits, but to nauseate us horribly at the same time. Horror movies these days are, more accurately, puke movies.

If 'Hellraiser' is at all typical of the horror flick of the future, we can expect cinemas to start providing sick bags (in different sizes, in case you want to share one with a friend).

Certainly it is inadvisable to go out for a meal before seeing it. For it is truly disgusting (almost as disgusting as the man who sat next to me belching loudly at regular intervals).

The gist of it is that a certain unpleasant but previously dead man, called Frank, is accidentally revived by a few drops of his brother's blood, whereupon he leaps out from under the attic floorboards disguised as a cast-off from The Fly. Unsurprisingly, he needs more blood to be fully

revived, and persuades Julia, his brother's wife (and his former lover) to act as his provider. She sets about luring unsuspecting men from singles bars up to the attic and then smashing them over the head with a metal hammer so that Frank can do unspeakable things to them in order to get himself a new skin.

All this she does out of love, or lust, or helpless and inexplicable devotion — a devotion that survives despite the not-very-sexy appearance and bad eating habits of the resurrected Frank. Which brings me to the sticky, mucky stuff.

Frank, of course, is no ordinary corpse, quite apart from the fact that he is not dead. He is covered in an indescribably horrid slime, dripping from every inch of his body, which resembles one enormous puss-oozing sore. Julia's utter humiliation is perhaps best represented by the fact that she goes so far as to kiss him — only on the hand, but believe me that is quite revolting enough.

The slime is, as I say, much more interesting than blood. But 'Hellraiser' does not content itself with this unappetising detail.

While Frank was sort-of-dead, he was actually being subjected to exquisite (what else?) pain by these lurid and overgrown gnomes with pins holding their rotting flesh in place, who, it seems, are after him now, intent on dragging him back to Hell, or somewhere just as nasty.

Unfortunately for him, but fortunately for the somewhat buried sense of Good and Evil that 'Hellraiser' stands by, his niece stumbles accidentally upon these supernatural torturers, and grasses him up. What they do to him when they find him isn't very nice, but I can't tell you exactly what it is, as unfortunately while it was happening I had my eyes shut. Funny thing, really.

I should add, shameful though it is to admit, that this was not the only time my eyes were shut. 'Hellraiser' is very, very scary, and I wouldn't count myself as unusually squeamish when it comes to blood-and-gore fantasies, even though I never really got over the Cybermen.

Why do we go to see these films, which are designed to make us disgorge ourselves from both ends (the one in fear, the other in revulsion)? Why do we walk away delighting in the fact that we actually didn't watch the best bits, and so really wasted our money? Why do we go back for more?

For myself, I blame the alienation that arises from the commodity form. In these boring times, we need a bit of blood and slime to liven things up.

In any case, 'Hellraiser' is highly economical, as you will save on the food you won't be able to keep down for the next week. I recommend it un-wholesomely.



Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

The dangers of soya beans

This article is dedicated to those meat-eaters who, when told of the health risks of animal products, take it personally and get all defensive. The news is that those smug vegetarians (myself included) may be at risk themselves from the "right on" soya bean.

The evidence comes from studies of the poor health and reproductive performance of cheetahs in North American zoos. In 1985, for instance, there were 29 deaths but only 18 births amongst American cheetahs. Seven of the young died before reaching maturity.

Kenneth Setchell, professor of paediatrics at the University of Cincinnati, examined the bodies of the dead cheetahs and found evidence of liver damage in 60% of them. By comparison, cheetahs in a successful breeding centre in South Africa had no liver damage.

A major difference in the lives of the two populations was their diets. South African cheetahs ate healthy whole carcasses while the North American ones were fed on a commercially prepared (and presumably cheaper) diet which was largely horse meat but also contained soya bean products for extra protein.

Analysis of the commercial diet found that it contained two substances, from the soya-beans, which are known to act as weak oestrogens (female sex hormones which help prepare the body for fertilisation and pregnancy). It is not unknown for plants to produce substances that mimic animal hormones — even sex hormones — though their reasons for doing so are not always obvious. This has led to

the use of some plants as natural abortives or contraceptives.

This seems to have been the inadvertent result of feeding soya bean products to the North American cheetahs. While elsewhere, 60-80% of females produce live cubs, in America only some 10% did. Unfortunately, withdrawing the soya beans does not necessarily help. One four year old female who had never been pregnant came into oestrus ("on heat") after a change in diet. She mated and showed signs of early pregnancy but failed to bear any young. Plant oestrogens can apparently cause the uterus (womb) to become fibrous and damaged. Whether this damage can be reversed remains to be seen.

More serious for the cheetahs' health, oestrogens are known to affect the liver and so seem responsible for the greater death rate. Changing the diet resulted in improved liver function. This means that the liver would be better able to remove poisons from the blood. The blood itself clotted better, so cuts were less likely to cause blood losses which might weaken the animals.

This story may or may not have lessons for humans. Do oestrogens in food plants or in some contraceptive pills cause damage to the wombs of those taking them? Do soya bean oestrogens cause liver damage? This has been observed as a side effect of "the Pill" in some cases.

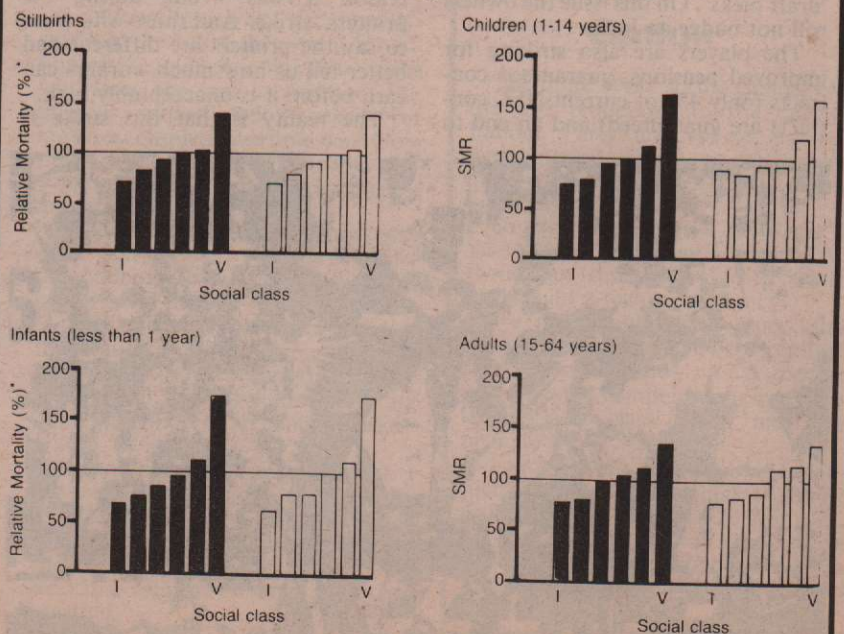
I would not think there was cause for concern among soya bean eaters unless they eat a lot of them. After all, the cheetahs were eating bean products every day. However, research certainly needs to be done to see if there are any ill-effects in people.

Information: *New Scientist*.

Health and the working class

These tables show that death rates are up to twice as high for working class people as for the ruling class. This is true throughout our lives and follows 40 years of the NHS! This information comes from "Facing the figures: what really is happening to the National Health Service?" This book is packed with facts which chart the NHS's decline. Produced by Radical Statistics Health Group, it is an indispensable tool for health service campaigners. So, if you want the facts about hospital waiting lists, the health of ethnic minorities, the importance of charges to patients to NHS finances, etc., send £3.95 plus 50p p&p to RSHG, BSSRS, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL.

Figure 2.3 Mortality by social class and age, England and Wales, 1970-72.



* Relative mortality (%) is the ratio of rates for the occupational class to the rate for all males or females

A fearsome picket

Alan Johnson looks at the recent strike in American football

"In Washington there were ugly scenes as 275-lb defensive tackle Darryl Grant took on a chartered bus filled with non-union players as it rolled into Redskins Park. In a frenzied attack Grant smashed two windows with his bare fists — and emerged unscathed. "I look at these guys as guys who would steal the shoes off a dead man," said the footballer.

The American footballers' strike is in its third week. Picket lines have been set up at all 28 National Football League training camps. Scab coaches have been attacked, missiles thrown and in one case a couple of shotguns appeared. No wonder the weekly "First Down" asks the question "who dares cross the world's most fearsome picket line?"

Well the answer is that hundreds of yesterday's rejects are. Old veterans brought out of retirement, young rookies who thought their chance to play in the NFL had gone forever. The NFL owners are staging scab games in a straight forward attempt to break the strike. "This is the regular season. It's just a different set of footballers out there," said Tex Schramm, Dallas Cowboys' President.

The National Football League Players' Association is an affiliate of the American TUC — the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO is a federation of 89 unions representing 13.1 million workers across the United States. A support committee has been formed involving six of America's largest unions, including the United Steel Workers.

This strike is not a freak and socialists shouldn't treat it as one. The issues involved are clear: "Among other things they involve workers' rights, fair treatment on the job, a fair share of revenues and the right to bargain and speak out without reprisal," said labour leader Don Bickford.

The players are demanding what is called "free agency". This would give the player the right to seek his own club once he has four years' NFL experience and his contract has expired with the club which 'drafted' him from college. At present the player is 'drafted' by a particular club without any say in the matter and cannot leave that club unless he is 'traded' for other players or future 'draft picks'. On this issue the owners will not budge an inch.

The players are also striking for improved pensions, guaranteed contracts (only 4% of current NFL contracts are guaranteed) and an end to

the attacks on union representatives. In the pre-season shop stewards were 'cut', or dropped from team rosters at New England and Los Angeles Raiders. The players are also resisting the imposition of mandatory random drug testing.

By fielding scab teams and carrying on with the regular season, the owners have raised the stakes, threatening the players' very jobs. One football writer, Ira Kaufman, says "Forget about freedom of movement, pensions and insurance. These players are now fighting for survival."

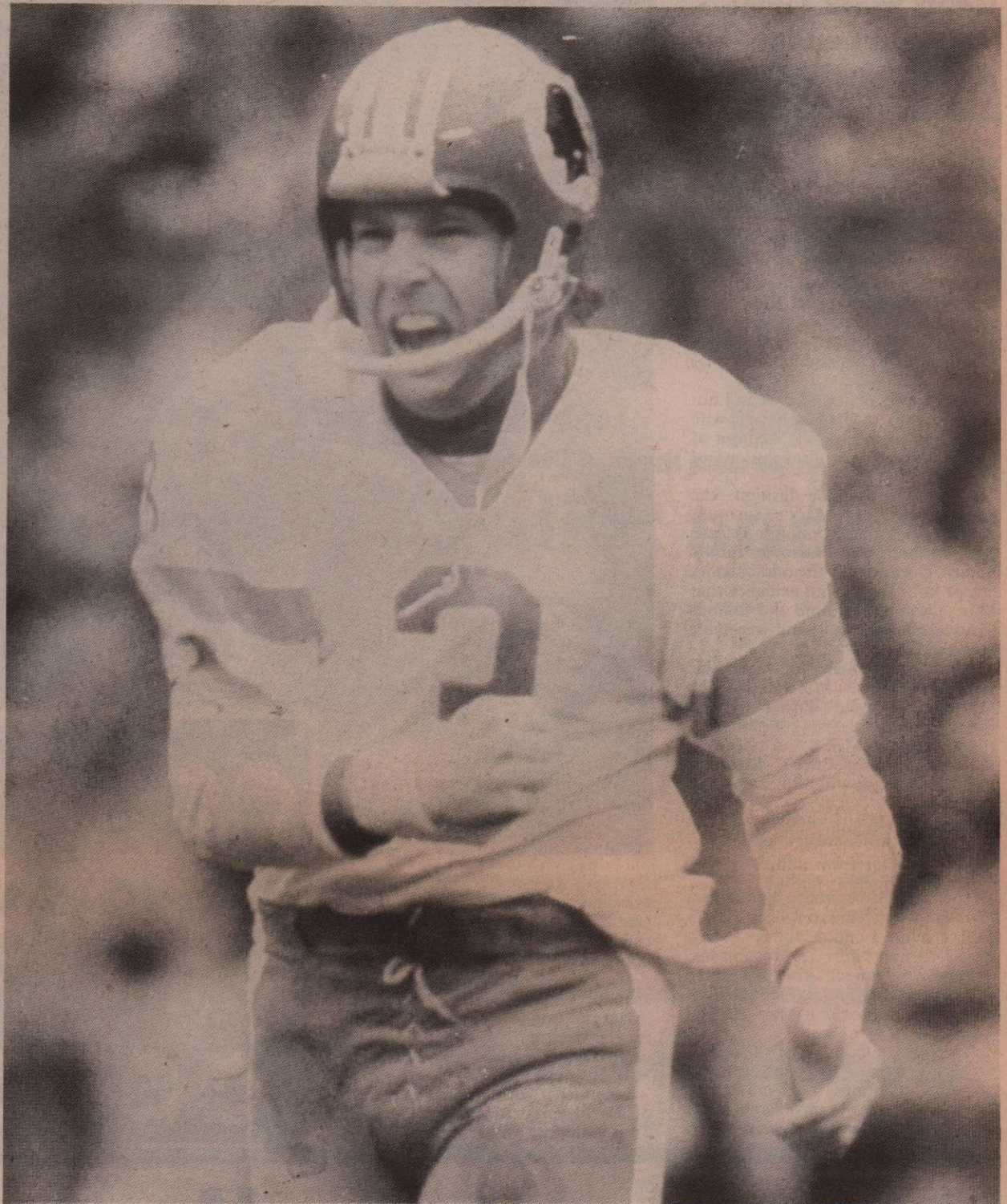
I don't think that's strictly true. The union is fighting for survival but the scabs won't last five minutes on the team rosters once the strike is finished. The owners are playing a cruel game with youngsters who have dreamt of playing in the NFL since they could walk. For one, the reason they are not on the rosters in the first place is that they are not good enough. But more importantly, as Mick Luckhurst, a British-born Kicker for the Atlanta Falcons, and union negotiator puts it: "The scab players must realise they've put themselves in a real Catch 22 situation for the end of the strike. The players wouldn't play with them because of the bad atmosphere on the whole team and so the owners would have to get rid of them. That's a real no-win position to be in."

The attitude of many players was summed up by Walter Payton, the legendary Chicago Bears running back, who said, "Tell you what, if we had to scrimmage with them, you'd have to use a lot of body bags". And Walter's nickname is "sweetness". Buffalo Bill's Nose Tackle Fred Smerlas is more straightforward. "If the scabs come in, they're dead men."

Bothered

But should socialists really be bothered about people who earn, on average, \$230,000 a year? Should we really care about the likes of Jim Kelly who earns about \$9,000 a day. Well, first, it's a sobering fact that the average NFL player's career lasts three years. Second, it's a fact that, as anyone who has played kitted football knows, you risk serious injury every time you pull on a helmet and play. But the players themselves are aware of the problem. "It's hard for the fans to understand," says Phil Simms, last year's Super Bowl MVP (Most Valuable Player). "They look at us and what we're doing and that's what they want to do. We're living out their dream playing professional football. *But it's a job to us and we're sticking up for our rights. We want some type of free agency and we're going to get it.*"

That's the key point. The money argument is wrong here for the same reason it was wrong during the printers' strike. And those who want to say the printers are different had better tell us how much workers can earn before it is unacceptably high. The reality is that this strike is



about union-busting. It's about the principle by which trade unionism lives and dies: solidarity. It is also about who owns the game itself. In the 1982 strike the players' slogan was 'We are the game'. It was a 'we' that included the fans. In this strike the owners are saying they are the game.

The 57 day strike in 1982 cost the owners \$200 million. Every lost weekend this time costs them \$40 million. The major television networks provide 60 per cent of the clubs' income. Hence the scab games. TV viewer ratings reflecting the attitude of the fans will influence the outcome of the strike.

Channel Four promised to show pre-strike games from Week Two. They are now showing scab games, no doubt after pressure from the NFL owners. People in Britain who want to support the strike should write to Channel Four and tell them to stop showing scab games and start showing the film of union matches from week two that everyone knows they have.

American Football is a growing sport in Britain. Three million watch it each week on Channel Four. There are hundreds of clubs up and down the country. It's not just a merchandising operation although it's certainly that as well. It's also laying down strong roots in many working class areas.

It's hard to explain the attraction of the game to the uninitiated. It's powerful, dramatic and highly

skilful. It combines collective endeavour and individual artistry. You can grow to appreciate the game's secrets more and more with each game. I trained with the Merseyside Centurions and loved it. I had to finish not least because I didn't have time to learn the team's defensive playbook nor keep up training with the election approaching. If you don't know what a "Denver Bronco Slant on noise" is when the defensive co-ordinator "audibilises" at the line of a scrimmage you haven't really got time to ask!

In that respect it carries a lot of the compulsion of chess in its combination of the exacting science of strategy and tactics and the human drama or clash of attempted execution and resistance.

Sixth sense

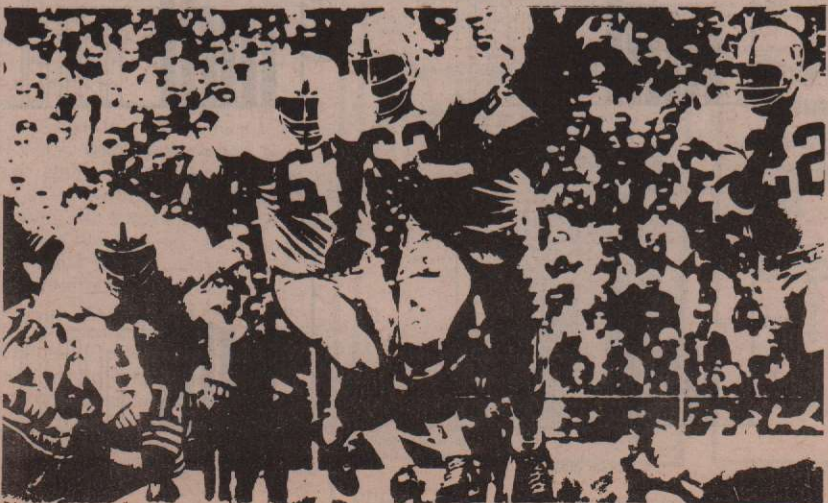
Watch a Dan Marino working his sixth sense understanding with Mark Duper coming off a fly pattern, or John Henry's rifle of a right arm unleashing a 'zinger' to Vance Johnson or Mike Singletary, reshaping Chicago's entire defence in a split second as he spots the offensive strategy, calls the adjustments and tracks down the play like a bird of prey.

The best players can unify a crowd. It was said of Hugh McElhenny, the great running back that "When Hugh ran with the football some

magical power of transference lifted the audience out of the braying arena and into the concert hall. He could homogenise any crowd of colliding partisans and make them — just for one afternoon — aficionados joining in a celebration." I think that would be a fine aim for a socialist society. To achieve a sporting culture in which the main idea is of "aficionados joining in a celebration".

The strike could have an important effect on many youngsters who follow the game. A clash between solidarity and narrow self interest, unionism and anti-unionism, collective action and corporate power is being played out before millions. Gene Upshaw, union head, is right when he says "When you have a Dan Marino, who just signed a tremendous contract, who has every reason in the world to be completely satisfied with his position in life — willing to take a leadership role and stand up and say 'I'm here to fight for my fellow teammates and guys who are not as fortunate as me throughout the NFL', that really says it all."

Right now Dan Marino is on the picket line. If he stays there with his colleagues the strike will probably succeed. If the strike gets sidetracked into Labour Courts as it did in 1982 or if players start crossing picket lines in any numbers then it is not only the strike that will be lost. It will be another step in the direction of the scab being made hero. We can all be with Hugh McElhenny later. For now we need to be with Fred Smerlas.



Bus workers lose round one

By John Payne

Last month London busworkers lost the first round in their fight against management's plans to deregulate and privatise the capital's bus service, with its inevitable effect on both the service itself and on the workers' wages and conditions.

Workers at Norbiton garage voted to accept, in the face of threatened job loss, a wage cut of £20-£30 a week and an increase of one and a half hours on the working week.

Although regarded by some union leaders as a form of 'victory', because management had reduced their original cuts package and now allowed Norbiton workers to transfer to other garages, it was clearly the opposite. Not only was the cut in wages and conditions confirmed, but management had won the first major challenge to their plans and have now

got the green light to pick off other garages.

The defeat had nothing to do with an unwillingness to fight amongst Norbiton workers. Although traditionally a weak garage, the workers had time and again rejected management's threats and pressure and been prepared to strike.

The problem lay with the London busworkers' union leadership, who consistently refused to organise the London-wide all-out action that was necessary to win. Frightened of such action, they wasted overwhelming ballot majorities for action from London busworkers, diverting it into dead-end court action and ill-prepared one day strikes. The predictable end result was the continuing isolation of Norbiton and growing demoralisation among other busworkers.

Despite this, it still needed the intervention of ACAS, national TGWU officials and the absence of a leading Norbiton union activist on

holiday, before the final cuts package was forced on to the Norbiton workforce.

The focus now switches to other garages in line to be picked off: initially Bexley Heath, Harrow and

then Wimbledon. Already workers there have been offered new contracts, varying between garages according to "market forces", but all containing some form of cut, whether in wages, conditions or both.

Longbridge

Action against victimisation

Workers at Austin Rover's Longbridge plant have shown their willingness to take action against victimisation. Unfortunately, their determination has not been matched by union leaders at plant or national level.

Last month two Trim Shop workers (one a shop steward) were sacked for alleged 'clocking offences' and 150 of their colleagues immediately went on strike. Longbridge convenor Dave Osborne (a Communist Party member) and the Works Committee ordered a return to work so that a secret ballot could be held. Nevertheless the militant response of the rank and file had obviously frightened management sufficiently to secure the reinstatement of one of the sacked men.

The result of the ballot is thought to be a clear majority for a strike but the Works Committee have still not announced the outcome. Meanwhile Longbridge management are arguing that the ballot is invalid because the

wording referred to two workers whereas one has now been reinstated. Amazingly the Works Committee seems to have accepted this legalistic argument and have postponed any further action until at least Thursday 15th when the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) next meets. Meanwhile the sacked man (unsurprisingly, the shop steward) remains suspended on full pay — a state of limbo utilised by management on many occasions in the past to buy time and to allow a sacking to become a fait accompli.

Longbridge workers have already achieved a significant breakthrough with the reinstatement of one of the victimised men; for the past ten years Austin Rover and BL management have operated a de facto policy of never reinstating sacked workers whatever the circumstances.

The next move for Longbridge workers ought to be obvious: all-out strike action of the whole plant to secure the reinstatement of the shop steward. Militants in the Trim Shop will be pushing for this from Thursday regardless of what the JNC decides.

Diamond 4

From back page

sentence is harsh by any standards.

At the eleventh hour the four families turned to the Chinese Information and Advice Centre who launched the appeal campaign. Despite being sabotaged by the powerful clique of big restaurant owners who wanted to maintain their cosy relationship with the police, the campaign struck a resonant chord in the community. Unfortunately it was too late to change the appeal against the sentence to a full appeal against conviction, but the campaign will continue to seek to clear the names of the Diamond 4 after their release from prison.

This case has highlighted the occupational hazards of the catering trade, especially for black workers — something for the TGWU to take up

as an issue if it is serious about recruiting catering workers into the union. It has further shown Chinese workers that neither the police nor their own Chinese bosses can be relied on to defend them. They have also seen the effectiveness of political campaigning as opposed to keeping one's head down and relying on British Justice. Finally, in future, Chinese workers will think twice before ever calling on the police! Self Defence is No Offence.

Watch out for the Diamond 4 on Bandung File on Channel 4 next Saturday 17 October. Donations and messages of support are still needed to sustain the four families, and to campaign for the case to be reopened. Write to: Diamond 4 Defence Campaign, c/o 152-6 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Tel: 01-836 8291.

YOUTH
fightback

Labour's new youth rules

By Mark Osborn

Last summer the realigned leftist Tom Sawyer pushed a number of proposals to 'reform' the Labour Party Young Socialists through the Party's youth sub-committee.

Some of these proposals were passed in a modified form at Labour Party conference. The new rules mean that youth will have to leave the YS after their 23rd birthday rather than their 26th; all regional structures, conferences and committees will be abolished.

This is hardly a move towards a more open LPYS. It is difficult to imagine how kicking out a sizeable proportion of the members and abolishing regional democracy could help build a thriving YS.

It seems likely that this is also a softening-up of the YS/Militant. Next year we may well see a YS remould as Labour Students and the unions are brought in to pull together a broad Labour Youth wing. A democratic union would actually benefit the Party's youth and could be used by a campaigning Party to strengthen its links with the workplace and the colleges. Unfortunately the right wing are not stupid and are unlikely to be so benign.

Sure

Last week's Militant editorial said "the right will never be able to build a youth movement in their own image". Well I wouldn't be so sure about that, and there are a number of right-wingers who are willing to give it a try.

What actually happens will depend on the extent that the right will be able to clamp down on socialists throughout the whole Party. Partly, also, on the extent that old conservatives within the union bureaucracies can be won to the idea of recruiting youth and setting up union youth sections. The TGWU's Link-Up campaign could be part of a move in this direction.

What are we left with now? While the regional committees and conferences were potentially a good thing, nobody is going to miss them much because under Militant control they were next to useless.

The age limit is pretty serious though. Many YS activists will try to avoid the age limit implementation, but they'll have to be careful: the right have been given a green light to attack activists and branches. We can expect more YS branch closures, making it harder for paper-selling tendencies to work.

Option

The thing about a rule change like the age reduction, in the current Labour Party atmosphere, is that over a period of time, no matter how much we dislike it, it will come gradually into force.

So there is no option at all, for a YS tendency like Youth Fightback. If we want to survive in the LPYS we must build a teenage tendency.

We must continue the successful push we have made towards college and school students. As a routine part of every campaign, these groups of working class youth must be brought in.

Talking to the French youth movement in the 1930s Trotsky said he didn't want to be shown 20 year olds, he wanted to be shown a real youth movement. We must bear this in mind. We either adapt, or we die with the Militant.

A Labour Murdoch

By a West Midlands FBU member

The courageous stand of the West Glamorgan fire-fighters in defence of jobs has won them a lot of friends in the rest of the Fire Service.

These friends do not unfortunately include the national leadership of the Fire Brigades Union, who have channelled the action into fruitless talks at ACAS. ACAS's track record in assisting or arbitrating in such disputes is far from impressive, and the FBU leaders know this well.

Groundswell opinion in most of the Metropolitan Brigades for action in support of the West Glamorgan fire-fighters has been called off by local union leaders, following behind-doors 'advice' from the national leaders.

In an attempt to save face the same leaders are now talking of balloting for national strike action; macho posing and sabre rattling while stitching up a "deal" through ACAS. Now that the leadership have demobilised the "999 calls only" action throughout the country, the

Home Office and employers will gather heart.

The outrageous Murdoch-style ultimatums and sackings by the Labour-controlled West Glamorgan Council can only be met by united national action. The proposal to cut 48 jobs out of 360 is clearly marked as a national test case, and if left unchallenged, would translate to 5,000 jobs across the country.

The FBU has successfully defended jobs on many occasions since the 1977/8 national strike. This has been largely due to the clear and unambiguous policy of all out strike action in defence of jobs and against redundancies. The employers have gained confidence following the defeat of the miners; at the same time the FBU have compromised or even abandoned a fighting policy that had been seen by the members to work.

The deal which was cobbled together and agreed at ACAS does not solve the problem. It merely postpones it. It gives the government time to train squaddies and bring the "Green Goddess" fire engine out of moth balls. It allows the fire-fighters' willingness to fight to be dissipated in the waiting, and lets the FBU leadership off the hook.

Labour's hope to build on

WHETTON'S
WEEK



On the Thursday of the Labour Party Conference I rang up the industrial tribunal from Brighton for the result of my appeal. They refused to give it to me.

When I got back to Nottinghamshire the result was in the Evening Post and various other papers. So the media got to know before I did. I did not receive official confirmation until last Wednesday, along with a letter from the manager of the DHSS asking me for details.

Jeopardised

The tribunal upheld British Coal's decision to re-employ me at one of two Yorkshire pits — Manton or Shireoaks. They did not support my reinstatement at Bevercotes because "the future of Bevercotes colliery might be jeopardised by industrial unrest."

They are allowing me 42 days, rather than the normal seven, to reply to their decision. I have talked and am still talking it over with my wife, family and comrades in the NUM; I will be consulting with my branch; and only after that serious consideration will I be publicising my opinion on it.

Judgement

Of course, what the tribunal did not consider were the effects of the judgement, not only on myself, but on Ted Scott and on those who will be sacked after us for carrying out trade union duties. It will mean that, for trade union duties, you can be shifted the length and breadth of the country, and that is a principle we cannot accept.

I was in Brighton for the whole week of the Labour Party conference, working with other victimised miners. We covered over 40 fringe meetings, raising money for the sacked miners and trying to present our case, and the response there was fantastic. It was only what happened inside the Conference that I found terribly depressing.

Taking the two together — what took place inside Conference and

what was happening outside at the fringe meetings, the comrades we spoke to — I did not come away from Brighton downcast. I would have done if I had just spent the whole week inside the hall; but it was what was being said and the response outside that really gave us a lift. It showed that there are still some damn good comrades there, and that is what we have got to build on.

First on the eve of the Party conference, and then again last week, the NUM NEC has voted against giving the present overtime ban any real teeth. Yorkshire, Durham, Nottinghamshire and Kent wanted it made into a proper ban; Scotland, South Wales, Midlands and COSA voted against and had a majority.

Tragedy

I think it is a tragedy that there are elements in the National Executive who are rushing headlong into 'new realism', and they are prepared to trample on the likes of myself, Ted Scott, Mick McGinty and all the other people. But the argument is not just or even mainly about us, it is about all the people who will get sacked after us. But they seem to be willing to forget us in order to have Scargill's head on a plate.

Defend the Diamond 4!

By Cheung Siu-Ming

On the same day that ex-Tory MP Keith Best was let off jail, there was a demonstration outside the High Court as four Chinese waiters appealed for a reduction of their two year sentences for affray.

The appeal succeeded in reducing their sentences to nine months. They have already served five months in prison and now expect to be freed next month.

The appeal was the culmination of a big campaign supported by every London Chinese community centre — hundreds of letters and thousands of pounds collected — which created an impact that was acknowledged by the High Court judgement.

The waiters worked at the Diamond Restaurant in Chinatown, Soho. On 29 June 1986 a fight broke out at the restaurant when four drunken customers, hurling racist abuse, sought to leave after refusing to pay a bill. This is a very common occurrence in many Chinese and Indian restaurants up and down the country and is hardly newsworthy in itself.

However in this case, the customers actually assaulted the waiter, who was beaten to the ground and kicked in the ribs. Three other waiters came forward in defence of their fellow worker, and in the ensuing fight, both sides sustained injuries before the attackers were restrained. The restaurant owner called the police...who arrived and arrested the four waiters.

The four customers (who still haven't paid their bill) were transformed from racist thugs into prosecution witnesses. The media reported the case in a sensational manner, describing the customers being "clubbed like seals" by supposedly martial arts experts.

The police should have been challenged in court for:

- a) only taking statements from non-Chinese witnesses;
- b) allowing the customers to receive hospital treatment, while detaining only the four waiters for questioning;
- c) not giving the waiters a medical examination by the hospital or even a police surgeon to establish whether they were in a fit state to be questioned, sign statements and be charged;
- d) questioning the Diamond 4 without the presence of an interpreter or solicitor;
- e) not questioning or bringing charges against the racist attackers.

However, the defence lawyer engaged by the restaurant owner failed to challenge the prosecution case and did not call any witnesses to contradict the police version of events. Despite this, other charges like "wounding with intent" were dropped through lack of evidence, and the Diamond 4 were convicted under the catch-all charge of affray.

The trial judge even claimed that two years was a "lenient Sentence"! For four workers with families and with no previous convictions, the

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Beat the Blues

Students defy Tories and rain

By Sandra Cartledge

Last Thursday's "Beat the Blues" march saw 2,000 students brave appalling weather to demonstrate against the Tories in Blackpool.

Horizontal sleet on the Wirral and rain virtually everywhere else kept numbers down. The weather was so bad that only half the students from the North West who had bought tickets actually went on the march.

At 11 a.m. waves were breaking over the assembly point on the promenade but by 2 p.m. the tide had gone down, and the rain stopped just long enough for us to make our noisy way past the Winter Gardens.

It wasn't to last, but despite the rain coming down, most people stayed for the rally where the speakers included Simon Pottinger from NUS (in personal capacity), Michelle Carlisle from NAC on the campaign against the Alton Bill, and speakers from the TGWU and Birmingham Unemployed Centre.

Some even stayed for the bands, dancing in the rain to "The Medicine Show" and "The Bobs".

In the warmth of an amusement arcade, Socialist Organiser spoke to some of the students who had come for the day and the consensus seemed to be "a rain-out but not a wash-out".

About half the 50-strong delegation from St. Martin's College in Lancaster had walked to Blackpool overnight. Despite the wind, rain and blisters, Michelle Anthony and Jane Sullivan, two of the walkers, didn't rule out doing it again. "It was a good cause. We wanted to be able to say we'd walked the 27 miles to support our union". Both first year students, they intend to remain involved in the union "as long as it's not another long walk. I'm not bothered, I'll join in."

Understandably some people were disappointed that there was no indoor provision for the rally in bad weather. According to Paul McGarry, MANUS deputy convenor, it was a case of "no-one would have us". But most still had a good day despite the wind and rain.

Sam Hale and Vicky Carroll from Ripon and York St John's College talked about the Defend Yourself, Defend Your Union campaigning going on in their college, aimed primarily



at getting students involved. As well as getting a lot of people into student union activism, the campaign in the college has resulted in students setting up their own Labour Club and has strengthened the women's group there.

Their major campaign currently is against the Alton Bill. "There's a lot of support for our campaign, but there's also a big Christian community in favour of the Bill, so we need to win a lot more support yet."

Most people seemed to feel that the march gave them some kind of focus for the start of term and that the momentum would keep their union campaigns and activists going. Not everyone agreed though. David Candler, an RCF supporter from Newcastle Poly called MANUS cynical for organising the demonstration and claimed it was merely "the result of internal Labour Party bickering". Others had a more positive view. Mary Rawcliffe, Women's Officer and Ziggy, the Socials Officer from St. Martin's talked about the problem of student apathy. "It's up to us to get them interested. This march has proved that a lot of people who would never have dreamed of coming on a march have come along and have actually walked 30 miles to be here. So people are there, it's just getting to them and capturing their ideas. The demonstration was something they could see they were doing something about. The Tories were actually here in

Blackpool."

The demonstration was noisy and lively, a miracle given the weather and it is proof that a demonstration early on in the academic year can be a launch for the union.

Had NUS national executive called



Michelle Carlisle

the demonstration it would certainly have been bigger, even so we got media coverage — BBC TV news, local papers and Manchester radio stations all reported the demonstration with only local radio lying about the numbers on the march.



No comment: Photo: Paul Herman

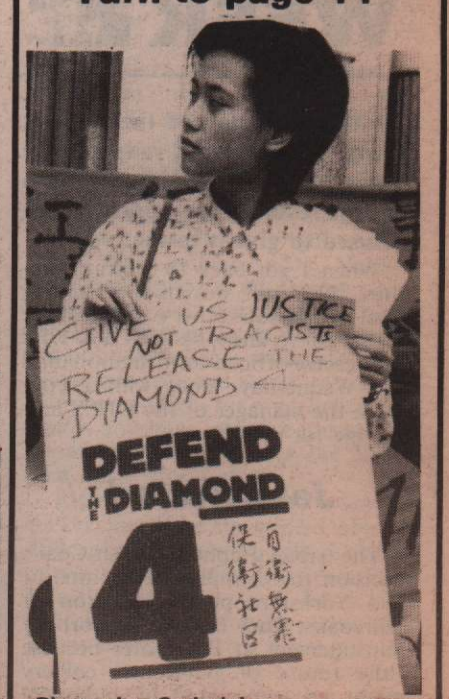


Photo: Ian Swindale