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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Amnesty now for non-payers!

TORY POLL TAX CHAOS

- Five million liability orders on dubious evidence
- Thousands chased by bailiffs illegally
- 200 falsely imprisoned?
- One million forced off electoral register

By Clare Richards

The poll tax is back to haunt the Tories. Having ditched Margaret Thatcher, its ardent champion, and promised the abolition of the tax and its replacement by the council tax, the government hoped to evade electoral

damage that the poll tax threatened.

But the poll tax is back at the top of the political agenda, posing a threat to the Tories' hopes of a fourth term in government.

A recent successful challenge to the admissibility of computer print-outs as evidence in liability

Turn to page 2



The poll tax still haunts the Tories

Kick them out!

The lie machine



Awful, yukky, yobbish boors "Fergie", Andy and Co. do indeed seem to be. But the relentless pounding of them by the awful, yukky, yobbish boors of the Star and the Sun is enough to make even a republican feel sorry for them. The excuse for this Star headline was a mild bit of schoolgirl boisterousness by the Duchess of York on an aeroplane!



The pounding of Labour by the election-fevered tabloids is no less relentless. Today takes out a bit of insurance for its proprietor Rupert Murdoch, just in case Labour wins the election.

Defend NUS democracy!

From back page

place just one month before, disrupting important election work. It will lead to a downgrading of NUS's national demonstration on 12 February. It brings NUS into serious dispute.

Left Unity supporters are mobilising against the conference, but the likelihood is that it will take place. Activists must ensure that elections are held for delegations, that they themselves stand in those elections, and that policy is passed at their General Meetings to defend NUS democracy.

Left Unity is circulating a model statement for colleges, Area NUSs, Labour Clubs, etc. to pass and send to NUS.

"We believe that the calling of an extraordinary conference is an undemocratic and irresponsible move. NUS Reform should be resolved at full NUS Conference. We call on the NUS NEC to oppose the conference and properly to investigate the requests made for a conference. We call on the colleges who have submitted such requests to think again".



On 17 January, 5,000 high-ranking officers of the disintegrating Soviet army discussed their future at a rowdy meeting in Moscow. Their anger at attempts by republics such as Ukraine to take over chunks of the old armed forces signals the danger of the ex-USSR following Yugoslavia's slide into wars between nations.

Amnesty for non-payers!

Poll tax chaos

From front page

But the poll tax is back at the top of the political agenda, posing a threat to the Tories' hopes of a fourth term in government.

A recent successful challenge to the admissibility of computer print-outs as evidence in liability cases against non-payers means that hundreds of thousands of prosecutions have had to be postponed, causing chaos in the courts, and financial disasters for many councils.

Even should the government act to close off the loophole in the Civil Evidence Act, they will be unlikely to be able to apply it retrospectively: five million people who have had liability orders already issued against them will be able to appeal, and probably get their liability orders overturned.

On top of that, the 200 people already jailed for non-payment could be freed, and could press action for wrongful imprisonment. Those who have had wages or benefits arrested, or goods

seized by bailiffs, may have grounds for compensation.

Provision of council services will collapse, the courts will be clogged by a huge backlog of cases.

The Tories' claims that the poll tax registers won't disenfranchise people have also shown to be false: one million voters have disappeared from the electoral registers to avoid having to pay. So much for the Tories' claims to be the upholders of democracy!

The recent chaos over the poll tax has given a boost to the campaign for non-payment, and we have to step up the fight, and kick the Tories out for good!

We must campaign for the Labour leaders to get off their knees, to lead this fight, forget about implementing the Tories illegally enforced tax, and side with the working-class people in the communities who have been illegally hounded and prosecuted.

Labour must offer an amnesty for all non-payers, to be implemented immediately they get into office.

ANL founder-member Ernie Roberts speaks out

We need a broad movement

My particular concern about the rise of fascism is in relation to the danger it represents to the organised working class movement.

I remember the rise of fascism in Italy under Mussolini, in Germany under Hitler, in Spain under Franco and in Pinochet's Chile.

In each of those countries the trade union movement was destroyed. The British trade union movement would suffer the same fate if ever the fascists got power in this country.

Both Hitler and Mussolini called themselves National Socialists, although they set about destroying all socialist books and literature. The fascists aimed to destroy the heritage of the socialist movement. This would happen here too. Britain has a very strong socialist and democratic tradition which must be defended.

The people of Britain have had a long historical struggle to get the democracy we have got.

For these reasons I am concerned that we should establish an anti-fascist movement.

Three neo-fascist thugs, among them Steven Cartwright, the BNP's Scottish organiser from Easterhouse, entered Clyde Books at 11am today [21 January]. Their intention became

clear when, after a brief survey of the shop, premises, and staff on duty, they started ransacking the shop, trying to cause as much damage to stock, shelving and postcard racks as possible before running away.

Clyde Books is Scotland's

only remaining progressive bookshop, specialising in politics, ecology, environmental and women's politics, and Scottish and Irish literature.

Clyde Books have been forced to launch a special appeal for funds to improve security in the interests of staff and customers.

Poll tax bailiffs abuse powers

By Cate Murphy

Poll tax collection is in further chaos this week following the adjournment of thousands of prosecutions of non-payers.

Poll tax campaigners have successfully argued that computer print-outs from councils are inadmissible as evidence of non-payment.

The Civil Evidence Act of 1968 allowing computer print-outs to be used in place of testimony in civil proceedings, had never been extended to magistrates' courts, protesters pointed out.

Consequently, thousands of cases in Liverpool, Gravesend and South London, among others, have been adjourned, pending the result of a decision by a Clerkenwell magistrate.

The final decision is not expected before the end of March,

and therefore thousands more cases due to be heard before then will also be put back.

Up to five million people issued with liability orders could appeal if it is decided that such computer print-outs are not admissible.

Those imprisoned for non-payment could, probably, claim unfair imprisonment, and those whose goods have been seized by bailiffs could claim compensation.

This decision will cause chaos in local councils, but give a big boost to the campaign to maintain non-payment levels.

Councils up and down the country have been relentlessly pursuing non-payers through the courts. Almost 200 people have been jailed for not paying, and the figure is expected to reach several hundreds before the tax is finally abolished in 1993.

In many cases, councils are deliberately targetting active anti-poll tax campaigners, hoping to derail the struggle, and frighten others into paying. Labour councils have been as vindictive as Tory councils in this attack, many preferring to jail people rather than use bailiffs or attachment of earnings. 24,000 committal summonses

have been issued to date.

The National Consumer Council has criticised the behaviour of bailiffs

in non-payment cases, claiming that many abuse their powers. Anybody can set up as a bailiff, and, unlike bailiffs dealing with rent arrears, those seizing goods for poll tax arrears do not have to be certified by courts.

Bailiffs dealing with rent arrears cannot seize goods such as clothing, bedding and essential household goods like cookers: but there are no such checks on poll tax bailiffs.

Many have acted illegally in seizing such goods, and using force and threats to get people to hand over goods for auction. There is also no limit on the bills poll tax bailiffs charge the non-payers for their "services": some non-payers have received huge bills from the bailiffs, more than their original poll tax arrears.

Labour councils should have nothing to do with sending in any bailiffs to seize working-class people's goods, but especially not these crooks. We must campaign through our Labour Parties for councillors to obey party policy of not using bailiffs.

Birmingham students face expulsion

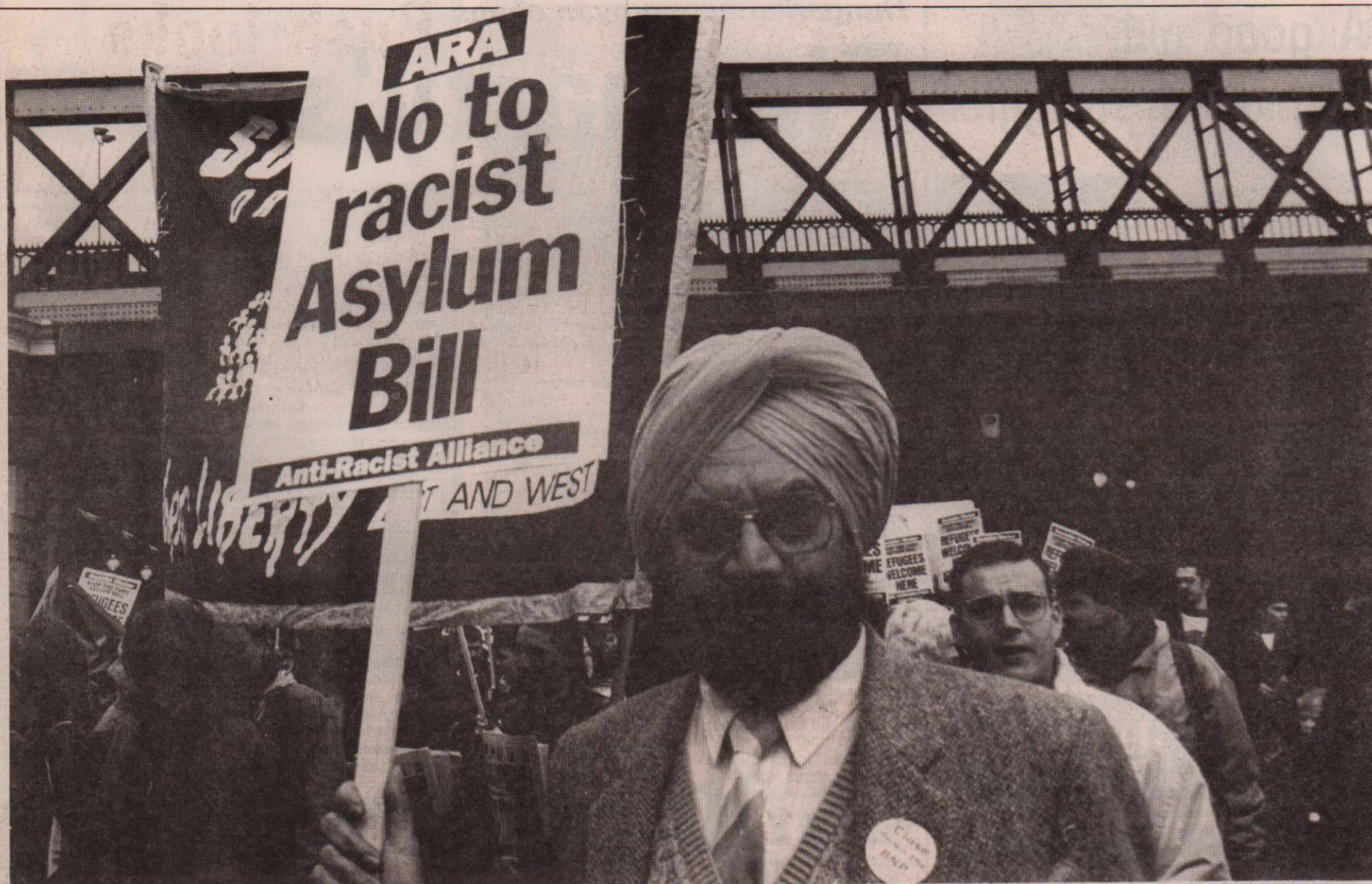
By Mick Duncan

Five students at Birmingham Polytechnic have been charged with criminal damage, assault, and theft following an occupation last December, and threatened with expulsion.

Last week they were sent notices to attend a preliminary hearing, after which full expulsion procedures may begin.

We are appealing for support from the National Union of Students — asking for a speaker on the 12 February national student demonstration, and possibly for a national demonstration on our campus.

Send messages of support from student unions, Labour Clubs, and trade union branches, to Birmingham Polytechnic Students' Union, Franchise Street, Birmingham.



On the march against the Asylum Bill. Photo: Dan Judelson.

Unite the anti-racists!

Europe is now facing the most serious fascist threat since the 1930s. In France, Le Pen's fascist Front National are polling over 20% of the vote.

Le Pen's party targets Arabs and black people. Le Pen is an anti-semitic who described the holocaust as a "detail" of the Second World War.

The Front National is opposed to the labour movement. A victory for the fascists would lead to the smashing of the organised working class.

The French NF have replaced the Communist Party as the "radical" alternative to normal French politics. In doing so they have polluted political life. Other parties and politicians have caved in to racial intolerance under pressure from the NF.

In Eastern Europe and the ex-

USSR terrible economic crisis is creating a social base for authoritarianism. Ruined, desperate people are searching for answers in societies where socialism has been discredited by Stalinism.

Conditions are ripening for a mass resurgence of anti-semitism. It is already visible; and in countries like Poland, too, where the Jews were mostly driven out or killed in the 1940s.

The British Nazis, split and marginalised in the Tory Britain of the 1980s, are being boosted both by the rise of the European far right and by John Major's pre-emption dose of racism, the Asylum Bill.

So in Britain the working class movement faces a long-term, serious fight to resist the growth of the fascist right.

The possibilities of sizeable mobilisations against fascism were shown during Le Pen's visit to Bri-

tain last December. Many hundreds were involved. The fascists were confronted and set back.

Now the chances of a united left response to the far right are being damaged. Last week the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) and the newly-launched Anti-Nazi League (ANL) fought each other on the letters page of the *Guardian*.

Last Saturday they fought each other physically to get their own banner at the front of the London anti-Asylum Bill demonstration.

The SWP won the fight, allowing their national organiser, the very silly Chris Bambury, to strut about at the front of the march with clenched fists inside black leather gloves. This man has more than one problem.

Now sometimes real, deep divisions will not allow the left to unite in common campaigns. But here the

divisions are artificial. The competing campaigns are viewed as the private property of the groups at their core.

The centre of the ANL is the SWP. In the middle of ARA is the Socialist Action-Ken Livinstone-Morning Star axis who were responsible for the last atrocity on the left, the unbelievable madhouse called the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

Both the ANL and ARA are invite-only organisations.

The ANL's office is staffed by SWP full-timers responsible to the SWP's Central Committee. There are no structures to get involved with. Not even any pretence of democracy.

Last week, ANL stalls appeared in colleges, staffed by SWP-ers, and selling SWP pamphlets — including their stock of "left" anti-semitic, anti-Zionist rubbish.

ARA has meetings... which groups like *Socialist Organiser* can not get into.

This is absurd! There actually is a real Europe-wide fascist problem. And yet again we see the left split because of the primitive sect-building antics of various left groups.

The level of debate is summed up by the SWP's justification for setting up the ANL: ARA fights racism, we will sort out the fascists. As if fascism cannot be confronted without combatting racist ideas!

So we need unity and democracy in our campaigning.

And we need to get away from the idea that all our campaigning can be done on the basis of the lowest common denominator; in this case — fascism is wrong, racism is bad.

The fact is that campaigns run on this basis *cannot succeed* in the face of a serious fascist threat. Unless we relate to the real fears of white workers — of unemployment and terrible housing — to which racism is a stupid but tangible answer, we will lose the battle to unite black and white workers in the fight against racism and for socialism.

"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."
Karl Marx

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Poll tax amnesty now!

Labour plans to put the poll tax centre-stage in its election campaign, in the hope that renewed anger and opposition to the tax will ensure the Tories' defeat.

Should John Major settle for polling day on 9 April, Labour councils will send out next year's bills early, at the end of March. The bills, expected to be nearer £300 on average than the government's target of £257, will — Labour hopes — cause a swing from the Tories big enough to put Neil Kinnock into No.10.

But Labour's calculations could backfire: non-payers who have been summonsed and jailed by Labour councils, or had goods seized by bailiffs sent in by Labour councils, aren't necessarily going to flock to vote Labour in the general election.

What could have boosted Labour's

support would have been to refuse to do the Tories' dirty work for them, and to give a real lead to the millions of non-payers in a fight to bring down this vicious anti-working class government.

Instead, Neil Kinnock ran scared: dining with City bankers is more important to him than siding with the worst off in our society, those at the sharp end of the Tories' policies over the last 13 years.

The most notable Labour contributions on the poll tax have been the distancing of the party leaders from any non-payment campaign, the hounding of Labour councillors opposed to implementation, and Roy Hattersley's condemnation of the demonstrators brutally attacked by riot police in Trafalgar Square in 1990.

Had Labour then thrown its weight behind the non-payment movement, we might have got rid of the Tories altogether. For sure, Labour would be riding higher in the polls going into the election.

Even now, should Labour come out in support of an amnesty for non-payers, and all poll tax prisoners, they would gain much support. It's not that an amnesty can't be afforded: only this week Tory minister Lynda Chalker has written off £3.5 billion of debt for the British Virgin Islands — a tax haven and playground for the rich.

Plus, there's been the billions of pounds pumped into the water industry to make it easier to privatise. If the Tories can afford such handouts to their friends, Labour should pledge to help those it claims to represent.

We should make the poll tax an issue in the election: we should demand that Labour keeps to its promise to abolish the poll tax immediately, to introduce a fairer system of local government funding reflecting ability to pay, and we must campaign for a Labour government to restore cuts in central government funding.

Top of our demands must be an amnesty for all non-payers and poll tax prisoners.

A good old-fashioned struggle

By Sleeper

These are not particularly inspiring times on the industrial front. Reported strike days are running at their lowest level for over 50 years, redundancies are being accepted without much resistance, and "New



INSIDE THE UNIONS

Realism" is the order of the day at Congress House.

The reasons for this state of affairs are many and numerous. Roughly speaking, they boil down to the union leaders' collapse before the Thatcher anti-union offensive of the 1980s, the continuing effect of the recession of the early-to-mid '80s, and the pervasive "don't-rock-the-boat" mentality in the run-up to the general election.

The faltering recovery in rank-and-file militancy which began in the late '80s has been stopped in its tracks by the latest recession.

So it warms the cockles of the heart to hear about a good old-fashioned redundancy dispute at the GEC-Alsthom switchgear plant in Manchester. The best aspect of this dispute is that for the first time in several years a significant group of manufacturing workers are refusing to accept redundancy as some sort of inevitability — an Act of God that cannot be resisted.

For too long now, "packages" involving voluntary redundancies (VR), early retirement and "natural wastage" have been accepted by full-time officials and stewards as the best that could be achieved in the face of the inexorable drive to "slim down" workforces and produce a "leaner, fitter" manufacturing base, capable of taking on the menacing Continentals and fanatical Japanese.

The GEC workforce, faced with the loss of 225 out of 430 hourly-paid jobs, have decided to simply say "no" and take their stand on the basic principle that *all jobs are worth defending*. VR blandishments from management have been rejected. And they are using "old-fashioned" methods like picketing, delegations to other workplaces, and appeals to the labour movement at large, to pursue their dispute.

Back in the 1970s, disputes of this kind were commonplace. They often succeeded in reversing "inevitable" redundancies and plant closures. They were in fact "anti-capitalist", in that they represented a rejection of the system's in-built drive to constant rationalisation, de-manning and speed-up.

But, of course, most of the union activists of the 1970s did not take an explicitly anti-capitalist stance, at least, not in public. Instead, they tended to fall back upon arguments about "defending Britain's manufacturing base" and, even worse, "British jobs for British workers". This was not surprising, given that the left (and much of the right) of the trade union leadership was totally committed to the so-called "Alternative Economic Strategy", a siege-economy panacea for all Britain's economic ills founded upon import controls.

The AES has long since been consigned to the dustbin of history, but the nationalist impulses that lay behind it remain. The Labour Party's latest "Made in Britain" campaign is one example; the North-West Confed's proposed campaign to "Save Britain's Manufacturing Base" is another.

So it is hardly surprising that the Manchester GEC strikers are using this kind of argument. A strike bulletin points out that 12,000 jobs have been lost in GEC as a whole since 1988, while the GEC-Alsthom plant in France has been virtually unaffected because "French labour laws make it more difficult to make people redundant".

The obvious conclusion from this ought to be that British GEC workers should get together with their French opposite numbers to campaign for a levelling-up of terms and conditions for *all* GEC workers, using the EC Social Charter as a lever where they can. The re-establishment of the once-strong GEC Combine Committee, including the French workers, would be a good start. The one feature of the "good old days" of the 1970s that the GEC workers should *not* revive is the "British jobs for British workers"-type nationalism that pervaded trade unionism in those days.



Hungarian economy in chaos

The party's over

LETTER FROM HUNGARY

By John Cunningham

Things do not look good for Hungary. The economy is virtually stagnant, agriculture is in a complete mess, prices rise constantly, wages are static, unemployment is rising, whole chunks of industry are being sold off at rock-bottom prices (usually to the West) and many of the problems created by the old regime remain to be solved.

For years Hungary enjoyed a prosperity which was the envy of Eastern Europe and even now Poles, Romanians and others still make the long trek South and East to sell their goods in Hungarian markets, attracted by the better prices they can command there. Budapest's Keleti railway station is still a thriving centre for money changers of all descriptions.

The limited private enterprise permitted or tolerated by the old regime of Stalinist Janos Kadar meant that many Hungarians could achieve a standard of living unthought of in neighbouring states, where regimes the like of Ceausescu's Romania and Honecker's East Germany were not so "tolerant".

For many Hungarians it meant a second job and a

work-day often 14 hours or more long.

Taking 1970 as a base of 100%, real income had increased to 153% by 1989, a measurable and substantial increase in the amount of money in the Hungarian pocket. Taking 1985 as a base of 100%, the picture is very different:

	Real Income
1985	100%
1986	102.3%
1987	100.7%
1988	98.7%
1989	102.5%

"Regulations are now so lax that it is easier for a foreigner to set up a business in Hungary than it is for a Hungarian... It is probably in agriculture that the biggest mess of all can be found".

A complaint many Westerners encounter when talking to Hungarians is how the cost of living is increasing all the time. One family I talked to told me how going to a restaurant for a meal was, once, a fairly common

occurrence; now it is a rare treat, they simply cannot afford it.

Property prices are also shooting up, particularly in the popular tourist areas around Lake Balaton where Hungarians face competition from Austrians and Germans buying holiday homes. Added to all this is the spectre of unemployment: 145,000 in March 1991, and rising.

Budapest is alive with foreign businessmen buying up what they can of the Hungarian economy. The country is up for the highest bidder in what is possibly the biggest rummage sale in modern history and prices are at rock-bottom level. Tungram, the light-bulb manufacturer, has already gone for a bargain-basement price while other, less spectacular, rip-offs occur almost daily.

Regulations are now so lax that it is easier for a foreigner to set up a business in Hungary than it is for a Hungarian. In many ways developments are alarming — foreign media giants now own *all* Hungary's national daily newspapers. The German publishing giant, Springer, a little slow out of the blocks, only managed to pick up a dozen provincial newspapers, all of them virtually given away by the late Communist Party.

It is probably in agriculture, however, that the biggest mess of all can be found.

The break up of the large State and Collective farms has meant a partial return to small-holding. Hopelessly inefficient in the world of modern agriculture, their

problems are compounded by the loss of the protected markets of the USSR and East Germany. Prior to the changes, 80% of farms were Collectives whose average size was 5,440 acres, 15% were State farms, average size 14,300 acres. Some small holdings are now a mere 30 or 40 acres!

Compounding all these problems is the withdrawal of state subsidies and the lack of any clear agricultural policy from the government. The current state of play is that some of the State and Collective farms are run as before, some on private lines and some small holders operate as best they can. It is, in short, a hopeless mess, particularly given the fact that long-term planning is essential in agriculture. Pig-farming has three-year cycles, cattle cycles are from seven to eight years, and so on. The lack of co-ordinated plans and goals promises a major disaster in the future and rural unemployment.

Hanging over all this is the legacy of the old regime. Ex-functionaries can be found hanging on to their positions in all walks of life and many of the people to benefit first from the moves to private enterprise were former Communist Party bureaucrats who, knowing the system and having the contacts, were able to get their snouts in the trough before anyone else.

In some areas wholesale ejection of party members has created chaos. I asked one Hungarian why Hungarian TV is so bad and she ventured the answer that many people had been sacked because of their connections with the old regime. While this may be understandable, what it has meant in practice, my friend suggested, is that a bunch of amateurs are now running things — and it shows!

Given all these problems you may ask whether Hungarians regret the changes that have occurred. Not a bit. They tend towards cynicism regarding their own government and there isn't quite the wholesale rush to embrace anything Western that can be found in Poland.

After 150 or so years under the Hapsburg empire, then the inter-war dictatorship of Horthy and then some 40 years of Stalinism, it should come as no surprise that Hungarians talk enthusiastically of liberty and freedom and some voices are even being raised about the way the country is being sold off to the highest bidder.

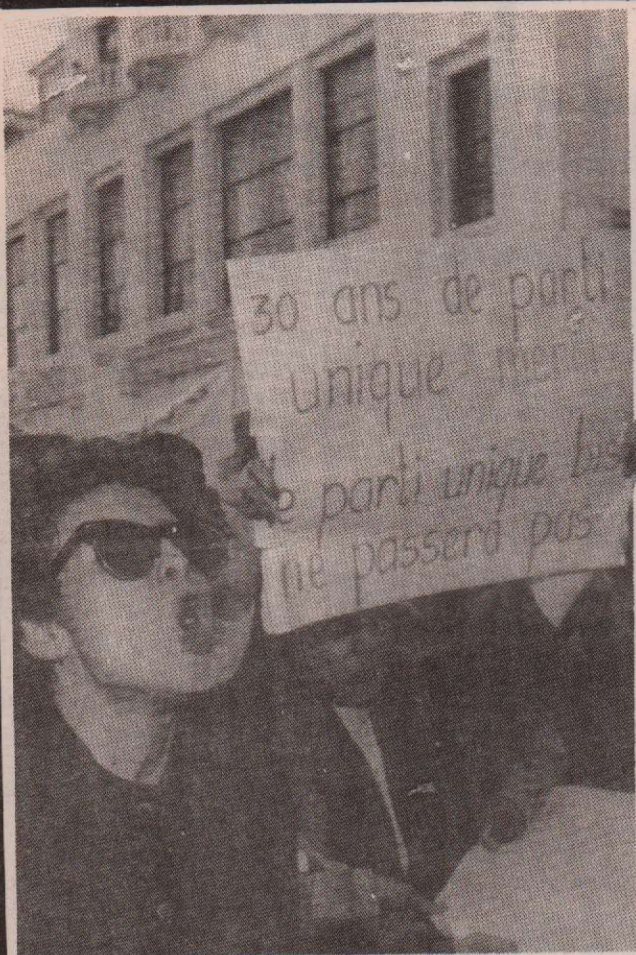
The major voice missing in all these developments is that of the Hungarian workers' movement. Since the defeat of the 1956 Revolution (now celebrated as an annual holiday) it has been fragmented and demoralised. Possibly most importantly of all, it played virtually no role in ousting the Stalinists and thus did not go through the transforming and uplifting experience of Polish workers in building Solidarnosc.

It has yet to become an actor on the stage of Hungarian politics; when and how it will achieve this is still a matter for conjecture and discussion. At this stage it is simply impossible to say.

Keszthely, Hungary



Hungarian industry is badly in need of modernisation.



Algerian oppositionists speak out

"No to the police state, no to fundamentalism"

The Socialist Forces Front (FFS) is the biggest party in Algeria opposed both to the old FLN/military regime and to the Islamic fundamentalists (FIS). Its leader Hocine Ait Ahmed responded to the coup of 12 January as follows.

It was a terrible blow to democracy when they cancelled the second round of the elections and made a coup d'état. It is the worst thing they could have done against our country. The coup was much more against democracy than against the FIS.

As for Sid Ahmed Ghazali [prime minister, and leading figure in the "Higher Council" set up after the coup], how can he cancel this elec-

tion result? At the meeting between the political parties, we proposed proportional representation on a regional basis. He went for a system of two rounds [as in France], on the advice of backroom strategists who foresaw victory [for the FLN].

With these elections, a strategic opening was created between the police state [the old FLN regime] and the fundamentalist state [which the FIS aimed to create], on the basis of which we were able to enlarge democracy and act so that, even if the FIS had a big majority, there were still remedies and constitutional limitations. It would have been better, in my opinion, to give the fundamentalists a little exposure to power, while preserving the police, the security forces, and the army.

This coup discredits democracy in the eyes of the mass of the people and gives ammunition to fundamentalism. The second round would at least have allowed us to register the fact that the FFS would have beaten the FIS in Algiers, in the five

constituencies where we had run-offs at the second round... We would have beaten them in Setif, too.

But that is what they did not want. They did not want the FFS to appear as an alternative.

Djamal Bensaba adds

On voting day [26 December, the first round] many polling stations were effectively handed over to the control of the FIS... However, despite fraudulent practices and total mobilisation of its electorate, the FIS could only get three million votes, whereas it got five million in the local elections [of June 1990].

The FIS's success was due above all to the demobilisation of the population, half of whom did not vote. The people have been deceived and manipulated...

The results of the first round were primarily a protest vote against the abuses of the regime. It was not support for a programme or a model of society which pushed the electorate to opt for the FIS.

In the absence of means of expression for democratic political parties and civil society — those means having been confiscated and distrained by the various cliques of the regime — the dispossessed of society had nothing but the mosques. And those mosques, where, outside all control, they put across a religious message clearly tied to obvious

political aims, had great influence...

The former single party [the FLN] had illusions about its hegemony — which was only theoretical — and the satellite parties which worked inside the FLN and spent their time playing off one faction of the regime against another had illusions about their real weight in society.

Notwithstanding that, the press and the mass media gave us to believe that this nebulous collection of salon politicians was really gaining ground against the FIS. They created illusions...

The FFS offers a vision of society which is an alternative both to the police state and to the fundamentalist republic. It combines modernity, social justice, human rights, in a word the democratic liberties for which the Algerian people have never ceased struggling...

No other demonstration since Algeria's independence has equalled our march on 2 January [against the fundamentalist threat], in numbers or determination. The slogans of defence of the republic and of democracy, and of national unity, emphasised that Algeria is not Iran, Afghanistan, or Sudan, and that Algerians are determined to oppose all forms of totalitarianism, the police state and the fundamentalist republic being two forms of totalitarianism dialectically linked to each other.

[Translated and abridged from the French socialist weekly *Rouge*, 16 January 1992.]

Kenneth Clarke — pinball wizard!

By Ian Hollingworth

As the general election approaches, Kenneth Clarke continues to pirouette round the education scene like a demented pinball, desperately seeking flashes and bangs to clock up scores with the electorate.

But his contradictions are showing.

Contradiction one: Yesterday, reading standards were "deplorable". All the fault of "trendy left wing teachers". Today, serving teachers are supposed to be able to train student teachers in the schools, rather than leave it to college lecturers.

Contradiction two: Yesterday there wasn't enough phonics teaching in schools. Too many institutions relying on the trendy "real books" approach (which means using imaginative prose to fire the child, not the torturous boredom of Janet and John).

Today, Marie Clay's catch-up method from New Zealand, which takes the poor reader out of the

classroom for intensive one-to-one coaching, is all the rage. The contradiction? Marie Clay is one of the pioneers of the "real books" approach!

But why is there a need for remedial reading programmes on such a scale anyway? Continued underfunding of the state education system, with class sizes more than double those in the private schools that John Major's cabinet sends its children to, has got to be one of the main reasons.

If the Tories are so concerned about child literacy, why are public libraries shutting now for three days out of seven due to "shortage of staff"?

If the Tories are so concerned about literacy in general, why are they taking post-16 and adult education out of local authority control with their infamous Education Bill, asset-stripping local colleges built up with community money in the process?

NATFHE, the lecturers' union, is calling a lobby of Parliament on 5 February, 2.30-6.00 pm to protest against this bill. Join it if you can.

More from Socialist Organiser



1917

How the workers made a revolution



Available from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Please add 20% (minimum 28p) for postage.

Nine days after the 12 January coup, Algeria is drifting towards civil war. According to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), 500 of its members have been arrested. A preacher has been arrested leaving his mosque.

The government — so Robert Fisk reports in the *Independent* (21 January) — plans to take over FIS-controlled local authorities and then to establish government control over the FIS's organising centres, the mosques. Islamic militants have carried out four armed attacks so far on police stations or police and army patrols.

Whichever side wins in a shoot-out between the army and the FIS is likely to impose a brutal dictatorship, crushing socialist and democratic opposition as well as their immediate rivals.

Dying to win

GRAFFITI

As millions of Americans and others across the world settle down with their popcorn and their Budweiser to watch the Superbowl this Sunday, few will realise the extent to which American football literally destroys its players.

Every one of the National Football League's 1,200 are likely to be hurt in one four-month season — many more than once.

Last year's injuries included a broken back and a broken neck resulting in total paralysis. Players have a lifetime of less than four years at the top.

A new book by Steve Courson, the 21 stone blocker for the Pittsburgh Steelers, recounts how the pressures of the big business of sport consume players. Players with serious injuries are loaded with steroids and painkillers, the syringe marks concealed with an artificial skin called 'turf' and then they are sent out to play.

Courson himself, 36 years old, has been told that he'll need transplant surgery if he is to make it past 40. As every sports boss knows, it's not the taking part, but the profit, that's important.

The financial reptiles of the Stock Exchange have a new favourite company — GLAXO, the drugs manufacturer, which they have valued at £28 billion, making it the most valuable company on the Exchange.

Its workforce of 36,000 produced a profit of £1.3 billion last year, or more than £360,000 per employee.

The source of these huge profits is largely one drug, an ulcer treatment ZANTAC, which alone counts for more than half of GLAXO's turnover.

Because GLAXO have a monopoly on the drug, they can get away with charging what they like for it. So the sources of GLAXO's profits are largely the NHS and the health systems of other countries. And the artificially high price of the drug means that many people go untreated.

40p on every GLAXO product goes straight to profits. With the recession and the financial worries it brings, the Stock Exchange obviously believes that ulcers are one of the few guaranteed growth sectors.

This week's Reactionary of the Week award goes to Labour MP, Tribune treasurer and witch-hunter, Richard Caborn (Sheffield Central CLP).

In a questionnaire about the price of groceries in the *Independent on Sunday*, poor old Dicky was floundering over questions like the price of eggs and bread.

"I haven't got a clue. I am not a new man", responded Yorkshire's answer to Garry Bushell. *Socialist Organiser* would like to send its condolences to Mrs. Caborn.



Ted Grant

Lenin would turn in his grave if he could see what happened to the Revolution he led, hi-jacked and defeated by Stalin and self-interested bureaucrats who then only succeeded in turning the economy into backward capitalism which could offer the workers little in the way of food or freedom.

But if the new entrepreneurs of Moscow get their way, he will not get the chance. Having had limited success peddling old statues of Felix Dzerzhinsky and other bits of Stalinist memorabilia, the new venture capitalists want to take Lenin's mummified corpse from his mausoleum in Red Square and on a world tour.

They expect to net \$1.8 million. Could this be capitalism's sickest joke, turning the body of one of its greatest enemies into a marketable commodity?

The SWP make extraordinary claims for the ANL — it seems that these now include time-travel.

Socialist Worker's centre-page spread on the ANL's 1970s incarnation is carefully worded to give the impression to the uninformed that the ANL was responsible for driving the fascist National Front from the streets of Lewisham in 1977.

At the time, the ANL was actually just a twinkle in an SWP full-timer's eye, and was not born for another 3 months.

The cynical word-play gets worse — "Whenever the NF attempted to march it was met by a counter-demonstration". Yes, it's true, but these demos weren't always supported by the SWP-dominated ANL.

The march of fascists on Brick Lane in 1978 was opposed by anti-fascists, but the SWP called on people to go to the second Rock Against Racism carnival instead.

Those who refuse to learn the lessons of history, it seems, are condemned to rewrite it.

Ted Grant, founder of the *Militant* has been turfed out of the nest.

Over thirty years Grant politically equipped the tendency that rose from being a small Stalinoid sect with the most boring paper on the left, to being a fairly small Stalinoid sect with a paper which, as far as anyone can remember, was still printing the same articles after 30 years.

Now the bulk of *Militant* has broken Grant's major article of faith — that *Militant* never changes its politics — and left the Labour Party to survive without it.

The Grant faction is now setting up its own organisation, having held a conference a couple of weekends ago.

It has returned to the true faith of hanging around in the Labour Party, not doing anything and — another bone of contention with the majority — telling Eastern European workers that Stalinism is half-way to socialism and that they should stick with it.

Ironically, the Grantites' first public exposure may be to back a candidate against the Labour Party — Dave Nellist in Coventry South East, expelled Labour MP and sympathetic to the Grant faction.

Dave suggests he will stand against an official Labour candidate if he is supported by his CLP and trades council. The only question is, what label will he stand under? "Real Labour" has a certain ring to it...

Boring old farts

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

I don't know about you, but I'm beginning to be bored by *The Oldie* already. And the first issue hasn't even appeared yet.

Everywhere you look there's Richard Ingrams prancing about, shamelessly plugging his brain-child, and making a complete ass of himself into the bargain.

The nadir was surely reached a couple of Sundays ago, when the old phoney appeared in the *Observer* modelling shell-suits, bikers' leather gear and suchlike unseemly garb.

For some time I had suspected that *The Oldie* would turn out to be simply a spoof on the part of the increasingly eccentric Ingrams — some kind of joke at the expense of the PR/media people he claims to despise. But it seems that *The Oldie* is for real and will shortly be gracing the news stands of the nation.

The question remains:



Life emulates art: the *Independent's* cartoon version of its target reader, Alex, ruthlessly trashes the paper when the *Telegraph* offers more cash.

what is the point of this publication, apart from providing its editor and his cronies with some amusement and income in their declining years? Ingrams has been plugging it as a counter-blast to the prevailing "Yooff" culture so assiduously promoted by the advertising, music and publishing industries for many years now.

The Oldie would be written for and by people who 'had never heard of Freddie Mer-

cury until his death, can't work a video machine, and don't know what Karaoke is", according to Ingrams.

The problem with such a manifesto is, of course, that in order to proclaim it, you have to know at least something about Freddie Mercury, videos, Karaoke, etc. In other words, it is all posturing, just like Ingrams' many years of pretending to be as old and cantankerous as Bill Deedes.

Anyway, indignant old

reactionaries already have the *Sunday Telegraph*, *Spectator* and *Private Eye* with which to keep themselves happy. No: I have reluctantly concluded that *The Oldie* is primarily aimed at people from PR, advertising, and the media. Perhaps it is some kind of sick joke after all.

Readers of the *Independent* will have had no difficulty in getting the point of the *Daily Telegraph* current advertising campaign, featuring a cartoon character called Alex, who "trades up to the Telegraph from January 20th".

Alex is the creation of Russell Taylor and Charles Peattie (who also begat Gary Bloke, the ageing rockstar in *Private Eye's* "Celeb" strip).

Alex's adventures ran for five years in the *Indie's* City pages and, in the process, established Taylor and Peattie as hot property in the world of strip cartoons.

The point about Alex is that he is a complete bastard, devoid of affection, loyalty, pity or gratitude. When the strapped-for-cash *Indie* found itself unable to meet Taylor and Peattie's modest demand for a £20,000 pay rise, the cartoonists immediately approached the *Telegraph*, which snapped them up and spent an estimated £250,000 on a gloating advertising campaign rubbishing the poor old *Indie*.

A case of life emulating art, perhaps.

For able-bodied non-parents only!

WOMEN'S EYE



By Belinda Weaver

I went to the Asylum Bill demonstration in London last Saturday, and I took my eight month old daughter, Daisy, along too. That doesn't sound very complicated, but it was. By the time I got home, I was tired, angry and frustrated, my feelings about future demonstrations very negative.

The assembly time is lunchtime. Babies don't understand "Hurry up". So we start off late, thinking we can catch the march before it leaves the Embankment. We don't. When we emerge from the tube (up a flight of stairs, and through a ticket gate in which the pram gets stuck) the march has gone.

Get the tube from Charing Cross to Green Park. More stairs and an escalator. The

sign advising me to fold my pushchair is, as ever, ignored. Life is too short to remove a strapped-in, well-wrapped up baby from a pushchair for a one-minute escalator ride.

Emerge from Green Park (more stairs and the same kind of ticket gate) to discover that the march has passed there too. Decide to walk the rest of the way. A bus is ruled out because the pram must be folded — too hard.

Park Lane is wall-to-wall cars, and there is nowhere to cross, except for the underpass (too many steps). When I finally arrive at the Park, through the one tunnel that has a ramp (ecstasy!), Daisy is awake and restless in the pram.

She feels constricted by the straps and wants to get out. By this time, she's thirsty too, but there are no seats in the park, and the ground is wet, so I rule out a breastfeed. It is also really cold, and there is nowhere to change her nappy.

I spend about ten or fifteen minutes in the park before I decide Daisy has had enough.

She's whimpering and miserable in the pram, and it's too cold for her to be out of it for long.

I plan to get the tube to St. Paul's and walk (to Old Street). Once on the tube, I put Daisy on my lap, where she's happy. I decide to go on to Bank and change, as I know Daisy is very, very sick of the pram and will probably

cry all the way home from St. Paul's. The alternative is to carry her and push the pram with my free hand, but, since it's a mile or more and she's quite heavy, I can't face this.

Big mistake going to Bank! I nearly lose the pram in the wide gap between train and

"People think I am a loony."

platform, but we survive. Two flights down a spiral staircase to the Northern Line, where there are no trains because of signal problems; the first train will be in fifteen minutes.

This is too long to wait, so I opt for the Circle Line. An escalator and more stairs — two flights. These have a protruding bit that catches on the pram's brakes every time we move up a step. I am swearing and cursing London Transport as loudly as I can by now. People think I am a

loony.

No Circle Line trains listed. Consider going back to the Northern Line, but the down escalator isn't working. Wait ten minutes for a Circle Line, using Daisy's mittens as entertainment for her. I have to keep her happy as I need her to stay in the pram until we get on the train.

Holding her and lifting the pram on isn't on. Rock the pram and chat to Daisy all the way to Barbican tube. Three flights of stairs to the street. Daisy is being terrific, so I push the pram as fast as I can.

Once home, I feed and change her and then make tea.

As I drink it, I wonder who is to blame for the day's hassles — London Transport? The men who designed tube stations exclusively for able-bodied, unencumbered people? Myself, for taking Daisy to the march? The Tories? Society? I opt for the lot, and plan my own march — called by Angry Mothers.

The case for Socialist Feminism

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It was the rank-and-file — like these BAE Preston strikers — who won the 37-hour week, not Jordan and Laird

A fighting socialist alternative

By Tom Rigby

How should socialists relate to the forthcoming general election in discussions at their workplaces and trade union branches? How can we get over the case for a Labour vote at the same time as preparing workers to fight a Labour government when it acts against their interests?

These questions will be central to the discussion at next month's 'Socialists and the Trade Unions' school organised by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

It will be an event at which the voice of the rank and file will be heard. London Underground workers fighting job losses, engineers campaigning to stop the AEU/EETPU merger and offshore workers who are building a new independent union will all be able to put their case.

We will also be discussing broader issues of socialist theory with the aim of drawing the lessons of past defeats and setbacks so that we can rebuild and renovate the working class movement for the battles of the future.

Sessions include:

- The state of the movement and the coming general election
- European unity and the future of the labour movement
- Strike strategy — how to fight and how to win
- Public service strikes and emergency cover — the case for and against
- Effective workplace and branch organisation
- Fighting sexual harassment at work
- Arguing socialism in the workplace
- Organising the rank and file: a history of the minority movement
- Round table: where now for the left in the unions?
- How to deal with 'Japanese' working methods
- Karl Marx and the trade unions
- The case for a Workers' Charter

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For more details contact Tom on 071-639 7965 or write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Times: 11.30 — 5.45, Saturday; 10.00 — 3.45, Sunday. Registration from 10.30 on Saturday

Stop the AEU/EETPU merger!

No to business unionism!

By an AEU member

Within the next few weeks, voting will commence amongst engineering union (AEU) members on the proposed merger with the electricians' union, the EETPU.

Activists up and down the country are working feverishly to ensure the biggest possible 'No' vote.

They are determined to defend the AEU's democratic structures and traditions and to thwart the formation of a powerful force for right wing business unionism.

Rank-and-filers face the unanimous opposition of the union's executive — including supposed 'left

wingers' Roger Butler and Jimmie Airlie — and are further hamstrung by the decision of the union's sovereign National Committee to back the merger. But, despite this, they remain determined to work for a huge 'No' vote.

Up and down the country, nearly every major shop stewards' committee that has had a discussion has come out against the merger.

At Ford's Dagenham plant, AEU activists have produced alternative "Vote No!" material parodying the official glossy posters emanating from Peckham Road.

Despite the fact that the odds are stacked in Jordan and Laird's favour, many ordinary members are very receptive to the anti-merger message.

They don't want a merger with a union that:

- * organised scabbing on engineers, printers and journalists at Rupert Murdoch's Wapping plant and was, as a result, expelled from the TUC;
- * offers "sweetheart" deals to the building employers in an attempt to break the builders' union, UCATT;
- * pioneered the kind of single-union, no-strike deals that the AEU leadership has copied at Nissan and Toyota;
- * has applied to join the "bosses TUC", the CBI;
- * keeps a blacklist of its own members who challenge the leadership and routinely shuts down branches that show any signs of autonomy or independent life;

* includes in its membership the following bodies: the Steel and Industrial Managers' Association; the National Unilever Managers' Association; the Rolls-Royce Managers' Association and the Association of Managerial Electrical Executives;

* is £1,815,000 in the red and set to lose £180,000 this year alone.

Now, in principle, there is nothing wrong with uniting engineers, plumbers and electricians into one big union. The problem is that *this*

"Up and down the country nearly every major shop stewards' committee that has had a discussion has come out against the merger."

merger has nothing to do with effective, fighting rank-and-file unity and a lot to do with creating a very powerful bureaucratic machine for policing the membership in the interests of the bosses. Look at the facts:



Gallagher and Laird

* Jordan has just signed a single-union deal with Toyota that guarantees a 39-hour week, thus undermining the fight of other car workers for shorter hours and the already established 37-hour week in engineering. At Nissan, AEU membership is less than 15% as a result of this kind of disastrous deal.

* Jimmy Airlie — that symbol of sobriety — last year signed a deal with the oil contractors that has increased the working year for AEU members and all other 'hook-up' workers on the rigs by 91 hours. An increase of 5% in hours, with no compensatory pay increase.

In return, the oil contractors have yet to reinstate a single victimised trade unionist. But Airlie still sings the bosses' tune, and lambasts the offshore union activists in the OILC as 'scabs' and 'parasites'.

* Despite vague assurances to the contrary, the AEU's bedrock rank-and-file democracy will be an early casualty of amalgamation.

Peckham Road already wants to close 200 branches.

You can bet that district committees and local shop stewards' meetings will be the next casualty.

NEW PROBLEMS NEW STRUGGLES



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WAWAY!

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The Provos seek a British solution

AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna

Forget — if you can — the horrible carnage on the road in Armagh and the pulped and shredded bodies of seven Irish building workers. Forget — if you can — the shattering wounds of those who were still alive when the debris had fallen.

Focus instead on the great mystery at the heart of the Provisional Irish Republican Army which this terrible piece of sectarian killing exposes. Those who set off the bomb are members of an organisation in whose initials "R" stands for a Republic within which Irish people of all religious denominations and none will be equal citizens. Those who killed the seven Protestant building workers — as casually as a farmer would wipe out vermin on his land — say that the goal they seek to serve by such deeds is to "unite Ireland".

Their dogma is that it is Britain which wilfully keeps Ireland divided, and that that is the reason for their quarrel with Britain. But their staple military activity in Northern Ireland is killing Irish people of a different — Unionist — political persuasion from their own. They claim, and exercise, the right to kill anyone connected to the Northern Ireland state, including workers who do it servicing work of any description. They have now killed 26 such workers.

These are all "Crown forces", "British agents" and — as they say to justify the killing of the seven builders, and other similar killings — "collaborators".

The point is that two-thirds of the people in Northern Ireland are active or passive "collaborators" who identify with the existing Northern Ireland state! The policy of killing those seven builders, and others like them, *logically* implies killing as many of their co-thinkers as "necessary".

Though the Provisional IRA say they want to unite Ireland, every killing and bombing they do is seen in the Protestant community as an act against that community, as a sectarian act by Catholics against Protestants, as an attack on the Protestant community — as an attempt to coerce them.

The answer is that the Provisional IRA do not — not "for now" anyway — seek an intra-Irish solution: they seek a British solution imposed by British military might on the Irish Protestants. The evidence is overwhelming.

The people who run the IRA are not idiots. They are politically sophisticated and aware people (witness, for example, the way they play up to the British left). They know perfectly well that "war is the continuation of politics by other means".

They know that any "military logic" which radically cuts across and contradicts the political objectives of the war can not make sense.

They know — they must know, can not but know! — that their military campaign, the killing of Irish Protestants for their connection with the British state, can not but work against their stated and, no doubt, sincere, goal of uniting Ireland.

They know that every act such as that in Armagh — and the hundreds of less spectacular but similar acts which do not get widely reported in Britain — adds to the great power of convulsive hatred and resentment against them, and against the Catholic community, in Protestant Ulster.

They know that this has, in the last 20 years, produced sectarian assassination of hundreds of Catholics; they know that this hatred would erupt into civil war if the British forces left.

They therefore know that every "military" act, such as last Friday's killings, is an act *against* Irish unity, an act winding ever tighter the explosive opposition to Irish unity.

Know it? They have *seen* Protestant resentment erupt in a general strike in 1974 which shattered Britain's plans for Northern Ireland so thoroughly that the effect is still felt. Frequently, they seem to play on it. They deliberately do things which appear to be designed to "stoke up" and detonate the Protestants — the bombing of a Remembrance Day religious ceremony in Enniskillen four years ago, for example.

Of what politics can their actions be the proper continuation? *That* is the mystery. The only answer to it is the one I offered above.

For all their talk about "Tone's Republic" and "Connolly's socialism", there is a core of Catholic communal feeling at the heart of the Provisional "Republican" movement in the Six Counties. It has deep, strong roots in Ireland's terrible history.

Ireland's Catholics were conquered by Britain and subjected to savage repression for hundreds of years. They faced wars of extermination in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the 1640s, the systematic slaughter of Irish children by the armies of Cromwell's British Parliament was so much a commonplace event that the soldiers had a philosophical catchcry to explain and justify what they routinely did: "Nits will make lice".

In the 18th century the Catholics faced nearly 100 years of a system remarkably like South Africa's apartheid.

By contrast with many other conquering landlord classes — like, for example, those who conquered England in the 11th century and then, over centuries, melded with the conquered people — the lords of the Irish land were no more than an alien crust.

Slowly, over many decades, the Irish people won back control over their own country. They sloughed off the alien caste of foreign landlords.

But not all those who had come to live in Ireland under English and British rule were members of that exploiting upper crust.

An entire "Protestant" society with its own class structures, from aristocrats through farmers to proletarians, had come into existence in North East Ulster.

This part of Ireland had more in common with the British colonies put down in North America, displacing the natives, than it had with the "thin crust" colony of the rest of Ireland.

It is the society produced by that colony which is the core of the present Six Counties — surrounded by and partly interlaced with areas of Catholic predominance.

In the first fifty years of Northern Ireland, to the end of the 1960s, the artificially big Catholic minority in Britain's semi-detached Six Counties state were treated as second-class citizens.

"In the 1640s, the systematic slaughter of Irish children by the armies of Cromwell... was so commonplace... the soldiers' catchcry [was] 'Nits will make lice'."

This produced the Catholic revolt that is now in its twenty-third year. 'On the ground' in Northern Ireland, now the Provos know very well that the main problem they had to deal with was the "Orange" Protestants. Their attitudes are the attitudes such conflicts always produce.

The situation of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland gives much encouragement to communalist ideas, ideas which see progress in terms of the Catholic community turning the tables and gaining power over the Protestants.

Yet, the national leaders of the organisation, though they may share such feelings, do not act on them alone. Plainly, there must also be a great part of them that is committed to the mystical idea that the God of Irish na-



The wrecked minibus after the bombing at Teebane Cross. This disgraces the name of Irish republicanism.

tionalism will somehow ensure that out of the maelstrom of sectarian civil war that their deeds may bring on the people of Northern Ireland, there will, somehow, come Irish unity and independence.

There is an essential element of mystical adventurism at the heart of the Provos' enterprise. A few years back, Gerry Adams — who also presents himself as a believer in Tone's Republican policy of uniting Protestants and Catholics — offered as public explanation to the people of Northern Ireland for his close escape from an assassination attempt, the fact that he goes to Mass every morning. The leaders of the Provisional IRA really do believe things like that.

And Adams and his friends are the 'sophisticated' rational ones, who displaced the old rigid anti-political Provo leaders a decade ago!

The Provisional IRA's mad disregard for the dictum of James Connolly, "Ireland without her people means nothing to me", is to be explained by the fact that a large part of Ireland's people mean nothing to them, and that to get a British solution as many of them can be killed as necessary. Despite the dogma that Britain's presence is the great evil, the Provos use the one million strong Irish Protestant community as mere ciphers and counters in the game they play with the "Brits".

They do what they do to the Protestants because, despite their Republican pieties, they think the Protestants do not count.

They believe that in the last act, the British will coerce, blackjack, arm-twist and economically blackmail the Protestant community into doing what they, the Provisional IRA, want.

The Provos started their military campaign with the doctrinaire and deeply anti-democratic belief that what the Protestants want counts for nothing and should count for nothing when it did not coincide with what they, the Provos, wanted; the responses of the Protestants in the course of the IRA war have reinforced and murderously augmented this attitude.

Now men and women who started out sincere Wolfe Tone Republicans, have come to believe that as many Protestants as 'necessary' can be killed. Thus the awful logic of communalism works itself through Irish petty-bourgeois republicanism, like a devouring cancer.

But they could not possibly believe that they can kill Protestants with impunity, and stoke white-hot the Irish minority's hatred of their cause, if they did not look to a British and not an intra-Irish solution.

The Provisional IRA hope that war-weariness will eventually drive Britain to revert to the policy of uniting Ireland — but

as an immediate executive goal, with Britain taking initiatives to unify Ireland over the heads of the Protestants, using the British Army to control them. That is less mad than it might seem.

Thatcher faced down the spectacular Orange opposition to the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. And a war-weary Britain seeking to withdraw could not — unless the central British state itself had half-collapsed — just pull out and let things rip in a civil war which would probably spread to Glasgow and other areas in Britain. The Provisional IRA know that, and know that the British would have to seek a "political solution" in a deal with Dublin. That, at any rate, is what they hope for.

They are very unlikely to get it, because unlike the "Republicans", both London and Dublin know that the Protestant community does count, and will insist on being counted. And after all the upheavals that would be necessary to achieve it, such a Provo-British-Dublin solution would most likely face an IRA-style military campaign by Protestants against the new Irish Establishment. Neither Dublin nor London would want that, or the risk of it.

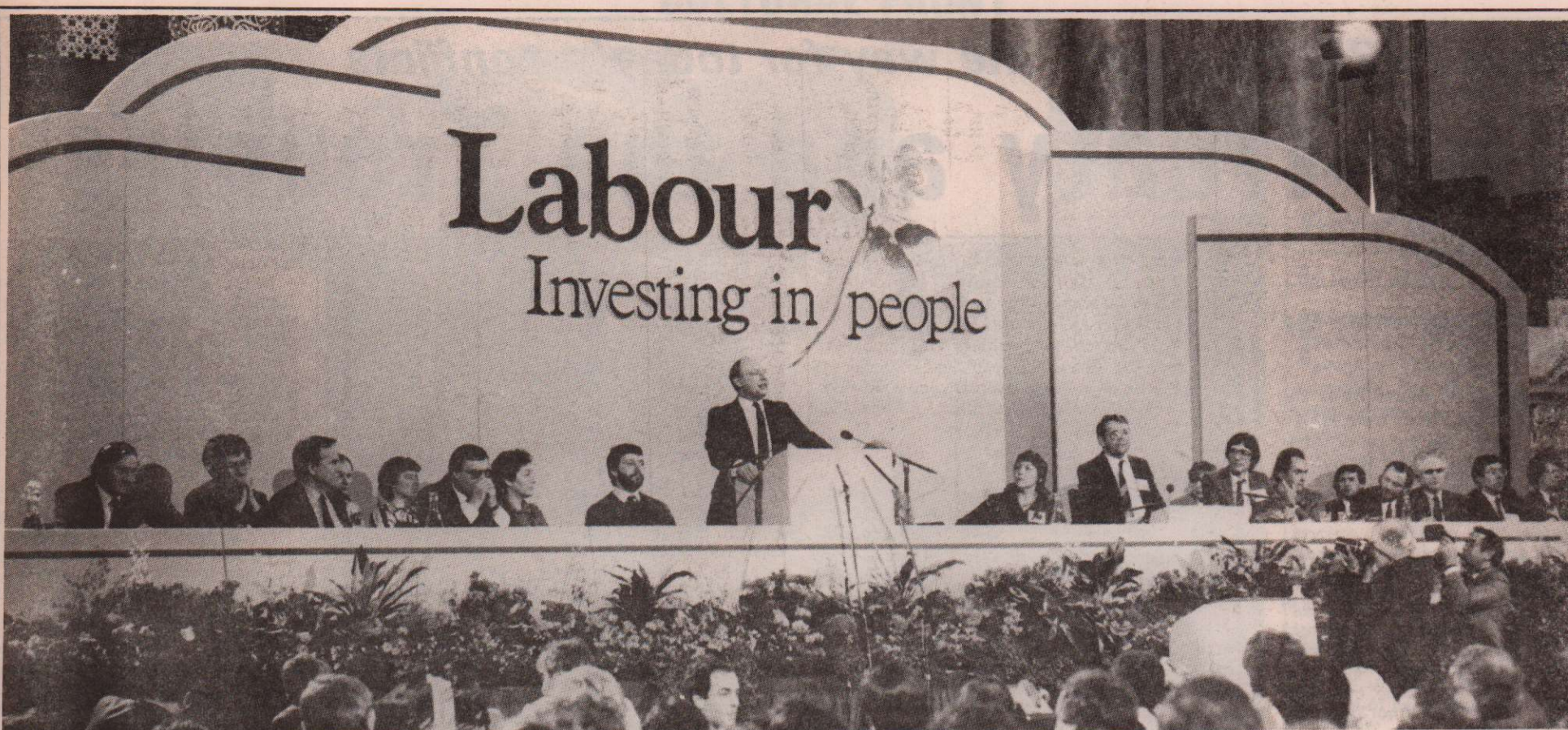
No-one but a blinkered Catholic-Irish chauvinist could regard such a "swapping" of alienated communities — the Protestants in all-Ireland taking the place of the Catholics in Northern Ireland — as a step forward. It would not even mean British withdrawal: a big British military presence would be necessary to suppress the threat of civil war and repartition.

So the Provos are unlikely to get what they want from Britain. But they know that they will *never* foreseeably get what they want from the Northern Ireland Protestants. They have given up on that big part of the Irish people; and thus it is with obscene hypocrisy that they invoke Tone and Pearse and Connolly!

Most Irish people, Catholic or Protestant, know or sense all this. That is why most of the Catholic Irish — including a majority of the Six Counties Catholics — reject the Provos' mixture of mystical adventurism, Catholic communalism, and addle-headed *realpolitik*.

They might not feel comfortable — their business not being to say things clearly and where necessarily provocatively — spelling it out as brutally as I do here; but nevertheless they reject the Provisional IRA, whose deeds, like the latest slaughter, disgrace and shame the name of Irish Republican, a historic name to which they have no right!

The real Wolfe Tone, the real Robert Emmett, the real Joe Biggar and maybe the real Patrick Pearse, if they lived now, would be the Provos' targets, not their allies!



The left needs a clear alternative to Kinnock's blah-blah. Photo: John Harris.

"Programme of Action" conference on 25 January

New economics for Labour?

By Martin Thomas

Almost for the first time since 1985, when Andrew Glyn published his *Million Jobs a Year* pamphlet, the Labour left is discussing economics.

Labour MPs, trade unionists, and left-wing academics are meeting in London this Saturday, 25 January, to discuss a "Programme of Action" on "Labour and the Economy".

The chief sponsors include MPs Ken Livingstone, Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, George Galloway and Audrey Wise; trade union leaders Ken Cameron, Peter Heathfield, Peter Lenahan and Joe Marino; and academics Ben Fine, GC Harcourt, Laurence Harris and Frank Wilkinson.

Their statement has seven points:

- "Policies for full employment: the rebuilding of the public services; a shorter working week..."
- National minimum wage and "an end to restrictions on trade union solidarity".
- Cut military spending to the European average; a "planned programme" to convert from military production.
- "The creation of a new core of publicly-owned companies", compensation "in the form of long-term government securities" where firms are nationalised.
- "Tax incentives to promote the repatriation of capital".
- "A sharp cut in interest rates" and devaluation of the pound.
- "International economic cooperation, both inside and outside the European Community, including Third World debt cancellation..."

It also calls for "raising dividend taxation and reversal of the Tories' multi-billion pound tax cuts for the rich".

This policy is wider-ranging, but less sharply radical, than Andrew Glyn's proposals, published by the Campaign Group of left Labour MPs in 1985, for comprehensive state control of financial institutions, capital export, prices, imports and all large companies.

In its preamble, the new *Pro-*

gramme of Action statement refers back approvingly to the "Alternative Economic Strategy" published by the Labour left in the early 1970s. That "AES" was centred on planning agreements between a Labour government and big companies, increased social spending, import controls, and price controls. Through the planning agreements, through increased

"The 'economy' is not a machine that can be tinkered with at will by this or that government, with the class struggle only applying external 'pressure' one way or another... A real socialist policy can never be just an 'economic' policy; it is a policy for mobilising the working class..."

social spending, and (in more radical versions) through new nationalised industries, investment would be jacked up. The import controls (and withdrawal from the European Community) would ensure that increased demand did not just pull in imports; and price controls, that it would not just lead to inflation.

"Such policies could have been applied at the beginning of the 1980s", declares the preamble, but today "a different emphasis is required. Policy cannot aim to put existing plant and machinery back to work [but instead] to generate resources for investment..."

the new *Programme of Action* is two books published in 1989: *Beyond the Casino Economy* (sponsored by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy), and *Livingstone's Labour*.

Beyond the Casino Economy included some readable and detailed argument about how modern information technology makes planning and social control more necessary and practicable, and concluded with a sort of sawn-off version of Andrew Glyn's recommendations: an "anti-monopoly programme" to nationalise 25 top companies, and the banks and finance institutions, as a "first stage". *Livingstone's Labour* was an altogether feebler effort, proposing no new public ownership but instead a package of forcing capitalists to bring their money back to Britain, cutting arms spending, increasing taxes on the rich, and...a trade pact with the USSR.

Those are the ingredients. The compromises no doubt necessary to get broad support have left the final dish very watery in parts; and some elements necessary to make a nourishing programme for a working class socialist movement are, I think, missing from the ingredients.

Workers' plans; workers' control; industrial democracy; the revolutionary change in the state necessary for state economic controls to become social controls — all these are missing from the ingredients. But, as a Marxist criticism of the "AES" put it back in 1980:

"The 'economy' is not a machine that can be tinkered with at will by this or that government, with the class struggle only applying external 'pressure' one way or the other... A real socialist policy can never be just an 'economic' policy; it is a policy for mobilising the working class..." [Colin Foster in *Workers' Action*, 22.03.80]

The collapse of the command economies in the USSR and Eastern Europe makes this issue doubly important. Any credible socialist policy today has to explain very clearly how it differs from what passed as orthodox socialism for 60 years: a bureaucratic state-monopoly system.

Marx wrote ironically in *Capital*: "It is very characteristic

of the enthusiastic apologists of the factory system, that they have nothing more damning to urge against a general organisation of labour in society than that it would turn all society into one immense factory". Under the influence of Stalinism and Fabianism, too many socialists have seemed almost to adopt Marx's caricature as their own policy — to propose in place of the tyranny of capitalist factories a more comprehensive "planned" tyranny!

Marxian socialism is about freeing workers from the tyranny of the factory system. Workers' control and democracy are central to that.

The *Programme of Action* notes the "globalisation of industries" and "west European integration". But instead of concluding that we should ditch the old Stalinist and Fabian notions of "socialism in one country", and

"Any credible socialist policy has to explain very clearly how it differs from what passed as orthodox socialism for 60 years: a bureaucratic state-monopoly system. Workers' control and democracy are central to that."

return to the ideas of the *Communist Manifesto* — "united action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat" — the *Programme* instead concerns itself with what is "needed to match Britain's competitors".

What about what is needed for the cross-European working class to "match" increasingly integrated Euro-capitalism? Neither immediate proposals for a levelling-up of workers' rights and conditions across Europe, nor broader

perspectives for international democratic planning of credit, investment, and production, find a place in the *Programme of Action*.

The wateriness of the *Programme* also destroys its coherence at some crucial points. Even less than the 1970s "AES" does this *Programme* have "handles" to connect it to day-to-day working class concerns and struggles and make it something more than vague advice to future Labour government ministers.

On many issues it is so vague as to be vacuous: issues such as working hours ("a shorter working week" without any more precise indication, such as 35 hours); child-care provision ("a sustained boost", without even indicating whether this "boost" should be big or small!); and training (it just says "a national training programme" — but even the Tories have some programme of training!).

In the area which is central to its logic — state control of the economy — the *Programme* signals a loss of nerve. Many of its sponsors used to identify socialism with state control of the economy, and see the old order in the USSR as embodying that idea; now, it seems, they have no answer but to propose the same idea in milder, more watery form.

Thus the *Programme* proposes not comprehensive state control, but only "a new core of publicly-owned companies...in order to have the information and leverage to drive up the level of investment". The new socialist government will tame the capitalists not by expropriating them, and not even by controlling them, but by competing with them! And it will do that while burdened with paying full compensation to former owners, albeit in the form of interest-bearing paper rather than cash.

For all these reasons, the *Programme* can only be a starting point for discussion. But that the Labour left is discussing economics again is itself a step forward.

"Labour and the economy"
Conference
Saturday 25 January
11 to 5, at Conway Hall, Red Lion
Square, London WC1
Admission £5/£2 unwaged.

How 1920-21 paved the way for today's conflicts

The Treaty and the Troubles

Television

Patrick Murphy reviews *The Treaty*

"Take it down from the mast, Irish traitors/It's the flag we republicans claim/It will never belong to Free Staters/For you've brought nothing on it but shame."

That is how the republican nationalist tradition has summed up the events leading to the partition of Ireland in 1921.

After years of bitter, costly war with the British, the Sinn Fein-dominated government in Dublin achieved not a republic, but a Free State (Saorstát) and not Irish unity but partition.

It was a momentous, decisive period and was well-portrayed in the 2-hour Thames TV and RTE co-production, "The Treaty", last Wednesday.

"The Treaty" was a dramatic reconstruction of the negotiations between Lloyd George's coalition government and the Irish delegates led by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. If you had no interest in or little knowledge of Irish history, the film's dilemma was still of universal interest; this was "principle versus compromise", the conflict personified in the person of Michael Collins more than in anyone else.

The portrayal of Collins was the kindest, though it was far from sycophantic or uncritical, and, to this day, his assessment of what all the republican politicians were up to has always struck me as more accurate than the nationalist ballad quoted above.

"I am going to London", he said, "to do a thing that those who send me know has to be done, but haven't got the courage to do themselves".

The last General Election in the whole of Ireland took place in 1918. Outside of Ulster, the old Nationalist Party led by John Redmond was crushed and humiliated by Sinn Fein. The dramatic upsurge in Sinn Fein support was a result of their role in the war with Britain which followed the execution of the leaders of the 1916 rebellion.

Sinn Fein won 73 seats, the Nationalists 6. Sinn Fein refused to take their seats and instead set up a separate Irish parliament in Dublin (the Dáil), formed their own army, the IRA, and proclaimed their right to govern Ireland.

The British declared the Dáil illegal, banned Sinn Fein and, from August 1919, a still more bitter war ensued between the British forces and Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and the IRA.

The British government had difficulty recruiting police locally, and the RIC were driven out of large parts of the south, so they sent in specially recruited reinforcements of ex-soldiers and police called the Black and Tans.

The Tans soon developed a well-deserved reputation for brutality and bad discipline. They ferociously reacted to one successful IRA attack by burning down the city of Cork.

The changes in Irish politics pressurised the British government to come up with some acceptable political arrangement.

Their main aims had nothing to do with democracy or rights, of course.

Lloyd George was head of a coalition government dominated by the Conservative Party and they were determined to keep Ireland within the Empire and to protect



Those who do not learn from history are condemned to relive it

On January 30 1972, a march in Derry to protest against internment — indefinite imprisonment without trial — was banned. The organisers defied the ban and the march went ahead. It was a peaceful, unarmed protest, which took place in an area bristling with armoured cars and soldiers armed to

the teeth.

When the marchers got to the fringes of the Bogside, the Catholic ghetto under the perfectly preserved walls of the old Protestant city, soldiers opened fire without warning.

They kept on shooting, killing 13 men — many of them teenagers — outright,

and wounding 29 others. (One of them died not long afterwards).

The soldiers claimed that they were fired on: none of the many independent reporters present saw any evidence for this.

It was outright murder by British soldiers gone berserk and out of control.

the northern Unionists from rule by Dublin. This they did effectively.

In 1920, Lloyd George tried to pre-empt the democratic demands of the republicans by passing the Government of Ireland Act which introduced Home Rule with two separate parliaments, the southern Parliament would rule 26 counties, the northern Parliament 6 counties.

It was sold as a temporary arrangement, and a Council of Ireland was set up in which both Parliaments would be represented and which, Lloyd George claimed, would lead to re-unification.

This was never a serious possibility. The real drive to partition Ireland was coming from the northern Unionists, not from Westminster.

On May 20 1920, the first elections to the Stormont Parliament in Belfast were held and the Unionist-dominated Parliament opened in June.

The decisive events were occurring, however, on the streets and in the workplaces.

The Loyalists attempted to establish their permanent control over the north, and pre-empt any plans at unity by driving Catholics out of Belfast, or out of mixed areas and mixed workplaces.

There were vicious pogroms of Catholics and Protestant trade union activists who tried to protect some of the class unity built up in the post-war years of industrial militancy in Belfast.

Sinn Fein, meanwhile, totally rejected the 1920 Act and the Anglo-Irish war continued.

It was becoming costly for both sides however.

The Government's response to the Troubles was, chiefly, brutal violence and coercion.

It was a policy proving very unpopular internationally, relations with the US were in danger, the growing Labour Party, the press, and even the King, publicly opposed the extremes of repression.

The ex-PM, Asquith, commented that "there are things being done in Ireland which would disgrace the blackest annals of the lowest

tion was a guarantee that a major, escalated war was the alternative.

In the end, Lloyd George confronted the Irish delegates with an ultimatum — sign the Treaty with all its risks and enjoy peace, or refuse and take the consequences.

He did not allow time to refer back to Dublin or discuss further. Griffith was convinced that there was no alternative, Collins became convinced quickly and, in the end, they all signed.

"The Treaty" was a ponderous, slow film, slightly contrived to make the tale clearer, but, with some qualifications, it was a story well-told.

It is irritating that such productions have to be laced with bits of stage 'Irishry' — the only time the ordinary people of Ireland come into the scene, they are huddled around bonfires in Dublin streets, crooning rebel ballads as background to the key conversations of the leading characters.

This mock Sean O'Casey was reinforced by other historical drama favourites like women in the background 'pulling the strings', accidentally making decisive suggestions, offering tea, wiping the sweating brow and so on.

The tragic consequences of the Treaty were hidden in a lot of innocuous subtitles at the end. The Treaty was ratified in Dublin but the two big hopes for the Irish were cruelly and quickly denied.

Peace it certainly did not bring. Sinn Fein split and De Valera and Cathal Brugha, who had sent Collins to negotiate, led an anti-Treaty force in a bloody civil war against Collins' new Irish government.

More nationalists lost their lives in that war than in all the fighting since 1917.

The Boundary Commission finally reported in 1925 and Northern Ireland included all 6 counties controlled in 1920.

So the Treaty achieved neither peace nor unity and, from the point of view of the 1990s, its cost in blood, misery and conflict appears all the greater.

It was a terrible statement. For too long, in Irish nationalist legend, the responsibility has lain on the shoulders of Michael Collins.

This film and recent work by Tim Pat Coogan and others has redressed some of the balance.

The dilemma faced by republicans in 1920 was the same as the greatest dilemma facing them to this day.

There was and is a great tension between the republican desire to break the link with Britain and the nationalist desire to win a unified Ireland.

That tension is imposed by the politics, identity and power of the Northern Protestant minority, a minority with decisive support in 1920/1 from the British government.

The great political mistake of Sinn Fein in 1921 was, arguably, to treat the desire to separate from Britain as more important than the desire to retain a united Ireland.

Certainly, in this dramatised version, the amount of time spent in the negotiations discussing the relatively trivial question of the oath of allegiance and the exact relations with Britain was way out of proportion to the time spent dealing with Irish unity and the need to avoid partition.

This Treaty is a much-analysed historical episode, but if I had to draw one lesson for Irish politics today, it would be that democrats and republicans might again have to consider links between Britain and Ireland in order to unite the country.

despotism in Europe".

In 1921, Lloyd George offered to negotiate with Sinn Fein. He convinced the Conservatives to consider the best compromise available, helped by the resignation of arch-Unionist, Bonar Law, and his replacement as Tory leader by the more amenable Austen Chamberlain.

Sinn Fein accepted the invitation to talks. They were war-weary, exhausted and unconvinced that they could sustain, let alone step up, the war with Britain.

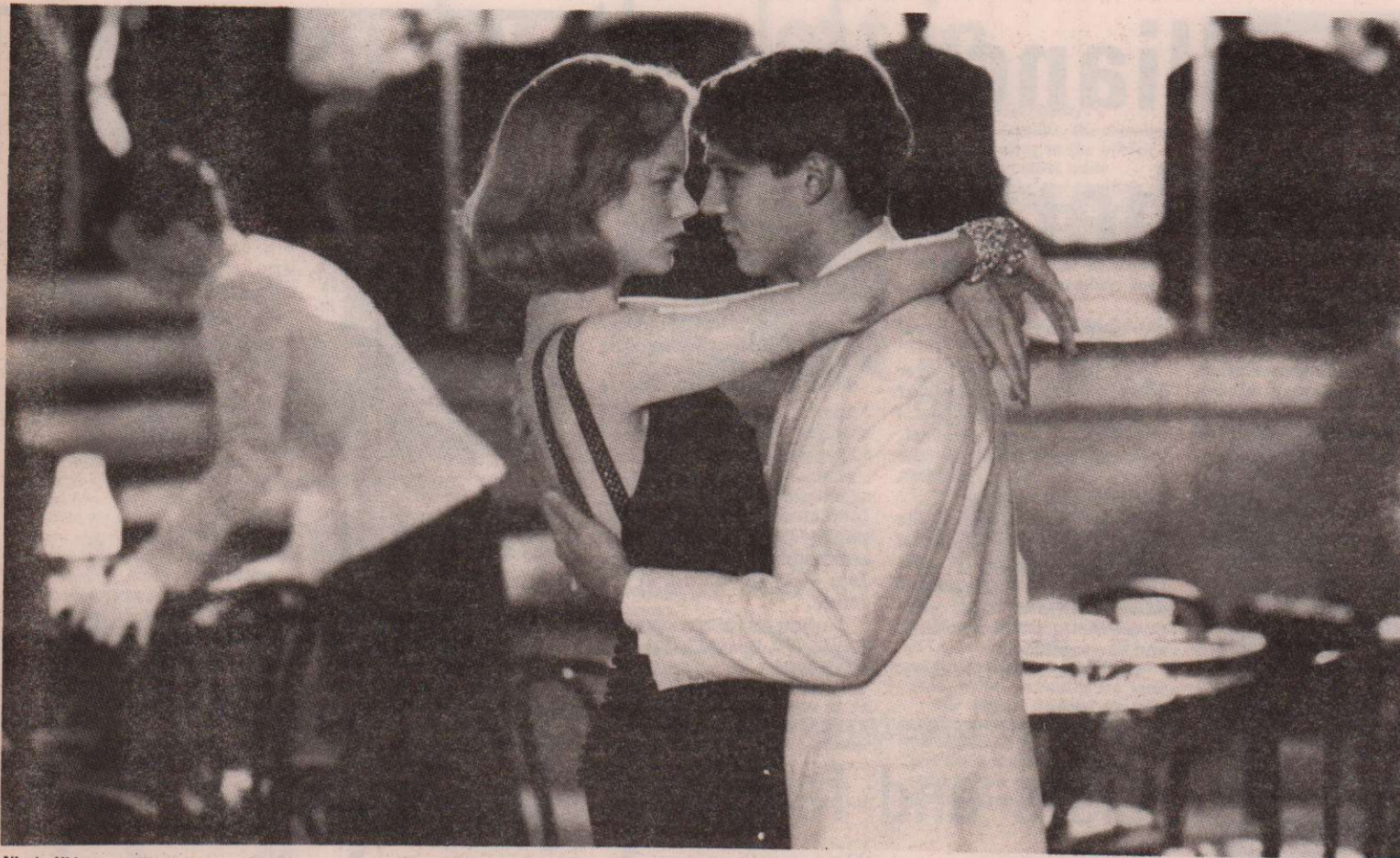
This weariness on both sides came across strongly in the reconstruction of the talks, but, above all, the drama conveyed the way in which the Irish delegates were outmanoeuvred.

Lloyd George suggested that the area controlled by the North would be so small as to be unviable, the exact division would be decided by a Boundary Commission.

Unity would be inevitable, only delayed.

The flip side of the British posi-

CULTURAL FRONT



Nicole Kidman as Drew Preston — too nice. Loren Dean as Billy Bathgate — too dumb.

Too much money, too little film

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *Billy Bathgate*

Billy Bathgate is a "so what" movie. Nothing happens in it, and if it did, you wouldn't care because no character in it has any drive, interest or charm. It's a tableau, a waxwork, not cinema. It's dead in the water.

What it does have is "production values" — movie-speak for sets, costumes, cars, etc. New York gangsterism, 1935-style, has been faithfully recreated on screen, but to no purpose. The director, Robert Benton, has nothing new to say, and the actors have nothing to do.

It's an adaptation of an EL Doctorow novel of the same name. The Billy of the title is a poor Bronx kid who falls under the spell of gangster Dutch Schultz. To Billy, whose mother works in a sweatshop/laundry for four dollars a week, Schultz is a role model — someone who clawed his way out of poverty and made himself the richest man in New York. The American Dream, only this time with guns.

Perhaps the film is about Billy's disenchantment with Dutch once he sees him up close, sees his creepy paranoia, his psychopathic rages. But perhaps it isn't. Billy is such a blank that it's impossible to tell what (if anything) is going on behind his blandly handsome face. The actor who plays Billy is too old for the part, so he plays young by playing dumb. He's a lunkhead with a half-open mouth. Since Billy is supposed to be both smart and lucky, and the centre of the movie, this is Benton's first mistake.

The other main parts are also poorly cast. Nicole Kidman is more high school sweetheart than femme fatale; she simply doesn't have the presence to play Drew Preston, a wised up society dame who gets her kicks by sleeping with gangsters.

When she seduces Billy, they're like goofy teenagers; she's too young for the older woman role. The role of Drew called for someone debonair and insouciant, someone mysterious, fascinating, exciting. Kidman is nice.

And Dustin Hoffman as Schultz brings nothing to the party. His portrayal of a mean little psychopath is all externals — the clothes, the tight lips, the tight walk. His sudden murderous rages come from nowhere; we never get inside this little crook.

There has to have been more in

the novel than we get on the screen, but the appeal of Doctorow's books (they have a kind of sparkle) is in the writing, not in the plots. When the stories are extracted, they congeal; they badly need the leavening of his style to succeed.

Without Doctorow's writing, the film adds up to nothing. Its premise that fearless people lead charmed lives is piffle. Drew only survives because Billy is watching out for her, and Billy survives because the director needs him to.

The main thing wrong with *Billy Bathgate* is too much money.

Everything is lavishly done, there are crowd scenes galore, and the period has been painstakingly recreated. In this kind of set-up, the script is usually the least of a director's worries. But films need more than sets and costumes to succeed; they need a story, they need a point. Actors get suffocated by all this "production values" paraphernalia; it's the period picture equivalent of being upstaged by special effects. Not every movie needs the "big" treatment. Hollywood has binged too long. It's time for a purge.

'No Vietcong called me nigger'

Boxing

By Dion D'Silva

Last week saw the 50th birthday of Muhammed Ali, probably the greatest heavyweight boxer there has ever been.

The figure of Ali, now afflicted with Parkinson's disease, is not quite the same as the lively, articulate boxer of the '70s. However, he was described in those days (by himself, I think!), as the 'most famous face on the planet'.

He was born Cassius Marcellus Clay in 1942 in Louisville, Kentucky. He started boxing in a local club when he was just 11. He won many amateur titles and then, in 1960, the Olympic Light Heavyweight gold medal at Tokyo.

On his return to the States, he became more and more disillusioned with the racism he witnessed and even, it is said, threw the medal he had won for the United States into the river near his home town.

Nevertheless, there were eleven white men, millionaires, keen to sponsor Ali in his professional career.

After just a few fights he became so confident that he began to make predictions about the exact round in which he would stop his opponent — and he was usually right!

Boxing had never seen anything like

it. So sure was he of his skill, that he didn't even put up a guard — he used his reflexes to evade punches. He taunted other boxers in the ring and literally danced the Ali shuffle. Then he would use his tremendous punching speed to finish off his opponent — in the allotted round.

In 1963, Ali came to England to fight Henry Cooper — another of the 'great white hopes'.

Ali got more fan mail from Britain than from any other country and was extremely popular with many — black and white — working class people.

Yet it is often forgotten that there were many who hated him. He was called cocky and arrogant. It was hard for people to understand that here was an intelligent, witty and arrogant black boxer.

My dad was one of the many thousands who packed Wembley to see the fight.

Ali had predicted a fifth round victory. My dad says that as Ali walked through the crowd, he was spat upon and some people tried to throw punches at him.

Everyone remembers Cooper's left hook which had Ali down in the fourth round. But in the next round, Ali demolished Cooper, and the fight was stopped.

Soon after Ali was 22, he fought Sonny Liston, the much-fancied champion for the World Title. After round six, Liston sat in his corner reluctant to come out. In round seven, Ali

knocked him out in the first minute.

Just when Ali was at the peak of his fitness and strength, he was stripped of his title. He had refused to be conscripted into the US Army to fight in Vietnam.

The way he saw it, "no Viet Cong ever called me a nigger".

Ali had changed his name because he was a Muslim and rejected his 'slave' name. Rather like Malcolm X, he looked toward the Third World regimes and Africa in particular. He often pointed out that 'Black is beautiful' — he was the most beautiful of all!

He served a short jail sentence for dodging the draft but carried on training. Eventually, at age 29, he was allowed to box again. After some gruelling fights, he regained the World Title by beating Joe Frazier.

Ali fought in some rather unusual places — the "Thriller in Manila", the "Rumble in the Jungle" in Zaire, where he outsmarted George Foreman.

I remember the nights I used to stay up listening to these fights on the radio.

Boxing might be a barbaric sport but Ali represented more than just a good boxer. He was a showman who made trite but funny poems about his opponents and who always put his interviewer on the spot.

He was proud to be black and he spoke out against oppression. You've guessed it — he was and remains a hero of mine!

Benevolent barbarism

Television

By Geoff Ward

In South Carolina, USA, some women can be jailed for being pregnant. Unbelievable? Not according to the *Everyman* programme on BBC1 last Sunday.

This horrific story centres around the issue of rights for unborn children.

When a pregnant woman (in practice, mainly a poor, black, woman from the ghettos) enters the antenatal clinic of the free state hospital in Charleston she will be tested for drugs without her consent. If the test proves positive, she will be given two "choices": either go on the drug rehabilitation programme or go to prison for the duration of her pregnancy.

"Failure" on the programme leads automatically to prison.

This action is "justified" on the basis of protecting the life of the unborn child whose health could be seriously jeopardised unless the mother can be prevented from abusing herself and the child with drugs.

Women were shown being taken to hospital in manacles, living in cramped prison cells; reportedly they are chained to their beds.

One woman was still in prison six months after giving birth to her baby, seemingly without any rights of access to the child.

This inhuman, brutal system was defended by one smug administrator — who then admitted she hadn't even visited the prison to which the pregnant women were being condemned. Unfortunately, the programme didn't ask why the overwhelming majority of women in prison happened to be black.

The authorities made the wild claim that no changes in the statistics for women seeking antenatal treatment had been detected, yet the film showed police squads hunting women down who had become fugitives to escape prison.

Other American states are watching this so-called "experiment" with a view to adopting it elsewhere. The implications are frightening.

Concern for the welfare of unborn children is legitimate; our system tackles the problem by completely trampling on the rights of pregnant women who are victims of drug abuse, not criminals.

It turns their pregnancy into a nightmare. And why stop there? Cigarettes and alcohol can cause foetal damage, too.

This criminalisation of women is not just an indirect attack on abortion rights — what greater harm can be caused to a foetus than death — but it could also force women to opt for abortion rather than face a prison term.

It will inevitably drive women away from seeking vital health care and in the case of South Carolina, lead women to have their babies in other states.

The prison option is favoured as it is a less costly, more convenient alternative to providing a decent health service. The last decade has seen a massive cut in welfare in the US.

The individual woman is blamed for harming her child and punished accordingly without reference to the social conditions which, for instance, breeds drug addicts.

In the climate of guilt and fear directed against "bad mothers" it wouldn't be a massive step towards the forced sterilisation of some women considered to be unfit to bear children.

"Health fascism" is an abused term which is banded around on the left, but this barbaric project must rank as one of the best examples of it.

Join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty!

In Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR, Stalinism is dead. Capitalism will ruin the lives of millions as these states turn towards the market.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty and its predecessors have fought for years for workers' unity, East and West.

We have advocated a decent, sane alternative to both the market and to Stalinism — workers' liberty.

The sad fact is that those prepared to fight for real socialism in Eastern Europe have been in a small minority. Socialism has been discredited by its association with Stalinism.

The working classes of Eastern Europe believed socialism was totalitarianism.

Now the workers will have to rediscover the very meaning of the word as they find out, in practice, about the madness of capitalism.

But the death of Stalinism has also lifted a burden from

the shoulders of the real socialists.

The bosses can no longer point to the totalitarianism of the East and say "That's socialism". Now, in fact, they will have to justify the misery they have created in the ex-Stalinist states.

We are heading back to the times before the Stalinist counter-revolution in the USSR, back towards a more straightforward battle between the genuine socialists and the capitalists.

The Alliance for Workers'

Liberty exists to aid the struggle of the working class for its own self-emancipation.

We support the paper *Socialist Organiser* and the struggle for a renewal of socialism.

The AWL is building an organisation which is fighting for the re-birth of revolutionary Marxism inside the international working class. Join us in the battles of the future.

To find out more, contact: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



Was Hitler's regime bureaucratic-collectivist?

Bureaucratic collectivism is a world-wide phenomenon

DEBATE

Laurens Otter continues our debate on the class nature of the Stalinist states

Both Chris Arthur's position and Tom Rigby's (*SO506*) are part and parcel of the "Marxist" tendency to conflate class systems into larger brackets than Marx accepted.

The usual myth is that Marx divided all class-dominated systems into four, when what he actually said was that anyone who thought that was an obvious "Dummkopf" [blockhead].

Thus — despite the fact that in *Capital* Marx clearly distinguishes the two — entrepreneurial capitalism and mercantilism are both assumed to be "capitalism", an analysis which conveniently fits the thesis that a class system can only arise in a country after that particular country has the appropriate insurrection.

This thesis, however, is not to be found in Marx. For instance, the French Revolution came in a country that was already Mercantilist, though conflicts had arisen between the system and its political government. No stable mercantilist regime arose since mercantilism had already exhausted its progressive potential and — for the political and military defence of the new regime — needed to introduce new technological and social forms, which in a short time came into conflict with mercantilism.

This new technology and these new class relations were introduced far more rapidly in Great Britain, an island which had had a revolution to introduce mercantilism, but not entrepreneurial capitalism. That country was forced, primarily for military reasons, to advance its technology in ways that affected social relations. The introduction of industrial-entrepreneurial production in Britain led very rapidly to the Great Reform Bill and the apparent overthrow of "Old Corruption".

Mercantilism was established faster in France than England — in both countries it was in response to the needs of revolutionary wars — even though it was England that had had the revolution.

No-one in France, in 1789, consciously set about unleashing an entrepreneurial capitalist revolution. The aims of the early leaders were all in terms of progressive mercantilism, though these immediately conflicted with the aspirations of the more radical revolutionary visionaries

as also with the self-interests of the *sans culottes* at home and the slaves abroad.

No English Puritan revolutionary conceived of a mercantilist system; there too was immediate conflict with underclasses and those who had a more far-reaching revolutionary perspective.

Arthur and Rigby are both arguing on the basis that a bureaucratic collectivist system could only be found in the Soviet Union (and in subsequent Stalinist states) since only in these has there been a bureaucratic-collectivist revolution — as if anyone consciously ever set out to make a bureaucratic-collectivist revolution.

It has always been fundamental to bureaucratic-collectivist analysis of the Soviet Union that the new class system is found not only there but also in modified forms within fascism, in Keynesian reformism, in the vast complexes of monopoly capitalism and in a host of forms throughout the Third World.

Indeed, the earliest form of the analysis (that of Simone Weil) started from the fact that in Weimar Germany members of the bureaucracies of business, of trade unions, of political parties, and of the state appeared to be able to move into each others' jobs with virtually no difficulty. (An observation which would be even truer now).

Arthur's argument (which amounts to an adaptation of Thatcherite triumphalism) rests on the fact that Stalinism has collapsed (though only in the Soviet Union and its European dependencies). He would not, presumably, retrospectively, argue against a capitalist analysis of the French Revolution on the strength of the Bourbon restoration of 1815; nor against the view that England after the Great Reform Bill was capitalist-dominated on the strength of the Tory (land-owning and mercantilist) revival of the 1850s.

It is generally held that in Britain the compensation paid by Labour for nationalised industries financed the take-over and asset-stripping corporatism of the subsequent period. It is obvious that the economic mainstay of Thatcherism was not in the productive industries (as it had been of traditional Adam Smith entrepreneurial industry) but was a parasitism, the political expression of asset-stripping.

In no way does the existence of such a parasitism disprove the bureaucratic collectivist analysis, any more than the fact that "Old Corruption" was given a new temporary lease of life by the needs of the new capitalist industry, means that Marx was mistaken in the *Manifesto* and that such capitalism was not dominant.

Laurens Otter, Salop

Where to find your Socialist Organiser meetings on: "How to beat the racists and fascists"

Thursday 23 January
Manchester University, 1.00.
Speaker Nik Barstow
Hull University, 7.30.
Speaker Paul Hampton
Poly of North London, Holloway Road site, 1.00
Monkwearmouth College, 1.00. Speaker Habda Rashid
Park Lane College, 12.30.
Speaker Mike Fenwick
York University, 1.15.
Speaker Nick Lowles
St John's College, York, 7.00. Speaker Nick Lowles
Newcastle, Rossetti Studios, 7.30
Sheffield, SCCAU, West St, 7.30. Speaker Pete Radcliff
Leeds, Swarthmore Centre, 7.30

Brighton, Great Eastern pub, 7.30. Speaker Sab Sanghera
Friday 24 January
Richmond-Upon-Thames College, 1.00. Speaker Paul Ramsamooj
Goldsmiths College, 1.00.
Speaker Jill Mountford
Huddersfield Poly, Conference Room, 1.00. Speaker Mike Fenwick

Thursday 30 January
Kent University, Eliot College, 6.00
Liverpool Institute, Room 58, 12.30. Speaker Gail Cameron
London SO Forum meeting, LSE, Room A142 7.30. Speakers include Ernie Roberts and John O'Mahony

These meetings are sponsored by the *Alliance for Workers' Liberty*. For details of *Socialist Organiser* in your area, phone Mark on 071-639 7965

What's On

Saturday 25 January
"Labour and the Economy" 11.00-5.00, Conway Hall, Holborn, London
Bloody Sunday demonstration.

Monday 27 January
"Iraq — unsafe haven". 7.00, Manchester Town Hall. Iraqi and Kurdish speakers and Jeremy Corbyn MP

Wednesday 29 January
"Socialists and the general election". Essex University SO meeting. 6.00
"Fighting racism and fascism". Wallasey Alliance for Workers' Liberty meeting. 8.00, Wallasey Unemployed Centre

Assemble: 12.00 at Hyde Park, London

Anti-racist action

Friday 31 January
Anti-Fascist Action social: the Bhundu Boys, Stoke Newington Town Hall, London. £7.50/£6.00
Saturday 22 February
"Close the BNP HQ".

Demonstrate: 12.00, St. Nicholas Church, London SE18

Saturday 28 March
Oppose police racism. Demonstrate: 12.30, Plashet Park, London E6. Called by Newham Monitoring Project

Looking ahead

Students demonstrate against debt. National NUS have organised a demonstration to oppose student poverty. Assemble: 12.00 on Wednesday 12

February in Battersea Park, South London

Workers' Liberty 1992 will be held at Caxton House, North London from Friday 3 to Sunday 5 July...

Fighting the right. Selling the paper.

120 copies of *Socialist Organiser* were sold on the Asylum Bill demonstration.
12 copies were sold before a *Socialist Organiser* meeting on fighting racism at North London College.
10 copies were sold at Whitechapel tube, East London.
12 copies were sold at Glasgow Poly.



Striking GEC workers read SO's coverage of their dispute.

If you would like to help us sell *Socialist Organiser*, write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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We aim to raise £10,000 from donations and fundraising to buy new equipment.

This weekend supporters in London are organising two jumble sales and car boot sales to raise funds.

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A tragedy of the left



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A lesson for the left in the unions?

By Liam Conway, Central Notts NUT

Recent elections in the National Union of Teachers produced a very creditable result for the left Socialist Teachers' Alliance candidate.

Joan Ivens was re-elected Examiner of Accounts. STA candidates standing for Vice-President, Will Reese and Carole Regan, were over 1500 votes short of their 'Broad Left' rivals. The best result was achieved by Ian Murch of the Campaign for a Democratic, Fighting Union (CDFU). His vote of 17,422 for Treasurer was over 6000 better than the nearest left candidate.

Why did the left do so well in some elections and not in others?

The STA leadership puts Murch's result down to the non-political, even 'right-wing', nature of his campaign. More

generally, they say the CDFU is non-political because it concentrates exclusively on union affairs. This accusation is nonsense and damages the left in the union.

Ian's election material focussed on the union's finances and the 'political' implications of this for the union. He was, after all, standing for Treasurer of the NUT. Ian has opposed the right-wing drift of the union at every turn. What more could you ask for?

Some of the STA's election material was poorly focussed and effectively 'non-political'. Carole Regan noticed that education faced the biggest crisis in its history, but gave little indication as to how electing her would change anything.

In the VP elections, the 'Broad Left' candidates produced a list of short, sharp statements of 'intent' focussed on the current attacks on teachers. They have no 'intent', but their message was simple and effective.

The left has always done best



in elections when it has been able to tap into the current political consciousness of the members. This does not mean selling out to the 'Broad Left', and has nothing to do with advertising left-wing credentials. It has to do with taking elections seriously, both the message used, and getting it across.

The STA has over 700 members. This gives it an advantage over the smaller CDFU. This advantage has clearly not translated into votes cast at national officer elections. The CDFU, despite its size, has been able to tap into a mood amongst the members. With more activists on the ground it

could do even better. At the moment, the members are not chafing at the bit for action. Like most trade unionists, they are awaiting the outcome of the general election. In this climate, the left should do everything it can to influence the outcome of that election and prepare the members for action in the future.

The elections of Ian Murch and Joan Ivens should be seen as part of those preparations. Misdirected accusations of non-political campaigns and right-wing drifts should cease in the interests of preparing the ground for the struggles to come.

What unites the STA and the CDFU is much more important than what divides them.

The STA has 700 members, but far too few of these are actively involved in union politics. The bigger the active left in the union the better, whether in the STA or the CDFU, or, like me, in both. I feel no embarrassment about recruiting for both.

The biggest internal obstacle to the success of the left is presented by those who would put the growth of their own sects before the development of a mass opposition in the union.

Jobs fight needs your support

The GEC workers can turn the tide. With the real number of unemployed now well over 3.6 million, the stand in defence of jobs at GEC is of vital importance to the entire trade union movement.

Over the last few years, too many groups of workers have been left to fight alone or sold down the river by their union officials.

Others have lacked the confidence to go into battle in what they have seen as very unfavourable cir-

cumstances.

But now a group of workers, who are well-organised and united, have dug their heels in.

It is the duty of every trade union and labour movement activist to rally to their defence. A victory for the GEC workers will encourage other workers elsewhere to fight back.

• Invite a striker to speak at your trade union or Labour Party meeting.

• Make a donation to the strike fund.

• Try and get a levy for the GEC strikers going at your workplace.

• Send a message of support to the strikers and a solidarity delegation to the picket.

For more details, contact: Dave Hughes, 23 Prince Edward Avenue, Denton, Nr. Manchester, M34 1AS.

GEC strike makes links across Europe

The strike of GEC Openshaw is the first since the Maastricht European Summit in which workers are pushing their dispute at an international level.

From the first registration of the dispute, the unions have been in contact with the CGT — the trade unions federation in France (where GEC Alstom is based), asking the CGT for solidarity.

They hope to gain access to the company's plans for the Openshaw plant through the

legal rights of French unions to see company documents. If the company refuses, the unions can take them to the French courts.

The MSF at Openshaw are also demanding the workers' rights under the Treaty of Rome (article 1186) to international meetings with management in France.

Ultimately, they want to build an international GEC Combine Committee across Europe.

Openshaw MSF branch chair, Rick Hesketh, told *Socialist Organiser*: "The one thing the multi-national companies fear most is multi-national trade union action. That is going to help us win".

Telecom: national action needed

Telecoms workers over 60 are being targeted by British Telecom (BT) for compulsory "retirement" — that's sacking to you and me.

The National Communications Union (NCU) is divided as to whether to fight on this issue or not.

Industrial action to stop the CPSA stop press

The DHSS Section Executive of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) has just voted to negotiate a redundancy package with the Government's Department of Social Security (DSS).

Though restricted, for now, to workers in the settlement centres, the decision represents a dangerous precedent.

"With management on the offensive over pay, national bargaining, badges and uniforms, this is a decision we will come to regret", was how Section Executive member Mark Serwotka responded. The Section Executive, which normally has a left-wing majority, took the decision when *Militant* supporters broke with the Broad Left majority and voted with the right wing. A fight on staffing was blocked by the right wing Section Chair. Full report next week.

sackings is being taken by Westminster Branch and other branches are balloting. Meanwhile, the possibilities of compromise deals at a national level have faded in the face of BT's intransigence.

The way forward is surely to defend the over-60s and their right to work until the state retirement age; anything less is not justice.

There is no doubting the financial hardship that BT's policy is causing.

Nevertheless, the significance of the over-60s issue is not just one of BT badly treating one group of workers but that this is just the beginning of a massive attack on the jobs and working conditions of all NCU members.

The gap between workers leaving on voluntary redundancy terms and planned staff reductions is growing wider, with the only solutions on offer being a change in BT policies on staffing (unlikely) or compulsory redundancies in the near future (very likely).

We must face the facts and take a stand now to defend the over-60s — knowing we will be next. The way forward is for more branches to take action and to give BT the message that we are not prepared to sacrifice the over-60s.

The NCU Executive need to be told this as well: at the national meeting of branch delegates arranged for later this month, branches need to press for a national campaign on this issue.

Correcting nature's mistakes

Les Hearn's



SCIENCE COLUMN

The frenetic pace of genetic research since recombinant DNA techniques were introduced seems to be bearing fruit in the form of an effective treatment for cystic fibrosis.

The tragedy of many fatal genetic diseases has challenged researchers to find ways of replacing faulty genes. Hitherto, medical science has only been able to offer palliatives — donated blood clotting factors for people with haemophilia; antibiotics and physiotherapy for people with cystic fibrosis; etc. The result has often been a prolonged but still short and sometimes painful life.

Gene therapy has a short and slightly checkered history. Unauthorised experiments on human sufferers of thalassaemia (a debilitating blood disorder) were carried out in 1984 by US researcher Martin Cline.

For his irresponsibility, Cline lost his researcher's licence, though the "guinea pigs" appear to have neither suffered nor benefitted from his attempts to insert healthy haemoglobin genes into bone marrow cells.

More recently, successful gene therapy has been carried out on a young victim of Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID). People with SCID are unable to make a protein called adenine deaminase (ADA) due to a defect in the ADA gene. The result is a crippled immune system and victims usually die in infancy from overwhelming infection.

One boy in Texas spent his short life in a plastic bubble designed to keep out bacteria and viruses.

However, a 4-year old girl with SCID has been able to lead an essentially normal life, apart from transfusions of white blood cells every couple of months or so. The cells are her own, previously removed and treated to insert normal copies of the ADA gene. Since white cells have a limited life span, regular replacements are necessary.

A permanent cure might be effected by inserting the normal genes into the stem cells,

cells which are parent to the white blood cells and are found in the bone marrow. But this could be hazardous as the genes might disrupt the normal functioning of other genes, perhaps making them cancerous.

Of potential benefit to many more people is the latest discovery of a technique for inserting healthy copies of the faulty gene that causes cystic fibrosis (CF). CF is the result of a defect in a gene for a protein that controls the flow of chloride ions across cell membranes. The effect of this in people with two copies of the gene (ie. one from each parent) is to cause a build-up of mucus in the lungs. This results in frequent infections with progressive destruction of the lung tissues.

Most sufferers die before the age of 30.

Interestingly, a single copy of the faulty gene, the most common genetic defect in European populations, seems to protect against death from gut infections.

CF research has really taken off since the gene for CF was discovered in 1989 by US and Canadian scientists, with a team at St. Mary's Hospital being pipped at the

"Gene therapy has a short and slightly checkered history"

post. Now, a team at the Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, has found a way of introducing the healthy gene into the cells of lung membranes of experimental rats. Once in these cells, the genes are fully operational.

The method of introduction is quite ingenious. Lung cells cannot be taken out, modified and put back, unlike white blood cells. So the researchers use an adenovirus which infects lung cells and causes symptoms of common cold.

First, they "disable" the virus, so that it is no longer disease-causing. Then they insert copies of the healthy gene. Finally, they introduce it into the lungs by means of a nasal spray. The virus enters the lung membrane cells, releasing the genes but causing no further effects. The genes then function normally but, over a period of weeks, the cells are naturally lost, necessitating repeat treatments.

Safety aspects will need investigating, but treatment for humans may be possible in just one year. This is surely an answer to scaremongering talk about genetic engineering (as well as to critics of any research using animals).

The Industrial Front

Rank-and-file electricians will be delighted to hear that 62-year old Eric Hammond is to retire in March as General Secretary of the EETPU.

Unfortunately, his successor, Paul Gallagher, is no improvement. No bets are being taken on Lord Hammond of Wapping.

Ford bosses are getting tough. They want to sack 512 workers at the Southampton Transit van plant. The workers would be well-advised to adopt the use of tactics that forced a management U-turn at Halewood recently.

An instant walkout by almost 200 workers forced a section manager to apologise to an operator he had threatened to discipline. Halewood management were a little concerned that Ford Europe's vice-president, who was due to visit the following day, would find the production line silent...

You've heard of 2-year deals — now the 3-year deal.

Ford New Holland — the Essex-based tractor makers mainly owned by Fiat — are pushing for just such a thing along with the introduction of temporary labour. Stewards, rightly, don't want to be tied down for 3 years, and have won a ballot for strike action amongst the 1,600 workforce.

Rolls-Royce, who went in for some union-busting last spring, but were quickly forced to retreat, are after the unions

once again. Management at Crewe are threatening de-recognition if the overtime ban and work-to-rule in defence of jobs are not called off.

The maintenance base for British Airways' fleet of jumbo jets is to be moved from Heathrow to Cardiff. What's more, the company will be looking for a single-union deal.

Candidates already include the GMB and the TGWU. Surprise, surprise, the 'front-runner' is the AEU.

The future for BA workers: out goes the fine tradition of solid organisation amongst the Heathrow engineers. In comes a Nissan style 'work till you drop' deal. No wonder the employers are so keen on an AEU/EETPU merger.

The TGWU and the GMB — Britain's two largest unions — have embarked on a joint campaign to win the right to five days per year training for all their members.

Could this be the first step towards merger? And could it have anything to do with counteracting the effects of an AEU/EETPU merger?

More merger rumours... It seems that with good old fashioned "TUC left" Ken Gill about to retire this summer the MSF right wing want to link up with the AEU and EETPU. The MSF executive have explicitly repudiated such a move so there must be some truth in the story.

According to the CBI there could be up to 30,000 redundancies in the financial services sector this year. With union density in this sector below 10% BIFU's plan for the first-ever national strike in defence of jobs at the TSB is of vital importance.

By Janine Booth (NUS women's officer, personal capacity)

"We used underhand and dirty methods at NUS conference to get reform passed... We will use any means necessary to smash you [Left Unity] and get reform through."

So said a Liberal Democrat at the National Union of Students [NUS] National Executive on 20 January. And that's just what the alliance of Liberal Democrats, Labour Students [NOLS] and independents are doing.

At NUS's Christmas conference, last December, President Stephen Twigg broke the constitution to call a revote after he had been defeated in his attempt to abolish Winter conference.

Constitutionally, the abolition has to be endorsed by two successive NUS conferences. NOLS knows it will probably not get endorsement at the regular Spring conference, so they have organised an extra "emergency" conference where their chances will be much better.

Such an emergency conference needs 25 colleges to call it. The National Executive discussed requests from 40 affiliates for an extraordinary conference.

After a series of incredible rulings and proposals by Twigg, the National Executive has set the conference for 4 March.

The conference looks likely to take place in Cardiff, so colleges in the North will find it difficult to attend.

The procedure set out in the NUS Constitution says an affiliate must pass a request for an extraordinary conference at its governing body or following a procedure approved by that governing body.

Last Summer's attempt to call a similar conference failed because an investigation showed that several colleges had broken their own constitution in making a request for the extraordinary conference.

To get round this problem, Twigg ruled that the NEC must accept the word of the "principal elected officer" of the affiliate that their motion was passed properly.

So, a college can break every rule in their constitution and Stephen Twigg doesn't care, so long as they support him.

Only two colleges of the 35 from whom Twigg accepted requests have discussed the issue at a General Meeting this year. 21 requests were passed by Executives, one by a management committee, two by General Meetings last academic year, while several requests clearly state that they must go to higher bodies for ratification. Some were not signed by the "senior executive officer".

To stop the NEC discussing these obvious shortcomings, a motion was pushed through not to debate each submission! Twigg even tried to stop amendments being taken! A move to discuss a venue was voted down.

The right wing's primary argument is that the NEC must act on the request of affiliates under the Constitution. NOLS in particular are keen to portray themselves as merely acting on the member's wishes.

Of course, it is all a smokescreen. The ten Oxford University colleges that submitted calls for a conference were organised by NOLS, as were many others.

The National Executive is clearly out of order.

The NUS Steering Committee should be approached to investigate every request, as it does when affiliates break other rules concerning conferences. The NEC has engaged in flagrant abuse of its powers and been highly irresponsible.

With the press predicting an early April general election, the extraordinary conference could take

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Victory to the GEC strikers!

By Dan Judelson

GEC strikers are standing firm in the face of management intimidation. At a mass meeting in Ashton Town Hall last week, the strikers unanimously reaffirmed their decision to go on indefinite all-out strike.

Before the meeting, the mood amongst strikers was clear. Asked why they thought management had announced another 130 redundancies, they were quite certain: "It's to try and get people back to work, it's an intimidation process, that's all," said Rick Proctor, AEU member.

"I've been round the picket line since the announcement [of the extra redundancies] and the reaction from people is they're even more resolved to the fact that they're staying out here," said Ian McGuinness, GMB steward at the Higher Openshaw plant.

Mr McGuinness also pointed out how the confrontation had been

"The new managing director is either here to close the business or crush the unions... he's asked for confrontation."

sought after and caused by management: "The new managing director has come here...he's either here to close the business or crush the unions. That's what he's trying to do: he's taken us on and asked for a confrontation."

The timing of the dispute is clearly no coincidence, coming as it does almost exactly one month after the new managing director arrived at the plant.

More and more workers are supporting the GEC strikers. Every GEC unit that the strikers have visited has donated money and

many plants have or are in the process of collecting strike levies from their members to help the Openshaw workers.

Such direct contributions from other trade unionists are vital if the GEC strike is to be victorious. Over

Clearly, to win the dispute, solidarity from other workers must be central. Where other sections of the GEC combine are concerned this could range from boycotting work shifted from Higher Openshaw all the way up to strike action.

It must be remembered that this is not the only option, however. In the more immediate future mobilisation of the labour movement, especially in Manchester, is vital. A town centre rally or demonstration by GEC strikers and other workers would show and reinforce the solidarity needed to win, as well as providing a potentially large source of funds for the strikers.

'More and more workers are supporting the GEC strikers.'

£100 was collected by students at Manchester Polytechnic. Another £100 with the promise of more came from APEX at Leyland Daf in Preston.

It is heartening to see how the GEC strikers are receiving such widespread and financial support.



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