

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

**Socialism
and Democracy**
Direct action and Parliament



A debate between
**Michael Foot and
John O'Mahony**

opening remarks and chaired by Alan Simpson MP

Conway Hall • Wednesday 9 March 1994 • 7.30pm

Racist gangs rampage in East London

STOP

RACE

ATTACKS!



Muktar Ahmed lies in bed after being battered by a organised gang of 20 white youths in Tower Hamlets, East London

**Black and white, unite and fight!
Labour movement support for
community self defence! see pages 3 and 5**

Time running out in Northern Ireland

JOHN MAJOR will meet Irish prime minister Albert Reynolds on Saturday 19 February, and Provisional Sinn Fein is holding a conference in Dublin on 26-27 February, as time runs out for chances of a major political shift in Northern Ireland.

The Tory Government, dependent as it is on the

Ulster Unionists to prop it up in Parliament, is stonewalling on the Provisionals' demand for "clarification" of the response by the London and Dublin governments to the joint initiative by Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and John Hume of the constitutional-nationalist SDLP. According to Sinn Fein's

paper "An Phoblacht", Unionist leader James Molyneux has claimed that he got the British government to delete from their response proposals for a British-Irish Convention which would sit in parallel to a devolved Northern Ireland Assembly and have some power over it. Sinn Fein chairperson

Tom Hartley called for Britain to help push the Northern Ireland Protestants into a united Ireland. "Britain created the Unionist veto... Because Britain has the power to remove the veto, it holds the key to the resolution of this problem.

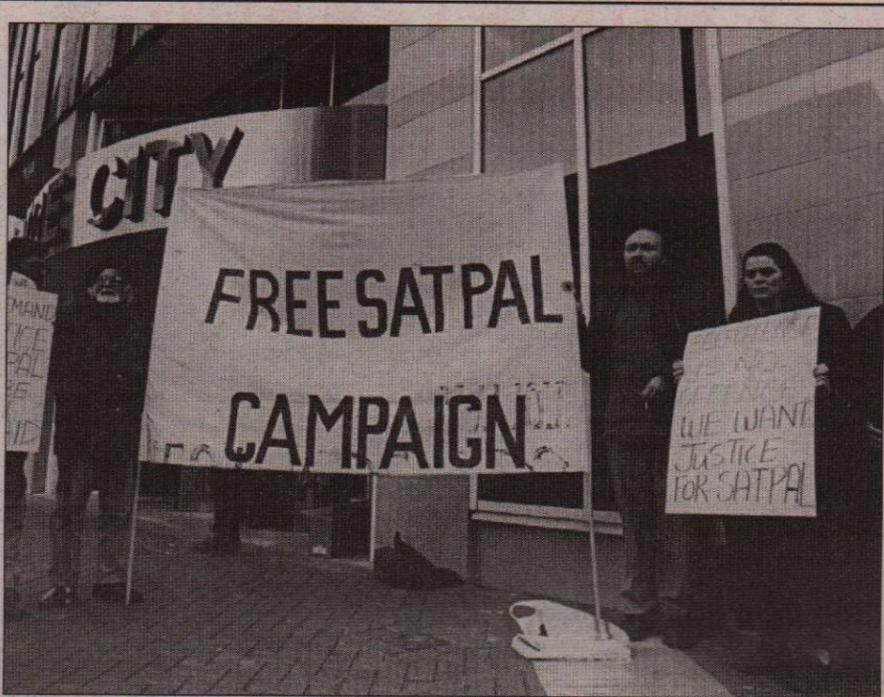
"British interference must be replaced by a positive

British commitment to advance the creation of a negotiated Ireland".

Plainly the Provisionals still look to British power to make good their lack of a democratic programme which could unite the people of Ireland. But the Provisionals' commitment to negotiation and their promise to end their mili-

tary campaign if talks open represent an important shift for the better.

The British labour movement should demand that the British government opens talks now with all parties, including Sinn Fein, with the perspective of a united Ireland with federal rights for the Protestants.



Satpal Ram Campaign picket the Legal Aid Board 9 February. Satpal Ram has been in prison since 1986 serving a life sentence for murder. He was the victim of a racist attack. He defended himself and his attacker died as a result. After bad legal advice (not to plead self-defence) and facing an all white jury, Satpal was convicted of murder and jailed for life.

Contact the Free Satpal Campaign, 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1NH. Phone: 021-5512 4518. Photo: Mark Salmon

Why Bryan Gould is quitting the Labour Party

By Tom Rigby

BRYAN Gould is to quit politics. He says he is disillusioned by the conservatism of the Labour Party.

Gould was brought into a prominent position in the Labour Party by Neil Kinnock. He "masterminded" Labour's failed election campaign in 1987, and helped lead the party's drift to the right in the late 1980s.

Now Gould — this defender of nuclear weapons, advocate of employee share-ownership, promoter of the witch-hunt, and pioneer of efforts to break the Labour/union link — has himself ended up marginalised by the "modernisers".

His trajectory tells us something about how stifling and stilted the Labour Party has become.

Gould first fell from grace when he dared to suggest that the profiteers who have made so much out of water privatisation would not get full

compensation if Labour renationalised.

In 1992 he grew bolder. Nationalist hostility to the European Community had always been his main claim to radicalism. He dared to

"Gould helped lead the Labour Party's drift to the right. He is no loss."

argue that the pound should be withdrawn from the Exchange Rate Mechanism.

John Smith and Gordon Brown poo-pooed the idea. It was not sufficiently financially retentive for a party that was preparing for government in maybe five years' time.

Two weeks later the Tories adopted Gould's policy. He has never been forgiven by

Smith and Brown.

Only a few months ago, Gould was saying that he would challenge Margaret Beckett this year for Labour's deputy leadership. His policy would be full employment and defence of the welfare state. Probably it was the collapse of this bid that led him to quit politics.

The leaders of the TGWU and the GMBU, despite their disquiet about the Labour leaders' attitudes on the welfare state, would not back Gould's challenge. Beckett is sponsored by the TGWU, and is supposed to be a potential opponent of further attacks on the unions' position in the Labour Party.

Gould is no loss. The main cause for sadness in all this is that his departure creates a space for the unprincipled Ken Livingstone — described in the press as one of the leaders of Gould's "kitchen cabinet" who tried to stop him going — to come forward as a leader of the opposition to Smith and Brown.

German workers fight for jobs

IG METALL, the most powerful trade union in Europe with 3.2 million German metal workers, is heading for strike action in March over jobs and pay.

The union is demanding shorter working hours to save jobs. It calls for a 35 hour week, already agreed from

October 1995, to be implemented immediately, and for a 30 hour week in individual plants. It has conceded some loss of pay, but demands some wage compensation, and calls for a guarantee of no job cuts.

The bosses are demanding longer hours. They say that

factories should have the right to return to a 40 hour week to cut costs — effectively scrapping the already-agreed 35-hour week agreement — and insist that where other factories cut hours, pay must be cut proportionately.

Talks broke down on 11 February.

Bosses go for workplace dictatorship

AN academic survey has confirmed that weakened trade union organisation has opened the way for bosses to act like outright dictators in factories and offices.

According to researcher Neil Millward, they "are moving towards a situation in which most employees are treated as 'factors of production', rather than as human beings, with hopes, aspirations and rights... the sort of circumstances which gave rise to trade unionism [in the 19th century] where managers have everything their own way".

Millward confirms that talk about alternative forms of consulting workers means almost nothing in practice. Consultative committees and "company councils" have become less, not more, common.



Tabloid scandal fuels moral backlash

By Gerry Bates

THOSE left wing smart alecs who thought *Socialist Organiser* was being too laid back in its refusal to gloat at the Tim Yeo affair should now be able to see what we were getting at.

The hypocritical tabloid war against the Tories over personal morality has indeed ended up as part of a nasty right wing moral backlash.

The result is that a rather sad Tory MP has been forced to leave the government for the "crime" of having a brief fling and becoming hopelessly infatuated with a young woman less than half his age.

The woman has since been hounded for keeping a condom by her bed.

Those who wish to continue gloating, can. I say pass the sick bucket.

Profiteers siphon off Third World aid

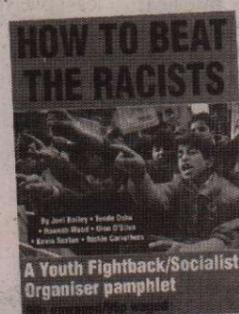
OVER FORTY per cent of Britain's overseas aid since 1978 has gone to just five big British companies.

According to the Independent on Sunday (13 February), the five companies — Balfour Beatty, GEC, Amec, Biwater, and Davy — are represented on two official boards which decide on aid projects. Some of them also give a lot of money to the Tory party.

Third World governments get aid for big projects carried out by the British companies.

So the "aid" is mainly aid to British bosses! If the projects benefit Third World countries, well and good; if — like the Pergau dam in Malaysia — they are useless or even harmful, too bad.

In fact this way of deciding "aid" favours monster prestige projects in relatively well-off Third World countries — choices which often also suit the local rulers — rather than smaller-scale projects, better knitted into the local economy, in the poorest countries.



How to Fight the Racists
95p plus 29p postage from
WL Publications
Ltd, PO Box
823, London
SE14 5NA

Build labour movement committees for the 19 March TUC demo

Workers' unity to beat racism

THE SCALE of violence depicted on our front page this week, and described on page five — nine racist attacks in East London in the last few days — should bring a sense of real urgency to our work. The labour movement must help defend our Bengali brothers and sisters!

The TUC has organised a trade union demonstration against racism and fascism in East London on Saturday 19 March. This can be a focus for labour movement action against the fascists.

Labour movement mobilising committees are being built in towns up and down the country. Coaches and trains are being booked. This is urgent work, to build the biggest possible response to the racists on 19 March, and to launch lasting campaigns.

In Lancaster, for example, an open meeting was initiated by the local Young Labour Group with the University Labour Club, the local Area National Union of Students, and a ward Labour Party.

In Leicester, the Trades Council has called an open meeting. In Nottingham and Sheffield, too, Trades Council initiatives are coordinating the work.

On Tyneside, the long-established local Anti-Fascist Association has booked a train.

The campaigns must remain labour movement campaigns. The last thing we need is 'anti-racist', 'progressive' Tory or Liberal politicians speaking at the rally or leading the march on 19 March. We need no unity with such people. Such unity will limit what we can do or say.

Socialists should link the work of 19 March mobilising committees to the job of building support for Labour in the May local government elections.

The anti-fascist magazine Searchlight believes there will be two dozen candidates from the British National Party, and perhaps ten from the National Front, in May.

The dramatic rise in racist violence in East London following the BNP's victory in a council by-election there shows how important it is to confront the Nazis at the polls. The only working-class response is a campaign for Labour.

Trade unions must pledge themselves now to build for 19 March as part of a long-lasting campaign which unites political and street protests in a mass movement against racism and fascism.

That mass movement must combine work on several fronts: street action against the fascists; labour movement support for black and Asian community self-defence against racist attacks; systematic leafletting and campaigning to combat racist ideas; and black and white workers' unity for working-class demands, for decent jobs and living standards



The labour movement needs to intervene and give support to community self-defence. A 1986 demonstration commemorates the anti-fascist action in Cable Street in 1936. Photo: Jez Coulson (IFL)

How to uproot race-hate

LAST YEAR an Asian woman was set on fire as she waited at an east London bus stop.

A black man, Kenneth Harris, and his white girlfriend were attacked in Ilford last October. Kenneth was stabbed with a screwdriver and a car was driven over him — because he is black. He injuries included a fractured skull and a punctured lung.

The month before a Bengali youth, seventeen year old Quddus Ali, was beaten nearly to death by a gang of racist thugs.

Look at Muktar Ahmed's picture on the front page. This is a disgusting business. Why are people are so full of hatred that they do this to

another human being?

Who would put a brick through a kid's bedroom window, as the racists did?

This is not a matter of an individual with a psychological problem. In Britain last year there were at least twelve racist street killings and, according to the Institute for Race Relations, 140,000 racist attacks.

This is a massive, social problem.

In the East End of London, poverty, and some of the worst housing in Britain, stand only hundreds of yards from the marble halls of City banks. Billions of public money were spent on subsidising Canary Wharf and other white-elephant projects for the

rich, while a fraction of that amount could generate decent housing and decent jobs for the workers on the Isle of Dogs.

Why are young white men turning to the fascists rather than to Labour and the unions? After the Nazi British National Party's Millwall by-election victory Labour spokesperson Keith Vaz was asked that very question on national TV. He said he had "no idea", revealing his utter incompetence as well as the bankruptcy of his politics.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty believes that a big part of the problem is the weakness of the leaders of the official labour movement. They offer very little to youth — black youth or white youth. The unions do not organise the unemployed, and Labour does not fight for any economic policy which could end unemployment.

Many white workers in East London — not just the violent racists — accept a "Sons and Daughters" housing policy, which means, in code, whites get houses in prefer-

ence to Bengali. Why? Because they do not believe that everyone who needs a home will get one. There is a squabble over the existing, inadequate, housing stock. Someone must lose out. The racists say that whites should be OK, and Asians should lose out. And Labour says in effect: let us share out the misery evenly.

It is hardly surprising that the racists find an interested audience among white workers.

The answer is for Labour and the unions to fight the Tories and provide answers for the basic needs of all workers. That means homes and jobs for all. It means giving work to hundreds of thousands of unemployed building workers and cutting the working week with no loss of pay.

Such policies can unite rather than divide workers, because effective class struggle in the inner city must clearly mean black and white workers' unity. White workers must side with black workers, if only because unity is the best way to solve their own problems.

**TUC march
against racism
Saturday 19 March
Assemble 11am, Spitalfields
March to London Fields**

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser,
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Newsdesk 071-639 7965 (Latest reports Monday)

Editor: John O'Mahony
Sales Organiser: Jill Mountford
Published by: WL Publications Limited
Printed by: Eastway Offset (TU) London E9

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser and are in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office

WE SAY

Unite the left!

THE TORIES ARE deeply unpopular, but the left is not in a good state.

As a result of the defeats the working class has suffered over the last twenty years — under both Labour and Tory governments — debilitating moods of defeatism and demoralisation grip the bulk of the left, compensated for here and there by their hysterical alter ego, sectarianism.

We are not in the position we should be in if we are to build on the widespread opposition to the Tories that now exists. Senseless disunity — the inability to unite even for limited common goals — is the plainest manifestation of the state the left is in now.

The mood of weary acceptance of this disunity is itself part of the left's demoralisation.

Great possibilities would be opened up if the left could find ways to unite in practical action. What, practically, might we do?

- A broad based left wing co-ordinating centre could be set up across the whole trade union movement. The Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee has set itself this agenda.

Its job would be to organise support for strikes — collections, speaking tours, drives to co-ordinate and build for solidarity strike action.

It could pool the resources and experience of different forces in the movement. It could intervene in the TUC and Labour Party in support of policies that serve the interests of workers.

It would take as one of its major priorities the organisation of a campaign for a Labour government committed to scrapping the anti-union laws and instituting a set of positive legal rights for workers.

- Broad-based anti-racist unity could be established at a local level to build up support for the TUC's demonstration against racism on 19 March. This would expose the criminal divisions that exist between the Anti-Racist Alliance and the Anti-Nazi League and the need for socialists to concentrate on mobilising the ranks of the workers' movement against the fascist threat.

SOLIDARITY WORK with socialist and trade union activists in South Africa and the ex-USSR should be a major priority for genuine socialists. It is something around which we can build unity in action.

In South Africa, an ANC / National Party coalition is likely to attack black workers' living standards, organisation and civil rights.

In the ex-USSR, the embryonic workers' movement faces the threat of severe repression as the disintegrating old bureaucratic ruling class desperately tries to get to market capitalism.

In Britain no-one but the serious anti-reformist and anti-Stalinist left will organise to help these people.

As well as supporting every struggle that takes place the left has to link-up and fuse the different battles over individual issues into a generalised political alternative.

That means that the left has to fight for a Labour government and for socialist policies inside the Labour Party.

Despite Kinnock and Smith, Labour is still the political wing of a multi-million strong mass workers' movement. It is the only alternative government available to that movement.

Either socialists fight inside that party — basing themselves on the struggles outside as well — or we consign ourselves to irrelevance as far as politics, the overall running of society is concerned.

Immediately the best way to strengthen the left in the Labour Party is to build the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network.

THE VAST BULK of the broader, politically active, left is still to be found in the Labour Party and its affiliated trade unions.

After over a decade of right wing political counter-revolution, witch hunts and purges, Tony Benn can still get around 70,000 individual party members to vote for him for Labour's National Executive Committee.

An absolute minimum of 5,000 solid left wingers regularly attend their ward meetings, while ten times this number still hold party cards and some may attend occasionally. Beyond this layer there are similar numbers of people who may have let their membership lapse but would still define themselves politically as 'Labour Left'. There are even broader layers of shop stewards and active rank and file trade union members who identify politically with Benn, Skinner and Scargill.

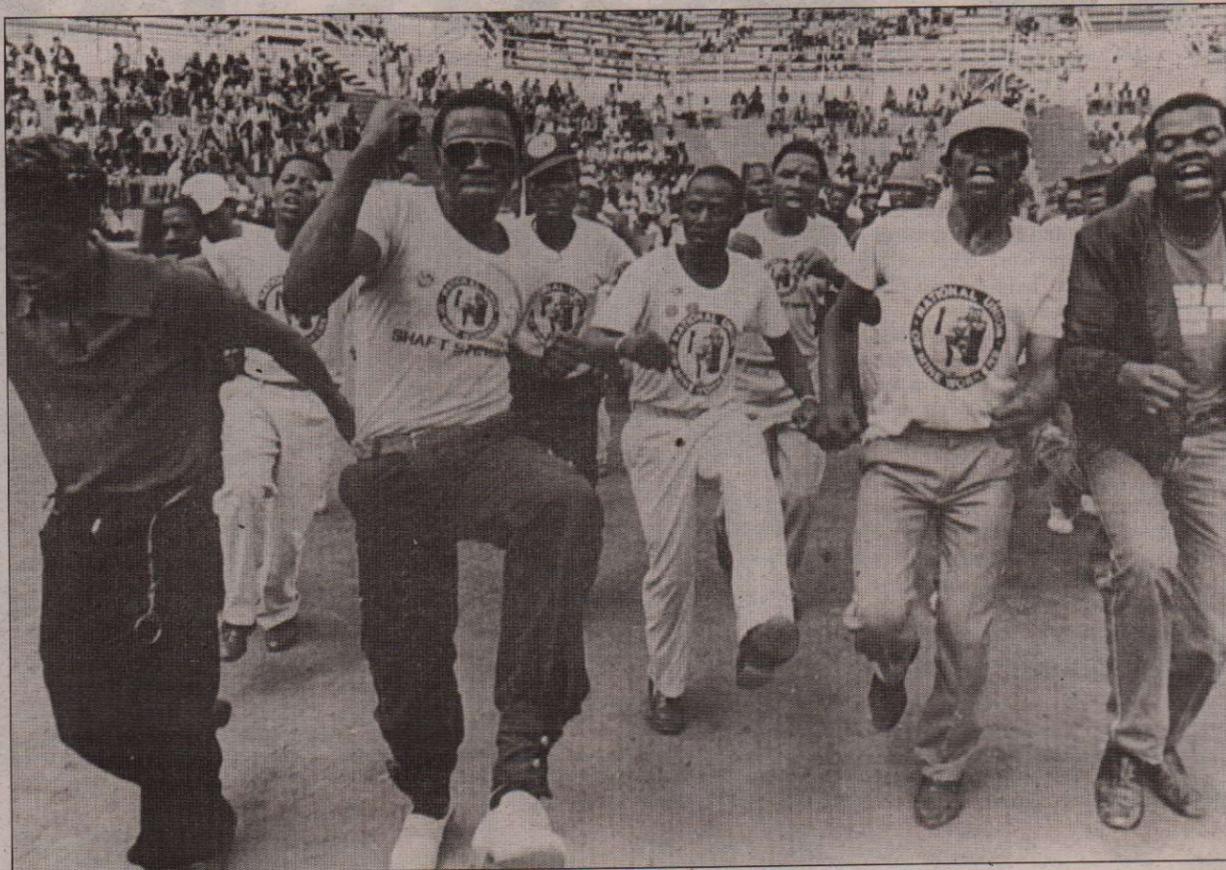
If a serious revolutionary socialist organisation is to be built in this country in the immediate future then it is from amongst these, and from workers and youth who have yet to be drawn into struggle, that it will be built.

The so-called revolutionary left is also important. If the 6,000 or so people who are presently active in the SWP, Militant Labour and the smaller sects could be won to a serious orientation to the working class and to participation in the fight to transform and revolutionise the existing labour movement, then the left would be a far more attractive and effective force than it is at present.

Unity is needed. We need a single, united, open, democratic and rational revolutionary Marxist organisation, able to work in both the industrial and the political wings of the workers' movement. But we are a long way from being able to create such a thing. Immediate unity in one organisation is a fantasy. Unity in action for defined goals — that is possible.

Unity in action does not mean being silent about our differences. It means unity in action and clarity in debate and discussion. Unity in action would be a start. It would be a giant step forward from where we are now.

A letter from South Africa 'We are standing to raise the demands of the working class'



South African miners' strike, 1987. What will the ANC offer them?

Dear comrades,

THE Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) will contest the April 1994 elections in South Africa.

Together with other organisations and individual trade unionists, WOSA will campaign under the banner of a Workers' List for an Independent Workers' List Party (WLP). The workers' list is a list of demands of the working class, but the WLP would also put forward a symbolic list of candidates who will fight for these demands. Amongst these demands of the Workers' List Party are: jobs for all, the unconditional right to work for all, an end to retrenchment, and the reduction of the working week to 35 hours without loss of pay. The WLP believes that the state must begin immediately to provide jobs for all, decent housing at an affordable cost, free and good quality health care for all, the transformation of the education system and full equality for women, and, most of all, a living wage, no payment to the Apartheid debt and opposition of the IMF/World Bank plans.

Everyone pretends to support the demands mentioned above but they say that there is no money. The WLP

believes that there should be a public debate on the budget. It should be a people's budget. Huge resources have been wasted on useless projects like Mossfass and government corruption. Resources should be allocated in a truly democratic way.

We are campaigning for the Workers' List for an Independent Workers' Party because we believe it is essential to have an independent political organisation of the working class. For us, it is not important how many

seats the WLP wins, but for the working class to recognise that such an independent party is needed. We are not alone in this. In our work at grassroots level, it is clear that there is support for this workers' party. A recent survey by Integrated Marketing Research found that 3.3 million adults "believe the struggle is not yet over in South Africa and that the system is corrupt. They favour the radical destruction of the old system as a precondition of genuine change." More

specifically, a survey by Barometer on Negotiation has found that "60% of black people would support a separate workers' party to represent them politically." Thus the conviction of the WLP that there is widespread support for our views.

The Workers' List will further be discussed at a conference for the Movement of a Mass Workers' Party (MWP) to be held in Johannesburg from the 26-27 February 1994.

WOSA,
Western Cape branch

Buthelezi threatens anti-democratic coup in South Africa

By Anne Mack

THE bosses of the KwaZulu bantustan are threatening to stage a coup and split away from a democratic South Africa based on one person, one vote.

King Goodwill Zwelithini and his cousin Chief Buthelezi have declared that their Inkatha Freedom Party - in reality a quasi-fascist organisation, based on gangsters and lumpen petty bourgeois - will not take part in April's non-racial elections.

Instead they will use their existing bantustan state machine to stage a coup and set up a "Zulu kingdom" as an independent country.

Socialists need to be clear about the issues. The differences in South Africa between Zulus and others are real, not imaginary. They were artificially boosted by the apartheid state, but they existed before that, and are rooted in historical development.

If the majority of the Zulu people wanted a separate state, then they should have the democratic right to set one up.

King Goodwill and Chief Buthelezi, however, have no intention whatsoever of allowing the Zulu speakers - or any of the other people in KwaZulu and Natal - any democratic say. Opinion surveys have repeatedly show that the vast majority of Zulu

workers and youth want to be part of a unitary South Africa. Inkatha's threat is an alternative to giving the mass of Zulu-speakers a democratic say on their future.

The way to undercut fears that some Zulus do have about possible discrimination against them is for the workers' movement to fight for substantial democratic and federal rights for the different proto-nations or tribal groups in South Africa.

At the same time, any attempt to establish a white state imprisoning large numbers of black people must be opposed, by force if necessary.

Racist attacks in East London

Self-defence is no offence

By Mark, South London

SINCE the fascist British National Party councillor Derek Beackon was elected in Tower Hamlets, East London, the number of racist attacks in the area has increased three hundred per cent.

"Our answer to the racists is to force the trade unions and the Labour Party to fight capitalism, the root cause."



The labour movement should support black communities fighting back. Photo: Carlos Guarita, Reflex

So say the police. That is the figure for *reported* incidents. It is only the tip of the iceberg. A recent report by the Home Office calculated that there were 130,000 racist incidents throughout Britain in 1992. Only 8000 of them were reported to the police.

The increase in the number of attacks in the East End of London is connected to an explosive growth of organised racist gangs who attack Asian youths. 18 year old Muktar Ahmed almost died last week when a gang of over 20 skinheads knocked him to the ground and then kicked him and beat him about the head.

Only hours before that attack, an Asian boy was ambushed and coshed by a gang of ten white adults.

Last week, too, a van drew up outside Tower Hamlets College, and a group of skinheads jumped out and attacked Asian students with staves and other weapons.

Kumar Murshid, chair of the Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Committee, summed up the situation in the East End of London. "Things are worse than they have ever been. The kind of attacks we are getting now - I would have expected one every few years.

Now I see one every month, every week".

This explosion of racist attacks shows that fascists are a violent threat to the black and Asian communities.

It is clear evidence that to allow the fascists to organise and operate in an area means allowing their boot-boys to attack and kill people.

That's why they should never be allowed to operate, to build support, or to develop their race-hate gangs - anywhere!

It is not just fascist gangs who carry out attacks. Such things

grow out of the racist filth spread by the bigger political parties. They are promoted by laws on immigration which brand black and Asian people as undesirables. They are whipped up by the racist press.

But the fascist organisations specialise in encouraging and organising racist attacks.

How can we stop the racist attacks? The Establishment — including the Labour Party — says: look to the police!

The same police who refused to help Quddus Ali when he was beaten nearly to death by a white gang last year.

The same police who then attacked and broke up a peaceful picket outside the hospital in the East End where Quddus Ali lay in a coma.

The same police who charged nine Asian youths with riot for reacting to the attack on their picket.

The same police who, in the face of increasing racist violence, spend their time hunting down the anti-racists who challenged their defence of the BNP's HQ in Welling against an anti-racist march last October.

Just one look at the front page of the Metropolitan Police's journal [see illustration] tells you just what the priorities of the racist British police are.

Filthy racist propaganda in the press acts on the poverty, unemployment, and poor housing among whites in an area like Tower Hamlets to recruit to the fascists.

Our answer to the racists must include answers to the social problems that push people towards the racist loudmouths — answers to such questions as:

- how to get decent housing;
- how to end unemployment;

YOUTH FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967 for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Youth Fightback is...

● how to end the miserable conditions of dog-eat-dog capitalist Britain.

Our answer to the racists' lies is to force the trade unions and the Labour Party to fight the Tories and to fight capitalism, the root cause of the terrible things our society inflicts on black and white workers alike.

Fine, you say, but how to stop the attacks tomorrow and next week in the East End of London? The immediate answer is: organise for self-defence!

We need self-defence organised by democratic committees which pull together black community organisations and the labour movement.

- Such committees could:
- * organise self-defence classes;
 - * set up street committees;
 - * organise escort services;
 - * provide security stewards for vulnerable families and for public events.

This is not a new idea. It is what the labour movement and Asian youth in Foleshill, Coventry, did in 1981.

They patrolled their area and defended it from racist gangs. They fought back against victimisation by the local police who harassed and arrested them.

They united the community and the labour movement, not only in self-defence but in a political movement that organised a mass demonstration in 1981.

By mobilising for the TUC demonstration in the East End on 19 March, the labour movement must make it clear that we say "self-defence is no offence". The labour movement must take the lead in a political campaign against racism and fascism; and — here and now — actively help organise self-defence for the black and Asian communities who face indiscriminate racist attacks.



Police launch round-up of anti-racists

On 16 October last year, the police blocked off a 60,000 strong anti-fascist march in South London. Inevitably violence broke out. Now — as this front page of the Metropolitan Police newspaper shows — the police are out to get people videoed at the event. They hope to get them sentenced to "five to ten years in jail."

Gunmen in blue

LOS ANGELES' finest in blue, the Los Angeles Police Department, have swung into action again.

Two off-duty officers were arrested after shooting their handguns into a crowded street in broad daylight. The two, worse for drink, were caught after a high-speed car chase.

Despite the officers' claim that they were aiming at road signs, it seems that they were shooting at a California Highway Patrol motorcyclist. Relations between the LAPD and CHP have been strained since a Highway Patrol officer testified against the LAPD in the Rodney King trial.

THE PEOPLE of the Czech Republic are finding the cost of freedom of speech under capitalism.

The Czech Republic's new commercial TV station has installed a video cabin in a department store in central Prague where viewers can tell the camera what's on their minds. The programme-makers then edit the tapes and the results are shown in a programme called Vox Populi.

The catch? Three minutes in front of the camera cost 10 crowns, or about £450.

FIND THE conversation running out early in the evening? Do you need a new game to bring spice and excitement to your life?

Now we can answer your dreams with our "Back to Basics"™ game (not suitable for those under the age of 16 if straight, 21 if gay).

The game is simple. Each player in turn chooses a Tory sex scandal, and, after the requisite number of drinks, mimes it for the rest of the players to guess.

To help you, below is a list of the major sex scandals to hit the Conservatives since the last election.

1. David Mellor's affair with Antonia de Sancha (don't forget the toe job and the Chelsea football strip);
2. Timothy Yeo, weighing in with not one but two illegitimate children;
3. Steven Norris, reportedly having five mistresses (which accounts for London's transport problems - Norris has ministerial responsibility for them, but clearly not enough time to sort them out);
4. Lord Caithness, another transport minister, who quit after his wife shot herself in response to his philandering;
5. Backbencher David Ashby, who shared a hotel bed with another man but clean forgot to have sex (a couple of drinks less next time, David?);
6. Backbencher Garry Waller, who fathered a child by his Commons secretary;
7. The death of Stephen Milligan, a man who displayed his depravity by becoming a Conservative MP after union-

GRAFFITI

VIVELA REVOLUCION

By Cyclops

bashing as industrial correspondent of the "Economist" and then being a consort of Andrew Neil at the "Sunday Times";

8. Hartley Booth, who has caused a scandal among Conservative MPs by claiming to have failed to seduce his researcher and sending her poems.

Special rules: (1) Bonus points can be claimed at any point in the game by opening a copy of Alan Clark's memoirs and acting out his sexual fantasy on that page.

For example, flipping the book open at page 8 you will find: "I'm madly in love with Frances Holland. I suspect she's not as thin and gawky as she seems. Her hair is always lovely and shiny. Perhaps I can distract her in one of those big janitor's cupboards off the Lower Guildhall".

Frances Holland was the 22-year-old Labour candidate standing against Clark in the 1983 General Election. Clark had clearly not let the death of his father the previous day upset him.

(2) If the game begins to get a little dull, you may choose to play the "Sun rule". This means that if the truth is not interesting enough, you can make things up.

Work is currently under way on an edition of this game including political and financial scandals, available soon in four handsomely bound (if somewhat hefty) volumes.

Bryan Gould must think he is hard done by in comparison with John Cahill.

Cahill got a £3.2 million pay-off when he quit last week as chair of British Aerospace after just two years in the job, during which he spent most of his time not in the BAe offices but at his home in Florida.

Bryan Gould, after announcing his resignation as a Labour MP, is only collecting his MP's pay and expenses for the three-month parliamentary recess by postponing his formal departure to September.

But Labour Party leaders, understandably, want a by-election sooner, to coincide with the Eastleigh by-election. Will Bryan's conscience win, or will he sit it out for the cash?

Watch this space, but don't hold your breath.

When prurience is preferable

PRESS GANG

THE GUARDIAN TODAY
THE INDEPENDENT
THE SUNDAY PRESS
THE WORLD

By Jim Denham

sent bill. Fleet Street was already humming with rumours of a Tory "gay ring", Cabinet ministers dressing up

"Purient, distasteful as it was, the tabloid reaction to Milligan's death was marginally healthier than that of the 'quality' press and the BBC."

as French maids and all manner of other naughty goings-on in high places. The Sunday prior to Milligan's death *The People* had published a story involving footballer Justin Fashanu and two unnamed cabinet ministers. Such is the terror now stalking the government benches that, according to the gay former Tory MP and Times columnist Matthew

Parris, at least one unmarried Tory has been told to find a girlfriend and be seen with her pronto: "there wouldn't have been anything explicit, first a piece of friendly advice that if he was seen with a girlfriend it would help."

Prurient, inaccurate and generally distasteful as it was, the tabloid reaction to Milligan's death was marginally healthier than that of the "quality" press and the BBC, who treated the whole business as though it were the Story of the Giant Rat of Sumatra ("a tale", as Arthur Conan Doyle told his readers, "for which the world is not ready"). Anyone who relied on the BBC for their information on Monday night and Tuesday, must have wondered what on earth was going on: news readers referred coyly to "mysterious circumstances" and a "partially clothed body"; *Newsnight* pointedly didn't show the next morning's tabloid front pages. It turns out that Director General John Birt — anxious as ever to appease the government — issued strict guidelines cen-

soring all references to the details of Milligan's death. The "quality" papers were almost as coy, making much use of the word "bizarre" in their initial coverage. It was plain that the BBC and the non-tabloid press would have much preferred to have drawn a veil over the sordid details. And it was fairly obvious why: Milligan was their chum, an ex-BBC man who'd also worked for the *Economist* and *The Sunday Times*. Julie Kirkbride of *The Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil had known him since they were both members of the Federation of Conservative Students in the 1960s. Neil summed up the instincts of the "quality" media when he wrote "I had hoped this weekend to bring some alternative (to his friends, more credible) explanation for his death to the one given by the police. The fact that I cannot leaves me feeling, somehow, that I have failed Stephen".

So it is thanks to the "prurient", "sensationalist" tabloids that the truth has emerged. Sexual practices never discussed — or even acknowledged — in the media are now out in the open. If Mr. Milligan's particular predilection is as widespread as we are now being assured it is, then public discussion of it is long overdue. The tabloids in their usual crass and cruel way, have done us all a service.

Adding insult to injury



WOMEN'S EYE

By Jean Lane

SAMMY Davis is 42 years old. He is from Ghana. He and his wife have lived in England for twenty years, and their three children, aged 15, 13 and 3, were born here. He is under threat of deportation and a campaign has just been launched to prevent this. His expulsion is, in fact, a thinly disguised attempt to cover up a terrible case of injustice.

In 1986 Mr Davis was convicted of raping a Swedish student in a mini cab office in North London. He was convicted on evidence gathered by the now notoriously suspect Stoke Newington police.

This evidence consists of an identification made by the victim in court, not in a parade. Mr Davis was the only black person the victim

was asked to consider. Her original description was of a clean-shaven man with a large belly and hands. Mr Davis was slim and had a moustache.

The rest of the so-called evidence was no better. The victim failed to identify the correct mini cab office, naming the one in which Mr Davis worked under pressure from the police. The office had no lock and key which could have been used to lock the victim in as was claimed. The woman who worked in the office with Mr Davis had left the room for only a few minutes to make a cup of tea and had heard nothing. Forensic tests on samples from both Mr Davis's body and from the office failed to turn up any link to the crime.

Mr Davis did four years in prison on the basis of this evidence, being released in 1990. Since then he has fought to clear his name. Despite the obvious inconsistencies in the police case against him, the Home Office refused to reopen his case. And now they plan to add

insult to injury by deporting him as an illegal immigrant.

His case is so strong that he is being supported by Women Against Rape, a feminist group which campaigns against violence against women, and Black Women's Rape Action Project (BWRAP). They say: "Sammy and his family are now being punished a second time for something he did not do. Women's justifiable anger against rape must not be used as a pretext for imprisoning innocent men and curtailing civil liberties. Convicting the wrong man does not protect women or serve justice: many rapists are never caught and the racist stereotype of black men as rapists is used by police as a pretext for harassment and other illegalities against black communities. Wrongful convictions for rape have less to do with vindictive or untruthful women than with failings in the legal system in which the protection of neither defendants nor victims seems to be the central concern."

It is ironic that, in the UN's Year of the Family and during the government's Back to Basics campaign of Family Values, a family is being broken up purely at the whim of the Home Office. Mr Davis's son, Martin, aged 13, says: "You [the Home Office] have done a lot of damage already. Please don't do any more damage by sending my father to Ghana. You will be breaking up my family, messing up my brother's and my education, destroying our health and possibly the rest of my family. Do you really want this on your conscience, considering my father has done nothing wrong?"

Send messages of support for Mr Davis, complaining about his deportation to the Home Office, and please send copies to WARIBWRAP 71 Tonbridge Street, London WC1H 9DZ. Also, there is a vigil against the deportation on 23 Feb, 11am to 1pm, outside the Home Office: Isis House, 67-69 Sussex Street, London SE1. Nearest Tubes: Borough and Blackfriars.

SWP helps the Labour right to disrupt the student anti-Tory fight

The build up to the national student demonstration on 23 February has been a test for the politics of the student movement and of left-wing organisations active in the student movement.

Jill Mountford, Alliance for Workers' Liberty student organiser, compares the record of Labour Students and Socialist Worker.

WHEN grant cuts were announced in the Budget, thousands of students took local action. Left student unionists threw themselves into this action; right wing or a-political student union leaders were pushed into action by the anger of ordinary students.

Nationally, the Labour Student leaders were more unresponsive to the wave of anger sweeping through the ranks of students. They were determined not to let it interfere with their pathetic efforts at romancing the Tories. National Union of Students (NUS) President Lorna Fitzsimons cancelled a National Executive at the end of last year to avoid a debate on a proposal that NUS should call a national demonstration.

NUS did absolutely nothing to organise and channel student anger. In the colleges, even loyal right-wing Labour Student faction members were furious at the NUS leaders' complete failure to lead.

Left Unity supporters on the National Executive of NUS and in the colleges pulled together an alliance of NUS Areas, Student Unions and activists to fill the vacuum left by the NUS leadership. They started to build for a national demonstration on 23 February.

The idea was to build the broadest unity possible in the student movement around this demonstration. This was an idea to unite the whole left, you would think. You would be wrong! The leadership of the Socialist Workers' Student Society had different ideas.

In student affairs the SWP plays the role of tweedle-dum to the Labour right's tweedle-dee. The

rhetoric varies; nevertheless, they work in tandem. The right says do nothing. The SWP sect says: organise a stunt. Both act against building the broad campaign we need.

As soon as the SWP saw that 23 February was going to be a massive demonstration, they jumped in. They produced thousands of SWP posters and publicity announcing it as a 'SOCIALIST WORKER' demo! They made no mention of any unions or Areas supporting the demonstration.

Inevitably, this "sectarian stunt" approach worked to damp down support for the demonstration. Some student union leaders initially refused to support what they thought was an SWP demo.

Sectarian disruption did not stop there. In a ridiculous stunt, the SWP now declared that the

demonstration was a "March on Parliament". Raving, they even claimed — in the brochure for their recent student school — that the demonstration could "bring down the Government"!

This is ridiculous. It is also unserious! Like

"The SWP has claimed that the demonstration could 'bring down the Government.' This is ridiculous and unserious."

so much of the "ultra-left" sloganising Socialist Worker goes in for, this is not for "operational use" but for image-building.

To announce in *Socialist Worker* that you intend to march on Parliament, when a law bans any march within a mile of the House of Commons while it is sitting, is simply to warn the police. If they were serious, they would not do that. A serious intention to "march" on parliament would require that the left work in strict secrecy, not that the police be given advance warning and three weeks to prepare.

But it is utter nonsense! You'd need an army to "March on Parliament". The existing army would certainly be used to stop a serious attempt.

Given the likely size and composition of the demo the only possible result of an attempt to march on parliament will be that the demonstration will be violently smashed up by the police. That could very well snuff out the campaigns against cuts in



French students march in Paris. We need mass action like this, not diversionary stunts

grants.

Certainly in today's political climate it may greatly slow down the development of the mass student movement we need.

Were there not so much evidence that the leaders of the SWP are a bunch of irresponsible idiots, this would brand them as provocateurs working for the Tories or the right wing Labour leaders of the NUS! By claiming that the 23rd is a march on Parliament and an SWP demo, SWSS has put more people off committing themselves to the march than Lorna Fitzsimons and her friends have! Events have massively discredited Fitzsimons: SWSS appears to be 'left', and serious about fighting the Tories.

The NUS national executive have condemned the demo on 23 February. Using the SWP's call for a march on parliament to discredit the demo, they try to stop

student unions supporting it, saying that they are worried about the safety of students who attend. Instead they say they want a demo during the Easter vacation.

Of course, many Labour Students and many SWSS members have built the demo. They want action against the Tories. But the Labour Student leaders don't want any action that may disrupt their careers, and the SWSS leaders care above all else about "building the SWP". A stunt fight with the police might destroy the demo but so what, if they can recruit a few dozen students to the SWP?

It may seem unfair to compare the sleepy slugs who lead NUS with the SWSS leaders, but it isn't. For years, the SWSS leaders have worked hand in glove with Labour Student leaders.

SWSS never seriously challenge the Labour Student leadership

of NUS. They vote for Labour Students against Left Unity in NUS.

Like the bird that picks bits of food out of the teeth of a hippopotamus, SWSS work in harness with the Labour right wing in NUS. While Labour's right keep control of NUS, SWSS can claim that the choice is Fitzsimons-Smith-Labour or the rev-rev-revolutionary SWP. Nothing else matters!

Of course, both hate the serious fighting left in NUS, Left Unity, which gets on with organising national action.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) students take a leading role in Left Unity. We are serious about getting the NUS up off its knees. We want neither right-wing Labour passivity nor pseudo-left stunts, but mass student action against the Tories. Join our ranks!

Better than going down the pub

MARKET Research, as we all know, is an invaluable guide to action for the labour movement. Look at the last general election, where Labour's triumph was almost entirely determined by market research.

Recently John Monks, the thrusting new TUC general secretary, commissioned some market research on the question of "attitudes towards the public sector". Naturally he went to Debbie Mattinson, ex of Goul-Mattinson Associates, better known as the "Shadow Communications Agency" — the very people who masterminded the 1992 election campaign!

Debbie's brief was to "look at how workers in the private sector see the 'deal' that workers in the public sector get, and where their sympathies might lie" and to "use this information to help develop a strategy for communications for the Public Sector Campaign". Four group discussions were set up, involving two groups of men and two of women; two groups in the South East and two in Scotland; two groups amongst "C1 / C2 respondents" and two amongst "DE". All very scientific, as you can see.

The results of this in-depth research were astonishing. For instance, most respondents objected to politicians' pay rises and were resentful of highly-paid judges and top civil servants. There was "general criticism" of bureaucracy.

These amazing findings were summarised thus:

1. Public Sector Services that are most valued are emergency services, health and education.
2. Other services are at best taken for granted and at worst felt to be of little value.
3. Most respondents, however, would be unlikely to be prepared to pay more taxes for these services.
4. These private sector workers feel very vulnerable in terms of their own financial position, and in particular job security and other aspects of pay and conditions.
5. On the whole, they feel that public sector workers get a better deal. There are some misconceptions about this.
6. Whilst sympathy exists for nurses and emergency services, respondents do not feel motivated to act in any way themselves.
7. The role of the Unions has been diminished, they are no longer felt to have real 'clout'.
8. The idea of a march or rally in this context will do little to persuade these respondents."

DON'T KNOW how much the TUC paid for this brilliant research but it was clearly worth every penny. Alternatively, they could have paid me £5 to go down the pub and listen to exactly the same opinions being expressed. But that, of course, wouldn't be nearly so "scientific".

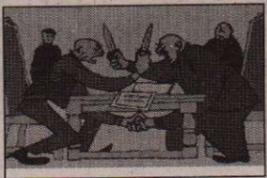
The real meat of Debbie's findings, however, concerned the role of the unions in any public sector campaign:

"It is thought that they (the respondents) might now do something to help nurses, etc. (though striking would lose the sympathy that exists) but respondents find it hard to suggest what they might do....."

"Industrial action in the sense of striking etc..... is unpopular."

It is of course, a coincidence that these findings have emerged first as pressure is mounting (from the leaderships of the NUCPS, CPSA and the IRSF) for the TUC to call a day of action in defence of the public sector in April. Clearly, days of action are not where it's at. A "hearts and minds" crusade like the brilliant "Jobs and Recovery campaign" that did so much to stop the pit closures is what is needed. John Monks and Debbie Mattinson are to be congratulated on an outstanding piece of research. "Rubbish in, rubbish out".

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Albert Bowns 193

A fighter for the working class

ALBERT Bowns, miner, NUM activist, and fighter for the working class died last week.

Albert will be known to people who were reading this paper during the great miners' strike of 1984-5.

He often contributed to our pages, voicing clearly and sharply the aspiration of the 120,000 strong army of striking miners who for twelve long months dared to fight the Coal Board, the Tories and those capitalist hired thugs, the police.

Albert was not just the voice of his brothers and

sisters in struggle. He was also one of the most politically advanced of the rank and file leaders who held the strike together. He did more than understand that the courts were unjust and that the police were violent scab-herders: Albert Bowns did what he could to organise miners to fight back. He spent time in jail for it.

Albert was prepared to act on Karl Marx's old dictum: "between equal rights, force decides."

He came closer than any other leading NUM activist to realising the need for collective and disciplined pick-

et line defence squads.

But he will be remembered as a warm and gentle man. It was his deep humanity that gave him his iron will to resist the brutalities of capitalism.

Below we reprint some extracts from his contributions to our paper.

They reflect something of the man and the struggle he played such a large part in. We hope they convey some idea of Albert Bowns to readers who never had the good fortune to know him.

A full obituary will appear next week.

The miners were

AS 1985 began, scabbing started to spread in the South Yorkshire coal field, which until then had held out as the main active centre of the strike.

At first the scabs were isolated, weak individuals and the hard core of the union stayed solid.

But as the pressure from the Tories, the Coal Board and their hiring media continued, some formerly active strikers began to break.

The first extract from Socialist Organiser is an appeal from Albert Bowns, as Kiveton Park NUM branch delegate, to Reg Moss, an ex-Militant striker who broke under the pressure, scabbed and then sold his "story" to the *Daily Express*.

It stands as a clear explanation of why the miners dared to fight and why for workers there can be no such thing as "normality" in a world dominated by the capitalist's lust for profits.

"**T**HE miners' strike is in its 11th month.

Eleven months of great hardship for striking miners and their families.

Eleven months during which striking miners have stood up to everything Thatcher and

MacGregor have thrown at us.

Eleven months of police violence, press lies, organised scab-herding.

Eleven months during which the striking miners and their families have shown what they are made of and refused to let the Tories and their imported pit butcher MacGregor ride rough shod over us.

It's been a hard fight and it is harder now than ever. But the only alternative is surrender. We were right to fight and right to continue to fight.

I believe, Reg, that striking miners and our families have a right to be proud of what we have done over the eleven long and bitter months we have been fighting for our jobs, for our children and for our communities.

That fight is not over yet. We are still fighting to win. But you have changed sides.

This letter would not have been necessary if you had just deserted the strike, for whatever reason. But you have used a newspaper whose vitriolic attacks on the striking miners and the working class movement are well known.

When I first read this article I wondered if you had realised the

consequences. Did you think of your colleagues on strike? Did you think of your friends in London, especially in Stepney and Tower Hamlets? Friends who fed you and sheltered you on your four visits there.

"What is normal about running to accept every crumb which the management might, and I say might, condescend to offer us?"

I find it hard to believe that you didn't realise how it would hurt all these people.

The article implies that you went on strike just for your union. I thought that you went on strike, as we all did, for your job, your pit and your community!

You wrote: 'I went to jail for

9-1994

for the class



Albert Bowns on a protest march during the 1984-85 miners' strike

right to fight

Scargill but enough is enough. Having been arrested with you on the three occasions you speak about and having spent two weeks in Lincoln Prison with you, and having been to London on fundraising mission, speaking to various support groups with you, I have lost count of the number of times I have heard you state that our fight is for pits and communities and jobs.

If you did believe this at the time, although this article implies otherwise, then that is the reason you went to jail, not for "Scargill"!

You say, 'maybe it is a political strike'. Of course it is! You don't know the meaning of the word. You've never been a supporter of Arthur Scargill. You can't see that everything we are involved in is political!

We are fighting against pit closures which are a political decision of the Tory government.

45,000 Yorkshire miners on strike don't believe their union is broken. 120,000 miners nationally don't believe their union is broken. Last, but not least, Kiveton Park's four branch officials and six committee men, and the rest of the 300 men still on strike, don't

believe the union is broken, locally or nationally.

You state that you want to put your family first and get back to your normal life. Surely this is everyone's wish. But what normality can there be if the union's bargaining power is lost by local trade union leaders capitulating?

What is normal about having to accept mass redundancies?

What is normal about having to accept pit closures on "economic" grounds (possibly Kiveton Park)?

What is normal about craftsmen being de-skilled (a point you have made continually during the strike)?

What is normal about running to accept every crumb which the management might, and I say might, condescend to offer us?

That is the 'normality' which you will have to return to if the rest of us follow your example.

The Kiveton Park NUM was determined to fight against this kind of 'normality' and will continue to do so until the final outcome.

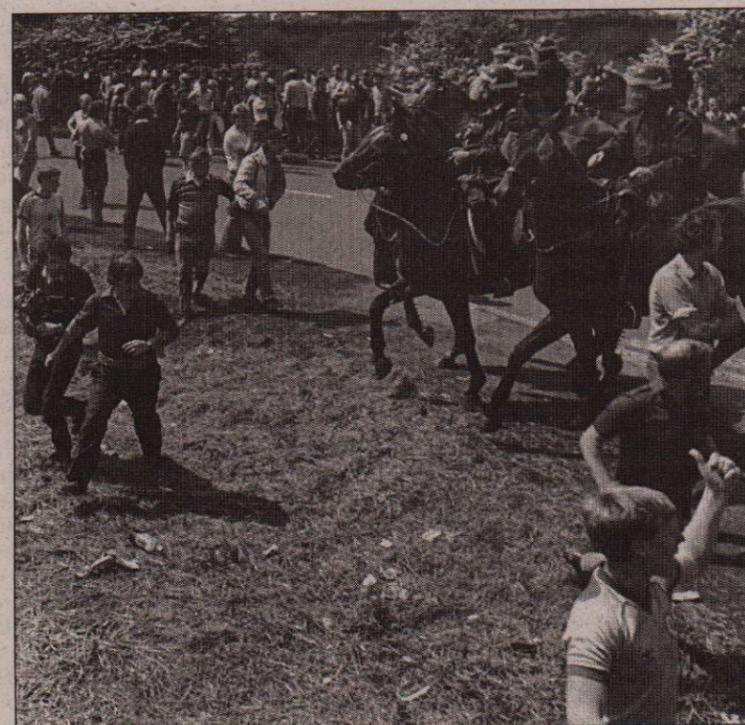
We will continue to fight for working miners such as yourself as well as striking miners.



Pickets try to break through police lines outside Orgreave coke works, near Sheffield

The need for national mass pickets

ALBERT wanted to defeat the police on the picket lines. He knew that the miners had to do that if they were to win.



Orgreave: police on horses and with batons and riot gear disperses miners with shirts, jeans, and bare hands

"I WAS HOPING for more from the national delegate meeting (November 1984) than rallies. I was hoping for something more concrete in terms of stepping up action on the picket lines.

I was hoping for, perhaps a national mass picket on particular collieries or particular areas. We are in a do-or-die situation. As far as I know we've never yet stopped a scab going in to work.

Now, we're just sticking to our own collieries, and it's making us

weaker. If you can't stop the scabs at your own pit with the numbers you can assemble, you might as well all go to another pit en masse and stop some scabs going in."

Kinnock sided with Thatcher

ALBERT WAS, of course, a Labour supporter. In the course of the strike he learned to loathe the Labour leaders.

"AS FOR THE Labour Party leadership, particularly Neil Kinnock, many of our lads, who weren't even very political prior to this strike, are disgusted with Kinnock's position.

Some of them are even saying they won't vote for the Labour Party while he's leader, but that's just anger.

We have to point out that Kinnock isn't the Labour Party and that just as he has been elected, he can be unelected.

There's been some incredulity that here we have the son of a miner from a mining community in Wales who has sided with Margaret Thatcher.

He's forming his opinion from the media, not from the rank and file."

Jim Higgins, former National Secretary of International Socialists (Socialist Workers Party):

"Why we failed the rank and file"

The British working class desperately needs an organised national movement of the rank and file within the existing trade unions.

So we have long argued in the pages of this paper, and of its predecessors, *Workers' Action* and *Workers' Fight*. Such a movement was built, and eventually destroyed, by the Communist Party in the 1920s. Other attempts have been made to build a rank and file movement since. One such attempt, and an important one, was made in the mid-70s by the SWP (then called IS). We print here an account of that experience written by Jim Higgins, a leader of IS at that time.

Higgins, then a Post Office engineering worker, had been a decade in the CP when the Russian suppression of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 forced him, like thousands of others, to rethink his politics. He passed through the Healy organisation on his way to IS. He was National Secretary of that organisation for perhaps 18 months in 1972-73. He was expelled, together with a large part of the IS group's central cadre, late in 1975. Most of the working class militants the group had recruited since 1968 also left the organisation at that time.

Jim Higgins' account of this important episode in British working class history does not necessarily tally with the one we would give. For our account, see the article by Jim Denham, who parted company with IS about the same time Jim Higgins did, in *SO* nos. 578 and 582. Nor do we share his hope that the SWP might yet play a positive role in building a rank and file movement: opportunist lurches in that direction are possible, but now, as in the '70s, anything the SWP does in this field will be subordinate to narrow and short term sect-building calculations.

Higgins' article is reproduced from *Workers' Republic*, the journal of the "Republican Marxist Group", who consider themselves an external faction of the SWP. A sub to *Workers' Republic* costs £5 a year from RMB, PO Box 3140, London E17 5LS.

AMONG Trotsky's papers discovered after his assassination was a draft of an article that was later published as "The class, the party and the leadership." In this small pamphlet, Trotsky discussed the crucial role that Lenin played in the immediate events leading up to the Russian revolution.

Put briefly, the thesis is as follows: over the years, Lenin had built a unique authority among the party rank and file that oriented them firmly on the working class.

The mutual authority and trust engendered over these long years of struggle, ensured that when the crucial testing time came, despite the opposition of the majority of the Bolshevik leadership, Lenin was able to reorientate the cadre on the question of Soviet power. In their turn rank and file Bolsheviks, through their hard won positions in the factories and workshops, exercised a leadership that eventually led to the triumph of October 1917.

This particular lesson of 1917 has retained its relevance up to the present. The revolutionary party will succeed only if it has built strong organic links with organised workers. The question is, how is it to be done? It is not done by socialist propaganda alone; even the most immaculately conceived newspaper, although it may build a group, will not build a workers' party. Episodic forays into existing industrial disputes may gain the odd member but the relationship of party and class remains as distant as ever. Rallies, demos, campaigns and stunts have their place, but alone or in combination they will not build the party into an organisation that will make the revolution.

In Britain the road to the working class is through a rank and file movement. The tradition of rank and file organisation dates back before the first world war. From the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement (SSWCM) came much of the leadership and cadre of the Communist Party in the 1920s. This tradition gave the infant Communist Party, despite its small numbers, a much larger periphery of militants, many of whom held key positions on the job and in the unions.

It was this relationship which enabled the CP to form the Minority Movement and it was the prestige of its association with the Russian Revolution that enabled the CPGB to exercise its political authority on the Minority Movement. If that authority was subsequently betrayed by the machinations of the Comintern, RILU and the CPGB, that does not gainsay the fact that the Minority Movement was not, at the beginning, an empty shell and, in its heyday, it had a possibility of becoming a decisive factor in the difficult struggles of the 1920s and in the growth of the Communist Party as a revolutionary workers' party.

The lessons of the Minority Movement were not entirely lost in the Trotskyist movement. In 1958 Gerry Healy's group mounted a successful Rank and File Conference on an advanced programme of demands. This promising beginning came to a nicely rounded zero, foundering on the Healy group's lack of industrial cadre,

political ineptitude and impatience with any policy that did not promise the revolution next Thursday at the latest.

That little exercise in futility also provided some lessons. Not least was that it is not impossible to mount a quite impressive conference of genuine militants. The real trick is to carry on the work in a continuing organisation led by engaged workers and serviced with the necessary printed material and organisational back up.

In 1970, the International Socialists began to re-examine the experiences of rank and file organisation. IS concluded that building the party in Britain could be accomplished by the creation of a rank and file movement, not as an IS front but as an independent force operating on the shop floor and through the union structure. Through mitigating the militants' isolation in the individual factory or union it would transfer experience from all over the country and powerfully reinforce the solidarity which is the precondition of success in industrial struggles.

At the same time, the overall political and economic climate was such that incomes policy and anti-trade union legislation were designed to solve the capitalists' problems at the expense of organised workers, most importantly, on the shop floor. In the long term, although militant struggle could partially redress the balance and add to working class confidence and cohesion there was no solution within the confines of capitalism. The rank and file movement would provide the bridge for workers to make the final steps to the revolutionary party.

That was a general outline of the theory and one that was generally accepted within IS. Nevertheless, it was also appreciated that there was one vital ingredient missing from the scenario: a sufficiently large and experienced IS cadre of militants. The main task then was to develop a turn to the class that could produce sufficient base to act as the springboard to a rank and file movement. The assumption was that this would be a difficult and long term perspective but was one that could bring IS real influence together with the incalculable advantage of being involved in the day to day problems of workers and their struggles both at work and in the unions.

The unevenness of the class struggle meant that at any one time it was possible to be talking to the convenor of an engineering combine about the tactics of the wage claim affecting thousands, while a few miles away one might be discussing with one not very enthusiastic worker how to get a one page duplicated bulletin into his/her workplace urging people to join the union. That unevenness was recognised, as



IS/SWP leader Tony Cliff

also was the need to make strenuous efforts to service the struggle at whatever level we might encounter. It was clear that no one was going to get rich quick by this strategy, but the eventual reward was infinitely greater than the simple addition of membership campaigns, although these of course have their place.

By 1973, IS was producing 16 national rank and file papers ranging from "Car-worker" and "Collier" to "Rank and File Teacher" and "NALGO Action News". The total print run for these papers was 70,000. Later in the same year the group had 18 trade union and industrial fractions covering about 2,000 members; of these about 1,200 were white collar (teachers, draughtsmen/women etc.) and 800 manual workers. In addition there were another 200 manual workers not organised in a fraction. Now that, in all conscience, is a modest cadre but it is bigger, much bigger than anything the Trotskyist movement in Britain has ever had before or since.

In a climate where the Heath government's policies were attracting more and more opprobrium, with a considerable increase in the strikes and working class militancy, the need for a rank and file movement became more and more evident with every day that passed. Not only that, the Communist Party possessed its own pale shadow of such a movement in the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU). A torpid body, only episodically active, its efforts were largely concentrated on pressuring trade union leaders and organising support for the CP's candidates in union elections. Even so, it stood in the way of the genuine article and for want of anything better, represented a blind alley for unsuspecting militants. The IS Executive Committee, was unanimous that now was the time to prepare for a rank and file conference. At this point Tony Cliff suffered one of his Pauline conversions on the road to Damascus.

After a discussion with John Charlton and Roger Rosewell (at the time Liverpool organiser and most recently speechwriter for Mrs Thatcher), Cliff was convinced that the returns, from what would be a lengthy and expensive enterprise, were insufficient. What was needed was a Rally and a "Buyers into Sellers" campaign. Instead of geometric growth that consis-

OUR HISTORY



Saltley Gates: a high point of the industrial struggles of the early 1970s from which a real rank and file movement could have been built

tent long term work can bring, Cliff opted for the short term simple arithmetic progression that is possible for anyone with the requisite number of fingers and toes and small ambitions.

At the EC, Cliff insisted either that he got his rally or he would take three months leave of absence and write his book on Lenin. For right or wrong, those of us who knew Cliff realised that his three months' leave would be entirely devoted to overturning the decision. Fearing that his phone bill would beggar the organisation, we suggested a compromise: first a rally and then the rank and file conference. The opposing views would be proved or disproved in life, we naively thought.

In the event the rally held at Bellevues Manchester was a success. The SWP Buyers into Sellers campaign, which it was promised would double and treble circulation, was an unmitigated disaster which died unmarked even by the merest blip in the circulation graph. Unfazed by this failure, Cliff found the real culprit in Socialist Worker itself. Utilising some more carefully selected quotes from Lenin and Trotsky and point to the fact that too few workers wrote for the paper, he demanded a drastic reorientation; the journalists would in future take on the role of the sub-editors of the workers' copy.

Whether or not this was the way forward for the paper is an open question; what is beyond doubt, however, is that the number of worker articles did not materialise. What is worth remarking at this point is that Cliff still maintained the view that the emphasis of the organisation was on the advanced workers on the shop floor and the unions. This was not to last for long.

IN APRIL 1974, the Rank and File Conference was held. Some 600 trade unionists applied for credentials and it is a measure of the effectiveness of rank and file papers that, for example out of 32 TGWU branches participating eight of them were from London bus garages where "Platform" circulated. "Hospital Worker" encouraged nine NUPE, two TGWU and one COHSE branches to send delegates. "Carworker" was influential in getting 21 AUEW and TGWU branches in the motor industry, together with 27 shop steward committees. In all, more than 300 trade union bodies applied for credentials, including 239 trade union branches, 40 combine and shop stewards committees, 19 trades councils, together with a few strike committees and occupation groups.

If not comprehensive, this was a very impressive beginning. If a majority of the contributors from the floor were IS mem-

bers, it was nevertheless a matter of some consequence that they were experienced trade unionists with some credibility in their localities. Furthermore, there was a substantial, minority of speakers who were not IS members, who had been attracted by the rank and file papers, the programme of the conference and prospects of a continuing movement. Outstanding among these was George Anderson, chairman of the joint shop stewards committee at Coventry Radiators and Joe McGough, Convenor at Dunlops Speke and Chairman of the Dunlop National Combine Committee. As I say, an impressive beginning and one that with hard, consistent work could have conferred immeasurable benefit. It was not to be.

By 1973-74 approaching half of the group's members were manual workers, quite a few of whom had years of experience and some standing in industrial and trade union struggles. If the penetration was patchy that was a measure of our low starting point and also, in the sense that in several unions IS was setting the left agenda, a vindication of the essential correctness of the strategy. Just as the years of work were taking on organisational form, in the first conference of the Rank and File Movement, Cliff moved decisively to defer indefinitely the conference in favour of a membership rally and a Buyers into Sellers campaign.

What is clear is that Cliff and a few of his circle had convinced themselves, despite paying lip service to building a rank and file movement, that the group was not up to the job. This is of course a perfectly respectable point of view and one that might more fruitfully been discussed a great deal earlier, if only because to build a movement requires a dedicated and united effort from the whole organisation.

Unfortunately, the method used, employing Cliff's now patented brand of dialectics, was to attack the theoretical base of which idea of rank and file movement rested: the primacy of advanced workers to a revolutionary socialist analysis. In the May 1974 Internal Bulletin Cliff wrote... "our audience is largely made up of young workers with very little political tradition and quite often with very little trade union experience. Only in these terms can our

policies of the last year be justified."

In the same month at the National Committee, Cliff went further claiming that the "changing locus of reformism" meant that the workers had been depoliticised and that many shop stewards were bent. The young traditionless workers should be the focus of the organisation, who we would be educating and directing to fight for shop stewardship.

This farrago of nonsense was not only dishonest, it also flew in the face of what had been written in the 1973 conference documents, with Cliff's enthusiastic support: "a revolutionary organisation with a few hundred militants in each of the major industries could have produced a different conclusion in these struggles, that would have tipped the balance of defeat towards victory... we have to be prepared to offer them programmes of action with which they can agree, but which leads them into

opposition to the vacillation of the left trade union leadership and its backers in the CP... In the present situation the revolutionary organisation can draw a few thousand workers..."

Nothing here about the changing locus of reformism. In their drastic redefining of the IS focus, Cliff's faction were not only throwing overboard 20 years of theory and preparation, but also the entire rationale behind a rank and

file movement that could build in a favourable climate. Lack of nerve led to political caprice and spelt the end of the Rank and File movement.

The Rank and File Organising Committee had only one non-IS member, Joe McGough, who left having decided it was a hollow IS front. The IS Industrial Department, staffed by graduates, with only passing experience of industry, came to substitute for the Organising Committee, which seldom met and when it did was poorly attended. The delegates to the conference were not circulated and were lost. A paper organisation crumbled into dust.

IS was back in the safe supportable world of simple arithmetic: a membership campaign here, a Right to Work march there, allied to some opportunist interventions in strikes. After three years of this, having conceded its inability to build a rank and file movement, the IS announced itself as the SWP, the revolutionary party. As Ernest Erber said many years ago: "There

is something rather risible in the idea of the small mass revolutionary party."

If comrades ask, how one individual with his satraps could reverse a central tenet of the IS politics and tradition? they are making a serious point that bears directly on the nature of our movement. At least part of the answer lies in the physical and political climate in which the movement developed. Crushed between Stalinism and Social Democracy, small and persecuted, it had to rely on a few gifted individuals to just exist. In the 1930s Trotsky was the fountainhead of theory and policy and the final arbiter on all political differences in the movement.

From the 1940s onwards, in Britain, Gerry Healy, Ted Grant and Tony Cliff were the most considerable figures in their different brands of British Trotskyism. As I have said elsewhere, it is not an accident that Healy's group was always characterised by a certain thuggishness, Grant's by being outstandingly boring and Cliff's by capriciousness and short termism. I hasten to add that of the three Cliff was the most impressive and, on a personal level, in many ways a generous and attractive human being. But his faults, which may have been necessary to build a group from 30 to 500, become the reverse then they are deployed in an organisation with some prospect of influence in the mass workers movement. A gross inability to work in a collective unless he has won his way, makes a mockery of his dedication to democratic centralism. Even more serious is his total disregard for constitutional forms that prove inconvenient to his immediate preoccupations.

Anyone brought up in the working-class movement will know that militants are particularly outraged by arbitrary and undemocratic behaviour, in the workplace or the unions. This trait, as one might expect, is particularly pronounced among socialist militants. Cliff's cavalier attitude to the norms of working-class democracy means that he will never fully understand British workers and that the SWP will be denied the mass following he so ardently desires. It is salutary to compare the IS Conference industrial perspectives document of 1973 to that of the SWP for the 1993 conference. Even allowing for the changed circumstances of today (changes that IS were unable to change or modify by Cliff's self-denying ordinance) 1973 spoke from limited but real influence with realistic hope for the future, 1993 is an example of sheer scraped-out emptiness whose verbiage ill conceals the virtually complete lack of influence and activity, finishing with the rallying cry "Sell more Socialist Workers". Truly the mountains are in labour and have given birth to a mouse.

I started this article with Trotsky's description of the key role that Lenin played in the events of 1917. What if we were to change that series, of class, party and leadership, just a little. Let us suppose that Lenin's unique prestige had been utilised to convince the cadre not to submerge themselves in the mass movement, but to recruit them in ones and twos, is it not possible that October 1917 would have been permanently postponed? Fortunately, Lenin was not Cliff, with a better prose style, nor was 1974 in any way as significant as 1917, but it was a self-inflicted wound, both unnecessary and debilitating.

If this article is seen as an attack on Cliff, that is certainly what it is, but it is also a critique of the movement that produced him. The act of joining a revolutionary movement does not mean that we abdicate all responsibility for thought to gurus, no matter how dedicated and well meaning. We should not be attempting to recreate the history of Bolshevism but build a movement in Britain based on the workers as they are, not how we would like them to be.

The transition from the here and now to revolutionary consciousness is active intervention in real struggles of both Marxists and workers. In the process, both elements learn something and the struggle is more directed, more intense and more political. I can think of no more effective way of making that transition than through the creation of a rank and file movement. Even now, the only organisation that can seriously prepare such a movement is the SWP. To reverse a well known phrase of Karl Marx, the first time was farce, another failure would be tragedy.

The tragedy of the Mexican Revolution

By Pablo Velasco

THE Mexican revolution, one of the great social struggles of the twentieth century, continues to exert an influence both on modern Mexico and throughout Latin America, where revolutionaries continue to utilise its lessons (or misapprehensions) to justify their strategies. And at its apex, the revolution contains a tragedy which is itself a lesson for modern socialists.

The background — the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz

THE DICTATORSHIP of Porfirio Diaz, from 1876 to 1910, saw the development of Mexico into a capitalist country whose industry was predominately controlled by foreign investors and whose agriculture was predominantly owned by Mexican landlords. Both mining and oil were in foreign, especially US, hands while the 800 or so haciendados (landlords) owned and controlled over 80% of villages. They had eliminated peasant communal ownership (ejidos) and the free towns.

In a total population of just over 15 million, a little over 3 million were jornaleros (day labourers) or peones (farm hands). Together with their families, they were about 12 million people, or 80% of all Mexicans. Peasants, or rather rural proletarians, as they mainly were, suffered at the hands of both local bosses (caciques) and the rural state police, earning less than the average industrial worker.

Industrial workers were less than one million strong, or 15% of the workforce. Textile workers laboured a 14 hour day, men, women and children, in mills without ventilation. Miners working 12 hour shifts, without even minimal protection for their health and safety and suffered over 500 deaths in accidents between 1906 and 1910.

Both workers and peasants were perpetually in debt to the tienda de raya, the company shop.

The glorification of science and technology by Diaz's inner circle, the "cientificos", justified this brutal exploitation, while a force of 40,000 army and police terrorised the population, suppressing strikes, peasant risings and Indian rebellions. In addition, the foreign capitalists often created their own private armies, the "guardias blancas", to crush dissent. Not surprisingly, there was opposition to Diaz, not only within the elite, but also amongst the lower classes, notably the (misnamed) Mexican Liberal Party (PLM) of Ricardo Flores Magon, which was strongly influenced by anarchism.

The outbreak of revolution 1910

THE revolution began initially as a



Zapata and Villa ride into Mexico City

struggle for power within the ruling class. In the elections of 1910 a wealthy northern landowner, Francisco Madero, challenged the ageing Diaz on a platform of "universal suffrage and no re-election". By June, Diaz was "re-elected" and Madero in jail.

He escaped, and his manifesto "The Plan of San Luis Potosi" now ignited the flame of revolution by calling for land taken arbitrarily and illegally from peasants to be returned.

Groups such as the PLM and those led by Pancho Villa in Chihuahua and Emiliano Zapata in Morelos all rose up against the Diaz dictatorship. In a matter of months the dictator was on a boat to Europe.

Madero became President in June 1911, dropping the land question and disarming the peasants. It appeared as if an orderly bourgeois succession had occurred. But for the revolutionary aspirations of Zapata and the Morelos peasants, it might well have passed into history as just another Latin American coup.

The peasant revolution (1911 — 1913)

FROM 1911 to the beginning of 1913 revolutionary activity was carried on exclusively by Emiliano Zapata of Morelos, whose manifesto, the Plan de Ayala, represented the progressive sectors of the peasant movement. It denounced Madero for betraying the revolution, demanded land to those who worked it, nationalisation without compensation of the property of capitalists and landowners and the expropriation of the lands of the Catholic church. It called for the peasants to take their lands, guns in hand, as part of a great army which

controlled much of Southern Mexico. And it brought the full force of the Madero state and its Federal Army against them for 18 months.

The constitutional revolution (1913 — 1914)

THE DISPUTE within the ruling class resurfaced in February 1913, when Madero was assassinated in a coup organised directly by the US Ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson. This brought Victoriano Huerta to power.

The forces of Madero, now called the Constitutionals and led by Venustiano Carranza, allied with Villa in the North and Zapata in the South and issued the Plan de Guadalupe in March 1913. They successfully defeated the Federal Army at the Battle of Zacatecas in June 1914. The high point of the revolution occurred after this time: the peasant forces of Villa and Zapata, together with anarchist workers' leaders met at Aguascalientes in October 1914, and approved the essentials of the Plan de Ayala.

Electing as interim President

Eulalio Guitierrez, they set up a situation of dual power between themselves, the radical petty bourgeois, and the new bourgeois state of Carranza. A third civil war in four years, was in the

offing. The revolutionaries occupied Mexico City in December 1914.

The vacuum

DESPITE THEIR military power, the great peasant armies lacked the national politics and the national party to make them a force capable of ruling Mexico. Neither did the working class, despite its rapid organisation during the revolution, to assert itself as an independent force able to lead the peasantry behind it.

Despite its tradition of struggle in the mines and factories during the Diaz dictatorship, the workers' movement lacked the kind of seasoned, coherent leadership which was to prove so necessary during the Russian Revolution of 1917. Instead, the disparate elements of the PLM, and those of the anarchists, who lacked any idea of what to do with state and government, filled the breach.

Nor at this point was the bourgeoisie strong enough to take control of the country. Rather it was still in the process of re-crystallising — fusing the old elements of the Diaz oligarchy with the leaders of the Constitutionalist Armies. However, within the ranks of Carranza's Party, one man did understand this situation, and the remaining five years of the revolution are basically the story of his ascent to power. That man was General Alvaro Obregon.

The creation of the Bonapartist state

OBREGON forced Carranza, the nominal President, into making concessions to both workers and peasants — embodied in

the constitution of 1917. At the same time he exploited the divisions and vacillation in the ranks of the revolutionaries, defeating the mighty Northern Division of Villa in four battles at the end of 1915. Carranza's forces exhausted each other in further bloodshed.

Zapata was cruelly assassinated in April 1919, and Carranza too was executed the next year while attempting to remove himself and the contents of the Mexican treasury to the United States. Obregon rode into Mexico City to become President in December 1920, flanked by Pablo Gonzalez, the bloody assassin of Zapata, and Genovero de la O, the last great peasant leader of the South. A more transparent symbol

of Bonapartism — a system of rule under which a powerful state machine balances between classes — could not be found, and modern Mexico has been shaped by the equilibrium on which Obregon stood.

A postscript — the tragedy of the anarchists

THE GREATEST tragedy of the Mexican revolution was the role of the leadership of the Casa del Obrero Mundial at the apex of events in 1914 — 1915. The Casa, dominated as it was by anarchist ideas, stood in the great tradition of the anarchists who had organised the Mexican labour movement in the 19th century, leading many of the great strikes in the period up to the demise of Diaz. They also stood in a tradition which had worked amongst the peasants notably south of Mexico City, where their inflammatory propaganda for land in the 19th century must surely have blazed a trail for Zapata's movement.

According to their ideology they were unremittingly hostile to all governments — and certainly in 1914 much of their sympathies were with the Conventionists.

Obregon, and his skilful operative Dr Atl, exploited this situation, showering the Casa with gifts (buildings, government money etc.) and allowing them to organise, even to the point of controlling a telephone company after a strike in 1915. The Casa, organising 150,000 workers at this time, obliged their mentors with 10,000 troops who formed the so called "Red Battalions" of the Constitutionalist Army. They played a leading role in the defeat of Villa in 1915. They also acted as useful propagandists for the bourgeois party, and became an essential prop for the emerging state.

Such a tradition of co-operation and collaboration between unions and party-state continues to this day, explaining both the stability of the Mexican state and the prostration of the official workers' movement. It is the most tragic legacy of the Mexican revolution.

"Zapata demanded land to those who worked it, nationalisation without compensation of the property of capitalists and landowners and the expropriation of the lands of the Catholic church."

"The working class failed to assert itself as an independent force able to lead the peasantry behind it."

A parable of British justice

Matt Cooper
Reviews *In*
the Name of
the Father

Directed by
Jim Sheridan



Daniel Day-Lewis as Gerry Conlon



“IN THE name of the father” is an excellent film. But is it about what it claims to be about — the Guildford 4 and the Maguire 7?

These 11 innocent people were locked away — in some cases for up to fifteen years — by British bourgeois justice, for crimes they did not commit. They were all politically unexceptional people who had never done anything to attract the attention of the anti-terrorist squad. The Maguires were even members of their local Conservative Club!

The film distills the true details into a partly fictionalised psychodrama centring on the relationship between Gerry Conlon (Daniel Day-Lewis) of the Guildford Four and his father, Guiseppe (Peter Postlethwaite), one of the seven convicted of being the Guildford Four's bomb makers and support unit.

In prison Gerry finds an alternative father figure in Joe MacAndrew (Don Baker), the IRA man who did plant the Guildford pub bomb. It is this half fictionalised story based on the true story that supplies the heart of the film as a tension is set up between MacAndrew's violence and Guiseppe's meek-

ness, competing for Gerry's soul.

This film is neither a documentary nor a history. Much of the detail is starkly untrue. For example, the Guildford four stood trial before the Maguire seven, not as the film has it, in the same dock.

The final appeal scene is

turned into a courtroom drama with the public gallery full, the defendants in the dock and a passionate speech from the four's solicitor. Invention!

The truth? Three appeal court judges sat behind closed doors listening to a barrister, while the prisoners waited in their cells. The English legal system does not allow a solicitor to represent clients in higher courts.

Gerry and Guiseppe did not share a cell. Gerry never met MacAndrew in prison.

At best the film's story is a parable.

But the film is very good, following Gerry from being a petty thief in Belfast to undergoing the psychological torture of interrogation and false imprisonment. The relationship between Gerry and his dying father, imprisoned by people who know he's innocent, guarantees the film emotional impact.

The film is superbly acted (especially by Day-Lewis and Postlethwaite), brisk, and extremely effective.

Nonetheless the film leaves a feeling of taking the easy options Sheridan has sacrificed accuracy for emotional impact and popular appeal. A more ambitious film maker would surely have combined both.

POEM

Backwards march

By David Laurence Bishop

I've buried dead King Arthur
and all his Yorkshire reds
so now it's back to Eton showers
and dripping on your bread.
I'll buy myself a big moustache
and resurrect the Raj,
I'll call it "Kipling's Theme Park"
and put our chaps in charge.

I'll conscript young contemptibles
then restart Kaiser Bill
as Mr Blobby's butler
while they sweat in the mill
making cannons by the dozen
and khaki coloured nikes
as Albert and the Lion
croon war tunes down the mike.

I'll use the family tightrope
to walk across the town
and drop the Old Queen's memoirs
on Labour's tartan clown.
I'll tax the gas appliances
and water bottles too
so you'll turn like the purest Brits,
back to basic blue.

Stephen Hawking on the universe, black holes and Theories of Everything

A best-seller which you should read

Les Hearn
Reviews *Black*
Holes and
Baby Universes

By
Stephen Hawking

THE WORLD'S second most famous scientist has produced another best-seller, though not so successful as *A Brief History of Time*. Stephen Hawking's latest is a collection of articles and speeches, and an incongruous mix they are, too. Some are about his ideas, summarising, expanding, clarifying points already raised in BHT; others are about his own life and it is inevitable that the details of the upbringing, illness and struggle to carry on of the "crippled genius" will continue to fascinate.

It is perhaps no bad thing that Hawking comes over as a very ordinary person outside his field, as fond of banal clichés as the next man (oops!). Writing of his blockbuster success (*A Brief History of A Brief History*), he sounds genuinely surprised at its popularity (a year on the *NY Times* and four years on the *Sunday Times* best seller lists; 40

hardback reprints; 33 translations). He confronts head-on the myth that it is the "least-read" best-seller, wondering whether the situation is any worse than for such popular classics as the Bible and the works of Shakespeare. He can hardly ignore the "human interest" factor in the sales of BHT and openly states his belief that the famous final sentence about knowing the "mind of God", which he almost cut, perhaps doubled the book's sales.

Many people seem to find it significant if they find that a scientist believes in God, particularly if the scientist's field appears to be one where God might be expected to exercise some clout, such as creating the universe. Despite the famous phrase above, Hawking refuses to pander to this (*My Position*).

He attacks the philosophers of science who have accused him of "positivism", which is "out of date", giving his own view that "reality" cannot be known independently of a theory or model.

As an illustration, he takes "Schrodinger's Cat", a "thought experiment" in which a cat is enclosed in a box, with a loaded gun and a radioactive atom. If the atom decays, it will trigger the gun and the cat will die. Therefore, on opening the box, one will find the cat either alive or

dead. That much is obvious, but according to the quantum theory the situation of the cat before the box is opened is a mixture of the dead quantum-state and the live quantum-state. This conflicts with the "classical" view of reality that the cat is at all times either dead or alive.

I think the cat "experiment" is a rather poor example. It would have been better to have had Schrodinger's electron in the box. However, it is the case that unobserved particles are in a mixture of states, one of which takes over at the moment of observation; which one is determined by the laws of probability. Hawking says that objects possess all possible histories, the probabilities of each determining which is likely to be observed. It is no good saying this is illogical or impossible if, as is the case, real particles behave according to such a model.

Much has been said about a "theory of everything" (TOE). Hawking believes we may be close to such a TOE but is at pains to bring the scope of such a theory down to earth (*Is The End In Sight For Theoretical Physics?*). A TOE has to unite all the fundamental forces, showing that they are all aspects of each other. This has been done for electric and magnetic forces (last century), and for electromagnetic and weak forces (last decade, with the discovery of the pre-

dicted W and Z particles). Several proposed theories that unite the electroweak force with the strong force that holds atomic nuclei together are being tested. But the goal is to unite these forces with the gravitational force. Hawking seems to think this is possible and that there is an end in sight, but he points out that this was also thought to be the case at the end of the 19th century and again during the 1920s.

Also, a TOE would not really be a TOE: it could only be used to make limited predictions about the behaviour of matter, at the very least because it is impossible to know exactly the state of a system of particles.

In *Black Holes and Baby Universes*, Hawking reveals that the concept of a black hole originated over 200 years ago, in a paper by John Michell in 1783. Starting from the idea of a cannonball falling back to earth unless its speed exceeded the escape velocity (about 11km per second), he speculated that a sufficiently massive star would have an escape velocity greater than the speed of light so no light could escape.

Hawking was responsible, with others, for much of the current understanding of something that has never been directly observed. For instance, the prediction that black holes are not really black but would radiate

and send out particles at a rate that would get greater the smaller the black hole was. Ultimately, a black hole would disappear in a puff of gamma rays.

The laws of physics are time-reversible and this leads to the idea that if matter can fall into a black hole, it can also fall out! Hawking appeals to the concept of imaginary time, a direction of time at right angles to real time, to argue that, as an astronaut is pulled into spaghetti and crushed out of existence in real time in a black hole, his or her mass would continue to have a history in imaginary time, emitted as particles from a black hole in a baby universe budded off from this universe.

Other articles include *Is Everything Determined?* (Yes, but we can never know what has been determined!) and the transcript of Hawking's appearance on *Desert Island Discs* (well, I found it interesting!)

This book is definitely a pot-boiler but why not? I dare say Hawking could not have achieved as much as he has dependent only on the "welfare" state. No doubt many other talents remain undiscovered in other people with disabilities. Wait for the paperback edition or borrow it from the library but do read it. And finish BHT if you haven't already done so!

*Bantam £14.99

Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

BOLTON

Thursday 17 February

"Ireland in Crisis — what should socialists say?"

1.00 Chadwick Site, Bolton Institute

BIRMINGHAM

Monday 21 February

"Ireland in Crisis — what should socialists say?"

8.00 Queen's Tavern, Essex Road

NORTHAMPTON

Saturday 5 March

"Ireland in Crisis — what should socialists say?"

12.30, Vocal Club, Bailey Street

GLASGOW

Thursday 24 February

"Russia's chaos"

Speaker: Job Arnot

7.30, Dickburgh Halls

LONDON

Wednesday 23 February

"How to beat the racists"

Speakers: Propa-Ghandi from Funda-mental, from Searchlight and Mark Osborn of the AWL

St George's Tavern, St George's Road, Elephant and Castle

Unity march against racism and fascism

Assemble 10.30
Forest Recreation
Ground
Nottingham
Saturday 26
February

WL '94 will
take place
from Friday
8 to Sunday
10 July at
Caxton
House,
North
London

Bristol Marxist
Forum Conference
Saturday 5 and
Sunday 6 March.
For more
information phone
0272-423435

LETTERS

How not to challenge myths

LETTER

IN AN ARTICLE published in *SO* 586 I made a passing reference to the Clydeside socialist John MacLean being "mentally and politically disorientated". Dave Donnachie takes me to task on both points in his contribution to last week's issue of *SO*.

Unfortunately, his contribution is a good example of how not to conduct a serious political argument.

He rejects the reference to mental disorientation on the grounds that this accusation originated from prison doctors and members of the Communist Party (CP). Reduced to its essentials, his argument is: we can't trust screws or Stalinists, so MacLean must have been sane.

This is a non sequitur worthy of James D Young himself.

As I pointed out in a full article on MacLean (*SO* 581), there is ample evidence in his own writings to show that he

adopted an increasingly conspiratorial view of politics towards the end of his life.

MacLean claimed, for example, that Lloyd George was trying to provoke him into organising a general strike. Surely Dave Donnachie would accept this absurd allegation is an example of being mentally disorientated?

"MacLean claimed that Lloyd George was trying to provoke him into organising a general strike."

With regard to the question of MacLean's political disorientation, Dave Donnachie is simply self-contradictory.

He points out that MacLean's opposition to the CP has, in his opinion,

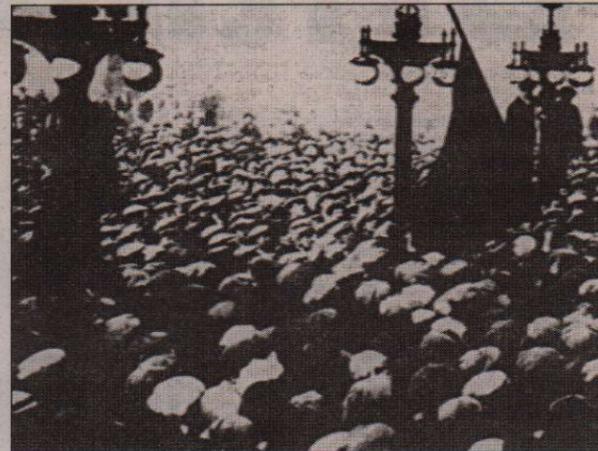
wrongly been put forward as an example of his political disorientation. Yet Dave

Donnachie himself writes: "The tragedy is that MacLean did not join the CP and carry his arguments into that organisation. He remained outside of what, at that time, constituted the real vanguard of the working class."

Thus, Dave Donnachie himself provides an example of MacLean's political disorientation — in support of his claim that MacLean was not politically disorientated.

Dave Donnachie also argues that it is wrong to accuse MacLean of abandoning internationalism in favour of Scottish nationalism. He is broadly correct to argue along these lines. I made the same point in the article which appeared in *SO* 581.

Even so, MacLean did exhibit political disorientation in relation to the Scottish question. He made false equations between Irish and Scottish history, failed to recognise the ongoing devel-



MacLean's times: the Red Flag flies in St George's Square, Glasgow

opment of an all-British labour movement in the early 1920s, and campaigned for a Scottish workers' republic at a time when labour movement support for Scottish self-government was already beginning to ebb.

Of course, one can debate this or that aspect of the politics of John MacLean (or of *SO*), but to tilt at windmills in the manner of Dave

Donnachie gets us nowhere.

If Dave Donnachie wishes to demolish myths, as he claims in his contribution, then a good starting point would be challenging the myth expressed by Dave Donnachie himself, that MacLean was "the most important Scottish workers leader".

Dale Street
Glasgow

Who was Jesus Christ? The Christian evidence



By Rob Dawber

LAST WEEK we finished surveying the Pagan and Jewish evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ and found it very thin.

So what of the Christian evidence? Here we can expect to find an abundance of information relating to events, actions and even sayings of Jesus. Everyone knows the story of Jesus. It is fair to assume that this story derives from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, being the only accounts we have which appear to record as eyewitnesses events, doings and sayings of the life of Jesus.

The Christian Bible consists of an Old and a New Testament. In a copy with 1,250 pages. Finally comes the Book of Revelation.

The four Gospels take up, in the edition before me, 133 pages; the Acts of the Apostles 39; Paul's Epistles 96; the other Epistles 16 and the Book of Revelation 19. Those parts then which claim to treat of the actual life of Jesus are less than half of the total, the next largest section being attributed to someone, Paul, who had no direct contact with Jesus.

The Gospels read as a first hand account of someone we are told was crucified in 33AD. But it is not so. Not even Christian tradition claims that they are the work of eyewitnesses or immediate followers of Jesus written down in the heat of the moment. They are all called "the Gospel according to" rather than the more usual Greek ascription "of". (They were all written in Greek originally). Of the supposed authors only the names of Matthew and John appear in the list of immediate disciples of Jesus. The name of Mark appears as a companion of Peter and Paul; and Luke as a companion of Paul.

The earliest Christian authority who speaks of the authorship of the Gospels is Papias, round about 140AD. He says that Mark "neither heard the Lord nor followed him" but was an "interpreter of Peter" while Matthew he says "compiled the oracles in the Hebrew language and each man interpreted them as he was able." This is of course not compatible with the Gospel According To Matthew being written originally in Greek.

None of the Gospels themselves name their authors with the exception of John (John 21, 24). But even here the claim is made in an appendix added by a later author.

The first 3 Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, share a common core and are known as the Synoptic Gospels. John is quite different, recounts only about 18 months of the life of Jesus, and contradicts the other three

in many ways.

The common core of the Synoptic Gospels isn't just a common storyline or common tradition but in fact a common document. So far as can be established this common document is basically what now passes as the Gospel According to Mark minus some later additions.

The original document is lost but so much of Matthew, Mark and Luke consists of the same words, phrases and narrative that it is impossible to explain this by co-incidence. At different times the author of each had the same document before them and used it as the basis of each of their accounts of the life of Jesus, each altering it sometimes in slight but important ways.

There is an additional source that is common to Matthew and Luke, known as "Q" from the German "Quelle" or source. This consists mostly of sayings of Jesus. Either it was an additional document, or it was part of the original source that the author of Mark used and he edited it out unlike the authors of Matthew or Luke.

This common document was written shortly after the war with Rome between AD66 and 70. This is shown simply from the fact that in it Jesus 'predicts' events that took place in that war. The following is all but identical in Matthew (11:21-23) and Luke (10:13-15):

"Woe to thee, Chorazin!
Woe to thee, Bethsaida!
For in Tyre and Sidon had

been done

Long ago in sackcloth and ashes

They would have sat and repented.

Howbeit I say to you,

It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon

In the day of judgement than for you.

And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted to heaven?

Thou shalt be brought down to Hades."

Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum are places along the shore of the lake of Gennesareth — the scene of savage fighting between Jews and Romans in AD67. Their sufferings are presented as punishment for their rejection of the Messiah a generation previous.

Again the following, varying a little in Matthew (23:34-39) and Luke (11:49-51 & 13:34-35):

"Therefore I send to you Prophets and wise men and scribes;

Some of them shall you kill and crucify;

And some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues,

And persecute from city to city:

That may come on you all the righteous blood

Shed on the earth

From the blood of Abel the righteous

To the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah,

Whom you slay between the sanctuary and the altar...

Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Who kills the prophets,
And stones them that are sent

to her!

How often would I have gathered thy children together,

Even as a hen gathers Her chickens under her wings,

And you would not!

Behold, your house is left to you desolate.

For I say to you, you shall not see me

Henceforth, till you shall say, 'Blessed is he that comes In the name of the Lord.' "

That these are not the words of a Palestinian is betrayed by the fact that in the Greek the passage reads rhythmically and towards the end drops into rhyme. It is a 'prophecy' written to be recited and easily remembered.

For dating purposes the clue lies in the ascribing of Abel as the first of the "prophets and wise men and scribes" whose blood has been shed and Zachariah, son of Barachiah as the last, slain between the sanctuary and the altar.

The Old Testament has a Zechariah, stoned to death about 800BC but he was not the son of Bachariah and it is difficult to see why he should be singled out as the last. The prophet Zechariah is called son of Bachariah but there is no evidence that he was murdered.

However Josephus mentions a Zachariah, son of Baruch (a variant of Bachariah), a rich citizen of Jerusalem, who was lynched in the middle of the Temple as a suspected traitor in AD68.

Next week: were the Jews fighting for a life after death or for a life now?

Postal workers throw out productivity deal

UCW: start the fight for a shorter working week now

UCW

By a Manchester postal worker

THE ATTEMPT by the UCW leadership to foist productivity deals on the membership has failed. Despite the barrage of publicity from the union executive and management UCW members threw the deal out by 37,000 votes to 34,000. The vote against would have been even higher if there had been an organised "vote no" campaign. As it was, it was left to individual

branches to put out their own leaflets to counter the propaganda.

The leadership now have a problem. They went to conference and got knocked back. They went to the branches and the same happened. Now they've lost out with the membership as a whole. So what do they do next? The joke going round is that they will try balloting the members' spouses and partners next. Truth is, though, that they haven't the foggiest what to do. They expected the deal to go through and made no plans at all based on the eventuality of rejection.

The danger is that the initiative will now pass to the management. They've threatened to implement the schemes without the union's agreement. If that happens we will be forced onto the defensive, running round from office to office trying to stop them.

The way to deal with this is for the union to take the offensive. The deal was rejected because UCW members, especially in the majority delivery section, preferred fighting to save jobs rather than selling them off. The campaign for a shorter working week, called for at last

May's annual conference, needs to be stepped up now.

General Secretary Alan Johnson should go immediately back to Royal Mail and demand an immediate reduction in hours. The argument that this is not achievable because of the Tory pay policy is a nonsense. If Royal Mail were prepared to give us extra money for increases in productivity, most of which has already taken place, then they can afford to cut the hours. And in any case the pay freeze policy seems to be dying on its feet. Then, if Royal Mail are not pre-

pared to make a satisfactory offer, the membership should be balloted on industrial action.

At the moment that doesn't look likely to happen. Johnson seems more concerned at launching a witch hunt against the branch activists he sees as responsible for "no" votes.

He had demanded that a copy of every leaflet put out by the branches on the issue be sent to him. He had an opportunity at last week-end's special merger conference to address the delegates on the way forward and said nothing.

The responsibility for starting the fight for the shorter working week now lies with the branches. Demands for immediate action should go forward from every branch to UCW HQ. Executive Council members should be reminded that the EC elections are coming up and unless they back the call for action, then they won't appear on branch recommendations.

Jobs are disappearing week by week in Royal Mail. The ballot result gives us the basis for putting a stop to this. Miss this chance and we might not get another.

Very winnable! Very soon!

FURTHER EDUCATION

By a Southwark NATFHE member

BOSSSES in the Further Education sector are throwing down the gauntlet. Lecturers face the sack if they refuse to sign new contracts.

The new contracts have the old objectives of demolishing agreements between employers (College Employers' Forum, CEF), and the union (National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education — NATFHE)

The net result of these new contracts will be 30% increase in workload for college lecturers. Within two years we can expect a similar percentage of redundancies among our members.

The colleges are like any other business outfit (which is what they have become since April 1993 incorporation).

The competition in the Further and Higher Education market is becoming desperate.

You only make a profit by providing the same or more education with fewer staff. This means job losses on an enormous scale, a large increase in part-time appointments, and a huge deterioration in the quality of education available to our students.

The CEF have been pushing NATFHE around for months in the negotiations and combing this

with local threats of sackings to lecturers refusing to sign new contracts (this is the prospect facing fifty lecturers at City of Bath college as we go to press).

At other colleges, like Southwark, the pushing and probing of union resolve takes the form of offering management jobs to a handful of senior lecturers (massive increase in workload for a few extra quid, but you can get in the golf club).

Southwark College illustrates the current situation and tasks. Following the national one day strike called by the NATFHE leadership for 1. March, Southwark is staying out for an extra day. It will then come out the following week for three days, then four days the week after, and then go on indefinite all-out strike until management retract new contracts for senior lecturer on the management spine.

This sort of action, local and hard, sits uncomfortably with a national action which is typically token.

Clearly the national action of 1 March must be the start of a campaign to prepare the union for all-out indefinite national strike to demolish the new contracts.

Now is the time. The government is on the ropes. It's backed off from the NUT on key bits of the national curriculum and can't even stomach a fight to dismantle the National Union of Students.

Stark choices for Sheffield council workers. Fight back or go under!

COUNCIL WORKERS

SHEFFIELD council now faces a £36 million budget shortfall. If cuts of this scale actually go ahead they will result in between 1,500 and 2,000 compulsory redundancies. As many as one in six teachers could be chopped.

The Sheffield Labour Party faces a very stark choice — implement Tory cuts and lose most of the council seats up for election in May, or set an illegal budget and stand up to the Tories.

The council unions cannot wait for the Sheffield Labour Party to stop acquiescing to Tory cuts. All the unions should be preparing to take all-out strike action to shut down the whole council in the event of a single redundancy notice being issued.

All three UNISON branches are balloting this week for a one day

strike to take place on the day the council sets its budget. In addition several departments which are in the front line for compulsory redundancies are balloting for all out indefinite strike action. It's vital that all these ballots are successful and that in the event of the notices being issued prior to the ballot results all out unofficial strike action takes place.

The threats the council are making are very serious indeed.

Nevertheless, council workers should be wary of being manipulated by the council and right wing union officials.

There is a principle at stake in this dispute: no compulsory redundancies.

If the council "offer" reduced cuts and job losses it would be wrong to accept them if this principle was broken or working conditions threatened.

NCU/UCW merger — towards a fighting union?

By UCW and NCU conference delegates

IN BOURNEMOUTH last weekend delegates from the UCW and NCU agreed to merge their unions to form a new communications union.

The important thing is that the best of the democratic traditions in both unions are maintained and extended.

The NCU conference passed several good propositions to extend democracy — asking for

TUC and Labour Party delegations to be elected in their entirety for example. But conference rejected the setting up of a branch political rebate scheme that would have encouraged local branch political activity.

There are structural issues in the new merged union that will have political consequences. Co-ordination above Branch, and below national level is necessary if the merger is to be effective.

In order for the merger to be a reality, not just a union in name, the left branches, and activists

need to organise to create a unified front against the bureaucracy.

The first conference for the new union will be at the end of 1995 (the new union is officially created at the end of 1994). The left in the UCW and NCU must start organising for this now.

The call for an activists conference before UCW conference in May, in order to bring together UCW and NCU members to discuss the future left organisation, must be supported.

Issues of productivity, EVR

and job cuts on the delivery side are paramount for UCW members. The threat of privatisation and the drive to increase profits must be addressed as must the prospect of increased casualisation.

The NCU BL campaign for jobs must be encouraged and the BL NEC held to BL policy on job security and organised contractors. With a united left across UCW and NCU, that can go beyond the existing organisation, we can fight the employers and win.

Victory in Islington for nursery fight

SPRINGDALE NURSERY in Islington, north London, will reopen in September this year.

The decision by the council's ruling Labour Group on 16 February is almost certain to be ratified by the full council. It follows a mandate from a joint meeting on 22 November of the Labour Group and the Local Government Committee (delegates from Labour Party branches and trade unions); and that in turn followed a six-month occupation of the threatened nursery by parents and children, and a long campaign of agitation.

A year ago, council officials were talking about cutting Islington's then ten council nurseries back to three. Now Springfield has been saved, and the council has decided to open a new nursery at Golden Lane.

It shows what stubborn direct action and dogged battling within the Labour Party can achieve.

NCU elections = a victory for BT

TELECOM

THE ELECTION for the General Secretary's position in the BT workers' union NCU has been won by Tony Young.

Young is a gifted dissimulator, manoeuvre and manipulator. Unfortunately he practices his skills on the membership rather than on management.

The defeated candidate was Bill Fry, the Broad Left nominee and an opponent of the drift to the

right in the Trade Unions and the Labour Party.

Young won by 23,565 to 13,552 on a turn-out of about one third of the membership. He exploited his position as sitting General Secretary to the full. Telecom Engineers had pictures of him falling through their letter boxes all the time in the run up to the poll.

This is a serious defeat for the left. It will strengthen the right inside a merged NCU/UCW and will help the full time officers at Greystoke House frustrate any attempt by the left-led NCU NEC to lead a fight over jobs.

MSF: Unite the Left!

By an MSF Health Worker

100 PEOPLE attended a Unity Left / Network 90 conference on Saturday, to discuss a strategy for the left within MSF (the Manufacturing, Science & Finance Union). It couldn't be more necessary.

The leadership has just brought forward a set of rule changes for this year's conference, which attack fundamentally the democracy of the union. They are embarking on a concerted attack on the left, in order to build on their success at last year's Labour conference, where the MSF delegation broke union policy in order to rescue the OMOV package for John Smith.

Although welcome, the conference was something of a disappointment.

The left within MSF has become insular, concerned more with the fifty people at its meetings than with the thousands elsewhere. But there were signs of an outward turn this weekend.

It remains to be seen how much of this the Unity Left leadership, or the Network 90 organisers, will take on. And there was no commitment for further meetings, or for the formation of a genuine broad left structure, democratic and accountable. But the opportunity is there. The MSF left mustn't let historical divisions block unity; turn outwards to the membership, and unite the left.

Girobank workers strike

By a NCU member

THIS WEEK is to see the first of a series of one day strikes over pay at Girobank.

The workers are demanding a flat rate £450 increase which averages at around 3 - 5% but means more than that for some of the lowest paid who earn as little as £7,000.

Already, an overtime ban has forced a 1.5% offer out of management which was rejected in a ballot.

The fightback shows what could be done if the national union leaders gave a proper lead in the battle against the public sector wage limit.

Lambeth Council victimises steward

By Trudy Saunders CPSA.

A UNISON steward working for the Labour council in Lambeth, south London, has been victimised by management in a blatant anti-union move. The steward has previously organised industrial action and won major victories in her shop. She is also editor of the Lambeth UNISON Social Services Restructuring newsletter which provides members with vital information on management plans to implement cuts in jobs, services and conditions.

The steward was suspended in early December on a charge of "damaging Lambeth Council's credibility" by providing a col-

league with an "unauthorised reference". The minor nature of the charge, lack of proof and management's over-the-top response clearly point to victimisation. Throughout, Lambeth have ignored their own and ACAS's procedures.

During the steward's 7 week long suspension her UNISON shop walked out in protest and marched to Lambeth Social Services HQ demanding a meeting with the two Assistant Directors. At shop, branch and executive level numerous motions were sent to the Director of Social Services demanding the steward's full reinstatement. The shop also organised a lobby of her disciplinary.

Since her suspension UNISON members in the steward's area

have refused to cover her work.

The action of Lambeth UNISON members undoubtedly had a bearing on the outcome of the disciplinary hearing. Management's behaviour throughout suggested they would attempt to sack the steward. In the event they imposed the worst they could — short of sacking. The steward has been given a final written warning and was demoted with significant loss of salary for a minimum of 12 months. She has been moved to an Area managed by the only Lambeth manager to complain about the social services restructuring news letter.

UNISON will continue to fight, at branch and shop level and are currently appealing against the decision.

In Brief

BBC workers are demanding that their union BECTU ballots over secret management plans for pay cuts of up to 15%.

Barclays workers are balloting for a one-day strike over pay.

Strathclyde Council — the biggest in the UK and run by Labour — is to impose the Tory pay freeze. 104,000 workers will be hit. The council should unite with workers, tenants and service users to fight the Tories.

The abolition of Wages Councils is having the effect the Tories wanted. Some 20% of the 2.5 million workers who used to be covered by them until last year are now paid below the old minimum rates.

SOCIALIST

**Students
march on 23
February**

ORGANISER

Demonstrate! Strike!

Take on the Tories!

**By Alison Brown,
convenor, South Yorkshire
Area National Union of Students**

THE NATIONAL student demonstration on Wednesday 23 February will be a long-overdue slap in the face for the Tory government. It will signal the start of a new stage in the battle against the Government's attack on students and education.

Not only students are on the move. On 1 March NATFHE, the biggest lecturers' union, has called a national strike over working conditions.

Student activists must work to shut down every college and university in solidarity with NATFHE and against the grant cuts. Students should boycott lectures so that every college in the country stops on 1 March!

The Tory Government can be beaten! The Tories are in a deeper crisis than the right-wing French government which, last month, suffered

defeat at the hands of French students and workers. The French students campaigned against attacks on education by way of agitation culminating in a half-million strong demonstration - and the government caved in.

With such a campaign, we too can win. We can stop the Tories!

Students have had enough of waiting for the careerist slugs who run the

National Union of Students to lead. That is why Left Unity has pulled together an alliance of student activists and student unions who are determined to act, and to act now!

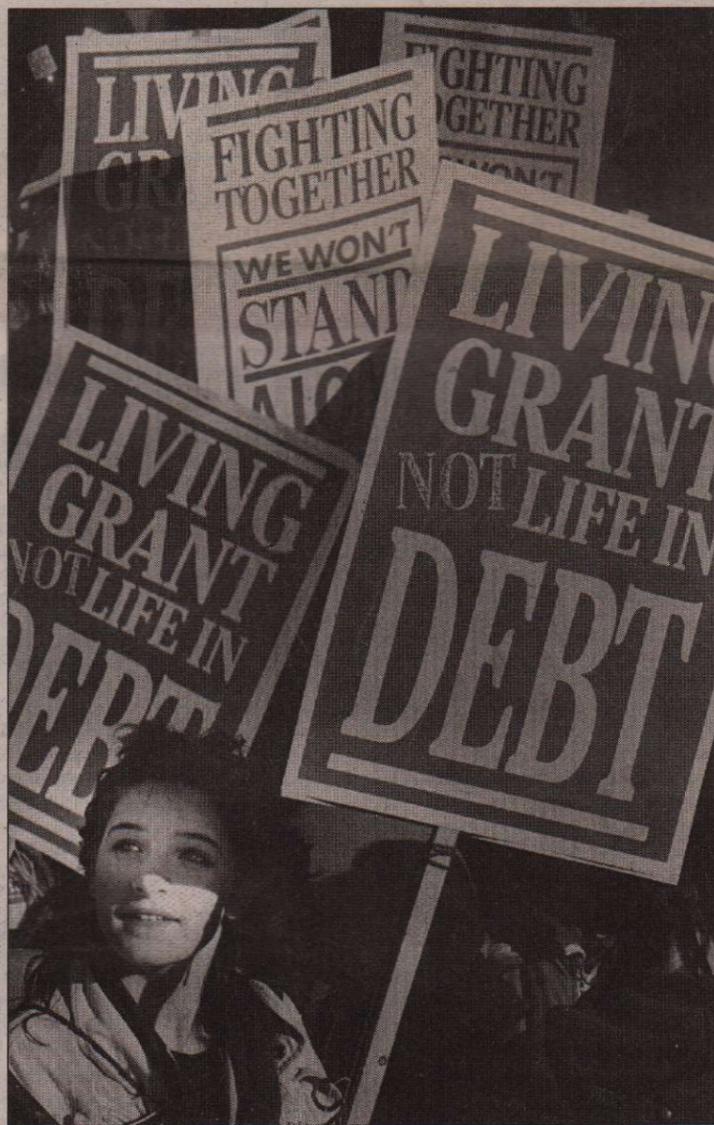
The left's task now, while we will continue to increase the pressure on the NUS leadership to take up the fight against the Tories, is to drive forward the campaign by way of powerful direct action.

Building the demo on 23 February

- Set up an open student action committee
- Get your union to lay on free transport
- Contact college unions. Get their support. Set up joint committees.
- Announce the demo in your lectures.

Building the shutdown on 1 March

- Demand the college closes on 1 March
- Get the student union to produce mass publicity for the shutdown
- Organise joint picket lines and rallies with trade unions on 1 March
- Use occupations or walk-outs to shut down your college on 1 March.



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