Schools
Tory cuts breed misery

Students
We need free education

Racism
Racist cops, racist laws, racist Britain

Riots
What's next?

Europe
Fighting fascism and the far right

Techno
Feminist freedoms?

Women
Domestic Violence

Join the FACE Demo: Sat 30 September
Britain • FACE • Labour sells out •

What now for the Free Education Campaign?

Anthony Brain

The Free Education Campaign made important gains at the NUS Special Conference earlier this year. The right wing Labour Students leadership were defeated in their proposals to scrap even a formal defence of the right to a free education. A further gain was made with the conference declaration mandating NUS to organise a national demonstration in the Autumn term.

Despite these victories, however, the battle is far from over. Jim Murphy has made public statements about how the union will have to reconsider its position and how important it was that such a large majority voted for the Labour Students position. It is quite obvious that the right wing leadership of NUS will now spend the next few months attempting to sabotage the conference decisions.

Though NUS was instructed by conference to organise a demo in the Autumn, it has not as yet named a date for that demo. This is why the Free Education Campaign is calling for a September demo. We must force NUS leadership to support and build for this.

The leadership of the Labour Party faced a defeat when the 1994 conference reasserted its commitment to Clause Four. The leadership then spent the next six months working against the decisions of conference and organised a Special Conference at which the clause was abolished - using completely undemocratic methods.

The leadership of Labour Students, apeing the leadership of the Labour Party, will prove extremely reluctant to abide by the decisions of NUS Special Conference. It is important that we organise within colleges to keep them under pressure and make sure that they do.

Liberation supporters will be working within the Free Education Campaign to build support for the national demo. The campaign must organise a massive tour of colleges to get as many people on the demo as possible from all colleges.

This demo called for September by the Free Education Campaign has the potential for mobilising thousands if built for properly. Why is this demonstration so important? There are two main reasons: it can mobilise masses of people in support of their own interests; and can give them the confidence that they can resist what the government are attempting to do.

This demo will be most effectively built by the campaign visiting colleges, calling on as many Student Unions and NUS bodies to back the demo and building support for it from FACU, parents, school governors and the Labour movement. This can help to build a powerful alliance between students, working people, the trade unions and the social movements.

We must not see the struggle over grants as being isolated from wider attacks on education, or on the welfare state.

The campaign must link up with others fighting to defend education, in the Fight Against Cuts in Education (FACE) campaign, with parents and school governors, and with the trade unions and the left in the Labour Party. Finally we must develop demands to place on a future Labour government.

The austerity drive is being organised throughout Western Europe, and we must link up with all those forces resisting it. In particular we need to develop links with European student movements such as in France where students are striking the Ballard government.

Get Active! To find out more about the Free Education Campaign, write to: FEC, c/o Charlotte Wade, Students Union, University of Central England, Birmingham.

Does Young Labour sell out?

Mike Banks

The answer to the above question has to be "you'd better believe Young Labour sells out" if it's the fees you're after. The national conference you're talking about.

It's practically all that the leaders of the Labour Party's youth membership nationally ever do. I'll give you an example: angry students from all over the country have been battling to defend free education and there's still a hell of a way to go. But what has Labour Students been doing about it? Well, in the form of the NUS leadership it has been collapsing towards the government's position on tuition fees and loads. It's led no sort of fight and it reckons Blair's graduate tax is a pretty good idea. At my college, though, it's been Labour Party members who have led the fight to defend free education. We've done so despite the right-wing policies of the Labour studentship and we want them to realise that not all young Labour Party members are prepared to accept policies which are not in the interests of young people from this party any more than we accept them from the Tories. We will fight all the way to stop the creation of Tory Party 2.

So what have we been trying to do in our area? We've built up several campaigns around different issues (free education, nuclear testing and McLibel) and turned them outwards to youth who are not currently party members. This way, we can build up a group of youth who really will fight hard against the party leadership - they have not been groomed to think that we must shut up until after an election. We also want to take discussions where we devise our policy demands to take to Young Labour conferences and to constituency meetings.

We aim to take forward the success of Labour Students conference last year where we pushed policy through in favour of free education by standing up to the leadership at every opportunity.

I don't remember the days when the Labour Party had a radical youth wing but I know it needs one again now. It's important to be inside Young Labour groups if they are open to ideas from the left and they want to be active.

The youth will be crucial to the courage and the new ideas that's needed to stand up to Blair's leadership and his constant erosion of every commitment the party ever had.

Get Active! Join up with the left in Young Labour. Use the coupon on page 5 to join Liberation! or write to Liberation!, PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UW.
Defend education - support FACE demo on Saturday September 30!

Kathryn Marshall

Last month the Association of Teachers and Lecturers published findings of a survey that revealed there to have been 4,600 redundancies in the teaching profession since the government’s latest round of vicious cuts.

A total of around 10,000 is likely to be closer to the mark once more schools have been forced to set their ludicrously low budgets. Despite the fact that many heads and governors have held out against the proposed cuts and have attempted to set “needs budgets”, pressure on them is increasing all the time to weaken and to capitulate to the government’s plans.

The government now seeks to cloud the issue by dangling a carrot in front of the thousands of parents, governors and students from the organisation FACE who have taken to the streets about these cuts. This week’s carrot that has already gone brown and squiggly is in the form of “funding” for sports and physical education.

This is typical of the tactics we’ll see in operation between now and the calling of the next general election. The government will stitch together some attractive soundbites (I understand that references to improving our national heritage as has been said this week are attractive to some folk) in the hope that concessions will be seen to be made to our demands for a decent and at the very least adequately funded education system.

Every “concession” they make will carry the usual strings in its tail; in terms of the new plans for sports, the paltry sum of 4 million pounds has been offered for schools and more work for no extra money at all is being expected from the teaching staff.

Will good sport suddenly develop with a funding proposal full of hot air and hardly any funding? Of course not.

What will be very good sport indeed, however, is giving the Tories another electoral pasting like they received in the local elections back in May because of their inexcuse upon these iniquitous cuts.

It’s the job of all of us who have supported FACE to keep this issue at the forefront of people’s minds until and beyond the election. Since its conference in June, FACE has received a steady stream of new affiliation requests from a group in Scotland. The organisation has grown way beyond just those who have been affected by the cuts so far. But as further cuts of around four to five per cent are likely to hit councils in 1996 there is still a long way to go before the huge wall of anger and support from the public, the student movement and the teaching unions is translated into a government climbdown.

That’s why despite the lull in activity that the summer break brings with it, it’s vital that the next FACE demonstration called for September 30 is built for with great enthusiasm. As FACE’s own paper says: “To make sure of its success we must all start organising now.”

Decent housing should be a basic right

Steve Revis

For young people in Britain, finding adequate housing is a big problem. You may be stuck in the family home facing all kinds of difficulties, unable to move out because of the lack of decent paying jobs, benefit restrictions or means grants. You may have been forced out of the “family home” for any number of reasons, or not have a family home at all and be living in either insecure, sub-standard private accommodation or have no place to live at all.

Perhaps you’re a student facing grant and benefit cuts, forced into the cheapest and probably dirtiest private rented housing there is.

If you live in a household with a mortgage, there’s a fair chance “negative equity” is suffering - the house is worth less than the mortgage with which it was combined with increased job insecurity makes the threat of losing your home a very real one.

The Thatcherite “Boom” of the 80s lead many people to buy their own homes at extremely inflated prices. Schemes were created whereby people could buy the council housing they lived in, though many have left with houses that they can’t sell and with mortgages that are more expensive than their previous rent.

Council housing is virtually impossible to obtain, waiting lists have never been longer.

Sell-off

Legislation has meant that councils have been forced to sell of their housing stock yet they are prevented from using the money they receive for such sales to build more homes.

There is no shortage of unemployed workers to build new homes, nor is there a shortage of empty housing that could be made habitable. Yet there is an acute housing crisis.

This is because of the market system which we are told is essential to create a healthy vibrant society.

The media and the government have been insisting that the market creates a vibrant economy for over a century now, only all the evidence flies in the face of this argument.

Now the “modernisers” of the Labour Party aim to meet the needs of society with a system that has been tried and failed remains a mystery.
Racism, Labour and the Unions

Mark Jansen

The organised labour movement, in Britain the trade unions and the Labour Party, has always been crucial for socialists in that it represents, in however a distorted form, working class people organizing independently of the ruling class. The struggle for socialism can only be achieved through the unity and independence of the working class and the oppressed, and as such socialists must work within the existing organisations in which workers and the oppressed are organised.

Though new organisations will be needed for carrying out the task of world socialism, if such organisations are to be built they will be built by working people themselves, that is not changing the existing organisations and the need do deceive any one.

None of this means however, that the struggle for socialism is not naturally progressive, especially since the Labour movement leadership has been almost invariably pro-capitalist. It has a number of times has actively collaborated in the exclusion of women, and has campaigned at certain points to exclude black people from the workforce.

The Labour movement in Britain campaigned for immigration controls and for a white Australia. For a long time, the Labour Party should view the Labour movement as the epitome of struggle for socialist ideas, in which we fight to win working people from their misleaders.

An integral part of the struggle for socialism is the struggle within the class, which can only be achieved through equality within the working class.

This means that socialists must demand that the labour movement must take up struggles against racism, sexism, heterosexism, nationalist oppression or any other forms of inequality between workers, because they are essential struggles in and of themselves, but also because the unity of the class is impossible without them.

The anti-racist movement over the last couple of years forced the labour movement to shift a little. In March of last year the TUC organised a national anti racist demo for the first time ever.

The Transvaal workers' union adopted a resolution that labour parties must oppose all forms of racism, and the TUC themselves have been involved in campaigns against the Apartheid regime.

These are important steps forward, but they mean that the struggle against racism in the labour movement is far from over.

We must push these and other demands into all other unions and the Labour Party. But more importantly we must ensure that these are not just paper commitments. We must ensure that labour movement bodies with anti-racist policies actively campaign for these policies and mobilise their members around them.

> George Thompson

Western capitalist policies have created crises throughout the world. Many people flowing towards the door to the European Union firmly shut. On April 1st 1991, asylum seekers are now being bussed in detention centres, treated like criminals. The State rejects over 90% of all applications and deportations people back to lands where their lives are at risk.

People who have lived here for years are also subject to deportation raids by crews to be bundled aboard planes. Jory Gertner's tragic death was a result of the forces in inhuman deportation policy. The Government allows the police to constantly harass the black communities under the pretext they are searching for illegal immigrants. They also call for St. Parte and restrictions on everyone's civil rights using this excuse.

The National Day of Actions to demand the end to detentions and deportations on June 24th deserves widespread support. Hundreds picketed prisons and detention centres to protest against our racist State and its immigration laws. Liberate! Supporters united with asylum seekers and refugees groups and labour movement bodies to show our solidarity with refugees. State racism is more of a threat to black communities today than fascism. Racial hatred is more likely to be stirred up by Tony Ministers than the rantings of SNP Fathers. Blacks are more likely to die from police assaults than fascist attacks. Yet State racism and fascism feed one another. Some swaying the government's racist message in the run up to the next General Election could turn to fascists rather than Tories. Serious anti-fascists cannot ignore State racism.

Apart from campaigning to scrap all immigration laws, anti racist groups must turn to fights against Tory proposals which make immigrants second class citizens. Government measures are reducing their access to education, jobs and benefits. We must com bat any legally racist attacks on black communities by launching black for striking crime and unemployment.

The World Confederation of Labour have called for 1 million workers to demand the government to make the agents of a snooper State, grieving on colleagues who may be migrant workers.

We must challenge the racism of the police and judiciary which makes blacks more likely to go to prison than whites for committing the same offence. Under attack from fascists or cops we must champion the local community's right to organise and defend itself by any means necessary. Self-organisation is a necessity for oppressed groups fighting for their liberation. Yet there can be no black liberation without socialism and vice versa. The racist institutions can only be destroyed through destroying capitalism. Revolutions develop when straws of anti-capitalist struggle like black liberation comb.

The divisions within the current anti-racist movement have proved an obstacle to building the kind of mass mobilisation necessary to make a real impact on the racist system that we live under. While it is unlikely that in the short term these differences will be overcome, we can make a start by organising united actions open to all sections of the movement. Together we can bring the walls of racism crashing down!

> Koen de Clerck

The history of the anti-racist movement in Belgium is very much linked with the electoral breakthrough of the fascist Vlaams Blok (Flemish Blok) in Flemish north of Belgium where three-fifths of the ten million Belgians live.

The first breakthrough goes back to 1968 when the Vlaams Blok achieved 10 per cent of the votes in the town council elections in Antwerp, the largest town of Flanders with half a million inhabitants.

But the most important breakthrough was achieved with the national elections of 1991, when they got 10 per cent of all Flemish votes. This phenomenon was due to the fact that the struggle against austerity in the first half of the 1980s was ended with the social democrats going into government in 1987. They betrayed their voters, who as revenge voted for the fascists.

The Socialists of the young Vacht/Jeune Garde Socialists (Socialist Youth Guard) was active since 1987 with its campaign "Here I am, here I'm alive! Equal rights and opportunities!"

Together with others we launched a pluralist campaign, "School Without Racism." Petitions were distributed in schools to obtain 60 per cent of the votes of pupils in order to declare their school a "School Without Racism".

The campaign was a real success, but after some time the sectarian policies of the Marxist/Stalinist component caused the movement to cease to exist as an independent organisation.

Together with others, we organised a pluralist Anti-Racist Youth Committee, and called for a week of students as a reaction against the electoral rise of fascism exactly a year after the 1991 elections. The strike was a big success with 20,000 participants and was repeated in 1992 and 1993.

These Youth Committees acted in solidarity with the large movement Hand in Hand, who organised massive demonstrations in Brussels (100,000 and 60,000 participants).

Of course all this protest against fascism didn't solve the problem which is a social, economic and political one. But it helped in isolating the fascists politically - that's why we even participate in small actions against fascist movements - and making it difficult for them to gain even more ground.

It was also a learning process in which people learned to distinguish between anti-fascists who want to stay within the framework of neoliberalism and those who take a clear position in favour of working-class people. Hopes in the traditional political parties were proved wrong.

At the moment the situation is far from easy. The mass movement based on the shock of 1991 is over its peak. Neither on the issue of equal rights, nor on that of an alternative socio-economic policy, are successes at hand.

However the anti-racist movement remains an important forum where the main issues are posed. And it forms an important militant framework for political and social change, equality and solidarity being its fundamental values.

That's why we are involved in building the Anti-racism Committee of the National organisation against racism that is willing to isolate the fascists and take up the issues of unemployment and anti-fascist policies in order to oppose capitalist logic.
Riot against racism?

Simon Deville
Recently, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul Condon, backed by Home Secretary Michael Howard claimed that black people were responsible for 80% of muggings in the country's capital.

This manipulation of statistics covers over the fact that black people form a major part of the most oppressed sections of the working class.

No mention has ever been made by Condon of the levels of poverty faced by those who feel driven to such desperate measures, nor is it made of the ethnic make-up of the victims of muggings. Moreover, no mention has been made of statistics that show white people to be responsible for the majority of muggings in, say, Glasgow.

The fact that Condon attempts to use a dodgy statistic to reinforce the racist stereotype that "all black people are muggers" is not insignificant.

Get Active!
Get the CARF
(Campaign Against Racism
& Fascism)
Newsletter
from BM Box
8784, London WC1N 3XZ.

This clearly shows the right wing's attempt to whip up racism as we approach the next General Election in order to win racist votes, but it also is preparing the way for an offensive on the inner-city working class.

Over the last few weeks riots have broken out in Bradford, Luton and Leeds. Right wing politicians have struggled to provide explanations - the Bradford riots were blamed on Islamic fundamentalism and on the Asian youth "caught between two cultures"; though this explanation couldn't apply to riots involving a number of white youth. In Luton organised crime was found to be responsible and in Luton it was the fault of lawless youth.

A common thread running through all of these, though, was that they all took place in deprived inner cities that have faced heavy-handed, paramilitary style policing, though the right wing seem to have overlooked this blatantly obvious fact.

Condon's remarks seem to be aimed towards an even greater level of "saturating" policing which will almost certainly provoke a number of other riots.

Riots may be a laugh for some people or a chance to have a go at the police who have been harassing our communities, but whilst they remain sporadic, disorganised and out of control, they generally achieve very little. They may also serve to rally the right around racism and "law and order".

To make a real impact we need to organise working class people around clear social demands that we can take throughout the labour movement.

This would provide a real alternative to the present that would challenge both the Tories and also the Labour leadership's "guilty on crime" stance and their pro-rich social policies.

Liberation's Dutch sister group: Rebel
Fight together for equality

Ron Bloch
In the Netherlands, as in the rest of Europe, the welfare state is being demolished and people from Third World countries are trying to escape poverty.

People lose the jobs, housing and living conditions deteriorate, people are waiting years to get a house. These are the consequences of the government policies of the last 12 years, that stood for the interests of the rich.

But appearances can be misleading. Many people get confused and blame immigrants and refugees. But those people are in an even worse situation.

Racism

Racist organisations like the Centrum démokraat (2 members of parliament and together with other racist and fascist organisations also represented in the local councils of many cities) struggle together for a "Netherlands for the Dutch". But of course this exclusively white, Dutch Holland won't be a better place for the ordinary Dutch people.

In Parliament the leader Janmaat almost always votes for the further dismemberment of the welfare state! The different far right parties are in favour of the same policies as the Dutch government, composed of Social Democrats and 2 Liberal groupings (PVDA, VVD and D66). Their main difference is that according to them, immigrants and refugees should be treated tougher.

Although for years now, immigrants without a Dutch passport have the right to vote and to get elected at local level, even the new government (for the first time in almost 100 years) without the Christian Democrats) could make the next step expanding this to national level.

Instead of that, the asylum policies were tightened, the law on affirmative action for immigrant people is passed without any sanctioning on trespassing by employers. After that the racist parties showed the electoral potential of racist politics, the ordinary right wing (but also social democracy) political parties more and more talk about the "refugee problem", about "more density in place of rights for immigrants". Especially the leader of the "liberals", Balkenende, whose party is in the government coalition, but who is also leader of the parliamentary group of the "liberals" is developing himself more and more towards a kind Bar
cus like right wing position.

Solidarity

For the Dutch section of the FI Socialist Workers Party (SAP) and the youth organisation, Rebel, it's clear that we have to struggle together with the immigrants and refugees for the improvement of their conditions. That's why we are involved in the creation of local and national anti-fascist and anti-racist committees.

We are involved in the broad, more moderate movement "Nederland Beekent Kleur" ("Netherlands shows colour, takes sides"), but also in the campaign "Schoorls (province) against racism" and in the more direct action organisation. Anti-Fascist Action, that is famous for effectively breaking up fascist meetings.

The building of a powerful anti-fascist movement is connected with the struggle for more jobs, better wages and social security and the defence of the welfare state.

We have to fight for defence and expansion of democratic rights, like immigrants right to vote, the right of appeal for refugees who are not recognised as such by the Dutch state.

Solidarity also means the cancellation of the Third World debt and forcing our government to stop supporting dictatorships. Because without poverty and repression nobody has to fear.

Get Active!
To find out more about Rebel write to:
Rebel, Sint
Jacobstraat
10-20, 1012
Amsterdanm,
Netherlands.
Tel: (00 31) 20 6259272

If wars, starvation, environmental devastation, exploitation and injustice make you angry...

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Then, like us, you've probably thought a lot about how to change the world. Simply wishing things would get better is not enough.

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Don't just get Angry

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Toxic Texaco beaten by Ecuadorean greens

Eco-friendly activists have won a battle with oil giant Texaco over its destruction of eastern Ecuador.

The US-based company promised in May to repair the damage done to the indigenous communities who have suffered. As part of its activities it killed two million acres of rainforest, spilled more oil than the Exxon Valdez disaster, displaced indigenous peoples from their lands, polluted the water they bathe, cook and drink from, and polluted the air.

And that’s just for starters! At the beginning Texaco was taking 93 percent of the profits with the paltry remittance for Ecuador. The Ecuadorian government, which relies heavily on the sale abroad of petroleum to keep its ruling elite well looked after, was pressurized into taking action by the Amazon for Life campaign within the country and by an international boycott of Texaco.

Indigenous peoples and small farmers want money spent on reforestation; removing abandoned equipment, cleaning abandoned oil wells; new schools and hospitals; and sewerage and drainage facilities for the towns. However other oil companies including British ones are now involved in oil exploration and they have found new seams to pillage. Indigenous communities have vowed to protect their land and people from “ecological violence and cultural terrorism” and have called for a 5-year suspension of all mining.

Now that this partial victory has been won, the longer struggle is to challenge the export dependency of Ecuador on one non-renewable and harmful mineral as well as the power that western transnationals wield in third World countries.

That means changing the economy to serve the poor and powerless, not the rich and powerful. It also means looking for allies with the potential and in whose interest it is to change society. That’s the working class.

Campaigning against Blair

The British society is in a pit of a social and economic crisis. The traditional basis for the British economy, mass production and consumption of goods, has been eroded. The welfare state is in chaos. As a result, the consensus politics by which all the main political parties agreed with the basis, is no more.

The Conservative Party is most obviously in crisis. It is split on a whole range of issues, most notably Europe. But the Labour Party is undergoing changes too. If Blair gets his way, Labour will no longer be the party of the working class and the trade unions. It will become the party of Europe and big business, a bosses’ alternative to the Tories.

When Blair announced his intention to scrap Clause Four - Labour’s commitment to common ownership, the Socialist Policies for a Labour Government campaign was launched. This is necessary since Blair’s attacks will continue. His next step is to reduce the role that the trade unions and constituency parties play in deciding policy.

A few weeks ago Liberal Democrat supporters attended the campaign’s conference in Birmingham. It was decided to fight around the issues of full employment, public spending, public ownership of utilities, benefits, repealing VAT on fuel, trade union rights, a minimum wage, cutting arms expenditure and challenging discrimination.

Liberal Democrat supporters attended the campaign’s conference. All people who wish to fight Blair should get involved. In particular, it is important to raise these issues in branches of Young Labour and in college Labour groups, and in trade unions.

The list of demands are a good start, but they are not particularly radical or socialist. We believe that a more fundamental reorganisation of society is necessary.

In our opinion, those in the Labour Party should instead be seeking to broaden outwards and look to the trade unions, the campaigns, and the struggles of youth, the oppressed, and the broader working class.

If Blair is to be defeated, it will not simply be because the left in the Labour Party does a good job. It will be because workers, youth and the oppressed start to fight for their rights. A Labour government will promote great expectations which will soon turn to anger. This anger must be channeled through the Labour Party. The Labour Party left will not win on its own. It must link up with the struggles of workers, youth and the oppressed.

Seven more “miscarriages of justice” in Northern Ireland

Bob Greene

In the Summer of last year, Liberation reported on the case of the Ballymurphy 7, seven nationalist youth in Belfast who were fitted up and tortured by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. We are pleased to say that they have now all been acquitted and released. The fact that some have spent up to 4 years in prison, that security forces threatened to hang over the names and addresses of their families to Loyalist death squads, and that they were tortured both physically and psychologically has shown the lengths that the British state is prepared to go to in order to attempt to smash resistance to British rule amongst nationalist youth in Ireland.

In acquitting the remaining three - Hugh McLaughlin, Tony Garland and Michael Beack - in March this year, the Court of Appeal rejected most of his time emphasizing that although there was no real evidence their statements couldn’t be trusted anyway. The reason he had to do this is simple - there have been too many exposures of the corruption and brutality of the ‘justice’ system meted out by the British state in recent years, in particular to nationalists in the north of Ireland. Behind the smokescreen of the “peace process” very little has changed.

The British state still rules the six counties through giving a few minor privileges to the Protestant minority in Ireland and through repression and discrimination of nationalists and Catholics.

The courts cannot be seen to admit this because the repressive apparatus are still needed to maintain this system of inequality and national oppression. Moreover it would open the way to appease the hundreds of other innocent people locked up by the British state.
Techno - A Home For Female Musical Expression?

Katherine Swingle

Women have clung onto the coat tails of men in loads of ways and in loads of ways. They have to work harder to get less far and they have to justify themselves for having the audacity to enter many male-dominated careers.

The music business is no exception. When rock and roll was new, women were pushed into what we deemed appropriate "female" roles, hence the huge number of "girl" groups which came on the scene in the U.S. in the 1960s. They had great voices but they were marketed by male producers.

You can see a natural progression from these groups to Kylie Minogue who owes her pop persona to record company decisions. As the years have gone by, more women have blasted their way to the top of the mainstream, i.e. male-dominated and constructed, music scene. Singers such as Tina Turner have even shown that you can be a female rock star if you strut your stuff forcibly enough. This is progress of sorts. Turner's whole life is battle against men and winning, and being stronger now than ever gives her music a great kick to it.

But female performers like that do very little to change and mould for themselves the kind of music we actually hear. In a way, they just speak men's musical language in different kinds of voices. They say different things but all the musical forms stay the same. And so musical forms such as heavy rock thrash on and on and maybe we'll see a few more female vocalists in such bands or the odd token singer.

At the moment though there are lots of women coming out by women who have got involved in techno music. This music is a whole new kind of sound and it is one in which women are currently leading the way.

Take the music of Jane Silbery and Margaret Fiedler for instance. They mix computer-generated samples with acoustic instruments. They create a new musical language. They also mix samples of lyrics or maybe whispered words - none of your verse, chorus, verse, chorus, middle 8, repeat chorus to fade or to death depending which comes first.

Does this create music made up of sounds that do not connect to each other or to human experience? I don't think so. In interviews Silbery often says that she hates the idea of just experimenting with technology for its own sake. It makes her feel "like I do when I hear comedians full of hate and people laughing". She sees techno as the chance to get her feelings expressed via music without having to follow any rules. These women see themselves as having their own musical history. Joni Mitchell has always been an exception to the rule of women having to simply intervene into male musical forms. She has experimented with and blended a huge number of musical forms creating a new one, and that is all that you're doing when you sample. She worked a lot of jazz, blues and even country into her one sound. It was refreshing and she had her own role.

Kate Bush has also always used technology to create an in-credibly complex sound. She could layer all kinds of instruments over the top of each other and break up her own voice and then put it back together differently. These sounds certainly were not developed in order for these women to distance themselves from their experiences. They have been able to make dramatically moving sounds and songs of all of their own invention. It is on this base that the new technology-proficient women are building.

Maybe they are not on the brink of creating a women's musical language and it probably wouldn't be a good thing if they did. New restrictions for female artists would just replace old ones. But techno is providing a way for women to express themselves more freely, and women in turn have noticed this and are leading this musical form.

Self-Defence Is No Offence!

Elkie Dee

Emma Humphries was recently released from prison, after appeals against a life sentence for killing a man whom she feared would otherwise have killed her.

Campaigners for the rights of women like E.D. are hoping that Sara Thomson may also get a more sympathetic hearing.

The Jordanche family storyline in Brookside has drawn more attention to real cases. Helplines for women facing domestic violence reported an increase in calls as a result of the story. A wonderful twist (for politico soap-addicts) scriptwriters have shown the women of Brookside Close launching a Free the Brookside Two defence campaign. Though the story was also used to attack the left with the caricature "rent-a-mob" intent on causing violence who "castrated" the Jordachio to be moved to another prison.

It's important to remember that domestic violence isn't just a problem for a few unfortunate women, Mandy Jordanae, Sara Thomson or whoever.

Many women still live in fear, others are still in prison for killing in self-defence, whilst men are acquitted on the grounds of provocation by "nagging". Even worse, many black women face the additional threat of deportation from Britain if they do leave violent partners.

There are a range of organisations campaigning for changes in the law to make it less biased against women, and doing practical solidarity work to support prisoners who killed because they knew no other way out. Others try to help women and their 'people of fected by domestic violence.
Jobs not J.S.A.!!

Nigel Daniy, CPSA North Humberside ES Branch (personal capacity)

As Treasurer Mils-Mier, John Major oversaw the withdrawal of benefit rights for 16 and 17 year olds. This has forced thousands of young people onto the streets rather than stay at home and be subjected to physical and emotional abuse. As Prime Minister, Major has looked on as more and more young people have lost their entitlement to benefits. Students can no longer sign on during their holidays, even though grants are being cut. Those in full-time education can no longer claim housing benefit. Those doing part-time college courses are often harassed off the unemployment register. This increasingly makes further and higher education the preserve of a privileged few.

In October 1996, the Tories plan to replace Unemployment Benefit and Income Support for the unemployed, with a single benefit - Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). Again, young people will be especially hard hit. Those aged 16-24 face cuts in their benefit of between 20 and 60 per cent, depending on their circumstances.

Low Pay? No Way!

Elkie Dee

Everyone needs money to pay for somewhere to live, to buy food and so on, don't they?

Labour politicians acknowledge that it's scandalous that so many people, many of them young, lack the money to afford these basic necessities. So why won't the Labour Party make a commitment to introducing a minimum wage for everyone, including young people? What's so scary about the idea that all people who work need a living wage? Quite a lot for Labour.

The leadership of the Labour Party under Tony Blair are less interested in promoting social justice than they are in showing that they can manage capitalism better than the Tories. Ending poverty pay through the introduction of a minimum wage would get in the way of this.

Already Harriet Harman, Labour's spokesperson on employment, speaking to the bosses organisation the CBI has stated that the Labour leadership will fight to exempt young people from the national minimum wage so that bosses can exploit them as much as they choose. She suggested that new legislation could exempt employers from paying minimum wages to under 18s altogether and that an extra-low minimum wage could be developed for either under 24 or 21 year olds.

When Labour politicians and trade union bureaucrats oppose the minimum wage, they claim they are concerned about unemployment, that jobs would disappear. They even have the cheek to suggest this would be bad for young people, women, black people, and others who suffer from high unemployment and would lose their jobs.

Don't be conned by this kind of argument. Because it is a con! These arguments are used to defend the interests of the ruling rich, such as factory owners and those with thousands or millions of pounds invested in the exploitation of capitalism, against those of the working class. These arguments are also used against the interests of young people, black people, women, people with disabilities, all of whom are more likely to be in poverty-pay jobs if they have them. These are the people who most need a minimum wage.

Many young workers in low-paid jobs are forced into them by government policies, for example, the DSS requirement that people who sign on as unemployed must actively seek work and be willing to accept any work offered, even that of a low-wage cleaning job. The bosses need someone to clean, and they want it done as cheaply as possible, as that leaves them more money to award themselves pay rises. Working class people are told by the DSS that they don't have the right to seek to earn enough money to pay for the roof over their head and some food, even the odd night out. They don't have the right even to earn the pathetic amount they're given in Income Support, Housing Benefit etc.

The Job Seekers Allowance now being introduced by the government is going to make this even worse, as young people are bullied and intimidated into accepting poverty wages and any other conditions bosses wish to impose on their workers. It may be used to coerce people into scabbing against other workers on strike for better pay.

Commitment to the minimum wage would create problems for a Labour Party who have no intention of reversing years of welfare state cuts under Tory rule.

The Job Seekers' Allowance is aimed at saving money on benefits by making people not eligible for benefits or forcing them into near-slave labour. A minimum wage would make this harder, as it would make this policy designed to save money a lot less effective in achieving its purpose.

This is why campaigners for a minimum wage and against the Job Seekers' Allowance must link together to fight for a Labour commitment to the minimum wage and for Labour and trade union activists to take up these 2 closely connected struggles. These struggles need to include and fully involve everyone affected.