Major’s ‘Carry On’ team is no joke

Thatcher’s men,
Thatcher’s policies!

2.2 MILLION officially unemployed, and rising: the rigid Tory squeeze on the economy has brought 3,000 redundancies a day since John Major took over as Prime Minister.

Latest figures predict jobless totals topping three million: in fact they are probably already at this high. But Chancellor Norman Lamont declares this toll of misery to be "a price worth paying".

The Tories are desperately struggling to market Major as a ‘caring’ alternative to Thatcher; but it’s not just the recession that reminds us that most of her policies are still in place, along with the ministers who helped force them in. The evidence is all around us.

CHAOS in the NHS, and deepening: the havoc caused by Thatcher’s dogmatic insistence on applying ‘market’ methods is provoking a new round of cuts and unprecedented redundancies. More than 100 more hospitals are queuing up to ‘opt out’, while health care drowns in a tide of bureaucracy and waiting lists rise inexorably. Health Secretary William Waldegrave, backed by Major, insists that he will not bail out hospitals that go bust or relent on the highly unpopular ‘reforms’.

ANGER in households across the country as bills for the Poll Tax that Major and Michael Heseltine claim to have scrapped drop through letter boxes. Even Heseltine is now panicked by the prospect that without an extra £4 billion subsidy, an election next year could take place under the shadow of a third year of Poll Tax bills.

MISERY in the schools, where despite the failure of the first effort, Education Secretary Kenneth Clarke still insists that seven year-olds must be put through the agony of ‘testing’ to satisfy more Thatcherite prejudices. Meanwhile, Tony Poll Tax capping and other restrictions have cut school and college budgets to the bone.

INCREDULITY among British Rail travellers and commuters on hearing Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind’s vague pledges to improve railways. Even as he spoke BR was finalising plans to close down key sections of its freight services, and Lamont was restating the need for economic restraint.

Major may be attempting to don the mask of moderation, but his policies are stuck in the Thatcherite groove. His last best hope of electoral survival hinges on the weakness of Labour’s response.

There’s not only the problem of a Labour programme that offers less radical reforms than any time in the Party’s history: there is a problem of credibility. Each time Kinnock and his Shadows preface their timid proposals for reforms with ‘responsible’ promises that spending will depend upon economic growth, more voters begin to wonder if anything would really change under a Labour government.

To make sure things do change, we must not wait for the General Election. We must step up the struggles now against every aspect of ‘Thatcherism’, and use the summer’s union conferences and every other Labour movement arena to develop fighting policies spelling out socialist demands on a Labour government.
Lambeth: goodbye to Joan Twelves

By Councillor John Tulle

TWO YEARS of Joan Twelves' leadership of Lambeth Council have ended, terminated not by the local parties or the 40 Labour councillors, but by Walworth Road's witch-hunting.

The left has protested against this disgraceful interference in local democracy, knowing that any replacement will be even more hostile to socialist politics. Yet there will be few tears shed, given the disastrous politics followed by the council leadership over the years.

Vilified

How is it that the very administration that the Tories, their obnoxious press gang, and the polite surliness of Walworth Road have vilified and witch-hunted, is also seen as the enemy by its own trade unionists, anti-polit tax activists, and by large sections of the left?

These two years can be seen as a political lesson on how to alienate every conceivable section of political and social world. It was a long, tortuous, and inglorious exercise in the shadowing of principles.

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But we need a further effort to finish the job. We need the last £2,000 of our Fighting Fund target to finish equipping our offices properly. All donations are welcome - large and small!

Poll Tax than capping would have initially implied. Local people were not exactly holding street parties!

This illustrated the problem. It was a victory for the local state against the central state. But it was totally disconnected and at odds with any real demands or mobilisations of the community.

Sometimes, small issues highlight the depths to which such politics sank. Nowhere else but 'left-wing' Lambeth were two Labour Councillors, who haven't paid their Poll Tax, actually banned from voting in the Council.

Two votes

Two uncounted votes were precisely what the leadership needed to get its £26 million cuts package and record Poll Tax through.

Having ditched socialist politics for an impoverished form of 'pragmatism', not even basic democratic rights were to be defended - that an elected councillor can vote.

So why the witch-hunt if the leadership was so compliant? Two issues forced it. Firstly, the recommendation that Poll Tax bailiffs should not be used. Then, crucially, voting against the Gulf War. These were more than could be tolerated by the local LCC and the national Labour Party.

Conscience

The administration's left-wing past would never leave it alone, stabbing constantly, not usually effectively, at its conscience. But you are now not allowed to make day-trips to the left in the Labour Party, especially on a question as dear to the NEC as a war.

The result is an administration that has angered its natural enemies, but also alienated it's potential friends. NALGO, for example, has opposed the witch-hunt, but its efforts are understandably tied up with fighting the job cuts that Joan Twelves continues to force through.

As Twelves faced the end of her leadership, workers were going into occupation, ballotting for all-out industrial action, lobbying the security-guarded Town Hall, and commenting bitterly on her last days.

Towards the end, the few remaining sympathisers could be heard muttering the fact that Twelves was wrong, no matter which way she turned. Yet such a realization never translated into a understanding that the left never held any real power in Lambeth, but instead made itself simply a function of other forces. Sometimes they complained, but always they complied.

Little money

How did it end? Proving everyone to their right absolutely wrong by successfully appealing against capping, they had a little extra money to spend.

After two years arguing that all the compromises, sell-outs, and low-deals were necessary to prevent the right-wing and the LCC coming to power, the last act of the administration was to reverse a few cuts, not according to their own priorities, but the right-wing's. It has to be asserted in the face of all the cynicism and shallow 'realism', that real power cannot be won in isolation from the struggles of the labour movement.

The Twelves administration ranted on every item in their original manifesto. It was clear that the real power was elsewhere, and that they were increasingly just a tool of other forces.

Litmus test

There is a simple litmus test for socialists. Ignore having your own office, and lots of suited people around you. Ignore your ability to deliver a vote (on whose terms)?

If you cannot welcome, and seek to amplify the struggles of local people, then such 'power' is worth nothing. Indeed you only have it until someone with real power takes it away.

That is the sad truth about the Twelves administration, recently deposed.
New witch hunt in Liverpool

In the 2 May local elections, six 'real Labour' candidates chosen by their local parties were stood against those imposed by Walworth Road. Five candidates were elected. Although the candidates were backed by Militant supporters locally, it seems clear that the initiative to stand them did not come from Militant. The whole episode has caused considerable controversy on the left.

Now will the 'Broad Left' will stand a candidate against official Labour candidate Peter Killory in the Walton by-election, caused by Eric Heffer's death. What attitude should socialists in the Labour Party take?

The decision about how to cope with the Walworth Road mafia against candidates supported by local parties is an entirely tactical one — there are no timeless principles to be obeyed. In particular, the view that socialists should never stand against so-called 'official' Labour candidates is formalistic and tactically inept.

Exceptional

The conditions in Liverpool are exceptional. Because Harry Rimmer's right-wing council leadership has no stable majority, in effect there is a coalition council with the Liberals. Massive redundancies and services being imposed by the borough council are in the process of being imposed. The opposition on the council is the 'Broad Left' group comprising 22 expelled Labour councillors and the five newly elected.

Clearly the decision to stand the six 'real Labour' candidates against those imposed by the Labour leadership was a tactic to attempt to stop the balance on council against the right wing coalition.

There are two arguments which some Labour candidates use to oppose the election against the ward candidates. First, that it is wrong in principle ever to stand against 'official' Labour candidates.

Second, that this tactic would worsen the witch hunt against the left. The first argument cannot be sustained. Five candidates won on the basis of fighting cuts and defending jobs. This showed the open defiance of Walworth Road and the council leadership had a mass base. The 'real Labour' candidates were chosen using the normal democratic selection procedures. They had the support of their local parties and a considerable portion of the local community.

Expelled

The second argument is more serious. Walworth Road has jumped at the opportunity to deepen the witch hunt, expelling the ward candidates and the 22 councillors who have formed a left group on the council. Local MPs Terry Field and Bob Parry are being 'investigated'. Obviously the Labour leadership has seized the opportunity to try once more to crush the Liverpool left. But this deepening of the witch hunt is not in itself evidence that it was wrong to stand the six candidates. It has precipitated a deepening of the witch hunt — but that was coming anyway. Those who stand up to the witch hunt and try to defend local jobs and services face more witch hunts. Buckling down to every Walworth Road dictat will be no defence against the witchhunters.

The events in Liverpool stem from very special local circumstances and cannot be generalized or applied mechanically elsewhere. Liverpool has had the most advanced and determined mass opposition to the attack on local government in the whole of Britain. Opposition to the attacks of the Tories and the Labour leadership has a mass base often lacking elsewhere. In most other places these tactics would be unwarranted adventurism.

In particular, any temptation to use the evidence of Liverpool for advocating a general tactic of standing against imposed candidates would be wrong. In each case it depends on the strength of the left and whether there is a mass base for open defiance.

It seems that there is a sharp debate among the Militant leadership on these issues. Hundreds of their supporters have been expelled from Labour party membership. But it would be a major error on their part to transpose this by standing anti-Labour candidates on a national basis.

Neither should they, or the Liverpool council Broad Left, assume that they can repeat their council success in a parliamentary by-election. The Walton by-election will be about much more than the attack on Liverpool local government, or Kinnoch's witch hunt. Workers will want to express their hatred of the Tories, and will want to avoid two Labour movement candidates.

Ducking the fight

Militant have never seriously fought the witch hunt. They have avoided building a united campaign to confront the Labour leadership on this question. A general policy of standing anti-Labour candidates would be another episode ofducking the fight and playing into the hands of the right wing.

But neither can socialists adopt a generalised position of accepting automatically the flats of Walworth Road, as its destruction would be the last word in democracy and socialist legitimacy. If the left did that it would fight with one hand tied behind its back.

What panics Chris Patten?

The response of leading Tories to their defeat in the Mombmby by-election has the taste of something horribly like panic.

As Major and Tory chairman Chris Patten orchestrated a campaign against the Labour Party of 'lying' over the NHS, it was obvious that this was more than the usual excuse for by-election failure. At the highest level the Tories are ratted.

They are panicked because there are signs that the measures they took to win the election — getting rid of Thatcher and the Poll Tax — have not worked. The Tory lead in the opinion polls is evaporating nationwide. The 'good news' that what stood between the Tories and a fourth successive electoral victory was Margaret Thatcher and the poll tax now looks depressingly shaky: why is the poll tax not working in the NHS? That's of course a giant issue, from which the Tories cannot hide. In addition to the field there is the flood of redundancies, with real unemployment rising to over 3 million. People are getting their new poll tax bills, despite the pledge for its eventual abolition. And the underlying rate of inflation is up, despite the decline of the headline rate.

This can be summed up in one word: recession. The Tories have had a massive internal bloodletting to get rid of the poll tax and Thatcher. But they cannot make a U-turn on the NHS as well; neither can they, despite public opinion, turn round the economy in a clean-cut way before the next election.

As a result they are losing support massively in their base in the middle class and the better-off sections of the working class. What is particularly dangerous and threatening to the Tories is that they are losing this support in the Midlands and the South, and to both the Liberals and Labour.

Whatever the exact date, the next general election will be fought under very different conditions to that in 1987. In 1987 Britain was at the crest of the 'yuppie boom' — the mid-1980s speculative economic expansion fuelled by US economic growth and financial deregulation. Now hard times are hitting not just the working class in the north, but substantial sections of the better-off working class and the middle class.

Once the Tories heartland support in the South begins to decay, and especially when they lose out to both Labour and the Liberals, they are in deep trouble. While Labour does not have a decisive lead, the possibility of a Labour government is now open. The Tory hysterics against Labour is just the beginning of a long rearguard action.

What attitude will the ruling class take in a general election? In 1987 substantial sections of capitalist-backed Labour. In the 1980s we have seen sections of the non-revolutionary Social Democrat Labour and the Liberal Party rise to back Socialist party governments in France and Spain. Has Labour got enough rightwingers to attract such support in Britain?

An沢 morning Labour government would be put under big pressure by the City and big business to carry out right-wing policies — pressure it would be too happy to accept. But before an election, capitalist will fight a bitter campaign to prevent Labour coming to power. For sections of the middle class this is just a matter of tradition and habit.

But for the most far-sighted ideologues of British capitalism Labour is still not trustworthy. Not because Kinnoch espouses radical policies or will challenge capitalism, but because a Labour government is a risk not worth taking. A fourth Tory term might lead to controls inside the Labour Party as Kinnochism came unstuck, but this would deeply demoralise the trade unions. The effects a Labour government are not so certain. Working class expectations would be raised. The conditions for a fightback could be created. Overall it is not worth so a prospect for the ruling class as another Tory victory.

The achilles heel of Labour movement in this situation is precise the strength of the right and new realism in the unions. A Kinnoch government would come to power with new realism almost universally dominant in the unions, and the right massively ascendant in the Labour Party. Just as the semi-fascist Le Pen movement in France has grown substantially during ten years of Mitterrand rule, right wing sentiment could re-emerge. Labour victorious or Labour defeated in the next election both mean disillusionment with Kinnoch.

The question will then be who benefits from this. The preparatory work to organise and deepen the base of the left in the unions and Labour Party before an election will be crucial to the outcome.
Tube strike: inevitable retreat or RMT climbdown?

After RMT leaders called off strike action against redundancies on the tube last month, we published an article by a Socialist Outlook tube worker calling the decision not to go ahead ‘inevitable’. That article argued that the base of support did not exist for resistance to management’s threats to suspend and eventually sack strikers. This view is contested below by two of our supporters.

Who called off the LUL strike?

By Alan Nettle

The calling off of the strike on London Underground was a timid climbdown. Almost all of the 800 redundancies will go ahead (80 of them will be drivers - probably half of them ASLEF members). LUL said that the additional 200 job cuts were not seriously proposed anyway.

Management’s reason for the job cuts was that automatic ticket barriers had reduced the need for staff, and that reduction in use of the underground had enabled them to take rolling stock out of use for renovation. The restructuring involves both job losses, and loss of earnings for workers displaced, albeit temporarily, from their normal jobs.

The not result is fewer workers covering the same amount of work - a long term management project. After the successful strike ballot, the decision of the RMT leadership to call off the strike in return for a few vague concessions, had the LUL management laughing. Their divide and rule tactics have paid off - the union leaderships and activists are at one another’s throats. This is a throwback to the 1982 strike, when ASLEF members crossed NUR picket lines, NUR members crossed ASLEF lines, and TSSA members crossed both.

The bitterness caused by this was only partly overcome by the 1991 train worker strike - which were organised by mass, open meetings of the rank and file. It is not ASLEF’s craft nature which upsets the RMT bureaucrats but their recruitment of guards and shunters previously organised by RMT.

RMT is little better than ASLEF despite its claim to be an industrial union. It is just as prone to poaching as ASLEF.

If a united, industrial railworkers union comes about it will not be through a recruitment war, or through telling ASLEF workers they must sacrifice themselves for lower-paid and lower well-organised workers. It will come about through a united struggle over common issues - the last thing that either the RMT’s Eamonn Kavanagh or ASLEF’s Derek Fullilove want.

Fortunately the calling off of strike action three weeks ago makes them closer to achieving their objectives.

The problem with the article on this in Socialist Outlook no. 2 is not just that it puts the best possible gloss on the loss of 800 jobs and supports the decision to call off the strike. It also defends the way that it was done - by a decision taken over the heads of the rank and file by informal ‘sounding’.

It is true that there was management intimidation right from the start of the ballot, and it is possible that the mood changed, or new factors intervened making the strike become unavoidable - although the article in unconvincing on this.

But who decides the mood has changed? There was only one decision to put on the rank and file - and that was for strike action. There was no right to set aside such a mandate without going back to the members - nor should the ballot be thrown in to be shown but to seek a reaffirmation the mass vote in the new situation.

It seems that the change of heart, at least among the leaders of the strike, came after the result of the ballot - which many felt was disappointing. Yet a two to one vote on a 60% poll is a very good and solid mandate under today’s conditions and with management threatening victimisation.

If the charge of using ballots as bargaining counters is to be effectively avoided, new democratic methods of decision-making that need to be developed within the RMT. While ballots to call strikes are unavoidable within the law, the law does not (quite deliberately) allow a mass ballot to call it all off. Mass meetings can be held if the views of the rank and file need to be sought.

In the event, the LUL management won by intimidating methods and they will be back for more. The days of ‘safe’ strikes are clearly over. This may well have been the best chance the RMT will get for some time to take LUL management on. ‘Keep your powder dry’ as against ‘strike whilst the iron is hot’ is the seldom the way to generate a struggle against management.

It is true that the ASLEF leadership played a destructive role in the whole confrontation, but the answer cannot be just ‘smash ASLEF’. Too many assumptions were made in the previous article about what the ASLEF membership would have done. The last day official strike: not enough attention was paid to developing rank and file solidarity.

The fact is the end result of the legal was a big defeat for the unions and a victory for management, and if that is not recognised it is harder to regroup for another day.

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New attacks on abortion rights

by Kate Arens

The reporting in the mainstream press of the recent court case allowing a 12-year-old girl to terminate her pregnancy was, to say the least, selective. No papers chose to highlight the fact that the girl did want to have the abortion and most appeared to attach too much importance to the girl’s mother’s wish that she continue with the pregnancy.

Although the decision in this case was made mostly on the basis of medical evidence, it is nonetheless an important decision in that it has enabled the girl to carry out her choice to terminate the pregnancy. This victory for choice however is only one in a sea of bad news for women’s reproductive rights. The introduction of the internal market in the NHS and the creation of the trust hospitals has meant money is flowing out of the non-essential services including abortion facilities.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (HFEA) while providing slightly easier access to the facilities that do exist for early abortions has also reduced the upper time limit for abortions from 28 weeks to 24 weeks making the reduction in facilities and increase in waiting lists even more worrying.

The HFEA has also restricted the availability of donor insemination (DI) for single women and lesbians. This is a vicious attack on women’s choice and in a clear example of the hypocrisy of the anti-abortion lobby. Their aim is not to give rights to ‘unborn children’ from some mis-guided sense of humanity. It is a clear attempt to control the lives and bodies of women and ensure that the ‘right’ babies are born to the ‘right parents’.

Elsewhere the picture isn’t much better. In the US, Utah has just passed very stringent anti-abortion legislation, with the death penalty available to judges for women who obtain abortions. Utah has put a bid in for the 1998 Winter Olympics which will be decided by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Birmingham on June 15.

The National Organisation of Women (NOW) from America has organised a boycott of the state of Utah and has asked women in Britain to picket the meeting of the IOC and show support for the women of Utah.

The National Abortion Campaign (NAC) is holding a conference aimed at trade unions on July 27, to discuss many of the issues raised by the HFEA and the reorganisation of the NHS.

The conference will also be discussing access to contraception and access to information about it. Despite their recent realisation that AIDS is spreading among the heterosexual population as well as the gay community the government and the education services are not responding with more detailed information and advice on contraceptive methods.

The conference will also look at the attacks on abortion rights in eastern Europe and there will be special actions from Poland and other Eastern European countries at the conference.

For more information about the activities in Birmingham, the conference in July or any general information about NAC, please ring 0121-704 0121 or contact the National Abortion Campaign Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC1.

Can NALGO’s left meet the challenge?

Fred Leplat (Islington Branch) and Eve Turner (Ealing) sum up the key issues before this year’s conference

The 750,000-strong public services union NALGO has survived better than most the battering that trade unions have taken in recent years. Its overall membership has fallen just 40,000 since 1981; the equivalent figure for NUPE is about 100,000.

Central to this survival is not just NALGO’s huge financial and publicity resources which boost recruitment, but the fact that its 490,000 local government membership has held up. Service jobs losses in local government have been among the NUPE and GMB manual workers. But this is starting to change.

NALGO’s future depends on the following key factors. First, can it fight off the flood of redundancies threatened in local government? Second, will it put up a serious fight for its local government members? Third, can it fight off the growing threat of de-recognition? And fourth, what will be the outcome of the NALGO merger with NUPE and the health union COHSE?

This year, up to 50,000 redundancies are threatened in the local government membership. Hundreds have already taken place in authorities as far flung as Harlington, Harrow, North Tyneside, Liverpool, Ham- mersmith, Lambeth and Kent County. NALGO’s local government committee has no strategy to fight this jobs massacre.

Time and time again, redundancies and redeployment agreements have been negotiated, usually not involving immediate compulsory redundancies, for want of a national-led fight.

Capitulation

Local activists have a hard job winning the argument for resistance, when branch members know that everyone else is capitulating. Only in exceptional cases, like Liverpool, does a real struggle take place.

Next year the jobs carnage will be much worse. As the Tories try to slim down local government through privatisation and charge capping, NALGO stands to lose up to a quarter of its local government membership.

Local government employers are this year hanging tough on pay negotiations, refusing to make an offer, despite the growing settlement date.

Still snarling from the bloody nose they got in the 1989 pay strikes and concessions made, they are waiting for the official inflation rate to come down to impose a low-level deal.

Low-paid ditched

Once again, NALGO’s negotiating team, led by lay officials Jim White and Irene Geddart, and local government officer Dennis Raad, are preparing to ditch the claims for the low paid - a minimum of £950 a year.

Job losses are also threatening the public utilities privatised under Thatcher – water, gas and electricity. Privatised electricity firm National Power has just announced 2000 jobs losses which NALGO does not intend to fight.

This sector is leading the way in breaking up national negotiating structures. The water industry, privatised into 12 private authorities, now has negotiations authority by authority. Several have severely restricted union negotiating rights.

Withdrawal from national negotiations also hangs over local government. Around 40 authorities, mainly in the south east have already withdrawn from national negotiations.

Union merger

Doming this year’s conference agenda is merger with NUPE and COHSE, scheduled to be completed by February 1993. The merger has wide support throughout the union. It will create the largest union in the country, with 1.5 million members of whom more than a million will be women. The new union will be dominant in the NHS and local government.

For the three leadershapers merger is a matter of bureaucratic self-defence in hard times. NUPE and COHSE are financially strapped, and NUPE in particular has lost thousands of members. NALGO’s leadership knows that it if does not complete the merger then NUPE will look to the GMB.

The NALGO left rightly supports merger. But what matters is whose agenda wins out in the new union.

New realism

NUPE’s leadership has been much more directly under the wing forward line, and indeed, through deputy general secretary Tom Sayer, to Neil Kinmock than NALGO. NUPE is unaffiliated and has often sided with the TGWU and MSF against the AEU and GMB in TUC committees, ever issues like anti-unions laws and pay restraint.

Sayer and the NUPE right wing will want to use the merger to drive back the troublesome NALGO left. Merger will create a new stronger bureaucracy and a tough battlegroup of NALGO left wingers.

But the militants in NALGO face a broader problem - that of renewal of their forces, and of winning back the trust of the public and the public services who have been a nest-grinding, arena of struggle in the 1980s.

Many local leaderships have been worn out and retired. The endless round of battles over the cuts, job losses and pay are taking their toll.

Minority

The left is a powerful minority, especially at national conference. But the Broad Left has never been stabilised because of the factional rivalry between the SWP and Militant, both of which have used it as a front.

Last November the SWP forced the national Broad Left meeting to seize control and then effectively shut it down.

If the challenge of mass redundancies and merger is to be confronted, the left needs a minimum of permanent organisations - in a democratic basis.

Only the forces organised around NALGO Action are put together and fighting. Without it the left will suffer serious defeats in the near future.

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India after Gandhi’s assassination

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi has thrown Indian politics into turmoil. But the major factor in the general election campaign until his assassination was the strong surge of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The right wing BJP held 4008 mass election rallies across India, and is the decisive new force in Indian politics.

Oliver New spoke to ACHIN VANAIK, a leading member of the ICS, Indian section of the Fourth International, about the crisis of Indian politics. Vanaiik is the author of The Painful Transition, the best Marxist analysis of India, published by Verso.

Oliver New: What will be the immediate effects of Gandhi’s assassination?

Achin Vanaiik: The immediate effect is going to be a blow to the Congress party. Congress used to dominate Indian politics, but its dominance was eroded by its failure to do anything about poverty. Now Congress is in a more or less a realist national figure to lead them, but without Rajiv they haven’t got one.

But Congress should get a sympathy vote because of the assassination. The elections will either result in a small majority for Congress, or a new coalition. They will show whether the BJP can make a dramatic breakthrough. Even if they don’t make an immediate breakthrough, the BJP will be a crucial factor for some time to come.

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ON: When Rajiv was assassinated commentators talked of this death of one man as a threat to Indian democracy. Why are they so important in India?

AV: It is to do with the ‘patriarchal’ character of the political system. In the political centre in India you have the Congress and its offshoot/imitator, the Janata Dal. On the main questions of the economy nothing separates them politically, they have moved well to the right of the post-independence social democratic consensus.

Both those formations are coalitions with a shifting class base and no clear cut programme to hold them together. So the role of central leading personalities is vital to appeal to a multi-class, multi-caste electorate and have a really national appeal. It was this factor which made Indira Gandhi promote her son Sanjay, and after both their deaths, made Congress turn to Rajiv. In addition there is the growing volatility of Indian politics. That can be summed up in a single phrase: the failure of Congress.

Outside of the Congress and Janata Dal you have a wide variety of political parties to the left and right – the BJP on the right and the Communist Party India (India) and the Communist Party (Marxists) on the left. They are more structured, with a firmer programme, so their leadership crisis is not so severe.

The dilemma is that Congress is the only real national party, but with no leader to compare in stature with the other party leaders.

ON: But there don’t seem to be fundamental political differences between the major parties?

AV: In fact there are, on the crucial questions of economic policy and socialism. Both within Congress and Janata Dal there are rightist forces which favour public ownership. And obviously the Communist parties have a more left wing economic programme.

But in a strong sense Congress and Janata Dal have managed capitalism, and the BJP have no clear alternative economic policy, as yet. But the crucial difference is on secularism. While Congress, Janata Dal and the present premier Chandra Shekhar are opportunistic and play the communalist game, they are not nearly so committed to Hindu nationalism as the BJP. That is the vital dividing line in Indian politics today.

ON: Why, when the economic crisis is so great, is communalism and secularism the crucial issue?

AV: Because of the failure of Congress and its derivative parties. National rebellion against both the north and north-east of the country particularly in Punjab and Kashmir. But even these national movements are very concerned on the issue of religious identity.

There is a strong link between communalism and nationalism.
Who wins in Ethiopia?

THE FALL of the Dergue regime in Ethiopia, and the flight of its leader Haile Martam Mengistu, is the outcome of a long crisis. For years it has been obvious that the days of Mengistu were numbered.

Unable to defeat the rebels in the subject province of Eritrea and Tigre, hugely unpopular in the whole of the Ethiopia, the Mengistu regime was doomed once the Soviet Union began to withdraw its aid. The entry into Addis Ababa of the fighters of the Eritrean People's Democratic Revolutionary Front is a victory for all the peoples of that country. But what kind of regime will result?

Both the Eritrean fighters and those in Tigre have formally been led by adherents of Marxism-Leninism. But the transition of power has been brokered by the United States. The US aims to use the crisis to pressure the EPRDF into a pro-Western stance in return for promises of aid.

Mengistu was part of the Provisional Military Administrative Council of Ethiopia which, in power since 1974, overthrowing the emperor Haile Selassie. This was not a popular revolution, but a military coup against the semi-feudal regime. But overthrow of the emperor unleashed a revolutionary dynamic.

The early years of the regime were marked by sharp conflicts between the Dergue and the trade unions, which resulted in 1975 in the banning of strikes and growing repression.

Left repressed

From 1976-8 the Dergue fought a bloody battle to repress the far-left Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, eventually choosing the more moderate All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (M'esioun). The Congress of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party was also repressed.

All the forces in this conflict made reference to the traditional Marxist-Africanist rhetoric. But despite radical measures, including nationalisations and a brutal collective that was imposed on an unwilling peasantry, the Dergue never represented a force for socialisation. It was a radical, authoritarian petty-bourgeois political force, which crystallised a new privileged class based on state bureaucracy.

The real face of the Dergue was most vividly shown in its long war against the peoples of Eritrea and Tigre. This war was fought with utter brutality, making attacks on the civilian population a matter of course.

Worse, the Dergue showed utter disregard for the consequences of the military campaign in disrupting aid to the millions of victims of successive famines.

With the enemies remaining war torn and hundreds of thousands of dead by starvation, Mengistu lashed out at the states' reserves on projects like maps and commuter buildings in Addis Ababa.

It seems unlikely that the hostile demonstrations which greeted the entry to the capital of the EPRDF were sponsored by genuine left support. It appears that they were organised by the tiny group of people who supported Mengistu's regime. Nonetheless, the demonstration against which were met is not a good sign for the future.

Under Brezhnev the USSR backed Mengistu in return for military bases. The danger is that the new regime will copy a pro-Western role.

The neighbouring Somalia shows that a pro-Western stance is no guarantee that aid to enable the new regime to stave off famine will be forthcoming. But in the highly unequal global economy, and in the context of the Third World debt crisis, aid to the new regime may well be forthcoming. But in the highly unequal global economy, and in the context of the Third World debt crisis, aid to the new regime may well be forthcoming.

International News

South Africa: hunger strikers force ANC's hand

by Charles van Gelderen

IT WOULD SEEM THAT even deadlines must have a deadline. After weeks of prevarication, it was only the initiative of African National Congress hunger strikers that pushed the leadership into taking action.

In December of last year the Consultative Conference of the ANC called for the implementation of the agreements with the government - principally the release of all political prisoners and amnesty for returning exiles.

It set April 30 as the date by which these demands should be met. If not, the ANC would organise mass actions, consumer boycotts and hunger strikes among political prisoners still behind bars.

April 30 came and went and the only thing that happened was that the ANC leadership issued a new ultimatum to the government. They demanded the sacking of the two ministers in charge of defence and security, Malan and Vlok.

No action

They again threatened action if these demands were not met by May 9. This deadline also passed. The ministers were not sacked. No mass actions took place.

On May Day, however, there were limited demonstrations against the continued imprisonment of political prisoners. About 350 members of the ANC Youth League were arrested in batches in various parts of the country and about 30 of it's activists occupied the provincial offices of the ruling National Party in Cape Town for three hours, before being evicted by the police.

In his now well-established role of maintaining contact with the government behind the scenes, Nelson Mandela telephoned Security Minister Dr. Adriaan Vlok late at night and obtained the release of the youth who were arrested.

Hunger strikes

But at the beginning of May, six political prisoners started a hunger strike, to be joined by others later. Initially, one of them, Ratidzai Rohas, was released from hospital because he was so weak that he could hardly stand. The prisoners' condition was said to be critical, and on the brink of kidney damage. A further six prisoners were released some three weeks later, to coincide with the opening of De Klerk's 'Peace Conference'.

This hunger strike spurred the ANC leadership into action. The entire leadership joined ANC members nationwide in a 24 hour fast. Whether this will be enough to satisfy the militant elements inside the ANC remains to be seen.

It is also symbolic of Mandela's pragmatic and conciliatory style of leadership that while there were demonstrations against Margaret Thatcher, fed by white South Africans for her heroic (sic) stand against sanctions, Nelson Mandela had a forty minute telephone conversation with her.

'Peace talks'

The problems confronting the ANC leadership are growing. It is increasingly seen by rank and file members and supporters as having lost the initiative in negotiations with the government.

Pressure from the ranks and the increasing evidence that the security forces are conniving with Inqatha violence against the ANC seems, at last, to have had an effect. The ANC, as well as the COSATU union federation, refused to take part in the 'Peace Talks' convened by the government under the chairmanship of President De Klerk, at which the right wing Conservative Party and Inqatha were represented.

Demonstrations

It also called for demonstrations in support of the prisoners in the few days before the 'Peace Talks', in which both Winnie Mandela and ANC Chief of Staff Chris Hani were arrested.

But there can be no doubt that De Klerk now feels he has the upper hand in his dealings with the ANC. It is true that his whole electoral constituency is being steadily eroded. In a recent by-election in the Orange Free State, the Conservative Party candidate more than doubled his majority.

So De Klerk, has had to look around for new alliances. Buthelezi has replaced Mandela as a potential partner in a future 'non-racial' government. This, despite the fact that a recent opinion poll showed that he commands only 10% support among black South Africans. It is even doubtful that he has the support of the majority of Zulus.

Confident

The 'coloured' Labour Party has now merged with the previously all-white National Party, thus assuring De Klerk of a majority in the event of the three, at present racially constituted, chambers merging in the future.

That is why De Klerk could confidently declare, in an interview with the Financial Times that the National Party will have its hands on the tiller of government for a very long time to come'.

He is not, however, prepared to push his power on the line with elections on the basis of a universal franchise - one person, one vote - across the colour bar. Instead he is hoping that the orchestrated violence now sweeping the country will stampede 'moderate' blacks into his camp as the only alternative to the savagery now going on in the townships.
The End of Yugoslavia

The crisis in eastern Europe is taking a special form in Yugoslavia – the break up of the multinational state into warring nations. Yugoslavia’s spiralling economic crisis, and the dissolution of the League of Communists, has brought regional and national conflicts back onto the stage of history. The prospect of any federal solution has been sabotaged by the offensive of the ex-Communist leadership of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, which is attempting to make the whole of Yugoslavia a Serbian fiefdom. Here MICHELE LEE charts the end of Yugoslavia.

YUGOSLAVIA today is split into two irreconcilable camps: those who want a free association of equal nations and those who want a Serb-dominated central state. The earlier Federal order, based on national equality, has been destroyed – a process which started with the Serbian destruction of the autonomy of the province of Kosovo. The latest crisis – with Serbia blocking the election of a new Yugoslav president – has substantially increased the likelihood of a full-scale civil war.

Break down

The latest crisis is the culmination of a four-year process of destroying the all-Yugoslav constitutional order, by Milosevic’s Serbian regime. Formally speaking, Yugoslavia is a federation of eight members: six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro) and two provinces (Kosovo, Vojvodina).

But over the past three years Serbia has unilaterally altered the character of the federation, swallowing up the two provinces (Kosovo is in the third year of military occupation), and engineering a coup d’état in Montenegro which has reduced it to satellite status. This has destroyed the national-political balance in the federation. Milosevic’s trick consisted in robbing the provinces of their real autonomy, but keeping their representation at federal level – a representation which is under his control. Thus while Serbia had been one among equals, its weight in federal bodies has quadrupled.

Federal Yugoslavia may continue procrusteanly to exist in a formal sense, but in reality the federation has been dead for some time. Its only significant remnants are the federal government and the army.

The federal assembly, to which the federal government is responsible, is made up of two chambers, one representing the republics and provinces, the other all citizens. The make-up of the former was altered by the republican elections of 1990, but elections for the second chamber have not taken place and probably never will.

Greater Serbia?

The period during which the Serbian representative Jovic was Yugoslav president – May 1990 to May 1991 – was a crucial period in Yugoslav history. The demise of the League of Communists (the Yugoslav CP) in February 1990, put paid to Milosevic’s plan to use the party to take control of Yugoslavia. Jovic’s accession to the top of the Yugoslav state during this period allowed Milosevic’s regime to stabilise itself during the turbulent period, and their anti-Yugoslav acts in pre-Yugoslav rhetoric. As the resistance to Serbia’s aggression grew in the other republics – strengthened by the election of non-communist and nationalist governments – Milosevic turned to the army for support.

The army, hostile to the new order in Slovenia and Croatia, proved willing to go along with this, giving Milosevic the illusion that he was above all laws. However, in March this year spontaneous mass anti-government demonstrations erupted in Serbia. Milosevic asked the army to introduce a state of emergency throughout Yugoslavia, but the army refused without an express order from the presidency. This was denied.

Two things immediately followed: Serbia decided to destroy the national presidency and the army turned to federal prime minister Markovic. It should be stressed that the conflict is not an ethnic conflict. The Serbian regime’s hostility to Croatia is not based on ethnicity, but expresses a fundamental clash between two opposing visions of Yugoslavia. Four republics – Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia and Croatia – voted for Mesic, while Serbia and its satellites voted against.

In the wake of Serbia’s problem with Mesic lies at a symbolic level, as Serbian president Mesic would outrank Milosevic. Given the cult of the personality which Milosevic has fostered and the anti-Croat hysteria he has fanned, it is possible the Serbian regime would not long survive such a change at the all-Yugoslav level.

In the long run Milosevic is working for the creation of a Greater Serbia. Such a Serbia would embrace, in addition to the two provinces, most of the territory of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. That is why, over the past year, Milosevic has encouraged armed Serbian rebellion in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina with the aim of breaking them up.

Much of the Serbian opposition has united with Milosevic on this issue, helping him to survive the March demonstrations and a strike involving 700,000 workers that followed within days. Since then, the Serbian regime has shifted still further to the right, embracing semi-fascist political groups.

Milosevic’s strategy was clearly summed up in the statement issued in response to the breakdown of the presidential system by the Serbian
Polish workers plan fightback

POLAND HAS BEEN the testing ground for IMF shock-tactics in Eastern Europe. But signs of resistance have appeared, with a wave of strikes organised by Solidarnosc. This text was published in Workers Unity by the Factory Commission of Solidarity ‘80 in the Warsaw FSO car plant, a traditional bastion of workers’ militancy.

Solidarity ‘80 is a breakaway from Walesa’s Solidarnosc (some would say the political continuation of the Solidarity of 1980). It has 250,000 members (to Solidarity’s 2.5 million) and is strong in the Szczecin area.

We must have our own interfactory, independent workers’ representation.

The elections are drawing nearer and will be different from those in 1980. Then Solidarity voted by an overwhelming majority for the Solidarity side of the Round-Table Agreement. The elections were like a plebiscite, in which the majority voted unambiguously against the Communist Party (PZPR) – to be rid of the nomenklatura.

However, it became clear that the Solidarity side of the Agreement was intended to co-operate with the nomenklatura. From the Balcerowicz Plan, it was clear that the new order meant a swift transition to nineteenth century-style capitalism.

This is the aim of both the former opposition elite and the nomenklatura, who are trying to transform themselves into a new class of businessmen. Those who are benefitting are the new political elite, the now private class of lawyers and private investors. Those who are losing are the working people.

They are bearing the cost of inflation, unemployment, cuts in social services and losing their jobs. They, on the other hand, have cause to be pleased with themselves. They have unlimited potential to enrich themselves at our cost, from our work, and can use private schools and health care.

But the time for manoeuvre is passing. There is no longer room in the political system for the democracy that we voted for two years ago. It seems that the transition to capitalism has so many problems that it cannot accept democracy. Trade union rights still have to be restricted and the political police state.

Workers councils are being closed down. We are still defenceless against the lawless state apparatus. Undemocratic laws are being introduced with the goal of clericalisation – banning abortion, blocking divorce, imposing religion in schools.

It is time to protest. Time to say loudly that this is not what we voted for, the nomenklatura, to substitute for a dictatorship of money, of the rich, of speculators and the same party parasites who are now metamorphosing into directors.

Branch of the Alliance of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia – a coalition of parties and groups supporting prime minister Markovic. They said: “By obstructing the election to the post of president of the member from Croatia, Milosevic’s personal regime has completely revealed its real intentions in regard to the future of Yugoslavia.”

“We are witnessing the final act of the destruction of Yugoslavia, which has been pursued over the last few years in accordance with a clear plan: to force Slovenia to leave Yugoslavia; to cause chaos within, and the territorial disintegration of, Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina; to transform Macedonia into the southern province of Serbia, to provoke military intervention in the name of defending Yugoslavia – understood as Serb property, to prevent all reforms and stop all economic and social changes which could bring Milosevic’s personal regime into question.”

“By their refusal to accept the constitutionally prescribed procedure for electing the president, the representatives of so-called ‘unified’ Serbia, acting as Milosevic’s personal representatives, have shown that they do not recognise the equality and sovereignty of the other republics, or accept the basic rules of democratic procedure. They have shown, in other words, that they no longer recognise Yugoslavia.”

**Military Coup?**

Milosevic’s election would have increased the chances of a new inter-Yugoslav settlement, based on a respect for international borders and republican sovereignty. Rather than accept a situation in which the federal institutions would bestow legitimacy on his opponents, Milosevic chose to destroy them. At the same time, by blocking the election of Mitic, Serbia (via its satellite Vojvodina) tabled its intention to seek a vote of confidence in the Markovic government.

If Markovic were to fall, a state of anarchy would follow. Since the federal institutions are located in Belgrade, which is also Serbia’s capital, the latter would be in a position to take over the federal reserves and money-printing machinery. In this way Milosevic would finance his war on Yugoslavia.

Serbia’s destination of the presidency has left the army without its legal commander-in-chief. Markovic and the army have both, in fact, come out in favour of Mopic becoming president.

However, as this now looks unlikely, it is possible that the army would support a move in the federal assembly to transfer the powers of the collapsed presidency to Markovic. This would amount to a coup d’état, and dictate military rule. It would solve nothing and should be resisted. Moreover, the unfolding economic catastrophe is forcing the hand of all actors on the Yugoslav stage. The end of the Yugoslav drama is in sight. It looks unlikely to be a pretty spectacle.

**Key demands of the independent workers’ list**

1) Unconditional defence of the workers’ living standards
   - Legislation for a minimum wage determined by the trade unions, based on a real assessment of workers’ needs
   - Automatic indexation of wages and benefits
   - Abolition of the ‘payroll tax’

2) The right to work
   - End the closure of workplaces and mass sackings
   - For a sliding scale of working hours – if output is reduced, working hours will be cut equally without loss of earnings
   - An ambitious programme of public works – particularly housing and infrastructure

3) Defend social services
   - Priority for investment in health, education and housing
   - An immediate freeze

4) Reject the Balcerowicz Plan
   - Rejection of predatory ‘marketisation’ of the economy and the privatisation of factories
   - Restoration of government control of foreign trade
   - Repudiation of the foreign debt

5) A plan for economic development based on self-management
   - Workers’ control in the factories, exercised by elected delegates
   - A national economic plan to be elaborated by the self-management councils

6) Defend Women’s Rights
   - Stop the exclusion of women from work
   - Equal pay for women. Wage rises in feminised professions
   - Priority for investment in free creches and nurseries
   - Freedom of choice - free access to contraception, abortion and universal sex education

7) Fully democratic political life
   - Freedom to establish political parties, without state interference, apart from open fascist ones
   - Restoration of trade union rights, and the right to strike, including solidarity action
   - Half clericalisation of public life - separation of church from state. Independence of all state institutions from the church. End religious education in schools

Translation by David Holland.
What is socialist feminism?

by Kate Ahrens

Feminism has never received a good press. Even its most ardent adherencer has been one of the "poor relations" along with the other "struggles against specific oppression" - racism, heterosexism and ableism.

On the left we have even espoused the notion that all forms of oppression will just "disappear" when the revolution comes. So what is feminism really about?

Since the Sixties and the rise of the women's movement, feminism has developed broadly speaking into three main areas - socialist feminism, radical feminism and bourgeois feminism. This is a very loose and inaccurate portrayal - based as it is on the work of the few authors who have written about these areas.

Socialist feminism

Socialist feminism is the most common, really stops at that point. Generally bourgeois feminists don't even attempt to analyse why women suffer discrimination - that and is almost always implicitly linked to capitalism - and that is why women suffer discrimination. That is what is missing.

Bourgeois feminism

Bourgeois feminism, in the most common, really stops at that point. Generally bourgeois feminists don't even attempt to analyse why women suffer discrimination - that is what is missing.

Radical feminism

Radical feminism takes a rather different standpoint. Radical feminism analyses the whole of society through the prism of patriarchy, which overwhelmingly affects all other factors (such as class) in determining why things happen and who benefits from them.

Radical feminism also has a view of men which broadly speaking regards them as being a threat and there is no point in attempting to change the way of society to end the oppression of women.

This leads to almost the murder of bourgeois feminist ideas - a belief that not only can the solution to women's oppression be found under capitalism, but that it can be found in the workplace in which men and women interact.

Socialist construction

One of the major differences between socialist feminism and radical feminism is the concept of socialist construction. Much radical feminist ideology is based on the idea of men's inherent violent and selfish nature and women's inherent kindness and generosity. Socialist feminism is founded on the basis that these traits are not innate but culturally conditioned by the society we live in.

Socialist feminism, along with bourgeois and radical feminism, argue in favour of women's caucuses and women-only meetings, while the motivation is different for all these three groups.

Bourgeois feminists argue that these things as an end in themselves; radical feminists want them as places they can remove themselves from the mixed society they see as hopeless.

Support

Socialist feminists recognise these spaces as methods of encouraging women to gain the confidence and support they need to fight for liberation and as places to further develop the understanding of women's oppression without the constant pressure to be under in mixed groups.

Socialist feminism is a way of combining the reality of women's oppression with the ideology of the class nature of society. In essence it is an extension of the Marxist analysis -

which was correct as far as it went but was incomplete because, for the most part, it missed this element of the nature of capitalism and pre-capitalist societies.

The struggle for women's liberation and the struggle for socialism are inextricably linked. It is impossible to achieve true equality for women without the destruction of capitalism and socialism - a society of real equality - cannot be achieved without the victory of the struggle against women's oppression.

Outlook for Socialism

Socialist Outlook is in December organising a weekend of rallies and workshops on the theme Crisis in the Third World. In the aftermath of the Gulf war, US president Bush declared the start of the 'new world order'. For the peoples of the Third World this means not just more of the same, but worse - much worse.

40 million people are at risk from starvation in Africa, the debt crisis is taking a huge toll in human misery through IMF-imposed austerity, epidemics of cholera are sweeping through Latin America, the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East, as well as Belgian and capitalist economist Ernest Mandel.

Outlook for Socialism 1991 is 6-8 December at William Guba School, Charring Cross St, London WC1. To register fill in the form below.

Debt Campaign

Preparations for the 13 July demonstration demanding the cancellation of the Third World debt, called to coincide with the G7 meeting of the leaders of the world's richest nations, are well under way. New sponsors of the campaign include the TUC South East region, and the executive of the ACTT.

Socialist Outlook supporters should be ensuring that meetings with speakers from the campaign are organised in their localities and coaches booked for the demonstration.

For speakers and information about the campaign contact Cancel the Debt, c/o 23 Bevenden St, London N1 8BT, or Cancel the Debt Scotland, c/o Latin American Institute, 60 Oakfield Ave, Glasgow.

Summer Camp 1991

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International holds its eighth annual youth summer camp in Czechoslovakia this summer.

This is great opportunity for young people from all over Europe to meet and discuss politics in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The camp runs from July 20th - 29th.

We are organising a delegation from Britain to attend, and the total cost, including transport and food for the week, will be £130.

We will make every effort to subsidise employed people and students who wish to attend.

If you are interested in finding out more about the camp, write to Kate Ahrens, PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UJ, or ask your Socialist Outlook seller.
Life as a token Trot
A WEEK AGO, I luxuriated in a First Class seat on British Rail's Manchester Pullman. Stretching lazily in a large seat in the nearly empty carriage I heard announcements telling people like me in second class carriages to get off because there was no room.

Yet, even though my ticket had been bought for me by Canadian television so that I could attend on their Friday night regional talk show, I could not kid myself that this was my long-delayed break from show business.

It was not debonair looks they wanted from me (just as well, I thought, or they would want their money back). Nor, alas, did they want me as an advocate of the Marxist left, a supporter of Socialist Outlook, heroic protagonist of the working class.

No, Granada wanted me for my knowledge in a field unknown to me on the hand left: I was to appear as an expert on the NHS, to help argue the case against hospitals "opting out".

Seven years working for London Health Emergency have led to many interviews, live and taped, with regional and national television and radio - and with the wide range of local, regional and national newspapers and magazines.

On behalf of LHE I have been asked to speak at hundreds of local and national conferences called by the whole spectrum of labour movement organisations. Invitations and support have come from every quarter, with one notable exception: the hard left.

For some reason or other the eyes of almost all left organisations are averted with instant indifference the moment NHS campaigns are mentioned. Revealing to most socialists that I work for LHE is almost as dangerous as being a former Bloomsbury official. The attitude: "Yeah, O.K., I can see the need for the NHS, but it's a bit too much trouble to get involved..."

I take this that sections of the paranoid right wing in the unions, seeing a socialist involved in LHE, have instantly taken fright, regarding it as a "Trotskyist threat". If only they knew!

LHE has almost 300 affiliations from trade unions, a couple of "Patrician" and other organisations, and virtually none of these reflect any influence or involvement of the hard left.

The government has been striving to understand why the NHS, by far the most popular of the public services, and a continual electoral asset to the governing party, should be met by such indifference on the left.

There is no economic or political explanation. The government is by far the biggest employer in the country, with branches "every town". 70% or more of its million staff are women, and large percentages are black - and the left professes a special interest in fighting sexism and racism. The majority of healthworkers are unionised, and their record of militancy in the last fifteen years matches any other section of workers.

Perhaps it is the rare exception to the general left apathy on the NHS that give the clue - struggles on NHS pay (most recently the ambulance dispute) do occasionally cut through to galvanise some "interventions". But as soon as the pay fight subsides, the left troops off in search of action elsewhere.

The problem is that the left on this adopts an economic approach. The largely female NHS workforce is not easily fitted into the stereotype of male-dominated industrial workers who tend to be targeted for the left's selective efforts at serious "trotskyist" work. Many of the day-to-day issues NHS workers confront are too political or too complex to allow easy answers to be dropped in from outside.

Yet with everyone other than the Marxist left, the NHS is now "flavour of the month". Since the Manxman, Neil Kinnock and the Labour leadership have all last caught on to the electoral advantage of high-profile health campaigns, the mass support that is so easily tapped.

How does it feel to be out-fisted by Kinnock? Maybe you agree it's time for a change?

for fifteen months the Daily Mirror, and laterly TV's Cook Report, have hounded Arthur Scargill, with allegations of financial impropriety during the NUM strike. In particular they have accused him of using money donated for miners' welfare funds to pay off a personal mortgage.

The Lightman Report, set up by the NUM executive, repudiated this claim, finding it "without foundation". But the NUM continues to make these and other allegations.

Socialist Outlook: Did you encounter any problems with Channel 4 in explaining who was behind the frame-up?

Ken Loach: What was disappointing was that a lot of things have said about the NUM, its role in the affair, the actions of NUM Min Kim Howells and Kevin Barron, were cut out by the Channel Four lawyers.

The point is that Barron and Howells deserved to be criticised. They'd abused Arthur Scargill with great abandon, especially Kim Howells.

SD: The original Mirror article claimed that Arthur Scargill used money set aside for the miners to pay off his own mortgage. Your documentary raises serious questions about this. However, the Mirror, in its one-page reply to your programme, made much of the fact that you didn't respond to the accusation that Arthur was lent money by the International Miners Organisation (IMO).

Kl: Yes we didn't deal with this because it seemed such a private matter. It was true that Arthur borrowed money from the IMO during the strike - for six months, all paid back, and at a high rate of interest. During the strike he wasn't being paid by the NUM and didn't have an income, so how could he be going to the local building society and borrow money from them.

The hypocrisy of well-paid journalists like the Mirror's industrial correspondent Terry Patkinson, on their enormous expense accounts made their allegations seem laughable.

SD: The programme relies heavily on the face to face interviews. It is almost as if the camera is reading their faces to see if they are lying. Scargill came across as sincere; but so did Roger Windsor. He didn't look as if he was lying.

KL: He seems on face value very genuine. You have to remind yourself that he has made £10,000 out of this. He was the one person in the NUM offices to get a loan during the strike - £20,000 which he has never paid back at least £80,000 from the Mirror and the Cook report. This cash has enabled him to move to France with his family.

SD: Both Cook and the Mirror still both assert that money came into NUM funds from Libya.

KL: You have to remember that the situation was very difficult for the NUM leadership during the strike. Money was coming in from all over the place. There was also money coming in from unions which could not have been sent to him going to the NUM, otherwise it would have been requisitioned to the NUM Executive who had to deal with the finances, with the media, with the negotiations, and they were also running the strike, so to keep tabs on every penny of the money would have been impossible. It is incredible that there are any records at all.

SD: A lot of fuss has been made about money collected by Soviet miners to aid the strike going to the IMO, instead of striking miners. But your film showed that the money had been diverted by the Soviet government. It also showed that Gorbatchev had made a deal with Thatcher that the USSR wouldn't give support to the British miners.

KL: The idea that the money was going to the IMO was distorted. We investigated the IMO's role and found that it was not acting as an intermediary, just as they were supposed to do.

SD: As the film makes clear decisions had to be made on this money at the highest level and it was totally a function of Soviet foreign policy. The old guy who was the head of the Soviet Miners' Union was quite interested because he went on television and gave a militant speech on the need for solidarity with the miners, they gave him the push. But both to say that, Stalinism changes, but the same, is amazing.

SD: Pattoisons of the Mirror and Cook Report were highly inconsistencies about how much money had supposedly come from Libya and the like about Arthur Scargill's mortgage.

KL: The Mirror, as Arthur says, want to drag him into court to sue for libel. It's like a loss leader. They are prepared to be wrong over the mortgage allegations, because the benefits of getting him into court to discuss the miners' tactics would be so great. In a court, pursuing an expensive libel action, Arthur would be asked all kinds of questions about what happened to the NUM finances during the strike. By defining him as a 'traitor' to the union, because in the face of the sequestration of the union, everything had to be done in a clandestine way. What saving of labour movement organisation and funds Secretly helped the NUM in this.

The duplicity of the Mir Cook/Howells/Barron accusations is that they turn this secret financial operation into absolutely necessary to preserve the NUM and keep the strike going, into something shady and disreputable.

SD: Nicholas Jones of the BBC was very good in the programme, stating that the reason for the allegations was to destroy Scargill as a threat to Neil Kinnock. And once the pro-Kinnock Mirror had made its aim clear, Kinnock gave them credence and demanding an enquiry.

KL: Yes I agree. The prime reason for doing the piece was to put it into a political context, not just to refute the allegations. What was said in the programme was true - that if you could designate Scargill then you could dismantle the whole strike. It makes sense from the Mirror's point of view as a connected attack on that sort of politics, on industrial struggle, on militancy, on anything that isn't vote for Neil every five years. Page 11
Ann Taylor

LONDON

Hidebound attitudes KATHY KIRKHAM and Rachel Wingfield (SO2) show themselves to be remarkably intolerant towards alternative forms of self-expression practised by liberated women and men.

What gives anyone the right to say that such an expression is not permitted by the law? Is it not true that the word ‘liberated’ means something quite different from the word ‘law’? Is it not true that the word ‘law’ means something quite different from the word ‘liberation’? Is it not true that the word ‘liberation’ means something quite different from the word ‘law’?

When Madame takes on the role of bimbo or virg in a masochistic society, she is actually pouring oil on the gears of that same society and in that way she is actually helping to overthrow the system.

Her images of the family, gender roles, religion and media, sexuality, and youth culture, provoke outbursts of hatred and vilification from these reactions. They are not predictable. Women who perform these roles are not predictable. They are not predictable because they are not predictable. They are not predictable because they are not predictable. They are not predictable because they are not predictable.

IT IS INTERESTING TO note that the two subjects which have excited controversy on your letters page are lesbian and gay oppression and liberation. This is not surprising. It seems that it is still sex which gets the puntings going!

However, I have some sympathy with your correspondent. Madame has a problem: she has absolutely none with either the question on the family or the biological determinism of sexuality.

OK, Madame parades her sexuality in an assertive way. That’s nothing new. She’s got it right when she said of her own style ‘that’s part of men’s fantasy too’.

That’s the big bang in the middle of bourgeois and sexist imagery of what is ‘beautiful’ and ‘elegant’. Millions of young women ‘wannabe’ like her. Yet, because they have internalised sexist imagery and attitudes, they can’t believe that Madame hasn’t even said to the sexual reality of the family. It is a process in which both in subjective and objective forms constant-

Fashionable conventions are illustrated in the letter in the name of the family. It is a process that involves themselves in the relationships they want to have, in the situation they are in, in themselves in, in the family of power between men and women, children and adults, heterosexuals and lesbians and gay men.

It is a matter that the至关 of the sexual and political power within the family. It is a process that involves themselves in the relationships they want to have, in the situation they are in, in the family of power between men and women, children and adults, heterosexuals and lesbians and gay men.

History shows very clearly (as the supplement underlines) that the form and structure of the family has changed radically over time. This has given rise to these inequalities of power and privilege that are natural and unchanging. It is an institution which has evolved over thousands of years to meet the social, economic and political needs of the society in which it exists. It is an institution which has evolved over thousands of years to meet the social, economic and political needs of the society in which it exists. It is an institution which has evolved over thousands of years to meet the social, economic and political needs of the society in which it exists.

The most alarming aspect of the Madame discussion is in the debate of what it is to be a man.

If Madame is a subjective co-option and distortion of the capitalist entertainment industry, then it is certainly not predictable that what women perform have been doing for years.

When millions of young women and men see her as a symbol of rebellion against authoritarian attitudes, we should look more closely. Rachel and Kathy fail to recogn-

ise the injustices of Madame’s work. She does not just reproduce fantasy in a patriarchal society. She investigates them, carries them further and sub-

verts them. However I don’t en-
tirely agree with the focus of the original article, which looks at Madame the person and not enough at her historical produc-

tion. But it does capture the es-

ence of the phenomenon.

Madame’s sexual diversity in our society is constructed in the context of male domination and women’s subordination... This is only part of the equation. The sex, sexual, negative, progressive bourgeois family...

Women as well as men are reared in this ‘context’. In reality, sexist and aggressive male sexuality cannot be con-

trasted to the somehow pure and simple female sexuality. That’s why Madame strikes a chord with female as well as male fantasies.

Today’s women and men can’t fundamentally transcend the effects of the bourgeois family. As materialists, we under-

stand they cannot reproduce themselves, socially and in bed. That women can be challenged collectively and reduced to the public realm.

But we will continue to reproduce themselves long after formal rules of the bour-

geois family have been abolished. Whatever is left has been precisely what the bourgeoisie are afraid of... This is the message of Madame’s work. The pointless and necessary point of hope.

Madame’s commercialisation, her bourgeois femininity and individualist attitudes in her work must be criticised. But her music and imagery allow us to understand the complexity of the situation. That’s not so much the system’s fault: it’s not in itself.

In biology, men and women are reared in this ‘context’. In reality, sexist and aggressive male sexuality cannot be con-

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In biology, men and women are reared in this ‘context’. In reality, sexist and aggressive male sexuality cannot be con-
Four decades of battles against bigotry

Peers, Queens and Commons

by Stephen Jeffery-Poulter
Reviewed by Rebecca Fleming

Peers, Queens and Commons is a readable and detailed survey of the battles for change in the legal situation of gay men across Britain. It covers the period from the struggle for liberalising reforms in the 1950s and 60s, to the fight against the reactionary measures of the Thatcher era. Based on contemporary materials, the book communicates both a general impression of the shifting attitudes of the press, the lawmakers and the gay community, and gives many trenchant oracles of information.

Thatcher

For example, it is revealed that one of the very small minority of 22 Tories who in 1969 backed a motion calling on the Government to speedily implement the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report regarding homosexuality was Margaret Thatcher. And we are treated to a pertinent quote from a Socialist Outlook supporter in moving the first successful lesbian and gay rights resolution at Labour Party Conference in 1985.

A Socialist Outlook supporter moved the first successful lesbian and gay rights resolution at Labour Party Conference in 1985.

"I have no difficulty in recognising the value of homosexuality. I would remain contrary to public policy. However, the central conflict is the book that it fundamentally remains a narrative, shifting away from research, judgement and the central question of - why? Why did the political climate change in the 1980s and 90s? Why are lesbians and gay men discriminated against, why has there been and is there a different response to the demand for lesbian and gay equality from the different political parties and forces? Why have certain groups or organisations campaigning for social or legal change been more successful than others?"

The progression is carefully charted – from the safely-safely tactics of the Homosexual Law Reform Society in the '50s and '60s, through the radical assertions of Gay Pride articulated by the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in the 1970s, to the peculiar hybrid of Thatcherite, activity and self-confidence initially represented by the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, before its decline.

So is the fragmentation of the movement into the kaleidoscopic range of lesbian and gay organisations, both political and social which exist today. But that is all.

We are left with no sense of the author's views and therefore no grasp of the lessons he thinks the lesbian and gay movement should take with them when Jeffery-Poulter writes that:

"Stonewall"

The emergence of the Stonewall Group as an uncompromisingly self-selected, polished and tightly knit professional organisation marks a hopeful new start. And he seems to be proposing a kind of lesbian and gay multi-culturalism, a 'concern for the value of diversity', however, even this rather dubious approach seems impotent and unclear to the end.

Thus, Peers, Queens and Commons is accessible and informative, but ultimately frustrating.
Tories win control in Brent – another LCC fiasco

by Mick Woods

OSCAR WILDE WOULD HAVE LOVED IT. For the second time in eight years, the Tories are in control of Brent council due to the defection of Labour councilors. Carelessness indeed!

The resignation of the Labour Whip, Poline Nyugu, and Snehla Amada Johnson from the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) councilor, as well as their vote for a Tory mayor, changes the balance of the council from no overall control to a Tory/DLP alliance depending on the mayor’s casting vote.

At the time of writing, another Labour councillor, Harshad Barot, has also resigned the Labour whip but is unlikely to join the DLP (membership still low).

Serious side

But there is a serious side to this fiasco... The existing Labour Cabinet was forced out by the LCC/new realist right, with left wing councillors voicing their belief that even London Labour officials... (continues)

... the situation to launch an attack on positive action – both defectors were black women. Rather than risk the embarrassment of any political assessment... (continues)

... the栗境 likely to reduce the full tax this year. Full tax notices are already going out to Major’s recent U-turns. In addition, non-payment levels are high and the council has yet to obtain all of year’s liability notices.

As a result, this high-profile project may be at risk. But more serious is the Tory declaration of next year’s housing, the promotion of Wandsworth-style privatization.

If the council are to recover, it needs to rebuild from the base upward against these attacks - defence of council housing is an issue that could rally Labour’s natural base. A genuine petition have been launched in the borough demanding the return of the defectors’ resignation. Meanwhile, the role of ‘alliance’ are already at one another’s throats over whether the name of the Housing Unit should remain ‘Winnie Mandela House’.

Fighting back for lesbian and gay rights

by Debbie Epstein

THE CURRENT attack on lesbians and gay men, the effect of the infamous Section 28 and of camps... Some of them are discussed by lesbian and gay activists at a recent conference in Birmingham.

It was organised by the West Midlands Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and attended by 70 people attended from groups as far afield as Manchester and Birmingham.

Steering committee

Delegates decided to set up a national Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights. To facilitate this a steering committee was set up which to which any... (continues)

The new steering committee is to meet up to work on the ground with the projects that the group has set itself, through the sectors, through local groups and through social sciences have already secured a victory. The Boycott Birmingham campaign... (continues)

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No. 3

June 8, 1991

A hard-won success

by Peter Purton, LCLGR National Officer

The current battle is for equal representation of lesbian and gay men in local government. With the British Conservatives’ new-found enthusiasm for the agenda of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) following its recent AGM.

To make it into the Conference agenda in 1994 to successful meetings with the Cabinet ministers in 1990 marked the dramatic success of LCLGR in national politics the demands for the ending of the legal oppression of the lesbian and gay community as the backbone of everyday discrimination. The Labour Party National Executive Committee, Britain, which would have been the basis of a June election manifesto, contained a substantial paragraph

promising such reforms, along with the repeal of the unpopular Section 28 attacks – such as Section 28 and Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill.

But – as out-gay MP Chris Smith warned the meeting – there is absolutely no room for complacency. Many of the Labour leaders have finally accepted their conference policy for no other reason than that they were forced to.

The immediate Tory attack, guaranteed to be out in splendid sight by the press, cannot be dismissed. The defensiveness or silence which has marked previous Labour responses, from the Prime Minister to the Shadow Home Secretary, is only too evident. The perceived electoral unpopularity of the issue will be a massive pressure on the government to back down, and that prejudice cannot be fought by wishing it away.

The conflict has been waged by the lesbian and gay community against attacks and to carry the issue through... (continues)

... in support of the new strategy.

To obtain a speaker from LCLGR on its campaign for equality.

They have a good record of being teenage gay and youth work and much-needed facilities - using Section 28 as the excuse. This action could provide a legal definition of what Section 28 really means, the possibility of taking the council to the European court and the basis for a major campaign against Section 28. Letters of support and financial help are urgently needed. Copies of these letters and any other information about the effects of the Section should be sent to Birmingham Action Against Section 28. The conference did have its lighter moments. Leader of the Labour Group on Birmingham City Council, Sir Dick Knowles, arrived at the council house with a look of horror on his face, demanding to know who had given the organisers permission to use council property. Will heads roll...

It has also had its difficult moments too. One man present made a number of anti-lesbian statements.

Discussion

But one of the clearest things about the day was that the difference led to a major waste of time. It led to a discussion of how to work together on demands on the group. They agreed on the 10-point plan.

For more details of Coalition contact Mark on 021 319 5460 (day). Send letters of support/donations to One in Ten, Yewdale Centre, 300 Yeawdale, Tarrhouse, Skelmestead, Lancs. And to Birmingham Action Against Section 28, c/o Brighton Unemployment Assistance Group, Priory House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 1YJ.
In protest at the 21 June "Victory Parade" and celebration of all those who died in the Gulf War Nothing to celebrate! Candelit vigil June 20th 9pm to midnight Trafalgar Square Bring photographs, banners (without the poles) and candles.

Inability & Women Against the Gulf

Sponsored by Labour Against the War, Trafalgar Park, Women, General Secretary, Delyth Thomas, Daily Worker Socialists, Party Black Goddess, Labour London Campaign Group, MPs, Financeers, Socialist Campaign Group, Socialist Resistance.

Rail unions scrap pay ballot at eleventh hour

by a UCW postal worker

THE communication workers' union, the UCW, has called a series of strikes over a pay for the Post Office's counter sector. The action follows a 56% majority in a nationally balloted in favour of rejection of a 6.8% pay offer.

Following the "divide and rule" principle, the Post Office management has engaged in a series of small deals with relatively small and vulnerable group of workers, hoping to narrow the field before the first round of pay negotiations in the industry. They are relying on the system of sub-post offices, often run by shopkeepers, to undermine the effectiveness of the strike.

Underestimated

But the Post Office management underestimated anger among counter staff against recent changes in working practices, as well as a pay offer below inflation.

The initial three-day strike in London, Coventry, Birmingham and Glasgow won 75% support. This was followed by a further four-day strike from 23 to 31 May, which UCW leaders claimed, won 85% support. Some offices have, however, been kept open by managers.

But the key to success would be action from other sectors of UCW members. Militants in the union are arguing that only all-out action can win a decent pay deal for postal workers, given the lull of previous one day strikes.

Anti union laws

But UCW leader Alan Tuf-fin insists on respect for Tory anti-union laws, meaning that the counter strike has had a tactical weakness from the start.

No further action is currently planned - the future of the dispute is to be discussed at the UCW strike conference on June 4.

A defeat for the counter staff would go some way towards winning support for the Post Office management in its war on union offensive. Now is the time for all UCW workers to reverse this trend through united, all-out action.

Victory for Hull CPSA strikers

80 members of the civil servants' union, the CPSA, have voted to return to work after a successful two month strike. The strikers waged a vigorous campaign against the threat of redundancies, as well as over 70 CPSA workplace meetings.

The Department of Social Security strike has also been a nationally co-ordinated campaign of strike action against job cuts in CPSA workplaces.

The union's DSS conference had agreed on a national campaign around the issue, but the section leadership had failed to act. The Hull action has now shown the potential of well organised local strike action. Now the pressure for a national campaign needs to be increased.

Rail unions scrap pay ballot at eleventh hour

by an RMT member

The largest rail union, the RMT, called off a ballot for British Rail workers only three hours before it was due to start.

The union's executive accepted an offer of 7.75%, only 1.5% more than the previous rejected offer, and a long way short of members' expectations.

The original call for a ballot on pay was unexpected: while railworkers had more than RMT's misery offer, the vital issue facing the industry's 95,000 non

nationalisation plans in preparation for privatisation. These plans are being pushed through sector by sector, dividing up the workforce and eroding hard

won national conditions.

This year's pay claim could be one of the last ad hribal claims in British Rail, as national bargaining on pay and conditions go out of the window. However, despite a mandate from the 1990

AGM, the RMT is letting each section of workers fight on their own.

Just before the pay ballot was called, the union had geared up members for industrial action against the privatisation of the nationalisation machinery. Massive moves to hold up and down the country and a ball

lot was widely expected.

Miserly

The miserly pay offer only increased members' expectations that a ballot would be called linking the issues together and so gaining maximum unity. Now, not only have the union executive failed the members

on pay, but more importantly they seem determined to allow the break-up of the industry by refusing to call for in

dustrial action in defence of na

tional conditions.

Calling off the pay ballot at the eleventh hour has made much that more difficult to com

Tough times for building workers

by Paul Davidson

The state of the construction industry is usually seen as a barometer of the economy as a whole. Given the current dire state of the industry, talk of the recession ending is clearly absurd and building workers face tough times ahead.

100,000 construction workers face losing their jobs this year. This is on top of the thousand jobs already shed by Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs).

So-called self-employed build

ers are earning far less than official union rate of £40 a week. Added to this, the industry's health and safety record has deteriorated so badly that deaths are at a near post

war high.

It is in this climate that the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT) is receiving more press coverage than at any time since the national strike in 1972.

This time though, it is not be

cause the UCATT leadership is campaigning on behalf of con

struction workers. The press coverage concentrates on al

leged ballot-rigging by the right and the subsequent swing to the left in the recent elections for the executive committee of the union.

Even before last month's Dis

patches programme, 'The Ballot

ers' on Channel 4, it was com

cerning knowledge that the right

wing in the union had a corrupt history of ballot-rigging in the right.

The head of the right-wing is the General Secretary, Albert Williams. who is retiring this month and now ballot

ning is taking place for his suc

cessor. Socialists organise to make their readers that this is an unsung source of strength. Although this may be true UCATT mem

bers cannot afford to abstain. With one candidate being a freeman, another hardly seen by activists, and with the Broad Left not having an alternative, the only contender with any record at all is George Brannow.

Ballot-rigging must be dealt with. But it is to be dealt with by the members. In the face of the bosses' offensive more court

cases and more blood-letting won't take building workers one step forward.

The bosses in the building in

dustry have already responded to the election result with the offer of a 4.5 per cent wage rise and a threat to tear up union agreements. These attacks will be a key test for the new leaders

ship in mobilising the rank and file.

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cases and more blood-letting won't take building workers one step forward.
Pergamon
23 head
fight against
union
bustes
by an NUJ striker

JOURNALISTS in newspapers and publishing have for some time been facing a concerted employers' assault on collective bargaining rights. But many chapters of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) are fighting back.

The best-known of these struggles against union derecognition is the two-year-long strike by 23 NUJ members at Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press in Oxford.

Many of the strikers have been joined by workers at Marshall Cavendish, Haymarket and IPC in London.

Sacked

The Pergamon strikers, sacked by Maxwell in May 1989 for staging a one-day strike against union derecognition, have waged a magnificent campaign on an international level over the last two years in defence of their union rights.

Their case has recently been strengthened by an independent inquiry conducted by ex-TUC President Tony Christopher.

Maxwell, witting under the constant pressure, has attempted to undermine the strike with a series of buy-out deals.

Last year the strikers rejected an offer of £100,000 that had been back by NUJ General Secretary Harry Conroy.

Offer rejected

More recently the strikers have rejected an offer of re-employment that excluded their Father of Chapel (shop steward). The recent sale of Pergamon Press to Dutch publishing giant Elsevier has not deterred the 23.

Their response has been to organise a national rally in celebration of two years of struggle.

Nor has the sale solved Maxwell's problems - huge borrowing to finance such purchases as the New York Daily News is beginning to increase financial pressure on his empire.

The fight for union rights is spreading.

Management intimidation at Marshall Cavendish has failed to deter strikers. Indeed, the print union SOGAT has offered support to the NUJ strikers, and there are moves to build further joint action between print and NUJ chapters.

Single union

This attempt to break down the sectoralism of the industry will be vital to the success of the fight for union rights. But the campaign for a single union for all media workers will not be aided by NUJ General Secretary Steve Turner, who is explicitly opposed to any amalgamation with print unions, and prepared to ignore NEC and conference policies on the issue.

Turner's failure in the recent postal ballad, which had a turnout of only 23%, was on an election address declaring support for a 'non-political, professional journalists' association'.

But his success in the election reflected a desire by many NUJ members to oust ex-General Secretary Harry Conroy, as well as the lack of a credible left candidate, rather than a positive vote for Turner.

None-the-less, the right-wing majority on the NUJ executive is shrinking, with Pergamon's left-wing editor Jim Bournela now Vice-President of the union.

The left has been making progress in the battle over derecognition, practical solidarity from socialists is now a vital task.

Picket
Marshall
Cavendish
Wardour St, W1
1-2pm each day
More information
071-582-8882

Mobilisations defeat London Nazis
by Ian MacDonald and Patrick Baker

Recent attempts by the British National Party (BNP) and the National Front (NF) to intimidate London's black community have been decisively rebuffed.

Nazis demonstrations in Uxbridge on May 11 and Thamesmead on May 25 were met by mass counter-mobilisations organised by the black community and the left.

The National Front's attempts to return to west London attracted only 20 supporters. They were met by a mobilisation ten times their size, organised by the Socialists Monitoring Group and the local labour movement.

The BNP's continued attempts to stir up racial hatred in Thamesmead, where two black people have been murdered in the last few months, met a similar response.

Over 1,000 anti-racial demonstrators turned out on Saturday May 28 for a rally called by the local anti-racist coalition, GACARA. Demonstrators were only prevented from halting the racist march by the repeated attacks of hundreds of riot police.

The twisted priorities of Peter Hambro's Metropolitan Police mean that any future racist rallies must continue to be met by united mass action.

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