Wages, not 'workfare'!

NO return to the 1930s!

Defend jobs and hospitals!
DEMONTSTRATE February 18!
Public Eye on neo-nazi thugs

By Ray Garton

Public Eye's "Rights Fighters" (BBC2, 22 January) revealed a well-documented expose of the links between neo-nazi skinheads and the organised far right at home and abroad. In particular it showed the British National Party is recruiting an army of street fighters from the ranks of the Blood and Honour movement, an umbrella group for neo-nazi skinhead bands, and amongst organised gangs of football hooligans.

More disturbingly, the programme pointed out that the message of white power and race hate spread by neo-nazis has been accompanied by a rise in racially-motivated attacks and racist murders. But while the programme provided a well-researched critique of the far right, it had little to say about how they can be stopped. In fact, there was no mention at all of the organised anti-racist movement.

The programme had little to suggest other than demand that the police do more to control the neo-nazis. The futility of such an approach was demonstrated by the numerous interviews with police officers shown in the programme. Asked about the role of his police force in escorting neo-nazi skinheads in and out of Nottinghamshire to a Blood and Honour gig in Mansfield, which clearly amounted to incitement to racial hatred, chief constable Dan Crompton said: "They are entitled to express their views in a like manner to other people."

Similarly, while the police officer responsible for stewarding the BNP 'Rights for Whites' march through Thame next Sunday, near the spot where Rolan Adams was murdered, described the event as 'most unfortunate' and 'incredibly insensitive', he argued that the BNP had a legal right to march and "were able to help them exercise that right by protecting them". The conclusion for anti-fascists is clear. Although we should not refrain from demanding that the state and police act against the neo-nazis, we should be under no illusions that this provides any answers.

It will be left to organisations such as the Anti-Racist Alliance, in conjunction with the wider labour movement, to confront the fascist menace wherever it appears.

Over 50,000 people marched through Paris on Saturday 8th February to protest against the rise of racism. Although the Socialist Party wanted to simply oppose Le Pen, many of the demonstrators argued that it is the austerity policies and the racism of the Socialist government that have allowed the Front National to grow.

Labour left must Smash the new Smaajorism!

THE SUGAR-COATED Merry-go-round of John Smith's keynote speech in Bournemouth last Sunday was more important for what it signalled than what it actually said.

No concrete new policies were announced, and there was no word on the main issues of debate inside the party - the block vote, proportional representation, workfare, or universal benefits. Most of the state ideas it weakly passed off as radical and renovatory are merely the commonplaces of the party mainstream for at least the last decade.

The front page splash was, as 'The Independent' admitted, more the result of 'behind-the-scenes briefings' than anything else. But why did Labour's hype merchants go into overdrive? Smith has signposted a sharp lurch right in the coming period, as attempts to break Labour's organic links with the working class move up another gear.

While tacit, Smith's endorsement of the moderniser faction, remains no less real. Tony Benn is wrong to argue that the speech 'seems not just to abandon socialism, but to repudiate social democracy'. In truth, Labour has not abandoned socialism; it has never been a socialist party and it is incapable of becoming one.

Frontbenchers by the score rush to embrace the New Right agenda. As Labour local authorities get ready to axe tens of thousands of council jobs, environment spokesman Jack Straw last week announced that a Labour government would retain compulsory competitive tendering. Labour now accepts the council tax in principle, be added. Just before last year's election, Straw, then education spokesman, dropped Labour's commitment to the charitable status which gives public schools massive tax breaks.

David Blunkett, the party's health spokesman, has backpedalled on Labour's commitment to reverse the Tory hospital cuts and is under conflicting stances on the Tomlinson report to recommend cures to axen ten London hospitals, defusing widespread anger which could have built the fightback.

Blunkett told The Sun: "Labour has been linked with fascists for too long. John Major has talked of giving people a hand up out of poverty, not a handout". I agree with him. But he has stolen our philosophy."

The message for socialists could not be clearer.
Labour leaders run from anti-Tory fight

No return to the 1930s!

THE UNEMPLOYED appear to be the prime target of a vicious new offensive, as John Major's government tries to outdo even the brutality of Margaret Thatcher.

The £76 billion social security budget is top of the hit list for cuts from a government whose outward image of bumbling incompetence belies itsavedly reactionary core.

The result could be a new drive towards impoverishing the lowest-income families, recreating many of the horrors of the 1930s.

Embattled Chancellor Norman Lamont has called for a wholesale slaughter of sacred cows as he imposes a 'review' of all public spending, with instructions to ministers to cut, cut and cut again.

Schemes widely touted in the press after a deliberately vague keynote speech from John Major to Tory party workers include:

- Withholding the benefits of up to a million people unemployed for more than a year, unless they sign on for pointless 'training' schemes.
- Press-ganging the unemployed to take on 'voluntary' community project work for a measly £10 a week on top of their benefits.

These proposals fall short of a full-scale US-style 'workfare' system, in which the unemployed are compelled to 'work' in menial jobs or be stripped of benefits. But with arch-Thatcherites Peter Lilley at Social Security and Gillian Shephard at Employment looking to slash their own budgets, even harsher measures could still be on the cards. Lilley has already suggested breaking Tory election pledges, including a promise not to means-test child benefit.

The new Major offensive is both economic and political in its motivation.

Collapse

Lamont's nose-diving economy has brought a collapse of employment, sending even the lauded jobless total soaring above three million, and intensifying the government's huge debt crisis. Next year's £50 billion public sector deficit is nearing peacetime record levels.

With sterling bobbing helplessly in the wash of other European currencies, and all of the stock remedies for ending recession having already failed, Major's team are getting desperate. Since they cannot kick-start the economy, they must either find ways to cut public spending or raise taxes.

But as a recipe for making quick cash savings, workfare is a non-starter. Experience in the USA shows it costs vast sums to administer a system in which local social security offices become in effect 'labour exchanges', each managing the compulsory work effort of thousands of reluctant workforcees on behalf of local cheap-skate employers.

Although some claimants would no doubt be stripped of benefits, far more money could be recovered far more easily for the Treasury if a concerted drive was made against highly-paid tax evaders, who fleece the Inland Revenue of billions each year.

Workfare's main economic appeal for the Tories and their big business backers is that it further undercut's rates of pay and job security for those still in work, and reduces the expectations of the unemployed as they hunt for work. This would reinforce the efforts of Gillian Shephard to cut the pay of the lowest-paid by scrapping the system of Wages Councils. Yet figures show that after 14 years of Tory rule Britain already has almost the lowest-paid workforce in Europe.

Significantly, the media have emphasised the idea of drafting the unemployed into what are termed 'community schemes' - loosely interpreted to mean anything from sweeping the streets to repairing roads and school roofs, or ancillary work in hospitals.

Through workfare the Tories might hope to get real jobs - which the Tories are unwilling to pay for - done for Mickey Mouse 'wages', while further smashing the public sector unions.

But the attack on the unemployed also plays a political role for the Tories. By once again stoking up the divisions within the working class, and playing off the relatively prosperous 'two thirds' against the poverty-stricken 'one third' in society, they are opening the way for even wider-reaching measures.

Included in the package of suggestions under consideration are the means-testing of pensions and of child allowances. Ministers have been told to 'think the unthinkable'.

By picking first on the relatively soft target of the unemployed who lack any organised lobby group to defend them, Major hopes to create a harsh new climate devoid of compassion for the poor, a free-fire zone in which pensioners, children, the sick and people with disabilities can be picked off at will to balance the books of British capitalism.

Abject

Major chose a good week to try it on. Labour's leaders had already embarked upon their own policy review, in which the 'targeting' of benefits and means-testing play an increasing role.

As Major unmasked plans further to impoverish working people to benefit the prosperous, John Smith mounted the rostrum in Bournemouth to announce the demise of socialism and a new focus on the personal prosperity of individuals!

Only the belated decision of the NUM to ballot on March 5 for strike action in defence of threatened pits offered any serious challenge to the right wing offensive.

Without a determined battle by the left to mobilise the strength of the workers' movement against the Tory onslaught, long-term blows can be struck against what remains of the welfare state - blows which John Smith's miserable band of Clintonite 'modernisers' will not even promise to reverse.

Miners back March 5 ballot

AFTER months of evading the issue, the NUM has at last decided to ballot its members on March 5, with a recommendation for 24-hour strike action.

The ballot will take place alongside those being held by the rail unions. Other public sector unions could yet decide to join the alliance.

NUM President Arthur Scargill specifically linked the miners' fight with that to defend hospitals, councils services and the rest of the public sector when he spoke at the Women Against Pit Closures rally on February 6.

Now the NUM has finally declared itself in favour of strike action, the fight for a yes vote is vital.
For a fighting public sector alliance
by Paul Swift
(Notts NALGO steward)
The Tories are stepping up their vicious attacks on the public sector in a desperate bid to slash their £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement.
The mining industry, the railways and the Post Office are all being prepared for privatisation with huge job losses. The NHS faces continuing cuts in services. Civil servants’ terms and conditions are being badly hit by the extension of market testing and performance management.
In local government, the loss of 100,000 jobs and services are combined with the extension of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), whilst the local government review appears to be little more than a cynical attempt to slash jobs.
On top of all this, the Tories are now imposing a public sector service cutback. With the devastating economic crisis and the requirements to cut borrowing contained in the Maastricht treaty, there can be little doubt that these trends will continue.
Public sector workers throughout the country have been involved in localised strike action against cuts in jobs and services, and attacks on conditions of service.
In many cases such action has been linked to wider struggles, in particular the campaign against pit closures. However, if the government’s mounting attacks on the public sector are to be successfully resisted, it is essential that action starts to be co-ordinated at a national level across the public sector unions.
Activists should be calling for a public sector alliance to co-ordinate nationwide activity, including strike action, in defence of jobs and against the pay freeze.
This could be given a focus by the decision of the CPSA executive to ballot its members for a day of coordinated industrial action against the 1.5 per cent pay ceiling.
Workers throughout the public sector should call on their unions to follow this lead and ballot for action on April 1. Such a day of strike action could be extended out to become a national public service day, aimed at highlighting the government’s attacks on the public sector.
NALGO activists have the opportunity to put pressure on the council’s executive at the national local government group meeting to be held in Blackpool on 11 February.
NALGO and Notts NALGO are calling a fringe meeting for the evening of the conference – “For a Fighting Public Sector Alliance: Notts NALGO”. If you are at the conference, join us.

Fight back for local government jobs!

By Bob Smith and Steve Kaczynski
According to the 1 February Independent, councils throughout Britain are bracing for “harsh cuts in spending”.
A sample of 78 local authorities told the paper that they expected to save £500 million worth of cuts with the loss of 15,000 jobs – the worst cuts of recent years;
Labour Party estimates go much further – suggesting up to 100,000 local government jobs may go nationally. But though fights-back are happening, in general the long running battles, in Islington and Newham NALGO were isolated bastions of struggle.
This was because industrial struggles have been at a record low in recent years. It is clear that local government employees are seriously threatened in many parts of Britain.
But there is resistance developing in some places already, notably Birmingham, where a successful one-day strike on January 19 is to be followed by a NALGO day of action on February 18.
This one-day strike is technically separate from the TUC call for action in support of the miners, but is a defence of both miners and local government workers.
Martin Tolman, Birmingham NALGO branch secretary, told Socialist Outlook that “the council has told us they need to save £60 million. To do this, they need to cut 3,000 jobs, including through compulsory redundancies.
"This contradicts our redeployment agreement and there are other ways to find the money. Prestige projects could be cut, in deference to essential services.
"No houses are being built, the education system is demoralised, social services cannot cope with demands placed by the community. We are asking the council to stand shoulder to shoulder with us, mounting a joint campaign against the Tories’ unilateral spending policy.”
- 1,500 teachers, NALGO members and others marched through Bristol on January 30 in a joint protest against cuts planned by Avon council.
- 1,000 protesters from local government and Trust hospitals joined a massive NALGO organised demonstration through the centre of Truro on January 30 under the slogan “Save Cornwall’s Services”.

Lessons of Lambeth
Privatisation is corrupt!

By expelled Labour councillor Steve French
ONCE AGAIN the media have been saturated with stories about “sickening Lambeth”.
Lambeth’s Chief Executive has claimed that the council’s purge of redundant workers was legal.
Unfortunately, the picture is not so clear.

Islington strikers call off action
Steve Kaczynski
AFTER SEVEN months on strike, Islington NALGO members went back to work on February 1.
The year-long NALGO dispute in Newham has also been called off – with strikers told by the union to return to work with no guarantees of no victimisation.
In the last stages of the Islington dispute, there had been two sources of pressure upon the strikers.
Firstly, the National Executive Committee of the Socialist League, which was a sub-committee of NALGO’s NEC, was threatening to cause underwriting the strike if it was called off.
Secondly, Islington Council was threatening to sack large numbers of strikers on the spot, while giving others notice that they too were threatened with dismissal.
According to Brian Gardner, Islington NALGO branch chair, the Socialist League had made a reassessment of the position necessary.
A number of concessions had been won from the Council management including a search of people’s papers, taking voluntary early retirement and redundancies, and a number of agreements had been reached on the principle of non-victimisation.
It was left to strikers that staying on in a rank and file capacity was already gained while putting many, perhaps all, strikers at the mercy of repriams that Islington Council management threatened.
The 2 February edition of Socialist Outlook, the branch’s newsletter, said Islington NALGO leaders had been too concerned with negotiations with management and had not tried to collate Southern’s position.
According to Brian Gardner, in the correspondence, and had not tried to consolidate the Islington Socialist League.
The branch was the first group to issue an official statement and had previously organised sympathetic demonstrations.
Socialist Worker claims that the ending of the strike was “unnecessary and cowardly”, but the situation in local councils throughout Britain shows down in flames these left-liberal front-runners of the Socialist Workers’ Party.

Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC), among others have become the official voice of the CGT in the struggle for the rights of workers.
LCC has now backed up its call for strike action on the specific issue of redundancies with a call for a general strike.

Investigation
Two of the witch-hunt councilors, myself and Julian Lewis, led a major investigation against corruption in the NCC. The initiative was lost.
The delayed-strategy in Lambeth has led to the near collapse of the council.

However, it’s too simple to say that when the LCC took over they failed to carry this work through. Old corrupt networks have regenerated, new officials have come in that had proper view over CCT.
Years of cuts and the high level of poverty and deprivation in the borough require Labour leaders to look beyond the trailing banners in the Town Hall for the solutions needed.
As Lambeth faces cuts out of over £30 million at a time when the fighting trade union response to cuts, privatisation and corruption.
Miners News

Linking miners' support groups
By Glenn Norris and Steve Hall
MINERS' support groups, which have been formed in support of the miners' strike, have met together in Manchester on Tuesday, 27th February, called around the slogan "unite the struggles".

The conference, called by the North West Miners Support Group Network and Parkside women's pit camp, was held at the Marley Hotel, 27th February. The conference was called to discuss the coal strike, the struggle for the miners, and the need for unity. It was attended by speakers from across the country, and was a chance for the miners to come together and discuss their common struggles.

After lunch, resolutions passed in workshops would be discussed at the conference. The chair, Mr. David, said that the movement forward would be agreed. The resolutions would be held in the hands of the miners, and a conference was held to discuss the need for unity.

The conference came together to discuss the need for unity, and the need for the movement to move forward. The miners are working together to achieve their goals, and the conference was a chance for them to come together and discuss their common struggles.

Women spearhead pits struggle
By Celia Murphy
Seventy of the women on the pits marched through London on 2nd February in a demonstration organised by Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC). It was a short but powerful demonstration, with women holding placards and banners, and singing songs.

The demonstration was called in protest against the planned closures of pits. WAPC have been calling for a pit closure moratorium, and the demonstration was a chance for women to come together and demand that their pits be saved.

Scargill slams the compromises
The National Union of Mineworkers has correctly condemned the trade and industry select committee report, which recommended a 500,000 five-year package to save, at most, 19 of the 31 threatened pits.

"We find that proposition and the suggestions that we agree to new working practices to be totally unacceptable. The experience of other countries was that longer shifts mean means more accidents, he added.

"The committee got it wrong and their recommendations are not consistent with Labour Party policy."

Trade and Industry Select Committee report

- A subsidy of £350 million over five years to subsidise the production of an extra 19 million tonnes of coal.
- Up to £300 million of the subsidy to come from the fossil fuel levy currently used to subsidise the nuclear industry (the nuclear levy).
- Coal industry costs to be reduced by "reforming working practices".

Accessible coal to be extracted from the 19 pits earmarked for immediate closure.
- Any pit threatened with closure to be put into the Colliery Review Procedure.
- A reduction in open cast mining and greater controls on opencast production.
- Imposition of the nuclear levy on electricity supplied from nuclear power.

Socialist Campaign Group
Supporters Network
Maastricht and the future of socialism
Organising the left in the Labour party

Saturday April 17th
Sheffield Hallam
University, Pond Street
Sheffield S1 3JD

For further details contact:
SCGSM, c/o Jeremy Corbyn, Red Rose Club, 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7

Paul Mather

No. 37
February 13, 1993
Page 5
Outlook

From boom to bust — and back again?

By Dave Olser

After a near-three years of the deepest recession seen in Britain since the hungry thirties, there is still no conclusive evidence that 1993 will mark a return to growth.

Available indicators are analysed in depth almost daily in the Financial Times: optimistic commentators regularly half some favourable statistic as a temporary or potential breakthrough, but you can easily find a headline that will allude to the same stories in the back issues of two years ago.

But recovery, at least on a limited scale, will eventually come. Economists will almost certainly be followed by another, probably even deeper, slowdown.

Recurrent economic crises are a permanent feature of the capitalist system. To understand why, it is necessary to look beyond the superficial expositions of the "business cycle" and turn to the analysis of the way the economy is developed, well over a century ago, by Karl Marx.

Recession, Marx argued, arise from "the growing incompatibility between the productive development of society and its hitherto existing production relations... Capitalism is an irrational system. Raverscroft steelworks, Trentham colliery and Cammass Laird shipyard stand idle, while experienced local workers, in need of jobs, are locked outside their gates. It is not as if there is no need for the coal, steel and ships these facilities could produce. It is that the dominant classes refuse to give the workers the means of production, and provided workers with the money to buy consumer goods. Thatcher's economic miracle has brought down prosperity; or so it seemed.

Of course, the entire situation is unstable. The bosses have dreamt of maintaining an equilibrium at boom conditions since the birth of capitalism. It is a dream that has gone sour every time.

Bankers flogging a dead Canary

ONE illustration of the way that recession destroys capital is that colossal monument to Thatcherism's failure, the Canary Wharf. Manchester on Thames' office block in London's Docklands. Three of the 11 banks that lent £600m to the project's developer, which is now in administration, are trying to call their loans onto the secondary debt market at a fraction of their face value. If they are lucky, they will recover 10p in the pound. The move effectively values Canary Wharf, which cost over £150m to build, at just £60m.

Real wages increased for key groups of workers, amid constant talk of 'skill shortages'. The sudden surge in demand for equipment, raw materials and even bank loans pushed up prices. Inflation began to increase.

In most cases higher costs could not simply be passed on, because desperate rival suppliers were ready to undercut the competition simply to stay in business. The glut of goods on the market drove prices down further.

Deeper processes were at work too. Under capitalist liberalism, individual bosses constantly seek to increase their share of the overall profit available, available in their sector by replacing workers with machines, making themselves more efficient than their competitors. Other capitalists are forced to match their rivals' latest equipment or go under. However, what is rational for each individual capitalist in isolation is detrimental to the capitalist system as a whole.

As marrow alone explains, profit as such can only be derived from the exploitation of human labour — the difference between the workers' wages and the value of what they produce at work.

As more and more equipment, relative to human labour, is needed even to stay in the game, the bosses have to lay out ever greater sums to generate the same return. Looked at another way, the rate of profit on each pound invested tends to decline, to the point where the cost of financing a new venture outstrips the potential return.

Consequently, the project never happens, and business confidence plummets. Meanwhile, the workers "displaced" by new technology are taken out of the consumer goods market.

Some firms begin to cut back production or even go bust. Credit markets for other capitalists, and hundreds of thousands of workers are dumped on the dole. Banks like up interest rates to cover bad debts, making most new investment prohibitively expensive. The bosses' boom turns to bust.

Yet, dialectically, slumps contain within them the basis for capitalist recovery. Excess capital is taken out of the system, as seen in the eighties slump which destroyed around a third of Britain's manufacturing industry. The surviving capitalists get to buy up valuable assets on the cheap.

Mass unemployment creates a pool of cheap labour, while fear of the dole queue erodes trade union militancy and makes it easier for the bosses to cut wages, cheapening the price of labour power.

Governments undertake anti-slump policies for political reasons — one of the prime lessons of capitalism learned from the thirties.

In Britain, political control of the central bank enables the Tories to reduce interest rates in the hope of encouraging investment, while economies like Japan and the USA are turning to Keynesian measures of state spending. Business conditions slowly begin to improve, and the whole crazy cycle starts again.

The only solution for this crazy merry-go-round of boom and bust is a democratically-planned socialist economy, based on working-class self-organisation, which will operate in the interests of the majority of the population.

Bank staff take notes from TSB

By a special correspondent

THERE WAS a strike last month which affected 1400 workplaces in the private sector, closing about half of them. The employers admitted to the Financial Times that the effectiveness of the action had surprised them.

The strike was in the TSB. It was the first on the Newcastle upon Tyne branch over compulsory redundancies made by the Bank in breach of an agreement with the union.

The strike was particularly long and severe in the North East because the branch was closed on Wearside, and flying pickets were deployed around the centre. But the protests were also widespread in other branches in the Durham coalfield.

This level of militancy has not been seen in the banks since the 1960s, when the National Union of Bank Employees (the forerunner of BUIF) used regional strikes to gain recognition.

The banks had set up a house staff association to avoid recognising an independent trade union (what the chairman of Midland Bank then called the 'serpent in our midst'). But recognition was finally achieved through industrial action, although three staff associations still exist alongside BUIF in Barclays, Lloyds, and Nat West Banks. (Interestingly, this tactic continues to be used by employees. BUIF recently won a bitter two-year recognition battle in the North of England Building Society after management created a staff association to oppose the union.)

Following the TSB dispute, the major clearing banks are drawing up plans to confront the union head-on:

Nat West is outraged at the union's public campaign against compulsory redundancies last year when the Bank 'credited-scored' staff for redundancies.

(Noted, to say, the Nat West Staff Association did nothing to fight the sackings.) And Lloyds are furious at the union's successful campaign against its threatened takeover of Midland Bank, which would have cost 30,000 jobs.

Lloyds and Nat West have announced — even before negotiations have begun — that they would set a cost of living rise this year. Barclays "are to follow this line. For all their talk of 'competition', the major clearing banks are coordinating their approach to pay with a view to crushing the union. They met in Birmingham on January 8 (ironically the day of the successful TSB strike) for this purpose.

Other banks are also lining up to test the union's resolve. Royal Bank of Scotland is sacked staff under its 'Project Cumbria' initiative — whilst playing one of its directors a 50 million bonus.

The Co-op Bank — virtually 100 percent owned in BUIF — is selling up a 'consultative council' to try to bypass the union.

Bank staff are now increasingly prepared to face action. The banks, spurred on by shareholders and the City press, are expecting a fight. As the date of the 1st February is approached, the TSB strike has shown BUIF members that they can win.

BARCLAYS Bank, which owed 3,000 jobs last year, has announced 5,000 redundancies since 1 January.

The latest victims are 1,000 staff at the bank's London clearing department. Its closure could herald the end of the cheque clearing system with the loss of another 5,000 jobs in other major banks.
Their morals and ours
Sex, Lies and Journalism

By Dave Osler

A LEADING Labour moderniser has been photographed dancing the night away in a gay club.

The paparazzi have also pounced on a former prominent Labour politician courting a public convenience, while two other frontbenchers—one of them married—are having a hetero relationship.

Affairs

As for the Tories, one ministerial Dainier regularly cruises Kings Cross in search of commercial sex workers, while a rightwing cabinet colleague of the prime minister has left his wife for a black French bloke. He is also said to have had an affair with a third rightwing cabinet minister.

A top Thatcherite—still in public life—has a voracious appetite for underage boys, while a leading Liberal Democrat has had over a dozen extramarital liaisons.

All of the stories above are doing the rounds of political journalists, usually by way of pub talk. Are any of them true? It’s anybody’s guest, but it would be no surprise to see at least some of these tales make the public prints in 1993.

Scandals

The last 12 months have been a vintage year for sex ‘scandals’. Prince Charles, Princess Diana, the Duchess of York, and Lord Brittan are all available. Paddy Ashdown hit the headlines simply by having sex with someone other than his husband or wife, while the dalliances of sundry rock & roll stars, movie stars and artists provided plenty of column inches on the inside pages.

Sex, lies and journalism form the backbone to John Major’s decision to sue the radical New Statesman and Society and satirical rag Scallywag after they referred openly to long-rumoured and long-running rumours that the prime minister is sleeping with a woman catering manager.

Soho

Gossip over the matter was so widespread that pop group Soho recorded a song about the purported affair. At least one leftie newspaper published the rumour in print two years ago, while a Sunday Times profile of the woman concerned argued she learned her catering skills ‘on the job’. Nudge nudge, wink wink.

Almost every national newspaper made some oblique reference to the allegations. Now one of Britain’s radical publications with a half-way reasonable circulation may go under for arguing that they were not true.

NSF are publishing grappling apologies in a bid to stay out of the dock, but losses sustained on the withdrawn issue alone already exceed last year’s

meagre profits. The other publication, edited by an undistinguished banal neurot, has told the PM: ‘See you in court’. Socialists should be in solidarity with Scallywag.

The whole issue underlines the massive hypocrisy surrounding monogamy, and indeed, sexualities in general. On any reckoning, there must be at least 60 gay MPs in parliament.

Outing

Only one—take a bow, Chris Smith, who was Labour in Islington South—has the courage to admit it. Hence the blind panic in Westminster caused by last year’s ‘outing’ threats from gay activists.

Surveys regularly indicate that over half of married people have been unfaithful to their partners. The figure for unmarried couples—the vast majority of stable relationships between socialists—well, anything, be far higher. Put bluntly, having a bit on the side is hardly anything out of the ordinary.

Socialists have always argued for sexual freedom. Marx and Engels touched on the question in Manifesto of the Communist Party.

Some 150 years on, their wording may seem even more the real, albeit limited, advances in sexual liberation in recent decades.

It doesn’t even touch on gay sex.

But the spirit of the remarks still rings true, given the new rights’ back to the family’ drive, which has been particularly marked in Britain and the USA.

“By a democratic procedure would be introduced community of women”, screams the whole bourgeois in chorus. The bourgeois seen in his wife a mere instrument of production.

Exploited

“he hears that instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common will likewise fall to the woman.”

He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.”

Underlining the bosses’ hypocrisy, they go on: “Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other’s wives.”

Battle to defend state education

By Anne Hudson

Thousands of teachers’ jobs are threatened, along with other aspects of education including school meals, as a result of the new round of local authority spending cuts.

State education will continue to suffer the damage inflicted by a government that can still manage to find £2.75m a year to send a tiny proportion of pupils to private schools.

There are two important dimensions to the Tories’ education policies: the attack on the public sector, of which state education is a vital part, and a series of other half-baked initiatives intended to overhaul education in the interests of the capital.

The National Curriculum is linked to an educationally unsound system of testing (including the infamous Standard Assessment Tests) in which white-middle class students, who are trained rather than educated to demonstrate mastery of various compartmentalised bodies of knowledge, will appear most successful.

The pressure on schools to ‘opt out’ of local education authorities, which has intensified in recent months, and the publication of ‘league tables’, are forcing schools to compete for results and resources regardless of the communities they serve.

Fight over testing

A CLASH seems possible as the overwhelming majority of teachers from all sides declare their opposition to the Tories’ controversial English test for 14-year olds.

The biggest union, the NUT, has seen a massive 75 percent ballot return showing 91 percent of English school teachers ready to take action short of strikes against the tests.

A smaller poll showed 86 percent of their colleagues ready to support them in this stand.

Though the NUT would require another ballot to give a mandate for a boycott of the tests, the second largest union, the NASUWT, is expected to call for a such a vote.

Even the right wing Association of Teachers and Lecturers has recorded near-unanimous opposition to the tests.

No. 37 . February 13, 1993 Page 7
South Africa
Fresh battles ahead for liberation struggle

Winnie Mandela - voicing real fears

by a socialist from South Africa

Winnie MANDELA'S blistering attack on the African National Congress leadership are not, as Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders try to make out, the true voice of an embittered woman seeking notoriety.

She is voicing the real fears of a growing number of ANC supporters, especially among the youth, who are frustrated by protracted negotiations which seem to be going nowhere.

Conciliatory

They are critical of the ANC's conciliatory stance toward the De Klerk regime, despite the increasing evidence of security forces involvement in the violence in Natal and the townships -- an involvement which the government seems either powerless or unwilling to stop.

She first spoke out at the funeral of the veteran liberation fighter, Helen Joseph, who herself expressed her disillusionment with the ANC leadership, before her death.

"Many people here would be for- gotten these days if they have forgotten what the original cause was for which Helen and other heroes of our struggle lived for and for which many died. But, surely a tool may suspect cor- rectly that these sacrifices were not paid in order to reach some so-called power sharing arrangements between the white of the oppressed and the oppressors.

"Joseph Mboho, Steve Biko, Neil Ag- gitt, Solomon Mahlangu, David Webb- ster, Mathew Gwuelle and countless others did not pay the supreme price in order that our freedom be allowed to disappear into the sunset of political oblivion. They died in order to usher in a new dawn of freedom, justice and lasting peace for our people."


While she is not against negotia- tions in principle, she insists that "It is cruel to take the masses along with us on the question of power sharing. And it is the masses who must give a mandate to the leadership about the interpretation of power sharing. Because if we do not do so then we are likely to find ourselves in an elite group leading the masses while we are not in touch with them. We do not know their aspira- tions."

Sunset clauses

Asked about her attitude to the so-called sunset clauses -- proposed by Joe Slovo and endorsed by the ANC for an interim government of national reconciliation, she replied: "It must not be seen as a challenge to parliament for a few individuals in the organisation. The masses must be part of the de- bate."

It is a form of the top leadership of the ANC to which she returns time and again. "The National Party elite is getting into bed with the ANC, in order to preserve its own power. The leadership of the ANC is getting into bed with the NP to enjoy this newfound luxury."

That Winnie Mandela's position is shared by a large section of the people who are now by a survey carried out by Vrye Weekblad on the streets of Soweto and Johannesburg. It con- firmed that the prospects for the near future remain bleak for ordinary black citizens.

Even those who believed that there was no alternative to negotiations argue that the bargaining scene is so perverted by dishonesty and lies that their efforts have been dragged into confusion and uncertainty. Most don't be- lieve that negotiations will bring about an early settlement. Bewildered

They do not know what is really happening; they are bewildered. The views of these sceptics are, perhaps, expressed succinctly by Don Nhlanhla of Soweto. One of the interviewees.

"They made CODESA and it failed. Look what's happening: violence everywhere. There is not going to be a settlement before there is a real fight. They are talking lines in negotia- tions."

What is the present stage of the struggle in South Africa? Has the CODESA negotiation process put the left and the mass movement in difficulty?

WOSA characterises the present period as that of the carrot and the stick; De Klerk is using a combination of repression and concessions to try to lock the ANC into the reform process. It has been seen that the ANC may make many concessions, on one-person one vote, nationality and the principle of a unitary state without South Africa. But the decisive move of the movement as a whole has gone into decline; there's a sort of de- pression where everyone's energy seems to be lost to the negotiations.

A key turning point was de-feat and sell-out of the NUMSA (metalworkers) strike last Au- gust; this was a massive strike defeated not by the bourgeoisie but by the leadership betrayals. The trade union movement has lost membership rather than winning new members, and this is symptomatic.

Can the ANC really compromise the principle of one-person, one vote? It is significant that even Communist Party (SACP) leader Joe Slovo has come out in favour of a 'sunset clause' in a negotiated settle- ment; that he is a black worker whites an effective parlaiamentary veto for 5-10 years.

The model here is the 1980 Lancaster House agreement which gave independence to Zimbabwe.

There has been tremendous opposition inside the ANC, with opposition form the Youth League, but in the end the ANC executive accepted the position of Joe Slovo with just a few minor amendments. So yes, for five to ten years there will be no 'one person, one vote', and that can happen in that period to disrupt a transition to majority rule.

De Klerk's strategy is two- fold. First to guarantee a veto for the whites, but also to build up a 'national front', a bloc of right wing forces against the ANC and the liberation move- ment. This would involve the ruling National Party, but also the puppet leaders of the 'homelands' and their suppor- ters, as well as the Zulu-based Inkatha 'National Freedom Front'.

Page 8  February 13, 1993 No. 37
How does WOSA assess the strength of Inukha's campaign of mass terror against the liberation movement?

Inukha has got mass support in Natal, and in Transvaal among the migrant workers in the hostels. The mine workers were relatively socially isolated, and Inukha was never able to see the possibilities to organise them. Its campaign on the theme of Zulu nationalism has been very effective, even affecting people of Zulu origin inside the ANC.

The campaign of terror continues, especially in Natal. But such is the state of the mass movement, that really the murder rate has just accepted. The ANC don't want to be seen as disruptive of the transition process, so there is no effective self-defence. The murder of 10 people in one night hardly gets reported in the press anymore.

"In black schools the teacher-student ratio is now 1:70"

Have other forces inside the liberation movement, for example the Pan African Congress, been able to take advantage of the 'rightist' position of the ANC to build themselves?

Originally the PAC came out with a very militant opposition to the negotiating process, using a rhetoric of armed insurrection. They recruited on this basis, especially among the youth. Now this position has been eroded by the decision of the PAC to meet with the government and become involved in the negotiation process. PAC's youth wing AZANU and its student wing have both opposed this, and there has been a number of splits in the PAC, especially in the Transvaal; now the youth have split from the PAC.

The recent statements of Joe Slovo that there had to be an 'historic compromise' seemed to be a sharp rightward turn for the SACP. Is this accepted throughout the party? How big is the CP, and is it the dominant left force?

Joe Slovo's statements have not been received very well inside the rank and file, but there seems to be agreement in the Communist Party leadership, with the exception of a few leftist leaders like Chris Hani.

Once again, the youth have rejected this position, and they are the strongest sector of SACP support outside the organised workers movement.

We think that Slovo is trying to sell the SACP as the vanguard of a broad national democratic party, on the model of social democratic parties in Europe, making a bid for that terrain in South Africa.

At the moment the SACP is the dominant left force, with 8-10,000 members. It is particularly strong in the Transvaal and federation COSATU.

The militant 'workerist' who built COSATU in the 1980s, largely capitulated and joined the SACP, or kept quiet — and this is a real tragedy. Through this the SACP was able to neutralize the militant wing of the trade union movement and incorporate it into the projects of the ANC. For example Cyril Ramaphosa, former president of the miners' union, is now the general secretary of the ANC.

What are the prospects of the left?

In the medium and long-term we still think there are big possibilities. The traditions of the 1980s rebellion and trade union struggles are too strong just to disappear, no matter how difficult the current situation.

Still you find in struggles and debates the demands for socialist and workers control spontaneously re-appear, whatever the position of the leadership and despite the bureaucratisation of the unions.

What is the central political line of WOSA, its themes of intervention and demands?

WOSA finds itself in a difficult position. Its central strategic demand is for a Constituent Assembly on the basis of one-person, one vote.

But it is a hard struggle to push forward this line, given the dominance of the negotiation process and the compromises of the leadership of the liberation movement.

But you have to look at the longer-term prospects. The tradition of socialism is still very strong in the workers movement. And there are still important workers struggles over pay and conditions, when the transition process continues, but fails to bring either democracy or prosperity for the non-white masses, the reaction of the youth will be very sharp. That is the importance of continuing to build an alternative, revolutionary, leadership in South Africa.

Interviews by Phil Hauser

Pretoria muddies Angolan water

By Charlie van Gelderen

Despite the internationally-supervised elections last September — which United Nations observers declared free and fair — civil war was raging once again in Angola.

The MPLA won a decisive majority, even in areas where Unita previously held control. But Unita leader Savimbi has refused to accept the result, in violation of an agreement between the two parties.

Savimbi may have been abandoned by his friends in Washington and London, but South Africa remains anxious to see a friendly government installed in Angola. Pretoria is hoping for favoured access to that country's rich oil reserves, the one essential mineral South Africa lacks.

While pretending to support the peace process, in practice Pretoria is continuing to assist rebel forces. According to the Angolan authorities, at least 50,000 Angolans have been undertaken by the South Africans.

There have been allegations that 32 battalion, made up of South African-recruited Angolans working under the South African Defence Force, was deployed in the south of Angola, in readiness for a fully-fledged civil war.

There are unconfirmed intelligence reports that even before the election results were announced, two Department of Military Intelligence operations were sent into Angola to establish the groundwork for a joint South African-Libyan assault force. At least two DMI operatives continue to closely monitor the situation in Angola from a CIA base across the border in Zaire.

Some weeks before Savimbi threatened to renew his war against the MPLA government, 32 Battalion was engaged in military exercises near Kimberley. Since then, 250 soldiers of 32 Battalion have "gone missing."

The unit was put on 24-hour standby in September.

In September, a former official of the South African Foreign Affairs Department, Sean Cleary, was arrested in Luanda on suspicion of attacks hostile to the Angolan state. He was subsequently deported, and South African foreign minister Pik Botha declared persona non grata inside Angola.

These allegations were given new weight by documents leaked to a Spanish news agency, which referred to a pre-planned plot to take over Luanda by force, using the 4,000-strong Units forces stationed there in the wake of the elections.

No. 37  February 13, 1993 Page 9
German fascism is back in the headlines — sixty years after Hitler first took power. What are the differences between fascism today and the Nazis of the 1930s? RAY SPILLANE reports.

AS LONG as capitalism exists there will always be space for far right groups to function (and to be used by the state when required).

Trotsky identified the nature of fascism as a movement of the petit-bourgeoisie aimed like a 'battering ram against the working class'. He predicted that the fascists could only come to power through violent struggle — at which point the party would become incorporated into the state and would lose its character as a social movement.

And it was Trotsky who set out the correct tactic, that of the united front, which would have been the only method to unite an ideologically divided working class against the fascist threat.

When Trotsky theorised what National Socialism was, others fiercely contested his analyses.

Divided

While the Stalinist Communist Parties were still claiming the German CP had done nothing wrong in its suicidal ultra-left 'Third Period' turn, which had divided the German working class by branding social democracy as the main enemy, and arguing any fascistic government would be short lived in Germany, Trotsky wrote:

"The bourgeois which burn the impious literature of Marxism light up brilliantly the class nature of National Socialism. While the Nazis acted as a party and not as a state power, they did not quite find an approach to the working class."

"On the other side, the big bourgeoisie, even those who supported Hitler with money, did not consider his party theirs. The national 'renais-sance' leaned wholly upon the middle classes, the most backward part of the nation, the heavy ballast of history."

"Political art consisted in fusing the petit-bourgeoisie into oneness through its common hostility to the proletariat. What must be done in order to improve things?"

"First of all, throttle those who are underneath. Impotent before big capital, the petty bourgeoisie hopes in the future to regain its social dignity through the ruin of the workers."

"Today we are confronted with the so-called 'new world order'. One of the errors some have made when analysing this situation is to put part of all of the blame for the rise of fascism on the collapse of Stalinism."

This is a fundamental mistake. In Eastern Europe it has been the failure of Stalinist leaderships — themselves often anti-semitic and nationalistic — to deal with national chauvinism that has left an ideological vacuum in which the far right have been able to make gains.

The core of the problem is Western Europe, not least because of the exceptional position of the efforts rapidly to incorporate the former East Germany into the capitalist system. Today's crisis of capitalism does have similarities with aspects of the 1930s.

50 million jobless

The fact that 50 million people are unemployed across Europe means there is going to be a reservoir of support into which the fascists can tap.

To make matters worse, the crisis of leadership in the workers' movement is anything but resolved. Social democrats are implementing swinging austerity packages in France and Spain, the CPs are decomposing in Italy and France and the far left has relatively little social weight in any country.

But what circumstances would drive today's bourgeoisie to turn to fascism? Germany in the 1930s suggests that this will only be as a last resort.

In Germany after the defeat in WW1 there was continuous political turmoil until the Nazis silenced any debate after coming to power in 1933. Only after a right-wing Bonapartist government had failed to curb the strength of the working class did the bourgeoisie turn to Hitler to save them from the threat of revolution.

The experience of bourgeoisies across Europe under fascism was of political instability which meant that any profits were far from guaranteed.

The concrete question, therefore, is whether any bourgeoisie is currently sufficiently desperate to risk playing the fascist card. Today this is not yet the case.

Of course this does not mean that the far right can simply be ignored. Unless fascism is stamped out in its infancy, it can hide its true building slowly until a fresh onset of capitalist crisis opens new opportunities.

Meanwhile, the media's focus on fascist attacks, and not the huge anti-racist mobilisations which are also growing in Germany also plays into the hands of the far right by implying that there is little resistance and that fascism is going from strength to strength.

Another area where similarities can be seen with the 1930s is in the willingness of social democracy to accept increasingly draconian measures claiming that it is in an attempt to save 'democracy' as some balderdash against the far right.

In this context the decision of the SPD in Germany to restrict the right to asylum can only play into the hands of the racists and fascists.

This process of tightened immigration controls is closely linked with the Maastricht Treaty. The creation of 'Fortress Europe', with its secret agreements on refugees worked out by both the Treu and Schengen groups, will only fuel the fires of rising xenophobia and the far right.

Serious damage has already been done. Regardless of whether Maastricht is ratified, the Ad hoc Group on Immigration has approved a policy under which refugees should at best be relocated within their original continent, and preferably rely on their own state authority for protection.

Even without any massive far right breakthrough, their violence is growing in Europe and in Britain. The Campaign Against Racism and Fascism in a recent press release identified a minimum of 59 people killed in 1992 as a result of either fascism or racism.

The situation in Britain is if anything the exception rather than the rule compared to the rest of Europe. It does not dis

Meanwhile, the media's focus on fascist attacks, and not the huge anti-racist mobilisations which are also growing in Germany also plays into the hands of the far right by implying that there is little resistance and that fascism is going from strength to strength.
This is precisely the process American socialist Farrell Dobbs observed when he warned, "The more intense the struggle becomes, the more they (the capitalists) will be inclined to use their seeming neutrality in the class struggle for paying less and less attention to what the fascists are doing. The government will let them do what they damn please, while more and more using its authority to curb the rights of the left. Thus, even if the government does something in passing to curb the rights of the fascists, all that happens in the last analysis is that the rulers get a new pretext for attacking the anti-capitalist forces. They will piously claim to be moving in a perfectly fair-minded way against the 'extremists' on both sides of the controversy."

To treat fascism as simply a gaggle of criminals is also a political error. It is precisely because of its overt racism, its oppressive attitude to women, its homophobia, and because its eventual aim is to smash up the workers' movement, that a wide range of fascism's potential victims can and must be mobilised to defeat it.

Smashed

This can only be done on the basis of exposing the political programme of fascism, acknowledging that they are a political movement, but one which must be confronted and smashed both ideologically and physically.

The fundamental nature of fascism has changed not one iota from Hitler's 1930s National Socialism.

Now British fascism is also making a concerted effort to attract both the lumpenproletariat and elements of the white working class through music/youth culture under the broad umbrella of Blood and Honour.

Offering an identity to dispossessed youth through a culture defined by rampant nationalism and extreme racism is a tactic which has brought the far right a number of recruits.

In a recent television documentary, the BNP's North-east Organiser claimed that even support for a football team was an ideal seed for the far right to work on, since from this flowed support of the English national team - and from there opposition to those who were not English could also flow.

Of course it does not have to happen that way, and there are important initiatives at a number of football clubs to oppose racism.

The current economic situation opens up some areas which the British fascists have decided to target. While Hitler's Nazis built up their strength in numbers by concentrating initially on the countryside, today certain areas of particular neglect, such as East London, have become a focus for fascist activity.

So too have areas such as the East Midlands, where if the miners' struggle were to be defeated whole communities would be unemployed.

The BNP can see the potential - but the left has yet (again) to determine upon a united response between the anti-fascist forces. The division that exists only gives further breathing space for the far right.

For their part, the fascists have set up Combat 18, with a specific brief to monitor and attack the left. The creation of this organisation means that any anti-fascist strategy will be able to register any success without being perceived to take up the issue of physical confrontation.

One of the dangers of today's period, quite unlike the 1930s, is the degree to which people look towards purely peaceful, even pacifist, answers to root the problem of fascism.

When the situation develops to crisis point, the left cannot mobilise and win the working class and its allies against fascist violence just by making appeals against Nazism. We must put forward an alternative, radical set of demands, beginning with organised self-defence of the working class and its communities and minorities against the fascist thugs, but also taking on the fight around unemployment, housing, and the ending of the conditions on which fascism feeds.

International

The international character of the fight against fascism in the 1930s - and today - should not be forgotten. Once again we need co-ordinated international action to beat back the fascist threat.

Fascism can be defeated, not only in Britain but across Europe. Our task as socialists is to unite and mobilise the labour movement and the oppressed against the racism of the state and the far right, and to fight to develop a credible socialist alternative.

Above all one lesson has to be learnt from the rise of Hitler. Division breeds defeat. Whether we are dealing with Le Pen, the NF or the BNP, the fascists are the enemy, and not those in other groups or currents who simply have a different line in fighting fascism.

In this context we must remember the famous warning that "Those who do not learn the lessons of the past are doomed to repeat them."

The left cannot mobilise and win the working class and its allies against fascist violence just by making appeals against Nazism. We must put forward an alternative, radical set of demands, beginning with organised self-defence of the working class against the fascist thugs...
James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism
Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928

Class Struggle Roots of US Trotskyism

"The Passaic strike really put the Party on the labor map. In my opinion it deserves a chapter in Party history, all by itself."

Conditions were tough as Cannon pointed out, in 1922 the USA had 6,000,000 out of work; estimates suggested at least 1,500,000 were constantly unemployed.

"There are no state doles. Of approximately 30,000,000 wage earners, only 5,000,000 are organised and even the existence of even their weak organisation is constantly threatened by the open shop drive of the employers."

"The Republican and Democratic Parties are the tools of the rich and the anti-labour programmes of both parties are constantly maintained against the workers - the interests of the employers and the state, one of the most important tactics to come out of the early years of the Third International was that of the 'united front'. Cannon outlined some clear illustrations in concrete application in the trade union movement."

"We see the starting of a process of differentiation in the bureaucracy. We do not see the differentiation so clearly now as we will see it later. Some of the bureaucrats, under the pressure of the masses, will be compelled to take part in the fight against the bosses to maintain the unions and even to help us to organise the unorganised. Others will go still further in the other way and this will create new alignments, new problems for our work, and new possibilities. Basing ourselves fundamentally upon the masses we can at the same time, to a certain extent, find aliances in the bureaucracy, and make use of them."

"The fact of the matter is that the logic of the class struggle is entirely against any stable relations between capital and labor, and when unions surrender a fighting policy in favour of class collaboration, they only give the bosses ground for new encroachments."

"In his sharply critical line against collaborationists, editors of their newspapers, and businessmen associations."
Classic tale of love in vein

Hollywood’s toothless Dracula

Dracula – tamed by love

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola
Starring Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder, Anthony Hopkins
Reviewed by Jodley Green

With thanks to the Odeon Cinema, Brighton

DRACULA IS the tale that will not die. Film makers, from Hollywood to the Eu- ropean avantgarde, have never let him rest. But here, we are told, comes the vampire movie to end them all, and we're invited to be yet another victim.

Although this film is beautifully shot, it is a tedious costume piece. Indeed, the scenes I left did not make me feel unconfined. Wasn't this the idea of a horror movie? Instead we are given a love story akin to Beauty and the Beast. The heroine, Mina (Winona Ryder), falls in love with Dracula (Gary Oldman), who is turned into a vampire by a Romanov prince Vlad, but discovers that he is more than other than the evil Count Dracula (Gary Oldman).

Of course, she loves him anyway, and in true Disney style the spell is broken and he returns to his former heroic self. Mina is a Victorian reincarnation of Vlad's fairy tale princess bride, who killed herself in 1497. Just in case you've missed the point thus far, "Love never dies" is plastered over the promotional material.

That the film attempts to charm rather than horrify would not matter if it did not claim to be an authentic and definitive telling of Bram Stoker's tale.

The horror of the vampire is rooted in the absence of essentia evil. While there is a tradition of 'progressive' horror, from Shelley's Frankenstein to Terminator II, in which evil has social or human causes, Dracula does not lend itself to such a treatment. So the film offers us the joys of the Count's first love to explain his evil nature.

But as a romantic hero he loses his power to frighten us, and cannot carry the weight of the sexual/social meta- phors. Given the themes of oral eroticism and necrophilia, the sex scenes are played very straight. Although bloody, this is politically 'safe' sex, couched in anachronistic, de- manded any subject. AIDS references appear to be a sloppy afterthought.

Christian imagery on the level of a Madonna video is littered throughout the film. Apart from Gary Oldman, the acting falls to impress, and even Oldman loses his touch as he rejuvenates. Although flawed, Coppo- lla's Dracula is visually stunning, and worth seeing on this basis alone. But it is also a missed oppor- tunity to get to the heart of Stoker's disturbing and complex novel.

Getting it right on the Underground struggle

AN ILL-INFORMED and sectarian letter appeared in the last issue of Outlook two months after the defeat of the RMT on the Underground. Its author, who doesn't work on the Underground, claims new realism has come to the pages of Socialist Outlook and that we covered up for the role of the RMT bureaucracy.

The original article to which he refers in issue 33, in fact pointed out that the struggle was not organised by the RMT bureaucracy. It is therefore rather strange to claim that the bureaucracy "had the same impetus to initiate the leadership of the LT district council into endorsing their actions at every stage."

The RMT bureaucracy took no actions let alone inveigle anyone into supporting them. Our writer makes the same error as others on the left without active supporters on the Underground - he has created an im- aginary scenario.

Socialist Outlook did not say, as he suggests, that feeling for action was limited to 100 militants. Of course not. RMT members voted to strike by three to one. They refused to get rid of the Company Plan. As we said at the time, three factors led to the defeat: the visible intimid- ation by management in a period of rising unemployment, the blatant sub- stitution by the other Underground unions, and the weakness of the RMT activists and representatives themselves.

The RMT bureaucracy did next to nothing throughout - they were happy to pass the buck to the militants on the District Council. It is more accurate to say that the bureaucracy totally failed the membership than that they sold us out - except in one respect. In the end, they refused to allow the strike to be postponed than called off.

Unfortunatley ASLEF left the hook, but made little difference to the outcome for two reasons. Firstly, by the time the strike was called off we were in reality too weak to get it re-called. Either we had a strike or we didn't. Secondly, despite the ballot, the ASLEF leadership never had any in- tention of striking - they had already accepted the principle of the Company Plan and only disputed the money - they realised no objection to 5,000 jobs going.

Under pressure from the RMT Dis- trict Council's campaign and the rank and file they tried to evade a strike ballot, first by organising a referendum, and then in a delayed ballot, by inviting their members to vote for action short of strike action. The ASLEF leadership and most of their activists openly tried to undermine the RMT strike and would only have been forced into one themselves if an RMT strike was already successfully under- way.

There is a crude left wing school of thought which holds that all industrial disasters are simply due to bureaucratic sell out. This is of course true in a very general way but it doesn't help us un- derstand particular events.

In the struggle on the Underground the militants placed no reliance on the RMT bureaucracy and tried to organise the struggle without them but in the name of the union. We failed for sev- eral reasons, of which the role of the various union bureaucracies is only one.

Socialist Outlook underground workers

Oslerism or optimism?

DAVE OSLER has the en- viable record of appearing in almost as many leftwing papers as I do. However, his piece on the So- cialist Workers Party (SWP) deals mainly in gossip to which one might merely note that those who live in glass houses might think twice about throwing stones.

Even so, there are serious is- sues at stake. Osler's view of the class struggle is essentially pes- simistic. He recognises the sea change that has taken place with the miners' struggle, but argues that the task of rebuilding the left will be a long one.

No doubt it will, but at the same time we have the chance to take both a quantitative and qualitative leap forward.

There is no need to be in any way manic about it, but at the same time socialists must seize the time rather than merely as- suring ourselves that we are playing a role in a long term historical process.

Keith Flett
North London

The Revolutionary Quality of Malcolm X
By Steve Bloom

£1 inc p&p to: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

No. 37 February 13, 1983 Page 13

The Revolutionary Quality of Malcolm X

S1 inc p&p to: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

By Steve Bloom

February 13, 1983 Page 13

The Revolutionary Quality of Malcolm X
London busworkers request stop to privatisation

By a London busworker

Over 1,000 busworkers demon-strated and lobbied the House of Commons on 27 January, protesting against privatisation and deregu-latisation on London's buses.

The ten existing companies — technically subsidiaries of Lon-don Transport — are proposing wage cuts of £30-40 a week, sever-al hours increase in time on duty and virtual wiping out of all demarcation lines and other work-related conditions.

This is to prepare for privatisation on 1 April so management can have a “fighting chance” to buy the companies in open com-petition with private contractors.

Of course, if busworkers ac-cede to redundancy and sell their contracts of employment, the privatised companies will be in a much better position to impose even more draconian conditions after April.

In the face of this onslaught, the TGWU leaders might have been expected to prepare an action. Not a bit of it. Taking its cue from the NUM executive, they are pinning all their hopes on the power of their pocketbook — in their decision to not go on strike.

The meeting in the House of Commons after the march ended with chairperson Peter Gibson, TGWU national executive mem-ber for buses and a supporter of the Workers Revolutionary Party, paid tribute to the 'Tories for Mars' minister for London, Steve Nor-ris.

"At least he has the bottle to come here and meet you. I hope we can persuade him to take a select committee of inquiry," said Gibson. Angrily denounc-ing busworkers who beckoned Norris, he added: "He was good enough to come here to speak to us. Give him a chance; he has a job to do.

Evasions

After listening to how the pro-posed destruction of workers' living standards and London's public transport system is really a great step forward, and useless-1evasions on the question of pensioners' passes, travelcards and the future of the London Transport pension fund, Gibson refused to allow questions to Norris.

Massed ranks of Labour MPs — 22 in all — and one Liberal Democrat assured busworkers that they had to wait for what one described as a "real thing of com-munication" (now there's a thing to stir terror into the soul of the working class) to in-fluence the select committee.

In the meantime the bosses would have forced through the new contracts, the anger and mi-litancy of rank-and-file buswork-ers would have dissipated and what is left of the public trans-port service would be to the greedy clutchers of the Tory vultures in the City of London. The capital's bus services would degerenate to the chaotic stand-ards of deregulated and privati-ised Sheffield.

Busworkers cannot wait for select committees, the pleasure of supposedly 'sym pathetic' Tories, baliffs or legal niceties. Strike action must be organised by the rank-and-file now.

It must be a London-wide strike action and it must seek to bring the tube and British Rail out of the Tories. It must immedi-ately link up with pensioners' groups to defend pensioners' passes.

---

Bursnall support group launched

By Bob Smith

A support group for Birmingham's largest union, GMB, for the Bursnall dispute has been formed after several months of strike action at the metal finishing factory.

Its inaugural meeting saw 50 strikers and supporters attend. Community representatives, labour move-ment figures, and even delegates from Oxford and London, pledged their backing.

Dropped

Unfortunately the Bursnall workers' union, GMB, has failed to develop solidarity among workers at suppliers and customers. A joint GMB/UFOU entreaty campaign in the metal finishing sector was dropped after GMB general secretary John Edwards alleged that it would put funds in danger of sequestration — before employers had even made any legal moves.

---

March 5 decision day for Rail hinge-off fight

By Steve Kaczynski

One third of Britain's rail network is under threat of closure because the Tories plan to halve their subsidy to British Rail over the next two years.

According to the Guardian, senior BR managers fear the "worst cuts" since the mass closures led by Lord Beeching 30 years ago, in spite of claims by the Tories that privatisation would not lead to a weakening in service and line closures would be "constantly monitored.

In terms of the impact on BR employees, 7,000 or so have become seversen when the severance money will be given severance in the near future. It is expected that in 1994 the number given severance will rise to 20,000.

The BR's decision on the outline operations of its yard at Bardney is one of several that will determine the fate for jobs. This decision was taken after consultation with other unions, including the NUM.

The synchronised balloting of members in public sector jobs offers an opportunity to fight more than just the laying of rail lines it is a real opportunity to make "unite the struggles" something more than a pious and inarticulate phrase repeated in the far-left press.

But the 5 March ballot must produce a "yes" vote and sus-tain work must be put in to ensure that apathy and despair do not play their usual role in the Tories and bureaucrats off the hook.

Her Majesty's Royal Train may also fall victim to Tory pro-posals. Revolutionary Marxists warn that will be another front against the possible loss of this priceless part of our national heritage, the future of which hangs by a thread.

FAU agreed to call off their action if management did not immediately respond to the three sacked workers and start to negotiate on pay, staffing and safety. Management's reaction was to send warning letters to crew mem-bers of the above-mentioned crews. Union notices boards at the CPA headquarters were torn down.

In a statement given to the press ending the FAU said that, "if the government continues in the same vein, the three sacked and penalised workers who have been actively involved in the strike. It would mean accepting the denial of the union's right to strike within the law.

The issue at stake in this dispute must sound familiar to many trades union activists here. What is also of particular interest is the significance of the dispute in relation to Hong Kong's future.

The capital's financial muscle and the one of the most productive and profitable business firms in the world for the first half of 1992 were US$31.2b, 13.3% from the same period in 1991.

Union spokespeople believe that in the run up to the elections in Hong Kong in 1995 the task force is to maximise profits before selling a majority share in the British Rail.

While Cathay have denied such plans, it is widely believed that the implications of the franchise is to make profit at the expense of workers. The officials of the CAU and the AOMA (the Chinese Airlines Association) have said that the FAU is affiliated to the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU), an independent and democratic federation in contrast to the much smaller number of which is pro-Sinois, the other pro-Tawan.

Hong Kong strike for union rights

By Chris Pattan

Hong Kong's last Governor, the self-called "fighter for democracy has been ignoring the demands of a broad based support movement for 3,000 strikers, members of the Flight Attendants Union (FAU), who were in dispute with Cathay Pacific Air-lines (CPL)

The strike, which had been going since 13 January, was called off fol-lowing the intervention of the Legis-la-}
Fightback in Silicon Valley

By D. Warwick

BERKSHIRE has seen two of its biggest labour movement events for years in the last month.

A meeting called by Reading Trades Council supported by the rail and postal unions attracted only people. Speakers included IUCW, RMT, NUM.

There was determination to fight privatisation and pay restraint. South Wales NUM’s Tytore O’Sullivan, was loudly applauded in calling for the TUC to act to support the miners.

A striker from local Hills’ engineering factory also addressed the meeting and a collection was taken for the dispute, which is demanding the reinstatement of sacked workers.

In the same week, Wokingham hosted a march of some 200 people in support of the miners and against unemployment.

Banners from the NUM, TGWU, Labour Party, CND featured in the march through the town to the town hall, where it was addressed by Mo Mowlam MP and Tytore O’Sullivan. The organiser had invited Transport minister, John Redwood MP, but he was, unfortunately, otherwise engaged – attending a dinner party in Sunday-on-Thames.

These events indicate a resurgence in the battle against the Thatcher government in the Thames Valley, largely because of the government’s policies on the miners and the rest of the public sector.

DAF disaster: revenge of the market

By Dutch socialists Wim Baltuszen and Wim Dorssers (union activists at DAF Eindhoven)

TRUCK manufacturing worldwide is in a disastrous state. In 1975, there were just 10, and the expectation is that by the year 2000 there will be just three or four.

DAF is the first big company to face at least partial shutdown. On February 6 it was announced that at least 2,600 workers of the 5,000 at Eindhoven will be sacked, and some 750 out of 2,400 in Belgium will also probably lose their jobs.

What will happen at Leyland is unclear, but at the time of writing it seems many thousands of British workers will also soon be on the dole.

DAF took over the truck and van division of British Leyland in 1987. It all looked very promising. The British truck market was the biggest in Europe, and with a market of 30 per cent, DAF instantly became the largest player.

Total sales nearly doubled. In 1986, DAF sales were Fll 3200m; by 1989 they hit Fll 5000m. Profits went up from F132m to F172m over the same period.

But takeovers that year of Austria’s Steyr and Spain’s Fiusa went wrong. And in 1990 the British market collapsed. Leyland’s right hand drive models could not be sold on the continent. Losses soared and the banks forced DAF to negotiate with Germany’s Mercedes-Benz.

High quality

DAF has real attractions for Mercedes. It has developed a range of completely new, high quality engines and cabins; its service network is excellent; and its European market share, at 8 per cent, is not negligible.

By Dutch socialists Wim Baltuszen and Wim Dorssers (union activists at DAF Eindhoven)

Last week a demonstration took place in which some thousands of DAF’s employees participated. In deed, at the time the unions’ directors still had hopes that they would be able to arrange the financing.

By means of mass meetings we informed the employees at DAF about the situation that occurred. Also in Belgium, the workers are demonstrating at the banks.

There have been negotiations with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the board of directors and the banks, to exert as much pressure as possible in order to preserve employment.

We declare our solidarity with all activities to preserve employment at DAF in Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands.

We are going to participate in a big demonstration. Hereafter we invite you and our Belgian colleagues to participate. It concerns our mutual interest, preservation of employment at DAF.

Lancs demo demands ‘save DAF’

By Bill Sutcliffe

AROUND 5,500 jobs are under threat at Leyland DAF after three British banks – National Westminster, Barclays and Lloyd’s – pulled the plug on the truck and van manufacturer’s Dutch parent company.

Most UK employees work either in Leyland, Lancashire, or Birmingham, but the company has smaller sites in Glasgow, Cheriton, also in Lancashire, and Thame in Oxfordshire.

Over 5,000 people marched through Leyland last Friday to demand that the local assembly plant, which employs 2,200, stays open. Banners read ‘Quality Trucks, Quality Workers’ and ‘Do not let Leyland die’.

They were followed by a line of truck cab units, and two historical vehicles from the town’s commercial museum.

Dutch workers call for solidarity

The following solidarity message from the Netherlands’ Industriebond FNV union was sent to employees of Leyland DAF last week:

To the employees of Leyland DAF, AEEL, MSF, TGWU

Dear Friends

At this moment, the future of DAF and Leyland DAF and consequently the jobs thousands of people in the Netherlands, Great Britain and Portugal are in doubt. After a period of uncertainty, we were suddenly confronted with applications for moratorium both in the Netherlands and in Great Britain.

In Eindhoven the collective unions have for some time tried to get an explanation from the management.

Probably the best Trotskyist paper in the world

Subscribe to Socialist Outlook

EC Europe (including Britain): 1 year (24 issues): £15 3 Six months: £8

Non-EC Europe: 1 year £20 3 Six months: £11

Rest of the world: 1 year £24 3 Six months: £13

I include a donation of £

Name:

Address:

Send to: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UJ

No. 37. February 13, 1993 Page 15...
Smith, Major converge in Bournemouth

SNAP!

See inside, pages 2-3