

Socialist OUTLOOK

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Brutal Tory laws**

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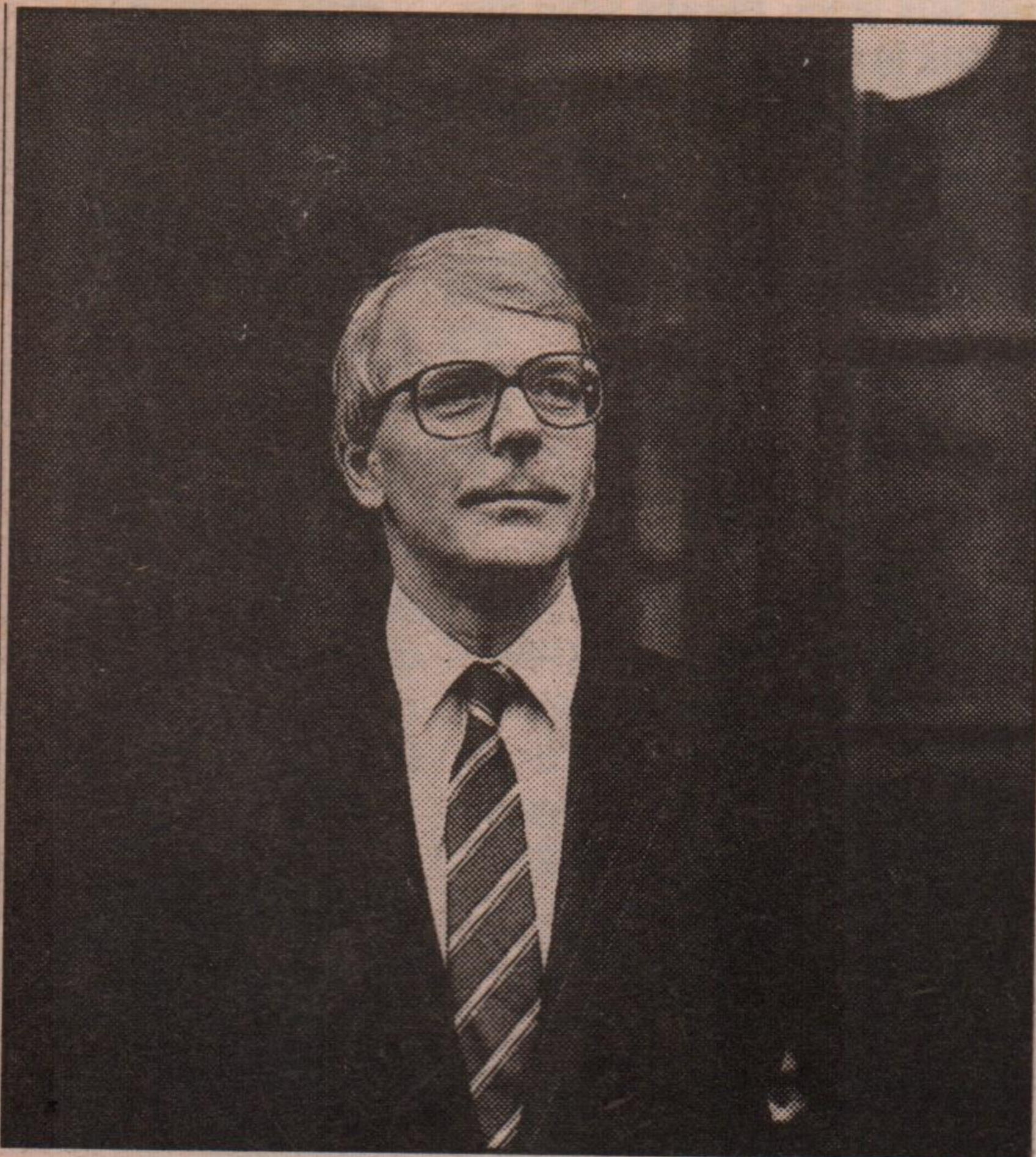
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No. 60, April 16, 1994

DANGER AHEAD



MAJOR DIVERSION



Major: front man for unpopular Tory policies

WILL John Major last, or won't he? Will there be a leadership challenge now, or in the autumn? Who will replace him?

Who cares? It's all a cynical diversion from the real problem!

The Tory press is again full of speculation in the aftermath of yet another government foul-up over Europe, in the run-up to likely election defeats in council and European elections, and with the Scott Report on the Iraggate crisis looming in the autumn.

Media bosses increasingly see Major as an electoral liability, and have bolstered those criticising his government.

But Major's abysmal poll ratings don't reflect personal hostility to him as an individual. They show huge hostility to the Tory

Party and the brutal Thatcherite policies foisted on working people over 15 years.

Whether John Major stays or goes, and whether he would be replaced by an outright Thatcherite 'bastard' like Portillo or a populist bastard like pils butcher Heseltine, his removal would offer no relief. Thatcherism would continue.

We don't want Major removed, we want the Tories out — out of council seats, out of the European Parliament, but most importantly out of government. A massive Labour vote on May 5 will show the extent to which the government has lost any mandate to govern: and it will underline the need for Labour to press now for a General Election so we can clear the lot out before more damage is done.

KICK OUT the TORIES!

Tower miners fight closure

by Dafydd Rhys.

MINERS AT Tower colliery, the last deep mine in South Wales, voted to resist closure of their pit which would mean the loss of 250 jobs in an area suffering 17% unemployment, with male unemployment at 31%.

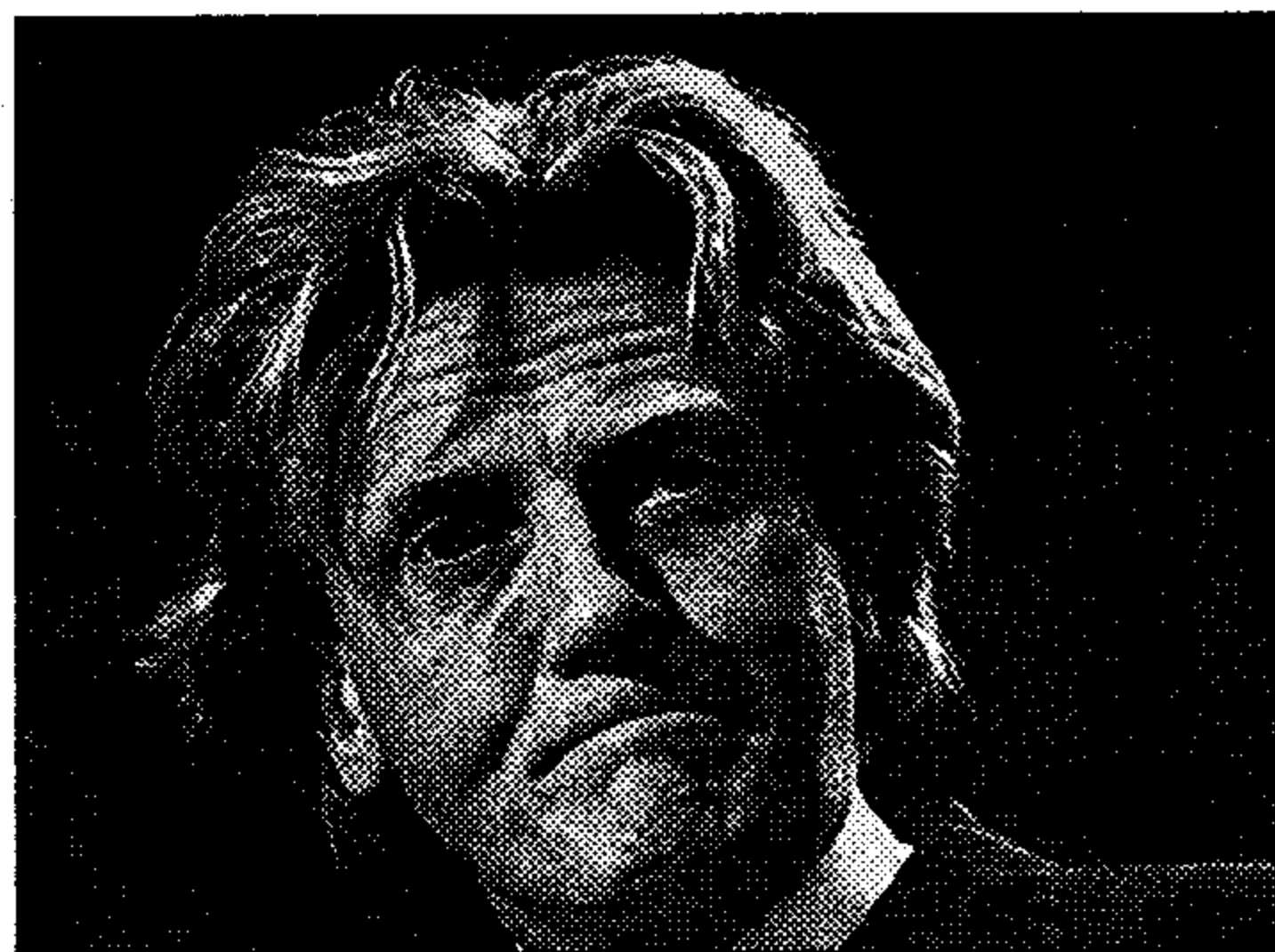
Tyrone O'Sullivan, chair of Tower Lodge NUM said,

'This is a tremendous ballot result, under intensive management pressure, which shows the Tower men feel that jobs in the future are more important than the quick-fix of redundancy.

We hope people will now rally to Tower and give us the support we need to push back British Coal. We hope our stand will help to start a fight back against unemployment and for all the low paid and unemployed in Britain.'

Tower colliery will now go into the government's review procedure, but as Tyrone explained,

'We know the review won't deliver the goods on its own: what it will do is buy us time to campaign against closure. Our immediate aim is to force British Coal to restart production at the



Butchering last pit in Wales: Heseltine pit.'

Tower was one of the 19 'core pits' guaranteed a future by Heseltine's review. Last October British Coal (BC) announced a cut of nearly half a million tons in Tower coal supplied to Aberthaw power station. When the Lodge refused to accept the 250 redundancies, BC demanded all bonuses were cut until the target was met. 200 men were forced to leave before Christmas.

February saw a further cut in coal supplied to Aberthaw and more redundancies demanded. Pressure was further increased with the announcement that the redundancy terms on offer would end on April 30. The closure announcement was a logical step in the continued run down of the pit over the last six months.

The Tories want to destroy

the unity and militancy of Tower colliery NUM, which stands like a beacon in the sea of union collaboration and capitulation in South Wales. It is no small irony that the most militant South Wales pit in the 1984-5 strike is the only one to remain open.

The government plans to sell off the coal industry area by area. Tower will be sold as part of a package. Such a large investment is out of the reach of Tower management who would like to buy the pit. By closing it before privatisation they hope to buy it out alone.

Hence the ploy of deliberately

running down the market for coal while spending large amounts of money on the pit in the month before the closure announcement.

The decision to fight the closure is a tribute to Tower Lodge NUM who have campaigned tirelessly in defence of the coal industry. We must make every effort to deliver the support they deserve and ensure a reversal of the closure decision. A vigorous campaign will now be launched by the Lodge which all trade unions, Labour Party branches and Miners' Support Groups are urged to support.

Messages of support to: Tyrone O'Sullivan, Tower Lodge NUM, Tower Colliery, Hirwaun, Mid Glamorgan. Tel: 0685 811199.

Hunger strikes fight detentions

By Bill MacKeith

THE NUMBERS of immigration prisoners on hunger strike has considerably reduced since the UK's largest ever hunger strike started on March 11.

At Campsfield, six strikers are now in their fifth week of taking only sugarless liquids. Others, dispersed from Campsfield, continue in their new detention centres.

The strikers have successfully drawn attention to the trebling of immigration detentions within the last year.

Media coverage and an adjournment debate in the House of Commons have followed demonstrations of support outside Campsfield, Winson Green, Exeter, Hull and other prisons and through a letter to Major signed by 100 Oxford academics.

The government has taken a 'get tough' turn. Two Algerians given temporary admission have been re-arrested. One had spoken out publicly at a demonstration at

Campsfield and on TV. The basic demand for at least temporary admission has yet to be won.

Group 4 attempts to restrict demonstrations at Campsfield have met with limited success. Numbers are the key. Support is needed (Saturdays, 12.30pm - particularly 30th April).

Close Campsfield!

A vital step in this struggle will be the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION on SATURDAY 4th JUNE.

(11am, St. Giles, Oxford - feeder march); 1pm Exeter Hall car park, Kidlington (main march assembly); 2pm rally at Campsfield.

Posters and leaflets are available - Tel: 0865 724452.

Money is urgently needed to fund this work. Please send donations to Campaign to Close Campsfield, c/o 111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford.

Black agenda for anti-racism

By Charlie Langford

200 PEOPLE met at the 'Communities of Resistance' rally, called by the Rahman family Defence Committee in Manchester last Saturday.

There were speakers from many other campaigns, including anti-deportations, legal frame-ups and racist murder. The rally basically represented the black agenda for anti-racism and anti-fascism.

Key speakers Anwar Ditta and Mohamed Idrish, from the successful campaigns in the 1980s, made it absolutely clear that success in avoiding deporta-

tion is entirely due to the strength of the campaigns; the legalistic details were the state's excuse for surrender.

There are several other cases - Cardiff 3, Guildford 4, Birmingham 6 - that prove this.

Campsfield

Bridget from the Campsfield campaign was also a speaker. None of the people recently allowed out on bail from the concentration camp would speak because of fear of re-arrest.

The common factor in every speech was that the state is thoroughly racist in its laws, its police, its judiciary and its prisons.

This alone shows the poin-

tlessness of campaigns to change the law. Who will implement the new racial harassment law pioneered by ARA?

The only point where the rally was weak was in the dim view of the way forward. Some speakers called for a network of campaigns and in an embryonic form this now exists.

But it has to develop into an open, democratic, non-sectarian anti-racist and anti-fascist campaign, free of attachment to any political party, which recognises black autonomy and aims to link up with the labour movement.

The seeds for such a campaign were all in Manchester last Saturday.

BNP bottle out - NF to stand in Hull

The BNP has failed to return the nomination papers taken out for their candidate in the Noddle Hill ward in Hull City Council elections in May.

This is a victory for the work done by anti-fascists in the ward over the last few weeks.

However the National Front is standing a candidate in the Ings ward in East Hull. This is the first time for years that fascists have stood in the city. The ward is a traditional Labour seat.

Socialist Outlook supporters are arguing that the official campaign materials should be explicitly anti-racist and anti-fascist.

Despite support from rank and file members, this is unlikely to happen as those in control of the election machine and the Labour candidate are part of the right wing old guard.

Outlook supporters have also successfully argued for the local trades council to mount a vigorous campaign against the fascists. Teams of trade unionists will be mobilised to canvass in the ward and links are being built with local community groups.

The first organising meeting was held Thursday 7 April and the meeting was well attended, constructive and representative.

The campaign includes local trade unionists, the ANL, YRE and community activists. Mass leafleting, canvassing and a public meeting will all be happening in the ward.

HOME NEWS



£21,000 Appeal Fund

O.K. We know you've just been hit by tax-rises - if you're lucky enough to have a job. And you've got to pay VAT on your fuel bills.

But we're going to ask you for money anyway. Because we can't think of a better way of spending your cash than giving it to us.

Never mind false modesty - Socialist Outlook is the best paper on the left! Not just because our front covers and lay-out are more imaginative - which they are - but because of what we have to say.

While others supported the fight against pit closures when the campaign was at its height we have stayed the distance. Our supporters in Lancashire and Wales continue to play an active role at Parkside and Tower pits.

On international coverage we are second to none. This issue alone brings you exclusive material from Palestine and Italy.

Our analysis of the break-up of former Yugoslavia is way ahead of anyone else. Through International Workers' Aid we have organised concrete support for the people of Bosnia.

With our limited resources we have helped give young people a voice through Liberation!, the only socialist youth paper in Britain.

We want to be able to continue all these things and more. But that costs money. We need to raise £21,000 over the next few months.

Of course it would be much easier if the government or big business gave us a hand-out but they won't.

So we are asking you, our readers, to show your contempt for Tory tax increases and VAT on fuel by sending us a donation to help make Socialist Outlook even brighter and better.

RUSH cheques, postal orders or surplus jewelry to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.



Time to get tough with criminal Tories!

IT'S OFFICIAL: inescapable evidence has now been produced to show that Britain's crime wave is linked to the rise in unemployment. And real unemployment — much of it concealed by the massaging of official statistics, is now around 5 million.

Statistics from the Association of Chief Officers of Probation show that a massive 70% of last year's convicted offenders were unemployed. These figures are based on a 28,000 sample, but exclude most metropolitan areas, where unemployment levels are even higher.

They were revealed in the same week as an internal Home Office briefing document, leaked to the *Independent*, admitted the link between crime and 'relative deprivation' created by Tory economic policies.

Far from easing deprivation, Tory Chancellor Clarke is actually intending to rub salt in existing wounds by cutting dole payments to young workers by 20% from 1996 as he leads the attack on the welfare state.

The civil service document concludes that improving prospects of employment would be the biggest single contribution the government could make to reducing the risk of unemployed youngsters sliding into crime.

Wooden headed

This news will come as a shock only to the Tories, who have wooden-headedly ignored all the obvious evidence that their cynical and divisive policies of feathering the nests of the rich by ripping off the poor have created a mounting social crisis.

A whole generation of working class youth, growing up on neglected council estates or inner-city wastelands, with no prospect of a stable job, a decent wage, a house or enough money to match the



Jail for jobless youth: but not for Tories in Westminster's £21m vote-rig scandal

media stereotypes of 'success', have been alienated, ignored, and occasionally subject to police repression when their revolt has boiled over into riots or larger scale disturbances.

Unable to afford trappings of 'success' such as smart cars, videos, or designer clothes, some have taken the individualism promoted by Tory ideology to its logical, anti-social conclusion, stealing to raise money to buy what they need — or stealing just for fun, to relieve boredom and frustration, as with much of the 'joy-riding' of fast cars.

None of this is a secret: the crime wave has reached such epidemic proportions that insurance companies will no longer provide anti-theft cover for houses in some inner city areas. Car crime is rampant, and, like most petty crime, is largely ignored by police.

For the Back to Basics Tories, the answer is simple: Home Secretary Michael Howard is demanding more police pow-

ers, longer sentences, bigger prisons and locking up more young people. If the Tories get their way it could reach the point where a greater proportion of Thatcher's lost generation will have spent time inside a prison than in a college.

The civil servants of course were right: the key to tackling crime is to cut it off at source.

More jobs, better pay, better education are the key.

Alienated

Fewer idle, alienated youth walled off from society would offer fewer recruits to the army of petty crime; the more young people become able to afford their own cars and homes, the less they will want to steal from other people.

But Tory policies, reflecting the needs of the capitalist market economy, head in the opposite direction: fewer full-time jobs, lower pay, more casualisation,

fewer prospects, fewer houses, and a growing gap between rich and poor.

Labour politicians, keen to score opportunist points from the crime wave, have called for the publication of the Home Office brief. But the issue, like that of taxation, is a double-edged sword for Labour.

The harder they argue the link between unemployment and crime, the clearer it becomes that anything short of the most radical and hard-hitting socialist programme for economic expansion and reconstruction will fail to make any impression on the problem.

Capitalism has failed a generation of youth, and offers no escape.

John Smith's timid opposition, which Labour front-bencher Jack Straw now ludicrously argues is stronger for not having any specific policies, falls far short of the answers that are needed.

Even Bryan Gould and union leaders like GMB chief John Edmonds have recognised the need for a radical re-think to make full employment a central plank of Labour's electoral platform.

Gould and others argue for a Keynesian policy based on extensive government borrowing. This is bolder than Smith, but still fails to grasp the scale of the problem.

Labour must promise a job-creation package centred on a crash programme of public works, financed in part by a steeply progressive taxation of the rich who have pocketed billions under the Tories and in part through the nationalisation of key banks and finance houses.

Social security and unemployment benefits must be uprated, with Tory cuts restored.

It is by tackling these roots of the social crisis, rather than fuelling the reactionary Tory 'law and order' crusade, whose main victims, as ever, are black communities and working class youth, that socialists can answer crime.

Bosnia: we need vehicles for solidarity

By Ian MacDonald

INTERNATIONAL Workers Aid (IWA) West London has existed for approximately one year.

Two weeks ago, after six months collecting we had £3,000 for a lorry to send to Tuzla via Split for 7 April. We had bought a lorry and filled it with flour, sugar, yeast and medical supplies.

Myself and Sheila Nadim from the campaign set off on April 1 — first stop Paris. We reached there at 3pm April 2 and immediately took part in a meeting of IWA which was very successful and collected

another £100 for the campaign.

On April 3, 100 miles south of Paris, disaster struck. Without any warning the double offside wheel bolts sheered and we went out of control down the auto route. We eventually hit the central reservation and toppled over.

Obviously we were shocked — and lucky to be alive — but our main concern was to be able to salvage most of our load and get it to Tuzla.

We are also determined to go out again at the next opportunity. We managed to organize sending our cargo on to Tuzla with help from the French comrades from the Ligue Communiste Revolu-

tionnaire who were able to divert a lorry from Belgium to pick up most of the load.

One positive thing has been achieved already. The local paper has carried a very positive story about the amount of work that went into the campaign and has also put out an appeal for another lorry.

This is essential if the campaign in West London is to continue. The West London campaign is a focus for building the campaign in Britain and organising more convoys to Tuzla.

Comrades should phone 081-571 5019 if they can help or have any ideas how to obtain another lorry.



Miners from Tower colliery found time to support the IWA convoy with a £500 donation and a memorial plate

Convoy starts rolling

INTERNATIONAL Workers Aid convoy number two leaves the Croatian port of Split this week, bound for Tuzla. Five trucks and a crew of 15 will negotiate the route through the mountains, carrying mostly aid for the IWA bread programme, organised jointly with the miners' union in Tuzla.

Trucks from Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Denmark converged on Split, where the IWA has established an office and warehouse facilities. (The lorry from Britain crashed in France).

IWA plans to send one convoy every ten days or so through to Tuzla while this remains possible. Campaigns in the various countries will supply the depot in Split. Part of the convoy will divert to Sarajevo on the return journey, where IWA has been invited by unions to participate in the city's May Day celebrations.

EDITORIAL

Teachers on the warpath put NUT leaders under fire

**By Keith Sinclair,
Hull NUT delegate
(personal capacity)**

DELEGATES voted to maintain the National Union of Teacher's (NUT) boycott of SATs and to pursue militant policies on a number of other issues at the union's conference held over the Easter weekend.

The increasing confidence amongst large numbers of members was evident throughout the four day conference.

Many recognise that the government is weak and therefore can be confronted and indeed defeated. On a number of important issues pressure from the organised left resulted in progress being made on union policy.

The results of the national executive elections were announced just before Easter. They showed increased votes for the left although there was no overall breakthrough and the left only gained one extra place on the executive.

But this year's conference confirmed that the left in the NUT is one of the largest and most affective of any union. Carol Regan, a leading member

It's not cricket!

ENGLAND lose ignominiously against the West Indies and fail to qualify for the World Cup. Who's to blame?

Obviously it is the trendy teachers of the 70s and 80s with their 'progressive' ideas. The remedy? Compulsory team sports for all. Simple - no need to consult; no need to evaluate the evidence; and if it means extra hours for teachers then so much the better.

John Major's latest wheeze is but the latest of the 'back of a fag packet' ideas to come from the Tories.

Truancy

Ignore all the evidence that most truancy is highly selective with PE featuring high on the list of missed subjects; that schools have sold off playing fields to finance essential capital projects - that's the Tories' way to make policy.

The NUT's continued boycott is vindicated. With the Tories down, but not out, it's time to put the boot in and finish them off once and for all.

of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), was elected vice president of the union.

Anti union laws

Conference opened dramatically with the first debate being on the Tory anti-union laws. Socialist Outlook supporter, Roy Leach, moved the successful motion that called for a campaign to repeal all anti-union legislation and for the union to refuse to co-operate with anti-trade union legislation.

The executive attempted unsuccessfully to take all the key points out of the motion.

This is the first time the left has managed to get such a motion passed at NUT conference. The injunction against NAT-FHE's March 1 strike clearly had a significant impact on the thinking of NUT activists.

George Wiskin, speaking for the executive, even resorted to lying when he claimed that only a handful of very small unions had such a policy. As a Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) bulletin pointed out, calling UNISON a very small union stretches even the most liberal imagination.

Whilst there should be no illusions that NUT general secretary Doug McAvoy is going to lead action against the law nevertheless the passing of this motion is an important victory for the left.

Need for national action

The key task for teachers is to force the union into national action against the Tories. The best option was a national fight on pay. Unfortunately the left was unable to commit conference to national action against the 2.9% imposed pay award.

Similarly the executive and their supporters managed (just) to vote down a fighting policy for next year's claim.

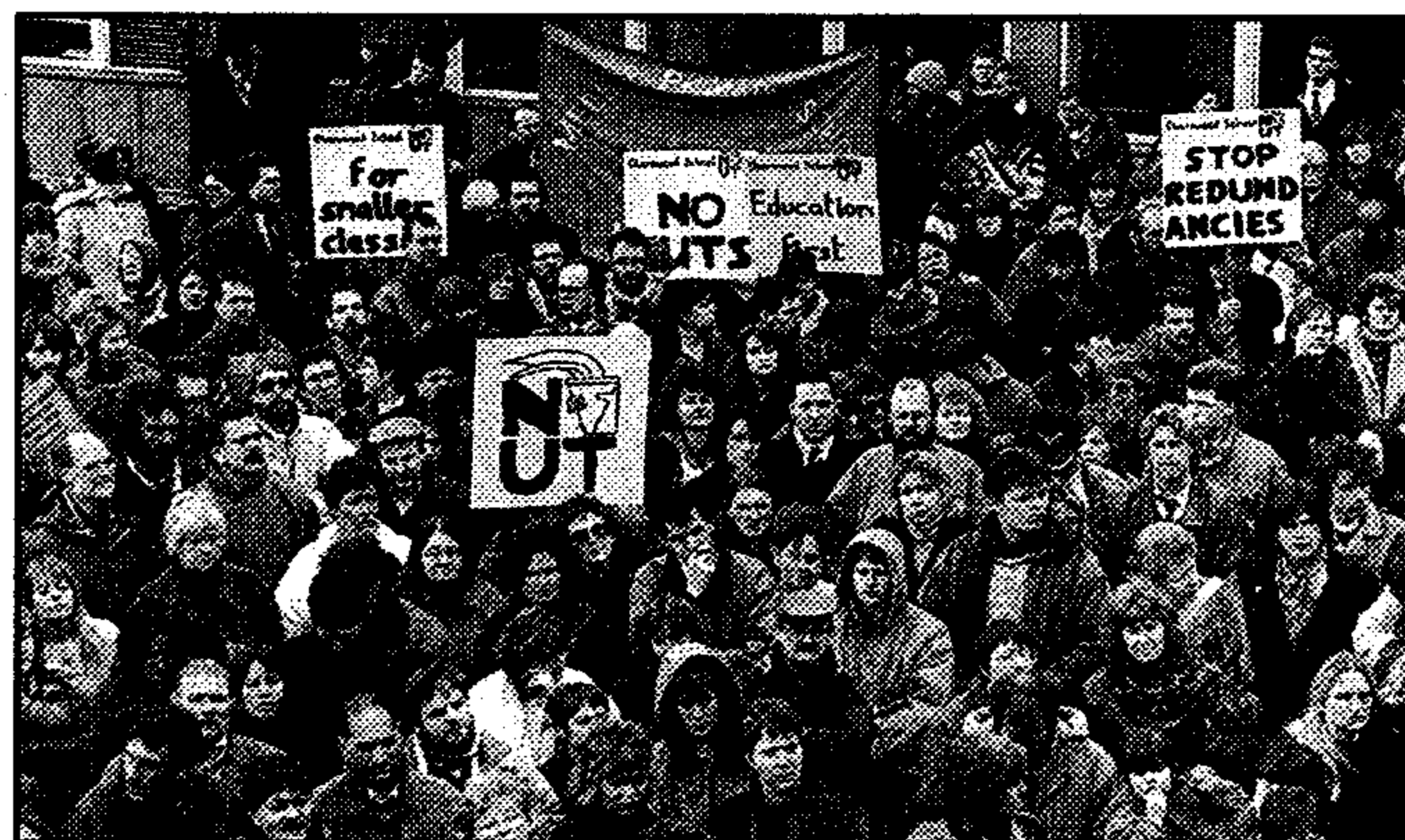
Their margin of victory - 325 votes in a card vote of 150,000 - shows how close victory was. The left should now campaign for a special salaries conference to show the union has clear pol-

icy for next years claim.

Despite the narrow defeats on pay, the conference did provide a number of possibilities for national action.

Section 11 campaign

The government intends to reduce the level of Section 11 grant from 75% to 50% by 1995/96. Section 11 payments are used to fund teachers for students where English is a second language. The cut in funding will have a severe effect in many areas including areas such as Tower hamlets and Birmingham.



Rank and file radicalisation puts NUT leaders under pressure

It represents a national attack and needs a national response. A national day of action will now take place in the summer term and accompanied by local strike action.

and ensuring that the union membership understands the limitations of the Dearing Review.

It was agreed that the boycott policy should continue until standard national tests are abandoned. This debate was important in bringing out the ideological implications of the changes in government policy

The fight against racism and fascism

Affiliation to the ANL and ARA were reaffirmed although the executive did manage to squeeze through an amendment restricting support to ANL to those of its activities that were 'peaceful'.

Teachers Against the Nazis organised a large rally with Esther Bronstein, a Holocaust survivor, speaking. She also addressed conference making a significant impact on all present and the intention is to hold follow-up meetings around the country.

The strengths and weaknesses of Teachers Against the Nazis mirror those of the ANL. On the one hand, energetic anti-fascist activity, on the other

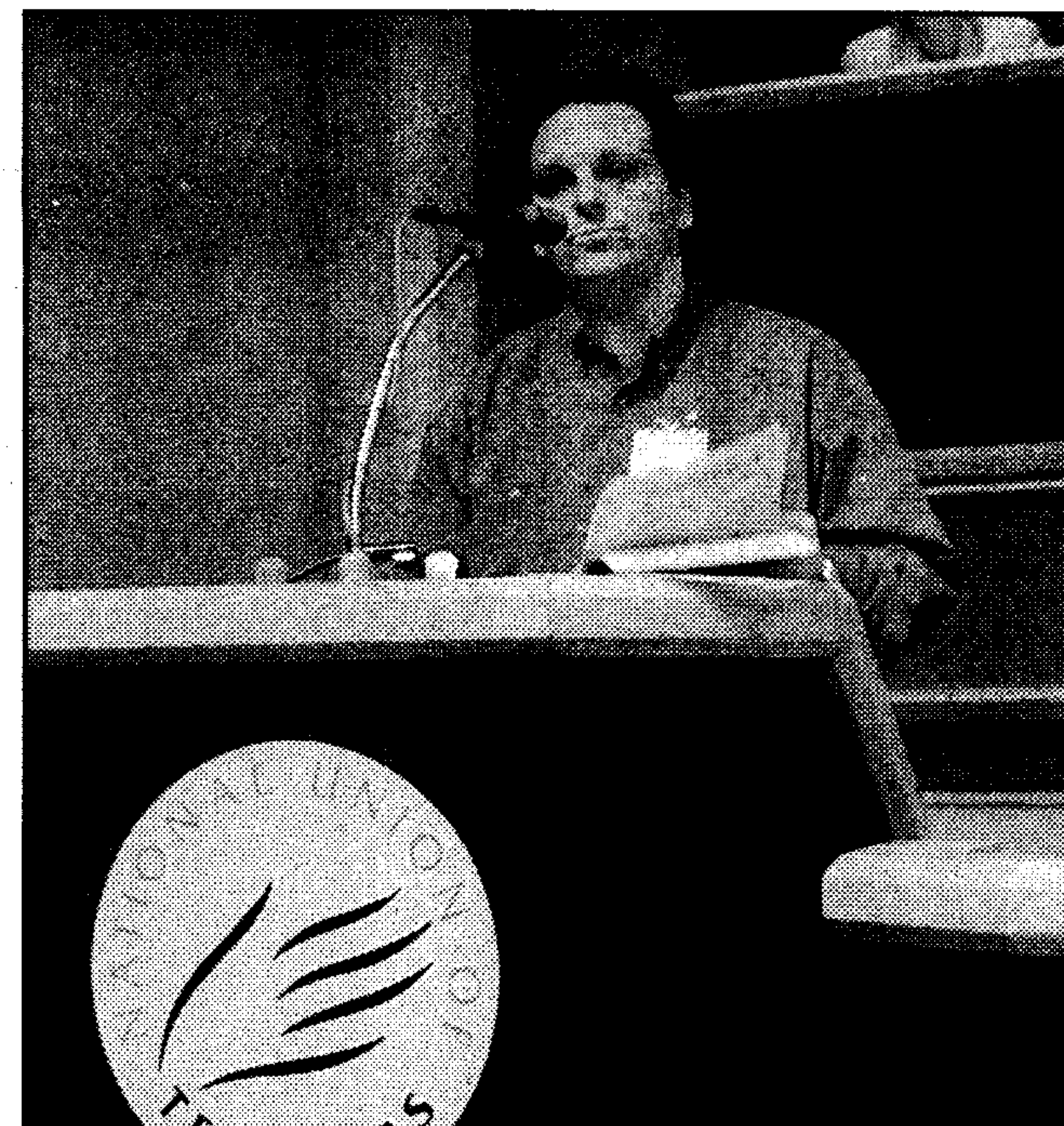
Class size

It was agreed to call a lobby of parliament to start mobilizing members behind a serious campaign in support of the union's objectives for smaller class sizes.

This follows the executive's failure to implement last year's policy that aimed to get the campaign moving twelve months ago. A significant change has been the success of a very small number of schools who have fought and won on this issue.

Education policy

The main motion on education policy was moved by Socialist Outlook supporter Gill Lee. The motion clearly ex-



Keith Sinclair joining the onslaught on the platform

hand a method of operation where all decisions appear to be made by the SWP with the lack of democratic structures.

The left

The NUT left is large and well organised. This is helped by NUT conference being a large conference of over a thousand delegates.

There are two left organisations - the STA and the smaller Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CFDU). The two groups worked fairly well together at this conference. A joint slate was agreed for the Conference Business Committee and this led to the slate winning three of the four available places.

Much of the friction surrounds the position of the SWP, who are the single largest tendency within the NUT left. The SWP are members of the STA but played very little role within the organisation of STA at the conference.

There is much talk of the need for unity between the STA and the CFDU. Socialist Outlook believes there is no principled reason why the members of both groups could not be united in one organisation.

However what is really needed is a united left tendency that includes all those currently in both groups and those who could potentially be attracted to a merged organisation.

There are clearly a number of areas where all the left should be able to work together in the coming months. Most of those areas of work are obvious from the key debates of conference as outlined. Another area is the election for NUT general Secretary.

The overall assessment of conference must therefore be very positive. On a number of issues the NUT has improved its formal policies.

The job of the left over the next few months is to unite to force the national executive to implement the agreed policies.

The leadership of the NUT will come under increasing pressure from the government and the leaderships of the other teaching unions.

The left needs to mobilise the members to ensure that the executive is forced to maintain the SATs boycott and to pursue vigorously the policies agreed in Scarborough.

TRADE UNION NEWS

Fight NASUWT scabbing threat!

LAST YEAR the NUT and the rival teachers' union NASUWT united to defeat the Tories national school tests.

This year unfortunately the NASUWT have not only called off their boycott, but in a scandalous speech, NASUWT leader Nigel De Gruchy has egged on the Tories to send in external markers to break the NUT boycott.

This is an absolute disgrace from a TUC af-

iliated union. Every effort must be made to get rank and file NASUWT members to condemn De Gruchy and to oppose any attempts to use NASUWT members to undermine NUT action.

In the event of external markers being sent in they should be met by NUT pickets and a student and parental boycott of the school for the days the tests are taking place.

Time to broaden out UNISON's left wing



**Discussion article
by a London
UNISON activist**

AS UNISON delegates across the country prepare to pack their suitcases for the first annual conference in Bournemouth in the middle of May, the question on many minds is "What the hell is going on?"

With the merry-go-round of internal full time officer appointments still creaking around, with FOUR head office buildings scattered across London, and with a national membership system which lurches from crisis to crisis, the services to activists and members of the three former unions COHSE, NALGO and NUPE, have collapsed like a pack of cards.

The Union's finance section is so paranoid about members finding out the state of play that



Potential support for a fight in UNISON stretches well beyond the existing organised left

information is restricted to a small sub-committee of the NEC.

One member of the committee revealed after a few beers that the Union is dropping £2 million

a month. An attempt by the Finance Officer to bang through a subs increase just 9 months after Unison was formed was vetoed by the NEC on the basis that it would never get through Conference. Very perceptive.

Paperwork

At branch level, activists are left to deal with mountains of paperwork.

In order to form a bona fide merged branch you have to jump through more hoops than Evil Knievel, and it's probably easier to get a Cup Final ticket than it is to get a membership application processed.

Finding out who your full time officer is and where they're based can make the hunt for Lord Lucan look like a doddle.

Meanwhile, the Tory government's relentless attack on the public services grinds on. Repeated calls from the rank and file for a serious response in-

volving industrial action have been played down or simply ignored.

There have been hundreds more leaflets sent to UNISON branches offering mortgages, credit cards and "Once In A Lifetime" trips to Croyde Bay Holiday Camp (I kid you not) than there have publicising the campaign against the pay freeze and privatisation.

In the week that the Government announced that Guy's Hospital was going to close, *UNISON Week*, the activists' magazine, contained a glossy brochure publicising a conference supporting management buy-outs of public services. Inspired stuff.

So how should the left respond? For a start there needs to be a breaking down of the ex-NALGO domination of the debate on the left in the union.

There has to be a recognition that the partner unions come from different cultures, with

quite large numbers of manual workers.

NALGO members are far too ready to dismiss former COHSE and NUPE activists as "right wing" because they don't necessarily share the enthusiasm for the same issues, adopt all the right slogans or sell papers outside meetings.

A classic example is in local government where ex-NUPE branches, after years of being told by Tom Sawyer that accepting 'caring cuts' by Labour councils (the 'dented shield' policy) is the only way, are starting to hit back at LCC-dominated Councils who seem hell bent on out-doing the Tories over cuts and privatisation. It's a step forward that we need to encourage.

On the health side there's huge potential which needs to be tapped.

The balance on the left has to be shifted away from the old NALGO/local government stronghold if we're going to spearhead a campaign for a major UNISON fightback over the destruction of the NHS both in London and beyond.

There is a genuine anger and frustration at the way UNISON has shaped up which is crying out for a focus.

The left can tap into this, if it recognises that there are real possibilities of winning much broader support than before, across all sectors of the union.

If we begin to take up issues including the collapse in standards of service to members and activists alongside demands for a fightback over pay, privatisation and the attack on the public services, then our influence will grow.

Bournemouth is our big chance.

Setback as Telecom strike ballot is lost

BY 5048 (57%) to 3776 (43%) London BT engineers voted against taking one day strike action in protest at the introduction of contractors into the London local network. The turnout was 47%, quite high for a postal ballot.

This means BT now has a green light to continue its policy of substituting contract labour for direct labour on all divisions.

In order to head off the strike threat BT has had to pledge the extension of its policy of no compulsory redundancies during 1994/5, to limit the number of contractors to 150 this year (out of a London workforce of 19,000), to find permanent posts for the 1000+ redeployees who are currently without them, and to "review" the use of contractors later this year.

Promises

These promises may well prove worthless, but the London branches will be campaigning to hold management to them.

A serious assessment of the defeat has started in the union. Debate has centred on the isolation experienced by external staff who go straight to their first job from home and who only meet their workmates at the monthly management Team Briefings.

This is undoubtedly true, but in fact some of the best votes

came from branches with mainly external members.

There are no surpluses of staff on this division and some are working high levels of overtime. They are more confident than colleagues on other divisions which have declared staff surpluses.

In fact the main problem area was on other divisions where membership had suffered from large scale redeployment.

Although the fight was about getting these staff redeployed onto external work in place of the contractors, they did not feel confident, and were concerned by the threat of a management lockout as occurred in 1987.

The main responsibility for this situation lies with the Broad Left (BL) NEC who incorrectly negotiated the Identification of Redeployees Agreement in November 1993 which allowed these massive redeployments to take place on an appraisal related basis.

The result is a defeat for the powerful London branches, the base of the NCU BL.

We will have to fight hard for the reelection of the BL NEC despite its retreats and wasted opportunities of its year in office.

We are also faced with a difficult Sign Up campaign to retain members.

Minority Rights bosses get tough with unions

by Steve French

QUESTION. Who said 'I am sick of your filthy insubordination. You are my subordinate...and you will do what I say.'?

Was it: (a) John Major about the 'bastards'; (b) the editor of *Socialist Outlook* to his staff or (c) a manager of the Minority rights Group (MRG)?

Three points for C (one point for A; two points for B). The worker who faced this abuse, Deborah Knight, has now been 'sacked' after unionising a majority of staff.

MRG is a high-profile agency with an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory agenda in

the development/human rights field.

It receives funding from the EU, London Boroughs Grants Scheme, Oxfam and Scandinavian governments.

However MRG has no more than a draft Equal Opportunities policy, and has existed for 25 years without proper procedures for grievances, disciplinary or appeals and without union representation.

Grievance

After the abuse, Deborah's union (TGWU/ACTS) brought a grievance. Management's response was to try to have Deborah suspended. They failed but brought a disciplinary 'for behaviour bordering on gross misconduct'. This was challenged by ACTS. Management

withdrew 'without reservation'.

ACTS members than pressed for union recognition - two days later Deborah was told to clear her desk with no notice or reason.

Deborah says, 'MRG works for the rights of minorities, yet I was bullied and intimidated and victimised by sacking just two days after the union applied for recognition'.

Support for Deborah's campaign for reinstatement has been won from the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, Region 1 T&G, Southern District RMT and Lambeth UNISON 'A'.

■ Donations/messages of support etc should be sent to South London ACTS, c/o 12-14 Thornton St, London SW9 OBL (071 733 5135).

UNIONS

Birmingham benefit staff walk out

by Bob Smith

MORE THAN 150 UNISON members in Birmingham City council's benefits section began indefinite strike action on Monday 23 March in support of their claim for regrading.

The council launched a multi benefits system designed to improve efficiency and increase the uptake of benefits, but unfortunately the new 'left' council leadership are refusing to fund it adequately, and allowing management to intimidate and threaten strikers.

Staff will now be assessing and paying council tax benefit, housing benefit for private and council tenants, free school meals as well as advising claimants of their entitlements to wel-

fare benefits, income support and family credit.

The existing benefits service was already a fiasco with a massive backlog of over 150,000 claims built up from April of last year.

Benefit claims for private tenants were taking over six months to process - the legal requirement being 14 days! UNISON members took the brunt of tenants' dissatisfaction with abuse, threats and violent incidents. Following limited industrial action new security arrangements were made and 80 temporary staff employed.

Obviously the problems were not solved. There is still a 40,000 backlog - only interim payments have been made and rebates yet to be assessed. Poor training of temporary staff meant many assessments were inaccurate.



Not feeling the benefit of right wing council policies: Birmingham UNISON strikers

Massive overpayments were made and written off due to the impossibility of collecting the money.

Certainly, the ideas behind the new benefit service are supported by UNISON - a shift away from a 'business culture' concentrating on administration at a minimum cost to a 'benefits culture' concentrating on efficiency and maximum take up which should benefit workers and claimants.

In reality an apparently unaccountable management have ditched council policy and gone for ruthless cost cutting. Cuts in

training, and a cheap adaptation of the computer system have only heightened the crisis.

Theresa Stewart, Labour Party council leader and 'left' victor over the 'business administrator' Sir Richard Knowles, is using the excuse of Tory cut-backs.

Jobs freeze

In fact millions have been saved by freezing jobs and making cuts in other social provisions while April's council tax bills have been reduced to bribe voters.

The UNISON branch are making a determined stand against the contemptible treatment. An emergency meeting is being called to arrange pickets and build a 24 hour branch stoppage of all 9,000 Birmingham Council UNISON staff.

Strikers are only receiving basic strike pay and need financial support as well as picket line solidarity.

■ For donations, speakers and messages of support contact UNISON no.1, 3rd Floor, Mercury Hse, 71 Cornwall St, Birmingham, B3 2EE, 021-233 3048.

Blacklisters move into a new League

By Dave Osler

TWO former managers of the now-defunct Economic League blacklisting outfit have set up a consultancy to keep tabs on "anti-business" pressure groups, trade union activists and socialists.

Going by the politically neutral name of Caprim Limited, it operates from a post office box number in Redditch in the West Midlands. Companies House records list the directors as Stan Hardy, a past director general of the Economic League, and Jack Winder, the organisation's director of information, who each hold 30 £1 shares.

Tribune has been sent photocopies of what appears to be a regular bulletin, *Caprim Monitor*, spelling out the wide range of McCarthyite services now on offer.

As well as traditional Economic League "labour-screening" activity, which enables bosses to vet the political and trade union background of prospective employees, Caprim also offers an "anti-business monitoring service" which targets "the many and varied organisations whose activities threaten a company's freedom of action".

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade and the Ethical Investment Research and Infor-

mation Service are given as examples.

The Economic League, established in 1919 to combat the Bolshevik menace on the shop floor, went into voluntary liquidation last year with creditors of £300,067.

As recently as 1987, it claimed to have 15 employees in its London offices, 60 others across the country, and an income of £1,000,000 a year. But with union militancy on the wane and a flurry of unwelcome media interest and parliamentary scrutiny, many companies simply stopped subscribing.

The organisation was heavily criticised for effectively keeping people out of work on the basis of inaccurate or flimsy information.

People were blacklisted for campaigning against hospital closures, signing nomination papers for relatives standing in local elections for the Communist Party or simply for being mentioned in Left-wing newspapers.

Paid spies

The League used paid spies in at least one trade union, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and even the Liberal Party, and monitored such "vehicles for subversion" as Christian Aid, Greenpeace, the Child Poverty Action Group and Oxfam.

The names of mainstream



Unlikely victim of anti-left blacklist: MSF chief Roger Lyons

Labour figures such as Jack Ashley, the former Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent South, and Roger Lyons, now general secretary of the Manufacturing, Science, Finance union, cropped up alongside one man who was apparently listed merely because his wife had briefly been a member of the Young Communist League

nies, primarily in construction or manufacturing.

As the files were card-index based, the access provisions of the Data Protection Act did not apply. A question mark remains over what happened to them, and it is possible that they form the basis of Caprim's records.

The organisation's new emphasis is set out in one edition of

"With union officials advocating playing it safe within the law, frustrated and impatient employees may be more likely to listen to those urging militant action." - Caprim Monitor

when she was 16.

At the time of its collapse, Mr Winder was owed £24,804 and Mr Hardy £9,591. Peter Shipley, who specialises in smearing Labour candidates for Conservative Central Office, was owed £1,679.

The League kept files on at least 50,000 individuals, and vetted anything up to 400,000 job applicants a year on behalf of over 2,000 leading compa-

nyes, primarily in construction or manufacturing. Caprim Monitor: "Not all people who cause damage to companies are political extremists. Some have laudable motives. But their methods and conclusions may fail the test of objectivity."

"One of the growth areas of 'busybodyness' is ethics. Companies are categorised, pigeon-holed and effectively blacklisted on the basis of criteria decided by the 'ethical in-

dustry'.

"Caprim can supply the information a traduced company needs to set the record straight and/or to initiate legal proceedings."

Of the two groups named, CAAT is currently running its "Together we can: Stop the Hawks" campaign against the sale of British Aerospace fighter-trainers to Indonesia, and is researching the company's involvement in the Al Yamamah Saudi arms deals.

Campaign worker Will McMahon commented: "I'm glad the Economic League is concerned about what we have on BAe. It bloody well should be."

EIRIS's executive secretary, Peter Webster, said that his company merely supplied information to clients in accordance with ethical standards drawn up by the customers themselves, and that companies are always told what is said about them.

One edition of *Caprim Monitor*, dated July 1993, turns its attentions on the far Left, said to be "on the move again" after years in decline. Militant Labour and the Socialist Workers' Party are singled out.

"Militancy among teachers, firemen, railway, bus and tube workers, far from attracting public odium, has drawn some outspoken support. The silence of the TUC, after its early outcry against the closure programme, can be portrayed as yet another betrayal of trade unionists by their leaders."

"The far Left has always got onto every picket line of any significance. The difference now is that the industrial relations climate is set to change ... With union officials advocating playing it safe within the law, frustrated and impatient employees may be more likely to listen to those urging militant action."

THE RIGHT-WING coalition of Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*, the federalist Northern League and the neo-fascist MSI has stepped into the vacuum created by the collapse of the corrupt centre parties who have run Italy for decades.

Italy's right wing thieves fall out

Here LIVIO MAITAN looks at the significance of the elections and the weakness of the parties of the workers' movement.



THE WINNING coalition is far from stable. Public arguments have raged between Berlusconi, Northern League head Umberto Bossi and Gianfranco Fini of the MSI.

Attempts to form a government have been postponed until after April 15, with no guarantee of success. New elections could yet be on the horizon.

This is a new phase in the crisis of political leadership in Italy, which broke out in 1992. A coalition distinguished by its inclusion of neo-fascists now has to form a government.

This coalition does not have an absolute majority of votes cast (42.9 percent for the Chamber of Deputies, 39.9 percent for the Senate), but because of the 'first-past-the-post' electoral system, it has an absolute majority of seats in the Chamber and is only three votes short in the Senate.

The political and ideological weakening of the workers' movement parties during the last 15 years and the tearing apart of socio-economic structures because of the long wave of stagnation, meant that political divisions only partially corresponded to social divisions.

The Progressive pole - dominated by the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and the Party of Communist Refoundation

(PRC) - won its votes primarily amongst the working class and sections of the radicalised petit-bourgeoisie.

However, the elections confirmed that the Northern League is supported not only by sections of the middle and small bourgeoisie but also on a much smaller scale, by workers.

The results reconfirmed that the neo-fascists have a fairly large electoral base, already indicated by the municipal elections in Rome and Naples. *Forza Italia* was also successful in popular quarters of major cities in the North, alongside spectacular results in regions of the

South.

The industrial bourgeoisie appeared divided. Minority sectors of the employers organisation *Confindustria* opted for Berlusconi whilst some put themselves on the side of the Progressives, with even a few standing as candidates. Most continued to support - discreetly - the centrist parties.

Naturally there will be new realignments and *Confindustria* has already said it is prepared to support a government led by Berlusconi.

Such a government would represent a real turning point. Further conservative and reac-

tionary measures will be added to those already adopted by the Ciampin government. There will be further attacks on the remnants of the welfare state and political institutions will be changed in a more authoritarian direction.

But it is not clear to what extent a Berlusconi government could produce stability in a country which has always known acute social conflicts and a combative working class.

The right-wing are divided, illustrated by the often heated polemics during the electoral campaign and in its immediate wake.

Berlusconi will have great difficulty in carrying out his mediating act whilst making an opening towards part of the centre, which may prove necessary from the viewpoint of Parliamentary balance.

Other factors could set off further instability. The European elections in June will be conducted under proportional representation, with alignments perhaps very different from those of March 27-28.

Finally, the political developments take place alongside an economy which, despite partial improvements, remains marked by stagnation and the prospect of increased unemployment.

The ruling class has to gamble on a heterogenous coalition, the most important component of which was only set up in the last two months by Berlusconi.

He is considered by the 'historic' bourgeoisie to be an 'upstart' without any 'tradition' - expressing a totally superficial overall ideology and his party is composed of members whose effectiveness is largely untested.

The rights' main opportunity is the weakness of the left, who were rejected because they didn't have an alternative to a disintegrating political system. The PDS secretary, Achille Occhetto, never ceased proclaiming the supposed gains of the existing government.

For its part the PRC appeared as the left wing of the Progressives but not as a force intent on imposing a radically different dynamic, an anti-capitalist perspective.

A recomposition of the bourgeois camp remains precarious but the recomposition of the workers' movement hasn't even started.

A Hot Spring in France?

by Jeff Lowe.

THE CRISIS of the Balladur government in France is escalating. The victories at Air France and over the government's attempts to cut wages for young people have encouraged a new wave of struggles.

In Fresnes, a suburb of Paris, Renault workers have been occupying their factory since March 7 to oppose redundancies, defend trade union rights and for wage

increases.

On April 7 the whole of Paris ground to a halt as workers on the Metro, buses and local train services took 24 hour strike action.

Their action was to protest against plans to cut subsidies, break up the RATP (the authority which controls all transport in Paris) and eventual privatisation.

The same day workers in France Telecom, the Post Office and the Societe Generale bank took strike action.

Although the transport workers strike, combined

with torrential rain, reduced a protest demonstration in Paris to only three thousand, larger demonstrations took place elsewhere. Six thousand marched in Nantes, five thousand in Vierzon for example.

These demonstrations were joined by students fresh from their victory over attempts to cut the minimum wage for young people and by unemployed youth.

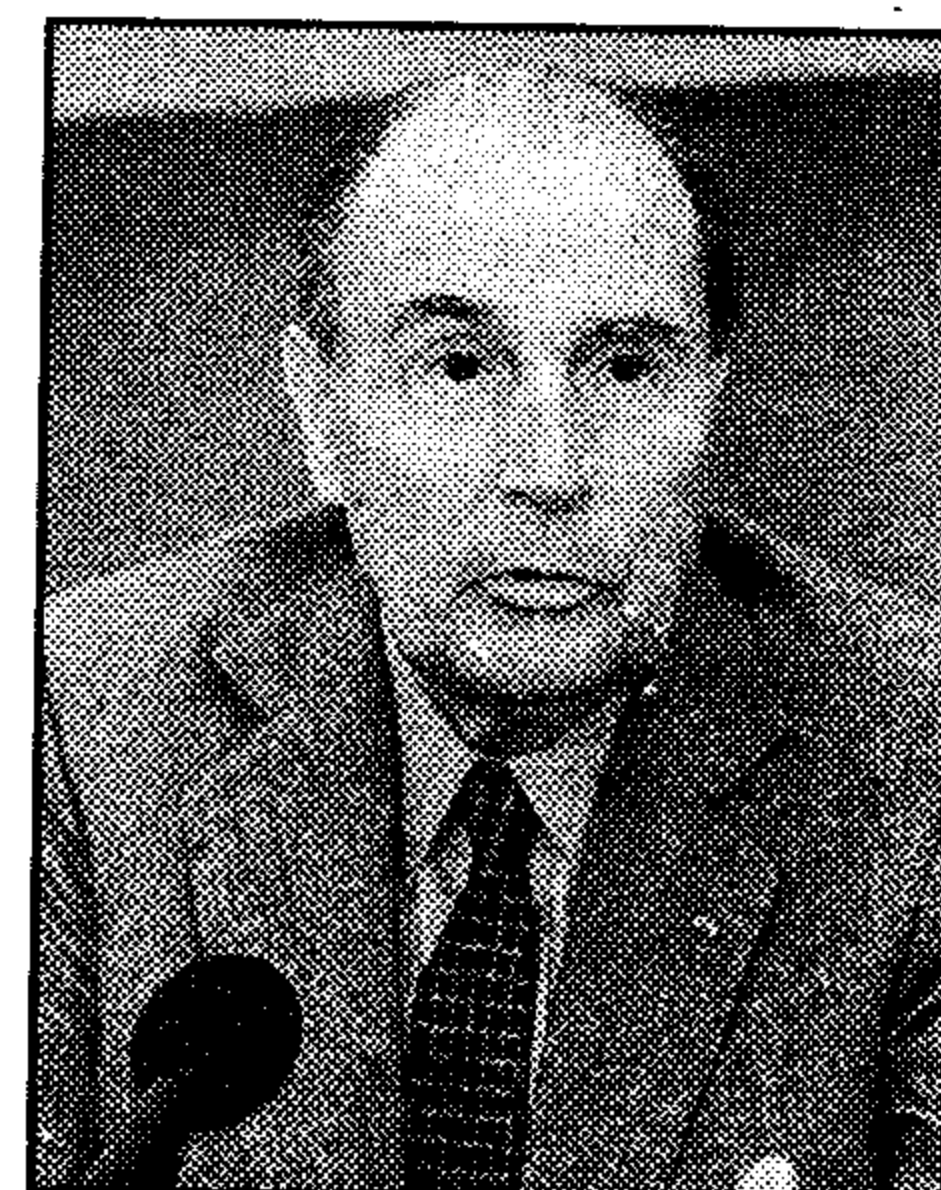
In true Stalinist fashion the Communist Party union officials tried to prevent contact between these radicalised

youth and trades unionists.

Struggles around social issues are also continuing. In Lyon large demonstrations have demanded the right of two deported Algerians to return to France. Even the local court has demanded their return.

Trades unionists throughout France are now organising campaigns against unemployment and for the 35 hour week.

The first leg of a 'right to work' march set off from Albi in the south of France on April 6. Numerous other legs



Mitterrand shrugs it off are planned and will meet together in Paris on May 26 - 29.

WORLD NEWS

Fight for the right to strike

Socialist Outlook spoke to Steve French, Assistant Secretary of Lambeth Trades Council about the conference to be held on April 23, 9.30am - 1pm, Lambeth Town Hall

WHAT is the significance of the conference?

UNFORTUNATELY the British labour movement has yet to respond to the threat posed by the 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act, the results of which are graphically posed by the recent NATFHE court ruling.

NATFHE's recent strike was deemed illegal after the union had been forced to hand over its membership records to the employer. This is the first conference of any significance to counter this threat.

WHAT response has there already been from the labour movement?

THERE has been great interest across London and even wider.

A supportive statement will be sent by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs. We want to encourage labour movement organisations to send messages of support for the initiative and delegations where possible.

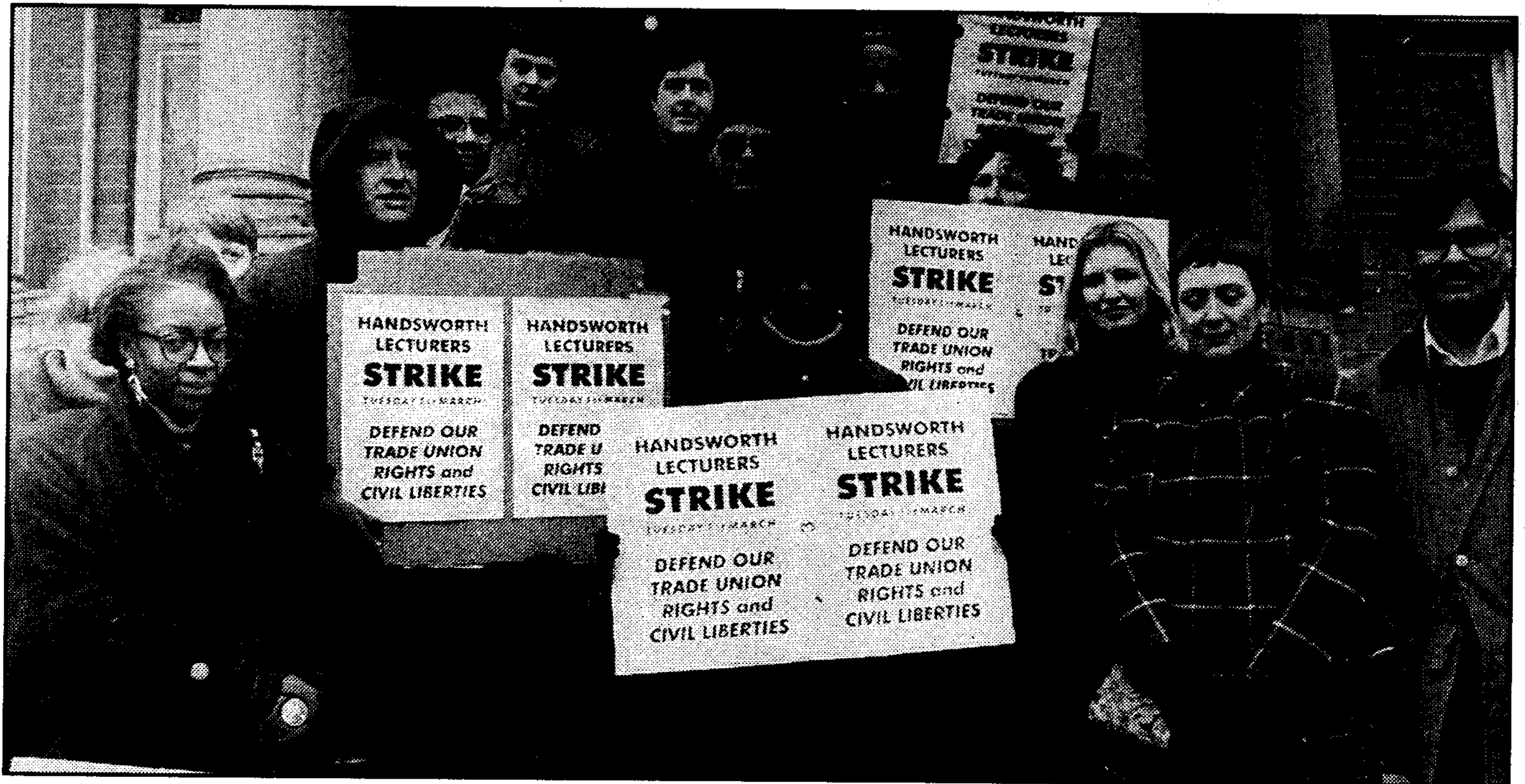
WHAT specifically do you think should come out of the conference?

IT SHOULD lay the foundations for a national labour movement campaign in defence of the right to strike.

We should ensure that the conference goes forward with an appeal for the labour movement, from top to bottom, to campaign on this issue.

The leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC should be urged to organise a conference in the near future on this subject.

■ Further details from LUTURC, 12-14 Thornton St, London, SW9 0BL tel 071 733 5135.



College lecturers became surprised victims of the anti-union laws when their 62% ballot vote was overruled by judges

Choice for unions in 1990s Britain

Defy the law — or go under

TRADE UNIONISTS in Britain are faced with an increasingly sharp dilemma every time they contemplate industrial action to defend themselves: if they walk out they break the law, but if they don't, the employer can put the boot in.

The snares and pitfalls of the barrage of anti-union laws brought in during 15 years of Tory rule make it almost impossible for many sections of workers to take legal strike action.

This was starkly exposed when, at the end of February, a democratic ballot vote for strike action on March 1 by college lecturers' union NATFHE, which had registered 62% in favour of action, was overturned by Appeal Court judges.

They ruled that the 50,000-strong union was obliged to have informed management in advance of the individual names of all those members who would be balloted — and that its records for this purpose must be accurate to "within the number of fingers of two hands".

If this restriction remains in

force, almost every union would be potentially in breach of the law in conducting a ballot, since few have records anywhere near that accurate. The only workplaces where this would not be a problem would be the declining number in which all union members pay contributions through check-off systems administered by the employer.

Attack on DOCAS

One crucial aspect of the most recent (1993) anti-union laws was to mount a serious attack on union membership by undermining the direct deduction of contributions (the DOCAS system).

All unions are now obliged by this autumn to get each individual member to 'sign up' a new authorisation for subs to be deducted from their wages, and to repeat the exercise every three years. To make matters worse, employers have been given the right to approach union members every year, or every time deductions are adjusted, to ask if they wish to pull out.

This attack is aimed at the soft underbelly of Britain's bureaucratized unions, the gap that has grown over the past decade between national leaders and the active members at branch level on the one hand, and the more passive layers of membership on the other, many of whom see little in the way of direction or leadership for their subscriptions.

Some unions are already predicting heavy losses of membership, although if properly organised, sign up campaigns

"The fight must be stepped up at union conferences this summer for the right to strike, and for policies of defiance of Tory legislation designed to smash union strength"

can strengthen branch organisation and revitalise a drooping rank and file.

Assuming unions retain the large majority of their members, they still face a succession of carefully-placed obstacles in mounting any fightback.

The rules on balloting are so rigorous it is now impossible to take legal action quickly. The time-honoured tradition of an instant walk-out after a show of hands at a mass meeting has been outlawed by the Tories — though it returned in a glorious moment of defiance on March 8 when 5,000 Sheffield council workers defied the legislation and stormed out on strike.

All legal immunities from civil liability for industrial action are withdrawn if a strike is not preceded by a majority vote in a secret ballot.

But to satisfy the law, even a majority yes vote must be followed by a week's notice to the employer, who must also be told whether the action is to be 'continuous' or 'discontinuous' — allowing strike-breaking measures to be put in place if deemed worthwhile.

To make matters worse, the union must also in giving notice of a strike 'describe' to employer the employees involved. According to the NATFHE judgement, this means listing the names of members to be balloted.

This would clearly enable hard-line employers to embark on systematic intimidation and victimisation of union members: it would certainly make legal strikes for union recognition almost impossible.

In addition, the ballot must be:

★ HELD not more than four weeks before the action;

★ HELD separately for each union participating;

★ HELD separately on each location covered by the employer

★ ASK a question with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer;

★ REFER specifically to a particular dispute;

★ CONDUCTED BY POST if more than 50 employees are involved;

★ NOTIFIED to the employer in advance.

Under 1990 legislation, unions are legally responsible (and thus liable to civil claims for damages) for any industrial action that does not have official backing, unless it gives notice to each member involved that the union repudiates the action.

Employers have been given the right to sack workers who take unofficial action. Individual members of the public can seek court injunctions against those staging unlawful industrial action.

Breach of injunctions by un-

CENTRE STAGE



Early anti-union laws hit picketing: now the noose is tightening



New Tory Bill is a bitter blow to black communities, giving police even greater discretionary powers to stop and search as well as ban demonstrations and peaceful protests

ions is contempt of court, and as such can — as with the NUM — lead to the sequestration of union assets.

Strike action is in any event given legal immunity only when it arises from narrowly defined disputes affecting the particular workplace and section involved.

Labour in 1974 removed any immunity for political strikes. The Tories in 1988 further restricted the right to take action on issues not directly involving workers and their own employer. In 1990, solidarity ('secondary') action was rendered unlawful, though secondary picketing had been outlawed in the early anti-union laws.

While nothing legally stops a union organising 100% of workers in a given workplace, the old system of 'closed shop' agreements have been ended, not least by the 1988 legislation which made unions liable if they took action to force an employer to discriminate against non-union members.

Recognition

However, employers are not obliged to recognise trade unions, and increasing numbers of firms, led by publishing houses and newspaper bosses, have gone onto the offensive, withdrawing collective agreements, refusing to negotiate with union reps or officials, and imposing 'individual contracts' aimed at dividing up staff.

In the NHS, ambulance Trusts have gone so far as to withdraw recognition from UNISON, representing over 90% of crews, and instead recognise the small scab union APAP with a handful of members.

These laws add up to a massive, and cynically-planned straitjacket on the British labour movement. To survive, the unions must mobilise their membership and take action: and — as this year's NUT conference has recognised — this now almost inevitably means breaking the law.

The fight must be stepped up at union conferences this summer for the right to strike, and for policies of defiance where necessary of Tory legislation designed to smash union strength."

Sections taking action must be given the full support of the labour movement, while the political fight is waged to force Labour's timid leaders to pledge a full restoration of union rights once the Tories have been removed.

Tory laws are taking liberties

'YOU do not have to say anything unless you wish to do so, but what you say may be given in evidence'

These famous words may well be a thing of the past if the Criminal Justice Bill passes through parliament and becomes law, reports HELEN SHAW.

THE CIVIL liberties organisation Liberty says, 'the ancient right to silence exists because historical experience shows that to compel answers to questions leads to repression, injustice and ultimately to tyranny'.

The sweeping measures proposed by Home Secretary Michael Howard will undoubtedly lead to more miscarriages of justice.

Howard intends to ignore the advice of two Royal Commissions (1981 and 1993) and abolish the right to silence which both felt was an essential safeguard against miscarriages of justice. Removing the right to silence demolishes the presumption of innocence in the current criminal justice system.

As victims of miscarriage of justice still languish in jail, the racist police still fail to solve racist crimes and continue to harass the black community, the Tories talk up the rise in crime to create a climate of fear and obscure the real causes of collapsing social structure in society.

Their solution is to introduce the Criminal Justice Bill. It will be debated in parliament on April 12 and contains a plethora of draconian measures which attack fundamental civil liberties and rights.

Particular groups of people and activities have been targeted including squatters and travellers, ravers, festival goers and

peaceful protesters. Many of the new proposals have major implications for the trade union and labour movement and on the rights of black communities.

An amendment to the bill was announced on Friday 8 April by Home Office Minister David McLean, ostensibly to deal with weapon-carrying gangs, amounts to a new style 'sus' law.

Police will be given powers to stop and search people within a limited area for 24 hours which can be extended for 6 hours if violence breaks out. Records will be kept by the police of people stopped and searched.

Currently the European Convention on Human Rights insists that there must be 'just cause' before searching an individual. The specific individual needs to be suspected of a crime.

This amendment gives police blanket power to use their judgement about the likelihood of violence breaking out. This will be open to abuse and used to justify the harassment of the black community as were the 'sus' laws.

Included in the Bill are many public order provisions which criminalise dissent and diversity. New offences of aggravated trespass and holding or attending trespassory assemblies will be created. These proposals criminalise legitimate forms of dissent, undermine the right to peaceful public protest and breach international human rights law.

Knock-on effect

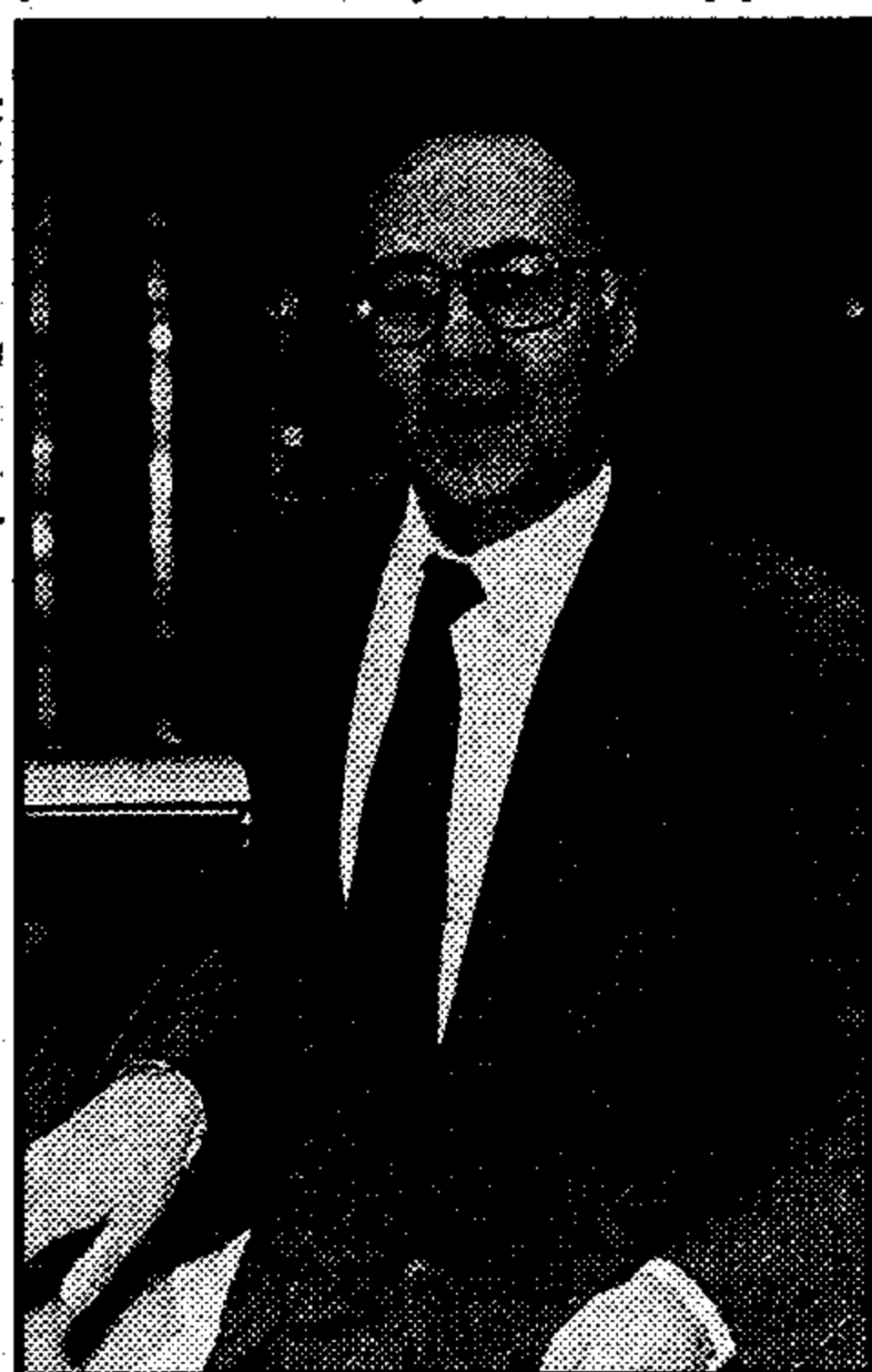
Whilst many of the clauses in the Bill are targeted at particular activities they have knock-on effects for other activities. Clauses aimed at stopping the activities of hunt saboteurs and curbing activities like the Stonehenge festival — in themselves a bad enough attack — could also be used to stop pickets of workplaces, protests outside foreign embassies, local protests outside hospitals or town halls.

Clause 54 provides that an order can be obtained to ban assemblies which are likely to be held without the permission of

the owner, and which may result in the 'serious disruption to the life of the community'.

By its very nature most protest involves disruption. Large scale demonstrations in London, such as those organised by the labour movement or by anti-racist organisations may be particularly vulnerable to the proposals.

In practice these measures could be easily used by the police to arrest and detain people, even if they are not subsequently charged. This will deter people from participating in legitimate protests. The potential applica-



Eyes far right: it's Mr Howard tion of these proposals to such a wide range of protests makes them particularly dangerous.

Although they might not be used against most forms of peaceful protest, a law which in practice relies on police discretion is a bad law. The police will be in the position to act as arbiters of what is and is not acceptable protest.

The clauses relating to 'aggravated trespass' are even more alarming. Under these provisions neither the police or the prosecution have to prove that disruption or obstruction of lawful activities or intimidation of people engaged in them *actually took place* merely that there was the *intention* to do so.

For example if you organise a peaceful picket on land outside your workplace (but owned by the employer), to protest about job losses, and with the aim of dissuading people (by talking to

them) from entering the workplace, and encouraging them to support a strike, you could be guilty of aggravated trespass.

Three months

As a result, you could go to prison for up to three months, even if the protest is well-mannered, good humoured, and involves just a handful of people.

If you stand on the town hall steps to protest about the reduction of nursery facilities, you could be guilty of aggravated trespass and go to prison for up to three months.

There is no requirement of proof that actual disruption took place — only the police judgement that it is your intention to disrupt.

Clause 55 gives the police powers to stop people whom the 'reasonably believe' to be on their way to an assembly which they 'reasonably believe' is likely to be prohibited under Clause 54.

They can direct them not to proceed. This effectively rubber-stamps the illegal police road blocks mounted during the miners strike of 1984/5, in which they excluded people — thought to be striking miners — from certain areas.

Bail conditions

In addition some of the proposals on bail conditions have implications for anyone likely to be involved in political protest.

The Bill gives the police new powers to impose bail conditions if they consider someone might not surrender to custody, commit an offence, or otherwise obstruct the course of justice.

The response from Labour has been lamentable, with the front bench going along with many of the recommendations.

But better late than never: a fightback against this legislation must begin now; if not we might find increasing numbers of labour movement and political activists unwittingly winding up as guests of Her Majesty.

CENTRE STAGE

Rail union faces crisis in leadership

BR carve-up signals new confrontation



One-track minds: privatisation threatens chaos

As preparations to privatise the railways move into top gear and railworkers ballot for strike action the Rail, Maritime, Transport Workers union (RMT) is in special conference discussing issues fundamental to the very survival of the union itself.

On April 1 British Rail (BR) effectively ceased to exist. Signalling, track maintenance workers and other staff were transferred to a new state-owned company – Railtrack. Most of Railtrack work will be put out to tender, then the shell will be sold off.

Large parts of the remnants of BR were reorganised into 'train operating units' – as the precursor to being sold off over the next few years. If private offers do not come forward the government is preparing the ground to giving these 'units' away cheaply to management buyouts.

On the same day RMT rail members began to receive ballot papers asking for a mandate for strike action against the immediate effect of this reorganisation – the break up of BR means the end of national redundancy transfer arrangements which have protected railworkers for many years.

Whilst activists are hopeful a vote for action can be won it is clear that the ballot has come far too late. Despite agreeing such a policy at last summer's RMT AGM it was only the election of new left activists to the union's national Executive this year that precipitated the ballot.

For many the question remains – how do we translate a successful ballot into action, especially after the recent NAT-FHE court case? Any dispute will be legally challenged by BR/Railtrack. Few RMT members have any faith that the union leadership will be prepared to challenge any adverse legal ruling.



Express route to redundancies: BR privatisation faces RMT with crucial test of strength

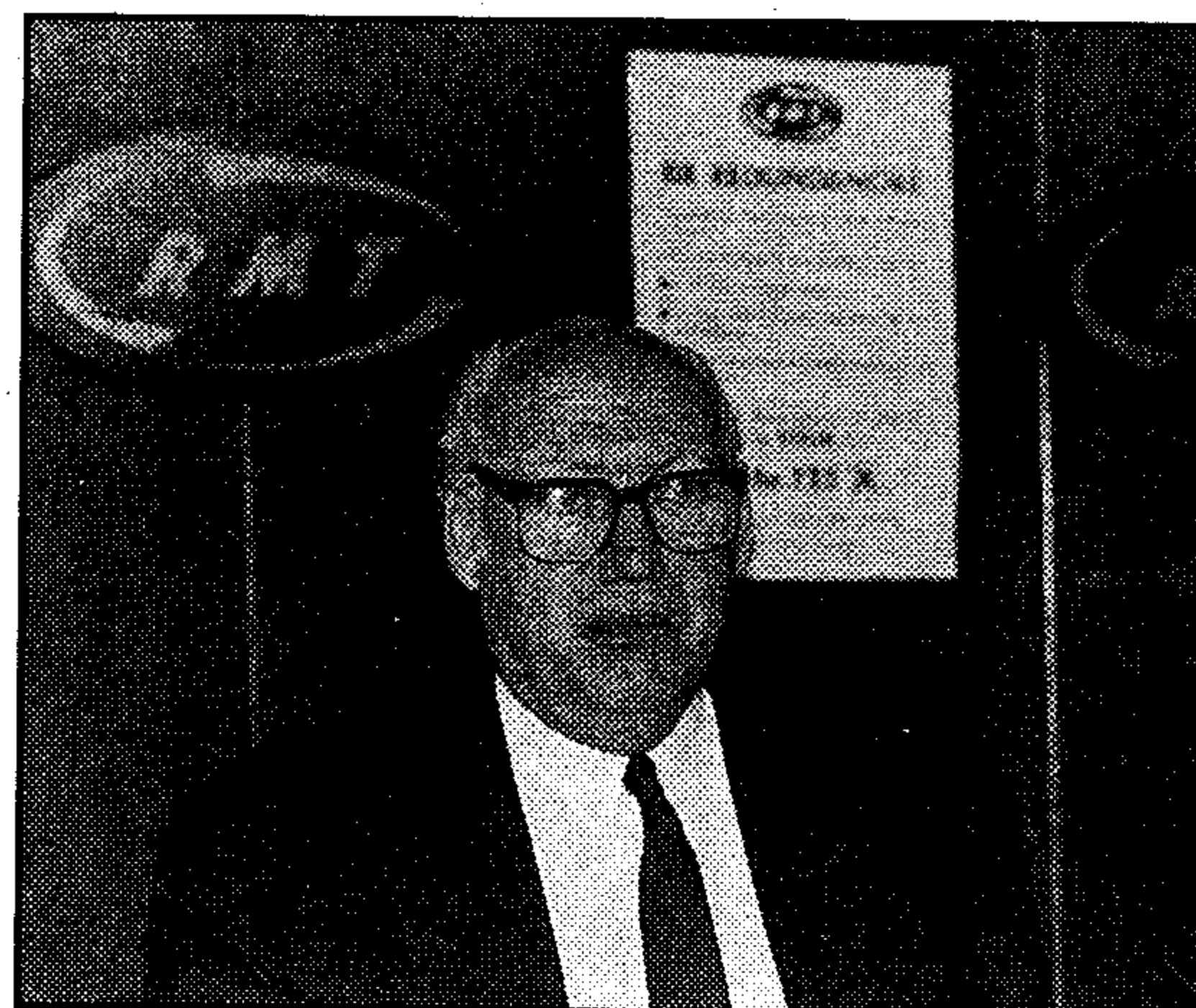
The only positive sign has been the decision this week of RMT members on the London Underground who voted by nearly 2 to 1 for strike action. This at least opens up the prospect of combined BR/LUL action – a previously successful strategy.

While these moves go on a Special General Meeting of the RMT has been convened to discuss the union's financial position. A failure to properly integrate the NUR and NUS after merger leaving the two sections of the union still mainly separate has been financially disastrous.

Lost members

We have also had to deal with BR stopping the checkoff of union subscriptions. Up to 20% of BR members have fallen out of the union.

The sheer effort of reorganising to collect subs through a network of collectors has done immense short-term damage,



Looking for a way out? RMT chief Jimmy Knapp

despite the positive side effect of bringing many members into more regular contact with the union – in effect every member has to renew their commitment to the union each week.

Put together the union is in financial crisis. Tough measures will have to be taken. But the choices put forward by the leadership go totally in the wrong direction. Instead of cutting back on bureaucracy they have opted for a package which protects themselves while attacking the fundamental democratic rights of ordinary members.

Big test

All this means a big test for the RMT left – organised in the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union. The CFDU has grown in influence over the last year. But now it needs to go beyond being a useful place for discussion and start to try and impose its agenda on the union.

That RMT members are fed up with their leaders is clear. The General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary narrowly held on to their positions in recent elections with the AGS candidate associated with the CFDU coming within 1% of unseating the incumbent Vernon

Hince.

This deep seated lack of faith in the leadership needs to be harnessed by the CFDU. Up to now the CFDU has met on an ad hoc basis with no consistent convenors and has had as its main function winning the support of branches and district councils to its general policy aims. It has always refused to have a formal structure of membership or affiliation relying instead on loose sponsorship and open discussion.

This may have been fine originally. Certainly many supporters were reluctant to go down the road travelled in the early 80s of a rigid Broad Left tied to the coat-tails of one political group. But as was clear at a recent CFDU meeting in Manchester this lack of structure is no longer sufficient. The failure to come to any decisions at that meeting was a real set back.

We have to move forward, agree a basic structure and set immediate campaigning initiatives. In particular, we need to be able to place maximum pressure on the Executive to stop any recurrence of the debacle of last year – when the BR strikes were called off for want of a two-thirds majority on the Executive to call another days strike.

We have to discuss out, and decide how we do this through the structure of the union – whilst at the same time building open action aimed at ordinary union members through such things as mass lobbies of the Executive when they discuss the ballot results.

In this light the meeting opportunely called by the London Midland District Council for this Wednesday will be a valuable forum for working out how we proceed.

ANALYSIS

SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN GROUP Supporters Network CONFERENCE

The policies Labour needs for ...

SOCIALISM and FULL EMPLOYMENT

Speakers: TONY BENN; ARTHUR SCARGILL; DENNIS SKINNER; DAWN PRIMAROLO and other leading left-wing figures. Workshops on: strategies for defending jobs; creating jobs; welfare cuts and the unemployed; unemployment and racism; unemployment and the defence industry; global unemployment.

MANCHESTER Town Hall JUNE 11, 11am - 5pm

Joint conference registration and annual network membership £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

Send registrations to 3 Blades House, Kennington Oval, London, SE11 5TW for conference pack and credentials, plus network membership card, mailings, local contact details etc.

After Hebron massacre

Repression reverts to normal

By Roland Rance

THE MASSACRE by an Israeli settler of dozens of Palestinian worshippers in a Hebron mosque on 25 February led to an upsurge in demonstrations and other acts of resistance against the Israeli occupation.

The response of the Israeli military authorities was, unsurprisingly, to tighten the oppression in the Occupied Territories. Hebron was placed under total curfew for a month, while the rest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were under military closure.

The army continues to murder Palestinians, to destroy their homes with anti-tank weapons, and to deny access

to hospitals. A new 'security' road, which Palestinians are forbidden to cross, has divided Hebron in half.

This has not deterred the PLO from continuing to negotiate with Israel on the implementation of the imperialist agreement.

Policing lessons

Latest reports suggest that Israel will permit the stationing of a small, unarmed 'International Observer Force' in the Occupied Territories, while senior commanders of the new Palestinian Police Force for Gaza and Jericho are to be trained in community policing at the British Police College at Bramshill.

According to the *Guardian* (8 April), 'The experience in Northern Ireland, interroga-



Hebron massacre was rooted in long-term Zionist repression of Palestinian people

tion techniques, treatment of offenders, police accountability and human rights will be on the syllabus'.

Despite the continuing PLO concessions, it seems unlikely that Israeli forces will indeed withdraw from Gaza and Jericho by 13 April, as promised in the agreement.

Meanwhile, the official Israeli inquiry into the massacre at Ibrahimiya Mosque has established that five of the six soldiers supposed to guard the mosque failed to turn up for duty on 25 February, that the video surveillance camera was broken, and that Israeli troops fired at the mosque to prevent Palestinians from fleeing from the massacre.

An army commander stated in evidence to the inquiry: 'You have to understand the basic situation. A Jew has a

weapon to defend himself. An Arab who is carrying a weapon is a terrorist. A Jew with a weapon is defending himself and he is allowed to shoot. We forbid soldiers in the IDF to open fire at them'.

Israel's leading intellectual, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, has argued that the killer, Baruch Goldstein, is the authentic representative of the country's current culture and regime, and that the real guilt lies with Prime Minister Rabin.

Groups banned

In an attempt to shift the blame to a minority, the Israeli government has banned two right-wing Israeli organisations, the splinters of the fascist Kach movement founded by Rabbi Meir Ka-

hane.

This decision has been widely welcomed by Israel's apologists in the Zionist left, as well as by the Israeli Communist Party. But, as the anti-Zionist left has pointed out, this banning legitimises future administrative measures against Palestinian or radical left groups.

Lawyer Leah Tsemel, a Fourth International supporter, appeared in a televised debate with the Justice Minister and described the bannings as 'the easy way out'.

She called for the criminal prosecution of those responsible, adding: 'There is no doubt that many more than the members of Kach and Kahane Chai should be sitting in the dock'.

'A first step towards socialism is to reject the Israel-PLO agreement'

DR ADEL SAMARA, an independent Marxist economist from Ramallah in occupied Palestine, has spent 8 years in prison - 2 years under Jordanian rule and 5 years under Israeli occupation. This article is based on his address to a Socialist Outlook public meeting during a recent visit to London, and subsequent conversations with Socialist Outlook.

IT WAS NOT necessary to wait for the Hebron massacre in order to understand that Israel is still not ready for a just and lasting peace with the Palestinian people and the Arab world.

During the three years since the start of the imperialist settlement process at the Madrid conference, Israel has intensified its repression in the Occupied Territories, with more killings, expansion of settlements, more settlers 'imported' from the ex-

Soviet Union and other places, and a tight siege of the Occupied Territories.

The 'Declaration of Principles' signed by Arafat and Rabin was an indirect annexation of the Occupied Territories, with no hint that Israel will withdraw, and no discussion of the Palestinian people's right to return to their homeland.

It is important to understand that this agreement is primarily about economics rather than politics. What we are seeing is a re-ordering of capital in the Middle East.

The agreement closely mirrors the proposals of the World Bank mission which visited the Occupied Territories just after the Madrid conference. The overt project of the World Bank, and of the imperialist settlement, is the creation of a Middle East Market, in which Israel is accepted by the Arab world as the local representative of the imperialist world order.

Israel would be the economic centre of the region, and its gate towards western Europe and the US, while Turkey would have a secondary role as the gate towards central and eastern Europe. This project, which would prevent Arab economic integration and perpetuate the underdevelopment of the region, is in truth not a Middle East Market, but a market in the Middle East.

Economic development is impossible under the Israeli occupation, which is characterised by confiscation and control of land and resources, establishment and expansion of settlements, treating the Palestinians as a captive market, and control over the Occupied Territories' imports and exports.

'It is important to abandon the romantic idea that the PLO is a framework for all the Palestinian social classes'

This agreement does not offer any prospect of Palestinian independence, and I have never heard of a political status between occupation and independence. Therefore, this agreement is not intended to develop the Palestinian economy. Under the guise of a move towards Palestinian self-rule, it merely offers the annexation by Israel of the economy of the Palestinian cantons.

The agreement has been negotiated and promoted by the imperialists, Israeli, Arab and Palestinian capitalists.

The Palestinians who support this agreement are the bureaucratic and capitalist leadership

of the PLO, capitalists inside the Occupied Territories (mainly sub-contractors for Israeli companies), Palestinian employees of foreign institutions and NGOs in the Occupied Territories, Palestinian financial capitalists in the Diaspora, and westernised and renegade communist intellectuals.

These forces are all parasitic



PLO chief Arafat

rather than productive. They are not 'the people'; they are the capitalists, and as such are more interested in profits than in independence.

We note that many of them are already adjusting the economy of the Occupied Territories to meet the needs of the world market, and planning joint projects with Israeli capitalists as part of the regional economic collaboration outlined in the agreement.

The Palestinian delegation was appointed rather than elected. This anti-democratic beginning leads us to expect the establishment of a bourgeois dictatorship in any Palestinian

'Autonomy', which will act to strengthen rather than end this structural dependency.

The new regime will consolidate a capitalist socio-economic formation, in which class differentiation and struggle will be even sharper than today. It is important to recognise this, and to abandon the romantic idea that the PLO is a framework for all the Palestinian social classes.

Faced with this alliance of the various capitalists against Palestinian rights, the Marxist and socialist forces must put forward a programme which can confront the capitalist exploitative programme.

This Popular Classes Programme should be based on the establishment of a democratic civil society and the creation and consolidation of a cooperative mode of production as a prelude to a socialist mode, with disengagement from the Israeli economy, the struggle for producers' democracy against bourgeois political democracy, and the self-management of producers against the private ownership of the capitalists and their appointed managers.

This programme cannot be confined to Palestine. Only through a struggle for socialism in the Arab world as a whole can the plans of imperialism be frustrated. A precondition for this is the rejection of the Israel-PLO agreement.

WORLD NEWS

Sri Lanka opposition victory rocks UNP chauvinism

**K Govindan
continues his
look at Sri Lanka**

MARCH has been a month of elections in Sri Lanka and hopefully a sign of things to come.

First there were local government elections in the Eastern province amid much controversy, voting in this ethnically mixed area splintered on communal lines.

Splits

The Sinhala vote was split between the United National Party (UNP) and the opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The Muslim vote was swept up by the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and the Tamil vote by three independent groups fielding Tamil candidates.

Considering the UNP government's belligerent stance on the Tamil national question; the disappearances of 5,000 Tamil youth in the East and its shaky control of the region – the minorities deserted it giving the independent groups a clear victory.

Some Tamil parties such as the Eelam peoples revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the Tamil United Liberation front (TULF) refused to contest the poll and called on voters to spoil their ballot.

Mockery

'A mockery of democracy' was EPRLF spokesperson in Europe, K Thamba's, opinion of the exercise.

Speaking to *Socialist Outlook* he pointed out that a free and fair election when thousands of people are living in refugee camps and a war is being prosecuted in the North East was an impossibility.

The UNP motive for the election was two-fold. They have to convince the western donor community that they are sincere in seeking a political resolution to the ethnic conflict.

Also it was a carrot to the donkey of Sinhala chauvinism which opposes the merger of the North and East province.

Referendum

True to form, shortly after the polls President D B Wijetunge announced that a referendum would be held to de-merge the province.

The North and East of Sri Lanka is where the Tamil community have historically been concentrated and a merged province with a unitary authority has been one of the key demands of the liberation struggle.

Later on in March elections were held for the Southern provincial council. by recent stand-

ards the UNP suffered a crushing defeat reduced to 23 seats while the Peoples Alliance (PA) won 32 seats in the 55 seat council.

The PA is composed of the bourgeois SLFP, Lanka Sama Samaja Party, Communist Party and Janata Mithuro.

The PA's campaign was led by SLFPer, Chandrika Kumaratunga who is the Chief Minister of the Western province. She is seen as left leaning, and an outspoken critic of the government's economic policies and its war drive in the North-East.

The Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) contested all seats and marginally improved its vote to 1.13% but didn't win any seats. In spite of tremendous pressure to enter into the popular frontist Peoples Alliance it contested independently denouncing the impact of International Monetary Fund and World Bank diktats and the genocidal war against the Tamil people.

National question

The TULF urged Tamils to support the NSSP as it alone has the clearest position on the national question.

President Wijetunge has been taking a hard line on the war since his infamous remark last year that, 'there is no ethnic problem, only a terrorist problem'.

He has railed against the demands of Tamils for justice as an attempt to make the Sinhala people 'second class citizens in their own country'.

Meanwhile since June 1993 over 15,000 Tamils have been arrested in the capital, Colombo, solely on their ethnicity and accused of being terrorists.

Switzerland has announced that it will repatriate Tamil refugees causing widespread concern among the 150,000 Tamils seeking asylum throughout Western Europe.

India has sent back 36,000 Tamils, many forcibly, to refugee camps within Sri Lanka as their homes are war zones.

17 year rule

Presidential and Parliamentary elections are due around the year's end. The United National Party has been in power for 17 years too long.

Recent draconian emergency regulations on the press highlight the danger that from authoritarianism there could be a slide into dictatorship.

News of the government defeat in the South led to a slump in share prices at the Colombo Stock Exchange. Let's hope that with the next set of elections they take a dive.

(The article in SO 59 was wrongly accredited, and was by K Govindan)



On sex education, the Tories and bigots are all at sea.

Sex: Tories favour ostrich position

**A health promotion
worker looks at
the hysteria over
sex education**

THE LAST few weeks have seen repeated bouts of outraged tabloid newspapers, top Tories and assorted bigots complaining over sex education.

Now most thinking people would logically respond to continual increases in teenage pregnancies (already the highest rate in Europe) and in numbers becoming HIV positive, by insisting that more information must be directed at those most at risk.

The Department of Health in its *Health of the Nation* policy, set targets of reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS and cutting teenage pregnancies by 50% by 2000.

Prudish

But the Department of Education, House of Lords, and the tabloid press – happy to use sex to sell papers, but equally happy to exploit the indignation of prudish types who find it rude – are not run by logical or thinking people.

Education Secretary John Patten has forced schools to remove teaching of contraception, abortion and prevention of AIDS/HIV from the secondary school science curriculum, and made it possible for parents to keep their children out of any sex education classes.

He was swift to butt in to the first big row that erupted when a health promotion nurse, Sue Brady, giving sex education to 10 and 11 year olds in school in Leeds, dared actually to answer the questions the children raised.

Patten made it clear he would prefer the kids did not know the answers: in effect his policy is to reduce sex education to the traditional method – behind the proverbial bike-shed.

The second controversy surrounded the withdrawal of *Your Pocket Guide to Sex*, the Health Education Authority booklet by Just 17 agony uncle Nick Fisher, giving frank advice on contra-

ception, protection against AIDS, and answering a wide range of other concerns and queries.

All copies of the pamphlet were withdrawn on instructions from Health Minister Brian Mawhinney after complaints in the House of Lords, the tabloid press and also members of the HEA board (rumoured to have been started by the Bishop of Peterborough).

None of the critics is in the age group aimed at by the booklet – 16 to 25. Some of the complaints focused on the 'smutty' language used. But anyone who has heard House of Lords debate will be glad most of the information we need for our daily lives is not couched in the language of the average Lord.

Equally, anyone over 28 who has tried to involve themselves in a conversation with a group of 18 years olds will recognise the culture gap and loss of comprehension that can follow.

The average GCSE grade in English in Britain is an 'F'. When a group of 16 year old males were asked recently what 'penetrative sex' was, they said "When you force her to have it."



No sex please, we're Tories: Patten

The same group said that 'a peer group' was "a group of people at the end of a pier".

Appropriate

The language of the HEA booklet was appropriate to those it was aimed at, who are also the social group at risk of teenage pregnancy and most at risk of HIV/AIDS. Such a book is surely more use than one aimed at soothing the nerves of the House of Lords.

The other complaint against the booklet was that it did not specify that sex should only take place in a permanent, loving relationship. This school of thought, insisting that sex for pleasure is basically wrong, and that it should only take place within marriage (preferably for the purposes of procreation), is clearly held by only a small minority in society.

Such zealots have a right to live as they wish, but no right to tell others how to live.

In any event we all know that whether or not teachers are allowed to tell young people about sex, teenagers will continue to be sexually active. This is not a problem that will go away if ignored.

However there is a more sinister political threat behind the crass and hypocritical headlines – from same tabloids which a few weeks ago were revelling in the steamy details of Gillian Taylforth's Range Rover blow-job libel case.

Runing for cover

Why did the Health Education Authority, which commissioned the booklet, not stand by its decision?

The explanation is that the Tory government holds the purse strings on the HEA, and decides each year how much to allocate to health promotion. This financial year's allocation has still not been agreed – even though we are well into April.

Under this blackmail, the HEA is held politically under the thumb of Tory ministers. This is also why there is so little informed discussion of the links between social class, poverty and ill health.

The HEA has been forced to walk a tight-rope, outlining superficial measures to promote better health while not criticising government policy which undermines the health of the poorest.

By cracking the whip again over this booklet, the Tories have again tightened the gag on the HEA, which winds up effectively subscribing to the view that health promotion is an individual issue rather than one of social policy.

Dramatic cure for Major depression

Beautiful Thing by Jonathan Harvey, performed by the Bush Theatre Company at the Donmar Warehouse, Covent Garden until April 23 then on tour. Reviewed by PETER PURTON

WHAT A JOY this is! What an achievement! 'Beautiful Thing' started its run at the Bush Theatre while the campaign to equalise the gay male age of consent was at its height. In the aftermath of its defeat, this wonderful play is the perfect antidote to depression.

Growing up poor, and living in south-east London's Thamesmead, are both pretty strong grounds for depression.

Being a gay teenager as well could make this a story of misery and despair – as indeed so many works of art and literature on this theme have been. Instead, this is a triumph, uplifting and hilariously funny as well.

The young cast of five play out the drama as Amelda Brown's Sandra (a barmaid) struggles to provide for her school-boy son Jamie (Mark Letheren).

Next door lives Leah (Sophie Stanton), expelled from school and in the house on her own most of the time, heavily addicted to Moma Cass, and on the other side Ste (Shaun Dingwall), a school mate of Jamie's, whose alcoholic father is in the habit of regularly beating him up.

To top off the list, Sandra's latest boyfriend (Richard Bonnevill) is a self-proclaimed artist and complete clown.



This may not sound like promising material, but Jonathan Harvey's play spins it into a tale of young love blossoming between Jamie and Ste amidst and as part of the harsh daily realities.

Moments of drama and of deep emotion mingle with delightful comedy – none more so than the scenes where Tony, the new boy friend tries to 'talk to' Jamie about life and

things, or that where they all try to cope with Leah high on speed. Even 'The Sound of Music' has a part to play.

Reviews usually criticise, but this play is so good that it blows away the weaknesses in a deluge of delight. Being a young gay – and even living in south-east London – in early 90s Britain clearly isn't all bad. See 'Beautiful Thing' and believe it!

Finding key to the present in the past

War In Eastern Europe: Travels Through the Balkans in 1915 by John Reed. Published by Phoenix. Reviewed by GEOFF RYAN.

JOHN REED is best known to socialists for his classic *Ten Days That Shook the World*. He is perhaps better known to a wider audience from his portrayal by Warren Beatty in the film *Reds*.

In 1915 he travelled extensively throughout Eastern Europe. The reappearance of this account of his experiences is very welcome as it has been out of print virtually since it was first published in 1916.

Like the best socialist writers Reed relates to a wide variety of human experiences.

He describes the horrors of war, the typhus epidemic raging through Serbia, the conditions of the Jewish town of Rosvno in the Pale of Settlement and, with equal fluency, paints vivid portraits of individuals, crowds or scenery.

My favourite chapters are those on Constantinople. Not only does he give a wonderful picture of the city but also shows the hypocrisy of the war.

Despite Turkey being allied to the Central Powers, English, French, Russian and American officials mix freely with the Germans, Austrians and Turks with whom they are supposedly at war.

Members of the Turkish ruling class are expected to buy themselves out of military service – failure to do so would be seen as an admission they were broke!

The poor, who are expected to die for 'their' country, riot declaring 'We don't care for victories! Give us bread!'

Of course the most relevant sections today are those relating to Serbia (including Macedonia). Reed gives numerous examples of the depth of nationalism. British army officers are denounced as 'cowards' for trying to prevent the spread of typhus. A Serb lieutenant comments 'We Serbians know that all that is needed is the willingness to die – and the war would be soon over'. Mothers greet their children 'Hail little avenger of Kosovo'.

Serbia was subjected to brutal destruction by Austro-Hungary, with massive bombardment of Belgrade. Eighty years later atrocities on a far worse scale than those perpetrated by the Austro-Hungarians are committed on Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Albanians and all the other nationalities of former Yugoslavia.

The most serious flaw in Reed's analysis concerns his inability to accept the existence of a Macedonian nation: he sees them as, basically, Bulgarians, a common error at the time.

It was not until the second world war and the struggle of the Partisans that there was any recognition of a Macedonian nation.

The book would have been strengthened by an introduction drawing together some of the relevant factors for understanding the current situation in Eastern Europe.

Instead it is printed exactly as written by Reed in 1916 – including the now rather dated anglicised spelling of Slavic names.

But Reed is such a wonderful writer these are minor quibbles.

Single parents: proud to be poor?

Soul Providers: (Writings by Single Parents). Edited by Gil McNeil. Published by Virago. Reviewed by Sue Woodford.

The timely publication of *Soul Providers* comes as both rumours and suggested plans by the present government are being taken up by the media.

The possible cessation or reduction of child benefit for single parents after the first child is an example. Another

is the loss of prioritised access to low cost local authority housing for single parents.

The status of the single parent, never high in a culture which prefers to see itself as made up of predominantly nuclear families, has slid further into disrepute. The Conservative government is seeking ideological scape-goats to blame for its gradual claw-back of funds from important social infrastructures.

By using the writings of the parents themselves this book does indeed go beyond statistics and allows the reader to journey through the various lives of a group of such parents and share the experience of both their achievements as

well as their pain.

Its editor, Gil McNeil, wishes it to be 'a celebration of skills, dedication, resourcefulness and sheer hard work...'. For me, reading *Soul Providers* was a very moving and uplifting experience.

A single parent myself, I kept recognising small fragments of other people's stories that I also had known, an incident here, a similar feeling there.

Unfortunately I was already convinced of what most of the book is trying to say in order to carry out its task of debunking myths about single parents. Somehow it will have to reach out to those tabloid

reading, myth accepting 'others' out there.

The point that this book fails to address, however, is the one which is most commonly mentioned by the single parent contributors, namely poverty.

If, as is pointed out in the introduction, single parent families on the same level of income compare well with nuclear families, then all those families experiencing deprivation through poverty suffer.

As a single parent who has experienced this poverty I can assure you it is nothing to celebrate. By focusing on the individual or individual family unit, the possibility of cooperative support, planning and

responsibility by society for all children is lost.

Several of the contributors comment on possible alternatives in society or in extended cooperative groupings but there is no attempt to draw out any analysis from these signposts. Ultimately I was left with my glow of linked companionship, my poverty and a metaphorical pat on the back.

Only by radically changing society's allocation of resources can parents and children get what they need to make parenting a real success. That requires a revolutionary change for everyone.

Sequel perhaps, Virago?

REVIEWS

Courts open lid on British nuclear dustbin

by Bala Kumar

GREENPEACE has lost its legal battle to delay the operation of THORP.

Mr Justice Potts ruled that the government had not acted 'unreasonably and irrationally' in approving the Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP) without first holding a public enquiry.

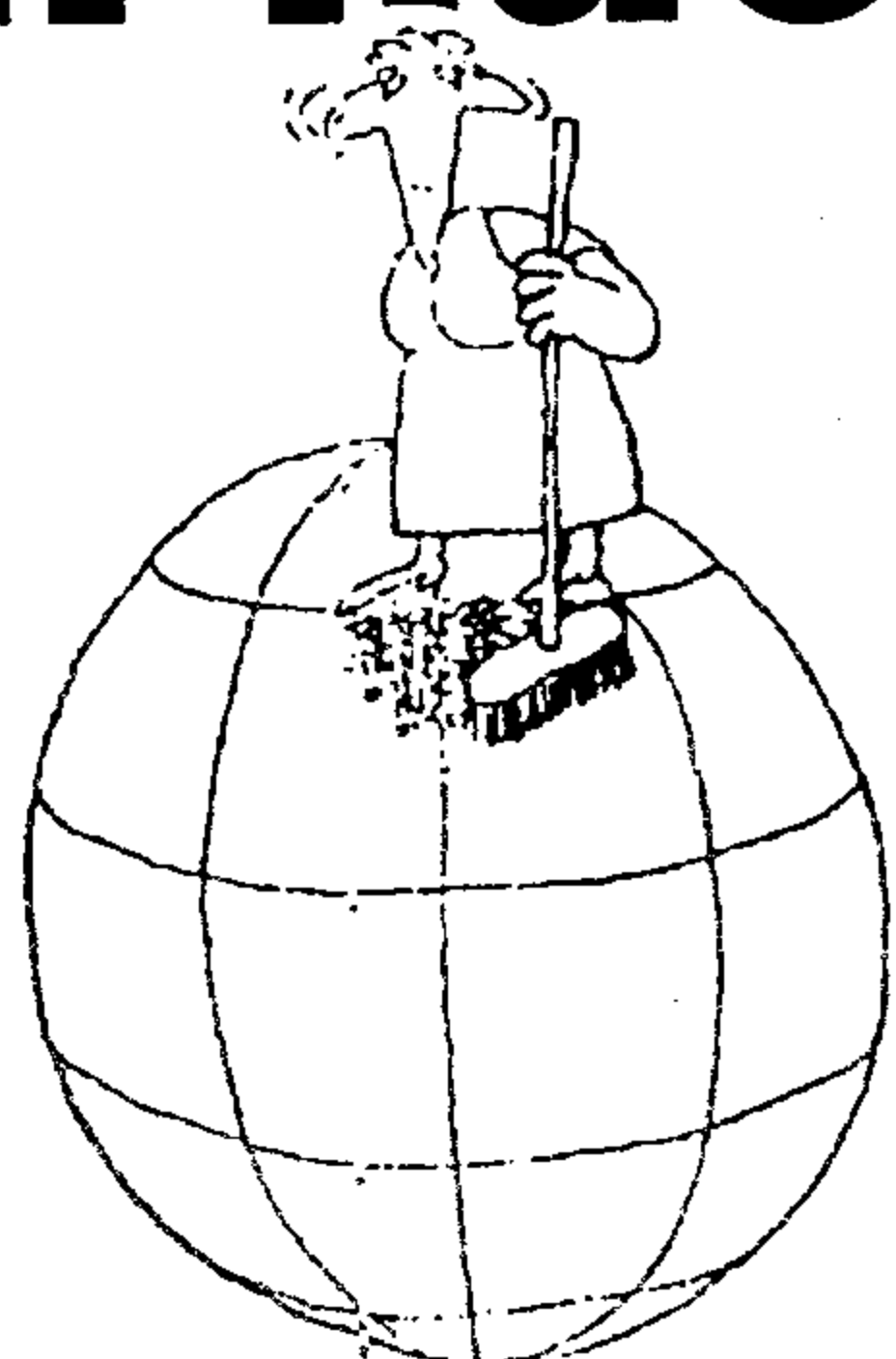
A record 64,000 objections to its opening were received from the public.

This overwhelming concern was overridden by the government on the grounds that £2.85 billion had been spent building the installation and that billions of pounds of orders awaited.

THORP's purpose is to extract uranium and plutonium from radio-active waste for commercial and possibly military use while disposing of the waste itself.

However as Paul Leventhal of the Nuclear Control Institute asks, 'Who will guarantee the safety, security and peaceful use of this extraordinary material during its shelf life of hundreds of thousands of years?'

Certainly the owner of the plant, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL), can't be trusted when



they have placed profit margins above the health and safety of their work-force and the residents of Sellafield in Cumbria, where THORP is located.

On top of the high incidence of leukaemia among children in the region, one study estimates 600 deaths from cancer worldwide within the first ten years of the plant's operation.

Waste to be reprocessed would be transported across great distances increasing the risk that these consignments could be hijacked by terrorists or leak out and contaminate vast areas.

Although the domestic nuclear industry will be a major customer, so will countries like Germany, Japan and Switzerland. Many western European

countries with high environmental standards and vocal green movements are dumping waste they can't or won't store themselves, on Britain.

The British government seems quite willing to make Britain a nuclear dustbin.

As long as science is unable to treat nuclear waste and its presence is a hazard to lives and livelihoods, nuclear power is an unacceptable source of energy.

Meanwhile the traditional alternatives like oil, gas and coal are themselves major sources of pollution. They contribute to global warming and acid rain.

The £1 billion subsidy the government gives the nuclear industry annually should be used instead to fund research into renewable and clean forms

of energy.

The campaign to shut down THORP often saw trade unions and environmental groups at loggerheads.

Trade union officials were actively supporting BNFL to protect the 5,000 jobs that would be created at Sellafield. But at what price do they accept this?

Meanwhile the green lobby who were denounced as 'eco-fundamentalists' must take seriously the consequences on communities of mass unemployment.

Both camps must bury the hatchet and start talking to each other. We need to combine each other's skills to begin the conversion of these industries to socially useful ends.

As for THORP, people in the countries which are exporting waste to Britain have begun campaigning for the cancellation of these orders. That would defeat the economic rationale for the plant's operation.

We haven't lost the battle to close THORP; we've only just begun.

■ **Further information from: Stop THORP Campaign, BOX 33, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London, E8**

Together we can stop the Hawks

Protest outside the 1994 British Aerospace AGM

IN SPITE of 200,000 killed in East Timor British Aerospace (BAe) continue to sell Hawk ground attack aircraft to Indonesia.

Since the invasion of East Timor in 1975 one third of the population have been killed. The UN have voted that the occupation is illegal.

Despite evidence that previous Hawks sold have been used against the civilian population in East Timor in 1993 BAe accepted an order for another 24. The Hawks are due for delivery in 1996.

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade will be launching its Alternative Shareholders Report, which will argue for conversion and highlight the results of BAe's sales of military equipment.

Join the protest outside the AGM, 12 noon, April 26, Grosvenor Square, London.

HOME NEWS

Socialist OUTLOOK

Where We Stand

Facing mass unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won education, health and welfare services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis – an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new type of working class leadership, based on the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis.

The capitalist class, driven and politically united by its own crisis, its requirement to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has been given determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions with legislation, and to fragment and weaken the resistance of the working class and oppressed, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full powers of the state.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively proclaiming total surrender on every front, while ditching any pretence that they offer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and un-

ion rights.

New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of *reformism*, seeking no more than improved conditions within the framework of capitalist rule.

Socialist Outlook rejects reformism, not because we are against fighting for reforms, but because we know that the needs of the working class – for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy – can never be achieved under capitalism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing their own working class.

We are a *marxist* current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the *revolutionary* tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class – the overwhelming majority of society – to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers,

the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth – and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world. *Socialist Outlook* is above all an *internationalist* current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries world-wide.

Sectarianism

Unlike some other groupings on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. Too often this degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from the actual struggle taking shape within the labour movement, playing into the hands of the right wing.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolu-

tion. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for *united front* campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascism – in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

- Please tell me more about *Socialist Outlook*
- Yes, I want to become a *Socialist Outlook* supporter

Name
 Address
 Phone
 Age
 Send to *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

What's HAPPENING

WANT YOUR event included?
Send details by **April 22 to What's Happening?**,
P.O. Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

APRIL

Friday 15

STOP the fascists! Picket of Italian Embassy, 6.30-8pm

Saturday 16

CAMPAIGN Against the Child Support Act national conference 10am-6pm
Kingsway College Sidmouth Street off Grays Inn Road Kings Cross WC1
details PO Box 287 NW6 5QU

END THE Blockade: Cuba Solidarity Campaign day school Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC1, 10am-5pm.

Sunday 17

BERT JANSCH plays benefit for **CAMPAIGN against M11 link 7.30pm** Heathcote Arms Grove Green Road Leytonstone E11 £4.50/£2 details 081 527 9857

Monday 18

STOP closure of GUY'S HOSPITAL. Campaign

meetings every Monday, 7pm, Nutmeg House, Lafone St, London SE1

Wednesday 20

MEDIA WORKERS against the Nazis launch rally, with Tony Benn, John Pilger, Paul Foot, Darcus Howe. 7pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

Friday 22

CAMPAIGN Against the Arms Trade Candlelight Concert 7.30pm St Martin-in-the-fields Trafalgar Square Tickets £12/£9/£6 from 071 930 0089

REMEMBER Stephen Lawrence: Benefit Evening 7.30pm-2am Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, SW2. Tickets £8 in advance, £10 on the door.

Saturday 23

RACIAL VIOLENCE and Justice. People's Tribunal in memory of Stephen Lawrence, 10am-5pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

NEW Agendas for Peace and Justice - a Day for Edward Thompson. Ruskin College, Oxford. £5/£2.50. Contact R. Bulkeley, 0865-56069

Sunday 24

NICARAGUA Solidarity Campaign screening of film

Danzon. 12 noon, Phoenix cinema, High Rd, East Finchley, London N2. £5/£3.50

MOZAMBIQUE Angola Committee AGM 11am - 3pm BDAF 22 The Ivories 6-8 Northampton St Islington N1 tube: Highbury & Islington

Tuesday 26

LOBBY of British Aerospace AGM Marriot Hotel Grosvenor Square W1

Thursday 28

MARCH to commemorate International Workers Memorial Day 12.00 Euston Station to Parliament details Construction Safety Campaign 071 537 7220

CAMPAIGN Against Hazards In London meeting 2.30pm - 6.30pm Church House Dean's Yard off Great Smith Street details 071 226 5436

LOBBY of Parliament against deregulation 2.30pm - 7.30pm

GATT, Globalisation and People's Resistance. Meeting called by LONDEC, 6.30pm, Conway Hall, RTed Lion Square, London WC1. Details 071-713-7907

JAZZ NIGHT for Nicaragua with The Westbrook Trio, Annie Whitehead's 'RUDE', Keith Tippet, Zubob, 8pm-midnight, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. £8/£6.50.

Sat 30

LIBERATION! editorial meeting 11am sharp South Manchester

LEEDS TUC May Day march and rally 11.30am assemble outside the art gallery

MAY

Sunday 1

MAY DAY FAMILY Festival

with live bands, top comics, food, beer, labour movement speakers.
MARCH from Kennington to SERTUC Rally on Clapham Common. Assemble 12 noon.

Saturday 7

GERMANY'S role in Europe: day-long seminar with Peter Gowan (*New Left Review*), Colin Meade (*Socialist Outlook*) and Gunter Minnerup & Gus Fagan (*Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*). Details: Peter on 071 607 2789

Tuesday 10

Manchester **SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** educational on Cuba, Vietnam and China, 8pm, Unicorn pub, Church St

Wednesday 11

ANGOLA Emergency Campaign Lobby Parliament 7pm Committee room booked in the name of Bob Hughes MP
Details: 071 387 6771

Sat 21

NATIONAL free speech day - picket your local McDonald's details London Greenpeace 5 Caledonian Road N1 9DX

Saturday 28

ANTI NAZI League Carnival march from Kennington Park to carnival in Brockwell Park South London *Note venue changed again*

JUNE

Saturday 4

DEMONSTRATE to close down Campsfield Kidlington, Oxford

Saturday 11

FIGHT for Full Employment! Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network conference Manchester

details: 19 Moorlands Avenue Leeds LS5 1AP

Saturday 25

ANTI-Apartheid Movement Extraordinary General Meeting

JULY

Fri 22 - Fri 29

INTERNATIONAL Youth Summer Camp Tuscany Italy leaflets/details from Liberation!, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Youth fighters to gather in Italy

By Jake Farrier in Amsterdam

THIS YEAR the Fourth International's youth summer camp will be in Arezzo, near Florence, Italy (22 - 29 July).

Attended by 800 young people from Europe and beyond it is run by the young people themselves.

Representatives of socialist youth groups from 14 European countries, including *Liberation!* in Britain, recently met in Amsterdam to agree the programme.

There will be a chance to hear about the mass struggles of young people in France and Portugal against government cuts and the deepening fight against racism.

In extending the anti-sexist content workshops will look at the attacks on women from the new economic crisis, violence against women and children, marxist feminism, men and feminism plus much more.

Struggles against racism, 'third world' exploitation, for democracy and for ecological alternatives, the new world order and imperialism will also be highlighted.

But its not just heavy politics!

Discussions include: the banning of drugs, AIDS and HIV; the integration of disabled people into society; enjoying safer sex and more.

Lots of different social events will finish off days filled with a wide range of leisure activities, all in the heart of beautiful Tuscany.

Cheap transport from Britain is being organised by supporters of *Liberation!*. The all-in cost will be around £150.

■ Send in your £35 deposit, or write with two first class stamps to *Liberation!*, PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU

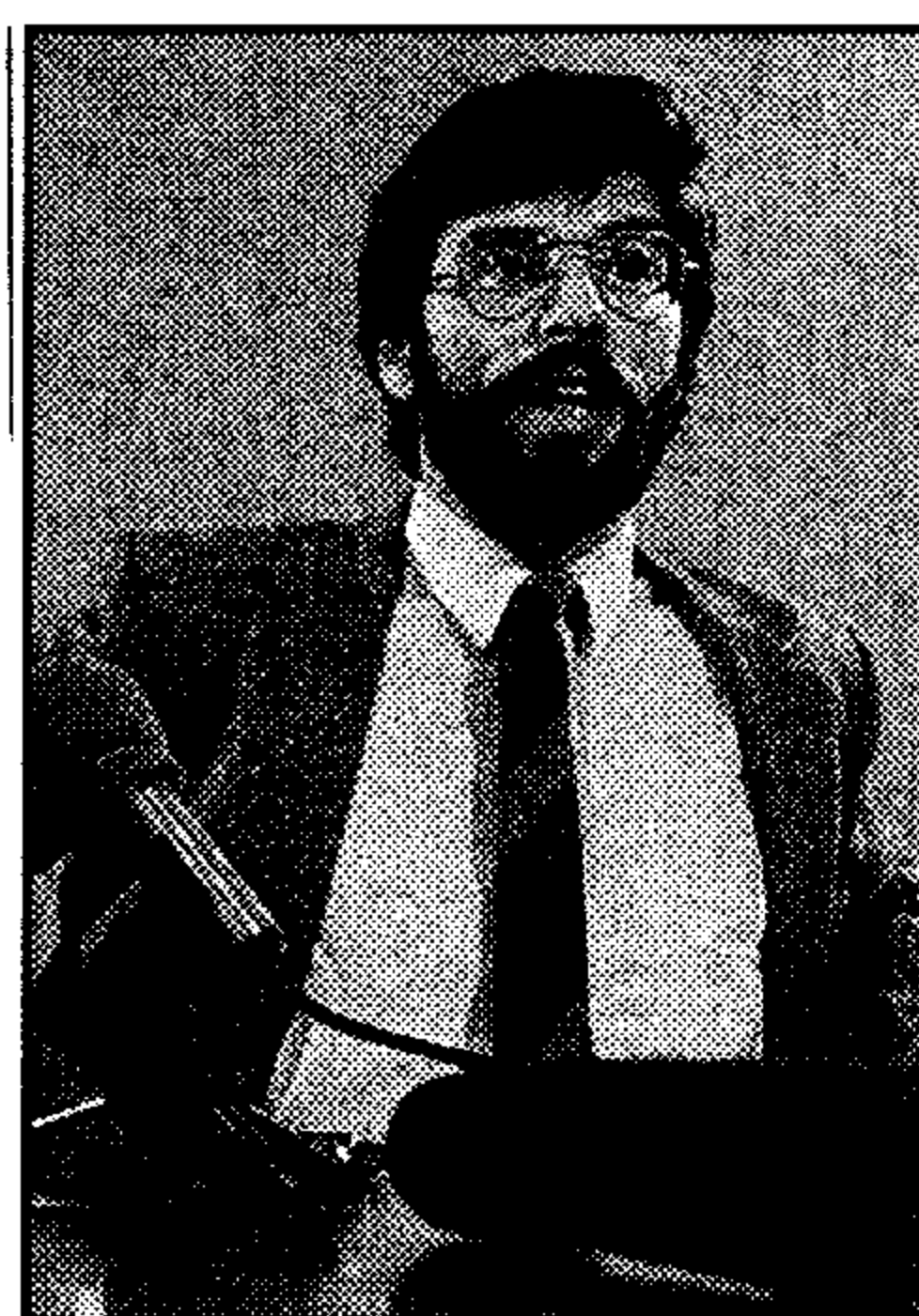
Real issues in Ireland debate

IT SEEMS TO ME that cdes Gibbons and Hughes say either too much or too little in their critique of the coverage of Ireland by *Socialist Outlook* (no.57).

Their criticism of MacUaid/Coen articles is in fact the assertion of an alternative line which the comrades are too shy to spell out.

That line is that we support the republican leadership: support a line of unity with Irish capitalism; support a false choice between a strategy of military adventures or political capitulation.

It means also supporting a line that goes beyond denounc-



No information: Gerry Adams ing the present British hypocrisy in relation to talks with Sinn Fein to demanding negotiations in a situation where these will

either go nowhere or involve Sinn Fein in renouncing the core of its programme.

And it means supporting 'clarification' of a Downing Street declaration that could not be clearer in its restatement of a Unionist veto and in drawing a dagger to the right of the Irish people to self determination.

The comrades call for Sinn Fein to be given space in the pages of *Socialist Outlook*. I'm sure that *Socialist Outlook* would welcome the opportunity to debate with Sinn Fein.

As someone who has fought alongside republican militants in many campaigns over the past 25 years I would welcome

that opportunity in Ireland also.

Unfortunately I am reduced to attending Sinn Fein 'conventions' that are the antithesis of debate, given that no discussion is allowed and that the central plank of their present policy - the Hume/Adams agreement - remains a secret even from Sinn Fein members.

The democratic deficit in the present round of secret diplomacy is in itself damaging the struggle against imperialism and is grounds enough to repudiate the present policy of the republican leadership.

John North Belfast

FeedBACK

HOME NEWS

Socialist OUTLOOK

Stop UN air strikes: troops out of Bosnia Lift the Bosnia arms embargo!

UNITED NATIONS air strikes launched by American F16s against Serb forces in Gorazde were not an action in defence of Bosnia but a continuation of Western policy leading to the ethnic partition of the country.

To the extent that the western powers have a policy in Bosnia it is to end the war, stabilise the situation, get rid of a difficult political problem and create the conditions for the re-introduction of capital into the region.

They lack sufficient direct material interests in the region to have much stomach or direct involvement in the war. This is what has made western policy a vacillating mess from almost any standpoint, leaving even Paddy Ashdown looking decisive!

Although they have launched air strikes to stave off the imminent fall of Gorazde - which had been designated as a "UN safe Area" - to the Bosnian Serbs, the UN had chosen to ignore the fall of the towns of Zvornik, Foca, and Visegrad over the past two weeks.

In fact the spring offensives of both Serb and Bosnian forces has been in progress for weeks and until now the UN have played down the implications of this for their policy.

The Serbs on the other hand have played their advantage to the full.

Cease fire

They exploited last week's one day cease fire to launch their offensive around Gorazde, using weapons moved from Sarajovo, and to capture strategic ground overlooking the town - which they want in order to secure that part of Eastern Bosnia and open a new route into Bosnian Serb-occupied areas to the South East.

Western policy is in a mess, but no less dangerous for that.

The practical expression this policy has been the negotiations over the last week for a generalised cease fire between the Serbs and the Bosnian army.

This is a goal which links directly to Serbian interests since any cease-fire would freeze the current battle lines into borders under conditions where the Bosnian Serbs currently occupy 70% of Bosnia. This is why the Serbs were prepared to accept the "ultimatum" in Sarajvo.

The UN air strikes carried out on Sunday therefore do not represent a defence of Bosnia but the continuation of a policy which will result on the destruction of Bosnia.

At the same time they represent a major and unacceptable escalation of western intervention in the region which is against the interests of all the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia.

Surrender

Bosnian government support for the air strikes is seriously misplaced. The UN acts directly on behalf of western powers who are seeking to force the Bosnians into surrender. The UN is the instrument of that policy.

The only force which can defend Bosnia is the Bosnian army and the Bosnian working class and those who give it support.

The UN should get out of ex-Yugoslavia and allow the Bosnians to defend themselves. The Bosnian government has repeatedly called for the arms embargo to be lifted.

The effectiveness of the BH army if they were properly armed is not in doubt. Despite being confined to light weapons their spring offensive has been remarkably successful in some parts of the country. Substantial territory has been liberated in the North - to the north and west of Bugojino and north



Bosnian Serb forces have cashed in on the cease-fire, while Bosnians are starved of arms

of Travnik. Pressure has been relieved on the small Bosnian enclave of Maglai and the BH army has liberated Zepce.

At the same time the US and the West continues to push Bosnia into the reactionary federation with Croatia, leading to the ethnic cantonisation of what remains of Bosnia Herzegovina. Military intervention

will increase the pressure in this direction.

The hardship of every day life remains a direct pressure on Bosnia to settle as well. Conditions in central Bosnia remain essentially the same as they have been for the past year, and most UN aid convoys have now been suspended as a result of the air strikes.

The role of the UN perpetuates this situation and imperialist leaders are happy to see it continue as a means of achieving western aims.

Until UN forces are out of ex-Yugoslavia and the Bosnians allowed arms in order to defend themselves and their country there cannot be a lasting peace in the region.

Should newspapers take sides?



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theory+practice, our occasional in-depth review, and *Liberation!*, the red, green and feminist youth quarterly, add to excellent international and labour movement coverage that we are well

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