

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST



With Gorbachov or with the workers?

See page 3

This is Kent miner Terry French. He is one of the trade unionists still in jail for fighting for jobs and abandoned by the TUC.

photomontage: Peter Kennard



The deaths that never had to happen

As Britain faces what might be the coldest freeze in living memory, unknown numbers of old people will die of hypothermia and other cold-related illnesses as a result of inadequate heating.

In Tory Britain, many pensioners cannot afford to pay their heating bills. Inadequately heated homes prove to be death traps for the old.

With no prospect of warmer weather in sight, pensioners will have to wait until a week of below-freezing conditions before receiving an extra £5 in social security for increased bills.

The supplement scheme is in any case extremely limited. To qualify for the £5 you must live in a household on supplementary benefit, have less than £500 in savings and be over 65, or have a child under 2 or a chronically sick or disabled person to care for.

The social and political system under which we live puts profits before people, and so, because of the government's policy of 'tightening our belts', people — those who have spent a life time in useful work and in rearing families — will die this winter from the cold for want of the money to heat themselves.

The Tories and the DHSS must be forced to give out more money to old age pensioners. And Labour must make a firm commitment to massively increase the pension.

LEFT TO ROT



LAST WEEK the former coal board chair Ian McGregor was interviewed on TV about his life and 'achievements', he crowed loudly about the greatest achievement of his life — his victory over the miners. And well the dirty old bugger might!

The miners' strike ended almost two years ago, but 500 sacked miners are still locked out.

They have been without work since the day they bravely took their places in the magnificent ranks of the fighting miners, those who, at the beginning of 1984, told McGregor and Thatcher that they wouldn't let themselves be pushed around any more.

They have now been out three long years — and the Tories and the Coal Board say they will never get their jobs back.

What does Labour say? Kinnock mumbles that, maybe, Labour will do something when he becomes Prime Minister.

Labour's leaders don't even mumble vaguely that they may 'do something' for the jailed miners.

They say "the law must take its course" — the brutal class law of Mrs Thatcher's Tory government which sent armies of semi-militarised policemen into the coalfields to terrorise the striking mining communities, and then beat-up or jail many hundreds of those who stood up to them.

Defeat

The labour movement could have come to the aid of the miners, but because of rotten leadership we didn't. And so McGregor and Thatcher have won the great victory the labour movement gave them by its inactivity.

We let them defeat the miners then — and now we let them continue to grind down the sacked and jailed miners.

Miner Terry French has been in jail for two years, and it will be eight months more before the prison gates open for him. Thirty-two months in jail for fighting for jobs and trade unionism!

The labour movement has every

right to be proud of Terry French, and of every miner — and every mining family — who stood up to the Tories and their police thugs. And we should be ashamed of the inactivity of the rest of the labour movement during the miners' strike — and now.

For the sacked and jailed miners are now not too far from being the forgotten men of the labour movement. As Liz Fench, Terry French's wife puts it:

"When Terry first went away he got hundreds of letters of support, but he doesn't seem to get very many at all."

Sir Ian is feted and knighted and interviewed on TV, while his victims rot on the dole or in jail.

The sacked and jailed miners must not be forgotten. They symbolise everything that is alive and good and healthy in the labour movement, while the Thatchers and McGregors symbolise everything that is putrid and vicious in capitalist society.

Neil Kinnock may wish that the miners would just go away and let him get on with cultivating his political career. But the sacked and jailed miners are not going to go

away. Liz Fench knows what needs to be done now, and the labour movement should listen to her:

"Constituency Labour Parties should be lobbying Neil Kinnock now to make sure that there is an amnesty for all miners, not just for some of them. Labour Party policy must not be forgotten."

"The trade union movement should get its act together for 1987, if we united all the disputes that are going on together as one we would have a better chance against the Tory government."

"Please don't forget the class fighters in prison."

Send messages of support and solidarity to:
Terry French B7 3383,
Northeye Prison,
Bexhill on Sea,
East Sussex,
TN 394QN.

There are still 50 Kent NUM members sacked. Rush donations to Kent Benevolent Fund
Magnus house,
Deal,
Kent.

WORLD Brief



ABOUT 40 people demonstrated outside the Four Courts in Dublin (Sunday 11 Jan) in protest at a High Court ruling that prohibits counselling and assistance for women wishing to travel abroad for abortions. The banner carried the telephone number of a nursing home in Britain which gives a complete pregnancy counselling and termination service.

Palestinians and the PLO

By Will Adams

THE PUBLICATION of an opinion poll of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, areas which have been under Israeli military rule since 1967, has aroused anger in both Israel and Jordan. The poll was commissioned by the Jerusalem paper 'Al Fajr', the American 'Newsday' and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

93% of those interviewed consider the Palestine Liberation Organisation as their legitimate representative. 78% felt that the only long term solution to their conflict with the Israelis to be the establishment of a state in the whole of Palestine.

Asked what basis they would like any future Palestinian state run on, 30% favoured 'Arab nationalism and Islam', 26% 'Islamic law' and 32% some form of secular, democratic system.

50% would support a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza as an interim solution, but 43% favoured not seeking an interim solution short of a state in the whole of Palestine.

Israel's rule of the region received little support. Only 1% supported the Israeli-appointed mayors in the occupied territories and 74% wanted proper elections for municipal administrations. Only 0.1% thought that continued Israeli rule of the area, with an improvement in the quality of life and democratic rights guaranteed, an acceptable interim solution.

The Jordanians, sometimes put up as the possible protectors and sponsors for a future Palestinian state, also received little support. 6% would support Jordanian control of the West Bank and Gaza as an interim solution and only 3% supported King Hussein (Jordan's ruler) as future leader of the Palestinians compared with 71% for Yasser Arafat (the current chair of the PLO).

78% thought the use of force justified in furtherance of their struggle. When questioned about particular attacks, 64% thought the attacks on Rome and Vienna airports were not justified, while 82% thought



the attack on US Marines in Beirut in 1982 was justified.

The poll was carried out in a sample of 1000 of the 1.3 million Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, chosen randomly in a way to reflect the geographical and social spread of the population. Israel has made strenuous efforts to try to discredit the results.

Dr Mohammad Shahid of An-Najah University, who had supervised the poll, was taken into custody by the Israelis who tried to force him to declare that the results had been falsified. When he refused to do this his work permit was withdrawn.

Those polled were asked to show what they or their immediate family had experienced from the Israeli occupation forces. The percentages of those who had suffered the following were

Political arrest	47.5
Beating, physical abuse and threats	50.7
Harassment or direct insults at Israeli Military checkpoints	55.7
Confiscation of land or property by Israeli authorities	22.8
Ban on travel abroad	34.1
Curfew	74.2
Demolition or sealing of homes	17.6
Deportation or town arrest	15.7
Fines by military courts or any other direct harassment	36.7
None of the above	6.3

Few surprises as the Anti-Apartheid Movement meets

By Lawrence Welch

The Anti-Apartheid Movement's AGM saw the old leadership once again in control. The City of London Group (CLG), expelled last year, but present as individual members, made a strong bid to outshout this ascendancy, but were unable to distinguish themselves from the leadership except by the vehemence with which they promoted the non-stop picket of the South African Embassy.

A forewarning of what the AGM was to be like was given to participants in the form of a search of bags for any subversive literature which the AAM did not want distributed in the conference hall.

The AGM itself started with a rushed-through Standing Orders Committee report. The equally hasty vote on it was challenged principally by the CLG who proceeded to chant through Secretary Abdul Minty's report.

Chair

When Chair Bob Hughes MP had his appeals for order ignored, he ordered the whole of the AGM out, which, predictably, left a large contingent in the hall refusing to leave.

After some 30 minutes there was a recount of the vote on the Standing Orders report. The recount defined the rest of the debate: 410 in favour of the report, 196 against. The CLG continued to vocalise their increasing isolation from the rest of the AGM, making up in enthusiasm and volume what they lacked in coherent argument.

The AGM itself contained few surprises with the standard motions being passed on Sactions and boycotts, the Frontline states and repression — though there was a greater emphasis on Namibia.

The National Committee proposed constitutional amendments, revealingly, for 'ratification' by the AGM. Unfortunately, the CLG dominated the debate, advocating wholesale boycott of all the proposals on the grounds that the leadership were unable to mobilise activists, and were merely seeking to cater to the electoral interests of the Labour Party. Only one speaker (not aligned to CLG) pointed to the real failure of the proposals — that they entrench the position of the NC as the supreme policy making body, above the AGM.

The violence of the rhetoric of the debate on both sides was given material expression by the defeat of the critical motion when a supporter of the leadership leapt out of



Launch of COSATU photo: IDAF

his seat to assault a member of the CLG. The assailant was not evicted.

The Trade Union debate demonstrated how events in South Africa has forced even the AAM leadership to shift by a few degrees. A resolution was passed welcoming the formation of COSATU and calling for material and financial support for it. An amendment 'urging all affiliates to establish contact with appropriate trade union bodies in South Africa' met with the customary verbal opposition of the Executive Committee but they pragmatically remitted it to the NC.

The whole AGM managed to unite on support for a member of the AAM, Viraj Mendis, who is under threat of deportation to Sri Lanka where he faces persecution and possibly death.

Next year's AGM will probably be a much more controlled affair: with the new constitution the CLG has effectively been barred. More ominously, the Standing Orders report calls for 'the need to avoid the repetition of proposals which have clearly been defeated at previous AGMs'. Democratic and open debate is sacrificed to 'getting through the business'.

The ANC celebrates its first 75 years

By Anne Mack

THE OLDEST national liberation movement in Africa celebrated its 75th birthday last week.

The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) was formed in 1912. Since the late 1940s it has been at the centre of black opposition to the racist regime, and over the last few years has reestablished itself as a force inside the country.

In recognising the heroism and courage of the ANC and its militants it should also be remembered that the movement's history is shrouded in myth — and South Africa's workers need the truth in their fight for freedom.

For instance, the 'turn to the left' by the ANC in the 1940s under the influence of its activist Youth League

including Nelson Mandela, was not a great step forward, as it is usually presented.

In fact the rise of the militant nationalist movement of the ANC in the late '40s and '50s expressed the defeat and failure of a potentially socialist working class movement in the 1930s and during the war years. A failure rooted in the collapse of African and non-European trade unionism after the defeat of the African mineworkers' strike of 1946.

Workers' direct action and strikes were consciously sabotaged by the Communist Party and ANC during the war in the name of 'defending democracy'. Socialist oppositionists in the white working class were defeated. And working class socialism — Trotskyism — voluntarily dissolved into a non-European nationalist movement in which all talk of socialism was outlawed.

At the end of this failure came apartheid.

In the fifties the ANC launched a defiance campaign against the pass laws, and helped to organise workers' stay aways against the government. This movement faced state repression culminating in the Sharpville Massacre of March 1960; and in response the ANC turned to armed struggle.

Today the ANC is central to developments in South Africa. It is a movement deserving solidarity from every socialist; but it is not itself a socialist or a working class movement. In fact it has never claimed to be one.

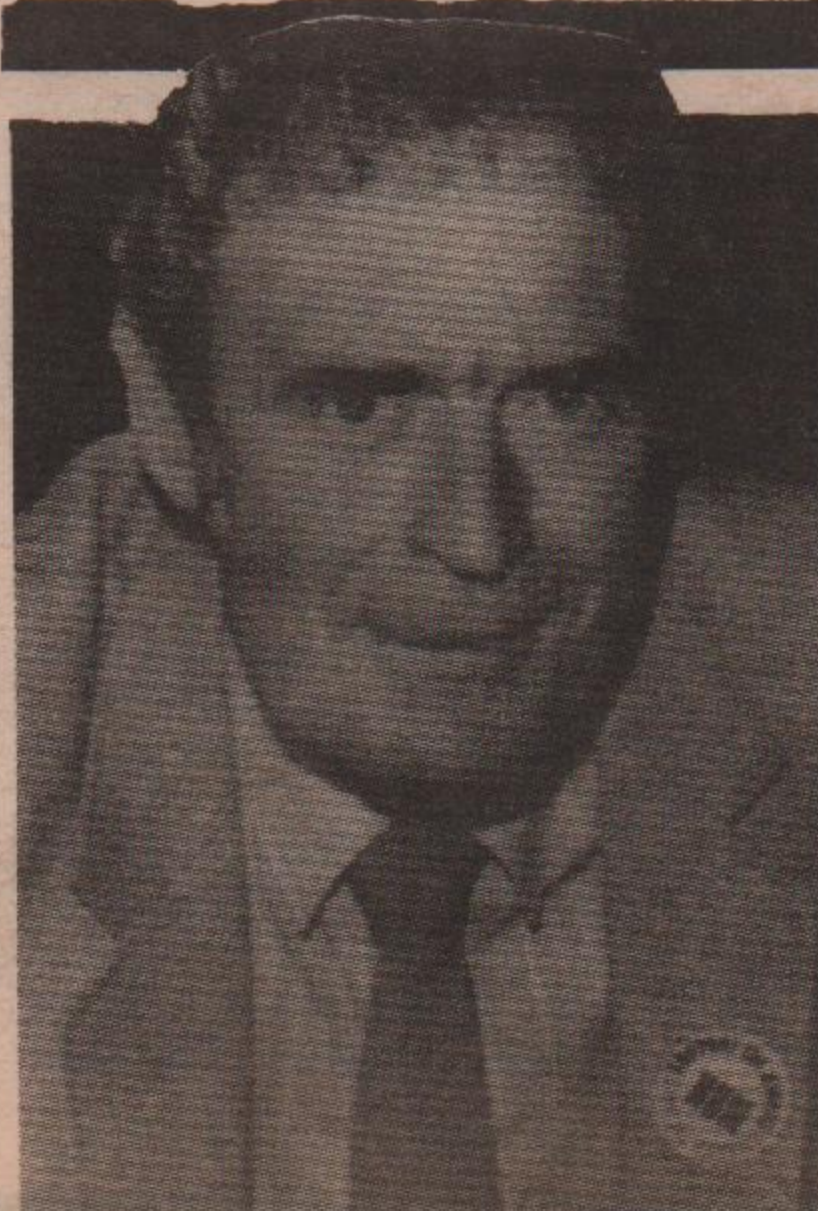
The great tragedy of South Africa is that no mass working class socialist movement exists in that country today, a movement that could rouse that country's black working class majority to fight as a class for its own liberation. It is on the forces who are striving to build such a movement that the future of freedom and socialism in South Africa depends.

Jack Collins

Jack Collins, the secretary of the Kent area NUM, died in hospital on Wednesday, January 7.

A former member of the Communist Party, and a committed fighter for the interests of the working class, Jack Collins was a prominent miners' leader during the great strike of 1984/5.

The labour movement has lost an important socialist militant.



With Gorbachev - or with the workers?

TUC LEFT won a victory over the TUC right last week. As a result, the TUC is sending a delegation to the so-called Congress of the so-called trade unions of the USSR — that is, to the 'Congress' of the police state labour fronts misnamed trade unions which have the job of helping the Russian totalitarian state regiment, repress and control the Soviet working class.

The 'Congress' the TUC will be visiting will be a congress of organisations which are in no sense trade unions. They are pseudo-unions, one of whose chief functions is to prevent the working class in the USSR organising a real workers' movement.

Those who try to organise independent trade unions are persecuted and sent to jails and labour camps, or to asylums for the insane where their minds and bodies are often destroyed by drugs forcibly administered.

How things stand with trade unionism in the Stalinist states was exposed by what happened in Poland during the glorious month of August 1980, when strikes spread out from the Gdansk shipyards and engulfed much of Poland.

For the first time in history a Stalinist regime was forced to recognise the right of the working class to organise free trade unions. Militants of the small underground free trade union movement such as Lech Walesa and Anna Walentynowycz, came out of the underground. The ten million strong Solidarnosc movement mushroomed in a matter of weeks.

And the official 'trade unions'? They supported the police state against the strikers. In early August as the strike was getting under way the leading 'trade union' official at Gdansk told the workers to go back to work or he would have them shot down, "to teach them a lesson they would never forget".

When the workers won the right to form free trade unions, police state 'unions' more or less collapsed. Today, five years after Solidarnosc was banned under Marshall law, the regime has still not put the police state 'union' together again, although they are trying to.

Solidarity of workers with other workers everywhere, whether in Chile, S. Africa or in Stalinist Russia, is a basic Principle not only of socialism but of trade unionism itself. That we should help the workers in Stalinist states form free T.Us — and support them and cheer them on while denouncing their oppressors — is as elementary a principle as the principle that you don't cross picket lines during a strike.

The British labour movement should do everything it can to help Solidarnosc and the other, much smaller, free trade union movements



Polish workers on strike, 1980

in the Stalinist states. We should do nothing to help the police state 'unions' and we should not, by associating with them, endorse the foul lie that these organisations for repressing and controlling the workers are real trade unions.

On this question the division in the labour movement is a strange one. The left — those like Arthur Scargill who are usually on the right side of class struggle in this country — are indifferent if not hostile to the free trade union movement in the Stalinist states, and believe that the anti-working class regimes there are some sort of socialism.

The right — those like Eric Hammond and Bill Jordan who want to teach the British labour movement to crawl on its belly to the Tories and the bosses, people who are normally and instinctively on the wrong side of the class struggle in Britain, and who sometimes play the role of scabs in it — are loudly and outspokenly friendly to the free trade union movement in the Stalinist states.

This is a false division and an unnatural one. Movements like Solidarnosc are the natural allies of the British left, not of the right. What is the explanation for this unnatural division?

The problem is that on the one hand many on the left think, with Arthur Scargill, that the Stalinist regimes are socialist, and on the other hand the problem is that oppositionists in the Stalinist states, including working class oppositionists, often seem to find the liberal capitalist system preferable to the Stalinist.

This is natural: They spend their lives in police states in which the socialist programme of nationalisation of the means of production seems to have been realised, and in which nationalised property is the basis on which savage anti-working class regimes have been stabilised. Naturally they look with sympathy to the west, to the enemy of their oppressors.

In Britain a working class politi-

cian like Arthur Scargill looks to the enemies of our capitalist enemy, to the Stalinist states — while in Poland a great working class fighter like Lech Walesa does the same, from his side of the great East/West divide. Anti-capitalist militants and their anti-Stalinist counterparts stare uncomprehendingly at each other across a historical void — if not a historical timewarp — which makes them mirror images of each other. Each one sees in the other the dupe, ally or distant starry eyed admirer of its own Stalinist or capitalism enemy. Naturally they repel each other.

Walesa looks to the West for the salvation of the Polish working class — to the West were there is much more freedom, but also class exploitation, oppression, racism, poverty, unemployment and misery on a vast scale in even the richest of capitalist states, the USA. Scargill looks to the East for the salvation of the British working class — to the East where the workers are bled dry by the ruling bureaucrats and locked into a police state system which Leon Trotsky once rightly said was in some respects — human and civil rights for example — worse even than Hitler's fascist Germany.

Instead of independent working class politics, politics which bases itself on the International Socialist programme of action against both the Stalinist and capitalist systems you get inverted partisanship on the primitive rebels pattern of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'.

On both sides what is glaringly lacking is an independent working class socialist view of a world divided between bureaucratic Stalinism and capitalism.

In Britain the TU right wing's championing of the anti-Stalinist free trade unions does their reputation a great deal of harm among militant trade unionists.

It is time to put an end to this state of affairs. The fight for a free working class movement in the Stalinist states is a left wing cause! The serious

anti-Stalinist left — those who base themselves upon the international working class; who believe that socialism will mean the end of class exploitation everywhere; who fight to destroy and dismantle all the systems of state repression everywhere; who stand for workers liberty East and West — must make the fight of the working class in the Stalinist states their fight.

Accordingly SO will in the next few

weeks approach various groupings and campaigns and ask them to help us call a conference in the Autumn to which will be invited those in the British labour movement who believe with us that the duty of the British labour movement to give active support and help to the free trade union movement in the Stalinist states is, to repeat, as fundamental a question as not crossing a picket line during a strike.

Some of us always lose

FOR MOST of us, the mid-'80s have been years of record unemployment, cuts, and union-bashing.

But for a few, they have been the biggest, gaudiest party in history. In the last four years in the US, nearly \$500 billion worth of companies have changed hands in takeovers and mergers. There has been a similar takeover boom in Britain.

Share-dealing, money-changing, and all sorts of financial jugglery have climbed higher and higher. Stockbrokers, speculators, bankers and lawyers have made huge gains.

The losers have been the workers who lose their jobs as asset-strippers and merger-makers axe less profitable businesses, and young people who do not get work because new investment in production and public services is low.

In Thatcher's Britain and Reagan's America, the profiteers are heroes. Greed is good, profit is the life-spirit of creation.

But as the debauch goes into the cold grey hours, some of the heroes turn out to be villains. They have gone too far. As always: it was the same with the hero-industrialists of Victorian Britain, or the hero-conquerors of High Imperialism.

Some of the financial whizzkids are not just pocketing their proper share of the loot collectively squeezed out of the working class by the robber class as a whole; they were cheating their fellow-capitalists.

Ivan Boesky, Drexel Lambert, Geoffrey Collier, Morgan Grenfell; now Morgan Grenfell again, Ansbacher, Roger Selig, Ernest Saunders, and Guinness — the famous banks, companies, and individuals have stumbled one after another.

Will the whole money-dealing boom go down with them? It's too early to say yet. But one thing is certain: as long as the capitalist private-profit system remains, those who will lose most in the crash will be the same as those who lost out in the boom — the working class.

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GRAFFITI



Students and workers

According to the US magazine Newsweek, the greatest fear of the Chinese government about the student protests is that they might link up with workers.

"Workers", the magazine reports, "have become increasingly disenchanted with free-market experiments that have often led to rising living costs. Recently the price of such staples as fish and meat nearly doubled, pro-

mpting a fair amount of grumbling from workers on fixed salaries..."

"A handful of workers joined the demonstrations in Shanghai and Nanjing to air their grievances, primarily inflation. And while hardly any workers appeared at the Beijing rally, Western diplomats believe that Communist officials are prepared to react decisively if such a (student-worker) alliance appears to be emerging."

Independent Ulster?

Writing last year in the Belfast magazine Fortnight, Ulster University economics professor Norman Gibson speculated that an independent Northern Ireland might seek support from Eastern Europe or Libya.

Despite the fierce right-wing convictions of the Orange leaders, the logic of a break with Britain would drive them to unlikely alliances.

Now Martin Smyth, Grand Master of the Orange Order, has said that "Unionists could approach Moscow for their protection if the link with Britain is cut" (according to the Guardian, 12 January).

Smyth's purpose in air-

US slump

The central pillar of the world financial and trading system — the economic supremacy of US capitalism — continues to crumble.

An end-year survey by Business Week magazine shows that between 1982 and 1986 the US slumped from producing 75% of the machine tools its industry buys, to producing only 50%. The other 50% are imported.

In another key sector, integrated circuits, the US used to have 60% more of the world market than Japan only four years ago. In 1986 Japan overtook the US.

Where US-based industry is flourishing, notably in chemicals, it is increasingly under foreign ownership. The latest figures (end of 1985) showed 34% foreign ownership of the US chemical industry.

Speculation, takeover mania, and a drive for maximum short-term profits have increasingly overshadowed basic investment for US companies. Now

the Wall Street Journal warns that "US companies are damaging their future vitality, and even viability, through reluctance to undertake new investments and new product development."

British judges

A unique survey of 465 British judges in the January issue of Labour Research reveals that British judges have highly privileged backgrounds and a number have been actively involved in politics.

Public school, followed by Oxford or Cambridge, is the typical start in life for the British judge. 29 out of the 34 most senior judges attended public school, where fees currently top £5,000 a year. At least 33 judges have been actively involved in politics.

The survey also shows that only 17 out of the 465 judges are women; and only one judge is black,

China's third stock exchange opened last week in Beijing. Companies in China have been issuing bonds and shares for about two years. In Shanghai, more than 1400 companies have sold shares or bonds; in Canton, at least 600.

Such market economics is already well advanced in Hungary, but China is moving faster than Hungary.

Rape

Sexism in its most crude and violent form is still widespread. A recent survey in the US found that 30% of men said they might rape a woman if they could get away with it, and when the wording of the question was changed a full 50% said they would "force a woman to have sex with them" if they knew they would suffer no comeback.

'Tunas'

In Japan they have a name for it — 'tunas'. It means workers who freeze to death sleeping on the streets in winter, and the reference is to the frozen fish in Tokyo's fish market.

Less than half Japan's workers have the famous 'jobs for life'. The rest compete for casual, temporary, and part-time jobs.

In the Sanya district of Tokyo conditions are particularly bad, and each year 90 workers freeze to death on the streets.

AIDS

This week, on 16 January, the US Food and Drug Administration is likely to give approval to a prescription drug for AIDS.

The drug, AZT, has already been used experimentally. In one test, only one out of 145 AIDS patients receiving AZT died, while 16 out of 139 died in a similar group not receiving AZT.

It is not known whether AZT stops the effects of AIDS or just slows them down. AZT also has serious side effects, causing severe anaemia in about one-third of patients.

Supplies are limited, since the production process is long and costly. Nevertheless, AZT seems to be the best hope so far against AIDS.



although four judges are of white South African origin.



Hatton

Unfair to Militant?

Anyone looking for a coherent analysis of the dispute between Liverpool City Council and the Black Caucus would have been disappointed by the article in SO 296 by Bas Hardy.

Although the page it was featured on was called "Analysis", there was little of this. Instead Bas Hardy repeated without any care for the facts about the record of Liverpool City Council on racism.

For example, Hardy quotes a Social Services Department report on the number of elderly blacks receiving "meals on wheels", day care facilities and in residential homes. What Hardy doesn't reveal is that these figures relate to the time the Liberals controlled the council. Under Labour, since 1983, in Liverpool 8, the number of black people who had meals on wheels, etc., has increased from the 0.3% quoted by Hardy to 13% by the end of 1985!

On housing, in Liverpool 8, the Council has spent more on its housing budget than any other Local Authority's total housing budget. The Council have built 978 dwellings in Liverpool 8, and they have carried out large scale improvements to 1782 dwellings.

On the question of jobs, over 20% of all new intakes have been black. In fact the worst area for recruitment both before and since the Bond Affair occurred is the clerical section where appointments are made in conjunction with NALGO.

On the Bond Affair, even the Black Caucus book admits that the majority of councillors on the selection panel were not Militant supporters. Hardly a Militant coup! One thing that comes through the whole book is the complete lack of any strategy on the part of the Black Caucus to tackle racism. Their whole ideology is based on the old "consensus" between the Race Relations "industry" and the establishment.

The Black Caucus's claim to be truly representative of the black community was shown to be false in the May 1986 council elections. They stood a candidate against Labour in Granby ward. They got a miserable 477 votes, completely smashed by Labour's 2287 votes. The majority of local black community organisations call for the lifting of the boycott on Sam Bond.

The Black Caucus has the support of the Liberals, the five rebel councillors who wouldn't vote for an illegal budget, Neil Kinnock, sections of the Churches, Tories and some businessmen.

In 1986 the Black Caucus gave evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Employment. They stated that Littlewoods was a good example of what can be done to

fight discrimination against blacks. Coincidentally Littlewoods employs a Black Caucus supporter as "race advisor". In actual fact, Littlewoods only employ 22 blacks out of 7,000 workers in the Liverpool area (or 0.8%). The whole dispute on Sam Bond relates to the Black Caucus being cheated off that they haven't landed a well-paid, plush job.

Some other points about Bas Hardy's article. He states that Tony Byrne was installed as Leader of the Council after "last month's putsch ousted John Hamilton". In fact, as anybody should know, Hamilton had joined forces with the Labour Party bureaucracy in trying to keep the expelled councillors out of Labour Group meetings. The majority of councillors considered the expulsions wrong and wanted to let the expelled councillors stay in the group. It's normally the right wing who talk about "putsches" and people being "ousted"!

Bas Hardy also quotes Trotsky and

James P. Cannon as a stick to beat Militant with. Would Socialist Organiser call for a separate black state in Britain as Hardy implied or are these rantings of "Bas" just his personal opinion.

An analysis of the Liverpool experience is needed but Bas Hardy can't provide one. In all his articles over the last year or so there is a real thread of spite, slander and nit-picking. Most of Hardy's fury seems to come from the fact that Militant do have a lot of support on Merseyside whilst Bas Hardy is becoming more and more isolated because he has been incapable of building a tendency all the many years he has been involved in revolutionary politics. Socialist Organiser should take the trouble to get someone who deals with facts before commissioning reviews such as the one in SO 296.

Yours comradely,
SIMON LAWLOR,
North Nottingham LPYS

Dealing with bigots

The article in SO 295 advocating expulsion from the Labour Party of Midlothian Labour District Councillor Sam Campbell after his anti-Catholic sectarian diatribe at an Orange Order rally omits to take up two pertinent points.

First, should Sam Campbell be expelled because of what he said (that Catholics are the 'enemy', that Catholic schools should be closed down, etc.) or because of his membership of the Orange Order (i.e., that membership of the Order is incompatible with membership of the Labour Party, and that all members of the Order, not just Campbell, should be expelled from the Labour Party)?

Socialist Action supporters, in Glasgow at least, would have us adopt the latter position on the grounds that the Orange Order is a pro-imperialist organisation, membership of which is irreconcilable with membership of the anti-imperialist Labour Party which we should be striving to create.

Whilst open to correction on this issue, I fail to see how barring from Labour Party membership some of the most militant Scottish miners (and presumably replacing them with impeccable anti-imperialists such as the former Argentine dictator

General Galtieri should he be exiled to Britain) would enhance the composition of the Labour Party.

Moreover, given that the Catholic Church is hardly renowned for its anti-imperialist dynamic, I can only assume that Socialist Action, in their concern for consistency, will also advocate that all Catholics be expelled from the Labour Party.

Secondly, the issue has exposed that a 'two nations' theory (i.e. that Catholics and Protestants in Ireland are two different nations) is implicitly held by a current among those who call for British withdrawal from Ireland.

Campbell's tirade has been condemned by some as anti-Irish racism. To do so makes sense only if one equates 'Irish' with 'Catholic' and thereby excludes Protestants (one in five of the Irish population) from Irish nationhood. (Even then it does not make any sense — Campbell was referring to Catholics in Britain rather than in Ireland, judging by the press reports).

None of the above should be taken as suggesting that socialists should not oppose the ideology of Orangeism. What it does question is the notion that every Orange Order member is a Sam Campbell, and that every Irish person is a Catholic.

IAN McCALMAN
Glasgow

The NHS: lethal in their hands

The Health Service is safe with the Tories, we were told at the last election. Since then Fowler has assured us of how many millions he is ploughing in. Well, I don't know where those millions are going, but one thing's for sure, it's not going into hospital beds, wards or general health facilities. So perhaps Fowler's paying it to himself?

Last November a man I know collapsed while he was visiting a friend. He was writhing in pain and vomiting. His friend phoned his doctor who told her to bring him to the surgery when it opened at 4 pm. This was at 11 am. So she phoned her own doctor who told her that he couldn't come out because the man wasn't his patient — medical ethics and all that. In desperation she phoned the hospital who told her not to bring him in because they hadn't got a free bed. She took him anyway and for seven hours he lay on a trolley in a corridor till they could find a patient

to send home so he could have a bed. It turned out that the man had a stone in his kidney that was so big they had to operate, cut into his kidney, to get it out. Four days after the operation he was sent home, no doubt because some other poor sod was lying in the corridor waiting for a bed.

Within a week my friend had collapsed again and was rushed back in with a blood clot on his lung — apparently a common occurrence in old people after surgery. This must have been known along with the fact that my friend has a history of heart trouble.

The Health Service that Fowler is running is not the one that I envisage. It is a conveyor-belt, speed-up system similar to the Fords production line, where defective parts inevitably come off the end of the track and where cure is better than prevention.

That reminds me of an experience of my own. When the effects of 20 years of women taking the pill eventually became known a couple of years ago, and there were reports of side-effects such as cancer, heart

trouble, sterility, nausea, etc., I decided that it was time to come off it. I was in a high-risk group — taking the pill for over ten years, from before I was twenty-five, a high-



By Jean Lane

oestrogen pill and a heavy smoker to boot.

So I went to the clinic, having done some research of my own, to tell them I want to go onto the cap instead; this being a method of contraception which seemed almost as reliable, more convenient and with the least danger from side-effects.

Feeling quite pleased with myself for taking my well-being into my own hands, I strolled in and made my an-

nouncement. I was met with a stoney, poker face, the owner of which demanded to know why I was putting them to all this trouble. The pill is easy, you see. You go in, get a quick weight and blood pressure test — once a year a cancer smear — and come out the other end with 6 months of birth control. The clinic is so busy that so long as everybody wants the same thing it can run relatively smoothly with a conveyor belt of scales, pressure pumps and dispensary. I, with my proud announcement, was a spanner in the works.

I explained that I no longer wished to take the risks that went with using the pill. The reply I got went something like this: "These Americans have got so much money they don't know what to do with it. So they bang out another research project and report. One year it's sugar, the next it's salt or butter, and this year it's the pill. It doesn't mean anything."

I dug my heels in and said I wanted the cap, not cancer. (So why are you a heavy smoker?) The woman picked up my ten cancer smear test reports

from my file, shook them at me and said, "There's your insurance against that!" Not impressed with my desire to prevent getting cancer, she just wanted to be able to inform me what I'd got it!

Like the nurses in my friend's hospital, this woman was massively over-worked in a cold and inadequate building and underpaid — working against all odds just to keep an inadequate system tiding over rather than to provide a necessary and urgent service.

In this next election, Fowler is going to sell us more rubbish about what he is providing. In fact he will be selling our health service — down the river. I think we should teach him and the rest of the Tories exactly what is meant by "prevention rather than cure". Let's cut this cancer out and prevent it from returning to make us sick. That means performing an emergency operation on the Labour Party, so that it is no longer sticking plaster over the scars of capitalism, but a real working class alternative which will provide the services we need.

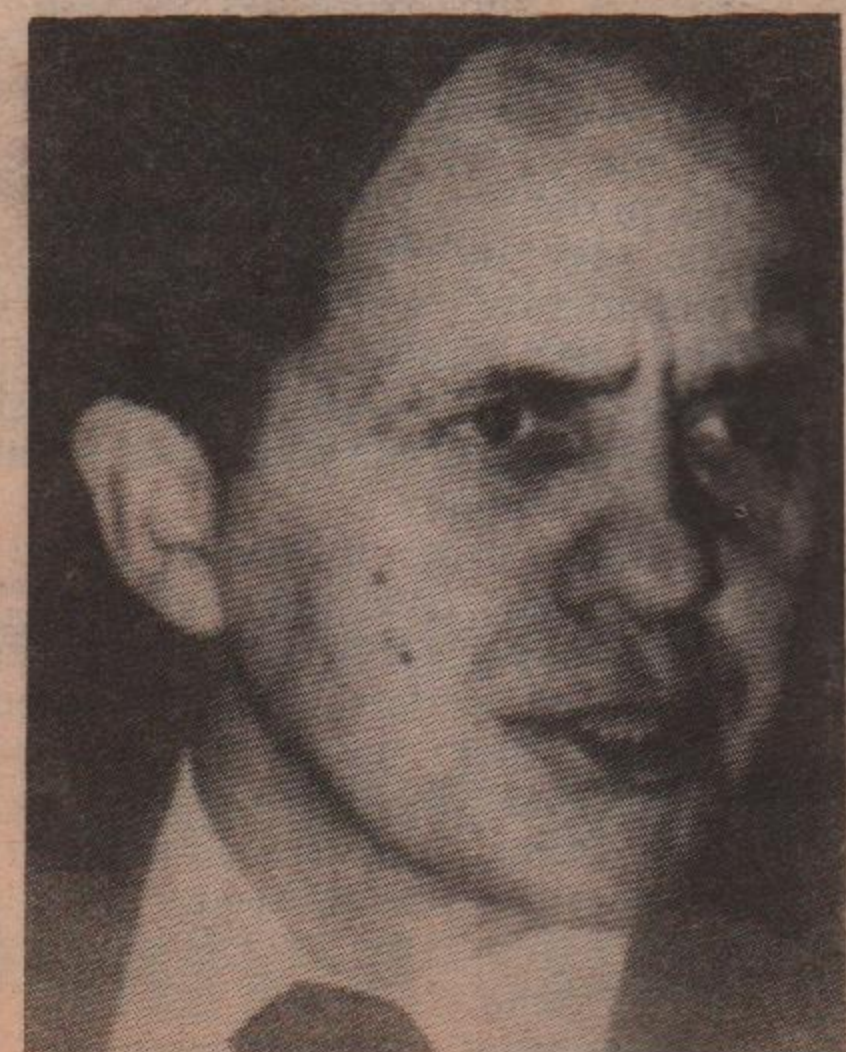
When is a union not a union?

"We are of the opinion that without strong and free trade unions, there cannot be strong socialism. (Rapturous applause)...Nothing happens here in the absence of consultation with, and co-determination by, the trade unions. The members of the party and state leadership of the German Democratic Republic are themselves members of trade unions, in some cases already for decades."

With these words Erick Honecker East German head of state, opened the 11th Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), held in East Berlin in September of 1986. It was attended by 1,014 delegates claiming to represent 296 million workers, organised in 432 "trade unions" in 154 different countries.

But far from all the organisations represented at the congress were genuine trade unions.

Set up in 1945 in Paris and now based in Prague, the WFTU is an umbrella organisation comprising the fake state-run "unions" of the Stalinist states, Communist Party-controlled trade unions in the West



Edmund Baluka, Polish socialist oppositionist, jailed for his 'crimes'.

By Stan Crooke

and elsewhere, and trade unions or organisations purporting to be trade unions in Third World countries linked politically or economically with the USSR.

Honecker's opening comments were therefore accurate, albeit in the opposite of the intended sense. The absence of independent trade unions in the Stalinist states exposes the hollowness of their claims to be advancing the cause of socialism. And the overlap in membership between the ruling state bureaucracy and the "trade unions" is evidence of control by the former over the latter, rather than an expression of workers' control over "their" state.

Thus what WFTU President Sandor Gaspar (also President of the National Council of Hungarian "Trade Unions") described in an eve-of-conference press conference as "the highest forum of the world trade union movement" included representation from such unlikely "trade union" organisations as:

- The Central Council of Afghan Trade Unions and the Ethiopian Trade Union Federation (state-run labour-front organisations being constructed on the Soviet model);

- The Polish state 'trade union' OPZZ, (an attempt to construct a new state-run "trade union" after the suppression of Solidarnosc);

- The Liaison Commission of Iranian Trade Unions (a rump organisation representing nothing at all, set up by the Moscow-loyal Iranian Tudeh Party);

- The South African Congress of Trade Unions (an organisation of extremely modest proportions, heavily overshadowed by COSATU — though this did not prevent WFTU general secretary Ibrahim Zakaria describing it as "the true representative of the South African trade union movement");

- The fake state-run "unions" of the Eastern bloc states (the role of which was summed up by Shalayev, chairperson of the Central Council of the Soviet "unions" as being "the greatest possible intensification of



Gorbachev explains the importance of hard work

productivity in order to achieve an increase in the tempo of economic growth".

However, not all organisations represented at the congress were fake unions. Luminaries of the Western trade union movement attending the Congress included Campbell Christie (Scottish TUC General Secretary), Ken Gill (AUEW-TASS, and a member of the TUC General Council), Stan Fitzsimmons (President of the Fire Brigades Union) and William Wallace (Irish TUC vice-president). British and Irish trade unionists will doubtless take heart from the company their leaders keep.

In his opening speech to the congress, Gaspar stressed the alleged openness of the event. It was open to all trade unions, not just unions already affiliated to the WFTU. And freedom of debate would be the order of the day — "everyone has the possibility of stating their opinions, openly and with equal rights."

On the first point Gaspar was correct. 452 delegates were members of WFTU-affiliates, as against 562 delegates who were members of unions affiliated to other international federations or of non-aligned unions. But genuine debate was notable for its absence from the Congress. Speeches were merely set pieces.

Documents such as the "Appeal to Workers and Trade Unions in All Countries" were adopted unanimously, without the moving of amendments. And the WFTU Presi-

dent, General Secretary, 12 Vice-Presidents and seven secretaries were elected/re-elected unopposed.

Three main themes were taken up by the Congress, with separate commissions set up to deal with each of them and submit a report for approval by the congress: peace and disarmament; economic and social questions; and, rather hypocritically, trade union rights.

The commission's sessions were characterised by a combination of accurate condemnation of prevailing conditions in the capitalist West, coupled with fanciful claims about the workers' wonderlands of the Stalinist states.

Thus, the commission on peace and disarmament, like the congress as a whole, was predictably to witness an unending series of speeches praising Soviet "peace initiatives", such as the moratorium on testing nuclear weapons, and condemning America for its 'Star Wars' programme and its responsibility for heightening international tensions.

The way to preserve peace was to strengthen the economies of the "socialist" states. As Honecker put it: "An expression of their (East German workers') desire for peace is that on the occasion of World Peace Day (1 September) 3,725,000 workers achieved maximum shift performances...Their most striking expression is the slogan: 'My place of work — my place of struggle for peace'".

The latest congress of this sham 'trade union' federation fulfilled

a dual purpose.

On the one hand, it was a stage-managed performance designed to boost the fake-socialist credentials of the Soviet bureaucracy and its equivalent in other countries, by falsely portraying the Stalinist state as peace-loving (despite their readiness to use violence to crush workers' uprisings), havens of economic and social progress (despite the backward and crisis-ridden nature of their economies), and custodians of trade union rights (despite the absence of genuine unions and their crushing of attempts to establish independent trade unions).

On the other hand, it also marked a further step towards attempting to create a single united international federation involving all trade union and organisations purporting to be trade unions — which, in practice would function as a medium through which Stalinism would strengthen its influence in the labour movements of capitalist countries.

However bureaucratically run and limited in their internal democracy the latter remain, nonetheless, independent workers' organisations, a distinct from the state-run organisations of the Stalinist states which pass themselves off as trade unions.

Socialists should certainly support the creation of a single federation of trade unions, but not what is on offer from the WFTU: a stitch-up between union bureaucrats in the West and Stalinist functionaries in the East.

France: the right retreats, the workers advance



Strikers tell scab what to do

THE RIGHT WING government's retreat was an opportunity for the unions, the Socialist Party (PS) and the Communist Party (PC) to rally to the cause of the students and make their victorious struggle the start of a class-wide counter-offensive against the RPR-UDF government. But they didn't.

Before 10 December the students asked the unions to call strikes on that day in solidarity with the students' mass demonstration.

The right wing unions — CGC, CFTC, FO — flatly refused. The

Last week Stan Crooke reported on the current student/worker revolt in France up to 8 December 1986, when the government backed down on its education cuts. This week's article brings the story up to date.

CFDT offered support under strict conditions (such as preservation of the non-party-political nature of the student movement, and limitation of demands to purely student ones).

When Chirac backed down, the CFDT condemned the demonstration of 10 December as "inopportune" and sent only a token delegation.

The FEN did much the same. Only the CGT called for strikes on 10 December.

As the French daily paper "Le Monde" put it: "clearly, the unions do not want to replay May 1968 in December 1986," referring to the general strike of May 13 1968 called by the CGT, CFDT, FO, CGC and FEN which unleashed a wave of strikes and factory occupations independent of the control of the union leaderships.

For the Socialist Party general secretary Lionel Jospin said on 14 December:

"We are not embarrassed to say that we are in complete solidarity (with the student movement)."

But nine days later Jospin declared: "We socialists, we want the return of calm... We do not want a political crisis in this country. We do

not want violence." The PS refused to support the demonstration of 10 December and refused to be even officially represented at it. So much for Jospin's "complete solidarity".

The PCF had been more positive in response to students' appeals for support than the PS, but it was equally unwilling to take the students' victory as the start of a big offensive.

A recent opinion poll showed that only 3% of French students identified politically with the CP. The PCF attempted to explain such a loss of support as being the result of a "shift to the right by society". And it maintained that line even after the students' victory.

So the leaders of the unions, the PS and the PCF were mortified (or, in the case of the PCF, bemused) rather than inspired by the struggle of the students. But rank and file workers reacted differently.

The PCF had played with the slogan "Struggle pays off" in the aftermath of the student revolt, but did not put it into practice. Workers took it seriously.

In the fortnight between the victory of the students and the end of the year strikes erupted.

Workers in the EDF (electricity

supply industry) took part in a token four-hour strike in the morning of 11 December after the breakdown of talks between union and management over pay. 25,000 demonstrated in Paris, though only 31% of the workforce supported the strike, apparently due to its token nature. There was more widespread support for a strike on 17 December, forcing a reduction of 21,800 megawatts in electricity generation.

Merchant seamen and staff of the Air Inter airline joined the growing strike movement. Shipping at most Atlantic and Mediterranean ports was brought to a standstill within days of 10 December, and the Air Inter strike cut flights by 15% and the number of passengers carried by 35%, before it ended on December 20.

Paris

In the RATP (Paris public transport) a strike began on 22 December, called by the independent union of drivers, which covers some 50% of the RATP train drivers (bus services were not affected). Supported by 59% of the drivers, the strike cut Paris underground rail services by an average of 60%.

A strike on the SNCF (French railways) began on 18 December and was effectively to paralyse the rail network within a week. It spread from involving only drivers at the outset to drawing in support from office staff and other sections of the workforce. Stations were occupied and lines blocked to prevent scab trains running in some parts of the

country.

The question of pay rises was at the centre of many of the strikes (although especially in the SNCF dispute a number of other issues were involved as well). Workers in the EDF and SNCF had not had a pay rise since 1985. If the RPR-UDF government is successful in its plans to keep down pay rises, they can look forward to no more than a 3% pay rise, like the rest of the public sector.

But the union leaders tried to end the strikes as quickly as possible.

The CGT publicly stated at the start that it would not support the RATP strike though it subsequently mellowed its tone.

The CFDT likewise condemned the strike as being too sectional and concerned only with the demands of the drivers, and expressed its fears of "the risks engendered by this unpopular strike".

The CFDT also went on to condemn the SNCF strike, attacking, for the sake of "balance" the "blind technocrats" who kept down wages and also denouncing "with equal vigour the stubborn and irresponsible movements in the process of paralysing the country."

Such a strike, it claimed, could only devalue "true trade unionism"!

But as the SNCF strike intensified, the union leaderships were forced to change their tactics. Denunciation had failed to end the strike, so the leaderships declared their support for it, in order to be able to sell it out and call it off. On 23 December, the CFTC, the CGC and the FMC (an autonomous union grouping the higher grades of SNCF employees)



Chirac



signed an agreement with management and called for a return to work by their members.

The CGT, CFDT and FGAAC (Independent General Federation of Drivers) refused to sign the agreement.

The rank and file strikers — who were often not in any union at all — set up their own co-ordinating committees: an inter-regional co-ordinating committee based at the Paris North station, and a national co-ordinating committee consisting of delegates from local strike committees.

Leadership

The CGT leadership responded by questioning "the motivation of creating a co-ordinating body which is going to short-circuit the representative trade union bodies...Public opinion is being tricked, and an attempt is being made to take over the railway workers' strike for a political operation which bears not a trace of spontaneity." The CGT singled out for attack CFDT official Daniel Vitry, as the man behind the moves

to side-step official union structures.

The CFDT responded by joining in the attack on their own official. A CFDT statement condemned "the action currently being led by Daniel Vitry" and announced that Vitry was to be the object of an internal union inquiry on the grounds that he was not acting in line with his union mandate.

But the union leaderships were also forced to sound more militant: Henri Krasucki of the CGT declared:

"The CGT will do everything to ensure that the movement of struggle grows" and "Let the tide rise! Unlike other union officials we are not afraid of the workers."

The French magazine *Le Point* summed up the dilemma of the union leaders: "Forced to act with extreme carelessness in order to be neither disavowed nor outflanked (by their members)...To face the unpopularity of public opinion in order to avoid being cut off from their base — such is the uncomfortable alternative with which all unions (i.e. union leaders) are therefore confronted, henceforth placed "under surveillance" by their members."

"the union leaders tried to end the strikes as quickly as possible"

The controlling pro-Kinnock faction in the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) maintained its stranglehold over the organisation last weekend by bureaucratically and unjustly depriving delegates opposed to the ruling faction of their votes.

The opposition had a majority, but the incumbent young bureaucrats had the power, and they used it like Stalinists (and many of them are, in fact, soft Labour Party Stalinists) — without scruple and in defiance of the elementary rules of democracy.

The occasion was the NOLS "Student Council", which selected delegates to run for election to the National Union of Students (NUS) Executive at the Easter NUS conference.

Using blatantly undemocratic manoeuvres, they managed to secure a narrow majority for the "soft left", the ridiculously (Orwellianly) misnamed "Democratic Left" faction. To keep control, the registration desk totted up the figures, assessed the weight of the different factions and then found excuses to rule enough delegates out of order to ensure their own fake majority.

Then, when the "Democratic Left" 'majority' had been established, incumbent NUS president Vicky Phillips debated Simon Pottinger so that the meeting could decide who should be NOLS candidate for President at next NUS conference. Phillips beat Pottinger by 14 votes: but 17 opposition votes had been unjustly disqualified.

This is the latest episode in a long and sorry tale of such stitch-ups. Although the "Democratic Left" claim to stand for 'pluralism' and 'democratic socialism', and claim to be opposed to 'sectarian manipulation', 'Leninism' and other sins they say are associated with organised socialist groups, in fact they function as a hard, disciplined political faction, sacrificing principles of democracy for the objective of 'keeping control'.

NOLS national conferences are notorious for the bureaucratic procedures that have kept the "Democratic Left" in control. Oppositionists have been 'carved out' year after year.

The way these people run NOLS is a scandal to the labour movement. The examples of their chicanery are legion.

Last year, one of the NOLS auditors was Dave Brennan, a supporter of Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN). He was not allowed to see anything more than a statement of income and expenditure. Denied the right to see correspondence from Clubs, receipts or membership cards, against which income could be measured, Dave refused to sign the accounts.

The "Democratic Left" 'majority' voted to refuse to allow David to speak about why he could not say the accounts were a true and accurate record.

Ruled out

In 1983 a whole range of Labour Clubs and delegates who supported opposition points of view were 'ruled out'. At Manchester University, all delegates who opposed the "Democratic Left" were disqualified and DL supporters, who had been elected as observers, were promoted into delegates.

Oppositionists were ruled out because — so it was claimed — they had not filled in their cards properly. When this claim was challenged, the cards were said to have been lost!

Conference overturned the Student Organiser's recommendation and it was the last occasion on which the conference was allowed to challenge the credentials report.

The same year, a DL member on the National Committee, Dave Mason, was proven to have forged a signature to get the SSiN supporter on the Birmingham University delegation disqualified.

Every year there are new examples of barefaced and shameless fiddling like this.

More than fiddling and opportunist cheating is involved though.

The scandal of NOLS



Kinnock

The basic structures of NOLS are not fully democratic, nor is NOLS open to all students. Part-time Further Education students — who are heavily working class, far more so than University and Polytechnic students — are not entitled to join NOLS!

The Student Council itself — scene of last weekend's display of bureaucratic fiddling — is anything but democratic. In fact it has only 'consultative status' — the National Committee can overrule it. And it is enormously weighted in favour of Student Union Officers. Anyone on a student union executive who has a NOLS card can vote there — swamping elected delegates from Labour Clubs.

By Sandra Cartledge and Jane Ashworth

But, even so, sometimes the incumbent bureaucrats face defeat, even playing such a rigged game. What do they do when the opposition looks like winning? They change the rules!

In 1984, a non-sabbatical member of Manchester Area NUS executive, Rachel Kennedy, was given voting credentials. Other non-sabbatical Area Executive members have voted since. This year, because the "Democratic Left's" narrow majority depended on it, all such NOLS members were ruled ineligible to vote.

More even than that. This year's Student Council was rigged in advance.

All Labour Clubs have to give four days' written notice to their members before discussing business. Yet notification of the Student Council was not sent out until December 5: college terms would either have finished before a meeting could be held, or before notification had been received. And the Council meeting took place before the new term began at many colleges.

Against previous custom and practice, delegates appointed by Labour Club Executives — in the absence of a properly convened club meeting — were not allowed to vote.

Also against custom and practice, NOLS National Committee members — all but two of whom, of course, supported the DL — were given a vote.

The rules are whatever the "Democratic Left" faction say they are — from year to year and from hour to hour. Their guiding principle is plainly the notorious Stalinist rule of conduct. "We do what is necessary, comrade!"

Opposition clubs' delegate entitlements to national conference have been gerrymandered as well. When North Staffs Poly asked for some more NOLS cards, the NOLS office cancelled the ones they had

already received. Other clubs have received far too few cards and were not sent the extra ones they have requested until very close to the deadline for returning them to NOLS. Yet without properly completed cards, returned to the NOLS office by the proper date, they will not be entitled to the full number of delegates at the conference.

Why do the "Democratic Left" resort to these undemocratic practices? Although they function as a hard faction under the political control of the Clause 4 organisation, there is very little that unites the DL politically. What does unite them is their support for Neil Kinnock (even if many of them are quietly critical), and their loathing for 'Trotskyists'. Some of them, like NOLS chairperson, Ben Lucas, are open witch-hunters.

As the DL have moved further and further to the right, NOLS has all but collapsed as a distinct political group. The DL majority on NUS Executive has blundered from one fiasco to the next.

Within NUS and within NOLS, SSiN has emerged as a coherent, fighting, socialist opposition, able to unite wide layers of students around a strategy based on mass action and linking up with the working class.

Whole parts of NUS policy — on cuts, and on general strategy — have come from SSiN, forcing the DL on NUS Executive to stall, and junk their own conference mandates.

The "Democratic Left" have no idea how to fight for student interests. As they decay, they are taking NOLS and NUS down with them. So more and more students are looking to SSiN as an alternative. And bureaucratic stitch-ups are the only way they can hold onto their control.

The bureaucratic inertia that afflicts NOLS, and thus NUS, will actually prove self-defeating even to the electoral objectives the DL have set. To win the youth vote for Labour, an ongoing campaigning approach is needed — oriented in particular to working class youth in Further Education colleges.

Yet the national demonstration that NUS has finally called will be on a Saturday — when many FE students have to work (and when coordinated action by college trade unions will not be possible).

Fix

Faced with a disgusting, undemocratic fix, SSiN supporters walked out of the Student Council, after the rigged meeting — that is, in real terms a minority of the meeting — voted to support DL candidate Vicky Phillips for NUS President, the post she currently holds.

The DL cannot continue in this style indefinitely. No amount of manipulation can cover up their political failures.

Joining NOLS is very difficult. Not only are working class youth from the Further Education colleges ineligible for membership, but NOLS groups which the "Democratic Left" does not control are refused recognition.

Yet NOLS is the student wing of the mass working class party: it is worthwhile for socialist students to fight their way in to settle accounts with the bureaucrats who are stifling NOLS. SSiN's message to student activists is: Join NOLS! Join the fight to transform NOLS into a democratic campaigning socialist student movement!

Socialist Students in NOLS can be contacted at 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15.

The left in Australia

Number 1 of the second series of the Australian labour monthly Socialist Fight has just appeared.

The first series of Socialist Fight ran from 1981 to October 1983 under the slogan "Build a fighting left in the unions and ALP" (Australian Labor Party). The editorial in the new issue explains:

"Since then Socialist Fight supporters have been involved in a number of attempts to reach agreement with other groups of socialists as a basis for a publication with wider support. We worked on 'Labor Militant' and then on 'Labor Action'...

"We have not given up on our view of the need for a publication with broader support. But we cannot just wait for the needed broader left wing to emerge. And we can best help it to emerge, and help to map out a clear direction for it, by publishing now.

"We are distinguished from many other currents on the left in Australia by two things. First, by our focus on the struggle for working-class socialism, rather than schemes for Australian 'economic independence', which we regard as a snare and a delusion. Second, by our focus on the fight

within the existing labour movement, the trade unions and the ALP, rather than on single-issue campaigns or the proclamation of minuscule 'alternative parties'..."

Further: "It has become clear...that views on international political struggles play a crucial role in the functioning of relatively small publications and groups...We need to learn from and support struggles against oppression and for democratic socialism in all countries..."

"In South Africa...we oppose the claims of the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front to a monopoly over the liberation struggle...Our focus is on direct links and solidarity between Australian workers and South African workers, not on government sanctions against South Africa.

"The struggle of Solidarnosc in Poland has confirmed the anti-working-class nature of the Stalinist states and of their official 'trade unions'...We will work actively for solidarity with Nicaragua against the brutal war waged by the Reagan government...We do not believe, however, that solidarity requires us to close our eyes to the limitations of the Sandinista leadership in Nicaragua..."

The lead story in Socialist Fight is on the recent nurses' strike in Victoria, Australia's biggest workers' struggle since Bob Hawke's Labor government came in. Other articles cover the struggle of the Builders' Labourers' Federation, a militant union outlawed by the Hawke government; the Peter Wright/MI5 court case; workers' links with the Philippines and with South Africa;

and more.

The four centre pages carry a comprehensive outline of perspectives for socialist activity in Australia. Australia's revolutionary left is currently in flux. The Socialist Workers' Party, formerly the biggest Trotskyist group in Australia and linked with Socialist Action in Britain, has taken its view of the world in terms of imperialist and anti-imperialist 'camps' to its logical conclusion and become openly Stalinist. The Socialist Labour League exploded at the same time as its British equivalent, the Workers' Revolutionary Party.

There are, therefore, a lot of activists who see themselves as Trotskyists but are re-thinking, seeking new answers and new definitions. Socialist Fight has recently sponsored a series of meetings on South Africa, on the development of Third World capitalism, on the history of the Trotskyist movement, and on Palestine and Ireland, at which these issues have been debated with some of these activists.

Socialist Fight supporters will continue this work of debate and clarification alongside their day-to-day activity in the unions and the ALP.

Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN



Edwina Currie gives kiss of death to Hackney resident

Class and diet

Class differences reach into the womb, according to research into the diets of pregnant women.

Researchers analysed the eating habits of a hundred women, a quarter attending the Royal Free Hospital in affluent Hampstead, the rest attending the Salvation Army Mothers' Hospital in Hackney, the most deprived London borough.

The women were asked to list everything they ate for a week. Then the researchers analysed the sixty different oils and margarines used by the mothers-to-be and sampled food from the forty-eight different takeaways eaten by them.

As might be expected, the women from poorer Hackney ate less protein, fat, vitamins and minerals than those from Hampstead. However, all ate more than the recommended minimum of 60 grams of protein per day.

Despite this, there was a clear link between food intake and underweight babies. Now, the average weight of Hackney babies was less than that of Hampstead ones. One in eight Hackney babies weighed less than 2.5 kg (5½ pounds) while more of the Hampstead babies did. Underweight babies are more likely to die soon after birth and to suffer handicaps.

Mothers of low-weight babies ate only 1300 calories per day in the first three months of pregnancy. This is nearly 1000 calories less than recommended by the Department of Health. Though their protein intakes were adequate, they were eating too little of another necessary food — Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs).

EFAs seem to be necessary to build a healthy placenta, the organ which supplies the growing foetus with food and oxygen. They are also vital for constructing blood vessels and nerves. Lack of EFAs may hamper the growth of the foetus and retard the development of its brain.

The Hackney women ate less fresh vegetables and fish but more takeaways than did the Hampstead women. The Edwina Currie theory might be that ignorance is to blame for the poverty of the diet. Other

studies have shown thought that healthy diets cost more and, particularly scandalous, that it is impossible for a pregnant woman to get adequate nourishment when living on state benefits...and about half of the Hackney women were unemployed.

THIN BLOOD

The blood of vegetarians is thinner than that of omnivores (people who eat plants and animals), according to a survey in Germany. This might sound bad but let's see what it actually means.

The survey measured the viscosity or thickness of the blood and found it to be lower in vegetarians. Semi-vegetarians were intermediate in blood thickness. The difference in viscosity was due partly to a fall in the number of red blood cells (that carry oxygen round the body) and partly to a drop in the thickness of the plasma (the yellowish salty fluid that makes up most of the blood).

Now, the thickness of the blood is a factor in determining how much work the heart has to do. The thicker it is, the harder the heart has to work in pumping the blood round. The higher, also, is the pressure developed by the heart.

High blood pressure is a major "problem in Western societies, being largely caused by smoking and by fatty meat diets. The findings about the viscosity of the blood could partly explain how such diets harm the health.

But what about the fall in red cells in vegetarians? Isn't that bad, as well? Not necessarily! It may be that omnivores need more red cells to get enough oxygen around, since their blood is too thick to flow at the normal rate. Vegetarians may actually have the normal amount of red cells.

Yet more evidence for the good sense of following a vegetarian diet (as indeed does a certain smug science columnist!).

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Why not form a Campaign Group?

A number of Labour Party members up and down the country have formed themselves into local Campaign groups.

These groups are organised on non-sectarian lines. The aim is to provide a unified left campaigning force in the constituencies.

If you have already done this and have not yet informed the Campaign Group, or if you wish to do so, please contact the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, c/o Alan Meale, secretary, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

From Resistance to Rebellion — an exhibition on Asian and Afro-Caribbean struggles in Britain since the Second World War.

19-30 January, LINES Resources Centre, Lydford Road, Reading. Ring 0753 23699 for details.

3-28 February, Dame Colet House, Ben Johnson Road, Stepney, London E1. Tel: 01-790 9077.

2-13 March, Multicultural Education Centre, Leeds 7. Tel: 0532 623448.

13-17 April, Wolverhampton CCR, Clarence Road, Wolverhampton. Tel: 0902 773589.

1-28 May, Highfields Community Centre, Leicester. Tel: 0533 531053.

1-12 June, Waltham Forest Teachers Centre, London E17. Tel: 01-521 3311.

For hire details contact Busi Chaane at the Institute of Race Relations, 2-6 Leeke Street, London WC1X 9HS. Tel: 01-837 0041.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS

LIVERPOOL. Wednesday 28 January. Debate with Militant on Ireland. 7.00 pm, Liverpool University.

SO SUPPORTERS IN THE TGWU. National meeting, Sunday 18 January, 12 noon. Merseyside

Unemployed Centre, Hardman St., Liverpool. For further details contact Jim Denham, 021-471 1964.

SUPPORT THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL STRIKERS.

Monday 19 January. Room 8, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, 7.30 pm. Speakers include Dennis Skinner MP; Richard Balfe MEP; 3 News International strikers.

Wednesday 21 January. Oxford House, Derbyshire Street (off Bethnal Green Road), 7.30pm. Speakers: Tony Benn MP; Betty Heathfield, WAPC; Carol Hall; strikers from Silentnight

and Hangers. Chair: Liz Short.

Saturday 24 January. Demonstration. Assemble 5.00 p.m. Tower Hill tube.

SUPPORT THE WHEELERS STRIKERS!

Sunday 18 January. Chinese New Year Benefit Gala for Wheelers strike in Brighton, 3-5 p.m. Performances include Ray Man Chinese Orchestra, martial arts and labour movement speakers. For details ring 01-836 8291.

Monday 2 February at 7.30 at Seven Dials Community Centre, Earlham Street, London WC2. London Public Meeting in support of the Wheelers strikers.

Rush donations to: Chinese Workers Support Fund, 152-6 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Makes cheques payable to 'Chinese Workers Support Fund'.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership

of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and management's privileges.

Socialist can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers

in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand: For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of

housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small financial contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Britain's death squad exposed!

Ulster cops did shoot to kill

The Tories new business

A Question of Sport

By Tracy Williams

IT'S GREAT having a video. You can re-play the replay highlights of the American footy, or tape operas — watch them 10 times and then pretend to your friends in Islington that you understood it all first go. Don't think I've gone all affluent: Granada TV rentals had a special Christmas offer of £1 for the first month — well I couldn't resist.

So, last week I watched a documentary called "Home and Away", about two British women who left their family and friends to play professional football in Italy. It's a pity that the women had to go abroad to be appreciated — let's hope it takes off here.

Angle

Still on the sporting angle, I watched a new quiz show called Sporting Triangles. Nick Owen comperes this new electronic boardgame, with regular team captains Tessa Sanderson, Jimmy Greaves and Dennis Taylor.

It is not half as good as "a Question of Sport" and anyway I hate quiz shows — the comperes are usually offensive, and they always have tacky sets that look like they are about to fall down. And I never get the answers right!

The highlights of the week for me came rather unexpectedly from the adverts — now, all us serious minded socialists realise that the adverts offend and exploit etc. etc. For example the government spent a fortune advertising the Gas shares (£80 million) and now we've got BA. Yet so far they've spent very little on advertising AIDS advice or information (£2 million), but some of them deserve an award for comedy.



on the



Have you seen the 'Shake and Vac' advert? It is quite old, the one with the singing housewife. Next time the cat decides the litter tray is somewhere in the middle of your bedroom carpet, or poor old granny doesn't make it to the toilet and trickles on the way up the stairs just think how joyful you can be putting

the "freshness back" into your carpet. A more recent one currently showing in the mornings, advertises pens if you're on a picket line or in the queue at Tesco's, or hubby's on nights? Run to the nearest phone and shout "quick, get home the egg's coming".

Lastly, my favourite, the one advertising 'Gold Blend' coffee — now, I'm a coffee drinker myself but I wouldn't be seen dead with a coffee bean around my neck — and what happens if you're a tea lover...

"Hey, Trace that's a lovely necklace you're wearing — but what is it?"

"Well actually it's a gold teabag!"

A use for the Telegraph

Been a bit nippy lately, hasn't it? But if you want something to warm the cockles of your heart this Monday, there was a caring, compassionate Daily Telegraph with a few home truths about the plight of our senior citizens in the winter months:

"As was seen last winter, hypothermia kills the elderly; however small the numbers involved, they are all unnecessary deaths. It is the state that is, at present imposed upon to provide a solution to the awful problem of old people freezing to death. So it should be. We pride ourselves upon being a compassionate society and there can be few more uncompassionate acts than allowing the relatively helpless to perish in this fashion."

Now, the pedantic might want to take issue with the Telegraph over just how "small" the numbers of hypothermia victims were last winter; official figures put it at around 600 people aged 65 or over. Age Concern reckon the true figure for last year was 44,000 pensioners dying from illness related to the cold.

But the point is that the Telegraph cares and it believes that the state is "imposed upon" to "provide a solution" to this "awful problem".

The semi-official mouthpiece of Home Counties Toryism even goes so far as to administer a gentle rap to the knuckles of the Thatcher administration:

"If the government thinks it has discharged its responsibilities in this area adequately by offering a £5 supplement per week to the elderly when the duration of cold weather

PRESS GANG

conforms with absurdly bureaucratic guidelines, it is deceiving itself."

What does Mr Norman Tebbit (who it is said recently dismissed calls for a more "caring" government image with the words "No one with a conscience votes Conservative anyway") have to say about this?

By Jim Denham

Will the Telegraph's column inches be measured for clear anti-government bias? Is Max Hastings to be denounced as a closet pinko? This seems unlikely. The Telegraph's other leading article is an enthusiastic plug for privatisation. It has evidently not occurred to the Telegraph that the fundamental reason for old people freezing to death in the winter is that fuel is simply too expensive. Gas and electricity charges are determined by the government's wish to raise revenue, not by the ability of people to pay. And privatisation has made the situation very much worse.

An even more extraordinary result of the cold snap manifested itself in Tuesday's Daily Mail — an editorial in praise of British Rail and British Rail staff: "BR is underfunded (compared to the subsidies

pumped into other railways abroad); understaffed in the South (where vacancies remain unfilled because of housing costs); and unloved.

"Just this once, maybe, we should leave our grumbles in the deep freeze and thaw out some gratitude for the effort most railwaymen are making in these most appalling conditions..."

This is remarkable stuff from the publication that generally most loyally reflects Mrs Thatcher's well-known dislike of the railways and is a favourite weapon (when rolled up) in the hands of enraged commuters pursuing BR staff down platforms.

What has brought all this on? Could it be because the South East has been hardest hit by the cruel Siberian winds? Is it just a little chilly, even in the editorial offices of the Telegraph and Mail? And why do they not ask where the money is to come from to pay for more generous heating allowances for the elderly or to provide BR with more adequate subsidies?

It is indeed remarkable what sub-zero temperatures can do to the political outlook of the Tory press. Suddenly profit isn't everything. There's a role for the state and even for subsidies to BR.

Meanwhile Age Concern has issued some advice to pensioners which could prove particularly useful in the event of the week's temperature not averaging 1.5°C, and the £5 'Exceptionally Cold Weather Payment' not being made — stay in bed and wrap yourself up in old newspapers.

Now there's a really good use for copies of the Telegraph and the Mail.

DEBATE

The truth about EIS

To the Editor, Socialist Worker.

Dear Editor,

In his article in SW on 6 December 1986 on the Scottish teachers' pay campaign, Jimmy Ross refers to myself as one who misleads the EIS membership by fostering the illusion that the EIS leadership is "solidly against... a trade off on conditions and pay".

I would be obliged if he would indicate the grounds for this statement.

He must be well aware that Willie Hart and myself, both supporters of Campaign for a Fighting Union (CFFU), moved the motion at the outset of the campaign, at the June 1984 AGM, on no trade off on pay and conditions, against the opposition of the majority on the Executive; that I and other CFFU supporters have tried consistently to change the basis of the campaign to a straight pay claim and an entirely separate campaign and negotiations on conditions and resources and that we moved resolutions to that end at the EIS Council meetings in April 1985, and February 1986, and again at the Special General Meeting in November 1986.

He must also be well aware that I am centrally involved, alongside four CFFU supporters on the National Executive (plus two other activists) who have rejected the latest Main/Rifkind Rehass Deal, in arguing for a no vote on the ballot currently being conducted.

As a supporter of CFFU I have campaigned throughout against any trade off and have warned members consistently as to the trajectory of the majority on the National Executive.

Your correspondent is well aware (or should be) of all this and yet he asserts the contrary.

He then goes further and compounds his lie by stating that I "lay the blame for any shoddy future deal at the door of the English teachers". Again Ross must be well aware (or he should be) of the many efforts by myself and other CFFU supporters to strengthen solidarity between Scottish, English and Welsh teachers through exchanges of literature and

Ian McCalman takes issue with the SWP's coverage of the teachers' dispute in Scotland. A copy has been sent to Socialist Worker

frequent journeys to speak at rallies and conferences.

Only last month CFFU ensured the distribution amongst Scottish teachers of ILTA broadsheets calling for the rejection of the Nottingham deal, and I spoke at a large fringe meeting organised by LAPAC on the eve of the Special Conference at Blackpool.

A number of SW supporters in the NUT expressed their appreciation of these efforts to enhance solidarity. They will no doubt be fascinated to hear from Ross that I was secretly trying to undermine the teachers' campaign by playing off NUT and EIS members against each other.

SW has clearly decided that we have reached a point in the teachers' campaign when truth is not simply a casualty but is in fact the main enemy, for Ross goes on to refer to "the disgraceful climbdown by the left-led Strathclyde EIS over the action on composite classes".

Again he must be well aware (or should be) that the Strathclyde Regional Executive voted to condemn this deal, which we were never asked to approve, and went on to reiterate our demand for a maximum of 25 in primary composite classes.

In this list of falsehoods, Ross also manages to refer to me as a member of the EIS National Executive, a position which he is well aware (or should be) that I have never held. Obviously he is operating on the principle of shooting on sight at anything truthful.

It would be idle to speculate as to why Ross, a long-time SW supporter, should resort to such a tawdry parade of lies. It may be seen as an attempt in some way to reverse the marginal and declining influence of SW among Scottish teachers. Obviously it will be rejected with the contempt it deserves and assuredly produce a result the opposite of that intended.

Yours fraternally,
IAN MCCALMAN

The original article

Jimmy Ross's article

Despite the overwhelming rejection by Scottish teachers of the latest government offer, the Rifkind Deal, and this Thursday's strike by union members, there is still unease about the outcome of the dispute.

The EIS executive has successfully resisted being tied down by the special conference to a specific claim or programme of industrial action.

A massive escalation of the action is needed. Instead we are getting more of the same selective action as last year.

Many teachers feel that the proposed selective action is an attempt to get a few more crumbs from the government.

It is now surprising to hear that some on the left inside the union are painting the following picture: That the EIS executive is solidly against the Rifkind Deal, the Main Package and any trade off on conditions for wages.

This fantasy has led some on the left (like EIS executive member Ian McCalman) to argue that the threat to Scottish teachers comes not from their own trade union bureaucracy,

but from the English teachers.

This is dangerous nonsense. It is just not true that the EIS leadership is solidly against Main or a trade off on conditions and pay. General Secretary John Pollock was at pains to stress that teachers will be "realistic" in negotiations.

Anyone who, for whatever motives, tries to lay the blame for any shoddy future deal at the door of English teachers rather than where it belongs — at the door of our own leadership — is merely giving left cover in advance to a sell out by our own leadership.

The left are more powerful now in the EIS bureaucracy than ever before, but the danger is that they are being co-opted as apologists for the official strategy and an official sell out!

Just last week Pollock praised the disgraceful climbdown by left-led Strathclyde EIS over the action on oversize classes. It shows, he said, how progress could be made in negotiations! That is exactly what we are worried about.

'Anti-semitism is confined to the fringe.'

When, some 18 months ago, Socialist Organiser began debating its position on Zionism/Palestine, we forecast that SO would move into the Zionist camp.

Moshe Machover of Matzpen, the Socialist Organisation in Israel, was invited to participate in that debate, because he too disagreed with the democratic, secular state position. Were he to read John O'Mahony's article (4 December) he would, I am sure, disagree with it in its entirety. Moshe is one of those who struggled to win a previously Zionist left over to an anti-Zionist position. O'Mahony seeks to do the opposite.

By his own admission he is a Zionist supporter and despite all that has been written on the Zionist movement, its colonial roots, its reactionary role in Jewish politics, he has learnt nothing and forgotten all. He has even confused the terms 'Jewish' and 'Zionist' and then accused the rest of the Left of anti-semitism for the same sin!

Escape

Zionism *never* was a method of fighting anti-semitism. It held anti-semitism couldn't be fought, far better to come to terms with it and establish their own state. For most Jews it wasn't even a means of escape. Some 2.5 million Jews who did flee went not to Palestine but to Britain and America.

Describing those who believed that the Bolshevik Revolution made Zionism irrelevant, Chaim Weizmann, the first President of Israel, wrote "Nothing can be more superficial and nothing can be more wrong than that. The sufferings of Russian Jewry never were the cause of Zionism."

Similar statements were made by Ben Gurion during the Nazi era and the leader of American Zionism, Abba Hillel Silver. Israel was not "conceived as a refuge for all the victims of anti-Semitism" (otherwise it could hardly have seen in anti-semitism a force for good that stimulated emigration) but the only means of preserving the Jewish people as a collectivity. It was the response of the Jewish petit-bourgeoisie.

It is beyond doubt that the Zionist

movement obstructed the movement to save Jews from the Holocaust, terming it 'refugeism', e.g. it opposed the lowering of the immigration movements in Britain and the US arguing that the refugees should go to Palestine. Nor is it true that all methods of fighting anti-semitism in Europe failed.

Not only, by Begin's own admission, did some two million Jews survive by escaping into Russia, degenerated as the revolution was, but opposition to anti-semitism in countries such as Denmark (where the entire Jewish community was smuggled out to Sweden), Bulgaria and Italy *did* prevent many more Jews being killed. In Holland there was even a general strike against the deportations which the Zionist Judenrat opposed. Whose reading of history is false?

Even today, far from being the 'life-raft state', Israel jeopardises the position of Jews in the diaspora with its genocide of the Palestinians. What was Israel doing when over 2,000 young leftist Jews were being tortured to death in Argentina? Selling arms to the Junta. And the Zionist leaders of that community? Telling others not to make a fuss. Compare that to the Zionist campaign over Soviet Jewry.

Nothing in Trotsky's writings leads one to the conclusion that he supported the Zionist enterprise in Palestine. In July 1940 just before his death he wrote "The attempt to solve the Jewish question through the migration of Jews to Palestine can now be seen for what it is, a tragic mockery of the Jewish people... Never was it so clear as it is today that the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system."

Personal

O'Mahony's obsession with anti-semitism blinds him to the fact that anti-semitism today in Europe is not, unlike 50 years ago, state sponsored. It is a personal form of racism, confined to fringe fascist groups. It is black people in Britain, Arab people in France, Turkish workers in Germany who experience state racism. Jewish people have socially moved upwards and politically moved rightwards.

Missing the point

Adam Woolf's rather abusive sally into the debate on Zionism misses the point.

For example, Adam disputes that the "Jews have been the chief single victim of imperialism in the 20th century", pointing to what has happened in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

But it is anything but "liberalism" to think that World War Two was an imperialist war, and that six million Jews died at the hands of rapacious German imperialism and not hindered in this genocidal activity by the 'democratic' allies. What happened to Jews wasn't just 'racism' — it was an imperialist racism.

There is nothing racist about thinking that the programme of the PLO is Arab chauvinist. And John O'Mahony obviously does not "legitimate the racist oppression of the Palestinians".

Adam doesn't seem to have thought

about the issues. 'Smashing the Zionist state' is a very militant and revolutionary sounding slogan. But if Adam wants to play-act as a Marxist he should be clear about what social force is to implement it. Either he thinks that a united working class will do it, and he equates a secular democratic state with 'socialism' — in which case he simply begs the question, and effectively demands that the Palestinians must wait until this united, socialist movement has been built. Or he thinks that this united state, the 'smashing' of Israel, will be imposed by military force. That would be conquest — there is no other word for it.

At least have the decency to find out what we are arguing about before denouncing us as 'racist'.

CLIVE BRADLEY



A London cemetery, 1986

That is why we say that anti-semitism has been redefined and the term 'black anti-semitism' like 'left anti-semitism' is used as a means of countering opposition to Zionism.

Racism is not merely a question of personal prejudice, but at the level of class, a specifically oppressed section of the working class. Apart from France, there is no Jewish working class in the West, unlike the 1930s.

The Jewish people have changed and with it anti-semitism.

As Abram Leon noted, "Zionism transposes anti-semitism to all of history, it saves itself the trouble of studying the various forms of anti-semitism and their evolution." (Jewish Question, p. 247). If Jews today, unlike the Jews of the East End who fought the fascists, base their identity around Israel, then that is a reactionary identity.

Colonial

Zionism as a colonial movement is not something of the past. Internal colonisation has been a continuing feature of Israel's existence. Today's operations on the West Bank are no different to what it did in the Galilee.

O'Mahony asks what is wrong with Israel being a state for all Jews as opposed to all its citizens. The answer is racism, not merely in this or that

policy but in every single facet of the State's operations.

It means Israel's Arabs are at best tolerated and at worst unwanted. It means the growth of Kach and Tehiya, it means apartheid and expulsion. It means concern over the 'demographic problem', i.e. too many Arabs.

Assimilation

The article demolishes other straw targets. Socialists did not advocate assimilation as a strategy, neither do we mourn it. Only incorrigible reactionaries would consciously seek to preserve differences of caste or religion where individuals choose otherwise.

Nobody on the Left believes Jews have a 'demonic place' in history. Those of us who are Jewish and whose opposition to Zionism came as a consequence of our revolutionary socialism understand not only Zionism's relationship to anti-semitism but also its reactionary role within Jewish politics.

Even the Jewish Socialists Group understand that Israel feeds off the diaspora Jewish communities contributing nothing to their well being.

Instead of an analysis which sees Israel as an artificial state, which cannot exist other than in alliance with

imperialism, O'Mahony resorts to moral relativism. Jews are "the chief single victim of imperialism in the 20th century". "Incomparably less terrible things" were done to the Jews than to the Palestinians.* This ranking of hierarchies is ironically attacked on the facing page by Ms Carlisle and Ashworth.

Even were these statements true they would be irrelevant. Since when has support for a democratic, secular state been part of reactionary Arab chauvinism? It is a demand that is rejected by all the Islamic chauvinists. Unfortunately, Socialist Organiser, in refusing to give any meaningful support to the Palestinians — either in the labour movement or in NUS (where it is to the right of most reformists and on a par with Militant) has accommodated to imperialism.

As for helping the left "scour itself clean" of anti-semitism, this in itself speaks volumes about O'Mahony's analysis of racism — it's not located in society but in individuals. However not wishing to stand in his way, I suggest an open debate between ourselves and John O'Mahony in which he will have the opportunity to begin scouring.

Yours fraternally,
TONY GREENSTEIN,
Labour Movement Campaign
for Palestine.

*This sentence appears here as written in the original manuscript.

UNDERGROUND

Knifed by Knapp

Armed with an 82% ballot majority for industrial action on the London underground, and having called a one-day strike for Wednesday and threatened a subsequent overtime ban, it took the NUR leadership just five days to grasp at straws being offered by the London Region Transport bosses. By a 12-1 majority, they voted late on Monday night to call off Wednesday's strike and lift the threat of an overtime ban.

Management has written to the NUR confirming that it is prepared to negotiate on a wide range of attacks it is currently planning against the workforce. It will now apparently talk to the NUR about introducing competitive tendering for the canteens, rather than imposing it. Canteen workers have been threatened with a 30% wage cut to allow them to 'compete' for their own jobs!

NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp claimed the LRT letter a "significant victory". But a more accurate assessment came from LRT boss, Tony Ridley, who pointed out

that nothing had been conceded. Existing competitive tendering and privatisation, for example in the cleaning side, is to remain.

Future plans for similar and other attacks, for example replacing station workers with automatic barriers in outlying stations, are still there. Now, say LRT management, they will be talked about, which they claim was happening already.

Always seeing the threat of industrial action as a "negotiating ploy", the NUR leadership must have been nervous about any strike action getting out of their control after the strength of the 'yes' vote. Their strategy is clearly to string out negotiations and pray for a Labour government to come to their rescue. It could not be more short-sighted or suicidal.

Many of the job cuts and attacks on conditions will be implemented by the next election. The Labour leadership is not committed to reverse the inroads already made by LRT bosses. And even if they were, the one force that could make them has now been sold down the river at the time they were ready to fight, leaving workers inevitably demoralised and the bosses confident.



HANGERS

Bosses plot

Bosses at Hangers — the artificial limb manufacturing company in Roehampton — tried to manipulate one of the workers locked out for 16 weeks into a blacklisting plot.

Peter Kendall was approached before the New Year to compile a list of workers still in dispute. Not realising what he was being enlisted to do, he complied.

To a shocked meeting of locked-out workers, Kendall told his story. The Morning Star (January 10) reported that breaking down, Kendall told his comrades: "I felt I had betrayed everyone". But the workers, who gave him a standing ovation, told him, "You are all right, son. You haven't let us down".

As TASS official Barry Todman said, this management ploy proved "what we've known all along — this company will sink to any level."

The lock-out began after workers walked out in solidarity with four union officials who had been sacked for leafleting their members about an overtime ban in support of a wage claim.

JOSEPH FRAY

Locked out

Workers at a small engineering factory in Smethwick, Joseph Fray Ltd., have been locked out since 19 November 1986.

This was because as part of their campaign for a pay rise, the workforce voted to work to rule. This dispute is the result of built-up anger against management's attitude to pay and conditions over many years.

The average wage is between £80 and £85 a week before deductions, which is below the national minimum for the job. They make metal fittings for luxury cars such as Jaguar. At the moment Jaguar is using fittings that had previously been rejected as sub-standard!

In the past the workforce have missed out on pay rises. This year they were determined to get a decent rise. So in June they put in a claim for 15% for the annual rise in September.

Management flatly refused and offered an initial 3.2% which works out to an extra 6p an hour.

The workers totally rejected this, saying it was an insult. After many variations of the same offer, management came up with 12p over 15 months in two stages.

This too was rejected by the workforce. The workers stayed solid throughout Christmas and into the New Year, despite considerable hardship.

Management were expecting the workers to return after the Christmas and New Year break. When this did not happen, all 120 workers were sacked on 5 January, and the jobs are now being advertised.

The workers are maintaining their picket at the factory to stop scab labour being recruited. They welcome support on the picket line, which is at Middlemore Lane, Smethwick. The TGWU has made the dispute official.

Send messages of support and donations to the J. Fray Strike Fund, c/o 324 High Street, West Bromwich, West Midlands.

The fight against Murdoch continues support the Printworkers' national march and rally to Wapping on the Anniversary of the News International strike.
SATURDAY JANUARY 24 ASSEMBLE: 4pm ARUNDEL ST (off embankment) MARCH via FLEET ST TO RALLY AT WAPPING.

TEACHERS

A desperate bureaucratic act

All members of the Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA) Council, the Inner London Division of the National Union of Teachers, have been suspended from union membership.

This unprecedented action has been taken by the National Officers of the NUT. Charges will be heard by the NUT national disciplinary panel within the next 21 days. In the meantime, the National Officers are stonewalling all protests on the grounds of "sub judice".

The suspensions remove at a stroke virtually all of the Inner London leadership of the NUT, including most officers of its ten branches in

By a suspended member of ILTA Council.

the ILEA. The reason? An ILTA Council motion last December calling for a one-day strike of London teachers against the Baker Bill!

Tory Education Secretary Baker is rushing a Bill through which wipes away all previous legislation and negotiating machinery concerning pay and working conditions for teachers in England and Wales. The NUT's parliamentary briefing docu-

ment explains that the Bill will:

- Remove the right of teachers to negotiate their pay and conditions of service.
- Establish an advisory body to advise the Secretary of State on pay and conditions of service.
- Pick the people he wants for his advisory body.
- Instruct this body what matters they should look into, and how much money is available.
- Ignore this body's recommendations and impose his own settlement.
- Make differential payments to teachers in different parts of the country, or even teachers in the same

school teaching different subjects!

These tyrannical powers were compared in a London meeting to Franco stopping Spanish postmen going on strike by making them all members of the armed forces.

ILTA is the biggest and most militant Division of the NUT, representing some 13,000 members. It has been at the forefront of action during the past two years of the teachers' dispute. It applied to the national union well in advance for permission to take one day strike action, on an issue where there is a clear national policy of opposition.

Yet the national officers suspended ILTA without even giving it the ultimatum to withdraw the strike call. In fact the letter informing the ILTA secretary that permission to strike was refused arrived only last Thursday — three days after the suspension of ILTA Council was announced!

This is a desperate act by a handful of bureaucratic cowards, who have no stomach for a fight with the Tories, even at their most vulnerable time leading up to a general election. They are most worried about losing control of the union to the Left.

The fighting alternative posed by Socialist Teachers Alliance policies have won through at ILTA and many sections of the union nationally. The recent ballot on the ACAS Nottingham deal (see last week's Socialist Organiser) shook them rigid.

It is increasingly clear that the NUT's present leaders are far down the road of "New Realism", promising to deliver to Labour local authorities and to the Tories a well-policed teaching force, if only a few crumbs will fall off the table. ILTA, where an estimated 80% of members voted against the ACAS deal, is a massive roadblock for them.

All trade unionists should support the fight against the Baker Bill, and send messages of protest to NUS General Secretary Fred Jarvis, who is this year's chair of the TUC!

CPSA

A defeat for the left

THE largest civil service union, the CPSA, has elected right-winger John Ellis as its General Secretary.

In the original election, held in July, Ellis was narrowly defeated by the Broad Left candidate, John Macreadie. But following a supposedly high number of complaints and a report by the Electoral Reform Society, CPSA's right-wing executive decided to hold the ballot again — making certain changes in the procedure which favoured their own candidate (eg 'desk top' balloting was more or less legitimised).

Macreadie's vote increased from 20,424 in July to 31,791 in the second election: But Ellis' vote increased more, as the right-wing and their allies in the media launched into their customary 'Red scare' tactics.

Geoff Lewtas, the candidate of the Stalinists and Kinnockites ('BL 84') gleaned only 13,100 votes — but this would have been enough to make the difference if the left had put up a

By Mike Grayson

single candidate. This is shown by the result of the General Treasurer election, where the Broad Left candidate withdrew (having lost the July election), and all on the left swung behind the BL'84 candidate, Chris Kirk. She defeated right-winger John Raywood by 49,132 to 43,765.

There is no doubt that some of the BL'84 leadership are happy with the election result — they have kept out the 'Trot' candidate. But Ellis's election is a setback for CPSA, and under the union's rules it is one we must live with for 5 years before the next election.

SO supporters, and others in the 'Socialist Caucus' group, have always held the position that all union posts should be elected annually. Unfortunately, the majority of the Broad Left — especially Militant supporters

in the aftermath of the right-wing victory, we must renew our arguments for democratisation of the union. The annual conference in May will give us an opportunity to put some of these arguments across.

And before that, we will see the annual elections for the President and National Executive Committee (and probably also for Deputy General Secretary — the post now vacated by John Ellis).

Moreover, in February there will be a national ballot on whether CPSA should establish a political fund — with the 'campaign' in favour of this being run with with all the energy of a lame tortoise. CPSA activists certainly have their hands full in the coming period, but the chance is there to begin to reverse our recent setbacks.

•SOCIALIST CAUCUS national meeting in London, Saturday 31st January. For details contact the Caucus c/o 112 Terrace Rd, London E13.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Setback in France

The strike wave in France looks to be ending, as drivers at some of the more militant depots vote to return to work.

As we go to press, electricians are back at work, and the unaffiliated Train Drivers Union, which represents 56% of Metro (underground) drivers, has agreed to suspend its strike. The Communist Party's CGT, and the pro-Socialist

Party CFDT have not agreed to management proposals.

The estimated cost of management concessions over wages since the strikes began is between two and three billion francs (over £200 million).

Reactionary anti-strike demonstrations were called by the government parties, the RPR and UDF. About 2,000 demonstrators chanted "strikers go back to work", "give us

back our trade" and slogans denouncing President Mitterrand. The fascist National Front attracted a smaller crowd.

Behind the public sector management stands the government — and their willingness to make some concessions indicates their anxiety about this wave of working class action. The strike may be over, but it may prove to be only the first round in a renewed class conflict in France.

Teachers strike back

By Liam Conway, NUT.

The Inner London Teachers Association has called a strike for 13 January, the day Parliament reconvenes. This is the way forward!

True to form, the NUT leadership immediately condemned the strike as "unhelpful" and "counter-productive" for their attempt to persuade the government to accept the findings of the Nottingham agreement.

The government knows that the union leaders are running scared, so the Tories have gone on the offensive. The attack is taking place on two related fronts.

Firstly, there is the long-running dispute over pay and conditions. The Tories are determined not only to impose their own settlement but to make it impossible for teachers to take any action again in the future.

The Tories have already revealed the nature of their second front — propaganda against the teaching profession.

Rarely has so much deceit and distortion been allowed to go unchallenged as that which the Tories are peddling about education.

Comprehensive education is by no means perfect and socialists should continue to fight for progressive change which allows people to learn questioningly for themselves. But the Tory attacks on comprehensive education are not rooted in their concern about its failure but in their fear of its success.

Tory aims to reintroduce selective



ILTA lobby Baker's predecessor Joseph outside County hall last year

education in the guise of city technical colleges, to return to the three 'R's, to remove 'controversial' subjects for mixed ability classes, and to shackle the teachers' unions are all designed to make teachers and students into obedient cabbages who know their place in society.

If the Tories achieve this then few will be educationally proficient enough to challenge them when they privatise the whole system.

The tragedy of all this is that the union leaders are either blind or

believe it can be stopped without a fight.

The Tory lies must be challenged. Even in the educationally reactionary area of exam results, comprehensives have done better than the selective system.

Tory figures are worked out on the percentage of people gaining five or more 'O' levels. This percentage is grossly misleading when you consider that the total number of people taking any exam has increased continuously and significantly over recent years.

The fact is that the total number of pupils gaining exam passes of all kinds is increasing all the time.

If mixed ability teaching had such an adverse effect on so-called "high flyers", why are more students than ever applying for university and college places despite Tory attempts to make it increasingly difficult to get there.

That is why it is so important that teachers in London support the call of ILTA to strike on January 13.

The ballot seems to indicate that teachers are too demoralised at present to respond to such a call. However in London, teachers have continued all forms of action other than strike action. The ILTA leadership has continued to inform members about the crass nature of the Nottingham deal.

Little can be lost at such a desperately late stage and if the response is good, London could give a lead to teachers all over the country.

Anger and frustration

We've just been getting back after Christmas. It's all very quiet. I think a lot of things will start to move when the victimisation tribunals report later on this month.

The rank and file are waiting for the result which will decide whether a campaign is to be waged on reinstatement.

Right now, the rank and file seem angry and frustrated. The leadership of the Labour Party won't make the issue of the sacked miners very important in the lead up to the general election — they'll take the "middle ground" and forget about us.

MacGregor, Coal Board chair during the strike, was on ITV last week. He said he had some good friends who were trade union leaders! And he denied that he was out to smash trade unions!

But when his wife was asked about her husband's role in the miners' strike she replied flatly that he was out to squash the trade union!

Overall he seemed to be saying that if he could he would have put us all up against a brick wall and shot us. Of course, backed by Thatcher's

thugs in blue, he did everything but that.

If McGregor's sort of thinking is allowed to be channelled into this country and industry and other sectors it will be very dangerous. I know we have already got top policemen and military top brass thinking along these lines and now the industry



Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

barons are catching up with them. McGregor discussed the suggestion that he take over the NHS! Someone, somewhere, must be joking!

But in a way it might have been a good thing because it would have provoked such a big outcry. That's why the Tories backed off, for now. But what if they win the next election?

What he said about the Battle of Orgreave, where we fought a long battle with the police, was quite

typical of his type of thinking. He wanted heavier police action and he would have been prepared to see troops used against workers.

The trial of the three NUM leaders is coming up in March and April and it looks like they are after their scalps.

Peter Heathfield, Arthur Scargill and Mick McGahey will be answering charges about the way the union's funds were used during the strike. Something like 50 days have been put aside for it, which I think is unprecedented.

I hope that a major campaign will be created to show the broad trade union movement what is going on.

I remember us saying during the miners' strike that unless the mineworkers win they will be coming for you next. They have come for the sacked printers, the Silentnight workers and now the artificial limb makers at Hangars — and they will be coming for the whole trade union movement if we don't stop them. If the courts get their way against the miners' leaders, other trade union leaders' heads are going to roll.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

NO FREE UNIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

By Eric Heffer

I'M NEVER opposed to visiting the Soviet Union.

I remember talking to Rudolf Bahro after he came out of the East German prison; and he argued that as long as the visit was honest and forthright there was nothing wrong with visiting.

Below the top level there are a lot of people unhappy with the situation in the Stalinist states. So I don't think there is much wrong with the TUC visit, providing they are willing to talk honestly and freely about the need for democracy and about the political prisoners.

Of course the official "trade unions" in the Stalinist states are not free trade unions.

For example workers are in prison there, for setting up a mineworkers union. After all, during the miners' strike Arthur Scargill and company had to learn that the Polish Stalinist regime was quite happy to sell coal to Thatcher and to undermine the striking miners. In the end Scargill felt he had to apologise to Solidarnosc leader Lech Walesa for his hostility to Solidarnosc, the independent workers' movement in Poland.

What happens is that many people in our movement are so prejudiced because of the Catholic Church's involvement with Solidarnosc in Poland that they can't see the wood for the trees.

But the fact is that although there were probably certain people in the Hungarian uprising of 1956 who did try and use it for their own reactionary gains, nevertheless it was a genuine workers' movement which should be supported by the British workers' movement.

It is interesting to note that throughout every workers' upsurge in the Stalinist states, there is always the call for workers' councils, for workers' control and for democratic bodies.

Nothing to fear?

By Ian Holingsworth

If you fancy buying a slightly shop soiled Polaris missile there's one just fallen off the back of a lorry near Salisbury in Wiltshire.

Apparently a military convoy was on its way to Reading and had planned to stop over at the Royal Ordnance Depot at West Dean. One of the lorries skidded on the icy road and tipped over into the ditch. The Ministry of Defence refused to release any details of the convoy's load but assured the public that there was "nothing to fear".

In spite of this, police and army closed the road for a mile either side of the accident. An RAF fire tender and decontamination unit went into

action and helicopters buzzed overhead.

Local anti-nuclear campaigners who rushed to the scene were threatened with being shot if they ventured too close.

One campaigner had his tyres let down by troops (a favourite army trick, according to Cruisewatch members). Others rallied round and donated spare wheels to get him mobile again.

Since the publication of Labour's defence policy, local party activists have been on the propaganda offensive in this Tory heartland — arguing the case for the non-nuclear approach. So far the Tories have been silent. This potentially catastrophic accident must serve to wake local people up to the danger of Thatcher's defence policies.