

Kick out the Tories in '87!

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

See centre pages

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

TEACHERS CHALLENGE THATCHER

Killed by the profit system

If safety had been put before profits, people would not have died in the Zeebrugge ferry tragedy.

The accident seems to have occurred because of design faults in the ship which the zealots of 'Free Enterprise' had been worried about. Townsend Thoresen never put them right because of 'commercial considerations'

The ferry was unstable and capsized easily because it has wide decks with no bulkheads, to allow rapid loading and unloading.

Also, its doors may have been left open to speed it up further.

Better a bit slower than unsafe. Yet it could have been made safe even without making it slower.

The Financial Times reported on 10 March:

"Mr Bob McCallum, head of Caley Hydraulics, based in East Kilbride, Scotland, said his company had fitted hydraulically operated vertical bulkheads to a Canadian ship designed for use in winter icefields.

Problems

Mr McCallum said two vertical bulkheads could probably have been fitted to the Herald of Free Enterprise for about £300,000. This would have divided the ship into three watertight compartments and could have been enough to prevent the capsizing, he said.

Mr McCallum said: "These problems are not really difficult to overcome if an engineer and a good naval architect can work together. Cost is the main factor."

The Financial Times further quotes economist Simon Bergstranc:

"Everything has been so competitive that, when it has come to building new ferries, the emphasis has been on making them more luxurious - fitting bars, restaurants and so on, making them more comfortable to travel on - rather than giving any additional attention to safety problems," he said.

£300,000 is peanuts for Townsend Thoresen. But for the profiteers it's too much to pay for safety.

The Irish Times reports that the British Department of Trade was sent a new design for the ferries in 1982 after a collision involving a Townsend Thoresen ferry.

A Mr Peter Brown comments: "I devised an alternative design for ro-ro ferries and sent it to the UK Department of Trade for consideration. But the calculations were returned with a terse note stating the Department's surveyors were too busy to study them."

By Liam Conway

The coming weeks will see a series of joint strikes and rallies by the two biggest teachers' unions, the NUT and the NAS/UWT against the Tory government's plan to impose new pay and conditions on them.

The new pay and conditions have not been negotiated, but just decreed by the Tories. And worse than that: the Tory formula is worse all round than one that was negotiated and agreed between the teachers' employers, the local authorities, and the union leaders.

The majority of classroom teachers, on the lower pay scales, get a very small increase, while head teachers get much more. Teachers are required to cover for absent colleagues for three days, though in many areas they have been refusing to cover at all, and demanding that the local authorities employ enough staff to deal with absences.

The teachers are fighting for their rights as trade unionists and workers. If they are defeated, then the Tories will be able to use the imposed deal as a model for other workers in the public sector. They have already talked about abolishing the right to strike in 'essential services' and replacing trade union negotiation there by compulsory arbitration.

The teachers are also fighting for a decent education system - which is impossible unless teachers are properly paid and have liveable work conditions.

They should be supported. Unfortunately, the teachers' union leaders are not ready for the long struggle that is needed. Last May, when the NAS/UWT leaders led the first capitulation to the government arbitration service



Inner London teachers' demonstration. Photo: Ian Swindale.

ACAS, teachers had effectively won improved conditions of service. Morale was high and the rank and file was ready to press home our advantage against the Tories.

Even now, despite the demobilisation since the summer, teachers have voted with a massive 4-1 majority for strike action.

These must not just be token strikes, gestures before we grace-

fully admit defeat.

For teachers on the lowest scales, the pay off for the sale of their conditions is pitiful. But we have much more to lose than our more senior workmates. We will be carrying out orders, not giving them. We are offered more work for less pay.

These strikes must be the start of something much bigger. Strikes

will need to be on a regular and escalating basis.

Members must participate in and control the strike activity in their localities. School Action Committees could be developed to coordinate activity, linking up with other schools in a broader-based rank and file organisation.

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WOMAN'S EYE

Pregnancy and benefits

There are some things you can't plan. Getting pregnant seems to come high on the list. The Family Planning Association reckons that 75% of pregnancies aren't planned.

So you find you're going to have a baby. Well, it's not too bad. OK, there's no child care but there are all those benefits you can claim. Aren't there?

Not any more there aren't. It's taken since 1977 to get fairly reasonable state maternity rights for working women. Ten years. It took the Tories a few minutes in the House of Commons to end it.

Most women who get pregnant this month won't get the maternity grant. It only used to be £25, but that is better than nothing.

From next month — April — only women who get supplementary benefit or family income supplement will get the new £80 grant.

The single payment of about £250 to buy baby things that women used to get who were on supplementary benefit has gone too. That's a £175 cut.

But there is still the weekly maternity benefit from the DHSS. Or is there?

Unless you are in paid work for the first six months of your pregnancy you won't get the new statutory maternity pay. If you do get it, it's down to your employer to pay it and get the money back from the DHSS. I wonder how many employers will find it easier to sack women or squeeze them out before then when they find out the woman is pregnant.

By Penny Newell

Women have no protection against being sacked in this way if they haven't been employed for two years — unless they are in a strong unionised workplace. And even if you have been employed for more than two years, there are plans to make you have to pay a fee to take your case to an industrial tribunal.

You only get the feed back if you win your case.

Years of working will count for nothing. An example is the women print workers sacked by Rupert Murdoch. They will not get the new statutory maternity pay.

If they aren't on supplementary benefit or family income supplement they won't get the £80 maternity grant either.

I spoke at a SOGAT London Clerical Branch meeting of sacked workers on benefits a couple of weeks ago. There was a pregnant member there who will suffer because of these cuts.

No maternity benefits because your boss prefers scab labour! And who made it possible? The government which loves the bosses.

There are women campaigning in defence of maternity rights. A group called Maternity Emergency is having a rally on Monday 6 April at Central Hall, Westminster. It is supported by many women's groups and trades unions like the TGWU and NUPE.

Their slogans are "Mothers' Rights — Babies Benefit". It is quite clear that working class babies and mothers matter least to the Tories, but these cuts are an attack on all women who should be entitled to benefits.

Raise the issue in your union. What is it doing? Many union agreements rely on the state benefit rules as a basis for negotiation. Often it is hard to spot what extra conditions have been negotiated, they are so small.

The TGWU are targeting women in their recruitment drive. They will need to be at the front of the maternity campaign if they are to convince women they are serious and aren't just trying to boost their paper membership.

South Wales pits: rank and file movement needed

Socialist Organiser spoke to Mark Thomas, Branch Committee member, Tower NUM, delegate to special conference (personal capacity).

What happened at Saturday's delegate conference?

The full time officials wanted to go into negotiations with the Board and accept the concept of six-day working.

It was all rhetoric coming off the platform about the deal only affecting Margam. We don't believe that is true. It will now be used where there is any major new investment in a pit. The platform are saying we will have to accept the Board's terms.

On the card vote at the end of the four hour debate, 133 voted in favour with 77 against. I was surprised it went that way, and particularly for the support for the resolution from the Merthyr pits (Merthyr Vale, Taff Merthyr, Deep Navigation).

The major opposition came from Tower and Cynheidre from the West. At first sight Cynheidre seems surprising, but the fact is they have already got six-day working at the moment in the Cadri Fawr — a drift system they are driving at the moment.

The men in Cynheidre can see that once the drift system is finished, the men will be taken en bloc out of the pit and put into Cadri Fawr.

Two lodges in Gwent, Oakdale and Marine also opposed. They are the coking coal pits in South Wales. They have been told there is only five years 'viable' coal left in the complex. We know it will take five years to get Margam off the ground.

So the prospect is for Oakdale and Marine closing to man Margam. So much for creating 800 new jobs!

The other argument about the creation of new jobs is the introduction of new technology, which means less men to work the pits. We will need many more than 800 jobs just to stand still.

What is the feeling among the rank and file?

They feel the decision is ridiculous. On Thursday there is the NUM NEC. We have heard that Scargill will ask them to reconsider, but I can't see the South Wales leadership doing that. After that the leadership will go into talks with the Board; they will come back with what's on offer and then will have to put it to a vote of the membership. They are biding time to give themselves a chance to campaign.

A number of lodges are discussing the way forward. A rank and file movement is developing to oppose the decision. At the Merthyr pits, which voted for the resolution, men are now organising against the way the lodges voted and even putting forward motions of no confidence.

I believe that many of the lodge committees that voted in favour went into the situation with their

Teachers challenge Thatcher

From front page

But there must also be action on a national level, beginning with the joint NUT and NAS/UWT rally in London, to demonstrate the extent of grass roots feeling against the government.

Unfortunately the union leaders are not prepared for the mass participation of the membership. But



The NUM conference

South African miners: against capitalism and apartheid

A giant banner carrying the words "Socialism means freedom" was unveiled when South Africa's giant 300,000 strong National Union of Miners (NUM) held its fifth annual conference on 28 February - 1 March.

The union spelt out its political policy in a resolution on political action: "The workers' struggle in the mines cannot be separated from

the struggle in the community... Apartheid and capitalism are two inseparable evils that must be smashed."

The NUM has also adopted the Freedom Charter of the ANC as a guiding document in the struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation." Cyril Ramaphosa, the NUM general secretary described the charter as "a

minimum programme of demands".

The NUM looks set to fight for this bolder, more open political orientation within the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), whose conference is due in July.

The NUM has also thrown down the gauntlet to the mine bosses. They have demanded a 55% wage increase.

More on South Africa — page 5

eyes closed. They are now telling the men they did not vote in favour of six day working, just talks with the Board. But the resolution accepts the concept of six-day working.

That is also what the South Wales executive said when they recommended it on a majority vote. They said the Board had said six-day working or nothing and we had to accept it.

The executive also said that Margam would happen anyway. If the NUM were not there it would be manned by the UDM, or the EETPU or the ISTC. We should not throw away the chance of organising it.

I don't believe the UDM would survive down here, and in any case the decision does not stop the Board manning Margam with anybody they want. If we concede the six-day week, what does organising the pit mean?

What is the attitude towards Des Dufield now? You and others on the left campaigned for him in the recent presidential elections.

I still believe he was the right

candidate at the time, but I'm totally disappointed at the way he has acted. I think he has been influenced and controlled by George Rees.

The decision has turned a lot of men who campaigned for Des completely against him. They are saying — we gave the man our confidence and now he has done this against us.

Many are disgusted at what happened in the run-up to Saturday's vote — press releases, stage-managed meetings with the press invited by an EC member on the day before the conference.

Many are worried about the repercussions nationally for the South Wales decision — we think they will be as damaging as the return to work decision. We are now having the finger pointed again.

To highlight it all there was the Tory Minister for Coal, David Hunt, on the TV last night, basically saying what marvellous men the South Wales miners are.

The last time South Wales miners were given a compliment like that was when they refused to support the steelworkers in 1981!

On the repercussions nationally, we will be getting all these people saying what great people South Wales miners are and we should ditch the 'Barnsley Mafia'. But what they mean by that is not just Scargill, Heathfield and others.

It is saying let's ditch Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and the rest of the NUM — 'go on your own lads, you'll get a better deal'. That will give them the split they want.

On Saturday I think the Presi-

dent used terrible tactics when he condemned Yorkshire for accepting the 'Doncaster Option', and then said they had no right to criticise South Wales. They should not have accepted the 'Doncaster Option'; and we should not have accepted six-day working.

Our job now is to build up the ammunition and get the rank and file organised. When they eventually hold a ballot I think the leadership will lose it.

Killed by the profit system

From front page

And a report produced by the International Maritime Organisation three years ago was ignored. The report warned that the ferries were more likely to sink than conventional cargo ships if they get into difficulties.

The report said that the governments who are members of IMO "have had to avoid taking [safety] action which might unnecessarily have inhibited the development of a ship type which is outstandingly successful from a commercial point of view."

So the deaths were caused by 'commercial success'. It is typical of the society we live in. Making money is put before protecting people's lives.



Frozen bacon at the Clinton McCurbin protest (see page 10). Photo: John Harris, IFL.

Handouts for the rich

THE TORIES promise tax cuts, especially for the rich, in next week's Budget. But they will do nothing for Britain's poor.

According to the Low Pay Unit, out of £8.1 billion given away in tax cuts since 1979 the poorest six million taxpayers have got only 8 per cent. 45% of income tax cuts went to the richest 10% of the population.

In Britain today, the top 5.2% of the population owns 81.2% of listed shares and 83.7% of land. The top 10% own more than half the total personal wealth, and the top 25% own three quarters.

Tax cuts won't mean more money for the low paid or the unemployed.

The rich should be taxed more, not less. In fact we should take their wealth from them and use it for the common good.

Arms for Contras

THE BRITISH government has agreed to sell arms to the 'contras' in Nicaragua. Blowpipe missiles are to be provided to them for use in their war against the Nicaraguan people.

If it goes ahead, it will be the first known sale of arms to the contras by the Thatcher government.

The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) will buy the missiles for the contras out of their \$100 million contra aid fund.

The labour movement must stand by the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan people have endured terrible suffering as a result of the US-backed contra war and economic blockade.

Nicaragua is the freest country in Central America — and that is why Thatcher and Reagan hate it so. A victory for US imperialism would be a defeat for socialists and the workers' movement everywhere.

Right-wing sabotage

IT'S NOT progressive policies that damage Labour in elections, but attempts to wriggle away from them and to appear as right-wing as the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

Last week's West Midlands Euro-election proves that.

John Bird, the Labour Party candidate, was about as right-wing and respectable as they come. He kept the seat — but the previous 19,685 majority over the Tories was drastically reduced to 4,025, though the turn-out was slightly higher.

Why? The Tory vote stayed about the same, but the Alliance candidate, who more than doubled their 1984 share of the vote, picked up Labour votes.

The attempts by Neil Kinnock and Patricia Hewitt to blame the left for the Greenwich defeat were just excuses. Half-hearted and uninspiring leadership is the real problem.

Listen to what Labour's ex-leaders say when they are free from the pressure of the rank and file and voice their real thoughts.

During the last general election James Callaghan sabotaged Labour's effort by attacking the party's armaments policy. Now he has come out in favour of keeping Trident — which even David Owen wants to scrap!

For too long Labour has been led by people who give lip-service to the democratic decisions of the movement and privately pursue capitalist policies. No wonder voters don't find Labour convincing. We need a democratic party and an accountable leadership.

Socialism has got a future!

EDITORIAL

The idea of socialism has come in for quite a hammering in recent years. The Tories have an evangelical mission to wipe 'socialism' from the political map. The Alliance are little different. And even the Labour Party leaders have progressively ditched all mention of socialism in an effort to win votes.

With this in mind, the New Statesman magazine last week ran a feature entitled 'Socialism — A Future?'. Kicked off by Labour Party deputy leader Roy Hattersley, the discussion includes contributions from Eurocommunist writer Eric Hobsbawm, from Inner London Education chief Frances Morrell, and from Paul Hirst, an ex-Maoist turned right-wing Labour university professor.

Advocating 'market socialism', one contributor notes that it "leaves little for the unions to do". But "if the purposes of unions are being served by other, better means, then no one except those with a personal interest in their survival should mourn their demise."

"Since market socialism does not involve the actual expropriation of capital, it is less vulnerable to it than most other forms."

Paul Hirst declares: "Socialism is in no sense committed by its basic values to such institutions as central planning and state ownership. Indeed, it should be opposed to them." A socialist society "pre-

supposes bargaining rather than planning."

And Hirst openly admits his ideological lineage. Referring to the German socialist Edward Bernstein who argued nearly a century ago that socialism was impossible and Marxism out of date, Hirst comments: "He became a political leper...But he was right."

Flawed

The lines of thinking expressed in the New Statesman (and there are differences — not all the contributors are Roy Hattersleys) are widespread and popular in the Labour Party. They are the political wing of trade union 'New Realism'. But they are fundamentally flawed.

The 'new revisionists', as they are often called, and probably like to think of themselves, accept as a point of departure the Tories' claims that socialism has been tried, failed and proved unpopular. But socialism has never been tried. What has failed is not socialism, but the traditional Labourite, bureaucratic 'welfare capitalism'.

Socialism requires, as a minimum, grass-roots democratic control over political power, and over day-to-day work. It means working class political and social power, making collective decisions based on what people need — not on what will make the fattest profits. For it to be possible to fulfill people's needs, socialism will have to be an international system.

And it does need planning: not the planning of faceless bureaucrats, but the active participation of people in deciding how to direct resources. Democratic planning will have to take priority over the market, and eventually market mechanisms will die out. In the long run, market mechanisms and real social control are incompatible.

The problem for the labour movement is that it has never fought for such a socialist future. Our answer to the Tory evangelists should not be to renounce this

future, but to reassert it, and fight to commit the labour movement to it.

It is a future that can be won only by the mass action of rank and file workers, taking control over their own lives, by mass action and self-management like that fought for by Poland's Solidarnosc.

Working out nice ideas about 'market socialism' in which unions play no role is irrelevant to the real world — a real world of class struggle. Paul Hirst, at least, partially acknowledges that this world exists:

"The 'veto group' against socialism is a large one [but] is not confined to a minority of wealthy bourgeois. It will ruthlessly resist and destroy a legal socialist government and if it fails to do so it will solicit the help of foreign allies."

Indeed in the miners' strike we saw a foretaste of the ruthlessness

Solidarity or sycophancy?

Congratulate Socialist Worker. They have finally faced the truth about Derek Hatton. Alex Callinicos (SW, 28 February) commented: "I doubt if there will be much occasion to mention Hatton's name again in this or any other socialist paper. He is clearly intent on taking up permanent residence in a very different world from that of the Liverpool working class."

No so long ago, SWP members would denounce Socialist Organiser for making precisely such comments. Their argument then was that Hatton and Militant were under attack from the right wing, so they shouldn't be criticised.

Militant in and out of Liverpool are still pretty unpopular with the right wing. So what has changed?

The SWP, over the past couple of years, have been making rather embarrassing overtures to Militant.

of this 'veto group'. But what is Hirst's conclusion? He argues that we should "not abandon socialism" because it "is not only a narrow...political enterprise, it is also based on certain fundamental principles about how society should be organised..."

But his is a feeble conclusion. In fact capitalism is based upon the wealth and power of big business. They will do whatever they can to defend their wealth and power. Time and time again we have seen that not only the 'insurrectionary socialism' so despised by Hirst provokes their "ruthless veto".

The distinctly non-insurrectionary President Allende of Chile was overthrown in a bloody coup in 1973. To fight for socialism, the working class will have to be prepared to defend itself. "Insurrection" — or revolution — is not an option: it will be a necessity.

The New Statesman special does not answer the question of how to fight for socialism. It abandons socialism as an objective — except that none of the contributors ever knew what socialism was in the first place.

In Liverpool, for example, after denouncing the council for 'selling the workers down the Mersey' in 1984 and joining Black Caucus demonstrations, they about-turned: "Militant have good reason for calling themselves revolutionary...In all respects, except their adherence to the Labour Party, their programme and politics belong to the Trotskyist tradition."

This is not solidarity: it is sycophancy.

Now, after their love letters to Militant have remained unanswered, the SWP have given up. The 'unity offensive' with Militant is yesterday's gimmick. Now they tell the truth about Hatton.

For our part, we stick by Trotsky's maxim: "to face reality squarely, to tell the truth in small things as in large." Socialists never had anything to gain by covering up for Hatton's appalling behaviour.

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GRAFFITI

Gorbachev

Trotsky is back?

Trotsky's name may reappear in official Soviet accounts of the 1917 Revolution.

The rest of the world has long since known that Trotsky was the practical leader of the October uprising, and one of the foremost speakers of the revolutionary left from his arrival in Russia from exile in May 1917.

But Stalin and his successors tried to suppress Trotsky's name. Photographs from the early years after the revolution were retouched to take Trotsky out of the picture.

Now, according to an editor of the official encyclopaedia on the 1917 revolution, "The names which for different reasons were not included in the past will appear in the new edition."



Rape

"Rape is not a specifically sexual crime. It is primarily a crime of violence". Gillian Mezey and Michael King believe that this conclusion is confirmed by their recent study of male rape.

The rapists are not always, perhaps even not usually, gay. One of the cases studied by Mezey and King was that of a gay man raped by a car-load of heterosexual men. They told him that he would not dare tell the police about the rape because he was gay.

No-one knows exactly how many male rapes there are, but in Boston rape centres get one call from a male rape victim for every 15 from women victims. Rapes are common in men's prisons; Los Angeles County Jail is said to have at least one a week.

Male victims suffer similar shame and humiliation to women, and, since Rape Crisis Centres primarily serve women, they may be even less able to find somewhere to turn for help.

Reformed Red Ken

"Among those considered as 'reformed' and loyal to the Kinnock regime are Ken Livingstone, the former Greater London Council leader, Frances Morrell, leader of

the Inner London Education Authority, and Margaret Hodge, the Islington council leader".

Not us speaking, but 'The Independent' of 9 March.

'Communist' bank

Just over a year ago, in late 1985, the Italian Communist Party's daily paper Unita started publishing stockmarket prices.

Now Italy has a 'Communist' merchant bank, Finec, launched on 6 March, is 70% owned by

a CP-aligned group of workers' cooperatives, and 30% by a state credit institute.

This sort of involvement in capitalism is not unique to the Italian CP. The Communist Party of India runs several important export/import businesses dealing with India-USSR trade. The French Communist Party owns France's biggest publishing company and its annual fete is a major trade fair.

And in Britain the CP journal 'Marxism Today' has been boosting itself to advertisers on the basis of how well-heeled its readers are.

Cards

£6,000 per year for six years - maybe the US government is not paying Vice-President George Bush enough? Except that that's just for the packs of playing cards that he hands out to guests on his official jet...

WORLD (ARMS REDUCTION) CHESS.



Too shrill on Gorbachev

The tone of your coverage of Gorbachev and his reforms is becoming increasingly shrill. What exactly do you feel is being threatened: your ability to act politically or your theories? Your theories, I think, and I suggest they need some revision.

What emerges from the editorial "With Gorbachev or with the workers?" is the following thesis: if, e.g. Polish workers are pro-capitalist, pro-"West", pro-NATO this is unfortunate, but understandable given the societies they have grown up in. However, if we are sympathetic to them and join in solidarity with them in their grievances they will understand that what they want is not capitalism but socialism.

The stance is not only patronising, but ineffectual, as is the notion that

"the fight for a free working-class movement in the Stalinist states is a left-wing cause" when in reality it is a cause which has been taken up by the right, and will continue to be.

What needs changing are the rigid old conceptual polarities: left/right; Stalinist/Trotskyist; worker/bureaucrat. Political criteria are needed to work out who are friends and who are enemies, and one of these must be: to be against both the blocs. This excludes the trade union right wing who would like to see Poland out of the Warsaw Pact but not Britain out of NATO. It also excludes Solidarnosc trade unionists who think that NATO will help them to get "workers' liberty".

Gorbachev, whom Socialist Organiser calls a "dictator" (why?) has indicated acceptance of the simultaneous dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. This step, if

achieved, would make possible many of the changes desired by Solidarnosc. The obstacle is NATO, which has no intention of dissolving itself.

Socialist Organiser won't gain anything by setting its face against these realities. The new line being attempted by the Soviet Union is a line of political struggle rather than military confrontation, and it is inspired by a hope in the political potential of the working class which has not been seen for generations in Moscow.

It is a hope for which there is very little empirical evidence, at least in the case of Western Europe, but we should leave it to the Cold Warriors to interpret Gorbachev's moves as nothing more than military weakness and desperation.

Sincerely,
WAYNE HALL,
Athens

Rights under attack

We are concerned that an important feature of the current political climate is an attack on the rights of lesbians and gay men. The fact of our oppression is being questioned in many quarters and the denial of rights to us is now being justified as a legitimate 'public health' measure.

As the death toll from AIDS will continue to rise throughout this year and in all probability well into next year the gutter press and religious bigots will clamour for more and more repression against homosexual people. There has already been a real increase of violence and intimidation against both lesbians and gay men.

The irrationality of such a strategy must be exposed. The argument has to be that only the combination of decriminalisation of homosexuality, and intensive medical research, can form a sure foundation from which to tackle the disease.

Conditions must be created where gay men can, with confidence, seek the help and advice of the medical authorities in tackling the disease and tracing those who have been in contact. The other methods of seeking to do this - mass screening, abrogation of civil rights, and repressive surveillance and raids on gay places - will be as fruitless as they are unacceptable.

It is against this background that the Pride Steering Committee has formed a solidarity working group to organise a substantial Solidarity Contingent from predominantly heterosexual trade unions, political



Kinnock retreats - and the gutter press comes after him

parties, community and cultural organisations on the Lesbian and Gay Pride March in London on 27 June.

Like the Notting Hill carnival, Pride involves a wide variety of social, commercial and political interests, and like Notting Hill it is a day of celebration for an oppressed and often beleaguered section of society. We are determined to maintain the occasion as one of celebration - but we need your help to do this.

Our slogan is: Equal Rights for All - Defend Lesbian and Gay Rights. We ask you:

1. To encourage some of your lesbian and gay supporters to join the

solidarity working party to help us to mobilise labour movement support.

2. To direct your organisations, publications and branches to discuss these matters and build support for the Solidarity Contingent.

We ask you to come with your banners - to march in solidarity behind the banners, bands and floats of the lesbian and gay community and the autonomous organisations of homosexual people.

We look forward to receiving your response to this invitation.

Yours sincerely,
MARY HARPER,
Solidarity Working Group
c/o 11 Rushton House,
Albion Ave,
London SW8 2SE.

Campaigning to build the LPYS

Easington LPYS are continuing to build the YS through socials, the fanzine and relating to current issues such as AIDS and South Africa, etc., as well as organising a campaign to defend the LPYS.

On 19 March we will be holding a public meeting on AIDS with a supporter of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, a socialist vicar, a reactionary born again Christian and an 'expert' on AIDS on the platform.

The meeting has been called to respond to a debate that has taken place in a local newspaper on the subject.

On 26 March we are having a fundraising social, half of the proceeds to go to South African trade unions, the other half to get people to the YS conference in Blackpool.

We also intend having street collections and meetings in Peterlee town centre on South Africa and adopting detainees from the South African NUM.

We are presently gathering

material for the next issue of our fanzine, Red Thorn.

In order to raise money to get people to YS conference we will be collecting money outside factories and in the streets.

We also hope to have another debate with the Young Tories in Peterlee Tech and use the event to set

up a sizeable Labour Club there.

We have been invited to speak at two Labour Party wards on the Sawyer proposals. Petitions and leaflets have been sent out to about 20 Labour Party wards and affiliated organisations including branches of the NUM.

GARY SCOTT,
Easington, Co. Durham

South Africa tour

Five Manchester LPYS branches have been helping to build solidarity with black workers in South Africa, and recruiting people to the YS at the same time. Tom Rigby, a British representative of EAWTU, spoke at several meetings in Manchester, putting the case for building direct links with South African trade unionists

Tom also spoke at student union meetings of up to 90 people. Money has already been donated by various student unions, and two socials are being organised by students to raise funds for black workers.

The LPYS branches have also helped to mobilise for a picket of South African Airways, and are intending to start bucket collections around Manchester.

The South African solidarity work has attracted a lot of people to the YS, and the five Youth Fightback YS branches in Manchester intend to take a lot of people to YS conference.

PAUL MCGARRY,
Manchester

Send letters to Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

News from inside South Africa

Twelve hundred strikers detained under emergency

Last week we were pleased to receive the latest copy of 'Arise/Vukani', the magazine of Action Youth, a socialist grouping in South Africa. Below we publish some of the most interesting articles.

Tembisa is the second largest black township after Soweto and is situated between Kempton Park and Olifantsfontein. In May 1986 more than 1200 workers from 11 municipal departments downed tools and demanded:

- *A minimum wage of R700 per month.
- *The dismissal of certain seniors.
- *The right to observe stay-aways without the loss of wages or fear of victimisation.

Ultimatum

An ultimatum by the "mayor", Lucas Mothiba, for the workers to return to work while he looked into their problems or be dismissed, was rejected by the strikers. They were subsequently dismissed and started preparing the community for the struggle which was to follow with door-to-door pamphleteering and discussions.

On three occasions, the workers were teargassed and baton-charged by the police and army, but they could not be crushed. Seventy families were evicted and several strikers arrested, leaving many families stranded. The union, SAB-MAWU, looked after the families at Wilgespruit and started a campaign to assist the children.

The entire workforce of 1200 was arrested by the security forces. This was the biggest single mass detention under the State of Emergency. The significant feature here, was that although the workers were in detention, the bosses still could not get scabs to replace them, indicating the level of support for the strike. At the same time a rent boycott and a consumer boycott of the Councillors' businesses continued in support of the strikers.

When the workers were released from detention, they continued their struggle and pressure was put on the councillors to resign. By the time the Councillors had resigned, the writing was already on the wall. The Council was collapsing through the power of the workers. In order to try and save the Council, the deputy minister of



Municipal workers like these in Johannesburg are denied basic rights like the right to strike

Law and Order flew by helicopter to encourage the "mayor" but to no avail — Mothiba resigned and the Council collapsed. An official from the Department of Constitutional Development pleaded with the workers to return to work, giving in to all their demands. The workers returned to work, victorious after eleven weeks of intense struggle.

The eleven week strike was significant in that:

- a). In a high unemployment area, bosses found it almost impossible to recruit scabs due to the support won from the community for the strike.
- b). The rent boycott was used correctly as a tactic rather than a principle, and was given a proper perspective of being related to the struggle against exploitation.
- c). The struggle against the puppet Town Councillors was supported by all sections of the community, i.e.,

the students, youth, etc., under the direction and control of the workers themselves.

d). The collapse of the Town Council, as well as the successful rent struggle, is accredited by all in Tembisa to the power of the workers' struggle.

At the end it can be said that another small battle had been won by black workers in the overall war against the apartheid-capitalist state.

Violence and the struggle

Over the last few months, the repressive wave of state violence has been tragically punctuated by killings of political activists. There is much evidence to suggest that organisational disputes and sectarianism have in many cases become the main reason for these deaths. The idea of regarding political alternatives in the movement as "obstacles" that have to be physically removed needs to be urgently addressed by all progressive forces.

Such actions, without a doubt, can only strengthen the enemies of the black working class and its allies, and weaken the liberation movement. It is a well-known fact that the state has embarked on a systematic programme to remove opposition who are part of the liberation movement. Political activists have been brutally murdered while many in exile have been killed openly by the SADF. Under these conditions, to engage in any form of violence within the liberation movement is both counter-revolutionary and reactionary. Such activity makes one nothing but an agent of the state.

Violence is a means of self-defence against the capitalists, not a means of settling disputes within the revolutionary movement. Those who perpetrate violence against people in the movement must be treated with the utmost contempt, and their actions exposed at every turn. It is vital that the democratic right of all tendencies to exist, organise and constructively criticise be protected by all revolutionary socialists.

We in Action Youth fully support initiatives to stop further killings. Our membership fully endorses the campaign begun by the Electrical and Allied Workers Trade Union as a

first step to bringing discipline to our struggle. We therefore reiterate their call to all organisations to commit themselves to the following pledges.

1. All organisations must defend each other against state violence.
2. All organisations must engage in joint unity-building campaigns and activities.
3. Violence in the settlement of disputes or differences between progressive organisations must be outlawed, and those undisciplined

elements should be exposed as working in the interests of the state's plan to create a South African Lebanon.

4. The right of all progressive organisations to exist must be respected, no matter how small they may be, because there is room for all in the broad liberatory movement.

We also commend the Eastern Cape region of COSATU for recently sponsoring the peace talks between AZAPO and the UDF in the Eastern Cape.

Metalworkers' union calls for socialism

The Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) has come out in favour of building socialism in a struggle led and controlled by the workers.

This commitment was made by the union's first National Congress held in Johannesburg on 3-5 July 1986, attended by over 300 factory delegates.

The Congress felt that workers must not only control their union, they must also lead the struggle for liberation in South Africa. "If workers are not at the head of the struggle, then there is no guarantee that the Botha government will be replaced by socialism."

MAWU said that socialism cannot be built without democracy. Democracy means that all must have freedom of speech and association, the right to recall leaders and government by majority.

Democratic practices must be established now. For this reason,

MAWU insisted it will not dictate to its members which political parties they should belong to and MAWU will co-operate with all groups committed to the national liberation struggle and to the transformation of the economy.

Key MAWU shop stewards and officials were not present because they were either detained or in hiding. In spite of this, every organised factory was represented which resulted in thorough debate on important issues facing MAWU, especially in the light of the State of Emergency.

MAWU is determined more than ever to achieve a living wage in the metal industry and to fight for economic and political justice.

Delegates stressed that in order to lead the struggle for socialism, workers need to have a clear programme of their demands and aims. This programme, according to MAWU, is very important if workers were to build "correct alliances" and "true socialism and democracy."

Botha in trouble?

When PW Botha called an early white election for 6 May it appeared to be an expression of the strength and confidence of South Africa's ruling National Party (NP).

That confidence was unfounded. White politics are now in a state of turmoil not seen since the rise of the Nationalists to power in 1948.

Many of the Afrikaner institutions that have historically formed the base of the National Party such as the Broederbond (a high-powered version of the masons) are now split with support growing for the ultra right HNP and Conservative parties.

The National Party is also losing ground to forces on the 'left' of white politics — people who want to reform white rule but preserve racial capitalism, such as the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), and the New Republic Party (NRP). Neither of these parties are in favour of one person-one vote in an undivided South Africa.

Botha has also faced defections from the left' from within his own ranks. The most prominent of these is Denis Worrall, former Ambassador to Britain and apartheid's most sly apologist. Worrall, who is standing as an independent, could even defeat Chris Heunis, who has been tipped to replace PW Botha as head of the National Party in the Afrikaner University constituency at Stellenbosch.

By Anne Mack

It is not inconceivable that after May the National Party could find itself in a situation where just another small split or defection could put it in a minority in parliament.

This fragmentation of white politics is a direct result of the crisis of apartheid. A strategy of repression alone is not enough to create the mass black support needed for the survival of racial capitalism and reform threaten to further disintegrate and divide the Afrikaner base of the National Party.

White unemployment is now higher than at any time since the 1930s. Operation Hunger soup kitchens have been opened up in white areas and some white workers now find themselves digging ditches for £30 a week alongside black workers.

Many whites blame the deteriorating living standards and insecurity on Botha who is considered to be "too soft" on the township revolt. Hence the growth of the right.

Whatever the result in May's election it is unlikely to lead to the strengthening of white rule. As a result it is likely to give a boost to the black rebellion.

As white parliamentary politics gets more fractious, the military — who to an important extent partial rule already through the President's Council — are waiting in the wings. South African Socialist Duncan Innes pointed to this danger on TV two weeks ago: "It is not a big step from the level of repression today to filling a football stadium full of people."



ARISE! VUKANI
Magazine of Action Youth

HAMBA KAHLE COMRADES

On children and youth
We want them not to know hunger, poverty and war, not to face wretchedness and unemployment. We want them to live in a society where the only yardstick for the human being is dignity, labour and dedication to the people and country.

Comrade Sammie Mofokeng

**SOCIALISM WILL TRIUMPH!
THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!**

Two detained GERMCOOL workers and members of MAWU, Phisoaniso Mokoena and Simon Ngobane, surrounded by police supporters on the 07/12/86 in Johannesburg. (Photograph courtesy of the Long March)

OK strike Soweto massacre Mozambique
Mawu congress - Biko day Socialism
Construction union launch Azanyu
Congress Return to school Tembisa strike
Railway workers United vs Popular front

The Russian Revolution and women

WOMEN have been oppressed for thousands of years but the programme of women's liberation dates from recent times — together with the ideas of human rights, democracy, and equality.

The early 19th century socialists — the most radical and thorough of the advocates of the idea of human emancipation or liberation which was launched by the American and French Revolutions — were also advocates of women's emancipation. Charles Fourier declared: "The degree of emancipation of women is the natural measure of general emancipation."

Fourier, writing in 1808, also went beyond legal formalities in his programme for equality. "People would be housed in large buildings which would be equipped with various services including creches. Young children would be cared for communally. There would be communal restaurants and public rooms..." Robert Owen had similar ideas.

There were exceptions in the socialist movement. Until relatively late in the 19th century there was a strong current of 'proletarian anti-feminism', represented by such leaders as Proudhon and Lassalle. They reflected the element in the working class that looked backward — to the old patriarchal household economy — rather than forward. Claiming they wished to protect women, they opposed women's employment in industry.

Marx and Engels interpreted the programme of their more radical predecessors into a perspective of

Can socialism open the way to women's liberation? The experience of the USSR and other societies which call themselves socialist is not encouraging. Lynn Ferguson argues that the workers' revolution

of 1917 was, however, a revolution for women, too; and the worsening of the position of women went hand-in-hand with the suppression of the revolutionary working class by the new Stalinist bureaucracy.

class struggle rather than utopia-building; they opposed Proudhon's ideas as "both reactionary and Utopian" because they tried to run backwards away from that class struggle.

In 'Origin of the Family' (1884) Engels endeavoured to use the researches of the US anthropologist Lewis Morgan to map the evolution of women's position. The attempt has been criticised in the light of later research, but the *approach* was a lasting scientific advance. The position of women was discussed in terms of the changing material conditions that determined it, not just in terms of abstract moral rights and wrongs.

Engels also summarised the socialist programme: "The modern individual family is based on the open or disguised domestic enslavement of the woman; and modern society is a mass composed solely of individual families as its molecules...In the family, (the man) is the bourgeois; the wife represents

the proletariat..."

"The peculiar character of man's domination over woman in the modern family, and the necessity, as well as the manner, of establishing real social equality between the two will be brought out into full relief only when both are completely equal before the law. It will then become evident that the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished..."

"With the passage of the means of production into common property, the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public matter. Society takes care of all children equally, irrespective of whether they are born in wedlock or not" — and, Engels adds, this will

underpin a great expansion of sexual freedom.

In Germany, the basic ideas worked out by Marx and Engels (building on previous socialists) were bulked out a great deal by the experience of a proletarian women's movement, led by Clara Zetkin.

The Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Kollontai, Inessa Armand and Samoslova, were pupils of Zetkin and the German movement in relation to organising women.

On taking power the Bolsheviks abolished all reactionary laws relating to women, and established full political and legal equality for women. Freedom of divorce, abortion, etc., were introduced. Special trains were organised to take birth control facilities into remote areas. All laws against homosexuality were scrapped until 1934. "The presentation of homosexuality in the great Soviet encyclopaedia was based on Magnus Hirschfeld and partly on Freud". (Hirschfeld was a pioneer for homosexual rights in Germany).

And a great beginning was made towards freeing women from domestic toil. Communal kitchens, laundries and creches were established.

But these facilities were always far from adequate both in terms of quality and quantity. Trotsky wrote:

"Moreover, the existing creches, even in Moscow, Leningrad, and the other centres, are not satisfactory as a general rule to the least fastidious demands. 'A creche in which the child feels worse than he does at home is not a creche but a bad orphan asylum', complains a leading Soviet newspaper. It is no wonder that the better-placed workers' families avoid creches."

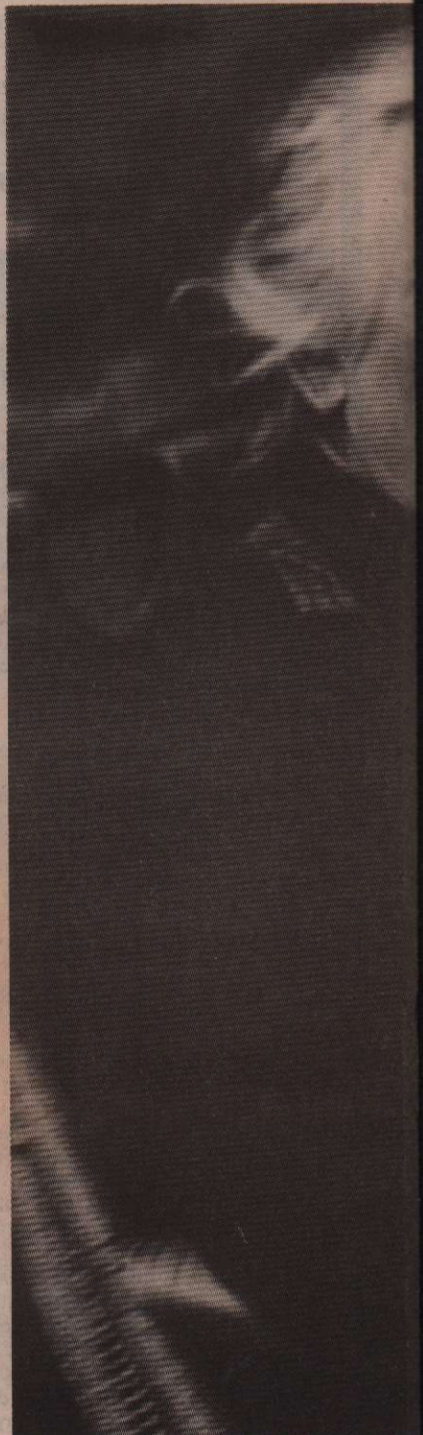
The same applied to other facilities. The communal dining halls left much to be desired when compared to "home cooking". The laundries did virtually everything but return your laundry clean and fit for use. None of this is particularly surprising, if we think about the nature of the Soviet Union at this time — a materially backward country, with a predominantly peasant economy, where the First World War was followed by the revolution and then civil war in defence of the revolution.

Shortage

There were severe shortages of the basic necessities of life. Given that the precondition for the socialisation of housework and childcare is a high level of economic development, most of the attempts made in the early years of the Soviet state were bound to be utopian.

Trotsky warned that only "our children and grandchildren will realise this aim" of women's full emancipation. Some Bolsheviks, however, went in for doctrinaire fancies.

"Acute food shortages rather than the exigencies of socialist theory led to a large extension of communal feeding. The vast problem of homeless children imposed on reluctant and overburdened authorities the establishment of children's homes



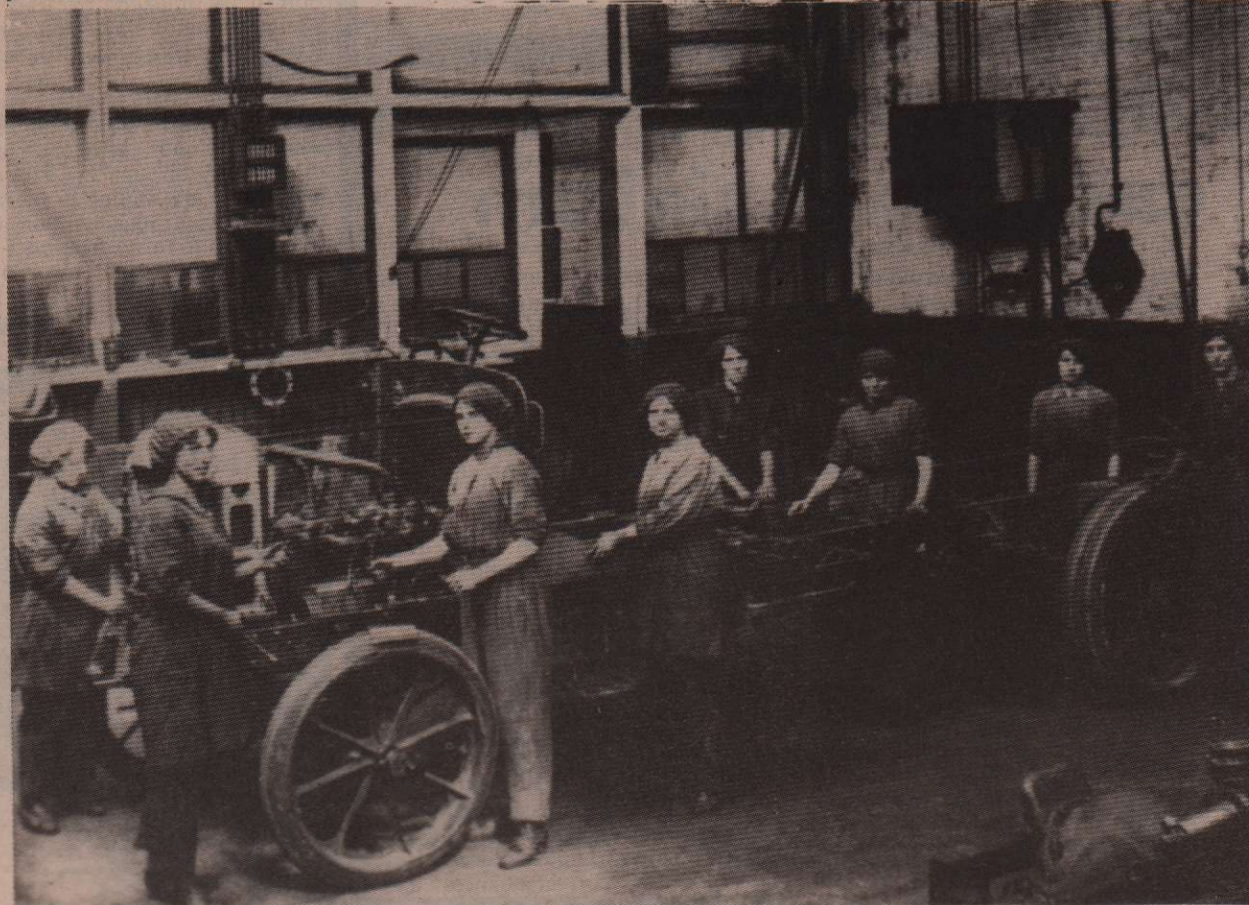
Clara Zetkin, of the German socialist

and settlements. In this aspect of war communism, as in others, doctrine was invoked to prove that what was done in the emergency of war was identical with what had long been included in the cherished precepts of socialist programmes... (Though from 1925 the state had to resort to foster-parents instead).

"The sequence of war, revolution and civil war had produced many of the same unpremeditated and disintegrating effects on family and sex relations as on other aspects of social life. Here too, 'war communism' marked a specific period; and here, too, what in other conditions would have been treated as the unwelcome result of chaos, confusion and licence was now retrospectively, justified in terms of socialist doctrine." (EH Carr, 'Socialism in One Country', Vol 1., p.27).

Lenin and Trotsky had to fight against fantasists and utopians on this front as on the fronts of economic policy, military and diplomatic policy, art, etc.

The theses presented to the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921 argued for active efforts to involve women in all aspects of Soviet society. It was also the responsibility of the party to fight an ideological battle against backward attitudes towards women amongst the working class, and particularly the peasantry. Lenin criticised the backwardness and complacency of many male party members:



1917. What would happen to all the women workers brought into the factories during the war?

olution



women's movement.

"They regard agitation and propaganda among women and the task of rousing and revolutionising them as the job of just the women communists...Unfortunately we may still say of many of our comrades, 'scratch the Communist and a philistine appears'".
With the development of a privileged bureaucracy which usurped political power from the working class, the philistines triumphed. The Stalinist big lie, that the Soviet Union was "steaming towards socialism" made it impossible to admit that anything was wrong with the position of women.

Divorce

Divorce and abortion laws were tightened up. Women were no longer permitted to decline "the joys of motherhood" as "we have need of people". Working class and peasant women, that is. As for the bureaucrats' wives, "they will, as formerly, do what they find necessary under the very nose of an indulgent judiciary" (Trotsky).
The enormous gains made by women were completely lost, to be replaced by the old slavery of domestic toil. The old family units were reinforced as 'forty million points of support' for the bureaucracy.
Certainly, complete emancipation of women was not possible in the young, isolated, materially-backward Soviet state. But the answer to this

was a consistent conscious struggle against those conditions, and internationally for the success of revolution. The Stalinist bureaucracy subordinated these to the defence of its own material privileges.

It is no coincidence that the worsening of the position of women went hand in hand with that of the working class and peasantry as a whole.

The Stalinist USSR was not and is not socialist. The problem was not the workers' movement excessively dominating women's organisation, but the workers' movement and all independent organisation, male or female, being crushed. The history of the USSR does not show women's position declining while the working class forged ahead — but the defeat of women coming with the defeat of the working class.

Trotsky summed up:
"How man enslaved woman, how the exploiter subjected them both, how the toilers have attempted at the price of blood to free themselves from slavery and have only exchanged one chain for another — history tells us much about all this. In essence it tells us nothing else. But how in reality to free the child, the woman and the human being? For that we have as yet no reliable models. All past historical experience, wholly negative, demands of the toilers at least and first of all an implacable distrust of all privileged and uncontrolled guardians."

How the Tsar was toppled

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

This year is the 70th anniversary of the revolution in which the workers took power in Russia. Socialist Organiser will be marking the anniversary with a series which each week chronicles the events of the corresponding week 70 years ago.

Last week a background article sketched the politics of Russia before the Revolution: the Tsar (Emperor) and the old aristocracy were opposed timidly by liberals based on the weak capitalist class, and more vigorously by the growing industrial working class of the big cities. The peasants, the majority of the population — illiterate, oppressed, and living in terrible economic backwardness. Among the workers, Marxists, both revolutionary (Bolshevik) and more moderate (Menshevik), were influential. The World War was causing great suffering.

Then, within a few days, Tsarist rule was toppled. This week's feature covers three weeks of events in Russia — those during and immediately after the first, or 'February', revolution of 1917, which gave power to a liberal-capitalist government.

All dates are given according to the old calendar in use in Russia before the October 1917 workers' revolution.

Thursday 23 February (8 March by the modern calendar).

International Women's Day. No socialist or trade union organisation calls for strikes, but women workers in several textile factories in Petrograd come out and appeal for support; some male workers also strike. A total of 90,000 strikers.

Friday 24 February

About half the industrial workers in Petrograd are on strike. Demonstrations demand "Bread! Down with the autocracy! Down with the war!"

Saturday 25 February

Strikes spread further. School students join in. More street demonstrations. Bolshevik leaders call for all-Russian general strike. Police stations wrecked and abandoned in the Vyborg workers' district of Petrograd.

Sunday 26 February

More demonstrations. The 4th company of the Pavlovsky regiment of the Imperial Guard mutinies.

Monday 27 February

More army units mutiny. All political prisoners freed from jail. Revolutionaries take over the Tauride Palace. Mensheviks form the 'Provisional Executive Committee' of the Petrograd Soviet and call on the workers to elect deputies to the Soviet. The Duma (the Tsar's tame parliament, elected on a restricted franchise) meets and sets up a Provisional Committee. Menshevik leaders meet it privately and demand it takes power.

Strikes and demonstrations begin in Moscow.

Tuesday 28 February

The Tsar's ministers arrested.

Wednesday 1 March

A 1,000 strong meeting of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in Petrograd issues its first decree. It calls for: election of committees in all sections of the army and navy; political actions of all sections of the armed forces to be

under the control of the Soviet; implementation of decrees of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma only if they do not conflict with those of the Soviet; no handing over of weapons by soldiers to their officers; full civil rights for all officers.

In Petrograd another 43,000 members of the garrison rally to the revolutionary forces. In Moscow a general strike is under way, political prisoners are liberated, and a Soviet of Workers' Deputies is created through election of rank and file delegates.

The Provisional Committee of the State Duma issues its own appeal to the army and navy — for a continuation of the war against Germany.

Thursday 2 March.

In Novgorod workers arrest the governor, vice-governor and the chiefs of the police and gendarmes. In Revel workers demonstrate behind banners preserved from the 1905 Revolution as armed soldiers and sailors join their ranks. In Tver workers demonstrate under the slogans of "Down with the War!" and "Long Live the Revolution!", while soldiers seize the arsenals and arm the workers.

Trade union organisation begins to emerge. The first meeting of trade union organisations in Moscow is held, attended by 25 union delegates and two delegates from the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (Bolsheviks). They agree to recognise as valid only decisions of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

A Provisional Government is formed, incorporating the former Provisional Committee of the Duma.

Friday 3 March

Red flags are hoisted over the ships of the Russian navy at Helsingfors. The Moscow Soviet resolves to send delegates to all industrial centres to help establish trade unions. Delegates attending the Petrograd Soviet swell to 1,300.

Saturday 4 March

The Bureau of the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks meets in Petrograd and resolves to resume publication of Pravda, edited by Molotov and Shliapnikov. It adopts a resolution characterising the Provisional Government as "counter-revolutionary" and "representing the interests of the big bourgeoisie and aristocracy." It calls for the creation of "a provisional revolutionary government of a democratic character (dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry)".

In Helsingfors a mass meeting of sailors, soldiers and workers elects a new commander for the Baltic Fleet. In Minsk and Voronezh workers' militias disarm police and gendarmes and free political prisoners. In Gus-Chrustalny all police are arrested.

Sunday 5 March

The first issue of the new series of Pravda appears. The Bolsheviks are still not clear about their ideas: Pravda says "The fundamental problem is to establish a democratic republic".

Despite opposition from many workers and soldiers, the Soviets in Petrograd and Moscow pass resolutions to end the strikes and resume work. Elsewhere, the revolution is still winning new ground — in Kiev the police are disarmed, in Sevastopol mass meetings of sailors, soldiers and workers demand disarming of the police, liberation of political prisoners, and creation of revolutionary organs of power, and in Samara mass demonstrations are held under the slogans "For a Democratic Republic!", "Convene a Constituent Assembly Now!" and "Long Live the Third International!"

Monday 6 March

A mass meeting of workers from six Petrograd factories declares the decision to end all strikes to be "premature" as "the struggle against tsarism is not yet completed". But, to avoid creating "disunity in the ranks of democracy", they agree to comply with the decision and resume work.

The Provisional Government issues a statement pledging to fulfill all agreements with Russia's allies, guaranteeing the army all necessary resources to "continue the war to a victorious conclusion", and calling for the preservation and strengthening of discipline in the army.

Wednesday 8 March

Pravda announces the holding of organising meetings in Petrograd to build trade unions for metalworkers, engineers, joiners, shoemakers, tailors, employees of credit institutions, and workers in theatres and cinemas.

Tsar Nicholas II is arrested and taken by train to Tsarskoye Selo, where his wife is also arrested.

Thursday 9 March

Learning that the Provisional Government intends to allow the ex-Tsar to leave for England, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet orders the occupation of railway stations by soldiers and calls on railway workers to prevent the fallen Tsar from attempting to flee the country. In the face of such pressure, the Provisional Government backs down, and Nicholas Romanov remains in Tsarskoye Selo.

In many Petrograd factories workers are still on strike and demand immediate introduction of the 8-hour working day. The Executive Committee of the Soviet calls for acknowledgement of "the necessity of resuming work" and sets up a commission to organise arbitration tribunals.

Friday 10 March

The Petrograd Soviet reaches an agreement with the Petrograd Society of Manufacturers and Factory-owners on the issues of introduction of the 8-hour working day, and the establishment of factory committees and arbitration tribunals in order to "resolve questions of mutual relations between workers and the owners of enterprises and the administration".

Saturday 11 March

A meeting of the Council of the United Aristocracy adopts a resolution appealing for support for the Provisional Government. Army Head of Staff, General Aleksyeyev, sends a telegram to all commanders at the front proposing measures to crack down on revolutionary agitation in the army.

Sunday 12 March

The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet declares the oath of allegiance to the Provisional Government, introduced on 7 March, to be unacceptable and non-binding where it has been taken already.

A demonstration of workers and soldiers is held in Moscow under the slogans "Long Live the Constituent Assembly!", "Long Live the Democratic Republic!", "Long Live the 8-Hour Day!" and "Long Live Universal Peace and the Fraternity of Peoples!"

Monday 13 March

The workers' executive committee at the Izhorsky factory (Petrograd) decides upon immediate introduction of an 8-hour working day and fixes the hours as 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. The factory committee at the Kabelny (cables) factory (Petrograd) declares that no worker may be taken on without the approval of the factory committee and that no worker may be sacked against his or her will. A mass meeting of tramworkers in Harkov demands the sacking of all tramdrivers who informed on their colleagues in a strike of October 1916, and compensation for all drivers arrested for going on strike. The Soviet of Workers' Deputies at the Lensky mines (Irkutsk region) resolves to establish an enquiry in order to bring to justice those responsible for shooting workers in a dispute of 1916.

Tuesday 14 March

In an appeal to the Polish people, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies declares: "The democracy of Russia is based on recognition of the national-political self-determination of peoples, and proclaims that Poland has the right to be completely autonomous in international relations."

Soldiers in the 87th Siberian regiment of the 11th Army arrest their commanding officer after he bans the wearing of red rosettes on their trenchcoats.

By Stan Crooke

The Socialist Action school of falsification

SSiN

By Sandra Cartlidge

Socialist Action's descent into the mire gets muckier and muckier. Polly Vittorini's description of the conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) in Socialist Action last week was an extraordinary exercise in deception.

Socialist Action are very proud that their candidate for the National Committee - Polly Vittorini - got 12 votes standing as a 'Campaign Student' representative. Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN), they proclaim, only got six votes more - showing the inexorable decline of SSiN and the irresistible rise of Campaign Student.

The trouble is that Campaign Student got their votes from the right-wing Labour

Socialist Organiser is holding its 1987 AGM on 28-29 March in London. We'll be discussing Ireland, women's liberation, South Africa, and plans for next year. If you're interested in coming, contact PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Saturday/Sunday 14-15 March. Scottish Labour Party

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

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Britain's death squad exposed!

Ulster cops did shoot to kill

The Tories now hirable

2 Socialist Action 6 March 1987

Socialist ACTION

Remember the women of the north of Ireland

WOMEN THROUGHOUT the world will be celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March. For us in Britain should highlight one special struggle which demands our attention in the north of Ireland and its own girls. On International Women's Day Socialist Action gives over its national space to support the women's delegation to Maghaberry prison.

THE NATIONAL Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) national conference held on the weekend of 28 February-March witnessed the establishment of a new left current in the student movement. It was shown in two developments.

First Campaign Student, standing in opposition to a far-right of support for the Labour Left Labour Party, got 12 votes standing as a 'Campaign Student' representative. Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN), they proclaim, only got six votes more - showing the inexorable decline of SSiN and the irresistible rise of Campaign Student.

The trouble is that Campaign Student got their votes from the right-wing Labour

current in NOLS and NUS.

Much of the argument against Radical Feminism used to be common ground on the socialist left. If Socialist Action really want to identify wholeheartedly with this current, good luck to them. But we're not going down this cul-de-sac with them.

The justice of Polly Vittorini's factionally warped view of the situation will be clear at next week's NUS conference. SSiN are the major challengers to the hopeless Kinnockite leadership, and have offered a convincing way forward for large numbers of student activists.

Socialist Action and 'Campaign Student' really have nothing to say. They have no strategy whatever for the student movement, except to involve it with 'Labour's campaigning left'. Some of us can remember when Socialist Action's predecessors - who used to be a significant force in NUS - poured scorn on such a 'strategy' for students.

Link

To link students to the labour movement, we have to fight for a strategy of mass action that makes the link in practice. Affiliation of NOLS to LLL, or Campaign Student fringe meetings at NUS conference, are worthy endeavours: they are not a strategy.

That they can only promote themselves by systematic (and it is, increasingly, systematic) slander against SSiN and Socialist Organiser is an index of how degenerate the Socialist Action current is becoming.

Idiotic

SSiN do not, of course, as Polly Vittorini idiotically claims "agree with the view that women are incapable of being objective and only men can be." SSiN has simply been arguing against the revamped Radical Feminism

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 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.

A new left in NOLS

THE NATIONAL Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) national conference held on the weekend of 28 February-March witnessed the establishment of a new left current in the student movement. It was shown in two developments.

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The trouble is that Campaign Student got their votes from the right-wing Labour current in NOLS and NUS.

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Link

To link students to the labour movement, we have to fight for a strategy of mass action that makes the link in practice. Affiliation of NOLS to LLL, or Campaign Student fringe meetings at NUS conference, are worthy endeavours: they are not a strategy.

That they can only promote themselves by systematic (and it is, increasingly, systematic) slander against SSiN and Socialist Organiser is an index of how degenerate the Socialist Action current is becoming.

Idiotic

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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 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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Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

The plight of AIDS victims

Current publicity on AIDS concentrates on preventing infection but medical science is tackling the far more difficult problem of alleviating the plight of the victims.

Various strategies were reviewed recently in *Nature*, by Hiroaki Mitsuya and Samuel Broder, of the US National Cancer Institute. They were in charge of the successful test of the first anti-AIDS drug, AZT. The aim is to attack the Human Immunodeficiency Virus through a function peculiar to it - not easy, since it hides inside human cells and uses many human cell enzymes. Here are the stages in HIV infection that may be attackable.

1. Binding to target cell. HIV seems to stick to a substance on the surface of those white blood cells called 'helper T-cells', probably with a glycoprotein (see diagram). Antibodies might stop this but don't seem to. Most people with HIV have antibodies but the infection still seems to take its course.

2. Entry into target cell. HIV's lipid membrane (see diagram) fuses with the T-cell's coat, like two bubbles joining. The virus then sheds its inner coat (P18 and P24 in the diagram) to reveal its genetic material in the form of two single strands of RNA. Virtually all other living things would have double strands of DNA.

3. Transcription of RNA into DNA (like making a permanent copy of a computer program). The process is carried out by an enzyme called reverse transcriptase (RT) - reverse because normally DNA is copied into RNA, not the other way round. The RNA is destroyed in the process. This is the unique feature of HIV. Though human cells make DNA, they don't use anything like RT. RT is made by the virus and is carried inside the virus's coat. AZT affects RT.

4. Integration into 'host's' DNA. The viral DNA joins the host's DNA, lying dormant for a time. This integration is caused by a viral enzyme which could perhaps be interfered with.

5. Activation of virus genes. HIV has seven genes (a lot for a virus), some of which are responsible for regulating the others. When these are activated, the T-cell is forced to

manufacture the various components of new HIVs in large amounts. It is now that the destruction of the T-cell starts. This is certainly incidental and unnecessary as far as the virus is concerned. Indeed, if it happens too fast, the virus may be unable to finish reproducing.

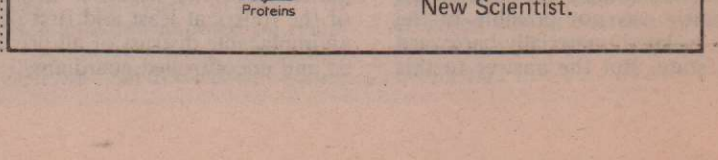
Perhaps the death of T-cells is a sort of suicide to try and prevent the spread of HIV. It may work in some cases - not everyone exposed to HIV gets AIDS. In those who do, the virus escapes before the T-cell self-destructs and the disease spreads, leaving a wake of dying T-cells unable to defend the body against the various unusual infections that actually kill AIDS victims.

Mitsuya and Broder are hopeful that ways of fatally delaying the virus's reproduction can be found, perhaps combined with replacement of T-cells from donors.

So far the one drug on the market for treating (some) AIDS victims is 3'-azido-2'-deoxythymidine (AZT). AZT attacks the virus at its weakest point - RT. AZT is similar but not identical to one of four types of link in the DNA chain - thymidine. RT treats it as a normal link but finds that the next link won't join it. The virus DNA chain is prematurely ended. Moreover, RT has destroyed the virus RNA up to that point so there is no second chance.

The drawback of AZT and similar drugs is that human cells also making or repairing DNA, may be 'fooled' by AZT. Luckily, it seems that RT is far more easily fooled than human DNA enzymes. However, AZT reduces the amount of ordinary thymidine available and this is what causes anaemia as the bone marrow is starved of thymidine.

AZT's test last year resulted in a large drop in deaths in a group of AIDS victims. It also caused dramatic improvements in those suffering from AIDS-related dementia. For Mitsuya and Broder the way forward lies not so much with vaccines for AIDS, since HIV seems to be able to dodge immune defences. They are now testing a drug similar to AZT but ten times more powerful. Further basic studies on the virus and its behaviour should open more avenues of attack. Unfortunately, it is this sort of research the government seems reluctant to adequately fund.



The AIDS virus - actual dimension one-tenthousandth of a millimetre. Diagram: New Scientist.

A puke movie

PRESS
GANG

Saving Blackie

Your caring Socialist Organiser has saved Blackie the donkey from a horrible fate at the hands of hard-drinking Scotsmen from the Star and evil Welshmen from the Sun. Press Gang now has possession of Blackie. And here is the proof.

Villaneva de la Vela, 3 March 1987. Yo, Felix Cantalego, ha vendido el burro de les tabloids a 'Press Gang' de Inglaterra. Recido 55,000 pesetas. Signed, Senore Felix Cantalego.

Grown men and women wept openly when news of Blackie's intended fate became known. In a barbaric ritual, the poor beast was to be PURSUED through the streets of a sleepy Spanish village by hordes of drunken reporters shouting "gotcha!" and brandishing cheque books. Meanwhile photographers would SURROUND the animal, tormenting him with flashbulbs. Then he was to be TORN limb from limb by frenzied Don Mackay of the Star and desperate Hugh Whitton of the Sun, crying "He's mine, he's mine!"

Worst of all, it was rumoured by villagers that Mr Mackay intended to ship Blackie over to London where he was to be appointed News Editor of the Star.

By Jim Denham

Only the intervention of Press Gang prevented this horrible ritual. Our no-nonsense message to King Juan Carlos read: "Look here, Bourbon, you probably don't know how barbaric the British press is. But you must have seen the Sun readers in action in Benidorm. Imagine what their reporters are like. Unless you act NOW we'll go over your head and appeal to the Spanish masses: 'General strike until Blackie is safe'. Our ultimatum paid off.

Meanwhile, furious bulding workers rushed to cancel their orders for the Sun and the Star. Their anger boiled over when they heard about what Mackay and Whitton intended to do to the poor beast. "It's disgusting and outrageous", said Brian, 37, from Barnes. "I saw what these animals did to Peter Tatchell and Deirdre Wood. No donkey should be treated like that. My wife and kids read the Star, but we'll never buy another copy."

A statement by the Spanish Embassy in London said that it would be a "lamentable cruelty" if the reports of the tabloids' grisly rituals were true. Petite blond, Vicki Pout, 19, a committee member of the RSPCA, was sent to Wapping by the International Donkey Protection Trust to plead for Blackie.

She was taunted by drunken hacks and offer £500 to pose topless for Page 3. At the Star's Bouverie Street headquarters sensitive Vicki broke down in tears after abuse and sinister chants of "Get 'em off" from Starmen swigging raw red wine.

But Vicki's sobs turned to tears of joy when she heard of Press Gang's mercy mission.

Meanwhile, Labour leader Neil Kinnock announced that Blackie would almost certainly be offered a safe seat at the next general election, provided that there was no truth in the Sun's attempt to smear the donkey as gay. "He'd make an ideal candidate for my new-look Labour Party, and he can then while away the autumn of his life in the comfort and safety of the House of Commons," declared the dynamic socialist supremo.

Edward Ellis reviews 'The Fly'.

'The Fly' is not so much a horror as a puke movie.

Seth Brundle (Jeff Goldblum) is a slightly loopy scientist who has invented a teleport system — that is, the sort of time-saving transport system so well known from 'Star Trek'.

Brundle meets and falls in love with Veronica (Geena Davis) who works for a glossy science magazine. She agrees to follow and film his experiments up to the great moment when he will teleport himself.

It is not all plain sailing, since Brundle has some difficulty in explaining the nature of flesh to his computer. A cuddly baboon is turned inside out during teleportation — which gives us a foretaste of the gut-churning special effects for which we are in store. But eventually the experiment works.

Then, drunk and depressed by a supposed threat to his relationship with Veronica, Brundle decides to teleport himself. He is successful — except that a blue bottle fly gets stuck in the teleporter. The computer fuses the two, creating Brundlefly.

Decays

Gradually, Brundle decays; his body rots, as more and more the fly dominates him. He is slowly and painfully transformed into an insect, a huge, disgusting insect — transformed both physically and psychologically (if you can be psychologically an insect).

The process of rotting is the centre to the film. And it really is quite revolting. Brundle starts to get nasty and sexually demanding; he eats lots of sugar and candy bars; he starts to vomit over doughnuts in order to digest them; then bits of his body drop off. Just imagining someone pulling out their own fingernails is pretty horrible: but here we see it in gory detail.

It isn't exactly frightening: if you cover your eyes it's the same impulse that makes you turn away from a rotting dead cat in the road, rather than the fear of being run over.

And in this it is very similar to those old 'Twilight Zone'-style movies of which it is, indeed, nominally a remake. Brundle is a victim of scientific, ungodly vanity, and suffers as a result. As in many of the old American horror movies, an in-



Brundle

sect is the epitomy of horror, because insects do not know love (and, of course, this used to be part of a Cold War message: insects were metaphors for communism).

Like the old horror movies, it is

based on an extremely primitive and inconsistent idea of science, despite all the soft hums and VDUs. I keep thinking: if the computer can fuse Brundle with the fly, why can't it defuse them just as easily? But such

considerations are outside the scope of this kind of story.

But unlike the 'fifties movies, it is a fable without a moral. There is no Cold War message, nor any semi-religious warning not to meddle with nature. It's just a lot of nauseating special effects built around a flimsy love story.

Perhaps Brundle's fate is supposed to be a symbol in some way for AIDS and other ailments of the modern world. There has, I understand, been some speculation to this effect. Frankly, I can't really see it; but I never have been very on-the-ball about allegory. Comparisons with Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' (where a man wakes up to find he's a cockroach) strike me as equally far-fetched. This is just a gruesome movie.

Even so, for what is 'The Fly' is pretty good. Jeff Goldblum gives a tremendous performance as the rotting, puking scientist. The special effects are effective. And it could have been more horrible still.

Speaking as someone with a fanatical loathing for all insects and other creepy crawlies, (in fact you wouldn't get me through the cinema doors to see a film called 'The Spider'), I am pleased to report that 'The Fly' gave me no nightmares.

Nor does it descend to the depths I had expected: Brundle does not start to eat shit.

This is nevertheless not a film for those with a weak stomach. Be sure not to have over-indulged before you settle down to it.

It's the wolf?

By Tracy Williams

Channel 4 have recently started a series called "Film on 4", the aim of which is to show contemporary films to a wider audience. So far we have had "The Chain", "Cal", the wonderful "My Beautiful Laundrette" and last week "The Company of Wolves."

Angela Carter has re-written the seemingly innocent fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood, an art director's dream, turning it into a richly symbolic fantasy of sexuality and mysterious tales of wolves and men.

I really enjoyed it, and for me, the film seemed to be saying that men are evil, and so in the young girl's dreams they turn into ravaging wolves. You could say it's

on the

Box

wolf whistling carried to its extreme!

However back in the real world not all men are evil wolves. Yes, it's true: women face daily abuse, be it verbal, physical or ideological; men and capitalism oppress women, and men — be they upper or working class — benefit from this.

Radical feminists argue that separatism is the only answer — to live, work and socialise without men. But men won't go away, and what about their sisters who actually like men? Are we sex collaborators?

Radical feminism is good in that

it has raised many questions but completely inadequate in answering the needs of working class women.

Then there are those like Militant who argue that we can't criticise working class men because they are oppressed themselves by capitalism. Say that to the woman who has to wash, clean, feed her kids and her man, who spends his time in the pub and then comes home to claim his marital rights. "Oh sorry, love, you can't complain. Didn't you know he's oppressed by capitalism."

Offer

Socialist feminists offer what is the only logical solution to the problem of the "wolves" — to fight alongside working class men for the liberation of our sex and our class so that our class in its entirety can make the changes needed to benefit the whole class and not just privileged sections of it.

Black sections meet



Danny Kaye

By Jim Denham

The mother of a friend was quite upset to hear about the death of Danny Kaye. She had seen him at the London Palladium just after the war and said he had held the audience spellbound.

He never held me spellbound, though I'd not seen him live.

And I was probably prejudiced against him at an early age by the headmaster of my junior school who lectured us at length before a showing of Hans Christian Andersen, about what a wonderful human being Danny Kaye was.

I was further inured against the charm of Kaye by a period spent as a member of a jazz band catering for the red nosed end of the market, whose grand finale included "the Music Goes Round and Round", a "novelty" number from "The Five Pennies", a schmaltzy Hollywood biopic in which Kaye portrayed the band leader Red Nichols.

Night after night of hammering through this banal rubbish caused me to curse the very name of the man who had first popularised the tune.

More

One film, however, persuaded me that there might be a bit more to Danny Kaye than the lightweight song and dance man I had come to know and dislike: The Life and Times of Walter Mitty. This picture had very little to do with James Thurber's original story, but did allow Kaye to excel in a series of quite funny, fantasy cameos: a ruthless Mississippi gambler, dashing RAF hero, supercool surgeon, etc.

It was a particularly appropriate role for Kaye who later in life expressed a desire to become an airline pilot and a cordon bleu chef.

The main thing to be said in Kaye's favour is that he stood up to the House Un-American Activities Committee and was the victim of a nasty red-baiting anti-Semitic campaign as a result. (His real name was Kaminsky).

This experience seems to have scared him off further political commitment (he turned his attention to less dangerous causes like UNICEF and childrens' charities) but at least he took his stand for good against evil as he saw it at the time. That may explain why Ronald Reagan's tribute to him last week was somewhat less effusive than might have been expected.

Danny Kaye's light touch and general aura of decency didn't really fit in with the America of Reagan and Rambo.

It is probably no coincidence that - in later years at least - he was far more popular than in Europe than in America. He was a good man. But Hans Christian Andersen still makes me want to spak.

This Saturday, 14 March, the Labour Party Black Sections conference meets in Nottingham in what will probably be election year. The recent actions taken by the government against Tamil refugees and the remarks made by Norman Tebbit about prominent black politicians seems to indicate that racism may play an important part in the Tory election campaign.

Unfortunately the Labour leadership's opposition to Black Sections and Patricia Hewitt's leaked letter expressing concern about the 'loony left' will only add fuel to this campaign.

Ally

On the issue of Black Sections Kinnock has an unlikely ally - the so-called Marxists of Militant. They seem to be oblivious to the destructive role that racism has played within the labour movement. History has shown that black people will organise, autonomously if need be, to fight racism wherever they find it. Greater representation of black people at all levels is an important priority for Black Sections. There is nothing wrong with this but it must be linked to a general campaign to get more people involved into a fighting and thriving black movement.

If Black Sections do not tap into the struggles of the community and bring their demands into the labour movement then they will not grow. This is particularly true of the strug-

Plan of action

Ali Asgar outlines a proposed plan of action for Black Sections.

1. Urge Black Sections to develop a charter of demands around which the struggle against racism in the Labour Party and in British society can be developed, e.g. issues such as the 35 hour week, minimum rates of pay, anti-racist education, etc. Our emphasis is to arouse interest among black workers and provide a means whereby involvement in the Labour Party would be encouraged.

2. Attempt to involve Black Sections in anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigns in the black communities.

3. Attempt to initiate a debate on the responsibility of black Prospective Parliamentary Candidates and black local government councillors - a commitment, to no rent rises, no rate rises, no cuts in services must be sought.

4. A campaign against the recently imposed racist visa restrictions could be initiated by Black Sections.

5. A national speaking tour by a well known speaker, e.g. Michael Manley, could be organised by Black Sections in conjunction with a recruitment drive.

6. A voter registration drive could be initiated by Black Sections where they exist and it need not be stale - registration drives could lead to increased black membership and involvement in the Labour Party.

The future fight for Black Sections must be two-fold. On the one hand to:

a) fight against racism in the Labour Party;

b) fight for increased representation of black people in the Labour Party;

c) take up the rights of black workers in the Labour Party;

On the other hand, to:

a) become firmly rooted among black working class communities;

b) participate and play a leading role in the campaigns of black workers outside the Labour Party.

Dion D'Silva looks at the issues facing Black Sections.

gles of black youth.

Having been hardest hit by the government's policies, they are understandably disillusioned and cynical. In response Black Sections Youth should be open, flexible, supportive and unbureaucratic - all the things they are not.

Control

Black Sections must take a leading role in anti-fascist and anti-racist struggles nationally and internationally, including campaigning against all immigration controls and deportations which are by necessity racist. There must also be demands

for the democratic control of the police; for the right to self-defence; and for anti-racist education policies to be implemented.

Labour

The black community is overwhelmingly working class. At the last general election over 80% of those that voted, voted Labour. However, far too many didn't bother to vote at all.

A lively registration drive should be initiated that also encourages black people to get involved in the Labour Party to make it accountable and responsive to all black struggles.

One way to do this is to draw up a charter for black workers. Some of the demands could be as follows:

- *Unions to campaign to organise the low paid and the unemployed.
- *The right to union recognition.
- *Greater black representation on union executives, branches, etc., with

all full-time officials on a worker's wage.

*Unions to actively campaign against immigration controls and deportations.

*Support for the formation of black caucuses in trade unions.

*No rent rises, no rate rises or cuts in jobs and services by local councils.

Change

Racism is a force that divides the working class and helps the bosses. If we want to start to dismantle the basis for these reactionary ideas we must change the system.

Capitalism is defined by class oppression. This means that only a united working class can bring about its downfall and begin to build a socialist society.

Black workers are an important part of this class, and any effort to fight racism within the labour movement is a step forward.



Demonstration in Wolverhampton against police killing of Clinton McCurbin. Photo: Nigel Clapp.

Racism in the police

By Dion D'Silva

A fortnight ago, in Wolverhampton, Clinton McCurbin, a black youth, was choked to death while two police officers were attempting to arrest him.

Earlier this year Trevor Monerville suffered brain damage after spending six-days in police custody in East London.

Reality

In the book 'White Law' we see that such incidents occur all too often. Paul Gordon graphically illustrates the harsh reality of institutional racism in one key area of state policy - the criminal justice system. This is traced back to the early 1960s when black labour was no longer required and immigration controls were enforced.

The author gives detailed statistics on police harassment of black people. In 1976 the Metropolitan Police arrested 2112 people on 'sus' (suspicion). Of these, 42% were black, whereas in the same area only 11% of those arrested for criminal offences were black.

The 'soft-cop' policy alongside this harassment has been community relations work, including police training in race relations and the recruitment of black police. These policies have been unsuccessful, primarily because they see the problem as being due to a

lack of communications rather than racism in the force and society as a whole.

The next strategy was for the police to criminalise the whole black community with the use of dubious statistics on 'black crime'. In at least one case, the assailant was recorded as black even though the victim told a journalist she was hit from behind and couldn't see her attacker.

The book clearly demonstrates that racist policing is not only due to the few 'rotten apples'. The whole police force sees black people as a 'problem'.

Nuisance

The courts have continued and sanctioned the ideas of racism, with some judges openly making racist statements. In prison there has been no serious attempt to tackle the racism of the prison staff. Indeed black prisoners are dispersed because the solidarity they show is seen as a nuisance.

This new form of racism attempts to criminalise black people and depict them as 'aliens' because British capitalism is in crisis. Nevertheless black people have shown their willingness to fight whether it be in

strikes such as at Grunwick or in campaigns against deportations and racist policing.

White Law - Racism in the Police, Courts and Prisons by Paul Gordon is published by Pluto Press.

•Five skinheads who attacked a black family of 13 in Luton have been jailed for a total of 27 years.

The attack took place as the family left a restaurant. During the vicious attack a person was thrown through the restaurant window and another had paint sprayed in their face.

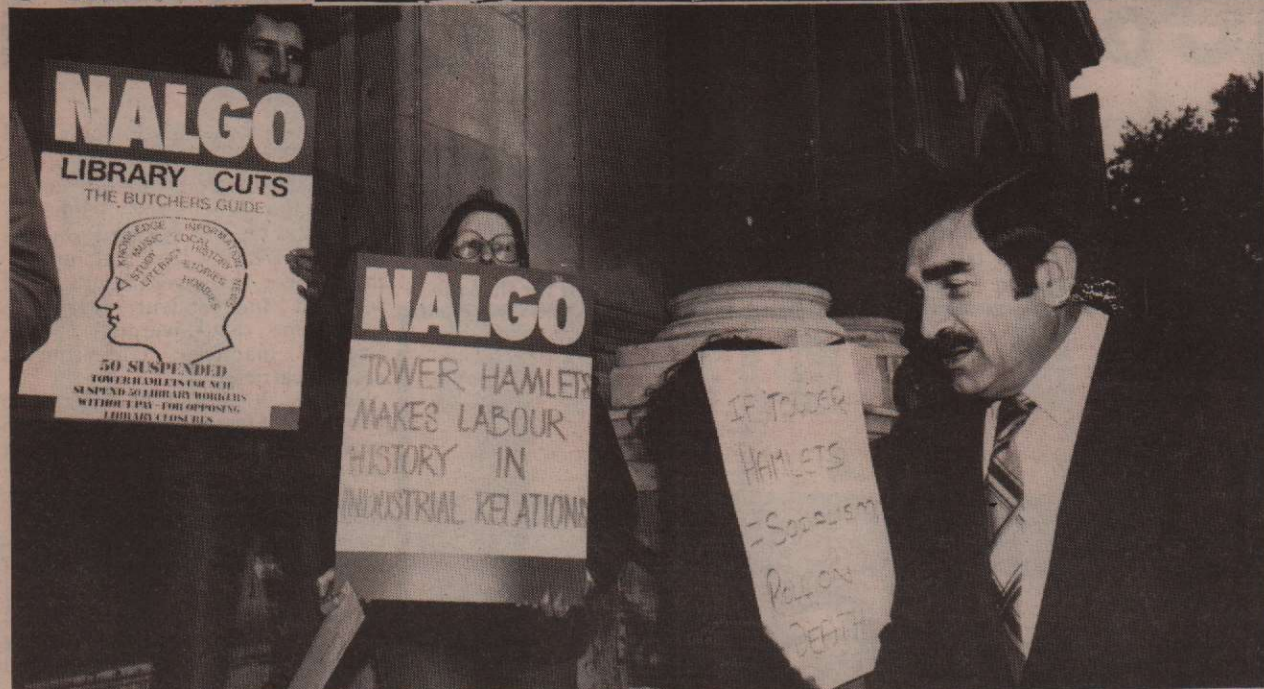
The trial judge told the racist youth that 'the motivation for this was purely out of racial hatred'. According to the Pakistan/Kashmir Youth Organisation there had been growing racist activity in the Luton area and the police have been suppressing evidence of this.

•Latest Manpower Services Commission figures on unemployment show that on average it takes whites 13 attempts before they get a job. For Afro-Caribbeans the figure is 16 and for Asians it is 21.

The survey also identified racist discrimination in searching for work using Job Centres. After YTS 69% of whites get jobs, 48% of Afro-Caribbeans and 52.1% of Asians.

The MSC response to this has been to report firms which have been identified as discriminating, to the Commission of Racial Equality. The CRE does not have a very good record of success in this field.

Further, a video is being circulated for anti-racist training of staff.



Labour councils have a long record of disputes with council unions.

TGWU drive for part-timers

By Jim Denham

Transport and General Workers Union general secretary Ron Todd has announced a new campaign, aimed at recruiting part-time workers, women and youth.

Rally

At a rally at the Wembley Conference Centre Todd promised: "Our new unionism will address itself to the problems and aspirations of groups of temporary and part-time workers, women, young people and members of ethnic minorities who have, quite frankly, been neglected in the past."

The TGWU's plans include a

recruitment campaign aimed at the Ladbroke hotel chain.

All this is excellent. But the record of the TGWU national and regional leadership does not inspire confidence. Since last July's rules revision conference, special categories for part-time workers (under 21 hours per week), youth under 18 and others have existed, whereby they can join the union at half scale 1 contributions (40p) and receive half financial benefits. Membership for registered unemployed people under 21 years of age at 10p per week was also agreed.

Difficult

But in practice, these categories of potential TGWU members have often found it very difficult to join the union. In some regions, full-time officials appeared not to know about the rule changes.

Those who have managed to join have usually been shunted off into "holding branches" which never meet, and have no power even when they do.

In the Merseyside area (Region 6) rank and file activists have been recruiting the unemployed, YTS trainees, and Community Programme workers for many years. They have done this despite the indifference of the national leadership, and the lack of provision for such recruitment (until July 1986) in the rulebook.

TGWU activists should take advantage of the rule changes, and hold Ron Todd to his word: Organise the unemployed and part-time workers, with full rights within the union, and with branches that actually meet!

Trades Council

Glasgow Stalinists

AT its annual general meeting last week Glasgow Trades Council took the unusual step of voting 88-59 to reject the EIS nominee for an executive position, although that union is its second largest affiliate organisation. The result was no doubt determined by the fact that Glasgow EIS chose Ian McCalman, whose politics are unacceptable to the Communist Party members and their fellow travellers who predominate at Trades Council meetings.

Hopefully, Glasgow EIS will remain independently minded in its politics and refuse to be dictated to by the Stalinists and their allies in this way.

Students

Scots protest on loans

By Jim Kearns

8000 students from all over Scotland demonstrated in Edinburgh on Thursday 5 March against Tory plans to replace student grants with loans.

It was the first all-Scotland demonstration against loans which the National Union of Students has organised, and in comparison with the recent national demonstration in London there was a good turn-out.

A serious fight-back against loans however must go further than simply marching through the streets.

The NUS leadership in Scotland

seems content to stand still — urging students to demonstrate but do no more — while the Tory attacks become more and more vicious.

The best the demonstration's organisers could do was advise students to turn up in fancy dress. Nobody did.

Cathie Finn, President of the Educational Institute of Scotland, and Bob Thomson of NUPE also spoke at the rally. Both were frustrated at the education system's bias against working class young people. Neither, however, condemned the on-going witch-hunt against some Labour Clubs who are building a working class fightback in some of Scotland's smaller colleges.

Does Islington care?

By Nik Barstow (Asst. Secretary, Islington NALGO, in personal capacity).

Islington's Labour Council has locked out over 30 housing advisory workers who provide its service to the homeless.

The "Council that cares" suspended NALGO members, without pay, on 9 March because they were working to rule to press a claim for higher pay.

Attack

Ken Butler, a suspended NALGO steward, explained: "Between 1985-6 Islington suspended someone on full pay who was accused of racial harassment. Usually suspension without pay is used only for people about to be sacked — now they're using it against people taking limited industrial action."

"It's a fundamental attack on our ability to organise or take action of any sort."

The lock-out marks a new low in the way Islington councillors deal with trade unionists — as bad as the way the SDP behaved when they briefly ran the Council before 1982. Desperate to drop the 'loony left' tag the Council have decided that a "get tough on the unions" binge will boost their standing with Kinnock and Patricia Hewitt.

To pave the way for the lock-out councillors were spreading wild rumours that the work-to-rule had left homeless people on the streets

and unable to claim supplementary benefit. Though they could never point to a single case, Labour Council leaders gleefully backed an SDP proposal for an investigation into housing advisory workers in one 'neighbourhood office', only amending it to call for an investigation into the whole office — without a single reason being put forward! It was just another scare tactic.

After the crocodile tears for the homeless the born-again 'sane left' showed its teeth — and locked out almost the entire workforce of the service which provides help to them.

Islington's housing advisory workers — the lowest-paid in inner London — had made sure that their action was aimed at putting pressure on managers, not the homeless. In reply they got shown the door!

Cynical

The Council leaders have cynically tried to look good to the press — attacking 'heartless' workers and getting tough with the unions. But the cynicism runs even deeper.

Margaret Hodge, Islington Council's leader, has still to close a £6 million 'gap' in the council's budget if she doesn't want to fight the Tories (and she doesn't). Locking-out council workers, and hoping more take support action, is the quickest way to save some of the money.

It confirms what Socialist Organiser has always said — "If they won't fight the Tories, they'll have to attack the workers."

Speakers from the dispute can

be contacted via Islington NALGO, 23 Compton Terrace, N1 (01-354 7470). Donations should be sent, payable to Islington NALGO, to that address.

London Weighting

Ealing NALGO

By Robert Read and Hilary Curtis

Members of NALGO in the London Borough of Ealing have been on strike since Thursday 5 March.

They are in dispute with the Labour-controlled council over their claim for Inner London Weighting on their pay. Council employees in Brent and Hammersmith already have the extra money.

Ealing NALGO have been fighting for inner London Weighting since 1974.

Before the all-out strike, NALGO members were refusing to cooperate with councillors, refusing to collect any money for the council and had a ban on overtime. They also planned a one-day strike for Thursday 5th.

Graham Southgate, Press Officer of the local NALGO branch told Socialist Organiser that on Monday, 60 workers at Ealing Town Hall were suspended without pay for refusing to collect council money. Most of the

Even the managers quit!

Workers at Salford Plastics in Eccles, near Manchester, are fighting for their jobs.

Forty TGWU members have been on strike for three weeks since six of them were suspended. The boss set very high new output targets for the six workers. When the targets were

By Paul Woolley

not met, they were suspended.

A mass meeting voted to strike in their support. All 40 were then threatened with dismissal. Another mass meeting decided to stay out and the boss sent dismissal notices by

dispatch rider.

AEU and EETPU members at the factory are also on strike, although some scabs and managers are going in and trying to do the strikers' jobs. TGWU members at local companies which trade with Salford Plastics are blacking materials.

Some deliveries are turned away. The local Jobcentre has refused to advertise the strikers' jobs.

The company boss, Barry Chapman, is bitterly disliked. Workers have gone without pay rises and worked in appalling conditions to "make the company profitable". Yet figures obtained by the TGWU show Chapman personally took over £100,000 out of the company in 1984-5.

Even his managers quit because they cannot stand him. For now, he is 'sitting tight', not talking to the unions, the press, or anyone.

TGWU officials have said the dispute will be a long one. The strikers will need money and support. Eccles LPYS has organised a public meeting where these can be arranged,

Ordnance sell-off

By Paul Woolley

THE buyers for 12 Royal Ordnance Factories (ROFs) being sold off by the Tory government, will be announced at the end of March. GKN are the current favourites.

Redundancies have already been declared at ROFs at Enfield Middlesex, and Patricroft (Manchester). At Patricroft, a 3-shift

system has been introduced, speeding up production.

The only strategy from the union leaders is pressurising Tory MPs and having a half-day strike to lobby Parliament. The aim is to 'stall' the sell-off until a Labour government is returned.

The unions' mandate for action should be translated immediately into a serious campaign (including strikes) to beat off privatisation now.

Councillors victimised

47 Liverpool Labour councillors are due to be sentenced by the Law Lords this week for the crime of attempting to look after the interests of Liverpool's working class. They had the nerve to take on the Tory government in line with

By Lol Duffy, (Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Wallasey, in personal capacity).

Labour Party policy and their election commitments, and for that the

full force of the law is being used against them.

The Tories talk about democracy, but when the people of Liverpool elect a council on the basis of creating jobs and improving services, the government uses its so-called independent courts to make sure that Liverpool Labour Group's manifesto commitments are not carried out.

Surely it should be up to the people of Liverpool to decide who best should represent them, and not the courts.

Liverpool's Labour councillors could not expect justice from the courts and should not have expected it from the very beginning of the campaign. What they should expect, though, is support from the next Labour government with any disqualifications being quashed and compensation paid.

The Labour leadership's response to Liverpool's fight has been disgraceful but not unexpected. The response of all socialists in the Labour Party should be to make sure that Labour is unequivocally committed to reversing all disqualifications and fines when in government. I, for one, will be fighting for these demands.



Caterpillar workers from Scotland march from Transport House to lobby the House of Commons. Photo Jez Coulson, IFL.

Gay rights are policy

The leaked letter from Patricia Hewitt, or Neil Kinnock's office, which suggests that it is the lesbian and gay rights policies of the 'loony left' Labour councils in London which are responsible for Labour's decline in the opinion polls, have raised a storm of angry protest from the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights and its powerful supporters in the party.

LCLGR points out that a comprehensive policy for full equality for lesbians and gay men was passed by a large majority at the 1985 Labour conference, and was reaffirmed at the 1986 conference by a majority of 79% and with the unanimous support of the National Executive Committee.

The Party's policy commits it to immediate legislation to end all legal discrimination against lesbians and gay men and to make any form of discrimination on grounds of homosexuality illegal.

LCLGR believes that it is dishonesty that loses votes, not a principled commitment to equality which is properly explained and campaigned for. Wherever Labour fought an open and honest campaign around lesbian and gay rights policies or openly lesbian or gay candidates in the last local elections, the Party returned much improved results. By contrast, wherever Labour sits on the defensive and pretends not to support lesbians and gay men, it hands the initiative to the bigots and loses votes.

LCLGR calls on the leadership to stand by its policy in the best interests both of lesbians and gay men, and of the party as a whole, and pledges itself to fight vigorously and with all the resources at its disposal to ensure that Labour's conference commitments are not watered down.

Caterpillar bosses get mean

The management of the US based company Caterpillar are starting to get tough with the workers who have been occupying 'their' Uddingston plant in Lanarkshire.

Last week American plant manager Ken Robinson made it clear that the decision to close the plant announced in January is to go

ahead. For good measure he went on to threaten the Caterpillar workers with loss of redundancy payments and wages in the run-down period. A works committee spokesperson summed up the reaction of the 800 strong occupying workforce: "Threats don't worry us. We are going to lose our jobs anyway

By Brian McKenna

under the company's proposals. We will fight to the end to retain them."

The Caterpillar workers are to donate a tractor, dubbed the 'Pink

Panther', to Nicaragua to help the people there who are fighting US-backed 'contras'. The tractor was originally offered to Live Aid - who were threatened with legal action by the company, who claimed it was their property.

Now War on Want are taking it to Nicaragua - although the company have won an interim prevention order against the charity accepting it.

Last Thursday, 5 March, Caterpillar workers were joined by other workers in a demonstration in London. At the company's factory in Grenoble in France there was a two-hour stoppage in the workers' support.

If management continue to toughen up then the occupying workers will need to respond in kind. At the moment they are depending too much on the broad top-level support they have been given by the likes of Scottish Secretary of State Malcolm Rifkind, SNP chair Gordon Wilson and the upper ranks of the clergy in Scotland. The demand should still be put on the government to ensure that no Caterpillar equipment be purchased by public sector companies. But we also need serious labour movement action in their support, beginning with boycott action.

Caterpillar's intransigence surely confers doubt on the wisdom of the strategy advocated by some on the left that workers can simply 'change the employer's mind by being more militant'. Caterpillar workers need another option: a co-operative sheltered by Strathclyde Regional Council and the next Labour government.

Donations to: T. Stevenson, 17 Camprie View, Bargeddie, Bailleston, Glasgow.

Margam: a big defeat

I was bitterly disappointed for a number of reasons at the decision taken last Saturday by the South Wales miners' delegate conference to accept the principle of six-day working at the proposed Margam pit.

It is stepping outside the national union, and on a decision involving major changes to working practices. That should not be decided through Areas alone, but through the National Union of Mineworkers. The South Wales miners' decision was to ignore, slide around or duck under the national body.

In the past we have always looked to the Welsh miners to be radical and progressive. Now, however, it seems they are being very inward-looking.

I also thought, with a decision like that, they would have made inquiries about what happened when similar working practices were introduced in the past, as they were in Bevercotes in the 1960s. But they did not - they neither contacted the national union about it, nor indeed any of the lads who worked under that system.

I understand the pressure the South Wales people were under. It is 800 jobs. But 800 jobs today

could well mean the loss of thousands of jobs tomorrow if the Coal Board manages to make the new working practices and projected productivity at Margam the norm.

At a later stage they will turn to other pits and say that if they do not match Margam they are 'uneconomic' and should close.

It is the thin end of the wedge of doing away with national agreements. The Coal Board will now want to introduce Area by Area agreements, then pit by pit agreements; then district by district within each pit.

The media of course are rubbing their hands with glee and portraying the decision as a swipe against Scargill. But the blow is not against Arthur Scargill - it is against every single miner - and opposition needs to come from every delegate and miner throughout the country.

Particularly around this area, where many men have still got memories of the Bevercotes Agreement.

ment, the reaction is amazement and bitterness. They are really uptight about it. I had my written tribunal decision two weeks ago and still absolutely nothing has happened. I understand the Coal Board has something like seven weeks to decide what they are going to do, but they have made no approach to me. It gives the lie to Haslam's so-called 'review'. He makes a speech about reinstating those who won their tribunal cases and were not involved in violence, and then how my case is treated. I won a clear decision at the tribunal: no violence; no damage to property. And then nothing from the Coal Board. It clearly indicates how they think. What it says to the other sacked miners is, if a case like mine cannot command instant reinstatement, what chance are they going to have? In the present elections for the union's vice-president, I think that Sammy Thompson and Eric Clarke are both very able men. But of the two I prefer Sammy Thompson's stand on victimised miners. Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.



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