

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

Kick out the Tories in '87!



Labour's
'to be
or not
to be'

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Thatcher's friends plotted to oust Labour government

DISBAND

THE HARD core of Britain's permanent state machine — organisations like MI5 — is firmly and bigotedly Tory.

If a Labour government ever moves beyond pale-pink consensus politics, these unelected rulers will try to strike it down. And in return the Tories will do their best to keep the now-tattered veil of secrecy shrouding MI5.

The government has announced that it will charge three newspapers — the *Independent*, the *London Daily News*, and the *Evening Standard* — with contempt of court for publishing allegations from a book by former MI5 agent Peter Wright. A copy of Wright's manuscript was sent to the *Independent*.

According to Wright, the Tories' friends in MI5 tried to bring down the Wilson Labour government in 1974. So now the Tories repay MI5 by making it illegal to publish the allegation.

The Tory government has already lost a court case trying to stop publication of Wright's book in Australia. They are appealing through the Australian courts, and in the meantime they can still try to clamp down here with court injunctions.

They took out injunctions against the *Guardian* and the *Observer* last year. *Socialist Organiser* could be prosecuted for contempt of court, too, for this article, which republishes Wright's allegations.

• Thirty senior MI5 staff tried to organise a smear campaign against Harold Wilson in 1974 in order to bring down the Labour government. According to Wright, "It was a carbon copy of the Zinoviev letter [a faked letter from the Communist International to the British Labour Party in December 1924] which had done so much to destroy the first Ramsay MacDonald government".

• The top directors of MI5 were not involved in this plot, but covered it up afterwards.

MI5!

• MI5 tapped telephones illegally. It bugged the French and West German embassies.

• It made plans to assassinate President Nasser of Egypt at the time of the Suez crisis.

• When Wright joined MI5 in the 1950s, it had files on two million people. The files have increased dramatically since then. Separate revelations have shown that MI5 vets applicants for BBC jobs.

The Tories are a threat to democracy. Their move against the three newspapers is only their latest attack on civil liberties, after:

• Severe restrictions on the right to demonstrate (under the Public Order Act) and on trade union rights.

• Increased stop-and-search powers for the police; effective creation of a national riot police during the 1984-5 miners' strike; increasing militarisation of the police.

• Prosecution of civil servants Clive Ponting and Sarah Tisdall for blowing the whistle on unsavoury Government operations.

• The crippling of local democracy by direct controls on local councils from Whitehall.

• A police raid on the BBC as part of the Tories' efforts to suppress Duncan Campbell's TV programmes on

'The Secret Society'; increased pressure on the BBC to toe the government line.

It is all the more vital to campaign vigorously for a Labour victory in the coming general election. But Labour must also have policies to deal with the 'secret state'.

Otherwise a Labour government will be a prisoner of the permanent state machine. Remember: the 1974 Labour government was not very radical. But it came into power after a great miners' strike which had forced the Tories into a general election.

That was enough to set the MI5 agents plotting. Field-Marshal Carver has also revealed that some 'fairly senior' army officers were talking about a military coup at that time, too.

A Labour government really accountable to the labour movement will have to dismantle the hard core of the existing state machine, and replace it with an administration under the democratic control and supervision of the majority, the working class.

For a start, Labour must campaign now to disband MI5. It is a standing threat to the 'national security' of the great majority of the people of this country!



Subversive enemies of MI5 march in support of CND.
Photo Ian Swindale.

WORLD Brief

IRA campaign

THE BRITISH government is discussing whether or not to put the British Army back centre-stage in Northern Ireland, in face of a renewed IRA offensive which has seen a wave of attacks on members of the RUC.

Last week a prominent judge and his wife were blown up.

There are a number of reasons for the IRA's increased activity. The Sinn Fein/IRA leaders must convince their own hard-core militants that Sinn Fein's turn to politics does not mean any military softening-up.

Last November's old guard split-off from the Provisional Republican Movement now exists in unequal competition with Sinn Fein, in the guise of Republican Sinn Fein, led by Provo founders David O'Connell and Rory O'Brady.

SF did miserably in the recent 26 Counties election, getting only a little above 1% of the vote, so the focus on politics may be coming under hostile pressure within the Republican movement.

'External' concerns, too, govern the Provos' tactics. They know that the best hope they have of seeing the Anglo-Irish agreement smashed is for a massive Protestant backlash to develop. The killing of off-duty RUC men, and incidents like last week's killing of a Protestant worker because his brother's firm had done some maintenance work for the RUC, are designed to stoke up anger in the Protestant community.

The Protestant militants opposed to the Anglo-Irish agreement have spent the last 18 months putting pressure on the RUC. The new and more lethal pressure from the IRA may decide the British government to try to take some of the pressure off the RUC by returning the Army to a more central role.

A complication is that any move Britain makes has now to be squared with its Dublin partners in the Anglo-Irish agreement. Though the new Taoiseach, Charles J Haughey, quickly declared after the election that he would work the agreement, he may make difficulties.

On the whole, though, things have been going very well for the Anglo-Irish agreement. Three weeks ago a historic meeting occurred — the first gathering of a committee of representatives from the British and Irish parliaments agreed under the terms of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

In the event of a devolved Parliament being set up in Belfast, the inter-parliamentary committee will also include representatives of that body. Closer links now exist between Britain and Ireland than at any time since Dail Eireann seceded from Westminster in January 1919.

Sri Lanka

IN SRI Lanka, the cycle of violence and counter-violence has reached a new pitch. Tamil separatists blew up a bus station in the country's capital, Colombo, on 21 April. Four days earlier, 122 Sinhalese were massacred in the north-eastern port of Trincomalee.

The government has responded in kind. Fighting between Tamil 'tiger' guerrillas and government troops has reached a new intensity.

The Tamils are a national minority in Sri Lanka, the majority of whose population are Sinhalese. Tamils, who also live in southern India, are mostly Hindus, while Sinhalese tend to be Buddhists. Although under British colonial rule some Tamils were relatively privileged, today the Tamils are a bitterly persecuted minority.

The British government has scandalously refused to allow many Tamil refugees to find sanctuary in Britain, and wants to deport a Sinhalese who supports the Tamils, Viraj Mendis, who now lives in sanctuary in a Manchester church.

The Tamil national movement, which includes radical-nationalist groups like the Tigers, is an entirely just movement against brutal national oppression. The government of Jayawardene has increasingly used violent repression against Tamil communities around Jaffna in the north of the island, destroying whole villages and encouraging anti-Tamil sectarianism.

Indiscriminate attacks on Sinhalese civilians are a blind alley for the Tamil movement. But there will be no peace in Sri Lanka — increasingly compared to Lebanon — until the Tamil minority is granted the right to self-determination. That must include their right to a fully independent state if they want it.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation re-unites

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has reunited under the well-known leadership of Yasser Arafat, following the Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers last week. But improved relations with other factions have been won at the cost to Arafat of a move towards more hard-line nationalist positions.

The Council broke with Arafat's recent orientation towards the 'moderate' Arab regimes. A representative of the Polisario guerrilla group attended the meeting at the PLO's invitation, prompting Morocco's King Hassan, who is at war with Polisario, to break off relations with the PLO. The PNC abrogated the PLO-Jordanian 'Amman agreement' signed in 1985, in which Arafat and King Hussein agreed to coordinate peace initiatives (although in practice Hussein has been ditching the PLO).

And most important of all, the PNC condemned the Peace Treaty with Israel signed by Egypt in 1979, and theoretically at least, banned contact with the Egyptian government. Even more galling for Egypt's President Mubarak, the PNC resolved that it would continue to deal with "popular and democratic" — i.e. opposition — forces in Egypt.

The Egyptian government promptly closed all PLO offices in the country.

This realignment marks quite a serious shift. Arafat's orientation towards Egypt — which although for long a pariah in the Arab world and still not fully reintegrated, is the strongest Arab state — followed the PLO's terrible defeat in Lebanon in 1982. The PLO was forced to evacuate Beirut, and Arafat quickly



tried to make new diplomatic friends.

After that, the PLO came close to falling apart. Long-standing differences between the 'moderates', seeking a degree of compromise with Israel, and the hard-liners, exploded into a major military conflict in 1983 which split Arafat's own organisation, Fatah.

Bridges have since been mended, and now Arafat has managed to reunite not only with his own dissidents, but with hard-line adversaries of his for many years, like the PFLP's George Habash.

Habash, who boycotted the last PNC because of the rapprochement with Jordan and is a bitter opponent of the current Egyptian regime, has emerged as a key figure in the reorganised PLO.

Whether or not Arafat can be held to the more hard-line stance remains to be seen. For the new arrangement is a double-edged sword in some respects for the hard-liners. The

reunification of the PLO under Arafat's leadership is widely perceived as a defeat for the main hardliner, Syria, which has been trying to force Arafat out of Arab affairs. Arafat has emerged much strengthened after the PNC and many commentators consider that he has in reality only made minor concessions.

Autonomy

To an extent, therefore, the overall result is greater autonomy of the PLO leadership from Arab governments. But the PLO is today very weak, and this autonomy is unlikely to last. Hopefully, a more united PLO will be able to restrict the ability of different Arab governments to manipulate its divisions, but that too remains to be seen.

Is this a victory for the left? It is good that the PLO shows solidarity with Polisario, and rejects an alliance with King Hussein, who in 1970 but-

chered Palestinians living in Jordan, and has as much Palestinian blood on his hands as Israel does. Egypt, too, is a right-wing regime.

But the hardline nationalists have no coherent alternative to Arafat's increasingly unsuccessful diplomatic endeavours. Their concentration on the Israel-Egypt peace treaty is a case in point. There is no doubt that the Egyptian government's decision to sign a peace treaty was very popular in Egypt at the time, although now it is a focus for much discontent with Mubarak's regime. Straightforward rejection of any peace treaty on principle is a purely nationalist response that cannot relate to the real concerns of the Egyptian masses, who have suffered heavily in wars with Israel.

Moreover, it cannot relate to the Israeli Jewish masses. Since 1974, and more so since, the Arafat leadership has made empirical tactical adaptations in its 'democratic secular state' policy that might allow for more flexibility in relating to the Jews. But it has coupled this with a diplomatic strategy that has relied, more and more, on right wing regimes that never deliver the goods.

The ultra-nationalist alternative mainly substitutes only a more vigorous 'armed struggle' and reliance on supposedly more radical regimes like Syria. This strategy also fails to relate to the Arabs in the occupied territories, many of whom are workers, and some of whom work inside the 'Green line', in Israel.

The PLO has proven that it can survive. Thus the central objective of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and subsequent foreign policy, has failed. And this survival alone is important for the Palestinian people. But the PLO cannot break the logjam. A socialist movement that breaks out of the purely nationalist framework of the past is needed — a working class movement that recognises Israeli national rights and tries to win Israeli workers to wholehearted support for the Palestinian cause.

Organising domestic workers in South Africa

IN THIS interview, taken from the South African Labour Bulletin, Margaret Nlapo of the South African Domestic Workers' Union explains her union's policies and how to fight to defend black women domestic workers in South Africa.

What are the major grievances of your members at present?

The major grievances revolve around questions of dismissal without notification, low wages and long working hours, and the disruption of family life which domestics experience. Employers are hiding behind the lack of legislation to protect these workers.

This is the context in which our demands must be viewed. The demands adopted include:

- A minimum wage of R200 per month;
- Unemployment benefits for domestic workers;
- Normal working hours, 8 hours a day, 5 days a week;
- Workmen's Compensation. The union sees this as a very important demand.

Like any other workers domestics often get hurt at work. Typical examples are dog bites, breaking legs and arms while cleaning windows, etc. For the injured worker there is common law to protect them, but few know of this, and the employer's usual response is to simply dismiss in-

WOMAN'S EYE

jured workers.

- Maternity benefits;
- Annual paid sick leave;
- Overtime at R2.50 an hour.

Domestic workers are isolated, dispersed, and usually under almost total control of their employers. Your union claims a membership of 50,000 and has stated the need to organise the other million or so unorganised domestic workers. Given this situation, how do you recruit new members?

Our response is to make domestic workers aware of their problems, to give them an idea that we know their problems. This gives them confidence and strength, they are also attracted to the union.

Thus far recruitment has predominantly been based on word of mouth. We do sometimes send an organiser to a new area, but it is important to know that every member is an organiser for the South African Domestic Workers' Union (SAD-WU). Members usually bring in new members.

Unlike the situation of other unions, you do not have workers concentrated at one point, like at a factory.

How then do you keep lines of communication between the union and membership open? What structures, for example, exist within the union to ensure this?

One of the best things about the last few years is the way our workers have developed structures by themselves, in order to respond to their situation.

We have seen the formation of street and area committees on the ground, especially where we are well organised. Some domestics whom we have helped are so grateful that they go out to organise their whole street. Meetings are held at street level on a weekly basis.

Area committees form branches, such as Johannesburg, Springs, Pretoria, etc. Branches then elect regional executives.

There is also the national conference, to be held every two years, where the national executive will be elected. Above this is a National Council, consisting of ordinary members from each region (three per region) and union officials. This body will ratify decisions taken by the national executive.

Your problem at the moment is also the lack of time off for domestics. Does this affect union organisation, like attendance at meetings and so on?

Yes, it does affect us. That is why we are also demanding normal working hours. At our Annual General Meetings for example, we usually

have to have a follow-up meeting the next day, for those who couldn't come the day before. Street level meetings are also affected by this; irregular attendance is one way we see this problem in our union.

Influx control has historically affected domestic workers in quite a significant way. How will the so-called scrapping of the Pass Laws and the new 'orderly urbanisation' affect your members?

It seems to me that most of our members are worse off now. Pass raids may have stopped, but you must remember that the majority of our members are still migrant workers. Many come from the so-called independent countries.

These people will not get the new identity booklets, they will not find it easier to seek work in the cities. It is with them that our main concern lies.

Your members also complain of the disruption of family life. Is there a way you can redress this problem in the future?

It is very, very difficult. This is the one thing that causes a lot of heartache amongst our members. Our own children are running in the streets while we must smile at our employers' children. In the cities we may redress this by calling for creches, for time off, but for our rural workers it is very hard. Ultimately the solution is political, there must be an end to this 'homeland' system.

Labour's 'to be or not to be'

Good news on Sunday?

By Jim Denham

WHAT DID you think of the News on Sunday? I know you bought one, because, like me, you find the prospect of an avowedly left-wing 'popular' paper on the news stands a strange and exciting one.

I remember the Sun in its pre-Murdoch, radical colours. But the News Chronicle, the Daily Herald, and the Reynolds News belong to a sepia-tinted past, as remote from this day and age as Craven A, cloth caps and Communist Party MPs.

I'd seen some of the NoS dummy issues, which were pretty uninspiring efforts both politically and journalistically. The acrimonious departure of John Pilger, and the very public debacle surrounding the paper's pre-launch advertising, e.g. 'No tits, but plenty of balls', did not augur well. Word had it that Pilger's walk-out was merely a tip of the iceberg: there was a fundamental rift between the aims and objectives embodied in the twelve-point charter drawn up by the paper's founders some time ago, and the brash 'left-wing Sun' aspirations of editor Keith Sutton.

Which perspective would win out on Sunday 26 April?

Right

Well, I think they got it about right. If anything, issue no.1 tended towards excessive earnestness, missing no chance to display its ideologically sound heart on its sleeve.

Even the colour feature about some very old mummified human remains discovered in a South American desert managed to work in a few sage comments on women's oppression ('Life was nasty, brutish and short — especially for women, something that hasn't changed much in 10,000 years') and the nuclear threat ('Perhaps there is a lesson we ought to heed from our earliest ancestors, among the first human beings to walk this troubled planet: beware, we could well be the last').

Don't get me wrong — I'm not complaining. I never thought I'd have cause to remark on a Sunday tabloid being just a little too self-consciously right-on. It makes a nice change.

My only real complaint concerns the front page lead — the piece about a young Brazilian who had offered his kidney for sale because of desperate poverty. A most disturbing story, certainly. But the next day's Independent led on Peter Wright's revelations about the MI5 plot to overthrow the Wilson government in 1974.

This story has been known to journalists for some time, and the NoS must have been aware of it. The Observer and the Guardian intended to splash it, but were silenced by injunctions from the government.

Guts

Papers like Socialist Organiser and Socialist Worker have reported it. Finally the Independent had the guts to publish and be damned.

Was it cowardice or stupidity that led the NoS to ignore what should have been the perfect lead story for their launch issue?

That said, I wish the News on Sunday well. They've got a tough job ahead, and need to sell 800,000 copies a week within two years to survive. I'll keep buying it, and I hope you do as well.

THE CENTRAL argument of Eric Hobsbawm and others who favour 'tactical' voting is this: what is the alternative?

They say that there is no other alternative to a Thatcher victory in the coming general election but a pact to exchange votes between the Labour Party and the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

As Hobsbawm puts it in the May edition of the curiously-named magazine 'Marxism Today': "The defeat of the Tory government is the essential task in British politics, and should have absolute priority over any other aim and political calculation".

Hobsbawm admits that there is no chance that either the Alliance or the Labour leaders will call for tactical voting. He concludes that people should just go ahead and do it — the 'Popular Front' from below, so to speak.

If it can be taken for granted that the readers of 'Marxism Today' are natural Labour voters, and that quite a lot of them live in prosperous middle-class areas, then the main burden of Hobsbawm's message to them is: 'Vote SDP-Liberal Alliance'.

And thus the grotesquely misnamed 'Communist Party' draws out the full logic of its politics to the muddy dregs.

Quite apart from any consideration of principle, the campaign for 'tactical voting' now being waged by a gaggle of right-wing writers, ranging from the Communist Party and 'Marxism Today' to the editor of the 'New Statesman', can only bring an added dimension of chaos and confusion into the Labour camp. As if the Labour leaders weren't already making a big enough mess of things, these 'Marxists' are now doing what they can to sabotage Labour's election campaign.

Principle

The main argument against a Labour block with the SDP-Liberal Alliance is, however, a matter of principle. The question posed to the labour movement and the Labour Party by the advocates of a new Popular Front is nothing less than fundamental: to be or not to be.

Any political block of the Labour Party with the bourgeois Alliance will give the Alliance veto rights to determine what a Labour-led government can and cannot do. Defeating the Tories is of course 'essential' — but so is having an alternative to Toryism.

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Kinnock and Hattersley at Labour's Red Rose Rally in Northampton last week. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report.

The new 'Popular Front'ists have only half the picture. If defeating the Tories is 'first', what is second? They propose to bring down Thatcher (assuming their tactics work) at the cost of the labour movement forswearing the fight for a real alternative to Thatcherism.

Is David Owen — or a Labour or Labour-led government acceptable to David Owen — an alternative to Thatcherism? Or Thatcher's understudy?

Using the shoddiest sort of argument, Hobsbawm hangs everything on anti-Toryism in the way a pre-Labour radical might have done 100 years ago. "The Alliance is unquestionably an anti-Thatcherite phenomenon, and insofar as the Tory Party has been hijacked by the self-made stormtroopers of the Right, a secession from Conservatism".

But the Alliance is much more fundamentally anti-working-class than it is anti-Thatcherite. 'Tactical voting' means forswearing anti-capitalist policies — and not only for the coming election, perhaps forever.

The Popular Frontists want Labour to accept the Alliance at its present level of support as a permanent feature of British politics. Instead of fighting it, we must ally with it, block electorally with it, and let it set the limit to what the Labour Party can even aspire to do.

Wrapped up in the 'emergency' motivation for the Popular Front is something far deeper: a historic surrender to the forces of capitalist society by the labour movement.

Historic

Hobsbawm advocates a British version of the traitorous policy of the Italian Communist Party, which a decade ago offered, in the name of the Italian working class, a 'historic compromise' to the conservative Christian Democratic party.

Of course Neil Kinnock and the present leaders of the Labour Party are, in our view, far from having policies adequate to the task of sorting out Britain after Thatcher's

years in office. And, as we argued last week, they are fighting the election campaign like people not quite clear that they want to win.

But what the new Popular Frontists want the labour movement to do is forswear ever being able to offer the electorate an alternative — and immediately to give up in advance, on the say-so of the opinion polls, on an attempt to win the General Election.

If Labour loses the election, it will be because the Labour and trade union leaders have failed so miserably to organise the movement and unite it in a vigorous campaign against the Tory government. And because they seem more interested in inflicting on the movement such nonsense as the eve-of-election conflict with some of the most vociferous

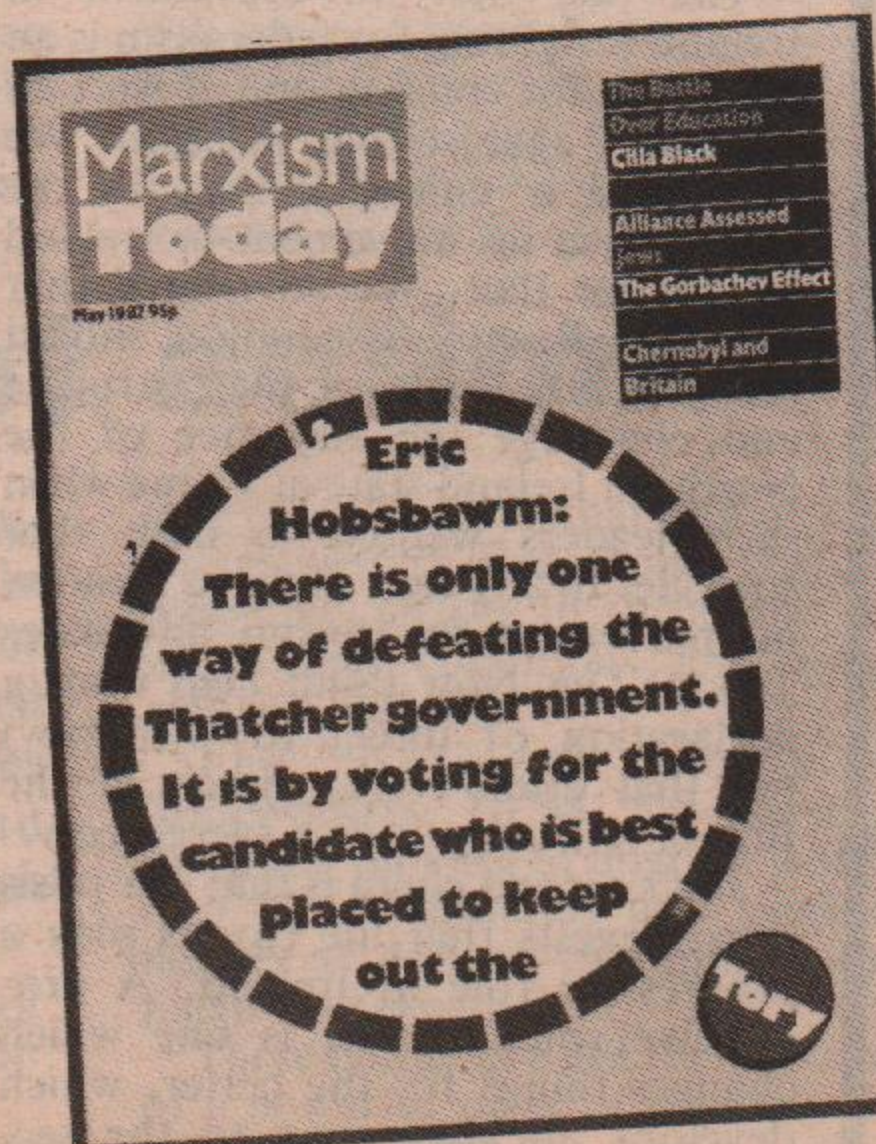
black people in the party.

Fight to win

But Labour does not have to lose the election. A powerful campaign round Labour's conference policies can still be mounted, and it should be. The last thing Labour needs is to follow the advice of the 'SDP-Marxists' and haul up the white flag of surrender.

For all their faults, and no matter how distant they are from socialist politics, Neil Kinnock and the leaders of the Labour Party who reject coalition and go into the election committed to fight for a Labour government are far to the left of those chicken-hearted 'Marxists' who have abandoned class politics entirely.

Hobsbawm's scab policies are nothing new



Marxism Today's scab special

THE scab policies now being pushed by Eric Hobsbawm and the Communist Party aren't new. They had the same line in the '30s and '40s.

In the late '30s they argued that what was needed was not a Labour government but a 'Popular Front' government — Labour, CP and... Liberals! When the wartime coalition broke up in mid-1945, and Labour decided to ask the electorate for a majority in the general election, the then influential and sizeable CP was bitterly against it.

Labour should stick with the 'progressive Tories' like Churchill and Anthony Eden, said the CP! Labour won by a landslide.

There is a difference between the old Popular Front and Hobsbawm's idea of it today. In the past the CP was guided by Russia's foreign policy needs — in 1945, by Churchill's wartime alliance with the USSR.

Today it is not Russian foreign policy interests that guide them (otherwise they would follow Gorbachev into supporting Margaret Thatcher!). What determines their line now is their own political prostration.

GRAFFITI

Women moving left

Ever since women got the vote, on average they have voted slightly more right-wing than men. But that may have changed. In the 1979 general election, the Tories got a 4% bigger share of the women's vote than of the men's vote, and the Labour Party a 5% smaller share. In opinion polls before the 1983 election it looked as if the 'gender gap' had been reversed, but on the day the Tories still did 4% better among women, and Labour 4% worse.

The Alliance is also more popular among women than among men. It has also introduced a rule which women in the Labour Party have been advocating in vain for years, that each shortlist for selection of candidates must include women. There will be 91 women Alliance candidates at the general



Suffragette fighting for the vote election, 86 Labour, and 33 Tories.

Childcare and work

Union pressure is leading to increased provision of childcare facilities and arrangements at work, although the most positive gains so far have been in the public sector. A Labour Research Department survey of childcare provision shows that negotiated

agreements range from a few days' paid leave to care for sick children to workplace nurseries costing between £16 and £45 a week. Examples of agreed childcare provision include: *North Manchester General Hospital's nursery which costs

£16-24 per child per week, depending on income; *£25 a week childcare payments at IPC Magazines for one child only; *late clocking facilities for child carers at Rolls Royce, Bristol; *job sharing and the extension of the flexible hours scheme for family commitments at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and

*five days' paid leave for "domestic distress" at the civil service in Portsmouth.

The survey points to the massive increase in the numbers of women in employment in the past 15 years, poor local authority nursery provision and government policies on parental leave as contributing to the increased need for unions to place childcare higher on their bargaining agendas.

CPSA pay-off

The right-wing leadership of the civil service union CPSA does not give up easily. Last year they lost elections for general secretary and union treasurer to left-wing challengers.

They raised a hue and cry about ballot-rigging. An investigation showed no evidence of rigging, but they re-ran the elections. This time the right wing won the general secretary election; but they lost

again for treasurer. Now their defeated treasurer, John Raywood, has been given a whopping consolation prize. Although he is stepping straight into a £25,000-a-year banking job, the union will pay him £87,500 redundancy money.

Union officials such as this have more in common with the employers than with the union's rank and file members.

The poor pay

The suicide rate among men has risen by 30% over the last ten years, and the Royal College of Psychiatrists reckons

that unemployment is a factor. About 3,000 men kill themselves each year, and among young men

suicide is the second most common cause of death after accidents. Unemployment causes suicides directly, through despair, and also indirectly, by turning men to drink. Heavy drinkers are 15 times more likely to kill themselves than the average person (and overall, alcohol causes 100 times more premature deaths than illegal drugs).

The suicide rate for women is half that for men, and has been decreasing.

Poor health

38% of men on low incomes suffer ill health, but only 17% of men with £1000 a month or more. 34% of low-income women are sick, and 14% of high-income women.

These recent survey results confirm other

research showing that the poor have much worse health than the rich. The survey was funded by the tobacco industry, but shows that smoking damages health from an early age.

Unions falling behind

Trade unions are failing to tackle new industries and new geographical areas of industrial growth, according to research done by the Scottish TUC and reported in the Financial Times.

In the new town of East Kilbride, non-unionism was 65% in 1982 and 80% in 1986. Only 6% of the companies surveyed by the Scottish TUC in Livingston recognised unions, and only 19.5%

in Glenrothes and Irvine. All the foreign-owned companies were non-union, bar one.

High-tech electronics companies in these areas of industrial expansion were almost all non-union, too.



100,000 'anti-imperialists' mobilise against the Tory government: William Craig's 'Vanguard' movement of the early '70s.

Ireland and SO

Joe Craig (SO310) advises SO to drop its programme for Ireland because it is "left-wing imperialism". His arguments for this view, however, are very poor.

Our support for Irish self-determination is conditional, he says, because we advocate federalism, a particular form of government, and because no movement in Ireland is fighting for it.

In fact we consistently support the general demand for self-determination. We advocate federalism not just because it is the only democratic version of a united Ireland but because it is not possible to achieve any form of united Ireland without some programme to unite Protestant and Catholic workers.

The oft-recited idea that Protestant-Catholic unity will only be an attainable goal after a united Ireland actually means that there is no chance of a united Ireland. Our main criticism of the Troops Out Now demand is that, without a political strategy or proposal for a united Ireland it will lead not to self-determination but to civil war and repartition.

I find it strange that many critics of our programme identify our cardinal sin as that of making Irish self-determination conditional on other demands. In reality what we have done which is different from the rest of the left is to give our support for Irish self-determination a higher priority than our support for Brits Out! We support both and realise, of course, that Irish unity is not possible while the British army remains. But we know that Troops Out alone does not necessarily mean a united Ireland and for us, a united Ireland is more important. Self-determination is the principle, troops out is a strategy, more suitable at some times than others.

The fact that no movement in Ireland is fighting for federalism is an argument for creating one, it isn't an argument against that position. We advocated a united Ireland in the 1960s when no movement in Ireland fought for that. We advocated that the Civil Rights Association should recognise the logic of their struggle and challenge the existence of the Northern Ireland state at a time when their leaders wanted to limit that struggle. In any case as far as I know, no movement in Ireland advocates Troops Out Now (Sinn Fein want a declaration of intent to withdraw) but that doesn't stop much of the British left using it as a sacred cow.

Joe's second claim is that our position suggests that the troops play a progressive role in Ireland. A progressive role, to me, is one which changes things for the better, which develops an alternative to the sectarian state, breaks down divisions and moves against national oppression. Britain and her troops defend the status quo, the irreformable sec-

tarian state. We have repeatedly said that we think British policy, in fact, stirs up conflict between the two communities. The combination of dealing with the Catholic revolt with brutal repression and running Northern Ireland entirely from outside is stoking the fires of civil war.

That is not a description of a progressive role. It is just less reactionary than a collapse into civil war. Britain's rule is not progressive, a major feature of its policy has been stagnation and stalemate. For their own reasons, however, the British state wants to avoid civil war and chronic instability in Northern Ireland. The problem for all those who oppose them is: what do we propose as an alternative to this? The simple collapse of the state power in Northern Ireland is not an alternative which is democratic and moves our class forward. But that is what Troops Out on its own means.

Alternative

Republicans and socialists have, in fact, no serious alternative to the existing situation. There is no alternative government in waiting. It is not just a matter of handing over to the local population. The division of Ireland continues not just because the British army is in the North; it will continue in some form anyway because the Irish people are divided. The worst scenario, *even worse than what exists now*, would be a long and bloody civil war with thousands dead, mass population movements, and an eventual settlement which created a new and even more bitter partition. Joe Craig and others have to ask themselves the same basic question over and over again: What defines our attitude to Ireland most clearly: our opposition to the Northern Ireland state or our commitment to Irish self-determination?

If our wholly justified opposition to the Northern Ireland state and the troops leads to recklessness about the future of self-determination and working class politics in Ireland it is time to examine our priorities.

Finally Joe seems to sneer at the idea that the central problem is not imperialism but the division between the Irish people. He puts forward no argument against our view except that it might lead one to the same view as the British government, i.e. that sectarianism is the problem. Here Joe demonstrates a range of flaws common on the left. First a tendency to challenge an argument not with reasons or facts but with anxiety about its implications (but if you are right then that means...). Second a conviction that if the left ever agree with any assessment which the ruling class also has then we must be supporting them. Thirdly, and linked to these, a reluctance to look at the facts when they challenge common wisdoms.

The facts tell us that imperialism

has not been the central problem in Ireland. 1. British (English) involvement in Ireland predates any form of imperialism or colonialism as we understand it. It goes back 800 years. The relationship between Britain and Ireland is unique. It bears little comparison to that between Britain and India or the USA and Vietnam.

2. At the peak of British imperialism, at the turn of the century, the policy of a big majority of the British ruling class was Home Rule. It is true that the Unionists allied with a section of the British establishment to resist Home Rule but the decisive factor in their favour was that they were a compact community concentrated in the North East and with powerful political organisations.

3. The main political policies of the British government (if that is to be the measure of imperialism) have recently been to break open the Northern Ireland state and improve relations with the Republic (1960s), power-sharing (1973-4) and the Anglo-Irish Accord (1985). The chief opponents of these policies and up until recently very effectively, have been the Protestants.

If we were to determine our politics on the simple principle of supporting those who oppose Britain's policies in Northern Ireland then we would have to fete the worst Orangeists as the best 'anti-imperialists'. The Provisionals, by comparison, have achieved little, except to force the pace of reform at times.

Socialism

We in SO say that there is no possibility of socialism without a united working class to fight for it. The working class in Ireland is divided and that division centres in the North on the questions of what the legitimate political territory of Ireland is, how the two communities should relate to each other and how Ireland should relate to Britain. It is not possible to progress from here to develop working class politics without a democratic programme for the workers' movement which a) recognises this as the central problem and b) proposes a solution which champions the right of the Irish majority to self-determination and protects the rights of the Protestants as a distinct community within a united Ireland.

That is not left-wing imperialism it is the sort of rounded and consistently democratic programme for the national question proposed by the revolutionary socialist Third International over 60 years ago.

PATRICK MURPHY, Leyton, E. London

Send letters to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. No more than 300 words, please, or we may have to make cuts.

Black workers' May Day victory

This Friday, hundreds of thousands of black South African workers will celebrate May Day.

And they will also celebrate a victory over Botha.

The racist government has been forced to grant black workers a May Day "workers' holiday". Botha has said that the first Friday in May will be a holiday.

He has not done this out of the goodness of his heart, or out of his love for working people, but because of the threat of a general strike in the closing moments of the whites-only election campaign.

Last year over 1½ million black workers struck and took May Day as

their holiday. This year even more workers looked set to take industrial action.

Botha's announcement is not all it seems, though. For a start, the government has not given May 1 as a holiday. It has just said that the first Friday in May shall be a holiday and surprise, surprise, May Day this year falls on a Friday.

Nevertheless, the independent unions have said that they will strike every May Day until May 1 is made a public holiday.

This victory comes after a long campaign over the last few years by the independent unions

May Day has a long history in South Africa where it was first celebrated in 1904 by white workers.

By 1916 the International Socialist League (forerunner of the Communist Party) was organising non-racial May Day celebrations. By 1928 the vast majority of workers on the demonstrations were black. In the 1930s the Communist Party and others on the left fought a long hard battle to maintain the May Day marches as non-racial celebrations of workers' unity and opposed the expulsion by the racists of black workers from the May Day Organising Committee.

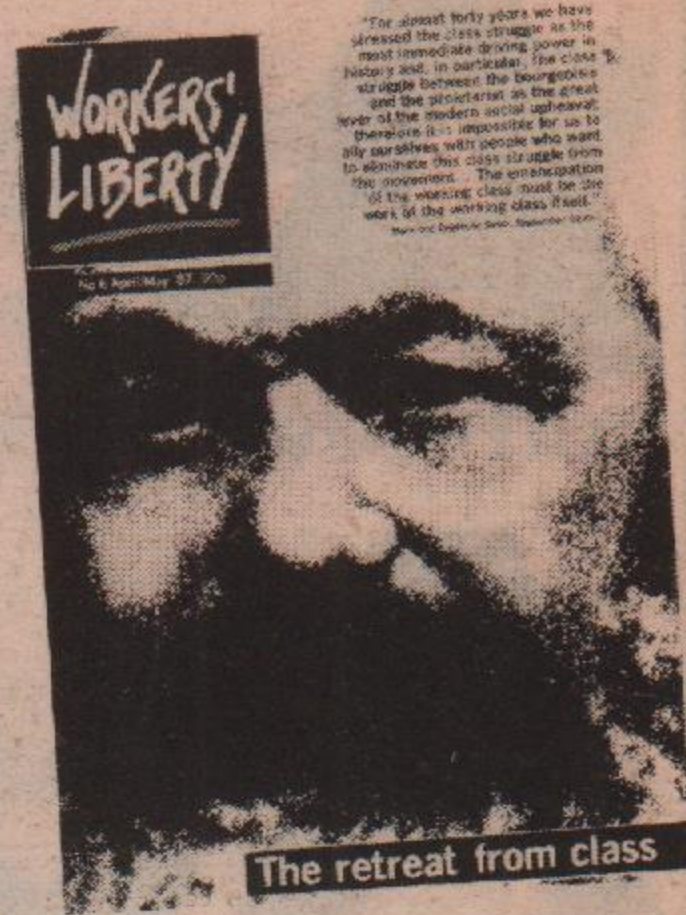
During World War 2, the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU), in which Trotskyists like Sam Gordon and Dan Koza played an important role, kept up the May Day tradition using the slogans "We

Want Bread" and "Work for Wages".

1950 saw a May Day stayaway called to protest at the Suppression of Communism Act and to demand higher wages. Despite attempts by the state to smash this strike it was well supported especially among the best organised workers.

However, as African nationalism rose as a mass force in the 1950s the priorities of the liberation movement turned away from specifically working class concerns, and the importance of May Day declined.

In fact it wasn't until the 1980s that May Day once more became important and its importance is an indication of the strength of the rising black workers' movement, the force with the power to destroy apartheid.



Why is the working class going out of fashion on the left?

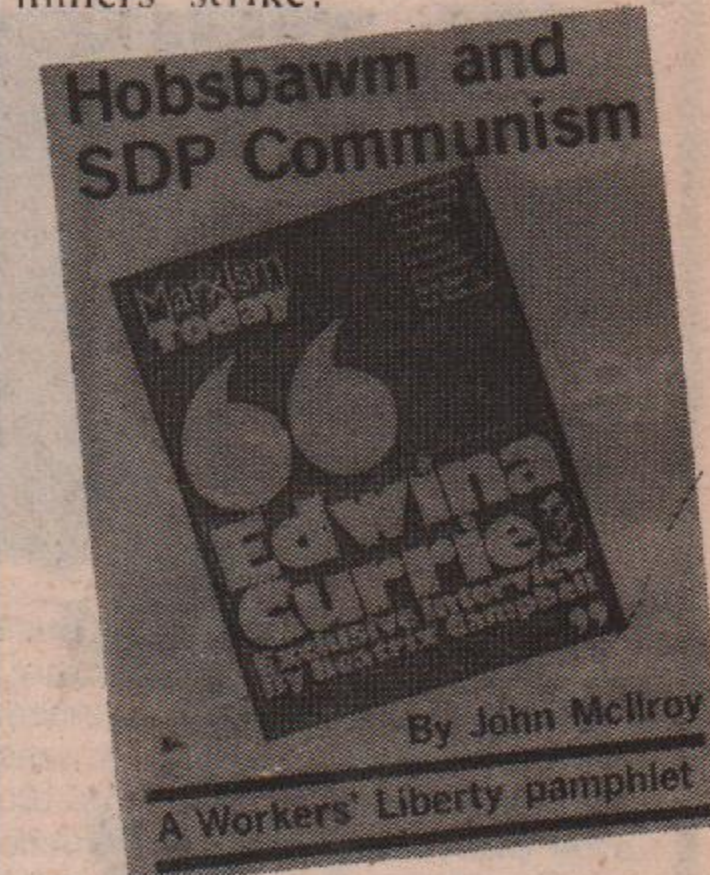
Workers' Liberty No. 6 provides an answer. Plus Bob Fine on the Freedom Charter, Vladimir Derer on the Labour Party, Martin Thomas on the Third World and much, much more. Workers' Liberty No. 6 is available from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 90p plus 20p p&p.



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Anger over shooting of strikers

By Anne Mack

Johannesburg was alive with rumours this Monday morning, 27th, of a possible strike or stay-away in protest at the shooting dead of six striking black railworkers and the sacking of 16,000 last Wednesday.

According to sources inside the country there is much talk in the townships and the unions of action either this Wednesday or next Wednesday — the day of the white general election. But so far it is only talk and rumour. The giant black trade union federation COSATU has not yet called for any specific action.

Part of the reason for this appears to be a fear on the part of the leadership of COSATU that any call by the federation may be used by the state as a pretext for a further crackdown on the activities of the workers' movement.

Since last week's shootings which were followed by the police occupation of COSATU headquarters and the arrest of the 400 people inside, the federation's leadership have spent most of their time in conference with their lawyers, discussing the legal problems that a call for solidarity action might create.

The government's drive against the militant black railworkers and their union SARHWU has been extended over the last few days with the attempted eviction of over 300 workers from their hostel at Oggies and the recruitment of hundreds of unskilled white workers as scabs. At one Johannesburg station, Kempton Park, over 750 whites have been

The Metal and Allied Workers Union organises demonstrations at workplaces every Monday to publicise the case of Moses Mayekiso, the union's detained general secretary, and all other detainees.

Moses, who faces charges of treason and a possible death penalty, is to appear in court again on 3 August. His 'crime' is that he helped build the Alexandra Action Committee, a democratic township organisation, which according to the charge sheet amounted to an attempt to "overthrow, usurp or endanger the authority of the state, with seditious intent to defy or subvert the authority of the state."

It is vital that the entire international workers' movement rallies to Moses' defence. Send letters of protest to:

P.W. Botha, President, Union Buildings, Pretoria 0001, Republic of South Africa.

HAMBANI KAHLE MA-COMRADES

**ASISOZE SANILIBALA FUTHI
SIYOQHUBEKA NJALO
NOMZABALAZO ENAWUFELA**

We will never forget you, we will never give up the cause you died for

Federation calls for workers' self-defence

THE POSTER above commemorates Mawu members, BTR strikers and supporters, who were abducted from the township of Mpophomeni and murdered by a gang of Inkatha supporters.

COSATU is now arguing for workers' self-defence.

"We have to organise our own defence to protect ourselves and our struggle against attacks. Already in many areas COSATU workers are starting to defend themselves. We have to strengthen this a hundred

times over, in every workplace and every township.

"The attacks are getting so serious, so many people have died, that we must organise self-defence in every workplace and every township to consolidate and protect the gains we have made".

hired to do work traditionally done by blacks — and not done by whites for over 50 years.

The fact that the rail strike was allowed to go on for six weeks, in a vital sector of the economy, with the government losing millions of pounds every week, is an indication of the uncertainty gripping the highest levels of the South African state in the period running up to next month's elections.

Mike Roussos of SARHWU argued on Wednesday night that the sackings and shootings were part of the government's election strategy to placate the far right. This is no doubt true, but it doesn't explain why a notoriously hardline employer like the South African Transport System (SATS) would allow the workers six weeks to mobilise before resort to mass sackings which are a favourite weapon of the South African bosses.

The strike is also an indication of the very real strength and authority that the independent unions, even relatively new and untested ones like SARHWU, possess among black workers.

Nevertheless, it does certainly look like SATS has succeeded, for now, in breaking SARHWU.

Whether the open collaboration between SATS and the security forces that led to last week's massacre is a sign of a new turn towards repression of the trade union movement is the question that must be answered.

P.W. Botha's advisors have talked about new anti-union laws after the next election and Pik Botha said at an election rally that black trade union militancy and political involvement "could lead to the end of trade unionism in South Africa".

However, an all-out drive against the unions would be a big gamble for Botha.

It would mean turning his back on the trade union reforms of the late 1970s and early 1980s and on any attempt to co-opt or at least control the trade unions. Nor is it at all clear that Botha feels he is in a secure enough position to launch an all-out offensive against the unions, implying a level of repression far higher than anything we have seen so far.

A wave of action

THE LATEST state of emergency has been quite effective in terms of making life difficult for township and community based organisations. Street committees have been dislocated, and murderous black vigilante groups are on the increase.

However, the Emergency has not halted the rising wave of black industrial militancy.

Alongside the 16,000-strong rail strike there is a strike in the Johannesburg/Soweto area of some 7,000 postal workers. The Food and Allied Workers' Union, FAWU, has recent-

ly organised a national day of strike action against detentions. There are numerous strikes in the mines over wages and conditions and against vigilante attacks.

The National Union of Mineworkers, NUM, has started to move the families of migrant workers into the compounds and single-sex hostels as part of the union's campaign to 'take control'.

These battles are just the latest part of a powerful surge of working-class militancy which has swept industry after industry. January and February 1987 alone saw 750,000 strike-days — more than the total for any one of the years 1980-4.

A history of the Australian work

Australia is a country whose settlement by whites fell wholly within the capitalist era. It differs from the earlier colonies such as those of Latin America, many of which still retain a sizable peasant class. Australian farming was dominated by large capital from its earliest beginnings, and small farmers constitute a very small minority of the Australian population today.

The country was first settled by whites in 1788, mainly by convicts and their guards. Some few free settlers did venture out with the first fleet.

The large and mostly uninhabitable continent constituted a prison for convicts from Britain and Ireland, but convicts were not left to languish in gaol. Convict labour — plus a few free settlers — provided the colony's first workforce. They could be sent out to work, since they had little chance of survival if they escaped. Free settlers could gain the services of convicts for nothing, to work their land or serve in their houses. Since the main job of the colony was to become rapidly self-supporting, convicts who had served their time were granted land to work so that they could add to the produce and help feed the barely surviving colony.

The climate was hostile. Only the narrow coastal strips were really suitable for farming. Large amounts of capital were needed to farm successfully, since the list of jobs to do was endless — scrub clearing, crop rotation to ensure the soil did not become exhausted, stock breeding to provide the manure needed for fertiliser. It took money to do all that, and to weather the hard years when drought struck or imported seeds failed to thrive.

Thus many became labourers for others rather than farmers themselves. Unlike the USA, where the frontier existed, and families could push westwards and find land to work, Australia's interior had no such promise.

Next month ships will leave London in a re-enactment of the voyage of the 'First Fleet' which took convicts to Australia. It is part of the celebrations of Australia's bicentennial in 1988.

Campaigners for the rights of Australian black people are organising protests during the bicentennial, highlighting the fact that white settlement led to the virtual destruction of the continent's original population.

But in the late 19th century Australia, with the highest wages in the world, was called 'the workers' paradise'. Patrick Duhig outlines the history of Australian labour.

By the 1820s, freed convicts were no longer granted land, and only those settlers with capital were granted land. This further concentrated land in the hands of the wealthy few.

Workers, however, were not badly off. Since there was a shortage of labour, wages were high. Wool was Australia's export staple, and much work was needed — shearing, shepherding, lambing, timber getting, droving and land clearing. The big land owners began to put on pressure to import more labour.

By the 1840s the labour shortage had somewhat eased: but workers had now begun to organise. The Australian Union Benefit Society was set up in the 1840s. It led strikes, carried out political agitation, and organised trade combinations. It was strong enough to force the end of convict transportation in the 1840s, because workers saw convict labour as a threat to their wages and conditions.

For the same reason workers were also opposed to the import of

"coolie" labour from Asia. This created a racist tradition which continued in the Australian labour movement right up to the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972. Since then the 'White Australia' policy has been dropped, and Australia now takes far more immigrants from Asia than from Britain; but racism continues, especially against the small remaining aboriginal population.

By 1855, Australia had won full self-government from Britain. Franchise was restricted, and parliamentary seat-allocation weighted against the — more radical — towns. Each state was self-governing; federation did not come until 1901.

Labour had no party of its own, but it was a strong pressure group even in the 1850s. The gold fever of the 1850s, when thousands of workers rushed to the gold fields, created a labour shortage. A worker earning 4½ shillings a day in 1850 could earn 25 shillings a day by 1853.

Workers sought to consolidate these gains by getting immigration severely restricted, to allow in only skilled and agricultural workers, both in short supply.

Despite a mild economic depression following the gold-rush boom, the years 1873-1890 were boom years for Australian labour. In those years, British capital, seeking to escape economic slump at home, flooded into Australia to finance the spread of railways, telegraph, and huge irrigation projects. Labour was getting stronger and more organised. By the 1870s, various Trades Hall Councils and Trades Union Congresses had been formed. An intercolonial (all-Australian) trade union congress was held in 1879.

Workers won the right to strike, and immunity from prosecution for conspiracy when organising. Conditions in mines and factories were regulated by law.

1878 saw the founding of the Amalgamated Miners Association, which linked up gold, silver, copper and coal miners. It numbered 25,000 in 1886, when it set out to organise shearers. By 1890, the Amalgamated Shearers had 25,000 members too, with another 7,500 in a separate union in Queensland. 1886-1890 was a period of successful strike action by workers.

W.G. Spence, who founded the



Above and below: nurses on strike in Victoria. Photo: Socialist Fight

miners' and shearers' unions, was a class conciliator rather than a confrontationist, though, and the early labour movement was influenced more by the ideas of Henry George and John Stuart Mill than by those of Karl Marx.

Workers favoured the programme of the Radical Liberals — extension of democracy, triennial parliaments, taxes on the wealthy landed class, extension of public works, upper house reforms and the regulation of industrial and social conditions. The major class conflict was between the merchants and shopowners of the towns and the landed squattocracy, rather than between workers and the wealthy. Workers tended to side with the merchants, to try to break the rural rich of their monopoly of political power.

Class

Class consciousness began to grow as the boom ended in the 1890s. Scab labour and strike breaking police were used by the bosses to break strikes in the 1890s as workers struck to defend their conditions. The Australian Labor Party was formed out of the trade unions' political leagues to put the workers' voice in Parliament. Though it was founded on a conservative programme — support for arbitration, ties with Great Britain, and White Australia — labour was at least organisationally independent of the bourgeoisie.

Some people were, however, trying to bring socialist ideas into the labour movement. William Lane, in

Queensland, tried to form the Australasian Labour Federation in 1890 to unite all Australian and New Zealand workers. His strategy was to build industrial unions, not craft unions, and to take action on political issues, not just on wages and conditions.

Queensland got the world's first Labor government in 1899. The first Federal Labor government came in 1904, lasting only four months. By 1910-13, Labor had been stabilised enough to govern for three years.

But Labor was dominated by its most conservative sections — its parliamentary representatives and trade union officialdom. Labor had no real class direction of its own; and though Labor had a majority in both houses the Liberals' policies still dominated Australian government.

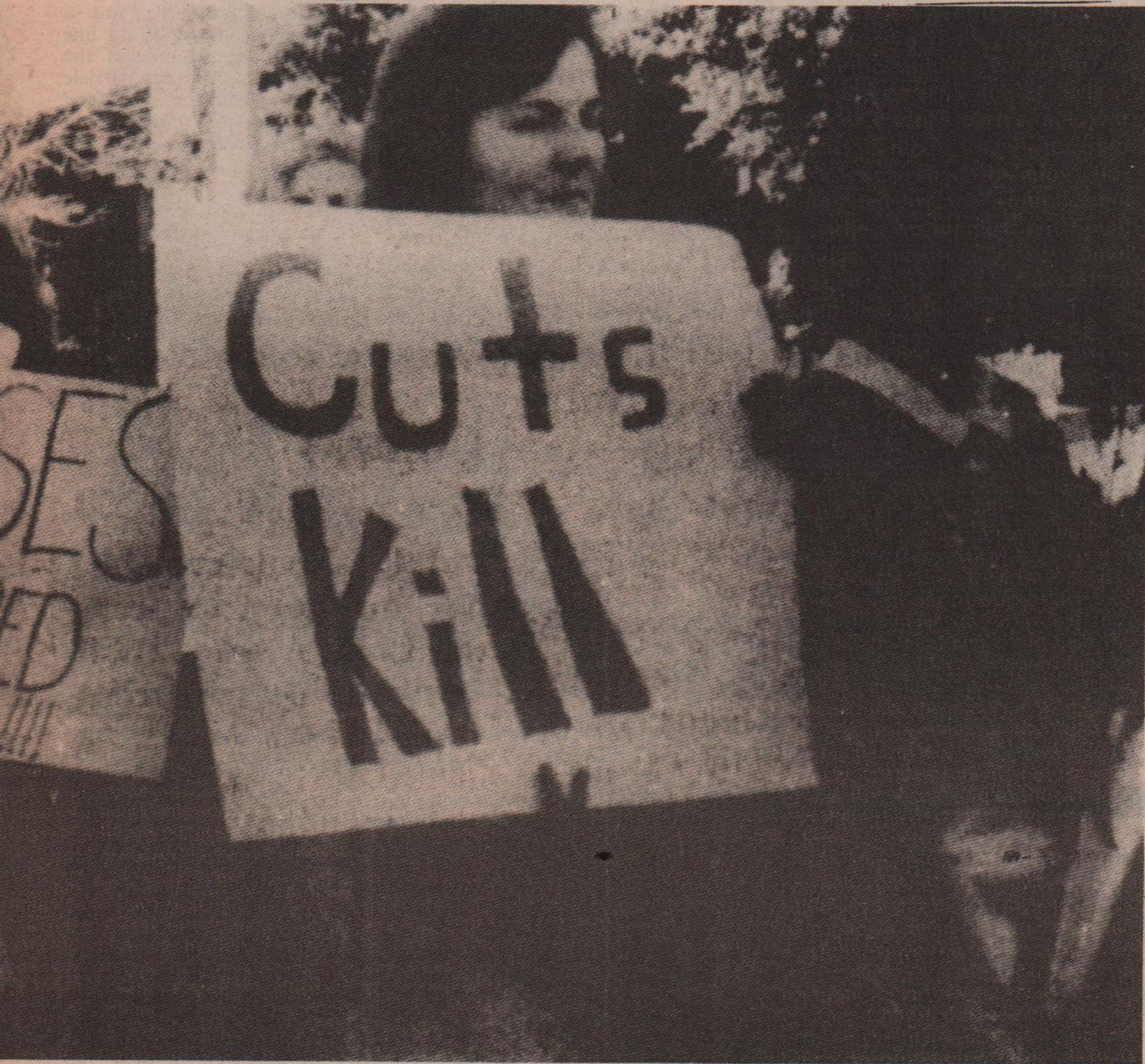
Australian Labor in power has always been a brake on working class struggle. Dominated from the beginning by union officials, it has sought to manage capitalism, rather than attack it head-on. Its greatest push in its early years was to establish the principle of arbitration firmly.

Strikes

This approach led to three huge strikes in 1910-14 being broken or cheated and derailed. In the miners' strike of 1909, Labor joined with the bosses to starve the workers back to work; a coal strike was also sold out by Labor; the Brisbane general strike of 1912 won wage rises and union recognition in the arbitration courts and the strike was called off, but then



Working class



the bosses appealed and had the decision overturned.

The Labor Party's idea that workers' well-being was tied up with the prosperity of Australian capitalism caused it to side with the bosses against the working class. By suppressing militancy and strikes, Labor was the best servant of Australian capitalism.

Conscription

Australia rushed to Britain's aid in World War One, believing the British ally was necessary to keep out the 'Asian hordes'. However, the war caused a split in Labor's ranks. Left wingers and others had begun a campaign against conscription. Anti-war and anti-conscription activists grew in number. But Labor split on the issue and went into the political wilderness for years.

The post-war years saw the growth of the Australian Communist Party, which had several thousand members in its heyday in the '20s and '30s. It applied for affiliation to the ALP, and briefly won it in New South Wales, but mostly organised outside the ALP, which remained resolutely capitalist party.

Even when it won, power at the height of the Depression, Labor had to answer but to cut wages to restore profitability.

After World War Two, Labor headed a reconstruction government. The welfare state was set up. Big programmes of social services, public works, land settlement, housing, and immigration were begun.

Labor now believed it could avert big boom/bust cycles by massive public works expenditure. But Labor was to be partially destroyed electorally yet again. The red scare card was played. The Liberals put up a bill to outlaw the Communist Party. This split Labor into two camps. The right wing broke away to form the Democratic Labor Party, a group which kept Labor out of office until 1972, when the Whitlam government won a majority in the Lower House. The DLP is now dead.

Whitlam came in on a big spending programme — urban and regional development, the arts, and housing were all to get money.

Boom

But the post-war boom was ending, and again Labor forced workers to pay the bills. Indexation of wages was introduced, supposedly to equalise wages for those in weaker unions, and to keep wages in line with inflation. But the result was a net loss for workers.

Workers were disenchanted by this, but there seemed no alternative. There is no big party to the left of Labor which might form a government — the only way to swing is back to the conservatives, or to give up in apathy.

Workers, however, were ready to defend Labor when the government was sacked in 1975 by the Governor-General, the Queen's representative in Australia. But Labor told workers to calm down, that the election would get them back the government. It

didn't. The conservatives won, and Labor again was in the wilderness.

The Labor leaders thus formed the opinion that Whitlam had tried to go too far, too fast, so they started trimming back on their policies until they were again indistinguishable from the conservatives.

The union leaderships have supported every stab in the back Labor has given the working class. Union leaders were eager to sign the Prices and Incomes Accord with Labor — a document designed to keep wages down so as to raise profits. They have sat back while Labor, elected in 1983 again, has broken a trade union, the Builders Labourers, and tried to smash another, the Meat Workers. Three versions of the Accord have eroded workers' pay and conditions further.

The Australian union movement is presently depressed. Small actions have broken out, but the union leaders have rushed to police them. Until workers unite to take on the misleaders in the unions and in the ALP government, there will be little to expect from a so-called Labor government.

Organise

The first step now is to organise the left in the Australian Labour Party and the unions — a left that can simultaneously challenge the leadership from day to day, strive to take the leadership in specific actions and make radical socialist propaganda that will forge a new, socialist, consciousness in the Australian labour movement.

A wave of protest action

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

Wednesday 26 April

The Provisional Government's Minister of the Interior authorises the use of troops in the Minsk province to suppress the peasant movement. The Provisional Government's Minister of War issues a decree demanding "unconditional obedience to the military orders of superiors" and threatening any soldier who calls for an end to the war with punishment "in line with the full rigour of martial law".

A 2,500 strong meeting of workers of the Petrograd Stary Parviainen factory condemns the Petrograd Soviet's support for the government's "freedom loan" to finance the war and opposes the entry of socialists into a bourgeois coalition government. It also demands separation of church from state, and school from church.

In Helsingfors the crew of the Msta declares its lack of confidence in the Provisional Government, and calls for an end to the imperialist war and for the transference of all power to the Soviets.

Thursday 27 April

Prime Minister Lvov sends a letter to the President of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee inviting representatives of the Soviet to become members of the Provisional Government. Alekseyev, commander-in-chief of the Russian army, orders commanders at the front to prepare for an offensive beginning in mid-May. A general meeting of soldiers of the 2nd Siberian Rifle Division, stationed on the Western front, calls for the publication of secret treaties, an end to the war, and a change in the composition of the Provisional Government.

The Vinnitsa Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies resolves to introduce immediately the 8-hour working day, "not waiting for a decree from the Provisional Government." A 2,000 strong meeting of workers of the Kazan factory Alafuzov demands immediate publication of Tsarist treaties and the confiscation of private estates, and condemns the withdrawal of revolutionary troops from Petrograd. At the initiative of Bolshevik deputies, the Helsingfors Soviet resolves to establish a Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet (Centrobalt).

Friday 28 April

An all-Petrograd meeting of representatives of workers' militias is held to decide upon the constitution of Petrograd Red Guards. Their purpose is defined as "defence of the gains of the revolution and struggle against counter-revolutionary activities". The representative of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee present at the meeting declares that the Executive Committee is sharply opposed to the formation of Red Guards.

A joint meeting of the executive committees of the Moscow and Petrograd Soviets votes by 23 to 22 with two abstentions to oppose entry into a coalition government. The Provisional Government issues decree number 238 condemning fraternisation and appealing for an end to it. In Pokrov the Soviet of soldiers' deputies declares its support for the demand for a pay-rise by workers at the Morozov factory and suggests that management makes concessions.

The Kronstadt Soviet declares conditional support for the "freedom loan".

Saturday 29 April

The Bureau of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee resolves to propose to the organisers of the Red Guards that they should cease to agitate for their formation and should not undertake any organisational measures until the matter has been discussed by the Soviet Executive Committee. The Vyborg Soviet resolves to reorganise the local militia into Red Guards. The Executive Committee of the Nishny Novgorod Soviet calls on local soviets to establish workers' militias.

By 217 votes to 127 an extended meeting of the Helsingfors Soviet votes in favour of the "freedom loan". After the meeting many crews and shore-detachments replace their delegates who supported the loan by Bolsheviks opposed to it. On the South Western front soldiers fraternise with the Germans after threatening to throw grenades at any artillery units which open fire during the fraternisation.

Saturday 22 April

The wave of protest at the contents of the "Miliukov note" continues to spread throughout the country. Armed demonstrations are held in Petrograd.

In an attempt to calm the situation the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet bans the holding of meetings or demonstrations on 23 April. The Moscow Soviet of workers' deputies and the Moscow Soviet of soldiers' deputies adopt the position of the Petrograd Soviet and appeal for an end to demonstrations and a resumption of work.

The Yaroslavl Soviet condemns the "Miliukov note" as does the Minsk Soviet and workers' mass meetings in Kiev and Nizhny-Novgorod.

Sunday 23 April

After discussing the "Miliukov note" the Pskov Soviet advocates support for the Provisional Government only if its policies do not bring it into conflict with the Petrograd Soviet. A mass meeting of workers and soldiers in Yuryev calls for control of the Provisional Government by the Petrograd Soviet, after discussing the "Miliukov note". The Voronezh Soviet condemns the "note" as counter-revolutionary and the Executive Committee of the Irkutsk Soviet also issues a condemnation.

400 delegates in Petrograd and 250 delegates in Moscow attend general meetings of the local metalworkers' trade unions. The 8-hour working day is introduced into all printing presses in Minsk on the instructions of the printers' trade union. A mass meeting of soldiers in Krasnoyarsk adopts a resolution calling for "not war until a victorious end, but revolution until the end".

Monday 24 April

In Petrograd the seventh all-Russian conference of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (Bolsheviks) opens, attended by 133 delegates with full voting rights and 18 delegates with a consultative vote, representing 79,204 party members. In the Tauride Palace (Petrograd) a meeting of delegates from soldiers at the front is held. A Provisional Government minister declares that "war until a victorious end" does not mean "until annexations", but "simply" that it is necessary to defeat Germany. The President of the Petrograd Soviet calls for support for the Provisional Government and for the war effort.

In Peterhof the Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies begins the organisation of local Red Guards. A joint meeting of railway workers and the local soviet in Murmansk declares its lack of confidence in the Provisional Government and calls for the establishment of workers' control over management on the railways. A mass meeting of 1,500 soldiers in Vladivostok condemns the "Miliukov note". A general meeting of workers from four Moscow factories replace their delegate to the Moscow Soviet after he votes in support of the Provisional Government at a meeting of the Soviet.

Tuesday 25 April

Workers at the Kramer factory in Moscow replace one of their delegates to the Soviet after they vote in support of the government's "freedom loan" (to continue the war). The second delegate is not replaced after he admits his mistake.

On the Northern front Lettish soldiers fraternise with the Germans and fly red banners bearing revolutionary slogans; the German commanding officers are forced repeatedly to withdraw their troops facing them and replace them with fresh forces. In Erivan soldiers in the 28th reserve regiment arrest their commander and adjutant after they attempt to reintroduce the Tsarist scale of penalties for breaches of discipline.

In the "Holy Mountains" village (Pskov region) the head of the village militia informs local landowners that their land is being divided up among the peasantry. The Motovilicha Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies (Perm region) issues a leaflet appealing to local teachers and students to go into the countryside to carry out cultural and educational work among the peasantry.

Turn to page 10

Youth fight the Tories

Out now is issue number nine of Youth Fightback, paper of the left wing tendency of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Youth Fightback has been produced in this format for a year, during which time we have built our forces inside the LPYS. Comrades use Fightback as the focus for their work, campaigning on the streets, in colleges and in workplaces. With a bit of effort, some comrades sell 50 copies of each issue.

The need for a left-wing alternative to the Militant leadership in the YS is obvious — the YS is a degenerate, sectarian place which normal people avoid. We find that it has

been necessary to produce posters and leaflets to supply YS branches with materials that the national YS fails to provide.

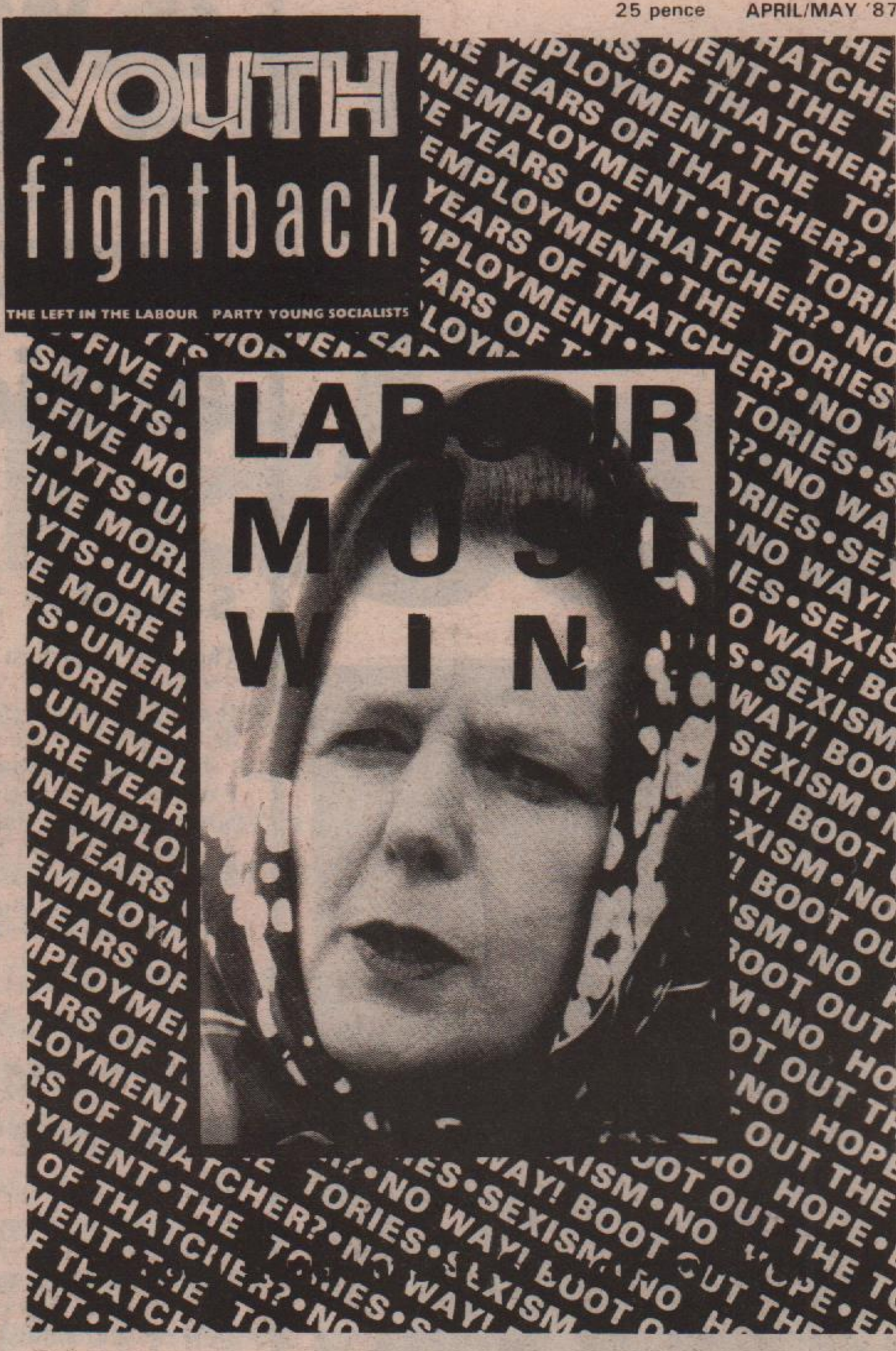
We produce regular mailings for our supporters and affiliated LPYS branches. These mailings are used to turn the whole organisation towards campaigning priorities.

Right now, with an approaching General Election, YS branches are on the high streets and in the shopping centres, signing up people to vote, doing street meetings, petitioning, collecting money for local strikes, arguing for a Labour vote using Youth Fightback's socialist policies.

Where possible we will be debating the Young Tories.

Using the issues of Tory education cuts and Thatcher's cheap labour schemes like JTS and YTS — we can link the election campaign with the current round of school students' action. The date that has been set for national action is 14 May. Youth Fightback supporters will be inside and outside the schools arguing for joint teacher-student action against the Tories, organising school student action committees, school gate meetings and leafleting. Even though many school students will not be old enough to vote they can still join the campaign to kick Thatcher out.

Another aspect of our campaigning — raising money using gigs and discos — will draw lots of school students and



working class youth into socialist politics using music. All our activity and political direction is decided by our editorial board — YS branches can affiliate and get two delegates to the Editorial Board. It's free. Write to: Youth Fightback, 33 Hackworth Point, Rainhill Way, London E3.

The latest edition of Youth Fightback is available from 33 Hackworth Point, Rainhill Way, London E3 3ET, for 25p plus 18p postage.



Special issue on racism: 25p plus postage from Youth Fightback

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Wapping: public meeting on the anniversary of the brutal police attack on the picket line in May 1986. 7pm, Thursday 7 May, at the John Marshall Hall, Blackfriars Rd.

LESBIAN and Gay Pride March '87: contact Solidarity Working Group, Mary Harper, London Lesbian and Gay Centre, Cowcross St, London EC1.

WALLASEY SOCIALIST ORGANISER PUBLIC FORUMS.

'Woman in a man's job' — Wallasey Socialist Organiser forum with Jean Lane. 7.45, Monday 11 May, at Wallasey Unemployed Centre, Seaview Road.

Wednesday June 17, 'Can Kinnock deliver socialism?' All meetings: Wallasey Unemployed Centre, Seaview Road, 7.45 p.m.

Re-elect Labour in Liverpool! Support the Liverpool 47! Rally, 7pm Friday 1 May at Transport House, Islington, Liverpool 3.

Printed T-shirts designed to order, or from a wide range of popular prints. Contact ABS, 0782 84170.

Black Lesbians and gays fightback demonstration: 2 May. Assemble 1pm, Ducketts Common, near Turnpike Lane tube, London.

The Middle East: how to achieve workers' unity and socialism? London Socialist Organiser forum with John O'Mahony. 7.30, Thursday 21 May, at the Plough, Museum St, London WC1.

Hangers: support the locked-out limbfitters. Assemble 10.30am, Saturday 2 May, at Roehampton Lane, London SW15, and march to Bishops Park, Putney, for rally at 1pm. Contact: 01-646 0260.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and

West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

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

end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist

states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand: For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement. Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls. For equality for lesbians and gays. For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority. For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion. For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism. We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small 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

Food, poverty and heart disease

Science for People (SfP) has been published for over a decade now by a group of socialist scientists with the ponderous title, *British Society for Social Responsibility in Science*. Despite this mouthful of a name, BSSRS has always tried to address the needs of working people, whether it be health and safety at work (the excellent *Hazards* bulletins), public health, misuse of statistics, racism and IQ or the politics of food.

The current issue of SfP is devoted to food and follows a successful conference last November. It also coincides with the launch of the Tories' *Look After Your Heart* campaign. The contents address the relationship between capitalism, food and the working class, both as consumers and workers.

Two ways in which capitalism influences food production are discussed in articles on *irradiation of food* and the *fast food industry*.

Food irradiation is being introduced not for the benefit of the consumer but for that of the producer — it increases shelf life of "fresh" food, saving on wastage. It can kill harmful bacteria but cannot destroy any poisons already produced by such bacteria.

Contrary to government assurances, there is considerable evidence of ill-effects from eating irradiated food, both in animals and humans. At present, it is not clear if this is due to destruction of vitamins (20-80%, depending on the vitamin) or to other novel chemical effects.

Pressure to introduce irradiation seems to come not from the food industry but from the nuclear industry, perhaps looking for markets for the radioactive cobalt and caesium found in nuclear waste!

The *fast food industry* answered a need for cheap reliable meals outside the home without the trimmings of restaurants which make it difficult to take children. The cost is in the nutritional standard of the food and in the exploitation of young workers. Not only do they work long, unsocial hours for low pay but virtually all skill and interest has been removed from their work.

The way in which cooking remains part of *women's domestic work* is examined. The socialist answer has traditionally been some form of public catering. Present day candidates for this are the school meals service (everywhere under threat of privatisation or abolition) and the fast food industry (which suffers from the disadvantages mentioned above).

Haringey School Meals Project has gone on the offensive against privatisation, etc., by involving meals workers, children, teachers, dieticians,

etc. It aims to establish higher nutritional standards and a wider range of foods, in line with the backgrounds of the consumers. Another article argues that any national food policy must take into account the culinary contributions and needs of ethnic and cultural minorities.

One interesting piece recounts a day's work by a *foods technologist*. She describes how her employers try to reconcile the wishes of consumers with the constraints in the production of convenience foods. Thus, E numbers are becoming unfashionable, so they are trying to find "natural" substances that make foods look as "attractive". She also shows how much she is able to influence policy in the direction of health (a little!).

Perhaps the centrepiece of this issue is the article on *heart disease and poverty* by SO supporter Dr. George Davey Smith. The British Isles have the highest rate of coronary heart disease in the world. Government and Health Education Council (RIP!) propaganda centres on "unhealthy lifestyles" as the cause of this — drinking, smoking, high fat diet, little exercise — ignoring or discounting the growing evidence of the role of poverty.

For instance, a study of civil servants found that lower grades died at a rate three times greater than in the higher grades. Less than half the difference could be explained in terms of "lifestyle" factors. Similarly, Asian communities in Britain have a far higher rate of heart disease than can be explained on the basis of lifestyle. The common factor seems to be stress, associated either with poverty, working without any control over the nature of the work, or with racist pressure (or with all three).

But let's take the government's message to "look after your heart" at face value and see how they back it up.

On smoking, they condone tobacco promotion through advertising and sports "sponsorship".

On healthy eating, they refuse to pay enough benefit for claimants to afford a healthy diet; they subsidise the production of butter and fatty meat; they fill nutrition committees with representatives of the food industry.

On exercise and stress they offer nothing but words. They are not prepared to subsidise public sports facilities or to abolish high stress activities, like shift or production line working.

SfP's recent issues have been lively and readable but still contains a multitude of printing errors. These are mostly irritating but sometimes misleading. Nevertheless, at 85p it is good value. For this issue, or the last one (a special Health issue), write to SfP, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL. Cheques to SfP.



Mud, rain, blood, death and terror

'Platoon', in addition to receiving 4 Oscars, has received quite a lot of stick.

London's City Limits commented disapprovingly, "those who happen to think war glorious won't find much to contradict them here." And many critics have pointed out that its story is built around a good-soldier vs. bad-soldier whilst boy-becomes-man cliché, and that the Vietnamese are all just enemies in the jungle or passive victims.

Others have even decided 'Pla-

Edward Ellis reviews 'Platoon', now on general release

toon' is ordinary, run-of-the-mill and uninteresting.

All of these criticisms are baffling. 'Platoon' in fact is a brilliant indictment of the Vietnam war, which from start to finish is terrifying, distressing and deeply moving.

Director Oliver Stone, himself a Vietnam veteran, set out to recapture what it was really like in the war. He

tells it through the eyes of a single platoon at the turn of 1967-8, just as the war was reaching its peak.

This approach does impose certain limitations. It is true that the viewpoint is that of an American; the Vietnamese do not feature as individual characters. It is not, therefore, rounded-out history or political analysis.

But it was not meant to be. It is a film above all about disillusionment, about the discovery not only that war is horrible, bloody and dangerous, but that that *this* war is also both futile and wrong. The 'defend our way of life' idealism of volunteer GI (Charlie Sheen) gives way first to a mind-numbed survival instinct, and then to depression and despair.

There is no implicit racism in the exclusion of the Vietnamese from the centre of the plot. It is not illegitimate for a film maker to focus on a particular side to question — the perceptions of American troops in this case — and that is what 'Platoon' does.

It is extremely real and believable — horribly so. The war consists of mud and rain, insects, pain, blood and death. It is above all *terrifying*. Pain and death are portrayed with greater realism than in any film I have seen, and so it is more tense, frightening and upsetting than the most effective horror film.

It is all upsetting: from the US ambush on the Vietnamese in the jungle, to the violent destruction of a Vietnamese village, to the hopeless battle at the film's climax.

Of course, our immediate sympathies are with the American soldiers — mostly from the bottom of the social pile, dragooned into the army, poor kids who want to go home. But the film evokes no malice towards 'the enemy'. The Americans are dying because they shouldn't be in there in the first place: all this death is their fault.

News on Sunday seemed to think the message of the film is that Americans spent too much time fighting each other and not enough fighting the enemy — an idiotic interpretation that bodes ill for the paper's future as an intelligent tribune. City Limits, to come back to them, argues that we are not meant to identify with the Vietnamese villagers that are brutalised by the Americans, but with the GIs who are horrified by what is happening. The City Limits reviewer should speak for himself. I certainly felt moved for the sake of the villagers.

Platoon is a very fine film. As a film about the Vietnam war it is unequalled. As an emotionally effective work of art, also, it is second to none.

Barcelona, May 1937

FIFTY years ago, on 3 May 1937, the telephone exchange in Barcelona was attacked by three lorry-loads of Assault Guards led by a Communist Party member, Rodriguez Sala. Their aim was to evict the workers who were occupying the exchange.

A workers' committee had run the telephone exchange since July 1936, when Spanish workers rose up to crush the fascist revolt of General Franco. It united militants in the Socialist-led UGT and the anarchist CNT union federation.

The Telefonica was a symbol of the workers' revolutionary struggle — a struggle that in the Catalonia region, including Barcelona, had achieved particularly high levels of democratic organisation and workers' control.

The Communist Party supported the government of the Popular Front. It held that fascism should be defeated first, and only later could socialist revolution be attempted. It was committed to keeping all struggles within the limits of capitalism, within the limits allowed by a capitalist government.

When the workers could not be restrained, they had to be forced back into line. The Communist Party was to become the battering ram of the counter-revolution within the anti-fascist movement.

By Clive Bradley



The attack on the Telefonica was repulsed, and in anger and outrage the workers of Barcelona took to the streets. Barricades were set up.

The workers' leaders — anarchists and members of a group called the POUM, some of whose leaders were ex-Trotskyists — could have taken power. But they hesitated. The workers were told to hold down their guns.

And as they did so, the Communist Party moved in to round up their

critics and opponents — anarchists, POUMists, Trotskyists — and murder them. A brutal witch-hunt — which had already begun and was well under way outside Catalonia — developed against the most class-conscious socialist workers.

It was one of the most horrible episodes in working-class history, proving conclusively that the pro-Moscow Communist Parties — and their bosses in the Kremlin — had crossed the barricades, never to return.

It is all vividly described in this account by the American Trotskyist Felix Morrow. 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain' is one of the classics of the Trotskyist movement, and of socialism in general.

It analyses the whole course of the revolution after 1936, arguing that the assessments and policies advocated by the Trotskyists were proved right. But — as was tragically the case before and since — the Trotskyists' warnings were not heeded.

Other accounts in general verify Morrow's account — from academic histories to more journalistic works like George Orwell's 'Homage to Catalonia'.

Morrow later split with the mainstream Trotskyists in America, and eventually abandoned revolutionary Marxism. But his brilliant book on the revolution deserves to be on every socialist's bookshelf.

Economics of the streets

OUR CHARTER for Young Women, among other things, demands: the right to free and safe contraception and abortion on demand; adequate facilities; the right to make the best decisions for us and to put them into practice; the right to have a child; no pressure to have an abortion when we want a child; and free 24-hour nursery provision.

Very positive. However, in the here and now young women are faced with the reality of crime, drug abuse, and homelessness.

Last week '40 Minutes' highlighted the plight of young women prostitutes in Birmingham. If you read the book 'Prostitutes, our lives', all

on the



By Tracy Williams

the women say that they never thought they would be prostitutes. The same was true of the women in the documentary.

Lorraine and Tracy, 19 and 15 respectively, led us through a grim scenario of their lives. Both women had come from homes where their father beat them. Both had been in care and run away. Tracy had been in 11 different homes in five years.

When you run away from home at 15, it's impossible to sign on or find a job, so how do you make ends meet? Prostitution, to them, was purely economic.

Fears

They could get £10 for jerking a man off, and £20 for penetration in the back of a car.

Both talked about their fears of being beaten, mugged, kidnapped or raped by their clients. But they have no choice. Their other biggest fear, of course, was the police and the courts. It's a vicious circle, because the courts impose fines, and you resort to prostitution again to pay the fine.

Some call-girls or hostesses can make £100 or £300 a night if they get the right client, i.e. rich and kinky. But for the street girls it is a different matter.

The programme raised many issues about prostitution. How do we define prostitution? Someone who sells their body for sex? Someone who sells their body full stop? If the latter definition is true, would this mean that fashion models are prostitutes, or page 3 women are prostitutes, or even that Madonna is a prostitute?

Freedom

Do we treat prostitution as labour power? If so, do we unionise prostitution? Or do we rather try to look at men and women and sex?

Until women have economic freedom and ideological freedom from their families or their husbands, they will continue to earn money on the streets or in the hotel rooms. Men will continue to kerb-crawl and harass every woman in sight, be they six or 96, and women will continue to be burned out of their houses because their neighbours know 'what they are'.

"We may be your next-door neighbour, your daughter, your sister, your mother. Maybe you never knew that some of your best friends are pros".

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

A wave of protest action

Sunday 30 April

The Petrograd Soviet issues two appeals: to the socialists of all countries, appealing for support for Russian democracy; and to the army, appealing for preparations for an offensive. The founding meeting in Petrograd of a trade union for coopers passes a resolution of no confidence in the Provisional Government. The first meeting of the Centrobalt is held in Helsingfors. On the Northern front the first issue of "Okornaya (Trenches) Pravda" appears. The Vladimir Soviet resolves that no troops will be dispatched from the garrison to the front without the permission of the Moscow and Petrograd Soviets. At a meeting of the army chiefs-of-staff in Mogilev, Miliukov calls for the speediest possible mounting of an offensive as a means of "curing the country and, in particular, the capital." Attempts at fraternisation on the South-western front are prevented by Russian artillery fire. A pro-monarchist demonstration in Kiev, under the slogan "Long live a Constitutional Monarchy" is broken up by soldiers.

Monday 1 May

An extraordinary meeting of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee discusses the question of a coalition government and resolves by 44 votes to 19 with two abstentions to send representatives into the Provisional Government. A plenary session of the Moscow regional bureau of soviets opens in Moscow, attended by 34 delegates; it votes in support of a coalition Provisional Government.

The factory committee of the Kazan chemical factory resolves to introduce a six-hour working day for workers in hazardous working conditions, and to introduce eight weeks' maternity leave for women. In Urzhum, peasants led by soldiers arrest local bureaucrats and factory-owners. In some smaller towns and villages the day is celebrated as a holiday.

Tuesday 2 May

Negotiations open between the Provisional Government and representatives of the Petrograd Soviet about the formation of a coalition government. An extraordinary meeting of the Petrograd Soviet held in the evening votes to approve entry into the Provisional Government. At a meeting of the Moscow Soviet of workers' deputies, speakers from the Black Sea fleet and the Sevastopol garrison call for continuation of the war until victory. A meeting of workers from twelve small Moscow factories replace their delegate to the Moscow Soviet after he votes for the "freedom loan". On the South-western front soldiers vote to send troops to Petrograd to defend the gains of the revolution. On the Rumanian front the first issue of "Soldier-Citizen" appears, produced by the army committee of the soviet of officers' and soldiers' deputies; of its three editors, one is a general and another is a colonel.

Wednesday 3 May

Negotiations continue between representatives of the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies about the formation of a coalition government. The bureau of the all-Russian Soviet of peasant deputies supports the formation of a coalition government and sends delegates to the negotiations.

A 2,500 strong mass meeting of workers of the Petrograd United Cables Works condemns the formation of a coalition government and calls for all power to be transferred to the soviets. The Soviet of military deputies of the Kiev military zone welcomes the formation of a coalition government.

A general meeting of the Archangelsk garrison demands the shutting down of the defencist "Soldier-Citizen" newspaper. A joint meeting of the Orechnovzuyev Soviet and the Vladimir and Pokrov Soviets of soldiers' deputies warns local textile factory owners that unless they meet their workers' economic demands, their factories will be placed under workers' control.

Socialists and teachers

Liam Conway starts a discussion on the education system and socialism

After reading Tracy Williams' article the other week about her experience of teachers in secondary schools I began to think about the way socialists perceive certain groups of workers.

My own experience of Secondary Modern School was very similar to Tracy's. It was a Catholic school where half the teachers were nuns, and many of the others petty tyrants. My decision to become a teacher was based on the naive assumption that I could do it better, that I could change the world through teaching.

However, becoming a teacher has altered my perspective somewhat about teachers and education. It is not that all teachers are enlightened socialists practising socialist values in education (although there are more than you might think), but simply that teachers are workers doing a difficult and stressful job.

Yes some teachers victimise children, have racist values, see themselves as middle class, etc., but so do many other groups of workers. What matters is the objective reality of any group of workers in relation to capitalism.

Teachers are just as prone to attacks and cuts by capitalists as any workers and the coming period may tragically make this clear. They may be better paid than average but so were some of those on strike at Wapping.

The bottom line should be that we see teachers as workers and tackle their shortcomings like revolutionaries seeking to patiently explain.

In any case, if teachers victimise they are also often victims themselves. One of our own comrades was recently one such victim.

He was asked by students to state whether or not he was gay. Rightly or wrongly he chose to say that this was a private matter, but that he defended the rights of gays and lesbians, and had attended demonstrations to show his support. Unhappy with this response the students mounted a vicious campaign of abuse against him. This campaign lasted for several days.

We discussed the incident in the Socialist Teachers Group and agreed that the best solution was open discussion with the students — no heavy discipline or tokenistic assemblies, but free speech for all sides. The victimisation ended after the discussion but the students were not convinced about gay rights.

However, it might not have ended there. What if the harassment had continued? Should teachers have to put up with this type of abuse indefinitely? Is any action against such students simply teachers acting as state police officers?

Clearly the answers are not easy within a capitalist system. But socialists should analyse these and other events independently, from a principled position. Otherwise the result is inconsistency — like defending McGoldrick against Brent Council but not the Poundswick teachers against racist personal abuse from students.

Socialists should build bridges from themselves to all workers. It strikes me that few socialists have attempted to cross this bridge to see how teachers work, especially in primary and secondary schools where they are in direct contact with work-



Schools of struggle? Photo Monique Blanchet (Report)

ing class youth. This results in letting the Tories have it their own way in any debate about education.

Whilst the Labour leadership ignores educational content, and the hierarchical structure of the service and promises only to spend a little extra money, the left withdraws from the arena on the grounds that little can be done under capitalism. The Tories are less naive. They hate the thought of working class kids having contact with education, especially if this goes beyond the 3 Rs, strict uniform and military discipline.

Education was fine if it stayed within the limits of cannon fodder for capitalism. 'Liberal' education of a type was OK at university or polytechnic where the effect was limited. The numbers being educated in higher education were small enough so it was safe and fairly cheap to allow small discussion groups, one-to-one tuition and even a little debate about controversial issues.

Tories

At school this was not the case. The Tories have consistently sought to undermine the comprehensive system, not because going comprehensive meant anything in itself but because it heralded another more dangerous potential. Linked with comprehensives was the idea of mixed-group teaching — race, class, literacy, disability etc., would not be excuses to split students up. Throw in small class sizes of under 15 and 'controversial' subjects discussed in an open way, like class, racism, sexism, even Marxism — in fact anything connected with this reality kids had to face — and you had a combination the Tories felt threatened by.

It might be said that these progressive developments are meaningless as part of the fight against capitalism, but some points are worth considering.

Little radical came out of school students before comprehensives, even in the '30s. The relatively open atmosphere in comprehensives has made some contribution to the formation of school student unions. How many of us could seriously argue that smaller classes, radical education and mixed groups would not accelerate the growth of school student unions?

And what about the teachers? Even right wing teachers recognise the difference between groups of 30 and groups of 12. When you have a mixed group of 30 it is significantly different from 30 'O' level students. It is a potentially antagonistic group, where differences can explode.

Teachers can be forced against their will to use neanderthal teaching methods just to survive with their nerves intact. Anyone who has been in this situation understands this.

But a group of 12 mixed students is a different world — it can be made socially cohesive, students can and will learn to live with each other and to learn from each other. The feeling of us and them is taken out of the situation and the teacher merges into the class and the educational process.

Socialists should fight for such changes as we should seek to raise the consciousness of workers as early as possible, thereby preparing them for their role in the class struggle.

Take the case of our comrade again. Surely he would have been better able to fight racism, sexism and anti-gay hysteria if the atmosphere in class and school was less oppressive. And if he was able to do this wouldn't this make at least a partial contribution towards working class unity, if only by counteracting the effect of capitalist media on children.

The Tories' attack on schools is not just about funding. The implications of smaller classes go far beyond its cost. That is why Baker has linked his attack on teachers to a return to the 3Rs, selective education and payment by results.

The Tories want teachers and students to be passive, to fulfill their role for capitalism. Baker's attempts to tie teachers down to a rigid contract that will increase contact time with students, give more power to heads and introduce 'thought control' appraisal are all linked to this objective.

If teachers have no time away from students, then how can they prepare new ideas to pervert the children with? Better still, if teachers have a rigid contract how will they take effective action for a better, more radical and well funded education service?

And if the students are in large, badly resourced classes they will learn to hate teachers, minorities, each other and anything except the system that oppresses them along with the rest of us. Teachers in this situation will see the kids as the enemy and revert to reactionary teaching methods. The whole atmosphere will be repressive, education will suffer and the Tories will be able to gloat about the failure of the comprehensive system.

Finally with everyone knowing their place in the educational rat race and incapable of mounting united opposition, the Tories will be able to privatise the whole system without so much as a whimper from those involved.

This strikes me as the reality of the current situation. Socialists should learn to handle this reality and develop a strategy for dealing with it.

We should not look at schools as containing oppressed and oppressors, goodies and baddies, students and teachers. We do not do this when we look at the world at large.

Instead we should pose a transitional programme for education, one that will improve the conditions for our purposes. Otherwise we spout knee-jerk, emotional responses which leave schools outside our struggle and often alienate those within schools whose support we need to enlist.

Civil service pay fight continues

The two largest civil service unions are now into their fourth week of rolling strike action. An all-out strike now looks more likely than at any time in the union's history. This means that the thorny problem of emergency payments to benefits claimants in

By Penny Barnett, SCPS (personal capacity).

the event of such a strike is on the agenda again.

There is no clear cut answer to this question and a wide range of views is held on the left in the unions. The

starting point for many is the fairly narrow trade union view that in a civil servants' strike, as in action by more traditional industrial unions, to allow any of your duties to be carried out is scabbing on your own strike.

Unfortunately we are not dealing with a company that manufactures cars or packs toilet rolls, but with an organisation that daily pays out the

only income received by millions of people living in poverty in this country. That fact won't go away and socialists should think through the implications of all-out strike now.

It is important right from the start to separate out the arguments. The basis for the discussion is a whole hearted recognition of the right of those in social security offices, along with health workers, residential social workers, etc., to strike — full support for their action to improve pay and conditions and build their strength and militancy. But from that basis socialists in the movement need to examine ways of directing the full force of that action at the employers, minimising the damage done to, in this case, the poorest and least organised section of our class.

In recent discussions among the left in the Civil Service unions, three main positions emerged.

1. That no emergency payments should be made at all, and that NALGO members in social services should be asked to boycott any such work they are asked to do.

This is obviously unacceptable from a trade union and socialist viewpoint. The idea that food riots on the streets of Britain would quickly cause the government to crumble relies on the Tories being more sensitive to the plight of the poorest than workers are, and anyway it is hardly the way to build solidarity across the labour movement.

From a purely trade union point of view the millions saved in unpaid benefits could go a long way to undermining the effectiveness of action in the revenue collecting departments, e.g. Customs and Excise.

2. That emergency payments should be made by local councils via NALGO members in social services, and possibly through local centres for the unemployed.

This is by far and away the most popular, and in many ways the most appealing position. It allows that payments should be made, helps to build solidarity among the unemployed through local centres and claimants groups but means that strikers don't have to "scab". Unfortunately it is also the least practical of the proposals.

Its supporters won't recognise the fact that Social Services have only

very limited powers to pay out money. They are already hard pressed and would be simply swamped from day one. In fact the likeliest scenario is that they too would be pushed into taking industrial action against the intolerable pressure, and while any escalation of the action by civil servants would be desirable, it does rather defeat the object as far as emergency payments is concerned.

Local centres for the unemployed could find themselves in an even worse position — even assuming a sympathetic local council stumped up the cash. Could we seriously expect three or four workers in a centre to make hardship payments to thousands of claimants?

Except in some very well organised areas, this is unlikely to be a practical proposal.

3. That emergency payments should be made by DHSS offices, under union control. Just as health workers established rotas for emergency cover during their dispute, it should be possible for strikers to establish rotas for teams to go into local DHSS offices solely for the purpose of providing an emergency service.

The teams would obviously refuse to work alongside scabs and would greatly marginalise them.

Action like this, far from prolonging the dispute, would make it easier to get the support and involvement of claimants and unemployed workers and to build the sort of solidarity action from other unions that would help bring it to a speedy conclusion.

It would have the additional effect of boosting the confidence of the strikers in their ability to challenge "management's right to manage" and to resist the introduction of anti-claimant legislation like the recent Fowler reviews.

In opening up this discussion it is obviously taken for granted that any all-out strike would be quite solid. If there were widespread scabbing, it would be possible for management (as during the Birmingham and Oxford strikes of 1982) to contain emergency payments without reference to the unions. We would obviously resist that and it is important not to sit back and rely on scabs to save us from having to get our hands dirty in this argument.

NUT conference

The left loses out

THE LEFT was unsuccessful on every major vote at the National Union of Teachers (NUT) conference.

We were unable to get a fair hearing for the eight Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA) officers who were expelled and suspended from the union for their vigorous campaign against the conditions imposed on teachers by Tory Education minister Kenneth Baker.

A motion calling for total non-compliance with Baker and escalating strike action was defeated. The famous ILTA motion calling for immediate 'no cover' for absences was narrowly voted out after pretty suspicious delaying tactics by the executive.

However, the conference was by no means all a failure for the left. The Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA) conducted a daily campaign on the ground, and many delegates were convinced by the arguments.

Liam Conway reports on NUT conference

The defeats at conference are not ones from which the left cannot recover, despite the work and conditions most teachers will face after the Easter holiday.

The STA must continue campaigning among the members. Our task will be to stop demoralisation, lift up the heads of the members, and point their eyes in the direction of those who sold out all their conditions of service.

This means a campaign against both the NUT executive and those local leaders whose votes condemned teachers to the Baker Act.

In Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Birmingham, Derby, Nottingham, and many other towns and cities, teachers on the left who wanted to fight Baker must be mobilised against the time-servers

and bureaucrats.

This task will primarily fall on the STA. The STA must concentrate its mind on the major questions confronting teachers in the aftermath of the Baker Act. This means providing the political leadership for all those prepared to continue the fight against Baker and the Tories.

We must forge a united front against the national executive's defeatist strategy. Such a united front can only be successful if we are not diverted by sectarian politics and unprincipled use of the capitalist courts. It means building and rebuilding strong local groups of the STA.

It means continuing to work through the Local Association Pay and Conditions Campaign, LAPACC, an organisation capable of providing the STA with a much wider audience for its ideas.

And it means using the ILTA 8 Defence Campaign as a means to get into every association [NUT branch] in the country, defending the ILTA officers and arguing on a wider political front. It is vital that the left is politically strong, well-organised and clear-headed at this time. Many teachers will be angry when they come to work the new conditions.

We must mobilise this anger, direct the disaffected into union meetings, and have them expose and remove those who have participated in the capitulation to Baker.

LAPACC meeting: Saturday 6 June, International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd, Nottingham.

London Buses

Strike against tender

Five out of seven bus garages in South East London and Kent (Selkent) came out on strike last Wednesday over the threat to jobs and bus services caused by bus routes being put out to private tender.

Up until recently bus routes in London have been run by London Buses Ltd. With the opening up to private tender, London Buses are running a crash cost-cutting scheme to be able to compete for these tenders.

Just in Selkent, two garages are due for closure and the workers in the other garages will be expected to work longer hours for less money. In London as a whole the reorganisation of the buses has so far lost us 3000 jobs, and this is only the beginning.

In other parts of the country the deregulation of the bus services has already led to about 20,000 jobs being lost. That does not take into account the jobs lost through the introduction of one person operated buses. It has also led to a chaotic free-for-all on the roads with private bus companies vying for business; driving dangerously, blocking roads to stop rival companies getting through — along with everyone else, including the fire and ambulance services — and even punch-ups in the street between drivers of rival companies.

The privatisation of the bus ser-

By John Payne

vices is having a devastating effect on both the workers in the industry and on the public who use it. This is particularly true for women who need a reliable, well-staffed public transport service to ensure their safety at night.

And now London is next on the list. Last Wednesday two of the Selkent garages struck for 24 hours and three others pulled their buses in during the morning and evening rush hours. More industrial action has happened sporadically around other parts of London, and more is expected. Last Friday, all of the London Bus workers were balloted as to whether they will be prepared to take action over private tendering and the answer is expected to be a resounding yes. But it is not clear what form the action will take: working to rule; non-cooperation; selective strikes. The union, TGWU, seems reluctant to make the action London-wide, preferring instead to pull different garages out at different times. This may cause havoc to the bus travelling public, but it is unlikely to persuade the government to reverse its transport policy. Many bus routes are run from more than one garage.

The TGWU should call all-out London and country-wide strike action against privatisation and tendering and for the bringing back of conductors to bus crews.

Ancoats

Sit-in still strong

THE SIT-IN at Ancoats Hospital, Manchester, is still going strong, and has recently won a small victory.

The Regional Health Authority (RHA) has backtracked, and now says that Ancoats Department must only temporarily, not permanently.

And they have issued a consultation document on the future of the Casualty Department. The document does mention the 'possible' option of leaving the Casualty open.

Clearly, the RHA has been

By Paul Woolley

pressured by the determination of the Ancoats people and some fairly adverse publicity.

The sit-in should go all the way — tell the RHA that they won't leave until the Department is reopened with proper staffing and facilities. Pile on the pressure! Join the march and rally on Monday 4 May, 11am from Ancoats Casualty Department, Old Mill St, Manchester.

Nurses' pay

Time for NHS fightback

30,000 nurses leave the NHS each year due to low pay and worsening work conditions.

The NHS management want to spend £30,000 on an inquiry on why nurses are leaving. The management are probably hoping that by the time the inquiry is over the general election will have gone, the Tories will be back in and there will be no election upset.

But really all you have to do is spend one afternoon on any hospital ward to find out the real reason why nurses are leaving.

Ward sisters, after maybe ten years experience, get a pitiful take-home pay of around £460 a month, while student nurses collect a meagre £235 a month: to do full time, responsible nursing.

Wards now depend far more on agency nurses who may spend just a few days in each hospital before going on to the next, depending on where the agency sends them.

The ironic part of this is that most agency nurses are staff nurses working their days off to subsidise their appalling wage.

The situation is so desperate that the sugar coated RCN are even mumbling about strike action and political affiliations.

This may be a cynical move by the RCN leadership to pretend to their members that they are doing something. But it does indicate that the RCN leadership is bending to the opinion of its members and this should be supported along with the calls for strike action and affiliation to the TUC and the Labour Party.

By Mark Nevill

What probably will happen now is that the RCN will call for decent pay and conditions, get the members hyped up and then do absolutely nothing to make sure the government implements the wage increase.

Action for better pay must be link-

ed with other issues such as privatisation, health cuts and inevitably kicking out the Tories. This must be organised within NUPE, COHSE and other trade unions. It must also be directed at rank and file RCN members.

For the Health Service to survive, workers must start fighting back and nurses will be an integral part of this struggle.

Salplas

Scabs give in

THE 24 hour picket at Salplas, Eccles, has been enjoying the good weather in the 11th week of the dispute.

40 strikers are still on picket rota, and the dozen scabs are still going in. The factory is fast becoming a deathtrap. One scab broke his leg falling off a stacker truck.

Another got his hand mangled in a machine. The Health and Safety Executive cannot intervene while there is a dispute on.

Many scabs don't last one week. They are either 'sacked' or quit because of the conditions — £90 for a 50-hour week!

A demonstration in support of the strike attracted 200 people despite being called for 10.30 on a Friday morning. TGWU members from Liverpool, Preston, and nearby Lankro at-

By Paul Woolley

tended. Local Labour MPs spoke at the rally at the Salplas gates.

The strikers are still determined to 'stick it out', with the Industrial Tribunal being postponed again. Noone knows how long Salplas boss Chapman can last, but with only one machine working he is on very low production and in danger of losing big contracts.

There are now rumours of two or three other companies being interested in taking over Salplas.

Get a striker to speak at your meetings. Send money and support. Contact: Jim Billington, Salplas Strike Committee, c/o 43 Abingdon Road, Urmston, Manchester M31 1GW.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Liberal racism in Tower Hamlets

Liberal-run Tower Hamlets council has issued eviction notices to 90 families, all but a few of them Bengali, who have been living in bed and breakfast hotels while waiting for proper council housing.

The council claims that these families have left homes in Bangladesh and therefore are "intentionally homeless", so the council is not legally obliged to house them.

The families all have legal residency in Britain and have lived here prior to being put in homeless accommodation by Tower Hamlets council, some for more than 20 years.

Labour's housing spokesperson for Tower Hamlets, Councillor Phil Maxwell, has described the policy as "forced repatriation". After he had examined files held on these families by the Homeless Persons Unit he said "the council claims the passports were not asked for at interviews. However, one of the files contains a complete photocopy record of a Bengali and British passport...the files show that the council has been building up unauthorised dossiers of information on homeless families."

The Homeless Persons Unit have only two officers who speak the dialect of Bengali spoken by most of the families. Officers who only speak

English have interviewed parents to establish that they could return to accommodation in Bangladesh by getting their children to interpret.

The Liberal Party nationally is understood to be embarrassed by Tower Hamlets Council's upfront attacks on Bangladeshi families. They no doubt see a racist image as electorally damaging. But Tower Hamlets Liberals also have electoral considerations in mind. Two of their leading councillors, including Housing Chair Jeremy Shaw who is behind the policy, are standing for the Tower Hamlets constituencies in the forthcoming general election, and their assessment is that anti-Bangladeshi policies will boost their support among white voters. They hope to overcome some of the damage done to their support by recently announced cuts to council services and grants to voluntary organisations.

One of the voluntary groups whose grant was cut was the Homeless Families Campaign, which has successfully represented the interests of homeless families for a number of years. The campaign, along with Labour councillors and Labour Party members, is organising against the Council's racist evictions. Some council officers are unhappy with the policy and NALGO is considering refusing to process the evictions.

Smash the backlash

The demonstration to 'smash the backlash', in London this Saturday, May 2, should be an important step in defending lesbian and gay rights from recent attacks. The march is in Haringey, where

recently there has been a highly publicised campaign against the teaching of positive images about homosexuality in schools.

The march is organised by Positive Images and Haringey Black Action.

It is necessary for the labour movement to unite to defeat the bigoted anti-gay backlash. This march focuses on a number of recent alarming developments.

The campaign against including homosexuality in school sex education is being mobilised by local parents' groups, backed by Tories, Liberals, religious leaders, and reportedly fascists. It has also received backing from the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Religious groups have distributed anti-gay literature. One vicar in Haringey went on hunger strike protesting at council policy. A religious cult called the New Patriotic Movement — backed by the notorious Moonies — have promoted the slogan 'Gay = AIDS = death'. And, of course, Manchester's Chief Constable, James Anderton, has declared his own bigotry to be the message of his hot line to God.

The background to all this, of course, is the AIDS hysteria. A Staffordshire Tory councillor only expressed an extreme version of what many people believe when he said that "90% of queers should be gassed" to prevent the spread of AIDS.

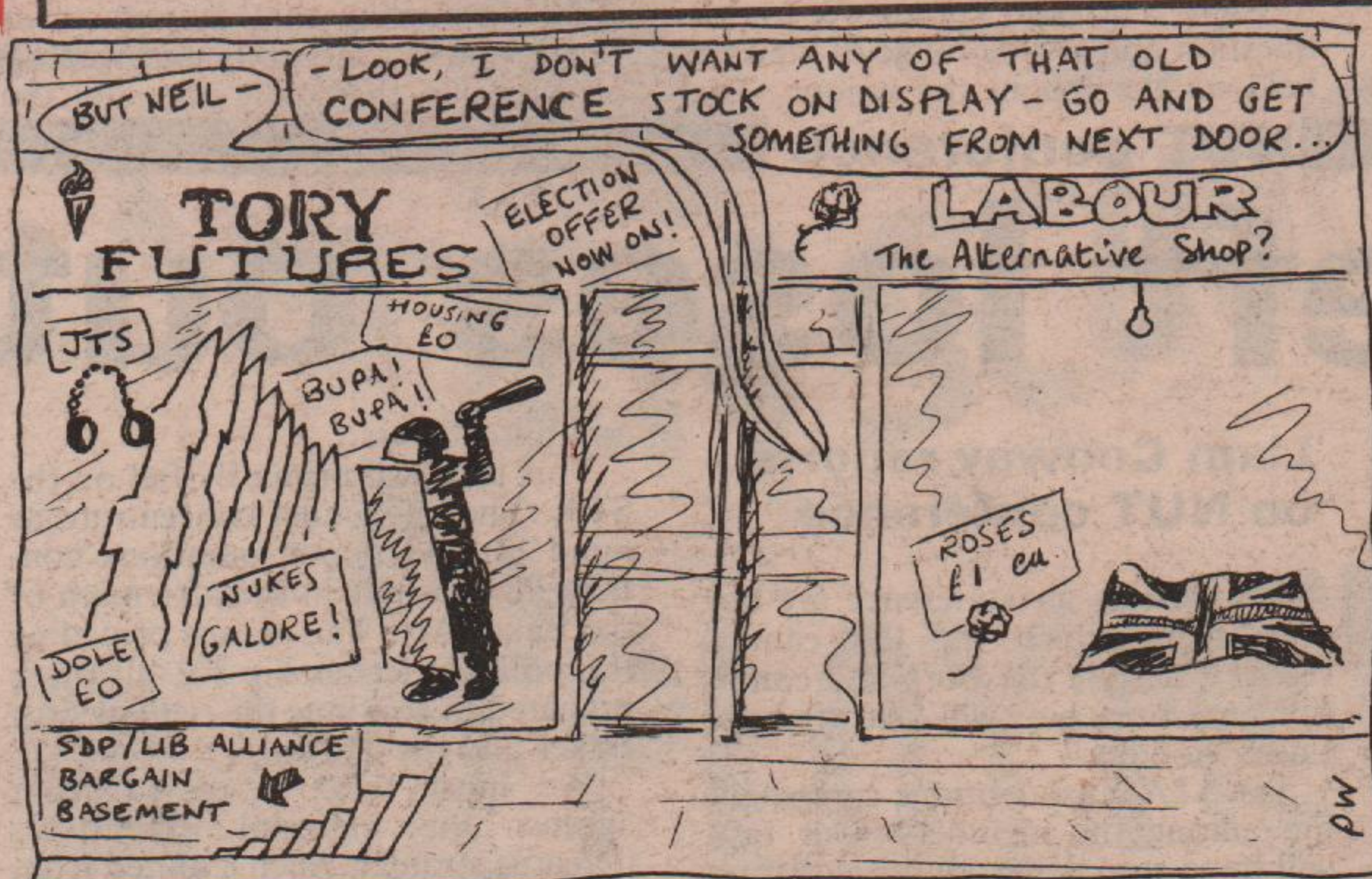
Physical attacks on lesbian and gay venues — including police raids — are increasing.

And scandalously, as all this goes on, the Labour Party leadership is running scared of conference commitments to lesbian and gay rights in an attempt to ditch the 'loony left'.

The Labour Party and the whole labour movement should stick up for the rights of lesbians and gay men. Lesbians and gay men have a right to walk the streets, meet, kiss, love and organise without fear of harassment. Young people have a right to learn about homosexuality so that those who decide they are homosexuals themselves will not endure the discovery as a painful experience. Everyone has a right to equality without prejudice.

The march assembles at 1pm on Saturday May 2 at Ducketts Common in Haringey next to Turnpike Lane tube.

**Defend Lesbian and Gay Rights!
Smash the Backlash!**



Caterpillar vote to end occupation

By Brian McKenna

At a mass meeting of Caterpillar workers at the Tannochside plant last Sunday afternoon, 26th, a vote was carried to end the 14 week occupation of the factory. However the package recommended reluctantly by the shop stewards to the workforce does not seem very promising.

At the eleventh hour a consortium, fronted by the butcher of the Scottish steel industry Sir Monty Finiston, had put in a bid of £5 million for a section of the plant (that is £7 million less than it is actually worth!). Sir Monty's outfit — called Multi-Purpose Terrain Holdings (MPAT) — will produce, for military purposes mainly, an amphibious and multi-terrain vehicle, and it will ensure the employment of 100-400 workers (presumably the less militant) out of the workforce of 1200.

The military hardware expert behind the project is, the Caterpillar workers have been assured, a 'good Scotsman' — David McWatt.

Experts in the field have been staggered by the audacity of the bid and predict failure. That the government appears to have had a hand in the deal would suggest that the upcoming election has had more than a little to do with its emergence.

Senior shop steward Michael McPake said of the deal before the

mass meeting: "The shop stewards regard this as an attempt to get some of our union bosses like Jimmy Airlie and Gavin Laird off the hook".

Certainly, the massive pressure put upon John Brannon and his fellow shop stewards by AEU and Scottish TUC officials at the STUC conference in Perth last week was disgraceful. Had the Joint Occupation Committee not submitted, then without a doubt the AEU would have cut off strike pay and forced a mass meeting.

Key issues such as when exactly Caterpillar will remove vital equipment and when workers will be dismissed have been fudged. The workers not kept on by MPAT will be virtually unemployable now. The broad support generated among ordinary working-class people in the West of Scotland and beyond has been squandered.

It is rather a sad end to an inspirational occupation.

Tories say work for your dole

By Clive Bradley

THE Tories have plans for us after the next election. They have plans for dealing with unemployment.

The unemployed will still get the dole — miserable pittance that it is. But they will have to work for it.

Thousands or even millions of people could find themselves forced to work for their dole if the Tories win the election. A government-sponsored report published on 22 April proposes adopting the method tried and tested elsewhere — like in the USA, where it's called Workfare.

The study, by the Employment Research Centre at the University of Buckingham, was commissioned two years ago by the Department of Employment. The government has been at pains to say that they do not intend to implement its proposals. But who can believe them?

The recently-introduced Job Training Scheme (JTS) is already a step towards a workfare system. People who refuse 'training' run the risk of losing their benefit.

Just as the workfare report was published, Thatcher made it clear to the Commons that 'the electorate would be asked' whether or not young people refusing 'training' should lose their benefit.

CPSA action

By Gary Scott

The civil service unions' programme of selective strike action in the Northern Region in the week beginning 21 April was a huge success, with 90% of CPSA and SCPS members on strike and all DE and DHSS offices closed.

The culmination of the regional action was two days all-out strike on the final two days of the week involving 25,000 civil servants.

Even traditionally "moderate" branches like the Department for National Savings, Durham, had something in the region of 90% of their members on strike.

Of its 2,000 CPSA and SCPS members and the more than 200 non-members, fewer than 300 scabbed on Thursday and even fewer on Friday. All the mail vans were turned away so there was very little work for the scabs to do.

More than 1,000 people attended a march and rally in Newcastle on Thursday 23 April.

The rally was addressed by Doreen Purvis, Vice-president of CPSA and Tony Christopher, General Secretary of IRSE. A representative from a Newcastle claimants' union offered his support for the strike on behalf of its members.

Judging from the mood of the people at the rally, there is a will to escalate the dispute. As Doreen Purvis commented, selective action is "neither use nor ornament".

New threats to NUM

THE NUM Branch officials at Ollerton have had warning letters from the management.

They are taking the matter further, but I don't know exactly what steps they will be taking. Certainly they are not prepared to let the management intimidate them.

Coal Board offer

Further to my tribunal case, which found that I had been unfairly dismissed, the Coal Board have written to my solicitor and said that in the interests of good industrial relations they are not prepared to reinstate me at Bevercotes colliery.

They are prepared to re-engage me in my old job at either Manton or Shireoaks collieries — both Yorkshire pits.

So they have accepted the tribunal ruling that I was unfairly dismissed for trade union activity — they haven't appealed against it — and they have given me my job back, but

WHETTON'S WEEK



not in the Nottinghamshire area. They want me out of the pit and out of the area. I'm going to see my solicitor on Wednesday, and we shall be going back to the tribunal in order to get a ruling that what they have offered is unreasonable. What we want is reinstatement in my own colliery and my own job.

The UDM

There was a report in the Financial Times last week saying that the NUM executive was considering sitting on national joint committees with the UDM.

If the report is correct, I would urge the members of the national executive to seriously rethink. We are coming up to a general election, and I

would urge them at least to hang fire until after the results of that general election.

The re-election of a Labour government should mean the demise of the UDM and the reinstatement of all the sacked miners. For the NUM national executive to rush in and officially recognise the UDM at this stage would be, as far as we're concerned in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, a disaster.

Elections

In my own particular area we don't run local elections this year. But the returns that I have heard from other areas certainly show that we should do reasonably well.

Sharon Atkin has thrown her full weight behind the NUM and behind the sacked miners, and she has my full support. If the Labour Party leadership do decide to remove Sharon and impose a candidate, it would be disastrous.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.