

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

## Strike on 14 March!

### Demonstrate 5 March Defend the NHS!

Assemble 11am, Victoria Embankment. Rally  
2pm at Hyde Park.

# What NHS cuts pay for

## Tax cuts for the rich

## More missiles

## More police

**A committee of MPs — and one with a Tory majority at that — estimates that since 1981 NHS spending on hospitals has fallen £1.8 billion behind what would be needed to maintain the same standard.**

Despite the Tories' fiddling with the figures, the fact is that they have slashed the Health Service to ribbons. And where has the money 'saved' on hospitals gone?

**The rich** had tax cuts worth £3.6 billion a year between 1978-9 and 1986-7. A typical man on £30,000 a year has had £100 per week worth of tax cuts.

**Missiles** and other weapons of death have had more and more money poured into them. Military spending went up 30% in real terms bet-

ween 1978-9 and 1985-6. Trident alone will cost as much as 500 new hospitals!

The Tory Government say they can't find £1.8 billion extra for the Health Service to save lives. According to one leading hospital doctor, 15 people a day are dying unnecessarily because of NHS cuts. But the Tories could find over £2 billion to destroy lives in the Falklands War and for building the military base on the Falklands.

Spending on **police**, prisons and courts went up 41% in real terms between 1978-9 and 1985-6. At the same time, crime rates have gone up, and police clear-up rates have gone down: however heavy the hand of the state, it cannot keep a lid on the tensions and vices bred by Tory economics.

The same Tories who can't afford money for the Health Service were willing to lose about £4.5 billion in 1984-5 in order to sit out and defeat the miners' strike.

The money is there to provide a decent Health Service. It can be

found even without counting the huge waste of resources due to Tory-sponsored mass unemployment.

The Tories are running down the Health Service deliberately because they want to boost profits. They want to cut every bit of spending that does not produce private profits or directly protect the privileges of their class.

Now another committee of MPs — with a Tory majority again — is demanding that the Government agree to give Health Authorities enough money to pay for any wage increase it offers to the nurses. In the past, when the Government has conceded wage rises, it has told Health Authorities that they must find the money for them by cutting.

Even Tory MPs are complaining today — and the reason is the pressure applied by the health workers' strikes. A few days of determined mass strikes have produced more effect than years of reasonable argument.

**The Tories are on the run! Spread and extend the protests, and we can force them to take some of the money back from the rich and give the Health Service the money it needs.**



Demonstrators in Manchester last week. Photo: Matthew Davies.



## Should brothels be run by the state?

I am sure that most women reading this article must have been kerb-crawled at some time.

Where I used to live, Moss Side in Manchester, it was virtually impossible to walk home at night or in daytime — without having some bloke slow down his car and look pointedly out of his window at you.

The first few times I stopped naively thinking they were asking for directions! I soon discovered this wasn't what was on their minds.

Kerb-crawlers are a menace, and if you've been the target for one there is a tendency to want something done about the bastards.

In Coventry, apparently, the police have recently had a major crackdown on kerb-crawlers. Over a few weeks they arrested 111 men.

My initial reaction was "ha, ha, serves them right!" Then I discovered over the same period over 130 prostitutes had been arrested.

That's the problem. Women are driven onto the streets for a variety of reasons. Lack of money, inability to get a job which pays enough or fits in with childcare — these are only a few of the reasons women go into prostitution.

A clampdown on kerb-crawlers often goes hand in hand with police harassment of prostitutes, and it also deprives prostitutes of clients, and consequently their livelihoods.

One solution people sometimes come up with is state-licensed municipal brothels. This is supposed to protect women who aren't prostitutes from attack by clients, and protect the clients from disease, by enforcing regular medical check-ups on the prostitutes.

All sounds pretty good, doesn't it? Until you read accounts by prostitutes of their working conditions. Women's control of which clients they choose is taken completely out of their hands — they simply have to accept the next in line. They work a 'shift' — which means they don't control when they have breaks. In short, the whole 'labour process' is taken out of their hands.

Also, enforced medical checks on the women don't seem fair. After all, if a prostitute has a venereal disease it is more than likely that she has caught it from a client — yet no-one suggests medically vetting the men.

I don't know what the solution is. We want a society where women aren't forced into prostitution by economic hardship, etc. But that certainly isn't going to come about under capitalism.

We don't want women to be harassed by men on the streets, nor as socialists, do I think we should be about depriving some women of their livelihoods, simply because we don't like what they do.

Perhaps one thing which would alleviate the situation would be decriminalising prostitution, so that prostitutes can run brothels themselves and not have to hang about on the streets. This certainly wouldn't solve all the problems, but it is bound to be better than police clampdowns.

# Anglo-Irish deal survives battering

The two year old Anglo-Irish agreement has taken quite a battering in the last few weeks.

The British Government provoked bitter Catholic Irish reaction when it announced that no-one would be prosecuted for organising or covering for the Northern Ireland police murder gang which killed at least five unarmed Republicans in 1982, as well as killing an apolitical 17 year old, Michael Tighe.

The rejection of the appeal brought against their conviction by

the six men who have spent the last 13 years in jail for the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings, who claim that their confessions were beaten out of them, provoked equally bitter comments about 'British justice'.

People began to ask what the point of the Anglo-Irish agreement is if Britain could thus ignore Dublin's attitude on what to do about the RUC murder gang.

The short answer is that the Anglo-Irish agreement is about police cross-border co-operation against the IRA. The police on both

sides of the border work more closely together now than they have ever done. The Southern courts send political people back across the border to stand trial in Northern Ireland (last week the former Westminster MP Owen Carron was marked down for extradition on Army charges, though he is to appeal). Despite the recent tension, police co-operation remains very close.

But the Anglo-Irish agreement is more than an agreement about policing Ireland. It is a binding treaty between Dublin and London

which commits London to both consult Dublin about running Northern Ireland and to try, where differences of opinion arise, to satisfy Dublin. The unilateral British decision not to prosecute RUC murderers flies in the face of that commitment.

It happened at the same time as John Stalker, the former Deputy Chief Constable of Manchester, published his memoirs. Stalker's career was ruined because he refused to cover up for the murder gang while conducting an official enquiry.

Opponents of the Anglo-Irish agreement on both sides of the border said it was now dead and should be buried. The most instructive thing about the recent strain is the fact that the Anglo-Irish agreement has nevertheless held and Britain has now partly climbed down.

There is to be a new inquiry into the RUC murder gang. Pressure is building up for the removal of RUC chief Sir John Hermon. The Birmingham Six are to be allowed to appeal to the House of Lords.

When Dublin announced that it will hold its own inquiry into the shooting by the British Army of an unarmed man on the border this week, British Minister for Northern Ireland, Tom King, mildly expressed the hope that they would share information with the RUC.

Neither Dublin nor London have any alternative to the Anglo-Irish agreement. Washington is as keen on it now as it was when it pressed London and Dublin to make it. And so far it has 'worked' for the British and Irish ruling classes. The Anglo-Irish agreement is not dead, or anywhere near being dead.

## Recognise the PLO!

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin told reporters last week that his policy of beatings in the occupied territory seemed to be working. How did he work that out? "Things could be worse," he said.

In fact the uprising against Israeli occupation has continued without let-up. The death toll of Palestinians is now over 60. Curfews have been extended. Jewish settlers have been involved in violent incidents, and some, along with troops, are being questioned by police or facing trial.

Meanwhile the 'peace process' also continues. The United States is pushing for Israel to give up some territory in exchange for peace — which is completely unacceptable to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir — without even hinting at the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state.

Shimon Peres, Israel's Foreign Minister, is pushing for an international peace conference.

But the big question mark over any such conference is the form of Palestinian representation it would include. The Palestinians have made it clear that they wish to be represented by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

### Peres

Is this acceptable to Israel? Historically, no. But there are signs of change. Peres told the Jerusalem Post: "There is a difference between the PLO in the territories and the PLO abroad."

In general, he favours negotiation with Jordan's King Hussein. But: "I think we should distinguish between those whose political views conform to those of the PLO, and those who actually belong to the organisation. We do not censor ideas. We censor weapons." (Jerusalem Post, week ending February 20).

In fact, of course, Israel does, regularly, censor ideas. But that Peres is thinking like this is significant. Some Israeli doves are now openly advocating negotiations with the PLO — which until recently would have been unthinkable.

Despite widespread popular support for repression of the Palestinian uprising, many Israelis are currently involved in much soul-searching. Fear of what repressiveness will do to Israelis themselves is a common theme among doves.

Over 60 young Israelis and 160 army reservists are refusing to perform their military service in the territories.

The depth of opposition to Israeli rule among Palestinians has shocked and surprised Israelis and outside observers. Arabs living in pre-'67 Israel, and even the supposedly docile Druze (an Islamic schism) have been mobilised on an unprecedented scale.

What next? The uprising shows no signs of dying down, and the issue of the occupied territories will not go away: it will be central in this year's Israeli elections.

The effect on Israeli consciousness of the uprising is twofold: an ostensible shift to the right in emotional-political terms

### Israel

By Clive Bradley

has been accompanied by an actual shift, in terms of realpolitik, towards recognition that territory will have to be given up for peace. Even Shamir has shifted a bit on the issue of a peace conference — at least off the record.

The effect on Palestinian consciousness is equally great. There is clearly a new sense of their own potential power among West Bank and Gaza Arabs — and Israeli Arabs.

Peres admits that if elections were held now in the occupied territories, PLO supporters would sweep the board, with Muslim fundamentalists taking the rest. So all the attempts of successive Israeli authorities to displace the PLO have come to nothing.



Arafat

### Nazis

## Who was Waldheim's protector?

**Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, is a war criminal. He did know about, collude in, and perhaps he participated in Nazi killings and deportations in Yugoslavia. He seems to have helped murder captured British soldiers too**

As the evidence piles up against Waldheim the most interesting questions cease to concern what he did in World War Two — in which he was just a small-fry Nazi gangster — and focus on his later career. Both Washington and Moscow had dossiers on Waldheim and yet they let him become Secretary General of the UN. Why? Was one of the super-powers blackmailing Waldheim? Or both?

### Labour Party

## CLPD debates councils' fight

**Local government was the only issue to cause controversy at the first stage of the Annual General Meeting of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), held in Edinburgh last Saturday (13 February).**

Resolutions and amendments concerning the accountability of MPs, the attacks on the Labour Party Young Socialists, the continuing wave of expulsion of socialists from the Labour Party and the need for annual contests for the Party Leader and Deputy Leader positions ("subject to the strict proviso that any campaigning should be restricted to normal labour movement channels") were passed without controversy, though sometimes there were tactical differences on questions of nuance.

On local government the main resolution argued that Labour councillors should repeatedly resign and stand again rather than impose Tory-dictated cuts, in order to make local government inoperable. Amendments sympathetic to the drift of the main resolution suggested either tactical variations on this theme, or the strategy of "majority opposition". An amendment moved by Socialist Organiser supporters argued for a united stand by Labour controlled councils and local labour movements in outright defiance of the Tory attacks.

The main resolution was motivated on the grounds that after the experiences of councils such as

Liverpool and Lambeth, no Labour Group will now be prepared to go down the road of open defiance and face the possibility — or probability — of surcharge and disqualification from office.

SO supporters argued that standing for election on the basis of a promise to resign again if elected does not make sense.

Liverpool and Lambeth were defeated. But so were the miners.

### Labour Party

## Clampdown in Wales

**Labour Party (Wales) organiser Anita Gale has closed down Plasnewydd ward Labour Party after allegations that expelled Militant supporter Chris Peace was allowed to attend the ward AGM.**

Cardiff Central became a marginal seat at the last election when Tory Welsh Office Minister Ian Grist's majority was cut by a half in a campaign in which Plasnewydd ward featured prominently.

The ward was suspended just one week before the Constituency AGM, and the 'Western Mail' has suggested that the charges are a front for a right wing take-over of the constituency led by former parliamentary candidate, Jon Jones.

A letter of complaint was apparently sent to Ms Gale by six Cardiff councillors including Mr Jones. Ward officers have not seen this.

Are the NHS workers or Ford workers therefore wrong to fight back?

Socialist councillors could play a big role in helping workers and tenants fight the cuts.

There were majorities for the main resolutions and sympathetic amendments. The final outcome will not be known until the two other stages of the AGM have been held and all the votes collated.

The ward alleges that the Labour Party nationally or regionally, has never informed them of the expulsion of Chris Peace.

The suspension, which came as a complete surprise, was announced at an unusually large constituency executive meeting.

An investigative body has been set up comprising Ms Gale, the chair and secretary of the Constituency and one member of the Labour Party Wales Executive Committee (which is right-wing dominated) to investigate ward officers Martin Barclay, Sarah Bryant, Dave Davies and Stevi Jackson who is herself a member of the Wales EC.

The Constituency AGM on 19 February took no decisions and elected no new officers because of lack of time. Questions on the suspension were ruled out of order.

The constituency remains paralysed while Labour Party (Wales) proceeds with the inquiry.

# A sinister move

P R E S S  
G A N G

## Cap'n Gob

By Jim Denham

When he took over the Mirror Group in 1984, Robert Maxwell boasted that within two years the Daily Mirror would overtake the circulation of the Sun and the Sunday Mirror (and/or the People) would outsell the News of the World.

Less than a year later, nearly a million had drained away from the combined sales of Maxwell's three national papers, the fastest fall in their history.

The main reason for this sad decline is not hard to fathom. Former Sunday Mirror editor Robert Edwards (in his book Good-bye to Fleet Street) sums it up quite well.

"There was no sales advantage in ramming home to Mirror readers, many of them Labour supporters and hostile to the cruder aspects of capitalism, that their newspaper was now to all intents and purposes controlled by one man and subject to his giant ego and caprices. It was, in fact, a grave disadvantage."

All the evidence suggests a direct relationship between the frequency and prominence of Cap'n Bob's appearances in the pages of his own papers, and the decline in their circulation.

People have tried telling him this, but to no avail. He just can't stop himself bounding up to his editors and saying things like "I have a great page one splash story for you" — which, according to Edwards, was how the Mirror came to carry the headline "Maxwell saves Sinclair".

Another brilliant front page headline, "Maxwell makes printing history" marked the exciting news that Cap'n Bob had placed a record order for German colour printing presses.

Now Joe Haines, who received his training as a professional toady in Harold Wilson's 'kitchen cabinet', has written the 'authorised story' of Cap'n Bob's life. It was originally commissioned as a present to the Great Man from his wife, Betty.

Now it is being serialised in (you've guessed it) the Sunday Mirror and the Daily Mirror. Haines, we are told, "had access to Maxwell's archives, family and friends without conditions as to the use he could make of his sources or the judgements he would come to."

Here are a few of the gems from Haines' book, just to give you a tantalising flavour:

"He is a creature of mood, switching from laughter to anger in a second. He can be both ruthless and soft hearted, swift to make up his mind and even swifter to change it."

"Lord Kearton...told me: "If we had another ten men like Robert Maxwell, Britain would not have suffered from the economic problems that have plagued it since the war."

"He is rich, but cares nothing for personal possessions."

"He has contributed more to the advancement of late 20th century science than any layman alive, which is the opinion of scientists."

"He is to give away the vast fortune held by the Maxwell Foundation in Leichenstein for five charitable causes. It means that the poor boy from Sototvino, whose daily bread often depended on the charity of others, is now returning the wealth he has helped to create."

For more of this sort of stuff, you will have to buy Haines' book...or read the Sunday or the Daily Mirror. I wonder how many more readers the Mirror will lose this week?

## EDITORIAL

Last week Home Secretary Douglas Hurd confirmed that the government intends to make the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act of 1974 a permanent law.

The Act was introduced in the wake of the Birmingham pub bombings, in which 21 people died. At that time there was a vicious backlash in some areas against the Irish community and it marked the end of the days of big 'Troops Out' marches.

The Act has been used to detain a total of 7,645 people in Northern Ireland since 1974. 2,975 have been detained on the mainland during the same period.

In practice it gives the police (especially the highly political Special Branch) wide powers to stop and search anyone they consider suspect. It also gives the government the power to 'exclude' (i.e. deport) people to and from Northern Ireland.

The plans to make the Act permanent are portrayed by Hurd as an attempt "to save lives and protect our citizens".

It is no such thing. The Act represents a deadly threat to the civil liberties of people, not just in Northern Ireland but also on the mainland. It follows in the tradition of repressive legislation such as the Official Secrets Act 1911 (which was also introduced after a terrorist outrage).

Far from moving towards a political settlement of the Irish question, it rests on the further use of police repression. In the aftermath of the Stalker affair we can have no illusions about the intentions of the people who administer



Making the Prevention of Terrorism Act permanent means more power for the state to attack the labour movement.

the security forces in the North of Ireland.

The labour movement must op-

pose this latent piece of sinister Tory legal chicanery; it offers nothing but further violence and

state terrorism for working people, Catholic and Protestant, Irish and British.

# Smears as a last resort

THERE ARE lies, damned lies — and then there's the so-called 'Democratic Left' leadership of the National Organisation of Labour Students.

There is also the 'Tribune' of the soft left, which has picked up and carried the dim lies of the 'Democratic Left'.

An extraordinary pack of lies has been put into circulation in the National Union of Students, aimed at discrediting Socialist Student, which is mounting a challenge for the leadership of NUS.

A good example is an article (apparently syndicated) which appeared in last week's edition of Manchester University's student union newspaper 'Mancunian'. Under the by-line of a certain 'David Jackson' (who seems not to exist), the article claims that Socialist Student is merely a front for Socialist Organiser, which in

turn is a front for the 'International Communist League' (ICL) which uses "access to free and easy drugs and sex... to draw young recruits" into its "twilight world".

Leading members of the ICL, it says, are drug addicts who "wish to see the abolition of a directly elected Parliament in Britain" and promote "the ideology which guided the Russian revolutionaries Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky and which led to the creation of the Soviet dictatorship".

Hot stuff. Of course, the article includes not a single lowly fact to back up any of its allegations.

And some of the allegations are pretty wild. The stuff about sex and drugs (no rock'n'roll?) is especially hard to take seriously.

As for the 'ICL': no such organisation exists. There was an organisation called the ICL once, and it might interest historians of the far left to know that it disappeared in 1981. To the best of our knowledge no group of that name exists in Britain today.

So the attempt to stick an 'ICL' label on Socialist Organiser is just old-fashioned McCarthyite witch-hunting — and incompetent witch-hunting at that.

There is nothing secret about Socialist Organiser. Our 'Where We Stand' column each week says clearly what we think and what we do. Our Annual General Meetings are publicly advertised in advance. And allegations of 'secretive caucuses' coming from someone who doesn't even have the courage to use his real name are a bit rich.

Of course, behind the pen of 'David Jackson' is the hand of the

## SAINTS OR SINNERS?



Communists take over local schools and colleges, use subsidies from the City Council to fund their activities and aim to capture Europe's biggest youth organisation. Sounds like a Sun exclusive? Or a Ronald Reagan 'B' Movie? But could it be true? David Jackson investigates.

'Democratic Left'. And the reason they feel the need to scribble is not hard to work out.

Under their tutelage, NOLS and NUS are both in a dreadful state. Indeed, they have only held control of NOLS through years of unbelievable bureaucratic carve-ups. NOLS is now so discredited as an organisation that serious socialists in the NUS have concluded that the only way to keep NUS for Labour is to stand against the little Stalinoid clique who run NOLS as their fief. Only bureaucratic fiddling has prevented Socialist Student from winning majorities in NOLS.

And that puts at risk something very dear to the DL's heart: their careers. To protect their careers, no technique is too dirty, and hence the catalogue of absurdities in 'Jackson's' article.

Take the political illiteracy of his bracketing together of Trotsky and Stalin. Trotsky fought Stalin's dic-

Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London SE15  
4NA  
01-639 7965  
Latest date for reports: first  
post Monday or by phone,  
Monday evening.  
Editor: John O'Mahony  
Typesetting: Upstream Ltd  
(TU). 01-358 1344.

Published by Socialist  
Organiser, PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA.  
Printed by East West Graphics  
(TU). Registered as a  
newspaper at the Post Office.  
Signed articles do not  
necessarily reflect the view of  
Socialist Organiser.

# GRAFFITI

## Angry men

Women might be winning more equality in the workplace, but the same old battles are going on at home. A new book, "Successful women, angry men" looks at the phenomenon of 'dual career marriages', marriages supposedly based on sharing equally the housework, and both partners working.

Women are finding that the 'liberated' men they'd married revert to type when they realise their wives aren't going to do all the cooking and cleaning, as well as holding down a full-time job.

Apparently the arrival of a baby makes matters worse, leading to arguments over whose turn it is to change nappies, feed the baby, etc.

Husbands feel neglected, feeling their wife's career is fine for the first few years of marriage, but assuming it should end when financial stability has been achieved.

Women respond by trying to be 'Superwoman', attempting to live up to the women's magazine ideal of a glamorous dynamic woman who can have a career, family and an exotic sex-life with no effort whatsoever.



Society doesn't help. Men find it difficult to get time off work to look after sick children. It is expected they have a wife to do 'that sort of thing'. Women are made to feel 'second-rate mothers' if

they go out to work.

Some men might intellectually agree with women's equality, but when it hits them where it hurts, in their home lives, they turn out to be the same old chauvinists.

## Mentally ill homeless

New York's Mayor Koch has come up with an unconventional solution to the city's growing and immensely politically embarrassing homelessness problem.

Koch's administration has turned to forcibly removing homeless people from the streets and putting them into institutions on the grounds that they are mentally ill.

The first person selected for this programme, Joyce Brown, proved more than Koch

could handle. She took the City to court, and a judge ruled after extensive medical tests that she was completely lucid.

Brown's case has been taken up by the media in the States, and she has become a vigorous campaigner on the issue of homelessness. Some local doctors are still claiming she is schizophrenic.

Funny how political

protesters both East and West have been pronounced mentally ill — Brown in the States, and Vladimir Klebanov in the USSR. So much for the land of the free!

## Racism

The touristy spectacle of the Chinese New Year celebrations last weekend cover up a little-publicised aspect of racism in Britain. Waiters in restaurants in London's Chinatown suffer severe racial abuse and harassment. Waiters report that not a day goes by without physical or verbal abuse being heaped upon them.

During last year four waiters from the Diamond restaurant in Soho were jailed for supposedly attacking customers. What in fact happened was that a group of customers refusing to pay their bill punched and kicked the head waiter to the floor. The waiters snapped and retaliated in kind.

One restaurateur, Mr Lam, reported that if he called the police to deal with such incidents, white customers were let off, whereas on the rare occasions involving black or Asian customers, they were hauled in.

A recent report by the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee on the Chinese Community in Britain stated that "The Chinese Community in London is not subject to a statistically significant degree of racial abuse or attacks." Perhaps they should have asked the Chinese community what they think.



## Nothing's burning

Israel's leading-comedian, Tuvia Tsafir, is the latest victim of the Israeli government's attempts to silence criticism of its activities in the occupied territories.

A sketch, 'Nothing's Burning', which was to have been broadcast at the weekend, was banned by the state-run TV station. Said Tsafir:

"The sketch is intended to protect our soldiers, and attacks those who

send them to do the dirty work, while they fail to seek a real solution to the problem."

The director general of the TV station disagrees, and slammed the sketch as "macabre anti-Israeli propaganda".

The censorship of Tsafir's sketch follows in the wake of criticism by liberal Israelis of inaccurate TV coverage of the West Bank unrest.

# A recovery of workers' militancy

By Gerry Bates

The last few weeks have seen a real revival of working class militancy —

\* the bubbling revolt amongst health workers which is now gaining real momentum;

\* major strikes at Ford, on the ferries and now at Land Rover;

\* a series of limited sparks of resistance from civil servants, local government workers and the pit deputies;

\* political solidarity strikes for the health workers at Vauxhall, Ellesmere Port, Thorn EMI, Manchester and in local government.

We are seeing the first signs of recovery of working class since the defeat of the miners in 1985. Last year the number of workers prepared to take strike action increased by 75% from the 1986 figure, from a 50 year low of two million strike days to 3.5 million.

Union membership is on the increase again. NALGO and USDAW have both reported increases from last year. Other unions including the TGWU are set to follow.

The revolt in the health service has been spreading rapidly since the Manchester nurses and the blood transfusion workers forced the Tories to back down in January.

So far the revolt has been largely unco-ordinated, with different unions taking action on different days and over different issues. The health union officials have sought to use the present wave of militancy to increase their own ranks. NUPE and COHSE competition has now reached the ludicrous level of both union leaderships naming different days for protest action over the budget.

However, stewards organisations have blossomed considerably over the last few weeks — strike committees, co-ordinating committees and joint shop steward committees have sprung up in many areas to co-ordinate the action at a local level.

Although the present battles in the NHS are in the main defensive — against cuts, privatisation, etc. — they also include a powerfully



Photo: Matthew Davies

mobilising, offensive element. Many workers are willing to take strike action over the NHS, for instance the Vauxhall workers at Ellesmere Port were prepared to strike in support of the health workers even though they had voted to accept a bad deal themselves. Workers at Thorn EMI in Manchester have even defied the Tory anti-union laws to strike for the healthworkers.

The healthworkers' action in January showed the Tories can be forced to back down. The recent action of Ford has in fact boosted the confidence of the healthworkers and the settlement (which could have been much better) that the Ford workers achieved — the employers' fourth 'final offer' — should act as a pacemaker for many other workers in the motor and engineering industries. It seems to have convinced Land Rover

## Nurses have changed

Nicole Iszacks is a district nurse in the Hulme area of Manchester. Socialist Organiser spoke to her about the state of the NHS, her part in the action and how she sees the whole mood progressing in the light of the strike and 6,000 strong demonstration in Manchester on February 19th.

What sort of action have you been taking?

I was on strike for one day on Friday and I have attended a couple of joint shop stewards committee meetings, which is the organising body for all the action taking place in Manchester. I think it's an excellent group, there's a brilliant level of debate, strategy is taken seriously and there is a conscious attempt to learn from the mistakes made in 1982. There's a visible desire to create a broad movement involving other workers. The thing is most nurses have never seen themselves as part of a broader labour movement. Other workers,

like the miners, the councilworkers and the firefighters came out on the demo to support us and a lot of nurses have now changed through industrial action. They're much more assertive. It remains to be seen whether they'll apply this new experience to other conflicts and struggles.

What's the situation in NUPE and COHSE? We saw you on the TV shouting at Bickerstaffe on Friday.

Seriously, the situation isn't really very good. The leadership just aren't in contact with the membership. Bickerstaffe isn't listening to the demands of the grass roots. It's all very well for him to make strong speeches like he did on Friday, but it's not backed up by action. We want a general strike on March 14th. Everyone at the demonstration on Friday agreed with that demand but the leadership is really vacillating. We've got this action on March 5th for a demo in London but it's on a Saturday to avoid any strikes! We have to show the TUC that the health workers are going to have to organise themselves. The unions have to take notice of the demands of the nurses so we can go forward.

workers to fight.

The Ford dispute was in part defensive — against flexibility and speed-up — but it also showed the strength of this key group of workers. Ford's Belgian plant at Genk was shut down within a week, production was seriously affected at the company's big West German plants.

The Ford strike also showed that the Tory anti-union laws don't always have the desired effect at damping down militancy. The need for the national union officials to get a ballot majority for their first attempted sell-out deal allowed Ford stewards to campaign for rejection.

TGWU negotiator Mick Murphy put it like this: 'By balloting the membership as obliged by the legislation, we have got a situation which gives us no option but to take strike action from Monday. This is a tragedy we have sought to avoid from day one...'

Before the union ballot laws came in, he explained, he could have sold the workers out because 11 (small) plants voted for it and only 10 against!

The pit deputies' 83% ballot vote also helped to strengthen their action. Ballots don't necessarily have to demobilise action.

The seafarers dispute was significant for many reasons. The massive queues of lorries at the ports showed the power of the ferryworkers. Dover, a traditionally conservative port, was out and backing the national action and a still powerful group of workers were set to test the Tory anti-union laws.

The outcome was a serious defeat. McCluskie and the rest of the NUS leadership failed to put up a serious or consistent fight against the laws. By telling workers at some ports to go back to work they weakened the strike as a whole.

Ferryworkers now face a massive assault on pay, hours and working conditions.

The mood of the seafarers had much in common with that of the healthworkers. It was summed up by the leader of the Hull ferry occupation on the first night of the strike when he said: 'Enough is enough'.

This reflects a broader pattern across industry. In the '70s over 50% of strikes were directly related to pay. Now that figure stands at just 35%. The big majority of strikes are now over conditions and hours as workers resist the employers' drive for increased profitability and the government cut-backs in the public sector.

One factor underlying much of the present revival of industrial militancy, particularly in the health service, is that many workers no longer see the point of holding back. Twelve months ago the argument of the union leaders that Thatcher was too strong and that the only way to defeat her was through the election of a Labour government had a very strong resonance indeed. Now, after Thatcher's re-election many workers are still doubtful if the Tories can be beaten but at the same time see no alternative but to fight.

The Tories can be beaten. The Manchester nurses and the blood transfusion workers proved that. The Ford workers proved that the bosses in the private sector are not invincible either.

The task for socialists today is to link up the rank and file activists who do want to fight through initiatives like the London health stewards call for a national NHS stewards conference and to demand that the leadership of the TUC and Labour Party back the present action and help draw the struggles together by calling a one-day general strike in support of the healthworkers on March 14th.



The rally in Manchester. Photo: John Smith, Profile

# Manchester stewards say strike on 14 March!

Support is growing for the idea of a general strike on 14 March in defence of the NHS.

Last Friday, 19 February, over 6,000 workers attended a demonstration and rally in Manchester in support of the health workers.

Karen Reissman, speaking for the Greater Manchester Health Stewards' Committee, summed up the mood of the rally:

"As a nursing sister who sees the effects of the cuts every day, it is just great to see so many people like we've got today, protesting and on strike against Tory policies for the NHS.

"If we're really going to defend the NHS we need to have this sort of action right across the country, we need every city and every town to be stopped by this sort of demonstration so that Margaret Thatcher has to listen to us.

"We've got ten district health authorities taking strike action today and numerous other workplaces. We can stop the Tories as long as we don't squander the chance that we've got now.

"We've had public sympathy for years and Margaret Thatcher doesn't care. What we need now is effective action. We need a national strike across the whole of Britain."

Earlier at the same rally an indicative vote was taken on a motion to call on the TUC to call a one-day general strike on 14 March. Support was unanimous.

Significantly, the day of strike action in Manchester was supported by groups of workers outside the health service. Over 300 council workers from Manchester DLO came out as did groups of white collar workers in NUPE and NALGO.

500 workers from Thorn EMI also voted to take solidarity strike action and came out on strike. The stewards' committee has now had a writ under the Tory anti-union laws slapped on them by management.

The fighting mood in Man-

By Tom Rigby

chester, and the response to this Wednesday's call for action in Scotland, shows that a clear lead from the TUC could make a one-day general strike on 14 March a real success.

It would provide a national focus for the current action in the NHS, and give a massive boost to the confidence of health workers and the working class as a whole.

14 March could become the start of a real campaign of mass action against the Tories.

If the TUC won't move, then the response in Manchester shows that the rank and file stewards' commit-

tees have the ability to organise strikes on 14 March.

A national stewards' conference is needed to help unify the action and hammer out a series of demands for the dispute. The London stewards' initiative of calling a national stewards' conference on 26 March must be supported.

If any issue has the potential to act as a catalyst for a massive movement against the Tories then it is the NHS.

Strike action to defend the NHS is not unpopular. Over 60% of Tory voters believe it to be justified. The current rise in Labour support in the opinion polls has come at a time of renewed working class anger and militancy involving

strikes on the ferries, in the car industry and in the NHS.

There is no alternative to strikes to defend the NHS.

So the labour movement now has an historic opportunity to turn the tide against Thatcherism. We must counterpose the working class vision of a caring health service run for people, to the Tories' idea of a sickness service run for the benefit of profiteering spivs.

If we don't fight now then there may be no health service left to defend in a few years time, if the Tories get their way.

\*Mobilise for the TUC demonstration on 5 March.

\*TUC call a general strike on 14 March.

## 10-hour hospital siege

By Stan Crooke

Enraged workers at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital trapped and besieged a management team sent in to the hospital last Friday (19 February) in order to measure rooms and wards for the purpose of providing specifications for a firm tendering for cleaning services.

The siege lasted ten hours and stood firm in the face of threats from management to sack 50 workers involved in it. Warnings from union officials of all-out strike action quickly forced management to drop this threat. The team left the hospital after the lifting of the siege, as ignorant of ward measurements as when they had arrived.

The decision to send in the team was clearly a calculated move on the part of the Lothian Health Board general manager, Winston Payler, to test out the response of the ancillary workers.

The unions' "rolling programme" for Scotland continues to involve small groups of workers, such as laundry staff, drivers, or sterilisation unit staff, being called out on strike for between one and three days. As with the same

strategy in 1982, the result is loss of momentum.

The "rolling programme" has, it is true, made a limited impact. Some non-essential operations have been cancelled in Edinburgh, and disposable paper bed linen has had to be used in some hospitals. But the strategy has cut across the necessity of escalating the level of the dispute and deepening the involvement of all NHS workers in it.

Nor have the health service union leaders attempted to broaden out the focus of the dispute. In the Lothians, for example, plans to close four hospitals and three clinics and to axe 500 jobs have recently been uncovered. But the current action against privatisation of ancillary services remains compartmentalised off from broader questions of opposition to closures and loss of jobs, and of achieving better rates of pay in the NHS.

Health service union leaders have also held back from calling for solidarity strike action from workers outside the NHS on 24 February, the Day of Action in support of the NHS called by the Scottish TUC. The failure of the NHS union leaders to issue such an appeal has, in turn, been used as a pretext by other union leaders to refuse to call for solidarity strike action. The Union of Communications Workers' leadership, for example, have done no more than

suggest that any of their members taking a day's holiday might join a local demonstration in support of the health workers.

But in Edinburgh, for example, NALGO members employed by the District Regional Council and also workers from a number of other workplaces will be on strike for at least half a day.

In the hospitals themselves, however, the response to the Day of Action is overwhelming, and the turnout from NHS workers on the demonstrations being held on the day will probably be even larger than on similar days of action in the 1982 dispute. Mass meetings have already been arranged for 25 February in a number of Edinburgh Hospitals to assess how the Day of Action should be followed up.

Union activists in the NHS in Scotland need to develop their own network of workplace based committees to run the dispute, and link up with NHS trade unionists in the South on the basis of a unified set of demands to defend and improve the NHS for users and workers alike.

This underlines the importance of NHS shop stewards committees in Scotland (as everywhere else) sending delegates to the 26 March national conference called by the all-London strike co-ordinating committee.

## Hatton: a parasite on the back of Liverpool workers

I note with interest your recent reviews of the Hatton and Taaffe/Mulhearn books about Liverpool. As one who contributed a few articles on the subject in the mid-80s — and earned a multitude of brickbats in the process — I would like to set a few matters straight before the left in general forgets about the whole thing and gets on with championing the next 'worthy' cause.

As your readers are aware, Derek Hatton is alive and well and continuing his showbiz career. His latest effort is a two hour Sunday phone-in show. The other arsehole in the seat last week was Stan Boardman.

This vile excuse for a comedian was booed off the stage in Liverpool last winter for making anti-Pakistani jokes at a kids panto attended by a large number of Asian children. Boardman also appeared on the infamous 'Stars for Maggie' extravaganza. He is evidently also a mate of 'Degsy' and may even be in the same Masonic lodge.

I am glad that most socialists now recognise Hatton for the political conman that he is. The mistake would be to regard him as an apparition — totally divorced from the politics of the Militant Tendency whose cause he championed for many years.

The working class can only be a force for change if it purges itself of the many elements of ruling class ideology which are stamped upon it. We are talking here about racism, sexism and anti-'intellectualism'. Under the Militant reign these forces were not combatted — instead they were allowed to let rip.

Opponents of the Bond appointment were denounced as being part of the 'race relations industry' (a phrase popular with the National Front).

Non-manual trade unionists were treated contemptuously because they were not horny-handed sons of toil. No attempt was made to advance the specific problems of women, either in the field of work or outside it.

The whole episode also revealed a general shortcoming on the part of most of the left. The 'revolutionary socialist' tendency which had stood up in meetings all those years to pass meaningless motions to no effect, were now in positions of 'power'. The socialist vision could now be handed down by decree via the council office.

This is the major crime of the Militant Tendency in Liverpool. They tried to impose a peculiar Stalinoid 'state-socialist' version of socialism on local people whether they liked it or not. They also screwed up a genuine mass movement of anti-Tory working class feeling through such unthinking bureaucratic antics as the 31,000 redundancy notices.

John Hamilton, whether or not a 'genial uncle' was quite correct to say that throughout all this period Hatton acted as the Militant's 'cypher'. That they still cannot fully distance themselves from such an obvious parasite on the back of the Liverpool working class is a testimony to their on-going political bankruptcy.

Bas Hardy, Liverpool

More letters on Page 10

**This Saturday, 27 February, students are marching against the Education Bill — the so-called GERBill. And this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the great wave of student radicalisation in 1968. Clive Bradley looks at the history of those twenty years.**

For a long time the image of students in the minds of militant workers was represented by 1926. During the General Strike, undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge were the backbone of the army of strikebreakers mobilised under the government's wing.

Yet by the early 1970s students were playing an important role in building support for strikes — for example at Salfrey Gate in 1972 where striking miners and their supporters successfully picketed out a coke plant in defiance of the police.

Indeed, by then the popular image of students was of fiery radicals who would sit down in Trafalgar Square at the drop of a hat.

The radicalisation took place in the late 'sixties — part of a worldwide upheaval that led some socialists to see students as a new 'revolutionary vanguard'.

The London School of Economics was a major battleground, seeing its first sit-in in 1967 in support of the union president, victimised for opposing the appointment of a new Director who had Rhodesian connections. A Socialist Society had been formed several years earlier and paved the way for this movement.

LSE was still central a year later when the wave of radicalisation rose in earnest. 1968 was the year that shaped the modern left. In Vietnam, the National Liberation Front launched the 'Tet offensive' that marked a major intensification of the Vietnam war. In France, ten million workers — inspired by the example of revolutionary students — went on strike in May. In Czechoslovakia the 'Prague Spring' was brutally interrupted by the invasion of Russian tanks.

### Vietnam

Everywhere, students were at the heart of the movement in solidarity with Vietnam. In Britain, it was mainly students who were mobilised in mass demonstrations against the American war — for example in the huge demonstrations at Grosvenor Square that led for the first time to shocking clashes with police.

Two groups on the 'far left' in particular grew after '68: the International Marxist Group (IMG) and — much more so — what was then called the International Socialists (IS) and later became the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP).

The IMG were vital in organising the mass-based Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, but tended to be invisible within it as a political tendency — although individual members, such as Tariq Ali, had a very high public profile. Furthermore, the IMG went along with the ultra-leftism of a lot of the students, developing weird political strategies calling for 'red bases' in the universities ('sociologically inaccessible to the repressive forces of the ruling class'). The IMG's paper after the French general strike was underway headlined: "The power of student action!"

IS were more serious. Making a turn to 'Leninism' as a model of organisation (i.e. tightening up their previously very loose structures), IS also turned their student recruits out to the growing workers' struggles. By the early '70s they had managed to acquire a relatively significant working-class base.

The other — at the time, biggest — far left group was the Socialist Labour League (SLL) which later became the Workers' Revolutionary Party. They took a bitterly sectarian stand towards the student movement (denouncing VSC as a

media stunt designed to divert attention from the SSL).

In the early 1970s, student radicalism turned for the first time towards the structures of the National Union of Students itself. In 1971 — the left — in the shape of the Communist Party — won the presidency with Digby Jacks. Then in 1972 the Tory government launched an attack on student union autonomy.

Then Education Minister Margaret Thatcher's plan was to put student unions under the control of an Auditor General, who would authorise payments. The aim was to stop student union donations to strike funds. This issue — so-called 'ultra vires' payments — has resurfaced many times.

The Thatcher proposals were defeated. An enormous mobilisation of students stopped the Tories in their tracks.

### Different

It was different to the movement of four years previously. In 1972 the student movement as a whole went into action; it was not a matter only of a politicised minority. In a sense, of course, the action against Thatcher was less political than VSC or related struggles. Often it was a low-level affair: members of Rugby Clubs fighting to keep hold of their cash.

But it transformed NUS. NUS conferences became dominated by the left — the Broad Left (CP, Labour, Liberals) and the revolutionary left (the IMG in various hats, and the IS). In local colleges, too, the left was strong.

The Broad Left dominated NUS until the early 1980s, successfully standing a string of presidential candidates. Following the mass mobilisations of 1972, and particularly under the Labour government of 1974-79, this Broad Left leadership became more and more conservative.

It saw its role as a pressure group on the government, rather than as a campaigning movement. Of course, NUS held national demonstrations — but often stifled action from below that was independent of the national leadership.

From the mid-'seventies a major issue was the government's raising of fees for overseas students. Massive fee increases, besides being unfair, were a way to divide students from each other. A big campaign to defend the rights of overseas students peaked in late 1979 with a wave of occupations.

The campaign was defeated. Overseas students' fees went up — reducing drastically the numbers of overseas students from less than extremely affluent backgrounds (which in turn had an effect in reducing student militancy, as overseas students had often been in the forefront).

In the wake of that defeat, the government introduced new measures for student union financing — very similar in aim to the defeated 1972 Thatcher proposals. The new rules were designed to tie student unions hand and foot to their college administration. The campaign to defend union autonomy was defeated.

But in 1981-2 there was a concerted student fightback — a big wave of occupations against education cuts led, and indeed planned, by the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS). NOLS took a majority on NUS Executive in 1982, including the presidency: Neil Stewart became the first Labour NUS President.

Until the late '70s, NOLS had been invisible as a force for itself in NUS — keeping firmly in tow to the



# TWENTY YEARS STUDENT RA

Communist Party-led Broad Left. The Broad Left transformed itself into the Left Alliance (LA) in 1979, and NOLS split — although not immediately — leaving the LA as a straightforward pact between the CP and the Liberals.

### Left

From the mid-'70s, the far left in NUS consisted largely of the SWP and the Socialist Students' Alliance (SSA), which included the IMG. Within NOLS, the chief opposition had been Militant until the early 1980s. But by 1983 there was a serious left alternative in NOLS to its 'Clause 4' leadership (later broadened out to be the 'Democratic Left'). Socialist Student was formed, bringing together a number of tendencies and individuals and joining up with the fragments of what had been the SSA. Within Socialist Student the dominant force was Socialist

Organiser.

Socialist Student rapidly grew to be the main left opposition within NUS. On a whole series of issues, Socialist Student led successful struggles against the 'Democratic Left' leadership — only to find that policy passed by conferences would be ignored by the leadership if they didn't like it.

It is because of this concerted challenge by Socialist Student that the 'Democratic Left' has resorted to old-fashioned witch-hunting tactics. For the first time the non-sectarian socialist left is in a position seriously to challenge the right-wing Labour leadership, and might defeat it.

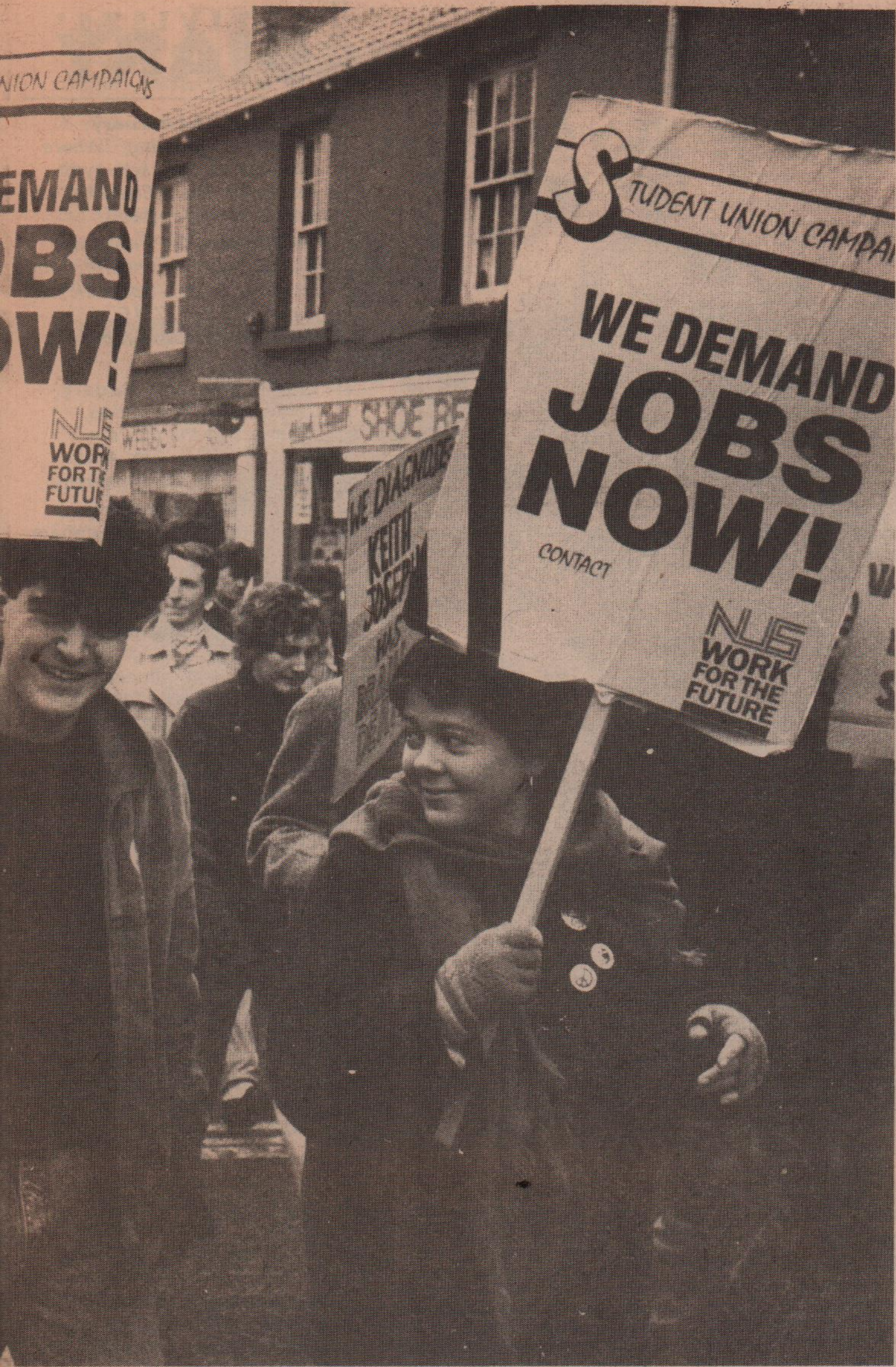
### Rise

Yet there are peculiarities in this situation. The rise of Socialist Student has not been accompanied by a wave of radicalisation comparable to the late '60s or early '70s. It is

not that students are uniformly apathetic. Far from it: big struggles have continued to take place over cuts and other issues. But the general background today is the inability of the NUS leadership to cope with the 'Thatcher years'. Socialist Student's strength has been that it has provided immediate answers and shown the way forward — on basic questions such as the necessary strategy to fight the cuts, on the defence of student unionism, and on grants, benefits and housing.

### Focused

Groups like the SSA in the '70s were unable to provide such immediate answers, and focused rather more on traditional 'revolutionary' issues — such as Ireland. Such issues are still discussed today; but the fundamental question has been how to reverse the retreats students have endured for so long.



# YEARS OF RADICALISM

certain lessons can be drawn from the past two decades of student struggles.

## Broad

With sufficiently broad mobilisation, students can win campaigns on their own, given the right conditions. For sure, nothing can be won without grass-roots mobilisation and rank-and-file involvement. The 1972 campaign for student union autonomy was the example of such a victory. More recently, government proposals to replace grants with loans had to be shelved at least in part because of student opposition. In many of the attacks on Tory policy to beat down opposition and impose cuts. To such attacks, unity with the 'movement' is essential. The '68 generation often saw itself as the 'advanced guard'

of social revolution. They saw how students in France had sparked a huge wave of working class militancy, and imagined that all they had to do to create such a movement in Britain was to appear on television getting their heads cracked open by the cops.

## Many

Many Marxists, who should have known better, completely capitulated to this impatient mood. The worst offenders were the IMG — which no longer exists, although its general ideological tradition is represented today by 'Socialist Action' ('Campaign Student').

Robin Blackburn, a prominent 'New Left Review' intellectual and member of the IMG in the late '60s and early '70s, argued in 1968 that "those who reject the strategy of the Red Bases...will be in serious danger of becoming the objective allies of social imperialism and

social fascism".

Now many of the red-hot revolutionaries of '68 are right-wingers of various shades.

## Sober

A more sober — though not a conservative — approach is needed. Students are a volatile social group, able to flip suddenly from militancy to apathy. That lasting links are made between the student and labour movements is essential for students to win, and thus prevent bouts of apathy.

Many students threw themselves into the miners' strike. The task now is for students — not just individuals, but student organisations — to join up with the growing industrial struggle against the Tories. The 'Democratic Left' who run NUS failed to build serious links with workers in struggle in the past. That's one reason why they need to be replaced.

## Call student leaders to order

**THE LEADERS** of the National Union of Students, the 'Democratic Left' (DL) faction, want SSiN expelled from the Labour Party.

For standing up against their incompetence, their passivity, and their inability to organise students in NUS, the DL want SSiN expelled.

For exposing the corruption in the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), the DL want SSiN expelled.

For beating the DL on most domestic policy issues in NUS for the last four years, they want SSiN expelled.

Hiding behind a dubious Labour Party constitutionality, the DL have run to the Labour Party, asking the NEC to rescue them by getting rid of us.

The DL want SSiN to be taken to the National Constitutional Committee, which means that they want us expelled. But the DL have a problem. The thing they want to get us on is standing against NOLS candidates in NUS elections.

But NOLS candidates are not Labour Party candidates. The Labour Party NEC may give a NOLS slate its blessing or it may not — it doesn't make any difference. NOLS National Committee decides the candidates, and NOLS is not the Labour Party. It is an affiliate — just like the Fabian Society or the Socialist Educational Association.

Constitutionally, there is nothing the Labour Party NEC can do about it if it doesn't like the candidates NOLS National Committee chooses. Constitutionally, it is none of their business. NOLS is not accountable to the NEC. And therefore, wanting to expel SSiN members for standing against NOLS in NUS is like wanting to expel members of the Socialist Teachers' Alliance for standing in an election in the National Union of Teachers against the Socialist Educational Alliance, which is an affiliate of the Labour Party just like NOLS.

The DL has another problem, much deeper than any lawyer or Star Chamber can resolve. That is: how can the DL explain their failings to any fair-minded jury?

The DL are accused of:

- Systematically rigging NOLS conferences for at least the last five years. We published evidence of this in the pamphlet 'A Stitch in Time', and they have never dared to reply.

- Refusing to allow elected Auditors to see the books, because they are covering up for the financial favours they have done for Labour Clubs which support them.

- Refusing to allow part-time Further Education students to join NOLS while allowing part-time postgraduates to join.

- Changing the rules at the last minute to defend their majority.

- Failing to maintain the organisation. In 1984 it had 7,000 members. Now NOLS has 5,000.

In NUS the DL are accused of:

- Failing to organise student support for Labour at the General Election, and bringing the Party into disrepute among students.

- Breaking NUS conference mandates — we suspect, sabotaging them out of petty factional spite. Sabotaging the production of the Welfare Manual to discredit Simon Pottinger — delaying its arrival in colleges by three months.

- Failing to do a job for the labour movement by running a recruitment drive among the thousands of YTS trainees in Further Education colleges. Failing to fill the gap in contact between youth and the labour movement that the end of the apprenticeship system and youth unemployment have created.

- Alienating Jewish students and the Union of Jewish Students to the extent that the UJS, the only genuinely representative body of any

minority in the student population, is discussing withdrawing from NUS. Most glaringly, the DL tried to sell NOLS support for Sunderland Poly's banned Jewish Society to UJS in return for UJS support for a NOLS candidate in an NUS election.

- Creating such a bad name for the Party that out of 17 Labour Party members on NUS executive, only 10 chose to stand on the NOLS slate. The previous year there were 14 Labour Party members on the Executive, of whom nine were elected on the NOLS slate.

- Portraying Labour as a Stalinist party, with Stalinist ideology and Stalinist methods.

Within their own terms of reference the DL have an even bigger problem. The majority of Party leaders believe the Left to be an electoral liability. That is the basic reason for the recent expulsions of left-wingers from the Party.

But in NUS it is plainly untrue that the Left loses elections for Labour. Last year Simon Pottinger of SSiN beat Jo Gibbons, the official NOLS candidate, for Vice-President Welfare. A candidate supported by SSiN for Finance Committee (not normally a base for the 'loony left!') beat the NOLS candidate by a margin of almost three and a half to one.

It is not true that the Left are unelectable. It is not true in General Elections, and it is not true in NUS. The electorate, and in this case NUS conference, will respond to candidates who tell the truth, who conduct themselves honestly and politically, and who say what they think rather than what they think the audience will like.

Unfortunately for the DL, they are going to have to explain just how come a small group of people with little money came to give them — who have the Party label to cling to, and lots of money — a thrashing both politically and organisationally.

## Excuse

The excuse the DL gives in NUS to explain SSiN's successes is that SSiN have done deals with the Union of Jewish Students. It is not true. SSiN and UJS certainly have worked together. There has never been a quid-pro-quo deal with UJS or anyone else in NUS.

The climate on the left is tainted with anti-semitism — unintentional, unclear, but unmistakable. The DL have tapped into thinking which says: Zionists are racists; the UJS are Zionists; SSiN works with UJS; ergo, SSiN are racists, or the next worst thing.

The DL have also tapped into a reservoir of anti-semitism in the belief that Jews plot and conspire. If SSiN works with UJS, then that is Trotskyists and Jews, the twin devils, conspiring together.

The DL are more than happy to invoke the appalling idea that all Jews in Britain — unless they are explicitly and vehemently anti-Israeli — are personally responsible for Israeli government policy. Diaspora Jewry has a collective responsibility for Israel and everything it does. Therefore, by association, SSiN are supposedly apologists for Israel, responsible for the deaths of Palestinian Arabs!

The DL play on the equally prejudiced myth that if someone is in UJS then they must be right-wing. Conspiracy-spotting is a good cover for the DL. It deflects blame for NOLS's appalling record in NUS by trying to focus everyone's attention on a common enemy — 'Zionists'. And by 'Zionists', they mean Jewish Zionists.

The DL are trying to save their careers at the expense of Jewish students. They are playing with fire by kindling left-wing anti-semitism.

That is just one more good reason why the DL have to be called to order.

# Child abuse: the issues

The outcome so far of the Cleveland child sex abuse inquiry has set back the whole debate.

Doctors Higgs and Wyatt have been removed from their posts. Most of the children have been returned to their parents. The traditional view has been publicly vindicated — the problem of child sex abuse is over-estimated by over-zealous doctors and heavy-handed social workers.

Prior to Cleveland it looked like, at long last, the question of child sex abuse was being seriously discussed. TV programmes, newspaper and magazine articles, were focusing on the issue, exposing its real extent, and beginning to look at different ways of dealing with it. Now, it is business as usual. But the problem still remains. Children still get sexually abused by their fathers, brothers, family friends.

So what is the truth of the matter? Well, the anal dilation test used by Dr. Higgs is clearly not a reliable test for sex abuse. The test was initially developed after research on a very small sample of "high risk" children — children already suspected of having been sexually abused.

Once the test is transferred to the general population you do get a high proportion of 'false positives' — children who are positive for other reasons, like chronic constipation or lax muscles. Higgs' insistence on the complete reliability of her methods, her unwillingness to accept other medical views, is simply not good medical practice.

It is true that the vast proportion of what seem likely to have been 'false positives' in Cleveland caused a terrible amount of unnecessary pain. Apart from the ethics of performing distressing anal examinations on children who are not already suspected of having been sexually abused, the heartache caused to the families must have been tremendous.

But all the newspapers focused on this angle. Not surprisingly so — the family is an almost sacred institution in this society, and any

By Katherine O'Leary

suggestion that it is not the heaven it is supposed to be is seen as an attack on one of the lynchpins of capitalist society. Capitalism needs the family, and will leap to its defence when it is under attack.

But the truth is, that whatever techniques are used to detect child sex abuse, however careful and sensitive doctors and social workers are, there will be some parents who are wrongly accused of abusing their children.

Mistakes will still be made. This is sad, but inevitable. Our priority should be to protect children, and any suspicion that a child has been abused should be investigated.

The Cleveland Inquiry did raise some important issues — sadly the most important were those not given prominence in the press.

Most experts in the field of child abuse say that the key thing is to listen to and believe the child. If this had been done in Cleveland many of the problems would have been avoided. Children do need to be given the confidence to tell other adults about what has been done to them. What they don't need is strange adults insisting, on the basis of extremely dubious medical evidence, that daddy has done something terrible to them. Think of the emotional damage that in itself can do to a child.

As socialists we do have to insist that child abuse is a real problem. It goes on in the home which, far from being a safe haven, is often a very dangerous place for children. The relations of power which exist in society are mirrored in the home. There, at least, the man who might have a low-paid, degrading job, can be 'king of the castle'. Children are his property. To be good is to do as you're told — it's not surprising that this should sometimes extend into sexual abuse.

In the long run, we will only get rid of child sex abuse by getting rid of the sick society that warps human relationships. But in the here and now, we need to give children more confidence, and to provide adequate social work ser-



Dr Marietta Higgs

vices that can deal sensitively with abuse, rather than be forced into crisis management.

Phone-lines for children, refuges, perhaps on the model of those for battered women, are part of the answer. Social work services must

be changed — often mothers who suspect their child is being abused keep quiet for fear of their child being immediately taken into care. Social work must become a service for families, rather than a state 'soft cop'.

## 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.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Tuesday 23 February.**  
Oxford SO meeting, 'Where We Stand'. Speaker: Lynn Ferguson. 8pm, East Oxford Community Centre.

**Wednesday 24 February.**  
Merseyside SO meeting, 'The Housing Crisis'. Speaker: Helen McHale. 7.45, Wallasey Unemployed Centre.

**Wednesday 24 February.**  
Canterbury SO meeting, 'Workers in the Eastern Bloc'. Speaker: Tim Anderson. 1pm, at the University.

**Thursday 25 February.**  
Sheffield SO meeting: debate with Workers' Power on the Middle East. Speaker: Tom Rigby. 7.30pm.

**Thursday 25 February.**  
Support the BTR Strikers — new video and speakers, 6.30 at Lambeth Town Hall. Organised by South London Support Group, 01-274 4000 x 372.

**Thursday 25 February.**  
York SO meeting, 'How to unite Arab and Jewish workers'. Speaker: Clive Bradley.

**Saturday 27 February.**  
North London SO jumble sale. 2pm at the 'Red Rose', 129 Seven Sisters Rd, N7.

**Saturday 27 February.**  
Demonstration called by the National Union of Students against the Education Reform Bill. Assemble 12 noon, Embankment.

**Tuesday 1 March.**  
North London SO meeting, 'Support the Health Workers'. Speakers: Mark Nevill, Nik Barstow, Pete Gilman. 7.30, 'Red Rose'.

**Wednesday 2 March.**  
Edinburgh SO meeting, 'Socialists and Ireland'. 7.30, Windsor Buffet, Leith Walk.

**Tuesday 8 March.**  
Newcastle SO meeting, 'Palestine: two nations, two states'. 8pm, Tyne Rooms, 10 Pilgrim St.

For further details of SO meetings, contact 01-639 7965.

**AFTER ALTON: A conference on Women's Liberation and Socialism into the 1990s.**

**Saturday 23 April, at Caxton House, 129 St Johns Way, London N19.**  
Contact: Lynn Ferguson, c/o 12A Canonbury Street, London N1 2TD.

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# Stalker — a view inside the state

A rash of books has appeared recently on the security services, the police and the situation in Northern Ireland. Add these to the already voluminous collection of books, pamphlets and sectariana and you have a considerable library.

This book, written by a high ranking police officer sent to investigate allegations of an RUC 'shoot-to-kill' policy is different to most of them, and better.

In May 1984, when John Stalker was first asked to investigate the events surrounding the deaths of six unarmed men in three separate

**Neil Stonelake reviews 'Stalker' by John Stalker (Harrap, £12.95)**

shooting incidents, he was only forty-four years old and the Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, Britain's second largest police force.

There was nothing in Stalker's

record to suppose that he was anything other than a loyal servant of the British state. His rise through the ranks of Greater Manchester CID had been rapid. He had been vetted a total of three times by MI5, and had been selected to attend the prestigious course at the Royal College of Defence Studies concerning

"...defence issues concerning the Western democracies and other countries with similar interests..."

Clearly, Stalker is no radical, and his mistrust of 'Marxists' who attempt to influence the operational conduct of police business is plainly stated.

However, his investigation into the affairs of the RUC provoked anger and hostility from senior officers of that force, and in particular its special branch. From Chief Constable Sir John Hermon down, determined attempts were made to cover up the facts of what had happened — particularly on the night when 17 year old Michael Tighe and his companion 19 year old Martin McCanley were gunned down in a pre-arranged police ambush.

It became known that a tape existed of the killings, which would have proven highly embarrassing to the officers in charge of the RUC.

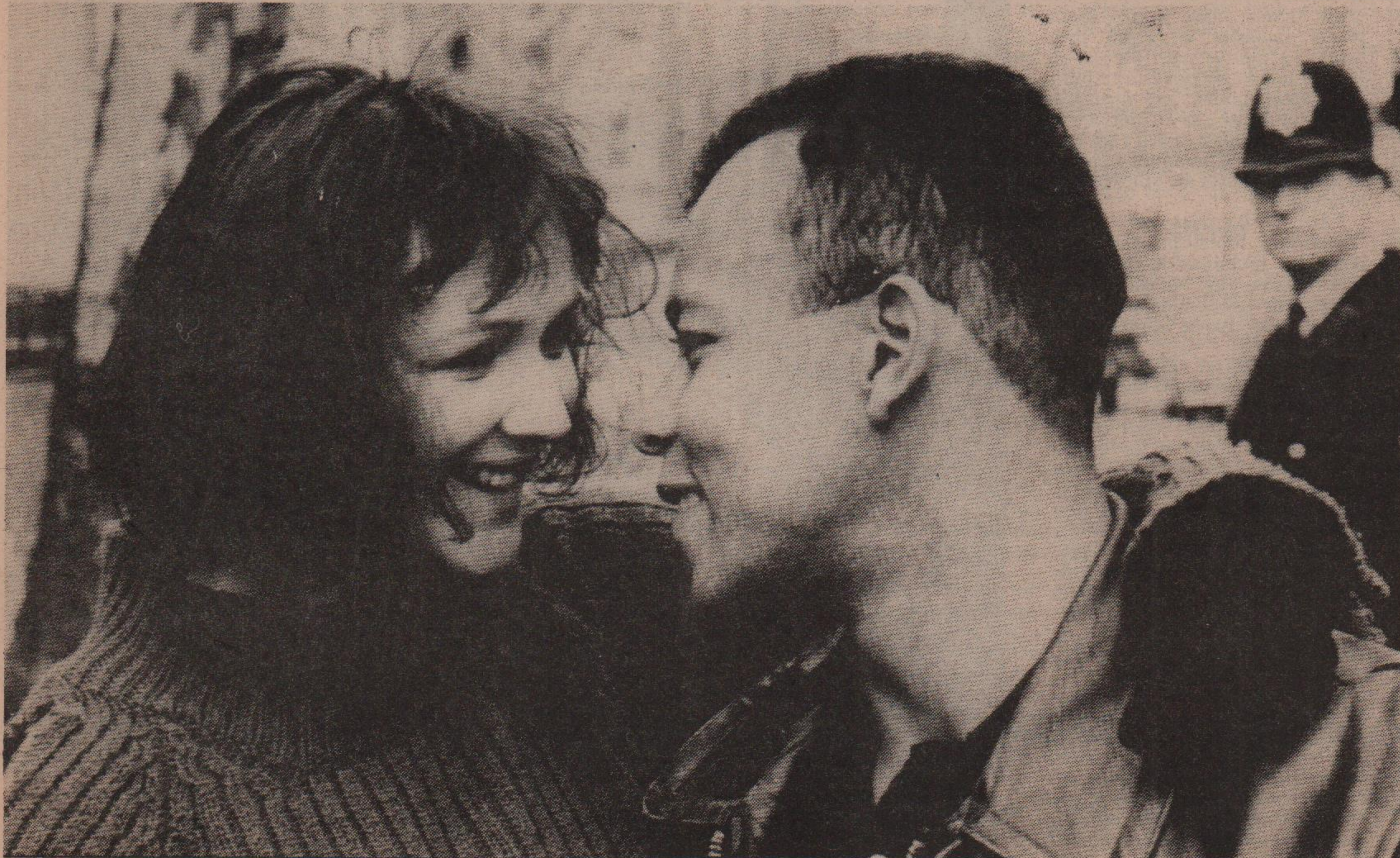
For eighteen months Stalker and his team of detectives tried to prise the tape out of their possession, only to be blocked at every turn. When Stalker was, eventually, within a few days of securing the tape, he was removed from the investigation and shortly afterwards suspended from duty on a number of disciplinary offences which with hindsight seem even more bizarre than they did at the time.

Stalker's anger at the blocking of his investigation is apparent and the months of harassment that he and his family suffered in the process as his paymasters and colleagues tried to discredit his report are recounted in detail.

In particular, the book sheds some light on the character of the notorious James Anderton, the unsavoury religious bigot who still presides over the Greater Manchester police force. Anderton emerges, despite Stalker's attempts at objectivity, as a weak, petulant, self-aggrandising buffoon, whose delusions of grandeur ("[he asked] me to imagine an invisible finger writing out for him on the breakfast table what the Lord wished him to say") would be comical were he not in a position to impose a reign of terror over one of Britain's largest cities.

Stalker should not be glorified; he is, after all, a product of the same organisation that spawned James Anderton. But he emerges from the book as an honest, conscientious man (if a bureaucrat, using the term in a completely neutral way). When the crunch comes, policemen and policewomen — however personally enlightened — can normally be expected to side with the bourgeois state and the class it represents. The fact is, however, that Stalker didn't — and suffered in consequence.

This book deserves to be widely read for the light it throws on the way the British state operates.



## A charmless follow-up

"We've a big job to do in those inner cities," intones the voice of Margaret Thatcher. But there is no evidence of social progress.

London is in a state of greater and greater decay; bulldozers clear out communities of the homeless built up around rubbish tips in open ground; the police shoot dead a middle-aged black woman, and riots break out, youth battle with rows of riot shields, and fires spread through the suburbs.

It is to this rapidly degenerating London that Ravi returns — fleeing from political opponents back home, where he was a big man in the government. It is a London to his mind morally degenerating also.

His son Sammy has a beautiful and free-spirited wife, Rosie, whom Ravi likes. But their life-style is a far cry from what he expects and a challenge to his morality. And among their friends, two provocative black lesbians are determined to find out what Ravi did in the government.

And of course his government tortured its opponents. To the radical Londoners — Rosie and friends — Ravi's dictatorial past is anathema. But he is giving his money away to his son — who wants to hide and forget the realities of his father's life. As for Rosie, she "can't hate him"; although his presence signals the apparent final collapse of her marriage.

Fleeing from his past, Ravi seeks out an old English love. But can she forgive him the years he left her, apparently forgotten? And can he forgive himself for the things he's done?

Hanif Kureishi and Stephen Frear's "Sammy and Rosie Get

**Edward Ellis reviews "Sammy and Rosie Get Laid".**

Laid" — their follow-up to the highly successful "My Beautiful Laundrette" — is an attempt to portray a complex mix of the politics of contemporary England and the Indian sub-continent; the estrangement between an Anglicised Asian and his important, wealthy father; sexual politics.

Like their previous film, it focuses on the cross-over of cultures, and sexuality, including homosexuality (in this case lesbianism). At the film's climax, an Asian man and an English woman (bought up in India), an Asian man (brought up in England) and a white American woman, an English woman and an Afro-Caribbean man, and two black women (one Asian, one Afro-Caribbean) are having sex with each other.

**None**

But unlike "My Beautiful Laundrette", "Sammy and Rosie" has no charm. None of the characters are very appealing. Ravi is a genial, and as it turns out, guilt-stricken, old man for whom we feel, perhaps, some sympathy: he tries to reclaim his own soul at the end of the film ("We can't let these fascists beat us down" he declares. "We must fight!"). But that he was responsible for monstrous repression is beyond doubt.

Sammy and Rosie, whose rela-

tionship is one of closeness but widening estrangement, have moments of tenderness together — but little to identify with.

All of the characters are wooden, stereotyped yuppies who seem virtually unaffected by the social explosions around them. They just watch (and have sex) while London burns. They walk through burning streets all but unharmed; Thatcher's Britain is a background to their personal traumas, but not part of it.

There are touches of 'magical realism', as the ghost of Ravi's conscience takes physical form to haunt him, and the homeless urchins burst into a fine rendition of "My Girl".

Yet the film never seems to decide how far down this road it wants to go. Is the total woodenness and lack of conviction in every line that Sammy utters deliberately stylised? Or is it just dreadful acting? I guess the latter.

So "Sammy and Rosie" is a disappointment. Kureishi is obviously very talented. But here his characters are often just mouthpieces for clever-clever "shock" lines: "I think I was the result of a premature ejaculation", Sammy tells his girlfriend earnestly. Do me a favour.

It has its moments. But they are few and far between.

## How money warps movies

**The Comic Strip is, I suppose, an acquired taste. Until now I've never been very impressed. "The Strike", the first of a new series, impressed me, and it was funny too.**

It is the story of the 1984-5 miners' strike as it might be made into a multi-million dollar Hollywood movie (starring Al Pacino as Arthur and Meryl Streep as Anne Scargill!)

Its subject isn't the miners' strike but modern commercial movies. It follows the subject through with relentless logic, as the money men and the technicians take over and reshape the screenplay written by a victimised miner (Alexei Sayle).

"Um, ah, er — this Scargill

**Mick Ackersley reviews 'The Strike'**

looks like a loser to me" mumbles Al Pacino (Peter Richardson, who also wrote and directed "The Strike"). So we get a happy ending.

"Arthur Scargill" becomes the "moderate" hero fighting off "the militants", fat and brutal thugs who try to blow up Sellafeld.

He finally saves the day by riding his broken-down motorbike to Westminster, where the House of Commons allows him to address the MPs. At the triumphant end, his crippled, small daughter (we saw him rescue her from a mining

disaster!) stumbles down the aisle of the House of Commons so that 'Arthur' can pick her up and cuddle her...under the friendly gaze of a Prime Minister who looks like Neville Chamberlain and a Speaker with a goatee beard who looks like "Uncle Sam". Of course, everyone had an American accent.

"The Strike" was a brilliantly sustained and appropriately savage indictment of the industry which produces movies like "Werewolf Too" (sic), which last week I had to sit through in my role of escort to a small child.

If you missed it, catch it when it comes round again.

# Shame as feminism?

The replies to my 'Women's Eye' piece on pornography contain many valid points, but I think they all miss the crux of what I was trying to say.

Male and female relationships, sexuality, and desire are shaped by, and take place in the context of male dominance, and the oppression of women. However, to argue that heterosexual sexuality, and its manifestations, specifically pornography, are simply about male dominance strikes me as rather 'reductionist'.

Helen McHale in her letter argues "The fact that women are sexually aroused by pornography is totally irrelevant. It is undoubtedly the case that some women fantasise about rape. So what?"

Well, I don't think it is irrelevant. Nor do I consider it irrelevant that women produce and read, for instance, Jackie Collins novels, in which the sex depicted is little different from the fantasies on the letters page of 'Playboy'.

Helen argues that such responses by women occur because women are dominated by male ideas of sexuality.

But society has traditionally defined women, primarily, as passive and receptive sexually. It certainly does not see women as active consumers of sexually-explicit material — indeed, if anything, women are conditioned not to respond to, or be interested in, material about sex.

If women do relate to pornography not in a purely negative way, it does imply that there's something to Marion Bower's argument in her Feminist Review article which I referred to in SO 344: "Whilst I do not discount the influence of social pressures on women's view of themselves, this does not seem to be a satisfactory account of why pornography should be sexually arousing to women."

"Sexual responses are notoriously resistant to social pressures. For example, homosexuality existed, and still does, in societies where the penalty for its expression is death."

After all, many feminists, who presumably to some extent have broken from dominant male ideas

## Lynn Ferguson replies to the discussion in our letters column about pornography

about women, have written about sexual fantasies in which they assume a passive role. Moreover, women are conditioned from birth to be wives, mothers and nurturers, but many break out of this, or at least kick against it. I don't see that sexuality should be more resistant to this unless there are other factors involved.

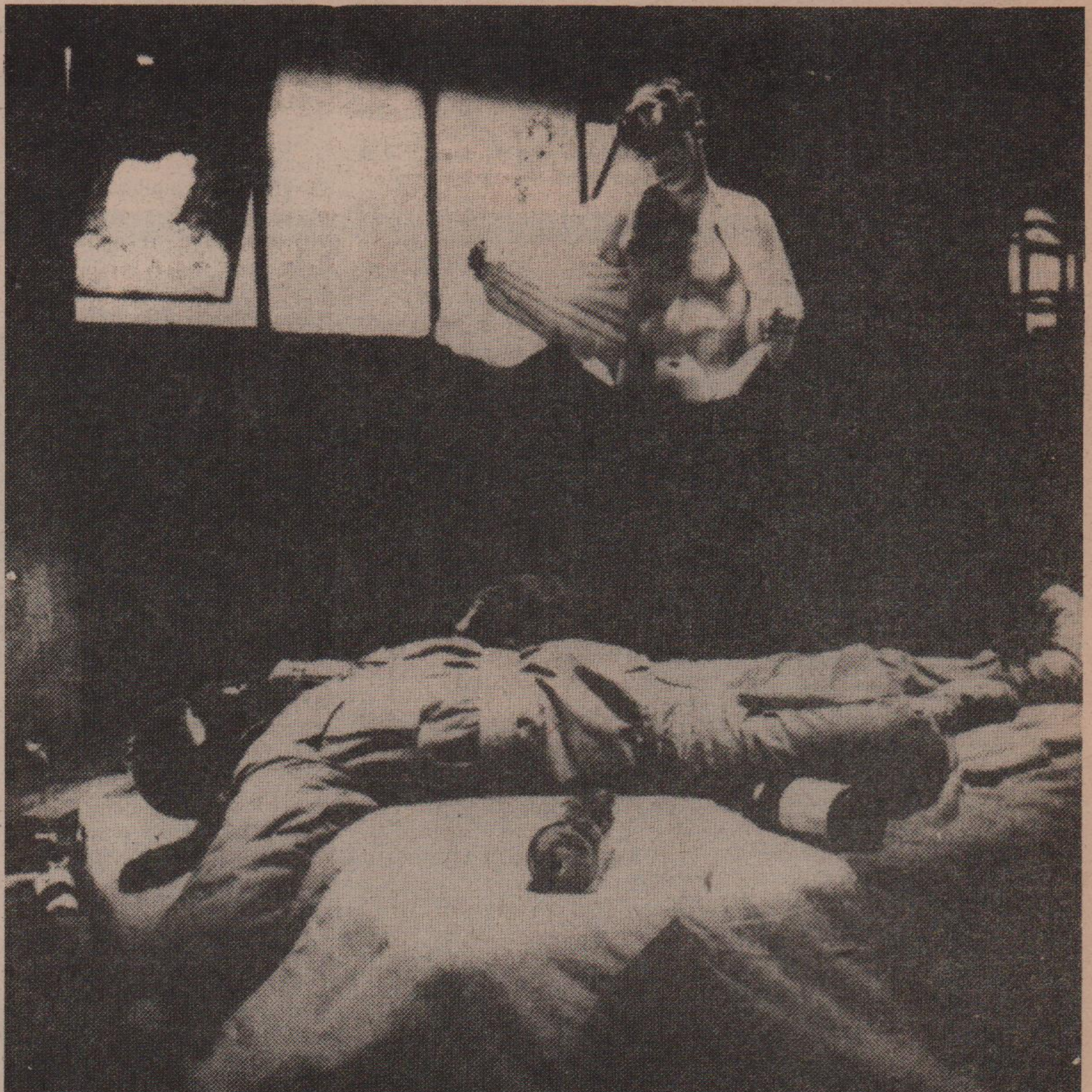
Ellen Willis, in her article 'Feminism, Moralism and Pornography' (published in the collection 'Desire' by Virago Press), argues that feminist opposition to pornography can be oppressive to women.

"If feminists define pornography, per se, as the enemy, the result will be to make a lot of women ashamed of their sexual feelings, and afraid to be honest about them. And the last thing women need is more sexual shame, guilt and hypocrisy — this time served up as feminism."

Another argument is that pornography leads to violence against women. Jo Springthorpe argues that "In research studies, pornographic literature has been suggested as a cause of rape." The key word here is "suggested".

It is indeed the case that people have embarked upon research studies intending to prove a causal link between porn and rape. But no-one has succeeded in doing so. In fact, research studies from places like Denmark and Sweden, where a wide range of pornographic material is freely available, show a comparatively low rate of sexual attacks — while rape is and has been horrifyingly widespread in illiterate, underdeveloped societies where mass pornography is unknown.

I'm certainly not arguing that the free availability of porn actually causes a drop in the incidence of rape and sexual assault (or better job opportunities, or more legal



A scene from Derek Jarman's 'The Last of England', which shows explicit and apparently homosexual sex. Is it pornography?

equality, or any of the other gains women have won in some of the more developed capitalist countries). But given this is the only conclusive research that exists, it indicates that porn does not directly cause rape or the subordination of women.

Jo also mentions child pornography — "How many eight-year old girls willingly consent to

pornographic modelling?"

It is incontestable that a vast quantity of porn involves coercion, rape and even murder in its production. This is vile and must be stopped — indeed it is already illegal, to the extent that child sex abuse, rape and murder are illegal.

But the vast bulk of freely available porn is not produced in such a way. The argument is completely irrelevant to written pornography. And it has little to do with the reasons that people like pornography.

Penny Newell gives a graphic account of how men can use pornography to harass and intimidate women. I think Penny was quite right in the action that she took. I also agree with Sarah Cotterill that women in a workplace where porn is all over the walls, and makes their working environment unpleasant, have a right to remove it, and to get union backing for doing so.

But in the case that Penny described, I can't help thinking that if this man was so intent on getting at women, then he would do so, porn or no porn. The pornography was the *method* he chose, not necessarily the cause — and not necessarily by any means the worst method he might choose.

I don't think women should be forced to look at pornographic images if they find them offensive. But I think private consumption is a different case.

Helen McHale says 'feminists are not moralists'. But often variants of feminism have slipped over into moralism. What about the 'social purity' movement amongst 19th century feminists? What about Christobel Pankurst's "votes for women, chastity for men"? And what about the spokeswoman from "Women Against Violence Against Women" who argued on TV for an alliance between feminists and the likes of Mary Whitehouse and Victoria Gillick?

Linda Gordon and Ellen DuBois in Feminist Review no 13 argue this: "Today, there seems to be a revival of social purity politics

within feminism...the contemporary feminist attack on pornography and sexual 'perversion' shades at the edges into a right-wing and anti-feminist version of social purity, the moral majority and pro-family movements of the new right."

I think, as thinking people, we have a responsibility to be aware that there are lots of different approaches to pornography *within feminism*. Not everyone agrees with Andrea Dworkin.

As I mentioned in my original article, Marion Bower and Jessica Benjamin have investigated the constitution of sexuality in early childhood, and have related fantasies of dominance and submission to small children's ambivalent feelings about their powerlessness in relation to their mother.

I'm not an expert on psychoanalysis by any means, but it seems to be an angle worth looking at. Socialists should never assume we know everything about a subject. We should always be questioning our assumptions, and looking to deepen and extend our understanding of issues. Pornography and sexuality should be no exception.

Ellen Willis argues: "At present...the sexual impulses that pornography appeals to are part of virtually everyone's psychology. For obvious political and cultural reasons nearly all porn is sexist in that it is the product of a male imagination and aimed at a male market..."

"But anyone who thinks women are simply indifferent to pornography has never watched a bunch of adolescent girls pass around a trashy novel."

Pornography is a very complicated and emotive subject. I think we should be aware of the debates which have taken place about it, and we ought to be prepared to think seriously about the difficulties with the 'mainstream' analysis.

The feminist movement has done so. Why shouldn't we?

## Letters

## Not all Jews are chauvinist

The Socialist Workers' Party have now gone in for "left-wing" stereotyping of whole nations. Two articles under the heading "Inside Israel" from Socialist Worker of 30 January give reasonable factual accounts of the drift to the right inside Israel, but conclude that this is an inescapable process of history.

The recent Peace Now demonstration against oppression in the occupied territories saw a massive turn-out of 40,000 Jews — an equivalent demonstration in Britain would be well over a million. But the SWP do not see this as evidence of real opposition to the Israeli government. Instead they quibble about the size of the demonstration compared with the 200,000-plus Jews who demonstrated against Israel's role in Lebanon in 1982. And they conclude:

"The more the Palestinians resist, the more most Israelis feel threatened and the more reactionary they become."

It is impossible for Jews to go any other way. Be honest, Socialist Worker, why don't you just say "these Jews are all the same — you can't change them."?

And this is exactly the logic of the second article "Do Israeli workers

hold the key?" They don't, says Socialist Worker. Why?

First, "the Israeli working class has never taken action over discrimination against Arab workers" — so obviously they never will (like nurses will never go on strike). Secondly the leaders of the Jewish trade unions are chauvinists — so obviously all their members are too. It's funny how Socialist Worker never seem to equate British trade unionists with

## Why all nations have rights

Tony Traub (letters, SO 344) says "socialists support the self-determination of oppressed nationalities. The (Israeli) Jews are not in this position. (Read Lenin's writings on the national question.)". And this is a common feeling — that national self-determination is exclusively the preserve of the oppressed.

Of course, as a general rule, self-determination does not need to be advocated for those nations who already have it. But that doesn't mean that we're in favour of nations who are independent at the moment being deprived of national

the political consciousness of Norman Willis.

These "left wing" stereotypes of Jewish people demonstrate how far Socialist Worker has come from an independent working-class analysis of the national question. They have forgotten Trotsky's and Lenin's repeated warnings against falling for the chauvinist propaganda of bourgeois nationalists.

LIAM CONWAY,  
Nottingham

rights in the future.

It is completely illogical to say that *only* oppressed nations have national rights. National oppression means precisely the denial by others of national rights. If a nation, by virtue of no longer being oppressed, loses its right to self-determination, *logically* that means we should have no objection to someone conquering it — and turning it into an oppressed nation again... It really is a very silly argument.

Socialists are in favour of national rights for oppressed nations because we're in favour of national rights.

GERRY BATES,  
Camden



Pickets at Land Rover

# Land Rover strike solid

By Jim Denham

**The Land Rover pay strike is rock solid. All 6,000 hourly-paid employees are out and over 1,000 of them turned out for picket duty on the first day of the action, Monday 22nd.**

The Joint Shop Stewards' Committee has organised 24-hour picket rotas and one senior steward told us that even workers who voted against taking action have been eagerly volunteering for picket duty. The militancy of the Land Rover workers was demonstrated the week before the pay strike began. Thousands walked out when management brought in the MORI organisation to conduct an opinion poll of the workforce.

Managing Director Tony Gilroy was forced to abandon this attempt to undermine the workers' solidarity and a public apology was issued. This victory, together with the concessions won by the Ford workers in their strike, has given the Land Rover strikers a terrific boost.

However, Land Rover — part of the state-owned Austin-Rover Group — will not be a pushover. The government has made it clear that they want a 'hard line' maintained by Land Rover management. And the full time officials on the

National Negotiating Committee have so far given no leadership whatsoever.

It will be up to the plant shop stewards and the rank and file workers at Solihull to ensure that the tremendous solidarity of the strike is maintained and no sell out deal is accepted. Regular mass meetings need to be held to keep the strikers informed of all developments and counter any management attempts to whip up a 'back to work' movement.

## Offer

The company say that their pay offer is worth 14% over two years but in reality only 8% of this is 'new money', the rest being consolidation of bonus payments.

The official claim is somewhat vague, involving the demand for a 'substantial' pay increase and the consolidation of an £8.50 attendance allowance. One obvious tack for the Solihull Joint Shop Stewards' Committee is to formulate a more concrete set of pay demands. The absence of a clear lump sum target could give the national officials a free hand to negotiate a sell-out. And TGWU workers in the docks must be approached to refuse to handle any more Land Rover products, a very high proportion of which are exported.

loss, speed-up and threat to union organisation — of the changes in working practices agreed only in 'principle', to ensure the maximum number of plants reject them. This should go together with building serious rank and file links between the plants. If such links had existed over the last 6 months then the national union leaders would have had much less room for manoeuvre in their various attempted surrenders;

\* support for the health workers action, including strike action on March 14th.

Ford workers have just beaten a powerful employer and this alone should provide real inspiration to other workers.

# Ford victory

From back page

ten as long ago as last October. And three weeks ago there was the farce of the union leaderships recommending the bosses' previous offer, which included the 3-year timescale and imposition of changed working practices.

Despite the real concessions won by the rank and file's solid action, workers also see real weaknesses in the present deal that has been accepted. It is still over a 2-year period and, with Ford just announcing booming profits, a wage rise of little more than the rate of inflation is condemned as inadequate. Most importantly, though, the deal concedes the 'principle' of the need to radically change working practices on the shop floor — 'quality circles', 'team leaders' and skilled workers on the production lines — and places the unions' seal of approval on the bosses' basic strategy.

The danger now is that the weaker plants will concede the changes, given the pressure from the national union leaders, isolating the more militant plants and further dividing Ford workers. This in turn would make more difficult a repetition of the solid, united action seen over the last 10 days strike. The deal also divides the 32,500 manual workers off from the 12,000 Ford white collar and supervisory staff, who are still negotiating their deal with the company.

One of the most important features of the negotiations and action over the latest deal has been an unprecedented unity between the two groups of workers. Both have been threatened by Ford's plans and action against it has involved the white collar workers. Supervisors in particular have been threatened with major job losses, as well as loss of status.

White collar workers are reported to be angry with the manual workers' settlement, and some are threatening action during their own negotiations, which are due to restart today (Tuesday).

Despite these problems, the boost in confidence that the strength of the strike and the concessions wrung from the bosses must have given Ford workers should be translated into:

\* support for any action taken by white collar and supervisory staff;  
\* an immediate campaign in all the plants to explain the implications — job

# Thousands of jobs at risk

By Mike Grayson

**On Thursday 18 February almost 600,000 civil servants had a letter arrive on their desks, informing them of steps the government was taking "to improve the way in which the Civil Service carries out its business."**

These steps include hiving off parts of the service, so that partly independent 'agencies' run their functions. Up to 70,000 staff — an eighth of the Civil Service — could be under the management of these new agencies in a year's time.

The long-range plan is apparently to crop the Civil Service down to an elite core of 20,000 "policy-makers", with everyone else working for agencies. The full privatisation of some of these new bodies has not been ruled out.

Among the first candidates for hiving-off are the Passport Office, the resettlement units (currently run by the DHSS), the Meteorological Office, and — most significantly — the unemployment benefit service and Job Centres.

Socialists may initially give scant regard to what seems to be the break-up of the 'Whitehall bureaucracy'. At stake, however, are the pay and conditions of many thousands of low-paid

workers. As the 'Guardian' of 18 February commented: "Creation of new agencies is likely to intensify dispersal from London to save money, but will also allow the end of national pay rates for people working outside the capital. The drive to cut costs will enhance salaries for the few...but cut the standard of living for the many, particularly clerical staff outside the capital."

Guidance issued to departmental managers also makes it clear what is in store for those working under the new agencies. This guidance states that Agency status means:

\*greater freedom from central control in the areas of pay, recruitment and other aspects of personnel management.  
\*adjustments to industrial relations arrangements.  
\*appointment of Chief Executive and key staff, with changed terms and conditions of service."

Although staff have been told that any changes in their conditions will be negotiated with the Civil Service unions, there is little doubt about the government's long-term intent.

These proposals also have to be looked at in the light of the so-called "Mueller Report" on working patterns,

published last year. This discussed ideas such as a large expansion of part-time working in the Civil Service, with the ending of guaranteed rights like sick pay and maternity leave.

In short, when all the tabled proposals for the Civil Service are considered, the prospect is one of job loss, reduced job security, and even worse pay than we get at the moment.

So what has been the response of the Civil Service union leaderships? Peter Jones, secretary of the Council of Civil Service Unions, was quoted in 'The Independent' as saying "I don't know what all the hype has been about. We are talking about a very long-term programme." (If the reports of 70,000 jobs being hived-off in the first year are remotely accurate, one must wonder about Jones's definition of 'very long-term'). Reaction from other union leaders has been mixed, but there has been no immediate pledge of action in opposition to the proposals.

Four years ago, the Civil Service unions failed to respond adequately to the union ban at GCHQ. Will they repeat that failure in the light of this less immediate, but potentially devastating, threat?

The rank and file membership must begin building the pressure from below, rather than waiting for a lead from the top.

# Nurses at every pit lane?

**I think the Ford workers' settlement was a victory because the bosses did back down. The tragedy is that the workers could have got so much more.**

But even with what they did get, other workers will be tempted to press that much harder when they see the example.

I hope the TUC's demonstration on the NHS on 5 March will be massive. Quite a few Notts miners will be going down, as I will be with my son, who is a nurse. I hope the Chancellor gets the message from that demonstration and the strike action that we want a viable health

service and not tax cuts for the rich. The rich can afford private health care anyway.

I hope nurses will follow up the example at Frickley colliery, when they picketed them out for a day. I would like to see nurses at the top of every pit lane, outside every car factory, etc., etc.

Other workers need to realise

that, because of the need to keep emergency cover, nurses cannot come all-out, and therefore others need to come out on their behalf.

NACODS are taking their dispute with British Coal to the Reference Tribunal. I am keeping my fingers crossed that there is no attempt to sell-out. British Coal are shoving very hard the line that this

## Whetton's WEEK



## Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN WINDSCALE: THE PENNEY DROPS

Midnight of 31 December saw the release of Sir William Penney's report on the Windscale fire, thirty years after its suppression by Harold MacMillan.

More has become known about the fire over the years but two facts about the Windscale reactors can still bear emphasising.

Firstly, the reactors did *not* produce electricity for domestic use. They were pieces of military equipment making plutonium for bombs.

Secondly, the fire occurred because of a lack of basic knowledge about the behaviour of nuclear reactors. And once the problem was identified, it was dealt with not on the principle of utmost safety but of expediency.

The reactors or "piles" were primitive set-ups, consisting of fuel rods and cans of uranium (for making into plutonium) set in a pile of graphite (carbon) blocks. The graphite slowed down neutrons released by the fuel so they could react with the uranium. The by-product of heat was removed by fans blowing air through the pile and out through huge chimneys.

The unsuspected problem concerned the graphite. Bombardment by neutrons distorted its structure, increasing its internal energy. After a while, it would release this "Wigner energy" (named after its discoverer) as heat. This first happened in 1952 "spontaneously" in an "accident".

Wigner energy had to be released in a controlled way to avoid over-heating and a possible fire. This was done by allowing the pile to over-heat slightly but keeping the temperature below 250°C when the fuel cans might burst. The interval between releases was increased over the years, doubling by 1957. So, on October 7, when Pile No. 1 was due for release, it contained more energy than at any time since 1952.

The reason for this was not stated but Windscale was under pressure to produce as much plutonium as possible. More frequent shutdowns would have hindered this.

The operator seems to have precipitated the fire by allowing excessive over-heating but was hindered by lack of information from the reactor core. The instruments were placed to monitor normal operation, not Wigner release.

When the overheating was diagnosed, the fans were switched on but the pile remained hot. At dawn on the 10th, a surge of radioactivity was recorded at the top of the chimney but the works manager was only told that afternoon of the "bad burst" in the pile. Core scanners had been jammed by heat so workers pulled plugs from the hottest channels to look in. They saw glowing metal, receiving large doses of radiation in the process. A can of fuel had burst, allowing the uranium to oxidise (releasing more heat). The cooling air made matters worse, like fanning a fire. Pumping carbon dioxide in did not help, either. Normally a fire extinguisher, it allows metal to continue burning.

Some graphite would have been burning by now. Turning on the main air blowers would have turned the pile into a monstrous barbecue (graphite and charcoal are the same substance) but luckily, after some debate, they were not! The resulting radioactive clouds would have overwhelmed the chimney filters, causing a "major catastrophe" (the filters were installed *against* the wishes of the Atomic Energy Authority).

Workers laboured through the night using scaffold poles from a building site to poke the swollen fuel cans out of their channels. The fire was extinguished by flooding the pile with five million litres of water. This was a considerable gamble. The water could have flashed to steam or it could have reacted with the graphite, making hydrogen. Either could have caused an explosion.

In any case, radioactivity escaped and the Windscale management had no plans to deal with this. Arbitrary limits for radioactive iodine in milk were hurriedly set but much had already been drunk when these were enforced.

MacMillan suppressed Penney's report because he felt it would make the US less likely to share nuclear expertise with an incompetent and backward industry. This would hinder plans to make the UK a fully-fledged nuclear power.

This is borne out by the tale of the missing polonium. Used in the "trigger" of Britain's old-fashioned A-bombs, this was made at Windscale. Some escaped in the fire and, when revealed over 25 years later, led to a doubling of the estimated deaths.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Scots tenants protest

By Stan Crooke

Tenants from all over Scotland will be converging on Edinburgh this Saturday, 27 February, for a major demonstration and rally in opposition to the Tories' planned attacks on housing in Scotland, embodied in a White Paper published at the close of last year.

The White Paper's proposals will have dire results for council tenants, Scottish Special Housing Association (SSHA) tenants, and tenants in the private sector. The Tories claim they will mean more choice. In reality, they will mean more privatisation and even worse standards of housing.

For private developers and private landlords, on the other hand, the White Paper promises a bonanza of rich pickings.

### Response

The response of tenants throughout Scotland to the initial discussion paper, which contained some — but certainly not all — of these proposals, was one of blanket opposition. In spite of this, the Tories are pressing ahead with their plans to sacrifice housing standards to the profits of private builders and landlords.

Since the publication of the subsequent White Paper tenants all over Scotland have maintained their opposition through a variety of activities, from leafleting, petitioning and public meetings to pickets of Tory MPs and a lobby of last November's Scottish Labour Party special re-call conference. A demonstration organised in Glasgow attracted over 1,000 tenants.

But Labour-controlled councils and the Scottish TUC have hitherto kept a low profile in the campaign. Individual councils have certainly provided some support, such as funding, for the tenants' campaigning. In general though, and despite the threat which the White Paper poses for councils, the opposition of councils, like that of the STUC, has not gone beyond verbal condemnation of the proposals.

This Saturday's demonstration and rally, initiated by the Network of Edinburgh (council) Tenants and the Lothian Federation of SSHA Tenants, will be the first all-Scottish action against the Tories' plans. The threat to housing standards contained in the White Paper has re-awakened the tenants' movement throughout Scotland.

Follow-up plans for activity after the demonstration and rally include consolidation of the network of tenants' groups which has developed in the course of the campaigning, with an initial focus of ensuring that tenants are organised to oppose the dubious temptation of swapping their council landlord for a private landlord.

### Rally

The rally will also see the launching of a National Housing Charter for Scotland, taking up not only the need for more funding for housing, but also the need for real democracy and accountability in the way housing is built and administered.

Plans are also in hand to increase labour movement involvement in the campaign. A number of resolutions on the White Paper are on the agenda for this year's Labour Party Scottish conference and a fringe meeting on the issue has been organised.

Labour movement activists must be fighting for full support for the tenants' campaigning, linking it up with the fight against poll tax and current industrial struggles in order to hasten the demise of this hated government.

**Scottish Assembly of Tenants — "Hands Off Our Homes!" March and Rally. Assemble 11.15 am, The Mound, Princes Street, Edinburgh. Creche available. Further information from J. Frew (031-225 4606).**

# Victory for Ford workers

By John Bloxam

32,500 Ford manual workers returned to work on Monday after winning an important victory over their bosses. Following mass meetings the previous Thursday, they voted 60-40 to accept a deal in which the company had been forced to make real concessions. In particular, the bosses conceded a union veto over the introduction of radical changes in working practices in each of Ford's 21 British plants and dropped their insistence on a 3 year deal. They also agreed to guarantee that the pay rise covering the second year of the new deal would be at least 7%.

Following a lengthy period in which workers' victories have been few and far between, it was an important victory. A boss at Land Rover commented this had strengthened their own workers' resolve: 'I think that without the Ford dispute we would have got a deal.'

Having won this test of strength with the company, Ford workers' own confidence and shop floor organisation will be strengthened. This will be especially important in the campaign now to resist the bosses' plans to radically change working practices in the plants, with consequent job losses, speed-up and attacks on union organisation.

Only one plant (Dagenham Assembly) voted against the deal recommended by the national union leaderships, but those for rejection still represented a substantial minority (40%) of all Ford manual workers. Having tasted their strength and seen the rapid and crippling effect the 10 day old strike had on Ford's European operations, they felt they could have won much more and angrily rejected the union leadership's clear intention to call the strike off at the earliest possible opportunity, irrespective of its strength and chances of winning major gains.

Certainly the unions' own claim of a one-year deal, 10% wage rise and shorter working week, had been forgot-

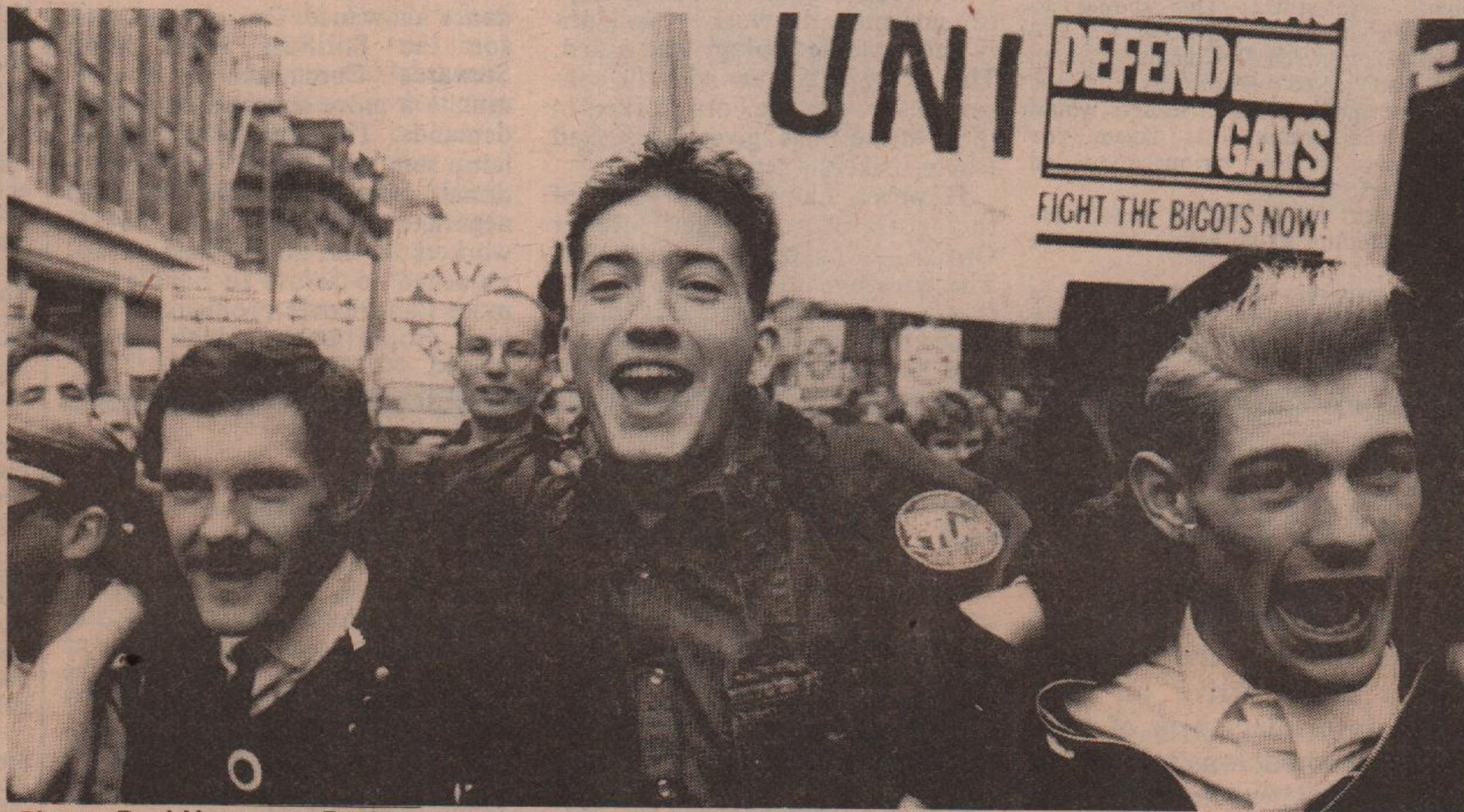


Photo: Paul Hermann, Profile

## 20,000 protest at Clause 28

Over 20,000 people brought Manchester city centre to a standstill on Saturday 20 February in what was by far the largest ever demonstration for lesbian and gay rights in Britain.

The march, called by the North West Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Equality, was in protest at the notorious Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill which aims to prevent the "promotion" of homosexuality.

As speakers said at the rally in Albert Square — packed to capacity for the first time in years — the "promotion" of homosexuality is merely the "promotion" of equal rights, equal treatment and equal

respect.

Clause 28 is a major attack on human rights.

Speakers included Michael Cashman of EastEnders, Sue Johnson of Brookside (greeted with chants of 'Sheila! Sheila!'), Ian McKellan and many others. At the festival in the evening, other speakers included Mildred Gordon MP, Chris Smith MP, Gill Cox of Women's Realm and Peter Tatchell. Performers included Jimi Sommerville and Erasure's Andy Bell.

The whole day was an enormous success. It demonstrated the depth of feeling against Clause 28 amongst lesbians and gay men — and among many heterosexuals.

Indeed, Saturday may have marked the emergence — or coming

together — of a mass lesbian and gay protest movement for the first time in Britain. The huge numbers of individuals and scattered organisations that constitute the 'lesbian and gay community' have shown themselves ready to move into action to defend their rights.

The presence of the organised labour movement on the march was low, and a major task is to take the campaign into the trade unions. Trade Unionists Against Clause 28 has been formed in London; similar groups are needed elsewhere.

The Clause is very likely to become law. So opposition will have to take a long-term form. Clause 28 is not going to go away — and neither is the new lesbian and gay movement that has been born to fight it.

## CARI calls picket

The Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) has organised a picket of the Turkish Airlines office in London for Saturday 27 February.

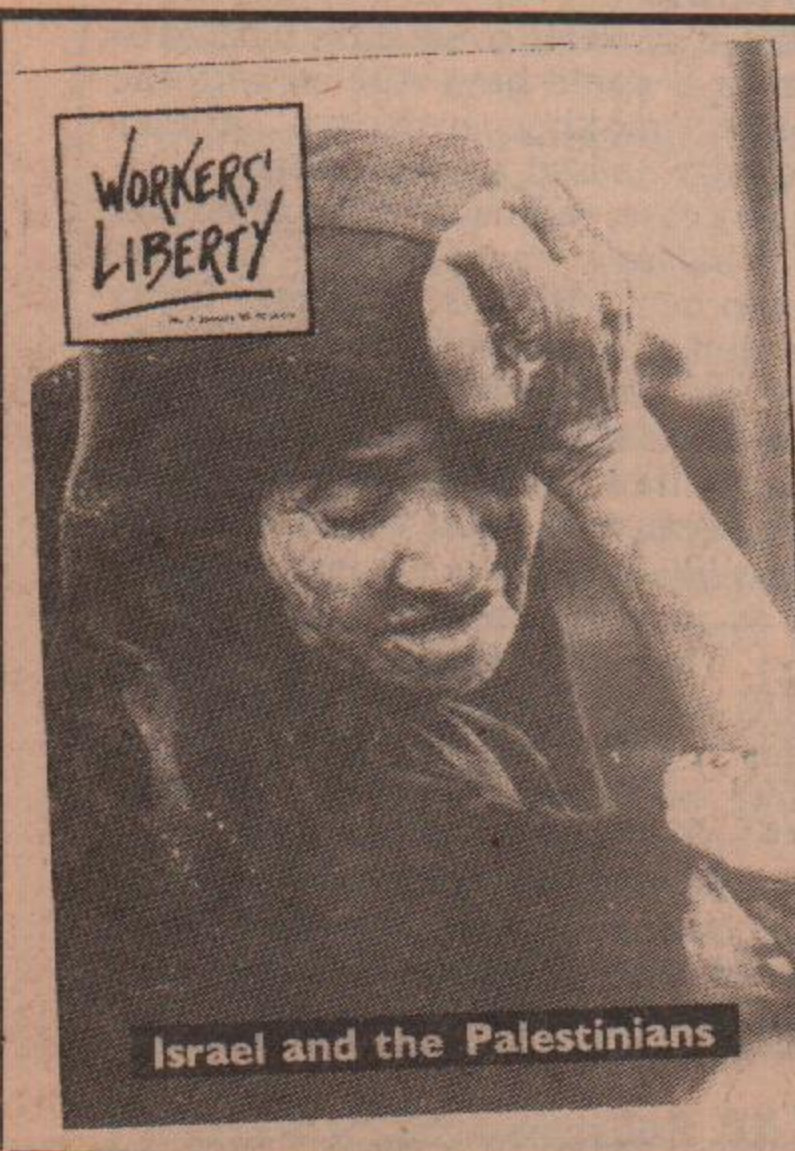
The occasion is a visit to Iran by the Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal on 28 February. Ozal's visit is for the purpose of negotiating a \$3 billion trade deal with the Iranian regime.

Turkey and Iran have many links. They have undertaken joint military action against the Kurdish people (who live in both countries as well as Iraq). To please the Iranian regime, Ozal has stepped up the harassment of Iranian oppositionists in Turkey in recent years.

Iranians have been deported to Iran — where they face almost certain death.

CARI is calling for Turkey to break links with Iran and for an end to the harassment of Iranian exiles in Turkey.

**Picket of Turkish airlines (near Oxford Circus)  
11.00 — 1.00pm,  
Saturday 27 February  
Organised by the  
Campaign Against  
Repression in Iran  
(CARI)**



### Palestine: two nations, two states!

The new issue of 'Workers' Liberty', out now, discusses the conflict in the West Bank and Gaza, and carries, for the first time in English, two articles by Trotsky on the socialist approach to disputes between nations.

Also in this issue: a feature on the Crash, Kowalewski on Poland, and debate on Ireland, Scottish nationalism, South Africa and the movies. 90p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Israel and the Palestinians