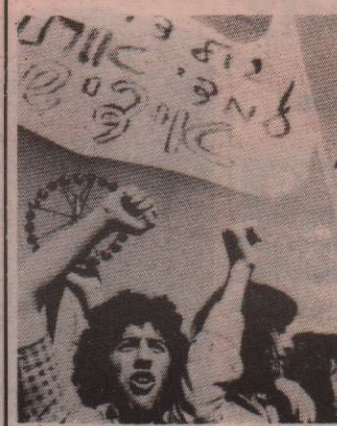


SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

INSIDE:



Should we write off Israeli workers?

See centre pages

Strikes can save the NHS

The gloves are off. The Tories' claims to believe in the NHS, to be keeping it 'safe in their hands' and pumping it full of money are revealed as pure hypocrisy in the new National Health Service review. Up to 320 hospitals are to be allowed to opt out of health authority control. Management boards will behave 'like businesses', determine their own pay levels, and offer 'choice' — the Tories' favourite buzz word — to their patients. There will be choice of meals, television, telephones...

If you can pay for it.

The elderly will get tax concessions if they opt for private health care.

Local GPs are to be given fixed budgets. If they 'overspend' they'll be penalised. If they underspend they can keep half of what is left! GPs will no longer be obliged to accept patients — like the old or the very ill.

We know what all this will mean — worse health care, and worse conditions for health workers. One of the first actions of Tadworth Court hospital, a childcare unit in Surrey which 'opted out' six years ago, was to derecognise the trade union and do away with national pay rates and conditions.

The Tories are spending over £1 million to produce this review. Increased spending on



Nurses' protest last year. Photo: Ian Swindale

the NHS itself will be less than the increase in the inflation rate.

Many of the proposals were leaked at the end of last week by Robin Cooke, Labour's front bench health spokesperson,

who obtained a confidential draft of the review.

Labour and the trade unions should launch a big campaign against the proposals. It should include strike action. Many

health workers are disillusioned with strike action after last year's campaigns.

But the answer is better strikes — better organised, uniting workers from different

unions and with clear objectives.

Workers' action can save the NHS. We need to act now to save it.

Sinn Fein looks for ways out of impasse

By Martin Thomas

Sinn Fein sees many of the complexities in the Northern Ireland impasse, even if its uncritical supporters in Britain don't.

In his speech to the movement's ard fheis (conference) in Dublin last Saturday, 28th, Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams said that the IRA must be "careful and careful again" to avoid killing civilians; and he stressed the need to reconcile Protestants and Catholics.

"Since our last ard-fheis, I had a series of discussions with a number of Northern Protestants. These discussions crystallised for me the need for republicans to understand the perceptions and fears of this section of our citizens.

"The majority of Northern Protestants, locked into their support for unionism and imperialism, see the demand for Irish national independence as a demand for a creation of a Catholic state and an end to their Protestant identity. Many of them wrongly conclude when republicans call for a British withdrawal that we include them in that withdrawal scenario.

"These fears are fed by the reactionary utterances and antics of sectarian politicians.

"Those perceptions, though foreign to Irish republicans, are held by many Northern Protestants. They represent a barrier which we must consistently try to break down.

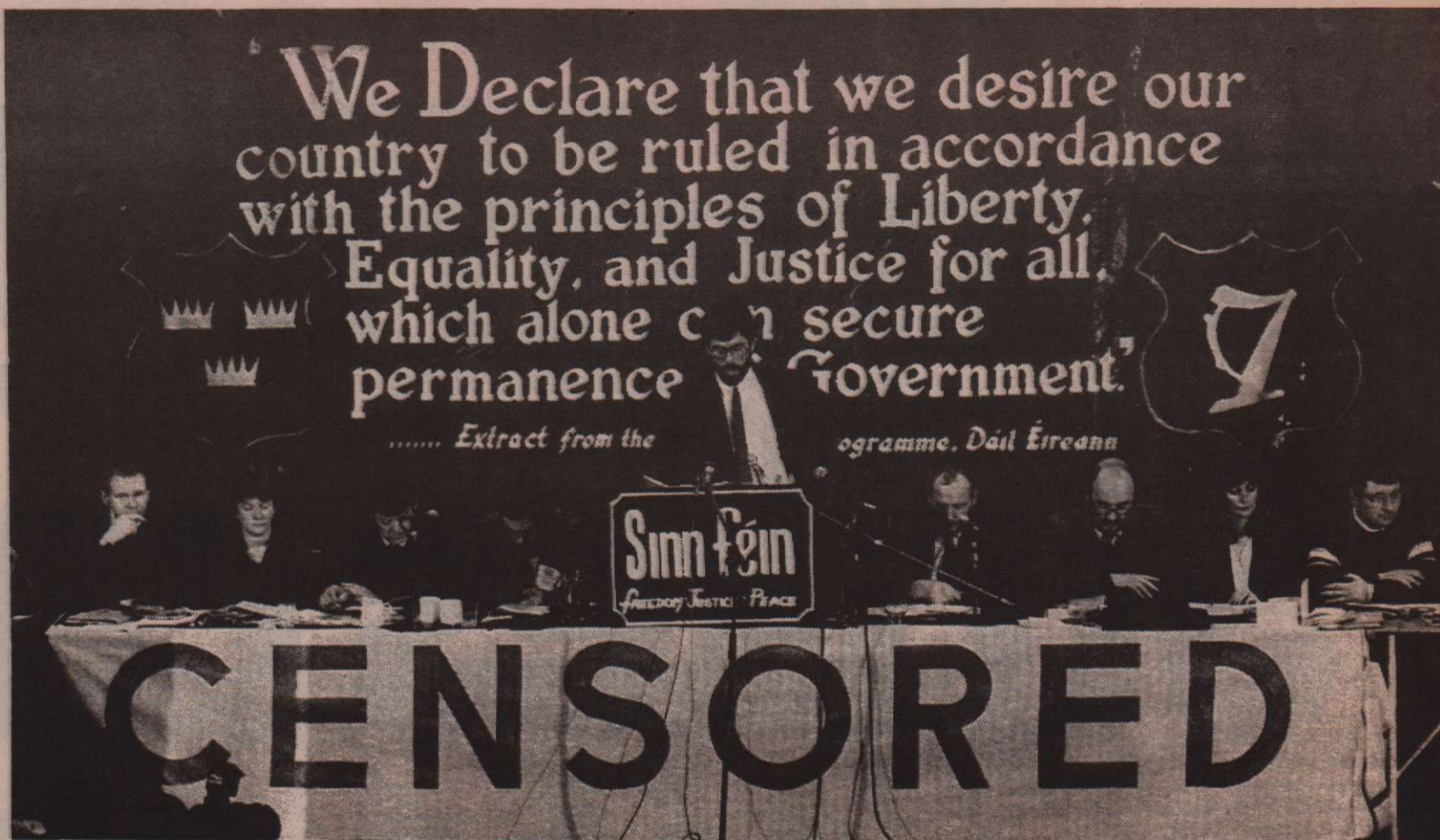
"When we consider the gulf of pain and hate and the years of physical separation that exists between ourselves and the Northern Protestant population this is a formidable task. Yet it is one to which we must remain committed."

Sinn Fein and the IRA have had setbacks recently.

Despite Northern Catholics becoming more cynical about the Anglo-Irish deal (the agreement under which Britain promises to consult Dublin about the running of Northern Ireland, signed in November 1985), there is no sign of any new electoral breakthrough for Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland.

In Southern Ireland Sinn Fein has less than two per cent of the vote.

Militarily, the IRA's campaign long ago became a desultory and



Gerry Adams called for an effort to reach out to Protestants — but did not say how

sporadic affair. The political cost of the civilian casualties far outweighs any military rationale.

The Republicans' response, it seems, is to reinforce and extend their turn to electoral politics.

- An IRA unit has been disbanded because it killed a former RUC reservist.

- Gerry Adams' call for the IRA to be "careful and careful again" must have been agreed with the IRA leadership. An IRA statement just before the ard fheis declared: "Armed struggle will not compromise political struggle."

(Over the last year) many civilians died in operations which dented the confidence of some of our supporters...mistakes were made...

We have a responsibility to correct the problems and refine our activities so that they do not hinder but complement efforts to build a broad-based front against imperialism".

are not very covert.

Their leader is an ex-SS officer and their programme is anti-foreigner and 'patriotic'. Young demonstrators chanted the slogan "Foreigners in, Nazis out!" on the night of the election.

The Republicans now have 10 seats, while the Social Democrats emerged as the strongest party.

The most recent crisis in Argentina unlike the previous few, seems to have strengthened the position of the army. Hot on the heels of an attempted coup last year, last week a small group called the Everyone for the Fatherland Movement tried to seize a military barracks.

After a successful army operation, leaving most of the 'conspirators' dead, the army is claiming leftist provocation. There is little evidence that the rebel group was particularly leftist, although it was certainly liberal.

The ghost of the days leading to the 1976 coup is hovering now over the run-up to this year's presidential election. The army's popularity has been boosted.

The 'dirty war' in which thousands of people were murdered or 'disappeared' is unlikely to be forgotten. But could it be in danger of being forgiven?

- The ard fheis decided that if Britain introduces a law compelling election candidates in Northern Ireland to make a "declaration against violence" then Sinn Fein candidates will make the declaration tongue in cheek.

- The main decision of the ard fheis was to work for a "broad all-Ireland anti-imperialist front".

"In this motion", said Gerry Adams, "we are saying that dogma and elitism are dead". Sinn Fein general secretary Tom Hartley said that the decision marked a watershed. "We need to break out of our narrowness and have the confidence to acknowledge that we do not hold the holy grail on the anti-imperialist question".

The motion was passed almost unanimously. But what does it mean? An alliance with Fjanna Fail, the most nationalist of the Southern parties? With the SDLP, the constitutional nationalists in the North?

In the first half of 1988 Sinn Fein had talks with the SDLP. These broke down; but in his speech last Saturday Gerry Adams left the door open for further talks.

"It is interesting to note that in our dialogue with the SDLP their delegation was moved to agree with us that the Irish people have the right to national self-determination.

"They also accepted that an internal Six-County 'settlement' is no solution and that the real question is how do we end the British presence in Ireland in a manner which leaves behind a stable and peaceful Ireland.

"A verbal commitment by the SDLP leadership to those propositions does not, or course, mean that they will change strategy. It does, however, represent a marker by which their activities can be judged."

All this smacks of heresy for traditional old-style Republicans. What does it mean for working class politics? Unfortunately, nothing very positive.

Adams is right when he says that building links with Protestants must be central for any attempt to create a free united Ireland. Ireland cannot be united unless its people are united — including at least a sizeable proportion of the Protestants.

But a pan-Catholic political front — that's what the "broad anti-

imperialist alliance" actually means — could only increase Protestants' fears that a united Ireland would mean a Catholic state. It could only undercut efforts to unite Catholic and Protestant workers on social and economic issues.

The way to a free united Ireland is working class politics — including consistent democracy which would guarantee to the Irish minority community, the Protestants, regional autonomy in the areas where they are in the majority.

Labour councillors defy poll tax

POLL TAX

By Stan Crooke

Adozen Labour councillors in Lothian Region, Scotland, have declared that they will:

- refuse to pay the poll tax themselves;
- support the campaign for mass non-payment;
- oppose prosecution of people who fail to pay the poll tax;
- support the Lothian Region town hall workers union, NALGO, in its policy of non-cooperation with poll tax debt collection.

Last week Lothian Regional Council voted through a poll tax of £278, meaning an overall annual

poll tax of £392 for people living in Edinburgh.

Right-wingers in the council Labour Group have condemned the rebels. Eric Milligan, deputy leader of the Labour Group and president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, has attacked them for inconsistency. The 12 rebels all voted for the poll tax rate which they are now refusing to pay.

Refusal to vote for the poll tax, followed up by a campaign in the labour movement, would indeed have been a better approach. But the declaration of the 12 is a step forward against the poll tax. It has publicised the policy of the NALGO regional branch.

Labour Party branches should demand that their councillors join the 12 and vote accordingly at Labour Group and full council meetings.

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WORLD BRIEFS

The right has lost out to the far right in recent elections in West Berlin. Although

openly pro-Nazi parties are banned by the US, British and French authorities who formally control the city, the Republicans

Campaign against the massacres in Iran, Iraq and Turkey

- Iraqi Cultural Centre, Tottenham Court Rd, 1pm, Saturday 25th February 1989.

- Turkish Airways, 1pm, 18th March 1989.

- United Nations Information Centre, 1pm, 25th March.

Public Meeting

22nd April 1989

Demo

6th May 1989



Return to the Rock

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

No apologies for returning once again, to 'Death on the Rock'. The importance of this whole affair — not least for what it tells us about the relationship between the government and the press — cannot be overstated.

The Windlesham/Rampton report overwhelmingly vindicated the programme. Windlesham, a Tory and former Northern Ireland Minister, together with Richard Rampton, a leading QC, were appointed by Thames to investigate the programme after a massive outcry in the press. They were both personally approved for the job by Home Secretary Hurd.

After a painstaking four-month inquiry, Windlesham and Rampton concluded that the programme was fair, well-researched and "without ulterior motives". There were three significant errors, but these "need to be set against the programme overall" says the report.

The government's response was all too predictable. Mogaadon Man Hurd bleated on about it being, "a report on television, by television for television". Defence Secretary Younger professed himself "absolutely astonished", etc etc.

This response — not actually bothering to discuss the content of the report, but simply slugging it off as though its wrong headedness should be obvious to all reasonable folk — was also the reaction of most of the press. The *Sun* (naturally) put it most crudely: "Thames Television can wriggle like a puff adder."

They can posture like Mick Jagger. They can hold all the inquiries they wish into the truthfulness of witnesses and the integrity of their journalists.

But they cannot alter basic truths. Their programme, *Death on the Rock*, was an irresponsible, mischievous, deeply harming episode. It should NEVER have been made.

It should NEVER have been broadcast.

It's a bit difficult to argue against a powerful case like that, isn't it? The unanimity of the press (other than the *Guardian*, the *Independent* and the usual suspects) in seeking to discredit Rampton has been remarkably similar to their unanimity in attacking the programme when it first appeared.

And come to that, much like their unanimity in repeating the official government/MOD 'line' immediately after the shootings (the IRA people were armed, they were making threatening movements, warnings were given, there was a bomb nearby, etc etc).

The role of the *Sunday Times* in all of this bears further scrutiny. While the *Sun* and the tabloids labelled witness Carmen Proetta as 'The Whore of Gib', Murdoch's 'quality' Sunday repeated the allegations in more tasteful language, and gave the campaign a respectable gloss by claiming that witness Josie Celecia and Stephen Bullock 'destroyed' Proetta's evidence.

When Bullock objected to this, *ST* editor Andrew Neil responded with a typically nasty campaign to smear him as well. Bullock has now issued a writ against Neil and the *ST* which may account for the *ST*'s admission this week that it "did make mistakes" in its coverage.

I'll leave the last word (for now) to Richard Ingrams writing in this week's *Observer*. He asks the obvious question and gives the obvious answer; it's the first time I've seen it spelled out so clearly in any national paper:

... "how [did] so many newspapers come to print so many inaccurate misleading and, in some cases, libellous stories all in support of the Government's case?"

Were any inquiry to be mounted into this propaganda campaign, it is more than likely we would find the gentlemen from M15 busily engaged in spreading lies and disinformation."

Afghanistan in ruins

EDITORIAL

The Russian pull-out from Afghanistan inevitably brings to mind the American abandonment of Saigon. It is very similar.

For certain the Mojahedin who will march into Kabul will be no friends to socialists or democrats. But the Russian army deserves much of the blame for the brutalisation of Afghan society.

It was a harsh society before Russian intervention at the end of

1979; now the Islamic militants are spurred on by an understandable thirst for revenge.

The Soviet occupation has been typical of twentieth century imperialism, with all the colonialist techniques of destroying villages, napping civilians and driving peasants into the hills or into refugee camps. One million Afghans have been killed; four million (out of 16 million) have become refugees.

Because of the savagery of Russian occupation, the mujahs have overwhelming support at least in the Afghan countryside. But the anti-Russian forces are a conglomerate of local feudalistic

groupings and rival factions. Civil war will now break out within the rebel camp; progressive voices will be very small and weak.

As the Russians withdraw, so too the American Embassy has pulled out, fearing that its people would not be safe when the Islamic forces conquered the capital. So much for the theory of some on the left that the Mojahedin are puppets of the US. The US were glad enough to help the Mojahedin harass the USSR; they know, however, that their enemy's enemy is not necessarily their friend, or at least not a reliable friend.

Nations or people cannot be bludgeoned or exterminated into

the modern era. Even if socialism existed in the USSR, it could not be exported via napalm fire. The use of napalm fire is, indeed, a clear proof that socialism does not exist in the USSR.

The future of Afghanistan is a question for the people of Afghanistan.

Socialists do not welcome the coming to power of Islamic reaction in Kabul. But foreign tanks and bulldozers are not the answer; in fact they have strengthened the reactionaries, driving the vast majority of the people of Afghanistan into their hands. Now the people of Afghanistan will pay the price.

Rushdie and principles

Ten thousand Muslims marched through London on Saturday 28 January demanding the banning of Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses'.

His publishers, Penguin, have been doing a roaring trade since the controversy struck, and are unlikely to pay much attention. Financial motives notwithstanding, it is good if Penguin resist such pressure. The banning (still worse, the burning) of books is the sign of a repressive society.

It would be wrong to believe for a moment that intellectual intolerance is the preserve of Muslims. Various newspapers have lamented the peculiarly bigoted character of Islam, while the *London Evening Standard* contrasted Islam with the 'inherently' more enlightened Christian religion. A current TV series, 'The Triumph of the West', echoes this theme, defining Christianity as 'intrinsically self-critical'.

This is a strange verdict on the history of Christianity — a religion which dominates the West because it was adopted by the notoriously intolerant Roman Empire, and later

inspired such historical episodes as the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition.

More recently, Christianity and the charge of 'blasphemy' have led to the refusal by several local authorities, and TV channels, to permit the showing of Monty Python's 'Life of Brian'; to Mary Whitehouse's successful prosecution of *Gay Times* for blasphemous libel; and to the Rushdie-esque controversy over Martin Scorsese's 'Last Temptation of Christ'.

This should be born in mind when the press and the right-wing more generally point to Islamic intolerance of 'The Satanic Verses' as an example of Asian barbarism interfering with 'our' normally civilised behaviour. The call for Asians to go back to Asia where they can burn books with impunity has already been raised explicitly by Tory MPs.

Our opposition to book burning must not give aid to this kind of racism.

But defend free speech we must. So it is depressing to see several Labour politicians, including Bernie Grant and Jack Straw, join the call for Rushdie's book to be banned. One Labour MP has called for 'blasphemous libel' to be extended to non-Christian religions.

Such a move would not be a blow

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'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx

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Monday evening.

Kinnock's nightmare

GRAFFITI

An official Labour Party press release arrived on our desk this morning. "Labour warns of potential 1992 nightmare" screams the headline.

What could it be that has provoked the Labour leadership to such hysteria. Tory plans to privatise the NHS?

Let's read on. "Labour leader Neil Kinnock is on Monday to unveil shock new research on plans to scrap borders between European Community countries by 1992..." Oh, so that's what strikes horror into the hearts of Neil and his cronies.

Funny how petty little Englandism comes far more naturally to Labour's leadership than defending workers' interests.



Last weekend saw the inaugural meeting in Moscow of the 'Memorial Movement'.

The 'Memorial Movement' is committed to commemorating the victims of Stalinism. They want a museum built and archives established on Stalin's terror. Gorbachev is committed to this, but wants the project to be controlled by the Ministry of Culture. The 'Memorial Movement' activists want more democratic control.

The 500-strong delegate meeting at the weekend also demanded the freeing of the jailed Karabakh Committee, and the restoration of full citizenship to dissident novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

These demands are far from likely to go down well with Mikhail Gorbachev.

The first issue of the movement's newspaper, which was due to contain an article on Solzhenitsyn, had its print run summarily reduced from 30,000 to 5,000 and the Solzhenitsyn article censored.

There are also reports of a 'Memorial Movement' demonstration in Minsk having been broken up with teargas.

The meeting had an exhibition about Leon Trotsky, describing him as a victim of Stalinism. Trotsky is still officially a 'non-person' in the Soviet Union.

Crime is on the increase in China — and conservatives in the Party are blaming it on reform policies.

Last year, according to official figures, serious crime rose by 66% and crime overall by 45%. Around 80% of all crimes were theft.

A special crackdown is being planned for Peking. Five years ago a similar crackdown took place which led to thousands of brief mass trials and summary shootings. China uses the death penalty more than all other countries in the world put together.

for a wide range of offences.

The government's reform programme allows freer movement of labour. Around 50 million 'transients' are on the move in China, picking up casual work where and when they can.

China's conservative bureaucrats are blaming the crime increase on these itinerant workers, in order to discredit the reform programme. The cause though is far more likely to be found in social dislocation and grinding poverty.

British Rail have just announced a new plan for improving 'customer care'.

In the wake of reports on severe overcrowding on trains, and of lapses in safety procedures, maybe these are the areas to be targeted?

No. This radical new measure is...a ban on rail workers wearing trade union badges! This will apparently drastically improve the quality of 'customer care' and also be far more in line with BR's friendly new corporate image.

So the next time you're unable to get a seat in a train, and end up standing for two hours in the guard's van, you can rest assured that at least your sensibilities won't be offended by the sight of an NUR badge.

The notorious Judge James Pickles, well known for his ability to find excuses for sex-offenders, has done it again.

A man who admitted getting into bed with a six year old girl he was babysitting, and sexually assaulting her, was given two years probation by kindly old Judge Pickles.

The offender, you see, had had an unhappy childhood, and may well be bullied in prison...Pickles, in justifying his leniency, said: "People can criticise me if they like, but they don't know all the facts"!

I think we know enough, don't you?

New bid for sanctuary

LETTERS

Within the past week a family from Small Heath in Birmingham has taken sactury in Birmingham Central Mosque. This is a desperate attempt by Amir Kabul Khan, his wife, Zahtoon, and their children,

Arzoo (4) and Ramiz (2) to stay together against the attempts of the immigration authorities to seize Amir Kabul and deport him.

The couple were married in 1983 when Amir made a visit to this country. Amir returned with his wife to Pakistan where they lived together for a year.

Zahtoon came back to England to give birth to her daughter, and Amir applied to join them. He was

refused on the grounds that the 'primary purpose' of his marriage was to gain settlement in the UK.

In 1986 Amir was again refused a visitor's visa but was allowed to enter the country on a temporary basis.

Please write to the Home Secretary at Queen Annes Gate, London. Quote the Home Office Reference No. TH/133314.

Amir Kabul Defence Committee, 723 Coventry Rd, Birmingham 10

The biter bit?

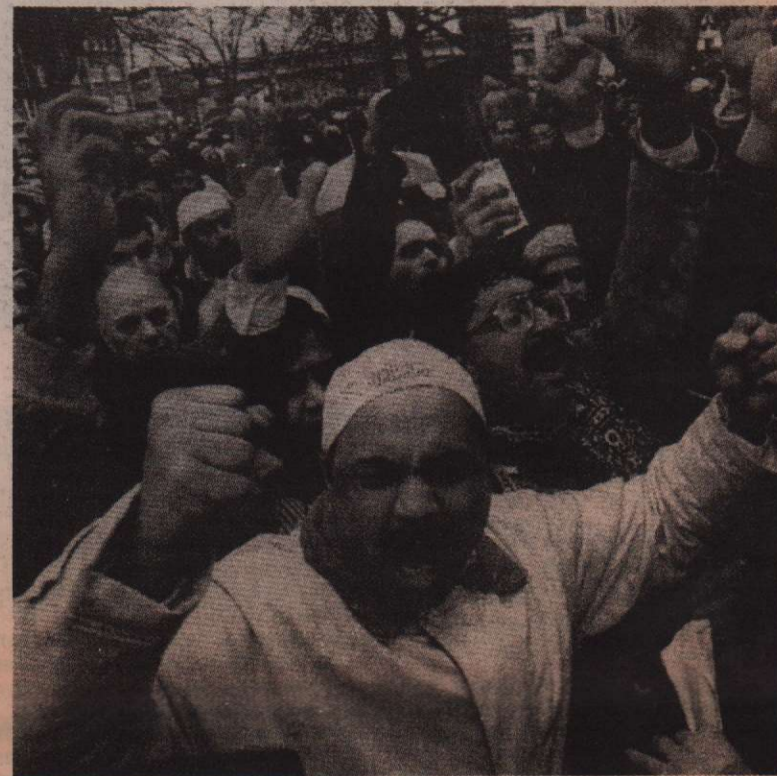
Clive Bradley (SO 385) and Eric Heffer (SO 386) are right to defend Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses' from any undemocratic attempt to ban or burn it. It's a pity that Rushdie has not been such a consistent democrat himself when it comes to fighting racism.

A Rushdie article in *New Society* (December 1982) entitled 'The New Empire Within Britain' is considered very good coin by many anti-racist educationalists. According to Rushdie, "400 years of conquest" and "being told you are superior to...the wogs" has left its stain on "all" white people in Britain.

Whilst other countries, like Germany, have made valiant attempts to combat racism, Rushdie believes that "the British may be the only people on earth who feel nostalgic for pillage and conquest and war", irrespective of their general attitudes or social class. Worse still, says Rushdie, "It is possible that this blindness (racism) is incurable."

Such views are widely held amongst anti-racists. It's the guilt-tripping, "original sin" approach and not surprisingly leads to undemocratic practices.

If white people are all incurable racists, what's the point of open democratic persuasion? Why not



Demonstration against 'Satanic Verses'

try thought control and imposition instead? Sadly, many did, hence the debacles in Brent and at Burnage High School.

Rushdie's views are pessimistic and undemocratic, but mostly they are grossly inaccurate. To single out Britain as unique in a world full of

racist societies is pure ignorance.

I defend Rushdie's right to speak and my right to say he's talking nonsense. I hope he and other anti-racists will start to recognise that right.

Liam Conway Nottingham

Poverty in Manchester

I was glad to see your review (Graffiti, 12 January) of Manchester City Council's report of poverty in the City.

As you said, an important feature of that report is that the assessment of poverty in it is not based on official figures but on socially accepted standards and the

actual 'quality of life' of hundreds of thousands in our City.

But the final sentence in your review implied a fatalistic and mechanical perspective which is not present in our report. On the contrary, our developing anti-poverty strategy is detailed as are a range of specific initiatives already set in mo-

tion by Council departments.

In addition, when the Anti-Poverty Sub-Committee discussed the report, we agreed to produce leaflets and summaries which could be available at many Council offices to the people of Manchester. We have also had a meeting and press conference with Manchester's MPs, who have agreed to launch a joint campaign based on the report. It may even be possible to get a national campaign going.

We realise that we shall not eradicate poverty by what we are doing, but we are providing the facts and arguments which show that poverty is not the individual's fault, but society's. Our campaign will, of course, be better if the Party in Manchester shows working class people how our system of society reproduces poverty.

Thank you again for reviewing our report, which is available at £1.50 from the Campaign Unit at Manchester Town Hall.

Councillor S. Darby Ex-Chair, Anti-Poverty Sub.

Women for Socialism Conference
Saturday 25 & Sunday 26 February
"Socialist Feminism into the '90s"
Wesley House, Holborn, London WC1

Saturday: Starts 10.45am

Plenary with Martha Osamor, SWAPO representative, Bernadette McAliskey, Betty Heathfield and other labour movement speakers
 Workshops on the themes of: Women & the Family; Welfare State; Women and Work; Internationalism; Education & Culture

Sunday: Launching Women for Socialism

Discussions on: producing a newsletter; developing regional and national structures; and much more

For more details contact: Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY

Creche, food, accommodation, social, help with fares for women outside London.

Wrong on Currie

SO of 5 January linked the Tories' dumping of Edwina Currie to anti-semitism and misogyny.

I would agree that what Currie said about eggs was probably correct. Profits are more important to the Tories than the health of ordinary people, so she had to go.

But to bring in anti-semitism and misogyny in the Tory Party is a mistake.

Undoubtedly both exist in the Tory Party, but clearer examples

than the sacking of Currie can be found on the far right of the Tory Party. Keith Joseph refused to stand on the same platform as a Tory candidate in the last election because of the anti-semitism of the candidate, an ex-NFer.

The danger in tacking on the charge of anti-semitism to anything the Tories do to someone who happens to be Jewish is to render the term useless and make it harder for the left to fight anti-semitism.

Francis Lawn Sheffield

SWP: time to call a halt

By Rhodri Evans

Violence was used by the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) last week to suppress discussion in one of their public meetings.

It was a Newcastle University Socialist Worker Student Society meeting on Immigration Controls last Friday, 27th. Three Socialist Organiser supporters went along.

Only one SO person, Mark Osborn, was allowed to take the floor in the discussion session. He questioned the SWP's boasting about the Anti-Nazi League of the late 1970s. He pointed out that the Anti-Nazi League had not opposed immigration controls, and had failed to organise physical support for black self-defence against the fascists.

He was forced to stop speaking. SWP speakers distorted what he'd said — saying, for example, that he had claimed that "the ANL failed", full stop. Mark objected.

An SWPer came up to Mark, pushed his finger at his face, and told him to "stop disrupting the meeting". Then he grabbed Mark's coat, pulled him off his chair and dragged him across the floor towards the door.

He apologised to the meeting for losing his temper, but refused to apologise to Mark. The leading SWP comrade present also refused to apologise to Mark, or to do anything about the attack.

Why does the SWP react like this? What are they so jumpy about?

In the first place, the SWP has become increasingly sectarian, arrogant, self-absorbed, and out of touch. In the second place, their political record on the Anti-Nazi League does not bear scrutiny.

Since the early 1980s, the SWP's key idea has been "the downturn". Class struggle has turned down, so socialists must wall themselves off

and try to recruit from "the militant minority".

There's a grain of truth in this view, especially since the defeat of the miners' strike. But the SWP's exaggerated 'downturn' theory is less a sober assessment than a rebound from their equally exaggerated hopes, in the 1970s, of quickly building a mass party and eclipsing the Labour Party.

They called the miners' strike "an extreme example of the downturn", and for the first few months grimly predicted its rapid collapse almost every week. They denounced and shunned the miners' support committees until the strike was six months old.

So, for most SWP members today, their only experience of political activity is "party-building" as a self-absorbed exercise, divorced from any perspective of expecting anything much from the class struggle or the labour movement.

They sell papers, they hold meetings, they appeal to activists who are disgusted and tired by the struggle against the present right-wing drift in the labour movement. Working together with other socialists, or patiently discussing with people to convince them, don't figure much.

The Newcastle incident is not the first such. Last year SO supporters were thrown out of the SWP's 'Marxism 88' summer school, while SWP leaders told grotesque lies about us — that we "support the witch-hunt of Militant in the Labour Party", we "have a two-state position on Ireland", or we "support the Israeli state's terror against the Palestinians" (this last was said in writing by Alex Callinicos!)

That's increasingly the pattern: raise any serious political question with the SWP and you'll get wild slanders, weird diatribes, and sometimes attempts to silence you

Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

OCTOBER 1978 15 pence



Whose side are you on?



WORKERS FIGHTING for better wages and conditions in the coming months will find the Labour Government firmly on the side of the bosses. That's what Callaghan and Healey have decided, with their 5% pay limit and their hostility to the 35 hour week.

The trade union leaders have called for the 35 hour week and against the 5% limit. But the Post Office Engineering Union leaders' support of their members' struggle for the 35 hour week gives the measure of their real intentions.

Every struggle will face attempts to stifle it with cries of "Don't rock the boat, or you'll let the Tories in!" The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory says that is no way to fight the Tories. We fight to keep the Tories out but also to build and prepare a socialist fightback against the present Government's second-string Tory policies and against the next Government, Tory or Labour.

FOUR CONSTITUENCY Labour Party supporters in C-organiser need your support to make sure that the socialist alternative is heard in many general elections and in the months leading up to it. Sponsor our campaign by the campaign paper bundles are 20 for £5, post free. Contribute to our campaign fund.

We need £2,000 before the election, to issue leaflets, posters, and pamphlets, and to organise meetings. £2 from each of 400 supporters will get us there. Send it to SCV, Box 107, King Free, 102 Upper St, London N1.

Stop the Nazis' march on Shoreditch!



STANDING in solidarity with the Anti-Nazi League and the National Front have organised a march into Shoreditch in London's East End.

Their objectives are to build and consolidate the strength of their new national headquarters in Great Eastern Street, to share a role from Brick Lane, and to re-establish their power to arrest the black community in Brick Lane itself.

Their calculation has been that the Anti-Nazi League and the political organisations, associated with it, would prefer to ignore the provocations rather than start wars for the cause.

But the presence of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory in East London is clear proof of the choice of drawing some support from the carnival of the East End underworld, the National Front, and the National Front.

And that can only be done effectively by mobilising the strength of the labour movement and the Asian community north of the river. This can be no reliance on the State to do the work for us.

It is the duty of every socialist to respond to that call. Arguments that a confrontation would lead to the death of the march are nonsense. Let the NF get away with their march this Sunday, and the violence Brick Lane's Bengalis have so far suffered will be nothing compared to fascist violence.

The Nazis must be stopped. They must be stopped. Defend Brick Lane! Stop the Nazi march!

PATRICK KODIKARA
Assemble 12 noon at the junction of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road.

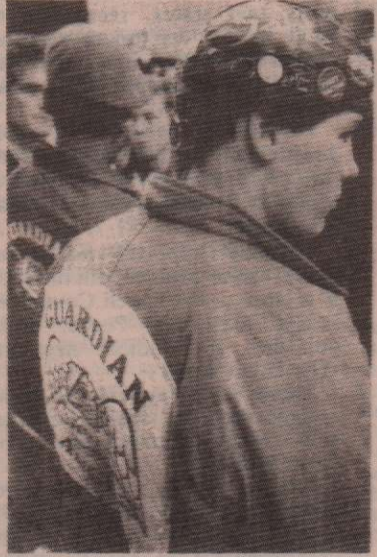
No. 1 of Socialist Organiser: we called for anti-fascists to rally to defend the Bengali community in Brick Lane against a Nazi march, while the SWP told them to go to an Anti-Nazi carnival in South London.

physically. Why is the Anti-Nazi League a tricky question for the SWP? The ANL did mobilise a lot of people, and it did push back the fascists. But at critical points it failed. In October 1978 it organised a carnival in London. The National Front announced a march the same day to

Brick Lane in East London, where the Bengali community had been suffering serious fascist harassment. Socialist Organiser published our first issue that month. The front page carried a call from the secretary of the local anti-fascist Defence Committee for people

Not Angels, just a nuisance

The Guardian Angels have arrived from New York, saying that they will patrol the London Underground to keep it safe. But do they represent a real answer? Colin Foster reports.



Vigilante types. No relation to the working class. Not accountable to anyone. That's the verdict on the Guardian Angels from US socialists whom Socialist Organiser spoke to this week.

"They're scary", said one socialist in New York, explaining that the Guardian Angels had been patrolling her neighbourhood, an area with a lot of crime. "They don't ask anyone 'do you want help?' They just barge in and intimidate."

Another socialist told us that the Guardian Angels "played the role of cops — trying to maintain the status quo. They've tried to stop socialists selling papers in the subway (underground)."

The socialists whom we spoke to saw the Guardian Angels' arrival in London as just another publicity stunt for their founder, Curtis Sliwa.

The Guardian Angels emerged in New York around 1979-80, with a lot of publicity. But "they're not much of a factor now. They're more a nuisance than anything

else." Not worse than a nuisance, either. Vigilante groups easily shade over into semi-fascist gang violence, but — so we were told — there's no evidence of the Guardian Angels going that way. The mostly Black and Puerto Rican youth who join the Guardian Angels are well-intentioned, motivated by genuine concern at the terrible crime rates in US cities.

Murders in Washington DC run at ten times the rate of violent deaths in the Troubles in Northern Ireland. New York is little better.

The Guardian Angels are unarmed. They did, however, organise a demonstration in support of Bernhard Goetz.

Goetz was travelling on the New York subway in December 1984, when four black youths tried to rob him. He shot them — repeatedly, injuring one so much that he is now a paraplegic, in a wheelchair for life. And then he became a hero for many frightened, desperate or bigoted people.

Horror at the increasing meanness, brutality and inhumanity of Thatcherite Britain may make some people look to the Guardian Angels. But the evidence from the US is that the Angels provide no answer.

An activists' conference
Campaign for Education Access, Benefits and Cuts

- How to fight, how to win
- Speakers from the NUS NEC (personal capacities)
- Speakers from local campaigns, unions and areas
- Workshops include basic campaigning strategies, childcare, housing, Further Education development
- Academics and activists
- Creche, videos, accommodation, social

If you want up-to-date ideas and information about building the confidence of students in unions and areas through active campaigns — come to this conference.

Saturday 11th February
12 — 5 pm
The Octagon Centre
Sheffield University Students Union
Entrance: £2.50/£1

Socialist Student Day School
Activists: get political!

- Speakers from Britain and abroad
- Debates: Middle East, Soviet Union, Labour Party
- Workshops include: Poland, pornography, lesbian and gay liberation, sexual abuse, civil liberties
- Videos, creche, books
- Discussion about the reform of NUS

Sunday 12th February 12 — 5 pm
Octagon Centre
 For further details contact SSiN, 133 Ashford Street, Stoke-on-Trent, or ring Jill or Rob on 01-639 7967.

Should we write off Israeli workers?

By Benjamin Cohen

Israeli society has been profoundly shaken by the impact of the intifada.

In the past year, the myth of a maintainable status quo in the Occupied Territories has been shattered, the uneasy National Unity government has won another term and the PLO has recognised Israel's right to exist. The political situation is one which constantly accumulates contradictions, and the hope in Washington, Moscow, Jerusalem and Tunis is that the diplomatic process will iron these out.

However, the respective parties involved have a different idea of what this diplomatic process actually constitutes.

Where is the Israeli left in all this? On 24 December Peace Now held a 20,000 strong demonstration in Tel Aviv calling on the government to open a dialogue with the PLO. This marked an important new stage in the development of the Israeli Peace Movement; for the first time, a mainstream organisation raised a demand which had previously been the preserve of groups further to the left (in Israel, 'right' and 'left' is determined by where you stand on the Palestinian question).

It also displayed increasing divisions within the Israeli Labour Party. Among those addressing the Peace Now rally were senior Labour Party figures disillusioned with the 'softly, softly' approach of the Peres leadership.

There is, then, a new configuration in Israeli politics which socialists need to assess. I will begin by looking at the positions of various groups on the left vis-a-vis the Palestinians, at the same time analysing some wider issues in rela-

tion to the Israeli working class.

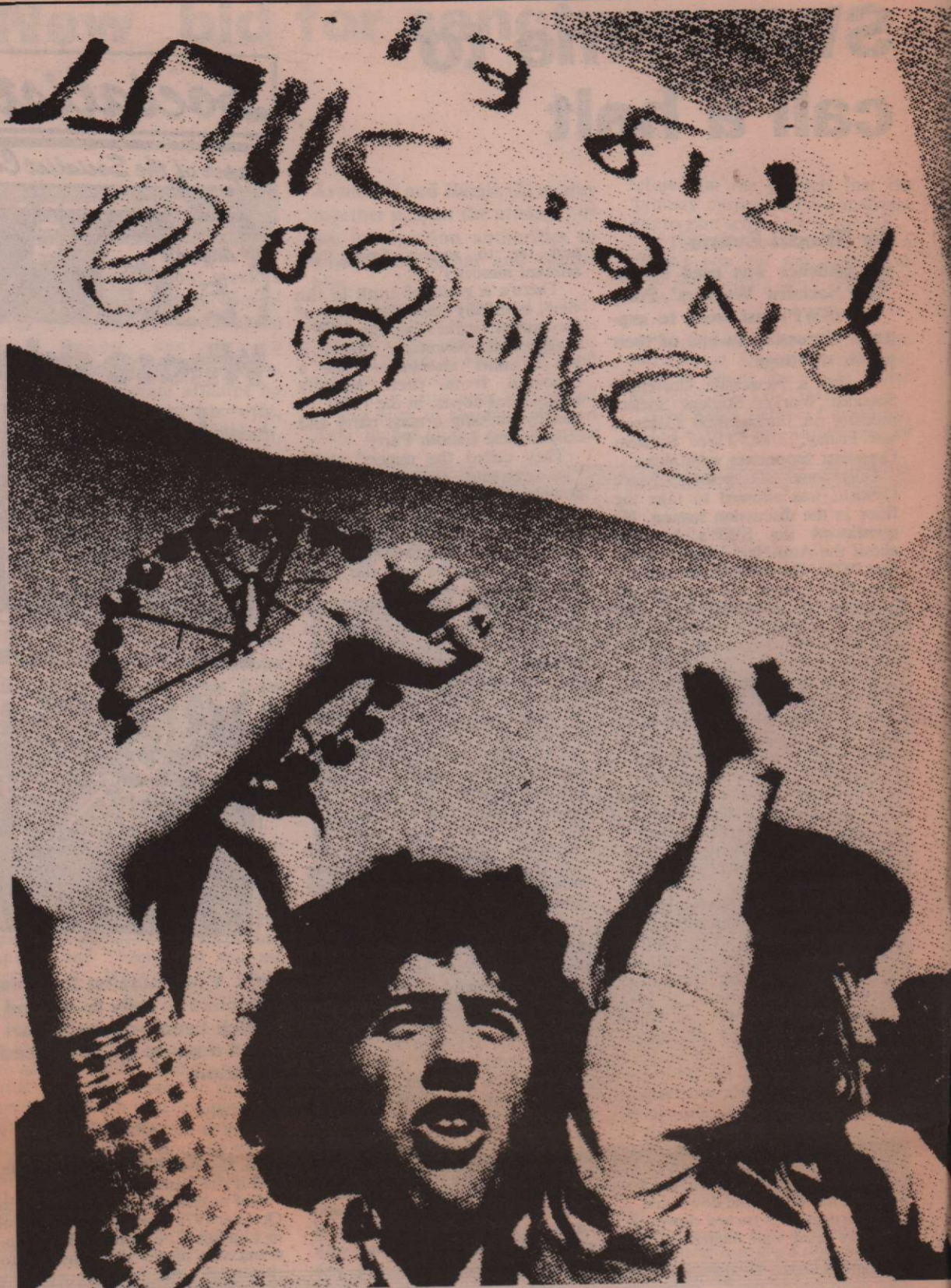
By far, the biggest parliamentary organisation in what we can broadly call the Israeli left is the Labour Party (Mapai). Mapai and its precursors were the dominant current in the Zionist movement until 1977, when the right wing Likud, under Menachem Begin, won the general election.

A member of the Socialist International, the party's platform ostensibly synthesises socialism and Zionism. In reality, Mapai is far from being a workers' party. Rather, it represents the interests of the bureaucracy controlling the Histadrut (Israeli Labour Federation), which is also the country's largest employer. Mapai favours 'territorial compromise' as a solution to the Palestinian issue, but this stops short of talking to the PLO and of recognising the Palestinian right to an independent state alongside Israel.

Further left is Mapam, the United Workers' Party. It is also heavily involved in the Histadrut, but Mapam's record of defending workers in disputes that conflict with the interests of the Histadrut bourgeoisie is better than that of Mapai.

Mapam is vocal in the Peace Movement and advocates talks with the PLO. Yair Tsaban, a Mapam Knesset Member, recently met with PLO officials in Paris in defiance of the 1986 law forbidding contact with an 'enemy organisation'.

Close to Mapam is Ratz (Citizens' Rights Movement). Ratz campaigns vigorously against religious coercion, promotes women's rights and favours a two-state solution with the PLO as a partner in dialogue. However, Ratz supports the 'liberalisation' of the Israeli economy and voted in favour of the 1985 austerity programme



Black Panthers, Tel Aviv

which attacked wage levels and basic subsidies.

The other two leftist parties in the Knesset are the Democratic Front for Peace and equality and the Pro-

gressive List for Peace. The DFPE is a coalition of groups, the main current being the Israeli Communist Party (Chadash).

Chadash has traditionally been an agent of Soviet directives and is highly sectarian, especially when it comes to the PLP. The Party supports two states, recognises the PLO as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinians and picks up most of its support from Israeli Arabs.

Far healthier is the PLP, a joint Jewish Arab party which is a coalition of Jews from the 'Alternativa' group and Arabs from the Peace Movement.

The PLP supports two states and holds regular contact with the PLO. It is close to the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which publishes the radical newsletter 'The Other Israel'.

There is a myriad of peace organisations in Israel. The largest and most influential peace group is Peace Now.

Formed in 1978, Peace Now grew rapidly in the wake of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. After the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatilla, Peace Now organised a huge demonstration of 400,000 — in relative terms, the equivalent to the whole of London attending a demonstration.

Whilst always cautious about talking to the PLO, Peace Now have called for direct negotiations following the PLO's Algiers Declaration. This is very important, since it frees the organisation, to a great extent, from its appearance as an appendage of the Labour Party.

There are, sizeable groups to the left of Peace Now, such as Dai La

Kibbush (Stop the Occupation).

In the Israeli peace camp, there is a distinction between groups who specify borders between Israel and a Palestinian state and those who leave the question of territory open, mobilising simply against the Occupation for the immediate time. Dai La Kibbush and Hala ha Kibbush represent the former and latter trends respectively.

Many of the groups represent sectional interests. 'Women in Black' is a women's group modelled on the Argentinian organisation 'Mothers of Silence'. They hold weekly demonstrations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and face frequent harassment from Meir Kahane's racist 'Kach' party.

Another sectional group is 'Yesh Gvul' (There's a Limit) which organises soldiers who refuse to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Both support a two state solution.

An idea gaining currency amongst the liberal intelligentsia is that of 'confederation'. This means a federated Israel and Palestine run along the same lines as Benelux, or the EC after 1992. It is something socialists should be wary of. None of the advocates of this solution have addressed the question of trade union organisation or the general issue of working class rights, although this isn't surprising.

Such a framework would guarantee the untrammelled manoeuvres of capital outside the boundaries of the nation-state, and although the Histadrut bureaucracy would on occasion conflict with private capital, neither group could be relied upon to defend either

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 worldwide, including the struggle of

workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:
For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class-based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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

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A compromise for peace

The Israeli socialist Adam Keller will be doing a speaking tour in Britain on 11-24 February. In this article — reprinted from *The Other Israel* — he explains his views on the 'right of return' of the Palestinians.

We — the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace — want a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This solution is to be achieved through peace negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied in 1967 and the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Everything, so far, is easy for me to write, though it is not at all easy to achieve this solution in reality. There, I stand on firm moral and political ground.

But answering your main question, regarding the Palestinians who became refugees in 1948, is far more difficult and painful. I will, nevertheless, try to answer it and to be as frank as I can.

I am very much aware of the fact that, in the process of being created, the state of Israel caused great harm to the Palestinian people; that the society of which I am a part has displaced and destroyed another society.

The house where I live, in the Tel-Aviv suburb of Holon, is new; I don't know to whom this plot of land belonged before 1948. I do know that the university where I studied for my BA is located on the site of the Palestinian village Sheikh-Munis and that the



headquarters of the trade union of which I am a member is where Sumeil village used to be.

Wherever I go in Israel I encounter ruined Arab houses, or cactuses which once marked the boundary of an Arab field. When I travel on an Israeli road, I find junctions which everybody still calls by the name of a village that disappeared forty years ago.

All Israelis are, in one way or another, aware of this — even though many try to hide the knowledge from themselves. For many, guilty feelings have turned into fear and hatred. For many an Israeli the mere thought of the refugees coming back has become a nightmare, the nightmare of himself being uprooted and becoming a homeless refugee.

Many Israelis believe that peace with the Palestinians is impossible. They perceive the conflict as a savage struggle for survival, in which one side wins and the other is destroyed; therefore, they oppose making even the slightest concession to the Palestinians. It is from deep-rooted fear that the Israeli right-wing draws its power.

I have spent nearly twenty years of my life trying to convince my fellow Israelis that we can — and must — make peace; that our government should sit down and

talk with the Palestinian leadership. I think that despite all the horrors now being daily perpetrated in the occupied territories, this moment is coming nearer.

When our leaders will, at last, sit and talk, there will have to be at least a basic form of justice for those who have already lived in refugee camps for forty years.

But there will not be pure and complete justice. The best political solution which I believe could be achieved would mean that, in fact, only a few of the razed villages will be restored; that a limited number of the people now living in refugee camps will be allowed to live in the territory of the state of Israel, and — where this would not entail the uprooting of an existing Jewish community — on or near their original land; that the majority of the refugees will be offered citizenship of the Palestinian state, as a solution for their national problem, and monetary compensation — for their lost properties and for their decades of hardship.

I realise that, in offering this solution to the Palestinians, I am asking them to make a big and painful sacrifice: to accept that the hope which they treasured for forty years was after all a dream; that the injustice which was done to them will not be undone.

Feisal Hussein stated — in the meeting with *Peace Now* which preceded his latest arrest — that, where the Palestinians' right to return is undebatable, the way in which it should be implemented could be discussed. I am aware how much Hussein had to overcome before he could move in this direction.

If both the Israeli government and the PLO adopted this way of thinking, it would not remove all the pain and injustice of the past — but for a new generation of Israelis and Palestinians, such a compromise could mean a future without bloodshed, in which the mutual hatred could gradually dissolve.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Saturday 4 February
'Alternative Policy Review' Conference. Queen Mary College, E. London, 10.00

Saturday 4 February
Viraj Mendis Defence Committee Demonstration from Church of the Ascension, Royce Road, Hulme, Manchester 15, 12.30

Sunday 5 February
NE London Socialist Organiser meeting: 'The state of the unions'. Speaker Tom Rigby. Angel & Crown pub, Upper St, N1, 7.30

Monday 6 February
Manchester SO meeting: Debate with Socialist Outlook on the Eastern Bloc. Speakers John O'Mahony, Phil Hearse. Millstone pub, 7.30

Monday 6 February
Nottingham SO meeting: 'Why the PLO went for "two states"'. Speaker Paul McGarry. ICC, Mansfield Rd, 7.30

Monday 6 February
London SO educational series: 'The New Unionism and the first Marxist Groups', Bruce Robinson. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1, 7.30

Saturday 11 February
'ABC' student activists' weekend conference. Octagon Centre, Sheffield, 12.00. Contact Mark: 01 639 7967

Saturday 11 February
Marxism Today 'New Times, New Thinking' conference. Caxton House, St Johns Way, N19, 10.00

Sunday 12 February
Socialist Student dayschool. Octagon Centre, Sheffield, 12.00. Contact Mark: 01 639 7967

Sunday 12 February
Adam Keller tour meeting: 'The struggle for Palestinian-Israeli peace', Sheffield.

Sunday 12 February
Cardiff SO meeting. Speaker John O'Mahony

Monday 13 February
Adam Keller tour meeting: 'The Struggle for Palestinian-Israeli peace'. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1, 7.30

Wednesday 15 February
Adam Keller tour meeting, Leeds

Wednesday 15 February
Adam Keller tour meeting, Sheffield

Thursday 16 February
Adam Keller tour meeting, Newcastle

Friday 17 February
Adam Keller tour meeting, Manchester

Saturday 18 February
Socialist Organiser Industrial weekend school (two days). Man-

chester Poly Student Union. Contact Tom: 01 639 7965

Monday 20 February
Adam Keller tour meeting, Liverpool

Monday 20 February
London SO education series: 'The formation of the Labour Party', Cathy Nugent. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1, 7.30

Tuesday 21 February
Adam Keller tour meeting, London

Wednesday 22 February
Adam Keller tour meeting, Brighton

Saturday 25 February
Stop the Killings! Picket Iraqi Cultural Centre, Tottenham Ct Rd, London W1, 1.00

Saturday 25 February
Women for Socialism two-day conference. Wesley House, Wild Court, London WC2. Contact Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3; 01 992 0945

Saturday 8 April
Gorbachev & the European Left conference (two days). ULU, Malet St, London WC1. Contact Gus Fagan, 30 Bridge St, Oxford OX2 0BA

Saturday 17 June
Socialist Conference Third Conference (two days). Octagon Centre, Sheffield

Saturday 8 July
Workers' Liberty summer school (two days), London

טורה לתפטר
לפנינו



Israeli or Palestinian workers.

The problem with most of the Israeli left is its inability to relate to the working class. Whilst the Palestinian question rightly occupies the centre of Israeli politics, this need not exclude a class perspective.

Most socialists tend to focus on the position of Palestinian labour within the Israeli economy, but the historic militancy of Israeli workers should be noted. The question is whether Israeli workers can be won to the cause of peace.

The majority of the Israeli working class is composed of Oriental Jews. Peace organisations have developed in this community, chiefly 'East for Peace' and the 'Oriental Front', but the overriding stereotype is that Oriental Jews loathe the Arabs. Much of the Israeli Left has either fed or ignored this stereotype.

Why does it exist? Oriental Jews tend to vote for the right, or the mystic religious parties, because they have been alienated from the Histadrut and the Labour Party. In other words, an irony is at work; in Israel, Oriental Jewish workers perceive the 'labour movement' as an exploiter. The Likud has used this in several ways, one argument being that a Palestinian State would lead to Oriental Jews performing the menial jobs previously done by Palestinians.

But the Oriental Jewish response has not always been reactionary. In the 1970s, the 'Black Panther' movement organised in slum neighbourhoods. One of their demands was for an independent Palestinian State, and many of

today's Oriental Jewish peace activists have their roots in the Black Panthers.

If the Israeli left is to be taken seriously it must gain the support of Oriental Jews by campaigning against economic exploitation and cultural discrimination.

Israel's economy is currently in severe crisis, and the government's response is another austerity programme at the expense of the workers. Many factories have closed, meeting with angry reaction.

When the 'Alliance' company announced the closure of their Haifa plant, workers occupied the factory. A police raid met with brave resistance, and shouts of 'this is our intifada'!

One woman, referring to her two sons in military service, commented: 'One son in the tanks, one in Golani (an elite regiment), and look what the state does to me'. Needless to say, the Histadrut was an active accomplice in crushing its members.

At the moment, the future direction of Israeli workers cannot be determined. But, as unemployment rises and living standards plummet, we should bear in mind the events of eight years ago. In 1981, 13 shop stewards organised 100,000 workers outside the framework of the Histadrut in protest against attacks on jobs and wages.

As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reaches a new, crucial stage, the Israeli left should set about recognising the huge potential of the Israeli working class.

Information taken from 'The Other Israel' and 'News From Within'

When British Marxists led one million

1924-5, like today, was a period of setbacks for the working class. The engineering workers had been heavily defeated in a lock-out in 1921-2. Trade union membership was falling. Yet the then-revolutionary Communist Party managed to organise a rank-and-file network, the Minority Movement, which at its peak had the affiliations of one-quarter of all the trade unionists in Britain. David Black tells the story, in the first of a series of background articles for Socialist Organiser's Industrial school on 18-19 February.

The Minority Movement was founded in August 1924 after almost two years of considerable preparations by the revolutionary militants of the Communist Party. It marked a new rise in labour militancy, and in the organised influence of revolutionary socialism amongst the militants.

Despite having taken a principled revolutionary stand in the struggles of the engineers in 1922, the Communist Party had found the ground cut from beneath its feet by reverses which it had been powerless to prevent.

The actual conditions of struggle



Unemployment march in the 1920s

inside the trade unions became increasingly difficult. The defeats of 1921-2 where the employers had taken on the working class section by section and won, had created massive demoralisation and lengthened the dole queues to 2½ millions.

Under the pressure of these defeats, the Party leadership adapted to the prevalent moods in the working class and tended to dismiss the possibility of creating a real working class base in the next round of struggles.

This too-pessimistic approach was reflected in the speech of JT Murphy, a Central Committee member of the CP at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International: "In England we have had a powerful Shop Stewards movement. But it can and only does exist given objective conditions. These necessary conditions at the

moment in England do not exist... You cannot build factory organisations in empty and depleted workshops, while you have a great reservoir of unemployed workers".

By early 1924, the Communist Party had become so infected with defeatism on the industrial front, that the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) intervened directly. The work of the British section of the RILU was severely criticised for its sectarianism at a time when the class was beginning to recover from the demoralisation of the defeats of 1921-2.

The Executive of the RILU pinpointed the defects of the Communist Party's approach when it stated: "... the work of the British Bureau does not keep pace with the requirements and possibilities of the present labour movement of Great Britain". In short the Communist Party was idle in the face of new and sharp developments in the class struggle. The transformation of the old purely propagandist groups which had united under the name of the Communist Party in 1920 and '21 into a real Communist Party actively involved in the everyday struggles of the working class, had still to take place.

Consequently the Executive of the RILU fought fiercely for a rapid re-organisation of the industrial work of the Communist Party. The main emphasis of the fight was placed on the urgent necessity of constructing revolutionary minority groups in all sections of industry — and with these groups, a strong national leadership.

William Gallacher, a former leading Clydeside shop steward, was set the task of convening a national conference to forge these minority movements into a unified body of national character.

The success of these new departures was of prime importance to the struggle against the right wing inside the TUC whose treachery had paved the way for the massive defeats of 1921-2. The new wave of class struggles afforded tremendous opportunities to the revolutionary wing inside the unions. With the correct tactics, the Communist Party would be able to win around it those dedicated fighters and working class militants who had not rallied to it previously, laying broad foundations for a struggle to replace the bureaucracy of the trade union movement with an organised rank and file revolutionary leadership.

This crucial tactical turn towards the mass of militants inside the unions was not, however, met with unqualified enthusiasm in the leadership of the Communist Party. William Allan, a leading CP member, described the reception given to the new policy: "...at the beginning of the National Minority Movement, considerable time was

expended to fight down the belief that there was no room for a movement dealing with immediate and 'narrow' economic issues, that it was a reformist conception, and that such an organisation would stand in front of and hide the face of the party from the workers. Sneering descriptions of the NMM were given in the Party as being an attempt to dress a red man in a pink cloak". This sort of attitude caused the delays in calling a national conference to launch the movement.

More through the efforts of Party rank and filers and trade union militants than anything else, a national conference formed a Miners Minority Movement in January 1924, after a series of district conferences in all the coalfields. The conference decisions reflected the growing determination of the working class to join battle once more with the employers. It resolved that district committees were to be set up in South Wales, Durham, Lancs, Cheshire, Yorkshire, Nottingham and Scotland.

On 16th February 1924 the Miners' Minority Movement launched a newspaper, the Mineworker, whose campaigning focal point was the call for the transformation of the Miners Federation into a national industrial union, the United Mineworkers Union, affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions. Other demands included the six-hour day and or real wages to be equivalent to the real wage in 1914.

The biggest achievement of the Miners' section, however, occurred soon after the establishment of the movement. Frank Hodges, the right wing Secretary of the Miners' Federation, resigned to take a post in the Labour Government and the left winger AJ Cook was elected secretary by a majority of 15,000. This development was also intimately connected with the recovery of the miners from the defeat of 'Black Friday'.

Elsewhere, however, the progress of the movement was somewhat slower. Proposals for broad agitation in the engineering union were uttered but largely not implemented. Only at the end of May had sufficient preparations been made to organise local conferences, of which one took place in Manchester and one in Edinburgh.

The support for the Conferences enabled the CP's Central Industrial Committee to launch immediately a Metal Workers Minority Movement. Despite this early success, the pace of development was still slow. Conferences were planned for other districts but did not take place.

These temporary difficulties did not deter the CP, which sought to draw out the lessons of the workers' struggles to date. The Sixth Party Congress of May 1924 assessed the situation thus: "The bankruptcy of the bureaucracy has brought into existence fighting groups of workers in all parts of the country, all battling for a fighting policy for the Trade Union movement. These groups are gradually being co-ordinated into what has become known as 'The Minority Movement' — the new and encouraging sign of the spirit that will one day overcome all obstacles in the path of working class emancipation... The Communist Party has on all occasions assisted in the development of this movement, and will continue to do so, but at the same time warns those active workers who participate in it, that only a revolutionary Communist struggle can serve to achieve the object they have in view".

By August 1924, the stage was set for the first national conference of the Minority Movement, which was held in London. The gathering was attended by 270 delegates, representing almost 200,000 workers, and united the individual rank and file movements, formulated a programme of action and arranged for the election of an executive committee and a general secretary.

The conference was particularly timely in that the Labour government of MacDonald had had 8 months of government and wide sections of the working class were moving into conflict with it. Also, it was a genuine attempt on the part of the CP to break from the sterile propagandist sectarianism that had plagued so much of its earlier industrial work, creating the opportunity for its transformation from a tiny propaganda group, into potentially a mass party with deep roots in the working class.

The struggle to build strong national unofficial movements around immediate demands was a step towards this mass revolutionary party, as well as an organiser of the immediate working class struggle.

The lessons of Black Friday and the collapse of the Triple Alliance of railmen, miners and transport workers, had bitten deep in the minds of the militants, who felt the need for a movement which could provide an instrument of combat against the right wing inside the trade union leadership.

Hence, the first Conference focussed much of its attention on the battle for rank and file control over the union leaderships, in general, and the TUC General Council in particular.

The Minority Movement's Programme of Action mirrored this concern by calling for the setting up of workshop and factory committees, for representation of these committees on the Trades Council, for industrial unionism, and for the immediate affiliation of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement to the TUC. These demands were designed to assert the strength of the rank and file in the unions and to make the union leaderships directly responsible to the rank and file.

The inaugural conference also called for a strengthening of the General Council of the TUC, "to mobilise and concentrate all the forces of the working class movement for the purpose of opposing a united class front to the united class enemy."

This may appear to have been in



Socialists and the trade unions

A Socialist Organiser weekend school

Saturday and Sunday February 18/19
Manchester Polytechnic Students Union
Oxford Road, Manchester

For details contact Tom on 01 639 7965 or write to
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

trade unionists



Striking dockers, East London 1926

formal contradiction to the stress which the Conference laid on fighting the right wing. Far from it! The delegates were fully aware of the urgency of a parallel growth of rank and file control over the General Council. This was implicit in the statement that "The reactionaries desire a General Council which will check and dissipate all advances by the workers. We of the Minority Movement desire a General Council which will bring into being a bold and audacious General Staff of the trade union movement... We can guard against the General Council becoming a machine of the capitalists... by, in the first place and fundamentally, developing a revolutionary class consciousness among the trade union membership and, in the second place, by so altering the constitution of the General Council as to ensure that those elected thereon have the closest contact with the workers".

On these firm foundations the Movement experienced initial successes. Trade union activity was on the upswing, there was a partial economic recovery from the slump of 1921 to 1923 and unemployment fell slightly, all providing an impetus to the class struggle, with key sections moving into action to recoup the losses they had suffered at the hands of the employers in the past period.

Railmen, engineers, shipyard workers and dockers all filed new wage claims. Into this fray stepped the Minority Movement.

Substantial successes were gained and new affiliations were secured. March 1926 saw some 957,000 trade unionists organised in the Minority Movement. It was especially powerful in the coal industry, shortly to be the scene of major class conflict. By August 1925 Minority Movement branches had been formed in the mining areas and 16 miners' Lodges had affiliated.

Similar developments took place in the engineering industry. In fact, there were 153 engineering delegates at the next Minority Movement Conference. Further support was derived from substantial membership of the Movement among the East London tailoring and furniture trade workers, who were largely Jewish refugees from Tsarist oppression.

Given this basis, the Movement

was able to exercise considerable influence on the course of the class struggle. Under its pressure, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain leadership began to investigate the possibilities of a new Industrial Alliance between the members of the old Triple Alliance.

The Movement also achieved a partial success when the TUC Congress of 1925 accepted a resolution empowering the General Council to organise support for stoppages. However, the resolution — framed by the 'left' union leader, Hicks — was so vaguely worded as to be meaningless. Understandably, the Minority Movement was dissatisfied with it and stepped up its campaign to urge the TUC leaders to prepare for the coming fight.

Right through to the General Strike, the Minority Movement commanded increasing support, forcing union leaders leftwards and succeeding in having parts of the Programme of Action adopted as union policy. The strength of the Minority Movement was demonstrated by the fact that in July 1925, the TUC was forced to ally itself to the miners and make the Tory government retreat on 'Red Friday'.

Yet at this crucial point, when the Communist Party was clothing the fight for a revolutionary working class leadership in real flesh and blood, the tactics of the Minority Movement began to change.

This change owed its origin to the first manifestations of the growing tendency of the incipient Stalinist regime in Russia to put the programme of world revolution in second place, subordinating it to a reliance on "progressive forces" whose task was to 'neutralise' the hostility of imperialism to the young workers' state in Russia.

In Britain, this change found its expression in the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, which would supposedly offset the vicious anti-Soviet outlook of the British capitalist class. All the bold warriors — Purcell, Hicks and Swales — who were to be instrumental in betraying the General Strike, were to be found under the canopy of the Anglo-Russian Committee. They exploited a cheap and empty 'left' (pro-Soviet) image in foreign policy

to cover a rightist and bureaucratic trade union policy at home, where it meant something in practice. And it was to this wing of the trade union bureaucracy that the Minority Movement was tied.

In return for the dubious friendship of bureaucrats towards the USSR, the CP and Minority Movement began to sacrifice their political independence. The depth of the change is best signified by reference to two statements from leaders of the Communist Party.

1924: "It would be a suicidal policy ... for the CP and MM to place too much reliance on what we have called the official left-wing". (JR Campbell in Communist Review).

1925: "The left trade union leaders occupy at present the position not only of the workers in the immediate crisis, but also of the spokesmen of the working class elements in the CP... and alternative political leadership". (Palme-Dutt in 'Inprecor').

The fight to prepare the rank and file in the local areas was muted and limited by the exigencies of the alliance, and the activity of the MM was directed towards presenting the 'lefts' as a leadership that could smash the capitalist offensive. On the eve of the General Strike, then the revolutionary movement was effectively paralysed and the independence of the revolutionary workers' party heavily compromised.

This was the tragedy of 1926, and everything the Movement did prior to the strike, during the strike and after it was coloured by this policy. The Councils of Action, built up in the previous period and designed to co-ordinate the rank and file against the bureaucracy were turned over to this policy, being transformed into ginger-groups instead of embryonic organs of working class power.

The CP and the MM failed to play an independent revolutionary role in the strike, despite the courageous efforts of party members in some districts. Possessed by the idea that it was not on the cards to challenge the domination of the TUC leadership, it raised the preposterous slogan "All Power to the TUC". That is, to the uncontrolled bureaucracy that was blatantly selling out the strike.

Even the betrayal did not shake the Party leaders off this course.

Only a few weeks after the end of the General Strike the Central Committee sought to head off great criticism in the ranks with the warning that "There will be a reaction within our Party against working with left wing leaders. We must fight down this natural feeling and get better contact with these leaders and more mass pressure on them." In other words, not only dig your own grave, but pay for the use of the shovel!

Throughout the period of continuing ferment after the end of the strike the bureaucrats benefitted enormously from the restraint of the CP and MM and the left cover they provided. When they had ridden out the storm, they then broke up — in late 1927 — the Anglo Russian Committee, and launched a ferocious witch-hunt against the Minority Movement.

The refusal to learn from the bankrupt policy of pressuring the sham Lefts marked the beginning of the end for the Minority Movement (and the Communist Party) as a revolutionary force.

This policy was taken to extraordinary lengths by the Communist Party leaders so that when the TUC General Council instructed trades councils to disaffiliate from the Minority Movement at the end of 1927 the CP advised them to obey! The policy, together with the demoralisation and defeat which descended on the working class led to a sharp decline in the Minority Movement.

The sharp turn left of the world Communist movement was to kill the Minority Movement stone dead. Having subordinated to the union bureaucrats in a period when the working class could have pushed them aside, the CP after mid-1929 suddenly appeared to go mad. Not only the bureaucrats were now declared bankrupt — but the trade unions too!

Already weakened by its incapacity to assimilate the lessons of 1926, the Minority Movement indulged in the idiotic antics of the Stalinist ultra-left Third Period, attempting to set up 'pure' revolutionary breakaway unions (eg the United Mineworkers of Scotland), and describing everything outside these bodies a 'social-fascist' —

thus writing off the majority of the class who were concentrated in the reformist unions.

This period was adequately summed up by Brian Pearce in his 1959 article "Some Past Rank and File Movements": "Characteristic of the 1929-31 period was a growing disparity between slogans and achievements. During the Bradford wollen strike of 1930, for instance, the Minority Movement shouted to bewildered workers about "The Struggle for Power" — but proved incapable of setting up a single independent mill committee. The shouting to workers to come to be led, with a general strike as 'the next step' grew louder and shriller..."

Admit this 'growing disparity between slogans and achievements', the Minority Movement was allowed to die slowly up to 1932, when it was finally buried.

When after about 1934-5 the Communist Party emerged from the ultra-left binge of the Third period its trade union policy rapidly became one of blatant subordination to the union machines and bureaucrats, its prime goal the capture of union office and positions. Rank and file direct action to smash bureaucratic control of the unions was forgotten in favour of gaining positions within the bureaucracy.

The Minority Movement in the early stages of its development was the model revolutionary opposition movement in the unions. Led by communists, but having no formal connection with the Party, it was able to win hundreds of thousands to its revolutionary policies of struggle against both the ruling class and its bureaucratic mainstays in the trade union movement. This broad front of militants could — given the leadership of a powerful communist party, capable of ruthless self-criticism — have created the basis for the mass revolutionary workers' party. The very growth of the movement pointed to the fact that key sections of workers were breaking from the road of reformism. But when they looked for leadership it was not forthcoming.

Today's tasks bear close similarity to those of 1925. A nationally organised mass rank and file movement is a vital necessity at a time when the TUC leaders 'left' and 'right' are in headlong retreat before the Tories.

In building such a movement we must learn from the Minority movement.

There are tremendous possibilities for such a movement today. However, militants must be clear on one thing: that pressure politics alone are useless. This is the lesson which we must learn from the Minority Movement. Any pressure we put on today's union leaders must be backed up by the most detailed preparations to remove them and replace them by a militant leadership and socialist policies. Without this, pressure politics can only play into the hands of the bureaucracy.

Our attitude to 'our leaders' must be firmly based on the central conception of the Minority Movement in its early days: that we ally with those leaders only as long as they identify themselves with the militants and actively fight the right wing. Or as TA Jackson an early Communist Party leader put it: we may take them by the hand in order (if they retreat) to take them by the throat. Only this way can we carve out the path to victory over the enemy class once and for all.

First published in Workers' Fight no. 11, 23 July 1972.

Anti-capitalist or anti-American?

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver
reviews 'Stormy
Monday'

Stormy Monday' is a rather slow-key thriller. There's no thunder and lightning, and not too many surprises. There's much more plot than there would have been if Hollywood had made it, yet it doesn't add up to much.

Its message is that glitzy American capitalism is underwritten by criminality; that New World money comes to the Old to be laundered. Good old Europe (represented by Newcastle!) doesn't need this slush money and doesn't want such bogus development. Hang commercialism!

The plot concerns the attempts of a dodgy American Mr Cosmo, to buy up run-down parts of Newcastle for development. Cosmo, played by Tommy Lee Jones, is an authentic villain. He's always slightly off. There is a quiet menace simmering in him, but he's too restrained to be truly enjoyable as a hate figure. Though the film is frankly anti-American, perhaps the director was wary of going too far.

Newcastle is putting on an American celebration week, with street parades, speeches, dinners and wheeling and dealing. The Labour Councillors seem only too happy to sell things off at bargain prices; they want the credit for reviving the dying city. Cosmo is happy to throw in a few fringe benefits, so that they can feel they're the ones conferring favours. 'What's in it for me?' seems to be their guiding principle.

One person opposed to the mass sell-off is club owner Finney,



Sting with Stubble and Bass

played by Sting (or rather underplayed; he isn't terrible, but he's all one note. The effort of keeping his designer stubble intact to the nearest millimetre seems to have exhausted his strength; he never

raises his voice.)

Finney moves the plot along by refusing to sell out to Cosmo and by hiring out-of-work Brendan as a cleaner for his club. When Brendan ends up tangling with Cosmo's old

flame, Kate, the story gets going.

Kate is pretty interesting, but Brendan is identikit, with his Levi 501s, earring and leather jacket. His chat-up lines are groaningly predictable, but he's fairly nice,

very different from the evil Cosmo, so we can see why Kate likes him.

Basically the plot is whether Cosmo will have his wicked way with Newcastle, or not. To me, it looked as if the Yanks had already landed. The bars and restaurants all looked American, and one barman had an American accent.

What with American beer on tap, neon signs, jazz bands, and US DJs on the local radio station (albeit for the week), the place already seemed American, circa 1950s. There wasn't a cosy British pub in sight, and no-one was drinking bitter.

To compensate for the lack of senseless slam-bang violence (part of most American thrillers), the film assaults the ear drum with cacophonous jazz music. The Krakow Jazz Ensemble are on hand, representing anarchic, warm-hearted Europe as opposed to the cold and calculating commercialism of the Americans.

Though I loathed it, the music fitted in with the conception of the movie. 'Stormy Monday' had definite pretensions to being a stylish cool thriller, and all cool thrillers have to have jazz on the soundtrack.

However, in choosing the music, I think the film's anti-Americanism went too far. With Dave Brubeck or Miles Davis on the soundtrack, the film, might have had a bit more style.

It also takes a pot at the wrong targets. American capitalism is undoubtedly nasty, but the speculative gutting and redevelopment of decaying inner cities is hardly peculiarly American.

What's happening to Newcastle in 'Stormy Monday' is Thatcherism with an American accent. Home-grown capitalism is just as sinister as any shown in 'Stormy Monday'.

Unlucky for some

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Computer viruses struck again on Friday 13 January. The '1813' virus, designed to lie low in infected computers until a Friday 13th came along, sprang into action.

Invented by anonymous 'hackers' (computer enthusiasts who enjoy illicit access to other people's computers), viruses are spread between computers on floppy discs, stores of information and programs. They copy themselves into the control programs that tell the computer how to work, and are then permanently part of that computer's operating system.

The 1813 virus can be detected because it adds 1813 bytes (8-letter words) to the computer's store of information. This uses up some of the available memory and slows down the computer to as little as a quarter of its usual speed.

On Friday 13th, 1813 becomes dangerous, deleting any of the control programs that the user runs. This can completely disable the



computer.

Like human virus infections, computer viruses produce symptoms. 1813 makes the screen go blotchy and there is a small black block on the bottom left.

Viruses are not a minor problem. Just one computer user, City University in London, was found to harbour about 100 copies of 1813 in its personal computers when infection was discovered last December. It is thought that the virus got into the system via an infected computer games disc brought in by a student.

City's systems consultant deleted the 1813s and then 'inoculated' the system against further infection.

Despite these precautions, two more 1813s appeared on Friday 13 January. City now has posters everywhere asking people to submit their discs for testing and inoculating.

A juvenile sense of humour lies behind some computer viruses. With the 'Italian virus', a ball appears in the middle of the screen and starts bouncing wildly from side to side. Sometimes, it seems to kick a letter into the middle of the screen.

The 'Cookie Monster' places the message "I want a cookie" on the screen. This only goes away when the operator types in "cookie". The 1701 virus, found infecting IBM's Belgian training centre, causes all the letters to slide down the screen and 'leak away' at the bottom.

The 1704 causes a 'hailstorm' effect, picking letters from the screen and making them fall. A plopping noise accompanies this!

Viruses, and another problem, 'Trojans' (for Trojan horses), are frequently found in 'pirated' software. Trojans are obvious because they destroy data files as soon as they are run on the computer.

'Logic bombs' are similar except that their effect is delayed. If the user of software supplied on ap-

proval pays for it before the due date, the supplier will remove the logic bomb. But if the bill is not paid, or if illegal copies are made, the result can be expensive for the malefactor.

Piracy is a major problem for suppliers of software (programs and data). The wide occurrence of viruses in pirated software would be a useful defence for the software writers, were it not that the viruses have got into legitimate software too. Computer viruses have spawned their own cottage industry of firms who disinfect and vaccinate victims.

Amusing if they don't bother you, could viruses have a sinister aspect? Suppose they infected computers controlling something like railway signalling or early warning of enemy missiles.

Already people have tried blackmail using logic bombs. Could computer terrorism be the scourge of the age of information technology? As a biologist, I find the similarities with real viruses intriguing. Both types, for example, can only multiply by taking over the machinery of another organism.

A fascinating thought occurs to me: could computer viruses arise spontaneously within the computer population, without human agency?

Meanwhile, there's another Friday 13th in October!

How to avoid Dutch auctions

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

The motor industry is looking remarkably well, Fordist these days. The British car market has never been so buoyant with sales reaching a

record 2.2 million last year.

Of these, 1.25 million were built by British manufacturers, the highest figure since 1977. Total European sales are also at record levels, around 13 million per year at the last count, making it a larger market than North America.

Manufacturers are moving fast to get into shape for 1992. For those like Ford and General Motors with a long-established presence throughout Europe, the drive is to transfer work with the aim of concentrating production of particular models on single sites.

For Japanese manufacturers like

Toyota and Honda the race is on to establish European beachheads before the abolition of internal trade barriers is matched by the creation of new external ones.

Britain has so far been the favoured location for Japanese assembly plants, being (in European terms) a low-wage economy, with a supposedly "compliant" and relatively skilled manual workforce.

These developments offer the British motor industry unions (primarily the TGWU, AEU and MSF) considerable opportunities. They also pose considerable difficulties as recent events at Ford have demonstrated.

Ford intend to make Britain the

centre of its European engine-building operation and has earmarked £725 million for its Bridgend engine plant. At the same time production of the most profitable model, the Sierra, is being transferred to Genk in Belgium, leaving the Dagenham plant with only the Fiesta. This will result in the immediate loss of 500 jobs and a possible loss of 3,000 by 1992.

Jack Adams, National Automotive Officer of the TGWU, responded by offering Ford's European boss Bill Hayden flexible shift patterns if only he would let Dagenham keep the Sierra.

What a pity that the TGWU and MSF haven't taken up the German union IG Metall's offer (made back in November)

that all European unions with members in Ford should draw up an agreed code to oppose large transfers of work. MSF and TGWU rejected the approach, arguing that they had "a good working relationship" with Ford.

Without a Europe-wide agreement, there's a real danger of a (pardon the expression) Dutch auction in which unions across Europe give away hard-won gains in their effort to retain or attract work. Genk's major advantage over Dagenham, for instance, seems to have been the Belgian unions' agreement to three-shift working. But Jack Adams' response makes it clear that the TGWU would have been willing to offer a similar arrangement in order to keep the Sierra.

Any Europe-wide union agreement would, of course, involve give and take. IG Metall is known to be unhappy about Ford's commitment to Bridgend and would want British unions to support their campaign to get some of the investment there diverted to the Cologne plant, in exchange for a united campaign to stop the Sierra transfer. But better an agreement like that, than a nationalist free-for-all with the company the only winner.

The problems posed by "green field" investment by Japanese companies are even greater. Nissan's 1984 Sunderland deal with the AEU set a precedent that Toyota will certainly want to follow at its proposed UK plant. The "beauty contest" for recognition by Toyota has begun even before the final location of the plant has been announced. Jim Thomas, national car industry officer of MSF, has said: "We would be more than happy to sign a single-union agreement." Similar noises have been made by Jimmy Airlie of the AEU. Airlie, of course, was the architect of last year's abortive single-union deal (vigorously opposed at the time by, amongst others, MSF) with Ford at Dundee.

Both MSF and the AEU claim that they will abide by the TUC's codes of practice allowing single-union deals on green field sites but outlawing no-strike deals. That remains to be seen. Most likely, any such deal, whilst not explicitly banning strikes, would contain a "binding arbitration" clause that would amount to a no-strike deal in all but words.

Here again, we see the Dutch auction process in operation. The fact is that any British union unwilling to offer something pretty close to a no-strike deal, stands no chance of recognition by the likes of Toyota so long as the AEU and the non-TUC EETPU are on hand with their ready-made sweetheart deals. And even if the British unions get their act together and agree to abide by the TUC code of practice, multinational employers can always look for a better deal elsewhere in Europe. The only answer is European union links along the lines proposed by IG Metall for Ford, and already in existence at Honeywell Bull, and Airbus Industrie.

Stop AEU/ EETPU merger!

By Norman Goodwin

On Saturday 14 January the Birmingham Engineering Gazette group, responding to a call from Birmingham 4 Branch AEU, called a meeting to build a national campaign against the merger with the EETPU.

To date, the Gazette Group national leadership have singularly failed to raise the banner of an anti-merger campaign. But we must anticipate that the right-wing union leaders will find a way of going to the membership on a postal ballot with (shades of the EETPU) a form of words calculated to please the tabloid press and bamboozle the average member.

Information on how the talks are going is almost non-existent. The *Financial Times* seems to pick up what little information is available, and from that source we hear the line is merger now, and sort out little matters like structure, rule book, democracy after the marriage.

We urge the Gazette leadership to be prepared to lead a fighting anti-merger campaign now. This position was subscribed to by members from as far afield as South Wales, London, Manchester, Hull, Blackpool and Northampton.

The meeting accepted that such a

campaign will be a hard task given the power of the bosses' press, etc. But failure could mean that by the end of the summer we will all be reluctant members of a yellow union.

Our great democratic union, the union of Wal Hannington, the union of Saltley Gates, is on the brink of becoming an American-style company union. It must not be allowed to happen.

The meeting decided the general principles of the campaign should be:

1. No talks with the EETPU while they are outside the Trades

Union Congress.

2. Uphold the democratic structure of the AEU. Defend national committee, final appeals court, district committees, branches, etc.

3. For the regular election of all officials.

4. No to business-type unionism. Reject single union/no-strike deals.

5. While recognising that a single union throughout engineering is a desirable long-term objective, any talks with other unions must be on the above non-negotiable conditions.

6. For a rank and file campaign against the merger, prepared to in-

volve progressive EETPU members.

Practical proposals were put forward which included circulation of leaflets into places of work, and model resolutions to District Committees. Wherever possible local meetings open to all AEU members and other progressive trade unionists should be arranged.

For further information, please contact Norman Goodwin, Secretary, Birmingham Engineering Gazette Group, 28 Bowling Green Close, Erdington, Birmingham B23 5QU. Tel: 021 373 1463.

Jordan offers bosses flexibility

By an AEU member

A recent 'Unite for 35 Hours' campaign circular put out by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (Confed) explained some of the reasons why a 35-hour week was justified.

One of the reasons was "We've earned it". Too bloody right we have! It goes on to say how we've accepted new technology, flexibility, etc., and how between 1980 and 1987 productivity in engineering soared by 54%.

So is the Confed gearing itself up for a bit of a fight with the Engineering

Employers Federation, the engineering bosses?

Is Bill Jordan going to use his influence in the CSEU to get an agreement on a 35-hour week, and demand pay increases which take into account rising inflation (almost 7% now and going up and up), and the recent settlements such as at Fords and Nissan (the 8.9% Ford deal has been cited as the 'going rate'), and even reverse the trend of going for long-term agreements which, if not inflation-proofed, can lead to pay cuts in real terms?

Sadly, no. From the information available, Jordan's proposals are unprecedented. He wants to out-boss the bosses, giving commitments to stability and efficiency and the need to

maintain productivity growth.

No, Jordan may have a very credible Brummie accent, but he's a traitor to his class, in his smart suits and flicked-back hair, and his secret negotiations with that other traitor, Eric Hammond.

Activists need to get organised to fight back. But the leadership of the left in the AEU has been conspicuous by its absence. In fact Airlie's role in supporting Ford's Dundee proposals should make us very wary of placing too much reliance on such people.

Instead, a rank and file campaign is needed against the AEU/EETPU merger; a campaign which goes to the branches and the shopfloor and which cuts across the crap coming from Jordan and his ilk.

Protests planned on loans

SOCIALIST STUDENT

By Rob Read

Wednesday 1 February will see demonstrations around the country against the introduction of student loans. Local days of action have been planned to coincide with the closing date for submissions to the government's White Paper on top-up loans.

Cumbria, Lancashire, Manchester and Merseyside students are coming together for a demonstration in Man-

chester, which will link the fight against loans to the fight against the Poll Tax and education cuts.

In London, however, the National Union of Students (NUS) Area Exec (NUSL) voted by 4 to 3 not to support a demonstration. Originally 1 February was called as a national demonstration. However NUS leaders claimed that they were unable to get a route.

After much wrangling with the police, Rebecca Fleming (NUSL Convenor) and Kath Budden (University of London Union Campaigns Committee) managed to secure a route from Finsbury Circus to Shoreditch Park.

An activist meeting held at the London School of Economics, welcomed the demonstration but overwhelmingly agreed that the route was one which went from nowhere to nowhere. A large number of people at the meeting in particular the SWP, decided that the route

should be changed and if necessary they would change it on the day.

A week later, Phil Woodford, the general secretary of NUSL and a member of NUS's dominant 'Democratic Left' faction put a paper to the Exec calling for withdrawal of support for the demo. He claimed that activists would be going out for a direct confrontation with the police; with people coming from all over the country NUSL would not be able to handle the numbers.

Socialist Student supporters argued that NUSL should stick with the demo. It is the police who look for confrontation, not students. If people are coming from parts of the country then all should welcome them and ask them to bring along stewards.

By turning their backs and hoping the demo would go away, the Exec were themselves leaving students alone without the protection and support of their union.

This story is typical of the cowardly attitude of the leadership. No action had been organised by them until six weeks into term. Once again they have left a week's gap between the week of Action and the National demo.

Instead of calling for a shut-down of education, they are calling for a day of action in the 'Week of Action'. Activists are calling for a full shut-down involving students and college trade unions.

A national demonstration has been planned but for 25 February, a Saturday when many FE students who have Saturday jobs cannot attend.

The demo in London is still going ahead, organised and stewarded by activists in the colleges.

from management.

The government has frozen allowances on its YTS cheap-labour job scheme for youth. The money is £29.50 for the first year, and £35.50 for the second.

The government is also making it easier for training managers to run courses that do not meet up to minimum standards!

A survey by Incomes Data Services showed January pay settlements running at 7%.

British Coal management wants to review the future of another 12 pits, employing 8,000 miners.

IN BRIEF

Management have agreed to £35,000 severance payments for registered dockers who lost their jobs in Liverpool. The TGWU had threatened strike action.

The government is responsible for directly funding most of the payouts through the National Dock Labour Scheme - a scheme which the Tories want to abolish.

The university lecturers' union has formally rejected the 3% pay offer

Building sites kill 160

Low levels of health and safety on building sites caused 160 deaths in 1988. Even ordinary citizens are not safe. Last year seven were killed.

The very low level of union organisation on most sites has allowed employers to cut back on safety standards. The average fine following a death on site is only £450. As profits increase, the price of a building worker's life is falling!

The Construction Safety Campaign wants to end the carnage. At a meeting at Hackney Town Hall on 7 February, they will be outlining their demands, which include heavy fines and imprisonment for employers who cause a worker's death.

Every worker should be able to join a union and to elect their own safety representatives. We must end the illegal blacklist which many employers are known to operate.

More details: Mark Metcalf, Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, 01-249 8086.

Contact Socialist Students in NOLS, 133, Ashford St, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Pit sell-off means more deaths

By Ray Ferris

Flesh and blood miners will become simple extensions of mining technology and subordinate to it.

That's British Coal's strategy document. The vision outlined in

the 'Wheeler Document' is a highly productive, machine-intensive industry, concentrated on fewer high yielding faces.

Six and seven day working, with 9 hour and continental shifts, will be called for to keep the machines running continuously. Incentive schemes, area and local pay bargaining will pitch miner against miner, pit against pit.

Sub-contractors will be used more, and safety legislation replaced by more pliable guidelines. It all adds up to more profits and fewer jobs — a vision for privatisation.

The booklet "Coalmining, Health and Safety?" produced by Durham Area NUM looks at the human costs of this vision — some of which can already be counted as British Coal proceeds with its plans.

Major accidents in the North East District are back to their 1982 levels — though the number of miners has almost halved. Nationally the major accident rate, as a proportion of manshifts worked, is escalating. Simultaneously there has been a steady cut in the safety Inspectorate for mines and quarries.

The booklet reveals the close connection between the new techniques and work practices and mining safety. Major accidents became much less common in the early 1970s with the introduction of a standard day wage and uniformity of pay.

The booklet also probes into the less dramatic issues of workplace stress, noise, dustlevels and a condition called vibration white finger caused by excessive use of some types of heavy machinery.

As Dave Lister, a Durham Area NUM member, put it: "When privatisation comes in safety goes out of the window. British Coal are pushing pits to their limits, making us work as fast as we can to get cheap coal out — then they turn round and close the pits."

We need to have more information about 6 day working and 9 hour shifts and to link the issues of health and safety with management's obsession with short-term profits."

The booklet produced by Durham Area NUM goes a long way towards explaining the issues and exposing the connivance of government and British Coal to marginalise safety. Where it falls down is in its proposals for action — simply calling for a Royal Commission on mines health and safety.

No votes please, I'm Kinnock

By Gerry Bates

No amendments to the Labour leadership's Policy Review documents will be allowed at this year's Party Conference.

Last year, too, amendments were not allowed; and some resolutions seeking to change key elements in the documents were ruled out of order. We were told that the membership would have its day in 1989.

Last week, Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) defeated by 12 votes to 4 a proposal from Ken Livingstone that Party members and affiliated organisations should have the right to amend the final drafts of the Policy Review.

For the Kinnock leadership Party Conference is at best a media event, at worse an inconvenient necessity. They have said openly that they regard its decisions as 'consultative', not sovereign. Such was Neil Kinnock's reaction to the 1988 Party Conference vote reaffirming unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The NEC even heard a proposal that the Policy Review Reports should have priority over composite resolutions passed at Party Conference on the same issue. The soft left balked at this, and the move was defeated 11-4. By then Neil Kinnock and several right-wingers had left the meeting.

The following procedure was adopted. After this year's

Conference, the Policy Review Reports should be amended "in the light of any resolutions carried" at the Conference. In addition, the 'Campaign document', to be drawn up by a joint meeting of the NEC and Labour's Shadow Cabinet and printed in early 1990, should 'reflect' both successful Policy Reports and resolutions.

This procedure is not quite what the Labour leadership wanted — they will now have to justify preferring the Policy Review Reports over contrary Conference resolutions. Nevertheless, it is still very far from the idea of Conference sovereignty and democratic procedure.

Phrases like amending "in the light of" and "reflecting" are a bureaucratic dream. And it is clear that it won't be Conference making the final decision. If the 1989 Party Conference decides for unilateralism but also carries a Policy Review Report which fudges on the question — and it may well do so — then it takes little imagination to work out on which side the solidly pro-Kinnockite NEC and Shadow Cabinet will come down.

The procedure is undemocratic. Constituency Labour Parties should send resolutions to Walworth Road and the NEC demanding the right to amend the Policy Review Reports, and insisting on the basic democratic right that Party members, through Party Conference, should determine Party policy.



Moving to privatisation

WHETTON'S WEEK

The Coal Board has announced plans to close 12 more pits. I was not surprised. I think there will certainly be more.

It's all leading towards privatisation. What the Coal Board and the Government are doing is getting rid of what they see as dead wood, so that we finish up with an industry of maybe 50 pits.

They want high profitability, low union organisation and low wages.

It doesn't matter to the Coal Board whether miners at a pit were for or against the strike. That'll make no difference. They'll close what they see as liabilities, and if they happen to be in Notts, well they just happen to be in Notts. Tough luck!

I think there is another scheme afoot

to try to drive men out of Notts into the new superpit at Ashfordby. They're obviously going to have a problem of manning it up and keeping it a UDM pit. So they'll shut pits in Notts and recruit the UDM manpower for Ashfordby.

This week we heard that one of the UDM pits in Notts is to have a power station tagged on to it. It's another pointer towards privatisation.

When electricity is privatised, it will affect every man, woman and child in this country.

Jobs are going all over the place, in the pits, in transport. Soon we'll have only a few people creating the wealth of the nation and all the rest of us as window cleaners, etc.

There'll come a time when people will look at us and see us as like South America with a small handful of very rich people and masses of very poor people.

The Coal Board has given names and addresses of individual miners to market research teams to get individual miners' views about privatising the pits. The NUM has objected.

It's an exercise done behind our backs. A few individuals will probably take part. It will be very interesting to see if they dare publish what the findings are.

I certainly haven't been asked my views — but that's not surprising!

The UDM has twice voted against a pay offer but looks like having it forced on them by arbitration; and British Coal refuses to talk to the NUM. So the entire workforce of the Coal Board will have a pay deal forced on them that nobody has given their support for. What's going to happen in future? Is negotiation going to be done away with, and pay rises — or standstills on pay rises —

handed down from on high? It's a very disturbing prospect and not just going for miners alone.

Kim Howells, the research officer for the South Wales NUM, has been selected as Labour candidate for the Pontypridd by-election.

The NUM's gain becomes the Labour Party's liability.

I've never seen eye to eye with Kim Howells, I have a suspicion that Kim Howells was one of those instrumental in organising a return to work without a settlement. I may be banging an old drum, but I am firmly convinced that we could have won that strike. If the NUM had stood firm then the entire political scene of this country would have been significantly altered.

But certain individuals panicked. Supposedly we finished up with a draw, but in reality we lost.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM.



The new issue of Workers' Liberty includes Max Shachtman's key articles on Stalinism (in print for the first time for decades), and articles and reviews on 'post-Fordism', modern architecture, Ireland, Palestine, Thatcherism, the Greens and much else. £1.50 plus 22p post, from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.