

For Workers' Liberty East and West

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Socialist Forum Revolt in Eastern Europe

Thursday 27 April
7.30

Lucas Arms
Grays Inn Road
(tube: Kings X)

Speakers • Eyewitness from Hungary and Czechoslovakia — fresh from discussions with the opposition
• Polish Socialist Party — PPS (RD)
• The British representative of the Hungarian opposition group the Young Democrats

These laws are rigged!

Help the dockers beat the Tory/port bosses' conspiracy

The Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) has held back their ballot on strike action over the docks. They have delayed sending out ballot forms until they have received legal advice.

Once again, Tory anti-union laws have been used to intimidate the union. Under the law, if the union's dispute is with the government, rather than the port employers, it is 'political' and so unlawful.

But in fact, the Tories and port employers are hand in glove.

Look at the evidence:
• Just hours before the abolition was announced, Sir Keith Stuart, head of ABP, the single largest port employer, said abolition was to be welcomed as it would boost their profits by £5-10 million a year. He then warned the dockers: "If there were a strike and it affected our ports, so be it, that would be a very small price to pay against the long-term benefits which would accrue to our business."

"Industrial action in any form would not deflect me or my board from our strong support for the abolition of the scheme."

• In January this year port employers from Britain and France met together to co-ordinate plans for destroying the Dock Labour Scheme and its French equivalent.

• Abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme was not in the Queen's speech or the Tory manifesto, but it has been consistently campaigned for by the port employers.

For instance, just weeks before the abolition announcement, Nick Finney from the National Association of Port Employers — the bosses' national organisation —



called for the scheme's abolition at a banquet attended by Norman Fowler. It's clear where the initiative comes from.

• Over the last few months, port employers in Glasgow, Liverpool, Grimsby, Hull and Aberdeen have been gradually escalating their attacks on the Dock Labour Scheme in order to prepare the ground for an all-out confrontation.

Those attacks came after the cabinet made the decision in princi-

ple to go for abolition in February of this year.

• The port employers donate millions of pounds every year to Tory party funds. P&O boss Jeffrey Sterling — the man whose money-grabbing greed led to the Zeebrugge disaster — stands to make millions out of the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme as port employers go on a general offensive against wages and conditions.

Surprise, surprise, P&O gave

£100,000 to Tory party funds last year and Sterling is an advisor to the Department of Transport.

After all that, the port bosses say that the dockers have no legitimate industrial dispute with them! If we'd seen pressure from dockers pushing a left-wing Labour government to extend the Dock Labour Scheme to non-scheme ports, do you think the port bosses would be saying they had no quarrel with the dockers?

Labour must scrap anti-union laws!

Labour Party and trade union activists must campaign hard in the coming months to make working class solidarity legal under the next Labour government.

On 23 April, shadow Employment Secretary Michael Meacher said on TV that the next Labour government would repeal bans on 'secondary' picketing and solidarity strikes. "There can be no justification for limiting the freedom of workers to seek external assistance while no action at all is taken to limit the action of employers."

Labour's leadership promptly denounced Meacher! According to the *Financial Times*, "there was little attempt to disguise the anger felt by some of Mr Meacher's colleagues...The message from other members of the Labour leadership was that there could be no question of the party supporting a restoration of the powers enjoyed by trade unions before Mrs Thatcher came to power in 1979."

But Michael Meacher was doing no more than repeating Labour Party policy. Last year's Policy Review document on 'People at Work' watered down Party policy a lot, but even that said: "We do not think it is fair that all supportive action by other employees following a majority vote, should be unlawful."

Last year's Labour Party conference carried a composite motion moved by the TGWU and seconded by the GMB, which called for the repeal of all anti-trade union laws introduced since 1979, and a Workers' Charter which would guarantee:

- The right to strike;
- The right to picket peacefully.

The law against 'secondary action' is blatant class law.

In the Wapping dispute, Rupert Murdoch was able to get the printers' unions' action deemed unlawful by saying that his Wapping works was a different business from the Fleet Street sites where the printers had been sacked. In the docks, the port employers have acted together to get the Dock Labour Scheme scrapped, and now say that the only legal way the dockers can strike is against individual employers.

Solidarity is decisive in class struggle. Trade unionists know that. The employers know it too. The employers act in solidarity — and for the workers it's divide and rule, by law.

Turn to back page

Don't believe the bosses!

The port employers insist that there will be no return to casual labour after the abolition of the NDLB. There is little reason to believe them.

Already the port employers have plans to prepare the ground for casualisation.

If the scheme goes then the protection that it gives to all dockers, registered and unregistered, will disappear. A general offensive against wages and conditions for all dockers can be expected.

The employers want to break down port work into core and peripheral jobs. They aim to

create a divided workforce. A 'core' group of workers will be fully trained, skilled and permanent; and 'peripheral' workers will be employed on temporary contracts to cope with changes in trade and the seasonal nature of much dock work.

In the fish ports the trawler owners will try to unload their own ships and just employ dockers on a casual basis if and when they need them for big loads.

The employers plan to scrap the industry's National Joint Council, opening up dockers to local attacks on pay and conditions where the employers think they can get away with it.

What casual labour means

Before the Dock Labour Board, dockers were hired by the day or half-day. This is how Mayhew described it in the 19th century.

'Then begins the scuffling and scrambling forth of countless hands high in the air to catch the eye of him whose voice may give them work. As the foreman calls from a book of names, some men jump upon the backs of others so as to lift themselves high above the rest and attract the notice of him who hires them.'

'All are shouting, some cry aloud his surname, some his Christian name, others call out their own name, to remind him that they are there. Now the appeal is made in Irish blarney — now in broken English.'

Indeed, it is a sight to sadden the most callous, to see thousands of men struggling for only one day's hire; the scuffle being made the fiercer by the knowledge that hundreds out of the number there assembled must be left to idle the day out in want.

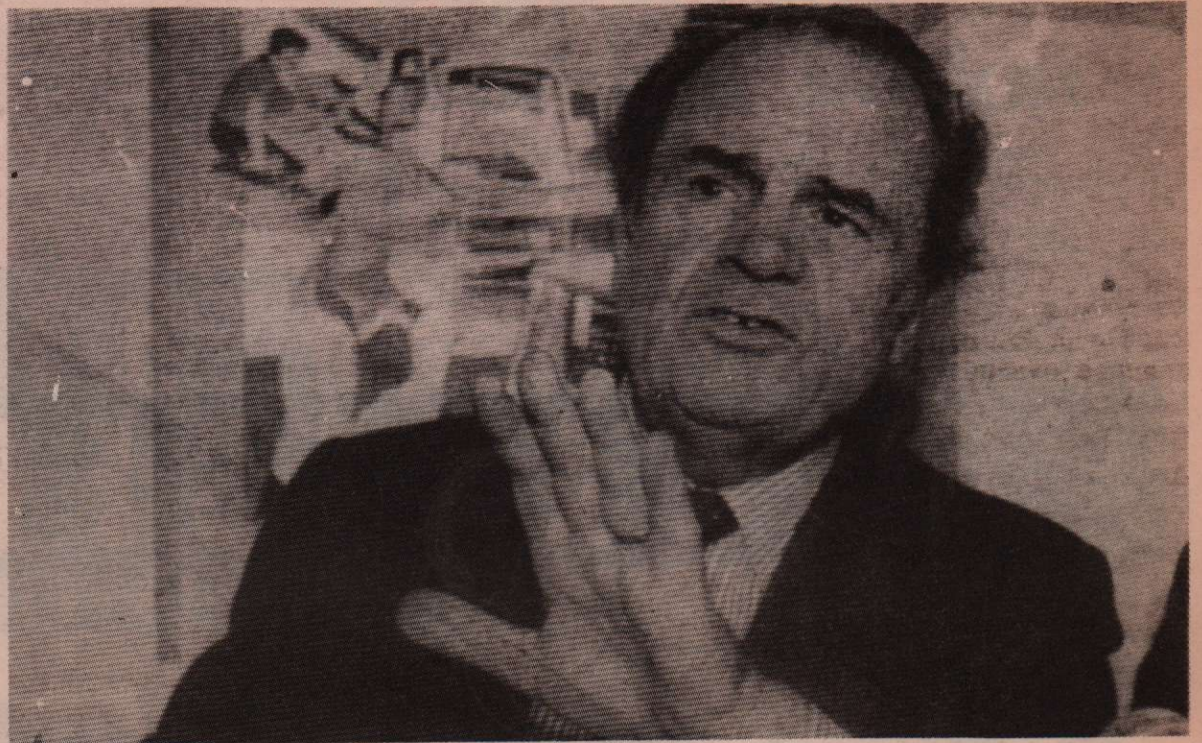
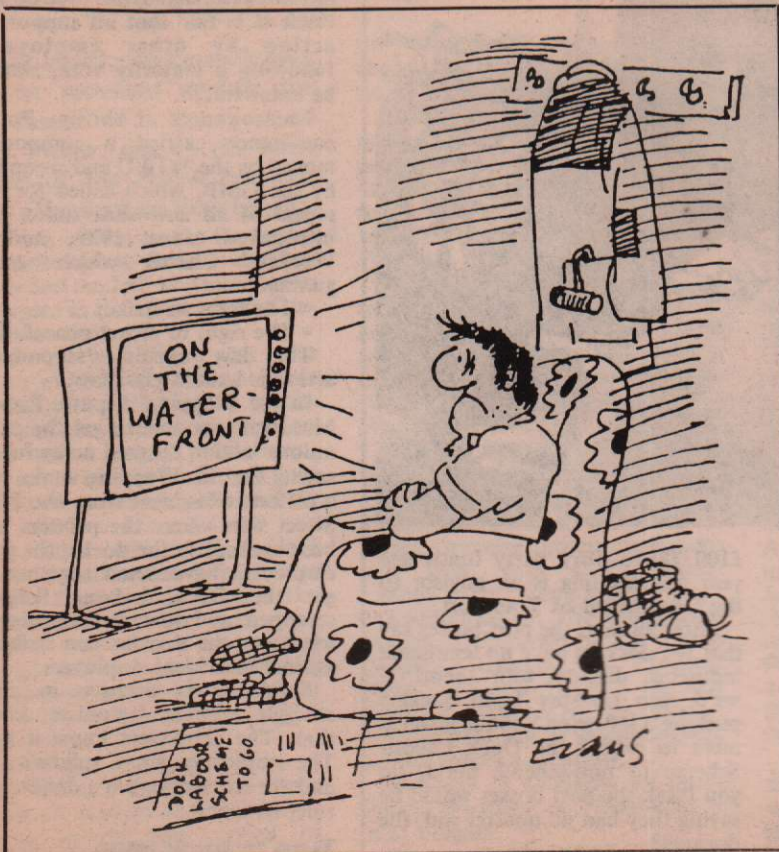
'To look in the faces of that hungry crowd is to see a sight that must be ever remembered. Some are

smiling to the foreman to coax him into remembrance of them; others, with protruding eyes, eager to snatch at the hoped-for pass.'

And the dockers' leader Ben Tillet, a bit later:

'Struggling men fought desperately and tigerishly, elbowing each other, punching each other, using their last remnants of strength to get work for an hour or half an hour for a few pence...Coats, flesh, even ears were torn off; men were crushed to death in the struggle. The strong literally threw themselves over the heads of their fellows and battled with the milling crowds to get near the rails of the cage, which held them like rats — human rats who saw food in the ticket.'

'A grinning caller-on walked up and down protected by these stout iron bars facing the raging and shouting mass and as he walked, the mass swayed with him. He faced the iron bars and moving from one end to the other, he would pick and choose the slaves with wanton brutality as one throws scraps to hungry wolves, to delight in the exhibition of a savage struggle for existence with the beasts tearing each other to pieces.'



Ron Todd

The bosses' grim fairy tales

By Stan Crooke

In Spring 1988 the Port Employers commissioned a report on the Dock Labour Scheme. The document rests on some very simple assumptions, such as that port employers are the sweetest, nicest people you are ever likely to meet (which does not say much for the rest of humanity), and that free market capitalism is the best of all possible worlds.

It also draws some very simple conclusions, such as that Britain would be a land flowing with milk and honey if the National Dock Labour Board were to be abolished, and that the scourges of unemployment and inflation would also depart from Britain's shores forever as a result of the scheme's abolition.

Before the Dock Labour Scheme, says the document, "anyone could attempt to sign on for a day's or a half-day's labour at the dock gate — though obviously hiring practices were less chaotic than this suggests".

What's the evidence that they were "less chaotic"? Do the document's authors perhaps find it too difficult to portray the frenzied and degrading scramble for work in pre-scheme days as an example of the harmonious workings of the free market?

The scheme, claims the document, has resulted in the docks industry being highly "strike-prone" but the document does not explain how the scheme caused strikes, any more than it explains its assertion about the "practical impossibility" of sacking a docker registered with the Dock Labour Board.

Moreover, continues the document, starting to get down to the nitty-gritty, "once the Scheme ceases to compensate for a weakness of the market, then its costs must outweigh its benefits". This is now the case because "permanent employment relationships are now firmly established".

In fact in recent years, many port employers have been intent upon replacing registered dockers with casual labour. In South Wales for example, the local port employers are currently attempting to pay off 40 'surplus' registered dockers in Cardiff, whilst seeking permission to take on 50 casual non-registered dockers at the Port of Barry, just six miles away.

Once the Scheme is scrapped, claims the document, then the benefits will start to flood in. But when the document's authors talk of "benefits", it is clearly benefits for employers that they have in mind.

The document claims that 4,180 jobs would be created in the registered ports within five years of the Scheme being abolished. But the document fails to reconcile this

claim with its statement a few pages on that, "there will be a further voluntary (sic) shake-out (of labour) on the repeal of the scheme...The labour force will be reduced by 1,295 by the end of year one and a further 868 by the end of year two."

Such wage cuts and job losses would make the Dock Labour Scheme ports more "competitive" — with the non-Scheme ports. The latter would then have to pursue a similar exercise in "cutting costs" (ie. wage-rates and jobs) to remain "competitive". As the document puts it: "Competition between ports would intensify as restrictions were lifted...non-Scheme ports would also have to offer similar reductions in the cost of freight."

The document also claims that the Dock Labour Scheme is the key to regenerating the entire British economy.

Firstly, abolition of the Scheme would reduce unemployment in the areas around the ports themselves. This assertion is "proven" by pointing to the fact that job-creation levels are higher around non-Scheme ports than around Scheme ports. It's the same fallacy as if you point out that there are more umbrellas on the street when it's rain-

ing than when it's dry, and conclude that abolishing umbrellas would abolish rain.

Unemployment is higher around registered ports because those ports are in areas like the North where industry has been in decline for years.

The document also argues that abolition of the Scheme would reduce the cost of importing foreign goods, and that "the forces of competition" would ensure that these savings "are passed on in the final price to the consumer".

But you don't need to be a professional economist to know that inflation depends upon a lot more than just the freight costs of importing foreign goods. And even if people did buy more imported goods because of their lower prices, this would merely make even worse Britain's trade deficit, especially given that low inflation would push up exchange rates and thereby make British exports abroad more expensive.

The document suffers from one other major deficiency. It is extremely dull and boring. The only consoling thought in reading it is that the National Association of Port Employers probably wasted a lot of money on it.

What it means to scrap the Scheme

Johnny Jones, secretary of TGWU 6/2 branch at Manchester docks, spoke to SO

In Manchester docks itself, there are only nine of us left, but there's 168 workers along the canal up to Ellesmere Port.

It's always been union policy that any attack on the Scheme we would meet with an immediate strike. Ron Todd has tried to convince the Docks Committee delegates that their remit was the wrong course of action, and in no time at all the union would be skint.

So he tried to persuade them over two days to change policy. The national delegates wouldn't. He called a meeting of the Executive Council who supported him, and the national delegates still stuck to their remit.

It was put to the delegates that we go along that line, meet the employers on the Tuesday. That was backed, eventually, 85 to 10.

Ron Todd said that if the union sits down with the port employers, even if they do say no, then he is in a position to call it an industrial dispute, and call a ballot.

The thing the employers are after is the 'jobs for life'. But if we've got a job for life, why are we down from 47,000 registered dockers in the early '70s to 9,400 today?

All we're trying to do now is get negotiations going — because technically we've no terms and conditions of employment after July. Even under the Scheme, employers can fold up business, sack everyone and start up again with fewer workers.

But it would be disastrous to negotiate port by port — the likes of us will have no chance.

What we're frightened of now is a return to casual labour. Our employer could just turn round to us in July and say "if you don't like the conditions, get going."

One reason why they've hit us now is because May, June and July are the quietest months in this trade. So they've picked their time.

We're hoping we can get support from unregistered ports. After all, if we're on the same level as the unregistered ports, their jobs too will be in jeopardy.

We have regular contact with Liverpool. At the national meeting they and other places like Southampton wanted it out. The bone of contention was that we should pick the time, and we should pick the place.

It would be crazy for the employers to say they're not going to negotiate on anything. The real crunches are, one, the employer being given men he doesn't want, and, two, the 13% levy they have to pay to finance the Dock Labour Scheme. Yet one port made £47 million profit with the Scheme.

As far as the Labour Party is concerned, the question on every docker's mind is, if they get back into power, will they return the Scheme to what it was before?

Now is the time to fight

Dancing on the graves

EDITORIAL

There's life in the old dinosaur yet", wailed the *Daily Mail* on 25 April.

- Dockers are balloting for a strike over job security and conditions.

- Engineering union leaders are discussing a ballot for selective strikes over pay. This dispute covers 800,000 workers.

- London underground workers have stopped the network twice in two weeks by unofficial strikes over pay. There's an official strike from 8 May.

- Rail union leaders are also considering a ballot for strike action over pay against British Rail.

- BBC television workers struck on Monday 24th over pay. Further one-day strikes are planned.

- Power workers are voting on industrial action over pay, with the result of the ballot due on 8 May.

- University lecturers will refuse to mark exams this summer. Again, the issue is pay.

Unemployment has fallen over the last couple of years — not as much as the Tories claim, but it has fallen. On the basis of counting used before the Tories started fiddling the figures, the jobless rate now is about 2.6 million, down from about 3.5 million (figures from *Labour Research* magazine).

The drop in unemployment has given workers and unions more confidence. Inflation is running at 8 per cent, and workers want to keep up. They know that company profits and the incomes of the rich are rising fast.

Even right-wing union leaders like Eric Hammond of the EET-PU, and Bill Jordan of the AEU, have been sounding militant over pay.

The new — though limited — revival of militancy must also be boosted by last year's series of struggles in the National Health Service, which put the Tories on the defensive and won a few concessions.

Much of what the Tories are doing now is very unpopular — the poll tax, privatisation of water and electricity, and their new plans for the Health Service.

Strikes still have to be fought against the odds. The Tories' anti-strike and anti-picket laws put the courts very firmly on the bosses' side. Unemployment is still a threat.

But the new revival gives the trade union movement a chance to redress the balance. The



Moses is free

Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), has been freed. He was in detention since June 1986, shortly after the State of Emergency was declared.

The judge said there was no evidence that Moses and other accused had directly organised the unrest, nor that the Alexandra Ac-

tion Committee had been set up as an alternative to the town council.

"The Alexandra Action Committee was intended to unite the people of Alexandra in order for them to help each other overcome the problems and grievances they face."

The judge accepted that Moses believed in socialism, and democratic structures — that all elected representatives must be mandated and accountable to the people of Alexandra.

In a statement, NUMSA "welcomes its general secretary back, and looks forward to future consolidation and growth. We must go forward to build democratic structures and involve the masses in all decisions."

This is a major victory for the black people of South Africa — and for all of us. At one time it seemed likely that Moses would go to prison for 20 years. His freedom is a blow against the apartheid state.

dockers' strike alone will have tremendous power. A dockers' strike coupled with strikes in the power stations or on the railways and the growing community revolt against the poll tax would knock the Tories sideways.

Remember the summer of 1984: when railworkers looked like being on strike alongside the miners, the Tory government hastily instructed the British Rail bosses to buy the rail unions off — which they did, and very cheaply too.

When Liverpool Council looked like joining the struggle, the Tories fobbed it off with a few sops — which unfortunately the so-called Marxist leadership of the council accepted.

Unity is strength. The employers choose their times for battles. The port employers have chosen their time for the attack on the Dock Labour Scheme — only they may turn out to have miscalculated.

The labour movement also should choose its time for battle. That's a truth too often us-

ed by union bureaucrats to justify postponing a fight for ever. But it's a truth that rebounds on them now.

The time to fight is now — and militants in every union must make sure that message gets through.

Jobless gap grows

WORLD BRIEFS

Despite the general slight drop in jobless rates, unemployment has increased among Catholic men in Northern Ireland.

The difference between Catholic and Protestant unemployment rates is bigger than ever. 36 per cent of Catholic men were unemployed in 1985-7, according to a Government survey just published, and 14% of Protestant men.

15 per cent of Catholic women were officially jobless, and 9% of Protestants. The survey also found that many fewer Catholics and Protestants get top jobs. Only 5% of Catholics had professional or managerial jobs, as against 11% of Protestants.

Although the decline of heavy industry in Northern Ireland has hit Protestant workers hard, a large number of them have found jobs in or around the police and army.

3,399 people were officially and legally murdered by governments across the world between 1985 and mid-1988.

An Amnesty International report says that two-thirds of executions were in four countries: Iran (743 executions), South Africa (537), China

(500) and Nigeria (439). The figures for Iran and China may be gross underestimates; some guesses put the rate of executions in China as high as 30,000 a year.

The US had 2,048 prisoners on death row last year, but legal complications there delay executions, and make sure that the rich can avoid executions altogether.

The report also looks at the argument that the death penalty reduces murder rates, and finds it false. On the contrary: in New York State, between 1907 and 1963, an execution produced, on average, two extra murders in the following month.

Joint ventures between Western capitalist businesses and Soviet enterprises are booming.

These joint ventures became legal in 1987. At the end of 1988 there were 200, and by the end of 1989, experts reckon, there could be 1000. New rules allow the Western business to have a controlling share in the venture.

Most of the ventures are small, with the Western companies seeing them as experiments. The total invested by Western companies at the end of 1988 was \$440 million. The biggest chunks were from West Germany and Italy.

Yugoslav businesses have invested some \$43 million in joint ventures in the USSR. Yugoslavia, a pioneer of 'market socialism', has long had many joint ventures with Western companies.

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

I sometimes worry what writing this column is doing to my finer feelings. I seem to have built up a certain immunity to the excesses of the tabloid press: articles that would once have produced paroxysms of rage and/or nausea, now bring on no more than a wry smile and a world-weary shake of the head.

But over the last week or so I've begun to feel genuine anger for the first time in a long while. It's been brought on by the exceptionally nasty campaign being waged by the *Sun* (and, to a slightly lesser extent, by the *Star*) against Liverpool fans in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster.

It has to be said that none of the press exhibited much in the way of sensitivity in the days immediately following the tragedy: even the *Independent* received complaints about pictures it published on Monday 17 April, showing clearly identifiable individuals being crushed to death against the wire mesh.

But from the outset, the *Sun* set itself apart from the rest of the national papers by hinting (none too subtly) that the fans were to blame: if not individually, then at least collectively, they brought it on themselves.

The *Sun's* campaign reached a new low on Wednesday of last week: the front page (headline: "The truth") alleged that Liverpool fans had "picked pockets of victims", "urinated on the brave cops", "beat up PC giving kiss of life". In smaller print, the *Sun* claims that, "in one shameful episode, a gang of Liverpool fans noticed that the blouse of a girl trampled to death had risen above her breasts. As a policeman struggled in vain to revive her, they (the fans) jeered; 'Throw her up here and we will **** her'."

Then, of course, came the allegation of drunkenness. Hundreds of Liverpool fans were booing at local pubs until minutes before the kick off, according to the *Sun* and "their late dash to the ground added to the crush outside which caused the tragedy."

A close reading of the *Sun's* coverage reveals that the source of most of these allegations is one PC Middup. M Middup just happens to be secretary of the South Yorkshire Police Federation Not, perhaps, the most impartial of commentators.

The next day, the *Sun* responded to criticism of its report by claiming that "the facts came from the police, an MP local publicans and taxi drivers."

The same day, the *Independent* reported that Mr Middup had been "asked by a senior officer in the force not to make any further statement about the disaster." The MP referred to by the *Sun* was Mr Irvine Patnick, who received all his information second hand, from the South Yorkshire police. The most widely quoted publican, Keit Ollerenshaw, manager of the Owl ("Liverpool fans drunk my pub dry") later retracted his statements and said there had been no violence in his pub and, anyway, most of the drinkers had been Nottingham Forest supporters.

As for the allegations that fan urinated on police and rescuers, a letter from a survivor, published on the front page of Friday's *Independent*, can serve as the last word on that matter:

"In the worst moments of the crush was both urinated and vomited on — this was not from malevolence, but death throes."

I expect Kelvin McKenzie, editor of the *Sun* read that letter. No doubt Messrs Middup and Patnick did as well. But I doubt if they felt any shame. They're all too busy covering the backs and vilifying the dead.

'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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4 LETTERS

Equal pay for some

GRAFFITI

While the pay gap for women workers remains obstinately as big as ever, women bosses are catching up on their male counterparts.

According to the British Institute of Management, women managers have been getting bigger pay rises than men. Their average pay is about 5% less than male managers', but that's because they're on average six years younger.

Gender stereotypes still have a big influence, however, on what sort of managerial jobs women get. 24 per cent of personnel managers are women, and 17 per cent of public service managers — but in manufacturing and production only 2%, in research and development only 5.5% of managers are women.

Six major police raids on black clubs or factories employing black workers were carried out in Newham, East London, last year, according to the Newham Monitoring Project.

On 7 December police raided a clothes factory and some five people have been deported as a result. In a raid on a club in February, 95 police officers — one fifth of Newham's entire police force — were used, and the result was one minor charge.

The Monitoring Project reports a total of 65 cases of police harassment of black people brought to it in 1988, and 107 cases of racial harassment, including four of arson and 42 of other physical attack.

Twenty six per cent sound like a reasonable pay rise? Or is it irresponsible and inflationary?

Anyway, it's what company directors got last year, according to the British Institute of Management. Their gross pay, before deductions, went up 14%, and Nigel Lawson's tax handouts pushed their increase in take-home pay up to 26%.



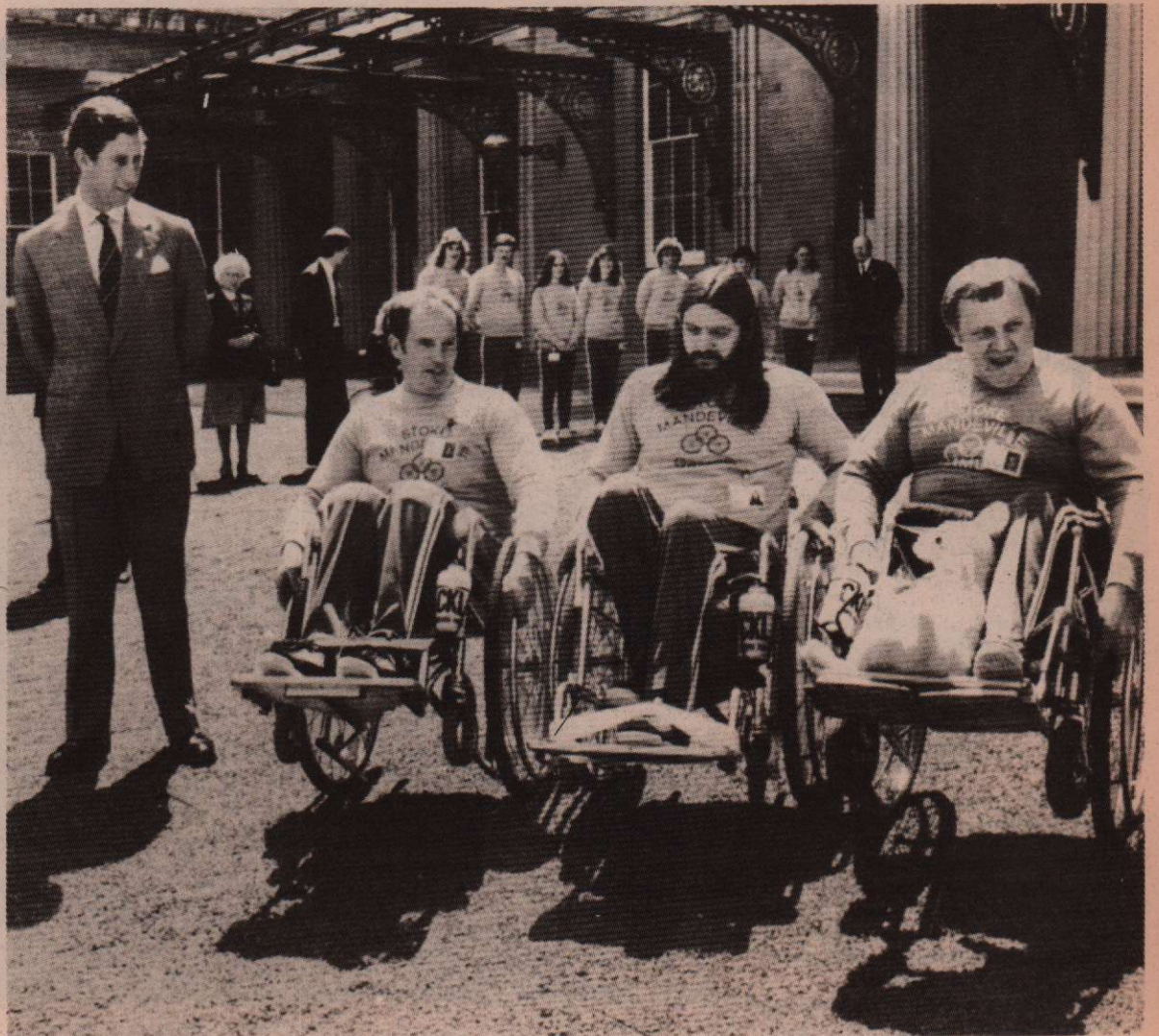
Another 'life is hard at the top' sob-story: many bosses are going to their doctors complaining of shooting pains in the thigh.

This 'Fat Docket Syndrome' is caused by sitting on fat wallets. While the old-style bundle of banknotes had some give in it, the 1980s sheaf of credit cards is harder and causes pain.

Just a bit of fun?" Often there's a nastier undercurrent to jokes — and a recent survey in Women's World magazine suggests that many jokes are sexist even when they seem like friendly joshing.

Women were asked whether their husbands or partners embarrassed them in public, and how. Over half said they did. When the women were asked what behaviour embarrassed them most, top of the poll by far was "taking the mickey out of you in front of your friends", named by 47% of women.

Only 24 per cent named "blue jokes", 25 per cent "bad language", and 23 per cent "arguing in front of your friends".



Prince Charles in charitable mood

No cheers for charity

LETTERS

I am enquiring about the cost of advertising space in SO. A half page would be fine for the three adverts I want to place.

The first is for a sponsored swim for our local hospital, Guys, in London. The maternity ward doesn't have enough cots and blankets for the children. The swim should raise enough to buy at least six, we hope.

The second is a lottery for money to pay the staff in the council nursery that is threatened with closure. The council has to choose between keeping open nurseries and old people's homes, although we don't think we should have to do this, old people must come first.

The workers in other nurseries are threatening to go on strike and that's clearly not a good idea — it will only harm the children who need nurseries.

The third is a 'paint in' at the local primary school. It badly needs a repaint. All the classrooms need doing and usually the school pays people. If we did it, as parents, the school could buy more books for the children. Donations of paint are welcome too.

Many thanks, Ms Liberal 1989. In his letter 'Two cheers for charity' Rob Dawber agrees with Jim Denham about Comic Relief. He calls the SWP sanctimonious for their approach.

Well, my mum is not and never has been a member of the SWP, but she has instilled this sanctimonious attitude in me. In the pub at Christmas she tore a man to shreds who was collecting for the old. "What do you think I am?" she said (she's 71). "I've paid taxes all my life and I don't want charity handouts like we had in the old days."

I agree with her. Of course I've put money in the office whip-round for local community groups, but I always complain too.

On Comic Relief, there is a more fundamental contradiction,

though.

Some of the money raised was going to Africa — that vast continent where it appears everyone is starving. Or are they?

Despite independence, the legacy of colonialism and imperialism continues. This means that Africa is still the primary producer of cash crops and minerals for western capitalism.

Particular African countries suffer more than most. Mali's cotton crop is good — but you can't eat cotton. Senegal's ground nut crop is good, but you can't eat them.

In 1985, Bob Geldof's year of Live Aid, £50 million was raised. We saw graphic examples on TV of attempts to use this money to feed people — stuck lorries, etc.

Yet in that same year the figures for net export from Africa was £21.5 billion.

So you could say that for every £1 given to Africa in relief, £2 or more was reclaimed by the West in debt

repayments.

I feel sad when black people like Lenny Henry don't use the opportunity more of exposing these connections with starving children in Africa. Long may we all be sanctimonious.

'If in anger yo' must explode let it not be w' insults. If in pain you prefer to die let it be in honourable battle. Now is the time to rise and fight the brother that has lost its way and his cruel master who makes us pay for aid he knows we never received. Must our children die so that the dollar may rise again?' So wrote Owen Sichone, a Zambian writer, about the plight of his country and the collusion of the Zambian government.

Charity exists — let's expose it, not support it.

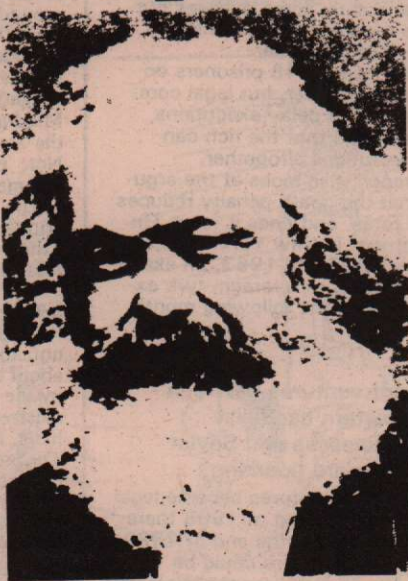
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Justice for Kitson

Trade union and anti-apartheid activists will demand justice for David and Norma Kitson at the second annual conference of the Justice for Kitson Campaign, to be held from 1pm to 5pm on Saturday 6 May in Camden Town Hall, Euston Road, London NW1.

The Conference will insist that the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union (MSF) provides financial support to David Kitson and that the African National Congress (ANC) lifts its suspension of the Kitsons. The Conference will also set up the Foundation for the Care of Victims of Apartheid, which will promote the treatment and relief of distress suffered by refugees from the South African regime.

David Kitson was imprisoned for 20 years in South Africa for his role in the military wing of the ANC. His union TASS (now part of MSF)

promised to help him 'build a new life' when he returned as a hero to the UK in 1984.

However, David and Norma were suspended by the ANC in London for their refusal to toe the political line dictated to them. TASS used this suspension as a pretext to remove the funding of David's teaching post at Ruskin College, Oxford.

The Justice for Kitson Campaign, founded in 1988, and comprising supporters in the anti-apartheid organisations, MSF and other trade union and labour movement bodies, has taken up the cudgels on behalf of the Kitsons.

Letters of protest to MSF: Ken Gill, General Secretary, MSF Head Office, 79 Camden Road, London NW1 9ES. Tel: 01 267 4422. For ANC, contact: PO Box 38, 28 Penton St, London N1 9PR. Tel: 01 837 2012.

Justice for Kitson Campaign, c/o Hugh MacGrillen, 21B Theberton St, London N1 0QY. Tel: 01 226 5436 (answerphone).



240 students attended the conference

Students organise Left Unity

By Jill Mountford and Liz Millward

Two hundred and forty students gathered in Sheffield last Saturday for the Left Unity conference called by Socialist Student.

It was the biggest event of its kind for over a decade, with participants from all over the country and from a number of different left groups (including Socialist Student, Socialist Outlook, Socialist Action, Workers Power, the SWP and the Militant).

Socialist Student organised the conference after a highly successful fringe meeting at the last National Union of Students conference, with over 300 people attending.

The call for left unity has obviously struck a chord with many students who feel demoralised by left infighting, and the inability of NUS to organise and lead effective campaigns.

The NUS leadership (the Democratic Left faction of Labour Students) talks left while surreptitiously swinging NUS's campaigns behind Kinnock. This means that all the life quickly drains out of campaigns and that ordinary students despair of ever being able to beat the Tories. Everything not organised by the leadership is condemned by them.

For many activists, the last straw was the Democratic Left's vote for 'Cosmo' Hawkes, an independent right-winger, at last NUS conference. This man, who claimed to have ended homophobia in Portsmouth and who is currently suing Socialist Student supporter Dave Barter for libel, but not for calling him a 'closet Tory clown', is now, thanks to the Democratic Left,

National Secretary of NUS.

Running true to form, one of Cosmo's supporters even tried to stop the Left Unity conference going ahead, with a solicitor's letter of course. Happily the attempt failed.

In fact the conference was a great success. Whilst one section of the conference (Campaign Student) appeared to be interested in creating an election machine, the vast majority of participants wanted to use Left Unity to launch a serious fight back against the Tories.

The conference opened with a plenary discussion on loans, the poll tax and education cuts.

In contrast to NUS debates which are made up of speaker after speaker outlining how bad the Tories are, Left Unity concentrated on how to beat them.

The afternoon was taken up with workshops and a final plenary which voted on proposals arising from the day's discussion. Subjects covered included internationalism, lesbian and gay liberation, women, anti-racism, anti-fascism, education and arts campaigns, FEs and Areas, green issues, students and the labour movement, loans and the poll tax.

The final debates were remarkable. At NUS conferences the left is constantly maligned, accused of intimidation, of being against autonomy for oppressed groups and of disrupting debate. In fact no-one was intimidated, everyone spoke who wanted to, all the speakers kept to the point, there was none of the precious demagoguery which is part and parcel of NUS, and the first policy passed recognised women's right to autonomy and demanded that at least 50% of the steering committee should be women.

The truth is that it is the Right

who cannot bear democratic debate, because people might get the chance to listen and make up their own minds and vote with the Left.

People submitted resolutions throughout the debate and made amendments from the floor and the world did not end. Both workshops and debates showed how little the bureaucracy genuinely serves political discussion.

Obviously there are a lot of conflicts still to come. Last Saturday the Left was looking for its common ground and there is a surprising amount of it. The policies which were passed will all be circulated soon in the form of a solid basis for getting campaigns off the ground on all the issues which were discussed.

The only real spanner in the works was the attempt by Militant supporters to insist that they had been carved out. In the morning they tried to say they hadn't been allowed to register, and it took a unanimous vote of the conference to finally persuade them to get on with it.

They then proceeded to take very little part in the discussions (most of them going to the pub during the workshops) but insisting on making interminable statements alleging harsh treatment.

When Jill Mountford, Socialist Student convenor, asked if they would commit themselves to building Left Unity, they were outraged, saying that there hadn't been enough discussion and making pitiful cries of 'carve up'!

In fact the conference voted to offer them places on the steering committee but they effectively indicated they would not take those places up.

Given that their main contribution to the event was to moan about it, Jill's question

was quite reasonable. As usual, it appears that the Militant are not prepared to build any organisation which they do not control.

Though they wouldn't state that they agreed with the programme for Left Unity, they made no attempt to argue against it. They made no comment about positive discrimination, the right to autonomy, support for the PLO or Time To Go — policies which the conference backed, but which they disagree with.

Instead, they told us how new layers of students will rise up in future and create left unity. Those of us unfortunate enough to be around just now will have to wait I suppose. To be honest, most of us are getting very bored of waiting for Militant.

The elections ensured that the political groups involved were represented, but with a majority of independents on the steering committee.

The committee of around 35 people has over half women, and six black members. Its main job will be to coordinate the various campaigning activities agreed by the conference, and to organise a second conference later in the year.

A number of Left Unity meetings are planned for a variety of NUS events, and our job now is to build Left Unity into a campaigning force within the student movement. We are committed to using the rest of this term, and the summer, to keeping the loans campaign going, and to trying to put back the enthusiasm that the NUS leadership has killed.

The poll tax registration forms will be appearing very soon so we have to organise frustration of the registration process as part of getting the poll tax campaign off the ground in England and Wales.

In addition, Left Unity is committed to helping the dockers in their struggle to keep the National Dock Labour Scheme, and to building not one, but two 'Beat the Blues' demonstrations in October.

This is not paper policy like NUS's. These activities and many others will be organised even though we don't have the resources of NUS. The delegates at Left Unity do not want Left Unity for its own sake, but in order to build a current in NUS which will fight the Tories, that will involve the majority of students in that fight, and that will stop the drift to the right.

The NUS leadership should take notice of what happened this weekend, or it may very well find itself out of a job.



NUS Executive member Emma Colyer addresses the meeting

Fighting for democracy in Hungary

Gabor Fodor, a member of the Hungarian opposition youth group FIDESZ, spoke to Janet Burstall and Tony Brown

The programme of FIDESZ has been described as 'liberal democratic'. Is this a fair assessment?

Yes, I think so. At the end of the '70s and beginning of the '80s there was a Hungarian democratic opposition. From this opposition grew the Alliance of Free Democrats, a liberal and social democratic oppositional group. There is another line in the Hungarian opposition, a populist line, the Hungarian Democratic Forum.

These are the two main trends in Hungarian political life. Between them is FIDESZ.

FIDESZ is a very liberal and very young organisation. FIDESZ is not as strict as the Democratic Forum and the Alliance of Free Democrats because they are like parties. FIDESZ is freer because it is a youth movement.

FIDESZ's aims are like a normal liberal democratic youth movement's aims. Its main aim is to build up democracy in Hungary.

Can you outline FIDESZ's programme?

FIDESZ has a draft programme which was adopted at the end of summer 1988. There is also a political declaration which is shorter.

At our Congress we set up special FIDESZ groups to work on specific sections, such as the education system, economy, political system, the constitution, and the special problems of the youth in Hungary such as housing, and military service.

So the programme is still developing?

Yes. How have the recent political changes in Hungary helped FIDESZ and the opposition to organise?

The opposition groups brought about the changes and they are very important because the opposition groups, the Alliance of Free Democrats, Hungarian Democratic Forum and small parties like the Social Democratic Party and the Small Landowners Party, along with FIDESZ, are making proposals which have a strong influence on the Communist Party. The Communist Party uses these aims which the opposition groups create.

For example, inside the CP there is very strong fighting between the reformists and the orthodox wings. The opposition is very important for the reformists. They argue in the party forums that reforms need to be introduced faster because here is the voice of society (ie. the opposition groups) and the society wants the reforms very, very much.

The changes are important also for the people themselves because it allows them to organise themselves. So in the countryside there are FIDESZ groups, AFD groups and HDF groups and these are self-organised. This is very important because these types of organisations

have not existed for 40 years.

Are there any direct relationships between the opposition groups and the reform wings of the ruling party?

Not very strong. For instance, Imre Poszgay, the head of the CP's reform wing, had very good connections with the Hungarian Democratic Forum, but the HDF is more radical than Poszgay. There is some connection, but it's not strong.

Some of the opposition's demands are political, such as freedom of press, speech and assembly, but what of economic demands? Does the opposition have general agreement on economic reform?

Yes. As everybody knows, it's very important. Economic problems are the business of government everywhere. Now the opposition groups have said we have to fight in the Parliament and we have to fight to make political questions on everything. For example, the

"The important thing is that this government has lost the trust of the people. People don't see why they should work for this government because we are in a very big crisis and they made it."

Constitution, human rights, new party law and new election laws — and after the election a new government which will be made up of the opposition or the Communist Party. This government will have an economic programme.

The main opposition aim is political changes in the Parliament and free elections in Hungary. The last free election in Hungary was 1945.

Is it clear yet when the elections will be held?

In the next year. Everybody, almost everybody, wants it then. The HDF said that the elections should be held at the end of this year because this Parliament can't create a Constitution because it's a terrible Parliament.

But the other opposition groups said we should wait until next year because by then we will be stronger and will be able to form a government. There is a very strong

development of the opposition.

So does this mean that one of the main aims over the next year is to build a team capable of forming a government?

We believe we will be fighting a free election in the next year.

And so one of the first jobs of the next government will be to create a new Constitution, and not leave it to this government?

Yes. After the free elections the new Parliament will make a new Constitution.

Do you think the CP will try to stop that happening?

The CP want this Parliament to make the new Constitution because they want to limit the changes. It's a very dangerous situation. The opposition has to fight against this.

I don't believe the CP want a free election because they know they will lose. The opposition will win.

Before the 15 March demonstrations, the CP made a big campaign that we should all celebrate and demonstrate together — the CP and the opposition. The opposition said it was impossible because nothing had changed and we don't forget what has happened in the past. We said we would demonstrate and the party and their organisations could make another demonstration.

25,000 or 30,000 people went to the Party demonstration and more than 100,000 people attended the opposition's. After that the government was very afraid and Political Committee and Central Committee meetings were held and discussed the events. They see that the majority of society want changes, and they don't want them because that demonstration was against the government.

That's the reason why I don't think they want free elections. But in the newspapers, radio and TV, Party leaders have said on a number of occasions that there will be free elections in 1990.

With regard to other East European countries, is there much interest in Hungary in developments in other Soviet-dominated countries, for instance Solidarnosc in Poland?

Yes, we are very interested. For example, at the Alliance of Free Democrats Congress two weeks ago, they made a declaration to all opposition groups in East Europe. They want to organise a special conference in late autumn in Hungary with representatives of every Central and East European group. And they want to discuss what we ask of the Soviets, and how can we press the Soviets.

It will be a very interesting and very important conference. We feel that these connections are very important, because now we have a good chance for the Soviets to get out of Central Europe.

Over the past year there have been some spontaneous strikes. Has the opposition made attempts to set up independent trade unions?

Hungary is different to Poland. Recently some workers and intellectuals have attempted to set up independent trade unions, and some FIDESZ members have assisted. But our experience showed us that things don't happen this way.

In Poland it came from the workers, workers who had charisma. There are only the first steps in Hungary. The old workers are very disorganised, they have no organisations or clubs — they are only individuals.

Anyway, after one month of the union I described, all that had happened was that the rules had been made. Workers aren't interested. They don't spend their days working out rules. It's a different situation to Poland. The workers don't feel that they have to set up independent unions.

But FIDESZ and the other opposition groups do have to explain why workers have to set up their own special organisations, and maybe soon they will.

How important does FIDESZ think that work is?

For example, a lot of young workers are in FIDESZ. We do have a miners' group in the country. But most people don't feel that it's important to create organisations. They think the Communists are shit, but they don't go the next step. So maybe that's something where we can help them.

One of the problems facing Solidarnosc is the introduction of market reforms. Some of these are popular also in Hungary. The logic of these reforms is that places like the Lenin shipyard will be closed. So while the Solidarnosc leadership may favour such policies it will seriously affect Solidarnosc members — which highlights the problems of these reforms.

There is not a trade union in Hungary. The contradiction is for the Solidarnosc leaders.

But what consideration does the Hungarian opposition give to these dilemmas of market policies?

It will be unpopular in Hungary what any government will have to do in the future. A lot of people will lose their jobs. That's the only way in Hungary.

The important thing is that this government has lost the trust of the people. People don't see why they should work for this government, because we are in a very deep crisis, and they made it.

The next government has a chance that the people will trust them if that government appeals clearly, and says some people will lose, but more will win, and in the future new jobs will be created, and a new industrial structure will be made. This government has neither the plans nor courage to do that.

Does any of the opposition look to a third way, other than bureaucratic command or market mechanisms, a solution based on full political and economic democracy, made by democratic assemblies?

I'm not sure. These are not easy problems in Hungary. Things are happening so fast. In the future I don't know — the opposition groups might create a government, or if there will be a dictator to stop the changes.

There is political fighting on one side, and on the other there is an economic crisis which is getting deeper and deeper every day. Every week it's harder to live in Hungary.

Given what happened in 1956 in Hungary, in 1968 in Czechoslovakia and 1981 in Poland, your views of peaceful change and a smooth transition seem very optimistic.

But the outside circumstances are very different — that is Gorbachev. In 1956 the Russians had a different doctrine, and now the Russians and the other European powers want changes. They see the changes as necessary which they didn't in 1956 or 1968.

4 April 1989



Chinese students confront soldiers

Not

A Chinese worker is Observer: "These me (tops) aren't Communist feudal old guys who people and despise u looks at the news an background

The death of a disgraced former Party leader has provoked huge student demonstrations across China.

Hu Yaobang, whose funeral has been the occasion for this student rebellion, was not in reality a democrat. But he was sufficiently even-handed during the last wave of student demonstrations, in late 1986/early 1987, to have appeared a friend of the student radicals. He seemed so both to the students who now demonstrate in his memory, and to the party leaders — who sacked him.

This is the most significant movement of defiance against the ruling Communist Party for many years. The focus of student demands, as in 1986/7, is democracy. Slogans have included "Long live democracy, long live freedom" and "Down with tyranny and bureaucracy". Last time, one slogan was the old Abraham Lincoln adage, "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

Alongside the demand for democracy is emerging a radical



Communists but feudalists

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From Maoism to the market

Mao's Communist Party took power in 1949 after a civil war. Gradually they established a system on the model of the USSR under Stalin.

A different course had been possible in China in the 1920s. In the revolutionary events of 1925-27, the young industrial working class played an important role, and was very influenced by the Communist Party.

But under the direction of the international Communist movement, increasingly dominated by Stalin, the CP had dissolved itself into the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) led by Chiang Kai Shek.

In 1927, the KMT turned on the communist workers and slaughtered them.

Some of the communists, led by Mao Zedong, fled to the countryside. There they organised the peasants, first in Kiangsi in the south, and later, after the 'Long March', further north.

China was falling to bits. The centuries-old rule of the Emperor and his bureaucracy had been corroded by the acid of capitalist penetration, and had then collapsed

in 1911. The new republican regime, in turn, quickly dissolved into a patchwork of 'warlord' rule. Different regions were ruled by different 'warlords'. And then, after 1937, the Japanese seized most of China, including the main cities.

Chen Duxiu, founder of the Chinese Communist Party and its leader in 1925-7, had been convinced by the events of 1925-7 that Trotsky was right to insist on the political independence of the working class and to reject Stalin's and Mao's idea of a 'bloc of four classes'. Trotskyist groups organised among the city workers. But repression by the Japanese and by Chinese bosses kept them weak.

Meanwhile, in the absence of any effective central government, the Maoists were able to oust the old landlords and bureaucrats and make themselves the ruling 'warlords' for substantial regions. Separated from their earlier roots in the working class, guided ideologically by Stalin, basing themselves on peasants rather than workers, and becoming administrators for large regions, the communists around Mao gradually became something other than communists.

They remained, however, determined revolutionaries against Japanese imperialism and against China's old ruling class. In the war against Japan they formed a united front with the Kuomintang but kept their armed forces separate. They gained strength. When Japanese power collapsed in 1945, the Maoists were soon able to defeat the corrupt and unpopular Kuomintang forces of Chiang Kai Shek.

The Maoists re-entered the cities

— but as a new ruling class, not as fighters for working class self-liberation. The workers were instructed to stay at work and obey their bosses. Strikes were banned.

The Maoists took over the large proportion of industry and commerce which Chiang Kai Shek's regime had nationalised or which had been owned by Chiang personally or his cronies. The rest of the capitalist class was treated very gently — its property nationalised only in the mid-'50s, and with compensation.

Those of the Chinese Trotskyists who did not flee in time were jailed.

In the countryside, the Maoist revolution did mean some progress. The peasants seized the land. The living standards of the poor peasants rose substantially. The traditional extreme subordination of women was lightened.

In the cities, the Maoists tried to build a base for themselves in the working class. They developed industry fast, and workers in the big state enterprises had job security and higher incomes than the peasants. The only trade unions allowed, though, were state-controlled outfits, so much a sham that they could be abolished altogether during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-67 without much effect!

Until the late '50s China moved pretty much in line with the USSR. In the early '60s, however, Mao parted ways with Moscow. China became isolated economically and diplomatically. Until 1972 China's official line internationally was very left-sounding. Thousands of revolutionaries left the Moscow-line Communist Parties to form Maoist

groups.

The leftism was always hollow, however. And in China itself the policies most admired by Maoists in far-off lands were disasters for the workers and peasants.

In the so-called Great Leap Forward of the late '50s, peasants were forced into huge collective farms and exhorted to develop industry through 'backyard steel furnaces'. This craziness cost the lives of thousands of peasants.

In 1966 Mao launched the so-called Great Cultural Revolution — mobilising 'Red Guards' of youth to help him in a faction fight within the state bureaucracy. Both Western culture and what remained of old Chinese culture were denounced in an orgy of phrasemongering. The country's education system and its industry were set back many years.

Then in 1972 Mao made a deal with US President Nixon, on the backs of the Vietnamese revolutionaries. Soon Chinese foreign policy was consistently pro-America. After Mao's death a group around Deng Xiaoping took charge and turned China resolutely in the opposite direction from the Cultural Revolution.

Since the mid-'70s the land has been effectively returned to individual peasant ownership. China has been opened up for foreign trade and foreign investment. State controls on the economy have been rolled back in favour of market mechanisms.

These measures have led to rapid economic growth, but also to mushrooming corruption, increased inequality and vast unemployment in the cities.

8 POLL TAX

Keep Labour unilateralist!

LABOUR PARTY

These model motions for Labour Party Annual Conference are being circulated by Labour CND

1. "Conference believes that ridding Britain of all nuclear weapons is an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide. We

therefore reaffirm our continued commitment to the unconditional removal of all nuclear weapons and nuclear bases from British soil and waters within the first parliament of the next Labour government."

2. "Conference reaffirms its unconditional commitment to the unconditional removal of all nuclear weapons and bases from British soil and waters within the first parliament of the next Labour government. Conference likewise confirms its commitment to reduce defence spending, initially equal to the average level of other West European countries, and to transfer the savings made by the elimination of nuclear weapons from Britain to health and other social services underfunded by the Tories."

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Thursday 27 April

London Socialist Forum: 'Revolt in Eastern Europe'. Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road, 7.30

Thursday 27 April

Nottingham SO: 'Women's liberation - is socialism the answer?'. ICC, Mansfield Road, 7.30

Friday 28 April

York SO: 'How to beat the poll tax'

Saturday 29 April

CLPs Conference on Party Democracy. Transport House, 2a High St, Birkenhead, 11.00. Contact Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Merseyside L44 8BG

Saturday 29 April

London Alternative Policy Review Conference. LSE, Houghton St, London WC2, 10.30. Contact c/o 96a Stoke Newington High St, London N16

Monday 1 May

Sheffield SO: 'Ten Years of Thatcher'

Monday 1 May

London SO education series: 'Early years of the Communist Party', speaker Tom Rigby. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1, 7.00

Saturday 6 May

Yorkshire SO day school: 'Transforming the labour movement'. St John's College, York, 10.30

Saturday 6 May

Morning Star conference: 'Fightback against the Tories'. Conway Hall, London WC1, 11.00. Contact Morning Star, 74 Luke St, London EC2 4PY

Saturday 6 May

Irish Hunger Strike Commemoration. Assemble Broad St/Cumberland St, Birmingham, 12.00. Contact organisers c/o PO Box 540, Birmingham B11 4AU

Saturday 6 May

Green Socialist Students Conference, organised by SERA. Leeds University Union, 11.30. Contact Ron Strong, 28 Richmond Mount, Leeds LS6 1DG

Wednesday 10 May

'Hands off Guys' march against NHS

White Paper. From Guys Hospital (Melior St) to St Thomas's Hospital, 6.30. Contact Richard Excell, Southwark TU Support Unit, 01 582 0996

Friday 12 May

Trades Councils conference (5 days), Blackpool

Saturday 13 May

Democratic Rights Convention Planning Meeting, London. Contact Reading Matters bookshop, Box 35, Wood Green High St, N22

Saturday 13 May

Lutte Ouvriere fete (three days). Near Paris. Contact Clive, 01 639 7965

Monday 15 May

London SO education series: 'The General Strike': speaker Vicki Morris. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1, 7.30

Saturday 20 May

Bristol District Labour Party day school on 'Defeating the Poll Tax'. Filwood Social Centre, 10.30. Contact Pete Crack, 0272 772218

Wednesday 24 May

Bristol SO: 'Dockers against the Tories', speaker John O'Mahony

Saturday 27 May

Newcastle SO: 'Socialist Feminism - is it a contradiction in terms?' Rossetti Studio, near Trent House pub, 7.30

Saturday 3 June

Gorbachev and 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 17 June

'Time To Go' Show (two days). City University, London

Friday 23 June

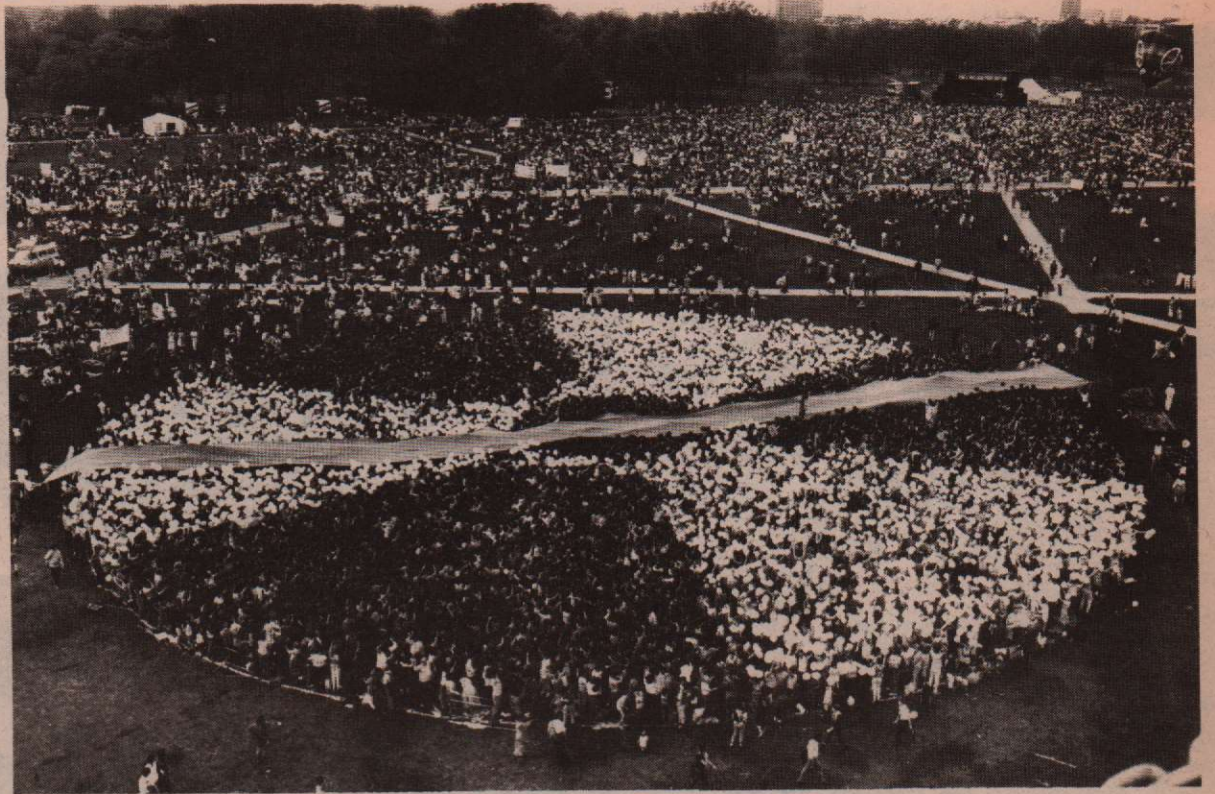
Manchester SO: Debate on Ireland with Geoff Bell (Briefing) and John O'Mahony (SO). Millstone pub, Thomas St, 7.30

Saturday 1 July

TUC poll tax demonstration, Manchester

Saturday 8 July

Workers' Liberty Summer School (two days). Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19



Poll tax in chaos

POLL TAX

By Stan Crooke

Although the poll tax has not been in force for even a full month yet in Scotland, Strathclyde Regional Council already has a backlog of 130,000 items of mail concerned with the tax.

In Tayside region, 6,500 changes to the poll tax register are being processed every week. Poll tax staff in the Lothians have been overwhelmed by complaints about inaccuracies in poll tax bills sent out at the beginning of the month.

Strathclyde is now having to send out 1.8 million poll tax bills, as against 400,000 rates bills previously, and has had to recruit an extra 850 staff. In the Lothians 850,000 poll tax bills have been sent out, as against 220,000 bills under the rating system, and poll tax collection is costing £4.6 million more per year than collection of the rates.

But there is no sign of the Scottish TUC, which also held its annual congress last week, stepping up its opposition to the poll tax.

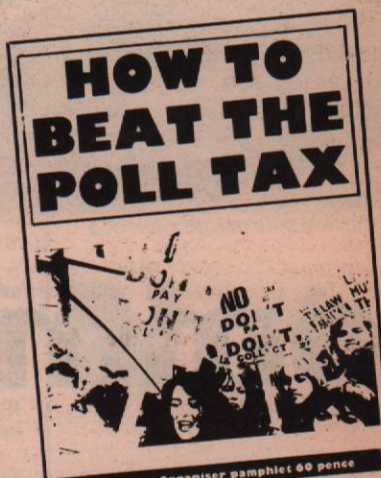
A composite resolution moved by Edinburgh and Aberdeen Trades Councils called for support for non-payment and local anti-poll tax groups, urged local government trade unionists to boycott work on the tax, and appealed to Labour-controlled councils to refuse to implement the tax.

A composite resolution, backed by the STUC General Council, called for a continuation of the existing 'broad-based campaign', support for 'disruptive' tactics against the poll tax (such as being slow in paying it), and urged local authorities not to use warrant sales against people who could not pay the tax.

The Edinburgh/Aberdeen resolution unfortunately received only a handful of votes. STUC general secretary Campbell Christie denounced it as divisive for allegedly attacking Labour-controlled authorities instead of the Tory government.

NUM full-timer Eric Clarke suggested that its supporters should go and find themselves caves in the mountains, and asked rhetorically: 'What do you want us to do? Form a Baader-Meinhof gang? Get the guns out and shoot the bastards?'

With the exception of a few Trades Council delegations, the congress voted in favour of the General Council-backed composite, which, at the insistence of Labour Party Scottish spokesperson, Donald Dewar, had been stripped of all reference to support for 'stop-pages' in protest at the poll tax, lest this be taken as an endorsement of striking against the poll tax.



60p plus 13p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

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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- Lenin & the Bolsheviks, Marxism and Trade Unions, Two States: A defeat for the PLO?
- Trotsky: A tragic figure?, Marxism & Women's Oppression, Eyewitness Report: Poland
- Stalin: Totalitarianism or Leninist?, Marxist Economics, Gorbachev's Reforms
- Transforming the labour movement and the fight against New Realism.

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There's worse than Stalinists

Socialist Organiser opposed the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and demanded the withdrawal of USSR troops so that the peoples of Afghanistan could be free to determine their own future. But since the Soviet withdrawal we have argued that the elements of 20th century progress — women's rights, education, secularism — which exist under the PDP regime should be defended against the Islamic rebels. Some readers have disagreed. These contributions are abridged from a debate on the same issue in the US socialist magazine 'Against the Current'. David Finkel argues for siding with the PDP regime.

There is nothing inherently progressive about 'modernising' dictatorships — there was certainly nothing progressive about the Shah, and I'm frankly dubious about some of the claims made for the Afghan regime's programs — but in the excitement of the Iranian upheaval many of us forgot that there are worse as well as better options.

The triumph of Khomeinism in Iran was not only a real political revolution but also an authentic catastrophe, not only for "progress" in some historical sense but for a nation of real human beings.

The victory of the Afghan Mujahedeen would be at one and

the same time the triumph of a real national resistance movement and a major catastrophe for Afghan workers, women and intellectuals. The ascendance of Islamic fundamentalism to leadership of the Palestinian movement (not that I expect such a thing to happen) would be an even worse setback for the Palestinian cause than the 1967 war.

We should no more wish for the victory of such a force in Afghanistan, or anywhere in the Middle East, than we would like to see Jerry Falwell take over the United States and proclaim a Christian Republic.

I'd like to briefly suggest an approach for the left on Afghanistan from my own political perspective — which I realise is not shared, unfortunately, by any major forces in the Afghan war — that of revolutionary Third Camp socialism.

From this perspective, it is unthinkable as a matter of basic principle to support or apologise for a Soviet military occupation of any country, just as no circumstances permit the slightest degree of support for US imperialist intervention (including US backing for the Afghan Mujahedeen).

For one thing, the Soviet motivation for invading Afghanistan is in no way progressive. While I think the standard Cold War interpretation that the Soviet Union moved into Afghanistan to pursue ambitions for a warm-water port is nonsense, I do think the bureaucratic ruling class in the Soviet Union seeks to consolidate its social system, which is anti-socialist and in no way in the interests of the working class or the oppressed.

For another thing, the practical consequences of the invasion are that for the next generation or two,



land reform, literacy and women's rights will be associated with napalm, plastic mines and Hind gunships.

Indeed, not only on a world scale but also inside Afghanistan this invasion has strengthened not socialism but the most reactionary kind of politics. The time will tell if the withdrawal of the Soviet troops took place before the Afghan regime's dependence on them had become an incurable addiction.

Does this imply that the international left ought to be supporting the Mujahedeen in defense of Afghan self-determination? Not automatically.

While it is permissible in principle for socialists to support a socially and politically ultra-reactionary national force against an imperialist invader (for example, defending Haile Selassie's slave-owning Ethiopian regime against Italian aggression in the 1930s), there is no requirement that we do so if there is an alternative perspective through which national independence could be realised. Whether such an alternative exists requires a concrete and specific analysis of the given situation.

In the case of Afghanistan, I believe there is a better or at least 'less bad' alternative to supporting

Islamic fanatics whose victory would mean the slaughter of a large section of the population, the return of women to the Dark Ages and quite possibly the breakup of the country along lines of tribal and super-power dominance.

Prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979, when the conflict between the PDP regime and the Islamists had the character primarily of a civil war that is, an internal struggle even though there was of course outside great-power support on both sides, it seemed to me that socialists ought to critically support the PDP regime, not because of agreement with its bureaucratic politics but because in that time and place its victory was the best possibility for advancing the rights of workers, women and ultimately of the rural population.

With the Soviet invasion, I think it was wrong for the left to support any side, except to demand the end of the invasion and of US CIA arming of the Mujahedeen and the Zia dictatorship in Pakistan. My view today is that the withdrawal of Soviet troops will once again mean that the conflict is primarily a civil war in which we ought to be for the victory of the PDP — without apologising for its complicity in the crimes against humanity committed

by the Soviet invaders.

I cannot agree that the PDP deserved from the international left the sort of support — and along with it, comradely and constructive criticism and advice — that for example, the Sandinistas have enjoyed. While many of its cadres are undoubtedly motivated by revolutionary goals and desires to advance the well-being of the people, I do not believe that as a party the PDP's politics and record in power cannot justify our political solidarity.

At the same time, I hope the PDP survives without the Soviet tanks and that the Afghan peasant's identification of "socialism" with helicopter gunships and mass extermination can be overcome in a matter of years, rather than decades.

However, any optimism I might have is tempered by the PDP regime's apparent lack of steps to create serious self-defense popular militias among its own presumed social base — notably the urban working class and the pro-regime popular organisations — for a mass defense against the Islamists' onslaught. This may be a product of bureaucratic paralysis, or perhaps a fear of which way the workers might point the guns.

Socialism from below, not the PDPA

By Dan La Botz

David Finkel argues that the left should have supported neither side in Afghanistan during the invasion and occupation, and that once the Soviet Union has evacuated, the left should support the Afghan Communists of the PDP (the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan).

Finkel says he believes in a "socialism from below", a "Third Camp Socialism", yet his conclusions lead him to neutrality in the face of imperial aggression and then to political support for a bureaucratic ruling group once the imperial invaders have withdrawn, moreover support for a quisling regime that turned over the country to foreign powers when rejected by its own people. Such a position is not consistent with the Third Camp or the socialism-from-below politics that Finkel espouses.

Many years ago now, the Third Camp developed a slogan "Oppose Imperialism East and West", capitalist or "Communist". Yet, when imperialism strikes from the East, Finkel argues that the anti-imperialist forces should not be supported because they are morally objectionable and socially and politically reactionary.

Now it is true that the Afghan tribal culture with its virtual enslavement of women is

particularly repugnant. Historically, or course, if capitalist imperialism — British, French, German, American and all the others — was usually imposed on backward tribal societies or on religious peoples who kept their women in slavery, whether in Asia, Africa or Latin America. The British made war against tribal people all over Asia, Africa and Latin America; the Americans against Buddhists in Vietnam and Moslems in Algeria.

The colonial people usually had reactionary traditions of class and sexual oppression, of racial discrimination and national chauvinism. (So did their conquerors of course). Where would the logic of this position on Afghanistan have put us in the age of the "white man's burden"?

The question, as I see it, is: when the man carrying the gun rides into town on his horse (or later his tank), are you with the people or are you with the man on the horse? I thought our side was with the people, even when we thought the rulers of the people should be overthrown and the people's society and politics should be revolutionised, either as the man on the horse was being driven out of town or as soon after he was gone as possible. I thought that was the Third Camp's position.

The Third Camp position in Afghanistan, as I see it, is that the Soviet Union is an imperial invader and should be driven out of the country, and we should stand for the military victory of the anti-

imperialist forces, the actual rebels, even though we not only do not like their politics, but are disgusted by elements of their culture.

If we do not want to support military victory to the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, will we also oppose military victory to the Catholic Nationalists in Poland fighting the Soviet Union or to Stalinists in Cuba fighting the United States because we find the morals and society and politics of Catholic Nationalists and Stalinists repugnant, which I trust we do? The Polish Catholic Nationalists have historically been anti-semitic, and the Cuban Stalinists have opposed gay liberation. Will we not support their military victory against imperialist aggression because we do not like their repugnant customs?

Now regarding the PDP. Socialism from below is usually counterposed to socialism from above, state socialism, the tradition of Social Democracy or the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union and those deriving from it. The PDP, whether the Parcham or Khalq faction is the paradigmatic party of socialism from above, of state socialism, of Stalinism. Jonathan Neale, a Marxist anthropologist who did extensive field research and is an expert on Afghanistan wrote of the PDP's "revolution from above":

"These [radical social] measures showed that the PDP was intent on a life and death struggle against feudalism. But they hadn't a cat in hell's chance. Not, as some would have it, because they made

'mistakes' and committed 'excesses'. But because they came to power through the officers and not the enlisted men. They came to power behind the backs of the peasants, not by working from the bottom up by seizing the state and then trying to work from the top down".

The resistance was fierce in the countryside and writes Neal:

"Where the cadres were helpless the government turned to the police. They increasingly acted like every government before them. They had their armies of spies, their prisons, their torture chambers, their midnight killings. These were not 'mistakes' and 'excesses' as some would have us believe; they were the only way the CP [PDP] could restrain a hostile population. But the police also failed. And then the state turned to the army, to guns and tanks and planes to bomb and strafe the villages. Police terror can be selective. Terror from the air means war between government and people.

This was the PDP before the Soviet invasion and occupation, though of course there were already several thousand Soviet advisors involved in helping the PDP make war on its own people. Then the PDP invited the Soviet Union in to turn Afghanistan into a high, dry Vietnam.

Now, when the Soviet Union leaves, we should give political support to this same party, the PDP? This is not an uncommon position on the American left, but it is surprising and disturbing that David Finkel thinks his position is

consistent with the principles of the "Third Camp" or "Socialism from Below".

We should support the small Afghan working-class movement, the struggle for political democracy and for women's liberation. We should support those in Afghanistan who, while resisting the Soviet invaders and the PDP quislings, also politically oppose the Moslem reaction. There may be very few in Afghanistan who share our politics — I do not doubt that, that is the case. But there are many, many more with whom we can join forces in a struggle against returning women to the past and against the imposition of Stalinism from above.

It is even possible that following the withdrawal of all Soviet forces, the overthrow of the current government and the development of a new situation we might find ourselves coinciding in a common struggle with the Stalinists against feudalism in Afghanistan as we sometimes find ourselves coinciding with Stalinists on issues here. But such a coinciding in position does not by any means imply political support.

In the end it is more reasonable to support the few with whom we can agree politically and the many with whom we can join forces in a struggle for democracy and women's liberation, than to give even critical political support to the PDP, a party with which we not only fundamentally disagree, but whose history and behaviour show that it is diametrically opposed to ever the way stand for.

Tragedy of a woman artist

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Camille Claudel'

Camille Claudel' is a major film, probably the first to convey the torments and pressures that women artists undergo in their struggle to produce and sell their work in a world dominated by men.

Camille Claudel was a nineteenth century sculptress who came from a middle class French background. Her brother Paul, a diplomat, became a well known French poet. Other contemporaries included Zola, Debussy, Balzac and, most importantly, the sculptor Auguste Rodin, who became her teacher, then her lover.

Camille's family were unusual. Her mother didn't like her sculpting but her father and brother were initially supportive, especially her father, who moved the family from semi rural life in Villeneuve so that Camille could work in Paris.

By the time Camille meets Rodin in the film, he is already one of the giants of his age. No longer struggling, he is established, famous, sought after, already beginning to coast on his fame.

Camille is shocked that he seems to prefer the adulation of the world to serious work of his own. Camille, on the other hand, is driven, passionate about her work, embracing the clay she sculpts like a lover.

When she becomes Rodin's apprentice, she strives to do her best and, in turn, inspires him. He is dazzled by her ability and moved by her passion for her work. Through her he can recapture something of the exhilaration for sculpture that he has begun to lose in the bustle of the world.

The film presents Rodin as vain, eager to cut a figure in the great world. Such behaviour cuts him off from his work, since he spends his time, as Camille warns him, with people who care nothing for his work, but hand around him because

of his fame, the name he has made for himself. The relationship Camille and Rodin develop becomes a counter attraction to the temptations of vanity and prestige.

Shared work leads to shared passion and Rodin proclaims Camille the most desirable woman in the world. With Camille's very real beauty and talent, it is easy to see why she fascinated him. It is perhaps harder to accept her love for him, since he never courts her with his talent. We never see her in awe of him as a sculptor, but only in love with him as a man.

Yet the film conveys brilliantly the emotional battleground of their relationship, their passion, their desire and their competitiveness. The performances of Gerard Depardieu and Isabelle Adjani are so good that you never doubt that real feeling exists between Camille and Rodin.

Camille is marked for doom. She is the typical Romantic artist, isolated, withdrawn, difficult, caring for nothing but her art, and her great love affair. As her relationship with Rodin founders, she withdraws more and more into a world of her own. Her studio becomes more and more crowded with unsold work. As an artist she no longer seeks an audience; the work has become an end in itself.

Nemesis strikes at Camille from without and within. The film shows Rodin incapable of accepting her both as a woman and as an artist who might equal or even surpass his own achievement. And his rejection brings all her insecurities to the surface, unbalancing her.

Believing him jealous of her ability, Camille creates a paranoid myth of an all-powerful man out to destroy her. Rodin becomes the unchanging focus of blame for her troubles.

Though Rodin is shown as both vain and cowardly, he is definitely not the villain of the piece. The film presents him fairly honestly, with some justification for his actions. And it doesn't present Camille as simply the victim of male cruelty. Cruelty there certainly was, but Camille herself was flawed — too proud, too insular, too competitive, too driven, to exist easily side by side with another towering talent.

Camille's family are implicated in her later breakdown. Her mother

represents conventional society, a world that denied women any self expression, any desires beyond home and children. Camille's brother Paul, though her earliest confidant, eventually turns against her. As he converts to Catholicism, his soul seems to shrivel within him; he can no longer pity Camille or try to understand her. His cold eyes condemn the waste of her gifts.

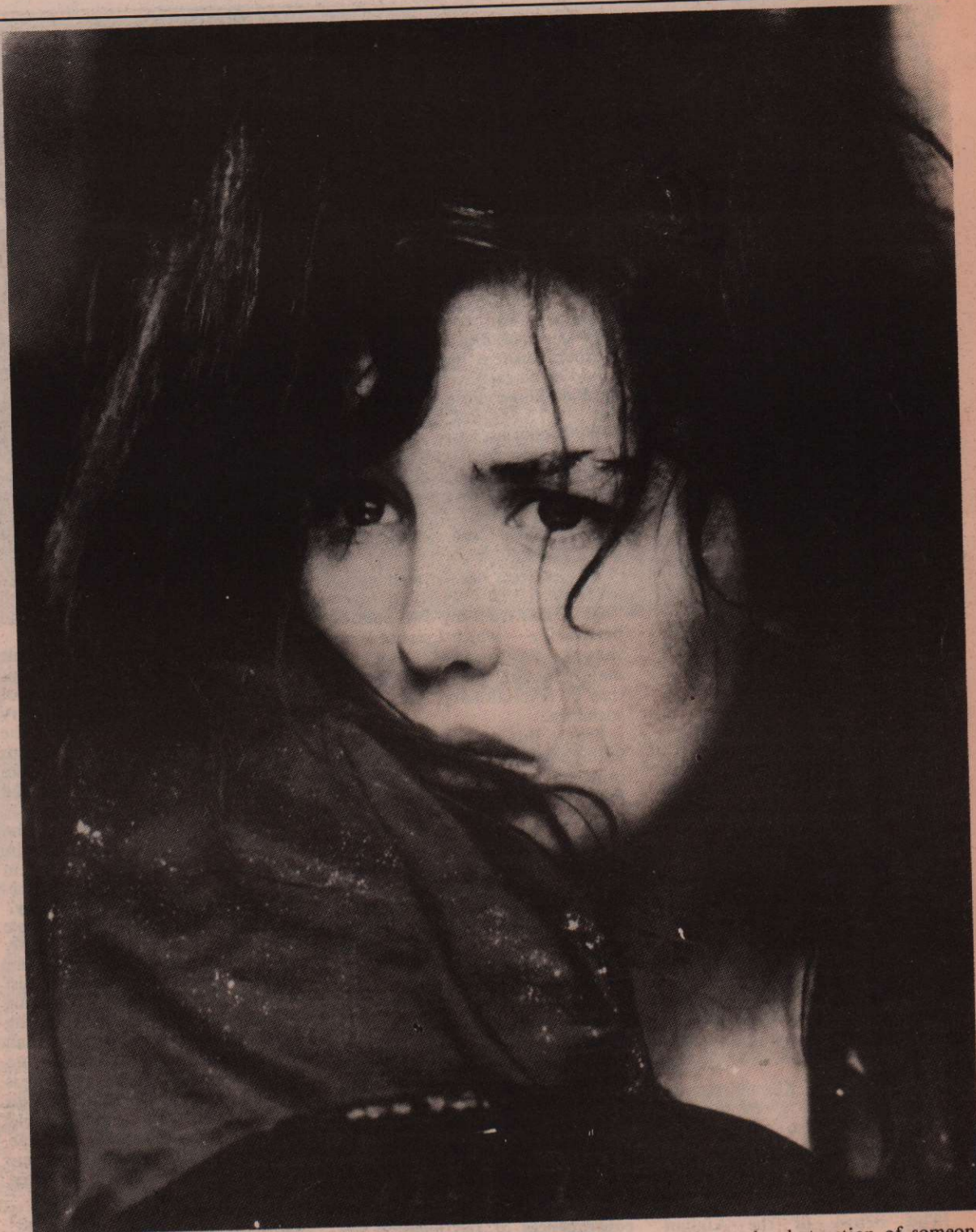
The pressures on Camille were

many. For a woman to be an artist in the 1880s was rare enough. For her then to turn her back on her family to live unmarried with Rodin was even more shocking. She lived as a veritable outcast, having lost even the goodwill of her father and brother. The strains on her sapped her early drive and confidence, and when she was most vulnerable she had no one left to turn to.

It is a truly tragic story, since it

shows the destruction of someone who could have been a major talent. The film captures that tragedy well. We see the characters for what they are — weak, flawed, passionate, cowardly, complex, brave and talented.

The film is over two and a half hours long, but is so engrossing that the length is unimportant. It is well worth setting aside time to see 'Camille Claudel'.



Come back Noah...

If Ark, an environmental pressure group, is correct in its predictions, we may live to regret the wholesale closure of the British shipbuilding industry.

Their estimate for the rise in sea-level if the 'greenhouse effect' (GHE) continues unchecked could leave us looking like Noah's imprudent neighbours.

According to Ark, average sea-levels could be 5.7 metres (nearly 20 feet) higher by 2050. This would be due to a partial melting of the polar ice caps as average temperatures rose.

This would flood large areas of Britain, some of which is already below sea-level. Higher seas would also accelerate the erosion of the cliffs which is already threatening residential areas on the East Sussex coast.

Ark claims that "Parliament may have to move to Birmingham because vast areas of central London will have disappeared under water."

Ark's predictions lose some of their force when it is revealed that they are merely the most extreme of a range of possibilities arrived at by geographer Michael Tooley of Durham University. If all goes well, the predicted rise in sea-level won't come for 300 years.

Tooley's estimates lie outside the current consensus for the scientific community. Their estimates range from rises of 20cm (8 inches) to 1.4m (4 to 5 feet). But these figures are not to be sniffed at, particularly in conjunction with

other predictions for the GHE.

One of these is that summer rainfall in Britain will be reduced. Coupled with the greater rates of evaporation in a warmer climate, there could be short-falls of 40% in the contents of reservoirs.

Apart from making water more scarce (and more expensive, under private monopoly control!), there would be higher concentrations of pollutants. This is because a similar amount of toxic chemicals would be dissolved in a smaller volume of water.

On the topic of the GHE, the government is now speaking with a forked tongue. On the one hand, Mrs Thatcher has publicly embraced the environmental message, even seeking to take the credit for the work of British scientists in unravelling many of the details of the GHE and other environmental benefits.

One mildly amusing consequence of this 'green' enthusiasm was the way the United Nations Environmental Programme got £1½ million more than intended following a disagreement between Mrs Thatcher and Environment Minister Nicholas Ridley at a press conference. She announced a doubling of Britain's contribution to UNEP. Since this turned out to be ¼ million more than she thought, UNEP was the beneficiary of her unwillingness to back down.

Mrs Thatcher was also hosting a day-long seminar at Chequers this week to discuss environmental issues, particularly the GHE. This coincided with the



LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Department of the Environment's three-day meeting to discuss priorities in environmental research.

On the other hand, the Department of Energy has rejected demands from scientists for action now to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. In evidence to

the Commons Environment Committee, the Natural Environment Research Council called for more research coupled with action now to reduce the chances of harm from the GHE. Given the uncertainty of the situation should they prove correct, this is the only prudent and responsible course.

In contrast was the statement of the Department of Energy's junior minister, Baroness Hooper. She referred to 'wild' speculation (ie. the broad consensus of climate scientists) and said that it would be ten to fifteen years before we knew for sure what was going to happen. There was therefore no need to take any measures till then!

The US Environment Protection Agency has assessed the implications of doing precisely what the DoE proposes, ie. nothing till about 2010. The result could be a 40% greater warming of the world by 2050.

The EPA suggests various measures to cut CO₂ emissions, such as:

- increasing the fuel efficiency of vehicles (to 80 miles per gallon for small cars);
- increasing the heating efficiency of homes and offices (the most efficient use less than a third of the average);
- switching more to solar, hydroelectric, geo-thermal and nuclear power.

The folly of the wait-and-see approach is highlighted by two other contributions to the debate. The CEGB has told the Commons Energy Committee that it will be emitting a quarter more

CO₂ from its power stations by 2005 unless the government intervenes to modify the operation of its beloved market forces.

And scientists at the Meteorological Office at Bracknell, praised by Mrs Thatcher as a leading centre for GHE research, have pointed out that there is a considerable lag of up to 100 years between the emission of CO₂ and its effect in warming the world.

Thus, the present mild warming could be the effect of CO₂ emissions in the last century. Since emissions this century are far higher (and still increasing), the 'wilder' predictions could turn out to be quite near the truth by the middle of next century.

This is because the oceans tend to absorb about half of all CO₂ released. But as world temperatures rise, the oceans will absorb less and may even start releasing CO₂, perhaps leading to a runaway warming.

I'm thinking of buying a house-boat before the prices go up!

Green Socialist Students Conference

Saturday 6 May, from 11.30 at Leeds University Union
Registration: Ron Strong, 28 Richmond Mount, Leeds LS6 1DG (0532 781900)

Little girls and gravity

TV

By Jean Lane

How many people watch those films on TV in the early hours of the morning, like at 2am? Hopefully not many, since they are usually low-budget moral-mongers.

A particularly nauseating one was shown recently called 'Paternity'. Burt Reynolds, a rich New York bachelor, pays a waitress to have his baby. They both draw up legal documents covering every eventuality and he, in accordance with the agreement, proceeds to take over her life for the duration.

She has to live in his apartment, eat what he says, exercise regularly, and listen to 'whale foetus' music all day, all for the good of his baby — which, by the way, is going to be a boy.

This is all done in the spirit of good, clean comedy. She gets fed up, sneaks bits of steak to eat, has the odd crafty fag, intrudes on his relationships with other women — their relationship is strictly business — and, surprise, surprise, ends up falling in love with the great sexist lump of a man.

Ah, but he does have a soft heart underneath all that egotistical, macho exterior. In one particular mushy part of the film he explains to her why he wants a boy.

People will say that the thing they like to hear most, he tells her, is a particular piece of music. "For me it is the sound of a child laughing."

There is a playground near his apartment which he passes everyday. One particular little boy has a bike and he can do anything on his bike: he can leap into the air, ride along the tops of fences — you name it. He defies the laws of nature.

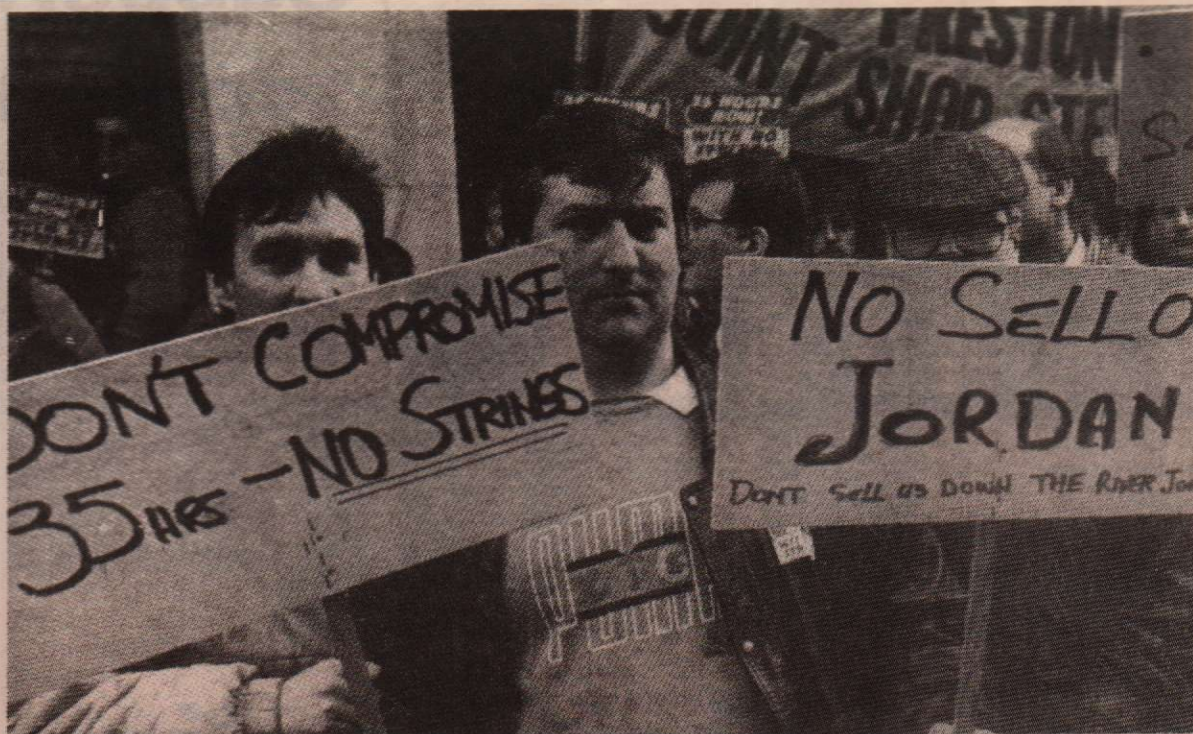
It's genuinely moving, the way Reynolds describes this little boy and so true when he says that the day he falls off his bike is the day that some insensitive soul comes along and tells him about the law of gravity. "And I want to be there when they tell him." And that's why he wants a boy.

No one seems to have told whoever wrote this script that little girls too could defy the laws of nature until some insensitive and sexist soul comes along and tells them about the differences between little girls and little boys, which happens a lot sooner than learning about the law of gravity, and brings them down with an even bigger bump.

If ever I do decide to have a baby, I hope it is a girl, so I can be there when they tell her.



£1.50 plus post from PO Box 823, London SE 15 4NA.



Engineers lobbying pay talks

Jordan can be stopped

The on-off-on-again saga of the AEU/EETPU merger continues.

On Monday 24 April the engineering union's supreme policy-making body, the National Committee of lay delegates, voted unanimously to oppose any merger with the EETPU as long as that union remains outside the TUC,

and as long as the proposed structure of this new amalgamated union involves the wholesale destruction of the AEU's democratic structures.

The vote was unanimous because the right-wing voted for the main anti-merger motion after they had failed by three votes to win their wrecking

amendment.

This puts Jordan and Laird in a difficult position as the whole NC is now, formally at least, united against the merger proposals.

But, true to form, it looks as if the AEU's leaders, who are pro-merger, will try to go for a ballot despite the decisions of the National Committee.

Even if Jordan and Laird do go for a ballot, they can still be beaten! The vote on the NC reflects the large number of AEU convenors, stewards and activists who don't want to go into a union with Hammond. The key factor now is to organise those forces to ensure that the AEU leaders can be defeated should they go for a ballot.

As Norman Goodwin from the Anti-Merger campaign put it: "What we need now is the maximum co-ordination of all those who oppose the merger so that, in the event of a ballot being called, we can stop Jordan."

"A national meeting of Engineering Gazette supporters to discuss this issue is a priority."



Former Labour MP and witch-hunter Robert Kilroy-Silk argues with NUJ picket Charles Wheeler as he crosses the picket line

TV strike success

The 24-hour strike by BBC workers last Monday, 24th, was a success.

BBC unions estimate 18,000 people walked out across the country. TV and radio news, including Breakfast Time, were hit. So were coverage of the world snooker championships and Wogan.

The joint action by BETA (Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance) and the NUJ (National Union of Journalists) is over a 16% pay demand. Bosses have offered only 7% and say they will impose it at the beginning of May.

Monday's success should be used as the basis for stepping up the action to make BBC bosses back down.

Fight back after fiddled ballot

By Trudy Saunders

Social Security workers have voted by 8,400 to 7,000 to accept a technology package (the Operational Strategy) which includes 15,000 job losses, compulsory transfers and compulsory detached duty.

That's if you accept the interpretation of the right-wing leadership of the DHSS Section Executive Committee (SEC) of the workers' union, CPSA.

It was one of the most undemocratically run ballots in the history of the union:

- The ballot paper called on CPSA members to accept the deal or take immediate all-out strike action without any build up, or campaign.

- The right-wing chair of the SEC used the national mailing list (previously guaranteed only to be used for National Executive Committee elections) to send out personal letters to workers at their

home addresses urging them to accept the deal.

- The SEC demanded that certain branches allow right-wing SEC speakers in. Those who refused are now facing disciplinary action.

- Right-wing SEC speakers blatantly lied when they told CPSA members that they either accept the deal or face compulsory redundancy!

The ballot result is hardly surprising after such a campaign.

Yet a conference on the issue held in March 1989 (before the ballot) voted overwhelmingly to reject the deal and build to all-out strike action.

However, the SEC are not going to have it their way. CPSA members in DSS will fight back against the Operational Strategy. In many regions that fight back has already begun. It is vital that we build at a rank and file level and start preparing for strike action, organising levies, etc.

The CPSA DHSS Broad Left must decide and implement a strategy for winning immediately. We cannot sit back and let the right-wing scabs on the SEC sell us out.

AEU plans pay strikes

Bill Jordan, president of the AEU, presented his National Committee last week with a package of selective industrial action.

Calling for a two-hour cut in the working week over two years, along with pay rises to match inflation, he warned the bosses "when the engineers offer them a reasonable bargain, they must take it or take the consequences."

The package will be put to the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions along with a ballot recommendation. These talks will affect the conditions of around two million manufacturing workers.

This 'fighting talk' follows Jordan's humiliating climbdown over his earlier proposals to draw up a 'flexibility' deal for management. Horror amongst the rank and file at this sell-out led to a series of local Confed meetings denouncing Jordan. And led to a 300-strong lobby of the Confed talks with the bosses on 12 April.

Surprised by this anger, Jordan had to back down and now feels forced to develop a more militant 'left' face.

But the union leaders must be made to return the original 8-point claim submitted last autumn, including 35 hours with no strings, shift and overtime premiums, limitations on overtime. And with rising inflation a one-year pay deal is needed.

Eight months have already been wasted in talks with engineering bosses. And a considerable campaign will be needed to win a ballot for action.

The recent successes over the right-wing can be used as a launchpad to rebuild a genuine rank and file movement. An urgent national conference of engineering stewards is still vital to organise such rank and file campaigning unity.

Call for safety on sites

Over 100 delegates to the Construction Safety Campaign AGM on Saturday 8 April heard Shadow Employment Secretary Michael Meacher MP demand an end to death and maiming on construction sites.

"A record number of construction workers suffered fatal or major injuries last year. A worker is killed or seriously injured every hour of every working day," Mr Meacher said. "Concerted action is needed to reverse the deadly trends that have resulted in a 65% increase in site deaths since 1981."

Last year a quarter of all workplace deaths occurred on construction sites.

157 workers died in site accidents and 4000 more died of occupational disease: Yet the average fine for criminal breaches of health and safety law was just a few hundred pounds. No employers has ever been imprisoned for causing the death of a worker.

The Construction Safety Campaign demands:

- A mandatory prison sentence where employer negligence results in a death, serious injury or imminent risk to health and safety on sites.

- No sacking of safety reps who raise health and safety issues on site. No sacking or loss of pay for any worker refusing to work in unsafe conditions.

Black-listing to be made illegal and employers found guilty of victimisation to be prosecuted.

- Right of safety reps to stop the job where substances plant or processes at work present an immediate hazard. This right already exists in many countries including Australia, Sweden and Canada.

Builders' pay revolt

A pay lobby has been called on Wednesday 26 April at the building bosses' headquarters.

Construction workers want a major pay increase, double time for overtime, and a review of how wages are paid. Safety is also a big issue, with over 150 death last year on sites.

With the construction boom, bosses face a shortage of skilled labourers. Building workers are in a stronger position — but it will take more than pay lobbies to squeeze concessions out of management.

Lobby: Building Employers' Confederation, 6 Portugal St, London WC2, Wednesday 26 April.

IN BRIEF

70,000 power workers are being balloted on strike action over this year's pay claim. It is the last pay round before the industry is due to be sold off.

University lecturers will set exams but not mark them. General secretary Diana Warwick has said that a marginal increase in the 7% (over two years) pay offer will end the dispute.

She also called on lecturers to put pressure on individual universities. Winding down the dispute is

unlikely to deter the hardnosed university bosses.

Over 400 Channel Tunnel workers at the Isle of Grain have been on a three week unofficial strike. The dispute was over pay and conditions.

The government has threatened to scrap the linking of firefighters' pay with industrial workers. The present system was set up after a nine weeks strike in 1978.

The shopworkers' union, USDAW, raised its membership last year by over 9,000. It was the second rise in two years. A union report concluded that the 'post-Fordist' retail food sector provided the best recruiting results.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Beat back Kinnock's assault on Labour policy

The Constituency Labour Parties conference meets on Saturday 29 April, just ten days before Labour's National Executive meets on 8-9 May to finalise the Policy Reviews.

We've got our work cut out. If Neil Kinnock gets his way, the main points of Labour policy will be:

- The Trident nuclear submarine project continues;
- Nothing is renationalised;
- Working class solidarity — sympathy strikes and 'secondary' pickets — remain illegal;
- A Labour Government will be 'no soft touch' for the trade unions.

In a recent book Eric Heffer described the alternatives for Labour's future as 'Socialism or SDP Mark Two'. Neil Kinnock wants to go down the road of an SDP Mark Two. If he succeeds, Labour's vote is likely to go the way of the SDP Mark One's.

Labour can win support only by offering working class people a clear, confident alternative to the Tories, not a shamefaced promise to add pink edges to Thatcherism. And a Labour government can hope to avoid the fiascos of 1964-70 and 1974-9 only by having policies which really tackle the chaos of capitalism.

Yet on 7 April the *Guardian* reported that Neil Kinnock's office

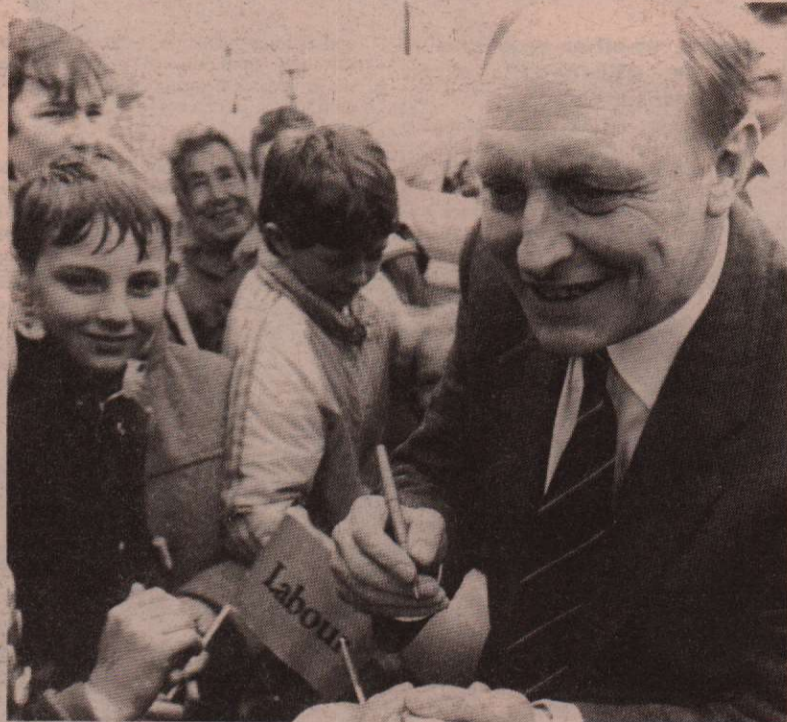
had told Bryan Gould to redraft the economic policy document because its one and only firm commitment to renationalisation — of British Telecom — was too much. The document, reported the *Guardian*, already said that a Labour government would be 'no soft touch' for the unions.

Bryan Gould denied the *Guardian's* report of conflicts with Neil Kinnock, but not what it had said about the contents of the document.

Then in *Tribune* of 21 April, Ken Livingstone, also a member of the economic policy review group, reported: "After vigorous intervention from supporters of the leader's office, the document's radical analysis was junked. The final draft removed all the progressive sections of the original and resulted in a bland document with no measures able to halt British economic decline."

Judging from Livingstone's account, the original draft was none too good either. The 'radical analysis' was the thesis that Britain's economic decline results from the domination of the City over manufacturing capital — a thesis commonplace both on the left and on the right.

On Livingstone's own account, no conclusions were drawn about social control over the City. But still this draft was too much for Kinnock.



On 6 April the *Guardian* had reported the military policy document would "contain the expected decision that the Trident nuclear submarine system should be placed into a new round of superpower talks on strategic weapons. No commitment is given that the system would be dismantled within

Support the Tube workers' strike!

Tube workers will strike from 8 May for better pay.

Union leaders meeting on 25 April called an official strike.

It follows a successful unofficial one-day strike by drivers and guards on 20 April.

Seven lines were paralysed altogether and services were massively disrupted on the Victoria,

Bakerloo and Central lines.

It was the second 24-hour strike called over a claim for a £64 per week pay rise without strings.

Initially the claim came from one person operated (OPO) train drivers, but drivers then decided to include all drivers in the claim, and to involve guards, too, who should benefit through rises linked to differentials.

This second strike affected all lines with guards and the Northern line was closed altogether.

Unofficial strikes have been organised because official negotiations have dragged on for so long. Tube drivers have flexed their muscles and tube bosses have backed off from using the law. Now it looks likely that official negotiations will take place before further unofficial strikes.

For their part, bosses have agreed to talk about pay, but only linked to drastic changes in working conditions. They want to claw back holidays (Bank Rest Days), introduce continental shifts, pay flat rates instead of shift allowances and make drivers work for 7½ hours flat out.

All these proposals must be put to a mass meeting of drivers.

For the bosses, profits and privatisation are the order of the day. Plans to re-organise stations amount to a slaves' charter, and station staff have voted to strike against them. The NUR ballot was won by a 7-1 majority and the TSSA vote by 2-1.

On 8 May a pilot scheme is planned for Harrow on the Hill.

Busworkers must fight!

By a London bus driver

London bus workers have been offered a 7% pay rise and all garages are at the moment holding meetings to discuss the offer.

The recommendation from the T&G leadership of the bus workers — the London Bus Committee — is to reject the offer, and it looks likely that this is what will happen. With inflation, the price of housing in London and the incoming poll tax, 7% is actually a massive pay cut.

If the offer is rejected by most garages there will then be a ballot in May which will be asking for the bus workers to support industrial action for the claim, which is for 14%.

With tube workers set for an all-out strike from 8 May, a bus strike alongside them would shut down London. Now is the time to fight.

Scrap these laws!

From front page

Solidarity is the first principle of the labour movement, its *raison d'être*. The ideal for capitalism is the law of the jungle — each individual worker competing with every other worker in face of the bosses. Every bit of progress the labour movement has made has been progress away from that ideal towards solidarity.

Workers in individual workplaces combined to make a united front against the boss. Then workers from different workplaces got together in unions covering whole trades and later whole industries. Then the different unions got together in a united movement...

Without that long struggle for solidarity, the Labour Party would never have existed. And now Neil Kinnock wants to keep all solidarity, except the most minimal workplace solidarity, illegal!

Two things need to be won at the Labour Party conference this autumn: a clear decision that conference resolutions override the Policy Review documents where they conflict, and a commitment to a Workers' Charter which removes the Tories' legal ban on solidarity.

Polish socialist denied passport

The biggest protest possible must be mounted against the denial of a passport to Jozef Pinior, one of the main leaders of the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution).

He was invited to the forthcoming conference in Oxford on Gorbachev and the Left and intended to participate in the Chesterfield Conference in June.

There has not been a year since 1981 in which Pinior has not spent time in prison. He is one of the most courageous and active leaders of the radical wing of Solidarnosc.

He is well known for having been the only treasurer of Solidarnosc to have anticipated martial law and successfully hidden 80 million zloties of union funds in Lower Silesia from seizure by the authorities.

He was a member of the national underground leadership of Solidarnosc during martial law and spent three years in prison from 1983-6 for his union activities.

He is the constant victim of police harassment and 48 hour periods of 'preventive detention'.

Now, in the new period of 'liberalisation' he is being denied

the elementary right to travel abroad and discuss with the international labour movement.

The ostensible reason for the refusal of the passport is the imposition of a suspended sentence of one year's imprisonment, last October, for activity in connection with the mass strike last May in Poland.

Pinior was convicted of assaulting a state functionary after he and three friends, two of whom were women, were attacked by a group of 20 factory guards in the vicinity of the Dolmel plant in Wroclaw.

This will have a familiar ring to veterans of the British strikes by miners, printworkers and seafarers.

This is a foretaste of things to come! Organise protest resolutions now from your CLP, Branch Labour Party, union branch, etc.

Resolutions to: The Polish Ambassador, Embassy of the Polish People's Republic, 47 Portland Place, W1 and General Dzeslaw Kiszczak, Minister of the Interior, Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych, ul. Rakowiecka, Warsaw.

Messages of solidarity to: Jozef Pinior, Wroclaw, ul. Piastowska 37 m 8, Poland.

Press your MP, MEP and local

councillor to write in protest.

This GC/branch, etc:

1. Welcomes the legalisation of Solidarnosc in Poland.

2. Is deeply disturbed by the continuing denial of democratic rights to socialists in Poland.

3. Notes that Jozef Pinior, a leading member of the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) has been invited to speak at the forthcoming conference on Gorbachev and the Left in Oxford and to the Chesterfield Conference and that the Polish authorities have refused him a passport.

4. Resolves to write in protest against the denial of a passport to Jozef Pinior, to the Polish Ambassador, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Polish Republic and to send a message of solidarity to Jozef Pinior in Poland. It further resolves to request elected Labour representatives to do likewise.

Picket of Polish Embassy 1st May, 1.30-2.30, Portland Place, WC1. Tube: Gt Portland Street.

Stop press: Tony Benn has agreed to write a letter of protest to the Polish authorities on Pinior's behalf.

the lifetime of a Labour government."

Then on 23 April Michael Meacher said that a Labour government would repeal Tory bans on sympathy strikes and 'secondary pickets' — and the Labour leadership publicly stabbed him in the back and said that the Policy Review would contain no such commitment.

Let no-one criticise Neil Kinnock for not campaigning. He has been campaigning all right — against Labour conference policies, against every policy which identifies the Labour Party as some sort of working class alternative to the Tories, against every policy which separates Labour from the Democrats and the SDP.

At Labour Party conference this year, he hopes to ram all this through, with the aid of a ruling that the conference cannot amend the Policy Review documents.

Labour and trade union activists are fighting back on several fronts. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is campaigning for a clear declaration by the conference that conference resolutions take precedence over the Policy Review documents where they conflict.

Labour CND is fighting for a conference decision to reaffirm unilateralism. Battles are also necessary to hold the line on economic policy and workers' rights.

These battles can be won. Sections far wider than the 'hard left' will resist a bonfire of Labour policies. But we need to organise. Saturday's conference will be crucial.

• Constituency Labour Parties conference, Saturday 29 April, from 11am at Transport House, 2a High St, Birkenhead. Details: Lol Duffy, 051 638 1338

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

Inside:

Betty Heathfield:
A new kind of
women's movement

April 1989. 10 pence.

WE WON'T PAY THE POLL TAX!

In millions of homes in Scotland the first poll tax bills are dropping onto the doormat. In a few days the rest of us, in England and Wales, will be getting our poll tax registration forms.

In Scotland, the tactic of delaying the registration process has had a limited success — learning the lessons from Scotland, we can do better here. In the meantime, in Scotland the non-payment campaign seems to be gaining strength as people are faced with the choice of paying massive poll tax bills and taking a further cut in living standards — or pledging not to pay.

Poll tax will replace rates with a flat-rate tax, largely unrelated to people's ability to pay. Until now, rateable value has been a rough indication of income: so the poorest people in properties with the lowest rateable value will lose most under the poll tax.

On the whole, women are some of the poorest people in our society as they often do low paid or part-time jobs or are single parents. It follows that they stand to lose most under the poll tax...and have most to gain by becoming involved in the anti-poll tax campaign.

There will be a rebate system — but it too is completely unfair. Those eligible for a rebate will be rebated up to 20% of the national average poll tax. If you are living in an area with a higher than average poll tax, you will lose out.

Poll tax legislation will force many women to make painful decisions about their family life, yet it has been introduced by a government which pretends that it wants to promote the family as the most important social institution.

At the same time as the government is talking about having more health care done in the community, ie. farming out long-term sick or disabled people to be looked after by their relatives, the poll tax will place additional financial burdens on the people — mostly women — doing the caring, as they will also be liable for their relatives' poll tax bills.

Black and Asian families will receive the highest poll tax bills, because they are more likely to be on lower incomes, live in inner city areas where poll tax will be highest,



Photo: Steve McTaggart

and because they live in larger than average size households. So black women will have to make painful decisions about forcing older children to leave home rather than be eligible for their poll tax bills.

Each household will have to nominate someone to be responsible for registering everyone else in the household. And in the case of married couples, each will have to pay their partner's poll tax. If a woman's husband walks out on her,

she will have to pay his poll tax until she is legally separated, or can otherwise prove he has left.

Women fleeing violent partners can be traced by their partners, as their new address will appear on the public poll tax register.

The poll tax will be an expensive and bureaucratic nightmare, and women will have to bear most of the burden on their own shoulders.

It's therefore vitally important that women become active in the

campaigns to defeat the tax.

We can be active in our trade union branches, our Labour Party women's sections, or in our local community, drawing other people into the campaign in order to make it as broad as possible. We should organise lobbies of councils, calling them to account for the legislation they are going to impose on us, and we must force them to listen to us, and acknowledge the likely horrendous effects of the tax.

Many of us will take the stand of not paying our poll tax, some because we can't pay, all because we won't pay this unfair tax.

And we must fight for local government trade unionists to join us, and refuse to deduct from wages or benefits, and demand that Labour councils refuse to send in bailiffs to working class homes, or send working class people to prison. Together we can defeat this Tory tax.

No space for socialists

STUDENT WOMEN

By Emma Colyer (NUS NEC, personal capacity)

Spring NUS Women's Conference was surprisingly small, with few new women having become involved in the campaign over the last year.

The debates that took place were on sexual abuse, pornography and poll tax. Unfortunately, the debates on sexual abuse and pornography were conducted in such a way that women were polarised in two camps on the issue of whether porn leads to rape.

Without doubt, the vast majority of women think pornography degrades and humiliates women, and resent the millions poured into the sex industry, wanting a better world without pornography, and with equality for women. The question is, how do we get this?

There are, of course, many analyses, but some of the women at conference refused to recognise this, equating those who disagreed with the statement 'porn leads to rape' as being in favour of the continuation of pornography. We

all want to get rid of porn, but for women in Socialist Student this is inseparable from the fight for women's liberation, from the fight to change society.

What happened at women's conference was that left-wing women, who wanted to have a genuine debate, were frozen out — because they had a different perspective from the majority of women present.

However, the left did have significant victories at conference, the main one being the support for the call from Socialist Student for mass non-payment linked to non-implementation as the way to beat the poll tax.

The NUS leadership tried every dirty trick in the book to prevent this policy being passed: they called for three votes on it, despite the vote being quite clearly in favour. Then, amid accusations of intimidation by the left, a secret ballot was demanded — and imposed on the conference. Obviously, what the leadership was attempting to do was to whittle down support for the motion — but they failed and the motion was passed.

Now we have to fight to make sure that the NUS women's campaign actually carry out this policy.

What women should also be fighting for is the right to hold a particular political viewpoint without being undemocratically treated, without being made to feel

they have no place in the women's campaign.

The task ahead of us on the left in the women's campaign to clearly to create an atmosphere where socialist politics have as much a place in the discussion as any other ideas, not just at conference, but in the campaign as a whole. We must fight to turn the women's campaign outwards, into the wider labour movement.

We saw the beginnings of this at women's conference this year, with the Women for Socialism fringe meeting, with Betty Heathfield (WAPC) and Sandra Plummer (Socialist Lesbian League) speaking to a well-attended fringe meeting.

Hopefully, through Women for Socialism, we can unite left women around some basic issues — such as fighting poll tax, such as linking up with women workers in the NHS, fighting for decent lighting on campus.

What Women for Socialism can be part of is creating a new women's movement for the 1990s, rooted in the community and labour movement, which fights the intransigence and sexism of our own leaders, and confronts the Tory attacks head on.

Students can take this forward in their colleges, by setting up Women for Socialism groups and inviting speakers — by taking up the theoretical debates like pornography, on our terms, but also campaigning around the issues that affect all women students.



WAPC groups lobby 1985 NUM conference for associate membership

A new kind of

Death in the name of Islam

Ayatollah Khomeini and his mullahs have recently formed a 'Women's Cultural and Social Council' whose function is to "help in creating the groundwork for the development of women's personality and rights".

How will this brutal regime, which considers women to be "the source of corruption" on earth, and has forced them to cover themselves from head to toe so that nobody

can actually see that they are indeed women, develop women's "personality"?

According to the Women's Cultural and Social Council, by strengthening the "holy institution of the family on the basis of Islamic laws and morals" and proposing plans so that women can use their spare time to engage in "healthy activities using educational, cultural, sport and leisure facilities."

What these plans are going to lead to should be clear to anyone who has followed the attacks by the reactionary clerical regime on the rights of women in Iran.

"Islamic laws and morals", as in-

terpreted by the mullahs, sanction polygamy for men, and encourage the most brazen form of prostitution via temporary marriages — which can last for as little as ten minutes!

Women have no right to divorce and cannot even seek employment or go on a trip without the permission of their 'menfolk'. They need their husband's permission to study.

Over the last ten years the Islamic regime has destroyed what Iranian women struggled to achieve for over 100 years: girls are denied an education because there are not enough women teachers for the segregated schools; they cannot engage in sports activities because they must not reveal their figures.

Nor do they have any 'spare time' since they spend hours queuing to obtain the meagre rations in basic necessities allocated by the authorities.

The new Council is certainly not going to "propose plans" to change any of these!

Far from developing women's 'rights' in Iran, the Council's job will be to intensify the attacks on women's rights, and brutally repress any opposition.

During the 10 years of the Islamic regime, thousands of women political prisoners have been executed — including many pregnant women and young girls — and currently there are at least 80 women awaiting execution.

Recently a woman was executed because her husband, a heroin addict, had forced her into prostitution to pay for his drugs. The husband himself was freed after being whipped.

Rape of female prisoners is a normal and lawful practice.

The attacks have intensified since the ceasefire in the war with Iraq, as the regime, faced with new economic and social crises, has tried to stamp out any opposition.

* Affiliate to the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI), 39/40, London WC1N 3EX.

Betty Heathfield continues the debate on the future of socialist feminism, arguing for a community-oriented women's union

Nobody has ever organised a union for housewives! The problems of the housework and housekeeping (from cooking and cleaning to making the money spin out) have always remained largely the domain of women. When children arrive, that responsibility mainly remains with the mother, even if she has another job.

In today's world, because of women's long struggle to gain equality, there is a slight change of emphasis, and a token amount of sharing family burdens and household duties, but in the main very little has changed — either at work or at home — to significantly change the status of women.

The well-identified roles of male and female are still instilled in every one of us at the moment we are born, and will need an almighty upheaval if we are ever to get this changed.

This role casting spills itself over into every other aspect of our lives outside of the family also, and is one of the reasons for the many problems that will continue to beset women in our society.

Especially the aspect of work where women are still used, on the whole, in jobs with a domestic-oriented aspect — cleaning, caring, machinists (underwear, knit-wear, hosiery, etc.) and shop work or cooking; all of these jobs being in the lowest paid categories.

You will note that there are not too many women electricians, bus

or train drivers, engineers, building workers or pilots!

This helps to perpetuate the attitude that the women's job cannot be deemed to be the bread-winning job of the family, which is why family issues get left as her main domain, unpaid, unnoticed, unlimited hours, no sick or holiday pay, and therefore the provider of pin money (hence part-time work), although it is now accepted that her financial contribution is vitally necessary to the family.

Even in full-time work, equal opportunity is still being fiercely fought over by the trade union women's sections, against great odds, in a trade union movement built in the image of male domination — and even, to their shame, in socialist political parties.

Equal pay has now been replaced by equal pay for work of equal value, but there are still too many loopholes for opting out of this.

Now, after another election defeat, the trade union movement is jumping on the bandwagon of defending part-time, low paid women workers. Lifting their level of pay is long overdue, and should be accompanied by a much fairer deal on many other aspects of their employment.

At a time when union membership is declining, one hopes that this sudden burst of enthusiasm to swell their ranks is not just a token gesture of concern.

Because the main problem for women that needs a drastic change and the full support of those unions is a helping hand for us to shake off the legacy of the type of job that goes with part-time working, and the long-endured presumption that it is always women that have to be landed with this type of work.

There is no reason why part-time working should not be spread into many other areas of employment and with properly planned job sharing facilities offered to both men and women, used to break down the barriers of sex discrimination in what are considered male dominated work areas, at the same time helping to solve some of the problems of unemployment.

With equal access and equal pay



Picket against repression of Iranian refugees in Turkey. Photo: Ian Swinburn



— unsuccessfully. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

f women's movement

participation of men and women, we would surely have a much livelier and more meaningful trade union movement. The present male-dominated trade union movement would be transformed into a family-dominated, community-oriented movement, with everyone fighting hard for industrial expansion instead of industrial decay; a fair minimum wage; equal value with no sex discrimination.

Such issues as childcare and parental leave would be of equal importance to both sexes. There would be many jobs now considered only women's realm that men would be able to enjoy doing, without loss of status or pay, and, equally, thousands of women would no doubt excel in many of the areas where male domination has held sway for so many years.

Only then could we direct new technology towards improving all those jobs that constitute dangerous, dirty and heavy work, thus relieving men and women of that burden.

It would completely alter the relationships between men and women, helping each to have greater respect for the other, starting to solve many of the problems arising from the debasing attitudes towards women fostered by the 'weaker sex' image, and page 3 syndrome; perhaps eventually helping to make the world a safer place for women.

It would also be easier to organise members of the family around the 'job-sharing' idea. With prospects of a shorter working day and week, more holidays and earlier retirement, it would give more impetus to extending our leisure time facilities, thus creating more energy for environmental and creative skills to emerge. This would not be just a struggle for feminist ideas, but to help us also make a truer assessment of masculinity.

The importance, then, of building the trade union membership for women becomes much clearer — but not on the basis of keeping the present male-oriented type of movement we have now.

Women are 52% of the population. We need a re-appraisal of our role within the work ethic, the trade

unions, the labour movement at large. And for those women's organisations whose function in any way tries to change attitudes to determine a better future for us and our families.

We need an organisation that can unite women around their specific needs; we need a women's charter, covering every aspect of our lives that hinders our equal development in society. Such a charter could bring us into action in every area of importance to the fabric of our lives — peace, jobs, education, health, transport, housing, etc. And we would organise on all these issues from the basis of our charter around our own basic needs in the places we live and work, whatever our family situation is, or special category of concern.

If we were already members of a trade union, political party or group, the women's movement would supplement and help our work within these organisations. Such a movement, however, would seek to organise those women in their thousands for whom these bodies have not catered. In other words, the unorganised.

It would be a union of women, initially answering a long-felt need to 'belong', for women who stay at home, for women who are unemployed, for all those women (like Women Against Pit Closures, Women Against Murdoch) who are supportive of trade union members of the family in dispute — because it affects them just as much as the worker on strike.

It would be for every woman who would like to be part of a **united voice** on behalf of all issues affecting women.

A campaigning organisation, a union of women, eventually a national union of women, created in our images of womanhood, perhaps in the future affiliated to the TUC, bringing to that organisation an entirely different concept of a trade union, as they are now mainly geared to those at work.

Our concept would have its roots firmly in the communities in which we live with all our problems, as well as the places we work to produce the wealth for all our needs,

and we would be the link that is necessary to connect the two.

Thus making the trade union movement stronger, more firmly rooted in society, and more approachable and accountable to the life of the community and its well-being. A true and firm basis for a caring, socialist society.

As women also, we would have to adjust, not only to the aspects of feminism which need a fuller discussion and understanding if we are to succeed, but also a more concerned approach and understanding of masculinity, what this entails in our present situation, and why this concept needs to undergo a change, both for us and men.

This would perhaps be the most wide and far-reaching area of re-education ever undertaken in our society, but one which is far overdue, and one which could have the most beneficial impact upon the whole of the civilised world.

If we want to do all this, we need to start now, from where we are and with what we could most reasonably expect to achieve at this present moment. Amongst all the women's organisations, WAPC is in a unique position to be perhaps able to start this up. The strike gave many of us new confidence in ourselves, but sadly, for many others, it did not change anything.

So the proposal initially is that we re-organise and re-build our movement into a women's union, open to all women. This would not change any groups still in existence in the coalfield areas, whose struggle is now intensified, and would be in complete accord with the women's charter based on class issues.

It could in fact strengthen their work, enlarge their support, extend their influence. It would help them to link the issue of pit closures and its attendant problems to the larger problems of every community, pin pointing, with others in struggle, the utter devastation caused by Tory policies.

• This article first appeared as a paper to the WAPC conference in 1987, and was discussed at the Women for Socialism conference in February this year.

Hitting children is wrong

By Penny Radcliff

The problem that parents had with their children in the past was that they tended to die. Apart from that they never had any problems with child rearing...until the last 20 years or so."

This was the inauspicious (and wildly inaccurate) start to the relaunch of BBC2's access programme, 'Split Screen', last week.

Child rearing is in the news because of the launch of a campaign to remove the legal right of parents to smack their children. So it was smacking at issue in 'Split Screen'.

Supporting the right — indeed, the duty — of parents to hit their children was child-minder and mother of six, Lynette Burrows. Amongst her evidence was a 'smacking' family whose own negative feelings towards their children were quite clear — "You have to teach children to be nice, otherwise they're horrors." And how do you teach them to be nice? By smacking them when they're not, of course.

I must admit I was pleasantly surprised. I had expected to be faced with some fairly hard to counter arguments in favour of the 'restraining slap'. Instead, we were presented with a fragile case that blamed everything, including inner city riots, heroin addiction, AIDS and child sex abuse, on the failure of parents to regularly hit their

small children.

And this in a society where (according to child psychologist Penelope Leach) 97% of four year olds are smacked between one and six times a week. Is it the other 3% who are turned into drug-crazed rioters? Or have we got the wrong end of the stick?

In fact a more carefully researched film by Penelope Leach gave us some hard evidence instead of sweeping generalisations.

We were told that evidence shows that violent crime is linked with being violently punished as a child. One ex-prisoner, convicted of 'running amok with a machete', told of having been violently punished as a child for underachieving at school. About to become a father for the first time, he had vowed never to smack his children and repeat his parents' mistakes.

Of course, we all know it's not as easy as that. In a world that holds children in low esteem, their mothers in less, the stresses and pressures of parenthood, especially when coupled with poverty and isolation, leads many who would rather not smack to lash out in desperation.

But this is a world away from those who believe that systematic violence is the way to mould our children into useful members of society. Not only does it not work, but it is part and parcel of the attitude that children are less than human, that they are the property of their parents, that has led to the extremes of abuse that we are only now beginning to uncover.

Labour council 'opts out' of defending NHS

By Julia Coulton

The first effects of the Tory White Paper on the health service are beginning to be felt in Manchester, as the chair of Central Manchester Health Authority has announced plans for the city's largest hospital complex to 'opt out' of the NHS.

This move would affect Manchester Royal Infirmary, the Royal Eye Hospital and St Mary's Hospital, which is a specialist maternity and children's hospital.

If these hospitals do opt out of the NHS it would be extremely bad news for both the health workers involved, and the local people. 'Efficiency' would be the order of the day, with good patient care coming a poor second.

If the plan goes ahead, health workers will undoubtedly have to suffer worsened working conditions, and have to carry on trying to provide the services patients so badly need as already overstretched resources are cut back even further.

The people who are entitled to use the hospitals will be limited to a strict geographical area, so many in need of care will be denied access to specialist services.

But even for those who are still allowed to use the facilities, the sort of services available will change drastically. 'Efficiency' will mean an end to high-cost services like casualty units, and special baby care units — services which are of vital importance to the inner city area in which the hospitals are situated.

These changes will hit working class people hardest — poverty and bad housing makes you ill, but at least up to now there has been the

NHS to rely on. Women and children will be especially affected as they are amongst the biggest group of hospital users.

It is frightening to think what might happen to already inadequate services like those for sick children, pregnant women and older women needing hip replacements. 'Opting out' of the NHS can only mean playing with people's lives.

We have come to expect this sort of thing from the Tories — but the chair of Central Manchester District Health Authority is a Labour councillor, Ken Collis.

Local Labour Parties are calling for the expulsion of Cllr. Collis from the party for his actions — Stretford Women's Section and Moss Side ward have already passed resolutions to this effect.

Activists are organising lobbies of DHA meetings, and linking up with health workers fighting the opt out proposals.

The Labour Party nationally has said it will bring any hospitals which have opted out back into the NHS — this must be included in the Policy Reviews and the next manifesto.

But more than this, the Labour Party needs to fight now to make sure that no hospitals do opt out. Manchester will be the first of many unless a broad campaign is built among health workers, Labour Party rank and file and the wider community to save our hospitals.

Women are in the forefront of the fightback in Manchester both as health workers and hospital users. There is going to be a demonstration when Junior Health Minister Roger Freeman visits Manchester on 5 May.

We need to link together to show the Tories — and Tory-backed Labour councillors like Collis — that they can't get away with opting out of providing the health care services based on need, not 'efficiency'.

The politics of pornography

By Lynn Ferguson

Pornography available in your average newsagents shop "includes magazines specialising in sex and violence: women being humiliated and beaten, schoolgirls being stripped and whipped, pictures of punishment and interrogation with Nazi overtones..."

"Their (the most popular titles) main fare is an obsessive fixation on women's open genitals and anuses, photographed close up, often pulled or stretched and posed to appear gaping, inviting sexual access."

So says Catherine Itzin in an *Observer* article, publicising a new campaign — the Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship.

A campaign against both porn and censorship sounds the answer to many a socialist feminist's prayer. After all, we're in favour of freedom of speech, but also we're against pornography. Most of us find it personally offensive. Porn tells lies about women's sexuality — perpetuates pernicious myths about what we want — even what we are. Porn routinely — even the 'soft' stuff — depicts women as subordinate, always receptive, passive, inviting. We want to be taken, want to display ourselves. Whores, bitches on heat — that's what we all are really.

A campaign which publicly exposes these images for the rubbish they are, which explains why porn makes women angry, why we do not want it in our workplaces, this surely must be a good thing.

Sadly, though, the Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship (CPC) is not it. For sure the campaign is against censorship...except in the case of pornography. The campaign does demand the repeal of obscenity laws — the laws which have been used against gay and lesbian literature and, indeed, feminist writings on sexuality.

The arguments of the left against banning porn have centred on the difficulty of simply focusing on material which we find offensive. We have argued that any censorship would be used by those in power to ban not material which is offensive to women, but that which is offensive to the government, the homophobes, the Mary Whitehouses.

But the CPC does make a serious attempt to avoid this pitfall. It defines pornography as "depicting a combination of sexual objectification and subordination of women, often including violation and violence." Excluded is "erotica defined as sexually explicit materials premised on equality, bona fide sex education materials,

or medical and forensic literature."

Pretty tightly drawn, or so it seems. But then what about lesbian porn? Contrary to the illusions of those who present lesbian relationships as soft-focus celebrations of woman-centredness, lesbian sexuality can be violent, aggressive and feed off power relations. Some lesbian porn depicts this too — indeed, for the past few years much of the lesbian movement has been bogged down in a discussion of the rights and wrongs of lesbian sadomasochism. Would we ban lesbian porn that didn't fit with our idealised picture of full equality?

What is maybe more worrying than semi-theological discussion about where we draw the line is the way the case for banning porn is being argued by the CPC.

A resolution, sponsored by the CPC, and passed amidst much controversy at the recent conference of the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCCL — now called 'Liberty') argues "there is sufficient evidence to say that it is highly likely that a link exists between certain kinds of pornography and harm to women, both in terms of the aggregate increase in sexual violence against women, some individual sexual attacks and the subordinate, unequal status of women."

Phew! There's a lot there. But one or two fairly unsubstantiated assertions leap out of the page.

The question of the 'link' between porn and sexual attacks on women is a controversial one. Those who argue that such a link is 'highly likely' rest on the evidence of one research programme, carried out in the US, during which a cross-section of men, under controlled conditions, were questioned on their attitudes towards women and sexual violence before and after being exposed to pornographic images. Apparently prolonged exposure desensitised them, made them more sympathetic towards misogynist views about women; many said that they felt they would rape "if they could get away with it."

Very alarming. But we have to be more rigorous than that. We cannot base a theory of the link between porn and violence against women on one research programme, plus a series of examples where porn has figured in sexual attacks. This cavalier attitude simply will not do.

Then there is the 'aggregate increase in sexual violence.' Where? Simply in Britain, in Europe, in the West? An increase in reported violence, in awareness, or a real increase? It is naturally difficult to say whether such incidents have 'increased' over time. We rely on official statistics for our evidence — and not only are these unreliable, but often they do not exist.

In the Middle Ages a mass porn industry did not exist, yet evidence



indicates that women were treated brutally. For sure legally they were the property of men. Rape was a crime against the husband or father — not against the woman herself.

Franco's Spain banned porn — do we think women had more equality under fascism? Is it likely that sexual violence decreased?

In Iran today, porn is outlawed. And yet we all know of the terrible situation of Iranian women. In prison, women are routinely raped — virgins are always raped prior to execution, so that they do not go to heaven. Rape here is used as a tool of political repression — not simply misogynist repression, but part of repressing political oppositionists. It's nothing to do with porn — it's to do with a society which rests on the severe subordination of women.

In her article, Catherine Itzin quotes with approval the view of the US Court of Appeal, which said

in 1985: "Pornography is central in creating and maintaining sex as a basis of discrimination..."

But clearly not. Women have been oppressed for thousands of years. In different societies — different times and places — women's oppression has taken different forms. Porn has sometimes figured largely, sometimes hardly at all. Is porn central to women's secondary position at work?

For sure porn can be used to make a workplace uninhabitable for women. It can be used as part and parcel of a campaign of sexual harassment to drive a woman out of her job. As such it should be fought — management should have guidelines, unions should be prepared to put up a fight about it.

But more central to perpetuating women's secondary status at work is the position of women in the home, lack of childcare, lack of op-

portunity, which drive women into low-paid, part-time work; the assumptions that women should be financially supported by men, that our job is to keep home and look after the kids; that we work for 'pin money'. Our unions are not geared to our needs — so often we cannot fight to improve our position in the workplace. This, and not porn, is the key.

It is profoundly misleading and politically disorienting to argue, or even to imply, that to ban porn would clear the ground for a significant improvement in women's position in all areas of life. It won't.

We have to organise, to fight, to argue on all fronts. And no, this isn't sidestepping the specific issue of pornography, it's attempting to find a way in which we can make real gains, lasting gains. Banning porn, however carefully we go about it, won't do that for us.

Poisoning our bodies

By Katherine O'Leary

The new health consciousness has made much of what we put in our bodies at one end. Salmonella, listeria, risks from pesticides and fertilisers — all have hit the headlines, all have made us think more carefully about what we eat.

But what about the other end? Once a month, every month, for around 30 years of our lives, women menstruate. And, of course, there is a massive industry providing sanitary towels and tampons — 'sanpro', in the trade — to mop up the blood. What sort of standards apply to their manufacture?

Well, very few actually. In fact,

all we have is the industry's own Code of Practice, which is more concerned with matters of taste, packaging, etc, than of safety.

Despite appearances — cellophane wrapping our tampons, new dinky individual packages for sanitary towels — they are not actually sterile; standards for surgical dressings and hospital maternity pads do not apply to 'sanpro'.

In the early 1980s there was lots of publicity about Toxic Shock Syndrome. Caused mainly by deodorised tampons, with sharp applicators, it resulted in serious pain, fever and sickness. The scandal caused manufacturers to take certain brands off the market.

But now a new scandal has emerged. The bleaching process used on tampons, sanitary towels and disposable nappies produces diox-

ins, very poisonous chemicals, which are thought to cause cancer, birth defects, and immune problems.

The manufacturers claim that the level of dioxins in these products is no cause for concern. But medical opinion is that no level of dioxin is really 'safe'. Vaginal membranes are very absorbant, and are thus more susceptible to any such chemicals.

Third World women get an even worse deal. Examples from Malaysia of 'foreign bodies' found in previously unopened packets of sanitary towels include a fishing hook, cockroach eggs and rat droppings.

Does this make you feel 'safe and secure' on those 'intimate days'? No, me neither. I wonder what 'Sister Marion' thinks of all this?

Where we stand

1. We aim to build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our own fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities, the right to work, the right to live in this country with the partner of our choice, the right to maternity leave and job security for mothers, the right to wages, benefits and legal status independent of a man, the right to organise as trade unionists and as women.

These rights and many other, many not yet won or consolidated, must be defended and extended in face of the onslaught against women by this government.

2. Such a mass campaign has to be part of a labour movement response to the Tory attacks. We aim to provide a focus for united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's move-

ment, and to involve women who do not relate to these movements.

3. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full

part at all levels. We fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter of Women in the unions.

We fight against the labour movement's reflecting in any way the oppressive ideas about a woman's role, which can undermine women's ability to fight back, and dangerously divide the movement. We ally with all those fighting for rank and file control, democracy and accountability, against those who hold back and sell out our fight. Never again a 'Labour' government that ignores party decisions, serves the bosses and bankers, and beats down workers' living standards and struggles.

4. We aim to co-ordinate and assist those women in the Labour Party, and the trade unions, who are fighting for these aims.

5. We are for direct action, solidarity as women and as workers, and for maximum mobilisation for all actions against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK Inside: Betty Heathfield: A new kind of women's movement

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