

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

China: build the solidarity campaign!

By Cheung Siu Ming

The bureaucrats' campaign of terror and killings against the workers and students continues in China.

Pro-democracy campaigners are being rounded up, paraded before the public, given short sham trials, and then shot, often in public.

China's dictatorship routinely carries out many more legal killings than Iran, South Africa and all the rest of the world put together. The picture on the left shows an execution earlier this year, before the democracy movement.

The group around Deng Xiaoping is consolidating its hold on the bureaucracy.

The Chinese Communist Party central committee has finally deposed its general secretary Zhao Ziyang and Politburo member Hu Qili.

Zhao and Hu were in a minority of two on the five-man standing committee when they opposed martial law.

Jiang Zemin, the Shanghai party leader, now replaces Zhao. Jiang is described by the *Guardian* as "an economic progressive with conservative political views".

The whole farce underlines the fact that Deng Xiaoping has the same dictatorial power over the entire Stalinist apparatus as Mao, whatever the formal titles.

Meanwhile the arrests and executions continue, but so has economic sabotage and the sullen resistance of the urban population.

The capitalists of the West are doing their best to help Deng. George Bush, before saying his words of condemnation of the Tienanmen Square massacre, enounced his first principle: "We want to preserve this relationship" (with the Chinese government). Japan, the biggest foreign investor in and trader with China, is anxious not to disturb its flow of profits.

But the heavy-handed brutality of the Chinese government has still caused problems. Major financial deals with Japan and the World Bank have fallen through. The

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Labour must back the strikes!

The Tories believed it couldn't happen. Working-class militancy was dead. Socialism was being buried forever. Maggie's popularity was unassailable.

Look at them now. Labour is 14 points ahead on opinion polls, the Tories more unpopular than at any time since before the Falklands

War.

A new wave of working-class action has already brought the country to a standstill once, and is set to do so again. The biggest transport strike since 1926 — and more to come. The labour movement, after the doldrums of depression throughout the '80s, is making a comeback.

It is not an accident that Labour surges ahead in the polls at a time

when there is a revival of militancy. Behind them both lies a new mood of confidence, a willingness to fight. People believe they can get rid of Thatcher, and can beat the employers over pay and conditions.

Labour's revival is categorically not to do with Neil Kinnock's middle-of-the-road image. Kinnock could be as glitzy as he likes, but without the labour movement's combativity, Labour would still be

trailing.

So Kinnock should stop running scared. Support for industrial action need not be a vote loser. On the contrary, Labour needs to build on the hope that it is a real alternative to the Tories — that it really will be different.

In any case, the strikes are the way to fight the Tories now. We can't afford to wait for an election. So Labour should be full-square

behind all the current strikes, at local and national level. The most active militants must be recruited to the Labour Party — to make sure it does fight for workers' interests in future.

The Tories know their days are numbered. But the more militant, coherent and united the labour movement is, the fewer those days will be.

Why we need rank and file links

A London busworker spoke about the struggle of London's transport workers

On Wednesday 21st, London's bus workers struck with the tube and rail workers over pay.

This was the first time all transport workers had been out in London together since the General Strike of 1926, and it had a massive effect on the city, causing £30 million to be lost in sales alone.

On Wednesday 28th, the Tube and rail are coming out again. We don't yet know whether the bus workers will be out with them, as our union leadership leaves us in the dark about their plans, even though they have a six-to-one vote in favour of strike action from the membership.

Indeed, the London bus workers' leadership is a good example of the problem facing the working class at the moment. The working class is beginning to fight back — not just transport workers, but dockers, BBC, local government workers, etc. as well.

But the working class has not only got 10 years of Thatcherism and consequent demoralisation to shrug off. That's the easy part, once you get going. It's got a leadership which is largely unwilling to fight, or which will fight, but within strict time limits, in ways that are less likely to win.

Our leadership on the buses is no exception. Here's a classic example of how not to key into the mood of the workers.

We have an offer of 7.1%. We are asking for 14% to cover for inflation, London house prices and past losses. We have a ballot which returned a 5-1 vote in favour of strike action.

After one day's action has been taken, management offer 7.5%. Any further action is called off for negotiations. The new offer is rejected and a new ballot returns a 6-1 vote for strike action.

Before any action can be taken, management up the offer to 8.1%. Inflation is by then 8.3%. We get no news from the union as to what is happening, or whether any action will be called. All our members are asked to do is put a cross on a ballot form.

The leadership decided what action to take and when. We get any news about it from the media.

While all this is going on, the Tube workers are taking unofficial action on their own, when we could quite legitimately have been fighting at the same time over our own claim, and bringing the city to a halt.

Well, on Wednesday 21st, we



20,000 on Pride '89

Over 20,000 people joined this year's 'Pride '89' march, and many thousands more the festival. It was the most successful Pride march ever — celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising in New York that gave birth to the modern lesbian and gay libera-

tion movement.

The Tory government's notorious Section 28 of the Local Government Bill, which outlaws the 'promotion' of homosexuality by local authorities, has failed to force lesbians and gay men back into

the closet. The Pride march shows the extent of opposition to Tory policies on gay rights.

The labour movement must take the issue seriously. Neil Kinnock must stop trying to hedge on it and stick up for some principles.

eventually managed to get it together.

The London Bus Conference decided on Tuesday night to come out with the Tube and rail on Wednesday. Our members didn't know until they turned up for work on Wednesday morning. And they were angry about that. But the majority supported the strike nevertheless, and no bus went on the road — despite our leadership rather than because of it.

It just shows really how much strength of feeling there is.

There are people in my garage who never come to union meetings, never show an interest. They've been ratted on for so many years by the union that they just expect to get sold out and leave it at that. And now they are standing in front of the union notice boards and saying: "We should all be out together, and indefinitely. Never mind these one-day strikes. Let's stay out 'till we win."

Our members aren't running scared of the law, even if our leaders are. I don't think it's right to make a fetish out of breaking it. I think the union leaders should try to fight within the law if they can, because an official call for a strike makes it more effective. Indeed, on

the buses, unless there's an official call, a strike won't happen, because there is no unofficial rank and file or shop stewards' organisation as there is on the Tubes and the docks.

But in the end we have to recognise that the Tories' laws are there to prevent us winning, and in the end we have to decide to fight regardless.

Our members know that. They see the Tube workers defy the law every other week and get away with it. After one of their days of action, the local London press had front page articles calling for the 'ringleaders' on the Tubes to be found, sacked and charged with the cost of the strike to London Underground Ltd.

The Tube workers held a mass meeting and decided that if one member should be picked on, they would step up the action. The next morning's paper had a front page article from one of London Underground's managers saying: "We are not looking for the ringleaders." All the laws in the world are no good for them if we stick together and fight to win.

We have got to make our leadership accountable so that the rank and file have an input into the decision-making. We have to build a rank and file organisation, to put pressure on the leadership and to do what we want, so that, if they won't fight, we can.

But more than this, we've got to make the fight political. The working class has fought before. It got rid of a Tory government in 1974. It replaced it with a right-wing sell-out Labour government that imposed wage restraints and social contracts on the working class and which paved the way for the massive dole queues, cuts and smashing of our NHS.

Kinnock doesn't want to get rid of all the Tories' anti-union laws, because he too wants to keep the working class in check. He wants to tinker with the system as it exists and pass on a few more crumbs to us than the Tories did, that's all. You can see that when sell-out Labour councils talk about 'kinder' cuts.

We must learn from past experience. Industrial militancy is

great, especially after so many years of demoralisation. But it's not enough on its own.

We must make the fight political. Demand that the next Labour government repeals all the anti-union laws and legislates a workers' charter of positive rights such as the legal right to strike, to picket, to take secondary action, to have a minimum wage, etc.

We should demand that the next Labour government commits itself to reverse the privatisation of transport and puts money into a good, integrated public system that gets more private traffic off the roads, leading to a safer environment. It should reverse the other privatisations too, such as water, gas, electricity and housing.

But we should not just wait for a future Labour government. Kinnock would love that. Take the industrial fight into the Labour Party.

Workers should join the Labour Party and fight to make it democratic, so that the next time we get rid of a Tory government we replace it with a government that represents the working class in action and that carries out the decisions of its members.

The Labour Party now should support the workers on strike, stand on their picket lines and draw the militants into the Labour Party.

Win the full claim!

As we go to press on Tuesday afternoon, it appears that there is to be no bus strike tomorrow with the Tube and rail workers.

Such a decision, both when other workers are out, and when bus workers are clearly prepared to fight, can only be described as stupid.

By fighting we can win the full claim, particularly if we fight with other transport workers and if we step up the action from one-off days to all-out.

Women's conference shows strong left minority

By Cate Murphy

Big attendances at the Women's Fightback and Women for Socialism fringe meetings showed that there were a lot of women at Labour Women's Conference who want to fight the Tories.

But overall, the spirit of 'new realism' dominated the conference, in Yorkshire on 24-26 June.

Motions arguing for Labour to mount fighting campaigns against the poll tax, against the NHS White Paper, and on housing were denounced by the right-wing — predominantly in the trade unions — as damaging to Labour's chances of victory.

But if anyone is damaging Labour's chances of beating the Tories it is those who argue that the working class must passively pay the poll tax, suffer the effects of commercialisation of the NHS and see their homes sold off over their heads because it's the law. Why should anyone vote Labour, if Labour refuses to take on the Tories, especially at a time when hostility to Thatcher's policies is growing, and workers are beginning to fight back?

The fight for democracy in the party also suffered a setback, when the National Executive Committee's proposal to merge the NEC women's committee and the National Labour Women's Committee was passed. The women's organisation no longer has any national body elected by, and accountable to them. It will now be the male-dominated national Labour conference who will decide our leadership. And Kinnock honestly believes that denying women any effective say in the party will make it more attractive to them!

But the left did win one significant victory — conference voted convincingly to re-affirm our commitment to unilateralism, condemning Kinnock for attempting to ditch party policy.

A motion demanding full support for the dockers' action was also carried, but resolution condemning the massacres of Chinese students and workers in Tiananmen Square was defeated, because it condemned Gerald Kaufman for his defence of the Tory position of refusing to allow Hong Kong people to come to Britain, should they wish, and the Standing Orders Committee refused to allow a speaker from the Sheffield Chinese Solidarity Campaign to address conference.

Women's Fightback collected over 400 signatures on its petition condemning the executions, calling for full support for the democracy movement and recognition of the newly-formed independent students' and workers' organisations. Our fringe meeting, which attracted over 50 women, was addressed by Chan Yuk Kuen from the Sheffield Area Chinese Solidarity Campaign, Gail Cameron of the CLPs conference, Nadine Finch and a London busworker.

The Women for Socialism fringe meeting on Saturday evening was the largest of conference, attended by over 100 women. MPs Alice Mahon, Maria Fyfe and Jo Richardson spoke from the platform about winning women to Labour by campaigning against the poll tax, and for women's rights — such as childcare provision. Discussion from the floor focussed on the campaigns that Women for Socialism should take up. Even if the official leadership of Labour women aren't going to fight the Tories, we will.

China

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regime will face new problems of inflation, unemployment and falling agricultural and industrial output.

Deng and the group of old men around him will either be thrown out of power or will go and join Mao and Stalin in the next few years. What happens to them depends on the democracy movement.

The Chinese movement will be undergoing a process of political clarification. It will have to find answers to questions like: can peaceful civil disobedience be an effective weapon next time? Will there ever be a faction in the party which will break ranks and join the masses? How can the army be

neutralised? Did the movement mobilise the working class early enough or on a sufficient scale.

The same process needs to happen inside the solidarity campaigns outside China. We need to build direct links to give moral support to the movement in China, and also to open up the political dialogue, so that lessons can be learnt across the international movement about how such Stalinist regimes must be fought, in China and in other parts of the world.

The recently formed Chinese Solidarity Campaign is holding its first conference on Saturday 29 July at County Hall, London SE1 (near Waterloo).

Get your organisation to back the conference, send a donation, send delegates, and invite a speaker! Contact CSC c/o CIAC, 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

Neither London nor Beijing but the people!

EDITORIAL

Whatever happens to Hong Kong in 1997 should be decided by the people of Hong Kong. Neither London nor Beijing has any right at all to decide Hong Kong's fate.

Nobody could blame the Hong Kong Chinese for fearing incorporation into the China of Deng Xiaoping. Not that British rule has meant any democratic freedom: Hong Kong is an old-fashioned colony, where the people are allowed no vote, and the governor is appointed by Britain.

The colony has been a pool of cheap labour, producing goods for the world market, with scant trade union rights or welfare provision.

The people of Hong Kong are Chinese and their long-term future must lie with the people of China. The workers' movement in Hong Kong will link up with its mainland brothers and sisters, integrating Hong Kong into a socialist China, when the revolution which Deng has tried to bury destroys the Chinese bureaucracy.

That is not on the immediate agenda, and the Hong Kong Chinese have every right to be free of Beijing's role — and of Britain's.

What if millions of Hong Kong Chinese fear the instability of 1992 and wish to live in Britain? They should be allowed to do so without limitation. Of course there should be agreements with all the nations of the world to accept Chinese immigrants, in the European Community, in Australia or anywhere else.

But Hong Kong people's right to live in Britain is not conditional on other countries also accepting them.

One right-wing think tank has proposed that refugees from Hong Kong should be settled in a 'replica Hong Kong' off the coast of Scotland — a kind of metropolitan bantustan, in which the citizens would have few rights and big business would have a free hand.



Demonstration in Hong Kong

But immigrants, wherever they are from have a democratic right to live anywhere they want.

The British government shed plenty of crocodile tears for the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong, and the media criticise Hong Kong for deporting them. But refusing to accept Hong Kong (or Vietnamese) refugees into Britain would be just

the same.

No one should fear that Hong Kong immigrants would create unemployment or homelessness. Immigrants haven't caused our social problems in the past, and won't in the future. Rather, they tend to be among the worst victims of unemployment and homelessness.

And these social ills are caused by the social system. Working class unity across racial or national divides is the best way to fight that system.

One cause that the British labour movement should champion, in the interests of unity, is the democratic right of the people of Hong Kong to self-determination.

Euro-money? Euro-capitalists? Euro-workers!

The debate about whether or not Britain should join the European Monetary System, moving towards a single Euro currency, is about what's best for the bosses.

From a working-class point of view, either way, we will have to continue fighting.

There are voices on the left who think that working-class people do have to choose — and that they, like Thatcher, should choose opposition to the EMS (more consistently and honestly, perhaps, than Thatcher has) and to the European Community in general.

The *Morning Star*, for example, commented: "The EMU (economic and monetary union) would...aggravate the tendency for Britain to become an underdeveloped offshore dependency."

It goes on: "The labour movement should...seek to block progress towards the EMU by defending the sovereignty of parliament, and demanding that it be used to intervene in the economy...in

the interests of the working class."

And it concludes: "[Our problems] certainly cannot be solved by surrendering any possibility of democratic control over the currency."

But this view does not stand up. Britain is not an "underdeveloped dependency" — it is a declining imperialist power. Britain — that is, British capitalism — will participate in the EC as a partner with other imperialist powers. The point to the EC is not to subordinate particular countries in it to others, but to strengthen Eurocapitalism as a whole.

We do need democratic control of the economy. But how can we have real control within the confines of Britain? The world market will decide what happens to the bigger part of the economy — certainly to its currency! To control the economy we need international co-operation.

And of course the cooperation of capitalist states has got nothing to do with the cooperation of democratic, socialist states. A united socialist states

of Europe will be a very different beast to today's EC.

It is ridiculous to conclude that in some way a more isolated capitalist Britain is preferable to capitalist Europe. It's like preferring a nationally-based monopoly to a multinational company. Socialists are against both. We fight for an alternative to both.

Our alternative is not to try to obstruct the natural tendency for capital to develop on an international plane. If they are international, so must we be. If they want a European monetary system, we must have international trade union links to defend jobs and conditions

across Europe. Opposing the EMS will hardly help defend jobs. International workers' unity will.

Greater European integration is going to happen whether the left wants it or not. Our real task is not to obstruct it, but to learn how to fight on the new terrain.

Our elected representatives in Strasbourg should have more power, not less, so that labour movement candidates can fight some of the economic powers that will be controlling our lives.

And at rank-and-file level, workers must build international organisations to take on the Eurocapitalists.

Defend unilateralism!

As we go to press, the Transport and General Workers' Union conference looks set to reaffirm the giant union's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The union's general secretary, Ron Todd, has himself come out clearly against the Bomb.

Labour's gains in the Euro-elections, he said, were not due to the Policy Review dumping unilateralism. It reflected a revolt against the Tories.

(Many voters switched from the Tories to the Greens — the one unilateralist party. So much for unilateralism losing Labour votes!) Todd also insisted that Labour

must set its policies by socialist principles and fight to convince people, rather than drifting in line with what the opinion polls suggest is popular.

Giving the British state the power to threaten to wipe out hundreds of millions of working class people in the USSR and Eastern Europe is not and cannot be any defence for working class people in Britain. The only thing wrong with Labour's unilateralist policy is that the party leaders have never campaigned for it.

We should go on from the TGWU conference to make sure Labour Party conference this autumn decisively rebuffs Kinnock and reaffirms unilateralism.

PRESS GANG

The Greening of Today

By Jim Denham

It is a fairly safe general rule that whereas successful papers evolve, struggling ones change: and the greater a paper's difficulties, the more noticeable and frequent the changes tend to be.

Max Hastings' almost imperceptible transformation of the *Daily Telegraph* (from retired colonels in the Home Counties, to the world of the yuppie and the Sloane) is a classic example of a successful newspaper evolution.

On the other hand, the *Guardian's* dramatic re-design amounted to an admission that it was losing sales to the *Independent*, while the *Star's* astonishing downmarket plunge of a couple of years ago was the result of sheer panic at United Newspapers.

But this title that has undergone the most frequent and extreme changes in recent years has been *Today*. Since its shambolic launch in early 1986, *Today* has had no less than three proprietors, at least as many editors, has shed its Sunday edition and has shifted from 'middle market' to 'down market' and back again.

Today is a newspaper in the grip of a severe identity crisis.

Politically, *Today* is even more unstable. Its launch coincided with the heady days of the Alliance — which also happened to be the personal preference of its first proprietor, Eddie Shah. The pro-Alliance stance survived Shah's sell out to Lonhro, but when Murdoch took over in mid-'87 it was only a matter of time before *Today* fell into line with the rest of the *Digger's* titles and started cheering for Mrs Thatcher.

And that is where matters stood until this month's European elections. Then suddenly, a new and bizarre development took place. *Today* began to turn Green.

On the Tuesday before the vote, *Today* announced: "Make no mistake. Green politics have well and truly arrived." At this stage, the paper stopped short of outright endorsement of the Greens, warning of a lot of their policies, such as putting a stop to economic growth, are unattractive bunk."

By Thursday, *Today's* leader was urging readers to vote Green. On Friday, when it had become clear that the Greens had done extremely well, *Today* led with "Two million vote Green", and devoted an entire inside page to interviews with Green voters, quotes from Green spokespersons and a piece by political editor Paul Wilenius entitled "Maggie and Neil running scared."

Today's editor, David Montgomery, later explained (to the *Observer*) that his turn to the Greens was part of an "aspirational policy", whatever that means. The *Observer* could not resist pointing out that Montgomery's newfound enthusiasm for the environment sits rather uneasily with his paper's well-known support for property ownership (which presumably means more homes being built) and satellite dishes.

According to Paul Wilenius, the Tories have now set up a Green unit, to look at ways to attract Green party supporters to the Conservative fold. My guess is that, come the next general election, *Today* will be urging its readers in exactly that direction.

Rushdie defended

The blasphemy laws, and their absurdity, were trenchantly criticised at a public meeting in defence of Salman Rushdie in London on June 23. The meeting which had been organised by the Campaign Against Repression in Iran, attracted around 300 people. Speakers included Iranian writers and activists, and Tariq Ali.

Gita Saghal from Southall Black Sisters stressed that it is the opponents of fundamentalism who most consistently fight racism.

Other speakers denounced the antiquated blasphemy laws, arguing that their effect was to increase religious intolerance.

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser
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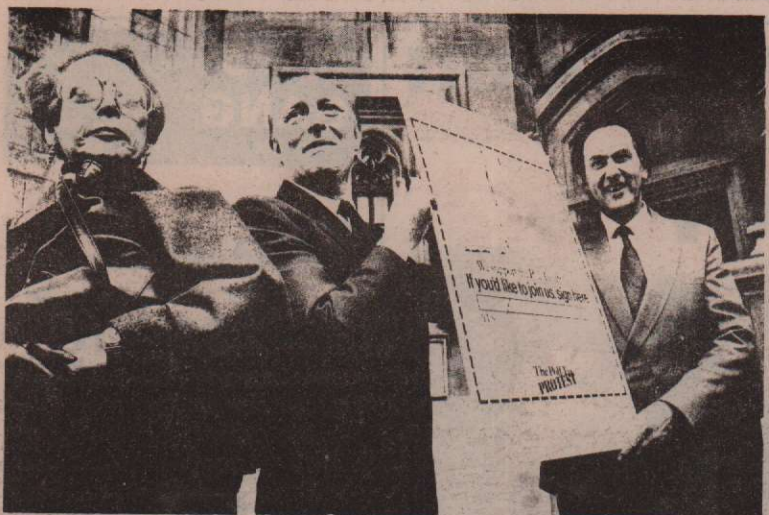
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4 LETTERS



Despite Kinnock, the poll tax fight hasn't stopped at petitions

Poll tax flounders

GRAFFITI

The first stage of poll-tax registration is not going too well, apparently.

Figures are as yet only available for inner London, and some other cities, but signs are that many people aren't sending the forms back — despite threats of dire consequences from their local councils.

In Tower Hamlets, only 43% of forms sent out have been returned. And nearly 2,000 of those which have been returned are either covered with queries about the questions asked or have "get lost" or stronger insults written on them!

Up in Manchester, council officials are expressing surprise that they have got back as many as 60% of the forms — fewer than two thirds.

In Islington, it looks like non-registration may have been supplemented by another tactic — the main poll tax registration office was damaged by fire last week, and the local constabulary suspect arson!

The new Hungarian leader, Rezső Nyers, has said that it is necessary to "cast aside the old concept of socialism."

In an interview with the party daily, Nepszabadsag, he also said that Hungary was the first Eastern Bloc country to recognise Western concepts of freedom.

His speech follows hard on the news that the Hungarian Communist Party would be prepared to enter into coalition government with opposition parties if defeated in next year's elections.

The Communist Party has little choice — a recent poll showed that they would receive only 36% of the vote if elections were held now.

Forget water-play, storytelling and music and movement — the traditional fare of infant schools will soon be a thing of the past.

Tomorrow's tot will be no namby pamby wimp, living in a world of fairy tales — it's dog eat dog out there, and it's about time the kid-dywinks got to know a thing or two about it.

All these nasty Euro-laws won't let us put the brats down the pit — and central heating means chimney-sweeping is hardly a growth area.

So...the new national curriculum will give children the skills of the future! The basics of business and marketing will be taught to infant

school children. After all, Tonka toys don't grow on trees — they have to be designed, market-researched and advertised, for god's sake!

Equipped with these skills they could set up their own small businesses in their spare time — the profits could be used to buy equipment, books, maybe even sponsor a teacher!

After all, why should toddlers think the world owes them a living?



Lawson: a golden handshake coming?

One maxim that miserly Maggie clearly believes in is 'charity begins at home'.

Benefits for the unemployed are slashed, the NHS is starved of funds, hundreds of schoolkids in the East End cannot go to school because there is no-one to teach them. But Maggie always looks after her own. Tax cuts for top earners have been her main strategy. But now she has come up with a nifty new idea.

A parliamentary Bill is to be introduced next month to provide redundancy pay for ministers who lose their posts in Cabinet reshuffles!

It seems the poor dears have terrible difficulty in adjusting to the lower pay level of a backbencher, and need some extra dosh to ease the blow.

A Cabinet minister will receive £7,130, a minister of state £4,563, and a parliamentary secretary £3,065.

The same Bill proposes to increase the Prime Minister's pension by over £5,500 — taking it to more than £23,000. Surprise, surprise, this does not apply to previous PMs!

The Bill is not expected to become law until the autumn — too late for those whose heads are about to roll in Thatcher's forthcoming purge. But I'm sure we'll all sleep rather easier in our beds now we know that when Maggie and Co. get the sack they won't be short of a bob or two.

Police help fascists

Police in Dewsbury last weekend (24-25 June) helped the fascist British National Party make a show of strength by directing all their force against an anti-fascist counter-rally.

The fascists were holding a rally behind Dewsbury Town Hall. The Kirklees Black Workers Group called a counter-rally to take on the fascist threat; there were some 500 members of various local Black and Asian workers' groups and a sizeable number of local anti-fascists.

After our rally the police allowed us to filter down to the Town Hall. Four fascists caught drinking in a pub were chased and beaten.

About 100 BNP supporters regrouped and at the sound of a whistle ran around the back of the Town Hall. A crowd of mainly Asian youth chased after them, but were forced by the police to stop behind a crash barrier around the ringroad.

The anti-fascists were now penned in by a heavy police presence. We made a big tactical mistake by not trying to rush the police lines at this point. At about 3pm the BNP rally finished and they rushed to the opposite side of the road.

The police charged into the Asian youth, arresting and dispersing them, at the same time as the fascists chanted 'Salman Rushdie' and waved the Union Jack. The police had their backs to the BNP and concentrated their efforts on the mainly Asian crowd.

The anti-fascists were driven nearly a mile out of town.

Understandably, we no longer had any confidence in the advancing police who were in full riot gear. A barricade was built.

Then the BNP were discovered drinking in the Scarborough Arms. The 200-strong crowd forced them out of the back doors. They escaped in their cars which were stoned as they got away.

Mounted police then moved in and drove the anti-fascists down South Street. Several barricades were erected, but we were overwhelmed by the police. The crowd was split up and many were chased onto the fields beyond the mosque at the end of the street. There were many arrests.

While the police concentrated on quelling the riot they had created, the BNP wandered through the town centre beating up any Asians they could find. They were able to drink openly in the Black Bull pub, only leaving it to hunt down anti-fascists in packs. The town centre was a no-go area.

We have to learn the lessons of Dewsbury. The fascist BNP were able to hold a rally and stir up race hatred in the area.

The police knew which side they were on — and treated the anti-fascists as the problem. They came down on us heavily.

We must become active in local Anti-Fascist Action groups, and get prepared tactically. The BNP and other fascist groups are growing in Britain and across Europe. They thrive on shows of strength, and with every successful rally their size and confidence grows.

We have to be prepared to take them on — in the streets and the



Cops arrest anti-racist

football terraces, where they perpetrate vicious attacks on Asians, Blacks, Jews, lesbians, gay men and left-wingers. We must stop the ugly growth of fascism.

Deng is no Bolshevnik!

LETTERS

Steve Revins (Letters, SO 407), in condemning the Chinese bureaucracy, compares Deng Xiaoping to Lenin, and Beijing to Kronstadt.

But Steve is making an extremely unfair comparison. The Bolshevik government in Russia in 1917 was a different beast entirely to the Chinese dictatorship today.

Lenin's Bolsheviks were the revolutionary wing of the old European labour movement, who had managed to take power in a big, but backward country. Civil war, external military intervention, and economic blockade, took their toll very heavily on Russian society.

The Bolshevik government became a besieged fortress. Revolutions elsewhere failed. In those dire conditions, the Bolsheviks were faced with a dire choice: surrender, and allow a brutal right-wing government to take power and carry out its revenge on tens of thousands of revolutionary militants; or hold on until a fresh revolutionary victory in Europe or elsewhere ended their isolation.

Their only real choice was to hold on. Certainly, holding on meant taking some desperate measures, and certainly hindsight may show some of those measures to have been unnecessary, or wrong. Kronstadt itself is a subject of much controversy, and it's not at all obvious that the Bolsheviks had better alternatives than to suppress the rebellion.

But they were measures taken by working class revolutionaries in terrible conditions.

The Chinese rulers were also once revolutionaries of a sort — but a very different sort. Even in their militant youth, Deng and his associates were Stalinists, with no democratic tradition, let alone concern for workers' democracy. Now they are a class of pampered bureaucrats notorious for their corruption.

Lenin for certain would have had the students, and against murderers.

Edward Ellis,
Southwark

We felt sick

If you think of the most patronising tone (Mrs Thatcher) and the most anti-feminist diatribes (Norman Mailer) you feel pretty sick, yes?

Well not as sick as we felt when we read Jill Mountford's analysis of events in NUS's Women's Campaign.

Any woman who stands for election opens herself to criticism and, often, verbal abuse. Whatever the reasons for Gill Lewis's actions in standing for election and subsequently resigning, there should be no occasion which justifies the use of the word 'sisters' as a derogatory term.

By doing so, Jill Mountford rejects the principle of women working together and in solidarity with women from colleges all over the country.

Lindsay Judge
Jan Taylor
Manchester

Praise the Wat Tylers!

I have read a number of leaflets, and listened to numerous discussions on the poll tax (or community charge). I am writing this letter as a housewife and I am not dominated by any political party or group.

I think people should be told now truthfully what they get for the poll tax (or community charge). The answer is nothing. We are better with the domestic rates left as they are. By the end of 1990 some people will have paid £400, not including water rates. In some cases I believe it may be more.

We fought a war in 1939-45 against dictatorship. The way I see

it, we are being dictated to in various ways.

We are not children to be given pocket money, and then we get it taken away from us by someone higher up the ladder.

Did all those men, women and children die in vain? We the people should show the spirit of one of our ancestors, Wat Tyler in 1381.

He was betrayed by Richard II, who agreed to his face, but had him beheaded for what he believed in. After death he won his point.

I am saying to everyone who thinks like I do: stand up and be counted.

Praise to the Wat Tylers of 1989.

Mrs J Hickman
Southampton

Which way forward for the left in the unions?

A national conference for the left in the trade union movement organised by Socialist Conference

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 November
Sheffield Polytechnic Students Union
Pond St (opposite rail station)

Saturday: registration 10.30am, conference 11.00am-5.00pm; Sunday 10.00am-4.00pm

Credentials: £6 waged, £4 unwaged from The Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG

Far right grows in Germany

By Stan Crooke

One of the biggest shocks in the recent Euro-elections was the success of the West German far-right 'Republikaner' (usually called the 'Reps').

They won just over seven per cent of the vote, and gained six places in the Euro-parliament. In some regions, such as Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, their share of the vote was as high as 15%.

In January this year they won 7.5% of the vote for West Berlin's parliament, and went on to recruit heavily in the following months, increasing their membership from 8,500 to about 14,000. Their success in the Euro-elections will guarantee further growth.

A high proportion of their recruits, between 30% and 40%, are state employees — civil servants, border guards, soldiers and police officers. And a high proportion of the Reps' members, and voters, are young people.

A survey recently conducted by the Emnid Institute in Bielefeld found that:

- 99% of Rep voters thought that there were too many foreigners in West Germany;
- 100% thought that foreigners who worked in West Germany should not have the right to vote;
- 92% thought that foreign workers should be allowed to stay in Germany for only a maximum of one year;
- 78% thought that teachers put forward too negative a view of Hitler;
- 62% wanted a redrawing of the

borders between Germany and Poland (which were moved a long way west after World War 2);

- 50% wanted the anthem used by the Nazis, *Deutschland über alles*, to be made the national anthem;
- 51% had either a positive or a neutral attitude towards Hitler.

But the Reps' support is wider than sentimental old Nazis longing for a return of their Führer.

Rep supporters are primarily concerned with more material things. 64% are concerned about their housing, 63% about their job prospects. The Reps have been able to exploit the worries and uncertainties of the lower middle class and some workers who get no adequate answers from the Social Democrats or the Greens.

Like Le Pen in France, the Reps have found a scapegoat: if there aren't enough jobs or houses, it's because there are too many immigrant workers.

In the boom years of the '50s and '60s West Germany actively encouraged immigrant workers. Now there are two million unemployed. Opinion polls show that 75% of the population think that there are too many foreigners in the country.

The Reps give their scapegoating a viciously racist twist. "The green flag of Islam will never fly over Germany" is one of Reps leader Schönhuber's favourite slogans, implying that the country is being flooded by Turkish immigrants. In fact about 60% of immigrants now are Germans from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Physical attacks on Turks have increased recently.

The Reps describe themselves as pro-European but anti Common



Immigrants being expelled from Germany

Market, and advocate German withdrawal from the EEC. They see the EEC as the medium through which drugs, crime, the Mafia, and — of course — more foreigners penetrate Germany. The Reps' nationalist populism is reflected in their election statement: "The EEC benefits primarily the Euro-multinationals, the big concerns, but not the small artisans, farmers and workers".

The Reps also call for German withdrawal from NATO, to tap anti-American feeling but more importantly to facilitate the 'sacred goal' of the reunification of Germany.

In their verdict on the Nazis, the Reps, and in particular former Waffen-SS sergeant Schönhuber, are rather ambiguous. They do condemn Hitler, but more for 'betraying' Germany through his military adventurism than for his politics.

And the condemnation is mixed with admiration. According to Schönhuber, the Waffen-SS was dominated by "a new and revolutionary spirit, the principle of achievement above everything else". In his autobiography, Schönhuber puts the victims of Auschwitz on a par with their murderers: "We do not want to forget either the idealism and readiness to make sacrifices of those people who believed in a national revolution and were shamefully misused by the rulers of the Third Reich".

Schönhuber claims he is not anti-Jewish, but says: "Gradually, you get the impression as a German that the Jewish Central Council is the fifth occupying power on German soil".

The Reps have been careful to

keep their distance from old-time pro-Nazi and pro-Hitler groups. But their fascist views are clear.

Those politics need to be exposed. But that is not enough; and even worse is the demand that the West German state should ban the Reps.

The Reps are pushing fake solutions, but to real problems. Answering social and economic problems with socialist solutions is the key to destroying the conditions in which the Reps prosper.

And here in Britain it is important not to slip into British-nationalist prejudices about Germans as a nation being inherently inclined to fascism. The Reps are a product of social conditions — the same which saw a big growth in support for the National Front in this country in the late 1970s, and for fascists in France recently — not an expression of some mystical 'German spirit'.

A new start on Ireland

By Clive Bradley

Britain should get out of Ireland, said Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams in a keynote speech at the Time To Go conference on 17-18 June, but "the most likely scenario if withdrawal is not done properly is repartition."

This sober assessment could set the tone for a serious campaign for British withdrawal, if the left allows it to.

About 700 people attended the 'Time To Go Show' in London to discuss a wide range of issues. Adams was a popular speaker, reflecting the pro-Republican sentiment of the conference. He described the experiences of repression at the hands of the British army, and argued for a broad campaign in Britain to get the troops out.

Adams' answer to the danger of civil war and repartition was that if the British government made an "irreversible" decision to withdraw on a set date, that would force the Protestants to accept the inevitable and negotiate a united Ireland. Other speakers also recognised the danger — and looked to the British government to deal with it.

Naomi Wayne, speaking on the 'bloodbath scenario', elaborated a complex series of measures the British government could take to force the Protestants into a united Ireland.

This attempt to discuss the mechanisms of withdrawal is an advance on the dominant left slogan 'troops out now'. Adams and others recognise that withdrawal alone is not a clear policy and that what goes with withdrawal can be decisive.

Faced with the objection that withdrawal would lead to a blood-

bath, it is not adequate to answer that there's already a bloodbath. Casualties over the past 20 years have been horrific — but tiny in comparison to full-scale civil war. We have to face up to the danger of a bloodbath, and that doesn't mean approving or supporting the British troops.

A large part of the conference accepted the reality of these problems and many people were genuinely open-minded. Unfortunately, the main emerging alternative to 'troops out now' simply creates new problems. Naomi Wayne's strategy, for example, depends on a British government exercising economic and military coercion against the Protestants.

In the first place, this formula depends on trusting the British government. Naomi Wayne and Gerry Adams said it would be disastrous if the British government's stance were not "irreversible".

Ken Livingstone commented that it would only take one minister to seem doubtful for the whole policy to collapse — stoking up Protestant militancy as they believed the government might retreat. But why should we ever believe that the British government's stance would be irreversible? Who would make it irreversible?

The progressive agency in this strategy is the British government! Gerry Adams, referring to the hard left, complained of 'benign imperialism'. But the Wayne-Rowthorne strategy is about as imperialist as you can get.

The idea that a British government should threaten Protestants with the loss of their jobs (or social security!) if they fight withdrawal is monstrous — not to say completely inoperable as a policy (how do you know who has or hasn't accepted withdrawal?)

Behind the economic threats would lie military force to "disband and disarm" the Protestant-dominated UDR, RUC and UDA — but this makes the policy a formula not for troops out, but for troops in!

The British army has been trying to disarm the Catholics for 20 years. To disarm the Protestants would take many more troops, many more years, and much more bloodshed.

Significantly, although Irish nationalism was a strong trend at the conference, this kind of 'benign' (or indeed rather belligerent) imperialism got off pretty lightly. Naomi Wayne was warmly applauded for declaring that the purpose of her policy was to get Britain out of Ireland to allow the Irish people to decide their own future.

The ideological hard core behind the worst trends in the conference was the Socialist Workers Party. They assured us that the Protestants were a 'caste', and therefore had no rights, and anyway would never fight. They repeated ad nauseam that 'there have been many examples of peoples bombing imperialism out of their country, but none of bombing it back in'. Protestant attempts to carve out a separate state are not even a possibility worth discussion.

This vehement Pro-d-bashing was weirdly combined with calls for Protestant-Catholic workers' unity (to be developed from economic struggles) and assurances that a revolutionary working class is the force for change. In other words, the problems raised by the SWP's gung-ho 'anti-imperialist' pose were glossed over by the assurance that it would all be happening in the context of a socialist revolution which would solve all problems.

Self-consolation was the keynote on the Protestant question: instead of answers to serious questions,

devices to show that the problems themselves were unreal.

Throughout, the SWP — who were by far the largest organised group — were utterly incapable of engaging the political issues. The most idiotic demagoguery, and sometimes slander, replaced argument. One SO supporter, pointing to the communal divisions in Ireland, was denounced as a 'Tory', on the grounds that all divisions are class divisions... SO was repeatedly attacked for advocating repartition, although we didn't and don't.

Sean Matgamna, speaking from the platform on the 'bloodbath scenario', addressed the left's weaknesses head on. We should recognise that the Anglo-Irish deal has been a success for the bourgeoisie, and withdrawal is a long way off.

The basic fault of the left is that it doesn't deal seriously with the Protestants. In many socialist views of Ireland, the Protestants are simply a 'bad nation', deserving no rights, or indeed no attention.

So the bitter division between Catholic and Protestant is either treated as only a reflection of the division between Ireland and Britain, or expected to melt away in the economic class struggle.

A socialist policy would recognise the Protestants as a distinct Irish minority and promise them regional autonomy within a united — federal — Ireland. This policy of consistent democracy, if it was taken up by the Republican and labour movement in Ireland, might conciliate the Protestants, create the possibility of workers' unity and thus lead to a united Ireland.

There was some indication of openness to these ideas, although it was often drowned out by the SWP's sectarian declamation.

But Time To Go is a positive initiative, giving, at the very least, a

framework in which these different issues can be discussed. It should be built. The August demonstration, commemorating 20 years since the troops went onto the streets, must be made a success.

The success was less of a success than organisers had hoped, but it could yet play a role in creating a serious withdrawal movement in Britain.

IRELAND: The Socialist Answer



With contributions from Sinn Féin, Tony Benn, Geoff Bell, Stan Crooke, Patrick Murphy and John O'Mahony.

A Workers' Ireland pamphlet. £1.

£1 plus 30p postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Continue the debate! The Workers' Liberty 89 summer school on 7-9 July includes a round-table discussion on Ireland with Nadine Finch, Austen Morgan, John O'Mahony, Jo Quigley and Naomi Wayne.

Register now: £8, £6 (low waged), £4 (unwaged) to WL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

6 SUMMER SCHOOL

Come to Workers' Liberty 89!

The Workers' Liberty 89 summer school, organised by Socialist Organiser and the Iranian Marxist group *Socialism and Revolution*, takes place at Caxton House, 129 St Johns Way, London N19, from Friday 7th to Sunday 9th July.

It will include a wide range of discussions and debates on everything from the 'greenhouse effect' through jazz and Jesse Jackson to China. There'll be a creche, trips out for older children, good food, bands and a cabaret on Saturday evening, and accommodation available for people coming from out of London. Transport has been organised from most major cities.

Registration costs £8 (£6 low-waged or students, £4 unwaged) from Workers' Liberty 89, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Workers of the world unite!

Friday 7 July, 8.30pm

Registration and bar from 7.30pm

Speakers include: • Socialists from China and South Africa • A representative from the Polish Socialist Party (RD) • US Marxist and editor of *Against the Current*, Robert Brenner • Iranian Socialists, *Socialism and Revolution* • John O'Mahony, editor of *Socialist Organiser*
Saturday 8 July

Morning
Registration, cafe and creche from 9.30.

10.30-12.30 Introduction to Workers' Liberty 89.

Ten Years of Thatcher

Speeches from John O'Mahony (editor of *Socialist Organiser*), *Socialism and Revolution*

A. 1.30-4.00 Forum on Ireland: Time To Go, Time To Rethink

The new Time To Go movement has not only brought together broader forces to oppose the British Army's role in Northern Ireland, but also opened debate on the alternatives for the future.

Our round-table session will provide debate between a wide range of views.

John O'Mahony (editor of *Socialist Organiser*) will argue that Northern Ireland is an untenable, unviable political unit. A united Ireland is the only possible framework for reconciling the Irish majority (Catholic) and minority (Protestant) communities. But, to be democratic and to be workable, this united Ireland must reassure the minority and

guarantee their rights — through some federal system giving regional autonomy to the mainly Protestant areas. This programme is not a magic solution, or good advice to London and Dublin; but it could be the basis for a united workers' movement.

Naomi Wayne is the co-author (with Bob Rowthorne) of a recent book, 'Northern Ireland: the political economy of conflict', which argues that British withdrawal can be linked to peaceful progress to a united Ireland if Britain uses its military and economic power to apply pressure to the Protestants.

Nadine Finch is convenor of the Socialist Movement's Policy Group on Ireland. Her report to the recent Sheffield Socialist Conference argued that the 1980s have been "a decade of defeats for Thatcher" in Ireland, with "the growth of political resistance in the North" and "the renewal of Sinn Fein". The key demand should be "withdrawal from Ireland politically, militarily and economically. The timetable should be set to meet the needs and demands of the Irish people and reparations negotiated to resolve some of the most pressing economic problems."

Robin Wilson is editor of the Belfast socialist magazine *Fortnight*. He has argued that the focus for the left should now be on democratic reform within Northern Ireland.

Austen Morgan is the author of a recent biography of James Connolly, and Jo Quigley is writing a study of the Irish workers' movement in the 1930s and 1940s. Both will argue that the left has been misdirected by myths of Irish nationalism.

B. 12.30-4.00 Which class rules in Russia? A debate

Fewer and fewer people believe that societies like the USSR and China are socialist. But what are they?

The 'orthodox' Trotskyist view, since the late '40s, has been that these are 'degenerated and deformed workers' states'. Problems

have long been obvious with this formula. Socialist Organiser recently concluded that no description as 'workers' states' — however qualified — makes any sense at all.

We believe that these societies are societies of class exploitation, run by a bureaucratic state-monopoly ruling class, which are broadly parallel to capitalism in the development of the productive forces rather than going beyond capitalism or being transitional from capitalism to socialism.

Martin Thomas will be speaking from the Socialist Organiser editorial board.

Socialism and Revolution has also been discussing this issue. They will argue that after 50 years of development since Trotsky's death it can no longer make sense to use the term 'degenerated workers' state' for the USSR. The 'degeneration' has gone beyond that point. The term 'bureaucratic state' is more accurate.

Robert Brenner, who will also speak, is an editor of the US socialist magazine *Against the Current*, around which are organised many of those revolutionaries in the US who believe that an understanding of the USSR can be based on Max Shachtman's notion of 'bureaucratic collectivism'.

Frank Furedi is the author of the recent book 'The Soviet Union Demystified', in which he argues the view pioneered by the journal *Critique*, according to which the USSR is a peculiar new social formation, "one without any developmental dynamic" which could arise only through a number of 'accidental factors'.

C. 1.30-4.00 Eastern Europe in ferment

Poland's free trade union, Solidarnosc, relegalised. Semi (or quarter) free elections in Poland. Free elections promised in Hungary, and opposition parties operating openly there. Huge strike waves and bitter national conflicts in Yugoslavia.

Eastern Europe is in a state of upheaval not seen since 1956. What's going on? What do the different opposition groups want? Where do they find their support? Will independent trade union movements like Solidarnosc emerge in other countries? Is Solidarnosc becoming bureaucratized and being co-opted by the Polish government? How far have East European governments gone in pushing free market economics, and how much further can and will they go?

Adam Novotny, who has travelled extensively in Eastern

Europe over the last year, will introduce a discussion.

D. 1.30-2.45 Introductory Series No.1: Capitalism in crisis

Why is half the world starving? Why are hundreds of millions unemployed when there are so many jobs that need to be done? Why can the flickering figures on City computer screens mean boom or bust, upturn or slump?

This session will explain the basics of how capitalism works — and why it can't be managed to serve the common good.

D. 3.00-4.00 Introductory Series No.2: Socialism from below

For centuries people have dreamed of a society of justice, freedom and solidarity. But modern technology and the modern working class make it more than a dream. The revolutionary struggles of the working class over more than a century have given us a glimpse of how society could be organised differently.

E. 1.30-3.30 Solidarity with Chinese workers and students!

Cheung Siu Ming is a Chinese Trotskyist living in Britain, and an activist in the newly-formed Chinese Solidarity Campaign. Other Chinese activists and socialists will also be speaking in this session.

A. 4.30-6.00 The road to peace — the Israeli- palestinian conflict

Last year the Palestine Liberation Organisation, basing itself on the most powerful upsurge yet of Palestinian nationalist struggle, the *intifada* in the West Bank and Gaza, called for a 'two-states' solution in Israel/Palestine. It demands an independent Palestinian state, while recognising the right to exist of the Israeli Jewish state.

Socialist Organiser believes that this policy, linked to a fight for a Socialist United States of the Middle East, can provide a basis for Arab-Jewish workers' unity. Clive Bradley from Socialist Organiser, Ben Cohen from the Campaign for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, and a speaker from the PLO will discuss prospects.



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Way, A

B. The economy of Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland does not just have political Troubles. It is an economic disaster area. Unemployment is over 20 per cent, and two and a half times as high for Catholic men as Protestant men. Forty per cent of all manufacturing jobs have disappeared since the 1970s. Over half the population depends on state benefits or jobs in the public sector. It is one of the poorest regions in Western Europe.

Why? And what can socialists do to mobilise working class activity to change things? Robin Wilson, editor of the Belfast socialist magazine *Fortnight*, will introduce a discussion.



Workers' Party '89

Saturday, Sunday
10th, 8th and 9th
House, St John's
Archway, North
London

C. Permanent Revolution and South Africa: does the theory fit?

Baruch Hirson is a veteran South African Trotskyist, a former political prisoner, and author of 'Year of Fire, Year of Ash', a study of the Soweto uprising of 1976. He will lead a discussion with **Tom Rigby** of the Socialist Organiser editorial board on 'permanent revolution' and South Africa.

The theory of 'permanent revolution' was developed by Trotsky after 1905 as a perspective for socialists in Russia. Russia was a huge empire, dominated by a very backward countryside, but with islands of modern, large-scale capitalist industry in the

cities. Most socialists reckoned that it would have to have a 'bourgeois revolution' — a revolution like France's in 1789-99, destroying old feudal structures and opening the way for the free development of capitalism — and then a period of capitalist growth before a working class socialist revolution could be possible. Trotsky dissented. The working class, he said, could draw the peasantry behind it in the fight for democracy against the old feudalistic restrictions, and then combine the democratic revolution with a socialist revolution in which the workers took control of the means of production. 1917 proved him right.

Later Trotsky generalised his theory to apply to other

underdeveloped countries, counterposing it to the Stalinists' notion of a 'two-stage' revolution. But sometimes the generalisation has been taken still further by modern would-be Trotskyists, reducing 'permanent revolution' to an empty form of words.

Where does South Africa fit in to this debate?

D. Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition

Jesse Jackson's challenge for the Democratic nomination for US President last year was the most radical initiative in US mainstream politics for many years. Many see the 'Rainbow Coalition' organised behind Jackson — of black people, workers, women, Latino-Americans and other oppressed groups — as the motor force for socialism.

But can challenges within the Democratic Party really show a way forward? What does the long history in US politics of radical movements based on populism (an appeal to 'the people' rather than specifically to the working class) have to teach us? Why is there no workers' party in the US, even of a social-democratic type, and can one be built?

Gail Cameron will lead a discussion.

7.00-8.00

- Trade union forum
- Iranian solidarity forum
- Student left forum

Sunday 9 July

A. 9.30-12.00

Saving the world

The British Green's 15 per cent in the Euro-elections established them as the third party in British politics — oustripping the Democrats and the SDP — and the most successful Green party in Europe.

Are Green politics the politics of the future? Is socialism, with its commitment to expanding production and to large-scale industry, now an outdated ideology? Or, on the contrary, is the socialist programme of conscious human control over the economy the only way to save the world?

Green Party co-chair **Jean Lambert** will debate with Socialist Organiser science columnist **Les Hearn**.

B. 9.30-11.00 Capitalism, Imperialism and the Third World

South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil: without a doubt industrial

capitalism has grown and is growing in the Third World. Yet the gap between rich and poor countries continues to grow.

Should socialists align ourselves with the struggle of poor countries to achieve the real independence which alone will permit development? Or does such a stance mean lining up with the less-developed *bourgeoisies* and cutting across the international workers' unity which is the only way to transform the world economy and end poverty?

Imperialism has clearly changed since Lenin wrote his famous pamphlet in 1916. But how? And what are the implications?

Robert Brenner is a US Marxist who has written many influential articles on capitalist 'underdevelopment', both in Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages and in the Third World today. The Iranian comrades of **Socialism and Revolution** have had to work out what Marxist anti-imperialism really means in struggle against leftists who said that 'anti-imperialism' in Iran meant backing Khomeini. **Martin Thomas** will speak from Socialist Organiser.

B. 11.20-12.30 Socialist Feminism

When the new women's liberation movement first emerged in Britain, in the early '70s, it was dominated by socialists of one sort or another. Over the last 20 years the movement has shifted from the streets into the corridors of local government power and into the publishing houses, and a sort of 'cultural feminism' has become dominant.

But is this inevitable or irreversible? Can a mass working class-based women's movement be built? Can *Women for Socialism* be a start in that direction?

We'll discuss the prospects.

C. 9.30-11.00 The roots of Lesbian and Gay oppression

With **Janine Booth**

C. 11.20-12.30 Islamic fundamentalism explained

Introduced by **Socialism and Revolution**

D. 9.30-11.00 Introductory Series No.3: Socialism from above — reformism

Can socialism be introduced through parliament? Is there a viable 'third road' between parliamentary reformism and socialist revolution?

D. 11.20-12.30 Introductory Series No.4: Socialism from above — Stalinism

What went wrong in Russia? In China, how could a regime which came out of a revolution supported by the mass of the people turn into one which shoots down workers and students at random on the streets of its capital city? What's the answer?

E. 9.30-11.00 The concept of Marxist philosophy

Introduced by **Socialism and Revolution**

A. 1.30-3.45 Post-Fordism ..New Times?

We are moving, so the Communist Party's magazine *Marxism Today* says, "from the old mass-producing Fordist economy to a new, more flexible, post-Fordist order based on computers, information technology and robotics." The *New Times* call for new politics: in place of the old class struggle, diverse alliances.

But does new technology really dispel class struggle? Is the working class fading away into a mosaic of varied identities, or growing?

Is what we really need politics still based on class struggle, but geared to the changes in capitalism and in the working class?

Alan Johnson from the Socialist Organiser editorial board will debate with **Mark Perryman** from the *Marxism Today* editorial board.

B. 1.30-3.45 The Left and political democracy

'Charter 88' has set the left running in all directions on the question of democracy. Sponsored by leading Liberal Democrats, but also by well-known Marxist writers, it calls for a written constitution, democratic reform and proportional representation.

Should we back it or not? **Hilary Wainwright**, a leading figure in the Socialist Movement, has signed Charter 88. **Bob Fine**, author of the book 'Democracy and the Rule of Law', hasn't. They will debate how we can and should link democracy and socialism.

C. 1.30-2.30 Ten years after the Iranian revolution

Introduced by **Socialism and Revolution**

Turn to page 8



From page 7

C. 2.45-3.45 Permanent Revolution — a balance sheet

The theory of 'permanent revolution' was developed by Trotsky after 1905, as a perspective for socialists in Russia. Russia was a huge empire, dominated by a very backward countryside, but with islands of modern capitalist industry in the cities. Most socialists reckoned that it would have to be a 'bourgeois revolution' — a revolution like France's in 1789-99, destroying old feudal structures and opening the way for the free development of capitalism — and then a period of capitalist growth before a working-class socialist revolution could be possible. Trotsky dissented. The working class, he said, could draw the peasantry behind it in the fight for democracy against the old feudalistic restrictions, and then *combine* the democratic revolution with a socialist revolution in which the workers took control of the

means of production. 1917 proved him right.

Later Trotsky generalised his theory to apply to other underdeveloped countries, counterposing it to the Stalinists' notion of a 'two-stage' revolution.

How do things stand 50 years on? Many Trotskyists today make 'permanent revolution' an all-purpose slogan for much of the world. But in many countries, even underdeveloped ones, the capitalist classes have already — by their own means, revolutionary or bureaucratic — pushed aside the old oligarchies and colonial regimes. If we talk about 'permanent revolution', meaning that the working class should put anti-feudalistic and anti-colonial demands to the fore, aren't we in danger of fighting yesterday's battles and being pulled into the slipstream of the nationalist bourgeoisie?

The slogan of 'permanent revolution' was used by some would-be Trotskyists in Iran to justify backing Khomeini. **Socialism and Revolution** review the experience.

D. 1.30-2.30 Introductory Series No.5: The revolutionary

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

tradition

Socialism, Bolshevism, workers' councils, general strikes, uprisings — isn't it all out of date? Look at China, Poland, South Africa, Brazil and many other countries in the last ten years! The revolutionary socialist tradition is still alive and relevant.

D. 2.45-3.45 Jazz: the music of revolt

With Jim Denham

E. 1.30-3.45 Pornography — how do we deal with it?

Catherine Itzin is a founder of the Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship, which believes that bans on pornography are necessary to protect women's rights and can be clearly distinguished from censorship. **Ruth Cockcroft** from Women's Fightback will argue that any bans will do more harm than good to women's rights.

4.00-4.30 Closing Rally: Building a Marxist movement

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 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.

Read more about it!

Ten years of Thatcher: 'No, socialism is not dying!', editorial in Workers' Liberty 7. 'The free economy and the strong state', by Andrew Gamble. 'Me and Mine', by John Rentoul. 'Where There Is Greed', by Gordon Brown. 'Mrs Thatcher's Revolution', by Peter Jenkins. 'Thatcher', by Peter Riddell. Debate on 'Thatcherism' in Workers' Liberty 10 and 11.

Ireland: Time to Go, Time to Rethink: 'Ireland: the socialist answer', pamphlet from Socialist Organiser. 'Northern Ireland: the political economy of conflict', by Naomi Wayne and Bob Rowthorne. *Fortnight* magazine, subscription £11.50 for a year from 7 Lower Crescent, Belfast B17 1NR. 'The state in Northern Ireland' by Paul Bew and Henry Patterson.

Which class rules in Russia?: 'Reassessing the Eastern Bloc', pamphlet from Socialist Organiser. 'The essential Shachtman' and 'Squeezing the workers' by Zbigniew Kowalewski, in Workers' Liberty 11. 'The Revolution Betrayed' and 'In Defence of Marxism' by Leon Trotsky. 'The Soviet Union Demystified' by Frank Furedi, and review of this book in Workers' Liberty 11.

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China: Workers' Liberty no.12, forthcoming. Penguin China readings 3, 'Communist China', edited by Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell. 'Mao Tse-tung', by Stuart Schram. 'Peasant War in China and the Proletariat', by Leon Trotsky, in 'Writings 1932'. 'The Chinese Revolution', collection of writings by Leon Trotsky.

Israel/Palestine: 'Two nations, two states', broadsheet from Socialist Organiser. 'Arabs, Jews and Socialism', pamphlet from Socialist Organiser. 'Israel and the Arabs', by Maxine Rodinson.

The economy of Northern Ireland: 'Beyond the Rhetoric', ed. Paul Teague. 'Ireland: the socialist answer', pamphlet from Socialist Organiser — pages 23-24 and 53.

Permanent Revolution and South Africa: 'Breaking the Chains', pamphlet from Socialist Organiser. 'Focus on South Africa' section in Workers' Liber-

ty 8. 'Year of Fire, Year of Ash' by Baruch Hiron. 'Results and Prospects' and 'Permanent Revolution' by Leon Trotsky.

Jesse Jackson: 'Jesse Jackson, the Rainbow and the Democratic Party — New politics or old' by Joanna Misnick (published by the US group Solidarity).

Saving the world: *New Ground*, journal of Green Socialism, subscription £4.50 for a year from SERA, 26-28 Underwood St, London N17JQ. The latest issue, no.20, includes an article on 'Ideological barriers to Red-Green cooperation'. 'Ecology and socialism' by Martin Ryle. 'The German Greens' by Werner Huelsberg, and review of this book in Workers' Liberty 11.

Capitalism, imperialism and the Third World: 'The new working class in the Third World' by Martin Thomas in Workers' Liberty 6. 'The origins of capitalist development' by Robert Brenner in New Left Review 104. 'Marxist theories of imperialism' by Anthony Brewer.

Socialist feminism: 'No Turning Back', pamphlet from Socialist Organiser. 'Is the future female?' by Lynne Segal. 'Socialist feminism: out of the blue?', special issue of Feminist Review.

Lesbian and gay oppression: 'Coming Out' by Jeffrey Weeks.

Islamic fundamentalism: 'Islam and capitalism' by Maxine Rodinson.

Marxist philosophy: 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of classical German philosophy' by Friedrich Engels.

Post-Fordism: Marxism Today, October 1988 (special issue). 'From Ford to computers', article in Workers' Liberty 11; 'No, we are not beaten', article in Workers' Liberty 6. 'The retreat from class' by Ellen Meiksins Wood.

The left and democracy: 'Rearming the state' by Bob Fine, in Workers' Liberty 11. 'Socialism on trial' by James P Cannon. 'Democracy and the rule of law' by Bob Fine.

The Iranian revolution: 'The Iranian workers' movement', pamphlet from Campaign Against Repression in Iran. 'Iranian women against Islamic regime', pamphlet from Campaign Against Repression in Iran.

Permanent Revolution: 'Results and Prospects' and 'Permanent Revolution' by Leon Trotsky. 'From permanent revolution to permanent confusion', article by Clive Bradley in Workers' Liberty 7.

Jazz: 'The Jazz scene' by Eric Hobsbawm.

Pornography: 'Pornography' by Andrea Dworkin. 'Is the future female?' by Lynne Segal.

WHERE WE STAND

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ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Monday 3 July Sheffield SO. 'What is the revolutionary tradition?' Speaker Patrick Murphy. SCCAU, West St. 7.30.
Friday 7 July
Troops Out Movement public meeting with Sinn Fein councillor. Tottenham Town Hall, 7.30
Thursday 20 July Workers' Ireland forum. 'The Protestants of Ulster: what are their rights, and what are the implications for socialists in Britain?' Debate with Geoff Bell and John O'Mahony. Lucas Arms, Grays

Inn Road (Kings Cross). 8.00.

Wednesday 26 July
Bristol SO: 'Socialism, Europe and 1992'. Speaker: Neil Stonelake. Shepherds Hall, Old Market, 7.30
Friday 15 September
CLPs Conference. Speakers include Alice Mahon, Audrey Wise, Tony Benn, Eric Heffer. Sheffield, 7.30. Contact Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Promenade, Merseyside L44 8BG. (051-638 1338)

Saturday 16 September
CLPs Conference. Speakers include Alice Mahon, Audrey Wise, Tony Benn, Eric Heffer. Sheffield, 10.00am.

Friday 3 November
History Workshop Conference 1989. Salford University. Contact Helen Bowyer, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4UX (061-736 3601).

Which side in Afghanistan?

Socialist Organiser opposed the USSR's war in Afghanistan from the start. Since the withdrawal of the USSR's troops, we have argued that socialists should side with the PDP regime, as representing at least limited 20th century progress, against the Islamic rebels. This argument has led to a debate in our letters column, with some readers maintaining that we should back neither side in the Afghan civil war.

Here we print a second extract (abridged) from the debate which the US socialist magazine 'Against the Current' is conducting on the same issue.

By Chris Hobson

It's possible that by the time these comment appear, the Najibullah regime will be history.

Or, bloody and discredited, it may still be clinging to power, and David Finkel will be supporting it. Either way, I shall be very glad to have taken, ever since 1979, what I feel is the right stand, one of support for the Afghan resistance and total opposition to the Soviet Union and its agent, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

What I want to do in this comment is to clarify what Finkel's and my conflicting viewpoints mean *in practice*, not in words.

The first part of Finkel's position is that the left should have given critical support to the PDPA up until the Soviet intervention — not only when it first came to power, but

in the pre-Soviet phase of the war, when the PDPA was already waging a ruthless war against the overwhelming majority of the population.

What this means in reality is that — however hard it might have been to see things clearly at the time — now, with ten years of hindsight, Finkel is for supporting a regime whose policies were driving the majority of the population to rebellion and civil war.

Strategically, as a serious politician, what does Finkel think this support would have accomplished? Does he think it would have moderated the Afghan regime in some way? Would it have made the regime even marginally less brutal? If so, how? Or does Finkel think critical support would have changed the regime from a 'revolution-from-above' approach to one of 'revolution-from-below'? This would be fantasy — the line between the two is fundamental.

I've been using terms Finkel would presumably agree with, but I think my own are clearer: the Afghan regime from the start, in its methods and objectives, was state capitalist and not socialist at all.

Behind this 'strategic' question is a more fundamental one: *by what right* does this regime impose its rule on the countryside from above and against the people's will, pour napalm over those who resist, and claim our support while doing so? And don't the Afghan people deserve any say whatsoever?

Finkel's answer is to point to the PDPA's progressive programme. On paper, that programme is clear enough: 'land reform, literacy, and women's rights'. But what has this meant in reality?

To narrow things down, let's take the point Finkel rightly regards as a crucial one: women's rights. Finkel fears a catastrophe for women if the Mujahadeen win. This is a real possibility. Unfortunately, the PDPA has made this more likely by linking reforms for women to a war



against the majority of the population, a linkage Finkel *accepts* by retrospectively supporting the PDPA in the pre-Soviet phase of war.

If Finkel wants to argue that resistance to the reforms is what touched off the civil war, one might ask if he believes it's progressive to seize power in a coup d'état and try to modernise a traditional country by state terror.

In any case, the examples of the regime's accomplishments on women's rights are hardly impressive: 440,000 female students (in a population of 17 million, including refugees), 68,000 in the women's organisation, 6,000 in the armed forces — all according to official figures.

How does this stack up against the millions of women killed or made homeless by the same regime? (Recent estimates are that 1.5 million people have been killed and more than six million made refugees or exiles by the war.) Finkel is impressed with the paper programme and the regime's modest accomplishments, but doesn't connect this with the murderous war that has driven a third of the population (women too) out of the country.

And so Finkel starts with the programme and ends by supporting the PDPA in the war. But the war is the

PDPA programme; the real programme — in reality, not on paper — is to stay in power by any means necessary. The reality is that since the civil war broke out, the PDPA regime has pursued one aim consistently and unswervingly: *not* women's rights, *not* land reforms, but to kill, injure, or maim as many people as necessary to stay in power.

And this is a general problem of the left vis-a-vis the so-called 'socialist' countries and movements, a problem Finkel seems to share: the progressive formal programme, the presumed good intentions of the regime, are given more weight than the real problem, which is to hold onto power. It's high time that the left realised that in dealing with Stalinists we're not dealing with working class revolutionists who differ with us over methods, but with people whose programme is to seize the state and use it to stay in power at all costs.

My own view is that the war has been a national liberation struggle against the Soviet Union and its puppets, the PDPA. Revolutionaries ought to support this struggle without supporting the reactionary policies of its leaders. This includes supporting the right of the Mujahadeen to get arms from the United States — without which the war would have lasted far longer than ten years — while warning against reliance and dependence on the United States.

There are three reasons why revolutionaries should support the resistance despite the ideology of its leaders and many of its activists. First, national independence is a goal we support — I hope I don't have to elaborate on this.

Second, it is impossible to support women's rights or any other social reform by backing a party that tries to impose them by force and then wages a barbarous war of occupation that has killed and made homeless millions of people. The

preeminent issue in people's minds is that their country is under foreign occupation, that the foreigners and their local henchmen are killing people wholesale. They are not going to accept that in order to get women's rights.

The third reason for supporting the resistance is: if revolutionaries don't do so, there will be no one who is raising support for women's rights, from *inside* the inevitable, progressive and democratic struggle for national independence.

In fact, with the advantage of hindsight one can draw exactly the opposite conclusion from Finkel's: what revolutionaries inside Afghanistan should have been doing since 1979 was building a secular, democratic, socialist force in the national resistance, so that now there would be such a force in the post-Russian, post-PDPA Afghanistan.

Today, with the end of Soviet occupation, Finkel thinks war there will again become "primarily a civil war in which we ought to be for the victory of the PDPA." Finkel hopes "the PDPA [government] survives without the Soviet tanks," but he doesn't tell us how it is to disentangle itself materially from Soviet aid and politically from responsibility for ten years of slaughter.

Tanks or no, can the PDPA hold power without Russian arms, 'advisers', planes, military intelligence, etc? Leaving aside formulas ('civil war', etc.) how is the PDPA going to regain the slightest degree of popular support? Finkel's perspective amounts to supporting a regime and party correctly hated by the vast majority as Soviet puppets and brutal murderers.

Far better to begin from scratch the job of building a revolutionary, libertarian socialist movement in Afghanistan that can collaborate with others to fight for a truly free society — however small, isolated and physically endangered such a movement may be at first.

Who's fighting for what?

By David Finkel

Chris Hobson's contribution raises exactly the right question about Afghanistan.

The central question is: if there is going to be a viable social struggle for women's rights and other elementary democratic goals in Afghanistan, where will the forces for that struggle come from? I will explain why I don't have much confidence in the answer that Hobson offers with such great certainty.

For Hobson, the answer is clear: such forces can come *only* from one camp in the existing conflict, "from inside the inevitable, progressive and democratic struggle for national independence" being waged by the anti-PDPA Mujahadeen. It follows then that "what revolutionaries in Afghanistan should have been doing since 1979 was building a secular, democratic, socialist force in the national resistance."

I see three immediate problems with this policy. First, while I don't feel competent to tell Afghan revolutionaries what they should have been doing since 1979, I am not aware of any force that has emerged in the resistance that is at all secular or democratic or socialist — by even the loosest definitions of these terms — let alone all three.

Second, the Hobson and LaBotz formula excludes the possibility that any forces in the camp of the current regime might themselves be authentic supporters of Afghan na-

tional independence and capable of learning the lessons of the PDPA's catastrophic experiment in helicopter-gunship 'socialism'.

It seems to me that such forces, particularly educated urban women and perhaps sectors of the working class organised in pro-PDPA unions, are quite likely to be defenders of the existing PDPA government on the grounds of sheer physical and social survival — that the resistance if it came to power would exterminate or enslave them. Hobson indeed recognises that "a catastrophe for women [is] a real possibility."

This possibility is all the more grave if, as seems to be the case, the resistance factions are unable to agree on a programme for post-PDPA Afghanistan — a large-scale slaughter of ordinary people in the government camp might be a short-term expedient to delay their own internal conflict.

Further, the hideous character of the war in the countryside — for which I agree the PDPA bears enormous responsibility — is likely to have generated a deep peasant hatred of the urban society, similar to that of the Kampuchean peasantry that gave some social base to the Pol Pot catastrophe.

A government based on such understandable but ultimately reactionary peasant hatred would likely not limit its reprisals to the PDPA officials but would victimise ordinary urban civilians in a murderous way. For these reasons, my guess is that the potential forces for an independent and democratic

Afghanistan are not in one camp, but in both, trapped in a brutal war against each other.

Third, while all of us in this discussion are revolutionary internationalists, our politics must be conducted in a certain time and place. For democratic activists and socialists in the Soviet bloc, the main enemy must be their own bureaucratic rulers. For us in the United States — even if one agrees with Hobson that the Mujahadeen were justified in taking US assistance — it is imperative to emphasise the deep political-military involvement of our own imperialist government in the Afghan conflict, an involvement that is at least as deep as that of the Soviet Union now that the Soviet troops are gone.

For us to support the Mujahadeen in this context is difficult to distinguish — "in practice, not in words", to borrow Hobson's phrase — from supporting our rulers' imperialist machinations.

I want to be clear: in my opinion the Afghan events have been a disaster for socialism. *This is not because the Soviet Union was defeated and driven out of Afghanistan.* Indeed, that defeat is just about the only *positive* thing that has happened in this conflict since 1979 (I would add also the demise of Pakistani dictator Zia ul-Haq, if indeed that happy event was somehow occasioned by the Afghan war.)

The Soviet rulers' military and political debacle in Afghanistan certainly weakened their options in Poland in 1980-1 and accelerated

the political ferment that has opened up important space for the democratic movement from below in the Soviet Union.

The disaster, rather, is the identification of the Soviet Union in the public mind (and in the mistaken view of most of the international left) with 'socialism'. Such identification has naturally reinforced the image of socialism as something that is rammed down people's throats by foreign armies. The left failed in its responsibility to explain what the Soviet army was trying to ram down the Afghan people's throats was not, and could not possibly be, socialism in any way, shape or form.

At the same time, while the PDPA is not in my view a socialist force (and I explicitly rejected political solidarity with it), it is quite wrong to label it as 'quisling' or to think that simply saying "the [PDPA's] real programme, in reality, not on paper, is to stay in power by any means necessary" exhausts the subject.

There is much more to it, and Jonathan Neale's article, cited by Dan LaBotz, indicates what it is:

"It would be different [for the PDPA] if they were time-servers, Brezhnev and Kosygin. They are not."

"They are enormously brave men and women, the flower of their generation. They worked publicly and underground for years against feudalism, reaction, corruption and the oppression of women."

"They and they alone had the daring to seize the time, to try to

roll back the forces of inertia, backwardness, bigotry and ignorance. They fought one of the most repulsive regimes in the world under some of the most difficult conditions revolutionaries have faced. And it has come to this. "Now they stand up to their mouths in the blood of their people, helpless prisoners of helicopter gunship 'socialism', seen as traitors by the very people from whom they came."

Any view of the PDPA as a party concerned *only* with hanging on to power therefore misses half the point. The Soviet Union's defeat in Afghanistan was purely of its own making, but for the PDPA, the Afghan tragedy was a function *both* of its deeply flawed politics and the overwhelmingly difficult conditions that would confront any revolutionary force in such a society. In any case, in the Afghan civil war as it stands *today*, there is nothing to indicate that the PDPA is any less nationalist, or more entangled in imperialist connections, than the leadership of the Mujahadeen.

The hegemony of the PDPA is not the solution for Afghanistan. Neither is the ascendancy of Islamic fundamentalism. My argument, against which Hobson presented no specific information, is that those sectors that might spearhead a struggle for an independent and democratic Afghanistan will have more room to breathe if the current regime survives at least in the cities, than if the mullahs and the Hekmatyars take over.

The Mafia and the American Dream

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews "Married to the Mob"

Married to the Mob will probably be a huge hit.

When I saw it, audiences were howling with laughter, often so loudly that the next few lines of dialogue were drowned by the racket. It's belly laugh territory, and for the most part the timing is so quick, and the punch lines so good, that the film zips along happily.

Angela De Marco (played with great sweetness and humour by Michelle Pfeiffer) hates her life as a Mafioso's wife, affluent though it is. Everything in the house is 'hot' the result of robberies and dirty dealings, husband Frank works odd hours and is never home, and she hates the endless socialising with other Mafia wives, particularly the sucking up to boss Tony Russo's wife, Connie.

Angela wants to come clean, and bring her small son up away from corruption. When chance lends a hand, she tries to start a new life, but unwittingly winds up involved with an FBI man who's trying to investigate the very people she's trying to escape.

Angela could be any bored housewife in the commuter belt suburbs outside New York, complaining about her husband's long hours and his sycophancy towards his boss. But of course she's not. Frank is a hit man, not a business man. All the same, their life is a kind of parody of the American Dream, albeit a singularly crass and tacky one.

The Mafia in the film aren't the chilling types shown in the *Godfather* though they deal a fair amount of death. This is a comedy,

so the guys are presented almost as endearing crazies. The faces are wonderful — some broken nosed and battered, like over the hill prizefighters, others just plain sappy. Even evil boss Russo, who's the most sinister of the lot, is cut down to size by his fear of his domineering wife, Connie. With her on his tail like an avenging angel, he acts like a tiny, terrified boy caught out in wrongdoing.

The film is really a cartoon, and the characters have the simplicity of comic strip creations — Angela the sweet, dippy innocent, Russo the bad guy, Connie the wicked witch, and so on.

Where the film comes unstuck is in the portrayal of Mike, the FBI man, as played by Mathew Modin, Mike is just too dim and recessive to register. Modin doesn't seem at home in comedy, and he keeps failing to strike the right note. From a fairly good beginning, he goes downhill fast. He isn't overdone like the others; he doesn't have the larger than life cartoonishness, and the film sags when he's around.

We have too long to think that Angela deserves better than this nerdy guy who's a cop and a snooper to boot.

In the thirties and forties, the FBI man was a stock American movie character, and he was generally supposed to be on the side of the angels, like Cary Grant tracking down the Nazis in *Notorious*. But the sixties changed all that forever, tarnishing the image of the CIA and the FBI, showing them up for what they were, unscrupulous, often corrupt, secret agencies with unlimited power. Quite often in films now, it's these agencies that are the bad guys.

But the sensibility of 'Married to the Mob' hasn't kept pace with the times; the plot has been recycled, but it hasn't been updated for the cynicism and knowingness of the eighties.

For all that the film has a genuine fizz and sparkle, with a lively soundtrack by David Byrne, and it's not too predictable. Also the



Michelle Pfeiffer as the Mafia wife

humour isn't the kind you feel guilty about after you've laughed — it

isn't racist or sexist or homophobic. I liked it.

Confused? You won't be

TV

By Vicki Morris

Despite US-USSR rapprochement in the age of Gorbachev, some sections of Hollywood maintain a healthy distrust of Soviet intentions.

ITV showed a cheapskate full-length American feature film called 'Sexpionage' which probably left Gorby watchers feeling confused about whether Russians are peaceable these days or, behind their smiling faces, ready as ever to overrun the West.

This was a ludicrous tale of Russian schoolgirls tricked by the KGB into training as spies who would go on to entrap the Yankee adversary using the full range of their seductive powers.

The heroine was played by an actress of about 30 whose transformation from 16 year old student to raunchy woman of the world was effected by letting down her ponytail. The transformation in her moral value system was achieved almost as simply and every bit as unconvincingly.

The sweet, innocent and kind schoolgirl shopped some Soviet dissident to the authorities even when she had already tricked her passage out of the USSR.

The film-makers wanted to remind us that the enemy, at the same time as they appear to be warming to Western ways, owe some curious allegiance to the country of their birth. Yup, our heroine loved her country so much she didn't want to live there.

The plot was facile. In a film which turned out funny for the most part there were some moments of surprisingly nasty sexism. The settings were not lavish. From the frozen wastes of Siberia and the inevitably snowy streets of Moscow, the heroine was not whisked off to sunny Miami, colourful Los Angeles or vibrant New York.

The denouement was not that the heroine escaped to Hollywood to be a multi-million earner make-up model, or anything like that. Instead, in a rare touch of realism, she fled the Soviet Union to marry Jack Spalding, agronomist, and live as an ordinary American housewife. The Soviet authorities considered her plan of sufficient value to Soviet spying that they let her go.

The real and only half-imagined interest of the film lay in the fact that it mirrored the views of the hawkish tendency at a time when the doves have the upper-hand in super-power diplomacy. In spite of the present convenience to the White House and Kremlin of appearing to be friends, the friendly relations might quickly change.



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Good money after bad

There is another side to the coin of the race to build bigger and better bombs to destroy much of life on earth.

While details have yet to emerge from the USSR, the facts of a massive pollution have recently been revealed from the USA.

Basically, for forty years, the companies producing plutonium for US atomic bombs have simultaneously been pouring radioactive waste and toxic chemicals into the ground, either deliberately or negligently.

Now the US Department of Energy is picking up the bill. An article by Dan Charles in last week's *New Scientist* outlines the scale of the problem.

The worst case is that of the Hanford reservation in Washington State. Here, nine nuclear reactors converted the otherwise useless Uranium 238 in fuel rods to Plutonium-239. Reprocessing plants then separated and purified the plutonium to weapons grade.

As a by-product, 190,000 cubic metres of highly radioactive waste now sit in 163 tanks at Hanford. The sludge settled at the bottom of these tanks is so radioactive that the heat from its decay has weakened all the tanks and cracked some. They are now too fragile to be pumped out.

Some 200 cubic metres of waste have leaked from the tanks into the ground.

The DoE's plan now is to dry out

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN



the sludge and store it in an underground repository together with spent fuel from commercial reactors.

36 million cubic metres of less radioactive waste and toxic chemicals have been dumped or poured directly into the ground at Hanford. This includes, according to Dan Charles, liquid waste containing some 4,000 tons of plutonium pumped into the rocks in the late 1940s (though I wonder if this figure is a misprint — it seems

an awful lot of a very expensive substance to throw away!)

After this was stopped, Hanford managers still stored waste in leaky evaporation ponds, seepage basins, and burial pits. They hope that the size of Hanford reservation would mean that the waste would spread out so much that by the time it escaped to the outside would be too diluted anyone.

However, spring water from Hanford has been found recently to contain over a thousand times the level of Strontium-90 permitted in drinking water. Strontium-90, incidentally, is mistaken by the body for calcium. It is incorporated into bones where it quietly irradiates the marrow, causing leukemias.

The scandal was kept under cover by Government secrecy until some five years ago. Law suits by environmental groups and political pressure from some state governments forced the DoE to accept the need to clean things up.

Another source of radioactive pollution is the Rocky Flats plant in Colorado. Here, blocks of plutonium are machined to the precise shapes needed for 'efficient' explosion of atomic warheads. The subject of critical attention in the past, including a film, over its pollution of its workers and of their homes, Rocky Flats is now receiving attention from the FBI (perhaps a tangible effect of the changeover from Reagan to Bush).

The FBI used an aeroplane with

infra-red sensors to spy on the plant at night. They discovered that an incinerator which had been banned from use was in use at night, allowing further pollution to escape into the air. The aeroplane also found the company to be using evaporation ponds for storing dangerous chemicals even though this too had been banned because they leaked.

The FBI installed monitoring instruments in streams flowing through the plant, and found unreported discharges of chemicals. They also found illegal waste being discharged from the plant's sewage works into a creek.

Past protests have always been deflected because of Rocky Flats' importance to the US nuclear programme. But now criminal charges have been brought against the managers.

The big deal is how much it is going to cost to clean up the USA's nuclear mess — \$100 to 150 billion over the next twenty years.

The only good thing about this catastrophe is that the technology is being developed to tackle it — 9000°C incinerators to turn chemicals into carbon dioxide, water and hydrogen chloride; electrical furnaces for turning contaminated solid into rock; bacteria that can live on toxic chemicals and break them down.

These technologies will be useful for tackling the many other cases of radioactive and toxic chemical pollution waiting to be dealt with in the world.

Unhelpful interjections

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

Earlier this month publications like the *Financial Times*, the *Economist* and even the *Daily Telegraph*, started carrying articles defending the right to strike. The FT even talked about the "unhelpful interjection of the legal process into industrial relations". What on earth was going on?

The law was beginning to come into disrepute, that's what. A series of legal decisions granting employers injunctions, was beginning to make it seem

virtually impossible for a union to hold a legal, official strike. Matters reached a head with the Court of Appeal's decision in early June, preventing a lawful, national docks strike — a decision described by the FT as "surprising".

When BR management went to the High Court seeking an injunction against the NUR on grounds that 32 railworkers (out of 75,000) had not received ballot papers, the intelligent sections of the ruling class looked on in horror and trepidation.

To overturn a ballot that had resulted in over a 2-1 vote in favour of an overtime ban and a 9,000 majority in favour of a 24-hour strike, with a recorded vote of almost 70% of the members, on such flimsy grounds, would be asking for trouble.

Indeed, the very timing of BR's legal moves seemed calculated to aggravate the situation: Jimmy Knapp had turned up at ACAS, ready to look for a 'com-

promise' and making all sorts of conciliatory noises. Then BR sprung its little surprise, and Knapp stormed out shouting about the "worst betrayal since Pearl Harbour"(!) and looking like a man who was genuinely, very, very angry.

Sensible representatives of the ruling class don't like this, or it seems like that, especially when a real possibility of a 'compromise' has been fouled up unnecessarily. Few commentators doubted that the rail strike would go ahead one way or the other, regardless of what the High Court decided.

In the event, the judges threw out BR's case and the one-day rail strike went ahead officially and legally. Almost simultaneously the House of Lords upheld the T&G's appeal against the injunction preventing the dock's strike going ahead. Of course, the T&G will now have to hold another ballot and by the time the strike finally takes place

the National Dock Labour Scheme will have officially ended, meaning that many strikers will be risking redundancy money of up to £35,000.

You don't have to be particularly cynical to realise that the judges' decisions were not motivated by any particular concern for the democratic rights of workers to withdraw their labour. What they were motivated by was a realisation that to come down against the unions once again would be to risk undermining the entire edifice of industrial relations legislation, to stoke up rank and file bitterness and to run the risk of uncontrollable unofficial action breaking out.

Or, as 'Justinian' of the FT warned the judges, don't "place the right to strike too much in jeopardy in the delicate balance of competing powers for industrial harmony and equitable conditions of work". Couldn't have put it better myself.

Tube workers need unity

London Tube workers in the NUR are due to take official strike action on Wednesday 28 June and 5 July. This follows an NUR ballot over action, and last Wednesday's successful strike.

Tube bosses want to rip up old agreements and introduce a new slaves charter for staff: 'Action Stations'. Workers will have to reapply for their own jobs, will have to prove they are passenger-friendly, and will lose promotion linked to seniority. Management want a mandate for favouritism and victimisations.

The unofficial action by Tube drivers boosted the morale of other Tube staff who voted heavily for action. Last week, drivers co-ordinated their unofficial action alongside the official strike. It is vital that they do so again. It would be a tragedy if ASLEF drivers ignore the strike call on Wednesday and allow a service to run on the Underground.

Tube bosses called in the courts to stop the first official strike. Since then they have been on the defensive — postponing 'Action Stations', then agreeing to drop it if they can keep a new structure for promotions.

Tube workers need unity. Management have the same plans for them all in the run up to privatisation. An all-out official strike by drivers, guards and other staff could stop them in their tracks.

Ford witchhunt

In the same week that Ford admitted that they subscribe to the Economic League, they victimised yet another line worker at their Dagenham plant.

He has been sacked for alleged 'discrepancies' on his application form. Bosses have produced no evidence that he gave false information; eight months after starting work, he is sacked for not giving extra information about his educational background.

It is the latest in a series of victimisations by Ford bosses at Dagenham, including the TGWU branch chair, Mick Gosling. Clearly Ford bosses want to subdue their workforce in preparation for the next pay round and the extra production they want to force through by 1992.

Strike against ET

On Monday 26 June several offices in the Department of Employment struck for one day to protest at the introduction of trainees from the Government's cheap labour 'Employment Training' (ET) scheme.

A series of Eastern and Southern division meetings voted for strikes in affected offices and solidarity action in other offices.

Several major problems face the launching of a successful campaign, especially the lack of a clear lead from the union's National Disputes Committee (NDC) and Section Executive Committee (SEC). Even as the first trainees are reporting to their offices, it is still unclear whether the NDC will honour their earlier promise of 25% strike pay in affected offices.

Another problem is the lack of a unified response from the union Broad Left which has failed to lay the groundwork for an unofficial campaign against ET, a campaign which also would force a response from the NDC and SEC.

As offices take unofficial action organised by rank and file CPSA activists pressure should be placed on the SEC and NDC to make action official and stop placing faith in prolonged negotiations with the bosses.

Union-busting is international

At the National Miners' Gala, there were striking miners from America and Australia, and one of the main things to point out about what they were saying is that the experience they have had with union-busting and the imposi-

tion of six or seven day working weeks were almost identical with our own.

It makes it clear that union-busting is not the prerogative of Thatcher but is an international feature of capitalism. There is a great deal of international solidarity between mineworkers at the best of times and during struggle more bonds are strengthened. I'm sure that we will assist these comrades in whatever way we can.

At our pit we are seeing attempts by management to tempt men with money and overtime as a way around a guaranteed wage.

Some people consider that the guaranteed wage doesn't matter, and that it can always be made up by a bit of overtime.

But the guaranteed wage remains the only thing that is under some



WHETTON'S WEEK
A miner's diary

sort of control, whilst everything

else is at the total behest of management.

It's that guarantee that management are trying to erode so that they control everything. Unfortunately some of the men are falling for the easy money.

I hope that mineworkers assert their authority by fighting for that guaranteed wage and that it is a central issue at next week's conference.

NUM Conference is coming up at the beginning of July.

Many more delegates are now entitled to attend the conference. This means there will be a wide range of opinion on the issues that affect mineworkers and socialists and a greater involvement of the rank-and-file. That can only be a good thing.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

North Sea strike on 6 July

North Sea oil construction workers staged 24-hour strikes on 14 platforms on Monday 19 June.

A strike across the whole North Sea oilfield has been called for 6 July — the anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster which killed 167 people.

There has been a series of unofficial strikes and work to rules in the past three weeks. Action is organised similarly to the London Tube strikes, by semi-clandestine rank and file 'liaison committee', with the tacit support of union officials.

Contract workers want guaranteed pay and conditions under the Offshore Construction Agreement. At present bosses cancel the agreement when rigs hook up and begin oil production.

They want union safety reps, inclusion under Health and Safety legislation, and the Health and Safety Executive (instead of the Department of Energy) to monitor safety. There are also calls for a single industry-wide union.

Most construction workers are employed by contractors, on worse conditions than permanent staff and up to £100 a week less pay. But all workers across the industry are increasingly angry over pay, conditions, and safety.

Docks: no local deals

The T&G union leaders have been giving out all the wrong signals over the issue of local agreements signed between the port bosses and stewards and local officials.

Originally, the T&G had a clear policy for a national agreement with the port employers to replace the Dock Labour Scheme and against the employers' insistence on local negotiations.

However, over the last month or so this commitment has been blurred. First, speaking at the Scottish TUC, Bill Morris, the acting General Secretary, talked of a replacement national agreement

with the port employers negotiated nationally and locally.

Around the same time, local union officials in Southampton floated the idea of a local deal with Associated British Ports. Over the last few weeks, a local deal has been signed at Sheerness in Kent, and reports also suggest that they are close at Poole and Ipswich.

None of this bodes well for maintaining the unity of the dockers in

national strike. The T&G should refuse to recognise such deals and instruct all stewards and local union officials to have nothing to do with them. Further, Ron Todd should stop talking of a negotiated national agreement representing a mere 'safety net' to be supplemented by local deals, and instead focus on the need for a decent national agreement that can help to the dockers' forces.

One million aren't paying

POLL TAX

By Peter Burton

Ten thousand non-payers of the poll tax marched in Glasgow on Saturday 24 June from George Square to Kelvingrove Park.

The speakers at the rally included George Galloway, Dick Douglas, Jim Sillars, and Tommy Sheridan. All of them spoke of the growing belief that the poll tax will be beaten in Scotland.

The poll tax system is in chaos, with perhaps as many as one million not paying so far. In Fife region, 105,000 out of 260,000 have not paid; in Central region, 66,000 out of 220,000; in Tayside, 120,000 out of 200,000; in Lothian, 300,000 out

of 680,000.

All the speakers condemned the leadership of the labour movement for their absence from the rally. Some spoke of the need to get organised, with every non-payer at the rally becoming an organiser for non-payment and pressurising for non-collection in their workplaces and unions.

In the weeks and months ahead, anti-poll tax unions must continue to ensure that non-payers are not left isolated, but are organised and brought into the anti-poll tax unions. Pressure must be kept up on the councils, such as the successful picket of Strathclyde Region headquarters on Monday 26 June against the arrestment of wages and benefits and warrant sales.

We must organise defence of individuals faced with warrant sales, as has already happened in Aberdeen. If the momentum of the campaign is sustained, we will surely win.

IN BRIEF

Steel erectors in London are still on all-out unofficial strike over pay and allowances. Their hourly rate for skilled and dangerous work is £4.24.

So far at least 18 major building projects have been disrupted by the action over the last six weeks. These delays mean thousands of pounds lost in office rents and through penalty clauses in building contracts.

The strike is organised by a 25-strong shop stewards co-ordinating group and an appeal has gone out to other trade unionists to organise regular levies to keep the strikes going.

BBC workers pulled the plug on coverage of Royal Ascot and the Test Match last Friday. Union delegates threw out the latest offer

from BBC bosses — 7% already imposed plus a lump sum and other minor concessions. Action will need to be stepped up to break the present deadlock.

A mass meeting of workers at Yorkshire TV threw out an 8% pay package tied to drastic changes in working conditions — including rostering and longer hours.

Passport staff have ended their industrial action. The strike at Liverpool, and overtime ban at other offices forced management to concede another 203 permanent jobs — 45 more than their previous final offer.

Post Office workers in Cardiff started an overtime working — they want it to remain voluntary. And counter staff in West Central London struck over part-time staff.

Members of the **banking union** BIFU have voted for an overtime ban at Lloyds bank over this year's 7.5% pay offer.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Rail: the way to win

Mersey dockers call for solidarity

The Merseyside Port Shop Stewards put out this appeal for support at the TGWU conference on 26 June

At a time when the country's ports are experiencing record profits, in the run-up to 1992, dockers' terms and conditions of employment are being scrapped.

Scrapped to ensure that this long awaited expansion in the dock industry is restricted to the inhuman working conditions which existed prior to decasualisation. Dockers recognise the importance of the Law Lords' decision to uphold the TGWU's right to organise an official national docks strike in pursuance of a national agreement.

The port employers also recognise the importance of the Law Lords' decision — they are now preparing dismissal notices, some have already been sent out.

Our General Secretary's astounding success at the Law Lords now has to be translated into a victory against the National Association of Port Employers.

The first stage in this process must be to ensure that the national strike ballot is concluded over the next few days. For our part we must deliver a unanimous vote to defend our right to a national agreement.

The threats and intimidation of the employers during this ballot must be responded to fully by the General Secretary. Dockers need to know that they have the protection of the trade union movement with them.

No return to casual labour

The whole of the trade union movement, especially members of the TGWU, must indicate their physical and financial support for the dockers.

All strike bound or strike breaking cargoes must be boycotted.

The status of 'Official Dispute' has to be honoured by the non-registered ports. All diverted vessels or cargoes must be boycotted.

The consistent solidarity shown by our sisters and brothers in the National Union of Seafarers, together with the Road Haulage Section of the TGWU must be consolidated.

Our sisters and brothers in the National Union of Railway Workers in Holyhead, Folkestone and Harwich, etc. must be called upon for support.

Our European comrades in Rotterdam, Bremerhaven, Le Havre, Antwerp, Hamburg must also be called upon to extend the hand of solidarity in our struggle.

We have all inherited much from the Great Docks Strike of 1889 — for 100 years their proud tradition of solidarity with workers worldwide has been the hallmark of the dockers.

We call upon our union's Biennial Delegate Conference to show its solidarity with the dockers — to declare its unequivocal support for the dockers' struggle ahead.

We seek the right of an emergency debate at this year's conference in order to ensure that support for the dockers is practical and set in concrete — not empty phrases.

This is a unique opportunity for our sisters and brothers in the various trade groups and industries to indicate the type of support they can give to the dockers.

"If the 1889 Dock Strike had failed, our movement today would be a pale shadow of its reality."

Ron Todd

(Introduction to the Great Dock Strike 1889 — The story of the Labour Movement's First Great Victory, p.8)

More on the docks page 11

By a rail worker

The rail strike last Wednesday 21 June, was a complete success.

Not a single train ran in the whole of the country and in London the tube and bus strikes ensured that no public transport ran in the capital.

Of course there were some scabs but there were so few of them that BR didn't even try to make the usual exaggerated claim of thousands going to work.

During the day they did keep telling the media that 25% of the staff had turned up for work, but forgot to mention that these were ASLEF and TSSA members, so far not involved in the dispute.

Since the strike has been shown to be so successful, however, BR is lost for something to say. Their threats have failed, their promises proven empty, and their legal attempts have blown up in their faces. No doubt they're spending most of their time right now backing each other.

Rail workers have the initiative and the mood to step up the action, to keep BR on the run. Rightly Jimmy Knapp, General Secretary of the National Union of Railworkers has said that talks can begin only when BR have made some concrete moves

and understand that a pay offer needs to be in double figures.

We need satisfaction on the Machinery of Negotiations and on pay but we should set clear targets so that the membership knows what we are fighting for. We want to maintain the right of negotiation on everything and a pay rise of 15%. BR can afford both, but only if the rush to privatisation is stopped.

Privatisation is about turning the railways from a public service into yet another mechanism for extracting private profit. That is why we have seen our conditions eroded over the last few years, our wages held down, and we have been made to work harder.

That is the source of profit. It doesn't come from the sky, but from squeezing workers harder.

BR won't back down from privatisation unless they are forced to. It will take more than a one day strike or a series of one day strikes to do that. The danger is that BR will sit these out and wait for demoralisation to set in.

We are on top, and should stay there. The only way to do that is with much more than one day action. We should step up the action and demand of Jimmy Knapp that the dispute is taken forward seriously and effectively: the best way to do that is to take action and the union into our own hands.



Town Hall workers go for strikes

By Nik Barstow

After years of taking it lying down over pay, NALGO members have started to fight back.

When you think what the employers' 'offer' is — a cut in real pay, an insult to the low paid, and a promise to attack national bargaining — no wonder NALGO members have voted for real industrial action.

And we aren't the only workers who are in the fight to defend their conditions and win higher pay.

The railworkers were offered almost exactly the same as us — a 7% rise and a break-up of national bargaining.

They've shown they won't take it. After being put through the mill in the courts the dockers are set, again to take national strike action to protect their conditions and their jobs.

It shouldn't be a surprise that we're now in the front line of a battle that could rock the Tories. To them we're the same as the dockers and railworkers: we're an obstacle to 'modernising' Britain because we won't stand for a dog-eat-dog society where they cut all our services and expect us to cut each other's throats.

We're 'dinosaurs' because we think we need national agreements and a national union to help defend us.

Solid in Leeds

By Jo Bishop

Support for the first of the one-day rail strikes was solid in Leeds.

Members of Leeds Poly Labour Club, some of them SO supporters, have been quick to take solidarity action and went to Leeds Central station on the morning of the strike. The strikers stressed that the main issues of the dispute were negotiation machinery and the safety of both workers and travellers. Pay, though important, is a secondary issue.

Rail workers now have little confidence in BR management after the underhand way in which they took their case to the courts while in negotiations at the government arbitration service, ACAS. Strikers were at first suspicious of us until they realised we were Labour

Party members fighting against the Kinnohite leadership in the party for left-wing politics.

Their mood was defiant. One striker, an ex-miner who had fought right through the miners' strike, stressed the need for a strong Labour Party that fought for and supported workers in struggle. He had no time for "groups who play around outside the Labour Party", and so distance themselves from the real struggle and the working class.

Apart from showing our solidarity by standing on the picket line we also offered practical help: by providing a minibus to take strikers home, especially women who would otherwise have to get home without public transport.

The service we offered to the local NUR will remain a central part of our Labour Club's support for and commitment to workers in struggle. We ended the one-day strike inspired by the militancy and commitment of the rail workers.