

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The French
revolution

pages 6-8

Taking stock in
industry

page 3

Students fight back

page 5

Labour must scrap all Tory anti-union laws

Back the right to strike!

Sue Du Bost
(secretary, Wallasey
Labour Party, in
personal capacity)

Nowadays it's easier to have a legal strike in Poland than in Britain. We've lost too many major industrial disputes because of the anti-union laws. They must be scrapped.

It's good to see the Transport and General Workers' Union are calling for Labour to repeal all existing anti-union legislation. I guess the docks strike taught them this lesson. I fully support this, and hope the Labour Party conference does too.

Wallasey Labour Party feels this isn't enough, though, which is why our motion to Labour Party conference is proposing a workers' charter, which guarantees workers the sort of rights the Tories offer the bosses.

We need a legal right to strike without fear of being sacked. If we can't have this right, bosses shouldn't have the right to sack us.

We should not only have the right to join a union if we wish, union officials should be allowed to recruit members in work time.

There are many rights we don't have that should go into a charter. If workers vote in a secret ballot to strike in support of other workers, whether they are involved with those other workers or not, it should surely be their right to do so. The government shouldn't be able to tell them they can't.

Kinnock's proposals regarding the anti-union laws are very worrying. According to the *Guardian* he intends to ignore the T&G resolution, even if it is overwhelmingly passed at conference.

He is saying that unions that



The Tories are planning a new law against strikes in 'essential' services

support strikes without a ballot will be fined, so if workers walk out after the boss does something outrageous, and the union supports this action without first calling a ballot (which can take weeks), a Labour government will fine

that union.

What then if the union refused to pay the fine? Would Kinnock then advocate sequestrating the union's funds like a dirty Tory?

Since 1979 the laws have been getting worse and worse, and it

seems that if Kinnock gets his way they will continue to do so even under a Labour government. This year's Labour Party conference **must** support the T&G motion and Wallasey Labour Party's proposals for a workers' charter.

If Labour retreats, the Tories advance

At the Labour Party conference on 1-6 October, the Transport and General Workers' Union will propose that Labour commits itself to free unions from the risk of having their funds seized if they organise strikes.

In other words, Labour should *back the right to strike*. There would be no effective right to demonstrate if people whose business was impeded by demonstrators on the streets could sue the organisers for damages. There would be no effective right to free speech if anyone whose income suffered as a result of fair comment could go to court to get the money back from their critic.

There can be no effective right to strike if the courts are going to make good bosses' losses at the expense of the unions, and drive the unions out of business.

But Neil Kinnock and his allies in the trade union leadership, like John Edmonds, are running scared. They want Labour's policy to include the right for bosses to sue unions if the strike does not meet Tory rules about secret ballots (or some modified version of them).

If the labour movement runs, the Tories will continue to come after us. According to the *Financial Times*, they are considering plans to further restrict strikes in essential industries, maybe by imposing "cooling-off periods".

If Labour retreats, it will encourage the Tories to advance. Instead, Labour should boldly proclaim the right to strike as a basic democratic right.

Walesa calls coalition a mistake

Leach Walesa this week tried to cover his back against the worker protest which is likely to be provoked by the free-market economic policy of Poland's new Solidarnosc-led government.

Interviewed on *Panorama* (BBC, Monday 11th), he said:

"I believe that it is my, and Solidarnosc's, gravest mistake ever that we took the prime minister's post and joined the government. That was our biggest mistake, but a mistake we were forced into. We simply had no choice.

"There was the quickest ever re-establishment of the Communist Party monopoly, faster than ever before. So given all this we had to say: it is a pity we aren't ready, but so be it. We cannot agree to this.

"We must do everything not to lose out through that decision. There is a chance. We enjoy huge social support. There is great understanding, and a great many will strive to build a Poland of our dreams.

"This will be difficult because, as I said, we are amateurs. But it is quite possible that having such chances we will make something of our country."

In 1980-81 Solidarnosc also aimed to "make something" of Poland — a Self-Managed Republic. Now the conservatised leaders of Solidarnosc are collaborating with the Stalinists to make of it a land fit for capitalists to exploit in — and many of the Stalinists are trying to make sure, as fast as possible, that they find a place in the newly-booming private capitalist class.

Next month the ultra-Thatcherite Adam Smith Institute will be organising a conference in Warsaw to advise on selling off Polish industry. The conference has been organised after discussions with the central committee of the Stalinist party.

Meanwhile, the new Solidarnosc-nominated Finance and Industry ministers have explained their views to parliament.

Industry Minister Tadeusz Syryjczyk, himself a private businessman, declared that: "We



Walesa speaks to Gdansk shipyard workers

must change the structure of ownership. The only guarantee of democracy is a middle class which prizes the notion of contracts and property."

So much for the working class! While the Solidarnosc ministers collaborate with the Stalinists to create

a new capitalist middle class, the job of keeping the workers subdued will fall to Jacek Kuron, the new Labour Minister.

Kuron was jailed in the 1960s for publishing a pamphlet in which he denounced the Stalinist regime as state capitalist and called for the

workers to overthrow it through a socialist revolution. In the 1970s he organised the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) to help strikers. Now the poacher is turning gamekeeper.

But the rank and file of Solidarnosc will have the last word.

Beginning of the end for Hawke?

Tony Brown reports from Sydney

Australia's Labor government is confronted by the most intense industrial dispute since its election

in 1983.

Now in its third week, the domestic airline pilots' action for direct wage negotiations with their employers on a 30% pay claim could spell the beginning of the end for the Hawke government.

What is certain is that Hawke's extraordinary behaviour will have

drastic consequences for the labour movement for a long time to come.

When the pilots decided to restrict their working hours, Hawke declared 'war', saying he was quite prepared to close down the industry for however long it took to defeat them. He then pressured the airline owners (including Ansett's Peter Abeles, who also owns TNT) to

refuse to talk to the pilots' union, the Federation of Air Pilots (FAP).

In the space of a week:

- The airlines, supported by the government, successfully had the pilots' awards scrapped by the Industrial Relations Commission, removing all legal protection of their working conditions.

- The airlines, encouraged by the government, have issued writs to sue individual pilots, and the unions, for millions of dollars of damages. They are using laws introduced by Malcolm Fraser's Coalition government which were to be removed when Labor was elected. They carry individual fines of up to \$50,000 per day.

- The government has deployed the airforce as strike breakers, and asked all international carriers to carry domestic passengers, something previously prohibited. The Soviet Union has gone so far as to send out an Aleutian in response to the call.

- The airlines are threatening to stand down without pay the 21,000 other airline industry workers.

- Cabinet is considering paying the \$20 million per week compensation requested by the two airlines.

Hawke has raised the stakes to such an extent that even a compromise will seem like defeat. If the pilots win a pay rise well in excess of

the centrally imposed 6% limit then other workers will demand the same and the straightjacket of the Accord will be at breaking point.

But if Hawke wins, and the FAP is broken, then all unions will have hanging over their heads the threat of personal and union bankruptcy.

The pilots are in a strong position, because there is no real reserve army of pilots to speak of. The use of the airforce and the international carriers has only soaked up 20% of the daily national demand for seats. And even though the airlines are advertising internationally for new pilots it won't be possible to have them flying for months, and that's if they can get enough.

Added to that is the enormous cost of the dispute. The airlines are each losing \$10 million per week. But the tourism industry, which is now the second largest export earner, is hit hard. The total cost of lost tourist dollars will exceed that to the airlines. And then they also will lodge a claim for compensation with the government.

If Hawke proves unable to maintain the wage limit then the basis of consensus will collapse, paving the way for a new Coalition government under Andrew Peacock. And that government will be armed with the expensive weapons that Hawke used against a trade union.

Soviet miners set up own union

Miners from central Siberia who struck in July have set up an independent trade union.

According to the *Observer* (10 September), the union's declared aims are to "combat bureaucracy and opposition to perestroika" and to work for social justice and the transfer of "all power" to the working people.

The *Observer* also reports that an association of independent unions has been set up, called Sotsprof.

On 11 September, according to the *Financial Times*, leaders of the July miners' strikes, from the Ukraine as well as all parts of

Siberia, met in Moscow and set up a National Union of Strike Committees.

They drafted a list of demands to present to the official state-controlled miners' union, and some miners' leaders threatened renewed strikes if by 1 October the government has not yet made good the promises it gave to end the July strikes.

According to the *Financial Times*, "the strike committees are still debating whether they should operate within a radically reformed official system or form a fully-fledged rival movement". But the *Observer* quotes Siberian miners' leader Teimuraz Aviliani as saying: "The [official union organisation]

is an organ of State power...it is for us miners another high echelon of power giving out orders...So we had to take things into our own hands."

Another recent report, in the *Independent*, says that railworkers are considering strike action. They called off a strike planned from 1 August after promises from the government, but are not satisfied with what the government has done to deliver on those promises.

Vast amounts of freight are transported by rail in the USSR, and a railworkers' strike would have devastating power. After sixty years of bureaucratic suppression, the Soviet workers are finding their own voice again.

The importance of playing Irish

NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

In my first year at secondary school I was forbidden to play the sport with which I was obsessed.

The school was strictly Catholic, run by priests. The sport was soccer. It was not only a foreign import, but the national sport of the ancient and heathen enemy, England.

The sports which dominated Catholic schools were all Gaelic games, organised nationally under rules of the Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA).

In 1971 the rule which forbade members to play foreign sports — the steadfast rule — was abolished. In the South it had been honoured more in the breach for years. In the North, where Gaelic games were considered to be more under threat from the 'alien culture', it remained a powerful guideline even after 1971.

The loss of support and talent to other sports, particularly soccer, has for some time symbolised the fear that a certain type of Irish identity would fade.

In fact social identity has survived better in the North than in the South. Last week the most northern of Catholics travelled to Dublin to

see their county, Antrim, take part in the first All-Ireland hurling final in 46 years.

It was a big occasion — over 15,000 travelled from Antrim. Catholics in Antrim are besieged — they live at the heart of Ian Paisley's DUP territory and do not often get a chance to celebrate their collective identity. Gaelic games have grown rapidly in the last 20 years there. They are probably now at a peak.

Three days after the hurling final, which Antrim lost to Tipperary, two big soccer matches took place. In the staunchly British North, Northern Ireland were rudely and predictably knocked out of the World Cup by Hungary. In Dublin the Republic drew 1-1 with West Germany in a friendly international.

West Germany is still one of the

great international football teams, and this was the Republic's eleventh home game without defeat (they had had ten consecutive victories before last week). They are very well placed to qualify for next year's World Cup in Italy.

Soccer is becoming more popular, and more successful, in the South. For years the Republic's team has been of much higher quality than Northern Ireland. Some of the most brilliant players, for example, Kevin Moran, are gains made from Gaelic football.

And on the fringes of the Six County border the Catholic attachment to Gaelic football and games is breaking down.

The big enthusiasm in Derry at the moment, where the Nationalist majority is becoming used to running the city for the first time, is Derry City Football Club. Derry Ci-

ty FC is a Northern Catholic team which plays in the Southern Irish League and are currently the League of Ireland champions.

So nothing can stop the universal appeal of soccer to "liberated" Nationalists. Gaelic games are stronger in parts of the North, and indeed in Britain, than in much of the Republic. It may be that, like clerical vocations, and a certain kind of ethnic Irish identity, Gaelic games have their most promising future where they are under threat or surrounded by an alien culture.

There are strong Gaelic Athletic Associations in Antrim, Tyrone, London, Birmingham and Glasgow. But next summer boats and planes will probably carry thousands of Southern Irish fans to Italy to see a mainly English team take on the cream of our international game.

Taking stock in industry

EDITORIAL

The last few months have seen a spectacular upsurge in industrial action.

The Tories' 'de facto' seven per cent pay ceiling has been decisively smashed by a series of groups of workers.

Some of them did not even have to take strike action, but merely threaten it (like the power workers who settled for 9.2% in May, after balloting in favour of industrial action); and two watershed pay deals earlier this year were reached without even the threat of industrial action. At Ford, the second stage of a two-year deal triggered an 8.9% increase, while at Nissan a spectacular 15% was achieved in January as the first part of a two-year deal.

Settlements like these, combined with the steady rise to 8% and beyond of the price index, the increase in mortgage payments of up to £200 per month for many workers, and the well-publicised six-figure salary increases of bosses like Lord King of British Aerospace and Jeffrey Sterling of P&O, have fuelled the present upsurge of wages militancy.

Workers' self-confidence has been boosted by the continuing decline in unemployment and the advent of a 'skills shortage' in engineering and manufacturing; and an explosive cocktail has been completed by a drive by several key employers for the restructuring of established bargaining machinery. In local government and on the railways, moves towards localised bargaining coincided with the upsurge in wages militancy to produce remarkably solid rank and file support for official disputes.

500,000 local government workers began a programme of 'rolling' strikes in early July demanding a 12% pay rise with no strings. It was the first time their union, NALGO, had ever called national strike action.

At the same time, railworkers embarked upon a series of highly effective one-day strikes in protest at an imposed 7% pay increase and the break up of their national negotiating machinery. The BR Board's 'tough guy' tactics soon collapsed in the face of railworkers' solidarity and the Board was forced to up their pay offer to 8.8% and withdraw at least some of the strings, in a climbdown.

The town hall bosses had to make similar concessions to halt the NALGO action.

Not everything has been on the up and up. The dockers' defeat is a serious setback for the labour movement, but it probably will not have the same generally dulling effect that the miners' defeat had.

The overall picture is one of advance for the class. Quite apart from the immediate victories that have been achieved on pay and 'strings', there is the less tangible but even more important knock-on effect summed up by the *Financial Times*: "The councils' climbdown comes in the wake of disputes at British Rail and London Underground which were also settled after considerable concessions by

management. Taken together, the settlements are likely to encourage a growing confidence among British workers that carefully planned industrial action can achieve results."

The significance of the latest round of national disputes is best illustrated by some simple statistics: in the 12 months up to May 1988, 2,147,000 strike days were lost; in the 12 months between May 1988 and May 1989 the figure was 2,911,000; this year's NALGO action alone has lost well over 3,000,000 strike days; industrial action is now firmly back on the agenda as a fact of British industrial life, despite all the Thatcherite propaganda and *Marxism Today*-type theories about "the end of the working class".

This pattern is set to continue with the engineers' 35-hour week campaign and a host of wages disputes coming up. The engineers' dispute is of particular importance. Their central demand of a 35-hour week with no loss of pay counterposes the interests of the working class to those of capital. This demand should be taken up by broader sections of the labour movement and linked to a serious fight for an end to overtime and a minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.

Such a struggle would pose questions of control in the workplace and, to paraphrase Marx, represent a struggle between the political economy of the bourgeoisie and that of the working class.

It is ironic that the new militancy coincides with Neil Kinnock's new drive to make Labour a 'safe' alternative government for the British ruling class and to distance the party from extra-parliamentary struggle. After weeks of equivocation on the rail strike, Kinnock publicly called upon the NUR to accept the 8.8% offer.

Despite Kinnock's behaviour, many workers see his approach as the best hope of ousting the Tories at the next general election. What is required is a positive, working-class alternative to both Kinnock's class collaborationist leadership in the Labour party and the 'new realism' of trade union leaders, both left and right.

That means integrating the battles inside both the trade unions and the Labour Party.

Within the unions this involves laying the foundations of a rank and file movement capable of linking up struggles, placing demands upon the existing leaders and — where necessary — organising independently of them. It must be a rank and file movement that avoids the twin dangers of becoming simply an electoral machine and stage army for 'left bureaucrats' (like the CP-dominated Broad Lefts of the '70s) and the syndicalist error of attempting simply to bypass the existing leaderships without placing demands upon them or challenging them politically.

It would take disputes seriously, respond quickly and attempt to seize the initiative. It would try to generalise action and operate to spread information and to agitate and organise for solidarity.

Where necessary it would have to act as an alternative leadership in the union. As the old slogan goes: 'If the leaders won't lead, then the



NALGO's first-ever national strike won important gains

rank and file must'.

The struggle for trade union democracy is a vital part of the process of building a rank and file movement. A programme for trade union democracy would have to involve, as a minimum campaign:

- All officials elected for definite terms — no more than two years — and subject to recall;
- Policy-making bodies made up of lay members only;
- Delegate conferences to have supreme policy-making powers;
- Elections at workplace meetings or workplace ballots;
- All candidates to have unrestricted rights to circulate literature;
- No secret negotiations. Elected rank and file strike committees to control all disputes.

These demands need to be linked to policies designed to draw specially oppressed sections of the working class into the unions. For example: full support for the self-organisation of women, black people, lesbians and gay men, and positive discrimination within the structures of the labour movement.

Given the employers' increasing readiness to use the courts and the Tories' anti-union legislation to outlaw official action and threaten union funds, many militants are looking towards 'pure' rank and file unofficial action as a way of circumventing the law and the timidity of official leaderships. The effectiveness of the unofficial London Underground strikes has added to the attraction of 'pure' rank and file amongst many militants.

But it is a dead end for all but the most tightly knit and well-organised groups of workers. Paradoxically, the approach of totally by-passing official union structures can quite often suit the bureaucrats, allowing them to stand back from the action and evade their responsibility to provide leadership and support to the strikers.

There are two solutions to this problem:

(1) For socialists to continually press for industrial action — including action outside the law — to be made official, thus forcing the

officials to commit themselves to backing the strikers and making it clear to the employers that they are involved in a serious dispute.

(2) Campaigning politically for the repeal of the existing anti-union legislation and for a positive alternative set of legal rights for workers, including the legally enforceable right to strike and picket effectively, for access to workplaces in order to organise, the right to stop the job whenever health and safety are in doubt, the right of unions to determine their own internal democracy free from the courts, the right to employment free from sexual or racial discrimination or discrimination on grounds of sexuality, etc, etc.

Such a response does not represent 'reformism' or 'spreading illusions in the bourgeois state': rather it represents a way of putting forward a generalising overall political alternative to the Tories' anti-union laws and Kinnock's pale-pink imitation.

This approach fits in with the classic Marxist approach to the struggle for reforms.

As Marx argued: "...every movement in which the working class as a class confronts the ruling classes and tries to constrain them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt by strikes etc. in a particular factory or even in a particular trade to compel individual capitalists to reduce the working day is a purely economic movement.

"On the other hand, the movement to force through an eight-hour etc. law is a political movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say, a class movement with the object of enforcing its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general, socially coercive force."

Such a positive approach is the way to directly challenge the Labour leadership's strategy of distancing a future Labour government from the unions and from militant union action.

Daily Express
The Guardian
Daily Mirror
Daily Star

PRESS GANG

The stupidity and cynicism of Mr Hitchen

Saturday's *Daily Star* front page consisted of an open letter to the Prime Minister, accompanied by the headline, 'Wipe them out'.

You didn't have to actually read the open letter to know who "they" are — the IRA.

Open letters are always a good way of driving home your point, and *SO* has made use of the technique more than once. This one came from the *Star*'s editor, Brian Hitchen, and it pulled no punches:

"There is only one way to fight terrorists. With terror. A terror so great that those psychopaths will shudder at the very thought of the men who are coming for them."

Hitchen was calling for the SAS to be "turned loose", to "hunt down and wipe out" the IRA as part of an "official shoot-to-kill policy".

Correctly predicting the reaction of people like myself, Hitchen warned Mrs Thatcher that if she follows his advice she will, "of course... be criticised by the usual limp-wristed, peace-and-quiet-at-any-price gang. But you will have the support of every right-thinking person in Britain."

Now, the *Daily Star* is a paper in severe trouble, desperately trying to carve out a niche for itself in the circulation war against its more successful and longer-established rivals, the *Mirror* and the *Sun*. In its relatively short life to date, the *Star* has veered from a left-Labour stance to Thatcherism to soft-porn and back to Thatcherism.

No rational person, knowing the history of the *Star*, would normally take anything it said on any subject seriously. But I suspect that Saturday's front page will have struck a chord with a lot of basically decent people — that is a measure of the stupidity and callousness of the killing of Heidi Hazell in Dortmund last week.

The 'Irish question' unfailingly brings out the worst in the tabloid press — from the *Mirror*'s light-minded and inconsistent calls for troops out, through to the *Sun*'s bloodthirsty and dishonest justification of the Gibraltar shootings.

Mr Hitchen's open letter stands in the very worst traditions of tabloid sloganising and posturing on the Irish question. And it didn't even have any very original proposals to make — after all, Gibraltar showed that sending in the SAS and a 'de facto' shoot-to-kill policy are already pretty much the standard British response to IRA active service units.

In fact, the same day that Hitchen's open letter appeared, the *Sun*'s front page led reported that the SAS had already gone into Germany and quoted a "senior Army officer" as saying that, in a face-to-face confrontation, "it would be necessary to take positive and effective action" — a form of words that sounds very much like "shoot-to-kill" to me.

No, the important thing about Hitchen's open letter was not its practical proposals, but its savage, vengeful tone and that brutal headline: 'Wipe them out'.

Either Mr Hitchen is a very stupid and ignorant man, or his open letter was a cynical attempt to boost the flagging fortunes of his ailing publication by tapping into the emotional response of many ordinary people, to a particularly nasty killing.

Either way, it was a very irresponsible piece of journalism on an issue where thought and sensitivity should be at a premium. Perhaps it would be better if papers like the *Star* didn't cover serious issues like Ireland at all, and simply stuck to what they are best at — the private lives of soap opera stars.

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

Karl Marx

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4 GRAFFITI

Rip-off by the royals

GRAFFITI

Rupert Murdoch has one saving grace. He doesn't like the monarchy.

On Monday 11th the front page of *Today* splashed the news that the Duchess of York's two children's books, supposedly written for charity, will make her £1 million and the charities less than another author would pay to their agent.

She has already had £220,000 from the books, before a copy was sold, and the charities have not heard anything about getting a penny. She and Prince Andrew get £155,400 a year from the state.

According to an American critic quoted by *Today*, the books are "ghastly, frightening, cruel and racist".

Today also reports that six "image consultants" have been labouring for a full year to make the Duchess more acceptable to the public.

Seeing that she was "bossy, opinionated, fat and insensitive", they advised her to write the children's books, lose 20 pounds, wear different clothes, and project herself as "a committed mother".

The six might now like to try their macabre trade on the prime minister of China, Li Peng. Decades of totalitarian rule have left him inept in the methods of manipulating public opinion.

Trying to demonstrate that his regime is not corrupt and privileged, last week he told a newspaper interviewer that he had swapped two luxury Mercedes limousines for a more modest Audi. Chinese workers will be wondering what this 'communist' leader was doing with two Mercedes in the first place.

The Tories have backed down on proposals to demand a 70 per cent majority in strike ballots.

A code of practice issued on 8 September omitted the requirement for a 70 per cent majority, although earlier this year the government had indicated they would include it. The code is not strictly speaking part of the law, but is to be "taken into account" by judges.

This headline is from 1975 — but it could be used again today.

There have been new revelations of information being passed from the RUC to the 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' (the named used by the legal Ulster Defence Association for their sectarian murders). Many Catholics in Northern Ireland have been murdered by Protestant-bigot gangs like the UFF after receiving threats from the RUC or UDR, and a steady trickle of UDR soldiers are prosecuted for Loyalist paramilitary activities.

1975 was the midst of the biggest wave yet of sectarian murders. That year, also, there was a ceasefire by the Provisional IRA — showing that even if you think that the Provisionals' military campaign is best called off (and we do think that), Protestant bigot violence is not just a response to what the Provisionals do.

For 20 years British troops have been propping up the artificial, untenable, and undemocratic Northern Ireland statelet. To prop it up they have to beat down the oppressed Catholic minority which is rebelling against that state, and ally with the forces of the Northern Ireland majority.

The RUC and UDR are almost exclusively Protestant forces.



Charity begins in the palace...

An average of 16 people are deported from Britain every day of the year, seven days a week.

The figure has multiplied more than four times since the Tories took office in 1979, and it is ten times what it was in 1974, although Britain's immigrant population has not increased particularly and new immigration from Asia, the West Indies and Africa has been tiny.

According to *Searchlight* magazine, quoting the Refugee Forum, over 6,000 people were deported in 1988. In 1979 there were only 1,300 deportation orders, and in 1974 only 500.

One hundred and sixty pounds. That's the bill to the average household for the Tories' privatisation programme.

Figures released this week by Labour front-bencher Gordon Brown show that the total paid to advertising agencies and City bankers in the sell-off programme is over £2 billion.

Scottish landlords have had a £40 million windfall from the poll tax, according to calculations by local authorities.

Private tenants' rents included an element for rates, but they didn't get any reduction when the landlords stopped having to pay rates and the tenants started having to pay poll tax.

The same thing is likely to happen in England and London Labour councils reckon that the windfall for landlords in London alone could be over £90 million.

The oppressed can become oppressors

LEFT PRESS

By Martin Thomas

I wish we were wrong. One of the issues that separates Socialist Organiser from the rest of the left is our adherence to Lenin's principle on national conflicts: "A struggle against the privileges and violence of the oppressing nation and no toleration of the striving for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation".

The argument has focused around Israel/Palestine and Ireland. Like most other leftists, we support the Palestinian Arabs and the Northern Ireland Catholics in their struggles against oppression.

But we also say — in line with the bit of Lenin's summary to which I have added italics above — that a socialist and democratic policy must include guarantees of the national or communal rights of the Israeli Jews and the Irish Protestants. It must propose consistent democracy not revenge for past atrocities.

Many people on the left reckon that we are thus insulting and betraying the oppressed peoples. The problem in Ireland and Palestine, they say, is imperialism and the Catholic Irish and Palestinian Arabs are not imperialist. Socialist Organiser is giving comfort and succour to imperialism, or its allies and agents.

If only it were so... If it were so, then we would not have had the sickening series of proofs over the last few weeks that we are right. 'Anti-imperialist' peoples can become oppressors too.

For centuries the Poles have been the most oppressed, carved-up and bullied people in Europe. Yet Cardinal Glomp, leader of the Catholic Church in Poland, has denounced Jews who asked for the removal of a new convent set up on the site of Auschwitz in the most vicious anti-semitic terms.

The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were taken over by Stalin through a deal he struck with Hitler, and for 49 years since then have suffered Russian domination. Now the local rulers talk of immigration controls against Russian workers moving to their areas.

They talk of making their local

languages the sole official language, thus discriminating against the very large minorities of Russian-speakers.

The same demand has been raised by nationalists in another fringe republic of the USSR, Moldavia. The Moldavians have had Russian imposed on them as their official language, and the Cyrillic (Russian) alphabet imposed on them for their own language (a dialect of Rumanian). Now they want to turn the tables.

In the south of the USSR, long-oppressed Azerbaijanis are venting their anger not on the rulers in Moscow but on Armenians. Georgians are demanding more freedom from Moscow — but also stamping down on their local minority of Abkhazians.

These problems arise in Eastern Europe more than anywhere else because Eastern Europe has such a complex patchwork of small nations and scattered minorities. But they are not unique to Eastern Europe. There is a Western example of the same pattern which we should have learned from long ago, in Quebec, the French-speaking province of Canada.

The French-speaking Quebecois were oppressed for centuries under the rule of England and then of English-speaking Canada. Anglo-Canadians held prejudices against the French-speakers quite comparable to anti-black racism in Britain.

In the late 1960s a big Quebec-separatist movement emerged. The old separatist groups — small, very Catholic, traditionalist and right wing — were replaced by a big new party, the Parti Quebecois, social-democratic in tone, and eagerly supported by militant trade unions.

Quebecois started talking about themselves as the 'white niggers' of North America, and linking their cause with a world-wide fight against racism and colonialism. Most leftists were jubilant. The revolution was on its way.

Twenty years later, the Parti Quebecois has become a regular capitalist party of government in Quebec. There is no strong drive to make Quebec independent: instead Quebec nationalism has focused on issues of language rights.

Since 1969 the federal government of Canada has given the French language spoken by 30 per cent of its people absolutely equal status to the English language spoken by 70 per cent. Quebec nationalists, however, felt that the



same sort of approach in Quebec — giving the English language preferred by 20 per cent of Quebec people equal status with French would just mean continued English domination.

To redress the balance, it was necessary to make French the sole official language. This meant, for example, that it became very difficult for English-speakers to have their children educated in English.

The reaction of Quebec's French speakers like that of the Moldavians, was understandable. But its results were to increase bitterness and divert the Quebec labour movement into a blind alley. Those who suffered were not just the racists and the fat cats, but also ordinary English-speaking workers, and migrants from countries like Italy and Poland, who had generally made English rather than French their second language.

It is a sad story. What makes it sadder is that much of the left continues to support the demand for French-language domination in Quebec — and *Socialist Worker* for example, last week, supported the demand for local-language domination in Moldavia. "To argue for... keeping both Russian and local language as official does nothing to redress the years of discrimination. The current strikes by Russian speaking workers are reactionary..."

For sixty years or so after World War 1, national conflicts were overwhelmingly battles between colonial peoples, fighting for liberation and oppressive great powers. Today we have many more complex conflicts.

It is time the left stopped trying to cram every national conflict into the mould of a colonial liberation struggle, and returned to the Marxist classics, learning from what Lenin and other Marxists wrote about the complex national and communal conflicts in Eastern Europe in their day.

workers' fight

160 — June 14th to 21st 1975

ARMY AIDS ORANGE TERROR

THE ARMY POINTS THE FINGER — AND THE ORANGE THUGS POINT THEIR GUNS

Their links with Protestant-bigot murder gangs are no aberration, but an organic part of the structure by which Northern Ireland is maintained.

The hidden tide of violence

WOMEN'S EYE

By Joanne Richards

One in ten women were sexually assaulted on the streets last year, according to a survey published in *Company* magazine last week.

Of the 5,000 women taking part in the survey — most of them single and under 25 — over half said they had been followed home by men. 37% had been the victims of indecent exposure; another 42% had been touched; and a horrifying 10% suffered serious sexual assaults, including rape.

This is a tide of violence far worse than fights between football fans, but getting one-hundredth of the publicity.

The vast majority of women live

under a self-imposed curfew, with 90% too scared to walk the streets alone after dark. Nowhere was deemed 'safe' territory — bus stops, taxi ranks and shopping centres were all voted as places where an attack was likely.

Only one woman in 100 would use the Tube after dark, and just 14% were happy to travel by night buses.

For many women the fear of assault is compounded by the belief that no-one would come to their aid if they were attacked: a mere 1% thought a scream for help would bring assistance.

Less than a third of women would bother reporting the attack to the police — doubtless because they don't believe they'll get a sympathetic hearing.

Indeed, the fact that over half the women reported that they deliberately dressed "drably" when going out at night in an attempt to stave off attack reveals that women still believe they will be blamed for "provoking" men into sexually assaulting them. After all, judges

are constantly lecturing us about men's uncontrollable, rampant urges...

The answer for some women is self-defence — one in ten women now carry weapons, including knives, as well as the more "traditional" defences of cans of hairspray and keys. But even carrying these things can be a criminal offence, and using them is as likely to land the woman in court as her attacker!

Immediate remedies to make the streets safer for women would include improved street lighting, free and accessible self-defence classes, and better staffed, more frequent public transport.

The remedy favoured by three-quarters of the women surveyed — harsher sentencing — is no solution. What we need to do is change men's attitudes towards women, stop them seeing us as ever-available sexual objects. Locking men up for longer periods in brutalising conditions is going to do nothing — for the attackers or their victims.

Fight for the right to study! Defend student unions!

By Paul McGarry
(NUS NEC, personal capacity)

The student movement faces its biggest challenge in recent years.

It faces a Tory government that is serious about introducing a system of student loans, and moving towards legislation designed to break up the National Union of Students (NUS).

The Tories seem likely to unveil precise plans for loans and voluntary membership at their conference in October or in the Queen's Speech in mid-November.

Probably loans will first be introduced through a 'top-up' system, which means that an already diminished student grant will be supplemented by loans of £12,000. Then the grant element will be gradually cut and the loan element expanded.

Already the Great Education Reform Bill has included the effective privatisation of Higher and Further Education. The move towards loans also fits snugly into the restructuring of the education system that the Tories want.

Out go notions of education as a right or education for its own sake. In comes the American model of education for industry and profit, and education regulated by market forces.

This is another piece in the Thatcherite jigsaw which already includes the conscription of 16-18 year olds onto YTS, pressure on Higher and Further Education colleges to become profit-seeking units in an education 'market', and the horrors of the effects of the GER-Bill in primary and secondary education.

Britain's already discriminatory education system will become ever more discriminatory. Sections of society — working-class, women, mature, black and disabled students — traditionally excluded from Higher Education will be increasingly deterred by financial considerations. The Tories' talk of increasing the numbers of students in Higher Education by 50,000 just sounds ironic.

The loan system, and consequent pressure to repay, will push graduates towards better-paid jobs and away from professions such as teaching and jobs in the voluntary sector. So education will be harmed from another angle, too.

It is also likely that this parliamentary session will see some form of restrictive legislation

against NUS and individual student loans. The recent flurry of articles in the quality and education press, and the setting up of a Parliamentary Group of anti-NUS MPs, confirm this.

No doubt there is some conflict between gung-ho Tory MPs, such as Rhodes Boyson and Tim Jarman, who want the complete dismantling of NUS and individual student unions, and those who take a more cautious attitude. However, one thing is certain — NUS is going to be hit.

The Conservative Collegiate Forum's (CCF) recent student-union-bashing document, 'Perestroika On Campus', shows that the racist, homophobic leadership of the Conservative student organisation is well organised and means business.

What kind of strategy can win? An honest assessment of the state of NUS is the first stage towards an informed analysis.

Unfortunately the student movement is blessed with a group of 'leaders' devoid of both ideas and the ability to formulate a fighting strategy. To beat loans and defend student unions, the hotch-potch of Kinnockites, CPers, right-wing independents and fellow travellers who dominate the NUS National Executive Committee are relying on the same strategy that has failed the student movement so many times before: get the support of 'public opinion'; get the support of dissident Tory MPs; get the Labour Party and SLD to make a good parliamentary intervention; and back all this up with respectable student activity.

The support of public opinion is to be welcomed, but such an approach does not deal with what is necessary to defeat the Tories. Public opinion did not save the Greater London Council or the nurses.

But if we pursue middle-class public opinion on its terms, inevitably we end up dropping the more radical of NUS's policies. Anyway, the Tories are serious about the dismantling of the education system as it exists. A bit of back-bench lobbying will not change their minds.

Students need an alternative. Left Unity supporters are arguing for a radically different perspective. We base ourselves on student self-activity linked to labour movement support.

At the moment the Tories are faltering. They are unpopular because of the Poll Tax, distrusted on the National Health Service, and hurt by the victories of NALGO and the rail workers. The prospects



'Beat the Blues' student demonstration

in a fight for the right to education seem better than at any time since the miners' strike.

Left Unity is arguing that the student movement should take up the following strategy. Firstly, the defensive nature of the struggles has to be challenged.

NUS needs a positive package of demands to:

- meet the Tories head on in the battle of ideas;
- mobilise its membership beyond 'No to Loans';
- pull the Further Education sector into the struggle on a new basis. FE students need mandatory awards and better discretionary awards.

It is the job of NUS to 'integrate' the battle against loans into other campaigns, capturing the maximum energy for the central battle against their loans system.

The slogan should be 'Fight for the Right to Study — Defend NUS'. NUS needs to have an alternative vision of education. But more than that, this vision has to be linked to action.

Organising demonstrations, occupations and other direct action around the time of Tory Party Conference and the Queen's Speech will focus on the need and power of self-activity. But other questions will arise, for example, what will a future Labour Government's policy on education look like?

The present Policy Reviews contain no commitment to adequate funding of education, and the question of the level of the student grant is fudged. It seems that Labour Students' leadership are even prepared to accept the idea of a Graduate Tax (already implemented by the Labor government in Australia). Recent articles in the *Times* imply this.

A Kinnock Labour Government seems certain to attack education as well as working-class living standards. Raising positive demands for a decent education system during coming struggles will act as a pole of attraction for activists, as Labour Students' leadership side with Kinnock's denunciations of radical action and plans for a Graduate Tax.

It is also essential that student activists understand the inter-relationships between the various attacks. Under the Labour Students' leadership, NUS has become increasingly irrelevant to its

membership. Calls for the defence of NUS have to be linked to, and indeed are *conditional* on, a real struggle against loans. NUS only becomes something worth defending when it proves it can deliver in the fight to preserve our living standards and rights to education.

So the fight against loans is central to the success of the battle against voluntary membership.

It is not adequate to simply lump the Poll Tax on top of the loans and voluntary membership issues. To do so without explanation or understanding — as groups like the Militant do — clouds up the issues that activists must get grips with.

Loans and voluntary membership are student-specific issues. The Poll Tax is not, and its defeat will need a struggle by the whole of the labour movement. To see only the similarities and miss some of the obvious differences between the issues skews our strategy.

A political framework which understands the roles of student action and Labour movement support, and the dynamics of campaigns, is being concretised by Left Unity. To take forward the debate on activity and action further, activists must:

- support the MANUS demonstration on 18 October;
- come to the conference on Loans and Voluntary Membership organised by Kent Area NUS for 4 November in London;
- come to the lobby of Parliament on 20 October (the day that loans is being debated), also called by Kent Area NUS;
- a co-ordinated wave of occupations in response to the Queen's Speech, linked to a national demonstration, is central to building a national campaign that is

adequate to beat the Tories. This perspective must be closely tied to the work of building activists' networks in the colleges, links with workers in campus trade unions and the pressing task of replacing the ridiculous leadership of NUS.

All the indications are that the New Realism of Labour Students has led them to the conclusion that all they can do is wait for a Labour government to help them out, and meanwhile maybe win a few concessions from the Tories on Housing Benefits. These people have failed the student movement on every occasion.

Others on the left have also failed to understand the most elementary of ideas. Militant and their front organisation, Further Education Labour Students, have belatedly arrived at crude versions of ideas we advocated three years ago. Those ideas are not only gutted of the need to build an activist movement in NUS, but are banally repeated as propaganda tied to slogans about future socialist Labour governments.

Militant tend to argue that students *can't win* anything without the help of the labour movement. Tweedledee, the SWP, don't even attempt to formulate a policy beyond 'more militant student action'. This is just student syndicalism.

Despite their inadequacies, Left Unity will be looking to build joint action with all the left groups, Greens and independent activists. NUS desperately needs a non-sectarian fighting left to save it from the Tories.

Join Left Unity: £2.50 (grant)/50p (no grant) — c/o 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Thursday 14 September

Leeds SO: 'How to beat the poll tax'. Coburg pub, 7.30

Sunday 17 September

North London SO: 'In Defence of the French Revolution'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

Monday 18 September

Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture: 'The Importance of being Marxist', by Boris Kagarlitsky, New Theatre, LSE, 7.30

Thursday 21 September

Newcastle SO: 'The Alternative to the Policy Review'. Moorside School, 7.30

Saturday 23 September

Campaign Group of Labour MPs: one day seminar — 'Planning for Victory'. Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N7, 11.30. Conference fee £2, to Jeremy Corbyn, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N7

Sunday 24 September

North London SO: 'Solidarity with China's workers and students'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

Thursday 28 September

Nottingham SO: 'What is

socialism?'. International Community Centre, Mansfield Road, 7.30

Friday 29 September

Leeds Socialist Organiser and Socialist Outlook debate: 'Where is the USSR going?' Leeds Poly Student Union, 7.30

Sunday 1 October

North London SO: 'Social Democracy goes Thatcherite'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

Sunday 1 October

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign: 'Sandinista Sprint', sponsored run and dance for Nicaragua. Brockwell Park, Brixton, SW9, 11.00. Details from NSC, 23 Beviden St, London N1 6BH (253 0246)

Tuesday 3 October

Canterbury SO: 'Socialists and the Labour Party'. KJCR III

Saturday 7 October

Socialist Lecturers' Alliance: 'NAT-FHE 1989 Pay Claim Action Conference'. New Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Details from Barry Lovejoy, 25 Philip Victor Rd, Birmingham B20

Sunday 8 October

Socialist Platform Memorial Meeting for Harry Wicks. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1, 3.00

Monday 9 October

Sheffield SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'. SCCAU, 73 West St, 7.30

Fight for the right to study! Defend NUS!

Manchester Area NUS demo

Wednesday 18 October

Assemble 1.30, All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester

Details, posters, camera-ready artwork — phone 061 736 3636

How the capitalists remember their revolutions

This article by the Russian Marxist George Plekhanov was written for the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution in 1889. He takes issue with a bourgeois historian of the time, Paul Janet, who supported the Revolution but regretted and denounced its most radical phase, in 1793-4. This year, on the 200th anniversary of the Revolution, some bourgeois historians, like Simon Schama, have been denouncing the whole revolution, even its most moderate phase in 1789-90. Others, like Francois Furet, have advanced arguments parallel to Janet's. Plekhanov shows why these attempts by the bourgeoisie to lay the ghost of its revolutionary past distort the real history.

England passed through her revolutionary storms in the 17th century, and there were then two revolutions: the first led, among other things, to the execution of Charles I, while the second ended with an animated banquet and the rise of a new dynasty.

But the English bourgeoisie, in the evolution of these revolutions, manifests very divergent views: while the first, in its eyes, does not even deserve the name "revolution" and is simply referred to as "the great rebellion", the second is given a more euphonious appellation; it is called "the glorious revolution". The secret of this differentiation in the evaluation of the two revolutions has already been revealed by Augustin Thierry in his theses about the English revolutions.

In the first revolution, the people played an important role, while in the second the people participated hardly at all. When, however, a people mounts the stage of history and begins to decide the destinies of its country, according to its power and best understanding, then the higher classes (in this case the bourgeoisie) get out of humour. Because the people is always "raw" and, if the revolutionary devil

begins to pervade it, also becomes "coarse", the higher classes have a way of always insisting upon politeness and gentle manners — at least they demand these of the people. This is the reason why the higher classes are always inclined to put upon revolutionary movements, if prominently participated in by the people, the stamp of "rebellions".

The history of France is particularly rich in "great rebellions" as well as in "glorious revolutions". Only in France, so far as the historic sequence of events is concerned, matters happened in a manner opposite to the one that prevailed in the England of the 17th century. In England, for instance, "the great rebellion" preceded "the glorious revolution", while in France "the glorious revolutions" usually had to give way to "the great rebellions". This fact repeated itself in the entire course of the 19th century.

Upon the heels of "the glorious revolution" of 1830 in Paris followed the rather sizeable "great rebellion" of the weavers in Lyon, which gave the whole bourgeoisie such a great fright; upon "the glorious revolution" of February 1848, glorified even by Lamartine, followed "the great June rebellion", which prompted the bourgeoisie to seek refuge in the arms of a military dictatorship; and upon the "most glorious" September revolution of 1870 followed, finally, in March of the subsequent year, the "greatest of all French rebellions". The bourgeoisie now claims that the "great rebellions" have always injured the cause of "the glorious revolutions". We cannot here consider the correctness of this claim in its application to the 19th century, but must yield the floor to the bourgeois philosophers about the events of the 18th century.

Toward the end of that century there took place in France a "great rebellion" and a "glorious revolution" of 1789; "the great rebellion" played its part largely in 1793. After what has already been said, the reader will now be able to predict with certainty what the bourgeois philosopher, Paul Janet, thinks of those revolutionary movements.

In the final chapter of his book, Janet says: "In order to arrive at an objective evaluation of the French Revolution, one must in regard to it differentiate three things: the purpose, the means, and the results obtained. The purpose of the revolution — to gain civic equality and political freedom — was the most sublime, the most legitimate a people has ever striven to attain." But the means were bad: "only too frequently they were forcible, terrible."

So far as the results are concerned, civic equality, according to Janet, has been fully attained and leaves nothing to be wished for; "political freedom", however, "obtains in France since the revolution only sporadically and to this day is more or less endangered." It will be secure only when the French people shall dispense with all forcible, unlawful methods and shall learn once for all to look upon their revolution as finished, and, finally, when the revolution itself has passed into the historic past as irrevocably as has already been the case with the revolutions in England and in the United States. "The at-

tainments of the revolution should be held fast, but there must be renunciation of the revolutionary spirit and of forcible and unlawful means."

Very good. But let us not forget that revolutionary means had been employed since 1789, that is, not only at the time of "the great rebellion", but also during "the glorious revolution". Is "the glorious revolution" to be condemned by Paul Janet because of its forcible means? But no — on the contrary. In his description, the acts of force practiced during "the glorious revolution" appear fully justified, highly useful, and thoroughly efficacious. He speaks very commendably of the popular insurrections directed against royalty, aye, he seeks to prove that, without these uprisings, the government would have smothered all the reforms of the national assembly in embryo, and that the great aims of the revolution would then have remained unattainable.

The storming of the Bastille he hails as "the first victorious appearance of the people of Paris on the revolutionary stage"; and in the same approving manner he expresses himself about the second appearance of the same people on the same stage, about the events of October 5 and 6, and also about the storming of the Tuileries. Arrived there, *nota bene*, after Janet has proved the inevitable necessity of eliminating a king who was negotiating with the enemy at the very outset of the war, he adds in a melancholy vein: "France became gradually accustomed to solving political questions with such sorry means." But he does not tell us with what other means the given and unpostponable task might have been accomplished.

Only after the storming of the Tuileries, that is, after this last necessary uprising, according to Janet, do the people of Paris, under the pen of our historian, gradually become transformed into a mob governed by the lowest passions. Now it becomes clear: a "rebellion" is quite acceptable, only one must not permit oneself to be led astray by low passions — does the bourgeois historian want to be understood in that sense? Not at all. We are at once informed that now, "the glorious revolution" being over, all insurrections lack both sense and justification. Now we have it at last. The king has fallen, the nobility has been destroyed, the bourgeoisie has been lifted on the shield — what more does the heart wish for? Now be quiet, after you have on this earth done all that belongs to the earth. Who, unless it be the common mob, would think of insurrection?

Next! As could have been expected, Paul Janet extends his sympathy to all the parties that successively stood at the head of the movement, except the party of the Mountain. Upon the latter he pours the whole vial of his wrath; for this party he reserves all his strong language and epithets.

Between these miscreants and the "manly, generous Gironde", Janet draws this interesting parallel: "The ones, like the others, wanted the republic". But while "The Girondists aimed at a free, lawful, mild republic, the Montagnards strove for a despotic, cruel republic. Without attention to liberty, the latter prized only equality. True, both

parties favoured the sovereignty of the people, but with the difference that the Girondists righteously wanted to include among 'the people' all the citizens, while for the Montagnards, in keeping with the perversity still current today, the people consisted only of members of the working class, of persons living by their own labour. Consequently, according to the Montagnards, to rule should be the prerogative of this class alone."

The political programme of the Girondists, therefore, differed essentially from that of the Montagnards. Whence this difference? Paul Janet himself gives us sufficient information about that. The difference proceeded from the fact that the Mountain party, as we have seen, conceived of the mutual relations of the then existing social classes in a way different from that of the Gironde. The latter "would have it understood that the people included all the citizens", while the former considered only the working class as "the people"; the other classes, according to the Montagnards, were no part of "the people", because the interests of these classes were contrary to those of the working class.

And, strictly speaking, the Girondists themselves did not include in "the people" all the citizens, i.e. the entire French nation of the time, but only the third estate. Did they include in "the people" the aristocracy and the higher clergy? Not at all. Did not Abbé Sieyès himself, who never went so far as the Girondists, in his brochure *'Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?'* ["What is the Third Estate?"] set "the people", that is, the third estate, without compunction against the small aggregation of the privileged, i.e. the nobility and the higher clergy?

The Girondists, who fought the "privileged" far more decisively, no doubt agree with Sieyès about that. If, for all that, their conception of "the people" was so different from that of the Montagnards, this may be explained only by the fact that the Mountain party had gone one step further, in that it classed as "privileged" also such social institutions as appeared to the Girondists sacrosanct and necessary. It was a contested question which classes really should be regarded as "privileged". But that shows — and Paul Janet's explanations leave room for no other interpretation — that according to the Montagnards all persons and classes that live by "labour", but the labour of others and not their own, belong in that category of the "privileged".

We must now seek to clear up the point of why the defenders of the cause of the working class inclined towards a "despotic and cruel" republic. Why did they not rather appear as adherents of a "lawful, free, and mild" republic? This circumstance must be traced back to two causes, one external, the other internal. Let us turn, first, to the external cause, that is, to the relations then existing between revolutionary France and the other European states.

The condition of France, at the time the Mountain party seized power, was most desperate, aye, it was hopeless. Janet says: "Enemy troops invaded French territory from four sides: from the north, the English and Austrians; in Alsacia,



The French royal family in 1789

the Prussians; in the Dauphine, proceeding as far as the city of Lyon, the Piedmontese; and in Roussillon, the Spaniards. And all this at a time when civil war raged on four sides: in Normandy, in the Vendee, in Lyon, and in Toulon." Aside from these open foes there were the secret adherents of the old regime scattered all over France, who were ready surreptitiously to aid the enemy.

The government, which had taken up the struggle against these innumerable inner and outer foes, had neither money nor sufficient troops — it could count on nothing but a boundless energy, the active support of the revolutionary elements of the country, and the colossal courage to shrink from no measure, however arbitrary, illegal or ruthless, so long as it was necessary for the defence of the country.

After the Montagnards had called to arms the entire French youth, without being able to supply the newly formed armies even partially with arms and food out of the slender means flowing to them from taxation, they resorted to requisitions, confiscations, forced loans, decreed rates of exchange for the *assignats* — in short and in fine, they forced upon the sacred possessing classes money sacrifices, all in the interest of an imperiled country for which the people were sacrificing blood.

These forcible measures were absolutely necessary if France were to be saved. There was no depending upon voluntary money contributions — Janet himself admits that. The iron determination and energy



The Jacobin leader Maximilien Robespierre

of the government were also necessary to spur to the limit of effort all the fresh forces of France — Janet admits that, too. But he, Paul Janet, would rather have seen the dictatorship in the hands of the “noble and magnanimous Gironde” than in those of the abominable Montagnards. Had the Girondists emerged victorious from the struggle with the Mountain, then they too, according to the author, “they too would have been forced to quell the royalist insurrections, beat down the opposition party, repel the invasions, and it may be doubted whether, without the dictatorship, they would have been able to cope with all these evils. But their dictatorship would have been less bloodthirsty and would have given more scope to law and liberty.”

But upon which layers of the population would the gentle Girondists have been able to lean? When, after their defeat in Paris, they sought help in the provinces, they found there only the passive help of — to use Janet’s expression — “the dilatory and lukewarm” middle class and the malignant support of the royalists, which they themselves had to reject. And could they reckon with a more effective support on the part of their adherents in the struggle with the foreign foes? The Gironde never did and never would find favour with the lowest, the most revolutionary layer of the population, least of all in Paris. That part of the population evidently entertained views about “the people” and its interests quite different from those of the Gironde, so vastly admired by Janet

because of its magnanimity.

It was just this circumstance which brought about the fall of the Gironde and the victory of the Mountain. The former was almost exclusively confined to the forces of “the dilatory and lukewarm middle class”. Could anything substantial be accomplished with such allies? No, the moderate and liberal Gironde never would have been able to rescue France from the critical condition in which she found herself enmeshed in 1793.

It was the external situation of France that made the dictatorship, the one of the Montagnards, a necessity. And once a dictatorship was needed, all the talk about a “free, lawful, and mild” republic became simply ridiculous. The revolutionary dictatorship necessarily had to be as rigid and as ruthless as the external foes who had called it into being; just like the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, and like the threats of a reactionary Europe against France.

Let us now proceed to the internal causes which made it impossible for the Montagnards to find a “free, lawful, and mild” republic to their taste. Here we must first of all direct the attention of the reader to the famous rights of man and of the citizen. Among these we find many rights which conform to the interests of the lowest class of the population; but we also find among them one toward which this class, from the very outset, was compelled to maintain a peculiar and contradictory attitude. We refer to the right of property.

How would, for instance, a Paris “sansculotte” (literally a man

without pants [*culottes*], a nickname resembling the English word “ragamuffin”) conceive of this right, when his very name shows that he himself is bare of all property? How could he proceed to exercise this wonderful right conceded to him? There was no lack of examples lying near to his hand. The bourgeoisie had taken unto itself many a piece of aristocratic church property — why should he not now do the same with bourgeois property?

The *sansculotte* at that time had to pass through many hard, albeit many merry days. Often he had to endure hunger in the most literal sense of the term, and hunger, as is well known, is a bad counsellor. Thereupon our has-nothing began to exhibit a great nonchalance toward bourgeois property. The bourgeoisie resisted that as well as it knew how.

How this social struggle was bound to affect the political life is obvious. The “mob” gathered in a party of its own and raised the Montagnards upon the shield. The “mob” of that day knew how to fight and soon obtained control. And then there was obviously nothing left for it to do but to use the political power just attained to call into being social institutions under which the right to property would no longer sound like bitter mockery. But for the proletariat of that day, as well as for the modern proletariat, this was possible only under one condition — the total abolition of private property in the means of production and the social organisation of production.

But the latter, under the condi-

tions then prevailing, was simply unthinkable for two closely connected reasons: the proletariat of that day did not possess the requisite capacity, nor did the means of production of that day meet even the elementary requirements for socialisation. Therefore, neither the proletariat of that time nor its most advanced representatives could even conceive of the idea. It is true that in prerevolutionary French literature we find a few communist utopias, but these, for the reasons stated, could find neither currency nor recognition.

Under these circumstances, what was left for the momentarily victorious “mob” to do? If socialisation of the means of production was not to be thought of, then private property therein necessarily must continue, and the indigent populace was limited to casual and forcible encroachments upon its realm. And because of such encroachments the “mob” is being blamed by all bourgeois historians to this very day. Forcible encroachments upon the realm of private property made a “lawful” republic an impossibility, because the law was framed to protect just that private property.

No more could the republic be “mild”, because the possessing classes naturally did not tolerate, with their hands in their laps, such interference with their property, but, on the contrary, eagerly sought for an opportunity to put an end to such nonchalant “mob rule”. The struggle between the proletariat of that day and the possessing classes, fatedly and inevitably, had to be fought with terroristic weapons. By means of terror alone, in a condi-

tion replete with insoluble economic contradictions, could the proletariat then maintain its rule. Had the proletariat attained a higher stage of development and, on the other hand, had economic conditions been sufficiently advanced to secure its welfare, then there would have been no need for it to resort to measures of terror.

Let us have a look at the bourgeoisie, praised so highly by the historians because of its penchant for “lawfulness”. By no means did it leave its enemies in peace, nor in critical moments did it shrink from decisive measures; but its cause stood then upon such firm footing that it had no need to fear an opponent. Come to power during its “glorious” revolution, the bourgeoisie introduced the social order suited to its needs, and did it with such thoroughness that even the most stubborn reactionaries could thereafter scarcely think of abolishing it. If the latter had essayed an attempt in that direction, they would soon have become convinced of its utter facility.

Under such circumstances it was easy for the bourgeoisie to talk about “lawfulness”; when your cause has won and your enemies are hopelessly defeated, then the order of things most suitable to your interests becomes “lawful” — would you then still resort to unlawful means? You are certain that henceforth your privileges will be amply protected by law. The bourgeoisie strove for lawfulness in politics, because historic evolution had fully secured its triumph in economics.

8 FRENCH REVOLUTION

How the capitalists remember their revolutions

From page 7

In its place, the proletariat could not and would not have acted otherwise. That the spokesman of the "mob", the Montagnards, no less than the Girondists, held on high the principle of liberty and law is proved by the constitution they formulated, the freest ever written in France. The constitution introduced direct legislation by representatives of the people and limited the powers of the executive to a minimum. However, because of the entire external and internal conditions of France, it became impossible for the Montagnards to apply the constitution.

Generally speaking, it may be regarded as a rule permitting no exceptions, that a given social class or layer of the population, having come to power, will the more readily resort to measure of terror if its chances to retain power are small. In the 19th century, it had to become clear to the bourgeoisie that its rule over the proletariat was becoming more shaky every day and, in consequence, it now strives more and more for terroristic subjection of the same. Against the June insurgents it proceeded more ferociously than in 1831 against the weavers of Lyon; and in the suppression of the Communards of 1871 it acted far more atrociously than in June 1848.

The terror practiced by the bourgeoisie against the proletariat overshadows by far the atrocities of the Jacobins which, by the way, have been greatly exaggerated by the reactionaries. Robespierre, when compared with Thiers, looks like a veritable angel, and Marat, put side by side with the bourgeois press cossacks of the bloody May week, appears like a mild, benevolent being. He who looks deeper into the French history of our century must fully agree with the Russian writer, Herzen, when, after the June days, he said that there was no more ferocious government, and there could not be a more ferocious one, than that of the shopkeeper running amuck.

It was just this shopkeeper ferocity which made impossible a permanent consolidation of political freedom in France. The bourgeoisie must be held solely responsible for the reactionary lapses that typify the history of France in the 19th century. Even during the time of the Restoration the victory of the reactionaries was made much easier because the bourgeoisie, mortally afraid of the workers, for a long time prevented their entrance upon the struggle.

And now, for the sake of tranquillizing the bourgeois writers, who shudder at the mere thought of the Jacobin rule of terror, we shall present a truth which to us seems irrefutable. The victory of the working class, now impending in all civilised countries, is certain not to be marred by cruelty, because the victory of the cause of labour is made secure by the course of history to such an extent that no terror will be needed. Of course, the bourgeois reactionaries will be well advised if they abstain from trying to trip up a victorious proletariat, and are judicious enough not to imitate the royalist conspirators of the great revolution. "A la guerre comme a la guerre" (in war act as in war, i.e. as war makes necessary) is a true saying, and in the heat of the fight it might go hard with the plotters. But, we repeat, the entire course of historic evolution guarantees the success of the proletariat.

On the occasion of the celebration of the centennial anniversary of the great revolution, the French bourgeoisie has almost purposely proceeded to demonstrate to the proletariat *ad oculos* (to the eyes) the economic possibility and necessity of a social transformation.

The world exhibition gave it an excellent demonstration of the unprecedented development of the means of production in all civilised countries, which has outwined the boldest fantasies of the utopians of the preceding century. In keeping therewith, the emancipation of the proletariat, instead of the noble dream it was at the time of Babeuf, has become an historic necessity.

The exhibition has shown, furthermore, that the modern development of the means of production, under the anarchic conditions governing production, must logically and necessarily lead to industrial crises ever more destructive to world economy. In order to escape the dangerous consequences of these crises, nothing is left for the European proletariat but to lay the foundation stone for the planful organisation of social production which, for the *sansculottes* of the past century, was a thing impossible. Not only do the modern production forces make possible such an organisation, but they tend in that direction. Without such an organisation the full utilisation of these forces is not to be thought of.

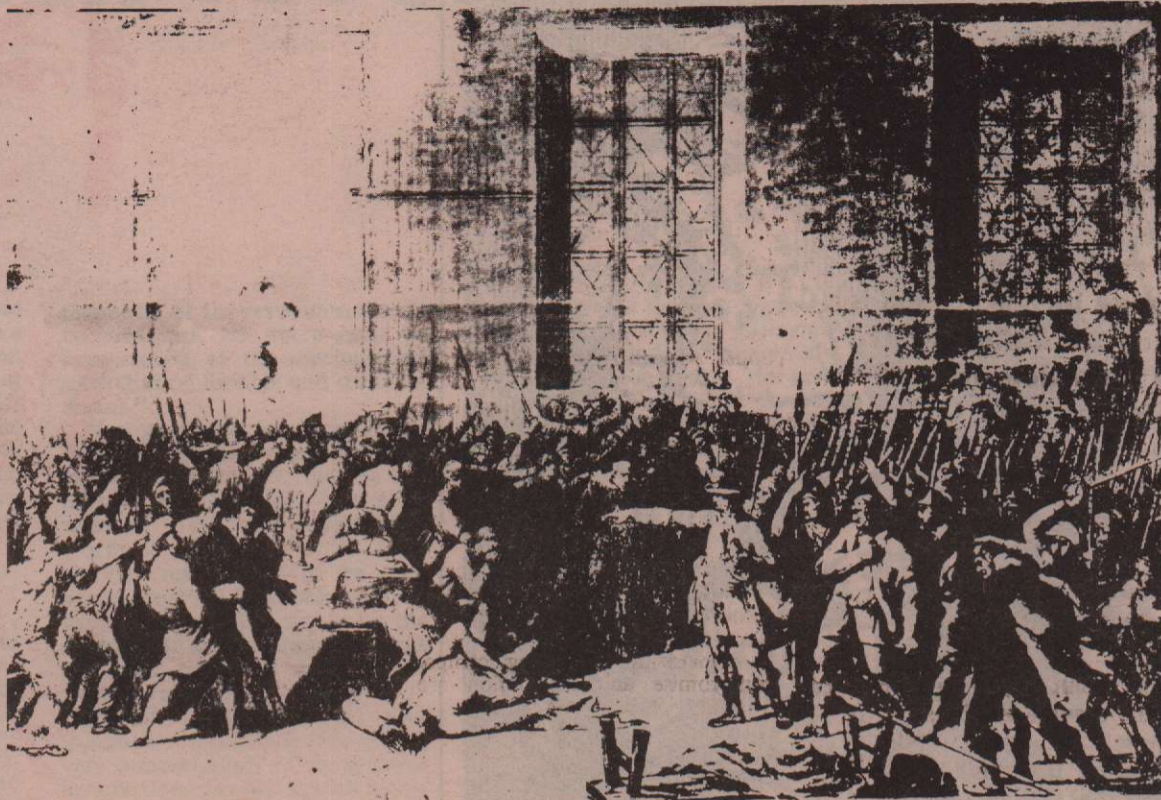
In the modern mechanical workshop production has already taken on a social character; all that is now needed is to bring into harmony the different productive functions in these workshops and, in keeping therewith, transform the ownership of the product, i.e. change it from private to social ownership. To attain this aim will be the task of the European proletariat. The International Socialist Congress, meeting in July 1989, did not fail to remind the proletariat of this great task.

And now back to our philosopher, Paul Janet, of whom we have lost sight for a while. Just now he presents himself with the assertion that one "must remain true to the spirit of the revolution, but must reject the revolutionary spirit." In other words, manning must be satisfied with the results of the great revolution attained by the bourgeoisie, but must not take another step forward.

But we hold the very opposite is true. The aims of the bourgeoisie cannot possibly be those of the working class, and the results attained by the former cannot satisfy the latter. And, therefore, the workers go one step further when they reject the bourgeois spirit of the great revolution, but remain true to the revolutionary spirit. To remain true to that means to struggle ceaselessly and fearlessly for a better future, to struggle implacably against all that is old and obsolete.

The bourgeoisie would fain instill into the workers' minds the idea that modern society knows no class divisions, because the foundation of the modern state is the equality of all before the law. But this formal equality can console the workers as little as, under the old regime, the proclaimed equality of all before God satisfied the bourgeoisie; not content with this fantastic equality, the bourgeoisie did not rest until it had come into possession of all possible mundane goods. Small wonder then that the proletariat will not be content with juristic fictions, knowing full well that economic inequality must in real life render illusory all other equality.

In much the same manner the bourgeoisie would make the workers believe that, today, there is nothing more to be done in the realm of the economy and that, therefore, one must only indulge in the game of "pure" politics. But "pure politics" means for the workers nothing but kite-tail politics in the service of the bourgeois parties, and the bourgeoisie is fully aware of the significance of this brand of "pure politics", at least such was the case



The arrest of Robespierre, July 1794

when it was engaged in the struggle with the nobility and clergy.

In the brochure "*Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat*" ["What is the Third Estate"] once before mentioned, which must be regarded as the programme of the bourgeoisie of 1789, the sophistries of the "pure politicians", then to be found in the two upper estates, were refuted with much talent. Abbé Sieyès insisted that the nation, as a matter of fact, was divided into two camps, in the one, the privileged; in the other, the oppressed; and that this actual division must be reflected in politics. It was natural and understandable that the privileged should seek to preserve their interests by means of political measures; but the oppressed also must not neglect the safeguarding of their interests, and should appear as a unified party in the newly opened political arena.

To this very day this lesson has not suffered in either sense or importance. Conditions have changed only insofar as the bourgeoisie today occupies a privileged position. And what else is now left for the workers but to close their ranks in a separate party of the oppressed, standing in opposition to the privileged bourgeoisie?

At the end of the 18th century, at the time of "the great rebellion" of the French "mob", the class antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat was present only in embryo. For that reason the class consciousness of the proletarians had to be rather unclear. When, in the course of this treatise, we tried to explain the argumentation of Paul Janet relative to the Jacobin conceptions of "the people", we ascribed to them an attitude antagonistic to all classes living on the labour of others. That was really the only possible meaning of the argument of the author.

However, this is correct only insofar as the Montagnards, in reality and instinctively, always strove to defend the interests of the poorest class of the population. This was so because in their conception there was present a feature which, in the course of further evolution, would have taken on a thoroughly bourgeois character. This feature shows up plainly in the speeches of Robespierre. And through it is to be explained the struggle of the Jacobins against the Hebertists, and in general their struggle against the so-called agrarian legislation.

But these "agrarian laws", as their adherents pictured them to themselves, contained nothing that

was of a communist character. Private property, and the petty bourgeois purposes closely connected therewith, forced themselves into the programmes of even the most extreme revolutionists of the time. Babeuf alone took a different stand; he appeared in the last act of the great tragedy, when the strength of the proletariat had already been wholly exhausted in the preceding struggles. The party of the Mountain failed just because of that innermost contradiction between its petty bourgeois conceptions and its endeavour to be a representative of proletarian interests.

To the present-day representatives of the working class these contradictions are foreign, because modern, scientific socialism is nothing but the theoretic expression of the unbridgeable antagonism of interests between bourgeoisie and proletariat. The impending victory of the working class under the banner of socialism is going to be far more glorious than all the "glorious" revolutions of the bourgeoisie put together.

Force, naked force, based upon bayonets and cannon, becomes more and more the only support of bourgeois rule. And candid "theoreticians" make their appearance, who admit without further ado that the prevailing bourgeois order cannot be justified theoretically, and does not require such justification — because the bourgeoisie controls the public powers. Thus, for instance, speaks an Austrian professor, Gumplowicz, in his book "The Political State and Socialism".

When the representatives of the nobility and clergy, in one of the first sessions of the estates, fell back upon the foundation of their privileges — the historic right of conquest — the theoretician of the bourgeoisie, Abbé Sieyès, proudly replied: "*Rien que cela, messieurs? Nous serons conquérants a notre tour!*" — which means, "Nothing but that, gentlemen? Well, we too shall be conquerors in our turn!"

And the working class must say just that to the advocates of bourgeois force.

Dates

- 5 May 1789: King Louis XVI convenes the Estates General.
- 17 June 1789: The 'Third Estate' (everyone except the nobles and the clergy) declare themselves the National Assembly.
- 14 July 1789: Storming of the Bastille, the royal prison in Paris.

4 August 1789: National Assembly decrees abolition of feudal privileges.

5 October 1789: Women march from Paris to the royal palace at Versailles, force the king to come to Paris and to ratify the decisions of the National Assembly.

20 June 1791: King attempts to escape from Paris to join counter-revolutionaries abroad; is intercepted and brought back.

20 April 1792: France declares war on Austria, whose monarchy has family links with France's.

10 August 1792: People of Paris storm the Tuilleries (the royal palace in Paris); bring the Girondin faction to power.

21 January 1793: King Louis XVI guillotined.

March 1793: Mass counter-revolutionary peasant rising in the Vendée district of western France.

4 May 1793: First 'Law of the Maximum', fixing maximum prices for bread.

29-30 May 1793: Lyon, France's second city, taken over by moderates and counter-revolutionaries.

31 May-2 June 1793: New rising in Paris results in the expulsion of the Girondin leaders from the Convention (parliament) and the rise to power of the Jacobin or Montagnard faction.

5 September 1793: Rising in Paris pushes Jacobin government towards the policies of the Terror: sweeping price and wage controls, "revolutionary armies" to requisition grain from the countryside, the guillotine for counter-revolutionaries.

27 July 1794: ("Thermidor" by the revolutionary calendar) the Jacobin leader Robespierre is ousted and guillotined, and soon power shifts from the Jacobins to the moderates.

Names

The **Girondin** faction were the most moderate republicans, so called because many of their leaders came from the Gironde area, round the great port of Bordeaux.

The **Mountain, Montagnard, or Jacobin** faction were the most radical wing of the bourgeoisie. Their leaders were Robespierre, Danton, Marat, and Saint-Just.

"**Sans-culottes**": according to all modern research, the decisive force in all the sans-culotte institutions were not those who had no property at all — labourers, servants, beggars, and so on — but urban working people who were also small property-owners, shopkeepers, craft workers with small workshops, cafe owners, and so on. There was no cohesive industrial working class in the modern sense.

"**Agrarian laws**": proposals to divide up the land equally and give everyone a smallholding.

Will apartheid be negotiated away?

Both the South African government and the opposition groups around the African National Congress are talking about negotiations in South Africa, though the conditions set for talks by the two sides are still miles apart. This article from the Cape Action League, a socialist group in South Africa, reviews the prospects.

At one end of the spectrum of possibilities, the presumed framework within which such a negotiated settlement would be hammered out is some confederal-federal constitution based on ethnic/racial groups. At present, only the compradore black middle class is willing to go that way. Very recently in Munich, West Germany, even the wily Chief Buthelezi has indicated that he and his party are willing to consider that road provided certain other conditions such as the release of all political prisoners were effected. Quite logically, therefore, the National Party government is at present "negotiating" with precisely these compradore elements.

At the other end of the spectrum, the presumed framework within which a settlement would be negotiated is the unitary, non-racial, non-ethnic South African state. This is the direction within which the vast majority of the people of South Africa are moving. This is indeed the mass line of the liberation movement at present. This is what has given to the Charterist movement, taken globally, the popularity it has experienced in recent years. For — let it be stated clearly — the armed propaganda of the African National Congress, together with the momentous insurrectionary wave of the period 1984-86, kindled in the hearts of the masses of South Africa the hope — a realistic one as many of them believed — that sooner rather than later the South African regime would move towards the negotiation table. For the moment, that particular option has led into a cul-de-sac.

By way of completing this discussion on the different possibilities of a negotiated settlement, let us state that most liberals in South Africa believe that some blending of colours, some centre-left point on the spectrum can be found where the two extremes can meet and avert a cataclysmic, Palestine or Lebanon-like conflict.

In this, they have recently been encouraged not only by most Western governments and liberal or social-democratic opposition groups but even more importantly by historic shifts in the Southern African strategy of the Soviet Union. If reports emanating from that country and papers by Soviet Africanists delivered and discussed at numerous seminars and conferences are anything to go by, it would seem that the Soviet leadership has become convinced that an armed conquest of power by the national liberation movement in South Africa is beyond the capacity of that movement (however

defined) and that, consequently, it would be more effective to work towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict in the rather distant future (at least ten years). As for socialism, Dr Victor Goncharov, who is said to be "a leading Soviet analyst on Africa", reckoned "optimistically" that perhaps in another 100 years South Africa would attain to this desirable state.

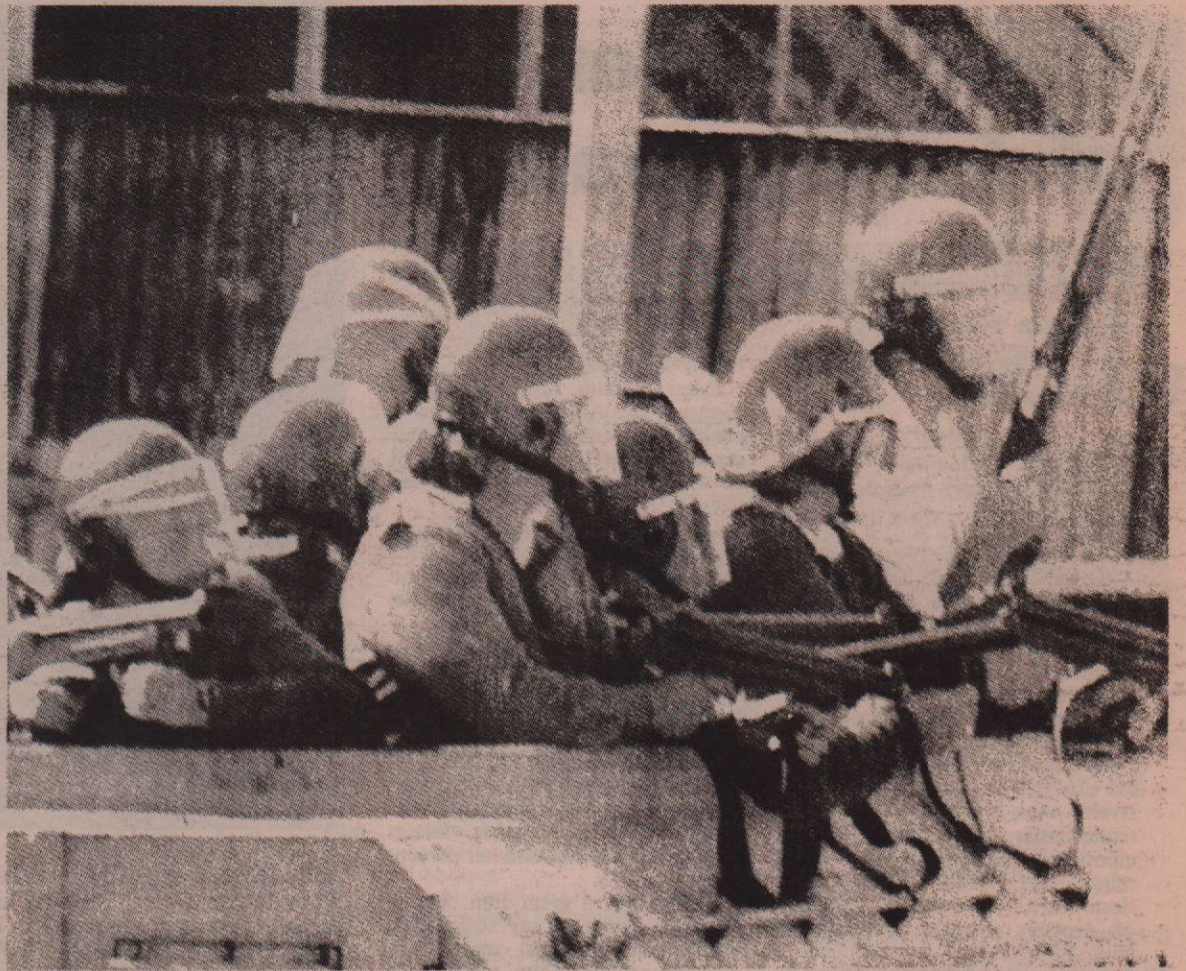
Be that as it may: we are entitled in terms of our analytical thrust, to raise the question under which conditions or circumstances a negotiated settlement between the South African ruling class and the black working class would be possible. Posed in this form, it immediately becomes evident that — as in every other civil war in which the major classes in a social formation are struggling for dominance — these conditions are extremely unlikely to occur.

Civil wars involving exploiting and exploited classes are seldom resolved by compromise; where strata of exploiting classes find themselves in conflicting camps, compromise and negotiation are certainly possible (compare, for example, the Philippines recently), but this is not the case in South Africa. One of the ineluctable consequences of the system of racial capitalism is that the black working class *has to and will* lead the struggle for liberation.

The black middle class *has to and does* decide whether to align itself with the black working class or with the white bourgeoisie in whatever guise; it cannot act independently and its class location in the racial capitalist order is such that it cannot win over the white bourgeoisie and the white working class to accept its preferred solutions. The stark choice before it is either to sell out (as some have done) to the racists or to go with the movement of the black working class. That movement, objectively, is not simply against racial discrimination but against class exploitation and hence against capitalism. It is a movement against apartheid understood as the present socio-economic and socio-political form of the racial capitalist system. We are not involved in a struggle against a feudal ruling class nor are we struggling directly against a foreign imperialist overlord. Our struggle is against the local white capitalist class and its domestic and foreign allies.

At present, a large section even of the organised black working class is trapped in the mystifying petty bourgeois belief that it is possible to disentangle racial discrimination and capitalist exploitation in the peculiar historical conditions of South Africa. All manner of academic buffoons and party political propagandists teach them that what is called "the system of racial domination" in South Africa was superimposed on "the system of class domination" which is notionally no different from that which obtains in any other capitalist society. At the bottom of this particular mystification lies an ideal-typical "capitalism" which has never existed anywhere except in the academic abstractions of free-enterprise economists starting with Adam Smith. Hence the deracialisation of the polluted capitalist system is seen as stage one of the struggle in South Africa. Consequently, a negotiated settlement which will leave the basic free enterprise system intact is postulated as a possibility that has to be made into a necessity.

It is our view that only the unlimited internationalisation of the conflict in South Africa could bring about conditions in which some such negotiated settlement would become possible. However, the military costs of such a course of action would be prohibitive and given the lack of any deep commit-



Riot police are the South African state's answer to the black working class. Negotiations are reserved for right-wing black politicians like Buthelezi.

ment to, or interest in, Southern Africa in all the most important capitalist nations and in the Soviet Union, it is unlikely that this path would prove to be popular. Even the first resort of the anti-apartheid movement, namely, the demand for comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the South African regime, cannot be implemented without a prohibitive mobilisation of resources by all the major industrial countries of the world.

Without this internationalisation, a negotiated settlement within the unitary framework referred to before is not going to come about. Botha, Heunis, Malan and Co., just like any other regime in any other African country will not hand over power to the leaders of the exploited classes just because they are appealed to on grounds of morality and so-called Western civilisation. Nothing could be further from reality than this scenario.

In the short to medium term, they will try to accommodate the augmentation of economic and political power by the black working class and black middle class by "Broadening democracy" in their sense of the term, i.e. by trying to co-opt as large a layer of the middle class as possible by tying them into the racial capitalist order and neutralising those who refuse to defend neo-apartheid. Those who choose to go with the black working class in quest of political and economic freedom will continue to feel the jackboot of repression.

If a negotiated settlement of the conflict in South Africa is not on the agenda, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, what, then, is the alternative? In a nutshell, we have to steel ourselves for a war of position, a long march not through the institutions but for building up new institutions and organs of workers' power.

Until recently, the ideology of the black petty bourgeoisie was hegemonic in the national liberation movement. During the next decade the ideology of the black working class will become hegemonic in our movement. More and more, the youth and the conscious organised workers in South Africa are realising that in the present world democracy comes through socialism and not *vice versa*.

The fact that there are few if any models that can be used immediately is neither strange nor discouraging in the epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism. In the coming decade, the values, the practices and the embryonic

organisations appropriate to a socialist Azania will be established and consolidated in the process of building a national through our day-to-day resistance to oppression, exploitation and repression.

Whenever conditions permit, we shall mobilise our people on the largest possible scale in order to entrench the traditions of socialist struggle which flow out of the traditions of our decades-long struggle for national liberation. The hegemonic black working class will attempt through its organisations to occupy every empty space in the social formation, to capture new areas by forcing the ruling class to bring about fundamental empowering reforms such as the right to form trade unions, the abolition of pass laws, group areas, etc. This will be done through mass mobilisation, not by accepting the racist constitutional framework of the rulers. By means of such actions, the political ecology will be changed fundamentally, the parameters within which all the classes of the social formation can make decisions will be shifted in favour of the goals and strategies of the black working class.

We have time to mention only three kinds of factors that need to be considered. Firstly, the enhancement of economic and military strength of the neighbouring states constitutes a plus point for our struggle today. Hence, our strategy should embrace this goal at all times and we need to support all progressive regimes in the region that are not opposed to a socialist Azania.

Secondly, we have to look carefully at what is happening to the composition of the South African Defence Force. To what extent is its class and "racial" com-

position changing? Is this a factor of significance in our strategy? What tactics flow from our assessment?

Lastly, and certainly not least, we have to create a national liberation front of all the forces that are opposed to the racial capitalist order. We have to build a People's Parliament in exile on the model of the PLO, in which tendencies with different programmes are represented and tolerated. This implies that all notions of sole authentic representative status by any of the present liberation organisations operating internationally should be jettisoned as being divisive, destructive and not reflective of the situation on the ground in Azania.

Despite the undoubted popularity of the Charterist current in South Africa at present, there are significant other tendencies and organisations, all of which have the potential under conditions favourable to their particular visions of the future, to mobilise the oppressed millions of our compatriots. It would be strange if in a relatively advanced capitalist country it would be otherwise.

All of us hope, of course, that in spite of different analyses, approaches and assessments, there is enough common ground among us to make possible the converging of our organisations. From within such an overarching structure as suggested here, we will be able to give overall direction to the movement of the toiling masses of Azania against the racist regime and its capitalist backers. In such a structure, too, it can be decided from time to time whether or not to enter into tactical alliances with elements that are merely opposed to the superficial or phenomenal aspects of the system.

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The importance of facing reality

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Sex, lies and videotape'

Not surprisingly, 'Sex, lies and videotape' (which the Golden Palm at Cannes this year) is about...sex, lies and videotape.

Steven Soderbergh, the director, feels strongly about lies. The sex/videotape angle merely illustrates the damaging results of lies and deception, how they hollow out relationships from within so that only the empty husks, the outward forms, remain.

Two sisters, Ann and Cynthia, are locked in ferocious sibling rivalry. Ann is the cool, calm, controlled sister, who is repelled by any emotion she suspects her sister might feel, while Cynthia, the 'loud' one, works off her jealousy of Ann by sleeping clandestinely with John, Ann's husband. They have polarised: Ann has suppressed her sexual side, while Cynthia constantly tries to shock people.

Their rivalry over John ignores

the fact that he's not really much of a catch. The classic brash lawyer on the up-and-up, John sees a bit of sex on the side as one of the perks of being male. His dishonesty is deeply ingrained.

Enter Graham, John's old school friend. Like Ann, he finds sex a problem; he can only experience sexual pleasure by watching videos of women talking about their sex lives.

Graham is the catalyst for a range of changes in all three; he represents something different for each, and their responses to him change the way they respond to each other.

Lies are shown not as polite fictions, but as real violations of another person's self. When Ann questions John about his infidelities, he not only denies them, but sets out to make her feel both guilty and paranoid for her suspicions. It's the classic ploy, attack as a form of defence, and it violates both Ann's feelings and her perceptions.

This is not a great film, but at least it's trying to say something, which is more than most filmmakers are doing in these blockbuster days. It explores emotional territory — love, sex, betrayal, therapy — things that



Andie McDowell plays Ann

don't often get looked at in much depth. But Soderbergh is no Ingmar Bergman; the angst, such as it is, is fairly bearable. Soderbergh keeps things light, and even goes for a few laughs.

The film's premise — that we're lost if we can't tell the truth — may

seem simplistic, but it's valid. Avoiding reality, constructing fictions, lying to others and to ourselves is not a healthy way to relate to the world, and usually ends up causing more problems in the long run. By facing reality, we open up opportunities to change it.

When evolution doesn't work

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN



Cystic fibrosis, haemophilia, sickle cell anaemia, Duchenne muscular dystrophy — these are inherited diseases which have a devastating effect on their victims.

As I argued last week, restrictions on embryo research would make it more difficult to detect these diseases at an early stage.

However, before embryo testing becomes possible for a particular genetic disease, a whole range of research has to take place. Such research has already thrown up much important information about genetic diseases.

For instance, in many cases it is now known what causes such diseases, even down to pinpointing the exact DNA sub-unit which has mutated. In others, the faulty gene has been located, making it possible to devise a test for its presence in carriers (people with the gene but without the disease) and in affected embryos (usually with two copies of the faulty gene).

In some cases, the faulty protein made by the gene has been characterised and steps towards finding a treatment can be taken. Being able to identify carriers has led to some puzzling problems.

According to Darwin's theory of

evolution by natural selection, harmful genes should be eliminated gradually from a population because those with it should be less able to produce offspring. But some 'faulty' genes are extremely common. The gene for sickle cell anaemia (SCA) occurs in up to 40% of people in some parts of Africa and 5% of people in Britain carry the cystic fibrosis gene.

The SCA gene is common in areas with a large amount of malaria for the following reason. The faulty gene produces a mutant type of haemoglobin (the red stuff that carries oxygen in the blood). Carriers of SCA have half the normal and half the mutant haemoglobin.

This functions almost normally but crucially does not provide such a welcome environment for the malarial parasite. Carriers have a survival advantage over non-carriers and hence produce more offspring on average. Thus the SCA gene (more accurately, the Malaria Resistance gene) has spread through such populations.

Unfortunately, when two carriers pass their genes to their child, that child suffers the severely debilitating and life-shortening disease, sickle cell anaemia. When they use oxygen up faster, as in exercise, their haemoglobin crystallises, distorting their red blood cells and blocking small blood vessels. This causes weakness, pain and damage to vital organs.

In the absence of malaria, the SCA gene should gradually decline in frequency, as its possessors are at no advantage and on average a quarter of their children will be unlikely to become parents themselves.

Once again, with the more common cystic fibrosis (CF) gene, carriers suffer no ill-effects, but those with two CF genes are seriously ill. Their lungs constantly fill with mucus and they are prone to get lung infections. With physiotherapy and modern antibiotics, average life expectancy of CF sufferers has increased to 27.

Why therefore is the CF gene so common? The incidence of 1 in 20 being a carrier is far too high to be explained by random mutations. If there was no advantage to carriers, we would expect the frequency of

the gene to fall gradually since one quarter of the children of two carriers would probably die before becoming a parent.

The CF gene, recently identified and isolated, seems to reduce the permeability of membranes to the chloride ion and this is thought to be an advantage during epidemics of diarrhoeal diseases such as cholera. Deaths occur because of massive losses of electrolytes such as chloride followed by loss of water. CF carriers may be less prone to such dehydration and hence survive longer and have more children on average.

It is now possible to identify the 2 million or so CF carriers in Britain. Where a couple are both carriers, their foetuses can be screened and, if found to be potential sufferers, abortion can be offered.

Another strangely common gene is that for Tay-Sachs disease (TSD). Some 1 in 30 Jewish Americans carry it and it is common in other Ashkenazi Jewish communities. Sufferers have two TSD genes and this results in a build-up of a fatty chemical in certain nerve cells. The cells, mainly in parts of the brain, become grossly swollen.

By the age of one year, the child is weak, retarded and has difficulty eating. Blindness follows with death by the age of three. It is thought by some scientists who have looked at the history of families with TSD genes that carriers have a higher resistance to tuberculosis.

Another common genetic disease, phenylketonuria (PKU) is also too common to be explained by chance mutations (about 1 in 60 are carriers). Victims are unable to break down excess quantities of an amino acid which is essential in small amounts but toxic in large amounts. The result is severe mental retardation and death by thirty. However, it is possible to prevent this by early detection followed by a diet low in that amino acid. No advantage to carriers has yet been found.

A few genetic problems seem more common than expected for a rather peculiar reason. As much as 80% of fertilised eggs go on to be spontaneously aborted but foetuses carrying genes for juvenile onset diabetes seem less prone to this. This formerly fatal disease can now be treated by insulin injections and so it seems that genes for JOD are

likely to become more frequent as their possessors can now have children.

Other diseases, such as haemophilia, Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) and Huntington's chorea (HC) are much rarer and may be the result of random mutation.

The first two are carried on the X chromosome. Since males have only one X chromosome, they need only one copy of the faulty gene to get the disease. Females need two faulty genes and this occurs extremely rarely.

With the advent of effective treatment for haemophiliacs, the incidence of haemophilia genes is likely to increase. However, abortion of male foetuses of carriers of haemophilia and of DMD should virtually eliminate these diseases (though the genes will survive in carriers).

Huntington's chorea is unusual in that just one copy of the gene will cause the disease. It is also unusual in that the symptoms, continuous involuntary movements, a progressive dementia and death after about 12 years, only appear in mid-life. By then, the victim has usually had children of whom 50% will also develop the disease.

Therefore, having once arisen by a chance mutation, there is little or nothing to stop the gene from surviving. Natural selection can only operate by reducing or increasing the fitness of a living creature to reproduce but the HC gene has no effect on this.

Screening all members of an affected family will reveal those at risk of passing on the gene (though they will also know the unpalatable truth of their own fate). Foetuses can then be screened for the gene. The information made available by modern genetics could help eliminate much suffering but it must be accurate and be used in a responsible way. In some cases, carriers of SCA genes have been discriminated against, both socially and in employment.

However, TSD is being tackled in America and Israel and in Italy the debilitating blood disease, thalassaemia, is being confronted by a mixture of screening, counselling and selective abortion. Births of victims have fallen by 60%.

• Information from *Nature*.

When is a cult...?

TV

By Vicki Morris

At an odd time on Sunday, sandwiched between the usual anaemic religious ceremonies was a very odd Australian programme called 'Cherith'.

It opened on two well-scrubbed schoolgirls singing weakly to the accompaniment of a tinny guitar in a suburban shopping centre somewhere outside Sydney. The song was called something like 'Let the Lord have his way'.

I thought 'Cherith' was going to be a holy version of the daily 'Neighbours', especially for Sundays, and I prepared to squirm at the usual insipidity given a godly hue by some Murdoch programming scheduler trying to curry favour with the Almighty.

That was before I heard that the father of Cherith, our heroine, was the local born-again preacher and his name was Spong, and saw that he combined the looks of Barry Manilow with the unctuousness of Des O'Connor.

Pastor Spong was no Miltoman fire-and-brimstone preacher, swooping about in black robes, bashing bibles on the bowed heads of penitent sinners, but a more modern incarnation, thin and oily, speaking softly in condescension to a hallful of respectable coughing, fidgeting citizens of Sydney.

Cherith was far from nun-like piety or sackcloth and ashes. She was a 'normal', fairly rotund teenager, more concerned with what was for pudding than saying grace, and only slightly disgruntled that she had never yet been possessed of the ability to speak in tongues like fully-fledged members of her father's congregation.

Repressed urges were a major theme of the comedy. Pastor Spong interviewed one of Cherith's suitors, who was not in the church, about the extent of his "rein on his biological impulses" and warned that he didn't want Matthew making "merry mischief" with his naive daughter.

Cherith had to conceal the fact that she wrote soppy paeans of praise — "you make me feel like a new-born baby foal" — to Brian, the soloist in the choir.

Probably, what was most normal about Cherith was that she had no personal sense of these romantic outpourings being sinful. She kept them secret because they were private and intimate.

When her parents found out about the poems, they firmly introduced Cherith to the notion that secret feelings — especially about sex and romantic love — are sinful. She looked as appalled and taken aback by her father's over-the-top vitriolic denunciation of her as we were amazed and amused by his preposterousness.

And the tragedy of the piece was that Cherith took her father's scoldings to heart. She had a vision and began to speak in tongues whilst showering.

Her parents responded to this rite of passage with the revolting glee with which some parents greet the news of their daughter's first period...or at least, her making the netball team.

I can't work out why the usually respectful old Beeb should show such a programme when they did. It was far too funny, with shock value in its bad taste portrayal of Holy Joes on their very own day.

Perhaps its screening was sanctioned to provide a dangerous, hysterical contrast to the melancholic maunderings of the Anglicans as appearing on 'High Way' etc. — all very sober folks, not given to this probing of the soul and occult dabbling, but just turning up to church on Sunday, fluting a few hymns, snoring through the sermon, and carrying on business as usual for the other six days of the week when there's something more lucrative to do.

If such had been the intention, 'Cherith' was an effective vehicle for warning about the dangers of religious cults to the emotionally vulnerable, because — so it transpired in a small and sobering subtitle at the end of the programme — 'Cherith' is a true story, and the girl who began speaking in tongues in 1987 hasn't stopped, or spoken a word of ordinary English since.

Mind you, I don't think the Anglicans have got that much to feel smug about either...

Tories try to cover up schools crisis

By Ray Ferris

I have recently heard statements from the government saying there will be no children in inner London without a teacher.

"This is obviously not the case," said an angry parent after his 9 year old son was told to stay at home last week because there was no-one to teach him. Around 150 pupils in London were told to stay away from school indefinitely.

The situation is worst in London. Teachers there find it too difficult to make ends meet.

The Inner London Education Authority had around 800 vacancies to fill over the summer. One third of all teachers in Tower Hamlets resigned in May. Even after frantic recruitment, including throughout Europe and in the West Indies, ILEA is still 200 teachers short.

Supply teachers have been sent in to act as full-timers, leaving the prospect of sending more pupils home if a teacher goes off sick.

Classes have been split to leave fewer larger groups — one school in Tower Hamlets refused children because they did not have the desks to cope with increased numbers!

Last Tuesday, 5th, Jeremy Corbyn MP led a march of parents and teachers from Hargrave Park school in Islington

to the local education office. They were protesting about the lack of teachers in their area.

Nationally, term began with a shortage of over 4,000 teachers. Yet, at the same time, the government is introducing the 'National Curriculum' into an education system staffed by demoralised, underpaid teachers in under-equipped schools in desperate need of repair.

A teacher at a South London comprehensive told us: "At our school we are short of computers and electronics equipment — yet we are supposed to teach Information Technology. We do not even have a camera to record pieces of assessed work in Craft Design and Technology."

"Many teachers are expected to teach subjects they are not trained in — language teachers taking PE classes, art teachers taking science. Part-timers are used to plug the gaps, leaving classes split between two different teachers, so the continuity and cohesion of a subject is lost.

"And to make matters worse, more and more is piled on to full-time teachers. We have extra administration and marking because of the 'National Curriculum'. We have to take increasing responsibility for discipline, special needs and even careers advice."

The present crisis is the result of ten years of Tory mismanagement. They have cut the central government share

of education spending by over a quarter in that time.

Official Department of Education and Science figures suggest that £3 billion will be needed to put school buildings right. And they have taken

negotiating rights off teachers following campaigns over low pay.

Workers in education form the front line of defence against these attacks. We must support them in their struggles for a decent education for all.

IN BRIEF

Pay talks covering one million council manual workers are due to begin this week.

4,000 white collar workers at 5 nuclear plants, including Sellafield, have voted for a series of one-day strikes over pay. The union want 12% — management have offered 7.75%. Ballot papers have been issued to 200 key engineers and scientists who will vote on all-out indefinite strike with 85% strike pay.

Workers have voted 4-1 to resist union derecognition at the ICL computer factory in Gorton, Manchester. The ballot, organised by the MSF, produced a 2-1 majority for strike action.

The college union NATFHE may be taking more action over pay and conditions. Lecturers at Further Education colleges have been offered a 5.3% pay rise tied to worse conditions — the union claim is for a flat rate £3,400 rise. And Polytechnic lecturers have rejected

an 8.4% offer tied to new contracts of employment. Management have launched an offensive against conditions of employment since colleges left Local Education Authority control this spring.

41 dockers at the port of Glasgow have refused to sign new job contracts which involve 'flexible' working and a 25% pay cut. Management have made 11 dockers redundant and have threatened the rest with the same.

New contracts signed by dockers at Immingham and Grimsby include a no-strike clause.

The UCW leadership is calling on ACAS to intervene over its pay claim for post office counter workers.

An estimated 40,000 nurses are still waiting for appeals over their grading.

New figures out on the Employment Training scheme suggest only 40% of places available are taken up — with a 75% drop out rate! The survey, by the Low Pay Unit, is only the latest in a series of damning reports.



WHETTON'S WEEK

A miner's diary

The forgotten heroes

Some of the sacked miners have been collecting outside the TUC Congress.

Jimmy Lees and George Brooks were there. Some of these men have been sacked for over five years. The fact that they are still organising, still collecting money and still turning up at conferences is nothing short of heroic.

I went to a function on Saturday night — the East Midlands Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. Billy Etherington and Tony Benn addressed the event. There was a good turnout.

But it's a sad fact that, generally, these men have been forgotten about. I've always said that perhaps we should not call it 'Justice for Mineworkers', we should call it 'Justice for Victimised Workers'. It's unfortunate that the print-workers, seamen or, now, the dockers have not organised in the same way.

It's tremendous that the sacked miners are still at it. And it's also an indication of the political lessons that they've learned. It's a tragedy that other victimised workers do not join in more.

Some of the trade union leaders are not happy with the TUC vote to call for the repeal of anti-union laws, and certainly the leaders of the Labour Party are not happy with it.

But they have to remember this: their own credibility will be damaged if they try to duck the issue. There will be millions of working class people looking at their response to what the TUC is asking and demanding.

If the Labour leaders are seen to hedge they can not very well expect workers to turn out and vote for them. So the best way forward for the Labour Party is to embrace the TUC's stance.

We know exactly where we stand with the Tories. We don't know where we stand with Labour. The noises they are making seem to mean that we're as bad burned as scolded. There is a real credibility gap.

Down the pit people spend the first part of the week — Monday to Thursday — talking about redundancies.

During those days everybody wants to get out. On Friday the talk is of overtime — they want some more work.

It's depressing. It's part and parcel of the aftermath of the strike and the fact that the industry is not the same industry as before. It's very sad.

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

The national rip-off

By Liz Millward

Over £100 million of taxpayers money is to be spent advertising the privatisation of the Electricity Boards.

Much of this money will go on familiarising the public with the two 'new' companies created out of the existing electricity generating industry — Powergen and National Power are already featuring in (indistinguishable) television commercials.

Many more such commercials will follow — the advertising budget is more than twice that of the current campaign to improve the image of the water authorities.

Most of us have become hardened to privatisation of big industries by now, and to the expensive advertising which goes with them. The consumer sees very little difference 'before' and 'after' privatisation, except that we have higher bills to pay for the new logo and all the commercials. Workers in the industries face job losses and worsening pay and conditions, but the essential service remains the same, no cheaper, no better.

And so it is to be with electricity. Bosses in the new companies are demanding that they retain as 70% monopoly for at least 10-15 years after privatisation.

According to Thatcher, the reason nationalised industry is so hopeless is that there is no competition — no 'market discipline'. Yet if the electricity companies have their way, the only competition will be for a very few, very big contracts in the industrial and commercial sector.

And there will be no competition in the production of nuclear power. In fact, the private electricity companies will have government guarantees to cover the cost of nuclear power.

Privatisation of electricity is just a joke. Despite all the fine words about cheaper power and a more 'efficient' industry the consumer won't be able to tell the difference. Workers no doubt will — things will get worse.

The only competition most people can see is for the advertising contracts, the 'managing the sale' contracts and the contracts for printing all those glossy prospectuses.

Still, if a few city paper pushers can rake off a couple of million each at our expense, who cares? Certainly not the Tories.

Teacher's job is a trade union issue

A group of Asian parents are protesting about the appointment of a teacher as Home Liaison Officer at the Springfield school in Mosely, Birmingham.

A majority of pupils at the school are Asian, and some parents argue that the teacher, Mrs Bartel, is unsuitable because she cannot speak Urdu or Punjabi. A parents' action group has been set up to call for her resignation.

It may have been an insensitive appointment, and some of the comments by the tabloid press have been downright racist. But Mrs Bartel must be supported. She has worked at the school for several years and she was approved both by an interview panel and the school's governing body (which split 6-4). The education authority employs translators who can help her if necessary — and language training facilities are available.

It would set a very dangerous precedent if parents vetoed appointments they didn't like. It is right that her union, the NAS/UWT, is giving support — her right to stay is a trade union issue.

Mersey dockers fight back

By Billy Jenks, Liverpool dockers' steward

Dockers at Liverpool's Seaforth and Pandora dock areas went on strike on Thursday, 31 August, against the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company's imposition of tighter restrictions on working areas.

The strike came about as the direct result of the new working conditions which have been introduced since our return to work. Since the collapse of the national dock strike the MDHC has introduced seven fixed working areas.

In the past we had the option of moving around areas on a rota basis. There is a difference in the amount you can earn in each area and management want to establish these permanent areas in the hope that those working in the better paid ones will be less likely to take action against the MDHC and more likely to look after their own self-interest.

Seaforth and Pandora struck because management wanted to make the working areas even smaller by making the freight liner section separate from the rest of Seaforth. The strike was successful, but it's obvious to see management's intentions for the future.

In the MDHC as a whole we are going through the arguments about how many shop stewards there should be and how

they're elected to represent each area.

Before they abolished the docks' scheme, we had 22 stewards representing the dockers and 14 representing the office staff. The docks' stewards would be elected on a company-wide basis and be rotated to the various areas.

With the introduction of fixed working areas, management want the stewards to be elected from and by those areas. They also want to reduce the number of stewards from 36 to 16.

Management think that having the

stewards elected from each restricted area will mean that most stewards only represent the interests of their own area.

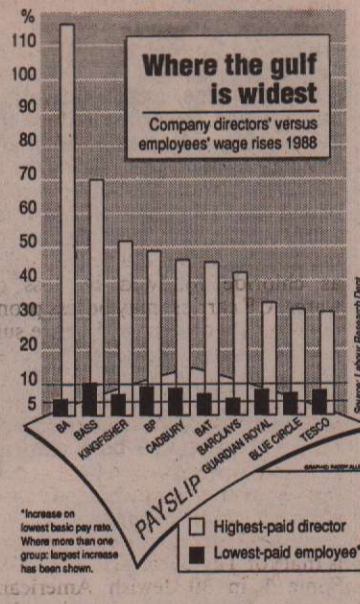
It's a danger, but we will agree to 17 stewards, with the elections in each area.

Negotiations are on with ACAS now, and we should know the results soon. There's no doubt we've got a job to do to avoid divisions between each section, but last Thursday's strike shows that management haven't got it all their own way.

Teacher's job is a trade union issue

A group of Asian parents are protesting about the appointment of a teacher as Home Liaison Officer at the Springfield school in Mosely, Birmingham. A majority of pupils at the school are Asian, and some parents argue that the teacher, Mrs Bartel, is unsuitable because she cannot speak Urdu or Punjabi. A parents' action group has been set up to call for her resignation. It may have been an insensitive appointment, and some of the comments by the tabloid press have been downright racist. But Mrs Bartel must be supported. She has worked at the school for several years and she was approved both by an interview panel and the school's governing body (which split 6-4). The education authority employs translators who can help her if necessary — and language training facilities are available. It would set a very dangerous precedent if parents vetoed appointments they didn't like. It is right that her union, the NAS/UWT, is giving support — her right to stay is a trade union issue.

Bosses cry wolf on drive for 35



Right across British industry, bosses are getting much higher rises than workers, as this chart reproduced from the Guardian shows.

Bosses in engineering are boosting their profits and boardroom pay, too. But they have blocked the unions' demand for a 35 hour week.

Last week they were pushing a report by a business research group which claimed that a 35 hour week would cause economic catastrophe, with the loss of 426,000 jobs and a 3.5% increase in inflation.

They should try to explain why office workers can have a 35 hour week without causing ruin, and why the countries with the shortest industrial work weeks, like West Germany, also have the most modern and productive industry.

Over the last few years, British engineering companies have been making easy profits. Now the unions are staking their claim.

Ambulance crews plan action

Ambulance crews have voted 4-1 for an overtime ban over this year's pay offer. The action is due to begin from midnight Wednesday 13 September.

Ambulance workers want a 20% rise to bring them into line with the pay of firefighters. Management have offered 6.5%, which amounts to a pay cut when inflation is taken into account.

Both firefighters and police have their pay rises linked to the average rises in earnings. This year the police were offered a 9.25% rise. So an essential element to their claim is to win parity with the other emergency services.

The heavy vote for action reflects the

mood that enough is enough. In some areas emergency 999 services are held together on overtime.

Essential equipment is often bought with money collected through charity events. Other ambulance workers — controllers and service officers — are also voting for an overtime ban on pay.

As we go to press, union leaders representing ambulance crews have called for ACAS to intervene. The government side ruled out binding arbitration but has now agreed to talk to ACAS.

This shift has been caused by the decisive vote for industrial action.

Union leaders must demand commitments from the government side before calling off the action.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Regrouping Labour's left activists

This editorial from the new Constituency Labour Parties Conference Newsletter maps out how the left should organise

Nothing sums up better how much we stand to lose and why we need to get organised than this.

In 1981, 150 MPs signed a statement pledging their opposition to the result of the special Wembley Conference that established the electoral college for the leader and deputy leader.

This was the background to the rise of the hard-line right-wing 'Labour Solidarity' group pledged to 'save the party we love' from uppy constituency activists.

But back then we laughed at Labour Solidarity's huffing and puffing. We saw them and the 'Gang of 150' as the dinosaurs, wedded to Labour's past. We felt we were on the march with our democratisation of the party and with the policies of social ownership and unilateralism.

The truth is we lost. All of the following signed that statement: John Cunningham, Donald Dewar, Frank Dobson, John Evans, Derek Foster, George Foulkes, Roy Hattersley, Gerald Kaufman, Martin O'Neil, George Robertson, Jeff Rooker, John Smith, Jack Straw, Ann Taylor.

That's right. Virtually all of today's Labour spokespeople who were around at the time. And as for Labour Solidarity, it has disbanded. With most of its leading members snug in the shadow cabinet it feels its mission is accomplished.

This year's conference will endorse a policy review which if it had been in place in the early eighties, would have ensured David Owen would never have left the party.

Look through that list again. How many of those people ever supported a comprehensive programme of social ownership, with or without workers' control? How many of them ever argued for unilateralism? In truth they were always hostile to the revolution in the party that sought to reclaim the party for the members, that said

'never again' after the anti-working class, anti-socialist fiasco of the 1974-79 'Labour' government.

And today, in the pages of Labour Party News and New Socialist there is a massive propaganda effort to shame the local activists into submission. We are dinosaurs on policy because 'everybody knows' we have to make capitalism work/keep the bomb etc. When we insist on arguing the alternative we are alienating new members, embarrassing party leaders, rocking the boat named '10 Downing Street'.

The CLPs Conference is a grouping of party members from many constituencies who have united to resist this transformation of our party into a safe, stable, pro-capitalist social-democratic party.

We stand for genuine Party Democracy. The Party must become habitable for all working people.

We stand for an economic policy that has no illusions in capitalism. In his wiser days Neil Kinnock called the 'dream of a managed capitalism' a utopia, akin to trying to create 'an air-conditioned jungle'. We stand for social ownership, under popular control, of economic power. Capitalism can't be made to 'work for the workers' by using a few 'carrots and sticks' anymore than it did for Labour leaders from Ramsey Macdonald to James Callaghan.

We do not need a bang-up-to-date Kinnockite version of the old depressing cycle of electoral victory, broken promises, policies 'blown off course', appeals to 'tighten the belts', attacks on 'politically motivated agitators', confusion, disarray and electoral defeat.

We stand for unilateral disarmament as necessary and a potential vote-winner for the 1990s. We seek to develop ways to project this policy to make it the common-sense of society.

The CLPs Conference network is small with modest resources but it is growing. Will you join us? Affiliate your CLP. Attend the conferences/workshops on policy, briefings on party issues and campaigning plans. Take and distribute 'The Newsletter' in your CLP. Better still tell us the news and views from your CLP. Join the resistance.

If your CLP wants its name added to the list of supporters of the CLPs Conference, or you want to



Eric Heffer addresses first CLPs Conference

send in articles, or you want more information about the CLPs Conference, contact Lol Duffy, CLPs Conference, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG. Tel

051 638 1338.

One year's subscription to the Newsletter costs: 1 copy — £1.20; 5 copies — £6; 10 copies — £12.00; 20 copies — £16.80.

Labour's Socialist Alternative Pre-Conference Rally

Friday 15 September 1989
7.30pm
Sheffield City Polytechnic
Totley Hall Lane
Sheffield

Speakers: Alice Mahon
Audrey Wise
Tony Benn
Eric Heffer
(others invited from NEC left slate)

The Rally is organised by the North West Campaign for Socialism and the CLPs Conference and supported by the Campaign Group of MPs, CLPD and the Socialist Movement

North West Campaign for Socialism, CLPs Conference, Campaign Group of MPs, CLPD and the Socialist Movement

Pre-Conference Briefing The Socialist Alternative to the Policy Reviews

Saturday 16 September 1989
10.30am to 4.30pm
Sheffield City Polytechnic
Totley Hall Lane
Sheffield

For further information contact: John Nicholson, 33 Birch Hall Lane, Manchester M13 0XJ — 061 225 5356 or Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG — 051 638 1338

Poll tax fight needs a democratic and united campaign

By Cate Murphy

Following the debacle at the beginning of this month when two national

poll tax federations were launched within a couple of days of each other, both groups have now agreed to co-operate in building for the national conference in Manchester on 25 November.

Any such moves towards building a united fight against the poll tax are welcome, but in reality we are still a long way from unity. The *Militant* faction who are the dominant force in one national initiative, have agreed to give two places on their conference organising committee to the other federation (linked to the Socialist Movement) — but retain their majority. So *Militant* will decide the speakers and structure of the conference, and have the final say on who is allowed to participate.

After the experience of the Broad Left Organising Committee — a supposedly broad trade union grouping which was transformed into a signboard for occasional *Militant* rallies, and then died — activists will be worried.

Given *Militant's* concentration on mass non-payment, the conference is likely to be weighted in favour of community-based campaigns. Obviously a powerful mass non-payment campaign is essential to the fight against the poll tax — the experience of Scotland has proved this. But the success of this fight rests on the refusal of Labour councils and trade unionists to co-operate in the implementation of the poll tax.

Non-implementation must go together with mass non-payment. A national federation must orient towards, and seek to actively involve, labour movement bodies prepared to join the campaign. We must ensure that the November conference is open to Labour Party and trade union branches who genuinely are fighting the poll tax. Labour movement bodies should organise now to make sure they are represented in Manchester.

Poll tax groups are growing in number throughout England and Wales — but there is still a long way to go. The important thing is not to squander the potential that exists to build a real fight against the tax.

What is needed is a democratic, united campaign working together to force the Tories to back down and, equally, to put pressure on the Labour Party and trade union leaderships to mount a real fight against Thatcher. A campaign representative of all political views, not one dominated by one faction forcing through its programme, and using the campaign as a means to build itself.

Of course there are differences over the best strategy to take the campaign forward. But setting up rival federations — at national or local level — convinces no-one: it simply divides and weakens the campaign.

The debates must continue — but within a single campaign that is open to, and representative of, all those fighting this vicious Tory tax.

Build the conference on 25 November!

Fight for:

- A democratic and united national campaign.
- A strategy of mass non-payment and non-implementation.
- An orientation to the labour movement.

For more information about the conference — and credentials — contact Tommy Sheridan, Organising Secretary, c/o 12 Renfield Street, Glasgow G1.