

The main enemy is at home!

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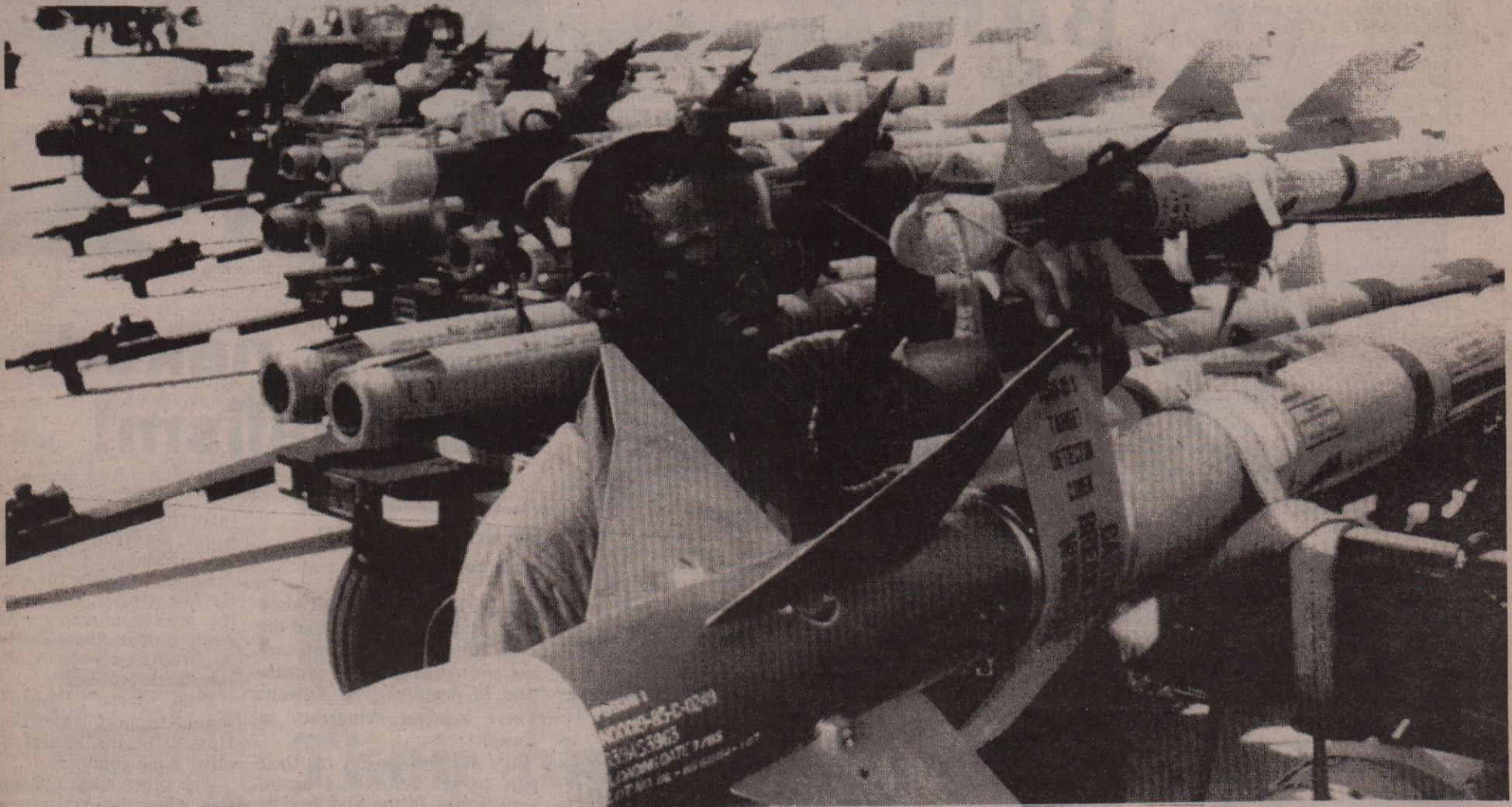
SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

No war in the Gulf

Demonstrate
Saturday 15 September
London

called by CND, supported by the
Campaign Against War in the Gulf



MOBILISE

Against this war!

By Jeremy
Corbyn MP

The media give the impression that *everyone* agrees with Bush and Thatcher.

We must say, very quickly, that there is a substantial amount of opposition.

When parliament is recalled we must table an amendment which calls for the withdrawal of British troops. I hope the amendment will also explain the nature of this war.

This is a war fought in an atmosphere of hypocrisy. The regime of Saddam Hussein has been consistently supported by the West.

The Iran-Iraq war could not have been fought without the complicity of the arms manufacturers and industrial countries which supported both sides. Saddam could not have

manufactured chemical weapons without the approval of large numbers of industrial states in Europe and North America.

Saddam's treatment of the Kurdish people is something all Western governments have tried to ignore. 5,000 people were killed at Hallabja; 15-20,000 were killed shortly after that.

I think it is to the discredit of the trade union and labour movements that it did not do more to support the Kurdish people.

Two years ago we spent two hours with William Waldegrave. We went through all the circumstances of the use of chemical and biological weapons by the Iraqi government against the Kurdish people.

Waldegrave said he was opposed to Iraq's human rights record, but he refused to interfere with trade

Turn to page 2

Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

2 LABOUR PARTY

Speaking out against the ban!

"I am for a free press — both inside and outside the Party. I am totally opposed to censorship of ideas. I have always stood up for freedom. The Labour Party I joined stood for freedom and justice. I am concerned about the way proscriptions and bans are being bandied about."

Dave Hopper, Durham Area NUM

"Freedom for debate and dissent is a fundamental principle of democratic socialism and must be preserved at all costs. Any party which ceases to tolerate alternative points of view ultimately undermines its own democratic credentials. As Eastern Europe throws off the monolithic thinking and intolerance of Stalinism, it ill befits Labour to embrace such authoritarian methods."

Peter Tatchell

"The banning of Socialist Organiser is an extension of the ideological witch-hunt in the Labour Party. There are some people who said that when Militant were investigated and banned that it did not concern them.

**END
THE
BAN!**

"Now that the NEC's right-wing/soft left majority have turned against SO there may be some people who still say: they did not knock at my door.

"This witch-hunt has to be stopped. At this year's party conference we need all the support we can muster from CLPs and trade unions to stop this madness.

"Many Labour MPs join all-party groups with the Tories — and nothing is done about them. They even taken 'holidays'

together. And yet socialists on the left of the party are continually being examined by the hierarchy. The Tory press loves to see the Labour Party ripping itself apart. Now is the time to call an end to it."

Dennis Skinner MP

"I oppose all bans and proscriptions of socialists in the party."

Bill Fry, President of NCU Engineering Group Executive

"I am not in favour of proscriptions and bans. I am also disappointed that socialists are being proscribed without a hearing."

Jimmy Fitzpatrick, FBU National Executive

"I am totally opposed to the recent Labour Party action of proscribing groups within the party. The Labour Party is supposed to be a party of ideas. If we try to stop the flow of ideas from a section then the Labour Party itself will become extremely sterile."

Bernie Grant MP



Panama: the US wasn't against invading countries then

This is naked imperialism!

By Eric Heffer MP

The policies of the United States of America and the British government are not concerned with the restoration of democracy in Kuwait. There was no democracy in Kuwait!

It's just an excuse on their part to get a foothold again, very firmly, in the Middle East to secure their oil interests.

Their attitude is one of naked imperialism.

That has got to be said clearly and without any fudging. At the moment it isn't being said.

I want to point to the hypocrisy of the Americans and the British, and the other nations.

They talk in terms of defending democracy. But the Americans went into Grenada where thousands of people were killed by the Americans.

In Nicaragua they've supported the Contras. They've undermined and helped to overthrow the elected Chilean government of President Salvador Allende, organising a spectacularly bloody coup. They have supported dic-

tatorships throughout the world, always in the interests of US imperialism.

Britain has done the same. In the last analysis the answer to the present must be with the Arab peoples themselves. The Arabs and only the Arabs can solve their problems.

That doesn't mean one should support either Saddam Hussein or the leaders of the other Arab countries.

The other great hypocrisy is that when the Arab people of Palestine have demanded a state of their own on the West Bank — and they have a right to state of their own — there have been no moves through the UN to use sanctions against Israel.

All these things have got to be said. And the most important thing that needs to be said is that we are being manoeuvred into a shooting war, a new imperialist war due to start any time now.

It's the duty of socialists to stand out against this war. We must make it absolutely clear that we are not prepared to support it.

The labour movement in this country has got to oppose the war. Labour must stop going along with the British government in this war.

Mobilise against this war!

From page 1

and credits for Iraq. The next day £200 million soft credit was announced to help Iraq, to rebuild Basra.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the question of oil supplies and oil interests arose, so the task force was sent. Now we are in a very dangerous situation where a war could break out. This war would be a sort of desert version of Vietnam.

What we are now seeing is the first post-Berlin Wall international conflict.

One of the changes which is coming about is the growing unity of the North European and North American powers against the poorer countries in the rest of the world.

Those powers are acting as a world police force, moving into regional conflicts against Third World countries. This is the first of many such battles which will be about the resources which the poorer countries of the world supply to keep the richest industrial powers going.

It is very important that we not only call for the withdrawal of these forces from the area around Iraq, but also look at the overall relations between North and South.

I am not happy with the role of the UN Security Council. It is a body easily manipulated by the US. We should demand the General Assembly is recalled.

I would not give blanket support to the UN. It can be used as a cover for the deployment of troops in the region. Indeed, it already has been.

Perez de Cuellar has been pushed back as Bush and Thatcher get on with the war-mongering.

We must mobilise very large

**Memorial Meeting
for Sam Bornstein
Sunday
23 September
3pm**

**Conway Hall, Red
Lion Square, WC1**

numbers of people as quickly as we can. Clearly meetings are taking place all over the country. We should all organise as much as we can in our own communities and localities.

It is important that we organise a very large, national demonstration as soon as possible. We must show that there is real opposition in this country.

We are not prepared to wrap ourselves up in a Union Jack. We

are not prepared to go down the road of war and not prepared to see the regional conflict turn into another horrible Vietnam.

We must stand for real internationalism. We stand for millions of people who do not want to see the conflict descend into a war in which thousands and thousands of unemployed youngsters from Britain and North America would be killing unemployed youngsters from Iraq.

Learning from history

By Neil Cobbett

Socialist Organiser was born in October 1978 on the eve of one of the great turning points in working class history — the victory of Margaret Thatcher in the May 1979 election.

The roar of Tory triumph which greeted that victory was the signal for the most savage attack the working class had experienced in 50 years.

Socialist Organiser was started to help fight that threat, to unite the left and help re-arm the labour movement, and to fight the docile, right-wing Labour leaders who made the Tories' 1979 victory possible.

The *We stand for workers' liberty* pamphlet is an important contribution to re-arming our movement with socialist ideas as industrial struggle revives and the next general election approaches.

Too often the labour movement and the left has found itself pushed into blind alleys because clear thinking was absent, and because the lessons of the past had not been properly harvested from our experience. As the American philosopher George Santayana put it: 'Those who do not learn from history are likely to repeat it.'

Socialist Organiser has stood out against this kind of refusal to accurately record the lessons of our experience. The pamphlet discusses

many issues on which *SO* has led the way in opening and conducting debates on vital issues such as local government, the unions, Ireland, Palestine, South Africa, women's liberation and the student movement. Issues and struggles where *SO* had to stand hard against the accumulated conservatism and philistinism of a left and a pseudo-left which had become so disoriented that it could only respond to developments in the class struggle by resting on old, outdated positions, or by posturing and bending to the prejudices of the politically uninformed.

**We
stand
for
workers'
liberty**

**£1.50 plus 24p postage
from SO, PO Box 823,
London SE15 4NA**

US wants military bases in Gulf

By Tony Benn MP

What we are witnessing is an attempt to put a permanent American force in the Middle East.

We had a base in Egypt from 1888 to 1956. And the Egyptians, at the time, used to read out the list of pledges which had been given by successive British prime ministers to

withdraw the base.

The American moral position is not very strong. They went in Panama and they even took Noriega hostage! They support Israel in defying the UN resolution on the West Bank. They support Turkey when it attacked Cyprus. They went into Grenada.

Tony Benn was speaking at the Friends Meeting House, London NW1, on 29 August.

Their real war aims

EDITORIAL

Thatcher and Bush are lying. Their real war aims in the Gulf are different from what they say.

They do want to "save" Saudi Arabia and get back Kuwait — not because they're against aggression, but because they want cheap oil. They also want to zap Iraq — withdrawal from Kuwait or no withdrawal from Kuwait.

As the big business magazine *The Economist* put it: "Two of [the West's war] aims have been declared; the unspoken third one is beginning to seem more necessary as the weeks wear on..."

"The goal that Mr Bush and other leaders have been (understandably) silent about is the need to cripple Mr Hussein's ability to be a more efficient aggressor next time." (25 August)

The *Sunday Times* (26 August) was more explicit. "The priority is no longer to contain Saddam but to roll him back, then secure his demise..."

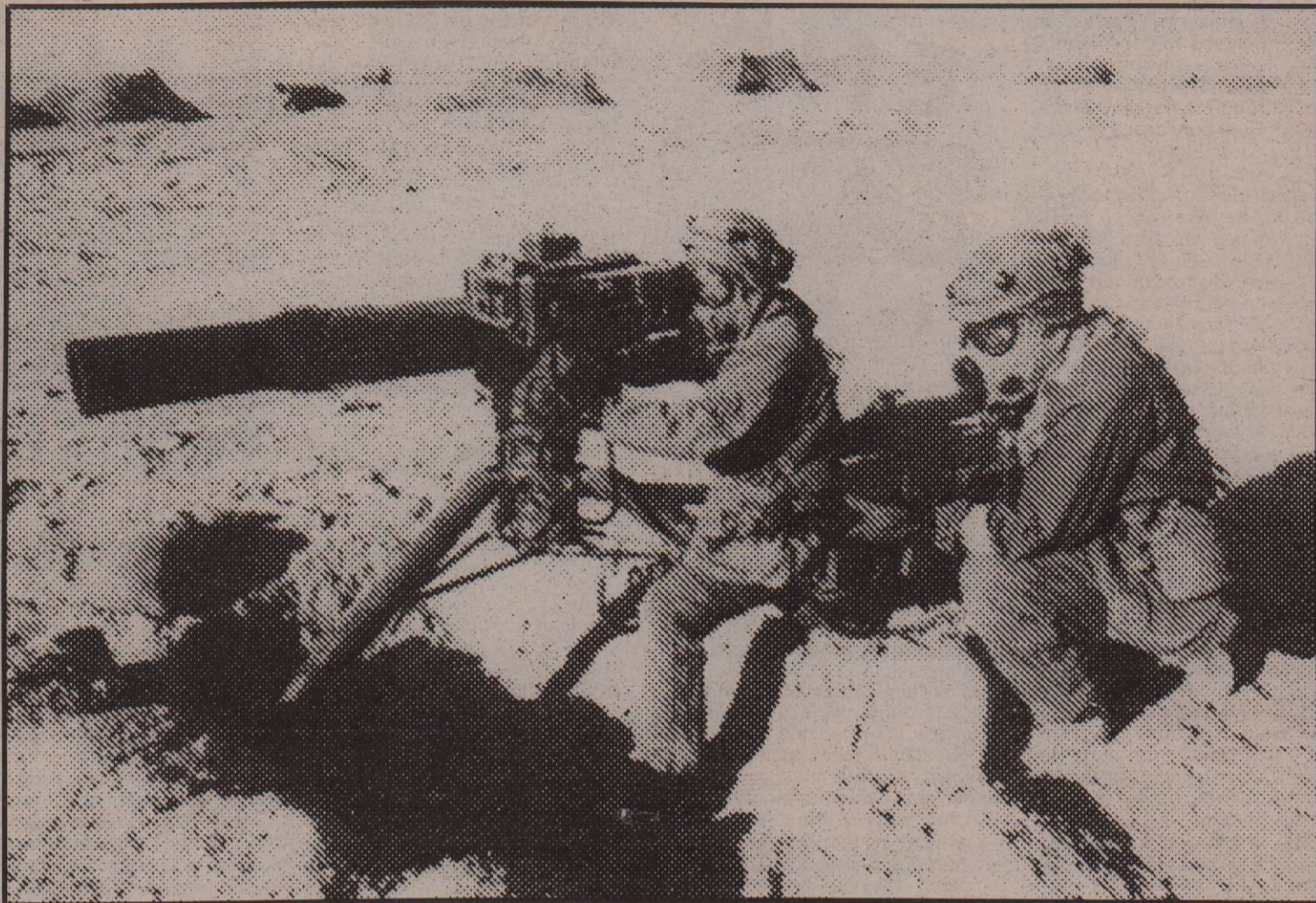
"If Saddam survives the loss of Kuwait, the Americans are ready to move on Iraq to ensure his downfall..."

"All the usual voices in the West will oppose it, so it is important to realise now why they will be wrong. Saddam must go not because he is a tyrant [but] because he is a tyrant with expansionist ambitions to spread his tyranny across the Middle East — a goal which would clearly be against the interests of the West and its Gulf allies."

The *Sunday Times* could well have gone on to say that its objection is neither Saddam's tyranny (Saudi Arabia is already about as tyrannical as any regime on earth) nor his expansionism (where was the US intervention against Israel's seizure of the West Bank, or Syria's effective takeover of parts of Lebanon?), but that he is acting "against the interests of the West". If Iraq gets to control the whole Arabian peninsula, with 56% of the world's oil, then it will be a great economic power, able to dictate terms to the US.

Saddam Hussein is a brutal tyrant, and would-be regional imperialist. The working class has every reason to want him out. But that is a task for the Iraqi people, not for US imperialism — not for the power which has bombed, despoiled and sabotaged across a great swathe of the world, and sustained vicious dictators in countries from Chile through Nicaragua and El Salvador to Turkey and Indonesia.

"The need to cripple Mr Hussein's ability to be a more efficient aggressor next time" sounds reasonable. But it can only mean invading Iraq, deposing its government, imposing a new one, and placing Iraq under some measure of US military control, perhaps even with US troops permanently stationed



there. It means slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and denying Iraq its right to govern itself.

That is what the US wants. Whether it can do it is another matter. There are other voices in the

ruling class. The *Financial Times*, for example, while agreeing that "In the post-cold-war world, stability in the Gulf is arguably the one international issue important enough to justify the existence of the full panoply of US strategic

military power" (4 August), is also very anxious to avoid a shooting war. "The Security Council's current purpose," it writes approvingly, "is neither to save Mr Saddam's skin nor to secure his overthrow, but purely and simply to restore the

status quo ante August 2". (28 August)

If the US is "the world's policeman", then what is brewing in the Gulf is a police riot. Get the troops out now!

Their nightmare, our hope

"When Erin has ceased with their memory to groan, she will smile through the tears of revival on thine"

Those were the words with which an English poet addressed the Irish Republican Robert Emmett, who, at 22, had been hanged, cut down still alive, disembowelled, and then chopped up by a servant of the then all-powerful British government of Ireland, in 1803.

When the working class has ceased to groan at the memory of the Stalinist tyranny, it will smile on the memory of Leon Trotsky, who defended the working class and the name and principles of international socialism against the Stalinist cataclysm that overwhelmed socialism and Marxism 60 years ago.

Thus might Trotsky's followers have expressed their hopes, and their expectations. After Stalinism would come a new restoring working-class rule.

But no. After Stalinism is coming capitalism. Stalinism has discredited socialism; made the workers who have lived at the mercy of the all-powerful Stalinist state tyrants identify socialism with despotism, stark inequality, and needless poverty; and mass-produced a sterile, scholastic pidgin—"Marxism" which has settled like a sandstorm over the living roots of Marxism all across the world.

The East European workers — for example, the East German workers, who have not known freedom since 1933! — are having

to relearn what millions of European workers already knew at the beginning of this century. That is the price we pay for the betrayals of workers' interests by reformists and Stalinists, and the defeats they brought down on our heads.

But the working class *can* learn what socialism is, and it *will* learn, under the whip of the class struggle, with the help of socialists whose ideas embody the memory and experience of working-class history. We can already see that class struggle, rising now even in the USSR.

And Trotsky now, 50 years after his death? Let the author of an anti-Trotsky article in last Sunday's *Telegraph* answer that question.

"It is largely due to the pervasive influence of Trotskyism that the failure of communism has not been accompanied by the instant demise of Marxist influence in British intellectual circles. It is Trotsky, after all, who has been the great hero of the British left"

The article, by Janet Daley (whoever she is), is entitled "Don't let Trotsky save socialism". It is a tedious and clumsy rehash of vintage anti-socialist polemic.

The *Sunday Telegraph* has a nightmare: that Trotsky did succeed in saving socialism and that now, when the Stalinists are relinquishing their claim to be the socialists and their systems are collapsing, Trotskyism will prove to be the seed for a new growth of unfalsified socialism.

It is the hope and belief — translated into bourgeois nightmare — that sustained tiny persecuted groups of Trotskyists through a long unequal struggle. For Daley

and the serious bourgeois press, as for those who have kept Trotsky's cause alive, the name of Trotsky, fifty years after his death, has come to be the name of the real socialism, the name of the real threat looming over the future of the bourgeoisie. It is the name of the hope which inspires us.

When liberated socialist humanity has ceased to groan at the memory of bourgeois and Stalinist rule, it will recall the name and the memory of Leon Trotsky with gratitude and love.



Crime? Everyday business, says the City

The five year prison sentence given Ernest Saunders for his part in the Guinness affair is considered by more than a quarter of his colleagues to be too stiff, according to a Gallup poll.

Why? Easy. Almost a third of them think the sort of practices he was convicted for are pretty widespread in the City.

The fact is, of course, that if Ernest Saunders, instead of ripping off a few million, happened to be Irish and in vaguely the area where a bomb once went off, he would have got a damn sight more than five years, probably would spend his time in a maximum security cell,

and would have been beaten up by the police.

If he kept his sights lowered on robbery but was poor and black, he would also get more than five years, and could, indeed, expect to be quite unable to find gainful employment when he was finally let out... with the inevitable result that he would turn to crime and be locked up again within a year.

Ernie will, on the other hand, no doubt be given several hundred thousand pounds by way of an advance from a top publisher to tell his story, gruesome accounts of prison food included.

The only people who get off lighter than top business men are crap comedians.

'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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No defence of Iraq!

LETTERS

If the US does invade or try to bomb it into submission then socialists should support Iraq" SO 458).

In articles in *Socialist Organiser* the conflict has clearly been assessed as a battle between the imperialist US and the sub-imperialist Iraq for control of the oil fields and for power in the region.

Would the landing of US troops in Iraq change the nature of this conflict? Would the predatory, reactionary "oil war" be transformed into a just war for Iraqi self-determination?

To both these questions the answer has to be no.

The conflict which was sparked by the Iraqi seizure of Kuwait's oilfields could well escalate into war and spill over into Iraqi soil. But these actions would not on their own change the nature of the conflict. The war would remain a reactionary conflict between rival powers.

Our view on the character of the war cannot be ruled by the mere transgression of borders and boundaries. The crossing of a border does not, in and of itself, make the conflict primarily about national self-determination.

During World War I some Russian socialists such as Plekhanov used the issue of Belgian self-determination to justify supporting their own ruling class's war effort



US and Egyptian troops on exercises

against Germany. Lenin rightly denounced this attitude.

He explained that socialists had to look at the fundamental issues at the core of the conflict.

"The most widespread deception of the people perpetuated by the bourgeoisie in the present war is the concealment of its predatory aims with 'national liberation' ideology." (Lenin, 1915)

The right of the Belgian people to national self-determination was an important concern for socialists. But this issue in World War I was subsumed in the inter-imperialist war for domination and control of colonies. The war was reactionary on both sides.

The landing of US troops on Ira-

qi soil would not be sufficient to transform the character of the war.

Articles in *Socialist Organiser* rightly condemn the present conflict in the Gulf as reactionary on both sides. This view should be maintained.

The escalation of the Gulf showdown into a full-scale war will not make the conflict a war of liberation to force the Iraqi people from US oppression.

"But picture to yourself a slave-owner who owned 100 slaves warring against a slave-owner who owned 200 slaves for a more 'just' distribution of slaves. Clearly the application of the term 'defensive' war or war 'for the defence of the fatherland' in such a case would be

historically false and in practice would be a sheer deception of the common people of philistines, of ignorant people by the astute slaveowners." (Lenin, 1915)

Lenin may well have been writing about another war, in another place, in another time, but these words ring true for today's conflict in the Gulf.

Finally, again to paraphrase Lenin — it is not the business of socialists to help the younger robber to rob the older and overgorged robbers. Socialists must take advantage of the struggle between the robbers to overthrow them all.

Tony Dorman
Manchester

Why support Arab unity?

The editorial in *Socialist Organiser* no.458 raised more questions than it answered.

The creation of a unified Germany did not result in the oppression of cohesive national minorities within its borders. This would not be the case in the event of an Iraqi-united Arab state. Even within the existing borders of Iraq the Kurds are an oppressed national minority. An Iraqi-united Arab state would generate, rather than resolve, a wave of questions of national oppression.

If one believes that socialists and democrats should "accept" an Iraqi-united Arab state, then why not "accept" the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait? After all, Iraq could "unite" the Arab world only through a series of wars of conquest

which repeated in a rather more bloody form the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait.

In fact, if socialists and democrats are obliged to "accept" an Iraqi-united Arab state whilst fighting its political regime, then surely in the 1940s socialists and democrats should have "accepted" the German "unification" of the bulk of Europe whilst fighting the Hitlerian political regime. Hitlerian Germany "united" most of Europe through military conquest, which is the method Hussein would have to employ in order to "unite" the Arab world.

Separate from the specific issue of Arab unification under Hussein, the editorial also argues in more general terms that "socialists should support the unity of the Arab people if they themselves wish it. The achievement of such unity would be progressive, in part

because it would clear the minds of the Arab working class and help them to deal with their own ruling classes".

Why should Arab unity help Arab workers deal with their own ruling classes? The editorial itself makes the point that "it is the Arab ruling classes that control the (Arab) states today". Given that this is indeed the case, surely the class-against-class divisions are clear enough already, in the absence of any supplementary re-jigging of national boundaries in the name of "Arab unity".

Indeed, the emergence of a pan-Arab supra-state (even one not under the political regime of Hussein) would confuse rather than clarify societal class divisions, if, as is likely to be the case, it created new instances of national and ethnic oppression and discrimination and thus provoked heightened inter-ethnic conflicts at the expense of class-based conflicts.

There is therefore no basis for assuming, in the manner of the editorial, that the creation of a unified Arab state would necessarily be progressive. The editorial itself points out that "pan-Arab nationalism today is an ideological system which ties the working class to the petty bourgeoisie and sections of the bourgeoisie." To passively declare that "the achievement of Arab unity would be progressive" merely gives undue credence to the pan-Arab rhetoric of anti-working class forces. The editorial seems to be looking both ways at once.

The editorial rightly calls for the withdrawal of the Iraqi occupying forces, and yet rejects the slogan of 'self-determination for Kuwait'. Why?

It is true that less than 50% of the population are Kuwaiti. It is also true that only 36% of the population of Kazakhstan are Kazhaks, and only 48% of the population of Khirgizia are Khirgiz. But I have yet to hear anyone suggest that these

Soviet republics should not be allowed to advocate self-determination for themselves on the grounds that the original indigenous population is in a minority.

As socialists we are in favour of full civic rights for migrant workers, and therefore in favour of migrant workers being entitled to an equal say in the right of the country in which they are working to self-determination. The general right of self-determination surely applies to the entire population of a country, not just to its 'indigenous' population.

The editorial speculates about possible scenarios in which socialists might feel obliged to rally to the defence of Iraq, in the event of a struggle for "Iraqi self-determination against an imperialist invasion or blitzkrieg". The basic argument seems to be that sub-imperialist Iraq may find itself faced with "conquest and subjugation" in a situation where its sub-imperialist drive "collapses into its opposite".

This is less than coherent. In 1918 Germany's imperialist drive "collapsed into its opposite" (loss of territory, imposition of reparations, the later occupation of the Ruhr, etc) and so again too in 1945 (foreign occupation, division of Germany, etc). No socialist, however, suggested defending Germany in 1918 or 1945 because the country faced conquest and subjugation.

Surely it is in the nature of an expanding sub-imperialist power (in this case, Iraq) to come into conflict with an ageing imperialist power (in this case, America) at a certain point in its development. Why back one side against the other? Whatever the level of conflict, or whatever the location of the fighting, the nature of the conflict would remain unchanged, i.e. a struggle for regional hegemony.

Stephen Ryaptis
Liverpool

Always against sanctions?

In Tom Rigby's reply to my letter regarding economic sanctions on Iraq, he argues against sanctions that they will cause economic hardship to the people of Iraq. That is surely true of all sanctions, whoever imposes them.

Why then did SO support sanctions in several instances in the past, as when martial law was imposed on Poland in 1981? If we supported Tom's argument we would always be against sanctions in all cases and that is a ridiculous position.

His other argument is that we oppose them in this case because "few of the third world governments would now be prepared to back military action needed to impose effective economic sanctions against

Saddam". Surely that is contradicted by the 13-0 vote at the Security Council on the resolution to use all means necessary to impose sanctions? How far that vote will be replicated at the General Assembly we cannot say at the time of writing, but it would not be surprising if it was fairly overwhelming.

And that must surely be in line with the view of the SO editorial: "The idea of a UN regulated world order is a good one." Tom Rigby and other members of the Editorial Board will therefore surely welcome all moves which tend to curb the power of the US and bring its actions under control, including the imposition of economic sanctions against Iraq.

Ian McCalman
Glasgow

Don't call for Iraqi withdrawal!

Socialist Organiser has been quite right to oppose the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as the reactionary expansionism that it is, and is right to politically oppose the Saddam Hussein regime as one that contains not one ounce of genuine anti-imperialism.

But has SO gone too far in raising the slogan "Troops out of Kuwait" even after the Western build-up in the region? I think this slogan is wrong for two reasons.

First, Kuwait is a country without a real organic class formation. The majority of its indigenous population either live directly off rentier income from oil or belong to a middle class welded to this rentier class. This is not an argument to say that anyone, least of all a reactionary like Hussein, can walk all over them, but the absence of a working class has important implications for a Marxist strategy.

What are the forces that could get Iraq out of Kuwait? As far as I can see there are two. The first is a US army of conquest. Since such an army would certainly not stop at the borders of Kuwait, Iraq would be totally justified in fighting the US from inside Kuwait as self-defence.

The second force capable of withdrawing Iraq from Kuwait would be Iraq with a radical democratic government (or even a socialist one). But would one be in favour of such a government handing back a large section of wealth to an undemocratic and imperialist force on its doorstep? In the absence of any principle of national rights being involved, the answer must be no. In this context "Troops out of Kuwait" becomes a romantic fictional utopia with no purchase on reality.

Secondly, up until now *Socialist Organiser* has down-played the role of Western imperialist forces trying to influence Iraq. To be sure, there is no shooting war now, but as everyone knows, war is the continuation of policy through different means. The troop build-up in the Gulf is on the same continuum as the war which seems likely.

If Iraq is in some sense defeated by the presence of troops even if not one shot is fired, the US victory will be just as real. In the phoney war which is happening now, the question of Kuwait must be subsumed into the greater question of imperialism in the region: Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait now will become a military victory for the US at first remove.

Tim Wilding
Sheffield

Mark Lindsay

We were shocked and saddened to hear about Mark Lindsay's death.

We are both *Socialist Outlook* supporters who worked with Mark in Norwood Labour Party and other campaigns in South London.

His death really is a tragic loss to the local labour movement. Mark was utterly dedicated to the socialist cause and worked incredibly hard. Often he kept everyone else going if they began to flag.

He was always non-sectarian in his approach, supporting all campaigns and workers' struggles. We, like many others, will miss his cheerful resoluteness and dedication.

I hope you can convey for us our sincerest condolences to his family. Mark was certainly someone of whom they can be very proud.

Yours in solidarity and remembrance
Judith Arkwright
Steve Potter
South London

NOLS wreck areas

By Mark Sandell, NUS
NEC (personal capacity)

The NOLS leadership of the National Union of Students has a tradition of ignoring democratically decided conference policy.

Any policy that involves organising a fight back campaign, taking on the Tories, working alongside the trade unions, or calling for a mid-week demonstration in London is usually (a) formulated by Left Unity, (b) totally ignored by the NOLS leadership.

NOLS have made a bit of a break from this tradition — they're still breaking mandates, the odd thing is they've now started to break policy mandates they argued and formulated themselves. If it wasn't so serious it would be highly amusing.

The Central Funding of Areas was discussed and debated over a two-year period. The NOLS leadership, together with Joe Marshall, ex-CP student organiser and NUS NEC, hatched a form of Central Funding that would give total political control of Areas to NUS NEC.

NOLS mustered support in their Areas and convinced the membership that such moves were vital to save Areas from "imminent collapse". Unfortunately for NOLS, a year later they lost control of their Areas (mainly to Left Unity supporters) and the Areas network came up with a mechanism to block NUS NEC's political control of Areas.

As a result of this, NOLS have decided that to implement any form of democratically decided Central Funding policy would be unconstitutional! Various necessary schedules went unchanged when the policy was passed by 75% of conference, they say.

Rather than ensure that such schedules are changed at the coming conference, NOLS have decided to

be Guardians of Democracy! The truth is they've searched desperately for a get-out and the best they can come up with is that lack of change to various constitutional schedules. The fact that many Areas have a left profile and a political will to organise and defend students is surely nothing to do with the NOLS decision.

And, of course, NOLS have conveniently forgotten their fears about the "imminent collapse" of Areas. Or have they? After all, they have agreed to put £25,000 into the CADF, which in real terms represents a huge cut.

Left Unity supported, and still supports, Central Funding, though it actively opposed the NOLS proposals. Central funding could provide a basic level of funding to all Areas regardless of whether or not there is a rich and willing Higher Education college in a particular Area. Areas have an important political role to play within the structures of the national union and the student movement, yet many suffer from serious underfunding and their work is hampered by one financial crisis after another.

The NOLS leadership have once again shown contempt for the democratic procedures of NUS but more than this they have put at risk the whole student movement. Areas will become further weakened if starved of more cash at a time when they have a vital role to play in building and developing unions, organising campaigns against loans, and for a decent living grant, linking up such fights to the fight against the poll tax, and turning the national union into a fighting, campaigning union.

We have to fight to defend Areas, to demand Central Funding and forcing the NOLS leadership to make a financial commitment to all Areas, and not just the ones in political synchronisation with themselves.

A fighting union

The crisis of political will amongst the majority of the leaders of NUS is set to continue during the next academic year.

The right-wing Kinnockite bloc at the top of NUS is determined that there will be no big campaigns against poll tax, the housing shortage and benefit and course cuts.

Now the Gulf crisis demands an active, campaigning, anti-war response from NUS, which it is hardly likely to get from the careerists in Labour Students (NOLS) who do what Walworth Road tells them to.

The last thing the NOLS clique want is big student mobilisations against the war, the poll tax, the loans scheme, and the benefit cuts. Firstly, the Kinnockites oppose the mobilisations politically (they are paying their poll tax, they are for a mass campaign to take out loans).

Secondly, they are embarrassed about any mass movement. Any action terrifies them and disrupts the real business of chatting to the ministers and grabbing a good press.

Fortunately, in the colleges and Areas, there is a different mood. Many of the new layer of Area convenors are supporters of Left Unity. One Area — West Yorkshire — has taken the responsibility of organising the first major mobilisation of the year: their anti-poll tax demonstration will be massive and is set for 24 October.

The basic job for the left is to translate the activity in the colleges into one movement which can both take on the Tories' plans to wreck student living standards and educa-

tional opportunities and take on the right wing at every level in NUS.

To do that we will have to overcome the rabid sectarianism amongst the NUS left. We will also have to spell out a strategy which the left can get together to fight around.

With this in mind, Left Unity has produced the Campaign for a Fighting Union. The campaign aims to pull all NUS activists together who broadly agree with:

- fighting the poll tax;
- an affiliations drive tied to policies which develop the strength of the working-class FE sector;
- a more democratic union with an accountable leadership.

This campaign has already met with a fantastic response. During the next year the campaign will help to break down the barriers on the NUS left and pose a real threat to the right-wing careerists on the NUS NEC.

**Anti-poll tax demo
Don't Pay,
Don't Collect
Wednesday
24 October
12.00
Woodhouse Moor,
Leeds**

Organised by West Yorkshire Area NUS. Backed by the National Union



Janine Booth (NUS Women's Officer — at that time MANUS convenor) leads last October's MANUS anti-loans demonstration.

This year the first student mobilisation will be the Leeds anti-poll tax march, on 24 October

Education cuts

By Steph Ward

Further Education students in Sheffield start back this week only to find that over the summer the council has decided to cut the maximum discretionary grant from £625 to £412.50, and the free travel for students who live more than three miles away has been abolished.

This is the latest in a long series of education cuts which have included the loss of 24 jobs in the education department and the redeployment of hundreds of teachers and lecturers.

Once again the implementation

of the poll tax is to blame, with the Labour Council going out of its way to make cuts to avoid being capped, rather than leading a fight against the Tories.

South Yorkshire Area NUS is responding to the cuts by sending a petition to the education committee, holding a meeting for all FE students with Steve Mitchell, NUS VP FEUD, and picketing the education committee on 19 September.

Samm Dextor, president of Castle College, said: "If we don't fight these cuts then who knows what will happen. Grants may be cut altogether and colleges could be closed. It's vital that students get organised now to defeat the poll tax."

Hillsborough disaster: we want justice

By Wendy Robson

Last Friday, 31 August, women relatives of the Hillsborough football disaster mounted a 24-hour demonstration outside the headquarters of the South Yorkshire police, who were responsible for policing the match.

The women were protesting at Thursday's decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions that no charges should be brought against anyone responsible for policing the ground or for safety standards.

This has surprised many who see the disaster as the tragic conclusion of years of heavy-handed policing and profiteering by clubs.

Many of the relatives of the victims of the disaster are waiting for compensation for the loss and trauma caused by the disaster. But what the relatives want most of all is justice and a guarantee that nothing like this will happen again, and feel that this has been set back by the decision.

Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield, the officer in charge of policing Hillsborough that day, has been quoted as saying: "This

decision takes a great weight off my mind." It is obvious that the police feel exonerated by this decision.

Socialist Organiser spoke to two of the women demonstrating in Sheffield last week. Jenni lost two daughters in the disaster and Terri lost a son.

"We can't bring our own families back but we didn't want anyone to ever be in the same situation again. Because of yesterday's decision not to prosecute, they have just been given a licence to do whatever they like, not just the police, but the local authority who are supposed to check the safety at the ground, the FA and all the rest.

"That really was a set-back for us because we hoped to get better facilities at grounds, so you don't have to worry about things like that, you can be treated like human beings, not herded in like cattle.

"I brought my children up to find a policeman if they were ever in trouble. I wouldn't do it now. It's the last thing I'd suggest. I'd suggest every other alternative now, knowing what I know and what we have seen and what we have been through ourselves.

"It was mainly young people who died, and they do not come under the compensation laws. They don't

Free Martin Foran!

FREE MARTIN FORAN	FRAMED BY THE NOTORIOUS W.M.I.S. SERIOUS CRIME SQUAD DESPITE 15 ALIBIS.
FREE MARTIN FORAN	CONSTANTLY DENIED MEDICAL TREATMENT, CRIMINALLY NEGLIGENT OPERATION BY PRISON DOCTOR HAS SERIOUSLY DETERIORATED HIS CONDITION, BRUTALLY ATTACKED BY PRISON OFFICERS IN A CELL.
FREE MARTIN FORAN	FOR 13 YEARS MARTIN HAS PROTESTED HIS INNOCENCE AND FOUGHT FOR HIS DIGNITY, HE NOW SERVES EXTRA YEARS AS FURTHER TORTURE.
FREE MARTIN FORAN	JOIN MARTIN'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT A RALLY FOR FREEDOM

ST. PHILIP'S CATHEDRAL, B'HAM. SATURDAY SEPT. 8TH 11 AM. P.P. 10.00. 10.00. 10.00. 10.00. 10.00.

have to care about the deaths because all that bothers most of the people is money — the clubs, the FA and the police.

"In everything the police do they should be more accountable. There has got to be a separate authority. The South Yorkshire Police Authority is next to useless because they only tell you what they want you to know. If you want to cover up, you get your mate to do it for you, and that's what happened. It's 'ask my mate if I'm a liar'. It stinks.

"As regards football matches, I don't think that they should be policed. Football supporters are not criminals. There is an element of hooliganism, but an awful lot of it is caused by high-profile policing. It's confrontation. I think they automatically treat anyone who goes anywhere near a football ground like a criminal.

The only ones who aren't treated like criminals are those in the VIP boxes. The average person is treated, first and foremost, as a public nuisance and secondly as a football supporter. Being a human being doesn't enter into it.

And that is the thing that has been forgotten at Hillsborough, that there were 95 human beings killed.

6 LABOUR PARTY

The case for banning SO by Clare Short

Tribune (which opposes the ban on SO) published the following article by Clare Short in defence of the NEC's decision. Short has had some credibility as an independent-minded intelligent leftist. Her lawyerly efforts to defend the NEC's decision to ban SO may well be the best case that can be made for what the NEC has done. It is a very shoddy effort, as Liz Millward shows in her reply.

By Clare Short MP

I disagree very strongly with Paul Anderson's argument (*Tribune*, August 3) that because *Socialist Organiser* has only 350 members and an effective presence (I presume this means domination) in two Constituency Labour Parties, the National Executive Committee should not have declared membership incompatible with Labour Party membership.

It is very important that the Left should discuss this issue. We all feel a deep revulsion to the ideal of ex-

pulsions because we believe so deeply in democratic debate. But this cannot mean that any organisation, whatever its beliefs and methods of organisation, is free to infiltrate the Labour Party.

If fascist groups started to move into the Labour Party, I presume there would be no dispute that membership of such groups was incompatible with Labour Party membership. I presume also that everyone would agree that individuals who engaged in violent or criminal activity should be expelled from the party.

The NEC decided some time ago that membership of Militant was incompatible with Labour Party membership. Painful as I found the whole question, I believe that decision was right.

But, because members of Militant are not honest about their membership, beliefs and organisational methods, we are left with a problem in deciding whether any particular individual is a legitimate member of the party. We have therefore created a procedure for dealing with cases which provides a fair chance for each individual to make his or her case.

It is true that *Socialist Organiser* was brought to the attention of the NEC through the Frank Field dossier. My view of that dossier was, and is, that many of the complaints were specious. But there



were a number of complaints from long-standing members of bullying and intimidation which drove them away from the party.

The NEC has a duty to act against such practices whenever they are brought to our attention. In the case of Birkenhead, the NEC has done this and now plans to hold a fair selection.

The complaint against *Socialist Organiser* was also investigated. When it was first put to the NEC, there was insufficient documentation and we agreed that we needed more evidence.

At our last meeting we were provided with hundreds of pages of *Socialist Organiser's* own internal documents which showed without doubt that it is a vanguardist, secretive, central democratic, revolutionary organisation which is "in the party but not of the party".

It is the duty of the NEC to pro-

tect our constitution and therefore to declare membership of *Socialist Organiser* incompatible with Labour Party membership. Any individual liable to expulsion following this decision will have a right to put his or her case before a decision is made.

I agree with John Stuart Mill that a proliferation of eccentric views is a reflection of liberty. All such groups are entitled to organise and seek support, although I find the dishonest way in which they go about this distasteful and deeply undemocratic.

But they are not entitled to misuse our party for their own ends.

If we allow our distaste for expulsion to leave us open to infiltration by such groups, we are damaging the capacity of the Labour Party to represent the needs and views of Labour voters.

A cooked-up case

By Liz Millward

Reading Clare Short's hypocritical screed in *Tribune* dishonestly defending the ban on *Socialist Organiser* reminds me of the headmaster's words before the cane falls on some defenceless behind: "This will hurt me more than it hurts you."

The knowing, understanding adult revolted at violence suffers far more mental anguish than the foolish child who will just have to put up with a sore bum. All total nonsense, of course, but acceptable in a world of stiff upper lips and children being seen and not heard.

In the modern Labour Party, similar patent nonsense is common currency. Clare Short wants us to believe that she really suffered when Militant was proscribed. She does not believe in principle in expulsions, and consequently suffered "deep revulsion" at the wholesale abandonment of "democratic debate". The reality is that her mental torture lasted as long as the proverbial headmaster's — just long enough to wipe the blood off the cane and call "Next!"

Next, in this case, is *Socialist Organiser* — banned from democratic debate in a secret hearing, without formal charges or bourgeois rules of evidence. SO's "trial" brings shame on the Labour Party, but I do not suppose Ms Short has had many sleepless nights.

For the record, it is worth stating what SO is before comparing reality with Ms Short's conscience. Basically, SO is a weekly newspaper, supported by the people who sell it in terms of money and labour. More than that, it is a forum for socialist ideas — which

are discussed on paper and in meetings. Quite apart from the fact that everyone on the left knows these things from their experience, the paper, openly sold in public places, says what we are every week!

As a Labour Party member of long standing, Ms Short has had plenty of contact with SO and has been involved with SO supporters in many labour movement and women's campaigns.

So she can hardly claim SO is "secretive". She cannot be surprised to learn that SO is "revolutionary". Given SO's openness, not only during the period of the current witchhunt but generally, Clare Short has no grounds for her claim that we are "dishonest" in our dealings with other labour movement bodies. During the FAB campaign Ms Short worked closely with SO supporters, rank and file Labour Party women who needed her parliamentary voice.

Similarly SO supported the Time To Go initiative, and held a wide-ranging debate around her attempt to ban "Page 3" topless models. Is Clare Short asking us to believe that she was unaware of these activities, or did not notice that speakers at Time To Go or FAB events had bags full of the paper, and began by introducing themselves as "from SO". The activities she finds so "distasteful" now are the same "secretive" activities she was happy to be associated with 12 months ago. For "infiltration" read "by invitation".

Ms Short also raises the popular spectre of "bullying", "intimidation" and "violence" in the certain knowledge that even the NEC could not and did not substantiate those charges. Yet they remain, proclaiming guilt by association.

In her two paragraphs about Frank Field's dossier, she says that many of its complaints were

"specious". That admission is shown by what follows to be hypocrisy. "But there were a number of complaints...of bullying and intimidation which drove" members away from the Party.

She doesn't say that the NEC upheld none of those complaints, and in effect declared them all "specious". Yet she manages to leave the impression that some were justified and that the complaints all concerned SO (which they did not).

"The NEC has a duty to act against such practices whenever they are brought to our attention". Even when it finds against the charges?

And when she justifies banning SO by reference to "fascists" and to "violent" and "criminal" activities, it is inescapably a scandalous amalgamation, albeit a sneaky one.

Such trickery and dishonesty!

Clare Short refers to the "100s of pages of SO's own internal documents" with which the NEC was "provided". (There were about 80, all openly circulated.) Does she know she could have had hundreds more pages, all provided by SO, as per our offer? Or does she prefer to sustain the myth of "secretive sects" by getting an incomplete set via a circuitous route? The documents from which she draws such damning conclusions were marked "Confidential" for the first time by the Labour Party NEC! They contain minutes of meetings and continuations of discussions held in the paper. Contributors' real names are used throughout. The veneer of secrecy was added later, by the likes of Ms Short.

Right next to Ms Short's letter in *Tribune* is a box advertisement which reads: "Going to Labour Party conference this year? *Tribune* needs volunteers to sell copies of the paper and help at the *Tribune* rally. If interested contact..." No doubt

those helpers will be given pieces of paper with arrangements on, they will hand out leaflets which carry suggestions as to how delegates should vote, and will undoubtedly become part of a network of people who regularly support, sell and contribute to the paper...There is nothing distasteful and secretive about that process and Ms Short will not institute a witchhunt against *Tribune's* many supporters (I hope).

The words "in the party but not of the party" are a tendentious paraphrase of a note of an individual contribution to an EB discussion, not anything we would acknowledge as our collective view. A secretive and conspiratorial, "central democratic" (sic) grouping, made up of people of average intelligence, simply would not put such material into circulation as we do.

SO has been just as open as *Tribune*. It is the likes of Clare Short who have invented a conspiracy where there is none, and who sustain the lie by devious writing. With one hand on her heart, and her fingers crossed behind her back, Ms Short asks for our sympathy over her hard decision. Ms Short would be entitled to support had she stuck up for her "democratic" principles and demanded a fair, open hearing for SO. But Ms Short has learned that principles are cheap compared to the sordid joys of power so she will have to suffer her anguish alone.

Like lawyer like client! To justify the new twist in the spiral of Labour Party authoritarianism, the ban on *Socialist Organiser*, Clare Short uses exactly the NEC's own mixture of sloppiness, dogmatism and false amalgamation.

Clare Short's letter is itself data for a study of the growth of authoritarianism in the Labour Party.

ideas Th

Bill Hamilton from the 'End

"End camp gather speed

By Mark Osborn

I disagree with almost everything I've ever read in *Socialist Organiser*. But I defend your right to publish the paper, and the right of Labour Party members to read it, sell it, and raise funds for it", said Phil Kelly, editor of *Tribune*, at the 'End the Ban' rally last Saturday 1 September.

200 Labour Party activists attended the rally in London's Conway Hall.

It was organised by 'End the Ban!', the broad campaign set up to fight the ban imposed on *Socialist Organiser* by Labour's National Executive on 25 July.

'End the Ban!' is supported by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Labour Party Socialists, Labour Left Liaison, Women for Socialism, Labour Briefing and Socialist Outlook. Bill Hamilton, speaking on behalf of the 'End the Ban!' committee at the end of the rally, stressed that the campaign's no. 1 priority in the next four weeks, up to Labour's Annual Conference in Blackpool, must be to get in emergency motions against the ban.

The Labour leadership will attempt to get the ban endorsed by conference with little or no debate. Our chances of stopping them depends entirely on how many emergency motions we get in.

The proceedings which led to the ban on SO began with Birkenhead CLP's decision to deselect Frank Field MP. Field blackmailed Labour's NEC into an 'investigation' by threatening to resign, force a sudden by-election, and stand against Labour. He presented a huge 'dossier' with a blunderbuss of allegations against all sorts of people, including SO. (None of these



The Ban' campaign

'ban' campaign

complaints against SO were upheld, but the NEC banned us regardless).
Liz Williams from Wallasey Labour Party spoke at the rally about the Field affair.

In 1987, Frank Field's attacks on the Labour candidate for Wallasey, Lol Duffy, in the last election, probably, cost Labour the seat. Field told the local press that he could not endorse Duffy.

A couple of weeks after Field's remarks, Lol Duffy cut the Tory MP's majority from over 6,000 to just 279.

Liz Williams described the anger of local Labour Party members at allegations made in Frank Field's "dossiers". The allegations ranged from the scurrilous to the absurd.

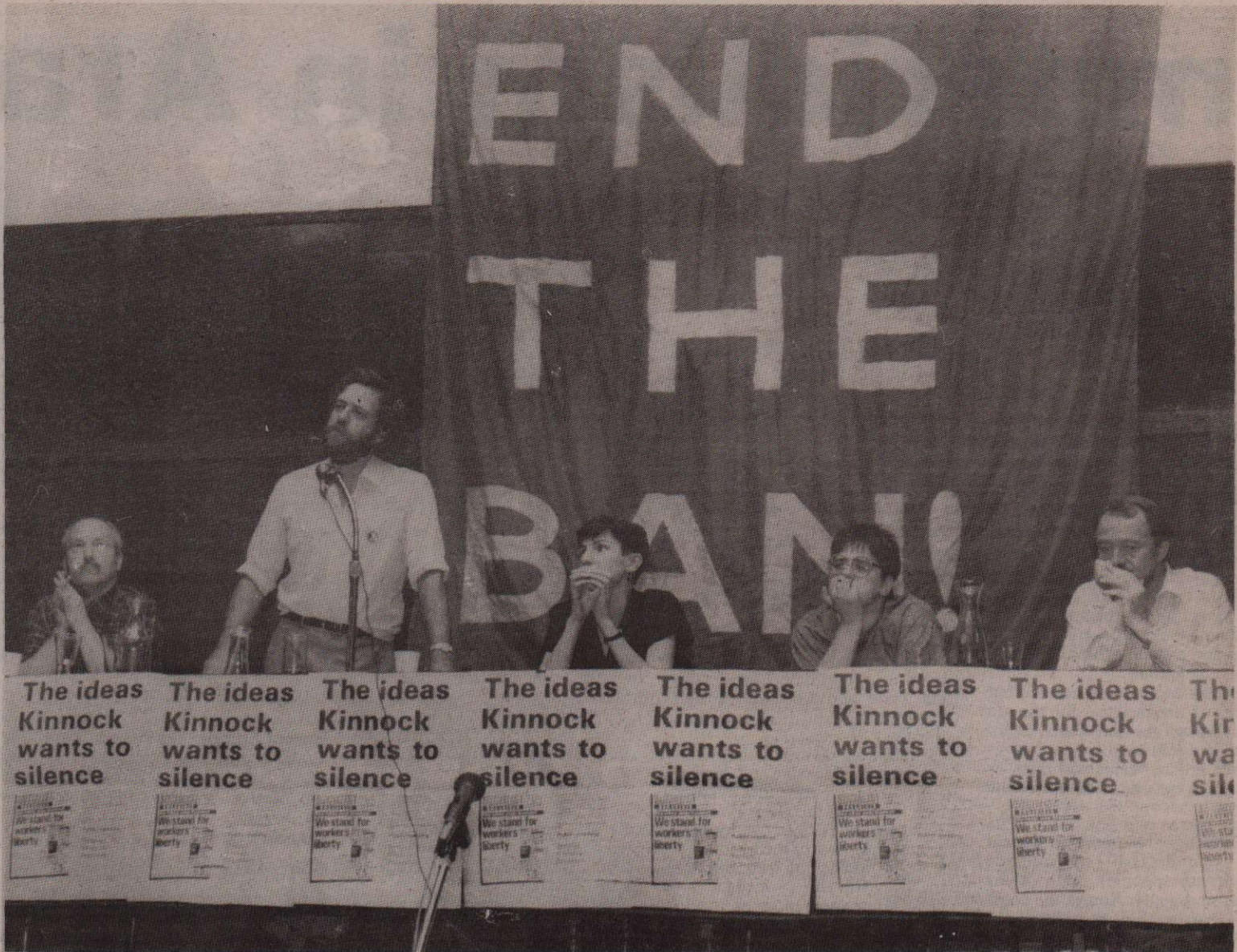
Eric Heffer MP was unable to speak because of illness, but sent his greetings. **John O'Mahony**, editor of *Socialist Organiser*, described the injustice of the proceedings. SO tried to contact Labour Party officials to say that it wanted to discuss and was willing to consider any changes in its way of organising that the NEC might propose. No reply!

"We received no charges, no notice of evidence, no hearing, no official communication until we got the letter telling us we were banned," he said.

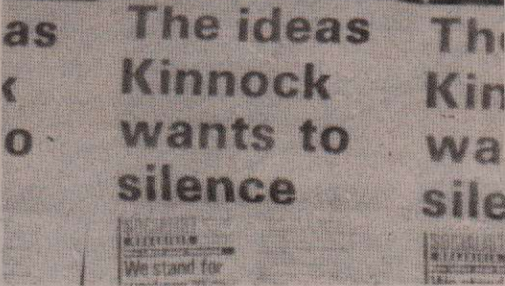
Janine Booth Women's Officer of the National Union of Students explained that the cooked-up allegations used to bounce the ban through the NEC came from the kitchen of the Kinnockite leadership of the National Organisation of Labour Students.

NOLS is infamous for conspiratorial stitch-ups and bureaucracy, and now they want SO banned as a 'Leninist sect'.

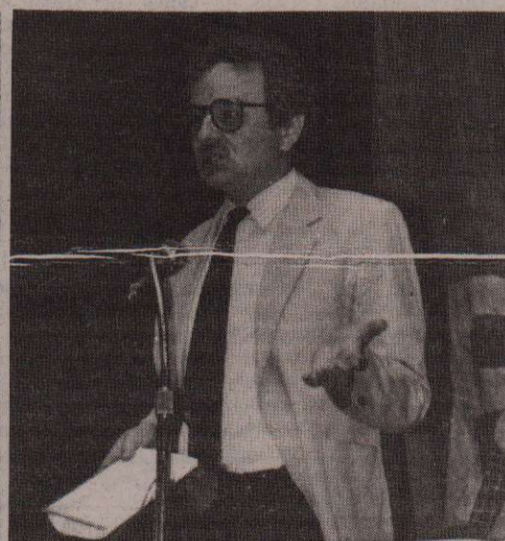
Jeremy Corbyn MP and **Ken Livingstone** MP also spoke against the ban and the rally was chaired by **Dorothy Macedo**. A collection raised £438 for campaign funds.



Jeremy Corbyn addresses the rally



John O'Mahony, editor of Socialist Organiser



Phil Kelly, editor of Tribune



Ken Livingstone MP

'End the Ban' checklist

Emergency Resolutions to Labour Party Conference: This is the top priority. Please do everything you can to get the resolution through your CLP. It should be signed by your CLP secretary and sent to 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT. Make sure your conference delegate is fully aware of the case for the resolution and that they should make contact with the campaign to organise lobbying of the Standing Orders Committee.

Reference back of the section of the NEC report dealing

with the ban: If the emergency resolution fails to be timetabled or is not reached before the above section of the NEC report, reference back may have to be moved. There is no time allowed to properly motivate this so your delegate must be made aware of this possibility arising and be mandated to vote for it.

Speakers: 'End the Ban' can provide speakers for any meeting. Try to get a speaker to Labour Party branch and CLP meetings, especially if the emergency resolution is

being debated. Speakers will also be available for other labour movement meetings.

Local meetings: If there is the opportunity then organise a local meeting on the issue of the ban. Again, speakers are available together with publicity material.

Tribune advert: A large advertisement will appear in Tribune's conference issue. Get as many individuals and organisations as possible to sponsor it.

Support from other labour

movement organisations: Only CLPs and national unions and affiliated bodies can formally submit resolutions to Party conference, but general resolutions of support will be very welcome from any labour movement organisations including Party branches, trade union branches and committees, stewards committees and campaigning groups and solidarity organisations.

Finally, make sure that you inform the campaign of any success you have. Contact 'End the Ban', 12a Canonbury Street, London N1 2TD.

Imperialism in Arabia

Martin Thomas looks at the history of imperialism in Arabia, drawing heavily on Fred Halliday's book "Arabia without Sultans".

Western domination first arrived in Arabia in the early 19th century, when Britain began to build up control round the southern and eastern coasts of the peninsula.

By the end of the 19th century, the British Empire controlled almost all those coasts, from Aden — the lynchpin of the system — at the south-west corner, through Oman and a chain of small 'protectorates' to Kuwait.

Britain's motive was not oil, but control of the facilities for the sea route through the Suez Canal (completed in 1869) to the 'jewel in its crown', India. Arabia was then, as it had been for centuries, one of the poorest regions in the world.

Dry, barren and hot, most of its land area could support no human life beyond that of nomads (wandering people) with their camels and goats. Round the coast there was a thin population of traders, fisher people, and (especially in North Yemen, the peninsula's least infertile area) peasants.

In the 17th century, the warrior nomads of Arabia had carved out the framework for one of the great world civilisations of the that era. Within a few decades of the death of Mohammed in Medina (near the west coast of the peninsula) in 632, his new religion, Islam, and the Arabic language, had been spread by conquest all across the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

But in the following centuries Arabia was never the centre of any of the Islamic empires. From the 16th to the 20th centuries, the dominant force in the Arab and Muslim counties was the non-Arab empire

of the Turks. The Turks' control was always weak in the Arabian peninsula, mostly confined to Mecca, Medina and the western coast.

Oil exploitation began before the First World War in Iran (under the control of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, later BP) and Iraq (under the control of a consortium of British, French and later American companies).

The spoils of the decaying Turkish empire were a major prize in the First World War. Britain opportunisticly promised aid both to the nascent pan-Arab nationalist movement and (at the same time) to the Zionist movement which aimed to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

The imperialist carve-up

After the war Britain and France carved up the Middle East. France took Syria and Lebanon. Britain took Palestine and Iraq; it already controlled Egypt.

Britain then divided Palestine into two states, Palestine and Jordan. It co-opted the Hashemite dynasty, which had ruled the Hijaz (Western Arabia) under Turkish overlordship by installing two branches of it as the royal families of Iraq and Jordan. They still rule in Jordan.

The Hijaz, and most of the inland areas of the peninsula, were conquered by Arab warriors led by the Saudi family and inspired by a purist Islamic sect, the Wahhabis. In 1932, they declared a new state, Saudi Arabia.

In 1938 oil production began in Saudi Arabia. The concession had been granted to a consortium of American companies, called Aramco. In the 1940s, the US gave huge amounts of aid to the Saudi regime, and trained its armed forces.

With episodic clashes, the close alliance between the US and the Saudi dynasty has continued ever since. But, Fred Halliday argues, "it is" — or at least was until the current huge US military intervention — "mistaken to see Saudi Arabia as just a US colony with the appearance of independence. The

wealth of Saudi Arabia and the political character of the ruling family enabled it to forge an alliance with the US in which its ruling class wielded a degree of power consonant with the preservation of US interests".

The Saudis showed their power as they participated in the successful OPEC drive to raise the price of oil from \$2 to \$12 a barrel in 1973-4. But the US has been the rising power in the region since World War 2, and the dominant power since the early '70s. From 1951 to the early '70s, Britain also tried to keep a stake as nationalism grew.

Britain's retreat, 1951 to 1971

In 1951 a nationalist government in Iran nationalised its oil industry, previously controlled by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (BP). Britain organised an embargo; the CIA organised a coup in 1953; a new agreement was signed with a consortium involving American oil companies and compensation was paid to AIOC.

In 1956 Britain, together with France and Israel, invaded Egypt to reverse the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. The US opposed the invasion, and the invaders were forced to withdraw.

In Jordan, the king had loosened his ties with Britain in 1952 by replacing the British commanders of his army with Jordanians. But in 1958 he called in British troops again, to safeguard him against a wave of pan-Arab nationalist revolt.

The British-installed monarchy in Iraq was overthrown by a military-led nationalist revolution. To forestall Iraqi claims to Kuwait, already oil-rich, Britain made Kuwait independent and sent troops there until Iraq conceded. In the same year, 1958, US troops landed in Lebanon to bolster the government against Arab nationalists there.

Britain's greatest defeat in Arabia was in South Yemen and its capital, the port of Aden. A radical nationalist movement, eventually

Stalinist-aligned, emerged with a great strike wave in 1956, and guerrilla war began in 1963. The British did door-to-door searches and tortured thousands of Arabs. They blitzed whole areas of the countryside. An official report blandly described it thus: "the inhabitants all had to leave their homes and move out of the area until further notice, a hardship which it was hoped would persuade them of the foolishness of continuing to support the rebels". All to no effect: Britain had to pull out and hand over to the radical nationalists in 1967.

In most of the rest of the area, though, regimes friendly to the big imperialist powers, if now more inclined to the US than to Britain, were secured.

Civil war raged in North Yemen between 1962 and 1965: Egypt sent troops to help the republicans, and Saudi Arabia to help the royalists, who eventually prevailed. (In the wake of the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, North Yemen and South Yemen have recently united. There is not much information in the British press on the nature of the unified regime).

Oman and the rentier statelets

In Oman, a rural revolt, led by the Imam (the traditional ruler of the inland areas, began in 1957. It was put down by British forces within two years; but a new more radical, guerrilla movement, based in the western area of Dhofar, waged war for ten years, from 1965 to 1975, until it was subdued by British and Iranian forces.

From 1932 to 1970 Oman was ruled, on behalf of Britain and under British supervision, by Sultan Said bin Taimur. His rule, writes Halliday, "prevented Omanis from leaving the country... and kept from the population... medicines, radios, spectacles, trousers, cigarettes and books.. Just before he was ousted in 1970 Said had decided to close the three existing primary schools in the country — because they had become 'centres of communism'."

He kept 500 personal slaves, and a harem of 150 women.

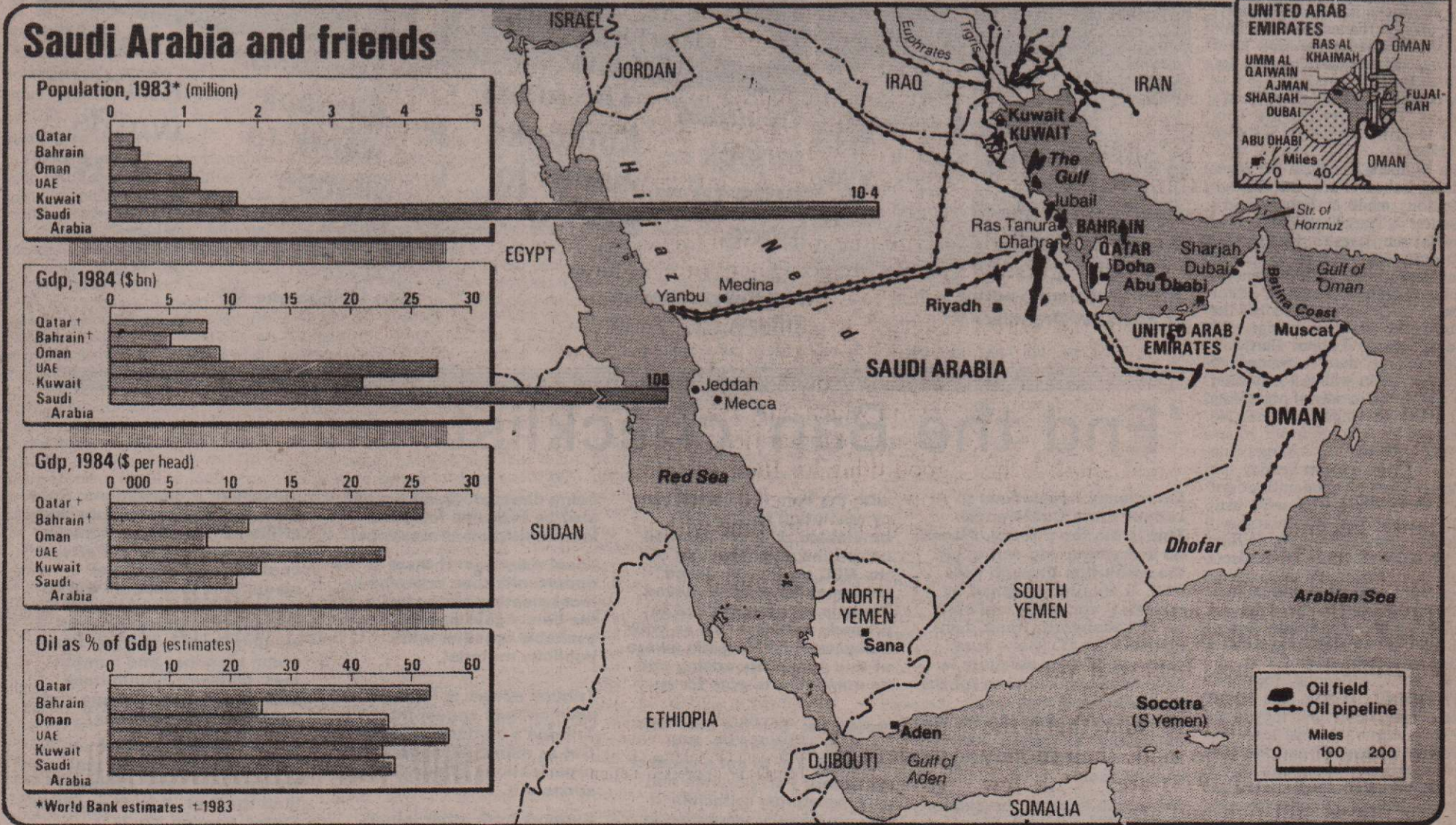
After large-scale oil production began in the late '60s, Britain decided some change was needed. It organised a coup and installed the Sultan's son in his place. The son is reckoned liberal compared to his father; he has made the traditional national dress compulsory for nationals (and banned for foreigners). The US, rather, than Britain, has military bases in Oman. It remains more a satrapy of the big oil companies than a truly independent state.

In 1971 Britain finally decided to withdraw from east of Suez, handing over to a string of dynasties along the west coast of the Gulf: Bahrain, Qatar, and a conglomerate called the United Arab Emirates. All became very rich in the 1970s through oil. All — except Bahrain, where oil production is much lower, and there is a sizeable native working class — have reproduced, in more extreme forms, the pattern of Kuwait: autocratic rule by royal families, which employ migrant labour without any civil rights to do all the work and allow the local population to become a rentier class.

Saudi Arabia

The Saudi regime has become a good assistant to the US in keeping order in the region. Sixty years ago it was the product of a real popular movement, even if a very socially backward one. Dynastic rule by the Saudi family could go together with a mass movement then. Today, however, Saudi family rule is coupled with modern capitalist industry — oil, petrochemicals, steel, aluminium, construction.

The combination makes one of the vilest tyrannies in the world. The Saudi family's Islamic fundamentalist rule suppresses all trade union or political rights in the manner of a Stalinist state — and also suppresses many of the individual liberties which even Stalinist states allow.



The S Atlantic and the Gulf

By Clive Bradley

Most of the Left supported Argentina throughout the South Atlantic war, believing that an Argentinian victory would somehow be a blow for "anti-imperialism".

A defeat for the junta, they argued through convoluted logic, would strengthen imperialism, and therefore even strengthen the junta itself.

The most rabid pro-Argentinian current was the American Socialist Workers Party, then linked to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The SWP went as far as to publish a speech in their weekly paper, *The Militant*, by Galtieri's foreign minister, Costa Mendez.

The Militant published an article by Will Reissner, later also published in Britain, comparing the economic development of Argentina and Canada. It argued that the lower level of Argentinian economic development was caused by foreign investment. Quite apart from whether this, in itself, would determine a political attitude in war, the argument ignored the fact that Canada receives more foreign investment than Argentina.

Clearly, foreign investment alone could not explain the nature of Argentinian capitalism, and certainly could not be the more or less sole criterion by which to define Argentina as a semi-colonial oppressed nation which should be supported in the war.

In Argentina itself, the main would-be Trotskyist group, led by

Nahuel Moreno, called for national unity and for trade unions to set up recruitment centres for the army.

Others were less crude. But some on the Left did not take the pro-Argentinian line. The British *Militant* were unique in making little objection to the war at all. They dismissed calls for the fleet to be withdrawn, arguing that it was a completely utopian demand.

Their alternative was that a socialist federation be established of Britain, Argentina and the Falkland Islands. *Militant* coupled this slogan with a call for a general election in Britain which would throw out Thatcher, replacing her with a socialist Labour government — which might indeed decide to continue the war on a new, socialist basis, helping the Argentinian workers to overthrow Galtieri.

This, of course, was not at all utopian.

Like now over the Gulf, many people who opposed the war were in favour of economic sanctions instead. *Militant* echoed this call, demanding a trade union boycott of Argentina.

The British Socialist Workers Party did not support Argentina, although they made very little of the theoretical questions involved. Fortunately enough — for them. More recently they have taken extremely crude "anti-imperialist" lines on the conflict between Iran and Iraq, in the closing stages of the Gulf War, and over the current Gulf Crisis.

These positions don't square at all with their stand on the South Atlantic War. But the SWP see no need to explain themselves, and still less to educate their members in their own history.



Making the oil fields safe for feudalism?

"The Saudi Arabian (women) you see", according to a report in the *Economist* magazine (8 February 1986), "are 'wrapped up like maize'; their faces, as well as their heads and bodies are covered.

"Saudi Arabian women do not go out, except to visit close friends and relatives or to shop — usually with a husband or brother... They are not allowed to drive... They do not meet men who are not their husbands, close relations or, oddly expatriates.

"Their marriages are arranged for them... Although polygamy is reckoned unfashionable, expensive and troublesome by smart Saudis, it is still practised.

"There is no cinema... theatre or music. The only forms of public entertainment (are) football and the public executions which happen

most Fridays". Migrant workers are a minority of the population in Saudi Arabia, rather than a majority as in Kuwait and the Gulf emirates. But they still do most of the work. Many of them — from Pakistan for example — are under supervision by their own regimes as well as by the Saudi government.

The government's huge wealth allows it to offer a life of ease to any of the local people who want it — though some of the desert nomads, apparently, prefer to continue their traditional way of life.

Imperialism and sub-imperialism

Since the early '70s vast oil revenues and the decay of Arab nationalism have helped keep Arabia

fairly stable. Britain withdrew from direct control. Until 1979 the Shah's Iran acted as a 'sub-imperialism' to police the area (sending troops, for example, to help put down the Omani rebels).

From 1980 to 1988 Iran and Iraq were locked in war: Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, perceiving Iran as the more dangerous power, backed Iraq, and the US eventually sent ships to the Gulf to help impose a stalemate result to the war.

Now Iraq is bidding for the sub-imperialist role — not just as an ally of the big powers, but as a regional power in its own right. The US has responded by trying to establish itself directly as the dominant military power in the Gulf. For the people of Arabia, the clock is being turned back to the 1950s or '60s.

Poor little Kuwait?

By Colin Foster

'We are ready for business", the Kuwaiti financier told the *Independent on Sunday* (26 August). "The only difference is that that now we do it here" — in London — "and not there".

So much for the war propaganda about "poor little Kuwait!" if you believe the speeches of George Bush and Margaret Thatcher — or even of Labour's Gerald Kaufman — the huge military build-up in the Gulf by the US, Britain and their allies is motivated not at all by concern for oil and profits, but only by determination to save the oppressed Kuwaitis from Iraqi tyranny.

Yet the Emir whom the US want to put back into power, and the Kuwaiti elite, look not much like an oppressed nation. "Our country is

occupied", said the Kuwaiti financier interviewed by the *Independent on Sunday*. "We do not like it, but so be it. We control our economy. We are a solvent, state. We have desks, telephones, staff, lines of credit".

Already before the invasion, the Kuwaiti elite's income from their maybe \$100 billion of overseas investments was greater than from oil. They still control and draw income from those investments.

"Kuwaiti bankers and government officials, as well as oil company and airline employees, have converged (on London) to reorganise the state's disparate businesses, investments and bank deposits into a veritable Kuwait-in-Exile Ltd."

Kuwaitis who have not made it as far as London are surviving well, too. In Abu Dhabi, according to the *Guardian* (27 August), thousands of Kuwaitis have been put up at government expense in five-star hotels. Not for them the thirst,

hunger, discomfort and disease of Egyptian and other Arab and Asian migrant workers caught in transit camps in Jordan as they flee Iraq.

In occupied Kuwait, ten thousand Iraqi exiles have been shipped back to Baghdad for jail or slaughter, and there have been several reports of Sri Lankan and Thai migrant women workers being gang-raped by Iraqi troops. Many thousands of domestic servants in Kuwait, Sri Lankans or Filipinos, have been left destitute by their Kuwaiti employers fleeing, and (as is custom in the Gulf) taking their servants' passports with them.

But of ill-treatment of the Kuwaiti elite there is no report yet. The greed and privilege of the Kuwaiti elite do not justify the greed of Saddam Hussein. But they do make nonsense of the propaganda about Kuwait now being the oppressed nation of all oppressed nations, the one that must be saved if the light of liberty is to shine anywhere.

The wit of the Morning Star

By Gerry Bates

It is not beyond the wit of a statesman to think up ways of extricating us from this crisis in a principled way, without a war," says the *Morning Star* helpfully (23 August).

"It could be made clear," they make clear, wittily, "that US and other forces would be withdrawn".

But "it would be most sensible for the US to agree to a UN force in which some of its own forces take part."

Indeed, according to the issue of 21 August, "it is important to put all efforts into this demand [a UN force], and not be sidetracked into calls for the withdrawal of US forces which leave out of account

Saddam Hussein's forces and their potential for further aggressive acts."

Hilarious. With peaceniks like these, who needs warmongers?

But not something to make the Bush administration exactly quake in its shoes. After all, who calls the shots in the UN? Do they not precisely want the whole gunboat flotilla to be sanctioned by the United Nations?

What the *Morning Star* really wants, of course, is for Shevednardeze to be Mr Middleman. But we should depend on neither the Russian bureaucracy nor the various feeble components of the United Nations. We need a movement, in Britain and America, and all other countries whose governments are committing themselves to war in the Gulf, to stop the war.



Rancid at heart

FILM

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Wild at Heart'

Wild at Heart' is not only rancid at heart; it's rotten through and through, right down to its moth-eaten fake optimistic ending. I've rarely been so sickened by a movie, or so bored.

It's a turbo charged, southern gothic, road movie cartoon, full of oddball characters and random violence and the kind of banal dialogue that's there to prove how stunted the characters are. It's condescending in the worst possible way.

Why make 'Wild at Heart' at all? Filmmaker David Lynch obviously thinks he's exposing the sick underbelly of American society, in all its violence and weirdness, but he's really just exposing himself, and it's not a pretty sight.

The story is about Lula and Sailor, two lovers on the run. Lula's mother, Marietta, is determined to separate them, whatever the cost (and it keeps rising).

Marietta is whacko right from the start, and she just gets whackier, but Lula and Sailor are presented as innocent young lovers, devoted to each other. They're meant to win our sympathy.

But there's a hitch here. At the start we saw Sailor beat a man's brains out in graphic, bone crunching detail. After that, it's hard to see him as the boy next door.

Lula and Sailor are meant to be super hot for each other, and there is scene after scene of them in bed together. Their talk is supposed to be passionate and wild, but their utterances are so deadpan that it all begins to seem ironic, a send up of passion.

Nicholas Cage as Sailor does at least connect with the audience; there's something pathetically hang dog about him that's winning. But Laura Dern as Lula is less lucky. She tries hard, strutting and posing and arching her back like a cat, but she has nothing, beyond Lynch's one-note, cartoon-sexy concept, to play.

There's something condescending in Lynch's treatment of Lula and Sailor, as if sex were the only bond these 'little' people could have. It's only much later that we see tenderness between them, and by then I'd lost interest in both them and the movie.

In Lynch's earlier film, 'Blue Velvet', he was lifting the lid on so called 'normal' life to show the weirdness and criminality underneath. He probably thinks he's gone further in 'Wild at Heart'. But he hasn't. 'Blue Velvet' implied a rejection of criminality and sleaze; there's no rejection in 'Wild at Heart', not even in the ending. The violence and sleaze aren't used as a contrast to anything; that's all there is.

There's no humanity in the characters, and no humanity in the film. The revelations Sailor and Lula make to each other don't add to them as people; they're just there to add shock value of a prurient kind. The treatment of women is also offensive. The camera goes right up into Marietta's face, making us recoil from her, and from her madness, her obsessions, yet without shedding any light on where her madness comes from. It degrades her.

Lula is also violated by Lynch. In one truly repulsive scene, the sleazeball man, Bobby Peru, threatens Lula with rape, and Lynch leaves us thinking she's disappointed when he suddenly

drops his threats and walks out.

'Wild at Heart' is like a carnival freak show, where Lynch, as the ring master, parades the freaks to amuse us, the paying audience. The freaks, turned into objects and lined up to be jeered at, lose their humanity. We're repelled.

But it's also a blood show. When there isn't enough blood in the Lula/Sailor story, Lynch has them stumble by chance on to a gory car wreck where a girl gushes blood before them.

There may be a role for violence in some movies, but this isn't one of them. The camera feasts on the blood here, barbarously, sickeningly, gratuitously. It's a sadist's night out. Apparently even worse scenes were cut because of mass walkouts by preview audiences. I don't even want to think what they could have been like.

Lynch may believe society is sick and bent, but films like this are part of the problem, not a solution. His only alternative to violence and mayhem is a hearts and flowers sickly sentimentality; the world's a terrible place, so turn inwards to love and family. Very deep.

Lynch has said Stanley Kubrick is the filmmaker he most admires. You can see that influence in Lynch's films. Like Kubrick's, Lynch's are dazzling in technique, but are



Nicholas Cage and Laura Dern as the boring lovers Sailor and Lula

empty, voiceless, pointless. They exist in a moral vacuum. Lynch can set up a camera all right, and catch

a startling image, and give his pictures a look unlike anyone else's. But technique alone isn't enough. If

it was, robots would be making movies, not men and women. 'Wild at Heart' feels like a robot's movie.

A Vietnam war film with Vietnamese

TV

Lillian Thomson reviews 'Tour of Duty'

In Vietnam war films, the Vietnamese are almost never shown. Why?

The Americans made successful film propaganda about evil Nazis and sadistic Japanese, so why not show the Vietnamese? Is it shame on the part of the Americans? Are they afraid of showing a ragged, peasant army under siege by American technology?

Or does the lack of a Vietnamese presence in films reflect the way many Americans saw the war, and presumably still see it, as one fought against an enemy rarely glimpsed, never understood?

Tour of Duty, a television drama series (Saturday evenings, ITV) set in an infantry company in Vietnam in 1967-8 tries to show some of war from the Vietnamese side. It hasn't done it well, but it's made more of an effort than any feature film to date, and the sightings of Vietnamese, though rather stereotyped, break a long standing

taboo. These Vietnamese are not the sadistic Orientals of World War 2 movies, or the more recent, racist *Deer Hunter*, but are human beings fighting a just war.

Tour of Duty has the obligatory Saigon bar girls but it also has NLF and NVA soldiers, and other civilian Vietnamese, both peasants and town dwellers, trying to live their lives in the cross fire of war.

In one of the early episodes there was an extended section in a Vietnamese tunnel, where Taylor, a captured black soldier, has been taken. Taylor, terrified at being in the hands of the enemy, has his thinking turned round by a kindly Vietnamese doctor who treats his wounds, all the while wondering why he, an oppressed black man, fights for the US.

Taylor says he was drafted, a form of legal slavery, and the doctor agrees. He then goes on to say that Vietnam is his country, that his people fought the French and then the Japanese, and they'll fight the Americans to the end too, no matter what it takes.

These scenes, which allow us to build up an identification with the Vietnamese balance the story in the way other war films don't. When it's only the Americans we're

encouraged to identify with in movies, it's small wonder that audiences cheer to see the Vietnamese blown up. But in the tunnel scenes, the truth of the war was clearly stated, not by an American, but by a Vietnamese with right on his side.

The series hasn't really retreated from that, but it's concentrated much more on the American experience, and the kind of tough realism represented by the battle hardened Sergeant Anderson. Anderson's limited, but he cares about his men; he doesn't want to see them killed. He's meant to represent the ordinary soldier, uninterested in the rights or wrongs of the war, doing the job he was sent there to do, and surviving if he can.

Tour of Duty tries to tackle issues, such as pacifism, war trauma, looting and desertion, but it trivialises them for the fifty minute format. In the first episode, Horn, a college educated GI, refuses to fight, claiming the war is wrong. He leaves his weapon behind on the chopper, and keeps his head down in the firefights.

Yet by the next episode, Horn's toting a gun, having learned from Anderson that a war zone is no place for philosophy. 'Either you kill the enemy, or he kills you.'

It shows the confusion of the GIs when the NVA bombard them with propaganda, claiming the ruling elite who sent them to die aren't fighting by their side, then doesn't take the trouble to work issues through. Solutions like Horn picking up a gun are too pat. The Anderson view, that politics and understanding are luxuries that soldiers can't afford, always prevails.

Glimmers of consciousness get buried in the daily struggle for survival. Yet the struggle seems unreal, because the core characters never get a scratch. Week in, week out, upbeat endings, in which Anderson and the men escape from impossible situations, undercut what we really know about the war. Their immunity from death is a form of cheating.

The essence of war films is tension; the fear that death can come at any time. Removing that tension, by removing the threat of

death, may make the show palatable for television, but it robs it of reality.

Continuity is the one thing lacking in real war. People get killed or wounded. The faces change.

Of course TV dramas need characters we relate to week after week, so Anderson and Co have to survive. But keeping them alive leaches out the drama and suspense.

The cast is ethnically balanced, with black, white and Hispanic soldiers fighting side by side under the (white, and possibly Jewish) officer, Lieutenant Goldman. The series constantly underlines the cramped, poverty stricken backgrounds of the GIs. Most of them have nothing to look forward to back in the 'world'. The series is anxious to point out that most of the soldiers came from the working class not from middle class families with 'connections', and that these men were betrayed by the society who sent them to war.

The Japanese medic in the squad was killed off early in the series, but not before he's given a few insights into American racism. His parents, interned in World War 2, lost everything, so his father advised his son to grab what education he could. They can't take that away from you, he told him. Except by sending you to your death in Vietnam, of course.

Tour of Duty's images seem to come from other war films, such as *Apocalypse Now*, rather than from the war itself, and some of the writing is overly self conscious, cursed as it is by the writers' hindsight. Yet the hindsight says the war was wrong. It doesn't try to cop out by claiming it simply wasn't fought right, or that middle class liberals spiked the army's guns, though both complaints have come out of GI's mouths in the course of the series.

Tour of Duty, plagued as it is by wooden acting, increasingly soapy scripts and unconvincing jungle, isn't as one sided as most of the big war movies. Of course it's a whole lot sorer for the US soldiers than it is for the Vietnamese whose lives and country they're destroying. But as least the 'enemy' has a face and a cause worth fighting for. That's a first.



The reality of the Vietnam war: a South Vietnamese woman begs US soldiers to spare her home during an anti-Communist operation, Saigon 1967

Teachers: back to fight

By Liam Conway

Teachers start the new term in a mixed state of anxiety and confusion. Anxiety over their jobs prospects and confusion over the direction of education in the 1980s.

On the jobs front, redundancies still threaten in many parts of the country. Ironically, in London there are still teacher shortages. Many London boroughs are relying very heavily on supply teachers and recruits from virtually every country in the world, some of whom have been persistently denied "teacher" status in Britain, in order to fill the gaps.

Some boroughs have even been saved by the crisis in the Gulf which has prevented teachers taking up lucrative posts in Kuwait. Elsewhere extra incentive allowances are being used to entice first-time teachers into certain areas.

Meanwhile the government's educational policies are in confusion and disarray, particularly after the publication of this year's highly successful GCSE and A-level results. Michael Fallon, the new right-wing minister for schools, has been put in the embarrassing position of attacking the Centre for Policy Studies (the Tory-right's think

tank), for their continued criticisms of the GCSE exam.

This apparent U-turn on the attributes of the GCSE reflect uncertainty amongst Tory ranks about the direction of education in general. The summer has produced many conflicting pronouncements about the National Curriculum. The use of tests in primary schools has already proved a disaster, taking up too much time with a few bewildered and anxious children whilst

"The only antidote to these ailments will be strong union action"

others are left to work on their own in the classroom.

Another National Curriculum problem of the government's own making is how to fit too much content into too little time. With every subject competing for timetable space the government may well revitalise plans to extend the school day.

But even this might not be enough as a recent report from the government's

own advisers strongly recommends the extension of "Green education", with studies of global warming, rain-forest destruction, the advance of the deserts and the extinction of many plant and animal species. However, such education may well be banned as quickly as it is introduced as children discover that the cause of these problems is international capitalism.

Another blow to Tory educational philosophy came this week through the publication of a Swedish report on creche children. Thatcher's claims that children are better off at home with "their mothers" are disproved by the report which shows that creche children become better performers, are more creative, more self-confident and more popular than their counterparts.

Of course none of these revelations about the bankruptcy of Tory educational ideas should come as any surprise to teacher trade unionists who are increasingly realising that the government does not change its mind even when it's proved to be stupid. Consequently the coming year will mean more of the same for teachers: poor teaching conditions, inadequate resources, ever increasing class sizes and low pay. And, as before, despite the inactivity of the union leaderships, the only antidote to these ailments will be strong union action in the defence of education. A task which the left must renew from day one of the new school year.

Oil workers: keep up the pressure. Name the day for action!

Representatives of the rank and file-based Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC) are to meet national union officials this week to review progress in the oil workers' safety and recognition dispute.

The unions are preparing a ballot for union recognition but are being obstructed by the oil contractors who refuse to provide them with the names and addresses of workers.

Yet it is the same oil contractors who have refused to negotiate with the unions until they hold a ballot!

Thursday's meeting should immediately go ahead with the ballot and name the day for the start of an all-out North Sea-wide strike. All-out action will quickly bring the employers to their knees. It will cost them 400,000 barrels a day and hit the exchequer to the sum of £2.2 million per day.

"On one issue there can be no compromise. That is our demand that the men sacked after taking action should be reinstated."

Ronnie McDonald
Chair, Oil Industries
Liaison Committee

OILC should take firm control of the running of the dispute on the ground and there must be no deals over the heads of the rank and file which leave a single oilworker locked out.

Support the Pergamon strikers

By Harriet Eisner,
Pergamon striker

On Wednesday 12 September the Annual General Meeting of the Maxwell Communications Corporation shareholders will take place at the Mirror building in Holborn.

MCC has been at a low ebb recently, and June's results show Maxwell to be £1.2bn in debt. However, this financial situation does not seem to inhibit Maxwell, and the Pergamon strikers intend to lobby the AGM to show Maxwell's investors the kind of support we have and how poorly his managerial methods are regarded.

It is important that Maxwell's investors learn first-hand of the kind of campaign that is being waged against a corner of the MCC empire. The boycott campaign is unique in the support it has gained from the academic teaching unions and the National Union of Students, so we would particularly like to have representatives of these unions with us on the day with their banners.

It is also important that our fellow media industry workers are there in force. In terms of the print unions some of the best support has come from Max-

well's own doorstep — from the Mirror SOGAT clerical chapel. We look forward to seeing a strong presence from SOGAT, NGA, BETA and ACTT outside the Mirror building on the day. It is a chance for the media unions in particular to show their collective strength and the support that they continue to give the Pergamon 23.

At a time when Maxwell must be wondering how he can rid himself of the strikers since we rejected his last financial pay-off it is vital he sees just how solid we are.

The MCC AGM falls between the TUC Conference and the Labour Party Conference, where Maxwell, as ever, will be keen to maintain and flaunt his labour movement credentials. It has always been our unofficial policy to follow Maxwell all over — whether to a launch, a Labour Party reception or to a book fair. It is our intention to let Maxwell know that we will not go away and this he already must have realised from our continued unanimous rejections of his increasing financial offers.

Every bit of embarrassment and pressure helps so I hope you and your trade union branch or organisation can come to the Mirror building at 11.45am on Wednesday 12 September. Please let us know (0865 60762) if you can make it, and if you will be bringing a banner.

Bury witch-hunt backfires

By Tony Dale

The bulk of the sexual harassment charges against Bury NALGO Branch Secretary Rob McLoughlin have been dropped.

Two weeks ago the joint secretariat of NALGO and TGWU organised a hearing in Manchester to investigate whether there were any charges to answer.

Rob McLoughlin was informed that the Branch Administrator wished to drop the charges of sexual propositioning. She still wants the joint unions to investigate complaints as to her treatment as Branch Administrator.

The joint secretariat preliminary hearing was organised on a proper and

clear basis.

An initial hearing on 10 August had collapsed when Rob McLoughlin refused to attend. It was unclear what would be the basis and nature of that hearing. McLoughlin would not have been given a chance to present his full case. The result would have been an unjust stitch-up.

In contrast the rearranged meeting was organised properly. It was an investigation as to whether there is a case to answer. McLoughlin was allowed to present his side of the case in full.

It now appears that the core of the charges that the Branch Administrator was harassed for sexual reasons has been dropped. It looks likely that the issue will be resolved soon.

What remains unresolved is the disgraceful actions of sections of

NALGO who used the issue to smear and witch-hunt a left wing Branch Secretary. The complaints were utilised by a section of the Branch who tried to organise a mini coup.

Bury NALGO has a record of fighting cuts, trying to improve the pay and conditions of its members and opposing the poll tax. This good track record has made enemies both inside and outside the Branch.

Political opponents jumped at the opportunity. The campaign which resulted produced a bulletin circulated around the Town Hall entitled 'NALGO members beware.' This bulletin and anonymous comments were used to fuel a press witch-hunt.

Hopefully, the whole issue is drawing to a close. The attempt to force Rob McLoughlin out of his position as Branch Secretary has failed.

What the whole episode highlights is the need for a proper, recognised structure for dealing with complaints and disputes between NALGO employees and elected officials. Without such a structure, disputes will degenerate into chaos with justice being the first victim.

TOWN HALLS ROUNDUP

HILLINGDON council is proposing cuts of £10 million. This would include 300 job losses.

A NALGO branch meeting overwhelmingly voted to oppose these moves and agreed to ballot on industrial action.

The ballot, timetabled for 10 September, will seek backing for a programme of industrial action including five council-wide one-day strikes, indefinite strike action by selected groups of workers, and no cover for vacant posts.

NORTH TYNESIDE council was due to be hit by a one-day strike on Tuesday 28 August. The action was called off when the council agreed to no compulsory redundancy policy.

The dispute is taking place against a backdrop of threats of 1,100 job losses. The council want 640 jobs to go by 1 December.

Despite its no compulsory redundancy policy, the council is continuing with plans for swingeing cuts in jobs and services.

KIRKLEES housing benefit workers are in their sixth week of strike action in a dispute over the poll tax. The workers are demanding regrading before they cooperate with poll tax work.

Support Greenwich

The Greenwich housing strike is now entering its fifth month. The dispute started in May over the pay and conditions of cashiers forced to do poll tax work. Now, the dispute has become a battleground to defend NALGO from the council's attempt to break the union.

The Labour council is bringing in temporary workers to cover strikers' jobs. The council has taken a decision to start disciplinary action against eight strikers.

A branch meeting on 23 August called for an escalation of the strike. A request is going to the NEC to ballot key groups

of workers for indefinite strike action. London-wide strikes are being considered. The meeting called for immediate strike action by all Greenwich NALGO members if any striker is sacked.

The strike is now an anti-union lock-out. The council are throwing up obstacles to prevent a return to work. Greenwich council are out to break NALGO.

The actions of Greenwich council represent a new low in the attitude of Labour councils to industrial disputes. If they get away with it and defeat NALGO in Greenwich it will be a green light for union busting by councils up and down the country.

Moves to broaden the action and escalate the strike should be supported.

Cheap jibes

WHETTON'S WEEK
A miner's diary

I was absolutely disgusted with Neil Kinnock's speech to the TUC.

What came over to me was an abandonment of any commitment to the working class and to socialist ideals.

I thought it was cheap and underhanded and an abuse of privilege for him to go to that rostrum and castigate Scargill. He is throwing wood on to the flames that the Tories and the right-wing have lit.

Kinnock has dragged the Labour Par-

ty through the mud by saying that he is going to continue to run the economy along capitalist lines. Tory anti-trade union legislation will stay on the statute books. If anybody has got the audacity to stand up and criticise him he will slap them down in public. That is not a socialist leader.

The NUM's inquiry hasn't finished. I see daylight at the end of the tunnel.

I hope that finally we can bury all the allegations that have been made against Scargill and Heathfield — but I don't for one moment believe that will be an end to the attack on the NUM.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Refer back this
NEC report!

Page 18 of the National Executive's Report to the Labour Party Annual Conference, just published, contains a key section which delegates will be challenging at the Conference.

The section, right at the end of the "Party Organisation" part of the report, reports the banning of *Socialist Organiser*. It does not present any coherent argument — in its formal wording, it declares only that *Socialist Organiser* would be ineligible for affiliation to the Party, which is not the same as being banned — and it is barely even grammatical, but the gist is clear: the NEC wants to expel Labour Party members who sell, raise funds for, or write for *Socialist Organiser*.

Because the procedure for "referring back" sections of the National Executive's Report does not guarantee a proper discussion, it is vital that lots of CLPs submit emergency motions on the ban. Otherwise the section can be taken together with several other pages of the NEC Report, and bounced through conference with only token discussion.

The Report includes the welcome news that Labour Party individual membership has, at last, begun to revive. It was 293,723 at the end of 1989, as against 265,927 at the end of 1988, and 288,911 at the end of 1987.

However, much of the improvement seems to have been due to members paying subs by direct debit rather than by cash, and therefore being more likely to retain paper membership when they become inactive. Not much improvement can be attributed to national campaigning: the Report's section on campaigns features the Poll Tax, believe it or not, as the Party's major national campaign — a campaign consisting entirely of press releases rather than activity by members!

The Report lists the expulsions decided by the National Constitutional Committee over the last year. Some 35 members have been expelled for being affiliated to *Militant*, mostly in Glasgow Cathcart and Newcastle East CLPs. Some 9 members have been expelled for miscellaneous other reasons.

Also just published is the Final Agenda for Conference, including amendments submitted in August together with the motions printed in the preliminary agenda. Amendments on the ban on *Socialist Organiser* have been ruled out of order; but that ruling strengthens the case for emergency motions. It cannot be said that the emergency motions are out of order because CLPs could have submitted amendments instead.

One debate may be significantly altered because of the amendments — the one on trade union rights (coily entitled "A Charter for Employees"). The TGWU has submitted an amendment to the resolution from MSF in this section.

The amendment strengthens the resolution, notably by inserting the call for "abolishing the anti-union legislation introduced by the Tories since 1979", but still leaves key issues not covered: the right to take solidarity action, and the right of unions to determine their own rules free from government interference. A composite based on the motions from Stoke-on-Trent Central, Hackney North, Bolsover, Morecambe and other CLPs, will be necessary to raise those issues.

More on
the fight
against the
ban pages
6-7 and
page 2

TUC leaders throw in the towel

Jim Denham reports
on the TUC

We must put clear demands on the next Labour government...there must be no ambiguity". Thus spoke TUC general secretary Norman Willis during the debate on employment law on day one of this year's Trades Union Congress.

What particular "clear demands" Willis had in mind was not revealed to the assembled delegates. But at least there was no ambiguity in Willis's message: the trade union movement must give total and unswerving support to the Labour leadership's "employment policy" — that is, the acceptance of the bulk of the Tories' anti-trade union laws.

Compulsory strike ballots, restrictions on solidarity action and on picketing, even legal powers to seize union funds — all will remain in place.

The debate polarised around a TUC General Council statement and a motion entitled Composite 1 from the NCU (both supporting the Labour leadership) and Composite 2 in the name of NALGO, which proposed the repeal of all the Tory legislation.

Last year's Congress (like every Congress since 1982) ordered the General Council to campaign for the repeal of all anti-union legislation. Instead, the TUC leadership threw in the towel; in May they voted to back Labour's policy document "Looking to the Future" with only NALGO, MSF the NGA and NUCPS summoning up the courage to abstain.

The persistent lobbying of General

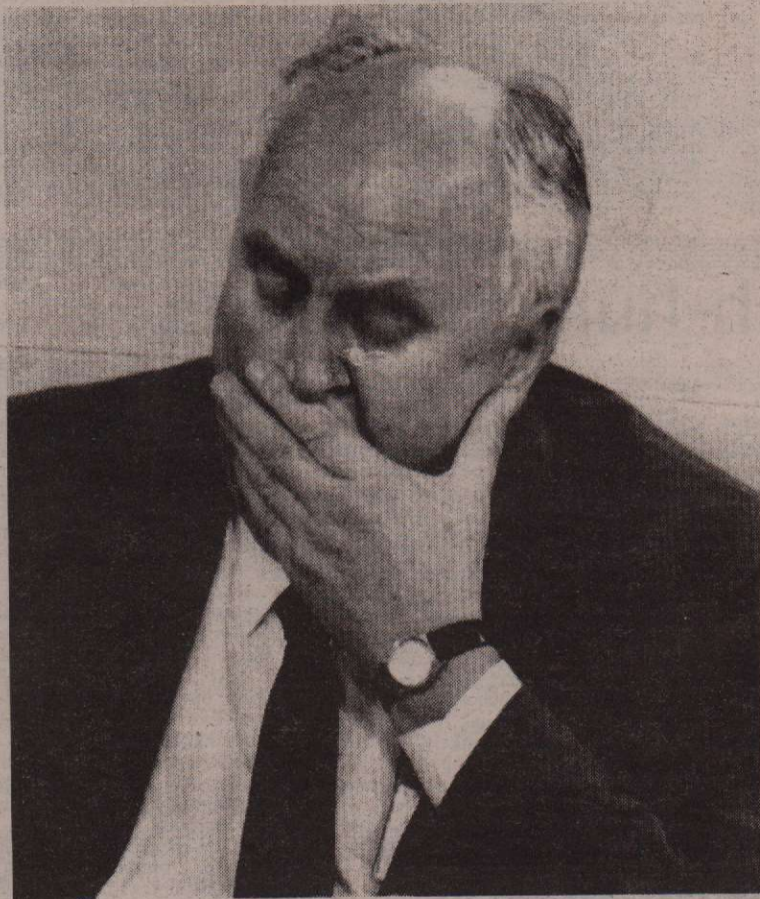
Secretaries by Labour's Employment spokesman Tony Blair whittled down the opposition and pulled even "left-wing" unions like NUPE and the NUR into line.

Meanwhile, the biggest TUC affiliate, the TGWU, was in its usual state of total confusion: their biennial delegate conference called (for the umpteenth time) for the repeal of all anti-union laws but that master of prevarication, Ron Todd, was desperately trying to square the circle by claiming that TGWU policy did not preclude giving support to Labour's policy document...

So most pundits were predicting a walkover for the Willis/Blair "new realist" consensus at this year's TUC. What opposition there would be could be dismissed as the last death-throes of a few pathetic old dinosaurs.

In the event, the vote was remarkably close: the NALGO composite received 3,529,000 votes as against 4,404,000 for the General Committee-backed Composite 1. This hardly justified Tony Blair's crowing about "a decision of tremendous importance [that] allows us to lay to rest the old agenda of the 1970s and put in place the new agenda of the 1990s."

Ron Todd, in characteristically decisive form, claimed that the differences between Composites 1 and 2 were not as great as all that...and the TWGU delegation duly voted for both! Todd's confusion was only exceeded by that of Norman Willis who demonstrated his new unambiguous persona by closing his speech with a rousing call for a vote for the NALGO composite. This was, of course, a mistake. But perhaps Norman's subconscious was trying to tell him something: this battle is far from over.



Norman Willis tries to avoid ambiguity

Kinnock's speech was a disgrace

By Eric Heffer MP

I would like to go on record as opposing the speech Neil Kinnock made at the TUC.

The remarks he made about Arthur Scargill were a real disgrace. He went on and on about Scargill asking for favours for the working class.

The ruling class look after their own, and we in the Labour Party should look after our people — the working class.

Neil Kinnock was telling the trade union movement that he is going to do nothing for them.

In the end the labour movement will be sorry about some of the TUC decisions. It would never have happened unless some people had not voted both ways.

But the result was the acceptance of a whole series of Tory policies.

Campaign against the war!

By Mark Sandell

Following the very well attended meeting against the war in the Gulf held last Wednesday at the Central London Friends Meeting House, a number of initiatives have been made made to organise the opposition to the war drive in the Gulf.

Last Thursday the Campaign Against War in the Gulf (CAWG) was formally set up with the backing of Women for Socialism, Tony Benn MP, Socialist Organiser and Labour Briefing. The meeting, which included a broad range of campaigns, socialist groups and peace activists, agreed to constitute the campaign around a demonstration in opposition to the war drive on 15 September.

The demonstration was called under the slogan "No Gulf War" in order to get as broad and as large a demonstration as possible.

On Monday CND also called a demonstration for the 15th. The CAWG is now building for this united, national demonstration.

Saturday 15 September
Assemble 1.30 at North Wharf
Road

March to Hyde Park
Speakers include Tony Benn, Ken
Cameron, Diane Abbott and
Bruce Kent

A second committee, formed on CND's initiative has been formed to oppose the war. This Committee Against War in the Gulf has been set up on the basis of uniting all who oppose the war. It includes various church people, the Green Party and Plaid. At last night's committee meeting it was said that the committee should be open to Liberal Democrats, wet Tories, etc.

CAWG, backed by Labour Left MPs, is now in a position to organise the specifically working-class labour movement opposition to the war. If a movement is built capable of stopping the war drive it will be working class action that will be central.

CAWG must set itself up as an open, democratic labour movement campaign in opposition to the war — and the labour movement must be a central element of a more general anti-war movement. It is important that support for the demonstration is built in the labour movement, and that Labour Party

and trade union banners are brought on the demonstration.

Send a donation and sponsor the Campaign Against the War in the Gulf. Write to CAWG, c/o 7c Cumberland Park, London W3.

The SWP refused to back the initial action in opposition to the war drive — a picket of the US Embassy called by Women for Socialism.

They refused to back the meeting — addressed by Bernie Grant MP — after that picket.

The SWP organised a demonstration without asking for joint action with anyone, on 1 September. Not surprisingly, no one turned up but themselves.

Last week the SWP were denouncing CAWG.

This week the SWP have produced their own leaflet with the CAWG text and sponsors with their name added, advertising their own CAWG meetings which they have consulted no one about.

Later this week we shall be asking for a cheque for their affiliation to CAWG. More news next week.