

Debate: Should socialists ever defend Iraq?



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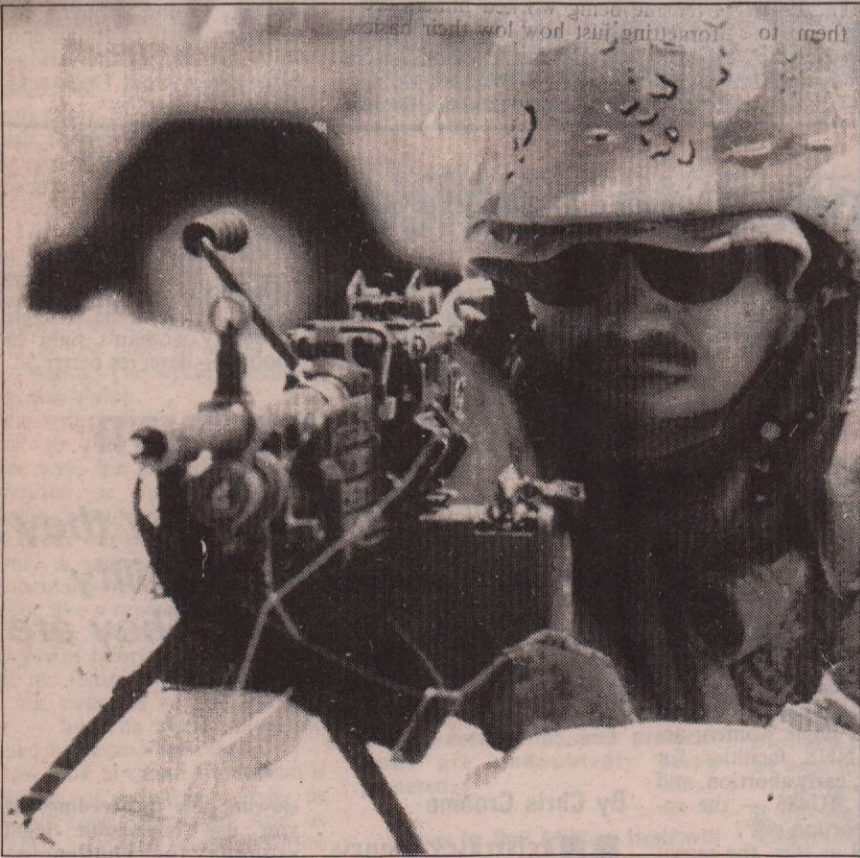
SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home!

100,000 more troops for the Gulf; the worst recession in a decade:

Capitalism



brings

war



and slump

There's many more like Polly Peck

By Colin Foster

Two billion pounds of paper wealth have disappeared. The shares in Polly Peck, worth £2 billion just two months ago, are now worth nothing.

Polly Peck's downfall is one of the biggest company collapses ever in Britain. 1990 has seen more big companies go bust than any year since 1974.

A typical capitalist success of the 1980s has become a failure which may prove typical for the 1990s. The rise of Polly Peck and its boss, Asil Nadir, was based on easy credit, opportunist deal-making rather than any productive innovation, and murky accounting.

Nadir launched the company in the late 1970s. While working in his father's small clothing firm, he saw an opportunity in the fruit business in northern Cyprus, which had been in disarray since the Turkish army seized the area and partitioned Cyprus in 1974.

He quickly made big profits — and reported, so it now appears, even bigger ones. With the help of friendly relations with the Turkish government, he expanded into fruit and vegetables, and electronics, in Turkey.

"There have been few businessmen," reports the *Independent on Sunday*, "more successful at getting bank loans than Mr Nadir... There were nearly 60 banks... When Standard's [Standard Chartered Bank, the bank which lent most heavily to Polly Peck] officials saw the

full list of Polly Peck's creditors, they gasped in despair."

Nadir was helped in getting credit by the rapidly-rising share price of Polly Peck, based on its reports of big profits and its lavish dividend pay-outs. With the money he borrowed, he expanded further, buying banks, newspapers, hotels and an airline in Turkey and Cyprus, the US fruit company Del Monte, and the Japanese electronics firm Sansui.

He also borrowed large sums personally. He had another company, South Audley Management, for his personal affairs. According to the *Financial Times*, "No one [there] ever seemed to be doing much except drink coffee", says one [visitor to the company]. Another visitor recalls: "It was amazing how many people there were feeding off Nadir's wealth. Quite literally. Bacon and egg breakfasts from the kitchen would be served at 10.30 in the morning for those who wished."

The spiral of borrowing, new deals, and more borrowing could continue indefinitely, almost regardless of real profits and losses, as long as credit remained easy. But this August the Stock Exchange censured Nadir for his share dealings, and in September the Serious Fraud Office raided his offices. The banks became more cautious. The balloon burst very quickly.

There were lots of deal-driven, credit-driven companies like Polly Peck in the economic upturn of the 1980s — in Britain and, even more so, in the United States. Both Britain and the US may see lots of failures like Polly Peck in the 1990s.



Hindu chauvinists attack a mosque

Backlash in India

125 people have been killed in Hindu-Muslim fighting over the last week in India, and 900 over the last year.

The rise of Hindu chauvinism in India parallels the ascent of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East. For over 40 years India has been governed in the name of secular and socialist principles, and the result has been mass poverty and squalor, enormous privilege and inequality, and corruption. Disillusioned and desperate people are turning to Hindu chauvinism as the only alternative to hand.

India's 100 million Muslims — and many smaller minorities — are in grave

danger.

The Congress Party, which ruled for 30 years after independence in 1947, grew and developed as a nation-building movement — a movement to unite people of all India's varied ethnic, religious and language groups so that they would throw out British colonialism and build a new nation.

It then became the party of the ruling bourgeoisie, and steadily declined into corruption, vote-catching, and wheeler-dealing. The murderous Hindu-Sikh conflicts in the Punjab a few years back, for example, were stoked up partly by the then Congress government helping extreme Sikh chauvinists in order to undermine more cautious Sikh politicians

whom it saw as a greater danger.

The Hindu chauvinist strand in Congress — which existed even before independence, and was epitomised by the not-so-saintly Mahatma Gandhi — has become more virulent. The origins of the present bloodshed lie in an opportunist gesture towards Hindu chauvinism by Congress leader Rajiv Gandhi before he was voted out of office.

Gandhi gave Hindu zealots the go-ahead to build a temple on the site of a 460-year old mosque. The Hindu zealots say that the mosque stands on the place where a Hindu god was born, and it should be destroyed. Muslims, of course, object. Thousands of Hindus have

massed to storm the site.

The Hindu chauvinist upsurge is, however, still nowhere near as strong as Islamic fundamentalism in many countries. The big Hindu chauvinist party, the BJP, got 11% of the vote at the last election, and hopes to double that score next time.

India still has a lively and often militant, though fragmented, trade union movement. A working-class political alternative could gain support. Unfortunately, the main parties based in the working class — the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party (Marxist) — have consistently trailed behind either the Congress Party of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, or the various bourgeois anti-Congress alliances.

Access to choice

By Alice Sharp, NAC Steering Committee

The National Abortion Campaign (NAC) has decided to launch a new, and positive campaign for the coming year.

'Access to Choice' will encompass the needs and demands of all women. It includes access to information for Irish women, access to donor insemination for lesbians and single women, access to NHS facilities for free, safe, early abortion, and access to RU486 — the so-called 'abortion pill'.

As well as this, the recent NAC AGM appointed a steering committee and examined the desperate financial situation facing NAC. It committed itself to publicising and opposing the attacks on abortion rights in Eastern Europe, and to launching an affiliation drive aimed at lesbian and gay organisations.

Left Unity women have long contended that campaigns for reproductive rights should be broad and positive, and NAC's new initiatives are most welcome. Whilst there is currently no direct attack on reproductive rights, it is all the more important that campaigning work is continued and taken forward.

Unfortunately, some groups jump on campaign bandwagons and then leap off when they become less

newsworthy. NAC — and the struggle for every woman's right to choose — deserves better.

Poll tax clampdown

"At the end of the day they can pass as many liability orders as they like. They are just kangaroo courts"

By Chris Croome

Magistrates courts across the country are resorting to draconian measures to clear the massive backlog of poll tax cases.

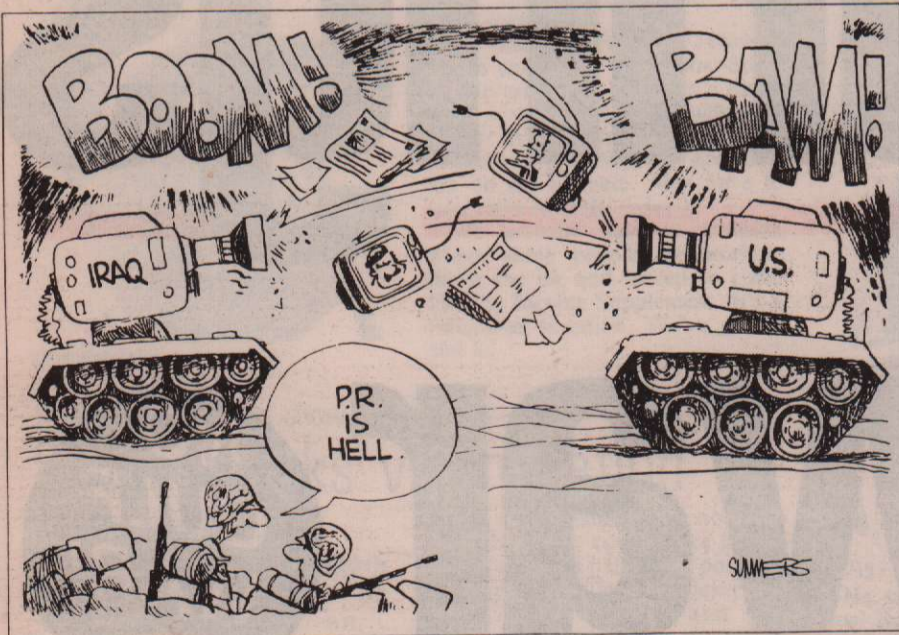
In many areas the courts have been flagrantly violating the law through the banning of McKenzie's Friends, and not allowing public access to the sessions.

The clampdown has led to incorrect liability orders being served on people who haven't been allowed to defend themselves.

Not everything is going their way, however, as a Sheffield activist explained: "There is a lot of scope for

slowing the proceedings if you use reasonable legal grounds for challenging things, bearing in mind the magistrates don't know what they are talking about half the time..."

However, the poll tax is not going to be defeated in the courts: "At the end of the day they can pass as many liability orders as they like. They are just kangaroo courts. You are in there basically to politicise, to mobilise support, to find out where your support is, to show them that there is a campaign, to give people advice and assistance, to clog up the courts as much as you can and try to get as much positive publicity as you can."



Court halted by mass picket

By Steve Battlemuch

The experience was only bettered by watching the birth of my son," was how one anti-poll tax activist described the atmosphere at Bingham court last Thursday, 25 October, when the cases of 1700 non-payers were adjourned by magistrates

unable to cope with the 150 campaigners who packed into the tiny court building.

Nottingham's Labour council had decided to use Bingham court, which is nine miles out of Nottingham, in order to discourage people turning up. The tactic backfired because Bingham court is very small.

The magistrates were forced to call off all the afternoon's proceedings

because of the health and safety risk and the noise created by demonstrators inside and outside the court.

The council now faces a dilemma — continue to use Bingham court and face a repeat performance, or revert to using the City court alone, which means they will need twice as many court days.

Campaigners will protest at the Labour council's Tory policies at a lobby of the City Council on Monday 5 November, at noon.

Capitalism brings up yours war and slump

Would a war now help or hinder George Bush's Republican Party in the US Congressional elections on 7 November?

This question, and questions like it, will decide whether the US will go to war in the Gulf this week, or shortly after the election. Everything is now in place for war.

George Bush says he has "had it" with Iraqi ill-treatment of American hostages. He has "had it" with waiting for sanctions to "work". The three-month "phony war" may be about to turn into a real war.

Pressure on Bush not to fight has been building up from the people in the US, whose support for war has fallen spectacularly — to just over 50 per cent now — in a few weeks, and from sections of the capitalist class who fear world economic chaos in the wake of war.

The Great Alliance against Iraq has creaked a little under the strain, with the USSR and France being more conciliatory. The isolation of Iraq may be about to end with a spectacular shift of posture by Saddam Hussein's long-time opponents, the brother Ba'athists of Syria.

The Americans, and their spluttering satellite Mrs Thatcher, may well calculate that *this* is the time to go to war, before it is "too late".

Meanwhile the British bosses' organisation, the Confederation of British Industry, has reported the most gloomy industrial outlook for ten years. 1990 is proving a record year for company collapses. In the US, a deal on the federal budget has been stitched together only by shameless juggling with figures: the gross imbalance of the American economy remains, undermining the dollar as the basis of world trade and finance. The world is heading for a new slump.

War will probably add economic chaos to the downturn already under way. But probably only the surrender or fall of Saddam Hussein can now avert war. And it may break out within days.

Only a year ago, as Stalinism spectacularly fell apart in Eastern Europe like a mummy whose tomb has been exposed to air, the triumphant bourgeoisie proclaimed itself the master of the world. All the big struggles of history were over — and the money men and women had come out on top.

Now look at them! Capitalism is a regime of economic crisis, as socialists have always said. And, as socialists have also said, the future of humankind will be one of socialism — or barbarism.

"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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25,000 anti-war protestors marched in New York on 25 October

Dawn raids in Liverpool

The arrest of 22 people in dawn raids by police investigating corruption in and around Liverpool Council marks the latest dramatic phase in the strange unfinished saga of *Militant's* role in Liverpool.

Derek Hatton, who was deputy leader of the council when *Militant* was most influential, in 1983-6, is out on police bail; the police are sifting through the mountains of documents they seized; a smattering of stories has appeared in the press alleging that the *Militant* organisation was directly involved in the alleged corruption; and prosecutions are undoubtedly being prepared.

It may be that *Militant* itself will be raided, and its financial and other records seized.

The raids are a factor — coincidentally or otherwise — in the struggle between the Kinnoekites and the *Militant*-influenced "Broad Left" in the city. 29 councillors have been suspended from the council Labour group for voting against implementation of the poll tax or against rent rises, and moves are under way to expel them from the Labour Party. The new right-wing leadership of the Labour council is planning big job cuts.

Socialist Organiser doesn't know whether or not there was corruption in Liverpool.

We know that damaging allegations have been made in the press for years about Derek Hatton and others, without Hatton having

recourse to the easy money of the libel courts.

Derek Hatton is a disgusting creature who now has nothing in common with the labour movement. In fact he is a prime specimen of the ideal man of Mrs Thatcher's Tory Britain, the me-oriented spiv who makes a fortune selling his knowledge of Liverpool council and its affairs to property speculators.

But why is Hatton different from the many Tory ex-ministers who have gone straight from their ministries to the boards of companies who deal with those ministries? The Tories are hounding Hatton, who is now one of their own, not for what he is but for what he used to say he was.

The Liverpool labour movement is still the victim of the mixture of sectarianism, backwardness and socialism-in-one-city corporatism with which *Militant* and Hatton ran the council. *Militant* and Hatton have opened up the Liverpool labour movement to a massively disruptive, and perhaps in some of its aspects deliberately disruptive, police operation.

Militant may have laid itself open to large-scale police interference under guise of investigating corruption. And it must be certain that many Liverpool Labour activists who have nothing to do with corruption, and many who have nothing to do with *Militant*, will suffer. Liverpool council workers who now have to fight to save their jobs will have their struggle hindered and obscured by the mud being thrown around.

During their years in power,

Socialist Organiser subjected *Militant* and its Hatton-faced regime in Liverpool to sustained criticism. We have no brief for them, and no political or financial confidence in them.

Militant ran Liverpool council like you would expect a dimwitted know-nothing sect to run it. They did not even fight the class struggle when it came to it: they did a short-lived deal with the Tories when they should have fought side by side with the miners in 1984, and the next year collapsed into a deal with Swiss banks.

They have spent the last five years concocting preposterous myths about their reign in Liverpool. They, who have always substituted revolutionary activity for revolutionary activity, now substitute retrospective "revolutionary" fantasy-mongering for the revolutionary work they did not do when they had a chance! No, we don't trust *Militant*, and we would not recommend that anyone else should trust them either.

But we should not allow the whole of the Liverpool Labour Left, or the Liverpool council workers, to become victims of *Militant's* ill repute. And socialists should not support the capitalist state — or proclaim themselves neutral — in the repression now being prepared against *Militant*.

Let them investigate the Tory party! Sorting out *Militant* is a job the labour movement should reserve for itself. If investigation is to be done, it should be done by the labour movement.



Playing the nationalist card for the election?

The political power of money

Do we live in a democracy? A polity of equal citizens? They say we do.

But we don't. Some are more equal than others. In wealth, of course, but not just in wealth.

Wealth implies inequality in all that wealth can buy. And wealth can buy pretty well anything.

It buys political influence. In America it is reckoned that it takes \$25 million to win a seat in the Senate. According to one-time Washington insider Gore Vidal, you can see some of the big campaign contributors telling the bought and paid-for "elected representatives" how to vote in Senate divisions which concern them.

Once upon a time they bought votes retail; now they pay big sums to allow the candidate to use the media to get votes, and once the votes are gained they own them because they own the senator.

Is it different in Britain? Consider the history of the *Sun*.

The *Sun* switched from Labour to the Tories after the 1970 election. It is widely credited with swinging a sizeable section of the working class to Thatcher in the 1979 election. (See "Stick it up your punter", by Peter Chippindale and Chris Horrie.)

Plainly many other things determined the swing to the Tories. But the *Sun* was the mass propaganda organ of the new Thatcher Toryism.

It is a descendant of the old Labour paper, the *Daily Herald*. The *Herald* was sold in 1964 and became the *Sun*. A few years later Rupert Murdoch bought it. He had it support Labour in 1970. Then he changed his mind.

As an Australian, Murdoch didn't even have a vote in Britain. Actually he had lots of votes. He bought those votes. Or rather, he bought the means to influence and win them for Mrs Thatcher.

The act of buying the *Sun* and then developing it by way of savagely brutalising popular journalism made Murdoch an immense political power. And Murdoch is not the only one. Nor do the media operate only by such vote-gathering. They have whipped the Labour Party leaders into line with the needs of the bosses over the last decade.

The brutality with which they have assailed Labour in general, and people like Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in particular, is a lesson in itself.

Next time somebody tells you that this is a fine democracy, ask them what sort of a democracy it is where a Rupert Murdoch can deliver hundreds of thousands, and maybe millions, of bamboozled voters to the Tories!

Gazza loves Maggie

GRAFFITI

Mr Justice Harman stirred up an unusual bout of judge-bashing in the tabloid press recently when he claimed in court never to have heard of "Gazza", the footballer Paul Gascoigne.

The tabloids have been quieter about Harman's latest, and much worse, bout of old-fogeyism. A lawyer in his court addressed a witness as "Ms".

Harman made a great show of not understanding. When the expression was explained to him, he commented: "I though there were only three sorts of women - wives, whores and mistresses". What price legal impartiality?

According to the *Sun* (30 October), Margaret Thatcher greeted Paul Gascoigne at Downing Street with the improbably words, 'Hi, Gazz'.

Toadying publicity-seeker Gascoigne told the Tory rag: "She is nice and cuddly". Probably so if you're as rich as Gascoigne.

Many Tories must have been baffled by the exchange reported in the *Sun*. Many, if the *Guardian's* report on the Tory conference last month should be trusted, see the modern world as a David Lynch style carnival of weirdness and vice.

How else explain the chair's comment after Angela Rumbold's keynote speech on "the family" at Tory conference? "Thank you for a wonderful speech, Angela, and thank you most of all for being so normal."

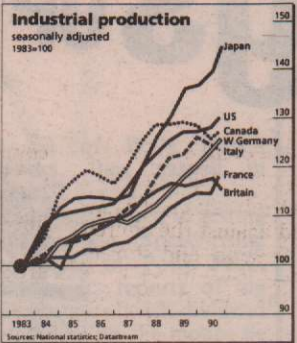
What did the chair think Rumbold was likely to do or say?

Performance-related pay is the new bosses' buzzword.

And if you ask about their own big salaries, they'll reply that they're just applying the same principle - the boss who secures big profits should get a big salary.

The fact is, though, that over the last year, while profits have been falling, top bosses' pay has still been rising - by 22% between 1989 and 1990, according to a recent survey by Incomes Data Services.

IDS also found that there was "hardly any correlation" between bosses' pay and the success of their companies as measured by earnings per share.



Thatcher's economic miracle, graphically illustrated: this chart from the *Economist* magazine shows British industry more sluggish than any other big advanced capitalist country's in the years since 1983.

The latest issue of *Searchlight* magazine reports on a survey of Jewish migrants from the USSR to the US on anti-semitism in the USSR.

"Statements such as 'dirty Jews', 'Jews are to blame for the shortages', and 'Hymie go to Israel' are routine" in food queues in Moscow and Leningrad, according to *Searchlight*.

500 migrants reported a total of 467 anti-semitic incidents - distribution of anti-semitic literature, harassment of Jewish children, graffiti, damage to property, desecration of cemeteries, and even direct physical attacks.

According to the official *Militant* account of it ('Liverpool: the city that dared to fight', by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn), Liverpool City Council's jousting with the Tories in 1983-5 was an epic nowise inferior in heroism and inspiration to the French Revolution of 1789-94. The comparison is Taaffe's, not ours.

It was disconcerting, then, to read the *Daily Mail's* account of the reaction of Derek Hatton - who in 1983-5 was the leading *Militant* figure on the City Council - to being jailed for one hour last week.

"It was awful," he groaned. "I know the width of every wall, every scribble on the paintwork, how many panes there are in the skylight. All I could think was... how can I get out?"

A bit of a come-down from the brave talk of "better to break the law than break the poor!". And the comment maybe casts light on the question of whether panic, loss of nerve and cowardice on the part of Hatton and his close colleagues shaped the final debacle in 1985, when the council declared 24,000 redundancies as a "tactical move" (it said) to keep it within the law. Perhaps then, too, all Hatton could think was "how can I get out?"



"We're not going to war"

The seven US reservists who led the 20 October New York demonstration to oppose the Gulf war. Stephanie Atkinson (second from the left) said: "The money we are spending to restore a royal family in Kuwait could be better spent here. I can not support a war."

from the left) said: "The money we are spending to restore a royal family in Kuwait could be better spent here. I can not support a war."

Stick it on your reading list!

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

The splendidly-titled 'Stick It Up Your Punter', an unauthorised history of the *Sun* by Peter Chippendale and Chris Horrie, promises to be essential reading.

The *Sunday Correspondent* is presently serialising the book and (according to *Private Eye*) Kelvin Mackenzie sent *Corrie* editor John Bryant several desperate messages, begging him to reconsider. Kelvin, it seems, is one of those people who is good at dishing it out but not so good at taking it (remember how upset he was when Channel 4's *Hard News* 'doorstepped' him?)

The excerpt published in this week's *Corrie* concentrates on the symbiotic relationship between Mrs Thatcher and the *Sun*, recounting how Rupert Murdoch pulled the paper round from its original pro-Labour stance in 1970 to its enthusiastic endorsement of the Tories in 1979. That much, of course is common knowledge; but did you realise that it could very easily have been quite different?

Murdoch, it seems, was initially very chummy with Harold Wilson ("both consummate opportunists", comments Chippendale and Horrie) and valued the old charlatan's influence over the print unions and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It was only because Wilson started getting paranoid about the press and complained of a Fleet Street "personalised political vendetta" (which Murdoch took as a personal affront), that the two fell out.

The book is also very informative about the exact nature of the relationship between Thatcher and the soaraway tabloid; I had always assumed that Mrs T was using the *Sun* as her "conduit to the working class" and that the paper, sensing the populist main chance, went along with this. It seems that the boot may have been on the other foot: Thatcher, Geoffrey

Howe and Nicholas Ridley began to drop in on "chewing the fat" sessions at the *Sun* in 1974; over more than a few whiskies, Mrs T would pick editor Larry Lamb's brains and respond with rapt enthusiasm, along the lines of: "That's marvellous. If only I had people like you who really know how to communicate. Absolutely marvellous."

For his part, Lamb decided that Thatcher had become his tool for bringing about a *Sun*-led political sea change...

Of course, no-one can ever measure the influence that newspapers have over the outcome of elections, and it is common on the left to find people to ascribe almost in-

vincible powers to the press (how come, then, that Labour ever wins elections?). But there can be no doubt that Larry Lamb's famous polling-day leader in 1979, at the very least, contributed to the size of the Tory landslide. Mrs T certainly thought so, and sent Lamb a "charming" letter of thanks, promising to strive to be worthy of his support. A few years later, of course, she knighted him.

When Kelvin Mackenzie took over as editor in 1981, the relationship changed somewhat: Mackenzie worships Thatcher as an "anti-establishment" figure who has saved the country from the liberal and the soft left. He also personally initiated a new phase in the *Sun's* evolu-

tion - the "loony-left" campaign.

This has subsided a little since last year's Calcutt Report, but for most of the '80s it dominated the paper's "political" coverage: it consists of finding examples of supposed "loony" behaviour by Labour local authorities (eg. banning black bin bags as 'racist') and then splashing the story as yet another example of how Labour is in the grip of nutters, militant gays, black fanatics, etc., etc. In almost every case these stories have been proved to be fabrication.

Incidentally, the Chippendale/Horrie book exposes the famous "Freddie Starr Ate My Hamster" story as a fabrication as well.

The face in the mirror

WOMEN'S EYE

My mother always says she would rather go to the dentist than the hairdresser. She says she never knows what to say to the person in the mirror.

"And have you been on holiday this year?"

"Yes."

"Anywhere nice?"

"No we went somewhere really nasty and hated every minute!"

When the pleasant chat doesn't come easily, perhaps the dentist's classic conversation stopper - "open wide" - is preferable. But all the evidence is that most women love going to the hairdresser. I do myself, although I can't afford the London prices very often. In the pleasure stakes there is nothing to beat having your hair washed for you.

The hairdressers I go to never have any trouble making conversation. Last time I went, the woman in the next chair launched into an account of her man-trouble. The man in question would not have won any prizes for his liberated attitudes.

"I'd leave tomorrow if it wasn't for the kid - we can't afford to find anywhere to live, and he wouldn't pay maintenance!"

The woman described a course of events involving a dark alley, her man, and her with a frying pan.



By Liz Millward

entertaining similar fantasies about her husband...If two men are found beaten to death with pans in Islington alleyways one morning, the police need look no further than 'Snips' for the culprits.

Elderly women close to where I live are protesting to the (Labour) council that their local hairdresser may have to close. The council has increased the rent on the shop by such a large amount that the £2 shampoo and set for OAPs will have to go. As the OAPs can't afford any more, the dryers will probably dry no more blue rinses.

The salon is a "nice old fashioned place" where the old ladies can have a chat as well as a haircut. Going to the hairdressers is an outing, a way of keeping in touch. It serves a run-down council estate with few facilities and poor public transport. If the hairdresser closes, its elderly customers will become more

isolated. Thanks to the design of the estate there is no opportunity to gossip over the garden fence.

The woman I met in the hairdressers was probably also isolated, though not by her physical surroundings. She needed a place to talk where she would get a sympathetic hearing. Although not stated, it sounded like her man-trouble was more serious than raised voices over an imperfect dinner. She may also have wanted a place to spend some time and money on herself away from his lordship's endless demands.

Awful hairdressers are the stuff of nightmares: "I came out looking like a poodle" (soft perm); "It was orange" (auburn low lights); "Well, it'll grow out" (just a trim).

But a visit to a good hairdresser is an hour's break from other people, or an hour's break from loneliness. Nothing is demanded of you, except to keep your head still. The idea is that you leave the shop feeling better than you did when you went in. It seems that women use their doctors in the same way. For a much needed talk and some personal attention. Even after 10 years of the 'me' society, women still love to find excuses to get attention from others, and to talk to other people about the things that matter to them. In the real world, outside of *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*, women are lonely, isolated and hurt and no one is there to listen except the face in the mirror.



A socialist president?

Two cheers for Mary Robinson

By Patrick Murphy

In the past, Irish presidential elections have been dull, un-controversial affairs — affecting and interesting few people.

Suddenly, the current election has exploded, threatening the fall of the government and the astonishing prospect of the left candidate, Mary Robinson, becoming president.

The previous front-runner, Fianna Fail candidate Brian Lenihan, has been sacked as deputy prime minister, and Robinson now has over 50 per cent in opinion polls.

The detonator was a constitutional crisis over the role of the pre-

sent prime minister, Charles Haughey, and Fianna Fail's presidential candidate Brian Lenihan in back door attempts to get their party into government without an election in 1982.

The Fine Gael government had fallen after losing a crucial vote in the Dail (parliament). It was then up to the president, Patrick Hillery, to decide whether to dissolve parliament and call an election.

It appears that Brian Lenihan contacted Hillery, misusing his position, to persuade him to call on Fianna Fail to form a government.

Prime Minister Charles Haughey has sacked Lenihan in order to avoid defeat in a vote of confidence. (His majority depends on the votes of the Progressive

Democrats).

The main beneficiary is Mary Robinson, who at first was thought to have no chance of success. Her main support comes from the Labour Party, who usually get no more than 10 per cent of the vote.

She was a prominent Labour TD (MP) until she resigned from the party over their support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. She argued that the Agreement was wrong to ignore the feelings of Northern Unionists.

Her main policy statements during the election have, however, concentrated on internal and largely constitutional issues. She earned her reputation by making a stand against the Catholic, clerical and ill-liberal nature of the Irish state. In

the two bitter referenda of the 1980s, where divorce and abortion were made constitutionally illegal, she campaigned against the church and for more freedom and choice. She has continued to raise some of those issues in the current election.

She was bitterly attacked by her opponents after an interview with the Irish magazine *Hot Press*, in which she criticised the state's attitude to contraception, homosexuality, and the role of the church and proposed constitutional reform. The Catholic Church still has a 'unique role' written into the constitution.

Robinson also wants more powers for the presidency, to give the elections more meaning and as a



counterweight to the dominance of the Dail.

On Northern Ireland she is a liberal anti-Nationalist. She argues that the Republic should remove the articles from its constitution which claim jurisdiction and authority over the North and instead insert a statement that there can be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of its people.

Today Mary Robinson supports the Hillsborough Agreement and the recent initiative by the Northern Ireland Minister Peter Brooke to launch talks between the Northern Irish parties (excluding Sinn Fein) to reach a constitutional settlement.

Mary Robinson has gained an impressive array of support. She is backed by the Labour Party, the Green Party, the Women's Political Association and a number of prominent trade unionists, including some republican-minded figures such as Phil Flynn of the Local Government and Public Services Union (LGPSU).

She has the endorsement of a number of leading trade unionists but has used this only to make an appeal to their members for votes. There is no attempt to appeal to workers, no campaigning demands which deal with the vicious attacks suffered by the Irish working class because of the Fianna Fail government's programme of austerity. Robinson would say that this is because the job is a constitutional, legal one, not policymaking, but that hasn't stopped Fine Gael's Austin Currie making populist appeals to farmers because of their economic grievances.

The seriousness of this gap in Labour's campaign can be seen from the opinion polls. Before the recent events, the only social class which gave Robinson most votes is the middle-class. Working class voters were clearly supporting Brian Lenihan, with 25% supporting Mary Robinson.

Fianna Fail have, of course, always had a huge plebian base. They have the most efficient party machine in Ireland and they are populists.

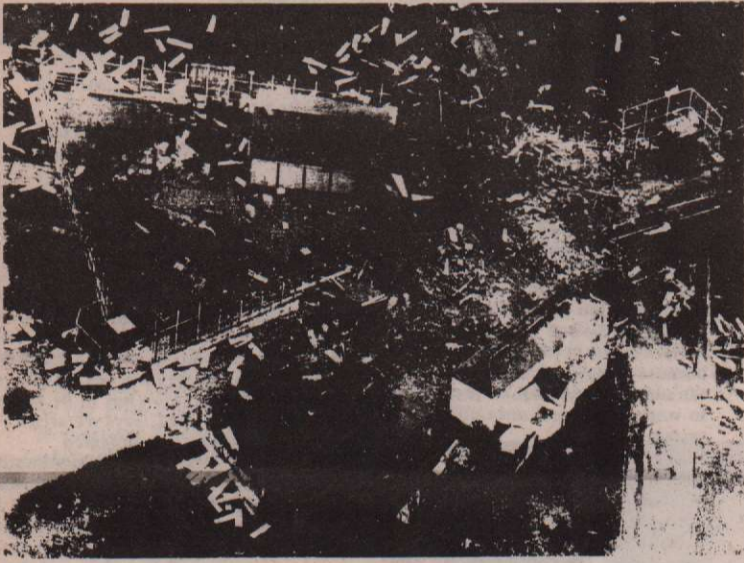
The Irish left cannot begin to challenge that by concentrating on liberal opposition to traditional Irish clericalism and conservatism. Secularism and democracy are crucial in Ireland but unless they are connected to a consistent and campaigning opposition to the effects of capitalist reorganisation on workers they will continue to be 'ideals'.

Labour has still to decide whether it will be the liberal wing of capitalism or the representation of the organised working class.

Fine Gael have chosen a high-profile candidate in Austin Currie. Currie is a prominent ex-member of the Social Democratic and Labour Party in Northern Ireland. Indeed, it was his public stance against anti-Catholic discrimination in housing in Dungannon which sparked off the civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s.

Currie's campaign has been one of failed opportunism, and when last seen he was going after the rural farming vote, apparently abandoning the cities to Labour. His attack on Robinson's anti-Catholic liberalism was in line with the SDLP's record in accommodating clerical opinion in the 1980s. Currie accused Robinson of being 'pushed by the extreme fringes of the left beyond sound legal judgement'.

Mary Robinson's vote, then, will be a register of the opposition in Ireland. Not the farcical 'official' opposition of Fine Gael but those voters who oppose the political establishment in Ireland: the Church, Fianna Fail and, to an extent, big business.



Scene of devastation... the army checkpoint at Coshquin, Derry.

You can't unite Ireland without uniting the people

By Jackie Cleary

When someone like Margaret Thatcher, with Gulf war fever and blood lust beaming out of her eyes, emotes on TV about how "evil" the IRA are, you know what the expression "sincere like a politician" means.

Yet the latest innovation of the IRA is spectacularly horrible — the human bomb, whose family is held at gunpoint to force him to become a suicide driver in a massive car bomb.

Their justification for the "human bomb" tactic — in the article reproduced here — is this: that they have the right to kill anyone they declare a "collaborator". And they have declared anyone who works at any job connected with the police or army — catering, building, maintenance, and so on — a collaborator.

Such workers are a big proportion of the Northern Ireland population. Not all of them are Protestants, but most of them are.

The human bomb tactic is just one more proof that the IRA is whatever claims it makes to being a Republican organisation in the tradition of Wolfe Tone and James Connolly, and whatever many of its supporters sincerely believe — a sectarian organisation. Its main fight is not in fact against Britain, but against the Protestant population. In the last analysis it is the opposition of that population which thwarts the IRA in its goal of making Ireland into a unitary state under a Catholic majority.

No democratic united Ireland can be won by trying to beat the Protestants into submission. No democratic united Ireland is possible without politically uniting at least a large proportion of the people of Ireland.

AN IRELAND'S BIGGEST SELLING POLITICAL WEEKLY

PHOBLACHT

Republican News

Sraith Nua Iml 12 Uimhir 42 25 Deireadh Fómhair Thursday, 25th October, 1990 (Britain 40p) Price 35p

BRITAIN CAN END THIS WAR

EXPRESSIONS of "deep shock" from Margaret Thatcher in the wake of the IRA bombings which devastated two of the main British border posts in Ireland ring hollow down the decades of her futile policies in the Six Counties which have prolonged the Irish war into the last years of the 20th century. The six British soldiers, and one civilian collaborator, who lost their lives on Wednesday were the latest victims of that British failure to face the truth that there can be no peace while their military and political presence remains in our country.

The simultaneous explosions at the heavily-fortified British army border posts on the main Derry to Buncrana road — where five soldiers were killed — and at Newry on the main Dublin to Belfast road — where one soldier was killed — virtually demolished both bases which are key installations in the military frontier with which Britain imposes the division of Ireland. Their destruction and the loss of six military personnel has been one of the most morale-shattering blows against British forces in recent years.

The sixth man killed in the Derry blast worked directly for the British forces in a Derry barracks and continued in spite of many IRA warnings against such collaboration. Media concentration on that aspect of the attacks could not conceal the truth of the IRA statement that "this morning's military operation again devastates the British myth of containment, with the British government responsible for the deaths, at this time of the morning's

been proven that the British cannot contain the threat to its military presence in the Six Counties from the IRA in spite of the heaviest concentration of its forces and in spite of every new repressive measure.

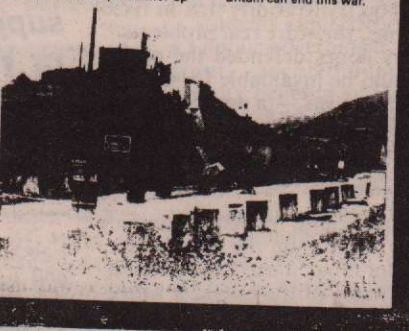
NO BRITISH SOLUTION

Thatcher's expressions of shock will come as little comfort to those whom she has sent to the front-line of her Irish war. For over ten years her governments have been sending troops across the Irish Sea, and have increasingly been putting locally-recruited personnel up

front, to risk death and injury in pursuit of a policy which is doomed to failure. There can be no British solution to the conflict in the Six Counties. Every attempt to impose such a sham solution has only prolonged the injury, pain and death which war brings.

It is Britain's war. If there were no border posts and checkpoints, no troops on the streets, no barracks and torture centres, no battalions of British soldiers guarding a fortified border or besieging communities, then there would be no bombings and shootings.

If there was, instead, British recognition of the inevitable fact that its military and political role in Ireland will come to an end eventually, then the way to peace would be open. The British government must be forced to come to terms with that reality, to recognise sooner rather than later that it's for the Irish people as a whole, without the interference of a foreign power, to resolve their differences and decide their future. Britain can end this war.



Tribune wields a hatchet

By Ron Vandy

Last week's *Tribune* carried an article by Jeff Lovitt which was clearly meant to be a "hatchet job" on *Socialist Organiser*.

The point seemed to be to assert that *Socialist Organiser* is pretty much what the Labour Party National Executive said we were.

The article also quotes from a two year old *SO* discussion bulletin an unflattering comment on some of the people who have clustered around the Socialist Movement. The point here seems to be to sow ill-will between *SO* and the Socialist Movement.

Lovitt talked to *SO* editor John O'Mahony on the phone, and quotes him in the article. In fact he gave O'Mahony no indication of the scope of the article; O'Mahony thought it would be one of the short "update" pieces *Tribune* has carried regularly on the ban on *SO* and the campaign against it.

That the article should appear now is all the more odd because *Tribune's* first response, four months ago, to the moves to ban *SO* was a long front-page article rehashing the NEC documents and adding its own factual (and factional!) "corrections". Nothing very new is added now.

Tribune's role in the anti-ban campaign was always strange and ambivalent. And surprising. *Tribune* has drifted a long way to the right in the slipstream of the Kinnockites, albeit at a distance. Its "Diary" comments on the far left are — even when they report and sneer at real idiocies — among the worst examples of sterile sectarianism on the left today. There was not much natural

sympathy between *SO* and *Tribune!*

Tribune's declaration of hostility to the ban on *SO* was surprising — and welcome. Unfortunately, its opposition to the ban was grounded exclusively on an abstract liberalism. Almost every concrete comment *Tribune* made about *SO* — and many of the comments weren't really about *SO*, but about "Trotskyist groups" in general — would have backed up and justified the NEC's decision to ban for anyone not inclined to stand on a dogmatic and abstract liberalism.

Tribune was not even consistently liberal. It published — and maybe commissioned — a vicious piece of mudslinging by Clare Short MP in defence of the ban. Indirectly and slyly, but nevertheless clearly, she smeared *SO* by association with violence, fascists, and "criminals".

Tribune published a fine letter in reply by Danny Nicol. It would not publish a brief point-by-point rebuttal from *SO* editor John O'Mahony. By contrast, *SO* would have felt obliged to publish a direct reply by those charged to such direct charges.

Tribune editor Phil Kelly spoke at the *End the Ban* rally like a man who was very worried lest the NEC misunderstand what he thought he was doing there. He was at pains to insist that he had "never agreed with anything he had ever read in *SO*" — and he gave no indication that he was joking. He felt obliged to raise the stupid canard that *SO* supported the ban on the "anti-Zionist" journal *Return* within the National Union of Students.

And despite its opposition to the ban, for *Tribune* it was always



The witchhunters

"business as usual". They charged full commercial rates for the half-page advertisement *End the Ban* published in the Labour Party conference issue. Solidarity is one thing; business is business.

None of that is surprising. The surprise came long ago when *Tribune* — in sharp contrast to

much of the "revolutionary" left press — came out, in however contradictory a fashion, *against* the ban. Even abstract liberalism counts for something. Not much, but something.

And, all in all, we continue to be grateful to *Tribune* for its support before the Labour Party conference.

A hiccup in the elections

The main hiccup at the Labour Party Socialists AGM was in the election of the nine 'national' places on the 62-member LPS committee.

The other places were filled from regional and black, women's, youth and student caucuses without much controversy; but for the national places a new and unfamiliar voting system produced unexpected and unwanted results.

The system was supposed to ensure representation for all points of view, but it didn't work that way. Quirks in the voting left unelected a number of comrades who have played prominent and valuable roles in LPS as

individuals affiliated to no special body of opinion, and whom no-one wanted to unseat.

As soon as the results were announced, Martin Thomas made a gesture towards redress by withdrawing from his elected place and asking the AGM to agree to replace him with Dorothy Macedo, the outgoing co-chair of LPS, who had not been elected. This caused some consternation, first among supporters of *Socialist Outlook* (who had one of their people as the best-placed unelected candidate, and thus hoped to get the place made vacant), and then among others; but eventually the AGM agreed it.

The AGM had just had its sharpest debate over the planned Socialist

Movement paper. The debate had ended in an agreed compromise, but — as with all sharp debates — not without suspicion and ill feeling. It was particularly unfortunate that Reg Race, who has been LPS's Socialist Movement liaison officer, was then voted off the committee — not because a majority wanted that, but as the unintended result of people trying to work a new and unfamiliar voting system.

Suggestions are now being discussed for co-opting the six unelected 'national' candidates. Plainly that is the right thing to do.

But a disturbing note has been struck since the conference by some supporters of *Socialist Outlook*, and others, who present their own defeat

in elections to the "national" places as the result of a *Socialist Organiser* conspiracy.

Whatever their motives, they are on dangerous ground. Either, or. Either *Socialist Organiser* supporters are entitled to participate freely in events like the LPS AGM and to stand for election — or they are not. If they are not, then the reason has to be that the Labour Party NEC says we aren't.

Sour grapes from defeated candidates — all right. Witch-hunting agitation along the tracks laid down by the Labour Party NEC — that is something else again. It will lead those who pursue it into a freakish right-wing detour on the road out of the Labour Party which some *Socialist Outlook* supporters are travelling.

Will the new socialist paper back Labour?

By Gerry Bates

The biggest controversy at the Labour Party Socialists AGM was over the planned Socialist Movement newspaper.

The paper is to be launched next March, probably as a fortnightly, with a pilot issue this month (November). People involved in the project wanted Labour Party Socialists (which is an autonomous offshoot of the Socialist Movement) to sponsor the paper; other LPS activists were worried about whether the paper would call for a Labour vote in every constituency, or instead hint at support for Greens, or Welsh or Scottish nationalists, in some areas.

Some left Greens, and left Welsh and Scottish nationalists, are involved in the Socialist Movement; and some people in the Socialist Movement who are members of no party look more to such parties than to Labour.

There was a sort of compromise at the AGM: the people involved in the paper promised that they would press for it to call for a Labour vote everywhere, and the others agreed to sponsor the pilot issue. The debate will obviously continue.

At the AGM, Reg Race put the case for the paper. "It's likely that *Marxism Today* is going to go down the hatch. *New Socialist* has already gone. The *New Statesman* is in serious difficulties. There is a strong

need for a clear non-sectarian voice on the Labour left which is going to promote the issues that Labour Party Socialists believes in.

"We want to discuss how to get issues about the Labour Party into that Socialist Movement newspaper between the LPS officers and the Socialist Movement officers over the next few weeks."

Keith Veness said that the Socialist Movement had made a "potentially disastrous" decision that the paper would not necessarily call for a Labour vote in every constituency. "If we, as LPS, are seen in any way to give aid or comfort to people who are not campaigning for a Labour vote, that will be disastrous."

"The Socialist Movement is a broad debating forum open for anyone to come along. That's its value, that's why I've supported it. Once you try to codify that in fixed positions, there are real problems."

Davy Jones defended the paper. "It could be invaluable for Labour Party Socialists — a paper we could sell much more broadly than *Labour Briefing*, *Socialist Organiser* or any of the other left papers."

"The Socialist Movement doesn't have a position on the general election. But it has started a discussion. The officers of the Socialist Movement are proposing that it calls for a Labour vote in every constituency. There are some people in the Socialist Movement who don't agree. But we are starting a discus-

sion, and Labour Party Socialists should argue for the position."

Paul McGarry said: "When the issue was first raised on the Labour Party Socialists committee, it was said that the paper would call for a Labour government. I asked whether this meant calling for a

"LPS activists were worried about whether the paper would call for a Labour vote in every constituency, or instead hint at support for Greens, or Welsh or Scottish nationalists, in some areas"

Labour vote in every constituency, and I was told no. It seems to be that that is a fudge.

"I don't want to see Labour Party Socialists going into an election with a paper that says 'Vote Labour. PS: vote Green if your Labour candidate is no good. Vote

Plaid Cymru. Vote for the Scottish Socialist Party..."

"If your Labour candidate is a right-winger and a witch-hunter, the thing to do is to recruit new people to the Party, kick out the candidate, and get a left-winger next time — not to go off and vote Green or Plaid."

Bill Hamilton replied: "Yes, we should be absolutely up front, and say vote Labour in every constituency. But the Socialist Movement helped get LPS off the ground. We must recognise that there are people in the Socialist Movement who are involved in other parties, and we must work with them."

Paul McGarry, he said, was "anticipating a decision which has not been taken yet. The comrades are only going to be able to put the position which we all believe in, for voting Labour everywhere, if we're in there supporting the newspaper rather than carping from the sidelines."

Mike Marqusee was concerned about "the effect on Labour Party Socialists of endorsing a Socialist Movement newspaper which does not call for a Labour vote in every constituency." He was in favour of LPS having "a fruitful and positive relationship with the Socialist Movement" — but LPS must also be "clearly autonomous and independent, as an organisation of Labour Party members. If we are seen in any way as an arm of people

who are outside the Labour Party and indeed hostile to it, then we are in trouble.

"The politics of calling for a vote for the Greens, or Plaid Cymru, or why not the Liberal Democrats while we're at it, are the antithesis of class socialist politics."

Jim Denham said he thought there were "hidden agendas floating about". "In the Socialist Movement there clearly are people for whom an orientation to the labour movement is not central. They support Plaid Cymru or the Greens. There are also people who hark towards an idea that somehow the Socialist Movement, eventually, in the distant future, will turn itself into a coherent socialist party, a viable alternative to the Labour Party."

"I suppose it's quite an attractive idea. But in Labour Party Socialists we must clearly reject and dissociate from anything that deviates from an orientation to the labour movement. And that's why we've been having this debate."

Terry Conway said she agreed with 95 per cent of what Jim Denham had said. But the best way for LPS to put across its arguments was to get involved in the Socialist Movement paper. If LPS did not get from the Socialist Movement the assurances it needed about supporting Labour everywhere in the general election, then LPS should pull out from the Socialist Movement paper. But the first thing to do was to get involved.

Labour Party Socialists map out campaigns

The Labour Party Socialists AGM last Saturday, 27th, was designed to consolidate policies and structure for the movement, which was launched at a conference in Sheffield in May.

And, with a few hiccups, it did that. Between 150 and 200 activists met in Sheffield, decided basic policies, and elected a new committee. LPS should be well set now to establish the place which it laid claim to by its work at Labour Party conference, as the leading activist force of the Labour left.

The AGM laid a firm basis for expansion by adopting detailed campaign ideas on the poll tax, anti-union laws, the Gulf, the witch-hunt, and the coming general election.

A refreshingly reasonable discussion on Ireland ended by adopting a proposal from Declan O'Neill to endorse the broad principles of Irish self-determination and British withdrawal, but to remit for further discussion the details of a resolution submitted by *Socialist Outlook* supporters. Sarah Roelofs of *Socialist Outlook* claimed that concern for accommodating the Protestant community in a solution to the Irish conflict was equivalent to concern for accommodating the white elite in South Africa, but the majority of the AGM saw that the issues could not be brushed aside so easily.

The policy discussion established that LPS's position on Israel and Palestine is to call for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, not the destruction of Israel.

A big majority favoured democratisation of the trade union block vote in the Labour Party rather than dissolving it into new Labour Party industrial fractions, but reaffirmed the right to express minority views in LPS.

Other issues were identified to be remitted for further discussion: economic policy and Europe.

LPS involves three identifiable political currents — *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Outlook* and *Briefing* (which has now parted ways with *Outlook*) — together with hundreds of unaligned individuals. The AGM showed a solid political basis on which all those people can work together — without any one current trying to dominate and be exclusive — and draw in hundreds of others.

As a gesture of defiance against the witch-hunt, *SO* editor Sean Matgamna was elected to the 62-strong LPS committee.

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On the march in Leeds. Photo: Mark Sandell

5,000 students march against the poll tax

By Steve Mitchell (NUS VP FEUD)

On Wednesday 24 October 5,000 students marched through Leeds to protest against the Tory poll tax.

The demonstration was called by West Yorkshire Area of the Na-

tional Union of Students, and was organised by the Area Convenor, Mike Fenwick, who is a *Socialist Organiser* supporter.

The march was led by a contingent of women from NUS's National Women's Campaign. When it passed the Leeds court which was hearing the cases of poll tax non-payers, the whole demonstration sat down in protest, and was addressed

by All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation national committee member Ian Greaves.

Speakers at the rally included Emma Colyer (NUS National Secretary) and Eddie Goncalves, who spoke from student CND about the need to campaign against the threat of war in the Gulf.

One of people attending the rally

was Rachel Taylor — who is the NUS officer responsible for poll tax campaigning. Taylor was challenged to speak at the rally and defend her dreadful record. She declined. Taylor, like the other Labour right wingers on NUS Executive, is paying her poll tax.

100 people attended the *Left Unity* fringe meeting at the end of the demonstration.



Sit down protest outside magistrates court. Photo: Mark Sandell

Fight for a decent grant

By Elaine Jones (NUS Kent Area Convenor)

The take up for student top-up loans introduced in September has so far been incredibly low — less than 2.5% of the government's target.

Many students face poverty. The value of grants has been cut by over 20%. They have been excluded from all social security benefits. They have to pay poll tax. Despite all that, the great majority are not prepared to saddle themselves with a government loan.

The Tories plan to spend a further £1 million on advertising the scheme in the hope that more students will be duped into borrowing their way through higher education.

Students in further education are excluded from any form of financial support scheme. They don't get any grant or even the offer of a loan.

The National Union of students

failed to run a serious campaign against the introduction of loans or positively in favour of a decent living grant for all in post-16 education.

Alan Howarth MP, Minister for Higher Education, said recently: "The only achievement of the NUS in its campaign against student loans was to cause a large traffic jam on one occasion in London."

There was a kernel of truth in what he said. The traffic jam was caused by a nasty battle between 15,000 angry students and the boys from the Met on horseback, wielding truncheons.

In the student movement the 'traffic jam' is better known as the 'Battle of Westminster', where dozens of students were arrested, dozens were hospitalised and many more got a quick political education.

The fight on Westminster Bridge was the culmination of weeks of local and area-wide action against loans. But after it, the Kinnockite leadership of the National Union of Students deserted the militant students. Over the following weeks they consciously defused the militancy and anger of rank and file students across Britain. In effect

they smashed the anti-loans campaign.

Left Unity supporters on the National Executive and in the colleges continue to fight and organise against loans and to demand a decent grant for all.

For the last four years the Kinnockite leadership have done very little to fight the Tories. They have been content with promises from future Labour governments.

The nearer we get to a general election the less likely the NUS leaders are to initiate a fightback to win a fair grant for all.

Students can't afford to wait for a Labour government. They need a grant, accommodation, social security benefits and an end to the poll-tax. And they need them now.

Left Unity's 'Campaign for a Fighting Union' is a strategy for NUS. The campaign has won widespread support in colleges and areas throughout Britain. Now we have to make sure that the Kinnockite leadership listen to us.

The threat of voluntary membership to NUS is raising its head once more.

And what are the NUS leaders proposing to do? Once more to discuss reforming NUS.

NUS calls for troops out of the Gulf now!

By Mark Sandell (NUS NEC)

At last the left on the National Executive of the National Union of Students has got its act together.

An emergency Executive meeting was called by *Left Unity* supporters to discuss the Gulf.

Until then NUS had more or less supported the Labour Party leadership line on the Gulf. The central NUS leaders overplayed their hand, however, with the President directly interfering in the work of National Secretary Emma Colyer, and preventing any information being given to colleges even on CND's opposition to the Gulf war.

At the emergency NEC, despite opposition from the Kinnockite faction of Labour Students, a *Left Unity* motion was passed and NUS adopted a position for the immediate withdrawal of US and British troops.

Support for UN-sponsored action against Iraq was rejected, and NUS took a clear position of opposing the imperialist build-up adopted.

The SWP proposed a ludicrous amendment, that NUS should "shed no tears for Kuwait" (so much for the butchered Iraqi political exiles in Kuwait, and the hundreds and thousands of migrant workers displaced by Hussein's oil grab). Having lost that, they then flipped over and sided with the right wing in opposing NUS's affiliation to the Campaign Against War in the Gulf.

Should socialists

US has no alternative to Saddam

An Iranian socialist from Socialism and Revolution argued for no support for Iraq under any circumstances: "Down with Saddam! Down with imperialism!"

The presence of the US in the Gulf shows that, 17 years after the end of the Vietnam War, the balance of forces has turned in favour of imperialism.

It may be temporary, but the relationship of forces has changed because of Gorbachev's reforms, and Eastern Europe going over to world imperialism.

Trigger-happy generals will be going around the world against working-class movements.

Why the Gulf? Because it is the most sensitive area of the world. There is still the Palestinian upsurge. There is the fight between the Israelis and the masses of the Arab world. Imperialism is in the area.

But in the future we will not have on the one hand the USSR and on the other world imperialism; we will have the two super powers working hand-in-hand against the working class.

This is more important for the US than whether Saddam stays or falls; and it indicates what sort of campaigns we must organise.

We have to mobilise public opinion against US intervention and the change in the relation of forces. If we just campaign in defence of Saddam and against war, then our campaign will be limited; and if war doesn't happen our campaign will collapse.

I think US imperialism does not intend to topple Saddam, and revolutionary Marxists should not defend Saddam.

During Lenin's period the Comintern said that if an oppressing nation attacked an oppressed nation then we should defend oppressed against oppressor. Some people start from that point and say we should defend Saddam.

The Iraqi working class is suppressed by Saddam's dictatorship. But the national minority, the Kurds, have arms, they have occupied whole areas. They have been fighting for many years to topple Saddam.

If we ask the Kurds to support Saddam against US attack, they will not accept it. It is absolutely out of order for them. They are fighting Saddam Hussein, and even if imperialism attacks they will still go on attacking.

They see Saddam Hussein as an agent of imperialism. They fight imperialism by toppling Saddam. Support for Saddam will not be accepted by the majority of the people in the region.

For the Comintern under Lenin the situation was utterly different. Then, the national bourgeoisie in the colonial and semi-colonial countries was objectively anti-imperialist. The working class and the national minorities were not lined up against the national bourgeoisie.

The Comintern said that because the proletariat was not strong and the national bourgeoisie was anti-imperialist, we should defend the national bourgeoisies against imperialism, though we do not defend them politically.

Today that situation no longer exists. Countries like Iraq are armed to the teeth, with the agreement of world imperialism. Imperialism has not been stagnating for the past 60 or 70 years; things have changed.

In the early years of this century the interest of world imperialism was predominantly to export capital across the world. In order to export capital they were very interested in control of the internal economies of those countries. They had close links with the states that they established in these regions. The states were pre-capitalist and dependent on imperialism.

After World War II the interests of imperialism changed. They are not exporting finance capital, they are exporting machinery. They paved the way for a capitalist mode of production in the countries which had been colonies or semi-colonies.

There were land reforms to bring the peasants to the towns and create a working class, and by giving loans they created bourgeoisies in those countries.

In order to satisfy imperialism, the states which came to power were not the same as the states at the turn of the century.

States like Iraq are politically independent of imperialism, though economically they are very much linked to imperialism.

Such regimes have used anti-imperialist slogans for many years — and it is not just Khomeini and Saddam. In the 1960s the Shah of Iran was "anti-imperialist". The Iranian monarchists say that it was imperialism which brought down the Shah!

These states are economically linked to imperialism, but politically they can be anti-imperialist. They can burn American flags. They can occupy American embassies. They can invade Kuwait.

American imperialism is not antagonistic to those states. Yes, they sometimes punish them. But if they do not have a better alternative ready, they will not topple the regimes.

Regimes like Iraq's are allies of imperialism, although they may have some differences. So revolutionary Marxists cannot go to armed Kurds saying: defend the Iraqi regime against US imperialism. We have to choose between defence of a reactionary regime against imperialism and support for the mass of workers who are armed. The best slogan we can put forward is "Down with imperialism! Down with Saddam!"

In Iran, during the occupation of the US Embassy, the majority of the revolutionary left supported the Khomeini regime. The Khomeini regime however was not in opposition to imperialism. Imperialism never attacked Iran. Some of us

said that we should not defend that regime — politically or militarily. We should side with the working class and with the national minorities. We were right.

In Saddam's case the situation is similar. He has become "anti-imperialist" because of the internal political and economic crisis. The "anti-imperialism" is not genuine.

The implications of the line of "defending Iraq" is to have a united front with those who have the same slogans. Today, in Britain, those who are saying "Down with imperialism and long live Saddam" are the agents of Saddam.

We would have to have a united front with the police agents of Saddam Hussein! That is the logical conclusion. We would have to have a united front with them against the Kurds.

Le Pen in France has the same position: long live Saddam, down with imperialism. If you are serious about "defending Iraq" you logically must line up with people like Le Pen.

We must say: Down with Saddam! Down with imperialism! That way we can attract thousands of Kurds to the campaign.

We would support Iraq despite Saddam

Martin Thomas argued that we should say "Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!" — but also be prepared to defend Iraq's national rights against invasion

Iraq is a sub-imperialist power — that is a capitalist power of the second or third rank — which is trying to enlarge its sphere of influence and the wealth of its bourgeoisie, to establish itself as something of a regional power. It has done this by seizing Kuwait.

American imperialism is intervening with military force to defend its interests. That, again, is something we have seen in many parts of the world in recent decades.

Those two aspects lead us to the basic position: US and British troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait! We do not side with US imperialism and we do not side with Iraqi sub-imperialism.

So far we have agreement with *Socialism and Revolution*. We have agreement against a lot of other currents on the left, for example, *Socialist Worker*.

However, there are also aspects of the situation which are new compared to what we have seen in recent decades.



Should we be prepared to defend Iraq against invasion?

The Gulf is probably the one area in the world which is absolutely indispensable to the US, because of its oil reserves. The US has a new freedom to intervene, because of the USSR's disarray, and it is intervening in an area which is economically vital. Those two new features lead paradoxically, to phenomena reappearing that seemed to have been relegated to the past.

A lot of leftists talk about the whole of the Third World as neo-colonial regimes. I agree absolutely that it is an incorrect definition. A country like Iraq, for instance, is politically independent.

US and other imperialisms have operated through an "imperialism of free trade" — an imperialism which depends not on colonial or semi-colonial control but on economic power.

But they are not prepared to do that in the Gulf now. Whoever controls the oil reserves has a huge power in the world economy. The United States will not be able to gain advantage over this power just by economic means.

In the Gulf, now, the US is concerned about political control. That is why the capitalist press says it is

not just a matter of getting Iraq out of Kuwait, but of crippling Iraq so it can do nothing similar in the future.

They want an Iraqi government which will make a treaty with the US, and the US have forces on the spot, in Iraq or nearby, to enforce the treaty. And if America has that sort of control over Iraq, it will not be just to stop it using chemical weapons. It will be to enforce the policies of the United States on Iraq.

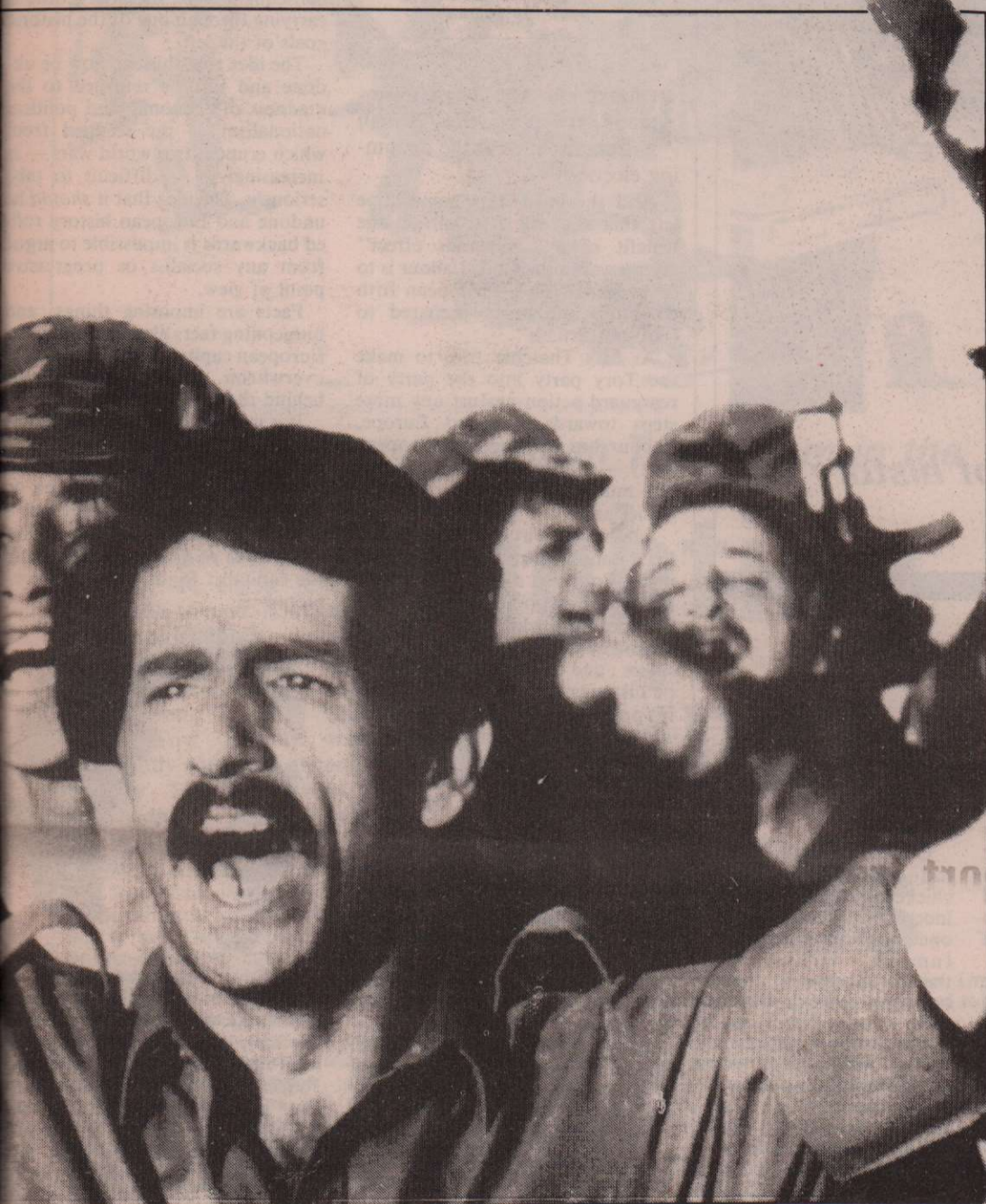
The US wants a permanent military presence in the area, to subjugate Iraq (if they can) and to put down other revolts in the region.

So the conflict started as a conflict between a sub-imperialism, struggling for elbow-room, and the dominant big imperialist power, the United States. But it has gained other dimensions. That is why we have argued in *Socialist Organiser* that it may become necessary, as the situation develops, to argue for the right of the Iraqi people to self-determination.

We do not think that socialists should start supporting Saddam Hussein now on the grounds that perhaps, in the future, Iraqi self-determination will be threatened.

Gulf crisis:

Should we ever defend Iraq?



do believe that self-determination for Iraq may become an issue.

would like to deal with some of the objections. Does supporting self-determination for Iraq mean supporting Saddam Hussein? No, we would support Iraq despite Saddam Hussein.

An analogy from the history of the movement may help. In the 1920s the Trotskyist movement used to argue for the defence of the USSR — on the grounds of nationalised property, not national rights, but the same basic approach applied. Defence of the USSR, it was clearly, did not mean defence or support for Stalin! Indeed, it had well have been expressed: down with Stalin! Defend the Soviet Union!

Why did Trotsky intend supporting Stalin against the oppressed nations in the USSR. Trotsky argued, for example, for the rights of the Ukrainian people to break away from the USSR and form their own independent state. Likewise, in 1945, supporting self-determination for Iraq in no way cuts against full support for the Kurds' struggle against Saddam Hussein.

It is not a question of supporting

Saddam We support Iraq's national rights despite Saddam Hussein.

Does Saddam Hussein represent a bourgeoisie like the colonial bourgeoisies at the beginning of the century? Quite clearly, no. The Iraqi bourgeoisie is much more powerful and more developed.

But the right of nations to self-determination does not depend on how developed the bourgeoisie is.

There is no threshold of capitalist development above which a nation loses its national rights.

Does our position force us to conduct campaigns together with the Ba'athists? No: no more than the Trotskyists arguing for the defence of the Soviet Union in the 1930s were forced to work with the agents of the KGB. Our united fronts on any issue are within the labour movement. They are not with police agents.

Another possible objection to our position is that if Iraq suffers a blitzkrieg or a US military occupation, that is just a matter of the fortunes of war in an inter-imperialist conflict.

I think that objection means losing all sense of proportion.

Every conflict between capitalist forces, or capitalist and Stalinist forces, involves an element of inter-imperialist conflict. For example, I think we all agree that we should have supported the Vietnamese against American imperialism. Yet look what the Vietnamese did with their victory: they established mini-imperialist domination over Laos and Cambodia. So you could say we should not have taken sides in Vietnam: the conflict was inter-imperialist. That would be absurd — not because there was no element of imperialism in the Vietnamese bureaucracy's war, but because that element was a minor, subordinate part of the conflict.

If a Gulf war develops — as looks quite likely — into an attempt by the USA to subjugate Iraq and to establish the United States as the dominant power in the Arabian peninsula, with permanent military force there and treaties tying the governments — then to say that is just an episode in an inter-imperialist conflict is to lose all sense of proportion.

Finally, it is true that many Trotskyists have responded to recent conflicts by slotting them into patterns from the first half of

this century. The occupation of the US Embassy in Iran was just slotted into what Trotsky wrote about China or what Lenin wrote about national revolts in 1920.

I agree that slotting these events into the mould of 50 years ago is no way to analyse them. But to slot what is happening now in the Gulf into the mould of the confrontation between the US and Iran over the Embassy siege, into the mould of the Iran-Iraq war, or into the mould of the South Atlantic war, is equally wrong.

Just as we attempted to analyse what was new at the time of the South Atlantic war, or at the time of the Iran-Iraq war, so also we should analyse what is new — and, paradoxically, also very old — in the Gulf.

We should say: Down with imperialism! Down with Saddam! We should also say: the national rights of Iraq may be under threat and the national rights of the peoples of the Arab world may be under threat. We should support those national rights against US imperialism and its allies.

For independent class action

Summing up by Martin Thomas

There is no single force or power called "imperialism".

There are different imperialist powers. For decades past, many on the left have talked about "imperialism" as a single power, because the US has been the strongest power and the second imperialist power, the USSR, has been one which most of the left did not recognise as imperialist. But it was a wrong way of seeing the world.

The usual conclusion drawn was to support any regime which came into conflict with the US, because being anti-US was automatically "anti-imperialist". The conclusion drawn here has been that Iraq is just another expression of the same all-embracing "imperialism", so there is no real conflict. It is equally wrong.

We should support the working class and the Kurds against Saddam Hussein. We would oppose Saddam Hussein, and work for his downfall, even while supporting Iraq's national rights against the US.

In Iraq we would say: Saddam

Hussein has suppressed the people. He has drawn Iraq into disastrous wars. We cannot rely on or look to Saddam's armies to defend Iraq. The workers should be armed. The soldiers should be able to elect their own officers.

For the defence of Iraq's national rights, as for every other issue, we look not to Saddam Hussein or anyone like him, but to the independent mobilisation of the working class and its allies.

No full-scale war

Summing-up by Socialism and Revolution

I think there will be no full-scale war. If there is a war, it will be a short one, a few strikes on the main industrial-military targets.

The aim of imperialism is not the occupation of Iraq but to build a presence in the Gulf region. That is the aim. There is a minimum — one per cent — chance of a war in the immediate future.

What if there is a war? Obviously we will call for the downfall of imperialism and the removal of the troops from the region. At the same time we will call for the downfall of Saddam. Self-determination for the masses of Iraq can only be through the downfall of Saddam. There is no other way.

Why shy away from calling for the downfall of Saddam? Because America is saying the same thing? It is not the same thing. We are calling for the troops out of the region. We are not calling for the Americans to topple Saddam, we are calling for the working class to topple Saddam. The central question which will open the way for a fight against imperialism is the downfall of Saddam.

Self-determination can only be posed when American imperialism makes Iraq its 52nd state. But it won't. Even if they attack they will replace Saddam with another bourgeois state.

We must call for the downfall of Saddam, now, before an attack. If there is an attack we are for the mobilisation of the masses against the bourgeoisie, for a workers and farmers government.

The calls for self-determination are very vague, not related to the objective situation. We want the working class to topple Saddam, not US imperialism.

Speeches from a London Socialist Forum meeting, Monday 29 October.

Socialists and the Gulf crisis

A collection of articles, editorials and debate from the pages of Socialist Organiser

A Workers' Liberty pamphlet £1 plus 22 pence p&p from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

The Matchgirls strike of 1888

The modern industrial trade unions began in 1888/89 with a series of great strikes. The most spectacular of these was the London Docks Strike of 1889, led by the Marxists Tom Mann and John Burns. But the first was the strike of the 'Matchgirls', the grievously exploited women workers who made safety matches for Bryant and May in the East End of London.

The 'Matchgirls', who succeeded in getting better conditions, were moved to go out on strike after reading an exposé of their terrible conditions in Annie Besant's journal 'The Link'. It must be one of the clearest proofs ever of the value of left-wing agitation! Karl Marx's daughter, Eleanor, was one of the organisers of the 'Matchgirls' strike.



Those who do not learn the lessons of history are likely to repeat it

Dangers of DNA

Les Hearn's



SCIENCE COLUMN

The latest addition to the list of substances hazardous to health may be that molecule basic to life — DNA.

This is the implication of research by the Cancer Research Campaign's laboratories in Glasgow.

Now, it is already known that some cancers are caused by viruses, which operate by injecting their genetic material into the cells of their victims. This material, DNA or the closely-related RNA, then takes over, or, at least, modifies the behaviour of, the cells so that they proliferate uncontrollably. A tumour is the result.

It is also known that other cancers are caused by the cell's own DNA having been damaged in some way — by radiation or chemicals, natural or artificial. This damage results in the triggering

of certain genes which then stimulate the cells to proliferate, causing tumours as with the cancer viruses above.

Such genes are called 'oncogenes' (cancer genes). It seems that they are often normal genes, but are freed from their normal control. The genes injected by the cancer viruses are very similar to the body's own oncogenes and may even have been picked up by some ancestor of a cancer virus from a human cell. Naturally, their operation will be free of control by the 'host' cell.

The fundamental agent of cancer causation would therefore seem to be an oncogene, a length of DNA probably carrying the code for a protein which stimulates a cell to grow and multiply, spreading throughout the victim's body. But would such an oncogene be dangerous on its own: naked, so to speak?

In principle, it would appear not. If ingested, DNA is digested by the enzymes of the gut. If inhaled, enzymes in the lungs should also break it down. How to explain, therefore, a cluster of rare cancers among researchers into oncogenes at the Institut Pasteur in Paris?

The occurrence of some half dozen cases of bone marrow or lymph cancers could have been coincidence but this was unlikely enough for the British Health and Safety Executive to decide to fund the CRC oncogene research.

The CRC workers extracted DNA from human cancer cells, isolated the *ras* gene, a known oncogene, and

cloned it to make a large number of copies. Then they applied the *ras* genes to broken skin on the backs of mice. Within weeks, dark patches had appeared on the backs of the mice, to be followed several months later with tumours of the blood and lymph vessels.

Cells from these tumours were cultured in the laboratory and were found to contain the human *ras* gene. Therefore, the human *ras* genes had entered the bloodstream of the mice and had then got into the cells lining the blood vessels. Presumably, the genes had further gone into the nuclei of 'infected' cells and there they had gone into operation, stimulating the cells to proliferate.

Finally, the *ras* genes had managed to get themselves copied, perhaps by inserting themselves into the cells'

normal DNA, and passed on to the 'daughter' cells which were therefore also cancerous.

Other researchers have induced tumours in chickens and mice by inoculating them with an oncogene from a chicken tumour virus. It therefore appears that not only naked DNA cause cancer, but it can do so across the species barrier. While this is not a very immediate risk for most people, it is certainly relevant to the 380 or so labs in Britain which work with oncogenes. These have now been warned of the possible danger to them. Those with broken skin are particularly warned against handling oncogene.

Now it must be discovered whether oncogenes can be infective by inhalation or swallowing.



60 pence plus 24 pence p&P from PO Box 823, London, SE15 4NA.

Why Thatcher can steal the clothes of the left

AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna

It looks like Mrs Thatcher intends to play the British nationalist card in the upcoming election.

And she must have some hope left that she will after all get the benefit of a "Falklands effect" after a war in the Gulf. Labour is to be presented as a "European fifth column", the party prepared to "sell out Britain".

As Mrs Thatcher tries to make the Tory party into the party of rearguard action against any more steps towards a united Europe, Labour has become the European party — still divided on the issue, but much less seriously than the Tories are.

And what an irony there is in that for a Labour Party led by Neil Kinnock! For most of his political life Kinnock has subscribed to the anti-Europeanism which has been the dogma of the left — Stalinist, Trotskyist, and reformist alike, with little distinction — for over 20 years. He probably didn't change his mind — he just put his mind, along with his political conscience on this and on everything else, at the disposal of the opinion pollsters, the image-makers, and the public relations operators.

A lot of erstwhile Labour Party opponents of the EC have quietly gone along with Kinnock. A principled anti-EC stance in the Labour Party is now the preserve of the anti-Kinnock left, people like Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner. Outside the Labour Party it is the — now muted — slogan of the revolutionary left. (And that is a measure of the political crisis of the left! But I go ahead of myself).

The anti-EC left is now trapped in impossible contradictions. If it were just a matter of a Kinnock betraying the anti-EC cause, then he could be denounced and campaigned against. There could be hopes of a future favourable swing of the pendulum.

But Thatcher is the problem! Thatcher has stolen the anti-EC clothes of the far left! Of course they can denounce Thatcher and question the sincerity of her anti-ECism. In a Commons exchange with Thatcher on Tuesday 30 October, Tony Benn did that. Thatcher was just an electoral opportunist, not someone who could be relied upon for serious work against the Common Market, he said.

A lot of Trotskyists who spent decades in an identical posture towards Stalinists carrying through anti-capitalist — but not working-class — revolutions could tell Benn that's a pretty hopeless posture against someone as entrenched and powerful as Thatcher. Resistance to the full absorption of Britain into a united Europe is now Mrs Thatcher's cause for as long as she wants it.

That is one reason why the revolutionary left — once the most strident and fervent in the anti-EC camp — is now almost silent. But there are surely other reasons.

The bourgeoisie has taken Europe to within hailing distance of federal unity and a United States of Europe. The collapse of the

Stalinist empire in the East has opened up the prospect of European unity of a scope unseen since the division of the Roman Empire late in the 3rd century AD. In its own way and with the characteristic consequent evils, the bourgeoisie is carrying through one of the historic goals of the left.

The idea that this can now be undone and Europe returned to the madness of economic and political nationalism — the seedbed from which erupted two world wars — is increasingly difficult to take seriously. The idea that it *should* be undone and European history rolled backwards is impossible to argue from any socialist or progressive point of view.

Facts are imposing things; and burgeoning facts like the developing European capitalist unity eventually overwhelm, displace and leave behind those can't keep pace.

It is more natural for a right-wing party like the Tories to be in Thatcher's present vein than for the left to be nationalist, as it has been on this issue for so long. Except that it is the British left that has opposed the growth of European unity, and the capitalist Right which has promoted it!



It is a recurrent pattern in history. In 1848 the bourgeois democratic programme for a united Germany was defeated. Germany was united nevertheless, by the Junkers and the Prussian monarchy, in their own way. That the bourgeoisie has gone so far towards realising the old democratic and working-class programme of European unity is not difficult to explain or understand: it is a product of working-class defeat.

European unity is being realised in this way by the bourgeoisie because of the defeat and prolonged eclipse of the genuine left.

But a situation where the Tory party can steal the political clothes of the left in general, and of the far left and even the Trotskyist left in particular — that needs some explaining! It is another product of defeat — a product of ideological defeat and erosion.

It is part of the topsy-turvy state of politics in a world distorted and misshaped by the cancerous growth of Stalinism. The parameters of left and right have been shattered and overlaid, creating crazy patterns.

The concerns, attitudes, mores, and moralities, the definitions of good and bad and right and wrong, of a ruling class — and moreover a ruling class of singular hypocrisy, one which all the time feverishly pretended to be what it was not — became mixed in with the goals and hopes of working-class socialism. Ideas that were authoritarian and therefore right-wing were legitimised and licensed in the thinking of the left.

That, I believe, is the root of the left's disarray on this issue. I will return to the argument next week.



Minneapolis 1934: striking teamsters organised into defence guards drive deputies and

By Liz Milward

American Trotskyism in the 1930s

Fighting against all odds

People new to Trotskyism and comrades not enamoured of the idea of studying often complain that many of the classic texts are impossible to read. Books about historical events usually presume detailed knowledge of those events. Unfamiliar jargon is common. Trotsky, Lenin, Marx and Engels write beautifully with both anger and humour. They write about the 'big truths' — relevant today, but hardly easy reading.

James P Cannon is different. He was 'one of us' in that he is not a historical figure studied at Oxford, and he never led a great revolution or even a mass movement. He knew Trotsky, and he visited Russia in the 1920s as part of the American delegation to the Comintern.

But he was also part of a small group of revolutionaries, forging their way through strikes, party building, faction-fights and anti-war struggles. These events did not take place in semi-feudal Russia — remote from our experience — but in modern America, as familiar as 'mom's apple pie'.

The 'History of American Trotskyism' is the story (complete with anecdotes) of the break from Stalinism and the founding of the American Trotskyist movement. The chapters of the book are 12 informal talks given to young comrades.

James Cannon and 2 others (Abern and Shactman) were expelled from the American Communist Party for 'Trotskyism' in 1928. Cannon had been one of the leaders of the party, and had attended the 6th Congress of the Comintern on its behalf. Entirely by accident Cannon was issued with a copy of Trotsky's 'The Draft Program of the CP: a criticism of fundamentals'.

Trotsky was in exile in Alma Alta, after being expelled from the Russian party. He had sent the document for discussion and the bureaucracy had failed by a series of mistakes to suppress it completely. The Canadian Maurice Spector also got a copy. "We let the caucus meetings and the Congress session go to the devil while we read and studied this document. Then I knew what I had to do and so did (Spector). Our doubts had been resolved... we made a compact... that we would come home and begin a struggle under the banner of Trotskyism".

This book is about the struggle to set up and keep together a group of revolutionaries against

overwhelming odds. As Cannon says: "It was not too promising a struggle from the point of view of numbers. The three of us... Abern, Shactman and myself — felt pretty lonely as we walked down to my house to lay plans to build a new party that was to take power in the United States."

At first the new party oriented to the Communist Party, calling itself the Communist League of America (opposition) and trying to win the educated workers away from Stalinism. The organisational difficulties were enormous — no money, no office, few members. The new party also faced opposition both from capitalism and from the Stalinist bureaucracy which was prepared to go to any lengths including violence, to silence its critics.

When Stalin announced his 'left turn' and the first 5 year plan in 1929 he cut much of the ground away from under the feet of the Left Opposition. These seemed to be the very things the Trotskyists had been calling for. Cannon and the CLA were presented as arguing about minutiae.

Many workers were still euphoric about the success of the revolution in Russia. Compared to the conditions of the American depression the Stalinist propaganda promised paradise. Only the Trotskyists didn't believe Stalin's lies.

In the same way, today's Trotskyists campaigned for freedom for Eastern bloc workers — and now point out, amid all the capitalist clamour, that the greater liberation has yet to be won. The long called-for revolutions are victorious — and still the Trotskyists complain!

"At a time when tens and hundreds of thousands of new elements were beginning to look

toward the Soviet Union... while capitalism appeared to be going up the spout; here were these Trotskyists, with their documents under their arms, demanding that you read books, study, discuss and so on. Nobody wanted to listen to us."

But the book is not all depression and hardship. It is also heroic and inspiring. Cannon's description of the New York hotel workers strike is fascinating. This is (to my mind at least) an almost foolproof set of instructions on how to conduct a strike and how to lose one.

"As the hotel workers began to turn towards unionism in a big way, this handful of Trotskyists found themselves in the midst of a swirling mass movement." As the campaign for unionisation of the hotel workers gathered strength, the tiny



James P Cannon

party threw all its resources into the struggle. They won the respect of the workers by their obvious commitment and organising ability.

"...every worker in the industry on strike saw 'the Militant' (no relation) every other day popularising the strike, giving the strikers side, exposing the bosses lies, and offering some ideas on ways of making the strike successful". At the height of the strike, James Cannon spoke, to over 10,000 workers at Madison Sq gardens.

Tragically, the strike was lost, primarily by one BJ Field, a party 'intellectual' put in place by the CLA to help lead the workers. Field like so many before and after him fell victim to professional government 'negotiators'. He began to consider himself above the party and above the workers.

"Instead of organising the militancy of the ranks from below, and thus coming to the negotiations with a power behind him — the only thing that really counts in negotiations when the chips are down — he was moderating the militancy of the masses and spending all his time running around from one conference to another with these government sharks, politicians and Labour skates who had no other purpose but to knife the strike".

To the shock and surprise of the American labour movement, the CLA expelled Field in the middle of the strike. They didn't keep quiet, and draw away from him, failing even to denounce him in their paper, nor did the Trotskyists follow Field into selling out the strike.

This week Derek Hatton is helping the police with their enquiries into property speculation in Liverpool. The whole of the left

will suffer because 'Militant' did not have the courage to kick him out and expose him in their paper 'Militant'. 'Militant' leave themselves open to the accusation that Hatton was working to their instructions. The whole of the left will suffer by the association of corruption.

By contrast, the CLA went on to win a huge strike in Minneapolis — the whole party having learnt the lesson provided by BJ Field's behaviour.

The story of the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes is the story of how, exactly, to win. The chapter on the Minneapolis strikes is a blueprint for action today. For those who think Trotskyists are against women's organisations there is a description of the Women's Auxilliary — not making soup but "running round and protesting and scandalising the bosses and city authorities" and distributing the strike paper — the Daily Organiser.

The final chapters of the History deal, with considerable humour, with the fusions and faction fights which recruited large numbers to the party in the 1930s. As the Communist Party became increasingly bureaucratized, newly radical youth and workers were drawn to the Socialist Party. The Cannonites, now the Workers Party resolved to join the Socialist Party to recruit these radicals. In order to do this, they had first to negotiate with the Socialist Party leaders. These people too are recognisable in and around the left today. I can only give a flavour here:

"There was Murry Baron, a bright young college boy who... got a job as a trade union (officer)... He lived well and considered it important that he continued to do so. At the same time, he was dabbling with the task of leading a revolutionary movement like someone who takes up a hobby on the side". or "Norman Thomas... who as Trotsky very well explained called himself a socialist as a result of a misunderstanding".

The negotiations were succesful, and the Trotskyists spent a year inside the Socialist Party and left to form the Socialist Workers Party in 1937. At this point the story takes a break. It is continued in 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party', and Trotsky's 'In Defence of Marxism'.

'The History of American Trotskyism', once started is as hard to put down as a good thriller. It is full of people we know — either as comrades or enemies, and situations we have lived through. But it is not a novel or a piece of historical journalism. Like all the texts of our movement it is a guide to action and a call to revolution.

"The degeneration of the Communist Party began when it abandoned the perspective of revolution in this country, and converted itself into a pressure group and cheering squad for the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia — which it mistakenly took to be the custodian of a revolution 'in another country'... What happened to the Communist Party would happen without fail to any other party, including our own, if it should abandon its struggle for a social revolution in this country, as the realistic perspective of our epoch, and degrade itself to the role of sympathiser of revolutions in other countries. I firmly believe that American revolutionists should indeed sympathise with revolutions in other lands, and try to help them in every way they can. But the best way to do that is to build a party with a confident perspective of revolution in this country. Without that perspective, Communist or Socialist Party belies its name. It ceases to be a help and becomes a hindrance to the revolutionary workers' cause in its own country. And its sympathy for other revolutions isn't worth much either."

James P Cannon, 2 March 1954

Boris Kagarlitsky's Soviet chronicle

We live, we act and...we hope

Books

Ruth Cockcroft reviews
'Farewell Perestroika' by Boris Kagarlitsky. (Verso, £8.75)

Kagarlitsky's book, based on articles he wrote for dissident circles over the last few years, combines an eyewitness account of momentous events with a picture of the development of Kagarlitsky's own political thinking.

That in turn reflects the growing sophistication of the new workers' movement itself.

Kagarlitsky begins his story with the 'Popular Fronts' (PF). The PFs were huge spontaneous rank and file organisations formed to ensure the reform process was not jeopardised.

During the 'Hot Summer' of 1988, sections of the bureaucracy were making ominous noises about not 'giving up principles'. The liberal intelligentsia and the population at large feared an almighty clamp down and the return of old style Stalinism.

The 'unofficial and informal' groups faced persecution and petty bureaucratic obstacles. They grew quickly into a force that could defy the authorities and call huge street meetings and vast demonstrations.

The Moscow Popular Front was dominated by socialists; their flag was red, green and yellow, symbolising socialism, ecology and freedom.

Kagarlitsky chronicles the rise the popular movement and the new found confidence of the Soviet people.

The 19th 'Party Congress' which was televised across the whole of the Soviet Union played a massive part in politicising people and raising their expectations. That conference backed Gorbachev's proposals for a Congress of People's Deputies.

The proposed congress, rather than dampening the popular movement, acted as a catalyst for further protest action.

The PFs did not boycott the undemocratic elections but worked to ensure that dissident views were represented.

Their organisation ensured Yeltsin's 90% vote as well as other significant victories against the conservatives, not least the broadening of their own base. Socialists in the Moscow Popular Front fully supported this tactic, in contrast to the Polish socialists who had boycotted the elections in 1989 and as a result had become marginalised.



Boris Kagarlitsky

Kagarlitsky was not unaware of the dilemmas of working within the Popular Fronts. There were severe organisational difficulties because of the hostility of many liberals to 'centralism', and the socialists were extremely conscious of their lack of support from the organised workers' movement.

The thousands of workers who had been prepared to rally to the Popular Front's banner on the streets during the Congress were lost, and the socialist groups had failed to consolidate any form of organisation.

As well as this, in different national regions the Popular Fronts were open to the political domination of chauvinist nationalism.

Kagarlitsky can barely hide his disappointment when 'the Estonian miracle', a huge well organised movement which was seen as a turning point in the liberation movement's fortunes, proved to owe its popular success to nothing other than Party patronage.

"The Popular Front was engendered by the patently sympathetic attitude to it of a significant section of the party and managerial apparatus, which strove to gain greater autonomy from the central authorities in Moscow".

In addition the Estonian and other Baltic Fronts contained a highly suspicious attitude to their own Russian minorities.

The result has been the harmful fragmentation of the movement on nationalist lines, and many Russian speaking minorities finding it necessary to form their own separate organisations.

Where the bureaucracy was unable to influence the nationalist popular fronts, it came into sharp conflict with them. Accusing the fronts of 'bourgeois nationalism', the conservative bureaucrats in the borderlands unleashed a vicious counter-attack on the popular movement.

Demonstrations were violently broken up by the police, special troops were used to break the resistance of the strikers sympathetic to the Armenian PF, and in Georgia a movement demanding secession from the USSR was violently put down with great carnage.

The paralysis of the bureaucracy at the centre in the face of the fragmentation of the periphery led to civilian carnage over Abkhazian national rights and to terrible tragedies in Armenia. **This unleashed hatred, arising from nationalist discontent, gives us a nightmare glimpse of Eastern Europe's possible future.**

The disintegration of the Soviet Union along the lines of its deep national antagonisms has been met either by increasingly ineffective force or by the paralysis of the bureaucracy.

Unable to use its traditional method of political intervention, terror, the bureaucracy sits inert as the Empire crumbles around it.

Meanwhile the broad based PFs have been unable to overcome the ideological constraints of nationalism and have fallen into espousing the interests of their own local bureaucracies.

By 1988 Gorbachev was using the slogan of 'a law governed state' while legislating for an undemocratic constitution. **This "legalisation of bureaucratic tyranny" again exacerbated the nationalist crisis.** It further reinforced the process of turning the Popular Fronts into narrowly



Striking Soviet miners 1989

nationalist movements. **But perestroika's failure, and Gorbachev's increased desperation shook up a whole new social layer of the population — the working class.**

The 1989 miners' strike in essence signalled the rise of a new opposition at the same time as the nationalist opposition was involved in armed clashes.

'The prospects for the East are not healthy liberal bourgeois democracy and liberal market regulation, but a Third-World style economy, slavery and poverty, or, as Kagarlitsky calls it, a "market Stalinism".'

The crisis for the bureaucracy had become particularly acute.

Workers' independent organisation promised a new way forward, the possibility of a path leading away from national conflict and disintegration. On the whole the two movements have not cross-fertilised.

Miners organised workers' committees which involved all nationalities in the workforce and became the "actual centre of popular power". The official 'unions' belatedly supported the strike, but they were kept out of

negotiating and the formulation of the strikers' demands. Party officials became involved in the strikes in order to confine them to the level of economic demands.

The demands of the majority of strikers did remain economic but the movement as a whole inevitably became political, for example, demanding the right to free trade unions. Miners occupied the squares of city centres for days — debating and discussing ideas.

The strikes were finished and on the whole undermined by local strike committee leaders. **But, as Kagarlitsky points out, the real weakness was that "there were not only no free trade unions but also no unified organisational centre".**

In the spring of 1989 Kagarlitsky was central to the formation of Sotsprof, and later the Socialist Party. Through the Popular Fronts and their glaring weaknesses, Kagarlitsky had begun to understand that "a powerful socialist organisation was needed, capable of drawing behind it broad strata of workers and of beginning to fight in a revolutionary manner".

The miners' strike in the USSR was one of the biggest spontaneous workers' movements which had erupted into strike action in post-war East European history. In some regions a revolutionary crisis and dual power existed, with workers' committees taking on board the functions of the local 'soviets'.

In the midst of the now familiar chorus from the right wing that socialism is dead, it is as well for us to remember this fact.

Vorkuta miners demanded the separation of Party bodies and state power. Gorbachev, quite rightly interpreting this as a demand for his resignation, facilitated an anti-strike law.

Undemocratic laws have been imposed by Gorbachev during times of greater and greater crisis. The moves from a command economy into a market economy has led to a

huge social crisis, from which has emerged a new corrupt "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" extruded from the old nomenklatura.

Kagarlitsky gives us an ominous warning:

"The guardians of old ideas can talk about the restoration of capitalism, but the fact is that this social milieu is incapable either of creating from within itself a modern western style bourgeoisie or of building developed capitalism. The most of which it is capable of is forming a dependent, poorly developed society with a parasitic ruling class combining all the negative features of both Eastern and Western models."

The prospects for the East are not healthy liberal bourgeois democracy and liberal market regulation, but a Third-World style economy, slavery and poverty, or, as Kagarlitsky calls it, a "market Stalinism".

Kagarlitsky also warns that with Gorbachev now administering the 'Lebanonisation' of Soviet society, the prospect is for civil war, pogroms and rampant national chauvinism.

Our movement, the movement of the working class, has emerged as a powerful force just once since the breakdown of old Stalinism — in the miners' strike and the political demands raised there. But the size of that movement and the formation of new independent structures give us a glimpse of the possible alternative to Gorbachev-Yeltsin.

"An alternative has yet to be created. Before us are hard times. But before us is the future. We live, we act, and that means we have hope"

Kagarlitsky's words should be a reminder to us all that in these times of bourgeois rejoicing about the 'end of history' (in their favour!) the working class, the gravedigger of Stalinism and capitalism, is still an immensely powerful force.



The inhabitants of Twin Peaks

David Lynch's freak show

TV

Belinda Weaver reports on 'Twin Peaks' (BBC2, Tuesdays)

David Lynch hasn't been famous all that long, but he's already repeating himself. 'Twin Peaks' looks like 'Blue Velvet' tidied up for television. It has the same small town setting, the town's economy is based on lumber, and nothing is quite what it seems.

It's soap opera, but according to the hype, it's superior soap opera, not your run of the mill 'Dynasty'

or 'Dallas'. That may be a shame; people got a kick out of Alexis and JR. So far, no-one in 'Twin Peaks' has that larger-than-life quality, that low-down, nasty streak that made characters like Alexis compulsively watchable.

The first episode of 'Twin Peaks' was watchable, but it dragged a little. It needs revving up.

Part of the problem may be Lynch's sensibility. 'Twin Peaks' seems to be striving for weirdness; the oddness of the characters seems imposed rather than organic. It's as if Lynch decided small towns were innately weird and thus every character had to be quirky.

But he's got it all wrong. Small town people aren't weirder than others; they're often less weird than city dwellers who can get away with more because of big town anonymi-

ty. Small towns tend to ostracise oddballs, to keep them in their place. They don't get the free ride Lynch suggests.

In 'Blue Velvet', Lynch was saying that the weirdness is all underneath; that places and people who seem normal aren't. But hardly anyone 'Twin Peaks' seems normal; Lynch has stacked the town full of oddbods from the start, like the woman who carries around a small log. It's gratuitous.

Maybe Lynch feels that soap opera demands oddballs, and so he's sticking to the conventions of the genre. To me it seemed he was papering over cracks. The story so far is thin. A prom queen is murdered, another girl who has been raped and tortured turns up, traumatised. The FBI investigates.

Instead of getting on with it, Lynch has spun things out with the weirdo stuff, as if he wasn't sure what else to do. That's where the show sagged — in the filler bits.

Otherwise, it had a bit of snap, though the high school scenes were a bit torrid and overheated, like cartoons rather than soap opera.

'Twin Peaks' so far has nothing of 'Wild at Heart's gratuitous violence and cynicism, and there is some humour in the scenes between the FBI agent Cooper who plays Sherlock to the town sheriff's Watson. Cooper is genuinely strange; he has a disconcerting quality that keeps you interested.

But if Lynch plays circus master to a freak show in the next few weeks, instead of getting on with the story, 'Twin Peaks' may hit a trough.

I've seen better on a bleach bottle

Books

BJ Siddon reviews 'Gates of Paradise' by Virginia Andrews (Fontana, £3.99)

My brief for this week's review was to find and read an immensely successful 'international bestseller' on a romantic subject. You know, the sort of two-inch thick paperback sold at station booksellers and produced from the handbags of female commuters.

I began by selecting a bookshop away from my normal patch, and chose 'Gates of Paradise' by allocating points for number of pages (492), position in bestseller

list (8th), availability of large print (yes), new title (yes), and design of front cover (truly vile with raised silver lettering). By all these simple tests 'Gates of Paradise' emerged as a truly popular book.

Now all I had to do was read it. The opening lines were not promising:

"For as long as I could remember, the only person I could share my deepest thoughts with was Luke Casteel Jr.

"I wanted to...look into his soft dark sapphire eyes forever and ever and tell him what I really felt, but the words were forbidden. He was my half brother."

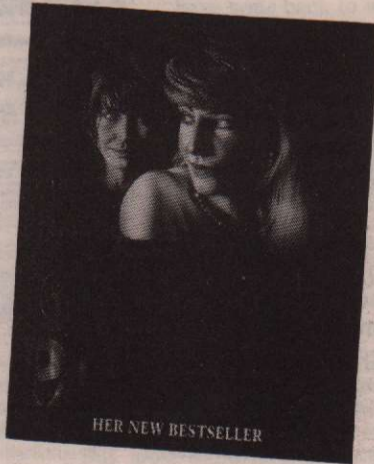
To cut a long story short, our heroine (Annie) is in love with Luke, and vice versa. Their love is forbidden because of their "blood relationship". Annie is the daughter of Heaven and Logan, and Luke the son of Heaven's sister Fanny and Logan. But he is named after Heaven's father Luke, who

was married to Leigh (daughter of Jillian) who died in childbirth. Fanny's half brother Drake has been raised by Logan and Heaven as Annie's brother. Drake is the son to Luke Sr and his second wife. Finally, there are Tony, Stacie (killed in a car crash), and Troy. Tony was married to Jillian and Troy was presumed dead but was really alive all along. When Heaven and Logan are killed in a car crash, Annie goes to live with Tony and finds out that Heaven was really Tony's daughter (and thus he is Annie's grandfather) and Troy is Annie's father so Annie and Luke Jr can get married after all.

It's easy to laugh. There's plenty to laugh at (492 pages to be precise). Opening the book at random produces gems of prose such as "...because she was cursed with a dumpy body, a small bosom and hips so wide they made her look like a church bell, she was doomed to be a domestic servant, always cleaning and polishing in someone else's house." Or: "...I kept trying to imagine the first time my mother had seen [the room]. She had been living with Cal and Kitty Dennison, the couple who had paid \$500 to her father for her."

I confess to having got hooked about page 200, even though (as a reader of detective stories) I had guessed ages before that Troy would turn out (a) to have been alive all along and (b) to have been Annie's father. No other resolution of the plot is possible.

There is no sex in the book, and only one real kiss — between Annie and Luke when they still think they are related. The best character is undoubtedly Fanny, who wears leather mini-skirts and has 'younger men' as lovers. Even she turns



respectable, moves into the big house, and learns how to inspire loyalty from the servants.

So it is no mean feat to become interested in such a book. It certainly wasn't the quality writing what done it. I've seen better sentences on the back of a bleach bottle. It wasn't the plot what done it either, because the plot was guessable after the first paragraph. The characters were hardly gripping — how can you take seriously people called Drake, Troy or Heaven? I think what got me in the end was the hope that someone would reveal why Heaven had been sold to Cal and Kitty Dennison for \$500. No one did.

Don't buy this book. Don't buy it if you are facing a long train journey and the only alternative is a copy of 'Socialist Outlook' which you've read before.

In years gone by 'bestsellers' consisted of lurid broadsheets sold at the prison gates on the morning of a hanging. Bestsellers have declined since then.

Lenin in a love triangle

By Geoff Ward

Browsing in the video shop, I came across 'The Sealed Train', a film starring Ben Kingsley as Lenin.

The video dramatises the period from Lenin's last weeks in exile in Switzerland (March 1917) to his arrival at the Finland Station in Petrograd, Russia.

The February revolution has toppled the autocratic Tsarist monarchy, establishing a provisional government. Soldiers, weary from the war, are deserting the front in droves. Soviets spring up in the major cities, but the Bolsheviks are in disarray.

Lenin is searching for a way back into Russia. Out of the blue, an offer of a train and safe passage through Germany is made via an intermediary. The proposal originated from the German High Command itself, hoping that Lenin will lead Russia out of the war.

Lenin lays down strict conditions before accepting the offer, so that he can not be branded as a 'German agent'. He approaches Mensheviks, anarchists, and Bundists (Jewish-nationalist socialists) inviting them to join the train.

The scant news that reaches Lenin tells of the worrying drift of the caretaker Bolshevik leadership (Stalin and Kamenev) towards support for the Provisional government, unity with the Mensheviks, and even support for Russia's 'defence' in the war.

The film begins to go off the rails once the train journey starts. In walks Inessa Armand, a Bolshevik leader, rumoured to be Lenin's former lover. The story increasingly becomes centred around a sort of ménage à trois between Inessa, Lenin and Krupskaya (Lenin's wife), only what we see is really the burning embers of a relationship that took place years earlier. Instead of 'steamy' flashbacks, we're treated to long, lingering stares.

The rest of the Bolsheviks, even Zinoviev, who was Lenin's closest comrade at the time, are reduced to virtually ordinary commuters. We're shown none of the feverish debates you may expect about the situation of dual power developing in Russia. No inkling is given that Lenin is preparing for a major battle within the Bolshevik Party to swing it around to the prospect of the working class seizing power.

The film did have the redeeming feature of encouraging me to go away and read some serious stuff on the period. It's a shame about the silly love triangle. Great revolutionary upheavals that lead to the formation of the first workers' state in history deserve better treatment than this.



Schoolbooks

We bought our books in Free State schools back then. Penny by penny the poor paid. My mother Would scrimp and save; some found it too much bother; And some could scarce afford to feed the children. One day my English book went missing; later, when The teacher searched the desks, we found it, new covered In flowery wallpaper. The small thief hovered Shamed, blushing and trembling; he was beaten. And me, I sat and saw him cringe and beg. A nervous clever granny's boy, an orphan Of eight or nine, Anthony Cullinan, Who boasted to me once he'd eaten an egg. Property has rites, and children's rights are slim: I reddened still for what we did to him.

Sean Matgamna

'Socialist Organiser' and 'Return'

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 1 November. Anti-poll tax picket of Oxford Magistrates Court. 1pm onwards.

Thursday 1 November. How to stop the Gulf War. Speakers: Iqbal Sram and Socialist Organiser. 8pm Manchester Town Hall.

Friday 7 November. Anti-poll tax picket of Fenton Magistrates Court, Stoke. 1.45pm onwards.

Friday 7 November. Why socialists should be in the Labour Party. Speaker: Paul McGarry. Workers Rally meeting at Liverpool Institute. 12.45pm.

Saturday 3 November. No Gulf War demonstration. Cardiff.

Saturday 3 November. March to support oil workers. Assemble 11am at Allison Place, Newcastle. Rally at 12.30 at Newcastle Poly Students Union

Saturday 3 November. Launch of Charter of EC Rights for black and migrant workers. 9.30 - 5pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London.

Sunday 4 November. Women Against War in the Gulf. 2pm, Durham Road, Community Centre.

Monday 8 November. Socialists and the Labour Party. Socialist Organiser meeting. Essex University. 6.30pm.

Monday 5 November. 'Conscience and the law and social progress'. Speaker: Tony Benn. 7pm at London School of Economics, Holborn London.

Tuesday 6 November. Oxford Poly Labour Club meeting to oppose the Gulf War. 1pm.

Tuesday 6 November. Israel and Palestine. Speaker: Socialist Organiser. 5pm at Nene College Northampton.

Thursday 8 November. The use of the far right. Socialist Organiser meeting 7.30pm Elliot College, University of Kent.

In the future

Friday-Sunday 9-11 November. CND National Conference. Coventry Poly. Details: 071-700 2393.

Sunday 11 November. Variety night with Jeremy Hardy, Tom Robinson and Billy Bragg. Bloomsbury Theatre near Euston. Proceeds to the London Campaign for the Birmingham 6.

Thursday 15 November. Britain and the Gulf public meeting. Speakers: Mark Fisher MP and from the Campaign Against War in the Gulf. 7.30pm Stoke Town Hall.

Saturday 17 November. Musicians Against Nuclear Arms 'Concert for Peace'. 7.30pm at St Martins in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, London.

Saturday-Sunday 17-18 November Socialist Movement Conference in Manchester.

Saturday 24 November. Stop War in the Gulf national demonstration. Assemble 12 noon Embankment. March to rally at Hyde Park.

Sunday 25 November. National Anti-Poll Tax Conference at the Manchester Apollo. 10.5pm. Details: PO Box 764, London E5 9SX.

Saturday 1 December. 'Left Agenda' Speakers include Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone. Organised by Labour Left Liaison. 10.30-5pm at the LSE. Details: 10 Park Drive, London NW11.

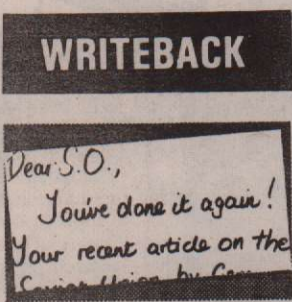
Saturday Sunday, 1-2 December. Fighting for Workers' Liberty. Socialist Organiser student weekend in Manchester. Details: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Your complaint is that *Return*, a magazine produced by a group of mainly anti-Zionist Jews, has "undercut" and "undermined" the End the Ban campaign around *Socialist Organiser*.

Not so. All we have done is point to the contrast between your attack on the right's intolerance of dissent within the Party, with which we agree, and your own record on the subject. It is a fact that *Socialist Organiser* supporters at NUS conference either supported the ban on *Return* or were completely indifferent to it.

Far from it being any odd couple of *Socialist Organiser* supporters who signed a petition demanding that we be banned, the persons in question were two of your NUS Executive members, including the Women's Officer. The petition in question was used to create a witchhunting atmosphere against *Return*, which directly led to this ban in question. Despite this your two supporters refused to withdraw their names from the petition and *Socialist Organiser* supported them in this.

The demand for *Return* to be banned came from the Israeli-funded Union of Jewish Students, for whom the presence of anti-Zionist Jews is, quite understandably, intolerable, given their claim to represent all Jews. Their reaction was no different to that of the military in Israel to books and pamphlets they disagree with. They sought a ban. In this situation you sided



Write to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

with Zionist versus anti-Zionist Jewish and Palestinian students.

The Union of Jewish Students are not banned in colleges, nor has *Return* ever supported moves to that effect. It is nothing but guilt by association to suggest that "those who share the views of *Return* to one extent or another" have done so.

If you dispute any of the above, then I have but one question to ask. Why have the four *Socialist Organiser* members of NUS Executive done nothing to reverse the ban on *Return*?

We oppose the ban on *Socialist Organiser* that that good friend of Zionism and the Israeli state, Neil Kinnock, is making.

Yours in solidarity
Tony Greenstein
Editor
Return

Jill Mountford replies

What *Return* did was fabricate a false political profile for *SO* on the basis of a plain lie.

In *Return's* faked picture, *SO* was in favour of banning *Return* at the conference of the National Union of Students, and we were therefore hypocrites when we appealed on general libertarian principles for support against the Labour Party's ban on us.

For serious principled democrats who believe that "freedom is always for the one who disagrees" — that is, that the issue is only tested when it is a question of freedom for those you detest — support for *SO* against the ban could not be conditional on *SO* itself consistently opposing bans. Consistent democrats are none too plentiful, though, and very scarce indeed in wide stretches of the left.

Return's story about *SO* provided those who wanted one with an excuse to do nothing about the ban. It served, for example, Phil Kelly, editor of *Tribune*, as one way to distance himself from *SO* at the End the Ban rally. At the rally, John O'Mahony nailed *Return's* lies there and then: the underground whispering campaign in a number of Constituency Labour Parties probably did real damage.

Return's sabotage of the End the Ban campaign was motivated by unbridled malice

and political hostility. Its lies helped license and excuse others who have political differences with *SO* to give full vent to their malice and hostility.

Lies? Yes. For years *SO* has campaigned against the dominant "ban your opponent if you can" culture in the National Union of Students. And it has not been a popular stand.

We have said with every collective voice we have that we are against banning *Return* — though we will fight *Return's* politics as a source of confusion and, often, lunacy. We did not vote to ban *Return*. No representative of *SO* signed the petition for banning *Return*; around 100 student supporters of *SO* at the NUS conference refused to sign it!

To argue that because two *SO* supporters (one, not two, of them, on the NUS Executive) signed the UJS petition, *SO* has collectively turned itself inside out on the question of banning would be tendentious to say the least — far-fetched to the point of silliness.

But to go on from that and to spread it as an alleged matter of fact, as an account of an event already in the past, that *SO* supported the ban on *Return* decreed by NUS president Maeve Sherlock — that, Mr Greenstein, is a plain and deliberate lie.

Like so much of the politics of Greenstein and his friends, it is probably generated by hysteria. But it is no less a lie for that. Nor is Greenstein's activity to undermine the End the Ban campaign anything other than plain scabbing.

Yes, Jewish student societies have been banned in certain col-

leges. For the better part of two decades, it is the Jews in NUS who have been witch-hunted — by the hysterical "anti-Zionists" like Greenstein, and the mindless militants of the Socialist Workers' Party. Sherlock's ban on *Return* was a result of shifts within the Stalinist-tainted Kinnockite faction of Labour Students, which has often been among the "anti-Zionists".

NUS conference discussion on the Middle East has become very emotional and viciously factional. People tend to take sides broadly, and then not bother too much about the details.

The sole element of truth in Greenstein's picture of *SO* at NUS conference is that *SO* people would instinctively have been on the side of the Union of Jewish Students, who are normally the victims in the conflicts, and were the victims of bullying at that conference.

"Free speech" for *Return* was a slogan on the banner of those — the Socialist Workers' Party, for example — who normally make free speech and rational discussion about the Middle East or Israel impossible, and who routinely harass and bully young Jews. To focus on the issue of principle is difficult in such an atmosphere.

The remarkable thing, therefore, is that only two *SO* people signed the Union of Jewish Students petition, and perhaps a hundred refused to. As I understand it, Sherlock imposed a one-off ban on *Return*, for that conference only — for the last few minutes of the conference, to be exact. There is no general ban.

Briefing debates its future

LEFT PRESS

LABOUR BRIEFING

Which way forward for Briefing?

A broadsheet issued last weekend by Labour *Briefing* documents a debate among the supporters of the paper over whether to cease publication in favour of the new paper being launched by the Socialist Movement, or to continue independently.

In the course of this debate it has become impossible to continue the production of *Briefing* up to its AGM on November 11th. Key staff essential to its production have left; we cannot replace them until the future of *Briefing* is decided.

We have produced this broadsheet in order to explain the situation to readers and to urge them to attend the AGM where this debate will continue and where all decisions in relation to the future of *Briefing* will be taken.

Graham Bash, Liz Davies, Bryn Griffiths, Steve King, Dave Lewney, Mike Marqusee, Pauline Purnell, Jane Stockton, Keith Veness and Valerie Veness put the case for continuing *Briefing* "as an independent publication of, and by and for the Labour left."

With the approach of a general election, the headlong rush to the right of Labour Party leaders, and the escalation of the witch hunt, Kinnock and his supporters would like nothing more than to see us disappear — or be swallowed up by a journal largely outside the structures of the Labour Party.

For *Briefing*, the struggle to hold Labour's elected representatives to

account has always been paramount. The recent Party conference — at which Kinnock announced he would not be bound by the vote to cut defence spending — shows this task is as vital as ever. It cannot be carried forward from outside the Party or even from a safe distance; it can only be pressed home from a firm base within the Party itself.

At the *Briefing* AGM we will propose relaunching *Briefing* as a monthly publication, with a premium on hard information and a sharp focus on the Labour Party. We want to see *Briefing* continue as an independent, democratic forum for the Labour left. We want *Briefing* to survive and thrive so that it can play a full, positive and essential role in building Labour Party Socialists and preparing a socialist campaign for a Labour victory at the next general election.

The proposed Socialist Movement paper, whatever its merits, cannot perform the functions of *Labour Briefing*. To close in its favour would leave a gaping political hole on the left.

Briefing is currently the only left paper written by and for activists in the Labour Party and trades unions. It organises at the crossroads: taking the class struggle into the Labour Party and turning the Party outwards to industrial disputes, anti-poll tax activities, struggles against war in the Gulf, for a woman's right to choose, for lesbian

and gay rights, for the release of the Birmingham 6 and Tottenham 3, for British troops out of Ireland, etc.

These struggles cannot be separated from the battle inside the Labour Party. Indeed, we will only mount an effective challenge to the 'New Realist' leadership by bringing them into the Party.

Gill Lee, Jenny Fisher, and Alan Thornett (all associated with *Socialist Outlook*) put the alternative.

The most positive development on the left in Britain over the past few years has been the emergence of the Socialist Movement. It is a modest but real gain in the face of the onward march of new realism and Kinnockism. It has developed into a national political framework with the political potential to fight new realism in the unions and Kinnockism in the Labour Party. In order to realise that potential, however, it needs an organising force — which

means a paper. Thus the debate. What are the implications of the emergence of such a paper for *Briefing*?

Would it be desirable for *Briefing* to continue under these conditions? In our view it would not. The best political traditions of *Briefing* would instead most effectively be advanced by going into a Socialist Movement paper which would be strengthened as a result.

There is another side to this debate. In our view, the future of *Briefing* would be at issue whether or not a Socialist Movement paper had emerged, although it may only have become critical at a slightly later date.

The left in the Labour Party, although it remains very important, has shrunk dramatically. Anyone who denies this is denying reality. The right wing is riding high. The Policy Review has gone through. This does not mean the left has been destroyed, or that it won't re-emerge, but it is smaller than it has

been at any time since *Briefing* was first published. And this has meant the shrinkage of *Briefing's* natural constituency. New campaigns have emerged — against the poll tax and the war in the Gulf — which cannot always be taken up exclusively through the Labour Party.

Briefing, in our view, could only have a future if it clearly and fully adopted the twin track approach to which it has been committed since it went fortnightly. The *Briefing* readers, writers and sellers meeting on 15 July, however, was a disappointment in that respect. There were explicit polemics against the twin track approach of the Socialist Movement and a clear intent amongst key sections of *Briefing* supporters that *Briefing* should be by and for Labour Party members only. It is our view *Briefing* does not have a viable future on that basis.

Organise the left

AS WE WERE SAYING...

From SO, October 1979

This year's Labour Party conference is the most crucial conference, probably, since the early nineteen twenties.

What if we win on democracy at Brighton?

It will inevitably be the beginning of a major fight between right and left. The democratic changes to be voted on at Brighton would be a great step forward — but in themselves they are not enough. Either the left will go on

from a victory on democracy at Brighton to consolidate the Labour Party as a genuinely socialist party seeking to overthrow capitalism on the basis of the class struggle of the working class, and build up a mass membership around such policies.

Or there will be a serious prospect that the right wing will be able to go on the offensive and purge the left with which it can no longer live in comfort. If in the next period the working class were to suffer a big defeat, the right could become strong enough to turn the party into something more resembling the tight and intolerant Social Democracies in West Germany or Sweden...

The Right has positions of great reserve strength and support within bourgeois society. They have backing from the bourgeois press. They

could count on support from passive Labour voters if they could organise them — and there are powerful forces in British capitalist society which would be eager to help them organise.

They have powerful support also within the bureaucracy of the trade unions.

The left must organise. For the first time in over half a century the political structures built by the British labour movement and still massively supported by it (despite Labour's record in office) are fluid and likely to be recast in a new mould, to serve the right of the left, the bourgeoisie or the working class...

But only if the left organises itself.

By Chris Knight and John O'Mahony

Why did Cunard agree to pay seafarers' union £80,000 per year?

By Tom Rigby

Controversy surrounds a draft agreement between the Cunard shipping line and Sam McCluskie executive officer of the shipping section of the Rail, Marine and Transport Union (formerly NUS).

Under the deal the union was to receive payments of £20,000 per quarter (£80,000 per year) from the company starting in April this year in return for what is alleged to be a no-strike deal and a guarantee not to organise the black third world workers who make up the vast bulk of Cunard's crews.

Already, 4 major maritime branches have sent in resolutions to the RMT head office demanding a special emergency one-day conference to clear up the matter. Some rank and file activists want McCluskie to be suspended from his position within the union pending an enquiry: "It's the only way to ensure that we will get to the bottom of this" one seafarer told SO.

A lot of attention has focussed on the 'no-strike' side of the draft agreement in which the union appears to commit itself to "the continuous operation" of Cunard's passenger fleet. However, RMT activists are even more worried about the possible re-appearance of the so-called 'Asian Levy' (ie the union receiving payment for not organising third world workers.)

One rank and file activist highlighted for SO this aspect of the agreement: "Just look at the text, I quote 'With specific reference to paragraph 7 the company agrees to pay the union'. So paragraph 7 is the key. What does it say? 'The union and the International Transport Federation have reviewed the terms and conditions of service applicable in the company's passenger fleet, and have found them to be broadly in conformity with the ITF minimum standards for crew ships'."

"This doesn't make sense. Why should Cunard pay the union £80,000 per year for terms and conditions which meet ITF standards? I think the real reason is that on the QE2 only just over 100 people are covered by the

agreement whereas over 1,200 crew — drawn from third world countries and used to low pay and poor conditions — are left out".

A glance at paragraph 8 of the agreement would tend to provide further evidence for this interpretation.

"The union accepts that it no longer has and will not seek while this agreement is in force representation rights for personnel now employed in the com-



Sam McCluskie

pany's passenger fleet other than in the decks and engine room".

McCluskie has said that the financial crisis facing the union justified signing the agreement. Rank and file activists throughout the RMT — not just within the shipping section — have the right to expect him to explain why.

What was the 'Asian levy'?

A rank and file seafarer explains the origins of the 'Asian levy'.

The so-called 'Asian levy' came about in the early '70s.

It was a payment to the union by the companies — initially at £10 per head — for each worker from the Indian sub-continent who was taken on. The payment was not direct but went through the general council of British

shipping. Effectively, the union was being paid not to organise workers.

Over the years the money was increased to £15 and then to £30 per head.

It was ostensibly being paid in order to further the interests of the Indian seamen. It was supposed to be kept in a special fund. I believe it was in excess of £2 million when it ended.

But, we found out that the money never went into any special fund but just went into the general funds.

Teachers must fight for a decent pay rise

A major confrontation over teachers pay could be just round the corner argues National Union of Teachers executive member Andy Dixon

There is every chance of a left-wing victory at the NUT Special Salaries Conference on November 3rd.

The left wants a clear commitment to strike action and is putting forward a flat-rate claim of £3,200 per year extra for every teacher.

The executive's own proposal — for a claim of £1,500 plus 10% — involves some major concessions to the left. For example, they accept that the 1990-91 pay claim should be

weighted towards classroom teachers and should include a flat-rate element which will give a bigger overall percentage rise to the lowest paid.

Even if the full flat rate claim is defeated, the executive's position would be something around which teachers can unite and campaign.

There has been a significant degree of left unity round this issue. The two biggest factions on the left — the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union — have both submitted more or less the same amendments.

Two unofficial conferences this year in Nottingham on redundancies and salaries, and in London on salaries, have helped to cement this unity.

What's more, a lot of local associations not traditionally associated with the left have obviously supported our arguments.

It is this pressure that has forced the majority on the executive to introduce a flat-rate element into their own claim.

The mood in the schools is complex. In the build-up to this salaries conference there was a so-called consultative exercise where every member of the union was sent a draft memorandum and asked to comment. A lot of local associations and school groups put forward amendments and comments. I was in head office and able to go through the responses. The message that came through to me was that there is a lot of frustration and anger but not a great deal of confidence.

People still feel the effects of the defeat in 1986, and there is a lack of confidence in the leadership. At the same time there is a lot of frustration over conditions as well as pay.

So the anger exists for a fight but not yet the confidence. The way to break through that is for

the conference to make a very clear statement that if the government doesn't offer significant concessions in January we will be looking to strike action.

This would be the start of building confidence. That's the way the action developed in the 1984-86 dispute. People were not champing at the bit for action when it started, but once things got going momentum built up and people were prepared to do more than the leadership called for.

The leadership are no longer totally opposed to action. The new realist argument — that the Tories are invincible — is losing ground. The revolt against the poll tax, the weakness and the unpopularity of the Tories have underpinned the argument.

Teachers have had to put up with so much since the Education Reform Act that it just isn't the case that members won't support action.

PSA strikers stand firm

John Moloney (PSA, London)

The strike in the Property Services Agency (PSA) remains solid. Key accounts staff voted on Monday to remain on strike.

This means that PSA, the department responsible for maintaining and constructing government properties, is not generating any income. The Agency is paying out millions but is getting nothing back. So every week PSA slides further into the red.

The dispute is about Tory plans to convert the PSA into a private company. They intended to force all PSA staff into the company, stripping them of their civil service status, their pensions, redundancy money.

But the industrial action has changed all that. Senior management now are prepared

to let most staff remain civil servants but want to lock 2000 plus people into the new organisation. This so-called 'offer' has been rejected at all the strikers' meetings. Even the key accounts staff who would have been covered by the deal, have thrown it out.

With the PSA losing millions per week, with the start date to set up the company being pushed back (from 1 April '91 to July '91 at the earliest), now is the time to stand firm.

From initial members meetings it is clear that they find the offer a non-starter. We must build on this. Members meetings must be held in every workplace. They must be told that it isn't enough to say no to what's on offer, but that we must step up the action, increase its scope. For all activists the cry must be reject the deal, more strike action.

And if management don't come up with a decent offer soon then we need to name the day for all-out action in the new year.

Piccadilly guards locked out

Last week the station announcements declared that all the hold ups/delays/cancellations in Manchester and the North West were due to an official guards dispute at Manchester Piccadilly. In fact it was a management lock out.

The 222 guards, all members of the RMT, were told on Thursday 26 October to accept new rosters which meant working longer unsocial hours. The next day they arrived at their normal working times and the management refused to let them start work. A picket line was instantly set up outside the station.

On Friday 27th the guards were balloted for indefinite official strike action, which was

passed overwhelmingly. The strike although just in Manchester at the moment, has national implications and the guards at Manchester are pushing for national action.

The new rosters the management tried to impose were in breach of national agreements and were presented to the workforce without prior union negotiation — if the management wins in Manchester it gives a green light to tear up the national agreements everywhere and by-pass the unions in imposing new conditions.

The guards at Manchester are 'ready and willing' to work but a union spokesperson said: "Unless the management calls us in for talks we will be here all week and longer if we need to be."

Wandsworth — end of round one

By Dion D'Silva, Wandsworth NALGO

The 50 Wandsworth NALGO members on selective strike action have gone back to work. The 4-week strike forced management to negotiate, and important concessions were won.

However, the cuts package is still looming. As Peter Key from

the strike committee put it: "We are hearing about cuts every day — they are just getting worse and worse."

All the major unions are to ballot for one-day strike action throughout the borough. Every effort must be made to get a yes vote in all the unions.

Both NALGO and the council are upping the stakes. Alan Jinkinson has promised full support to the NALGO branch. Beresford, the Tory leader, no longer blames 'rent-a-mob' for the demonstrations, but blames NALGO. This may be a warning of an attack on NALGO itself. Unfortunately, he can look to Labour councils such as Greenwich and Southwark as examples.

Years of demoralisation and a lack of any clear national union strategy has taken its toll. Strikes seemingly against the poll tax have really been about jobs and services and strikes seemingly about cuts have remained isolated.

Nevertheless, there is tremendous potential for a victorious campaign against the cuts in Wandsworth.

Three weeks ago over 3,000 people — many of them young parents and children — marched on the Town Hall. It was the biggest demonstration in the borough for a decade. Hopefully the mood of anger and determination expressed on that lobby can be a spark for local and national action.

In Brief

The executive of the telecom union NCU have voted to accept this year's pay deal. This is despite the fact that a majority of engineers voted against it because of the strings attached which could mean a pay cut of up to £3,000 per year for some.

A big majority of manual workers at GPT Liverpool have voted for strike action in pursuit of a shorter working week.

Postal workers in Oxford are in the fifth day of their unofficial strike in protest at the sexual harassment of a woman cleaner.

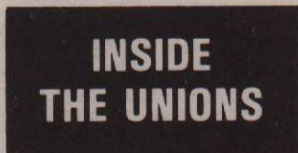
Social contract with the Tories?

I must admit, I thought Neddy (the National Economic Development Council) had been sent to the knacker's yard along with all the 'Little Neddies', the unlamented MSC and all those other manifestations of 'tripartism' (read 'class collaboration') that characterised the glorious Wilson/Callaghan era.

But it seems that Neddy was spared the Thatcherite butcher's knife and just put out to grass like a loyal old nag who's served his purpose and no-one quite has the heart to sell for dog meat.

Neddy is actually meeting this week, and will be presented with an exciting Congress House document offering to discuss a 'responsible' attitude to pay on behalf of the unions, in exchange for discussions on low pay, unemployment, training and productivity, with the government and the CBI.

The paper has been written by TUC assistant secretary David Leigh and not actually passed by



By Sleeper

TUC committee (that would be old-fashioned bureaucracy, wouldn't it?). Leigh, Norman Willis and the GMB's John Edmonds (who's been touting similar proposals for some time) all deny that the paper represents anything whatsoever to do with pay restraint or — heaven forbid! — on Incomes Policy.

To paraphrase the shrewd Ms Mandy Rice-Davies, They Would, Wouldn't They?

No-one expects the Tories to take

the proposal seriously, although it does chime in nicely with recent ministerial exhortations for lower pay settlements. The Tories are (at present) ideologically opposed to any deals on wages that involve talking with the unions on other issues: that smacks too much of Wilsonian corporatism (which they call 'socialism') and would represent an unacceptable political climb-down. The government's own unofficial 7% pay norm for the public sector is quite a different matter, of course.

So what lies behind the Leigh/Willis/Edmonds initiative? Partly, it can be explained by entry into the ERM and genuine concern that recent pay increases (especially in the motor industry) that exceed the rate of inflation may lead to unemployment as devaluation is no longer an option to keep British goods competitive overseas.

Partly, it is an 'exposure' tactic, aimed at the government in much the same way that certain varieties of 'orthodox' Trotskyists used to raise totally unrealistic demands on the labour leadership: when things go wrong, inflation spirals

out of control and unemployment soars, the TUC can say 'we told you so' and wave its clean hands in the air for all to see.

But most importantly, the proposal represents a marker for a Social Contract-type deal with a Kinnock government: Willis and Edmonds have been thinking along these lines for years, but memories of the 1970s and the implacable hostility of leftist unions like the TGWU and NUPE, combined with the skilled/craftist unions like the AEU have, up until now, stayed their hand and kept talk of Incomes Policy to hushed whispers in the corridors of Congress House. Now, the advocates of an Incomes Policy are breaking cover though still they dare not speak its name.

Significantly, outrage at this proposal has been expressed not just by Bill Morris of the TGWU ('trade union members would not accept it') but also by Gavin Laird of the AEU ('we could not deliver it'). And probably the firmest opponent of any suggestion of a pay deal with any government is our old friend Eric Hammond of the 'scab' EET-PU...

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Miners: vote yes for action!

Across the coalfields activists in the NUM will be pushing hard over the next fortnight to win a big yes vote for an overtime ban.

Dave Hopper, general secretary of the North East area of the union, explained why miners must vote for action: to force the British Coal to the negotiating table and to win a decent pay rise.

The NUM is demanding an increase in basic pay of £10 per shift.

But right now British Coal are refusing to even meet and discuss with us. Hopefully, a successful ballot will bring management to their senses and force them to negotiate. But what we have at the moment is a situation of non-recognition.

We shouldn't fall for British Coal's divide and rule propaganda.



Dave Hopper

Staffordshire miners show action wins

Strike blocks victimisation

By Anna Mawson

Miners at Hem Heath colliery, in Stoke on Trent, struck on Thursday and Friday, 18-19 October.

Dave Cliff, a well-known NUM activist, had been moved to a different job. The strike quickly convinced pit bosses to reinstate him in his old job, together with a workmate who had been moved; and the under-manager responsible for trying to move Dave Cliff was carpeted.

Miners were particularly angry because of the reason given for moving Dave — "absenteeism".

Dave Cliff had returned to work on Wednesday 17th, following the death and funeral of his father. He had been given the news of his father's death by the colliery general manager while at work. The manager told him not to worry

Some people argue that there is no point in an overtime ban as its effects will be undermined by the Nottinghamshire coalfield continuing to produce at full capacity.

But it's not so simple. British Coal now rely on productivity at each individual pit much more than ever before.

The pits have been run down to such an extent that even the most minimal forms of industrial action will have a big effect on production.

You can either stand up and be counted and fight for what you believe in: a decent wage or just accept the bosses' dictat.

If we don't fight then we will just get inadequate settlement after inadequate settlement imposed upon us and our wages will fall in real terms.

The tragic thing about the industry at the moment is that because of the huge amounts of overtime being worked miners are forgetting just how low their basic pay really is. Some lads are working so much overtime its surprising that they don't need oxygen when they've finished.

Everything else, all the incidentals, are at the behest of the boss. Men are being threatened with losing their bonus if they don't work overtime.

So much overtime is effecting health and safety in the pits. Some people are doing 16 hours a day 7 days a week, working such long hours is obviously tiring and dangerous. No wonder accidents are on the increase. Men have to take risks to make money.

We actually have a situation where some people are working down the pit and forced to claim Family Income Supplement. It's a ridiculous situation. We've got to end it.

about work; management would do everything they could make Dave's bereavement as painless as possible.

Dave took official sick leave and bereavement leave, and the personnel manager was quoted as saying, "Dave has an excellent record. He's not been absent one day in the last six months".

It was rumoured that the real reason for Dave's relocation was that, along with other NUM members, he had successfully organised the men in his heading, and fought for proper bonus payments and shorter shifts on account of the extreme temperatures.

On the Thursday (18th) Dave's heading team refused to work, and were sent home, along with the men on the return heading. Dave's district of the pit struck work, and by Friday morning virtually no-one was going in. Even some of the 'UMDUMS' refused to cross the picket.

Thousands of Americans say:
'Bring the troops home now!'

Opposition is growing in America to the prospect of a bloody Gulf war. There have been a number of sizeable anti-war demonstrations; the biggest, in New York on 20 October, was 20,000-strong.

The New York demonstrators marched to Times Square shouting 'Bring the troops home now' and 'George Bush read our lips: we're not boarding Pentagon ships'. The central march organisers were the Coalition to Stop US Intervention in the Middle East. 60 anti-war groups organised for the march — from the left and the trade unions to religious groups and veterans associations.

Last month a New York anti-war meeting was attended by 2,000 people. The meeting was addressed by Ramsey Clarke, the ex-US Attorney General under Lyndon Johnson. Clarke spoke at the demonstration, saying: "We are here because we have an imperial presidency, as unrestrained as any military dictatorship that ever lived."

Already, 31 US service personnel have been killed in the US's 'Desert Shield' Gulf build-up. The day after the New York demonstration a commentator in *New York Newsday* made the following point: "It was clear yesterday in New York that the sudden appearance of lists of battle casualties from the Middle East would produce crowds of historic size, and in a hurry."

Newsday also took time out to rubbish Bush's claim that the build up "isn't about oil. It is about naked aggression." They write:

"Q. Why are we in Saudi Arabia?"

"A. For oil.
"Q. Is it right for us to risk our lives, or even lose them, for oil?"

"A. The rich say it is."
This is an article from page 2 of a major New York paper!

The New York demonstration was led by seven US reservists who oppose the US's presence in the Gulf. The seven have either applied for conscientious objector status, or have been declared AWOL for failure to report for active service. AWOL reservists could face three years in jail.

Thanks to the comrades in the *US Socialist Action* for help with this story.

Saturday 24 November
Stop War in the Gulf!

National demonstration. Assemble 12 noon, Embankment. March to Hyde Park for rally.

SO KEEP THE
HELLOUT
OF THE
MIDDLE EAST!



The arguments for action can get a wide hearing

Now is the time to fight

WHETTON'S
WEEK



A miner's diary

A few years ago Mick McGahey made a statement which sums things up.

He said that the only time the Coal Board would stop chasing us was when we stopped running away.

Five years after the great 1984-5 strike — five years in which the Coal Board have kicked miners from pillar to post, shut pits, made thousands redundant, and cut wages from third in the league table to 15th — it is time that the miners say, enough is enough.

Voting yes for the overtime ban could be the start of a fight back.

Management have got men working seven days a week, twelve hours a day. The safety record is nothing to be proud of. Men are reaching for ridiculous norms in order to earn money on bonus schemes. It's time we got back to a basic wage.

As it stands, men have to wait and see what money they have made

on the bonus, and then argue about it. Or go for overtime.

Neither of those options is any substitute for a decent, guaranteed five-day week with a guaranteed wage at the end of it.

People say we are asking too much. I don't believe we are asking enough. We need a decent basic rate, tied to a rate protection scheme.

Coal is the only heavy industry where you start on the bottom wage and finish on the bottom wage. Once a man achieves a certain rate he should keep that, no matter where he is deployed in the pit, and into sickness and injury. Many people have to come off the face and go to work on the pit top. Then they are on the rock bottom of the wage scale, after 20, 30 or 40 years in the pit.

In the 1972 and '74 strikes, people say that the miners took on the government and beat it. But it was not just the miners. It was our action coupled with the Arab governments' pressure on oil supplies.

The current Gulf situation is an ideal time for miners — and offshore workers — to take action. Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield addressed a meeting last night which I attended. They spoke to all the branch officials and committee-men in the Yorkshire coalfield.

It was an excellent meeting. We will be holding special branch meetings and canteen meetings, and handing out literature. We will see a revival of the old-style campaigning NUM.

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