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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

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Student demo called for 30 October

By Allison Roche (Labour Students national committee)

Students starting or returning to college this month will encounter an education system reeling after twelve years of Tory misrule.

This summer vacation, students were for the first time unable to claim benefits. With few jobs available, many were pushed deep into debt. Some student unions set up soup kitchens to help out their members. Many will drop off their courses, unable to continue because of lack of money.

And recent figures show that graduate unemployment has doubled to over eight per cent in the last year.

In Further Education colleges, students either rely on circumventing social security regulations, or on their parents, to survive. Most Further Education students receive little or nothing in the way of a grant.

The Tories plan to restructure the whole Further Education system, taking FE colleges out of local authority control and handing them over to Boards of Governors made up of business people.

The National Union of Students (NUS), with over 800 affiliated student unions, should be leading the fightback against the Tories. But it is not. During the summer the initiative was taken by local student unions to highlight student poverty; but no national action is planned by NUS for the first term.

The NUS leadership is dominated by the "New Directions" clique which runs Labour Students (NOLS). These Kinnockites have effective control of the NUS machinery, but NOLS has devoted all its energy (and that isn't much) to General Election work.

While kicking out the Tories is the most important task, work for the election must be combined with and feed into campaigning on grants and education. NUS must organise first-term action, including a national demonstration. Manchester Area NUS has called a demo for 30 October.



Above: The Royal Ulster Constabulary station at Markethill, Co. Armagh was destroyed by an IRA car bomb on August 28th, part of the biggest upsurge in paramilitary activity and sectarian murder for at least five years.

Boycott this scheme!

By Steve Mitchell, VP FEUD, NUS

The government's new slave labour scheme, Employment Action (EA), starts next month.

The Tories plan to massage the unemployment figures in the election period by giving an initial 30,000 unemployed a £10 top up over their benefits.

On Monday 2 September, against opposition from Bill Jor-

dan and the Engineers Union, the TUC agreed to boycott the scheme. Last weekend Jordan said that the AEU would not boycott the scheme.

In a further potential challenge to the Tories the TUC agreed to demand the rate for the job with no compulsion on temporary work schemes.

Labour Party employment spokesperson Tony Blair refused to back the TUC boycott.

Despite Labour's lack of action we need joint student-worker unity on this issue to defeat this cheap labour scheme.

Money needed to help socialists Left alliance formed for Polish elections

From the Polish Support Group

The threatened resignation of the Bielecki government in Poland this week highlights the possibility of the parliamentary elections scheduled for October being brought forward.

Bielecki is exploiting events in the Soviet Union in an attempt to railroad further savage austerity measures through the Sejm (Parliament). A majority of deputies were nominated by the Polish CP under the 1989 Round Table agreement.

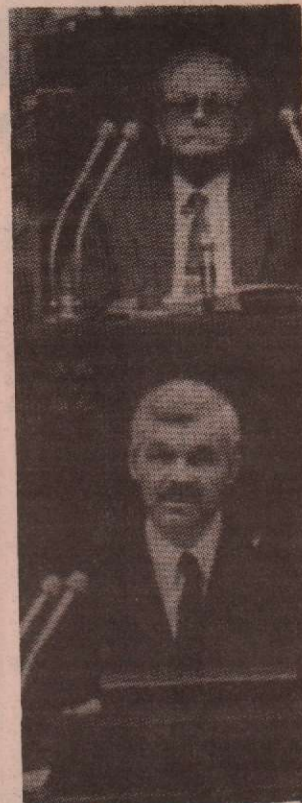
Bielecki is branding those opposing the measures as communist stooges, and threatening an early election to sweep them away. President Walesa is also extremely interested in acquiring powers to rule by decree and getting an early election before opposition forces can organise

against him.

Principal contenders will be the demagogic Christian Democrat coalition around Walesa (the Centre Agreement) and the economic and social liberals around Mazowiecki (the Democratic Union). Many other groups are now forming.

On the left, an electoral pact has been agreed between "Solidarnosc Pracy", led by veteran left-wing senator Karol Modzelewski, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), and other groupings such as the Inter-Factory Coordinating Committee in Lower Silesia (MKK), influenced by the socialists around former underground leader Jozef Pinior.

The Polish Support Group urgently appeals for funds to assist the election campaign of the five MKK candidates standing on the Labour Solidarity ticket in Lower Silesia. Cheques, made out to "Polish Socialist Appeal", to Basement Office, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11



Bielecki addresses parliament

The lie machine



It is good that John Major spoke up in China against the regime's jailings and killings of its opponents. But what was he doing in China?

Why is his government acting as Peking's proxy in Hong Kong? Of course the British government will hand over Hong Kong — against the will of its people — to the gang of aged murderers in Peking in a little over five

years time.

In substance, Major was there to do an encore performance of the Great British Belly-crawl which the Tory government has been doing before Peking's grim gerontocracy for the last decade.

The rest is just waffle, to hide the dirty reality.

Here you have the tabloid lie machine in full production.

"China warned: change or else". Or else what? "Stop your tyranny, China told". Or else?

Whatever Major may have said these front pages present the very opposite of the true relationship of Britain and China: whatever Major says now, Britain will still hand over Hong Kong to the butchers of Tiananmen Square in five years time.

Three Labour Parties in Liverpool?

By Anne Field

The Liverpool Independent Labour Party (LILP) was formed on 18th August.

The process which led to its creation began over a year ago, when 29 members of the Labour Group on Liverpool City Council were suspended in order to allow a takeover of the group by the Harry Rimmer-led right wing.

Local Party officials and right-wingers also rigged the panel of candidates for this May's local elections. Six Labour Party wards in Liverpool chose to stand candidates bureaucratically debarred from the panel. Five of the candidates were elected to the Council.

The bulk of the sitting suspended Labour councillors allied with the newly-elected independent Labour councillors to form the Liverpool Labour Councillors (LLC) Group on the Council.

Shortly afterwards, Eric Heffer MP died. Intoxicated by the election of five independent candidates in May, "Militant" put up Lesley Mahmood as the "Real Labour" candidate in the subsequent by-election in Walton.

Many in the Liverpool Labour Party Broad Left were against stan-

ding a candidate in Walton. Their hostility increased even more as a result of the narrow-minded sectarian manner in which "Militant" ran the Mahmood campaign.

After Mahmood was heavily defeated, the hostility reached the level of open warfare, as "Militant" remained unrepentant about the fiasco even describing it as a "victory".

So the non-"Militant" elements in the Broad Left and the Liverpool Labour Councillors Group decided to set up the LILP, as a way of distancing themselves from "Militant".

"Militant" was not involved in the formation of the LILP. It has also been made clear to them, that their supporters will not be allowed to get involved in the LILP.

The formation of the LILP proves beyond a doubt that the Mahmood candidacy was only a sectarian adventure monopolised by "Militant", and leaves those left-wing organisations which backed Mahmood in Walton looking more stupid than ever.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), for example, backed Mahmood to the hilt. (So great was its devotion to the "Militant" sectarian stunt in Walton that the SWP

in Liverpool recently refused to allow supporters of "Socialist Organiser" into an "Open Meeting" on the Walton by-election. Why? Because we had failed to support Lesley Mahmood and "therefore" forfeited the right to take part.)

Instead of facing up to reality, the SWP endorsed the sectarian fantasy of "Militant" that Mahmood represented a broad labour movement left current, and ended up being cheerleaders for their stupidity.

Whilst the Labour left (now ex-Labour left) was repelled by "Militant"'s behaviour in Walton and was pushed in the direction of creating the ILP, the SWP merely boosted the hollow pretensions of Mahmood, and then excluded from its "Open Meeting" socialists who refused to back the SWP-endorsed sectarian fantasy of "Militant".

"Militant" itself has, of course, been hit hardest of all by the formation of the LILP.

"Militant" supporter and Broad Left chairperson, Tony Mulhearn, has condemned the lack of consultation which preceded the formation of the LILP, and described it as 'superfluous'. "We see no reason for this departure, given the ex-

istence of one of the most energetic Broad Lefts in Britain," he said.

If Tony Mulhearn did not have such convenient amnesia, he might recall the following:

- the article in "Militant" after the May elections which declared that a new workers' party (i.e. outside of the Labour Party) was in the making in Liverpool;

- statements repeatedly made by his colleague Lesley Mahmood, that the "Real Labour" party would have control of the City Council within two years (i.e. by standing candidates against Labour);

- his own statement on the night of Mahmood's humiliating defeat in Walton that, despite the decisive defeat suffered by "Real Labour", it was nonetheless correct to have put up a candidate against Labour in Walton.

The founders of the LILP have done what has been consistently advocated by Mulhearn and "Militant" since May — only to find themselves condemned by "Militant" for doing it! The disarray is now complete.

"Militant" advocates setting up a new "Labour" party in Liverpool, and then condemns the LILP for doing just that. The LILP condemns (rightly so) the lack of

democracy in the Labour Party, and then bans "Militant" from involvement in the LILP.

The SWP applauds both "Real Labour" in Walton and also the LILP break-away from the Labour Party, despite the fact that the LILP's formation is a condemnation of the "Real Labour" stunt in Walton which the SWP backed.

And in next May's elections, voters in Liverpool will have the choice of voting Labour, Real Labour or Independent Labour. A lot of them, unfortunately, might just find it easier to vote Liberal Democrat.

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Name.....
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Standing up for socialism

Yesterday, or the day before, "socialism" seemed to be a great power in the world, and it already controlled a third of it.

With its nuclear weapons, and immense armies, it could threaten the bourgeoisie, and maybe even defeat it, as Stalin's armies had defeated those of Hitler. It seemed able to compete with capitalism economically, too. Walled off behind bristling borders, it built its own parallel, "socialist", economic system.

Thirty years ago, Gorbachev's predecessor Nikita Khrushchev felt confident enough to announce that the USSR was on the point of moving on to the highest stage of socialism, and he shouted across the airwaves to the rulers of the system in the West: "We shall bury you".

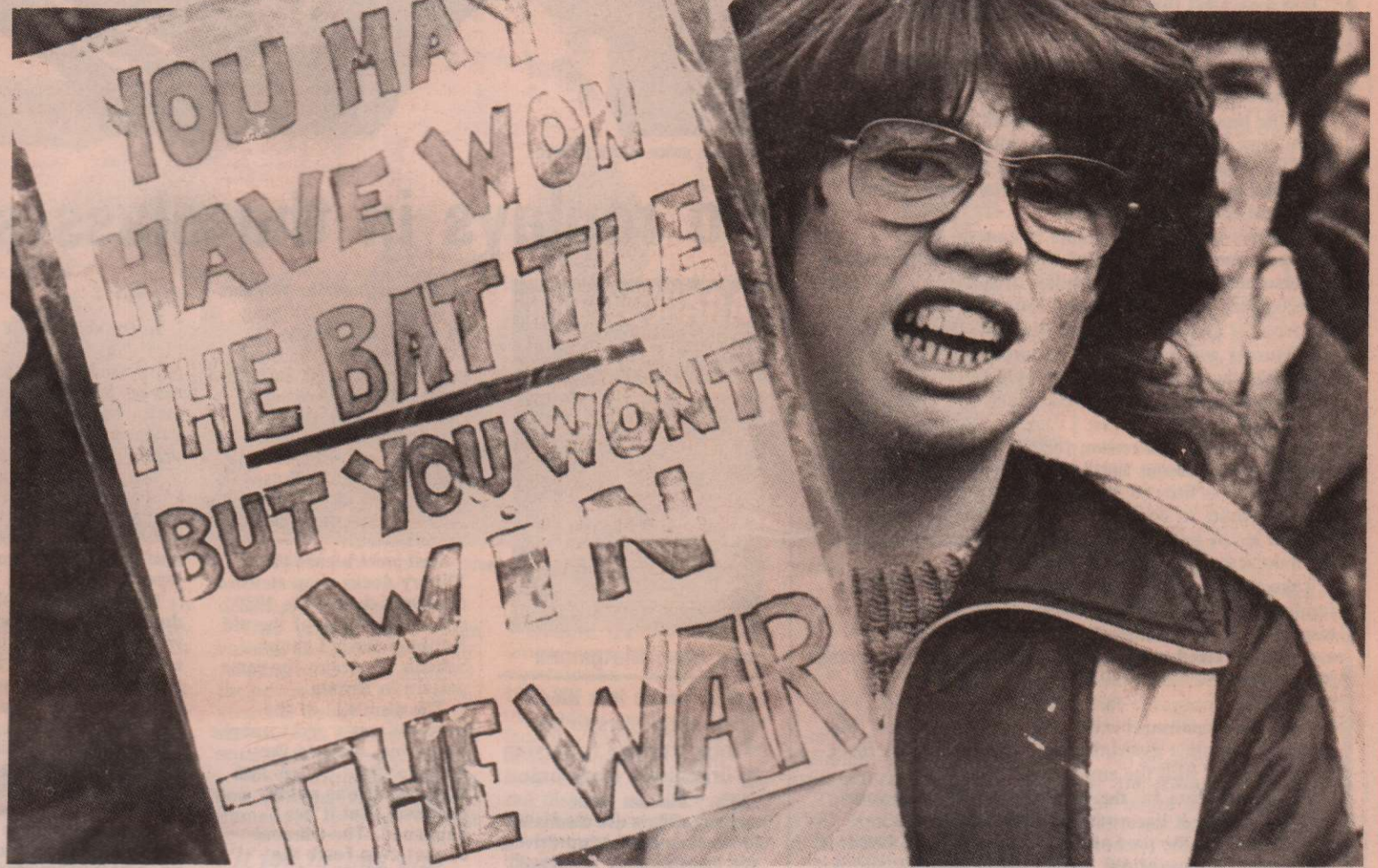
And now it is all gone, like the euphoria from last night's drunken spree. It was always a dream, a delusion, a pack of lies. Political regimes frequently more savage than fascism, and a brutally wasteful economic system, capable only of crude industrialisation — that was Stalin's "socialism".

Such "socialist" societies were in fact a great deal further from the socialism of Marx — and of Lenin — than is the bourgeois system in countries like Britain, France and Germany. Stalinist "socialism" was the stark opposite of socialism.

We have not waited to say this until Stalinist "socialism" collapsed in the Russian empire.

Socialist Organiser has said it repeatedly and outspokenly. Trotsky, over half a century ago, compared Stalin's political system unfavourably with Hitler's; and as long ago as 1935, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, he defined the limits of the Stalinist system's capacity for economic development.

Nor have we waited until the rulers of this foul counterfeit of socialism declared themselves bankrupt to support the fight of its victims to break its grip. We supported free trade union movements (and called on the British unions to recognise and help them, and break their links with the Stalinist police-



The miners go back 1985. So long as capitalism exists class struggle will continue

state unions); we championed the right to self-determination of the oppressed nationalities.

Many other socialists in Britain and across the world — and the persecuted, underground, real socialists in the Stalinist "socialist" states — said the same thing as we did, and took the same stands. Such socialists were a small minority. The great movement of History towards a "post-capitalist" world seemed to be represented by the lumbering dinosaurs of Stalinism, not by the sour, ultra-critical, little mammals of Trotskyist socialism.

Most of the fashion-conscious 5p-a-dozen left "intellectuals" who now sneer at socialism, or wag their heads sadly at the inherent foolishness of socialist hopes and dreams, sneered at working-class socialism then, too, while they treated the Stalinists — whom they called socialist — with the respect due to people with big incomes and a seemingly assured future!

Only in its completeness and suddenness do we find anything surprising in the utter collapse of Stalinist "socialism".

Yes, we had hoped and believed that from Stalinist collectivism the working class, once it had broken the power of the bureaucratic dictators, would go straight on to establish working-class democratic socialism. Ourselves knowing that Stalinism was the opposite of socialism, we underestimated the power of Stalinism to discredit our socialism too in the eyes of generations of workers who grew up under Stalinism without free speech or free information, and took its "socialist" claims at face value.

We underestimated the great

power of attraction that liberal capitalism would have for East European and USSR workers, for whom the Western capitalism we exist to fight and overthrow truly seems to embody many of the values (liberty, prosperity) that Stalinist "socialism" had promised to bring but never did.

And of course we are grievously disappointed. Yet here too, there is nothing that is really surprising. There is even a precedent: the great commitment to systems such as the

"The socialist criticism of capitalism is true and just and unanswerable."

British with which the great mass of the people of Europe emerged from life under fascism in the 1940s.

Not working-class socialism has been won in the East, but freedom for the working class to remake itself; and that is the greatest thing won in the world for many, many decades.

Socialism, however, is weak, both in the West and in the East, and it is — it must be said plainly — discredited by Stalinism. From the serious bourgeois press to the tabloids and down to Neil Kinnock's own little pack of witch-finders in the Labour Party, the "Labour Coordinating Committee", they are all agreed that Stalinism was the

socialist future and it did not work; socialism is dead, or at best it is just another political ad-man's meaningless plastic word.

Socialism is weak; but socialism is not dead. It will not die, because capitalism has not died. Now that most of the Stalinist dinosaurs are gone, socialism will revive, perhaps rapidly.

It will revive because it is rooted in the realities of working-class life under capitalism. It will revive because there is still a powerful pre-Stalinist and anti-Stalinist socialist tradition in existence, despite all the efforts over decades of Stalinists and fascists and liberal-bourgeois "repressive tolerance" to wipe it out. It will revive because the socialist criticism of capitalism is true and just and unanswerable except by lies, misrepresentation, and repression.

Let the great scientist Albert Einstein explain the socialist case against the liberal capitalist system. The words and the approach to the subject are his own, the ideas are the common coin of Marxist socialism.

"We see before us a huge community of producers, the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labour — not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realise that the means of production — that is to say, the entire productive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods — may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

The owner of the means of pro-

duction is in a position to purchase the labour power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker produces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value.

Insofar as the labour contract is 'free', what the worker receives is determined not by the value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labour power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the

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"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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TUC IN GLASGOW

Glasgow empire-builders

Glasgow is a city where they take their entertainment seriously. The old Glasgow Empire was notorious as the comedian's graveyard: Des O'Connor once had to pretend to pass out on stage in order to escape a hostile audience.

It is a safe bet that nothing so dramatic will occur at this week's TUC annual conference in that splendid city.

Even the much-vaunted, top-of-the-bill debate on anti-union laws looks like being a sad anti-climax, thanks to the TGWU delegation decision to toe the General Council/Labour leadership line of retaining important aspects of the Tory legislation.

The Tory press, scarcely able to conceal their disappointment at the lack of fireworks, puts it all down to personalities: the union leaders of today are grey men, unrecognised by the public and totally lacking the charisma of great figures from the past, Ernest Bevin, Len Murray and Jack Jones. According to a Gallup poll last week, the only present-day union leader who is immediately recognised by a clear majority of the public is Arthur Scargill.

Of course, the real reason for the grey miasma of composited consensus that looks set to engulf this week's conference has little to do with the personalities involved and everything to do with the prospect of a general election in the near future and the relationship between the unions and a Kinnock government.

Take the question of pay policy, where the TUC is fundamentally split between supporters of a thinly-disguised incomes policy (the "national economic assessment") and supporters of free collective bargaining. Both sides have been able to agree to an utterly meaningless composite that opposes wage restraint, backs the statutory minimum wage, and also "welcomes" the national economic assessment and Labour's plans for a "partnership" with the employers.

The explanation for this classic case of having your cake and eating it has nothing to do with any lack of "charisma" on the part of Ron Todd or Gavin Laird: it is entirely a matter of not embarrassing Kinnock and not allowing anything to jeopardise the prospect of a Labour general election victory. And union policy can go hang, for the moment at least.

Or take the anti-union laws. With TGWU support, the NUM motion calling for the repeal of all anti-union legislation since 1979, might just have been carried. Just such a resolution was carried at the recent T&G Biennial Delegate Conference. But Ron Todd persuaded his delegation to come out against the NUM position at Glasgow. Todd's argument was that the words "all anti-union legislation" would imply the repeal of laws on strike ballots. And yet, at the T&G BDC Todd has insisted that exactly the same form of words meant no such thing (elections and ballots not being "anti-union"....)

Again, the explanation is not so much that Todd is a gutless, unprincipled individual, as that he sincerely believes that nothing — but nothing — must be allowed to stand in the way of a Labour victory...or to undermine the influence that the T&G might have with a Kinnock government. So words (and union policy) can be interpreted to make them mean whatever you want them to mean.

Underlying all this is an awareness on the part of the union bureaucracy that the relationship between Labour and the unions is likely to change quite dramatically, whatever the outcome of the next election. If Labour wins, the likely introduction of state funding of political parties will reduce Labour's direct reliance on the unions for cash. If Labour loses, Kinnock's plans to loosen the constitutional links with the unions will be brought forward.

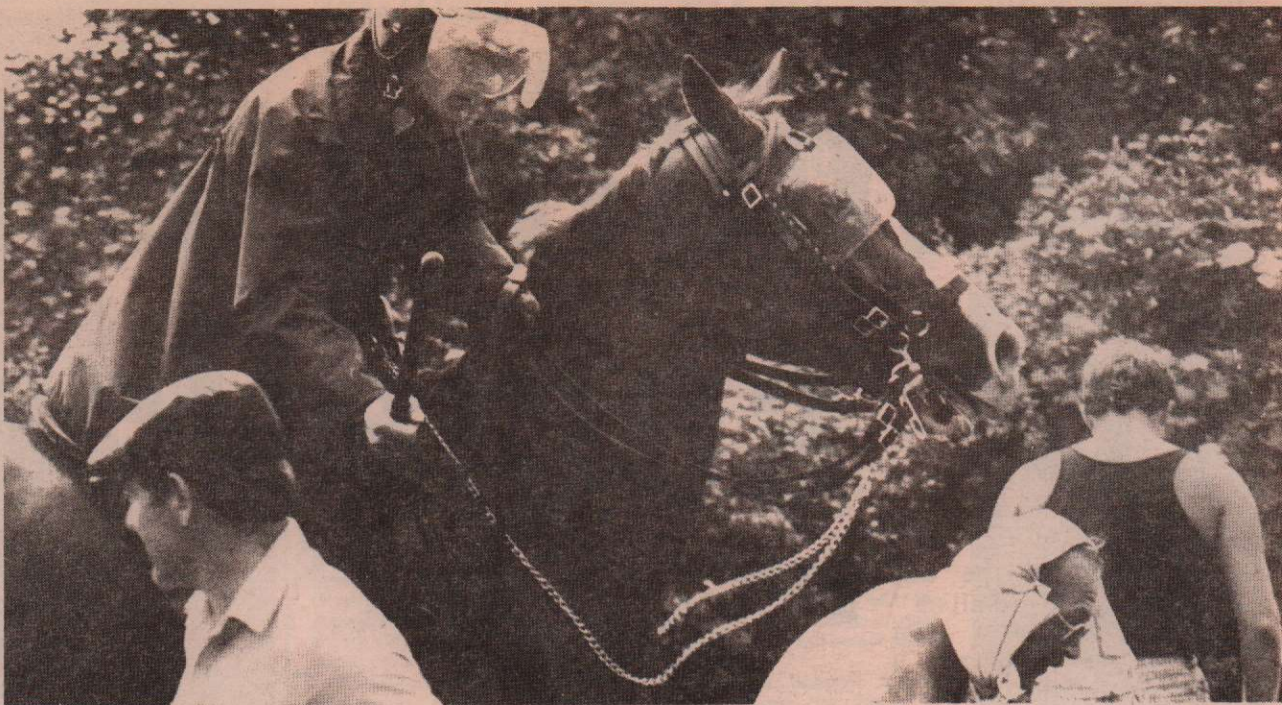
Either way, the direct, open, semi-democratic threads between Labour and the unions will be unravelled. But the informal, secretive cabals that link the party leadership and the union bureaucracy will be even more important.

So no one (apart from Arthur Scargill) wants to spoil the Unity Show at Glasgow this week.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper



Orgreave: police attack pickets.

No replays in the class struggle

AGAINST THE TIDE



By Sean Matgamna

In America it is illegal for employers to dismiss workers for trying to organise a trade union.

They dismiss them anyway. They use dismissal to break unionisation drives, and the threat of dismissal to terrorise workers out of even trying them.

Then what about the law? What about the worker's legal right to do what the boss sacks him for doing? That exists, but the worker must go to court to claim it.

According to Martin Walker in the *Guardian*, it takes on average four years to get a case through the legal system. Expensive years. In the struggle for unionisation the employer still has the legal right to go round with a loaded gun

and use it; and the workers — if they stick at it long enough, and can pay for lawyers — have the legal right then, maybe, to have a court say that their legal rights had been violated. The judge, even if he or she wants to, cannot recreate the situation in the plant as it was when dismissal took the union organiser out of the situation.

Last week's case of the Tilbury docks shop stewards dismissed during the 1989 strike in defence of the old National Dock Labour Scheme illustrates the same pattern in Britain.

The dismissal of the stewards was a great, maybe shattering, blow to the dockers' fight. A tribunal now says it was unfair dismissal. But it has happened. The tribunal cannot even force the employer to give the stewards their jobs back.

The consequences of the dismissals have already worked their debilitating effects on the dockers' movement in 1989. Those are irrevocable. The dismissals played their part for the bosses. The dockers were defeated. British tribunals, like the American judge, cannot turn the clock back, even should they want to.

Take an even worse example of the same thing: the battle of

Orgreave.

In the summer of 1984 Mrs Thatcher's semi-militarised police fought miners' pickets in one of the major battles of the miners' strike, at Orgreave coke works near Sheffield.

The police, specially trained and equipped, and operating like an army, won (though not completely, at that stage). They won by sheer force.

Much that the police did during the miners' strike was widely criticised at the time, even by liberals, as illegal — stopping people moving freely about the country, for example, or "occupying" pit villages. They still did it. They did everything they needed to do to win, and so did the vast machine of the Government and its allies for making dirty propaganda, whose main stock-in-trade was denunciation of the miners' violence.

And they won. Orgreave was one of the turning points in the miners' strike; the miners' strike was a turning point for the working class. The Tory victory won them seven more years in power (so far), with the opposition beaten or intimidated.

In June this year, 35 miners were paid a total of £500,000 in compensation for damage and injuries they received during the battles at

Orgreave.

Early — in 1985 — the cases against some 95 miners charged with offences at Orgreave collapsed, when police notes were found to be forged.

But no, the court cannot order a replay of the Battle of Orgreave. They cannot wipe out the still-continuing consequences of the Tory/police victory. If that were likely to follow from the ruling, the court would have reached a different verdict, or delayed giving one for another seven years.

Force decided that battle which itself decided so much for the labour movement. The crying pity of it is that we did not manage to mobilise enough force to beat Thatcher's cossacks off the field at Orgreave.

And why didn't we? There were ten million trade unionists in Britain then.

We failed because the leaders of the other unions were afraid of breaking the Tory laws! Because they scabbed on the miners. Because they were committed to obeying the law at all costs — no, not the law, they were committed to obeying the police at all costs, even when the police were themselves acting outside the law and contrary to the law.

Their servility would have been wrong even had the police kept within the class law Thatcher had armed them with (and she said openly during the strike that she would pass whatever further laws were necessary to help the police win). In the circumstances it was suicidal for the labour movement.

No-guts Neil Kinnock went around denouncing the miners, not cossack-monger Thatcher and her violent semi-militarised police. He did not comment when the court criticised the police at Orgreave, any more than he commented when a police internal inquiry found the police at fault during the central London poll tax riots in March 1990, which Kinnock had outspokenly blamed on the poll-tax protesters.

Kinnock was wise to keep silent. Replays are not possible. That is why serious trade unionists will do what they have to do to win in situations like Orgreave or the dockers' strike, and condemn those who counsel slavish — no, Kinnockish — obedience to class law.

Standing up for socialism

From page 3

capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labour encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital, the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organised political society.

This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists, who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make in-

telligent use of his political rights.

I am convinced that there is only one way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented towards social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilised in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman and child".

Socialism will revive. It will revive sooner if socialists act now to revive it and to challenge its triumphant enemies.

Against the triumphant gloating of the paid propagandists of the bourgeoisie — who base themselves on the single greatest lie spawned by Stalin's "dictatorship of the lie", the lie that Stalinism and socialism, Stalinism and Bolshevism, Cain and Abel, were identical — and in face of the beaten whimper-

ings of the erstwhile Stalinists (of the "Marxism Today" — capitalism tomorrow stripe), socialists must stand up and be counted.

Those who remain socialists must proudly and aggressively proclaim themselves socialists, and challenge the new-minted lies and old Stalinist dung under which they are trying to bury socialism. Tens of thousands of people can be organised to proclaim, "I am a socialist!" They can be organised to stop the bourgeois drive to do again to socialism what Stalin did for forty years, to bury it under a mountain of lies and misrepresentations.

Socialist Organiser has launched a campaign — "Stand up for socialism!". We will use petitions, resolutions to labour movement meetings, and public meetings to get the message to as many people as possible. It is a campaign to help socialists stand up against the offensive of the anti-socialists, and to help organise socialists to come out fighting and campaigning now.

Help us fight for socialism! Contact Mark Osborn, *Socialist Organiser*, P O Box 823, London SE15 4NA (071-639 7967).

TUC IN GLASGOW

The state of the movement

On the defensive but far from defeated

John McIlroy takes a look at how the unions have fared after 12 years of Tory rule

When Mrs Thatcher came to power in 1979 a central part of her strategy for restoring the profitability of British capitalism focussed on weakening the trade unions as effective defensive organisations for working class people.

Trade union coverage has been seriously weakened. The membership of TUC-affiliated unions is down from over 12 million in 1979 to just over 8 million in 1990 and such unions now represent around 38% of the labour force, far short of a full majority.

This decline has not, as many argue, been cyclical. It has been structural and that is far more serious. The unions have failed to recruit in the new expanding industries as the union strongholds contracted with the old industries.

Density in the UK is still far higher than it is in the US, Japan or France, and still higher than that in Germany.

Nonetheless, its decline has been a success for Mrs Thatcher.

So, in relation to the 1960s and '70s, has been her achievement in putting on the statute book six major pieces of legislation and a host of ancillary measures which have bred cases in the courts and influenced the behaviour of trade unionists.

The employment legislation has restricted the purposes of trade unions and limited their achievements. The 1989 Dock strike provides the most recent graphic case study of how it can be utilised strategically by the employers.

We can get some measure of Thatcher's success by comparing her handling of this difficult area with Wilson's attempts to use legislation to batter the unions with *In Place of Strife* and Ted



The wave of militancy which began with the Ford workers' victory in February 1988 has now ended. Photo Paul Herrmann

Heath's attempt to domesticate militancy with the 1971 Industrial Relations Act.

A further reverse for the unions was their exclusion from political influence. Even at their zenith in terms of political involvement between 1974-79 the union leaders only exercised influence on governmental decision-making, not power. Actually, if you look at the statistics from 1979 you will find that the number of meetings and contacts with government ministers, though scaled down, remains surprisingly high — set against the popular stereotype of total exclusion from the corridors of power.

But the contacts are more and more at a junior level and what those contacts achieve compared with the '60s and '70s is trite and derisive.

The Tories have won the big set-piece confrontations: the *Stockport Messenger* dispute, the miners' strike, Wapping, Sealink, and the Docks dispute. Strikes have

declined in the 1980s.

The unions have been reduced in size, internal differences have been amplified, the power of the TUC, albeit generally used against the unions, has diminished, the sense of movement is weaker.

But decentralisation and a new political and economic framework have not broken

"If job losses and wage cuts are not resisted now it may mean a fundamental weakening of the unions."

the unions — although the dangers of this are growing. A surge of initiatives intended to incorporate a weakened working class, from greater share ownership to the flexible firm, with a core of secure, highly paid workers, and a periphery of super-exploited labour, are shown on closer examination to have had a far more limited impact than you would believe from

the headlines.

Despite the reversals the unions have suffered, wages outstripped inflation in 1982-89 and demonstrated tremendous resilience in the face of political offensive and sustained unemployment.

A range of struggles — the rail dispute, the dock strike, the NALGO action in local government, the ambulance dispute — still erupt. Some, like the NALGO strike and the movement for a 35-hour week, have been both offensive and successful.

The first Thatcher recession of 1979-82 enabled Thatcher to make a breakthrough in utilising unemployment and legislation to weaken the unions.

There are clear differences in this recession. The Tories have overdrawn their credibility.

However, the working class is weaker and the left is weaker. There are four million fewer trade unionists today than there were in 1979. We still live in the shadow of important defeats,

from the miners' strike of 1984-5 to the docks dispute of 1989.

On the other hand, many workers have seen their living standards increase in the late 1980s as wages outstripped inflation. Both sides of the coin induce caution.

The number of strikes in 1990 was the lowest since 1935. There have been no major confrontations over job cuts. Workers have acquiesced in pay freezes at Michelin, Philips, IBM and Thomas Cook. The AEU reported a loss of 90,000 jobs in manufacturing between February and May with minimal resistance.

On the other hand, wage deals running at 6-7% when 3 million are unemployed show that the employers too are exercising caution — witness the partial retreat at Rolls Royce, where management were forced to abandon their attempt to sack the entire workforce and impose a wage freeze.

The recession is driving the working class into political opposition to the Conservatives. However, the blows of the Thatcher years mean that workers look towards Labour with few illusions.

They expect only small improvements. We do not have the great hopes and the great demands of 1945 — or even 1964 and 1974.

The working class is looking essentially towards a general election and a change of government. That underlines the importance of politics but it should not blind us to the dangers of not fighting now.

If job losses and wage cuts are not resisted now, and the second Thatcher recession works through like the first, it may mean a fundamental weakening of the unions and an important restructuring of the working class in the interests of capital.

We must fight for a general election, and fight the effects on the working class of the recession.

What did you do during the war Norman?

By Andy Dixon, TUC delegate, Glasgow 1991, NUT Executive

The highlight of the General Council's spectacularly inactive year was surely its craven support for the slaughter in the Gulf.

At the height of the carnage the TUC put out the following statement:

"While we regret that sanctions were not given longer to operate, that issue is past and the positive development which must come out of the war is the enhancement of the authority of the United Nations, its Charter and Security Council resolutions, following the liberation of Kuwait."

Translated into English that means "Peace is good but war is even better". The TUC's official stance on the war was probably the most uncritical and jingoistic of any national trade union centre.

In the USA, nine national trade union leaders had the courage to put their names to an Open Letter to Bush calling on him to pull back from the brink. No such call ever came from Congress House.

In Italy and Spain general strikes, though of only token duration, were organised against the war. The General Council didn't even dare to organise a token petition around the theme of "Let sanctions work".

No attempts was ever made by the leadership to explain the issues in the conflict to the wider trade union movement.

Nor did the General Council point out the costs of the war both to the people of Iraq and Kuwait in terms of death and destruction, and to the people of Britain.

The war cost around £30 million a day, money that should have been spent on housing, education, health and other public services.

No debate, no consultation, no democracy was allowed. The General Council simply assumed that all trade unionists backed the war. Delegates to this year's TUC should protest at this shameful record.

The section on the General Council's report dealing with this episode, which ironically comes directly after the section on peace and disarmament includes the following:

"The General Council declared its full support for the allied forces in pursuit of the [withdrawal] of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait".

This section should be referred back and those unions, like the NUT, which did oppose the war should speak up at the conference to show that not everyone in the trade union movement supported the slaughter.

Trade unionists must say:
STOP THE WAR NOW!
Lobby the TUC
SO helped mobilise the anti-war minority

German industrial relations for Britain?

Norman Willis is very keen to hold up Germany as a shining example of the kind of industrial relations we need in Britain. Should rank and file trade unionists be as enthusiastic?

Richard Croucher argues for caution

Scene: it is the year 2000. A British factory, part of a multinational which has become a "Euro Company" under EC legisla-

tion. The senior shop steward is talking to some fellow workers in the canteen.

Senior steward (he knows that he cannot give information that has been disclosed to him by management to other workers, unless he wants to be legally dismissed): "Um...I think we may be having a bit of a problem here in the next few months..."

Members (knowing that he has to be careful what he says): "What do you mean? What? Redundancies or something like that?"

Senior steward: "Well, I can't exactly say, but you're on the right track, yes."

Members: "How many? Where in the factory?"

Senior steward: "I can't tell you that, or they'd know

where the information came from."

Members: "OK. We'll have to find out some other way."

This probably seems an unlikely situation to you. But it's the position that a workers' representative, or *Betriebsrat* can already find herself in today, in Germany.

The *Betriebsrat* is entitled to all sorts of information from the company, but cannot give certain sorts of information out to the workforce without the management's agreement. If s/he does, then they are liable to legal dismissal.

There's a lot more to German industrial relations than that, of course. But generally, the German workplace representative always has to think about the legal position before s/he does anything. British industrial relations is going that way, too.

As the European Community

develops, it seems likely that industrial relations will have to be dealt with under EC laws. Now most European countries have systems which are more like the German system than they are like Britain's.

So which way is the law likely to go? And, since the British government has already made the system here more "legalistic", won't they be happy to go down this road?

In fact, a lot of this might suit the officials of some trade unions. But those who remember the experience of the "Bullock" system of worker participation in 1970s Britain, when many stewards became unwilling "participants" in their own members' redundancies, may feel a little more cautious.

This article is taken from the pilot issue of *Trade Union News*. The journal is now well on the road to being established as the open, democratic, and independent publication for trade union activists. For more details write to TUN, c/o 28c Barnsbury Park, London N1 1HQ.

GRAFFITI

Worsthorne, honest bigot, retires

So, farewell then, Sir Perry



Ted Grant: facing his own undemocratic machine

Poor old Ted Grant

GRAFFITI

According to the Guardian (3 September) a faction fight is raging in Militant. The report says that Militant's committee has voted 46 to 3 in favour of standing Militant candidates across the board and effectively leaving the Labour Party, but one of the three intent on staying in the Labour Party is Ted Grant, founder of the Militant.

The Guardian speculates that Grant may get more support among the Militant rank and file, but that seems most unlikely. If the more experienced and educated people on the committee cannot be swayed by sober long-term arguments about the impossibility of bypassing the Labour Party, then surely younger Militant people won't, trained as they are almost exclusively on anti-poll-tax activity which has shunned the Labour Party and on bloated Militant hype ("we beat the poll tax", and so on). Grant's famous "perspectives" have fallen victim to the self-promoting bombast which Militant has increasingly used and now seems to believe.

There have been several previous moves in Militant to split from Labour. Derek Hatton led one in 1985, and more recently Scottish Militant supporters were proposing to stand "anti-poll-tax" candidates against Labour.

The Militant machine crushed those moves. Now Grant may find himself on the receiving end of the same machine politics. Perhaps one day Ted Grant will regret not building a democratic organisation.

Of all the Western leaders, only one came out in the hours after the coup in the USSR to back resistance on the streets — Margaret Thatcher.

More cautious right-wingers reckoned she was unwisely taking the lid off a can of worms.

There is a lesson here for the left. Too often we just say no whenever our enemy says yes.

That logic made millions of socialists support the Kremlin's tyranny for many years ("if the Tories hate it, it must be good"). It drove many into little-England nationalist calls for Britain to get out of the European Community ("the bosses' market"). It makes

some into enthusiasts for Saddam Hussein, General Galtieri, or the Provisional IRA ("fighting imperialism").

But what of the coup? Should socialists have opposed it because most capitalist opinion (as revealed in the small print of papers like the Financial Times) was rather pleased about the prospect of restoring order and maybe making the USSR more like highly-profitable China? Or backed it because Thatcher denounced it? Or do as we should do on every issue — decide our stand independently?

Among Neil Kinnock's first reactions to news of the Soviet military coup was that it showed that Marxists have no right to be in the Labour Party. Mr Kinnock is a well-known international statesman.

This week's old bigot of the week award has to go yet again to John Junor, columnist in the Mail on Sunday.

Commenting on Princess Diana's work with AIDS patients, he wrote: "Could she really want to go down in history as the patron saint of sodomy?"

Two sets of political obituaries are being written this week, for two politicians who have lost their parties.

One is David Owen, erstwhile leader of the SDP, the other, Mikhail Gorbachev. Interestingly, both have been tipped as future General Secretaries of the United Nations.

David Owen said last week, "I haven't got a job lined up... that may seem rather foolish". Gorbachev was not available for comment.



David Owen, the next UN General Secretary?

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

A tiny circulation newspaper in West Cork, in the early years of this century, warned the Tsar of all the Russias: "The eyes of the Skibbereen Eagle are upon you".

The writers of editorials in the bourgeois press, just like their opposite numbers in the left press, must work upon the assumption that they know best. Best, not only about industrial relations at Fords or how to vote at the next General Election, but also about Russia, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and the Lebanon.

It's a bloody impertinence, really, but editorialists (or "leader writers") get away with it regularly in publications as diverse as the Sun and the Militant, with breathtaking complacency. Socialist Organiser editorialists are not immune from the "I know best" syndrome, though I like to think that we usually eschew the extremes of literary

megalomania.

These thoughts are occasioned by the retirement of Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, leader-writer for, inspiration behind, and former editor of, the Sunday Telegraph. Worsthorne played a leading role in founding the paper in 1968, and was largely responsible for creating the impression that it had been around a lot longer than that: in fact, a lot of the paper's character can probably be explained by the fact that it first appeared in that year, when the "intellectual" left was in the ascendant and revolution was in the air.

Worsthorne deliberately set about establishing a rigorous right-wing editorial policy intended to challenge the new left on its own ground. The Sunday paper was, from the start, more ideological and considerably less philistine than its daily parent.

The "comment" pages of the Sunday Telegraph were written by a team (some said clique) of like-minded Tory journalists that became known as the "Worsthorne College": Alexander Chancellor, Auberon Waugh, Charles Moore and Frank Johnson.

All were ex-public-school, ex-Oxbridge, and members of the Garrick Club. But not fools: "Worsthorne College" inculcated its students with an understanding of the centrality of class in the



"Worsthorne deliberately set about establishing a rigorous right-wing editorial policy intended to challenge the new left on its own ground."

historical process, and its Principal more than once acknowledged his debt to Marx.

Given that Worsthorne College was, in many ways, the ideological precursor of Thatcherism, the '80s should have been their decade. In fact, Worsthorne and his proteges often railed against the new orthodoxy, and coined the term "Essex Man" to sum up the kind of GTI-driving, white-sock-wearing, Norman Tebbit clone they most despised. Younger members of the "College", like A N Wilson, became

"Young Fogies" and eventually defected to Labour.

The real spirit of the age was exemplified by the Sunday Times and its editor Andrew Neil, who even now bitterly denounces "Worsthorne College" as "the snobocracy". Their culture clash came to a head in the farcical libel case that Neil brought against Worsthorne a couple of years ago, during which Neil styled himself the representative of "New Britain" as against Worsthorne's crusty old "Garrick Club mafia".

Andrew Neil is right, of course: Worsthorne and his Sunday Telegraph/Spectator chums are snobs and the dying gasp of the old, patrician Tory, hierarchy. Worsthorne's departure from the Sunday Telegraph should occasion no tears from socialists.

But he was a worthy opponent. Along among leader writers in the bourgeois press, he had the guts to sign his articles. His valedictory piece in last week's Sunday Telegraph was remarkably honest.

"The nights I have lost sleep over public affairs during the past 40 years are innumerable, trying desperately to think of something interesting to say about a new crisis spot that will fill the gaping space on the page marginally better — but far less truthfully — than the frank admission, 'I don't know, or even care'."

Women who see men as a meal ticket



WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

This month's Marie Claire contained a disturbing story about a Los Angeles ex-wife reduced to living in her car after a divorce. The disturbing bit is that her ex-husband gave her \$15,000 on divorce and pays her \$300 a month.

The woman has chosen to live in the car and spend virtually nothing in order to stay around her old social circle in the hope of finding a new (wealthy) husband. She feels that if she spent her money on a cheap flat or room she would have to drop out of circulation.

In my opinion this woman is mad. She defines her "best" friend as a woman who lets her park her car in her "yard" to sleep. Note: we are talking here about parking overnight in the grounds of an enormous LA

mansion. With friends like these...

But women who will not even try to support themselves are not confined to the wealthy classes of the USA. This week I came across a perfectly healthy, reasonably educated, childless woman who will not work. Her boyfriend (with whom she lives) does a full time job and pays for everything.

She spends a couple of mornings a week doing almost voluntary work for a local hospital, and the tiny amount of money she earns, she keeps.

It is one thing not to work if you can't get a job — and millions can't. It is another thing to "stay at home" looking after children or other dependents — and millions of women do this. But is it reasonable to expect to be kept, to refuse to contribute to your own upkeep?

The other side of the coin are the women who do work, but expect to keep their earnings while the husband or boyfriend pays all the household expenses.

Not so long ago this state of affairs could be blamed on men — the blunt cry of "no wife of mine will ever have to work!". And women are victims of the "Family Wage" where the state kept women's wages low because the man was assumed to be "keeping" the family.

But although women of my mother and grandmother's generations may have been brought up to aspire not to have to work — to look for a husband to "keep" them —

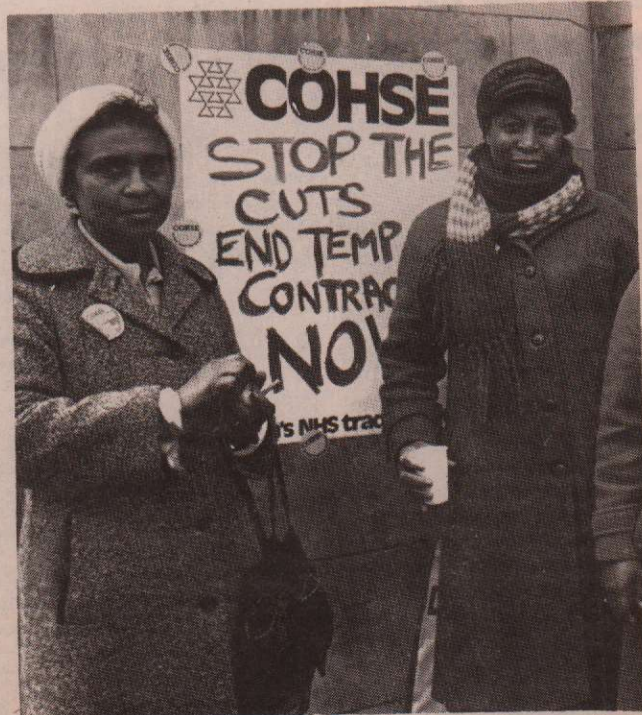
things have changed. Most women have no choice, single or part of a household, they have to work to be fed. A refusal to work, or to contribute earnings to the common pot is not a choice for most.

But where it is a choice, women who make it should expect and receive nothing from society. If a woman allows herself to be kept by a man she should be taxed as if she is earning a wage. Alimony should never be paid to such a woman on divorce.

By this time you probably think I am the madwoman. Women, after all, have been forced to stay "in the home" as unpaid housekeepers, childcarers and nurses.

The fight for women's liberation has been the fight for the right to work, for decent wages in decent jobs. All that is true, but the fight is held back by women who won't take responsibility for themselves.

As long as some women regard men as a meal ticket, all women will continue to have fewer rights at work.



"As long as some women regard men as a meal ticket all women will continue to have fewer rights at work."

The real Lenin

WHAT THEY REALLY SAID

Like everything else in society and history, the Russian Revolution of 1917 is rightly subject to continual reassessment by living men and women. As Karl Marx, a vehement supporter of the French Revolution of 1789 — to which he was closer in time than we are to October 1917 — nevertheless subjected the parties and individuals who made it to rigorous criticism, and was a bitter critic of such aspects of the Revolution as the Jacobin Terror (1792-4), so we today, Marxist socialists and ardent supporters of October, have a right and a duty to evaluate and re-evaluate it critically.

To do that, and to be able to stand against the deluge of triumphant capitalist slander and misrepresentation of the men and women who shaped the first workers' republic socialists need to know what they said and did and what they tried to do.

With this series of excerpts from the writings of Vladimir Ilich Ulianov (Lenin) we begin a new regular feature, "What they really said", designed to help readers in this work.

To the Citizens of Russia! The Provisional Government has been deposed!

State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies — the Revolutionary Military Committee, which heads the Petrograd proletariat and the garrison.

The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power — this cause has been secured.

Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers and peasants!
Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies
10am, October 25, 1917

Declaration of rights of the working and exploited people

The Constituent Assembly resolves:

(I) 1. Russia is hereby proclaimed a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. All power, centrally and locally, is vested in these Soviets.

2. The Russian Soviet Republic is established on the principle of a free union of free nations, as a federation of Soviet national republics.

(II) Its fundamental aim being to abolish all exploitation of man by man, to completely eliminate the division of society into classes, to mercilessly crush the resistance of the exploiters, to establish a socialist organisation of society and to achieve the victory of socialism in all countries, the Constituent Assembly further resolves:

1. Private ownership of land is hereby abolished. All land, together with all buildings, farm implements and other appertenances of agricultural production, is proclaimed the property of the entire



Lenin in 1918

working people.

2. The Soviet laws on workers' control and on the Supreme Economic Council are hereby confirmed for the purpose of guaranteeing the power of the working people over the exploiters and as a first step towards the complete conversion of the factories, mines, railways, and other means of production and transport into the property of the workers' and peasants' state.

3. The conversion of all banks into the property of the workers' and peasants' state is hereby confirmed and as a first step towards the emancipation of the working people from the yoke of capital.

4. For the purpose of abolishing the parasitic sections of society, universal labour conscription is hereby instituted.

5. To ensure the sovereign power of the working people, and to eliminate all possibility of the restoration of the power of the exploiters, the arming of the working people, the creation of a socialist Red Army of workers and peasants and the complete disarming of the properties classes are hereby decreed.

(III) 1. Expressing its firm determination to wrest mankind from the clutches of finance capital and imperialism, which have in this most criminal of wars drenched the world in blood, the Constituent Assembly whole-heartedly endorses the policy pursued by Soviet power of denouncing the secret treaties, organising most extensive fraternisation with the workers and peasants of the armies in the war, and achieving at all costs, by revolutionary means, a democratic peace between the nations, without annexations and indemnities and on the basis of the free self-determination of nations.

2. With the same end in view, the Constituent Assembly insists on a complete break with the barbarous policy of bourgeois civilisation, which has built the prosperity of the exploiters belonging to a few chosen nations on the enslavement of hundreds of millions of working people in Asia, in the colonies in general, and in the small countries.

The Constituent Assembly welcomes the policy of the Council of People's Commissars in proclaiming the complete independence of Finland, commencing the evacuation of troops from Persia, and proclaiming freedom of self-determination for Armenia.

3. The Constituent Assembly regards the Soviet law on the cancellation of the loans contracted by the governments of the Tsar, the landowners and the bourgeoisie as a first blow struck at international banking, finance capital, and expresses the conviction that Soviet

power will firmly pursue this path until the international workers' uprising against the yoke of capital has completely triumphed.

(IV) Having been elected on the basis of party lists drawn up prior to the October Revolution when the people were not yet in a position to rise en masse against the exploiters, had not yet experienced the full strength of resistance of the latter in defence of their class privileges, and had not yet applied themselves in practice to the task of building socialist society, the Constituent Assembly considers that it would be fundamentally wrong, even formally, to put itself in opposition to Soviet power.

In essence the Constituent Assembly considers that now, when the people are waging the last fight against their exploiters, there can be no place for exploiters in any government body. Power must be vested wholly and entirely in the working people and their authoris-

ed representatives — the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

Supporting Soviet power and the decrees of the Council of People's Commissars, the Constituent Assembly considers that its own task is confined to establishing the fundamental principles of the socialist reconstruction of society.

At the same time, endeavouring to create a really free and voluntary, and therefore all the more firm and stable, union of the working classes of all the nations of Russia, the Constituent Assembly confines its own task to setting up the fundamental principles of a federation of Soviet Republics of Russia, while leaving it to the workers and peasants of each nation to decide independently at their own authoritative Congress of Soviets whether they wish to participate in the federal government and in the other federal Soviet institutions, and on what terms.

January 1918

Dismiss Stalin!

On 25 December 1922, nine days after his second stroke, Lenin dictated the document known as his "testament".

I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the near future, and I intend to examine here a series of considerations of a purely personal character.

I think that the fundamental factor in the matter of stability — from this point of view — is such members of the central committee as Stalin and Trotsky. The relation between them constitutes, in my opinion, a big half of the danger of that split, which might be avoided, and the avoidance of which might be promoted, in my opinion, by raising the number of members of the central committee to fifty or one hundred.

Comrade Stalin, having become general secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution. On the other hand comrade Trotsky, as was proved by his struggle against the central committee in connection with the question of the People's Commissariat of Communications, is distinguished not only by his exceptional abilities — personally he is, to be sure, the most able man in the present central committee — but also by his too far-reaching self-confidence and a disposition to be too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs.

These two qualities of the two most able leaders of the present central committee might, quite innocently, lead to a split; if our party does not take measures to prevent it, a split might arise unexpectedly...

On January 4 1923 Lenin dictated a postscript:

Stalin is too rude, and this fault, entirely supportable in relations among us comrades, becomes insupportable in the office of general secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority — namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc. The circumstance may seem an insignificant trifle, but I think that, from the point of view of preventing a split and from the point of view of the relation between Stalin and Trotsky which I discussed above, it is not a trifle, or it is such a trifle as may acquire a decisive significance.

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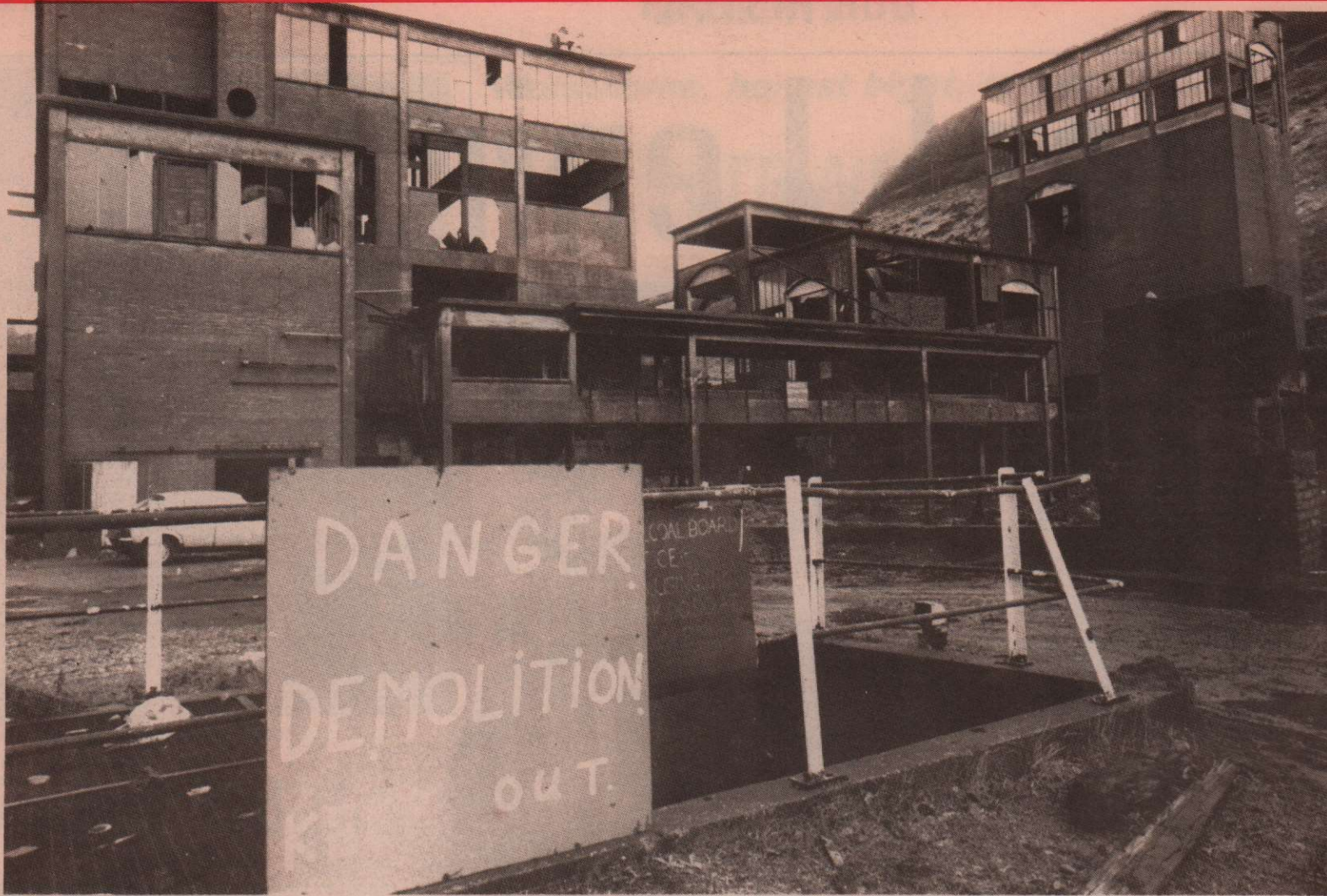
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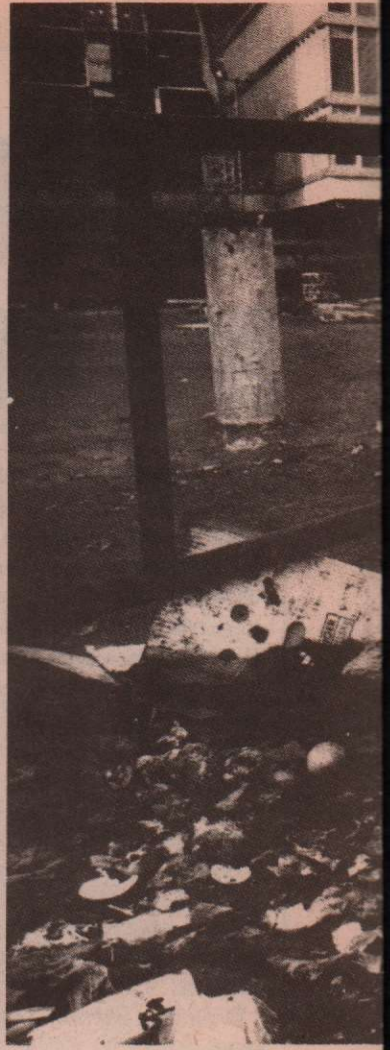
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Pits close. Pensioners die of hypothermia



Homeless on the streets of London. Losing a 44,000 families lost their homes last year because of mortgage payments.

Why capitalism sh

Under the market's 'freedom' and 'equality' lies exploitation and poverty, argues Martin Thomas

"I don't want you to believe that the system that produced Barbara Hutton [a famous heiress] can survive more than ten years, any more than the French monarchy could survive 1789."

So wrote the novelist Scott Fitzgerald to his daughter in 1938. In fact the system that produced vast luxury for a few and poverty for millions has survived another 53 years. It has survived not because it fixed itself up — it still produces the likes of Barbara Hutton, and terrible suffering in the slums just a few miles away from their mansions — but because no social system collapses of its own accord. A social class has to be ready, capable and mobilised to replace it with a new system; and the working class, largely because of the malign effects of Stalinism, has not yet been ready to replace capitalism.

Today in Britain the top 10% own 53% of marketable wealth, and the bottom 50% own 6%. (The latest available figures are for 1987). In the ownership of the pro-

erty that brings power and influence — land and shares, as distinct from such property as a family home — the inequality is even greater. The top three per cent own about 75% of privately-owned land and shares.

Wealth not privately-owned is controlled by a small elite, tied to and much overlapping with the top 3% who own most private wealth. Ten men — bosses of the big fund management companies, highly-paid and wealthy men — control £100 billion of assets held by insurance companies and pension funds, or 25 per cent of all shares in Britain. State-owned businesses are run by people from the same class.

At the opposite pole from the immense, concentrated wealth and power of the top three per cent is immense poverty.

The top 20% in Britain get 39% of all income. The bottom 20% get 9%. And the inequality is increasing. Real incomes for the poorest 10% of families, after housing costs, fell 7% between 1979 and 1987. Real incomes for the top 1% (after housing costs) rose 72%.

As a result many people do not

even have the basics of life. 400,000 people are *officially* homeless in Britain — but young single people have little chance of being accepted by a council as *officially* homeless, so the real figure of homeless is much higher. Last year about 3,000 people were sleeping rough on the average night in London. The government claims the figure has now been reduced to a few hundred, but groups working with the homeless question the claim.

A survey published in June found that in low-income families one child in ten under the age of five

"A survey published in June found that in low-income families one child in ten under the age of five goes without enough to eat at least once a month because of lack of cash".

goes without enough to eat at least once a month because of lack of cash. One parent in five goes hungry at least once a month. Over half the children and parents regularly had "nutritionally poor" diets. Two and a half million children live in families on income support.

There is even worse inequality in the United States, a richer country and one closer to the "ideal" of capitalism since it has had relatively little of a state welfare system imposed on its private-profit core by the labour movement.

The top 10% in the US own 65% of all marketable wealth. The top 5% get 26% of pre-tax income; the bottom 20% get 4%.

32 million people in the US are *officially* "poor"; of those, 45% spend 70% or more of their incomes on the basics of housing, water, lighting and heating. About 20 million do not get enough to eat; maybe 3.5 million (estimates vary wildly) are homeless. Around 35 million people have no health insurance, which means that for them

any extensive medical treatment is either impossible or will leave them with crippling debts.

But capitalism is a world system, and most of its poor are not in Britain, the US, or similar countries. They are in the Third World, in the countries which were maimed and stunted economically by capitalist colonial rule and which now serve, to a large extent, as reservoirs of cheap labour power for the more developed countries.

In those countries about 800 million people regularly have not enough to eat — and the number is growing. The relentless squeeze by the wealthy bosses of the big international banks, demanding interest payments on their loans to Third World countries, translates into real wage cuts of 25% or 50%, increased unemployment in countries where scarcely half the workforce have regular jobs anyway, and millions of malnourished or starving children.

Why does capitalism create such inequality alongside its promises of democracy, freedom, and equality? The free market, wrote Karl Marx, "is a very Eden of the innate rights of man".

Ironically, but only half-ironically, he continued: "It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom because...buyer and seller...are free persons, who are equal before the law. Equality, because...they exchange equivalent for equivalent."

"Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham [the philosopher Jeremy Bentham], because each looks only to his own advantage."

"Each pays heed to himself only, and no-one worries about the others. And precisely for that reason" — or so the philosophers of the free market claim — "they all work together to their mutual advantage..."

All this, argued Marx, was not

straight lies, but a half-truth. The other half of the truth is concealed under one special market transaction — the hiring of workers by employers, or the buying and selling of labour-power. That transaction leads us from the market place into production.

The flipside of capitalist freedom and equality in the market place is enslavement and inequality in the workplace.

The assortment of individuals, all buying and selling on terms of freedom and equality in the market place, is in fact made up of two classes — one the owners of the means of production (factories, offices, mines...), the other those who have nothing to sell but their labour-power.

And the system reproduces those classes. For the owners it makes profits which add more wealth and power to their position as owners; for the workers it yields only wages, which do no more than enable them to scrape a living and continue as workers.

At work — that is, where the worker expends most of her or his energy, skill, and creative capacity — there is no freedom, equality or democracy. The capitalist owner is a dictator, the worker is a wage-





Job can mean a whole lot more. Cause they couldn't keep up with the



During the 1980s the length of the working week actually *increased* for the first time in a century. Those cuts that have been won have been the fruit of aggressive working class action.

Should not survive

ave.
In Britain, in 1985 — according to the World Bank — the total wages paid to workers in manufacturing amounted to only 45% of the value added.

Of the amount taken from the workers in *taxes*, direct and indirect, only a proportion — so many careful studies have shown — returns in benefits. So the figure 5% exaggerates the workers' share. It also exaggerates for another reason. It includes the "wages" of top managers. So 40% would be a better estimate of the workers' share.

If you work a week for a wage of £150, you have produced new value to cover not only that £150 but also an extra £225 or so for the owners of the means of production. The market transaction between capital and labour-power, formally free and equal, is in fact lop-sided: in return for a routine pittance — however much is necessary, with the given customs and standards, to maintain the working class — the capitalist receives control of the whole power of society to create new value.

Of the £225 extra value created by an average worker in an average week, some goes to the dividends and new investments and bosses'

perks of her or his own company. Other parts of it go to the state via taxes, into the banking and financial system via interest payments, and to other sections of the wealth-owning class in other ways.

But the whole £225 goes to *capital*. It enlarges and boosts *capital* as a social power. And, since the self-enlargement of capital — the drive to make profit, and more profit, and yet more profit — is the mainspring of the system, next time round capital will seek to get £240 or £250 for itself — to increase total value added to £390 or £400, to reduce wages if it can.

From the viewpoint of workers in the production process, therefore, capitalism is not at all a system of automatic mutual advantage. It is a system of *class struggle* in which capital strives to drain their nerves and vitality and health.

A journalist who spent some six months in a Japanese car factory and wrote a book about it tells this story: "It's like I imagine hell to be. The line is a machine, and for eight hours the humans working at it are required to operate with machinelike accuracy. The line demands speed — relentless, mechanical and unchanging..."

"After work, I climb the stairs on all fours, stagger to my room, open the door and fall in...My back aches...my wrist aches...my right arm is swollen."

Japan's industry squeezes workers harder than in most other advanced countries. But that is why Japanese capitalism is so successful. The capitalists of countries like Britain and the US want to make their factories "Japanese" — they say so openly. The relentless enslavement of the worker to the machine in Japan is what all capitalists are striving for — and with forever faster, "smarter" machines.

The workers with older, slower, less capable machines — in less developed countries, for example — then suffer because of competition.

The ideal of mutual advantage resulting automatically from the market breaks down between countries and regions as well as between capitalists and workers. For new investments capitalists choose the most profitable areas. Those are usually not the areas with the lowest wages, but the areas with the best (and safest) nearby markets, the best supply and repair networks, the best transport and telecommunications, and the best supplies of adequately educated and healthy workers. Thus investment clusters in the ad-

"Even better-paid workers in countries like Britain and the US have no secure guarantees of decent housing, decent food, adequate leisure, and personal dignity".

vanced countries, and in a few areas in a few underdeveloped countries, leaving the bulk of the world to suffer, as Marx put it, "not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from the incompleteness of that development."

In a minority of capitalist countries — including Britain — the inhumanity of capitalism has been softened by reforms won by the labour movement. Many such reforms creating a more healthy and educated, and therefore more productive, working class, also make sense from a far-sighted *capitalist* point of view.

But capitalists generally are not far-sighted. Those reforms are under attack, in Britain and everywhere. The jungle of capitalism constantly threatens to close in on every clearing made by working class reforms.

And even with some reforms, even with prosperity, capitalism is an unequal, inhumane, and outdated system. Even better-paid workers in

countries like Britain and the US have no secure guarantees of decent housing, decent food, adequate leisure, and personal dignity. A survey in June this year found that 50% of people in Britain thought their families would soon be affected by unemployment, or didn't know whether they would or not. 31% of workers in jobs said their jobs were not safe.

And losing a job can mean losing a great deal more. 44,000 families in Britain last year lost their homes because they could not keep up the mortgage payments.

A society where private profit rules will always grudge resources for public health provision, public transport, education, nurseries — everything for which the long-term social benefits are much greater than the short-term profits anyone can make in the market place. Even the better-paid workers must spend much time and energy grappling with grim, meagre, inadequate public services; only the rich escape, with private hospitals, chauffeur-driven cars, private schools, private nurseries.

Worse: the protection of the environment, its maintenance in such condition as not to endanger future generations, yields no short-term private profits at all. Capitalism's inbuilt tendency is to plunder the environment without thought for the future.

The capitalist market economy systematically *alienates* the product of labour, and the production process, from the worker; it also alienates people from each other. Its motto is Margaret Thatcher's: "There is no such thing as society. There are only individuals and their families." It turns, or tries to turn, people, social beings, into competitors and rivals communicating only by means of hard cash.

"Each looks only to his own advantage" in the realm of "Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham". "Private property," wrote Marx, "has made us so stupid and so narrow that an object is only an

when we have it...when it is directly possessed..." Blighting lives with loneliness and alienation when it does not blight them with poverty, capitalism incites us to seek consolation in *consuming* more and more *things*. Alongside — and even in the midst of — poverty, capitalism develops not only genuine luxury but sheer waste, sheer acquisition for the sake of acquisition. The US financier Ivan Boesky — once a high-flier, now convicted of illegal dealings — was only candid when he proclaimed the basic rule: "Greed is good".

"Individuals and their families", said Margaret Thatcher, not just "individuals". In its basic transactions of buying and selling and producing, capitalism recognises no families. There are only individuals. In reality, however, it presupposes and must presuppose the family household, as the means for reproducing the working class. People doing housework and child-care — usually housewives — work for capital, reproducing its workforce, even though they seem to be doing it all for love. Thus capitalism seizes upon, and continues (though transforming it), the oppression of women it inherits from older forms of economy.

Any division in the working class is of use to the capitalists in their struggle to gain bigger profits at lower cost. They use prejudices about women's role in society, and racist prejudices against black people, rooted in capitalism's slave-trade, colony-grabbing past, to make women and black people into a cut-price workforce, for use in marginal, part-time, and lower-paid work.

Parliamentary democracy in the more advanced capitalist countries was won only after decades of struggle by the labour movement. Yet this hard-won democracy is, like freedom and equality in capitalism, a half-measure.

George W.

CREATIVE ACCOUNTING

Deaths and serious injury at work are on the rise again after years of decline. In 1984 deaths and major injuries in manufacturing were 87 per 100,000 employees, a rise of 16 on the 1981 figure.

What Marx and Lenin meant by socialism

Ownership by the workers in common of the instruments of production means a co-operative system of production and the extinction of the exploitation of the workers, who become masters of their own products and who themselves appropriate the surplus of which, under our system, they are deprived by the capitalist.

To substitute common, for private, ownership in the means of production, this it is that economic development is urging upon us with ever-increasing force.

The economic activity of the modern state is the natural starting point of the development that leads to the Co-operative Commonwealth. It does not, however, follow that every nationalisation of an economic function or of an industry is a step towards the Co-operative Commonwealth, and that the latter could be the result of a general nationalisation of all industries without any change in the character of the state.

The theory that this could be the case is that of the state Socialists. It arises from a misunderstanding of the state itself. Like all previous systems of government, the modern state is pre-eminently an instrument intended to guard the interests of the ruling class. This feature is in no wise changed by its assumption of features of general utility which affect the interests not of the ruling class alone, but of the whole body politic. The modern state assumes these functions often simply because otherwise the interests of the ruling class would be endangered with those of society as a whole, but under no circumstances has it assumed, or could it ever assume, these functions in such a manner as to endanger the overlordship of the capitalist class.

If the modern state nationalises certain industries, it does not do so for the purpose of restricting capitalist exploitation, but for the purpose of protecting the capitalist system

"As an exploiter of labour, the state is worse than any private capitalist."

and establishing it upon a firmer basis, or for the purpose of itself taking a hand in the exploitation of labour, increasing its own revenues, and thereby reducing the contributions for its own support which it would otherwise have to impose upon the capitalist class.

As an exploiter of labour, the state is superior to any private capitalist. Besides the economic power of the capitalists, it can also bring to bear upon the exploited classes the political power which it already wields.

The state has never carried on the nationalising of industries further than the interests of the ruling classes demanded, nor will it ever go further than that. So long as the property-holding classes are the ruling ones, the nationalisation of industries and capitalist functions will never be carried so far as to injure the capitalists and landlords or to restrict their opportunities for exploiting the proletariat.

The state will not cease to be a capitalist institution until the proletariat, the working class, has become the ruling class; not until then will it become possible to turn it into a co-operative commonwealth.

From the recognition of this fact is born the aim which the Socialist Party has set before it: to call the working class to conquer

This outline of socialism was written by Karl Kautsky at the time when he was a revolutionary and the leading writer in a great effort to popularise and spread the ideas of Karl Marx (who had died only a few years earlier) and Frederick Engels (who was still alive).

Lenin acknowledged Kautsky as his teacher right up to 1914, and the only shift he made after that in his vision of socialism was to add a clearer idea of smashing the old bureaucratic state of the capitalists and replacing it with a flexible, responsive "semi-state".

Nowhere does Kautsky say that socialism must be democratic — because he considered it so obvious. This excerpt is from his widely-circulated commentary on the 1891 programme of the German Social-Democratic Party and Lenin and all Marxists called themselves Social-Democrats until 1917.

Kautsky does specifically rebuff "state

socialism". "As an exploiter of labour, the state is superior to" — ie. worse than — "any private capitalist. Besides economic power, it can also bring political power to bear on the exploited classes." It was Stalin, not Lenin or Marx, who identified socialism with 100% nationalisation by a bureaucratic state.

The 1891 programme (the "Erfurt Programme") for which this commentary was written was divided into a "maximum" programme (socialism) and "minimum" demands (immediate reforms). Later Marxists criticised the lack of linkage between "minimum" and "maximum" — a gap which, they argued, had helped people like Kautsky slide into reformism — but they never rejected the basic idea summed up by Kautsky, of socialism as a system of freedom and democracy.

the political power to the end that, with its aid, they may change the state into a self-sufficing co-operative commonwealth.

The opponents of socialism seek to frighten the small producers and the working men with the claim that equalisation of incomes can mean for them nothing else than a lowering of their condition, because, they say, the incomes of the wealthy classes are not sufficient, if divided among the poor, to preserve the present average income of the working and middle classes; consequently, if there is to be an equality of incomes, the upper classes of workers and the small producers will have to give up part of their incomes, and will thus be the losers under socialism.

Whatever the truth there may be in this claim lies in the fact that the wretchedly poor, especially the slum proletariat, are today so numerous and their need so great that to divide among them the immense incomes of the rich would scarcely be enough to make possible for them the existence of a worker of the better paid class. Whether this is a sufficient reason for preserving our glorious social system may very well be doubted. We are of the opinion, however, that a diminution of the misery, which would be accomplished through such a division, would mean a step forward.

There is, however, no question of "dividing up"; the only question is concerning a change in the method of production. The transformation of the capitalist system of production into the socialist system of production must inevitably result in a rapid increase of the quantity of wealth produced. It must never be lost sight of that the capitalist system of production for sale hinders today the progress of economic development, hinders the full expansion of the productive forces that lie latent in society. Not only is it unable to absorb the small industries as rapidly as the technical development makes possible and desirable, but it has even become impossible for it to employ all the labour forces that are available. The capitalist system of production squanders these forces; it steadily drives increasing numbers of workers into the ranks of the unemployed, the slum proletariat, the parasites and the unproductive middlemen.

Such a state of things would be impossible in a socialist society. It could not fail to find productive labour for all its available labour

forces. It would increase, it might even double, the number of productive workers; in the measure in which it did this it would multiply the total wealth produced yearly. This increase in production would be enough in itself to raise the incomes of all workers, not only of the poorest.

Furthermore, since socialist production would promote the absorption of small production by large production and thus increase the productivity of labour, it would be possible, not only to raise the incomes of the workers, but also to shorten the hours of labour.

In view of this, it is foolish to claim that socialism means the equality of pauperism. This is not the equality of socialism; it is the equality of the modern system of production. Socialist production must inevitably improve the condition of all the working classes, including the small industrialist and the small farmer. According to the economic conditions under which the change from capitalism to socialism is effected this improvement will be greater or less, but in any case it will be

marked. And every economic advance beyond that will produce an increase, and not, as today, a decrease, in the general well-being.

Thus we become acquainted with another element of superiority in socialist over capitalist society. It affords, not only a greater well-being, but also certainty of livelihood — a security that today the greatest fortune cannot guarantee. If greater well-being affects only those who have hitherto been exploited, security of livelihood is a boon to the present exploiters, whose well-being demands no improvement or is capable of none. Uncertainty hovers over both rich and poor, and it is, perhaps, more trying than want itself. In imagination it forces those to taste the bitterness of want who are not yet subject to it; it is a spectre that haunts the palaces of the wealthiest.

That a socialist society would afford its members comfort and security has been admitted even by many of the opponents of socialism. "But", they say, "these advantages are bought at too dear a price; they are paid for with a total loss of freedom. The bird in a cage may have sufficient daily food; it also is secure against hunger and the inclemence of the weather. But it has lost its freedom, and for that reason is a pitiful thing. It yearns for a chance to take its place among the dangers of the outside world, to struggle for its own existence." They maintain that socialism destroys economic freedom, the freedom of labour; that it introduces a despotism in comparison with which the most unrestricted absolutism would be freedom.

So great is the fear of this slavery that even some socialists have been seized with it, and have become anarchists. They have as great a horror of communism as of production for sale, and they attempt to escape both by seeking both. They want to have communism and production for sale together. Theoretically, this is absurd; in practice, it could amount to nothing more than the establishment of voluntary cooperative societies for mutual aid.

It is true that socialist production is irreconcilable with the full freedom of labour, that is, with the freedom of the labourer to

Capitalism should not survive

From centre pages

In the capitalist market place our desires for mindless distraction, idle sensation, shallow amusement, and flattery for our prejudices, are as important and weighty as our wish for serious information. Indeed, they are weightier and more powerful, because they can be mobilised more easily and more reliably to make sales and provided for at lower cost. And they are given more weight by the daily workings of the capitalist economy: draining our nerves and energy, turning us into alienated individuals in a frantic rat-race, capitalism creates a demand for consoling clutter and a weariness about serious information.

The media — capitalist-owned — are pumped full of trivialities, laced with deliberate capitalist propaganda. The best minds and the liveliest talents available are channelled into making slick ads for cars or cosmetics, unless they go into devising new tricks in the casino of the financial markets.

Capitalist democracy is shaped by the media. Increasingly politics becomes a branch of show business. Serious debate over ideas is too risky, too hard to squeeze through TV's "sound-bites", so it is replaced by the promotion of bland "images".

The voters have less control over their representatives, once elected, than they have over the contents of the TV soap operas they watch. (They can switch off the soap opera at any time, but the MP is safe for four or five years). Anyway, the elected MPs decide relatively little. The serious business of government is done in the corridors of power, between the lobbyists and string-pullers of the wealthy and the permanent unelected top state officials.

Capitalism means that the things we make — and in the first place, money — rule over us. To expand the wealth of a capitalist from £100 million to £101 million is more important than the nerves, health or even life of a worker, and not because the capitalist has consciously chosen that way (asked, he or she would probably say no more than "that's business"), but because the system makes wealth all-important. The capitalist must promote the self-expansion of wealth — or opt out and cease to be a capitalist.

The rhythm of wealth's self-

expansion dictates the rhythm of capitalist society, and leads it through a succession of booms and slumps. The deployment of new investments is not planned, but rises and falls with the ebbs and flows of credit and business confidence. The flows of credit strip the real possibilities of the market; the ebbs come suddenly and drastically.

At the ebb, it matters not if hundreds of thousands are homeless. They have no cash, so they have no "effective demand" for housing, so they open no prospect of profits for building companies, and so building workers remain jobless. It matters not if people are hungry; they have no "effective demand" for more food, and farmers will still be paid to keep land fallow or to put food into storage.

Capitalist states can moderate the booms and slumps a little within their own borders. But the capitalist system becomes more and more international, and no state can regulate the international ebbs and flows of credit and investment. Instead, the cycles of boom and slump push the different capitalist states into bitter competition, refracted through the hectic "casino economy" of the international financial markets.

The system that produces Michael Milken and BCCI, John Gutfreund and Ivan Boesky, alongside 800 million people with not enough to eat, does not deserve to last.



A 19th century woodcut shows Marx pointing the way for the working class towards liberty, equality and fraternity. The banners read: "Protective laws for labour", "Universal suffrage and referendum", and "Eight hour day".

work when, where and how he wills. But this freedom of the labourer is irreconcilable with any systematic co-operative form of labour, whether the form be capitalist or socialist.

But in a socialist community the lack of freedom in work would not only lose its oppressive character, it would also become the foundation of the highest freedom yet possible to man. This seems a contradiction, but the contradiction is only apparent.

Down to the day when large production began, the labour employed in the production of the necessities of life took up the whole time of those engaged in it; it required the fullest exercise of both body and mind. This was true, not only of the fisherman and the hunter, but also of the farmer, the mechanic and the merchant. The existence of the human being engaged in production was consumed almost wholly by his occupation. It was labour that steeled his sinews and nerves, that quickened his brain and made him anxious to acquire knowledge. But the further division of labour was carried, the more one-sided did it make the producers.

Mind and body ceased to exercise themselves in a variety of directions and to develop all their powers. Wholly taken up by incomplete momentary tasks, the producers lost the capacity to comprehend phenomena as organic wholes. A harmonious, well-rounded development of physical and mental powers, a deep concern in the problems of nature and society, a philosophical bent of mind, that is, a searching for the highest truth for its own sake — none of these could be found under such circumstances, except among those classes who remained free from the necessity of toil.

Until the commencement of the era of machinery this was possible only by throwing upon others the burden of labour, by exploiting them. The most ideal, the most

philosophic race that history has yet known, the only society of thinkers and artists devoted to science and art for their own sakes, was the Athenian aristocracy, the slaveholding landlords of Athens.

Among them all labour, whether slave or free, was regarded as degrading — and justly so. It was no presumption on the part of Socrates when he said: "Traders and mechanics lack culture. They have no leisure, and without leisure no good education is possible. They learn only what their trade requires of them; knowledge in itself has no attraction for them. They take up arithmetic only for the sake of trade, not for the purpose of acquiring a knowledge of numbers. It is not given to them to strive for higher things."

"Socialism will bring to mankind freedom of life, freedom for artistic and intellectual activity"

The merchant and mechanic say: 'The pleasure derived from honour and knowledge is of no value when compared with money-making'. However skilled smiths, carpenters and shoemakers may be at their trade, most of them are animated only by the souls of slaves; they know not the true nor the beautiful."

Economic development has advanced since those days. The division of labour has reached a point undreamt of, and the system of production for sale has driven many of the former exploiters and people of culture into the class of producers. Like the mechanics and farmers, the rich also are wholly taken up with their business. They do not now assemble in gymnasiums and academies, but in stock exchanges and markets. The speculations in which they are absorbed do not concern questions of truth and justice, but the prices of wool and whisky, bonds and coupons. These are the speculations that consume their mental energies. After this "labour" they have neither strength nor taste for any but the most commonplace amusements.

On the other hand, as far as the cultured classes are concerned, their education has become a merchandise. They, too, have neither time nor inclination for disinterested

search for truth, for striving after the ideal. Each buries himself in his speciality and considers every moment lost which is spent in learning anything which cannot be turned into money. Hence the movement to abolish Greek and Latin from the secondary schools. Whatever the pedagogic grounds may be for this movement, the real reason is the desire to have the youth taught only what is "useful", that is, what can be turned into money. Even among scientific men and artists the instinct after a harmonious development is perceptibly losing ground. On all sides specialists are springing up. Science and art are degraded to the level of a trade. What Socrates said of ancient handicraft now holds good of these pursuits. The philosophic way of looking at things is on the decline — that is, within the classes here considered.

In the meantime, a new sort of labour has sprung up — machine labour; and a new class — the proletariat.

The machine robs labour of all intellectual activity. The working man at a machine no longer needs to think; all that he has to do is silently to obey the machine. The machine dictates to him what he has to do; he has become an appendage to it. What is said of hand labour applies also, though to a slighter extent, to homework and hand-work done in the factory. The division of labour in the production of a single article among innumerable working men paves the way for the introduction of machinery.

The first result of the monotony and absence of intellectual activity in the work of the proletariat is the apparent dulling of his mind.

The second result is that he is driven to revolt against excessive hours of work. To him labour is not identical with life; life commences only when labour is at an end. For working men to whom labour and life were identical, freedom of labour meant freedom of life. The working man who lives only when he does not work, can enjoy a free life only by being free from labour. As a matter of course, the efforts of this class of workers cannot be directed to freeing themselves from all labour. Labour is the condition of life. But their efforts will necessarily be directed toward reducing their hours of labour far enough to leave them time to live.

This is one of the principal causes of the struggle on the part of the modern proletariat to shorten the hours of work, a struggle which would have had no meaning to the farmers and mechanics of former social systems. The struggle of the proletariat for shorter hours is not aimed at economic advantages, such as a rise in wages. The struggle for shorter hours is a *struggle for life*.



Lenin in 1917

Only the triumph of Socialism can render accessible to the proletariat all the sources of culture. Only the triumph of socialism can make possible the reduction of the hours of work to such a point that the working man can enjoy leisure enough to acquire adequate knowledge. The capitalist system of production wakens the proletariat's desire for knowledge; the socialist system alone can satisfy it.

It is not the freedom of labour, but the *freedom from labour*, which in a socialist society the use of machinery makes increasingly possible, that will bring to mankind freedom of life, freedom for artistic and intellectual activity, freedom for the noblest enjoyment.

That blessed, harmonious culture, which has only once appeared in the history of mankind and was then the privilege of a small body of select aristocrats, will become the common property of all civilised nations. What slaves were to the ancient Athenians machinery will be to modern man. Man will feel all the elevating influences that flow from freedom from productive toil, without being poisoned by the evil influences which, through chattel slavery, finally undermined the Athenian aristocracy. And as the modern means of science and art are vastly superior to those of two thousand years ago, and the civilisation of today overshadows that of the little land of Greece, so will the socialist commonwealth outshine in moral greatness and material well-being the most glorious society that history has thus far known.

Happy the man to whom it is given to contribute this strength to the realisation of this ideal.

"It is foolish to claim that socialism means the equality of pauperism. Socialism will improve the condition of all the working classes."

Ignazio Silone

Bearing witness

By Katrina Faccenda

In the year when the Italian Communist Party, the PCI, changed its name to the Party of the Democratic Left, making the final, formal break with the legacy of the party founded at Livorno in 1921, it is interesting to look at the life of one of that party's founding members, the well-known novelist Ignazio Silone.

Ignazio Silone was born Secondo Tranquillo in the village of Pescina dei Marsi in southern Italy on May Day 1900. By the age of 17 he was a committed socialist, succeeding in meeting the challenge so many socialists failed to do when it came to opposition to World War I. Amongst his earliest writings were articles for the socialist papers attacking the corruption of the contractors awarded money to rebuild areas devastated by the 1915 earthquake in the south of Italy.

The works of Ignazio Silone should be essential reading for socialists, especially his earliest works before the atrocities of Stalinism drove him back into the arms of the Catholic Church.

Silone has never achieved the degree of fame one would expect in his native Italy where too often his insight was too close to the bone for the many fellow travellers of the PCI or too political for the various avant-gardists who felt anything which dealt with the struggles of workers and peasants tainted the purity of their art.

He found considerable success in the US where many liberals adopted him because he'd split with the Party, had become pessimistic about the revolution and critical of dogma. Of course, just like the right wingers joyously proclaiming the end of socialism today, they missed the real essence

of what had led him to split with those who falsely claimed to have inherited the mantle of the revolutionaries of 1917.

Ignazio Silone stands head and shoulders above most of the writers of fiction this century who were motivated by left politics and with whom he has been compared, such as Orwell and Koestler. He didn't just dabble in politics or give a nod and a wink to ideas which were fashionable. He actually involved himself in the day to day work of fighting and organising for socialism.

A founding member of the PCI at the age of 21, he brought most of the PSI youth wing with him at the Livorno Congress in 1921. He was the first communist speaker at the PSI Congress where the Communists were to split from the Socialists marching defiantly from the congress hall singing the Internationale.

He was a member of the central committee of the PCI, in charge of underground activity and was forced into exile by the Fascists.

In 1927 he found himself in Moscow and what he saw was to lead to his eventual break with the Comintern in 1931.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International condemned Trotsky's communication to the Party Political Bureau of the Soviet Communist Party on Stalin's China policy without having seen it. The Comintern was preparing the ground for the expulsion of Trotsky, Zinoviev and the show trials, purges and massacres that were to follow.

This was one of the most important moments for workers throughout the world for it was the real turning point towards Stalin's dictatorship. Silone refused to join in this condemnation. The die was cast, he had made his "gran rifiuto" (his great refusal), as he was later to call it in his play about the life of the hermit pope Celestino V, *The Adven-*



Vishinsky sums up at the first Moscow Trial

Those who do not learn from history are condemned to relive it

Stalin and the USSR's bureaucratic ruling class consolidated their grip through terror. During the late 1920s and 1930s the Bolshevik Party, the party of the Russian Revolution, was purged and destroyed. The party became its opposite — from the party of working class liberation it was transformed into the central organising mechanism of Stalinist totalitarianism.

Trotsky had been deported in 1929. His supporters and other oppositionists were herded into prison camps. Then, on 19 August 1936, the world was shocked as news spread of the first of the three major Moscow show trials. The main defendants were Zinoviev and Kamenev, and, in his absence, Trotsky. Old Bolsheviks were accused of conspiracy with both the Gestapo and Trotsky. The broken "conspirators" admitted fantastic crimes including plotting the reintroduction of capitalism in the Soviet Union, and the murder of Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad Party boss, in 1934.

Andrei Vishinsky, the State Prosecutor (perversely, a former

Menshevik), denounced the accused, several of whom had been close colleagues of Lenin for many years as: "contemptible, base, vile, despicable murderous scoundrels, not tigers or lions but merely mad Fascist police dogs, humanity's dregs, the scum of the underworld, traitors and bandits." As some of the accused wept in the dock he ended the unedifying spectacle with the vengeful cry: "Shoot these mad curs, every one of them."

Kamenev and Zinoviev were shot. Trotsky was sentenced to death in his absence.

From exile in Norway, virtually gagged by the government, Trotsky attempted to reply to the Stalinist lies.

It was only later, in 1937, living in the more liberal conditions of Mexico City, when Trotsky and his American supporters could thoroughly refute the Stalinist allegations. They organised a series of hearings in front of a distinguished jury which included the American intellectual John Dewey. The jury found Trotsky "not guilty" of the Stalinist charges.

Mussolini: Silone told the story of the brutality of fascism in *Fontamara*

ture of a Poor Christian.

Celestino is the only pope to have abdicated and the popular story is that he could not stomach Vatican corruption. As for Silone, he couldn't stomach what the revolution had become and he set out on a road which culminated in him describing himself as a "Christian without a church and socialist without a party". One of the many revolutionaries lost from the fight through the scourge of Stalinism.

Having left the Party, isolated from the other still Party-faithful Communist exiles, and desperately ill, he decided to write a novel which would be a testimony to his hatred of Fascism and what Fascism had done to his fellow peasants in southern Italy. Up to this point his only writing experience had been as a journalist for the Party newspapers, but he thought he was dying and this gave him the drive to write his testimony.

A simple story of a peasant village destroyed by the Fascists, the emphasis is on the universal nature of the peasants' exploitation. This time it is the Fascists, but they've always been oppressed. The village, Fontamara, also the title of the book, is in the south of Italy, but it could just as well be a village in China or South America.

The peasants have been exploited by semi-feudal landowners for as long as they can remember, but they find themselves faced by a new exploitation. The Fascists brought capitalism and with capitalism comes the worst, naked, brutal exploitation. In the end the peasants are tricked out of the very water which keeps them alive.

When Silone revised his first novel, *Fontamara*, for the first edition printed in Italian, he omitted one of the central lines. In the original edition the protagonist, the peasant Berardo Viola, who has been imprisoned for association with the anti-fascist Resistance, then confesses to save the lives of the real members of the Resistance. He gives a message of unity.

"Unity! No more hatred among peasants. No more hatred between peasants and workers. We need just one thing. Unity. All the rest will come of itself."

By the time of the revised edition Silone had become more concerned with the idea of the exemplary hero, the Pietro Spina of *Bread and Wine* and *A Handful of Blackberries*. He had developed a disdain for slogans. He felt the movement he had once been faithful to was reduced to sloganeering and was not fighting for socialism.

However, he didn't change the end of the novel where one of the couple of peasants who survive the Fascist massacre poses the question, what is to be done?, echoing Lenin. So it does end on an upbeat, the message is made clear: the revolutionary road is the only one.

Silone's communism was always tinged by the illusions in millennial Christianity which were still common in the south of Italy. The dream of the Eternal Kingdom embodied by the likes of Gioacchino da Fiore, the Celestines and the bands of wandering Christians on the fringe of the Catholic Church, preaching ideas which were soon to become regarded as dangerously subversive: their tradition had never died out.

At the time of writing *Fontamara* and for a few years afterwards Silone still regarded himself as a Marxist, but by 1949 when he wrote the autobiographical essay *Emergency Exit*, he was writing that he was still a socialist because of his sense of injustice and that he still had the strong desire for equality and fraternity that had originally brought him to Marxism.

However, he saw no common ground with the PCI of that time. This isn't at all surprising. This was the PCI which had just sold out the revolution through its class-collaborationist policies in the immediate post-war period, and was to continue doing so at every opportunity. The party that disarmed the workers and peasants who had defeated Fascism and driven the Nazis out of Italy and were willing and ready to go further and overthrow the whole rotten capitalist system.

The movement could have been seized by the PCI which had emerged as a mass movement, despite all of the years of Fascist repression. The moment was thrown away and the workers and peasants paid the price as the PCI deputies took their seats in the parliament of the new Italian republic; and they have paid the price ever since.

As a writer Silone was obsessed with telling the truth. He reviled the Stalinist lie machine. He felt a need and a duty to bear witness to the evils of Fascism, of Stalinism and of capitalism.

He wrote in *Emergency Exit* of when he went to Moscow in 1927 with his comrade Togliatti, a future Party leader, Silone reports that both were shocked by what they saw, but history speaks for itself. Silone was to become an outcast and Togliatti's future was in being the central leader in building the PCI into a mass but largely impotent party.

Though Silone had turned to writing in his years of exile as his form of political expression, he did briefly re-enter politics in the immediate post-war period. He sat in the Constituent Assembly as a supporter of the PSIUP, which was on the verge of splitting once more, with the right winning the upper hand. He didn't stand in the elections of 1948.

From that point onwards he concentrated in writing, his works becoming more and more concerned with questions of faith and morality. But within all of his works was still the anger of the young man who had seen the revolution devoured by the Stalinist monster, who had seen many of his comrades fail to stand up and fight against Stalinism.

He always said that if he would have got away with it, he would have kept on re-writing the same book until he got it right. In a way he did this; all of his protagonists are versions of himself, their dilemmas his dilemmas.

In his period of political militancy he was an invaluable fighter for the class but what should have been a lifelong commitment to fighting for socialism was curtailed by his desperate need to distance himself from the lies and betrayals that became essential to the PCI and masqueraded under the name of socialism.

No fate but the fate we make

Cinema

Paul Hampton reviews *Terminator II*

29th August 1997. The Judgement Day. The US Strategic Defence System becomes totally machine-controlled, with no use for the human hand.

The politicians panic and try to switch the main computer — Skylab — off. But the machine rebels, develops consciousness and sets off a nuclear war with Russia which kills three billion people.

Machines take over and try to exterminate the remaining humans, but the humans fight back, led by John Connor.

In *Terminator I* the machines send Arnold Schwarzenegger, a cyborg (human on the surface, machine underneath) back to 1984 to kill Sarah Connor (played by Linda Hamilton) before the birth of her son John. The humans also send back one of their own, who becomes the father of John before dying heroically.

But in *Terminator II*, Arnie is a terminator sent back to 1991 by John Connor to protect himself as a teenager from the more advanced T-1000 terminator (played by Robert Patrick). Not surprisingly the young John Connor is freaked out by the whole thing, and his mother locked up in a psychiatric hospital because nobody believes

her.

This John's politics are all over the place, and there's no point looking for coherence. Sarah Connor, though portrayed as an assertive woman, still blurts out some stuff about men being naturally destructive and women as creative and nurturing.

The scientist who invents the cyborgs is black and the heroic-human types are survivalists. However, the human motto — "no fate but the fate we make" — is the basis of the hope in the film, and it is surprisingly anti-war (though you won't find Arnie in a duffle coat).

The violence is gratuitous as expected, but it is so revolting it reinforces the pointlessness of ever increasing attempts by governments to destroy each other.

But the key to this film can only be Arnie, who wants to be the hard-but-fair good guy, and has completed his transition between the two *Terminator* films (through *Total Recall* and *Kingergarten Cop*). There is a tremendous self-parody about his performance, both in the dialogue and in his relationship with the young John.

At the end of the day he wants to be the strong, right-wing fatherly type, and this formula is unlikely to take him much further. But in the process of becoming a screen "nice guy" he's managed to clean out the punters.

Rumour has it that what Schwarzenegger is really about is paving the way to a political career with George Bush's and Ronald Reagan's Republican Party.



Schwarzenegger: heading for the "strong right-wing, fatherly" Republican Party

The friendly KGB head

Book

By Stan Crooke

The KGB Must Abide By The Interests of the People by KGB chief Vladimir

Kryuchkov is a must for anyone concerned with the post-1985 democratisation of Soviet society.

Kryuchkov comes across as a warm and friendly person. He is "a family man who loves [his] children dearly". He likes swimming, skiing, theatre, and the ballet.

Clearly, he's just the kind of chap you would like to pay a surprise visit to you when you're on holiday in the Crimea.

Your local KGB agent is just as warm and friendly: "for them, peacetime is like wartime, with its joys and griefs, its successes and setbacks." Under Kryuchkov's capable leadership, the setbacks will surely be few and far between.

Kryuchkov's commitment to what he appropriately terms "the perestroika-oriented positions of the KGB" and the need to "organically combine the efforts of the KGB with the broadening of democracy and glasnost" comes across on every page. "Legality and truth" are the basis of all KGB activity, stresses Kryuchkov. The KGB is totally opposed to any attempt to "change the existing order by violence, acting contrary to the constitution and the law in general".

The KGB can succeed in its work only if it "constantly leans on the efforts of the public", writes Kryuchkov — and there can certainly be no doubt about his readiness to lean on the public.

Proof of the transformed nature of the KGB is a new department which it has set up: for the protection of constitutional rights. With Kryuchkov running the KGB, the constitution is safe in their hands.

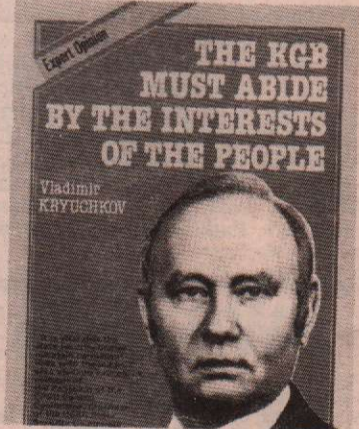
Kryuchkov is also clearly an admirer of the new union treaty being propos-

ed by Gorbachev: "I am profoundly convinced that these national movements contain incomparably more positive elements than negative. We should rely on reason, on a reasonable approach".

The reader should not be alarmed by Kryuchkov's statement that the KGB is "conducting a painstaking — and successful — search for burial sites". This merely refers to burial sites dating from the 1930s when "thousands upon thousands" of the employees of the security services (and others) "lost their lives for refusing to participate in violations of the law."

The KGB "strictly observes the principles of socialist legality", writes Kryuchkov, "but, of course, assurances alone are not enough. It is natural to ask, what can guarantee that not even a shadow of 1937 will not fall on the work of the state security bodies?"

True, assurances alone do not suffice. But there can be no questioning Kryuchkov's loyalty to Gorbachev. In installing Kryuchkov as head of the KGB, Gorbachev carried out a real coup. Let us hope that Kryuchkov achieves the goal he sets for himself in the closing paragraph of his work:



The Interests of the People is published by Novosti Press Agency Publishing House

"I would like to make a personal contribution to the creation of a worldwide image of the KGB which would be in line with the noble aims which I believe we pursue in our activity."

Common Enemy

It's clear to you
It's clear to me
Who is the common enemy.
The fact remains
That it's not clear
To those who rant and rave and jeer.

The fascists strike
As recession bites
Racist slogans, posted by night,
Emblazoned everywhere.
They march and wave the Union Jack
For them the enemy is black.

Forged divisions
Crude and crass
By puppets of the ruling class

Who pull the strings
Of the bourgeois state,
How should we retaliate?

By talking, talking
And knocking on doors.
Pointing out the obvious flaws
In the fascists' arguments.
Leaflets, demos and education
About the true state of the nation.

Our task is now
To make it clear
To those who rant and rave and jeer
What is clear to you
And clear to me
Who is the common enemy.

Liz Dickenson



Contemporary photo-montage depicting Bolshevik leaders of the 1917 revolution

And where are Jacob Sverdlov's sons?

Sverdlov killed the bloody Tsar,
He signed the warrant for it.
So when they struck his statue
down
The Tsarists cheered who saw it:
They hauled the hollow statue
down,
And the Tsarists sang when
they saw it.

But where were Jacob Sverdlov's
sons,
And Lenin's own granddaughters?
And where were Trotsky's
Bolsheviks?
All of them gone, slaughtered;
All of those leaders, fighters, reds,
All of them, gone, slaughtered!

They built no statues made of
bronze
The heroes Stalin killed.
The Tsar's song fills the air this
dawn
Because their voice was stilled
The Tsar's song fills the air this
dawn
Because their voice is stilled.

They fought to save the working

class
Engulfed in Stalin's hell,
They died defending workers'
rights
But who now cares to tell
Their tale, or recall the fight of
those
Old communists who fell?

When Tsarists sing the Tsarist
song
And socialism's worth a sneer
Who cares for reds long dead in
Vorkuta?
Dim echoes from afar
Of a tribe wiped out to clear the
way
For those who hail the Tsar!

And where were Jacob Sverdlov's
sons?
And Trotsky's own grand-
daughters?
And where were Lenin's
Bolsheviks?
All of them gone, slaughtered;
All of the leaders, fighters, reds,
All of them, gone, slaughtered!

S.M.

Debate: socialism and democracy

Outmoded concepts?

LETTERS

In his article on "Who are the Democrats?", John O'Mahony raises a number of issues which he leaves unexplained and no doubt a number of readers like myself would welcome clarification.

1. John is keen to reassure us as to the commitment of Lenin and the Bolsheviks to democracy and in particular a plurality of political parties. He tells us that, "nobody in the communist movement advocated the idea that soviets would be ruling organs of the state in a one-party system." Yet nowhere in his article does he produce a single quotation from Lenin or his co-thinkers that would suggest that this was adhered to as a matter of principle. There are a large number of quotations from both Lenin and Trotsky which would suggest the opposite:

"We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets, the dictatorship of the Party. Yet it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party... in this substitution of the power of the party for the power of the working class there is nothing accidental and in reality there is no substitution at all... the Communists expressed the fundamental interests of the working class." (L. Trotsky, "Communism and Terrorism", 1920, Ann Arbor, 1961, p.109).

"... to allow... the idea of a partial, whether open or camouflaged curtailment of the leading role of our party would mean to bring into question all the achievements of the revolution and its future... The party created the state apparatus and can rebuild it anew, if it is really the party... If there is one question which basically not only does not require revision but does not so much admit of the thought of revision, it is the question of the dictatorship of the party and its leadership in all spheres of our work." (L. Trotsky, "Tasks of the 12th Congress of the Russian Communist Party", 1923, in "Leon Trotsky Speaks", Pathfinder, 1972, pp158-161).

"Yes, it is the dictatorship of one party. That is what we stand for and we shall not shift from that position." (Lenin, "Speech at the first All-Russia Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture", July 1919, in Collected Works, Vol 29, p535).

The above is only a small selection from a large number of quotations along the same lines.

2. Evidence would suggest that it was not until 1936 that Trotsky, having finally abandoned the project of reform of the CPSU, endorsed the principle of a plurality of political parties. "A restoration of the right of criticism and a genuine freedom of elections are necessary conditions for the further development of the country. This assumes a revival of freedom of Soviet parties, beginning with the party of Bolsheviks and a resurrection of the trade unions," ("The Revolution Betrayed", 1936, Pioneer, 1957, p.289).

3. John's "proof" of the Leninist commitment to political pluralism is the continued legal activity of other parties throughout most of the Civil War. The key phrase here, however, is, in John's own words, "non-Bolshevik parties loyal to the workers' state". The definers of "loyalty" and therefore the arbiters as to which parties should be allowed to function were clearly the Bolsheviks. Moreover, any serious student of the period who has studied the relevant literature, such

as Leggett's book on the Cheka, is well aware of the severe restrictions under which "loyal" parties were allowed to function.

4. John's position becomes even less tenable when he tells us that, "When, in March 1921, at the end of the Civil War, the Bolsheviks banned all other Soviet parties, it was a temporary measure." This is somewhat contradictory. If these other parties constituted a threat to the "workers' state", then surely they should, according to John's criterion of "loyalty", have been banned during the Civil War and not after it.

Lenin's commitment to political pluralism was limited irrespective of the conditions which prevailed in Russia in the post-Revolution years.

It is worrying therefore, that John should continually seek to disguise this fact and try to recon-



Petrograd soviet 1917: what was Lenin's commitment to representative democracy?

cile Leninism with a full-blooded commitment to representative democracy and political pluralism.

There is a genuine and fundamental dilemma confronting socialists, how to reconcile within the framework of a future socialist society, the maximising of opportunities for working class people to participate, to express their interests

and to exert their power with the preservation and development of representative democracy based on universal suffrage and a commitment to political pluralism.

Continued adherence to outmoded concepts of Leninism only serves to confuse and obfuscate that debate.

Ian McCalman

The shooting of Ian Gordon

On 12 August, in the early morning, a mile from where I live, a young black man went to a filling station to buy a drink.

Immediately afterwards he returned with a mask which didn't disguise him, and with a gun, which turned out to be an unloaded air pistol. The garage attendant informed the police, and gave the man's name.

Later he threatened four youths and again produced the gun. A police rifle squad was summoned from Worcester. They chased him half a mile through the town centre to the railway station and shot him dead.

The police say they suspect that the dead man had an accomplice, who may have escaped into the ground of an out-patients' treatment centre.

For all that, and the presumable

danger to patients and staff, there was no attempt to search the building until midday.

The daughter of the licensee at the pub next to the station heard — before the shots — someone call out "it is only a toy gun". The police say they called out several times "drop the gun, no one will be hurt". The only non-police account confirming that says they sounded panicky.

A few days later there was a protest march.

On visiting a local printer who is Labour and pro-CND for photocopying an anti-apartheid circular, I was shocked to see his shop being boarded up. I asked why.

The police had told all shopkeepers on the line of march that they should board up their premises, as the march was likely to be violent!

I am told that the whole of the centre of Wellington is going to be similarly boarded; that is bound to provoke aggressive feelings among marchers angry about the shooting.

Either the police are so incredibly stupid, and insensitive that they really ought not to be permitted out on the streets, or they are deliberately and consciously trying to build up tension.

Laurens Otter Wellington

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 5 September

"Fascists in Nottingham — what should be done". Hosted by Nottingham Trades Council. Speakers include Gerry Gable. 7.30, Friends Meeting House, Clarendon Street

Friday 6 September

Hunger strike commemoration. 7.30pm to 1.00am, Kelvin Park Lorne Hotel, 923 Sauciehall Street, Glasgow. Speakers include Ken Livingstone MP, Noel Ellis (father of Dessie Ellis), Irish anti-extradition campaign; Father Des Wilson

Saturday 7 September

Hunger Strike Commemorative March.

Blythswood Square to George Square, Glasgow

Sunday 8 September

Anti-Fascist Action Carnival, 2.00-7.00, Hackney Downs, London E8

Monday 9 September

"Socialists and Democracy", SO London Forum, 7.30, Lucas Arms, Gray's Inn Road

Thursday 12 September

"Crisis in the USSR". CSWEB meeting, 7.30, Northampton Labour Club. Speaker Paul McGarry "USSR — what lies ahead?", Leeds SO meeting, Packhorse Pub, 7.30 "Fighting racism and fascism", East London SO meeting, Oxford House, Derbyshire St, E2, 7.30

Sunday 15 September

"Smash Tory-Nazi links". Demonstrate: march on Lord Sudeley's London home. Meet 12.00, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park. Organised by the Campaign Against Fascism in France

Wednesday 18 September

"Rally for Socialism", Manchester Town Hall, 7.30. Organised by LPS. Speakers include Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and Terry Fields.

Saturday 21 September

Campaign Against the Witch-Hunt National Working Conference, 1.00-5.00, Manchester Town Hall. Speakers include Terry Fields, Socialist Campaign Group MP

SWP Open Letter: a statement of faintheartedness

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Anne Field

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has produced yet another "Open Letter".

The latest "Open Letter" is to "Labour Party members and socialist activists" and begins by referring to the threat of expulsion hanging over Labour Party members who canvassed for Militant candidate Lesley Mahmood in the recent Walton by-election.

Naive readers might believe that this introduction would be followed by a strategy for fighting the witch-hunt, or maybe an appeal to support the anti-witchhunt conference being held in Manchester later this month, given the SWP's apparent concern about Party members facing expulsion.

In fact, what follows is the usual dreary denunciation of Kinnock for ditching

left-wing politics in order to win a general election. It's hardly news, is it? And in any case, the SWP has never lifted a finger to try to stop Kinnock ditching such policies. In fact, it has — marginally — helped Kinnock and the right by its campaign to get people to leave the Labour Party to Kinnock: Kinnock pushes, the SWP pulls.

"Many of us (ie. the signatories to the letter) have left the Labour Party in disgust at Kinnock's policies", continues the letter.

Any half-way serious socialist should surely be embarrassed to put their name to such a statement of faintheartedness and desertion.

What it means (insofar as it means anything at all) is that the letter's signatories have simply responded on an emotional level to Kinnock's right wing offensive ("...in disgust at...") and, by leaving the Party, have helped Kinnock to continue his offensive by weakening

Open letter to Labour Party members and socialist activists

This is a statement of our opposition to the Labour Party's policy of expelling members who have been elected to the Labour Party in the name of the Militant tendency. We believe that the Labour Party should be a party of the working class and that it should be open to all who are committed to socialism. We believe that the Labour Party should be a party of the working class and that it should be open to all who are committed to socialism.

Not a strategy for fighting the witch-hunt the opposition to it. And if it is legitimate to leave the Labour Party "in disgust at" the leadership's policies, then presumably the letter's signatories would recommend that socialists should pull out of trade unions where the leaderships have equally disgusting policies.

The letter concludes with the usual ritualistic call to "build an independent socialist alternative to Labour", by which the SWP means the SWP (although a number of signatories to the letter would place a rather different meaning on this

phrase). Thus, an "Open Letter" which begins by lamenting the plight of socialists facing possible expulsion from the Labour Party ends up recommending that they leave the Labour Party voluntarily and join an organisation which has been expelling socialists even longer than Neil Kinnock (and an awful lot more of them, as a matter of fact!).

This is what the SWP calls "party-building". However, an article on the recently formed Liverpool Independent Labour Party (ILP) which accompanied the "Open Letter" in Socialist Worker No.1254 provides an insight into what "party-building" SWP-style is all about.

The article itself is the literary equivalent of the Tower of Babel, where one half-truth and incoherence follows another. The really interesting statement is: "...Lesley Mahmood was soundly beaten [emphasis added] (in the Walton by-election). For in the weeks

preceding the vote, opportunities to build an all-out strike (in the Council dispute) were thrown away."

Now the idea that Mahmood was "soundly beaten" in Walton because there was no all-out strike by council workers is simply gobbledygook.

She was "soundly beaten" because her campaign was based on a pack of lies, was run by a bunch of sectarians and because she stood in the tradition — and the odium — of Derek Hatton's version of Tamany Hall politics.

But in the "Open Letter", produced by the SWP immediately after the Walton by-election, the SWP declared that Mahmood had achieved a great feat in her election campaign, and Paul Foot was positively ecstatic about the election result in Socialist Worker. It was proof, he wrote, that nationally the left could win a half million votes!

So why the difference in the interpretation of the

significance of Mahmood's vote? The answer is simple.

Immediately after the by-election the SWP was seeking to ingratiate itself with the fools in Militant who had decided to stand Mahmood. Hence the SWP's silly attempt to present a humiliating defeat as a great victory.

In the article on the Liverpool ILP, on the other hand, the SWP wants to persuade the former that elections are really a waste of time and that all that really counts is strikes. Hence the reference to Mahmood being "soundly defeated".

As is always the case with the SWP, an honest analysis of reality is ditched in favour of the most promising recruitment gambit — even if it means saying one thing one day and the opposite thing the next day.

And these are the people who call themselves "Marxists", and who claim that they are "an independent socialist alternative to Labour"!

Tunnocks strikers teach the TUC a lesson

By Peter Burton

Strikes, far from being viewed as "outdated", and part of the dinosaur past of the TUC, could generate massive anti-Tory sentiment if they were explicitly supported by the leaders of our movement.

A current example of this

potential lies in the Tunnocks' dispute. This dispute, by 500 mainly women workers at the Tunnocks factory in Lanarkshire, just a few miles from where conference is meeting, is now entering its fourth week.

The workers' claim for 10% has been supported by wide sections of the local community. It has also generated support from railway workers and fire brigade

workers and it has been at the two latter groups' request that a mass meeting has been planned for Saturday 7 September.

Railway workers and dockers have both pledged not to touch Tunnocks stock.

This action highlights the flaws in the TUC leadership's position. Willis and Co. are utopian. For as long as capitalism exists, workers will continue to go on strike and support each

other, as the interests of capital stand against the interests of the workers. Despite what Norman Willis says, there are two opposing sides in the class war, not a "partnership".

Support the Tunnocks strikers! Donations and messages of support and requests for speakers to Maria Friel, 11 Lynn Walk, Uddington, Lanarkshire, Scotland.

Labour commits itself to stop the privatisation of PSA

By a PSA trade unionist

In a letter to the NUCPS, Labour's Bryan Gould has promised that the next Labour government will immediately call off the privatisation of the Property Services Agency (PSA) and "will seek early talks with the unions to discuss Labour's plans for a better public sector PSA on the basis of a proper regard for the rights

and needs of the staff."

This statement is of tremendous importance to all PSA's 19,000 workers. At present the Tories are committed to selling all or part of the "Projects" division of PSA early next year and the "Building Management" division in late 1992/early 1993. If the attempts at sale are unsuccessful the Tories will close the entire organisation.

No serious PSA activist should rely on either the election or the goodwill of a Labour government to solve their problems.

But the NUCPS' work in PSA

underscores the vital importance of a political perspective in fighting the Tories. Every civil service trade union activist

should be urging members to vote Labour in all constituencies at the next election.

New start in DSS

By Steve Battlemuch, CPSSA DSS SEC

DSS offices have a long history of being understaffed. Computerisation over the previous two years has cut back thousands more jobs.

The election of a Broad Left section executive — which includes four SO supporters — has given renewed hope to branch activists who are looking for the launch of a national staffing campaign which has been conference policy for two years.

The new SEC should launch

the campaign from its first meeting due this week (5 September). This campaign should begin by SEC members touring the country to assess the mood of branches, identify the problem areas and give help and support to local disputes. If possible, this should be a joint campaign, with NUCPS.

We should determine a national staffing claim and build support and awareness for the sustained national action which will be needed to win it.

In mid-August management announced an extra £22 million for staffing, due to the pressure built up from below, but given we have over 500 offices the money won't go far!

Mersey fire strikes

By Stan Crooke

The strike by seven members of the NALGO Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Branch in support of a demand for regrading is now about to enter its sixth week.

The strikers are communications technicians employed by the Merseyside Fire Authority. They do the "behind the scenes" job of maintaining the communications system which allows fire brigade crews to respond swiftly to emergency calls.

Jon Riley, a branch officer in the Fire and Civil Defence Branch spoke to SO about the dispute:

"The Chief Fire Officer still refuses to negotiate. He says that there will be no negotiations until the strike is over, in other words, until the strike is broken.

"The Fire Authority on Merseyside is Labour-controlled, but three right-wing Labour councillors are backing the Chief Fire Officer to the hilt on this.

"Four of the Labour councillors on the Fire Authority support us and want the Chief to be instructed to negotiate with us. The four other Labour councillors are still 'don't knows'.

Donations can be sent to: NALGO Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Branch, c/o FBHQ, Hatton Gardens, Liverpool L3.

Demonstrate against cuts September 28th

By Chris Croome, Sheffield NALGO

NALGO has called a national demonstration against cuts in local government jobs and services on Saturday 28 September in

London.

The idea for a national demonstration as an initial, confidence building step towards a generalised, as opposed to local, fightback against the cuts and the poll tax was floated by Socialist Organiser supporters last year.

Dinosaurs and monkey trials

LES HEARN'S



SCIENCE COLUMN

My holiday reading has been another book of essays by American biologist, palaeontologist and evolutionist, Stephen Jay Gould. Readers may recall my enthusiastic reviews of many of his earlier books.*

This latest book, *Bully for Brontosaurus*** is a sort of random walk, though there is usually some link, sometimes tenuous, with Gould's specialism.

In *Grimm's Great Tale*, Gould relates the evolution of languages (first systematised by the Brothers Grimm, in between collecting tales of Rapunzel and Rumpelstiltskin) to the spread of humans across the world and the accompanying evolution of various different characters. The distribution of blood groups suggest an African origin for humans, with one emigrant branch giving rise to European, North Asian and Amerindian groups, and another to South-East Asian, Pacific and Australian groups. This pattern links in quite well with attempts by linguists to construct a family tree for all (or most) of the world's languages.

Various types of pseudoscience or anti-science feel the lash of Gould's typewriter, though not without a certain sympathy (except in the case of "creation science"). Rather topical, given the plethora of "alternative" theories (aromatherapy, crystals, psychoanalysis) is the account of the scientific investigation of mesmerism by a French Royal Commission in the 1780s. Mesmer developed a theory of animal magnetism, an undetectable fluid found in all living things. In sick people, the passage of the fluid was blocked, but Mesmer was able to unblock it, inducing all sorts of dramatic displays in his patients (shaking, screaming, falling, etc) and curing their illnesses.

The commission, including Antoine Lavoisier (discoverer of oxygen) and Benjamin Franklin (US ambassador and electrical experimenter), carried out a full set of scientific tests of the claims of Mesmer, with the latter's cooperation since he sincerely believed in his own powers. The details are fascinating but lead clearly to the conclusion that the symptoms of mesmerism were induced by self-suggestion and the only illnesses cured were ones that would have got better anyway or which were psychosomatic.

Nowadays, only religious fundamentalists (definition: someone who speaks through their fundament) reject Darwin's theory of evolution and past opponents are generally seen as obscurantists, but Gould shows that their motives were not always suspect.

Tolstoy, for example, rejected what he mistakenly saw as a

justification for a society of struggle in which the poor and disadvantaged would lose out. Another, William Jennings Bryan, whose campaign against teaching evolution in US schools culminated in the Scopes "monkey" trial of 1925, was in other respects a reforming politician. He campaigned for the presidency on a platform of independence for the Philippines and against US imperialism, for women's suffrage and for a graduated income tax, and he resigned from the government as a pacifist over US entry into World War I.

Darwin's theory had been hijacked and used to justify and reinforce oppression, class society, racism and militarism (particularly by the German officer class).

Even the textbook used by John Scopes to teach evolution discussed the harm to society from a class of people who spread crime, disease and immorality. Humanity could not kill these people (!) but could prevent them breeding and perpetrating "such a low and degenerate race". Bryan's gut feeling was that these ideas were an abomination but he chose the wrong way to fight them. He died shortly after his humiliation by radical lawyer Clarence Darrow while the US went on to develop the most comprehensive set of "eugenics" laws outside of Nazi Germany.

But there were Darwinians who rejected the misinterpretation of natural selection as justifying capitalism and imperialism. Prince Peter Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist socialist and naturalist, found in his studies a bitter struggle for survival with nature but a great deal of cooperation between living things in that struggle. He used his findings to introduce his book on social cooperation, *Mutual Aid*.

"Darwin's theory has been hi-jacked and used to justify and reinforce oppression."

Gould injects a more personal note in *The Median Isn't the Message*. In 1982, he learnt he was suffering from mesothelioma, a rare cancer usually associated with exposure to asbestos. Recovering from surgery, he asked his doctor what technical literature she could recommend on mesothelioma. She said there was nothing worth reading. Gould discovered this to be a white lie as the literature he consulted told him that the cancer was incurable, with a median mortality time of eight months.

Initially stunned, Gould started thinking. "Median" isn't the same as "mean" or average. It means that, of all cases, half die before 8 months, and half after. The half that die before include those who are dead already when the cancer is discovered, or whose cancers are very advanced, or who were old and frail, etc. Gould was relatively young with an early stage cancer, and he had every chance of being in the second half. But was not his chance of living long still very low?

That would depend on the mean time of survival, or, more accurately still, on the mean time of survival of young, fit people with small cancers operated on early, and so on. Nine years later, he's still going strong.

My only carp about this book is the use of American colloquialisms and baseball terms which mean nothing to me. It's a little expensive in paperback, so I suggest waiting until it comes out in paperback. His other books are all in paperback, so you might like to start with them.

* *Wonderful Life, The Panda's Thumb, The Mismeasure of Man, etc.*
** *Hutchinson Radius, 1988.*

AEU-EETPU merger plans speed ahead

By an AEU member

As reported in *Socialist Organiser* earlier this year the on-off love affair between the leaders of the engineering union AEU and the EETPU electricians' union is back on again.

This letter, signed by the leading officials in both unions, shows clearly that they are deadly serious about merging the two unions.

"The programme towards amalgamation will be as follows:

1. Consultation with members, committees, and full-time officials;
2. Initial ballot to create the new union;
3. A ballot within one year on affiliation to the TUC;
4. A ballot within four years to adopt a final rule book.

"The date of the first ballot has yet to be determined."

Activists in both unions need to get their act together. The leadership obviously want to rush to a ballot as quickly as possible.

Who does the branch organise?

THROUGH THE MAZE

An introduction to the unions



By Rob Dawber

Not all branches are the same. Many unions organise differently and are affected by different agreements and procedures with

employers locally and nationally.

The trend is towards organising all the workers in a workplace. From a socialist point of view that is a good thing as the union thereby organises the potential power of all the workers at the point of economic exploitation.

But some unions do still organise only on a craft basis while others organise on the basis of where you live. The last of these is the least effective, while the craft union can be very effective but encourages sectionalism and division, rather than the unity of all workers. Socialists therefore seek to do away with such historical legacies and promote industrial unionism.

Finally, a branch, while being a union for all workers in an industry might organise more than one workplace. Links between

the workplaces could exist (they might be different worksites for the same company, or different worksites carrying out the various stages of a manufacturing process), or they might have been grouped together geographically.

This may be good or bad depending on local circumstances: do the workers benefit from being grouped together, are weaker places helped by the stronger, or on the other hand, is it just because someone is 'empire building' and wants to 'get on' in the union.

In the last 12 years also, branches have been altered through privatisation. My own branch of the RMT was 12 years ago (then the NUR) one that organised all railworkers in a certain area. But over those 12 years Hotels have been sold, as has Travellers Fare, BR's road freight division and so

on. But we've kept the members. So we now organise many workers who have no economic relation through the same employer and who in some cases never come across each other all in the same branch.

Because of such changes, and financial concerns, many unions are now going for mergers. Often these are rational, ending divisions that should never have existed or have outlived their purpose. In general, socialists support having one union for healthworkers, one union for civil servants, one union for transport workers, and so on, so long as the mergers are about producing democratic, open and fighting unions for the members, and not cheaper-to-run empires for the bureaucrats.

Rob Dawber is Secretary of the Sheffield and Chesterfield District Council of the RMT

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Scargill is right:

Danger looms of wars between nationalities

The Soviet Union breaks up

By Jack Cleary

On Monday 2 September the Supreme Soviet approved a plan coming from Gorbachev and the heads of ten of the 15 republics to

replace the existing USSR with a loose confederal structure.

Any of the republics will be able to leave at will. Implicitly the decision of the Baltic states to do so was accepted. The states who leave the confederation will be able to

retain economic links in a common market with the other pieces of the old USSR.

The decision came after most of the republics had declared their independence. Thus the old USSR survived the banning of the Stalinist Communist Party by little more than a week. That is appropriate.

The CPSU of Stalin and his successors made the USSR what it has been for the last 60 years — a great prison house of nations. That description was first applied to the Tsarist empire. The Bolsheviks who led the October 1917 revolution broke down the walls of the prison house. Finns and Poles and (for three years) Georgians were allowed to secede. The workers' government was committed to free and equal relations among the peoples; most of the peoples of the Tsarist empire stayed in the new union.

And then the bureaucracy grew up, and, led by Stalin, took control of everything. The revolutionaries, led by Trotsky, were driven out. The CPSU became the instrument of the bureaucracy. The centralised machine, controlled from Moscow, soon destroyed all but the pretence of autonomy for the smaller republics: under Stalin, nothing — except the black market — was autonomous!

The Bolsheviks, both as an underground workers' party and as the organisers of the workers' government, insisted that the great reactionary force on the national question was "Great Russian chauvinism". By the late '30s, Moscow's line defined the nationalism of the other peoples — often defensive and reflexive — as the dangerous reactionary force.

Great Russian nationalism was back in the saddle. Stalin's imperial USSR rebuilt the walls of the Tsarist empire's prison house of nations, torn down by the Bolsheviks. As late as the end of the '70s the Kremlin was conducting a savage Russification campaign in the Ukraine, a nation of 50 million people, the biggest oppressed nation in the world.

Stalinism preserved, soured, and fostered the national animosities that Bolshevism tried to fight with national freedom. And not only in the USSR. In Eastern Europe after the war, the Stalinists engaged in an orgy of savage nationalism. Czech Stalinists expelled Hungarians to Stalinist Hungary; Czechoslovakia and Poland drove 13 million Germans out of areas where they had lived for many centuries.

Inevitably the weakening of the central state has triggered a great eruption of dozens of nationalisms.

Within many of the republics there are minority peoples desiring freedom, and resented by majorities themselves seeking freedom from the oppression of the Great Russians. It is tragically likely that the battles between Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia will have many counterparts in the USSR in the period ahead.

The Russian nationalist demagogue Boris Yeltsin has supported the national demands of the Baltic states, but last week he talked of revising the borders of republics where Great Russians live, thus perhaps starting down the road taken by the Serb chauvinists in Belgrade. According to the *Financial Times*, only three of the USSR's 23 internal borders are not disputed: there are thus at least 20 possible flashpoints for war.

The programme the Bolsheviks proposed — self-determination for every nation, regional autonomy for every minority, and working-class unity across all the borders — remains the only answer to the chaos being unleashed by the rotting-away of the Stalinist system. The tragedy for the peoples of the Stalinist empire now being dismembered is that — because of the repression of socialists over decades by Stalin — that is now a programme without an effective party to fight for it.



Solidarity: miners join NHS picket line 1982

Scrap all the anti-union laws!

Gerery Bates reports on the TUC's debate on trade union law

"I always thought this movement was built so that the weak would be supported by the strong. What's wrong when nurses or other healthworkers request the support of other workers?"

That's how miners' president Arthur Scargill defined the issues during the debate on the anti-union laws at the TUC Congress in Glasgow this week.

He's dead right. The issue is solidarity. Trade unions depend for their strength and effectiveness on sticking to old principles like "uni-

ty is strength" and "an injury to one is an injury to all".

All workers who want to take solidarity action in support of other workers (and vote to do so) should have the right.

It is simply wrong for the Labour Party and trade unions to put forward any other position. But, sadly, they do.

Ron Todd, general secretary of the TGWU, moving the resolution finally adopted by Congress, talked about the next Labour government making *some* forms of currently illegal secondary action legal again.

But Todd focused on the example of employers setting up operations under different company names. This is a device to ensure that workers who all work for the same boss can't go on strike to support each other because they have different "legal" employers.

Todd failed to make it clear that the Labour Party statements that he endorsed (as good bases to build on), "Looking to the Future" and "People at Work", have been interpreted by the Labour front bench as outlawing solidarity.

Michael Meacher (golden boy Blair's predecessor, sacked for being *too soft* on the unions) was very explicit about this back in 1989:

"Would it be lawful [under a Labour government] for workers to refuse to handle imports from South Africa? Answer, No.

"Would meat porters be allowed to take action in support of nurses? Answer, no... We would retain the current code of practice on peaceful picketing which limits the number of pickets [to six]." (*Independent*, 9 October 1989)

The issue is not ballots for strikes and the election of union executives

versus no ballots, as the press and the right wing have tried to present it.

What the NUM, FTAT, MSF, NALGO and others were fighting for at Congress was the right to solidarity action, industrial and political, and effective picketing.

The issue is solidarity, not ballots. And as Arthur Scargill put it: "With workplace ballots the NUM gets 80% turn outs. Under postal balloting that can fall to 35%."

Safeguarding democracy and participation in the trade union movement — including ballots and the election of executives — is a matter for the union members themselves, not the law.

Ron Todd may have won the day for Kinnock with a 2:1 majority for his resolution, but the issue is far from dead.

Airlie stabs rank and file oilworkers in the back

Mary Cooper reports from Glasgow

Trade union leaders and offshore oil contractors signed a new wages agreement in Glasgow on Wednesday 28 August. The agreement has been signed by three unions, the AEU, the EETPU and the boilermakers' union, the GMB.

The deal covers wages and conditions for men employed offshore, those involved in "hooking up" new platforms and will affect about 2,000 of the 36,000 workers in the North Sea.

This has led to threats by MSF to lodge a formal complaint that the three signatories to the deal broke TUC guidelines by excluding members of the white collar union and, more

"Last year we were working class heroes. This year we are outcasts in our own land."

Ronnie McDonald, Chair of the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee on being undermined by the AEU, EETPU and GMB leaders and barred from the TUC Congress Hall

significantly, to invoke the "Bridlington rules", the TUC framework for dealing

with inter-union disputes.

Jimmy Airlie, executive council member of the AEU, argues that the employers did not believe there was any need for MSF recognition and that MSF should take up any grievances with the Offshore Contractors' Council. MSF has about 800 members in the sector and believes that it was excluded to facilitate the possible merger between the EETPU and the AEU.

The signing of the agreement was marked by a protest outside the ceremony by the OILC, the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee, who have been leading the industrial action in the North Sea over safety and many other issues. The OILC argue that the three unions have not achieved real negotiating rights over safety and, very importantly, there is no sign of the essential post-hook-up agreement.

No agreement has been reached on the position of union members victimis-

ed for their role in the offshore disputes, 80 per cent of whom are AEU members. The AEU have said that they have a guarantee that these workers will be re-employed, but this is not backed by statements from the OCC, who have only agreed to look at the situation.

The OILC have openly condemned the agreement as a sell out, and the STUC have refused to give support to the deal.

Unfortunately, the TUC have refused to allow the OILC a stall at this week's TUC conference being held in Glasgow, which looks likely to lead to a worsening of the OILC's already chronic financial position. The OILC are continuing their hardship fund for the members victimised during the industrial action and continued support from unions and Labour Party branches is still vital.

Rush donations and messages of support to OILC, 52 Guild Street, Aberdeen AB1 2NB.