



Benn on Europe

A discussion: centre pages



Why Silcott was framed
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For socialist renewal!



For Workers' Liberty!

Racist plague sweeps Europe



pages 4 and 5



Students fight back

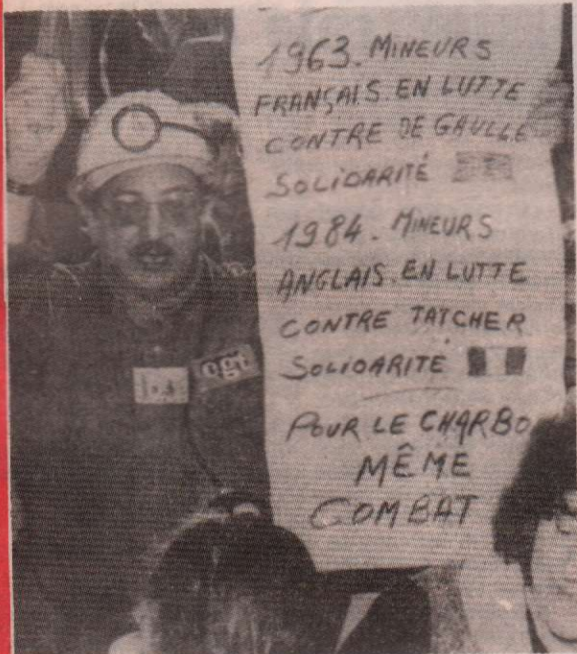
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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Civil war in the Tory Party:



French and British miners together during the 1984-5 strike. This is the kind of European workers' unity needed now.

Yes to Europe!

No to Thatcher!

Labour: drive out the Tories!

The lie machine



For sure someone else killed PC Blakelock, if Winston Silcott did not. Here *Today* deflects attention from police skullduggery: it is as if Silcott is to blame that the police framed him up! The Broadwater 3 may yet be charged with wasting police time for the last six years!



Freddie Mercury may be dead but the *Sun* just couldn't resist this picture mixing pop glamour with chauvinism.



Signs of better times a-coming! The blue, blue *Express* — which was the organ of the Tory anti-marketters back in the '60s — reports on one salvo in the growing Tory civil war. The not-quite-so-blue *Today* reports on another...

Yes to Europe! No to Kohl and Major!

By Colin Foster

The Tories are split on Europe! Thatcher denounces Major. Major snaps timidly at Thatcher.

Norman Tebbit calls on Tories to "put country before party", and fight European federalism.

The party organisers seek desperately to limit the damage. They know that the Tories divided stand an even bigger chance of being defeated in the 1992 general election.

The labour movement must treat Thatcher's chauvinist ravings with contempt.

But the labour movement should not support Kohl and Major any more than we should support Thatcher and Tebbit.

The West European capitalist governments — and most British capitalists,

too — want a more integrated EC, with fewer economic barriers between states. Socialists want a Europe without frontiers, as a step towards a world without frontiers.

The Euro-bosses may, despite themselves, help us in the long term. They may be unable to avoid some levelling-up of workers' wages and conditions across the EC, and some democratic controls on the EC.

But their aim is to build an integrated capitalist Europe against the working class. They want:

- A racist Europe, with vicious laws against immigrants from poorer countries;

- A job-slashing Europe: huge job cuts in steel industries across Europe have already been coordinated by the EC, and they will follow that pattern in other industries;

- An imperialist Europe,

with its own armed forces, ready to intervene in future massacres like the Gulf War;

- A protectionist Europe, developing itself into a cohesive trade bloc which competes with Japan and the US and which discriminates ruthlessly against imports from poorer countries;

- A bureaucratic Europe, run by permanent officials and cabals of ministers, with little more than ceremonial powers for the elected European parliament;

- A Europe of high prices and high taxes: value-added tax, a tax which hits the poor harder than the rich, is the EC's tax. The EC spends vast sums on subsidising often wealthy farmers, with the result of high food prices and huge stocks of unsold food.

The socialist answer both to Thatcher's flag-waving and to the Euro-bosses must be to work for cross-European workers' unity in opposition



The exploitation of homeworkers

Isolated and alone, homeworking women work in their own homes, using their own electricity, machines, cottons, etc. Paid a pittance per item, they are forced to work all hours. To cut, stitch and pack tea-towels, one woman was paid £6 per 100. Each towel is sold to tourists for either

£2.25 or £3.25. That is a 3750% increase. If the women complain, they lose the work. Homeworkers, however, can organise. Some take their machines to a community centre and work together so that they can pool resources and exchange experiences.



French nurses' strike. Links of solidarity across Europe are essential.

to the cross-European coordination of the bosses.

We should campaign for a democratic federal Europe, with full Euro-parliamentary control; for a levelling-up of workers' wages, conditions, and rights across Europe; and for an anti-racist Europe, opening its doors to

the persecuted and misery-driven of other countries.

We must fight for a democratic united Europe now, and forge links of solidarity and common struggle with the workers of Europe, and go on together with them to win a *Socialist United States of Europe!*

A 'controversial' role model?

RACE AND CLASS

By Vicki Morris

To find out what "controversial" Reverend Al Sharpton actually says, you had better catch him now on his tour from the US.

He spoke last Sunday at Lambeth Town Hall.

Far from stirring up racial tensions and preaching hatred of white people, Sharpton merely reflects the justified dissatisfaction of black people at home and abroad.

He sees himself as a role model for black people and urges them to fight for their rights, to join together and get organised.

Standing up and being counted has led him to be stabbed in the past.

Now, heavily and rather stably guarded, he is far

from being frightening: the Sharpton cavalcade is more suited to an American wrestler than a serious politician.

His message should not frighten anyone.

All he says is that government, parties, the legal system should live up to their bourgeois rhetoric about legal equality and democracy and deliver for all people — black, white, rich, poor.

If Sharpton inspires black people in their task of organising an active rank and file to combat racism and to fight for equality for black people, it will not be very long before their politics go beyond his.

However, the meeting was a hostile environment for socialists.

The National Black Caucus who organised it have obviously had a bellyful of the SWP's inadequate and simplistic politics, and witnessed their sectarianism in anti-racist movements.

Their 'Black and white, unite and fight; down with the Tories' propaganda went

down badly even when spoken by black members.

It is a crime that the SWP's dismissive attitude to black self-organisation has turned a lot of black people off left politics generally.

In Britain, the anti-racist movement is in its infancy at the moment and needs to be won to the idea of an orientation to the labour movement.

We cannot afford to go the way of American politics on these issues where they do not have an organised labour movement, only identity and communal politics.

In America different ethnic groups tend to look out for themselves.

Sharpton himself is guilty of not distancing himself from the anti-Semitism of some of the black activists in the USA.

His strategy for fighting racism and injustice is bound to be proved inadequate in the long run and socialists should not be frightened to say so, whilst recognising the boost given to black self-organisation that his visit has made.

Join our "200 Club"!

This week's contributions to our £10,000 fund for new equipment include £53.62 from a social in South-West London, £10 from Ken Leech, £12 from Manchester readers and £16 from Brighton readers.

The week's total of £161.62 brings the score so far to £4076.40.

We also need £1000 a month extra to cover running costs of an improved paper, and we are appealing for readers to contribute through our "200 Club". The way it works is as follows.

You pay a fixed amount each month — normally £5, but maybe £1 or £10. Most of the money goes to the paper — but you also get a

chance in a monthly draw for £100 prizes (or five chances if you pay £5, ten if you pay £10, or so on).

It's a chance to strike lucky, and at the same time a way of helping the socialist press.

It's easiest administratively if you make your "200 Club" contribution by bank standing order (to "WL Publications Ltd", account no. 50720851 at the Co-op Bank, Islington, 08-90-33), but if you prefer (or if you have no bank account) you can pay monthly or weekly in cash.

You can help further by getting workmates, friends and relatives to join the "200 Club".

Meanwhile, local SO readers in many areas are organising fund-raising events for the run-up to Christmas. Merseyside readers plan stalls at a

Christmas fair, a quiz night, and a raffle. East London plans a video night, a lottery and a social. Sheffield plans a jumble sale and a Christmas dinner.

Hull plans a book sale. South West London plans a car boot sale and a "Marx pub crawl". Nottingham plans a car boot sale, a book sale, a video night, a quiz night and a raffle. Midlandsbrough plans a jumble sale. South London plans a jumble sale, two socials, and two car boot sales.

Leeds plans a car boot sale, a social and a raffle. Newcastle plans a jumble sale and a meal.

Write and tell us about your local plans — and keep the money coming! Cheques payable to "Socialist Organiser" should be sent to SO Fund, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

The system that framed Winston Silcott

Winston Silcott is a convicted murderer. At the time of the 1985 Broadwater Farm disturbances he was out on bail charged with that murder, for which he was later convicted. He will remain in jail because of that murder.

But Winston Silcott did not kill Keith Blakelock, the unfortunate police constable hacked to death by Broadwater Farm youth in October 1985. The High Court has just quashed his conviction for killing Blakelock.

The police fabricated the evidence. They ill-treated children to get them to give evidence against Silcott.

Bernie Grant, the MP for Tottenham, which includes Broadwater Farm, said after Silcott's conviction was quashed that the police habitually fabricate evidence and routinely perjure themselves in court to get convictions against black people. Yes they do.

Grant cited the Birmingham Six, the Maguire 7 and the Guildford 4 cases and added that the police fabricate evidence and perjure themselves to convict innocent Irish people. Yes they do.

But Grant is only partly right. That is only part of the truth. The full truth is even worse than that. Of course, the police have their special victims. They go after black people, especially youth, with little inhibition. They frequently face urgent demands from their political and police superiors to provide the state with Irish scapegoats when IRA bombs go off, and they do that.

But it is not just black people and Irish people.

The police, when "necessary", do the same to almost everyone who comes inside their area of concern.



Winston Silcott

Fabricating evidence and perjuring themselves is their modus operandi.

It is how they work. It is British justice at the point of production. The police lie and cheat and beat confessions out of people as a matter of course.

If that is not understood and pursued then the whole point will be missed.

The nature of the system we have in Britain is most clearly visible in the case of the Birmingham Six. Plainly what happened there is that mistaken forensic interpretation of evidence convinced the policemen involved that the six were guilty. The policemen, as it happens with good cause to be angry and outraged after the awful carnage inflicted by the Birmingham pub bombings, then proceeded as they normally do when they decide someone is guilty or is a serviceable scapegoat — they beat confessions out of the six and manufactured "statements".

It is because you know what set them on the wrong track — the forensic scientists' false conclusions — that you can see the normal system clearly in operation. *It is routine.*

Often it is a means of convicting someone who is really guilty but against whom evidence does not exist. The point here is that it can be against those *not* guilty.

The real principles at the heart of British justice were expressed by leading judge Lord Denning when he said it was better for innocent men — the Birmingham 6 — to stay in jail than for them to be released and the courts to be thereby discredited. Yet justice is a condition of affairs in which even a known murderer can not be falsely convicted on evidence fabricated by the police of a murder he did not commit.

The operational principles which the Tottenham Three case shows at work at the heart of British justice are the time-worn principles of the police state: *raison d'état* and political/police convenience.

The police knew Silcott's record and, wanting a scapegoat, they invented the rest. They did not even have that excuse for framing Silcott's two companions.

It is not just this or that policeman who is "rotten" or "cor-



Demonstration, October 1986, outside Tottenham police station on the anniversary of the riots and the eve of the Old Bailey trials which were to rubber stamp the falsified case against the Tottenham 3.

rupt". The whole system is rotten and corrupt.

It is rotten and corrupt all the way to the top judges, who must and do know that the police lie routinely in court, who must know that when a policeman tells them that someone confessed then as likely as not the "confession" is just a stage prop.

Sometimes it is a lethal stage-prop, as 17 year old Derek Bentley found out. A little retarded, he was in police custody when his 16 year old friend shot a policeman. The 16 year old was too young to hang, so the police got their victim by lying that Bentley, in custody, had shouted to his friend as he shot the policeman, "Let him have it!" That got Bentley hanged.

The Broadwater Farm case proves once more that the police-judicial system stinks to high heaven. It stands heavily discredited in the eyes of millions. Juries are more and more ready to disregard both police evidence and the directions judges give them.

Uncorroborated confessions should not be admitted as evidence. People should not be interrogated without having access to lawyers. The police should be made accountable to elected authorities. Judges should be elected. The Tories' restrictions on defendants' rights to challenge juries should be abolished.

Labour should pledge itself now to initiate a root-and-branch overhaul of this corrupt system.

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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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RACISM IN EUROPE

Germany, Belgium, France, Hungary: misery boosts fascists

Racist attacks spread across Germany

Retreat or stand our ground?

THE POLITICAL FRONT

By Pat Murphy



Last Friday the General Committee of Leeds Central Constituency Labour Party decided to launch an investigation into two alleged *Militant* supporters, both longstanding party members.

The two comrades will almost certainly be expelled. There is no longer anything newsworthy about such a decision. The expulsion of *Militant* supporters began in the mid-1980s and the numbers targeted have rapidly increased since the Walton by-election. The main "political" excuse for taking action now in Leeds was the Walton fiasco. I mention the events in Leeds Central because they do illustrate sharply the nature of the current regime at every level in the Labour Party and they hold lessons for the serious left.

The *Militant*, and the two comrades would acknowledge this, are no threat to the Labour establishment in Leeds. Their Labour Party branch, however, is. It would, given the choice, select a left-wing candidate for the City Council elections in May; it is a safe seat; the left's preferred candidate was recently excluded from the District Party panel on the grounds that his name appeared on a local anti-poll tax leaflet.

Despite all this the branch would be very likely to select a council candidate at odds with the Labour administration. The truth is that they aren't likely to get the chance to make such a selection. The GC last week made a second decision, you see, to ask the NEC to investigate the *ward* for allowing *Militant* to be sold openly at meetings.

That investigation will almost certainly prevent the branch from having a democratic selection, and may even lead to action against its officers, none of whom are involved with any proscribed organisation in the party.

At one level, this is a squalid little affair. A few local right wingers are taking advantage of the atmosphere in the national Labour Party to protect their council seats and to keep an absolute grip on the council Labour group (there are perhaps two to three dissidents now). But the pettiness of it obscures the seriousness. The right wing hold sway in the Labour Party now and socialists need to register the extent and effect of their rule.

First, this is a classic witch-hunt — the word isn't out of place. If there was ever anything in the charges against proscribed groups, these are now much less important to the right than the need to beat down dissent and opposition.

The atmosphere created by Kinnoch's crusade is being used to settle old scores, to protect careers, to keep dissidents out of office. Where the left is still active, still pressing for pro-working class policies, acting as critics of cost-cutting poll-tax-collecting councils, the right have a new weapon in their armoury — the NEC will back the roughest disciplinary action at the filsiest excuse.

Secondly, we should register the fact that the stakes here are very high. Beyond the petty "fixing" of local bureaucrats the Labour establishment are preparing for office. They want the ground cleared of potential troublespots and opposition in advance of the next Labour government.

The economic climate faced by Labour if they win the election will be much tougher than that faced by Wilson in either 1964 or 1974. Trade union and working class expectations will rise.

The left meanwhile are fighting to hold onto the limited and diminishing ground we still have within the party. There is still a sizeable left in Britain which is desperate to see Labour beat the Tories and prepared to organise to hold any Labour government to account.

It is a much smaller, less powerful left than in the 1980s but in these hard times it is the only left worth its salt. It is, in fact, the only immediate hope for the British working class.

Given those conditions, which define and shape our immediate future, the Labour left should draw a number of hard but vital conclusions. One is that there is no prospect of beating this witch-hunt. That is not to say that every attempt should not be made to defend individuals through the constitutional process (the National Constitutional Committee).

But a very upfront, confrontational attempt to insist on democratic rights in the party will, in the immediate period, fail. We can, however, minimise the damage that the leadership can do, limit the effects of this purge on the ground, and we need to decide with determination that this should be done.

It is a start to recognise that that is where we are. Every inch of ground lost now will have to be retaken, at great effort, in the months and years after the election. It will make a great difference to working class politics to have well-organised, conscious socialists well-placed in the labour movement when that movement struggles to make its government act in our interests. Our main responsibility now is to ensure that we can make that difference.

Of course it is very hard to hold ground under such heavy fire, and the intensity of the witch-hunt recently has led many socialists to run for cover.

Even more bizarre, those who cannot hold their ground and decide to run will shout back at the rest of us that we are retreating! In this Alice-in-Wonderland world it will be crucial for the Labour left to realise that there is a *real* retreat going on and that we musn't be part of it.

Everyone who voted for *Militant*'s new turn, everyone who has signed the SWP's Open Letter, everyone who has dropped out of politics, is reacting to the onslaught of Labour's right wing by retreating. The price for this folly may be paid by millions of workers later. For now the immediate prospects for socialism lie with those who can keep their heads in hard times.

Manuel Kellner from the Cologne socialist fortnightly *Sozialistische Zeitung* spoke to SO

The official police figures list 600-650 racist attacks during the period from 1 January to 10 October 1991.

About 190 of these incidents involved petrol bomb attacks during the night.

The situation is obviously very serious. Each day the papers carry one or two new stories about an attack the previous day. For example, a few days ago, a Turkish marriage ceremony was attacked by 50 skinheads armed with baseball bats. Some of the Turkish people were stabbed.

The attacks are fairly evenly spread across East and West Germany. However, there seems to be more general public support for the racists in the East.

At the end of September, in Hoyerswerda, near Dresden, there was a very large-scale attack, involving hundreds of armed fascists, on a group of refugees.

There was a lot of support among the townspeople for this attack. People were applauding the racists as the attack took place. You do not find that in other areas of Germany.

The Christian Democrat Minister of the Interior for Saxony — the Land (or region) in which the town lies — Rudolf Krause, said after the attack: "The barbed wire around the asylum seekers will not be the final solution". Krause was using the language of the Nazis.

The attack also saw the police helping the racists. The fascists were shouting "Ausländer raus!" ("Foreigners out!"). The police removed the refugees,

in fact complying with the fascists' demands.

There is disproportionate support for the far right in the Bremen area, one far right group, the DVU, got 7.5% of the vote in the recent regional elections.

The right are also gaining electorally. In the Bremen area, one far right group, the DVU, got 7.5% of the vote in the recent regional elections.

There are a number of right-wing groups in Germany. Immediately after reunification they made a big push to organise in the old GDR. The first group to achieve prominence in the East was a well-organised openly Nazi group. There were other groups, for instance the DVU (German Peoples' Union).

A man called Dr Gerhard Frey, a millionaire, is funding much of the activity. He funds a right-wing newspaper, the *Deutscher Nationale Zeitung*. He is something between a Nazi and the groups who try to be semi-conservative, like the "Republican Party".

There is some liaison between these groups. For instance, if the "Republicans" organise a public meeting, you will find fascist skinheads working with them.

There are now around 70,000 people in the German far-right organisations. What proportion are actually involved in the attacks is more difficult to tell.

Currently there are attempts to amend Article 16 of the German Constitution. This article guarantees the right of asylum for all those suffering political persecution. This article was made after the Third Reich. It is an important democratic gain.

Of course, we are saying that the article should not be changed. But in fact this is not the whole battle because the police and courts are

already stopping political asylum speakers from entering Germany. In fact asylum only really exists as a privilege, rather than a right.

There has even been a big battle to stop the Social Democratic government of Rhineland Westphalia throwing out two thousand Yugoslav gypsies. They came from a region in civil war! But this government said they were not political refugees.

The figures the press speaks off are in fact quite

"Each day there are new racist attacks... petrol bombings... skinheads armed with baseball bats... refugees driven out of town"

small. It is said around 200,000 people are looking to get in to Germany. They say this number will "sink the boat". They complain these people will "steal our wealth".

200,000 is the same figure as the number of German origin who have come to Germany from Poland and the USSR. But that influx is acceptable because they have "German blood".

The economic situation in the old GDR is now very bad. The production of goods and services is now 25% of production in 1988. Industry has been destroyed.

Official unemployment in the east is now over one million from a population of 16 million. Another million people are on short-time working — often "zero-time working". There are also 313,000 on government

schemes.

The bourgeois press is saying that 30% of the Eastern workers have lost or partially lost their jobs.

Before unification of the money the people of East Germany were moving to the West at the rate of 20,000 a month. They said, if the Mark does not come to us, we will come to the Mark.

The current rate of East Germans moving west is 10,000 per month. In addition, 500,000 live in the GDR but work in the West of Germany. They work for low wages.

What is the workers' movement doing to combat racism? Comrades say that the atmosphere in the workplaces is very bad. There is a lot of prejudice against both the refugees and foreign workers.

The metal workers' union (IG Metall) — one of the most left-wing unions — has criticised the racist violence and dominant conservative politics. But no labour movement organisation has called action against the racists.

115,000 people marched to oppose racism in towns all over Germany on 9 November. In Berlin there were 50,000 demonstrators, but in other towns there were a few hundred or thousand. This was not a mass show of strength.

One of the reasons was that the unions did not mobilise for this day of action. If they are waiting until the first union office is bombed, then they are being very short-sighted!

The Social Democrats have organised some meetings against the racist violence. But where they are in regional government they have pursued racist policies.

There is no national anti-fascist organisation similar to the French SOS Racisme, but there have been meetings to put together such an alliance.



The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and trade unions have called for "tolerance", "against hate and terror". But social policies are needed to cut the roots of racism in poverty and despair.

French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen plans to visit Britain in December. A previous invitation — to speak at a fringe meeting at the Tory Party conference in 1987 — was cancelled after Anti-Fascist Action called a protest demonstration. There must be a strong protest this time, too.

Stop Le Pen!

Demonstrate outside the French Consulate, 21-23 Cromwell Road, London SW7

Wednesday 4 December
5.00-7.00

Details: 071 277 0817



9 November: 50,000 march against racism in Berlin

French demo called for January

By Vicki Morris

French anti-racists are organising a mass demonstration on 25 January in Paris, demanding an end to expulsions of immigrants and equal rights for them in France, including the right to vote.

The National Front, led by long-time Nazi Jean-Marie Le Pen, has increasing influence. An opinion poll in October asked people if they agreed "with the ideas defended by Jean-Marie Le Pen", and got 54% of the supporters of the mainstream right wing parties (UDF and RPR) answering "yes". In 1990 the figure was 31%.

22% of Green Party supporters, 16% of Communist Party supporters, and 14% of Socialist Party supporters also said "yes". That adds up to about one in three of the electorate.

'Respectable' politicians like Giscard d'Estaing can now refer to an 'invasion' of immigrants.

Le Pen, having gained so much ground on anti-immigrant themes, is now beating the anti-European drum in the style of Tebbit or Ridley. The response of the ruling Socialist Party is weak all along the line.

The government is tightening up rules against immigration and speeding procedures for expelling immigrants.

French socialists and anti-racists are now trying to build the kind of mass movement with its roots in working class organisations which can stop Le Pen.

Belgian Social Democrats' failure boosts far right

Vincent Scheltief, a Trotskyist active in Brussels, told *SO* about the Belgian elections

In the Flemish north, the far right party, the Flemish Bloc, gained. They are now the largest party in the main northern city of Antwerp, and in some other towns around Antwerp.

The Flemish Bloc now have 12 members in the national parliament. They have 6.6% in all Belgium, and 10.4% in the north.

All the four parties which formed the previous government have suffered setbacks.

Perhaps some people will be surprised at these results. However, the Flemish Bloc went over 20% in Antwerp

during the 1989 European elections. Now the Flemish Bloc's support has spread throughout Flanders.

In Brussels the Greens have made big gains — as have the far right. The far right in the south, the National Front, have around 5% of the vote, but no-one elected to the national parliament.

The Flemish Bloc is for Flemish independence. The National Front is for a unified Belgium. But both parties have run a very strong anti-immigrant campaign.

They want to stop asylum seekers and "send back" immigrants. They target immigrant peoples as "criminals" and "scroungers" on unemployment benefit.

These parties are against the new abortion law. Previously abortion was illegal in Belgium. New legisla-

tion states that abortion is legal in some — very limited — cases.

The Flemish Bloc, a very strongly pro-family, pro-woman-in-the-home Catholic party, has tried to win votes from the Christian Democrats, who were opposed to the new abortion law but compromised with their coalition partners.

Unfortunately many workers are voting for the far right. The far right has succeeded in capitalising on working-class discontent with the government parties.

For the past four years the Social Democrats have been in government, after ten years in opposition. There have been a few reforms, for instance better old age pensions, but not much.

Before the Social Democrats came into government the people had taken a 15% cut in living standards

and the workers hoped to recoup the lost ground. The Social Democrats disappointed the workers.

Now, in the big cities where there is a lot of poverty, the workers' districts voted heavily for the far right. In the past these areas would have been Social Democrat.

The trade unions have started an anti-racist campaign, but it is very defensive, saying black and white must work together.

The unions have produced some very basic posters for factories and workplaces. However, there have been many instances of these posters being taken down by workers. Even worse, some shop stewards have refused to put the posters up.

Although there are a lot of local anti-racist campaigns, there is no unified Belgium-wide initiative. In fact, to convince working class peo-

ple who vote for far-right parties an anti-racist movement must also provide a radical social alternative.

Our organisation works both within the Social Democrat and the Christian unions. During the election, in the French-speaking south we stood our own list, the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste (POS). In the north we were part of a green-red alliance which includes people from radical movements as well as dissident Communist Party members.

In the south we did better in the regional elections than the election for the national parliament, where the Greens took some of our vote. In the districts we polled over 1%.

Generally there is a shift towards the far left and far right from the centre. The youth, especially, are disillusioned with the political centre.

Letter from Hungary

John Cunningham reports from Budapest

At the very heart of Central Europe, Hungary appears calm and serene in an area of the world which is tearing itself apart.

Even when a Yugoslav bomber dropped its load on the Hungarian border town of Barcs recently, the response of the Hungarian government was muted. The first reports merely said that a Yugoslav aircraft had been destroyed in the air, presumably by Croatian fire, and that fragments of the disintegrating plane had been scattered on Hungarian soil.

The Budapest government has played down numerous violations of Hungarian airspace by Yugoslav aircraft.

For most of the conflict in

Croatia, only the Hungarian border guard has been on full alert. On 14 November, a full alert was enacted and convoys of troops were seen heading south for the border. As far as I am aware, this alert wasn't for the whole of Hungary, but even so it represented a new phase.

No Hungarian I've yet spoken to wants to get involved in what they see as a futile and stupid war. Sympathies are with the Croats, particularly as there is a Hungarian minority in Croatia, some of whom have been killed in the fighting.

The Serbs are universally reviled and seen as the instigators of the present fighting. These feelings are fuelled by reports from Serbia that certain factions are calling for the reconquest of 'Greater Serbia'. This would include a chunk of southern Hungary.

One student told me that the Serbs were "dogs who should be shot!" Another student recounted to me how, during the

Second World War, while the Croats lost 2% of its population, the Hungarian minority lost 20%. He refused to entertain any doubt that they, or some of them, might have been killed by Croatian fascists or the Nazis. "It was the Serbs".

This is a part of the world where politics often resembles tribal warfare, and the truth is basically what you want it to be.

A young Hungarian I spoke to only a few days ago, visibly upset, recounted how his folk-dance group, on a recent trip to Moldavia, had been run out of town. After travelling all the way to Moldavia, they arrived to find the local Romanian population up in arms about the visit of "Asiatic" Hungarians.

The furore culminated in a threat to bomb the dance venue.

In other parts of the world, this could have been shrugged off as an empty threat, but not here. The group, without dancing a single step, without even unpacking their bags, simply got

on the next train and made the long journey home.

An extreme example, untypical? Not really. Hungarians

"Politics often resembles tribal warfare... all the minorities have grievances against their 'host' nations, and historical allegations fly back and forth"

have not forgotten, and given the strength and endurance of collective memory hereabouts, are unlikely to forget, the ethnic

Hungarians who were killed during inter-communal strife in northern Romania in 1989. Northern Romania, (Transylvania as it is known in Britain) is called Erdely in Hungary, and all the towns are called by their Hungarian names, not their Romanian ones. As far as most Hungarians are concerned, Erdely is part of Hungary and one party, the Smallholders, during the 1990 elections, talked of re-establishing the '1,000 year old Hungarian order'.

Hungarian minorities exist in the Czech and Slovak republic (4% of the population), Yugoslavia (2%), Romania (9%). There is even a small Hungarian minority in eastern Austria.

With the exception of the Austrians, all the minorities have grievances against their 'host' nations, and allegation and counter-allegation fly back and forth.

Without detailed historical knowledge, it is difficult to

unravel these claims. Perhaps in the last analysis there is no right or wrong side. Only one thing can be said for sure at the moment — as the region continues to go through the tremors and shockwaves of de-Stalinisation and Westernisation, the centrifugal forces of nationalism will increase, with the Hungarian minority in northern Romania being a particularly acute focus of tension.

The lifeline for Hungary, as envisaged by the government, is membership of the EC. What happens when this cure-all turns out to be pie in the sky, and Hungary, as I suspect, will simply become a 'colony' for German capital, cannot be predicted.

Whichever way you turn, the future doesn't look too good, and the edginess and unease which Hungarians feel as they look around them at their neighbours will be compounded by a growing sense of economic decline.

Of very little brain

GRAFFITI



The Tories' crusade to make Britain's classrooms safe for traditional values took another stride forward this week.

In a list of 59 set texts for children to be tested at the age of 7 next summer show a return back to the "classics" of nineteenth century and other traditional role models for children.

This has been at the expense of more modern texts. One departure from the list is Allan Ahlberg's Mrs Plug the Plumber. While new man Mr Plug makes the meals and cares for the children, Mrs Plug saves the day with her monkey wrench and brazing torch — a good non-sexist story for the 1990s.

To replace what Kenneth Clarke must see as idiotic fantasies come a crop of talking bears, Winnie the Pooh, Paddington Bear. Paddington's family background is so orthodox that the mother doesn't work despite having a housekeeper — and Pooh, a bear of very little brain, is obviously the stuff that education secretaries are made of.

Amongst all the news of hostage releases you may have missed the Tories announcing they will not be building the fourth Trident nuclear submarine.

You know, the one Neil Kinnock fought so hard to retain at this year's Labour Party conference.

Resounding "told you" from Labour Party activists will echo up and down the country as the Party reports on its first year of the national membership scheme.

Back in days of yore membership was collected and renewed by local activists. But this wasn't good enough for Walworth Road. In part to undermine local parties, in part to try and create a passive membership looking to the national leadership instead of local activists, and mainly because they're stupid, the marketing executives of the New Model Party installed the computers and staff to process all membership nationally.

There follows the widely predicted year of chaos, no-one knowing who is a member and people not renewing their subs. In fact, 95,000 out of 320,000 have not renewed: hardly the surge in membership to one million that Neil Kinnock confidently expected.

This has thrown the Party HQ into turmoil: one possible upshot being the possible closure of the party's last surviving publication, *Labour Party News*.

Perhaps running the party should be left to the activists, and the marketing executives should go back to selling baked beans.

The present wave of student actions has been welcomed almost ecstatically by Socialist Organiser. Our supporters have been working flat out to build up support for them.

But if we are ecstatic, the SWP is delicious! SWP National Organiser and Central Committee member Chris Bambery scaled the heights of absurdity at a meeting at the Lancaster University occupation when he claimed that the occupation there was "more important than the General Election".

Yes indeed, as Chris Bambery's mouth is more important than his brain. Socialist Organiser students

This old photo of Chris Bambery in school uniform is the only one we have. He's younger than that now!

are organising a whip-round for a Christmas present for Chris, probably "The Janet and John guide to Marxism".

The Society of Black Lawyers has suggested that in cases where racism is an issue, juries should be racially balanced.

Fair enough, you might think, although the idea of anything being fair or balanced in the British legal system is somewhat novel.

But wait, here comes the Crown Prosecution Service, the civil service department responsible for presenting the prosecution case in the courts.

Imagine the case of someone using racial provocation as a defence, wouldn't a racially balanced jury be prejudiced against the victim? The CPS motto, it would seem, is always be prejudiced against the accused.

The party's over. The Communist Party of Great Britain has given up the Stalin party line, the long and never ending trudge down the British Road to Socialism has ended down a sixty year cul-de-sac.

Last weekend's 43rd and final congress saw the lentil and sandals brigade who now form the backbone of the CPGB transform themselves organisationally into the Democratic Left, and personally into a new generation of Channel 4 media personalities.

A few of the old guard put up token resistance. Steve Howell, a well known carving Stalinist in his home town of Sheffield, said that the new body could be neither democratic or left (so at least it has two things in common with the CPGB).

Willie Clarke, a miner from Perth, complained: "The capitalist class tried to destroy the party and failed, but it could be destroyed here today." Unfortunately Willie has failed to notice that the CPGB ceased to be a force for socialist change decades ago.

Ever wondered why the "Community Charge" was so called? Tory controlled Brent have now provided the answer.

Brent have set up a "shop your neighbour" hotline. Now you can ring up to point out that you suspect that nice Mr Smith from number 24 hasn't been coughing up quite as much as he should.

Never fear if you're gripped by this urge at 3am — the hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

And when you've done your good deed to the community you can see your handywork in print — 2,000 names and addresses of non-payers have been printed in a four-page advert in a local free paper. And another 6,000 will follow.

And the combined cost of this endeavour? £20,000.

Disoriented Express

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Hiduous figures like Norman "Munster" Tebbit and the cadavrous Nicholas Ridley have risen from their coffins, hissing ancient incantations about "sovereignty" and "sterling".

At the head of this ghoulish band stands the Woman in Black herself — returned to haunt the Tory Cabinet exactly one year after they drove a stake through her heart and cast her into the outer darkness.

Press coverage of the Tory Horror Show has varied from bewilderment to terror to outrage. Some, like the Major-loyal *Independent* and *Mail*, had no hesitation in de-

nouncing the Undead and calling for the silver bullet treatment without delay.

Even the *Sun*, once a mouthpiece of the Thatcher/Tebbit branch of Europhobia, rallied to nice Mr Major and warned the ghouls that their disloyalty could cost the next election, ushering in the Kinnock Terror.

But for the *Daily Express* matters were a little more difficult. For one thing, the *Express* has always been the most consistently anti-European of the national papers. For another, it has never been entirely happy with the Grey Man, staying loyal to the Finchley Phantom long after even the *Sun* had adapted to the new regime.

At first, the *Express* tried to make out that there was no dispute within the Tory party over Europe, the single currency, the referendum issue, or anything else; last Friday's "Opinion" column contained the following gems of wishful thinking:

"The position is straightforward... Mr Major's view and Mrs Thatcher's are not as far apart as some would have us believe... Mr Major is saying the same

as his predecessor... the issues raised by Maastricht and beyond are complicated enough without our seeing complications where none exist."

Express readers may, therefore, have been a little surprised by the next day's front-page headline: "Maggie Blasts 'Arrogant' PM". The paper's Chief Political Correspondent, Nicholas Assinder, informed readers that, "Former Premier Margaret Thatcher last night launched a fierce two-pronged attack on John Major... she turned on her successor over his policies on Europe and branded him 'arrogant and wrong' for denying the British people a referendum on a single currency... she even hinted our negotiations would be stronger if she was still in power."

By Monday, things had gone from bad to worse: Munster had appeared on David Frost's TV-am show demanding a referendum, disparaging "party unity" and even praising anti-Europe Labour MPs like Peter Shore and Tony Benn. "Tebbit Fans Euro Flames" proclaimed that day's *Express* front page. By

now, even the *Express* "Opinion" column was rattled. A change of line was called for:

"Former Cabinet colleague Sir Norman Fowler was simply telling the truth when he said that more interventions would lose the Tories the election. This would be to place Britain's destiny into the hands of those born-again Euro-fanatics, the Labour front-bench... For her own sake, as well as her party's, she should turn aside from the rancorous and rebellious course on which she seems set."

There must have been some terrible weekend agonising in the editorial offices of the *Express*, especially as editor Sir Nicholas Lloyd received his knighthood from Mrs T herself.

Now that even the *Express* has deserted her, will she rein in Munster, order Ridley back into his coffin and retire to brook in a darkened room in Dulwich? Is the Grey Man prepared to administer the silver bullet? Will the Tory party implode before the next election? For the answers to these and all the other questions everyone's asking, don't bother to read the *Daily Express*.

Progressive contraception or a question of eugenics?



WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Dickinson

Depo Provera (DP) is the trade name of an injectable contraceptive drug.

The usual dose of 150mg prevents pregnancy for at least three months. Although contraceptive protection is designed to last for three months, the drug from one injection can affect your body for an average of eight to ten months, even if the contraceptive protection has worn off.

In 1984 DP was licensed for long-term contraceptive use with specific conditions, including:

- that it only be used as a last resort method when all other methods of contraception have proved unsuitable;
- that a woman should give her informed consent to using DP, that is, that she knows what all the advantages and disadvantages are, and decides she wants it.

A licence does not necessarily mean that the drug has to be used at these times, only that it can be; neither does a licence prevent the drug from being used at

other times. You should remember that the licence protects the doctor if anything goes wrong.

Based on current practice, you are most likely to be offered DP if:

- you have a baby (or abortion) and need a rubella jab. It is the policy of many hospitals to give the two injections at the same time, before you leave the hospital. You do not have to accept the DP injection. This policy can affect all women, regardless of our race and class;
- you have had one or more unwanted pregnancies, one or more abortions, or three or more children;
- your doctor thinks you are irresponsible about contraception, you need the support of social services, are a single parent, are poor or from an ethnic minority, or don't speak English very well.

It is amongst these last categories that the use of DP is at its widest, particularly amongst black working class women and adolescents.

According to Marge Berer in "Who needs Depo Provera?", the following descriptions have been used by some doctors and researchers internationally and in Britain about women they would recommend DP for:

- irresponsible;
- unreliable;
- stupid;
- incompetent;
- retarded;
- promiscuous;
- illiterate;
- of low intelligence;
- problem women.

Berer says that because of the controversy around the use of sterilisation on women perceived by doctors as fitting these descriptions, the use of Depo Provera has

reduced profits, because it is at least more temporary than sterilisation, even though it creates similar problems.

There is a strong impression that DP is offered to women in Britain more often than it is requested by them.

Adverse effects of DP include heavy prolonged bleeding, excess weight gain, depression, loss of sexual desire, arm/leg pains, effect on bowels, concern about increasing the risks of certain types of cancer, risk of increasing arterial disease, nausea, risk of infertility, and so on.

DP has been used widely in the Third World as a first recourse contraceptive and has proved to be an effective instrument for reducing the birth rate. It is doubtful that these women made an informed choice, or were given any choice at all.

There has been considerable pressure by the pharmaceutical industry in Britain and the USA to licence DP, as it is clear that a rejection by these two countries would greatly limit the use of the drug in the Third World, and thus greatly

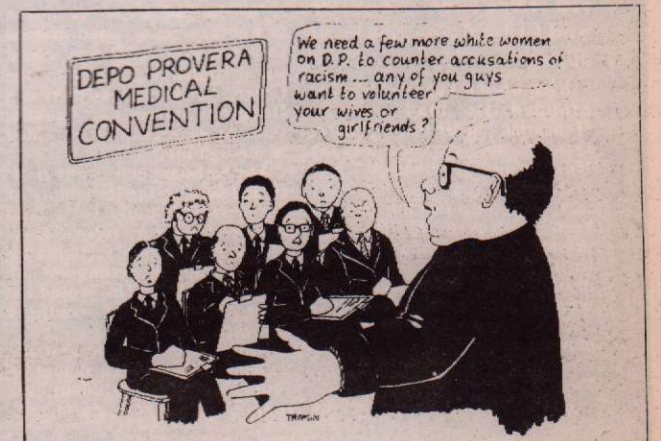
reduce profits. The medical practice as a whole defends the use of DP saying that the advantages and disadvantages are made quite clear and that choice is informed.

There is enough evidence available to repudiate this claim. If you can't read, or English is not your first language, you have to rely on what you are told. I would not think that many white middle class women would be rushed into a DP injection after coming round from an abortion.

Virtually all methods of contraception carry some danger to women. Some are more dangerous than others, both in the long and short term.

It is our right to decide if and when to have children, on our own terms. We should reject coercive and corrective population control and contraception that is not based on women's needs.

As Berer quite rightly says "Population control, in all its forms, is essentially about controlling women. Depo Provera is only one weapon of control among many."



Socialist students discuss ideas and action

By Janine Booth, NUS Women's Officer

The lessons of the current wave of student direct action will be at the heart of the discussion at this weekend's "The future for socialism" school organised by youth and student supporters of *Socialist Organiser* for 30 November and 1 December in Manchester.

We will be spelling out why direct action is not a thing of the past, but the only way available for students to fight back against the Tories.

The school is designed to clear away the increasingly fashionable nonsense that Marxism is outdated, and to present the basic elements that define modern revolutionary socialism.

We will look at some of the key actors and incidents in the history of the working class movement, explaining why Karl Marx is such an important figure and why the Russian revolution ultimately failed.

Sessions on the rise of fascism

Socialist Organiser supporters took the initiative in organising the 10,000 strong MANUS demo last month



In Germany, and on the national questions, will help clarify the socialist attitude to the growth of the far right internationally and to the spiralling national conflicts in Eastern Europe.

Workshops on the "Politics of Identity" and the history of black liberation movements will help place the present-day struggles of the specially oppressed in the context of a class analysis.

We will be answering such questions as "Is the working class finished?" and "Will there be a third world war?"

In the socialist tradition of debate, we are inviting the Fabians to an exchange on "Is there a parliamentary road to socialism?", and the Kinnockites to argue about government.

A creche, food, and overnight accommodation will be available, and transport is being fixed from all major cities. Registration is from 11.30 on Saturday.

For further information or to register, tear out the form below, and send to "Weekend School", SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Phone.....

Please send me more information about "The future for socialism" weekend school. Please register me for the school and send me information on transport from my area. I enclose £4 (£2 no grant): cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

How not to lead the student fightback

Paul McGarry looks at the twists and turns of the leaders of the National Union of Students

The right wing leaders of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) have suddenly regained an interest in direct action.

After years of dismissing occupations and demonstrations as "old-fashioned" methods of organising, the *New Directions* clique that runs NOLS and the National Union of Students is foaming at the mouth with enthusiasm, in particular for the Lancaster University occupation.

NUS President Stephen Twigg told the *Observer* (24 November) that "the issue of student poverty has to be raised, and occupations are an effective way of doing it".

But he quickly added qualifications (*The Times*, 25 November): "where there are local reasons for occupations we are supporting them... but... we do not consider a campaign of occupations appropriate".

And in case even qualified support for occupations could offend the college administrations, he commented:

For action but against a campaign?

"the target where hardship is concerned generally is not the institutions". But the college administrations are passing on Tory cuts with zest! Every college administration can quote Twigg's words back at the local Student Union.

Twigg's daily fluctuations are too subtle for his would-be successor, NUS vice-president and fellow Kinnockite Lorna Fitzsimmons, who is apparently charging around NUS headquarters claiming that she is leading the present mobilisations. On 26 November, twelve days after students at Lancaster went into occupation, Fitzsimmons managed to get out a national mailing. Most incredibly, she claimed that the occupations are "following on from our regional and local demonstrations". This is the same person who argued against "a splurge of action" in the first term at a recent National Executive meeting.

There are two explanations for all this. Either Twigg and Fitzsimmons are on mind-altering drugs, or they are running scared because of the upcoming NUS national conference in Blackpool in early December. As NOLS like to project a clean-living image, I suspect the latter is the real reason for our budding MPs' behaviour.

There is a cruel irony for NOLS in the week's events. On 14 November, the NUS National Executive voted for a Left Unity motion supporting the Lancaster action. In the same meeting, NOLS ensured the defeat of a Left Unity motion which argued that NUS's national campaign should concentrate on "organising various forms of action, e.g. pickets, occupations, lecture boycotts, press stunts, demos, etc." and that NUS should "support all actions in colleges and publicise them amongst the membership in an effort to spread the action".

Just ten days before Twigg's initial remarks were reported, he, along with his colleagues, was voting against the type of action he is so eager to embrace as his own. Instead the student movement was called on to "organise a day of action on 22 November with a view to targeting MPs' surgeries". The motion came from Lorna Fitzsimmons.

How sensible! All reports suggest no action, not even any viewing, got off the ground.

This latest act of treachery by NUS is just the latest episode in an encyclopaedia of misleadership.

Since taking the leadership of NUS in 1982, NOLS have sold students

short. Most recently, they have failed to mount any real campaign against loans. In November 1988, a wave of action similar to the present one swept across Britain's campuses, leading to the "Battle of Westminster", where mounted police charged an NUS demonstration without warning. Instead of stepping up the action, NUS put the dampers on, and ruined the campaign.

NOLS's perpetual inactivity flows from their slavish support for the Labour Party leadership. The last two years have seen NOLS concentrate on the General Election and NUS "reform", i.e. making NUS less democratic. Instead of combining an outgoing, fighting campaign with building for a Labour victory, NOLS has spent most of its time attacking Left Unity in an alliance with right-wing and anti-student-union forces.

NUS needs a rank and file organisation to take on the NOLS bureaucrats. And it is becoming increasingly obvious that NOLS has overstayed its welcome as the leadership of NUS. That is why Left Unity exists.

Join Left Unity!
Write to 56 Kevan House,
Wyndham Road, London
SE5, or phone 071-639
7967.

Newcastle occupies

By Mark Lickley,
President, Newcastle
Poly Student Union

Students are occupying part of Newcastle Poly's administration building in protest against charges for rent over the Christmas vacation.

The five-day-old occupation has followed a rent strike involving over 200 students, and a demonstration of 400 students through the city.

Left Unity supporter Mark Sandell, who is a member of the National Union of Students National Executive, has been present through most of the occupation.

Curiously, SWP members have been opposed to filling out the occupation's demand with political content, and have suggested NUS's Education Charter is too radical!

As we go to press, the college administration and the occupation representatives are entering into negotiation.

Fax messages of support to 091-232 4302.



Mark Lickley

Lancaster University

By Dan Judelson

Despite the eviction of around 200 students from University House on

Saturday 23 November, students at Lancaster University are still united in their campaign to defend student union autonomy and win lower rents.

Although we thought that some students in the occupation — particularly law students and overseas students — would leave voluntarily when bailiffs came in order to avoid arrest, not one single student did so. The bailiffs then proceeded to remove all the men first.

The sweating bailiffs then returned to the occupation and, assuming that they would receive a positive answer, asked the women if they would leave voluntarily. Again, not a single occupier wavered.

By this time, many students had got out of bed to join those who had been evicted outside University House and cheer each and every occupier as they were carried out. One person managed to get back in three times, much to the delight of the crowd.

The students then set off on a noisy and impromptu march around campus, with more students tumbling from their beds to show support.

On Monday lunchtime (25th), over 400 students attended a rally in front of the union building, at which they decided to spend every day this week building for the national rally they have called on Friday 29th. Events will include a soup kitchen to highlight student poverty and a torchlit march and vigil outside the Vice-Chancellor's house.

An emergency Union General Meeting was called for Tuesday night, 26th. It voted by a huge majority to continue the rent strike.

National rally: assemble at Lancaster University, 12.30pm, Friday 29 November.

Middlesex Poly

By Steve Mitchell

Students at four sites of Middlesex Poly are in occupation over cuts in education.

The occupations have eight demands, including increasing staff/student ratio and reopening closed sites.

The mood is very good. As one occupier put it, "we're in, and we're staying in until we win".

The organisers have been visiting other colleges in London and the South in an attempt to spread the action.

2. The action at these colleges has shown that direct action can involve the mass of students successfully in campaigns. NUS campaigns should be based on this kind of action.
3. While NUS NEC passed a resolution supporting action at Lancaster, the majority of NEC members have done little to support it. In particular the VP education who responsibility for NUS priority campaigns has done too little too late.

Lancaster University Student Union Executive give their verdict of NOLS' performance during their occupation in an emergency motion to the forthcoming NUS conference.

Towards Eur

No! The issue is democracy

By Tony Benn

Three points about the debate have interested me. First, there is fundamental agreement between the three party leaders. The Prime Minister is on the eve of negotiations so he has to be cautious.

The Leader of the Opposition, who hopes to take over, can be bolder. The Liberal Democrats, who are far from office, can be quite clear about their objective. There is no disagreement about the idea that we should move from the original membership of the community through the Single European Act to something stronger.

Secondly, a degree of caution has emerged from people who, when they discussed the matter 20 years ago, were far more uncritical. Thirdly — and I say this with some satisfaction — 21 years after I urged a referendum, I have won the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs Thatcher) and the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr Ashdown) to my cause. I had to wait 21 years, but it has been worth waiting for some recognition of the fact that the people have a right to a say in their government.

I do not want to go over old ground because this is not a question of yes or not to the status quo; we are looking to the future. Some people genuinely believe that we shall never get social justice from the British government, but we shall get it from Jacques Delors.

They believe that a good king is better than a bad parliament. I have never taken that view. Others believe that the change is inevitable, and that the common currency will protect us from inflation and will provide a wage policy. They believe that it will control speculation and that Britain cannot survive alone. None of these arguments persuade me because the argument has never been about sovereignty.

I do not know what a sovereign is, apart from the one that used to be in gold and the Pope, who is a sovereign in the Vatican. We are talking about democracy. No nation — not even the great United States which could, for all I know, be destroyed by a nuclear weapon from a Third World country — has the power to impose its will on other countries. We are discussing whether the British people are allowed to elect those who make the laws under which they are governed. The argument is nothing to do with whether we should get more maternity leave from Madam Papandreou than from Madam Thatcher. That is not the issue.

I recognise that when the members of the three Front Benches agree, I am in a minority. My next job therefore is to explain to the people of Chesterfield what we have decided. I will say first, "My dear constituents, in future you will be governed by people whom you do not elect and cannot remove. I am sorry about it. They may give you better creches and shorter working

hours, but you cannot remove them."

I know that sounds negative, but I have always thought it positive to say that the important thing about democracy is that we can remove without bloodshed the people who govern us. We can get rid of a Callaghan, a Wilson or even a right hon. Lady by internal processes. We can get rid of the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr Major). But that cannot be done in the structure that is proposed. Even if one likes the policies of the people in Europe one cannot get rid of them.

Secondly, we say to my favourite friends, the Chartist and suffragettes, "All your struggles to get control of the ballot box were a waste of time. We shall be run in future by a few white persons, as in 1832". The instrument, I might add, is the Royal Prerogative of treaty making. For the first time since 1649 the Crown makes the laws — advised, I admit, by the Prime Minister.

We must ask what will happen when people realise what we have done. We have had a marvellous debate about Europe, but none of us has discussed our relationship with the people who sent us here. Hon. Members have expressed views on Albania and the Baltic states. I have been dazzled by the knowledge of the continent of which we are all part. No one has spoken about how he or she got here and what we were sent here to do.

If people lose the power to sack their government one of several things happen. First, people may just slope off. Apathy could destroy democracy. When the turnout drops below 50 per cent, we are in danger.

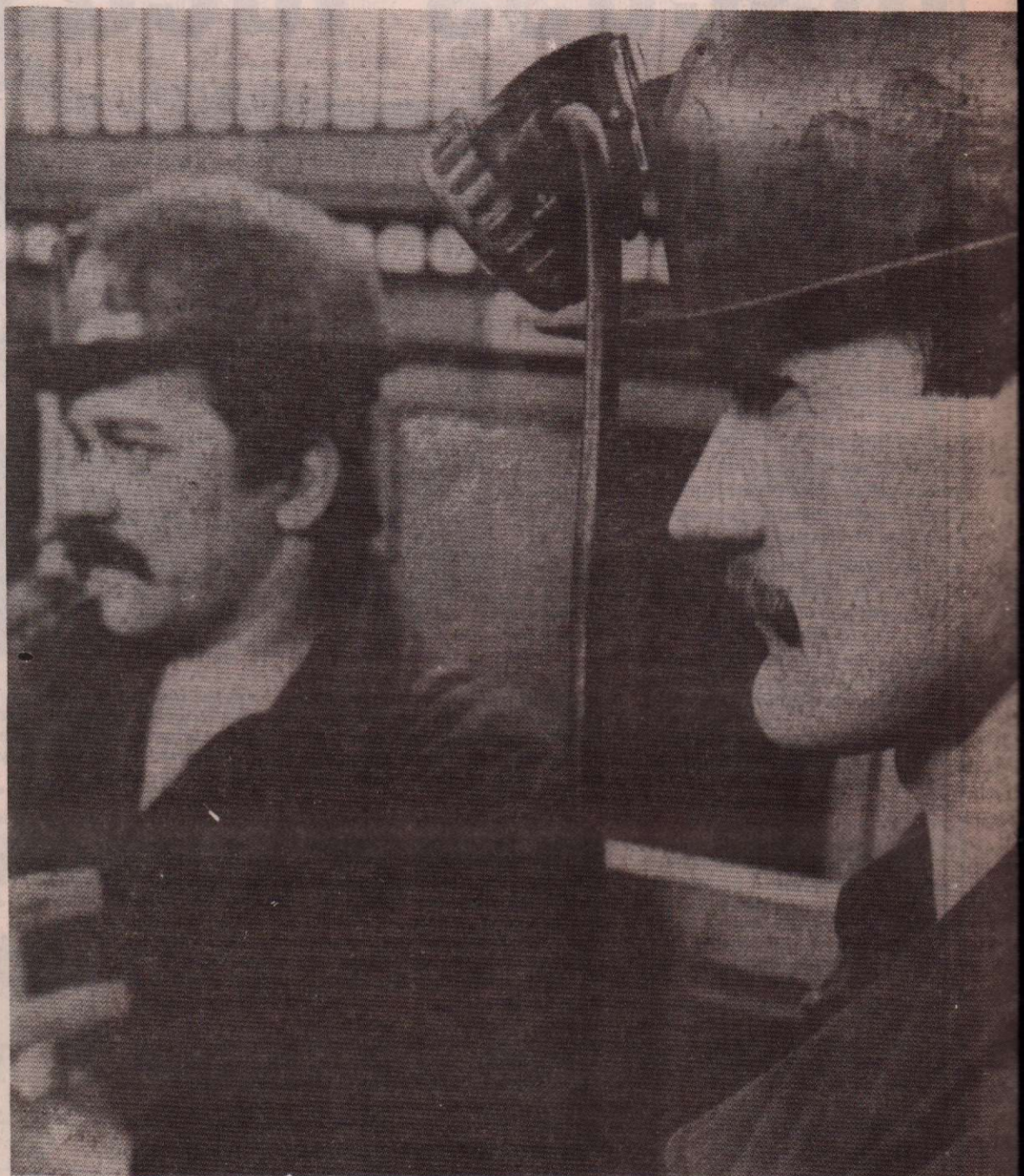
Mr Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Like in the United States.

Tony Benn: As my hon. Friend says, in the United States turnouts are very low. That is partly caused by the scale of the country.

The second thing that people can do is to riot. Riot is an old-fashioned method for drawing the attention of the government to what is wrong. It is difficult for an elected person to admit it, but the riot at Strangeways produced some prison reforms. Riot has historically played a much larger part in British politics than we are ever allowed to know.

Thirdly, nationalism can arise. Instead of blaming the Treaty of Rome, people say, "it is the Germans", or "it is the French". Nationalism is built out of frustration that people feel when they cannot get their way through the ballot box. With nationalism comes repression. I hope that it is not pessimistic — in my view it is not — to say that democracy hangs by a thread in every country of the world. Unless we can offer people a peaceful route to the resolution of injustices through the ballot box they will not listen to a House that has blocked off that route.

There are many alternatives open to us. One hon. Member said that he was young and had not fought in the war. He looked at a new



Polish miners, who have this month threatened strike action. Our answer to Euro-capitalist integration must be workers' unity

Europe. But there have been five Europes this century. There was one run by the King, the Kaiser and the Tsar — they were all cousins so that was very comfortable. They were all Queen Victoria's grandsons. And there was no nonsense about human rights when Queen Victoria's grandsons repressed people. Then there was the Russian revolution. Then there was the inter-war period. Then there was the Anglo-Soviet alliance. Then there was the cold war. Now we have a Boris Yeltsin who has joined the Monday Club. There have been many Europes. This is not the only Europe on offer.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland South (Chris Mullin) is a democratic federalist, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire North-East (Mr Barnes). They want an American-type constitution for Europe. It could be that our laws would hang on which way the Albanian members voted. I could not complain about that because that is democracy. However, it is unworkable. It is like trying to get an elephant to dance through a minefield. But it would be democratic.

Another way would be to have a looser, wider Europe. I have an idea for a Commonwealth of Europe. I am introducing a Bill on the sub-

ject. Europe would be rather like the British Commonwealth. We would work by consent with people. Or we could accept this ghastly proposal, which is clumsy, secretive, centralised, bureaucratic and divisive. That is how I regard the Treaty of Rome. I was born a European and I will die one. But I have never put my alliance behind the Treaty of Rome. I object to it. I hate being called an anti-European. How can one be anti-European when one is born in Europe? It is like saying that one is anti-British if one does not agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. What a lot of nonsense it is.

I ask myself why the House is ready to contemplate abandoning its duties, as I fear that it is. I was elected 41 years ago this month. This Chamber has lost confidence in democracy. It believes that it must be governed by someone else. It is afraid to use the powers entrusted to it by its constituents. It has traded power for status. One gets asked to go on the telly if one is a Member of Parliament. The Chamber does not want to use its power. It has accepted the role of a spectator and joined what Bagehot called the dignified part of the constitution, leaving the Crown, under the control of the Prime Minister, to be the Executive part.

If democracy is destroyed in Bri-

tain it will not be the communists, Trotskyists or subversives but this House which threw it away. The rights that are entrusted to us are not for us to give away. Even if I agree with everything that is proposed, I cannot hand away powers lent to me for five years by the people of Chesterfield. I just could not do it. It would be theft of public rights.

Therefore, there is only one answer. If people are determined to submit themselves to Jacques Delors, Madam Papandreou and the Council of Ministers, we must tell the people what is planned. If people vote for that, they will all have capitulated. Julius Caesar said "We are just merging our sovereignty". So did William the Conqueror.

It is not possible to support the government's motion. I have told the Chief Whip that I cannot support the Labour motion. I invite the House to vote against the government's motion and not to support a motion which purports to take us faster into a Community which cannot reflect the aspirations of those who put us here. That is not a nationalist argument nor is it about sovereignty. It is a democratic argument and it should be decisive in a democratic Chamber.

Tony Benn was speaking in parliament.

European unity?



cross the continent.

Yes! Fight for democracy

By Sean Matgamna

The reasons are many and complex why an important segment of the Tory Party now opposes the last moves towards a European federal state.

One reason is that the European Community's Social Charter would become mandatory, forcing the British state to make better — and more expensive — social service provisions. Britain, which has the most savagely anti-working class trade union laws in Western Europe, would come under pressure to "democratise". There would be pressure for electoral reform.

In other words, the norms now being operated in the European Community would, if Britain were forced to adopt them, lead to the undoing of much that Thatcher and the Tories have done in the last

dozen years!

Capitalists openly complain that if wages, and the "social wage" rise then they will be unable to compete: it is the same old argument that is used to oppose real wage increases.

One survey, for example, shows that an average British worker produces on average only £70,000 of goods in a year, a lot more than the average wage, but less than a worker in France or Germany; membership of the EC, say the bosses' representatives, will raise costs, for the reasons given above, and thus cut into the £70,000 and cut profits, making British industry even less competitive.

In other words, compared to Europe, Britain is now, comparatively, something of a backwater, something of a happy hunting ground for backward employers. They see the European Community as a threat to the Britain they run.

Go back 10 years or so, back, say, to the discussion on the EC in *Socialist Organiser* in the early '80s. There you will find the then very powerful anti-European Community left — including Tony Benn — raising, in anticipation, exactly the same arguments against the EC as the Tories raise — from the other side.

The EC would, they used to argue, stop a left wing Westminster government from carrying through socialist measures. The Europeans would hold us back from socialism. Since capitalism was enshrined in the EC constitution. British sovereignty was the best guarantee for the future the labour movement had of controlling its own affairs, and preserving the chance of settling with our own bourgeoisie.

For the left, too — I mean the mainstream left of the broad labour movement, not the "revolutionary" groups, which have chopped and changed on Europe shamelessly over the years, or the Stalinists who used to follow USSR foreign policy — the reason for opposing the EC, and now for opposing moves towards federalism are many and complex.

At the core of it is a plain old-fashioned unashamed British nationalism, filled up with attachment to the Westminster parliamentary tradition. The messianic notion inbedded in the old arguments that "Europe" would stop "us" reaching socialism was itself deeply nationalistic. *Socialist Organiser* answered those arguments then: a revolutionary socialist government at Westminster would disrupt and break EC restrictions on its right to take action against capitalism — and appeal for support, solidarity and similar actions to the workers of all Europe. The same answer in general is appropriate now that Britain is so far from being ahead of the rest of Europe that some Tories see the EC as a "socialist" conspiracy.

Benn is right: the issue is democracy. In the EC now there is a very high degree of economic integration; there is a powerful administrative bureaucracy; there are the national parliaments none of which have even titular political control over the whole EC edifice or over its bureaucracy; there is the European Parliament, which has acquired some power but nevertheless still stands to the actual running of the EC as a subordinate vestigial medieval parliament might stand to a ruling monarch. This image is implicit in what Tony Benn said in parliament.

Europe at the end of the 20th century is like this because parliamentary democracy was won inside the sovereign nation states of Europe and has not yet been won in the half-formed federal state into which those nation states are coalescing. Economically and politically, Europe needed to unite not at the end of the 20th century but at its beginning.

Early in the century socialists such as Leon Trotsky raised the call for the working class movement to create a United States of Europe.

The failure of the capitalist class to achieve European unity led two times in the first half of the century to wars which wrecked European civilisation, and — 1939-45 — reduced most of Europe's leading cities to ruins and rubble. Two times Germany, which had the

strongest and most dynamic capitalist economy, tried to unite Europe — and succeeded briefly in 1940 — two times Germany was defeated.

After the second great slaughter, the main capitalist classes started to unite. They could not, for political reasons, decide to create a European federal union that would allow the European economy to follow its natural course of development as one entity within a single state. National hatreds, divisions and pride were too strong for that.

So they did it back to front: economy first, and then, decades later — now — politics.

They created an international European coal and steel community in 1951 and the Common Market (with six countries, excluding Britain, which joined in 1972) in 1957-58.

Slowly, since then, the European Community has knitted together, until in some ways it is more closely knitted into one entity than the US economy is.

Slowly, the bureaucracy created to run the affairs of the Community has siphoned away the powers of the sectional national parliaments, rising in power and importance, until today it has greater power than any of the national parliaments.

The European Parliament is still a shadowy affair, though its power has slowly grown — too slowly — and is growing: the bourgeoisie now want to take the decisive steps to federal unity as they have taken all the other steps over 40 years — by strengthening the bureaucracy.

Is it possible for serious socialists to respond to all this by calls to strengthen one, or all, of the national parliaments? But the essential thing is that the economic unity of Europe is already a fact: the EC is an economic entity distinct from all others in the world market — currency union, for example, is very important but it is a matter of tidying things up, a detail. Britain is locked into it.

Britain could not without tremendous economic self-destruction now disentangle from the European Community. It is this economic unification that undermines and enfeebles the national parliaments: their influence on the EC varies with the strength of their economies, but not even the German parliament can control the EC. And it is this enfeebling of the parliaments, their relegation to regional administration units, provincial parliaments, that builds and strengthens the power of the bureaucracy.

Westminster, the British provincial parliament of the EC, could not now democratically exercise political control over "its own", unless it were, undemocratically, to be given control over the whole economic and social entity of which Britain is a mere part!

The bourgeois democratic answer to today's realities is a fully empowered sovereign European parliament. That is now the way to win democratic political control from the bureaucrats and over the bureaucrats.

The argument that you do not, under capitalism, thereby win control over the economy is true. And it is just as true of Britain and Westminster. The socialist answer to this problem is to win and use political power against the capitalists who own the economies.

An anachronistic championing of the sovereignty of regional parliaments within Britain against the giant Westminster parliament would not necessarily diminish the

power the British capitalist class exercise at Westminster. Nor does the championing of what are in fact now regional parliaments, like Westminster, necessarily weaken the EC power of the capitalist class exercised now mainly through the EEC bureaucracy. But it is a foolish argument — and an anarchist one — which dismisses more political democracy because it does not in itself solve the problem of economic inequality and lack of democracy. Socialists recognise politics and political rights as steps, as tools, in the realisation of economic democracy.

What we need in Europe is a fight for full political rights in a parliament with real power over the community. It is understandable that political formations like the SWP, who dismiss Westminster politics too, dismiss the idea of a democratic struggle for European democracy. They are essentially — if you reduce what they say and do to a coherence it does not openly display — a-political anarchists, albeit anarchists who have tasted the forbidden fruit of political knowledge, and, knowing they are naked, feel enough shame to hide their anarchism in toy-town "Leninism" and, on election day, calls to "vote Labour"! Tony Benn is no anarchist! His reference to "Communists, Trotskyists and subversives" is irony directed against the establishment, but he is not a Trotskyist, nor a subversive either.

What you are left with in Benn's speech is an amazing defeatism — European political integration, he says more or less clearly, must mean the end of democracy, autocratic rule. The power of Westminster is being snuffed out: there can not, he seems to say, be a Europe-wide replacement for it. What should the labour movement do? If taking up the age old struggle for democracy, but on a European scale, in alliances with the other workers of Europe, is ruled out what can the working class do? Unite with Mrs Thatcher?

A decade ago Tony Benn called for a national liberation movement in Britain, against the policies Thatcher pursued and against American bases. Does Tony Benn — who has stood out bravely against Thatcherism, and against its reflection in the Labour Party, all through the '80s — now think we should seek collaboration with Thatcher's Tories in such a "liberation struggle" against the European Community?

That is the logic of what he seems to be saying, and where it necessarily leads. It is the reductio ad absurdum of all such politics! Mrs Thatcher, by her unexpected stance now, may yet render the labour movement a service by making it impossible not to recognise such politics for the regressive nonsense they are and always were.

Not alliances with Thatcher in defence of Britain's already irretrievably eroded sovereignty, but the forging of a European-wide working class alliance to win a fully sovereign democratic European parliament — that is the way forward from where we are now.

We should say yes to a democratic United States of Europe!

United European labour should fight for the Socialist United States of Europe!

The left and Labour's youth, 1963-65

"New leadership" and irrelevance

In this article — one of a series — Jack Cleary shows how the Healyites (Keep Left/SLL/WRP) in the mid-1960s pioneered ideas now taken up by Militant and the SWP. The Healyites were the biggest left group in Labour's then-lively youth movement, outstripping Young Guard (the future IS/SWP) and Militant.

1963-64: The YS under Keep Left leadership

In January 1963, a 1200 strong rally for jobs assembled in Smith Square (where Labour Party headquarters was situated) as the rump YS NC was meeting. Under this pressure, four of the remaining eight members resigned (three of them were Young Guard supporters). They had showed no signs of resigning before the rally! Two others walked out, without resigning. Of the 1962 NC three had now been expelled, four had resigned, and two had walked out of the meeting, leaving an NC of two.

Outside the Scarborough YS conference in Easter 1963 there was again a big Keep Left demonstration. The YS registered a small advance: there were 365 delegates present, and 769 registered branches.

The drift of the Healy tendency is illustrated by the fact that at the beginning of 1963 Roger Protz took out a writ in the High Court seeking to have made null and void the NEC decision making anyone associated with Keep Left ineligible for Labour Party membership! He also sought a High Court declaration restoring him to membership of St Pancras North Labour Party. Psychologically, this would be rationalised by Keep Left supporters then — as by Militant supporters in the early 1980s when Militant attempted to rely on the courts to save them from the right wing of the Labour Party — as using the right wing's friends in the bourgeois law courts against them. But it was a breach of the principle of keeping the bourgeois state out of the affairs of the labour movement. Any policy for maintaining an integration of revolutionaries in the labour movement which depends on the help of the law courts is fantastic — as Militant found out in the 1980s.

But something of decisive importance now occurred: Keep Left won a majority on the NC. Keep Left supporters took seven of the 11 NC seats. Young Guard took one. It was the opening of a new phase of YS history, though much confusion reigned. Political confusion was manifested still. The conference which gave the Healyites the leadership of the YS came close to voting through the official Labour Party document, Signposts for the Sixties. Conference passed a Young Guard resolution from Hackney against all H-bombs and all military alliances. This was voting for Young Guard policy, while giving control to those who de-

nounced such policies as treason to the "workers' state" and political scabbery!

The new YS NC immediately launched a big official YS campaign on youth unemployment. The Tory government was heavily discredited by now, and tottering towards defeat in 1964.

Harold Wilson, a former Labour left, had succeeded Gaitskell as Labour leader early in 1963 and the Tribune left was conciliated. The Labour Party regime would now swing slowly towards internal tolerance and liberalism. The rule of the stone-age right wingers, of the Gaitskell sect — the future SDPers of 1981 — was over. It would be 25 years before a purging intolerant regime like the Gaitskell regime returned to the Labour Party.

The YS NC organised another big rally and lobby of Parliament for 11 February 1964. But the YS was not exactly thriving. The Brighton conference, at Easter 1964, had 347 delegates claiming to represent 25,000 members organised in 722 branches (this would include "social" elements in Keep Left branches). It was small enough after four years.

Again conference rejected support for Signposts for the Sixties, opposed immigration controls, and called for nationalisation of the basic industries under workers' control. Again a Keep Left majority of 7 out of 11 was returned for the National Committee.

Chairman John Robertson announced at conference that he would shortly be expelled, for he had been caught red-handed selling Keep Left in a rural area of Scotland... Brighton was to be the last official YS conference for 18 months. By the time of the next conference, the YS had split and the Labour Party had reorganised its remaining youth with a new constitution and even a new name.

1964-65: The Labour Party goes for a purge, Keep Left goes for a split

In 1964, for the second year running Keep Left had the majority on the YS NC. But the Labour Party bureaucracy stood in the way of developing the YS on left politics, and the imminent General Election spurred on the bureaucracy to settle with Keep Left.

They began to pick off the leaders of Keep Left. John Robertson was duly expelled. Dave Ashby, his replacement as chairman of the YS, quickly followed. And now Keep Left gave increasing signs of being willing for a break with the Labour Party.

At the time of the Easter 1964 YS conference there were already whispers about plans for a "Young Marxist Alliance" which could throw off the Labour Party shackles and go on to build a real mass youth movement. Initially Keep Left denied such a perspective. Events, however, had their logic. Transport House attacked relentlessly: an election was looming and the YS with its militant and distinct policies could not be allow-

ed to "embarrass" the leaders of the Labour Party. Keep Left was more and more isolated, and more and more the hard core looked for salvation to recruiting raw youth.

The parallel with Militant in Scotland at the height of the poll tax campaign is striking.

"Social" branches had originally been a valuable technique for starting to draw working class youth to a political YS. Increasingly, under pressure of the witch-hunt, they became a substitute for and an alternative to any politics other than the current, often arbitrarily selected, "campaign" (fight the Tories, defend John Robertson) or the current demonstration. The turnover of youth, always a feature of Keep Left, increased dramatically.

The hysterical atmosphere inside the left burst out at the Keep Left meeting at the 1964 conference in a violent harangue by John Robertson in which he said Young Guard were nothing but "scabs" and that those who were not 100% with Keep Left were 100% against them. "Get out of our way or we'll go over your bodies", he warned, and repeated the warning. Scuffles between YG and KL supporters followed.

Roger Protz, Keep Left's editor, resigned after that meeting. Earlier (in 1962), the main organiser of Keep Left's YS faction, Gavin Kennedy, had left the tendency. Now a left buffer began to form between Keep Left and Young Guard and Transport House, as Keep Left generated a left wing opposition to its course towards split, independent of the extremely factional and factionally motivated Grant and Cliff tendencies (though IS eventually absorbed most of it).

Outside the YS a movement of engineering apprentices began to be built, and Keep Left saw the possibility of the YS fusing with this movement. Also in the summer of 1964, gangs of youths, rivals in dress and lifestyles, the "Mods" (early Beatles style) and old-fashioned "Rockers" rioted and fought each other in various places. Keep Left hailed this as the "revolt of the youth", a revolt unfortunately in advance of the capacity of the YS to give it leadership...But with an effort they would catch up...

The attractions of an independent YS under Keep Left's exclusive control could only be enhanced by such events, and the leadership of the Healy tendency made good use of them. Keep Left organised a lobby of the Labour Party NEC in June against the expulsion of John Robertson and the closing down of Streatham YS. The Keep Left NC majority organised a "Fight the Tories" campaign culminating in a demonstration on 27 September which numbered 1500 people: critics pointed to the rawness of most participants.

In the late summer of 1964 branches of the YS began to be shut down. Keep Left did not retreat: instead, it stepped up the hostilities. The National Committee issued a YS manifesto, "Forward with the Young Socialists", with a foreword by Dave Ashby, who had been removed as YS chairman by simply being told that he was no longer on the books of the Labour Party in Leeds. At a meeting of the YS NC in August this manifesto was passed, 7 for (all Keep Left)

and one abstention (Roger Rosewell, a supporter of Young Guard; he later became IS/SWP industrial organiser, and is now a witch-hunter).

September's Keep Left carried a stirring and defiant clarion call by John Robertson which expressed the "go it alone" perspective of KL. "The time to fight is now", he insisted. "At Brighton at Easter we passed a policy for a real fight and an end to the shadow-boxing of Wilson and his cronies..." Conference decided policies and elected an NC to carry them out. 7 out of 11 are faithful to conference policies. "Forward with the YS" expresses those policies, and those who call themselves YS must stand by the manifesto. "We will unite with anyone who is prepared to fight for the policies of the manifesto". "At Brighton we told the bureaucrats we would not tolerate witch-hunts and expulsions. We meant exactly that. We will not tolerate them. We will fight on irrespective of the actions of the bureaucracy and the right wing. As far as we are concerned, they can go to hell, with a well-placed boot from us in the rear to help them on their way." Forward to the September 27 "Fight the Tories" demonstration. "For a Labour government with socialist policies".

The style of this piece of raving unreality suggests that Gerry Healy wrote it. It inverts the real relationship of forces in the world outside Gerry Healy's head. The tragedy now was that the leadership of the Young Socialists was in the hands of people capable of hypnotising themselves with senseless bombast like this. The Labour Party leaders were all too eager to help them on their way.

As Young Guard put it in September: there was now a sulphurous smell of witch-hunting in the air. According to later SLL/WRP myth, what happened next is that the Labour Party leaders expelled the YS, which refused to be snuffed out, choosing independence instead. In fact there were expulsions and purges, there were closures, sometimes the police were called to remove recalcitrant YSers, but there was no suppression of the YS as such. The leaders of the Keep Left tendency decided on an organised break with the Labour Party in the face of the witch-hunting and limited expulsions, and thereafter they set out, by being awkward and provocative in local Labour Parties and elsewhere, to have as many people as possible expelled and branches closed down. The bureaucracy did not need much provocation!

Finally, the Keep Left NC majority announced that it was calling a conference of the YS independent of the bureaucracy for February 27-28 1965, and invited every YS member to attend.

To stop the split a rather feeble "Save the YS campaign" was started, capable of attracting only 200 to a meeting in London in October 1964, despite having the support of Tribune, the ex-Keep Lefters such as Kennedy and Protz, Young Guard, Militant (which published its first issue in October 1964) and the "Nottingham Group" (forerunner of Socialist Outlook and Socialist Action). The Labour Party leaders contributed to "saving the YS" by issuing a circular telling people not to attend the meeting. They were entirely for the secession of Keep Left!

1965: A revolutionary youth movement?

Was there not a case to be made for the policy of taking the youth outside the Labour Party straitjacket and continuing to build?

It must depend on an assessment of the situation. For all the bluster, Keep Left was a very small force; so was the entire YS. It was ludicrous to pretend that YS conference decisions could be counterposed to the official policies of the Labour Party without a complete break. This break could only lead to the hiving-off of a small youth group with some ideas to make propaganda for. Was that desirable then, was it responsible revolutionary politics in the situation?

The SLL reprinted articles by Trotsky dealing with the situation in France in 1935.

MAKE THESE 'LEFT' MPs FIGHT

SIDNEY BIDWELL	JOHN HORNER	ROY HUGHES	GEORGE PERRY	J. LEE
TREVOR AMK	A. JACKSON	A. ATKINSON	STAN BEWERT	TOM SMITH
R. DAVIES	RUSSELL KEFER	A. ATKINS	ETAN GANNE	A. BORTH
JOHN MCDONALD	EMIRIS HUGHES	FRANK ALLAN	NORMAN POPE	MICK KERR
LENA JEGGA	ALAN DEANEY	TOM DAVEN	ARTHUR LEWIS	BERNIE BORDEN
J. DICKENS	ERIC VARLEY	S.O. DAVIES	JAK MURKADO	RICHARD KELLY
MAURICE EDELMAN	JOHN BARKER	ROBERT MOFF	MARGA WILKIN	MILVAIN GAITHER
ARNOLD GREGORY	CHRIS MCNAMON	WILLIAM HALLIDAY	PAUL ROSE	FRANK FLEMMING
ERIC HOFFER	BONNY STEWART	MARGARET GIBSON	JOHN BENDIS	ANNIE GIBSON
GORDON ROBERTS	ROBERT LEITCH	JANE LEITCH	JOHN LEITCH	JOHN LEITCH

HANDS OFF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION!



support the Red Guards

Years after they left the Labour Party the Healyites were promising to "make the left MPs fight" Wilson. Any SLLer bold enough to ask "how, exactly?" would get a smack in the chops and be expelled as a "faintheart" or a "scab". In May 1967 they combined "making the left MPs fight" with fervent support for...Wang Zhaoping and his "Red Guards".

The Newsletter

Weekly Organ of the Central Committee of the Socialist Labour League

10th ANNIVERSARY

MAY DAY MESSAGE

BUILD NEW LEADERSHIP

Led by four large, hand-painted pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky... It was the largest May Day demonstration organised by Trotskyists in any part of the world...

Trotskyism lives, fights and grows

BY G. HEALY

HAD TROTSKY been alive, there would have been no doubt about his reactions to last Sunday's demonstration. For here was the sort of party he fought and died for on the march...

The political keynote of the demonstration was working-class unity in the fight against right-wing Labour's betrayal. Success after success in the march carried flags and banners demanding that the "left" MPs fight Wilson, while others insisted on the necessity for nationalisation of the major industries and the military victory of the Vietnamese people over the American armed forces.

Trotsky would have endorsed every single point made by the marchers. He would have applauded the ability of the organisers to bring together so many workers of varied political persuasions...

ONLY FORCE

Now that the English working class is undergoing an unforgettable experience with the reformist Labour government of Wilson...



Behind Communist Sinister for

BY MICHAEL BANDA

WHATEVER WILSON and his minions may be, it is clear that they are not the sort of people who would be interested in the welfare of the British working class...

Reduced costs. How to face this? Mr. Wilson's response to the question is to reduce the cost of living. This is not the sort of policy that would be expected of a government that claims to be socialist...

irreversible for the Healy tendency. Impatience with the tempo of development in the working class movement and wishful thinking about what could be done outside the labour movement with a small section of youth (and a good printing press!) led the Healy tendency to what became — for all their bluster — a sectarian-abstentionist surrender to the dominant reformist bureaucracy in the labour movement.

That the break with the Labour Party was the product of a qualitative political degeneration and of hysteria was demonstrated to anyone still capable of learning (or still needing to learn) by the events of November 1964, when the seceding "revolutionary" YS engaged in strike-breaking!

Apprentice engineers, mainly in Manchester and Liverpool, had begun to organise an unofficial movement around wages and conditions. A big unofficial national apprentices' strike had come from similar beginnings in 1960 and in 1951. In September 1964, 1500 apprentices took part in a one-day strike. A committee was elected. Keep Left, the Young Communist League, Militant and others were represented. Bending to the untutored militancy of angry apprentices, it set the date for a strike. The Keep Left minority on the committee opposed this action as premature. Almost certainly this judgement was correct. Did they accept the decision of the strike committee majority? Not the "majority of the YS"! They now considered themselves the anointed leaders, by right, of the youth — of all youth. They broke away from the committee and denounced the YCLers and Militant for deliberately betraying the apprentices. Then they announced a date (9 March 1965) on which they would call their own apprentices' strike!

tionary party". For them, the party became an entity separate from history, from society, and even from politics (their politics were wildly unstable), when the needs of its onanistic development required it. It was concerned essentially only with its own growth and survival, by almost any means and on any conditions, and irrespective of its relationship to the labour movement and the working class; irrespective too of what damage techniques such as systematic lying would do to that movement.

To "maintain" his party — and his own princely bureaucratic lifestyle — Healy would in the 1970s, after much political zig-zagging, sell it as a spying agency (on Arab dissidents and Jews) to various Arab governments, bourgeois or worse.

It should be noted that it was now — from Healyites, in the mid-'60s — that the notion first made its appearance in Britain of raising the call "Build the Revolutionary Party!" as a central slogan. (It had, I believe, been so used in France by the Frank-Bleibtreu faction in 1946-8, and by the Lambertists in 1952-58). Today, it is commonplace in Britain. The people who mocked the Healyites for it, and called it "toytown Bolshevism", in the mid '60s — the Young Guard/IS-SWP group — picked it up in the '70s, and now they, too, use "Build the Revolutionary Party!" as the answer to most current political problems.

In the 1960s it did the Healyites no good! The youth were organised always on the perspective of imminent revolutionary crisis, and sent on one campaign after another. Certainly by the mid-'60s (probably earlier) the SLL leadership was using this as a cynical

"The people who mocked the Healyites' 'toytown Bolshevism' in the mid-'60s picked it up themselves in the '70s."

technique. The fact that the perspectives of the SLL were always quickly falsified led to a rapid turnover in membership. Many of the cadres dropped away in the mid-'60s, Ashby and Robertson for example. Robertson, who ate state-capitalist "scabs" for breakfast in 1964, was knocking around with Leeds IS in 1968-9, and later went to the CP.

The Healy regime destroyed real political life. From about 1966 systematic lying about political opponents and their positions became a prominent feature of the SLL. Surviving cadres suddenly had to accept the line that Ernest Mandel and Michel Pablo had supported the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956 — something none of them had ever heard about until a decade after it allegedly happened! Nevertheless, many of them — all those who "survived" this period — swallowed it. Then when the great mass movement against the Vietnam war erupted in 1967, and a vast new ultra-left youth radicalisation started, the sectarian SLL, finding "its" territory encroached upon, could only denounce it, isolating itself from the post-1968 radicalisation. It is a grim and tragic story, but we will not follow it beyond this point.

The secession of Keep Left marked the end of a definite period for the YS. In the early '60s it had been politically centre stage, with a more or less clear field for development as a socialist youth organisation. The 1964-65 split marked a defeat for socialist youth, a defeat centrally the responsibility of the Labour bureaucracy, but which happened also because the leaders of the old Trotskyist movement failed the revolutionary youth. A mass YS had not been built. The character of the Wilson government, especially after 1966, made the YS far from attractive to militant and socialist youth in the late '60s. The great youth mobilisation after 1967 was to pass the rump LPYS by (while the Keep Left YS hid from it). Prospects of real development did not open again until after 1970, and by then the LPYS had other problems. Now Militant was in control.

The French Socialist Party bureaucracy had started to move against the revolutionary leaders of the Socialist youth. Trotsky argued for a bold orientation to building an independent party: the situation was fast becoming revolutionary, war and fascism threatened, the SP leaders wanted to "make docile cannon fodder of the youth" for French imperialism and to beat down opposition to the SP's alliance with the bourgeois Radicals in the Popular Front.

But for the Healy tendency to have themselves off in 1964, on the eve of a Labour government, after they had been working in the Labour Party for 16 years, was political nonsense. The "brave" talk was toytown politics, rightly seen by Wilson and Co. as aiding them. And the leaders of Keep Left had a big element of choice — a free choice on whether to take all their forces out.

A policy of setting up an independent revolutionary YS might logically not have prevented a section of the youth from also being individual members of the Labour Party. In 1965 the SLL leaders occasionally talked of things like this for the future.

But if the SLL leaders had been capable of such a balanced policy and strategy then they would never have allowed themselves to be pushed into a break with the Labour Party on the eve of the formation of the first Labour government in 13 years, an event which would (and did) allow millions of workers to learn about political reformism from experience. The point is that the break was unbalanced and hysterical.

The parallel with Militant now is striking here too. Whatever "good" reasons can be cited for what Militant is doing, the people who ran the ridiculous Walton by-election campaign, and, among other things, thereby allowed the right wing to begin to remove Dave Nellist and Terry Fields from parliament, are politically unbalanced and irrational.

The SLL developed ludicrous theories about the possibility of a short cut to a mass revolutionary organisation via "the youth", as if it were possible artificially and at will to separate a generation of youth from the general experience of the class and the labour movement.

In reality they went marching out with a few thousand mainly raw youth, organised

by a few hundred revolutionaries, foolishly proclaiming that they had defeated the Labour bureaucracy. They went chasing their will-of-the-wisp on the eve of one of the most important experiences of the working class with reformism in government, removing their section of the revolutionary youth from the struggle in the political labour movement.

One consequence of this was that after 1966, when the Labour Government secured a majority in the March election (thus losing its excuses) and then went on a witch-hunting binge against striking seamen and introduced a statutory wage freeze in July, the sincere reformist activists simply began to drop away from the Labour Party. Had the earlier sectarian bloodletting in the YS not occurred, probably they could have been organised to give the Wilson government a difficult passage.

Servicing the YS as an independent organisation demanded more and more of the efforts and attention of the entire SLL cadre, a few hundred strong. By 1965, for example, building worker militants in Manchester were being harangued and browbeaten into accepting that their industrial work was unimportant compared with organising "revolutionary" youth clubs. (Some of them eventually joined IS).

The same youth-centred concern meant that shrill denunciation (occasionally justified, often not) of the CP in industries such as the ports, for the propagandist enlightenment of youth on the "essential" nature of Stalinism, replaced responsible concern with unity in the class struggle. In the dock strike of 1967, for instance, the SLL pursued a vicious propaganda war against the Communist Party, some of whose members were fighting the port reorganisation in alliance with revolutionaries, with Workers' Fight, for example. This replacement of the real struggle with newspaper commentaries was part of the process of losing touch with reality and with the real working class and the real labour movement.

1964-65: From splitting to strikebreaking

The 1964 turn was a turn away from the labour movement and from the work of transforming it, and it was to prove

Keep Left after the 1965 split

In February 1965 the Morecambe conference called by the Keep Left YS NC majority was attended by 1,000 people. It declared itself to be the YS from then on, with Keep Left as its official paper: effectively it became the youth wing of the SLL which now went off on an "Oehlerite binge" to end all Oehlerite binges, and whose central slogan became "Join the SLL, build the revolu-

Law, labour and "union capitalism"

A full view of the left and anti-Semitism

LETTER

Over recent weeks the issue of left-wing anti-Zionism/anti-semitism has been dealt with in a highly commendable way by this paper.

The myth of Nazi-Zionist collaboration is one aspect of this issue.

The far-right in Britain accuses Zionists of collaborating with the British security services for the purpose of achieving a Jewish state (by creating the "myth" of the Holocaust).

Sections of the left accuse Zionists of collaborating with the Nazis for exactly the same reason. The parallel is striking and both are sickening and sinister myths with phenomenally frightening implications for Jews all over the world today.

Neither argument deserves the respect of an intellectual response.

If it is to be given, however, then the attack should be fully comprehensive — a definite failure of SO's recent well-intentioned approach.

I draw attention to a few of many points which may have been overlooked:

(1) It was in fact the Mufti of Jerusalem, with the political aim of preventing Zionist settlement in the area, who conspired with Hitler and the Nazis. This is not an absurd attempt to paint the Palestinians with the Nazi collaboration brush. It is, however, a clear, undeniable and relevant historical fact.

(2) The idea of Nazism having any sort of partnership with Zionism shows a fundamental misunderstanding of Nazism. The idea that the most virulently organised anti-semitic movement the world has ever seen could possibly compromise with a Jewish movement or that it could possibly be in Hitler's interests to do so during the war is totally absurd.

(3) Certainly a number of individual Jews did collaborate with the Nazis, as did individual socialists and trade unionists. This concept of the Jews sharing collective guilt and blame for the actions of a few is a classic historical strand of anti-semitism. For example, the Nazis blamed Jews generally for Communism and Capitalism as individual Jews, such as Marx and Rothschild were prominent figures in both movements.

(4) There also exists a huge paradox in the argument. On the one hand we are asked to believe that before the war the Zionist movement was a small insignificant group. Yet at the same time we are asked to believe that the Zionists were powerful and significant enough to conspire with the most powerful country in Europe at the time.

This is also parallel with another long standing classical anti-semitic strand — the Jew, on the one hand a vermin-like inferior being, yet at the same time powerful enough to be dominating the world.

I have only touched upon a small number of points, all of which in isolation crush this evil and poisonous myth. I hope it has broadened the scope of the argument for those who choose to intellectually confront and debate its purporters.

Anthony Hermer
Anti-Racism Officer
Manchester University Labour Club

Book

Barry Finger reviews "Which side are you on? — trying to be for labor when it's flat on its back" by Thomas Geoghegan. (New York; Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 1991.

This book takes a uniquely American view of the American labor movement. It is written by a union advocate — a Harvard law school graduate, no less, who, by income and profession is an outsider to the union movement.

But it also embodies a social sensibility — an identification with the underdog, the oppressed and the down — or soon to be down — and out of the American industrial heartland, that is all but extinct in this land of the leveraged buyout.

Geoghegan is, in short, a throwback to the idealistic social liberalism of the early CIO days. For him, the journey began reluctantly in the late 1960s. Not a new, or any other brand of leftist in college, he was cajoled against his better instincts to poll-watch as dissident miners tried to recapture their union from its murderously corrupt leadership.

With the victory of the rank and file, Geoghegan signed on as a staff attorney. From there, he eventually established a new base in Chicago, where in due course he threw himself into the struggles of teamsters, steel workers, nurses and carpenters. This, then, is a Baedeker's tour of the American rust belt — of labor beaten down by economic decline, capitalist laws and self-serving labor bureaucracies.

Geoghegan's tone is one of hard-boiled moralism, suspicious of ideologies, yet wide-eyed American in his embrace of quick-fix schemes. For starters, he understands as well as any socialist — and better than a good many — that there exists an indissoluble bond between democracy and solidarity.

This is a lesson even understood by good bourgeois democrats. Scrupulous concern for the trappings of fair-play electoralism within capitalist democracies is a powerful social glue that binds the working class to the "national mandate". In the American case, the failure to extend these concerns to the union movement represents also, in a cynical fashion, a bourgeois devotion to the sanctity of its own institutions. For capitalist democracy works best where working class solidarity is undermined.

And this is to no small degree the purpose of the very American law regulating union "democracy", the Landrum-Griffin act. This act is rightly dismissed by Geoghegan as a joke. But it's more than just a bad joke.

It expressly approves of indirect elections of national officers through delegate conventions. These delegate conventions are in turn composed of ex officio union officers. No attempt need be made to inform the rank and file as to when the elections occur, or to involve them in national campaigns.

And while local officers must be directly elected by the rank and file, there is no mechanism enforcing an

honest ballot. The act does not provide for a neutral agency, and the Labor Department has no interest in intervening on behalf of rank-and-file democracy. Well then, what else should one expect from a capitalist state?

Geoghegan — good lawyer and true-believer that he is — would like the US Congress to fix the problems of American labor. How? By providing for an outside neutral agency to count ballots; by requiring a rank-and-file vote for all officers; by giving all bona fide candidates a copy of the membership lists; and by providing "public funding" from the union treasury for all candidates.

These are of course, excellent suggestions and should be core elements in every insurgency struggle within the union movement. They are just unlikely to be on the legislative agenda of the Congress. For while the ruling class may sell us the hangman's rope, we should not expect them to build the scaffold and personally offer to test the integrity of the instrument.

"For the sorry state of American labour is not just attributable to the lack of internal democracy or Ronald Reagan. In the 1930s unions were every bit as authoritarian, and far more racist and sexist than they are today."

And Geoghegan's peculiar mix of cynicism and idealism leads him to other farflung social tributaries. He casts a jaundiced glance at socialism — few prospects, even less appeal. But "union capitalism" through pension fund control — now there's a vision packing a true wallop! This sort of thing leaves socialists rubbing their eyes in disbelief.

But then one remembers that Geoghegan believes that "union capitalism" is required because private capitalists lack the imagination, energy or vision to run a productive society. They want to make profits, it is true, but wish to skip the process of production itself in their pursuit.

They have forsaken innovation for papershuffling with economic chaos, ruined communities, broken workers and a plague of lawyers the predictable results. Traditional capitalists are thus no longer fit to run society, therefore... Oh well, only in America.

If Geoghegan is a little mushy on social theory, he is right on target when it comes to the current status of American labor law, and not just Landrum-Griffin. For the sorry state of American labor is not just attributable to the lack of internal democracy or Ronald Reagan. In the 1930s, unions were every bit as authoritarian, and far more racist and sexist than they are today. And Reagan is not the first dyed-in-the-wool reactionary of the post-war era.

No, the lack of dynamism stems all the way back to when American workers lost — for all intents and purposes — the right to organise. In fact, they only held that right briefly.

The "Big Bang" of the labor movement in the 1930s was detonated by the Norris-LaGuardia act, which stripped the courts of their right to hear cases involving strikes. "After the Norris-LaGuardia law, there was no law at

all. No injunctions. No US army to enforce the injunctions. Nothing. It was a total vacuum. It was in this total vacuum that the Big Bang occurred".

Because there were no rules, everything was fair game. No one had to establish their credentials as an "appropriate bargaining unit". There were no laws to prevent the steelworkers or autoworkers from mass picketing, secondary strikes of neutral employers or sit-downs. The 1935 Wagner act then compounded this by sanctioning the actual, affirmative right to unionise.

This was the context in which the modern Democratic Party was reborn. Still a bourgeois party resting on urban machines and Southern Bourbons, the Democrats were now capable of commanding the loyalties of the working class, while containing their aspirations.

The precise dynamics by which the working class was held in check within the Party by Southern racists, is no longer operative — a casualty of the civil rights movement. But before the civil rights movement could undermine Jim Crow, the labor movement had already been defanged by the Taft-Hartley act of 1947.

This act made illegal everything that the CIO did in the 1930s. It is nicknamed in American labor, the Taft-Hartley Slave Labor act. The Democrats' platforms always promise to abolish it, the Democratic Congress — even when combined with Democratic Presidents — never bothered to.

Beyond this is the outright politicisation of the National Labor Relations Board. A product of the Wagner act, the NLRB is charged with investigating unfair labor practices arising from union disputes and elections. The vast majority of unfair labor practice charges involve claims of illegal firings for union activities. There was a time, perhaps more in mythology, when the NLRB was — as one of Geoghegan's mentors put it — "neutral in favor of the workers".

But that was before the Reagan cultural revolution. Today the NLRB is staffed with right wing kooks. It in effect oversees a massive wave of civil disobedience on the part of the employers which began to swell in the 1960s and 1970s.

"Breaking the law, ie. firing people, is absurdly cheap. The best deal in America, in cold business terms.

"There is a famous study... that says a union on average will increase a company's wage bill by 20%. So let us say, at plant X there are 50 workers who make \$25,000 a year. A union at this plant would cost an employer, then, about \$250,000 a year... And the penalty for violating the Wagner act is... what, \$3,000 a crack? Paid one time only, three or four years from now?"

"An employer who didn't break the law would have to be what economists call an 'irrational firm'."

It was recently reported in the Multinational Monitor that from 1982 to September 1990, approximately 4,000 charges were filed against the 500 largest companies in the US. The NLRB found that unfair labor practices had occurred in only 2% of the cases. 37% were dismissed without investigation and an additional 25% were withdrawn.

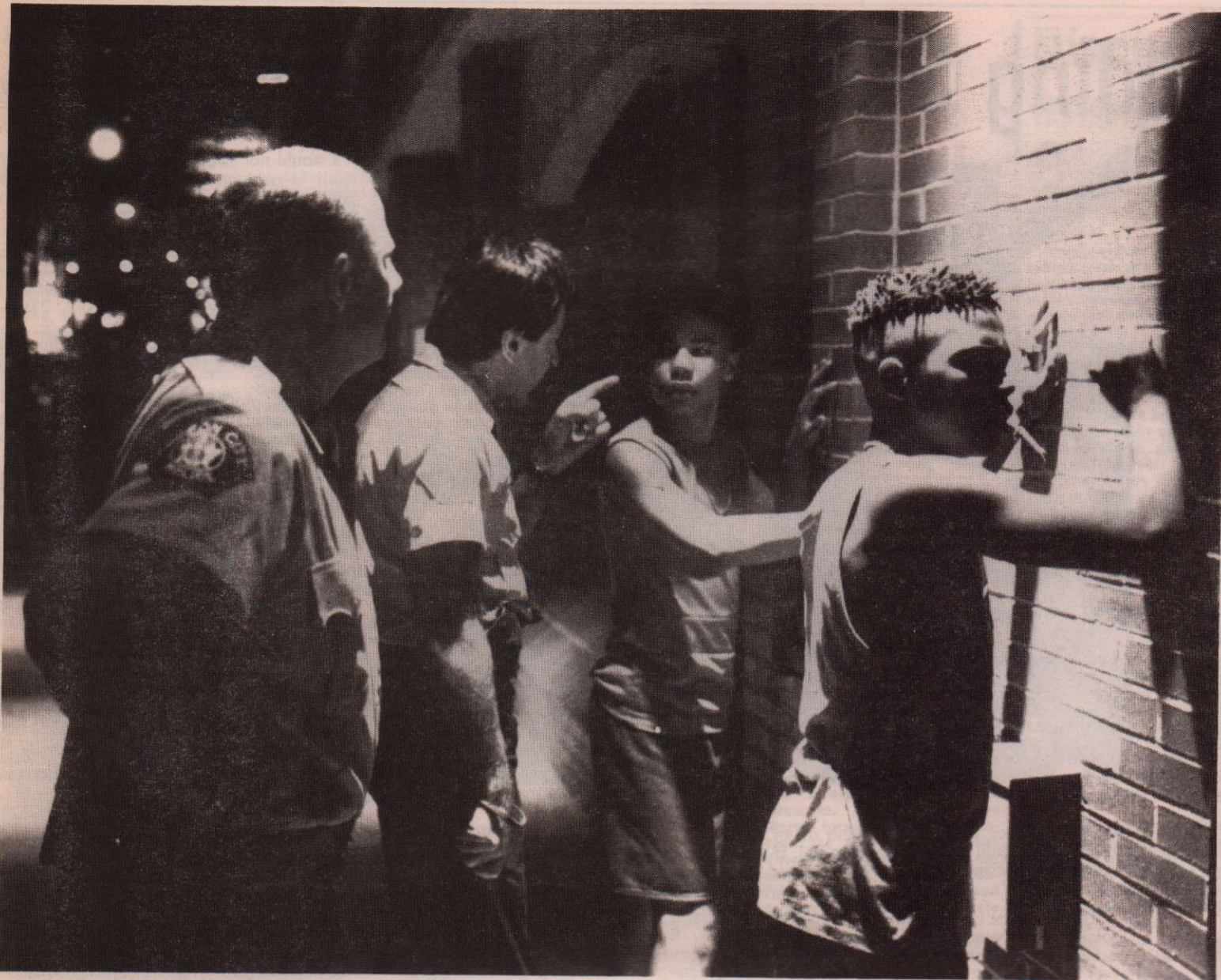
That is why organising in the private sector has virtually stopped. As related by Geoghegan, "unions can still win a special set of circumstances: when the employer does not oppose or delay the election, or commit any legal violations, the unions currently win over 90% of the time".

Who could dispute Geoghegan's conclusion that union organising faces no tougher restrictions this side of the Third World than right here in the USA?

Geoghegan seeks a legal revolution, the creation of a level playing field in the class struggle. Readers of *Socialist Organiser* undoubtedly have something else in mind. Don't let this put you off. Geoghegan has a lot to say and he says it well.



A union organiser of the 1930s speaking to the longshoremen of New York. During the '30s, American labour won the right to organise, and then lost it



City of Hope: a true evocation of the jungle and decay of American urban life

City of decay

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews "City of Hope"

The title of John Sayle's new film "City of Hope" is ironic; there's precious little hope for anybody living in his fictionalised New Jersey city.

It's a city on the verge of bankruptcy and decay, run by an Italian-dominated political machine steeped in the politics of patronage and kickbacks. Everybody's corrupt, some in bigger ways than others, of course, but everybody's got their own angle on things. Graft greases the wheels.

Nick Rinaldi, whose father is a big building contractor and slum landlord, hates his life. At the start of the movie, he quits his job on his father's site but it's hardly a positive move. He takes drugs, he drifts, he finds a girl, but he isn't going anywhere. He knows what he's against, but not what he's for. He's totally cynical.

His friends are pretty much the same, a bunch of losers who turn to petty crime for the money and status the real world denies them. When they're caught, and Nick is implicated, it sets off a tragic train of events. As the price for Nick's release, the Mayor puts pressure on Rinaldi to torch the slum buildings he owns and to make way for the Japanese-financed condominium development he and his City Hall

cronies want to build — more kickbacks for them. The fact that black and Hispanic families will be made homeless by the blaze — and that some will die — means nothing to the Mayor. He can only see the Japanese money coming in, money that will help him in his upcoming Senate run.

Other plots are woven into this story of corruption. One, the story of Wynn, an honest black councillor, offers at least some hope. He manages to overcome the divisiveness in the black community (the black Muslims versus the rest) and weld them into an angry fighting unit, ready to demand their rights.

But there's not much hope and not much optimism in much of the rest. Angela, the single mother Nick takes up with, is let down again. She, and her disabled son, will have to struggle on alone.

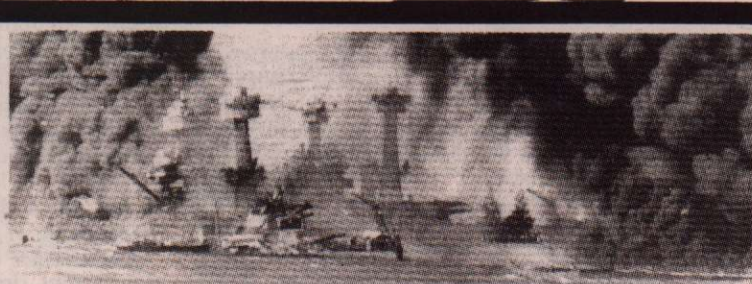
Sayles has captured the hopelessness of life in American cities, a world where there is nothing to aim for. For boys like Nick, everything is tainted and compromised. They grow up in a world with no positive role models, and with no future. They slide into drugs or petty crime as a way of getting kicks, but it's a slide, not a choice. If they're lucky, their parents pull them out by leaning on politicians for favours. If they're not, they end up trapped in the system, or mad, like the crazed character, Asteroid, who roams in and out of the film, ranting and raving.

Sayles has also caught the dog-eat-dog world of American community politics, in which Italians help the Italians, the Irish help the

Irish, and so on, each community fighting for its own members, against all the other communities, because they fear there won't be enough for everyone to share.

There is enough to share, more than enough, but with blacks pitted against whites, Hispanics against blacks, the fight is futile and circular, never directed against the real causes of poverty and inequality.

"City of Hope" is sometimes schematic, and there are scenes and characters which don't quite come off, but it's the truest evocation of the jungle and decay that is present-day American urban life in a film that I can think of. It's intelligent, and it's got something to say. Maybe Sayles has no answers, but at least he knows what the problems are. That's a start.



Roosevelt's "good reason": Pearl Harbour, 7 December 1941

"Timewatch", BBC2, Wednesday 4 December

Periscope

Everyone has two reasons for what they do: a good reason and the real reason.

Capitalist cabals and governments have their reasons: democracy demands of them that they also find good reasons. Thus in the recent Gulf War, George Bush's real reasons for war had little to do with his stated reasons.

Duplicity and lies and bourgeois double-dealing are as essential to our political affairs as gold, oil and oxygen.

US President Franklin D Roosevelt's

"good reason" for war with Japan was Japan's "surprise" attack on Pearl Harbour, the US naval and air force base in Hawaii. The real reasons were different: imperialist rivalry.

Essentially the US was the aggressor. Six months before Pearl Harbour Roosevelt had slapped crippling economic sanctions on Japan. And even "Pearl Harbour" was no surprise. Roosevelt — who won the 1940 election on a pledge to keep America out of war, as Lyndon Johnson won the 1964 election on a pledge to avoid war in Vietnam — let it happen to gain an unanswerable "good reason" for stampeding the people of the US into war.

"Timewatch" tells the story.

Trying to be too clever

Television

By Patrick Murphy

"The long march of mediocrity is at an end" says John Major. "The progressive theorists in education have had their day."

Education, like health, is a vote-loser for the government but they intend to turn the tide and their big idea is based on a double lie. The first is that educational standards have fallen disastrously in the last 20 years and the second is that the blame lies with trendy, progressive educational methods.

As BBC's *Panorama* showed last Monday, the case for these claims is very thin. The statistics were very few and always either misleading or plain wrong. "One quarter of seven year olds are unable to read" quoted the BBC report; but this was a newspaper summary of recent SATS results with proved nothing of the sort.

The results actually showed that about 50% of seven year olds had the expected reading ability, 25% were above average and 25% failed to reach the expected targets. In other words, the result shows a fairly normal distribution curve — they certainly don't show that one quarter of seven year olds can't read. Even more important, they do not prove that standards have fallen as there is no comparison made with previous years. And this was the BBC's best statistic!

It would be silly to deny that huge numbers of children do not get the education they deserve. Socialists can't be satisfied with the reading standards reached by many pupils. The government's attempts to blame progressive teaching are, however, a smokescreen.

Parents are becoming more and more aware of the devastation wreaked in schools by the government — the SATS are very unpopular, the shortage of teachers in specialist subjects, the lack of books, the time now spent saving money rather than teaching will affect standards.

In that atmosphere Kenneth Clarke has clearly decided to try to exploit parental fears and use progressive teaching as a scapegoat. The accusations made on *Panorama* were, by any standards, unserious: Roger Scruton put all problems down to "people from the '60s" and advocated the closure of all teacher-training colleges.

A lone parent in Leeds objected to a progressive and very popular school "because too much time was devoted to less able pupils". Kenneth Clarke was asked why, if standards had fallen, the Tory government of the last 12 years was not to blame, and he feebly insisted that left-wing LEAs, left-wing teachers unions and "people from the '60s" had obstructed his reforms.

The only venture into a school which actually used "progressive" teaching was revealing. Chapel Allerton primary school in Leeds is over-subscribed — surely the ultimate verdict for this government. The truth is that almost everyone who has had anything to do with teaching children since comprehensive schooling was introduced is repelled by the government's attempts to return to selection and elitism.

They are deliberately running down state comprehensive schools to justify their prejudice. They are also frightened of some of the good practices in schools, frightened of what education can do. One of the most revealing comments on *Panorama* was made when Clarke was asked directly what was wrong with "progressive teachers": "They're trying to be too clever", he blurted.

Ah, so that's the problem with education, we can't have ordinary people spending their time in schools trying to be clever: we might decide to create a rational, well-funded education service!

Understanding Stalinism's history

Tom Rigby continues our debate on the nature of Stalinism with a reply to Hillel Ticktin, editor of *Critique*. The pages of *SO* remain open for contributions to this vital debate.

Hillel Ticktin's contribution to the debate on the nature of Stalinism is only to be welcomed.

Over the last 18 years the *Critique* comrades have provided an invaluable service both in the form of their detailed analysis of the demise of Stalinism and in reprinting such works as Rakovsky's classic "The five year plan in crisis".

However, I must challenge Hillel's contention (*SO* 508) that "under Stalinism, unlike capitalism, there was no fundamental economic law regulating the system".

The origin, existence, development and death of Stalinism

Stalinism was most definitely governed by a law of development. Trotsky outlined this very clearly in 1936 in the "Revolution Betrayed".

This law was not a general abstract law but one that was historically specific to the Stalinist system, a law which regulated its origin, existence, development and death as a social organism.

Obviously, this law is not analogous to the laws of capitalist development, but why should it be? Stalinism is not capitalism.

Nor is it an exclusively economic law but again why should it be as under Stalinism politics and economics are fused.

Let us call this law, Trotsky's basic law of planning.

"The progressive role of the Soviet bureaucracy coincides with the period devoted to introducing into the Soviet Union the most important elements of capitalist technique.

"The rough work of borrowing, imitating, transplanting and grafting, was accomplished on the bases laid down by the revolution. There was, thus far, no question of any new word in the sphere of technique, science or art. It is possible to build gigantic factories according to a ready-made Western pattern by bureaucratic command — although, to be sure, at triple the normal cost. But the farther you go, the more the economy runs into the problem of quality, which slips out of the hands of a bureaucracy like a shadow. The Soviet products are as though branded with the grey label of indifference. Under a nationalised economy, quality demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative — conditions incompatible with a totalitarian regime of fear, lies and flattery."

If we pause for a moment to digest Trotsky's argument we can see:

1) Stalinism can copy a given level of technology "but at triple the cost".

2) It cannot however solve the question of quality, of innovation, as there is no workers' democracy.

3) This, in turn, affects the nature of the surplus product. "The Soviet products are as though branded with the grey label of indifference". Surely this is an analysis [in 1936] of Hillel's "defective surplus product"?

4) Note, Trotsky is here providing us with an *historical law* that encompasses Stalinism's present and future. He is outlining a *tendency* to collapse due to the basic truth that on the basis of modern technology an effective plan requires a thoroughgoing workers democracy.

Trotsky then goes to enlarge on this point: "Behind the question of quality stands a more complicated and grandiose problem which may be comprised in the concept of *independent, technical and cultural creation*. The ancient philosopher said that strife is the father of all things. No new value can be created where a free conflict of ideas is impossible. To be sure, a revolutionary dictatorship means by its very essence strict limitations of freedom. But for that very reason epochs of revolution have never been directly favourable to cultural creation: they have only cleared the arena for it. The dictatorship of the proletariat opens a wider scope to human genius the more it ceases to be a dictatorship. The socialist culture will flourish only in proportion to the dying away of the state. In that simple and unshakeable historic law is contained the death sentence of the present regime in the Soviet Union.



August 1991

Soviet democracy is not the demand of an abstract policy, still less an abstract moral. It has become a life and death need of the country."

Stripped of the inconsistencies involved in Trotsky's later version of the "degenerated workers' state" formula with which it sits uneasily in the "Revolution Betrayed", this idea is absolutely vital to an understanding of Stalinism.

Surely, Hillel would agree that his description of the contradiction between the laws of organisation and of self-interest and his earlier theorisations constitute a development and deepening of Trotsky's basic insight, and also of the parallel work engaged in by Rakovsky, rather than a new line of reasoning altogether?

A state with no class character?

I think that the core issue in this discussion is that Hillel's notion of the Nomenklatura as an elite or 'an actual ruling group and a potential ruling class' does not provide a convincing and theoretically sound alternative to either the inconsistencies of Trotsky's formula — "degenerated workers' state" — or to the question Trotsky posed to those who reject his formula: if the state is neither bourgeois or proletarian, what then is the class character of state power?

In other words, is the most brutal police regime in human history not a class state at all?

To reply as Hillel does to this question that the bureaucracy is 'an elite' with an unspecified class status or alternatively that "The USSR has mutated from a society in transition to socialism, so that it is now in the limbo of history" is simply to evade and sidestep the basic question of historical perspective posed by Chris Arthur at the start of this discussion.

What's more, the status of being "in limbo" hardly recommends itself as a precise scientific definition, nor does it exclude the possibility that the bureaucracy is a class. Marx specifically talked of Asiatic despotism as a class society "vegetating in the teeth of time".

The confusion is compounded by Hillel's comment on Mandel: "My object... has never been to simply attack him but to put forward an alternative view based on the same theoretical foundations". Perhaps Hillel could clarify this point.

To complicate the picture further, what Hillel actually describes, labels apart, is a new collective bureaucratic ruling class, arising out of a unique series of circumstances with its own self-limiting history.

Is there a social surplus?

Surely Hillel puts far too much of the burden of his analysis on the explanatory power of the

concept 'Mode of Production'. This is very marked for instance in his polemic with Bettelheim.

As a result he loses sight of the significance of what is most basic to an understanding of classes, the state and modes of production: *the question of the control over the appropriation of the surplus product*. By this change of focus and inversion of Marx's method, Hillel erects a purely formal and arbitrary barrier in the way of understanding the bureaucracy as a class.

So, as a result, Hillel's treatment of the 'precise form' in which the surplus is extracted and the significance of this is in fact superficial.

Hillel's basic argument is that the specific form in which the Nomenklatura appropriate the surplus product is so limited that it is meaningless to call them a class. "They have only a limited degree of control over the surplus product. For that reason, they do not constitute a class.

"Why? Because the workers continue to have a negative control over their own labour process. As a result, the ruling group could not 'plan' the system. As a further result they were and remain an unstable grouping".

But surely Hillel would not deny that there is a surplus, however imperfect the Soviet product may be, no matter how many "defective use values" have been produced? Or that the nomenklatura engage in a struggle to appropriate it? (Remember, if there is no surplus product then logically we must arrive at the absurd conclusion that Stalinism is a pre-class society.)

I think that the correct way to present the history of Stalinism is as 'The origin, existence development and death' of a particular party/state bureaucratic ruling class doomed precisely because it was incapable of establishing for itself a stable form of appropriation of the surplus product.

This is a lot less contradictory than saying it was not a class because it developed no stable mode of production.

The absence of a stable mode of production is thus simply an *effect* of the nature bureaucratic class rule. Hillel's snapshot of Stalinism — frozen in its moribund Brezhnevite phase of terminal decline — simply obscures the history of the whole period from the late twenties onwards. A history that involves both development and then — after the slackening of the terror — decline.

A parallel system to capitalism?

We can now turn to the question of whether or not Stalinism was a limited parallel to capitalism or as Hillel argues: "In converting to capitalism, practically all machinery will have to be replaced with market-type machinery. Hence it is not even a parallel road to capitalism. It is not even a footpath".

I would not doubt that a large measure of truth is contained in this argument from Hillel but it is *beside the point* to an understanding of Stalinism's place in history.

Let me explain. If Stalinism is to be replaced by capitalism or democratic working class power as Hillel seems to be saying in *Critique* 23, it was not, by definition, 'post-capitalist' as the majority of post-Trotsky "Trotskyists" believed [ie. Mandel].

Thus the *Critique* comrades and those of us in AWL/*SO* agree on what Stalinism was *not*.

Further, notwithstanding Hillel's strictures, if capitalism is restored in the USSR then terror, forced collectivisation and industrialisation were in historic perspective but a vile and wasteful bloodletting to pave the way for capitalism and the market.

And finally, if the workers replace Stalinism with socialist freedom, then the system was not simply "a self-aborting monstrosity" as Chris Arthur so vividly put it — but rather performed the same task of "accumulating its own gravediggers" as capitalism performs.

Labels, name tags, theory and the fate of the Left Opposition

Part of the problem with this discussion is that both Hillel and Chris appear to be attacking a theory or developed school of analysis which they call 'Bureaucratic Collectivism' that simply does not actually exist!

As far as I am aware, 'bureaucratic collectivism' evolved into a general name tag with which to describe more or less *any* theory that saw the Stalinist bureaucracy as a non-capitalist exploiting class. Underneath this common name tag radically different substantial theories developed.

Meanwhile, the orthodox Trotskyists used Trotsky's refusal to call the bureaucracy a class for a purpose [that of glorifying 'progressive' Stalinism] that Trotsky would have revolted against.

Obviously, this raises again what it means for Hillel to say he shares the same theoretical foundation as Mandel?

If we are to move forward from this sorry state that the revolutionary left finds itself in today, Marxist theory needs to be clarified by both analysing the reality of present day Stalinism and capitalism and by returning to some of the unfinished work of the past. Rakovsky and the Left Mensheviks understanding of 'planlessness', Trotsky's evolving prognosis and Shachtman's merciless critique of 'orthodox' Trotskyism all have something vital to say to us today.

Perhaps most of all, we have to realise that the greatest defeat of all that our movement faced this century was its failure from the early '30s onwards to come to terms scientifically with what Stalinism represented.

Fundamentally this was the product of the elimination of an entire revolutionary generation.

If we are to rebuild an international Marxist left that can even aspire to the levels reached by the Left Opposition in the late '20s, never mind attempt to go beyond it, it is vital that all obsession with secondary questions of labels and definitions are abandoned for the development of a substantive analysis of Stalinism and its place in history.

There can be no 'Chinese wall' between different Marxist schools attempting to analyse Stalinism — between 'bureaucratic collectivism' and the analysis developed by the *Critique* comrades — because so many of the sources are the same.

After all, it was Christian Rakovsky to whom the *Critique* comrades are so indebted and who analysed in rough outline both planlessness and "The systematic production of defective products", who put forward this characterisation of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

A characterisation pregnant with meaning and with a clear tendency towards an understanding of the bureaucracy as a class: "Under our very eyes, there has been formed, and is still being formed, a large class of rulers which has its own interior groupings, multiplied by means of premeditated cooption, direct or indirect [bureaucratic promotion, fictitious system of election]. The basic support of this original class is a sort, an original sort, of private property, namely the possession of state power. The bureaucracy 'possesses the state as private property' wrote Marx ("Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law")."

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Management document threatens 5000 redundancies



Tube bosses declare war

600 drivers and guards, 1,300 train cleaners, 600 station staff and 400 station cleaners are set to lose

their jobs in the next 4 years if London Underground management get their way.

This is the bitter fruit of the tragic divisions which have beset underground workers over recent years as management have attempted to play one group off against another.

This division and sectionalism reached crazy proportions this spring when leaders of ASLEF, the drivers' union, threatened to instruct their members to cross picket lines set up by the RMT which organises a sizeable minority of train crew and the majority of other staff.

Many train drivers felt that their jobs were secure, but now they know the truth.

A united cross union fightback is going to be needed, a repeat of this spring's mindless sectionalism would be suicidal.

"A halfway house to privatisation"

By Wilf Proudfoot, RMT

These proposals appear to be a half-way house to privatisation. The government cannot privatise the whole system so they have insisted on more use of the private sector, regardless of the effect on safety.

We will need to study the consequences for jobs in detail, but if LUL are proposing to extend the use of contractors, RMT views this with alarm and astonishment.

Contractors have an appalling safety record on the Underground. If the price of increased investment is even more use of contractors then that is too high a price to pay.

Two of my members have already paid with their lives following a track accident caused by contractors in 1990.

Over recent months there have been a number of incidents where mistakes by contractors working on signalling could have led to a disaster. The present system is completely unsatisfactory. I am certain that extending the use of contractors will lead to more accidents.

There is no enthusiasm among my members for split shifts or flexible rostering, but if LUL want to talk to us about changes in working practices we will meet them".

What the Standard won't tell you

In 1990, four trackworkers were killed at Chorley Wood when an unsecured contractor's wagon ploughed into them. Two of those killed were LUL staff, the others were contractors.

In 1989, traincrew on LUL conducted a series of unofficial stoppages in support of a pay claim. In an attempt to settle the dispute LUL proposed additional pay for changes in working practices — including flexible rostering. These proposals were overwhelmingly rejected by staff.

Eight serious incidents caused by contractors have been reported to RMT this year. Each could have led to an accident. Contractors' staff have damaged relays in a signalling room; have left live wires bare; and have mistakenly disconnected CCTV circuits and public address systems.

Seize the initiative! No time to waste!



Newcastle Poly: the way to fight

Spread the fightback against student poverty!

By Alice Sharp, NUS National Executive

Students are fighting back. Across the country, students are taking action against the effects of Tory policies.

Newcastle Polytechnic is the latest Student Union to occupy its college administration building. Students at Lancaster University have been ejected by bailiffs, but are continuing their campaign.

Middlesex Polytechnic students are in occupation, and other colleges, including Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, and Brighton Polytechnic, are likely to take action in the next few days.

The Tories and the college ad-

ministrations are responsible. The Tories are trying to cram thousands more students on to campuses without providing the corresponding funds. Changes in the way government money is paid to college have encouraged greedy college

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bureaucrats to try to recruit more and more students, regardless of whether the college facilities are adequate. The Tories' cynical withdrawal of housing benefit and income support from students has been at the root of much of the recent dissatisfaction.

Debt-ridden students have been struggling with insufficiently stock-

ed libraries, overcrowded lecture theatres, and increasingly expensive accommodation. Exeter University administration, for example, has increased rents by 49%.

The wave of protests shows how the student movement should be organising. Action must be spread to as many colleges as possible, and generalised to confront head-on the Tory policies that are wrecking higher and further education.

For several months, Left Unity has been urging the National Union of Students [NUS] to take the lead in organising a national campaign of action. Instead the Kinnockite-led National Executive Committee (NEC) has told students to lobby their MPs! And when Manchester Area NUS organised a ten thousand strong demonstration in October, the Kinnockites did their best to sabotage the event. Now their do-

nothing approach is starting to blow up in their faces.

It is important that activists seize the initiative as quickly as possible. Most colleges are forcing through cuts and increased charges to students. A Student Union General Meeting on such local cuts and increases, or on support for those taking action, should be called immediately to build for occupations, sit-ins, and the national rally in defence of Lancaster University Student Union on Friday 29 November.

We should build activist groups and networks, and Labour Clubs, to involve new layers of students. After a painfully inactive twelve months in the colleges — thanks in large part to the Kinnockite leadership of NUS — a newly radicalised student movement is now a real possibility.

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