

SOCIALIST

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ORGANISER

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- Labour should disrupt Parliamentary procedures and campaign for an immediate General Election.

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LABOUR: ON TO THE OFFENSIVE!

The real scandal of Tory councils

"GOTCHA"! Yes the Council leader from hell, Dame Shirley Porter, the woman who sold a graveyard for 1p, and spewed forth right-wing anti-working class drivel during her whole time as leader of Westminster Council, appears to have been caught out, and about time too.

It now appears that all the time the tabloid press was hot on the track of 'loony left' Labour councils who 'shock horror' build council houses, cut bus fare and funded local community projects for minority groups, the tabloids favourite council was busy spending £21 million of council cash to win seats for the Tory party.

The plan was launched in 1986 when the Tories in Westminster came close to losing control of the council. The traditional Tory voters had been moving out of the city to the suburbs. In 1981 only 21% of Westminster residents owned their own home compared with 65% nationally.

So, the Tory leadership worked out a two-pronged plan to change the electorate. No, not their minds, they wanted to change the population! Firstly they targeted the homeless who mostly vote Labour or don't vote. They moved them into bed and breakfast accommodation outside of the council area, mostly in the east end.

They decided to get even more "mean

and nasty" to homeless people to drive them out of the council area. A draft council document set the target to "stop housing Westminster homeless in Westminster with immediate effect [and] to move all homeless out of the Westminster starting with key wards by the end of 1988".

The second prong of the plan was to 'gentrify' key seats by using the government's scheme to sell off the council house stock. They sold council housing at discounts to people from outside of the area, thus clearing estates of mostly Labour voting council tenants.

It is now emerging that a similar cheap houses for votes policy was used by Thatcher's favourite Wandsworth council.

There are now 871 homeless people in Westminster entitled to a home, whom the council will not house. Millions of others are affected by the brutality of Tory government cuts and legislation and are still homeless.

No one is going to prosecute the Tory government that made the council house sales a priority and threw millions on the mercy of a market system. That's the system that leaves 800,000 building workers on the dole, materials lying unused and builds Canary Wharf office towers not houses because the market only has eyes and ears for greed not human need.

Tragically, the story of local govern-

ment is also the story of lost opportunities for the labour movement to a large extent. Westminster and Wandsworth Tories can only get away with their corruption because in the battles of the 1980s against rate capping and central government cuts Labour left leaders of councils and the GLC chose ultimately to follow Tory orders rather than defend jobs and services for working class people.

As someone once said "power corrupts and absolute power, tends to corrupt absolutely". However much we gloat it is a sad fact that it was Labour's miserable leadership that left the Tories in power until the stench of corruption became so bad that it cannot be hidden any more.



Guerrilla struggle

Pablo Velasco reports from Mexico City

ON 1 JANUARY a guerrilla uprising broke out amongst the Lacandon Indians in Chiapas, the poorest and southern-most state of Mexico. The group, reported to be between 200 and 1,000 strong, and calling themselves the Zapatista Army of National Liberation seized four towns and kidnapped a number of prominent local political leaders, including former Chiapas governor Absalon Castellanos.

Although the rebels were driven out of the towns and back to the jungle border with Guatemala, news came through of further acts of sabotage in other states in Mexico, notably Guerrero, suggesting that government reports saying they were just mopping up the last resistance were unfounded. More than one hundred people have been killed during the uprising, mainly guerrillas and civilians, although church sources in the region put the figure at over four hundred. One fifth of the Mexican army, some 12,000 men were sent to the area. Villages were bombed from the air and there was heavy fighting on the ground.

This is the first guerrilla activity in Mexico since the 1970s and is sure to have an impact, given that 1994 is election year for the Presidency, the most powerful position in the Mexican government. The focus of the election

helps to explain why the government of Salinas, which has used the army in recent years to break strikes and control campesinos (peasants), has not used the unbridled force against the guerrillas which many would have expected. It explains why the media has been allowed to report the events freely, and why Salinas has promised that some of the rebels would be amnestied.

The hypocrisy of the government is sickening. At the same time as Salinas was making his "benevolent" gesture, and other senators in his party (PRI) were acknowledging that poverty was the cause of the unrest, the Interior Ministry issued a statement denouncing the uprising as the work of "international terrorists working from bases in Guatemala", involving acts which could not be tolerated. Despite World Bank funding of \$100,000 last year to Chiapas, and numerous government funded projects (called, misleadingly, Solidarity), the region suffers from chronic poverty, particularly amongst the campesinos who have suffered both from competition with US agribusiness, and from debts to local landowners.

The issue of land is reflected in the name of the guerrillas. Zapata was the most uncompromising revolutionary in the Mexican revolution 1910-1920, organising peasants to take land, arms in hand. Although still revered in the history books in Mexico, he was in fact assassinated by the government in 1919. Indeed rebel leaders said that they were fighting for land, for socialism and against NAFTA — what they called "a death warrant for indigenous ethnic ground."

The traditional coffee and cotton harvests in Chiapas have been severely affected in recent years, and unemployment has soared amongst the indigenous population. Also, farms have been terrorised by the caciques (local bosses) who have seized land, and then guarded it with pistoleros (private police).

The government and the major parties (PRI, PRD, PAN) have issued a joint statement condemning the violence and setting up a multi-party commission to investigate the problems of

Chiapas, but this is without consultation with the local people themselves. And it seems clear that whilst the social problems are clear to everyone, and have been for sometime, there will be no long-term solutions offered by the government short of a few election year bribes.

All of this underlines the need for a clear socialist alternative to the policies of the PRI, including the slogan of Zapata — "land to those who work it", and that, despite defeats in recent years, the left does have opportunities to break the PRI's hold on political power.

Bradford students occupy!

By Kevin Sexton

ON MONDAY 100s of students at Bradford University General Meeting voted to occupy the administration block of their college in defence of student grants. Students across the country are organising demonstrations and rallies to show their anger against the Tories' proposals on 20 January.

This action follows on from last term's occupations and demos where Left Unity supporters were integral to organising the fightback in the student movement. Their strategy of being nice to Tories has failed the student movement and students in the colleges are organising action against the Tories.

Raffle Result

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty Xmas raffle was drawn on 30 December

- First prize: video recorder — E Doyle, Wallasey
- Second prize: colour TV — Dion D'Silva, London
- Third prize: case of wine — Mark Nevill, Leeds
- Fourth prize: £20 book token — Brian Rose, Essex

After the Russian elections: dangers for the workers movement

By Dale Street

THE RESULTS of the elections held in Russia on 12 December last year show that there is a fertile ground for the development of authoritarian rule.

Around 53% of the electorate participated in the voting (which involved a referendum on a new constitution, elections to the lower house of the Duma on both a party-bloc basis and also a constituency-by-constituency basis, and in some areas, the election of local councils).

The level of participation was far lower than that in a referendum on confidence in Yeltsin, held in April of the same year, when 64% of the electorate voted. The slump in the turnout was in itself a reflection of the growing despair in the country.

Yeltsin and his supporters systematically misused the media. Real debate about the constitution was kept to a minimum, and the media effectively functioned as a mouthpiece for Yeltsin, echoing his warnings that Russia could be plunged into civil war if the new constitution was not adopted.

In the party-bloc-based voting in the parliamentary poll the clear winner was Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), although it did nowhere near as well in the constituency-by-constituency polling.

The LDPR won some 24% of the vote, compared with 14% for Russia's Choice (pro-Yeltsin and pro-market reform), 12% for the Communist Party and 10% and 8% respectively for the CP's close allies the Agrarian Party and Women of Russia.

Despite the pained expressions of shock voiced by political pundits in the west, the results of the voting were in many ways only too predictable. Only the blind faith of Western political commentators in the market reforms now underway in Russia prevented them from recognising the likelihood of the LDPR making major gains.

The voting took place against a

background of economic collapse. Inflation is running at 20% a month, whilst industrial output is falling by 2% a month. 30% of the population now lives below the official poverty level.

Dissatisfaction with the "achievements" of capitalist market reforms was clearly going to undermine support for party-blocs such as Russia's Choice which backed the reforms.

In the absence of a credible socialist alternative, the almost natural pole of attraction for the millions impoverished by opening Russia up to the "free market" was Zhirinovskiy's LDPR.

Zhirinovskiy, a right wing populist demagogue, was able to tap into the concerns of a number of key constituencies: the impoverished, the military, workers employed in the defence industries, Russian frontier areas and Russian national minorities outside the borders of Russia, such as in the Baltic states.

His politics are essentially those of demagogic and extremist Russian nationalism, harking back to a mythical "golden age" rather than having a clear set of policies for immediate implementation (which, given the dominant position enjoyed by Yeltsin under the new constitution, he would not be able to implement anyway).

Zhirinovskiy calls for a crack-down on the mafia; an end to the rundown of the defence industries; economic protectionism; a house, a car, and a servant for every army officer; an independent foreign policy; building links with Serbs and Arab countries such as Iraq; and an extension of Russia's borders from the Baltic to the Indian Ocean.

The endorsement of the new constitution and the massive powers which it gives to Yeltsin, combined with the electoral support attracted by the DPR, are the latest sign of Russia's ongoing collapse into authoritarian rule and competing brands of Russian nationalism.

The results of these elections underline once again the need for socialists and the labour movement in this country to step up support for their counterparts in Russia.

March to stop the Nazis!

By Hannah Wood

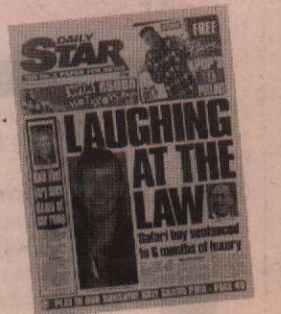
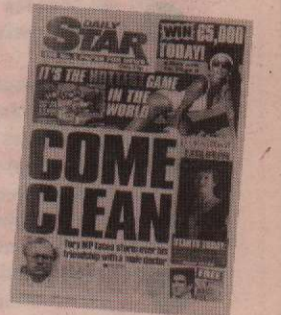
NAZIS FROM all over Europe travelled to London for a gig under the banner of fascist "Blood and Honour" on Saturday 16 January.

Anti-fascists mobilised to stop the gig and were successful in preventing it from going ahead.

The police seem to be learning some new tricks to deal with protesters. After anti-fascists had marched to Becontree in East London, the police put 400 protesters on a train and sent it non-stop right across London to Earls Court. They then proceeded to

close down Earls Court station, dumping all the anti-fascists in the middle of west London, and then decided to charge with batons and dogs, arresting some and injuring several people.

The two groups organising the demo, the Anti-Nazi League and Youth Against Racism in Europe spent most of their time bickering about where to take the demo and who was in charge making the demonstration directionless and the demonstrators nervous. If there had been direct confrontation with the fascists this could have led to people being injured. The lack of co-ordination over stewarding on these demos has to stop!



All human life is there! And some that defies classification...

Pleasant as it is to see the mad-dog tabloids rending Tory flesh to feed their habit, it is a sick moral climate that produces newspaper front pages like the Star's "come clean" demand to a Tory MP who — chastely, he says — had shared a bed with a male travelling companion. Clean is a word the tabloids should avoid. The Star continues in the same witch-hunting vein, denouncing "lenient" treatment meted out to a young offender. The Sun salaciously reports on the libel action brought against it by soap actress Gillian Taylforth. The faithful Mail thought the Queen's fall from a horse more important than the Los Angeles earthquake!

Labour: onto the offensive

We can beat the Tories!

SO FAR 1994 has been a good new year for those of us who take pleasure and draw hope from the Tories' troubles. Though the Yeo and Ashby scandals have hit the tabloid headlines, far more serious for the government is the allegation of corruption and gerrymandering in Westminster and Wandsworth.

And John Major's desperately poor performance at the arms for Iraq hearings.

Most important of all, the "Back to Basics" crusade is in deep trouble.

Leaving aside the more distasteful elements of the press's recent moralising what can only bring joy to the hearts of socialists is the absolute intellectual and ideological crisis now afflicting the Tory party.

The real problem for the Tories with "Back to Basics" is not just the hypocrisy in the message but its complete lack of believability.

Compare Thatcher and Major.

Thatcher was wrong. But at least she was believable. The targets set for her moral crusades usually had some plausibility — powerful trade unions and bureaucratic nationalised industries for example. In both cases Thatcher's arguments took up and adopted elements of a perfectly justifiable working-class hostility to the unaccountable powers of trade union bureaucrats and state capitalist managers. She then used these themes to justify viciously anti-working class policies.

Major's "Back to Basics", on the other hand, is both wrong and lacking in believability.

The people it is aimed at aren't quite getting the message Major intended.

For instance, this week's *Panorama* showed Tory Basildon's police chief dismissing the idea that there is no link between crime and unemployment. While a cross-section of 'Basildon man' seemed to agree with the idea that you couldn't take care of any of the "basics" in life unless you had a job.

This gives us a glimpse of the Tories' underlying problems. Major, and the party as a whole, lack any coherent and plausible ideological justification for what they have done in office and what they now intend to do.

The Thatcherite wave is receding! Major cannot indict "union power" and "ineffective nationalised industries" as the forces responsible for

Britain's continuing decline. The Tories have been in power for just too long to be able to get away with that.

But their problems remain. The policies Major and — his most likely successor — Clarke have embarked upon involve more massive attacks on the living standards of working-class people.

On top of attacks on the NHS and the welfare state, Clarke's budget alone will cost the average household £10 per week, while his pay freeze means that public sector workers won't see any increase in

their pay packets until 1997.

A government that is carrying out attacks like this needs at least superficially plausible ideas to justify them if it is to survive and see its policies through. At the moment Major's government is glaringly lacking in such ideas.

Thatcher never had a genuinely convinced majority behind her — in the last analysis she wielded state power as the representative of a one-pay minority dictatorship — but she at least managed to create the appearance of having such a majority, (largely because of the lack of

any real opposition from Foot and Kinnock)

Major clearly has neither real nor apparent majority support and no visible means of getting it either.

That is the root crisis facing the Tories. The problem for our side is how to transform this Tory crisis into a revival for both the Labour Party and trade union struggle.

The last time the Tories had a similar sense of malaise and scandal about them — in the early sixties — Labour harried them relentlessly in parliament. In 1964 Labour won.

Harold Wilson managed this with only the miserable intellectual backing provided by his tall talk about "the white heat of the technological revolution."

IMAGINE WHAT Labour could do now if it based a crusade against the Tories on the kind of ideas that emerged in outline form during the pit crisis of October 1992 and in response to the attacks on the NHS. What are these ideas?

* That peoples' needs should come before profits;

* That people should have a right to the best possible public and health services, that modern technology can provide;

* That education should be freely available and of a good standard for all.

These ideas — what Marx used to call the political economy of the



The Tories lack any coherent and plausible justification for what they have done in office

working class — would provide the best possible political basis from which Labour could launch a devastating attack on the Tories.

Our problem is that the Labour and trade union leaderships are frightened of launching such a campaign. They are still worried about the consequences of really fighting the Tories. Smith, Brown and Blair recoil in horror at the very thought of the attacks they might have to make on their rich and powerful capitalist friends who run Britain.

And if they started to raise people's expectations by really hammering the Tories while offering an alternative to Toryism in all its guises and stages then things might get

out of hand for a future Labour government. Better, they think, not to make any promises and to wait.

The Labour and trade union leadership, however, are not unmoving.

Smith has already started talking about full employment and workers' rights in a way Kinnock never did. Labour is even, at last, starting to behave like a real opposition in parliament by withdrawing some co-operation with the Tories. The unions have started to campaign again on issues like the NHS and the pay freeze. It is all still on a very low level and at a slow pace, but things seem to be changing.

It is the job of serious socialists to

go all out to do everything we can to force Labour to really fight the Tories. Whether you like it or not — and this paper certainly doesn't like it — the only alternative government now available to the mass working-class movement is the actually existing right-wing dominated Labour Party.

That is why we say "Labour must fight". But it's also why the Alliance for Workers' Liberty exists: in order to build a serious socialist organisation that can transform the existing multi-million strong labour movement into a revolutionary force that can really offer a thorough-going root and branch alternative to Tory barbarism.

WE SAY

Los Angeles earthquake The poor too need government intervention

AT LEAST 24 people were reported dead after a mammoth earthquake hit Los Angeles on the night of Monday 17 January. Emergency shelters were quickly erected in the suburban San Fernando Valley area. Thousands of people were evacuated.

President Bill Clinton declared Southern California a federal disaster area, and paved the way for low interest loans and emergency government funds to be made available to the victims.

Bill Clinton's Government will intervene and act for middle-class disaster victims, and that is good, but, at the same time, it is busy hacking at the rights and benefit entitlements of America's large and growing class of ultra-poor.

There are two million homeless people in America. There are no quickly erected shelters for them. In fact, in Central Los Angeles recently several hundred people have been arrested for giving money or food to homeless people. Seriously!

The official figures say that there are now nine million workers unemployed in the US.

Clinton's response? To promise to "end welfare as we know it." According to *Newsweek* (13 December 1993) the first target will be two million households who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The magazine describes Clinton's victims as "the poorest of the poor — the least educated and least employable."

It is one law for the rich, and another one for the poor. Class law rules in the US, as in Britain. Its double standards and hypocrisy, in this case over the need for government intervention, is obscenely obvious.

Their morals and ours

IT IS surely cause for celebration that the moral hypocrisy of the Tory government has recently blown up in the faces of several ministers. The case of Tim Yeo for instance is well enough known to need rehearsing.

But there are also strong reasons for tempering our joy at Tory distress with a little concern about the political implications of what increasingly looks like a right-wing "moral" backlash.

It is not, in and of itself, a good thing that ministers, even Tory ministers — or anyone else for that matter — should lose their jobs because they have had a sexual relationship, or have generated a child outside marriage. The same goes for sex, never mind sharing a bed, with someone of the same gender.

Those who believe that there is nothing to worry about here because Yeo was the victim of his own hypocrisy are missing the point.

The standards against which hypocrisy is judged are as important, and possibly more important, than the act of hypocrisy itself. For instance, if a trade union official were to be hounded from office for corruption and betrayal of the union's members that would recommend and reinforce certain values: workers' control and democracy.

The fall of Tim Yeo, in this way and for this reason, inescapably reinforces the values of the hard Tory right.

More, the recent round of scandals has helped to encourage popular disillusionment with politics and with politicians, as such. Contempt for the inhabitants of the Palace of Westminster — a handful of genuinely honourable members excepted — is well-deserved and healthy. But if it can fuse with religious and moral bigotry then we have the raw material out of which authoritarian and even fascist movements can grow.

The antidote to all this is not to abandon the ground of morality but to insist that people — even Tories! — have the right to determine their own sexuality.

Similarly, talk of "family values" is best countered not by rejecting the family as such, but by insisting on the social support that parents and children alike need in terms of jobs, education for children, and adequate housing if their family unit (be it one parent or two) is to provide a loving and caring environment.

How do w employme



Peter Hain

After a long period of bureaucratically-imposed silence under Neil Kinnock serious debate is at long last starting to break out again in the Labour Party. In particular, the Party's renewed commitment to full employment — a by-product of the bitter debate over union links last year — has provoked widespread discussion and controversy.

Peter Hain MP has been one of those arguing most vociferously for the Party to adopt a more bold and interventionist approach to the question. He talked to *Socialist Organiser* about the issues and the prospects for broad-based left unity in the Labour Party. As should be clear from the text Peter Hain's views on these questions are a long way from *Socialist Organiser's* but the very fact that the left is debating these issues again is a major step forward.

The left has seemed obsessed with issues like proportional representation and Maastricht. Shouldn't we be concentrating on jobs for all and the minimum wage?

It is true that PR should not be made a touchstone of whether someone is on the left or not.

Maastricht is somewhat different. I opposed the agreement because I opposed deflationary monetarist policy. However, among those who were against Maastricht there was a lot of hopeless confusion. There is still a little-Englander left. Against this I would advocate a more democratic Europe with a stronger European parliament and with a labour movement organised across national boundaries.

I think Maastricht also makes full-employment unobtainable. On this ground alone its monetarist legal framework must be broken.

Our driving aim must be full employ-

ment with decent working conditions. We must oppose this vision to the Tories' low-cost, skivvy economy. There is a big opportunity for the left to get this message across. The free-market framework has been seen to fail — in Britain, Europe and increasingly in Eastern Europe.

So we should go on the offensive for a shorter working week to solve unemployment?

Yes, full-employment can only be created in the advanced economies of Europe with a shorter working week. But I do not believe it is necessarily possible to trade in a 40 hour week for 35 hours with no loss of pay. I think we need to look at work-sharing and similar arrangements.

More generally the left needs to address the investment-consumption debate. The British economy is in serious long-term decline because it is geared towards consumption. Production is geared to instant consumption rather than investment.

We need an economy geared to investment and full-employment. There are choices to be made about where resources are directed. I do not think a diet of continually spiralling wage levels will do the economy any good.

Isn't it just false to counterpose consumption to investment?

In one sense: investment in infrastructure and industry increases demand and generates employment in its wake. John Smith appears to have accepted this — in principle, at least.

My point is that a shorter working week is not a cure-all. There will be hard trade-offs, at least in some industries.

Would it not be disastrous for a future Labour government to increase employment at the cost of large-scale wage cuts? Doesn't this remind you of the last Labour government?

Labour can only win if it offers a hard-headed, realistic picture of the desperate state of the British economy. There must be a gigantic shift towards investment. And unless we win that ideological argument people will turn again to the Tories' tax cuts and instant consumption. This is not a matter of incomes policies and wage cuts. But we must recognise that we are consuming more than we produce.

The Tories have bridged the gap with privatisation receipts and North Sea oil revenues and with debt doubling. This just can not be sustained.

The next issue we must address is how that investment can be controlled. We need to shift the City and finance capital away from its short-termism and its obsession with funding consumption.

So you are looking at mild restraints on financial institutions and big companies while at the same time asking workers for wage cuts in return for full-employment?

No. For example: overtime is not in the interests of the working class. If we get rid of

overtime, you also cut pay.

A basic trade union response would be to raise basic pay levels so there was no loss of pay.

I have negotiated pay in the Post Office for a long time and this sort of agreement is very difficult to achieve.

This is an impossibilist demand. If overtime was pushed out of the economy, hundreds of thousands of jobs could be created. But to suggest that this could be achieved at nil cost to the national pay bill is not realistic.

Realistic for who? Workers or bosses?

Take the Post Office at the moment. There are threats of office closures and job cuts. Postal workers responded by voting at their conference — against the Executive's recommendation — for a campaign for a shorter working week. This is a popular policy! It may be possible. It should be fought for as hard as possible.

But the last time a shorter working week was agreed in the Post Office, there were trade-offs in the form of productivity and changes in working practices. There are choices to be made and my priority is full-employment. The priority is not to chase next year's pay increase. That is not to say I accept the public sector pay freeze. I do not. We should fight against it.

Groups of workers will be faced with the choice of maintaining full-employment or wage increases. This happened at Sheffield Council. The workers there chose jobs.

But the Sheffield Council deal only happened because of a systematic campaign by local union leaders and the threat of massive jobs losses. Even then it was only accepted by a whisker.

Underlying this was the lack of a generalised fightback and the feeling of isolation. If a Labour government tried to treat the working class as a whole in this manner, it would not be popular for very long.

Not if jobs are being created. And if jobs are being generated in British manufacturing industry there is going to be a cost.

This is not to say we should not move against the rich elite. We should eat into profits.

How far are you prepared to go in this direction?

John Smith made an important statement recently — he said, rightly, that we should fund investment through borrowing. There is no reason not to do this. Secondly, we would reduce defence spending — although I do not believe that the savings here will be as great as some on the left believe, because what needs to happen here is a shift away from military production to civilian purposes.

Third. There must be redistribution of income through the tax system. We need to tax the rich much more. Above £50,000 per year should be very heavily taxed. Since the Lawson budgets of 1987 and '88 the very rich have had an extra £8 billion in their pockets. A full year of VAT on fuel will raise £2.9 billion. So by taxing the rich only a bit more we could get rid of VAT on fuel.

We must explain that this sort of trade-off should be made.

How will you deal with the capitalists' resistance? How can you control capital?

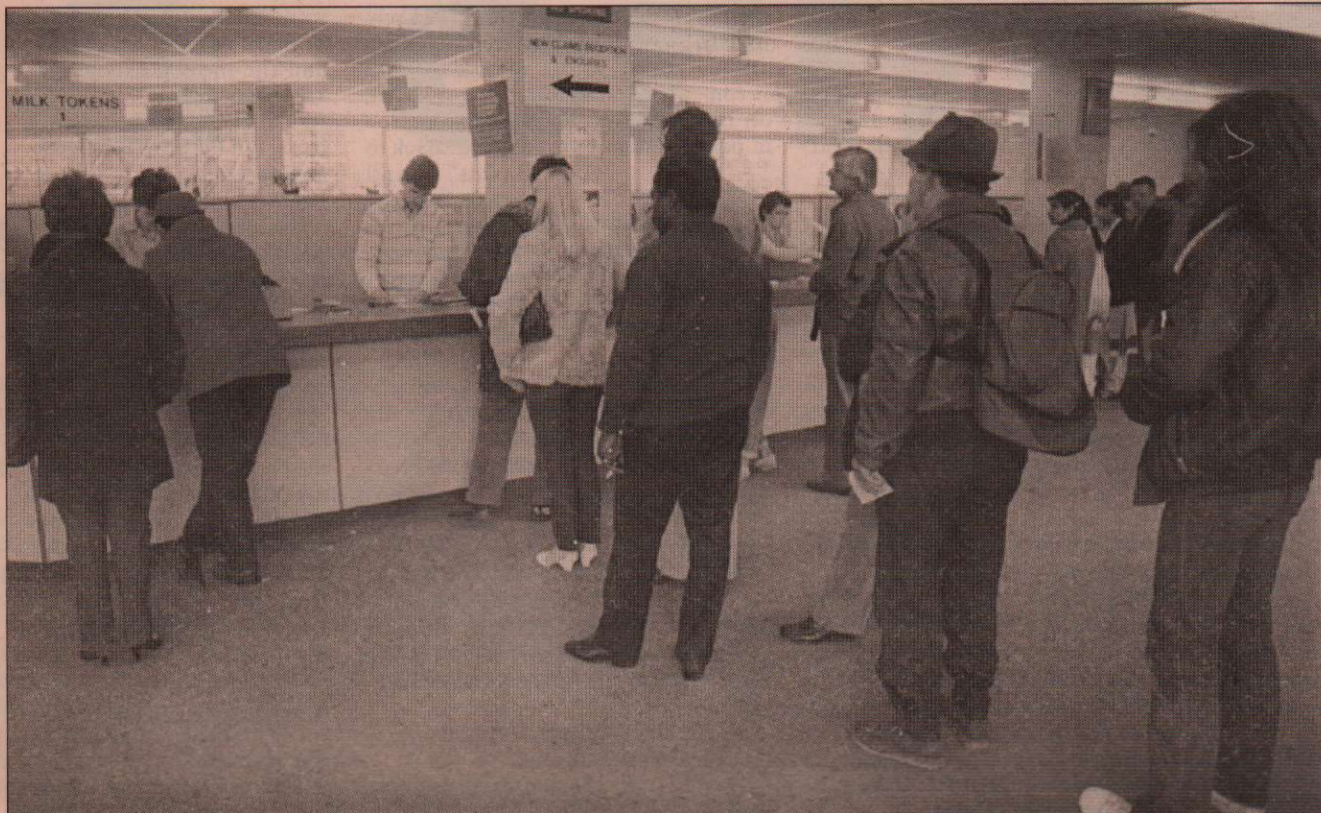
We need to take some defensive measures. The Bank of England must not become independent — as it is increasingly becoming. We need a democratically accountable Bank of England.

We must address the question of the insurance companies and pension funds — which own 80% of stocks and shares. I favour a stage-by-stage approach. We



John Smith

e get full nt?



A shorter working week can reduce unemployment

should make the popular argument that this is our money.

An incoming Labour government should demand that these institutions should direct a greater proportion to industry, rather than in property or exporting abroad. If you fail to do this we should legislate against them. To do this a Labour government would have to campaign outside parliament to get mass backing.

Haven't you just made a case for nationalising the financial sector?

Maybe I have, maybe I have not. I do not believe in slogans. I am sick of them. If you invite me to endorse another slogan, I refuse to do so.

Nationalisation is hardly on the agenda for the recently privatised industries, never mind the financial institutions. What the left must do is to advocate government stakes and intervention. Gradually, as people see that this is insufficient, the case for socialising the economy becomes more obvious. If we demand nationalisation now, your readers might applaud, but no one else does. It is not a credible policy.

But aren't you confusing the form in which we should argue for nationalisation and the substance of the policy? We should make clear that we don't want old-style bureaucratic monopolies but democratic control instead. Nevertheless, you can't dodge the issue of ownership.

What do you advocate Labour renationalises? What would be "credible"?

British Rail for a start. But I do not think that the public are ready for some slogan about nationalisation. And it is not even a question of popularity — we just could just not deliver it. If I was forced to choose whether to borrow to invest £61 billion in industry or £61 billion to buy back privatised industries — which is their current market value — I know what I would choose. I would borrow to invest.

What you can do is to change the regulatory system so that social objectives are pursued. For example we could make sure pensioners' standing charges are cut. Beyond that we must demand strategic objectives — a sensible energy policy, for example. Labour could take stakes in these industries and put a director on every board. It does not need to be a big stake: 1% or 5% could do it. Gradually we would

reacquire public control and democratic regulation of these industries.

We would immediately come up against company law, where shareholders are legally entitled to the highest dividends.

We also need to address the issue of why nationalisation is unpopular. It has been unpopular, firstly, because relations of power were not fundamentally altered in industry. Secondly, nationalisation has been too centralised and bureaucratic. It did not respond to people's wishes. So nationalisation is a separate matter from the issue of how we get back to an economy which works for people rather than a narrow elite who currently monopolise power and ownership. The left is a long way from where we were even fifteen years ago when we argued for the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). We have been rolled back by the Tories. And we now have to change the world as it now exists. So, for instance, there is a real problem with renationalising Telecommunications, given it exists in a global market, with cross-frontier ownership.

You pose these issues in an all-or-nothing way. The piecemeal changes I propose will eventually lead to the socialisation of the economy.

So you propose a return to the AES — albeit one dressed up for the 1990s. You have lost the more cranky nationalism of the 1970s, but all the old dilemmas still remain. Surely the only possible economic regulators are either people's needs or the elite's interests?

Sure. And we are talking about how to get to the point at which the economy is run in the interest of human beings.

Moreover what I propose are a set of policies that are potentially very powerful mobilising mechanisms, capable of linking in with local and grass roots struggle. Changing the direction of pension and insurance funds could be a very effective weapon in the battle to win support — of workers, yes, but also of those who pay into pension funds. A failing of the traditional Labour Party has been not only adoption of State Socialism but also its failure to link in with extra-parliamentary movements.

Do you see any possibilities of left realignment? Around what issues?

The debate in the Tribune Group has opened up in the last few weeks. Some in the Campaign Group also seem to be reconsidering. And there are plenty of people outside the Party who are looking for a lead and an alternative.

Two key questions are the defence of the welfare state and the issue of full-employment.

You are talking about the possibility of single issue campaigns cutting across these groups?

Yes, the Tribune and Campaign Groups will not disappear but in the Full-Employment Forum and around the recent Defence of the Welfare State conference a broad section of the left came together. The important thing here is that the official union structures are also involved.

There is some shift to the left in the unions' paper policy. But this is not true on the ground. There is only slow change and little grass-roots confidence. But I think unions like the GMB have shifted somewhat because they understand that the Shadow Chancellor's policy is just not credible.

The unions and the Party should organise a mass campaign of protest against the attacks on the NHS. But it is not happening. Why not? It could play a big part in transforming the situation. Is it just that the movement is fixated by worries about "what a Labour government could deliver"?

There is the general problem of the trade unions becoming less political. But I think the root of this is in the lack of confidence and self belief. Our response must be to turn back to the most basic, grass-roots activity. This is absolutely necessary. The Tories have a new set of massive attacks in the pipeline. Their budget was one of the biggest attacks on working people in a long time. They are forcing £24 billion in tax increases and £15 billion in spending cuts. But their threats to public sector pay and jobs can not hold in the long term. And we got an inkling of what the fightback could look like at the end of 1992 during the miners' demonstrations. There is enormous potential and we need to campaign to realise that potential.

Some of the issues raised here will be discussed in the next issue of *Socialist Organiser*.

When Len Murray made mugs of us all

THE official trade union movement loves anniversaries.

Famous victories and heroic defeats alike are commemorated with solemn meetings, jolly rallies, turgid books and (for some strange reason) mugs.

There were no meetings nor mugs, however,

to commemorate the recent tenth anniversary of the *Stockport Messenger* dispute. This was not altogether surprising, since the dispute was not just a defeat but a humiliating, shameful betrayal. Nevertheless, it was probably the single most important industrial confrontation of the 1980s (more important, even, than the miners' strike of 1984-5) and it deserves to be remembered.

It didn't look like a particularly important dispute at first: the *Messenger* group, owned by one Eddie Shah, published five free newspapers in the Lancashire and Cheshire area. In 1983, Shah set about de-unionising the business and sacked six NGA members from his Bury plant. The union responded by mounting pickets at Bury and also at Shah's Warrington plant (to which most of the NGA members' work had been transferred). They also called on all other NGA members to black the *Messenger* group and appealed to the NUJ for solidarity.

In October 1983, Shah obtained injunctions against both the NGA and NUJ, under the 1980 and 1982 legislation outlawing secondary action and action to enforce closed shops.

Up until this point, the Tories' anti-union legislation had not been put to a serious test. Employers had been happy to use it as a threat but usually pulled back from actually invoking it. And, anyway, rising unemployment (by now over three million) was gradually strengthening the employers' hand against the unions without the necessity of using the law. But Shah was a maverick and had the personal backing of Mrs. Thatcher.

The NGA defied the law and organised mass picketing of the Warrington plant. In November they were fined first £50,000 then £100,000, and finally the sequestration of their assets was ordered — the first total sequestration of a union in British history.

At this point the NGA turned to the TUC for help. In 1983 that wasn't such a laughable thing to have done. The TUC had held a special conference at Wembley in April 1982, at which it had been agreed that if any union was threatened by the law, the *whole* movement would take action in their support. Or, at least, that's what most trade unionists *thought* had been agreed. It turned out, of course, that TUC General Secretary Len Murray and his cronies had given themselves a get-out clause: the "Wembley Principles" empowered the TUC to organise supportive action. They did not *mandate* the TUC. The fine print stated that the TUC had to be "satisfied that assistance from the movement is justified". And, naturally, in this instance, it wasn't.

From that moment on, the NGA was scuppered. When they called a 24-hour national print strike in December with the support of the TUC Employment Committee, the General Council simply disowned the lower Committee. It was clear that whatever their fine words and "sophisticated", "tactical" arguments, the General Council was *in principle* opposed to solidarity action against the legislation.

The TUC's climbdown didn't just scupper the NGA at Warrington. It marked a turning point for the Tories' entire anti-union offensive. In January 1984 unions were banned at GCHQ and a month later the pit closure programme that provoked the 1984-5 strike was announced. From now on the anti-union legislation would be utilised whenever workers threatened serious resistance.

That's the legacy that Len Murray and the TUC General Council bequeathed us in December 1983 and we've still not got over it. Anyone for a Warrington commemorative mug?

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Test yourself: Are you 'basic' enough

An anonymous well wisher has sent us a so-far-unpublished Department for Education circular that appears to come directly from Ministerial level.

"DFE circular 94/0123/98. Find enclosed the new national curriculum key stage three test on Moral Education. To avoid further conflict with bolshie vegetarian teachers and other nutters the test is designed to be self marking.

Q1. What is Euclid's second theorem?

a. An important mathematical theory which is vital to an individual's progress through life.

b. A mathematical theory that was once taught by rote in schools and which most people did not understand - thank heavens those days are passed.

c. A sure-fire betting system.

d. A good excuse for sexually repressed teachers in religious schools to give young boys a sound beating.

Q2. Swearing. In what circumstances is it acceptable to swear?

a. None. A foul mouth shows a depraved mind.

b. Swearing is part of many people's everyday language and should be recognised as such. Most words contain little offensive in themselves.

c. All the f***ing time.

d. When you think that you have made sure that the press is not going to report it.

Q3. When should you use the word "bastard"?

a. Never, unless it's in Shakespeare.

b. Only as abuse divorced from the words original meaning of illegitimacy. Those born out of wedlock should not be stigmatised by outdated social mores.

c. As often as possible.

d. To describe your right wing colleagues and/or their children.

Q4. If you lead a political party that is lagging behind in the opinion polls do you:

a. Change your policies, since they are clearly unpopular and because politicians only want to carry out a popular mandate.

b. Stick to your principles and work at winning hearts and minds, believing that unprincipled careerists should work in advertising, not politics.

c. Give up and go to the pub, concluding that politicians are tossers anyway.

d. Lie and cheat, blaming anyone and anything but yourself: the sixties, single mothers, Jacques D'Ors, Maradona, Graham Taylor, the sweeper system and sell as many council houses as unnecessary.

Q5. Adultery is...

a. A sin.

b. Not the issue because it would be simplistic to think that relationships always last forever, or do not have occasional "rough patches".

GRAFFITI

VIVELA
REVOLUCION

By Cyclops

c. Fun.

d. Bad publicity if you are found out.

Q6. What do you think the "basics" are?

a. Absolute truths and Biblical morals?

b. The necessities of life: food housing, healthcare, education and work that should be everyone's right?

c. Beer and ciggies?

d. Votes?

Q7. The government recently said that there should be a return to "neighbourliness" and "neighbours". This is important because:

a. The Bible says to love your neighbour.

b. A sense of community is an important form of solidarity.

c. I don't like Australian soaps - there's not enough sex and violence.

d. You'd say that too if Kenneth Clarke lived next to you and everyone was looking for a new leader.

Q8. Complete the following sentence: "Michael Portillo is a..."

a. Bastard.

b. Bastard.

c. Bastard.

d. Bastard.

Your score

Mainly A: You are a model citizen. You work hard, keep your nose clean and refuse to expose yourself to the dangers of cynicism by avoiding the Guardian and news programmes on the BBC (try Satellite instead). Keep it up, well done!

Mainly B: Oh dear, you are a sadly warped and sick individual. You were probably brought up in the sixties. You are a cynic. You threaten the social order. Write your name and address clearly on the top of the question paper and give it back to your teacher.

Mainly C: You almost certainly watch Child's Play 3 most of your waking hours and have no morals to speak of. But do not despair: your teacher will give you a form so that you can apply to join your local police force. Your teacher will also give you some copies of this paper with mostly "b" answers and a name and address on the top. Your first job is to sort out these communists, gays and other assorted pinko-hippy cynics. You can help cure the British disease.

Mainly D: You have a very special gift. Your moral judgement promises a rosy future for you. Your teacher has the address of Conservative Party Central Office, please write at once.

The poodles turn vicious

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

WHEN THE Yeo story first broke, a lot of liberal and left-wing people felt just a little bit uneasy. Of course, it was nice to see the government embarrassed and Major's "Back to Basics" campaign in ruins. But we also feared a moralistic back-lash, fuelled by a prurient press, debasing the whole of British politics.

I personally agonised over this dilemma for several minutes before deciding to risk debasing politics and to have a good gloat.

Anyway, the bedroom farce aspect of things has long been overtaken by much more serious matters — property profiteering by MPs and gerrymandering by Westminster and Wandsworth councils — about which it is quite proper to wax indignant. As the catalogue of deceit, hypocrisy and corruption mounts up, what started as an amusing post-Christmas panto has turned into a crisis that threatens Major's leadership and perhaps even the Tory government itself. Not surprisingly, they're flailing about, looking for someone (other than themselves, of course) to blame. Mr Portillo, of course, blames everyone who dares to be at all critical of "national institutions" and echoing Bertolt Brecht, suggests that we are

not worth of such a fine government.

Major and the others haven't gone that far (yet) but are concentrating their fire on the hated 'media' and — in particular — the press. Kenneth Clarke and David Hunt have both used the term 'McCarthyite' — without any apparent sense of irony.

Now it is perfectly true that the ferocity of the press assault on the government has been the single most extraordinary spectacle to come out of the whole "Back to Basics" fiasco. Apart from the supine Express (edited by Major's chum Sir Nicholas' Lloyd) and the oh-so-liberal and decent Guardian, the entire Fourth Estate is now baying for Major's blood. The Sunday Times is in open revolt over the

coming tax increase. The Daily Telegraph described the Tory Party as "mired in sleaze" and "incapable of shame". The Mail poured scorn on Major's attempts to redefine "Back to Basics" and enraged Downing Street with its "F*****g Crucify Them" front page. But it has been the Sun that has turned most vicious of all, branding the Tories "a bunch of hopeless harlots (who) wouldn't recognise decency if they fell out of

their mistress's bed and landed on it." Perhaps recalling that after the last election he boasted "It's The Sun Wot Won It", the tirade was entitled "What fools we all were to believe this lot."

So what on earth is going on? Could Major and his allies be right — there really is a

press conspiracy to bring him down and even force an election? The truth is more likely to be that papers like the Sun, Mail and Telegraph are simply reflecting their readers' sense of anger and disillusionment over issues as varied as pit closures, the ERM fiasco and the broken tax promises. The Yeo affair and Major's pathetic wriggling over "Back to Basics" brought matters to a head, and the press has certainly kept up the pressure with new revelations on an almost daily basis. But the press hasn't created this crisis — it was waiting to happen.

The vast majority of the British press habitually behave like poodles towards the Tories and like slavering rottweilers towards Labour. The Tories have come to regard a deferential and virtually uncritical press and the natural state of affairs. That is what makes the present onslaught so traumatic for them. When Neil Kinnock and his colleagues were being vilified in the foulest manner before the last election, did anyone notice Mr Major or Mr Clarke suggesting that it might be just a teeny bit unfair? Now the Tories are getting the rottweiler treatment and they're squealing like stuck pigs.

If you can't have a good gloat over this, what can you gloat over?

Their values, and ours

WOMEN'S EYE

Phyllis Carter bus conductress

SPEND ALL my life working to earn enough to pay my bills. And that's all. And those in government have the nerve to preach to me about family values! Those scheming, lying, robbing, penny-pinching bastards!

They pack their kids off to boarding school for the best education money can buy. They don't want to live with their kids! It's incredible. My daughter hasn't learnt to read properly yet and she's seven.

Why can't they spend money on her education? She's just as valuable — no more — than they will ever be. And I can't be with her to help her out because they won't let me. Not if I want a job, and enough to keep my head above water.

I have values. I have family values. But they aren't the same as theirs. I've got my own. My values are about keeping my children safe, fed, warm, loved. My values mean that if I could not buy bread for my child I would steal it. I would. To them I would be a criminal, but to me I would be acting morally.

I don't know how they have the nerve to talk to us about family values. Since they decided they could get more money out of a privatised bus service, and my working conditions have changed so much, I hardly get to see my family let alone talk about values.

I started work this morning at 6.35am I shall finish at 4.15pm. That's almost a ten hour day. And that's my standard day. No overtime. When I come back to work in the morning it's like I never left the evening before.

"The only value the Tories know about is the value of money. They ought to. They've got enough of it."

So, when I do see my kids I'm tired. I'm very bad tempered. The little time I spend with them it's to shout at them to be quiet because after all the noise and dirt at work I can't stand more of it when I get home

I never thought I'd see the day I'd tell my children to shut up. My daughter's so inquisitive, learning about the world around her, asking me questions all the time. I dreamed of the day I would have a child to sit and talk to and teach, and be patient with. So she could get to know and do the things I couldn't. And all I have the strength to do is to ask her to be quiet or to go and ask her father.

Now they are running rings round themselves trying to explain away what they mean by "Back to Basics", "Neighbourliness" one said. Neighbourliness. My next door neighbour is an old woman, living alone, too scared to put her heater on in the winter for fear of being cut off. The only reason she needs neighbourliness from me is because of them!

"Education" another said. What planet are they living on? It's not the same one as ours is it, can't be.

"Safety from crime." What a joke. They give young kids no hope. No future and wonder why there is crime.

All the things they say they are trying to solve they have caused themselves because they care more about profit than people.

"Traditional family values" is another one. They only want us to live like that so we won't be taking money off the state. They don't have to live like that. Tim Yeo can have all the kids he likes because he won't ever have to ask the state for money. That's all they mean when they talk about young, single mothers. How much will it cost us.

The young single mothers I know would dearly love to bring their kids up in a well cared for, loving, rich environment. The reason they can't is because the government won't let them. They can't get work there are no nurseries, they live in bed and breakfast their benefits are cut to the bone. That's government policy not a desire to live like that.

The only value they know about is the value of money. They ought to. They've got enough of it.

The only reason they can say that their values are more important than ours is because they are in power and we are not. When we win some power maybe our values will be the ones that matter. And maybe we would be able to live by them without those thieving, dirty so-and-so's trying to stop us.

Making homelessness a crime!

By Mick

THE TORIES look set to criminalise squatting as part of their "Back to Basics" campaign. As Kenneth Baker said, "we'll get tough on armed robbers, get tough on rapists and get tough on squatters."

Baker puts people who move into empty property rather than slowly die on the streets up there with armed robbers and rapists! How sick can you get?

Homelessness is one of the worst and most savage forms of poverty. Even in this freezing weather, every British city has people sleeping rough. "Shelter" estimates that over 8,600 people will sleep rough tonight.

They estimate that over three mil-

lion people are homeless in Britain, living in hostels or sleeping on other people's floors.

This housing crisis is one of the most terrible results of 15 years of Tory rule.

The Tories say: "markets work". The market has failed to meet the basic human needs of millions of British people to have a home. Do they learn? No. They blame and want to punish their victims. Those who suffer as a result of the loony marketist policies they have forced on the people of Britain.

The attack on squatters is part of the Criminal Justice Bill currently going through Parliament. It will give a property owner the right to get a court order against anyone he or she accuses of squatting on his or her property.

The person accused of squatting

will not be allowed to attend the hearing!

The magistrate will be able to issue a court order that will give the accused squatter 24 hours to get out. Once that 24 hours is up the housed squatter will be breaking the law and will be liable to instant arrest.

The accused squatter must leave the property before he will be allowed to appeal to the government and give his side of the case.

It seems very likely that a property owner could use such a law against tenants whose rights have already been savaged by previous Tory housing legislation.

The Tories and the tabloids claim that squatters are a growing threat to ordinary people's houses. Yet squatters chose property that is empty and deserted, in the hope of a long stay.

A survey of 2,000 squats in 1991 found that only two were individually owned. The vast majority were commercially or state owned.

Most sick of all is the Tories' attempts to claim that squatters are jumping the queue for council housing! "It is unfair that local authority properties should be squatted when there are such long housing lists in certain areas" (Kenneth Baker).

This stomach-churning hypocrisy comes from a government which has:

- * pushed councils to sell council houses;
- * stopped councils using the money made to build more council houses;
- * slashed council budgets;
- * decimated local democracy.

Even if you don't take this into account, figures show the queue-jumping argument to be false.

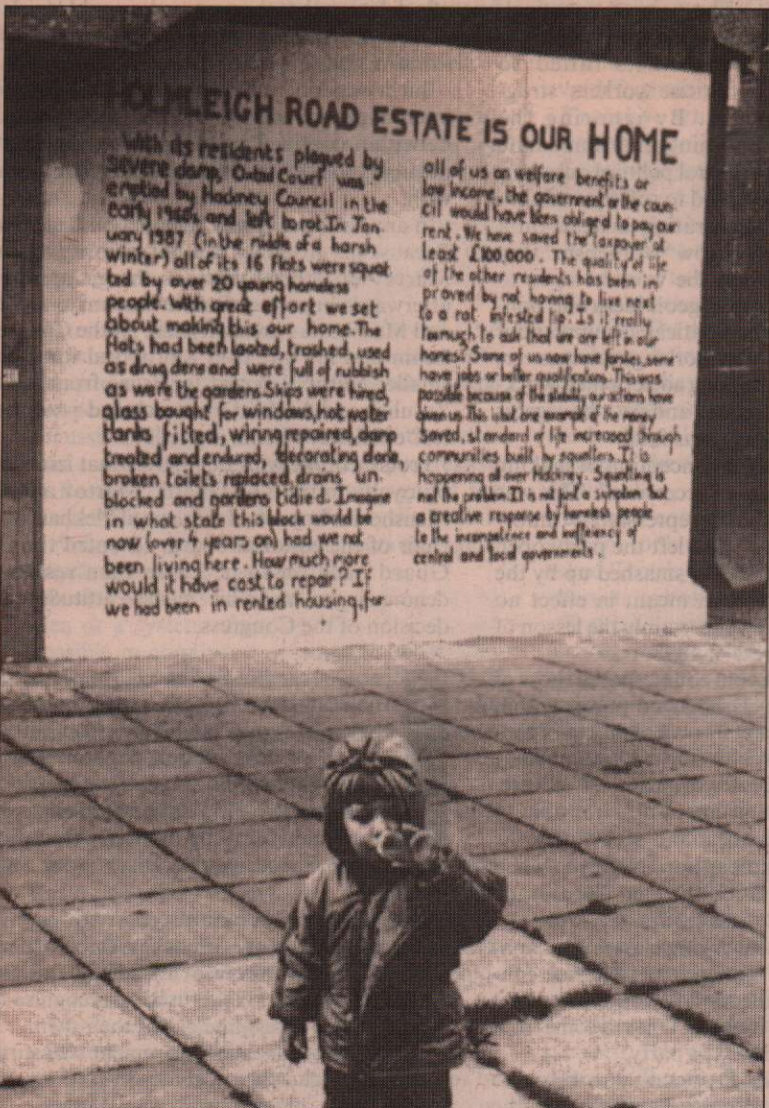
The Department of Environment itself estimates that 768,000 homes are empty and 13,000 housing association homes, and 558,000 commercial and private homes lie empty.

Under existing law, any property owner can remove squatters if they have an 'intending occupier' — a tenant. No new law is 'needed'.

But why should there be any law that forces people to rot on the streets or suffocate in rip-off hostels when so many homes lie empty and unused?

In rational human terms it is lunatic! It only makes sense in the mad, inhuman logic of the market. There need counts for nothing unless it can be paid for with cash.

Under this filthy system, profit-making and money are more important than the life of a youth freezing on the winter streets.



The government has slashed Council house-building programmes now it is blaming squatters from homelessness!

We like the way they do it

THIS WEEK'S "That's the Way to Do It" award goes to the school students and education workers of France. They have defeated the rightwing French government's plans to increase the proportion of the Education Budget that goes to private schools. 13% of the education budget already goes to private schools, which are predominantly Catholic.

The move to shift more school students into private and religious education and out of the secular state sys-

tem was knocked back by the French Constitutional Court, but what clinched the victory was the massive 300,000 strong march last Sunday in Paris.

The Education Minister has withdrawn the bill in the face of this active mass opposition. The French school students have taught the French government a lesson. They can teach us something too... They have shown us the way to defeat Tory attacks on education and on young people.



YOUTH
FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

Youth Fightback is...

... the voice of
revolutionary
socialist youth.

This page is
separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967
for details of our
activity.

Letters and articles
to *Youth Fightback*
c/o PO Box 823,
London SE15 4NA.



The mad logic of the market makes people homeless

A fair deal for Further Education

By Jo Archer (Sheffield)

THE GOVERNMENT'S proposals to cut student grants by 30% over the next three years focuses attention on student poverty. FE students throughout the country are campaigning against this injustice because we realise that these cuts will effect us in the future, as well as being

an overt attack on the education system as a whole.

But for FE students at the moment it is often much worse. Most FE students don't get a grant at all. This means we exist by working in shitty jobs and relying on our parents.

And what sort of education do we get? Are colleges booming businesses? It seems that way. We can see it in our colleges.

Every day business centres are being set up, cuts are being made in subsidies to means and equipment grants, course closures and learning centres introduced where we are taught by computers instead of tutors.

When it comes to rights for FE students not enough is said, especially in NUS. At Sheffield college students union we've organised a national FE Conference for 9 February. We plan to face all the issue effecting FE students and bring to the light of day problems which desperately need acknowledging.

Invited speakers include MPs, representatives from NATFHE, NUS, the NUS LGB Campaign, the Youth for Justice Campaign.

The issue we plan to tackle range from cuts in basic facilities in colleges to racism and fascism.

**Further Education
Student Conference**

Wednesday
9th February 1994
12-5 pm
Sheffield College

**A fair deal
for Further
Education**

Details:
0742 722348, Ed, Iris or Alison

Lenin and the Russ

On 20 January seventy years ago Lenin died. He was the Russian workers' leader in October 1917 when the working class in the old Empire of the Tsars made the greatest revolution in human history. Stalinist and bourgeois politicians have distorted and defiled Lenin's memory, obscuring what he stood for. In the first of three articles, Cathy Nugent surveys Lenin's life, his ideas and the events of his time.

VLADIMIR ILLICH Ulyanov, or Lenin as we know him, was born on 10 April 1870, one year before the uprising of Parisian workers created the Paris Commune which was, before it was bloodily suppressed after two months, the first workers' state.

But Lenin's birthplace might have been a million miles away from revolutionary Europe — the sleepy provincial town of Simbirsk in the Volga region of Russia.

Russia was a semi-feudal absolutist state, ruled by the Tsar who presided over a vast number of different peoples. The vast majority of the people (100 million out of a total of 117 million) were peasants and of these maybe two thirds were very poor.

The dominant strand of radical politics in Russia had for decades focussed on this majority. This movement was known as Narodism, from the Russian word for people. According to the Narodniks the peasants were the people.

The coming revolution in Russia would be by the people, the peasants. And socialism would be based on the "peasant commune". The revolution, the Narodniks believed, would take Russia straight from feudalism to socialism, missing out capitalist economic and social development altogether. Moreover capitalism was such an evil, they said, it was highly desirable that it be by-passed.

The Narodniks later regrouped and renamed themselves the Social-Revolutionaries in 1901. Continuing to base themselves on the peasantry, they were the largest single party at the time of the 1917 revolution.

Such theories had some connection with reality in the 1860s. Serfdom was abolished as late as 1861! But conditions two decades later were so different as to undermine these theories completely. By the end of the 19th century capitalism had firmly taken root in Russia. By 1897 there was a 14 million strong proletariat.

The Marxist socialist movement in Russia (becoming more influential after the mid-1880s) opposed itself to the Narodnik theories. The coming revolution in Russia, they argued, would be bourgeois in nature. Russian capitalism was inevitable and despite the horrors of capitalist industrialisation it was necessary and progressive. It would create an industrial proletariat. But meanwhile Russia was not ripe for socialism.

The most influential socialist writers in these early years were in exile abroad. The most important of these were George Plekhanov and Vera Zasulich (both of them ex-Narodniks) and Paul Axelrod. In 1883 they had founded the first Russian socialist organisation: the Group for the Emancipation of Labour.

These were the political debates Lenin came into contact with as a young man. The first influences he felt were Narodnik not least because his elder sister and brother were both part of that movement. Anna and Alexander Ulyanov were arrested in 1887 for plotting the assassination of the Tsar. Anna was acquitted; Alexander was hanged. Lenin was just 17.

In 1888 Lenin was himself arrested after only three months at University in Kazan — for playing a minor role in a student protest. But Vladimir was a member of the disgraced family Ulyanov. He was expelled from the University and ordered to live at his mother's estate near Samara. It was here in 1890-1 that he first came into contact with the socialists or the Social-Democrats as they were then known. Lenin wrote his first Marxist criticism of Narodism.

But Samara was another sleepy provincial town with very little to offer a newly-converted young socialist and it was only in 1893 when he moved to St Petersburg that Lenin was able to become an active Marxist.

Conditions for worker militants and socialists in the towns were extremely difficult and dangerous. Trade unions, radical political parties and 'subversive' literature were all banned. The Tsarist political police (the okhrana) had a vast network of informants and agents. Although their main target was the — sometimes terroristic — Narodniks, they repressed socialists too. Extreme precautions had to be taken against the police: meetings were held in secret, police 'tails' had to be shaken off. Many socialists were forced abroad, into exile.

The early 1890s was also a time of unrest throughout the industrial areas of Russia. "Unorganised" workers erupted in great spontaneous waves of mass strike action. Support for Social-Democracy grew. 1898 saw the first founding congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) at Minsk. Most of the delegates were arrested shortly after the congress began!

All Social-Democrats felt a need to respond to the burgeoning working-class movement, but there were wide differences on how best to do this.

There were three main factions. Firstly, the "Legal" Marxists led by Peter Struve (who eventually became a liberal capitalist politician). They wanted Social-Democracy to be a reformist movement. Then there were the so-called "Economists" led by Kuskova and Prokopovitch. The Economists wanted to build a movement on the basis of trade union, economic demands. They wanted the movement to be open and accessible to all. They did not want the movement to concern itself with immediate "political" questions such as the struggle for the — bourgeois — republic against Tsarism. Both of these political currents either paralleled or had many points in common with the "revisionist" current in Germany Social-Democracy. Led by Eduard Bernstein the revisionists wanted the German party to drop its commitment to socialist revolution. This long-term goal was nothing, Bernstein said, the movement (i.e. what reforms the movement can win in the here and now) was everything.

The third faction in the Russian socialist movement (to which Lenin belonged) bitterly opposed both the Economists and the Legal Marxists. This faction was grouped around a paper, *Iskra*, founded in 1900 by Lenin, Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod and Zasulich.

Lenin was to synthesise his criticisms in his famous pamphlet *What Is To Be Done* written in 1902.

The narrow practical, trade union activity of the Economists failed to politicise workers' struggles. By ignoring the burning and immediate general political questions posed to society and concentrating instead on a narrow "workerism" they left the workers open to bourgeois ideas and politics.

There could be no political vacuum and if the Marxists did not offer working-class answers to all the question afflicting society then workers would accept bourgeois and petit bourgeois answers. Such a strategy was fatal.

No less fatal was their conception of making the socialist party more "accessible". This was — in conditions of Tsarist repression — unforgivable "amateurism", and left the party open to the inevitability of being smashed up by the police. Such an approach meant in effect no workers' party. That was certainly the lesson of the first party congress of 1898.

To these methods Lenin counterposed those of *Iskra*. The working class has no power within capitalist society except its own ability to organise. It has neither wealth nor a spontaneously generated independent working-class culture. Under normal circumstances it is not able to understand in a scientific and stable way the nature of its own exploitation. Not even when it fights that exploitation through illegal trade unionism and great mass strikes.

In other words, the working class is not capable of arriving at a spontaneous Marxist consciousness. This is the kind of consciousness it needs to emancipate itself but it has to come from 'outside', from the Marxist party.

For Russian Social-Democracy to begin to function as a Marxist party Lenin argued, the disparate groups and circles of socialists needed to be united, tied together by a revolutionary organiser, a paper, through the *Iskra* enterprise whose tactics in *What Is To Be Done* he was expounding. Moreover, the Marxist party needs an exclusive, professional, serious, membership able to function despite Tsarist repression.

These were Lenin's first thoughts on the nature of the revolutionary party. It was the most important theme of his entire career, developed as he struggled to build the Bolshevik Party, the only party that has been up to this point in history capable of leading the workers to power.

As these debates took place Lenin was arrested. In 1897 he was forced into the first of many

exiles — to Eastern Siberia. Shortly before his exile he married his companion and lifetime comrade Nadezda Krupskaya.

Lenin's exile ended in 1900. Immediately he went abroad to meet and discuss with the Russian exiled-socialists to discuss setting up *Iskra*, the "Spark" after an old anti-Tsarist slogan "Out of this spark shall spring the flame."

The newspaper was smuggled into Russia through the underground network. Through the medium of *Iskra*, Russian socialists were able to clarify their political programme.

Lenin also spent his time abroad organising for a second, consolidating congress of the Russian socialists. This took place in the summer of 1903 in Brussels and London. It was not, however, a congress of unity. It was a congress of division of splits that were to lay the basis — for the time being in a confused way — for the differences in the Russian socialist movement right up to 1917 and beyond.

It was on organisational questions that differences emerged — specifically over the wording of Rule One of the Party's rule book, defining membership. Lenin wanted a tight definition with members obliged to "personal participation in one of the Party's organisations". An alternative amendment was put by another leading Marxist of the time, Martov.

Martov's formulation simply allowed for "personal assistance under the direction of one of the Party's organs". Lenin objected to the 'elasticity' in this. It left the Party open to all sorts of opportunists and dilettantes he said, reflecting his conviction that the party should be as organised as possible, made up of serious individuals to be better able to influence the masses.

Critics (including Trotsky and Luxemburg) accused Lenin of being dictatorial and in the grip of a delusion that the party rules could legislate in advance to stop the development of 'revisionism' and 'opportunism'.

But it was not that Lenin did not allow for internal party criticism. He simply felt it should be within confined boundaries i.e. that party members should be in broad agreement to start with!

In any case Lenin was defeated on Rule One. Because his grouping had the majority against Martov on other questions the groups were afterwards known as Bolsheviks (majorityists) and Mensheviks (minorityists). At the Congress Lenin had his way over a proposal for a new smaller editorial board for *Iskra* from which Zasulich and Axelrod were excluded — for better "efficiency" Lenin argued.

Trotsky broke with Lenin over that issue, out of loyalty to the 'Old Guard'. Martov and the Mensheviks boycotted *Iskra* until Plekhanov, as chair of the editorial board, co-opted the Old Guard back on to it. Lenin then resigned, denouncing as "anarchic" such an attitude to the decision of the Congress.

In 1904 the Bolsheviks set up a proper faction called the "Bureau of the Committees of the Majority" and in this Committee's name issued a faction paper, *Vperyod*. This, and Lenin's resignation from *Iskra*, was an open split yet the two groups were to remain formally in one organisation, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party until 1912.

The Bolsheviks campaigned for a third Congress. When the Mensheviks obstructed such a Congress they went ahead with one anyway. The Mensheviks refused to recognise the Bolshevik Congress and called their own.

But the entire socialist movement was stirred up by 1905 and these debates moved into the background.

The immediate background to the revolutionary events in Russia in 1905 was the effects of the Russo-Japanese war (1904-September 1905). This combined with rural unemployment of 10 million and successive waves of famine to provide the basis for unrest.

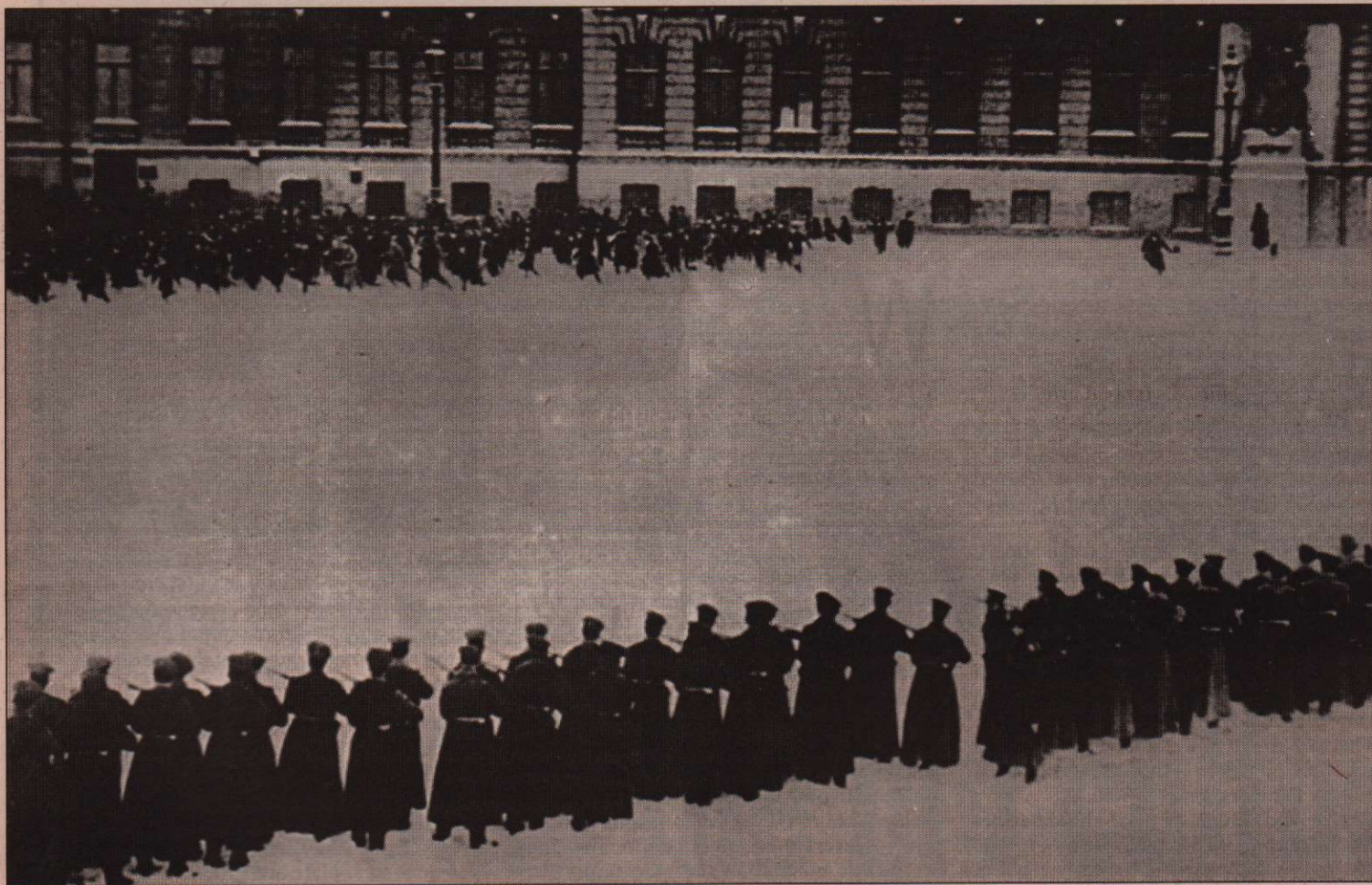
On 9 January 1905 200,000 of St Petersburg's workers marched on the Winter Palace. They were led by a priest (and government agent) Gapon. Gapon's slogan was "let us humbly beg our little father himself [the Tsar] to help us". They were gunned down by the "little father's" army.

News of the massacre prompted a strike wave all over Russia culminating in a general strike



The young Lenin and fellow members of the League for the Emancipation of the Working Class

Russian revolution



January 1905. The Tsar's army lines up against St Petersburg's workers

in October. Eventually the Tsar set up the Duma, a bourgeois parliament with very little power and elected by a savagely undemocratic electoral roll. The bourgeoisie set up a party for itself — the 'Kadet' party.

In the towns the workers set up their own parliaments, soviets, or workers' councils. In December 1905 the workers' movement was defeated and repressed.

Elections to the Duma were called on several occasions in the next few years. Each session was shut down by the Tsar and his Ministers within a few months of being convened.

During 1905 differences between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks were thrown into sharp relief. The fundamental question was the perspective of the revolution.

Russian Marxism was founded on the belief that capitalism was inevitable and progressive in Russia. This idea was asserted against the Narodniks and their descendants, the Social-Revolutionaries, which had elements of a vague classless utopian socialism in it.

But for Marxists socialism is more than a good idea or a system of morals. It only becomes possible in conditions of material abundance such as created by advanced capitalism. Such conditions did not exist in Russia. Against the semi-feudal Tsarist system there would have to be a revolution like that of France in 1789 or England in the 1640s. All Marxists said this.

However, it left many questions unanswered. Russia in 1905 was not France in 1789.

In the midst of a semi-feudal agrarian sea there was a powerful working class, concentrated in giant factories built with the technology developed in Western Europe and often with Western capital. These workers were revolutionary-minded and socialist-led.

The Russian bourgeoisie was a feeble class and at the sight of the mass socialist workers' movement a fear-stricken class. Would they be able to lead a "French-style" bourgeois revolution? Looking over its shoulder at the working class, would it dare try? Concrete analysis was needed within the general Marxist formulae. Here a split developed.

Lenin argued that though material conditions decreed that only bourgeois revolution was possible, the bourgeoisie could not lead it. It would have to be made against the big bourgeoisie. It would have to be made by the people — the workers and the peasants — clearing the way for bourgeois development. Therefore the political struggle for the independence of the workers was of the greatest possible importance. Lenin said that what was needed was a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry."

The Mensheviks (Plekhanov, Martov) on the other hand, insisted that only the bourgeoisie could lead the bourgeois revolution. The workers' movement, therefore, should be careful to avoid 'frightening' them.

Trotsky, who had separated from the Mensheviks in 1905 and would be independent of both major factions until he joined the Bolsheviks in 1917, agreed with Lenin in this division. But he went further, building on the common idea that the workers and peasants would have to make the bourgeois revolution.

Who, he asked, would really lead, workers or peasants? The peasants, he argued, had never led anything, being too scattered and backward. Inevitably they would follow some force based in the urban areas. The workers would thus be the leading class in any worker and peasant alliance. The working class would lead the revolution.

But how could the working class take power and not look after its own interests as a class? asked Trotsky. Would it not fight for its own interests against the bourgeoisie?

Trotsky argued, looking at the experience of the 1905 revolution, that once the working class took power it could not be confined within bourgeois society. It would be the beginning of socialism.

Mensheviks and Leninists alike could not accept this idea. Russia could not be socialist, they argued, because it was too backward. Trotsky's thesis appeared to break too much with the fundamental Marxist conception of socialism as a product of and a successor to the capitalist stage in human history.

Trotsky, however, did not argue that Russia was ripe for socialism. It was ripe only for a working-class assumption of power. If the workers were to take power in Russia and they left isolated, the working-class regime would be doomed. But the Russian revolution would be one link in an international chain, linked to revolution in the advanced countries of European capitalism, which were ripe for socialism.

The revolution would spread and the contradiction created in Russia by economic backwardness combined with a powerful revolutionary working class would be resolved on the international arena.

This was Trotsky's "Theory of Permanent Revolution". It predicted with very great accuracy what would happen in 1917. But, in 1905, only Trotsky could see the shape of the revolution to come.

At their April 1905 Geneva conference the Mensheviks, in line with their perspective, decided to give support to the 'democratic' programme

of the Kadets. When the Tsar announced the convening of a Duma in October they were immediately in favour of participating. The Bolsheviks boycotted the Duma as their hopes lay with the development of the workers' own movement against the institutions of the Tsarist state.

Lenin had to argue for months against fellow Bolsheviks for a new orientation in party organisation. The party, he said, has reached a new stage in its development and it is able to capitalise on the tremendous upsurge in working-class struggle. The party should do everything in its power to open up to worker militants. Furthermore, workers should be promoted in the party, and put on all of its committees.

Fellow Bolsheviks, remembering the debates and conditions of the 1890s and early 1900s were shocked by Lenin's arguments. But Lenin's argument was premised on the fact that the party had had 10 years of development and preparation: it was ready, now, to accept a mass of new members.

There was no fear of the politics of the party being diluted now in the new conditions of more or less open activity. Finally Lenin convinced his comrades of the need for changes.

As Lenin later wrote: the party "while retaining its fundamental character, has known how to adapt its form to changing conditions, to change this form in accordance with the demands of the moment." For the workers' struggle was doomed unless it had an organisation capable of harnessing its energy and directing it towards the enemy.



Trotsky alone analysed what would happen in the coming Russian revolution.

Karl and Rosa

ON 15 JANUARY 1919, 75 years ago, Rosa Luxemburg was kidnapped and murdered by right-wing German soldiers. A blow from a soldier's rifle smashed Rosa's skull. She was then shot and her body thrown in a canal, from which it was recovered some weeks later. Politically the soldiers were forerunners of the Nazis.

Her comrade Karl Liebknecht suffered a similar fate.

Thus died the two foremost revolutionary socialists in Germany. They had opposed German imperialism — and all the imperialist camps — during the world war, and spent much of it in jail.

The November 1918 revolution that brought down the German emperor and ended the war released Karl and Rosa from jail. But right-wing social democrats kept control of that revolution. German capitalism survived and international socialists like Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and many others were persecuted and murdered.

Born in Poland into a Jewish family in 1870, Rosa was a committed socialist at 16 and spent her life in the struggle for socialism. Moving to Germany she led the left wing of the German Socialist Party.

Karl Liebknecht was the son of one of the main founders of German socialism, Wilhelm Liebknecht (who died in 1900) and was a deputy in the Reichstag when war broke out. Soon, he defied the Party majority and used the Reichstag as a platform from which to fight the war.

Conscripted, he agitated against war in the streets wearing his uniform.

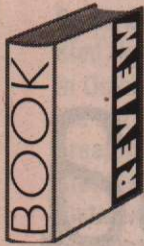
Both Karl and Rosa were passionate though not uncritical supporters of the Russian Revolution, they championed Lenin and Trotsky against the Liberals and right-wing socialists.

Rosa Luxemburg's writings against reform and in support of working-class



Rosa Luxemburg

The Panthers as they were



Mark Osborn reviews
A Taste of Power,
the autobiography of
Elaine Brown, a leader
of the Black Panther Party

Pantheon, New York

"HUEY SAID 'I've got my gun. What are you going to do with yours?' ... And Huey's calling the pigs swine, dogs, sharecroppers, bastards, motherfuckers, with his M1 in his hand. And *daring* them, just *daring* them!" These are the words of Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panthers, from his book *Seize The Time*.

The sex and the glamour and the violence found in the Panthers — encapsulated in *Seize The Time* — has largely been taken to be the whole truth. The Panthers were exciting and dangerous; they are far enough away in time and in miles to be uncritically revered.

"I've got my gun" was a beautiful, defiant thing for a black person to say in racist 1960s America where gun-happy racist whites were armed to the teeth. And the Panthers grew rapidly because they proved as good as their words. They policed the police. Following two high-profile stunts with guns — as a security team for Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's widow, at San Francisco airport, and then at the California State legislature in Sacramento in May 1967 in a protest against restrictions on the use of firearms — their daring became more widely known.

Elaine Brown reports David Hilliard, a party leader, as saying that "there were only seven real Panthers at the time. After Sacramento thousands of Brothers signed up".

Deliberately they organised "lumpen" youth — young black people of the inner city slums. The Party was built around men like Bunchy Carter, former leader of the 5,000-strong Slauson gang.

The political context of all this was the US's war in Vietnam and, centrally, the growth of a mass civil rights movement bringing with it the radicalisation of black youth in the cities. Year after year in the mid-1960s the black ghettos rose up against poverty and the police, and the Panthers were part of that movement.

The response of the state was repression on a vast scale. J. Edgar Hoover declared that "the Black Panther Party is the single greatest threat to the internal security of the US". Hundreds were arrested and scores killed as the Black Panther Party was infiltrated by the state and set up by their provocateurs.

Solidarity with the Panthers' just struggle and in opposition to the government-sponsored harassment of the Black Panther Party is basic for socialists. But could you leave it there if you knew about a vicious internal regime where violence in the name of "Party

discipline" was routine? And what about the Panthers' Stalinism?

In fact if a reader cares to be critical some answers already exist in *Seize The Time*. Beyond the immediate questions of guns and the police and the community programmes, there is not a lot of politics. Precisely what is wrong with what the government does? How would the Panther's *Ten Point political programme* be carried out? By whom? Are the *Ten Points* the complete answer? If not, what else is needed? And where is it to be found?

On political matters Elaine Brown's book takes us no further forward. She has nothing but praise for some of Huey Newton's more obviously cocaine-induced polemic (e.g. the point at which he describes how capitalism and nations have been destroyed by a force called 'reactionary intercommunalism': "Huey spat out an idea that the most learned economists and sociologists had failed to articulate").

And Stalinism? On the face of it the book is terrible. Brown's book was written in 1992, after the '89 revolutions in Eastern Europe, yet she is still uncritical of Panther illusions in the Stalinist states. Nevertheless, it is not that they are really Stalinists — rather that they side with those fighting their own enemy, the US government.

What *A Taste of Power* does do is provide a much more complete — honest — picture of the Black Panthers, warts as well.

As I've said, much of what she describes exists in outline in Bobby Seale's *Seize the Time*. For example there was clearly a cult of the gun and a cult of the leader, Huey P Newton.

Elaine Brown is a good witness. She was in the building when Ron Karanga's cultural nationalists killed leading Panthers Bunchy Carter and John Huggins. She was there when Huey Newton confronted Farrakhan (seemingly they came close to killing each other after Farrakhan's Black Muslim organisation bad-mouthed the Panthers). She was forced across the world — essentially kidnapped — by Eldridge Cleaver. She ran for office with Bobby Seale. For years Elaine Brown was at the centre of it all.

Brown describes the Central Committee: "a body of men with titles but no power. They had begged Huey to lead them, guide them, take charge of the party and their lives, the way men always do with their gods." Nevertheless, force was often required.

The Panthers' disputes — political and other — were regularly solved by violence. In a confrontation over the production of the Panther's paper Brown runs up against Bobby Seale. Seale outranks her and has her taken down to the basement and whipped. Brown accepts it. "Punishment was always an act of violence... if we had been in Bolivia with Ché we would be shot for violations of rules." True, I suppose, but somewhat besides the point.

Later Brown watches as Huey Newton drives Bobby Seale out of the Party and out of Oakland. He has him whipped 20 times with

a bullwhip in his Penthouse apartment. Huey says "you have violated the trust of the party". Margaret Thatcher identified the country with herself — Huey Newton identified the Black Panther Party with himself (the cult leader is a cultist himself) — "You are no longer chairman... In fact, I no longer want you in this party." Huey tells Seale he is now homeless: "be out of your house — my house — by morning."

WHY BELIEVE THIS? Well, I do not know about the details. The outline seems plausible. Why? Take this scene in *Seize The Time*: Huey and Bobby decide to get cash to buy guns. They find a man who will sell them cheap copies of Mao's *Little Red Book*. They take them to the University and sell the books at a big profit. Bobby Seale is pleased because they have outsold the Black Muslim press. What about the politics of the *Little Red Book*? Huey decides that not all of it is applicable to America and crosses some of it out with a pen — and probably a good thing, too!

What this does show is that the gun came first and the politics second, or further back. In essence the Panthers were a proud, dramatic, armed, semi-suicidal defiance of the brutal power which crushed black people. They were a voluntary black blood sacrifice on behalf of America's brutalised black masses, whom they tried to inspire with the will to assert themselves. Politically, they were little more than that. Certainly they were not politically coherent.

Brown says, "The Party was not democratic. It was democratic centralist." Leaving aside the issue of what I would mean by democratic centralism — again Brown is not exactly even a Stalinist, just using the rhetoric of Stalinism — someone else's 'big' politics.

The Panther regime she describes owes more to the structure of a gang than that of the bureaucratized Soviet Communist Party.

When Brown takes over the Panthers in '74, there is no vote. Huey Newton just hands over power in the same way he put her onto the Central Committee. Brown assembles several hundred leading Panthers and tells them: "I have control over all the guns and all the money. There will be no internal opposition I will not resist and put down. If you don't like what we're going to do here is your chance to leave. You'd better leave because you won't be tolerated."

THE QUESTION of women and the Panthers is difficult. On the one hand Bobby Seale's statements in *Seize The Time* are good. According to Elaine Brown he hardly lives up to his words — she describes one particular scene where Seale gets a 15 year-old Panther to humiliate herself for his amusement. But Brown clearly hates Seale's guts... Then there's Huey Newton slapping her face and a very bad beating Brown received at the hands of a Panther



Elaine Brown was a leader of the Black Panther Party. She was the first woman on their Central Committee and the person to whom Huey P Newton handed over power in the movement when he left America for exile in Cuba in 1974.

lover. But the general culture is mixed with the culture of the Panthers and complicated by personal relationships. Like Lenin referring to sex with people who had had lots of partners as "like drinking out of a glass greasy from many lips," the Panthers were people of their place and time...

BY THE EARLY '70s the Panthers had become big business. They looked for money to fund their community-based Survival programmes, taking 'donations' from legal and not-so-legal businesses. The programmes gave a lot of children some schooling they would not have received elsewhere. A lot of people got fed, when they would have gone hungry. But the money went elsewhere, too. When Brown visited Huey Newton in Cuba, she says she took him \$10,000 in her knickers. She adds that she spent \$10,000 in a clothes-binge.

At the end of the book the Panthers are collapsing into the bourgeois Democratic Party, the destination of so many of the US's radical movements. Brown attends high powered business lunches and gets wrapped up in the wheeling and dealing of bourgeois politics.

Here the problem of nationalist — black rather than class politics — unwinds itself. How to move beyond black community-based politics — resting on one in eight of the US's population — to politics capable of answering broad social and governmental-level questions? For, of course, a minority of 1 in 8 can not alone take decisions for the overall society in which they are immersed. The Panthers rose and fought at a time when American socialists were utterly marginal and the white workers were quiet, hostile, or full of murderous hatred for the black people and their movement. That was their tragedy.

The Platform and Programme of the Black Panther Party (1966)

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.
6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.
8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.



Black student occupation at Cornell University, USA.



Cheung Dieyi (Leslie Cheung)

Defending the old culture



Matt Cooper
reviews *Farewell
My Concubine*

Directed by
Chen Kaige

LIKE THE old-style Chinese opera from which the film takes its name, *Farewell My Concubine* deals with love, obsession and betrayal, here played out against the backdrop of 52 years of China's history. It is a rich, nuanced and multi-faceted film.

The story episodically follows the two lead characters Cheung Dieyi (Leslie Cheung) and Duan Xialou (Zhang Fengyi) from Beijing under the warlords, through the Japanese invasion, the nationalist regime and the Maoist revolution, the Cultural revolution and finally the post-Gang of Four thaw. This is not a film about the politics of the period; what links Dieyi and Xialou is the opera. The opera "Farewell my concubine" is traditional, telling of a mythical great warrior king who, vanquished in war, is deserted by all save his horse and his favourite concubine.

Since, like many ancient theatre traditions — that of England, in Shakespeare's time, for example — the Chinese is an all-male theatre, the female characters are played by men and boys. From an early age boys are shaped and moulded into a female stage role. Dieyi is shaped into one such female role, playing the concubine opposite Xialou's king. The film is an exploration of the changing relationship between Dieyi and Xialou in their confused roles on stage and in real life.

One of the major themes is that of loss of identity. With the opera, there is no interpretation: each step, each move, each costume and every element of make-up are by an unswerving tradition. There is even an ongoing argument about how many steps the king should take at a certain stage, five or seven!

The Academy of the Beijing opera,

a mixture of acting school and Dickensian workhouse, is the guardian of this tradition and the instrument whereby the young are indoctrinated into their roles. Any mistake results in a savage beating that would make even John Patten flinch.

Here the young Dieyi is forced to accept an identity as a woman that goes far beyond his stage role. Repeatedly the boy is forced to repeat a line from the opera "I am by nature a girl, not a boy". Again and again he cannot say the lines and inverts the "boy" and "girl". Through the oppressive violence of the academy Dieyi's identity is smashed and supplanted by that of the character he is destined to play — that of the concubine.

(As a by-product of the film's ambiguous sexual politics, there is always a feeling that Dieyi's homosexuality is only a deformation caused by his role).

A second theme of the film is that in order to create something of beauty an acceptance of suffering and sacrifice are necessary and therefore worthwhile. Beauty that is timeless and immutable is an all-important goal, the individual nothing. This is the world in which Dieyi lives. He is indifferent for whom he performs, caring only that he does perform.

This creates the setting for betrayal. As the concubine, Dieyi can love only the king, and therefore Xialou. Xialou is more worldly and is torn between Dieyi and his wife, Juxian (Gon Li).

As time goes by, the real world begins to intrude ever more rudely into the realm of the opera, both in terms of the changing political climate and the triangle between Juxian, Dieyi and Xialou. Finally, with the Maoist revolution, the tension between the two worlds breaks. The opera become a battle ground between those wanting to preserve the old culture and those wanting to replace it with "proletarian art". It is the Cultural Revolution that break the opera. The object of this "revolution" was to break the old culture and replace it with a new "socialist" culture, thereby transforming the peo-

ple into something new too. The central problem was that there was no culture with which to replace the accumulation of centuries of tradition. From a Marxist point of view the idea of such a Cultural revolution was an absurdity. Culture could change only with time and social evolution. What replaced the old culture was often little more than crude Maoist propaganda. The Cultural Revolution was a savage destruction of an old culture (and of millions of people deemed to embody the old culture).

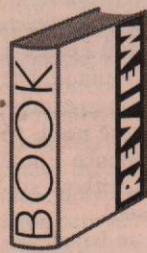
The director reserves a special venom for the Cultural Revolution that verges on the hysterical and is nearly the undoing of the film. A weaker film might well have been

overwhelmed by it, but Kaige (who denounced his own father in the Cultural Revolution) succeeds in showing that the only force it was capable of unleashing was a negative and destructive one.

This film is superbly crafted and dominated by Leslie Cheung in the role of both Dieyi and his alter ego, the concubine. The film's strength lies in its classical story of betrayal and in its bitter depiction of the futility of attempting to bury the culture of an old society when the culture of a new society has not appeared to supersede it naturally and organically.

Don't let the subtitles or 2½ hour running time put you off. This film is well worth your attention.

The Labour government and the Secret Service



Wilson and
the Secret
State

by Stephen Dorril
and Robin Ramsay

£7.99
Granta

DORRIL AND Ramsay cut their journalistic teeth working on the radical "spook watching" magazine, *Lobster*. *Smear* is a summation and synthesis of articles about the alleged campaign(s) of dirty tricks perpetrated against Harold Wilson whilst he was in power in the 1960s and '70s.

Their central argument is that from the late 1940s, when Wilson was a Junior Minister of Trade in the Attlee 1945-51 government, onwards, the Security Services had a deep sense of dislike for "darling Harold."

Dorril and Ramsay are of the opinion that Wilson attracted the hostility of the secret state not because he was a radical socialist but because he was both lower middle class and northern.

Over three decades, according to Dorril and Ramsay, the security services kept close tabs on and at key times deliberately worked against Wilson. Wilson merited this attention because he was an outsider, not a member of the south-eastern, Tory supporting, pro-finance capital milieu who considered it was ordained by God himself that they should be in key positions of state power.

The smears concocted by the intelligence services included allegations of sexual misconduct, financial corruption, land deals, and, most bizarrely, that Wilson was the head of a Communist cell within 10 Downing Street! Dorril and Ramsay expose the seamless web that connects the Tory party, Britain's financial institutions, and the intelligence services.

Real life casualties



Garry Meyer
reviews *Casualty*
and *Cutting Edge*

IF *CASUALTY* were real life, you'd think health workers were overworked, underpaid, highly skilled and dedicated people. If you watched *Nurses* — *Cutting Edge* (Monday 17, Channel 4) you would realise that in real life they are.

Casualty (Saturday 15, BBC1) was the gutsiest TV I have seen in a long time. The basic story concerned people caught in a toxic waste spillage.

A haulier was illegally dumping it for a corner-cutting factory owner. The hero — and he was a hero — was the asthmatic teenage boy who helped to save the driver's life, by staying with him, telling stories in between puffs on his inhaler, until the ambulance arrived.

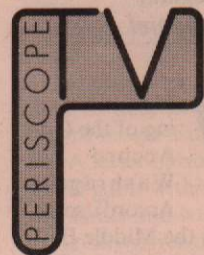
The story of the toxic waste which spilled when a lorry crashed drew us into another story of toxicity and waste — the poisonous Tory policies for the NHS. Without this element it would have been only another tragic story about bad guys who get off with a broken wrist and good people who die young.

Cutting Edge on Monday showed even more starkly the reality of working the wards. The programme brought out the dedication needed to be a nurse.

One of the nurses, for example, finished a 14 hours shift at 10 o'clock knowing he would have to be back at work 7 hours later. All this for a basic — as a student — of £1.71 per hour.

Where *Cutting Edge* fell down, however, was in placing blame for the state of the health service. *Casualty* showed more clearly where the blame lies and more dramatically.

Let history judge?



Paddy Dollard
previews
Timewatch and
*In Secret
History*

Timewatch, 26 January,
BBC2, 8pm

HITLER, Ronald Reagan and the Tsarina of all the Russias — the mad, the stupid and terminally effete — are all known to have placed great trust in astrologers and quacks. The Tsarina in her last days of power, just before the 1917 revolutions, was in the hands of Rasputin, "the mad monk", a faithhealer, a legendary debauchee and an upstart at court who was finally murdered by jealous young aristocrats. *Timewatch* will argue that historians have been "desperately unfair" to Rasputin.

In Secret History, 27 January,
Channel 4, 9pm

WHITE LIES tells the story of the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) which was founded in the 1950s to raise money for the defence of South African political prisoners and the support of their families.

Its founder was Canon John Collins, a Stalinoid Church of England priest who was one of the leaders of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the days when it could regularly call 100,000 people to demonstrate in Trafalgar Square.

Israeli-PLO Accords

The struggle will not end

Realising that it was grossly inadequate, *Socialist Organiser* nevertheless welcomed the PLO-Israel Accord because it seemed to contain the seed of a possible evolution towards a real solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict: two states for two peoples. The Accord — which has run into difficulties, but is still intact — has, not unexpectedly, been condemned by most socialists of *Socialist Organiser's* general — Trotskyist — persuasion. The majority of the members of the Israeli organisation, the Revolutionary Communist League favour the Accord for reasons similar to ours; a minority can see no good in it at all. We print the majority position here, and next week will print the views of the minority. The text is taken from the January issue of the magazine, *International Viewpoint*.

WITH the signing of the Oslo Accord (or Washington Accord), something happened in the Middle East, and whatever our assessment of the situation used to be, it is not going to be identical to the reality we knew prior to the Israeli-Palestinian agreement. It is too early to determine what will be the fate of the new order, and it is certainly too early to assess

what the socio-political picture is going to look like in one or two years time. However, we do know that there are those who are in error, and who foster errors, when they claim that they know what will be the fate of the Palestinians, the Occupied Territories and of the State of Israel, following the documents that were signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO): there are too many unknown factors, mainly the political, institutional reactions of the peoples, the sectors and the classes. Even so, we have no other choice than to try and assess the agreement and the different options it opens up, and, based on this assessment, determine a policy which puts the needs of the people first, alongside their ability to act in order to fulfil them.

1. The assessment of the Accord

The Accord that was signed by Shimon Peres and Abu Mazen in Washington is not a good agreement, and does not do justice to the Palestine people. Abu Mazen himself will agree, without any difficulty, with this view. The Accord was dictated to the PLO leadership by Israel and Egypt, because the balance of forces have deteriorated since 1990. Even though it diverged in many ways from the Madrid formula, that was agreed on the eve of the Madrid Conference, it provided the framework for the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Washington. In this respect, we have to relate to the Oslo Accord as part of our overall reaction to the Madrid Conference.

The Madrid Conference was the

result of two developments, one positive and one negative: (a) the Intifada, which put an end to twenty-five years of status quo in the Occupied Territories, and forced Israel, the countries in the region, and the international community to put the question of the occupation and Palestinian nationality on the international agenda; (b) the Gulf War, that emphasised and gave expression to the regional balance of forces, in favour of the American imperialism and its allies, and against the Palestinian national movement.

The combination of these two political developments put the Palestinian question on the agenda of the "New Order" in the region, but in a very limited way: taking the PLO out of the process, overlooking Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, and dropping the issue of self-determination.

The Palestinian national movement faced one choice only: to accept the formula that was dictated by Shamir and Baker, and to open negotiations with Israel under monstrous conditions, or, reject it and pay the price of conflict with most Arab governments. After weighing up the consequences, the PLO leadership accepted the American dictate.

The talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians did not go anywhere in the last year for three main reasons: the Israeli refusal to commit to a limited autonomy period as only a stage towards permanent withdrawal and fulfilment of Palestinian rights to self-determination, and the limited interpretation given by the Israeli delegation to "autonomy". However, despite these great conflicts, the Labour-Meretz government was interested in coming to an agreement as a result of the situation in the Occupied Territories and, especially, in the Gaza Strip which had turned into a second Lebanon during the years of the Intifada. The idea of "Gaza First" was an expression of the will, and the need, to remove the Israeli Defence Force from the Gaza morass, without giving up on the other issues.

The Oslo Accord is an Israeli victory, mainly because it is based on a Palestinian agreement to the idea of Gaza First. What did each side gain and give in order to reach this agreement?

The Government of Israel agreed to three concessions: in addition to Gaza First, it added the small territory of Jericho; it gave more substance to the meaning of autonomy, and gave more authority to the self-governing Palestinian area; and it dramatically turned around from its previous policy of refusing to recognise the PLO. Even though the accepted assessment is that the PLO is only a shadow of its former self, compared with the 1970s and 1980s, and that it has lost a lot of its significance. However, there is no way that its reduced standing can under-

mine the process, and the symbolic and political meaning of an Israeli recognition of an organisation that still represents the majority of the Arab Palestinian people.

In compensation of the acknowledgement, and with the alibi of Jericho, the PLO leadership agreed, with a small majority, to free Israel from Gaza, without any guarantees from the Rabin government, that after autonomy it will agree to a full withdrawal and to the establishment of a Palestinian State. Moreover, without any conclusions to major questions, such as — what will be

"Itzak Rabin can be praised that in exchange for 'pennies' he got a great deal more from the PLO."

the authority of Palestinian self-government? In addition, the PLO leadership agreed to a one sided normalisation, and the end to the fighting, while the key questions that deal with the occupation, self-government, the settlements and the refugees, were not solved and are still on the agenda for discussion.

There is no symmetry between the concessions that were made by Israel and the concessions that were made by the PLO leadership, and Itzak Rabin can in justice be praised that in exchange for "pennies" he got a great deal more from the PLO.

Among Israel's most significant achievements is the Palestinian willingness to normalisation and ceasefire, and this is before the basic problems of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been solved. Problems such as the Right of Return were not solved, the occupation is still intact, and so what we have here is a one-sided normalisation; lack of symmetry and equality. There is nothing between this "normalisation" and a historical compromise.

The normalisation that the government of Israel seeks is not solely in the relations between Palestinians and Israelis, but mainly in the regional arena. The Oslo Accord is an important factor in Israel's attempt to establish its economic status in the area, to open new markets, and to use it as a jumping board to international "membership" of the area. In contrast to what is seen on the surface, the main part of the Oslo Accord is not that part which establishes Israeli control over the Palestinian economy, (because this

control exists even more strongly during the occupation). Rather, it is meant to use the Israeli-Palestinian economic co-operation in order to tie regional markets to Israeli capitalism.

2. Our stand towards the Accord

Against determinism: most political interpreters, from both sides, who are involved in this subject, are giving us a one dimensional interpretation of the agreement and mainly of its future implementation: on the one side, the PLO leadership and the Israeli Peace Camp and the Israeli rightwing who believe that the agreement is leading unavoidably to the establishment of a Palestinian State (which they recognise as the fulfilment of the Palestinian peoples' right to self-determination); on the other side you have the Palestinian opposition, who are leaning on the publicised arguments of the Israeli establishment, and who state that this agreement cannot lead to a Palestinian State but that it will in fact end in a national disaster of the order of 1948.

We are rejecting this deterministic approach. Agreements express the basic balance of power, but the way in which they are applied depends on the balances of power at each stage of the process. The Oslo Accord can create a situation in which the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories are in a better condition to campaign for their rights. The Oslo Accord arouses in Israeli society a sense of willingness towards substantial concessions, far above those that are in the Accords. Everything depends on the level of politicisation within the Palestinian masses, and to a lesser extent within the Israeli masses.

To activate, not to denounce: if there were political forces supported by the masses, and not just small groups detached from the masses, these forces could have disrupted the process even using terrorist activities. Then the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) would have fought with them against this agreement, and for a better one. This could have also been a sign that there is an alternative, because the masses do not usually campaign except in cases where there is a perspective with which they can identify. Therefore, we have to assume that the PLO leadership would have abstained from accepting the monstrous conditions imposed by the Israeli government. Today there is no enlightened force that can disrupt the agreement, and there is no political perspective that can be placed in front of the masses. The option of disrupting the agreement does not stand, mainly because of the limited forces at the disposal of the RCL.

The RCL is not an organisation of political interpreters, nor is it an organisation of judges of history. Therefore our job is not to denounce



Jewish settlers resist



Palestinians stoning Israeli soldiers in Gaza

the agreement, but to do everything in our power in order to create those conditions that will enable the Palestinians to defend their rights, and to navigate this new agreement towards their interests. This is our main task within the Israeli population, and this is what we can offer to the enlightened Palestinian forces who agree with our negative assessment of the agreement, and like us put the rights of the masses at the top of their agenda.

Our public task is not to denounce the agreement, but to express lack of confidence in the Rabin government and its readiness to truly act towards an Israeli-Palestinian peace based on a full withdrawal, equality and fulfilment of self-determination. In other words, we have to lean on the support that we get from large parts of the Israeli public towards the agreement, and to clarify to the more politically aware the specific terms, which without them, the agreement will not be enough to create a true peace, and to recruit them to this task. Among the most important terms are our assessments that there is a great need to dismantle the settlements and to defuse the settlers, the need to establish Palestinian sovereignty in east Jerusalem, and to change radically the terms of the occupation (to dismantle the undercover units, to stop the hunt for "wanted" people, to release prisoners, to bring back the deportees, to drastically ease the issuing of licences, to change the policy towards family re-unification, and so forth).

The fulfilment of these terms will not only drastically improve the state of the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories and strengthen their self confidence, but will also shake the timetable of the agreement and its boundaries. Our slogans should be: "A fulfilment of the Accord means breaking its boundaries", and, "Peace is too important to leave in the hands of the government. We will not let Rabin lose the chances for peace."

Our other task is to convince the public, and first of all the more aware part of the public, that a true peace is peace between people, and not a lame agreement between leaderships.

Peace between peoples is much more binding than that which can be concluded between leaderships: it demands equality, it demands truth. Arafat and Rabin can sign an agreement that is based on blatant inequality, on humiliation and on erasing the past, but a true peace requires the exact opposite: mutual respect, facing the roots of the problems, willingness to accept responsibility of past crimes, and trying to fix whatever needs fixing without reference to bal-

ance of power.

This task obligates us to conduct a non-stop war with the racist and paternalistic approach of the ideologists and politicians from the Zionist left that are fulfilling once more the task of pioneers in the dissemination of racist poison to the public, and are aiming to recruit the public to support the agreement out of a sense of Israeli paternalism, emptying the vision of peace of its essence.

In opposition to this approach, which sees peace as an instrument for obtaining security and to ensure a Jewish majority, we present peace as a goal and a vision of co-existence based on equality and merging into the region; we give the word "peace" positive content, and present it as a qualitative step forward, and not as a return to the ideas of a "beautiful small Israel", which is closed to the Arab world — the Ashkenazi one, the undefeatable one. Against the strong wish of the Zionist left to use

*"Among Israel's
achievements is the
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cease-fire."*

peace for reconstruction of the national consensus and national unity within which the differences between classes are being undermined, as well as the ethnic and cultural uniqueness, we see in peace a new era in which we need to create new points of contact and unity, a strong alliance of all those that have been left out of decision making and the distribution of wealth — Israelis and Palestinians as one.

3. The Palestinian arena

The Palestinian people and the Palestinian nation are not in agreement in the way in which they assess the Israeli-Palestinian agreement. As we said before, only a few look upon it as a good agreement. Large numbers see it as a bad agreement, which was better off not born at all. This argument is not only between the Hamas and the PLO, or between Fatah and other movements. This argument divides Fatah itself from top to bottom, when central PLO fig-

ures from Mahmoud Darwish to Khaled and Hani El-Hassan are standing against Yasser Arafat's gamble.* There is a reason to believe that outside of the Occupied Territories only a minority of the Palestinians are in favour of the agreement that was signed by Abu Mazen.

The argument is not only about the chances of the agreement or the danger to the future of the Occupied Territories, but it is also about the future of the PLO and the Palestinian national struggle. Many Palestinians are afraid that the meaning of the agreement is atomisation of the Palestinian people, to localise national questions without a unifying framework, without a united strategy, and without one national perspective.

In the Occupied Territories it seems that the majority is pro-Arafat, but in contrast to the Israeli and international media it is not overall enthusiasm, but more of a no choice acceptance joined with hope and great fears. The Hamas, especially in the Gaza strip, has succeeded in expressing opposition on the street, but it was not as great as could have been expected. The secular organisations that oppose the agreement are almost nowhere to be seen. It looks like the opposition, religious and secular, is confused and cannot find a way to translate its rejection into an alternative strategy.

There is a dialectic relationship between the monopoly of Fatah on the street and the confusion that typifies the PLO sectors that oppose the agreement. On the face of it, it looks as if the Popular and Democratic Fronts have abandoned not only the street, but also all the national symbols: the flag, the joy of independence, the PLO as a symbol and as an organisation (boycotting the Central Council). As a result Fatah and the Shabiba can rule the street and appropriate the flag and the PLO. This monopoly only increases the alienation between the rejectionist organisations and the "street", and increase, in this respect, their isolation from the masses.

In this situation Fatah activists feel that the State in the making is theirs, and push even their partners in the negotiations, the People's Party and Fida[†], into a corner. Acts of violence, mostly verbal, were typical of the celebration of the agreement; they were celebrating their rule more than their freedom. The flow towards the police recruitment agency, which are in fact Fatah agencies and not national agencies, is only one expression of this phenomenon which is raising great fears amongst many Palestinians, including within Fatah itself. It looks as if all the other organisations are

standing still. This is also true of the popular organisations, the unions, the women's movement, the voluntary organisations and so forth.

The firm connections that were developed during the last months between Palestinian capitalists and Israeli and foreign capitalists, at a time when nothing was done to express the needs and interests of the workers and the unemployed, is also a reason for concern among the Palestinian public and its avant-garde.

Is it really that the choice is between complete support for Arafat and the agreement he signed, and disappearing completely from the public eye? Is it a fact that beyond critical interpretation of the agreement there is nothing that we can do or offer to the Palestinian masses? To these questions, the Palestinian left-wing organisations should answer quickly, if they want to keep a role in their society.

With all the humility that is required from us as an organisation that is not

*"Our public task is
not to denounce the
agreement but to
express lack of
confidence in the
Rabin government."*

a part of what is happening in the Occupied Territories — even though it took a big part in expressing unlimited solidarity with the national Palestinian struggle and cultivated strong friendly relations with a large number of activists from all national sectors — we see it as our duty to say to our Palestinian friends: "Do not drift away from the masses! Do not neglect the street! Even if you are right in your assessment of the Accord, the last word will always be that of the Palestinian masses, and they will establish whether they are moving towards independence or towards doom. They will determine whether the occupation will continue, even with a change of face, or whether the struggle for liberation will deepen. They will determine whether you will have a democratic society or a tyranny. They will determine whether the police and the capitalists will lead the future Palestinian society, or whether it will be led by the popular organisations."

Whatever the assessment will be, whatever the chances and risks, the role of revolutionaries is to act, and to activate the masses around their interests in order to minimise the risks, and increase the chances. This struggle does not begin from point zero: a people which gave birth to, and maintained a five-year Intifada; which gave birth under occupation and oppression to unions, popular committees, women's movements and various volunteer organisations — such people are not impotent if they are presented perspectives on struggle.

As opposed to the most pessimistic forecasts the Accord opens up new horizons to popular political and social activities. Would it not be easier today to organise the political prisoners and their families in a mass struggle for amnesty? Would it not be easier today to organise thousands of families that suffer from citizenship problems in a struggle towards an immediate change in rules and regulations that prohibit family reunifications? Would it not be easier today to organise a struggle against the building of new Jewish neighbourhoods within the heart of Arab Jerusalem? Why would you not act so that people would go out onto the street and demand solutions to problems that affect all Palestinians regardless of their stand on the Accord?

This and more: is it not possible to organise all the unions around a core of claims that will assure the place and the rights of workers within the autonomous area? Is it not possible to organise the women's organisations, and the human rights within the autonomy? If the PLO leadership will join with these organisations in supporting their demands — that would be great; and if not, these struggles will strengthen the masses in the struggle to protect their interests, with regard to the nascent Palestinian authority.

We do not know if this massive campaign will be able to radically change the framework of the Accord, or even parts of it. It is likely that if the campaign is bigger, it will make the PLO leadership more careful and less willing to make concessions, or damage the democratic rights of the masses. The best option is of course that the campaign will establish, once more, the place of the masses in the centre of the political arena, and will enable them to determine the essence of Accord in line with their own interests. A lesser option is to achieve the partial gains within the negotiations with Israel and within the character of the self-governing authority that will be created. The worst case would be if the balance of power is bad. Then the campaign will have achieved nothing, but will have served as a self-defence lesson for the people in their relations with the new authorities. It will uncover the nature of the ruling class, and will form a political opposition around a concrete core that the people can identify with.

The Palestinian masses need a political leadership that is armed with two very important strategic components: a policy of a unified front and a transitional programme.

A transitional programme is a collection of demands which you fight for (release of prisoners, democratic institutions, disarmament of the settlers or, if not, organising armed citizens' militias) and which answers the needs of a large part of the masses, without them necessarily agreeing to our political assessment. What is important is that the demands are considered achievable, right and relevant to the masses.

This transitional programme has to be a part of a national democratic programme, which has at its centre the demand for a legislative body within the autonomy. It should be a representative body drawn from all the existing political currents in the

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Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

**"Ireland in crisis —
what should
socialists say?"**

LANCASTER

Tuesday 25 January
1.00pm, Lancaster University Student Union

GLASGOW

Thursday 3 February
Speaker at both these meetings:
John O'Mahony (editor, Socialist Organiser)
1.00pm, Glasgow University,
Queen Margaret's Union

7.30pm, Partick Burgh Halls

BELFAST

Saturday 5 February
12.00pm - 5.00pm,
Dayschool at Central Hall,
Rosemary Street

SHEFFIELD

Wednesday 2 February
1.00pm, Sheffield University Student Union

Thursday 3 February
Speaker: Pat Murphy
7.30pm, SCCAU, West Street

NORTHAMPTON

Saturday 12 February
12.30pm, Royal Mail Club, St George's Street

LEEDS

Thursday 27 January
Speaker: Pat Murphy
8.00pm, Adelphi Hotel

YORK

Tuesday 1 February
Speaker: Nick Denton
8.00pm, Goodricke College, York University

HALIFAX

Thursday 27 January
12.00pm, Calderdale College

EDINBURGH

Wednesday 2 February
Speaker: John O'Mahony
1.00pm, Trades Council, Picardie Place

NOTTINGHAM

Thursday 3 February
Speaker: Tony Dale
8.00pm, ICC, Mansfield Road

LONDON

Wednesday 26 January
Speaker: John O'Mahony
7.30pm, Calthorpe Arms,
252 Gray's Inn Road, Kings Cross

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 26 January
Speaker: Richie Carrothers
1.00pm, Manchester Poly

LEICESTER

Thursday 27 January
David Ball debates a Young Conservative
1.00pm, Beauchamp College
Tom Rigby of the AWL debates Workers' Power
8.00pm, Castle Rooms

NEWCASTLE

Monday 31 January
Speaker at both meetings: Nick Denton
7.30 Rossetti Studios, Leazes Park Road
Tuesday 1 February
2.00 Student Union, Northumbria University

BIRMINGHAM

Monday 30 January
1.00pm

OLTON

Thursday 27 January
1.00pm, Student Union



Israeli backlash

The struggle will not end

Continued from page 13

Occupied Territories.

The policy of the united front: the condition for success in this struggle is the ability to unify the "customers" of the different claims, without connection to their political alignments or to their political assessments. In this we mean that the appeal should be to all organisations, including those that are connected to Fatah, to the unions, to the women's organisations, and so forth. Only a policy of a united front on the democratic claims could bring mass support in the present process, and bring the PLO leadership to open its eyes to this self-organisation. Only this kind of policy could recruit to the struggle the thousands of democrats within Fatah and the rest of the organisations that support the Accord, mainly among the working class and women.

4. Tasks

The first task for RCL activists is to work against all the boundaries that stand in the way of the fulfilment of the Accord within the framework of an enlightened interpretation. A battle against the settlements, to free all prisoners, against the annexation of Arab Jerusalem, for a radical change in the relationship between Israel and the occupied Palestinian population.

These battles can unify those who see in the Accord a break through and those who see in it an Israeli dictate and a Palestinian surrender. To both groups we say: "Whatever your assessment of the Accord, if no-one deals with the settlers and the settlements, if the hunt for the wanted is not stopped, if all the Palestinian prisoners are not freed, this Accord is doomed; let us act together to demand that the government acts on these issues, because without these steps there will never be peace between Israelis and Palestinians."

As long as the occupation continues — and the Accord's supporters agree that it will continue for the next few years even if it will change somewhat — our duty is to fight against every violation of human rights, both in the territories under direct occupation and within the autonomous area. These tasks will continue to be carried out with our friends in Gush Salom (the Peace Block) and with all the

other parts of the peace movement that are ready to take part.

Our second task, and it is a unique one for the RCL, is in the dissemination of information: to reveal the internal limitations of the Accord and what has to be done in order to give content to a true Israeli-Palestinian peace. Peace demands a brave look backwards and a readiness to understand what those "hundred years of conflict" were, what the reasons that gave birth to it were, and what the characteristics of the Israeli-Palestinian relations were during those hundred years. To raise the topic of expropriation of land and deportations, the right of return, and the right to self-determination.

Peace requires a brave look forward, with a vision of a different relationship between peoples; relations that are built on equality, on an attempt

"We have to build an alliance of all those forces that never considered the end of the occupation as their sole goal."

to correct injustices, a readiness to merge into the Arab region — not as the beach-head of the West, but as partners with equal rights and obligations.

In this mission we will need to meet head-on without compromise the paternalistic attitudes, the racism and the narrow-mindedness of the Zionist left, to stand against the values of separation and ethnic cleansing, to stand for the values of partnership, solidarity and coexistence. In these aspects we have to absolutely reject any attempt to compare between the settlers and the Israeli Palestinians, between robbers with blood on their hands and local inhabitants whose right to live here is unconditional.

More than ever there is an importance to the Israeli-Palestinian partnership. Both police forces and the capitalists are building for themselves

a joint future, and together determining our future. To their side and against them we have to create a partnership between peoples, women, human rights organisations, workers and activists. For this task we do not set any limits: every co-operation that will enable us to advance human and peoples' rights will be blessed, and first of all with the PLO. In this sense we have to compliment the activity of Fatah towards systematic cooperation with the radical branch of the Israeli peace camp and reject the refusal of the Palestinian left-wing fronts to cultivate links with the Israeli forces that are fighting against the occupation.

Our support for the Arab Palestinian struggle for self-determination and their right to build an independent State is not conditional on the class of its leaders. We will support the PLO as long as there is an occupation and as long as the PLO leads the Palestinian people in its struggle against the occupation. At the same time, our support of the PLO is a critical support, and we are not blind to the attempts of its leadership to merge into the American "New Order", including the price of its being turned into the arm that will oppress the Palestinians on behalf of the Zionists.

Despite this, we should not relate to them as enemies and conduct future potential battles at the expense of the present battles. The PLO signed a bad Accord with Israel, but it did so as the representative of an oppressed people and it will have to fight for a long time to reach its goals: the goals which made it the representative of the Palestinian people.

The forecasts that the Palestinian Authority will be an oppressive one are forecasts, even if they are well based. Today the occupation is not over, the Palestinian people are not free yet, and the PLO occupation is not over, the Palestinian people are not free yet, and the PLO and its leadership represent it in the battlefield that is mainly a diplomatic and political one facing the Israeli occupation authorities.

The RCL will be very active against the attempt by the authorities, or from within the peace camp, to turn a blind eye to supporters of the Accord on the Palestinian side

"removing" opponents, secular or religious. This turning of a "blind eye" does not assist the Israeli peace camp nor the PLO in advancing the peace, on the contrary, it will strengthen those who believe that peace can be imposed — an attitude whose end product is to bury the hope for peace between Israelis and Palestinians for long generations.

In addition we have to build in Israel, in co-operation with the Palestinian left, an alliance of all those forces that never considered the end of the occupation as their sole goal, but saw it as part of an overall battle to free humanity from all kinds of oppression and exploitation, to freedom from imperialism and to free humanity from fear of extinction. We did not fight against the occupation only so that the Palestinian flag can fly above the Temple Mount mosques; we did not fight so that the Palestinian authorities will continue the work of the Israeli or the Jordanian authorities; we did not act so that capitalists will be able to gain more at the expense of workers from both peoples.

We fought so that on the historical Palestinian land there would be established a democratic secular bi-national society whose borders will be as symbolic as possible, and that the two peoples, the Arab Palestinians and the Jewish Israelis will be able to live in co-operation, solidarity, full equality, and in mutual respect.

We fought, long before others, not only for national independence but also for democracy, the dignity of men and women, their freedom and well being. This struggle will not end with a signature on an Accord, not even when the occupation ends. The vision of peace and the vision of socialism is one to us, and there is a lot that needs to be done until that vision is fulfilled.

Footnotes

* Mahmoud Darwish is a famous Palestinian poet. Khaled and Hani El-Hassan were founding members of Fatah, the leading current in the PLO. All three were members of the PLO leadership.

† The People's Party is the former Communist Party and Fida is a split from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

For a public sector one-day strike: Fight the pay freeze!

By Tony Dale, Manchester UNISON Convenor Housing Department

THE TORIES HAVE set a time bomb ticking over their policy of a 3 year pay freeze for the public sector. The Tories have never liked the public services or public sector workers. Years of cuts have led to a sharp decline in services.

Kenneth Clarke in his budget declared a new offensive in the war against public sector workers and public services. He wants more cuts and a three year pay freeze.

The trade unions' opposition to last year's 1.5% pay limit was pretty feeble. This year things must change.

Some signs are hopeful. Already the TUC is talking about one day of action in April against the pay freeze and against job cuts.

The starting point for a fightback must be a public sector wide day of action.

Public sector workers cannot afford to put up with a pay freeze. Low pay in the public sector is a major and growing problem. Almost all council manual workers fall into the European definition of low pay. 400,000 white col-

lar council workers also earn below the Council of Europe Decency Threshold. The same problem of widespread low pay is repeated in the civil service, NHS etc.

The Tories have said we can have a pay rise if we earn it through "productivity increases". In plain English: public sector "productivity increases" equal job losses.

Any action needs to link the pay freeze to cuts in services and jobs. The Tories see the two issues as the two sides of one strategy — slashing public sector spending.

The possibility is there to push the TUC and the public sector

unions into organising a public sector-wide April day of action. Such a day of action must be a proper national day of action.

Last year NALGO (and then UNISON) called numerous days of action.

But local branches are left on their own to decide whether to organise any strikes on these days. This led to each day of action being smaller than the last. In the end the day of action became a day of small photo opportunities.

If the TUC agrees the day of action the public sector unions need to ballot their members on a day's strike action over the cuts

and pay freeze. The day of action should be a public sector-wide day of strike action. The key to a day of strike action is national ballots in each public sector union.

Already some officials have stated such official action wouldn't be possible as it would be illegal. This argument is nonsensical when you consider that civil service unions organised an official one day civil service-wide strike on Market Testing last November.

The importance of national ballots is that it will give a national mandate and authority for strikes up and down the country. Leaving local branches on their own to try

to declare disputes or organise unofficial strikes is a recipe for disaster.

The pay claims of the different groups of public sector workers need to be brought together as closely as possible. In local councils manual and white collar council workers have different settlement dates. Where possible, common settlement dates should be organised. The Tories have declared one pay policy for the public sector. We need to fight as one movement to defeat it.

A public sector wide day of action in April could be the start of the fightback.

Newcastle postal workers victory UNISON Fightback

POSTAL WORKERS

By Gary Young

BEFORE THE Xmas holidays rank and file postal workers in Newcastle's mechanised sorting office won a tremendous victory over management's attempts to remove a twenty minute break from each shift.

Each shift has traditionally had a 40 minute dinner break plus a 20 minute rest break — totalling only 60 minutes in break time for an 8 to 9 hour shift.

Unsurprisingly the local union executive of the UCW were mostly in favour of caving in to management's demands. But the membership had different ideas: a number of ad hoc shop floor meetings were held, workers mandated the UCW local executive to fight.

Management came back with compromise after compromise. Each time the local executive wanted to concede to the bosses, each time the workers said no, eventually mandating the union to issue ballot papers calling for local industrial action.

Before the ballot papers were even

issued, the management suddenly dropped their plans for removal of the break.

One Newcastle postal worker said "we've had enough... first our union accepts a pay freeze, then we find our whole office is to be relocated to another town — into an area with limited public transport access. How are we meant to get to work? All our shifts are to be rescheduled into evening and night shifts, all overtime has been scrapped, bonuses have been taken away, then the bosses try and take away what little break we have. Things are going from bad to worse to ridiculous!"

ON 15 JANUARY 80 UNISON activists from 40 branches met in Newcastle at a UNISON Fightback conference.

The day was dominated by discussion on the proposed TUC day of action over the pay freeze and cuts set for April.

The conference agreed that the key to success would be winning a

national ballot for strike action.

The old NALGO used to organise many days of action. Little happened on these days as local branches were left on their own to organise action. A national ballot to sanction a national one day strike is needed.

The Conference agreed to organise a fringe meeting at UNISON's

local government conference in March and to organise a follow-up conference under the title UNISON Fightback.

UNISON badly needs an ongoing campaign which will publicise struggles and organise to change UNISON. Hopefully UNISON Fightback will become such a campaign.

Unity needed to defeat Market Testing

CPSA

THIS WEEKEND the CPSA Broad Left will be discussing its tactics for this year's Presidential and executive elections.

Thankfully some advances have been made on last year's fiasco when the Militant and BL'84 (soft left) stood maverick 'independent' Albert Astbury on a vague and confused 'unity' programme. This created the necessity for the serious left in the union to intervene by standing a candidate: Mark Serwotka who used the election campaign as a platform for arguing for national industrial

action up to and including an all-out strike to defeat the government's Market Testing programme. Mark's argument for militant action to defend jobs won around 40% of the vote Astbury achieved. Without a unified opposition candidate arguing for serious action the sitting right winger Marion Chambers won yet again.

This year things can be different. The members want to see a fight against Market Testing. Both Militant and BL'84 are prepared to support a programme of industrial action including further national strikes to defeat Market Testing (not

just to ameliorate its worst effects) and the right wing are looking a lot less confident.

What is needed now is * A genuinely broad based and representative 'Unity' slate that involves all forces on the left of the union.

* An open left unity conference to build on what has been achieved so far with the aim of creating a single democratic non-sectarian left grouping.

* A powerful rank and file campaign around these themes: Vote Unity! Strike to defeat Market Testing!

Workers' Aid for Bosnia

AS WE GO to press the Bosnian peace talks appear to have finally broken down.

It now looks increasingly likely that the Serbian government and their Bosnian Serb allies will carry out their threats of launching an 'all-out war'. Let us hope that an intensification of the war will also provoke an intensification of working-class unrest in Serbia, a country suffering the highest inflation rate since the Weimar Republic.

It is the job of socialists to do everything they can to support the Bosnian Muslim people against annihilation at the hands of Serb imperialism without spreading any illusions or politically supporting the Bosnian presidency.

End the arms embargo! Arm the Bosnian Muslims!

Open Tuzla Airport now!

Picket the Foreign office Friday 28 January 6-8pm Called by International Workers Aid

Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee Conference:

Build the fightback!

SMTUC

THE TORIES pay freeze which means that all public sector workers will not get an increase in their pay packets till '97 shows quite clearly the need for a co-ordinated fightback across the unions. But the problem is that the national union leaders are at best very sluggish about organising such a fightback.

Given this situation it is vital for rank and file activists from across the unions to meet, debate and discuss strategy. An occasion for such discussion will hopefully be provided by the forthcoming Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee conference in early February. Despite the fact that the SMTUC has not done much in the last few years it remains the only relatively open co-ordinating centre that could help

link together the left in the unions.

All serious socialist trade union activists should attend. If workers from a broad range of industrial sectors and experience can make an input then the SMTUC can take on some life again.

Build the Fightback — Unshackle the unions! Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee Conference 5/6 February 1994 Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

Registration and sponsorship The conference is open to delegates from bona fide trade union and labour movement organisations and to individual activists. Full weekend £10, one day £6 low/unwaged £3

Send registration and/or sponsorship details including name, address, union or organisation to Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Road, London E15.

Fight compulsory redundancies in Sheffield!

SHEFFIELD

THE LABOUR GROUP in Sheffield Council is preparing to declare war on the council unions in an attempt to balance the books for the Tories. Although all the budget figures keep changing, it now appears very likely that at least several hundred compulsory redundancy notices will be issued in early February. This is in addition to the council asking the

unions to agree £9 million of cuts in employee terms and conditions, including a 2.75% permanent pay cut. With run down services about to be savaged a huge political campaign involving service users and unions must be organised. It is also vital that the council unions do not allow the council to divide and rule — industrial action across all departments is going to be necessary if compulsory redundancies are to be stopped.

Life after CCT!

LEEDS

UNISON MEMBERS in Leeds Refuse DLO have voted for indefinite strike action over pay and hours. 18 months ago they were taken off the national conditions of service and have had no pay

rise since. They have lodged a claim for a 15% pay rise and a 37 hour week. In response management have threatened to re-tender the service. The action is due to start next week and the significant vote show that there is life after CCT!

UNISON members reinstated!

MANCHESTER

Two sacked housing workers

Tests: NUT must stand firm

TEACHERS

THE NUT ALONE amongst the main teaching unions is holding out in continued support of a boycott of the Tories tests.

The ATL and NAS/UWT have accepted the Dearing Report which will keep in place key Stage 2 tests which are taken by pupils at 11 and could be the basis for the re-introduction of grammar schools.

Full report and analysis next week

have been given their jobs back after an appeal to a panel of councillors.

The two women, who worked at a Manchester Council Direct Access Centre were sacked last September, accused of assaulting their manager on a work's night out.

Despite their appeal to the Housing Director, the sackings were upheld. It was clearly a case of one manager backing up another, all the way up the line. Managers have been told to get tough with staff and that's what they did although the evidence against the workers was feeble. The reinstatements mean that this Labour council has really gone too far in establishing a strict regime and sacking staff on trumped up charges.

Broad Left challenge in NCU General Secretary Election

THE PRESENT General Secretary of NCU, Tony Young faces a left challenge in the union's five-yearly elections from Bill Fry the sitting President.

Bill Fry is on the Broad Left slate. Tony Young was originally a member of the Broad left but in his five years as General Secretary he had moved further away from BL policies and is now closer to the breakaway 'Unity' faction. This faction has very little support, especially in the larger engineering section of the union. The right wing faction 'Members First' are opposing Bill Fry by supporting Young.

In the 1993 NEC elections the BL swept the board on the Engineering section on an increased turnout, over the industrial issues of opposition to 7 day working.

The present BL-dominated NEC however has had to work with union officers who are not sympathetic to BL policies. The election of a BL supporting General Secretary would help cut through the obstruction and politics of union bureaucracy.

Kensington and Chelsea

COUNCIL WORKERS

AN UNOFFICIAL walkout by refuse collectors in Kensington and Chelsea has won union recognition for the TGWU.

The walk-out came in response to management suspending three workers over the issue of Christmas tips. The walk-out became a lock-out but after 24 hours the contractors backed down and reinstated the strikers.

The three are still suspended on full pay but TGWU officials say this is a face saving formula and they will get their jobs back.

SOCIALIST

Nazi thugs raid bookshop

ORGANISER

By Ivan Wels

20 January is just the start...

French students show how to win

WITHIN days of the Government's announcement of a 30% cut in student grants, late last year, thousands of students across the country were demonstrating on the streets to show they would not take this lying down.

Tory minister John Patten accused Oxford students of besieging him when he spoke to Tories there.

In London a demonstration organised in only three days, by Left Unity, mobilised 2,000 students. 800 of them went on to a meeting in the House of Commons to hear Tony Benn and Kevin Sexton (NUS Vice President Welfare) speak.

A demonstration in Leeds drew over 4,000 students. The message students are sending to the Government is clear: Enough is Enough! But we haven't beaten them yet. This term we must step up the fight.

By cutting grants and abolishing benefits, the Tories have driven all but students whose parents are rich and supportive into poverty and often into squalor. Now they are moving towards the abolition of grants and their replacement by a full loans system. This is in line with press reports that the Tories plan to introduce student tuition fees for which students will need yet bigger loans.

The terrific reaction from students against these Tory moves must not be squandered. The National Union of Students National Executive is hell bent on squandering it. Faced with an explosion of student action they refused to focus the anger into a national demonstration. That might upset the Tories, you see.

The hard-faced young careerists who run the NUS don't want ordinary students to get involved in student anti-Tory action.

Pressure from the colleges is so strong that the NUS Executive decided to call a day of regional action on 20 January. This is nowhere near enough, but it is something! Militants should use the actions on 20 January to kick-start a massive country-wide wave of protest against the Tories' attack on grants and Tory plans for pay-as-you-learn i.e. fees.

The campaign offers us a chance to explain to newly aware students how this attack on student grants is linked to the Tories' attempt in the Education Bill to destroy student unionism.

However, it is going to take more than one day of action to stop the Tories cutting grants. That's why it is vital that 20 January is the launch of a national campaign and not what the Labour Student leaders of NUS want it to be — a mere letting off of steam.

NUS leaders are still refusing to call a national demonstration. What can we do about this? It's an old left saying that when the leadership won't lead the activists must!

A National Coalition of Student Unions and the Left Unity members on the National Executive have called a National Demonstration in London on 23 February.

Activists must build flat out from 20 January for this demo. We should demand that the NUS NEC make it into a NUS demonstra-



French students forced their 'Tory' government to back down. We can do the same.

tion.

In France last Sunday a 300,000-strong school students' and teachers' protest forced the French 'Tory' Government to junk a reactionary policy in school education.

With the British Tories now in deep crisis, British students linking with workers, including teachers, and going onto the streets could do the same. If we mobilise now, then we can defeat the Tories!

ABOUT 30 Nazis dressed in full regalia walked into the Mushroom Bookshop in Nottingham City centre at 3.30pm last Saturday. They hurled metal stands to the floor, pulled books off bookshelves, wrecked the computer and smashed both shop windows with a fire extinguisher.

Bookseller Ross Bradshaw was hit on the back of the head and kicked to the floor.

"Some were wearing swastika and far-right Afrikaaner Resistance Movement arm bands," he said. "I politely asked them to leave because we wouldn't serve people wearing Nazi insignia. One said 'we are just browsing' and then they just started attacking people and wrecking the place."

A disabled woman on crutches was hit on the head; staff and about 15-20 customers were terrorised. In all, the Nazis caused about £5,000-6,000 worth of damage before escaping, some on public transport, some in a minibus. 32 Nazis were later arrested by the police and then released on bail.

Nottingham anti-fascist groups are meeting to discuss ways of combating this kind of thuggery. However, this particular incident can be seen as a act of desperation on an easy target by fascists who had been successfully prevented from holding or attending planned fascist events, by local anti-fascist activists.

New WL pamphlet:

Socialism and democracy

ONCE every five years people aged 18+ go to a polling booth, put a cross on a ballot paper, put the paper in a ballot box, and then go home and sit up till the small hours watching excited middle-class men on TV tell us who will form our next government.

The victors almost always win only a minority of the vote; but, because of our "first past the post" electoral system, one party gets most of the seats in the House of Commons and the right to rule our lives for the next five years.

This right to rule includes the right to change the rules in their favour, and to limit the other democratic rights we have so next time around it is harder for us to get rid of them.

On the four most recent election nights the party celebrating victory has been the Tory Party. We wish it had been the Labour Party, but, even if it had been, what would they — and we — have won? The right to change anything really substantial? Not at all. These things are, if at all, at best only decided very indirectly by elections.

If this is the case, why did, and do, Labour leaders like Michael Foot make such a fetish of parliamentary activity, and set themselves so much against extra-parliamentary activity? To safeguard the constitution?

Why have they, in the name of "democracy", bowed down to minority Tory governments determined to destroy all but a façade of people's rule over their own lives and communities? Why have they given up hope of going beyond the limited democracy we have to a better form of democracy? How are they able — in the name of "democratic socialism" — to exclude from the Labour Party all who want to fight, inside and outside parliament, to get rid of the Tories and the ability of their small class to rule the lives of the majority?

Socialism and Democracy contains a debate between then Labour leader Michael Foot and writers in *Socialist Organiser* about democracy — what it means and how to win it.

The AWL's new 96 page pamphlet, *Socialism and Democracy*, is available for £1.95 (cheques to "WL Publications") from: WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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SOCIALIST Inside this week
MALEFOLM
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Buses, rail, pits, public sector

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