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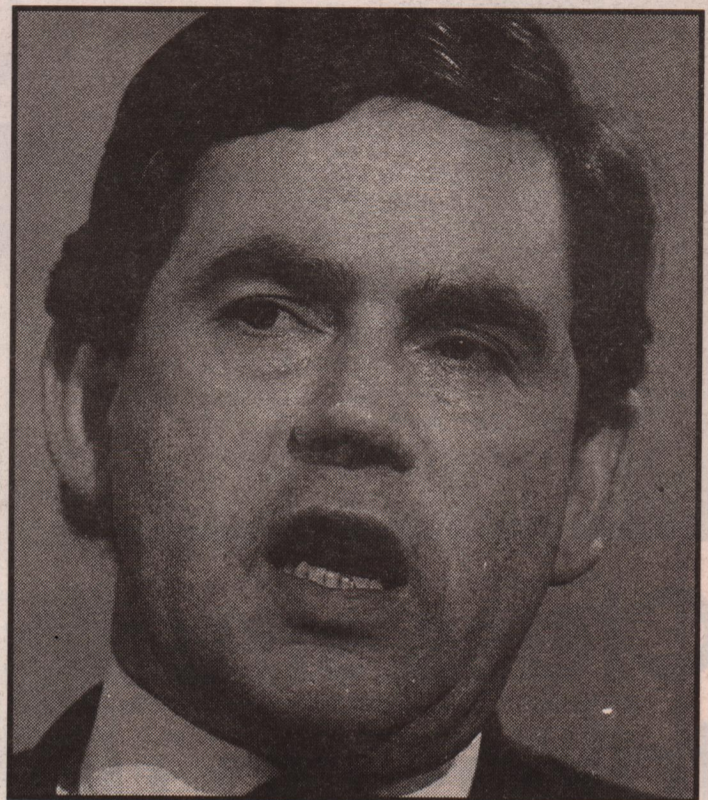
February 27, 1993

# socialist OUTLOOK



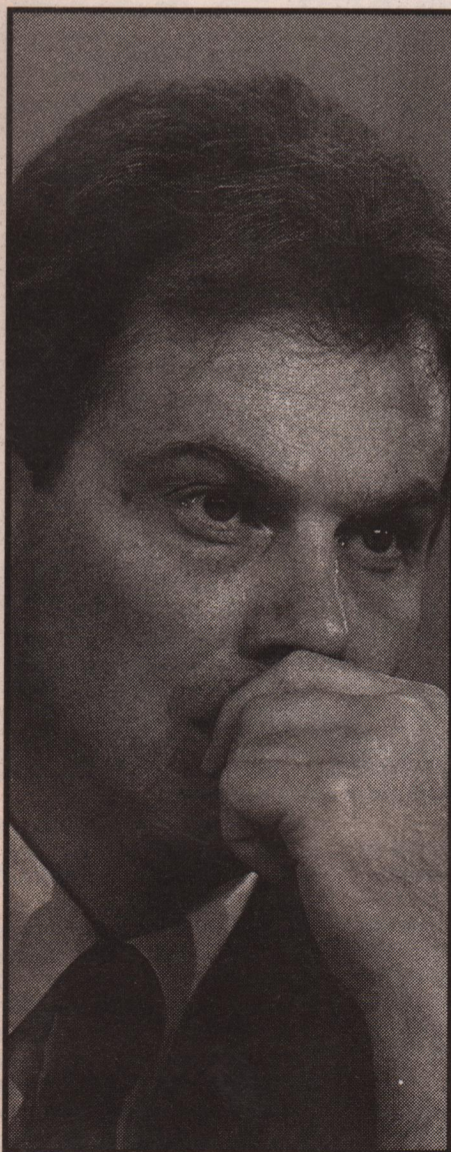
From red flag to white flag, from retreat to rout

**Anti-socialist, anti-union, anti-youth ...**



Andrew Ward

Fan of market madness - Gordon Brown



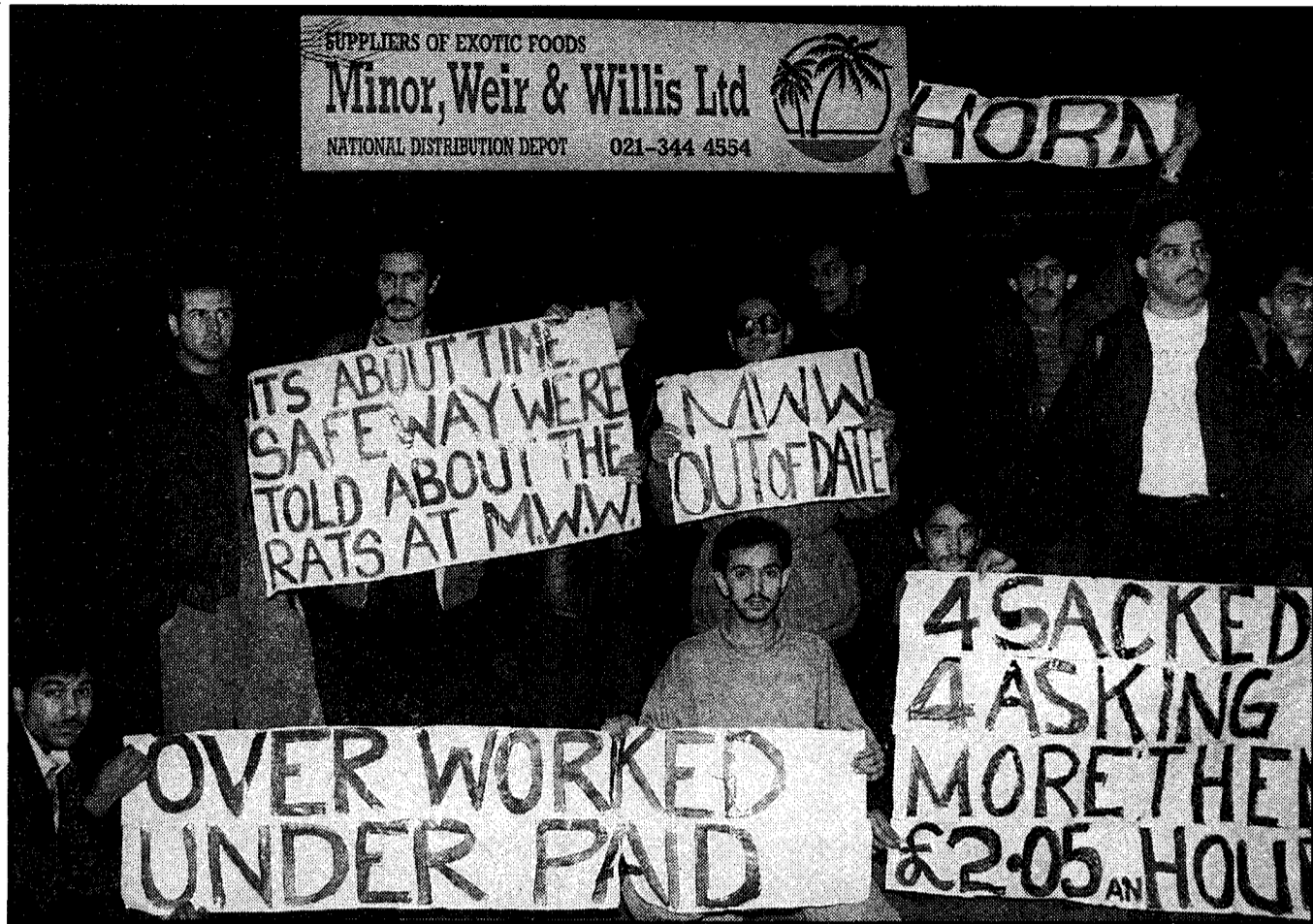
Andrew Ward

Law and order freak: Tony Blair

# LABOUR leaders ape Tory RIGHT

INSIDE: From new realism to new rightism - page 4  
Class struggle takes an upturn - p2 EDITORIAL - p3





Mark Salmon

## Food firm walk out

20 workers at Minor, Weir and Willis, which supplies exotic foods to large supermarkets, have been on strike since January 30.

Despite being on part-time contracts, many were forced to work up to 50 hours a week regardless of school and college commitments, and supply such essentials as overalls, tools and lockers themselves. Wages were little over £2 an hour.

Donations/messages of support to Birmingham Trades Council, 723 Pershore Road, Birmingham B29 7NY.

# Class struggle takes an upturn

By Dave Osler

THE LAST few weeks have witnessed what may yet turn out to be the green shoots of class-struggle recovery.

The current wave of disputes at private sector blue-collar workplaces like Glasgow's Yarrow warship yard, Dundee's Timex watch factory, the Coventry Peugeot Talbot and Liverpool Halewood car plants, and the Hillier engineering factory in Reading, all point to a new mood among crucial layers of the working class.

In some instances, Tory anti-union laws are being openly broken.

As socialists active in the eighties realise all too well, a spate of isolated strikes do not guarantee a hot autumn or even a winter of discontent. But the labour movement may yet spring into action.

Developments in the fight against pit closures, especially the synchronised coal/rail union ballots set for March 5, will prove a crucial factor.

● At Yarrow, a subsidiary of the hugely-profitable GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY, 1300 production workers have been

on strike since February 8 after management offered a one-off unconsolidated payment of £300 in place of a wage rise.

In return, the bosses wanted to cut teabreaks from ten minutes to eight and abolish them altogether on Fridays! But the workforce knows the company now has full order books, and the old 'can't afford it' line is cutting little ice.

Donations/messages of support to First Shipbuilders' Credit Union, 2033 Dumbarton Road, Scotstoun, Glasgow G14.

● At TIMEX, 300 assembly workers were dismissed last week in the largest single mass sacking since News International in 1986. The move from management at the American-owned multinational follows a lock-out which began on Monday 15 February, after workers refused to accept a 10 per cent pay cut, three hours on the working week, plus adverse changes in pensions and other benefits.

A high level of militancy has been on display, with injunctions trying to enforce the 'six pickets only' rule simply ignored, despite police intervention. Around a dozen scabs are nevertheless getting through.

Donations/messages of support to AEEU offices, 2 Union Street, Dundee.

● FORD'S Halewood plant in Merseyside saw a (probably illegal) spontaneous walk-out at the metal, stamping and body plant on Monday night last week, after selective redundancies. Tuesday's day shift followed suit.

● In Coventry, PEUGEOT TALBOT workers were set to hold a second strike ballot as Outlook went to press. Some 3500 workers at the plant had earlier voted 2300 to 859 to strike against a derisory 3.5 per cent pay increase in return for complete flexibility, compul-



Mark Salmon

Birmingham NALGO strikers out in defence of jobs

sory overtime and abolition of afternoon 'tea and pee' breaks.

This after a thirty per cent increase in productivity over the last three years, with five line speed-ups in the last year alone. But union officials now say they have won improvements on job security and have called for a second vote.

● There are daily pickets outside HILLER'S engineering in Reading, which specialises in aerospace work. Around 25 employees were sacked after an earlier one day strike against a 40 per cent pay cut. There has been high levels of labour movement solidarity locally, with British Airways workers at Heathrow implementing a levy.

Donations/messages of support to AEEU c/o Nick Murtagh, 1 Rustington Close, Lower Earley,

Reading.

● In the same town, COURAGE BREWERIES are balloting for a strike against management plans to contract out canteen services.

● Let's not forget BURNSALL metal-finishing plant in Smethwick, Birmingham, where a workforce predominantly comprised of Asian women have been on strike. (See page 15)

Donations/messages of support to GMB, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Road; Halesowen, West Midlands.

● Also fighting on in long-running battles against the odds are the women in the ANNIE HALL unionisation dispute in Yorkshire, and 89 women sacked for banning overtime at MIDDLEBROOK MUSHROOMS near Selby.

## Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network

### Maastricht and the Future of Socialism

Organising the left in the Labour Party - Building the Network

Saturday April 17th  
Sheffield Hallam University, Pond St  
(2 minutes from Sheffield BR station)  
11am - 5pm

For more information contact:  
Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network  
c/o 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7

# 4 Million Unemployed Now the fightback begins

NOT EVEN the demobilising geniuses at Congress House could completely thwart the impact of 'Jobs Action Day' last Thursday, when the official unemployment figures crashed 3 million. Thousands of local government workers demonstrated – and that is no accident. For they know that up to 100,000 local government jobs face the axe unless a fightback begins.

But against this background of cuts, unemployment and recession, the government is in deep difficulty and the signs of resistance are emerging. The Tories are locked in conflict over the pits crisis, torn between being seen to give in or alternatively to face parliamentary defeat on the issue.

Some small, but important, industrial disputes have developed in the past period – at Yarrows shipyard, at Peugeot and at Fords (see page 2). On 5 March there is the co-ordinated ballot for strike action against cuts and redundancies in the public sector, backed by the NUM, RMT and other public sector unions.

Most of all, there are welcome signs in the labour movement of reorganisation, and of resistance to the defeatist politics of 'new realism' among the activists and militant left.

On 27 February, in an initiative by North West Miners Support Groups, a conference will be held which will be attended by different groups of workers in struggle. On 17 April, the Socialist Campaign Group Network conference meets to plan the fight against 'Clintonisation' in the Labour Party.

But most important is a conference in Stoke-on-Trent on 6 March to found a 'Public Sector Alliance'. A huge turnout for this conference is essential.

The next stage of the Tory offensive is all about dealing decisive blows to every aspect of the public sector. This not only means pri-

vatizing rail and the Post Office, but completely restructuring local government and the NHS with the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

A labour movement body which can unite the struggles in the public sector and beyond, and reach out to an alliance with service users and non-organised workers and the unem-

ployed, has been urgently needed in the last period.

must be to build the conference to a size and attendance which will render such an operation impossible. Unemployment is not some sad fact of life, which the government can do little about. It is a deliberately-fashioned weapon of the ruling class. All the apologists for the ruling class have said, when confronted with the 3 million jobless figure, that at least two and a half million unemployed were necessary to 'control wage inflation'.

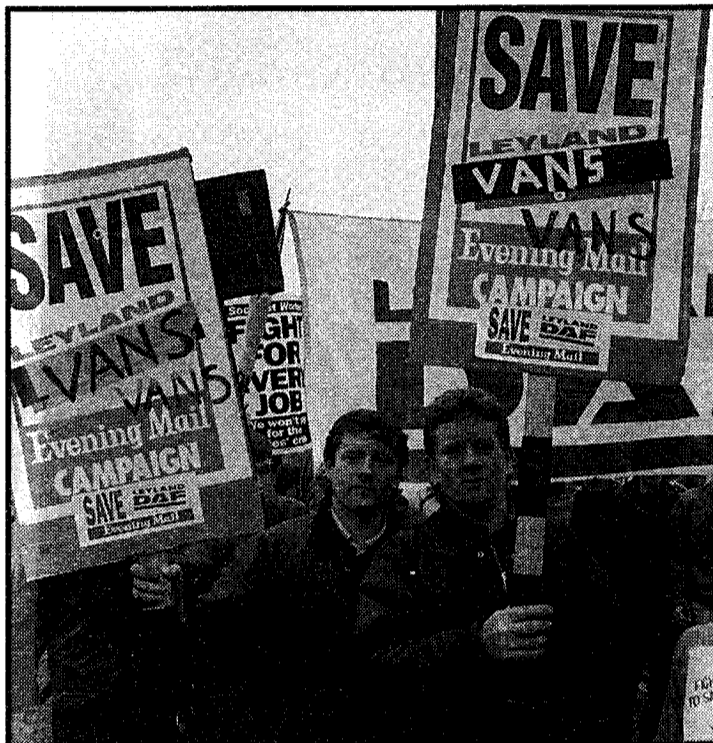
That's the reality: Major's 1.5 per cent public sector wage freeze only stands any chance because of the fear of unemployment. Real unemployment is probably 14-15 per cent of the workforce. But probably a full half of the working class lives in daily fear of the sack, knowing they have no prospect of getting another job.

That, combined with the anti-union laws, weighs down heavily on the possibility of a fightback. But the vicious circle can and must be broken. That means championing every single struggle, no matter how small, that is actually launched in this unfavourable climate. It means uniting the struggles. But it also means in that process reasserting some of the fundamentals of working class struggle against unemployment.

The demands must be raised for work-sharing with no loss of pay, a sliding scale of hours to divide up the work available between the whole workforce, and banning overtime. And it means raising the demand that the labour movement organises the unemployed.

These are basic demands of working class unity and solidarity. Without such measures, the outcome of the present recession will be to deepen division and fear in the working class.

As the Tories slide deeper into crisis over the miners, the economy and Maastricht, the left has a full agenda in the struggle to build the fightback.



Victims of market madness: Leyland Daf workers in Birmingham

employed, has been urgently needed in the last period.

The Stoke conference has the official backing of UCATT, and the president of NUPE is speaking. The initiative in launching this body has been taken by *Militant*. However, if *Militant* try to repeat what they did with the poll tax campaign, and the Broad Left Organising Committee, and keep it under their own tight organisational control, it will crash and a major opportunity will be wasted.

For the left, then, the response to this danger

## Get tough with Tory looters!

LABOUR'S disgusting Tony Blair has added his voice to the clamour from the right wing Tory tabloids for tougher action against teenage tearaways.

As John Major leaps on the law-and-order banwagon and Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke costs out schemes to jail more 15-year olds, Blair, too, opts for the easy route of blaming individual youth for the rocketing crime wave.

But while the reactionaries swap brutal recipes for repression, the real criminals of society get away scot-free.

Why focus on the petty crime of youth nicking videos and joyriding stolen cars when the Tory government, acting on behalf of its big business 'godfathers', has systematically plundered billions from the poor and

the working class, and while top-paid tax evaders daily rip off millions more?

Why should Blair get so excited about the highly-publicised anti-social violence of a minority of youth, while lifting not a finger to combat the brutal anti-social policies of a Tory government – whose deliberate creation of mass unemployment has literally ripped the heart out of whole working class communities?

### Thatcherism

Youth berated by Major and now by Blair for their lack of social responsibility could quite legitimately respond that they are simply carrying through Margaret Thatcher's famous declaration that 'there is no such thing

as society, just individuals and their families'.

Literally millions of working class youth now find themselves caught in a blind alley. Tory policies, driven by capitalist crisis, have robbed them of any hope of a decent job, of a house, of any social status, while besieging them with the advertising images of a consumerist society.

They are systematically ignored by the unions and Labour Party, who offer nothing to youth and make no attempt to organise them.

Denied any collective voice or expression for their frustration, if they let

their anger and alienation boil over in other ways they are promptly condemned not only by the Tories, but by those who ought to be on their side.

Instead of extending the jails to lock up today's angry youth, socialists should be reaching out to turn their anger against the real enemy – the Tory government, and the capitalist system it represents.

That Blair sides with the jailers rather than the youth sums up the utter bankruptcy of Labour's 'modernisers' – and the urgency of a political fightback inside the labour movement.



Blair wants to give cops more powers to beat up youth

Public Sector  
Alliance  
**Fight the  
wage  
freeze  
Fight the  
job cuts**

Saturday March 5th  
Queen's Theatre,  
Burslem Town Hall,  
Stoke-on-Trent.

Details from organising  
secretary, Roger  
Bannister, Knowsley  
NALGO, 60 Admin  
Buildings, Knowsley  
Industrial Park,  
Liverpool L33 7TX





Phil Maxwell  
Bryan Gould: suddenly it's radical to demand the right to a house and a job



Phil Maxwell  
Tory Education Secretary John Patten: one step ahead of Labour with his bigoted calls for 'family values' and compulsory religion?

**Capitalism on the slide, Labour on the run**

# From new realism to new rightism

By Nigel Johnson

JUST WHEN you thought Labour's policies couldn't get any more right wing, top party spokespeople have in recent days been outlining a new agenda - borrowed wholesale from the Tory right. Blair says crack down

on crime. Blunkett says youth should have compulsory civilian national service. Straw comes out in favour of compulsory competitive tendering, the council tax and ditching Clause Four.

And John Smith is set to

argue for a serious weakening of the party's links with the union.

To cap all this off, Gordon Brown has unveiled the party's 'new economics'. Building on John Smith's recent notion that ownership of the means of production is now irrelevant, Brown openly repudiates the practice of past Labour governments, and challenges the very idea of state economic action.

Key to the new economics is the following: 'The difference between left and right is not in the acceptance or rejection of the market - indeed the new economics insists that part of the action taken by the community should be to make the market *more competitive* - but Labour's recognition that it is the community's duty to ensure that markets work in the public interest'.

This is doublespeak of Orwellian proportions. To make the market 'more competitive' is a codeword for forcing down costs, which in turn means forcing down *labour* costs; 'the community' can only do this by forcing down wages.

In any case, what kind of mentality is it which thinks that the economic problems of Britain are caused fundamentally by markets simply being 'inefficient'. Nowhere in the world is the 'market' currently delivering prosperity; far from being the solution, market economics is precisely what gives rise to the kind of world-wide recession and mass poverty we are seeing today.

## Orwellian

'The community' is another Orwellian codeword. The only content which Brown gives it is when he talks about long-term investment agreements between banks and companies, financial institutions and the Bank of England being the key to Britain's recovery. The unions don't rate a mention.

Leave aside Brown's strange

idea of community being made up of loan sharks and City spivs, the whole idea is irrational gobbledegook. Long-term underinvestment in Britain's industrial base is not a product of the financial 'community' making mistakes; it is a deliberate act of policy. It comes out of Britain's whole imperialist past.

Britain's ruling class has a conscious strategy to concentrate its investment on internationally-based service sectors particularly trade and banking, relegating manufacturing activity to the provision of low-wage screwdriver facilities geared to Japanese, US or even German companies which want a bargain basement foothold inside the European Community.

## Game plan

That's where the manic determination to avoid signing the 'social chapter', the abolition of wages councils, and recent moves to cut wages and lengthen the working day come from. Permanent high unemployment to moderate wage increases is part of this game plan.

A Labour government would find itself powerless to change this if it relied on hints and nudges to the financial 'community' - some of the most hard-nosed people on the face of this earth.

Brown's speech contained other gems. The mantra-like repetition of the words 'individual potential' was clearly designed to introduce the term into common currency. 'The long term economic agenda must now be to modernise the British economy by advancing individual potential...The new economics asserts the basic goal of economic policy as the fulfilment of individual potential.'

Moreover: 'The new economics is unmistakably about suing the power of the community to advance individual

potential. And to avoid misunderstanding let me be clear...it does not equate action by the community with state power.'

## Thatcherism

What then is it, this 'action by the community'? Stripped of the waffle, it means good guys in the financial world promoting an economy in which individuals can make good, presumably at the expense of other individuals. This used to be called Thatcherism.

In contrast with this utter abasement before Tory ideas, Bryan Gould has announced the creation of a forum to elaborate 'radical' ideas. Writing in the *New Statesman* he proposes that labour pledge itself to two simple promises: a job and a house for everyone.

That of course is an excellent starting point: but a house and a job for everyone is something which no capitalist economy can deliver today. To fight for this objective means fighting for a socialist economy; Gould is far from accepting this obvious logic.

The irony is that Labour's new rightism comes just at the time when DAF has collapsed, a company with a full order book and customers queuing up. What better time to develop socialist demands, for worksharing with no loss of pay, nationalisation of companies declaring bankruptcy and a massive programme of public works?

Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke was panicked by Blair's 'get tough' line on crime into announcing detention centres for children. In other words he feared being outflanked to the right. Where will Labour's self-abasement end: when Tony Blair demands the reintroduction of the death penalty?

## Covering up facts on coal

By Dave Osler

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has hushed up a secret report which may prove that coal is the cheapest source of electricity, top industry commentators claim.

The charge - denied outright by the DTI - is contained in the January 28 edition of *Financial Times Coal UK* newsletter, edited by leading industry expert Gerard McCloskey.

It is alleged that in addition to the four specialist reports published late last month, the DTI commissioned further work from consultants Caminus Energy on the key question of which fuel produces power at the lowest cost. Yet the government has no intention of making it public, it is charged.

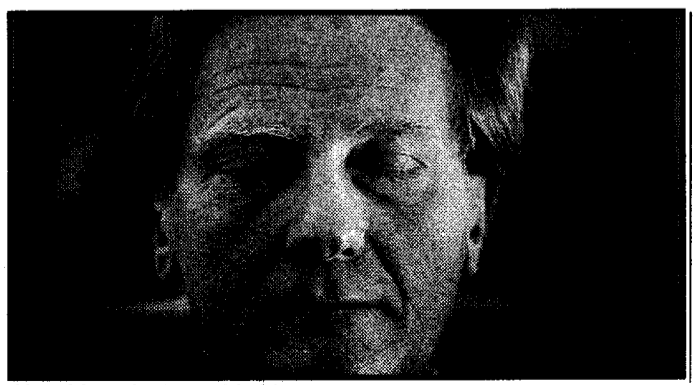
The published Caminus report on the size of the future market for coal ignored key options such as decom-

missioning Britain's ageing magnox nuclear reactors, limiting imported power from France and halting the construction of further gas-fired stations.

"We understand the DTI told Caminus to ignore at least the first two of these; effectively all three were ditched. This is called fixing the race," comments the publication. "Why Caminus has skipped these questions is a puzzle."

It goes on to pick gaping holes in Caminus's "deeply flawed" methodology, arguing that it is based on highly unrealistic view of current and projected prices and "outrageous" doctoring of evidence stolen from other sources.

Branding the whole review process "a mess", *Coal UK* adds: "Any solution that emerges may have an ephemeral political appeal, but nothing that smells like, looks like or feels like a lasting solution."



Heseltine: don't trouble him with the facts



FROM JUNE 1992 to the end of January 1993, NALGO local government workers in Islington fought a nine-month strike over cuts and redundancies. It ended with substantial concessions by the council, but not total victory. Socialist Outlook supporters played an important role in the strike, notably through branch secretary Brian Gardner and vice-chair Doug Thorpe. We asked DOUG THORPE how the strike was fought, and what the lessons were for the tens of thousands who still face the sack in local authorities.

#### How did the strike start?

IN THE mid-1980s, Islington Council under leader Margaret Hodge managed to avoid major cuts. But this was through creative accountancy, which essentially postponed the worst. In the last couple of years they've had to make major cuts to catch up.

The heaviest cuts have taken place in education, education, leisure services, and the housing and social service departments.

As part of this the council last June proposed new procedures with an obvious aim of being able to make people compulsorily redundant: up until then they'd mainly relied on early retirement and redeployment.

The council brought forward a plan for 900 job cuts; they never said how many would be compulsory. At one stage they mentioned 300 compulsory sackings, but the figure was never sure.

So we decided that we would have to go for strike action. There was a debate with the SWP, who wanted a ballot of all 2700 NALGO members for all-out action. We argued for taking advantage of NALGO's national cuts strategy, which meant bringing out key sections on full pay.

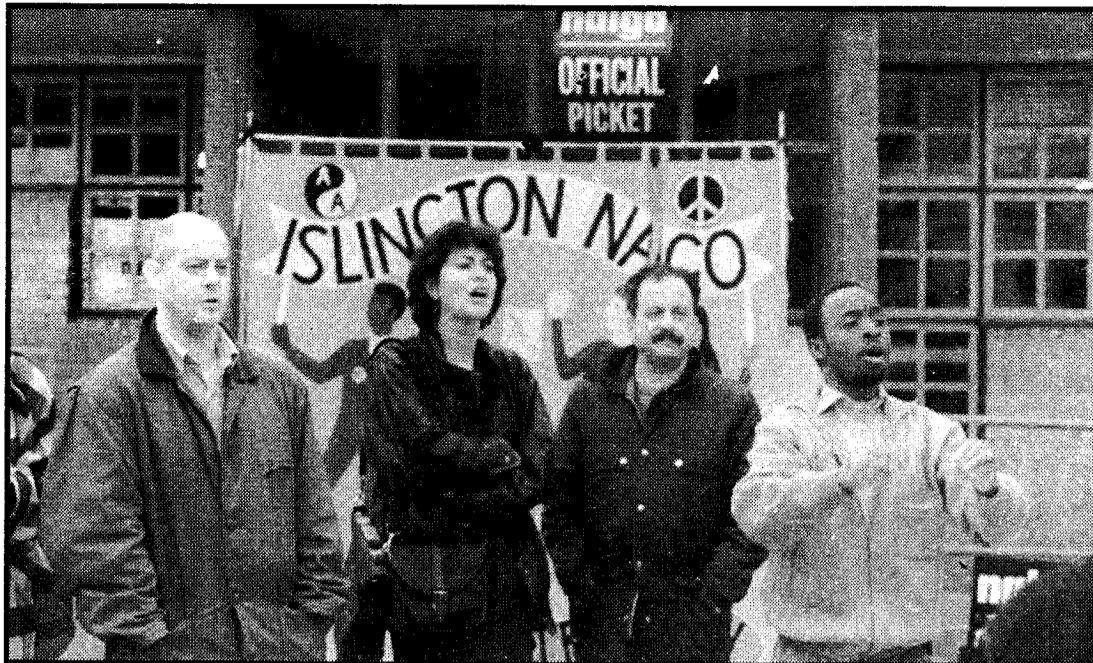
This was a much better way of winning ballots for action, and would involve the branch in a rolling programme of action. Everyone knew a ballot of the whole branch for immediate all-out action would be lost.

#### How many came out to start with?

WE intended to bring out between five and ten per cent of the branch, about 200 people. But there was a reluctance of any section to come out. However a management provocation made the Housing Benefit section walk out. This gave the confidence for other sections to come out, too. The strikers went round mobilising the whole branch for eight days of all-out action last July. If some people had not already been on strike, we would never have won that ballot.

#### Did the council respond to the eight days of all-out action?

No, they didn't budge. In my view this was because the other unions wouldn't move in solidarity with us. This division gave the council the strength to hold out. The most we got from the other unions was a decision not to sign the redundancy agreement with the council while NALGO was still out.



Islington strikers on the picket line: management provocation triggered the initial walkout

## Lessons of Islington NALGO strike

# Fighting to win

But after the 8-day action the morale of the strikers was still strong; it was weaker among the sections of the branch not on strike. So we moved rapidly to get NALGO to agree to escalation, to bring more workers into the strike action. We got this agreement, to bring out the whole of Neighbourhood Services, which includes Housing and Social Services. This enabled us to start picketing, which would have been difficult with some people still working.

**NALGO nationally backed this strike, with full-take home pay for selected groups of workers. Was this their anti-cuts strategy, to back individual, localised strikes, rather than take national action?**

THIS was exactly NALGO strategy – to be prepared to use a big national strike fund to back localised, isolated strikes. This gave them an image of ac-

**We need real national industrial action against cuts and jobs losses, but also a public sector alliance. No branch, no union, no group of workers should be left to fight alone.**

tually doing something; but in fact there was little use of the national strike fund, which was at times up to £20m.

There was extreme reluctance to take this kind of isolated action, branch by branch. People were extremely sceptical about the chances of winning. This localised form of action was never an effective way to fight the cuts. People would look over their shoulders, and ask why neighbouring branches were not taking action.

Now even the branch-by-branch strategy has been junked, since the Emergency Committee has decided to fund only strikes of 'national significance' – and who decided what they are?

**The council brought in scabs and maintained a skeleton service. What made them event-**

**ually decide to negotiate?**

IT WAS CLEAR that the original council leadership, under Margaret Hodge before she went off to her well-paid job at Price Waterhouse, wanted to smash union organisation in the borough – and that meant smashing NALGO. That's why there were no negotiations. But when Hodge resigned, they were keen to settle the dispute, so we were faced with the carrot and the stick; new negotiations opened up at the same as strikers contracts were also being terminated.

The council's services, especially Housing Benefit, rent collection and social services, were being severely disrupted, and it was costing them money. And public pressure, by the end of 1992, was building up for a settlement. Negotiations started in November.

It became clear that there would be an offer for a new trawl for voluntary redundancies, and that there would be an

effort to avoid compulsory redundancies, but no cast iron guarantee.

#### Was there a debate on this in the branch?

AS WE approached Christmas there was some weariness; but at the same time we had gone up to about 1000 people on strike, so we had to make a judgement.

The council was making us offers which were a big step forward on the situation we faced in June, but we did not have binding agreements against any compulsory redundancy. NALGO nationally was beginning to make noises that the dispute had gone on long enough. It was clear that national funding was under threat if we didn't negotiate a solution.

On top of that there were new sacking

threats, and some groups already had their employment contracts terminated. Incidentally, so far there have been no compulsory redundancies.

#### What was the role of the SWP during the strike? How did they react to a proposed deal?

AT THE START they disagreed with the strategy of the strike, calling for a ballot for all-out action. This of course would have failed. But once the strike got under way, they played the role of good activists, helping to run the strike. But when we got to the critical point of the strike, when we were threatened with sackings, and when we had to go back to NALGO to get escalation, the SWP chair of the strike committee suddenly resigned.

The explanation was that the SWP 'had every confidence in the branch leadership'. This was not widely believed by the strikers. My belief is that he did it because it was obvious we were getting into a critical period where a compromise deal was inevitable – and the SWP wanted to keep their hands clean to criticise any deal from the left.

They had a negative attitude to negotiations – that we should just go in and restate our demands. But at no stage did they really put forward an alternative strategy; rather they would put forward small amendments to the position of the branch leadership.

Towards the end in fact they were not really arguing for an alternative strategy, except the nonsense that we should make no compromise and escalate; in fact their effort went into building a Broad Left in the branch to recruit to the SWP. That was their priority, not doing work for the strike.

In the end the SWP argued to reject the strike deal, and go back to NALGO and argue the whole branch should be brought out on full pay. But everyone knew this was absolutely unrealisable, NALGO would simply refuse and that would be that.

The outcome was a partial victory, not outright victory. It was the best we could get, after nine months of strike action. And branch organisation has been greatly strengthened, with more stewards and more activists.

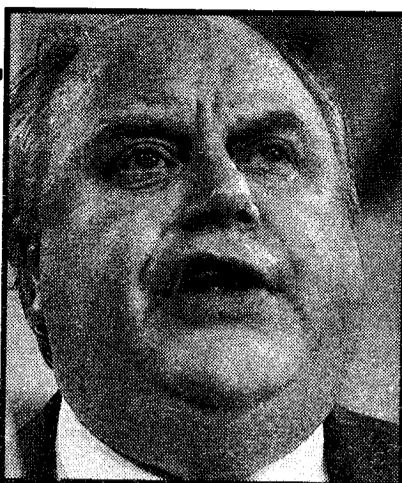
I don't think what we did shows the way forward, though. Yes, if a branch can fight and make limited gains, OK, go ahead, defend jobs and services the best you can. Of course, that is ABC for good trade unionists.

But in the end, faced with up to 100,000 redundancies in local government, local action, now matter how exemplary, will not win – it just can't. That's why we need real national industrial action against cuts and jobs losses, but also a public sector alliance. No branch, no union, no group of workers should be left to fight alone.



# Electricians set for TUC comeback

Willis: which way is he facing?



By Bill Sutcliffe

THE CONTROVERSIAL hard right electricians' union is now almost certain to return to the TUC, after the new Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union launched a ballot on affiliation to Britain's union centre last week. A 'yes' result is confidently expected by the end of March.

The AEEU was set up last year after the merger of the TUC-affiliated AEU engineers and the EETPU electricians, who were expelled in 1988.

While the 'Double E' was officially flung out on a rule-book technicality, its outrageous behaviour in the Thatcher decade included organising a blatant scabbing operation on printworkers during the News International dispute of 1985-86, pioneering sweetheart deals, and attempting to smash up the UCATT construction union in 1990 (check date).

It even mooted the formation of a rightist labour federation, taking in the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers, the Institute of Journalists and no-strike outfits like the Royal College of Nursing. The project fortunately came to nought.

In fact, no less than 11 unions - including some of the biggest, such as TGWU, GMB and NALGO - have outstanding

grievances against EETPU.

After last year's merger, the TUC set up a reconciliation committee chaired by NUPE chief Rodney Bickerstaffe. The move is pure window-dressing; so far, what is now the AEU electricians' section has made no binding commitment to mend its ways.

Nor, as officials in several of the unions concerned admit privately, will that be a precondition of readmission. With an annual affiliation cheque of over £1m at stake, any remaining semblance of principled objection is not long for this world.

Even the EPIU, a small union predominantly composed of former EETPU members loyal to the TUC, knows it will have to live with the old enemy's return.

Norman Willis, TUC general secretary, turned up at the press launch of the AEEU's ballot campaign to preach a healing gospel. Comrade Willis obviously subscribes to former US president Lyndon B. Johnson's maxim that it's better to have your rivals inside the tent pissing out than outside the tent pissing in.

But given new Tory legislation abolishing the TUC's Bridlington agreement - which regulates which unions organise which grades - the sparks are now a real threat to other unions, whichever way they choose to urinate.

# Sun City junket for coal bosses

By Dave Osler

A COAL bosses' conference in South Africa's Las Vegas features a golf tournament, safaris and a chartered airplane trip to Victoria Falls. Even the 'field trip' to visit local mines travels by ultra-luxury train and includes an overnight stay at a private game reserve.

The 8th Pacific Rim Coal Conference takes place in Sun City, a notorious gambling den located in the nominally-independent Pretoria puppet state of Bophuthatswana from June 29 to July 1, with the field trip taking up the next three days.

While hundreds of thousands of miners across the world face the sack, top management in the industry will be able to pass this thinly-disguised holiday off as work and claim their expenses back from their companies.

Conference registration is a snip at \$1000, and just \$200 for accompanying spouses. The

'working' trip is a mere \$1475 the pair. The junketing is an optional extra, with prices ranging from a modest \$50 for the golf to \$875 for the visit to Victoria Falls. These prices do not include hotel bills or airfares.

The main conference hotel is The Palace of the Lost City, billed as 'the most extraordinary hotel in the world ... guests will feel they have been welcomed to an imperial residence'.

Speakers on the 'technical programme' are mainly South African businessmen, but include Stalinist bureaucrat Wei Goufu, president of the China National Coal Import and Export Corp and, somewhat shamefully, James Motlatsi, president of South Africa's National Union of Mineworkers. An African National Congress speaker is yet to be announced.

Any mineworkers facing the dole in Britain who fancy popping along should fax Loretta Pelofsky of AER Enterprises, on 01 01 908 254 6812.

# PowerGen helps fuel east German privatisation

By Dave Osler

POWERGEN is negotiating to buy a substantial stake in the mining industry of the former east Germany, now on the market as part of the post-unification drive to sell off state property.

The privatised electricity generation company is currently resisting attempts by Michael Heseltine, presi-

dent of the Board of Trade, to force it to purchase more coal from British Coal.

While analysts have not so far pointed to PowerGen as a potential purchaser for British pits if Tory privatisation plans go ahead, its diversification move could be indicative of its strategic thinking.

PowerGen has formed a 50-50 consortium with NRG Ltd of the USA,

which Germany's Treuhandanstalt privatisation agency has given exclusive rights until July to negotiate the purchase of nine mines belonging to Mitteldeutsche Braunkohle.

The pits produce low-quality lignite, notorious as a pollutant, and a major cause of the persistent smog which still dogs industrialised areas of eastern Germany.

The plan is to keep the pits open

and go on to construct a new coal-fired generation plant near Leipzig, equipped with expensive desulphurisation equipment. Industry sources believe that the mines deal could be worth around £387m.

While the coal would probably be considered unsuitable for British use, its importation could not be ruled out, especially in the event of industrial action.

# 15,000 women's jobs under threat

# Bottomley's blitz on London hospital beds

By John Lister  
(London Health Emergency)

TEN HOSPITALS and upwards of 20,000 jobs in London face the axe as the Tory government decides to bite the bullet and implement the Tomlinson Report.

Contrary to media forecasts, Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley has opted to forge ahead with the closures, and set up further 'reviews' which will axe still more beds, jobs and services.

The hospitals to go read like a roll-call of famous names.

**CLOSURE ONE:** Guy's and St Thomas's hospitals are to 'merge' as a single Trust - and will be given just six months to decide which of the two sites will close. Most expect that St Thomas's, the most saleable of the two, will face the axe.

**CLOSURE TWO:** Bart's Hospital is to lose its Accident and Emergency (A&E) unit, and cease to operate as a district general hospital. Its 'shadow Trust' is to be dissolved, and management have until autumn to decide between three unsavoury options: outright closure, a 'merger' on the Royal London Hospital site, or a precarious

existence as a small specialist hospital on the expensive Smithfield site.

**CLOSURE THREE:** Charing Cross Hospital, which is to lose its busy A&E unit, is almost certain to face closure in the autumn after a tokenistic 'review'.

**CLOSURES FOUR, FIVE and SIX:** The Middlesex Hospital is to close through 'merger' with University College Hospital on the UCH site. Also to close, and be squashed onto the site will be the Royal Throat Nose and Ear Hospital and the Hospital for Tropical Diseases.

**CLOSURE SEVEN:** Queen Charlotte's maternity hospital will see its services 'transferred' elsewhere.

**CLOSURE EIGHT:** St Mark's hospital is to close through a 'merger' with Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow.

**CLOSURE NINE:** The London Chest Hospital is to close through 'merger' with the Royal London.

**CLOSURE TEN:** Queen Elizabeth's Hospital for Children in Hackney will close through 'merger' with the nearby Homerton Hospital.

But this is not the end of the cuts. More closures - some hitting hospitals like St George's, St Helier, and Kingston not even mentioned by Tomlinson - will follow, fuelled by the work of six government-appointed 'hit

squads', charged with implementing a quick-fire review of cancer, cardiac, neuroscience and other key specialties in London. Their brief is to close beds; they must report back in May.

In addition, the eight Special Health Authorities, which include Great Ormond Street, Moorfields Eye Hospital, the Royal Marsden and the Brompton, will be stripped of their direct funding from the government from April 1994, and forced to compete for survival in the NHS internal market. Some will face bankruptcy or massive cost-cutting closures.

The effects of these cuts would be to close upwards of 2,100 beds, beginning in the next few months.

20,000 health workers - at least 15,000 of them women - are at risk from these proposals, over and above the wave of redundancies which is sweeping through most hospitals in London and elsewhere. Claims that these staff could be redeployed inside the NHS are little more than a sick joke. Perhaps it's time to launch Women Against Hospital Closures?

If the Tories get their way, skilled and dedicated staff would be thrown onto London's 500,000-plus dole queue, and hospitals close, while 150,000 patients linger on growing waiting lists for treatment.

Central London would be left with



Thousands of professional staff - mostly women - face redundancy

a dangerously inadequate network of casualty units, having closed Bart's, St Thomas's and Charing Cross - three key units treating a total of up to 200,000 cases a year.

Inner London's hospitals would be unable to cope with any major disaster or epidemic, while hospitals in outer London could find themselves struggling to handle emergencies for whom there are no beds in the inner city.

After a slow and confused start, all the major unions and the Labour front bench have belatedly united in opposition to Tomlinson, with even the BMA timidly expressing doubts. Only the Royal College of Nursing and St John's Ambulance have emerged as servile allies of Bottomley in imposing these cuts.

The task now is to build vigorous campaigns linking health workers in

each of the threatened units with local community organisations, pensioners and user groups, for whom the hospital services are a vital lifeline. Now the scale of the threat is clear, the scale of the fightback must be increased.

Londoners need London's hospitals: but so does the rest of the NHS. The spurious arguments the Tories use and get away with to close hospitals in London today will be wheeled out in the near future to threaten beds in Cardiff, Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast and other major cities.

Bottomley had the bottle to throw down the gauntlet. Now the labour movement must show if it has the ability to fight back. Will the left rise to the challenge?

■ London Health Emergency can be contacted at 446, Uxbridge Rd, London W12 0NS. Affiliation £15/£25.





8 March

## International Women's Day

On 8 March 1908, women garment workers marched through New York's Lower East Side, protesting sweatshop conditions and demanding the vote. At a Congress of Socialist Women meeting in 1910 in Copenhagen, socialist women from the United States, inspired by recent battles, initiated a proposal for 8 March to be designated as an international women's holiday. Clara Zetkin, the militant socialist leader from Germany, urged that the proposal be adopted - which it was.

Two of the most significant 8 March celebrations occurred in the next few years. On that day in 1914 Clara Zetkin organised thousands of women to protest Germany's pell-mell course towards the first world war and Rosa Luxemburg's arrest and conviction for speeches opposing the coming imperialist war.

On 8 March 1917, striking women textile workers from the Vyborg district in Petrograd held an International Women's day demonstration which sparked the Russian revolution.

For the past 85 years International Women's Day has been observed by militant women around the world as a day of worldwide solidarity of women in struggle for liberation.

In the past decade the organised women's movement has declined in Britain, and there has been, in the advanced capitalist countries, a reactionary offensive against the gains of the women's movement in the 1960s and '70s. More than ever it is necessary to keep the traditions of International Women's Day alive, to continue to challenge every form of oppression which keeps women in slavery.



## Women Against Pit Closures

# The struggle last time

**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** looks back to the role played last miners strike by women in the pit communities and in local support groups. ANNE-MARIE SWEENEY was an activist in the Oxford Womens Support Group (WSG) and wrote about that group's support for the women from Maerdy, South Wales, in the book 'The Miners Strike in Oxford'.

IN MAY 1984 we recognised that a movement was developing - one that was to become one of the most essential factors in the strength and determination of the 12-month strike and the support it received.

In the speeches that women made it was emphasised that the movement would not restrict itself to the running of the food centres alone.

These women were not only speaking of the hardships the families were enduring, but were arguing a political case for the miners.

We were witnessing the emergence of a mass movement of working class women committed

with an energy and passion which inspired us all to take on the government and win a victory for the miners. We wanted to give what help we could...

The women from Maerdy faced many battles ahead, and one which the Maerdy and Oxford WSGs both share is that of fighting sexism of male comrades and fellow trade unionists.

This could take blatant forms - judging women at support meetings not in terms of their political contribution but in terms of their legs; disregarding the aspects of work that women take seriously; putting womens reports at the bottom of the agenda; not encouraging women to take part in decision-making or political discussion; relegating them solely to food collection and distribution - on the assumption 'that's all they understand'; speaking too long; and interrupting and dominating meetings.

None of the NUM speakers could convey the sufferings of the mining communities as well as the women. But that was not all that the

eager to watch the news, find out what was going on at lodge meetings, and be prepared to speak out in meetings attacking bureaucratic moves and expressing their own virulent condemnation of, for example, Kinnock and the TUC leaders...

In between speaking at meetings, press interviews and helping with collections, the women took the opportunity to go round Oxford's tourist attractions with members of Oxford MSG.

They were dumbfounded at the beauty of some of the colleges and grounds, and expressed anger and frustration at the privileges bestowed on the children of the upper classes, while they were fighting for the right of their children to go 600 yards underground in the hazardous, oppressive conditions of work, digging up coal.

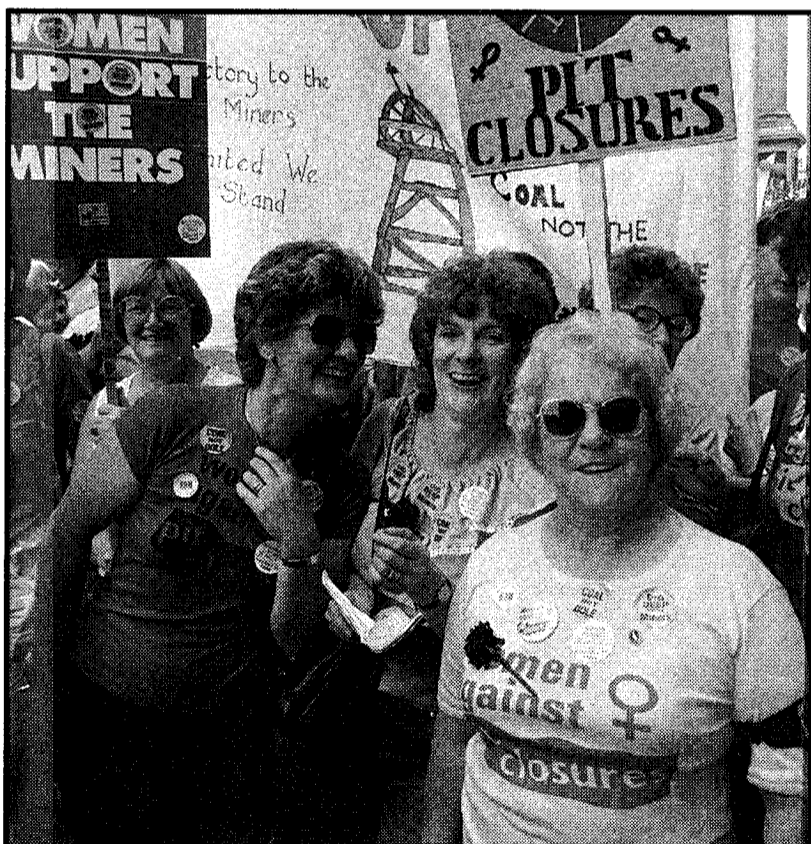
They realised it was not an automatic privilege of those living in Oxford. The children of car workers living in Cowley share similar disadvantages with those in the Rhondda, if not to the same extent (youth unemployment in the Rhondda is 70 per cent).

There are many lessons to be learned from the strike, but one of them is that while celebrating collective strength we must respect and acknowledge the worth of contributions, women, as individuals, make to that collective whole, especially given the odds they are working against. *The Maerdy pit closed in 1990.*

**We were witnessing the emergence of a mass movement of working class women with an energy and passion which inspired us all ...**

women could convey.

The rapid development of their political awareness during the strike meant that women were



## Pit camps continue

WOMEN Against Pit Closures are keeping up their 24-hour vigils outside seven of the ten most-threatened pits in England and Wales.

Rufford pit camp is planning a major demonstration in the Nottinghamshire coalfield for February 28, while a delegation of Irish women from Derry visited Vane Tempest pit camp in the North East.

Women at Trentham pit camp have condemned British Coal moves to seal up one of the colliery's three faces, ostensibly on safety grounds. Activist Brenda Proctor argued: "It's just another excuse to

shut the pit."

Support for the women is growing, with meetings and socials being organised in the run-up to the coal and rail strike ballots on March 5.

Last Sunday saw almost all of Britain's top women stand-up comedians, including Jo Brand, Jenny Eclair, Donna McPhail and Kit Holerbach, stage a WAPC benefit concert at London's Hackney Empire theatre.

Donations and messages of support for the pit camps: WAPC pit camps, c/o National Union of Mineworkers, Holly Street, Sheffield S1 2GT. Tel: 0742 766900 x295.





**RAPE** takes place in all wars. The dislocation of normal social life, and the power relationship which huge numbers of armed men have in relationship to civilians, means that even the minimal obstacles to rape in class society are cast aside.

Probably no army in history has been entirely guiltless. But imperialist armies, for example in Algeria and Vietnam and numerous other colonial wars, with their racist contempt for all 'native' civilians, have been particularly guilty of rape.

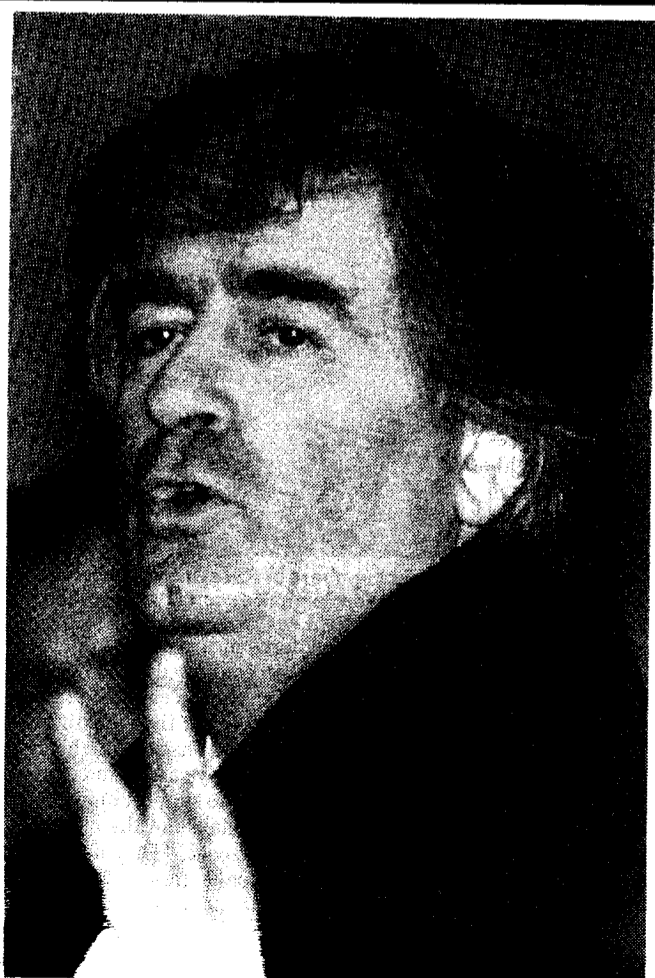
But is that all that there is to it in Yugoslavia? That men rape, that armies have almost total power over women in their vicinity, and that therefore rape inevitably takes place? In our view that is too sweeping and simplistic an explanation.

For evidence is growing that in ex-Yugoslavia that rape is being used as an instrument of *policy*, by the Serb Chetnik forces, for the purposes of 'ethnic cleansing', of demoralising and terrorising the civilian population, especially in Bosnia.

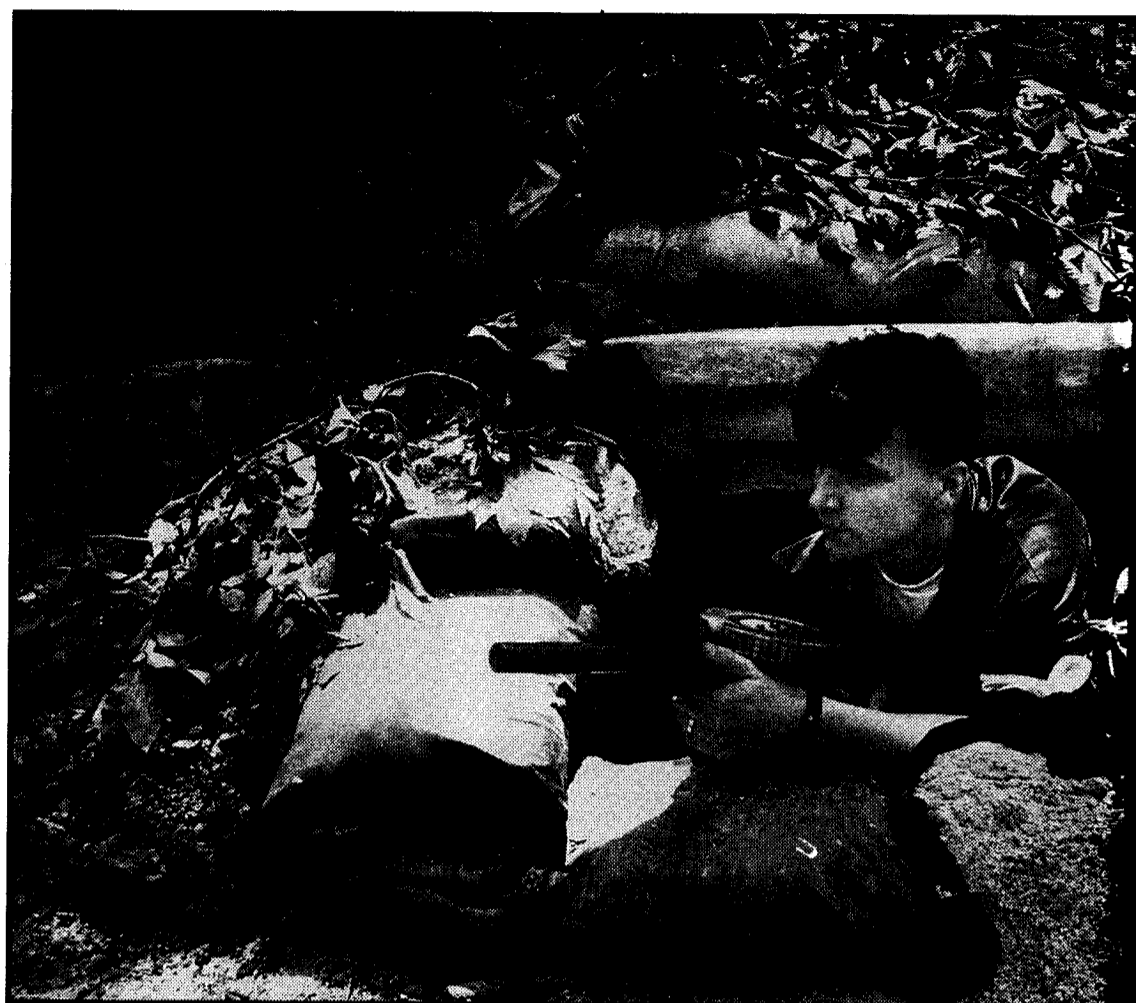
All rape is horrendous; but mass rape as an instrument of policy is a particularly vicious crime.

The campaign against it must be linked to the demand that rape be made an internationally recognised war crime. Women who are victims of rape, or threatened by it, must be able to use this as the basis of political asylum. Most of all, the indifference of Western governments and the political establishment, summed up in David Owen's statement that rape was 'too delicate' to raise with the Serbian leaders, must be broken.

What aids the rapists and other war criminals is the crime of silence; that is the first thing to break. Here we publish an article on this question by Ida Dequeecker of the Belgian section of the Fourth International.



Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic: his troops are guilty of systematic rape



All wars lead to rape but in ex-Yugoslavia rape has become an instrument of policy

Rape: an old problem returns in a modern conflict

## A crime in times of war crime in times

WHEN American feminists tried to get the anti-war movement to make a specific issue of condemning the rape of Vietnamese women by US soldiers they came up against a brick wall. Accusing *the boys* did not seem very realistic.

Following the rapes in ex-Yugoslavia the women's movement throughout the entire world has mobilised to seek the recognition of rape as a war crime and a crime against humanity and has demanded an international tribunal to bring the guilty parties to justice.

Everything leads us to believe that this demand will be heard. For good and sometimes not so good reasons. But if the women's movement succeeds in defending the interests of raped women from the sensationalism and propaganda to which the theme of rape so easily lends itself, an important step will have been taken in recognising the rights of women.

It seems that the Serbian extremists have used rape as a weapon of war within the framework of their policy of 'ethnic cleansing'.

But the Croatian and Muslim extremists are also guilty of what are called 'occasional rapes'. Is there any sense in this distinction? And is there a fundamental difference with rape in peace time?

Certainly not for the victims. Perhaps that is the only correct starting point: rape is always a crime, in the first place against women and girls.

Male society has never accepted rape as a serious social problem. Rape is always veiled in myths based on sensationalised stereotypes: the innocent virgin; the imprudent victim with only herself to blame: the wrong-doer driven

a soldier who has travelled thousands of kilometres, through blood, fire and death looks for pleasure with a woman?

Alongside this vulgarisation and justification of rape, without the least respect for the victim, war also produces its own sensationalisation of rape. Here also the victims don't count. The theme of rape, as a propaganda weapon against the enemy, is extremely effective.

It was exploited on a large scale for the first time during the international campaign against the Germans who invaded Belgium in 1914: the image of barbarian Huns, with rape in their blood, raised nationalist sentiments in Britain and other countries.

After the war the whole affair was denied and put down to propaganda exaggerations. No one (or rather no man) showed the least interest in the eventual victims.

In the same way today the Croatian elite depicts the Serbs as the only rapists and Croatia as a nation that has been raped to strengthen Croatian nationalism.

This nationalism has a secondary perverse effect: an attitude which consists of pushing aside Croatian women who have been raped, and are therefore dirty, rather than helping them.

The result is that the women themselves keep silent about what has happened to them. Rape is, in effect, a crime that

By Ida Dequeecker.  
(From the Belgian  
Trotskyist fortnightly *La Gauche*).

by uncontrollable sexual urges – a monster, in one case, a 'red blooded' man in another.

The logical consequence is that women and girls must stay away from strange men and seek the protection of their own men.

### Effect of war?

But then in times of war the protection is lowered and the combat troops suffer long periods of sexual abstinence. So the myth makes rape a secondary effect of all wars, regrettable but inevitable.

Thus General Patton wrote in his memoirs about the North Africa campaign in 1942: 'whatever my efforts there were undoubtedly rapes' committed by the American soldiers under his command. And Milovan Djilas assures us that Stalin would have commented on the rapes committed by the Red Army during the 2nd World war: 'don't you understand that





Former 'comfort women' demonstrate outside Japanese Embassy in Seoul

# peace, a of war

covers the victim - not the perpetrator - with shame. It is a crime which makes the victim into the guilty party, unless she has been murdered into the bargain.

It is a crime which dirties the victim, as well as the child that may ensue. The result, which is equally valuable in times of war as in peace-time, is that rape is a hidden phenomenon, the frequency of which cannot be estimated. It is only thanks to the actions of the women's movement that hesitant steps to gauge the extent are being taken.

Feminists have denounced the frequency of the phenomenon and its impact on the lives of women. The feminist movement has particularly analysed the socio-psychological mechanisms of rape which come from the social and structural inequality between men and women. Rape is the result of sexism pushed to the extreme.

Certainly war makes rape more likely. For in war the inequality between men and women is increased. Men live and fight in the macho world of the army.

Violence is in fashion. The weapon becomes a symbol of virility, an extension of the male sexual organ. In contrast to this world of men there is the defenceless world of the civilian population, women, children, then old and sick.

At first enemy women are raped, often in public or in front

of their husbands, to make the humiliation still worse. Then the same thing can happen to the allied women.

A well known example is that of the American soldiers after the Normandy landings during the 2nd World War. Whether rape is tolerated (as appears to be the case with the Serbian political and military leaders) or punished, there is still rape. Whether or not organised prostitution exists (as for the US soldiers in Vietnam), there is rape.

This shows that rape has nothing to do with irrepressible sexual desires, however popular this explanation may be, and everything to do with violent instincts. And it is true that all men are not rapists, just as not all men love the violence of war.

When does the so-called 'occasional rape' become systematic policy? In practice it is racist, fascist, ultra-nationalist ideologies that consider other people as inferiors which provoke this change.

A typical example is that of the Nazis who carried out a systematic policy of rape of Jewish

and Russian women, treating them as species to be exterminated. The sexist contempt for women was combined with racist contempt for their nationality.

But vengeance can also unleash a systematic policy of rape. Thus it was that the Red Army marked out its advance on Germany during the second world war with a long trail of rapes, the official excuse being that the Germans had acted much more savagely in the Soviet Union.

The aim of an analysis of rape in war-time, distinguishing occasional rape from systematic rape, cannot be to determine which is the most terrible.

The aim must be to show that rape is the product of social, ideological and psychological factors and that certain combinations of these factors lead to an escalation of rape.

That allows us to see that the knot of the problem lies in the way in which society moulds masculinity and femininity and has nothing to do with natural 'instincts'.

The recognition of rape as a specific war crime that is always forced upon women, and its punishment as such, does not, of course, extricate us from the problem itself. But it does constitute an important step in recognising the injustice done to women.

## Remembering past outrages 'Comfort women' demand justice

EVERY WEDNESDAY afternoon, outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, women assemble to demand justice for the estimate 80,000 Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Burmese and Dutch women forced into prostitution for Japanese soldiers during the last war.

Those women still living demand compensation. More importantly they demand official recognition of this crime, which Japan still officially denies, even forcing its education ministry to keep any reference to it out of school and college textbooks.

The story itself is horrific. As the Japanese troops advanced through Asia, 'comfort stations' were established for the troops. The military logic behind this was grotesque. During the Japanese attacks on Shanghai and Nanjing during the 1932 campaign in China and Manchuria, the troops had run amok and mass rape had taken place.

The 'comfort stations' were to 'keep military discipline', ie to make sure the rape was orderly. A large majority of the women came from racially despised Korea. According to Lieutenant-General Okamura, there was 'an endless supply of healthy Korean virgins'.

Most women were 'broken in' by beatings and rapes, to resign them to their fate. Crude operations were performed on some to remove their reproductive organs, to stop them menstruating - and thus make them

permanently 'available'. Others were savagely murdered.

The women were described as 'war supplies' and extreme logistical priority was accorded to their installation wherever the Japanese armies went. Japanese soldiers joked that following an advance the first things to arrive were the ammunition and the comfort women.

The Japanese government claims that the women were volunteers, something disproved by hundreds of personal testimonies. In addition to 80,000 women estimated to have been forced into this slavery, another 20,000 were forced to become cooks and cleaners.

What happened to the women and why was the issue buried for 45 years? Some of course were killed by their captors. Others suffered mutilation or torture; thousands permanent physical damage as a result of syphilis or other diseases; and tens of thousands suffered permanent psychological damage.

That the issue was buried for so long was a result of the shaming of the victims, the especially subordinated position of women in Japan and Korea, and the determination of the Japanese government to suppress the issue.

But the question has blown open by the rise of new women's organisations in Korea, which has linked the campaign to the issue of Japanese sex tourism in that country, and the growth of prostitution around American military bases.

## Women against war crime

SEVENTY women attended a candle-lit vigil last Wednesday organised by Women against War Crime, to fight against the use of rape in ex-Yugoslavia.

The campaign began as a response to the mounting evidence of rape; but the group intends to campaign for help and support for all women abused in war, and other political crises, irrespective of their nationality, ethnic origin or religion.

The campaign aims are:-

- to provide resources and aid to women in war crises
- to take action against the abuse of women as a war strategy
- to campaign for the recognition and prosecution of rape as a war crime
- to support links among women and peace groups across international borders
- to campaign against immigration restrictions for women war refugees seeking asylum from rape and sexual violence.

Next the campaign is organising a women-only march from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square, Sunday 7 March: assemble Speakers Corner 1pm.

Another group, Women's Aid to ex-Yugoslavia, aids to organise practical help to women in ex-Yugoslavia, including rape counselling and aid to refugees. For further information contact:-

● Women Against War Crime, Box 110, 190 Upper St., London N1 1RQ. Tel: 071 700 2800.

● Women's Aid to former Yugoslavia: 20 Tennyson Rd, Southampton, SO21 1GW. Tel: 0703 551094.





**By Dianne Feeley**

ON 18 MARCH 1871, the working people of Paris took power into their own hands. In the words of the Communards, the workers "understood that it was their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves master of their own destinies by seizing upon the governmental power."

With the average working woman forced to labour thirteen hours a day for a pittance – and having to buy her needles and thread out of her wages – it is no wonder that Parisian working women mobilised as a force on the side of the revolution.

Excluded from citizenship, deprived of an education, often defrauded of their wages and forced to supplement them by prostitution, women were also kept under the yoke of the clergy. The story of the Paris Commune of 1871 cannot be told without pointing to the role of women in it.

In 1870 France and Prussia were at war. Napoleon III was captured and the French Empire fell. Paris was surrounded by Prussian troops for 135 days. Cut off throughout the winter of 1870, the people of Paris faced food and fuel shortages.

Two members of the First International, Nathalie Lemel, a bookbinder, and Louise Michel, a teacher, organised soup kitchens.

The organisations set up during the siege of Paris laid the foundation of the Commune. Women organised their own Vigilance Committee in Montmartre, the political centre of the working class. Clubs, many of them for women alone, were also centres of intense activity.

After France's surrender to Bismarck, the new government of Adolf Thiers had to disarm the people of Paris in order to consolidate its position. By the morning of March 18, Thiers felt the situation was sufficiently under control, and ordered the French troops into the working-class districts of Paris to remove the city's cannons.

But, as Louise Michel recounts: "The army fraternised with the people instead of shooting them down. That triumph of the popular cause is perhaps chiefly due to the intervention of the women, who covered the artillery with their own bodies, and even placed



## Fighting for more than 'fraternité' Women in the Paris Commune

themselves at the muzzles of the guns to prevent them being fired."

### The measures affecting women

Tenants could cancel their lease, and could not be evicted for a period of time. Pawnshops were prohibited from selling

their articles, particularly tools, for without tools a worker had no chance of employment.

The Commune decreed that people could freely withdraw up to 20 francs of their clothing, furniture, linen, bedding, books and tools from the pawnshops.

A 600 franc pension was granted to the widow of any National Guard who had been

killed defending the Commune, and a smaller pension for each child. In neither the case of the women nor of the children was their Commune interested in the legal relationship. This decree, dealing a blow to the clerical-feudal institution of marriage, was, in the eyes of Communard Arthur Arnould: "an act of justice as well, for it is time to have done with that iniquitous prejudice, that legal barbarism, which in what today is called concubinage, as opposed to legal marriage, strikes only at the weak; the seduced woman and the innocent child."

In another decree, a food pension was given to any woman who asked for separation from her husband.

Consistent with the democratic nature of the Commune, a commission of three men and three women proposed secular free education for all children, based on scientific principles.

While the Commune held power for only two months, the educational

plans it outlined, and began to set up are a testimony to the power of the revolutionary government. Advocating the right of women to an education, they established an orphanage, and turned a girls' school into an experimental project.

Recognising the need to provide a technical education for women, the government organised workshops in some districts, where young women would apprentice to a trade. A professional school of industrial arts was opened for women. It gave instructions in drawing, sculpture and carving.

A plan to reorganise day nurseries was outlined. Seeing that the existing nurseries were not organised for the children, they suggested that nurseries provide gardens, bird houses and brightly coloured toys for the children. They suggested that young women who enjoyed working with children be assigned to work in the nursery at the ratio of one woman for every ten children.

Unemployment was a major problem in Paris from the fall of the Empire. The cooperatives and workshops set up during the siege of Paris provided the basis for reaching out and caring for the thousands of unemployed women.

The Clubs, disbanded for a period under the Thiers government, sprang to life during the Paris Commune. Many of them were open only to women. They were the "stockpiles of fire and courage" for the Communards.

In addition to the Clubs, other forms of women's organisations existed. There was a women's section of the Montmartre Vigilance Committee, the Union des Femmes (a section of the International), and a variety of local committees and societies. Their functions varied. Some sent their best speakers to agitate at the Clubs. The Montmartre Vigilance Committee hunted people who refused to defend the Commune, ran workshops, aided impoverished women and recruited women to the medical units.

But despite the heroism of the Commune, Paris itself was invaded on May 21 by Thiers' army.

Louise Michel, one of the great figures of the Commune, states that in the last desperate battles within the section of Paris itself, the women "flinched at nothing. They reconciled themselves much more speedily to the inevitable."

The history of the Commune illustrates the validity of the conclusions drawn by Andre Leo; she pointed out that women had not helped dethrone the Emperor and God simply to let men take that place themselves. "The revolution means – since we must take its side – liberty and responsibility for every human being, with common rights as their only limit and without any privilege of race or sex."

The experience of 1871 showed the world the power of women, organised and ready to throw off their yoke of oppression. As Louise Michel noted, "In rebellion alone woman is at ease, trampling upon both prejudice and sufferings. All intelligent women will sooner or later rise in rebellion."

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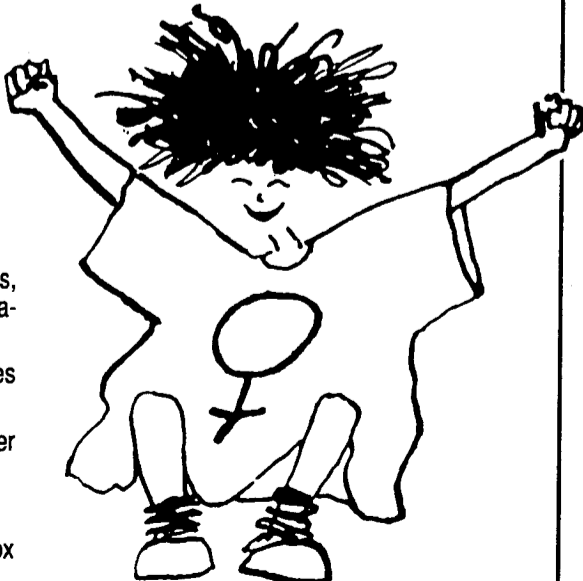
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# 'Our Socialism'

By Luiz Inacio da Silva (Lula), President of the Brazilian Workers' Party.

The Workers Party in Brazil (PT) emerged in the early 1980s from the huge strikes of metalworkers in the industrial centre of Sao Paulo. With 600,000 members, and probably 100,000 activists, the PT is the biggest workers party in the world, which has succumbed neither to social democracy nor to Stalinism. But important conflicts, and rightist pressures, exist within the party. They come especially from the party's MPs and some of its municipal councillors. Important political battles lie ahead. Here we publish an excerpt from *Our Socialism*, by the party's best known figure, Lula. It was originally published in the French magazine *Politix*

THE BRAZILIAN Workers' Party is not the remnant of a worn-out political project which has received a death-blow from the ship-wreck in Eastern Europe.

On the contrary, we have always queried 'actually existing socialism'. We condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, we defended Solidarnosc. We always knew that the very term 'actually existing socialism' was a mystification, in practice incompatible with the project of 'socialism as liberator' to which it paid lip-service.

We do not agree with the absence of political, economic and social democracy; with the identification of party and state or the monopoly of power by a single party; with the domination of the bureaucracy, which has become a privileged layer or caste; with repression, open or veiled, of ideological and cultural pluralism; with management of production through vertical, authoritarian and inefficient planning.

## Social democracy

All these disagreements touch on the very heart of 'actually existing socialism'.

We have equally distanced ourselves from social democracy. Past experience has shown it is not sufficient to accede to government and the state institutions: without mass mobilisations from the base it is impossible to achieve socialism.

The social democrats thought the state was neutral and could be an effective instrument for a peaceful transition



"Without mass mobilisations from the base, it is impossible to achieve socialism"

to a different economic and social logic. When it became obvious they were mistaken they abandoned any perspective of a transition to socialism, without abandoning the spheres of the state and its institutions.

Critical dialogue with the social democrats is useful for the international workers' struggle, but there is nothing in common between our ideological project and theirs.

The socialism we want must transcend both the perverse logic of the market and the command economies where the state decides everything from on high. Economic choices must flow from the social will, not the supposed 'strategic interests' of the state.

This requires what we call 'strategic planning', under social control. And we will create tools to allow the choices made to be implemented effectively. Economic democracy must, therefore, be based on the development of the socialised ownership of the means of production.

Social ownership is not the same as state property: nationalisation is one form but there are others, like cooperatives.

On a general level the state cannot be the guardian of society. Nor can a political party which, at best, contributes to the organisation of society. The state is responsible for organising the system of production and distribution.

There are numerous examples of what the state should do. To give one: today, in Brazil, 30 per cent of grain

production is lost somewhere between production and consumption. The state does nothing while people die of hunger.

We think it should take responsibility for production, guarantee distribution and control prices. That would clash with powerful interests and the present day state could not do it. We have to profoundly modify the nature of the State.

## Distributing wealth

Clearly the state must distribute wealth in a just way. This is not a question of abstract egalitarianism. An egalitarian society is not one in which a professional engineer earns the same as an engineering worker, a university professor the same as a secretary. People must be respected for what they are, for their productive capacity, including their intellectual productive capacity. Someone who produces more, who has a greater intellectual capacity should earn more. Only thus can we develop and stimulate human creative abilities.

We have to reconcile two objectives. On the one hand we must satisfy the material demands of society and increase productivity in the factories. On the other, we must organise work on a new footing which is less oppressive for the workers.

On the political level, socialism must preserve and expand all democratic liberties. To do this we will create instruments of direct democracy allowing

mass participation at all levels of political leadership and economic management. The 'popular councils' we have tried to create in the municipalities are a good example. In the units of production, we want 'factory councils' to be created.

These instruments of direct democracy should coexist with instruments of representative democracy and flexible mechanisms for consultation with the people, which can express collective interests without interference from capitalism.

Generally we want to establish the structures and ways of functioning of a pluralist society, which do not deny the rights of opponents and which respect minorities. We want a type of functioning which respects the forms of organisation of civil society, beginning with the right to organise trade unions and strike. We want a society which does not limit human creativity.

We have thought a lot about this question of democracy. Initially it was very difficult to pose the relationship between socialism and democracy.

There were currents in our party who thought democracy was some sort of tactical instrument. Now, we believe democracy must be seen as a conquest of the workers. This is particularly true in Latin America, but also in Europe.

## Chartist movement

Democracy has never been an advance consciously given by the bourgeoisie but a conquest of the workers. Universal suffrage was the first demand of the Chartist movement in Britain. There are many other examples.

So we cannot leave the flag of democracy to the bourgeoisie, who have limited democratic gains and used them for their own ends. The working class must carry out the fight for democracy.

Translation by Geoff Ryan

**"The socialism we want must transcend both the perverse logic of the market and the command economies where the state decides everything from on high. Economic choices must flow from the social will, not the supposed 'strategic interests' of the state."**



Multi-nationals make a packet, while thousands make for out-patients

# Puffing up Tory profits

By Dave Osler

IF I HAD my way, packets of untipped Senior Service full strength would be distributed completely free of charge in all Conservative clubs and Labour Co-ordinating Committee meetings.

Marxist smokers, on the other hand, should be asking themselves some serious questions; comrades, we can't afford to lose you.

Tobacco is the only legally-available consumer product which kills people when used entirely as intended. Cigarette smoke includes arsenic, cyanide, formaldehyde and known carcinogens.

As with everything else under capitalism, our class is disproportionately poisoned.

Every year, over 110,000 smokers in the UK die as a result of their habit. That's a Gulf War every two years. A further 300 - people like me - die from passive smoking - the effects of breathing in other people's cigarette smoke.

Smoking kills five times more people than road and other accidents, murder, manslaughter, suicide, illegal drugs and AIDS put together.

Working class women and men are respectively three and four times more likely to die from lung cancer as their upper-class counterparts.

Yet such mass slaughter is immensely profitable to British capitalism. Three of the western world's six largest tobacco companies are based in the UK.

These are Rothmans, BAT Industries and Hanson subsidiary Imperial Tobacco. All give money to either the Conservative Party or far right causes.

Rothmans is ultimately owned by South African corporation Rembrandt. It produces Marlboro and Raffles in Britain through a joint venture with America's Philip Morris, and now has a 14 per cent UK market share.

According to its 1992 annual report, it gave £100,000 to the Conservative Party that year.

Margaret Thatcher is on a substantial retainer from Philip Morris to promote its

products. Not that she's stupid enough to smoke herself.

BAT does not sell tobacco in the UK, but exports billions of cigarettes every year from its Southampton factory. It owns or has stakes in tobacco companies in 42 countries all over the world.

The fifth largest company in the UK by turnover, in 1991 BAT made £1000m profit from tobacco alone. While not donating directly to the Tories, it gives regularly to Aims of Industry and the Centre for Policy Studies. It has also contributed £1m to a City Technology College on Teesside.

Imperial has a 35 per cent market share, producing old-established brands such as Capstan, Regal and Woodbines as well as John Player Superkings and Lambert and Butler.

Its parent company gave £100,000 to the Conservative Party and £15,000 to the Centre for Policy Studies, according to the 1992 report.

It also handed over 2000 prime billboard sites over to the Tories at the start of last year's general election campaign.

The largest market share, at 40 per cent, belongs to Gallager, a subsidiary of US-owned American Brands, which produces the two best selling brands of cigarettes, Benson and Hedges and Silk Cut.

The government directly earned about £7800m in tobacco duty and VAT in 1991-92. Approximately 75 per cent of the price of a packet of 20 cigarettes consists of taxation.

Smoking costs the National Health Service £437m a year for hospital admissions alone. This figure excludes the cost of treating out-patients and care in the community.

But as good free marketeers, the government has undoubtedly weighed up the dif-



**Light up and help fund the Tories as you kill yourself**

ference between these two figures - and the hefty backhanders - and decided to let the carnage continue.

As a minimum, socialists, smokers included, should support policies to reduce smoking, including a ban on lighting up in public places and an end to tobacco advertising, including through sponsorship.

Moreover, as the labour movement begins another round of compulsory ballots on the political levy, we should be raising the issue of business finance for the Conservative Party, and pointing out that for the Tories, death is just another nice little earner.

# Love, death and HIV

## The Living End.

Directed by Greg Araki  
Starring Mike Dyrti and Graig Gilmore.

Reviewed by Peter Purton

*The Living End* is not a film for the faint-hearted. To call it 'entertainment' is stretching a point. Yet it is a very powerful, and well-made, low-budget drama.

Its theme is an old one: outcasts on the road, exploring

love and death. But its world is that of HIV and AIDS in Bush's America.

Its explicit target is the marginalisation of the disease, and those living with it, by the US government. Its answers, however, are neither liberal (as with several mawkish recent films), nor socialist but those of Queer Politics.

John, a Los Angeles gay freelance writer (why must all the gay characters be in such employment?) is told he is HIV Positive, despite practising safe sex 'most of the time'. He picks up Luke, a hitch-hik-

ing gay drifter, also HIV+, who has acquired a pistol from an hilariously surrealistic encounter with a lesbian couple.

A drama begins based on their relationship, and Luke's response to their homophobic and murderously violent world. No wonder some liberal reviewers have panned the film: the various gay bashers they meet are blown away with vengeful violence, in sharp contrast to the erotic and deeply living relationship between the boys. No safe sex here. Neither cares any more.

So this is the traditional world view turned upside down. But instead of affirming the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, *The Living End* simply wreaks vengeance. 'Fuck the world' is the slogan. We have nothing left to lose, so let's do what we want - only we don't know what it is or where to go.

The retribution suggested for President Bush for his wanton abandonment of people with AIDS to their deaths may seem apt; but it is not going to

bring about a cure.

The climax is dramatic and gripping, but the message is desolate. As Derek Jarman has said of *The Living End*, 'it transgresses'.

Many thousands are already dead in the West, as well as unknown but vast numbers in Africa. And a cataclysmic slaughter which will dwarf the present death toll now hangs across the world.

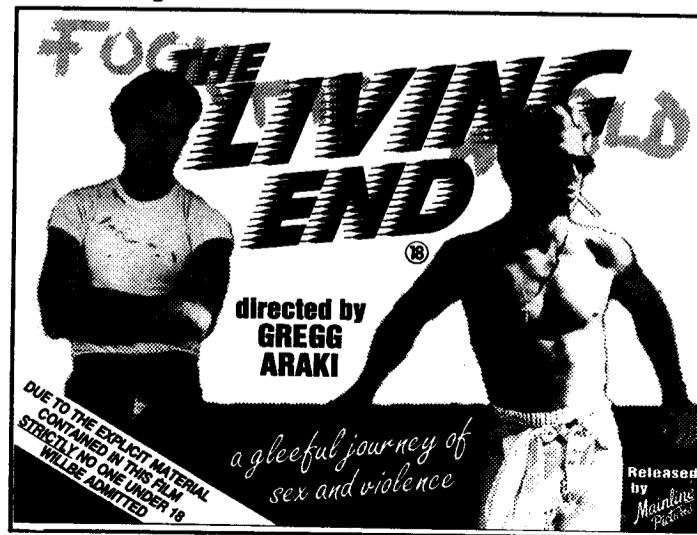
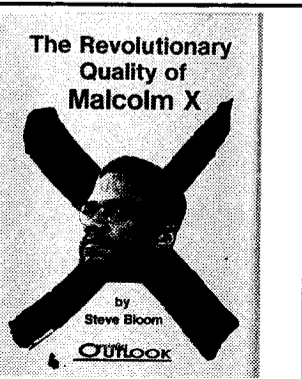
While the governments of

the imperialist world look on with minimal concern, since the main sufferers are gay men, black or drug users, it is right to be angry. But the anger of *The Living End*, while powerful, like its source in Queer Politics, offers now way out either.

*The Living End* is showing at MGM Piccadilly and the Everyman, Hampstead.

**The Revolutionary Quality of Malcolm X**  
By Steve Bloom

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# Beijing's bureaucrats put boot into workers

By Zang Khai

The Chinese economic reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping have harshly targeted the industrial working class. Breaking the so-called 'iron rice bowl' and 'iron wages', in reality means an attack on the right to work and decent wages. Unemployment is rising sharply.

On 13 July, Minister of Labour Yuan Chongwu argued that the 'oversupply' of labour power would continue to be a problem in China for many years. He argued there are ten million surplus workers in the cities and 100 million surplus workers in the countryside.

## 20 million jobless

But these figures are an underestimate; according to a survey conducted by the General Confederation of Trade Unions of China, the real unemployment figure for Chinese industrial workers is already 20 million; of the 144 million urban labourers, 10-15 per cent 'do not

have a job or await re-allocation of a job.'

Behind these unemployment figures are three crucial aspects of the economic reforms. First is the labour contract system, aimed at employing only fit workers for a limited period of time. Second is the 'internal retirement' system used to shake out the workforce. An article in *Workers Daily* last October printed a letter from a middle-aged worker who complains that in his factory everyone over 47 has been made to retire. Retirement pensions for this group of workers is 10 per cent less than normal pensions. This type of early retirement is not counted in the unemployment figures.

The third factor is the bankruptcy law, which now enables enterprises to be closed laying off all the workers concerned. Although on the statute books for some time, the law is only now being allied.

Last November the biggest textile plant in South West China, the Chongqing Textile General Factory was declared bankrupt, with 3000 workers



Women workers face sackings in Chinese reforms

losing their jobs. The factory still owed 3 million yuan to the workers in back wages and social benefits.

With the implementation of the new shareholding system, large numbers of workers are laid off when capitalists buy up the shares. A Hong Kong TV programme last November carried interviews with workers and the employer at the Number Two Dyeing factory of Wuhan City. A Hong Kong capitalist says he bought 51 per cent of the shares 'at a bargain price', laid off 1200 of the 2000 workers, and now retains only those workers under 35.

The workday has been increased from eight to ten

hours, and the workers are normally expected to work four or five hours overtime. Free meals and baths have been abolished. The factory medical team has been cutback from a few dozens to just a handful. This is the balance sheet of the privatisation of a factory.

Workers made unemployed are suddenly stranded. For example the workers 'internally retired' in Wuhan receive only 66 yuan a month, one third of their previous salary. Women workers are the hardest hit.

Last October the *Workers Daily* published a survey on the consequences of the reforms, saying that women workers are the first to be laid off. And many women workers choose to give up rights and social benefits to keep their jobs.

The official press published mainly eulogies of the reforms, and seldom criticisms. But workers grievances are still voiced,

albeit in subtle ways. One article in the *Workers Daily* criticised workers for their 'undesirable mentality' which 'lacks a correct understanding of the reforms and cannot adapt to change'.

## Ten fears

But another article explains the 'ten fears' of workers about the reforms, which include statements like 'the old are penalised', 'the nets of backdoor relationships are everywhere', 'young workers are not taught any skills' and 'nothing but money counts'.

Indeed the longstanding rights of workers are now under attack; and the workers do not enjoy any democratic rights to organise real trade unions and organise what up till now has been either passive resistance, or spontaneous outbursts of anger.

# Russian stalinist rump in fresh regroupment

By Steve Kaczynski

THE RUSSIAN Communist Party held its reformation congress, aimed at 'restoring and uniting the party', just outside Moscow last week. The Russian CP was outlawed after the August 1991 coup, as part of the ban on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The recent congress was only given the go-ahead by the authorities after a long wrangle over its legality. Eventually, the constitutional court ruled that 'core organisations' of the old CPSU had the right to exist and establish their own party.

## Chinese model

It is clear that the new formation is a rather unstable but essentially Stalinist mix. The leader, CPSU veteran Valentin Kupisov, stated in his opening speech that China had shown the compatibility of socialism and the market.

A number of coup leaders attended the congress, including Gennady Yanayev, Anatoly Lukyanov and ex-KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov. They were greeted with rapturous applause whenever they spoke.

Aleksandr Buzgalin, chair of the Party of Labour, attended the congress as an ob-

server. According to Buzgalin: 'The democratic trend, which wants a real renewal of the party, constitutes a clear minority.'

Leading positions in the congress organising committee were occupied by members of the Socialist Party of Working People, headed by Roy Medvedev, who seemed particularly embarrassed by the pro-coup sentiment among delegates.

Buzgalin said that Medvedev's party wanted 'parliamentary struggle and compromise with the authorities', whereas many grass roots delegates were inclined towards neo-Stalinists and even the 'patriotic' right.

While he and his colleagues were 'communists by conviction' they were wary of the 'congress's nostalgic defence of actually existing socialism'.

The principle social base of the Russian CP and similar organisations is among older people. There is a widespread belief in Russia now, measured in opinion polls, that life was better under the Communists, but that mood has little resonance among the young, who are bound to think that the past is the past.

● The class struggle went on during the congress deliberations. Hundreds of miners at Vorkuta near the Arctic Circle, occupying a mineshaft to force the authorities to release their detained leader, Iran Gurdov.

## A NEW CRISIS erupts in the Middle East, as Israel expels 417 alleged activists from the Islamic fundamentalist organization, Hamas.

In the first (February) issue of the new 36-page monthly *International Viewpoint*, Lea Tsemel, Dalal Bizri and Manar Hassan go behind the headlines to explain the meaning of the Israeli government's act and the reasons for the rise of Hamas.

There's also Catherine Samary, recently returned from Sarajevo, on the Yugoslav war, David Finkel on Bill Clinton's first steps and François Piguët on the social and political complexities of the crisis in Somalia — and more.

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## Titanic death toll as Neptune goes under

By Joe Pass

THE LOSS of the Haitian ferry *Neptune* last week may have cost several hundred more lives than the sinking of the *Titanic*. Yet press coverage was minimal.

Some 1,503 people drowned when the *Titanic* hit an iceberg on its maiden voyage in 1912. Regulations were changed so that vessels had to carry life-saving equipment for all on board. But there will be no tightening of safety rules after the *Neptune*.

The number of lives lost in third world shipping disasters each year is unknown. Industry sources believe that ferry casualties which could have killed 1,000 people in the Indian sub-continent have gone unreported.

### Welded on

Local ferries are often old and ill-maintained. The Philippine inter-island ferry *Dona Paz*, which sank with the loss of 4,400 lives in 1987, was a retired Japanese craft, modified by welding on extra accommodation with little regard for stability. It was the worst peace-time shipping disaster of all time.

More than 400 pilgrims visiting Mecca were killed last year after *Salem Express* grounded in rough weather, a mere six miles from port.

Even in the west, the free market means skimping of shipping safety in the name of profit. There were 193 deaths from the capsizing of P&O's *Herald of Free Enterprise* and 159 victims following a fire on Baltic Ferry *Scandinavian Star*.



Swapping stories of class collaboration? Mandela with Kinnock

## South Africa

# When a deal is not a deal

*"When I use a word, it means exactly what I choose it to mean - nothing more and nothing less."*

Lewis Carroll,

### Through the Looking Glass

AFTER A conference behind closed doors, the ANC leadership and the National Party government have reached agreement for a coalition government to run South Africa until the end of the century.

Since the news became public, Nelson Mandela and President De Klerk have been engaged in a semantic exercise about exactly what was agreed.

De Klerk maintains that a coalition government would mean 'power sharing'. Mandela, only too aware that this could be interpreted as a sell-out, is painfully wriggling to maintain his political credentials with the ANC rank-and-file.

In his 13 February speech Mandela said he '(wished) categorically to deny the statement in the press that the ANC has agreed to power-sharing until the year 1999. An interim government is not power-sharing'.

So there you have it. Humpty Dumpty could not have done better.

### Terms

Deputy minister Fanie Schoeman spelled out the terms of the agreement. Each party that attained a specific minimum support in the country's first all-race elections next year would be included in the government - a body that would double as parliament and constitution-making body.

Schoeman restated De Klerk's interpretation - 'a government of national unity is power-sharing. Mr Mandela was playing word games'.



Buthelezi

Whether or not the ANC emerges as the largest party, although most likely it will, it will be tied into the coalition government. 'It's not a proposal' said Schoeman 'it's a fact. We see it as a five-year period, the ANC see it as a five-year period. It will continue to be a government of national unity for a full five years.'

It is expected that Inkatha Freedom Party leader Chief Bu-

thelezi will be part of this coalition, despite his furious denunciation of the deal. He will find the fruits of office too tempting.

Mandela will not find it easy to sell the deal to his supporters. Harry Gwala, the Natal ANC leader, long ago expressed his dissatisfaction with the negotiation process. He says: 'We find this agreement unacceptable. It is a drastic departure from what we have always known the ANC stands for. This is indeed a strange way of appeasement. We are already setting down the rules of surrender before we meet the enemy. If we go into negotiations with such terms of surrender, where do we draw the line?'

### Differences

The Western Cape leadership also has serious differences with the national leadership; and Alan Boesak's resignation as Chairperson of the regional executive was only averted by Mandela's personal intervention.

The ANC seems to have given in to some degree to the government's insistence on regional autonomy, although this will be referred to the constituent assembly. De Klerk wants regional autonomy on such issues as health, education, the police and taxation.

The government also wants the demobilisation of the ANC's military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the incorporation of its soldiers into the security forces. The question of the overall control of security has also not been settled.

### Pushed

There can be no doubt that both the government and the ANC have been pushed into this agreement by the current economic and political instability. Unemployment is chronic and there is a continual flight of capital. Violence remains at record levels.

Both sides have agreed that stability is more important than full-blooded democracy. Whether they can sell this to their respective constituencies remains to be seen.



The Ferry *Neptune*, pictured in November 1991. It sank with over 2000 presumed drowned



# Leyland DAF workers face bleak future

By Bob Smith

THE HOPED-FOR management buy-out at DAF Vans Common Lane plant at Washwood Heath, Birmingham, has disastrous consequences for the workers. Already a third of the workforce has been sacked; and it now appears that managing director Allan Amey expects a cut in wages and conditions to be accepted.

John Allen, AEEU organiser, has pointed out the disastrous effects on the local components

industry, many of whom have stopped supplies because of fears of not being paid. The DAF workers have sent pickets to suppliers, hoping to get supplies started again, with some success.

The receivers, Arthur Anderson, are discussing rescue packages, all of which would mean a massive reduction in wages and worsening of working conditions, and 'Japanisation'. The plant was extremely efficient with a full order book, and crashed mainly because of the weakness of the Dutch parent company.

The Tory government has ig-

nored the plant of the work-force, unlike its European counterparts. DAF Vans will be a knock-down bargain, with a cheap labour force, a full order book, and a fully equipped factory.

Convenor Dickie Gould argues the mood of depression and lack of combativity among the workforce will result in DAF being sold off cheap. But he, along with the AEEU and TGWU bureaucracies, is incapable of giving the workforce any kind of lead. Until now, they are exclusively concerned with demobilising any potential resistance to a buy-out.

Mark Salmon



Not much on offer: Leyland workers hear the news

# London rocks to back Burnalls strikers

By Bob Smith

MORE THAN 1000 people attended a gig at Camden Town Hall on 12 February to support the Burnalls strikers. More than £5000 was collected for the strikers, mainly Punjabi women, who are in the ninth month of their strike to demand decent pay and working conditions, and union recognition, at the Smethwick electroplating plant.

Dharsan Kaur, Burnalls shops steward, praised the work of the Birmingham support committee, and its efforts to organise delegations to the picket line, raise money and organise speaking tours in support of the strikers. She said the gig, with Billy Bragg, Linton Kwesi Johnson and Cobra, was a tremendous boost after eight months on the picket line. Sixty strikers and their supporters came by coach from Birmingham.

The first of 53 industrial tribunals involving the strikers have been won and the employers, the O'Neill family, condemned by their own Irish community, were visibly shaken.

Jimmy O'Neill, Burnalls managing director, attacked one of the strikers last Monday morning. The striker got a doctor's certificate proving the injuries, and complained to a GMB official. But it was the striker who was taken to a

police station and interrogated for three hours.

The industrial tribunals could cost Burnalls more than £100,000 and put them out of business. Maybe they will now sit down with the GMB, the strikers' trade union.

On Thursday 18 February, the TUC day of action of jobs, delegations Trencham NUM, Women against Pit Closures, the Fire Brigades Union, and North Staffs, Birmingham and Coventry Trades Councils attended the picket line to show solidarity against the O'Neills.

They were told of the appalling working conditions, including nil health and safety provision, £120 a week (£90 for women), and a compulsory 65-hour, 7-day week. Workers were cheated out of holiday pay and benefits.

### Brutal

This dispute is vital in the struggle to organise the brutal sweatshops now proliferating in British industry and in building confidence in the unions among black people and other oppressed groups.

Unfortunately the GMB have failed to build the necessary level of solidarity, organise effective picketing or challenge labour movement leaders to speak out on the issue - or indeed to mount an effective campaign against

the wages and conditions in the metal finishing industry.

The strikers are now being blocked by the GMB from speaking at Birmingham Trades Council and other meetings. The joint campaign with the TGWU for union recruitment in the metal finishing industry has also been dropped.

However the strike and the industrial tribunals have forced the management to make improvements, including installing four large industrial ventilators and providing protective clothing - unfortunately at this stage for the benefit of the scabs working at the factory.

The support committee continues to meet, and attracts more than 50 people to its regular meetings. It can be



Burnalls strikers still battling on

contacted c/o Shaheed Udham, Singh Centre, 346 Soho Rd., Handsworth, Birmingham B21; Tel 021 551 2258. Donations to the strike fund and re-

quest for speaker should go to: GMB, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Rd., Halesowen, West Midlands.

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