

# Socialist OUTLOOK

8-PAGE TRADE UNION  
REVIEW INSIDE

Brian Douglas: first to  
die from police baton: p4

Racism in the Labour Party:  
Hassan Ahmed interview p14

Nigeria civil war looms: p13

Issue 84 ● 50p ● May 27 1995 ●

● 30BF ● 5FF ● \$1 ● 2DM ● 1500 lire ● f1

## Joy Gardner, Brian Douglas

# MURDERED BY RACIST COPS

A week which saw horrific court revelations of the routine brutality of police in deporting "illegal immigrants" from Britain, a black man, Brian Douglas, died as a result of police violence.

Brian died after his skull had been fractured by one of the new batons issued to police by right wing Home Secretary Michael Howard. He became another in a long line of victims of racist brutality from the Metropolitan police (see page 4).

Joy Gardner died two years ago when three cops from Scotland Yard's special Aliens Deportation Group burst into her house, bound, strapped and gagged her. Only after they had wound two reels of sticking plaster around her head did one of them notice she had stopped breathing.

Only now have the officers responsible been brought before the court.

Almost as horrendous as their testimony explaining what they did to her was the revelation that it was a routine operation. Most such cases are never publicised.

But deportations will become more frequent if the Tories have their way.

Tory MPs and ministers, desperate to play the racist card before the next election are planning an escalating crackdown on illegal immigrants.

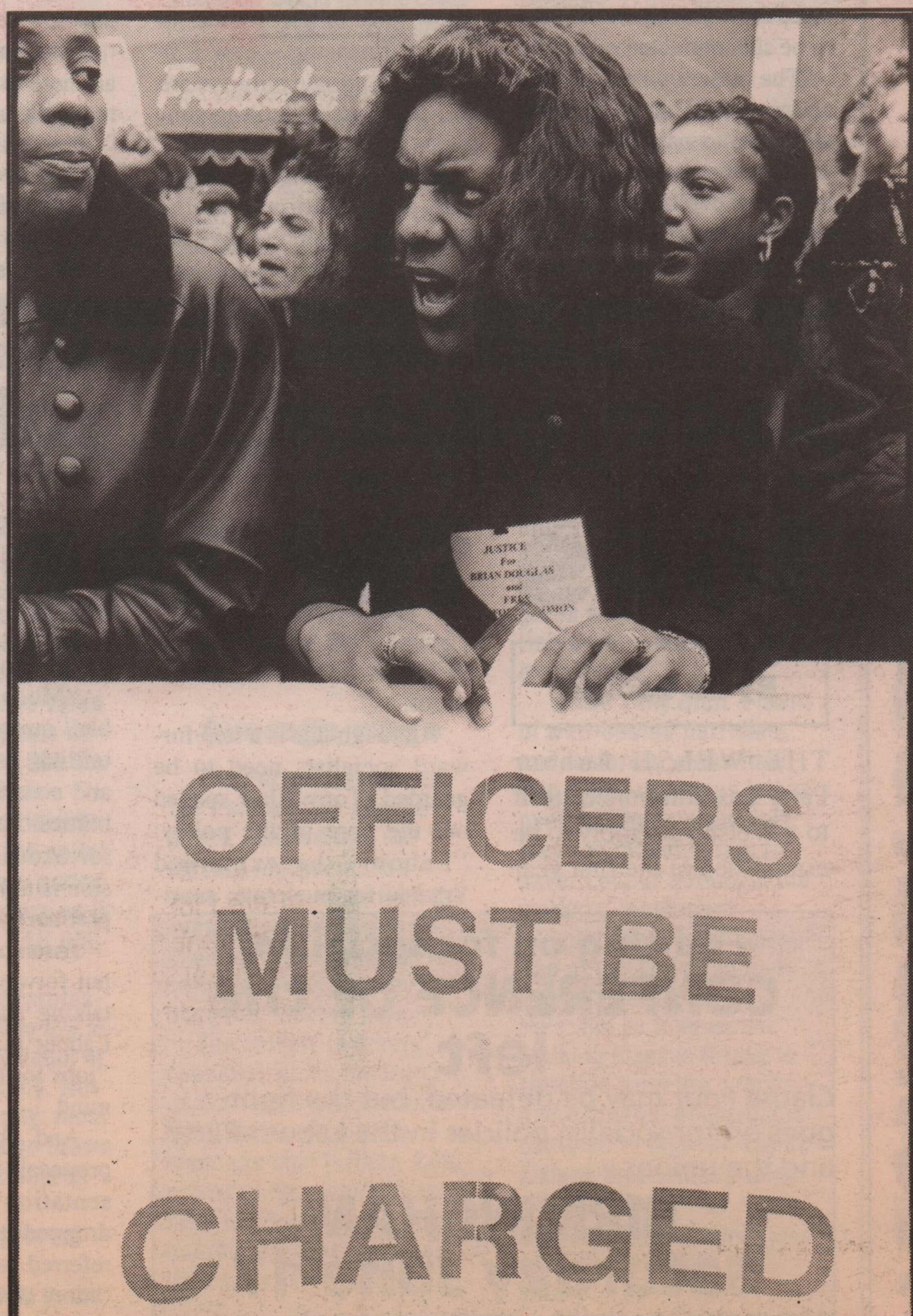
Will Tony Blair's team have the guts to come out and oppose this brutal expression of state racism?

Responding to his suspicious death in police custody, friends and family of Brian Douglas picketed London's Kennington police station last week, reports CATHERINE WHEELER.

With banners and cries for justice, around 600 voiced their outrage under the vigilant eye of a police video camera. Cars hooted support. Brian's grief stricken mother laid a wreath at the station entrance. "All we want is justice" she explained to a nearby police officer.

Over 900 protestors then marched to Kennington Park. Police angered protestors by forming a line just beyond the entrance to the park. A call for calm, issued on behalf of the family, managed to dissipate the tension as the bulk of protestors entered the park.

Donald Douglas, Brian's brother, said "We came here to protest against the brutality of the police and to seek justice."





# Oppose the 'nuclear future'

By Bala Kumar

Privatise the profits, subsidise the losses—the philosophy of a Tory government running out of get rich quick industries to hive off to its friends in big business.

Privatisation has become massively unpopular. The proposed sale of eight nuclear reactors for an estimated £3-3.5 billion is scrapping the bottom of a contaminated barrel.

Michael Hesteltine has offered us the sweetener of an eight per cent cut in electricity bills—itsself an informal levy on the fossil fuel sector. But the real winners have been the boardroom executives and the institutional investors. Profit maximisation will be the prime concern of the money men not safety.

The question of disposal has been deferred for five years, its expense left for future generations to shoulder. The production of nuclear waste and its

commercial exploitation is big business.

Labour has refused to confront the big questions of nuclear power. It has made no commitment even to phase it out.

Katy Andrews adds:

Three anti-nuclear protesters were arrested at Stratford Station in East London on May 18 for blocking the path of a nuclear waste carrying train.

Trains laden with the nuclear rods from Bradwell in Essex have secretly used the North London and Gospel Oak lines on their way to Selafeld for many years.

The cargoes continually give off radiation—if a container were to break open radioactive material would be widely dispersed.

Two of the demonstrators climbed onto the tracks and sat on the tracks while a third sprayed "Help! Danger!" on the flask carrying the rods. They were arrested and later freed on bail after a demonstration at Forest Gate police station. The case is due to be heard in June.

# Union struggle can halt rail sell-off in its tracks

By Greg Tucker

As train operating companies were this month put up for sale the form of rail privatisation was again changed with the announcement that most fares will be pegged to the rise in inflation.

A Gas or Telecom style sell-off has been abandoned—except for Railtrack—and instead the main rail services are to be subcontracted.

The new owners of the train operating companies will have to pay Railtrack to run over the lines, will have to hire out the rolling stock from another company, will be told the minimum number of serv-

ices they have to run and the maximum fares in most cases.

Their only assets will be the existing staff and therefore their only real room for manoeuvre attacking those staff's pay and conditions.

Even the most draconian attacks on rail workers will not be able to provide major cost savings—instead any profit will have to be provided by the government. For years the publicly owned British Rail has been told it has to allow fares to rise in order to be self-financing—now it is clear that private railways are to have massive built-in subsidies.

Even with these changes rail privatisation remains massively unpopular save for a few die-hard Tories and

those managers looking to join the ranks of the super-rich privatised company directors.

Which is why the new pamphlet "Signal Failure - Rail Privatisation and the fight against it" from the RMT Thames Valley District Council is a timely publication.

The pamphlet exposes the reality of privatisation and its consequences for service users as well as those who work in the industry, how safety is already being compromised, and how services will be cut.

As one manager put it "we are here to make a profit, not make the trains run on time".

It examines the reality of the "glory days" of the private railways when profit was sought at a horrendous cost in lives of a superexploited

workforce. It looks at the experience of nationalisation in 1948 and how railworkers demands for "workers control" were denied.

Arguing for a railway run by those who work in the industry, the need is posed for a clear commitment from the Labour Party to renationalise the whole network. What is required is an expansion of the network as part of a socialist plan which places social needs above the drive for profit.

The struggle over Clause 4 shows how the defence of Clause 4 is linked to the renationalisation of the railways.

The pamphlet is a must for railworkers, but it will also be of value to all socialists.

# Labour debates policy on Welsh Assembly

## Jobs for the boys?

By Ed George

THE WELSH Labour Party has committed itself to a Welsh Assembly to be established in the first year

of the next Labour government.

Although this is a step forward socialists need to be guarded. Tony Blair spelled out the core of the policy: "Labour" he explained "stands for moderate, sensi-

ble reform".

"Moderate" and "sensible" means no powers to establish primary legislation and no revenue raising capabilities. Unlike the proposals for Scotland the Welsh version is to be elected by a first past the post system.

Essentially what is being put forward is an ineffectual talking shop with a built-in Labour majority. The phrase "jobs for the boys" comes to mind.

And "boys" it will be—proposals to ensure the representation of women were dropped at the last minute and referred to the executive for "more discussion".

On a more positive note,

the Conference backed a call for an all-Wales march on the theme of "Wales demands an Assembly" against the recommendation of the executive. This would be a significant event in Wales.

As is traditional at gathering of Welsh Labour a great deal of hot air was generated attacking Plaid Cymru. "Nationalists" Blair told the conference, "would tear our country apart".

Sadly Mr. Blair's abhorrence toward nationalism is rather selective. It does not appear to extend to imperialist, big power, oppressor British nationalism.

Indeed the assembly proposals were explicitly moti-



Real jobs have been axed in capitalist crisis

vated as the "best way to defend the union".

Now we have to step up the pressure for an assembly that is actually worth having—one that has the right to determine its own powers, that is demo-

cratic and representative, the kind of assembly that would allow the Welsh people themselves to decide on their relationship with the British union and the EU.

HOME NEWS

### Fighting on for socialism CONFERENCE of the left

Clause Four may be defeated, but the fight goes on for socialist policies in the Labour Party and the unions.

**BIRMINGHAM**  
**Saturday June 17**

Watch this space for details!

# What we think

## Tories' gravy train runs out of steam

IT SEEMS John Major has no escape from the profound crisis wracking the Tory Party.

Barely a moment's respite separated the catastrophic local election results from a new sleaze row; then came the death of another Tory backbencher, a battle with greedy Tory back-benchers over the Nolan Report, new evidence that growth of the economy is already slowing down, a renewed offensive from Michael Portillo, yet another rumpus over Europe, and now the heavy-gun broadside fired at his government by Margaret Thatcher.

To cap it all, having dragged enough Tory MPs into risking their seats by voting to preserve Virginia Bottomley's hospital cuts, her ludicrous attempts to impose local pay bargaining (compounded by the ham-fisted Gerry Malone) has succeeded in turning the scabs of the Royal College of Nursing into radicals, creating a real possibility of industrial action by 850,000 NHS workers this summer.

### Links

These problems all appear to come from different directions, but they are linked: the gravy train has run out of steam.

At the centre of the problem is the weakness of an economy virtually stripped of manufacturing industry and struggling with a burden of debt exacerbated by years of profligate tax cuts to the rich.

To balance the books financially, (not least in order to limit public borrowing to the three percent maximum allowed under the Maastricht Treaty) Kenneth Clarke now has to make draconian cuts in spending – hence the onslaught on public sector pay, on social security, and on local government services including education.

In the ruins of the much-hyped Thatcherite 'economic revolution' Clarke's sole boast in today's stagnating capitalist economy is that inflation has been held down.

Retail sales are falling, house sales are at the lowest level ever recorded, and 2.5 million are claiming unem-

ployment benefit, indicating upwards of 4 million out of work and millions more under-employed. The lion's share of the 'new jobs' trumpeted by the Tories have been part-time, low-paid jobs in the service sector.

While privatised monopolies irritate millions as they celebrate more windfall profits and announce endless new rounds of redundancies, the damage done by unemployment has spread well beyond the initial waves of job cuts in the 1980s, which mainly hit shop floor workers in manufacturing industry.

Redundancies and the fear of them are now biting deep into the Tories' middle class base of electoral support – for whom the toll of jobs axed in managerial grades, in the media, in privatised industries and in 'safe' sectors like banking, insurance, finance, teaching, and the civil service means a whole new vista of long-term insecurity.

Many fear they may no longer be able to afford to buy their houses. With rampant use of temporary contracts and casualisation, full-time permanent jobs are now few and far between.

To cap it all, Kenneth Clarke is planning to axe social security support for mortgage interest payments in the first nine months of unemployment: tens of thousands could face repossession of their homes as a result.

Under Thatcher the whole Tory strategy hinged on successfully placating the key elements in the top two thirds of society at the expense of the lowest third.

The modest aspirations of ordinary people for more money to spend, a house of their own, a life free from the threat of crime, were skilfully twisted into support for cuts in taxes (and welfare spending), sales of council houses (and incentives to mortgage borrowers), and vast increases in police powers.

But as the tax bills go up, the jobs disappear, the house becomes an unsellable, overpriced millstone rather than an asset and the petty crime of the whole alienated generation develops into an epidemic, the whole scenario has been

transformed.

Even the promise of tax cuts doesn't work as it used to. Middle class families faced with a vague promise of tax cuts in exchange for the reality of cuts in education for their children today know that they cannot possibly afford to go private: they have joined the revolt.

The two-thirds to one-third split now operates in reverse. The Tory economic policies and their implications for

**The two-thirds to one-third split now operates in reverse. The Tory economic policies are cutting against a majority of the population.**

health, education and welfare services are cutting against a majority of the population.

As more people get angry, each of the scandals revealing the hypocrisy and personal corruption of Tory backbenchers and ministers serves further to discredit a government which is trying to sell an



Electors have dumped over two thousand Tory councillors

outdated dream.

As an *Evening Standard* article recently commented: "The government is so discredited that even its own natural supporters instinctively assume it is lying."

The Tories of course are deeply divided on how to repair the damage to their electoral base.

The hard right, led by Portillo and now clearly backed by Thatcher's intervention, is setting out an agenda of rabid nationalist opposition to any further European integration, (incorporating a thinly-disguised strand of racism) coupled with renewed attacks on the fabric of the welfare state and a new crackdown on law and order.

Although the chauvinist tabloid press would no doubt warm to a renewed campaign against Brussels bureaucrats, there is little evidence that Portillo personally or the main brunt of his policy would win even as much support as John Major.

Less obviously lurking in the wings, and still very much on the defensive, are the Euro-enthusiasts, headed by Heselstine, who recognise the inherent weakness of British capital, and see its incorpora-

tion into the EU block as the only long-term future.

Major, leaning now in one direction, now in the other, is balancing precariously between the two factions. That is the stance which has so antagonised Thatcher.

But there is little division over economic policy: both lines in the short run demand a continuation of the policies which have created the electorally disastrous 'feel bad factor' and more cuts in public spending – which in turn drive the government into damaging conflict with public sector workers and with users of the service.

### Polarised

Thatcher's unexpected intervention into this crisis could signal a renewed effort to force a leadership contest: it will certainly help polarise the growing conflict in a party which no longer has the credibility or the skills to push the populist buttons that won four successive general elections.

The Tory Party itself has dwindled to just 400,000 members, and is deep in debt. Small wonder Major had to prevent any investigation of its funding by the Nolan Commission. It is up against a

growing public mood that the time is over-ripe for a change of direction.

What a strange and tragic time, therefore, for Gordon Brown to unveil 'alternative' economic policies more stringent, more reactionary, than those of Kenneth Clarke, who now taunts the shadow chancellor, challenging him to name an area of economic policy where he would do things differently.

The 'change' demanded of Labour by Tony Blair has been in quite the opposite direction to most voters' aspirations – a change to embrace the very market values that have so discredited the Tories.

This may help Blair win the support of Rupert Murdoch, but it will not enthrone trade unionists and Labour voters, who want something different.

One implication of this is that any 'honeymoon' period of a Blair Labour government will be extremely brief.

That's why the key strategic issue in the labour movement is to ensure that when these struggles break out there is an organised left in the unions and the Labour Party prepared to stand up for the interests of the working class.

## Whose parliament is it, anyway?

"You are about to obliterate the professional classes' representation in the Commons," angry Tory backbencher Alan Duncan warned John Major.

What draconian measure did Major have in mind?

He had declared general support for the Nolan Report's suggestions that MPs should be obliged to disclose their outside earnings.

This is regarded as an outrage by wealthy Tory MPs, for whom the MP's basic salary of £32,000 a year plus lavish secretarial and travel expenses is little more than beer money.

"It must be a good thing to get professional middle class people into this House. If they are being told they have got to do this

on a salary of £32,000 a year, to be quite honest they are not going to come," warned former minister Sir Archie Hamilton.

Remember these are the same MPs who have voted for social security cuts designed to strip 250,000 disabled people of their benefits, and who ridicule as too expensive the notion of a minimum wage policy guaranteeing workers as little as £4 an hour – £8,000 a year.

Never mind the 'professional classes': they are already over-represented at every level in society. Not just in the Tory Party: most Labour MPs are also drawn from this same omnipresent layer.

So who will represent the workers? Friederich Engels in the

last century described elections in Britain as deciding every so often which members of the bourgeoisie should exploit the working class.

### Average wage

The Paris Commune of 1871 showed an alternative: it insisted that its elected representative were paid no more than the average workers' wage – and that they should be recallable at any time by the body that elected them.

The soviets (workers' councils) which emerged as the rival state power in the Russian revolution went one step further. Comprised of representatives from workplaces and neighbourhoods, they excluded the capitalists and the man-

agers – acting as real local parliaments of the working class. There, too, delegates who stepped out of line were subject to immediate recall.

While Tony Blair's team of well-heeled barristers and lecturers works itself into a self-righteous lather over the Nolan proposals, they are manoeuvring to sever Labour's roots in the workers' movement.

Let's expose the corruption of top Tories and any bent Labour or Liberal MPs: but as long as the working class is forced to spectate from the outside – and capitalist boardrooms continue to take the key decisions that actually affect people's daily lives – parliament will remain a squalid, deceptive side-show.

EDITORIAL



Tooled up for trouble: Met officers test out new batons

BLACK Londoner Brian Douglas died of a fractured skull after reportedly being beaten by police using the new American style batons. He was arrested on 3 May after a car containing him and another man had been stopped by two police officers in Clapham High Street, south London.

He was taken to Kennington police station where he was examined by a police doctor and deemed to be suffering from excess alcohol or drugs. Hours later, his condition worsening, he was taken to St Thomas's hospital into intensive care and subsequently died at 3.20am on 8 May.

On Sunday 14 May 400 people picketed Kennington Police Station calling for the suspension of the police officers involved and for an immediate full public inquiry.

Socialist Outlook spoke to INQUEST the pressure group which campaigns against deaths in custody and for reform of the coroner's inquest system about the issues raised by this controversial death.

## Black man is first to die by new cop baton

### SO: What are your concerns about this tragic death?

INQUEST: It raises a myriad of concerns about the police and the judicial system - racism within the police force, the oppressive policing of the black community, the militarisation of the police force, the inadequate medical care of detainees, the secretive and unaccountable investigatory system and the unacceptable death toll of black people in custody.

It confirms INQUEST's fears that increased arming of the police, be it with guns or these new batons, will inevitably lead to more tragic deaths. There is already an alarming increase in the number of police shootings.

Black people are markedly over-represented among those who die following violent incidents. It is our experience that many of these deaths occur after the use of excessive, unlawful and unnecessary force. Since 1985 33 black people have died in police custody or during incidents involving the police. Of those 18 (55%) have been in London.

### SO: What is the likely outcome of the official investigation process?

INQUEST: We have absolutely no confidence in current mechanisms for investigating deaths in police custody where the police are called in to investigate themselves.

These investigations remain biased, inherently secret and are never made public and yet they form the basis on which the Crown Prosecution Service and the Police Complaints Authority decide whether charges are to be brought and strongly influence the shape of the inquest. Prosecutions rarely happen.

This means the police remain unaccountable to the public for their actions and are seen by many as being above the law. The only public forum for examining such deaths is the inquest with its many procedural problems - notably the lack of legal aid for representation for the bereaved, the lack of prior disclosure of any documentation and its narrow remit.

Many relatives and friends of those who die in custody have great hopes that the inquest will establish the truth and are frequently dismayed by its limitations.

### SO: Why do so many black people continue to die in police custody?

INQUEST: The level of secrecy surrounding the police force increases individual officers ability to get away with abuse and even murder. The institutionalised racism of the police is backed by racist legislation and a society which condones racist behaviour.

There have been at least two inquests into black deaths in police custody which returned 'unlawful killing' verdicts and yet no-one was charged with an offence or even disciplined. The jury at such an inquest has decided that a criminal act has been committed and yet there is no criminal trial or public inquiry.

Where there is no adequate forum for calling an institution to account in the public domain, abusive practices run rampant. Individual officers, backed by such a secret and unaccountable institution assume a stance of invincibility and a sense of being untouchable in whatever they do. Agents of the state suspected of carrying out the killing or of seeking to conceal the truth walk away unscathed.

### SO: What can people do to support Brian Douglas' friends and family?

INQUEST: The immediate de-

## Deaths of black people involving the Met 1985 - 1995

**1985**  
James Hall, Lavender Hill Police Station, London  
John Mikkelson, Hounslow Police Station  
Cynthia Jarrett, Police Raid Tottenham

**1986**  
Stephen Bogle, Thames Magistrates Court  
Caiphas Anthony Lemard, Kensington Police Station

**1987**  
Nenneh Hallloh, Marylebone Police Station  
Mohammed Parkit, Marylebone Police Station  
Tunay Hassan, Dalston Police Station

**1988**  
Femi Adelaja, Old Bailey cell

**1989**  
David 'Duke' Daley, Marylebone Magistrates Court  
Vincent Graham, City Road, London  
Jamie Stewart, Holloway Road Police Station

**1991**  
Vandana Patel, Stoke Newington Police Station

**1993**  
Joy Gardner, Tottenham  
**1994**  
Kwanele Siziba, Hackney  
Joseph Nnalue, Stockwell

Oluwashiji Lapite, Stoke Newington

**1995**  
Brian Douglas, Kennington Police Station

mand must be to call for a fully independent, public inquiry into this death to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

Those in the labour movement should add their voices to those of Brian Douglas' family and the black community in calling for such an inquiry.

## FIGHTING RACISM

# Stamping out roots of fascism

**SIMON DEVILLE reviews the Newham Monitoring Project's new pamphlet 'The Enemy in Our Midst: Exposing Racism and Fascism in Newham'**

EAST LONDON has always been a haven for fascists. From Mosley's British Union of Fascists in the 1930s to the dockers strike in support of Enoch Powell in 1968, on to the rise of the NF in the seventies and today's BNP the east of the capital has always had high levels of fascist organisation.

Though Millwall has received a great deal of attention nationally since the election of the BNP's Derek Beacon in October 1993, NMP remain convinced that the threat of the BNP has not disappeared. Nor is it isolated to Tower Hamlets.

In local elections in May 1993 the BNP in the Beckton ward of Newham polled 33 per cent of the vote - their highest percentage in the country. At the same time the Tories stood on a clear racist platform, issuing a leaflet talking about Labour's "ethnic cleansing" policies, and standing as "Conservatives against Labour's unfair ethnic policies".

*The Enemy in Our Midst* traces the current rise in BNP support locally to the decline of the British Empire, the collapse of local industry based around the docks, the poor housing built after the war and the high levels of unemployment and poverty.

### Failure

More significantly, it emphasises the failure of mainstream political parties to address the needs of the white working class community.

The pamphlet traces NMP's fight against racist violence since its formation in 1980, its battles against the

National Front in the 1970s and its current campaigns against the BNP. It addresses how NMP has fought to isolate the BNP core from its base of support in sections of the white working class.

Though fascists have primarily focused on local racist sentiment to build support, they have from time to time managed to tap into genuine grievances of the local community.

This pamphlet stresses the importance of relating to the genuine needs of the local community - especially in areas such as the south of Newham where the left has largely abandoned these communities for decades.

"Ultimately, anti-fascism means persuading people that the BNP is not the only alternative and that local opinion is worth something and will be listened to.

It is for this reason that NMP has never seen the fight against racism in isolation from wider demands for social justice".

It also stresses the inadequacies of simply addressing issues such as

poverty and underfunding without challenging the racism within the working class.

Contrary to some views on the left, racism will not simply disappear through black and white people uniting over economic issues. Racism has, to a certain degree, its own dynamic that is cannot be reduced only to economics.

*The Enemy in Our Midst* addresses other controversial questions such as the need for a "no platform" policy in order to prevent fascists from intimidating black communities.

### Chasing fascists

It also opposes the mis-conception of this policy as meaning elite groups chasing after fascists, with no relation to a wider movement.

"Such action does not, however, necessarily involve violent confrontation, and the greater number of anti-racists who get involved means a lesser likelihood that this will happen.

This does not mean, however, abandoning the fundamental right of self-defence, a right which NMP has consistently argued in support of ... we see no reason why it should be abandoned in response to fascist violence."

Newham Monitoring Project's starting point is that of a grass roots campaign fighting for the interests of the local community. This pamphlet is based upon that experience and is aimed as a guide to activists in their local communities.

That the pamphlet does not put forward a strategy for taking these issues to a national and international level is a reflection of the weakness of the wider anti-racist movement and the left.

These kinds of strategies are a question for the wider Labour movement and anti-racist movement, though the experience of grass roots organisations such as NMP will prove invaluable in developing such strategies.

# Socialist OUTLOOK

20p • TRADE UNION REVIEW • SUMMER 1995

Battle-lines formed by TGWU leadership clash

## Blair backs Dromey to crush left

By Harry Sloan

"WITH A HEAVY heart and a clear head", the formula used by Bill Morris to sum up his reluctant defence of Clause Four, is the way many TGWU activists will vote for him as General Secretary.

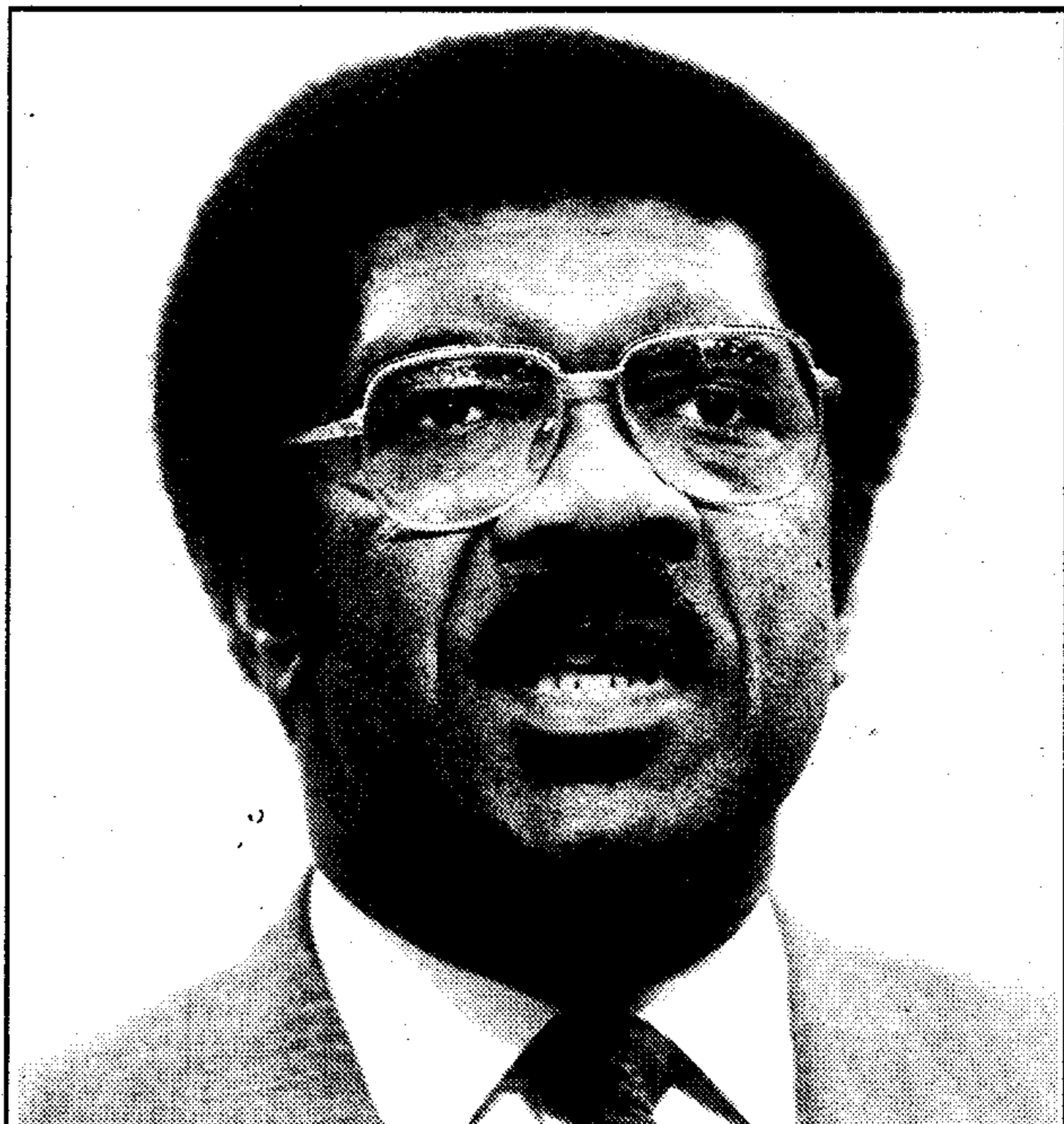
The contest will prove crucial to the politics of the labour movement for several years to come, and will dominate the forthcoming TGWU conference.

Morris is running for re-election against hard-line right winger Jack Dromey, darling of the media.

Though Dromey is famously married to Shadow Cabinet hack Harriet Harman, he is politically in bed with Tony Blair.

Blair likes Dromey's willingness to accept rock-bottom pay deals for his members, his new realist politics and his vicious hostility to the left. Dromey shares Blair's religious bigotry and also sends his son to the opted-out, anti-union church London Oratory school.

In contrast Blair sees Bill Morris as a weak leader, unable to deliver the kind of policies that would keep the



Bill Morris: hated for Clause 4 defence

TGWU in line behind a right wing Labour government. While Dromey, like NUT leader McAvooy, could be expected to work ruthlessly to sabotage any decisions he finds politically unacceptable, Morris faithfully cast the block vote the way the delegation decided.

Blair's office began 'confidentially' promoting Dromey and denigrating Morris with journalists even before the TGWU delegation brushed aside Morris's own objec-

tions, and finally opted to cast their vote in defence of the old Clause Four.

Dromey has exploited this issue to the hilt, complaining that Morris did not, as he would have done, ride roughshod over the union's system of democratic policy-making and put the Clause Four issue to a membership ballot.

Dromey, who cut his teeth as a front man for the union bureaucracy in 1970s unionisation battles at Grunwick and Garners Steak Houses, has

risen to the top of the TGWU hierarchy of non-elected posts. Unlike Morris, he would retain his job even if he loses the election. Going further, and getting nastier, he has branded Bill Morris a liability to the Labour Party.

But the split is not a straightforward stand-off between right and left. Morris has donned the mantle of the left and the right.

He has again committed himself to fight on for the union's policy of a minimum wage of £4 per hour, despite Tony Blair's refusal to specify a figure in advance.

Although Bill Morris has the support of all the major groupings on the left, including *Tribune* and the *Morning Star*, while Dromey's support comes from the right wing media and Blairite mafia, Morris also leans on right wing support inside the union.

Six of the TGWU's eight powerful, unelected Regional Secretaries, some of them extreme right wingers, and a dozen of Dromey's fellow unelected national trade group secretaries have supported Morris, who has at the same time enlisted the CP-influenced Broad Left.

Despite this bizarre line-up, Morris has come close to witch-hunting, attacking

Dromey's campaign as "an alliance of extremes", allegedly combining the far left and Labour modernisers.

In office, Morris himself has related more to the right wing than the left in the union. He has made no effort to spread the bitter battle of Badgerline busworkers, confining the union to a prolonged and expensive experiment in running a free bus service.

Nevertheless his period of office has also seen the TGWU challenge the reactionary proposals put forward by the Borrie Commission for Social Justice, and set out a positive alternative.

Morris is also the only national union leader to have supported struggles against immigration laws, and was clearly influential in the calling of the first-ever TUC demonstration against racism.

If he wins re-election, the left will find itself frequently in conflict with Morris, fighting for real policies to build the union, reach out to layers of low-paid unorganised workers, and fight back for union rights.

But should Dromey win, a bleak vista of witch-hunting and right wing policies looms. Vote against Blair's man, vote for Bill Morris. It's the best we can do in the circumstances.

### INSIDE

EDUCATION: NUT bureaucrats attack left p 2

RIGHT TO STRIKE: crucial role of broad lefts p 3

BLAIR'S NEW LABOUR: and the politics we need - See p 4

UNISON: left policies need turning into action p 5

RAIL: fighting new management techniques p 7

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK: What We Fight For p 8

POST & TELECOM: new union faces the future p 4

CPSA: swings left p 2

### World-wide

DENMARK: fighting transport privatisation p 6

SOUTH AFRICA: New Labour Laws p 8

FRANCE: state of the unions p 6

and more...

## CPSA swings to left, seeks merger

By Shaun Cohen, CPSA BA HQ Branch, personal capacity

TORY attacks on jobs and conditions in the civil service have driven the traditionally non-political CPSA to vote at this year's conference for affiliation to the Labour Party.

The conference also voted for merger with the new civil service union to be created by the merger of NUCPS and the Inland Revenue Staffs Federation.

The conference again took place against a backdrop of continued attacks on the public sector. Despite the government's apparent retreat last year from privatisation and market testing all that really changed was the tactics employed.

The tactics of the so-called 'moderate' leadership of the CPSA have not changed at all. They remain opposed to even the most innocuous resolutions for a fight back - such as a motion opposing co-operation with management consultants implementing market testing.

### Smears

The NEC 'moderates' have consistently attacked "the Trots", and any rational debate has increasingly given way to smear and innuendo.

But they have not been getting things all their own way.

Their attempt - allegedly on cost grounds - to reduce NEC elections to once every two years was roundly defeated, as was every attempt by the NEC to further emasculate the union.

Unfortunately the success of the left at conference has not been matched in national elections.

While the left can control sections within the union, this is not true nationally: the left only increased its presence on the NEC from three seats to five out of 26.

The improvement in the fortunes of the left needs to be consolidated by a conference of the whole left in the CPSA that will democratically decide tactics to advance the struggle against the right wing.

# McAvoy throws full weight against NUT's strike ballot

By Roy Leach, NUT Executive, personal capacity

NUT General Secretary Doug McAvoy has declared war on the union's annual conference and its activist base.

McAvoy (annual salary £60,000 plus £18,000 expenses) accuses conference delegates and local activists of being out of touch and unrepresentative!

Every member has now received two outrageous letters from him - one accompanying the ballot paper for the proposed one-day strike this term on class sizes, and another mailed separately to home addresses.

Both are financed from members' subscriptions. Both seek to portray the majority of conference delegates as members of "extreme political factions" who allegedly "put their own political agenda before the views of those members they represent".

Accusations (fed to and avidly retailed by the witch-hunting *Sunday Times*) that these 'extremists' are "taking over associations" run along-



Bloated bureaucracy: McAvoy's £18,000 expenses is more than most teachers earn

side the lying claim that they have committed the union to "support for violent demonstrations". In fact all the conference did was reject an Executive amendment which referred to non-violent activities of anti-racist organisations.

### Hysteria

But McAvoy's main intention is to whip up enough hysteria to sabotage the strike ballot and prevent any fight-back against education cuts.

He has made quite plain his

determination to by-pass conference and local officers by appealing directly to members through glossy leaflets and 'surveys of members' views' along the lines of the not-quite-a-ballot that led to the end of the SATs boycott.

He believes that this approach "now provides the only way of accurately [!] determining members' opinions." Clearly McAvoy's model for the NUT is a mixture of the First Direct Bank and the RAC.

Yet his strategy could

backfire, and has already elicited a vigorous response from many 'ordinary members' who he patronisingly accuses of being 'duped' by militants.

### Bloated

With thousands of teachers facing the sack this year, members recognise that the only thing standing between them and the dole queue is their local NUT officers - not some remote and bloated over-paid bureaucracy in London.

School groups and individ-

ual members from many areas of the country have responded to McAvoy's offensive (in both senses of the word!) by defending their local officers and calling for McAvoy's resignation.

Meanwhile FACE, the most dynamic and effective campaign against education cuts, which McAvoy still refuses to acknowledge, continues to grow.

More and more local groups are being established as parents, governors, teachers and increasingly school students gear up for the fight around the cuts expected in the Autumn statement.

The FACE conference in Coventry on June 10 is an absolute must for anyone who wants to build the fightback and force the Tories to turn vague promises of 'jam tomorrow' into more cash today.

The opportunity to put politicians from all parties on the spot will be combined with practical discussion of strategies for the future, and support needs to be built for the next FACE demonstration on September 30.

What better time to start than now?

## Blairite squeeze on NUT

By Ann Hudson

PARTY political broadcasts in the May council elections reminded everyone that education is still a key issue.

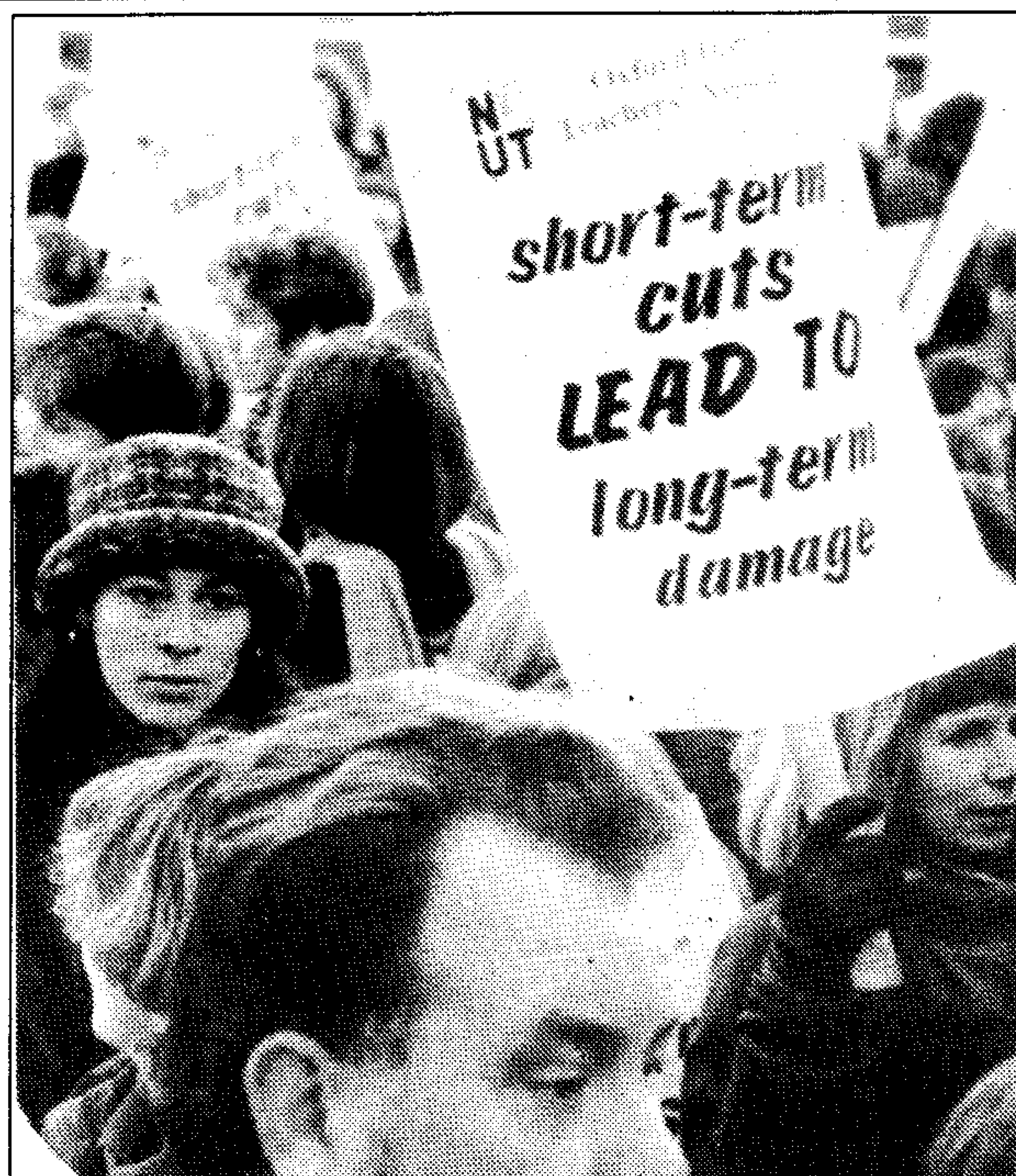
But the political leader who emphasised the need for mass public campaigns against government cuts in schools

with the words "Remember the poll tax. It can be done" was not even pretending to represent the working class.

It was just another example of the Liberal Democrats appearing more willing than Blair's New Labour to galvanise opposition to Tory policies.

It is becoming increasingly hard to find real differences between the Blunkett/Blair education agenda and the Tories' current drive towards further stratification of the system and shifting resources from the deprived to the most privileged sectors.

The development of Fight Against Cuts in Education, the new alliance of parents, governors and teachers which brought thousands to a national demonstration on



Cuts struggles could embarrass Blunkett and Blair

March 25 shows that there is a growing public awareness of the need to save what remains of state comprehensive education.

This view is not shared by the Labour leaders, or by the right wing leadership of the NUT. General Secretary Doug McAvoy was left adrift by a majority of his union conference voting to ballot on strike action to limit class sizes, and he is now looking for means to override the de-

mocracy of the union.

The SWP activists who heckled David Blunkett at the Blackpool conference gave extra ammunition to the McAvoy faction and the right wing media. But the 'Blunkett incident' was not the underlying cause of the current NUT witch hunt.

McAvoy's campaign of glossy posters, leaflets and letters urging them to vote 'no' to strike action arises from his decision to seek a

deal with Tony Blair and fly in the face of the conference majority, which was demanding action to protect jobs and services from cuts.

Against the barrage of expensively-produced NUT propaganda and cleverly-worded distortions of events at conference, it seems unlikely that the ballot for one-day strike action will be won.

If any significant numbers defy this pressure and vote for action it will reflect a strong groundswell of opposition to McAvoy.

Whatever the outcome of the ballot, there are three main tasks for NUT members:

- Firstly, we must campaign for union democracy, and defend the policy-making powers of conference.

- Secondly we must strengthen our links with parents, students and governors in the battle to defend education.

This is more than a fight for more cash: it also entails a struggle against increasing use of selection - through tests, league tables and opted-out schools - and deepening divisions in the system.

- Thirdly we must work more closely with other public sector workers to defend the welfare state and all of our rights as workers.

UNION SPECIAL

### FACE conference:

Fighting back for education  
COVENTRY Saturday June 10  
11am to 4pm

Contact: FACE c/o St. Giles County Middle School, Hayes Lane, Exhall, Coventry, CV7 9NS. Telephone: (0589) 789104.

## Fight for the right to strike

# Strike first - ask later!

By Roger Welch

SINCE the Tories came back to power in 1979 they have passed seven Acts designed to attack trade union rights - in particular rights to strike.

Today industrial action is only within the law if it is on the basis of a so-called trade dispute with the workers' own employer, is voted for in a fully postal ballot and notices are given to the employer both before the ballot takes place and before the action starts.

Any so-called secondary action, i.e. sympathy action is unlawful, and this is the case even if the workers involved have the same employer but the latter has divided up commercial operations into separate different companies.

(This device was part of the strategy deployed by Rupert Murdoch in his offensive against the print unions at Wapping.)

Picketing within the law has been reduced to a symbolic act which can only take place at the strikers' own workplace.

The determination of the state to continue its anti-union offensive was shown in

March by the decision of the Law Lords that employers, having derecognised a union, can withhold pay rises from any workers who try to maintain their rights secured by collective bargaining.

The implications of all of these legal shackles on trade unions is that if a strike takes place within the law the workers involved are generally fighting with both hands tied behind their backs.

There are exceptions where partial or total victories can be won as was the case with the signal workers last summer and the boycott of SATS mounted by the teachers' unions.

### Sacking threat

However, the norm is that workers in struggle are isolated and either lose the strike or as has happened in a number of cases, such as the Dover seafarers, the Wapping printers, the workers at Burnsalls and Timex, the workers are sacked during the strike.

The most recent example of this, and one that exposes fully the working of the new laws on balloting and strike notices, was the sacking last November of bus workers employed by Eastern National in Chelmsford for par-

ticipating in a one shift strike in defence of safe driving hours.

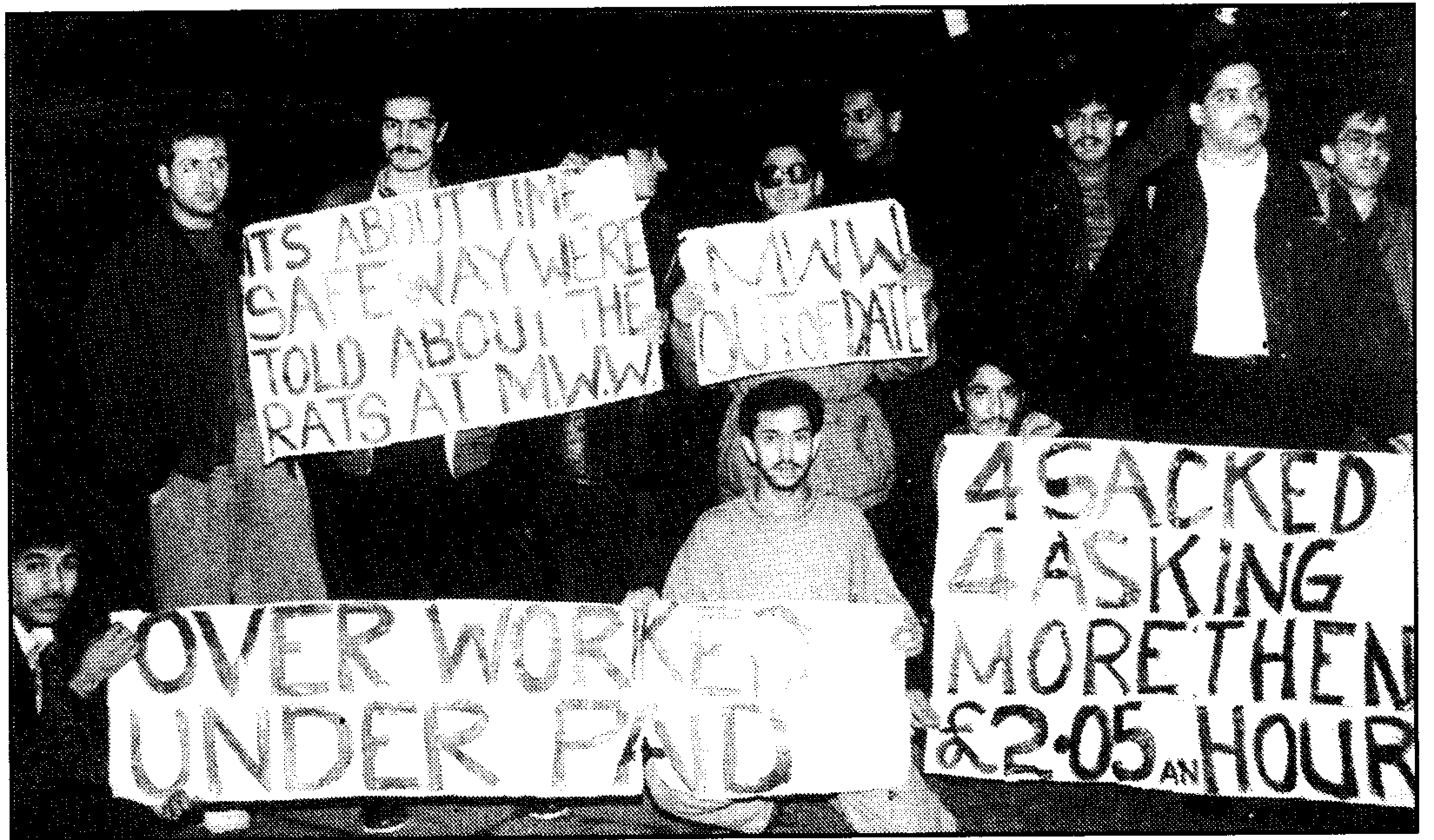
The bus workers and their union, the TGWU, obeyed the letter of the law to the full, and as a result Orbell, the managing director, of Eastern National, was able to lay his plans well in advance of the strike taking place.

As part of the Badgerline group, Eastern National was able to bring in scab drivers from all over the country within 24 hours of the sackings taking place.

This scab labour force was able to keep the buses in Chelmsford going until drivers could be recruited locally and given a crash training course to take the jobs of the sacked workers.

As recent unofficial stoppages by postal workers and by 900 bus workers in Liverpool have shown, if workers take action spontaneously, i.e. without any advance notice, the employer will have no chance to do what Orbell did and other employers such as P&O have done in the past.

Workers taking strike action can be sacked if they act within the law or in defiance of it. However, somewhat ironically perhaps, if they strike *without* going through



Sign of our times: anti-union laws aim to shackle fight for union rights or against low pay

all the balloting and strike notice legal paraphernalia their strike is likely to be more effective - and the risk of getting sacked is a lot lower.

### Defiance

Defiance of the law is a central part of trade union tradition. It is only just over 20 years since mass defiance of the Industrial Relations Act both defeated the law and helped to bring down the Heath government.

It is well over time for these traditions to be revived

and the lessons learnt. Industrial action within the law - at least when the full weight of the law and institutions of the state such as the police are there to ensure effective industrial action cannot take place - is often doomed to failure and exposes workers involved to the risk of dismissal.

There must be a real fight within and across all unions for official backing for sympathetic action and picketing in defiance of the law once a group of workers go on strike.

Part and parcel of this fight, as the Chelmsford struggle has shown albeit negatively, is often for workers to strike first and then demand union support.

Indeed if such sympathetic action and picketing can be secured the Chelmsford bus workers themselves can still win their just fight for reinstatement.

Moreover, defiance of the Tory laws now will make it far more difficult for a Blair led Labour government to keep those laws in place.

# Organise the union left

By Pete Hooper

THE KEY task for socialists in the unions is to build alliances of the class struggle left that are politically and organisationally independent of the bureaucracy.

Such lefts are needed at every level in the unions to lead the fight against the employers on key industrial issues, and to ensure that the unions and the Labour Party are committed to socialist policies and democratic structures.

To be successful, such left formations must be open, broad and democratic, and not the property or "front" of any one political current or organisation.

Most left groupings have fallen far short of these criteria. The prime objective of the old Communist party-led Broad Lefts of the 1960s and 1970s was to get CP-backed bureaucrats elected to national office.

They only mobilised the membership in campaigns

for industrial action when the right was in control.

The TGWU Broad Left, a remnant of this *Morning Star* tradition, is a bureaucratic, invitation-only electoral machine, incapable of breaking with the policies of the bureaucrats it supports.

Many of the 'new' Broad Lefts of the 1980s, such as that in the civil service union CPSA were led by Militant, with varying fortunes. They did not break from the primarily electoralist methods of the old CP-led Broad Lefts. Most never became more than front organisations promoting Militant.

Today's CWU Broad Left originated in the old NCU and had a relatively open and democratic structure: it is now at the crossroads. It could either become an electoral machine for a rightward-moving NEC caucus, or become a genuine class struggle formation capable of leading the fight against BT and the Post Office.

The most advanced left formation at present is undoubtedly the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) in the NUT. Through 20 years

of systematic work, members' meetings and regular publications and a democratic internal regime, the STA has built itself a dominant position in union conferences, challenging the leadership of the (right wing) Broad left.

The SWP, Britain's biggest far-left organisation, characteristically walked out of the STA at the peak of its recent success. What the SWP cannot stomach is participation in an organisation it doesn't control and that refuses to accept its sectarian and over-optimistic schemes for the class struggle.

Its sectarian insistence on building only at rank and file level, and its refusal to fight through the official union structures means that the SWP, for all its numbers, has never wielded real influence in the unions.

The way forward is not sectarian self-proclamation or erecting programmatic obstacles to unity: the left in the unions must organise and strike together to deal effective blows against the right wing.

**S**OCIALIST  
MOVEMENT  
Trade Union Committee

Honorary President: Tony Benn M.P.

Saturday July 15<sup>th</sup>

10.30am - 5.00pm

South Camden  
Community School  
Charrington St London NW1  
(between Euston & Kings Cross BR)

CONFERENCE

## 'New' Labour and the Unions

Despite all the hype of 'New' Labour, the Tories continue to attack us on all fronts - wages, jobs and the welfare state. We have to develop the fightback.

We must also prepare for Labour in office, and its expected attitude to strikes and struggles. Looking forward, we all desire a Labour victory, but we will not let a Blair administration abandon every principle and gain established in the past.

The conference will discuss all these themes.

Return this registration slip today

The conference is open to delegates from labour movement organisations and to individual activists. Fee: £5.00 waged, £3.00 unwaged.

We wish to send ..... delegates to the conference..... is enclosed [make cheques payable to 'SMTUC'].

Organisation

Name(s)

Address

Post Code

Telephone

The SMTUC is also appealing for donations from trade union organisations to help organise the conference.

We enclose £..... as a donation for the organisation of the conference. Return this registration slip to SMTUC, 3 Blades House, London, SE11 5TW.

Printed by Wrenham Printers Ltd (TU)

Speakers include  
Tony Benn M.P.  
and a range of  
TU speakers

Workshops on:

- Defend the link with Labour
- Unions and democratic decision making - our democracy and theirs
- Organising and developing the union left
- Preparing for Labour in office
- Full employment
- The minimum wage
- 35 hour week
- Defend the welfare state
- Labour policy and the unions
- Repeal the anti-union laws

UNION SPECIAL

## Why the left needs Trades Councils

by Keith Sinclair  
Secretary, Hull and District TUC

TRADES councils aim to bring together the local branches of all TUC affiliated unions. They are the regional structures of the TUC.

But given the appalling role of the TUC nationally, should left wingers bother with its local organisations?

Our answer is yes, and *Socialist Outlook* supporters are active in a significant number of trades councils. Getting involved is not difficult, union branches are often happy that someone is willing to attend on their behalf.

Trades councils have the potential to become the key local organisers of campaigns on a wide range of issues.

They need to offer a platform to all those in struggle – including those not organised through unions.

A good example here is the need to build alliances between trade unionists and all the other groups fighting the Criminal Justice Act. Trades councils can also bring together all the unions in and beyond education and link up with parents to fight against school cuts.

Trades councils are the ideal vehicle for uniting anti-racist groups in common action against racism, fascism and state racism – Oxford Trades Council has been centrally involved in the campaign to close the Campfield immigration prison.

Of course the original and key role for trades councils is in building solidarity around industrial disputes: currently, Chelmsford Trades Council, for example, is at the centre of solidarity with the 105 sacked bus workers there.

The recent annual conference of trades councils showed that a number of them are also involved in serious campaigns in defence of the welfare state.

Of course trades councils vary greatly from area to area. There are some where a handful of people have run the organisation for years and have become stuck in the vicious circle of low levels of activity leading to low turn-out leading to low levels of activity.

In some areas, local bulletins are used to spread information about disputes to a wider range of trade unionists than turn up to the monthly meetings.

Trades councils need to build their affiliations: shop stewards committees can now affiliate directly.

They can be effective bodies for mobilisation and unionisation – if the political will is there.

Of course serious militants will not be attracted to a boring monthly meeting; but they will support an organisation

# Blair declares war on unions

By Pete Hooper

THE OUTCOME of the Clause Four debate has clarified the political lines of divide in the trade unions, just as it has in the Labour Party.

Blair has followed through his victory with moves to distance himself and the party even further from the unions, in readiness for the inevitable clash on policy that will erupt should he win the election. This is the lesson Labour's far-right has learned from the electoral defeats of 1970 and 1979.

Although Blair won a conference majority for his new statement of free market values, the vote in the unions was much closer than in the constituencies.

The TGWU, UNISON and a number of smaller unions including the NUM, RMT, GPMU and FBU all opposed his changes. There was also significant opposition within MSF and the CWU which eventually backed him.

### Little on offer

Blair has little to offer workers and trade unionists other than the prospect of a Labour government itself.

The efforts of soft left leaders like GMB chief John Edmonds to do deals over full employment and the minimum wage were humiliatingly brushed aside. Gordon Brown's latest pronouncements on public spending are to the right of Tory Chancellor Kenneth Clarke.

To hold this line, Blair's strategy hinges on marginalising the unions within the Labour Party, reducing their voting strength at conference and cutting their representation on the NEC.

But he also wants to see union bureaucrats tighten their control over their members and in particular over left activists.

That's why Blair and his spin doctors have lavished such praise on the Communications Workers Union for having procured the 'right' result through a ballot going over the heads of activists.

They are keen to see similar methods used in other unions to isolate and atomise the left: National Union of Teachers chief Doug McAvooy has eagerly embraced the idea, firing off a volley of vicious material denouncing the democratic decisions of his union's annual conference, and opposing any vote



Humiliated: GMB leader Edmonds found full employment plea ignored



Blair wants to stifle campaigns that could challenge cuts imposed by right wing Labour policies

for industrial action to limit school class sizes.

In the TGWU, Blairite challenger Jack Dromey has attacked General Secretary Bill Morris for failing to hold a ballot on Clause Four.

The left must oppose this type of 'plebiscitary' democracy. For trade union members to vote on sometimes complex key issues without any prior involvement in discussion at meetings is neither sensible nor democratic.

### Media role

It is a method designed to maximise the influence of the right wing and of the mass media over isolated individual members, running counter to the collective spirit of trade unionism.

The barely concealed intervention of Blair's office into the TGWU election, briefing journalists against Morris and backing Dromey is a warning of further right wing political intervention yet to come in the unions.

Only the lack of a plausible right wing candidate to run against Rodney Bickerstaffe in UNISON has forestalled a similar Blairite

intervention. Instead the UNISON right wing, having been routed on Clause Four, are seeking to hi-jack Bickerstaffe's campaign and pull him away from the left.

Indeed the right are not having things all their own way.

Even as they announced the formation of the ironically-named pro-Blair "LINC" (Labour Initiative for Cooperation), backed by Roger Poole of UNISON, and designed to disengage Labour from the unions while pressing for electoral deals with the Liberals, UNISON followed up its defence of Clause Four by endorsing a package of hard-line left wing policies.

Similar resolutions raising demands for inclusion in Labour's next manifesto may well be carried at other union conferences this summer: but everyone knows that Blair will ignore them all.

The debate on Clause Four has meant that currents on the left have been hardened up, and in some cases found new allies on issues of public ownership and the

conception of socialist policies.

Some of the far-left abstained: the SWP and to a lesser extent Militant effectively encouraged abstention by calling for Clause Four in words while in practice countering their own sectarian party-building projects.

But the exclusive focus of the Clause Four debate on a future Labour government has served to detract from discussion on what to do now against the bosses and the Tory government.

Throughout industry, especially in the privatised sectors, a slowdown in the domestic economy and sharpening competition is leading to a new attack on pay, jobs, conditions and hours of work.

BT is attempting to impose flexible working hours while the Royal Mail is trying to enforce new working practices.

In the public sector, too, the onslaught continues unabated. In the NHS, up to 850,000 workers are currently in dispute over pay; teachers from three unions are set to ballot over action to combat cuts in schools; rail workers face a fight on pay and privatisation; competitive tendering in local government, the NHS and the civil service threatens tens of thousands more jobs.

Victories have been won: notably postal workers in Newcastle and BT workers in the north west. But overshadowing the whole situation are the anti-union laws which make most proposed industrial action unlawful.

Union leaders 'left' and right are united in their determination not to break the law. Thus the 'left' TGWU refuses to class solidarity action to win the Eastern National bus dispute in Chelmsford, while the CWU's general secretary

Alan Johnson, under threat of injunctions, attempts to repudiate his members' local unofficial actions.

The reality is that the anti-union laws have been effective in what they were designed to do: crush disputes by making the union bureaucrats police their own members. This is also why Tony Blair has no intention of repealing these laws.

But if a section of workers like the nurses did manage to overcome the hurdle of their leaders' inertia, there is no doubt that their struggle would be enormously popular, cashing in on the government's unpopularity and disarray.

As with last year's BR signal workers' dispute, it would prove politically impossible to use the anti-union laws against them.

### Public sector

United public sector action in defence of pay and services is crucial in the face of the government's on-going attack.

The RMT NEC has made the most important initiative so far to break the log-jam by calling for a demonstration on June 10 against low pay, and for a shorter working week. This must be supported and built for by the whole movement.

Initiatives such as the recent conference sponsored by Newcastle UNISON in defence of the public sector should also be supported as a means of pressing the official unions to take united action.

And campaigns based on user groups such as the parents and governors who make up the Fight Against Cuts in Education (FACE) can give confidence to trade unionists deciding whether or not to fight.

Speakers from FACE and from NHS campaigns should be invited to every union conference this summer.



# UNISON: nice policies - shame about the inaction!

By Fred Leplat,  
Islington UNISON

UNISON's vote to uphold of the 'old' Clause 4 was welcome in a situation when most union leaders are falling in behind Blair's New Labour.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, UNISON's current associate general secretary and front-runner for the top job when Alan Jkinson retires, made a passionate speech at Labour's special conference against the notion of 'rigours of competition' extolled in Blair's new Clause 4.

Since then he has defended representative democracy against the attacks made on the union for not balloting its members on the new Clause, and declared his support for the far-reaching left policies endorsed by the union's Affiliated Political Fund conference in May.

On the level of policies, UNISON now is well to the left of Blair, through its commitment to the welfare state, public services and renationalisation, opposition to all forms of competitive tendering, support for a minimum wage of £4.15 rising to two thirds of average male earnings, and the repeal of the anti-union laws.

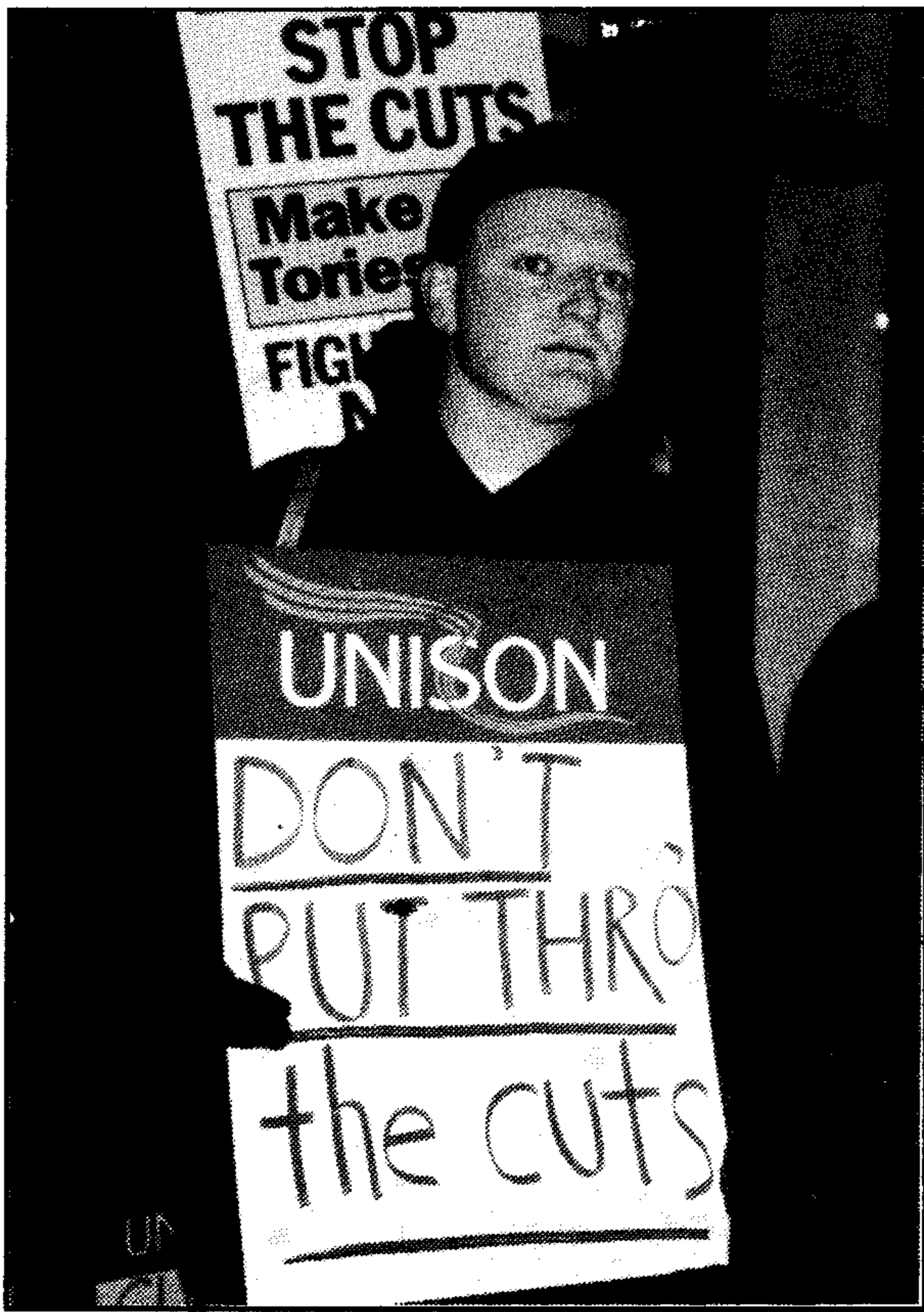
Bickerstaffe supports these policies, and deserves our support in the political fight to commit a Labour government to implement such policies immediately it is elected. He also backs UNISON's opposition to any weakening of the unions' link to or voice in the Labour Party.

However, this is only part of the picture. The union has sound policies but an appalling track record in action.

UNISON members who work in health, local government, education and the utilities, have been devastated by the 'rigours' of competition. If they still have a job, many of them will have seen their pay and conditions savaged

Bickerstaffe, has failed to organise any national campaign against these attacks.

At best branches have been left to fight on their own. But as every new piece of anti-union legislation is adhered to by UNISON, national action to defend members and defeat Government attacks has been avoided.



Looking for a fighting lead: and finding not much

through insulting pay offers and increased workloads and hours.

Union organisation has been eroded through successive waves of redundancies, privatisation and the introduction of local bargaining.

Yet UNISON, under the leadership of Jkinson and

Even the old "days of action" with balloons and funny hats have disappeared. Now branches are made to jump through innumerable bureaucratic hoops and wait weeks before holding a lawful and official ballot - by which time the dispute is lost, as the employers have carried



out their attack.

UNISON's 'new realist strategy of publicity campaigns and lobbying, mild support to individual branches, avoiding national industrial action and compliance with the anti-union legislation is a total failure.'

The crisis of the unions strategy is compounded by its financial crisis, the totally inefficient national membership register computer and the lack of any progress at a local level towards a full merger of branches.

The failure of the union's strategy is most obviously in the health sector.

Thousands of jobs have been axed and hospitals have closed, in most cases without active union opposition. Moves to impose the insulting 1% national pay offer, topped up to 3% through local pay bargaining with vicious Trust bosses now threatens a fresh onslaught on members' pay and conditions.

But as anger has grown, the union has now been overtaken in militancy and public profile by the traditionally right wing Royal Colleges of Nursing and Midwives. With morale at rock-bottom in health branches, unless UNISON gets its act together quickly it could begin losing nursing members to these rival organisations.

Yet the only response so far has been a successful lunch-time protest in March, which is now being followed

up by a ballot to consult members... on whether they want to be balloted on industrial action on the summer!!

Even the BMA and Health Visitors seem closer to strike action than UNISON. Yet defence of the NHS is one of the most popular issues around.

With the Tories in terminal crisis, UNISON could organise national strike action of its 400,000 members in health against the pay offer and the break-up of national bargaining.

The Tories would not dare use the anti-union laws against health workers for fear of an escalation that would sweep them out of office just as industrial action defeated Heath's anti-union laws when they imprisoned the Pentonville dockers over 20 years ago.

## Alternative

The left in UNISON must continue to promote an alternative strategy: national industrial action now - unlawful if necessary - against the national attacks of the Tories and the bosses, and fighting to commit a Labour government to implement UNISON's policies.

The forthcoming election campaign for general secretary will be an opportunity to argue that UNISON should adopt such a fighting strategy.

At the moment, it appears that the right who support Blair's New Labour do not

have any credible candidate equivalent to Jack Dromey in the TGWU, to put up against Bickerstaffe.

Militant Labour are trying to persuade sections of the left to support their chosen candidate, ex-NALGO NEC member Roger Bannister.

In order to pose an effective challenge to the current leaderships of UNISON, the left should be moving towards a united opposition.

The SWP-led Fightback still refuses to form a united left with the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union. The division of the left makes it easier for UNISON's leadership to avoid building any fightback now.

But there is a more fundamental problem. Both of these two left formations are essentially based on the ex-NALGO branches.

They need to find ways to link up with the ex-NUPE and ex-COHSSE activists, some of whom (especially from ex-NUPE) have come from outside the traditional hard left during the Clause Four fight, discovering that they no longer need vote the way they used to be told by Tom Sawyer, and who have been instrumental in winning UNISON to left wing policies.

The importance of this development must be recognised, and further fighting unity established in the struggle to commit the union to take action now against the 'rigours' of the market.

## CWU postal ballot stamps on democracy

TONY BLAIR got a helping hand in his offensive against union democracy when the Communication Workers Union balloted its membership over the new Clause Four.

The CWU has played a central role in winning other trade unions to his all-new Labour Party. The leadership will now be in the forefront of those trying to limit the commitments of the next Labour government.

But there are already signs that the Blairites will not have everything their own way. In the run up a number of regions

passed motions supporting Clause Four.

In March the CWU voted massively in favour of a retention of the political fund: 40 per cent of the membership voted by nine to one to retain links with the Labour Party.

The union Broad Left has recently scored some important victories. In this year's NEC election Bill Fry, a long term NCU BL supporter, and Dave Joyce were elected.

Members have been encouraged by successful strike action in the north west. The prospects for the autumn relaunch of the BL are good.

The five per cent fall in turn-

out on the telecom side was probably due to disillusion at the hours of attendance agreement made last year. And the failure of the three hard left candidates had a lot to do with a vicious smear sheet that was distributed in the union.

### Blairite project

The CWU leadership clearly already has in place a Blairite project for the Post Office and British Telecom. This will come up against a membership at general conference who will challenge the leadership over Clause Four and the rights of delegates to make their own decisions within un-

ion policy.

The key issues at telecoms conference will be sub-contracting, hours of attendance and performance related pay.

In the Post Office, "commercial freedom" has become the key phrase of the leadership. It envisages a partnership between the private sector and the Post Office competing for the postal services throughout Europe.

This would mean job losses for postal workers in other European countries, for the benefit of the British Post Office.

In British Telecom the situation is even worse. There is

no commitment to renationalise, but a guarantee to increase the shareholders' profits.

### Sequestration

Of more immediate impact will be the leadership's position on the anti-union laws. The Post Office have threatened both sequestration and removal of check-off to encourage Alan Johnson to start repudiating unofficial industrial disputes.

The threat of the anti-union laws has clearly limited unofficial industrial disputes in the last two months. This gives the leadership more control. But with management attacks in-

creasing, unofficial disputes are likely to reemerge in the summer.

The leadership will be encouraged to challenge in other policy areas to limit the influence of the left in the newly-merged union.

This will mean bringing the union's industrial policy much more directly under the control of the leadership to limit rand and file militancy.

The left has to begin organising against the modernisers in the CWU, challenging the consensus on commercial freedom and unconditionally defending CWU members in struggle.

UNION SPECIAL

# Danish workers revolt against privateers

By Finn Kjeller

DENMARK—More than 150,000 workers went on strike on April 20 in solidarity with bus drivers fighting privatisation.

The drivers have been on strike since February. This is a crucial test of strength in the government's privatisation programme.

Workers in the public sector saw this as a warning strike against planned tendering of industry. Local authorities have been encouraged to invite tenders for different services, especially those employing women on low wages.

The private sector also reacted to the anti-social logic of the policies. Most of the shipyards, bacon factories and large workplaces were part of the movement. Bus transportation was paralysed in all cities.

The Ri-Bus A/S company which won the city council tendering in Esberg proposed wage cuts of between eight and fifteen per cent. They have



Fighting privatisation at Barking Hospital, 1984: same firm is chasing Danish contracts

gone on to sack all the strikers and advertise for new workers.

An extremely successful picket has been operative, drawing in workers from all over Denmark. On March 27 the police responded. They broke through the picket and got out a number of buses.

This was a signal for country-wide solidarity. The wave of action has drawn in the SiD - the unskilled workers federation - and the Danish TUC, who are organising support.

Danish labour market regulations penalise most strikes by fines on top of wage losses. Nevertheless after the April 20 strike action was stepped up.

Trades union and support committees keep a supply of coaches full of protesters running to support the picket. Every morning police break it up and force out a handful of buses.

Thousands of trades unionist now have direct experience of the virtual state of emer-

gency which exists in Esberg. Flying pickets are chased all around the town. People are arbitrarily arrested by police.

Although it was Poul Schluter's right-wing government that first introduced neo-liberalism in the 1980s, few public companies and services were handed over to the private sector until Poul Nyrup Rasmussen led the Social Democratic come back. Indeed the police attacks are made possible by the anti-union laws

laid down under a Social Democratic government.

Minister of Justice Bjørn Westh has backed the police war against the pickets and Minister of Labour Jytte Andersen has warned that picketing bus drivers would be refused unemployment benefit.

Social democratic politicians and trade union leaders are eager to put a lid on the resistance to privatisation and tenders. Their aim is to limit the conflict to local level. But so far all attempts at compromise have hit a wall of refusal by the Liberals.

## Bitterness

The increasing bitterness of the conflict was emphasised on May 13 when 400,000 kr. worth of bus windows were smashed during the night. Although the support committees disassociated themselves from the action it is clear that the strikers are getting frustrated with the police's strong-arm tactics.

Plans are underway to broaden support further. A

new day of action is planned for June 1. This should be the occasion of a genuine mass blockade against the scab buses.

The Socialist Workers Party (SAP); the Danish section of the Fourth International, is calling for a 24 hour general strike and the SiD to launch secondary strikes and pickets against all firms delivering goods and services to the Ri-Bus company.

The strike may last a month or more. Whatever the outcome the struggle against wage cutting privatisation has fuelled a solidarity movement long unknown, reviving trade union networks and confirming a general rise in the level of class struggle.

Nevertheless, the Danish working class needs a victory over the privatisation pirates to set in place a positive dynamic encouraging other groups of workers to take on the liberal diktats.

■ Fax messages to the Copenhagen support committee +45 31 39 76 94.

# French unions under the cosh

By Dominique Mezzi

The French workforce is undergoing massive change. A fundamental recomposition in trade unionism is taking place.

Particularly important is the new situation where women make up almost half of the workforce. Big differences of experience within this sector exist. Private industry has been the testing ground for the most extreme anti-worker anti-social "flexible working" practices.

On the other hand, massive struggles over wages and over recognition of qualifications and working conditions have taken place in the health sector and other public services where non-publicised women are in the majority.

Trade union officials caught up in their usual routines have been staggered by the size of this new radical force. Nowadays no one goes from school to the factory and automatically joins the same union as their father or brothers.

Today's school leavers are likely to spend years in unem-

ployment or temporary jobs before getting the opportunity for a more stable employment. Trade unionist activists in industry still have to find ways of linking up with younger workers who inhabit a different cultural universe.

Some of the changes can be seen in the emerging debates in the major trades union federations.

There has been a big discussion in the CFDT since the 1970s about "repositioning" the unions in the centre of political life. This took the form of a proposed non-communist front involving the Force Ouvriere - the weakest of the big three federations - and the anti-left National Education Federation (FEN).

It stressed the provision of "services" to members, the isolation of the Communist CGT and a social compromise breaking with militant traditions.

The FO rejected the overture however and the FEN's turn resulted in a split to form the new Unitary Trade Union Federation (FSU) in 1993.

A parallel process operated in the CFDT itself. The ultra-moderate line, authoritarian

regime and resistance to mass mobilisation resulted in the birth of two radical, non-federated trade unions led by militants more in tune with the expectations of their rank and file.

They are skilled in agitating and organising for the broadest union unity in struggle.

The problem for the CFDT leadership was that the defeat of the Socialist Party was not reflected in an end to social struggle. Big movements in support of secular education, against unemployment and for youth rights broke out unrestricted by the union apparatus.

In December the CGT will hold its centenary conference. Although it has always been tied to the policies of the Communist Party it has been the largest and most militant of the federations. It remains France's premier union.

It currently faces a crisis of direction.

The collapse of the Communist Party means it will have to chose a new way forward - either cling to the grubby tailcoats of the declining Stalinist apparatus or explore the possibility of a radical trade union project.

Out of these movements may come a project for the reconstruction of French trades unionism. It could draw on the strengths of today's struggles, exploiting the success of the new non-confederated unions, amplifying the debate among progressives on an offensive trade union strategy and searching for a way to map out a political project.

Such a perspective could open the possibility for the unification of trades unionism and those who fight for the renewal of the labour movement.



French hospital strikers picketing in 1988

## Least organised in Europe

French trade unionism is unique in Europe. Only rarely has it been a mass force - this is due to the very specific evolution of the workforce and the special expectation of French workers of a political outlet to their demands.

This has been a constant since the revolution of 1789-93. Less than eight per cent of France's workforce are in unions, the lowest rate of any OECD country.

The CGT federation claims 450,000 members, the CFDT probably has no more than 360,000. The strength of the unions is also very uneven.

More than half of the CGT is concen-

trated in five professions: energy, metal, rail, post and public services.

Other than metal, all these are governed by state regulations which provide better protection than the private sector.

Half of the private sector workforce - six million people - are virtually non-unionised.

A further five million unemployed and temporarily employed are outside of organised labour. Since 1969 all the union federations have been declining in membership.

The claim of the trade union federations to represent the diversity of the workforce is less and less persuasive.

WORLD UNIONS

# Rail workers up against old buffers

By Greg Tucker

A DERISORY pay offer, massive job cuts and the onslaught of privatisation: rail workers face a catalogue of problems.

To make matters worse the main rail union, RMT, has been severely weakened by management attacks on the right to organise, while the other two unions ASLEF and TSSA have been given 'sweetheart' deals - as long as they promise to keep their members in check.

## Signals

In the signal workers' dispute last year and the fight for Clause Four the RMT Executive has shown that it is prepared to act firmly in the defence of railworkers.

But the signal dispute also showed the power of union officials to obstruct and delay action which impedes the ability of railworkers to fight back.

Time and again through that dispute serious questions, such as the need to extend the dispute to other workers, were dodged.

Now the same is happening every day. The Executive has to show that it can take control of events and give a lead. Ultimately, if it is to be taken seriously, it has to involve the membership and fight to take control of the union out of the hands of a small clique of officials.

BR's derisory 2.5% pay

offer has been rightly rejected by the RMT Executive. Their counter claim of 6% is sufficient to answer railworkers' immediate demands. And the decision to open up the struggle to involve other unions by calling a national demonstration on June 10 is to be welcomed.

But doubts remain. Over a month after the decision to call the demonstration, no work had been done to organise it. No official publicity for it has yet been issued by RMT HQ. Apart from one letter and a handful of leaflets, no work had been done to convince railworkers that a fight over pay is possible.

only when individual Executive members went out and produced their own leaflets was something done.

Privatisation has reached its final stages. Already large parts of the former BR have been opened up to competitive tendering. Whilst most contracts have been won in-house, as with local government competitive tendering the cost of winning has meant turning the screw on conditions and a serious loss of jobs.

## Imposed

Elsewhere new semi-independent Train Operating Companies are looking to flex their muscles, with major attacks in the pipeline.

Nationally negotiated agreements are rapidly being replaced by locally-imposed conditions.

Again very little has been



done. Bob Crow, Assistant General Secretary, elected last year on a left ticket, has been touring the country talking to BRIS members, raising the need for a fightback, but it is clear that the other officers have no stomach for a fightback.

Unlike twenty years ago, when there was one national employer, unwilling to force issues through, and it was possible to survive as a union with a structure which meant that no change was implemented at any level unless it was agreed nationally, today dozens of new small employers are vying with each other to attack our conditions, imposing their decisions at will.

## Techniques

New management techniques are now rooted in every day procedure. As well as direct mail shots to staff, the hotel industry is making a killing from week-long 'team briefings' on which staff are continually being sent by management.

The union has done nothing to respond to these changes. Its structures are hopelessly out of date.

But it is clear that for Jimmy Knapp and his immediate coterie the way to survive is to retreat into the bunker, cutting back on those union structures which give democratic rights to the membership, while bolstering those which consolidate their own positions.

The left has to respond.

● Firstly the Executive has to show that it can get its decisions implemented. After the debacle of the 1994 ballot defeat - where it was clear that there had been deliberate sabotage of the campaign by officers - a special subcom-

mittee was set up to monitor and control propaganda. This has not proved sufficient: the left has to tighten up its act to ensure its instructions leave no escape for Knapp and co.

● Secondly we have to re-think the union's structure, devolving power to the levels where decisions are being implemented. On the one hand this will mean new Regional Councils with enhanced powers to control regional officials. On the other we need to set up Combine Committees of the grades based district reps which can plan a strategy to defend members from new attacks.

● Thirdly the union has to open up to the rank and file. For most members the first they know about issues is when the management talk to them. They are lucky if they get a union response at all. Our whole approach to com-

munication and involvement has to be revamped. We need to turn *RMT News* into a paper that gives a lead on the union's priority campaigns, arming the membership. And we need a stream of leaflets and newsletters countering management disinformation, with a system for helping branches produce local propaganda.

## Left

● The left also has to look at its own organisation. Over the years a variety of groups have operated - from secret CP-run Broad Lefts to a rigidly structured Broad Left dominated by Militant.

Currently the CFDU operates as a limited caucus, which was able to organise a successful fringe meeting at this year's Grades Conferences but finds it difficult to

go beyond being a loose grouping of leading activists.

We have to make a turn outward to the ranks. This means being more organised. We need a more regular CFDU bulletin which opens up debate on how we deal with the broad problems facing the industry, and offering an alternative source of information on what is going on.

Watching from the RMT it is not always possible to see exactly what is happening in other rail unions. It is hard to judge how serious a development the ASLEF Campaign Group may be. However their decision to attack the ASLEF sell-out deal - which ended transfers from Train Operating Companies offered for sale - is a positive sign. The CFDU needs to build links with them and any forces inside the TSSA willing to fight.

## Socialist Outlook Summer School THE POLITICS OF REVOLUTION

Six days of discussion, debate, entertainment & relaxation in sunny Aberystwyth on the

glorious Welsh coast Sessions include: Post-war marxism; party, class & social movements; developments in popular culture; ecology, socialism after the fall of the wall; women and revolution; Russian revolution; Latin America... and more.

**AUGUST 23-28 1995**

Six days for just £110 (waged) or £45 (unwaged) Send your deposit of £35/£15 payable to 'Socialist Outlook Summer School', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

## Get 'The Bosses' Offensive' FREE with your 'Socialist Outlook' subscription

Socialist Outlook draws together the finest analysis of the trades unions and Labour Party with unequalled international coverage from Fourth International supporters in sixty countries world-wide. Your subscription also includes *Liberation!*, our youth quarterly, and the occasional review, *theory+practice*. Send your cheque for £17 (one year) £9 (six months) to 'Socialist Outlook Fund', PO Box 1109, London N4 2 UU. Libraries: £50 airmail worldwide. Overseas airmail: £38 far east, £30 rest of the world

Name .....  
Address .....  
Post Code ..... Tel: .....

The bosses' offensive  
Anti-union laws and the new management techniques

UNION SPECIAL

# Can South Africa's black unions meet the challenge?

By Comrade Darcy

ACCORDING to Labour Minister Tito Mboweni, South Africa has to choose "either to orient upwards and base its economy on quality, reliability and inventiveness, or to orientate downwards and take on the Chinas and Indonesias of the world.. We do not hesitate to recommend the road of high productivity." (*Business Day*, Sept. 9, 1994).

This is the kernel of the transformation of labour relations in the new South Africa. The ambitious economic Reconstruction and Development Programme can only be carried out if the black trade union movement is enlisted as a social partner of the government and employers.

To attain this goal Minister Mboweni set up a working group last July. In February it published proposals for a new Labour Relations Act.

One of the recommendations is to supplement contract negotiations with a "second channel" at the workplace level. The draft bill proposes a model of "workplace forums" similar to German and Dutch works councils.

It foresees the creation of an extensive apparatus for mediation and arbitration in labour conflicts. Employers' existing obligation to negotiate with unions over working conditions is to be abolished.

## Right to strike

Furthermore, the existing freedom to strike over any dispute is to be restricted through a prohibition on strikes over issues that should go to arbitration or the courts.

The intention is to "lead to increased productivity and profitability" (*Government Gazette*, February 1995).

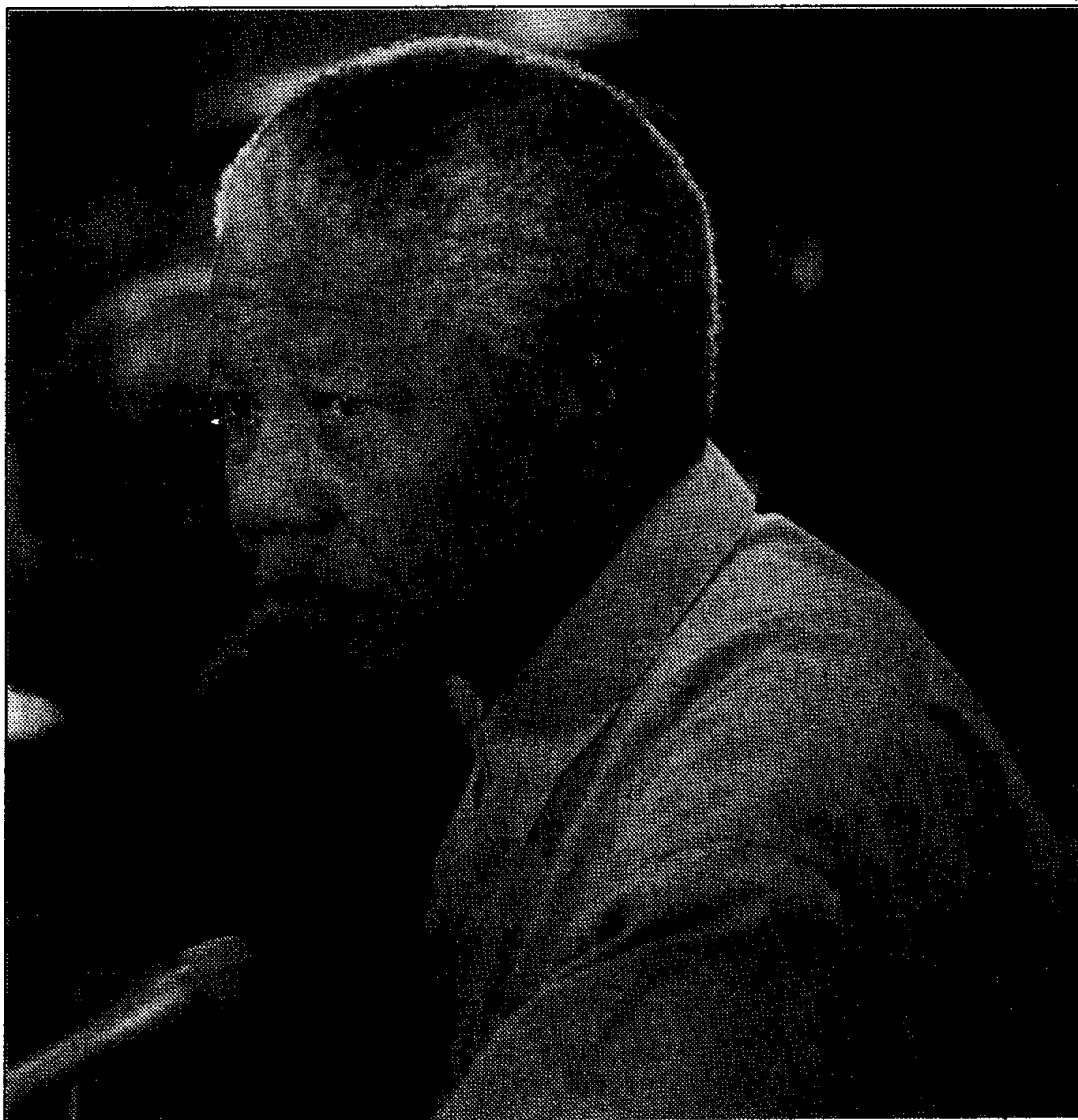
Employers are unenthusiastic. They are wary of taking on extra expenses at precisely the moment when have to be pushed down in order to compete on the world market. They also limit management's ability to run their companies as they see fit.

There are justifiable fears in the trade union movement that week place forums will compete with trade unions, at a time when many unions are having a hard enough time maintaining their bargaining position.

The bill requires consultation over production-related issues, but rejects COSATU's demand that employers be required to negotiate over these issues. From this standpoint the proposals look like a way to restrict collective bargaining.

COSATU is encountering problems in the new South Africa. Almost three million employees are union members, of whom 1.3 million are in unions affiliated with COSATU. But after rapid growth in the 1980s membership has hardly increased since 1990.

Since the elections the unions' leading bodies have been substantially



Mandela, like McAvoy, is warning union members against extremists

**"You can't put Jabu Xulu, who is earning \$50 a week after 15 years and supporting a family of five, in the same room with John Smith, the managing director of a big company who is earning \$5000 a week, and expect that [reaching agreement] will be a peaceful, easy process. But we have to manage to bring them together, because otherwise we will be shipwrecked on the rocks of continual conflict".**

(John Gomomo, COSATU President, *Financial Mail*, 24 Feb 1995)

weakened by the diversion of many union leaders into the government and politics at national, provincial and local levels.

This has resulted in a substantial decline in the leadership's ability to lead. A certain level of doubt has also arisen in the rank and file at the sight of former leaders and activists who now occupy portion of power alongside the old white oppressors.

The employers, and daily life in the companies, have scarcely changed since April 1994. Even *The Management Brief* admits that an "archaic mentality" exists among South African employers. Management's attitudes often remain "colonial" (*The Sun*, 10 March 1995).

These are the circumstances in which the unions are being asked to give up the strike weapon. Activists are unconvinced.

There is not much evidence of a new spirit of co-operation in either the public or the private sector. Black workers expect more from a democratically elected government than from the old white regime.

The first three months of this year were relatively peaceful, (60,000 strike days compared with 295,000 in the same period last year). But these actions were characterised by an exceptional bitterness, particularly in the public sector.

At the same time the government is under pressure to decrease public sector expenditure, particularly the wage and salary costs of the post-apartheid civil service. In February Mandela warned trade unions against "anarchists" in their ranks: COSATU President John Gomomo warned the government against starting a "witch hunt".

The economy is expected to grow 3 per cent this year: the first meaningful growth since the 1980s. Investment also increase last year, and there is already talk of a shortage of skilled labour.

According to economist David Mohr, this means "the end of declining salaries and loans". In the private sector, wage demands account for half of all the strikes.

The key contract negotiations will begin in the next few months. Expect conflicts.

# What we fight for

UP AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant employers with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won public services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis – an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

*Socialist Outlook* exists to build a new type of working class leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism.

The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of *reformism*, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism.

We reject reformism, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing the working class.

We are a *marxist* current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the *revolutionary* tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change.

We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the

working class to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, to unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth – and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

*Socialist Outlook* is above all an *internationalist* current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises in over 40 countries.

Unlike some other groups on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. This degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from struggles in the labour movement, playing into right wing hands.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now for their demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for *united front* campaigns on key issues such as racism and fascism – in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate differences.

If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country.

Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

WORLD UNIONS

## CONTACT US NOW!

YES - I want to become a *Socialist Outlook* supporter.

Please tell me more about *Socialist Outlook*.

Name .....

Address .....

Post code..... Phone .....

Send to *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4

# Nigeria on the brink

By Simon Day

In 34 years since independence Nigeria has had 24 years of military rule. And it looks like the present incumbent's days are numbered.

The election in June 1993 was generally believed to have been won by chief Moshood Abiola. After it was bureaucratically annulled General Sani Abacha was able to take advantage of the ensuing political crisis and impose himself on the country.

As well as sanctioning the killing of hundreds of civilians by the police and army he has banned newspapers and taken over the running of the courts. Despite a desperate search for a consistent policy and political base Abacha has succeeded only in making matters worse.

The economic crisis now threatens to engulf the regime. Huge debts to the "Paris Club" of creditors, pressure from the IMF and the US ban on official finance stoke the flames of the growing social crisis.

After taking power Abacha sought popular support by moving against market reforms, snubbing the west and promoting state control. The 1986 structural adjustment programme of General Ibrahim Babangida was discredited by growing discrepancies in income, rising inflation and the currency's collapse.

Fourteen months later, at the beginning of 1995, Abacha's policy was forced into reverse. Janu-

ary's budget announced big reductions in the deficit, lifting restrictions on foreign investment and liberalising exchange rates — things very close to the very same policy that had failed under previous administrations.

Despite the declaration of a war of austerity on Nigeria's people big business still want more.

The Financial Times spoke in the paternalistic tone of multi-national capitalism: "like a parole board examining a hardened offender, those who know the record of past Nigerian governments over the past decade are asking whether it is too late for the administration's character to change even if it has the will".

There is a growing tendency to disinvestment. Wellcome, ICI and the pharmaceutical group Hoechst are all withdrawing. In January Volkswagen closed its plant outside Lagos. Texico's 60 per cent stake in Texico Nigeria has been up for sale since 1993 (joint ventures are the main form of ownership in the crucial gas and oil industries).

The government has been increasingly unable to pay its share of the operating costs to its oil company partners — in large part because it has the substantial problem of a \$30 billion external debt hanging over it.

The banks are starting to demand risk premiums on debt repayments. This means that the government is having to borrow more money for the sole purpose of borrowing money.

Shell, Mobil and Chevron are taking the opportunity to pile on

the pressure for takeover under the threat of further investment withdrawals and a reduction in productive capacity. They are also demanding a lessening of the role of the Central bank of Nigeria in regulating foreign exchange.

Corruption and mismanagement threaten to make the civil service and judicial process inoperative. Millions of dollars of oil revenue are routinely diverted into the pockets of officials. The institutions of civil society are deteriorating beyond salvage.

The infrastructure is falling into disrepair. Roads are crumbling. Trains rarely run. Electricity and water are in short supply. Fuel is scarce.

On top of Abacha's social and economic policy crisis the demand for a return to civilian rule continues to grow. His recent promotion of 32 generals would indicate that he has a different idea about Nigeria's future.

The army is 60,000 strong but without sufficient military tasks. The admirals control two frigates that never sail and the vice-marshal planes which cannot leave the ground.

This turn to the armed forces for political support is therefore a mark of Abacha's desperation.

With the international creditors closing in and social breakdown at home the IMF and World Bank look like vetoing the \$30bn debt rescheduling.

Friendless at home and friendless abroad, Abacha's grip on power is becoming more tenuous by the week.



Laughing all the way to the tank: Vickers chief executive Sir Colin Chandler finds Nigerian repression terribly profitable. Sir Colin was Margaret Thatcher's head of Defence Export Services Organisation at the Ministry of Defence. Lord Nolan, where are you?

## Nigeria's military bolstered by British arms

By Paul Walker

Despite the fact that Nigeria has endured 24 of its 34 post-independence years under military government, the UK has consistently armed its military dictators in a bid to strengthen its political position in the oil rich nation.

In 1985 42 Alvis Scorpion Tanks were supplied to the Buhari regime, despite an appalling human rights record.

In the same year, the sale of British Jaguar fighter aircraft was instrumental in precipitating a coup by the military dictator, General Ibrahim Babangida, after a scandal over commission payments.

After Babangida took power Britain continued its supply of military equipment, culminating in the huge Vickers deal for 150 tanks in 1990.

This sale co-incided with a massive increase in British aid to Nigeria — it increased from £6.3m in 1988-89 to £67.7m in 1989-90 — leading to allegations that the aid was linked with arms sales.

In June 1993 a Presidential election was fairly won by multi-millionaire populist Chief Moshood Abiola.

Babangida promptly annulled the election result and appointed his own interim government. In the ensuing chaos, yet another military regime, headed by General Sani Abacha, came to power through a coup in November 1993.

Britain continued to deliver the Vickers tanks, after the annulment of the democratic election, and after the military strongman Abacha had seized power.

Abacha's regime has attempted to crush pro-democracy opposition by replacing union lead-

ers, taking control of the courts and banning newspapers. Hundreds of civilians have been killed by security forces in the unrest. Amnesty International has strongly condemned atrocities carried out by security forces against the people of Oginiland.

Despite these moves, over 30 military contracts have been signed between Nigeria and British companies since January 1994.

Pressed on the nature of these contracts the Foreign Office claim that they are "non-lethal", a term commonly known to be meaningless in arms trade circles.

Given the fact that many of Nigeria's arms purchases have been funded by secret military slush funds in the control of the Nigerian generals the arms to Nigeria affair is a ticking bomb in the basement of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

## Campaign launched for Nigerian embargo

Over 150 people participated in a meeting calling for a people's embargo for democracy in Nigeria in London on May 9th. Organised by African Liberation Solidarity Campaign and Campaign Against Arms Trade the meeting, which was 90% black, launched PEDEN, the "People's Embargo for Democracy In Nigeria".

That the Nigerian authorities have prevented the main speaker, Chima Ubani of the Civil Liberties Organisation Nigeria from flying out of Lagos to attend the meeting underscored the urgency of a campaign to stop Britain arming the military dictatorship.

PEDEN aims to link up with campaigners who are calling for an embargo on Shell Oil because of the companies role in exploiting the oil fields of the Ogoniland with the help of the military against the overwhelming opposition

of the Ogoni people whose main spokesperson, the writer, Ken Saro-Wiwa, is under arrest and being detained in the Port Harcourt military hospital.

In a letter to the Guardian last week Saro-Wiwa wrote of the murderous activities of the Nigerian military and Shell in the Ogoniland. "Ultimately the fault lies at the door of the British Government. It is the British Government which supplies arms and credit to the military dictators of Nigeria, knowing full well that all such arms will only be used against innocent unarmed civilians. It is the British Government which makes noises about democracy in Nigeria and Africa but supports military dictators to the hilt".

Enough said. PEDEN can be contacted at PO Box 256 London SE11 5TH. Tel: 0181-202-6292.

Affiliation is £25 Organisations, £10 Waged £5 Unwaged.

# "I just didn't know that I was that dangerous!"

HASSAN AHMED - a nationally-known leftwing Labour councillor in Nottingham - was recently expelled from the Labour Party. *Socialist Outlook* spoke to him.

**SO:** You came to England in the late 1970s. What had been your political experience in Pakistan?

I started out as General Secretary of the militant Punjab Workers Federation. After an IMF and World Bank intervention the government started a crackdown.

I can't remember a time between 1971 and 1978 when there wasn't quite a few of our comrades in prison. I spent just over three years in prison at different times.

I was never tried, never convicted - it was always detention, detention. The real crackdown came when General Zia came to power in 1977.

He brought in new draconian anti-labour laws. Mass protests took place and I was arrested. When I left Pakistan in 1978 I had nine charges against me. I went to a World Trades Union Congress in Geneva and never went back because I'd have been arrested.

**SO:** What were your hopes when you joined the Labour Party in Britain?

I joined the Labour Party in the early 1980s - very interesting times with the left organising around Tony Benn. Although I didn't know much about British politics, I saw the Party as a vehicle to fight against injustice and racism and to support the right kind of people to bring about change.

It was actually after talking to Alan Simpson, a local left activist and County Councillor, that I decided to join.

**SO:** You were instrumental in setting up the black sections in Nottingham. How successful do you think the black sections initiative was in encouraging black people to become active in the party and in shifting the



Protesting at racism in Nottingham: don't forget the fight against racism in the Labour Party!

views of the leadership on their involvement?

I was the national vice chair of the black sections for two years. I think the black sections were very successful in putting the black agenda at the forefront of British politics for the first time.

It forced the media and the leaderships of both Labour and the Tories to take the issue of racism seriously - black people were not prepared to accept the status quo, they wanted things to change.

The Labour Party had always received the support of all black people, afro-caribbean and asian because it was perceived to be a Party that fought against injustice, a Party of the poor and the oppressed.

And then we saw radical London Boroughs like Lambeth being led by a black woman Linda Bellos, and the setting up of Equal Opportunity and Race units, and the scrutiny of employment practices and service delivery.

All because of the black sections. First black people took to the streets and then the black sections gave the movement a voice.

**SO:** You have been a City Councillor in Nottingham. What is your assessment of your time on the Council?

As Chair of Personnel I was in-



Too radical for Labour's bureaucrats: Hassan Ahmed

involved in consultation with the trades unions. This was an interesting time because the Council was implementing CCT.

I made sure that not a single redundancy took place in the City Council. Even when people were transferred from one section to the other.

I developed the new training policy - it was the first time the City Council introduced a job sharing policy, the first time ever the introduction of the child care allowance and a work place nursery.

The Equal Opportunities Department which was resurrected followed by an Equal Opportunities post in every department of the City Council with a budget of £200,000.

We gave a very high profile to issues around race, disability, gender and restructured the consultation process with all of these groups.

We achieved a lot in those days.

When the Labour group decided to go hard on poll tax non-payers, I was the only member of the Labour Group voting against it. The person who led that attack was Graham Chapman, current leader of the Labour Group.

I could have voted against in the full Council Chamber and probably got kicked out - but I'm not a super fighter. And if there is a fight there's got to be a campaign, an organised fight, it can't be just a one person fight.

**SO:** You were suspended from

membership of the Party for three years and then expelled almost as soon as that time was up. Why has there been such a reaction against your involvement in the Party?

In the old Labour Group we had something like six Asian councillors and ten black councillors overall in the City Council. In the County we had seven or eight.

If you look at the record of those black members and you look at my record as a councillor then I think the white establishment and the power brokers will know that I am a dangerous person to live with.

They know that if I was allowed to get back into the Council this time after my three years suspension, they knew the kind of issues and alliances that could potentially be created with the left wing and the black communities.

I think that both MPs in Nottingham, John Heppell especially, felt threatened. I think it was a challenge to their power. The whole establishment joined hands including City, Council, MPs, and Party officials.

It's a myth that the Labour Party had somehow got over its racism and that it accepts black people as equal.

It only wants black people when they're not capable, when they're not articulate, when they don't pose a challenge, and when they haven't got their own agendas.

The moment they start talking their own language, start claiming

to be equal then they're not acceptable at all. And I think that's the main reason I've been punished and expelled from the Party.

I mean, the extent of the witch-hunt, this hate campaign against me - even I'm shocked. I just didn't know that I was that dangerous!

**Where do you think the struggle goes from here?**

There is a much wider witch-hunt going on against black people in general and people from Pakistani, Muslim backgrounds in particular.

They are the people who are facing the bleakest prospects today.

People in our communities are desperate to stand up and raise issues, get representation, get into the corridors of power and do something about it.

The social and cultural issues are very important.

These communities are very close knit, therefore their reliance on self-organisation is great. And that has shown itself in cities like Manchester, Birmingham, Bradford and Nottingham.

There are over two million people from Pakistani and Muslim backgrounds. And you don't have a single person in Parliament from those communities. From Asian backgrounds you have over three million.

Councillors and MPs who are currently sitting in their wards feel threatened. They've done is they've joined hands with the establishment to make sure that people like Gerald Kaufman and Roy Hattersley, Roger Godsiff and John Heppell remain as MPs.

The Labour Party has now formed this new membership abuse sub-committee at the NEC just to suppress this movement and ensure that Asian candidates don't get elected.

Communities need to stand together and fight. They cannot continue carrying on accepting this treatment and being treated as second class people.

**SO:** There has been some talk among black activists nationally about a National Black Party that stands in elections against the other major parties? What are your views on this?

If you're talking about a Black pressure Group which takes up and fights for the demands and issues relevant to the black communities locally or nationally then that's fine. It's all a part of black people's right to self-organisation.

But to form a political Party to contest elections - I'm certainly not in favour of that. I understand where its coming from, it's their frustration and their complete lack of confidence and trust in the system, but I don't think under the current political system that a separate black party would bring much progress for black people generally.

But if there was a system of proportional representation in Britain then I think there may be some justification for that.

FIGHTING RACISM

## Black Socialists back Hassan

A resolution denouncing the suspensions and expulsions nationally was passed unanimously by the Black Socialist Society's AGM in Birmingham on May 13.

The Nottingham campaign will be calling an organising meeting to set up a national campaign and a Conference prior to Labour Party conference in the Autumn.

The Black Socialist Society is active in 50 constituencies. Its

national membership is 2,000. Yet it is denied a seat on Labour's NEC until its membership reaches 5,000.

Hassan was on the Black Sections slate for the National Committee. The fact that he wasn't a delegate still didn't seem to stop people voting for him as the second runner-up after Mark Wadsworth.

Mike Penn and other white Labour Party officials present were not happy at all

## Biggest break-out in history

ALAN THORNETT reviews How the Blue Union came to Hull Docks by Keith Sinclair

ALL THE memories of the fight for militant rank and file organisation came back when reading Keith Sinclair's fascinating and well researched pamphlet on how the Blue Union came to the Hull docks in 1954.

The switch by 3,500 members of Arthur Deakin's right wing TGWU to the Blue Union, the National Amalgamated Stevedores & Dockers (NASD), came during an 11 day all out strike demanding the mechanical handling of grain, and was described by one of the dockers at the time as "the biggest jail break in history".

The move established the NASD, which had a long history on the Thames and which tended to be more open and democratic than the TGWU, in Hull and the main Northern Ports until its absorption into the TGWU in 1982.

The strike itself, 100 percent successful, was a reflection of the developing rank and file and shop stewards movement which was emerg-

ing in the ports and which would soon be reflected in other sectors such as cars and engineering and which was increasingly challenging the employers.

The pamphlet does not shrink from analysing the political forces involved in the strike and their influence in the move to the Blue.

It not only details the involvement of Birkenhead dockers in the strike - one of their leaders spoke at one of the mass meetings and pledged that they would follow Hull and join the Blue - but reveals that Gerry Healy, leader of the Trotskyist group which later became the Socialist Labour League, also addressed the meeting.

Sinclair quotes fellow Fourth Internationalist Bob Pennington, then a Liverpool NASD official and in Healy's group, as saying that the intervention of the Birkenhead delegation was decisive in the move out of the TGWU.

Whether this is so or not the Healy grouping built a strong base in the NASD, with several prominent dockers leaders as members. The main northern ports became better organised and more militant as a result of the launch of the Blue Union.

The pamphlet makes entertaining reading and is a welcome exercise in reviving the history of a local labour movement.

## Confronting the reality of domestic violence

HEDDWEN JONES reviews the *Brookside* trial

"WILL HE kiss me or punch me?" That was the question that best represented Mandy Jordache's fear of her husband's violence.

Brookside portrayed the reality of long term physical, sexual and emotional abuse. It depicted the growing desperation of two women trapped in a violent relationship.

Contrary to the common view of soap opera as insipid and escapist, the writers of Brookside have confronted a difficult and controversial issue with some courage.

The guilty verdict is a criticism of the whole operation of British justice and its treatment of women.

The 'body under the patio' story is a real achievement. The storyline's guilty decision climax was watched by a record nine million viewers. It has put domestic violence back in the headlines.

This is particularly important in the week Sara Thornton was allowed to appeal after being jailed for life following the killing of her partner. Emma Humphreys is currently in Holloway prison awaiting appeal.



An important counter-blast against sensationalist tabloids

The series is an important counterblast against sensationalist tabloid headlines about "woman takes revenge" and gory details of killings and abuse.

### Fear of discovery

Particularly apt was the series' long drawn out portrayal of the psychological violence inflicted on the women - the terror, panic and then awful

fear of discovery created a widespread sympathy for the characters.

The programme showed how there was no room in the British justice system for a manslaughter verdict. The judge had to impose heavy custodial sentences because the law offers no alternative.

Legal definitions of provocation, self defence and intent do not admit the experience of

women trapped and denied routes of escape - provocation is a key issue in the Sara Thornton case.

The script writers now face the challenge of the appeal. It remains to be seen whether they will stick to their guns and deny a happy resolution to the plot. Brookside has stretched the boundaries of soap opera - now they have to break them.

**Socialist Outlook welcomes readers' letters on any subject. Write to 'Feedback', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Letters over 300 words will be cut.**

# FeedBACK

## UVF front courted by Militant Labour

ON TUESDAY May 9 members of the Irish Committee for a Marxist Programme [Irish supporters of the Fourth International] attended one of the strangest and most disquieting meetings ever organised by a section of the socialist movement here.

The Belfast meeting entitled 'Is there a future for socialism?' was organised by Militant Labour, and included on the platform Billy Hutchinson of the PUP [Progressive Unionist Party].

This man has no place on

such a platform, or in such a debate. His party is simply a front organisation for the sectarian gangsters of the UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force] set up in attempt to by-pass the British ban on TV appearances by Republicans which indirectly effected Loyalist organisations.

The UVF has a horrific history of sectarian gangsterism. This stretches from the Malvern St murders through the Shankhill butchers to last September's attempt in Dublin's Connolly station.

More recently still, just before the publication of the Framework document, the PUP said that if it were not to their linking "all hell would break loose". We in the ICMP took this as a renewed threat of mass sectarian killing.

Not only are the UVF sectarian killers; even within the ranks of Loyalists they have been the most fanati-

cally right-wing. They have had the most extensive contact with British and European fascism.

Yet at the Militant Labour meeting Billy Hutchinson confided that he was a socialist! Not one member of Militant Labour contradicted him. In fact Peter Hadden, the Militant Labour spokesperson, said that everyone in the meeting believed in socialism - endorsing Hutchinson's preposterous claim. A member of Militant Labour then asked if the PUP would participate in a "conference of socialists" with a view to creating a workers' party in Northern Ireland. Needless to say, the PUP accepted.

We can only ask with the poet; "What strange creature shuffles towards Bethlehem to be born?"

The ICMP has been concerned for some time at the rightward lurch within Militant Labour and at their deci-

sion to partition themselves into Northern and Southern Irish parties, but this latest stunt - from an organisation that claims to stand in the Marxist tradition of Lenin and Trotsky - goes well beyond anything acceptable even in the widest definition of socialism.

Militant Labour have made a terrible mistake. They are confusing right-wing workerist populism with socialism. In doing so they endanger themselves, their own members and cause grave concern among socialist groups in contact with them. More importantly they cause of-fence to masses of Catholic workers and many Protestant workers by endorsing forces that have always opposed the independent non-sectarian organisation of working people.

Militant Labour have a lot of explaining to do. We would like to hear their explanations and we would welcome the opportunity to publicly debate with them. In the meantime we have no option but to sound the alarm bell for the members of Militant Labour, for Irish socialists and for the broad international movement of socialism.

**Irish Committee for a Marxist Programme, Belfast**

## Morals and revolution

I WAS astonished by Enzo Traverso's article on morality (SO 82). The article starts off talking about Marxism and materialism. It ends up in the dizzy realm of humanist idealism.

Perhaps this explains why Traverso has recently written a very complimentary book about religion.

Whilst it is possible to agree with the criticisms of the Bolshevik's excessive measures, his conclusions are all wrong. He suggests that some of the 'amoral' Bolshevik acts helped 'foster the rise of Stalinism'.

What Traverso doesn't do is to show how it was the material conditions (Russia's isolation and civil war) which gave rise both to Stalinism and to the clamp-down by the Bolsheviks. Traverso is turning an effect into a cause.

Secondly, the equation with Nicaragua really backfires. One of the reasons that the revolution failed is precisely because the Sandinistas chose bourgeois humanism (we are all dignified) over working class morality.

The Contras used all of their granted freedoms to crush the progressive aspirations of the government. The key question is therefore not

what morals/freedom, but whose morals/freedom?

Unfortunately the class struggle is not a dignified human conflict. This means that the workers have to take the military initiative.

We do not simply wage a defensive struggle and then claim the moral high ground. In the meantime thousands will have been massacred by the other side. Such was the case in Nicaragua and Chile.

Of course I am not advocating massacres or glorifying violence. But there are questions - like Kronstadt, which are military necessities.

Likewise, in times of struggle, the death penalty becomes a practical rather than a straight moral issue. And we should never advocate freedom of expression to counter-revolutionaries.

True we are fighting for a Marxist society without one person dominating another. But first we must go through the transition of the dictatorship of the proletariat where the workers do dominate the bourgeois elements.

To skip this phase is again to counterpose an idealism to historical reality and necessity. Regrettably, we cannot impose the ideal today. Morals are a product of what is going on in the world and must go through the class struggle first.

**Joe Nalrn, Bath**

REVIEWS

# Socialist OUTLOOK

INSIDE:  
8-page  
trade union  
review

## Last chance to mount coordinated national action

# PRESSURE FOR ACTION ON NHS PAY

LAST – but not least, UNISON, the biggest NHS union, has now added its voice to the unanimous chorus of organisations rejecting the Tories' insulting one percent pay offer.

A prolonged consultation exercise in UNISON branches throughout the country has shown that health workers have grasped the need to throw out locally-negotiated deals – even where they appear to top up the increase to three percent.

Many of the Trusts with whom they would have to settle want to add productivity strings to help cover the costs of the deal. And even where the full three percent has been offered locally *without* strings, the acceptance of a deal with an individual Trust means the end of national pay agreements, leaving each Trust workforce isolated in future negotiations on pay and conditions.

That's why the Tories have been so determined to separate out the one percent payment from the 'top up'. But in trying to force home a new structure that would weaken the health unions it has succeeded only in antagonising health workers across the board.

### 99 percent

It takes the special political talents of Health Minister Gerry Malone – the man who urged Margaret Thatcher to bring in the Poll Tax in Scotland and England at once – to have turned the docile donkeys of the Royal College of Nursing into ferocious tigers mobilising 99 percent of conference delegates to vote to drop their no-strike pledge and to adopt a resounding vote of no confidence in him.

The sudden radicalisation of the RCN and RCM has now turned the heat on UNISON, whose leaders had plainly been hoping to be dragged kicking and smiling into an RCN-led sell-out.

The TUC-affiliated union must at



least match the militancy of the Royal Colleges and professional bodies if it is not to face a wholesale defection of demoralised members.

### Ballot

So far the leadership has been less than dynamic. Months after the original offer stirred the anger of health workers UNISON is still debating whether or not to ballot for strike action.

Yet the issue, overlapping as it does with the fight against hospital

closures, offers an opportunity for a high-profile and popular fight in which the Tories would be isolated. Unless the national pay agreements are defended, this could be the last chance for nationally co-ordinated action on NHS pay.

UNISON should be at the vanguard, not the tail end of the campaign. Its health branches must be convinced they will find full support from socialists in mounting a fightback against the Tories.