

# Socialist OUTLOOK

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Thousands march for free education

# Students lead the fightback

THOUSANDS of students marched through cities all over Britain on November 1 in protest against plans by the New Labour government to scrap student grants and impose £1,000 per year tuition fees.

In many areas the turnout was the biggest by students for 20 years, and is a promising preparation for the National Demonstration called for November 26 by the Campaign for Free Education – though the CFE march is being built by campaigners without NUS support.

But the anti-fees protest also has a wider significance: it is the first organised fightback by any group against the policies of New Labour, and it represents a challenge to the brutal Tory logic behind the government policy.

Platform speakers (including Diane Abbott MP) have warned that the attack on free education is the "thin end of the wedge". They are right.

The students are not simply fighting for their own interests: the reforms will mainly hit younger students still at school. Their prompt and militant rejection of Blair's policies underlines the need for the workers' movement to prepare now for action to defend the welfare state against Labour's lethal combination of "unthinkable" new reforms and old-style Tory spending cuts.



# Róisín: the ordeal drags on

Veronica Fagan

THE GERMAN government are still seeking the extradition of Róisín McAliskey in connection with the bombing seventeen months ago of the Osnabruck barracks.

Róisín is still in the mother and baby unit of a London psychiatric hospital, where she gave birth five months ago to her daughter, Loinnir. Doctors have advised that she is not well enough to appear in court.

Róisín is suffering from severe post traumatic stress disorder as a result of her experiences at the hands of the RUC in Castlereagh and the British prison system.

On September 30, stipendiary magistrate Nicolas Evans refused to make an extradition order in Róisín's absence. He made clear that he would have granted the order had she been there, but would not do so without her presence and ordered her to appear for the next hearing.

Both Róisín's lawyer and counsel for the German government were prepared for the order to go ahead without Róisín in court. In-

deed it would have been helpful to Róisín if things had proceeded this way, as then she would have been able to either appeal to the High Court or apply to a judicial review.

The eventual say will lie with Home Secretary, Jack Straw. Instead of moving towards these targets, Róisín is stuck in a very destructive limbo.

Bernadette McAliskey said afterwards "This is just getting crazier and crazier by the minute. Now we cannot get this out of court. Meanwhile this is all affecting my daughter's health. I think she will be very seriously set back by the proceedings."

An attempt by Gareth Pierce, Róisín's lawyer, to persuade the magistrate to move the hearing to the hospital where Róisín was staying failed on October 23, the date of the subsequent court sitting. Róisín's case will be considered again on November 10.

The German arrest warrant relies on the evidence of an eye witness who has since retracted his statement - on German television.



Support for Róisín from Birmingham campaigners who picketed in Victoria Square on September 30

It also ignores the fact that two other eye witnesses have always denied that Róisín could have been 'Beth', the woman they saw.

Equally important, no investigation has been carried out into Róisín's alibi.

The reality is that there are a gaggle of witnesses who have signed statements which confirm that far from being in Germany at the time of the bombing, Róisín was at work in Dunganon.

None of these and many more points in Róisín's favour can be raised in court - the extradition

proceedings do not consider evidence.

Jack Straw won't look at them either, if the case ever gets to him, and may well be more concerned with not upsetting the German government.

How much can it take to secure the release of an innocent young woman against whom there is no evidence?

A lot if she's Irish - and perhaps more if she's the daughter of Bernadette McAliskey. The campaign must be stepped up as many notches as it takes.

## CS Spray - Ban it now!

Simon Deville

IN MARCH 1996, Ibrahima Sey, a 29 year old Gambian was arrested in Forest Gate and taken to Ilford police station.

Two weeks after tests of the spray began, he was sprayed with the gas whilst laying face down in the police station with his hands cuffed behind his back.

A year and a half later the inquest decided that he was unlawfully killed. The Crown Prosecution Service still has not even decided whether any of the officers concerned will even face charges.

Shortly after the result of the inquest, Jack Straw announced that he had looked at the evidence and was confident CS spray was safe, and will continue to be used. The only evidence that has been given to support this claim is tests of CS gas held in Derry 26 years ago. These tests were conducted in open air aimed at "dealing with public disorder". The report stated that the principle danger was where CS gas was used in confined spaces.

The CS Spray currently being used by police has not been tested in conjunction with its solvent MIBK, and is in a much more concentrated form (in fact it is 25 times stronger than that used in a number of US states, which have also resulted in deaths).

In addition to pursuing Ibrahima's case and demanding that the officers concerned be brought to justice, the Ibrahima Sey Memorial Campaign and Newham Monitoring Project have initiated a national campaign calling for CS spray to be banned from use permanently. The campaign has set up a national telephone line to record incidents where the police have used the spray.

To record any incidents or to affiliate to the campaign contact:

Newham Monitoring Project, PO Box 273, London E7 or telephone 0181 - 555 8151

# Gypsies face immigration crisis

Mark Janson

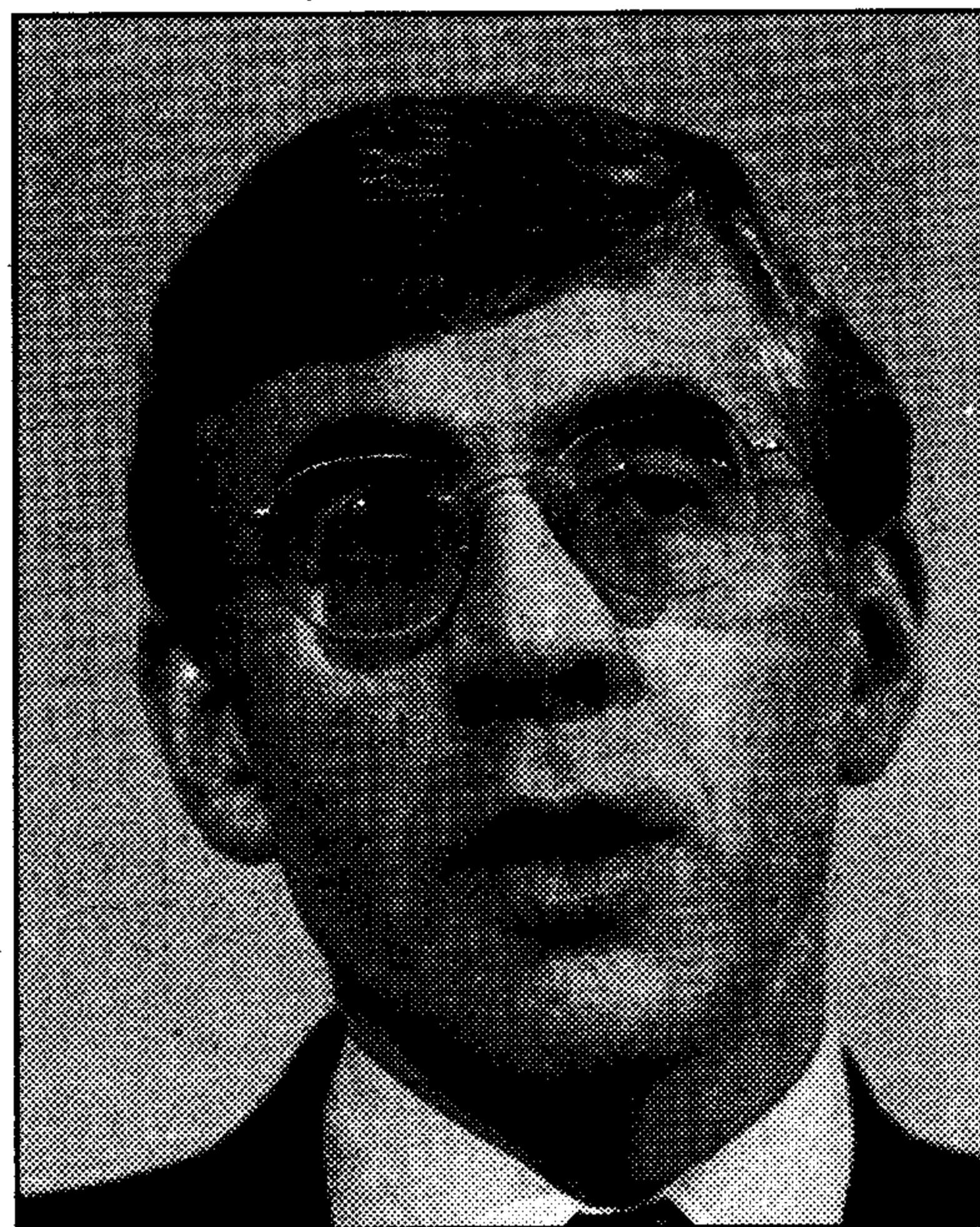
GYPSIES facing persecution in the Czech republic, Slovakia and Albania are facing a crisis. It isn't however, the crisis reported by the British media.

In the middle of October almost all the press and TV channels reported that Dover was being "swamped" by Eastern European gypsies seeking asylum in Britain.

In news stories that might be more at home in a far right pamphlet, they claimed that a television programme in the Czech republic had encouraged an influx of gypsies by showing the life of luxury they could live on in the British benefits system.

The reality of the situation shows a completely different picture. Over the last two years around 400 eastern European gypsies have sought asylum in Britain. Many families have been broken up and thrown into detention centres or deported.

Many more are forced to try and live on hand outs of food parcels



Stepping into Michael Howard's shoes? Home Secretary Jack Straw, custodian of racist laws

from charity donations. Those lucky enough to get benefits don't even get the poverty income that unemployed British nationals do.

Those that the Home Office allows to work in Britain are often denied the necessary documentation that proves to employers that they have that right. Far from being the first choice of destination for those fleeing persecution, Britain is much nearer to being a last resort.

Whilst in opposition the Labour Party pledged that it would review the notorious Immigration and Asylum Act and that if it could be shown that it was more expensive than putting asylum seekers on benefits then they would change the legisla-

tion. Numerous reports have shown that the current chaotic system is twice as expensive to administer than benefits, yet the Labour

leadership have remained silent.

Whilst the National Assistance Act and the Children's Act give local authorities a legal responsibility to provide the bare minimum of support to asylum seekers who are destitute, the financial responsibility has been pushed onto ever decreasing social services budgets.

Rather than demanding that central government should provide adequate support for asylum seekers, Kent County Council has simply demanded that something is done to stop gypsies seeking asylum in Britain in the first place.

They have asked the Slovak government for assurances that it would issue a statement discouraging asylum seekers from coming to Britain.

This racist response has clearly helped to fuel further bigotry against gypsies living in the area. If rumours that the National Front are planning a demonstration in the area prove true they will have been aided in this by both the press and the government.

# Firmin Gnali must stay in Britain

FIRMIN GNALI is an Ivorian asylum seeker currently facing deportation. The Home Office turned down his final leave to appeal in May of this year. The only chance of overturning that decision is through a judicial review.

Since Ivory Coast gained formal independence from France in the 1960s, it has remained under a military dictatorship,

propped up by the French government. Firmin campaigned for democracy in the Ivory Coast through the FPI (Front Populaire Ivoirien) and through the FESCI (Federation Etudiante et Scolaire de Cote d'Ivoire).

In 1991 and 1992 Firmin was arrested, detained and tortured for his political activities and in 1993 he lost his teaching job and was forced into hiding. He

fled the country in that year and arrived in Britain in January 1994 when he made his original asylum application. Since living in Britain Firmin has been working as an actor and musician with the Banner Theatre, a socialist theatre group.

Kidnappings, arbitrary arrests, torture and corruption are rife in the Ivorian dictatorship.

If Firmin Gnali is deported his

life may well be in danger as a result of his past political activity. Firmin Gnali Support Group is demanding that Firmin be given full refugee status and that all racist Immigration and Asylum legislation be scrapped.

Firmin Gnali Support Group c/o Friends Institute, 220 Mosley Road, Highgate, Birmingham. B12 0DG



## Lessons for left in SLP failure

## Crisis in the court of King Arthur

Dave Hudson

LAUNCHED at the wrong time, in the wrong way and with the wrong kind of politics and organisation, it is not surprising that the SLP approaches its December conference in what is probably a terminal crisis.

Only two years after its launch, the party has failed to capitalise on its modest election results, and is now riven by internal strife. These bitter divisions have nothing in common with the vigorous debate which would be a feature of any healthy, democratic socialist organisation.

On the contrary, they are the self-inflicted wounds of a leadership intent on maintaining control by trampling on the democratic rights of its members.

*Socialist Outlook* criticised the premature launch of the SLP just prior to the general election. We made the point that the working class and its vanguard would turn out in their millions to vote Labour to get rid of the hated Tory Government; any candidates standing to the left of the Labour Party would get badly squeezed.

We argued that socialists should maintain a united front approach against the Tories, ensuring a hearing in the working class for our criticisms of New Labour.

However, it would have been entirely possible for the SLP to recover from these and other mistakes, if it had maintained an open, non-sectarian and collaborative approach to other socialist forces, and developed a democratic internal regime. It is now clear that this is not to be.

From the beginning the SLP was a botched job. It was launched unilaterally by a small group of people around Arthur Scargill without any consultation with broader forces on the left in the Labour Party, trade

unions or Marxist left.

Nonetheless, many socialists, frustrated and demoralised by the seemingly inexorable march of Tony Blair's New Labour to the right, welcomed Scargill's launch of a new workers' party.

## Great Expectations

"Like many other people who joined the SLP," writes Councillor Ian Driver, in his recent resignation letter, "I had great expectations of the party. I naively believed that the SLP would break the mould of leftwing politics in this country and provide a unique and much needed opportunity to regroup socialists on a non-sectarian basis.

"I thought the SLP would become a vibrant, broad-based organisation that would welcome socialists from different traditions and provide a forum for the discussion of new ideas ... Unfortunately, none of this happened."

Ian, along with many others a campaigner for democracy in the SLP, found instead a regime that revealed itself to be worse than the Labour Party. In fact it had more in common with the old Stalinist parties, or with the monstrous caricature that was the WRP.

"In particular I am sickened" Ian writes, "by the lack of internal democracy in the SLP. ... political debate is actively stifled and, where members do succeed in discussing politics, any ideas expressed contrary to those of the leadership are stamped on."

Ian, who is a respected militant



No fan of internal democracy: Scargill

and member of Southwark Council in South London, accuses Scargill and his cronies of "a total disregard for democratic rights," and of "authoritarian intolerance." He complains of threatening letters from Scargill or his henchmen to members, demanding explanations for this or that misdemeanour.

## Expelled

Members were expelled under the guise that they were never really members, or because they were behind in their dues (even when they wanted to pay). No evidence against them is shown, and any right to appeal is denied.

At the same time Scargill is quite happy, according to Ian and others who have been forced out, to associate with disreputable elements who have resorted to violence against party members, or who have pub-



China Syndrome: Stalinist politics in SLP led to it recently publishing an article endorsing the Beijing bureaucrats' 1989 Tiananmen massacre of workers and students

licly espoused homophobic views.

It comes as no surprise therefore that the upcoming SLP Conference will be less than democratic. Anyone seen as a threat to the Scargill leadership team has been excluded from standing for the NEC; branch resolutions to conference are vetted for content and rejected out of hand.

In an interview in the *Weekly Worker* (October 2 1997), Ian says that he thinks the left in the SLP, organised around the Revolutionary Platform and the Campaign for a Democratic SLP, is fighting a losing battle. It seems they may leave after the conference because of continued attacks on their democratic rights. He also believes that there is no future for the SLP as it presently exists and the party will collapse within a year.

What kind of party does the working class need?

Ian Driver intends to continue work with others on the left who are in favour of regrouping. He argues that "there are a growing number who are coming to the idea that the left needs a new organisation. ... We need to look at this whole question in a new way. It goes back to the break-up of Stalinism. Socialists now realise that organisations must be set up on a democratic basis, without dictatorial bureaucracy".

Conditions are rapidly maturing for ruptures and upheavals in the workers' movement. Scargill's SLP

is just the first manifestation of this process. There remain differences in analysis as to the tempo, but for the first time since 1945 a recomposition of the workers' movement is posed.

The economic conditions for Labourist reformism have been eroded by intensified competition on a global scale, with big capital engaged in a spiral of mergers and takeovers, demanding more de-regulation and drastic public spending cuts. The Maastricht process and EMU are the political form of this.

This process is reinforced by the collapse of Stalinism which has removed an important post-war pressure, the ruling class feels it no longer needs to concede expensive welfare provision to the working class.

Blair's New Labour government has been long in preparation for this scenario, and will lead to a dramatic collision with the working class. For the first time since the war, the conditions are being created for major splits within the workers' movement.

## Wake up call

It is essential that the left in the Labour Party and the unions, ends its sleepwalking. If a new party of the working class is to develop, it is essential that it is politically prepared. This is the first lesson of the SLP fiasco. Secret talks involving a few chosen people behind closed doors have an inevitable bureaucratic result. Learning the lessons of the SLP means rejecting pompous (and sectarian) self-declarations either by vainglorious leaders, or a gaggle of tiny groups, with small forces.

A new party means bringing together, in an open and democratic framework and based initially on a limited action programme, broad class struggle forces from the Labour and trade union movement, the social movements, radical youth and the far-left.

It is only size, social and political weight which can impose a sense of responsibility, order and procedure on such an initially diverse political formation, not the bureaucratic jack-boot.

*Socialist Outlook* believes such a party will only emerge out of big working class battles with the Labour government. But the existence of a broad vanguard of the class which is politically prepared for such an eventuality and able to give leadership can ensure its success.

We would enthusiastically build such a party and argue within its democratic structure for the adoption at a future conference of a more fully developed revolutionary programme.

## Turn again, Livingstone?

## Like it or not, Blair's team prepares to railroad in elected London mayor

Veronica Fagan

THE LONDON Labour movement must wake up quickly to what Blair has in store for us in terms of London government.

A directly elected mayor, a small and ineffective assembly and no tax raising powers is not a package that can rescue England's capital from the decay into which it is increasingly falling.

Sadly the so-called consultative conference of the Greater London Labour Party on October 12 was largely a missed opportunity to begin really to debate out an alternative to this nonsense and to bring together activists from the unions and Labour Party who want to campaign for a meaningful referendum in May next year.

The conference itself was a farce. It was called by Labour Party full-timers desperate for supportive murmurings after the Greater London Labour Party Executive had constantly opposed the proposals coming from Millbank.

It was badly organised - so much so that many constituency Labour Parties did not receive the paper work. Most crucially it was not set up to take any votes.

## No votes

Despite the valiant efforts of the London MSF delegation and others no votes were taken. While it was clear that this was the intention of the platform it was a significant defeat that not enough noise was made to overturn them on this crucial question.

It was clear that there was a sig-

nificant majority at the conference against a separately elected Mayor and for a bigger assembly with more powers.

Many seemed sympathetic to the need for a multi-question referendum to allow these choices to be made. At this stage however many of these forces were less fired with the sense of urgency about these issues which made the top table so determined to prevent them having an effective say.

This state of affairs must be rapidly turned round. It is positive that the Greater London Association of Trades Councils (GLATC), together with Ken Livingstone has launched a campaign for a multi-question referendum.

However despite their good intentions GLATC does not have either the resources or the political

nous to fight the high profile campaign that is so desperately needed without significant involvement from all of the major unions. Political activists - whether Labour Party members or not - and community groups must also be central to the project.

## Priority

This issue has got to be a major priority for everyone in London over the next six months.

Socialists outside London should not rest on their laurels either, as it has become increasingly clear that the model of elected mayors will be extended to all major cities if New Labour are able to get away with it in London.

# Labour Conference 97 Why unions sold out on Blair's Partnership fraud

**Pete Firmin**

EVERYTHING at Labour Party Conference went according to Blair's plan.

Conference delivered a 'yes' vote on 'Partnership in Power' with its demolition of Party democracy (with around 30 per cent of votes cast against).

Most contentious issues were kept off the agenda, and even if they weren't, then the movers agreed to remit rather than rock the boat. Blair himself delivered a very eloquent, cleverly crafted speech which said virtually nothing.

The exception to this smooth running was the National Executive Committee election results. Not only did Ken Livingstone beat Peter Mandelson by a substantial margin for the vacancy, but the proportion of the vote obtained by the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs slate increased from 31 per cent to 39 per cent.

Blair had the trade union leaders to thank for such a 'successful' conference. John Edmonds of the GMB, speaking on Partnership in Power, said he didn't support the proposals but the GMB would not be voting against them, and went on to say, parodying Blair's speech to the TUC, "we're watching you Tony".

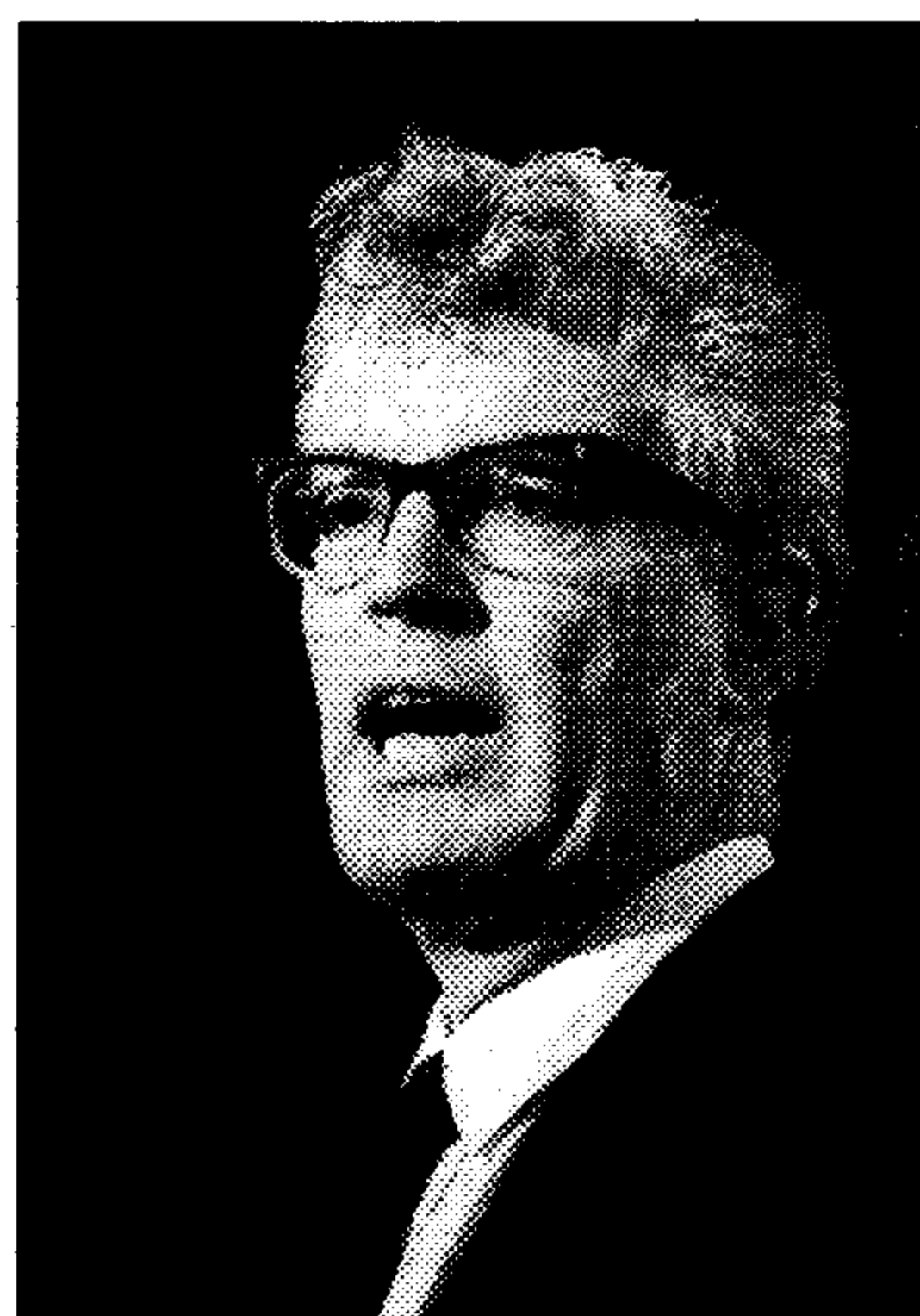
## Concessions

Union leaders did not want to oppose 'Partnership in Power' because they calculated it would endanger any concessions from the government on union rights. However, they then ensured that the composites on this issue contained nothing to upset Blair - no figure on the minimum wage, nothing on the anti-union laws.

The TGWU representatives at compositing (Bill Morris among them) even insisted that resolutions on the Liverpool dockers - echoing the policy passed at TGWU conference - be excluded from the composite. The union leaders dropped their demands on the Labour government even before entering negotiations.

Where resolutions were debated which posed uncomfortable questions for the government - on student tuition fees, arms sales to Indonesia, Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in the NHS - union leaders readily agreed to remit them to the NEC.

Even a left union delegation, the RMT, eventually remitted their resolution on PFI in the rail industry, having been convinced that they should only put it to the vote if they could win.



Backing down without any fight: UNISON's Rodney Bickerstaffe

They reasoned that remitting was better than having it voted down, ignoring the fact that remission means the NEC simply bins resolutions it doesn't like. In fact it would have had a reasonable chance of being passed.

The only close call for Blair was on Trident, where the vote went 53-47 against the resolution for scrapping it.

Beyond the stage management, the lengthy speeches by ministers, the now routine intimidation of delegates, what does this year's Labour Party conference say about the state of the movement?

The adoption of Partnership in Power makes it virtually impossible for the labour movement to hold the government to account - it removes the ability of unions and CLPs to submit resolutions critical of the actions of the government.

It also ends the right of individual members to elect MPs to the NEC, and downgrades the NEC as compared to a new committee, the Joint Policy Committee with an in-built Cabinet majority.

Union leaders were happy to go along with this - and overturn their own conferences' policy in the process - because it doesn't upset the main "link" they are concerned about. Their ability to have cosy chats with Labour ministers remains unscathed. They dislike the ability of their membership to hold them to account just as much as Blair does.

## General Secretaries

Some on the Labour Left refuse to recognise this conflict of interest, simply denouncing 'the unions' for their voting records in the Labour Party. This comes mainly from those around the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, whose concept of 'winning support in the unions' usually consists of writing to General Secretaries.

They prefer to share platforms with left (or not-so-left) General



New Labour still relies on the Old Bill to keep a beady eye on members. Are the snaps passed on to Millbank?

Secretaries to linking up with, and being a part of, the oppositions within the unions fighting for a change of policy and attempting to call those leaders to account.

Some have taken the NEC result as a signal of a resurgence of the Labour Left, overshadowing the adoption of Partnership in Power. This view often comes from those, like Ken Livingstone himself, who said in advance that Partnership in Power would signal the end of the Labour Party.

The problem with this analysis is twofold. Firstly, it sees those voting for the Campaign Group slate as a coherent force, whereas many are members who have become inactive because of despair at the drift of the Party.

Secondly, and more important, it assumes that simply organising to win the Constituency section of the NEC will change the balance of forces. This strategy is incoherent even in its own terms - the CLP section of the new NEC will only be about a quarter of a body being downgraded anyway. Victory in the CLP section of the NEC elections would change nothing on its

own.

In order to achieve such a result in the NEC elections, some are talking of the need for a very broad alliance indeed. They cite the joint effort with Labour Reform around Partnership in Power and say this needs to be repeated.

## No policies

However, Labour Reform is not - and does not claim to be - an organisation of the Left. If anything it is a section of the old Labour right. They do not have policy positions beyond the ones they took on Partnership in Power, and individuals freely admit they voted for the scrapping of Clause IV.

In order to enter into a joint election campaign with Labour Reform - which represents very little on the ground - the Left would have to drop any idea of campaigning on key policy issues.

The work with Labour Reform around Partnership in Power was not without its problems. Labour Reform were not prepared to oppose the changes, but only to call for deferral because of lack of time to discuss them.

A section of the Left went along with this, not as a fallback position if outright opposition fell, but as their main argument. Deferral was, however, never likely to win support in the unions, and opportunities were missed to argue the case for rejection of the changes, leaving the General Secretaries an easier task in their arm twisting.

Those who want to challenge Blair's capitalist policies will put questions of NEC slates in their rightful context - the need to be part of the opposition to those policies through demonstrations, strikes etc. This strategy can also motivate those who vote for the Left within the Party to become active again.

Unity needs to be forged in action between Party activists and campaigners outside; those in single issue campaigns and other political groups.

The Labour left needs to find ways of openly participating in the developing debate around how to forge an alternative to Blair - an alternative that will be constructed in practice but must also have an organisational form.

# Defend the Strasbourg 4!

FOUR Labour members of the European Parliament - Ken Coates, Hugh Kerr, Michael Hindley and Alex Falconer - have been suspended from the European Parliamentary Labour Party.

The Labour Party leadership demanded that all Euro-MPs sign an undertaking not to publicly discuss the system to be employed for the Euro-elections next year. The four refused and were subsequently suspended, although they are still expected to abide by the Labour whip!

Jack Straw has now produced the white paper proposing that the election takes place by the 'closed list' system. This gives the electorate no say in their preference within a Party list, and gives the party hierarchy absolute control not only over who is on the Party list, but what order they rank in.

This system has not been adopted openly by the Labour Party, nor has there been the promised 'national discussion' of voting systems. Blair's hope is that if he can get this adopted



Under the Millbank cosh: Ken Coates

for European elections eliminating dissident MEPs like the four and others, it will be much easier for him to centrally determine candidates for the next British parliamentary elections, removing many Left MPs at a stroke.

The four (apparently soon to be joined by several more) must be defended on the grounds of basic democratic rights. Party members at all levels must have the right to speak out against policy they disagree with.

Blair's intolerance of any opposition must be fought even when we don't agree with the criticism being made, such as when Llew Smith opposed the campaign for a 'yes' vote in the Welsh referendum.

There is an attempt across the labour movement (see elsewhere on UNISON) to silence critics, and socialists have to defend the right to speak out and to organise support.

Trade union and LP bodies should pass resolutions condemning the suspension of the four.

## Fighting on for welfare state

**DEFENDING** health, education and welfare services will be at the centre of resistance to the new Labour government: and the only campaign which sets out to link and organise campaigning on all these issues, the Welfare State Network, held a successful AGM conference on October 18.

Over 200 activists and campaigners heard Tony Benn open the conference with a warning that the destruction of the welfare state would take us back to the horrors of Victorian times, and call for "the biggest united campaign possible".

There was lively discussion in workshops on topics including the Welfare to Work policy, fighting NHS cuts, defending schools, opposing student fees, rejecting "Mad" Frankie Field's threatened pension reforms, and building on the summer's Euromarch campaign to battle against unemployment throughout the EU.

A strengthened Steering Committee was elected, drawn from a wide political spectrum, and the WSN pledged among other things to organise a conference in defence of the NHS for campaigners and health workers, to be held in early March.

The WSN record of activity and political debate contrasts vividly with the sterile, bureaucratic posturing of Ken Livingstone's "Campaign to Defend the Welfare State", which meets only once a year in a tightly stage-managed event dominated by platform bigwigs, makes no attempt to build local campaigning activity, and has steadfastly rebuffed all the efforts of the WSN to establish joint work.

■ Contact the WSN c/o 183 Queen's Crescent, London NW5 4DS. 0171-639-5068

# Cash handout too small to end NHS shambles

**Harry Sloan**

LABOUR ministers continue to dig themselves further into the Tory-created crisis in the NHS.

The belated acknowledgement that Kenneth Clarke's cash limits were set to cause a disaster in front-line services this winter led to the announcement of an additional, one-off injection of £300 million.

Although a welcome concession, and a considerable extra amount to be spent in just six months, we should bear in mind that the combined debts of Trusts and Health Authorities are projected at around £700m, and Health Minister Alan Milburn has declared that all these bodies must now balance their books by April 1 - effectively calling for deeper and more rapid cuts in almost every area.

Health Secretary Frank Dobson insisted that the extra money would be targeted to ensure that emergency services remained open through the winter months, and to speeding the discharge of elderly patients from hospital beds.

Unfortunately the support of frail elderly patients after their discharge falls on council social services, many of which are still slashing back services as part of 1997/98 budget cuts averaging £2.5 million per authority. Some have already run out of money to support elderly patients in residential or nursing homes: Oxfordshire alone has a waiting list of 100, which is predicted to double as £10m is cut from social service spending over two years.

In fact nobody has yet received any of the extra NHS cash. A third of the money has been earmarked to pay off overspends on GP prescribing budgets, leaving relatively small amounts in each region, for which health authorities had to submit detailed "bids" by November 1, consuming even more time and energy.

This process could leave whole areas receiving none of the extra



cash, while even those which win out will get relatively little compared with the deficits they face. Oxfordshire is £10m in the red, Worcestershire £18m, and individual Trusts are looking at massive cuts: as Wellhouse Trust and Forest Healthcare in north London each face cuts of £7m and £5m.

These immense financial pressures are driving wholesale bed closures, cuts in waiting list services and complex Trust "mergers" which will close still more front-line beds. In South West London alone more than 200 beds have closed since last winter, bringing the danger of even longer agony on trolleys for patients requiring emergency admission this winter.

Meanwhile the defensive and secretive attitude of the new government on health policy issues is underlined by the refusal to publish the report of the Independent Review into London's NHS commissioned during the summer by Alan Milburn.

The report, completed on October 31, has been given directly to ministers, who have said they will not publish it until at least January, although it is expected that selective "leaks" to trusted journalists (quite possibly the *Guardian*, which supports the closure of London hospitals) will enable them to test public reaction to any controversial proposals.

The delay will mean even more beds will already have closed before the report is unveiled: already the promised "moratorium" on London hospital closures has become a laughing stock, with Queen Mary's, Roehampton, Guy's Hospital and Queen Elizabeth's children's hospital all rushed towards closure while the Review panel was deliberating.

London Health Emergency has urged the immediate publication of the London Review, and warned of the dire consequences if any further acute hospital beds are allowed to close in the capital.

LHE has also urged Trusts and health authorities to regard the extra £300m as a mandate overspend where necessary to ensure that services are maintained - and send the bill to Alan Milburn.

The climate of cuts and crisis is likely to increase the frustration and anger of NHS staff when their pay round begins early next year. Labour could yet find that their attempt to uphold Tory spending limits lights the fuse to public sector militancy.

## Ignore these doctors' orders!

THE TOTAL political naivete of NHS consultants is underlined by two recent reports calling for fewer, bigger hospitals.

One is published by the Royal College of Surgeons and the other by the BMA.

The RCS calls for general hospitals to serve much larger catchment populations. Their plans could halve the number of acute hospitals.

But while they call for more consultants, the Royal College do not even mention the numbers of beds that would be needed: as a result, their proposals are being eagerly exploited by Trust and health authority bosses seeking to cut costs through mergers and bed closures.

There is a real danger that these abstract and impractical ideas could trigger even greater cutbacks in beds - reducing hospitals to no more than emergency care.

# Demonstrate against unemployment in Luxembourg

**Glen Voris**

EUROPEAN Union Employment Ministers are holding a 'Social Summit' to discuss how to implement the measures on employment that were agreed at the Amsterdam Summit in June.

These measures are extremely weak and did not contain any extra spending to create jobs. On the other hand the Amsterdam Treaty incorporated both the Maastricht Treaty and the Dublin Stability Pact with all their austerity measures in preparation for the European single currency scheduled to start on January 1 1999.

These measures require all governments in the European Union to reduce their budget deficits, and is resulting in huge cuts in welfare, education and health spending.



Renault workers joined the 50,000 on the march through Amsterdam

All of this adds to Europe's existing estimated total of 20 million unemployed and 50 million living in poverty. Gordon Brown remains committed to Maastricht

and Amsterdam even though he says he doesn't intend to take Britain into EMU just yet - which is why he has made it clear that many more cuts are on their way.

The fightback has begun. Over the last two years we have seen a massive wave of strikes and demonstrations across Europe.

French lorry drivers are back in the news again as Jospin tries to wriggle out of the concessions made by the previous government last time round.

The Prodi government in Italy may have survived this time but this doesn't mean all is plain sailing from now on either for them or any other European government.

Between April and June last year the Euromarches against Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Social Exclusion marched across 17 European countries calling for jobs and welfare, culminating in a 50,000 strong demonstration in Amsterdam and forcing unemployment onto the European

agenda.

The CGT, the main trade union federation in France, has called for a massive demonstration in Luxembourg on November 20 to demand real measures to combat unemployment - including the introduction of a 35 hour week across Europe.

Not wanting to be left behind again, the European Trade Union Congress (which includes the British TUC) has backed the call.

The Euromarch campaign, including activists from Britain is supporting this action.

Measures are being taken to get sympathetic labour movement bodies to organise transport, including for unemployed people. For further details or to book a seat ring: Glen Voris, St Helen's TUC Resource Centre on 01744 755889

# Youth face New (Slave) Labour Raw Deal for young jobless

George Thompson

In April 1998 youth unemployed for six months or more will be forced to join Labour's employment scheme, New Deal or lose their dole.

The supposed aim of New Deal is to remove a generation from the unemployment register but its likely result is to create a cheap pool of labour.

The government is spending £3.5 billion on the programme, but very little money will reach the pockets of the young participants. Most of it will go in huge handouts to bosses to subsidise them for employing young jobless at pay little more than their Job Seekers Allowance.

It has been trumpeted that the jobless participants will have four options under New Deal, but this is a myth. Full-time education/training option for up to 12 months will really only be open to youth who have qualifications below N/SVQ Level 2.

## Environment

Another option of working full time for your JSA on an Environmental Task Force is even less appealing when one of the stated projects will be reclamation of derelict or waste land (ie weeding).

The third 'choice' is to work for your JSA as free 'volunteers' for voluntary organisations. Presuma-

bly the good causes promoted by these voluntary organisations do not include helping the young unemployed or fighting poverty.

The final option is working for the private or public sector. For at least six months youth can be paid as little as £60 for full time work – but still have no guarantee of a job at the end of a placement.

Labour's local authorities are willing partners in crime in New Deal hoping to gain cheap recruits to make up for staff lost in years of cutbacks.

## Elderly care

Already under previous workfare schemes like Project Work, UNISON has criticised jobless people being compelled to work in areas like elderly homes where lives are at risk if people are not properly motivated or trained to do the job.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, in a rare criticism of New Deal from a trade union leader, attacked the scheme which will not pay a minimum wage to youth. He was reacting against the real danger that current employees will be sacked and replaced by the cheaper young casuals.

Although the TUC opposed verbally Project Work it has nothing but praise for Labour's equivalent, even when its been locked out of discussions on New Deal.

The Left has also been slow to criticise it. Amazingly a publication of the Socialist Party dominated Left Unity in the CPSA gave it "a cautious welcome". Also some members of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs have been taken in, including Alice Mahon, who believes it will provide 'meaningful work'.

Although there is a huge swathe of opinion which currently sees New Deal as the best thing since sliced bread, that will not always be the case. Socialists should link up with the unemployed and workers in the Employment Service who will particularly be hit by the New Deal.

It has brought the ES no more money for pay or staff and is another step towards its privatisation. Potential strike action in London by ES workers will highlight these issues.

## Minimum wage

We should demand a minimum wage for all workers irrespective of them being on schemes or not. The Labour government should use the money to reverse previous cuts in JSA so young people have the resources to finance their own job-searching.

Trade unions should be able to have some input into well financed voluntary schemes which have always been oversubscribed by the



The answer was simple: but instead Labour is making matters worse

unemployed.

Cash starved local authorities and public services should be given the resources for the creation of decent paid jobs paid by higher taxes on bosses who have made vast profits by sacking peo-

ple in recent years.

New Deal is a huge waste of money and a colossal waste of the talents of young people. Pressure should be put on the trade union and Labour leaders to offer them more than this raw deal.

# Build on the success of the Euromarch

Alan Thornett

**AN ENTHUSIASTIC Report Back Conference from the European Marches took place in Luxembourg on 4 and 5 October.**

130 delegates came from campaigns in Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece and Italy. There was positive feedback from both the marchers themselves and from the demonstration of 50,000 in Amsterdam in June.

The conference discussed the future of the campaign and how the success of Amsterdam could be built on. It took the decision to set up a European wide Network of the Unemployed and Excluded.

This will not be a new organisation, but a coordination of organisations, campaigns and individuals who supported the marches to Amsterdam. It will be broad and inclusive network and will operate on the basis of consensus.

One of its priorities will be to

campaign against the effects of the single currency and decisions of the European Union which create unemployment and affect the excluded.

The conference discussed several international initiatives and the possibility of another major Europe-wide demonstration, perhaps in Germany in 1999 under the presidency of the EU.

Two mobilisations were agreed for the coming year. The first is to support the demonstration at the Luxembourg Jobs Summit on November 20 this year supported by the European TUC, and the second to support events organised around the Cardiff meeting of heads of government in June 1998.

These are important initiatives. The Luxembourg demonstration is the first time that the European TUC has backed such a Europe wide demo.

True, they have called it on a minimal basis, but they are under pressure from the French CGT. The CGT has built the demo, and intends to take 20,000 people on it,

and they are raising the issue of a 35 hour week.

The TUC in Britain and its affiliates have been forced to support the demonstration – although what it will do to mobilise for it is another matter altogether.

The Cardiff demonstration is an equally important event. It will be the last major meeting of EU heads of government before the planned starting date of European Monetary Union (EMU) in January 1999.

The plan is to have an international demonstration in Cardiff and possibly a counter summit as well. The shape of this will depend on the alliance which comes together to organise it, but the European marches will give their full support.

In Britain, the debate on EMU is pressing. On the one hand we have had TUC leader John Monks launching a campaign to get Britain



into it as fast as possible, whilst further progress has been made by the campaigns inside seven unions arguing against it.

In Britain there is another important initiative as well. There has been an initial meeting of the various campaigns against Maastricht and the single currency, convened by Alan Simpson.

Most of the campaigns were there: GLAM (Greater London Against Maastricht), TUSC (trade Unions against the Single Currency), the People's Europe Campaign, the Labour Euro Safeguards Campaign and the Campaign For an

Independent Britain as well as the Euromarches.

The main decision at the meeting was on the need for an effective coordination of those campaigning against the single currency and the basis on which this should take place, ie on the basis of a progressive non-nationalist campaign, excluding the Tory right.

A further meeting has been arranged at which a political platform for such a non nationalist coordination will be discussed.

# Women must still fight to choose

**Susan Moore**

LAST MONTH women and men across Britain celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act.

The passage of this act was the biggest ever step forward for a woman's right to choose in this country. Millions of women died from back street abortions before this law, countless others suffered hideous medical complications, including sterility.

However, even though women in Britain today will not die because they need an abortion, the situation is far from perfect. The 1967 Act does not give women the right to choose but leaves us dependent on the whims and prejudices of the medical profession. Two doctors must give their consent before a termination can take place.

When the Act was passed Britain became one of the most progressive countries in the world in terms of abortion legislation. Today twenty four other European countries have

laws giving women control in the first twelve weeks of pregnancy.

While giving women full control of our fertility means fighting for these sort of laws without any time limits, the situation in these countries is a massive improvement on what we have here.

The reality is that a high proportion of later abortions occur because of inadequate provision and bureaucratic delays in the early months. A change in the law to bring us in line with other European countries would result in a significant reduction in late abortions.

The law is not the only problem that women face. Provision across the country has always been uneven both because of the role that anti-abortion consultants have played in blocking women's access and the different priorities of Health Authorities.

With deepening cuts and over stretched resources the situation is becoming worse – even in places that used to have decent facilities

women are having to wait an unacceptably long time. The Labour government has thrown two seemingly large sums of money at the Health Service but they will be nothing like enough to avert a deepening crisis including in abortion provision – often seen as a 'non-essential' service.

The National Union of Students Women's Campaign called a demonstration in London to mark the anniversary of the Act. Three hundred turned out on a bitterly cold winter's evening. Unfortunately the event was not wholeheartedly supported by the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) – if it had been it would have been significantly bigger.

NAC itself had prioritised two other events – an advert in *The Guardian* newspaper celebrating the anniversary and the publication with Marie Stope International of a book of women's testimonies of their abortions. Both these projects are worthy in themselves but the



failure seriously to mobilise for the demonstration was worrying. NAC has been successful time and again in defeating the anti-abortionists in their attempts to further restrict abortion rights because it has relied on the method of mass action. It would be a really defeat if it were to turn its back on this way of organising and rely on a lobbying approach.

Despite this weakness the call made by NAC in the advert, to commemorate the Act by fighting for it to be strengthened, is one that should be supported. The moves of John Walker MP to seek signatures not only for an Early Day motion celebrating the passage of the existing Act but for a separate one calling for women to decide in the first twelve weeks are to be welcomed.

Of course it should be the case that these changes are brought forward not by an individual member

of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs but by the Labour government itself. Blair shows no signs of doing this, and neither do any of the new women Labour MPs elected in May.

If the fight to improve the law is to be successful then women and their supporters will need to take to the streets in their thousands. Alongside this we need to demand that Labour ensures that every Health Authority is obliged to provide adequate facilities for women who need abortions.

Recent opinions polls show that the majority of people support a woman's right to choose. We need to organise to ensure that that support is turned into active and effective campaigning.

**Join the National Abortion Campaign: Contact NAC on 0171 923 4976 or write to NAC, Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL**

# Is something happening to the family?

**Terry Conway**

**WHY have a number of politicians, including the leader of the Conservative Party, been showing off their unmarried partners?**

What was the message they were trying to convey by making it clear these were active sexual relationships? Were the papers, broadsheets included, just trying to find something new to sell to us?

When William Hague sends a message of support to the Gay Pride march and Michael Portillo says that the Conservative Party should be tolerant of single parents this is something that all socialists should take note of.

But the traffic isn't all in one direction.

William and Ffion may have shared a double suite at Blackpool but the Tory leader has been careful to make us understand that they do intend to marry.

This spin was not only a concession to Maggie and those others in the Tory party who were taken aback by this but to quell the unease about the overall libertarian direction of his stance.

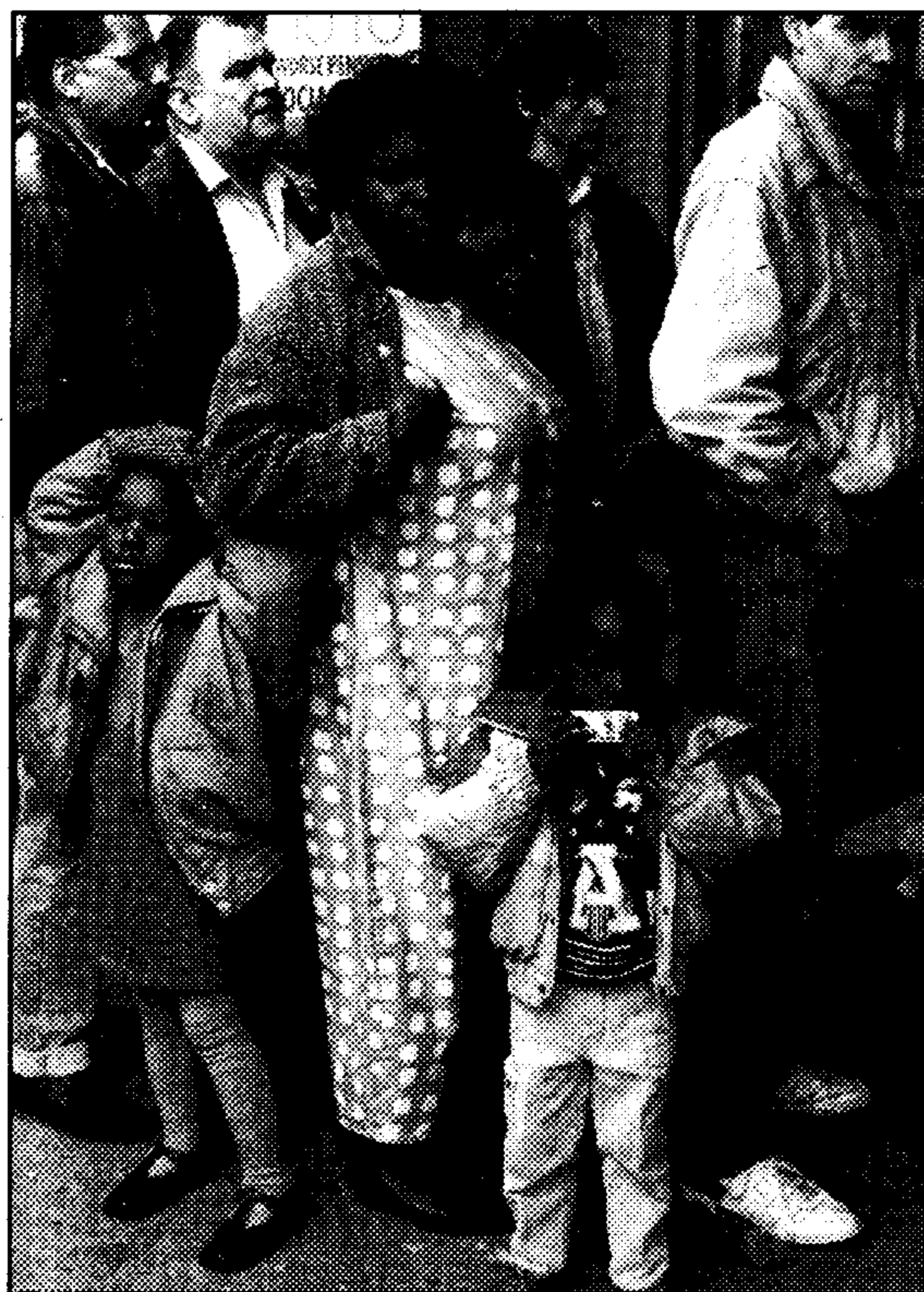
Cherie may have represented Lisa Grant, and Tony might be happy to have openly gay – and now lesbian MPs – at his side. When it comes to a vote on lowering the age of consent for gay men to 16 however it will be a free vote.

This important piece of legislation – introduced as a result of the victory of Euan Sutherland at the European Court of Human Rights – is very likely to be carried. Many MPs have made it publicly clear that they intend to vote against it but the leadership has done nothing to challenge this.

Free votes are very convenient when it comes to another issue of so-called 'conscience' – abortion. Labour will not introduce legislation to improve women's rights without a huge public campaign. They don't want to offend the Catholic Church, they don't want to be seen to be too radical.

Blair's conference speech explained that he was determined to tackle the 'family crisis' facing Britain, and is setting up a cabinet committee to deal with this issue. He explained "We cannot say we want a strong and secure society when we ignore its very foundation: family life". Under Jack Straw's leadership, it is pretty clear what is in store from the committee – more manure from the stable that has brought us curfews for the under 10s and other supportive and enabling policies...

If there are mixed messages from politicians whether Labour or Tory there are contradictions too in the patterns of how people actually live their lives. Divorce may have soared



**Some families are more interesting than others to Jack Straw and the New Labour moralisers**

over recent years, but so has remarriage.

In the early days of the lesbian and gay movements campaigners were extremely critical of the model of the heterosexual family. Today the demand for the right to gay and lesbian marriages has become stronger.

Early Marxists saw the family as integral to the capitalist system and therefore vital for socialists to understand. Frederick Engels book *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* is both one of the best books on the family and a classic Marxist text.

Engels explained that the family was necessary to the system to ensure the reproduction of the labour force. He meant not only the actual birth of new working people but their socialisation, feeding, housing etc through out their lives.

Others, building on his work, have since explained how the sexual division of labour in the family is reproduced at the point of production itself – leading to a sexual division of labour there that further compounds women's op-

pression.

The world today has changed significantly. The world of work is different, especially in the advanced capitalist world. Hours are much shorter so the non-work world has become more important and has had more opportunity to develop variety. There has been a massive growth in the number of people living on their own or as groups of adults without children.

It has become increasingly clear that capitalism uses and creates different family forms at different times.

Black feminists in Britain and elsewhere pointed out something that is true for working

class families in many different situations – that the family can be a site of resistance as well as of oppression. Black families are often torn apart by the system – whether by apartheid in South Africa or immigration controls in Europe.

All of these forms however can be used by the system to police us to behave ourselves at work and in society more generally.

Socialist feminists always argued against 'lifestylism' – those who argued you should live your life outside the constraints of the system so you would attract others to radical ideas. Today more than ever the limits of this individualism are clear.

We have to campaign for change that will enable everyone to live in the way they choose – to have equal access to services, equality under the law and real choice.

While we engage whole heartedly in these battles in the here and now, real change at this level means destroying the system and its profit motive.

No women's liberation, no lesbian and gay liberation, no human liberation without socialism!

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# Police raid on Notts UNISON branch

Mark Janson

Last month a police raid was carried out on the offices of Nottingham City UNISON and those of the Trade Union Unitary Status Team (TUUST), the joint negotiating body which represents the 17 unions recognised by Nottingham City and County Councils.

In addition to that the homes of the branch secretary, Andy Belfield and Simon Cousins, a former senior steward were also raided.

Police took computers and discs from the union offices. They didn't take anything from the Branch secretary's home (they didn't even question him), but took a number of items from Simon's house, including old lottery tickets - which the CID apparently believed to be some kind of code!

The raid is supposedly part of an investigation into a far-right newsletter called *White Rage* that had been sent to a number of council tenants and employees (including to UNISON activists) on Council headed paper over the last three and a half years.

### Anti-fascist

The UNISON branch, including Andy Belfield and Simon Cousins, has a long history of anti-racist and anti-fascist activity, and had made a number of proposals of action the council should take to deal with the racist and sexist literature being sent out.

The only "evidence" that the police could come up with was that Simon had been sacked by the council (and re-instated after a strike ballot) and he might have a grudge against the council.

Apparently it hasn't to occur to the CID that on this basis most people in Nottingham might have a grudge against the council.

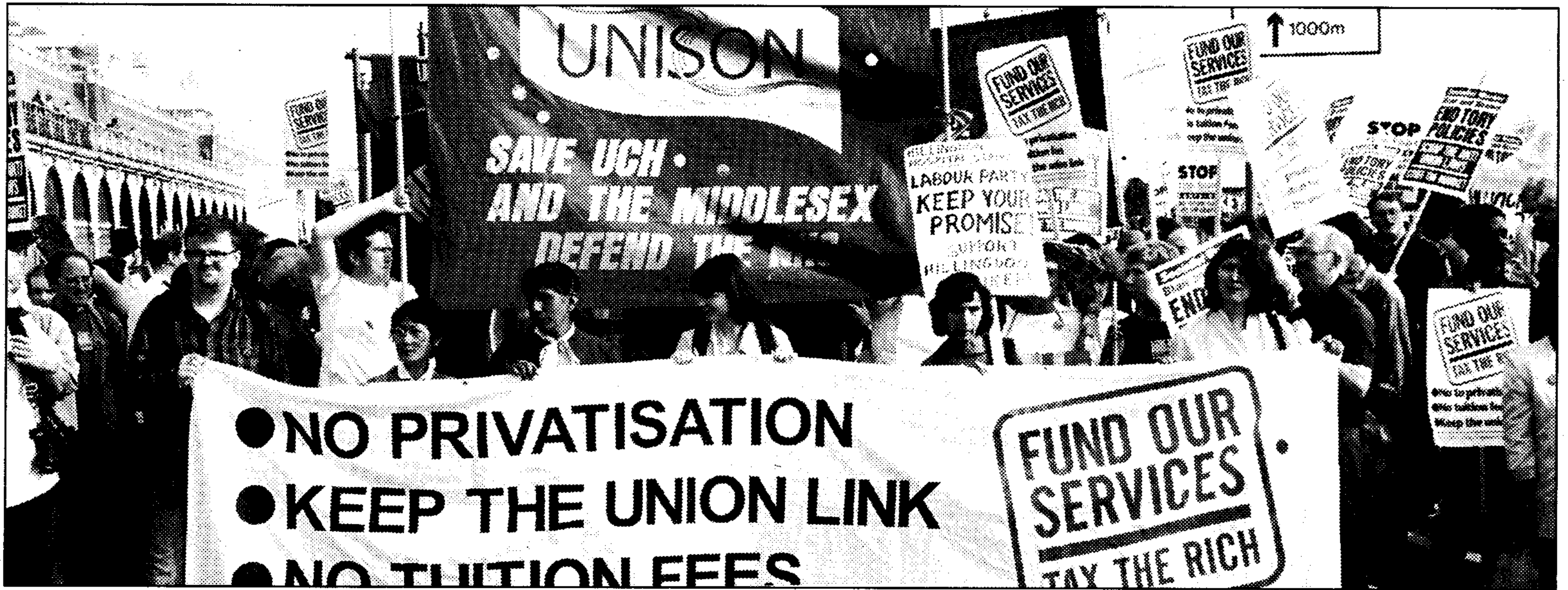
The UNISON offices and their computers are owned by the council, who gave their permission for the police to enter, despite the fact that they didn't have a search warrant.

During the raid the council issued a press release stating that they were committed to stamping out such racist material and that two UNISON members were being questioned.

### Angry

The overwhelming majority of employees have been quite rightly angered about the raids, and the council has realised the slanders against Simon and Andy won't wash.

They have had the cheek to write to all employees urging UNISON to work with the council in stamping out the racists. However the stories in the press about the raids are still being used by councils and right wing UNISON members to try and attack the left.



The scale of the lobby of Labour conference appears to have stung UNISON's full-time bureaucracy into new attacks on left activists

# Stop the UNISON witch hunt!

Simon Deville

TONY Blair's advice to the TUC to "modernise their structures like the Labour Party has" did not go unheeded.

Within months UNISON's leadership has launched an attack on union democracy and has found support that well known friend of the trade unions - Rupert Murdoch.

Rodney Bickerstaffe sent a circular to UNISON Branches urging them not to support the lobby of Labour Party conference which was called to demand that the Labour Party defend welfare services in accordance to UNISON policy.

Whilst this probably helped build support for the 8,000 strong lobby, it is clearly a move to stop branches campaigning for existing UNISON policy.

At the same time the UNISON leadership has attempted to target branches affiliated to the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union (CFDU).

Numerous CFDU-affiliated branches have had their accounts scrutinised in an attempt to show financial irregularities, though not a shred of evidence has come to light. Despite this the UNISON leadership are pursuing their

witch-hunt.

Full time regional officials in Leeds have taken away the branch's computer simply because the branch is affiliated to the CFDU. Incredibly a report into the incident has concluded that disciplinary action could be taken not against the full time officials but against three members of the branch who support the CFDU.

At UNISON's last National Executive Committee Rodney Bickerstaffe announced that there was to be an investigation into the CFDU because it produced material on the Local Government "single status deal".

### Account frozen

The Lewisham UNISON branch bank accounts have been frozen because of unspecified "financial irregularities". Because no specific charges have been made, members of the branch have been unable to defend themselves against the vague accusations.

Many of them believe however, that underlying the charges are concern over the branch's record in defending jobs and services, its support for the lobby of Labour Party conference, and the fact that it has a considerable strike fund.

This last aspect would cause

most concern for the bureaucracy since it allows the branch more autonomy from the national leadership in taking industrial action.

### "Insider"

On the October 26, Rupert Murdoch's *Sunday Times* published a front page article quoting an "insider" which accused "Hard-left militant extremists" of infiltrating UNISON and "illegally syphoning off hundreds of thousands of pounds in a plot to hijack it for their own purposes".

The article goes on to accuse the Nottingham branch of setting up a bogus racist group in order to justify funding for their anti-racist campaigns!

It is difficult to see which is more bizarre - the idea that Nottingham branch would need invent racism to try to justify anti-racist campaigns, or the idea that Nottingham council is going to fund anti-racist projects whilst making cuts in every other area.

It is clear that the "insider" quoted in the *Sunday Times* is a regional or national official who is preparing the way for a witch-hunt of activists throughout the union.

The NEC meeting on December 10 will discuss the Leeds branch. This is not just an attack on the

CFDU but an attack on any branch's right to campaign to change UNISON policy.

The *Sunday Times* article pointed to the funds allocated to branches, with the implication that the UNISON leadership are aiming to bring branch funding more and more under centralised control.

Equally as worrying is the fact that many of the current witch-hunts are against activists who are guilty of demanding that the union leadership carry out UNISON policy. If there is an unaccountable clique using UNISON funds for their own purposes it is the full time officials.

### Minimum wage

They decided to pull out support from the Hillingdon strike after conference had instructed them to continue support until all the strikers had their jobs back. They decided not to fight for the minimum wage or for renationalisation at either the TUC or Labour Party conference.

The reason that the CFDU has been singled out by the bureaucracy is that it has been at the forefront of campaigns against low wages, casualisation and privatisation, and has demanded that the union leadership should be accountable to the members.

## UNISON Gas convenor victimised

Bernie Hynes, a Unison convenor, a national rep and a Health and Safety rep for British Gas Service, was derecognised and had his facility time removed by management on the grounds that they had "lost all trust and confidence" in him. Bernie, a CFDU supporter spoke to Socialist Outlook

**SO - Tell us about the background to your derecognition.**

**BERNIE -** On October 20 management announced that they had withdrawn my recognition as a convenor, a national rep and as a Health and Safety rep.

Their pretext was a newsletter to Technical Sales Advisers that I sent out. It stated that a Technical Sales Adviser was told by his district manager to resign or be sacked.

Management are claiming that it is not within my remit to give this information to home-based UNISON members. Whilst UNISON assert that I am perfectly entitled to such action, it is clear that management had met with a UNISON national full-timer about my derecognition, without informing either me or the regional official. It has also been suggested to me that they are trying to dismiss me.

**SO - How has the branch responded to this?**

**BERNIE -** There has not been

a branch meeting since this happened, but a lot of people are angry that one national UNISON official has colluded with management behind the backs of the membership to remove an elected representative who management find troublesome.

All the branch stewards have backed me up despite pressure for them to find someone to replace me. At the next branch meeting we will be calling for the re-election of all the reps as a vote of confidence in the branch reps.

In particular we believe that it is probably illegal for management to try and impose a Health and safety rep of their choice upon the membership.

**SO - Have you had much sup-**

**port outside of the branch? BERNIE -** We have had support from reps all over the country.

It is clear that a national official is trying to help management get their way, and has even implied that UNISON will not provide me with legal support.

It is important that as many branches as possible pass resolutions committing UNISON to defending me, and defending my branch's right to decide who it wants to represent them.

The derecognition of union representatives was legalised by Norman Tebbit's 1980 legislation, we are also calling on branches to demand the repeal of that legislation, along with the rest of the anti-union laws.

# Unions at the crossroads

**Fred Thompson**

**SIX MONTHS** into a Labour government the employers' offensive continues, ably abetted and encouraged by government.

Blair has said he wants to teach the rest of Europe about the benefits of flexibility. For the workforce flexibility means casualisation and job insecurity.

The privatisation of public services continues, whether through Private Finance Initiative, or 'best value'. The anti-union laws remain in their entirety and their will be little real movement on rights at work.

Schemes like welfare to work and the abolition of lone parent benefit are not only intended to reduce state spending but bring down pay in general by forcing people to work on low wages.

When the outcome of the commission is finally announced, the national minimum wage will probably be regional, not apply to young workers and be pitifully low.

Despite the bluster, the deterioration of the NHS and education continue, and the announcement that Britain will join the single European currency, even if not quite yet, guarantees that Brown will attempt to hold down spending permanently.

What are our union leaders doing in response? The long-running disputes (Dockers, Magnet, Hillingdon, Critchley Labels, Project Aerospace) have been an inspiration to activists with their willingness to fight on against the odds.

But the leaders have done everything possible to undermine and sell them out, just as the TGWU did with the British Airways dispute. Ballots for strike action have been used as a mere negotiating tool.

Nor are these bureaucrats demanding anything from the Labour government. At Labour Party conference they ensured the resolutions on union rights contained nothing Blair would object to, and made sure nothing else was passed which might make him uncomfortable.

Complaints about Blair's hectoring tone at TUC did not prevent them making it a week that did nothing to worry the government or the bosses.

The union leaders are concerned at the loss of members, primarily because it endangers their pay and perks. Their answer is not to recruit by showing unions can protect workers against employers, but to draw up ever more

'attractive' packages of credit cards, insurance schemes and package holidays.

Just as Blair wants to sanitise the Labour Party, making it immune to influence by workers in struggle, there are signs that the employers, often in collusion with union officials, are attempting to behead any fightback in advance by victimising militants.

What should the response of activists be in this situation?

Firstly, we have to argue against the concept of 'partnership', which results in continual concessions to the employers on pay, conditions and jobs and for a strategy based on industrial action. Where action is taken locally, it should be made official, whether legal or not.

Unions should organise national campaigns, including industrial action, against national attacks and to force the Labour government to carry out their demands (e.g. national minimum wage, employment rights). Where national action is not forthcoming, the left should attempt to co-ordinate regional action.

Public sector unions need to link up with service users, both to apply additional political pressure on their employers and to give confidence to their members to take industrial action.

The anti-union laws are still one of the main roadblocks to any fightback, restricting the right to take action, and preventing its spreading when it does.

We need to force their repeal, linking a campaign for changing the policy of the unions to support for all strikes, illegal or not, and for solidarity action. The new Free

Trade Unions Campaign can play a leading role in this.

The left has to organise within each union against the undemocratic practice and continual sell outs of the union leaderships. These Left bodies have to be open, democratic and campaigning.

While they should contest union elections, their main emphasis has to be on winning the support of the membership for alternative policies to those of the leadership and for industrial action. Where possible and necessary, they should initiate industrial action against the wishes of the leadership.

The Trade Union Lefts Alliance can play a crucial role in linking up these left bodies in the different unions, initiating cross-union campaigns on policy, providing solidarity action, and beginning to provide an alternative leadership to that of the TUC.



Shoulder to shoulder - in a common struggle to contain the union rank and file. "Participation" in practice as TGWU national cars officer Grenville Hawley (right) joins forces with BL Cowley boss Geoff Whalen in 1975.

# A handbook for union battles to come

**INSIDE COWLEY - Trade Union Struggles in the British Car Industry in the 1970s**

by Alan Thornett, Porcupine £11.95

Reviewed by John McIlroy

ANYONE who believes macho management and attacks on shop stewards began with Mrs Thatcher and the victimisation of Derek Robinson should buy this book.

As you read the extracts of 1970s newspaper reports, stating that new investment in British Leyland was dependent on the hope that "militant moderate union officials can destroy the Trotskyist power base in the vital Cowley plant", you will see in a new light TGWU General Secretary Jack Jones's claim that he was transferring power to shop stewards.

## Social Contract

*Inside Cowley* demonstrates convincingly the disastrous impact of union leaders' enforcement of Labour's 1970s Social Contract in weakening workplace trade unionism and softening up the union membership for the brutal offensive of neo liberalism in the 1980s.

Alan Thornett worked in the Cowley assembly plant of BL from 1959, becoming a shop steward in 1963 and TGWU full time deputy convenor in 1967. The plant was unique in Britain. It harboured a factory branch of the Socialist Labour League (later Workers Revolutionary Party) over 40 strong which played a leading role in factory politics.

In his earlier book, *From Militancy to Marxism*, Thornett chronicled the making of militancy at Cowley, the winning of key stewards from the CP and management's strategy for regaining control, centred on the imposition of Measured Day Work to replace the

traditional piecework system, and thus remove direct control over pay bargaining from the stewards.

*Inside Cowley* documents in absorbing detail the continuing attempts of the company to break the militant factory leadership and regain control over pay and production. Anchored in an analysis of events in Cowley, it is also an outline history of trade unionism in the car industry - and wider - in the 1970s.

1974 saw the birth of the Social Contract and the intensification of the management offensive. Removing Thornett was seen as heading the stewards' organisation, and he was duly set up on fabricated charges. The book traces the complex interactions between membership, stewards, union officials and management.

The officials viewed militancy - and their own exclusion from the plant by the stewards - as a challenge to their function of accommodation with the company. Their role was to develop and finesse the attack on the leading stewards, although there were partial exceptions, notably Moss Evans.

Militancy in a car factory has perforce to be sectional at times, and often has costs for trade unionists. Management and officials were able to exploit sections of the membership who ignored the benefits strong leadership had brought them, and sometimes wives insulated from the workplace struggle of their husbands.

## Media witch hunt

They used embittered ex-Trotskyist Reg Parsons, who had already been in touch with Jack Jones, to orchestrate an opposition in the shadow of a virulent media witchhunt against the left. Years later, TGWU full time officer David Buckle reflected on the crusade to "break the power of the Trots - we did everything we possibly could to try to break the backs of these people."

The result was an important defeat for the left: the Regional Committee split the 5/55 branch, the power base of militancy, and substituted a secret ballot of all members for election of convenors by stewards. As the media feeding frenzy climaxed, the convenor Bob Fryer and deputy convenor Thornett were removed and a new leadership around Parsons was elected.

It was nonetheless a partial defeat. Thornett retained his steward's card and his base in the transport section because of the depth of support he enjoyed from the drivers. An inspiring section of *Inside Cowley* deals with the fightback, a crucial episode in the history of trade unionism in the car plants.

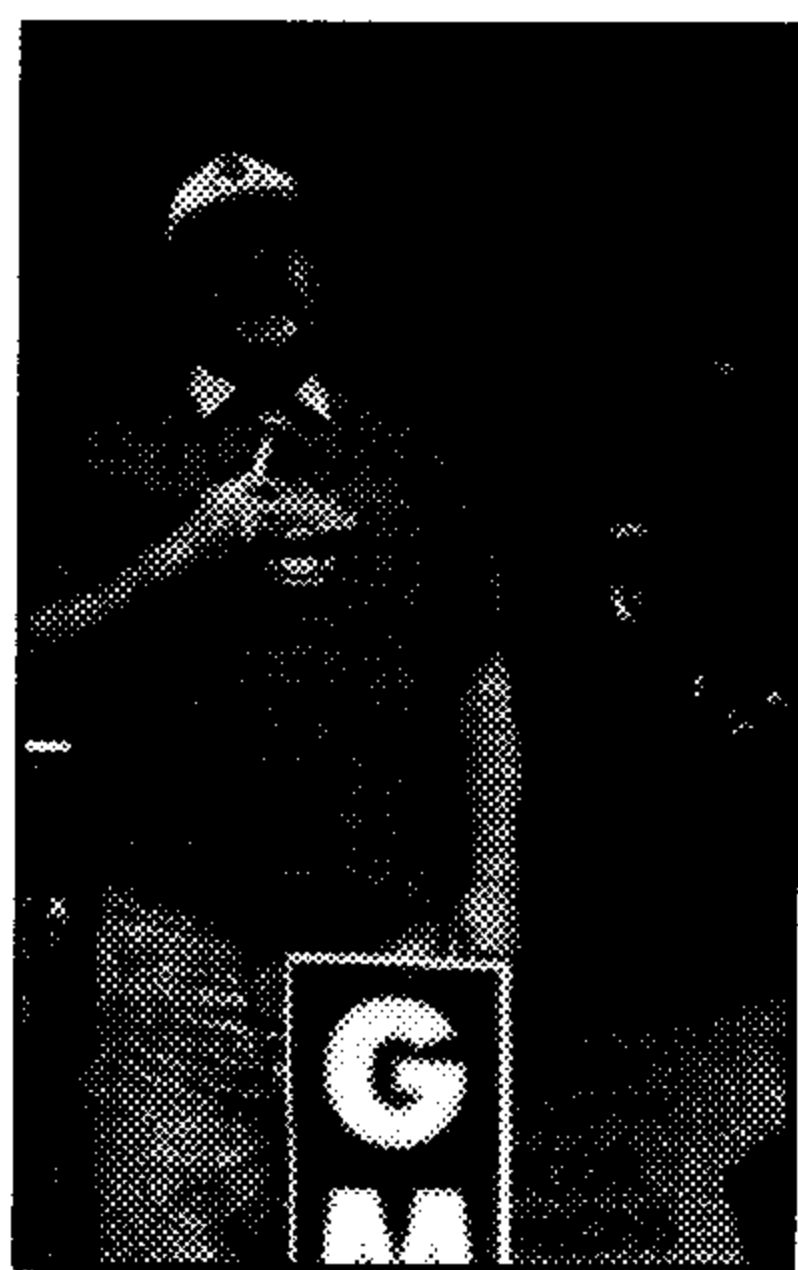
By December 1977, against all odds, the left around Bob Fryer and Alan Thornett had gained the leadership of the new 5/293 branch and won key positions in the convenor elections. At the heart of the matter was the fact that the Buckle-Parsons leadership opened the workforce to the management offensive: events proved militancy was the best protection.

## Grass roots

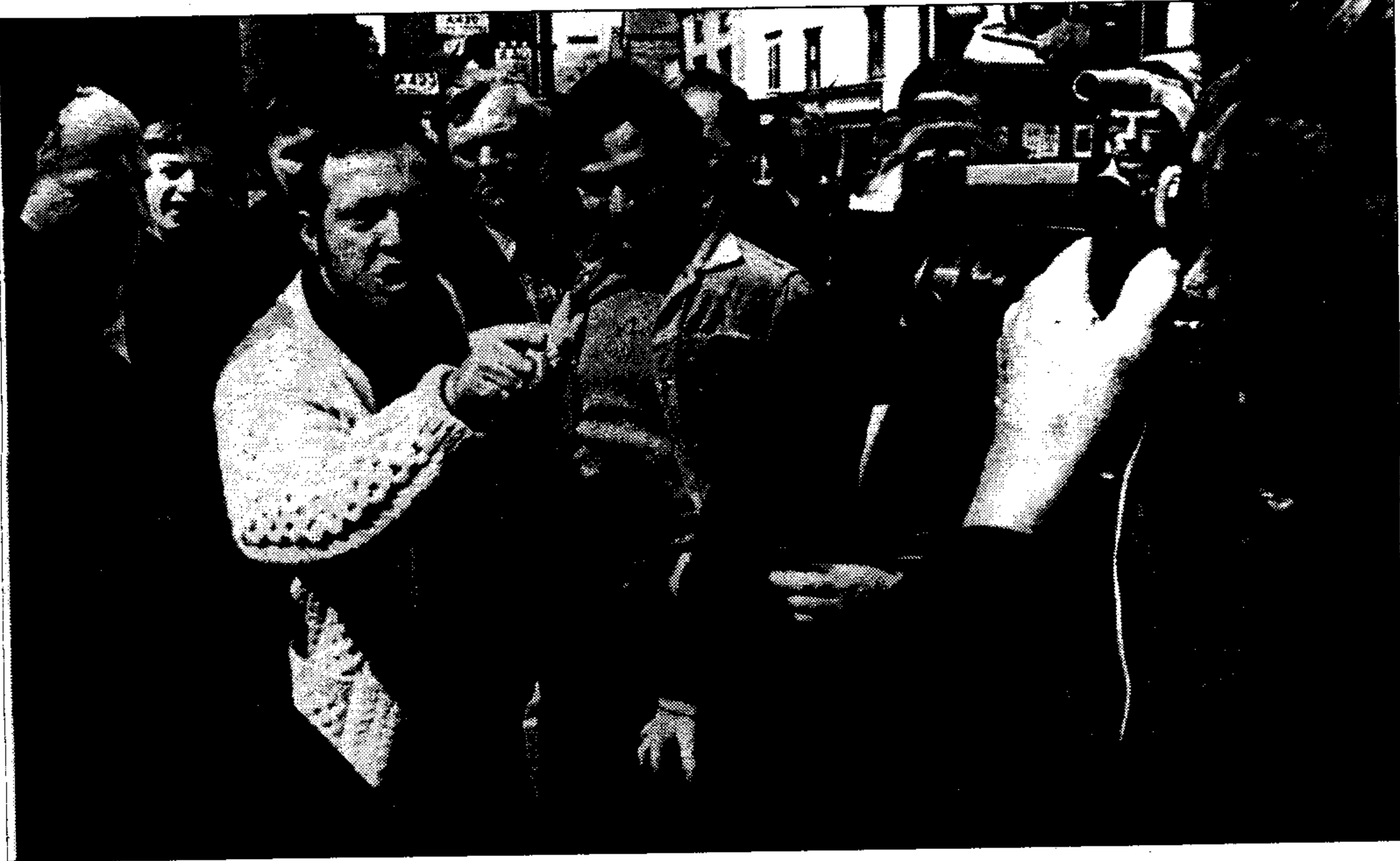
But if a key lesson of the book is that a strong base in the grassroots is indispensable another is that it is insufficient. Lacking the resources to build adequate support at District and Regional level, the plant leadership was soon under renewed attack from higher levels of the TGWU.

Flimsy charges of "disruption" for challenging minutes; and of breaking union confidence by distributing branch bulletins on the gate when management prohibited distribution inside the factory; the TGWU bureaucracy's kangaroo courts; the attempts to ban the left from stewards' meetings; the manipulation of ballots, all beggar belief - if you don't know the TGWU.

It hasn't changed a great deal. If some sections of the trade union leadership fought against the



The shape of things to come? GMB heavyweight John Edmonds backs off any fight with Blair



On the receiving end: angry striking drivers from Thornett's transport section confront a hostile media outside the gates of the Cowley plant in 1974

# Ballot victory for dockers

**Terry Conway**

**THE REJECTION** by the sacked Liverpool dockers of the recent 'final' offer of £28,000 from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company - by 69 per cent - is a huge victory.

The result is probably unprecedented in the history of the British Labour movement. It is also at least two in the eye for TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris, who had done all in his power to ensure the dispute was ended with a whimper.

The week before the ballot was held, the leadership of the Port Shop Stewards had been in London to meet with Morris. Not a word was breathed about any intention to ballot - or indeed about any new offer from the company.

No sooner had the stewards returned to Liverpool and held a mass meeting with the strikers than ballot papers started dropping through people's doors.

In doing this Morris was not only going against the supportive resolution passed by the Biennial Delegate Conference but even his own Executive.

The General Executive Council had passed a resolution that no action would be taken in relation to the dispute without prior discussion with the Port Shop Stewards Committee.

The ballot was sent out using the company address list rather than T&G branch records - in contravention of the rules of the union. Morris was clearly in cahoots with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

The timing of the ballot was such that the papers had to be returned before the next mass meeting was due. The papers were delivered to individuals' homes on

Sunday October 18, and had to be returned Wednesday 22.

Stewards reacted quickly, and an emergency mass meeting was held on October 20 to ensure the offer was discussed collectively.

There was great anger at the role of Bill Morris in trying to stitch up the men. It's a far cry from his speech six months into the dispute when he claimed to be "most privileged to be part of history in the making!" Some people may even have voted against the offer on the basis of his manoeuvre who otherwise might have accepted.

Since the result morale has been high. A successful picket was held in Dublin the following day, with 70 Liverpool dockers. It blocked the port and caused a massive traffic jam in the city centre. Future actions are planned in Dublin.

The dockers have called for a lobby of the next meeting of the GEC and are demanding that this discuss implementing the conference

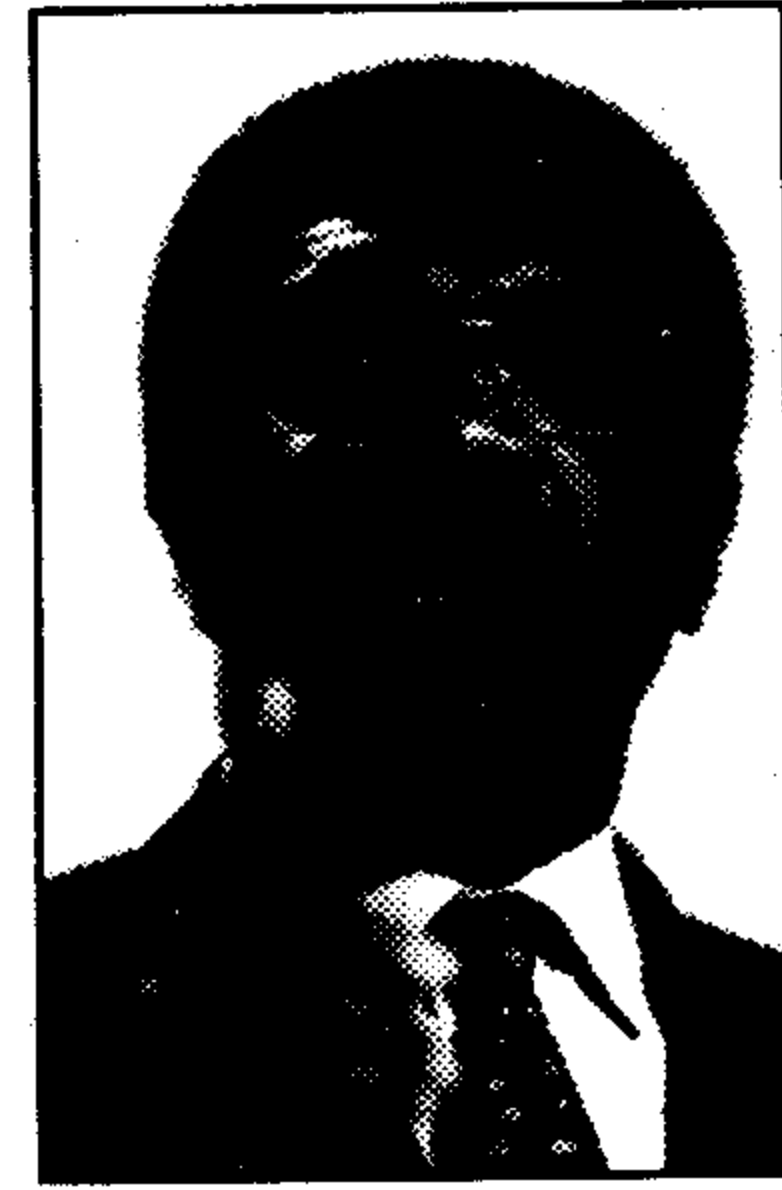
resolution and calls Morris to account for his actions.

Since the unexpected victory at the conference in the summer, the Port Shop Stewards Committee have given more attention than previously to developments inside the TGWU.

However it has proved impossible to convince them so far of the need to call together their supporters inside the union to discuss how to implement union policy.

The need for such a step is underlined by the failure of the union's official 'Broad Left' to throw its weight behind the dispute.

All trade unionists will take courage from the remarkable victory in the ballot. Now it is time to step up solidarity on all fronts to try to win the dispute. Organising in the TGWU must be a central part of this fight.



Rebuffed: Bill Morris

bosses with a fraction of the ferocity they deploy against their own members we would be in Utopia today. But the story exemplifies, too, the imagination, determination and stamina of our best militants.

Trade unionism in Cowley was far from simply a factory affair. The Assembly plant branches were keenly involved in supporting local struggles - in the university, the hospitals and various battles for union recognition. The most notable of these were at Blackwell's bookshop and the Randolph Hotel, the Ritz of Oxford.

The book charts how principled support for these and other struggles incited the rage of somnambulant full time officials in a variety of unions. It depicts as well as the fortunes of the left on Oxford Trades Council and the fight for solidarity with groups of workers throughout the country. The fight against the social contract continued in the plant and at TGWU conferences.

As the social contract lost the support of union members, "left" union leaders, such as Jones and the AUEW's Hugh Scanlon, imposed it through devices such as the "one increase every year" rule, and calls for an "orderly return to free collective bargaining".

Again, Thornett sees in the undermining of union democracy and the crucifixion of groups like the BL tool-makers who challenged wage restraint, the seeds of division and disillusion amongst union members which were to blossom under Thatcherism.

In a similar way the Ryder Report on BL, with its establishment of corporate bargaining and introduction of participation bodies disarmed the unions in BL. It also prepared the way for a new boss, Michael Edwardes, who would make more ruthless use of the ideology of joint interest.

The left lost crucial battles for plant-level pay against corporate bargaining - which was advocated by members of *Militant*, who espoused an abstract concept of workers' unity divorced from the reality of the time.

Corporate bargaining developed the process - which commenced with the abolition of piece work - of removing economic conflict further from the control of the rank and file and the point of production. This strengthened the ability of full time union officers to horse. In turn the three tier "participation" structure at plant, divisional and national level sought - with some success - to imprint leading stewards with the logic of capitalist production and recreate them as cheer leaders for competitiveness and speed-up.

Very soon key stewards like Derek Robinson from Longbridge were pronouncing in Cars Council reports "we can grab that extra bit of the world markets and give ourselves the reputation we undoubtedly deserve."

Fighting off sustained attacks by the leaders of their own union, the Cowley stewards had wage war on wider fronts.

*Inside Cowley* documents in macabre detail how Edwardes obtained the consent of convenors and officials for sackings and closures. Combine committee leader Derek Robinson built on Communist Party (CP) support for participation by leading a standing ovation for the BL undertaker.

Jones and Scanlon appeared with Edwardes in adverts captioned: 'We're all on the same side of the fence'. Once again there was a price

course because the CP was in partnership with the TGWU bureaucracy in witch hunting Thornett. At Cowley, as this volume demonstrates, CPers were conspicuous by their absence, emerging at crucial points to cast their votes for participation.

When the Robinson affair erupted, the response of the CP Midlands secretary was to call on the Combine to organise a 'deputation' to management at Leyland House, Coventry. Their 110 per cent support for participation and its key ideological component, company viability meant the CP were unable to mobilise members to defend Robinson once Edwardes played his key card, claiming it was a choice between Robinson or closure - and the AUEW took the threat at face value.

After years of living with the daily possibility of victimisation, Thornett's career inside Cowley ended in anti-climax as he was sacked in 1982 for failure to renew his HGV licence. As he observes, those immersed in wider problems often neglect their own. By now, as Thatcherism developed, the ground was slipping away from the left. Thornett's dismissal opened the way for further victimisations and the drastic rundown of BL's operations in Cowley.

The book might have benefited from some account of the organisation of production and working conditions inside the plant, the essential background to the struggles depicted here. It has little to say about the development of the Workers Socialist League, which Thornett established after his break from the WRP in 1974. No matter.

A major strength of *Inside Cowley* is its insistence on the need to ponder experience to learn lessons from history. It has some useful points to make on the struggles against sexism and racism. It demonstrates in numerous ways how the lessons of yesterday can help counter today's attempts by management to mobilise individualism and self-interest against collectivism in the working class.

*Inside Cowley* is a significant contribution to the story of workplace organisation and a valuable addition to the history of Trotskyism. It is a chronicle of past struggle and a handbook for future battles.

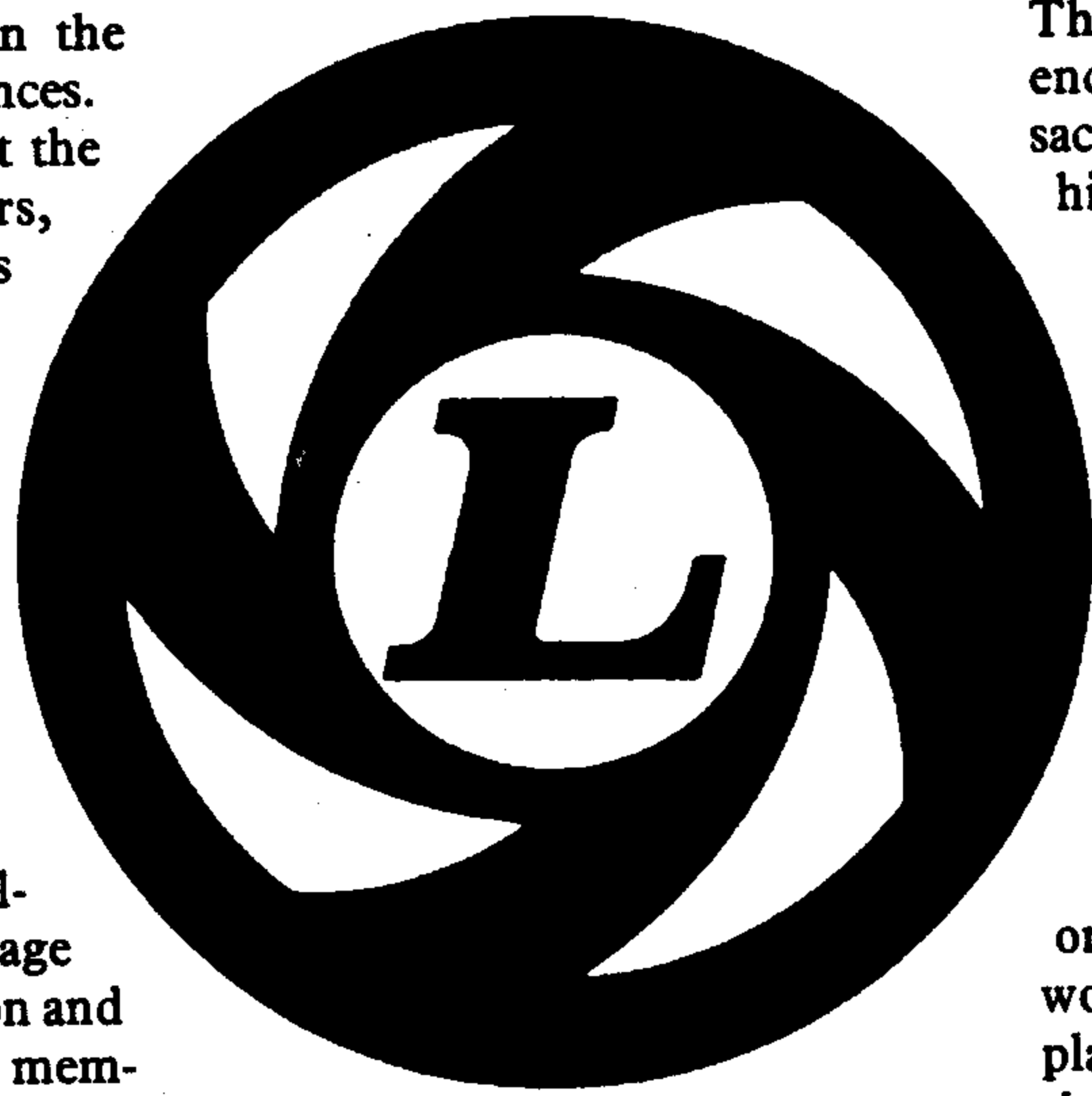
The conditions for remaking militant trade unionism exist, the fundamentals propounded here still apply. Suitably fashioned for new contexts and cultures, new generations and new problems. *Inside Cowley* is indispensable reading for all trade unionists facing this challenge.

to pay, commencing with Robinson's victimisation, ironically for signing a pamphlet supporting militant policies he had opposed in the combine committee. The AUEW leaders' sacrifice of Robinson again prefigured the future.

The CP was another important actor in this story, and as a former member Thornett well understands its role. The party claimed to have 48 members in a factory branch in Cowley in the late 1960s and early 70s. This provokes serious incredulity on the part of those who were around at the time. Whoever they were, they certainly didn't punch their weight at Cowley.

As I write I have in front of me a copy of the CP's *Comment* April 29 1978. A letter complains: "For weeks now the ultra-left presses have been screaming about the threatened victimisation of Alan Thornett by right wingers in the Midlands TGWU. Hardly a peep from the *Star*".

The reason for the absence of coverage was not, as the complainant believed, because of the *Morning Star's* inadequate coverage of the labour movement. It was of



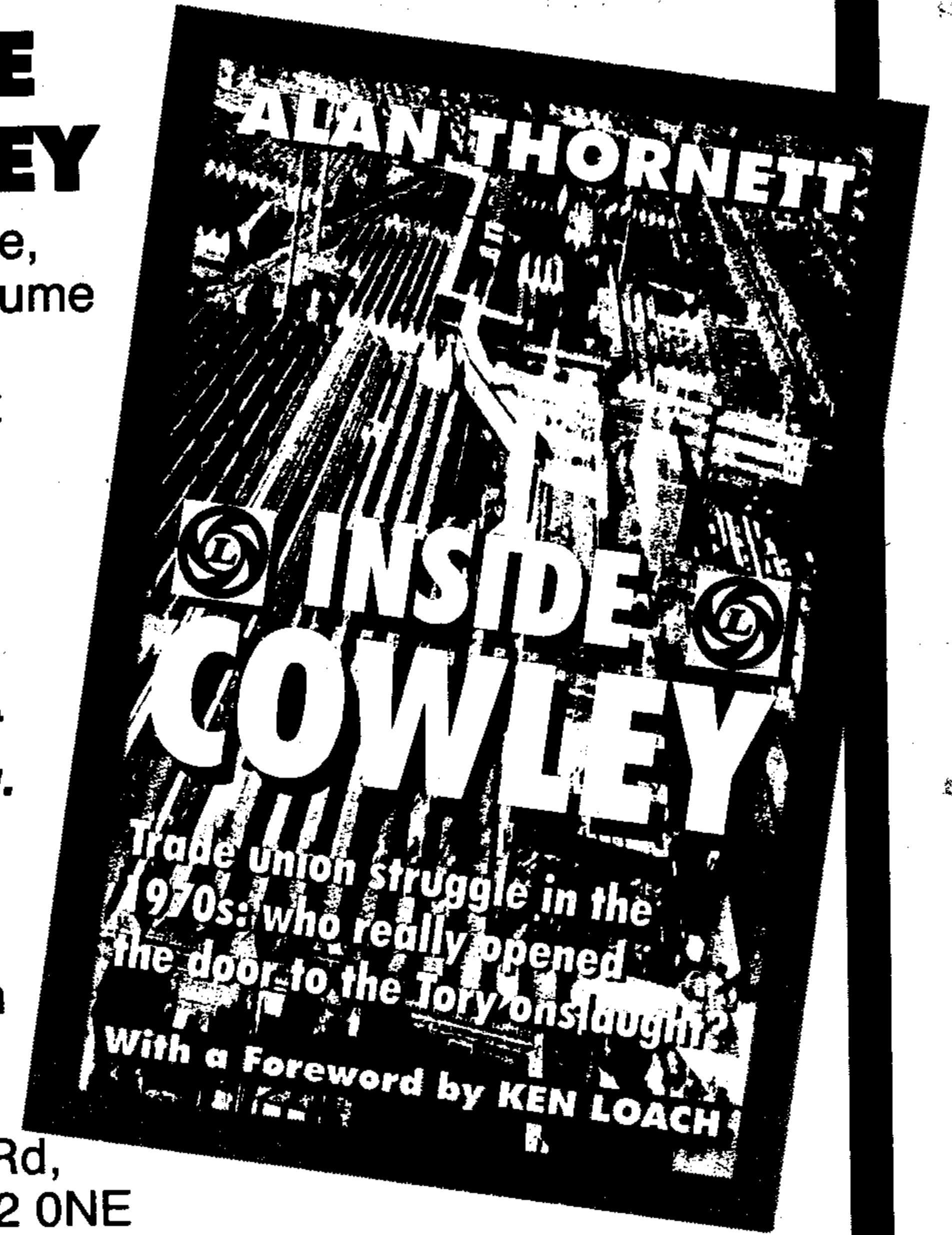
## OUT SOON!

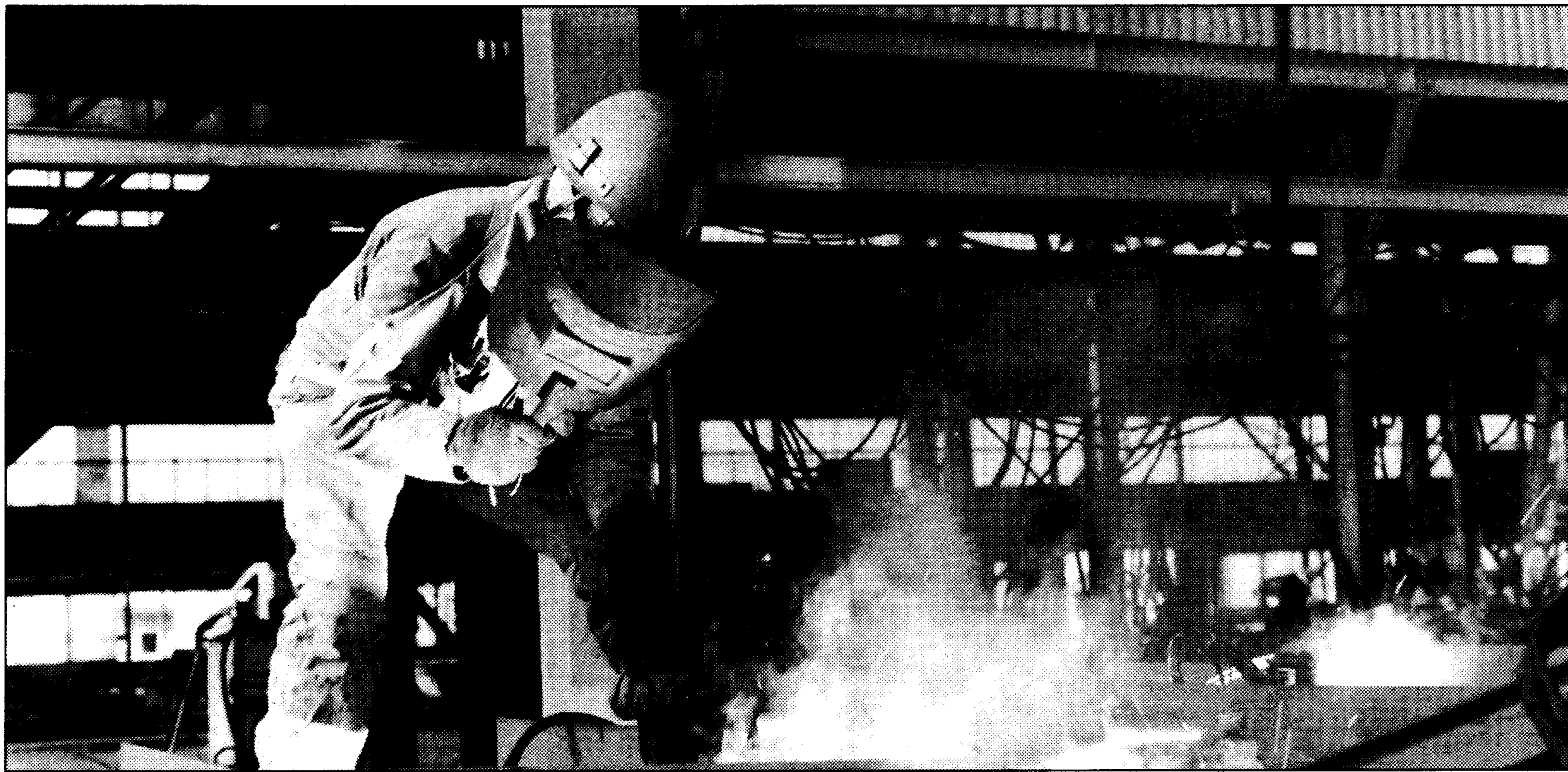
### INSIDE COWLEY

This 430-page, illustrated volume is due for publication at £11.95.

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**Japanese shipyard worker: the long-running recession in Japan has now merged with bankruptcies in Korea and the Far East currency and stock-market crises to question the reality of the Asian economic "miracles"**

# Chaos in the markets?

## Andy Kilmister

IT HAS BEEN GREAT fun over recent weeks watching capitalists squirming with nervousness as the financial markets rise and fall.

A month ago we also saw the annual meeting of the World Bank and IMF being disrupted by a vicious argument between currency speculator George Soros and Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamed.

But what is the significance of these developments? Are they the beginnings of a lurch into instability for the world economy – or are they just the result of stock exchange gambling with few effects elsewhere?

The current currency and stock market turmoil has both short and long term causes. In the short run two things are important.

Firstly, there are problems in the financial sector in a number of Asian countries. Risky property lending in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia and a growing Thai trade deficit sparked off the initial selling of currencies.

### Unsustainable

This has now spread to Hong Kong where the property market has also been booming in an unsustainable way. There are growing worries about the future ability of countries like Thailand to break into the higher value export markets in Europe and the US in areas like electronics.

The second short term issue is that there is a huge amount of speculative money now circulating in the global financial markets. This is because there has been a sustained shift throughout the last decade in the balance between profits and wages throughout much of the capitalist world.

Yet higher profits have largely not gone into productive investment, except in the USA, but have been placed in the financial markets. These markets have been expecting a slowing down of economic activity for more than a year now and are increasingly worried.

As a result speculative activity in both shares and currencies is becoming more frenzied as traders jockey for position, trying to spot the areas which will fall least when the bubble bursts and avoid the others.

Asian economies are not the only ones which have been abandoned in this process. In May and June there was a speculative demand for, and then selling of, the Czech koruna which led to a massive devaluation and a vote of confidence in the Czech government which was won by just one vote!

In the same way we can expect to see share prices become increasingly volatile as the markets prepare for the inevitable realisation that the boom market of the last few years cannot last for ever.

However, there are some longer term influences which have played a more important role in the crisis in South East Asia. Four in particular seem especially important.

Firstly, there is the long running recession in Japan. Much of the development of the Asian economies has rested on Japanese investment. While this is continuing to some degree, the weakness of Japanese banks and the economy more generally has fed through to other Asian countries.

Secondly, there is uncertainty about the future role of China in the Asian region, both politically and economically. Competition from China will have major implications for countries like Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Thirdly, questions have been raised about the future interest of the US in Asia. The USA is currently the fastest growing economy among the major capitalist powers. Increasingly it appears centred on its own regional economic bloc based on the NAFTA treaty and relations with Latin America.

There are deep divisions within the Asian countries about how to respond to this, with Mahathir Mohammed gesturing towards an economic break with the US and the formation of an East Asian Economic Community, a development

strongly resisted by others.

Fourthly, questions have been raised about the underlying basis of the so-called 'economic miracle' in East and South East Asia. Influential US economist Paul Krugman wrote an article two years ago in the US journal *Foreign Affairs*, widely read in US policy making circles, entitled 'The Myth of the Asian Miracle'.

Krugman argued that growth in Asia has depended not on increased efficiency but on the mobilisation of more and more resources. Consequently it is bound to slow down dramatically in the future as the scope for such mobilisation decreases.

He drew an explicit comparison



between East Asia now and the USSR and Eastern Europe in the 1950s. While Krugman's theses are controversial, they point to an important change of mood amongst governments and businesses in the US and elsewhere. The Asian economies are seen less and less as a model among such people in the way they were a decade ago.

All these factors have come together in the case of South Korea. Widely trumpeted as a major success story in recent years, including by some on the left, the South Korean economy has experienced two major bankruptcies this year, with a

third, the motor company Kia, only averted by taking the company into state ownership. The economy is plainly racked by bad debts and rampant corruption.

Even worse for the markets, the South Korean workers in January had the temerity to refuse to pay for the crisis by accepting worse conditions and wage restrictions. The South Korean example increasingly stands as a warning of what might happen elsewhere in the region.

### Repercussions

These tremors are unlikely to be restricted to Asia alone. US and British companies in particular are now sufficiently involved in the regions to ensure that any widespread crisis in the Asian financial markets will have repercussions elsewhere.

What are the implications of this for the system as a whole? Does it mean the onset of a more generalised crisis?

Here we have to distinguish between the currency markets and the stock market.

Currency crises under capitalism are essentially redistributive. If some traders (either private or government) lose, then others must gain. If the markets lose confidence in the currency of one country they move on to another.

The events of the last few months do not mean that traders have lost confidence in the system as a whole, but that one particular region is viewed less favourably as compared to others.

Stock market crashes are quite different. In these cases the signal is that the capitalist class no longer believes that profits will be as high in the future as they did before. As a result they are prepared to pay less for a share of such profits.

Such a feeling need not be restricted to one region and it may lead to lower investment and spending in the present and contribute to the onset of a full scale crisis.

However, it is not inevitable that changes in financial markets have such an effect. A whole range of

other factors interact with them and influence their effect on the economy as a whole. In particular the build up of debt in the economy is crucial.

The reason why the 1987 stock market crash and the fall in shares in Japan in the 1990s led to recession was largely the mass of bad debts held by the banking system at the time. This factor is not nearly so prevalent now, and outside specific countries a collapse in the financial markets is not so likely to lead to a general capitalist crisis on its own.

But that does not mean it is of no significance for socialists. The turmoil in East and South East Asia provides two important lessons.

Firstly, it disproves the view that capitalism can find a 'miraculous' way of organising the economy which can eliminate the possibility of crisis. The Asian economies like all others cannot escape the tendencies to disorder and stagnation which are endemic in the system.

### Warning

Secondly, it is a warning to those who believe the view which is increasingly commonly expressed in the media that somehow the 1990s are 'different'; that because of globalisation, or information technology, or some such development, we are now living in a boom that can continue without end.

The underlying features of the system in which we live have not changed in that way.

Most importantly, however, the developments of the last few months can only speed the long run trend indicated by the South Korean strikes of January.

As the 'Asian miracle' moves to an end, and the realities of capitalist development become as apparent there as elsewhere, they will underline the need for organisation and activity from those who can offer a way forward in the area: the working class of East and South East Asia.

# South-east Asia's environmental and health disaster

# Smoke Gets In Your Eyes

**B. Skanthakumar**

FOREST FIRES originating in Indonesia have blanketed much of the region in thick smoke blocking out natural light and choking tens of millions of people.

Claude Martin of the World Wide Fund for Nature described the environmental and health disaster: "The sky has turned yellow and people are dying."

In Sumatra and Kalimantan where the fires were started the smog has reduced visibility to a few yards at its worst. Everything it comes into contact with is coated in grime. Tens of thousands of Indonesians have been treated for respiratory problems, eye and skin irritations and children for asthma.

On September 26 there was an airline crash in Sumatra with all 234 lives lost. Poor visibility and communication have been blamed. On the Straits of Malacca, the world's busiest shipping lane, there have been a number of collisions including one which left 29 dead.

The East Malaysian state of Sarawak has been particularly badly hit. Schools, offices and businesses have been closed along with its main airport and port. Many flights into and from regional airports in Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia have been cancelled.

The Air Pollution Index (API) in Sarawak state capital, Kuching hit a record level of 839. Anything over 100 is unhealthy, and over 500 is extremely hazardous. In the rest of the region the API averages between 200 and 350.

## Stunted growth

In addition to the short-term consequences on livelihoods, the cost to the agricultural sector won't be known for years. The absence of direct sunlight will stunt crop growth, reduce yields and decimate harvests in seasons to come. Food prices have rocketed placing fresh fruit and vegetables at a premium and there are severe shortages in fire affected areas.

Surgical masks are hawked on street corners and sold in city shops as the officially sanctioned protection against the pollution. In Indonesia the price of these masks catapulted from 500 rupiah to 4000 rupiah putting it out of the reach of many.

Walhi, the Indonesian Environmental Forum, criticised the government for not making masks available to the poor in the interior. It has set up a community action centre in Kalimantan for free distribution of masks but also to begin consciousness raising campaigns on the causes of the fires and the importance of forest conservation.

One Malaysian NGO activist, Siva Rasiah, pointed out that the masks "were designed to stop surgeons spitting on their patients, not to keep out pollution." Yet governments were encouraging people to buy and wear them just to soothe their fears. Health advisors believe a wet towel to be more effective.

Forest fires in Indonesia are an annual event. Even the trans-boundary air pollution isn't new and was particularly bad in 1987, 1991 and 1994.

In fact in spite of the world headlines and extensive media coverage, this hasn't been the worst year for forest cover loss.

During 1982/83 some 3.5 million hectares of forest was burnt to the ground in Kalimantan, an area around the size of Belgium or the Netherlands.

In contrast the World Wide Fund estimates that so far between 500,000 and one million hectares have been torched. The damage is being done in rainforest which has greater species diversity per square kilometre than anywhere else barring the Amazon.

The Indonesian Government initially began by blaming the El Niño weather front for delaying monsoon rains and creating drought conditions which have made the region a tinder-box, where fire starts with the least encouragement.

The tragic starvation deaths which have been reported in recent weeks in Irian Jaya (West Papua) can indeed be traced back to the



The belated fire-fighting exercise in Irian Jaya, where forest fires got slightly out of control

absence of rainfall and the poor distribution of relief supplies in that province.

El Niño arises from warm ocean currents in the Pacific and used to appear in cycles of four or five years. However in the last 15 years, it seems to have become a yearly occurrence. One explanation is that global warming due to carbon emissions is the culprit. Ironically the present spate of fires will add to those emissions, exacerbating the problem in future.

It was soon obvious that the alleged cause of the forest fires, El Niño, might in fact be a symptom of the fires themselves. There were human factors which explained why fires had begun in certain areas and not others.

The *Jakarta Post* editorial on August 13 explained: "there seems to be no doubt today about the cause of these forest fires. They were deliberately lit to clear land and make way for new plantations, timber estates and new settlements under the government's transmigration program."

Even then the Indonesian government was reluctant to pin the blame on loggers and export-crop plantation agriculture in Kalimantan with which President Suharto's family and the military have notoriously close personal and financial dealings.

Instead it blamed subsistence crop smallholders, principally the indigenous Dayak peoples who practise 'slash and burn' cultivation to clear land. This controlled burning has been a technique used for centuries without the present environmental harm.

This was a classic instance of 'blaming the

victims'. The Dayak communities have been bearing the brunt of Indonesia's transmigration program which settles people from the densely populated islands particularly Java to provinces like Kalimantan, Irian Jaya (West Papua) and East Timor.

The stated motive of these schemes, which used to receive World Bank support, is to relieve population pressure on the main islands. It also opens up new areas to capitalist exploitation and encourages the 'Javanisation' of ethnic groups perceived as "backward" and "uncivilised" through inter-marriage and cultural assimilation.

Thus Madurese have been settled in Kalimantan where they are local partners in cash-crop farming of cocoa and palm oil with plantation companies. The government channels huge sums of money into their re-settlement, and indigenous Dayaks complain of being marginalised politically and in resource allocation by the settlers.

Early this year tensions between the two communities exploded into bloody riots with many lives lost and much damage to homes and property.

## Angry neighbours

Neighbouring governments responding to domestic public pressure were beginning to lose patience with the Indonesian government. President Suharto was forced to make a public apology for the smoke pollution.

In a sharp break with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) doctrine

of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, the tame regional media began publishing commentaries critical of the Indonesian government's handling of the situation.

The Singapore *Straits Times* published satellite images of Kalimantan which pinpointed the areas where fires had begun and where well into September new ones were being started. These corresponded to logging and plantation concessions, including those owned by companies which had been warned in previous years not to burn forest.

A. S. Budiman of the Rubber Association of Indonesia justified the burning explaining, "if you do land-clearing in pioneer areas, where no roads are established, the only practical way to get rid of the debris is to burn it."

What he didn't say is that it is also the cheapest way and saves companies the expense of bringing in heavy machinery to do the job.

Indonesia's Environment Ministry finally released a report in September identifying 176 logging and plantation companies in eight provinces responsible for starting fires and gave them a deadline to show evidence to the contrary. Among these companies are numerous joint-ventures in Sumatra with Malaysian and Singaporean conglomerates which accounts for the "softly, softly approach" of those governments in placing pressure on the Indonesians to take firm action against corporate interests.

## Suharto's friends

On October 3, the Forestry Minister revoked the licences of nine companies. Their shareholders read like a roll-call of Indonesia's richest men and President Suharto's closest friends.

It remains to be seen whether the companies will stop operations. In past years they have flouted bans and licence revocations imposed on them, secure in the protection they receive from their ties to the Suharto clan and the military.

In August Suharto personally opened a pulp factory in Kalimantan owned by his golfing companion Bob Hasan. Last year he had authorised the transfer of over US\$100 million from state reforestation funds to finance the construction of Hasan's Kiani Kertas paper and pulp plant in East Kalimantan. This decision is currently being challenged in court by Walhi.

Indonesia is already the world's largest plywood exporter and aims by 2005 to become the world's largest oil-palm producer. Meanwhile logging companies continue felling timber planting fast growing non-indigenous substitutes in their place, creating havoc with the eco-system.

Primary forest cover has been reduced to 55 per cent of the country from 82 per cent in 1966. At the current rate of deforestation within a hundred years Indonesia will have no primary forest left. Arable land in Java is turned into golf-courses and hotel resorts or inundated by hydro-electric dams, while peat bogs in Kalimantan are drained and turned into rice-fields.

Once peat fields are alight they burn on and on and aerial spraying with water does not extinguish them. They can only be put out by a rise in the water table. This will only happen if there are sufficient monsoon rains - which are recently much reduced by loss of rainforest cover due to break-neck logging and land-clearance.

Which is where we began.

The Indonesian regime is committed to the pursuit of economic growth as an end to itself, abandoning social welfare and poverty eradication to the charity of market forces. This model is not only imposed by international financial institutions but enthusiastically supported by the national capitalist class.

How much more need be sacrificed on the altar of "Development" before a halt is called to this insanity?

24 hours with the fate of Italy's government in their hands, but

# Refounded Communists fumble their big chance

FOR 24 HOURS in early October it seemed as if the Prodi government in Italy might fall, brought down by the Refounded Communist Party – without which it could not govern.

This turn of events would not only have been a major turning point in Italy itself but would have had serious ramifications across Europe. The crisis turned on measures the government needed to introduce to ensure Italy could participate in European Monetary Union.

The Refounded Communists (PRC) however retreated from opposition to the 1998 Finance Law and let Prodi's "Olive Tree Coalition" off the hook.

LIVIO MAITAN, a member of the party's National Leadership, warns that, until it elaborates a strategic alternative to the centre-left government, the PRC will be unable effectively to oppose the Prodi government.

THE PRC and the Olive Tree coalition had agreed not to attack each other during the 1996 election campaign. The Communists promised that their MPs would not vote against the creation of an Olive Tree-led government, but that their subsequent voting would depend on the government's proposals and behaviour.

But from June 1996 onwards, the Communists started to consider themselves part of the government majority. Until recently, the party's MPs supported the centre-left government with their votes.

This provoked contention in the party. The PRC finally accepted a Ministry of Labour plan to legalise temporary work agencies (which the party had always opposed). In return, the Minister promised to finance 100,000 6-12 month contracts for young people, at a monthly salary of 800,000 lira (\$450).

Over 2,000 of the PRC's middle cadre signed a petition demanding that the Communist MPs reject the proposal.

In another conflict, the PRC group voted against the government decision to send a military force\* to Albania. The expedition was only approved thanks to the votes of the centre-right coalition.

But the real trouble started with the debate on the Finance Law for 1998. Before the summer recess, the PRC clearly signalled their dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Prodi's proposals. In early September, Prodi told PRC leader Bertinotti that the government would not make the same compromises to the left as in the 1997 Finance Law.

Determined to respect the condi-



Italy's well-organised pensioners have been a constant focus of opposition to austerity measures

tions of the Maastricht Treaty on inflation and public sector debt, and join the new European monetary union, the Prodi government wanted to make further budget cuts, including in the pension system. Last year, pensions were removed from the cuts list at the insistence of the PRC.

PRC leaders reacted angrily to the Prime Minister's intransigence. Prodi's refusal to negotiate made matters worse. His real concern was to consolidate his own coalition, and make separate agreements with the trade union confederations. He hoped that this would leave the PRC without any option but to continue supporting him.

Prodi even convinced the unions to worsen pension rights for those

convergence with France and Germany, and adoption of the single European currency.

With all negotiations blocked, the PRC confirmed that they would vote against the proposed law. On 9 October, Prime Minister Prodi announced his resignation, without waiting for the vote.

This unleashed an unprecedented wave of attacks against the PRC. Politicians, mayors, and representatives of employers' groups accused the Communists of provoking a political crisis and preventing Italy from integrating with the other EU countries, just when the economy was starting to work properly. The trade unions joined in the witch-hunt.

The (ex-Communist) PDS daily

the parliament.

With seven of the 47 seats in the PRC National Leadership, the far left played an important role during the crisis, despite the usual disagreements on tactical questions.

500 militants attended a Rome meeting on 12 October, where Marco Ferrando and Livio Maitan discussed the crisis in the country and the party. At the 14 October National Leadership meeting, five of the far-left members voted against the Bertinotti-Prodi agreement. Two, Bicciardi and Mazzei, announced their resignation from the Party.

The Olive Tree needed this agreement with the Communists.

They had no other choice. New elections might not return them to

predecessors.

Within 24 hours, the PRC leadership seemed to retreat. On October 10, the Secretariat stated that the party was willing to make a pact with the government for one year, in exchange for modifications in the finance law, and a pledge to reduce the working week from 40 to 35 hours by the year 2000.

After frantic negotiations, agreement was reached. The PRC rejoined the parliamentary majority, and promised to vote for the finance law. Prodi withdrew his resignation, demanding and winning a vote of confidence from

ties, and in society, to establish any kind of consensus. And the separatist Northern League continues to provoke instability and tension.

In general, however, the Olive Tree coalition has benefited from the crisis.

Not so the Refounded Communists. The party's difficulties in defining a strategy towards the centre-left government have again been on public display. There is a clear disagreement within the Party leadership.

At the last National Congress I was one of those who said that the PRC should not have joined the parliamentary majority and supported the Prodi government. That government's decisions on socio-economic questions and foreign policy have confirmed what those of us on the left of the PRC had warned.

The Olive Tree components, especially the PRD, have even begun institutional co-operation with the centre-right, through their project to reform Italy's constitution in the direction of a semi-presidential system. And, in defiance of the current constitution, they have agreed to give equal treatment (and state funds) to private and public education.

The Prodi government has stressed, including during this latest crisis, that its top priority is to meet the Maastricht criteria and adopt the single European currency. In this latest confrontation, the PRC has won no significant concessions. We have even accepted the "reform" of some pensions, something we used to oppose on principle. Until October 9, that is.

In exchange, we have not won any serious promise for public sector programmes to attack the terrible unemployment (25-30 per cent) in the poorer Mezzogiorno of southern Italy. This was supposedly a pre-condition of any agreement with Prodi.

Apart from some cosmetic budget adjustments totalling 500 bn. lira, PRC leader Bertinotti is presenting Prodi's promise to cut the working week as a great victory for the party. It isn't.

Prodi has promised to organise negotiations between employers and unions. There is no mention of protecting salaries during any reduction in hours worked, something the PRC has always seen as essential.

The reduction is announced for the year 2001, but by then the EU Stability Pact will be in position, making it almost impossible for countries which have adopted the Euro to change their macro-economic policies. And there is no guarantee that the current government will be in place in four years time anyway!

Without an alternative strategy, and an alternative project, the PRC is clearly unable to sustain any confrontation with the centre-left majority in the Italian parliament. Seven years after the Communist Refoundation was born, it is high time to develop such an alternative.

**"The Olive Tree coalition has benefited from the crisis. Not so the Refounded Communists. The party's difficulties have again been on public display."**

who had started work as children, and therefore made sufficient pension contributions before reaching the minimum retirement age.

The final Finance Law presented to parliament was less severe than last year. But it was still unacceptably harsh. It contained none of the concessions the PRC had asked for.

## Prodi falls and rises

This caused a dramatic debate between government representatives and PRC MPs. Bertinotti, and PRC parliamentary group leader Diliberto said the government had become the instrument of the employers' organisation Confindustria and the banks, and was surrendering to the will of "the markets."

The centre-right opposition made signs that they would consider voting for finance legislation in order to prevent any delay to Italy's

*l'Unità* became hysterical, and even *Il Manifesto*, the newspaper closest to the PRC, urged Bertinotti to withdraw his threat. The party's fax machines and telephones were overwhelmed by threats and insults from people describing themselves as "ordinary citizens" and "workers."

Not since the darkest years of the cold war had Italian Communists faced such a climate. Beyond the manipulation of the PDS and the trade union leaderships, wider factors were at play.

Many Italians could not accept that a political force affirm positions which contradict "the consensus" and the supposed imperatives of the market economy, the Maastricht criteria, budget austerity, flexibility, and so on. Another group of citizens chose the PRC as a scapegoat for their frustrations with the failure of 'their' centre-left government to carry out new, better policies than their conservative

power. And the PRC could even have gained votes, since the centre-left government had not made any of the reforms needed and demanded by working people.

Prodi comes out of the crisis with his coalition strengthened, and with a guarantee that his finance law will be approved by parliament. He can continue his European integration policies, without major opposition. Since the centre-right opposition block is in crisis, Prodi can even expect to do well in this month's (November's) municipal elections.

None of this guarantees stability. Despite favourable short term developments, the socio-economic situation is still delicate, and conflicts are possible at any moment.

And Prodi is only at the beginning of his constitutional reform project. Over the next year or two he will have to overcome very deep divisions between the political par-

# Panic grips Algiers

**Salhi Chawki**

THE ALGERIAN capital no longer sleeps, since the massacre of hundreds of people in the eastern suburb of Haouch Rais. The population is arming itself, for protection against whoever is responsible for the waves of violence in the country.

As a new wave of violence hits Algeria, Western powers are beginning to doubt whether the Zeroual regime is capable of assuring control, for itself and on behalf of the west, over the regions of Algeria where the fundamentalists are active.

The Algerian élite may have been reassured by the US ambassador, who, in the wake of the latest massacres, confirmed his country's support for "military measures" by the Algerian regime against its Islamic fundamentalist opponents.

But only the élite will sleep safer. Outside a few, well protected rich districts, the people of Algiers now pass the night in their fields or on their balconies, armed in self-defence with stones, axes, kitchen knives and sometimes Molotov cocktails.

The Haouch Rais massacre came after months of systematic attacks on isolated villages in the regions of Tlemcen, Média and Blida. All were planned massacres, with all the horrible details you have heard about.

But the urban population was not as worried about this far-off threat as by the dozens of bomb attacks in busy urban settings. Collective panics regularly emptied the busiest streets, and unfamiliar parked cars provoked a huge number of false alarms.

And yet, life went on. The parliamentary election on June 5 was preceded by thousands of meetings, squeezed in between the bomb scares. And the beaches were packed with people all summer.

## Privatisation begins

Despite popular distrust, and public accusations of massive fraud, President Zeroual succeeded in using the June election to give a varnish of respectability to his regime.

Immediately after the results were announced, and before the new government was formed, the most painful parts of Zeroual's neoliberal reform programme were implemented.

A range of enterprises in the construction, publishing and retail sectors were liquidated. The almost total privatisation of the chemical sector was announced, as well as the partial privatisation of the mechanical and electronic sectors. Everywhere, redundancies were predicted or announced.

Coffin-chasers from all over the world flocked to Algiers to divide up the remains of the state industrial sector. Most nationalised companies had been unable to overcome the isolation and withdrawal of for-

eign investment which began in 1994 when the Armed Islamic Group began attacking foreigners.

A few deals have already been announced. Daewoo will take over a truck factory in Rouiba and a television factory in Sidi Bel Abbes. The Korean group promises to invest \$2 billion. Pfizer and other pharmaceutical groups have also announced investment plans.

The International Monetary Fund is insisting that land, too, be privatised, something the regime has been nervous about attempting. The IMF also demands the lifting of Algeria's remaining protective barriers around the national economy.

When the government presented this reactionary programme, most of the parliamentary parties, except the Berber minority's Cultural-Democratic Rally (RCD), expressed the population's concerns about the measures called for by the IMF.

Ait Ahmed's Front of Socialist Forces (FFS), which used to encourage Western economic pressure on the Algerian dictatorship, denounced the interference of IMF Chairman Michel Camdessus in Algerian internal affairs.

Many members of parliament from the government coalition (RND, FLN, Hamas) said they would only support Prime Minister Ouyahia if his government abandoned plans to privatise agricultural land and parts of the education system, and if it reversed the planned closure of a number of enterprises.

Social and labour struggles are again on the increase. After three months of strikes, workers at ENAL are increasing the number of sit-ins. Workers at the Sider metal-working complex in Annaba, near the Tunisian border, challenged management's announcement of 6,000 redundancies.

In July, workers at the Rouiba truck factory, facing the loss of several thousand jobs, became the centre of unitary "days of action" involving 30,000 workers in Algeria's main industrial zone, just outside the capital.

This movement of protest grew and spread across the country, but had no spokesperson or organised centre. The UGTA trade union federation, one of the bases of President Zeroual's new party, only exists during its "negotiations" with the regime, in the name of the working class.

But here and there, local union bodies did emerge as the leaders of the protests, like in Skikda (a petrochemical and gas-extraction region) and above all in Rouiba, where the union played a central role in the mobilisation.

Obviously, these were expressions of defensive resistance, by groups of workers threatened by job cuts and the dismantling of the nationalised industries. Their pres-



Counting the dead: the aftermath of the Baraki massacre

sure is above all an attempt to stop the flood of redundancies which have been announced.

In general, the context of insecurity in the country reduces people's 'militant energy'. Economic policies which are dissolving the working class have atomised the workers.

Nevertheless, this anti-liberal awakening, late as it is, is an important step in the possible reconstruction of the organised working class, in a way that will prevent the Islamic fundamentalists from capitalising on the widespread social despair.

## The shock of Haouch Rais

These challenges to privatisation, on the ground and in parliament, showed that Algerians were increasingly able to contain the burden of fear under which they live within "manageable proportions." As public security pressures subsided, society began to live again, and to debate matters of great importance.

At this point there was a new se-

**Then came the terrible news from Sidi Moussa, an eastern suburb of Algiers itself. More than 400 people had been murdered. Their throats cut. Their bodies mutilated. The young women kidnapped. The cattle stolen.**

ries of bomb attacks in Algiers, and a wave of rural massacres, starting in Média and moving past Chréa closer and closer to the capital. Then came the terrible news from Sidi Moussa, an eastern suburb of Algiers itself. More than 400 people had been murdered.

Their throats cut. Their bodies mutilated. The young women kidnapped. The cattle stolen.

Then, in the western outskirts of Algiers, on the road to the top-security residences of the elite, 63 residents of Beni Messous village were killed.

This was the first in a series of attacks in and near the Bainem forest, normally a popular destination for day-trippers from Algiers.

Panic spread in the villages clos-

est to the capital. In Baraki and Zghara, people from outlying houses began spending the night outside the nearest police station, rather than in their isolated homes. Rumours – usually false – that the region was being infiltrated by Islamic fundamentalists provoked panics.

Under pressure from the agitated population, the police agreed to distribute arms – this time without the political selection used in recent years to create the regime's Communal Militias. In Baraki, which already has a sizeable military presence, some 1,000 weapons were distributed to the population.

These new self-defence structures are being created in an atmosphere of fear and confusion.

Women and children are moved to safer accommodation, while the men spend the night patrolling, or standing sentry. Most have only sticks and knives. The vigilance is not very effective: sirens wail at the slightest alert, throwing people into confused agitation.

While people used to accuse the army of being responsible for a part

responsible for some other collective murders earlier this year. But these latest attacks were concentrated in the capital region.

The failure of the armed forces to protect the citizens is not evidence of a Machiavelian plan to collaborate in the attacks. No distribution of police forces can protect 28 million people, spread over Algeria's two million square kilometres of territory.

And in any case, the protection of the citizens is not the primary purpose of the repressive system. It exists to protect the ruling classes, and ensure their continued authority.

On the other hand, it is not impossible that some areas, preparing for the privatisation of agricultural land, are trying to drive the peasants off the most fertile land.

The attacks certainly surprised the regime. It seemed to believe that the worst was over. On August 20th, President Zeroual had even announced "the end of terrorism."

The strategy of the armed fundamentalist groups has changed. They used to impose their own, brutal authority on whatever population they could control. But increasingly, their strategy has been to carry out punitive raids against an entire population that they consider to be "ettekfir" (unbelievers). In this war against the godless, murder and pillage are justified. And virgin girls and cattle are legitimate booty.

These groups have taken refuge in inaccessible mountain regions like Chréa and Zbarbar. From these base-camps they organise punitive expeditions, local genocide, in order to remind the world that they exist, at a moment when the regime is proclaiming a military victory, and reasserting its political domination of Algeria.

In this desperate situation the growing structures of popular self-defence are the only act of civil dignity which can respond adequately to the horror facing Algeria.

Armed self-defence is the only way to fight the type of aggression Algerians are suffering – providing that it can be properly armed and structured.

## Who is responsible?

It is hard to find the truth amid the cacophony of rumours circulating among a traumatised, sleepless population. The massacres themselves leave few witnesses. But it does seem that the army was not – as many people suspected – responsible for these latest massacres.

Nor does the finger point towards the Communal Militias, armed and controlled by the regime. They do seem to have been re-

# Moroccan Jews seek asylum in Palestine

**Roland Rance**

THE RECENT bizarre report of several Israeli Jewish families seeking political asylum in the Palestine Authority is a graphic illustration of Israeli discrimination against non-Western Jews.

Some twenty Moroccan Jews from the Jerusalem satellite town of Mevasseret Zion fled to Jericho in September, after armed police evicted them from their homes and a court order barred them from entering both Mevasseret Zion and Jerusalem.

Until the mass immigration of Jews from the former USSR, in the early 1990s, approximately half a million Moroccan Jews constituted Israel's largest Jewish community. However, they have been consistently economically disadvantaged and under-represented in Israeli politics.

East European Jewish culture and tradition have been considered normative, and Jews from Arab countries such as Morocco and Yemen, as well as Ethiopians and Indians, have faced official racism, with even their Jewishness (key to civil rights in Israel) considered doubtful.

Following the establishment of



An early lesson in Zionism for an uprooted West Bank Palestinian

Israel and the expulsion of some 800,000 Palestinians in 1948, the new government urgently sought Jewish immigrants to repopulate the abandoned homes, villages and

towns. European Jewry had been seriously depleted by Nazi murder, and although a number of Holocaust survivors reached in Israel, it was clear that Europe would not provide the mass immigration needed.

Since most American Jews showed no inclination to leave for the Middle East, Israel was forced to look to the Jewish communities of North Africa and the Middle East.

Relatively well integrated, these Jews had never experienced the horrors of European-style racism. Few of

them had been attracted to the Zionist movement. Israel determined to "rescue" these Jews from their "exile".

The experience of the Iraqi Jews

has been confirmed by an Israeli court: Israel sent agents-provocateur to carry out bomb attacks on Jewish community centres, while Britain's client ruler in Iraq, Nuri Said, imposed restrictions on Jewish civil rights. Not surprisingly, within a few months the bulk of this ancient, prosperous and influential community had fled to Israel.

Similar stratagems, though less well documented, are known to have been applied in Morocco and Yemen. On arrival in Israel, these Jews - many of them professionals, academics or rich merchants - were treated as backward and ignorant children.

For many, their first experience of Israel was a compulsory spraying with DDT - an indignity never accorded to immigrants from the west. They were then resettled in former Palestinian areas, such as Lydda and Ramleh, or in "development towns" - newly-built slums in the middle of nowhere, often in exposed border areas.

Israeli political prisoner Mordechai Vanunu, who came to Israel from Morocco with his family in 1963, told a researcher in an interview in 1986: "We came from paradise to the desert".

This process was carried out by a government of the Israeli Labour Party, which thus earned the undying hatred of generations of North

African and Middle Eastern Jews. Mevasseret Zion was one such isolated border slum built for North African immigrants. Until the occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967, Israeli-held Jerusalem was a small and remote part of the country.

However, in the past thirty years it has been encouraged to develop into Israel's largest city. Mevasseret Zion, no longer on the border, has become a fashionable dormitory suburb for wealthy Jerusalemites who do not want to live in the city.

As a result, many children of the immigrants forcibly placed there forty to fifty years ago can no longer afford the spiralling cost of housing, and are forced to move to inner-city slums.

This was the background to the squatting movement in Mevasseret Zion, which led to the evictions of the Avivi, Dahan and Buzit families and their flight to Jericho. Now, with the help of Yasser Arafat, they have contacted King Hassan and asked to return to Morocco.

Although it is unlikely that many others will follow their example in the near future, the entire story shows how freedom, security and prosperity for Israeli Jews, no less than for Palestinian Arabs, cannot be obtained while Israel remains a racist state, wedded to a Zionist ideology of separation and apartheid.

# Is this Mary the answer to Tony's prayers?

**David Coen**

**MARY McAleese was elected Irish President with the largest majority in the history of the 26 County State, but the size of the majority cannot conceal the deep divisions in the Dublin ruling class revealed during the campaign.**

She defeated the Fine Gael candidate and great niece of Michael Collins, Mary Bannotti, who came in with 29%. The "left" candidate Adi Roche, supported by Labour, Democratic Left and the Greens, dropped from being a front-runner to a poor 7% of the vote on a turnout less than 50%, beaten even by Rosemary Scallon, better known as Dana, on 13%.

McAleese is almost universally hated by the Dublin media - her arrival at her first press conference was greeted by hostile silence, very

different from the cheers which welcomed the election of Mary Robinson.

By origin, a working class Catholic, burned out of her West Belfast home by Loyalists, she is disliked because of her traditionalist attitudes - she is anti abortion and close to the church hierarchy - but even so more because of her Northern nationalist background and what she represents.

Ge'rry Adams offered his support early in the campaign and this was the cue for a concerted attempt to damage her campaign by portraying her as a closet Sinn Feiner. At the head of the media pack was former leading member of the Workers Party and *Sunday Times* asset Eoghan Harris, who played a leading role in Mary Robinson's campaign, but linking up this time with John Bruton's Fine Gael. Apart from questioning how a non-Irish person (sic) such as

McAleese could become President, Bruton and Fine Gael were said to be behind the leaking of a couple of Irish Government documents showing, allegedly, that McAleese was a Sinn Fein fellow traveller.

The campaign misfired in the end: it irritated the republican instincts of Fianna Fail supporters who had their doubts about the way in which McAleese (with the help of the leadership) had elbowed Albert Reynolds out of the way.

McAleese's vote in Dublin was low; clearly her Catholic conservatism did not go down well in working class areas. In that sense she is a perfect representative of the problems Sinn Fein have in relating to politics in the South: the majority of people want Irish unity but it is not number one on their list of priorities.

Sinn Fein is too closely associated in their minds with the repressive, Catholic outlook which for so long dominated the 26 Counties and which has now broken down in a series of clerical scandals, 75 years after the foundation of the State.

What is now being demanded of McAleese is that she repudiate her nationalist sympathies and "reach out" to Unionists, i.e. that she helps sell the revamped partitionism emerging out to the "peace" talks to a doubting Southern (and Northern) nationalists.

Fianna Fail voters need to be brought round to the new settlement which, the British hope, will lead to the repeal of Articles 2 and 3 of the South's Constitution, thereby giving up the "claim" to the North or, more accurately, recognising the British claim.

So, paradoxically, the election of

the most pro-Irish unity candidate could prepare the way for a settlement which copper bottoms partition.

The other significant feature of the election is the way in which it cements the Sinn Fein/Fianna Fail Alliance, the pivot of the pan-nationalist front on which Adams is relying to force enough concessions from the British in order to sell a settlement to the base of the Republican Movement. The small proportion of the 26 County electorate which votes Sinn Fein supported McAleese to a vote.

Fianna Fail leader Bertie Ahearn will in the end debate what the "nationalist family" will accept from the British in return for repeal of Articles 2 and 3, but even his legendary infighting skills won't save him from the political fall-out from the "peace talks".

Fianna Fail's (and Sinn Fein's) reason for existence is Irish independence and national unity. They have not delivered on economic development except with the aid of huge and (short term) EU grants. Should they be seen to fail on the question of unity, then the gradual erosion of the party's support since the Haughey era could become a flood.

The Labour Party was the big loser in this campaign. Its candidate, Adi Roche, a soft focus do-gooder standing on a platform of good intentions, was designed to repeat their "success" with Mary Robinson in 1990.

She made little impact, apart from a few cringe-making remarks on opening the Presidential residence for music sessions. For most Labour supporters such sentimental blather



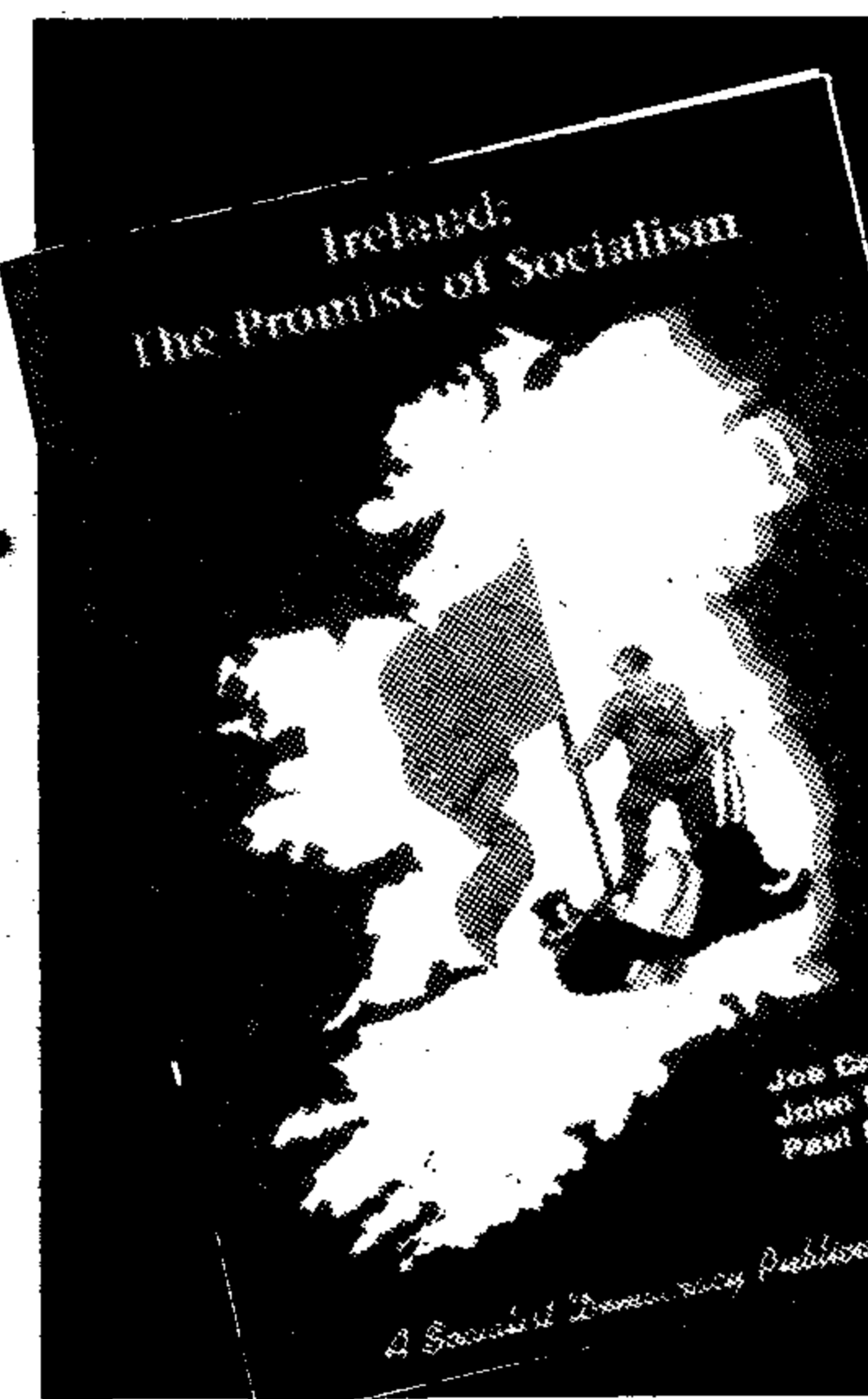
Aiding partition? McAleese

couldn't blot out the memory of Labour's participation in the Rainbow coalition with the conservatives of Fine Gael.

From a historically high vote of 19% and 33 seats, Labour are back in opposition with 10% and 17 seats. To make things worse, the defeat in the Presidential election has ruined their hopes of supplanting Fianna Fail as the main opposition party.

The impact of the "peace" talks, whatever their outcome, is likely to be highly destabilising on politics in the South of Ireland, and to Fianna Fail in particular.

In this situation there is undoubtedly room for a socialist party with a correct line on the national question. It is to this possibility that Irish socialists must bend all their efforts.



## Ireland: The Promise of Socialism

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# 80 years after Russian Revolution Still a beacon of internationalism

**Charlie van Gelderen**

THIS MONTH we will be commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. It is a good time to take stock of what it was all about.

This is especially important because, since the post-Stalin collapse of the Soviet Union, the legitimacy of the revolution is being questioned, not only by pro-capitalist historians but by many who call themselves Marxists.

The old myth that the Bolshevik seizure of power was some sort of conspiratorial coup has been resurrected. This is easily disposed of by calling on the testimony of opponents of the Bolsheviks.

A despatch from the Russian correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, Philip Price (December 1917), under the heading "How the Maximalists have come to gain control", read "The Maximalist fanatics who still dream of a social revolution throughout Europe have, according to my observations in the provinces, recently acquired an immense if amorphous following."

The historian N N Sukhanov, at one time a member of the Provisional Government after the February Revolution, wrote ... "they (the Bolsheviks) had become the sole

hope, if only because they were one with the masses... the mass lived and breathed together with the Bolsheviks. It was in the hands of the party of Lenin and Trotsky.

"To talk about military conspiracy instead of national insurrection, when the party was followed by the overwhelming majority of the people... was clearly an absurdity"

A second myth was that the aim of the Bolsheviks was immediately to achieve socialism in Russia. But socialism involves the elimination of inequalities and shortages: Russia was a backward economy lacking some of the most basic material resources. The revisionist theory that it was possible to achieve "socialism in one country" did not figure in the Bolshevik canon until Bukharin and Stalin formulated it in 1924.

For Lenin, the historical role of winning power in Russia was to encourage the international revolution, and particularly the German revolution. That the Bolsheviks were able to win power in Russia first was because the relationship of forces to the workers there was more favourable, and the revolutionary leadership more developed than in any other country.

The uncompromising internationalism of Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks was reinforced in the

first Soviet constitution, that of 1918. Distinction between "national citizens" and "foreigners" was eliminated.

Anybody living in the Soviet Union and ready to work enjoyed all the political rights, including the right to vote. The Scottish socialist, John MacLean, then in prison for leading a strike, was appointed Consul General for the RSFR. This gave him diplomatic immunity - and he was immediately released.

The Russian Revolution *did* ignite the spark of revolution in Europe. In February 1918, the Austro-Hungarian fleet mutinied; in Britain, in December 1918, at a *Daily Herald* rally in the Albert Hall, Robert Williams, general secretary of the Transport Workers Federation, urged "preparedness for revolution".

There were real revolutions in Finland, Austria and Hungary, soviet power in Bavaria, a revolutionary crisis in Italy. Even that citadel of capitalism, the USA, was not immune. There was a general strike in Seattle. Lenin's prognosis appeared to be confirmed.

These events struck terror into the hearts of the bourgeoisie and their spokespersons.

In a confidential memorandum to the delegates to the Versailles Peace Conference on March 13,



Lenin and Trotsky in 1920: their commitment was to international socialism

1919, Lloyd George warned: "If Germany ever goes to the Spartakists, it is inevitable that she would throw in her lot with the Russian Bolsheviks ... all Eastern Europe will be swept into the orbit of the Bolshevik Revolution... nearly 300 million people organised in a vast Red Army under German instructors."

The October Revolution also gave a powerful impulse to the developing national liberation movements in India, China and Indonesia, and to anti-imperialist movements such as that left by Kemal Attaturk in Turkey.

It is well to remember the inter-

nationalism which inspired the leaders of the Russian Revolution before it was crushed by the reactionary forces of Stalinism, and that pursuit of "socialism in one country" has meant, as Trotsky predicted, socialism nowhere.

It is this type of internationalism, a genuine commitment to widening the revolution on a global scale, which later inspired Che Guevara.

Today, it is the Fourth International which carries aloft the banner of internationalism which was so central to the thinking of Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks in 1917, and this is what we will be commemorating on November 7th.

# Eysenck's reactionary ideas live on

**Rod Marshall**

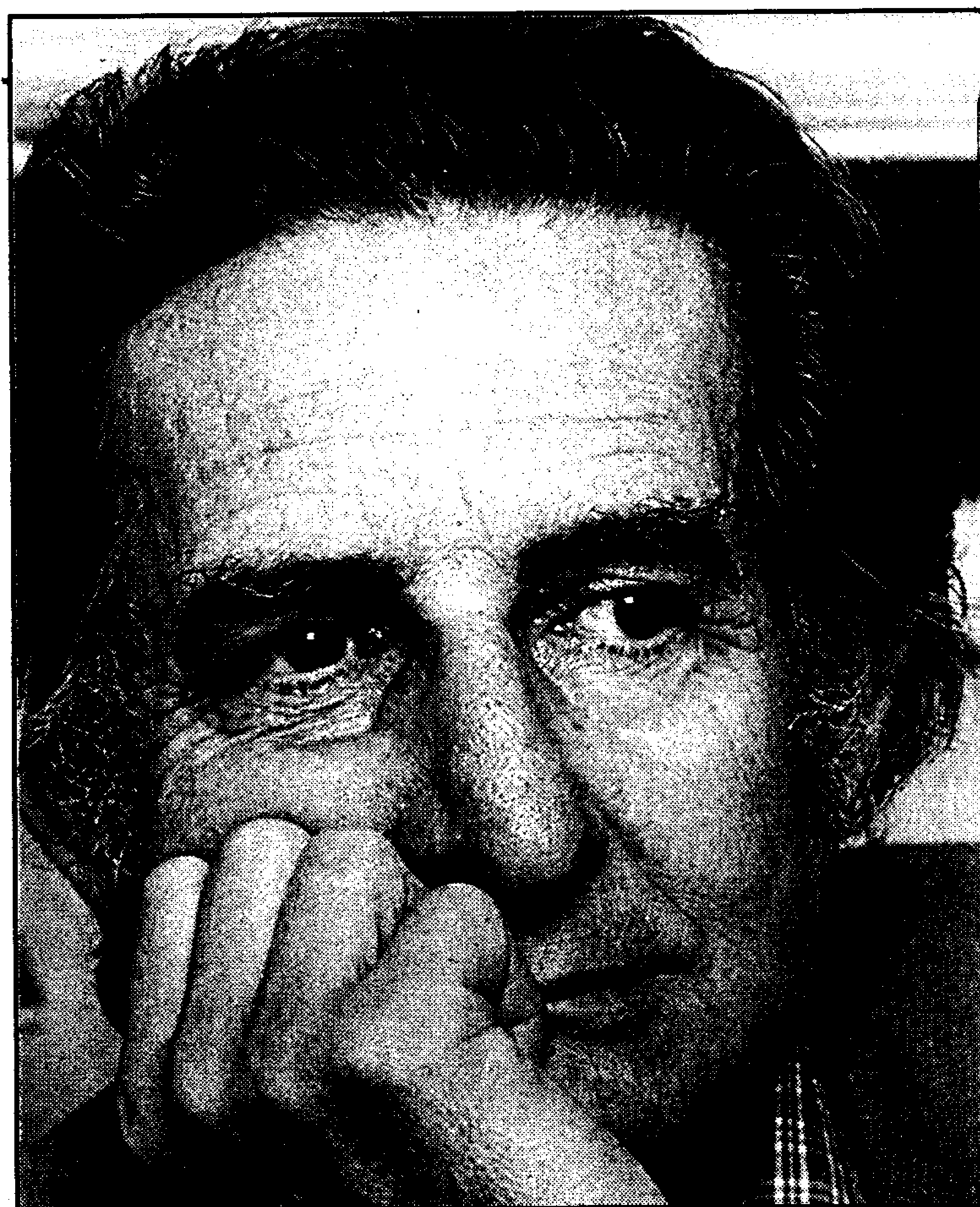
THE DEATH of well-known psychologist Hans Eysenck will not stop his ideas about personality and IQ living well beyond the hype and emotion of Diana's death which largely swamped news of his demise in early September.

A measure of an enduring legacy is one that is apparent before the death of its creator - thousands of undergraduates on psychology courses are taught to use Eysenck's Personality Inventory (EPI).

Many people well beyond academic circles talk of extroverts and introverts, of people being neurotic. Many others have taken intelligence tests or talk of genetic influences. These 'common sense' notions, now advanced by numerous other psychologists have a lot to thank Hans Eysenck for.

So to do the far right and fascist groups. Not that Eysenck was a member of any such groups - he was far too clever to be that closely associated and, after all, as a Jew he did flee Germany in the 1930s. So Eysenck was not a fascist, but he most definitely allowed his ideas - particularly those on the relationship between race and IQ - to be used by such groups.

In a debate with radical writer Leon Kamin in 1981 (*Intelligence: The Battle for the Mind*) Eysenck wrote that "Jews, Chinese and Japanese are often thought of as being particularly clever, Negroes and Mexican-Americans as being less able than average" (p 74). He dem-



Eysenck: his ideas based on racist stereotypes and bad science

onstrates these 'facts' that are "relatively easy to establish" in the form of IQ scores from white and black children in the US.

Eysenck is careful - very careful -

to present the causes of these findings as emerging from a range of possibilities: the "much more difficult question is whether these differences... are the result of cultural

factors and the outcome of deprivation or hereditarily determined and produced by genetic factors."

While Eysenck is careful not to rule in genetic causes for definite he is clearly ruling out environmental factors such as socio-economic status or the fact that the language of IQ tests is better suited to white middle class children.

This is despite a wealth of research findings (eg Labov 1969) which show that the language used in tests can exert huge and statistically significant influence on the outcome.

This studied ambiguity on the link between racial differences and genetic causes, coupled with clear argument in favour of genetic influence on IQ per se (citing the work of Jensen) allow reactionary ideas to emerge from a supposedly eminent source.

The argument goes: 'Yes, there are differences in intelligence between races. While genes cannot be ruled in for definite, genetics does cause IQ. Environmental factors and biased testing can be ruled out.' This is not only bad science, as Kamin and others testify, but it is a racist approach masquerading as science. This is why Eysenck's work is loved so much by racists and fascists.

Perhaps more worrying is the extent to which his ideas have become accepted as some sort of common sense. I don't have the space to present here the wealth of evidence that shows that many forms of ability - far better measures than an intelligence quotient - are evenly distributed among different races.

There is also a large body of literature on genetic influences that argues strongly for an 'interactionist' position, whereby genetic effects combine genetically with social and environmental factors (see for example Lewontin's *The Doctrine of DNA*).

It is regrettable that we tend to think in terms of intelligence and personality - terms which subtly delimit us to an individuality which calls for individual responsibility - but puts agency in the hands of genes or other scientific concepts over which we have no control.

The reactionary notion of responsibility lies not in suggesting the need for individual agency but in deliberately ignoring the very real social factors that prevent such individual agency being realised.

Eysenck's legacy therefore is to suggest that people are predetermined to be of a particular type - intelligent or unintelligent, introvert or extrovert.

These labels only serve to back up a society that rests on inequality between groups of people and yet kids people into thinking they are self-contained responsible individuals.

To that extent Eysenck's work is not only fuel for fascists but welcome fodder for capitalism as a whole. No wonder so many of the notions that he coined and popularised are now quoted and used by leading figures in government today.

# Look back in horror

Voices for Choice: Women recollect their experiences of abortion in Britain 1936-1997, £3.30

Reviewed by Eikle Dee

"I could have gone to prison. There was the horror of what you were doing and the fear of being caught. Horrendous. Absolutely horrendous".

Here, Jane recalls her experiences of having several illegal abortions as a young woman in the 1950s, before the 1967 Abortion Act.

She is one of 30 women whose experiences of abortion before and after 1967 are described in this book published by the National Abortion Campaign and Marie Stopes International, to commemorate the 1967 Act.

It reminds us all why there must be no return to the fear and danger of backstreet abortion, and is part of a campaign to move forward. NAC campaigns not only to defend the Act as it stands, but for abortion on request to be a woman's right.

For a legal abortion to take place, two doctors must sign a form stating that "the termination is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the woman". This takes away the decision from women and puts it in the hands of doctors.

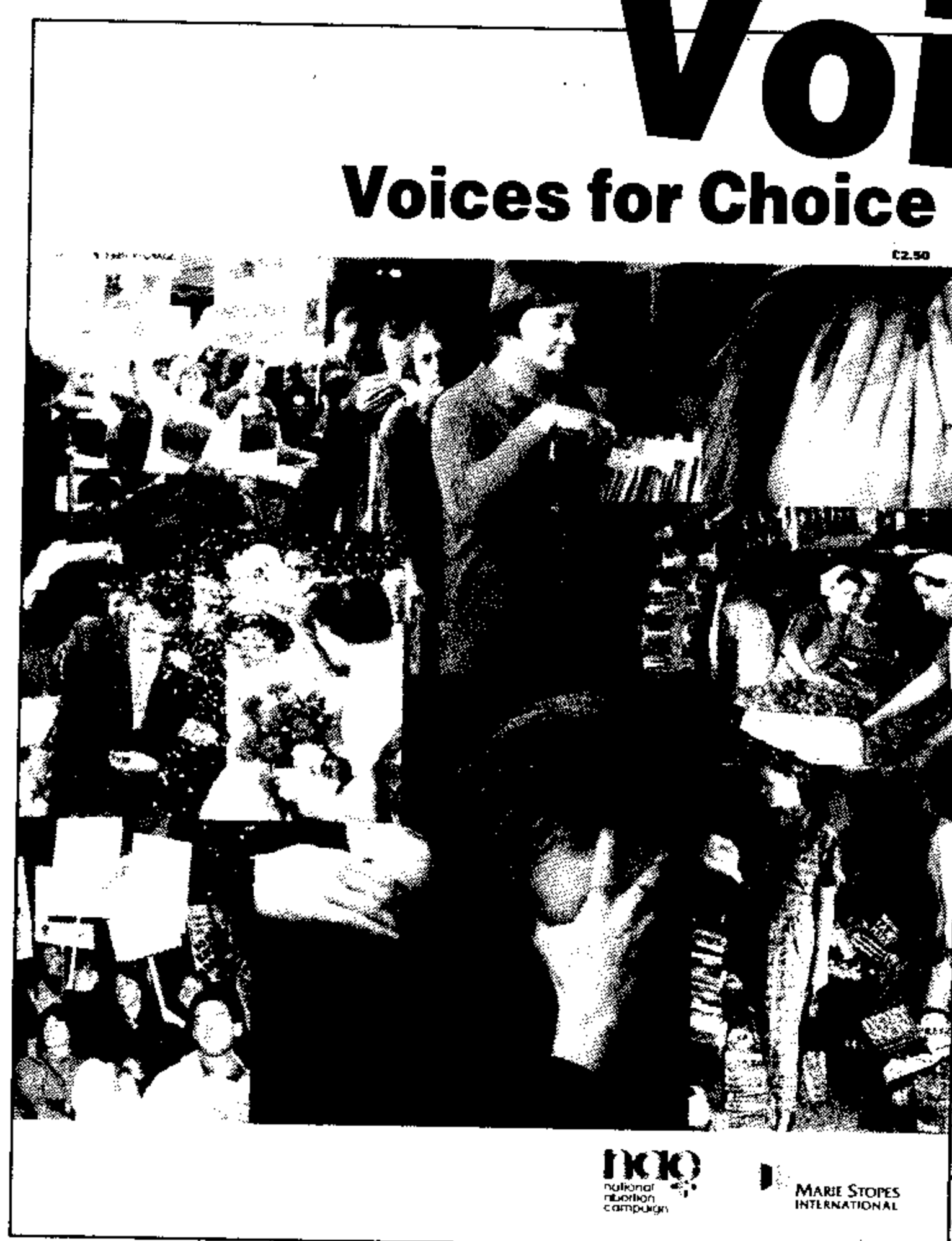
The book makes clear the difficulties women faced before 1967. Contraception was difficult to obtain for unmarried women and often failed. Many women tried gin and hot baths or pills bought by mail order, before turning to backstreet abortionists or, for the lucky ones, doctors who would help.

Alice was 16. Her father gave her pills, and the hot bath with gin, then tried hitting her and pushing her down the stairs, before finally calling in the abortionist.

Several women tell stories of having soap and water solutions injected into their womb and being sent away or left alone to

## Commemorating 30 Years of Legal Abortion in Britain

# Voices for Choice



I was 18 years old, and in Paris with some friends one Spring in the early 60s, when I was raped and became pregnant. It was 1963 - the year President Kennedy was shot.

It was 1963 and I was 16 years old. I'd met the father at a local jazz club.

My dad was there and he literally punched me in the stomach and then pushed me down the stairs.

wait for the abortion to start.

Jane remembers, "I walked for two or three hours. I can remember walking round the streets, feeling bitterly cold and crying, but knowing that I had to keep on walking. Had to keep on the move. Just waiting for the pain to start." She was back at work the next day - she had to be.

Other women ended up in hospital with

infections and incomplete abortions. One woman spent three months in a mental hospital in order to have an abortion, and was coerced into being sterilised at the same time. And these are women who survived to tell us their stories - others didn't.

An important issue for many of these

women was the cost of abortion. Rosemary couldn't afford the £300 required for a Harley Street abortion in 1964, so paid £60 for a backstreet job. After bleeding for 3 days she went to hospital. "They discovered I had septicaemia. If I hadn't gone there when I did I probably would have died."

The book fails to indicate what wage levels for working women then were like, but £60 is probably rather more in real terms than the cost of most private abortions now. Illegality made abortion both expensive and dangerous.

The book also recounts experiences of abortion after the Act, varying from distressing and frustrating delays and humiliating treatment to straightforward procedures in which women's ability and right to choose was respected.

My main quibble with the book overall was with the slightly puzzling choice of "significant dates" that accompany the women's stories. Some are chosen for their significance in relation to women's reproductive rights, or as "the first woman to ..." achievements, but the connection between abortion rights and Churchill's death, the Queen's Silver Jubilee or even a recent "tragic car crash" (yes, that one) is hard to see.

But this is a minor point. As a whole, these recollections of experience add up to a compelling argument for a woman's right to choose. Alice says, "I don't think anyone should have to go through what I went through. Abortion should be every woman's right". Order a copy for £3.30 (inc P&P) by sending a cheque to NAC, The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL.

## WHAT'S ON

### NOVEMBER

#### Wednesday 5

Lobby Parliament, St. Stephen's Gate 1.30p.m. Supported by the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

Lobby Parliament in support of the Liverpool Dockers, from 2pm onwards

#### Thursday 6

London Socialist Outlook public meeting, 80th Anniversary of the Russian revolution, 'What does Socialism offer women?'. 8p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (Holborn tube)

#### Saturday 8

National Assembly Against Racism conference, 9.30-5.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

Oxford demonstration against cuts in public services. Assemble 10.30am, Radcliffe Infirmary

#### Sunday 9

Student Assembly Against Ra-

cism, 10a.m.-5p.m., University of London Union, Malet St., London WC1

#### Tuesday 11

Save Lone Parent Benefit public meeting 7.30p.m. House of Commons committee room 10. Speakers include MPs and trade unionists

#### Friday 14

Sunday 16 International Seminar 'October 1917: Causes, Impact, Long-term developments'. Organised by the French association Espaces Marx, together with the International Institute for Research and Education/Ernest Mandel Study Center Amsterdam at the University of Paris VIII (St-Denis). For more information contact Espaces Marx

#### Saturday 15

Trade Unions under New Labour. Conference organised by Trade Union Lefts Alliance. 11a.m.-4p.m., University of London Union, Malet St., London WC1

#### Sunday 16

100 Years of Jewish Socialism, A Day to Relate, Debate and Celebrate. Organised by the Jewish Workers' Bund Centenary Committee. 1p.m.-6.30 London Voluntary Services Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Rd., London N7.

#### Thursday 20

Demonstrate for jobs and Welfare in Luxembourg, called by the French CGT and supported by the European TUC Secretariat. Further details and bookings contact Glen Voris, St. Helens TUC Resource Centre, 01744 755 889.

#### Saturday 29

Open Meeting called by the network of Socialist Alliances for England. 10.30a.m., The Crossing, Darwell St., Walsall.

#### Saturday 29

'Can Tory Spending limits deliver social justice?'. Campaign to Defend the Welfare State National Conference. 12.30-4.30 TUC, Great Russell St., London WC1.

### DECEMBER

#### Saturday 6

Campaign for a Fighting Democratic UNISON National Conference. 10a.m.-4p.m., South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, London NW1 (10mins Euston and Kings Cross) Network of Socialist Campaign Groups AGM, Leeds

Open Meeting for Supporters of the Euromarch, Birmingham. For further details contact Glen Voris, St. Helens TUC Resource Centre, 01744 755 889.

'Education Beyond 16', a one day education conference organised by NATFHE General Education Section. 11.00-4.00, Camden Town Hall, London (Near Kings Cross and Euston).

#### Monday 8 or

#### Tuesday 9

Lobby of TGWU Executive called by Liverpool dockers. Transport House, 16 Palace St, London SW1.

# Socialist Outlook

## Where we stand

**IN THE NINETIES** millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity faces widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

*Socialist Outlook* is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.

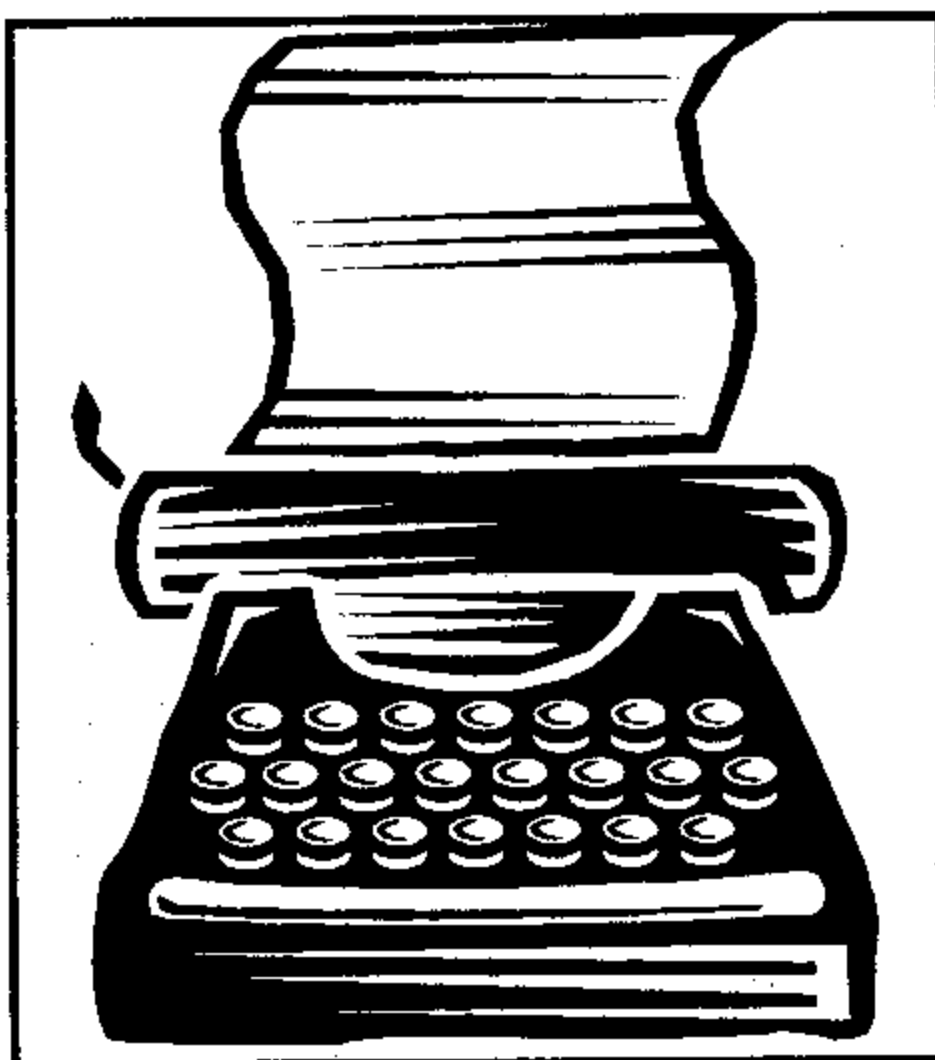
The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order gradually to acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

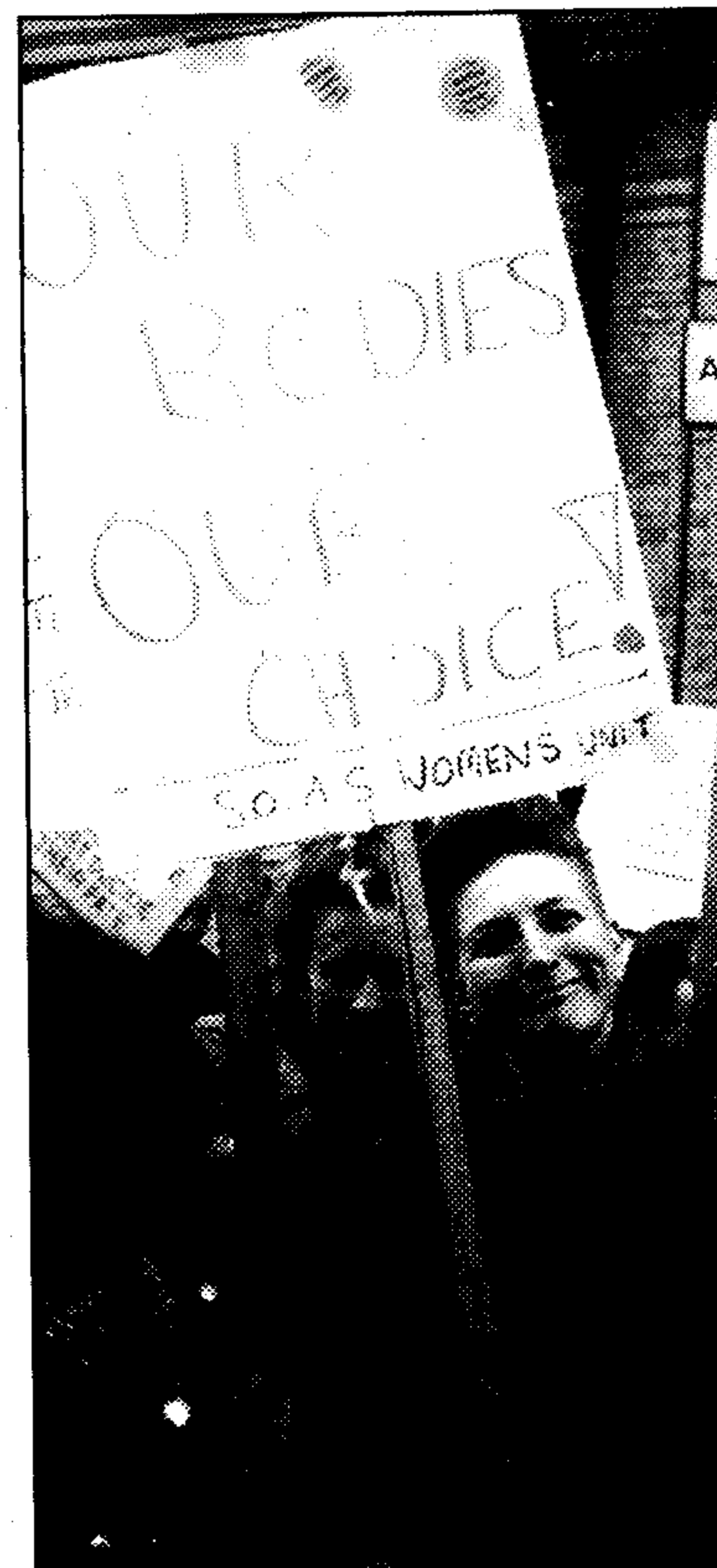
The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By simultaneously building revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.



## FEEDBACK

Send us your letters on any topic, to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Letters over 400 words may have to be edited for length.



# Defending the right to choose

SOMETHING was disturbing me, niggling away at the back of my mind last week. I felt uncomfortable, but I wasn't totally sure why.

Then, while reading a newspaper, the pieces of the jigsaw suddenly fell into place. Sorry I should explain. On Wednesday evening, I was at a rally to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act when heated row broke out.

Audrey Wise MP was speaking, talking about the pain of parents who have watched their young children dying of terminal, incurable, degenerative disease.

These particular parents had felt confident to go ahead with another pregnancy after seeing their first two children die in agony.

They knew that if screening indicated this foetus would have the same prognosis they could get an abortion because of the 1967 Act. On that basis they went ahead and had a child who lived and was free from this illness.

Audrey told her story in a somewhat clumsy way - she often does. She had irritated some in the audience earlier by talking of

the need for healthy, happy families. But it was when she talked of dying children that a young woman at the front became irate enough to interrupt her, accusing her among other things of promoting eugenics.

After a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing the meeting continued. Audrey Wise became very defensive and patronising in her response - seeming to imply that no one had the right to comment until they had been as round as long as she! This was hardly calculated to pacify an audience predominantly composed of students.

But at the core of her indignation, I felt there was something valid. While being cross many of the things she said I thought the attack was misplaced.

I couldn't stay until the end of the meeting. I was cold, tired and hungry and had to be up early the next day so I don't know if there was a discussion about what had happened.

A couple of days later, reading the papers I chanced upon the story of the woman - with an incurable degenerative disease - who had won the legal right to

die. It all fell into place for me then.

Some people with some types of degenerative diseases have been fighting this battle for a long time and now someone has won in this country.

There are those in the disability movement and beyond who are hostile to these moves - who say those involved are being manipulated and pushed by a society that discriminates against people with disabilities. I disagree.

I want the right to choose when I die if I develop such an illness. I want that right to be available for everyone. Fighting to end discrimination against disabled people is a separate and vital issue.

If I knew I was carrying a foetus that if born would face certain death in agony at an early age, I want not only the right to abortion, but also support from those around me. To mix this up with eugenics is to misunderstand the threat of those truly reactionary ideas.

Susan Moore,  
London

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# Socialist OUTLOOK

A monthly marxist review \* New series No. 10 \* November 1997 \* 50p

## Call Monks to order over EMU

Leaders of the two biggest unions Bickerstaffe (left) and Morris (right) are happy to let Monks (centre) use the TUC's name to wage his campaign for the Euro – despite their own union's policy



# Scrap the Euro, scrap the Treaty!

GORDON BROWN finally made his statement at the end of October, postponing British entry to the European single currency until after the next election.

But even while outside the economic straitjacket of a currency controlled by Europe's top bankers, there will be no escape from the austerity offensive ushered in by the Maastricht Treaty.

Elsewhere in Europe, resistance to Maastricht misery remains strong, as evidenced by a resurgence of action by the French lorry drivers, and recent strikes in Spain.

However Brown has made it clear that Labour still intends to join the new currency, and will therefore be looking for ways to ensure that the British economy "converges" with those which sign up for the Euro in

1999. Already Brown has effectively privatised the Bank of England, handing over control of key levers in the economy to the tender mercies of unelected bankers.

And he has upheld Tory cash limits on health, education and social service spending, triggering a round of cuts this year and more to come in 1998. With progressive taxation ruled out as a point of principle, Labour must look to keep a firm lid on public spending, if it is to prevent public sector deficits exceeding the 3% limit imposed by Maastricht.

These are precisely the reasons that major unions including UNISON and the TGWU have voted overwhelmingly against the single currency and the terms of the Maastricht Treaty.

But it is hard to see any evidence of

their leaders arguing for this policy. Instead there is the bizarre spectacle of TUC leader John Monks apparently more enthusiastic for Monetary Union than the CBI, mounting a one-man campaign to force the pace towards the single currency.

Top union leaders have been heard to complain in private that Monks has no mandate for his line; but there is no sign of any fightback from senior figures on the General Council, who have allowed the TUC to be railroaded into a policy that could slash the services, jobs and living standards of their members.

UNISON's Bickerstaffe seems happy enough to slap down his own members who take up a fight in defence of public services, but clearly lacks the bottle to defend UNISON policy in the media or challenge

Monks. Bill Morris of the TGWU is more concerned to do the government's dirty work by breaking the Liverpool dockers' strike than to uphold his union's policy in the TUC.

This issue will not go away. While the Tories tear themselves apart over the Euro, the spineless refusal of union leaders and many on Labour's left to oppose the Maastricht Treaty leaves Blair and Brown in the driving seat.

The demand must go up from trade union and Labour Party bodies for the rejection of the single currency to be coupled with a rejection of the Maastricht criteria, and for an economic policy based on full employment and a restoration of public services, funded from progressive taxation on big business and the rich.