

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

INSIDE

Unite the left
in NUS! See page 5

**TEACHERS'
ORGANISER**

New realism or
old rubbish?
How to organise the fightback
against the 1987 average
pay award. To Shirley Heath
10/11
Friday Club, Chesham Street
Tuesday 28 March
12.15pm

4-page
NUT
special

Time to draw
the line!

By Tim Pugh
President South West
NUT (London)
reportage



Beat the Poll Tax!

Why you should support the Khola Mayekiso tour

Khola Mayekiso, wife of South African metal-workers' leader Moses Mayekiso, is on a speaking tour of Britain.

Khola will be talking about the trial of Moses and four others who have been charged with treason for their part in the struggle in Johannesburg's Alexandra Township.

The trial is of vital importance for the South African and the international workers' movements. If Moses and his comrades are jailed, then the apartheid state will have won an important victory.

16th March: TUC Yorkshire and Humberside region.
17th March: public meeting Sheffield.
18th March: public meeting Barnsley.
18th March: TUC East Midlands region.
19th March: Nottingham International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd 1.15pm and Derby Indian Community Centre



7.30pm.
20-21st March: TUC West Midlands region.
22-23 March: TUC East Anglia region.
24-25 March: NUT Conference.
27-29 March: Wales and South West TUC regions.
29th March-1st April: London area (South East region TUC) including 30th March public meeting, Lambeth Town Hall,

Brixton.
2 April: Depart for USA and Ireland.
For details of meetings, phone NUMSA UK on 0926 315220 or TUC 01 636 4030 or Terry Bell (Friends of Moses Mayekiso) 086 038 0543.

**For more on Moses
turn to page 8**

Don't pay! Don't collect!

By Jim Kearns

Within two weeks the Poll Tax will become law in Scotland. On 18 March tens of thousands will demonstrate in Glasgow to declare that the campaign to defeat the Poll Tax is not over, it's just beginning.

For over a year, local anti-Poll Tax unions have been organising throughout Scotland. Federations of local groups have come together in Strathclyde, Lothian and elsewhere. Saturday 4 March marked the founding conference of the all-Scottish anti-Poll Tax campaign.

The 18 March demonstration calls for mass non-payment, but mass non-payment in isolation will not beat the Poll Tax. We must use the demonstration as a launching pad not just for a campaign of mass non-payment, but to turn the campaign back into the labour movement.

The Scottish TUC, the Scottish Labour leadership and especially the local Labour Groups in the Regional Councils, have played a disgraceful role on the Poll Tax. The anger and disaffection of working class people was seen in Govan. Labour lost a supposedly unassailable seat to the Scottish Nationalist Party precisely because the SNP was perceived to be taking a stronger stand against the Poll Tax than the Labour Party.

So far the Labour Groups in charge of Strathclyde and Lothian have had an easy ride. These Labour councillors, elected by working class votes, have chosen to meekly comply with the Tories' demands.

The campaign must demand of those Labour Groups that they will not prosecute anyone who can't, or

won't, pay their Poll Tax. It must demand no wage arremstments, no seizure of benefit, no warrant sales, when people don't pay the Tories' Poll Tax.

We must demand through local ward branches, Constituency Labour Parties, and Regional Labour Parties that Labour authorities do not carry out the Tories' dirty work.

The mass non-payment campaign must also address itself to local authority unions. For example Strathclyde NALGO branch has affiliated to the Strathclyde Federation of anti-Poll Tax unions. This affiliation must be built upon so that we can see NALGO workers using their industrial muscle to defeat the Poll Tax by, for example, boycotting any new registrations, and refusing to process wage arremstments or warrant sales.

The campaign must also carry its message to every workplace it can, so that as wide a base as possible in the trade union movement can be built for the ideas of mass non-payment and industrial action against the Poll Tax.

The fight against the Poll Tax in Scotland is alive and kicking. The potential for a mass campaign linking non-payment, non-collection and no deduction at source, is there.

The campaign in Scotland could act as a beacon to those organising in England and Wales so that the slogan of the Strathclyde Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions can become a reality in every working class community up and down Britain: No Poll Tax here!

And the pressure must be kept up on Labour-controlled councils — through lobbies of Labour Group meetings and individual councillors' surgeries, and through raising the issue in Labour Party branches and affiliated organisations — to demand that they stop doing the Tories' dirty work for them.

Hands off Tibet!

By Gerry Bates

30 years after China's Maoist government took real control of Tibet — Chinese control had been more or less nominal before then — the country still remains unsettled and rebellious. The mass of people remain fervently committed to achieving independence from Chinese control.

Chinese rule is the rule of outsiders who are alien to the culture and identity of the Tibetans. Many of the ruling Chinese officials can't even speak the language of the people they rule over. Chinese rule is rule by conquest and force.

In the last 30 years the Tibetans have been subjected to one of the grisliest forms of bureaucratic state-monopoly rule. They are oppressed as human beings, as Tibetans and as Buddhists.

The worst period was the years of the so-called Cultural Revolution, unleashed by a section of China's rulers led by Mao Zedong in 1966.

Mao wanted to beat down opposition to himself and his position in the Chinese Communist Party, a majority of whose leaders were against him. He had control of the Army; so he mobilised sections of Chinese youth, under the control of the Army, to crush his opponents.

They unleashed a reign of terror and destruction throughout China,



maiming and murdering. They destroyed as much as they could of the culture of old China and of that bourgeois culture which socialists like Marx and Lenin had said needed to be made accessible to the mass of the workers and farmers. They persecuted intellectuals and 'experts', and blighted art for more than a decade.

In Tibet this tide of state-organised barbarism took as its target an entire people, a people whose strongly inbred turbid Buddhist culture had proved itself a durable obstacle to change.

Socialists, of course, can have little sympathy with that backward and obscurantist culture. But we have less sympathy with the brutal attempt of the totalitarian Chinese state to pulverise the Tibetan people and destroy their identity.

Like the Muslims of Afghanistan, the people of Tibet are entitled to independence if they want it. They will make their own progress in their own way and in their own time.

Strikers bankrupt Lorenzo

WORLD BRIEFS

8,500 mechanics and baggagers on strike at America's Eastern Airlines have been supported, despite all predictions by pilots and flight attendants. As a result the company has been forced to file for protection from its creditors, under Chapter 11 of the US Bankruptcy code.

Eastern's boss, Frank Lorenzo, is

one of America's most ruthless and hated bosses. He has been backed to the limit by President Bush. Bush hoped to follow the example of Reagan, who early in his first term smashed the air-traffic controllers' union PATCO, but things aren't going so well for him.

The Ethiopian government has been forced to withdraw from almost all of both Eritrea and Tigré, the two main provinces that have been in revolt against them.

Ethiopian repression in Tigré has failed, and the regime of Mengistu has now been almost fully evicted.

This will spell further crisis for the so-called Marxist regime, which faces another summer of famine

Hot on the heels of neo-Nazi successes in West Berlin last month, the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party this week won seats in Frankfurt's local council.

The far right is growing mainly at the expense of the 'soft right'. Frankfurt's majority will be a coalition of Greens (who did quite well) and the Social Democratic Party (who did not).

Anti-Nazi's have protested at the NDP gains.

These events in West Germany suggest a resurgence of European fascism — a phenomenon most advanced of course in France, with Le Pen's Front Nationale.

The labour movement, which needs to forge Europe-wide links in preparation for 1992, should organise now to stop the spread of fascism.

More about the issues



AFGHANISTAN: USSR troops out!

Militant's policy and the 'colonial revolution' analysis.

Marxists and Afghanistan: the debate in detail. 50p plus 22p postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Both sides are equally bad in Afghanistan

LETTERS

The slogan "Defend the cities" (SO 391) is wrong for Afghanistan.

This slogan can only mean advocating a bloc with the Stalinist PDP to defend the cities militarily against the Mujahedeen. This proposal comes after years of Socialist Organiser opposing the war carried out by the PDP and the Russian army against the people of Afghanistan. The call for "Russian troops out" was right because their presence was the chief obstacle to national self determination.

Some people on the left claimed that the Russian occupation did not mean national oppression because the troops were invited by and/or came to the aid of the PDP government. SO rightly rejected this line of argument, pointing to the fact that the PDP had feeble support outside the army.

The Russian occupation could claim no legitimacy from its "invite" from the Kabul government. The PDP regime was not the legitimate representative of the people of Afghanistan. The Russian invasion was an attempt at artificially propping up an unpopular regime. As a result of the lack of support for the PDP the conflict became a war against the people of Afghanistan and degenerated into naplaming.

Now the Russian troops have gone the PDP regime remains a government forced on the people of Afghanistan by the army. The regime never broadened its base beyond the army and other state functionaries.

In other conflicts SO has rightly criticised populist army officers for

using the masses as a "stage army" being rolled on and off the political arena. But in Afghanistan there was never any possibility of stage army tactics, as the Kabul regime soon found itself pitted against the vast majority of the population.

So, why should socialists "Defend the cities" ie defend the last areas under the control of an unpopular, hated Stalinist regime?

The editorial in SO no.399 points to the progressive measures the regime implemented. Particular attention is drawn to the position of women.

Socialists critically support such measures but in no way should we support the regime. By calling for the defence of the cities and not just for the defence of the social gains, the editorial sides too closely with the Najibullah regime.

In this discussion on a hated regime carrying out socially progressive measures recall Trotsky's reference to people not liking missionaries with bayonets. He stated: "It is impossible to impose revolutionary ideas and institutions on other people through military violence." Such actions "must correspond to the desires of the toiling masses".

The tragedy of the situation is that the progressive measures implemented by the PDP were carried out as dictates by an isolated government backed solely by the army.

The attempt to bring "enlightenment" on the end of a bayonet pushed the masses into the arms of reactionary mullahs. This is the lesson in what happens when a military short-cut is sought. To implement democratic measures mass support is essential.

Today in Afghanistan, the conflict is between two equally reactionary and counter-revolutionary sides.

The Mujahedeen have the backing of the majority of the population. They carried out a successful fight to force the Russian army of occupation to flee the country. However, they are dominated by warlords and reactionary bigots and are opposed to the progressive measures brought in by the PDP.

The Kabul regime is a Stalinist clique raised to power by an army coup, has feeble public support and has spent most of its existence at war with the people of Afghanistan. However, government decrees have attempted to drag the country into the 20th century.

The "Defend the cities" slogan should be dropped. Instead the following points should be the basis of a socialist position.

1. Support neither side in the civil war — both sides are equally reactionary.
2. Support calls for a ceasefire and for a peaceful negotiated settlement.
3. Politically defend the social gains introduced by the PDP.
4. Defend the right of the people of Afghanistan to determine their own future.
5. For a Constituent Assembly.

Tony Dale
Manchester

Mystic in the mist

Some readers have queried the remark at the end of my review of "Gorillas in the Mist", in SO no.392: "I'm not that comfortable with visionaries". Aren't we visionaries? they ask.

Yes we are. But not in the way Dian Fossey was (or the way the film portrayed her, at least), and not in the way I meant.

The film portrayed Fossey as an obnoxious American who went to Africa with a vision, but without bothering to learn the language; who shouts at the "natives" ever louder in English when they don't understand her; and who tells them how to run things with no real understanding of their own needs and priorities. Her vision was not

one based on working with people for their liberation, but a personal fetish imposed on the people around her.

Whether the portrayal was accurate or not, I can't say. All I know is that I found her insensitive and self righteous.

Possibly Fossey had to act as she did to save the gorillas from extinction. All the same, it is hard to like someone who can happily see humans go hungry while money is diverted to keep animals safe. She was that kind of visionary, one I could not warm to.

I didn't mean to imply any disapproval of visionaries generally. Without visionaries there would be no socialist movement.

Belinda Weaver
Islington

Bush bumbles towards a slump

EDITORIAL

George Bush already looks like a lame-duck President, after only two months in office.

His nominee, John Tower, has been rejected as Defence Secretary because of his sleazy private life and the huge amounts of money he has had from military contractors. Worse, Bush's first budget is obvious nonsense.

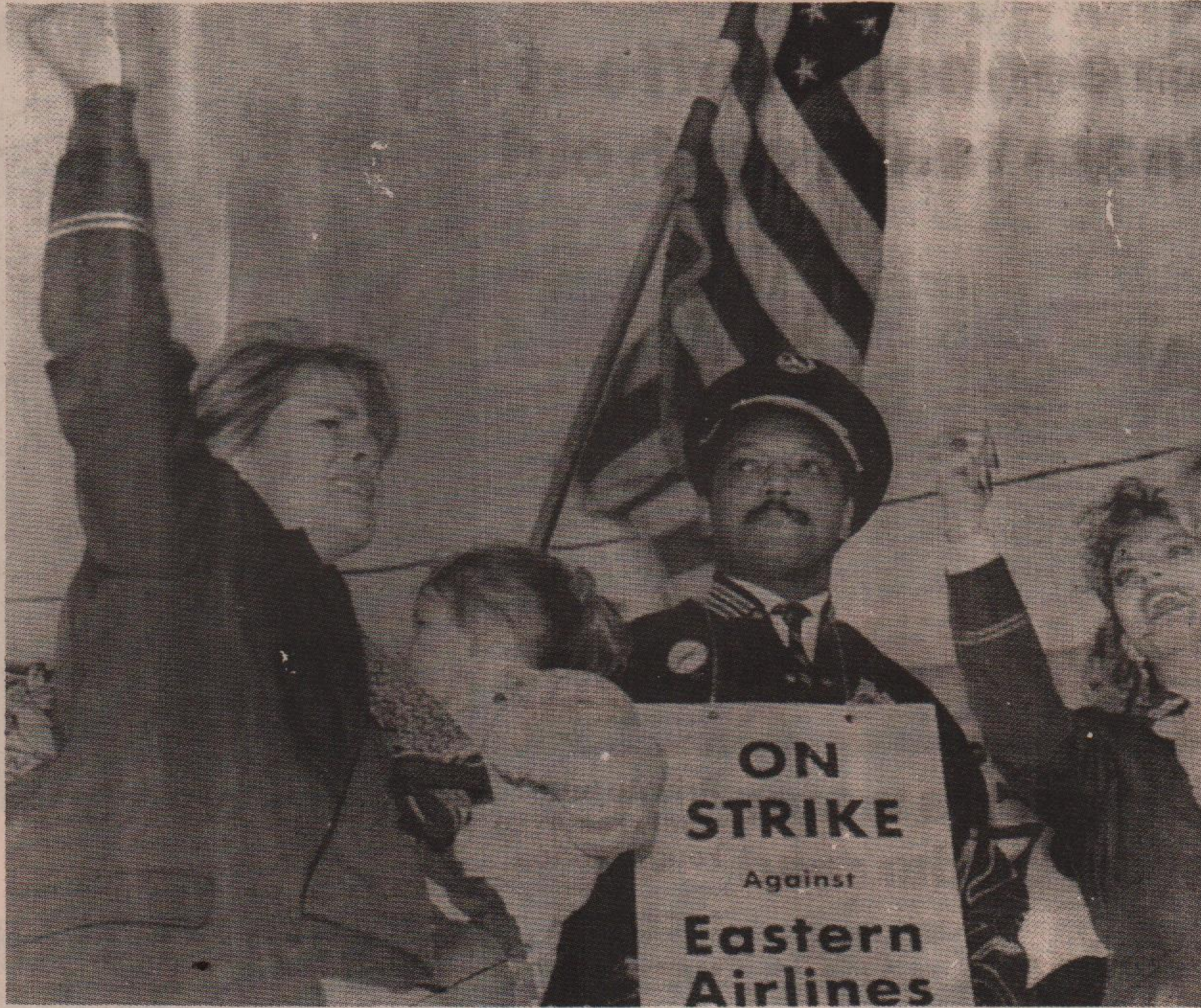
The American government spends far more than it receives in taxes. That's a big factor in US capitalism's difficulties. The government needs to raise taxes and cut spending. Bush is trying to make do instead with rosy over-estimates of tax income and requests to Congress to cut spending somewhere, he doesn't know where.

The world profit-making system has weathered the effects of the October 1987 stock market crash quite well. But the basic imbalances in the system which led to that crash are still there — and could lead to much worse than the crash.

On the latest figures, the US's current-account deficit is still \$135 billion a year. The productive clout of US capitalism, relative to other powers, has been steadily declining. The US has kept up its high levels of spending, especially military spending, essentially by printing more dollars.

It can do that, for a while, because the dollar is the world's money as well as the US's. It is accepted as good coin everywhere.

But that can't go on for ever. Already the thousands of millions of dollars held by banks and businesses outside the US — IOUs on the US —



Striking flight attendants from Eastern Airlines with Jesse Jackson at a Miami rally. Despite Bush's support for airline boss Lorenzo, Eastern has been forced into bankruptcy. Story, page 2.

far outstrip the US's reserves. The US could not begin to meet its IOUs if they were ever called in.

Sooner or later, capitalists worldwide will lose their faith in the dollar — and the bottom will drop out of world finance and world trade — unless the US's rulers fix up their economic position.

In theory it may be possible to cure the economic imbalances gradually, without disasters. That looks less and less likely. The alternative is a drastic slump in the US, forcibly cutting its spending. Because the US still has a huge

weight in the world economy, such a US slump would also mean a world slump.

Bush relies on fumbling along and hoping for the best. But even with a more coherent US government policy, the chances of everything going smoothly are slight. There are many possible triggers for chaos.

Venezuela's recent halt on debt payments highlighted the Third World debt disaster — still only inches away from panic. In Japan, a stock market scandal has reached right into the inner circles of power, and could even topple the government.

Tokyo's stock market, one of the world's biggest, suffered relatively little in October 1987. By the standards of anywhere else, it walks on water. Share prices are much higher in relation to company profits than anywhere else. Political disarray could sink them.

The last five or six years have been grim — but they have been years of boom, or as near to boom as the sickly capitalist system can manage these days. There is probably much worse to come. It is high time the labour movement stopped trying to patch up the profits system, and started fighting to replace it.

How to beat the Tories

So much promised — so little delivered. That was the verdict of the Low Pay Unit after Tuesday's budget.

Lawson's budget will mean no change for an unemployed single person or a pensioner living off a simple state pension.

Weekly increases for the low paid are negligible. But for the £40,000 a year bracket, income tax changes — on top of last year's dramatic hand-outs to the rich — will add up to an extra £10.06 a week.

Our next issue

Our next issue will be a special double issue in pamphlet form on fighting the poll tax. It will be out for 30 March.

A peculiar change in the welcome £33.76 a week Lawson has given to pensioners on £7,500 a year.

Apart from that, it's the usual Tory message: the richer you are, the better off you'll be.

The labour movement must put a stop to all this. We must find a way to clear the Tories out.

How? In the first place, the Labour Party should gear itself up for a fight. The current Labour leadership have been unbelievably weak in their opposition to Thatcher.

A few Labour spokespeople on TV is not enough. We need a campaign — of meetings, demonstrations, and support for workers in struggle. If Labour threw its weight behind mass campaigns against the poll tax, and in support of strikes, it could shift the balance, and get the Tories on the run.

Every day there is an opportunity

for a hue and cry against the Tories — from the scandal of recent rail disasters to the scandal of the NHS.

In the trade unions, too, we need to rebuild rank-and-file organisation, and rebuild the confidence to fight. Recent disputes, like in the Post Office and the NHS, could have served to rally huge opposition to the Tories. But

union leaders caved in, like they caved in so ignominiously during the miners' strike.

We need also to build union democracy, to make our unions more effective.

We don't have to just sit tight until the next general election and hope for the best. We can turn the tables now.

'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx

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Loadsamoney drops his pants

PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR
DAILY STAR

THE INDEPENDENT

By Jim Denham

Saturday's *Sun* appeared complete with red nose on the masthead. Inside a two-page 'Comic Relief special' gave in depth coverage of the zany stunts thought up by millions of big-hearted Britons as they clowned up and down the country for charity.

This column cannot hope to compete with the *Sun*'s coverage (after all they had no less than four reporters assigned to the job) but, to give you a general flavour, here are just a few of the cheeky stunts:

"Barmy Bernie Watts" had two red noses tattooed on his backside — and proved the job had been done by dropping his trousers in his local pub; Cheeky Rotarians in Weymouth picnicked on the "naughty bits" of the Cerne Abbas giant in Dorset; "Nutty restaurant boss" Andrew Price rode a horse through the streets of Bath wearing only a G-string (Mr Price wore the G-string I think, not the horse); "Fun loving Fergie" York had patients in stitches when she opened a new hospital wing in Manchester wearing a red nose on the back of her head...

I'll just pause for a moment while you get up off the floor and wipe the tears of hysterical mirth from your eyes...

Now, I have never been one for simply smearing events like Live Aid and Comic Relief — or for writing sanctimonious *Socialist Worker*-type articles about how they totally fail to address the real causes of deprivation and starvation (you know, the multinationals, the banks, the entire capitalist system, that sort of thing).

Rather, I prefer to take a more positive view. After all, the millions raised by these events come from the pockets of working class people. The amount of time, effort and ingenuity (if not perhaps subtlety) put into Comic Relief is surely a testimony to the basic generosity of ordinary folk.

But the emergence of the *Sun* as self-appointed cheerleader and unofficial souvenir programme for Red Nose Day leaves a nasty taste in the mouth.

I don't altogether blame the organisers, who do seem to have made some effort to ensure the real reason for all this effort was not forgotten. Lenny Henry took the opportunity to attack the government for cutting back on overseas aid. But the whole event does seem to have degenerated into an extension of the Noel Edmonds/Club 18-30/Radio One school of stupid-bloody-prattishness.

The involvement of the *Sun* was the final straw for me. It inevitably conjured up the image of Loadsamoney with a red nose on the end of his private parts dropping his pants in the pub.

4 STUDENTS



One law for the rich...

GRAFFITI

Last year 5,597 employers were found by the Wages Inspectorate to be illegally underpaying their workers. How many were prosecuted? A grand total of ten. Well, it must help to have friends in high places.

Is someone somewhere up to no good? We recently received a telephone call from the comrades of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

They had received two letters meant for, and clearly and fully addressed to, Socialist Organiser — at a different PO Box number and in a different postal district.

We wrote to the Royal Mail, and received a reply from a Mr J Tilley, the head of Customer Services, who wrote: "My enquiries have provided no explanation for the circumstances in which these letters were misdelivered in London SW9 and none of the staff at the Stockwell Sorting Office recall seeing them. I have no knowledge of any political interference with your mail, or the mail of any person, as you have suggested."

All very odd. How did clearly addressed mail end up at a different PO Box number in a different part of London? It looks like our mail, and the mail of other socialists, is being tampered with but the Special Branch aren't very adept at covering their tracks.

If the police are thoroughly incompetent with their surveillance of socialists, then the witch-hunters of the Labour Coordinating Committee are not doing much better.

An LCC computer printout has mysteriously turned up in our office. Its 'search criteria' are "LP/Socialist Organiser" — apparently an attempt to collate a list of contributors to Socialist Organiser to aid the Labour Party in any attempt to purge the party. We've written to the LCC to ask for an explanation, but had no reply.

Named on this list is one Valerie Coultas — a long-time contributor to Socialist Challenge and Socialist Outlook. We can categorically state that Ms Coultas is not, and never has been a contributor to Socialist Organiser. If the Labour Party leadership are relying on the LCC as their information gatherers, they're in trouble!

Britain is lagging way behind the rest of Europe in its under-5s childcare provision.

Only one under-5 in a hundred has a place in a local authority nursery. Despite all the recent publicity about the need to attract mothers back to work, at present only 20 private companies provide workplace nurseries. The Midland Bank has just announced its intention to open 300 workplace nurseries over the next few years, but as yet none of its competitors has shown signs of following suit.

The shortage of childcare has obvious effects on the take-up of jobs among mothers. In Britain only 28% of women with pre-school children work — and the majority of those work part-time.

In Denmark 44% of 3-4 year olds are in state nurseries — and 75% of women with pre-school children work. Europe-wide, mothers of under-5s work an average of 30 hours a week — in Britain most work fewer than 20 hours.

Spanish feminists have chosen an unlikely new symbol of protest — the mini skirt.

On International Women's Day thousands of feminists marched through the streets of Spain wearing mini skirts as a protest at two recent court cases.

In one, an office boss was cleared of sexually harassing his secretary because she was deemed to be 'provocatively dressed' — ie. she was wearing a skirt which ended just above the knee.

In the other case, two men were acquitted of rape when the judge decided their victim had got her come-uppance for leading a 'licentious and disorderly' life.

Women in Spain clearly have even further to go than British women in establishing that sexual assaults are not women's fault.

If there is any doubt about who has benefitted from the Tories' taxation policies, figures from the Low Pay Unit make everything quite clear.

In the year 1978-9 a married person with two children earning half the average wage would pay 2.4% of their income in tax and national insurance. In 1988-9 this has risen to 6.1%.

Those earning ten times the average income however, have had the proportion taken for tax and national insurance almost halved — from 65.6% to 37%.

Yet more proof, if more was needed, of the widening gap between rich and poor during the Thatcher years.

Tories plan education for profit

By Liz Millward

The Tories' strategy for the education system is essentially one of privatisation. The proposed system of student loans is a step in that direction, as are the various proposals to charge tuition fees — notably at the Royal College of Art.

They aren't going to 'sell off' the universities and colleges like they did British Gas, but they do want to take the last vestiges of democratic control away from colleges and, with them, as much public money as possible. To fill the gap left by the cuts in public funding, the Tories want business and industry to step in. They want the education system to show a profit, and that profit to go into private hands.

Student loans are part of the drive to gear education more to the market. Unfortunately for the Tories, they haven't been able to come up with a system which makes enough guaranteed money for any of the banks to take it up. All the British High Street banks have refused to run the loans scheme for the simple reason that profits can't be guaranteed — it will take a long time, and cost a lot, to collect all the repayments.

Student loans cost money to set up, and it takes years to collect all the repayments. From the banks' point of view, overdrafts, at high interest rates, are a much better bet.

The Treasury doesn't want to administer the loans scheme because of the huge costs involved. The Tories are left with an idea that nobody wants, that don't make money, and that the banks won't touch. But the longer the idea stays around, the more acceptable it will start to seem.

Unless we stop the Tories in their tracks, the loans system will become just another one of the Tories' ideas — not very nice, but inevitable. Once that happens, we're on the road to the rest of the Tories' privatisation plans for education.

We can stop the Tories now, while the issue is still fresh and before students have got disillusioned. NUS had a big demonstration two weeks ago with about 30,000 people. But the campaign seems to have stopped there — with no more activity planned until well into next term.

That's a mistake, and students must not allow it to happen. The number of people involved in this campaign show very clearly that it can be won — our task now is to



turn that support into activity to beat the Tories.

The groundwork for the privatisation of public sector education has already been laid through the Education Reform Act. 1 April 1989 is 'vesting day', the day the Polys and colleges formally leave local authority control and take charge of their own finances.

The governing bodies of these institutions will radically alter — from democratically accountable representatives (like councillors, trade unionists and students) to at least 50% of governors nominated from business and industry. College directorates will have far more power than previously — to privatise services, renegotiate wages and conditions locally, alter the balance of courses, sell buildings and land, and drop commitments to equal opportunities.

The Tories also want to introduce a system of tuition fees and 'vouchers' which would, if enacted, restrict free education of a high standard to about 15% of the stu-

dent population, leaving the rest to struggle by on a mixture of loans, grants, and American-style 'work-study'.

In addition, colleges would have to compete with each other for students (or rather their fees), with only a few prestigious institutions able to offer anything like the quality of education now generally available. A student's ability to get a good education would be in direct relation to their parents' spending power.

The logical conclusion of what the Tories are doing will be an American-style higher education system. Every institution will be expected to stand on its own, competing with all the others, and getting finance from wherever it can — with a heavy emphasis on the private sector. This will inevitably lead to lower standards at the 'cheaper end of the market', while the prestigious institutions, the equivalents of Harvard and Yale, will get more money and become even more elitist.

In other words, there is a determined class basis for what the Tories are planning. They want to take us back to the streaming concepts of the 1944 Education Act, with children being educated for 'their station in life'. Working class children will be channelled earlier in life, with the City Technology Colleges (for those both talented and lucky) leading to a few subsidised places in higher education.

Middle class children will get precisely the education their parents can afford — and there will of course be provision for buying your way into college for the very rich. Subjects like the arts, law, medicine, architecture, will once again become the privilege of those with a lot of money. Openings in these fields will simply not be available to working class people.

Students should fight with our allies — the trade unions, Labour Parties, community groups and all those who will lose out if the Tories get their way. Within NUS we have to get in touch with our own membership, and take the message out to school students. There are no short-cuts to beating the Tories, and no easy victories based on hoping for the best and smiling nicely at back-bench Tories.

A call for left unity to defeat loans and defend education

Left Activist Conference

22 April 11.00am

Octagon Centre, Sheffield University, Western Bank, Sheffield

We invite all SU activists and left groups in the student movement to take part — if you are interested, telephone Jill or Mark: 01-639 7967. There will be a planning meeting to decide the format of the conference on April 8th — everyone welcome

No sell-out on loans

By Dave Barter

The National Union of Students' failure to build mass opposition to loans has allowed other people's arguments to dominate public discussion of student financial support. Reported arguments against loans are more often those of the banks, protesting at lack of profit in the loans scheme — rather the voices of students demanding a decent grant for all.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) have come out in favour of a 'graduate tax' — a form of loans system. Rather than going into debt in order to study, they think students should pay extra tax after graduation. This is loans administered through the Inland Revenue rather than the banks. SDP students have pushed the same idea within NUS. Now former Labour Higher Education spokesperson Giles Radice MP has started arguing for a graduate tax. It is a possibility that this will be adopted as Labour Party policy. **Where do NOLS stand?**

Radice's argument turns on the expense that would be involved in a decent level of grant in an expanded education system. "The cost", he argues "would be prohibitive". "If higher education is to be expanded and student support reformed and extended, additional sources of finance must be found".

The sources of finance he favours? "The direct beneficiaries of higher education should make a financial contribution". He also favours employer contributions through higher National Insurance contributions for employees who are graduates.

Of course companies should be made to pay out to fund a decent education system! Of course the rich should be taxed to pay for our grants! But should a nurse with a degree (or who's failed one) pay more tax than one without? Should our National Insurance contributions be higher if we've been to college?

Radice has accepted the Tory logic that students should have to pay for their own education. But it's not just Radice, but NOLS have got some explaining to do — on three counts:

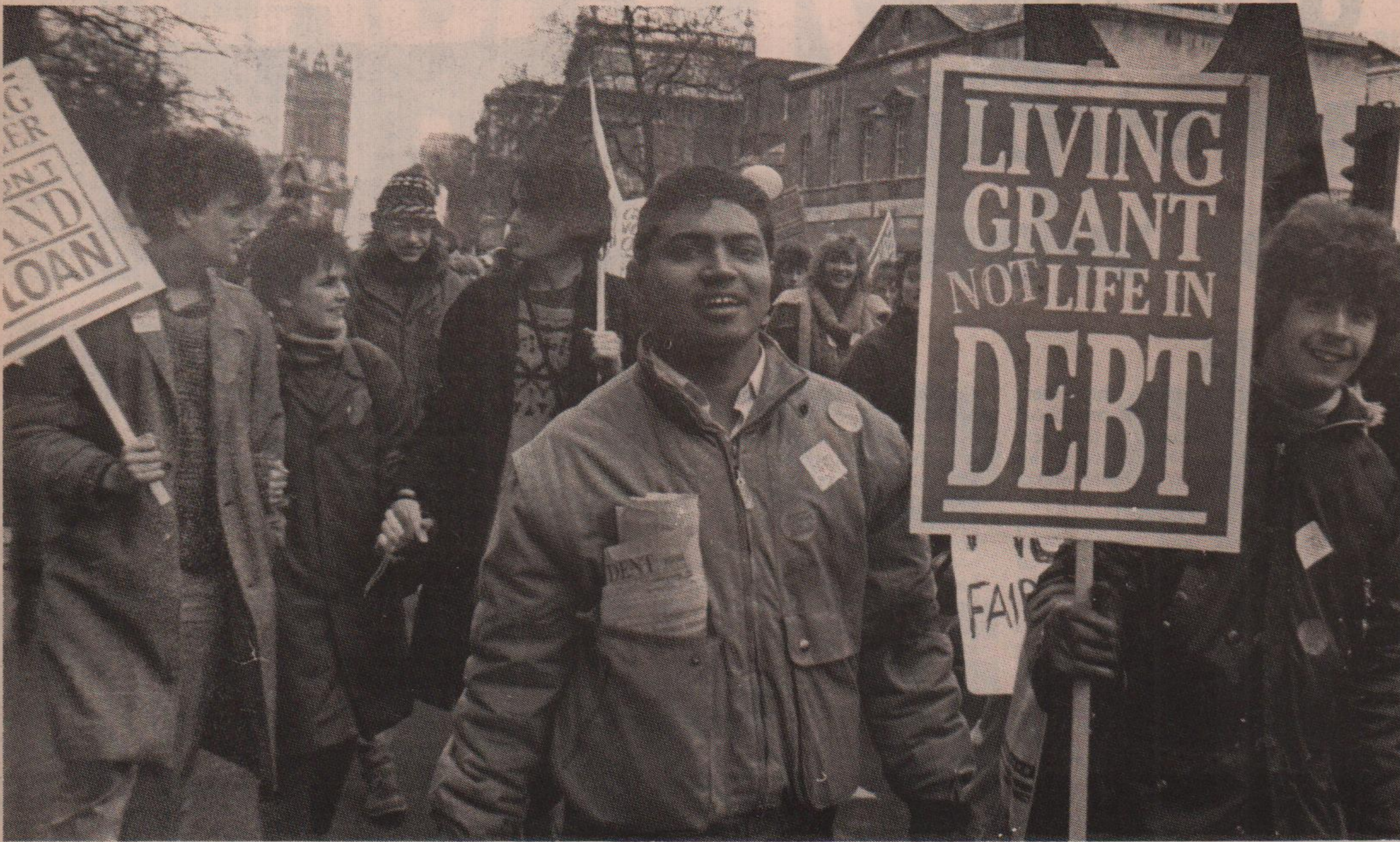
- Giles Radice's proposal looks like a possibility to become Labour Party policy. What are NOLS saying about that? What will they say if it does? They have sold us out over the poll tax (opposing non-implementation, not because they don't think it's necessary but because they don't want NUS to take a position in conflict with their friends on Labour Councils who are implementing the tax). These people put their careers before the needs of NUS campaigning. **Will they sell us out on graduate tax?**

- Why have they allowed the banks and the CVCP to dominate opposition to loans, doing more to seek alliances with back-bench Tories, than to mobilise students? Their strategy is to blame if graduate tax becomes Labour's — or anyone else's — alternative.

- Can't they see that such an outcome is the logic of their, and their 'communist' friends, strategy of 'popular frontism'. Building a campaign against loans not on the basis of student anger, but of seeking a common front with 'influential' people who might oppose the present loans proposal — banks, soft Tories, and so on — means gaining a common front on the terms of those other forces, letting their arguments dominate.

For NUS, passivity and 'popular frontism' will mean loans going through — with nothing better than a modification to satisfy the banks. It's the banks that are using us to get what they want, not the other way round!

Socialist student wants a fight for grants not loans, full grants for all in post-16 education! Build a loans campaign based on student action and linked to the labour movement and community. You can't fight loans with chats over dinner with bankers and Tory MPs.



An open letter to left activists

Already well over 100 student activists have joined a call for left unity and for a conference to build it. Below we print an open letter to the left from Socialist Students in NOLS explaining this call.

This open letter is addressed to people who consider themselves to be part of the serious activist left in NUS. We want to talk to you about the job that faces us.

The Tories have been in power for nearly 10 years. We have had ten years of their education policy. They have cut education, closed courses and they are now increasing the pressure to keep poorer people out of post-16 education. In the future we have the Poll Tax, loans and 'voluntary membership' waiting for us.

The left in NUS faces two major problems: it is fragmented into competing factions; and that section of the left which leads the NUS has failed to provide the student movement with decent leadership. It has failed to campaign properly. It has failed to link up with the labour movement and with community organisations facing cuts and attacks.

Labour Students (NOLS) — led by the Democratic Left — has been frightened of campaigning, frightened of mass mobilisations and frightened of forming alliances with workers. They have been passive and they themselves now admit it. NOLS has been used again and again by shameless "me-first" careerists, who see political activity in NUS and NOLS as a way to get a better job after they leave student politics.

Now the Democratic Left has fractured because of the pressure of the Tories, because of the dry rot of

careerism in sections of the leadership, and because of their inability to lead successful struggles.

The big question for supporters of the Democratic Left now is this: are they going to learn the lessons of their own failures? Or are they going to go on making the same mistakes?

Because the left in office has been a relative failure, a new right has developed within NUS. The pressing danger now is that these people will gain the leadership of NUS over the next year, or in the next two or three years. If that seems alarmist, look at the facts.

The Democrats, Tories and various 'non-political' independents — some of them probably closet Tories — have steadily gained ground in local unions and in the National Union. People like 'Cosmo' Hawkes, who began his NUS life as the perennial joke candidate, has been elected to positions in the National Union. At this NUS conference Hawkes and his supporters are pushing to gain the post of National Secretary. If they take the National Secretary post this year it will be a springboard for an attempt to take the Presidency next year when Maeve Sherlock retires.

The right could take control of the NUS this time next year, or the year after — if the left does not pull itself together. There are no grounds for complacency.

This statement originates with one of the left caucuses in NUS — SSiN/Socialist Student.

Socialist Student believes that we have a pretty good record in suggesting policy for NUS and student activists. We have had a lot of our ideas adopted by NUS Conferences. (Though unfortunately the NUS leaders didn't implement them).

However, SSiN has not got a monopoly on good ideas. Now that

the Democratic Left has fragmented, we are the largest left caucus, but SSiN is only part of the left. We want to develop a policy for the serious left to win in NUS and NOLS. We want dialogue with others on the left.

If we are to stop the offensive of the right, stop them taking control of NUS, then the left needs to unite. **Now!**

But there are big differences inside the left? Of course there are. But even if, because of the sometimes important political differences which divide us, we can't unite in one single common caucus, then we must at least unite for particular objectives and find a framework for intra-left dialogue. Too often today, important real political differences especially on international questions are used — and sometimes artificially emphasised — as mere factional badges and shibboleths. Dialogue is precluded. Today the NUS left exists in separate ghettos, hurling abuse at each other over the walls. Instead of that, we need unity in action against the right, and honest dialogue about our differences.

The threat from the right inside NUS is only a reflection of the Tory offensive against the whole NUS. The fightback against the Tories is the key task facing NUS.

Unless NUS's Labour leaders learn, and learn quickly, loans will be introduced, and NUS will be broken up by voluntary membership. We must look for allies. We must link up with the trade unions and the broader community.

This doesn't mean just at NUS HQ and TUC level. We mean at activist level too. We must support workers like the NHS workers and postal workers when they strike for better wages, etc.

Campaigns like the anti-loans campaign must not be solidly Higher Education oriented. We

need policies to get all the different groups inside of NUS working together. We need to involve Further Education students too.

The NUS should adopt policies that enable a fight back to begin at the most basic level of all — campaigns against course cuts, nursery closures and for fuller access to higher education. NUS must be flexible and learn to thrive on the imagination and initiative of the college activists.

Around these ideas — roughly, and without insisting on every dot and comma — we believe it is possible to get left unity, left unity inside both the NUS and NOLS. We need to create a very broad organisation on the left which fight to turn NUS into the sort of campaigning union students need to beat the Tories. SSiN wants to discuss this with groups and individuals who broadly agree with us.

We believe that the turmoil in the Democratic Left opens up opportunities to regroup the left and regenerate and reorganise it. The threat from the right makes it imperative that this be done.

Right now we are organised in SSiN, a democratic caucus in NOLS. SSiN will continue to exist and to fight for the future of the NUS until something better is organised. We declare now, however, because of the great urgency the right-wing offensive gives to the job of regrouping the left, that SSiN will be prepared to consider dissolving itself into a broader and more all-embracing fighting, effective left caucus, should that become a possibility. We are working to make it a possibility.

Right now the left is in flux. Seize the chance to recreate the NUS left — on a better basis!

Support, build and attend the Left Unity conference in Sheffield on 22 April.

Bring your ideas and your proposals to that conference and maybe we can forge a bigger, united NUS left.

What glasnost and perestroika mean for women

By Stan Crooke

Housework, childrearing and providing simple cosiness in the family" is women's role, according to Mikhail Gorbachev himself. Despite glasnost and perestroika, the USSR remains far from the ideas of the 1917 revolution.

More than 400,000 women in the Soviet Union have been awarded the title of 'Mother-Heroine' for rearing large families.

But the bureaucrats are less lavish with proper medical facilities than with medals. As Tereshkova (former Chairperson of the Soviet Women's Committee) admitted at the 1987 women's conference, "infant mortality up to the age of one is higher here than in the developed capitalist countries." According to official figures, there are 26 infant deaths in every thousand births.

In rural areas, though not in the cities, infant mortality rates are on the increase. In 1970, 26.2 out of every thousand babies died before the age of one. By 1985 the figure had risen to 32 out of every thousand. Moreover, Soviet statistics of infant mortality do not include a baby weighing less than a kilogramme as a newborn child and therefore underestimate infant mortality.

The provision of kindergartens and nurseries for young children is scarcely any better, though there have been some improvements in recent years. Every second child in the Soviet Union now attends a pre-school institution, although there are huge regional variations. In Uzbekistan, for example, only 37% of children attend a pre-school institution, and in the rural areas in the republic the average is even lower.

In his speech to the 27th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party,

Gorbachev promised that there would be a place at a pre-school nursery or kindergarten for every child by 1991. The failure of his economic reforms to date makes this unlikely.

Inadequate pre-school provision, poor quality and over-crowded housing and the notorious lack of basic consumer goods in the Soviet Union compound the strain. On average, a Soviet woman spends two hours a day in a queue; as Kuznetsova puts it: "All queues — except for vodka — are more women than men." The level of family breakdowns in the Soviet Union is high — the annual divorce rate is running at 1.4%.

According to Zakharaya, a hero of socialist labour and a deputy in the Russian Supreme Soviet, "we — women, mothers — often bear the guilt for this tragedy (of high divorce rates). We do not prepare our children for life: the daughters to be wise women, tender and affectionate mothers; our sons to be fathers, defenders of the family, this little state. There's something about which we should be thinking deeply a lot as well."

There is now more genuine debate about the need for husband and wife to share domestic chores, more discussion about single parents, and more sensitivity; the basic institution of the nuclear family is not the subject of any radical criticism in the manner of the Bolsheviks of 1917. Instead, the emphasis is on strengthening the family "by means of uniting the effort of state and economic organs, and of public opinion." There is a need to correct the current inadequate preparation of girls for "family life, pregnancy and motherhood", their lack of "an education in the moral foundations of the dignity of the wife."

The stability of large families is to be encouraged by various 'perks', suggests Nizovtseva, secretary of the Moscow Committee of the

Communist Party: "rights to improved living conditions, special arrangements for placing children in pre-school institutions, provision of a telephone." Some more forward-looking bureaucrats suggest that motherhood medals are perhaps now outmoded.

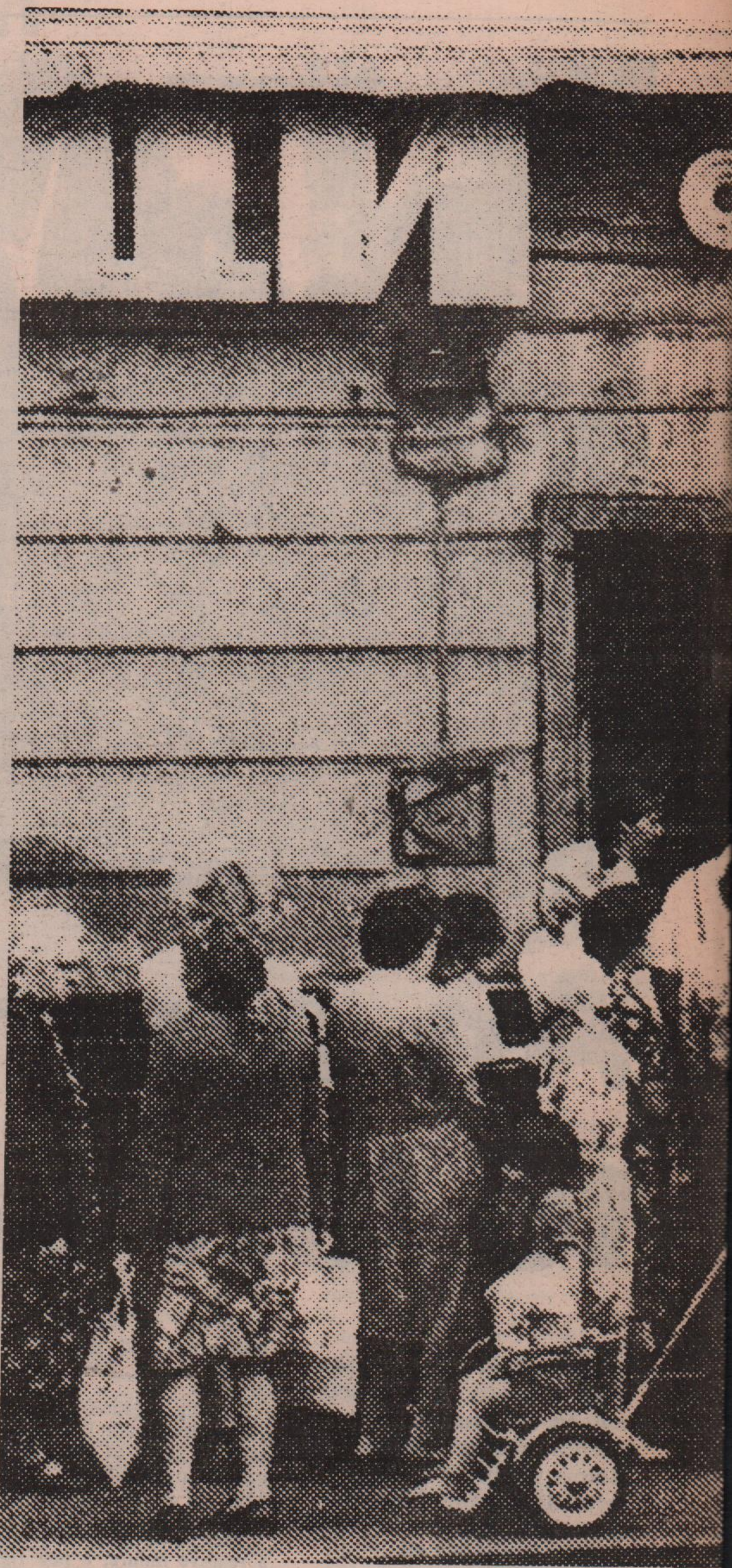
Combating alcoholism looms large in debate on strengthening the bourgeois family. It naturally falls to the kind-hearted wife to save the menfolk from this evil. "What is the main thing for us today? We must drag many of our men out of the swamp of apathy and drunkenness," claims Davletshina, chair of the Tatar Republic Women's Committee.

But drunkenness is not confined to the male population of the Soviet Union: "It is impermissible that 40% of women aged 30 smoke, whilst alcoholism amongst women is unfortunately fairly widespread." According to the redoubtable Tereshkova, "it is terrible when a man drinks, but when a woman drinks — this is even more terrible."

When a man is a drunkard, he is to be helped by his loving wife or mother. But when a woman drinks, she is to be scapegoated. The women's committee in a textile factory in Furmanov (Ivanovsky district), for example, has organised "courts of honour". "In front of everyone at the factory, the woman drinker is condemned. And she understands her guilt in relation to her children, to people."

The Soviet regime boasts of the advances made by women in the waged labour force since 1917. Over 85% of Soviet women work (as against 60% in the West) and they are a narrow majority of the labour force. 70% of Soviet doctors and 73% of Soviet teachers are women. Women are 60% of specialists and higher and middle specialist education.

A third of the 1,500 members of the Supreme Soviet (currently being



The average woman in the Soviet Union queues for two hours every day

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under

workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggle of

workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class-based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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Who holds a mandate from God?

Geoff Ward looks at the foundations of religious bigotry

Ayatollah Khomeini's mafia-style contract on Salman Rushdie for his 'blasphemous' novel, 'The Satanic Verses' shows that religious bigotry and intolerance still hold powerful sway in the world. And bigotry is not peculiar to Islam.

The last recorded burning of a heretic in England occurred as late as 1612, and not until 1677 did religious crimes cease to be punishable by death.

It is still possible to be prosecuted for blasphemy, as *Gay News* discovered in 1978. By recognising the 'crime' of blasphemy, the law officially presupposes the existence of god. If god did not exist it would be impossible to offend it.

In the earliest of civilisations, the first gods were imaginary people who were supposed to control natural forces — the god of thunder or the god of the harvest.

The greater were ignorance and fear of natural events, the more gods were created to 'explain' these things. For communities on the edge of subsistence, success or failure of a harvest was a question of life or death — and of mystery. Rituals and sacrifices were invented to appease the gods.

If the crops grew, then that proved the power of the gods. If they failed, then the fault must lie with the community.

As society developed to a level where a surplus of basic necessities was produced an elite evolved — taking control of the surplus by coercion. Among other things, they utilised the idea of gods or god to legitimise their rule.

The Egyptian Pharaohs commanded whole slave armies to build their pyramids. They invented some early religious dogmas like belief in an afterlife, where people would get rewards.

Philosophy began as a criticism of religious beliefs. The religious countered with theology — the 'science' of divinity. Dissenters were ruthlessly persecuted, as were people with competing religious beliefs.

The collapse of the Roman Empire saw the rise of two of the major dominant religions today — Christianity and, later, Islam.

Muslims share with Christians three basic beliefs: one god rather than many; the role of prophets as voices of god; and resurrection. Other ideas shared by Christianity and Islam include god's omniscience and omnipotence; divine revelation; knowing god through faith; and the Day of Judgement.

The Christian Bible and the Muslim Koran do, however, differ. In general, people's ideas of god differ according to their level of social and economic development, their culture, and their material circumstances — in a way that makes nonsense of the notion that religion is the word of god, rather than a reflex product of human ignorance and misery.

In the earliest societies almost everything that happened — from a rainstorm to a sudden death — was

supposed to be a deliberate act by a god. As science has progressed, religion has become more cautious, yet it remains fundamentally an alternative to reason and science. The theologian Martin Luther described reason as "God's worst enemy".

The fantastic accounts of miracles defy laws of nature. The Bible gives a description of creation which is contradicted by science.

What is the evidence for the existence of a god?

In the modern religions god is unknowable in any direct sense, possessing transcendental qualities which take god out of the range of human experience and which, indeed, contradict human understanding altogether. God is exempt from natural laws — thus falling outside the domain of scientific explanation — and it is impossible to ascribe positive qualities to god. God is simply "He who is".

Christian theologians have attempted to give god attributes like omnipotent, immutable, incomprehensible, infinite, omniscient, ie. attributes which are designed not to limit god in any way. Most of these traits however define god negatively: "immutable" means god does not change. God therefore is the exact reverse of how we perceive reality, and as such is incomprehensible.

The further god is pushed into the realm of the unknowable, the more believers rest their case on faith — belief without rational proof. The conflict between atheism and religion is fundamentally a conflict between reason and faith.

Throughout history, Christianity has sought to eliminate scientific principles that conflict with Christian faith, as in the persecution of Galileo for upholding the view that the earth wasn't the centre of the universe. It is impossible to gain knowledge of god through Christian faith as it is held beyond reason and, if necessary, against reason. Without a coherent and consistent description of this metaphysical be-

ing, faith, apart from being unjustified, is also unintelligible.

In feudal Europe the Catholic Church had a monopoly of intellectuals and ruled with the nobility, exploiting the peasantry.

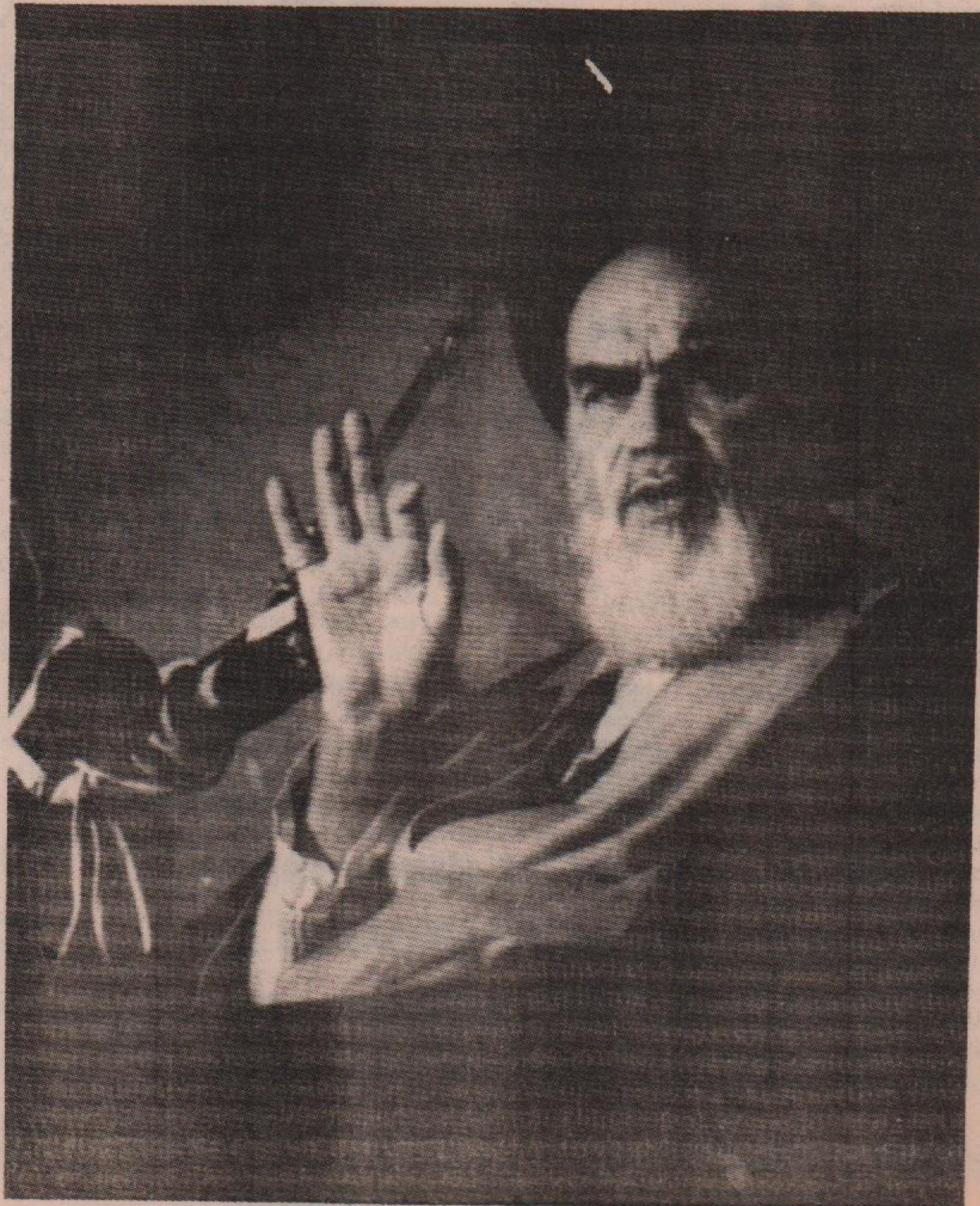
The alliance of Church and State began to break down in the 16th and 17th centuries with the rise of capitalism and the Church split in the process. Criticism surfaced within the Church as Biblical authority was undermined. By attacking superstitious religious dogmas the Enlightenment helped the bourgeoisie to wrest power from the feudal monarchy.

In the wake of theories like Darwin's Theory of Evolution the Bible went through a period of 're-interpretation' and 'revision' and found to be compatible all along with these changes.

Today 'Creationists' and 'Islamic Fundamentalists' still don't recognise the validity of Darwin's theory. And Islam's Koran did not go through the same sustained criticism as the Bible and is more often defended as literally true.

Religion has survived under capitalism because it serves the new capitalist class and provides an outlet for the bewildered and miserable — "the heart of a heartless world", as Marx put it. "The meek shall inherit the earth," said oil magnate Paul Getty, "but I'll still own the mineral rights." Despite the rhetoric of the mullahs, there is nothing clearly anti-capitalist in the Koran.

Religion thrives upon ignorance and fear of the unknown. Leon Trotsky wrote that heaven is the only fortified prison for military operations against the philosophy of Marxism. On the one side, faith in unknowable first causes, and hope for reward in the afterlife for submission in this world; on the other, the search for knowledge of real causes and effects, and the fight to win a better life in this world.



Successful economic reforms will reduce the size of the workforce. According to Kostakov, there could be a shake-out of up to 15 million workers by the mid-1990s. To date, however, this view has not been widely argued in public, and has been strongly challenged where it has been.

"Glasnost" and "perestroika" have widened the parameters of discussion about women's issues, allowing previously taboo topics to be aired in public.

But the debate largely continues to rest upon extremely conservative assumptions about the "natural tiny" of women or the merits of the nuclear family. Proposed economic reforms regard women's status as secondary to women's obligations to raise the quality and quantity of industrial output. There is no genuine autonomous women's movement in the Soviet Union, and the sign of one emerging.

Moreover, although greater discussion than in the past has been permitted since Gorbachev came to power, many aspects of the economic reforms now being implemented have created additional problems for women.

Inflation has led to a greater scarcity of basic consumer goods in the shops, as a result of panic-buying and hoarding, meaning even longer queues for commodities still in short supply. The crackdown on the sale of alcohol has led to sugar rationing as

sugar supplies are snapped up for home-brew. And family incomes have fallen — on occasion by as much as 50% as a result of the crackdown on low-quality production and the consequent loss of bonus payments.

The inability of the Stalinist elite to solve the women's problem is a reflection of a far more fundamental dilemma. Commenting on the failure of the Soviet government to achieve the liberation of women, Trotsky wrote:

"The real means at the disposal of the state did not correspond to the plans and intentions of the Communist Party. The family cannot be abolished, it must be replaced. A real liberation of the woman cannot be achieved on the basis of generalised distress."

The Soviet elite lacks both the desire to 'abolish' the nuclear family and also the ability to provide the material basis to allow for it to be 'substituted'. Gorbachev's reforms show no sign of succeeding in overcoming the 'generalised distress' which underpins Soviet society.

And, in any case, even if Gorbachev were able to see through his planned economic reforms, this would not lead to genuine equality between the sexes in the Soviet Union. Market mechanisms have not liberated women in the West. There is no reason to believe that they would do so in the Soviet Union.

Why Moses Mayekiso is on trial

Anne Mack explains why Moses Mayekiso is on trial

In South Africa the capitalist class is fighting against the working class and using apartheid as a whip to suppress people... You can't reform capitalism. It must be kicked out, removed, and a new social system introduced that is going to benefit the masses."

That's how Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, summed up his view of the kind of revolution — a socialist revolution — that will be needed to defeat South Africa's white racist apartheid rulers.

It is a conclusion drawn from a life of struggle and from involvement in the black workers' movement.

Moses was born in Cala, in the Transkei. His parents were very poor. They had to struggle to pay for his education.

That education ended prematurely when he was expelled from school after being accused of involvement in a student protest. After working for a period as a miner in Welkom for 80 cents a day, he returned to school and completed his matric in 1973.

He moved to Johannesburg and worked as a building labourer. By 1976 Moses had found a job at Toyota and joined MAWU, the forerunner of NUMSA.

Moses quickly became a shop steward and then MAWU national treasurer. He was fired after a strike in 1979 and became a full-time organiser for the union.

At one time Moses and other union organisers had no office to work from so they spearheaded the campaign to unionise the engineering industry of the East Rand whilst operating from makeshift 'informal' premises at a railway station.

They had to sleep at the railway station as well.

Moses played an important role in the foundation of the giant Congress of South African Trade Unions, COSATU, in late 1985 and was one of the organisers of the two-day general strike in the Transvaal in November 1984.

He was detained for this, but later released. The charges were dropped.

In March 1986 MAWU members staged a national strike for his release from another spell of detention. He was released shortly afterwards.

On 28 June 1986, after returning from a union solidarity tour to Scandinavia, Moses was detained and charged under the Internal Security Act. He was held in solitary confinement until January 1987, in a tiny cell with no windows, and was subject to constant beatings designed to disorient him.

Since the end of his solitary confinement, Moses is still denied books and writing material.

He has undoubtedly been tortured and beaten.

Moses' release on bail came about because of the massive international labour movement campaign in his defence.

The racist regime must not be allowed to break Moses' fighting spirit. He is a symbol of the resistance of black workers — defiant, proud and unbroken.

Moses' trial is particularly important because he is the elected general secretary of the most powerful industrial trade union in South Africa, but other worker militants face similar or worse charges.

Last week four members of the railworkers union, SARHWU, were sentenced to death after being accused of the 'necklace' murder of a scab during the 1987 rail strike. The police who shot dead strikers and raided union offices during the same strike have not faced any legal action.

In Natal, 4 transport workers are



Moses used to work as a miner

on death row after being accused of shooting or aiding and abetting the shooting of another scab. Mean-

while warlords from Chief Buthezi's Inkatha movement — who helped organise the scabbing

and openly murder and terrorise activists in the townships — face no threat of prosecution at all.

What will happen in Scotland when the poll tax starts?

By Stan Crooke

What will happen in Scotland after 1 April, the day on which the poll tax comes into effect? In the short term, probably not a lot.

We are allowed three months grace before we are legally obliged to pay at least part of our annual poll tax.

Through April, May and June, therefore, a lot of poll tax payers will sit tight. Not until July, or even later, will we know how many are holding out until the last moment, and how many are committed to non-payment, up to, and beyond, the point of threats of savings being seized or wages arrested.

The prospect of Labour-controlled authorities refusing to prosecute people for non-payment took another blow at the weekend of 11-12 March, when the Labour Party Scottish conference voted down resolutions supporting people who refused to pay the poll tax, and calling on Labour-controlled authorities not to seize the wages of those who do not pay the poll tax.

Lothian NALGO has pledged non-cooperation with attempts to recover fines for non-payment of the poll tax. A CPSA branch in the Lothian has pledged that its members will not deduct money from claimants' giro to pay the poll tax.

Unfortunately, the adoption of such resolutions is the exception rather than the rule. And there is no guarantee that the resolutions which have been passed will actually be passed into practice, although campaigning to achieve this continues.

The Scottish TUC is certainly not encouraging trade unionists to boycott work on the poll tax. In fact, it has even gone so far as to urge its affiliates not to support the demonstration in Glasgow on 18 March in support of non-payment.

Some on the left have already written off the chances of a non-payments campaign. "The Tories have constructed the mechanism to deduct the tax from wages and benefits. So, in practice, the basis for a campaign of non-payment

does not exist," declared last week's *Socialist Worker*.

It is certainly true, and always has been, that mass, collective non-payment by itself is insufficient to beat the poll tax. But non-payment, and pledges not to pay, can encourage active opposition to the tax by the organised labour movement.

Right now, the only action likely to trigger such labour movement action in Scotland is mass non-payment.

NALGO and CPSA members can boycott punitive action against poll tax non-payers. Other trade unionists can take action against wages being seized if people do not pay the poll tax. Labour-controlled

authorities might even drop implementation of the poll tax in the face of mass non-payment.

To regard non-payment by itself as sufficient to beat the poll tax is an illusion. The response to such an illusion should not, however, be to write off the prospects for a non-payment campaign before such a campaign even gets under way!

In the 'phoney war' period of the next three months in Scotland, therefore, those withholding poll tax payments must be encouraged to stand firm and the campaign in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win boycotts of the implementation of the poll tax must be stepped up.

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ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Saturday 18 March
Campaign Against Massacres in Iran, Iraq and Turkey. Picket at Turkish Airways, 11 Hanover St, W1. 1.00

Monday 20 March
London SO education series: 'Early years of the British CP'. Speaker Tom Rigby. 7.00

Monday 20 March
Benefit concert for 'The Cape Town Sixteen Campaign' with Irie! Dance Company and Rock Radio. Guest Appearance by Linton Kwesi Johnson. Albany Empire, Douglas Way, SE8. Tickets £2.50 unwaged, £5 waged

Wednesday 22 March
South London SO. 'Socialists and Ireland'. Speakers Martin Collins (TTG) and Martin Thomas. Walworth Town Hall, SE17. 7.30

Saturday 25 March
Campaign Against Massacres in Iran, Iraq and Turkey. Picket at United Nations Info Centre, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1. 1.00

Monday 3 April
London Socialist Forum. 'Gorbachev and the Left'. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. 7.30

Monday 3 April
Sheffield SO. 'Where next for

socialist feminism?' SCCAU, West St. 8.00

Saturday 29 April
CLPs Conference on Party Democracy

Sunday 14 May
Lutte Ouvriere fete near Paris

Saturday 17 June
'Time To Go Show' (two days). City University, London

Saturday 17 June
Socialist Conference Third Conference (two days). Octagon Centre, Sheffield

Saturday 8 July
Workers' Liberty Summer School (two days), London

Saturday 11 November
Socialist Conference 'Building the Left in the Unions', Sheffield

CLPs Conference on the witch-hunt and democracy

Saturday 29 April
AEU Hall, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. 11am to 5pm
Each CLP is entitled to three delegates at £2.00 per delegate. Visitors are welcome.

Contact: Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG

The Philippine left in transition

In the third part of his article Joly Macuja concludes his discussion of the 'Democratic Socialist' trend and looks at the Independent Socialists.

Revolving around this tendency would be several sectoral organisations, such as the labour alliances Pinagising Tinig at Lakas ng Manggagawa Kristiyanong Alyansa ng Makabayang Obrero, or the United Voice and Strength of the Workers, Christian Alliance of Nationalist Workers, the Union of Filipino Workers, Manggagawang Sosyalista of Socialist Workers, the peasant organisation Lakas ng Magsasakang Filipino or Power of the Filipino Farmer, and other sectoral organisations.

These various formations claim a total mass membership of around one million.

From a position of critical collaboration with the Aquino government, the tendency represented by the DSC has gone more towards a critical stance, following disappointment in particular with land reform legislation and Aquino's further drift to the right following successive coup attempts.

Unlike the national democratic tendency, though, the Democratic Socialists, with the third strain in the left, the so-called "independent socialists" would agree that it is in the interest of the Filipino people to work out a solution to the problems

of the nation primarily within a context of peace, recognising that the nation has known too much strife over 20 years.

The two currents have in recent years therefore been involved in several coalitions such as the Coalition for Peace which was formed during the ceasefire negotiations of the CPP and the government in the latter part of 1986, in order to push for participation of the other mass organisations in the negotiation process, aside from the main protagonists.

The coalition, while focusing its criticism on the government's all-out war effort and its unwillingness to address basic social issues as the main hindrance to peace, continues to seek a cessation of hostilities. The stepped-up counter-violence of the NPA has brought the war to the cities via "sparrow" (selective assassination of "enemies of the people") units, which have only meant a greater reason for the dominant right wing to further assert itself, the eroding of valuable "democratic space" vital for building people's organisations, and adding to the stream of civilian refugees caught in the cross-fire.

The Independent Socialists and Democratic Socialist tendencies have likewise found other common ideological bases for unity — such as the analysis that capitalism is the dominant mode of production in the nation, sympathy for the cause for a workers' socialism as opposed to a bureaucratic socialist model perceived to be in the agenda of the CPP, and criticism of the latter's centralised and dogmatic leadership tendency, the primary example of which was the decision to boycott the 1986 Presidential elections, not recognising the objective conditions of the rest of the nation which had not foregone hope in the electoral struggle.

As such the two tendencies have worked together in the formation of sectoral alliances such as the labour alliance Lakas ng Manggagawa (Workers' Power) and peasant alliance Pakisama (Pambansang Kilusan ng Samahang Magsasaka or National Peasant Association Movement).

The Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa or Bisig (Fraternity for the Advancement of Socialist Thought and Action) best represent perhaps this third tendency. It is a mixture of primarily Christian Socialists, Marxist-Leninists, former members of the old Communist Party, former national democrats, former social democrats, a handful of Trotskyists, and populists, whose immediate common denominator perhaps is a refusal to be wholly identified with either side above mentioned.

Its roots are from the so-called Independent Caucus, which left the BAYAN but did not join the formation of Bandila in 1985.

Arguably, there is a fourth bloc in the left involving the groups which revolve around the Confederation for Freedom and Democracy or Confreedom. These are mostly sectoral organisations (the trade unions affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions, peasant, youth and womens groups) which fall under the influence of the (old) Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of the Philippines which has historically identified with the Soviet Union.

The groups have only recently joined the orbit of the previous tendencies, as for a time the old party chose to collaborate with the Marcos government. The Party was in the mainstream of the Huk rebellion in the late '40s and early '50s, but, as many scholars have pointed out, the defeat has traumatised its leadership into moderation.

Continued next issue



May Day rally in the Philippines

Czechoslovakia: from show trials to a shambles

Adam Novotny traces the outlines of the history which has made Czechoslovakia today one of the most rigid of the states of Eastern Europe

The Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCz) was the only Communist Party in Eastern Europe which won a free, Western-style election in 1946, and which took full power (in 1948) with the direct support of a majority of the working class.

Workers believed that, with the capitalists gone, wages, working conditions and living standards could only rise. In fact, things got much worse. The CPCz formed itself into a full Kremlin-style bureaucracy, and tried to make the economy an exact copy of the Soviet Union's.

The highly developed economy, which had been built up and nationalised by the Nazis, and which had been hardly affected by allied bombing, was thrown into turmoil. Living standards in 1946 were higher than in Britain at that time. In 1948 they began to fall, and didn't regain their 1948 level for ten years.

Not surprisingly, there was

massive and immediate discontent among the working class supporters of the Party. Archives opened in 1968 show that there was a wave of strikes in the first six months of 'socialism', which were defeated by the police and workers still loyal to the Party.

There were purges and show trials in all of Eastern Europe in the first few years of Communist Party rule. What was different in Czechoslovakia was the strength of the working class, and its solid pre-war traditions of democracy and trade union activity.

There was a whole layer of educated activist workers who flooded in to the CPCz right after the war. The Nazis had decreed the Slav Czechs unfit for higher education and closed the universities. Most post-war students supported the Communists. Experience of the Nazis, radical history, and Czechoslovakia's original strong support of Israel had won many Jewish socialists to the CPCz.

All this was too much of a threat to the Moscow-educated clique at the top of the Party. In their attempts to make the economy function, and to extend their power over all of social life, they could allow no sources of opposition.

All members of pre-war parties were expelled from government jobs. Over 400 labour camps were set up, and soon filled with quarrelsome students, shop-floor activists and pre-war union officials who couldn't accept the new situation.

Estimates were made in 1968 that over 100,000 people were convicted of political or economic crimes at this time, with about 40% of them workers.

The working class was beaten down by the early 1950s, but the economy was still uncontrollable. The purge moved into the Party itself. Officials at all levels learned to obey orders unthinkingly, or be accused of sabotage. The Party was able to concentrate public anger on white collar saboteurs, and by 1952 started to close the labour camps.

The CP built a personality cult around president Gottwald, and stressed the national economic achievements of Czechoslovakia. Jewish Communists began to find themselves on the outside again. Attacks on white collar saboteurs, hoarders of scarce goods, speculators and agents of imperialism increasingly carried an 'anti-Zionist' or 'anti-cosmopolitan' tone.

The centrepiece of the purges and trials was the arrest, trial and execution of Rudolph Slansky, the Jewish General Secretary of the CPCz.

There were also trials of so-called 'Slovak nationalists' (Slovakia was the most underdeveloped region of the country, and its workers had a different pre-war and wartime experience). The Prague-based leadership warned that Slovak Communists might develop an independent outlook. Among those arrested as a nationalist was Gustav Husak, the current president, who

was later rehabilitated and installed as leader by the Russians after 1968.

The Czechoslovak show trials are important for several reasons. They show how a strong, independent labour movement could be neutralised and dissolved.

The experience of the first few years of 'socialism' made the Czechoslovak working class easy to control for a decade to come. The anti-intellectual and anti-semitic pronouncements of the leadership are still used, with some success, to dissuade workers from feeling sympathetic when groups like Charter 77 are suppressed.

The regime used similar tactics after the Soviet invasion of 1968. Then, 'normalisation' involved a purge of half a million CPCz members (half the total membership) in a population of 15 million.

Those still in power today are probably the most conservative in Eastern Europe. Unlike Poland or Hungary, there has been no attempt to popularise the Czechoslovak regime by removing the most hated Stalinists and rehabilitating the victims of the '50s.

The Czechoslovak Communists had the biggest statue of Stalin in the world built in 1955. It was later quietly demolished, and rotting potatoes are now stored in its base in the winter.

But those who had built it, and their younger 'comrades' preside over a society stagnant for 20 years, and an economy slipping further and further behind its Western neighbours.

Plenty jazz, little money

MUSIC

By Jim Denham

I noticed an advert in one of the 'quality' Sundays last week: it was for an album by a certain Andy Shepherd. The ad wasn't particularly unusual (it featured a rather posey portrait of the artist looking moody-cum-wistful with a smoldering fag in his hand) except for the fact that young Mr Shepherd is a jazz musician.

Last year it was Courtney Pine, this year it's Andy Shepherd. Jazz is back. You hear the merits of 'Bird', 'Diz', 'Miles', etc. debated at all the best parties these days.

Don't get me wrong: I think it's a good thing that jazz is fashionable. And if a few able young players like Pine, Shepherd and (my prediction for the next 'discovery') Tommy Smith get some recognition and make a bit of money out of it, so much the better.

My reservation is this: jazz has always been around, in the background, but it only comes to the fore when the mainstream 'pop' of the day reaches an impasse. When that happens, jazz is hyped up and a few fashionable-looking players get lots of publicity and trends at parties start talking as though they were personal friends of Charlie Parker.

Meanwhile, a lot of fine musicians who've ploughed a lonely furrow over the lean years remain in relative obscurity. And all too often, the 'jazz' revival means a fad for one particular type of jazz — like the grotesque 'trad boom' of the late '50s and the present enthusiasm for saxophone players all of whom sound rather like the late John Coltrane.

These random thoughts passed through my mind when I came across an obituary in the *Independent*: it was for Roy ("Little Jazz") Eldridge and it stopped me in my tracks. For me, Eldridge was a giant, second only to Louis Armstrong as the epitome of the jazz



Roy Eldridge

trumpet player.

I never met him, or even heard him in the flesh, but news of his passing hit me like news of the death of a friend. One of the first jazz records I ever possessed was 'I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music', recorded in the early '30s by Gene Koupa's Swing Band: that was my introduction to Roy Eldridge's red hot, driving, but basically melodic trumpet playing.

He owed a lot to Armstrong, but took that style forward at a time when Louis himself seemed to have made a conscious decision to stop experimenting and to rest on his laurels. Over the years, Roy Eldridge's work with big bands (like Artie Shaw's), with vocalists (like Billie Holiday) and with various small groups (often alongside the likes of Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster and fellow-trumpeter Buck Clayton) gave me and many others incalculable pleasure.

In the late 1940s he was one of the few swing-era musicians able to adapt his style to the new 'bop' ap-

proach without either sounding contrived or giving up his individuality. Dizzy Gillespie, for one, was strongly influenced by Eldridge and in later years when the two of them recorded together, it was often virtually impossible to tell who was who.

Yes, Eldridge was one of the greats. But he never had a big hit or made much money. And like so many black artists of his generation he had to put up with a lot of shabby treatment from promoters, audiences and even (occasionally) fellow musicians. His work with Gene Krupa's big band in the '40s ranks as some of the finest jazz trumpet on record, but the experience of working in an otherwise all-white band eventually caused him a nervous breakdown. It wasn't Krupa's fault, but Eldridge vowed: "As long as I'm in America, I'll never work with a white band again."

Eldridge, like many other black jazz musicians, was happier in Europe where race seemed to mat-

ter less and audiences were more appreciative of his kind of music. Throughout the '50s and '60s, he was on the road with various groups like Norman Granz's 'Jazz at the Philharmonic' package and his own 'Jazz from a Swinging Era' group with Buck Clayton.

I suppose Eldridge had quite a good life in comparison to the sufferings endured by some of his musical contemporaries. After a stroke in 1980 left him unable to play, he was at least financially secure and remained an honoured guest (and occasional singer) at various jazz festivals. But he never received the acclaim he deserved from a wider audience.

The present jazz 'revival' came too late to be of any use to Eldridge and I suspect that most of the trendies who prattle on about 'Bird' at parties have never heard of him.

No, I don't begrudge Courtney Pine, Andy Shepherd et al their popularity. I just hope they realise how much they owe to the likes of Roy Eldridge.

TV will eat itself

TV

By Vicki Morris

Television programmes about television have been a growing trend for a while, producing the likes of "It'll be alright on the night", "Clive James on Television" and its inept spin-off "Floyd on TV". By now "Saturday Night Clive" is no longer interested in what we see, but in issues around its production.

It was inevitable that the announcement of deregulation would send the BBC, at least, into a fresh and anxious flurry of self-examination and self-aggrandisement. It brought us programmes like "Three Minute Culture" (reviewed in SO 385) and stunts like a day-long, behind-the-scenes look at BBC1, explaining technicalities about which few of us have ever wanted to know.

They were reminding us how good Auntie Beeb is, before, seduced by media hype, we abandoned her and rushed off to buy satellite dishes, giving the government an excuse to cut her grants.

They can rest easy. By the end of the century, the British public will have bought only 10 million satellite dishes, according to the most generous forecasts. A glance in the popular newspapers at satellite TV's mediocre programming schedule will show why people are unlikely to shell out.

Meantime, the regular channels are striving to co-opt their viewers, churning out increasingly sensational and cheapskate programmes, like Kilroy where the audience is the show, and the more excitable the audience, the better the spectacle. That people are willing to appear in them is the programmes' only justification.

Ventures like "Comic Relief" foster this spirit of audience participation — and responsibility. If people starve in Africa — and if this programme is boring — with very few qualifications, it's the fault of you lot out there.

Producers are setting themselves up to fulfil Andy Warhol's prediction that in the future everyone will be famous for 15 minutes, bringing us cheap and immediate gossipy television for nose people or programmes where the self-elected can sound off and show off.

Producers without scruples push people to air their personal problems in public, in spite of evidence that they suffer traumatically afterwards. And in order to appear game for a laugh, people will do things — like kissing poisonous snakes — which leave them in palpitations off-screen.

Of course we should be in favour of TV being accessible. Thankfully it has been a short haul from the early days of British television enacted by a starved and plum-voiced elite.

But what we see now — stage-managed talk-shows — is only a pretence at access, carried out to save money by companies who cut their cloth according to their revenue.

Well-meaning "Right to Reply" and sarcastic "Points of View" are largely cosmetic exercises in persuading viewer that TV companies value their opinions.

Once my skull has been sufficiently numbed, I expect I'll get into the new game, but I maintain that there is no substitute for a programme with some money behind it, and produced by someone who thinks they owe me something, instead of the other way round.

Lampoon against capitalism

BOOKS

By Clive Bradley

Ben Elton's first novel, 'Stark', pits a group of unlikely EcoAction crusaders against a conspiracy by the world's richest men, organised into a secret society by the name of the book's title.

The good guys include CD, a pom living in Australia, who manages only to come a close second to the world's biggest dickhead, and is in love with Rachel, who is not a vegetarian.

An enormous hippy, Walter ("I mean, no really, I'm serious about this, okay? I mean this is a bad scene, right?"), a psychopath who "lost his love tackle" in Vietnam, an Aboriginal couple driven off their land and an American journalist, complete the ranks of EcoAction.

Heading the bad guys are various megacapitalists, an absolute idiot whose sole claim to money is his

brother, and a gang of fascists who are so stupid even the absolute idiot thinks so.

The background to their conspiracy, and its accidental discovery, is the slow but speeding-up death of Planet Earth. As the world reaches TTO (Total Toxic Overload), the Stark Conspiracy moves into action.

'Stark' is both extremely funny and cleverly fitted together. Ben Elton has created a large cast of characters, welded into a plot that combines elements of disaster epic, thriller, and farce — a kind of 'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' meets Tom Sharpe.

The mix of toilet humour and serious politics is potentially very fraught, yet Elton pulls it off. He does have you howling on the bus on one page and gritting your teeth with anger on the next. Quite a large part of the book is given over to descriptions of actual or hypothetical ecological disasters, from dolphins being drowned in non-sonar detectable nets, to a nuclear disaster in France.

And because you get the feeling Elton really is angry, you get quite worked up yourself.

A large part of his effect as a stand-up comic is simply that he

says things most people are usually not prepared to say about day-to-day life, a trick that at least gives the impression of profundity and is sometimes genuinely profound, I think. "If only," he laments, "we felt the intensity of feeling when love is reciprocated as we do when it isn't: then there would be truly successful marriages."

The book is full of little nuggets like that. But is this kind of jokey insight into personal relationships matched by political insight?

'Stark' is, on one level, an anti-capitalist novel of a very rare breed. It lampoons capitalism, as a system — not just individual capitalists — in a manner very uncommon for writers. The individual capitalists are, of course, really slammed — but it is his characterisation of the various stinking rich bastards that Elton is most similar to Tom Sharpe. His capitalists are mostly blundering but malevolent idiots, brimming with loathing for everything and everyone, especially each other, completely lacking the most rudimentary saving grace. But what they have done, they have done because of their system, the drive to make money, not only because they are bastards.

Yet I'm not sure 'Stark' is

positively socialist in any meaningful sense. There is indeed an implication that the world's richest people would be, if only they saw sense, the best-positioned to sort everything out. It's not fair to criticise 'Stark', as some have, for failing to 'show an alternative' or for preaching pure despair. It is intended as a salutary tale of which we should all take note, and if collective action is not a solution Elton points to, he doesn't really point away from it either.

Nor is it blandly 'green' and indeed stereotypical (ie. hippy) greens are the base of at least as many jokes as the unspeakably rich. "The association of ecological issues with hippies was a public relations disaster that could cost the earth," says Elton. His description of various shades of vegetarianism is one of the best passages in the book.

'Stark' is already a best seller, and probably therefore responsible for tearing down a fair patch of rain forest. But even if Elton's message is only negative, and even if as a result of putting it he makes a few megabucks himself, it will surely have at least some good effect on the large number of especially young people who read it.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

A bribe for not treating the sick?

Poland: the system cracks

By Clive Bradley

The 'leading role' of the Polish Communist Party has always been its most cherished dogma. Even Solidarnosc at its height in 1980-81 was forced to submit to it.

But now the dogma is in ruins. The Polish government has declared that there will be elections to a second chamber, possible in June this year, and other parties will be allowed to participate.

Anyone will be able to stand for a 98-member senate, on condition that he or she has the support of a political party or a 'social group' (which would include the recently semi-legalised Solidarnosc), or can collect 5,000 signatures.

Solidarnosc spokespeople were suspicious of the government move, fearing that such early elections might put opposition parties at a disadvantage.

Nevertheless, the regime's decision — unprecedented in an Eastern bloc state — shows how much pressure it feels itself under.

The announcement has come jointly from Solidarnosc and the government, and follows weeks of negotiation.

The agreement also includes elections to the existing 460-seat first chamber. According to this part of the deal, 65% of seats would be kept by the Communist Party, or so-called Polish United Workers' Party (and various little parties which until recently were firmly under the government's thumb); the rest would be filled by nominees of Solidarnosc.

There are obvious pitfalls for the opposition in the process of negotiation, and in particular for the working class. It will not, as many Solidarnosc leaders believe, be possible gradually to reform the system. Professor Bronislaw Geremek, a Solidarnosc intellectual, has recently been looking forward to democracy being "rebuilt in an evolutionary manner, not upsetting the political balance and stability."

But that is wishful thinking. In reality the current advances depend on the regime's already-existing relative instability and inability to maintain the balance — ie. the status quo. Jaruzelski negotiates because he is weak.

The workers' movement, which can no more negotiate its complete liberation in Poland than it can anywhere else, and should seize the opportunity now to press forward its demands. We can expect another round of strikes this Spring.

The deal also includes proposals for new presidential powers — which would be far-reaching.

Socialists need to welcome the concessions — but keep on fighting.



Profumo revisited?

By Kate O'Leary

My dates with vice girl by Minister" — yes, the story of the week in the tabloids is the revelation that Pamela Bardes, who had a House of Commons security pass as research assistant to Tory MP David Shaw, (who?) moonlights as a "high class call girl".

The press coverage of the scandal — so far — highlights the differences between now and the time of the Profumo scandal, in 1963. It's a case of 'the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce'.

Not even the hypocritical and prurient tabloids can summon up any sense of moral outrage. Lip-smacking jollity and glee is more the line.

Today is making the best attempt at sternness, playing up the Profumo parallels with a daily series on 'The New Keeler'. It is all pretty thin stuff, though.

"This woman is a security risk," they say — but the most prominent MP Mrs Bardes has been linked with so far is Minister for Sport Colin Moynihan, so the possible

threats to national security seem, well, limited.

Has Ms Bardes passed on our sporting secrets to the "Communists" or her "rich oil sheikh" contacts? Given English teams' performance, would they want them? Maybe Moynihan could have used her to sell Bobby

Robson to the Arabs?

As for her "string of rich and powerful lovers" — apart from Mr Moynihan (who insists they were just good friends), the best the papers can come up with is *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil, and the ubiquitous Jim "Nick Nick" Davidson. Wow!

Lobby AEU committee!

Talks continue between AEU and EETPU leaders about the proposed merger between the two unions.

Speaking at the AEU Youth Conference, General Secretary Gavin Laird has said that he hopes the merger will be completed by "January next year".

Any merger is likely to be on the basis of a major attack on the democratic structures of the AEU; as Laird put it: "If we say we will only amalgamate with anyone on the basis of our rule book then we will never amalgamate with anybody."

So the left in the AEU needs to organise to defend democracy in the union and stop the merger.

To that end an Anti-Merger Campaign has been set up. It is calling a lob-

by of the AEU National Committee in Eastbourne on 17 April. Activists in the AEU need to build for that lobby to show the leadership what the rank and file think of their attempt to destroy democracy in the AEU.

**Stop the merger!
Defend democracy in the AEU
Lobby the AEU National Committee**

**Monday 17 April 1989
8.30am onwards
outside the Winter Gardens,
Eastbourne
Called by Anti-Merger Campaign.
Contact N Goodwin,
28 Bowling Green Close, Birmingham B23 5QU**

By Lynn Ferguson

Hundreds of GP doctors around the country are threatening to resign if the government insists on forcing through its proposals for self-budgetting for large practices, and new contracts for GPs.

Local British Medical Association meetings called to discuss the GPs' response to the NHS White Paper have drawn numbers not seen for 20 years. In Leeds, 26% of the city's 375 GPs attended a resolution on 27 April, calling for mass resignations if the government refuses to back down.

200 doctors attended the biggest BMA meeting in Sheffield for 25 years. Sheffield has eight practices with over 11,000 patients which would be eligible for self-budgetting. Only one of these has agreed to preliminary costings, but even this practice has not said that it would accept a budget.

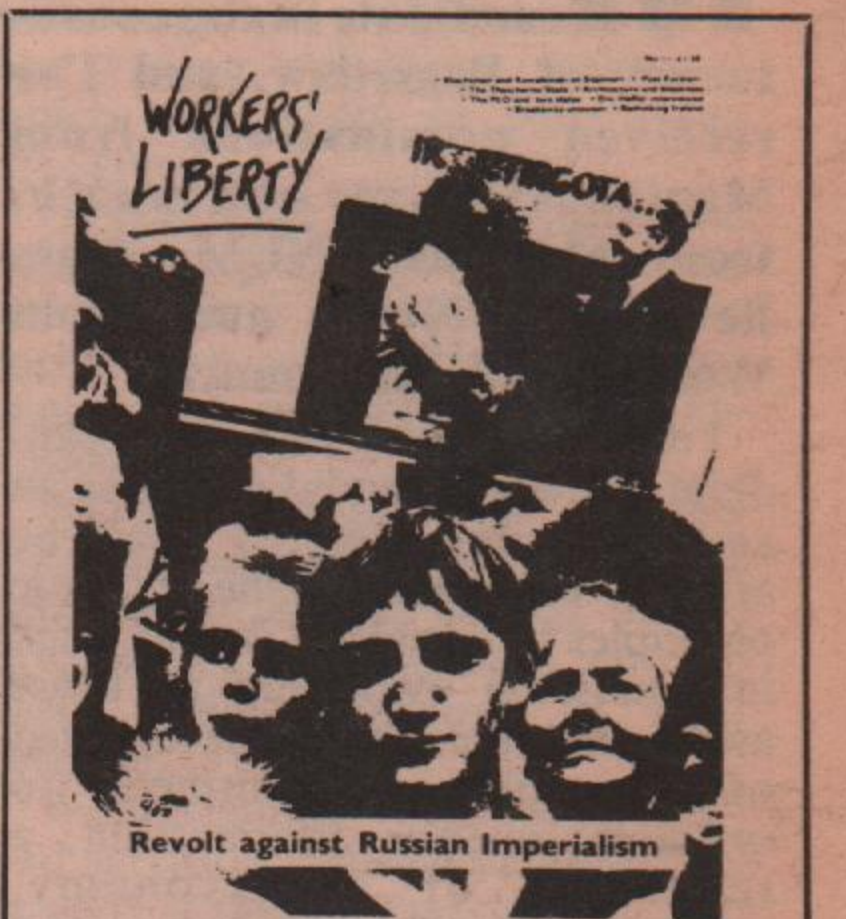
The last time GPs took such action was in 1966. Then, the government was forced to back down over new GP contracts when 71% of GPs tendered undated letters of resignation.

The proposed new GP contract would pay doctors more for each patient on their list, but less in other allowances, and would lead to larger lists, less time for patients, and poorer patient care. The proposals for individual budgets for 11,000-plus practices would force GPs to shop around for the most 'cost-effective' hospital care and would discourage GPs from taking on costly chronically ill patients.

One Sheffield GP, John Poper said: "It's not a matter of income. My practice would earn much more money under the new contract, but I just don't want to work like that. I don't want to be forced to provide care for my patients in that way because it's contrary to the fundamental principles by which I was trained."

The government will not be able to buy off the GPs — they, like other health workers are concerned about the quality of care for patients. Health workers know that the criteria of cost-efficiency are no way to run a health service.

If GPs refuse to cooperate, if large practices refuse to take on their own budgets, and if GPs link up with other healthworkers we can stop the Tories in their tracks.



Workers' Liberty No.11 has articles on the Eastern Bloc, 'post-Fordism', Thatcherism, civil liberties, modern architecture and much more. £1.50 plus 32 post from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

TEACHERS' ORGANISER

Supplement to Socialist Organiser (10 pence if sold separately)

New realism or old rubbish?

How to organise the fightback
Speakers: Andy Dixon (NUT executive, personal capacity), Pat Murphy (Leeds NUT)

Trades Club, Chadwick Street
Tuesday 28 March
12.45pm

Time to draw the line!

By Tim Peacock,
President South Notts
NUT (personal capacity)

This Easter, the National Union of Teachers is at its lowest ebb for many years. It is time to call a halt to the retreat and demoralisation and prepare to fight back.

The Tory government is pressing forward unhindered with its policy of breaking up state education. Individual schools are being turned into small businesses, with control of their own finances, and with powers to hire and fire teachers and tear up conditions of service agreements. Market forces are intended to ensure that only the leanest, fittest schools will survive. What does this mean for us?

For all workers in schools, it means worsened working conditions:

- Teachers working longer hours to attract more pupils to the school, cleaners, office staff, etc. taking pay cuts to save money — all for the good of the school.

- For our kids it means a poorer standard of education unless they are lucky enough to get into a "successful" school. Even then they will face overcrowding and a test-based curriculum.

At the same time as this, the NUT's power to organise is under attack.

Firstly, teachers are in the unprecedented position of being unable to negotiate nationally on pay and working conditions.

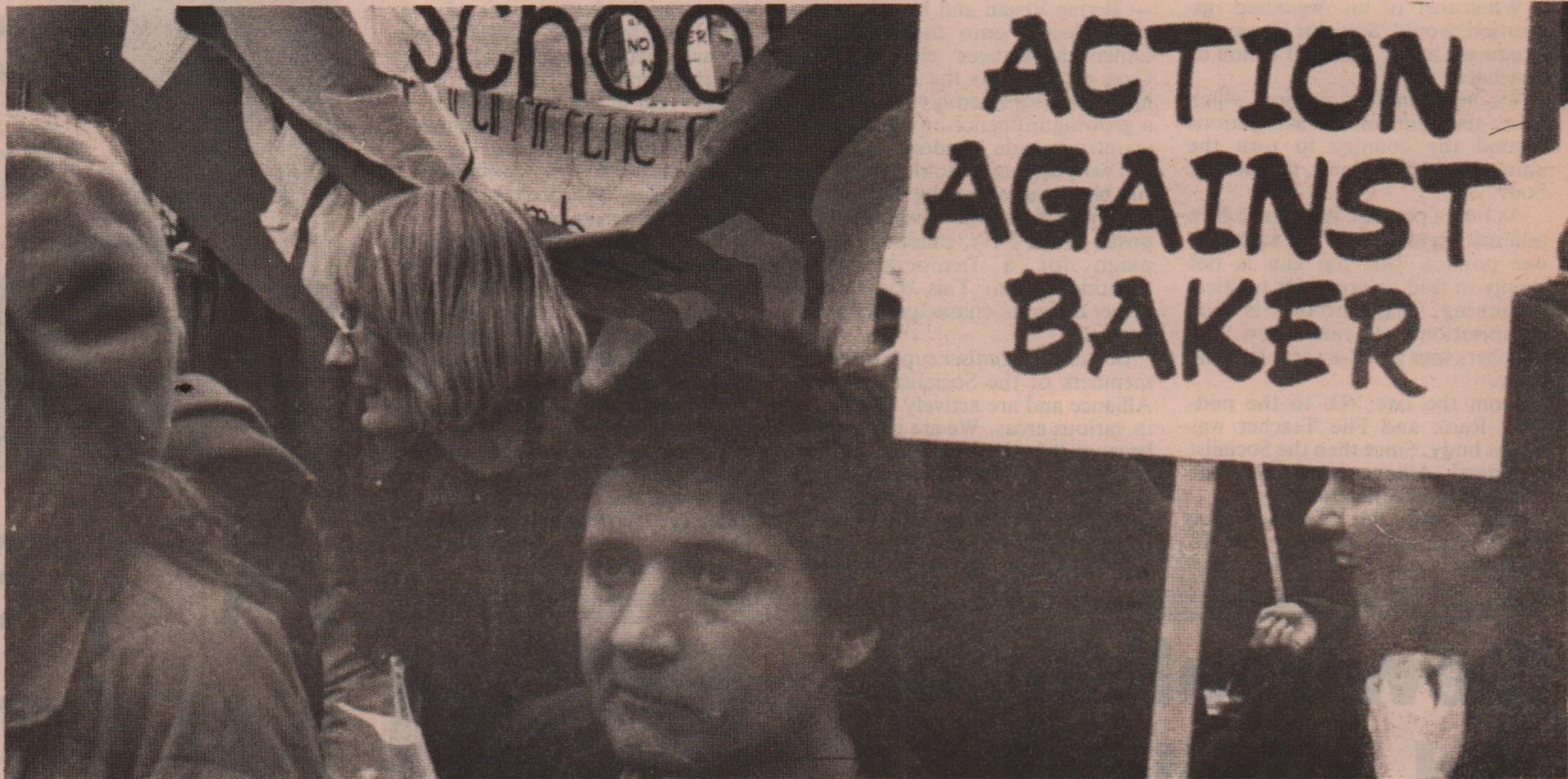
Secondly, we are being told that under Local Management of Schools (LMS) we are employed by our own school governors and therefore any industrial action not directed solely at them will be secondary action and therefore illegal!

NUT members are demoralised by recent defeats and overworked with the masses of extra new initiatives — GCSE, the National Curriculum. Now they are told that they cannot take action to defend each other from the cuts and attacks to come!

A sorry state of affairs, to be sure. The time has definitely arrived (if not some time ago) to draw the line and organise a fight back.

The NUT National Executive should urgently establish a range of educational standards and working conditions which it is prepared to defend. This means telling members, divisions and the employers which aspects of policy we are prepared to fight for.

It means telling groups of members in schools that they can rely on NUT support if they wish to take action against increased class size, loss of non-contact time, victimisation of individuals or



whatever.

This idea came out of a recent NUT Association Presidents' course and formed the basis of a letter sent by all those present to their executive members. It represents the feelings of a wide range of members, all despairing at the lack of support they are getting from the NUT leadership.

A "bottom line" which members could use in negotiations with head teachers would give renewed faith in their ability to defend themselves. It would also send a message to the government that teachers will not be pushed any further.

A second, important, part of the fight back needs to be building links with other groups of workers in schools. Cleaners, caretakers, librarians, etc. make up as many people as teachers — they are in the same position and we need to work together.

School based joint union committees could be formed to monitor the effects of LMS and to prevent one group being played off against another. We also look to the NUT nationally and locally working closely with other unions.

But can the NUT leadership be relied on to lead the kind of fight back we need?

Anyone who has watched their performance over the last three years has no choice but to conclude they can't and won't.

Look at the current strategy:

- Educating teacher governors about LMS. Fine, but what is the thrust of the training? A recent press release from Headquarters said the NUT "does not seek to impede or obstruct the implementation of the Education Reform Act."

- Information packs to school reps. Excellent, but the material has one flaw. It says nothing about what we as a union are going to do to defend members.

Not much fight back here. But then we are in this mess mainly because of the leadership's policy of retreat and capitulation. Three years ago they sabotaged a Pay and Conditions campaign that was basically winning, then proceeded to negotiate the sell-out at ACAS, totally failed to fight Baker's imposed pay and conditions, and, most recently, mounted "the biggest campaign in the union's history" against "one of the most retrograde pieces of educational legislation in the country's history" (their words) which consisted mainly of lobbying the House of Lords.

No, they have really been concentrating on an expensive restructuring exercise for the NUT, under the excuse of financial crisis, but really to increase centralisation of power and stifle democratic debate.

Socialist Organiser teachers believe we need a more democratic union with greater (not less) autonomy for local associations and all officials elected and account-

table to members' needs. We have consistently argued for the election of the General Secretary — which the Executive have strongly opposed.

Delegates to this year's NUT conference must support motions with call for a **fight back and increase democracy in the union.**

Members on the ground should

campaign for, and support, left candidates in this year's elections for General Secretary and Vice President. It is going to be difficult to achieve the democratic and fighting union we need until we replace the current leadership with people who are prepared to stand up for our interests and the interests of education.

Fight for better pay!

What's happened to this year's pay claim? The National Union of Teachers asked for 20%, the government imposed 6% heavily weighted in favour of heads, deputies and senior teachers.

Even on the government's own supply and demand theory, the weighting should have been towards the bottom end, where demand far outstrips supply. Indeed, recent government figures suggest the shortage will soon reach crisis proportions. It's an ideal opportunity to mount a serious campaign of action in support of the claim.

But apart from a few pathetic public utterances about the derisory nature of the settlement, McAvoy and Co. have no plans to fight the imposition. This is exactly what the

government wants.

Teachers who accept low pay will accept much worse besides, like the bigger crisis that will result from the teacher shortages. At Conference the left must expose the union leaders' defeatism, and put pressure on them to mobilise the membership to fight for more pay this year.

In addition, we must ensure that the Socialist Teachers Alliance motion in favour of re-establishing flat-rate pay increases is passed and acted upon.

If you want to know more about Socialist Organiser Teachers, contact Liam Conway, 34 Church Drive, Carrington, Nottingham. (0602 626776)

Join the Socialist Teachers' Alliance and fight!

By Ivan Wels

The union leaders carry on in their own sweet way — what can we do about it?" "There are so many issues the membership are angry about — LMS, loss of negotiating rights, the Baker legislation — why don't the union leaders mount some effective action?"

Comments like this are very common, and members soon realise that you cannot do much unless an organised opposition is mounted against McAvoy and Co. You cannot do much as a single association, let alone as a single member.

What sort of an organised opposition would *Socialist Organiser* like to see in the National Union of Teachers?

We need an organisation which raises the demands of associations around the country to turn the union into a responsive, democratic body.

As far as possible it needs to be a political organisation. We argue for our politics. But the aim is not simply to find an arena for political preaching. Paramount is the organisation of rank and file members into a self-aware, fighting body.

From the late '60s to the mid-'70s, Rank and File Teacher was such a body. Since then the Socialist Teachers' Alliance has been the main rank-and-file group.

Rank and File Teacher was started by some members in IS (forerunner of the SWP) and

others. It attempted to appeal to the broad base of membership. It had a rather philistine attitude towards 'politics' which did not have a direct relevance to teachers or the NUT — it was always a problem promoting resolutions on Ireland, for instance. It also had some strange ideas about head teachers being employers. But basically it was a healthy organisation until the SWP closed its doors to non-SWP members.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance grew out of that tradition. It was motivated by members of the IMG (forerunner of Socialist Action and Socialist Outlook) and others. It is not as compact an organisation as Rank and File Teacher, but it has had a measure of success.

In the late '70s two STA members — Bernie Regan and Ken Jones — were elected onto the Executive. Others have been elected since. Over recent years the organisation has grown considerably and has had a growing influence on parts of the country outside London.

Two years ago another rank and file body was set up by disgruntled STA members and others counterposed to the STA, called the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union. This body has a rather different character and as yet is small.

Socialist Organiser supporters are members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance and are actively building it in various areas. We are in the STA because it is the largest established opposition to the union leadership and has a sufficiently open structure for a whole range of views to be debated. It still tends to be rather London-based, with a rather vague

national structure, but it has improved over the past few years.

However, we are critical of several aspects of it. One aspect can be illustrated by the fact that this year's main meeting at NUT conference is going to be on Ireland — hardly the issue on most members' minds at the moment.

A more appropriate issue would be 'How do we make the union fight?' It is almost as if the sympathetic NUT membership are being told: "listen to this, it will be good for you!"

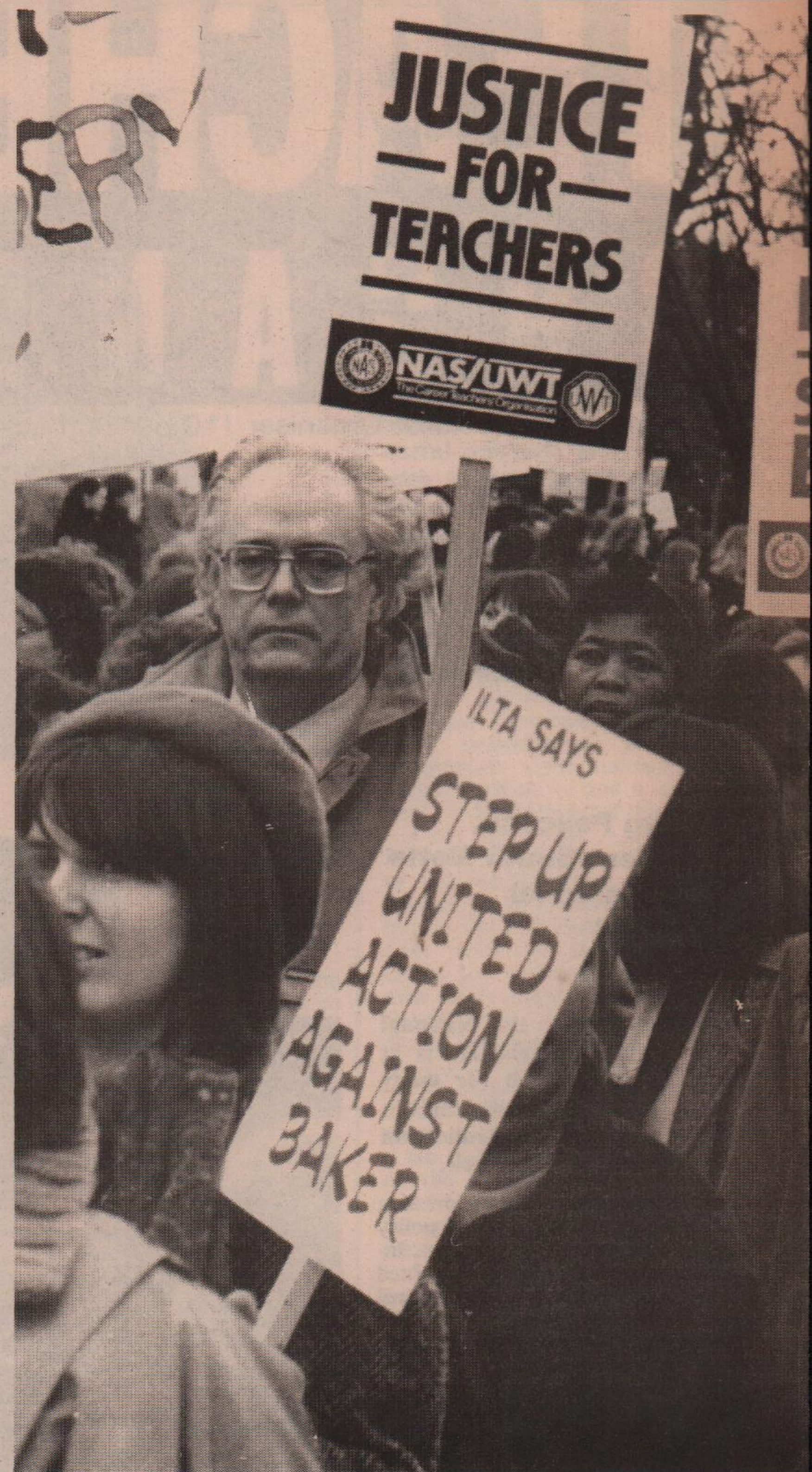
There is a tendency at meetings like this to have large platforms with as many as eight speakers. One year the STA had so many speakers one of them actually fell off the platform! The problem with having so many speakers is that it cuts down on the involvement of contributions from the floor and can alienate people coming along for the first time.

Last year in a one and a half hour meeting there was just one quarter of an hour left at the end for contributions. All this symbolises a rather elitist approach to the ordinary NUT member.

We believe it is important to start from where people are — whilst at the same time not shirking from facing up to the more "difficult" issues when appropriate. We need a mass membership with a strong national infrastructure consisting of a whole range of opinion in opposition to the union bureaucrats.

That is the only way to ensure a defeat for the likes of Thatcher and Baker and the only way to ensure a healthy, fighting, democratic union.

Join the STA and fight!



A year on NUT exec

Andy Dixon reports

The first few Executive meetings were fairly quiet. There were ritual skirmishes over elections for Committee Chairs and various outside bodies. (Ladbroke and Hills were not taking bets on the number of defeated candidates receiving eleven votes).

Those of us who were new spent the first few months trying to understand the archaic and often bizarre procedures used to conduct Executive business.

Until the summer President Horne managed to keep his cool remarkably well. Things began to warm up over the appointment of Dough McAvoy as General Secretary designate, with allegations of illegality and a walkout by Howard Roberts and Ian Murch. Since then there seem to have been challenges to the President's ruling almost every meeting.

On one occasion Malcolm Horne and Barrie Frost had a confrontation over Barrie's refusal to hand back a document outlining the proposed union budget for the year. This followed Mark Slater and Betty Hunter being thrown out of the

meeting because they had not signed a declaration of confidentiality (actually Mark had signed, but he had taken the outrageous liberty of qualifying his declaration by saying that he reserved the right to report to members, ie. the people who had elected him, on important issues).

Debate and discussion in the Executive is usually crowded out by Malcolm Horne's interpretation of the Standing Orders, motions that the question be put after the minimum number of speakers (three), and most importantly the shortage of time.

All business is channelled through committee, and often takes six weeks or longer after the committee meetings to reach the full Executive. The Executive meetings are never long enough and therefore the left has to be selective about which issues to challenge from the committee reports.

On two occasions we have resorted to requisitioning special Executive meetings (which we are able to do with 12 signatures): once to discuss the implementation of the Harrogate Conference decisions (not very successful!) and once to discuss the IAC report on pay and conditions and the union's response.

The second of those meetings was called after a normal Executive

New realism or old rubbish?

By Lesley Smallwood

Have you noticed how closely the union reorganisation mirrors the changes which are taking place in the Labour Party at the moment?

It is no coincidence. It marks a well planned shift by the labour movement's leaders to bring the membership into line with their 'new realist' policies.

For several years the National Union of Teachers has concentrated almost all its effort on building its image; for example, spending more money and time deciding a union logo than fighting to defend the most basic of its members' demands. Like the Labour Party, the NUT wishes to be seen as a respectable public relations organisation rather than a serious threat to the Government.

In order to maintain this image, the union has consistently refused to promote action against the Government's attack upon teachers, just as the Labour Party has refused to campaign actively around issues such as the poll tax.

The Labour Party leaders are dropping many of their so-called controversial policies such as unilateralism: the NUT refuses to admit that a defence of education

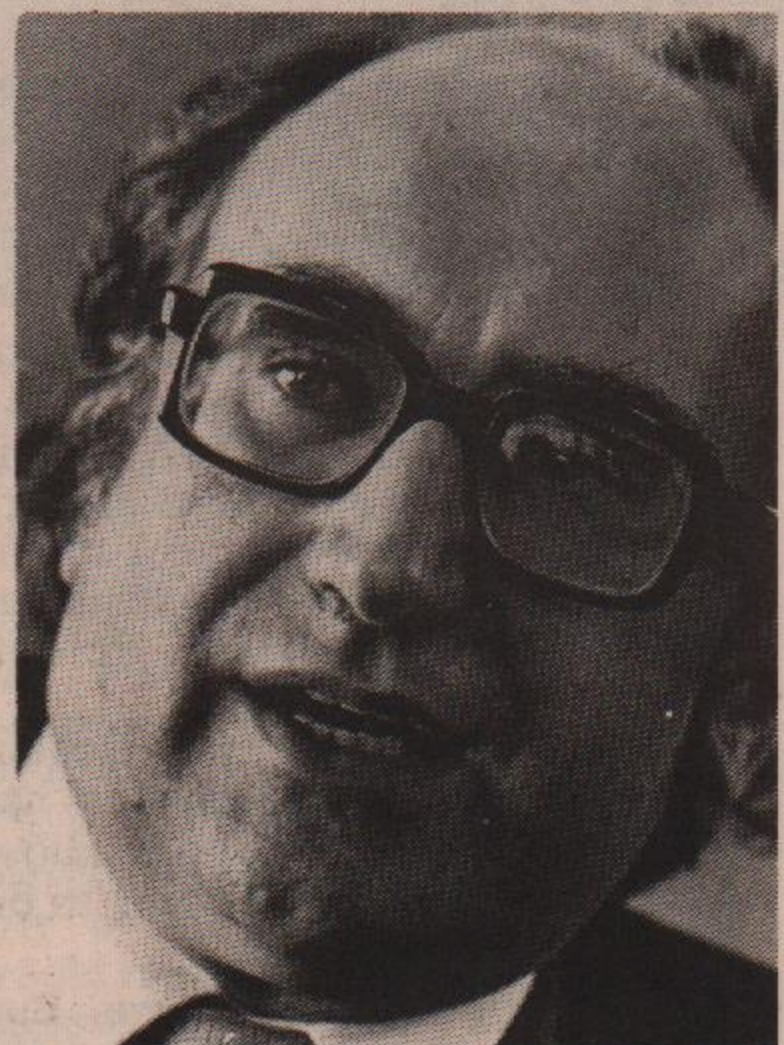
should be linked to other political issues, especially the attack upon local government services and the welfare state.

In the last year, however, the turn to 'new realism' has accelerated, as the leaders of the union and the Labour Party have attempted to introduce constitutional changes which limit the influence of rank and file members and entrench their own power. Nowhere can the contempt of the leaderships for their members be seen more clearly than in their attack on annual conferences.

Conference is the only way in which members can hold their leaders to account and decide national policies. The broad left of NUT Executive attempted to reduce the influence of conference by holding it every other year with a reduced number of delegates. Labour Party leaders are planning to replace decisions made at conference by an unaccountable Policy Review body.

At a local level, changes are also in progress. The restructuring of the NUT is aimed at taking power away from the locally elected representatives to a regional official appointed by, and accountable to, regional office.

In the Constituency Labour Parties, parliamentary candidates and election campaigns are to be

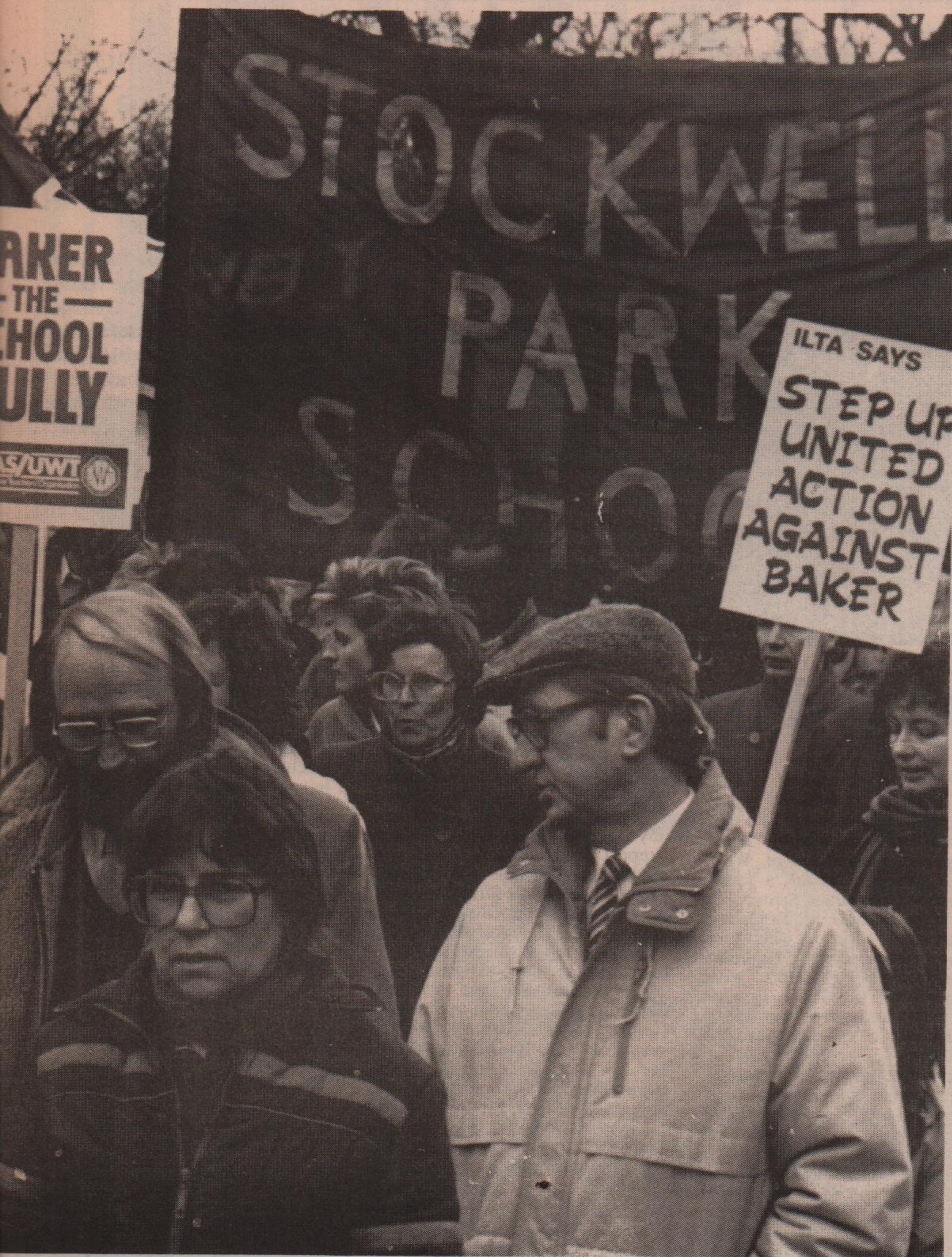


Fred Jarvis

voted by regional office. Constituencies not toeing the line have been suspended and members expelled in an attempt to control the party.

What the McAvoy and Kinnocks of this world forget, however, is that the labour movement will always fight back. The NUT were defeated in their attempt to reorganise conference at Harrogate, and the level of opposition should make them think carefully about any future changes. In the Labour Party the CLPs Conference has attracted over 50 constituencies in defence of party democracy and basic socialist policies.

A defeat for 'new realism' in any part of the labour movement is a boost for militants everywhere. It is the responsibility of every socialist to be part of the fight back in the unions and the Labour Party.



Take up the fight in the Labour Party!

By Patrick Murphy

An increasingly important problem for teachers is the fight to defend ourselves from cutbacks imposed by local councils. A whole range of measures are being employed by councils determined to meet spending targets set by the Government.

Compulsory redeployment schemes and the increasing use of temporary contracts are undermining conditions and reducing staff levels. Supply is often not maintained, and cover agreements are breached.

It is not only teachers but all school staff who face these problems. In most schools the cleaning and kitchen staff have been at the sharp end of local council cuts and privatisation. Pupils are very aware of the lack of books and proper resources.

Aside from the day-to-day defensive union reaction to these attacks, how should we approach this huge problem? The background to the attacks we face is, of course, the assault on local government by the Thatcher government. But, at the root of our problems is the failure of Labour councils to mount an effective fight back against the government.

From 1980 onwards a series of councils around the country were won by Labour Parties committed to a defence of jobs and services. The record has been one of abysmal failure — defeat, and, bar two exceptions, defeat without even a fight.

Those defeats were not inevitable. They happened because:

- The fight for democracy in the labour movement after 1979 was not thorough-going;
- The politics of the local government left were inadequate, reliant on top-down missionary socialism, not on the self-activity of a living

fighting local government movement;

- The forces of serious, fighting militants in the local Labour Parties were too weak. There were too few people organising consciously for a strategy of resistance and combining the struggle in the Labour Party with that in their unions.

Those failures must never be repeated. Trade unionists who want to mount a comprehensive defence of local services have to take on the political arguments about the role of Labour councils and their budgets.

Furthermore, they need to take them on where it counts. The fight against cuts in services is not just a trade union issue; it is a political issue which only the whole labour movement is capable of handling.

Local Labour Groups have got to decide whether to manage the system within constraints set by the Tories or organise a fight back against government policies. Local authority unions and socialists in the Labour Party, fighting together, mobilising workers to defend their jobs and conditions and arguing for accountability and socialist policies in local Labour Parties, could forge a powerful weapon against the Tories.

What we need, therefore, is a determined rank and file organisation which combines the struggle in the union, to defend members and make the union nationally fight, and the struggle in the Labour Party for the policies and leadership which can organise our forces for a fight back.

The alternative — to see our union activity as more or less adequate, or all we can do for now — will condemn not only teachers but all local government workers. To ignore the battle in the Labour Party is to fight with one hand behind our backs and to abandon a whole arena to people only too willing to use it to attack us.

With LMS and the Poll Tax looming, it is a luxury we cannot afford.

the utive

ing held in the week of the IAC
rt spent about 10 minutes on
ssue and Malcolm Horne refus-
allow a motion on pay to be
ted.

the Organisation and Ad-
stration Committee is chaired
en Bore (Tirana Association).
ne meeting of the Committee,
ngs were running high and Bore
called a Stalinist. Calm was
red when Howard Roberts
ted out that this was intended
compliment.

ie of the strangest Presidential
gs came at an Executive
ing when Peter Griffin, chair
e Salaries Committee, said that
Committee meeting earlier the
day had discussed and re-
d the idea of a campaign on the
of salaries and negotiating
s. In fact Griffin himself had
that we couldn't discuss a
aign at that committee. It was
ue for the Action Committee
the Salaries Committee.

hen I tried to point out this
pency at the full Executive
ugh a point of order, I was told
resident Horne "That is not a
of order. It is a point of fact
we don't have points of fact
!"

the Broad Left's disregard for
or consistency was shown
clearly when a proposal reaf-

firming the Executive's commit-
ment to the Salaries policy passed at
Scarborough last Easter (having
been proposed by the Executive)
was voted down, with the people
who had argued strongly for this
policy at conference arguing and
voting against.

Two topics of conversation vied
for prominence among the Ex-
ecutive majority over recent mon-
ths: the Broad Left standing a can-
didate against McAvoys for General
Secretary and the end of first class

rail travel for Executive members.
At first it was difficult to be sure
which was being taken more
seriously, but of course it soon
became clear — the end of first
class rail travel.

The Broad Left don't have the
backbone to mount a political
challenge to the rightward lurch of
the union. Do they have the
backbone to risk mixing with or-
dinary travellers (including
teachers?)

Competition corner

Finish the following dialogue be-
tween a NUT Conference delegate
and Fred Jarvis last year:

Delegate: 'Why do you drive
around in a limo on a £42,000
salary?'

Fred: 'Because I work hard.'

Mrs Jarvis: 'He does work ever
so hard you know.'

Delegate: 'I work hard too.'

Fred: 'Yes, but I work harder
than you.'

Delegate: '.....'

Answers to the competition send to
Fred Jarvis, Hamilton House, Lon-
don

First Prize

Free trip to West Ham' next match
with Fred Jarvis.

Second Prize

A joint season ticket with Fred Jar-
vis to watch West Ham United for
the '89-90 season.

Third Prize

'A drink with Doug' at Stoke
Rochford Hall.

WHERE WE STAND

**Socialist Organiser stands for
workers' liberty East and West.
We aim to help organise the
left wing in the Labour Party
and trade unions to fight to
replace capitalism with work-
ing class socialism.**

**We want public ownership of
the major enterprises and a
planned economy under
workers' control. We want
democracy much fuller than
the present Westminster
system — a workers'
democracy, with elected
representatives recallable at
any time, and an end to
bureaucrats' and managers'
privileges.**

**Socialism can never be built
in one country alone. The
workers in every country have
more in common with workers
in other countries than with
their own capitalist or Stalinist
rulers. We support national
liberation struggles and
workers' struggles worldwide,
including the struggle of
workers and oppressed na-
tionalities in the Stalinist**

**states against their own anti-
socialist bureaucracies.**

We stand:

**For full equality for women,
and social provision to free
women from the burden of
housework. For a mass work-
ing class-based women's
movement.**

**Against racism, and against
deportations and all immigra-
tion controls.**

**For equality for lesbians and
gays.**

**For a united and free Ireland,
with some federal system to
protect the rights of the Pro-
testant minority.**

**For left unity in action; clar-
ity in debate and discussion.**

**For a labour movement ac-
cessible to the most oppres-
sed, accountable to its rank and
file, and militant against
capitalism.**

**We want Labour Party and
trade union members who sup-
port our basic ideas to become
supporters of the paper — to
take a bundle of papers to sell
each week and pay a small
contribution to help meet the
paper's deficit. Our policy is
democratically controlled by
our supporters through Annual
General Meetings and an
elected National Editorial
Board.**



Anti-deportation fighter Anwar Ditta and her children

Anti-racism yes! Tokenism and guilt politics, no!

By Liam Conway

If it's anti-racism, it must be right; if the union's Black Caucus says it, it must be true.

These have been guiding mottos for some on the left in recent years, but they have led to some pretty dubious political responses. It's worth looking at a few cases.

Take last year's Burnage Report. It was clear from the report that "top down" management-induced anti-racism is ineffective and damaging, and actually leads to increased racial tension.

Socialist Organiser supporters

proposed a conference resolution through the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA), defending anti-racism, but urging the union to learn the lessons of Burnage. It was opposed by some socialist teachers on the grounds that learning lessons meant saying something negative about anti-racism. Fortunately the resolution remained largely unaltered, although the link between anti-racism and the need for an expanding education service was left unstated.

However, contacts inside the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CDFU) now say that Hackney NUT are proposing an amendment to the resolution

removing any reference to "learning lessons" from Burnage. Why? Because Ian MacDonald, a parent at Highbury Quadrant School and chair of the Burnage Inquiry, is apparently involved in the witch-hunt of those teachers at Highbury Quadrant School who were suspended by the Inner London Education Authority supposedly because of their anti-racist teaching practices.

MacDonald may (or may not) be a witch-hunter, but this does not mean that the Burnage Report, for which he was only co-author, has nothing valuable to teach us about the dangers of undemocratic anti-racism implemented on a shoestring budget. It is important that the STA left opposes any such moves by Hackney and supports the original motion.

More recently, many left-wingers, teachers and others, have been faced with the dilemma of the Rushdie affair. The Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) is likely to attempt to get a suspension of standing orders at conference to discuss a resolution defending Rushdie's freedom to write and condemning Khomeini's death squads. The STA should support this and resist the book-burning path taken by MPs Keith Vaz and Bernie Grant, left-wingers who claim the book is racist because it allegedly attacks the Asian community. (It doesn't).

Socialists must oppose moves to ban or restrict Rushdie's book or any move to censor any work because of its support, opposition or offense to any or all religions. We should demand the repeal of all blasphemy laws, and not be party to any notion that extending them would represent some form of equal opportunity.

At the same time we should defend the Asian communities from

any right-wing racist backlash and support the right of Muslims to march in opposition to Rushdie's book. The Rushdie affair is a timely reminder to socialists that tail-ending Black Section MPs like Bernie Grant is no substitute for independent socialist analysis.

The McGoldrick case of 1986/7 illustrates this last point quite effectively. When Brent Council suspended McGoldrick, much of the left gave them unquestioning support on the grounds that the suspension was part of an 'enlightened' anti-racist strategy. Indeed, many felt that Brent Council represented a genuine challenge to the government, despite the fact that it had never confronted the government over rate-capping.

According to Richard Hatcher (Socialist Teacher, April 1987), "two sets of forces were ranged against each other (in Brent). On the right, the unholy alliance between the Tories and the leadership of the NUT. On the left, Britain's first black majority Labour Council, based on a left-wing local Labour Party and supported by black activists and many socialist teachers. That was the essential alignment of class forces."

Such a view was widely supported in 1987. How ridiculous it now looks after the massive cuts the same Brent Council unleashed on its workforce in 1988. Sadly, I have yet to hear or read an account from Hatcher or anyone else of how this so-called fighting council became wielders of the Tory axe.

Indeed we must fight racism. If that fight is linked to a fight against government cuts it is both strengthened and rooted in the self-activity of the workforce. Abstract anti-racism, divorced from its context in a class society, can lead good socialists to worship false gods like Brent Council.

When common wisdoms are not wise

By Matt Cooper

The motions for this year's conference of the National Union of Teachers include many on international solidarity work which mix useful solidarity and awareness with 'left wisdoms' which are not so left and not so wise.

The resolution on South Africa is right to call for links with trade unions and raise the issue of prisoners and detainees. But it also has a one-sided emphasis on the ANC and SWAPO as the liberation movement.

There are other sections of the liberation movement — like the black consciousness movement, independent trade unionists and socialist groups — and it is about time the left recognised this.

The motion on the Palestine/Israel conflict is correct to call for links with Palestinian teachers in the occupied territories, but its demand that "any further links with the Israeli Teachers Union are made dependent upon their public support for the rights of Palestinians" is out of order. Would we oppose links with French trade unions not taking a firm stand on New Caledonia, or an American union that did not renounce the Contras strongly enough?

No. Indeed, we are all members of the British labour movement which has consistently failed to take the question of Northern Ireland seriously. We should maintain links and attempt to contact progressive Israeli teachers in the union.

The motion has a subtext, the left wisdom that states "no Israeli Jew is worth talking to unless they renounce the right of the Israeli state to exist." Socialist Organiser opposes this idea and calls for both the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab nations to have the right to their own state.

On Ireland we have the motion that time forgot. Remove "20 years" from the top and it could date from 1971. The left, it seems, is a very slow learner.

Despite good demands against discrimination and anti-Irish chauvinism, the motion has no solution beyond "the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops".

Troops out now on its own is not enough, and the majority of the Northern Catholics and Sinn Fein recognise this. If we ignore the chronic divide between the Protestant and Catholic working classes, withdrawal will lead to civil war, bloody repartition and sectarianism.

The left should stop its radical posing on Ireland and begin looking to real solutions, which include answers to the communal conflict in Ireland — solutions which recognise the rights of both Irish majority and Irish minority, such as a federal united Ireland.

A question of stress

Are you overdoing it? Are you the sort who just soldiers on until you drop?" asks the 'Teacher' (NUT journal). This "voice of the profession" leaves something important out.

Doctor Rank and File, our resident specialist and lifelong stress victim, has compiled a checklist for measuring your stress levels. Check it out. How do you score?

Answer each question Yes, No, or Don't Know.

- I find it hard to get to sleep and have recurring dreams about things being taken away from me. I'm totally paralysed and can do nothing about it.
 Yes No Don't Know
- When I contemplate recent union strategy I get attacks of dizziness, nausea and erratic breathing.
 Yes No Don't Know
- I feel too overworked and tired to attend union meetings.
 Yes No Don't Know
- I feel angry and irritable every time my union doesn't resist another increase in my workload.
 Yes No Don't Know
- I feel I can't confide in my National Executive member.
 Yes No Don't Know

Now check your score. Two points for Yes, one point for Don't Know and zero points for No.

0-3 No stress. You are very laid back and probably on secondment. On the other hand, you might be an Executive Member.

4-7 Medium stress. Most teachers find themselves in this category. Hang on in there, it'll probably get worse. Check out the tips.

8-10 High stress. You are in a bad way. Either consult your doctor or read on.

Doctor Rank and File's tips for reducing stress:

Do share your problems and feelings. You might for example join with one of the many Socialist

Teachers groups that are trying to make the union more effective.

Do make union meetings a priority and let your leaders know how you feel.

Don't give up.

Don't ignore your union strategy. Sit down and analyse what is going wrong. Share your views with others.

Don't vote at elections for people who have supported the disastrous policies that got you in to this state.

"Most people feel stressed at times. The important point is what they do about it. If the answer is nothing then expect to feel more stressed." *Teacher*, 26 September 1988.

STA fringe meetings

Friday 24th 7.30 pm

Gus John on Anti-racism

Sunday 26th 7.30 pm

Ireland: Time to go

Monday 27th 7.30 pm STA Women's meeting

All meetings, unless otherwise stated in STA literature at the Claremont Hotel

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