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socialist **OUTLOOK**

Wages, not 'workfare'!

**NO
return
to the**



1930s!

**Defend jobs and hospitals!
DEMONSTRATE February 18!**



Over 50,000 people marched through Paris on Saturday 6th February to protest against the rise of racism. Although the Socialist Party wanted to simply oppose Le Pen, many of the demonstrators argued that it is the austerity policies and the racism of the Socialist government that have allowed the Front National to grow

Public Eye on neo-nazi thugs

By Ray Garton

Public Eye's 'Right Fighters' (BBC2, 22 January) provided a well-documented expose of the links between neo-nazi skinheads and the organised far right at home and abroad.

In particular it showed the British National Party is recruiting an army of street fighters from the ranks of the Blood and Honour movement, an umbrella group for neo-nazi skinhead bands, and amongst organised gangs of football hooligans.

More disturbingly, the programme pointed out that the message of white power and race hate spread by neo-nazis has been accompanied by a rise in racially-motivated attacks and racist murders.

But while the programme provided a well-researched critique of the far right, it had little to say about how they can be stopped. In fact, there was no mention at all of the organised anti-racist movement.

The presenters had little to suggest other than demand that the police do more to control the neo-nazis. The futility of such an approach was demonstrated by the numerous interviews with police officers shown in the pro-

gramme.

Asked about the role of his police force in escorting neo-nazi skinheads in and out of Nottinghamshire to a Blood and Honour gig in Mansfield, which clearly amounted to incitement to racial hatred, chief constable Dan Crompton said: "They are entitled to express their views in a like manner to other people."

Similarly, while the police officer responsible for stewarding the BNP 'Rights for Whites' march through Thamesmead, near the spot where Rolan Adams was murdered, described the event as "most unfortunate" and "incredibly insensitive", he argued that the BNP had a legal right to march and "we were able to help them exercise that right by protecting them".

The conclusion for anti-fascists is clear. Although we should not refrain from demanding that the state and police act against the neo-nazis, we should be under no illusions that this provides any answers.

It will be left to organisations such as the Anti-Racist Alliance, in conjunction with the wider labour movement, to confront the fascist menace wherever it appears.

Labour left must Smash the new Smajorism!

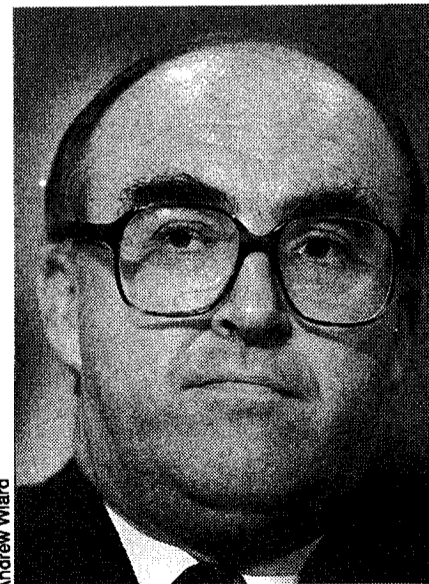
THE SUGAR-COATED Majorism of John Smith's keynote speech in Bournemouth last Sunday was more important for what it signalled than what it actually said.

No concrete new policies were announced, and there was no word on the main issues of debate inside the party - the block vote, proportional representation, workfare, or universal benefits.

Most of the stale ideas it weakly passed off as radical and renovatory are merely the commonplaces of the party mainstream for at least the last decade.

The front page splashes were, as -The Independent admitted, more the result of "behind-the-scenes briefings" than anything else. But why did Labour's hype merchants go into overdrive? Smith has signposted a sharp lurch right in the coming period, as attempts to break Labour's organic links with the working class move up another gear.

While tacit, Smith's endorsement of the moderniser faction, remains no less real. Tony Benn is wrong to argue that the speech "seems not just to abandon socialism, but to repudiate



social democracy". In truth, Labour has not abandoned socialism; it has never been a socialist party and it is incapable of becoming one.

Frontbenchers by the score rush to embrace the New Right agenda. As Labour local authorities get ready to axe tens of thousands of council jobs, environment spokesman Jack Straw last week announced that a Labour government would retain compul-

sory competitive tendering. Labour now accepts the council tax in principle, he added.

Just before last year's election, Straw, then education spokesman, dropped Labour's commitment even to review the charitable status which gives public schools massive tax breaks.

David Blunkett, the party's health spokesman, has backpedalled on Labour's commitment to reverse the Tory hospital opt-outs and issued conflicting statements on the Tomlinson report recommendations to axe ten London hospitals, defusing widespread anger which could have built the fightback.

Blunkett told *The Sun*: "Labour has been linked with freeloaders for too long. John Major has talked of 'giving people a hand up out of poverty, not a hand out'. I agree with him. But he has stolen our philosophy."

The message for socialists could not be clearer.

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Labour leaders run from anti-Tory fight No return to the 1930s!

THE UNEMPLOYED appear to be the prime target of a vicious new offensive, as John Major's government tries to outdo even the brutality of Margaret Thatcher.

The £76 billion social security budget is top of the hit list for cuts from a government whose outward image of bumbling incompetence belies its savagely reactionary core.

The result could be a new drive towards impoverishing the lowest-income families, recreating many of the horrors of the 1930s.

Embattled Chancellor Norman Lamont has called for a wholesale slaughter of sacred cows as he imposes a 'review' of all public spending, with instructions to ministers to cut, cut and cut again.

Schemes widely touted in the press after a deliberately vague keynote speech from John Major to Tory party workers include:

- Withholding the benefits of up to a million people unemployed for more than a year, unless they sign on for pointless 'training' schemes.

- Press-ganging the unemployed to take on 'voluntary' community project work for a meagre £10 a week on top of their benefits.

These proposals fall short of a full-scale US-style 'workfare' system, in which the unemployed are compelled to 'work' in menial jobs or be stripped of benefits. But with arch-Thatcherites Peter Lilley at Social Security and Gillian Shephard at Employment looking to slash their own budgets, even harsher measures could still be on the cards. Lilley has already suggested breaking Tory election pledges, including a promise not to means-test child benefit.

The new Major offensive is both economic and political in its motivation.

Collapse

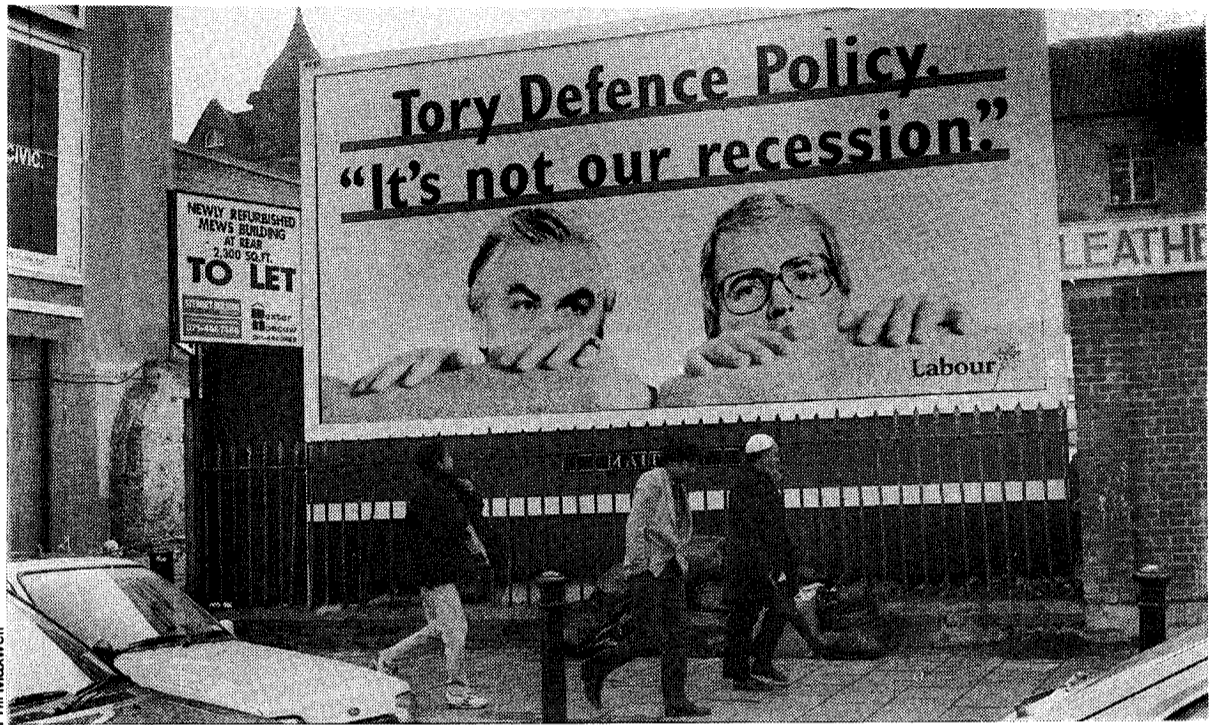
Lamont's nosediving economy has brought a collapse of employment, sending even the laundered jobless total soaring above three million, and intensifying the government's huge debt crisis. Next year's £50 billion public sector deficit is nearing peacetime record levels.

With sterling bobbing helplessly in the wash of other European currencies, and all of the stock remedies for ending recession having already failed, Major's team are getting desperate. Since they cannot kick-start the economy, they must either find ways to cut public spending or raise taxes.

But as a recipe for making quick cash savings, workfare is a non-starter. Experience in the USA shows it costs vast sums to administer a system in which local social security offices become in effect 'labour exchanges', each managing the compulsory work effort of thousands of reluctant draftees on behalf of local cheap-skate employers.

Although some claimants would no doubt be stripped of benefits, far more money could be recouped far more easily for the Treasury if a concerted drive was made against highly-paid tax evaders, who fleece the Inland Revenue of billions each year.

Workfare's main economic appeal for the Tories and their big business backers is that it further undercuts rates of pay and job security for those still in work, and reduces the expectations of the unemployed as they hunt for work. This would reinforce the efforts of Gillian Shephard to cut the pay of the lowest-paid by scrapping the system of Wages Councils. Yet figures show that after 14 years of Tory rule



Britain already has almost the lowest-paid workforce in Europe.

Significantly, the media have emphasised the idea of drafting the unemployed into what are termed 'community schemes' – loosely interpreted to mean anything from sweeping the streets to repairing roads and school roofs, or ancillary work in hospitals.

Through workfare the Tories might hope to get real jobs – which the Tories are unwilling to pay for – done for Mickey Mouse 'wages', while further smashing the public sector unions.

But the attack on the unemployed also plays a political role for the Tories. By once again stoking up the divisions within the working class, and playing off the relatively prosperous 'two thirds' against the poverty-stricken 'one

Major hopes to create a free-fire zone in which pensioners, children, the sick and people with disabilities can be picked off at will to balance the books of British capitalism.

third' in society, they are opening the way for even wider-reaching measures.

Included in the package of suggestions under consideration are the means-testing of pensions and of child allowances. Ministers have been told to 'think the unthinkable'.

By picking first on the relatively soft target of the unemployed who lack any organised lobby group to defend them, Major hopes to create a harsh new climate devoid of compassion for the poor, a free-fire zone in which pensioners, children, the sick and people with disabilities can be picked off at will to balance the books of British capitalism.

Abject

Major chose a good week to try it on. Labour's leaders had already embarked upon their own policy review, in which the 'targeting' of benefits and means-testing play an increasing role.

As Major unmasked plans further to impoverish working people to benefit the prosperous, John Smith mounted the rostrum in Bournemouth to announce the demise of socialism and a new focus on ... the personal prosperity of individuals!

Only the belated decision of the NUM to ballot on March 5 for strike action in defence of threatened pits offered any serious challenge to the right wing offensive.

Without a determined battle by the left to mobilise the strength of the workers' movement against the Tory onslaught, long-term blows can be struck against what remains of the welfare state – blows which John Smith's miserable band of Clintonite 'modernisers' will not even promise to reverse.

Miners back March 5 ballot

AFTER months of evading the issue, the NUM has at last decided to ballot its members on March 5, with a recommendation for 24-hour strike action.

The ballot will take place alongside those being held by the rail unions. Other public sector unions could yet decide to join the alliance.

NUM President Arthur Scargill specifically linked the miners' fight with that to defend hospitals, councils services and the rest of the public sector when he spoke at the Women Against Pit Closures rally on February 6.

Now the NUM has finally declared itself in favour of strike action, the fight for a yes vote is vital.



Andrew Ward

For a fighting public sector alliance

by Paul Swift
(Notts NALGO steward)

The Tories are stepping up their vicious attacks on the public sector in a desperate bid to slash their £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement.

The mining industry, the railways and the Post Office are all being prepared for privatisation with huge job losses. The NHS faces continuing cuts in services. Civil servants' terms and conditions are being badly hit by the extension of market testing and performance management.

In local government, the loss of 100,000 jobs and services are combined with the extension of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), whilst the local government review appears to be little more than a cynical attempt to cut yet more jobs.

On top of all this, the Tories are now imposing a public sector pay freeze. With the deepening economic crisis and the requirements to control borrowing contained in the Maastricht treaty, there can be little doubt that these attacks will continue.

Public sector workers throughout the country have been involved in localised strike action against cuts in jobs and services, and attacks on conditions of service.

In many cases such action has been linked to wider struggles, in particular the campaign against pit closures. However, if the government's mounting attacks on the public sector are to be successfully resisted, it is essential that action starts to be co-ordinated at a national level across the public sector unions.

Activists should be calling for a public sector alliance to co-ordinate nationwide activity, including strike action, in defence of jobs and against the pay freeze.

This could be given a focus by the decision of the CPSA executive to ballot its members for one day industrial action against the 1.5 per cent pay ceiling.

Workers throughout the public sector should call on their unions to follow this lead and ballot for action on April 1. Such a day of strike action could be broadened out to become a national public service day, aimed at highlighting the government's attacks on the public sector.

NALGO activists have the opportunity to put pressure on their union's national executive at the national local government group meeting to be held in Blackpool on 11 February.

Islington NALGO and Notts NALGO are calling a fringe meeting for the evening of 10 February in order to discuss the way forward.



Fight back for local government jobs!

By Bob Smith and Steve Kaczynski

According to the 1 February *Independent*, councils throughout Britain are bracing for "harsh cuts in spending".

A sample of 78 local authorities told the paper that they expected to make £850 million worth of cuts with the loss of 15,000 jobs - the worst cuts of recent years.

Labour Party estimates go much further - suggesting up to 100,000 local government jobs may go nationally. But though fight-backs are happening, in general the long running battles, in Islington and Newham NALGO were isolated bastions of struggle.

This was because industrial struggles have been at a record low in recent years. It is clear that local govern-

ment employees are seriously threatened in many parts of Britain.

But there is resistance developing in some places already, notably Birmingham, where a successful one day strike on January 19 is to be followed by a NALGO day of action on February 18.

This one-day strike which is technically separate from the TUC call for action in support of the miners, but is a defence of both miners and local government workers.

Martin Tolman, Birmingham NALGO branch secretary, told *Socialist Outlook* that "the council has told us they need to save £40 million. To do this, they need to cut 3,000 jobs, including through compulsory redundancies.

"This contradicts our redeployment agreement and there are other ways to

find the money. Prestige projects could be cut, to defend essential services.

"No houses are being built, the education system is demoralised, social services cannot cope with demands placed by the community. We are asking the council to stand shoulder to shoulder with us, mounting a joint campaign against the Tories' unfair spending policy."

● 3,500 teachers, NALGO members and others marched through Bristol on January 30 in a joint protest against cuts planned by Avon council.

● 1,000 protestors from local government and Trust hospitals joined a massive NALGO organised demonstration through the centre of Truro on January 30 under the slogan "Save Cornwall's Services".

Lessons of Lambeth

Privatisation is corrupt!

By expelled Labour councillor Steve French

ONCE AGAIN the media have been saturated with stories about "loony Lambeth" council.

Lambeth's Chief Executive has issued a report into £10 million of alleged corruption and mismanagement highlighting unauthorised redundancies, overcharging by the council's DLO, and overcharging by sub-contractors.

Smokescreen

Some on the left suggest that talk of corruption is purely a smokescreen to cover cuts in jobs and services. The reality is more complicated.

Lambeth Council is not an organisation that is run democratically by and for the working class. As a part of British capitalism it will mirror the corruption in society. Even before Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), Lambeth had an unhealthy voluntary reliance on sub-contractors.

Under the threat of CCT, with councillors opposed to it but unwilling to take a stand and ignore the legal requirements, officers bent the rules to

allowed openings for corruption.

But meekly accepting privatisation is no solution either. Lambeth MPs Keith Hill and Kate Hoey wrote to council leader Steve Whaley demanding that he "disband the DLO forthwith" and "externally tender service contracts held by the DLO."

History

Whilst Hill has backtracked following opposition from NUPE's NEC - he still wants the DLO management privatised!

This is turning history on its head. The fact is that Lambeth's DLO has been corrupted by the private sector. DLOs were created in the late 1940s as a mechanism to stop corruption. Millions have been stolen from national and local government via contracts with private companies.

Complacent

We should not be complacent about corruption. Socialists must demand action against what is theft of jobs and services.

Corrupt officers must be rooted out. Some of Lambeth's so-called DLOs have been busy at agents to raise

out work to subbies. Services should be brought in house.

Illegal redundancies

The same legal officers who forced councillors to make the redundancies are now saying that this was illegal and attempts by the left to stop DLO redundancies were later used to expel them from the Labour Party!

In recognising now that workers were wrongly sacked, the council's answer is...to make more DOS workers redundant!

Overcharging

Senior officers are locked into an internecine war over accounts. It is suggested that the DLO systematically overcharges the housing department for repairs.

Often, contractors carry out the work at a cheaper rate than the DLO. The DLO has kept these profits. Officers assert that this is illegal - but most other councils do the same. Everyone seems to ignore the fact that this is the logic of privatisation.

The witch-hunt

Islington strikers call off action

Steve Kaczynski

AFTER SEVEN months on strike, Islington NALGO members went back to work on February 1.

The year-long NALGO dispute in Newham has also been called off - with strikers told by the union to return to work with no guarantees of no victimisation.

In the last stages of the Islington dispute, there had been two sources of pressure upon the strikers.

Firstly, the National Emergency Committee, a sub-committee of NALGO's NEC, was threatening to cease underwriting the strike with full take-home pay.

Secondly, Islington Council was threatening to sack large numbers of strikers on the spot, while giving others notice that they too were threatened with dismissal.

According to Brian Gardner, Islington NALGO branch secretary, the new pressure made a reassessment of the position necessary.

A number of concessions had been won from the Council management including a search of people prepared to take voluntary early retirement and redundancies, and a number of agreements had been reached on avoiding many compulsory redundancies.

It was felt by strike leaders that staying out would endanger the hard-won concessions already gained while putting many, perhaps all, strikers at the mercy of reprisals by Islington Council management.

The 6 February edition of *Socialist Worker* claimed that Islington NALGO leaders had been too concerned with negotiations with management and had not tried to escalate the dispute.

Gardner's response is that both negotiation and escalation had been on the agenda. But NALGO members would not have accepted a failure by their representatives to negotiate.

Socialist Worker claims that the ending of the strike was "unnecessary and cowardly", but the situation in local councils throughout Britain shoots down in flames the ultra-left fantasies of the Socialist Workers Party.

Linking miners' support groups

By Glenn Vorris and Steve Hall

MINERS' support groups, anti-cuts campaigners, youth, unemployed, trade unionists and strikers will be meeting together at a conference in Manchester on February 27, called around the slogan "unite the struggles".

The conference, called by the North West Miners' Support Group Network and Parkside women's pit camp, will provide a forum for activists to discuss united action to bring together separate fights, both locally and nationally.

It will not be a rally. There will be only two opening speakers set the theme, and the meeting will then move straight into workshops to discuss resolutions and amendments.

After lunch, resolutions passed in workshops will be discussed again, and action to take the movement forward will be agreed. All resolutions should be in the hands of the organisers by February 20.

Socialist Outlook supporters in the North West have helped set up over a third of the 20 or so MSGs in existence in the region, with groups now in existence in Liverpool, Manchester, Lancaster and Morecombe, Preston, Bury, Blackburn, Oldham, Wirral, Wigan, Bolton, Warrington and other places.

The majority of local MSGs came together two months ago to form the North West Miners' Support Group Network, the first of its kind in the country. Network meetings are regularly attended by leading activists from Parkside, Lancashire's last surviving pit, Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures, and delegates from up to 12 MSGs.

* Unite the Struggles national conference, Manchester Metropolitan University Students' Union Building, Oxford Road, Manchester (the old polytechnic), Saturday 27 February. Contact address: MSG conference, PO Box 9, Eccles Square, Eccles, Salford, M30 7FX. Tel: 0942 884763, 0695 424451



Paul Mattsson

Women spearhead pits struggle

By Celia Murphy

Seventy five years after women won the vote, around 15,000 people marched through London on 6 February in a demonstration organised by Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC).

Coming just a week after publication of the Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee report, the theme of the Hyde Park rally which followed the demonstration was "Not 31... not 1... no pit closures".

The report (see box), had proposed a series of measures which would give

a temporary reprieve for some of the 31 pits whilst accepting the closure of others.

WAPC have denounced the report as divisive. "WAPC share the view of the NUM that the trade and industry select committee report is unacceptable. It does nothing to ease the burden of worry that women in the mining communities have carried since the announcement of the pit closure programme," said Sylvia Pye, National Chair of WAPC.

With the exception of NUM leader, Arthur Scargill, the platform of speakers was wholly women although overwhelmingly MPs or full-time trade

union bureaucrats.

A refreshing exception was the appearance of a Burnshall striker, who, addressing the rally through an interpreter, described the appalling working conditions which gave rise to the eight-month long strike. She ended an emotional speech by leading the crowd in chants of "The workers united will never be defeated".

Ann Scargill, arrested the previous day for chaining herself, suffragette-style, to the Department of Trade and Industry HQ, also received a warm reception when she was invited on stage to receive a cheque for £1,000 - a give from NUPE women to WAPC.

The event attracted broad support from within the trade union and labour movement but failed to mobilise the wider support or large numbers who joined the demonstrations against pit closures in the autumn.

Unless this support is revitalised, the momentum is in danger of being lost, and a "compromise", of the sort outlined in the trade and industry select committee report, is in danger of slipping through.

The rail and coal unions are balloting for a programme of industrial action early next month and initiatives of this sort need to be broadened.

Scargill slams the compromisers

The National Union of Mineworkers has correctly condemned the trade and industry select committee report, which recommended a £500m five-year package to save, at most, 19 of the 31 threatened pits (see box).

NUM president Arthur Scargill told a delegate conference last week that Labour members of the committee should not have endorsed the document.

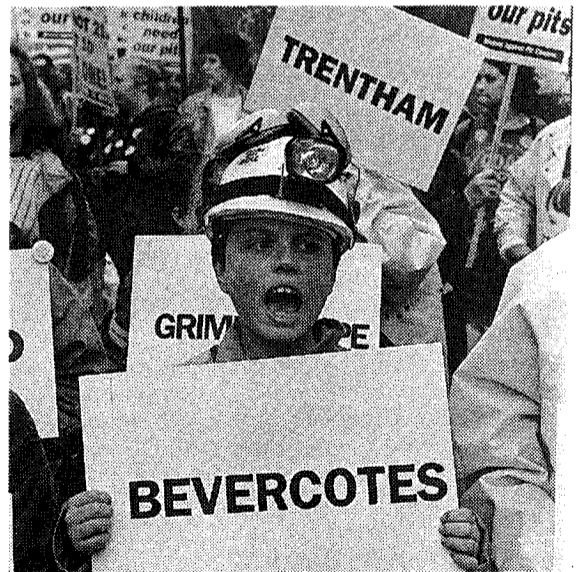
Mouthpiece

The MPs concerned are committee chair Richard Caborn (a *Morning Star* contributor), Mick Clapham (a former NUM official), Adam Ingram (erstwhile Trotskyist and later a Kinnock aide) and Stan Orme (Kinnock's public mouthpiece in the 1984-85 miners' dispute).

"If you look at the committee's figures, it is incapable that it projects a reduced market for coal at power stations from 65 million tonnes to 40 million tonnes," Scargill argued.

"We find that proposition and the suggestion that we agree to new working practices to be totally unacceptable." The experience of other countries was that longer shifts means more accidents, he added.

"The committee got it wrong and their recommendations are not consistent with Labour Party policy."



Paul Mattsson

Trade and Industry Select Committee report

British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal

- A subsidy of £500 million over five years to subsidise the production of an extra 19 million tonnes of coal
- Up to £380 million of the subsidy to come from the fossil fuel levy currently used to subsidise the nuclear industry (the nuclear levy)
- Coal industry costs to be reduced by "reforming working practices"
- Accessible coal to be extracted from the 10 pits earmarked for immediate closure
- Any pit threatened with closure to be put into the Colliery Review Procedure
- A reduction in opencast mining and greater controls on opencast production
- Imposition of the nuclear levy on electricity supplied from France

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From boom to bust – and back again?

By Dave Osler

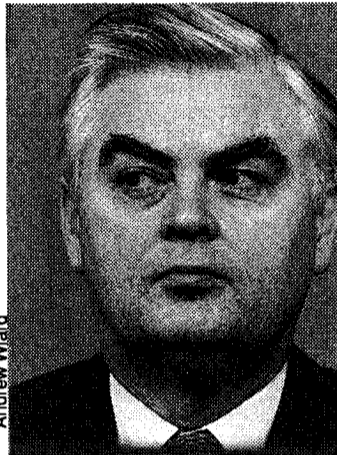
AFTER NEARLY three years of the deepest recession seen in Britain since the hungry thirties, there is still no conclusive evidence that 1993 will mark a return to growth.

Available indicators are analysed in depth almost daily in the *Financial Times*: optimistic commentators regularly hail some favourable statistic as a pointer to a potential breakthrough, but you can easily find almost identical stories in the back issues of two years ago.

For the four million-plus working class people without work, and the tens of thousands of families whose houses have been repossessed, complacent Tory talk of 'green shoots', 'bumping along the bottom' and 'conditions now in place for recovery' has become a particularly unfunny standing national joke.

But recovery, at least on a limited scale, will eventually come. Moreover, it will almost certainly be followed by another, probably even deeper, slump.

Recurrent economic crises are a permanent feature of the



Andrew Wainwright

capitalist system. To understand why, it is necessary to look beyond superficial explanations of 'the business cycle' and turn to the analysis developed, well over a century ago, by Karl Marx.

Recessions, Marx argued, arise from "the growing incompatibility between the productive development of society and its hitherto existing production relations".

Capitalism is an irrational system. Ravenscraig steelworks, Trentham colliery and Cammell Laird shipyard stand idle, while experienced local workers, in need of jobs, are locked outside their gates.

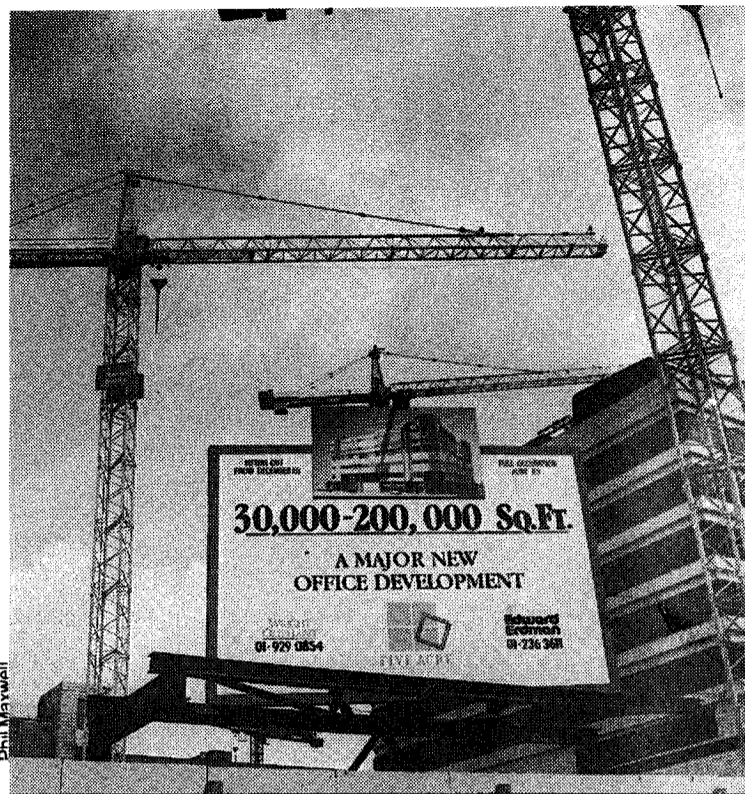
It is not as if there is no need

for the steel, coal and ships these facilities could produce. It is just that there is no profit for the bosses in providing them. That pensioners die of hypothermia, skilled engineers rot on the dole and dangerous ancient oil tankers destroy the environment matters little to our rulers.

But it was a different story during the 'Lawson boom' of just five years ago. Every second rate 'entrepreneur' in Britain believed he or she could make more profit by stepping up output. The banks were happy to lend money for bosses to invest in new equipment, and hire workers to operate it, on the back of the flimsiest of business plans.

This process created additional markets for capitalists who produce the means of production, and provided more people with the money to buy consumer goods. Thatcher's economic miracle had brought permanent prosperity, or so it seemed.

Of course, the entire situation was unstable. The bosses have dreamt of maintaining an equilibrium at boom conditions since the birth of capitalism. It is a dream that has gone sour every time.



Phil Maywell

Bankers flogging a dead Canary

ONE illustration of the way that recession destroys capital is that colossal monument to Thatcherism's failure, the Canary Wharf 'Manhattan on Thames' office block in London's Docklands. Three of the 11 banks that lent £600m to the project's developer, which is now in administration, are trying to sell their loans onto the secondary debt market at a fraction of their face value. If they are lucky, they will recover 10p in the pound. The move effectively values Canary Wharf, which cost over £1500m to build, at just £60m.

Real wages increased for key groups of workers, amid constant talk of 'skill shortages'. The sudden surge in demand for equipment, raw materials and even bank loans pushed up prices. Inflation began to increase.

In most cases higher costs could not simply be passed on, because desperate rival suppliers were ready to undercut the competition simply to stay in business. The glut of goods on the market drove prices down further.

Deeper processes were at work too. Under capitalism, individual bosses constantly seek to increase their share of the overall profit available in their sector by replacing workers with machines, making themselves more efficient than their competitors.

Other capitalists are forced to match their rivals' latest equipment or go under. However, what is rational for each individual capitalist in isolation is detrimental to the capitalist system as a whole.

As marxism alone explains, profit as such can only be derived from the exploitation of human labour – the difference between the workers' wages and the value of what they produce at work.

As more and more equipment, relative to human labour, is needed even to stay in the game, the bosses have to lay out ever greater sums to generate the same return. Looked at another way, the rate of profit on each pound invested tends to decline, to the point where the cost of financing a new venture outstrips the potential payback.

Consequently, the project never happens, and business confidence plummets. Meanwhile, workers 'displaced' by new technology

are taken out of the consumer goods market.

Some firms begin to cut back production or even go bust. This reduces markets for other capitalists, and hundreds of thousands of workers are dumped on the dole. Banks hike up interest rates to cover bad debts, making most new investment prohibitively expensive. The bosses' boom turns to bust.

Yet, dialectically, slumps contain within them the basis for capitalist recovery. Excess capital is taken out of the system, as seen in the eighties slump which destroyed around a third of Britain's manufacturing industry. The surviving capitalists get to buy up valuable assets on the cheap.

Mass unemployment creates a pool of cheap labour, while fear of the dole queue erodes trade union militancy and makes it easier for the bosses to cut wages, cheapening the price of labour power.

Governments undertake anti-slump policies for political reasons – one of the prime lessons capitalism learned from the thirties.

In Britain, political control of the central bank enables the Tories to reduce interest rates in the hope of encouraging investment, while economies like Japan and the USA are turning to Keynesian measures of state spending. Business conditions slowly begin to improve, and the whole crazy cycle starts again.

The only solution for this crazy merry-go-round of boom and bust is a democratically-planned socialist economy, based on working-class self-organisation, which will operate in the interests of the majority of the population.

Bank staff take notes from TSB

By a special correspondent

THERE WAS a strike last month which affected 1400 workplaces in the private sector, closing about half of them. The employers admitted to the *Financial Times* that the effectiveness of the action had surprised them.

The strike was in the TSB bank. It was called by BIFU, the finance union, over compulsory redundancies made by the Bank in breach of an agreement with the union.

The strike was particularly solid in the North of England. All branches were closed on Merseyside, and flying pickets were deployed around branches in the Durham coalfield.

This level of militancy has not been seen in the banks since the 1960s, when the National Union of Bank Employees (the forerunner of BIFU) used regional strikes to gain recognition.

The banks had set up in-house staff associations in order to avoid recognising an independent trade union (what the chairman of Midland Bank then called 'the serpent in our midst'). But recognition was finally

achieved through industrial action, although three staff associations still exist alongside BIFU in Barclays, Lloyds, and Nat West Banks. (Interestingly, this tactic continues to be used by employers; BIFU recently won a bitter two-year recognition battle in the North of England Building Society after management created a staff association to oppose the union.)

Following the TSB dispute, the major clearing banks are drawing up plans to confront the union head-on. Nat West is outraged at the union's public campaign against compulsory redundancies last year when the Bank 'credit-scored' staff for redundancy.

(Needless to say, the Nat West Staff Association did nothing to fight the sackings.) And Lloyds are furious at the union's successful campaign against its threatened take-over of Midland Bank, which would have cost 30,000 jobs.

Lloyds and Nat West have announced – even before negotiations have begun – that they will not pay a cost of living rise this year. Barclays are to follow this line.

For all their talk of 'competition', the major clearing banks are coordi-

nating their approach to pay with a view to crushing the union. They met in Birmingham on January 8 (ironically the day of the successful TSB strike) for this purpose.

Other banks are also lining up to test the union's resolve. Royal Bank of Scotland is sacking staff under its 'Project Columbus' initiative – whilst paying one of its directors a £6 million bonus!

The Co-Op Bank – virtually 100 per cent organised in BIFU – is setting up a 'consultative council' to try to bypass the union.

Bank staff are now increasingly prepared to take action. The banks, egged on by shareholders and the City press, are squaring for a fight. As the old myth of a 'job for life' is exploded, the TSB strike has shown BIFU members that they can win.

● BARCLAYS Bank, which axed 3,000 jobs last year, has announced 3,500 redundancies since 1 January.

The latest victims are 1,000 staff at the bank's London clearing headquarters. Its closure could herald the end of the cheque clearing system – with the loss of another 5,000 jobs in other major banks.

Their morals and ours Sex, Lies and Journalism

By Dave Osler

A LEADING Labour moderniser has been photographed dancing the night away in a gay club.

The paparazzi have also pounced on a former prominent Labour politician cottaging in a public convenience, while two other frontbenchers – one of them married – are having a hetero relationship.

Affairs

As for the Tories, one ministerial Daimler regularly cruises Kings Cross in search of commercial sex workers, while a rightwing cabinet colleague of the gentlemen concerned has left his wife for a black French bloke. He is also said to have had an affair with a third rightwing cabinet minister.

A top Thatcherite – still in public life – has a voracious appetite for underage boys, while a leading Liberal Democrat has had over a dozen extramarital liaisons.

All of the stories above are doing the rounds of political journalists, usually by way of pub talk. Are any of them true? It's anybody's guess, but it would be no surprise to see at least some of these tales make the public prints in 1993.

Scandals

The last 12 months have been a vintage year for sex 'scandals'. Prince Charles, Princess Diana, the Duchess of York, David Mellor and Paddy Ashdown hit the headlines simply by having sex with someone other than their husband or wife, while the dalliances of sundry rock & rollers, movie stars and aristos provided plenty of column inches on the inside pages.

Sex, lies and journalism form the backdrop to John Major's decision to sue the radical *New Statesman and Society* and satirical rag *Scallywag* after they referred openly to long-running rumours that the prime minister is sleeping with a woman catering manager.

Soho

Gossip over the matter was so widespread that pop group Soho recorded a song about the purported affair. At least one left newspaper published the rumour in print two years ago, while a *Sunday Times* profile of the woman concerned argued she learned her catering skills 'on the job'. Nudge nudge, wink wink.

Almost every national newspaper made some oblique reference to the allegations. Now one of Britain's few radical publications with a half-way reasonable circulation may go under for arguing that they were not true.

NSS are publishing grovelling apologies in a bid to stay out of the dock, but losses sustained on the withdrawn issue alone already exceed last year's

meagre profits.

The other publication, edited by an undischarged bankrupt piss-artist, has told the PM: 'See you in court'. Socialists should be in solidarity with *Scallywag*.

The whole issue underlines the massive hypocrisy surrounding monogamy, and indeed, sexuality in general. On any reckoning, there must be at least 60 gay MPs in parliament.

Outing

Only one – take a bow, Chris Smith, who sits for Labour in Islington South – has the courage to admit it. Hence the blind panic in Westminster caused by last year's 'outing' threats from gay activists.

Surveys regularly indicate that over half of married people have been unfaithful to their partners. The figure for unmarried couples – the vast majority of stable relationships between socialists – will, if anything, be far higher. Put bluntly, having a bit on the side is hardly anything out of the ordinary.

Socialists have always argued for sexual freedom. Marx and Engels touched on the question in *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

Some 150 years on, their wording may seem sexist given the real, albeit limited, advances in sexual liberation in recent decades.

It doesn't even touch on gay sexuality. But the spirit of the remarks still ring true, given the new right's 'back to the family' drive, which has been particularly marked in Britain and the USA.

"But you Communists would introduce community of women", screams the whole bourgeoisie in chorus. The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production.

Exploited

"He hears that instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common will likewise fall to the women.

"He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production."



Underlying the bosses' hypocrisy, they go on:

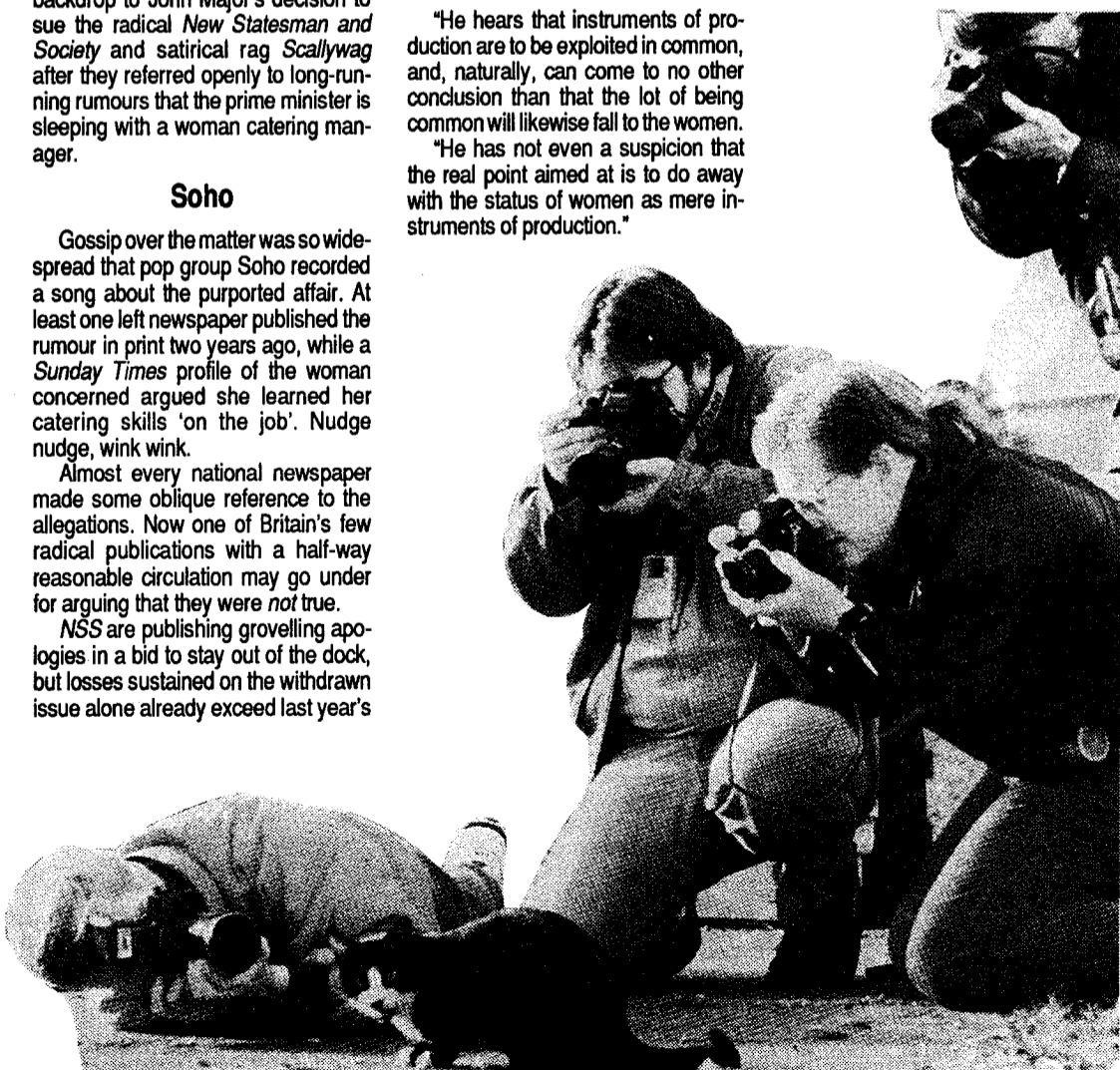
"Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives.

Marriage

"Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common, and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalised community of women."

The sole rider is that stable relationships can only be built on mutual trust. As another of last week's news stories proves, the bourgeoisie's 'hypocritically concealed' extramarital liaisons can have tragic consequences.

Lady Green, whose husband quit as Director of Public Prosecutions after being caught propositioning a prostitute, was found dead next to an empty bottle of pills. Police say foul play is not suspected.



Battle to defend state education

By Anne Hudson

Thousands of teachers' jobs are threatened, along with other aspects of education including school meals, as a result of the new round of local authority spending cuts.

State education will continue to suffer the damage inflicted by a government that can still manage to find £76m a year to send a tiny proportion of pupils to private schools.

There are two important dimensions to the Tories' education policies; the attack on the public sector, of which state education is a vital part, and a series of often half-baked initiatives intended to overhaul education in the interests of the capitalist state.

The National Curriculum is linked to an educationally unsound system of testing (including the infamous Standard Assessment Tests) in which white middle-class students, who are trained rather than educated to demonstrate mastery of various compartmentalised bodies of knowledge, will appear most successful.

The pressure on schools to 'opt out' of local education authorities, which has intensified in recent months, and the publication of 'league tables', are forcing schools to compete for results and resources regardless of the communities they serve.

The calls from the right for a return to dividing students into 'sets' – ultimately meaning streaming, which often worsens the plight of those deemed 'less able' – will further undermine any pretence of equal opportunities.

The leaderships of the major teacher unions are alarmingly acquiescent in the face of such offensives, and are doing too little too late to counter the blow that opting out will deal their members' conditions of service and rights to organise.

We cannot leave the battle to defend state education to the union bureaucrats or to the equally passive Labour leadership.

For this reason socialist teachers and those who wish to resist the rightwing offensive are organising to co-ordinate and build opposition to the government's attack on state education.

We intend to develop coherent links between the campaigns that are developing in the localities – for instance, anti-SAT campaigns and parent and teacher campaigns against cuts – as well as within some subject associations, such as the campaign by the London and National Association of English Teachers against the English SATs.

This initiative is seeking the active support of parents, school students, non-teaching school staff, anti-racist campaigns and labour movement activists.

Fight over testing

A CLASH seems possible as the overwhelming majority of teachers from all sides declare their opposition to the Tories' controversial English tests for 14-year olds.

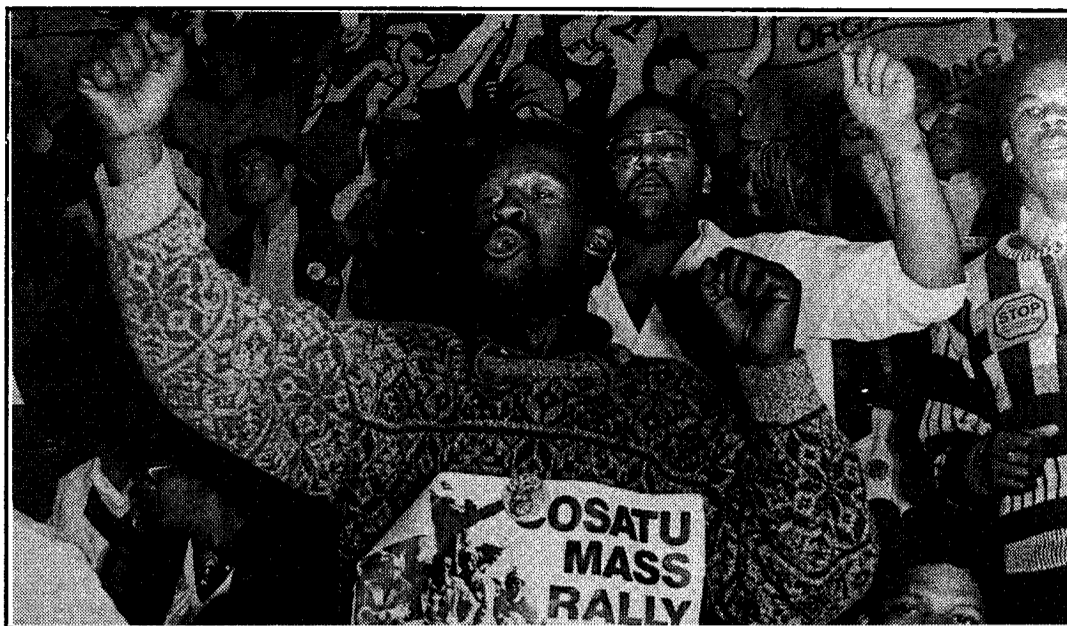
The biggest union, the NUT, has seen a massive 75 percent ballot return showing 91 percent of English specialist teachers ready to take action short of strikes against the tests.

A smaller poll showed 86 percent of their colleagues ready to support them in this stand.

Though the NUT would require another ballot to give a mandate for a boycott of the tests, the second largest union, the NAS-UWT seems likely to call for such a vote.

Even the right wing Association of Teachers and Lecturers has recorded near-unanimous opposition to the tests.

South Africa Fresh battles ahead for liberation struggle



The De Klerk Nationalist Party government and the ANC seem close to a deal. What will this mean for South Africa? Socialist Outlook spoke to MICHAEL BAM, a member of the executive of the Workers Organisation of Socialist Action (WOSA).

What is the present stage of the struggle in South Africa? Has the CODESA negotiation process put the left and the mass movement in difficulty?

WOSA characterises the present period as that of the carrot and the stick; De Klerk is using a combination of repression and concessions to try to lock the ANC into the reform process.

We have seen the ANC make many concessions, on one-person one vote, nationality and the principle of a unitary state without 'homelands'. The mass movement as a whole has gone into decline; there's a sort of depression where everything is left to the negotiations.

A key turning point was defeat and sell-out of the NUMSA (metalworkers) strike last August; this was a massive strike defeated not by the bourgeoisie but by the leadership betrayals. The trade union movement has lost membership rather than winning new members, and this is symptomatic.

Can the ANC really compromise on the principle of one-person, one vote?

It is significant that even Communist Party (SACP) leader Joe Slovo has come out in favour of a 'sunset clause' in a negotiated settlement; that would give the whites an effective parliamentary veto for 5-10 years.

The model here is the 1980 Lancaster House agreement which gave independence to Zimbabwe.

There has been tremendous opposition inside the ANC, with opposition from the Youth League, but in the end the ANC executive accepted the position of Joe Slovo with just a few minor amendments. So yes, for five to ten years there will be no 'one person, one vote'; and a lot can happen in that period to further disrupt a transition to majority rule.

De Klerk's strategy is two-fold. First to guarantee a veto for the whites, but also to build up a 'national front', a bloc of right wing forces against the ANC and the liberation movement. This would involve the ruling Nationalist Party, but also the puppet leaders of the 'homelands' and their supporters, as well as the Zulu-based Inkatha 'National Freedom



Winnie Mandela - voicing real fears

by a socialist from
South Africa

WINNIE MANDELA'S blistering attacks on the African National Congress leadership are not, as Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders try to make out, the lone voice of an embittered woman seeking notoriety.

She is voicing the real fears of a growing number of ANC supporters, especially among the youth, who are frustrated by protracted negotiations which seem to be going nowhere.

Conciliatory

They are critical of the ANC's conciliatory stance toward the De Klerk regime, despite the increasing evidence of security forces involvement in the violence in Natal and the townships - an involvement which the government seems either powerless or unwilling to stop.

She first spoke out at the funeral of the veteran liberation fighter, Helen Joseph, who herself expressed her

disillusionment with the ANC leadership before her death.

"Many people here would be forgiven these days if they have forgotten what the original cause was for which Helen and other heroes of our struggle lived for and for which many died.

"But, surely a fool may suspect correctly that these sacrifices were not paid in order to reach some so-called power sharing arrangements between the elite of the oppressed and the oppressors.

"Joseph Mduli, Steve Biko, Neil Aggett, Solomon Mahlangu, David Webster, Mathew Goniwe and countless others did not pay the supreme price in order that our freedom be allowed to disappear into the sunset of political oblivion. They died in order to usher in a new dawn of freedom, justice and lasting peace for our people."

Winnie Mandela elaborated her position subsequently in *Vrye Weekblad* and in an open letter published in the *Sunday Star* and the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*.

While she is not against negotiations in principle, she insists that: "It is crucial to take the masses along with

us on the question of power sharing.

"And it is the masses who must give a mandate to the leadership about the interpretation of power sharing. Because if we do not do that we are likely to find ourselves an elite group leading the masses while we are not in touch with them. We do not know their aspirations."

Sunset clauses

Asked about her attitude to the so-called 'sunset clauses' - proposed by Joe Slovo and endorsed by the ANC - for an interim government of national reconciliation, she replied: "It must not be seen as a shortcut to parliament for a few individuals in the organisation. The masses must be part of the debate."

It is this elitism of the top leadership of the ANC to which she returns time and again: "The National Party elite is getting into bed with the ANC, in order to preserve its silken sheets. And the leadership of the ANC is getting into bed with the NP to enjoy this newfound luxury."

That Winnie Mandela's position is

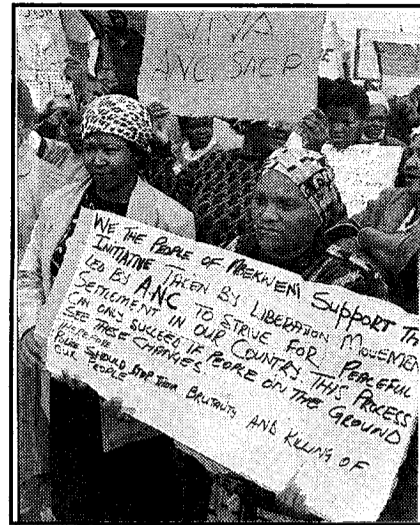
shared by a large section of the people is born out by a survey carried out by *Vrye Weekblad* on the streets of Soweto and Johannesburg. It confirmed that the prospects for the near future remain bleak for ordinary black citizens.

Even those who believed that there was no alternative to negotiations argue that the bargaining scene is so pervaded by dishonesty and lies that their lives have been dragged into confusion and uncertainty. Most don't believe that negotiations will bring about an early settlement.

Bewildered

They do not know what is really happening; they are bewildered. The views of these sceptics are, perhaps, expressed succinctly by Don Nhlanihla of Soweto, one of those interviewed:

"They made CODESA and it failed. Look what's happening - violence everywhere. There is not going to be a solution here before there is a real fight. They are talking lies in negotiations."



Party of Buthelezi.

This is the originality and cleverness of De Klerk's position. Not to try to hold back the tide of history, but to *manage* change to preserve capitalism and position of the white bourgeoisie.

The ANC have agreed that there will have to be a 70 per cent majority in parliament on constitutional change. The right-wing bloc can always prevent that, unless the ANC won every single black vote, which is impossible.

Has the negotiation process brought concrete gains to the non-white population, in terms of living standards, social security, health etc?

The economic situation has deteriorated tremendously in South Africa, as part of the world crisis. Inflation is rampant at 19 per cent; unemployment is 4 million in a population of 30 million. All social services, health, pensions etc. are still divided on black-white lines, with the situation much worse for the black population.

The average wage in South Africa for a black family of 5-6 is 400 rand a month (£67 sterling; FF 530); the government's own estimate is that such a family needs R2400 (£400/FF3200). So poverty is very widespread.

People from the rural areas are moving to the cities, so there is a major housing shortage with mass squatting. The drought in the north east has played a tremendous role in that, and the abolition of the Group Areas Act means that families can now move to the cities to be with the husbands to work there.

Because of the economic situation, South Africa has its own IMF austerity plan, which calls for 'retrenchment' of the state sector, which means mass sackings of government employees. But this falls on the black population. About 45 per cent of the white working population is employed by the state, a totally unreal figure.

These people cannot all be sacked. So it is the black teachers, health workers etc who have to go. For example in black schools now the teacher-student ratio is 1:70.

One effect of the economic crisis has been to put a temporary stop to the growth of the black and coloured middle class, which grew rapidly in the 1980s, and which often plays a conservative political role.

How does WOSA assess the strength of Inkatha? Is its campaign of mass terror against the liberation movement?

Inkatha has got mass support in Natal, and in the Transvaal among the migrant workers in the hostels.

The migrant workers were relatively socially isolated, and Inkatha was clever enough to see the possibilities to organise them. Its campaign on the theme of Zulu nationalism has been very effective, even affecting people of Zulu origin inside the ANC.

The campaign of terror continues, especially in Natal. But such is the state of the mass movement, that really the murders are just accepted. The ANC don't want to be seen as disruptive of the transition process, so there is no effective self-defence. The murder of 10 people in one night hardly gets reported in the press anymore.

"In black schools the teacher-student ratio is now 1:70"

Have other forces inside the liberation movement, for example the Pan African Congress (PAC), been able to take advantage of the 'rightist' position of the ANC to build themselves?

Originally the PAC came out with a very militant opposition to the negotiating process, using a rhetoric of armed insurrection.

They recruited on this basis, especially among the youth. Now this position has been eroded by the decision of the PAC to meet with the government and become involved in the negotiation process. PAC's youth wing AZANU and its student wing have both opposed this, and there have been a number of splits in the PAC, especially in the Transvaal; now the youth have split from the PAC.

The recent statements of Joe Slovo that there had to be an 'historic compromise' seemed to be a sharp rightward turn for the SACP. Is this accepted throughout the party? How big is the CP, and is it the dominant left force?

Joe Slovo's statements has not been received very well

inside the rank and file, but there seems to be agreement in the Communist Party leadership, with the exception of a few leftist leaders like Chris Hari.

Once again, the youth have rejected this position, and they are the strongest sector of SACP support outside the organised workers movement.

We think that Slovo is trying to sell the SACP as a kind of new social democratic party, on the model of social democratic parties in Europe, making a bid for that terrain in South Africa.

At the moment the SACP is the dominant left force, with 8-10,000 members. It is particularly strong inside the trade union federation COSATU.

The militant so-called 'workerists' who built COSATU in the 1980s, largely capitulated and joined the SACP, or kept quiet – and this is a real tragedy.

Through this the SACP was able to neutralise the militant wing of the trade union movement and incorporate it into the projects of the ANC. For example Cyril Ramaphosa, former leader of the mineworkers, is now the general secretary of the ANC.

What are the prospects of the left?

In the medium and long-term we still think there are big possibilities. The traditions of the 1980s rebellion and trade union struggles are too strong to just disappear, no matter how difficult the current situation.

Still you find in struggles and debates the demands for socialism and workers control spontaneously re-appear, whatever the position of the leadership and despite the bureaucratisation of the unions.

What is the central political line of WOSA, its themes of intervention and demands?

WOSA finds itself in a difficult position. Its central strategic demand is for a Constituent Assembly on the basis of one-person, one vote.

But it is a hard struggle to push forward this line, given the dominance of the negotiation process and the compromises of the leadership of the liberation movement.

But you have to look at the longer-term prospects. The tradition of socialism is still very strong in the workers movement. And there are still important workers struggles over pay and conditions, when

inflation is 19 per cent. WOSA tries to root itself in these struggles.

The youth in South Africa are decisive, because it is such a young country, with the majority of the population under 30 years old. Youth unemployment must be over 3 million, and that in a country of 30 million! These youth are angry. As

the transition process continues, and fails to bring either democracy or prosperity for the non-white masses, the reaction of the youth will be very sharp. That is the importance of continuing to build an alternative, revolutionary, leadership in South Africa.

Interview by Phil Hearse

Pretoria muddies Angolan water

By Charlie van Gelderen

Despite the internationally-supervised elections last September – which United Nations observers declared free and fair – civil war is raging once again in Angola.

The MPLA won a decisive majority, even in areas where Unita previously held control. But Unita leader Savimbi has refused to accept the result, in violation of an agreement between the two parties.

Savimbi may have been abandoned by his friends in Washington and London, but South Africa remains anxious to see a friendly government installed in Angola. Pretoria is hoping for favoured access to that country's rich oil reserves, the one essential mineral South Africa lacks.

While pretending to support the peace process, in practice Pretoria is continuing to assist rebel forces. According to the Angolan authorities, at least 50 overflights of Angolan airspace have been undertaken by the South Africans.

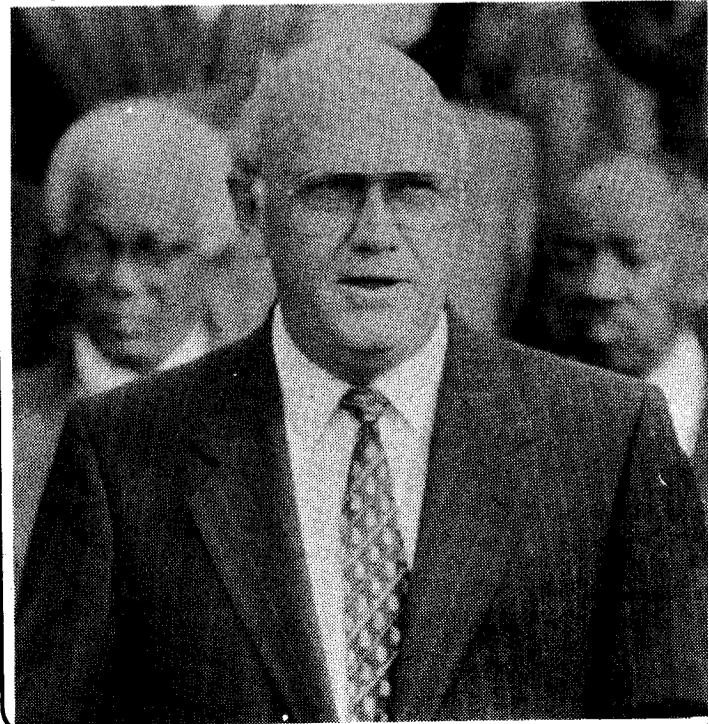
There have been allegations that 32 battalion, made up of South African-recruited Angolans working under the direction of the South African Defence Force, was deployed in the south of Angola, in readiness for fully-fledged civil war.

There are unconfirmed intelligence reports that even before the election results were announced, two Department of Military Intelligence operatives flew into Angola to establish the groundwork for a joint South African-Unita assault force. At least two DMI operatives continue to closely monitor the situation in Angola from a CIA base across the border in Zaire.

Some weeks before Savimbi threatened to renew his war against the MPLA government, 32 Battalion was engaged in military manoeuvres at Smitsdrift, near Kimberley. Since then, 250 soldiers of 32 Battalion have 'gone missing'. The unit was put on 24 hours standby in September.

In September, a former official of the South African Foreign Affairs Department, Sean Cleary, was arrested in Luanda on suspicion of actions hostile to the Angolan state. He was subsequently deported, and South African foreign minister Pik Botha declared persona non grata inside Angola.

These allegations were given new weight by documents leaked to a Spanish news agency, which referred to a pre-planned plot to take over Luanda by force, using the 4,000-strong Unita forces stationed there in the wake of the elections.





Never again!

German fascism is back in the headlines – sixty years after Hitler first took power. What are the differences between fascism today and the Nazis of the 1930s?
RAY SPILLANE

reports.

AS LONG as capitalism exists there will always be space for far right groups to function (and to be used by the state when required).

Trotsky identified the nature of fascism as a movement of the petit-bourgeoisie aimed like a 'battering ram against the working class'.

He predicted that the fascists could only come to power through violent struggle – at which point the party would become incorporated into the state and would lose its character as a social movement.

And it was Trotsky who set out the correct tactic, that of the united front, which would have been the only method to unite an ideologically divided working class against the fascist threat.

When Trotsky theorised what National Socialism was, others fiercely contested his analysis.

Divided

While the Stalinised Communist Parties were still claiming the German CP had done nothing wrong in its suicidal ultra-left 'Third Period' turn, which had divided the German working class by branding social democracy as the main enemy, and arguing any fascist government would be short

Lessons from the 30s for struggles in the 1990s

lived in Germany, Trotsky wrote:

"The bonfires which burn the impious literature of Marxism light up brilliantly the class nature of National Socialism. While the Nazis acted as a party and not as a state power, they did not quite find an approach to the working class.

"On the other side, the big bourgeoisie, even those who supported Hitler with money, did not consider his party theirs. The national 'renaissance' leaned wholly upon the middle classes, the most backward part of the nation, the heavy ballast of history.

"Political art consisted in fusing the petit-bourgeoisie into oneness through its common hostility to the proletariat. What must be done in order to improve things?

"First of all, throttle those who are underneath. Impotent before big capital, the petty bourgeoisie hopes in the future to regain its social dignity through the ruin of the workers."

Today we are confronted with the so-called 'new world order'. One of the errors some have made when analysing this situation is to put part (or all) of the blame for the rise of fascism on the collapse of Stalinism.

This is a fundamental mistake. In Eastern Europe it has been the failure of Stalinist leaderships – themselves often anti-semitic and nationalistic – to deal with national chauvinism that has left an ideological vacuum in which the far right have been able to make gains.

The core of the problem is Western Europe, not least because of the exceptional position of the efforts rapidly to incorporate the former East Germany into the capitalist system. Today's crisis of capitalism does have similarities with aspects of the 1930s.

50 million jobless

The fact that 50 million people are unemployed across Europe means there is going to be a reservoir of support into which the fascists can tap.

To make matters worse, the crisis of leadership in the workers' movement is anything but resolved. Social democrats are implementing swingeing austerity packages in France and Spain, the CPs are decomposing in Italy and France and the far left has relatively little social weight in any country.

But what circumstances would drive today's bourgeoisie to turn to fascism? Germany in the 1930s suggests

that this will only be as a last resort.

In Germany after the defeat in WW1 there was continuous political turmoil until the Nazis silenced any debate after coming to power in 1933. Only after a right-wing Bonapartist government had failed to curb the strength of the working class did the bourgeoisie turn to Hitler to save them from the threat of revolution.

The experience of bourgeoisies across Europe under fascism was of political instability which meant that any profits were far from guaranteed.

The concrete question, therefore is whether any bourgeoisie is currently sufficiently desperate to risk playing the fascist card. Today this is not yet the case.

Of course this does not mean that the far right can simply be ignored. Unless fascism is stamped out in its infancy, it can bide its time building slowly until a fresh onset of capitalist crisis opens new opportunities.

Meanwhile, the media's focus on fascist attacks, and not the huge anti-racist mobilisations which are also growing in Germany also plays into the hands of the far right by implying that there is little resistance and that fascism is going from strength to strength.

Another area where similarities can be seen with the

30s is in the willingness of social democracy to accept increasingly draconian measures claiming that it is in an attempt to save 'democracy' as some bulwark against the far right.

In this context the decision of the SPD in Germany to restrict the right to asylum can only play into the hands of the racists and fascists.

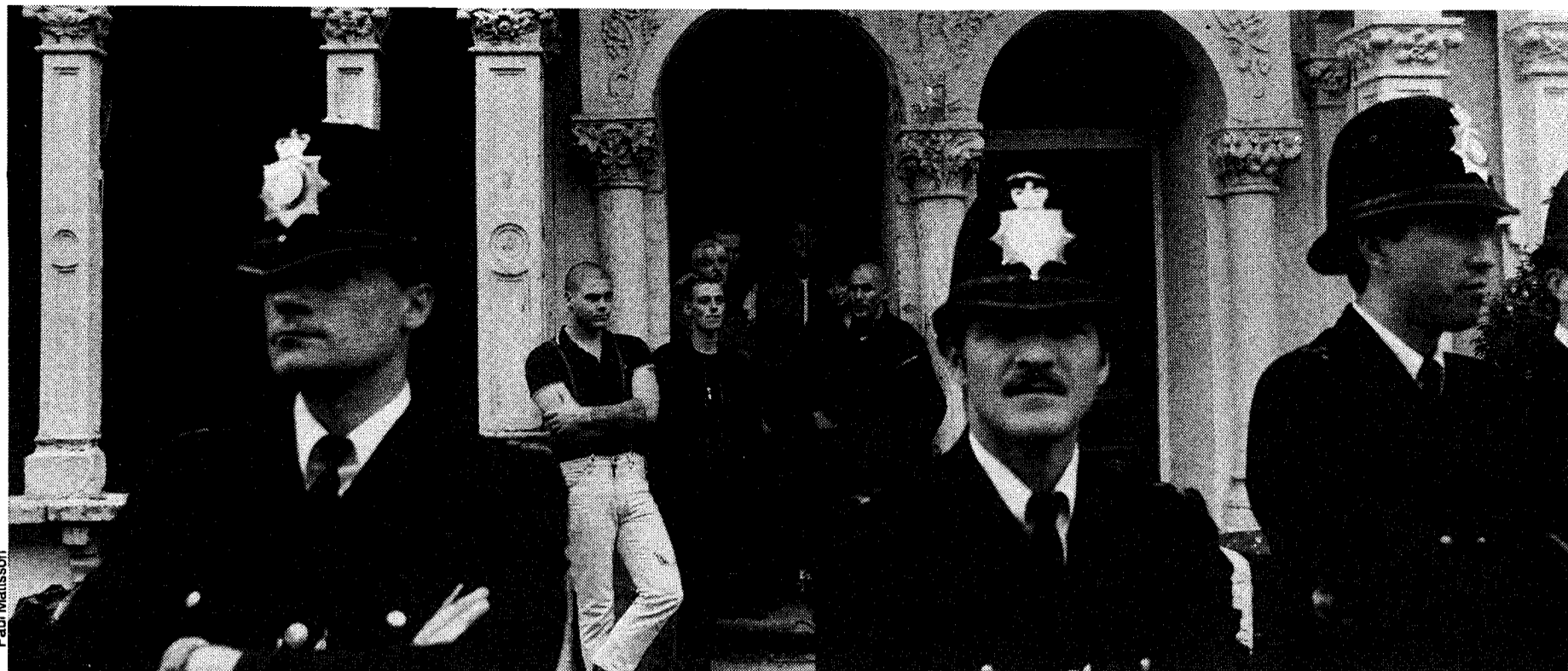
This process of tightened immigration controls is closely links with the Maastricht Treaty. The creation of 'Fortress Europe', with its secret agreements on refugees worked out by both the Trevi and Schengen groups, will only fuel the fires of rising xenophobia and the far right.

Serious damage has already been done. Regardless of whether Maastricht is ratified, the Ad hoc Group on Immigration has approved a policy under which refugees should at best be relocated within their original continent, and preferably rely on their own state authority for protection.

Even without any massive far right breakthrough, their violence is growing in Europe and in Britain. The Campaign Against Racism and Fascism in a recent press release identified a minimum of 59 people killed in 1992 as a result of either fascism or racism

The situation in Britain is if anything the exception rather than the rule compared to the rest of Europe. It does not dis-

Meanwhile, the media's focus on fascist attacks, and not the huge anti-racist mobilisations which are also growing in Germany also plays into the hands of the far right by implying that there is little resistance and that fascism is going from strength to strength.



Paul Mattsson

play any mass support today for a Le Pen type formation, nor has it opted for the reactionary parochialism of the Northern Leagues in Italy.

The two main fascist groupings offer the two different options available to the far right in today's Europe. On the one side there is the increasingly predominant BNP with its overt message of race war; on the other there are the dwindling numbers of the NF.

The NF, which grew in the late 1970s, has never recovered from being shunted to the sidelines by Thatcher's ascension to power and the playing of the race card when she talked of Britain being 'swamped' by alien cultures.

The choice has become increasingly one between the 'open' fascist party and entryism into the Tory party and its fringe groups.

Further splits, caused not least because there were a number of contending fuhrers, served further to disorientate the far right.

Today however it is the BNP that is becoming close to hegemonic. With party leader Tyndall and another leader Edmonds having a track record of criminal activity, including convictions for possessing offensive weapons there has been a move by some to define the BNP as a 'criminal conspiracy'.

This analysis presents two difficulties. Firstly it fails to grasp the nettle of what fascism really is, by simply relying on appeals for the criminals to be brought to book - through reliance upon the repressive police apparatus of the capitalist state.

This ignores the fact that the capitalists are quite content to use the fascists as and when they need to against the working class.

The second difficulty flows from the first in that calls for the banning of parties of the right has led far more often to bans or restrictions on organisations of the left and the working class. This was certainly the experience of the left in the USA.

Today again we are seeing the police in Germany trying to blame 'extremists' of both sides for battles between fascists and the left.

This is precisely the process American socialist Farrell Dobbs observed when he warned:

"The more intense the struggle becomes, the more they (the capitalists) will be inclined to use their seeming neutrality in the class struggle for paying less and less attention to what the fascists are doing. The government will let them do what they damn please, while more and more using its authority to curb the rights of the left. Thus, even if the government does something in passing to curb the rights of the fascists, all that happens in the last analysis is that the rulers get a new pretext for attacking the anti-capitalist forces. They will piously claim to be moving in a perfectly fair-minded way against the 'extremists' on both sides of the controversy."

To treat fascism as simply a gaggle of criminals is also a political error.

It is precisely because of its overt racism, its oppressive attitude to women, its homophobia, and because its eventual aim is to smash up the workers' movement, that a wide range of fascism's potential victims can and must be mobilised to defeat it.

Smashed

This can only be done on the basis of exposing the political programme of fascism, acknowledging that they are a *political movement*, but one which must be confronted and smashed both ideologically and physically.

The fundamental nature of fascism has changed not one iota from Hitler's 1930s National Socialism.



Now British fascism is also making a concerted effort to attract both the lumpenproletariat and elements of the white working class through music/youth culture under the broad umbrella of Blood and Honour.

Offering an identity to dispossessed youth through a culture defined by rampant nationalism and extreme racism is a tactic which has brought the far right a number of recruits.

In a recent television documentary, the BNP's North-east Organiser claimed that even support for a football team was an ideal seed for the far right to work on, since from this flowed support of the English national team - and from there opposition to those who were not English could also flow.

Of course it does not have to happen that way, and there are important initiatives at a number of football clubs to oppose racism.

The current economic situation opens up some areas which the British fascists have decided to target. While Hitler's Nazis built up their strength in numbers by concentrating initially on the countryside, today certain areas of particular neglect, such as East London, have become a focus for fascist activity.

So too have areas such as the East Midlands, where if the miners' struggle were to be defeated whole communities would be unemployed.

The BNP can see the potential - but the left has yet (again) to determine upon a united response between the anti-fascist forces. The division that exists only gives further breathing space for the far right.

For their part, the fascists have set up Combat 18, with a specific brief to monitor and attack the left. The creation of this organisation means that no anti-fascist strategy will be

able to register any success without being prepared to take up the issue of physical confrontation.

One of the dangers of today's period, quite unlike the 1930s, is the degree to which people look towards purely peaceful, even pacifist, answers to resolve the problem of fascism.

When the situation develops to crisis point, the left cannot mobilise and win the working class and its allies against fascist violence just by making appeals against Nazism. We must put forward an alternative, radical set of demands, beginning with organised self-defence of the working class and its communities and minorities against the fascist thugs, but also taking on the fight around unemployment, housing, and the ending of the conditions on which fascism feeds.

International

The international character of the fight against fascism in the 1930s - and today - should not be forgotten. Once again we need co-ordinated international action to beat back the fascist threat.

Fascism can be defeated, not only in Britain but across Europe. Our task as socialists is to unite and mobilise the labour movement and the oppressed against the racism of the state and the far right, and to fight to develop a credible socialist alternative.

Above all one lesson has to be learned from the rise of Hitler. Division breeds defeat.

Whether we are dealing with Le Pen, the NF or the BNP, the *fascists* are the enemy, and not those in other groups or currents who simply have a different line in fighting fascism.

In this context we must remember the famous warning that "Those who do not learn the lessons of the past are doomed to repeat them".

The left cannot mobilise and win the working class and its allies against fascist violence just by making appeals against Nazism. We must put forward an alternative, radical set of demands, beginning with organised self-defence of the working class against the fascist thugs ...

**James P. Cannon
and the Early Years
of American
Communism**

Reviewed by Pat Brain

James P. Cannon was unique among the early leaders of American communism in remaining true to the socialist ideas of his youth. He fought against the rise of stalinism from its very inception, and in 1928 was won to Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition.

Cannon had been in the IWW, an agitator for the syndicalist industrial workers of the world, before being won over to communism during the great wave of labour radicalism which swept the world in response to the 1917 Russian revolution. He went on to become a powerful orator and writer, a founder of the American communist movement which was born in 1919, and played a key role in founding the Workers Party in 1921.

This book includes Cannon's writings on the debates which wracked the party in the 1920s. He deals with the central question of a Labour Party in the USA, the building of an opposition to right wing bureaucrat John L. Lewis in the Miners' union, the role of Workers' Party supporters in the leadership of the New York garment workers' unions; and the Party's activities in defence of political prisoners, in particular the great campaign against the execution of the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927, which Cannon led in his capacity as secretary of the International Labour Defence.

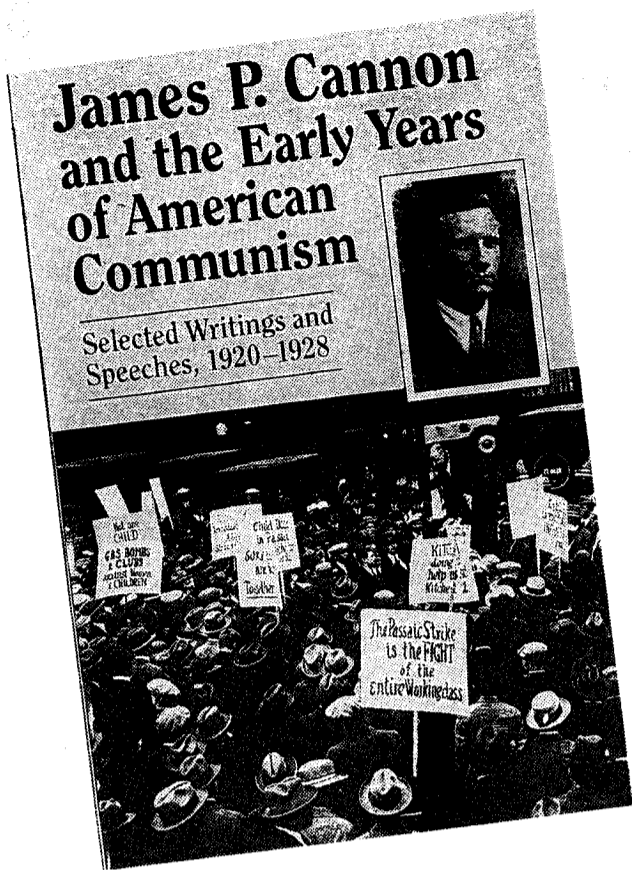
Socialists and trade union militants trying to come to grips with the enormous historical events that are shaking the world with the terminal decline and collapse of Stalinism will find the material in this volume fascinating. Forces representing the October revolution were battling internationally to hold back the counter revolution of Stalinism – and this had an inevitable impact on the newly formed American Workers' Party.

Cannon was one of the most able communist leaders in the 1920's, a period when the party was influenced but not yet dominated by Stalinism. This was inevitably a time of debate about the tasks facing communists in the USA. The policies adopted by the early communist leaders began to find a receptivity within the working class movement, but before the Party could become effective a big battle against ultra leftism was necessary, in which the role of the Communist International (Comintern) was crucial.

Cannon wrote in *The First Ten Years Of American Communism*: "the traditional sectarianism of the Americans was expressed most glaringly in their attempt to construct revolutionary unions outside the existing labour movement; their refusal to fight for 'immediate demands' in the course of the class struggle for socialist goals; and their strongly entrenched 'anti-parliamentarism'. All that hodge-podge of ultra-radicalism was practically wiped out by Lenin's pamphlet *Left Wing Communism – an Infantile Disorder*.

The whole orientation of the Party began to change from underground squabbling, unrealistic disputes and wrangles over refinements of doctrine, towards mass work. The communists began to occupy themselves with practical problems of trade union work, and the Party took its first faltering steps into the American Federation of Labor, the dominant organisation at that time.

Some of the most valuable materials in the book are the speeches and articles outlining Cannon's position on the trade unions. One of the most important strikes in 1926 was the textile workers dispute at Passaic, New Jersey. Cannon wrote:



**Class struggle
roots of US
Trotskyism**

"The Passaic strike really put the Party on the Labor map. In my opinion it deserves a chapter in Party history all by itself."

Conditions were tough as Cannon pointed out, in 1922 the USA had 6,000,000 out of work; estimates suggested at least 1,500,000 were constantly unemployed:

"There are no state doles. Of approximately 30,000,000 waged workers, only 3,500,000 are organised and even the existence of even their weak organisation is constantly threatened by the open shop drive of the employers."

"The Republican and Democratic Parties are the instruments of big capital and are devoted to its service. Either Party in government crashes the workers' strikes with injunctions, police and troops. In 1920 it was the Democratic Attorney General, Palmer, who secured a Federal injunction against 600,000 coal miners denying them the right to strike."

The question of an independent party for the working class was central from the beginning. Cannon wrote in 1923:

The question of the Labor Party cannot be considered separately from the role of the Communist Party in it any more than the Communist Party can be considered independently of the Labor Party. The interest of the Worker's Party are identical with the interests of the wider circles of radical workers who are seeking for expression through the Labor Party. Unless our party plays an active part in the Labor Party movement, it is bound to wither into a futile sect, and the developing class struggle will pass it by."

A large part of the book deals with the serious opportunist mistake that the Workers' Party made in 1924 in supporting Progressive Party Presidential candidate, Robert La Follette. This haunted Cannon to the extent that three decades later he wrote to Theodore Draper:

"If I can force myself to return to this leap into political irrationality even now 30 years later it is only because a bad experience, honestly evaluated and accounted for, may serve a useful purpose in immunizing the movement against similar abnormalities in the future."

In fighting to root the communists in the mass movement and mobilise the maximum forces against the employers and the state, one of the most important tactics to come out of the early years of the Third International was that of the 'united front'. Cannon gives some clear illustrations of in concrete application in the trade union movement. In May 1927 he wrote:

"We see the starting of a process of differentiation in the bureaucracy. We do not see the differentiation so clearly now as we will see it later. Some of the bureaucrats, under the pressure of the masses, will be compelled to take part in the fight against the bosses to maintain the unions and even to help us to organise the unorganised. Others will go still further the other way and this will create new alignments, new problems for our work, and new possibilities. Basing ourselves fundamentally upon the masses we can at the same time, to a certain extent, find allies in the bureaucracy, and make use of them."

"The fact of the matter is that the logic of the class struggle is entirely against any stable relations between capital and labor, and when unions surrender a fighting policy in favour of class collaboration, they only give the bosses ground for new encroachments."

In his sharply critical line against collaborationist politics of miners' union leader John L. Lewis, Cannon gives further example of the dialectics of the struggle which was opening up new possibilities for the Party.

"Lewis tried every way to come to an agreement with the bosses for class collaboration agreements. He has

made eleven different and important concessions in the past four years in order to establish 'stable relations' with the bosses. For example, he began the war on communists in 1923. He took all class struggle phraseology out of the union's constitution, he abolished the check-off in anthracite and smuggled a form of arbitration into agreement. In the last negotiations he offered district agreements. The open attack against the union and the lockout is the answer of the bosses to all of these overtures of Lewis."

Yet Lewis himself played a key role in the formation of the breakaway CIO in a split with the conservative AFL bureaucracy.

Art Preis, writing about the rise of industrial trade unions in the Thirties made the following observations in *Labor's Giant Step*:

"It is doubtful if the CIO would have been formed, or if the industrial union movement would have arrived as quickly as it did, if not for the exceptional qualities of Lewis. There have been a vile campaign to denigrate and discredit Lewis, to low-rate his real role. Lewis has many weaknesses – political conservatism, blind belief in capitalism, contempt for union democracy – which he shares with virtually all other top union officials. But it was Lewis, with his boldness, his self-reliance, his aggressiveness and courage, stamping him as a man of superior character and moral fibre who pushed through the CIO's formation. When his distractors are long dead and forgotten, the American working class will remember and honour Lewis as the founder of the CIO."

For Cannon, this contradiction was no surprise: it was one of the ways in which openings for Communism could emerge in the workers' movement: the task was to fight every retreat and exploit every forward movement.

"I deny that class collaboration represents a fixed stage in the struggle. It represents only a stage in a process. Now the bureaucracy, in our opinion, stands before the alternative of giving up the position of the unions entirely or taking up the defensive and even an offensive struggle. And herein we want to state the point of view that the tactics of the bureaucracy and reactionary workers will not be uniform by any means."

"Some of the bureaucrats will unquestionably be compelled under pressure of the masses to take a stand which will be a gesture of struggle, and this in itself will create new possibilities which we can exploit in our work for the organisation of the unorganised and the broadening of the left wing."

"And we also are of the opinion, on the basis of the fact that the capitalist will not stop with class collaboration agreements, but will proceed from there direct attacks on many of the unions, besides other factors making for movement in the masses, we are of the opinion that a new period of strike activity will begin."

Cannon, together with Max Schachtman and Martin Abern were expelled from the Party for 'Trotskyism', after attending an investigation at a Political Committee meeting on 27 October 1928. Theodore Draper who corresponded with Cannon to write a history of the early Communist movement said of Cannon:

"Unlike other Communist leaders of his generation, Jim Cannon wanted to remember. This portion of his life still lives for him because he has not killed it within himself, and I am happy that I had some part in luring him into making it live for others."

This book is available for sale from Socialist Outlook at a cost of £11.50 (incl. p&p). Please make cheques payable to Socialist Outlook and send to: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Classic tale of love in vein

Hollywood's toothless Dracula

Dracula – tamed by love

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola

Starring Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder, Anthony Hopkins

Reviewed by Jodley Green

With thanks to the Odeon Cinema, Brighton

DRACULA IS the tale that will not die. Film makers, from Hollywood to the European avantgarde, have never let him rest – but here, we are told, comes the vampire movie to end them all.

Although this film is beautifully shot, has delicious costumes and some marvellous scenes, I left the cinema feeling unsatisfied.

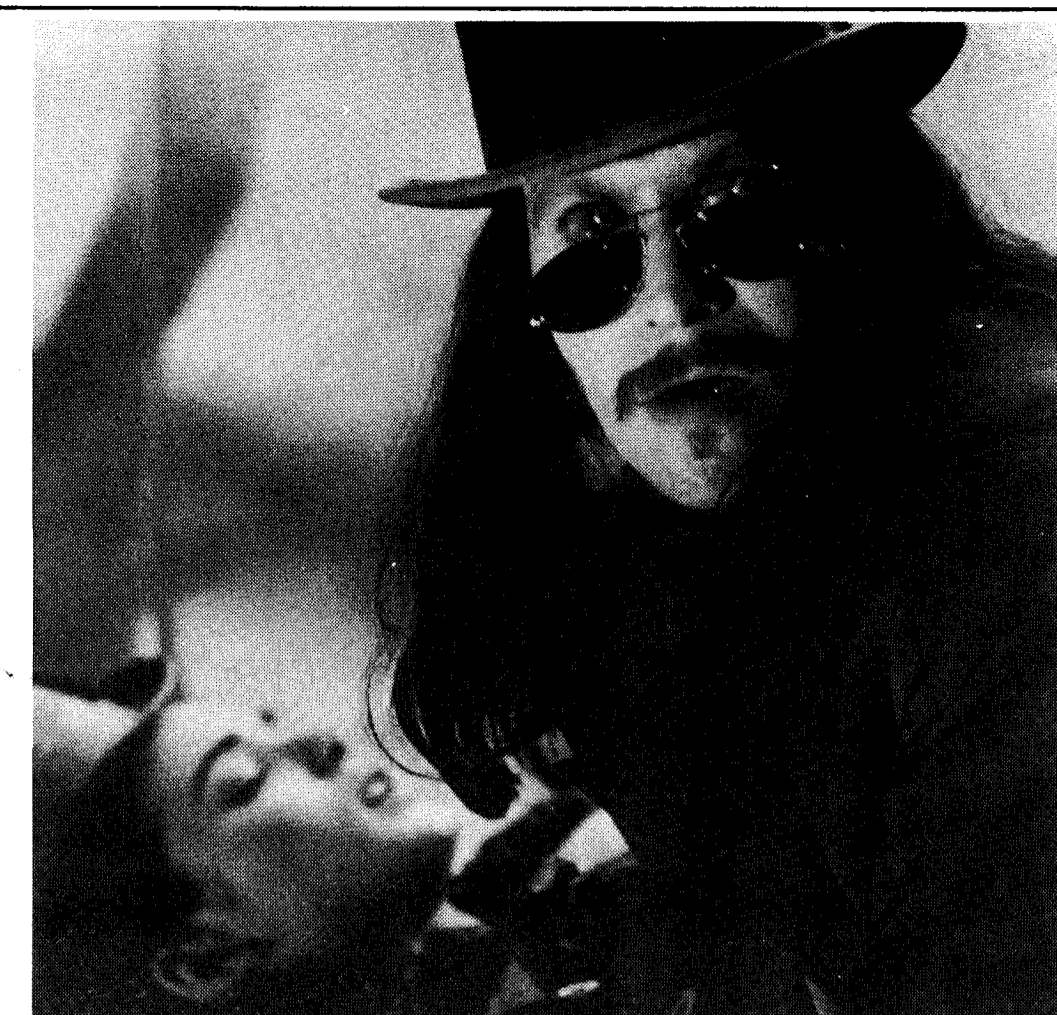
Wasn't this meant to be a horror movie? Instead we are

given a love story akin to Beauty and the Beast. The heroine, Mina (Winona Ryder), falls for dashing Prince Vlad, but discovers that he is none other than the evil Count Dracula (Gary Oldman).

Of course, she loves him anyway, and in true Disney style the spell is broken and he returns to his former heroic self. Mina is a Victorian reincarnation of Vlad's fairy tale princess bride, who killed herself in 1497. Just in case you've missed the point thus far, 'Love never dies' is plastered over the promotional material.

That the film attempts to charm rather than horrify would not matter if it did not claim to be an authentic and definitive telling of Bram Stoker's tale.

The horror of the vampire is rooted in conservative notions of essential evil. While there is a long tradition of 'progressive' horror, from Shelley's Frankenstein to Terminator 2, in which evil has



social or human causes, Dracula does not lend itself to such a treatment. So the film offers us the loss of the Count's first love to explain his evil nature.

But as a romantic hero he loses his power to frighten us, and cannot carry the weight of the sexual/social metaphors.

Given the themes of oral

eroticism and nec(k)rophilia, the sex scenes are played very straight. Although bloody, this is politically 'safe' sex, couched in romanticism, denied any subversive content. AIDS references appear to be a sloppy afterthought.

Christian imagery on the level of a Madonna video is littered throughout the film. Apart from Gary Oldman, the

acting fails to impress, and even Oldman loses his touch as he rejuvenates.

Although flawed, Coppola's Dracula is visually stunning, and worth seeing on this basis alone.

But it is also a missed opportunity to get to the heart of Stoker's disturbing and complex novel.

Getting it right on the Underground struggle

AN ILL-INFORMED and sectarian letter appeared in the last issue of *Outlook* two months after the defeat of the RMT on the Underground.

Its author, who doesn't work on the Underground, claims new realism has come to the pages of *Socialist Outlook* and that we covered up for the role of the RMT bureaucracy.

The original article to which he refers in issue 33, in fact pointed out that the struggle was not organised by the RMT bureaucracy. It is therefore rather strange to claim that the bureaucracy 'had the sense to inveigle the leadership of the LT district council into endorsing their actions at every stage.'

The RMT bureaucracy didn't take any 'actions', let alone inveigle anyone into supporting them. Our writer makes the same error as others on the left without active supporters on the Underground – he has created an imaginary scenario.

Socialist Outlook did not say, as he suggests, that feeling for action was limited to 100 militants. Of course not. RMT members voted to strike by three to one! They wanted to get rid of the Company Plan.

As we said at the time, three factors led to the defeat: the vicious intimidation by management in a period of rising unemployment, the blatant sabotage by the other Underground unions, and the weakness of the RMT activists and representatives themselves.

The RMT bureaucracy did next to nothing throughout – they were happy to pass the buck to the militants on the District Council. It is more accurate to say that the bureaucracy totally failed the membership than that they sold us out – except in one respect. In the end



they refused to allow the strike to be postponed rather than call off.

This undoubtedly let ASLEF off the hook, but it made little difference to the outcome for two reasons. Firstly, by the time the strike was called off we were in reality too weak to get it re-called. Either we had a strike or we didn't.

Secondly, despite the ballot, the ASLEF leadership never had any intention of striking – they had already accepted the principle of the Company Plan and only disputed the money – they realised no objection to 5,000 jobs going.

Under pressure from the RMT District Council's campaign and the rank and file they tried to evade a strike ballot, first by organising a referendum instead, and then in a delayed ballot, by inviting their members to vote for 'action short of strike action'. The ASLEF leadership and most of their

activists openly tried to undermine the RMT strike and would only have been forced into one themselves if an RMT strike was already successfully underway.

There is a crude left wing school of thought which holds that all industrial defeats are simply due to bureaucratic sell outs. This is of course true in a very general way but it doesn't help us understand particular events.

In the struggle on the Underground the militants placed no reliance on the RMT bureaucracy and tried to organise the struggle without them but in the name of the union. We failed for several reasons, of which the role of the various union bureaucracies is only one.

**Socialist Outlook
underground workers**

Feedback

We welcome letters on any subject but please keep them brief. Letters over 350 words will be cut. Send your letters to: **Socialist Outlook PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU**

Oslerism or optimism?

DAVE OSLER has the enviable record of appearing in almost as many leftwing papers as I do.

However, his piece on the Socialist Workers Party (SO 36) deals mainly in gossip, to which one might merely note that those who live in political glass-houses might think twice about throwing stones.

Even so, there are serious issues at stake. Osler's view of the class struggle is essentially pessimistic. He recognises the sea change that has taken place with

the miners' struggle, but argues that the task of rebuilding the left will be a long one.

No doubt it will, but at the moment we have the chance to take both a quantitative and qualitative leap forward.

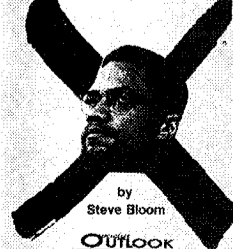
There is no need to be in any way manic about it, but at the same time socialists must seize the time rather than merely assuring ourselves that we are playing a role in a long term historical process.

**Keith Flett
North London**

**The Revolutionary
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Yard in pay fight

By Bill Sutcliffe
WORKERS AT Yarrow warship yard on Clydeside have launched Britain's first major all-out pay strike since 1989, after rejecting union officials' advice to accept a £300 lump sum in settlement of pay rise due last July.

Even then, the bosses demanded changed working conditions, including an end to Friday tea-breaks. Not surprisingly, the vote for action was 1,370 to 38.

Yarrow, owned by General Electric Company, has full order books, including contracts for five frigates for the Royal Navy and two for Malaysia. Yet it recently laid off 400 people at the yard, which employs 2,300 in total, and claims it has no more money.

Union convenor Ernie Horan argued in the *Financial Times*: "We have accepted some unpalatable deals over the last few years, when [the yard] has been fighting for its life. Clearly people feel that with the orders there now there's a bit more leeway."

According to the Confederation of British Industry, nearly one company in three is now freezing pay, or at least deferring annual rises, while the government is trying to impose cuts in real wages across the public sector through its 1.5 per cent pay norm.

A victory for Yarrow would be a boost for all workers suffering the boss class's attacks on our living standards.

London busworkers request stop to privatisation

By a London busworker
Over 1,000 busworkers demonstrated and lobbied the House of Commons on 27 January, protesting against privatisation and deregulation on London's buses.

The ten existing companies – technically subsidiaries of London Transport – are proposing wage cuts of £30-60 a week, several hours increase in time on duty and a virtual wiping out of all demarcation lines and other hard-won conditions.

This is to prepare for privatisation on 1 April so management will have a 'fighting chance' to buy the companies in open competition with private contractors.

Of course, if busworkers accept redundancy and sell their contracts of employment, the privatised companies will be in a much better position to impose even more draconian conditions after April.

In the face of this onslaught, the TGWU leaders might have been expected to prepare for action. Not a bit of it! Taking their cue from the NUM executive,

they are pinning all their hopes on the power of public opinion to win over the Tories.

At the meeting in the House of Commons after the march, chairperson Peter Gibson, TGWU national executive member for buses and a supporter of the Workers Revolutionary Party, paid tribute to the Tory minister for London, Steve Norris.

"At least he has the bottle to come here and meet you. I hope we can persuade him to have a select committee of inquiry," said Gibson. Angrily denouncing busworkers who heckled Norris, he added: "He was good enough to come here to speak to us. Give him a hearing."

Evasions

After listening to how the proposed destruction of workers' living standards and London's public transport was in reality a great step forward, and weasel-word evasions on the question of pensioners' passes, travelcards and the future of the London Transport pension fund, Gibson refused to allow questions to Norris.

Massed ranks of Labour left MPs – 22 in all – and one Liberal Democrat assured busworkers

that they had to wait for what one called a "ripple of communication" (now there's a thing to strike terror into the hearts of the ruling class) to influence the select committee.

Of course, a select committee is a Tory-controlled, toothless, neutered animal which cannot summon anyone before it and can only recommend.

In the meantime the bosses would have forced through the new contracts, the anger and militancy of rank-and-file busworkers would have dissipated and what is left of the public transport system would soon fall into the greedy clutches of the Tory vultures in the City of London. The capital's bus services would degenerate to the chaotic standards of deregulated and privatised Sheffield.

Busworkers cannot wait for select committees, the pleasure of supposedly 'sympathetic' Tories, ballots or legal niceties. *Strike action must be organised by the rank-and-file now!*

It must be London-wide strike action and it must seek to bring the tubes and British Rail out with it. They must immediately link up with pensioners' groups to defend pensioners' passes.

Burnsall support group launched

By Bob Smith
A support group for Birmingham's long-running Burnsall dispute – made up largely of Asian women – has been formed after seven months of strike action at the metal finishing factory.

Its inaugural meeting saw 50 strikers and supporters attend. Community representatives, labour movement figures, and even delegates from Oxford and London, pledged their backing.

Dropped

Unfortunately the Burnsall workers' union, GMB, has failed to develop solidarity among workers at suppliers and customers. A joint GMB/TGWU recruitment campaign in the metal finishing sector was dropped after GMB general secretary John Edmonds allegedly said it would put funds in danger of sequestration – before the employers had even made any legal moves.

Strikers are being blocked from speaking at Birmingham trades council, and apparently at other solidarity meetings, by GMB officials.

Tribunals

But the first few of what will eventually be 53 industrial tribunals have been heard, and the news is bad for Burnsall's owners, the O'Neill family. Total compensation could top £100,000 and put the sweat shop out of business.

Dharshan Kaur, the strikers' shop steward, was dragged into the plant recently and harassed. After she struggled and escaped, she was promptly arrested. Police searched her house after a scab alleged Dharshan had stolen her umbrella and scarf. Needless to say, they found nothing and Dharshan was released.

Donations, messages of support, requests for speakers to: Joe Quigley c/o GMB, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 3HP

March 5 decision day for Rail hive-off fight

By Steve Kaczynski
One third of Britain's rail network is under threat of closure because the Tories plan to halve their subsidy to British Rail over the next two years.

According to the *Guardian*, senior BR managers fear the "worst cuts" since the mass line closures by Lord Beeching 30 years ago, in spite of claims by the Tories that privatisation would not lead to a worsening in service and line closures would be strictly monitored.

In terms of the impact on BR employees, 7,000 of them have been given severance money or will be given severance money in the near future. It is expected that in 1994 the number given severance will rise to 20,000.

Even prospective private operators of sections of track are being asked to respond to the offer by the government to purchase their shares out of the

Jimmy Knapp, leader of the biggest rail union, the RMT, is calling upon the public to "bombard their MPs with protests" over the BR sell-off plans, according to the *Morning Star*.

The same source cited ASLEF train drivers' leader Derek Fullick who some time ago called cynically for a 'general strike' while doing nothing to build for it, saying that a train driver would be sacked "who ignored as many warning signals as this government has done over rail privatisation".

Fullick calls upon everyone to appeal to John Major to stop before his "Dogma Special hits the buffers".

While there may be some incidental benefit to the Post Office involved in filling those red pillarboxes with torrents of irate epistles, there is another way forward. It is, quite simply, **strike action**. Although the RMT has declared to deliver its members to the House of Windsor

the fight for jobs. This decision was taken after consultation with other unions, including the NUM.

The synchronised balloting of members of various unions in public sector jobs offers an opportunity to fight more than just the axing of rail lines; it is a real opportunity to make "unite the struggles" something more than a pious and ineffectual phrase repeated in the far-left press.

But the 5 March ballot must produce a "yes" vote and sustained work must be put in to ensure that apathy and despair do not play their usual role in letting Tories and bureaucrats off the hook.

Her Majesty's Royal Train may also fall victim to Tory proposals. Revolutionary Marxists will, be stunned with grief at the possible loss of this priceless part of our national heritage, but there is no basis for a united front with the House of Windsor

Hong Kong strike for union rights

Chris Patten, Hong Kong's last Governor, the self-styled 'fighter for democracy' has been ignoring the demands of a broad based support movement for 3,000 strikers, members of the Flight Attendants Union (FAU), who were in dispute with Cathay Pacific Airlines (CPA).

The strike, which had been going since 13 January, was called off following the intervention of the Legislative Council which called on January 27 for a public inquiry into the dispute.

The dispute was over crew members being required to work out of shift and out of their graded position.

In November 1992, the FAU said that if the CPA management did not agree to improve the staffing and safety situation, the over 3,500 FAU members would take action – by working only in their graded positions – from 1 December.

CPA management responded by suspending three crew members who refused to work out of position on 12 December and then sacked them on 14 December.

Subsequently, management announced a 6 per cent pay rise for 1993, falling well below the 9-11 per cent rate of inflation. The FAU rejected this offer along with the 1,100 pilots and engineers (AOA) and the 3,800 ground crew (LSU). This is the first time in the company's history that the three unions have stood together.

Since the beginning of the dispute, management have refused to hold any negotiations while the workers were still on strike. When the Chinese New Year drew near, in the interests of the travelling public, the

FAU agreed to call off their action if management agreed to reinstate the three sacked workers and start to negotiate on pay, staffing and safety.

Management's response was to send warning letters to crew members and refuse to deliver pay cheques. Union noticeboards at the CPA headquarters were torn down.

In a statement prior to the strike ending the FAU said that, "if the [union] allows the CPA management to sack and penalise members who have [been] actively involved in the strike, it would mean accepting the denial of the union's right to collective bargaining and to strike within [...] the law."

The issues at stake in this dispute must sound familiar to many trades union activists here. What is also of particular interest is the significance of the dispute in relation to Hong Kong's future.

Cathay Pacific is making money and is one of the most productive long-haul airlines. Its profits for the first half of 1992 were US\$1.26 bn, up 13.3% from the same period in 1991.

Union spokespeople believe that in the run-up to Chinese rule in 1997, the company is trying to maximise profits before selling a majority share to a mainland concern.

While Cathay have denied such speculation it adds credence to the claims of reliable industry sources that CPA management are intent upon smashing the trades unions.

The FAU is affiliated to the Hong Kong Confederation of Trades Unions (CTU), an independent and democratic confederation in contrast to the other two main union bodies; one of which is pro-Beijing, the other pro-Taiwan.

Fightback in Silicon Valley

By D. Warwick

BERKSHIRE has seen two of its biggest labour movement events for years in the last month.

A meeting called by Reading Trades Council supported by the rail and postal unions attracted sixty people. Speakers included UCW, RMT, NUM.

There was determination to fight privatisation and pay restraint. South Wales NUM's, Tyrone O'Sullivan, was loudly applauded in calling for the TUC to act to support the miners.

A striker from local Hilliers' engineering factory also addressed the meeting and a collection was taken for the dispute, which is demanding the reinstatement of sacked workers.

In the same week, Wokingham hosted a march of some 200 people in support of the miners and against unemployment.

Banners from the NUM, TGWU, Labour Party, CND featured in the march through the town to the town hall, where it was addressed by Mo Mowlam MP and Tyrone O'Sullivan. The organisers had invited Tory industry minister, John Redwood MP, but he was, unfortunately, otherwise engaged - attending a sherry party in Sonning-on-Thames.

These events indicate a resurgence in the labour movement in the Thames Valley, largely because of the government's attacks on the miners and the rest of the public sector.

DAF disaster: revenge of the market

By Dutch socialists
Wim Baltussen and
Wim Dorssers (union
activists at DAF
Eindhoven)

TRUCK manufacturing worldwide is in a disastrous state. In 1975, there were 25 European truck manufacturers. Now there are just 10, and the expectation is that by the year 2000 there will be just three or four.

DAF is the first big company to face at least partial shutdown. On February 6 it was announced that at least 2600 workers of the 5000 at Eindhoven will be sacked, and some 750 out of 1400 in

Belgium will also probably lose their jobs.

What will happen at Leyland is unclear, but at the time of writing it seems many thousands of British workers will also soon be on the dole.

DAF took over the truck and van division of British Leyland in 1987. It all looked very promising. The British truck market was the biggest in Europe, and with a market of 30 per cent, DAF instantly became the largest player.

Total sales nearly doubled. In 1986, DAF sales were Fl 3200m; by 1989 they hit Fl 5000m. Profits went up from Fl 32m to Fl 172m over the same period.

But takeovers that year of Austria's Steyr and Spain's Enasa went wrong. And in 1990 the British market collapsed. Leyland's right hand drive models couldn't be sold on the continent. Losses soared and the banks forced DAF to negotiate with Germany's Mercedes-Benz.

High quality

DAF has real attractions for Mercedes. It has developed a range of completely new, high quality engines and cabins; its service network is excellent; and its European market share, at 8 per cent, is not negligible.



Leyland DAF works convenor Derek Bullen on the march against closures

Negotiations with Japanese truckbuilder Hino - probably designed to put pressure on Mercedes - went badly wrong. That brings us to the current situation.

Overcapacity is rampant, and the same goes for steel, airplanes, cars and electronics. Mass lay-offs, mergers and plant closures are the answer for the bosses.

Such problems have to be dealt with in a worker-friendly way. Our unions have to demand: shorter working, no overtime, night, or shift work, early retirement, lowered work-rhythms, government support and investment, reconversion to environmentally friendly useful production.

It's not the easiest way and the bosses are way ahead on the international level. But there are no other answers if we want to stop what is happening now.

The authors are members of SAP, Dutch section of the Fourth International

Lancs demo demands 'save DAF'

By Bill Sutcliffe

AROUND 5,500 jobs are under threat at Leyland DAF after three British banks - National Westminster, Barclays and Lloyds - pulled the plug on the truck and van manufacturer's Dutch parent company.

Most UK employees work either in Leyland, Lancashire, or Birmingham, but the company has smaller sites in Glasgow, Chorley, also in Lancashire, and Thame in Oxfordshire.

Over 5,000 people marched through Leyland last Friday to demand that the local assembly plant, which employs 2,200, stays open. Banners read "Quality Trucks, Quality Workers" and "Do not let Leyland die".

They were followed by a line of truck cab units, and two historical vehicles from the town's commercial museum.

Dutch workers call for solidarity

The following solidarity message from Holland's **Industriebond FNV union** was sent to employees of Leyland DAF last week:

To the employees of Leyland DAF, AEEU, MSF, TGWU

Dear Friends

At this moment, the future of DAF and Leyland DAF and consequently the jobs thousands of people in the Netherlands, Great Britain and jeopardised. After a period of uncertainty, we were suddenly confronted with applications for moratoria both in the Netherlands and in Great Britain.

In Eindhoven the collective unions have for some time tried to get an explanation from the management.

Last week a demonstration took place in which some thousands of DAF's employees participated. Indeed, at that time the board of directors still had hopes that they would be able to arrange the financing.

By means of mass meetings we informed the employees at DAF about the situation that occurred. Also in Belgium, the workers are demonstrating at the banks.

There have been negotiations with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the board of directors and the banks, to exert as much pressure as possible in order to preserve employment.

We declare our solidarity with all activities to preserve employment at DAF in Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands.

We are going to participate in a big demonstration. Herewith we invite you and our Belgian colleagues to participate. It concerns our mutual interests: preservation of employment at DAF.

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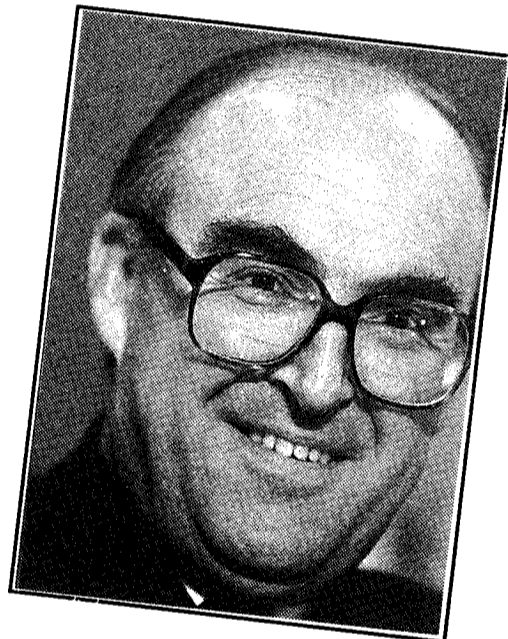


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See inside, pages 2-3