

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Inside this week 

Chile and the 'parliamentary road' pages 6-7



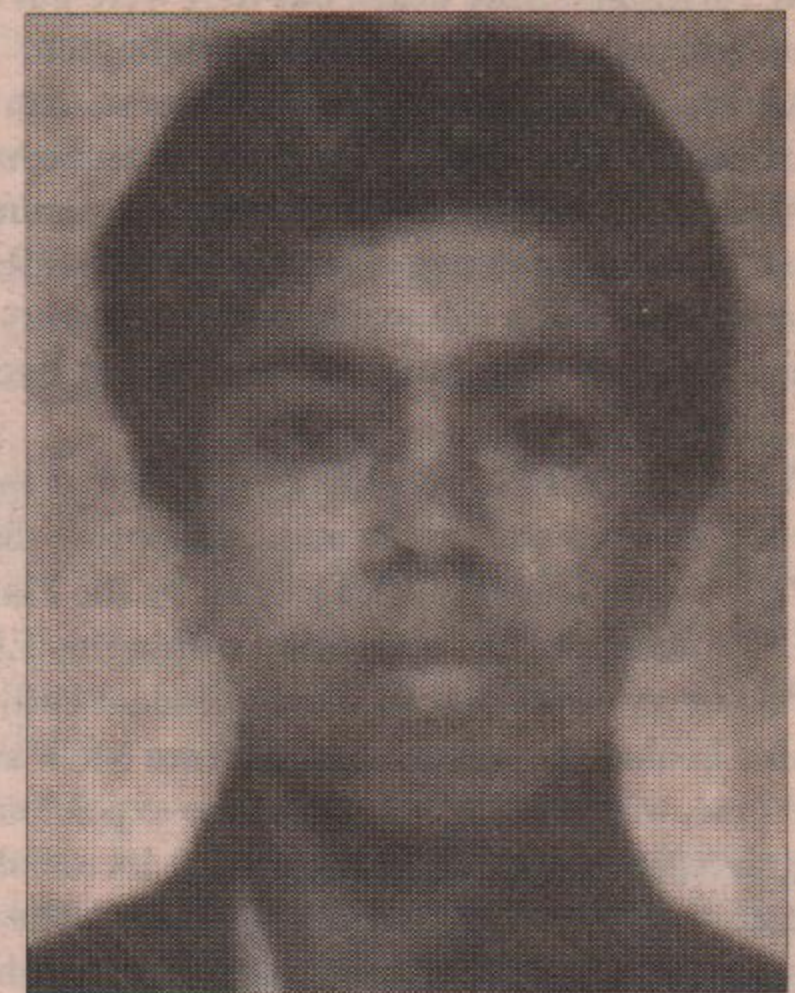
Self-defence is no offence:

YOUTH FIGHTBACK pull out

.....  
Adam Keller reports from Israel page 5

**Stop these murderers!**

# Unity can beat the racists



Ali Quaddus, beaten up by racist thugs in London's East End last week.

**R**ACISM IS THE bloodpoisoning of a society, and Britain is a seriously sick society - seriously, though not yet fatally, sick with racism.

The labour movement can fight the racist disease and cleanse our society of it. To do that three things are necessary:

\* Open war against all the racists,

\* A vigorous campaign against the poisoned springs and sources of racism,

\* Unity of the serious anti-racists.

War on racism? The lies of the racists need to be answered. The thuggery generated by racism needs to be put down. Institutionalised racism needs to be dug up by the roots and

such things as the racist immigration regulations scrapped.

Fight the sources of racism? Racism has many sources. It is ideas — ideas rooted in such great white crimes against black people as the slave trade — but it is not only ideas. Continued on page 2

**Labour — fight for jobs and homes**



# The sparks fly back

**G**ENUINE anger is a rare thing at a TUC Congress. Speakers may appear to get very het up about Tory legislation or unemployment or the loss of Britain's manufacturing base. But, usually, this sort of 'anger' is no more than a ritual of the rostrum — an affectation for the benefit of bored delegates and TV viewers.

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

At this year's Congress, however, there was a moment of real passion: the debate on the readmission of the EETPU, now thinly disguised as the electrical section of the AEEU. George Brumwell of UCATT denounced the electricians' poaching activities in the building industry and warned that if the TUC let them back in it would be delivering a "killer punch" to UCATT. TGWU general secretary Bill Morris added to the drama by tearing up a letter, promising to abide by TUC guidelines, from AEEU president Bill Jordan: "We are not turkeys voting for Christmas" declared Morris in an impassioned if not entirely cliché-free tirade.

The final vote was 4,303,000 to 2,837,000 in favour of readmitting the electricians, the culmination of a long and determined campaign by Norman Willis and John Monks on behalf of the AEEU. But there can be no doubt that most left-of-centre union activists sympathise with the views put forward by Bill Morris and George Brumwell: the electricians (and, maybe, the whole of the AEEU) are a Bad Union that should be cast into the outer darkness.

The case against readmitting the electricians (and, indeed, for expelling them in the first place) rests upon the idea that they represent something qualitatively worse than the norm of British trade unionism: that the brand of class-collaborationist, pro-capitalist "business unionism" developed by Frank Chapple (now Lord Chapple), Eric Hammond and now Paul Gallagher, is somehow 'alien' to the traditions of the TUC. An invisible line has been crossed and — like the Rubicon — there can be no going back.

What is this invisible line and when was it crossed? The standard left-wing mythology has it that the EETPU crossed the line when they organised Rupert Murdoch's recruitment of scabs to do printworkers' jobs at Wapping. The truth is, however, that Wapping had little or nothing to do with the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC: what precipitated their expulsion was the breaching of the Bridlington Agreement at Orion Electronics in South Wales and at a freight firm Christian Salvesson. The TGWU, GMB and USDAW (who all had members at those firms before the EETPU moved in with single-union, no-strike deals) protested to the TUC Disputes Committee, which ruled against the EETPU and ordered it to withdraw. The EETPU refused.

It should be spelled out at this point that the Bridlington Agreement is not something that the left within the trade union movement has ever supported: it is a bureaucratic arrangement for the block recruitment of workers in given plants and industries, often involving sweetheart deals with employers. What the EETPU did at Orion and Christian Salvesson was to negotiate rotten no-strike deals: but they were not expelled from the TUC for that, but for breaching Bridlington.

Are the electricians qualitatively worse than the rest of the TUC-affiliated unions? The answer must be 'no'. The TGWU, GMB and MSF have all signed single-union/no-strike deals at least as bad as anything signed by the EETPU/AEEU. According to John Edmonds (no less) the very first single-union deal was negotiated by the GMB at Beckton gas works in... 1889!

When the EETPU was finally expelled at the 1988 Congress the left cheered and, in the main, supported the pro-TUC EPIU, a split from the EETPU led by the Flashlight group — a CP-dominated, left opposition within this EETPU. The EPIU never developed as an independent entity, despite considerable behind-the-scenes support from MSF and the T&G.

Worse, within a few months of the expulsion of the EETPU, the oh-so-left-wing EPIU was urging its members at Ford Dagenham to cross EETPU picket lines! The only rationale behind this shameful episode was to destroy the EETPU at all costs — even the cost of acting as scabs for Ford management. In Labour-led local authorities, the EPIU played a similarly unprincipled game, persuading councils (as the employers) to unilaterally derecognise the EETPU in favour of the EPIU.

Most of the "left" were happy to go along with this demonisation of the EETPU and its membership: those of us who argued against the expulsion of the electricians in 1988 were dismissed as "soft" on Hammond and business unionism. Our arguments in favour of a single trade union centre were ignored. In fact, what we argued for was a TUC campaign directed at rank-and-file EETPU members against the scabbing activities of their leaders — a campaign that would have broken all the TUC's protocols against "interference" in the "internal affairs" of affiliated unions. Much easier — for the left bureaucrats — to simply expel them.

Now that Gallagher and the electricians are back within the TUC, the need for such a campaign is great than ever.

## Demo called for 3 November

# Save the student unions!

By Steve Mitchell — Manchester Area NUS Treasurer

**O**N 3 November students will gather in Manchester for a national demonstration in defence of student unions and against the threatened introduction of tuition fees. The demonstration has been called by Manchester Area NUS (MANUS).

The demonstration has the support of student unions and activists around the country and despite refusal by the National Union of Students (NUS) leadership to back the action or call any other actions for the term.

The NUS President, Lorna Fitzsimons, who was elected for a second year of office as the official Labour candidate, says that "demonstrations and direct action are old-fashioned and outdated". For years the NUS leadership has been lobbying Tory MPs, letter writing and trying to cut deals with ministers. Their tactics have failed while student poverty and cuts in education have got worse.

This could be the last year that student unions (SUs) have any right to campaign and defend their members. The Tories intend to introduce policy that makes SUs into little more than snack bars, optician and travel outlets. It is therefore vital that this demonstration is a massive launch pad for a national campaign to defend our unions. After the demonstration there will be a rally with speakers from all the major education unions. This will be followed by a Left Unity fringe meeting where activists are invited to come along and discuss the way forward for the campaign to defend student unionism.

If your labour club, women's group or SU aren't already backing the MANUS demo then put a motion to the next executive meeting, call on them to support it by booking transport, selling tickets for the coach, producing placards. Get camera ready art-work from MANUS and let's make this demo this biggest yet!

For further details contact Paul Williams or Steve Mitchell at the MANUS office on 061 275 2973.



One of two workers attacked by sectarians while repairing a house in North Belfast is helped to an ambulance

## Bigot killings increase

By Steven Holt

**S**ECTARIAN UVF and UFF assassinations of Catholics chosen at random for no reason other than that they are Catholics continues in Northern Ireland against a background of huge IRA bomb explosions devastating the centres of Protestant towns.

Recent "Loyalist" UVF activity has targeted British state personnel in Northern Ireland. They have attacked prison officers, killing one of them in his home.

The UVF attacks on prison officers are symptomatic of increased Protestant alienation from "their own" British state.

# Unite to beat the racists

## From front page

Racist ideas which for long marked those who held them as unbalanced cranks have gained a mass following and a nourishing respectability in recent years because of the social conditions generated by capitalism, and not only in Britain.

Where there is mass unemployment and homelessness, people look for scapegoats. Black people are easy scapegoats.

When society is run on the pig principle of "me first", and where millions are made to feel that they are failures in the race to climb on somebody else's back - the race in which the rich and the super-rich are the conspicuous winners - then people want someone to look down on.

The fight to uproot capitalism's poisonous crop of racism can not but be a fight against capitalist conditions and against capitalism.

We need black and white working-class unity in labour movement campaigns for housing, jobs, health care, and other public services. Only the labour movement can lead this fight, guided by socialists.

Those at the top of the labour movement, whether in parliament or in the leadership of trade unions, who mouth liberal hostility to racism and refuse to fight against the social conditions that inevitably generate widespread racism - such people are dangerous hypocrites.

Their anti-racism is for most occasions too shallow to be useful in the fight. Unite the serious anti-

racists? Serious anti-racists are those prepared to fight open racism and those prepared to fight the social conditions that breed racism.

Others may be helpful here and there, but they are not part of the serious fight to root out racism. To defend a black district threatened with attack by racists it would be useful to unite even with a decent Tory, if you could find one. But broad-front unity to make "anti-Nazi" propaganda with Liberals

and maverick Tory MPs - as practised by the Anti-Racist Alliance, with its Tory and Liberal sponsors, or the Anti-Nazi League, with its speaking invitation to the Tory mayor of Bexley - is not useful.

It is a direct denial of the basic truth that you need to fight against the conditions which breed racism in order to combat it effectively. You cannot do that in a common front with most of the "anti-Nazi" dignitaries!

Organised racism and fascism is still a great deal weaker in Britain than in France and Germany. It may not be so for much longer. We do not have all the time in the world to put the affairs of the anti-racist movement in order!

**\* See Youth Fight-back pull-out: why we need a united anti-racist/anti-fascist movement.**

JUSTICE FOR OLIVER CAMPBELL CAMPAIGN  
PO Box 273, Forest Gate London E7

## Free Oliver Campbell Public Meeting

Oliver Campbell is a black 22 year old from West Ham. He is serving a life sentence for a murder he did not commit. He is another victim of the racist legal system.

Thursday 16th September 1993

One Love, The Upton Centre,  
Bishop's Ave, Plaistow E13. 7.00pm

For further information contact 081-552-6284



*When Britain faced the threat of a military coup*

# Thatcher and Pinochet

**I**N A POLITICALLY unstable continent, Chile was long known as the England of Latin America. By 1973, it had had stable parliamentary and constitutional government for a longer unbroken period than most of the countries of Western Europe.

On 11 September 1973 all that came to a bloody and terrible end. The armed forces rose against the democratically elected left-wing government — whose majority had gone up by more than 15% in elections six months earlier — and unleashed a reign of terror against its supporters.

The socialist president, Salvador Allende, died defending the presidential palace. Unknown tens of thousands of his supporters would soon die at the hands of General Pinochet's triumphant fascistic militarists.

The story is told at proper length elsewhere in this paper. We are concerned here not directly with the coup in Chile, but with its effects on Britain at the time, and with its lessons for the future.

The coup in Chile had an immense impact, perhaps a shaping impact, on Britain. According to their own later testimony — that of Jack Jones, Transport and General Workers Union leader, for example — fear of a similar coup in Britain intimidated the leaders of the labour movement into courses of action they would not otherwise have chosen. They threw their weight behind a right wing Labour government.

In its own way, this proved as disastrous if not as bloody for the labour movement, as did Allende's "moderate" policies in Chile. The British labour movement was not crushed, but it was beaten down.

1973 was a year of great class struggle in Britain as well as in Chile. In Britain the struggle came to a climax with the miners' strike and an unscheduled General Election, to answer the question "who runs Britain, the Government or the unions?", which the Tory Government called and lost in February 1974.

A tremendously militant, labour movement had taken on the Tories and driven them from office. The right-wing-led Labour Party was the political beneficiary. It formed a government, backed by the trade unions and the whole working-class movement.

They made various concessions to the labour movement. They scrapped the anti-union laws the Tories had put on the statute book but could not, over three years, manage to implement.

And then over time the Labour Government — actively backed by the "left wing" union leaders, without whose support it could not have presided — turned on its supporters, using as its weapon a "social contract" which undercut militancy and worked to serve the interests of the employers.

The Labour Party had fought the election on a programme of "bringing about a fundamental



The British ruling class reaped a massive dividend from the slaughter of Chilean workers by Pinochet's army. Thatcher did not need to use such force against the workers in Britain. Her government exploited the timidity of the labour movement's leaders.



redistribution of wealth and power in the interests of working people". Even the colourful right-winger Denis Healey had talked about squeezing the rich "until the pips squeak". People had voted Labour on that basis.

Now Labour slowly put the squeeze on the working class, beginning a process of undermining the self-confidence of the workers that would have catastrophic consequences after 1979, when the Tories came back to power and used the slump conditions then prevailing to beat down and half-crush the labour movement.

What happened in the mid-1970s could not have happened in that way if the leaders of the trade union movement — some of them left-wingers with good credentials, like Jack Jones of the TGWU — had not decided to scale down their demands and deliver the labour movement up to an abject collaboration with the Government and the capitalists, whose chestnuts it was pulling out of the fire.

The left made gross mistakes — such as concentrating on a "little England forever" campaign against the European Community — which allowed the main trade union and Labour leaders to do what they did. But that is not our subject now.

Was the threat of a military takeover serious? How serious?

Lord Carver, the army's Chief of Staff at the time, later publicly admitted that there was talk of a military coup in Britain among "fairly senior" officers.

"Fairly senior officers were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army would have to do something about it..."

**T**HESE UNION leaders, and their MP equivalents and fellow-travellers like Michael Foot, had long insisted in labour movement debates that, yes, you could have a peaceful socialist revolution in Britain; yes, of course, parliament was stable and democracy safe in the hands of Britain's equivalent of Chile's generals and admirals.

And here they were in 1974 facing the realities of class power in Britain, knowing that if the working-class movement pushed ahead then it risked a savage Chile-style backlash. They looked at recent events in Chile, and what did they do? Did they admit that they had been wrong all those years about the reliability of parliamentary democracy? Did they warn the labour movement? Did they tell workers to prepare to fight?

No. They turned and ran, demobilising the labour movement.

Thus the British ruling class reaped a massive dividend from the slaughter of the Chilean working class. The class struggle is international!

The ruling class in Britain did not need to resort to a coup. The nearest we got to that was the illegal mass semi-militarised police operations against the miners in 1984 and 1985. Yet the working class in Britain, missing the tide in 1974-79, has suffered a terrible series of defeats.

It has seen its ability to act crippled by the laws in which a hostile Tory Government pinioned it. We lost the recent strike at Timex because those laws crippled solidarity action.

The British labour movement experienced no mass bloodletting. But it has experienced the awful debilitation of the Thatcher years and after. The French used to call the tropical prison on Devil's

Island, "the dry guillotine"; Thatcherism was to Pinochet's coup what the dry guillotine was to the one which chops off your head.

Right now the ruling class in Britain has no need of extra-parliamentary action or illegal force against the working class. But the working-class movement will revive, as it always does, even from the most severe defeats — as it has revived in Chile.

These questions are not academic. There will be other situations like that of 1973-5.

In periods of setback, retrenchment and depression in the labour movement, the serious people prepare the future by holding firmly to the hard-won lessons of the past. The myth of the parliamentary road to socialism can play the terrible role in the future it has played in the past if the labour movement — and in the first place the socialists — are not educated away from it.

The debate between believers in a "peaceful transition to socialism by way of parliamentary majorities" and advocates of working-class revolution has in modern times always been, in coded form, a debate about another question: are you serious about socialism? Do you conceive of socialism as the negation of capitalist class rule?

Those who said yes to the last question also said no to the idea of peaceful revolution. The idea that the ruling class will ever, while they have another option, surrender peacefully to a democratic parliamentary majority which threatens to wipe them out as a class — that idea is a blatant absurdity.

All the evidence of history speaks against it, and for the Marxist rejection of it. All experi-

ence supports the Marxist contention that the ruling class will not let us make a peaceful revolution.

If you want to help make the transition to socialism as peaceful and bloodless as possible — then warn the working class that it must expect the worst and prepare for ruling-class violence! Anything else is unserious, even if, as in Salvador Allende's case, it is sincere.

Learning and proclaiming that lesson to the socialist movement, and to the broader labour movement as it revives in militancy, expectation and hope — that is the best tribute we can pay now to the Chilean socialist martyrs who fell victim to bourgeois militarism and to their own reformist delusions 20 years ago.

The peaceful road to socialism is a peaceful road to the abattoir for the socialists when the class struggle gets serious.

That is the lesson that came out of Chile on a tidal wave of working class blood on 11 September 1973.

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

Karl Marx

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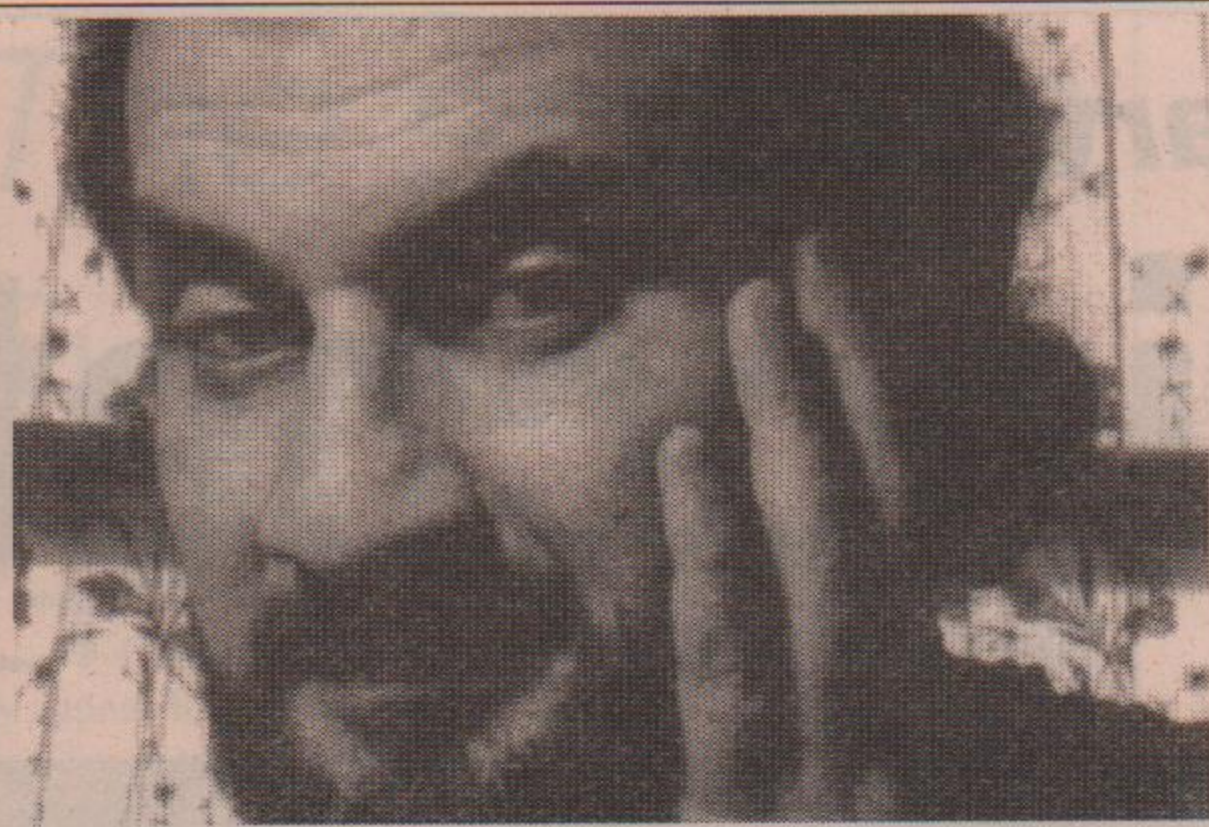
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Would one pay one's taxes for this man?

# Grasping governors

## GRAFFITI

**J**UST WHEN YOU thought it was safe to get arrested... Remand prisoner Steven Leach turned up three hours after the rest of business had finished at Pudsey Magistrates' Court near Leeds. The prison escort service had taken him to five other court buildings first. His solicitor is demanding payment for wasted time from the escort service — you guessed it, Group 4.

**A** POLICE Federation press ad claims that the police spend 82% of their time "helping people" rather than cleaning up crime. Depends, I suppose, on how broadly you understand "helping people". The police figure of 82% implies a very broad understanding indeed: as in "helping people to the floor", "helping people get racially abused", "helping people to get beaten up".

**R**EADERS WILL be saddened to learn that the price of education is racing ahead of general inflation by a factor of three. Schools for the kids of rich folks have increased their fees by up to £1,200 this year. That brings the average day place for Tristan up to £4,500 and that boarding school place for Cassandra to £9,000. The financial burdens of being stinking rich must surely be unbearable.

**C**LEARLY WORRIED about where his mum's taxes are going, Prince Charles has complained about the cost of guarding Salman Rushdie from the consequences of the Iranian fatwah. (Unlike Big Ears, Rushdie has put £500,000 of his own money into his security). Last week Rushdie stated: "I do think for the British royal family to start complaining about money being spent on other people is a tactical error". Rushdie echoed the sentiments of another writer who noted that Charlie's "literary efforts are quite second-rate and he cost[s] the country quite a bit more".

**T**HE LABOURISH think-tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is attempting to challenge right-wing hegemony in the field of economic journals by

way of its publication *New Economy*. The editors claim that it is directed at 'A' level students and non-specialists in economics. They have given a promise to ban algebra and footnotes. That may mean that it will try to avoid putting anything into testable terms and that you will not be able to check the references. But has the journal done its demand elasticity homework? The year's subscription to the journal costs up to £95.

**I**T'S VERY crude, I know, the theory that people's politics are determined directly by how luxurious their houses are. Nevertheless, it works pretty well a lot of the time. Bill Hayden was a slightly left-of-centre leader of the Australian Labor Party. Bob Hawke followed him in the job. He had been a big-talking leader of the Australian TUC.

Now Hawke is trying to make his fortune as a journalist, and Hayden has been Governor-General of Australia since 1989. Recently Hawke interviewed Hayden for a TV programme on the plans of the current Labor leader, hardened right-winger Paul Keating, to make Australia a republic.

Hayden, responding to sympathetic questions from Hawke, said that he had re-thought, that "the present system works well. It allows us to have stable government in this country..."

It was in Australia that the Queen's representative, sacked an elected reforming Labor government in 1975.

That Governor-General, too, was an ex-Labor man, John Kerr. The Governor-General's palace seems to turn people that way.

**T**HE NEW deputy governor of the Bank of England, one Rupert Pennant-Rea, until recently editor of the in-house journal of the bourgeoisie, the *Economist*, is introducing "Japanese" working practices in the Bank. Out goes the so-called "Golden Trough", exclusive dining room for 35 senior officers. From January, the management will be able to network with their less senior co-workers in a common canteen. Who knows, maybe they'll even slip in a game of table tennis.

Sadly, Pennant-Rea will be unable to view his handiwork — the directors' private dining room lives on.

# Showdown on Quality Street

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**P**RICE AND circulation wars are a sordid tabloid phenomenon that need not concern the 'quality' broadsheets. That was the understanding until Rupert Murdoch announced that the *Times* would cut its cover price to 30p.

Suddenly, the cut-throat competition of the tabloids has hit the rarified world of the broadsheets. The results have already been dramatic. The *Independent* may not survive at all and the *Telegraph* (hitherto considered

impregnable) has been badly hit, with a 6 per cent circulation loss. The *Guardian* with its distinct left-liberal readership has survived unscathed — so far.

Andreas Whittam-Smith reacted to the *Times*' price cut with a tirade of self-righteous indignation, even devoting a front page *Indie* editorial to a denunciation of the Digger and his dirty tricks. But before anyone sheds any tears for Whittam-Smith and his publication, remember the *Indie*'s own record: starting a Sunday edition with the deliberate purpose of driving the *Sunday Correspondent* out of business and, this year, attempting to buy up the *Observer* in order to close it down. And, to a large extent, the *Indie*'s present vulnerability is the result of Whittam-Smith's own editorial policy. He may bleat about the *Indie*'s "liberal" credentials, but to most readers the paper is clearly right of centre, even if it's

not openly Tory. If the *Indie* had fulfilled its early, radical, promise it would now be challenging the *Guardian* for the coveted Poly-lecturer market and safely insulated from the Digger's attack.

One happier and less widely-predicted result of the *Times*' price cut has been the damage inflicted upon those two loathsome "middle market" bastions of reaction, the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, both of which now sell at 2p more than the *Times*. Why pay 32p for a badly-written smug Tory tabloid when for 2p less you can have a rather better written smug Tory broadsheet? The Digger needs to be brought to heel, but sometimes some of his dirty tricks have quite pleasing side-effects.

**I**T WAS probably inevitable: Paul Foot's column, once one of the few good reasons for buying the *Daily Mirror*, has re-emerged in the

*Guardian*. Where else could he go?

On Monday's showing, Foot's *Guardian* column promises to be quite good — a little heavier and more literary than his offerings for the *Mirror*, but still the same basic formula of well-written, low-level, anti-capitalist propaganda laced with humour and a touch of the investigatives.

You may have your reservations about Foot, the SWP hack, but Footie the upper-class leftie journalist is still a damn good read. But what a pity that the man's talents are now only to be aired in the *Guardian*, where he'll be preaching to the converted (or the unconvertible). At the *Mirror*, he had a platform that gave access to millions of working-class readers. Now he addresses the Habitat-kitchen brigade who probably already get their fill of Footery from *Private Eye* and/or *Socialist Worker*.

# Women pay the price of NHS butchery

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

**C**ASSIE, MY young cat, had been ill, her breasts stiff and swollen, her life threatened, according to the vet. Later, after she was restored to health, we took her to be fixed so that she would not have kittens. The vet found that she was pregnant. He aborted her, but told me very sternly that he would not have done that if she had not been so ill before.

Barbara Whiten got less consideration from her gynaecologist than the vet seemed inclined to give my cat.

Supposedly infertile, Barbara did not know she was pregnant when she went for an operation to remove her womb because of trouble with the lining of the

womb. The doctors failed to discover that she was pregnant until she was unconscious on the operating table.

Discovering it, the surgeon — Reginald Dixon, a consultant at Kingsmill Hospital, Mansfield — continued removing her womb, aborting the foetus and ending Barbara's chance of ever having a child.

As she lay on the table waiting for the anaesthetic she thought that she was in the hands of a mere surgeon. He thought he was God.

What he thought *she* was is a question I cannot answer. He treated her like an apprentice butcher would treat a bit of meat he had to tidy up.

This is one in a spate of recent cases of doctors who think they are gods behaving like pigs.

The worst case was the one in which it was report-

ed that doctors were deciding who would have and who would be refused life-saving operations — on the basis of whether or not they were smokers!

Now, of course, doctors have always made decisions like this, but quietly. It is gruesome that they should

*"Money can indeed buy life, and people who might live die for lack of means."*

make such decisions — and grotesque when some of them feel — as evidently they now do feel — that they can defend such practices in public.

Mr Dixon's reported comments to Ms Whiten —

"it is what you would have wanted anyway" — suggest a man who does not even suspect that there is anything wrong in taking such a decision without consulting the woman whose rights over her own body he casually annihilated.

A woman's right to choose works both ways!

In fact women do seem to be the most vulnerable to medical high-handedness. But all poor people are vulnerable. The poor have always been vulnerable to doctors playing God.

As the old song has it: "If life were a thing that money could buy/then the rich would live and the poor would die".

Where health-care, which means life and death, is a commodity, money can indeed buy life, and people who might live die for lack of means. The more run down the health service becomes the more vulnerable we all become.



# Support grows for Israeli-PLO peace

Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv

**T**HE ISRAELI right have made an enormous effort in the past week.

According to police estimates, 50,000 demonstrators protested against the Israel-PLO deal outside the Prime Minister's office on Tuesday 7 September.

For several days they attempted to block the roads near the PM's office, trying to provoke mass arrests. The police arrested a few demonstrators but dispersed the rest with water cannon.

After three days of this, when they were quite exhausted, the Norwegian Foreign Minister came with the agreement for Rabin to sign. Since then they have not really been in evidence.

In the last few days the demonstrators have mostly been peace supporters. On Monday 13 September, there were pro-peace celebrations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

A key factor in the political situation is that the Israeli bourgeoisie is enthusiastically supporting the agreement with the PLO. The hard-core opposition is confined to perhaps 250,000 people of ultra-nationalist-religious persuasion. The mass of Likud's supporters either favour the agreement or are unwilling to oppose it.

Opposition to the deal amongst these religious-messianic people has a strong ideological base. They fervently believe that this territory is Israel's by right, because it is "the land of our ancestors". This group is a minority even among the settlers on the West Bank. The majority of West Bank settlers are there simply because the Likud government offered them cheap housing.

I suppose that some of these people are participating in the opposition simply because they are attached to the place where they live. If they are offered reasonable compensation they would, I expect, willingly leave.

The question now is what should the left say about the settlers? Jews should be able to live as equal citizens in a Palestinian state or as foreign residents there. Ethni-

cally pure states are not to be encouraged. What is not acceptable is that the settlers will constitute armed, extra-territorial enclaves inside the Palestinian territory. They must accept the authority of a Palestinian government.

In practice, faced with this possibility, I would expect 99% of the settlers to leave for Israel.

The Peace Bloc, has made a statement calling for the government to set up an agency for resettlement of the settlers. This is important to win the less ideologically committed settlers.

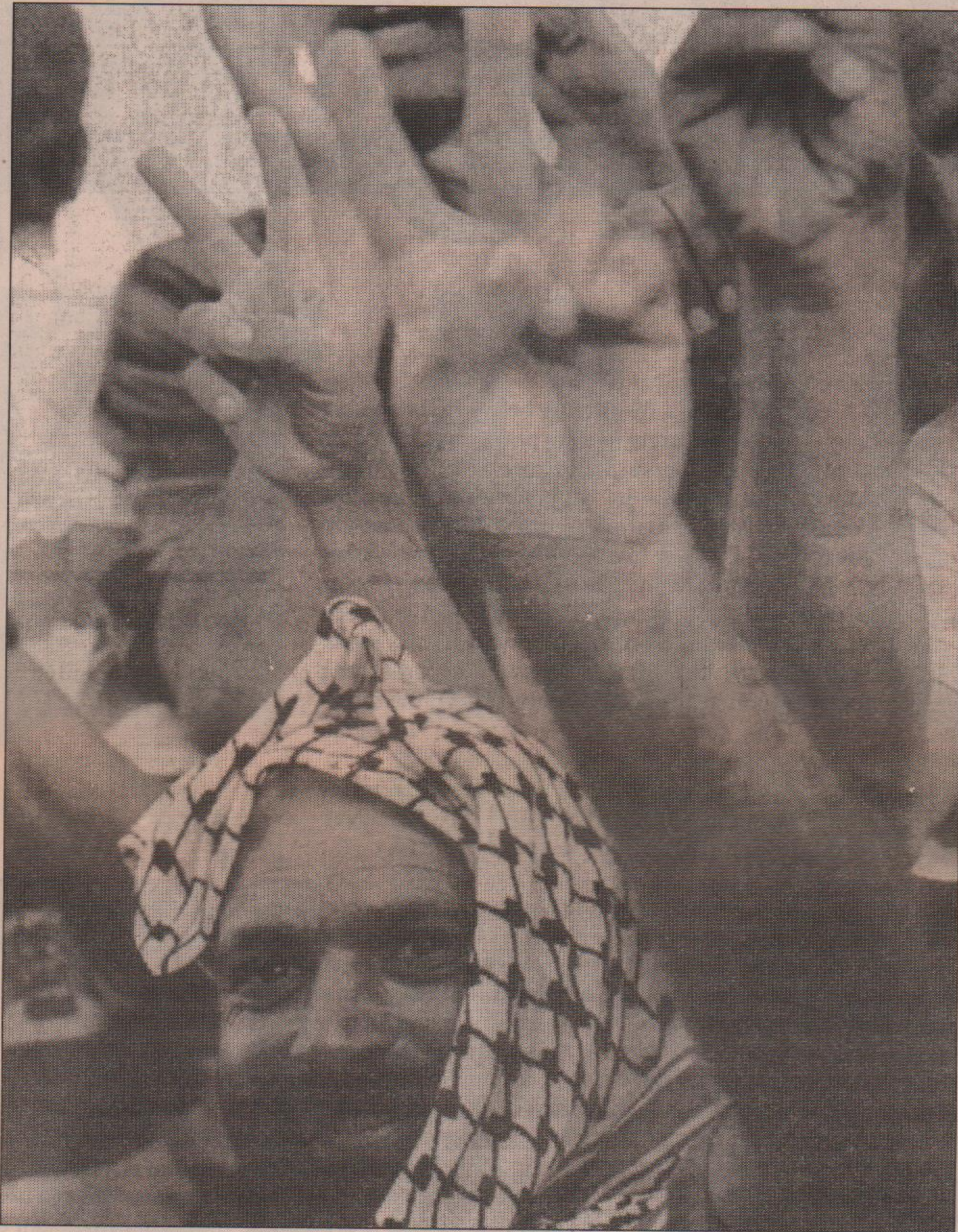
**D**ESPITE THE PLO-Israel agreement, conflict continues in the Occupied Territories.

The Hamas people are continuing, and even intensifying, their attacks. Reports here, however, suggest that Hamas is failing to mobilise the Palestinian masses. This appears to be true even in their stronghold of Gaza.

Opinion polls suggest that 65% of Palestinians support the deal with Israel. There have been quite large demonstrations in support of the deal all across the

*"Jews should be able to live as equal citizens in a Palestinian state. What is not acceptable is that the settlers will constitute armed enclaves inside the Palestinian territory."*

Occupied Territories. On Monday 13 September there was an agreement between Palestinian supporters and opponents of the deal to divide the day: in the morning the opponents had their general strike protest; in the afternoon supporters held celebrations. They agreed not to interfere with each other. That is good and significant.



Support for the Israel-PLO deal is running high

The danger of civil war amongst the Palestinians has receded somewhat. The mood has changed as the deal has become more real and concrete to the Palestinians. They now believe that the Israeli army really will leave. This mood is gaining Arafat new support.

It is significant that at the signing ceremony in Washington Arafat spoke in Arabic. He was trying to reach the Arab masses watching on television. He has stressed that in two years he expects to discuss the issues not covered in the agreement — Jerusalem, the settlements, and the right of return.

**E**LECTIONS ARE to be in nine months. In four months the Israeli army will withdraw from Gaza and Jericho and then, just before the elections, from the rest of the Palestinian-

populated area. In these conditions, just after Israeli withdrawal, Arafat's Fatah organisation will be in a very good position to win the elections.

Hamas perhaps expect to make gains in the following election.

There is an interesting analogy with the history of Israel. In the period of the British Mandate in the '40s there were three underground organisations fighting the British: the more mainstream Haganah and two extreme nationalist underground groups. As long as there was a campaign against the British, the groups which made the more daring and spectacular attacks on the British had a significant following.

After the partition, Ben Gurion's position was strengthened and the extremists were marginalised because of the mood of cele-

bration amongst the Jewish people. Perhaps matters will be similar and Arafat be strengthened against Hamas.

Nor is the Knesset properly representative now on this question. Rabin's parliamentary support is much narrower than it is in the country.

A number of factors will affect the Knesset vote. One member of the Likud will abstain, the other 31 will oppose the deal.

Members of the Oriental-religious party, Shas, feel intimidated by the establishment and it is not clear which way they will vote. They probably will not vote against the deal and may abstain.

Rabin is then left with 61 votes from 120.

There is talk now of a referendum in Israel on the agreement. The right demanded this, but now they are not so sure — they

would probably lose. A referendum could be a good move for Rabin because it would greatly expand his political legitimacy. It would be a blow the right would not recover from.

However there are dangers. What, for example, would happen if Hamas should carry out a terrible massacre on the day before the vote? The referendum might be lost.

The international effects of the deal are being felt already in the Arab East.

Jordan's agreement with Israel is not yet a peace agreement, but, under the diplomatic language, an agreement is plainly on the way. There are no major outstanding issues between the two governments. The Jordanian regime, however, is worried about the Palestinians. After all they are 70% of the population of Jordan.

King Hussein is afraid that the Palestinians will become too strong and destabilise his rule. There is now talk of a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. In principle, the Palestinians are not opposed to this, but the question is: where will the real power lie?

The Jordanians are also concerned about the Syrian government. Remember, in 1970 a Syrian invasion of Jordan was only prevented by the threat of Israeli intervention. The Jordanians do not want to alienate the Syrians by moving too fast.

For this agreement to be stable there will have to be Syrian-Israeli agreement. Syria has too many ways of destabilising the situation. The Syrian price for peace is Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. The problem here for Rabin is that withdrawal from Golan is much less popular in Israel. The settlers in the Golan are mostly from the Labour Party and they have backing inside the party.

Rabin seems to be delaying agreement with Syria. He does not want to fight on two fronts.

Adam Keller is editor of *The Other Israel*, an alternative view of Israeli politics. The new issue is out this week. For a six-month subscription send £10 to: *The Other Israel*, PO Box 2542, Holon, Israel 58125.



# 20 years after the military coup

# Tragedy in Chile

By Cathy Nugent

**O**N 11 SEPTEMBER, exactly 20 years ago, a bloody military coup in Chile ousted the Popular Unity government of President Salvador Allende.

Allende was a socialist, who considered himself a Marxist. His government — which had been elected in 1970 — attempted to introduce important reforms for the Chilean working class. Allende himself was killed defending the Presidential Palace during the coup. Workers in the factories attempted to defend themselves against the military attacks — but they were not sufficiently organised or sufficiently armed. They went down to defeat.

In the days and weeks which followed the coup, as the regime of General Pinochet attempted to establish itself, hundreds of thousands of working-class militants and political activists were tortured and killed. The football stadium in the capital city, Santiago, was turned into a giant prison, torture centre and abattoir for the Chilean left. 30,000 people — the majority of them asylum seekers — were sent into exile, perhaps to face torture and death in their home countries.

Why did this tragedy occur?

Allende's Popular Unity was a coalition government. The two main parties were the Communist Party, a pro-Moscow Stalinist Party, and Allende's Socialist Party. There were other smaller parties in the government, and the Guevarist MIR and the Trotskyists outside it.

The Communist Party's ideas were governed by the Stalinist policy for Latin America: stagism. The first stage was to defeat the "reactionary feudal sector". Thus the workers must form an alliance with the "progressive" national bourgeoisie. Then the workers' movement could proceed to a struggle for socialism.

In fact a distinction between the feudalistic oligarchy whose power was based on landownership and the industrial bourgeoisie was by no means clear cut *anywhere* in Latin America and perhaps in Chile least of all, which was a fully bourgeois society. In practice, even if there were an important economic distinction between landlords and capitalists, *politically* the ruling class would be very much united against any threat from the working class or from any "alliance" dominated by the working class.

This Stalinist policy, adapted to Chilean conditions, would contribute to the disastrous fate of the UP government.

The Socialist Party was nominally Marxist, formed in 1933 by intellectuals and Communist Party dissidents. One of the policy statements adopted at its formation declared the impossibility of an evolutionary road to socialism: the workers must overthrow the capitalist state if socialism was to be built in Chile.

That was still party policy in 1973 but it was *not* a policy that the government adhered to.

The Popular Unity government came to power on a wave of radicalisation that swept the country in 1970, boosted by dissatisfaction with the government of the Christian Democrats.

The Christian Democrats during the '60s had become the largest so-called "centre" party in Chile. The Christian Democrats have been proved time and again to be self-serving lap-dogs of the Latin American bosses. However, even these Christian Democrats had had to respond to a radicalised Chilean working class.

They introduced limited land reform and some nationalisation (they took a 51% share in the US-owned copper mining industry). But the reforms did not go far enough. They served only to awaken the aspirations of the Chilean people.

*"The Allende government systematically disorganised its own popular support whilst doing nothing to prepare for the capitalist backlash."*



1971: Chilean workers greet Castro and Allende

Allende promised more and won the Presidential election in September 1970.

The Popular Unity government stood in the tradition of Chilean economic nationalism: Chilean economic development without reliance on aid or loans or investment from abroad, particularly the United States.

Allende saw his government as being in the Popular Front tradition. Between 1938 and 1946 there had been a "Popular Front" government in Chile, led by the then main middle class party, the Radical Party, supported by the Communist Party and the Socialist Party.

Popular Front governments of the past normally included bourgeois parties: Allende's Popular Unity government did not. However, like its predecessors this government would introduce only limited reforms, *increasing* the expectations of the working class, but not *satisfying* them. To do that the government would have had to step outside the boundaries of bourgeois constitutional politics.

The government's reforms were genuinely far-reaching. We would find it very difficult to imagine any "reformist" party of today, anywhere in the world, introducing such radical measures. Land was expropriated — by 1973 about 40% of land had been expropriated and turned into smaller plots and co-operatives.

Although the government declared itself committed to the "mixed economy" — the majority of industry would remain in private hands — the nationalisation programme was extensive.

Copper and nitrate mines were nationalised, as were the banks. The government intended compensation but was, in the event, unable to afford it! Over the next three years many smaller industries and businesses were nationalised too — in many cases on the initiative of the workers.

This government even before it was elected frightened the US ruling class, then facing the inglorious end to war in Vietnam. And from day one the US State Department, headed by future Nobel Peace Prize winner Henry Kissinger, funded the military and right-wing opposition to Popular Unity and used every trick they knew to destabilise the Chilean government.

The 1973 coup was actively backed by the CIA, but was by no means the first coup they had tried to engineer.

For the first eighteen months, the Popular Unity government enjoyed immense popularity. Bit by bit, for a number of reasons, it began to be destabilised. Some of the reasons for this were:

\* The withdrawal of credit by the US. Chile already had a huge debt to the USA





Peasants seize and occupy land: the government discouraged their action, though it did not evict them

as a result of compensation payments incurred by the Christian Democrat government of Frei for its nationalisations. The United States tightened up its repayments schedules.

\* Financial speculation further weakened the economy (there was a run on the banks immediately after the election).

\* Agricultural productivity was low.

\* Workers won wage increases — a wave of strikes continued right through to 1973 — and this amidst economic crisis made inflation go up even faster.

All this meant economic crisis and crippling inflation which by 1972 had generated a middle-class and bourgeois reaction threatening the existence of the government. The government's response to the situation was disastrous.

Instead of building on the mass working-class support for its policies it grew afraid to make concessions to working-class demands because it feared upsetting the bosses and their military backers. And so it attempted to dampen all popular mobilisations.

For instance in May 1972 a demonstration — in support of further nationalisation — in one of the major cities, Concepcion, was fired upon by *cabineros* acting on the orders of the Communist Party mayor.

For instance, instead of acting against the Chilean financiers, the government encouraged wage "restraint" in order to "conquer" inflation.

For instance, the government did not support and attempted to discourage the wave of illegal land occupations, although they did not act against peasants who squatted land.

Various negotiations were entered into with the Christian Democrats. The idea was to win over the middle classes; the effect could only be to discourage and confuse the working class.

At all times Allende believed the military would not attack a constitutionally elected government. Even if certain military elements were — and this was common knowledge — in favour of overthrowing the government, a loyal "constitutional" majority amongst the officers would not allow it to happen.

Right up until the day before the coup during which they killed him Allende believed in this mythical neutrality of the armed forces.

In this way the Allende government systematically disorganised and diminished its own popular support whilst doing nothing to defend itself against or prepare for the capitalist backlash. The last year

saw intense political polarisation and spiralling violence.

In August 1972 the government sent in the police against a shopkeepers' strike in Santiago to try to get them to open up (many of them had been hoarding and conducting black market trading). This prompted violence from the right-wing fascist opposition.

In October 1972 the truck owners went on strike against a proposed state-controlled truck company. The strike spread to many other small businesses. In Parliament the opposition tried to impeach four government ministers.

During the middle-class strikes the Chilean workers had tried to keep the factories operating, to defend the government and to try to stop the worsening of shortages. Did Allende build on this support? No! Allende responded to the crisis by taking three military leaders into his Cabinet!

At this time workers' councils known as *cordones* were formed in several areas of the country. This was not a widespread phenomena but it was extremely important. These councils spanned several factories. They by-passed the unions. Partly they saw their goal as keeping production going during a crisis, organising transport and so on. They also saw themselves as defenders of the gains the workers had won under Allende.

Armed detachments were organised to meet the right-wing threat. These organisations, unfortunately, were nowhere near widespread enough

to save the Chilean workers from the savagery of the army, unleashed against them on 11 September.\*

Large sections of the Socialist Party supported the *cordones*, albeit passively. The Communist Party was very hostile to them as both a challenge to their hegemony in the trade unions and a source of intensified middle-class alarm.

The March 1973 legislative elections saw Popular Unity increase its share of the vote to 45%. (It had been 36% in 1970).

At this point Allende's generals resigned from the government. By May the right — which had been recruiting heavily for six months with no hindrance from the government — was out in force on the

streets, demonstrating against the government. The mood was heavy, there was talk everywhere of an imminent military coup.

The atmosphere was also confused. For instance Public Works workers joined the anti-government demonstrations — to demand the expansion of the social sector of the economy!

Now a strike in the copper mines set the scene for the coup to overthrow the government. The miners struck against the withdrawal of the sliding scale of wages. Under this system — a demand won in the first months of the government — wages were pegged to inflation and would rise automatically with the cost of living. It lasted until July 1973 and cost the government \$40 million.

With this strike forming a background there was an attempted coup, led by a rebel section of the military in June 1973. It was not supported by the whole of the military, only because they had not yet fully formulated their policy. The time they thought was not yet ripe. Over the next months the government lurched from crisis to crisis.

It still enjoyed massive support amongst the working class. Only five days before the final coup a million people demonstrated in Santiago to celebrate the third anniversary of Allende's election.

The tragedy was that Allende was unable or unprepared to assimilate the lessons of the previous year and a half. At the same demonstration he spoke of Chile's imminent return to

prosperity, if only the workers were prepared to hang on a bit longer. He was convinced that the military would not interfere (as if it had not already done so!) to subvert the workings of constitutional government. Unwittingly, he helped lull the workers as the Generals prepared to slaughter them.

In the event, apart from small armed detachments of workers, the Chilean proletariat was unprepared for the work of defending the government and fighting the armed forces. They were defeated with minimal fighting and then subjected to a terrible butchering.

There followed 16 years — until 1989, when the junta held an election — of the

viciously anti-working class Pinochet government.

Under the junta millions were pauperised; unemployment was as high as 40% in the shanty towns of Santiago.

The left in Chile — defeated and demoralised — failed to learn the lessons. The Communist Party split. Some of them continued, like a broken record, to criticise the "ultra-left" for alienating the middle class. Some joined the Castroite guerrillas.

Today the Socialist Party forms a coalition government with the Christian Democrats, whose leader, Aylwin, was a supporter of the 1973 coup and one of Allende's biggest critics at the time.

What are the lessons of Chile?

First and foremost Chile proves that the bosses will not give up their power without a fight. Chile had a long history of "constitutional", parliamentary government — they called it the England of South America. But still, when the crunch came, as the workers organised to defend the gains they had won under the reform government, the bosses called in the military.

Secondly, no matter how sincere its leaders, and Allende's government was undoubtedly sincere about reform, such a government is a disaster for our class. On the one hand it stirs up and alarms the capitalists, but on the other hand it is not prepared to act for the workers according to the logic of the class struggle it inflames, challenging the capitalist system. Allende attempted to introduce reforms only at a pace agreeable to the ruling class and acted as a brake on the mobilisation of the working class. Then the ruling class cut him down, and the Chilean labour movement went along with him.

Marxist socialists have pointed out that Allende's refusal to arm the workers was decisive in the defeat of the working class. This is, of course, true. But it was only the last act in a tragedy at the core of which was the Popular Unity government's decision to try to conciliate the capitalists, trying to convince them to go along with its reforms. As the elected government, they thought they had the power — the armed forces. That is why they did not arm the workers. They learned that when it came to it, the capitalists, not parliamentary democracy, had the ultimate loyalty of the armed forces. The working class of Chile paid for Allende's weakness, confusion and vacillation with many tens of thousands of proletarian lives.

*"Right up until  
the coup, Allende  
believed in this  
mythical neutrality of  
the armed forces."*



# Burnsall: why the officials didn't allow a vote to end the strike

## Why the Burnsall dispute is important

Readers have asked us why we are prepared to devote so much space to a discussion of the aftermath of the Burnsall strike, a long strike for union recognition at a small Birmingham metal-finishing works which ended recently.

The answer is simple: if the working class is to be able to effectively pursue the class struggle then it must *learn* from its experiences. Socialist papers like our own should aim to help in this process.

But in order to learn we must relate to the world as honestly, as objectively, as rationally and as logically as we can.

We have attempted to do this in the case of Burnsall: most of the rest of the left have not.

This failure is serious because:

- The strike represented an attempt to establish trade unionism in a non-union sector composed of super-exploited predominantly black workers.
- The union officials were genuinely trying to win the dispute.
- The objective problems encountered by the strike were very real. The anti-union laws undermined attempts to win solidarity action and the competitive pressures on one small non-union firm in a non-unionised sector made victory very difficult *without* a drive to unionise the rest of that sector.
- Burnsall is not unique. Large numbers of workers now work in small, non-unionised workplaces. The numbers of low-paid and insecure workers is growing as a proportion of the working class. We can therefore expect many more battles like Burnsall in the years ahead.

An awful lot could be learnt from a rational discussion of the balance sheet of this strike. But, when it comes to strikes, most of the left have double standards. The last thing they are intent on is a rational discussion.

Take *Militant*. They have denounced the GMB union full-timers at Burnsall for "betrayal" without, as far as I know, attempting to get their side of the story.

Yet, *Militant* themselves have a comrade employed as an appointed full-timer in the low-paid civil servants' union CPSA who has allowed his name to be put on circulars instructing CPSA members to cross the picket lines of the executive grades union NUCPS!

But when this was criticised by rank and file CPSA members they were sternly lectured on the need to "take the objective circumstances into account" etc., etc. It is a clear case of one law for the "revolutionaries" and another for the "bureaucrats".

We believe, on the contrary, that you should examine an argument on its own merits, not dismiss it simply by reference to who is making it. There is no other rational approach. An argument is not wrong simply because it comes from a trade union official.

An opposite response to that of the sectarians is also possible.

Many serious activists in the trade unions believe that strikes like Burnsall or Pergamon have no chance of winning, but dare not say so for fear of the reaction expressing such views might create.

So, instead of rationally discussing real problems, serious people maintain an embarrassed silence. That is a victory for the sectarians.

Silence or double standards cannot help workers solve real problems. Rational discussion can. For that reason we are continuing the discussion by printing a piece by Jo Quigley and a reply from Tom Rigby.

## By Jo Quigley, GMB Regional Organiser

**Y**OUR CRITICAL BUT scrupulously fair coverage of the GMB's leadership of the Burnsall strike (*SO* 569/70) is in refreshing contrast to the lies and cynical misrepresentations that have characterised most "Trotskyist" (sic) writing on the subject.

I believe Tom Rigby is quite correct in claiming that the barrage of propaganda manufactured and disseminated by the "third worldist" leadership of the London Support Group and their deluded accomplices on the sectarian left, who uncritically consume and parrot this specious nonsense is not at all an attack from the left upon the alleged misleadership of a trade union struggle. It is rather an attack upon trade unionism itself. As such it clearly provides ammunition and comfort to petty bourgeois Asian sweatshop employers, the backbone of any Stalinist anti-imperialist alliance.

Rigby criticises the GMB for failing to use the Burnsall strike as a springboard for a recruitment drive in the West Midlands' sweatshops. Although he does not consider the substantial resource implications of such

a proposal, he is undoubtedly correct in seeing a golden opportunity missed.

The GMB's promotion of the Burnsall strike had generated much free media publicity for such a drive. Sarah Cousin, journalist on the local Black Country *Express and Star* told me that, in the first six months of the strike, her paper had carried thirty-two articles on the dispute.

In January I reported to a Burnsall strike meeting, with people from the Birmingham and London Support Groups present, that I was proposing to the Regional leadership of the GMB, a recruitment drive into the unorganised metal finishing industry. I pointed out that the Burnsall management's determined resistance to union recognition was based on a quite rational calculation of the commercial implications for themselves of conceding union recognition, when their competitors continued to use non-union labour. Amusingly, my acknowledgement of this economic reality visibly shocked the "Marxist" revolutionaries from London, and their post-strike assertion that "from the beginning of 1993 onward they (the union officials) continually tried to demoralise the strikers", has its origins in my contribution to that meeting!

My proposal for a recruitment drive was accepted by GMB Regional Secretary, Geoff Wheatley, who had it submitted to one of the joint GMB/TGWU officer Working Parties that were examining projects upon which the two unions could work together. It went no further. A genuine and responsible support group could have played a most important role in overcoming the human resource implications that clearly made the official unions hesitate. But honest principled work of that nature was the last thing on the minds of the support groups that had parasitically attached themselves to the strike.

The London Support Group had produced a four page leaflet on the Burnsall strike. Most revealingly, it contained no call for other sweatshop workers to join a union and get organised. This as they say was not accidental. It was not an omission. Asian workers joining a British trade union is not at all on Amrit Wilson's black nationalist agenda.

The Birmingham Support Group spent its activity sowing seeds of suspicion and poisoning relations between the strikers and their union, even going so far as to accuse the union officials of lining their pockets from the Strike Fund. Quite clearly, no sane union could contemplate working with people displaying such undisguised and implacable hostility to it.

I believe there was a possibility that sweatshop workers might well have responded to a campaign, and rallied around the Burnsall banner that the GMB had raised. That it was squandered, was as much the responsibility of a viciously sectarian left, as it was a cautious complacent and conservative official union movement.

However, two criticisms in *SO* 570 I believe are misplaced. You claim it was wrong to call off the strike "without putting the issue to a vote" and "if the majority of workers wanted to continue the fight they deserve unconditional support". While these

are two separate criticisms, in the Burnsall strike they were closely connected.

The union officers could defend themselves on the grounds that no vote was called for, because no one dissented from my assessment that there was no point in continuing the dispute. Those who spoke, including Balvir Singh, acknowledged that there was no prospect of victory. However, while true, it is not the full story; for while a vote is normally the way of determining the majority among two or more conflicting opinions, a vote is also the common device used to give formal ratification where no disagreement exists.

In the Burnsall dispute there was a real possibility that if a vote to ratify the shared assessment that the strike was unwinnable was taken, the majority would have voted to continue the strike. If that had happened neither Danny Parry, nor myself, would have felt any obligation to respect such a vote. In fact no vote was called for, and it was only after the meeting, when some of the strikers got in touch with their outside controllers and manipulators, that they were told that they should have called for a vote.

Such a vote, if called for and taken place, would have been cynical. It would not have been a vote to continue a strike or pursue legitimate trade union objectives. As the meeting had already *without one single dissenting voice* agreed that such objectives were unobtainable to vote to continue must be a vote to meet some other unspecified non-trade union objective.

It is not difficult to surmise what that non-trade union objective might be. The union had provided most of its strikers from three separate sources, more money than they received in a week's wages from their management for 56 hours' work. If such a vote had been taken, it would have been a vote for the union to continue the provision of a meal ticket.

To understand why the union officials were so reluctant to call for a vote consider an earlier incident when they *did* encourage a vote. After Christmas, donations into the

Strike Fund declined, and for three consecutive weeks, the union paid out less than £20. It normally paid out £50. In that period Hamrik Lail abandoned the strike and got himself a job. In February, donations into the Fund were back to normal, but Hamrik Lail found himself put on short time. He returned to the union and asked to be put back on the

Strike pay roll. He wanted to keep his job, which was now a morning job, and do some picketing in the afternoon!

It is worth pointing out that before he abandoned the strike, Hamrik Lail was the main contact of *Socialist Outlook*. In the same way, Mohammed Shakeel (Jack), before he became the first striker to abandon the strike to run a small tyre business in Washwood Heath, was the main contact of the Socialist Workers' Party. These sectarians, who are always spouting on about learning the lessons of this or that struggle, are astonishingly quite impervious to learning any lessons about their own methods of intervention and their consequences.

The union leaders had not the slightest intention of putting Hamrik Lail back on the strike pay roll, but felt the issue could be an educative one for recent recruits to trade unionism. So a meeting was called, and Hamrik was invited to put his position. Before the meeting it appeared that the



Burnsall workers on the picket line: they could have spearheaded a sweatshop unionisation drive

*"No abstract right  
to vote, nor an abstract  
obligation to  
blindly follow that  
vote, will do."*





Burnsall workers on the picket line: fighting against the odds

trade union principle involved was understood. A number of strikers, including Sajid Hussain, Balvir Singh and Mohammed Tariq, had privately lobbied the two union officials, saying he must not be allowed back, he has only come back because the Fund has picked up again, etc. etc.

At the meeting, however, all, including the above three, voted for Hamrik's return. Kuldip Dhaliwal spoke for many strikers, when he expressed resentment at being asked to vote. For Kuldip the matter was not one for the strikers to vote on; it was a matter for the union officials to decide for themselves.

These two examples reveal that in concrete situations, abstract rights to a vote are quite useless as a guide to action.

In one situation Kuldip and many of the strikers do not want the right to vote if it involves them in putting trade union principles before ties of friendship (whatever they privately say behind that "friend's" back). However, in another situation where they have been manipulated into believing a vote can restore their meal ticket, they become very keen to exercise a democratic right that had previously meant so little to them.

I think Trotsky offers useful guidance, when he observes that, "Ultra left scholastics think not in concrete terms, but in empty abstractions... They seek a hermetically sealed formula which excludes fresh air." ("Learn to Think" *Writings 1937-38* p.333).

Leaders of a trade union struggle no less than Marxist revolutionaries must respond to concrete situations in all their complexity. No abstract right to vote, nor an abstract obligation to blindly follow that vote will do.

Your difficulties on this point arise, I believe, because of your very partial understanding of the role of trade union officials. In theory the Trotskyist analysis of the trade union bureaucracy acknowledges its contradictory character. In practice, however, and in your popular expositions with which you train and educate your members, your preoccupation is overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, with its negative side. Its timidity in struggle, its fear of mass mobilisation, its servility before authority, its proclivity to settle for far less than is on offer, and of course its very different material circumstance compared to most of its membership.

The other side, although anticipated in Marxist theory, finds little echo in your propaganda. Its upholding of trade union principle when its rank and file is unable or unwilling to do so. In the Burnsall strike, the record clearly shows the full-time officials time and again defending working class

interests against the duplicity and venality of their members.

For that reason, I believe the union officials were upholding an important trade union principle, when they ignored a vote to restore a renegade to the strike pay roll, and, for the same reason, I believe we were right not to encourage a vote whose only purpose would have been to give a spurious legitimacy to a non-trade union objective.

Your belief that unions are always obliged to give unconditional support to continue a strike for as long as strikers call for it, can hardly withstand sober scrutiny. A union funded from its members' subscriptions possesses finite resources, whose utilisation must be planned, managed and justified. The GMB in the West Midlands employees 19 full-time officers to represent over 70,000 members. For each officer that would be on average around 4,000 members in about 40 establishments. Thus a union in that situation which commits two of its nineteen officers to make their major preoccupation for over twelve months the representation of twenty workers in one sweatshop is hardly engaging in a rational allocation of resources.

It is an allocation of resources that can only be justified politically. As it was it represented a not insignificant commitment to the unionisation of sweatshop workers, disproportionately drawn from ethnic minority backgrounds.

For the union to have abandoned the Burnsall strike while the remotest possibility of victory existed, would quite rightly be seen as a betrayal, and that of course is why we stayed with the dispute for as long as we did. To have continued the dispute knowing it was unwinnable and having extracted all political capital from it, would have been a betrayal of a different type. It would have been a betrayal of the thousands of other workers that the two officers were also paid to represent and defend, and whose relative neglect could only be justified up to, but not beyond the time that the prospect of victory at Burnsall was remotely possible.

In the real world to talk of continuing a dispute without any consideration of the possibility of success is ultra left, phrasemongering, and reflects perhaps unconsciously the pressure of the sectarians with whom you associate, upon you. It mars what are otherwise two excellent articles by Denham and Rigby. By eschewing the conventional stereotype that pits virtuous worker against venal bureaucrat, your two articles provide a 'real' account of a strike's tensions and conflicts. As such it must be the basis for a more mature and hence effective political practice.

## Burnsall: the workers must decide for themselves

By Tom Rigby

*"Too long have the workers of the world waited for some Moses to lead them out of bondage. He has not come; he never will come. I would not lead you out of it if I could; for if you could be led out you could be led back again. I would have you make up your minds that there is nothing that you cannot do for yourselves."*

Eugene Debs

**J**O QUIGLEY'S ARTICLE raises a series of related issues that go to the very heart of working class socialism.

Jo describes as an "abstract right" the notion that the workers should vote on whether or not to call off their strike, and adds: "Leaders of a trade union struggle no less than Marxist revolutionaries must respond to concrete situations in all their complexity. No abstract right to vote, nor an abstract right to blindly follow their vote will do".

Jo could not be more wrong.

The principle at stake here is much broader. It is a principle that cannot exist "abstractly" but only in the concrete struggles of real flesh-and-blood workers. Marx wrote it into the rules of the First International: "The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves".

Our argument that the Burnsall strikers should have had a vote on whether or not to call off their strike (rather than having the strike closed down by two appointed full-time officials) is simply one concrete instance of this general rule that the workers must free themselves.

The principle or "right" at stake is working-class self-emancipation. It is the basic, overriding principle of Marx's socialism from below.

None of Jo's arguments against taking a vote address this point. Let us look at them in turn.

### Two wrongs make a right?

To say, as Jo does, that because the strikers were hypocritical in not wanting a vote in one case and wanting one in another, they therefore do not have a right to a vote, is illogical nonsense.

The right to vote *may* mean little to the strikers, as Jo argues, but even if he is right, it can not mean that this democratic right should mean little to us.

### Upholding a higher principle?

Jo's second main argument seems to me to amount to the idea that trade union officials can uphold *general* and higher principles against the particularism of a specific group of workers. Jo argues: "In the Burnsall strike, the record clearly shows the full-time officials time and again defending working class interests against the duplicity and venality of their members.

"For that reason, I believe the union officials were upholding an important trade union principle, when they ignored a vote to restore a renegade to the strike pay roll, and, for the same reason, I believe we were right not to encourage a vote whose only purpose would have been to give a spurious legitimacy to a non-trade union objective".

Two issues have been twisted together here in Jo's argument. Let us try and untangle them.

1. *Can trade union officials defend higher principles than their members?*

Of course. Otherwise we would have to denounce any trade union official who wanted to discipline a scab or group of scabs.

2. *Can the action of Jo Quigley and Danny Parry be justified in referring to this principle?*

No. Jo has to show how closing down the strike in the way it was *furthered* the trade union principles he genuinely believed he was defending.

It did not promote or further these princi-

ples. It obscured them.

Now, if we are faced with two principles or general rules that appear to be in contradiction with one another — like these two do — the only way to resolve the problem is to decide which is the higher principle.

The idea that the workers should take responsibility for themselves and their own liberation seems to me to be a higher and more basic rule or principle than Jo's argument that if left to themselves the workers would pursue a non-trade union objective by maintaining the strike simply to provide a "meal ticket" for themselves.

It strikes me that Jo and Danny should have tried to *convince* the strikers to call off the action themselves (by all accounts they did so try) and if that failed and the workers continued to carry on the strike it would be better for the officials to tell the strikers that they were not prepared to continue to "service" the strike, and that they would ask to be transferred to other duties.

The matter would then be in the hands of the elected CEC of the GMB, who *formally* and constitutionally had control of the strike all along.

If the strikers continued to demand "a meal ticket" as Jo puts it without outlining any strategy for victory then the CEC, as the elected representatives of the *whole* union between conferences, would have the right to call off the strike.

But, even then, there would be a very strong case, from an educational point of view, for not calling off the strike against the will of the strikers until wide layers of the broad labour movement could see that the strike could not be won.

You can have an authority in a workers' organisation that represents the interests of the collective whole and which therefore has the right to restrain a particular group of workers, but that authority must be elected and accountable.

To give that authority to appointed, unelected officials is to create a special caste of elite guardians of the common good.

Jo is thus barking up the wrong tree when he ascribes to us the belief that "unions are *always* obliged to give unconditional support to continue a strike so long as strikers call for it".

All we said is that *in this case* the strikers' demand for official backing to be restored should be supported. We also said that *in this case* virtually all the criticisms of the regional officials were dishonest and that the support groups had no strategy for victory.

To repeat: the workers should be convinced, not cajoled or compelled. If we want to rouse the working class to fight for its own freedom that is the only method to use.

### The responsibility of leaders

Jo's response to this argument is to say that he felt responsibility as the leader of the strike to see it through to the end, no matter how bitter that end may be.

I think Jo is wrong on this. In the last analysis a full-time official — even one who conducts an absolutely principled struggle in defence of the members — is a *servant* not a master of the workers.

Understandable though Jo and Danny's frustration at the antics of the support groups and some of the strikers may be, it does not and cannot justify closing down the strike without a vote. This is the case even if the demand for a vote was only seriously raised by the strikers after the strike was over.

To conclude. None of the "complexities" that Jo talks about amount to an argument for not having a vote. If we want to understand a complex thing we need both fully complete and concrete familiarity with all its aspects and an understanding of its underlying principles. It seems to me that the essence of every strike, and every working-class battle, is that it is part of the overall drive for working-class self-emancipation. No amount of references to complexity can obscure this simple truth.



# Creepy McCree makes good

## Cinema

### Matt Cooper reviews *The Firm*

THE HERO OF *The Firm*, Mitch McCree (Tom Cruise) is a creep. He makes you sick. He is a working-class lad "from the wrong side of the tracks" made good. Top of his year at Harvard Law School, his future seems assured.

He has an ambition to succeed, driven by fear — the terrible fear of poverty that can drive you, a fear you can only understand if you have known it.

He has turned his back on his widowed mother, who lives in a trailer park. Though he clearly disapproves of her having lovers he never even thinks of telling her when he graduates with top honours and lands a plum job.

Then there's his brother Ray, doing time for manslaughter. Him too, Mitch has cut out of his life — even though, as we discover, he only killed in self-defence. All that Mitch cares about is his decidedly upmarket wife (Jeannie Tripplehorn). For herself or for her usefulness to him in his social climbing? That is not clear.

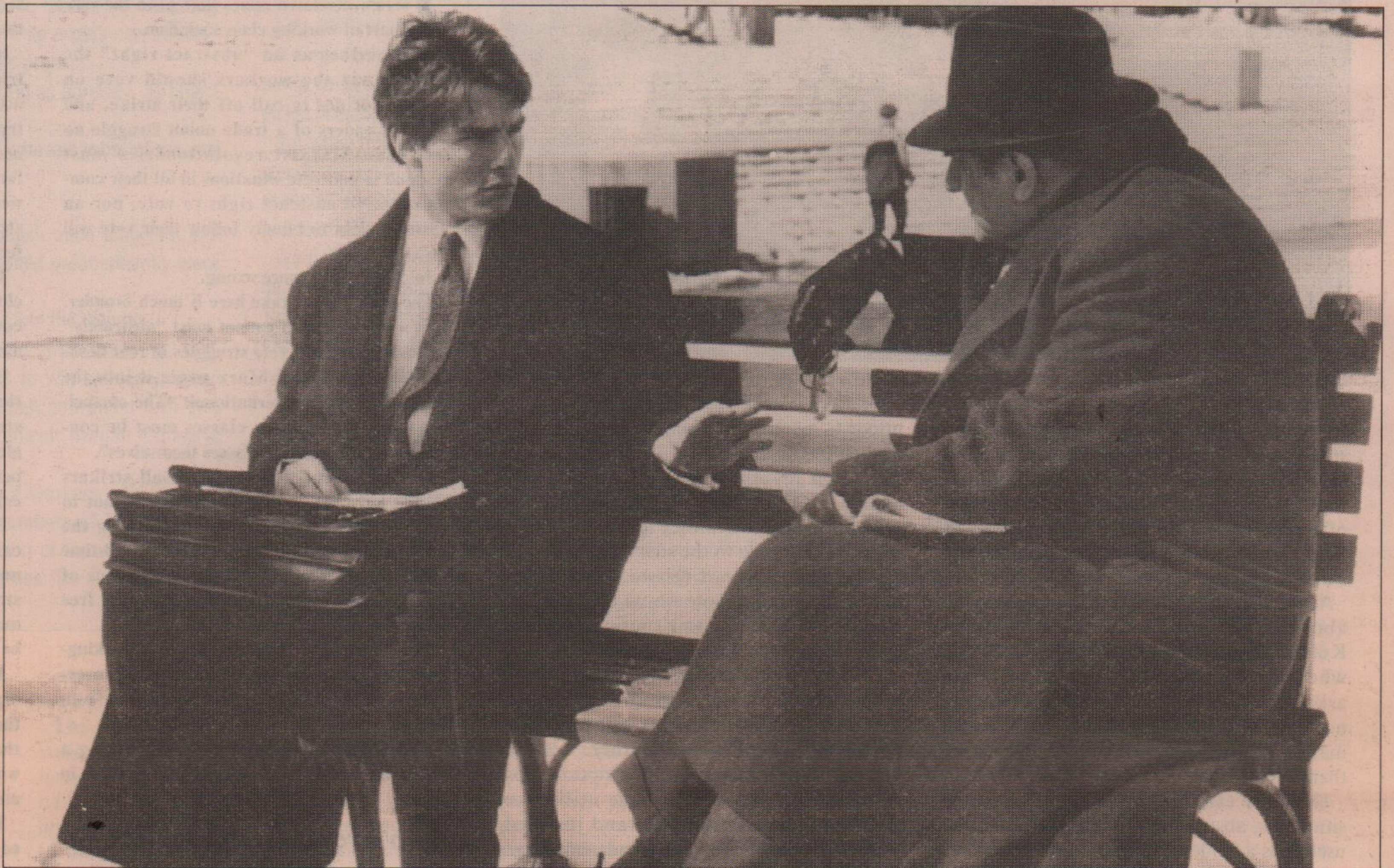
So there you have Mitch — a clever, ambitious, social-climber afraid to look down. When "The Firm" offer him \$96,000 a year plus house and car, he jumps at the chance. The Firm are, of course, the mafia lawyers who launder dirty money into clean businesses. Though Mitch does not know that yet. In choosing Mitch they seem to have chosen well.

Up to this point the film has been slightly dull. From here on it loses its bearings. Mitch is, after all, Tom Cruise. He's a good guy. The film's cinematography, wardrobe and make-up all contradict the story line to make you feel that he is really good. The plot is less convincing on that point. Mitch

## Periscope

The round-the-clock occupation to stop the closure of Springdale nursery, in North London, appears on television again this Saturday, 18th, at 2.15am on *Londoners*, Carlton TV.

The occupiers, who have been there for four and a half months, need support: send messages of support and donations to Islington Under-Fives Action Group c/o Springdale UFEC, 15a Springdale Road, London N16 (071-923 0263).



McCree the creep become a hero when he has to fight the FBI

doesn't seem to object to working for the mafia. Until he realises that he has a problem. His problem is that as a result he may end up dead or in prison.

Suddenly he reunites with his brother. Suddenly there's compassion, humanity. But all this sits uneasily with a character who wants to solve his problems without any self-sacrifice.

From this point the film descends into predictable farce, a sort of *Die Hard* with brains where brawn should be. But while *Die Hard* redeems itself with a self-deprecating humour, aware of its own ridiculousness, *The Firm* takes itself very seriously. It is the individual against the system scenario once again. Mitch has to fight the Mob, the lawyers, his wife, the FBI. Mitch the creep becomes the hero.

The film misses out on the possibility that Mitch might be an ordinary, flawed individual with weaknesses, and corruptible, like Gene Hackman's character — senior partner in the firm and complicit up to his neck, yet possessing a genuine humanity, even vulnerability. No such problems can plague Mitch.

At the end of the film Mitch is looking into his true love's eyes. After all the danger, the infidelity and the torment he has subjected her to — does she still love him, he asks? She looks hesitant. "I love you", shouted a voice from the audience. "I'll always love you", pouted the mouth on the screen a split second later. I didn't!

# Not just your average mini-series

## Television

### Paddy Dollard reviews *Sinatra* (ITV)

REMEMBER THE scene in *The Godfather* in which a film producer wakes up in a blood-drenched bed beside the severed head of his favourite horse? This is the *Godfather's* way of convincing the producer to cast a certain actor-singer in a coveted role in the movie he is about to make.

That sequence in *The Godfather* many people believe, is a dramatisation of an episode in the career of one Francis Albert Sinatra. Idol of the teenage "Bobbysoxers" in the forties and the star of a few routine movies, Sinatra's career was going steeply downhill by the early '50s.

It was revived and boosted in 1953 by an Oscar-winning character part in a fine film made from James Jones' powerful anti-war novel *From Here to Eternity*.

Frank Sinatra reputedly got that role courtesy of Italian-American gangsters. Mario Puzo wrote the widely-believed story into his romanticising novel about the mafia, *The Godfather*.

There is no doubt that Sinatra had such friends, or that he liked to be

photographed in the company of mafia murderers who had "Made Their Bones" many times over. Such pictures have often been published to haunt and embarrass him.

He has, of course, also been photographed hobnobbing with US Presidents — Kennedy, Nixon, Reagan. It is an incestuous world at the top in the USA!

Politicians, film-stars, plutocrats and gangsters mix, intertwine and sometimes swap roles, or double in them. Frank Sinatra is now and for decades has been a Prince of the Great Republic of the West.

*Sinatra* (ITV, last Sunday and Monday) was produced with her father's blessing by his daughter Tina. It is the official Sinatra tele-biography.

Now, you can learn a great deal about a person's philosophy from what he says — truly or otherwise — of himself and about his auditors from their implicit expectations, and their reactions. So it is with this series.

Did Sinatra have gangster friends? So, did the Kennedys he — truly — says here through his daughter!

Sinatra is shown acting for Joseph Kennedy — JFK's Svengali father — to get the mafia to "deliver" West Virginia for Kennedy in the 1960 election — by way of trade union influence which they controlled.

In power, however, the Kennedys are an ungrateful lot! They cut off Sinatra

and set the FBI on their erstwhile gangster friends. This official Sinatra tele-biography indicts them as ingrates, not as corrupt hypocrites working a corrupt system!

Sinatra, a long-time Democratic Party "Liberal" got his revenge: he backed Nixon in '68!

Oddly enough though, he did have some respectable credentials as a liberal in the '40s and for a long time afterwards.

He was an active opponent of racism in the era when race relations in the USA were regulated by the American Republic's own brand of Apartheid, which was not confined to the south. At the end of the fifties he was a pioneering employer of writers who had been blacklisted at the height of the witch-hunt.

His notorious antagonism to the press may have originated in his experience of being hounded for his political stands by the right-wing Hearst press in the forties.

Still, a nasty man by all accounts, with nasty associates and for a long time now, nasty Republican politics — a man who tries to play the role of the millionaire entertainer surrounded by skivvies and bodyguards as a variant of the traditional Sicilian "godfather".

A TV mini-series is a mini-series. This one was better than average, and more significant.



# British Telecom: reject pay insult!

By a central London BT engineer, Thames Central branch.

British Telecom workers have been offered an insulting 1.9% pay rise this year. Our union, the NCU, is recommending rejection in an industrial action ballot.

The offer is insulting because private sector pay rises are running at an average of 3.5% this year and because BT continues to make huge profits.

The employers' offensive in BT continues. We are being forced to work harder and in more

restricted ways.

On top of that, management now want to introduce seven day working. The best way to answer the bosses is with a massive vote for action on pay.

The new Broad Left executive now face their most serious challenge.

## Tube ballot against sacking

By a Central Line worker

**A** BALLOT IS taking place this week on the London Underground's Central Line for a series of one day strikes in defence of sacked Central Line guards Ray Stelzner and Pat Sikorski.

This Monday, 13 September, saw a 150-strong meeting on the issue at Leytonstone, next to the depot where the two guards worked.

The ballot result will be announced later this month. Activists expect a big yes vote. Socialist Organiser produces

a workplace bulletin on the Central Line which has been arguing for strike action to defend Ray and Pat.

### APOLOGY

Last week's paper was produced at a time when our usual industrial staff were at the TUC. This made it difficult to cross-check articles on the industrial page. Unfortunately this led to a serious

error. Our computer accidentally regurgitated an article from earlier in the year on the tubeworkers' pay ballot. Though the ballot was won, no action was called because of the low turnout. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused.

## Civil service workers plan strike against "Market Testing"

By Trudy Saunders, CPSA DsHSS section executive committee.

**T**HE CIVIL service unions are set to hold a one day strike against "Market Testing" — the first step in contracting out work to private profiteers — on 5 November.

As this is a fully postal ballot, it is vital that union activists devote all their energy to winning a massive "Yes" vote for action.

Yet tragically, the ultra-right-wing leaders of the CPSA have chosen this very moment to launch an attack

on union organisation which could have devastating consequences.

They want to abolish the two biggest areas of the

union — the DsHSS and DE sections.

A crazier diversion from the fight against the Tories is hard to imagine.

### INDUSTRIAL FRONT

*College Lecturers in the Further Education sector are due to strike on Wednesday 21 September.*

*Their action is in protest at the college Employers' Forum's attacks on the traditional FE contract.*

*Some lecturers face major changes in their conditions including a 45 week year and 900 hours' teaching time.*

*The action has to be escalated after 21 September.*

*Several offices in the Department of Employment were shut down in Bristol for two days earlier this month.*

*The strikes were in protest at the victimisation of the two CPSA reps who organised a walk-out in solidarity with the Arrowsmith strikers. DE managers had tried to advertise for scabs.*

## Middlebrook Mushrooms: the next steps in the campaign

**E**IGHTY NINE women workers at Middlebrook Mushrooms have now been on strike for ten months.

The strike started when management tried to bring in new contracts and the women refused to sign them. They were locked out.

Though the union, the TGWU, has lost an industrial tribunal hearing for unfair dismissal, the strikers are determined to continue their fight.

They are calling on people to boycott all products from the parent company, Booker

(of book prize fame), and to support their picket of the Booker prize ceremony on 26 October.

A demonstration is planned in Doncaster on Saturday 25 September, and a mass picket is planned for 20 November.

The women are also organising a trip to Liverpool to picket Booker warehouses and approach the dockers about boycotting mushrooms from Ireland.

Messages of support, requests for speakers etc. to: S Wright, 61 Manor Garth, Kellington. 0977 62923

## Strikes can beat Tory pay freeze

From back page

Rail union RMT leader Jimmy Knapp has talked of "A winter of discontent" but the TUC are very vague about any specific action.

All they have done so far is call an emergency meeting of the TUC public services committee to discuss the pay freeze. That's just not enough.

It is vital that we seize the time.

The fight over pay has to be linked to the defence of public services and public sector jobs.

Already sections of workers are being drawn into battle.

\* White collar Town Hall grades in UNISON are now balloting for a series of one day strikes against the pay freeze.

\* Firefighters are set to strike from 8 November if the employers do not abandon the pay freeze.

\* Civil service unions are striking on 5 November against Market Testing.

\* UNISON have called a day of action in defence of the NHS for 11 November.

The TUC should now pull all public sector workers together for a day of strike action to coincide with Clarke's Autumn Budget.

The Tories are very vulnerable.

The magnificent teachers' boycott of the Tory tests exposed their weakness. It is now up to other groups of workers to follow through the attack. From by-election disasters to chaos over Maastricht and rail privatisation, the Tories have shown themselves divided. The last thing they want now is a showdown over pay and the defence of the public sector.

The time is right to fight. The key task now is to win huge majorities for action in the ballots that are, or will soon, be taking place in UNISON, the firefighters union FBU and also in British Telecom the great private monopoly.

UCH: cross-London rank-and-file links are key to winning solidarity.

Jane Bruton, UNISON steward at the Middlesex Hospital, talked to Socialist Organiser about the strike against cuts at University College Hospital (UCH), which is linked with the Middlesex

"IT IS NOT very easy taking a strike that is limited to one hospital and trying to spread it, but that is what we have got to try to do.

The key is rank and file links across the London hospitals.

That is the only way to strengthen the strike and take control of the dispute out of the hands of the UNISON bureaucrats. If we don't do this then at some stage we could see those leaders pull the plug on the strike.

You can already see the dangers. UNISON have called a day of "activity" on 16 September, but have not directly linked it to UCH. And they certainly have not called for strikes.

All this points to the need to re-activate the shop-steward-based London Health Workers' Co-ordinating Committee. If we can do this then at least we then have some means with which to fight for rank-and-file control of the action.

We can't just wait for the UNISON leaders. The day of action on the NHS set for 11 November is just too far distant. Our dispute could well be over by then. We need to force UNISON to bring the action forward".

# Nature, nurture, or both?

LES HEARN'S

## SCIENCE COLUMN

**C**HRISTOPHER BARNES' letter ("No gay genes in prison overalls" — 5 August) described my article "In our genes?" as being "as suspect as the unscientific techniques involved in the research (into the possible genetic basis of homosexuality — LH) itself". He then makes exactly the same point as I, and indeed the researchers themselves, did, namely that it is unlikely that a single gene or group of genes is responsible for determining something as complex as human sexual behaviour.

Barnes accuses the scientists involved of holding that "straight is normal, gay is abnormal". In fact, molecular biologist Dean Hamer and his colleagues at the National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, were at pains to warn against the use of their research to "assess and alter" a "normal variation in human behaviour" (my emphasis). Later, Hamer repeated that tes-

ing for behavioural traits, and attempting to alter them, as opposed to testing for and attempting to treat genetic diseases, was "wrong and unethical". He added that male homosexuality "is a normal human attribute and there is no reason to test for it."

As regards the scientific validity of the research, I quote the director of the US National Centre for Human Genome Research, Francis Collins. He says "This study looks pretty solid. Even so, it is extremely important to have it reproduced". Distancing himself from the crude caricature of a genetic scientist drawn by Barnes, Collins states that "It is clearly the case that male homosexuality has a large environmental contribution. All this study is saying is that we may have found part of the genetic contribution" (my emphasis).

To counter Barnes' allegation that the scientists were labelling individuals and using a "stereotypical definition of homosexuality", I quote the fact that the researchers themselves "strongly" advised their research to "assess and alter" a "normal variation in human behaviour" (my emphasis). Later, Hamer repeated that tes-

most of the other gay subjects thus supporting the argument that environmental and/or other genes must also contribute to male sexual orientation.

This research is perhaps only circumstantial evidence but there is other evidence too. For example, there are now three studies showing small differences in the sizes of various brain structures between heterosexual and homosexual men. These findings also need confirmation and explanation.

With a staggering arrogance, Barnes dismisses all this as "unscientific". He "knows" that the environment determines sexuality and that sociological research will confirm this. "Humans are not natural beings. We are all social constructs, especially in issues of gender."

But whoever is right, (all environment — Barnes; a mixture of environment and genes — Hamer's group), it makes little difference: a wrong logic will just as easily advocate genetic testing for homosexuality as will a right logic. The current research into the genetic basis of sexual orientation can be criticised on several scientific counts — the number of subjects is small; the assumed level of male homosexuality is probably wrong; and so on. There must also be concern about the potential misuse of all genetic information. But outbursts such as that of Christopher Barnes do not help clear the

way homosexuality has been viewed".

"While geneticists did nothing in the 1950s and 1960s, their colleagues in clinics were trying out intensive therapy, aversive conditioning, hormone therapy, electric shock treatment and even partial lobotomy and castration in attempts to 'cure' homosexuality". If sexual orientation is solely determined by environment, one would perhaps expect these barbaric "treatments" to have had some effect. Christopher Barnes may be able to supply some facts. NS points out that Masters and Johnson, in their research into human sexual behaviour in the 1950s, searched in vain for homosexuals who had become heterosexual.

The current research into the genetic basis of sexual orientation can be criticised on several scientific counts — the number of subjects is small; the assumed level of male homosexuality is probably wrong; and so on. There must also be concern about the potential misuse of all genetic information. But outbursts such as that of Christopher Barnes do not help clear the



# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Support the UCH strikers

# Strikes can stop Tory pay freeze

By a Healthworker

**T**HE BATTLE TO save the University College Hospital in London is now at a critical stage. The UCH management claim that the merging of UCH into Middlesex Hospital is the only way to save at least one hospital. That claim is undermined by the fact that the local health authority has put a ban on all non-emergency operations until next April and threatens to stop sending patients to UCH/Middlesex next year — that would mean both hospitals closing.

Nurses and porters at UCH have been on indefinite strike with emergency cover since 17 August. The UCH strikers have held regular rallies and demonstrations and have called for:

\* Other hospitals to take action.

\* Workers outside the NHS to take action.

Ambulance crews have agreed not to move patients from UCH without the strikers' permission but management are being very heavy handed.

The Health Section of UNISON in London have called a day of action on Thursday 16 September.

We spoke to Elizabeth, a nurse at UCH:

"We have a very supportive reaction from other trade unionists and the public including donations, moral support and even some people coming out on strike with us. It's all very, very positive. It's good that we've had a build up in the action, and we've had all these rallies, so that when we do have the London-wide day of action on 16 September everyone will be prepared. All the people who have gone out talking to workplaces get very positive reactions. People do want to come out on strike to make a statement to support us. So I think next week on the London-wide day of action it's really going to show how much support there is for UCH and the health service."

More on page 15.



Healthworkers and others face cuts in real wages. Photo John Smith

**T**HE TORIES have thrown down the gauntlet to public sector workers. This Tuesday Chancellor Kenneth Clarke announced that this year's public sector pay freeze will continue next year.

Even newly elected TUC general secretary John Monks has managed to notice that "The government is in deep trouble".

He also realises the seriousness of the attack on public sector workers. "This is not a pay freeze, it is a pay cut for 5.5 million workers — many of them low paid. With inflation forecast at 4 per cent in 1994 and further tax increases likely, if this policy runs its course it will amount to a further severe cut in the living standards of millions of dedicated public sector workers."

"Meanwhile boardroom salaries are allowed to rise".

The pay freeze is just one aspect of the

Tories' attacks on workers caused by their public spending crisis.

- 140,000 public sector workers face the dole if leaks about the extent of Clarke's budget cuts are true.
- 25% of civil service jobs will go through Tory plans to extend "Market Testing" (the contracting-out of work to private profiteers).
- 15,000 post office jobs are on the line in the next 5 years.
- The reduction of BR's grant by 23% means that 500 trains per week will be cancelled and 50 stations closed on Sundays.

But if the TUC leaders can see how serious the Tories attacks are, then the question has to be: "Why aren't they organising any action?"

Continued on page 15

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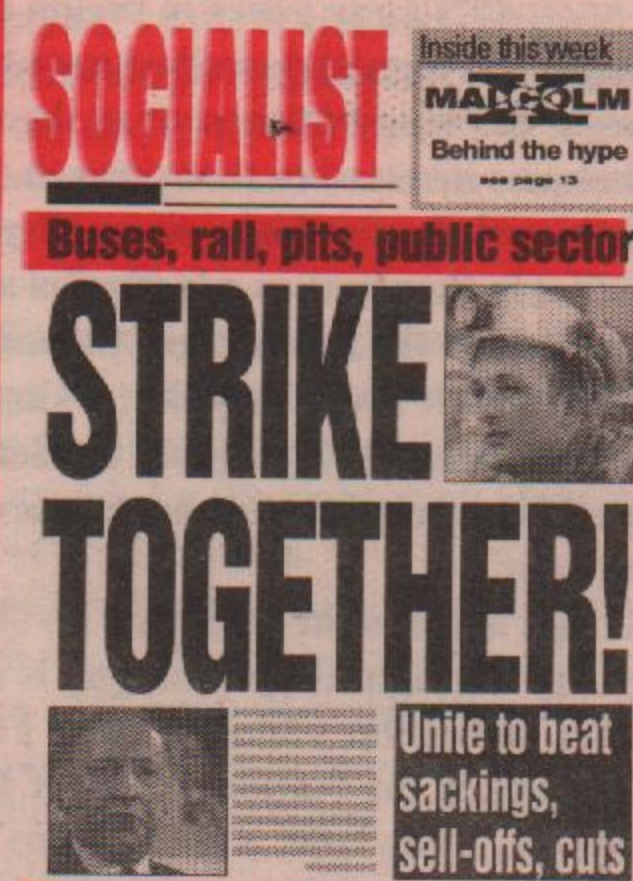
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# YOUTH FIGHTBACK

*The paper for well red youth!*

## Contents

Self-defence – no offence • Build Labour's youth • Fightback in the colleges

## *Nazis feed on Tory racism*

# FIGHT RACE

# HATE!



Police attack Asian youth on vigil in East London

**T**he racist gang that beat Quaddus Ali until he was nearly dead in London's East End is one part of the cancer of racism that has given the Nazi British

National Party the chance to win a council seat in Millwall in East London.

But this cancer of race hatred is not something conjured up by the Nazis. It is rooted very deeply in the age-old racism of British society.

Racism was built up to justify everything British imperialism did, from the early slave trade to the colonialism in Africa 100 years ago.

It is used to divide the British working class and scapegoat people for the social conditions the Tories and the capitalists they serve have created.

Mainstream politicians have whipped up race hate by blaming people for crime or unemployment and by publicly treating black communities as "problems".

It was the Tory government which brought in the Asylum Bill and used it to whip up race hate by implying that "our" houses and jobs were being "taken" by "immigrants".

Of course the Tories want to blame the black communities for the failures of their system! It is their system that creates mass unemployment, while those in work are forced into longer hours.

Their capitalist system organises things so well that bricks and land and building workers lie idle when housing is desperately needed. What could be better for the Tories than to turn white youth who are angry about the lack of jobs and homes against the black communities?

**What the Tories and the gutter press preach, the Nazis and the racist, white gangs translate into violent, racist action on the streets.**

It is not only the Nazis who attack black people and black communities.

The police do it too.

Day in and day out, black people face abuse, racist police harassment — on top of suffering from the indirect effects of racism — higher levels of poverty and worse than average unemployment.

The vigil outside the hospital in East London where Quaddus Ali lay critically ill turned into a fight with the police, when the police waded into the crowd.

Raharma Hadam, a young Asian woman on the vigil, told *Youth Fightback*:

"There are a lot of police patrolling the area all the time now, just to move Asian boys off the street. But they have nowhere to go. The police say: 'get out of there, move along!' It's harassment. Last night there were police round every corner you turned."

Young Asians on the vigil told *Youth Fightback* that local police told Quaddus Ali's friends that the racist attack

was "your problem".

The police are there to defend the bosses, and the police are soaked in racism. They will not fight racist attacks: all too often they carry them out!

With the racist cancer spreading and a horrible growth of neo-Nazism across Europe, it is vital now that socialists build a mass working-class-based anti-racist movement.

We need a working-class-based movement able to counter the racist crap with demands for more housing and jobs — for everybody, black and white.

The labour movement must unite against racist laws, against the racist police and campaign in every necessary way to drive the racist thugs off the streets.

Only the labour movement has the power to cut the cancer of racism out of our society. It is the job of socialist youth to join the labour movement and fight to make sure it does so.



*what we say:*

# Unite the anti-racists

**YOUTH FIGHTBACK BELIEVES THAT** there should be one united anti-racist/anti-fascist organisation. People have said to us "what does it matter, let everyone do their own thing". Wrong!

Of course we have supported the actions of the different campaigns. We have been on all the demos. But the existence of the Anti-Nazi League, Youth Against Racism in Europe, the Anti-Racist Alliance, Anti-Fascist Action, etc., etc., is not just silly, it is dangerous.

Each campaign has its own agenda. Much of the energy of each campaign is used up in organisational competition with the other campaigns.

Last year three separate marches were organised in South East London to protest at the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence! One very big march would have been much better!

Now we have the lunacy of two national anti-racist demos in different parts of London on the same day.

This sort of stupidity will keep the anti-racist movement weak. It will put off people who might otherwise get involved. It is a gift for those in the labour movement who want an excuse to do nothing.

The fascists, the police and the Tory racists must be loving it.

This idiocy is a direct and inescapable result of having different competing anti-racist campaigns.

The sad fact is that each of the campaigns has a hidden agenda underneath its supposed principles.

The Anti-Nazi League, who don't mind "soft racists", are aiming to build a liberal consensus against 'Nazis' within which the Socialist Workers' Party recruits members. It is run entirely by the SWP in the narrowly conceived interests of that party.

The Youth Against Racism in Europe campaign is designed to build "Militant Labour"; the Anti-Racist Alliance "principle" of a "black leadership" is simply a cover to allow certain careerists to appoint themselves as leaders.

Youth Fightback wants to see one anti-racist campaign that works in the trade unions, the Labour Party and in the black communities to build a movement that opposes *all* racism:

- \* Immigration laws,
- \* Police racism
- \* Racist attacks

We need a movement able to physically prevent fascist groups from organising their thug squads. It should unite white and black workers in the fight for full employment and decent housing for all — thus cutting the ground from under the feet of the racist agitators. It must be capable of posing alternatives to racist and fascist propaganda which lyngly blames the black community for unemployment and lack of proper housing.

We need a mass campaign against racism and to get it, the small and divided movements that now exist must unite. There will be many different ideas of the way forward but these could be discussed rationally in a democratic and united movement.

The lunatic logic of different anti-racist campaigns is horribly visible now — in senseless competition to fight racism.

Unity is better, and if we are to smash fascism we must create maximum unity.

There is no good reason why there should not be one united anti-racist and anti-fascist campaign.

An open democratic unity conference must be called immediately at which can be set up one united campaign. There is no other way! Stop the squabbling! Start a united fightback — now!

# Self-defence

In the early 1980s Asian youth who were angry about racist attacks on their communities, and understood the police would do nothing to stop these attacks decided to organise themselves to defend their communities. Their slogan was "Self-Defence is No Offence".

The police, however, (surprise, surprise) did not see it that way.

In Newham, East London, plain-clothes police arrested youths who were defending a school that had suffered many racist attacks.

A car pulled up outside the school and a group of white men started a fight with the group guarding the school. The police who had been waiting around the corner piled in and arrested eight youths. The racists who started the fight then revealed themselves as plain-clothes police officers.

The Newham Eight eventually won their case after a strong defence campaign was organised. The police, however, harassed those running the campaign and attacked one of the demonstrations it organised.

Another case of police attempting to intimidate and hamper such self-organisation was that of the Bradford 12. They were a group arrested for conspiracy.

These examples show that the police are not part of the solution to racist attacks, they

are part of the problem. The labour movement should look to working class organisations to fight the racists and champion the idea that the black communities have a right to self-defence against racists: "Self-Defence is No Offence!"

## Anti-Racist Alliance March for justice

Sat 16 October

Assemble:  
Temple Tube, 12 noon

Speakers include John  
Monks, Ken Livingstone

Sponsors include  
TUC, NUM, RMT etc.

## Unity demonstration Close down the BNP HQ!

Saturday 16 October

Winns Common,  
Plumstead,  
London SE18  
Assemble 1pm

## YOUTH MEETINGS

### Brighton Labour Party Young Socialists

"Is Labour relevant to youth?"  
Alice Mahon MP, Chris Smith MP  
Thursday 30 September, 6.30pm,  
Brighton Unemployed Centre.

### Battersea Youth Fightback

"Stop the Race Hate!"  
Thursday 23 September, 8pm,  
Battersea District Library,  
Lavender Hill.

### Manchester Labour Youth meeting

"Fighting racism"  
Eddie Newman MP, Jeni Bailey  
Tuesday 21 September, 1pm,  
South Trafford College.

### Newcastle Youth Fightback meeting

"How to stop the rise in racism"  
1 October, 12.30pm,  
North Tyneside College.

### Southwark Youth Fightback meeting

"Fight racist attacks!"  
Thursday 21 September, 12.30pm,  
Southwark College, The Cut.

### Sheffield Youth Fightback meetings

"Racism — where it comes from  
and how to fight it"  
Speaker: Jeni Bailey  
Wednesday 22 September,  
12 noon, Norton College.  
Thursday 23 September,  
12 noon, Parkwood College.  
Friday 24 September,  
12 noon, Castle College.



Newham Defence Campaign de

# Don't sing WOMEN'S

Alison, Sheffield

**H**AVE YOU EVER worried that you were pregnant or that you got someone pregnant? With a few drinks, a bit of carelessness or a split condom it's happened to most of us. Bad access to contraception, doctors you can't talk to and cuts in abortion services mean the prospect of having a kid on your own when you're 16 becomes a reality for many women. Others choose to have kids rather than have a boring life in a society that offers nothing.

Whatever the reason, living off a pittance on Income Support means you end up staying in by yourself with the baby with no money for food or clothes, let alone a child-minder. It's hard going, lonely and boring. The way the Tories and the media go on about single mothers you'd think they are rolling in it. As if they would get pregnant on purpose to get a grotty council flat! According to the government, single mothers are the downfall of society, bringing their children up to lives of crime and laziness, the cause of unemployment, drugs and the economic crisis!

For a start, many of the Tories spouting this gibberish would not last a day on the money many single mothers have to live on for a month. Secondly, who is it that shut down the coal pits, the factories



# is no offence



Photo Andrew Wierd

# Don't blame single parents!

## FIGHTBACK

and the public services that put thousands on the dole? It was not single mothers! The Tory policies have caused mass unemployment. What they are really doing is trying to avoid the blame for the crap society they have created with their right-wing social and economic ideas.

Single parents need social and financial support. Instead, this government cuts benefits and vital services such as nurseries, schools and public transport. Also it tries to cream off money from single parent families by introducing the Child Support Act. This means that absent fathers will be chased for maintenance money. It comes as no surprise that the money goes

straight into the government's pocket and not to the mother. In fact, many are worse off.

Under capitalism, scapegoats are used by those who have the power in society. This basically means they will always want somebody to blame for the inevitable crisis that their system finds itself in. At the moment they are picking on youth and single parent families. Single mothers don't have trade unions or any organisation to defend them, so they're an easy target.

One of the main reasons they pick on single parents is because they want to keep a hold on what is acceptable in society to control people's ideas. The Moral Right have always tried to lay down the law on the family, on sexuality, on who should have children. They say that everybody should live in a 'normal' family, with a mum, a dad and

two kids, so people feel guilty if they don't achieve this aim.

In fact society has never existed according to their rules. Single parents are common and mostly accepted within society. This scares the right-wingers and so they launch in with the backlash against lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and single parents. By targeting one group they divide people up and weaken their power to fight.

It's our job to show the Tories up for what they are, to expose their lies and show that it is them causing inequality and poverty in society. As part of this we must fight alongside workers in the labour movement for services like better childcare, sex education and abortion facilities to make people's choices wider, and also to defend people from the ideological attacks on their way of life.

## WRITE BACK

### Unfair healthcare

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, I've been working full- and part-time in various nursing homes. It is far from being a pleasant job and without any reward. The majority of the staff are women and as you could expect the pay is appallingly low.

These homes are usually owned by individuals who can charge what they like to the residents (normally £300 plus a week) and set wages and conditions for staff.

For them this is about profit and not about care of the elderly. There is no training — which makes lifting residents dangerous for them, yourself and for the colleague you're lifting with.

As back accidents are frequent, this makes a bad situation worse. There is no job security and, as many people go into this work, your boss knows you're easily replaceable.

Doing shift work on a 24 hour a day job means you can often work 18 hours at a go, become tired and irritable and unable to give sufficient care.

The new proposals about these homes are about cutting costs for the owners and lowering the already low standards they have to set; which will invariably lead to worse conditions for residents and staff alike.

What we need is better pay, decent training, improved safety conditions and job security, although no job is ever completely secure under capitalism.

We need decent NHS homes with properly trained staff on proper wages and who have full trade union rights. The trade unions and Labour Party must oppose the Tories' plans to lower standards. The unions must fight to unionise all health workers.

I tried to unionise one home once. The staff were very keen and joined but our boss wouldn't recognise it and the union bureaucracy of the GMB gave us no support.

It is very important that trade unions go out to young workers, and, as a young socialist, I will continue to fight to get youth into the unions.

Debbie

### Build Labour's youth

WHEN I MOVED FROM BIRMINGHAM I wanted to get involved in the local Labour Party. By contacting Labour HQ I got the names and telephone numbers of the local heads of the Labour Party and soon went to one of the ward meetings.

Not finding this to be the most inspirational setting for a young socialist I thought it would be a good idea to get together with youth in the Party to build an organisation for young people.

There was no such organisation, so I asked how difficult it would be to set one up. It was incredible how much support I got from the local Labour Party and soon they gave me the membership list for young people in the local party.

I sent out letters to all the members, following it up with telephone calls and several personal visits.

It was so surprising how willing people were to become part of a Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) branch!

By the time of the inaugural meeting there were a core of activists.

We have been given a lot of support from all parts of the Labour Party and this includes financial support.

We now have a growing movement in which we have direct representation on the General Committee of the local Labour Party.

We plan to hold an awareness campaign centred around the issues of homelessness and housing after the Conference.

There is nothing to stop any determined young person from starting up an LPYS in their area. It is certainly much easier than I thought!

Mic

## who we are

WE'RE SICK OF POVERTY, OF UNEMPLOYMENT, of police harassment. We're sick of pointless jobs and YT cheap labour schemes. The Tories have used unemployment to drive down our wages. They've cut or abolished benefits and grants. Yet most young people see politics as irrelevant.

The reason for this indifference is the failure of the leadership of the labour movement. The trade union leaders have cowered at the Tories' attacks and failed to organise workers in new industries or the unemployed. The Labour leadership has given in and trailed along behind the Tories. Instead of fighting the Tories, Kinnock attacked the left and broke up the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Young people do kick back. The anger does explode — in riots. But riots achieve nothing and cannot change the basic problems we face. The only force that can rid society of poverty, alienation, unemployment and cut away the roots of racism and sexism is the labour movement.

The place for a youth fightback is in and through the labour movement. We will fight the right wing leadership of Labour and of the unions. If they bar us from official structures we will build our own.

We can take on the Tories, drawing the anger of young people into class politics. We can show young people that they can change the world and that we can fight back.

### YOUTH FIGHTBACK — the paper for well red youth

"YOUTH FIGHTBACK was launched by Alliance for Workers' Liberty youth because youth need a socialist paper. If you want to get involved, write to us or send us articles, and sell this paper."

Sell **YOUTH FIGHTBACK**

I want more information about YOUTH FIGHTBACK

I want ..... copies of YOUTH FIGHTBACK and enclose

£ ..... (20p per copy; cheques payable to "WL Publications").

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Write to: YOUTH FIGHTBACK, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Or telephone Mark on 071-639 7965 for more details.



# Revolting in college!

**H**AVE YOU HAD enough of college bosses who rip you off? Enough of a hostile government that blames young people for everything bad while they let millions of us rot on the dole or on Youth Training?

Have you had enough of a system that forces you to try to get through college with no money? Well then, decide to *do* something about it!

Revolt against the Tory government!

Join *Youth Fightback* to demand:

- Full benefit rights for everyone over 16, including income support and housing benefit.
- The scrapping of cheap-labour "Youth Training".
- The setting up of real training schemes with full trade union rights and rates of pay for those who go on them and a guaranteed job at the end of it.
- A grant of at least £70 a week for every full-time student over 16 years old.
- A massive injection of money into education to fund decent

facilities, equipment and libraries.

- Democratic control of colleges by students, college workers and local councils and not, as happens now, control by profit-obsessed private companies. What action can you take?
- Get involved in your student union — if the union in your college is not running, help set one up.
- Get things moving in your college! Organise canteen meetings; call local lobbies of MPs and Councils. Demonstrate at the local Tory HQ.
- Bring students from your college to the following national anti-Tory events:
  - The lobby of Tory Conference in defence of student unions, at Blackpool on 22 October.
  - The national demonstration "Defend Free Education — Save Our Student Unions" — 3 November, 12.30 pm, All Saints Park, Manchester.
  - The lobby of Parliament on 25 November.



A student revolt is needed now

## The Tories are liars!

### LIE 1

The government say they want more people to stay on in education after school. How are students to live?

In 1988 the Tory government took 16-18 olds out of the benefits system altogether! Nationally there are no grants for 16-18 year old students; local authorities have drastically cut or abolished grants for 16-18 year olds.

The only way 16-18 year olds can get any income is to get a job or go on a Youth Training course at £29 a week. Youth Training is just a cheap labour scheme. There is little real training and it rarely leads to a job.

The truth is that the government will pay us £29 a week to be cheap slave labour for a sweat shop boss, but nothing to study or train at college.

### LIE 2

The government say they want a

better education system, with more people in it.

They have decreased funding per student. Colleges are overcrowded. They do not have the resources they need to run courses properly.

### LIE 3

The government say they want high quality education open to all.

Their real aim is to get a better trained workforce on the cheap in overcrowded and badly-funded schools and colleges.

The rich who have plenty of money will continue to send their kids to public schools and to the few elite universities like Oxford and Cambridge.

### LIE 4

The government say that their education reforms, imposing market disciplines and values, will make education better.

Look at the results so far!

The reforms have destroyed local democratic control of colleges. Market competition makes colleges give first place to courses that bring in cash.

It puts pressure on them to drop courses which cost them too much.

To make such decisions in this way is to indulge in the politics of the madhouse!

### LIE 5

The government say they support "Freedom of Choice" and work for a better education system.

Yeah?

Then, why is the government planning to destroy student unions and the National Union of Students?

It is hateful to them that students presently have the automatic right to be in a union.

They hate the way students use their unions to organise against college cuts and government attacks on students.

On top of this the government want to help universities impose huge tuition fees on students by way of a "Graduate Tax".

They want to smash local student unions and the National Union of Students in order to stop us organising against the upcoming Tory attacks on our right to free education.

The liars who run this Tory government are the worst liars, the most shameless liars, since Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, Josef Goebbels, abandoned politics back in 1945!

But Goebbels had the decency to shoot himself!

tally and physically harmed by this."

Rubbish! Being lesbian or gay does not make you a worse parent. Lesbian mothers must have the same rights as anyone else.

Bigots like Kay Bottoms must be opposed. But it is also a disgusting indictment of the US legal system that one of its courts could snatch someone's son because it disapproves of his mother's sexuality.

## Leave our kids alone!

**INTERNATIONAL BIGOT  
KAY BOTTOMS,  
VIRGINIA, USA**

**K**AY BOTTOMS HAS won a court case against her own daughter for the custody of her daughter's son, Tyler. Why? Because her daughter lives in a lesbian relationship! She told the court "Tyler will be men-

*Free Education*

*End Student Debt*

**No Tuition Fees**

*Defend Student Unions*

**Demonstration**

Wednesday 3 November

Assemble: 12.30,

All Saints' Park, Manchester  
(nr. Manchester Metropolitan University)

More details: 061-275 2973

## Join Left Unity!

**I**F YOU ARE SERIOUS about fighting the Tories' attacks on education you should get involved in your local students union and the National Union of Students. But, there is a problem. The NUS leadership is dominated by Labour "moderates" who for years have refused to organise national action. In the face of every major attack, they have refused to organise a fight back.

The left do organise in the student movement — in Left Unity.

Left Unity builds action in the colleges and challenges the cowardly right-wing Labour leaders of NUS. And we organise national action.

Left Unity is the national left-wing opposition to the "moderate", do-nothing leadership of NUS. If you want a student union movement that takes on the Tories and unites with the labour movement, join us!

*Elaine Jones,  
NUS National Executive  
(personal capacity)*

Name .....

Address .....

College .....

Return to: Left Unity, 9 Love Walk, Camberwell, London. Telephone: 071-639 7965.