

A SOCIALIST ACTION

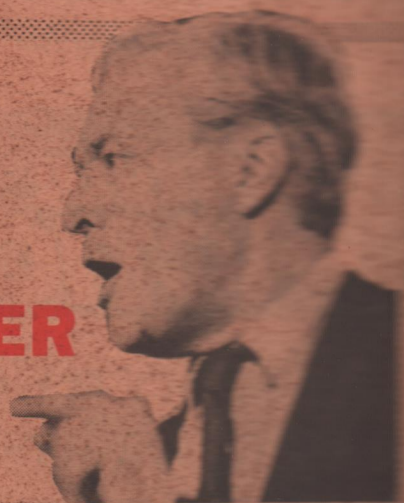
BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

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40p

VOTE
BENN/HEFFER



SUPPORT THE NUS



THE STRUGGLE between the National Union of Seamen and P&O is vital for the entire trade union movement. It is a dispute as important as Wapping or at GCHQ — an attempt to break an entire trade union.

It also shows the full viciousness of the Tory anti-union laws with the right they give to an employer, unique in Europe, to dismiss a workforce which goes on strike — and their right to withdraw recognition from a union. It is an all-or-bust strategy by P&O to smash the NUS. The sequestration of the NUS's assets by the courts, and the fine of £150,000, is yet another indication of the union-busting character of the Tory laws.

But the response of the NUS membership has been an inspiration to the labour movement. At the time of going to press the NUS membership has brought 80 per cent of British ferry services to a halt.

The scab services which the P&O has put on from Dover are purely cosmetic. The second sailing last Monday on the *Pride of Bruges* for example had 50 passengers, excluding the press, on a ship that can carry 1300!

Meanwhile by the beginning of the same week 5000 NUS members were on strike. All P&O ships supplying the North Sea oil rigs have been halted, Liverpool and Ipswich have stopped, ferries to the Isle of Man have been stopped, the channel island services have been halted. The deep sea ships are beginning to come out.

The *Financial Times* admitted on Wednesday that P&O could not operate a service on its present strategy. To operate its rosters P&O has to have a locally based workforce. And the Dover seafaring community has held out magnificently.

The strike comes as British ship owners have degouted the merchant fleet by switching to 'flags of convenience' to cut into unionisation, wage rates, and safety. More than 50 per cent of the British merchant fleet has been reflagged in the last 20 years to get around agreements with the NUS.

This tactic was also used to get around the solidarity shown by the NUS in the miners strike — when a ton of coal was moved in ships manned by NUS members.

The use of the courts to apply Tory law was seen by P&O as providing the final edge in winning a struggle against the NUS.

But thanks to the magnificent solidarity shown by NUS members it has become a dispute that can be won by the labour movement — with an effect that would strengthen the entire labour movement.

The response that should come from the TUC to any unions assets being seized is to take immediate solidarity action — but we have come to know that nothing will be forthcoming from that quarter. Norman Willis should be planning solidarity action with the NUS — not proposing concessions to ACAS. What must be done, and is vital, is that other unions supply the solidarity and finance that will allow the strikers and the NUS to keep going and win this dispute.

That is possible — and neither the courts nor P&O are capable of taking on the British trade union movement.

Winning this dispute would be the most significant victory for years for the trade union movement. Every section of the labour movement has as its priority to mobilise in all out support for the seafarers.

Winning the dispute can turn round the situation for the trade union movement.

Socialist ACTION

The policy review and the leadership contest

The outcome of Labour's policy review, and the tactics of the party leadership, are now absolutely clear — not that its intention was ever very carefully disguised. The aim at this party conference is to get through a policy document *Aims and Values* which explicitly abandons socialism as the goal of the party and, in line with that, to put through an economic policy abandoning public ownership. The aim at next year's conference is to abandon unilateral nuclear disarmament. While huge pressure forced the NEC to back the NUS, support for most workers in struggle has effectively been abandoned — as the lamentable display of Robin Cook and Neil Kinnock around the nurses dispute once again confirmed.



The consequences of that are clear. First it is going to reduce the possibility of a Labour government — because it allows the relation of forces to accumulate in favour of Thatcher. Second it means that if there is a Labour government it is going to be exceptionally right wing and demoralise its supporters.

This is really what is at the core of the leadership contest. It is obviously not about personalities. Nor is it about internal party matters. It is about how to defeat Thatcher and to secure a Labour government which actually delivers something for its supporters.

That is also how the leadership campaign has to be conducted. The view that it would damage Labour's standing in the polls is already shown to be false. What has to be done is to get the issues out into the open. Kinnock and Hattersley's supporters want the key policy issues — above all *Aims and Values* and the economic policy documents to go to this conference — not to be debated. For the left the most vital issue is that they are debated — and that should be fought for as the first priority at every union conference and in every CLP.

From that the tactics of the left should be clear. They should argue for a vote for Benn and Heffer in the first round — they are the best candidates. They are the only ones clearly opposed to the present course of the party. They should argue for a vote for Prescott in the second round. Meanwhile they should point out that Prescott supports Kinnock for leader, supports *Aims and Values*, and no-body knows what his position is on economic policy.

The aim must first be to gain votes against *Aims and Values* and the proposed economic policy — and to win votes for Benn and Heffer. Second to defeat Hattersley and the right.

But the key first step is to get the debate on policy out into the constituencies.

The votes that must be won

THE LEADERSHIP campaign will be a hard one. It will require real left organisation in the constituencies. A glance at the arithmetic shows where the key areas will be. JOHN ROSS assesses the fight ahead.

THE KEY area in the leadership contest will be in the CLPs. The vote of the Yorkshire NUM to support Kinnock and Prescott for leader and deputy leader makes it still more clear that there will be no significant union vote for Benn and Heffer. The crucial area will be the constituencies and the parliamentary party.

PLP

Inside the PLP the exact number of MPs who will vote for Benn/Heffer is not clear. But as the PLP has 30 per cent of the electoral college, and the Campaign Group had slightly over 40 members before the recent resignations, we would anticipate around 5 per cent of the electoral college vote from the PLP being cast for Benn/Heffer. As their trade union vote will be minimal this means that for the leadership contenders to win 20 per cent of the electoral college they have to win one half of the CLPs — 15 per cent of the electoral college.

Taking the CLPs, then, on the basis of the previous years voting for the NEC, they are fairly evenly split between the Campaign Group on one side and the combination of right wing and 'soft left' on the other — with the right being much the stronger of the latter two. The Campaign Group has a small majority over the right wing and soft left combined — and on Kinnock the right wing and soft left will vote together.

Majority

Taking as a rough dividing line those CLPs which vote in the constituency section of the NEC for a majority of Campaign Group candidates (4-7 out of 7), and those that vote for a minority of Campaign Group candidates (0-3 out of 7) then of 566 CLPs voting last year a small majority (51 per cent) voted for a majority of Campaign Group candidates while a large minority (49 per cent) voted for a majority of right wing and soft left candidates.

Tony Benn has personal support exceeding that of hard Campaign Group constituencies. In 1987 out of 566 constituencies which voted 422, 75 per cent, voted for Benn. However it will be significantly harder to get CLPs to vote for Benn for leader than for the NEC. The goal of getting a majority of CLPs to vote for Benn is therefore not unrealistic but is only going to be achieved by very hard organisation.

Candidates

Regarding the deputy leadership, two political factors will be crucial for the deputy leadership and the campaign in general. The first will be the vote for Prescott, and how to deal with it. The other will be regional differences.

It is clear the CLPs will vote massively against Hattersley. There are only 135 CLPs which vote essentially for right wing candidates — including the top placed right wing candidates (Ashley and Kaufmann) in

the constituency section, McCluskie for treasurer, and Boothroyd and Dunwoody for the women's section. That is 24 per cent of constituencies which voted last year.

This correlates almost exactly with the result the last time two left wing candidates ran for a single post, treasurer in 1986. Then Ken Livingstone and Gavin Strang received 75 per cent of the vote between them.

There is, therefore, a hard core of 25 per cent of the CLPs which vote a right wing slate and will support Hattersley. There is not much outside that. There is no reason to think that Kinnock will be able to pull much for his deputy, given the deep personal unpopularity of Hattersley. Prescott in a second round against Hattersley would probably pick up 70-75 per cent of the CLP vote — that is 22.5 per cent of the electoral college.

Prescott

In the PLP Prescott should pick up a minimum of 85 MPs in a second round and more likely up to 100 — 13 per cent of the electoral college.

With approximately 35 per cent of the electoral college vote from the CLPs and PLP Prescott only needs to pick up 15 out of 40 per cent from the trade union section of the electoral college — eight per cent being accounted for by the TGWU alone.

In short, not only does Prescott stand an excellent chance of defeating Hattersley, but he would win easily without Neil Kinnock's intervention. Kinnock is going to have to pull out every stop to save his deputy — and even then he may not succeed.

This makes it clear that the campaign for Benn and Heffer must not cut across the campaign to defeat Hattersley. Not only would that be objectively sectarian, which is the most important, but it would also inevitably alienate the party membership — who see the opportunity to strike a blow against the right.

Cut

This means two things. First making it clear that if there is a second round in which Prescott is standing the Campaign Group candidates will be calling for a vote for Prescott against Hattersley. If that is not done Eric Heffer's vote will be cut down because CLPs will be tempted to strike a blow against the right by voting for Prescott as the candidate most likely to defeat the right.

There should be no problem here as Campaign Group members have made clear that they will be voting for Prescott in a second round. It simply needs to be done openly so that CLPs can see clearly that they can vote for left policies, by voting for Heffer, in the first round and still vote against the right in the second.

Secondly CLPs must clarify Prescott's stand on the policy issues. So far he has avoided clarifying his



Party conference delegates in 1981 when the deputy leadership was announced.

views on the key issues. Where, for example, does he stand on economic policy — he is a member of the economic policy review committee which is almost certainly going to come to horrifyingly right wing conclusions.

Regions

When it comes to the regions the situation is extremely uneven. The regions are really divided into two groups. London, Yorkshire, the East

Midlands, and North West are dominated by the Campaign Group. Here it is an issue of getting out the vote. In the other regions organisation to win over 'marginal' constituencies, which means those thinking of voting Kinnock/Prescott, is required.

When it comes to such organisation by far the most effective grouping for delivering votes in the party in the last years has been the link up between Labour Left Liaison and the Campaign Group. In last year's elections 88 CLPs

voted for only Campaign Group/LLL candidates — compared to 9 who voted for only LCC backed candidates for example.

Key issues

Politically the leadership campaign will be running in tandem with two other key issues — the campaign against the 'Aims and Values' document and that against the economic policy document. These must be brought into the centre of the leadership campaign.

Voting in the constituency section of the 1987 NEC elections

Region	Total CLPs in region	Didn't vote	CLPs voting for the following number of Campaign Group candidates							
			0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Northern	36	2	6	6	5	5	7	2	2	1
Yorkshire	51	3	4	2	5	3	11	5	10	8
North West	74	10	8	3	9	6	14	3	5	16
East Midlands	44	4	1	6	8	3	5	2	4	11
West Midlands	58	7	7	6	4	9	8	7	5	5
Eastern	51	1	5	7	7	8	7	7	6	3
London	84	1	0	5	10	7	12	12	14	23
Southern	77	8	1	3	10	16	18	6	5	10
South West	48	8	0	6	5	12	2	3	5	7
Wales	38	4	12	5	2	8	3	2	2	0
Scotland	72	19	7	6	12	13	3	4	4	4
Total	633	67	51	55	77	90	90	53	62	88*

Region	Total CLPs in region	Didn't vote	% of CLPs voting for the following number of Campaign Group candidates							
			0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Northern	36	6	17	17	14	14	19	6	6	3
Yorkshire	51	6	8	4	10	6	22	10	20	16
North West	74	14	11	4	12	8	19	4	7	22
East Midlands	44	9	2	14	18	7	11	5	9	25
West Midlands	58	12	12	10	7	16	14	12	9	9
Eastern	51	2	10	14	14	16	14	14	12	6
London	84	1	0	6	12	8	14	14	17	27
Southern	77	10	1	4	13	21	23	8	6	13
South West	48	17	0	13	10	25	4	6	10	15
Wales	38	11	32	13	5	21	8	5	5	0
Scotland	72	26	10	8	17	18	4	6	6	6
Total	633	11	8	9	12	14	14	8	10	14*
Excluding no vote			9	10	14	16	16	9	11	16*

* Includes 5 CLPs which voted for only Campaign Group candidates but less than 7

How to win the vote

THE REASONS for voting for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in the leadership election are principled and not tactical. Neil Kinnock, in his willing alliance with Hattersley, has systematically sabotaged the struggles which would have taken the labour movement forward. He has thereby weakened the working class today and made it even less likely that a future Labour government will succeed. It is only necessary to list the miners strike, Wapping, the fight against councils cuts — not to mention the latest episodes such as the failure to give support to the nurses strikes — to make clear the record.

And worse is to come. This year will see the attempt to commit Labour to

Principles

an *Aims and Values* statement which is the most right wing ever adopted by the Labour Party, to commit Labour to an economic policy which will not work and rules out nationalisation, and, next year, everyone knows the assault on unilateralism is coming. All this weakens the labour movement. Under these circumstances a vote for Benn and Heffer is clear.

Tactics

But if the vote is not tactical this does not mean that tactics are not necessary in the campaign. This is not a campaign waged at the peak of left success as in 1981. It is necessary to identify clearly the issues and how to maximise the vote.

Crucial

Some crucial issues will not be pre-planned and will be thrown up by the class struggles itself. One such is

the P&O dispute. Benn and Heffer, and the Campaign Group, have taken up, and given full blooded support, to the struggle. Tony Benn and Eric Heffer went down to Dover to express support for the strike — which is what the leader of the Labour Party should have done. Support for such struggles is both vital in itself and will win support for the campaign.

Class

But in addition to direct class struggles there are a number of clear, coming, policy issues which can and should be used directly in the campaign. How to articulate these with the leadership campaign requires strategy and tactics by the left — not only organisation but highlighting what are the decisive areas where the left can win votes. These must also, to have an effect, be the most important issues of policy. Before considering these however consider briefly the line up of forces in the CLPs.

Leaving aside random votes the leadership election will see four basic group-

ings inside the constituency parties. The first is those voting Kinnock-Hattersley — the right. The second, the soft left, will vote Kinnock-Prescott. The third the periphery of the hard left, will vote Benn-Prescott. The fourth, the hard left, will vote Benn-Heffer. It is relatively easy at the beginning of the campaign to work out the relative strengths of some of these currents and, in turn, work out the key issues which must be clarified to strengthen the left.

First, as we show on the opposite page, approximately 25 per cent of CLPs will vote for the right wing — Kinnock-Hattersley. Nothing substantial can be done about them and for campaigning purposes they may be ignored.

The second group which it is relatively easy to determine the weight of, is the hard left which will support Benn-Heffer from the beginning of the campaign. Eric Heffer received 180,000 votes for the NEC last year — which is also the strength of those that voted for at least five Campaign Group candidates out of seven. This is 32 per cent of CLPs voting at conference.

Battle

The real battle ground is approximately 40 per cent of CLPs that are not committed either to the right wing or the hard left. How to win CLPs at present thinking of voting Benn-Prescott into voting Benn-Heffer, and how to win



Tony Benn speaking in Chesterfield

CLPs at present thinking of voting Kinnock-Prescott into voting Benn-Heffer is the key issue. *The key to achieving this is first to ensure that the policy issues are debated out before the issue of the vote for leader and deputy leader are taken.*

Policy

The decisive policy issues that can be foreseen are clear. Politically, in the contest for the leaders post, the key to winning votes from Kinnock will be discussion of *Aims and Values* and the positions taken by Labour on key issues of the day such as the NHS dispute.

The great majority of CLPs will be opposed to *Aims and Values* as it becomes clear what it is about — the dumping, even in the party's aims of any commitment to socialism. We would expect 75 per cent of CLPs to oppose *Aims*

and *Values* — compared to 50 per cent that might be considering supporting Benn for leader at present. The first crucial task is to explain to the 25 per cent of CLPs that will oppose *Aims and Values*, but at present may support Kinnock, that this is a completely inconsistent position. That *Aims and Values* must be thrown out. Kinnock, who introduced the document into the NEC, must be voted against — including because he supports *Aims and Values*.

The first priority on the issue of leader is therefore to ensure that every CLP debates *Aims and Values*. Resolutions to oppose it should be moved wherever possible. It is precisely because the leadership does not want the issues discussed that it is attempting to move for postal ballots in the leadership election — so that members do not discuss the issues — and is moving for immediate

nominations. Forcing a debate on the policy issues is the first priority.

As regards the deputy leadership the decisive issue will be both *Aims and Values* and economic policy. Everyone knows that Hattersley wrote *Aims and Values* and that he supports the documents likely to emerge from the Productive and Competitive Economy committee of the policy review. However *no-one* knows where John Prescott stands. He has declared that he supports Neil Kinnock for party leader and, while he is a member of the Productive and Competitive Economy review committee, he did not even attend its final meetings which finalised the document it is presenting.

Vote

The significance of this has to be brought out because the crucial CLPs in the deputy leadership con-

test are those at present considering voting Benn-Prescott — CLPs that wish to vote against the right but which are thinking of voting for Prescott in order to defeat Hattersley.

Here the left must explain that it is correct to vote for Prescott on a second round but that it is necessary to cast a clear vote against *Aims and Values* and the economic policy documents. That means voting for Eric Heffer on the first round — Heffer being the candidate for deputy leader clearly opposed to *Aims and Values*, the economic policy drift of the party, and its current course. Supporters of John Prescott must be challenged to ask where he stands on these decisive issues.

In every CLP, however the crucial issue is to win a debate on the policy issues starting with *Aims and Values* and economic policy.

Why I am standing for the deputy leadership



Eric Heffer and Dennis Skinner

SOCIALIST ACTION asked Eric Heffer to explain the reasons he was running for deputy leader and the key policies he would be campaigning on.

'SINCE 1983 the party has been moving steadily to the right. The leadership has been undermining the basic concepts of the party stage by stage. Many of the things that were accepted as our basic principles are steadily being eroded.

Not only are principles being eroded but policies which have been worked out over a long period of time by proper discussion and debate in the party are equally being undermined. That plus the fact that the

leadership has increasingly concentrated power in the hands of the parliamentary

By Eric Heffer MP

party, in the hands of the shadow cabinet, and within the shadow cabinet in the smaller group around the leader of the party.

Increasingly we are not involving the membership in democratic decisions. This has got to be stopped. It is time that the party

membership decides that we have had enough of this drift towards the right. If we are going to conduct a real fight against the Conservatives, and not just leave them to damage themselves, if we are going to mobilise opinion against them, then we are going to have to mobilise that opinion through a party which is dedicated to its principles and will fight inside the House of Commons in the most vigorous fashion — and take that fight out into the country, into the trade unions and into the localities.

This is why I think it is absolutely essential that this contest should take place.

The deputy leadership is not just about organisation, it is about policy. A lot of the input into the policy review is being made by Roy Hattersley. The document *Aims and Values*, adopted by the NEC, has got Roy Hattersley's imprint over the whole document.

We have had a debate on this in the PLP. I was told by the leader of the party that if any member of the parliamentary party had ideas on it they should

submit them to the NEC and they would be considered. I submitted a whole series of amendments. I received a card back saying that they had been dealt with. But when I asked my colleagues on the executive committee whether they had seen these amendments they said they didn't come up. They had apparently simply been considered by the deputy leader of the party and that was that.

This document is a fundamental retreat from the basic ideas of the Labour Party. It means that we are moving away from the idea of the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. We are talking in terms of accepting the capitalist system and merely making a few changes here and there. We are actually accepting the agenda set by the Conservative party — support for the market, for share holding and so on. It is a fundamental undermining of the basic concepts of Labour Party.

This relates to the discussion going on in relation to the whole future of economic policy. Here it

will be very interesting to know precisely where the other candidates for the deputy leadership will stand.

Roy Hattersley's positions are well known. He is the chief author of the *Aims and Values* document. But John Prescott also a member of the economic policy review committee and I await with interest the positions he will take. Up to now he's tended to say that he agrees entirely with what Neil Kinnock and the leadership are doing, and it's more a question of the role of the deputy leader rather than the politics. Well we're interested in the politics, they are really the key question.

As far as the policies of the campaign are concerned the first thing is to bring all those industries that have been privatised into public ownership — with this time genuine forms of democratic management and the involvement of white collar and blue collar workers.

Then we have to seriously argue for the extension of public ownership and control to the banks

and finance houses. We cannot talk in terms of creating full employment without having the control of the basic industries, as Nye Bevan put it, of the 'commanding heights' of the economy.

These two issues — the extension of public ownership and the campaign for full employment — are tied together. We have to have a policy of creating public industries in the worst hit areas. We need investment in these regions.

Second we need a full scale programme for housing — primarily for public housing so that people who can't afford to buy homes are able to have decent houses to live in. We have to scrap all the nonsense that has been talked about for some years about choice, because millions of our people don't have any choice. We have to get down to a campaign for housing and other construction work. If we do that this will also help bring back full employment.

Then we have to say that as far as democratisation is concerned not only do we have to have freedom of in-

formation but we must get rid of the House of Lords and bring back democracy in the localities by giving the right to elected authorities that will not be dominated by central government.

Also all anti-trade union legislation has got to be repealed and new legislation brought in which underlines the rights of the trade unions on a scale never seen before.

In relation to foreign affairs we have to fight for a non-aligned policy, the ending of all nuclear bases in this country, and working for the winding down, and ultimate abolition, of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and for a nuclear free Europe.

Alongside of that must be the ending nuclear energy in this country and basing our energy industry on coal.

From the point of view of the party we have to rebuild it at local level through having branches in offices, in workplaces.

These are the key issues in the campaign. We are waging a crusade for socialism.

Ireland — polls say time to go

THE LABOUR Committee on Ireland (LCI) AGM at the beginning of April met as opinion polls both in Ireland and Britain showed a dramatic increase in opposition to British policy, and the British presence, in the North of Ireland. REDMOND O'NEILL reports.

A SERIES of recent opinion polls in Britain and Ireland have shown a dramatic shift in opinion against the Anglo-Irish Agreement and in favour of British withdrawal from Ireland. In March half of those interviewed in Britain in a MORI poll for the *Economist* were for British withdrawal from Ireland now or within a set period. Only one in four people were for Britain remaining in Ireland permanently.

The results of the latest opinion poll in southern Ireland are more dramatic. The poll, reported in the *Irish Post*, was conducted by Irish Marketing Surveys on behalf of the *Irish Independent*.

There has been a spectacular change in Irish attitudes to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Only 22 per cent of those interviewed believed that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has brought about an improvement in the administration of justice in the north and only 21 per cent believe that it has brought about a change in the position of the nationalist community.

On the British presence as such, a clear majority want Britain out within five years. Twenty three per cent wanted an immediate British withdrawal. A further 30 per cent want British withdrawal within five years. Thirty four per cent want the troops to stay until a settlement is reached. And only four per cent support Britain remaining in Ireland permanently.

In answer to the question of how peace can best be achieved in the North of Ireland, 50 per cent were in favour of a united Ireland, including those supporting a federal arrangement. Twenty nine per cent favoured power sharing in the north and 11 per cent approved of an independent Northern Ireland. Only two per cent favoured a return to majority rule in the north and four per cent were for integrating the North of Ireland with Britain. The talks between the SDLP's John Hume and Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams were endorsed by 68 per cent with only 14 per cent opposed.

The disenchantment with the Anglo-Irish Agreement is mirrored in a poll conducted 15-17 February in the Six Counties for *Fortnight* magazine and Ulster Television. In this, 81 per cent of nationalists could detect no benefit to their community from the Agreement and only 16 per cent thought the nationalist community had benefitted from the Agreement. A massive majority of people in Ireland have lost all confidence in the Agreement.

The poll also showed that whilst the Enniskillen bombing significantly reduced support for Sinn Fein this was entirely recouped by the impact of the Stalker/Sampson report and the rejection of the appeals of the Birmingham 6.

In a chilling indictment of British rule, to the question 'Are there any events that would give you hope for the future here?', to quote *Fortnight's* report: 'Remarkably, fully two out of three respondents could not think of anything at all'.

The *Irish Post* commented on these polls in an editorial under the title 'Time to go': 'Something entirely new is needed and democracy in these islands demands that British withdrawal from the north is put on the agenda. The "Time To Go" year-long campaign, headed by MP Clare Short, and soon to be launched in Britain, is timely ... The British presence is at least part of the problem in Northern Ireland. It remains the greatest obstacle to negotiating a peaceful and permanent solution.

The Labour Committee on Ireland at its AGM at the beginning of April recognised the potential for significantly broadening the withdrawal movement in this context. It endorsed the year of action for British withdrawal culminating in a demonstration and festival in August 1989. It set the goals of winning a majority for action against employment discrimination and significantly increasing the vote for British withdrawal at this year's Labour Party conference.

Most encouragingly of all, it was attended by Tom Hart, a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union national executive, who pledged that he and others would be working to open up the debate on Ireland in the TGWU and to seek to get the union to reverse its 1987 Labour Party conference vote against the MacBride principles on employment discrimination in the North of Ireland.

Principles and tactics

FOLLOWING the decision of the Campaign group to contest the Labour Party leadership a number of MPs resigned from the group. Significantly this included a number of women MPs, Jo Richardson, Clare Short, Margaret Beckett, Joan Walley and Joan Ruddock. The reasons they state for resigning are disagreement with the leadership contest. Others have attempted to present the issue as about the position of women. The decision of these MPs to leave the Campaign group is unjustified and wrong.

All these MPs are also members of the *Tribune* group, and they are not resigning from this group. Considering the positions of the *Tribune* group shows what is wrong with their action and clarifies the issues involved.

The Campaign group has endorsed the demands of the women's conference for a strengthened women's organisation, it supports the call for constitutionally recognised Black Sections, it consistently defends the party's position for unilateral nuclear disarmament, it supports British withdrawal from the North of Ireland.

The *Tribune* group has taken no positions on comparable issues defending the interests of women — or of black people, or of party democracy, or on Ireland, on public ownership or any similar questions. Specifically:

- The *Tribune* group has not supported the demands of the women's conference for the election of the women's places on the NEC.
- The *Tribune* group has not supported the demands of Black Sections.
- The *Tribune* group

has supported witch hunts in the party.

● The *Tribune* group in the shadow cabinet elections last year, refused to al-

**By Jude Woodward,
Press officer WAC
(personal capacity)**

ly with the Campaign group to elect a left majority in the shadow cabinet that would have supported the key elements of party policy which the right are opposed to.

● The *Tribune* group has not endorsed policies defending public ownership.

● The *Tribune* group has not unequivocally supported unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The Campaign group, which no one claims has always been right in every decision it has made, has fought on the principled issues of policy and democracy in the party. In particular its record on defending the demands of women and black people in the party is infinitely superior to the *Tribune* group — not to speak of Neil Kinnock.

So if one takes the



Clare Short: her decision to leave the Campaign Group is unjustified and wrong

stated political positions of Jo Richardson, Clare Short, Joan Ruddock and the others literally one would have to say that they have subordinated agreement over fundamental principles to disagreement over a tactic — the advisability or not of a leadership contest. The resignations only make sense if something much more fundamental politically is involved — a basic political position.

Certainly their action in remaining in the *Tribune* group shows that their position can have nothing to do with that of women in the party. If the women had left the group to form a separate, new and more feminist group then a justification for their departure based on the weakness of the Campaign group on women might have some credibility. But

to leave the Campaign group for the 'feminist' *Tribune* group is a poor joke.

The *Tribune* group has probably never even discussed its policies on women nor endorsed the demands of women in the party. The *Tribune* group has not endorsed a single one of the women's conference demands to increase the representation of women in the party or to create a more powerful Labour women's organisation.

The fact that they do not resign from the *Tribune* group simply makes crystal clear that it is not a step towards 'feminism'.

Others who disagreed with the contest, and voted against it in the Campaign group have not walked out. Some, like Tony Banks have declared their support for

Tony Benn despite disagreeing with holding the contest at this point. This is because they understand that agreement on policies is more important than a tactical disagreement — even a very important one such as a leadership contest.

The MPs who left, particularly the women MPs, should reverse their decision. Not because the Campaign group is perfect on the issue of women — far from it — but because the *Tribune* group is worse. Because the Campaign group supports women's demands and the *Tribune* group opposes them. By giving credibility to the *Tribune* group the women MPs have strengthened forces in the party who not support the demands of women.

In politics, always, principles must take priority over tactics.

How do we fight the clause now?

CLAUSE 28 becomes law at the beginning of June and the first attempts to use it against Labour local authorities can be expected immediately after that. PETER PURTON, member of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights National Committee, looks at the way ahead.

THE campaign against the clause has been tremendous. Thousands of previously non-political lesbians and gays have discovered their strength. The support which has been carefully and tirelessly fought for over the years by campaigns such as the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and many lesbian and gay trade union groups, has enabled us to overturn the initially backward reaction of the Parliamentary Labour Party and to win unexpected public opposition to the clause from Neil Kinnock.

Front bench spokesperson Jack Cunningham, whose first response was a disgraceful capitulation to bigotry, and rejection of party policy, has now publicly committed a Labour government to repeal of the measure.

But lesbians and gay men, and those local authorities which have tried to carry out national Labour policy, cannot wait to be rescued by a future change of government and must decide now what strategy to adopt in the weeks and months to come.

The public campaign will continue, with the massive national protest in London on 30 April, regional marches throughout May, and Les-

bian and Gay Pride in June.

It is certain that Tory-backed reactionaries will be already preparing their cases against the most advanced Labour councils in order to put the clause to the only test which will determine the meaning, in practice, of that undefined phrase 'promotion of homosexuality' which makes clause 28 so very dangerous. That test is the decision of a judge, and it is obvious that the likely outcome will be unfavourable.

It is also certain that lawyers will already be advising Labour councils that to abide by party policy is guaranteed to land them in court, and that the best thing would be to quietly drop the whole exercise. The Tory opposition in the London borough of Haringey, which originated the 'positive images' in education policy which is a prime target of clause 28, is already using the clause to whip up hostility to the Labour group and, presumably, prepare the path for prosecution.

The first battle which needs to be won, therefore, is that councils must continue to defend party policy, and to be prepared to fight the issue the whole way through the courts. The list of Labour authorities adopting this



Demonstration in Manchester against Clause 28

policy in principle continues to grow. But it will be necessary to maintain massive pressure to keep them to it in practice.

The continuing fight for the understanding and support of the labour movement, especially the town hall and teaching trade unions, is the second critical strand of the strategy. There is no doubt that teachers and other workers will be victimised under this law by less progressive councils. A willingness to fight against such attacks, in the way in which a Bradford teacher has already had to be defended by threat of strike action. It will be vital to making the law as unworkable as possible.

The Stop the Clause campaigns must continue

to mobilise the widest forces against this law and in opposition to the vicious wave of reaction which spawned it, and will be fanned by it. To do so, alliances already built, as with the FAB campaign, need to be continued and strengthened.

In the labour movement, broad and committed support has to be won for opposition to the law and for support for victimised workers. This process has started with the unprecedented debate and vote at the NUT conference, and will be continued through other union conferences during the Summer. LCLGR is organising a high level campaign for the annual Labour Party conference aimed at maintaining the

issue of equal rights for lesbians and gay men on the political agenda and hardening existing support.

Clause 28 as law marks a new level of attack on lesbian and gay rights unprecedented in this country in the twentieth century. It is part of the carnival of reaction in which the Tories are revelling. But its impact is seen and understood by broad forces to extend much further than its initial target. It is by mobilising this support in the active defence of lesbians and gay men that the only hope lies of mitigating its consequences and preparing for its defeat.

Peter Purton writes in a personal capacity



Black Section demonstration against racist killing in Wolverhampton

Black Section AGM

Agenda set for audacious campaign

THE FIFTH annual meeting of the Labour Party Black Section registered a new situation in relation to the party's leadership. Previously the approach of the party hierarchy was to attempt to snuff out the stirrings of the party's black membership. Its new approach is more subtle and mediated.

The conference, which took place on the weekend of the 26/27 March in Manchester town hall, was in many respects an historic experience. Conference debated 25 resolutions submitted by formal bodies of the Black Section, including two emergency resolutions on South Africa.

There was also a major discussion on education prepared by the national executive. Another discussion, on the inner cities, had to be remitted because of time.

The conference, however, was dominated by a discussion on the way forward. Eight out of twenty three resolutions submitted prior to conference addressed this debate. Bernie Grant cancelled a trip to Afghanistan in order to contribute to the debate at the conference.

Events

The fact this question dominated conference attests to the seriousness with which it is viewed in the Black Sections. When the sequence of events is reviewed it is easy to see why such

importance is attached to the matter.

When the first resolu-

By Mike Wongsam

tions on the representation of black people were submitted to the party conference the NEC established a working party to report back with recommendations.

Minority

The NEC's working party, which had broad representation across the labour movement and included a number of black members of the party, had protracted deliberations and conducted the widest consultation exercise ever undertaken by the party until that point.

The result of these deliberations and consultation was that two positions were advanced from the working party. One, the majority position with overwhelming support on the working party, supported the idea of Black Sections and recommended that the constitution of the Labour Party be altered to

make their establishment possible. The second, minority, position, argued against the establishment of Black Sections, but in favour of the establishment of a black based (although with the participation of whites) campaign for black rights.

Aim

In the event, none of these positions were acted upon by the NEC. Instead, the NEC decided to establish a 'Black and Asian Advisory Committee' (BAAC) appointed by the NEC. This unprecedented step, the NEC has never before acted against the recommendations of its own working parties, established the future attitude of the party leadership to the Black Sections — the aim of complete annihilation.

An attempt at a compromise to resolve matters was proposed by Eric Heffer — the establishment of an affiliated organisation which would represent the view of black people to the Labour Party, and would be open to non-party members. However by now the framework had been set, and the NEC had staked everything on the BAAC. Heffer's proposal didn't fit into the requirement to inflict a defeat on the Black Section, and was duly voted

down by the NEC.

Since then, the party leadership has taken every opportunity to try weaken, isolate, and marginalise the Black Section. There has been the expulsion of Amir Khan and Kevin Scally, the actions against Sharon Atkin and Phil Murphy, and actions and threats against constituency parties that gave recognition to Black Sections.

At the same time, the Black Section built an extensive system of alliances within the party, and is conducting similar work within the trade unions. Moreover, the credibility of the Black Section within the black community has steadily grown with its increasing emphasis on community based grassroots activity.

Most important, however, are the notable victories scored by the Black Section over the party leadership. Firstly, the struggle to reinstate Khan and Scally, which was a campaign led by the Black Section in alliance with others in the party, and, secondly, the campaign against the BAAC — which even the party leadership admit is now defunct. These established the ability of the Black Section to conduct an audacious campaign against the leadership and win victories.

ing a policy of support for Black Sections — give new openings. Furthermore the party leadership's tactic of creating the BAAC has not worked, the attack on Sharon Atkin is likely to result in another embarrassment for the party leadership, and the tactic of trying to get the black MPs to launch a frontal assault on the black section has not succeeded. Faced with an impasse the party leadership turned from direct assault to an outflanking and splitting tactic.

'Affiliation'

This manoeuvre was started by Paul Sharma in an article in *Tribune* after party conference. He advocated the 'affiliation' option and couched it in such a provocative attack on the Black Section that it had the clear aim of getting its leadership to reject the proposal. The aim was that the Black Section would reject any proposal on affiliation and a tame body could be established by the party leadership to try to split the Black Section and remove its support.

The Black Section leadership refused to walk into the trap. It reiterated its principled position that while only the establishment of Black Sections will resolve the question of black organisation in the Labour Party it welcomes any step strengthening black democratic representation in the party. It also pointed out that members of such a black organisation would inevitably arrive at the conclusion that Black Sections are necessary — as had the working party.

Manoeuvre

However, while the party leadership was engaged in a manoeuvre others in the party took it seriously and proposals previously rejected by the NEC began to re-emerge.

The Heffer 'affiliation' proposal has reappeared in an amended form as the 'Bill Morris proposal' — only really a suggestion, since Bill Morris presented it in an article in *Tribune* but it has not been put on the table of any formal discussion. The NEC working party minority position has reappeared as the Tony Clarke (deputy general secretary of the UCW) proposal.

It is clear that the BAAC having failed the party leadership is considering retreating to the pre-BAAC proposals as they have not succeeded in annihilating the Black Section. This obviously throws open again the debate about black representation in the party.

Crunch

The crunch matter will be the question of white membership. The creation of an affiliated black organisation with official status and representation on GCs, which would be able to campaign for black representation on the NEC, would be a clear, even if limited, step forward for black representation. It would also almost certainly, after a couple of years debate, come out in favour of Black Sections.

But establishing an affiliated black organisation

would mean the party leadership making a real, even if inadequate, concession to the fight against racism and black oppression. This, naturally, they have no intention of doing if they can avoid it.

A second round of manoeuvring has therefore started with the reaffirmation by Kinnock that an black organisation must be open to white people. The racism inherent in this proposal is astonishing — even the present party leadership does not dare to suggest, for example, that men should be able to join the women's section of the party. Even the most right wing black Labour MP, Paul Boateng, has not been able to endorse this proposal.

The party leadership is therefore in a quandary. If it proposes its 'black organisation which white people can join' option it will have another BAAC fiasco on its hands. But accepting the principle of black self-organisation means taking a certain limited step forward in the fight against racism.

Response

The response of the Black Section to this has been exemplary. It has consistently explained that it will not accept a ridiculous proposal of a black organisation with white members, but it welcomes any genuine step forward for black self-organisation and will examine any concrete proposals in that light. Bernie Grant, who in the debate at the Black Section AGM introduced himself as secretary of the parliamentary Black Section, announced that he had been invited to have discussions with the party leadership, and that he was willing to make representations on behalf of the Black Section in these discussions.

The Black Section executive moved remitting the entire discussion on this issue to the incoming national committee, which was agreed by conference. Secondly, the Black Section agreed to participate in any discussions with the party leadership through Bernie Grant, while reaffirming its commitment to the objectives of the Black Section.

Resolution

This therefore puts the Black Section in the best possible situation in the existing relation of forces — and the new tactics coming out of Walworth Road. If Walworth Road are genuine about finding a resolution to the debate that guarantees black representation at all levels of the party, then the Black Section is not going to hold up the swiftest possible progress. However, if the party leadership pursues as hidden agenda, or persists with a 'white members of a black organisation' proposal then this decision puts the Black Section in the best position tactically to respond to any outflanking operations.

After six months during which the party leadership tried to claim that the issue was irrelevant, and attempted to crush the Black Section, black self-representation and self-organisation in the party is once more heading up to the top of the party's political agenda.



FROM MAY 1968 TO LE PEN

TWENTY YEARS ago, in May 1968, barricades stood in the streets of Paris. Ten million workers took part in the largest general strike in history. Hundreds of factories were occupied. 'The events' of May 1968 are this month being commemorated on the television and in the colour supplements.

But twenty years later, the elections in France show a very different pattern. The first round of the presidential elections on 24 April registered not simply the virtually certain re-election of Socialist Party president Mitterrand but the largest vote for an extreme right wing candidate, Le Pen, in any country in Western Europe since World War II. These elections give a deep insight into European politics. JOHN ROSS looks at the developments twenty years on from May 1968.

TO KNOW why no socialist can support Neil Kinnock or his policies simply look at the presidential elections in France. What is most significant is not that Mitterrand is almost certain to win re-election on 8 May. That is primarily a party political gain. It is that there exists today in France, as a direct product of Socialist Party government, the largest extreme right wing force in any European country since World War II.

That the rise of Le Pen and the National Front is directly correlated with the Socialist Party in government there is no doubt. In 1974, under a government of the right, Le Pen received 0.7 per cent of the vote. In 1981, the year Mitterrand won the presidency, and the Socialist Party the majority in the legislative elections, Le Pen couldn't even collect the necessary signatories to be nominated. Yet within two years, in the 1983 Municipal elections, Le Pen's National Front defeated the Socialist Party mayor in the industrial town of Dreux. Two years later, in the European elections the National Front won 10.9 per cent of the vote. Two years on again they won 9.6 per cent in the legislative elections — and 35 seats in the National Assembly. The 14.4 per cent in the April presidential elections caps that off. The correlation between the rise of the National Front and the experience by the French working class of the Socialist

Party in government is clear.

The rise of the National Front furthermore correlates with a deterioration of the relation of forces on a whole series of other fronts. In particular French union membership has plummeted — less than 20 per cent of the French working class is now unionised. The evident disarray in the bourgeois parties — revealed in the three way split between the Gaullist Chirac (19.95 per cent of the vote), the 'centre' candidate Barre (16.53 per cent) and Le Pen — does not compensate either for the worsening of the relation of forces or the sharp right wing shift represented by support for Le Pen.

Undoubtedly France is not in line with developments in a number of other West European countries. For example in West Germany the period of Social Democratic Party (SDP)-Free Democratic Party (FDP) government in the 1970s witnessed a radicalization to the left with the rise of the Greens and not the growth of the extreme right. Yet the development in France is ominous — in many ways the most serious negative development in Western Europe since 1968.

Why should the re-election of a Socialist Party president coincide with a rapid growth of the extreme right? What does it tell us about the political situation in France and Europe? May 1968 deserves to be celebrated less with euphoria and rhetoric than with a real attempt to understand the forces which it unleashed and the developments which have taken place since. To understand them, however, it is necessary to go back to the events which created May 1968 and the forces which it unleashed in France and Europe.

THE BACKGROUND

TO GO back to 1968, the great general strike of May that year in France was a product of the long post-war economic boom. From 1948 to 1968 capitalism underwent the greatest international expansion in its history. Output in twenty years increased by more than during the preceding three hundred.

The consequences for the working class in every imperialist country, including Western Europe, were profound. Western Europe's working class was strengthened. Millions of peasant farmers moved off the land and into the working class. In a number of countries, particularly Britain, millions of women moved into waged work.

Simultaneously mass unemployment virtually disappeared for two decades. Violent economic fluctuations vanished. Living standards rose uninterrupted year after year. Income differentials narrowed. Almost uninterrupted reforms took place. The working class in the advanced imperialist countries became stronger than ever before — and

simultaneously sank into a satisfied torpor.

The political structure of the West European states, including the structure of their labour movements, equally remained almost unchanged for this twenty year period. Bourgeois democracy existed in northern, and most, although not all, of southern Europe. In the Iberian peninsula the old fascist dictatorships of Salazar in Portugal and Franco in Spain were propped up by the United States and its European collaborators. Greece passed from civil war, to semi-dictatorship, to full military dictatorship in 1967.

Within the working class a major split existed between the north and south of Europe. The working class of northern Europe — Britain, France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Holland — was dominated by strongly pro-American and pro-Cold War Socialist Parties. The Communist Parties in these countries were weak — although they generally had a significant weight in the trade unions. The working class of Southern Europe — France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece — was dominated by pro-Moscow Communist Parties. The post-war division of Western Europe between countries allied with the United States, and states subordinated to the USSR, was reflected in the dominance of pro-American and pro-Soviet currents in the structure of the Labour movement. The political influence of either fascists or small revolutionary groups was almost insignificant — although substantial extreme right wing groups had temporarily appeared in France (the Poujadists) and West Germany (the NDP).

The most significant change within the ruling class in Europe was the creation, in 1958, of the EEC. Based on agreement between West Germany and France it progressively expanded from the original six members to take in all the major states in Western Europe.

This whole West European political structure was, in turn, unimaginable without its relation to the United States. The United States militarily saved Western Europe at the end of World War II — without it the Soviet Union would have crushed Nazi Germany alone and capitalism would have been destroyed from Moscow to the channel. The United States then rebuilt Western Europe economically through Marshall Aid. Every European capitalist knew that it was the US dollar, and the US army, which stood between Western Europe and a combination of the strong working class movement and the presence of the Soviet Union in Europe which would have threatened capitalist rule in Western Europe.

The United States, for its part, subsidised Western Europe from the end of World War II until the mid-1960s — not simply by Marshall Aid but by US private investment and US international economic policies.

The political reflection of this was the popularity of the US not simply among the capitalist class but among large sections of the working class. President Eisenhower saw demonstrations in his



Riot police = SS

support when he visited Europe, the assassination of Kennedy was experienced as a deep personal tragedy by tens of millions in Western Europe.

The West European working class, however, was itself profoundly changing in a process which might be described as its 'de-aristocratisation'. Millions of women entered the paid workforce — overwhelmingly in the worst paid and least skilled jobs. Capitalism in the West European countries drew in millions of immigrant workers — creating for the first time a significant black and immigrant working class. These women and black workers formed the new mass semi-skilled and unskilled section of the working class.

Outside Western Europe the process which dominated the political situation was the unfolding of the colonial revolution. During twenty years the greater part of the European colonial empires were dismantled. Attempts to prevent this — notably by the French in Indochina and Algeria — were crushed. Capitalism was overthrown in China, Cuba and North Vietnam. In the United States the colonial revolution directly interacted with the 'de-aristocratisation' of the working class to help inspire, and help force the US government to give in to, the rise of black struggle in the Civil Rights movement.

As long as capitalism continued to boom this West European political structure functioned with relative political cohesion. May 1968 was the symbol it could no longer operate. May 1968, the events that led up to and created it, established the present situation in Europe.

THE CONSEQUENCES

THE background to May 1968, was the Vietnam war. Opposition to the

war fuelled the student rebellion in Europe that flared for two years before May 1968. Economically Vietnam overstrained the US economy. The US attempted to finance its war effort by running huge balance of trade deficits with its West European allies. The West European working class simultaneously was stung by inflation, produced by the flood of dollars out of the US, and placed in a strong bargaining position by the rapid upturn in production, created by exports to the United States. This combination was a recipe for an explosion — which duly occurred. May 1968 and the struggles which followed it — the strike wave of autumn 1969 in Italy, the struggles against the Heath government in Britain, and the rising struggles under the Franco dictatorship in Spain — signified that the post-war order in Western Europe could not survive. But what was going to replace it? And how did it culminate, simultaneously, in the consolidation of forces such as Mitterrand in France, the emergence of left wing currents such as the Greens in West Germany and the 'Bennite' left in Britain, and the rise of the extreme right National Front in France?

PAS DE REPLATRAGE



LA STRUCTURE EST POURRIE

No replastering — the structure is rotten

Taking first erroneous analyses, a section of the Marxist left believed that the preceding order in Europe was going to be replaced by socialist revolution. From 1968-75 events which took place, culminating in the downfall of the Portuguese dictatorship in April 1974, were interpreted as meaning that socialist revolution had returned to Western Europe.

But that perspective was not realistic. Certainly the movements of the working class after May 1968 were even larger than those in the inter-war years or after World War I — reflecting the social expansion of the working class. Ten million participated in the general strike of May 1968 in France, 12-15 million in the strike wave of autumn 1969 in Italy, two national miners strikes and a wave of political strikes took place in Britain in 1968-74, a series of general strikes shook

CONSTRUCTION
SPECULATION
PROFIT

342885
32770
850

Capitalism kills

MAY 1968 LE PEN



the Franco dictatorship. Nor did the working class return to passivity after 1968. But in terms of the overall political situation it was ridiculous to make a comparison to the inter-war period or to revolution.

In the famous formula of Lenin for revolution to take place it is 'not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realise the impossibility of living in the old way', for a revolution it is essential that 'the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way'. Not simply was the working class in Western Europe after 1968 not engaged in revolutionary struggles comparable to the inter-war struggles but the situation was not revolutionary.

In the inter-war period the ruling classes had literally been unable to carry on in the old way. The revolutions in Germany, Hungary, and Austria led to the collapse of the German monarchy and the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The crisis in 1929-33 led to the destruction of the Weimar republic and the victory of fascism. In the 1930s first the monarchy and then bourgeois democracy collapsed in Spain to be followed by the triumph of fascism. In France the growth of the right in the early 1930s was followed first by the Popular Front and then by the effective collapse of bourgeois democracy even before World War II began. The background to these events was the dislocation of economic production in 1917-21 in Central Europe, and then economic collapse after 1929 throughout Europe.

No such events took place in Europe after 1968. There was economic recession, but it is ridiculous to compare it to the immense breakdown of either politics or the productive system in 1917-21 or after 1929. The ruling class was able to go on in the old way, in the sense of not facing either a collapse in its power or a collapse in its economy comparable to the inter-war period. What the bourgeoisie did to do was to adjust the mechanisms by which it ruled.

Here it is worth noting, again that, even if it had wished, the methods open to the bourgeoisie in the 1970s were no longer comparable to those of the inter-war period. The economic recession from the mid-1970s placed on the bourgeoisie the necessity to increase profits. But the economic and social formulas open to enable it to achieve this were very different to the 1920s or 1930s.

In the inter-war period the bourgeoisie had mobilised the mass petty-bourgeoisie — both the petit-bourgeoisie of the towns and the peasants and rural petty-bourgeoisie — for a direct assault to smash the workers movement by violence. This was the political formula of fascism.

Such a social formula is impossible today. The mass reactionary peasant vote that sustained Hitler even in his periods of isolation in the 1920s, or which provided the base of Mussolini or the French right of the early 1930s, simply doesn't exist anymore. It was destroyed by the post-war boom. Even the urban petty-bourgeoisie has declined significantly. Quite different tactics are required by the

bourgeoisie today than old style fascism. In a sense the policies of the West European bourgeoisies in the 1970s and 1980s are modelled more on those of the British ruling class during the 1930s than of fascism. This is no accident as the British was itself a ruling class in a country in which the petty-bourgeoisie had declined too far for a fascist solution to be viable.



Continue the strike, capitalism is dying

The British bourgeoisie in the 1930s had, above all, sought to split the working class. Although the 1930s are remembered as a period of desperate poverty and unemployment the truth is that this was true only for one section of the working class. For many the 1930s in Britain were a period of prosperity. Real wages for those in work grew rapidly, new industries were created in the south, house building and motor car building booms took place, Britain benefitted from a sharp turn in the international terms of trade against the colonial countries. The working class was completely split — with radicalisation among a minority but with the Conservative Party picking up its largest ever votes. Relative unity of the working class was only recreated in 1945 and in the post-war boom — from which all sections of the working class gained to differing degrees.

When the economic recession began in the mid-1970s the bourgeoisies in Western Europe, following the contemporary model of Japan and the United States, began a job of splitting the working class. Their instrument was the 'dual society' — the creation of a core of still secure, well paid, white, and chiefly male, workers surrounded by a periphery of low paid, unskilled, insecure, frequently black, workers whose conditions rapidly deteriorated. Outside even these lay the widening pool of the unemployed. It is into this structure that the radicalisation of the left, the growth of the extreme right, and the victories of right wing social democracy such as Mitterrand all fit.

Taking first the development of right wing social democracy, its base is both these overall social changes and, more specifically, the crucial change in the relations between the United States and Western Europe which took place after 1968.

The changing economic relation of the US to Western Europe, the fact that it was no longer subsidising but striking blows against its European allies, broke

the back of the pro-American currents in the European Socialist Parties. Nowhere was that clearer than in France. The old French socialist party was on the verge of extinction by 1969 — gaining only five per cent of the vote in the presidential election of that year. Only a rapid turn by the party in the early 1970s under Mitterrand revived the party.

In France, as elsewhere in Western Europe, the right wing of the socialist parties began to adopt a new rhetoric — pro-EEC, pro-austerity, in some cases demagogically anti-American. The current of what became right 'Eurosocialism' — Mitterrand in France, Gonzales in Spain, Craxi in Italy — developed from this. The right wing of the European social democracy now saw its saviour not in the United States but in the EEC — a course advocated in Britain today by Stuart Holland, Frances Morrell and, increasingly, Neil Kinnock. Mitterrand, with his pro-European armaments, pro-European austerity, pro-EEC stance is a perfect example of this current. This right wing social democracy is today the most powerful current in the workers movement in Europe.

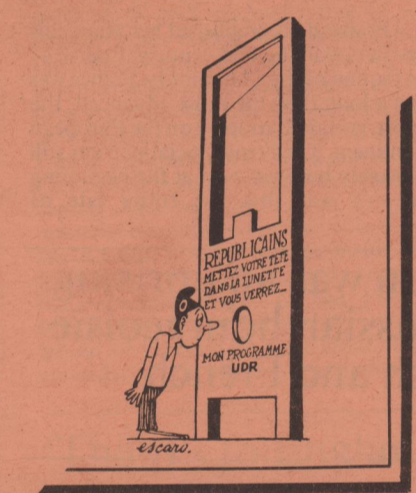
In this policy social democracy is even more successful, in certain countries, than the traditional bourgeois parties. The EEC means the untrammelled supremacy of big capital. It means eroding the power of localised small capital and farmers — the traditional base of the national bourgeois parties. In most European countries, therefore, the capitalist parties have split into strongly pro-EEC currents and those pursuing a more 'national' orientation. In West Germany this split lies between the strongly pro-EEC Free Democratic Party (FDP), passing through the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Kohl, to the Christian Social Union (CSU) of Franz Josef Strauss. In France, where national 'Gaullist' currents have been strong historically, it has created a particular split between the forces of Giscard d'Estaing/Barre (UDF), Chirac (Gaullist), and now Le Pen. Equally in Spain the bourgeois parties have remained divided and weak.

In such situations the right wing social democracy, with its firm pro-EEC orientation, appears as a bulwark of cohesion and stability for the bourgeoisie. In France the government of Mitterrand, with its policy of economic austerity, its nuclear build up, and its

firm support for the siting of Cruise Missiles in Europe, has been the best possible government for the French bourgeoisie.

The social bloc represented by such a current is also clear. It fits directly into the dual society. It is an alliance of the best off sections of the working class — of the employed workers, of the skilled, of those in the 'core', of those least touched by the austerity — with big capital. For capital it is an attempt to create a real European capitalist competitor to the United States.

The development of both the left and the right in Western Europe fits into this framework. Because the forces which are excluded from this right wing social



Put your head in and see our programme: UDR (de Gaulle's party)

democratic bloc are precisely the unskilled and semi-skilled section of the working class created by the post-war boom — layers that are overwhelmingly women and black. The formula of the right wing social democracy is an alliance of the bureaucracy and best off sections of the working class with big capital against the worst off sections of the working class.

In that framework the rise of both the left and of Le Pen is logical. They are the forces pushed outside the orbit of right wing social democracy. The enormous emphasis in the left wing currents on women and black people, as well as ecology and other themes, reflects the social recomposition of the working class since World War II.

But this social development also creates the ambiguity in the situation. On the one hand it creates the space for left wing political developments. But on the other, as Le Pen's vote makes horrifyingly clear, it also creates space for the right.

Le Pen's vote in France includes authentically some of the most deprived and socially depressed sections of the white working class. For example in the traditional Communist Party strongholds around Paris of Montreuil and St Denis the National Front gained 18 and 20 per cent of the vote respectively. Le Pen demagogically appealed to sections of the white working class who share the race for increasingly scarce jobs with immigrant workers and who felt, and in reality have been, totally deserted

by the traditional workers organisations. Le Pen's is the most advanced political expression of the same process which has seen the rise in racist attacks in Britain and the rise of xenophobia and racism against immigrant workers in West Germany. The combination of right wing social democracy with the rise of both the left and the right is an entirely logical development.

So far in Western Europe the consequences of the crisis, and of right wing Socialist Parties, had been primarily to strengthen the left — the Greens in Germany, the left socialist parties in Denmark, the left in the Labour Party in Britain. But Le Pen's is a very strong reminder that the same social forces can give rise to extreme right wing developments. That it should do so first in France, with its strong nationalist tradition, its still relatively strong petty bourgeoisie, its strongly nationalist, and declining Communist Party, and its now seven year experience of a right wing Socialist Party in office is entirely logical.

In an article in this month's *Marxism Today* Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques claim that 'The 20th anniversary of 1968 has a strange almost eerie character. It is not like the 10th anniversary in 1978. Then the lines of continuity were still strong. Now, the umbilical cord has been cut. In the West, at least, we are living in a different era.'

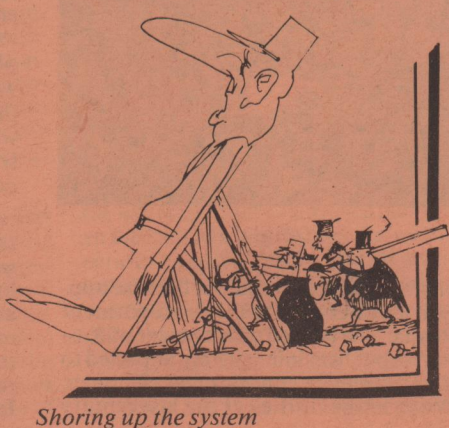
The events in France show just how wrong is that judgement. Jacques and Hall arrive at that conclusion only because they, ironically like some of the left, continue to regard May 1968 as some far away romanticised vision of the revolution. It was not. It was a seismic event which unleashed the present political situation in Europe. It is an event whose shadow grows ever longer.

From the barricades erected across the streets of Paris on the night of 10 May 1968 grew not the revolution but, in a sense, something still more powerful. That night the entire political structure of Europe began to change. It is still changing under the impact of the vast forces unleashed by it.

May 1968 was not the revolution. It was not even the 'dress rehearsal' of the revolution. It unleashed social forces which twenty years later are working themselves out with no sign of stopping. If anyone contents themselves simply with the memory it is because they are unable to understand the originality, the uniqueness of what was created — how it failed to correspond to the reality of what anyone, or any class, foresaw at the time. It corresponded to the great truth of Lenin that reality is 'infinitely more complex than foreseen by any party'.

The real celebration of May 1968 is not just to remember. It is to try to understand what has taken place. Because understanding is to create the firmest basis for action.

And Le Pen's success in France, as well as the left wing developments in other countries, shows how urgent that understanding is.



Shoring up the system

THE REVOLUTION began in the East. From Russia it passed over into Hungary to Bavaria and, doubtless, it will march westward through Europe. This march of events is taking place contrary to prejudices, allegedly Marxist and rather widespread among broad circles of intellectuals, and not those of Russia alone.

The revolution through which we are now living is proletarian, and the proletariat is strongest in the old capitalist countries where it is much larger numerically, better organised, more class-conscious. It is seemingly in the nature of things to expect that the revolution in Europe ought to unfold approximately along the same paths as those of

'In contradistinction to the direction of capitalist development from West to East, the proletarian revolution unfolds from East to West'

capitalist development: England — the first-born capitalist country, to be followed by France, to be followed by Germany, Austria and, finally, at the bottom of the list — Russia.

The fact is that the revolution began and led to the victory of the proletariat in the most backward major country of Europe — Russia. Hungary is unquestionably the more backward half of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which as a whole, in the sense of capitalist and even cultural-political development, stood between Russia and Germany. Bavaria where, following Hungary, Soviet power has been established, represents with respect to capitalist development not the advanced but, on the contrary, a backward section of Germany. Thus the proletarian revolution after starting in the most backward country of Europe, keeps mounting upwards, rung by rung, toward countries more highly developed economically.

What is the explanation for this 'incongruity'?

The oldest capitalist country in Europe and the world is — England. Meanwhile England, especially during the last half-century, has been from the

'Our October revolution was an uprising not only against the Russian bourgeoisie but also against English and French capitalism'

standpoint of the proletarian revolution the most conservative country. The consistent social-reformists, *i.e.*, those who try to make both ends meet, hence drew all the conclusions they needed, asserting that it was precisely England that indicated to other countries the possible path of political development and that in this sense the entire European proletariat should renounce the programme of the social revolution.

For the Marxists, however, the 'incongruity' between England's capitalist development and her socialist movement, as conditioned by a temporary combination of historical forces, did not contain anything disheartening. It was England's early entry onto the path of capitalist development and world robbery that created a privileged position not only for her bourgeoisie but also for a section of her working class. England's insular position spared her the direct burden of maintaining militarism on land. Her mighty naval militarism, although requiring huge expenditures, rested nevertheless on numerically small cadres of hirelings and did not require a transition to universal military service.

The British bourgeoisie skillfully utilised these conditions in order to separate the top labour layer from the bottom strata, creating an aristocracy of 'skilled' labour and instilling into it a trade union caste spirit. Flexible despite all its conservatism, the parliamentary machinery of Great Britain, the incessant rivalry between two historical parties — the Liberals and the Tories — a rivalry

which at times assumed rather tense form although remaining quite hollow in content, invariably created when the need arose an artificial political safety-valve for the discontent of the working masses. This was supplemented by the fiendish dexterity of the ruling bourgeois clique in the business of spiritually crippling and bribing, quite 'exquisitely' at times, the leaders of the working class.

Thus thanks to England's early capitalist development her bourgeoisie disposed of resources that enabled them systematically to counteract the proletarian revolution. Within the proletariat itself, or more correctly, within its upper layer, the same conditions gave shape to the most extreme conservative tendencies which manifested themselves in the course of decades prior to the World War...

While Marxism teaches that class relations arise in the process of production and that these relations correspond to a certain level of productive forces; while Marxism further teaches that all forms of ideology and, first and foremost, politics correspond to class relations, this does not at all mean that between politics, class groupings and production there exist simple mechanical relations, calculable by the four rules of arithmetic. On the contrary, the reciprocal relations are extremely complex. It is possible to interpret dialectically the course of a country's development, only by proceeding from the action, reaction and interaction of all the material and superstructural factors, national and world-wide alike, and not through superficial juxtapositions, or through formal analogies.

England accomplished her bourgeois revolution in the 17th century; France — at the end of the 18th century. France was for a long time the most advanced, the most 'cultured' country on the European continent. The French social-patriots still sincerely believed even at the beginning of this war that the entire fate of

mankind rotated around Paris. But once again, just because of her early bourgeois civilisation, France developed powerful conservative tendencies within her capitalism. The slow organic growth of capitalism did not mechanically destroy French handicrafts, but pulled them along, simply relegating them to different positions, assigning them a more and more subordinate role. The revolution, by selling the feudal estates at auction to the peasantry, created the French village, extremely viable, tenacious, stubborn and petty-bourgeois.

The great French Revolution of the 18th century, bourgeois both in its most extreme objectives as well as results, was at the same time profoundly national — in the sense that it rallied round itself the majority of the nation and, first and foremost, all of its creative classes. For a century and a quarter this revolution established the bond of common remembrances and traditions between a considerable section of the French working class and the left elements of bourgeois democracy. Jaurès was the greatest and last representative of this conservative ideological bond.

Under these conditions France's political atmosphere couldn't fail to infect broad layers of the French proletariat, especially the semi-handicraftsmen with petty-bourgeois illusions. Conversely, it was precisely the rich revolutionary past that gave the French proletariat an inclination to settle scores with the bourgeoisie on the barricades. The character of the class struggle,

lacking clarity in theory, but extremely tense in practice, kept the French bourgeoisie constantly on guard and compelled it to go over early to the export of finance capital.

While on the one hand seducing the popular masses, including the workers, by a dramatic display of anti-dynastic, anti-clerical, republican, radical and other tendencies, the French bourgeoisie, on the other hand, availed itself of the advantages accruing from its primogeniture and from its position of world usurer in order to check the growth of new and revolutionising forms of industrialism within France herself. An analysis of the economic and political conditions of French evolution, and furthermore not only on a national but an international scale, can alone provide an explanation of why the French proletariat, split up after the heroic eruption of the Paris Commune into groups and sects, anarchist on the one wing, and 'possibilist' (reformist) on the other, proved incapable of engaging in open revolutionary class action, of struggling directly for state power.

For Germany the period of vigorous capitalist flowering began after the victorious wars of 1864-1866-1871. The soil of national unity, drenched by the golden flood of French billions, became the bed of a glittering reign of boundless speculation, but also that of an unprecedented technical development. In contrast to the French proletariat, the working class of Germany grew at an extraordinary rate and expended most of its energies on gathering, fusing, organising its own ranks. In its irresistible upsurge the working class of Germany got great satisfaction from adding up its automatically growing forces in the reports of parliamentary elections or in the statements of trade union treasuries. The victorious competition of Germany on the world market created conditions equally favourable for the growth of the trade unions as well as for the unquestionable improvement in the living standard of a section of the working class.

In these circumstances the German Social Democracy became a living — and later on ever more moribund — incarnation of organisational fetishism. With its roots deeply intertwined in the national state and national industry, and in the process of adaptation to the entire complexity and entanglement of German social-political relations, which are a combination of modern capitalism and medieval barbarism, the German Social Democracy along with the trade unions under its leadership became in the end the most counter-revolutionary force in the political evolution of Europe. The danger of such a degeneration of the German Social Democracy had long ago been pointed out by Marxists, although we must admit that no one had foreseen how catastrophic would be the character of this process in the end...

As regards the development of Austria-Hungary, it is impossible from the viewpoint of interest to us to say



anything which would not likewise apply in a clearer form to the development of Russia. The belated development of Russian capitalism immediately imparted to it an extremely concentrated character. When in the 'forties of the last century

SOCIAL



EAST AND

Knopf established English textile factories in the central Moscow area, and when the Belgians, the French and the Americans transplanted to the virginal Ukrainian and North Russian steppes the huge metallurgical enterprises constructed in accordance with the latest word in European and American technology, they did not consult textbooks to learn whether they should wait until Russian handicraft developed into manufacture, while manufacture in its turn brought us to the large-scale factory.

On this soil, *i.e.*, on the soil of poorly digested economic textbooks, there once arose the famous but essentially puerile controversy over whether Russian capitalism was 'natural' or 'artificial' in character. If one were to vulgarise Marx and look upon English capitalism not as the historical starting-moment of capitalist development but rather as the all-imperative stereotype, then Russian capitalism would appear as an artificial formation, implanted from without. But if we analyse capitalism in the spirit of Marx's genuine teachings, that is, an economic process which first evolved a typical national form and which then

development of Australia is natural only from the standpoint of the historical process taken on a world scale. On a different scale, on a national, provincial scale it is, generally speaking, impossible to analyse a single one of the major social manifestations of our epoch.

Just because the Russian large-scale industry violated the 'natural' order of succession of national economic development, by taking a gigantic economic leap over transitional epochs, it thereby prepared not only the possibility but the inevitability of the proletarian leap over the epoch of bourgeois democracy.

The ideologist of democracy, Jaurès, pictured democracy as the nation's supreme tribunal, rising above the warring classes... In France, with her centuries-long history of handicrafts and of handicraft urban culture, with her struggles of city communes and, later, her revolutionary battles of bourgeois democracy, and, finally, with her conservatism of a petty-bourgeois variety, democratic ideology has until recently still rested on a certain historical soil.

An ardent defender of the interests of the proletariat, and profoundly devoted

'The revolutionary epoch burst in through the most weakly barricaded door'

outgrew this national framework and evolved world ties; and which in order to bring the backward countries under its sway sees no need of returning to the tools and usages of its infant days, but employs instead the last word in technology, the last word in capitalist exploitation and political blackmail — if we analyse capitalism in this spirit, then the development of Russian capitalism with all its peculiarities will appear wholly 'natural', as an indispensable, component part of the world capitalist process.

This applies not alone to Russia. The railways which have cut across Australia were not the 'natural' outgrowth of the living conditions either of the Australian aborigines or of the first generations of malefactors who were, beginning with the epoch of the French revolution, shipped off to Australia by the magnanimous English metropolises. The capitalist

to socialism, Jaurès, as the tribune of a democratic nation, came out against imperialism. Imperialism, however, has demonstrated quite convincingly that it is mightier than 'the democratic nation' whose political will imperialism is so easily able to falsify by means of the parliamentary mechanism. In July 1914, the imperialist oligarchy, on its way to war, strode over the tribune's corpse; while in March 1919, through the 'supreme tribunal' of the democratic nation, it officially exonerated the murderer of Jaurès.

In Russia these illusions from the outset did not have any kind of support beneath them. With the ponderous sluggishness of its meagre development our country didn't have time to create an urban handicraft culture... Nurtured under the high pressure of foreign finance capital and aided by foreign

ALISM

WHAT PLACE does the development of European politics since 1968 occupy in the overall march of socialism? Since the mid-1970s, the working class in Western Europe has been forced onto the defensive. The steps forward in the international class struggle — in Central America, in Southern Africa, in the Philippines — have taken place outside the advanced capitalist countries. This corresponds to the history of the twentieth century: socialist revolution has taken place in the colonial and semi-colonial world and, with the exception of Russia, capitalism has continued to exist in the imperialist states. Events since 1968 therefore are not an aberration but follow a clear logic. To help understand this process we reprint here a 1919 essay by Trotsky. Entitled *En route, thoughts on the process of the proletarian revolution*, it studies the general development of world socialism with brilliant thumbnail sketches of the chief European states — an ideal historical background to understanding events in Western Europe since 1968.

D WEST

technology, Russian capitalism in the course of a few decades gave form to a million-headed working class, which cut like a sharp wedge into the milieu of All-Russian political barbarism. Without the massive traditions of the past behind it, the Russian workers, in contrast to the Western European proletariat, took on not only traits of cultural backwardness and ignorance — which the semi-literate, indigenous urban citizens never wearied of pointing out — but also traits of mobility, initiative, and receptivity to the most extreme conclusions deriving from their class position.

If Russia's economic backwardness conditioned the spasmodic, 'catastrophic' development of capitalism, which immediately acquired the most concentrated character in Europe, then the same universal backwardness of the country under the spasmodic, 'catastrophic' development of the Russian proletariat permitted the latter to become — of course only for a segment of a certain historical period — the most irreconcilable, the most self-sacrificing bearer of the idea of social revolution in Europe and throughout the world.

Capitalist production in its 'natural' evolution is constantly expanding reproduction. Technology keeps rising, the amount of material boons keeps growing, the mass of the population becomes proletarianised. Expanded capitalist production deepens capitalist contradictions. The proletariat grows numerically, constitutes an ever-larger proportion of the country's population, becomes organised and educated, and thus forms an ever-growing power. But this does not at all mean to say that its class enemy — the bourgeoisie — remains at a standstill. On the contrary, expanded capitalist production presupposes a simultaneous growth of the economic and political might of the big bourgeoisie. It not only accumulates colossal riches but also concentrates in its hands the state apparatus of administration which it subordinates to its aims. With an ever-perfected art it accomplishes its aims through ruthless cruelty alternating with democratic opportunism. Imperialist capitalism is able to utilise more proficiently the forms of democracy in proportion as the economic dependence of petty-bourgeois

layers of the population upon big capital becomes more cruel and insurmountable. From this economic dependence the bourgeoisie is able, by means of universal suffrage, to derive — political dependence.

A mechanical conception of the social revolution reduces the historical process to an uninterrupted numerical growth and a steadily mounting organisational strength of the proletariat until, comprising 'the overwhelming majority of the population', the proletariat without a battle, or virtually without a fight, takes into its own hands the machinery of bourgeois economy and the state, like a fruit ripe for plucking. In reality, however, the growth of the proletariat's productive role parallels the growth of the bourgeoisie's might. As the proletariat becomes organisationally fused and politically educated the bourgeoisie is in its turn impelled to perfect its apparatus of rule and to arouse against the proletariat ever-newer layers of the population, including the so-called new third estate, i.e., the professional intellectuals who play a most prominent role in the mechanics of capitalist economy. Both enemies gain in strength simultaneously.

The more powerful a country is capitalistically — all other considerations being equal — the greater is the inertia of 'peaceful' class relations; all the more powerful must be the impulse necessary to drive both of the hostile classes — the proletariat and the bourgeoisie — out of the state of relative equilibrium and to transform the class struggle into open civil war. Once it has flared, the civil war — all other conditions being equal — will be the more bitter and stubborn, the higher the country's attained level of capitalist development; the stronger and more organised both of the enemies are; the greater the amount of material and ideological resources at the disposal of both.

The conceptions of proletarian revolution which prevailed in the Second International did not in reality transgress the framework of self-sufficient national capitalism. England, Germany, France, Russia were regarded as independent worlds moving in one and the same orbit towards socialism, and located along the different stages of this path. The hour of

the coming of socialism strikes when capitalism attains its utmost limits of maturity and thereby the bourgeoisie is compelled to surrender its place to the proletariat, as the builder of socialism. This nationally-limited conception of capitalist development provides the theoretical and psychological grounds of social patriotism: 'Socialists' of each country deem themselves duty-bound to defend the national state as the natural and self-sufficient foundation of socialist development.

But this conception is false to the core and profoundly reactionary. By becoming world-wide, capitalist development thereby snapped those threads which in the past epoch bound the fate of the social revolution with the fate of one or another more highly developed capitalist country. The closer capitalism knit together the countries of the whole world into a single complex organism, all the more inexorably did social revolution, not only in the sense of its common destiny but also in the sense of its place and time of origin, fall into dependence upon the development of imperialism as a world factor, and primarily in dependence upon those military conflicts which imperialism must inevitably provoke and which, in their turn, must shake the equilibrium of the capitalist system to its roots . . .

Growing out of capitalist development as a whole, and at the same time appearing before the national consciousness of each individual capitalist country as an external factor, imperialism acts as if to discount the difference in levels attained by the development of the respective capitalist countries. At one and the same time, they were all drawn into the imperialist war, their productive foundations, their class relations were shaken simultaneously. Given this condition the first countries to be driven out of the state of unstable capitalist equilibrium were those whose internal social energy was weakest, i.e., precisely those countries youngest in terms of capitalist development.

Here an analogy virtually imposes itself — the analogy between the inception of imperialist war and the inception of civil war. Two years before the great world slaughters, the Balkan war erupted. Basically, the selfsame forces and tendencies operated in the Balkans



as throughout the rest of Europe. These forces were inexorably leading capitalist mankind to a bloody catastrophe. But in the great imperialist countries there likewise operated a mighty inertia of resistance both in domestic as well as foreign relations. Imperialism found it easier to push the Balkans into war precisely because on this peninsula there are smaller weaker states, with a much lower level of capitalist and cultural development — and consequently with less of the inertia of 'peaceful' development.

The Balkan war — which arose as a consequence of subterranean earthquakes, not of Balkan but of European imperialism, as the direct forerunner of the world conflict — attained, however, an independent significance for a certain period. Its course and its immediate outcome were conditioned by the resources and forces available on the Balkan peninsula. Hence the comparatively brief duration of the Balkan war. A few months sufficed to measure the national capitalist forces on the poverty-stricken

peninsula. With an earlier start the Balkan war found an easier solution.

The World War started later precisely because each of the belligerents kept glancing fearfully down into the abyss toward which it was being dragged by unbridled class interests. Germany's extraordinarily augmented power, counterposed to the ancient power of Great Britain, constituted, as is well known, the historical mainspring of the war but this same power long kept the enemies from an open break. When the war did break out, however, the power of both camps conditioned the prolonged and bitter character of the conflict.

The imperialist war, in its turn, pushed the proletariat along the path of civil war. And here we observe an analogous order: countries with a younger capitalist culture are the first to enter the path of civil war inasmuch as the unstable equilibrium of class forces is most easily disrupted precisely in these countries.

Such are the general reasons for a phenomenon which seems inexplicable at

'The great French revolution of the 18th century, bourgeois both in its most extreme objects as well as results, was at the same time profoundly national!'

first sight, namely, that in contradistinction to the direction of capitalist development from West to East, the proletarian revolution unfolds from East to West. But since we are dealing with a most complex process, it is quite in the nature of things that upon these indicated basic causes there arise countless secondary causes, some of which tend to reinforce and aggravate the action of the chief factors while others tend to weaken this action.

In the development of Russian capitalism the leading role was played by European finance and industrial capital, particularly and especially that of — France. I have already underscored that the French bourgeoisie in developing its usurious imperialism was guided not only by economic but also by political considerations. Fearful of the growth of the French proletariat in size and power, the French bourgeoisie preferred to export its capital and to reap profits from Russian industrial enterprises; the task of curbing the Russian workers was therewith unloaded on the Russian Czar. In this way the economic might of the French bourgeoisie also rested directly on the labour of the Russian proletariat. This created a certain positive force in favour

of the European bourgeoisie. This alone suffices to explain why the counter-revolutionary intervention of the Entente imperialists was inevitable. On the other hand, this same intervention was rendered possible only because the Russian proletariat found itself placed by history in a position which compelled the Russian workers to accomplish the revolution before it could be accomplished by their older and much stronger European brother. Hence flow those supreme difficulties which the Russian proletariat is compelled to overcome upon taking power.

The Social-Democratic philistines have sought to conclude from this, that there was no need of going out into the streets in October. Unquestionably it would have been far more 'economical' for us to have begun our revolution after the English, the French and the German revolutions. But, in the first place, history does not at all offer a free choice in this connection to the revolutionary class and

nobody has yet proved that the Russian proletariat is assured a revolution 'economical' in character.

Second, the very question of revolutionary 'economy' of forces has to be reviewed not on a national but on a world scale. Precisely because of the entire preceding development, the task of initiating the revolution, as we have already seen, was not placed on an old proletariat with mighty political and trade union organisations, with massive traditions of parliamentarianism and trade unionism, but upon the young proletariat of a backward country. History took the line of least resistance. The revolutionary epoch burst in through the most weakly barricaded door. Those extraordinary and truly superhuman difficulties which thereupon fell upon the Russian proletariat have prepared, have hastened and have to a certain degree made easier the revolutionary work that lies still ahead for the Western European proletariat.

In our analysis there is not an atom of 'messianism'. The revolutionary 'primogeniture' of the Russian proletariat is only temporary. The mightier the opportunist conservatism among the summits of the German, French or English proletariat, all the more gran-

'Thanks to England's early capitalist development . . . within the proletariat . . . conditions gave shape to the most extreme conservative tendencies?'

of the French bourgeoisie in its relations with the French proletariat and, conversely, this same fact engendered a certain incremental social force advantageous to the Russian proletariat in its relations with the Russian (but not the world) bourgeoisie.

What has just been said applies essentially to all old capitalist countries exporting capital. The social might of the English bourgeoisie rests on the exploitation of the English proletariat but also of the colonial toiling masses. Not only does this make the bourgeoisie richer and socially stronger, but this also secures it the possibility of a much wider arena for political manoeuvres, both through rather far-reaching concessions to its native proletariat as well as through exerting pressure on it by means of the colonies . . .

In view of the foregoing reciprocal relations, our October Revolution was an uprising not only against the Russian bourgeoisie but also against English and French capitalism; and this, furthermore, not only in a general historical sense — as the beginning of the European revolution — but in the most direct and immediate sense. In expropriating the capitalists and refusing to pay Czarist state debts, the Russian proletariat thereby dealt the

diose will be the power generated for their revolutionary onslaught by the proletariat of these countries . . . The dictatorship of the Russian working class will be able to finally intrench itself and to develop into a genuine, all-sided socialist construction only from the hour when the European working class frees us from the economic yoke and especially the military yoke of the European bourgeoisie, and having overthrown the latter, comes to our assistance with its organisation and its technology. Concurrently, the leading revolutionary role will pass over to the working class with the greater economic and organisational power.

If today the centre of the Third International lies in Moscow — and of this we are profoundly convinced — then on the morrow this centre will shift westward: to Berlin, to Paris, to London. However joyously the Russian proletariat has greeted the representatives of the world working class within the Kremlin walls, it will with an even greater joy send its representatives to the Second Congress of the Communist International in one of the Western European capitals. For a World Communist Congress in Berlin or Paris would signify the complete triumph of the proletarian revolution in Europe.

Jackson shifts right

THE RESULT of the New York Democratic primary was not the substantial 'reverse' for Jesse Jackson that the press are claiming. True he only received 37 per cent of the vote compared to Michael Dukakis's 51 per cent. But that is still a tremendous percentage for a candidate who was portrayed at the beginning of the campaign as on the 'way out fringe' of the Democratic Party. Jackson was completely consolidated as the second runner for the Democratic nomination. Openly right wing Albert Gore was crushed with less than 10 per cent of the vote. Jess Jackson is now a powerful force in the Democratic Party.

The campaign also gives a deep insight into the forces at work in US politics. After nearly a decade in which all official claims were that Reagan's presidency showed a profound shift to the right in US political opinion the reality is that Jackson's campaign has shown a real growth in the most left wing section of the Democratic Party — shifting the entire party to the left.

The mobilisation of the US electorate in support of a programme of radical reform is all but unparalleled in the recent history of the country's political development. But New York also showed that the 'Rainbow Coalition's' strategy of politicking from within the largest of America's bourgeois parties is inexorably dragging the campaign to the right.

Jackson has increased his share of the white vote since the 1984 presidential elections to a very high degree — in the South alone it increased from 1 to 7-10 per cent. He's also managed to hammer all his competitors in a number of the primaries and caucuses that have taken place thus far, most notably in Michigan where he won 55 per cent of the vote to Dukakis' — the Democratic front runner's

— 28 per cent.

All this, as we tried to make clear in the March issue of *Socialist Action*, is on the basis of a populist

By Chris James

programme, calling for, among other things, massive reductions in arms spending for investment in the economy, the creation of a national health service, and a verbal commitment to the rights of foreign countries to determine their own social systems free of outside interference.

It is, naturally enough, on this last position that Jackson has now openly begun to shift. New York represented an exceptional primary. It receives 255 Democratic delegates, the largest allotment after California (whose primary takes place in early June). And 25 per cent of the electorate in New York is Jewish, the vast majority of whom are staunch supporters of the Israeli state.

The Zionist lobby in the US is a tremendous 'behind the scenes' political power, whose pressure can literally make or break a candidate on the basis of their position on the conflicts in the Middle East. In

other words, you support Israel unequivocally or else we mobilise literally millions of voters and fighting activists to try and ensure that you're not elected.

Jackson's public line, and the line of the campaign in general, on Israel and the Palestinians up to New York has been consistent, if mistaken. He has stood for the right of the Palestinians to a homeland on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, and for an international conference in order to mediate such a resolution to the conflict — the conference to include representatives of the PLO as the representatives of the Palestinian people in their struggle. He has met with Arafat publicly (and was photographed exchanging hugs with him), and a section of his constituency has been Arab-Americans who truly believed that he was the only candidate that was willing to stand in solidarity with them.

But when the pressure's on, opportunism makes itself very clear under such circumstances. In order to win over some sectors of the Jewish vote — he currently is polled as receiving 10 per cent of their vote as opposed to Dukakis' 74 per cent — Jackson has shamelessly reneged on his earlier positions, claiming that 'he saw no need to bring Mr Arafat into the formal negotiating process' and that 'the sole purpose of his meeting with the Palestine Liberation Organisation's leader had been to challenge him over his position on Israel'. He went on to say that the 'US priority in the Middle East should be to assure Israel's security, in part by getting the PLO to recognise Israel's right to exist' (In-

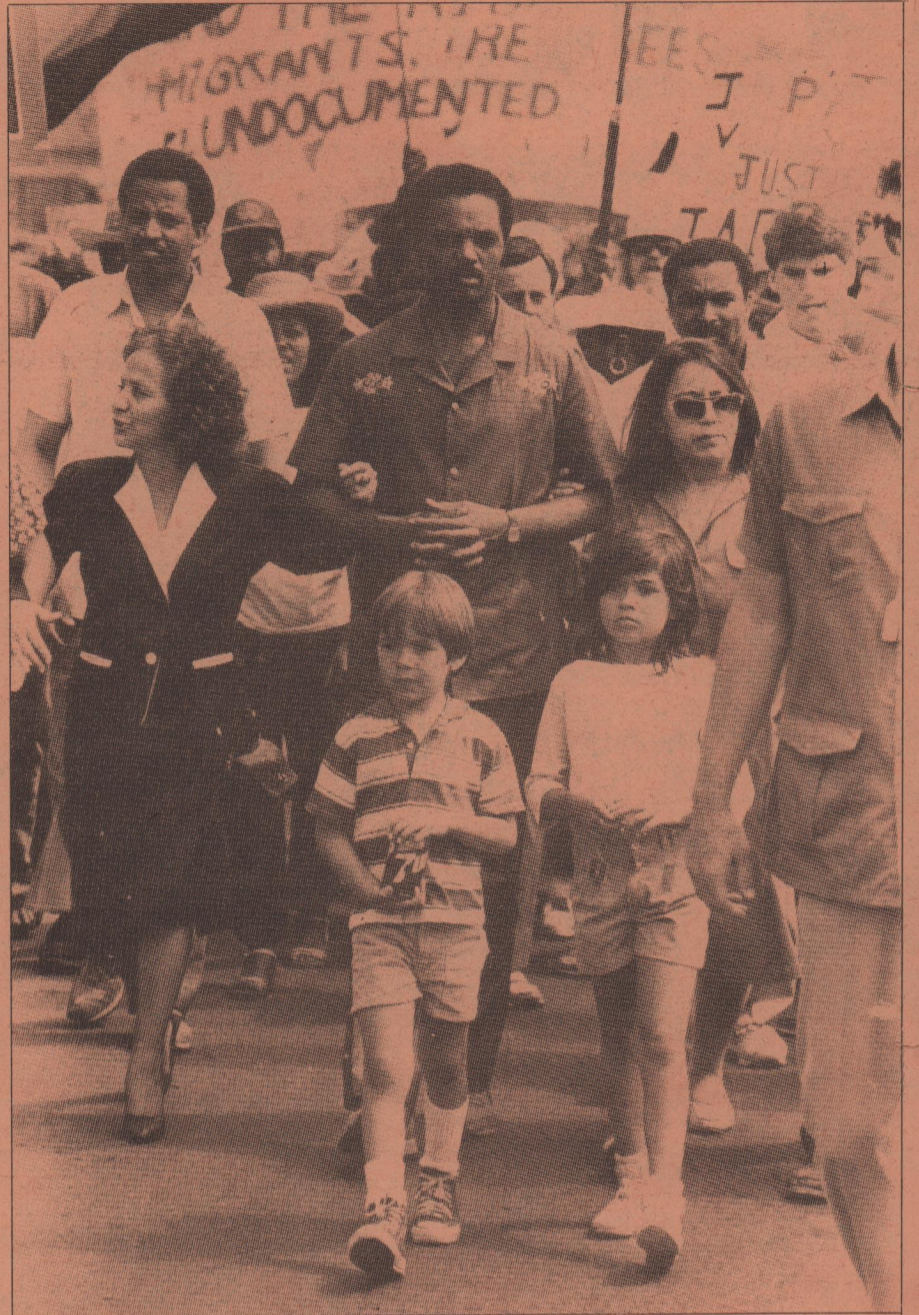
dependent, 11 April).

This is not the first time that Jackson has quickstepped to the right under pressure, only the most brazen. He fudged on his line of non-intervention in other nation's affairs over the Gulf War, for instance, when he decided overnight that if elected he would maintain a US naval presence in the area to safeguard its interests.

Why is it that Jackson has taken such a turn? Part of it, of course, is the pressure exerted by his 'need to win votes'. More fundamentally, however, is the reality of operating within the Democratic Party, which has proven the 'graveyard' of virtually every social reform movement that is managed to lure within its grasp in the past. In order to get the public support, or even the recognition, of the party big-wigs, Jackson has to do things in a way that will not be perceived by them as threatening the status quo. Needless to say, unquestioning support for the Zionist state and its machinations as the tool of US imperialism in the Middle East is one of the issues that stands at the head of the agenda.

It's ironic, though, that this move by Jackson very probably didn't win him any larger a percentage of the Jewish vote in New York. But it will have disaffected New York's 100,000 Arab-Americans, as well as intensifying the contradictions within the ranks of the progressive sections of the Rainbow Coalition that there has been such a struggle to build.

Unfortunately, New York is only the beginning of the process.



Jackson campaigning in New York

Victory to the Afghan government

THE SIGNING of the agreement between the USSR, Pakistan, and the United States for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan now allows attention to be concen-

By Mark Wilson

trated on the nature of the two forces that have been fighting in that country. The Soviet withdrawal will be phased over nine months. The 'mujahedin' fighting the Afghan government have stated they will ignore the Accord. The United States will continue to supply them.

There is no doubt regarding the character of the mujahedin. Their social leadership is Afghan landlords. The political programme is vicious reaction against Afghan workers, Afghan peasants, and Afghan women. They have viscerally opposed the secularisation of the state, equality for women, and



particularly the agrarian reform implemented by the Kabul regime since 1978. In a nutshell, they are a reactionary force made up of feudalists, arch-reactionary religious fanatics, monar-

chists and every other possible scum which can be found in Afghanistan.

Their entry into Kabul would mean the physical annihilation of the

vanguard of the Afghan working class.

This character of the mujahedin is thoroughly understood by international capital. 'Guerrillas plan a

bloodbath' was the title of the central article in the *Sunday Times* summarising the accord on 17 April. The *International Herald Tribune's* headline was 'Despite Accord, Chaos Is

Nation's Destiny'.

The *Economist* went the furthest when it commented 'The Afghans may settle their own differences violently ... within a year the top few hundred Afghan communists will be in retirement in Russia, and any left behind will be as rare as French collaborators after 1945'.

This agreement should be the occasion for the British left, which has been largely supporting these reactionaries, to take stock of its position. The Afghan mujaheddin represent one of the most obscurantist Islamic fundamentalist forces in the world. They do not even have the merit, as did the Khomeinists in Iran, of having overthrown the Shah. They are propped up with weapons and money by imperialism and their particularly reactionary client regimes — notably Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The other finances of the mujahedin have come from the massive international drug traffic conducted from their base in Peshawar, Pakistan.

It is a matter of disgrace that the British left, under the guise of 'anti-Sovietism'

has been supporting this scum who if they come to power will wipe out, through physical annihilation, all traces of communism, liberalism, working class organisation, or any other organised form which they consider suspect — undoubtedly including any organisation of women in Afghanistan. The killing of 600,000 communists by the Suharto forces in Indonesia in 1965 should provide some sort of model for what the mujahedin represent.

The social reality of the situation in Afghanistan has always been extremely difficult. It has been made worse by Soviet bureaucratic methods. But there is no doubt as to which side socialists should be in that war. It is a battle between a bureaucratic 'progressive' regime and some of the most reactionary forces in the world. Socialists should stand unequivocally, as they needed to all along, for the victory of the side of the Afghan government over the mujaheddin. If that government does not win the price paid in Afghanistan will be catastrophic.



Stop Zionist terrorism

IN AN operation involving the Israeli army and navy, led by the Mossad secret service, the Zionist state last week assassinated the PLO military commander, Abu Jihad, in Tunisia. Together with the 14 Palestinians murdered by Zionist troops in the West Bank and Gaza in the clashes following the assassination, the Zionists have now slaughtered nearly 200 unarmed Palestinians since the uprising began on 9 December last year.

The assassination is a reflection of the Zionist view, articulated precisely by Shamir, that the Palestinians should be 'crushed like grasshoppers'. But it is also a reflection of the increasing disarray of the Zionist forces. Convinced by its own propaganda that the uprising is simply a few trouble makers directed by the PLO, the Zionist state resorts to terrorist actions aimed at eliminating the 'ringleaders'. However, the murders, the countless beatings and maimings, the curfews and the deportations simply serve to fuel the flames of revolt and unite Palestinians and other Arabs in ever larger numbers.

By Rashid Ashraf

The assassination, for example, far from having its intended effect of crushing the uprising, has provoked some of the most violent clashes in the occupied territories and led to 100,000 Palestinians joining a 3-day strike called by the PLO inside the Israeli state. Internationally it has provoked moves towards greater Arab unity with Syria's Assad making overtures to re-establish links with the PLO and even Egypt condemning the 'criminal action' of the Zionists.

Palestinian deaths have resulted not only from actions of the troops but also those of the 'settlers' — or armed colonisers, to give them a more accurate name. The recent incident in Beita, where an Israeli woman was killed during a provocative 'tour' of the Palestinian village by the colonisers, gave an ironic twist to their activities. In the confrontation with unarmed Palestinians, it was the colonisers' own bullets which killed the woman. Of course, this did not stop the army from imposing a curfew on the village, rounding up the men in the town square, demolishing the homes of suspects and deporting six men to south Lebanon.

The uprising has struck the Israeli economy directly through the suc-

cessful boycotts of Israeli goods and mass resignations of Palestinian workers from the menial jobs that Israelis will not do. In the Gaza strip nearly all of the 400 Arab policemen have resigned, effectively ending the 'rule of law' there. Those who have in the past collaborated with the Zionists such as Hafez Toukan, the Israeli-appointed Mayor of Nablus, have started to resign their positions or flee into hiding.

Apart from the murders the Palestinians have suffered over 4,000 arrests, 20 deportations and thousands of casualties. Yet the revolt continues to gather force. Its persistence can be explained by its mass, popular character and the high level of self-organisation displayed, particularly by a new generation of Palestinian youth. While the United Leadership of the Uprising (ULU) directs the central initiatives such as the 'days of struggle', the driving force of the uprising remains the local committees. Against this form of popular participation the repressive apparatus of the Israeli state is becoming increasingly ineffective. This is reflected in the indiscriminate mass arrests and deportations which simply result in the emergence of new organisers and committees. The impotence of the much vaunted Israeli internal secret service, Shin Bet, was underlined when its announcement that leaders of the ULU responsible for issuing the 11 leaflets directing the initiatives had been rounded up, was promptly followed by the appearance of leaflet no. 12.

The outrage in Tunisia and the daily Zionist attacks on the Palestinians have helped to lift the democratic veneer from the Israeli state. In February, a CBS reporter filmed Zionist soldiers in Nablus systematically beating up two bound Palestinian youths for 40 minutes, and then breaking their arms. As a result of the international condemnation this film provoked, the Israeli state was forced to arrest the

soldiers. The soldiers' defence centred on the simple truth that they were carrying out orders from the government. The most shocking aspect of this incident for many supporters of the Israeli state, however, was the reaction of the many Zionists, such as Yuval Ne'eman of the Tehiya Party, who campaigned for the release of the soldiers and tougher action against the Palestinians!

The Zionists were quick to learn the lessons of this incident, however. The occupied territories are now regularly turned into closed military zones and the world's press is excluded, to allow Zionist troops to operate unhindered by considerations of 'human rights'. Arab newspapers and news agencies have also been shut down.

Despite this, news of the repression continues to leak out. The Zionists have laid siege to entire villages and camps, denying them food and basic medical supplies in an effort to starve the Palestinians into submission. That peculiarly Zionist system of instant 'justice', the bulldozing of suspects' homes, has also been resurrected. Even the normally sedate Vatican was moved to compare the activities of the Zionists with the Nazis' treatment of Jews.

The heroic resistance of the Palestinians needs international solidarity and financial aid is vital to fight the effects of the curfews. In Britain the numerous organisations fighting for Palestinian rights have to build a united campaign around the most pressing questions: raising funds and organising solidarity actions around the demands of immediate and unconditional Zionist withdrawal, and the holding of free elections in the West Bank and Gaza with full right for the PLO to participate.

● *In the Israeli state, Arab and Jewish activists, including the Sons of the Village movement and the Revolutionary Communist League, Israeli state section of the Fourth International, have established Committees to Fight the Occupation. They have undertaken to channel funds to the popular committees in the occupied territories. They can be contacted through: Remy Mendelzweig, 20a Sport St, 34575, Haifa or Marcello Weksler, Post Box 26163, Tel Aviv.*

SSiN peaks?

DESPITE this year's NUS conference being widely canvassed as the one at which Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) would make a successful challenge for the leadership, in fact the conference was marked by the emergence of a new right wing coalition which forced SSiN back into third place in the elections for the presidency.

For SSiN the conference was an undoubted failure. Despite fielding a slate of eight candidates, an intervention that reputedly cost them £3000, and four candidates elected, the key contest of Simon Pottinger for SSiN against NOLS's Maeve Sherlock was a debacle and marked the end of SSiN as a serious proposal as an alternative leadership for NUS.

SSiN had built up support in NUS in the last three years on the basis of opposition to the 'Democratic Left' leadership of NUS which dominates NOLS. They were able to do this because the DL is a current of left fakers, which has produced much dissatisfaction in NUS with their inability to produce real campaigning results for students.

However, SSiN's proposal of a left opposition based on pro-imperialist politics, opposition to the autonomous organisation of the oppressed, and in support of the sectarian interests of *Socialist Organiser*, was doomed to fail in any attempt to win the leadership of NUS. SSiN has now been firmly relegated to the position of an eternal opposition in NUS.

Only the tactics of the Democratic Left prevented the debacle of SSiN's whole project appear less than crystal clear. The DL only stood a minority slate for the leadership of NUS, and in supporting other candidates to the right of Labour for some executive posts allowed SSiN

through. Most notably NOLS support for a Eurocommunist candidate as NUS national secretary could not swing sufficient votes meaning SSiN won the post, with the NOLS backed candidate receiving 100 less votes than NOLS candidates were generally winning.

By Polly Vittorini
President SOAS SU

Despite the NOLS decision to stand a minority slate, the conference still elected fourteen Labour candidates out of eighteen posts up for election. This was through a combination of NOLS, SSiN, 'Further Education Labour Students' and independent Labour candidates. NUS therefore still has massive majority support for Labour, while being controlled by a Labour current which is politically aligned with forces to its right.

The failure of the NOLS leadership to provide effective direction to NUS poses the question of a replacement leadership. The issue is whether this will be from within the Labour, that is working class, currents or whether non-Labour and right-wing forces will build up their support.

Conference decided that the replacement will not be SSiN. But this conference also saw the emergence of a right-wing coalition of so-called 'independents under the name of 'Students for Students'. This current, whose only

common political thread was opposition to 'political student unionism', gained a third of the vote and knocked SSiN into third place. It represents an attempt to break up the hegemony of Labour in NUS. This explains why both the SDP and Liberal students were calling for a vote for the 'Students for Students' candidates.

Although Labour has majority support in NUS, the new method of election of the part-time executive posts in a block of 12, which will be implemented next year, will make it far easier for these non-Labour forces to gain seats on the executive. This makes it all the more imperative that Labour students should fight for a majority of seats on the executive.

The election of 'Students for Students' into control of NUS would undoubtedly mean that the NUS leadership would no longer defend automatic membership of NUS for students, supporting voluntary membership instead. The ground would be laid for the destruction of NUS as a real element in the defence of education and students.

For a force like 'Students for Students' to win the leadership of NUS would be disastrous for students and the labour movement. The refusal of the DL leadership of NOLS to fight for a clear majority of the seats on NUS executive gives ground to these forces.

Meanwhile, SSiN's pro-imperialist politics cannot win a majority either, moreover half their votes were transferring to Students for Students on the second ballot — an indication of the inherently right wing trends underlying the politics of SSiN. The

only consistent fight for a campaigning and internationalist leadership of NUS will come from Labour's left, as an alternative to both the DL and SSiN.

This is the importance of Campaign Student, and the Internationalist Alliance for Socialism that it was involved in at this year's NUS conference. While not yet in a position to win sufficient votes to gain seats on the executive, its politics represented a real step forward in NUS and has scored some political successes.

Unlike at the last NUS conference when the first discussion on Palestine in 11 years led to no policy being adopted, at this NUS conference a guest speaker from GUPS, making a hardhitting and hardline speech, received overwhelming support on conference floor.

Unfortunately the debate on Palestine was not reached on the agenda due to lack of time, but it is clear that positions in solidarity with the Palestinians would have been adopted. Campaign Student, and the IAS, have been the core of the campaign to achieve this situation in NUS.

Campaign Student and IAS supporters have also carried the campaign against Alton in NUS, organising and building a well-attended fringe meeting, despite the less than enthusiastic support of the DL NUS leadership.

A major fringe meeting was also held on Ireland, with the new NUS president Maeve Sherlock — who moved the initial motion that changed NUS policy on Ireland. This laid a good basis for building the coming year of action, and the Students Against Repression network.

Members resist executive's attack on union democracy

TEACHERS RECEIVED an average of 4.25 per cent across the board rise in the government announcement on their pay last week. This falls way short of the 40 per cent the national union of teachers voted on at its annual conference in Scarborough at the beginning of April.

As Bernard Regan (reinstated ILEA leader) made clear in moving an amendment calling for a £2000 flat rate increase at the conference, the national executive's proposed strategy was a fake and a recipe for leading the union further to the right.

The Scarborough conference was to have been the launching pad for the executive's proposals to rid the NUT of its so-called militant image. The main plank of their campaign around the Education Reform Bill was the establishment of an educational advisory council with bishops, parents and industry. Already this proposal looks doomed for the rubbish bin.

The response of the executive to the union's reduced membership was to have been quickly ushered through. The brakes were however put on the attempts to 'streamline' the union, when delegates decided to defer the debate to a special conference. In

reality this debate will be about the political direction of the union, not about organisational matters. It will be very important.

By Pat Tough NUT

There is a whole layer of union members who do not see themselves as part of the left, but would oppose restructuring of the union in an undemocratic way. In the buildup to the special conference, now scheduled for June, the left, including the Socialist Teachers Alliance, must recognise the huge vacuum that has opened up on this issue the centralist urge of the union leadership.

The executive's decision to name Doug Macavoy? as General Secretary designate without any recognised procedure up to a point clearly exposed the corrupt method of the bureaucracy and was rejected by delegates.

The Inner London Teachers Association

(ILTA) officers, reinstated after a years suspension from the union, were given tacit support from a large section of the conference. They showed why were unprepared to allow union members to be victimised by overzealous union officials all too willing to flout union disciplinary procedures and to spend large amounts of the unions funds in the process.

A standing ovation was also given to Lena Milosevic from Leicestershire who moved the resolution that would have made clear that the NUT was prepared to counteract stereotypes and misconceptions about lesbians and gays and to campaign against Clause 28 of the local government bill.

The conference listened silently to the debate and in spite of the defeat of the motion, moved by Lena, which lesbian and gay teachers had put forward, we secured a great victory. The union is now committed to maintaining support for any teacher victimised on the grounds of their sexual orientation and 'encouraging' the development of unbiased attitudes about homosexuality. The campaign wag-

ed by lesbians and gay men around clause 28 had clearly had an impact on the major educational union.

A substantial lobby of the conference was organised by supporters of the Fight the Alton Bill campaign. Wide support for the lobby in response to the union's negative attitude to the abortion bill made it all the more effective.

The immediate task for the left, and in particular the STA, is to fight for the type of union the NUT is going to be. The meeting called in May on this by the Coventry Teachers Association must be supported by local associations. A lurch towards new realism at a time when the state education service is undergoing an immense Tory restructuring is no time for business as usual.

Conference in defence of union democracy: Called by Coventry Teachers Association, National Union of Teachers. It will be held on Saturday May 7 at L Bank Teachers Centre from 11 am to 4 pm. Further details are available from Rhona Hazel, 22 Northumberland Road, Coventry CV1 3AQ. Tel: 0203 22142.

Stop Alton on 6 May

Defend abortion rights

ONLY DAYS after the 20th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act, David Alton's anti-abortion bill will come forward for its final reading in the House of Commons on Friday 6 May.

Alton's is the 15th attempt to restrict the Act since 1967 — all others have been defeated. The Fight Alton's Bill Campaign, whose affiliates include 22 national trade unions and the Labour Party, is calling for a final mobilisation to show the strength of opposition and ensure that this is reflected in the defeat of this bill, whatever its final form, on 6 May.

The bill now coming forward represents the most serious threat to the 1967 Act so far. The anti-abortionists have learned from their experience of other bills, and Alton has focused on the most emotive and confused issue of time limits.

would be in line with developments in medical technology and with current medical opinion. Many claim that the number of women having abortions at this stage is in any case insignificant.

Safety

In reality due to the margin of error of at least two weeks a flat ban on abortions after 23 weeks would criminalise roughly 2,000 women every year on current figures. Inserting a flat time limit for the first time into the '67 Act would tend to increase this margin of error — educated guessing of what week of pregnancy a woman is in rather than viability would determine the legality of abortions.

The burden would lie with the doctor performing the abortion to prove that a woman was not more than a certain number of weeks pregnant. We could look forward to a string of anti-abortion court cases.

Arbitrary

Even among those who accept that a woman should be forced to continue a pregnancy because the foetus meets an arbitrary viability limit, there is no clear medical support for a 24 week limit in the way Alton is proposing. Indeed a House of Lords Select Committee which considered viability and took



By Anne Kane

It has been rushed through its parliamentary process at breakneck speed — from initial presentation to final reading in less than seven months. It has had unprecedented media coverage and sympathy.

Attacks

There is also no doubt that any success for this bill would bolster the anti-abortionists to come back again with further attacks, as they made clear in committee.

As we approach the final debate it is well known that there is not great support amongst MPs for an 18 week time limit. Many MPs who voted for this in January actually support other less drastic restrictions — 22 or 24 weeks. The FAB campaign has received many replies from MPs on both sides of the division in January stating support for such an option.

MPs argue that a 24 week limit for instance

comprehensive medical submissions, concluded in February against a lowering of the time limit or notion of viability.

Neither is there support more broadly for such a limit. The FAB campaign recently mailed every Labour MP the text of a letter calling for a vote against any reduction, including 24 weeks, signed by 14 trade union general secretaries.

Alton of course hopes for more than 24 weeks, but any success, the first in 20 years, would spur him and the anti-abortionists on to further more attacks. With

this in mind, Cyril Smith, one of Alton's main supporters, has tabled amendments for the report stage on May 6th on time limits of 18, 20, 22 and 24 'completed weeks'.

Issue

The first important issue will be whether the procedure set during the Corrie Bill, of taking amendments in descending order, is followed or whether the Speaker overturns this and takes amendment in the order that they were submitted, in practice ascending order. Other

amendments — 27 and 26 weeks for instance — have been tabled and the importance of order is that as soon as any amendment gains a majority all others fall. Taking them in ascending order will effectively increase the risk of the amendments on the lowest time limits, being carried.

The remaining time before 6 May must be used to put maximum pressure on MPs to vote to defend the 1967 Act and against Alton's Bill in any form. MPs should be written to and talked to, especially those who abstained last time round and those

Labour MPs who defied party policy. Several trade unions have instructed sponsored MPs who voted for Alton in January to vote against in any future votes.

All supportive MPs should be checked to make sure that they will definitely be in the House of Commons on 6 May after the local elections on 5 May.

Protest

And all supporters should be at FAB's final protest demonstration against the Bill on the eve of the third reading, on Thursday 5 May — assemble

6.30pm, ULU Building Malet Street London.

Should the bill get through on 6 May in any form the fight is far from over. It would then go to the House of Lords which has the power to substantially amend it. FAB will, of course, be organising events aimed at the Lords in the unlikely event that the Bill is not thrown out on 6 May.

Every opinion poll and survey in the past 20 years shows overwhelming support for the 1967 Act. Defeat this Bill, like all the others by mobilising that opinion on 5 May.

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Publications fund drive SUPPORT IS COMING IN

SINCE last month readers and supporters have continued to respond marvellously to our appeal for an £8000 publications fund in order to ensure the production of *Socialist Action* in 1988.

Donations received in the last month already amount to £1329.29 in large and small donations, and in money raised through fundraising events and activities.

Supporters in Birmingham have responded particularly well in sending in a total of £135 already, and are planning a series of fundraising events to keep the money coming in.

One supporter in South London has donated the proceeds from a recently published research paper.

We have also received a series of large and small donations from individuals.

Together with last month's total of £510 the total income for the fund drive now amounts to £1839.29. This puts us on target to achieve our goals, as long as the money keeps coming in and readers and supporters continue to help out.

Socialist Action will continue to campaign against the Alton bill, and against the Zionist aggression against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. It will prioritise building the proposed year of action to mark the 20th anniversary of the troops going in to the North of Ireland.

It supports and builds the Black Section, the Women's Action Committee, the Labour Campaign

for Lesbian and Gay Rights and other important Labour Party Campaigns. With Labour CND it supports the movement against nuclear weapons, and seeks to help defend Labour's unilateralist policy. *Socialist Action* stands with every struggle against the Thatcher government's attacks on the working class.

And *Socialist Action* will be campaigning for the largest possible vote for Benn and Heffer in the Labour leadership election, and for the left slate in the NEC elections.

But to do all this *Socialist Action* has to come out, and that takes money. That means selling *Socialist Action*, and helping however you can to support our publications fund drive.

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