

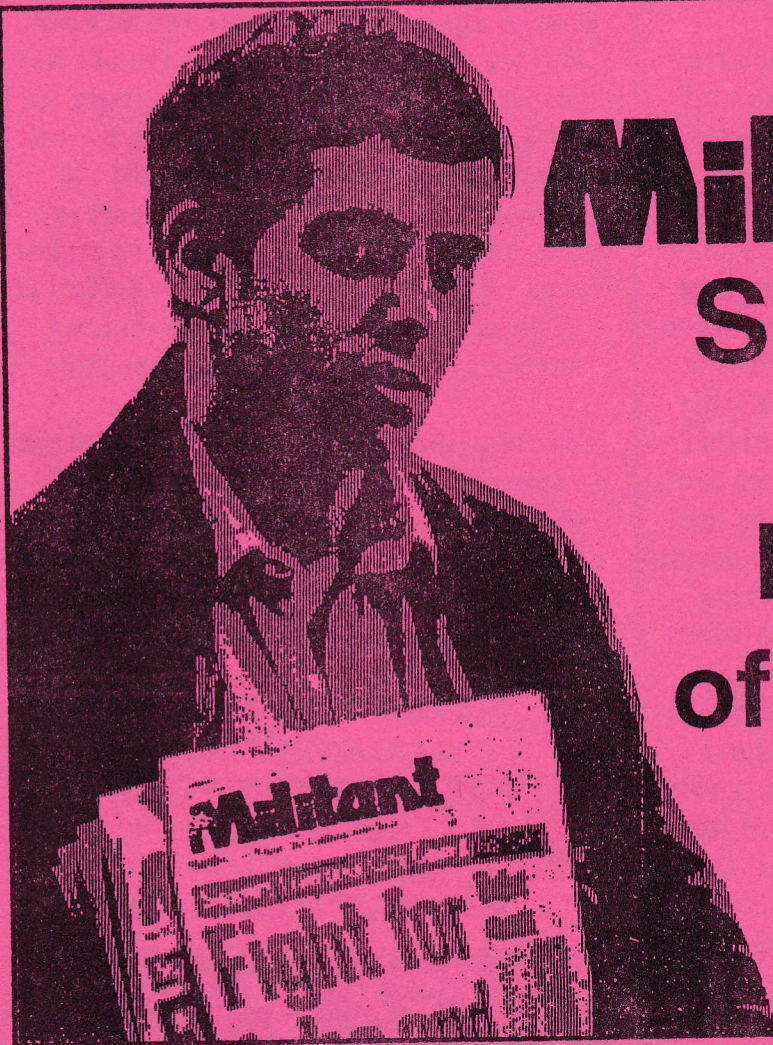
# Trotwatch

VOLUME ONE  
ISSUE ONE

Summer  
1992

PRICE £1  
LEFTIES £5

AN ANARCHIST COMMENTARY ON THE LIFE OF THE LEFT



## Militant SPLIT

Epitomy  
of a left in  
crisis

**WORKERS  
POWER:**

**STERN FACED  
TROTSKYISTS  
IN  
UNASHAMED  
BACKING  
FOR**

**PROPORTIONAL  
REPRESENTATION**

**SHOCK!**

**WE  
WANT  
YOUR  
VOTES  
IN  
THE  
1992**



**GERRY HEALY  
MEMORIAL**

**"CRIMES  
AGAINST  
THE CLASS"  
AWARDS**

**FREE  
INSIDE**

**READY  
MADE  
LEFTY  
COMPLAINT  
LETTER**

**SIMPLY  
DELETE  
AS YOU  
GO!**

Vote   
Vote   
Vote

**YOUR  
EXCLUSIVE  
TROTWATCH  
GUIDE TO WHO  
SAID "VOTE"  
AND FOR WHO**

**YOUR FULL LEFTY  
ELECTION ROUND UP  
INSIDE**



## *New readers start here*

**WELCOME TO THE first historic issue of Trotwatch: an anarchist examination into the murky underworld of "left-wing" party politics.**

Trotwatch has a simple aim: to catalogue and document, to analyse and critique, all manifestations of left-vanguard politics from an openly partisan anarchist perspective.

We believe the continuing dominance of leftism, in all its guises, over most expressions of working class resistance to "things as they are", represents a serious bloc to the creation of a truly revolutionary anti-capitalist proletarian movement. And we hate Trots too.

Trotwatch aims to contribute to the destruction of the leftie myth. To assist in however small a way to hurrying along the decline of the party builders and their central committees.

Trotwatch will aim to provide ammunition for anti-left argument and evidence of anti-working class left activity.

It will aim to expose instances of left manipulation and opportunism, and highlight examples of the left's attempts to rewrite our history and derail our struggles.

Trotwatch will unearth the crass and the unconvincing, the inept and the offensive, the most dangerous and most comic from the sordid and cynical world of left power politics.

Some of Trotwatch's coverage will be serious. Some will be silly. [But then so much serious Trotskyite politics is silly - "TUC, Organise a general strike!", yeah right...] All we hope will be informative, entertaining and useful.

Trotwatch welcomes all unsolicited internal bulletins, memoranda, central committee meeting minutes and ac-

count books from disaffected party hacks and former members. But we intend that most of our sources will be from generally available published left journals - which provide, in themselves, more than enough evidence for the prosecution.

Trotwatch cannot hope to cover every last disparate Trot groupuscule with access to a dot matrix, a Roneo and a grudge against their former comrades.

But we can hope to analyse trends in the left movement - its orientation to the Labour Party and the trade union barons, its reaction to the poll tax movement, the collapse of Eastern state-capitalism, its responses to strike waves - as well, of course, to poke fun at its marketing strategies, its vicious sectarianism and endless, obsessive introspection.

It is clear that the launch of Trotwatch represents a major victory for the global proletarian movement, which even now is flocking to its banner. It is essential that all advanced workers now rally around the following demands:

**DOWN WITH EMPTY  
SLOGANEERING!  
FOR THE BUILDING OF  
TROTWATCH!  
NOW READ ON  
WITHOUT ILLUSIONS !**



Workers spontaneously celebrate the founding of Trotwatch



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**Trotwatch** is designed and typeset by the *Bullet Ridden Partridges* and printed by *Iron Broom Resistant* printers. **Trotwatch** is a *We Remember Kronstadt* production. Genuine free-comunist forces may reproduce any materials from **Trotwatch** they deem historically necessary. Acolytes of the tyrant Lenin, however, will face the unquenchable wrath of proletarian vengeance if they attempt to do likewise.

Trotwatch reserves the right to humiliate any variant of leftie orthodoxy it sees fit. "The urge to destroy", the nineteenth century revolutionary Bakunin observed (in one of his more lucid moments), "is a creative urge". Trotwatch feels no obligation to map out its own positive anarcho-communist programme in the pages of this journal - that work can be undertaken elsewhere. Trotwatch's purpose is, on the surface, exclusively negative, critical and *destructive*. But trying to help demolish the grotesque edifice of leftism, to help clear the way for the emergence of a *genuinely* revolutionary working class politics, is class struggle at its most *constructive*.



# 'Red' Ken's power bid row splits left

ONLY WEEKS after a fourth consecutive general election defeat, Labour's left wing were dealt another crushing blow, this time in the party's leadership contest, when Ken Livingstone and Bernie Grant failed to win enough support in the parliamentary party even to get their names onto the ballot paper.

Kinnock's decision to resign so soon after the election, took the left by surprise and gave them little time to get their act together or to agree on candidates that they would back. In the early 1980s, the party's left looked to Tony Benn as its obvious leadership contender - but this time the 67 year old, twice-defeated Benn declined to stand, as did Dennis Skinner, the obvious Deputy candidate.

After a "controversial" selection procedure, organised by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, the Livingstone and Grant slate emerged - and protests and divisions soon began to appear.

The Socialist Organiser group were the most vitriolic (if not the most coherent) of Livingstone's opponents: "Livingstone will not be a candidate. And no real Left can develop around this Murdoch-sponsored pantomime candidate of the future Lord Redken, Sun columnist, Sun candidate on a Sun platform for the leader of the Labour Party".

SO were clearly not pleased at being 'lumbered' with Ken. In an incisive marxist critique of Livingstone's failings, SO point out that: "This character has a trick moustache and a whining - obviously false - South London voice... He is known variously as Red Ken, Red Leicester, Cheesy Red, or just scumbag".

## DOOMED

Citing poor economic and taxation policies as examples of Livingstone's "quack radicalism", SO set about trying to kickstart a doomed "draft Tony Benn" campaign: "He has been the standard bearer of the left for the last two decades. He is a man of political integrity". Unlike of course the "winking and grimacing" Ken (all quotes SO April 23,

The political front, p4). Livingstone will not be surprised by SO's contempt for him: they have been bitter opponents of long standing [see note at end]. A couple of weeks later on, SO came out in support of John Prescott, because of his 'public defence' of trade union links with the Labour Party.

SO point out that on this issue he is "hypocritical and unreliable" and that he "has consistently backed Kinnock's witch-hunting and... drive to scrap left-wing policies" - but, what the hell, Prescott "might even win" (SO, June 11, p2).

Socialist Worker, meanwhile, managed to adopt four different positions on the contest within the space of five weeks.

"Labour's leadership election presents a real choice" declared one party editorial. Dismissing all other contenders as Kinnockite henchmen, SW came out in clear support for the Livingstone/Grant ticket. The party that says it believes that parliamentarianism, electoralism and labourite reformism are obstacles in the way of building a real workers' movement, decided that: "Their campaign could become a focus for those

activists who want to prevent a further drift to the right and to build resistance to the Tories' attacks" (SW, April 25, p3).

Singling out Bernie Grant (who has of course helped them relaunch the ANL) for particular praise, the party added that his candidacy "will be a beacon for many socialists who feel betrayed by the leadership" (SR, May 92, p3). The party's support for Livingstone was more grudging (he has, the paper explained, "been affected by the general rush to the right inside the Labour Party") - but then Ken has repeatedly attacked the SWP from the pages of his Sun column.

When the Livingstone/Grant campaign crashed at the first hurdle, the SWP initially wrote the whole thing off. "The real choice for socialists is not between any of the candidates...", it explained, "but to fight to build an alternative to all of them" (SW May 9, p3). The party attacked the centre-right bruiser John Prescott (the only old style Labourist left in the race) for never once challenging Kinnock, or speaking out.

Three weeks later, Prescott had been rehabilitated, and the



Ken: 'hard-left' recruiting sergeant for Mr Brian Gould.

leadership contest was once again an important focus. "Voting for Prescott is the only way thousands of trade unionists and Labour members can show their disgust with Labour's leadership. Socialists should welcome his election as a setback for the right in the party..." (SW May 30, p13).

But after a couple of very concerned letters in the paper the following week, which suggested that "left wingers who campaign for a vote for Prescott are going up a cul de sac" (SW, June 6, p6), made a fourth stab at getting it right. "The present leadership election presents no real choice for the left", the June issue of the party Review complained...

Despite being eliminated in the first heat, Livingstone is continuing to campaign - though no-one seem sure quite why. This in itself has caused problems for his left supporters, because Livingstone is using his platform to call for support for rival candidate Brian Gould [if "clear commitments, to the union link and stopping attacks on the left" can be extracted from him in advance (Socialist Outlook, May 16, p9)] and John Prescott (S Outlook, May 30 92, p2).

## DISCLAIMER

Outlook's editors published a disclaimer, distancing themselves from Livingstone's views and pointing out that "Gould is utterly compromised with years of support for Kinnockism and the witch hunt... there are no conditions in which the left should vote for Gould...". But, says Outlook, they should support Livingstone - a candidate who thinks everyone should vote for Gould. Bernie Grant says he will be voting for Prescott, but agrees that "a campaign of writing his and Livingstone's names on the ballot papers would be a good idea" (S Out, May 30, p2). A tactic perhaps best adopted 'without illusions'?

Livingstone and Grant's declared support for centre-right contenders could yet trigger a series of messy withdrawals from their campaign - though, ironically, it does leave Socialist Organiser and "Cheesy Red" Ken pushing exactly the same line.

The Militant Tendency had no position on the leadership contest for well over a month - it simply ignored it. This is strange, seeing as the Tendency is supposed to believe that the left/right struggle within the party is the most critical of class struggles. But then the Tendency's hatred of 'soft southern middle class municipal social-



ists' like Livingstone (who they despised even in the days of the "rate-capping" battles in the Eighties) is well known. For Militant, the safest position was to wait until Livingstone had been eliminated before committing themselves. Finally, on June 19, Militant declared it would "recommend a vote for John Prescott... He is no marxist... His policies do not challenge the basic structure of capitalism" [No, honestly, they don't] "But he is closer to Labour's working-class base and more susceptible to pressure from below" (Editorial, p4).

The truth is that the left's attempt to jump aboard the Prescott bandwagon is a clear sign of desperation.

The Labour leadership contest is without doubt as boring as it is irrelevant - but it is a useful illustration of the state of the party's left-wing. From the "highpoints" of the GLC and the rise of the Bennite Left, it's been downhill all the way. Deprived of yesterday's leaders, the Labour left cannot agree on today's.

It's a telling indictment of the weakness of Labour's left forces, that they cannot even unite around a single prospective leadership candidate, that they all know is going to lose anyway.



#### WHY SOCIALIST ORGANISER HATES MR KEN...

Ken Livingstone says Socialist Organiser's hostility towards him has its roots in the twilight days of the GLC - a time when SO boss Sean Matgamna and Livingstone developed a deep and mutual loathing.

SO, meanwhile, claims the real antagonism between them began when Livingstone's closeness to Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party, convinced him to support Vanessa Redgrave's libel action against SO, for daring to "compare the WRP to the Moonies".

In response, the WRP attacked SO in the pages of Newsline for being part of an 'international Zionist conspiracy', and (according to SO) Livingstone refused to "dissociate himself from the crazy and mercenary anti-semitism of the Healyites... That is how our relationship with Livingstone became what it is now" (see We Stand for Workers' Liberty, Aug 1 1990).

## Proletarian power and proportional representation

THE THORNY issue of proportional representation (PR) and electoral reform is set to divide Labour's already fractious left-wing still further as the Party's autumn conference approaches.

With the post-mortem into the Party's latest defeat becoming more acrimonious, the possibility that PR could rescue Labour from a life of permanent opposition is coming under renewed scrutiny - even by the most devout of Trotskyists.

Is PR a way forward for the workers' movement? As yet, only a couple of Central Committees have spoken - but the battlelines are already being drawn. On the "Yes" team, currently, are Workers Power; in the "No" camp are the Socialist Workers Party; and on the "Yes, sort of, but..." reserve benches are the legions of Socialist Organiser.

Before the April 9 results were even in, Workers Power had decided to rally behind the banner of PR - as a useful transitional demand on the road to proletarian power.

Backing PR in opposition to the "grossly unfair voting system" in place at present, a Workers Power editorial argued that PR - if introduced in conjunction with other "democratic measures... would give revolutionary socialists a chance to stand, to put forward their programme and get elected" (WP, March 92, p3). The idea being that PR would encourage more electoral challenges to Labour from the left, and undermine the argument from Labour loyalists that such candidacies split the left-vote.

#### ATTACK

The paper also argues that because PR is more likely to produce "weak" minority or alliance government, it could reduce the likelihood of ideologically "strong" capitalist governments being able to attack workers so decisively. This is a strange argument for Workers Power to push. They are supposed to believe it essential that workers experience full throttle Labour gov-

ernments to dispell their illusions in reformism. Alliance governments would not put undiluted Labourism to the test. Workers Power is prepared to accept the possibility of left-coalition governments being produced by PR, but only principled coalitions, and only between "parties of the working class", such as, they say, the Socialist and Communist parties of France.

Not renowned for their patience, Workers Power unsurprisingly wants to see a PR system in place "immediately". Perhaps more surprisingly, given WP's unabashed enthusiasm for PR, is the fact that they haven't specified which particular variant of PR (Single Transferable Vote, Multi-member Constituencies, The List System, etc) they think would best benefit the communist cause. Or, how many Workers Power MPs they expect to have elected on 0.001% of the vote.

For the time being at least, Workers Power, appear to be the only orthodox Trotskyite group to have come out so clearly behind PR, but this may change following Labour's trashing at the polls. Paddy Ashdown has so far declined to comment on Workers Power's conversion to his cause.

Socialist Worker will have none of this: "Talk of pacts and PR - which could only be introduced after a Tory defeat under the present system - is a diversion from the real task of building resistance", the paper explained. PR could hand the balance of power to the Liberal-Democrats,

the party warned, and "when Liberals have managed to win office they have shown themselves for the Tories they really are" (SW 18 April, p3).

What the SWP really mean is that PR, even if it would be more "fair", would, the party thinks, reduce Labour's chances of winning - which would of course be a Bad Thing.

#### LUKEWARM

Socialist Organiser are lukewarm about the PR project. SO are not "in principle... opposed to improving and extending bourgeois democracy, however small the extension may be". But they caution against making "a religion of it" (SO, April 2, p7). They attack the notion that PR would set back the cause of Labourist "socialism" and are convinced that Labour could still win under a PR system.

SO calls on the Labour movement to "launch a campaign for democracy", in which, "PR would only be a small part...". But they warn that "to make PR a central cause for the labour movement make no sense now". Worse "...it could derail British politics and the Labour Party". Consequently, SO is "in favour of proportional representation", but "we are not very enthusiastic about it" (SO, April 14, p7).

Other groups, like Militant and Labour Briefing have yet to speak on the issue but if the PR bandwagon picks up speed, they won't be far behind.

Now... who's for a campaign for proportional proletarian dictatorship?





*The 1992 Gerry Healy Memorial*

# 'Crimes against the class' awards

TO CELEBRATE THE launch of this historic premiere issue of Trotwatch, we are proud to announce the birth of a brand new series of political awards - awards that will recognise and draw attention to the near-Olympic-like efforts of which left-ism is capable at its most resourceful. It'll be a bit like the Oscars - only it won't have anything to do with films at all. And the dissimilarities with the Oscars won't end there: because, unlike the Oscars, these winners won't be decided by the glitzy apparatchiks of Holywood big business. The Trotwatch Awards will be decided by the most advanced and conscious sections of the world proletariat: you, the readers of Trotwatch, in our exclusive workers' poll.

Established in memory of that most Trotskyite of Trotskyists, Gerry Healy (former Godfather of the Workers Revolutionary Party), the annual Crimes Against the Class Awards are surely destined to become probably the most coveted, the most sought after, the most highly desired, the most hotly contested, the most achingly longed after thing that any self-respecting lefty lieutenant could ever hope to become worthy of owning in the whole of eternity. Ever.

Indeed, it could be argued, that the CATCA is just the kind of left-wing award contest that Lenin himself could well have gone on to establish, had he not found himself stuffed and lacquered and on display to endless queues of East German tourists in a dusty mausoleum in the very epicentre of Stalin's Empire. But sadly, he did, and the rest, as they say, is a dialectical historical process governed by the development of productive forces. But Lenin may rest easy (at least until Yeltsin

puts him out for the bin men). Trotwatch will not shirk from the Historic Task Before It.

That said, in this opening year, the Trotwatch Ad-Hoc Awards Council has had a tough job whittling the potential candidates down to the shortlists they present to you now. It must be stressed the nominations they present to you here are simply suggestions: reminders from months past. The final choice in each category resides, as ever, in the hands of the workers. The Council also points out that it predicts a particularly tightly contested contest this time: the standard and scale of anti-proletarian activity undertaken by the forces of the left in the last year has been so impressive, that the job of picking the finalists will be made all the more difficult.

Our commiserations go out to those left-of-centre outfits and individuals who, for this year at least, don't make the grade. But remember, just because you don't reach our finals this time, doesn't mean you aren't doing an excellent job in trying to sabotage and dead-end those small amounts of proletarian self-activity that currently do attempt to escape the labourist swamp.

Who knows, next year you might be up there with the winners? In the meantime - don't forget - we'll be watching!





The categories and nominations for this year's Gerry Healy Memorial Crimes Against the Class Awards are as follows:

### i) THE LEAST CONVINCING FRONT ORGANISATION AWARD

And the initial just-to-get-you-started nominations are: The Revolutionary Communist Party for "Workers Against Racism"; The Socialist Workers Party for "The Anti-Nazi League II (The Return)"; and The Militant Tendency for "The Youth Rights Campaign" (formerly trading as the "Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign).

### ii) THE LEAST IMPRESSIVE CLAIM TO "VICTORY" AWARD

And the opening nominations are: The Militant Tendency for announcing, after being utterly thrashed in the Walton by-election by the official Labour candidate, that Mahmood's chronic showing "represents the future of the labour movement" (Militant, July 5 1991, Editorial, page 2); the Workers Revolutionary Party (Newsline) for greeting Major's emergence as PM, with the warning: "The new government faces a working class which is conscious that it brought down Thatcher" (Newsline editorials, November 1990); and The Militant Tendency (again) for its advertising slogan for its infamous "People's March Against the Poll Tax" book: "The book of the march that brought down Thatcher" (Militant, various, November/December 1990).

### iii) THE LEFTY RACKET LEAST LIKELY TO SUCCEED AWARD

And the starter-for-ten nominations are: The Communist Party of Britain, whose dwindling youth section is rumoured to be on the verge of announcing a new upper age limit, of 75; Socialist Appeal, Ted Grant's new Militant replacement, understood to be almost identical to its predecessor, only without all the sexy, vibrant, exciting and innovative qualities for which that organisation is so renowned; and The British-Soviet Friendship Society currently locked in internecine strife about whether to continue, or go the way of all Stalinist flesh: they currently can't decide who they're supposed to be friends with, and why?

### iv) THE MOST UNCONVINING POLICY U-TURN AWARD

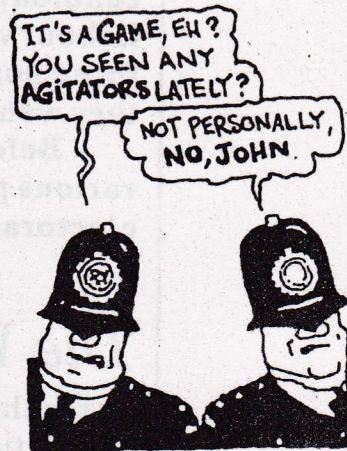
And the lets's get going nominations are: The Socialist Workers Party for "everything" (but in particular the initial "defeat" of non-payment, which later became the "Thatcher-beating-victory" of the poll tax campaign); The Militant Tendency for first denouncing and standing against Peter Kilfoyle in the Walton constituency by-election, then, in the wake of their "victorious" poll showing against him, urging Walton's electors to vote for Kilfoyle in the General Election, even after most of the Millies involved in the Mahmood challenge had been booted out of the Party; and the Revolutionary Communist Party for declaring in the 1987 Red Front election pamphlet that "these are excellent times in which to create a left-wing alternative to Labour" (The Red Front (Junius) 1987, page 1), only to discover three short years later that "the prospects for human progress are worse than at any time this century. Not even in the dark days of fascist triumphs did the prospects for... the creation of a new society seem so remote" (Living Marxism, December 1990), "Midnight in the Century", page 36.

### v) THE SPECIAL LIFE-TIME'S SERVICE AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF THE CLASS AWARD

And the "whatcha reckon?" nominations are: Tommy Sheridan (recent Parliamentary candidate for Scottish Militant Labour) and Steve Nally (both Militant men) who never for one minute let the interests of effective working class resistance to the poll tax, come before the interests of their party, or the Metropolitan Police for that matter. A sterling effort, sustained in the face of mounting criticism (and the occasional flying bottle) over many months and years.

Trotwatch is aware that "lifetime" awards are normally only given in the twilight years of a lefty's career, as they contemplate a permanent change of address to Highgate Cemetery... so, here's hoping.

ONCE YOU'VE considered your nominations and made your decisions, rush to the Trotwatch carpark, at the rear of our heavily fortified office complex, for the spontaneous show-of-hands vote that will finally decide the winners and losers. Any readers unable to attend the meeting, can obtain an advance copy of the full results by sending an sae to the Trotwatch Central Committee (Workers' Democracy Section).







## 'X'marx the spot

### *The Left and the 1992 General Election*

If April 9 was a bad night for Neil Kinnock, for the disparate forces of Britain's electorally-inclined hard left, it was pretty much a disaster.

Those impoverished forces woke up on the morning of April 10 to find themselves at least £25,000 worse off - the multiple effect of so many lost deposits - and without so much as a single workers'-MP-on-a-worker's-wage to show for it. And the Tories had got in again.

Of course, not all left fragments chose to burn money by standing their own candidates. Some groups called for a Labour vote (and only a Labour vote) in all constituencies. Some called for a Labour vote in all constituencies except where anyone more proletarian-friendly was standing. Others called for support only for independent left candidates (standing against official Labour ones) and no Labour vote. Some combined different elements of all three positions at once. Others seemed to make it up as they went along.

Below Trotwatch presents a thumbnail guide to the various poses adopted by those left groups entering the electoral fray. Confused? You will be...

### *The Workers Revolutionary Party*

As regular left-watchers will know, there are in fact two Workers Revolutionary Parties - the result of a many-sided split in the party in October 1985 - both of which claim to be the real WRP. [This claim is, of course, challenged by many other fragments from the split, who have chosen not to join the contest for the party's name, but who claim to be the real Trotskyite workers revolutionary party...].

In happier times when the party was easily the largest and most resourced Trotskyite outfit on the market, the WRP stood dozens of their own candidates in one general election, challenging enough seats to earn themselves a nationally televised election broadcast. But that was in the party's hey-day, when the petro-dollars were flowing in, and the infamous graveyard of skeletons had yet to burst from the party's closets. Both WRPs

*Both WRPs  
are now  
operating  
on shoe-  
string  
budgets*



are now operating on shoe-string budgets with only a fraction of their former combined membership - severely hampering their abilities to intervene in the political life of the class, let alone contest elections.

In the run-up to the 1987 election, around eighteen months after the Healy-split, the Workers Revolutionary Party (Workers Press) came out clearly against the idea of challenging Labour electorally. A Central Committee statement issued on May 10 stated clearly:

"We... disagree with the decision of some socialist groups to field alternative candidates in this particular election. This represents a diversion from the main issue facing the working class [getting rid of the Thatcher government]"

The party was clear in its call for a Labour vote in each and every constituency, whilst placing "absolutely [sic] no confidence in such a Labour government".

It also denounced the intention of its former comrades in the other Workers Revolutionary Party (Newsline) to field ten candidates under the banner of the WRP. In "a notice to voters", it warned them to "beware of frauds", who were "standing under a stolen flag". "They are not members of the WRP, and the policies they are arguing are not those of the WRP and our paper 'Workers Press'... These are political degenerates who have put their principles up for hire".

The WRP (Newsline), meanwhile, launched a £10,000 election fund drive (to cover the cost of the inevitable clutch of lost deposits), yet argued for a Labour vote, "a class vote against the Tories", in all constituencies where they weren't standing [ie all but 10].

Five years on, another election facing them, and both WRPs changed their approach.

Workers Press again called for a Labour vote, but this time not in all constituencies. It called for support for Dave Nellist and Terry Fields - the independent, de-selected sitting Labour MPs in Coventry and Liverpool - and for Tommy Sheridan - Scottish Militant Labour's candidate in Glasgow.

In its April 4 editorial "'Trotskyists' and the election", Workers Press attacks the 'defeatism' of Socialist Outlook, the "endorsement of Labour's pro-capitalist manifesto" by Socialist Organiser" and the un-Trotskyite analysis of Workers News [another ex-WRP fragment].

Strangely though, it does not comment on the politics of Nellist or Fields, nor on Sheridan's Militant "marxist" approach to the election - despite calling for a vote for these three Labour challengers, in a reversal of its previous position.

Its front page pre-election statement suggests that "the re-

*'They are political degenerates who have put their principles up for hire'*

THE YOUNG SOCIALIST Saturday March 14, 1982

★ GARRY'S COLUMN ★

**Vote WRP in general election!**

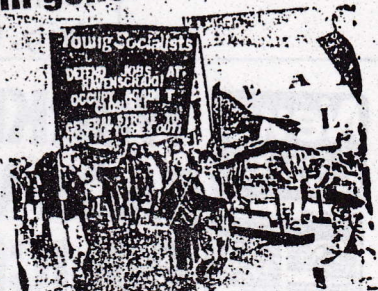
THE GENERAL election has been called for April 9, following the Budget last Tuesday.

The Tories are desperate to win the election, as they need to step up their fight against the working class as the only way to hang on to their bankrupt capitalist system.

The working class is not prepared to put up with more cuts in jobs, the health service, education and housing.

Since the last general election five years ago, it has brought down ex-Prime Minister Thatcher when millions refused to pay the hated Poll Tax.

Today, although millions of workers will vote Labour as a class vote against the Tories, there is no confidence in the



*Five years on, both WRPs changed position*



*The WRP never let the messy details of reality get in the way of 'scientific material analysis'*

removal of the Tory government and the election of a Labour government must be made the next decisive stage in the struggle of the working class in Britain", but does not explain how support for non-Labour candidates will help bring this about. Nor does it outline how electoral support for left-Labourite reformists furthers the critical struggle to win Trotskyite leadership of the working class movement - which is the sole reason for existence for the WRP. Nor what has "objectively" changed since 1987 to justify this switch in tactics...

In another change, this time round, Workers Press has chosen to ignore, rather than attack, the election strategy of the Newsline group.

In the April 92 issue of Marxist Review, the WRP (Newsline) lay out their election manifesto, which explains why the "greatest ever crisis of the world capitalist system" (p4) compels them to contest the election in the name of the global proletariat: "not only to warn the working class of the implications of the economic and political crisis, but to build a revolutionary leadership for the forthcoming battles in which the issue of workers' power will arise". (MR, April 92, p3)

The slight problem the Newsline team had in facing up to this Herculean task this time round, was that there was only sufficient funds in the party's coffers to contest a grand total of three constituencies nationally. A sign of the times being the party's much reduced Election Fund target, at £5,000, only half what they went for last time, but probably still five times too optimistic. The relentless costs of keeping the Newsline going as a daily, with a pitifully low circulation, is inevitably taking its toll on the reserves of the party's tiny membership.

And while the paper's banner front page headline on April 4 declared, with typical WRP-confidence "Workers back WRP policies!", the returning officers of the three constituencies in question delivered rather different news only five days later.

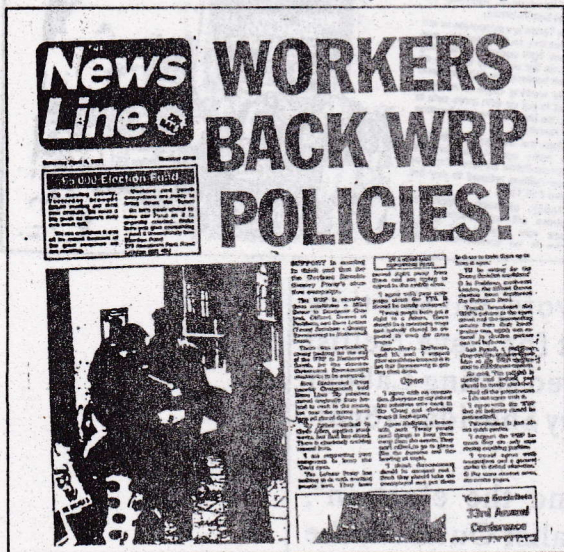
Party performance: Dave Lettice, standing for the party's youth section on a "Young Socialists occupy Ravenscraig" ticket in Motherwell South, got 146 votes (0.4% of the poll); Michael Driver, in Doncaster Central got 184 votes (0.4%); and Gilbert Dacres, in Peckham got 146 votes (0.5%), six votes ahead of the Whiplash (Corrective) Party candidate.

Far from being downheartened with its showing, the Central Committee was jubilant at the party's success.

Never one to let the messy details of reality get in the way of scientific materialist analysis,

the May edition of Marxist Review declared to the world:

"The Workers Revolutionary Party, through its practices after the calling of the April 9 General Election, experienced, gained strength from, and led this emerging revolutionary movement of the working class" (MR, Editorial, p3) [our emphasis]; and all on the strength of a grand total of 476 votes nationally and three lost deposits. Perhaps the WRP (Newsline)



*The central committee was jubilant*



are banking of the emergence of quite a small revolutionary movement...?

**AT A GLANCE:** WRP (Newsline): Vote WRP in three constituencies, vote Labour elsewhere. WRP (Workers Press): Vote Labour, except Nellist, Fields and Sheridan.

## *Revolutionary Communist Party*

In 1987, the Revolutionary Communist Party was a strident, brash, hard-nosed hard-left outfit. Confident, upbeat, but pretty indistinguishable from the other straight-Leninist parties with which it jostled for position in the student market place.

As the election loomed the party unveiled its latest strategy - "The Red Front" - a marxist electoral bloc: a slate of candidates who would stand together on a minimal four point programme ("Work or full pay; Defend union rights; Equal rights for all, Stop the war drive). The RCP's (rhetorical) intention was to unite the forces of the non-Labour left into a single electoral alliance around the programme and so mount a credible challenge to Kinnock in dozens of seats across the country. At the time, the RCP seemed quite taken aback by its own ingenuity.

The Red Front election manifesto explained in bold terms that Labour's feebleness after eight years of Tory attacks meant "that these [were] excellent times in which to create a left-wing alternative to Labour". To no-one's surprise - least of all the RCP's - the rest of the left took no interest at all in the Front [aside from some tentative enquiries from the tiny Revolutionary Democratic Group], and after a very short life, the Red Front was buried on election night, after a stream of lost deposits signified its inevitable demise.

In the months that followed, the RCP gradually discovered the reason why the Red Front - along with so many previous party projects - had failed so spectacularly.

The party had got it wrong. Times weren't "excellent" at all. This was, in fact, a dreadful time in which to try to build a left-wing alternative to Labour. Things had, suddenly, never looked bleaker. The project of human liberation, of which the party was the sole champion, was on indefinite hold, and had been for some time. Unnoticed by the party's central committee, the working class had become temporarily irrelevant to the course of history. The party had discovered we were living in the darkest political period, for revolutionaries, that had existed this century. Little wonder then, that so few proletarians had voted Red Front.

Within a matter of weeks, the party stumbled across the new marketing concept that would from then on distinguish it from the rest of the leftie rabble: the RCP had discovered Designer Depression, marxist style. It was very select, very dark, but with undeniable "cult-status" potential. While the rest of the left re-ran old sales pitches from the Seventies, the RCP un-

*While the rest of the left re-ran sales pitches from the Seventies, the RCP unfurled the banner of Ninties' leftie 'glum-chic'*

*The party had got it wrong*



*Out went  
optimism*

furled the banner of nineties' leftie "glum-chic":

Only the Revolutionary Communist Party understood just how bad things really were, and how bad they were likely to remain for a good while yet. While the rest of the left patiently awaited a return to those good ol' days that were gone forever, pretending nothing had changed, the RCP knew that leftism would have to be remade to face the future. The RCP could stand aloof from the leftie mob, mocking its tired old trade union enthusiasms, its refusal to face up to its own irrelevance.

Like joining an exclusive religious sect, being in the RCP meant being among the chosen few who really understood The Way Things Were. For student coffee-bar cynics, the appeal was obvious. In sharp contrast to the SWP's embarrassing "say-anything-to-get-the-members" opportunism, the RCP developed a very narrow and selective recruitment strategy, with which they could establish a tightly defined niche of their own, in the overpopulated market place of left politics.

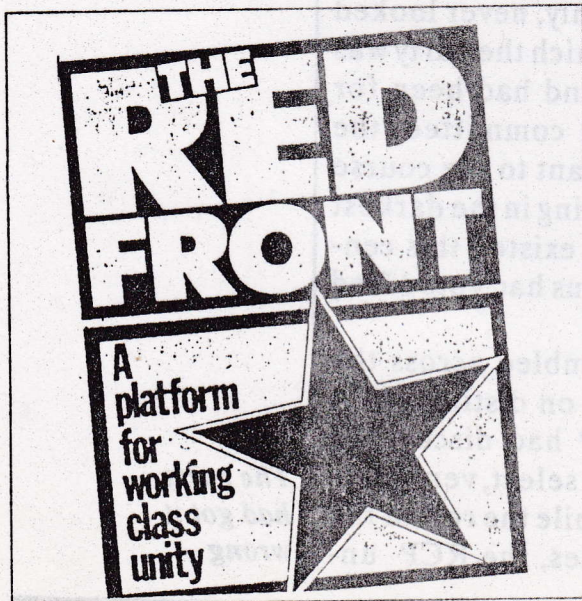
Outwent such optimism as the (absurdly-titled) "Preparing for Power" conferences. The weekly paper was shut down [a unspeakable heresy in most left circles] and re-emerged as a glorified Internal Bulletin. And to underscore the party's "otherness", the central committee set about drafting a series of deliberately esoteric policy positions - on Aids, Eastern Europe, the "fascist threat", and so on. At times, the "distinctiveness" of these positions, their "uniqueness" amongst the left, seemed to become more important to the party than their actual content.

Despite these endeavours, the party has yet to forge the new, improved RCP into a wholly coherently marketable product: Frank Richards' rambling columns in Living Marxism still periodically complain that the party's pessimism is drawing alongside a fair few "fellow travellers", but fewer in the way of fresh dedicated recruits: the flaw in the chicness being that if times are so grim, why bother joining any party? And the party has yet to let go of the last remnants of old-style trad-leftie tactics:

*Why bother?*

the RCP persists with its transparent "front organisations", and - despite these being the bleakest political times since the rise of Hitler - still chos to contest elections.

In 1992, however, there was no sign of the Red Front. The ten RCP candidates that did stand "made no promises" to their voters, who it urged, somewhat confusingly, to "break out of the grey" by making "a declaration of confidence in yourself". As usual, the party came out against a vote for Labour, but declined to say what electors outside the eight RCP-challenged constituencies should do. The party's declared aim in standing, was "not to become part of parliamentary democracy" [and after all there was precious little









'Noisy  
comic  
opera'

ELECTION  
SPECIAL:  
CONVINCED?  
YOU WON'T BE!

"We have declared the need to raise £70,000 by the end of July. This is a highly ambitious target, but then so is revolution, and we will achieve that also... Without exaggeration, the political independence of the working class in Britain depends, in this instance, on the CPGB raising £70,000."

The Leninist (CPGB)  
March 28, p3

"A Labour victory will... force Kinnock down on all fours and into a National Government. Such a government will far outdo the National Government of 1931..."

Marxist Review (WRP  
Newsline) April 92, p6

"While a vote for the mainstream parties is a wasted vote, a vote for the RCP is a way to hit back. It is also a positive statement of faith in the future, a declaration of confidence in yourself and in the potential of collective action."

Revolutionary  
Communist Party,  
Election Manifesto

"Proportional  
representation? Yes,  
but!"

Headline in the hard-  
hitting marxist journal  
Socialist Organiser,  
April 2, p7

defeat of the Tories would "help revive the self-confidence of millions of workers who are now too disheartened to fight directly for their own interests", and of course, "the working class will be better able to defend itself against a Labour government linked to the unions".

Fully backing "Socialists for Labour" - launched by Labour Party Socialists and the Socialist Movement amongst other - SO laid into those left forces daring to challenge the Party machine. "Any act of the left, or any refusal to act which helps the Tories or weakens Labour in this election will be a crime against the class", declared one editorial (SO, March 26, "Turn the tide", p5). "Split vote in Coventry could help Tories", warned another, adding: "A Tory victory... can be avoided if those left-wing groups now campaigning for Nelligan sober up and back Labour" (SO, April 2, p2).

But Socialist Organiser reserved its bitterest bile for its most obvious inner-Labour rival: The Militant Tendency, and its backing for three challengers to official Labour candidates. "Arguments about the need to back 'good socialists' like Dave Nelligan, Terry Fields and Tommy Sheridan might make sense - if they were not members or close associates of Militant, which is structured like a Stalinist sect and has for decades had Stalinoid politics" it sneered. Mahmood's challenge in Walton had been a "noisy comic opera of small parochial reforms and great big general (albeit preposterous) lies". "To accept Militant's candidates as symbolic representatives of socialism, you must have very low expectations of socialism... Militant's candidacies are a Militant-building diversion" (SO, March 19, p3 and 4).

And what of SO's conclusions once the results were in, and the new style non-"socialist" Labour Party had lost its fourth election contest in a row? "Join the Labour Party... Those who say give up may build sects, they will not help the working class to emancipate itself from capitalist ideas or reformist leaders & organisations" (SO, April 14, p7) by demanding that 'socialists' declared eternal allegiance to Kinnock's crew, of course.

The defeat led the party to declare that "the recovery of... labour movement self-confidence and combativity will be slower, more drawn-out and fraught with difficulties" (SO, April 17, Why Labour lost, p3). This from the party that told the world only a month before that "it is only by way of [a Labour]... victory that the labour movement will begin to get its confidence back and begin to throw off the paralysis which long Tory rule... has laid on the class" (SO, March 19, p3) [our emphasis].

This 'discovery' - that the working class is not finished politically by another Tory victory - highlights the problem that straight-Labour leftists have in selling the "our salvation is Labour" line: what do you do if Labour cocks it up for you again, and loses. Either you shut up shop for the next five years, or you discover that the only real difference in the way confidence will return under the Tories, rather than under Labour, is essentially



one of speed. One simple "discovery", and, hey presto, you're back in business...

**AT A GLANCE:** Vote Labour in every single constituency, everywhere. Don't even think of voting for anyone else. Not even for a minute.

*One minute  
they cheer  
on poll tax  
rioters, the  
next they  
cheer on  
Fidel Castro*

## *Revolutionary Communist Group*

The Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) is, these days, pretty much alone in the straight leninist left in this country in calling for a "workers' boycott" of all elections. Only a few Maoist "groups" practise the same position.

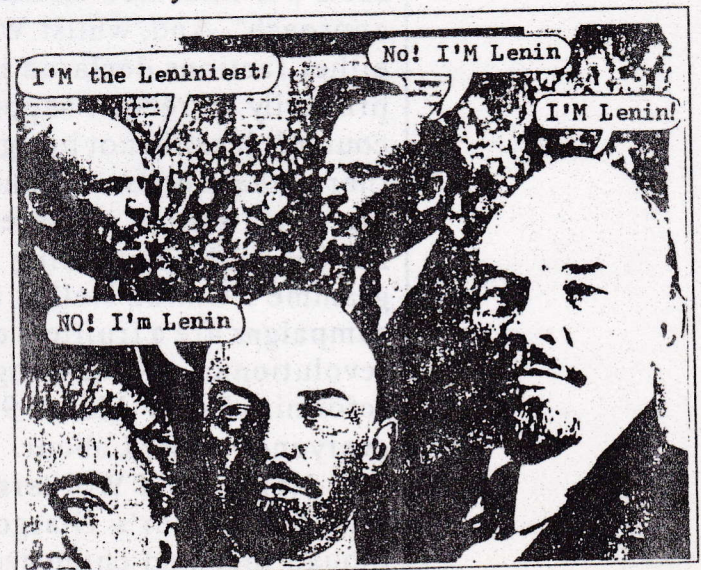
"A Labour victory will make no difference to the low paid, the poor, the unemployed, to the less privileged layers of the class", explains their election editorial. "Communists urge workers to break with Labour and boycott this election" (Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism, Feb/March 92, p2). The RCG have what is now very much a minority view on class structure on the left - they identify the most materially oppressed sections of the proletariat (in the industrialised North of the globe), and the workers of third world liberation movements, as the most revolutionary elements of the world working class.

For the RCG, the Labour Party is, at best, a party of the more skilled and comfortably off working class and the trade union bureaucracy - a privileged section within the workers movement, who, because they enjoy some material benefit from capitalism, do not possess the same direct and immediate interest in revolution that the lumpen proletariat do. The revolutionary spark - though it will spread throughout the class will be found initially in the underclass.

The RCG then place no "demands" on Labour: "Kinnock dare not side with the very forces which could mount a serious challenge [to the Tories], for fear of alienating semi-detached Britain and a horror of unleashing revolutionary forces which would go beyond any of Labour's plans to manage capitalism more humanely" (Paying to be poor, Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism poll tax pamphlet, page 27).

Sadly for the RCG, they take this perfectable marketable position and screw it right up - with the most tedious Stalo-Leninist "analysis" of imperialism, and by their slavish support for each and every national liberation guerilla movement throughout the world. One minute they cheer on poll tax and prison rioters, the next they cheer on Fidel Castro and

*Screw it up*





*'Break workers from the grip of Labourite reformism' - encourage them to vote Labour...*

the Cuban "socialist revolution". Wonder what they'd say if the lumpen underclass started rioting on the streets of Havana...

**ATA GLANCE:** Break with Labour, boycott the election. Vote for Fidel Castro if you get the chance.

## *Workers Power*

Workers Power's politics are an often bizarre mix of by-the-numbers orthodox Trotskyism and eclectic Labour leftism: as a result, their "positions" are often very intricate, complex and involved pieces of work. Their "line" on the 1992 General Election was a case in point.

The basic root of their election strategy was the lefty hardy-perennial "Vote Labour, but organise to fight!". The party's election leaflet explained that: "by getting organised to fight... we will be doing something far more powerful than putting a cross against the name of some careerist politician" - though of course we should do that as well. But it was when the party approached the issue of which non-Labour candidates it would back, and which it would condemn, that things started to get really tricky.

The party backed Dave Nellist in Coventry and Terry Fields in Liverpool, despite their reformist politics, because both men "remain candidates of struggle... Nellist and Fields both represent the continuing fight against Kinnock's witchhunt". As a result "Workers Power supporters will be canvassing for Dave Nellist and at the same time, arguing that only working class action and revolutionary change, not parliamentary law making, can win socialism" (Workers Power, March 92 p11).

But Workers Power didn't support either the RCP's handful of candidates, or those put up by The Leninist. "These two sects", it informed its readers, "share a classically sectarian approach". And, whilst Workers Power had no argument with either factions declared intention to use their election stunts primarily to recruit supporters ("Nothing wrong with that of course") it could not bring itself to support them because: "Neither of these organisations has any serious support in the working class, neither represents any major class struggle battles, neither will be standing on a revolutionary communist programme". Unlike Nellist and Fields of course... "In fact their campaigns are a fruitless diversion from the central task facing revolutionaries - breaking workers from the grip of Labourite reformism" (WP March 92 p11), by - of course - encouraging everyone to vote Labour.

Neither did Workers Power have any truck with Scottish Militant Labour's Glasgow candidate, Tommy Sheridan, although they had enthusiastically backed Militant's Mahmood challenge in the Walton by-election in Liverpool the year be-

*No truck*



fore. The distinction between bad-Sheridan Militantism and good-Mahmood Militantism was, Workers Power explained, that Mahmood had had the "support of key sections of workers that were on strike against the council" at the time of her candidacy, whereas Sheridan "does not represent either major sections of the working class engaged in struggle or a fight against the witch-hunt... Sheridan only represents Scottish Militant Labour, and this organisation offers no way forward for Scottish workers. There is no reason to support it against Labour".

Unlike, of course, Nellist or Fields, who presumably do 'represent some way forward', even though in Workers Power's own analysis "Dave Nellist's manifesto gives no guide to workers on how to fight back. Indeed it seriously misleads worker militants...".

It was at this point that Workers Power's tautly strung criss-crossing "line" became something of an ugly knot.

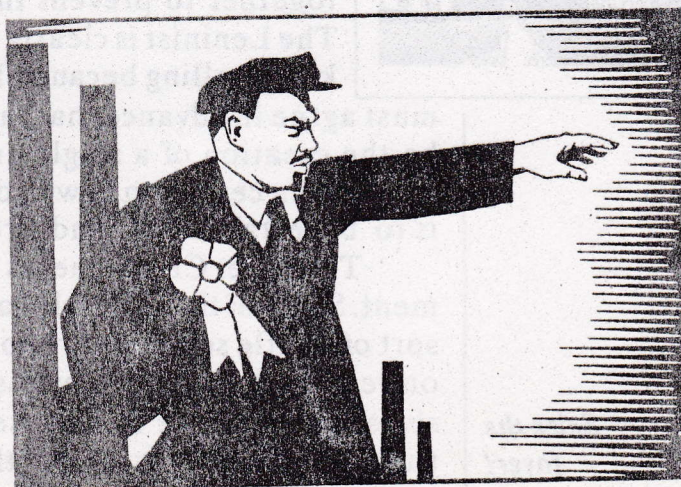
Once the election results were in, the party set to work trying to unpick the mess. The retrospective revisions began. The party's April paper declared: "We were wrong about Sheridan", in fact workers should have voted for him [this candidate who "offers no way forward"]. Workers Power had made "an incorrect estimate of the degree of support for Sheridan and Scottish Militant Labour in Pollock" which was due to the party's "lack of implantation in the area" [ie they haven't got any members in Glasgow]. The fact that Sheridan got over 6,000 votes showed that he did have a degree of support among the proletariat of Pollock, and that therefore "it would have been principled for Trotskyists to give critical support to Tommy Sheridan on the same basis as we supported Dave Nellist and Terry Fields". Workers Power's "principle" seeming to be that the party must support any would-be leftie MP who's liable to get more than a couple of thousand votes. Convincing stuff...

Meantime, Nellist's defeat in Coventry had apparently "vindicated" the "absolutely correct" decision to stand independently, even though, according to the party's own report, Nellist had repeatedly pledged his allegiance to Labour throughout the campaign, and despite the fact that "the doorstep campaign" in the ward, although "impressively organised... has done nothing to break workers from reformism". Which, if you remember, was the whole point of the exercise...

In its concluding paragraphs the party point out that "In supporting non-Labour left candidates we need a

*The 'principle' being to support any would-be leftie MP who's liable to get more than a couple of thousand votes*

*Vote retrospectively, without illusions!*





*'The  
Leninist' —  
not for the  
faint hearted*

method that clearly identifies when and why this has to be done". Quite so, and fast. Trotwatch verdict: poor effort, could do better.

**AT A GLANCE:** Vote Labour, except vote Nelligan and Fields. Don't vote RCP or The Leninist or Scottish Militant Labour. Support calls for PR. (After the election: retrospectively vote Scottish Militant Labour).

## *The Leninist (CPGB)*

The Leninist's 1992 election campaign was the centrepiece of the party's "Ninth Offensive", which (as the March edition of the "Central Organ of the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain" warned) "is ambitious enough to challenge capitalism, but is not a business for the faint hearted".

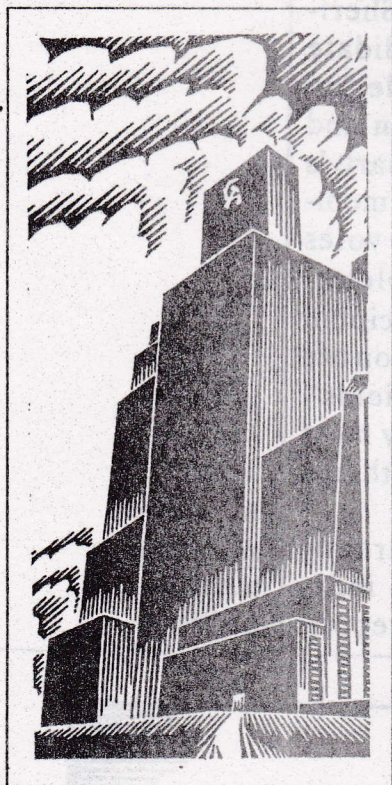
The party predicts that the Offensive will purge the organisation of "the weak" and "the tired" and will compel all comrades to work "at a tempo unparalleled even by this organisation". [This is what other capitalist time and motion studies refer to as a 'speed up'...]. In this particular instance, 'challenging capitalism' amounted to standing four candidates - two in London, one in Rhondda, and one in Glasgow.

At present The Leninist's primary goal is to establish itself as The Sole Legitimate orthodox-style Communist Party, by taking over the franchise held until recently by the Marxism Today CPGB - which has now dissolved itself into the Democratic Left. The Leninist split from the CPGB-as-was some years back in opposition to that party's drift towards Euro-communism. Now the old CPGB has gone, The Leninist has set its sights on the vacant plot it has left behind.

Other previous splits from the old-CPGB, such as the New Communist Party and the Communist Party of Britain, are still periodically having tentative 'unity talks' to see if some sort of joint Stalinist Alliance can be cobbled together to prevent their impending collective demise. The Leninist is clearly interested in the project, but talks keep stalling because The Leninist insists that all parties must agree in advance that the sole focus of the discussions will be the creation of a single unified Communist Party. Debates would then centre on how and when (rather than 'if') this party is to be established, and around which policies.

The other CP fragments refuse to give such a prior commitment. Some of them clearly have set their sights on forming some sort of gentle self-help group for aging Stalophiles, rather than on returning to the relentless rigours of perpetual party offensives that promise to cleanse their ranks of the weak and the tired. Particularly as most of these ex-CPers are weak and tired...

*Seize the  
foyer!*





and geriatric. Octogenarians of the world, goodnight!

Sensing that these unity talks are probably a dead-loss The Leninist is, at the same time, pursuing its own individual claim to the CP mantle. It is demanding that the Democratic Left hand over the CP's archives and other resources, and - in the run-up to the election - demanded of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) that it relinquish its rights to the name Daily Worker (the previous title of the Morning Star in the 30s and 40s, the former CPGB daily paper, now run by the CPB). When the CPB refused permission, The Leninist organised an occupation of the foyer of the party's offices, and - when that didn't work - went ahead and used the name anyway.

In the pages of the Daily Worker (which, in fact, wasn't even a Weekly Worker) The Leninist presented its marxist election message: vote Leninist in four seats, elsewhere, write the word "communist" across your ballot paper.

The Leninist's Election Supplement was in unapologetic mood:

"The election of even a handful of communist MPs and ten thousand voters writing 'communist' across their ballot papers would do far more for the working class than a Neil Kinnock government with a 200 majority. Indeed, if it came to a choice we would prefer four communist MPs, plus 10,000 'unofficial' communist votes, even though this might mean in the first past the post parliamentary arithmetic 400 Tories and only 200 Labourites...".

As to party member Anne Murphy's challenge to 'left' Labourite Ken Livingstone, The Leninist was equally unrepentant: "We make no apology for the fact that the main thing we want to do is strengthen the fight to reforge the CPGB... If it means Ken Livingstone or some other pale pink reformist losing their parliamentary seat, then so be it. It is a price worth paying".

The party had little time for vote-Labour-leftists: "we say the call to vote Labour from the likes of the SWP, Socialist Organiser, Militant and the 'official communist' rumps is pure Menshevism. Unless checked, these organisations risk constituting themselves [as] the left wing of the bourgeoisie, as the Mensheviks did in 1917..."

But nor did it have any time for boycott-ists either: "the RCG [Revolutionary Communist Group] has maintained a consistent political immaturity, which leads it, quite illogically, to link its justified hatred of the Labour Party with a boycott of the election... In the name of breaking workers... from the Labour Party, it actually leaves them with only Kinnock as a par-

*Don't 'spoil'  
your ballot  
paper  
— write  
'communist'  
on it*

*Sacrifice  
Ken!*

### OTHER PARTIES STANDING CANDIDATES

Other lefty outfits who put up their own candidates include:

#### THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

\* The International Communist Party (ICP) - a WRP spin-off - whose David Hyland ran a distant fourth behind David Blunkett, in Sheffield Brightside, pulling in 150 votes (0.4% of the vote); and whose Colleen Smith came in two slots behind the RCP candidate in Manchester Gorton, winning 30 votes (0.1%). In Newham North West, the ICP's David O'Sullivan, pulled 100 votes exactly (0.4%). In Glasgow, Rutherglen, Barbara Slaughter (former spouse of rival-WRP-splinter leader, Cliff Slaughter, head of the Workers Press faction) drew 62 votes (0.2%).

#### THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE

\* The Communist League (formed by a split in Socialist Action) - who sell the American Militant newspaper - stood in a couple of seats, including Manchester Central, where their Andy Buchanan notched up 167 votes (0.5% of the vote); and Sheffield Central, where the CL's Josephine O'Brien clocked 92 votes (0.3%)



*In fact the  
Daily  
Worker  
wasn't even  
a Weekly  
Worker*

liamentary alternative to the Tories". Thus, writing 'communist' on your ballot paper is a good thing, but 'spoiling' your ballot paper leads the field open for Kinnock, and thus helps the Tories...

Scottish Militant Labour fared little better. The Leninist explained that while it had supported Mahmood's Militant challenge in Walton the year before, it had only "supported her 'like a rope supports a hanged man' [sic]", and had only encouraged Militant to break with Labour, because "outside the Labour Party, Militant would be easier to subject to communist propaganda and communist polemic". Something that, according to the party, "has to all intents been achieved". Not that Militant seem to have noticed. And now, because SML's candidates "are indistinguishable from left Labourism" [unlike the 'revolutionary' Mahmood of course] "they should not be supported". (All quotes The Leninist, Election Supplement, March 28).

And the results of the Ninth Offensive?: Stan Kesley, Bethnal Green and Stepney, 156 votes (0.4% of the vote), in a seat where, alarmingly, the BNP candidates got 3.6% of the vote; Anne Murphy, Brent East, 96 votes (0.3%), narrowly behind Ken Livingstone's 19,387 votes; Mark Fischer, Rhondda, 245 votes (0.5%) and Tam Dean Burns, Glasgow Central, 106 votes (0.3%).

**AT A GLANCE:** Vote CPGB (The Leninist) in four seats; elsewhere write the word "communist" on your ballot paper.

## *Socialist Workers Party*

In this election the SWP gave their traditional line ('vote Labour but build a fighting socialist alternative') a slightly different twist in an attempt to catch the new mood of the times.

In the past, when the prospect of an incoming Labour government might have brought with it some sense of rising expectation amongst worker voters, the party's message could be that voting Labour would not be "enough", that wringing concessions from the new Labour Cabinet would need a fight. But in 1992, with expectations of what Kinnock and Co were likely to deliver so low to start with, the party switched its headline focus away from Labour's 'insufficiencies' and towards "Getting Major out" and "Putting the Tories on the dole".

If Kinnock was crap, it was still important to work for a Labour victory because "a Labour victory will make change seem a little more possible" (SW, what we think, March 21). "If Labour wins", added April's Socialist Review, "it will be seen by the employers as a sign of growing confidence inside the working class and will at least temporarily dent the confidence of the ruling class".

For the SWP's analysts such 'perceptions' are all important: with Kinnock and Smith in Number 10, change will 'seem' more possible, workers' confidence will 'appear' to be returning.

If, in reality, Labour's return to power will do nothing for the working class, workers may believe - wrongly - that it will.

*For SWP  
analysts such  
'perceptions'  
are all  
important*



The SWP seeks to encourage the spread of such illusions throughout the working class, on the unstated assumption that a "fightback" can be built out of a upturn in confidence that isn't really there. Hardcore materialists, or what?

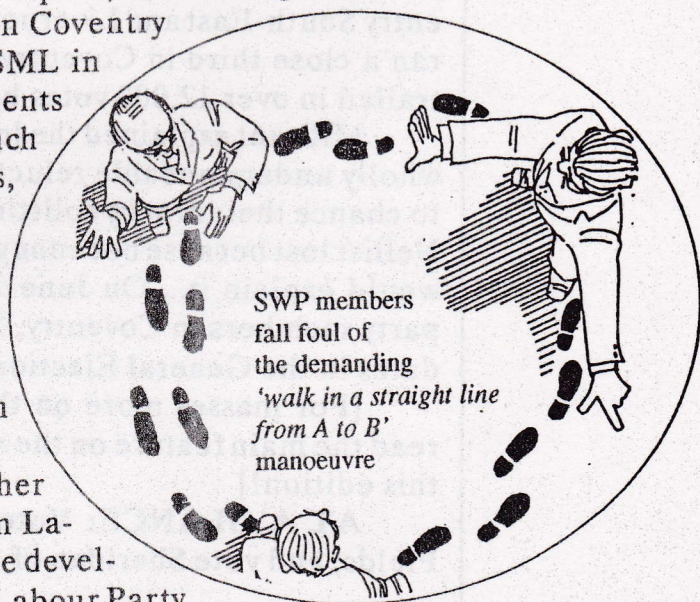
In fact, the SWP's commentary on the election was stuffed full of fantasy. "Where are the working class in this election?", bemoaned SW in its April 4 editorial. The answer was to be found in the party's Review the same month. Class antagonism hadn't dissappeared from the agenda at all, in fact "the election has been increasingly been seen [sic] as about 'them and us' or as... the politics of 'class and envy'" (SR, "Election, a question of class", April 92, p3). Ultimately, there's always a "class element when it comes to voting", and if "bosses magazines and newspapers have on occasion advocated a vote for Labour" that's only been "in order to save their own skins". How's that? Because bosses know that "Labour's links with the unions... can sometimes be used to damp down workers' resistance" (SW, what we think, March 21, p3). But perhaps that's only because bosses don't suffer from the same illusions about Labour, the SWP wants workers to?

In the past, the SWP, has put up its own candidates at election time, though it rarely refers to that tactic now. What the party does do though, is to support nearly all candidates from the Labour mileu who choose to stand. Most recently, the party supported Militant's Mahmood in Liverpool, and in the general election, backed Nellist and Fields in Coventry and Liverpool, and Sheridan from SML in Glasgow. While other left fragments (Militant, for example) usually insist such candidates are sure to win their seats, the SWP always adds the rider "the decisive factor is not whether they are elected". It's a case of 'it ain't if you win, it's how you lose': "A sizeable vote for them can lay the basis for a real fightback after the election is over" (SW, April 4).

So it's not that crucial whether candidates to the left of mainstream Labour win or lose, but it is critical to the development of the class struggle that the Labour Party itself wins: Nellist's defeat at the polls could actually help trigger resistance, but a defeat for Kinnock would only help dampen it. Of course, not that the SWP believes that elections are the important thing (which is industrial proletarian power after all), but - if we try to follow their electoral line:

Votes for non-Labour lefties can "lay the basis" for workplace action, even though such candidates divide that "all important" anti-Tory/pro-Labour vote, and despite the fact that millions of workers will continue to vote normal-Labour in a "class vote"

*Perhaps that's because bosses don't suffer from the same illusions about Labour?*



*It's a case of 'it ain't if you win, it's how you lose'*



*The  
Tendency  
were on a  
hiding to  
nothing in  
both wards*

that the party insists will also encourage a "fightback". And not forgetting that the the election of a Kinnock-Labour government is crucial in fostering the belief that things will get better. Which, er, of course they won't. Got that? Good, now repeat it back to us.

**AT A GLANCE:** Tories out! Vote Labour, but build a fighting socialist alternative. In the meantime vote Nellist, Fields and Sheridan.

## *Militant: Nellist and Fields*

Nellist and Fields - the nearest thing Militant had to two MPs - both lost their seats on election night, in an enormous blow for the Tendency. A setback for the party that was made worse by Tommy Sheridan's failure to win in Glasgow Pollok.

After being deselected by Labour head office, both stood independently - Nellist on an "Independent" and Fields on a "Socialist" Labour ticket - but the Tendency were on a hiding to nothing in both wards. Not to challenge both seats would have been seen as a clear act of surrender by Militant; to contest and lose would have been a clear defeat. And at a General Election there was even less chance of Militant winning that there had been in a by-election, such as Walton.

Despite both MPs strong personal following in their constituencies, the "imposed Labour" candidates won in both Coventry South-East and Liverpool Broad Green. And while Nellist ran a close third in Coventry (with some 10,000 votes), Fields trailed in over 12,000 votes behind the winner in Liverpool.

Militant explained the loss of their only MPs was due to the wholly understandable reluctance of traditional Labour voters to chance their arm by splitting the Labour vote: So, Fields and Nellist lost because not enough people voted for them. Yes, that would explain it... On June 23, Labour's NEC suspended 127 party members in Coventry, for supporting non-Labour candidates in the General Election (see Morning Star, 24 June, p8).

[For masses more on the machinations of Militant, now read the main feature on the split in the Tendency, elsewhere in this edition!]

**AT A GLANCE:** Vote Labour, except vote Nellist and Fields, and vote Sheridan of Scottish Militant Labour.

## *Small-time Labour lefties*

For a number of other small-time groups on the Labour Party left, the 1992 election was a profoundly confusing experience - one that left many of them bewildered and disorientated, stuck with pushing pitifully incoherent "lines" that the activists themselves could often make no sense of.

A case in point was Alan Thornett's Socialist Outlook. Deep tensions within S Out over the group's relationship to the

*A  
profoundly  
confusing  
experience*



Labour Party have been visible for some time. The group could not agree a coherent position over Lesley Mahmood's challenge to the official Labour candidate in the Liverpool Walton by-election last year, and as the general election approached, it was again the question of non-Labour candidates that threw the group into internal chaos. Solid Labour backers like Socialist Organiser (SO) looked on mockingly, while S Out distributed Socialists for Labour's "vote Labour in every constituency" one-off newspaper in an edition of their own paper that called for support for Dave Nellist.

S Out members went their own way, some campaigning for Nellist, some for a Labour vote everywhere, and some - according to SO at least - declaring support for the Scottish National Party. At this left S Out's editors desperately trying to elasto-plast together contradictory reports from the field into some sort of coherent position. The result was as dismal as it was unconvincing.

The "socialist" newspaper (yes, it's really called "socialist" - inspired, huh?) reflected the tensions existing with the labour-leftie milieu from which it draws its support, by calling for nothing specific in particular, beyond general anti-Tory-ness. The paper was especially vague around the questions of non-Labour left candidates, on tactical anti-Tory voting, and on the SNP.

Labour Briefing was little clearer. It called for a Labour vote, called on all socialists to stay in the Labour Party, yet gave uncritical coverage of Nellist and Fields' campaigns, while studiously ignoring the emergence of Scottish Militant Labour. Its post-election edition contained no reports on Nellist, Fields or SML's showing. Its centre-piece article, "Naming names: whose to blame for Labour's defeat", contained no mention of those on the left who had 'detracted' from Labour's vote.

An advert announcing the up-coming Labour Briefing AGM, explained its theme would be: "After the General Election... where the hell do we go from here?". Judging by their recent performance: nowhere fast...

*Solid  
Labour  
backers  
looked on  
mockingly*

*The result  
was as  
dismal as it  
was un-  
convincing*





# 'Disgusted... of Sheffield Central'

Stress, overwork and tension. Late nights, poor diet, little exercise. The non-stop lifestyle of the "90s Lefty Activist" can be gruelling.

The meetings, the paper sales, the flyposting, the fundraising, the watchful eye of the local party full-timer making sure you fulfill your quota. All of this can take its toll.

The early symptoms of tiredness, irritability, spots, can — if left unchecked for a few years — so easily lead to obesity, alcoholism, senile dementia, heart attack and death. Without a proper regard for personal

health, an interest in left politics can be fatal. Just look at Trotsky. Or Lenin for that matter.

Pressure is an important factor in creating the tension that can in turn lead to ill health among the most robust of lefty stalwarts.

And it is the need to make quick decisions under fire that can generate the stress that can lead to that pressure. [Get on with it, Eds]

Free with this issue of **Trotwatch** is a simple time-saving, pressure-relieving tool, that can help reduce that stress by doing half of your work for you. Instead of having to draw up that inevitable "critique of **Trotwatch**" from scratch, we've prepared one for you in advance! Following traditional left formulas, **Trotwatch** have drafted a easy-to-use multiple choice complaint letter for you to adapt and make your own. All you do is select one option from the comprehensive choice available in each highlighted section, and hey presto, you have your own unique and incisive analysis in a matter of minutes.

**Trotwatch**, we try to make the time for you to get on with the important things in your life. Like submitting the following model resolution to your trade union branch, tenants association, or students union.





# Comrades,

The publication of the [a] scurrilous; b) Tory-friendly; c) diseased and puerile; d) overpriced] *Trotwatch* magazine will be [a] condemned; b) ignored; c) mourned; d) critically supported without preconditions] by socialists [a] everywhere; b) of every persuasion; c) in rural Leicestershire; d) in the lounge bar].

Clearly a product of [a] the downturn; b) degenerate ex-maoists; c) global warming; d) MI5; e) syphilis] the pseudo-libertarian *Trotwatch* prides itself on setting out to [ a) inflict damage on the Left; b) mock Militant members' idea of dress sense; c) disorientate the most class conscious of workers; d) poke fun at the sad and lonely].

The question must be asked: [a] Why won't *Trotwatch* fight the Tories?; b) Where can I get a copy?].

Proletarians everywhere will respond to the emergence of *Trotwatch* with a bold marxist message: [a] We demand the immediate proletarian suppression of bogus anti-Leninist polemic! ; b) Look, I shan't tell you again, I don't want a bloody copy of *Living Marxism*!; c) *Trotwatch*? Nah, sorry mate, never heard of it].

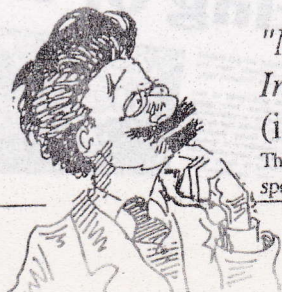
As Lenin himself once said: [ a) "The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class consciousness, unless the workers learn from concrete and above all from topical political facts and events to observe every other social class in all manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and materialist evaluation of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata and groups of the population" (*What is to be done?* (Penguin, 1989 Edition pp134-5); b) "Never trust a sailor"; c) "Sorry I'm late everyone, I was having a quick pint with Josef" ...].

By its publication, *Trotwatch* places itself [a) outside the proletarian camp; b) just round the corner from the proletarian camp, right by Wimpys]. The existence of *Trotwatch* can only offer aid to the enemies of real socialism: [a) the degenerate forces of Menshevik reaction; b) anarchists and infantile 'communists'; c) the Workers Revolutionary Party; d) the Tories].

We demand that Kinnock and the TUC immediately launch a workers' inquiry into the funding of *Trotwatch* comprised of [a) one-third trade union representatives, one third unwaged workers and one-third small business people; b) four-ninths trade union representatives, five-eighths unwaged workers and one small business person (5'4" max); c) our central committee]. In addition, we call [a) FOR a workers' boycott of *Trotwatch*! ; b) FOR an immediate halt to paper supplies for the *Trotwatch* plant; c) all FOR one and one FOR all... oops, sorry.].

We will publish the most original and amusing complaint letters sent to us, based on the above, in the next edition of *Trotwatch*.

If you are submitting a letter for our consideration, please also complete the following tie-break slogan:



"My Committee to Re-establish the Fourth International is the real one, because...."  
(in no more than 10,000 words).

The judges' decision is final, and dependent upon the specific global material conditions pertaining at the time.



# A Tendency to split

*Why Militant's founding fathers went their separate ways*

AT THE END of last year, the Militant Tendency — without doubt the most significant left faction operating within the confines of the Labour Party — split in two, following months of bitter internal warfare at the highest levels of the organisation, over the direction of future party strategy.

The split tore apart the party's Editorial Board - in effect its Central Committee - after a watershed Conference vote in October 1991, on the key issue of Militant's relationship with the Labour Party, committed the organisation to launching a new and independent labour party in Scotland. A party that would, amongst other things, challenge Labour electorally. At a stroke, this decision overturned the basic, core political premise on which the Militant Tendency had been founded: that marxists should always work loyally and doggedly within the ranks of the Labour Party to transform it, irrevocably, in a socialist direction.

For Militant supporters, Labour's relationship with the trade unions and its overwhelmingly working class constituency, made it, objectively, a potential "real socialist party" - given the right set of economic and political circumstances.

## TAKEOVER

The clear task for marxists, therefore, was to build a "true socialist" current within Labour, that could help direct the inevitable left-takeover of the party apparatus when the time came.

It was a founding principle of Militant that somewhere down the line a historic break would occur between the 'social-democratic' and 'marxist' wings of the party. But at that point, they argued, the Tendency would enjoy near total dominance over the party machine. As a result they wouldn't be forced to leave: they'd expel the remnants of the right-wing rump.

They explicitly rejected the notion of, at any stage, pulling away a minority from the party (before this pre-ordained historic split), and competing for the hearts and minds of loyal Labourists in an open

membership war. Until the candidature of Lesley Mahmood in the Liverpool, Walton by-election, earlier in 1991, Militant had always denounced its left-opponents operating outside (or in opposition to) the Labour Party as petty-bourgeois dilettantes who had left the field of class struggle.

The majority and minority factions at Conference - the two sides in the split - unsurprisingly, had two differing interpretations of what this fundamental re-examination of policy was all about.

The minority group, led by seventysomething theoretician and party godfather, Ted Grant, saw that Militant had (as a result of the decade of defeats the labour movement had suffered in the 1980s) lost its sense of direction, and abandoned its founding perspectives.

Militant was about to become guilty of everything it accused its left opponents of. To use a religious metaphor: The True Faith had been attacked by heretics and revisionists. For Militant to call on 'marxists' to leave the Labour Party, was like Moses lobbing one of the tablets of stone over a cliff. He and his supporters had retained the true orthodoxy, the essentials of Militantism. His oppo-

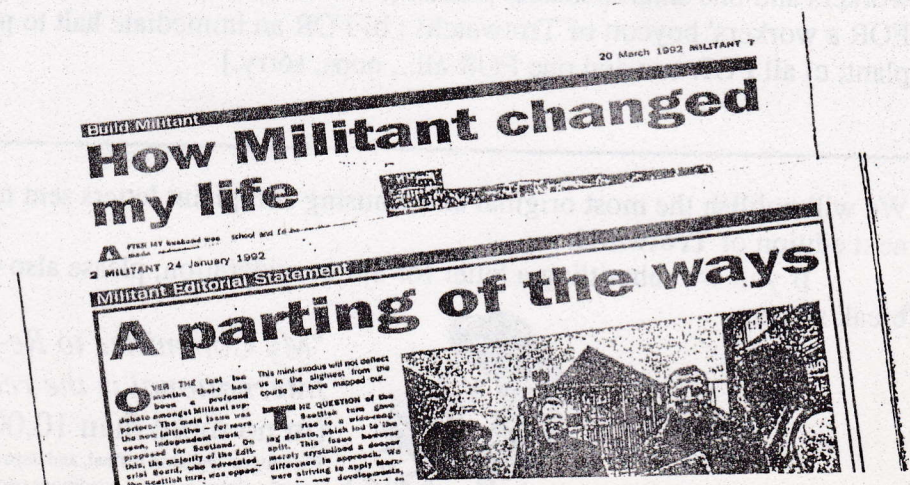
nents had changed and abandoned their beliefs.

In internal documents leaked to the national press, Grant complained of the party's treatment of the Walton election defeat, as some sort of victory: such assessments, he says are, "the worst kind of deception in a Marxist organisation" (quoted, *Guardian*, Sept 3 1991, p2).

## CLIQUE

Alan Woods, a Grant supporter and former editor of the party's theoretical journal, complained in another letter, that the 'clique' around Taafe were guilty of "dirty work, contemptible slander [and] administrative bullying". There had been, claimed Woods, a "systematic elimination of any independent-minded critical or 'dissident' comrade who stands in the way of the clique and its operations" (quoted, *New Statesman and Society*, Oct 3 1991, p34).

The majority group (who claim in Militant Jan 24 1992 to have won 93% support for their position at conference), led by Peter Taafe - Militant editor - have a more complex and contradictory position. They agree that Militant's position *has* changed:





but claim this is only at a tactical level, and represents only a temporary "detour", forced on them by a particular set of historical circumstances. They claim therefore to have renewed and refined Militant orthodoxy. They argue that Grant's supporters' adherence to the old order, reflects an inability to come to terms with new realities that they, as materialist marxists, have identified and adapted to.

The battlelines within the party were then clearly drawn, and having suffered defeat at Conference, Grant's faction were left with a clear set of choices. They could, firstly, refute their Conference defeat [as the work of renegades, of MIS, etc], assert themselves as *Real Militant*, and expel the majority Taafe faction. [This might be called the "WRP Option"]. But because Grant's forces were so weak, the only likely outcome of this would almost certainly have been the creation of two unevenly-matched competing Militants, one dwarfed by the other, as the larger Taafe faction simply ignored Grant's claim to the party trademark.

## CAPITAL

The fact that Grant didn't take this tack also strongly implies that he was not a key signatory to the title deeds for Militant's capital resources: its offices, publishing technology, printing presses etc. Such ownership questions are always critical in deciding the outcome of left-splits. A leading light on any central committee who neglect to put their own name on all key legal party documents and bank accounts, does so at their peril. Grant must have realised that, given his lack of capital, he would almost certainly lose a straight franchise war with the dominant asset-owning faction.

The second option would have been to leave Militant, and "refund" the party, on its "traditional principles" arguing that what-was-Militant had become so distorted, it was now beyond reform. [This has been the way of most of the splits from the Communist Party of Great Britain in the last thirty years, which created The Leninist, The New Communist Party, and most recently, the Communist Party of Britain].

A refinement to this option would have been to stay in Militant, and then quickly be expelled for disloyalty to the new regime. That

expulsion could then be used to demonstrate how corrupt and defiled the party had really become, and to show how necessary it was that the party be made anew again. This would also have been a more entertaining spectacle: with Grant's troops organising a phoney "stop the witchhunt" campaign, as Militant struggled to purge people claiming to be "socialists" from its ranks. The slogan for such a campaign?: It would have to have been "Why won't Militant fight the Tories?".

In the end, Grant, realising the limitations of his resources, and the numbers at his command, took the easy way out; option three: he and his supporters turned their backs on Militant, to form a brand new organisation, and launch a new journal: *Socialist Appeal*. Militant's own editorial on the split, "A parting of the ways" (Militant 24 Jan 92, p2), admits that Grant's bunch:

"...have plans to launch a monthly magazine, moving, as soon as possible, to a fortnightly and weekly. They now have their own small premises and their own staff and are raising their own funds."

They quickly warn any waverers that might be considering backing both bunches while the jury's still out, by adding in the next paragraph:

"Those supporting a rival publication cannot be regarded as Militant supporters".

The first edition of Grant's *Socialist Appeal* chose not to reply in kind. The launch issue of this new "Marxist voice of the labour movement" contained not one single word on the split: nothing on Grant's estrangements from his former

comrades, nothing on Scottish Militant Labour, and no "where we stand" statement of intent.

For a while it looked as though Ted's gang were simply going to ignore Militant's existence. But it was not to be. Socialist Appeal have just published their first pamphlet — *Socialism or Nationalism* by Mr T Grant — a bitter polemic against Scottish Militant Labour. Attacking Tommy Sheridan's stand in Glasgow as "a fundamental break with the methods pursued by Militant in the past", Grant deplores the rejection of Militant's "proud record of patient work in the Labour and trade union movement which achieved great results". "All of this", he warns, "is being thrown away".

## PROSPECTS

The immediate future prospects for either outfit are bleak. Socialist Appeal are particularly *unappealing*. They face the unenviable task of trying to rebuild from scratch a power base within the guts of the Labour Party at a time when Labour's already established left is in open and disorderly retreat. Weighed down with old-style Stalinoid Militant politics, Socialist Appeal has nothing to offer its potential recruits. By Militant-as-was standards, Socialist Appeal is a tiny organisation. Grant and his supporters will be pitched into the already crowded small-time Labour left milieu. He'll be reduced to competing with groups (such as Socialist Organiser) he previously mocked as irrelevant sects. Humiliating stuff...

Deprived of any kind of base within the party machine - even at regional or constituency level - Socialist Appeal can point to nothing to demonstrate either its relevance or influence within the party. Militant's plans for the Labour Party undoubtedly failed, but Socialist Appeal face the prospect of re-running that same battle plan with only a fraction of the members and resources it had before, and without any of the momentum that the Millie enjoyed at the height of its Liverpool "hey-day".

Grant's own personal leadership was clearly critical in Socialist Appeal making the break. Unless a new and younger cadre can be quickly brought up to speed, Socialist Appeal could well dissolve





on Grant's death, or even remerge from whence it split.

Taafe's Militant has little reason to be smug though: they have problems enough of their own. The party has not recruited as heavily as it hoped through its interference in the poll tax campaign. Its well-documented handling of the 1990 poll tax riot in particular, handed the initiative to other left groups (most notably the SWP) at a critical moment in the campaign.

## ISOLATED

During the Gulf War, Militant was isolated even amongst the no-war-but Labour left: one of its more unhappy policies in the early months of the conflict (which Taafe has since blamed on Grant) was to call for the unionisation of British soldiers being sent to the front. Such antics have only served to further damage Militant's meagre credibility on the left.

At the same time, Militant's one power base in Liverpool has collapsed. The confused disaster that was the Mahmood campaign, was quickly followed by the annihilation of the Broad Left councillors on the city council (see "The Walton experiment"). What now remains of Militant's glorious experiment in corporate municipal socialism? A small stock of council housing (some of which now appears to be collapsing around its tenants), and the tawdry spectacle of its former leader now reduced to advertising watches and calling for a vote for John Major. In its one industrial base - the CPSA (one of the civil service unions) - Militant supporters have been reduced to a permanent and ineffectual minority.

## POACHING

Being swept from the Labour Party all across the country, Militant's Big Idea has been to set in motion a small scale damage-limitation exercise north of the border. Scottish Militant Labour - an attempt to prevent the "Tartan Tories" of the SNP (Scottish National Party) poaching Militant's potential recruits (see separate story).

This dismal balance sheet is not improved by Taafe's continual insistence that the seemingly unstoppable slide in the party's fortunes, is

nothing more than a serious of unfortunate - and temporary - coincidences, or by his assurances that the Millie's luck will soon pick up. It won't.

The Militant Tendency is not about to disappear. It has enough members and money to limp along for a good while yet. But the long term prognosis for a self-proclaimed "External Faction of the Labour Party", wedded to the politics and practise of seventies British Labourism, must be poor in the extreme.

In reality, the "fundamental difference" of approach that led to the Militant-split is nothing more than a small squabble over tactics, writ large. Both organisations remain totally focused on the Labour Party, both committed to the "peaceful seizure of state power", both tied to the same

brand of stale leftism. The fact that a minor tactical dispute could become such a bitter and acrimonious "parting of the ways" is a testament to Militant's failure and exhaustion. In retreat, the left always turns on itself.

The crisis that has split Militant apart is clearly a by-product of a more general decline in the fortunes of left-Labourism. Because Militant has until recently led that Labour-left field in both numbers and profile, its not surprising that it has cracked under pressure ahead of less influential grouplets like Socialist Organiser or Socialist Outlook.

But those groups face identical pressures to those that tore the Millie apart. It may not be long before they follow suit.

These are dark days indeed for Labour's wannabe-loyal left-wing.

## Socialist Appeal — the last time...

This is not the first time that Ted Grant has edited a journal called *Socialist Appeal* — though the last edition of that journal rolled off the presses over forty years ago, when the Militant tendency was but a twinkle in Ted's eye.

In the mid-1930s, Grant was a member of the original Revolutionary Socialist League — one of the earliest British Trotskyist organisations — which published a journal by the name of *Young Militant*.

In 1937, the RSL became the Militant Labour League (MLL), and began publishing the original *Militant* newspaper. Grant and other left notables then broke away from the MLL to form the Workers International League (WIL).

The MLL later re-emerged as an enlarged Revolutionary Socialist League. In the meantime the rival WIL had begun producing the first issues of a journal called *Socialist Appeal*.

When the Revolutionary Socialist League and the Workers International League buried the hatchet and fused in 1944, they formed the (original) Revolutionary Communist Party, and *Socialist Appeal* became its house journal.

The RCP became the official British section of the Fourth International (FI), and was for the next three years unchallenged as the legitimate British Trotskyist party.

In 1947, the first major rupture in the UK Trotskyist movement split the RCP in two. Jack Haston, leader of the RCP, fell out with the bosses of the Fourth International over differing interpretations of Trotsky's economic predictions about post-War Europe.

Trotsky predicted capitalism was entering a period of crisis and collapse, that would herald a time of war and revolution. Haston was more cautious, pointing to evidence of capitalism's seeming stability, and he expressed some doubt about Trotsky's visions of imminent apocalypse.

The FI leadership leadership disagreed. They saw that an upsurge in workers' confidence would first manifest itself as an influx of working class militants into the ranks of the Labour Party. The key task for the RCP, as a result, was to abandon its twin-track approach (of working inside and outside the party) and concentrate solely on entryism, the better to make contact with these militants.

At this point, Gerry Healy (later to become head of the Workers Revolutionary Party) made his first big career move. Healy, already a significant member of the RCP, made direct contact with leaders of the FI, and promised that if they guaranteed to award him the British FI franchise, he would lead the RCP into the Labour Party.

The FI readily agreed, and although Healy was in a minority at the next RCP conference, he 'won' the crucial vote, because he had the FI's backing. Healy took the minority — which later became known as 'The Club' — off into Labour. The majority RCP remained outside, but dissolved itself a year later.

Other members of 'The Club' included Ted Grant and Tony Cliff (later to become leader of the Socialist Workers Party). As Healy consolidated his first empire, at the tailend of the forties, he split with/expelled both Cliff and Grant. Grant relaunched the Revolutionary Socialist League, the group that many years later became the Militant Tendency.

In reverting to the title *Socialist Appeal* some forty years on, Grant is clearly harking back to what he sees as a happier era in the history of 'entryism' — a time before the movement was ravaged by squabbles and splits. But, given the RCP's transparent failure to make any headway in the Party (and Healy and Cliff's later rejection of the entryist project), it's hard to see what inspiration Grant can possibly find in such empty nostalgia.



*A Tendency to split:*

# The Walton Experiment

It was Militant's decision to support an independent "Real Labour" candidate in the Walton by-election in July 1991 that really marked the turning point, and ultimately led to the bitter split in the organisation some four months later.

The battle for the seat was of enormous significance, for both the Kinnock and Militant wings of the Labour Party.

The seat had been held by veteran left-Labourist Eric Heffer, whose death at the age of 69 triggered the by-election contest. Heffer was the epitome of Seventies' style mainstream left-labourism. Anti-EEC, pro-nationalisation, an advocate of close concordats between Ministers and trade union leaders, he represented a tradition that is now almost extinct in the upper echelons of Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. Only Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner now remain from the Heffer generation of left MPs.

## ORGANISE

Although in his last years, Heffer seemed to align more and more alongside Socialist Organiser, whose journal he regularly contributed to, he had long been a defender of Militant's "right" to organise within the Party. Heffer had won considerable praise from Taafe and Grant for his famous walk-out from the platform of the 1985 Labour Party conference, when Kinnock made his "grotesque chaos" speech, attacking Militant's mismanagement of Liverpool City Council.

The battle to find Heffer's successor was of immense symbolic importance for both left and right. Kinnock needed to prove that his ascendancy in the party was absolute and unchallengeable by installing another new-realist henchman in Heffer's place.

Conversely, the left - and Militant in particular - needed to demonstrate their continuing influence within the party machine by successfully defending the (highly dubious) Heffer Legacy. The Walton constituency had also been a critical base for Militant/the RSL in the early

days - Ted Grant, himself, only narrowly failed to become the official Labour candidate for the ward in 1955.

A number of factors complicated the situation for Militant. First the by-election was taking place at the same time as a showdown industrial struggle between the Labour council (now firmly in the hands of the right-wing, under the leadership of Harry Rimmer) and whole sections of the council workforce, threatened with poll tax inspired redundancies and cutbacks. Ousted now from power on the Council, the Militant-left needed some way of intervening in this struggle: the by-election was the obvious focus. This is where a second important factor came in.

In the local elections that May, the Liverpool Broad Left (BL) had stood six independent councillors in safe Labour seats. All the BL candidates had originally been selected by their own ward Labour Parties, yet each had had their selection blocked by Walworth Road - who had imposed six new Rimmerite candidates in their places.

In the elections, five out of the six independent candidates won their seats, beating the official imposed replacements. Powerless they certainly were, but the Militant dominated left now had a council

caucus. One of the new left-councillors was Militant's own Lesley Mahmood.

Despite sharing in the BL's local election successes, it seems that Militant on Merseyside initially opposed the independent challenges, only to find themselves in a minority within the BL.

## CHALLENGE

With or without Militant, the challenge was going to go ahead. They therefore had two choices: denounce the independents, call for the election of councillors totally committed to the cuts packages, and find themselves 'out-lefted' by rival radical left labourites, or, move in to try to take over the independent challenge and hope to become champions of a revival of left fortunes on Merseyside. Fearful of being left on the sidelines, Militant chose the latter.

The problem was that events were developing a momentum of their own. When Labour head office selected Peter Kilfoyle as prospective Labour candidate for Heffer's old seat, it was seen by the Liverpool left as a calculated provocation. In 1985 at the height of the power struggle for control of the city council, Kilfoyle had been appointed

## 40 Years on, but still going strong Walton's socialist tradition

Keith Dickinson, who is on Militant's editorial board, was a member of Walton Constituency Labour Party from 1957 to 1962. He shows how Lesley Mahmood is the real inheritor of the party's long fighting socialist tradition.

REMEMBER my first years in the Labour Party well - not for nostalgic reasons but because I felt myself to be part of a fighting political organisation. My mother and father were card-holding members of Walton constituency Labour party

socialist Clause Four from the party constitution and to end the unilateral nuclear disarmament policy most members supported.

The Tories won a 100-seat majority in 1959. In Walton George McCartney got 20,254 votes but lost by 4,000. It wasn't possible to overcome the national mood and oust a longstanding Tory MP but Labour's vote stayed round 20,000 until 1983 when a campaigning district Labour party, with whom MP Eric Heffer was solidly identified, boosted Labour's vote to 27,000. Walton CLP has stood for Marxist ideas for decades. The party's national bureaucracy al-





regional organiser for the party, and had set about the job of purging the party of Militant members with much enthusiasm. For many on the Labour left his selection was the final straw: they were being ordered to rally behind the Witchfinder General.

This was not the first time that Merseyside Militant had had to face the prospect of challenging Labour directly. During the party's hey-day, as controllers of Liverpool Council, the Tendency had debated the question of "going it alone" in the city, by establishing an independent local party - in reaction to the threatened expulsion of, amongst others, council leader Derek Hatton, and the suspension of the District Labour Party (DLP).

## OFFICIAL

A minority in the Tendency, backed by Hatton, pushed for the DLP to declare its separation from Labour nationally. Taafe, Mulhearn and other Militant theoreticians stamped on the suggestion: "For one worker who supported an 'independent' DLP, there would be another five, ten and perhaps 100 at a later stage who would move into the official Labour Party. These workers would be denied contact with the best fighters who would have constituted themselves into an 'independent' DLP" (Liverpool: A city that dared to fight, p353). Militant stayed 'official', and took the expulsions.

With hindsight, Hatton identifies the decision to accept the suspension of the DLP as "the biggest mistake we ever made". "The District Labour Party was the Militant power base... yet we handed it over without a wimper... As a result, much of our previous influence and support was lost". (Inside Left, Derek Hatton, pp173-4)

While not accepting Hatton's analysis, Militant argued that conditions in the city now dictated a change in tactics. With the Liverpool left in open retreat, an unchallenged Kilfoyle candidacy "would have disarmed and demoralised that advanced minority of Liverpool workers who were coalescing around the Broad Left" (MIR, No 46, p6).

In fact, Militant's conversion to the 'ultra-left' tactic of

mounting an electoral challenge to Labour was not the result of a careful re-examination of the party's theory, but was a panic reaction to events entirely outside the Tendency's control.

On the one hand, growing resentment and impatience within the Liverpool left was threatening to isolate Militant if they did not move quickly enough to recoup the ground. On the other, anger and anti-Labour bitterness was building among some sections of Liverpool's working class, particularly those pitched into the poll tax battle and the jobs and cuts fights. Because of Militant's failure to remake even the local Labour Party in their own image, there was a danger of the most militant minority identifying Labourism as part and parcel of the enemy's armoury. The Labour left risked being marginalised by this development.

In part, the Mahmood candidacy was a leftist stunt to try to prevent the most politicized sections of the anti-council fightback from breaking free of the British Labourist tradition. Not for the first time, the Workers Vanguard was trying to catch up with the most militant workers in order to "represent" them.

This much is clear by the way the Broad Left attempted to portray the conflict between the Real and Official Labour candidate. Mahmood stood on a public platform of "no poll tax" and "no cuts in jobs and services", in contrast to Peter Kilfoyle's pro-poll tax pro-Rimmer cuts ticket. This was a straight con.

As a Broad Left councillor, Mahmood was part of the minority rebel group on the council who presented an alternative budget to the Rimmer plan. Not only did the alternative BL budget include a poll tax levy - but one that was £22 higher than the one the Rimmer group proposed: voting Mahmood meant voting for more poll tax. Mahmood and Co also proposed a 50% freeze in council job vacancies and a "revision" of work practices.

In reality, the working class of Walton were offered a choice between two "rival" Labour candidates both committed to collecting the poll tax and pushing through job cuts. Where Kilfoyle and Mahmood disagreed was on how much poll tax to try to screw out of Liverpool's

poor, and on how the service cuts were to be implemented.

In challenging Kilfoyle, Militant's intention was to protect, not to attack, the ideas of Labourism on Merseyside.

Militant's hope was to project the idea that theirs was a genuine, pro-proletarian Labour tradition, which the current leadership of the party had strayed from. Militant stood not on an "Anti-Labour", but on a "Real Labour" ticket. Throughout the campaign Mahmood continually restated her loyalty to the party, and the necessity of returning Kinnock to Number 10: "Even though many of us in Liverpool may temporarily be outside the Labour Party, our orientation will be 100% towards the mass party of the working class" [ie Kinnock and company] (Militant, July 12 1991, p9).

"The Broad Left candidacy did not represent a 'break with Labour' as our critics imagine", explained Militant's International Review some weeks later. "We have not changed our attitude to the traditional organisations of the working class. We have not departed from campaigning for a Labour government" (MIR, No 46, p7).

## DISAGREED

Other groups on the left disagreed, though most were unsure quite what they thought Militant was up to: Socialist Organiser (SO) angrily condemned the Mahmood "stunt": "Militant's Walton candidacy makes sense neither in terms of the overall fight to kick the Tories out, nor in terms of the fight against Kinnockism inside the Labour Party, nor in terms of the struggle of Liverpool council workers... [it is] a stupid and irresponsible adventure".

In an interview with one of its own supporters in Walton, SO added, that for the sake of socialist struggle "it's important that she is humiliated rather than just defeated" (SO, June 20 1991, pp8-9). For Workers Power (WP), the issue of Mahmood, was an acid test for the Labour left: "Here is a candidate who represents a whole section of workers in struggle against your party. If your struggles against Kinnock are to mean anything, they must mean taking sides... with a candidate whose



challenge actually represents these struggles".

Workers Power though was unimpressed by Militant's "compromise", that played "with the possibility of a split whilst presenting that possibility as a localised and tactical question.... [Militant] is facing the possibility of existence outside the Labour Party without giving a political rationalisation for the separate existence of a revolutionary party" (Workers Power, July 191, p5), a situation which left WP slightly bemused, but still overflowing with marxist "critical support" for Mahmood. Sadly for Workers Power, Merseyside Militant banned WP supporters from joining the Mahmood election campaign.

Socialist Worker was, if anything, more upbeat in its appraisal of Mahmood's electoral "success" than Militant itself. "The result showed the Broad Left was absolutely right to stand... The vote for Lesley Mahmood showed there are tens of thousands of people who want socialist policies... Walton shows that the opportunity exists to build an open socialist alternative, provided socialists are not mesmerised by electoral arithmetic" [ie winning the seats they stand in].

Without stating whether it thought Militant had broken from Labour or not, it added: "Lesley Mahmood says the 2,600 [RL voters] are 'loyal to Labour'. But those peo

ple have shown that they hate the Tories and don't believe Labour will fight. It's the most encouraging result for anyone who wants to be a fighting socialist alternative" (SW, July 13 1991, pp4-5). In a previous Open Letter to Militant in July 1985, the Socialist Workers Party had proposed (on a rhetorical level at least) the fusing of the two groups into a new left alliance. This time the SWP's horizons seemed set on simply picking up a few members from the leakage of the Labour left in Walton.

## ABANDONED

Writing in Labour Briefing shortly after the result, a Merseyside Militant spokesman poured more scorn on the idea that the Walton episode was a move against Labour: "The press - and it would seem some comrades on the left - say that Militant and the Liverpool Broad Left have abandoned the Labour Party. The opposite is true! Real Labour is not just a 'tag'. It genuinely reflects what the Broad Left is - the DLP [District Labour Party] in exile...". He adds tellingly "The decision to stand Lesley Mahmood will... help defend Labour's socialist traditions and assist the socialist renewal of Labour by building the forces of the left" (Labour Briefing, July 1991, p5).

Militant's reaction to the election result was unsurprising. They may have pledged at all their

press conferences that Mahmood was going to romp home streets ahead of Kilfoyle, but when reality intervened showing Kilfoyle had stormed home some 18,000 votes ahead of her, Militant still claimed it as an impressive victory.

"Walton 2,600 votes for socialism" declared the paper's front page that week. "In this by-election a marker has been put down: a warning has been issued to the Labour leadership" explained the upbeat editorial "Walton - we have the future". But added quickly "Lesley Mahmood's voters and supporters are loyal to Labour... Contrary to the press gossips, Militant is not about to change its fundamental attitude to the Labour Party" (Militant, July 5 1991, p2).

"There is no point in disguising the fact that many expected a larger vote...", added the more sombre editorial in the Review a few weeks later (MIR, No 46, p6) - without mentioning that Militant had attempted to do just that, with its initial celebration of its poll showing.

But this in itself 'disguises' an even bigger problem that Militant never squared up to: the fact is, that there was *no* outcome on offer in Walton that could have been a victory for them. It was only a question of *how* they were going to fail.

The costs of standing - in terms of further expulsions of their dwindling numbers within the Liverpool party - was going to be enormous, whatever the outcome. Much of the resources of the Kilfoyle campaign went into monitoring and photographing Mahmood's canvassers, ready for a post election purge.

## HUMILIATED

If Militant went on to be humiliated at the polls (which is unquestionably what happened) the impact on the faction's fortunes was bound to be immense. Liverpool has in the past been Militant's power base.

The Walton vote would be in part a referendum on the legacy of the Hatton-era when Militant ran the council. If they failed badly in Walton, Militant would publicly demonstrate, in the full glare of national publicity, their own weakness and marginalisation. Their claim

2 HOME NEWS THE INDEPENDENT

# Far left dealt crushing rejection

Monday 1 July 1991 THE INDEPENDENT

## Parties step up by-election campaigns as unions prepare to vote on strike action

# Militant faces 'crushing defeat'

By Colin Brown Political Correspondent

# Big Militant purge after Walton

ONE OF the biggest purges in the history of the Labour Party against alleged Militant supporters was promised yesterday in the aftermath of Labour's rout of the rebel Broad Left candidate in the Liverpool Walton by-election.

A "rogues' gallery" of photographs of the Militant-backed camp taken by Labour campaigners will be used to identify Labour members who broke party rules by supporting Lesley Mahmood, the expelled Liverpool Labour councillor who stood as a "Real Labour" candidate.

John Evans, a member of the party's national executive, who will lead the investigation, is alleged by Mahmood supporters to have leaped out of the window of Labour offices in Liverpool to take photographs of youths on board her campaign bus. MPs

By Colin Brown and Jonathan Foster

a late surge. The result was seen as a protest against the Militant-led diarray in Liverpool. Berkeley Greenwood, the Tory candidate, lost his deposit with only 3 per cent of the vote, the lowest share recorded by a Tory in a by-election since the Second World War.

Mrs Mahmood, who polled 6.5 per cent of the vote, said: "We will go from strength to strength." But Derek Hatton, the former Militant deputy leader of Liverpool, said: "It is the end of an era." He said if Labour won the next general election Britain would see a "mirror image" of the Tory party.

The Broad Left councillors, not all of whom are Militant, are planning to meet next week to discuss their tactics, including

ency parties. Walton and Garston, could be suspended while the expulsions of the alleged Trotskyites are carried out. But Labour members across the country could face expulsion.

Labour frontbenchers are also pressing for the expulsion of two Liverpool Labour MPs - Terry Fields, a Militant supporter, and Eddie Loyden, the MP for Garston - who failed publicly to support Mr Kilfoyle.

Frank Field, the Labour MP who recently fought off a hard-left challenge for his Birkenhead seat, said: "Now that Militant has blown its cover, you won't have a better opportunity to warnly shake this group by the throat and we should seize it with relish."

Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader, signalled his readiness to act when the national executive committee receives an initial report on the election in about 10 days.



WALTON BY-ELECTION RESULT

Neil Kinnock (Lab)	21,077 (57%)
Peter Kilfoyle (Lab)	14,457 (36%)



to speak "on behalf of" Liverpool's battling workers would lie in tatters. A triumphant Kinnock team would set about laying into their remaining pocket of strength with relish, and without fear of significant reprisals. Kinnock would have proved that Heffer-ism was a relic he and his party had left behind.

Had Mahmood knocked up a middling vote of around 10,000 - by effectively splitting the Labour vote in two - she would have let the Liberal Democrats in through the middle.

The 'dangers' inherent in this were highlighted by left critics including Socialist Organiser and by anti-Militant Liverpool city councillor, Keith Hackett, who (looking beyond Walton, warned: "Militant's areas of strength... [include] many of the key seats Labour must win if it is to form the next government. Even a few hundred votes for independent Labour candidates in 30 key marginals could decide the future of the country" (Independent, "How Walton could sink Labour", July 4 1991).

## ALIENATED

A split Labour vote, and a Lib-Dem victory in Walton would have brought down the wrath of the party, alienated many potential Millie supporters, and ostracised the faction from the rest of the Labour left. And for what?

A victory for Mahmood could even have been worse. Although it would have demonstrated some residual support for Militant on Merseyside, the party would clearly have been unable to deliver.

The election of Mahmood would have had transparently no impact on the jobs and poll tax battle around the council — which was the major focus of her election manifesto — and the arrival of Mahmood in Parliament would have had as little impact on the life of the Labour Party as did the existing presence of Militant fellow-travellers Terry Fields and Dave Nellist.

Worse than that, 'success' in Walton would have massively increased the momentum for a more generalised, even national, left "challenge" to Labour, which would have been totally unsustainable, and

impossible for Militant to be certain of dominating.

The tensions within Militant about where the Walton experiment was leading began to be exposed even before the by-election results were in.

One keynote article explained that the situation in Liverpool was significantly different from the rest of the country: "Liverpool has the most politicised working class in Britain", it explained. "This is the direct result of the social conditions" (Militant 14 June, p9). The tactic in Walton, therefore, was not something that could easily be repeated elsewhere: Mahmood's candidacy was probably to be a one-off.

However, the same article explained that the growing number of expulsions meant that: "a genuine workers' party is in the making. It may be that the bulk of the activists will be expelled... But the official party is withering on the vine... The real Labour Party will rest with the rank and file". So was this a break with the Labour Party after all, the forging of an ongoing separate party, on Merseyside at least?

A later post-Walton piece only deepened the confusion: "All the press speculate that the Broad Left have shot themselves in the foot by standing a candidate against the party. According to them, mass expulsions will ensue. Many may be expelled but the question has to be asked: expelled out of what into what? Out of a party which preaches Thatcherite virtues... into the working class who are fighting to defend their jobs, their living standards and their homes against poll tax bailiffs" (Militant 12 July 1991, p9).

## HERESY

It was this kind of "heresy" - to suggest that leaving the Labour Party was in effect to *enter* the field of class struggle - that Grant and his acolytes found impossible to stomach.

It had been embarrassing enough for them that Mahmood's pitiful performance had been dressed up as some sort of success. But Militant's transparent inability to string together two coherent sentences to explain what the party was up to after the Walton debacle



was just too much. The inevitable "parting of the ways" was not long in coming.

Militant's slide in Liverpool soon became a rout. The steady trickle of expulsions turned into a flood. At the general election, Merseyside Militant had again to perform a U-turn: there was no repeat Mahmood challenge. Militant called for a vote for the jobs-cutting Kinnock clone Peter Kilfoyle - the man it had been utterly unacceptable for socialists to support less than twelve months before. Militant offered not one word of explanation for its return to traditional Labour loyalties.

## CONSOLED

In the local elections in May this year, the Broad Left and the Independent Labour Party (ILP: a non-Militant left group) were all but wiped out. The BL defended 12 seats, but hung on to only one. Lesley Mahmood lost hers. The ILP lost in all eight wards in which it stood. Militant consoled itself with the observation: "Elections are only a signpost at a given time of how workers are thinking" (Militant May 15, 1992, p8), and called for a merger of the remaining BL and ILP forces.

While predicting that "Broad Left policies will find a growing echo and win mass support" in the months ahead, it's clear that Militant's heart is currently not really in it. Having made such a mess in Liverpool, Militant has decided it is time to relocate its centre of operations. According to the party, "the most politicised working class in Britain", is now to be found on the streets of Glasgow, rallying behind the all-new banner of Scottish Militant Labour.



*A Tendency to split:*

# Scrapping with the SNP

"We are not prepared to stand aside and watch passively while Labour's right wing drive a generation of potential socialists into the arms of the SNP", declared the party editorial that launched Scottish Militant Labour (SML) at the end of last year.

"In the short term", it explained, "the right wing have turned the Labour Party in Scotland into a desert... Many Scottish constituency parties are no-go areas for anyone expressing sympathy with Militant's socialist ideas". And while "In the long term, the Labour Party will once again become an ideological battleground between socialism and capitalism" in the immediate future the party was being forced by circumstance to look elsewhere (*Militant*, December 13 1991, p8).

The launch of SML, then, was the party's response to pressure from two sides. Firstly, the party's acceptance that it was being eradicated even in urban areas of the Scottish Labour Party. Secondly, the revival of the Scottish National Party and the growth of more general nationalist politics, was threatening to replace "socialist-led" opposition to the English Tory government.

While expulsions from the party have multiplied, many Labour activists have begun leaving the party voluntarily to join the ranks of the SNP - who are also recruiting heavily from the same "youth" that are Militant's traditional lifeblood.

## RINGFENCE

Scottish Militant Labour is designed to protect labourist politics north of the border, by trying to ringfence any break from the Party, contain it within the new organisation, and return it to the ranks of the Labour Party when conditions improve.

SML is not calling on Labour supporters to rip up their party-cards: "We would call upon all existing Labour Party members to remain within the party and resist every expulsion" (*Militant*, Dec 13 1991, p9).

SML obviously pretend to be an oppositional force, attacking the "febleness" of Labour's resistance to Tory legislation (the poll tax in particular), but SML was launched out of loyalty to - not antagonism towards - Labour. In the

general election, SML stood a grand total of one candidate in the whole of Scotland - Tommy Sheridan in Glasgow Pollok - and called for a Labour vote in every other constituency. "Working class loyalty to the Labour Party has been stretched to the limit", Militant explained, promising that it would do all it could to help Labour retain it. In usual Militant style, Sheridan (imprisoned during the poll tax struggle) claimed he would make "Scottish political history as the first person to be elected to Parliament from jail" (*Independent*, April 7 1991) and published poll findings showing him 3.5% ahead of the official Labour incumbent.

## INCREDIBLE

When, two days later, the results showed that Sheridan had lost by some 7,883 votes to that Labour candidate, SML declared it "an incredible result - we have made history" (*Militant* 10 April 1992, p8). Militant had in fact fared better in Pollok than they had in Walton the year before. This time they had won 6,287 votes, and had pushed the SNP candidate into fourth place over a thousand votes behind. SML seemed pleased: "The result... demonstrated that the intervention of SML can cut across the development of nationalism, at least at local level. Dire warnings by some on the left who stood on the sidelines that SML would be dismissed by voters as an irrelevant sect were shown to be totally out of touch." (*Militant*, 17 April 1992, p10).

Next to Nellist and Fields, Sheridan's vote was easily the largest vote won by an "left-challenger" in this election, and does show that despite everything they've done in the poll tax campaign, Militant have made some inroads in Pollok.

In the May local elections, SML even managed to win a couple of seats: Tommy Sheridan won in North Pollock and Nicky Bennet won

in nearby South Nitshill. In three other Glasgow seats SML candidates scored more than 500 votes. At the same time, Militant were being wiped out in the local elections in Liverpool. This sea change confirmed for Militant that the switch in emphasis towards Scotland had been correct. "In Glasgow, the red flame of socialism was burning brightly as the votes were announced" beamed its post election editorial, "SML has shattered the cocoon of complacency which has surrounded Glasgow's Labour leaders for the past decade" (*Militant* May 15, 1992 p2).

In fact SML's council duo (joined by two other non-Militant independent Labour councillors) now face an obvious problem. In Scottish local government, Labour is the establishment, the SNP the most obvious oppositional force. Either SML adopt that same 'complacency' and vote *with* the Labour Party - showing themselves to be identical to the jobs-cutting bailiff-loving yes-men of Scottish Labour - or they vote *against* Labour, and risk helping the SNP, or even the Tories, in the process. An untenable act of disloyalty.

## DISAPPEARED

This problem may explain why, since their 'historic' election, the SML duo have disappeared from the pages of *Militant*... The bigger problem for SML of course, is that outside Pollok and a couple of other big city wards they have precious little in the way of a power base. They may not even be able to secure any council seats outside Glasgow itself. Across the country they are in no position to protect Labour and sabotage the rise of the SNP, and could easily be out manoeuvred by initiatives such as Scotland United.

Stripped of Militant's rhetoric, SML is most likely to become a longterm storage facility for homesick Labour Party exiles.



## *A Tendency to split:*

# Militant's 'glorious' Empire?

Lesley Mahmood may have stood as the "anti-jobs cuts" candidate in the Walton by-election. But in fact, when it comes to sacking Liverpool council workers, the Militant Tendency are more experienced than anyone.

When it took control of the city council in the eighties, one of Militant's key objectives was to establish a series of mini-concordats with the local government unions, by drawing senior shop stewards into the council's decision making machinery.

In return for granting them increased power, Militant expected the unions to deliver passivity in the ranks of the council's workforce, and to mobilise loyal support from those workers for council actions when ordered.

In his autobiography, Derek Hatton explains how successful this plan was in the early days: "[the Town Hall shop stewards] became an integral part of the decision making process, a position they had never before achieved. They responded by throwing the weight of numbers behind us, whether it was to produce 30,000 demonstrators on the streets or to pack out mass rallies and meetings... Their power base was built up to such an extent that their national and regional leaders had to bow to their opinions in Liverpool" (*Inside Left*, Hatton, pp67-8).

## BUREAUCRATS

By promoting local bureaucrats, Militant planned to out manoeuvre any resistance from national union figures to its aims.

Hatton describes how the council set about "increasing the pay roll" by hiring more council

employees. The goal was not so much to improve the lot of working class Liverpoolians, but to build Militant's empire in the city. The party's intention was to generate more of itself — by creating a larger workforce, by commanding ever bigger budgets, by launching grandiose schemes (most notably its 'flagship' council house building programme).

## CONCORDATS

The concordats with the unions (which had become strained as the months past) finally broke down in September 1985 when Militant took the now infamous decision to issue 31,000 redundancy notices to its entire workforce, in an attempt to force the Tory government to bail out the near-bankrupt city. The unions were incensed by Militant's brinkmanship - especially because they had not been consulted in the matter. Militant were equally appalled by what they saw as the unions unwillingness to sell the 'temporary tactic' of the mass sackings (which Militant pledged were never going to be implemented) to their members.

Militant's 'strategy' slid into chaos as a result, and the jobs and services fight went down the tubes. This council turned on its own officials, warning them of "serious disciplinary action... and the threat of personal surcharge" if they did not dish out the dole notices to employees in their departments (quoted in *Guardian*, Oct 2 1985). Key Militant

placeman in the unions — including Ian Lowes of GMBATU — rebelled against their paymasters.

Militant's own static security guards even locked up the town hall one day and set up picket lines to prevent the Council meeting. The Council's 'joint shop steward committee' was ripped apart. The final humiliation came in mid-October, when the High Court stepped in to rule the redundancy notices illegal, and Militant were forced to withdraw them. Hatton commented at the time that "the notices had caused considerable disunity", but blamed everyone except the Council for the disaster (quoted *Guardian*, Oct 21 1985).

One factor that constantly undermined the jobs fight in the city in 1991, was the determination of local union bosses to see the struggle as their last chance to hang onto the remnants of that corporatism. Local NALGO branch secretary, Judy Cotter, describing the council's intention to privatise the city's refuse collection services, complained to the press that the unions were being left out in the cold. "The cuts could have been achieved voluntarily and by re-deployment...", she explained (*The Guardian*, June 26, 1991). Meaning that if the unions were allowed their say, the council could avoid the threat of strife - and still put through the cuts package.

## HOUSING

If its 'battle' against the Tory government in 84/85 leaves Militant with little to crow about, what about its other boast — that it built more council housing in the city during its time of office than the rest of the country put together? Unsurprisingly, it's another con:

"Between January 1981 and September 1985 (Labour won power in 1983) there were 1,717 council housing starts in Liverpool. In the same period there were 161,804 in





England as a whole" (*New Statesman*, March 7 1986, p12). And that's including all the housing association and co-op developments already underway that Militant took over.

The fact is that Militant's *real* crowning achievement in Liverpool has been to discredit the notion of 'socialism' and denigrate the idea of class struggle. From start to finish, Militant concerned itself solely with empire building: its role for the working class was simply as a stage army to be rolled on and off the battefield as required. Militant treated its workforce with contempt, then accused them of cowardice and betrayal when they refuse to be manipulated any more.

If there was precious little sustained resistance to the jobs cuts in the city in 1991, if there is a sharp downturn in confidence amongst Merseyside council workers, then Militant bear much of the responsibility for that.

#### NEPOTISM

It was Militant who portayed their crude patronage and nepotism as "socialism in action". Militant who suggested that accountants and financial managers were best placed to protect workers' pay and living standards. Militant who sacked workers to protect jobs. Militant who promised a showdown confrontation with the government, only to capitulate and retreat within weeks. Militant who finally delivered a painful and unnecessary defeat — which they had the audacity to describe as an "orderly retreat".

When standing Mahmood in 1991, Militant could have had little hope that memories of the Hatton era would bring the voters running...



Coming up in future issues of *Trotwatch*...

## Marxist Maastricht Mayhem

Socialist Organiser is demanding a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty — but, if it gets one, its demanding that everyone abstain!

*Oh dear...* Mind you, when it comes to matters-Euro, its competitors aren't doing much better.

Trotwatch delves deep into the left's Euro-muddle: who is saying what, and why? And what did they say in the past?

## Don't mention the Winter of Discontent!

Why does the Left want to forget the last time Labour was in power?

Could it be because tens of thousands of public sector workers took on Callaghan's Labour government, and wrecked its incomes policy?

We look at the lessons from the 1979 strike wave that the left doesn't want workers to learn.



## Poll tax parasites

We examine the Strange Case of the SWP and the Poll Tax Riots. And we analyse which Trots came off well, and which lefty leeches came unstuck, as we prepare an interim balance sheet for the community charge campaign.



# GERRY HEALY FOUND ALIVE!

**THE MOST FAMOUS** British Trotskyite leader ever to have battered and bullied his way to the top of a corrupt and sterile political sect is **NOT DEAD**, Trotwatch can exclusively reveal.

Gerry Healy, was until recently thought to have died of a heart attack at the age of 76 in December 1989. He is, in fact, **ALIVE AND WELL** — and plotting to retake his position as head of the world Trotskyite movement the very moment "material circumstances" allow.

The incontestable evidence that Healy is still very much alive has been assembled by our highly trained investigate reporting team, who — after months of painstaking work — have put together an irrefutable case:

**FACT:** Despite being "dead" for over two and a half years, Gerry still regularly contributes to the WRP/Newsline journal *Marxist Review*. His latest essay "Dialectics and the Natural Sciences (Final Part)" appeared as recently as May this year.

**FACT:** From Gerry's behaviour while he was alive, from his treatment of his supporters, from his pure megalomania and self-obsession, it's clear he thought of himself as second Jesus Christ — a powerful demagogue who mysteriously "died", only to return fighting fit, to the amazement of his colleagues, a few days later. Now Gerry is set on organising his own Second Coming!

**FACT:** Gerry has long been obsessed with macabre matters: While

head of the WRP, he paid "about £4,400" for **TROTSKY'S DEATH MASK** - the marxist equivalent of the Turin Shroud - made "about two days after the assassination, while Trotsky's body lay in a mortuary in Mexico City" by a member of the Mexican CP (*Labour Review*, September 1984, page 38).

**FACT:** And that's not all. After the violent split in the organisation in 1985, Healy's critics made a shocking revelation about their former leader's obsession with glossy American soaps:

"Those who knew his personal habits recall that his favourite TV programmes were *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. Those who remember his habit of leaving meetings early, may or may not be surprised to know that the real reason was to be in time to catch the latest episodes" (*Workers Press*, March 10 1990, page 5).

TV addicts will remember all too well that a key *Dallas* storyline concerned the death of an unlikeable power-crazed tycoon, AND that another character, long presumed dead, re-appeared alive and well - in an infamously shocking shower sequence.

**FACT:** A mourner at Gerry's funeral has exclusively told Trotwatch that he can now recall seeing a shady lone figure, dressed in a trench-coat and a Red Army-style cap, lurking in the shadows at the edge of the ceremony that bleak winter morning. "I approached him to ask him who he was, but he hurried off, muttering 'the

world shall hear from me again' or something like that", explained our source. "But I did notice he was wearing a false black goatee beard, and moustache. I also noticed that he was short, fat, bald and ugly. And that he wore thick rimmed spectacles. But I didn't think it was in any way mysterious at the time".

**FACT:** Trotwatch sources in Hollywood suggest that Gerry's latest plan is to rocket back to notoriety this Summer - by appearing, for the first time, on the Big Screen. Healy could be starring, as the brutal prison governor Andrews, in the blockbusting sci-fi conclusion to the *Alien* trilogy, *Alien³*. Publicity photos for the new space epic depict an actor who closely



**Gerry Healy?**

resembles Healy playing the Andrews' role. His screen-test could easily have been set up by one his loyal band of thespian supporters, including Vanessa Redgrave.

A spokeswoman for CBS/Fox denied that Healy had ever been considered for the role.

"The actor in question is the well-respected British character actor Brian Glover", she claimed. "I have never heard of a Mr Healy".

**NEXT ISSUE:** The shocking truth about the SWP's Tony Cliff! A man who was certified *clinically brain dead* over a decade ago, but who has remained head of a powerful student paper selling network — despite being unable to construct a single logical coherent thought!



Could THIS really be the notorious Mr Healy at a recent 'demo'?