

**a socialist organiser
broadsheet**

20p

the fight for trade union democracy



Nov. 1980

UNION OFFICIALS AND COMMITTEES

All officials should be elected for definite terms (no more than two years) and subject to recall at any time. Full-time officials should be paid the average wage in their industry.

Union policy-making bodies and delegations to the TUC and Labour Party should be made up of elected lay members only. The same should go for Standing Orders Committees and Appeals Committees.

Full minutes and voting records of policy-making bodies should be circulated.

National delegate conferences should be held every year and should have supreme policy-making power.

ELECTIONS

Voting should be at workplace meetings and not by postal ballot. We want **informed, collective, working class** decision-making, not ballots manipulated by Fleet Street lie-machines. Election addresses must be circulated unaltered, and candidates and their supporters must have unrestricted rights to circulate literature.

STRIKES

All strikes for trade union principle, work conditions or wages should be made official. Strike committees must be elected from (and subject to recall by) mass meetings. Through mass meetings and strike bulletins they must keep the membership fully informed throughout the strike.

There should be no secret negotiations. Every stage of negotiation should be subject to rank and file ratification at mass meetings. Mass meetings should never be presented with package deals unless each part of the deal has been voted on separately by the meeting beforehand.

WORKPLACE ORGANISATION

Shop stewards must be elected at mass meetings held in the workplace in company time. They should hold regular report-back meetings and insist on

company time for those too. Joint Shop Stewards' Committees should be set up on a plant, combine and international basis. White-collar workers should also be represented on these committees.

Despite the general need for unity, there will be cases where shop stewards disagree strongly with the majority of the stewards' committee and want to put their minority views to the membership. They should have the right to do so, after notifying the committee of their intention, so long as they also make clear to the membership what the stewards' **majority** view is.

Union branch meetings should be at the workplace and in work time if possible. If not, creche facilities must be provided to ensure women workers can attend. Labour Party workplace branches should be set up with all the rights of ordinary ward branches.

CLOSED SHOP

We must campaign: for 100% trade unionism; for the right of trade unionists to enforced closed shops; for the right of trade unionists to discipline fellow workers who scab or flout democratic decisions; against the check-off system; and against employer-policed 'agency shops'.

A policy for union democracy

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Full equality for women in the trade unions. Equal contributions and equal rights. Positive discrimination to ensure real equality. Support for the right to form women's caucuses.

BLACK AND IMMIGRANT WORKERS

No discrimination against black or immigrant workers in the union (including in social clubs). Positive discrimination to ensure real equality. Support for the right to form black caucuses.

Campaigns to recruit immigrant workers to trade union (using leaflets in the immigrants' own languages). Automatic endorsement of industrial action by black and immigrant workers whether they are in the majority or not.

A purge of open racists from all positions in the labour movement. Expulsion of fascist activists from the unions.

YOUTH

Full trade union rights for young workers, including the right to strike. Formation of youth committees.

THE UNEMPLOYED

Unionisation of the unemp-

loyed, with full rights within the unions.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Right of members to criticise union policy; to meet unofficially and visit other branches; to communicate with the press; to write, circulate, and/or sell political literature. Right of appeal direct to union Appeals Court.

All educational or other special qualifications for union office to be abolished. No member to be disqualified from holding union office on political grounds, other than fascist or racist activity.

DEVELOPING SOLIDARITY

Develop links between unions. Expand trades councils to include representation from the unemployed, tenants and students, and most important, direct representation from factory committees and other shop floor organisations. Affiliate trade unions to the Labour Party and trade union branches to the local CLPs. TUC and Labour Party conference delegations should be bound to follow union policy where it exists.

Trade union branch delegates to Trades Councils and Labour Parties must report back regularly.

BREAKING COLLABORATION

Trade unions should fight for full independence from the state. Total non-cooperation with the Employment Act; state money for postal ballots should be rejected.

The National Economic Development Council and all the other governmental and industrial 'participation' bodies should be opposed and boycotted. Trade unionists must be answerable to the membership, not to joint committees with the bosses.

No interference by the bosses' courts in the internal affairs of the labour movement. Even when an appeal to the courts is motivated by a desire to thwart the right-wing bureaucrats, it runs counter to the principles of working class democracy.

WORKERS! DEMOCRACY AND A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

THE TORIES, firmly entrenched behind a large and stable Parliamentary majority and backed by all the military and police power of the British state, are determined to make war on the standards, conditions, and organisations of the working class. In their attack on our class they will use to the full their legal right to make the laws and control the finances of the state.

The slump, and the accelerating long-term decay of British capitalism, add bite and urgency to the Tory attack.

Either the labour movement will allow this Tory government, with its programme of blatant ruling class legislation, to rule and administer society in the interests of the class they represent — even to the extent of the movement obeying anti-trade-union laws in the hope that, *maybe*, four years from now, *perhaps* a Labour government will be voted in which *may* undo *some* of the Tory damage.

Or the movement will fight back here and now, recognising no Tory or ruling-class right to meddle with the trade unions, to cut into the standards which the working class has won in decades of

activity, or to destroy whole working class communities through closure policies. It will refuse to keep within the normal channels of official politics. It will resist the Tories' attacks by every means necessary.

To fight back, the labour movement must *break collaboration* with the Government and use the strength and power which we have here and now. That means using industrial action to stop the Tories in their tracks. Just like we did last time round.

Breaking collaboration, mobilising to fight the Tories, and winning democracy in the labour movement, are all one and the same fight.

For decades, collaboration with the Tories and the bosses has been the normal way of life in the labour movement. Labour in Parliament is the Loyal Opposition, or governs in respectful partnership with the overwhelmingly Tory Whitehall chiefs and top bankers.

Labour councils 'manage' the cuts. Trade union leaders consult with the Government, sit on dozens of joint committees and councils, and take directorships in the nationalised industries — whether the administration is Labour or Tory.

This method of collaboration unavoidably means an undemocratic division in the labour movement. The leaders and the officials haggle with the bosses, sometimes

energetically, sometimes feebly, trying to get a better deal for their members.

The rank and file, on the other hand, are stage extras. Occasionally they are called into action to pressurise the bosses. When the rank and file themselves spontaneously take matters into their own hands, the leaders usually get alarmed and try to soften or even to betray the struggle.

It was always a wrong and inadequate method. But when capitalism was booming, it was at least a fairly stable going concern. Now it is not. Last year, for example, British Leyland eventually just refused to negotiate further on the unions' pay claim and imposed its own 5% 'offer' and 92 pages of strings. When the workers struck, BL forced them back by threatening to sack every single striker.

No negotiations are on offer over the mass sackings, closures and cuts. The labour movement must either stand



We need a democratic movement to fight the Tories — and to replace them by a workers' government

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helpless while workers' livelihoods and living standards are decimated, or radically change its methods and start fighting back.

What must the Left do? We must campaign for the movement to call its leaders to account, to replace the MPs, councillors and union leaders who still collaborate with the Tories, and to start organising for mass action against the Tories.

Activists must campaign for Labour MPs to start a campaign of Parliamentary obstruction. We should demand that the Labour leaders pledge themselves to complete repeal of the Tory anti-union law and to restoration of all Tory cuts when they return to office.

We should insist that the TUC leaders break off their consultations with the Tories and the bosses in the National Economic Development Council and dozens of other governmental and industrial 'participation' bodies. We must campaign for complete non-cooperation with the Employment Act. We must fight for Labour councils to defy the Tory cuts.

And we must try to inspire all the sections of the movement with the urgency of preparing for a head-on clash with the Tories, and equip them with the necessary democratic structure and flexibility to mobilise and educate millions of workers.

Thus both Labour Party democracy and trade union democracy are practical necessities of the fight against the Tories. They are closely linked in many ways.

The fight against cuts, for example, involves trade unions, Labour Parties, and Labour Councils. For the most effective resistance to the Tories, an accountable leadership is needed in all sections of the movement.

Organisationally, the trade unions make up 90% of the Labour Party membership (and conference votes), and nearly all the major industrial unions are affiliated to the Labour Party.

Without a fight for Labour Party democracy — for a government democratically accountable to the labour movement — trade unionists can only fight partial defensive battles against the Tories, without being able to impose a political alternative. Without trade union democracy, Labour Party democracy will be lifeless and

empty.

Democratic control of the Labour Manifesto is empty unless trade unionists know, understand, and control what their representatives vote for to go in the Manifesto — and are willing to fight for it to be implemented. Democratic election of the Leader is no use unless trade unionists have sufficient awareness and control of their block votes.

Mandatory re-selection of MPs demands that trade union delegates to Labour Party GMCs constantly call sitting MPs to account and report back regularly to their union branches.

Past Labour governments have made themselves 'accountable' to the bankers, the top civil servants, and the armed forces chiefs. They have based themselves on the capitalist state — *against* the labour movement.

When the labour movement demands its leaders be accountable, we demand that they break with the bosses' state. We promise we will *replace* leaders who collaborate with the bosses. We demand a government which is not hypnotised by the ceremony of Westminster and Whitehall, but bases itself on the working class in struggle against the bosses.

The assaults of the Labour right wing and the Fleet Street press on Labour democracy now are the mildest foretaste of the violent resistance which wealth and privilege will organise against such a government.

In face of such resistance, the formalities of Labour democracy will not be enough. We will need mass mobilisation, mass involvement, full democracy throughout the whole labour movement, so that every worker knows the issues at stake and is in the battle, heart and soul.

And the need for labour movement democracy is even more fundamental than that. We want the labour movement to make itself fit to rule society. Within our own ranks we must develop a democracy which is broader, wider and more real than Parliamentary democracy.

Or else how will the working class ever be ready to take power in society? How will we ever have an alternative to a murderous future of ever more rapacious Tory governments, with perhaps a few Labour governments of the Wilson/Callaghan type as stand-in operations between them?

With a foot in each camp

IF MARGARET Thatcher pursues her quango-killing expedition as she promises, a lot of the people whose pockets will suffer will be trade union leaders.

These leaders are already paid far more than their members, and they get pay rises not connected with the members' pay. On top of that many of them get generous hand-outs for being on such quangos as the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Race Relations Board, the National Enterprise Board and the National Freight Corporation.

Take Joe Gormley of the NUM, for instance. On the union executive he voted to boost his pay to well above £10,000. The justification? To keep officials' pay 'in line with management'.

But Gormley was also, for instance, on the Shipbuilding Commission established by Labour to carve up the Upper Clyde yards. In addition — no doubt also in order to keep 'in line with management' — he is a member of the board of directors of William Hudson, Canada Ltd. He flies to its meetings by Concorde with the luxury he has grown accustomed to.

Tom Jackson is another one that gets his one or two

are among the poorest paid in the country) is on the board of Harland and Wolff, the Belfast shipbuilders whose yards are a glaring example of sectarian anti-Catholic discrimination.

Fisher tops up his salary and director's fee with an



Joe Gormley

additional grand or two from the British Airports Authority.

If you're lucky, of course, you can tuck a few of these under your belt at the same time. Hugh Scanlon (now Lord Scanlon) held at least three of these down at once. Jack Jones had to make do with two: being on the board of ACAS (£1,000 a year, four years ago), and being deputy chair of the National Ports Council (£1,780 a year four years ago).

Apart from the quango boards, the Royal Commissions and the industrial boards, both private and public, the union leaders also participate in the numerous state planning bodies, like the 'Neddies' (National Economic Development Council committees).

The integration of the trade union leaders in the state is a trend that was noted by Marxists before World War 2. In Britain that trend has become an established fact. In it is combined the corruption of money, of distance from the conditions of life and work of the members, of shoulder-rubbing with the moneyed riff-raff who really run the country, of 'joint participation' in economic management, and of collaboration with our class enemies.



Hugh Scanlon

thousand pounds for a few visits a year to various quangos. He adds to that his — undisclosed — fee for being on the board of BP.

Nor is it just the right wing. Just as Jackson sat on the board of BP while it was busting sanctions, Alan Fisher of NUPE (whose members

THE EMPLOYMENT ACT

Hands off our unions!

by a CPSA militant

THE Government's often-repeated assertion that the Employment Act is not intended to upset the underlying principles of existing labour law is rapidly being exposed for the nonsense it is.

Already, police forces throughout the country have taken a lead from the 'Guidelines' and are cracking down hard on picketing. The first cases, to come before the courts soon, will be pickets arrested for obstructing the highway, when in fact their sole crime was to picket.

So far, almost all the arrests have taken place in the course of unofficial strikes, but clearly the trade union leadership is worried. Its dilemma is how to react if the same arrests take place on an official action. Reluctant as they are to organise opposition to the Employment Act, the head-on clash between the Government and the TUC becomes more likely every day.

It remains to be seen whether the courts, like the police, will recognise the nod and wink of the guidelines and pass appropriate sentences. If they do, and if the police persist in seeking a restriction on attendance on picket lines as a condition of bail in obstruction cases, then the jailing of large numbers of trade unionists is not far off.

Another aspect of the Employment Act looming up is the provision of Government funds for the financing of ballots. The two unions that have said publicly that they would use such money are the EETPU and the AUEW. There is clearly no need for either union to take the money.

In the EETPU, ballot expenses in 1978 amounted to only £23,000, and £13,000 in 1979, a year when they showed a surplus of income over expenditure of more than £1 million.

In the AUEW, the cost of

the September 1978 and March 1979 ballots came to £297,000 at a time when their general fund stands at £14.3 million.

The argument on the acceptance or rejection of Government finance does not hinge on the cost of balloting, therefore, but on whether or not such ballots are in themselves a good thing, and on whether such financing should entitle Government to more say in their conduct.

Although arrests of pickets make the headlines, at least to begin with, it is this aspect of the Employment Act that is most

dangerous for trade unions in the long term. It is clear that financing for ballots would only be provided with strings. Once unions became dependent on such financing, and organised their consultation and election procedures around it, those strings would no doubt tighten.

It is interesting to note that the Civil Service unions are presently discussing proposals by the Civil Service Department for a complete review of the arrangements for facilities for trade union representatives. These proposals include an effective vetoing of candidates for

elected office; those on probation or with any disciplinary black mark against them in the previous two years would be ineligible. Branch Executive Committees are also excluded from meeting in work time. I suspect that the same limitation will also apply to members' meetings if ever the Government financing of postal ballots for elections were accepted by the Civil Service unions.

The laws on picketing and the offer of cash for secret ballots are the carrot and stick of the Employment Act. The intention is clearly for the Government to be in a position to oversee ballots either directly, through the establishment of 'independent' bodies, or through the courts. It would not be long before they were seeking to veto who could and could not be a candidate.

One has only to look at the way that the election procedures in the EETPU operate to see why Frank Chapple is not afraid of the possibility of Government interference. The rules surrounding elections in that union are specifically designed to hamper the rank and file candidates and favour the more moderate full-time official.

A logical extension of collaboration between unions and Government in the running of trade unions' internal affairs is the kind of hand-in-glove relationship that largely exists in America. This could be summed up in the philosophy: "What's good for the company is good for the union".

Under this philosophy, contracts are signed that give away the right of workers to strike, and under which, in return for closed shop agreements and check-off subscriptions, unions take responsibility for the disciplining of militant members who step out of line. That clearly has attractions for the Chapples and Duffys of this world, but it is a road that the majority of trade unionists do not want to go down.



1972: the Industrial Relations Act in operation. 1981:...

Why officials must be elected

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THERE ARE basically two ways to choose a full-time official — either for a union's National Executive Committee or similar body to appoint him/her, or for that person to be elected by the membership at large.

The majority of TUC-affiliated unions appoint most of their officials, though some have one-off elections for their general secretaries and other top bureaucrats, and a very few (like the AUEW and NATSOPA) have periodic elections of all their officials.

The arguments in favour of election over selection are obvious. Having been on appointments committees of my own union, the NUJ, I know that the selection system leaves a great deal to be desired.

It is basically undemocratic, being open to an élite few; it lays too much stress on a person who can do a good interview but may not have the skills and attitudes required of a good officials; and it is too prone, on some occasions, to sordid and unsavoury wheeling and dealing among members of the Executive who are on the appointments panel.

Once appointed, they are effectively there for life. Though theoretically they could be dismissed by their NEC or by their delegate conference, in practice the NEC feels constrained to act as good employers: while the highly-charged and emotional atmosphere of a union conference can usually be exploited by an official even half-way skilled in the art of public communication, if he or she is under attack from the membership.

But an election held on the postal ballot system is almost equally unsatisfactory. As successive AUEW elections have shown, such ballots are wide open to column-

by JONATHAN HAMMOND (NUJ NEC, personal capacity)

ists like Bernard Levin of *The Times* and Woodrow Wyatt of the *Sunday Mirror* to prepare right-wing slates for their readers in the relevant unions to vote for.

The isolation in which votes are cast in postal ballots enable people like Levin and Wyatt to do their dirty work.

And dirty it often is, as is shown by the vicious and unprincipled character assassination that these gentlemen perpetrated against Bob Wright when he ran for the AUEW's Presidency against Terry Duffy.

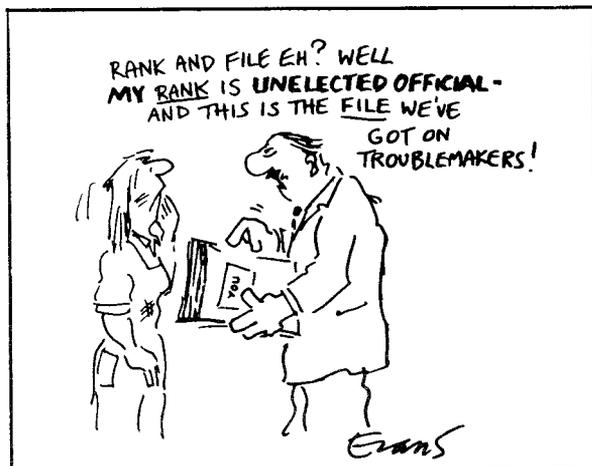
The Tory government recognises this, which is why its Employment Act contains provisions for bankrolling unions which hold postal ballots. Postal ballots also

branch meetings. This puts a premium on candidates to face the electors, who can question them not only their political and trade union views, but also on their relevant experience and skills.

It puts more weight, also, on the member who takes an active part in his/her union rather than on the person who stays at home and never attends meetings.

Officials by their nature, even the best of them, tend, in the final analysis, to try and reach accommodation with the bosses. A countervailing force of accountability to the membership has therefore to be set up.

While it is quite fair and right that officials dismissed by their electorates should receive proper compensation for losing their jobs, it is also fair that, if an official is thought by a sufficient number of members to have fallen down on the job, each un-



From an Engineers' Charter pamphlet

favour the plausible demagogue and liar, who can write an 'all things to all people' election address, while never facing the electorate in person to be put to the test.

The only true democratic system is periodic election of officials at workplace or

union should have a system for recalling that official to face the membership.

Only by this system can we obtain, in the long run, officials who combine the right political attitudes with the relevant administrative and negotiating skills.

ABOUT HALF of the TUC membership is not affiliated to the Labour Party. Most unions do not affiliate their entire membership; others are not affiliated at all.

Although, for example, almost all the TGWU's two million members pay the political levy, it only passes on an amount corresponding to a Labour-affiliated membership of 1.25 million.

Non-affiliated unions include CPSA, NALGO and NUT, all very much in the firing line this winter as a result of the cuts and the crisis in local government caused by Heseltine's onslaught.

In all these unions, there have been moves for affiliation. A motion for affiliation was sponsored by a couple of branches at the last NUT conference, but was not prioritised for debate.

The NUT's non-affiliation goes together with union rules restricting debate on wider political issues. The Exec would love the members to discuss only matters which relate narrowly to education. Even a decade of being affiliated to the TUC has not substantially weakened this concept of the NUT as a professional association rather than a union.

The arguments used now against Labour Party affiliation (or even supporting the Labour Party's education policy) were used when TUC affiliation was discussed. It was said that the NUT would lose members and lose 'influence' if it deviated from the strait and narrow path of 'teacher knows best'. It was only when NALGO took the plunge first, and did so without losing members, that the NUT finally voted to join the TUC.

There is no reason to suppose that the NUT will automatically be transformed into a militant trade union if it decides to affiliate to the Labour Party. The experience of TUC membership has

Linking unions to the Labour Party

by CHEUNG SIU MING (Lambeth NUT)

shown that as long as the rank and file members do not control the union, and do not build up links at grass roots level with other trade unionists, the NUT just becomes an extra cog in the bureaucratic machine at Congress House. The NUT National Exec and full-timers just pick up from Jackson and Chapple on how to police their members.

Labour Party affiliation must be linked to real struggles — the struggle for labour movement democracy and the fight against the cuts.

At the moment, the NUT's National Executive is dominated by head teachers, and is overwhelmingly male, while the vast majority of the union's members are classroom teachers, and female.

The notorious rule 8 allows the union's branches and divisions no power to sanction industrial action, and makes union members liable to suspension from the union if they take industrial action without the sanction of the National Executive.

Conference procedures allow the Executive to dominate in many ways, e.g. by the submission of lengthy memoranda, supported by the facilities of the full-time staff, to displace the top three or four motions prioritised by the members' votes.

The union's record on fighting cuts has been dismal. It shamelessly argues the 'special case' for itself and holds back from supporting wider initiatives, e.g.

the November 7th and November 28th demonstrations last year against the cuts, called by Lambeth Council and by the Labour Party.

It is more concerned with sorting out militant members taking industrial action than with attacking local authorities who are cutting. It is failing to galvanise the members nationally to win the battles in areas like Nottingham, where nursery teacher Eileen Crosbie was sacked for carrying out *official union instructions* and refusing to teach an oversized class.

The full-timers and the National Executive are now panicking over failures... and considering a drastic *scaling-down* of action, to take on only those issues it thinks it can win.

The fight for union democracy in the NUT and the fight to transform it into a militant force against the cuts, is the same political fight as the struggle in the Labour Party waged by the Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy — the fight by the movement's rank and file against its bureaucratic leaders and time-servers.

Labour trade unionists in the NUT (and NALGO, CPSA, and other unions) should argue for Labour Party affiliation as a step to link the struggles for rank and file control in the movement's political and industrial wings. Each struggle enhances the other.

NUT members should seek allies in the Labour Party grass-roots for our fight against the cuts, as well as giving them our support in democratising the Labour Party. In turn, a Labour Party transformed into a fighting party, with a socialist policy for education, will give added weight to those who call for the NUT to come off its petty professional high horse and become a real trade union, fully affiliated and active in both the TUC and the Labour Party.



Swinging the unions behind Labour democracy

TWO UNIONS were decisive in preventing Labour's 1980 conference from agreeing on a formula for democratic election of the Labour Party leader.

After the general principle had been agreed, two formulas were put forward: 50% unions, 25% CLPs, and 25% MPs and prospective candidates; and, one-third unions, one-third CLPs, and one-third MPs.

Although the 50:25:25 formula was better than the one-third:one-third:one-third in many respects, the Left called on delegates to VOTE FOR BOTH, to make quite sure the decision in principle was actually put into effect.

Two unions who had voted for the principle ignored this call. ASTMS voted for 1/3:1/3:1/3 but not for 50:25:25; UCATT voted for 50:25:25 but not for 1/3:1/3:1/3. So now we have three months for the right wing to manoeuvre and find some way of cheating on the principle.

A campaign is needed to commit unions to vote for any formula put forward which extends Labour democracy.

This campaign will also be necessary in the other unions which backed the principle: TGWU, NUPE, Boilermakers, Agricultural Workers, Dyers and Bleachers, NGA, Sheet Metal Workers, SOGAT, FTAT, Bakers, ASLEF, FBU, NATSOPA, CoHSE... Even if the AUEW's joke proposal of an electoral college with 90% of the votes for MPs falls, there will be all sorts of swindles put forward.

Remember the key issues: no swamping by MPs; annual elections; recorded vote.

In the AUEW, the fight to commit the union to Labour Party democracy is already a central part of the Left's general fight against the right-wing bureaucrats. Rank-and-file campaigning for Labour democracy must also be developed in the other unions which voted against reform — most importantly, perhaps, in the NUM.

This fight for Labour democracy will be a fight by the rank and file against time-serving bureaucrats — and thus closely bound up with the parallel struggle for trade union democracy.

Published by Socialist Organizer, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16, and printed by Morning Litho (TU).

THE QUESTION of trade union democracy again became a burning issue at this years Labour Party conference. However, the block vote was not the only thing to be noticed about the trade union delegations to conference. They were all predominantly white and male.

Few of them heard the extremely short women's debate at the end of conference. Either they had left by that time, or they thought it was a desirable time to pop out for a cup of tea.

The fight for positive discrimination in favour of women is just beginning to pick up steam inside the Labour Party. How will the trade union leadership react, when they have so evidently failed to do anything in their own organisations?

A recent article in the Guardian showed how after 10 years of the Women's Liberation Movement, the trade union movement at the higher reaches has been left unscathed - a virtual male monopoly. The figures are quite startling, on a par with the numbers of Labour Party women candidates at the last election.

Only the Actor's Union EQUITY has a half-way presentable number of women on its National Executive. For all the others the figure is abysmally low.

At the recent CLPD Women's Conference a motion was passed stating that the trade union delegation to annual conference should accurately reflect female membership of that union, and that there should be adequate representation of women in the election of delegates to the GMC from Labour Party and trade union branches.

It will take a hard struggle by women in their respective unions to put these demands into effect. The male-dominated Executives are hardly likely to give up their positions and privileges to women.

Even if they did, it's extremely likely that they would have hard job filling them. It's not women's fault, but it is a fact.

The way that unions are have organised and function has not just had the effect of keeping women out of the Labour Party Conference, but of excluding them at every level of the union.

The position is becoming worse with the deepening recession and increasing un-

A Woman's place is controlling her union!

by Pat Longman (NGA)

employment. The deep-rooted chauvinist tendencies of many male trade unionists are of course latching onto the widely held opinion that women should go back into the home. Both the TUC and Labour Party conference have passed motions on unemployment but have studiously avoided mentioning anything specifically about women's unemployment, believing that you can subsume it in the general demand.

The result is that women feel doubly unsure about their position and feel even more reticent about speaking up for their rights at union meetings and fighting off the employers' attacks.

Positive discrimination in favour of women inside the trade union movement calls for a long list of demands ranging from meetings in work hours and creche facilities, to election to shop stewards and representation on leading bodies. Year of consistent down-grading of women need to be overcome.

It's even taken the left an incredibly long time to get out of the way of thinking of a worker as being white and male, and in some unions, especially those with relatively few women members, you still feel like some kind of strange specimen who shouldn't really be there at

all. The way that union meetings are conducted - even when it is correct from a formal point of view - militates against women's involvement. Women are very often just not used to going to meetings with a very formal set environment.

Men may sometimes be

very ready to argue for equal conditions, and have quite a positive attitude to women's involvement. But when it comes to discrimination in women in election another matter. male trade unionists stand down and own interests in woman getting elected?

The TUC has Charter for Women goes some way involve women and partly need for positive action. But this does never properly used by the T circulation among file women trade minimal.

Women's groups unions are vital, need campaign unions like the waged inside Party by the CLP Action Committee itive discrimination of women. Men retain their privileges will have to them give their compensate having been rights for so long

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WOMEN AND THE UNIONS

Union	% Women Members	Women on Nat Exec
Bankers, Insurance & Finance Union	48	4
Nat Union of Hosiery & Knitwear Workers	72	3
Nat Union of Tailors & Garment Workers	90	5
Confed of Health Service Workers	75	3
Union of Shop, Dist & Allied Workers	66	3
Assoc of Professional & Executive Staff	50	1
Civil & Public Service Association	68	6
Equity	47	15
Bakers' Union	50	2
Nat Union of Public Employees	66	8
Tobacco Work Union	66	2
Transport & General Workers Union	15.9	0
Amal Union of Engineering Workers	16	0
Nat Union of Teachers	70	4

(source: Guardian, 10.3.80)

Voting in the unions

by STEPHEN CORBISHLEY (CPSA
British Library)

VERY FEW trade unions have changed their structures in the very radical way that the CPSA did at its 1979 National Conference, when the old block voting method was abandoned, and individual voting in workplace meetings was introduced.

The marked shift was the direct result of a campaign organised by the left inside CPSA, including the Communist Party but opposed by many Labour lefts as well as *Militant*.

The reasons for the change were very much rooted in the history of CPSA NEC's holding office without any clear basis of support within the membership; and such elections occurring on the basis of block votes cast being worth many times the actual numbers who made the decisions on the way that block vote went.

The Campaign for Union Democracy, in which a unity of the Marxist left with the CP was created, argued consistently that the only way of building a fighting union was to have a direct relation between the members in workplace meetings and the NEC, through voting. In this way the CUD argued, the real issues emerge, about which force should lead: the left or the right.

For many opponents, the new system, which often undermined their control of large numbers of block votes, was attacked as a means of destroying the basis of the branch decision-making. This argument was advanced even where less than 5% of the members attended branch meetings, and also in the case of one known right-wing controlled branch which never had a branch meeting at all. Nevertheless, the mystical unity of the branch was still argued.

The other main point raised in the CUD was that without this direct form of workplace-based democracy, it would not be possible to build campaigns (political or trade union) within the membership, and that such

campaigns are necessary to maintain a fighting union which the left can effectively lead.

The retention of the old block voting made the union no less open to red scares and witchhunts, and certainly made the

gave the right wing 'moderates', headed by Losinska (a close friend of Reg Prentice, among others), almost total control.

This right wing NEC clearly won, in a situation where the red scare tactics did not reach the level of

the right's victory was more to do with the failure of the Broad Left to win the arguments than with a conspiracy of the 'moderates' and the national press to befuddle the minds of CPSA members.

One direct result of the Broad Left's electoral disaster is that branch organisation and debate amongst the membership has been clearly identified as needing an overhaul to ensure that the branch structure really does meet the needs of its members. A victory over the right, in which the left wins the arguments, will enable a more powerful challenge to the Government in office than ever before.

If the Broad Left wants to hold office and fight for its policies, it has to win the members both in struggle and in argument: otherwise, any other period of office it has will do little to generate either a real fight against the employer, or gain greater control over the bureaucracy.

One side effect of the new voting system, which takes place in worktime as well as in workplaces, is that women certainly were more involved than ever before in the election process, free of the constraints of domestic responsibilities and child-minding during those hours. The fact that a large number voted for the right only shows how much the Broad Left's pre-emptiousness on women's rights had never reflected a fight within the membership.

CPSA is certainly a different union as a result of this simple but far-reaching democratic change. The introduction of workplace voting was certainly one of the factors that built the confidence of the left to fight and win by a narrow margin the issue of the election of full-time officials at the 1980 Conference.

This is the start of making CPSA a fighting trade union, not a staff association.



On the Brixton picket line

Broad Left-dominated NEC retain the illusion of being elected on a wave of mass rank and file mobilisation for its policies. Any red scare or witchhunt can only be defeated by convincing members of the need to fight, and who will lead that fight, and not hang back.

The first result of the new voting system, in 1980,

those in the AUEW, for instance, mainly because where the left had previously won its block votes, there was very little membership participation this year, e.g., in the Department of Employment and DHSS sections of the union.

While there were a small number of cases of corruption in the voting system, some condoned by Losinska,

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DEMOCRACY ON THE SHOPFLOOR

THERE ARE good reasons why militants are against postal ballots. With a postal ballot, each worker confronts the dangers and uncertainties of a strike [for example] as an individual. There is no spirit of solidarity and strength. The pressure of the capitalist media can have maximum effect.

Traditionally, our alternative has been mass meetings. But in Longbridge the union leadership, dominated by the Communist Party, has always tended to see a mass meeting as a sign of weakness. As a result, the membership also regards a mass meeting as probably the first

by Jim Denham (T&G, BL Longbridge)

AUEW leadership. But many militants blamed the members in the mass meeting. "They don't deserve to have a union!" was a common reaction.

What were the causes of that setback, and what answers should we look for?

A workforce like a well-disciplined army, striking when its leaders say strike and staying at work when its leaders say stay, is apparently the model of perfect organisation and perfect unity for many shop stewards. Measured against that model, mass meetings do

very weak against serious attacks from the employers.

Two strikes at Longbridge illustrate the problem: the strike against BL's refusal to pay out parity money, in February 1979, and the strike against Derek Robinson's sacking, in November 1979. In both cases, the strikes started with massive rank and file support. But the Longbridge leadership's method of organising the strikes was "leave it to us".

A couple of hundred workers at most, out of 15,000, were involved in picketing. The majority of the workers

floor democracy than mass meetings, of course - especially in factories the size of Longbridge. Mass meetings need to be properly prepared for through shop meetings.

Both the disastrous Robinson mass meeting, and the Longbridge mass meeting on the TUC May 14th Day of Action which failed to get any sizeable attendance, were hardly prepared for by shop meetings at all. In contrast, a series of shop meetings ensured that Longbridge held firm during the Confed action on the engineering pay claim last year.

The membership must be kept informed through bulletins. In Longbridge, the Works Committee occasionally puts out leaflets, but the only regular information service is the fortnightly bulletin put out by Socialist Organiser [and before that by Workers Action].

Lucas York Road, also in Birmingham, has a regular shop stewards' committee bulletin, which gives some account of the discussions on the stewards' committee: and that should be the norm.

Mass meetings themselves also need to be conducted democratically. To allow different views among the membership to get a fair hearing at mass meetings is not an abdication of leadership, but just elementary democracy. The responsibility of leadership does sometimes mean taking a bold stand and trying to carry the leadership with you, almost by force of will; but that should never degenerate into bureaucratic efforts to command the membership after failing to convince them.

During strikes, strike committees must be elected from and answerable to mass meetings. They must make sure that as many strikers as possible get full information at every stage and are actively involved in the running of the strike.



step towards backing down. This attitude was reinforced on 20th February this year, when a Longbridge mass meeting voted 10 to 1 not to strike in defence of our sacked convenor, Derek Robinson. Behind that vote lay treachery and evasion by the

seem to be a sign of weakness.

But that sort of 'perfect' organisation creates passivity and indifference amongst the rank and file. It cannot serve the socialist aim of the self-liberation of the working class. And it turns out to be

sat at home, prey to all the venom of the press and TV. There were no effective picket rotas. Strong flying pickets could not be organised for lack of people.

And both strikes were defeated.

There is a lot more to shop-

The Rank and File

MENTION the words 'rank and file movement' to most trade union officials and they'll burst their collar buttons right away. There is nothing so hated by the hardened trade union bureaucrat as the well-organised unofficial movement.

These movement would not exist, of course, if trade union officialdom had not become so distant from the shop floor, so much more absorbed in the state machinery, and so corrupted by money, power and the company of capitalist high society.

Early in the twentieth century, the miners in particular developed a big rank and file movement pressing for amalgamation, union democracy and improvements in wages and conditions. These Reform Committees, as they were called, included all workers in the industry who supported a platform of militant trade union demands.

At the end of World War I, the National Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement was founded, uniting the shop stewards in every union in a single organisation. This revolutionary-minded body was superseded in 1924 by the National Minority Movement, organised on the initiative of the Communist Party.

That movement was soon sabotaged by the ultra-left lunacy of the Communist International. But it did not mean the end of rank and file movements: so long as the trade union leaders remain unresponsive to the interests of their members and distant from the shop floor, rank and file movements are bound to exist.

The low point in their development followed the alliance between Russia and Britain in World War 2. Once the alliance was made, the Communist Party led its members and its far greater periphery of supporters into the wartime Joint Production Committees. Even then, however, there were rank and file organisations, initiated by Trotsky-

ists, anarchists and others.

During the long boom which followed the war, rank and file organisations developed again (though not in proportion to the enormous increase in the number of shop stewards). Above all, Britain saw the development of numerous combine committees. These were, of course, different from movements like the Reform Committees and the Minority Movement sections in that they based themselves on the stable factory level organisation and included all stewards (and only stewards) irrespective of their outlook.

The late fifties and early sixties saw both a development of combine committ-

the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Shop Stewards, in the mid-sixties. Unfortunately, it was the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, carefully cultivated by the Communist Party's Industrial Department, that emerged at that time as the most important rank and file movement, playing a major role in defeating both Labour's *In Place of Strife* and the Tories' Industrial Relations Act.

But while the LCDTU did unite militants in genuine rank and file movements like the Building Workers' Charter and the more electoralist Engineers' Broad Left, as well as many in no such organisations,

successful being Rank and File Teacher.

Whatever faults might have attended these efforts, they were an important contribution to the militant organisation of the real grass roots of the trade union movement.

While rank and file movements are often rather short-lived, there is no period in the twentieth century when they have not existed and been the most vigorous expression of the workers' interests.

The leaders of the official movement (and more recently the CP) have always accused them of being splitters or of trying to direct people away from the official organisations. The opposite is the case: their aim is to cleanse the official movement of the bureaucrats, the careerists, the traitors and the dupes of capitalism; and to develop militant leaders and help the rank and file take possession of the official movement.

This century has seen an accelerated drive by the state to integrate the trade union bureaucracy into its apparatus. Only a fighting rank and file movement can effectively fight this trend, as well as the petty corruption of officials, exposing every inadequacy of the leaders and organising the shop floor under the slogan: 'If the leaders won't lead, the rank and file must'.

The rank and file movements of the past teach us that these organisations cannot be treated as the backyards of whichever political grouping founded them — a criminal error perpetrated by the CP, the SLL/WRP, and IS/SWP.

Their platforms must be clear and easily grasped by the militants, and they have to give answers to the burning questions of the moment which confront the workers' movement, even if these answers are only supported by a small minority: they cannot afford, for the sake of broader support, to limit themselves to the small change of day-to-day demands.

by ANDREW HORNUNG



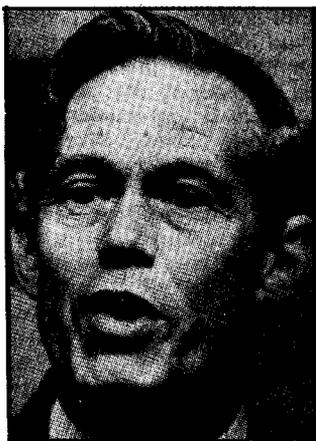
Grunwick: rank and file against the leaders

ees and the growth of politically militant rank and file groups. The Communist Party and, to a lesser extent, the Socialist Labour League (the forerunner of the WRP of today) played leading roles in organising these.

Taking advantage of the increasingly sectarian bent of the SLL, and foreseeing the attempt by the Labour Government to try to police the trade union movement, the International Socialism group (now SWP) initiated

it was itself only a pale shadow of what such a movement should be. It had a very limited (and wrongly expressed) platform, it had no branches, no industrial sections, no internal democracy, and relied on pressurising rather than fighting the trade union leaders.

At the same time, the IS group began more systematically to create rank and file organisations in different unions, the most



Reforming NUPE

by GEOFF WILLIAMS (NUPE branch secretary, University Hospital, Cardiff)

THE LAST NUPE Conference debated and carried a resolution on the 3 major reforms in the Labour Party. Now pressure is mounting for reforms in NUPE's own constitution.

At present, all full-time officials are appointed, by a National Executive elected on a branch block-vote basis.

The last rules revision conference failed to debate the election of full-timers. It spent just 15 minutes debating the election of the General Secretary, and that was at the very end of the conference. The result was that Alan Fisher, the present General Secretary, romped home. The conference agreed that the General Secretary should still be appointed; and the next rules revision is not til 1982.

But with Alan Fisher retiring next year, the issue of electing officials is still open.

Many other democratic reforms are needed in NUPE. At the last conference, for example, a motion to tie negotiators' hands during wage negotiations was lost after only a short debate.

Therefore the issue of democracy in NUPE is just as important as the fight to democratise the Labour Party. The issue of election of the General Secretary must now be seen in the same light as the election of the leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The ISTC autocracy

by JOHN CUNNINGHAM

THE STEEL workers' union ISTC is undemocratic in virtually every aspect of its organisation. What is taken for granted in many unions is unknown in the ISTC.

It was only in 1976 that the ISTC held its first national conference, and general secretary Bill Sirs put off the 1980 conference on the grounds that it was too expensive.

Conferences are not policy making bodies — they can only advise the National Executive Committee.

So items raised at conference only become policy when the NEC has discussed and voted on the issues. The rules regarding selection of delegates are complex, and it often ends up that full-timers appoint them.

At the plant level there are no equivalents of shop stewards' committees, and no single branch covers a plant. Instead organisation is by section, so there is a branch for the melting shop, one for the rolling mill, and so on. Each branch has its own secretary and negotiates separately. Any coordination usually comes from full-timers outside the plant.

All this, of course, plays into the hands of the bosses. When a branch becomes strong or militant, or in any way troublesome to the bureaucracy, it is either disbanded or split up. Full-time officials operate in a world of their own, with little accountability to the membership.

One fulltime official from Scunthorpe who was interviewed on Yorkshire TV just before the strike described the internal regime in the ISTC as 'autocratic'. And he thought it was a good thing, too.

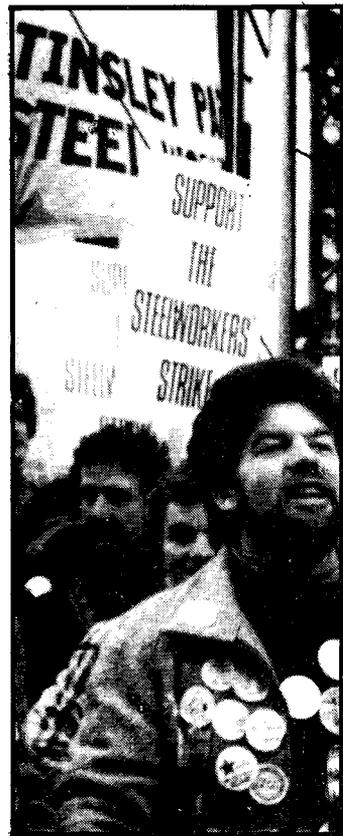
Opposition to the bureaucracy has been growing, starting in 1976 when Sirs finally conceded the right to hold annual conferences. At the 1979 conference a document entitled 'Steelworkers and Reform' was circulated

by the Liaison Committee for Constitutional Reform.

The document called for the abolition of trade sections and executive councils seats to be allocated in proportion to the membership of each division. Candidates for posts should publish policy statements. All fulltime officials should be elected, and the President elected separately from the Executive.

These reforms were kicked out by conference after Sirs launched a slanderous and demagogic attack on the Reform Committee.

But during the great steelworkers' strike of 1980, a Steelworkers' Charter was drafted (with the Socialist Workers' Party providing the main initiative). This Charter incorporates most of the basic



demands of the Reform Committee and also adds demands on closures, hiving-off, wages, etc.

Steel Workers' Charter

The Steelworkers Charter's demands on union democracy are:

- **STRENGTHEN SHOPFLOOR ORGANISATION**
 - Establish joint union committees of shop stewards and branch officials in each works to give unity and leadership, with a regular levy on members to provide funds.
 - Withdraw from management-union participation schemes — reject the BSC 'Steel Contract' and worker-director schemes.
 - For trade union newsletters at branch and works level.
 - For the 100% closed shop. Against SIMA representation.
- **RANK AND FILE DEMOCRACY**
 - For regular branch section or mass meetings of the membership to be held, whenever possible in works time.
 - No settlement of disputes without full report-backs to decision-making by the members concerned.
 - No enforced secret or postal ballots and no co-operation with management ballots which undermine trade union representation.
- **REFORM OUR UNIONS**
 - For delegate conferences to be policy-making
 - Regular election of full-time officials
 - For the circulation of election addresses based on policies
 - For the right of recall of full-time and lay officials
 - For the ISTC Executive Council elections to be based on Divisional representation and the abolition of the trade sections.
 - For a lay delegate controlled NCCC.
- **BUILD RANK AND FILE ORGANISATION**
 - Win support for this Charter among workmates and in trade union bodies. Built towards a national shop stewards' committee linking all steelworkers.

by SIMON
TEMPLE (TGWU,
5/35 branch)

The Case For Reform In The T&GWU

TODAY, THE Transport and General Workers' Union is generally regarded as one of the more left wing of the major unions. It supported its members on the docks in the recent dispute over redundancies, and backed Derek Robinson's fight for reinstatement — albeit rather halfheartedly — when his own union was doing Edwardes' dirty work.

On some major issues, the T&GWU is committed to Labour Party democracy.

As a result, the Left has not paid much attention to the union's internal structure in recent years. But, in fact, the T&GWU is far from democratic. All the full-time officials are appointed (except the general secretary — and, in practice, he is elected for life).

The national conference is only held every second year, and the rule book contains such catch-all sections as Rule 11, Clause 19: "Any member violating any working rules, registration or by-laws, disseminating false statements or any rumour which tends to depreciate the organisation, its officers, or any section appertaining to the Union, or circulating any business of the Union to unauthorised persons without authority, or who is guilty of other forms of misconduct, shall be fined a sum not exceeding £10, or otherwise dealt with by the branch or authorised committee of the Union as may be deemed fit".

Put more simply: if you step out of line, you can be expelled.

Of course, some rule is needed to deal with scabs, etc., but the present wording is a dictator's charter. And it was this rule that was used in the unsuccessful attempt to witch hunt nine militants at British Leyland's Cowley Assembly plant in 1977-8.

In theory, decision-making powers are held by elected lay committees at local, regional, and national level; and the officers are employed to carry out the policy they make. In practice, the officials usually play the dominant role.

The lay committees normally meet only quarterly (with monthly meetings of their finance and general purpos-

es committees) while the flow of information they receive is largely controlled by their (full-time) secretaries.

Major wage negotiations are almost always conducted by the officials, and lay delegates on the negotiating committees play a pretty secondary role.

Although the recent rules revision conference discussed a resolution making it compulsory for officials to refer back agreements for ratification, a get-out clause was inserted in the final version. So senior officials will still be able to stitch up deals behind their members' backs, as has happened more than once in British Leyland.

Even so, the T&GWU is fairly open at present. Faced with rapid expansion and the growth of the shop stewards' movement in the 1960s and early '70s, the leadership realised that it could not con-

tinue to rule the union with a rod of iron. Shop stewards were given a fairly free hand at plant level, and the leadership relied on the size and diversity of the union to protect them from any coordinated challenge to their positions.

The result has been that in some industries, the formal structures have been partly bypassed or adapted by strong shopfloor organisation.

Take the 1979 lorry drivers' strike as an example. The national Road Haulage conference, called by the Commercial Transport Section's National Committee, met in the summer of 1978 to draw up the wage claim.

When it became clear that the employers' organisation — the Road Haulage Association — had developed a national strategy (whereas negotiations in road transport take place at regional level), an unofficial

conference of stewards was held in Liverpool to plan a strategy to win the claim and to force a recall of the Road Haulage conference to give it an official stamp of approval.

Although the strike was official in most areas from the start, the main channels of communication were between shop stewards in different areas, not through the official structure of the union.

It is rare to find an unofficial body that spans more than one section. But one example in the National Container Liaison Committee, which consists of delegates from the dockers, container haulage drivers, and workers in the inland container bases. It is the more remarkable because of the traditional hostility between dockers and drivers.

It also answered the urgent need for unity to deal with the giant container lines which control their own container-packing, transport and shipping. But it is clearly a threat to the bureaucracy, which is busily searching for ways of coopting it or undermining it.

In practice, strong sections can usually fight their employers without too much hindrance from the bureaucracy, and witchhunts can successfully be challenged by strong organisation. Thus, faced with the threat of a strike at Cowley, and widespread support round the country, the Region 5 (Midlands) Committee backed off from the attack on the 'Cowley Nine' which had been launched by Oxford District Secretary David Buckle.

At the same time, they forced Birmingham road transport officer Alan Law to retire. He had originally been allowed to stay after being caught rigging a ballot, but after repeated de-



Nine stewards from the BL Cowley Assembly Plant [above] were harassed under the TGWU's catch-all disciplinary rules

»mands from the membership he 'represented', he had to go.

Where Jack Jones could use his enormous personal prestige within the union to control things, his successors have found it much harder. But the rapid rise in unemployment could give them the opportunity to tighten their grip. The union is said to have lost 40,000 members in the last two months as a result of the slump.

Strong sections such as the motor industry and docks are especially hard hit, and rank and file organisation could be weakened as a result.

So there are no grounds for complacency. The bureaucracy has a powerful weapon in the T&GWU rule book and it could quickly regain the ability and will to use it.

But, groundless or not, there is plenty of complacency. The Communist Party, who have a number of district officers among their members, argue that the national officials should be elected, but that district officials should continue to be appointed.

They say, rather contradictorily, that local officials don't take important decisions, so there's no need; and that elections can lead to right wingers winning, so they're a bad idea.

They also claim that frequent elections would mean constant electioneering and that only members in large factories would get adequate attention — but even if that were true, at least some members would be assured of decent support from their officers!

The Socialist Workers' Party started an 'It's Our Union' campaign a couple of years ago, but it didn't get very far, and apart from that there's been very little in the way of union-wide organisation, except over specific issues such as the defence of the Cowley Nine.

But there is no doubt that there is a crying need for a rank and file reform group to take up the key democratic issues across the whole of the union, and to combine it with a militant class-wide response to the present crisis. Otherwise, sectionalism, which has been elevated to the level of religion by some T&G officials, will be the ruin of us all!

The Chapple dictatorship

EETPU militant BILLY WILLIAMS spoke to Socialist Organiser.

CHAPPLE has suspended a number of branches because of their militancy. Cardiff, Swindon, and Birmingham Midlands are a few examples. He has attempted to drag individuals through the courts.

At the last policy conference, in Brighton, an overwhelming majority of delegates voted in favour of resolutions against the closure of branches, but Chapple merely referred them back to the Rules Revision Conference

election. He is now on the executive, but he is in a small minority there.

Chapple will not allow Communists or anyone who is not a member of the Labour Party to hold any position in the EETPU. This was pointed out by many delegates at the TUC conference who criticised the internal regime of the EETPU.

Chapple openly attacks members of the union with references to 'scum', 'terrorists', and 'hi-jackers'. If

be successful if they stick to their guns.

He is so out of touch, the rank and file will move without Chapple. His only defence will be to start a witch hunt against the 'extreme left' and 'communists'.

An example of this has recently occurred at the Texaco refinery in Pembroke. While Chapple, along with Duffy, supported scabs, the workers at the refinery stopped work until G&M laggards were taken on. The number of pickets also exceeded the six laid down in the Employment Act.

This has happened despite Chapple accusing the laggards of being site hi-jackers. While the rank and file are seeking unity, he is busily seeking divisions.

There are a number of rank and file papers circulating in the union. He has personally mentioned the paper *Rank and File Contact* and accused it of 'witch-hunting' the lackeys on the National Executive.

But what can he expect? There is a need for rank and file papers to get across what is really happening at the grass roots of the union. The official union journal *Contact* is printed by Woodrow Wyatt Holdings and there is no information in it.

The rank and file will continue to fight Chapple's regime in order to achieve a democratic union.

Chapple has said we need to work with the Tories. The rank and file have no intention of doing that, and we will organise to take on Thatcher and the rest of them, alongside the rest of the trade union movement.



Frank Chapple

— held every six years. The problem is that the next one isn't for another four years!

When Wyn Bevan [a left-winger] won a place on the National Executive, Chapple declared the election null and void because a bulletin was circulated among members in the area to transfer their vote to Bevan after the first round. According to Chapple's interpretation of the rules this was illegal.

The ballot was re-run — and Bevan clearly won the

that is his attitude, he must expect a fightback.

The members' response to these slanders has been to democratically castigate him quite openly at branch level. Chapple attempts to stifle this through the bureaucratic structure. It has come to the point where the only ones who are capable of interpreting the rule-book are lawyers, and he has plenty of them on his side.

He has also stated that the Tories' Employment Act will

Where we stand

... Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks!
No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line;
no state interference in our unions!
No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles
for better living standards and conditions!
Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price
increases. The same should go for state benefits, grants and
pensions.

... Start improving the social services rather than cutting
them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.

... End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs — share the
work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35 hour week and
an end to overtime.

... All firms threatening closure should be nationalised
under workers' control.

... Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions
for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the
banks and financial institutions without compensation. End
the interest burden on council housing and other public
services.

... Freeze rents and rates.

... Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem;
racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the
fascists off the streets.

Purge racists from positions in the labour movement.
Organise full support for black self-defence.

... The capitalist police are an enemy for the working
class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses'
striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special
Branch, MI5, etc.), public accountability, etc.

... Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's
equal right to work, and full equality for women.

... Against attacks on gays by the State: abolish all laws
which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the
right of the gay community to organise and to affirm their
stance publicly.

... The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right
to determine their own future. Get the British troops out
now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political
status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.

... The black working people of South Africa should get
full support from the British labour movement for their
strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white
supremacist regime. South African goods and services
should be blacked.

... It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the
labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during
each parliament, and the election by annual conference of
party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials,
who should be paid the average for the trade.

... The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of
capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world —
show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic,
human control over the economy, to make the decisive
sectors of industry social property, under workers' control.

The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and
file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze
the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a
working class socialist system in its place — rather than
having our representatives run the system and waiting for
the crumbs from the table of the bankers and bosses.

Socialist Organiser aims to help build a class-
struggle left wing in the trade unions and Labour
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paper.

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and gives the paper a firmer financial base.

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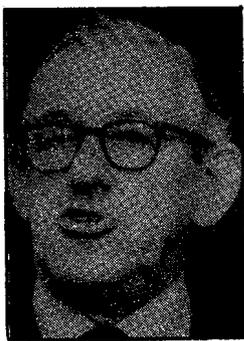
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your
Paper!*



BOB WRIGHT, left wing candidate for the AUEW presidency, spoke to Socialist Organiser at Labour Party conference

□ *What are your reactions to the Labour Party conference?*

■ All the tampering in the post-war period has brought us to where we are, economically on our knees. We've got unemployment and a government that is savagely attacking standards of living in every sphere. Our appeal must be to the ordinary people. If middle class interests can be won to support socialist ideas, all very well, but I'm not prepared to water down those policies in order to attract what's called the middle ground. We are a party of the workers - we should recognise that.

□ *What do you think the attitude of rank and file trade unionists will be to the decisions taken at this conference?*

■ I find it difficult to understand unions who boast

'The TUC must get off their knees'

about their internal democracy, who boast that elections on the widest possible basis are important, and then resist a wider basis of electing the leader of the Party. It's a contradiction and I question their sincerity.

I think that Conference - the unions again - erred in not endorsing that the final authority to determine the manifesto should be the Party, not the Parliamentary Party. But I'm convinced that this conference will contribute substantially to making the Labour Party a mass workers' party: a mass party of people who want to be involved, and not just a few activists who have carried the banner over all these years in spite of the constant deviations of the Parliamentary Party from the path that they ought to be treading. I think that the movement has a right to

demand that the MP's and the leaders of the PLP are accountable. They are given the privilege to serve the working class, and it's not a burden.

We also want to see proper democratic accountability inside every union. In 1980 union members are not prepared to accept the philosophy of the trade union 'boss'. We've got to get rid of it.

□ *What role do you see the Party having in the rank and file struggles against the Tory Government?*

■ The Party has to be capable of working with the unions both locally and nationally: we need better liaison. I think every constituency party should have a local industrial committee, a sub-committee of the GC. This industrial committee could link up with the Trades

Councils, having much closer liaison with the trade union movement and with the individual unions. I think there should be local councils of labour and joint activity on a wide front between Trades Councils and Labour Parties. And we can't have a return to the position where members of other political parties on the left were prevented from having any voice on the Trades Council.

□ *What do you think the Labour Party can do now to relate to workers facing redundancies tomorrow or next week?*

■ There's got to be a trade union leadership initiative that says that we do not agree to factories being closed. We shall not agree to company boards closing a factory in Leeds or Manchester or Birmingham, taking the money earned by the workers in those industries, and putting it into Chile or South Africa or some other savagely repressive regime. If capitalism is failing, we'll take over those factories.

I don't believe we should wait for another three and a half years for this government to run its time out. If we can generate a movement that will bring the Tories down, I subscribe to that. That's our task. The TUC has got to get off their knees. They're not going to resolve the workers' problems by having tete a tete discussions with Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph and the others. They've made it quite clear they are not prepared to be influenced by stage managed chats in Westminster.

AUEW: Stuff the Duff

FORMALLY, the AUEW is one of the most democratic unions in Britain.

All its officials are elected (though sometimes for very long terms). District committees of branch delegates have a substantial say in the union's policy on industrial battles. A National Committee of lay delegates is the sovereign policy-making body. The AUEW shop stewards' quarterlies have no parallel in other unions.

But a right wing leadership is busy trying to destroy that democracy.

Already, the election of officials is by postal ballot, not branch voting. That means most votes are cast without any collective discussion, and without any information on the candidates - apart from the sort of

'information' supplied by Woodrow Wyatt and other Fleet Street hacks.

The right wing defend postal voting by saying that participation was very low in the old branch voting system. And that's true. But the democratic alternative would be for members to vote in workplace meetings, preferably after hearing what the candidates have to say and getting a chance to question them.

The right-wing AUEW has tried to get branches merged into new big units, with full time appointed branch secretaries. This must be resisted.

The Executive is also going for a merger with the EETPU - on the basis of altering the AUEW's relatively democratic constitu-

tion to fit in with the EETPU's dictatorial regime. EETPU leader Chapple is demanding abolition of the AUEW's district committees, of the National Committee, and of the Final Appeals Court. Left-wing AUEW members have been campaigning for no merger, except on a democratic basis.

To defend democracy in the AUEW, and to have any chance of extending it, a strong rank and file movement has to be built within the union.

The Broad Left in the AUEW used to be very strong. But it focused narrowly on getting left-wingers (or one-time left-wingers) like Hugh Scanlon elected to office - and not criticising them when they got there.

When Scanlon's militancy faded, the Broad Left could do nothing, say nothing, organise nothing.

Today the most active and dynamic rank-and-file group in the union is the Engineers' Charter.

All the Left has been campaigning hard for Bob Wright as President against Terry Duffy, and for other left-wing candidates for official positions. That campaigning is important. But we must also remember the lessons of Scanlon's Presidency. The rank and file movement must always maintain its independence from individual leaders, keep up pressure on them, criticise their false steps, and even give a lead against them when necessary.