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Labour
Party

Socialist Organiser

NUM: Vote again on jobs!

Within days of the coalfield ballot, the Coal Board's soothing words about pit closures had been exposed as lies.

With the NCB denying any detailed plans for closures, the miners' vote was decided by the pay issue, which did have figures and dates attached.

By Sunday the figures

and details on pit closures were coming out. On Tuesday Arthur Scargill revealed documents leaked from the NCB, outlining plans to close pits at the rate of two million tonnes capacity per year, and listing 75 'short-life' and 30 'loss-making' pits.

Scargill stressed that the ballot result did *not* mean that the NUM would accept closures. Proposals for a new ballot on closures alone are likely for the next NUM executive meeting, and should be supported.

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.107 November 4 1982 (Claimants and strikers, 10p) 25p

NHS: all out November 8!

STOP THE TALKS

START THE FIGHT!



JOHN HARRIS

AS THE November 8 transport day of action approaches, the health union leaders are not out campaigning for strikes.

Still less are they campaigning for a 'yes' vote on all out action. Instead, they are talking to the government arbitration service ACAS.

No new offer has come from the government. But, as the Financial Times put it, "it is widely believed that many senior TUC and health union

officials are anxious to find a face-saving formula to end the campaign for a uniform 12 per cent rise".

TUC Health Service committee chairperson Albert Spanswick has not only failed to campaign for the Health Service committee policy of all out strike. He has tried to sabotage it by saying CoHSE can't decide until March [!] and proposing week-on, week-off strikes.

This follows the incident where he announced that NHS unions had scheduled another one-day action for November 24, and had to be publicly reprimanded by other union officials.

Spanswick has already announced that he will retire early. After this performance, he should be

called on to resign immediately — and the TUC Health Service committee should elect a new chairperson who will represent its policy.

Meanwhile, 150 NHS stewards from across the country, meeting in Sheffield last Saturday, decided on a plan of campaign for November 8 and for a 'yes' vote on the all-out action.

SEE PAGES 7 and 9

TEST FOR SPANISH LABOUR

The turning points in modern Spanish history tend to be remembered not by their year but by the day and month.

Every Spaniard knows that the 16th July (16-J) stands for Franco's coup in 1936 which began the Civil

War. And November 20th (20-N as it is spray-painted on walls) was the day of the dictator's death in 1975.

February 23rd (23-F) was the nearly successful military coup of 1981.

Now all these dates have been joined by 28-O, 28th

October 1982, the date when the Spanish people overwhelmingly voted into power a government of people who have never held political office and who in particular are not in any way tainted by Francoism. October 28th was the

first time anyone describing themselves as socialist had been elected to govern Spain for 47 years — the first time in the living memory of most of the voters.

The election of the Spanish Socialist Party

(PSOE) to power therefore is an historic event for Spain. It is also a major event in the politics of Western Europe as a whole. Spain is yet another country (after France, Greece and Sweden) in which in the last year or so

reformist socialist governments have come to power in conditions of acute economic crisis and apparently uncontrollable mass unemployment.

Much of the fate of Spain and of European Social Democracy, therefore,

hangs on the prospects of the government which Felipe Gonzalez is about to establish.

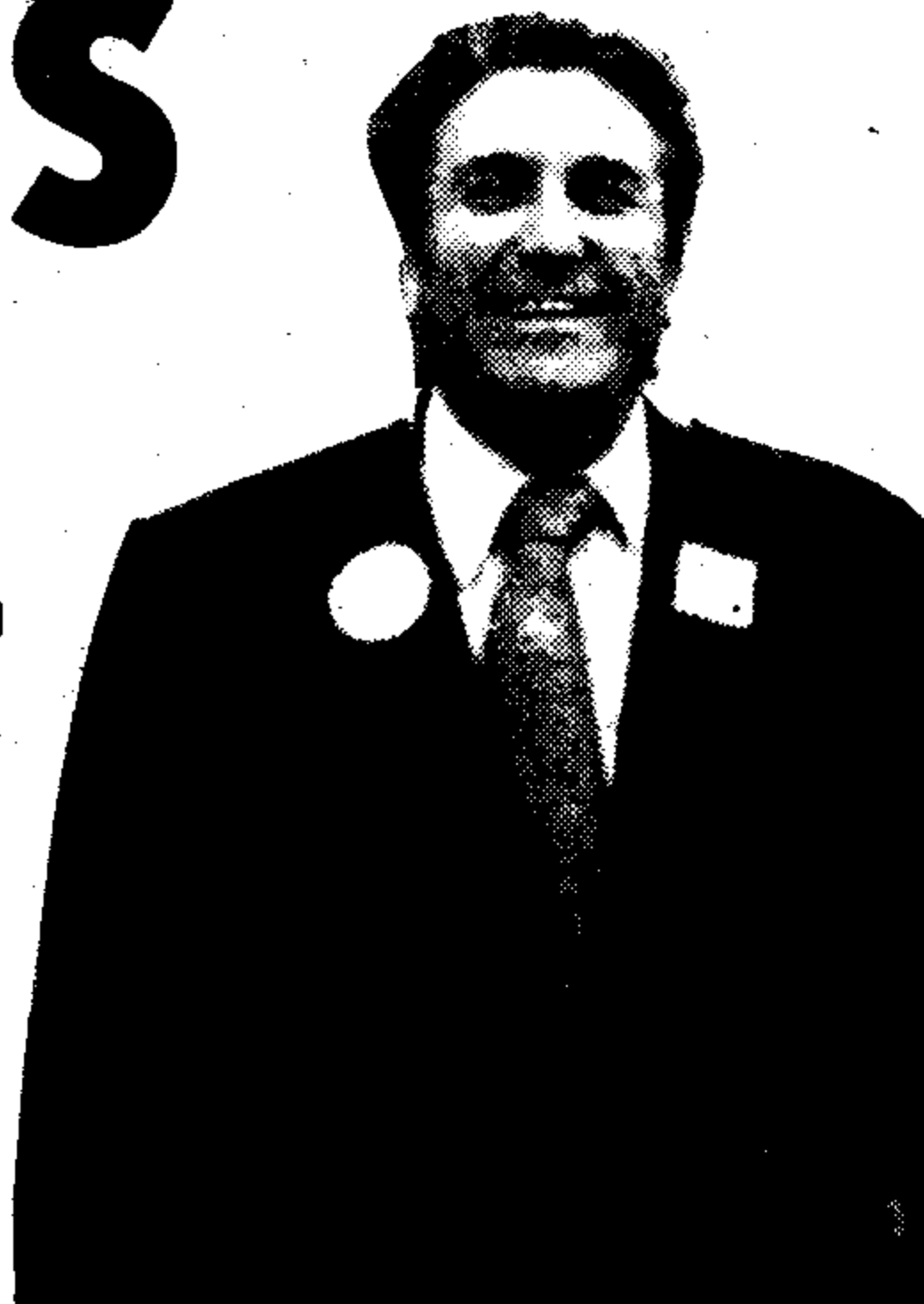
**Analysis
next week**



Felipe Gonzalez — a landslide win at the polls, but how will he cope with the economic crisis?

Chapple's man unleashes tide of apathy

by Jim Denham



Chapple: Spellar's boss

THERE wasn't much celebrating amongst Labour supporters in Birmingham when the news finally came through on Friday morning.

John Spellar had won back Northfield for Labour by 289 votes. Hardly a famous victory in a constituency that had been solidly Labour at every election since the war — until upper class twit Jocelyn Cadbury snatched it from Social Contract-supporting hack Ray Carter in 1979.

(When poor old Jocelyn saw what Thatcherite Toryism meant in practice — or so the story goes — he was overcome with remorse, and being a wettish sort of a chap, did the decent thing with a double-barrelled shotgun).

Damp

But it wasn't just the slimness of the majority that dampened socialist euphoria after Labour's first by-election gain from the Tories since 1971. Rather, it was the nature of the candidate and his policies.

John Spellar is a malevolent Rolf Harris figure who boasts of being "to the right of" Frank Chapple, his boss at the EETPU. His main claim to fame prior to the Northfield result was his "parasites" speech at Blackpool, calling for a full scale purge of Militant.

He publicly barred Tony Benn from setting foot in the constituency during the campaign, and told a Birmingham Labour Solidarity rally that he didn't want left wingers to even canvass for him.

He makes no bones about his sympathy for the SDP leadership, and "probably would have gone with them but for his union connections and a shrewd eye for the main chance. Naturally he supports wage restraint (sorry, a "national assessment"), opposes nuclear disarmament and is less than enthusiastic about extra-Parliamentary action against the Tebbit Bill.

Interestingly, his one concession to Labour Conference policy is his outspoken support for import controls, especially on Japanese cars (Northfield constituency includes the BL Longbridge plant).

Flock

Not surprisingly, Labour activists in Birmingham weren't exactly flocking into Northfield to go on the knocker for John Spellar. In fact, a good proportion of what canvassing was done, seems to have been carried out by AUEW full time officials sent in by Labour Solidarity.

If the labour rank and file were less than enthusiastic about Spellar, it seems that the electorate as a whole could scarcely contain their indifference.

The poll was 54%, meaning that 10,000 fewer people bothered to vote than at the general election. Spellar took 36.2% of the vote while Tory Roger Gale took 35.6%. And this in a constituency with 18% unemployment!

It hardly seems to vindicate

Spellar's claim that the voters of Northfield had rallied round "the traditional Labour Party with traditional Labour policies" once they saw the looney left in retreat and realised just what a sensible moderate fellow that nice Mr Spellar was.

The Socialist Organiser Longbridge bulletin put out on the eve of the poll summed up our attitude:

"We still say vote Labour (even though there is a Communist Party candidate standing who may seem more attractive to socialists) in order to deny the bosses' Party a victory..."

But the fight must be kept up after the election to force the Labour leaders to break with the bosses and the bankers, to stand by the Labour Conference's radical policies and to give real support to the health workers as part of the fight to bring down the Tories.

Right wingers like Spellar will oppose this tooth and nail, but Labour Party members and trade unionists now have a way of dealing with the likes of Spellar. reselection".



ANDREW WARD, Report

Southwark workers demonstrate against a right wing Labour council. They'll need more than fine words from us to convince them that left-wing Labour is any different.

Peckham shows need to convince workers

Ian Swindale reports

HARRIET Harman predictably won the Peckham by-election last Thursday, but the result serves to further warn the Labour Party that it is losing much of its traditional support.

Labour's share of the vote fell from 60% to 50% while Dick Taverne for the SDP polled almost 33% of the votes cast. The Tory candidate lost his deposit. The turn-out was very low — 38% — but this is

fairly typical for Peckham. Only 57% of the electorate voted in the 1979 general election (compared with a national average of around 70%) and in the local elections last May, many wards achieved turn-outs of only 25%.

The reasons for this are not hard to find. With the result a foregone conclusion many Labour supporters don't bother to vote. But more importantly, an increasing number of Labour voters in recent years have stayed away from the polls in protest at the failure of Labour, either nationally or locally, to do anything about the appalling conditions in this inner-London constituency.

They no longer believe that any party is willing or able to do anything for them.

Southwark council was dominated by a right wing and corrupt leadership for many years. The new left-wing council only came to power six months ago and has yet to prove that it is prepared to mount a fight in defence of the working class of the borough.

Suggestions that the Council may impose a rate increase of the order of 100% next spring indicate that they may prove unwilling to mount such a fight and thus lose more support.

The formation of the SDP has given some disillusioned Labour supporters an alternative to vote for since they would never vote for the Tories (in the May local elections not a single Tory was returned to Southwark council from the wards in Peckham constituency). But support for the SDP is limited. The eleven Labour councillor defectors to the SDP all lost their seats in the May council elections and the 33% share of the

vote won by Taverne last week was only achieved on the basis of a massive election campaign which they could not hope to repeat at a General Election.

Abstention still remains the form of protest exercised by Labour's traditional supporters in Peckham. If that lost support is to be won back, then Southwark Labour Party must show by its actions that now it is controlled by the Left it will act in the interests of the working class of Southwark by fighting to implement its manifesto commitments and confronting Heseltine if necessary rather than passing on the costs to its supporters in the form of massive rate increases.

And Harriet Harman, as the first of the three left wing Prospective Parliamentary Candidates in Southwark to get to Parliament, must convince the working class of Peckham that her victory means a new style of representation of working class interests.

Freeson lashes out

Pete Firmin reports on a new chapter in the saga of Brent East CLP

REG Freeson, sitting Labour MP for Brent East, has written a 42-point (!) letter to Labour Party general secretary Jim Mortimer appealing for a further inquiry into Brent East Constituency Labour Party.

Brent East is already — because of the May elections and an earlier inquiry — one of the very few remaining CLPs with sitting members yet to begin reselection. Now Freeson is attempting to get a serious delay, no reselection at all, and/or disbarment of the Left's candidate, Ken Liv-

ingstone.

The outcome of the earlier inquiry is that the CLP is being 'strongly supervised' for six months by assistant national agent Joyce Gould. But Gould has given an undertaking that, as far as she is concerned, selection can go ahead as

soon as she is satisfied with the CLP's Standing Orders and has verified membership figures for 1981 (on which branch delegations are based). Neither of these will take long.

This obviously disturbs Freeson, who stands in danger of losing to Living-

stone.

Freeson's letter is an amazing web of truth and semi-truth.

The most serious allegation, in the light of the present make-up of the NEC, is that the "evidence of unconstitutional conduct [in relation to the selection procedure] is more than prima facie".

This revolves around a meeting held by the Left at the beginning of September to discuss whom to put up against Freeson, and decide between Livingstone and Gerry Byrne (of Socialist Organiser and Women's Fightback).

Freeson argues that "the information shows clearly that there has been serious unconstitutional conduct over the Parliamentary candidature and that anything arising from it should be considered invalid". The clear implication is that Livingstone should be declared invalid as a candidate. (The same threat was recently used against left candidates in Oxford CLP).

We have to:

- condemn Freeson's action in seeking further delay,
- demand the democratic right to go ahead with selection,
- defend Livingstone's right to stand.

Protest at cop violence

TO highlight the crisis of policing in Newham, police harassment of black youths and refusal to take firm action against racial attacks, a week of action has been called from Thursday 28 October to Friday 5 November 1982.

Among activities planned are pickets of police stations in Newham and the call for a pupils' strike on Friday 5 November to protest at racial attacks in local schools.

Special attention is being paid by the campaign organisers to the case of Mr Luke Fordjour, who lost his left eye as a result of a racial attack. The police have failed to bring a prosecution

in spite of the assailant being identified to the police.

In this case the police failed to interview Mr Fordjour immediately after the attack. When visited in hospital he was merely asked to present his driving licence to West Ham Police Station. The police detective handling the case told the victim of the attack that he had more important things to do than work on the arrest of his assailants.

Events have been brought to a head by a vicious attack on Asian youths by plain clothes police. The First Avenue 11, as they are now known, have been charged with threatening behaviour and assault on the police.

MIKE FOLEY

Lewis bites the dust

Arthur Lewis last week became the sixth Labour MP to be "deselected" by his local constituency party, Newham North West.

At the selection meeting Lewis received five votes and was knocked out on the second ballot.

Lewis was defeated by Tony Banks, the 39 year old chairperson of the GLC arts and recreation committee. Banks emerged as the victor from a shortlist of six which included Dave Wetzel (chairperson of the GLC transport committee), Mandy Moore, Ken Palmer, a local left wing councillor and activist, and former Lambeth council leader Ted Knight.

Lewis has been in disfavour with the constituency party for several years. A previous attempt to start reselection proceedings was dropped after he gave a firm guarantee that he would not stand again. When he reneged on that promise reselection was started again.

An indication of the type of politics Lewis represents can be gleaned from his response to some of the questions asked. For example, he could not see any political difference between Tony Benn, Dennis Healey

and John Silkin.

He wants capital punishment reintroduced, particularly to deal with looters, whom he wants to be shot. His racist comments in Parliament and support for Scientology, and his total lack of any attempt to work in the constituency made the end result a foregone conclusion.

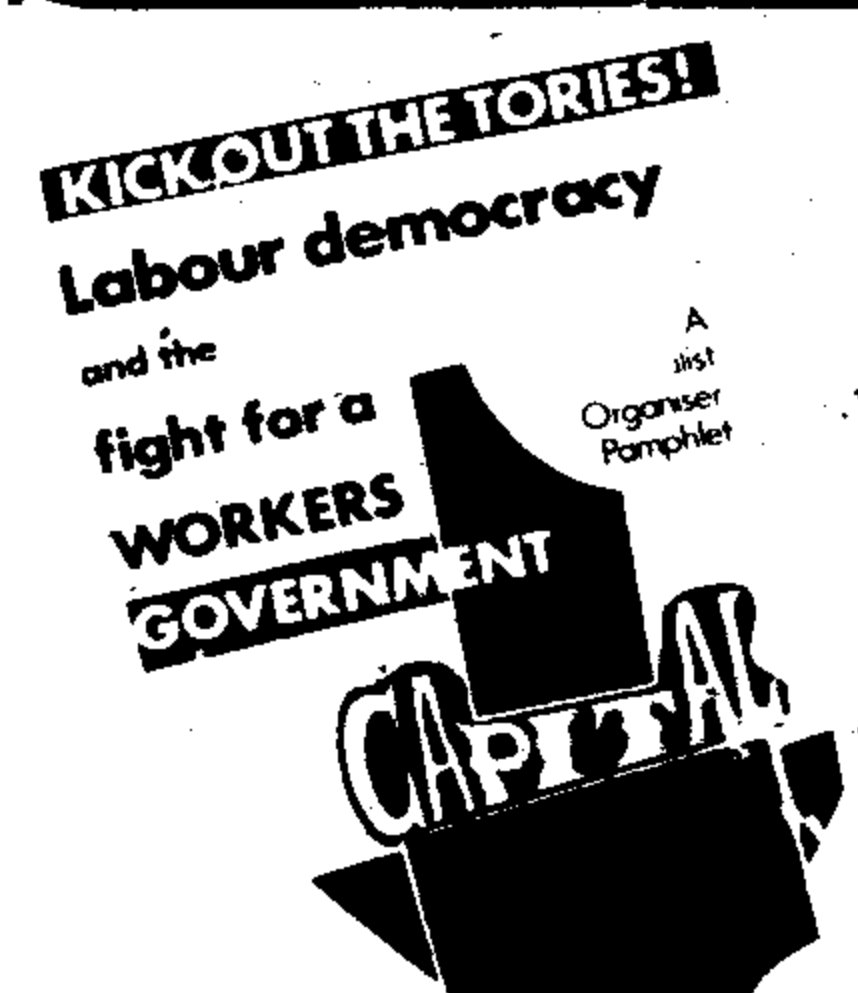
Banks' selection is a tiny part of the process of turning a local constituency Labour Party outwards into a more campaigning organisation.

MIKE FOLEY

Labour Committee on Palestine founding conference

Conference open to Labour Committee on Palestine members, delegates from affiliated organisations, and non-voting observers. Details from the secretary, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, London N16.

Saturday November 20, 1pm to 5pm at Brixton Town Hall, Acre Lane, London SW2.



Available from SO, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 for 60p incl. postage.

Opening shots in fight against witch-hunt

by
**John
Bloxam**

LAST Saturday, 30th, barely one month after the Labour party conference, and before the right wing have chopped any heads off, 101 Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) sent delegates to discuss resisting expulsions.

The 'CLPs against the witch-hunt' conference, initiated by Hackney North CLP, also had delegates from 67 YSSs, 110 other Labour Party organisations, and 22 trade union branches, etc. There were 76 observers, 36 from CLPs.

The conference agreed to establish a 'Labour against the witch-hunt' campaign.

It was sponsored by 20 MPs. Les Huckfield, Ernie Roberts, and Reg Race spoke on Saturday, as well as Audrey Wise and Ted Knight. Dennis Skinner sent a message of support.

There were a lot of Militant supporters at the conference — appropriately, since some of them are in the front line.

However, the way the Militant comrades intervened meant that much of the conference was polarised over their proposal that we should just elect one or two delegates to the Militant-dominated 'Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-Hunt' (set up from a conference on September 11), and dissolve.

So, ironically, those who are immediately threatened were the least constructive



JOHN HARRIS

for the campaign.

They persisted despite the harsh right wing message from Wednesday's NEC meeting, despite approaches from our Steering Committee before the conference, and despite a letter from ten MPs supporting the October 30 conference and urging a constructive approach.

Militant's belief, apparently, is that they can best fight on their own.

The division was a sectarian one because the Steering Committee's alternative was

for an organisation directly based on and accountable to Labour Party organisations (in particular the CLPs), to work side by side with the 'Labour Steering Committee against the Witch-Hunt'.

Virtually all the delegates who were not Militant supporters voted for this, and for maximum unity between the two campaigns, including an exchange of three delegates.

A number of suggestions were put before the conference by the Steering Committee on how to begin organ-

ising the resistance, and the basic 'groundrules' were overwhelmingly agreed:

- * the need to reverse the decision on the register,
- * unequivocal refusal to expel socialists — no bending before the inevitable threats of disaffiliation;
- * complete solidarity with any comrade expelled or CLP disaffiliated.

The immediate suggestions included rapid circulation of the policies agreed at the conference to Labour Party organisations and trade

Ted Knight addresses the conference

unions, to get support and commitments of action; the production of a regular newsletter to exchange information and coordinate action; and a lobby of the Labour Party National Executive meeting on November 24.

The conference established a delegate-based and CLP-dominated National Council, to meet at least once every two months. Any CLP supporting the campaign will automatically have the right to a delegate on the Council.

While the Council will control the campaign, the conference also elected a working secretariat: Ernie Roberts (chair), Joan Maynard and Reg Race (vice-chairs), Keith Lichman (secretary), Gerry Hughes (treasurer), myself and Alan Freeman (press/publicity), and John Gardner.

Bodies

These bodies will have to look at the weaknesses of the conference.

There were only 20 trade union branches, so a lot of work will need to be done in that area, particularly by the trade union subcommittee of the National Council — organising a campaign in the branches, establishing links with Broad Lefts, etc.

The trade union branches represented at the conferen-

ce have called a further meeting for Saturday November 13, 2pm at County Hall, London.

The other main area of attention must be the CLPs outside London — who represented only half the CLPs present (54).

Size

The size of the conference, the votes for clear action, the establishment of 'Labour Against the Witch-Hunt' — by any reckoning these will be shots across the bows of the NEC.

But there was little belief in the Conference that the right wing will be stopped by warning shots. It will require determined, united action.

Saturday's conference gives the skeleton for providing a lead in this. The job now must be to put flesh on the bones by:

- * campaigning for the policies of 'Labour Against the Witch-Hunt' and getting commitments for action.

Organisations that came to the conference should meet and plan local and regional campaigns. The London Labour Party regional executive has circulated a call to all CLPs urging them to refuse expulsions, and pledging full support if they do. Other Labour Party bodies should be urged to do likewise.

- * Get sponsorships and donations from labour movement organisations for 'Labour Against the Witch-Hunt'. Campaign to affiliate CLPs to it, and send a delegate to the National Council meetings.

- * Get delegates to the November 27 regional conferences organised by the 'Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-Hunt', and resolutions for:

- policies similar to those passed on October 30,
- the establishment of democratically elected and accountable regional organisations, affiliated to both campaigns,
- maximum unity between the 'Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-Hunt' and 'Labour Against the Witch-Hunt', including the exchange of three delegates;

- * Support the lobby of the NEC called for 9am on Wednesday November 24. Send banners, delegations, or messages of support.

Contact: c/o 107
Neville Road,
London N16

PRESS GANG

TEARS came to the eyes of Mrs Thatcher here yesterday as she stood for the first time at the Berlin Wall and looked out over the watch towers, dog runs and death strip dividing the free world from the horrors of communist rule.

With a catch in her voice and leaning forward so that she could scarcely be heard over the Falklands Victory Brass Band she whispered to her aides: "I want one of those! I want two".

Later she laid a wreath of white lilies on the Reichstag memorial to those who had died attempting to cross the wall. "You have got to see it to see the full horror of it", she said "...and you will."

"With our technology" she told a cheering crowd of ecstatic West German businessmen, "there won't be any white lilies in the western world, Nobody will get that far."

The dramatic trip to the wall and the contract placed with the Soviet Union for £200 million worth of barbed wire, electric fencing and 300 rabid dogs has caused further deep divisions within the Western Alliance.

President Reagan is reported to have told the British Ambassador:

"The broad's gone bananas. Why allow those Commie bastards to get their hands on our currency by buying their second grade security. Haven't we got enough of our own?"

But the Cabinet is likely to stand firm on its demand to buy the Berlin Wall assembly kit from Eastern Europe because of the difficulty of ensuring continuous supplies from British steel mills once they have been shut down.

The new strategy has been leaked from the Government's Think Tank proposals on election boundary reorganisations. Mrs Thatcher takes the view that the Royal Commission has not gone far enough in throwing about 25 extra seats the Tories' way.

After studying the long term MORI and NOP trends she became convinced that the key division in British politics is between North and South and that the Government should recognise the division.

Anywhere north of the 'blue rinse' line is to be declared a free enterprise zone mark 2. The wall will mark the boundary of the zones and the government's new immigration

laws will start to apply from the start of the new session.

To ensure the continuation of British democratic traditions the area north of the wall will be allowed to send five of its own representatives to Westminster — preferably right wing Labour MPs who will agree to join the Social Democrats in a new 'responsible opposition united front'.

The second Berlin Wall kit will be held in reserve to be erected at times of national emergency.

Plan

The NCB has already floated a plan for closing the Kent pits and offering the miners alternative jobs in Yorkshire, and it thought that the wall could be used until alternative camps were available to the miners and their families.

Mrs Thatcher has an ideological reason for wanting the wall in Britain as well as a practical one. She is known to believe that her most effective speeches have all been made standing next to monumental symbols of repression and has few opportunities to visit Berlin. With her own wall in Britain, Mrs Thatcher could visit it once a week and hurl abuse from the

ramparts at the forces of evil encamped outside.

Undesirables

The cornerstone will be the ability to keep political undesirables out of the range of the policy creators. A new Nationality Act will introduce a new tier of citizenship, whose boundaries will coincide with Mrs Thatcher's wall.

British women whose husbands come from beyond the wall will only be allowed to settle in the south if they can prove that their husband has complied with the regulations and completed ten years "separation from contamination" as long term unemployment is now being called.

The Think Tank has already recommended that the security forces on the fence (known as interzonal guides) should be privatised.

As Mrs Thatcher said to her Cabinet colleagues when she showed her holiday films in Cabinet. "One day all this will be yours."

**Patrick
Spilling**

Socialist Organiser Alliance

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Socialist Organiser is not just a paper. We fight to organise workers in the struggle for a new leadership in the labour movement.

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To 'Get Organised' in the fight, or for more information, write at once to us at 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Name

Address



International News International News International News

'Polish workers are impatient' Reagan cashes in on slaughter

THERE ARE a number of national papers that are not interested in publicising what is going on in Poland. They are concerned for — they would say international peace, but I would substitute the word 'trade' for 'peace'.

Recently I saw a very interesting book, 'Vodka Cola' [by Charles Levinson], about the connections between Western industrialists and the rulers in the Eastern bloc. That seems to be the only explanation.

For example — if you analyse the way the Western press, especially the English press, reported August 31, you'll find they said that it was inconclusive and that the demonstrations were not as big as Solidarity hoped for. Then a few days later, a Polish government spokesman said that demonstrations were held in 55 cities. There are only 49 big cities in Poland — so there had been demonstrations virtually everywhere. The Polish government said there were about 100,000 people participating in those demonstrations.

The press also plays down the repression. It's not just that they kill a few people on the street. We have very detailed information on torture being used on a massive scale in Poland, and indiscriminate use of substances like paralyzing gases. A number of people have been killed under interrogation in police stations and prisons.

We still don't understand why a large section of the British Left appears to think that bad things happen only in South America or South Africa. It's not to belittle the fight they have — they have an important fight, and we're all for that.

Horrible things happen in South Africa, and we know it. But also horrible things happen in Poland.

[There has been press speculation in Der Spiegel about bringing KGB units into Poland for November 10]. That's an absurd nonsense. The Polish secret service was trained from the very beginning by the KGB. There are officers who barely speak Polish. I know it well — I've been interrogated

Marek Garztecki of the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group spoke to Socialist Organiser

a number of times by Polish police. The KGB have been in for 37 years! I've seen them!

My mother was in prison for three years, and my father for five, and they were tortured, in the Stalinist period. They told me that the language they were interrogated in was Russian.

We don't know exactly what will happen on November 10. But certainly there will be massive protests. Every time Solidarity has called for a protest, there has been a protest.

The workers are getting more angry with every passing month. If you look at Solidarity communiques coming out of Poland, the emphasis has changed drastically. There is much less talk of national agreement, and more understanding that it will be very difficult now to sit at the same table as the people who are killing and torturing workers.

Probably this is being recognised on the government side as well. There are already some leaks from Poland that Jaruzelski might be replaced.

Everyone knows now that Jaruzelski is a murderer. His hands are blood-stained. You know that Poland is a Catholic country, and Christianity is a big influence, but I can't imagine my comrades are such good Christians that they will forgive him everything.

[Tadeusz Grabski, a 'hard liner' in the ruling party, has recently come out publicly against Jaruzelski, saying that the country is in chaos]. Grabski is a representative of the so-called hard line faction, the pro-Moscow faction. But this division between the conservative, or hard-line, wing, and the liberal wing, is artificial.

Grabski is a close friend of Olzowski, who is presented as an arch hard-liner in the Western press. But the same Olzowski who challenged Kania and Jaruzelski from a hard-line position, also previously challenged Gierk from a liberal position and made overtures to the opposition. So these challenges are artificial — the divisions are just one more sign that Jaruzelski is a failure.

[About the strikes on the banning of Solidarnosc:] Just one day before the strike broke in Gdansk, the regional committee of Solidarity issued an appeal saying: "At present, we consider it too early to start a general strike. The time is not yet right..."

The fact that the workers started the strike shows that they are very impatient. They've had enough and they're ready for very drastic action. But on the other hand — and I wouldn't like to say it as a criticism — the strikes might also show that there are still problems with coordination and organisation.

On Wednesday November 10, the underground Solidarnosc leadership has called for an eight hour protest strike.

And the International Transport Workers' Federation has called for sympathy action on the same day, such as blacking of Polish trade and ships.

Unfortunately the ITWF 'call' seems to have got no further than putting out a press release. But activists in unions like the TGWU, affiliated to the ITWF, can use the call to help organise support for practical action.

UPON the mangled bodies and shattered ruins created by Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the Reagan administration is attempting with barely disguised glee to construct a new, reactionary 'peace' in the Middle East at the expense of the Palestinian and Arab masses.

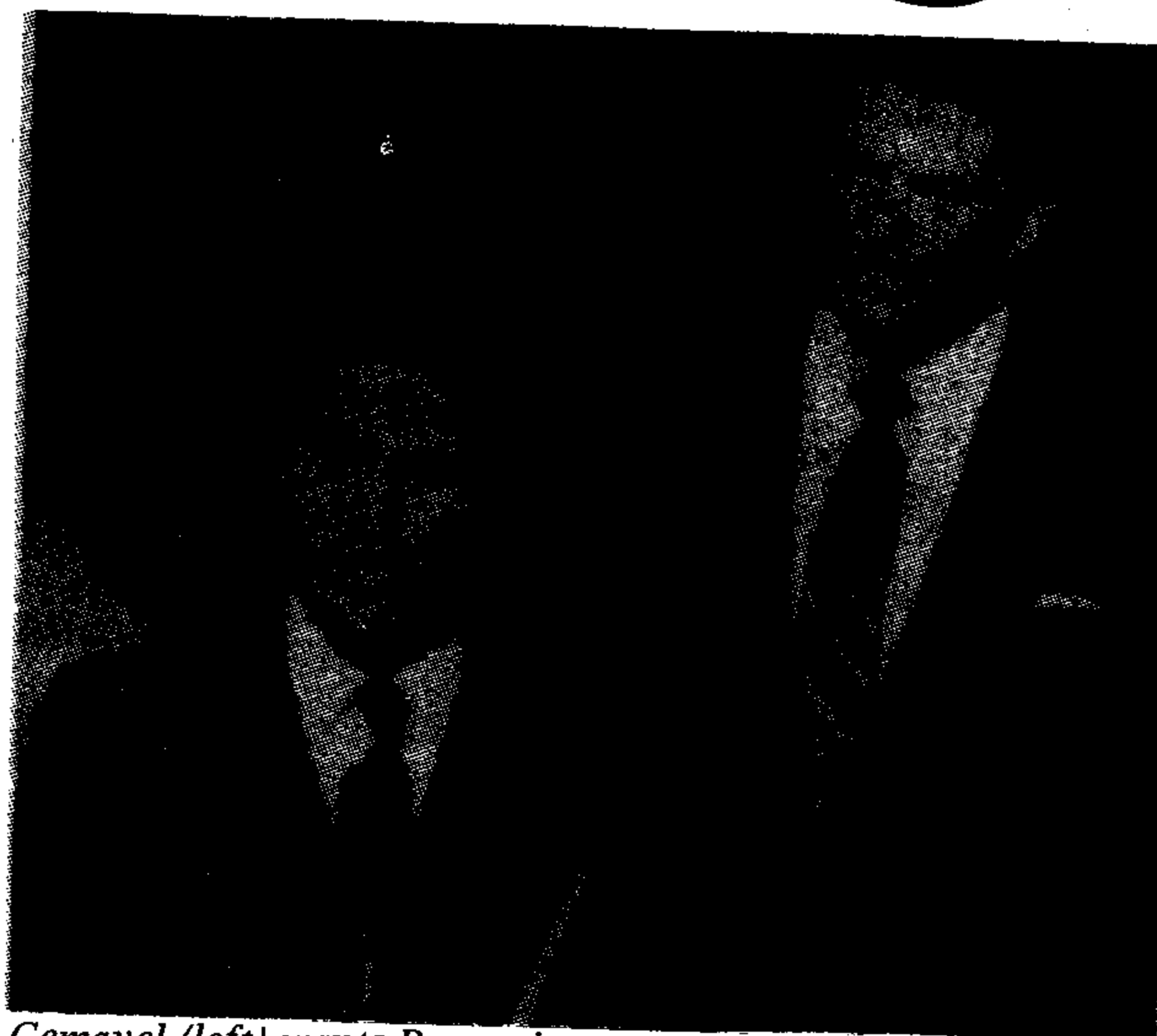
The US warmongers believe that the heavy military defeats inflicted by the Israelis upon the PLO, the Lebanese left militias and the Syrian forces outside Lebanon, now create favourable conditions to force humiliating concessions from the conservative leaders of the Arab regimes.

With brazen arrogance, one State Department official has summed up the administration's attitude to the new balance of forces in the Middle East:

"We believe the time has come to stop talking about talking about peace and start sitting down at the table, negotiating directly between Israelis and Arabs and the United States" [Newsweek, 1.11.82].

It is clear from the outset that each of these three components of Reagan's proposed peace talks have different immediate objectives and material interests — and that in the present phase of developments the most decisive of the three is the USA.

It was hand in glove with US strategists that Israel's Zionist rulers embarked upon their bloody invasion of Lebanon with the combined objective of inflicting a blow on the



Gemayel (left) wants Reagan's troops to stay

PLO, smashing its armed alliance with the Lebanese left, and thus opening the way to a stable right wing regime and the reconstruction of the armed forces in Lebanon.

Reagan's men are delighted at the way Gemayel has turned towards the US and at his skillfully judged displays of apparent independence from Israel, which should endear him to Arab rulers, and secure their financial support.

But even his displays of 'independence' fit in neatly with the US objective of restoring a strong state apparatus in Lebanon. Gemayel has called for the withdrawal of Israeli as well as Syrian and PLO troops from Lebanon — but has combined this with an appeal for a long-term presence of a vast multi-national 'peace-keeping' force

of upwards of 30,000 troops.

His visit to Washington brought detailed discussion on a rapid build-up of American arms supplies, and a possible expansion of the present 1,200-strong US contingent in the multinational force in Beirut.

The idea of a large-scale build-up would be to enable the force to carry out operations elsewhere in Lebanon. Already in Beirut French troops have assisted the Lebanese army in massive raids and arrests on Palestinians and Lebanese left-wingers — while of course mounting no attack on the Phalangist right wing.

This is the kind of 'peace' that Gemayel and his US sponsors want to see in Lebanon. And to get it, they are prepared to talk of US and other troops re-

maining stationed in the country for two years or more.

There is no real contradiction between such plans and also discussing formulae for withdrawal of Israeli, Syrian and PLO forces from Lebanon.

The Zionists themselves have put forward a three-stage plan which begins with evacuation of the 8,000 PLO guerillas still in the country (including many evacuated from Beirut who have re-entered in the North or in the Bekaa Valley), and envisages a two step withdrawal of Syrian and Israeli forces.

In exchange they want a guarantee of security of the border with Israel and permanent exclusion of Syrian troops and PLO guerrillas.

The Zionists look first and foremost to the reconstruction of the Lebanese armed forces and state machine as the means to achieve this objective.

But this same immediate objective is also tacitly supported by the right-wing Arab regimes, who saw the powerful fighting alliance between the PLO and the Lebanese left as a greater threat to their political stability than the Phalangist right wing.

The wealthy Saudi and Kuwaiti and other Arab League regimes financially sponsored the 30,000-strong Syrian presence as a move to control this situation in Lebanon.

They can now be expected to channel hefty sums with the begging bowl extended by Gemayel for the reconstruction of the Lebanese army and economy.

Anti-Apartheid clings to sectarian stance

by Bob Fine

THE fight to make the Anti-Apartheid Movement withdraw its official opposition to direct links between unions in this country and independent, non-racial trade unions inside South Africa continued at this year's AGM.

The Socialist Forum for Southern African Solidarity (SOFAS), a broad grouping of socialists including Socialist Organiser supporters, put a resolution calling for the AAM "to use its influence and contacts in the British trade union movement... to support, strengthen and extend those links between British and South African unions which are organised in conjunction with the independent, non-racial trade unions in South Africa."

A further resolution was put by the CPSA calling for the AAM to "promote exchange visits at all levels of the Labour movement based on the concrete need of South African workers, and to assist in the formation of international trade union combine committees in those companies which invest in South Africa."

Until now the attitude of

the AAM, reflecting that of the ANC and its trade union wing, SACTU, has been unreservedly hostile to these proposals. They have employed a long list of generally bad arguments to sustain their opposition to this elementary form of international working class solidarity.

Cast

Why has there been this irrational hostility? Mainly because the non-racial trade union movement among black workers, the strongest force for change in South Africa, has grown up independently not only of the apartheid state but also of the ANC, the South African CP and SACTU. They fear that their own leadership cannot control the escalating struggle in South Africa, a fear, in brief, that they cannot keep black workers in their place as a supporting cast for a struggle directed by themselves.

Their opposition to direct union-to-union links is one example of a generally sectarian stance toward what has in fact been the most exciting development in the South African struggle for years — the tremendous growth of non-racial union-

ism. That is why they pretend that SACTU, based mainly in exile, with no affiliated organisations in South Africa, represents the entire black working class, while they generally ignore the views of the unions which actually have organised tens of thousands of black workers.

Well, what happened this year? The AAM executive amended the CPSA resolution to cut out any reference to direct union-to-union contact, meanwhile they amended the SOFAS resolution, seemingly in a 'friendly' way, adding the condition that "such solidarity is pursued within the context of the policies of the AAM for the isolation of the apartheid regime and in support of the national liberation struggle."

We of course accepted this amendment. So on the one hand they opposed direct links with their customary ferocity, and on the other hand they supported them with vaguely worded conditions attached. No one knows what the AAM position now is, but it is clear both that they have conceded some ground to the demands of the trade union movement inside

South Africa and that the AAM apparatus will continue to try to block links.

We must try and turn this shift into a foundation for an entirely new approach to solidarity work.

There was a resolution from the local AA branch at York complaining about the ineffectiveness of solidarity action taken by AAM in support of striking black workers at Rowntree in South Africa. Against the express wishes of Rowntree supporting meetings organised by the AAM, and against the wishes of the local Rowntree unions, the campaign had been based on the "Think Before You Eat" boycott slogan.

A Socialist Organiser supporter pointed out that Jim Tolton, a shop steward from Rowntree in Leicester, who has been active in support of solidarity with black workers in South Africa, had been fired.

She called on the AAM to send a message of support to Jim, a message of protest to the management, and to use their influence within the AUEW to insure that a vigorous campaign is pursued for Jim's reinstatement. We must see to it that Jim is not left in the lurch.

New Turkish trials

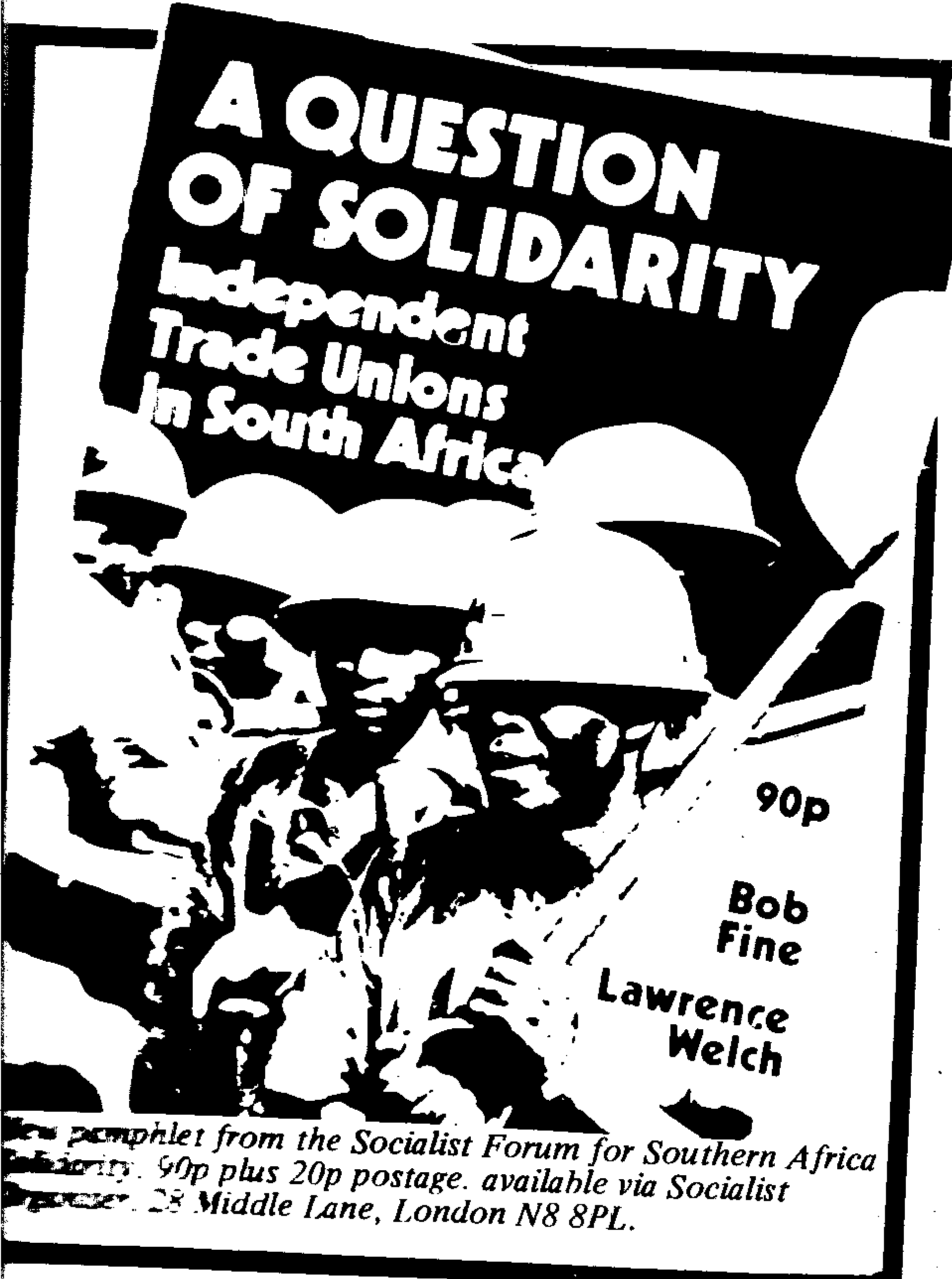
ON OCTOBER 6, the Second Military Court of martial law in Istanbul ordered the arrest of 18 trade unionists and senior members of democratic associations; and so far death penalties have been demanded against ten of them.

Moreover, the military prosecutor, who has let the trial of 52 DISK trade union leaders drag on since December 1981, has decided to turn into a mammoth trial, by including each of the 29 federations which are affiliated to DISK.

This means that the '18' are to be brought to trial together with the '52'.

Consequently, the number under threat of a death penalty has risen to 62.

In the same press release as announces the order to arrest the 18, the DISK office in exile states that: "With regard to the banning of the Solidarity trade union in Poland, DISK asserts its firm adherence to the principles of free trade unionism, as stated by the International Labour Organisation".



new pamphlet from the Socialist Forum for Southern Africa 90p plus 20p postage. available via Socialist 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

International News International News International News

CIA OPERATION EXPOSED

IN A chill warning to anyone who might underestimate the determination of the Reagan administration to roll back revolutionary struggles in Central America, Newsweek magazine has uncovered a major CIA operation aimed against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

A major expose published this week points to the build-up of CIA forces in Honduras and their links with former members of the notorious National Guard of deposed Nicaraguan dictator Somoza.

The operation is supervised by US ambassador to Honduras, John D. Negroponte, infamous for his activities in Vietnam, and selected for his utterly unscrupulous dealings with torturers and butchers.

Also involved are top figures in the Honduran military apparatus, and a squad of 20 'advisers' sent by the Argentine military junta, who (contrary to reports during the Falklands war) have continued their activities without interruption.

The Newsweek report is plainly published now in order to 'blow the whistle' on what it judges to be a dangerous and potentially embarrassing adventure.

It alleges that a mixed force, comprising Miskito Indians, miscellaneous reactionary forces inside Nicaragua itself, and gangs of Somocistas financed from Miami, is being pieced together by Argentine and CIA instructors in ten bases.

Apparently the operation began under the guise of intercepting supplies of arms from Cuba and Nicar-

Plans by the US against Nicaragua, paralleling the Bay of Pigs operation against Cuba in 1961, have recently been exposed. Harry Sloan reports.

agua to the guerilla fighters of El Salvador, but it has since escalated to a whole-sale perspective of sabotage and hit-and-run strikers against Nicaraguan targets, with hopes of toppling the Sandinistas and establishing a right wing government.

They leave no room for doubt as to the politics of such a regime. One CIA protegee is quoted as saying:

"Come the counter-revolution, there will be a massacre in Nicaragua. We have a lot of scores to settle. There will be bodies from the



Negroponte... infamous

border to Managua [the capital]".

Somoza's National Guard had long been a byword for bestial terror until they were routed by the Sandinistas in 1979. And despite talk of restoring 'democracy' in Nicaragua, the CIA operation has made no links with the more 'moderate' counter-revolutionary current involving renegade Sandinista Eden Pastora and former coalition junta member Alfonso Robelo - relying instead solely upon the blood-lust of the Somocistas.

Pigs

It is partly this - bringing the danger that the counter-revolution will be as isolated and fall as flat as the CIA's catastrophic 'Bay of Pigs' adventure against Cuba in 1961 (see pp.10-11) - which alarms Newsweek. But the authors also warn that the operation could unleash unexpected problems in Honduras itself, where at present a delicate facade of a civilian presidency conceals the brute reality of military rule.

But American efforts to destabilise the Sandinistas by military and economic means appear to be well advanced. The US-owned fruit monopoly, Standard Fruit, whose banana operation was one of the biggest employers in Nicaragua, has announced that it is to withdraw from the country. The economy remains firmly on the rocks, with the Reagan administration losing no chance to increase the level of disarray.

Which makes it even more laughable for the anti-

communist Newsweek to warn that another outcome of the CIA adventure is that: "The Sandinistas have used the attacks as an excuse to spend an estimated \$125 million on defence this year".

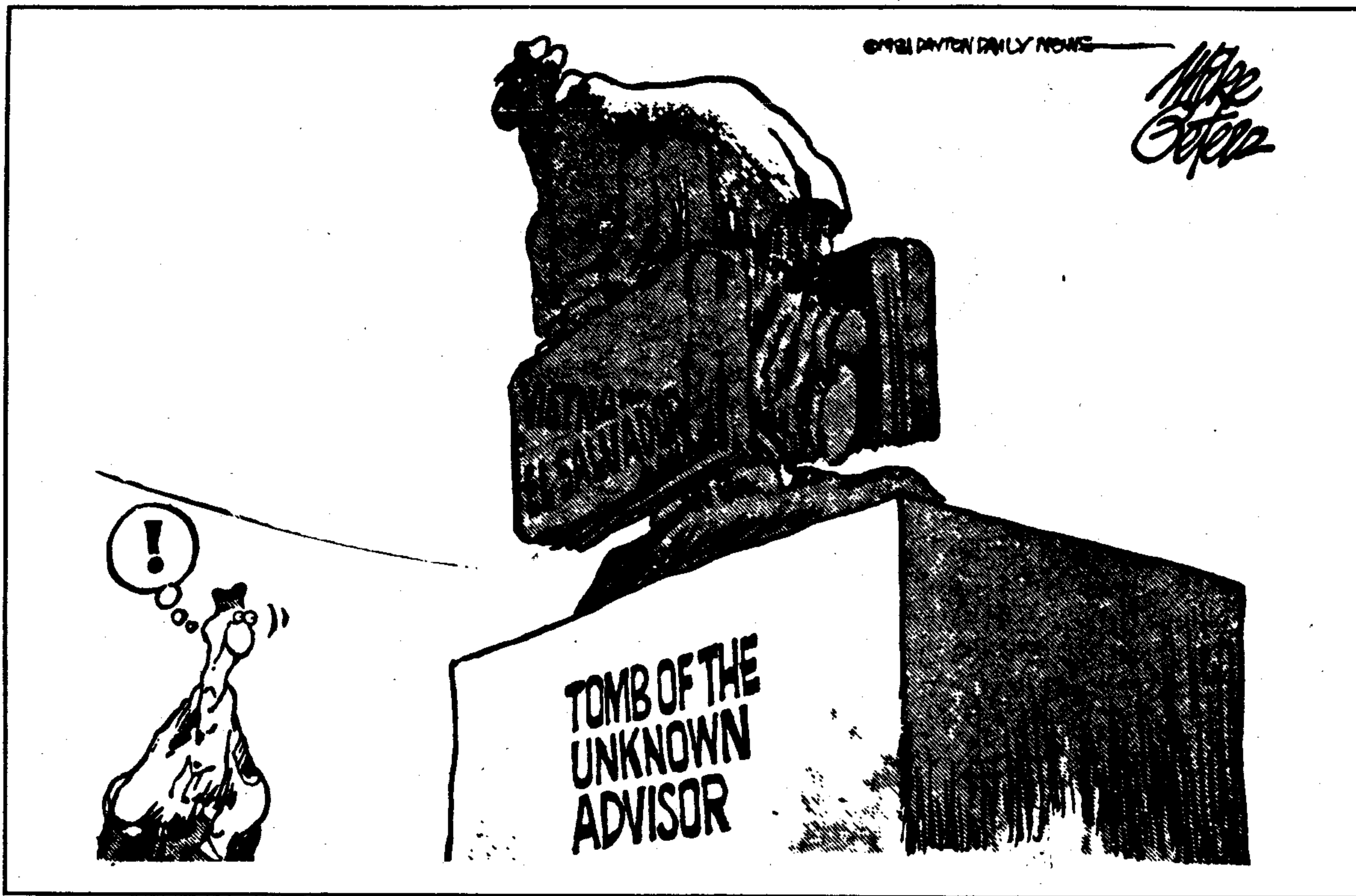
The Sandinistas want no such excuse - and can plainly ill afford such money.

Jointly

But with full-scale military manoeuvres, involving the US army, navy, and air force, jointly with the Hond-

uran armed forces, scheduled for the Nicaraguan border areas in December, there is no question that the threat they face is a real and growing one.

The best defence against such attacks is both the arming of the Nicaraguan workers and peasants in local-based defence squads, and the arming of other forces in struggle against imperialist-backed regimes in Central America.



O'Leary quits

THE instability of the Fianna Fail government in the 26 Counties, which depends on the parliamentary votes of the so-called Workers' Party to stay in office, has inevitably kept politics in the Republic at the simmering point.

For the Labour Party the prospect of an election 'any

time now' poses sharply the questions that has dominated the Party's life for the last dozen years: coalition.

The alternative to Fianna Fail is a coalition of the Labour Party and Fine Gael, a conservative party with a thin veneer of liberalism.

Labour has formed coalitions with Fine Gael three times since 1973. But the Labour Party rank and file has time and time again challenged coalition, at a cost of successive purges.

The abortive coalition formed between Labour and Fine Gael last year opted for a savagely monetarist and anti working class approach to the chronic problems of the Irish economy, and was brought down because of it. A mood developed in the Labour Party rank and file, and the affiliated trade unions, questioning the whole philosophy of coalition.

Renegade

At the Labour Party conference last week, the Party leader, Michael O'Leary, a renegade leftist and many times a minister, was repudiated when he asked for support for a new coalition. A 'compromise' was carried to put the motion to the Party if and when it becomes an option.

One unqualifiedly good result is that O'Leary has resigned as leader and left the party, perhaps to join Fine Gael. However, the Parliamentarians will certainly try to manoeuvre the party into a coalition. Dick Spring, elected by the Labour TDs (MPs) to replace O'Leary as leader, is an open supporter of coalition.

Frank Higgins



Up against imperial laws

David Norris of the National Gay Federation in Southern Ireland spoke to Will Adams

Fighting for

GAY'S

RIGHTS

What is the current legal position for lesbians and gay men in Ireland?

Lesbians aren't specifically covered by the law, as in England, except on the question of custody of children for lesbian mothers. There have been a number of cases of discrimination on this.

For gay men we have the position as in England before 1967 (when laws were passed legalising male gay sex under very restricted conditions). The 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, which made buggery illegal, and the 1885 Labouchere Amendment to it, which extended the Act to cover acts of gross indecency (which in practice means any male gay sex), still apply in full to the Free State. These laws were passed by an imperial parliament and have never been discussed by the Free State parliament except one time when Noel Browne put down a question at our prompting.

Under De Valera's 1937 Constitution of the Free State all imperial laws, i.e. laws passed while England controlled Ireland, remain in force except where they conflict with the provisions of the constitution. We argue that this law conflicts with sections 40 and 41 which cover human rights, right to privacy, right to equal treatment, etc.

We're currently taking this up through the Supreme Court. If we lose there we'll go to the European Court of Human Rights. In view of Jeff Dudgeon's case (Jeff Dudgeon is a gay man from the North of Ireland who took the British government to the European Court of Human Rights and won his case which has forced the British government to change the law on homosexuality for the North of Ireland) we feel we have a good chance of winning in Strasbourg.

What is it like to be gay in Ireland?

This depends very much on class and economic position. For professional people with secure jobs it is quite easy to be openly gay. For workers in places such as public transport coming out at work is very difficult. Some of our members have come out at work - this is very important for changing the attitude of their workmates.

I fought in my union - the Irish Federation of University Teachers - to put a motion to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions committing all affiliated unions to defending gay workers. The motion was passed in July this year. I found the blue collar unions generally took a better stance than the white collar

unions.

This is the first time any such motion has been passed. Next year we hope to build on this motion by putting a motion committing the Education Officer to prepare a programme of education on the problems of gay workers.

So far this year there have been four anti-gay murders of gay people in Dublin and Cork. Some of the parks in Dublin which used to be used for cruising are now very dangerous for gay men to enter at night. Gangs of young men will lure gay men into the bushes, beat them up and rob them.

I see two main reasons for the rising incidence of attacks on gay people. One is the recession. For young unemployed people robbing gay men is a fairly easy source of income. The other is the ideology of the Catholic Church. The Church argues that homosexuality is a grave sin. This provides some excuse for gay bashing.

The medical profession generally takes a conservative attitude on homosexuality. Homosexuality is still classified as an illness. There have been cases of gay people being treated for their 'illness'.

There is a small but growing commercial gay scene, mainly in Dublin. These have no political

commitment to fighting for gay rights.

What are the activities of the National Gay Federation?

We take legal action - both trying to change the law and taking up cases of individuals.

We run a counselling service, offering sympathetic advice to gay people.

We campaign through political parties, trade unions and the media for better treatment for gay people.

We also have a social side. We run discos at our centre every night. These provide a safe place for gay people to socialise. It also means that, unlike the commercial gay scene, the revenue from gay people's recreation goes into the fight for gay rights. We also show gay films.

What is the involvement of lesbians in the NGF?

Thursday evenings at the centre are women only. This means that the disco and counselling service that evening are run by and for lesbians. Of the 18 members on the Executive Council of the NGF, three are women. I estimate about 10% of our members are women.

There is also a separate lesbian campaign, Liberation for Irish Lesbians, which we work with.

Needed: power in the Party!

Rose Chapman reports

It called for united action to reverse the cuts and secure a decent wage for Health Service workers.

Both composites were carried.

Next year's conference will, I think, be much

changed from this year's, with the newly elected Standing Orders Committee making some much needed changes in the structure of the conference.

THIS year's Greater London Labour Women's Conference took place on Saturday 30 October at the University of London Union.

The conference seemed much better than last year's. It had a Standing Orders Committee, albeit unelected, who had written standing orders and organised a good agenda.

However, many things haven't changed. The Greater London Labour Women's Committee still replies to every debate just before the vote.

Things have improved slightly in that the proposer now has the right of reply. However only one person exercised this right, so all but one of the debates ended with the last word coming from the committee.

The real frustration of this conference and other Labour Women's Conferences, is that the motions passed have little chance of getting anywhere.

They may be discussed and referred to some other committee, next year, or not at all. There are too few

women holding important posts in the Labour Party to fight for any of the demands made by women. And it was clear from the Annual Conference that men are not only not prepared to fight for greater representation of women in the Party, but are quite prepared to fight to oppose it.

It is all right to pass token motions on abortion and child care, but they don't want to encourage women to take an active part in decision making.

This frustration was reflected in the number of motions and amendments in the organisation debate.

It was also the subject of the Women's Fightback fringe meeting at lunchtime.

Both the debate and the fringe meeting held an important message. If we want to see our most basic demands adopted as party policy and truly fought for, we must gain more power within the party itself.

This was the longest and most heated debate of the day, with several Militant supporters speaking against

all or some of the motions for positive discrimination but in the end all the resolutions were carried.

There were two important composite motions on social provisions and the National Health Service.

The first covered two areas. It called on the Parliamentary Labour Party to introduce legislation to change the way in which pay, tax, social security and pensions are awarded, where women are often defined as dependents.

The second part called for action specifically on the issue of unemployment benefit and a woman's right to work. Most importantly it proposed that a leaflet be produced publicising the discriminatory aspects of the Rayner report, and that this be sent out to Labour Party Women's Sections who should undertake to distribute it in benefit offices and centres for the unemployed.

The National Health Service composite condemned the vicious policies being pursued by the Tory government against the NHS.



The 200 Asian workers, mainly women, on strike for union recognition at Randi's quilt factory in Smethwick, have been receiving help with picketing from local Labour Party members.

Some of the Labour Party members, stewards at BL, have been helping the strikers organising the pickets.

Representatives of the strikers spoke to a TGWU Broad Left meeting in Birmingham last Saturday, and made contact with TGWU members from the Sandhar and Kang cash and carry warehouse, who are also on strike.

Unfortunately the TGWU has not offered much official support yet. Even though the strike is official, the strikers have yet to receive any money or supporting action from their union.

Despite the support from Labour Party members, a Labour councillor, Satnam Singh Moham, has put out a joint statement with several Indian employers, supporting the factory owners.

But the strikers remain determined to stand firm.

NOW - or never?

THE BLIND alley of a women's movement that fails to break from the political parties of big business and turn towards the labour movement is vividly illustrated by the recent conference of the American National Organisation of Women (NOW).

The conference, at the beginning of October, attracted over 3,000 delegates and observers: but the outcome of three days of discussions was the re-election of a right wing leadership and a commitment to raise \$3 million to support campaigns for the election of Democratic Party candidates.

A mere handful of trade unionists and little over one per cent of black and Latin women participated in the conference, whose platform was dominated by well-heeled business and professional

women.

The line put by outgoing president Eleanor Smeal and her successor Judith Goldsmith was that the only way to defeat the attacks on women's rights unleashed by Reagan and the right wing was through electing 'progressive' capitalist politicians.

In accordance with this, the platform sought and secured a mandate to engage in 'realistic' wheeling and dealing with candidates who may not even agree with NOW policies, and fought off most attempts to commit the NOW to any form of active struggle.

Their political hostility to the American workers' movement was demonstrated by the fact there was not even a featured Democrat trade union speaker, and

little reference to work in the unions.

And the platform struggled with considerable success to avoid any commitment to mobilise in solidarity with black and racial minority women.

Support for an anti Ku Klux Klan demonstration was voted down, and only against the vehement opposition of the leadership was a resolution carried which instructed them to establish their first full-time administrative post for a racial minority member.

And a resolution calling for a demonstration against the attack on abortion rights was manoeuvred out by the moving of an anodyne substitute which set its sights on the 1984 elections.

The conference as a whole ably demonstrated

that, as one delegate pointed out:

"We are suffering blows because the Democratic and Republican parties are opposed to our rights. As long as we give money to candidates running in those parties, we are just spending money to defeat ourselves".

That certainly sums up the political content of a bourgeois women's movement such as NOW.

The struggle for women's rights, a struggle against the divisive and oppressive 'norms' and values upheld and reinforced by the capitalist class and its state apparatus, can succeed only as a struggle which bases itself on the forces opposed to capitalism - the working class and the labour movement.

(Information from The Militant, paper of the US SWP).

Defend Pow Yean

POW YEAN came to England in 1979 to look after her ailing parents in Leeds. She has lived here since then, and her parents still need her help, due to inadequate state provision.

In April, her sister Pow Shien Leong won her fight to allow her son, Chun Hee, to live with her in England. Now the Home Office have decided to retaliate and deport Pow Yean.

Nowhere

Pow Yean has nowhere to return to in Malaysia. She was adopted as a baby

and does not know who her natural parents are. She did not even know she was adopted till the Home Office told her.

The Home Office case is that she is not the legally adopted daughter. They also say they are not satisfied that she meets the requirements for permanent residence in this country.

Pow Yean has appealed against the decision and this will provide the time for us to build up her defence campaign.

• Pow Yean Leong Defence Committee, Box L, 59 Cookbridge St, Leeds 2.

November
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1 7 14 21 28
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WHAT'S ON

Paid ads 5p per word, £4 per column inch. Send to Socialist Organiser (What's On), 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

HARINGEY Socialist Organiser: fortnightly meetings at Brabant Rd trade union centre. For details phone 802 0771 or 348 5941.

OXFORD Socialist Organiser meetings, Thursdays at 8pm, 44b Princes Street.

4 November: The BL Pay Claim.
18 November: Polish workers fight for Solidarnosc.

NOTTINGHAM Socialist Organiser meets every Friday 7.30pm at the International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd.

NORTH-WEST London Socialist Organiser group discussion meetings, every other Sunday, 8pm (for venue, see SO sellers).

Southwark and Lambeth Socialist Organiser Group. Open Forum - Women's Fightback and the fight against women's oppression. Speaker: Jo Thwaites, Women's Fightback editorial board. Thursday 11 November at 8.30pm, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5.

SOUTH EAST London Socialist Organiser forums, every other Thursday, 8pm at the Queen Victoria, Artillery Place, Woolwich.

STOKE Socialist Organiser meeting: Dave Spencer on 'What Socialist Organiser is, and why we are fighting the witch-hunt'. Sunday November 14, 7.30, The Swan, Swan Square, Burslem.

ISLINGTON Socialist Organiser, meets alternate Sundays

3pm at Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd. Next meeting November 14. Details: Nik, 607 5268.

GAYS in Education conference: 'Homosexuality in the curriculum'. Saturday and Sunday November 13-14 1982, 11am to 5.30, Health Education Centre, 304 Westbourne Grove, London W11. £2 waged, £1 unwaged. Further info: 112 Broxholm Rd, London SE27.

GREENWICH Socialist Teachers' Group public meeting: 'Gay rights in teaching'. Speakers: Deirdre Wood, John McKay. 8pm, Thursday November 11, Royal Oak, Woolwich New Road, London SE18.

WAGELESS WOMEN If you are a woman without an independent income then you are welcome on Wageless Women's Day, 10am - 10pm, 12 November, Co-op Hall, Seven Sisters Road. Films, Music, Kids' things, Theatre, Food, Drink, Discussion.

SUPPORT the healthworkers - rally called by Kings Cross no.1 NUR, Monday November 8, 10am, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road.

Speakers: Rodney Bickerstaffe, Jim Stevenson, Charlie Turnock, Arthur Scargill, Ray Buckton, Tony Benn (invited).

SUPPORT POLISH Workers: Leicester Trades Council meeting, Wednesday November 10, 7.30 at the 'Princess Charlotte'. Speaker from Solidarity TU Working Group.

HARINGEY Labour Party Young Socialists public meeting: Solidarity with the people of Central America. Monday November 15, 7.30 at Brabant Road TU and Community Centre.

SOCIALIST Students in NOLS meeting: Saturday November 13, 11am to 5.30, ULU, Malet St, London. Details from Jane Ashworth, 41 Ellington St, London N7.

ANTI-APARTHEID Trade Unionists' conference. Saturday November 27, details from AAM, 89 Charlotte St, London WC1.

FROM WAR in the Third World to World War 3? Dayschool, Saturday December 11, 11am, at Hargrave Hall, Hargrave Road, London N19, sponsored by CND, EISSOC, CAAT.

REPRESSION in Northern Ireland: day school organised by Glasgow Labour Committee on Ireland, Saturday November 13, 10.30am to 5pm, Queen Margaret Union Building, Glasgow University. Speakers - Dennis Canavan MP, Vince Mills, Derry TC member - plus workshops. Admission £1, 50p unwaged.

LONDON Workers' Socialist League educationals on basic Marxism. Next one: 'Imperialism'. Friday November 12, 7.30pm. For details of venue write to WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

DISCUSS the 'degenerated revolution'. A day of debate and discussion about the new book from Workers' Power/Irish Workers' Group. Debates on: Is Russia a Workers' State? The Cuban Revolution and Castroism. The Theory of Structural Assimilation. Saturday November 13, 11am to 7pm, Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Tickets £1 waged, 50p unwaged.

SPARTACIST Truth Kit - a 68-page analysis by John Lister, published by the Workers' Socialist League. £1 plus 25p postage from WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

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NHS PAY SHEFFIELD MEETING OFFERS LEAD

It was the first national meeting of NHS shop stewards since the dispute started seven months ago.

The TUC Health Services Committee did not call the meeting. In fact, they even refused an invitation to attend, and local union officials went out of their way to discourage stewards from attending.

The Sheffield and Leicester stewards' committees had to take the initiative themselves.

Despite the difficulties of contacting stewards throughout the country, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, Derry, Cardiff, Oxford, Leicester, Sheffield, Coventry, Plymouth, Wolverhampton, London, and Manchester were all represented.

Discussion centred round how to make the call for all-out action a reality. A few of the stewards present seemed to have all but given up — but only a few.

Several resolutions were passed [see inset] on campaigning for a 'yes' vote, on November 8, on coordinating local NHS committees, and on establishing joint action committees of NHS and other workers.

Rejected

Another resolution, from the Leicester and Nether Edge stewards' committees, was rejected by the conference. Some of its proposals were contained in other resolutions, but its central point, that an all-out indefinite strike should take place from November 8, was considered by a substantial majority to be unrealistic.

Those favouring the resolution said that we couldn't wait for individual union consultation, because the dispute would lose momentum. Areas where it was possible should take decisions at mass meetings to start on November 8, and fight to involve the rest.

Speakers supporting the Northern Ireland resolution (see inset) argued that because areas which have previously attempted all-out

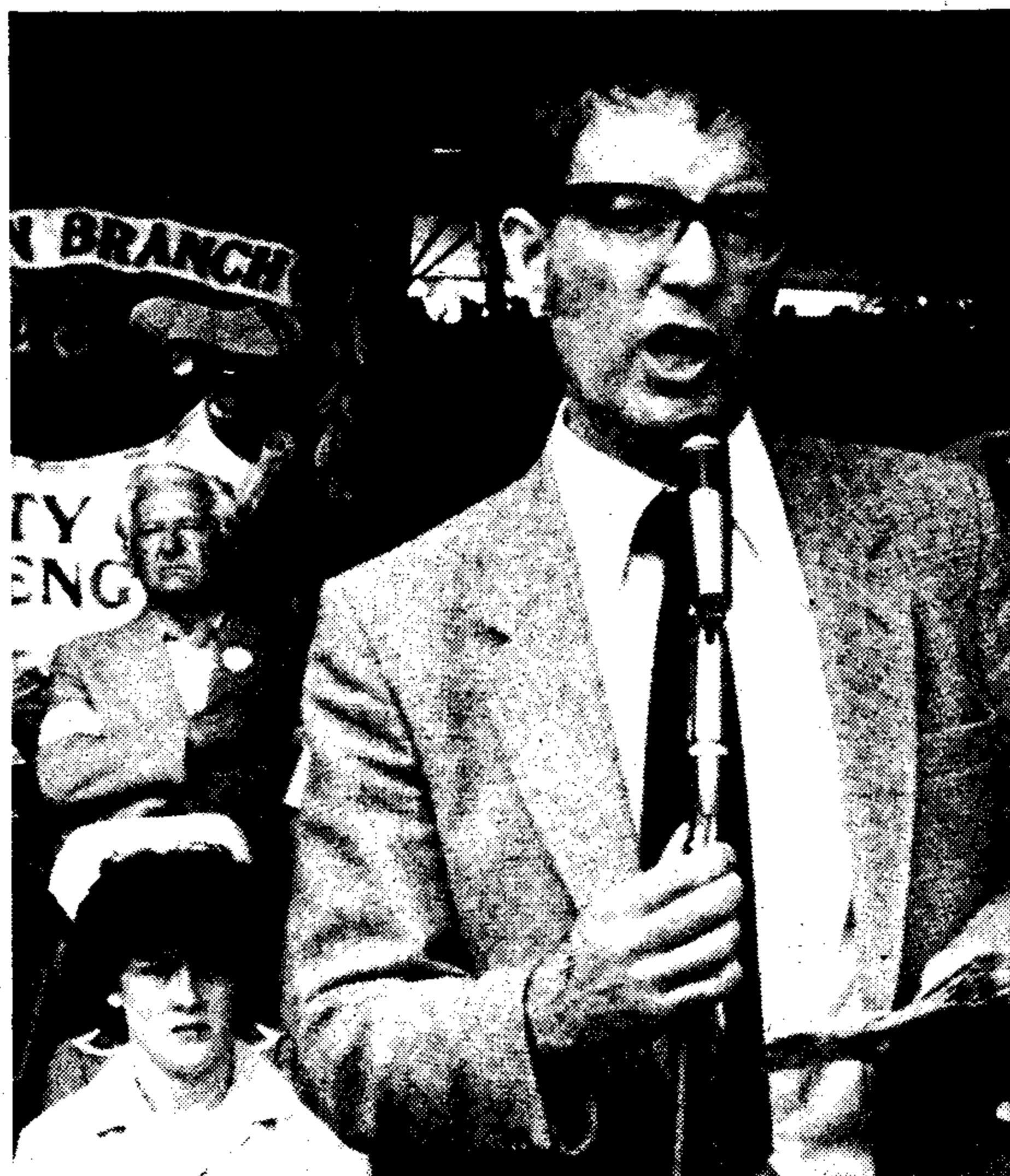
Jane Rees reports on the national meeting of 150 NHS stewards in Sheffield on October 30

strikes have been defeated by isolation, a successful all-out action must be national. After seven months of the dispute we need an active and intensive campaign to convince the membership that it is possible to win.

Some CoHSE members argued that although a lengthy consultation was disastrous, many CoHSE militants had fought for democracy in the union and now wanted an emergency recall conference. A demand for completion of the consultation by the end of November, together with a January start to all-out action, would make possible a successful campaign to get members from all the unions out.

It is significant that no-one proposing a November 8 start was able to point to even one area (let alone their own) where willingness to strike indefinitely from that day had been indicated.

Socialist Organiser supporters argued for the Northern Ireland resolution, and against that from Leicester and Nether Edge. Our assessment was that at this stage of the dispute a patchy indefinite strike would lead to a crushing



The meeting called on Bickerstaffe and NUPE leaders to campaign for all-out strike in the same style that Scargill did in the coalfields defeat.

The tactics in the Northern Ireland resolution allow us to build on the strengths so far, create the conditions for the widest possible all-out action, and give the minimum leeway to those in the bureaucracy who want to end the dispute in a confused, protracted, piecemeal collapse, and huge demoralisation.

The conference was also addressed by a representative of the Yorkshire area executive of the NUM. Although NUM members nationally had voted against action on their own claim, he stressed to us that the miners were still ready to fight on our behalf. What we must salvage at all costs in this dispute was the trade union organisation and consciousness built up during it.

We heard from Northern Ireland, where stewards are strongly organised in local committees and meet on a regional basis.

The struggle of the health workers has become an inspiration to all workers in Northern Ireland. On September 22 in Belfast, a mass demonstration was joined, uniquely, by both Falls and Shankill Road taxis. In Derry, one sixth of the population attended a demonstration which crossed the bridge that divides the Protestant and Catholic sectors.

Unfortunately the rest of the morning was a very sterile, abstract debate. Rather than bringing reports from their areas and drawing conclusions on the basis of experience, speakers indulged themselves in party political broadcasts.

Some argued 'build the links, ignore the bureaucracy'; others, that an all-out strike couldn't win, a general strike couldn't win, and that it was a political struggle to change the government (counterposed to any action on the pay dispute).

A national steering committee was formed, with delegates from each area. If this is built up it could become a pole of attraction for NHS stewards which the TUC will be unable simply to ignore.

In view of the weak call made by the unions for November 8, the Sheffield conference called for local committees to take it upon themselves to get the members out and organise flying pickets on the day.

A motion from the Coventry health service action committee put forward a model resolution for stewards to take back to their individual unions to establish a national structure, from local joint stewards' organisations to national negotiating bodies.

The model resolution is to call on the TUC, regional TUCs, and regional committees and NECs of the NHS unions to:

- * maintain and develop the role of the local NHS coordinating committees,

- * through these committees, develop full joint shop stewards' committees with the right to negotiate at local level,

- * develop regional committees composed of democratically elected representatives of JSSCs, serviced by full-time officers of health unions,

- * establish a TUC health union negotiating committee responsible to a national committee of representatives elected from the regional joint committees for both negotiations and the conduct of industrial disputes.

Leicester and Nether Edge (Sheffield) committees proposed a motion calling for 'the establishment in each area of delegate committees

of health workers strike committees and representatives of workers taking solidarity action, in order to coordinate solidarity action and the struggle to defeat the Tory [anti-union] laws [which make such action illegal]".

Sympathy action

"This meeting recognises that an indefinite strike in the health service (with accident and emergency cover) must be linked to widespread and prolonged sympathy action outside the NHS. It therefore calls on the TUC Health Service Committee to request the General Council to involve the other unions in sympathy strike action in the event of an indefinite strike in the NHS".

— Organising Committee

"This meeting urges the TUC Health Service Committee to refuse all future offers, however favourable, if they are funded in part from current expenditure [i.e. paid for by cuts]".

— Organising Committee

"This conference congratulates the initiative shown by the Sheffield and Leicester health service shop stewards committees in convening a national conference of the health service shop stewards.

We recognise the tremendous determination of health workers to force this Tory government to concede the 12% pay claim. Regrettably,

the leadership of the TUC Health Service Committee has been found wanting, and has consistently failed to match the resolve of their membership to win this dispute.

Nonetheless, even at this late stage the dispute can still be won. A campaign amongst the membership of those unions not already committed to an all-out strike must be launched from and by this conference. We must convince members of NALGO, CoHSE, etc to vote yes for an all out strike.

The consultation of these members must be organised efficiently and quickly. There is no reason why the results cannot be known by the end of November.

As the consultation is drawing to a close, the TUC must convene a similar conference of all health service local coordinating committees and joint shop stewards committees. If the TUC fail to do this, this conference agrees to reconvene and discuss the future strategy.

If the ballots favour an all-out strike, a deadline early in January should be fixed for the Tories to increase the offer. On that date if no new offer has been made an all out strike must be called, with accident and emergency cover only being provided.

Finally, the role of local coordinating committees and JSSCs must extend to other battles facing the health service workers. These bodies must be retained after the pay dispute to coordinate resistance against the Tories' vicious attempts to introduce cutbacks, redundancies, privatisation, and eventually the destruction of the NHS itself".

— North and West Belfast, and Derry, local coordinating committees.

A resolution from the Greater Manchester stewards' committee called for a lobby of the CoHSE national executive meeting on November 3, to demand that the executive calls for a vote for all out action and urgently convenes a delegate conference to decide.

Health Workers for the Full Claim: c/o 78 High St, Atherton, Lancashire.

THE FULL CLAIM • HEALTH WORKERS FOR THE ALL OUT FOR THE 12%

NUPE and CoHSE members at Cardiff Royal Infirmary last week took solidarity strike action in support of 17 victimised seamen from the scientific research ship Discovery.

CRI struck for 24 hours on Friday October 29, while the University Hospital NUPE branch came out on the previous Monday.

On both days Barry docks were successfully picketed by seamen and health workers.

The 17 were told they 'would not be re-employed' on the ship's next voyage because of the action they had taken in solidarity with the health workers. During the August week of action, the crew struck for five days,

keeping the ship in dock in Newfoundland, Canada.

After receiving written guarantees of no victimisation, they agreed to sail the ship home. The day after leaving port, after an attempt to discipline the convenor, the crew began an overtime ban which continued until the ship docked in this country.

The ban meant that officers had to wash their own dishes and make their own bunks.

The owners, the National Environmental Research Department, claim the men have been disciplined not because of the five day solidarity strike but because their overtime ban contravened Article 30 of the 1970 Mer-

chant Shipping Act. Under this law, crew can get two years' jail or a £1000 fine for taking industrial action while at sea. The convenor, Musa Nogan, rejects this as a crude attempt to divide the seventeen.

He believes that they have been victimised for the solidarity action, and the decision to do this has probably come from quite a high level.

Offers

Musa spoke to NUPE and CoHSE meetings at the Infirmary last week, and there was unanimous support for solidarity action.

Since then offers of support have started to come

in thick and fast. NUPE branches in hospitals at Llwynypia, Aberdare and Bridgend, have pledged support, as has the NUM Mardy lodge.

The sister ship of the Discovery, the Challenger, has been blacked and is trapped in dock in Ardrrossan, Scotland.

The NUS Cardiff branch has called on their own executive to call a national strike over the victimisations. Health workers in port towns should make a special effort to contact NUS branches to offer support for the Barry 17.

Martin Barclay



A quick, clear decision on all-out action — that's what the NHS stewards demanded



JOHN HARRIS

The policies adopted

After setbacks in BL, NUM, B WHAT WENT W



"Last year's monumental sell-out has left a big credibility gap"



Jack Adams, Longbridge convenor and Communist Party member, pushed the disastrous 'one day strikes' policy

BL: don't blame the membership!



British Leyland workers should not be blamed for their 23,000-11,000 vote last week rejecting a series of 1 day per week token strikes and an overtime ban in pursuance of their £16.00 per week wage claim.

But there is no doubt that their vote creates a very serious situation for the trade unions within BL and the trade union movement as a whole.

BL have not only held the workforce to roughly 5½%

this year and 5½% next year plus a few marginal improvements in conditions — they have emerged once again as the trail-blazers for the engineering industry, this time in the fight to establish two year deals on pay and conditions.

As in the past, BL workers faced a very serious leadership problem from the outset.

Last year's monumental sell-out — in which a very powerful strike was called

off after two days out, despite no change (for the better) in the offer — has left a big credibility gap between the leadership and the membership.

This gap got wider when the delegate conference of representatives from the plants voted to overturn the decision taken by a massive majority at a series of mass meetings, to reject the principle of a two-year deal and negotiate only for a one year contract.

But worse was to come. After negotiations with management produced only an additional 50p per week on the 2 year offer, or alternatively a lower (3.8%) offer on a one year basis. The negotiating committee voted to reject both offers and refer the form of action to be taken to a delegate conference the following day.

That conference was a disaster!

There were three resolutions in front of it. One from Longbridge called for 1-day strike per week plus an overtime ban. One from the Cowley assembly plant called for an all-out strike; and another called for acceptance of the 2 year deal.

After a sharp debate the Longbridge resolution, which was essentially motivated by the Communist Party through convenor Jack Adams, was carried by a substantial majority. In fact Adams bulldozed it through by insisting that

this was the only resolution which would be carried out at Longbridge. Given the predominance of the Longbridge vote, it was an ultimatum.

It is difficult to believe that those pushing such a line would not know its effects on rank and file BL workers, who are not looking for a soft way of fighting, but were closely watching their leaders to see if they were serious; for any indication of whether this year they were prepared to fight.

Taken strikes and overtime bans — with the living example of such action being the health workers, now 6 months into their dispute — would so obviously give out very negative signals.

Whilst there is no means of assessing every plant, the piecemeal policy appears to have been decisive in swinging the vote against action.

Jack Adams presumably seriously misread the situation at Longbridge, since at the delegate conference he assured delegates that he was putting forward a policy which he could ensure support for his own plant.

Adams opposed moves on the Longbridge stewards committee to strengthen the line put to the mass meeting by calling for an all out strike if there was no settlement after two weeks. He then went on to lose the vote for his own more timid

policy by a margin of 2-1.

In Cowley there were different conditions in the two plants; Body and Assembly.

In the Body Plant, where a very militant labour force was bitterly opposed to one day strikes, the right-wing leadership was determined to block any more militant and therefore more palatable alternative.

The delegate conference resolution was put to the mass meeting with no alternative, and was overwhelmingly defeated — under conditions where every indication was that a resolution for an all-out strike would have been carried easily.

In the Assembly Plant, things were different. The Shop Stewards Committee recognised the weakness in the policy and voted in line with the defeated proposal at Longbridge, to put an additional proposal for an all-out strike after two weeks.

At the major mass meeting on day shift the 2 to 1 vote in favour of action was largely influenced by that perspective.

The role of the national leaders of the main unions involved should be noted. Ken Cure, AUEW Executive Councilman, moved acceptance at the JNC the first time the 2 year deal was offered.

Grenville Hawley, National Officer of the TGWU, also worked for its acceptance from the outset.

In fact even before the delegate conference overturned the membership mandate, he was proposing 'exploring the avenue' of a two year deal 'to see how far the company would go'.

At that stage the JNC was adding new demands to make the trade union claim appropriate to a two year deal — such as the right to renegotiate after a year (which BL of course rejected!).

Analysing and explaining the sell-out however does not alleviate the problem, now facing BL workers.

This setback comes after 4 years of sell-outs, each of which has been used to increase management authority and step up the attacks on the shop floor.

As was stressed by TGWU convenor Bob Fryer at the Cowley Assembly mass meeting, this wage review was not just about wages.

It was about the balance of power in the plants between the Trade Unions and the management. It was about the treatment that workers are receiving at the hands of supervisors.

It was about the massive speed up taking place constantly on the tracks.



... so did AUEW's Cure

It was about defending those agreements which are still left and fighting to re-establish those destroyed by management in recent months.

On all these things the national trade union leaders again seriously failed the test. In fact they were, as on so many occasions in BL, on the opposite side of the fence from the members they supposedly represent.

Those in the decisive position in the shop stewards movement, such as Jack Adams, played a role which is now becoming painfully familiar to every BL worker.

The only consistent voice putting forward a clear alternative throughout these events was the Leyland Action Committee which produced a 4-page bulletin distributed in all plants and local bulletins in individual plants calling for an all-out strike.

BL workers preparing for the further rounds of struggles still to come should recognise who supports and who betrays them — and join the LAC's fight for a new, principled leadership.

DIG IN

THE RESULT of the miners' ballot is without doubt a blow for the whole working class.

Many workers were hoping that the miners would take Thatcher on. That hope has now gone.

The NCB have taken the result as a green light for closures. Already three pits are earmarked.

The government won't make the same mistake as they did in 1981, when they



The T&G's Hawley backed the two-year deal...

Bill Peters asks: WRONG?

Miners' vote was on wage offer

A JUBILANT National Coal Board has been quick to capitalise on the rejection, by 69% to 31%, of the call for a strike against pit closures and the NCB's pay offer.

Almost at once, closure details appeared which were unavailable before the vote. Snowdown colliery in Kent was revealed to be top of the list, followed by Kinnell in West Lothian and Britannia in South Wales.

These are plainly only the tip of the NCB's rationalisation iceberg.

Already the NCB have called for the reopening of the review board which deals with pit closures — paralysed since Scargill's election victory. The NUM executive have obtained a secret NCB document detailing the closure of 70 pits over the next five years.

So much for the soothing words of Coal Board chairman Norman Siddall before the ballot, claiming that Arthur Scargill's 'hit list' allegations were untrue, and that he would not use a 'no' vote to 'butcher the industry'.

Arthur Scargill has called the ballot result a setback. This is certainly true, not only for the miners, but for the working class as a whole.

The media have been quick to capitalise. Linking the NUM result to the BL vote, they have proclaimed these decisions as an endorsement of Tory policy, representing a new mood of moderation among important organised sections of industrial workers.

Core

This is false to the core. And the situations in BL and in the mines are very different.

In BL, a militant workforce which has been looking for a fight with management was confused by repeated sell-outs over recent years and the stupid tactic of one-day strikes linked to



JOHN HARRIS

Miners ready to strike for the NHS workers (above) are not moving to the right. But they felt the odds were against them on wages.

an overtime ban. In the pits, although the miners remain very strong, the heat has been taken out of the wages issue to some extent by their upward shift in pay relatively in recent years.

Scale

Many miners judged that against the scale of the battle posed. The appeal to miners to back the union, and the decision to include opposition to pit closures on the ballot form was not enough to counter that — particularly given the virulent media campaign against the strike vote.

The vote therefore in no way represents a swing to the right in BL or the pits, or a concession to Thatcherism.

Despite this, the media is determined to ensure that the votes are used to draw strength for the Tory government — that they are a blow to the working class, who have been looking to the

miners for so long, and more recently to Scargill himself.

The example of the miners in stopping pit closures by the threat of a strike almost two years ago has been a shining example to the working class. If the media can use the ballot to reverse that stand, it will be a very serious blow indeed.

The right wing in the NUM will assist that process by their campaign to discredit Scargill. The right wing leader of the small North Wales coalfield has even retailed the filthy line of some capitalist newspapers in likening Scargill's five regional meetings to Hitler's Nuremberg rallies.

Trevor Bell, whose white collar, management and supervisory members are traditionally the Achilles heel of NUM ballots, is cashing in by attacking Scargill's methods.

As far as Socialist Organizer is concerned, we give 100% support to the decision of the NUM conference to fight for a £30 wage claim, and to the way Arthur Scargill conducted that campaign.

His regional meetings, so hated by the right wing, were a breath of fresh air in the trade union movement — a trade union president going out of his office to do what he or she should be doing, campaigning amongst the members for policies to defend wages and jobs.

We salute him for that and hope he will continue.

Unfortunately, it is clear now that the mood was not strong enough on wages to win the vote, and wages

under those particular conditions determined the vote.

It is also clear now, we think, that making the two issues the subject of the same vote was a tactical error. (And we say this as a newspaper which accepted Arthur Scargill's assessment of the coalfields before the vote, and supported his tactics).

Whilst the two issues are totally linked, it is clear that the closure issue was not immediate enough to seriously influence the vote against the immediate issue of the wage contract. With no concrete names or dates for closures, the lies of the NCB could confuse the issue and allow the wages issue, which did have figures and dates attached, to dominate the ballot.

Closures should either have been the subject of a separate ballot, or a separate question on the ballot paper.

Despite this setback, however, the fight against closures in the mines is not over. In fact, it has not begun.

Recent history shows that miners will respond to a national lead against pit closures, and Arthur Scargill is absolutely right since the ballot to say that nothing is settled and the fight will go on. There must be another national ballot. All closures must continue to be an issue for the whole industry.

Miners must be allowed to vote with the issue of pit closures squarely in front of them. Under those conditions, this setback can be very rapidly reversed.

What makes Spanswick run?

BY
JANE
GOSS

Room 12 of the Great Northern Hotel set the scene last week for Albert Spanswick's latest attempt to sell out the NHS dispute.

With some COHSE members hard pressed to afford a cup of tea, Spanswick laid on plenty of wine, whisky and beer in order to entice the capitalist press to come and listen to his latest pearls of wisdom.

He then handed them an up-to-date tactical plan for losing the struggle.

"Heartbeat" strikes — one week out, one week in — guaranteed to exhaust and demoralise the health workers who have already had months of such tactics.

And then he topped it off by telling the press that it would take COHSE until March to ratify a yes vote for an indefinite strike.

Not content with these two gems, he hauled out the well worn bureaucrats' theme, saying that he was prepared to take the fight into next year's pay round, unless the membership wanted to stop it.

The message from the membership for Spanswick and all the other trade union leaders is that we want an indefinite strike and we want it now. Not in March or April.

The struggle about tactics between the rank and file and the bureaucrats in this dispute is becoming wider and more pronounced every day. Spanswick, as chairperson of the TUC Health Services Committee, finds himself in a role that he is just not capable of carrying out. His latest behaviour is callous and outrageous.

Strong, unrelenting pressure by the rank and file, organising through joint shop stewards' committees and pressure groups like Health Workers for the Full Claim, has forced the TUC Health Services Committee to a position of serious discussion on indefinite strike action as the only way left to escalate the dispute, now in its seventh month.

COHSE voted against this position. And it is now widely recognised that COHSE is the key union in the consultation procedure.

COHSE, traditionally a right wing union, has slowly changed over the past decade and Spanswick's actions have to be seen in the light of those changes.

In the past ten years the membership has grown rapidly — from 121,000 in 1973 to approximately

230,000 now. During that same time the union has become politicised by struggles against the cuts, closures and low pay and by the increasing number of left wingers who join COHSE. The National Executive Committee, although still dominated by the right, is challenging the officers more and more and is listening more to the membership.

The emergence 18 months ago of a credible broad left has further challenged the leadership and for the first time organised the rank and file in COHSE.

Wants

There are those who still genuinely believe that Spanswick wants further industrial action but that he is kept in line by the even more right wing national officers (led by his almost certain successor David Williams). His pronouncement early this year that COHSE would possibly be withdrawing Accident and Emergency cover and breaking the code of conduct sparked off instant condemnation and brought a quick rebuttal.

There is no doubt that he was heavily criticised at the time, and after a respectable time lapse from his 'mistake'/'misquote' he announced his early retirement.

This announcement takes a vast amount of pressure off him. He no longer has to worry about the NEC, the TUC, Group 81 (broad left) or the membership. He is now free to sell out the dispute and get his peerage.

As chairperson of the Health Services Committee he is also spokesperson, and most of the publicity is around what he says.

This suits the trade union leaders with a more 'left' image, like Bickerstaffe and Jenkins. They can continue to claim that they were pushing for the right tactics but were blocked by Spanwick (who they will no doubt lunch with in the Lords) while in reality they have not lifted a finger to get an indefinite strike.

So at the most crucial phase of a long, drawn-out dispute, the most crucial union — COHSE — is trying its hardest to crush a yes vote for indefinite action.

The announcement by Spanwick that all out strike action cannot be called until March under COHSE rules is nonsense. The rule which states that 14 weeks notice must be given is for annual delegate conference. The rule providing for special conferences does not state any time limits because clearly the time span is governed by the urgency of the subject to be discussed.

A recall conference could be organised in a few weeks. The fact is that the COHSE leadership see a conference as a real threat. They know that the membership are sick of limited action, that the arguments they put forward in June for winning without indefinite strike have not a shred of credibility left.

Election

They also know that in the run up to an election for a new General Secretary the position of the right wing leadership would be tested to breaking point by a recall conference.

But most importantly they realise that if COHSE votes for an indefinite strike, then it will certainly be carried by the TUC Health Services Committee and that this will mean a head-on clash with the Tories. This is the last thing the TUC wants.

ASLEF

Over and over again this year the TUC has sold out the struggles which could have challenged this government, NUR, BL, ASLEF, etc. Because of the tremendous swell of solidarity and public support they have not been able to do the same to the NHS.

In Spanwick the TUC have found a willing accomplice. He is prepared to use COHSE to wreck the Health Service action — but the COHSE membership are not prepared to let this happen.



Spanwick..... "callous and outrageous"

NOW!

by John Cunningham
(Dinnington NUM)

announced a list of pits to close. Instead, the NCB will continue, as they have done recently, to pick off individual collieries.

But the result of the ballot, regardless of the wording, does not mean that the NUM should, or will, sit back and see pits shut down left, right and centre. The intentions of the Tories are plain.

Recent projections published by the Department of

Energy envisage a sharp contraction in the use of coal by the turn of the century.

One of the hardest things in the world is to pick ourselves up after a defeat. But that is what militants in the mining industry have now got to do.

A battle lost does not mean the war is lost. The next battle is over Britannia, Kinnell, and Snowdown. So dig in now.

20 years after Cuban missiles crisis

PLAYING GLOBAL

TWENTY years ago, in October 1962, the Kennedy administration in the USA embarked upon a desperate showdown with the Khrushchev bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. It was widely — if not universally — believed that the world was on the brink of a nuclear war.

Publicly humiliated by the catastrophic failure of the CIA-run 'Bay of Pigs' invasion of Cuba in April 1961, Kennedy had been press-ganged into a confrontation with Moscow by intelligence reports of a build-up of Soviet medium-range missiles in Cuba — capable of striking targets deep in the USA itself.

Kennedy issued an ultimatum demanding their withdrawal, coupled with a full-scale blockade of Cuba by the US navy, with orders to stop a convoy of Soviet ships bringing further missiles.

The world waited with bated breath. Was this to be the final few minutes of human history?

In the event Khrushchev climbed down on the missiles issue — in exchange for a guarantee from Kennedy that the USA would make no further moves to invade Cuba. Millions breathed again — and a new stage in world politics had arrived.

With the Cuban regime reduced to the role of an impotent bystander as the Kremlin negotiated with Washington over their heads, the Soviet bureaucracy had firmly emerged into the field of global politics.

A decision to embark on a nuclear war with the USA in 1962 had in fact always been out of the question: the USSR was outnumbered 10-1 by American nuclear weapons.

But its growing military might and political influence had meant that for the first time the Soviet bureaucracy had become a political force not just in the vast bordering territories of the Soviet Union itself — in Europe and Asia — but on a world scale.

Indeed the conduct of the missiles crisis itself showed that Soviet influence was in the main restricted not so much by the inadequacy of Moscow's nuclear arsenal as by the outright opposition of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Kremlin to mobilising the most powerful potential ally of the Cuban revolution — the international working class.

Committed to securing the nationalised property relations upon which their power and privileges as a

parasitic ruling caste depends, Khrushchev and his Kremlin colleagues remained equally fearful of arousing the revolutionary potential of the workers' movement in struggles which might escape their control.

As a result, they followed essentially the same strategy as Stalin before them — combining brutal repression of their working class at home with a general orientation towards peaceful coexistence with imperialism.

They took military measures to protect their own borders, and from time to time utilised opportunities to gain military or diplomatic advantage over imperialism where this could be done without provoking a direct confrontation.

It seems clear that in the attempt to instal the missile bases in Cuba, Khrushchev was engaging in a degree of 'brinkmanship' — to test the resolve of the Kennedy administration.

The stakes were high. Had the US imperialists not taken a firm stand on the issue, Khrushchev would have gained a substantial strategic 'coup' with the establishment of a 'forward' base as close to the USA as the NATO bases in Europe are to the USSR.

In other words the episode had far more to do with Soviet defence than with any defence of Cuba itself — for which no such elaborate weaponry was needed.

But even after "defeat" on this ploy, Khrushchev was able to extract a pledge for the future security of Cuba which helped cement the uneasy relationship between Fidel Castro's initially anti-communist leadership and Moscow.

The Bay of Pigs episode also pointed to the newly emerging situation facing imperialist rulers in their attempts to police the world. 1949 had seen the triumph of the Chinese revolution and 1953 the defeat of imperialist forces in Korea and the rout of the French army in the Vietnamese battle of Dien Bien Phu.

Despite the successful CIA-backed coups in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954), the tide was plainly flowing against the imperialist rulers and in favour of the colonial liberation struggle. The 1959 Cuban revolution, carried through under the noses of the American imperialists, proved strong enough to withstand external subversion — and was able to turn for economic and military assistance to the USSR.

Since then the USA has



The election in 1950 of the allegedly pro-communist President Arbenz in Guatemala proved a thorn in the flesh of the US administration. In the throes of Cold War hysteria, they saw the nationalist regime as a threat to the profits of the US-owned United Fruit Company (owners of 10% of the country's land), and to the security of the Panama Canal.

Arbenz nationalised uncultivated land and supported strikes against foreign monopolies — but his government remained dominated by anti-communists, and the main power remained in the hands of the army.

In June 1954, having failed in diplomatic efforts to isolate Guatemala, US Secretary of State Dulles sanctioned a CIA-backed invasion by right wing Guatemalan forces from across the borders in Honduras and Nicaragua.

This toppled Arbenz, and installed a pliable, pro-imperialist regime.

suffered its traumatic defeat in Vietnam, and further struggles including those in Southern Africa, Iran and Nicaragua have shown the limited ability of imperialism to control its "spheres of influence" by direct military force.

And of course the emergence of radicalised leaderships in such liberation struggles and the ability of the Soviet bureaucracy to establish economic, diplomatic — (and sometimes, military — alliances with them, as in Angola and

Mozambique) has also helped to expand Soviet global influence beyond its mere capacity to deliver nuclear weapons on US or European targets.

So what now is the world relationship of forces between the Kremlin leaders and imperialism? As Reagan and Thatcher pound out their Cold War propaganda, giving dire warnings of the power, aggressiveness and capriciousness of the Soviet bureaucrats as arguments for runaway military spending and still more nuclear

weapons, it can be useful to assess the reality.

Two recent books — though marred by substantial weaknesses — help us in this task.

"Superpowers in Collision", a collection of essays by Noam Chomsky, Jonathan Steele and John Gittings (Pelican, £1.95) looks at relationships between the USA in particular and the NATO alliance in general and the USSR and China. And Fred Halliday's book "Threat from the East?" looks at the region where the Kremlin leaders are allegedly most actively fomenting the "end of the world as we know it" — the 'arc of crisis' from the Horn of Africa through Iran to Afghanistan.

Chomsky's article "The USA: from Greece to El Salvador" looks at the evolution of Cold War ideology from the immediate post-war period to the present day.

Quoting from President Truman's secretary of state Dean Acheson he shows clearly how a whole anti-Soviet scare was deliberately manufactured early in 1947 as the basis for the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, and US involvement in Greece and Turkey. Chomsky points out that:

"The Soviet Union played no significant role in the civil war in Greece since it recognised that this was an area central to American power. It was the first domino on the way to the Middle East — and in fact the domino theory was first formulated with explicit reference to the Greek situation.

This was American turf which Stalin knew the US was not going to abandon. He was therefore trying to call off the guerrillas, much as he sought to persuade the French communists to collaborate in the reestab-

lishment of capitalism in the early post-war years.

Yet since the US was committed to using force to crush what amounted to the former anti-Nazi resistance in Greece, a justification was needed at the ideological level, and this was provided by the Soviet Union."

Scares

Chomsky shows how similar scares were created in 1950 and in the 1960 US Presidential elections — where the "liberal" Kennedy criticised Eisenhower for being insufficiently aggressive towards the USSR and unprepared for war. By 1962 — over Berlin, Cuba and Laos, Kennedy had looked towards nuclear war three times!

He shows how the present conflict in El Salvador has been exploited by Reagan's Cold War propagandists in ways similar to the situation in Greece in 1947, and he exposes the State Department lies over



Carving up the world — Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin at Yalta

Soviet arms supplies to the Salvadoran liberation forces.

Jonathan Steele takes up an examination of the Soviet Union, and the policies it has pursued since finally achieving a rough equivalence of nuclear weapons with the USA in 1969.

Steel stresses how recent is the period in which the USSR could even hope to be regarded as an equal negotiating power with the Americans, and explains the various ways in which the policy of detente, floated by Kissinger and Nixon in the early 1970s, fitted well into the political thinking of Brezhnev and his Stalinist colleagues.

They sought top-level recognition from the imperialists, and forms of collaboration and co-existence which might enable them to hold down their military budgets and take steps to placate the economic demands of their own working classes at home. And in particular they wanted to obtain Western credits and technology which their own isolated economies had failed to generate.

From the imperialist standpoint:

"Kissinger argued that if the US could build up a web of relationship with Moscow, through trade, political dialogue and nuclear arms control, the Russians would be locked into a collaborative pattern of behaviour with the West. This would make it harder for them to break out in a wild, adventurist way."

Significantly, again, it was not the Republican leaders, but the Democrat Jimmy Carter in the USA who brought about a reversal of this policy of collaboration. The Pentagon chiefs had seen that despite detente the US had suffered serious setbacks in Vietnam, in Ethiopia and in Angola — with Soviet backing to the opposition in each case.

Carter's administration began its offensive with the "human rights" charade (exposed in Chomsky's article) but went on to embark upon production of Cruise and MX missiles, and, in the wake of the Iranian revolution and hostage crisis, to forge ahead with the establishment of a Rapid Deployment Force. In 1979 Carter also launched a hysterical outcry over Soviet troops in Cuba as a smoke-screen for halting the strategic arms limitation talks (SALT II). At the end of 1979 Carter announced plans to site Cruise missiles in Europe.



Playing with nuclear fire — Khrushchev and Kennedy

DOMINOS

By Harry Sloan

Almost as if in answer to this, the Soviet bureaucracy in December 1979 invaded Afghanistan – handing Carter and Reagan a colossal propaganda tool for use at home and abroad against the 'Soviet menace'.

Control

The picture emerging from Steele's account is one of a Soviet bureaucracy seeking ways and means of stabilising its relations with a dominant imperialism, but forced to respond to events in the class struggle and to shifts of imperialist policy which they cannot control.

He concludes: "The Russians are militarily stronger than they were in 1970, but the world beyond their borders is no more favourable to them than it was a decade ago. The United States is still economically, technologically and militarily superior." (p.64)

Halliday too emphasises the limitations of Soviet military power when compared to that of US imperialism:

"The Soviet Union aims to have a global military capability. It has been building a naval fleet capable of sailing in all the main waters of the world, and it has developed a long-range air capability – as demonstrated by the 1977 airlift to Ethiopia. Its global capability is still smaller than that of the United States, and its network of overseas facilities (with the exception of those in Eastern Europe) is, in comparison with that of America, diminutive."

One major facet of this weakness of the Soviet bureaucracy is its internal problems – the emergence of independent struggles by the working class in Poland and elsewhere, and the economic dislocation brought about by decades of bureaucratic mismanagement.

Play

Another is the division since the late 1950s between the Soviet and Chinese Stalinist bureaucracies, which has enabled the American leaders to draw Peking into similar collaborationist frameworks to those offered to the USSR in the early 1970s, and play one off against the other.

John Gittings' article explores the emergence of Chinese power in the last 33 years, and draws attention to the way in which the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a blow against the Chinese bureaucrats as much as against the imperialists.

Halliday's book explains the various reasons why the 'Arc of Crisis' should have become the focus for analysis of the balance of power between the Soviet Union and imperialism.

He relates this to the weakening grip of Western control in the Third World, the strategic importance of the Gulf's oil supplies, the growing power of the OPEC in relation to the West, the erosion of US control over its own allies, the drive by US generals for increased military spending, and the real increase in the military power of the USSR.

He goes on to explain the immense historic and geographical ties which link the Soviet bureaucracy with efforts to influence events in

the Middle East.

"What the West sees as the northern tier is for the Russians, the southern tier, a line of countries whose international and internal orientations are of prime concern to them, just as much as the politics of the Caribbean and Central American countries are to the USA."

Halliday catalogues and examines some of the extremely costly Soviet diplomatic disasters in the region. Amongst these the most catastrophic was the relationship between the USSR and Egypt, beginning under Nasser in 1955 and ending, under Sadat, with the expulsion of Russian technicians and advisors, the repudiation of Egypt's \$7 billion debt to Moscow and the cementing of alliances between Egypt and the USA.

Indeed many of the Soviet arms lavishly supplied to Egypt during that period are now being funnelled into the hands of the reactionary Islamic forces fighting the Soviet invaders in Afghanistan! Soviet military aid to the capitalist government of Egypt outstripped its aid to the Communists fighting US imperialism in Vietnam during the same period.

Halliday looks also at some other such failures – such as Somalia and Iraq. He shows how profoundly unstable are current Soviet relations with Gaddafi's Libya and the Syrian Ba'athists, and analyses a "net deficit in its record of Middle East diplomacy since the War."

Halliday is also the most categorical in spelling out the negative implications for the Soviet bureaucracy of their invasion of Afghanistan – which has embroiled a vast army in a prolonged war in which they can only further antagonise the masses of Central Asia.

But usefully Halliday also undermines some of the mythical explanations of Soviet policy. For instance he explains why it is false to overestimate the threat to the Kremlin bureaucracy from the Muslim minority peoples within the USSR.

And he explodes the argument that the USSR is pursuing a quest for oil supplies.

On the events in Iran, Afghanistan, South Yemen and Ethiopia – where US and other leaders have

claimed to find evidence of planned Soviet 'expansionism', Halliday successfully shows that developments far from being consciously instigated by Moscow happened largely despite the Kremlin leaders' efforts to control developments, and leave a situation which the benefits they have secured are by no means unambiguous.

And he points out that: "Far from being single mindedly inimical to the West, Soviet policy has too often allowed itself to be swayed from pursuing local advantages by tactical considerations arising from concern over the thrust of East-West relations. Such initiatives have run counter to the popular movements in the region. In some cases this involved playing too cautious a role precisely in order not to antagonise the

West. Soviet indulgence to the Shah and delay in openly backing the Iranian revolution is a striking case of this. . . . At other times the Soviet desire to rival the West leads it into courting some of the more repressive right-wing leaders of the Third World who may have disagreement of greater or shorter duration with their Western allies".

While thus successfully restoring some balance to the Cold War view of unbridled and burgeoning Soviet military power, and pointing the finger at the reactionary deals and alliances carried out by the Moscow bureaucrats in their search for their utopian "peaceful coexistence", Halliday, like the authors of "Superpowers in Collision" offers no political explanation of their conduct.

Indeed in many respects they show a quaint naivete about in particular the Soviet leaders and their motivations. Halliday, in search of a statement of Soviet foreign policy objectives, looks to the double-talk of the Soviet Constitution of 1977. And he is also charitable in his assessment of the reasoning behind Soviet aid to the Ethiopian regime and the invasion of Afghanistan.

But Halliday's glib approach is more than matched by that of John Gittings, who is critical of the Moscow bureaucracy's "curiously un-Marxist" approach to collaboration with the leaders of US imperialism, and goes on to talk of Brezhnev's "Moscow elections".

The collection of essays in *Superpowers in Collision*, while avoiding the jargon of Marxist terminology, descend instead into the jargon of journalese, referring indiscriminately to both the imperialist USA and the bureaucratic workers' state of the USSR as "superpowers".

Halliday stresses in his account the extent to which Soviet trade and aid to 'friendly' regimes produces little or no economic benefit to Moscow – in stark contrast to the loans and aid packages put together by the imperialists.

But the authors of *Superpowers in Collision* remain so preoccupied with 'power bloc' politics that the different social systems on which the two main governments rest are largely left aside.

Their conclusions are thus vague suggestions for 'codes of conduct' (Halliday) or 'public discussion' and 'neutrality' (Gittings and Steele), resting on the idealist notion that capitalist and Stalinist regimes alike can be peacefully – and by rational argument – transformed into systems which do not mean exploitation and repression for the world's population.

The nationalised property relations in the Stalinist-ruled states can only be defended and developed, and the warmongering of the imperialists defeated by the construction of a revolutionary Marxist leadership for the working class in every country of the world. That is our only way to ensure that the missiles scare of 1962 does not return as the armageddon of the future.

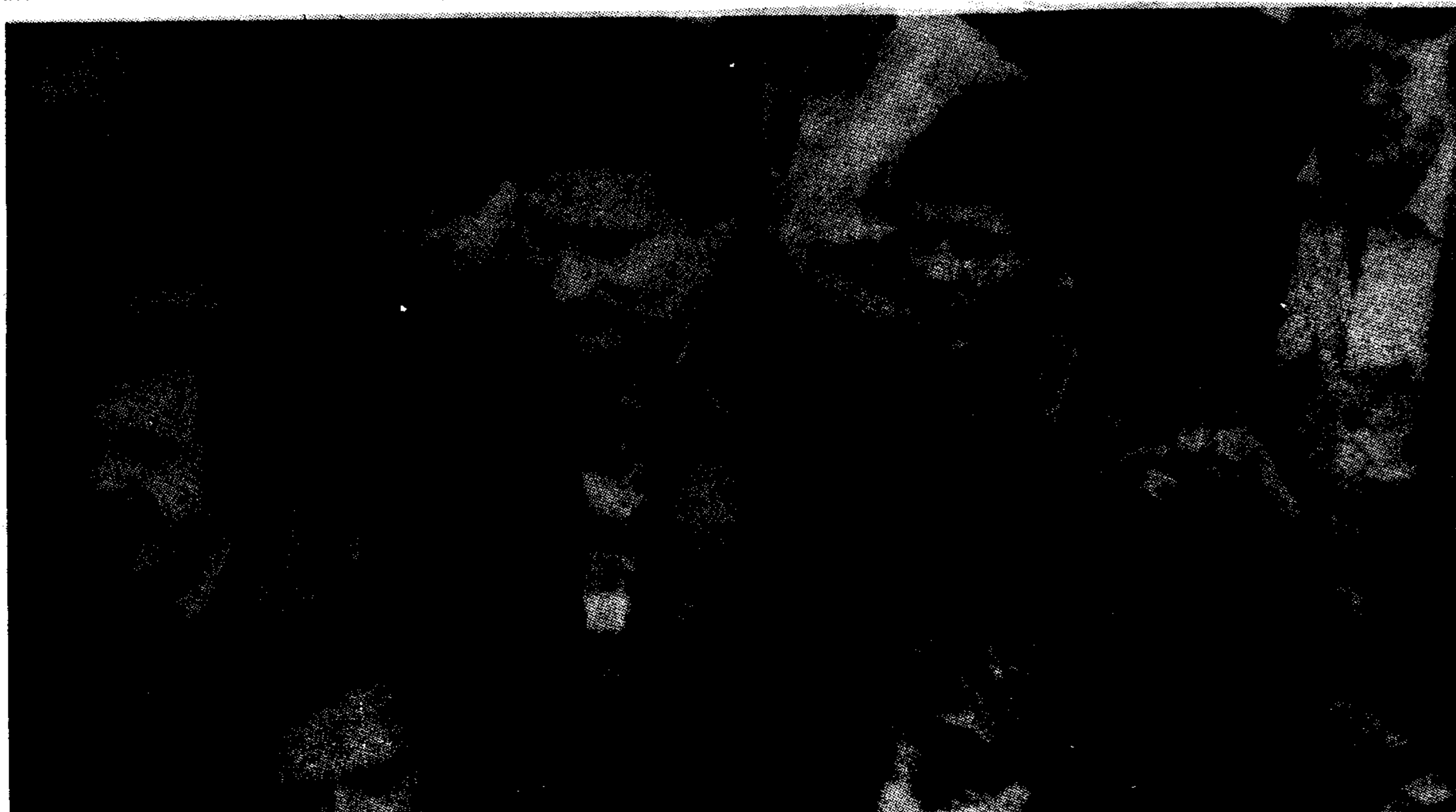


In the closing days of the Eisenhower administration, CIA chiefs completed plans for an invasion of Cuba, to be carried out by exiled reactionaries under US direction and with US air cover.

The plan laboured under the illusion that the Cuban masses were longing only for an opportunity to rise up against Castro's regime, and that a small force could catalyse a mass movement.

The invasion forces, armed and financed by the USA, were trained in bases loaned by the Guatemalan dictatorship.

But the attack was not launched until April 1961, under conditions where Kennedy had vetoed the provision of US air cover. It proved an unmitigated fiasco. Within 3 days the 1,500 strong invading force had been killed or taken prisoner, while thousands of underground reactionaries inside Cuba were rounded up and arrested by Castro's secret police. The masses rallied strongly behind Castro.



Throwing all the balance-of-forces calculations askew – Polish workers challenge the bureaucracy

Don't let them be deported!

MOHAMMED Ibrahim Ismail Patel, an Imam for the Islamic community of Aston-Under-Lyne has been threatened with deportation by the Home Office.

The Islamic community invited Mohammed Patel to serve them, after attempts to find an Imam from within the community. The mosque applied for his residence to be made permanent but this has been refused.

The Home Office has refused an extension of stay for Mr. Patel despite the obvious need of the local Muslim community; a thousand strong petition made on his behalf, and representations made by the local MP, Robert Sheldon.

The Mosque Committee

has prepared a sworn statement, witnessed by a commissioner of oaths, stating the needs and duties of an Imam; their inability to find a suitable one in Britain; and confirming that the Imam can be maintained without need of public funds.

The problems faced by the Muslim community of Ashton are also faced by other mosques, temples and Gurdwaras throughout the country. Those non-Christian (and non-white) religious communities are finding applications for religious leaders being increasingly blocked by the racist Home Office.

*Contact: Tameside Immigration Campaigns Support Group, c/o 35a Manchester Road, Denton, Manchester M12.



Whitelaw

REGGIE Yates from North London has been threatened with deportation to Ghana. The Home Office have forced onto him the choice of leaving his family or allowing them to be deported.

Felida, his wife, is a British citizen, but cannot confer her British nationality to her husband, as she was not born in this country. However, Reggie's grandfather was born in Britain. Under the 1968 Immigration Act, this should give him citizenship.

The Home Office have decided that this is not good enough. Where their racist laws are not fully effective, they re-interpret them!

The chairperson of the Tribunal had been a magistrate in Ghana, and his racist and sexist attitudes have decided Reggie's legal status.

He said, 'Many Euro-

peans, since wives seldom come out to stay, entered into relationships with women living in the country (Ghana). I find it is extremely unlikely that (Yates') grandfather believed that he was entering into a valid marriage ... and it is not proved that his grandmother believed she was validly married to George Williams Yates, indeed she gave the matter any thought at all!

*Contact: c/o Miera 43a, Harrow, London W10.

Beaten up – by cops!

EIGHT Asian youth aged 15-21 were arrested on Friday September 24 in Newham, East London, after incidents with plain clothes police officers, and face serious charges ranging from threatening behaviour to actual bodily harm.

One of the eight was hospitalised for several days as a result of being beaten up by the police. All of them were subjected to racist abuse and harassment.

The youths were attacked by plain clothes officers who did not declare their identity. Almost immediately, uniformed police arrived on the scene and arrested them.

This followed a series of racist attacks in the area. There were at least three separate incidents in the week before alone.

On one occasion 60 to 70 white youths with iron bars and sticks went on a rampage in East Ham and Manor Park looking for Asians to beat up.

The only crime committed by the youth was that of self-defence. The Vir brothers, also from Newham, were sentenced in 1979 to jail sentences of up to seven years for the same 'crime'.

Yet again, the police have acted against the victims of racist attack, and not the racists who organised the violence.

* Friday, November 5 Picket of West Ham Court West Ham Lane, Stratford E15.

* Contact: Defence Campaign, c/o 285 Romford Rd, Forest Gate, London E7 9HJ [tel.(01-) 534 164 evenings].

USSR - not a capitalist state

THE point of my article (SO 101; criticised by Glynis Powell, Letters, SO 104) was to use the material in Simis' book to illustrate just how much the USSR has in common with class societies.

In terms of basic civil rights, freedom to organise, freedom of information and discussion, and the general level of repression, we would have to conclude that the Stalinist states are worse than all but fascistic capitalist regimes - and especially so from the working class point of view.

Even the least totalitarian of the Stalinist regimes (which to a serious extent Poland still is now) cannot tolerate any working class independence, in politics, trade unionism, or any other sort of social initiative.

For that reason a workers revolution is essential in all of these states.

This will be common ground. But these considerations do not answer the question of how we should characterise these regimes.

The choices are limited. Either they can be characterised in terms of one of the two main classes in capitalist society, or the bureaucracies are a new and unforeseen ruling class.

Societies in which the decisive means of production are nationalised, and which originated in a powerful anti-capitalist revolution can only be designated capitalist on the basis of abstractions such as Glynis Powell employs to show that in terms of oppression the USSR has much in common with all societies as far back as ancient Greece and Rome.

"Workers experience the same alienation and lack of control as in the West"? Yes. Trotsky thought so, as my quotations established. But capitalism is a historic system, with its own specific features - essentially the market as decisive regulator of the economy (in various stages of development, up to the present stage of monopoly capitalism). It cannot be characterised by the things it has in common, as an exploitative and oppressive system, with other class societies.

Or are the Stalinist states an entirely new type of class society, whose laws of motion are as yet unknown? If that is the necessary conclusion from the facts of the last 60 years, then it places in question the validity of the idea, central to the Marxist programme, that the crucial contradiction of capitalism - the contradiction between the social character of production and the private ownership of the means of production - can only be resolved by the working class.

That is no small conclusion to reach. I believe it to be unnecessary.

A better explanation is that developed by Trotsky and in the last 40 years from Trotsky's theories. The Stalinist states are degenerated (USSR) and deformed (the others) workers' states. That means that their nationalised economies (onto which the bureaucracy is grafted) originated in the 1917 Revolution, or by way of the interaction of other revolutions with the degenerated USSR.

The nationalised property arises from the workers'



Stalin - did he represent a new class, or an usurping bureaucracy?

revolution, expressing the historic link between the working class and post-capitalist collectivism: but it is not 'working class' or 'progressive' *per se*, but potentially so, depending on the working class taking political power and reorganising the economy warped or shaped by the bureaucrats.

We are against imperialism destroying that potential; we are against imperialism strengthening itself by regaining territory; the working class, not the imperialists, must settle accounts with the bureaucracy. That is what 'defence of the USSR against imperialism' means for us.

For technical reasons we call the workers' revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy 'political' (i.e. a supplementary revolution on the basis of existing collectivised property). But it will inevitably have massive social tasks of reorganising the economy and the state.

This way of looking at it has the advantage of placing the Stalinist regimes in the historic perspective of the world working class revolution.

Trotsky certainly saw the

Stalinist regimes as possible only for a short time, as Glynis Powell says. He has been proved wrong about that, and it does have implications for the theory, but I can't see that it necessarily follows that the basic assessment - or rather, developments of it - must fall down.

It is true that the dominant characteristic of the post Trotsky 'Trotskyists' for 30 years has been theoretical confusion, and centrally on Stalinism. A whole range of different theories (explicit or implicit) are to be found under the 'workers state' tag. Whole layers of the 'Trotskyist' movement have at different times adopted positive attitudes to one or another ruling bureaucracy (Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Cuba...), in line with the method of the right-communists of the '30s (Brandier, Lovestone, etc.) and their latter-day heir Isaac Deutscher rather than the position held by Trotsky after 1935.

Nevertheless I think it is possible to argue a consistently working class anti-Stalinist line on the basis of Trotsky's actual positions. It is important to demonstrate this at a time when many who call themselves Trotskyist are manifestly breaking with Trotsky's politics while retaining the tags and labels.

And in terms of the tasks of the working class in the Stalinist states, the state-capitalist or 'new class' positions add nothing to the Trotskyist programme of 'political revolution' - not a comma, nor a full stop, nothing.

JOHN O'MAHONY, London

Not our motion

THE IDEA of having a CLPs campaign against the witch-hunt did come from Socialist Organiser supporters in Hackney North, but we were not the first to move it officially in the party, as your article last week suggests.

ANDREW HORNUNG, Hackney.

Writeback



We invite readers to send us their letters, up to a usual maximum length of 400 words.

Send to 'Writeback', Socialist Organiser, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

Irish women fight PTA

Dear Comrades and Sisters, We are writing this appeal to you on behalf of our friend and comrade, Maire O'Hare, who went over to London in October 1980, along with other women from Belfast, as a delegate from Women Against Imperialism, to the national Socialist Feminist Conference which was held on the last week-end of October.

On arrival at Heathrow Airport on Friday evening, Maire and another sister from Belfast, Anne Boyle, were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and imprisoned in a police station near Heathrow, from where they were taken to Rochester Row - at that time the London police station used to hold victims of the PTA.

At the time this took place, Maire was suffering from an infection of the kidneys and had been under medical supervision at home in Belfast. It was inevitable that the tension and the

primitive conditions which she was forced to endure in the Rochester Row station brought about an aggravation of her complaint.

While she was held, a sympathetic solicitor, called Alistair Logan, had applied for a writ of habeas corpus for both Maire and Anne. Whilst the legal wheels were grinding slowly into motion, Maire was released on Sunday evening whilst Anne was held the full seven

days. Although she was released, Maire too: the political decision to go ahead with the application for the writ, on the grounds that it was important to expose the workings of the PTA and to publicise the case as much as possible.

At the time of the court case, women comrades in London and at the Socialist Feminist Conference raised a considerable sum of money which was used towards the publicity campaign mounted to get both of the women released. Now, two years on, the Legal Aid Department in England has decided that Maire is liable to pay £290 towards her costs for the application of the writ. Anne, because she was unemployed, was not liable to any payment.



Debt

Maire is not in a financial position to pay this money - and we feel, as a matter of principle, that it is unjust to ask her or any other person to pay for their victimisation under the PTA. Nevertheless, under the equally infamous Payment of Debt Act (which is enforceable only in Northern Ireland) this money is now going to be deducted from her wages completely against her wishes.

We are therefore appealing for donations from concerned groups and individuals in Britain, to help pay these legal costs. All contributions will be gratefully received and will be acknowledged.

Yours fraternally, C. Devlin, for Irishwomen Against the PTA.

Money should be sent to the contact address: c/o THTOM, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green, London E2.

SCIENCE

Engineers with no spanners

by Philip Day

IT CAN be seen from the first part of this article [last week] that genetic engineering has many advantages over older biochemical techniques in the production of medically and commercially useful by-products; the production of human enzymes and hormones in excess by micro-organisms is the case in point. But it is also possible for genetic engineering to have disadvantages.

Cloning is now being developed in mammals and this, coupled with the recent boom in test-tube babies makes possible for the first time the cloning of human children. Recent press

releases indicate that research on fertilised human embryos is being undertaken in private clinics. Maybe Huxley's 'Brave New World' is not all that far from reality.

Area

This area in particular requires a general toughening up of controls in order to prevent any such cloning - although it must be said that cloned individuals don't necessarily have similar characteristics, as environmental influences have a greater role in character development than genetic traits. For example, twins - nature's

own clones - often have very diverse characters and capabilities.

DNA recombination technology initially had many perceptible drawbacks and dangers. Ignoring the so-called 'moral' questions of 'tampering with creation' raised by certain religious groups, the initial problem with genetic engineering was that the genes involved in the research processes were often antibiotic resistance genes.

These genes were used because their presence is easily indicated by growing the bacterial cells concerned in the presence of high concentrations of the antibiotic.

Growth in these conditions indicated successful transference of the gene concerned.

Genes

The danger of this technique is obvious, in that antibiotic resistance genes were being transferred from non-pathogenic bacteria, to ones which could possibly be pathogenic or in turn pass on the gene to pathogenic strains by 'conjugation', the rare bacterial 'sexual' process. This danger was soon eradicated by two procedures laid down by the government 'watch dog' committee, the Genetic Manipulation Advisory Group (GMAG) set up in 1975.

The two procedures laid down by GMAG were total laboratory control of genetically manipulated bacterial strains and the utilisation of crippled bacteria, alternatively known as conditional lethal mutants, which cannot survive outside the laboratory due to their nutritional requirements.

These restrictions were very successful and as an indication of their success GMAG, which once met on a monthly basis, now meets only two or three times a year.

Some say that GMAG has outlived its usefulness and would like to see it disbanded. The problem with

this is that it would leave the door open for unscrupulous genetic experimentation. A more preferable course of action would be to change GMAG's terms of reference, for them to include ethical considerations of genetic manipulation and not just safety aspects.

Since GMAG was set up in 1975, genetic engineering has moved out of its initial pure research phase, into an industrially and commercially biased phase, where the research processes are developed through pilot scale into full commercial plants. This maturity of technique has brought with it new and potentially serious social problems, problems which in some cases set undesirable precedents.

Basic

There are two basic problems posed by modern genetic engineering. Firstly most advances in commercial techniques have been made by the USA. This is undoubtedly partly the result of the US leading the international moratorium in genetic engineering, which started in 1975.

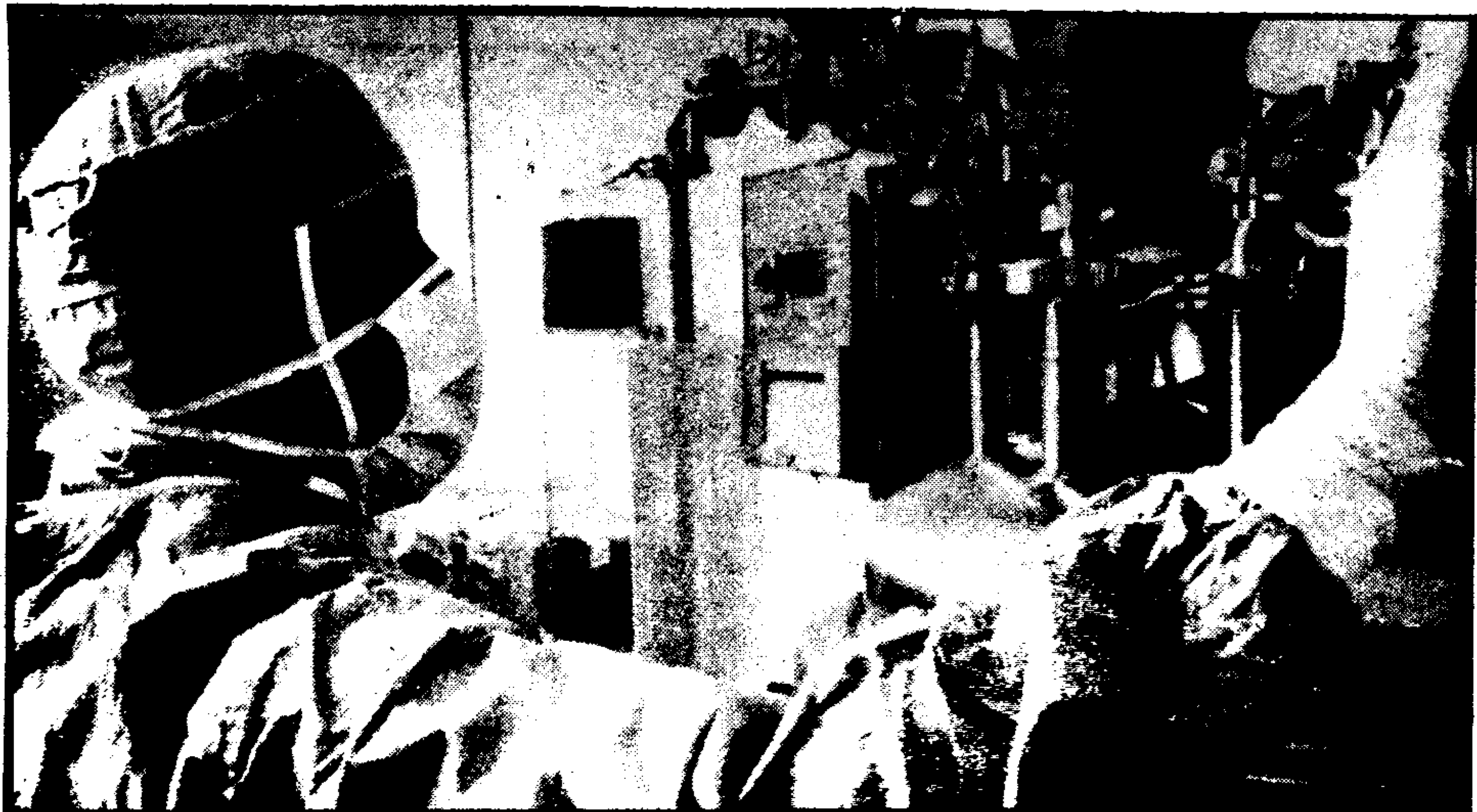
Britain and the West followed almost unthinkingly, applying strict legislation through GMAG and other similar bodies, whilst the Americans applied few restrictions after the initial pause and furore of the

'Berg' letter (a letter signed by several prominent US academics lead by Paul Berg, which denounced genetic engineering for safety reasons).

The result of this is that a large number of genetic engineering processes are patented and therefore, financially controlled by the US; with all this implies as to the imbalance between medical advancement and profit in the US, the West and the third world.

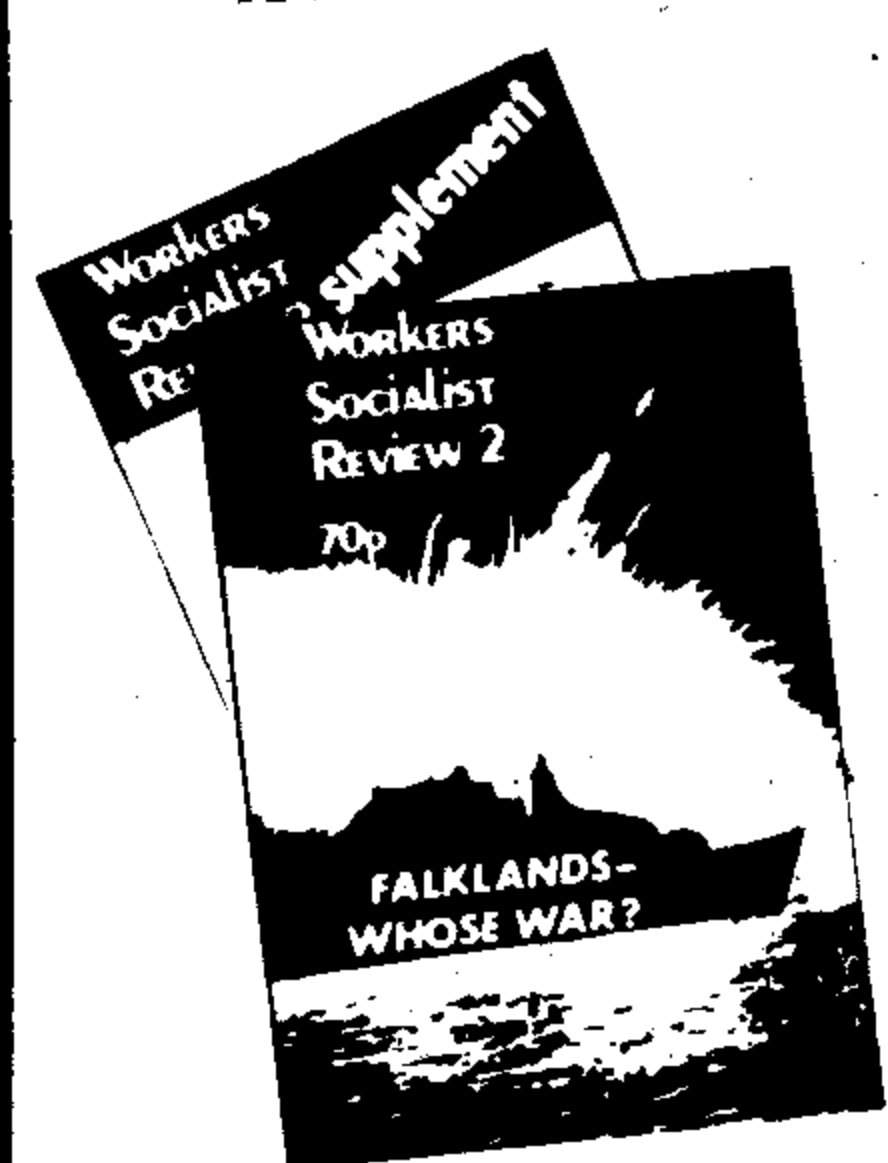
The second and potentially most undesirable effect of the USA's lead in this field is that patents are permitted under American law for micro-organisms. This is a precedent previously undreamt of, as it implies the financial control of a living organism over and above those normally acceptable in farming and animal husbandry. It prevents the development of similar strains of micro-organisms by other workers.

So we see the gradual development of genetic engineering by the capitalist system. Genetic engineering is potentially a liberating technique for mankind with its great medical significance and its enhancement of food production in some areas. It is too important to allow it to be controlled by the multinationals or for research to be strangled by oppressive US patents.



Potentially liberating techniques should not be left to the multinationals

Advertisement



Workers' Socialist Review no. 2 includes: debate on the Falklands/Malvinas; Bob Sutcliffe on Argentina in the world economy; articles on Lebanon, Central America, Poland, South Africa, France. 80p with supplement, plus 20p p&p, from WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

British Telecoms under attack

END OF THE LINE FOR OPERATORS?

Splitting posts and telecoms, ending the public monopoly, then selling off BT — the Tories' plans mean job cuts. Ann McKinley reports.

IN THE autumn of 1981, British Telecom (BT) decided to compile a report on 'The Future of the Operator Services' — later known as the Brookes Report.

Its release coincided with the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) annual conference in May, and as a result of an emergency motion there, a special conference is being held on it in November.

Developments since then — the announcement in July 1982 of the Tories' plans to privatise BT, and, in September, the leak of a Department of Industry confidential paper stating that BT should cut its workforce by 45,000 by 1987 — may make the Brookes Report look out of date.

But some of its findings, and the UCW executive's response to them, need looking at, especially after the day of action against privatisation on October 20.

The report considers five options for the next 20 years.

Option 1: closing down the operator service. This was discounted as a serious possibility.

Option 2: Maintaining a minimal traditional operator service and reducing this as swiftly as technological advances allow.

Option 3: Option 2 plus new 'profitable' services. These new services would be at the discretion of the telephone manager in the area.

Option 4: Option 2, plus other front office services. New technology will make it possible to give skilled customer-contact staff, like operators, access to straightforward information. This option means that operators should be able to have access to databanks and provide information which has previously been provided by CPSA/SPOE grades.

Option 5: is a combination of options 3 and 4.

The Report also contains interesting calculations on restricting the hours of services, and the savings that would result:

- Closing down all services from 6pm to 8am: 37% saving.
- Closing down all services from 11pm to 8am. 999 calls to be transferred to other authorities — 8.1%.
- Concentrating all existing work to a single unit in a telephone manager's area at 11pm. For example, if there are four exchanges in an area, three would close at 11pm and their work would be transferred to the remaining one — 0.9%.
- Closing down the directory inquiry service from 6pm to 8am — 11.3%.
- Closing down directory inquiries at 6pm to 8am and concentrating all other work in a single unit — 17.3%.

The report then goes on

to consider equipment strategy, and suggests that more power should be devolved to telephone managers to introduce modernisation like computerised directory inquiries. Changes could be phased in according to local circumstances — and where there is a weak union locally.

It would be difficult for operators to get national agreement on a shorter working week, and the necessary health safeguards to work on VDUs, if new technology is introduced area by area. And this also opens the door to local productivity deals, which BT has had in mind.

Measures recommended in the Brookes Report for the next ten years include:

- charging more for services,
- charging for services like directory inquiries to discourage use,
- limited access to the operator,
- introducing new technology quicker.

The more strategic measures include proposals not only to introduce computerised directory inquiries earlier, but to give business direct access to the computer — bypassing the operator. Eventually this access would also be available to residential subscribers. In August BT's computer information service Prestel announced that 100,000 householders are to be offered free adaptors so that their TV sets can use the service.

The idea is called Project Y, and although the aim is to encourage banking and shopping from home, BT are also looking at ways to save labour costs.

Big business in the print also has a lot to lose by such developments. There

was a flurry recently when the Bell Telephone Co. in the States made moves to bring out an electronic version of its local 'yellow pages'.

An instant coalition of local newspaper publishers let out a scream of rage, and the idea was quietly — but temporarily — scrapped.

On overall plans for the next 20 years, the Brookes report avoids a specific recommendation, but leans towards Option 2 — minimal traditional operator service, to be reduced as quickly as technology allows — with flexibility to allow BT to take advantage of any commercial or technological opportunity.

The number of operators employed at present is about 29,000. The report expects staff requirements to be 'stabilised' at about 4,000 sometime around the year 2005-6.

What has been the UCW executive response to this report? It complains on the first page of its special report that BT "are now thinking as business people and no longer as people involved in a public service". It then chastises the members for asking for a special conference on the Brookes Report!

Recommendation

The UCW executive is prepared to recommend to its members to obtain existing work, based on existing services, even where this work is currently performed by other grades — fellow trade unionists.

It is also happy to recommend cooperation with the introduction of new operator-based technology (computerised directory inquiries, etc.) with no safeguards as to who should operate this — the subscribers or the operators, no safeguards on its introduction by telephone managers' discretion, and no introduction of a shorter working week. They make no mention of defending jobs and services as they exist now.

Unity

Official union leadership policies make it difficult for UCW members at a local level to work in a united way with other BT unions, especially the POEU and CPSA Post and Telecoms section — whom it is our aim to amalgamate with.

The POEU's position has long been one of support for the splitting of posts and telecoms. They have argued that if telecom is 'freed' from posts, the inevitable profitability of telecom will ensure continued employment and prosperity for their members (very few of whom are on the postal side).

But it is that very profitability which encourages the Tories to liberalise and privatise the industry, and thus threatens the jobs that the split is supposed to protect.

The UCW saw the Bill to split posts and telecom as a threat: this meant that the UCW and the POEU, the largest unions affected, were divided from the start. Despite this, the unions mounted a campaign against the Bill on the basis of opposition to its provisions to end the public monopoly on telecoms.

The Bill, of course, went through, and during all this time there was no effort to involve the unions' mem-

bership in active opposition. At no stage was industrial action mentioned, despite the fact that workers in the gas industry were successfully defending the gas showrooms from being sold off at the time.

Now BT faces a competitor: Project Mercury, a consortium of Cable & Wireless, BP and Barclays Bank, headed by Michael Edwardes.

POEU branches sent in a number of resolutions to their annual conference to mount a vigorous campaign in opposition.

Debate was restricted and no decision was taken. It doesn't help, either, that ASTMS came out in support of Project Mercury in August. In their evidence to the Hunt inquiry on cable television they stated: "It does not mean that existing developments in communication systems such as Project Mercury should not be supported... there is already evidence that its inception has acted as a stimulus to BT".

No fight

ASTMS has about 2,000 members with negotiating rights in Cable & Wireless, which was itself a product of the Tories' asset-stripping policies.

Sold off to the market in November 1981, its latest figures record a pre-tax profit of £97.7 million, compared to £62 million in its last year as a nationalised company. Did ASTMS campaign against its privatisation?

It is worthwhile looking at BT's response to Project Mercury. Their natural answer is to cut the charges for the services on which competition is emerging, and to compensate by rais-

Michael Edwardes heads Project Mercury

ing prices in areas where the old monopoly remains intact.

Most noticeably these are local calls, and quarterly line rental.

Over the two-year period 1980-1, BT introduced three tariff increases.

January 1980 — 12.5% increase.

November 1980 — 20% increase.

November 1981 — 9.5% increase.

Altogether a 50% increase: and to make matters worse, the November 1981 increase was spread unevenly to 're-balance' BT's pricing structure and to remove — in line with a government diktat — the practice of long distance calls subsidising local calls.

Business

BT wants this 're-balancing' not only to make the loss-makers pay for themselves, but also to make BT's service more attractive to business customers.

From November 1981 the unit fee was increased from 4.0p to 4.3p, and the time allowance on local calls was reduced.

Increases for trunk call charges were well below those for local calls. The overall average increase on local calls was 26%, on trunk calls under 56 km 7.5%, and on trunk calls over 56 km, 17.7%.

The Post Office Users' National Council has pointed out that these figures are misleading. Because of the reduction in time allowed per unit, the real increase on a 3-minute local call was 115%.

The November 1981 price increases have effectively meant a public hand-out to big business of £56 million. BT chairman Jefferson believes that privatisation will mean a further 50% increase for resident-

ial customers — and the handout to business will be even greater.

A 50% increase, based on 1981-2 BT revenue of £5.7 billion, of which domestic users contributed £1.9 billion, would amount to £950 million!

Attacks

There is an alternative to these attacks by BT and the government.

A shorter working week and work-sharing on full pay, together with proper health and safety standards are the basic requirements needed for new technology to benefit the workforce.

Yet most important is the increasing need for amalgamation between the UCW, the POEU and CPSA (P&T) to combat the 'divide and rule' tactics of both management and trade union executives.

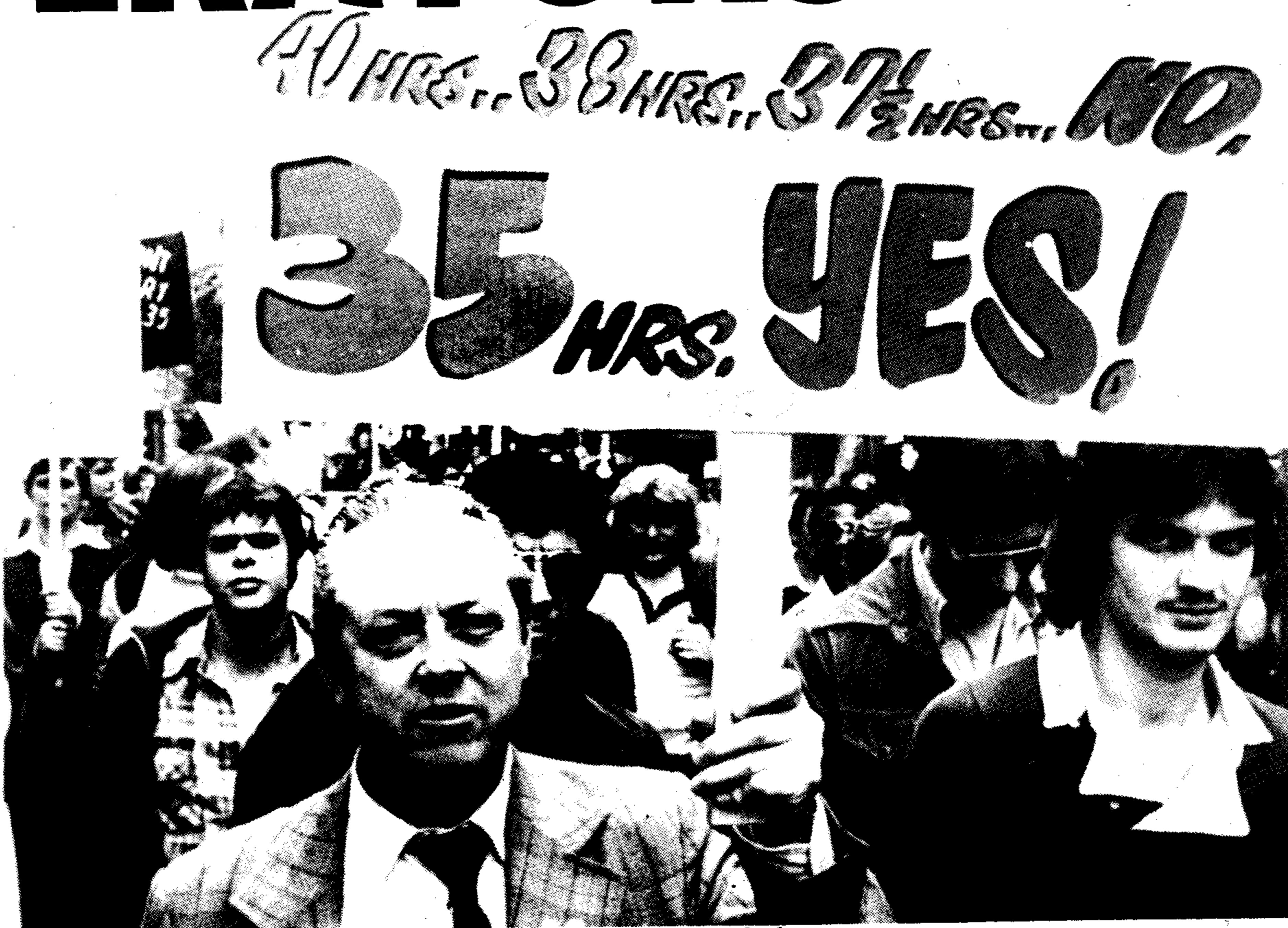
Ultimately the only thing that will stop privatisation of BT is the combined strength of those unions in industrial action.

The executives of these unions are prepared to see privatisation go through, and see the only course of action is to 'convince' members and customers to vote Labour at the next election.

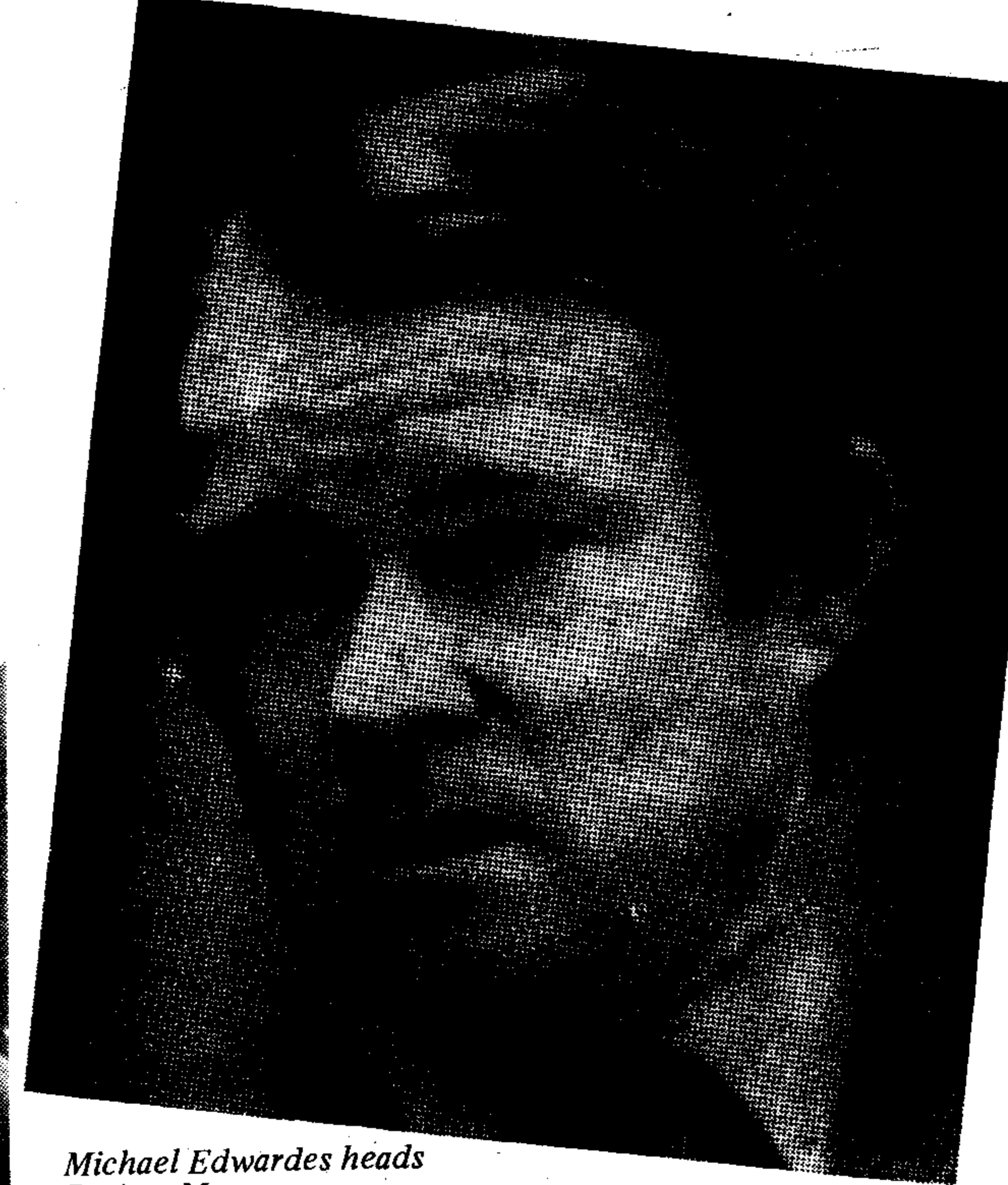
Action

But with the Labour Party NEC and PLP in the control of the right wing there is no guarantee of them carrying out Party policy. Extra-parliamentary action has to be the only way to defend jobs in BT — this fight should also be linked with others on the Tories' list of nationalised industries for privatisation. In the words of Gilbert and Sullivan, Thatcher has 'got a little list, and none of them will be missed'.

The working class has to defend its public services — or they will be missed!



The shorter work week is central to a fight to defend jobs and living standards



Michael Edwardes heads Project Mercury

£36 for a 60 hour week!

TGWU IGNORES HOSTEL STRIKERS

Martin Thomas reports

'I take home £36 a week', one of the pickets outside the Mount Pleasant hotel last Saturday told me. 'That's for 60 hours'. What about overtime? 'That's including overtime, at time and a third. I work as a night porter — five 12 hour shifts'.

It was a mass picket, about 100 strong, in support of 42 TGWU strikers at Arlington House hostel in Camden. The owners of Arlington House Rowton Hotels — also run two other hostels and three hotels in London, and the strikers are regularly picketing the hotels.

By pickets, and blacking supplies, they aim to hit Rowtons' business at the hotels — the Mount Pleasant (Calthorpe Street) the Grand in Southampton Row, and the London Park at the Elephant and Castle.

'This show of solidarity is a first move in stepping up the dispute', convenor Jack Jenkinson told me. 'Hope-

fully we'll be spreading the action further.'

On the Monday, the picket line at Arlington House was joined by Ken Cameron (general secretary FBU), George Guy (general secretary of the sheet metal workers), Tim Webb (national officer of ASTMS) Ken Livingstone (GLC Labour leader and formerly a Labour councillor in Camden), Harriet Harman (newly elected Labour MP for Peckham), and many others.

The strikers had called on all general secretaries to join the picket because they themselves were in court fighting attempts by Rowtons to evict them from

their rooms in the hostel (the court case is expected to last some weeks).

Moss Evans, general secretary of the strikers' own union, was not there. But that's part of a long story.

The strike is over wages — and jobs, now that Rowtons have sacked the strikers. The average take-home pay at Arlington House, a hostel for single men, was £28 for a bed-maker working 58 hours, £35 for a doorman working 60 hours, £32 for a cook doing 50 hours, and £33 for canteen staff on a 60 hour week. A toilet man get only £27 take-home for 50 hours.

Arlington House —

where recognition for the TGWU was won by a strike this April — is the only part of Rowtons that is unionised, apart from some women workers in the hostel in Lambeth.

Blacking is vital to win the dispute. At Mount Pleasant, the strikers have managed to get blacking for most beer supplies and, most important, of oil — which is used for heating there.

But no thanks to the TGWU. 'The help we've had is non-existent', said Jack Jenkinson. 'They took five weeks to make the strike official, and that was only after we had a sit-in at the regional office.'

'They've given no support to this mass picket, apart from the district official, Phil Pearson, who has been pretty good. In fact, the TGWU tried to block the strike. They said we were tearing up the agreement.'

'All the blacking we've had to organise ourselves, though it would have been much easier for the TGWU officials to do it.'

'We need support from the labour movement — finance, bodies on the picket lines, and resolutions through TGWU branches.'

At Arlington House, Jack Jenkinson told me, 'The kitchens are shut complet-

ely. But they're using contract cleaners - paid £24 a day - and uniformed security guards, who we believe cost £30 an hour!'

'One person was found dead in his room recently, and he'd been dead for three days. Rowtons say that's due to the strike, but I'd say the security guards are not doing their job. There have been fires at Arlington House during the dispute, and the strikers have always been the first on the scene to put them out. The security guards have been nowhere.'

'Camden Council said they would provide meals on wheels, and we agreed to allow them through the picket line. But we found that one day 40 or 50 meals had been left over. The management re-heated these meals, sold by the council at 24p, and sold them for £1.10.'

'But we've had fantastic support from the residents. Rowtons fill all the jobs by advertising internally.'

They've been advertising for four weeks now, and not a single resident out of 600 or 700 has taken a job.

'Recently they've organised themselves into a residents' association, and a couple of them are on the picket line with us today. Some are also organising to refuse to pay rent.'

All Rowton hotels are making a loss, and are subsidised by the hostels. Arlington House made £281,000 profit last year, 61% of Rowtons' total profits.

Yet Rowtons want to get rid of the hostels and concentrate on the hotels. Jack Jenkinson said, 'I think the reason is pressure from the council to modernise. They reckon they'll be forced to carry out improvements at Arlington House which will cost £1.5 to £2 million and reduce the capacity from 1066 to 500.'

'But I can't fully understand it. Unlike Camden, Lambeth and Tower Hamlets councils are putting no pressure on Rowtons, and even in Camden it could be two or three years before they get through all the legal procedures.'

The accommodation at Arlington House — which is part of the 'wages' for all the workers — is almost all 7 foot by 5 foot cubicles. 'You can easily touch both sides of the room by stretching your arms' said Jack Jenkinson. 'There is very poor ventilation and lighting, and the heating in winter is often non-existent. And the food they buy is usually very poor quality'. Camden council has decided to take over Arlington House. Jack Jenkinson told me how things stand.

'Rowtons are asking £3 million. They say it's a business. Camden says it shouldn't be, and I think they're right. I don't agree with Camden paying £3M but if it comes to it, they should. It's people, not money'.

However, the purchase is sure to take months. In the meantime, the dispute must be won. Blacking and support on the picket lines are what's needed to do that.

■ Pickets from 7am every day at Arlington House, Arlington Road, Camden, and at the hotels. Donations c/o Camden Labour Centre, 8 Camden Road, London NW1. (485 1100).

Roddy rebuffed as DHSS fight on

THE industrial action at the Oxford and Birmingham DHSS offices over staffing levels nearly came to an abrupt end last week.

For seven weeks, Erdington office has been on strike. Rapid escalation has brought five other offices and more than 500 strikers out.

Oxford supplementary benefits office separately and spontaneously came out on strike five weeks ago and was eventually given official backing by the two unions involved, CPSSA and SCPS.

The Government wishes to cut 7000 jobs in the DHSS by April 1983. It was obvious, therefore, that they were prepared to take on the unions in Birmingham and Oxford.

Last week, they made an offer of 52 temporary posts, to be shared between all the Birmingham and Oxford offices — posts that will disappear before March 1983 by natural wastage.

That this offer was derisory can be seen by the fact that on management statistics alone, Oxford was entitled to 23 extra permanent posts, plus up to a dozen more for local factors.

The Government was also prepared to offer a joint review of the staffing system, but in return the unions were to pledge the lifting of their national overtime and casuals bans, as well as signing a virtual 'no strike' clause on cuts and staffing until the review was completed in March 1983. This agreement would have ended the CPSSA's campaign against public expenditure cuts, as

Rod Bacon (vice-chair, CPSSA DHSS section, in personal capacity) reports on why DHSS strikers in Birmingham and Oxford rejected a deal proposed by their left-wing union president, Militant supporter Kevin Roddy

well as resulting in an inglorious defeat for the Oxford and Birmingham strikers.

The DHSS Executive Committee of the SCPS recommended rejection of the offer, but the amazement of the membership taking industrial action the Broad Left DHSS Executive of the CPSSA recommended acceptance.

What is behind this?

In January of this year, plans were laid for a membership consultation, asking for support for non-cooperation with new procedures leading to staffing cuts in the DHSS. This non-cooperation would be backed up by all-out strike action if members were suspended for following union policy.

This radical programme was moved by a supporter of the Militant tendency, which is the largest grouping in the CPSSA Broad Left. Members of the CPSSA Socialist Caucus group, which includes supporters of Socialist Organiser, joined forces with Militant on it.

It is now apparent, however, that Militant's major objective was to embarrass the then right wing controlled National Executive Committee and to make political capital for the Broad Left if the NEC refused to sanction the policy.

In May the Broad Left won by a landslide in the

CPSSA national elections and had to honour its policy of fighting the cuts in the DHSS. The consultation went ahead in June and produced a small majority in favour of industrial action, with a substantial number of abstentions.

It was clear that any fighting campaign would require firm and decisive leadership from the Broad Left dominated executives. The Militant tendency showed no relish for such a task and immediately began to back-pedal, interpreting the results of the consultation as an indication that no real fight was possible.

Very soon negotiations

commenced on a minimal clause to avoid compulsory redundancies and transfers. Management, scenting victory, pressed a hard line in negotiation. Whilst the leadership talked, the members in Birmingham faced the realities and struck.

It was a belief that in the circumstances any offer on staffing could be regarded as a victory, and a lack of faith in the membership's ability to fight for jobs, that led to the extraordinary decision to recommend acceptance to the strikers.

In Oxford the offer was unanimously rejected and in Birmingham the result

was 427 for rejection, 26 for acceptance. The members on strike have saved the union from a disastrous defeat.

The fight must now go on. Socialist Caucus members and their allies have continually argued for extensive industrial action in defence of jobs. We, of course, voted on the executive against the offer.

It is important, however, that the maximum unity is achieved in the Broad Left to escalate the strike, raise money for the strikers and develop the campaign against the cuts. Fortunately, the Broad Left, including the Militant tendency, have accepted the result and

have realised that the strikers must be supported. An escalation has already begun with the South Yardley office in Birmingham being brought out on strike.

It will be a tremendous struggle, especially at the present time, after the results in the NUM and in British Leyland. There is no guarantee of victory. Even if we fail, at least we will not have sold our right to strike and our overtime ban.

The rank and file membership in Oxford and Birmingham have shown the way. The Broad Left 'leadership' must follow and organise for victory.



The Birmingham strikers rejected the official union recommendation to accept by a huge majority

Maps victory

AT STANFORDS Map Shop in London management have agreed to reinstate all the sacked strikers (including their shop steward Paul Hobbs, whom they had previously refused to reinstate), and recognise their union.

There is still a dispute over new work contracts which management was agreed as a condition of reinstatement. Negotiations are going on through ACAS on this point.

Social workers fight privatisation

by Teresa Munby

STRIKING social workers in Birmingham have stepped up the fight against sackings and the introduction of privatisation of the city's social services.

The management consultative company, Price Waterhouse, employed by the city council, has ostensibly been given the job of conducting an "efficiency study" with a view to making "cost cutting changes" — i.e. cuts.

Nobody employed by Social Services is under any illusions about its real job, however, that of laying the basis (with the information collected) for a massive programme of privatisation.

It was because of this awareness, and NALGO's and NUPE's policy of non-cooperation with Price Waterhouse that the sackings, followed by a mass walk-out of some 9,500 council employees, occurred.

The last week of October saw the real battle beginning — maintaining and extending the strike in the face of attempts by the bureaucracy of both unions to weaken and deflect the action.

First, the day after the walk outs, NALGO ordered all except social workers back to work.

NUPE, following suit, promised strike pay only to social workers and those on strike who worked in establishments where NALGO was on strike and in the majority.

In other words, NUPE members were told in no uncertain terms that they could not initiate any action, only follow NALGO.

"This is NALGO's dispute, not ours" was the refrain heard over and over.

The following week showed how determined were the strikers, despite



NALGO's weak leadership threatened the strike's success

NUPE and NALGO's weak leadership.

By the end of last week emergency cover had been removed from virtually all of the 13 area offices (from which the majority of social workers are based).

Emergency cover had been organised and provided by the strikers, but where management had gained entry into the offices, this was withdrawn leaving management running the offices.

Duty

By the middle of the week the emergency duty telephone workers (who provide an emergency service across the whole of the city) had all come out.

When a leading NALGO steward was named as the first defendant in a list of about 20 in an ex parte injunction (ordering relaxation of picketing of an area office) obtained by management, one area office was totally abandoned.

Management had presumably sought the

injunction in order to have access to files. It is anticipated that the law will be used further to make social workers attend in court by the use of witness summonses.

Since some of these cases involve child abuse, some social workers may well feel the necessity of attending court rather than allowing children to return home (the immediate effect of lapsing of a court order) despite the obvious weakening effect this will have on the strike.

While questions of this sort may involve "professional" considerations, the strikers need to be clear on the management's use of the law and police. When Price Waterhouse were turned away from an area office one morning by a 150 strong picket, they were then allowed in in the afternoon when escorted by large numbers of police; yet this was hailed as a 'victory' because no one was arrested!

Fears of losing their jobs after the dispute is

over as a result of being arrested appear to blind even the more experienced activists to the principled position of fighting any such victimisation as and when it happens.

Weak

Weak picketing, which fears of arrests creates, will certainly not win the strike.

The major problem facing the strikers is the extending of the strike and the organisation and provision of emergency cover.

Previous social work strikes in Liverpool and Tower Hamlets, lasted for many months. The provision of emergency cover apparently maintained most of the essential services and thereby weakened the effectiveness of the strike action.

In Birmingham, the problem of emergency cover has been most acute in the residential childrens homes (other homes have been on a NALGO exemption list). At the beginning

of the strike these were operating under emergency cover — but very shortly the workers in these homes became frustrated by the fact that the emergency cover they were providing was greater than normal staffing levels!

It was partly this factor and partly their history of militancy from a Tory attempt in 1978 to close all childrens homes, that led to the decision to take the children from some homes and hand them over to management.

With the childrens' cooperation (many of whom had been expressing solidarity with their social workers) this was done and the management took control of the children.

When this tactic was repeated the next day the management called the strikers' bluff and in a typically callous way refused to take any responsibility for the children and went home.

This, together with NALGO's decision not to make this action official resulted in utter chaos and confusion that seriously threatened the whole of the strike at the end of the first week.

Although seemingly a good idea, the effect of such a tactic was to play into the hands of management by giving them complete control. To effectively strengthen and expand the strike, all residential homes must be occupied under the control of the strikers, who must be prepared to take "unofficial" action to win this strike and the battle against privatisation.

There are 12,000 NUPE members alone employed by the council.

If NUPE took the lead against privatisation and the cuts and called for all-out action in NUPE with supporting action from other unions it could stop the Tory council of Birmingham dead in its tracks

NO RETREAT ON CIVIL SERVICE PAY!

FOR THREE successive pay rounds, the Tories have beaten the civil service unions, and now they are preparing for round 4 in 1983.

A 3½% cash limit for public sector pay bargaining was announced as the inquiry into civil service pay headed by Judge Megaw concluded.

The Megaw report recommends the scrapping of the previous method of pay bargaining, based on 'fair comparison' with other employers. It proposes a number of strict controls on civil service pay bargaining, calculated not only further to reduce civil servants' living standards but to cripple the unions.

Besides recommending very limited access to any arbitration system, Megaw wants the introduction of US-style 'cooling off periods' before industrial action on pay.

Internally they want to see 'job evaluation' techniques, and the use of 'management consultants'. 'Market forces' should be considered, and any figures arrived at by comparison with outside industry revised downwards on grounds of civil servants' greater job security.

As part of the build-up towards the 1983 pay fight, a special delegate conference has been called for December 9 by the executive of the CPSA, the biggest civil service union. Conference delegates will have to decide whether to go along with the Megaw inquiry conclusions, fix the claim for 1983, and decide the type of industrial action to be organised.

The reaction of the CPSA executive so far has not been adequate to prepare the membership for the fight.

For reasons of 'realism', they have gone for a meagre £12 claim, and for a phased

introduction of a £90 minimum wage.

The Left needs to campaign for a wage increase of not less than £20 flat rate. CPSA members have suffered declining living standards over the past four years. If the argument is that a low target of £12 will seem more 'realistic' and is more likely to involve the members, then the CPSA leadership are kidding themselves.

Either we have good arguments for our claim, and the Research Department figures on comparative rates of similar workers support us, or some sort of game is being played.

The serious danger is that in the search for unity with the other civil service unions, the CPSA EC may have sold short the lower-paid grades that it organises before the fight begins.

The 1983 pay fight has one major difference for all the civil service unions. On the previous pay claims, the union leadership drew 'legitimacy' from the semi-official figures published by or drawn from the government Pay Research Unit.

But now PRU has been scrapped, and in 1983 the civil service unions stand on our own both in the arguments for the claim, and in the way we are going to have to fight.

Unlike previous years, there is neither the money nor the will for a long drawn out strategy of selective strikes. The only alternative now is all-out industrial action.

There must be a fight for such a policy at the CPSA special conference, together with plans to protect claimants and the unemployed from the effects of the action and secure their support.

Gay disco closed

by Will Adams

Movements, a gay disco run each Saturday in an Islington pub, has been forced to close after an attack by a group of skinheads. The disco, which had regular attendances of 300 lesbians and gay men, was one of the few non-commercial gay discos in London.

This attack came after a series of attacks on people leaving the disco. In one of these, three men waiting at Angel tube station were set upon and one was thrown on the rails.

The attack on the disco started when skinheads in the pub started throwing bottles into the bar where the disco was being held. Then they started smashing up the bar.

The pub management called the police who threw out not only the skinheads but also the gay disco-goers.

The organisers of the disco, London Gay Workshops, say they no longer have any confidence in the pub management or in the local police to protect the disco. As they feel unable to guarantee the safety of people attending the disco, they have decided to close down.

They are currently investigating other premises in London, and hope to reopen soon.

Problems — and Policies

The unemployed By Chris Erswell

WHAT IS the socialist alternative to all the government's cheap labour schemes? How can we gain the right to a real job for everyone, with real wages?

In each area, unemployed and employed workers can begin this task by holding workers' inquiries into the public services and facilities needed by working people; and by drawing up alternative workers' plans for reopening closed factories and for expansion of direct labour departments, hospitals, schools,

social services, etc.

Along with this should go the demand to open the books of the local authorities and the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) to reveal the colossal profiteering by private firms, both as suppliers of public services (drug companies in the NHS, educational suppliers and publishers, banks and insurance companies) and as 'sponsors' for MSC programmes and exploiters of cheap non-union labour.

Such investigation of

capitalist profiteering is the basis for demanding the nationalisation, under workers' management, of all such private firms parasitically feeding off public services; for their integration into a fully publicly-owned services sector.

How will this be financed? The very question shows the irrationality of capitalism — a system where new wealth cannot be produced because of... lack of wealth.

The banks and financial institutions should be nationalised, and investment and credit brought within a rational economic plan — which, however, is possible only if we have a real workers' government.

Drawn

Unemployed workers must be drawn into the struggle against current Tory attempts to privatise the existing public services, and thus create the unity in



action of unemployed and employed.

We should also organise the unemployed to support the NHS workers in the defence of living standards, by swelling the picket lines. In this way the unemployed can be increasingly transformed into the ally of the labour movement, instead of a reserve army of scab labour.

The MSC schemes should be scrapped, and all the job programmes incorporated into the relevant expanded public service departments, where the unions are well organised. Only such a policy can abolish the undermining of the unionised public services by the non-unionised MSC programmes doing the same work.

There is absolutely no need for the MSC schemes except as a means of not paying a decent wage for what should be work done by expanded public service departments. A programme of public works must be centred on the existing public services, not used as a means of dismantling them.

Socialist Organiser

Mellish only after the job

HEALEY'S HEAVIES TAKE OVER

LAST Wednesday, 27th, the Labour and trade union right wing consolidated their victory at the Blackpool Labour Party conference.

At the first meeting of the new National Executive Committee, they swept left-wingers off the key sub-committees. The Organisation Sub-committee and the Youth Sub-committee, in particular, now have solid right-wing majorities.

Compromise proposals from general secretary Jim Mortimer were swept aside. Michael Foot abstained on each vote as the

right wing pressed ahead.

But the votes at the NEC do not settle everything!

Sid Weighell's fate shows the right wing trade union leaders that they face a threat of revolt in their rear. There is no mandate from the trade union rank and file for a witch-hunt.

If the Labour Left turns to energetic, concerted organising in the unions, we can cut the ground from under Basnett, Duffy, and Grantham.

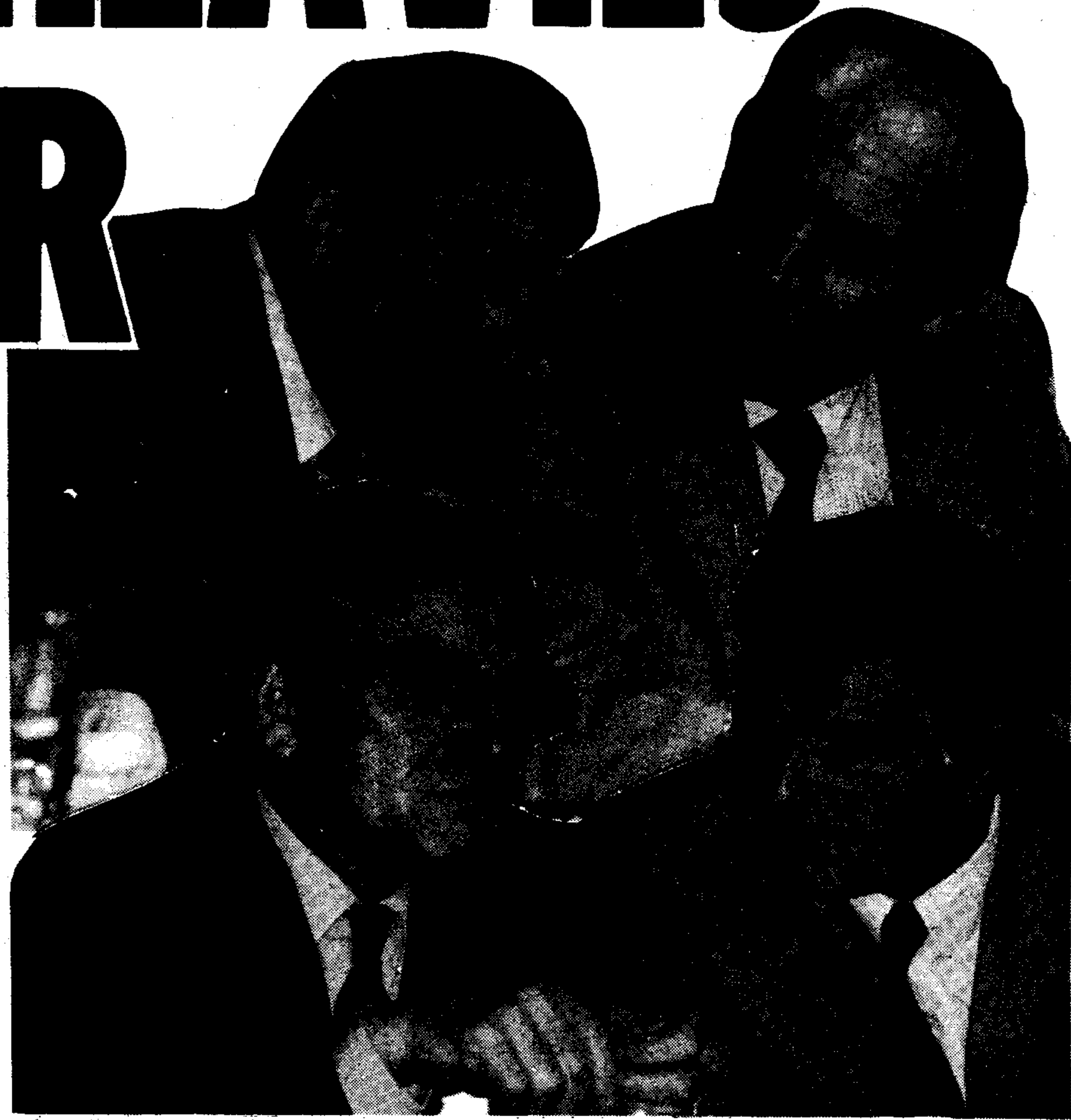
The Constituency Labour Parties are almost unanimous against a witch-hunt. Bob Mellish's resign-

ation will put the NEC to the test on CLPs' right to choose their own Labour candidate. Bermondsey CLP executive, and CLPs elsewhere, are determined to defend Peter Tatchell as Labour's chosen candidate.

Delegates from 101 CLPs last Saturday voted to refuse to expel socialists under the 'register', and to stand firm even if the NEC threatens to disband them.

If Militant falls victim, other left-wingers will follow. If left-wing activists are axed, left-wing policies will be chopped too.

The fight to create a real working class political alternative to the Tories — to make possible a 'Labour' government that has answers to the rampaging crisis of British capitalism — is inseparable from the fight against the witch-hunt.



Chapple and Basnett have got the bit between their teeth. But they haven't won yet!

Peter Tatchell
comments on
Bob Mellish's
decision to
force a by-
election in
Bermondsey

BOB Mellish's resignation has less to do with differences with the local Labour Party than his desire to take up a highly-paid job as vice-chair of the Tory London Dockland Development Corporation, at the invitation of Michael Heseltine.

This Corporation, with Bob Mellish's support, has agreed to luxury flats on Corbett's Wharf at well over £100,000 each, when the local people in the area desperately need better housing.

Bob Mellish has also supported the Hay's Wharf scheme to build the equivalent of 14 Centre Point office blocks on the Bermondsey riverside when many local estates in the immediate vicinity are in a terrible state of disrepair and urgently need replacing.

The Docklands Corporation has also been proposing the development of two yacht marinas in Surrey Dock, which will not be at all for the benefit of local people.

Local people do not support the policies of the London Docklands Development Corporation. They want to see low-rise council housing with gardens, and new industry to create jobs for the unemployed.

These are the policies which I am fighting for, together with the local Labour Party.

It is not us, but Bob Mellish, who is unrepresentative and out of touch with the interests of the Bermondsey community.

If Bob Mellish has been such a good MP as he and others claim, why then is Bermondsey in such a mess? On the doorsteps everyone agrees that the area has declined over the last 30 years during which he has been the MP.

He promised that the docks would close over his dead body. Of course, the docks are gone and Bob Mellish is still alive and has done very well out of the Labour Party.

Not only that, but most of the industry has gone from the area and many of the housing estates which his crony John O'Grady has been in charge of as leader of Southwark council have fallen to a serious state of disrepair.

My critics allege that I am some kind of terrible extremist. In fact the policies I am fighting for are very moderate and reasonable.

All I want to see is that everybody in this country has the right to a job, decent housing, and adequate health care. It is a damning indictment of our political and economic system that so many people are deprived of these things which are, after all, basic human rights.

What about the policies?

Dennis Skinner MP spoke to us about the NEC meeting

EVERYTHING is happening as I forecast at the Tribune meeting at Labour Party conference.

The whole thing has been a long-term right wing plan: to organise a witch-hunt against what they regarded as a weak section, namely the Militant tendency; to pick on parliamentary candidates that they didn't like; and to remove left-wingers on the NEC from the trade union section and the women's section, which are dominated by the Basnett-Grantham - Weighell - Chapple - Duffy block vote.

That's what the Trade Unionists for a Labour Victory is all about. That's what's behind it all.

Don't let anyone get any fancy ideas that it's John Golding being a master tactician. He's just a cipher. The real people behind it are Healey, Basnett, and so on.

They managed to induce NUPE to cast its votes for right winger Anne Davis, and not to vote for Doug Hoyle. The result was that we lost Joan Maynard — and Doug Hoyle, not that

he was the greatest left-winger of all time. It enabled them to increase their majority. Now the majority is with the Healey camp.

But don't get the impression that Dennis Skinner has just discovered that the right wing are after him, and he's crying. I ain't crying!

There's recorded voting next year for the trade unions at Labour Party conference. There will be no wheeler-dealing then. Unions like NUPE and the NUM will have to come down on one side or the other.

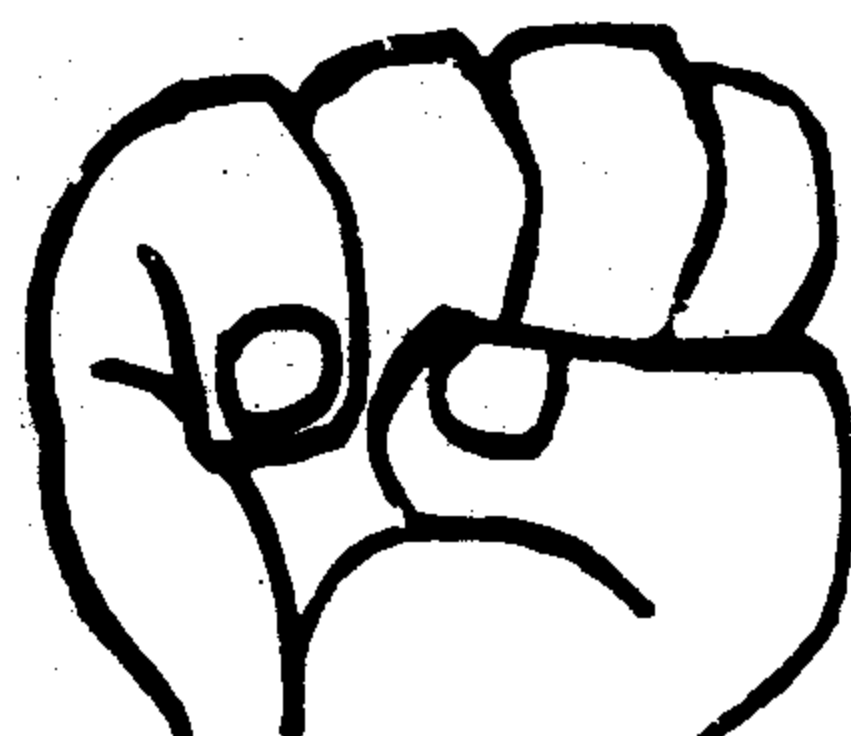
Last year when the Right came to the NEC with an exercise like this, Foot appealed for unity.

This time, when it came to taking Jo Richardson and Frank Allaun off the Home Policy Sub-committee, I said: "We've not heard the Leader speak yet. When is he going to enter the discussion?"

"Last year he was in right at the beginning to try to heal any breaches that might occur. Isn't he going to defend Frank Allaun, his left wing sidekick for the last 30 years, the same man who stood by him when he was being witch-hunted out of the Parliamentary Labour Party?"

"Now then, Mr Foot, are you going to defend Frank Allaun? Because if you can't defend Frank Allaun, how can we put any trust and reliance in you to defend the policies that the right wing want to remove?"

£6000 fund



THANKS to all our supporters who have sent in money to make sure the paper appears this week. We've had contributions from individuals and Socialist Organiser groups: £315.70 for the fund and £400 in payment for papers.

Now we've got the fund drive going again, let's make sure it doesn't stop. We're not out of danger yet!

We still need contributions to the fund, and payment for papers urgently.

Let's have a big drive to complete the Special Fund by the end of the year! Here's a few ideas to help give Socialist Organiser a happy Christmas:

*Christmas is a good excuse for having fun — organise an S.O. Christmas Party! Start some home brew now, and start selling invitations. Get people to donate food, and prizes (eg books) you can raffle.

*Organise a special Christmas jumble sale, for people to stock up with cheap Christmas presents. Book a time and place TODAY, and then get SO supporters to help organise it. Boost your profits: sell refreshments, have a raffle, and start the sale with an auction of the best items.

*Buy your mum a subscription to SO for Christmas, only £5 (3 months); £8.75 (6 months); £16 (1 year).

*Buy the paper a Christmas present: send us in a donation from yourself or a group of readers, and we'll write back and tell you what we bought ourselves.

Let us know what you're doing, and we'll publish the best ideas.

Thanks for contributions to the fund from: Peter McIntyre (Oxford), £15; Bob Fine (London), £30; Tom Cashman (Marathon sponsorship), £15; Chris Hickey (London), £5; Tony Dale (Manchester), £10; Coventry supporters £138.20 from assorted projects; Stoke supporters £25; Stockport supporters £12.50; Simon Temple (Birmingham), £15 from a sponsored walk; and Liz Corbishley, £50.

Thanks for paper money to: Liverpool, Glasgow, York, Durham, Coventry, Cardiff, Leeds, Huddersfield, Basingstoke, Oxford groups.

Thanks also in advance to Leicester for sending a generous cheque — details next week, when we've received it!

Fund total:
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