

Join the
Labour
Party

Socialist Organiser

TEBBIT BILL
IS UPON US!

On December 1 the major provisions of the Tebbit law come into force. On December 7 the TUC is calling a conference of union officials, and on December 4 the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions has a conference (see page 13). But still there is more of a verbal protest than a real fight against Tebbit. This week Socialist Organiser publishes a supplement from the Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights, outlining what the law means. The Mobilising Committee also calls for the trade unions to break collaboration with the Tories, withdrawing from bodies like the NEDC, and for preparation for all-out strike action which can rip up this blatant ruling-class law and defend trade unionists victimised under it.

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Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.110 November 25 1982 (Claimants and strikers, 10p) 25p

NEC struggles to throw out left as SHORE THROWS OUT LABOUR'S POLICIES

"ONE million unemployed... up to a decade ago would have been regarded as an economic disaster of the first magnitude." But such is progress that this 'disaster' is the cherished aim, the glowing promise, of Shadow Chancellor Peter Shore's proposed labour movement alternative to Thatcherism.

With socialist progress re-defined as reaching what would be considered a disaster ten years ago, Shore's plan published this week luckily discovers that this progress can be achieved by economic policies similar to those used by the Tory governments in 1951-64 and 1970-74.

"What ... sets the Labour Party apart is its central commitment to full employment ... The Conservative governments of 1951-64,

and 1970-74, sought to honour that commitment, just as Labour governments did", declares Shore, advocating a return to "the demand-management approach developed by Keynes and applied by governments of both parties in the first three post-war decades."

So here we have the poli-

cies of what used to be called the 'thirteen wasted years of Tory misrule' served up again as a socialist programme!

And what's happened to the policies of Labour Party conference? Squeezed out.

The economic projections contain no reference to the surely significant effects of nuclear disarmament. Public spending is scheduled to rise, but there are no calculations at all relating it to Labour's policies for restoring Tory cuts, improving welfare services, and building new council houses.

A 35 hour week without loss of pay is proposed in Labour's Programme '82. It is not mentioned in Shore's document.

Withdrawal from the EEC is overwhelming Labour policy. Many of us in the Socialist Organiser Alliance would argue that the policy is a nationalist diversion, but policy it undoubtedly is, and it should be reflected in the proposals of Labour spokespersons. It is nowhere in Shore's plan.

Even import controls - a policy which Socialist Organiser energetically opposes, but majority Labour policy - are mentioned only in passing.

'An extension of public

ownership' is referred to on page 7 - and not once again in the remaining 64 pages.

Another major Labour conference commitment is opposition to incomes policy. What does Shore say about this?

"We cannot raise the living standards of those in work as fast as we would wish."

He continues: 'It will be necessary ... to contain the costs which prompt the increases in prices ... (in particular) wage and salary payments.' How? "The alternative to rigging the market against labour is to intervene in the operation of market forces ... (through) a National Economic Assessment."

Here the role of the National Economic Assessment is defined plainly as 'containing' - i.e. keeping down - wages. 'Formal (?) command (?) incomes policies' are later rejected. But clearly a new 'social contract' is the first stage of Shore's programme. And since 'containing wages' is central to the programme, incomes policy of some sort will follow if the social contract doesn't contain them.

An appendix gives Shore's estimates of the rises in real wages on his scheme - 3% in 1982, 1983 and

1984, 1% in 1985, and 0% in 1986.

After all this, we only have the word of Peter Shore and his messing around with computer economic predictions that unemployment will be cut. All that is promised definitely is that public spending will be raised - and the pound will be devalued by 30%.

Devaluation is supposed to make Britain's exports more competitive. What it will certainly do is raise average prices in Britain by about 9 to 12% (on Shore's own figures). Price controls are promised, but who believes they will check the inflation? (Moreover, announced plans for 30% devaluation would surely mean a run on the pound if a Labour government got elected - and so even greater devaluation, even more inflation.)

So Labour's right wing is not only trying to purge socialist activists from the Labour Party. It is also trying to purge the policies decided by Labour conference.

British capitalism is in dramatic decay, in the midst of a capitalist world in slump. The slump will turn into recovery, even temporarily, only as and when the capitalists have stalled wages and imposed speed-up suffi-



Shore: Butskellism is his alternative to Thatcherism

ciently to make it profitable for them to expand production.

The working class needs to rally all its resources to resist, to fight to seize control of the means of production, and to rationally reorganise society.

This decay, and this need form the pressure behind the efforts and strivings of the labour movement over the last three years to reorient itself.

But the same pressure drives Shore and his like to ever more explicit abandonment of any prospect of real social change, ever more abject acceptance of the status quo.

All pretence of socialist criticism of capitalism is absent from Shore's document. "The major cause of instability and recession", it says, is nothing to do with the nature of the system, but just "the pursuit by the Reagan Administration in the USA of monetarist policies".

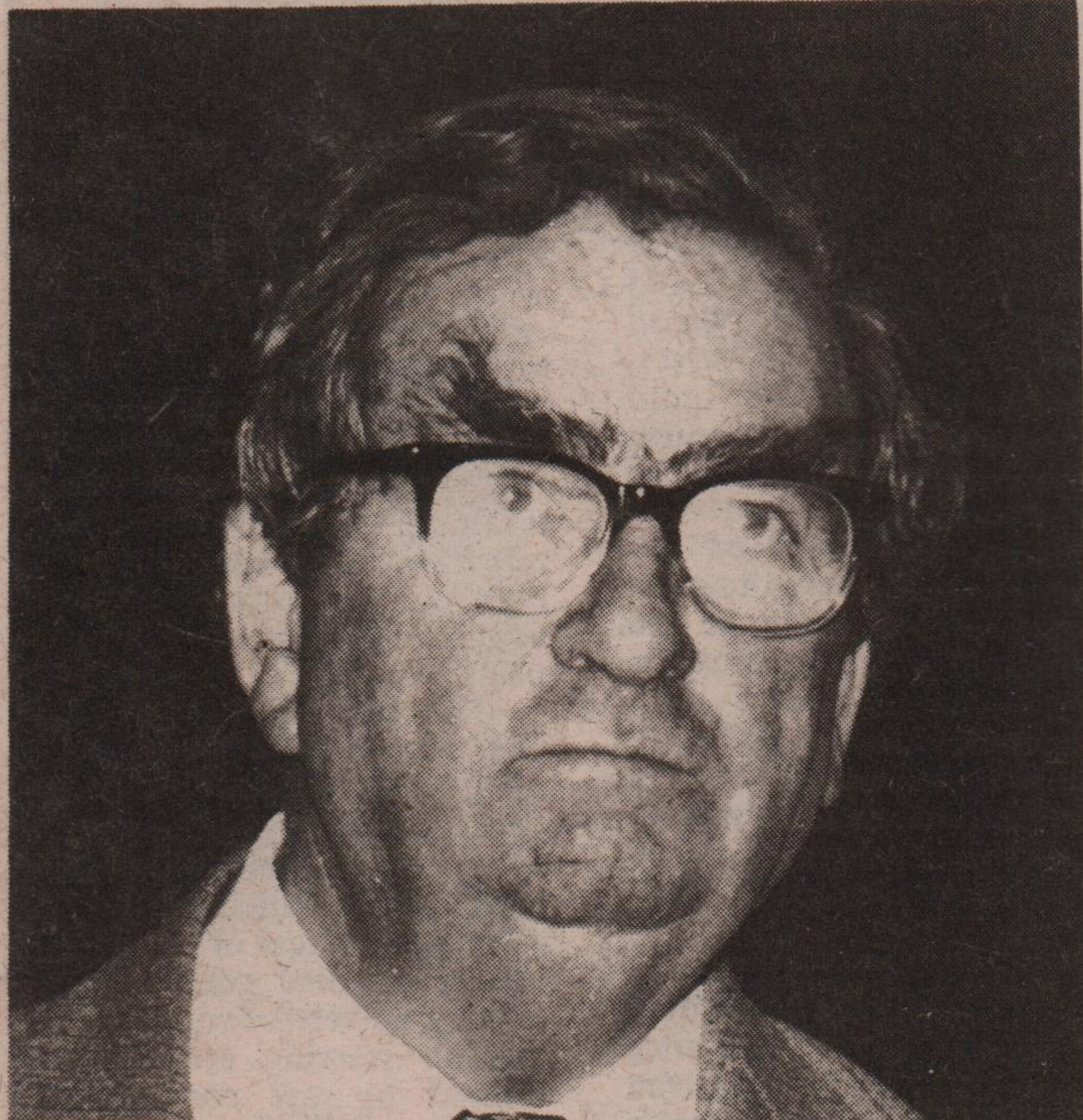
*And Shore is far from suggesting that the cause of these monetarist policies

might be class interest. No: they are apparently pure perversity, because Shore is 'certain' that his policies would improve profits - far more certain than he is about their benefits for jobs and wages!

Shore also says nothing about why the oh-so-beneficial-to-everyone Keynesian policies of 1951-74 were junked by the Labour government after 1975 in favour of monetarism!

Peter Shore and his fellow witch-hunters are proposing that Labour's manifesto should be a miserable re-run of the 1974-9 Labour government's record. If they get their way, they will probably lose Labour the election - or if not that, create a Labour/SDP coalition government or a Labour government that might as well be SDP for all its policies are worth.

That's what the witch-hunters are driving for. That's why every worker has an interest in joining the fight in the Labour Party and unions against the witch hunt and for socialist policies.



Healey: pioneered monetarism years before Howe

Tories' new plan to extend police powers

Front on the force?

ESSAYS by a group of Hendon police cadets leaked to 'City Limits' magazine cast fresh light on allegations of police racism. Asked to write on what they felt about 'Blacks in Britain', all but one of the 17 cadets reflected racism in their essays. In several instances they echoed National Front and other fascist propaganda. One speculated whether 'a 12 bore shotgun can blast a blackman into tiny pieces at 12 yards'. A more charitable cadet simply urged, 'Send them home'. Another admits that: 'It makes me cringe when I see a black bloke going out with a white woman...'. (The blacks must accept that if they are to live in this country, they must fall in line under white British dictators...'. No doubt these credentials will secure the cadets rapid promotion in the force.



The new Bill gives more powers to racist cops

SWEEPING new powers for the police, beneath a thin cosmetic veneer of ineffective 'safeguards' to the rights of arrested suspects are proposed in the Tory government's new Police Bill, unveiled last week.

The package has been described by the National Council for Civil Liberties as possibly 'setting back the cause of law reform by 20 years.'

Ironically, the source of many of the new proposals is the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, supposedly set up to increase the rights of suspects. But its two suggestions which would have done this — taking the power to prosecute out of the hands of the police and into the control of a civilian prosecutor; and introducing new safeguards against telephone tapping — have been ignored by the Tory Bill.

Instead, the new legislation proposes to extend police powers to stop and search people on the street for stolen or prohibited goods. Such powers already exist in London: now they are to apply across the country, opening up thousands of innocent workers, youth, and particularly blacks to further police harassment.

Charged

Figures show that less than 10% of those stopped and searched in London are ever charged with a criminal offence.

The only 'safeguard' offered to the victim of such random police harassment is that the officer must write a report of the incident!

In addition, the Bill would give police the power to arrest for a non-arrestable, minor offence, such as littering, if the person involved refuses to give a name and address. And on the vaguest pretext — simply searching for someone at large who has committed a serious arrestable offence, or 'having regard to a pattern of crime' in an area, the police would be empowered to set up road blocks for up to 7 days.

Having been arrested, the suspect would face further loss of rights under the Tory proposals.

His or her right to see a lawyer might be delayed if police officers judge the alleged offence to be 'serious', they may normally be detained up to 24 hours without charge, or, again if the offence is thought 'serious' by the police, an application could be made by police for a private hearing at which a magistrate could grant a further detention of up to 24 hours.

Suspect

The suspect would have no right to appear at such a hearing, simply to submit a statement in writing; nor would he or she be necessarily allowed a solicitor.

Only after 48 hours detention without charge would a suspect have the

With the help of information from Sarah Spencer at the National Council for Civil Liberties, Harry Sloan reports on the new Bill.

right to appear before a magistrate and to legal representation: and even then a further order could be issued authorising another 24 hour detention without charge.

The Bill would enable a senior police officer to authorise compulsory finger printing and intimate body searches of suspects which at present need a warrant, and extends police rights to enter, search and seize property.

In exchange, the flimsy 'rights' offered by the Bill are not worth the paper they are written on. Though the Royal Commission had pointed out that a wronged suspect has no effective redress against police breaches of procedures, it made no proposals to remedy this.

Evidence

The NCCL's demand that all suspects be automatically entitled to a solicitor and that any evidence obtained in breach of procedures be ruled inadmissible in court has been ignored.

Instead a face-saving formula for introducing an independent assessment of serious complaints against the police leaves all investigations in the hands of the police themselves.

And a plan for 'conciliation' over minor complaints would make a police officer responsible for 'reconciling' the two sides — plainly leaving the door open to pressure complainants into dropping their protests.

A new 'double jeopardy' rule would also protect police from complaints which allege criminal misconduct but which the Director of Public Prosecutions has decided not to take to court.

Needless to say, the most rabid right wing elements within the Police Federation will still complain that the powers embodied in this legislation do not go far enough.

But for the labour movement, the proposals must be seen as a further heavy blow at the rights of workers, the unemployed and young people.

Labour MPs and the

trade union movement must be called upon to build a campaign to expose the content of this Bill and the way in which it flies in the face of growing demands within the labour movement that the police be made accountable to elected local authorities.

But as an arm of the state machinery which functions outside the formalities of parliamentary democracy and accountability, and as the frontline defender of the private property and the legalised plunder carried out

daily by the capitalist class, the police force and legal system cannot in the last analysis be reformed to fit the needs of the working class.

Serious demands for accountability must sooner or later result in the conclu-

sion that the only accountable police force would be one based on the disbandment of the present apparatus, and the establishment by a workers' government of local-based patrols under the control of elected labour movement committees.

Youth pledge to fight witch hunt

Last weekend supporters of the paper Class Fighter met to organise the revolutionary left in the Labour Party Young Socialists. Jim Simons reports.



... and no faith in Labour's official leaders

THE Labour Party Young Socialists is the official youth wing of the labour movement. It is led by the Militant tendency. They base the organisation mainly on propagandising their 'bold socialist programme' — which is nearer to the reformist leaders in the labour movement than to revolutionary politics.

Class Fighter supporters in the YS intend to change this situation by transforming the YS into a revolutionary youth movement, by turning it out to the struggles of young workers, black youth, young women, gay youth and the growing nuclear disarmament movement.

That was the clear message from the Class Fighter supporters' conference in Leicester last week.

Representatives from all over the country brought their experiences and knowledge to the conference and collectively set out our policies and plans for the next year.

We heard how Class Fighter supporters had made their mark as the main left opposition in the YS, through our very successful

interventions in YS national events such as the conference, the Summer Camp and the October 16 demonstration.

On the witch-hunts, we made it clear that we would fight to the end for the right to put our politics across freely in our movement. If the right wing tried to restrict the YS through suspending the national committee or stopping our conference, we would fight to defy them and carry on with the conference. We welcomed the setting up of Labour against the Witch-hunt and pledged to take a full part in it.

Many speakers expressed their anger at the way our leaders on the YS National Committee had been handling that fight. We felt that the National Committee should start now to fight the

threat to the left wing, not through the bosses' courts but through a campaign involving the whole left in the party. We are all under threat.

The workshop on building the YS heard a comrade from Huddersfield explain how his YS had been built through campaigning for support for the health workers and for the rights of youth, whilst at the same time organising successful social events like discos and weekend camps.

Women

A large workshop on women's liberation highlighted the oppression of young women.

It discussed the problems of girls' experience in education and how to reach out to

unemployed young women and those in the unions, to help them organise effectively.

The sexism in the YS was seen as a reason why young women have difficulty in getting involved and we agreed to work to make the YS take women's oppression more seriously. We stressed how important it was for us to be involved in broad campaigns such as women's right to a job and the importance of Women's Fightback in organising working class women.

The conference also decided to have a day school on women.

The Gay Youth workshop put resolutions to the conference opposing state repression of gay men and lesbians. It called on Class Fighter to step up its campaigning work both inside the YS and out, and to fight for gay rights among our own supporters.

Trade unions

On trade unions and YOPs, the workshops held very good discussions. We called for democratic and accountable trade union youth sections with advertised conferences. We found in the discussion that youth sections existed in the TGWU, COHSE and the AUEW, and pledged to become involved and to raise political issues such as the right of all young trainees to strike and full pay.

We also recognised that trade unions should have the right to go into schools to give trade union education and decided to launch a campaign on this issue.

Two of those arrested in the now famous Oxford dole sloop told the conference how they were held for ten hours by the police while the corrupt landlords got their stories straight.

The black youth workshops took up the issues of police and state racism as well as pointing to the need to turn to black youth.

A comrade from Poland addressed the conference and warned that the Tories who 'support' Solidarnosc are not welcome. 'They think we're anti-communist. I want to see them when we really win. They won't be very safe in their seats then.'

A Turkish comrade pointed out that all over the world the bosses and the Stalinist leaders work together, while the working class is split. This is why international solidarity is so important.

We took a fraternal speaker from Revolution Youth, Ruth Haswell. She said a great deal about Revo's view of the world situation, but unfortunately little on relations between our groups, except to outline the 'very far reaching' differences. She did make a call for joint work and discussions which we will be taking up.

There were many other discussions throughout the weekend: not all of them can fit in this article. Socialist Organiser welcomes articles arising from the conference discussions.

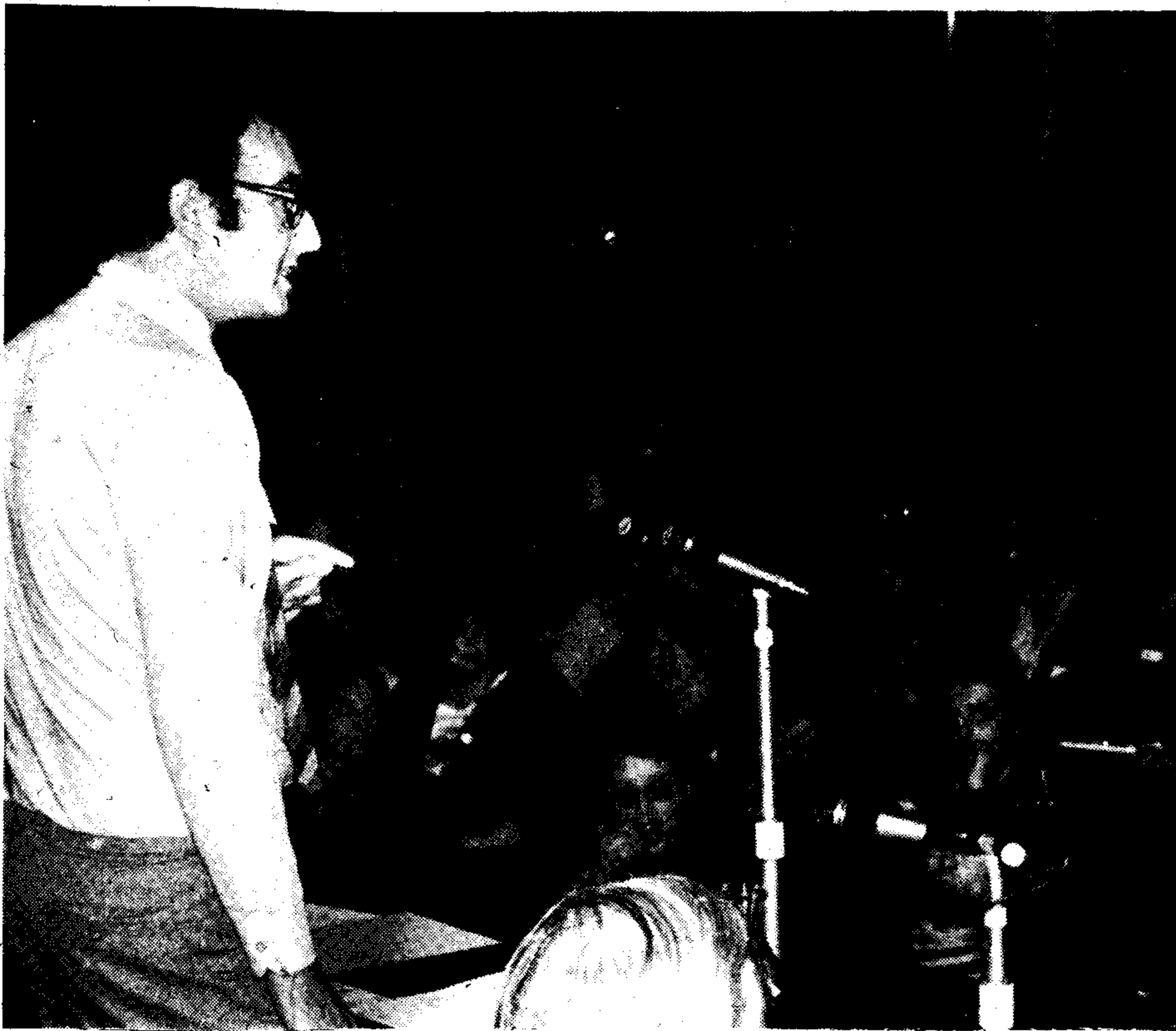
Overall the conference was a big step forward. Many new faces found the conference very motivating and educational, and took supporters cards.

The task now is to take our national success as a model and to apply them to the local work by building up massive, working class-based LPYS branches.

The first test of this will be the regional conferences coming up very soon.

The steering committee elected by the conference must ensure that these tasks are carried out over the next year.

Labour witch hunt



The October 30 Labour against the Witch-hunt conference

STOP THE RETREAT!

John Bloxam reports on the Labour Coordinating Committee AGM and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy executive

LAST weekend saw two defeats for the campaign against the witch-hunt. The Labour Coordinating Committee AGM on Sunday voted about two-to-one to apply for registration, and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Executive Committee meeting on Friday agreed by the same margin to recommend to the CLPD AGM in January that it do the same.

The LCC decision was perhaps the less surprising. Over the last year they have equivocated on the witch-hunt, and the AGM took place against a background of defeat in the EC elections for most of those who have fought against this.

Ann Ceseck and Jon Lansman were kicked off the EC, and Audrey Wise lost her position as vice-chair, as the Clause 4/ILP/Peter Hain grouping tightened their grip on the LCC.

But the shift to the right is not confined to the LCC. Indeed, a joint statement from Peter Hain and CLPD secretary Vladimir Derer is now being circulated arguing that the Labour Party conference decision on registration should be 'recognised', that not only the existing policies but also the existing

leadership should be supported, and that while witch hunts and expulsions are not acceptable we should 'refuse to allow ourselves to be diverted from working for Conference policies and a Labour victory'.

Versions of the statement were presented to the CLPD EC (where we did not reach it on the agenda) and to the LCC AGM where it was carried 72 to 61.

Why did the CLPD EC decide on its recommendation to January's AGM last Friday, instead of waiting until after the result of the CLPD's consultative ballot? The Secretary produced the novel argument that because the December 31 deadline for registration is now up in the air, the NEC might decide at its next meeting to bring it forward!

Conveniently, the EC recommendation thus appeared just before the LCC AGM and in the middle of the CLPD ballot.

More important as a sign of the political method used by sections of the CLPD is an article written by CLPD Treasurer Victor Schonfield in the latest issue of the CLPD bulletin, and circulated to 2000 supporters and affiliates.

His 'argument' in favour of registration amounts to little more than personal abuse and a threat that leading officers of the campaign will split unless they win. It has more in common with James Callaghan and his threat to resign unless abolition of the House of Lords was deleted from the 1979 Labour manifesto, than political debate in a campaign organised to fight against

such abuses.

The recommendation was not, however, the most important decision taken at the CLPD EC. When the EC discussed a recommendation on opposition to expulsions, the following sentence was

deleted on the proposal of Vladimir Derer - 'This AGM calls on CLPs not to carry out any such expulsions, and will oppose any consequent action taken against them'.

Now this particular sentence was also included in the successful resolution to the LCC AGM recommending registration. So we have the situation where the majority of the CLPD EC are to the right of the LCC, and have adopted exactly the same position as Militant.

In the Guardian of Monday 22nd, Lynn Walsh of Militant was quoted as follows on the decision of Islington Central CLP to refuse to expel Peter Taaffe and Ted Grant even if the CLP is threatened with disbandment: 'We think they should fight and that constituency parties should unite against it, but we're not prepared to see it go to the lengths of disrupting the Labour Party in that way'.

Despite the weekend's votes, the fight for an effective boycott of the register is not dead. The LCC decision will certainly give the right wing a boost, and lend credibility to an otherwise discredited witch-hunting mechanism. But while it will be difficult to organise an effective boycott without the CLPD, the same is not true of the LCC.

The CLPD is still decisive, and the fight to stop it



registering remains open - immediately, in the consultative ballot, and then at the AGM where the final decision should be taken.

The CLPD AGM will also decide whether opposition to expulsions will be confined to words and resolutions, or whether the campaign will be prepared to give a lead to CLPs to face down the right wing and publicly throw its weight behind those that do. The issue is central because the success or failure of the witch-hunt will be decided on the issue of expulsions, and it can be stopped only by action, not words.

A wide section of the Labour Party is committed to supporting such action. It is one of the central planks of the policy of Labour Against the Witch-hunt. The LCC is now also committed.

If they can be held to this, and the issue is won at the CLPD AGM, then this weekend's decisions on the register could be relatively minor defeats, and not the first actions in a headlong retreat.

CLPD motions

THE Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is circulating model resolutions for the coming Labour Party regional conferences. This week we publish the model resolutions on the Parliamentary Labour Party and on the rights of Constituency Labour Parties.

Parliamentary Labour Party
"Conference supports proposals to increase co-operation between different sections of the Labour Party and promote the unity necessary for victory at the next General Election by:

1) incorporating the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party into the Party Constitution, and adding to them a commitment to implement Labour Party policies.

2) providing for the major decisions of weekly meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party to be taken by recorded votes which are made available to all the Party's affiliated organisations."

Rights of Constituency Labour Parties.

"This Conference upholds the longstanding rights of Constituency Labour Parties to select parliamentary candidates of their own choice and to decide on membership applications. Conference calls on the Party's National Executive Committee to respect these elementary democratic rights and to endorse duly selected candidates, except in cases where rules have clearly been broken."



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Hands off Hornsey

Excerpts from a letter sent to Labour general secretary Jim Mortimer by Hornsey Labour Party secretary DIANA MINNS

Dear Mr. Mortimer,

It has been said that he (Tariq Ali) should not be a member because he is a former member of an organisation ineligible for affiliation to the Party (International Marxist Group) and that he stood against an official Labour Candidate at the 1979 General Election.

There are many in the Party who have been members of other organisations and who have stood for other Parties in elections; indeed in Hornsey there are two who have stood against

official Labour candidates, that we know of (Max Morris who stood for the Communist Party when they took more votes than the Tory majority in Hornsey and Pat Arrowsmith who was a candidate in Cardiff South East in 1979)...

There is very great anger and frustration that the membership of Tariq Ali should be refused on totally arbitrary grounds. We are advised that the constitution does not grant the NEC powers of arbitrary action over constituency Parties.

Hornsey Party has at no time denied the power of the constitution, the rules of the Party or the authority of the NEC; it does, however, feel that it cannot tolerate decisions handed down to it without explanation or reason.

The Party in Hornsey is a remarkably successful one - the membership is large, about 1,200, and very active. We achieved the best result for Labour in London in the 1981 GLC Election when Tony Hart won the seat for the first time ever and so contributed to regaining the GLC.

In the Borough Council Elections this year, the Hornsey Party held its nine seats on the Council - in one ward with a vastly increased majority.

Success

The success of the Party is due to its strengths within the community and its constant campaigning activities on Party policy; a regular newsletter is produced and delivered to every household and there are many public meetings on a range of issues. There is no element of community life where the Party is not involved in some way.

Clearly the party has had to think very deeply about the issue of the membership of Tariq Ali and the implications of the reported view of the NEC. The last time all branches were asked to consider the matter there were no motions to the GMC hostile to the principle of his membership. It should be noted that the officers of the Party were asked to seek an urgent meeting with the NEC.

Meeting

We consider it right that such a meeting should be with the full National Executive where the Hornsey Party can state its case. We have been advised that it would be a transgression of the Party constitution and the rules of natural justice for us to be denied this hearing...

Yours fraternally,
Diana Minns, Secretary

LAW backs Tatchell

ON Wednesday 24th, as we go to press, the Labour Party National Executive is meeting to discuss the purge against Militant and possible measures against Hornsey and Bermondsey Constituency Labour Parties.

'Labour Against the Witch-hunt' will be lobbying the meeting to demand:
•That the NEC withdraws its threat to disband Hornsey Party by the end of the year, unless it expels Tariq Ali.
•That Bermondsey Party be allowed to stand its chosen candidate, Peter Tatchell,

in the forthcoming by-election.

•That no further action be taken against Militant.
•That the NEC repudiate calls by John Golding, a leading rightwinger on the NEC, for a purge of Campaign for Labour Party Democracy activists.

Pledges

Labour Against the Witch-hunt has been campaigning successfully for pledges from CLPs that:
•They will refuse to recognise expulsions.

•They will give support and recognition to any Party threatened with disbandment.

It will also be campaigning for trade unions to mandate their delegates to the next Labour Party conference to reverse last year's decision to set up a register.

The lobby is the first shot in the campaign, which will be finalised at a London meeting of CLPs, MPs, Young Socialists and trade unions backing the campaign on December 12.

Contact: LAW, 11, Wilderton Rd., London N16 (01-802 1709)



Tatchell

Democracy in Leeds

by Peter James

ON Wednesday 17 November, at a large, specially convened meeting, the Leeds District Labour Party

decided to set up an electoral college for the Leader, Deputy Leader, Chairperson, Chief Whip and Secretary of the Council Labour Group.

The college will be made up one-third of Constituency

Labour Party and Labour Party branch delegates, one-third trade union delegates, and one-third councillors.

The right-wing, in outright opposition to the electoral college, led by the Education Committee chair, Councillor Bernard Atta, was insignificant. The main attempt to dilute the proposals of the Electoral Working Party were led by supporters of the Independent Labour Party (Leeds is their national centre).

They wanted an electoral college of 50% Labour Group and 50% District Party. The Working Group's alternative was narrowly carried.

Amendment

The other amendment the ILP pushed was one to allow the Electoral College not to proceed with an election if the Labour Group was in power. This is in line with their support for short lists of one (which ensured a clear run for that left wing socialist MP Merlyn Rees!) This amendment, too, was defeated.

This victory has to be followed through by ensuring that the Labour Group falls into line, and that full support is given to the Conference called by Manchester District Labour Party on Labour Group Democracy.



As Reagan announces his plans for MX missiles, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament conference takes place this weekend (November 26-27-28) at Sheffield City Hall. It is open to delegates from CND groups and to individual members of CND. Report next week.

International News International News International News

BRAZIL: SHAKY TRANSFER FROM ARMY RULE

Bas Hardy looks at the opposition victory in Brazil's election.

ALTHOUGH the final details of the results are still to come, the recent elections in Brazil will bring dramatic change to the political system, and an opportunity for the development of a radical, perhaps revolutionary, mass Workers' Party.

The military rulers, who have been repressing the democratic and labour organisations for 18 years, hoped to keep their hold on government by ballot-rigging, dirty tricks, and intimidation. "Nothing will change in economic policies", declared their economic minister Delfim Netto before the votes were counted.

Whatever they claim the result to be, the elections are a victory for the major opposition parties.

All the states of central political and economic importance in the country — Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul — have voted against the government's party, the so-called Social Democrats. President Joao Figueiredo, who wanted a gradual dismantling of military rule, is really opening up the floodgates of change.

The governing party won the small states of the interior, areas with a long tradition of 'coronelismo' — rule by party bosses. Mafia-style tactics were employed to maintain this.

The opposition parties probably have the majority of votes cast between them, and we can also count large number of ballot papers 'disallowed' by the regime as votes for the opposition.

The party with the most votes will be the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), which will capture the states of Minas Gerais and São Paulo, and at least the governorship in São Paulo.

This party comes out of what was for years the 'official' opposition to the

regime in the talking shop of a national assembly set up by the generals to give a democratic face to military rule.

The MDB was known as the 'yes, sir!' party because of its mealy-mouthed attitude to repression. In this party are to be found the professional middle class and some sections of the business world not directly tied up to the public sector industries run by the military. The MDB is also supported by the Brazilian Communist Party, which sees it as representing the 'progressive forces'.

The MDB is a pretty disparate movement, which will not maintain its present form in a future parliamentary system.

A large number of Brazilian voters see the solution for the future as a return to the nationalist past. Among these is the veteran Communist Party leader Luis Carlos Prestes, now in his eighties, who went against the Party line to support the old populist politician Lionel Brizola.

Like neighbouring Argentina, Brazil went through a period of nationalism. In Brazil this lasted from 1930 to 1964. The most important figures then were Getulio Vargas and Joao Goulart.

They allowed for the growth of a state-sponsored trade union movement under heavy government domination — a policy similar to that pursued by Peron in Argentina. In its struggle to establish an economically independent Brazil, the old 'populist' state was forced to rely on the masses for support.

1964 coup

Events like the signing of nationalisation decrees by President Goulart in front of mass rallies of trade unionists worried the United States, Brazilian industrialists, and the army to the extent that they overthrew the old regime in 1964 before it could be overthrown by the developing mass movement.

Lionel Brizola was state governor in Rio Grande do Sul at the time, and he mobilised state forces to resist coup attempts. He even went to the extent of arming some sections of the population. He threw in the towel in April 1964, however, when it was clear that the military would win.

Brizola's PDT represents the continuation of the old corporatist Brazilian Labour

Party (PTB). He is likely to win the governorship of Rio de Janeiro, though the PDT's successes elsewhere will be small.

The new Workers' Party (PT), led by Lula, the militant carworkers' leader, was the most significant contestant in this election. The PT will not win any state governorships, and its vote will have been squeezed by the pressure to vote for the MDB as the 'lesser evil'.

Nevertheless, the PT should pick up enough of a vote to confirm it as a major political force.

What are the prospects in the next few years? One option is a military 'coup', disallowing the vote, promising new elections, and renewing and escalating repression on the Chilean or Argentine scale. This is highly unlikely given the obvious opposition to continued military rule in all important social classes in Brazil.

The second option is to delay as long as possible the transfer of executive power to the opposition, especially



Lula's Workers' Party must resist the overtures of populism.

elections for the presidency. This will mean conflict between the central government and opposition state governors, and unrest from the probable opposition majority among federal deputies.

The third alternative is a more rapid devolution of power, on the model of de-Francoisation in Spain, with

perhaps an MDB or centre government for the first period of elected civilian government.

The Spanish model is one which many Brazilians are focusing on. Brizola is astute enough to realise that there is no chance of a return to old-style state 'populism', given the social and economic changes in the country

in the last two decades.

He wants to create a new Socialist Party from a fusion of the PDT, the Workers' Party, and sections of the MDB. The fortunes of such a party would improve with a decline in the centre. It would also lead to the ruination of the Workers' Party as an independent political force.

The independent trade union militants must resist Brizola's overtures. The incorporation of their forces into a demagogic electoralist party will lead to defeat as surely as the old populism did in 1964.

US backs joint offensive in El Salvador

THE Salvadorean government is launching an offensive against the left wing FMLN guerrillas jointly with the army of neighbouring Honduras — an army built up in recent years by massive US aid — and with US advisers.

This is a response to a FMLN offensive over the last month described by the well-informed Latin America Weekly Report as "by far the most ambitious in the three year old civil war". The FMLN has scored its "biggest territorial gains since hostilities began".

The military escalation has been accompanied by proposals from the FMLN and the associated political

movement, the FDR, for unconditional negotiations.

The negotiations proposal has been officially cold-shouldered by the regime and the US. But it may not be as much of a non-starter as it seems.

The Church in El Salvador is for the first time campaigning for negotiations. The motion from right-wing leader Roberto D'Aubuisson absolutely rejecting negotiations was defeated in the Constituent Assembly.

President Alvaro Magana has apparently been having talks with FDR leader Guillermo Ungo, unofficially and through intermediaries.

And a recent speech by US ambassador Deane Hint-

on to Salvadorean businessmen, hinting that US aid might be restricted if the regime did not polish up its human rights record, must reflect US pressure to open the negotiations option.

Deal

The military escalation may thus go together with a political deal by the bourgeois FDR leaders at the expense of the radical goals of the FMLN fighters. The FMLN, a major component of the FMLN coalition, is reported to have signed the negotiations proposal only under pressure and to be unwilling to abandon its strategy of 'prolonged people's war'.

Bolivian strike call

ACCORDING to the Financial Times (November 18), Bolivia's union federation, the COB, is planning a general strike on December 1 against the austerity policies of the new left coalition government.

Meanwhile the Supreme Court has summoned three of the country's former military rulers to appear before a military court on charges of illegal dealing in semi-precious stones.

After 18 years of nearly continuous military rule, and under pressure of a general strike call by the COB, Bolivia's generals handed over in early October to a coalition government including Communist Party ministers and members of the bourgeois nationalist party MNRI. The government is headed by MNRI leader Hernan Siles Zuazo.

Balancing

The coalition was faced with an almost impossible political balancing act, which already seems to be running into trouble.

On November 5 it announced a package including: * sweeping devaluation of the peso and currency controls;

* price increases — 150% on electricity (though less in poorer districts), 60% on cooking fuel, 180% on petrol, and 50 to 150% on fares; and

* a much more limited (42%) rise in the minimum wage.

It has also introduced worker directors in nationalised industry.

Siles explained anxiously "We would have liked to give more, but it's impossible", and finance minister Ernesto Aranibar urged trade unionists to "adapt themselves to

the real possibilities".

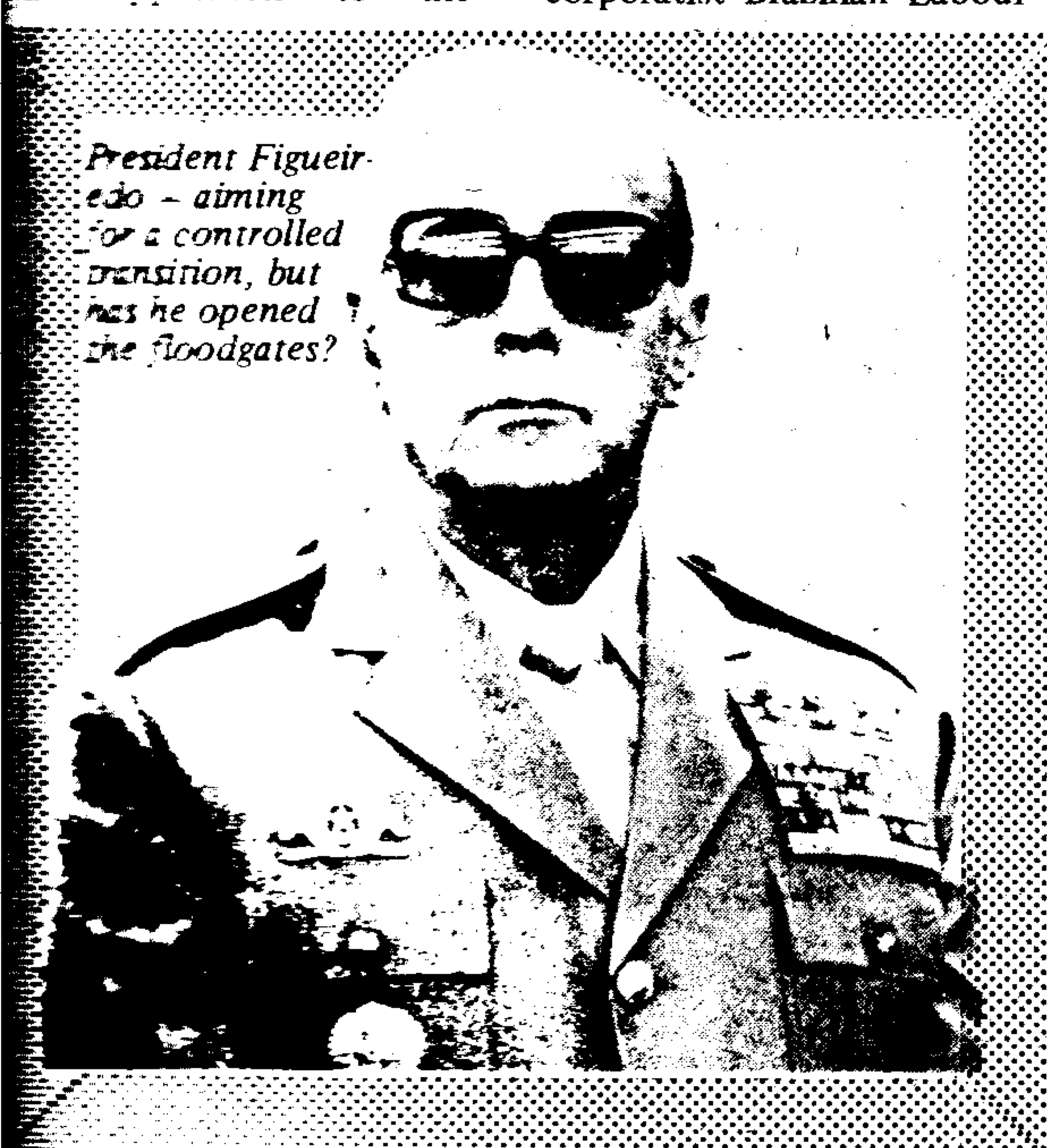
But many COB workers must be well aware that the package signifies the 'popular unity' government doing the international bankers' work for them. The Bolivian government is currently negotiating with the IMF over the country's huge foreign debt, on which it is technically in default.

Another important figure behind the scenes is Argentina. Chiefs of the old military regime have fled to Buenos Aires, but the Argentine government has signified its will to cooperate with Siles. It has offered immediate payment of \$85 million debts due from Argentina to Bolivia, together with rescheduling of \$600 million owed by Bolivia to Argentina. Bolivian government representatives have recently visited Buenos Aires, asking for the Bolivian generals who have fled there to be kept under surveillance and for the size of the Argentine military mission in the Bolivian capital La Paz to be reduced.

Crooks

Siles' coming to power was heavily backed by the major capitalist powers, who had come to see the military rulers as an unreliable gang of crooks. But now it has to satisfy the international bankers; try to maintain its credit with the working class; and simultaneously fend off the danger of a new military coup.

The time for which it can walk this tightrope looks like being short. If the Bolivian workers tie their fate to this government, they face disaster. An independent course towards a workers' and peasants' government is vital.



President Figueiredo — aiming for a controlled transition, but has he opened the floodgates?



International News International News International News

Ted Knight's big red

notebook

Last Saturday 50 members, including most of the campaign's activists, walked out of the Labour Committee on Palestine conference. At least 97 people previously unknown to the campaign had turned up claiming to be members. In short the conference had been taken over. Many of the 97 were prominent members of the Workers' Revolutionary Party.

Andrew Hornung and Tony Greenstein, the former secretary and chair of the LCP, explain why they believe the LCP has been wrecked and why they and the others who walked out have set up a new Labour Movement Campaign on Palestine.

"THE LABOUR movement's support for the right of the Palestinian people took a major step forward at the weekend", announced last Monday's Newsline, reporting the Labour Committee on Palestine conference the Saturday before.

But why was the paper of the Workers' Revolutionary Party so coy? In their modesty they have failed to mention the determining role they played at the conference.

Why didn't they say that about a hundred of their members and supporters — including leader members such as Corin Redgrave, Sheila Torrance, and Claire Dixon — marched into the conference claiming they were LCP members?

The matter can't have escaped the WRP's notice: after all, former Newsline editor Alex Mitchell was there, and Newsline staff



Knight

writers Rudder and Feldman also marched in as LCP members.

How could a labour movement committee, based primarily though not exclusively on Labour Party members and orienting much of its activity towards the Labour Party, be taken over with the help of people who are not Party members — and who, indeed, called for the bringing down of the last Labour government and now call not for a Labour government but for a "Workers Revolutionary" government.

Members

And how could they become members of the campaign without the secretary knowing?

All these people were admitted on the say-so of Ted Knight, the man maliciously

attacked by the press as 'Red Ted' — who was the treasurer of the LCP and is the leader of the Labour group on Lambeth council.

According to Knight, all these people were listed as paid-up members in his private membership list!

Break in

Where were they listed? In Knight's big red notebook.

The notebook, containing about a hundred names, first made its appearance at the very end of the LCP steering committee held a few hours before the conference.

Knight casually reported that he would not be able to give a treasurer's report because the relevant documents were missing following a break-in at his office

in Lambeth Town Hall.

When he claimed that his notebook contained the names of members who were not on the secretary's list, we challenged the legitimacy of Knight's list. Why had these people paid their money directly to Knight and not gone through the secretary — whose address was the only public address for the LCP?

Unflappable

These people, claimed the unflappable Knight, knew he was an officer of the LCP and many had come to the offices of 'Labour Herald', of which he is an editor. He had not been able to give them to the secretary, he said, because he had not been able to reach him.

Asked whether he had a single letter written to the Herald or to him asking for membership, Knight said no. Was there a single receipt stub or carbon for the money paid in for membership. No. Or a single membership slip filled in? No.

Who were these people who were going to try to get into the conference under cover of Knight? Answer: the WRP's members and supporters.

In the time that the secretary was on the door, there filed in 97 people who claimed to be LCP members but did not appear on the secretary's list of members or even on the list of contacts — which includes all those who had ever written to the campaign or signed an attendance sheet at any of its public meetings.

Newsline

But they were in Ted Knight's big red notebook! Of these 97, only three

or 'Who hijacked the Labour Committee on Palestine?'

claimed to be Labour Party members. And one of those three was a former Newsline journalist.

Those were were asked to whom they had sent their membership applications said they didn't know. Some, like Claire Dixon, a former secretary of the WRP's youth movement, claimed their money had been collected by their union branch.

Packed

It was soon blatantly clear that — however it was arranged — the meeting was packed with WRP support, and Knight was the only person giving this action legitimacy.

Naturally Knight rejected any suggestion that the LCP steering committee should meet in emergency session and consider the matter. Instead — displaying a flair for farce that revealed a new side to his character — he put to the Conference (including the people whose status was in question) the issue of recognising these people as members or not.

All that was not in quest-

ion was the outcome of the vote — and any other vote at the Conference.

Under these circumstances, neither of us — the two founders of the LCP — was prepared to stand for the Committee. To do so would have given legitimacy to a conference which was a carve-up, a campaign based on a packed meeting.

The only decision of the conference worth reporting at this stage, because it is a reflection of the forces that determined its direction, was the decision for the campaign not to establish branches for a whole year. We might just as well have allowed Labour Friends of Israel to come along and propose the LCP be wound up.

The LCP had made a little, but significant, progress in the short time since its birth six months ago. It has organised pickets and public meetings.

Speakers from the LCP have gone to many labour and student movement meetings, gaining several affiliations for the campaign. The emergency resolution promoted by the LCP was succ-

essful at the last Labour Party conference. It declared support for the Palestinian goal and for recognition of the PLO, and called on the Labour Party to institute a inquiry into Israeli war crimes in Lebanon.

To wreck the LCP's work now, to cover its successes and its future with the taint of the WRP, and to choke off its promising development by behind-the-scenes skulduggery, is to deal a blow to the Palestinian cause and to the development of truly internationalist currents within the Labour Party.

Why did the WRP do it? From all indications its purpose was to impress its allies in the Arab world. The WRP has close links — which sets great store by — with the Libyan government.

Why did Ted Knight do it? Knight appears on the WRP's platform at meetings such as the recent '13th anniversary rally for Newsline. Labour Herald is printed by the WRP press. What makes this relationship strange is — to emphasise the point — the fact that the WRP and Newsline are apparently opposed to the election of a new Labour government.

Those — like ourselves — who are convinced as to the methods used by Knight to achieve his ends will continue in our attempt to build an open labour movement campaign pledged to fighting for the rights of the Palestinian people and against Zionism.

About fifty people, the bulk of the non WRP supporters, left the conference and met to establish a new campaign which can continue the LCP's work.

This campaign, the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, which operates with a provisional steering committee elected from those who walked out of the conference. The campaign can be contacted by writing to the secretary, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Road, London N16.

Save Anwar!

THE Home Office has turned down a plea for political asylum by Anwar Mahomed, currently held in Strangeways Prison, and is threatening to deport him back to South Africa.

Anwar Mahomed was detained by the South African security police in December 1974, after a chance search revealed him to be carrying a leaflet issued by the banned African National Congress.

After a week of interrogations, beatings and threats, the police let Anwar go. He feared however that they might detain him again.

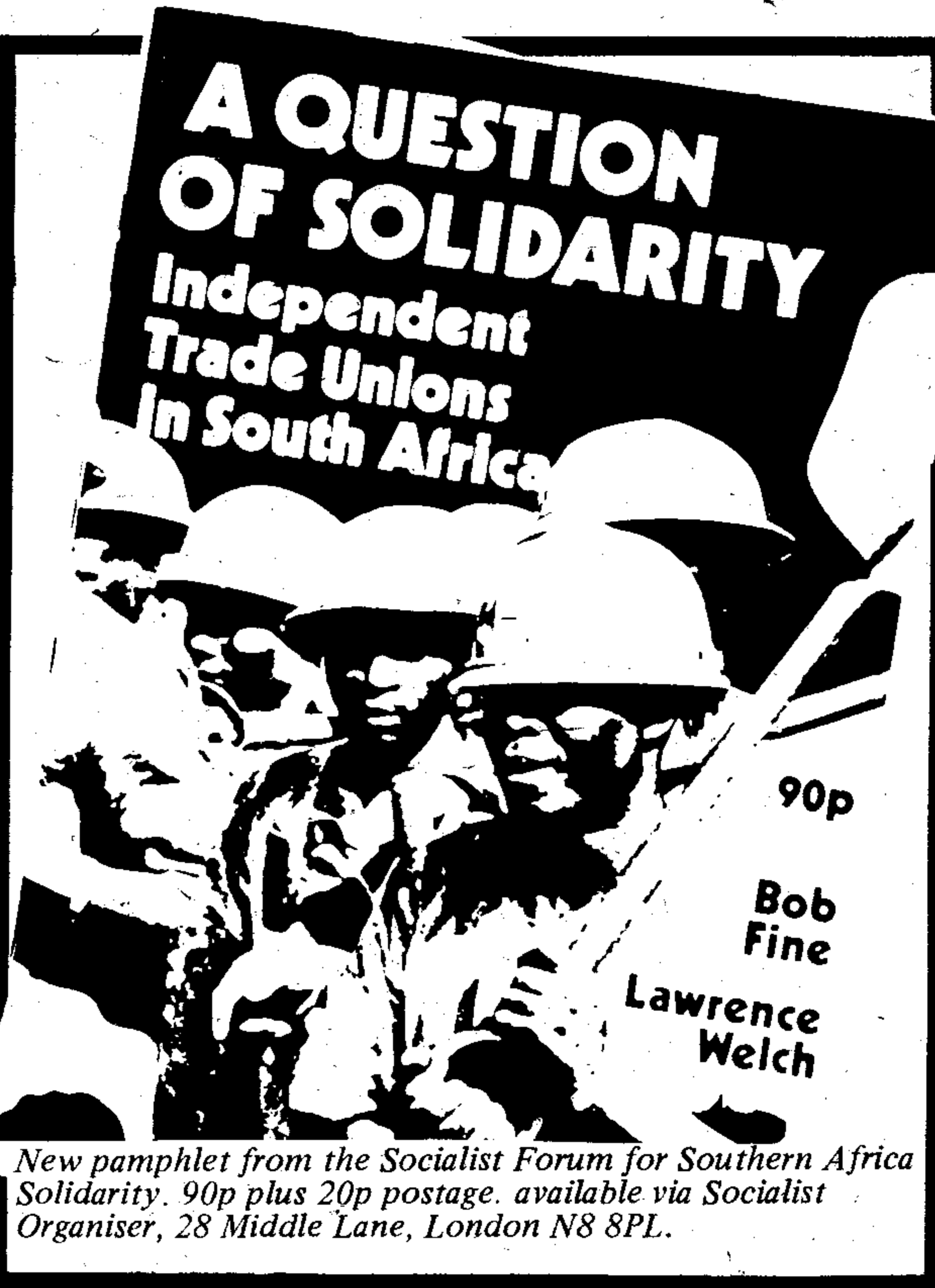
Anwar fled across the border to Mozambique using a forged passport. Eventually Anwar came to England.

In May 1981 he found himself overtaken by financial problems. He issued cheques even though his bank account no longer had any funds in it. Eventually he was arrested and charged with deception, convicted and sentenced to eight months imprisonment.

He finished serving his sentence six months ago.

The Home Office has announced it will reconsider Anwar's case, but Manchester Anti-Apartheid is continuing a campaign with pickets of the prison gates every Saturday (9am — 11am).

Contact: c/o 300 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9NS.



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

The Anti-Apartheid Trade Unionists' conference takes place this coming weekend, 10.30 to 5.15 on Saturday 27th, at University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1.

Under the slogan

'Isolate Apartheid' it will discuss action on various fronts such as military supplies and trade.

The conference is open to trade union delegates and observers. More information: Anti-Apartheid (01) 580 5311

Cautious Walesa

"IN 11 months of internment," declared Lech Walesa last week, giving a press conference on his release from internment, "I signed nothing, I made no commitments, and I promised nothing."

He stressed that he remained committed to "the spirits of the Gdansk agreement" which legalised Solidarnosc in August 1980, and would do "everything in his power" to get the Solidarnosc internees freed.

He was, however, cautious or maybe evasive when asked about the new state 'unions'. Solidarnosc has called on workers to boycott these 'unions'. Walesa said: "The August 1980 agreements provide for trade union pluralism. Anyone who believes in democracy cannot oppose this pluralism. Anyone who does that declares

themselves against the Gdansk agreements."

Walesa has said he needs a month to recover from internment and to orientate himself. Talk of discussions between him and General Jaruzelski has been countered by an official government statement that no such discussions will take place.

Meanwhile repression continues. Solidarnosc leader Wladyslaw Frasniki is on trial in Wroclaw. The Psychology Faculty at Warsaw university has been shut because of student protests.

Anna Walentynowicz, former Gdansk shipyard crane driver and a militant leader of Solidarnosc, has been thrown into a psychiatric hospital for going on hunger strike. Several other Solidarnosc leaders in internment are on hunger strike.

Solidarnosc LIVES



SOLIDARNOSC lives! Demonstration on the first anniversary of martial law. Sunday December 12: assemble 1pm at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, London,

and march to Jubilee Gardens. Called by the Polish Solidarity Campaign. Contact: 69 Edinburgh Rd, London E13, or phone 567 4427 or 960 7250.



Who's 'breaching the peace'? Protestors or warmongers?

Peace women refuse to be "bound over"

"THE power you are using is supporting nuclear weapons. It supports binding women's voices, binding our minds and bodies in prison so that our voices cannot be heard. So our warning of death is being repressed."

"But we cannot be silenced and I cannot be bound or bound over. Take responsibility for life, for your life, for all our lives... I am asking you to keep the peace. We are not on trial today, you are."

In these words to the magistrate, Katrina Howse stated the case of the 23 women from Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp who last week were jailed for 14 days.

They were sentenced at Newbury magistrate's court for refusing to be bound over to keep the peace.

Other women were allowed to go free after agreeing to be bound over for one year for the sum of £100. The charge was "breach of the peace".

Eleven of the women had occupied a security box at the main gate of Greenham Common USAF base in a protest last August. 96 Cruise missiles are scheduled to arrive at Greenham in December of next year.

The case of these eleven came up on Monday 15th, and the day began at 10am with about 100 people being shut out of the courtroom.

Even after an extra row of chairs had been brought in, many people, including some who had travelled from as far away as America and Belgium, were still unable to get in.

In their defence, the women and their witnesses showed that the policy of the camp is one of non-violent action.

Their action was designed to prevent a 'breach of the peace' from occurring - because if Cruise missiles are sited at Greenham Common this will make the base and the surrounding area a prime target for nuclear attack.

The presiding magistrate then asked each of the women to agree to be bound over to keep the peace for one year for the sum of £100.

Each woman made a powerful statement as to why she felt she could not agree to this.

One woman said that at

the moment there is no peace and that she lived under the constant fear of nuclear war. She could not agree to something which does not exist.

On Tuesday 16th, seven women, who had sat down on the road outside the security box and refused to move, were brought before the magistrate.

These women were again found "guilty" by the court and six of them were given 14 day sentences. The seventh woman agreed to be bound over, saying "I am delighted to keep the peace. That's exactly what I have been doing for the past 14 months."

A further ten women appeared in court on Wednesday 17th for their part in the "sewage pipe action" on October 5.

The sewage pipes were laid as part of improvements being made to the base in order that a further 1,300 US servicemen can be accommodated.

Women from the Peace Camp interrupted this work by lying down in the trenches and in front of the JCB digger.

Half of the women are now serving their sentence in Maidstone Borstal, despite the fact that none of them are under age. The remaining women are at Stafford open prison.

Over 40 Labour MPs have signed a motion calling for a debate in Parliament as to why these women have been sent to prison.

In the meantime numbers at the Peace Camp are quite low and we would welcome extra support. Newbury District Council are proposing a change in the common land by-laws in an effort to remove the Peace Camp from outside the air base.

These proposals have to be approved by the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment.

Please write to your MP urging her/him to bring this matter up in Parliament and to oppose the plans. Letters of protest to Newbury District Council (or petitions) would also be useful.

Demonstration of support - Sunday November 28, 1pm outside Maidstone Prison.

CLPD women step up fight

by Mandy Moore

WOMEN in the Labour Party have major differences with Annual Conference.

At this year's Women's Conference resolutions supporting the mandatory inclusion of women on shortlists; Women's Conference being given the right to forward five resolutions to Annual Conference for inclusion on the final agenda; and Women's Conference electing the Women's Section of the NEC, were all carried on card votes. And yet Annual Conference, following recommendations from the NEC to oppose, rejected all of these demands by a massive 5:1 million to 1 million majority.

Since then, there have

also been a series of attacks on the Women's Organisation by the NEC. Jo Richardson, the only Labour woman MP to have a real commitment to women's rights, has been removed from the NEC's Home Policy Committee, and has lost the chair of the Women's Committee. This means she also loses her vital place on the Policy Co-ordinating Committee which, along with the Shadow Cabinet, will draw up the next Party Manifesto.

The work of the Women's Rights Study Group has also been halted, and the NEC's representation on the National Labour Women's Committee has been arbitrarily increased to include such staunch defenders of women's rights as John Golding, Denis Howell and Roy Evans.

However, women in the



National Executive spokesperson Gwyneth Dunwoody opposed moves for women's rights

Party will only take these moves as an indication of the renewed effort that needs to be made to win demands for fundamental changes in the women's organisation.

The CLPD Women's Action Committee, which

has fought for a whole range of such changes since it was set up in 1980, will be stepping up its campaign at its AGM on December 4 in London's County Hall.

One main area of attack will be to build support in the trade unions for organisational changes for women, given the key role the unions play with their block votes at Conference; and another will be to spread the campaign further through the Labour Party Regional Women's Organisation.

Already, major gains in the regions have been made with the election of new WAC-supporting women to the National Labour Women's Committee; gains which need to be consolidated and increased over the next year.

As well as these issues, changes in the structure of

Prostitutes fight back against harassment

Jenny Fisher reports

IN June this year, for the first time, a woman pleaded 'not guilty' to soliciting in Argyle Square near King's Cross, and won. In July, the size of the local vice squad was increased.

Faced with growing police harassment, about 60 prostitutes organised by the English Collective of Prostitutes and two organisations who share the King's Cross Women's Centre - Women Against Rape and Black Women for Wages for Housework - have occupied the local church, the Holy Cross.

So what kind of police harassment has led to this action?

Legally, if the police see a woman solicit two men, then, after cautioning her twice, they may arrest her.

But present police practice is to stop, open the car door, and say 'You, you and you - in.'

The police systematically choose the women they want to harass; they don't wait for evidence. Women have been arrested while going shopping, or to fetch a take-away, or the police wait outside their flats.

The day I spoke to the women in the church, there had been five such unlawful arrests by 8 o'clock. One woman told me she had paid

£235 in fines in the past four weeks.

The women are demanding an end to the unlawful arrests. They want a worker seconded from the Police and Women's Committees of the GLC, Camden and Islington to monitor police activity in Argyle Square for the next month.

Police

This is needed even more now the police have been provoked by the direct action.

Black women under unlawful arrest report racist abuse from most - although not all - of the police. Racist comments like 'who's your nigger pimp?' are common.

The police use the excuse of looking for pimps to arrest husbands, boyfriends and sons - especially if they're black.

Meanwhile, real pimps who control about three quarters of the women in Argyle Square, are left alone. Only 8 pimps from the area were arrested last year.

Some pimps will even use threats to inform the police to keep control over the women. (Others just threaten to 'kneecap' the women - threats which the police ignore.) It may just be 'man to man solidarity' which inspires this co-operation but the strength of it suggests there may be more organised corruption.

The police claim to be acting in the interests of local residents, by fighting crime in the area.

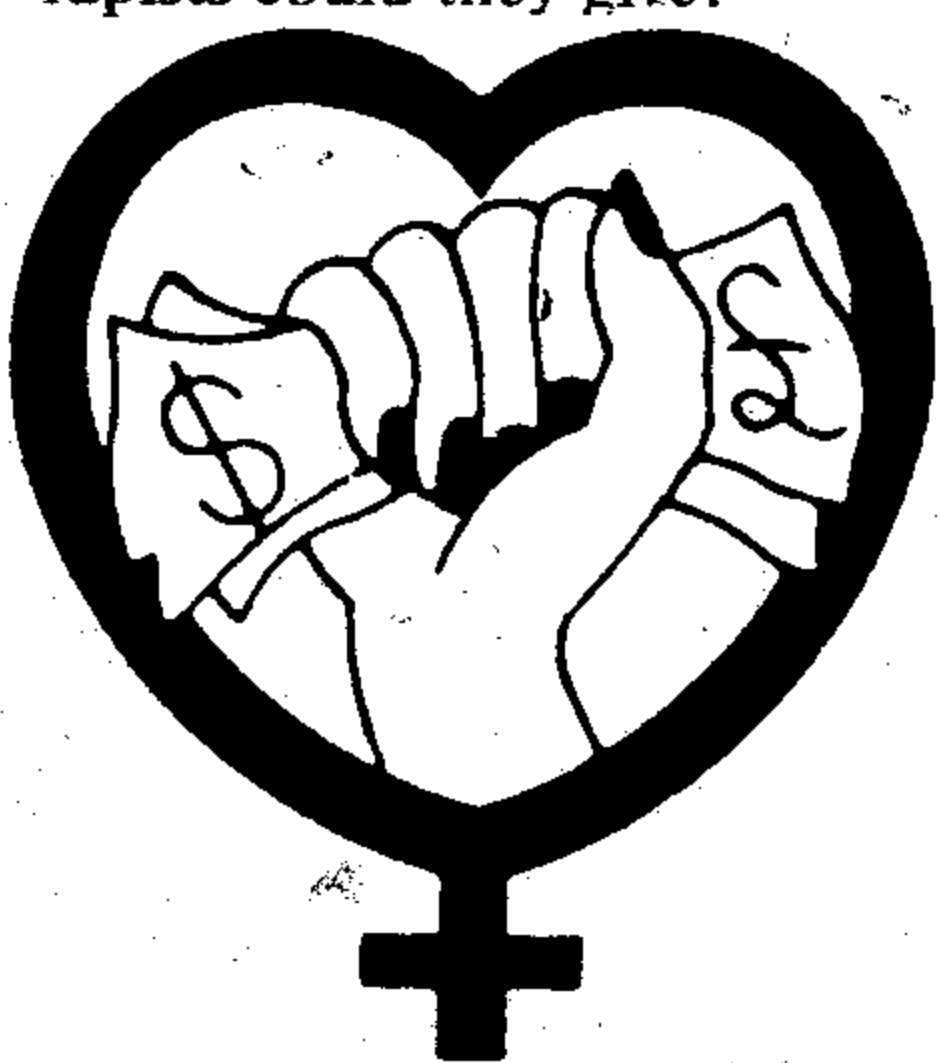
But the police are using their own definition of residents' interests as an excuse to do what they want: local people have no control over their 'own' police force. Residents who came into the

church for services (which have now been moved) have expressed support for the prostitutes' case.

Also, as police action ignores violence against women on the streets around King's Cross, it is in fact encouraging an atmosphere in which violent crime can take place.

A woman was raped in the area last week. She went to the police. They spent five hours trying to convince her she was a prostitute (and therefore didn't matter?). When she showed them a handkerchief the rapist had dropped, they weren't interested.

A rapist at large - and the police do nothing. What better encouragement to rapists could they give?



Once again, links between the police and social services are shown. Women arrested illegally face attempts by social services to take their children into care. This is no minority problem - only one or two of the women in Argyle Square have no children.

The women demand an end to this, and a more constructive attitude from social services: guarantees of help for all women who want to get off the game.

The Fleet Street press have been little help. Wo-

men whose families do not know they are prostitutes have been filmed. Press activity has scared away clients.

Last Monday I met one woman who had been unable to earn any money all day: with rents (£84/week in the hotels), fines, pimps to pay, and children to look after. Another woman had taken a 'client' to her flat, only to find out he was a reporter.

Economics play a large part in prostitution. The recession has brought a marked increase in the number of women in Argyle Square - now there are about 200 prostitutes in this small area. This includes a number of women who travel down from the North for a week or so each month - known locally as 'Thatcher's girls'.

The occupation has been supported by women's groups in Britain, Trinidad and Tobago, Italy, Germany and America (a solidarity picket of the British Consulate in Los Angeles has been held).

Will you join the fight against the police?

*Women are welcome to visit or join the occupation (Holy Cross Church, Cromer St., London WC1), especially those bringing food!

*Money, messages of support to the Women's Centre, 71, Tonbridge St., London WC1. (If you can duplicate messages, they will be handed out.)

*Encourage your MP to go to the meeting which will be held in the House of Commons.

*Write to the Home Office about the unlawful conduct of their sexist and racist police, demanding that Commander Chambers of 'E' division agrees to the women's demand for a meeting in the presence of official witnesses.

5p No. 8 Nov '82

Health Workers for the full claim

New improved offer?

TELL THEM TO STUFF IT!

Full Claim on 15 Letch.

Two years ago, Women's Fightback's first conference for Labour women stimulated the new growth of women's groups. Now we need to get these demands for major reform of the women's sections into a force that can lead in the Labour Party. That's what the second Women's Fightback conference, on November 27th, will be looking at. Register Now!

2nd National Conference for Labour women

November 27th 1982 at Kingsway Princeson College, Grays Inn Road, London WC2

Please fill in:

Name _____

Address _____

Organisation _____

Phone _____

Send with £2.50 Registration fee (£1.50 non-registered) and a.s.p. to: 2nd National Conference, 27th Nov 1982, Kingsway Princeson College, Grays Inn Road, London WC2

MOBILISING COMMITTEE IN DEFENCE OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS

HERE COMES TEBBIT!



Fight back now!

THIS broadsheet has been written and produced by Noel Hibbert and John McIlroy on behalf of the Manchester Mobilising Campaign for Defence of Trade Union Rights. Donations have been received towards its cost from: ASTMA 591 Salford and UMIST, Ashton-under-Lyme AUEW District Committee, Manchester North AUEW District Committee, Shell (Carrington) JSSC, Ward and Goldstone JSSC, Massey Ferguson JSSC, British Aerospace Lostode JSSC, Horwicks Loco Works Joint Action Committee, TGWU Region Southern Co-ordinating Committee, TGWU Branch 9/53, TGWU Branch 6/704, Bolton Trades Council. Others will be acknowledged if received.

The Tebbit law has now received the Royal Assent. But to confuse trade unionists and limit opposition, Tebbit has decided to bring the provisions of the new Employment Act in gradually by commencement orders. The timetable is:

Retrospective compensation for closed shop "victims" - October 28 1982.

Anti-strike provisions - December 1 1982.

Closed shop ballot - November 1 1984.

This should not lead to complacency. Tebbit is already talking about introducing further legislation on compulsory secret ballots and abolishing wage councils. We need a fight back now.

Tebbit's law - the 1982 Employment Act - received the Royal Assent on Thursday October 28.

It was greeted by a deafening silence from labour movement leaders.

As Tebbit cantered leisurely past the winning post Michael Foot's binoculars were firmly trained on the possibilities of stirring up internal problems in the Labour Party rather than on the possibilities of fighting the Tories.

After all the noise they had made earlier about Tebbit's law it was as if the TUC General Council had gone on prolonged retreat to a Trappist monastery.

Yet the provisions of this Act could affect the future of every single trade unionist in Britain.

Norman Tebbit said just before introducing his Bill into Parliament: "I use the word neuter because I've been told I must not use the vernacular when describing what I'm doing to the unions".

The central policies of Thatcher and Tebbit have one clear objective - to reduce your wages, worsen your working conditions and if needs be throw you to the back-end of the four million long dole queue.

Margaret Thatcher needs you... on her mantelpiece.

Where is the TUC?

Norman Tebbit wants you... as another statistic on the unemployment register, occupying a hard seat in the social security office, or tugging your forelock in a workplace without shop stewards where management's word is as absolute as it ever was in the 1920s or 1930s.

Your only protection against the Tories, your only protection against a return to the thirties is your trade union. But your union can only be an effective protection if it is strongly organised and has the ability to take successful industrial action.

In the last three years the Tories have mounted a legal offensive to which Tebbit is the most recent addition. Its aim is to undermine your union, weaken your bargaining power and erode your ability to take successful strike action.

Their laws have changed

the rules of the game so that:

*You have every right to take industrial action against your employer. But if you do, he has every right to sack you.

If British Rail had carried out their threats to sack all the ASLEF strikers, the law courts would have supported them.

*If you picket at any workplace other than your own, you or your union can be sued. So if you picketed another of your boss's factories half a mile away you could be hauled before the courts.

*If you take industrial action to support other workers you or your union can be sued. So Sean Geraghty, the Branch Secretary of the Fleet Street electricians received an injunction against supporting the NHS workers. When he ignored it, he was found to be in contempt of court.

*If you go on strike and you are entitled to social security for your dependants the social security will tot up their entitlement and then knock off £13.

This is the amount of strike pay the Tories think your union should give you. Your union may give you £6, tuppence-halfpenny or nowt. That's just too bad.

The Tories work out the absolute minimum that people need to avoid starvation... and then tell them to get by on £13 less.

*Other trade unionists at your workplace who are not on strike who may be laid off can be disqualified if they stand to benefit by your dispute or are involved in it.

Workers laid off who might achieve a change in their terms and conditions as a result of your dispute, drivers sacked because they refuse to cross your picket

lines, workers who are laid off because they black goods for your employer - all could be disqualified from receiving social security as they and their dependants are expected to live on air.

*If you have £2,000 or more in the post office, bank or building society savings or redundancy money for example you will receive no social security until you have used that up.

*Even if you have had a closed shop in your workplace for the last half century it will now be outlawed - unless 80% of your brothers and sisters vote to continue it in a secret ballot. Even then, those who vote against have every right not to join.

The aim of the Tories' legal offensive is obvious: to make you think twice before you take strike action. And to severely limit the efficiency of strike

The fight against Tebbit is part of the whole fight against the Tories.

action if you do decide to go ahead by making unlawful the methods that are most likely to put the ball in your gaffer's net.

If you play this game you need to win 6-0 to get a draw. The referee is playing for the other side.

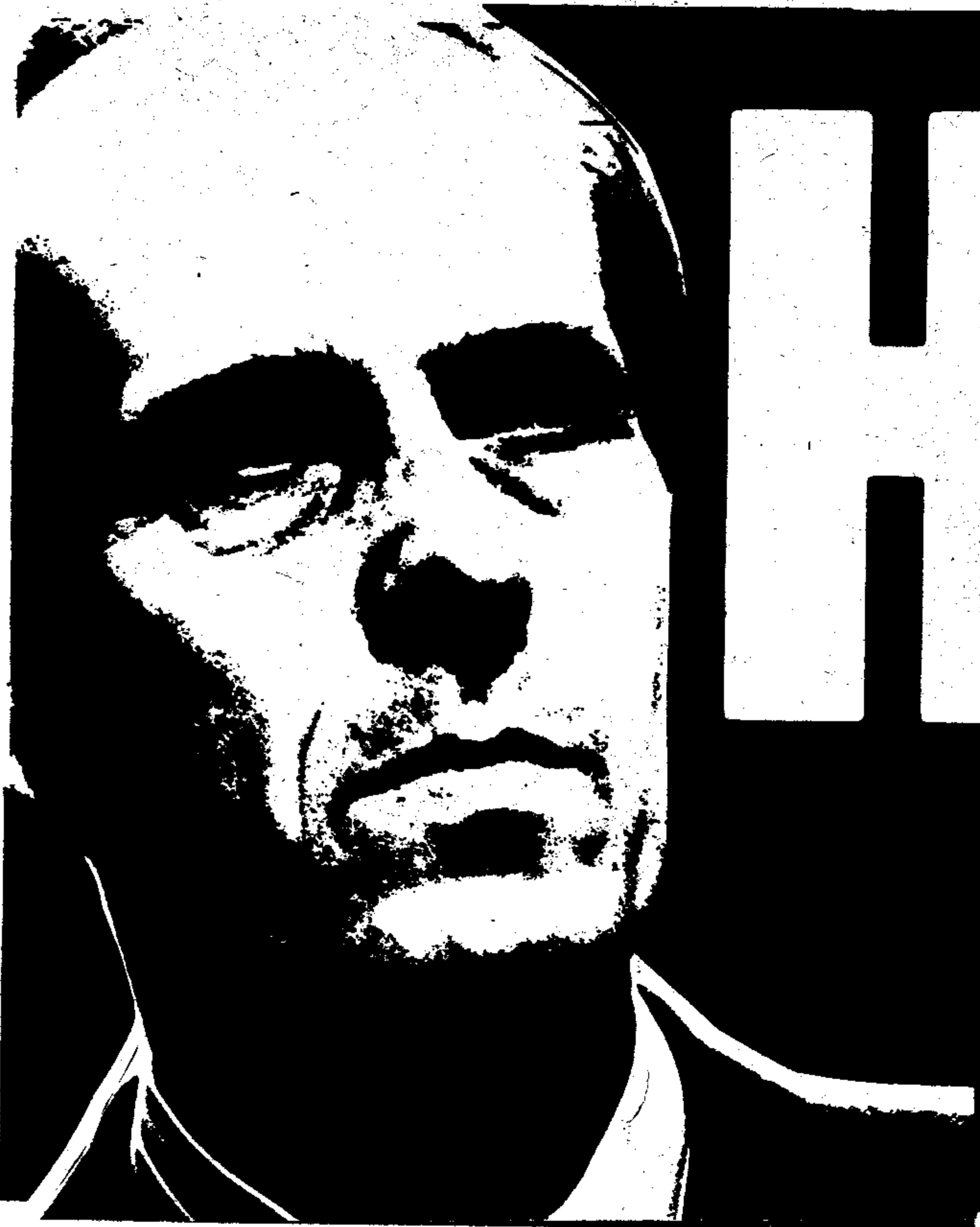
Our response must be a straightforward one. We must continue to play by our rules, using all the

methods required to disputes. We must build mass campaign against Tory rules now to ensure that they have little impact.

And we must do everything in our power to up struggles with the air removing the Tories from office and their rules from the statute book.



Len M...



HOW TEBBIT

What is the purpose of the Tebbit provisions on closed shops?

Quite simply, to stop the spread of union membership and weaken existing closed shops —

*by making it worthwhile for anti-unionists to come out from under their stones;

*by making employers think twice before they sack non-unionists, because of the penalties involved;

*and by making union representatives hesitant to defend 100% membership, because legal action may ensue.

If the closed shop is weakened so is union membership, union discipline, and union bargaining power.

Is it true that you can't have a closed shop unless you have a secret ballot?

What Tebbit actually says is that if an employer sacks a non-unionist in a closed shop situation, that dismissed worker will win a case at an industrial tribunal against the employer unless the closed shop met the requirements laid down in Tebbit which demand a secret ballot.

What are the requirements in a secret ballot?

For the closed shop to be an authorised closed shop which will give legal protection: you need an 80% majority of those entitled to vote. You need to have a similar ballot every five years, and in these subsequent ballots either 80% of those covered or 85% of those actually voting must support the closed shop.

The Tory government claims a mandate to introduce this provision when it was itself elected by less than one-third of those actually voting.

But the Tories' disregard for democracy goes even further. If you get the 80% majority, your closed shop is not binding against existing employees. Everybody who was entitled to vote in the ballot is entitled to decide whether to join the union or not.

In other words you take a ballot with a built-in anti-democratic hurdle almost impossible to get over, but if you still win, then it doesn't bind anybody anyway.

Is that quite right? What about new employees?

Fair comment. If you get your 80%, new employees must join the union... unless they are able to show that they genuinely object on grounds of conscience or other deeply held personal conviction to membership of the particular trade union(s) involved.

So if workers can show a strong and long-held objection to the policies of a particular union — its affiliation to the Labour Party, its main objectives of industrial action — they may be able to win exemption from a closed shop.

By December 1 the major provisions of the Tebbit law will be in force. Solidarity strikes, or blacking, strikes defined by judges as political, or flying or secondary pickets, will all open trade unionists to court action. Union funds can be seized by the courts. From 1984 clauses designed to destroy the closed shop will be in force. This feature explains just what the law will mean in practice.

Non-unionists can sue their employer if they are sacked but what about the union?

A worker sacked in a closed shop situation which does not meet Tebbit's requirements can take action against the employer or a shop steward, full time officer or union if they can show that the union brought pressure to bear to secure their sacking.

You have a closed shop. Bill Sykes rips up his union card. Having exhausted all means of persuasion, Nancy, the steward, says to management: "Bill's out or we're all out". Management sacks Bill. Bill can now sue both the company and Nancy. Even if he doesn't, the company can ask for Nancy to be 'joined to' the legal case.

And what about the awards that the tribunal can make against Nancy?

The tribunal cannot force the boss to take Bill Sykes back. They can award him large sums of compensation.

Bill will be entitled to a minimum award of £12,000 unless the tribunal feels he contributed towards his dismissal.

If the tribunal feels that Bill should be reinstated and the employers refuse (as they are entitled to), Bill is up for a minimum of £17,000.

And here's the sting in the tail. Nancy or her union could be made to pay some or all of any compensation awarded.

I get the picture. If the employer hasn't held the secret ballot or achieved the required majority he's in financial trouble, so he'll want to hold a ballot. If he doesn't, at £17,000 there'll be quite a few Bills, but Nancy may think twice if she knows she's going to have to pay out. Does the same apply to workers sacked for their trade union membership?

Yes. The Tories decided

to remove an obvious and embarrassing inequality.

But what the tribunals consider dismissal for union membership or activities is extremely limited.

For example, it is only unfair to sack you for participation in union activities at an appropriate time. And that means outside working hours or at a time when the employer agrees to you doing union jobs.

So the law does not help trade unionists sacked in non-union situations very much.

And remember, it is legally still OK for an employer to say "I'm not taking you on because of your union membership or activities."

What is the point I've heard people talking about to do with retrospective legislation?

Tebbit has set up a £2 million fund to reward those who stood up for anti-unionism in the past.

If you were sacked between 1974 and 1980 because you wouldn't join a union in a closed shop situation you had no legal redress under the Labour government's legislation. You can make up for it now by getting your share of the £2 million.

In what other ways does Tebbit try to weaken trade union membership?

The new Act tries to stop unions using their power to extend membership. What worries Tebbit is that four million on the dole queues has not prompted an exodus from the unions by those who still have jobs as happened in the inter-war years. Indeed, unions like NUPE and NALGO are still growing.

So the law now bans:

*Clauses in contracts requiring the employment of union members by sub-contractors.

*Discrimination through lists of approved sub-contractors who employ only union members or inviting tenders for the supply of goods or services only from union employers.

*Workers organising or threatening industrial action to force employers to employ only trade unionists.

*Workers striking because they are not prepared to work with non-unionists.

What does Tebbit say about our right to strike?

First of all, your strike will be open to legal action unless it is wholly or mainly connected with one or more of the following:

*Terms and conditions of employment.

*Physical conditions of work.

*Sacking or failing to hire a worker.

*Suspension.

*Work duties or distribution of work.

*Discipline.

*Trade union rights.

*Machinery for consultation or negotiation.

*Rights under procedures.

Well, that just about covers everything, doesn't it?

Not by a long chalk! When trade unionists refused to relay the 1977 Cup Final to South Africa, the Courts decided that they were not covered by this definition and were not protected.

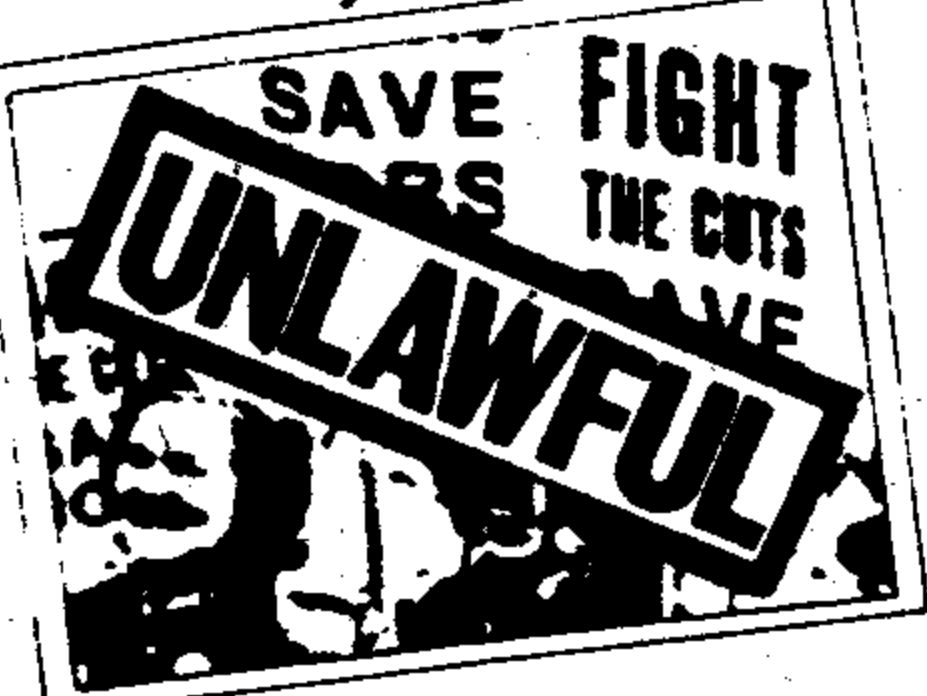
Similarly, when the print unions instructed their members in Fleet Street not to work in support of the TUC's Day of Action in 1980, the Courts decided that the strike was political and not covered by the definition, so that the unions were not protected.

But these are exceptions, surely. Nearly all strikes will be covered by your list, won't they?

Not really. The POEU strike against the Telecommunications Bill, the steelworkers' strike against redundancy, stoppages against privatisation in local authorities — all might be said to be not mainly about the issues listed and therefore open to legal action.

The point about this kind of formulation is that it gives the judges tremendous leeway to decide which strikes are and which are not unlawful.

And these unaccountable attorneys for the employers are hardly likely to do workers any favours.



What other sorts of industrial action are not protected by this formula?

The Act specifically lays down three situations where industrial action will not be protected.

Firstly, where your action is taken in connection with a dispute occurring outside the United Kingdom, unless your terms and conditions of employment are likely to be affected by the



outcome of that dispute.

So NUJ members at Reuters refusing to handle copy in solidarity with workers overseas last year would be taking unlawful action. So would the Massey Ferguson workers at Banner Lane who blacked parts connected with the Ursus plant near Warsaw in solidarity with Solidarnosc.

Secondly, you would not be protected from legal penalties if you take industrial action when there is no direct dispute between a group of workers and their employer.

So dockers who black ships where employers are not paying the minimum rates (as the International Transport Federation asks them to) would be liable to be hauled before the courts if the crews themselves were too intimidated to take action.

Thirdly you will be open to legal action where your dispute is a dispute between workers and workers and not a dispute between workers and employers.

Now in most demarcation disputes, or situations such as the Isle of Grain, there will be involvement by the employer — you can't say it's simply worker against worker.

But this definition places the final decision in the hands of the judges. And they've come up with some

amazing interpretations in the past.

OK. But if your strike is connected "wholly or mainly" with one of the issues in your list you are home and dry legally?

Far from it. Even if you fall within the list you are still in trouble if your action is unlawful secondary action.

If you are on strike and you approach trade unionists at another company and ask them not to handle goods for your employer, then the judges say that in most cases legally you are inducing those workers to break their contracts with their employer.

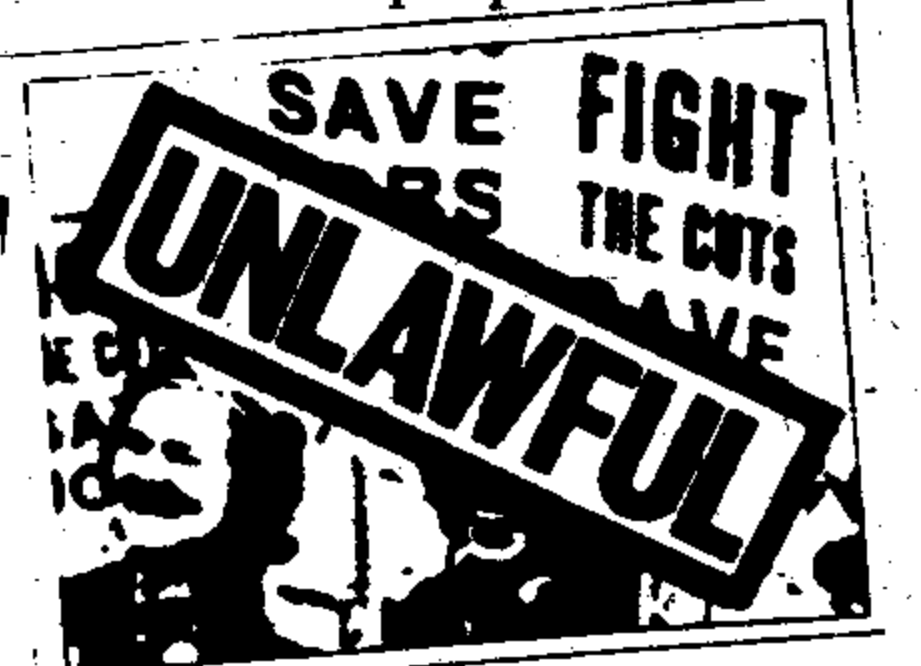
They are paid to handle your employer's work. Not only are they breaking their contracts of employment; they are ensuring that the commercial contract between their boss and your boss is also broken.

You are not only inducing breaches of contracts of employment, you are inducing breaches of commercial contracts as well.

Of course you need to do this to win your dispute. And until the Tories came along, the law said that you were protected if you did so.

But the Tories don't want you to win your dispute. So they now say that it is unlawful for you to interfere with the commercial contracts of an employ-

er who is not a party to your dispute, through interfering with the contracts of employment of his employees, unless a) that employer is a customer or supplier of your boss; b) your purpose is to disrupt the supply of goods or services to your boss; c) your action in asking for blacking is likely to achieve that purpose.



That's a bit of a mouthful. What does it mean in practice?

When nurses went to the pits and asked miners to strike to support them, they were inducing miners to break their contracts of employment and by doing so break commercial contracts between for example the National Coal Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Most lawyers said that the nurses were not protected as the NCB were not direct suppliers or customers of Regional Health Authorities, and they did not wish to disrupt supplies but to get a demonstration of solidarity.

BIT HITS YOU



If you ask for blacking in a strike from employees of suppliers or customers of your boss, you are over the first hurdle. If you can't get it, and you go to employees of that second employer's suppliers, your action is outlawed.

However, even if you are over the first hurdle - you are asking for solidarity action from workers of direct suppliers or customers - you still have to show that your purpose is to win your dispute and that your action is likely to achieve that purpose.

The problems can be seen from a case in 1979. The NUJ, on strike against the Newspaper Society, the provincial employers' association, asked their members at the Press Association to black all copy to local papers.

To further escalate the dispute they asked members of national newspapers not to touch copy from the Press Association.

Under today's law, the action on the nationals would be automatically illegal. The action at the Press Association would be subject to the tests of purpose and likelihood of success.

In this case the Court of Appeal said that the purpose was not to win the dispute. It was simply to raise the morale of the strikers.

This hair-splitting approach gives a clue as to how the courts will deal with these tests.

What about picketing?

The Tories' previous measure, Prior's 1980 Employment Act, limited the right to picket to a right

to picket your own workplace. The only exceptions are union officials (which includes stewards) accompanying members they represent, sacked workers who are entitled to picket their last workplace, mobile workers such as drivers who can picket the place from which their work is administered, and workers such as seamen or oil rig operatives for whom picketing their own workplace is impracticable.

When picketing your own workplace, you have precious little rights. The House of Lords has decided that you have no right to stop drivers or pedestrians even for five minutes just to put your case and the number and conduct of pickets is completely in the hands of the police.

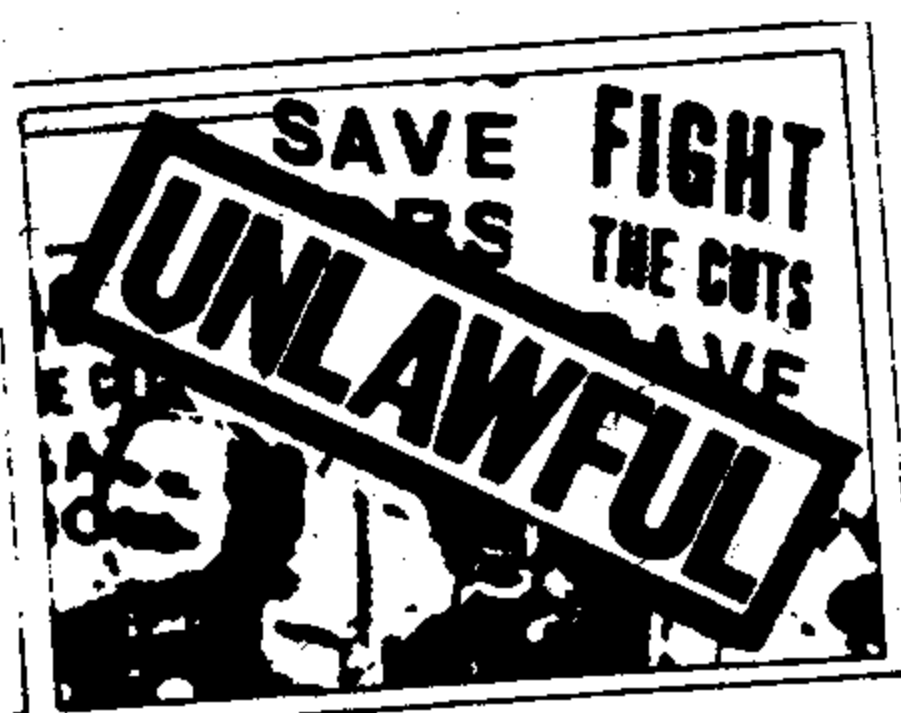
I've heard that Tebbit's law also makes it easier to sack strikers.

It certainly does. The story goes like this. The last Labour government said that an employer was protected if he sacked all the workers who were on strike and refused to take any of them back.

If he selected, he had legal problems. But this employers' charter caused management problems. If thirty workers struck, five returned after a week and then a further four weeks into the strike the employer sacked the rest, the courts decided that he had selected by taking back the original five.

The new law changes this and allows the employer to discriminate, thus placing in his hands a stronger weapon to break strikes.

Picketing rights already face heavy attack from the law. You have no rights at all unless you are picketing your own workplace. And even then the police have unlimited powers to decree numbers and conduct of pickets, and even to prevent them stopping people to put their case.



When you say "open to legal action" and "unlawful" what exactly do you mean? Would employers have to sue workers? What would be their remedies?

The Tory anti-union laws are civil law. The employers have to do their own dirty work. The police do not do it for them.

If an employer feels the law is being broken, he goes before a High Court judge and asks for an interim injunction. This is an order to the union to call the action off until the full hearing.

At that hearing, which may be months later, the employer can return and ask for compensation for loss of production.

Most employers never return to court. They simply want the strike called off.

To get an injunction the employer does not have to prove his case to the hilt. He has to show only that he has some kind of a case and that the balance of convenience means that the strike should be called off.

Judges always say "If the union wins its case later on, they can go on strike then. They have lost nothing by waiting. The employer, however, should not have to lose production through industrial action which may subsequently be found to be unlawful."

So they nearly always grant injunctions. This ignores the industrial reality: how are you supposed to negotiate over wages with industrial action ruled out? If you wait six months for industrial action in a victimisation case, you will wait forever.

It means that the injunction always works as a weapon of the employer to

break strikes.

What if you ignore the injunction?

You are in contempt of court, and can be fined like Sean Geraghty or imprisoned like the Pentonville dockers. It is up to the Judge.

Who can the employer sue - the steward, the official or the union?

Since 1906, when the Trades Disputes Act overruled the House of Lords judgement in the Taff Vale case, union funds have not been liable to pay compensation to employers and others directly affected by unlawful industrial action.

Legal cases have been brought against individual trade unionists. Now they can be brought against the union itself.

However, this will only be so when the unlawful industrial action has been authorised or ratified by the union executive or other bodies which have authority under rule to do so. There may be legal arguments as

there were under the 1971 Industrial Relations Act as to whether shop stewards have the authority to take industrial action. If they do, the union will be liable.

However, there is a clear way out for the union. If the executive repudiates the unlawful industrial action as soon as is reasonably practicable and doesn't take any steps inconsistent with that repudiation, then the union will not be held responsible.

If injunctions are issued against unions and disobeyed by their members, the employers remedy will be contempt of court. The employer will also be able to claim damages for loss of production.

There is a sliding scale so that unions with fewer than 5,000 members have to pay damages up to £12,500 and those with more than 100,000 will have to face awards up to £250,000.

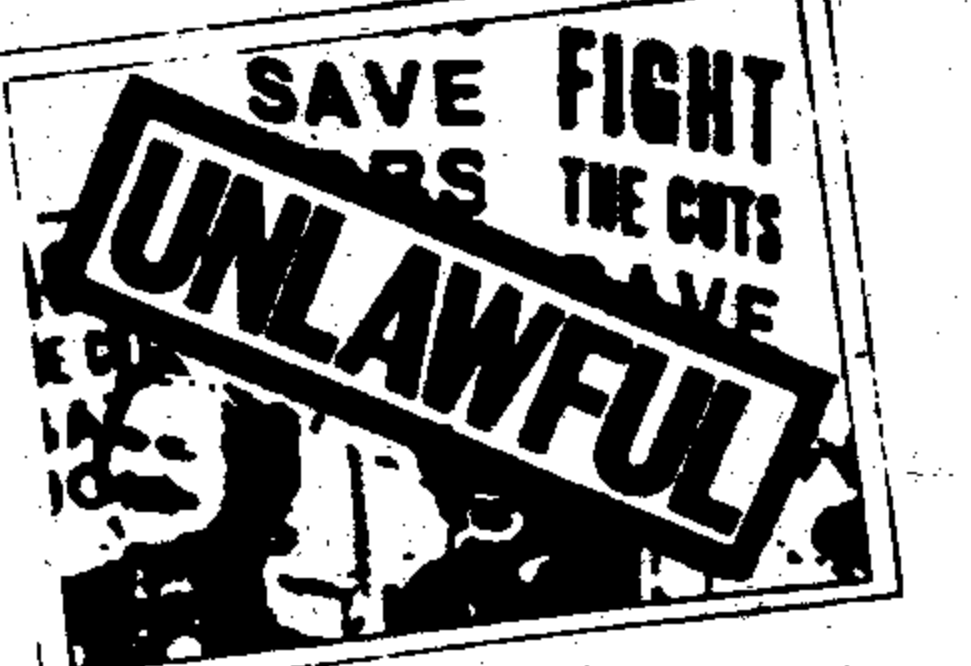
So the Tories aim to get unions to concentrate power to take industrial action at the top of the structure, and to get top leaders to dissuade

and discipline members who take industrial action that could lead to the use of the law - thus centralising decision-making at the expense of democracy.

What is the purpose of the legal restraints on industrial action?

To outlaw solidarity and put the unions under the atomiser.

Today fewer and fewer disputes can be won at one workplace. The sectionalism of our movement is a big plus for Thatcher and the purpose of Tebbit's law is to keep it that way, by limiting legally the means you will use to extend your action.



MOBILISING COMMITTEE IN DEFENCE OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT IT?

John McIlroy looks at some questions on fighting Tebbit.

I agree that Tebbit is bad law. But should we break it when it is made by a democratically elected government?

Trade unions came into being outside of and in defiance of the laws made by governments democratically elected according to the

system operating then.

If that was imperfect democracy, so is the system that elected Thatcher with less than one-third of the vote and makes us wait five years to get rid of her.

If the Tolpuddle martyrs had broken the laws made by governments in their day, we wouldn't have unions now. And they may not be around much longer in their present shape if we don't do something about Tebbit.

But wouldn't it be better to wait for a Labour government.

You might wait forever,

and God knows what would happen to our basic rights in the meantime.

You have to remember what the Tory laws do. They make it unlawful for you to successfully ask workers to turn back from picket lines at any workplace except your own.

This is not only an interference with the right to strike but a gross restriction on freedom of speech.

You are worried about breaking the law. But how often do the bosses break the law? Any Factory Inspector will tell you that whenever s/he enters any workplace, s/he sees breaches of the criminal law by the bosses.

Every year hundreds of employers commit breaches of wages council legislation and go unpunished. The UK government itself has been in breach of a whole range of European laws.

And when the bosses want to strike, nothing but nothing stops them. "Business strike may be last shove for Schmidt" headlined the Sunday Times on September 12 1982. "A determined campaign by West German big business against the government it has come to despise was a major factor behind the crisis that is expected to topple Helmut Schmidt's eight year old coalition." And it did!

We have to fight now and like the bosses we have to use every weapon we can lay our hands on.

What about the TUC's programme of opposition?

The TUC adopted an eight point programme to fight Tebbit's law at a special TUC Congress in April. The key points were:

*No participation in

closed shop ballots.

*No trade unionists to sit on tribunals hearing cases under Tebbit.

*No union to take public funds for union ballots.

*If a union is attacked under Tebbit, if it requests help from the TUC General Council, and if they are satisfied that assistance from other unions is justified, then they can co-ordinate support including, if necessary, industrial action.

*A campaign and defence fund to be established with a levy of 10p per member.

Is this adequate?

Not really. Look at the situation when an injunction was issued against Sean Geraghty this summer.

His union, the EETPU, did not ask the General Council for assistance, and the General Council gave none. It was left to ordinary workers to support him.

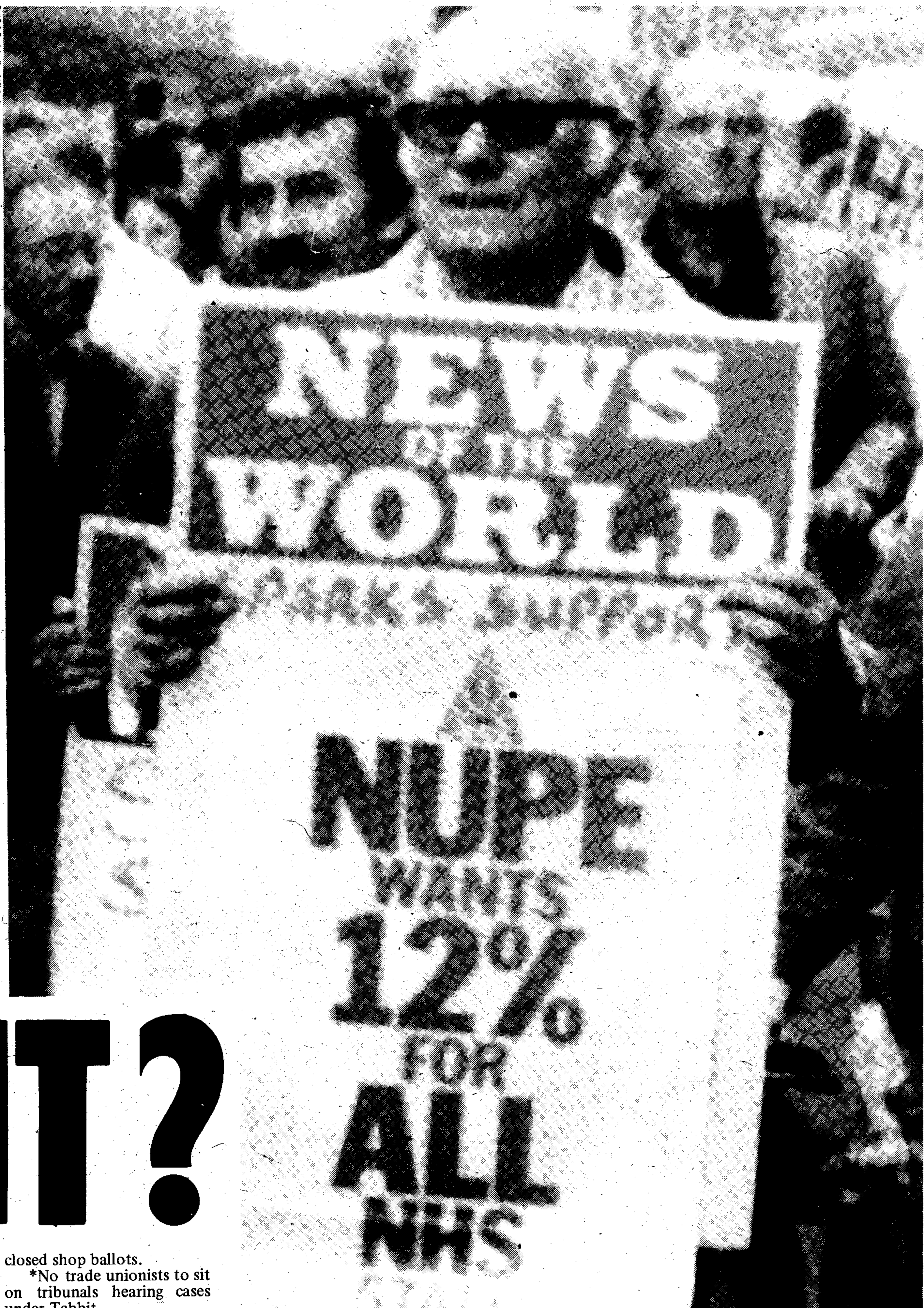
When ASLEF did ask the TUC for support against the Tories, none was forthcoming. What worries many trade unionists is that if a union in a similar position with Tebbit asks for help, the General Council will say "now is not the time" and leave them isolated.

Effective

So what should we do?

Firstly, we should campaign amongst workers and at all levels of the unions and Labour Party on the basis that sooner or later Tebbit will be used - and when it is the TUC should immediately call for all-out solidarity action by all unions.

If it doesn't, ordinary trade unionists must work towards that end. We cannot leave our brothers and sisters to be victimised.



The more the Tories and the employers are aware that any attempt to use the law will provoke all-out resistance, the less likely they are to use it.

Secondly, we think trade unionists should adopt a policy of "Don't talk to Tebbit".

Talking to the Tories is a waste of breath. Our representatives on tripartite bodies such as the National Economic Development Council should be withdrawing and organising a fight, not idly chattering.

Thirdly we think that the best way of fighting Tebbit

is supporting workers fighting now against the Tories on their own concerns.

Whilst arguing and discussing the importance of this legislation, we have to remember it is simply one part of an overall struggle against Tory policies and their architects.



The Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights was set up in April from a conference organised by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing. It publishes factsheets and leaflets, and provides speakers, to alert the labour movement to the dangers of Tebbit's law. It campaigns for the trade unions to break off collaboration with the Tories by withdrawing from bodies like the NEDC and to organise for all-out strike action to defeat the law. Contact: MCDTUR, 28, Middle Lane, London N8.



Lenin and the Russian workers' Revolution

Fighting for internationalism

What did Lenin really stand for? In previous parts of this series, Andrew Hornung and John O'Mahony have described his ideas and activity up to 1912. In this third article they look at Lenin's ideas on the right of nations to self-determination and on the First World War.

Much of Lenin's theoretical work at this time was focused on the national and colonial question. One of Lenin's major contributions to Marxism was his clarification of this. Russia had rightly been called the 'prison house of nations', with non-Russian nationalities outnumbering Russians in the Tsar's empire. What policy should Russian Marxists adopt towards Russia's subject nations?

They took a 'consistently democratic' stand, advocating self-determination for nations and for fragments of peoples who felt nationally oppressed. The preservation of existing state boundaries was no concern of the working class.

Lenin insisted that the road to international working class unity lay through the fullest rights of nations to a separate existence at will. National oppression poisoned the relations of workers in both the oppressed and oppressor nations. It was imperative that the revolutionary party of the oppressor nation accept and fight for the national rights of the oppressed nations. Conversely, the revolutionary parties of the workers of the oppressed nations and peoples would oppose the chauvinism and narrow national exclusiveness of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie of their nations, fighting in this way for international working class unity.

In contrast to this, the Marxists of that other prison house of nations, the Austrian Empire, redefined the right to self-determination of nations as the right to mere cultural freedom within the borders of the existing state, which were regarded as sacrosanct. Lenin pointed out that this policy of 'cultural national autonomy' merely perpetuated nationalism, and in no way helped international working class unity.

Lenin wrote a number of pamphlets and articles to combat the Austrians on the right and also an ultra-left tendency personified by Rosa Luxemburg, who maintained that, for example, recognition of Poland's right to self-determination was a retrograde step because Poland and Russia had been economically integrated.

This question eventually fused with the problem of the world-wide struggle against imperialism. Lenin demonstrated that it was precisely in the period of the highest stages of capitalism that there would be a whole wave of wars of national liberation against

imperialism. He argued that revolutionaries everywhere, and especially those in the imperialist countries, must support the oppressed nations and stand for their right to break out of the empires which oppressed them and set up their own states.

Admitting that political independence would be limited by the imperialist world economic relations now dominant, Lenin argued that the answer to the economic domination of imperialism was workers' revolution on a world scale, but consistent democracy on the national question was an irreplaceable part of the programme of socialism. His writings of that time are full of denunciations of those who did not understand that the right of nations to self-determination would still be a vital issue even after the socialist revolution.

Today, when the Stalinist USSR, with about half its population non-Russians, is the largest prison-house of nations on earth, and the lack of national self-determination is a dominating feature of life in countries like Poland, the national question is once again one of the most explosive issues in Russia and Eastern Europe. Lenin's policy on the national question will play a powerful role in the political revolution against Stalinism there.

The national question took on new sharpness as World War 1 loomed.

Lenin had participated in the congresses of the international socialist movement, though he had concentrated heavily on Russian affairs. Now, in 1914, when the World War broke out, the whole international socialist movement splintered into nationalist sections. Instead of the international brotherhood of the working class against war to which the International had repeatedly pledged itself, the outbreak of war produced fratricidal slaughter.

The same artillery fire that lit up the corpse-littered battlefields now highlighted the real situation within the international labour movement, which had become rotten with careerism and reformism. Social Democrats became 'social chauvinists' overnight, supporting their national governments in the war. Jules Guesde, a leader of the French socialists, even became Minister of War.

Russia was one of the few countries where the majority of socialists did not



Lenin - "combined concrete analysis and realism with rigid adherence to principle."

spring to 'defend the fatherland', though even here a social-chauvinist blow was the fate of German Social Democracy, which also supported the imperialist war. This party, representing over four million voters, went over massively to chauvinism. What shocked Lenin was the fact that Karl Kautsky, the revered 'Pope of Marxism' and the man whom Lenin had regarded as his teacher for the previous two decades, refused to echo the words of the revolutionary left, led by Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht: 'The enemy is at home! Turn the imperialist war into a civil war'. Instead, he began to rationalise for the renegades.

Kautsky's betrayal, masked by chatter about disarmament conferences, drew from Lenin a number of brilliant articles which exposed the social chauvinists, including those who had been pillars of 'Marxist orthodoxy' during the debates with the 'revisionists' like Bernstein.

He bitterly rejected and combatted the shallow programme of the Kautskys that after the war they should 'reconstruct the Second International'.

He exposed how the daily life of the Second International parties had led them gradually to accommodate and intermesh with the bourgeois state, much as the liquidators had tended to in Russia. He reworked his way through the

whole literature of Marxism, relating it to the whole experience of the class struggle.

He uncovered and, in a series of famous pamphlets like 'The State and Revolution' (1917), proved that the 'orthodox' Marxists like Kautsky had for years falsified, vulgarised and bowdlerised the real teachings of Marxism on the state, the class struggle and the proletarian revolution.

Implacably Lenin struggled to understand, expose, and eliminate from the labour movement the baseness, loathsomeness and vileness of social-chauvinism and 'Kautskyism'.

This was the only way to cleanse the labour movement and rebuild a working class international on firmer foundations. Gradually, small groups of revolu-

tionaries began to make contact and prepare the revival. A conference of revolutionary socialists was held in Zimmerwald in Switzerland in 1915, and another in Kienthal in 1916.

While the ravages of war seemed to stifle all political life, its very barbarism and the conditions it imposed on the working masses both at the front and at home provided the leaven for revolution. As Engels, predicting the world war as long before as 1887, had said: 'Eight to ten million soldiers will mutually massacre one another and in so doing devour the whole of Europe... Only one result is absolutely certain: general exhaustion and the establishment of the conditions for the ultimate victory of the working class'.

In Russia at the outbreak of war what had been a growing movement of the working class was suddenly stifled. The Bolshevik deputies in the Duma were

arrested for opposing the war. But within a short period, the collapse, the slaughter, the famine of the war revived the movement of opposition of the working class.

On Feb. 22 1917 a wage dispute at the giant Putilov works in Petrograd sparked off a lock-out which within the week had generated a mass movement of striking workers supported by mutineering troops and sailors. The slogans demanding higher wages were soon replaced by ones demanding 'Bread', 'Down with the autocracy', and 'down with the war'.

The leadership of the movement was quickly taken over by the leaders of the Left in the old Duma, Kerensky, Chkheidze and Skobolev. The Soviet that had been so important in the revolution of 1905 was reborn.

And, as a symbolic portent of the coming situation of dual power, it met in the Tauride Palace (the parliamentary buildings) on the 27th, the day the Tsar dissolved the Duma.

A Provisional Government was soon called into office with Prince Lvov as Prime Minister. But on the same day the Soviet issued its Order No.1 urging the setting up of more Soviets, particularly in the army and navy, and instructing workers, soldiers and sailors not to obey any orders unless countersigned by the Soviet.

Lenin arrived in Russia, in Petrograd itself, in April. He was greeted by Chkheidze, then the chairman of the Soviet, who warned Lenin about the dangers of disunity now that the democratic revolution could be fulfilled. But Lenin ignored these pompous, yet anxious, words.

He turned to the people gather around and announced: 'Dear comrades, soldiers and workers. The piratical imperialist war is beginning to become a civil war throughout Europe... The Russian revolution accomplished by you has prepared the way and opened up a new epoch. Long live the world-wide socialist revolution'.

The Bolshevik leaders there at the Finland Station to meet him were shocked at what Lenin had said. Some of them must have thought he had gone mad or — as indeed he had — gone over to Trotsky's view that the Russian revolution must take the course of combining the democratic and socialist revolutions under the leadership of the working class.

Lenin, who had the marvellous capacity to combine concrete analysis and realism in every situation with rigid adherence to principle, had seen the possibilities of full proletarian victory. Really, he merely developed previously worked-out ideas on the motive forces of the Russian Revolution to their logical conclusion.

Continued next week

Don't boycott black unions Writeback

IN reply to Tsotsi's letter (last week's SO): the nub of the issue on South African trade unions is this: Most of the genuine, independent, non-racial trade unions which now represent hundreds of thousands of organised black industrial workers are actively seeking direct links with unions overseas.

For example, the metal worker unions belonging to FOSATU, the largest non-racial union federation in South Africa, wrote:

"We strongly favour fraternal contact between workers in South Africa and workers in other countries at all levels, provided this is

guided by the interests and requirements of the workers...

"Several visits to and from our unions have already taken place with shop stewards and union officials from Europe visiting unions and factories in South Africa (and vice versa) ... This contact has been valuable and it will be encouraged in the future."

Anti-Apartheid, however, until the last AGM, has been vehemently opposed to the establishment of direct union-to-union links. They have argued on the one hand that they comprise a violation of their boycott policy, and on the other hand that

all links should be mediated through the trade union wing of the ANC, SACTU.

We say that the boycott should be against the apartheid state and the economic forces which support it, not against the black workers who are fighting back. We say that it is not enough for unions here to support SACTU, partly because most independent unions in South Africa have little or no contact with SACTU (which is underground and basically illegal), partly because contacts mediated through SACTU are unnecessarily dangerous, and partly because there is no substitute for direct experience of

workers, shop stewards and officials of the struggles of black South African workers.

We can use the strength of our own trade union and labour movement to demand the right to enter South Africa, to meet with black trade unionists and to invite representatives from these unions over here. This is an elementary and most effective way in which the British labour movement can show its solidarity.

Further, it is the way sought by the non-racial

unions in South Africa themselves.

The opposition of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and SACTU has proved to be an important block to developing solidarity of this kind.

Our campaign is to help establish direct union-to-union links along the lines sought by non-racial unions in South Africa in conjunction with progressive trade unionists here; in part, that includes a campaign to change the extremely unhelpful policies that have so far been advocated by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and fervently pursued by SACTU.

BOB FINE



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.

Hands off

Ted Grant!

What would Trotsky think?

John O'Mahony's reply to Glynis Powell (Nov. 4 'USSR not a Capitalist State') just won't do. You say 'a better explanation is that developed by Trotsky and in the last 40 years from Trotsky's theories.'

You fail to mention that Trotsky always stressed that the analysis of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state, was a provisional theory. That he believed that stalinism was an ephemeral phenomenon. That if this phenomenon proved longer lasting than he predicted, this meant that his theory would be proved to be wrong, and must be junked - thrown in the dustbin of history.

Moreover, Trotsky established two criteria for judging this:-

First, (in the Revolution Betrayed) he laid down that Stalinism could not survive more than a generation - because it was not rooted in a class system - if it did survive more than a gener-



ation, he made it clear, then it must be accepted that the analysis was faulty. Forty five years have passed since he published, and nearly fifty since he wrote, that - i.e. two generations.

Second, (in his Testament, 'The USSR in War,' written in '38) that 'if at the end of the War now beginning, there was no world revolution, then those who believed in a new

class system would have won the argument. (He deduced some fairly pessimistic conclusions from this, for the people of his day; it is illogical to assume that they are meant for all time, and now - more years after Stalin's accession to power, than elapsed between Thermidor and the Communist Manifesto - new conclusions would be appropriate.)

Thus, the fact that the

various Fourth Internationalists have for the last forty years insisted on the dogma of the degenerated workers' state, is not a development from Trotsky's theories, but the deliberate and conscious rejection of them. 'Trotskyists' have made a dogma of eternal application out of what Trotsky himself called a provisional analysis, and have ignored Trotsky's own provisos. I would remind you that Lenin said that insistence on outdated principles is the worst sort of reformism.

You dismiss as abstractions Glynis Powell's talk of oppression, a few pages earlier, you had published Marek Garztecki, whose account is hardly a matter of abstraction. It is the exploitation and oppression in the Soviet Union that are concrete. Surplus value is extracted. The bureaucracy has a monopoly of use, control and enjoyment of the bulk of soviet wealth - that is it has de facto ownership thereof, and

only in English Law is there a concept of De Jure ownership distinct from de facto, a typically English abstraction. All this - as you say - Trotsky saw in his lifetime; he argued that it was a temporary cancer on the revolution, that it was caused by specific conditions, and would be cured within a generation.

Trotsky held that Stalinism was the product of Russia's relative economic backwardness, and by the fact that only a Sixth of the world's surface, and less than a tenth of its population was covered by the Soviet Union. Nevertheless despite this backwardness, despite this isolation, despite the bloodiness of the Stalin regime, he held that working class power - such as it survived there - combined with the workers' movements elsewhere, was sufficient to create an impasse, a balance between workers' power and world capitalist power. It was only on this balance that stalinism could maintain

itself. If other countries had a revolution, even under stalinist leadership, this balance would be upset; which was why he believed that the stalinists could not under any circumstances make (or allow to be made) a revolution elsewhere and that Red Army occupation of Eastern Poland and parts of Finland would destabilise stalinism.

Stalinism now rules at least a third of the world's surface, more than a third of its population; the USSR has risen to be militarily the second power in the world, through its own manufactures, was the first power to launch rocketry outside the atmosphere. How is it - do you think - that the balance established in 1924 has not been upset? Can you really imagine that Trotsky, if he were alive today, would really entertain such a theory for a moment?

fraternally,
Laurens Otter

Alan Campbell's personal attack on Ted Grant is nothing more than scandalous. Ted has been a member of the Party for over 30 years.

How long has Brother Campbell been a member? Or is he yet another recent convert from one of the ultra-left sects?

Campbell attacks Militant for not supporting CND, the gay movement and troops out now. But doesn't he realise that most of the people in these groups are middle class?

The working class can be found in the trade unions and the Labour Party. It is only working class people at the end of the day who can change the world.

This is why Militant are in the Labour Party and trade unions, and not the women's movement. Marx said that the middle classes cannot be relied upon by working people in the battles between capital and labour. Does not Campbell's attack on Militant in its hour of need confirm this?

What's more: what would most help working class people today, the nationalisation of the leading 250 monopolies controlled one-third by a Labour government, one-third by the TUC and one-third by the workers themselves - or a large gay movement?

The answer is obvious

Yours faithfully,
EDDIE MOONMAN
(NUSMW)

SCIENCE Who fetches the water?

by Les Hearn

THERE has been much talk about helping the development of the Third World by introducing "appropriate" technologies, rather than the grossly inappropriate "improvement" offered by capitalist "development" agencies.

And there is often a lot of head-scratching and agonising when supposedly appropriate technologies fail to catch on and the poor keep getting poorer.

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Frequently, this arises through a failure of the "aiders" to recognise the class relations in Third World countries. But just as frequently, it seems that a failure to recognise sexual oppression is the cause.

Four examples of this are described by Anil Agarwal and Anita Anand in an article in a recent New Scientist called "Ask the Women Who Do The Work".

The first example was of a development project pushed by the Indian government. If the villagers of Dungari-Paitoli in the Himalayas were to sell a communal forest to the government to be turned into a farm for seed potatoes, then such fruits as a road, health clinic and possibly a school would be theirs. The men of the village agreed with this, but the women refused to accept the sale!

Women in this village are totally responsible for such basic family needs as fuel and fodder and already have to walk some 50 km a week carrying about 150 kg of wood in 25 kg loads. All

women, young, old and even pregnant, do this work.

If the forest were sold, each would have to walk some 50% further for wood, a crippling burden which far outweighed the alleged benefits of the potato farm. Though opposed by fathers, husbands and sons, the women fought and won.

Women also form the backbone of support for the Chipko movement, based in nearby Gopeshwar. This movement protects forests from government-sponsored logging companies. Its members buy trees to stop their being cut down. The history of the movement is of a series of spontaneous risings by village women to protect their last reserves of fuel and fodder from commercial lumberjacks, and even from their own men who would rather have the cash.

The Chipko movement is currently running the most successful re-forestation scheme in India, precisely because it recognises the interest of the women in fuel and fodder trees (as opposed to cash crop trees). The women take regular care of young trees, resulting in a survival rate of up to 90%

rather than the usual rate of under 50%.

The male lack of interest in energy for cooking explains the failure of India's first community Biogas plant in a village in Uttar Pradesh. The plant, which supplies cooking gas from cow dung to all households, was a great technical success. But the "community" started losing interest in it and supplies of dung dwindled. (Male) community leaders explained that they were more interested in power for agricultural machinery than with cooking energy. Meanwhile, the women have gone back to the drudgery of collecting wood and dung to burn on family stoves.

Male domination of decision-making has resulted

in the failure to take up another health-promoting technology. Efforts to introduce sanitary toilets to Third World villages have been almost universally unsuccessful and there are now some 1500 million people without access to adequate sanitation.

This has been explained as being due to the ignorance of rural people of the health benefits of sanitation, but, in fact, women are much more likely to accept sanitary toilets than men. Men, however, make the decisions, leaving women prey to restrictive taboos about excretion.

The fourth example is of community supplies of clean drinking water. Fetching water is exclusively the job

of women and children, so male village heads are less interested in getting community water supplies laid on.

Where these are introduced, though, they seem to have little effect on the diarrhoeas which are a major cause of ill-health in the Third World - killing six million children each year.

It seems that despite the clean water, poor personal hygiene will still allow enough germs to be transmitted to keep up the rate of diarrhoea.

This is because you need enough water in each house to encourage people to wash their hands after defecation. And fetching water from a stand-pipe which may be 100m away is women's work - on top of all the other things they have to do (like fetching wood!). In some countries (e.g. Bangla Desh) women are kept in purdah so they can only fetch water after dark, making shortage of water during the day inevitable.

So in this last case, the persistence of fatal diarrhoea can be linked firmly to the relations of power between men and women.



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.

IN BRIEF

CPSA sell-out rejected

Hostel picket

LOCAL Labour MPs Frank Dobson and Jock Stallard will be among those supporting the demonstration outside Arlington House hostel, Camden, this Thursday 25th.

42 workers at this hostel for single men are on strike for an increase in their wages of around £30 per week. On Thursday night the hostel owners, Rowtons, will be implementing the court order they have obtained to evict the strikers from their rooms in the hostel.

A vigil will start at 8pm and run through the night. Also expected to attend

are Camden and Greater London Labour councillors, Fire Brigades Union general secretary Ken Cameron, and newly-elected Peckham MP Harriet Harman.

Lack of active support from the strikers' own union, the TGWU, has been a major problem in this dispute. But the strike was on the agenda of the union's General Executive Committee last Saturday, and convenor Jack Jenkinson told us that he hoped to see moves soon for official backing.

The strikers are picketing and seeking blacking at three London hotels owned by Rowtons — the Mount Pleasant in Calthorpe St., the Grand in Southampton Row, and the London Park at the Elephant and Castle.

They need regular support on these picket lines, and donations — to be sent to the strike committee at Camden Labour Centre, 8, Camden Road, London NW1. (485 1100)

Air India

THE strikers at Air India offices at Heathrow airport and New Bond Street, London, are maintaining their pickets.

They have discovered that lorries have been issued with 'air side' passes which allow them direct access to the airport apron via any of the hundred or so entrances. As the apron is a restricted area, the strikers have not been able to mount effective pickets on these lorries.

Customs officers in the CPSA voted not to issue any more airside passes for Air India and no passes have been issued for the past week.

Air India management postponed a meeting with the strikers at ACAS planned for November 23. The meeting will now take place a week later.

The refuellers at the airport, who could ground all Air India flights by taking action in solidarity with the strikers will not be meeting to discuss the dispute until after the meeting at ACAS.

Support, especially financial, is still needed. Money/messages to: Air India Strike Committee, c/o TGWU, Transport House, 7-9 South Road, Southall, Middlesex. Cheques payable to 'Air India TGWU'.

AT LAST Friday's mass meeting of the 80 DHSS strikers in Oxford, CPSA Section Executive Committee member Mick Duggan moved acceptance of the latest offer to come from talks between the unions and the Department.

The offer was unanimously rejected, and the strikers have sent the CPSA National Executive Committee off to re-think how to lead the fight for jobs now being waged in Birmingham and Oxford.

The CPSA NEC had voted only 13 to 12 to recommend acceptance. The SCPS NEC continued to

recommend rejection — it was virtually the same offer as was rejected by the strikers back on October 27.

In his speech Mick Duggan said that the establishment of a Joint Working Group to discuss the complementing system in the DHSS was seen by the CPSA NEC as giving ministers a chance to 'get off the hook'.

This is leading members from behind. DHSS ministers have the firm backing of the government to ride this dispute out. This strike is a challenge to the government's policy

of job cuts in the public sector, and most of those on strike are beginning to realise this.

They went on strike for permanent posts and are determined to get them. The CPSA NEC now has to back this determination by escalating the dispute to an all-out strike in the DHSS.

Possible ways of escalation such as a one-day department-wide strike in support of Birmingham and Oxford were raised by SCPS official Geoff Tice when he moved for rejection of the offer. CPSA president Kevin Roddy came in at the end of the

meeting, after the vote, to say that such a one-day strike would have to be worked for by the delegations going out from Oxford to other offices. He said its success or failure would show whether continued escalation would be possible.

Those on strike should be asking Roddy and the rest of the Executive what they are going to do. Will there be a national instruction, with Section Executive members touring branches to argue for strike action?

An excellent opportunity

to ask such questions will arise at this weekend's CPSA Broad Left conference in Leeds. The importance of the DHSS strike makes it imperative for all SO supporters in the CPSA to attend.

ALAN STEPHENS

* Oxford: mass pickets Monday and Friday, 7am to 9am at Harcourt House. Pickets all morning, and then 3pm to 5pm. Donations and messages of support to M. Robertson, 24 Beecher Road, Summer-town, Oxford.

Foot backs picket

THE FIRST mass picket in support of the 200 striking clothing workers at Raindi's in Smethwick was held last Friday, 19th.

About 400 attended the picket, which was a good turnout considering that the final decision to go ahead with the picket was taken only about 48 hours before.

The picket was arranged to coincide with Michael Foot's visit to West Bromwich and the timing to suit

Foot's arrangements. Obviously at 5pm to 7pm it had no effect on Raindi or the scabs directly.

However, Foot did turn up for five minutes at 7pm.

The greatest barrier in the Raindi strike is now the failure to intensify the action, and provide effective backing for the strikers. The TGWU must be pressed to pay hardship money, and to organise regular mass pickets mobilising all

its local membership.

Picketing must be intensified to effectively stop goods and scabs entering and leaving the factory.

Finally, the key to the success of the strike is to extend it to the other sweatshops doing similar work, where the T&G has already recruited substantial membership. If this is done the other Indian employers will soon pressure Raindi into a settlement.

Godfrey Webster

RICHARD HORTON, Midlands regional secretary of the CPSA DHSS section, spoke to Socialist Organiser.

LAST Friday's meetings showed how the members feel. The vote was 520 to 23 for rejection of the latest offer.

There was a banner hanging over the balcony in the hall with 'Stuff the Offer' written on it. That set the tone for the whole meeting. [CPSA official] Alistair Graham had come up confidently expecting to convince the strikers that the deal was the best thing since Cashpoint cards. Well, he was sent packing with his tail between his legs.

On the other hand, the SCPS speaker, Peter Palmer, chairperson of the DHSS section, recommended rejection on behalf of the SCPS executive, and was enthusiastically applauded. [SCPS organises middle grades in the civil service, CPSA lower grades].

The members clearly saw that this 'revised offer' was in reality no different from the one they had already rejected. Only the form of words had changed.

Unfortunately the NEC still includes some people who believe the deck should be cleared ready for the annual pay claim and therefore regard this strike as a waste of time. That's basically the position that Militant supporters take, for instance.

What they don't seem to realise is that if we lose this one, it will inevitably weaken and demoralise the members when it comes to the pay battle.

But the NEC are obviously having to pick up the pieces and reassess their position after Graham's hammering on Friday. Basically, our

options now are pretty limited.

The obvious aim must be to extend the action to other areas. We certainly need to prepare the ground for nationwide escalation, but there is a problem as I see it. Other areas will want 50% strike pay like Birmingham and Oxford. That would exceed our strike fund income. So for nationwide escalation to be a realistic proposition, we need to strengthen our financial position, step up the levies, and start campaigning for support throughout the wider labour movement. I certainly hope SO supporters will be able to help here. And remember, as we get nearer Christmas, hardship claims are going to become more frequent from the strikers.

The other possibility is to intensify the dispute locally by bringing out unemployment offices. We are already considering action in one of the emergency payments centres (there are three in Birmingham and one in Oxford). The November 15 mass meeting voted for this, not in order to close them down (the centres would still run on volunteers and scabs), but to increase the pressure on management.

And we're tightening up on procedures in the UBOs. For instance, we're asking members not to manually correct forms from DHSS offices, but to return them and so put more pressure on the scabs.

Feelings are definitely rising among the strikers. There is no way we'll accept any sell-out. The only question we're asking is how best to extend and strengthen the dispute.

* Hardship fund: c/o Richard Horton, CPSA, room 337, Fiveways House, Islington Row, Birmingham B15.

NUT victims

THE National Union of Teachers executive is fast getting a reputation as the strictest disciplinarians in the TUC. After a series of suspensions of militants over the last two years, they went a step further last Friday by confirming the expulsion of two officers of the Southwark branch.

The two, Amanda Leon and Gil Lowenstein, had called for a one-day strike on July 1 against compulsory transfer of teachers from one school to another.

Teachers are against this because it leads to job loss and disrupts educational planning in the schools, as well as giving enormous power to heads and inspectors.

The Inner London

division of the union is officially opposed to compulsory transfer but its officers negotiated a compulsory transfer agreement. This was a direct consequence of the cuts in the Inner London Education Authority's 1982-3 budget — cuts which they supported.

Southwark was particularly hard hit and there was a wave of militant protest action in local schools during the summer term. This culminated in the 1 July strike called by the Southwark NUT officers after a vote in their branch.

Three of the officers have been suspended and temporarily banned from office. Amanda Leon and Gil Lowenstein have been expelled because it is their

"second offence".

Only two members of the Executive — Ken Jones and Bernard Regan, both members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance — opposed the expulsions. The NUT's notorious Rule 8 prevents members taking any form of industrial action without prior approval from the Executive.

Teachers will be comparing their leaders' inability to lead a single fight against the cuts with their determination to stamp out militancy.

NUT members should be flooding the Executive with resolutions demanding the immediate full reinstatement of all the Southwark officers.

TONY GARD

Ravenscraig pantomime

"A SUDDEN morale-raising unification of the Scottish nation was achieved in Motherwell yesterday with the creation of an all-embracing campaign to save the Scottish steel industry".

That was how the Communist Party's Morning Star described the Scottish TUC-convened conference held on November 12 for the avowed purpose of preventing any further cutbacks in the Scottish steel industry.

The conference was the day after the Tory Secretary of State for Scotland, George Younger, had announced that closure of the massive Ravenscraig plant was an option being considered by the British Steel Corporation. Directly and indirectly, closure would mean the loss of some 14,000 jobs.

The conference also took place the same day as the closure of the Clydebridge steelworks, at a cost of 600 jobs. Lacking faith in their union leadership to conduct a real fight, the workforce

had opted for redundancy money.

The shambles of the so-called 'morale-raising unification' of the Scottish nation taking place in Motherwell that day made such an attitude unfortunately only too understandable.

It was cooked up according to a recipe which has already led to a series of job-destroying disasters for Scottish workers: instead of building working class action to save jobs, the STUC called on the Tory party, Tory MPs, vicars, the Scottish CBI, Chambers of Commerce and a hotch-potch of other anti working class bodies to unite with the labour movement in a pious, vacuous statement of opposition to the threatened jobs disaster.

Low-point of the conference was leading Scottish trade unionists applauding and cheering the speech of Scottish Tory party chairperson Michael Ancram, and STUC general secretary Jimmy Milne welcoming the Tory 'support' and calling

for an all-party deputation to meet Margaret Thatcher. The deputation was to be led by George Younger!

This pantomime even went so far that Shettleston Labour MP David Marshall tabled a Commons motion four days later attacking the Scottish SDP, Liberal, and SNP MPs for failing to turn up alongside the Tories.

The outcome of the conference was no more than a five point declaration of opposition to any cutbacks in the steel industry, because of the essential role it played in the British economy, and a nationalist appeal for the government to curb steel imports.

We invite workers at Ravenscraig to write in to Socialist Organiser to say what they think of the Motherwell conference, and what needs to be done to save Ravenscraig from closure, 'partial' or otherwise. (Letters to Writeback, Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8).

LCDTU calls conference

The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions has called a conference against the Tebbit law for December 4 at County Hall, London SE1. Credentials for delegates from bona fide trade union organisations can be obtained from LCDTU, 148 Glenny Road, Barking, Essex.

The LCDTU has organised a number of demonstrations against the Tebbit law, and has sufficient weight in the labour movement to play a significant role in mobilising a fight.

But, dominated by the Communist Party and conditioned by the CP's focus on seeking left influence within the trade union bureaucracy and relying on left officials, the LCDTU has confined itself to promoting a more militant interpretation of the TUC's weak-kneed eight-point plan.

It has not campaigned for trade union leaders to break collaboration with the Tories, for general strikes against Tebbit (one day or indefinite), or for commitments to all-out action in the event of trade unionists being threatened with jail under the law.

The LCDTU also has generally run its conferences undemocratically, presenting a statement from the platform with no possibility of amendments.

Socialist Organiser recommends readers to urge trade union branches to send delegates with the aim of arguing for a democratic discussion and a fighting policy.

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Alan Thornett victimised

BETRAYED - BY

By Bill Peters

BL workers have seen a lot of sell-outs, but few can have been more slick and polished than the efforts of TGWU Oxford District Secretary David Buckle in selling out the struggle to defend Alan Thornett last week.

His long experience certainly showed from the moment he took control of events. He refused to publicly defend Alan Thornett and when the shop stewards defended him instead, he attacked them and denounced their statement.

He conspired with higher officials in the TGWU to call the mass meeting at the worst possible moment and then refused to attend it.

From the moment BL made their move to sack Alan Thornett on November 11, the full resources of both the Company and the Transport and General Workers Union swung into action to ensure that he stayed sacked. Looking back, the accumulation of these forces made a successful struggle in his defence extremely difficult indeed.

This is not to say he was not defended in the discipline procedure. By all accounts David Buckle put a very good case at the final meeting, clearly establishing victimisation.

He could rest assured, of course, that however strongly he argued the case, BL would not change their mind. The sacking was a strategic decision taken at a very high level and, short of an all-out strike, they were determined to see it through.

Significantly Buckle had told Alan Thornett and the plant TGWU convenor Bob Fryer that he had been in touch with the Regional and National officers of the union since he was first aware of BL's moves. There is no doubt that they were involved in the subsequent tactical decisions.

Final

At the extended plant conference - effectively the final appeal - Buckle concluded by registering a "failure to agree" with BL and giving them five days

notice (required under BL procedure) of "possible" industrial action. It was, according to those at the conference, the first time management side showed any interest in the proceedings.

They need not have worried, however. The five days' notice was not the start of a build-up towards strike action, but the first move in a sophisticated sell-out.

When Derek Robinson was sacked the spontaneous walk-out was made official immediately by the TGWU. Here, the collapse of the shop stewards movement in the recent period made a spontaneous walk-out at plant level very unlikely. But timing remained crucial. The quicker the membership was involved the better.

Notice

In this situation five days notice was a problem. In the present conditions in Cowley convenors are disciplined and victimised for calling mass meetings after the procedure is exhausted, let alone before.

It was very difficult for Bob Fryer to call a mass meeting of the plant once the five days notice was given. Roy Fraser in the Body Plant, for example, was victimised for doing just that.

Faced with this, Fryer planned to go straight to the transport drivers and seek a decision for strike action from the end of the five days notice. (Again it was very difficult for the drivers to strike in defiance of Buckle's five days' notice given their vulnerability, the ruthless management they were dealing with, and the inevitable response of the TGWU, which would be to order them back to work until the five days were up).

He would then call a mass meeting of the plant as soon as the drivers were out and giving a lead.

Before Buckle left the plant after the final appeal he arranged to produce a letter for distribution on the



Drivers from Alan Thornett's transport section giving Regional Secretary Mathers and Chairman Davies a rough ride outside TGWU offices during the kangaroo court "inquiry" which attempted to expel Thornett from the union. The threat of industrial action by the drivers if this went ahead forestalled this victimisation by union leaders. But though the drivers remain solidly loyal to Thornett, the bureaucracy has never abandoned its determination to drive him from the plant.

plant explaining the situation. When this arrived later that Friday afternoon, it revealed the next serious problem.

It said absolutely nothing to counter management propaganda which was already circulating in the plant. It is worth quoting it in full:

"This letter is to advise you that at an Extended Plant Conference today - 12 November - a case was argued against the dismissal of Brother Thornett in respect of his failure to renew his HGV licence and other related matters.

"The Company refused to withdraw the dismissal notice and we registered a 'failure to agree' and gave five days notice of possible industrial action.

"You will be kept informed of developments by your Senior Steward and Shop Stewards."

This was serious. If there

was to be a successful struggle, it needed the full time official conducting the case to publicly argue it. This letter, which was the ideal opportunity, showed that he would not.

Something had to be done. Without a full statement from the trade union side, the workforce would only have the Company version and support would be destroyed.

To meet this situation a statement was produced over the weekend, defending Alan Thornett, under the name of the sub-committee of the TGWU stewards committee. It was pinned to Buckle's letter and distributed to the plant on Monday morning and Monday night shift.

It had a very strong impact and cleared away the confusion created by Company propaganda.

At the same time, on Monday morning, Bob Fryer met the transport drivers. They voted solidly to strike from the end of the five days' notice, and to call upon the plant to follow them. (Their decision was not, as some newspapers claimed, conditional on the support of the plant).

Later that day Buckle told the Oxford Mail that he hoped to arrange a mass meeting of the plant for Thursday of that week,

during the five days notice, (and towards the end of that five days, giving time for a Company propaganda build-up).

Although when he put his request to management, through Bob Fryer, it was refused, it was plain that it would not end there. It is fair to assume that the Thursday meeting decision had been taken high up in the TGWU and that BL would soon be prevailed upon to concede it.

The TGWU leadership appear to have decided that they must kill the drivers' action before they came out. When Alan Thornett was victimised in 1974 they were caught. The drivers stayed out for a month despite the refusal of the plant to support them.

Meanwhile, management were stung by the sub-committee statement and reacted angrily. They intimidated Bob Fryer, demanding to know the names of the sub-committee who, they said, had distributed an "unauthorised" leaflet.

On Monday afternoon, Ian Forster (Director of Southern Operations) issued a leaflet throughout the complex "replying" to the sub-committee. His approach was to distort the case still further, since it was difficult to introduce a witch-hunt -

which was what the Company needed.

On Tuesday morning Forster got the break he wanted. The Workers Revolutionary Party were on the gates distributing a leaflet with a photo of Alan Thornett on the front and Karl Marx on the back.

It was headlined "All out strike now to reinstate Bro. Thornett". It never attempted to argue the case or relate to the situation. It was simply a political statement which ended:

"Nationalise the banks, the whole motor industry and all basic industries under workers control without compensation. This means a united struggle by the working class against the Tories and the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a socialist planned economy."

The leaflet had a serious negative impact on the plant. For the first time the right wing were able to divert from the issue itself and simply witch-hunt Alan Thornett as a Trotskyist.*

On Tuesday Buckle made it clear he was opposed to a transport drivers strike, saying that the issue was "too big" for one section.

Later that day, Buckle, with Fryer, met management and again asked for mass meetings on Thursday to be preceded by a shop stewards meeting on Wednesday morning. Sure enough, this time management agreed to authorise a mass meeting without pay.

Later Buckle began attacking not only the decision of the transport drivers to strike, but also the sub-committee statement, saying it was unauthorised

*This could not have been an innocent blunder by the WRP. Gerry Healy knows exactly the results of such a leaflet.

In "Victimisation at Cowley", the WRP account of the 1974 strike, Healy attacks the IMG for exactly the same thing - putting leaflets into the plant at the time of confrontation with management.

This remarkable page (p.53) from "Victimisation at Cowley" makes the point very well.

"This kind of intervention was extremely dangerous. It confused the workers on strike, it subverted the role of the trade union movement and it gave the company its ideal opportunity. Here at last was a real group of 'extremists' issuing their 'inflammatory communications' in order to wreck the company!

The way British Leyland used the IMG is most revealing. The method is illustrated in this letter from the production manager of the Cowley South works, W.B. Kennedy.

Kennedy wrote to the strikers:

"The present dispute at QT has been the subject of

unauthorised leaflets recently, on behalf of an extremist organisation.

"Such groups aim to wreck British industry. They will oppose any measures designed to promote harmony. That is why they have always wanted to tear up the Industrial Engineering Agreement and get back to the Dutch Auction system of bargaining.

"The Company does not intend to allow extremists to run the plant."

Observe how Kennedy jumps from the singular to the plural.

In the first paragraph we have: 'an extremist organisation' (the IMG) 'wrecking' British industry. But in the second paragraph we have: 'Such groups aim to wreck British industry'. The WRP, Alan Thornett, the senior stewards, have been roped in and been found guilty of the provocations carried out by the IMG."

It even explains exactly the same technique used by management again last week - taking a political leaflet and skilfully turning the smear onto the trade union publication.

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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



All-out strike now to reinstate Bro Thornett

A statement by the All Trades Unions Alliance

THE ALL TRADES UNIONS ALLIANCE (ATUA) is a group of workers from various industries who are united in their struggle against the management of British Leyland. We are calling for an all-out strike to reinstate Bro Thornett and to demand the reinstatement of all sacked workers.



I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN THE MARX CENTENARY YEAR 1983-1983

Name
Address
Post Office
Date sent
Age

BUY NEWS LINE EVERY DAY

THE T GWU

Move this motion



Buckle - no public defence of Thornett



From a heyday of 200 TGWU stewards, the Assembly Plant has been reduced to 40

and distributed without his knowledge.

It is an incredible statement since his own letter said that members would be "kept informed of developments by your senior steward and shop stewards". Yet as soon as the stewards acted on this he denounces them.

Inside

It would not have been so bad if Buckle's attacks on the sub-committee had been kept inside the union, but they were not. When he knew that the Company were trying to get the names of the sub-committee out of Bob Fryer in order to victimise them, Buckle went to management and denounced them in the most damaging terms.

It was the nub of the issue. By late that day supervisors were on the tracks distributing a new statement from Forster.

Wednesday's Oxford Mail, the edition before the mass meeting, exploited it to the full - which of course was the way it was planned.

Virtually ignoring the shop stewards meeting that morning which had pledged support unanimously, the Mail had a front page headline: "Don't be misled by agitators, BL tells workers". It went on:

"Workers at the Cowley car assembly plant were warned today that an extremist minority was trying to stir up a dispute for its own ends.

"The Austin Rover management has repeated its message that a strike will not get Mr Alan Thornett, sacked last week... back on the payroll.

"Mr Ian Forster, in his second letter in two days to the workers, says:

"Extremist organisations outside the Company and outside the union (i.e. WRP) are wrongly trying to make out this is a case of victimisation.

"A misleading document has been circulated by a self styled unofficial TGWU shop stewards sub-committee.

"The TGWU District Secretary has denied all

knowledge of this body and has disowned this misleading document and has started an investigation to discover who these people are."

The Oxford Mail goes on to say that Bob Fryer had refused to say who wrote the leaflet and quotes Buckle as saying "People have assumed I am a party to both the letter and the leaflet. I am not. The leaflet was issued without my knowledge or approval."

(It is interesting that the Oxford Mail knew of the demands on Fryer to reveal the names).

The distribution of this leaflet in both Body and Assembly Plants, plus its exposure in the Oxford Mail was a crippling blow to the possibility of a strike. But more treachery was to come.

The effect of all this on the plant was obvious. The only leaflet defending Alan Thornett had been denounced, and Buckle's statement was in effect a declaration that the TGWU officials did not want a strike and would not support one.

But it did not end there. Buckle wanted to be absolutely sure that there would be no strike vote. On Wednesday afternoon he met Bob Fryer and put the boot in again by announcing that he had no intention of attending the mass meetings.

Invited

This, he said, was because he had not been invited to the stewards meeting in the morning.

This was not even true since he had jointly met management to arrange it with Bob Fryer. It was an incredible position.

In fact Buckle had no right to refuse a direct request from the convenor of the plant to attend the meeting. He was the full time official dealing with the case.

Well over £1,000 per week is paid in subscriptions from TGWU members in the Assembly Plant and the appointed full time official whose wages, car and expenses are paid for out of it refuses to attend a mass

meeting on a major issue facing the plant!

His action can only be described as deliberately designed to undermine the possibility of a strike.

But the problems were still not over. Wednesday's shop stewards meeting had voted on the text of a reply to Forster's leaflet which was to be distributed on the gates by the stewards on Wednesday night shift and Thursday day shift.

The night shift distribution went well, but the day shift was a disaster. When the stewards arrived not only were the WRP there giving out their leaflet for the third morning running, but the local SWP were there with their own "Support Thornett" leaflet.

Without contacting any one the SWP had decided to

break an agreement made a few days earlier that they would leave it to the trade unions and not leaflet the plant.

It is not just a matter of giving management ammunition. The reason that Buckle's statement and the stewards' statement had to be given out on the gate is very important.

A major part of the break up of the trade union structure in the plant had been the success of BL in banning the circulation of all trade union literature with the exception of non-contentious administrative material agreed in advance by them.

The convenors have been constantly warned and intimidated about the circulation of "unauthorised" trade union material inside the factory.

Even Buckle's statement could only be distributed outside the gates.

For almost two years the official trade union movement has been relegated onto the gates for the distribution of its material. Even then, it could not carry names or signatures because of victimisation.

The refusal of the SWP to recognise that the stewards were carrying out the official distribution of shop stewards committee material and that they were interfering with that distribution made matters worse.

Difficult

It was a very difficult situation. Radio Oxford had been pumping out Forster's statement since it was issued. The early morning news broadcasts each half hour which most BL workers listen to before they go to work had each repeated Forster's key words "Extremist organisations outside the Company and outside the union..."

When workers entered the plant for the mass meeting many of them received three leaflets - one from the WRP, one from the SWP and one from the shop stewards committee.

The responsibility however lies with Buckle and the TGWU. When Bob Fryer announced to the key day shift mass meeting that Buckle would not be there it had a visible impact on the meeting. By that time the six or seven to one vote against a strike was inevitable.

The night shift which is smaller and generally more militant on the issue voted 60-40 to support a strike, but it was not enough to counter the day shift vote.

The transport drivers, meanwhile, had actually strengthened during the course of the week. They had received very important support from the drivers at Longbridge who pledged to black Cowley if Cowley drivers struck - a very effective action since they supply engines to the plant.

THIS Branch condemns the actions of Oxford District Secretary David Buckle in the recent victimisation of Alan Thornett at the BL Cowley Assembly Plant on the following grounds.

- 1) Failing, as the official handling the case, publicly to defend Alan Thornett.
- 2) Denouncing the shop stewards committee leaflet, which did defend Alan Thornett, to the management.
- 3) Failing to attend the mass meeting at the request of the convenor knowing that the attendance of the full time official was crucial on such an issue.

The drivers met on Friday morning to consider the mass meeting decision. Buckle by then had told both the Oxford Mail and Bob Fryer that if the drivers struck on Monday they would receive no support from the TGWU.

They were up against a very difficult situation. There was a strong mood to continue, whatever the odds.

Some however felt that it was hard enough for 90 people to take on BL in its present mood and after the mass meeting vote, but to take on the TGWU at the same time was impossible.

Remarkably the vote was very close, narrowly going against strike action. In fact it could easily have gone the other way since those unavoidably absent were militants. The vote however ended the last possibility of strike action over the issue.

But even that is not the full answer to the defeat. The chronic weakness of the shop stewards movement, gutted over recent years by a combination of 'worker participation', voluntary

redundancy and management offensive was a major factor.

It limited the ability of the stewards committee to counter the treachery as it arose on the shop floor.

Also the confusion and demoralisation created in the workforce by repeated betrayals by national officials and general secretaries of the annual wage reviews which have been used as the bedrock of management authority.

In addition to their hostility to Trotskyism the national leaderships of the major unions in BL remain politically committed to the profitability of BL and are opposed to anything which can shut down the plants.

There is no doubt that BL will build on this victory and that conditions in the plants will worsen. More victimisations are likely to follow. With Tebbit's laws on the statute book, BL is likely to remain a front runner in the offensive against the unions.

November

7 14 21 28

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2 9 16 23 30

3 10 17 24

4 11 18 25

5 12 19 26

6 13 20 27

WHAT'S ON

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

BROAD Left for Railway Workers National Rally: Saturday December 11, noon to 5pm, at Hampden Community Centre, 150 Ossulton St, London NW1. Contact: Broad Left, 2 Binstead Gardens, Sheffield 6.

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).

In Poplar and Clay Cross, Labour councils have defied Tory governments. But a confrontation over refusal to balance a council budget would be different and unprecedented? What would happen? What tactics would be best?

Islington Socialist Organiser meeting: speaker, Martin Loughlin, Sunday November 28, 3pm, Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Road. For baby-sitting, phone Nik, 607 5268.

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

LONDON Workers' Socialist League educationals on basic Marxism. Next one, 'Socialism and nationalism', Friday November 26, 7.30pm. For details of venue, write to WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

NO PASS Laws conference. Sunday December 12, 10am, County Hall, London SE1. Details: 146 Kentish Town Road, London NW5.

TROOPS Out Movement conference - 'Resisting the British state', Saturday December 11, from 10am at Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19. Contact: Troops Out Movement, PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

CAMPAIGN for the release of political prisoners in Sri Lanka. Public meeting, Friday November 26, 6.30, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1.

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Women's Action Committee conference: Saturday December 4, County Hall, London SE1.

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting Saturday December 4, 11am to 5pm, in Sheffield. Local SO groups should start electing delegates now.

BAN PLASTIC BULLETS, a Labour movement delegate conference, planned for Manchester, February '83. Sponsors include LCI, Bernadette McAliskey, Ken Livingstone. More sponsorship needed from LP/TU bodies. Contact Martin Collins c/o Box 15, 164/6 Corn Exchange, Manchester M3 4BN.

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.

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.

WOMEN in Education conference on anti-sexist education. Saturday November 27, 10am to 5pm at Teachers' Centre, Philip Lane, London N15. Contact: Mandy Mudd, Hornsey School, Indrewick Road, London N8.

HARINGEY Socialist Organiser meetings: alternate Sunday evenings, at Brabant Rd trade union centre. Next meeting December 5. Details: 802 0771 or 348 5941.

The Leyland Action Committee groups militants in several plants fighting for an alternative to the existing sell-out union leadership. Contact: LAC, 194 Dawlish Road, Birmingham 29.

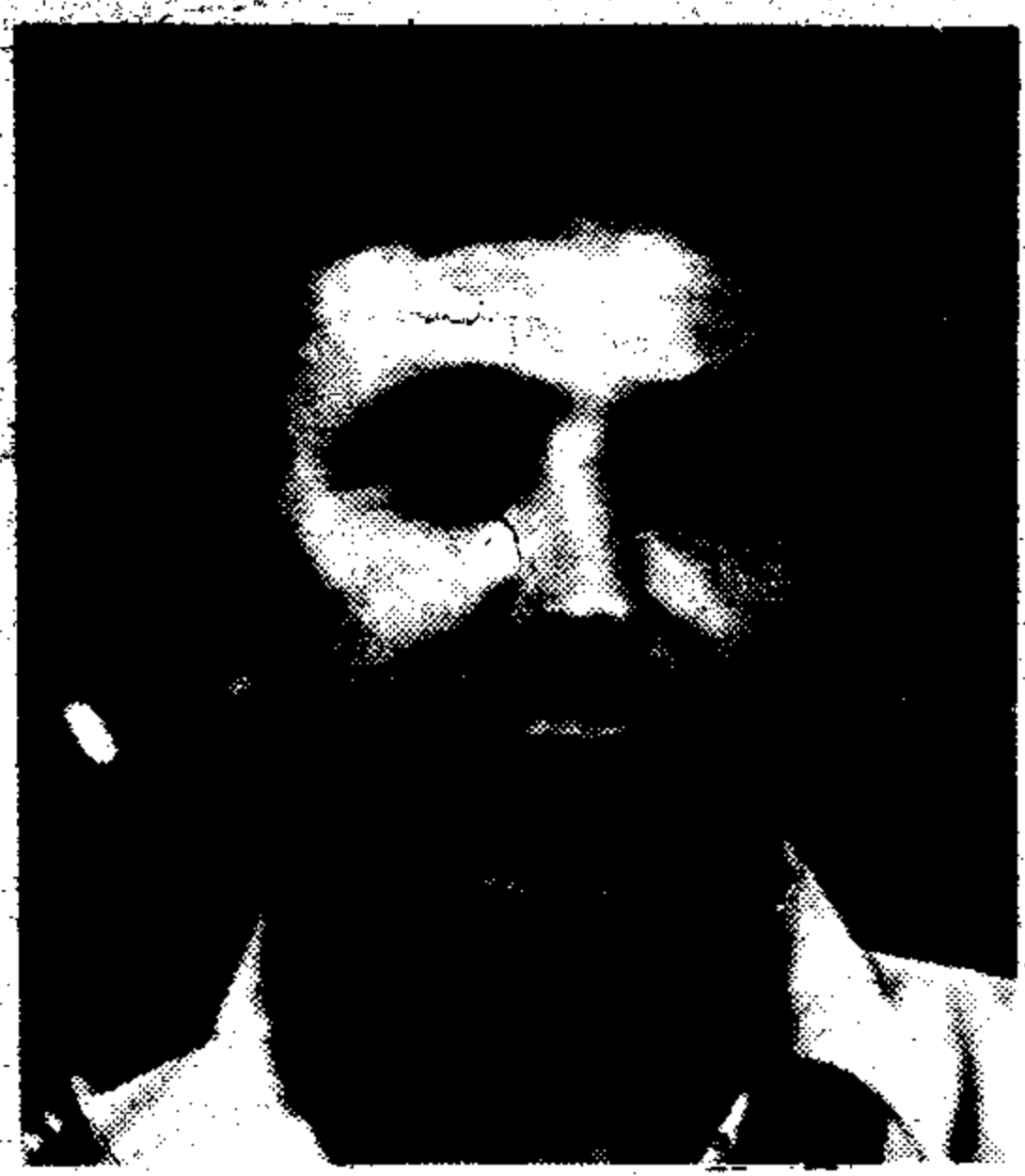
OXFORD Socialist Organiser meetings:

Thursday November 25: 'S&K strikers speak'.

Thursday December 2: 'Polish workers fight for Solidarnosc'. Both 8pm at 44b Princes St.

OXFORD Socialist Organiser GRAND XMAS BAZAAR, Saturday December 18, 12 noon to 3.30, 44b Princes St off Cowley Rd. Gifts, cakes, bottle stall, books and other goodies.

'The shop



Thornett

Socialist Organiser

floor movement must be rebuilt'

Alan Thornett, the shop steward victimised at BL's Cowley Assembly Plant, spoke to SO.

WHAT was your reaction when you heard the day shift vote down the strike call?

Well, I was resigned to it the night before, so it did not come as a shock. But my reaction was one of extreme concern for the future of the trade union movement in that plant.

I know the harsh conditions which exist in there at the present time, and I know this will make them far worse.

Why do you think the night shift — which voted 60-40 to strike — responded differently?

The night shift is generally more militant, and Company propaganda was not precisely targeted onto it in the way it was on the day shift meeting.



What happened then on the transport section — who had already voted to strike?

They remained incredibly strong. I think they would have taken on BL even alone, but it was the knowledge of the role of the TGWU that convinced some of them that it was absolute-

ly impossible.

Even then they called off their strike by a very narrow majority indeed.

There was strong support from Longbridge drivers: other transport drivers must see your case as really blatant victimisation.

Yes. There is a relation-

ship between the transport sections anyway, but the issue I was sacked for has a relevance to drivers.

The official reason I was sacked — for breach of contract through a lapsed HGV driving licence — was only a pretext for sacking me, but it is a serious issue in itself. If a driving licence

is to be made part of the contract of employment, which it is not, it has serious implications. A road traffic offence in your private car at the weekend resulting in disqualification would place you in breach of contract with BL.

In addition, other drivers know more than anyone else that I was victimised. They know that BL has never used the discipline procedure, let alone sacking, for a road traffic offence.

They also know that many other BL drivers have completely lost their licences through the courts, but have been found other work.

Overlooked

They know that other drivers have done exactly the same as me, overlook the renewal of their HGV licences, and no action has ever been taken or even suggested.

One driver had a road traffic accident and the police found his licence had lapsed. BL told him to stay in the yard until his new one came through.

What will you do now — will you go to an industrial tribunal?

Yes. Tribunals were set up in order to prevent industrial action over sackings, and of course they have no powers to reinstate even if they recommend it. But now there is no possibility of industrial action there is no reason to avoid a Tribunal.

Many supporters in the plant would expect me to use every avenue even if it cannot get my job back.

What would you say was the main reason this victimisation succeeded?

There are several reasons. Firstly, the role of David Buckle, the TGWU District Secretary. He was determined from the outset that there would be no strike.

He denounced the only statement defending me, called a mass meeting at the worst time and then refused to attend it.

Secondly, the weakness of the shop stewards movement on the plant which has been dismantled over the last two years.

It has been reduced from almost 200 TGWU stewards 2½ years ago, down to 40 today. It is just not an effective force, particularly in countering Company propaganda or fighting under harsh conditions.

Thirdly, continuous sell-outs in BL by national trade union leaders. They leave a mark and create a cynicism amongst the workforce which works against you in this kind of situation.

This is not the first time the TGWU bureaucracy has attacked you and other left wingers in the plant. Could you say a little about the previous occasions?

Yes. I was victimised in 1974 by BL. The transport department struck for a month and got my shop steward's card back. But the TGWU used it to do what they called "reorganising" the plant.

That meant breaking up the TGWU branch, introducing secret ballot voting and installing a right wing convenor.

In the middle of 1976, when the left had regained much of its influence but the right wing was still in power four stewards were victimised (their credentials were withdrawn). There was a two week strike which was eventually broken. Buckle openly supported management.

That strike was used to split up the branch yet again, since it was by then controlled by the left.

Charges

At the end of 1977 when the left won back the leadership of the plant the newly elected leadership was faced with charges arising from a District Committee meeting. I was subjected, to a kangaroo court organised by Buckle and recommended for expulsion, and Fryer and others were recommended to be banned from all offices for life. In the end they were unable to carry this out.

What do you think are the lessons for militants still in the plant and in BL as a whole? What should they do next?

We must understand what is happening to the trade union movement at

shop floor level, and the shop stewards movement in particular.

It is not just BL. There is a massive generalised attack, using mass unemployment as the lever. It has been more successful than many people think.

I know that to be the case in car components for example. The Smiths factory in Witney for example faces almost exactly the same conditions.

The central issue in combatting this onslaught is the struggle for democratic control of the unions — against the role of people like Terry Duffy (elected by the postal ballot influenced by the media); Moss Evans (elected for life); and David Buckle (appointed for life and accountable to no-one on the shop floor) — an official who arrogantly refuses to attend a mass meeting of those who pay his wages.

There is also the way the employers are now organised, much more than in the past. All struggles like this one are organised by consultants who pool the experiences of the employers.

Clinical

It was not like the past — one big witch-hunt. It was a carefully planned clinical operation. The extent of these changed conditions should not be underestimated.

In BL there has to be a serious reorganisation and rebuilding of the shop floor movement. In a sense it is going back to the drawing board. Conditions now are worse than the ones I can remember in the early 1960s.

But it has to be rebuilt on the basis of some political strategy for struggle under conditions of severe economic crisis, mass unemployment and answers to the viability issue.

It has to be built on a programme starting from the independent interests of the working class, and breaking from those like the present trade union leaders who start from the problems of BL.

That outlook is the one which has led them to attack us constantly since 1974, because we represented such a programme.

Would you suggest any campaign beyond the plant itself to expose the role of Buckle and the TGWU?

Yes. Like Derek Robinson's sacking, this will be a milestone for BL. Like with his victimisation, the real job was done by the union.

If the struggle for trade union democracy is to be tackled seriously, it is essential that trade union activists, particularly in the TGWU, know what has happened.

Finally, these issues, particularly the role of David Buckle, should be taken up inside the TGWU. I certainly intend taking it up at my next branch meeting.

FUND

COHSE leaves pay fight in limbo

THE CRUNCH decisions on NHS pay loom ever closer. And the leaders of the health unions are manoeuvring like mad, seeking to retain credibility in the eyes of their members while doing their best to ensure that the latest offer — worse than the previous one! — is accepted.

Continuing their policy of leaving the membership as much in the dark as possible, Albert Spanswick and the COHSE National Executive will not decide a recommendation until the eve of the special delegate conference on December 14.

COHSE is under increased pressure to give formal support to the call for all-out strike action with only accident and emergency cover, following the overwhelming vote by the NUPE executive to reject the latest offer and recommend members to back the strike call in branch meetings.

But to leave the whole

matter until the special conference itself leaves matters in limbo for three weeks and might open up still further scope for delay in the seemingly interminable seven month old dispute — if it were decided then to refer a strike decision back to COHSE branches.

Spanswick's right wing leadership has emerged as the most overt opponents of the policy of all-out strike action, which they viciously attacked at the union's regular conference in June.

But their 'alternative' strategy of piecemeal protest and pressure — which has allowed the dispute to drag on for so long — has been aided and abetted at every step by other health union leaderships, who share Spanswick's distaste for confrontation with the government and contempt for their membership.

NUPE leaders in particular, though mandated as early as May to push for an all-out strike in the NHS, have only in the last six weeks begun to fight for

such a policy.

Even now their commitment is far from total. Together with the NEC recommendation for an all-out strike goes a deliberately confusing warning from NHS officer Bob Jones — warning that rejection of the offer could lose NUPE members any chance of an increase for 1982-3!

If this were true, then why, NUPE members might ask, didn't NUPE's 'master strategists' bear such a danger in mind when allowing the whole dispute to drag painfully on for the best part of 12 months?

In reality it must be seen as a further attempt by union leaders to confuse and divide their memberships and end a dispute which they have never been seriously prepared to fight.

The answer must be a firm rejection of the offer — wherever possible from joint mass meetings of all health unions — and a solid vote for all-out strike action in the New Year.

Order your Xmas cards!

MANCHESTER Socialist Organiser supporters have asked us to advertise their fund-raising scheme. If you buy Christmas cards from them, you can help Socialist Organiser's finances, and the cards are cheap too. The cards — traditional or socialist — are 10p for single orders, £1 for 15, £2 for 35, and £5 for 100 — all with envelopes. Please send money for postage — 20p single cards or packets of 15, 40p for 35, and £1 for 100 — with orders to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

This week we have £120 from Andrew Hornung and £86.20 from Bob Sugden on the scheme under which supporters are asked to donate or guarantee one week's wages between now and December 31.

Other contributions: Hull SO £5, Rob Strinati £15, Stephen Corbishley £5, Dai and Sarah Stephens £50. This week's total is £281.20.

Please send money to: Treasurer, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Cheques to Socialist Organiser.