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Socialist Organiser

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Tebbit's Act UNIONS ON THE RACK!

TEBBIT'S anti-union law is now in force. From December 1, solidarity strikes, blacking, "secondary" picketing and action defined by judges as "political", all lay trade unionists open to court action and union funds liable to seizure. From 1984 clauses to destroy the closed shop will come into force.

But Tebbit is not resting on his laurels. He is already boasting that his forthcoming Green Paper will be a "new weapon"; the "most devastating thing ever to hit the union militants".

Among proposals likely to be contained in the Green Paper are:

*A fund to help employers stage strike ballots over the heads of the unions.

*Compulsory ballots for the election of union officers.

*"Contracting in" instead of "contracting out" of the political levy.

In other words, Tebbit plans a full scale assault on the organisation and political independence of the trade union movement. The internal affairs of the unions will be wide open to interference and manipulation from its sworn enemies — the Tories, the courts and the press.

Deadpan but gleeful, Tebbit justifies his plans by pretending to act on behalf of "decent union members" against the "unrepresentative militants" who he claims have "taken over" the unions.

More cynical hypocrisy cannot be imagined. When did Tebbit and the class he represents ever believe in any kind of democracy beyond the right to put a cross on a ballot paper every five years? When can we expect them to open up the boardrooms of big business, the inner sanctums of the civil service, the police, judiciary and army to public scrutiny and democratic elections?

And as for the trade unions being controlled by "unrepresentative militants", every working person with eyes to see knows what nonsense this is. Indeed, the Tories' success in pushing through their anti-union legislation has been largely due to the cowardice and treachery of the TUC. Even their passive, ineffectual "campaign" against the Tebbit Bill appears now to have ground to a halt.

And their sabotage of the ASLEF strike and unceremonious cancellation of the transport workers' day of action in support of the health workers, have smoothed the Tories' path and demoralised working class opposition.

But Tebbit *can* be stopped. Militant mass action — verging on general strike proportions at its height — smashed the Tory Industrial Relations Act in the early 1970s. Massive solidarity during the NHS strike pushed back the High Court threat to Fleet Street electrician's leader Sean Geraghty.

That's the kind of action we need now to smash Tebbit. And if the TUC won't organise it, then the rank and file must.



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Reg Race writes

THE Tebbit Bill is just part of the Thatcher government's attempt to reduce the combativity and effectiveness of the organised working class.

The specific powers that have been taken to curtail trade union rights are but part of the wider strategy that includes mass unemployment and gross interference in free collective bargaining.

Capitalism in Britain can no longer afford concessions to working people, either in the form of higher real wages or increased public expenditure. The crisis of profitability in British industry is now so great that the concessions given by the establishment after 1945 to workers are being withdrawn.

Health

Hence the crisis in the National Health Service; hence the proposed revocation of the Fair Wages Resolution; hence the cuts in social security benefits to the unemployed and those on supplementary benefit.

The attack on the working class is not just an assault on the advances it has made in real living standards. The assault is also on the ideology of collectivism, on collective social provision, on trade unions as defenders of the interests of working people, and the articulation of demands on their behalf.

Control

The Tory conception of a useful role for trade unions in the crisis of British capitalism is a role where union 'bosses' control the rank and file members of the union — but failing the efficacy of that, ensuring that ideology among the working class is so changed that union members will vote down proposals to defend their own interests if the Sun newspaper tells them it is a good idea.

Tebbitry must be defeated — but not just by proposals to change the law relating to trade unions and collective bargaining.

We need the implementation of the alternative economic and political strategy in order to change the balance of class forces in our society.

Wanted: tactics to fight Heseltine

Islington is in the front line. Martin Thomas reports on a debate.

HOW can Labour councils effectively lead a fight against the Tories' cuts? At an Islington Socialist Organiser meeting last Sunday, 28th, Labour activists discussed this issue with local government law expert Martin Loughlin.

To stand still next year, Islington council would have to raise rates by 43% — or £4 per week for the average ratepayer. To carry out its manifesto commitments immediately and in full, it would need (on present estimates of the government's plans) a rate rise of 62% or £5.60.

Under the Tories' new system for distributing central government grant, Islington stands to lose about £1.60 in grant penalties for every £1 it spends above a level which would correspond to severe cuts. I.e. each £1 for maintaining or improving services costs the rate-payers £2.60.

Martin Loughlin explained that Labour councils faced with this sort of situation have four options:

- To toe the government line and make drastic cuts;
- To levy the huge rate rise necessary to maintain and improve services;

- To draw up a budget that doesn't balance, and confront the government;
- To go into opposition.

No-one at the meeting was interested in the cuts option. And going into opposition is not much of an option in Islington, where 51 out of 52 councillors are Labour. So discussion focused on the third option — no cuts, but no huge rate rise either.

Martin Loughlin told us that a council pursuing this option would face the following hurdles:

- The council's permanent staff could refuse to draw up the budget. Legally, the council officers are not just servants of the elected councillors, but have a 'fiduciary duty' to the rate-payers.

- Money-lenders would stop lending to the council. And as councils rely on short-term loans to smooth out the difference between their income (which tends to be 'bunched' around the beginning and end of the financial year) and their expenditure (which is

fairly steady) week by week, the council would run out of cash.

The Greater London Council, said Martin Loughlin, had to pay 30% interest rates at one time. Councillor Maurice Barnes added that when Labour recently regained control of Lambeth council, the money market stopped dealing in loans to it for some hours.

- The government can order an 'extraordinary audit' of the council, and get councillors surcharged

and disqualified. The officers would then take over the running of the council, and no doubt make cuts, while new elections were held. (Under current law it is no longer possible for the government to send in a 'commissioner' to run the council, as it did in Clay Cross.)

Mick Sullivan and Maurice Barnes explained some tactical problems. If the council resolved to go for confrontation, there would first be a lot of pressure on councillors

from the officers. But if the councillors held firm, then the government would probably 'let them stew' until the council ran out of money.

And then the confrontation would be between the council and its workers, because there would be no money to pay wages. Not a good basis to mobilise workers and tenants against Heseltine.

Why didn't Islington council go for a big rate rise accompanied by a campaign to explain why the services are worth paying for, asked Martin Loughlin. Councillor Alan Clinton replied: rates are now a major expense for ordinary tenants and householders, and there is very little sympathy for big rate rises however worthy the excuses that go with them.

So how to deal with the tactical problems? There was some discussion about the possibility of the council withholding the police precept (the amount it has to pay towards the Metropolitan Police). Councillors Pat Longman and Paul Mullin pointed out that this precept is too small a part of the council's finances to make the difference between the council going broke or not.

But withholding the precept might buy time and substitute a confrontation between the council and the government for one between the council and its workers.

Interest

Alternatively, should the council stop interest payments to moneylenders? Debt charges are 30% of Islington's expenditure.

Withholding this money is again a very short-term option: immediately the council would be unable to get short-term loans, soon it would be unable to pay its wages bill. But it might serve tactically to make the clash one between the council and bankers, rather than between the council and its workers — and thus make

easier the crucial task of mass mobilisation.

Alan Clinton suggested that other options should be examined further — rescheduling debts or finding alternative money-lenders (which of course would only buy delay), and organising a group of experts (lawyers, accountants, etc.) to work with the council.

Nadine Finch, secretary of the Local Government Committee (the joint committee of Islington's three Labour Parties for borough-wide affairs), stressed the main political point: all financial schemes are useless without winning support from the council workers' unions, and far too little has been done on that.

Budgets

Nick Dorn said that the council had to present issues more concretely, and start now. It should instruct the officers now to draw up alternative budgets for the different options.

LGC chair Nik Barstow said that everything depended on the council showing it meant business. Even in Clay Cross plenty of tenants were dissatisfied with the council. They rallied only when the council actually took on the government.

Everywhere that a radical local authority has proposed blatantly to take on central government — Poplar in the '20s, St. Pancras in the '50s, Clay Cross in the '70s — the councillors have been prepared to be surcharged', stressed Martin Loughlin. 'If Islington councillors are not prepared for that, then there is no point talking about confrontation'.

But what the meeting was mainly about, was how to translate the will to defy the government, even at risk of surcharge, into viable tactics. Most of us felt we had begun to see the way more clearly.

Lewisham conference ducks fight on rates

by Tony Gard

BETTER child care, a women's committee, closer consultation with the workforce, defence of direct labour... These were all policies passed overwhelmingly at Lewisham Local Government Conference.

The Conference is an annual event, where the Labour Group's policies for the Council are debated by delegates from branches and affiliated organisations.

But the political crunch

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came on the 1983-4 budget and the related dispute with NALGO over Inner London weighting.

This dispute has been simmering for a year. Lewisham is clearly an Inner London borough but because of the position of the Town Hall its staff do not qualify for Inner London weighting. This anomaly has always been resented, but when GLC housing staff transferred to Lewisham and were getting the weighting, Lewisham

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NALGO members found themselves doing the same work in the same borough for £400 a year less.

They have blacked the transfer process and are threatening further sanctions.

Tenants are rightly concerned that this should not be settled out of money allocated for their much-needed repairs. However, the motion from branches on the GLC estates argued that the cost should be put on the rates.

This led to a sharp debate on next year's budget. Figures showed that even a stand-still budget would mean at least a 35% rate increase, while implementing last May's manifesto would need another 15% increase.

St. Margaret's ward put in a motion calling for a rates and rents freeze, no cuts in jobs or services, and meeting council workers pay claims, combined with a strategy for mobilising Labour movement resistance to the inevitable Tory attack, and linking up with

other Labour councils.

This was the only strategy which could unite working class support and overcome the divisions the Tories have sown in our ranks, because it was the only strategy which did not set one sectional interest against another. It would mean confrontation, but we have to decide whether we want confrontation with the Tories or confrontation within the working class.

S.O. supporter Cheung Siu Ming gave an account of the backlash produced in Lambeth by Ted Knight's rate rise policy. He warned that if we voted for rate rises this year we would be back voting for cuts next year.

Defeated

The St. Margaret's motion was defeated. Conference passed a resolution calling for rent and rate increases to be kept within the rate of inflation, 'unless the Labour group can show that a greater

increase in the rates is necessary to implement essential parts of the Manifesto' — which it had already shown quite clearly.

The tragedy is that last year's conference called for a no cuts, no rent rise, no rate rise position, though coupled with the dangerously misleading call for resignation and 'majority opposition'.

It declared rate rises no longer politically viable; this must be even more true today. Yet in the last year the Labour Party in Lewisham is supposed to have moved to the Left.

Last year's 'majority oppositionists' have become this year's rate risers. Most of them argue that resistance is not politically realistic because we do not have enough support and the new Council has not been in office long enough.

But as several speakers at Lewisham Labour Left's fringe meeting argued, the retreat has got to stop. We can't keep on saying, 'We will try this next year.'

Tony Gard

JOHN HARRIS

Students must control their Executive

Poly sit-in

Jane Ashworth looks at the issues for NUS conference

EVEN though the motions submitted to the National Union of Students conference aren't going to equip NUS with a brief to go out and organise students alongside the public sector workers against the government, it's still going to be one of most significant NUS conferences for a long time.

Grants, education, overseas students, cuts, and peace and disarmament will be debated as the prioritised motions, but some Exec and Rules Revision business that will be taken is just as important, and this is where most of the friction is likely to come.

The Executive and a good number of colleges are trying to change the nature of NUS conferences. It's true, at the moment they are bureaucratic and very hard to untangle for the first-time delegate; but the Exec's way of solving this problem would nothing but weaken



NUS president Neil Stewart: will he back the Manchester Poly occupation?

the national union.

Many motions want to break down the conference into a series of commissions, and invite in experts to tell us about grants, cuts, and so on. The Exec wants to stop challenges to the order paper by allowing them only at the start of conference, rather than at the start of any session, and it also wants to end the guest speaker system under which delegates vote to hear representatives

from campaigns and disputes.

They are wrong to try to make conference more accessible like this, because conference will never become more accessible by stopping debate or by keeping out politics, or by hindering the delegates' control of conference business. It will only become more manageable when NUS starts to involve the mass of its membership, and ordinary stud-

ents who aren't part of the major blocs get a chance to have their say.

If we can fight off these attempts to stop the national union taking decisions as one body, then this won't be the last year when we have a real chance to discuss the workings of the Exec over the previous seven months.

Staff strike

At this conference, that means the whole union finding out what really happened during the staff dispute. How come a union exec that is mostly made up of socialists forced its staff to go out on strike and then was reluctant to negotiate?

There is a motion of censure on Alan Watson, who has been seen as the Exec member with the most to answer for on the handling of this dispute.

As well as the staff dispute, conference will have to take an attitude to the occupation at Manchester Poly. Will NUS president Neil Stewart have the gall to tell them to go back to college?

The problem with the prioritised motions is that very few of them have much

to say about the way NUS should fight. There is a lot of talk about education cuts and Trident, but very little said about students and the labour movement, or about what we can do now to involve the mass of students.

Some of the best motions come up in the peace and disarmament section. Several call for Britain out of NATO and a good few call for action against Ministry of Defence work being carried out in the colleges.

Limits

This conference won't be important in terms of new policy breakthroughs, but it will be important in that the limits of Exec free-wheeling will be drawn up. And it will be important, too, in that the attempt to stop the union meeting as a full conference twice a year will be stopped, whether it is presented to us as 'learning from the women's movement about non-oppressive meeting structures' or offered up as the only way to maintain our credibility with the 'average student'.

"THE MOST significant action against the cuts in Manchester this year", commented one of the many students occupying the admin building at Manchester Polytechnic. We have now been in occupation for ten days against proposed cuts in staff and student numbers.

Support for the occupation has been immense, both from Poly students and from colleges up and down the country, with delegations and messages of support arriving daily.

By far the most important aspect, though, is the active support of the campus unions, particularly NUPE and NATFHE, both of whom have participated in the occupation mass meetings. NUPE have imposed an overtime ban, and have called for a series of one day strikes against the cuts. They themselves are being asked to take cuts in wages of £14 a week.

The Polytechnic's Labour Club is run by Militant supporters who prior to the occupation vigorously opposed it on the grounds that first support had to be built in the trade unions before any action was taken.

The overwhelming trade union support we have received is clear proof that it is action, not words, that builds support.

The executive of the city council Labour Group has lent its full support to the action, and several councillors have personally visited the occupation.

An injunction came six days after the start of the occupation, but for reasons best known to Poly director Ken Green it has not yet been acted on. Perhaps Mr Green hopes that the occupation will die on its feet. He must be joking. We are still as strong as ever, maintaining a level of at least 200 people at any time.

Tuesday 30th: Today the bailiffs turned up with several senior police officers to serve the possession order. As yet we are still in occupation, but expect to be ejected late tonight. Meanwhile a delegation from the occupation lobbied a meeting of the full council Labour Group in an attempt to gain their support. Unfortunately a motion to hear speakers from the Polytechnic was lost by 28 to 24.

Lynn Ferguson

Despite legal hitch,

NEC determined to carry its witch-hunt

Martin Thomas reports on last week's Labour NEC

LAST Wednesday, 24th, the Labour Party's new right wing National Executive Committee met to consider how to deal with the legal hitches in their purge of Militant.

Their decisions may well mean an attempt at a more sweeping purge than originally planned.

Initially the right wing's plan was to establish their 'register' of unaffiliated groups', declare Militant ineligible for it, and on that basis expel selected leading Militant supporters.

It ran into several problems:

- Resistance to the register. Some 16 groups have now been registered; general secretary Jim Mortimer's report for the NEC lists 48 that had refused to register or had not applied, and there are many more.

Mortimer reports: "there are some Labour supporters and probably the majority of Labour activists who welcome the policy and constitutional changes of recent years and who are suspicious of any move against the 'far left' because they see it as the prelude to other changes."

"It is a factor in the situation that a large majority of constituency Labour Parties are not sympathetic to the exclusion of Militant... Labour cannot afford to alienate

large numbers of its activists or to come into collision with a significant number of constituency Labour Parties in the approach to the General Election".

- The unfairness of the system was blatant. Labour Friends of Israel and the Labour Movement for Europe had to be declared ineligible for the register because of finance from outside the British labour movement, but no action against them is suggested.

- Constitutionally, ineligibility for registration is no grounds for expulsion. And so Militant were able convincingly to threaten the NEC with legal action against expulsion.

The threat of legal action was a wrong tactic in principle — the capitalist courts should not be used to decide the affairs of the labour movement. It now seems that if it has gained time (as Militant say it has), it has done so at the cost of broadening the witch-hunt.

The NEC now proposes to proceed as follows. The move against Militant will be nothing to do with the register. At the December or January NEC Militant will be declared ineligible for affiliation.

This procedure has two implications. First, "all members of the Militant Ten-

dency will become ineligible for individual membership of the Labour Party". It will not be a matter of expelling five, or 50, or 200 selected organisers, but the lot.

Secondly, the grounds for action against Militant are now plainly political. It is not a matter of the way Militant organises: Militant has said it is willing to consider any changes the NEC may propose on that score, and the NEC has proposed none.

The case, put in a draft motion for the December or January NEC, is that "the Militant Tendency, as a Trotskyist 'entrism' group, is a political organisation with its own programme, principles and policy for distinctive and separate propaganda".

Since plenty of Labour Party members have in the past belonged to other left groups, and some of those up for expulsion have never belonged to any group outside the Labour Party, the 'entrism' reference is irrelevant. Militant is to be purged for being Trotskyist.

And the precedent is that any group held to subscribe to Trotskyism, or another ideology of which the NEC disapproves, will be purged too — for thought-crime. The deadline for other groups to register looks like being the end of January. Any group which does not

register, or is found ineligible, will probably be subject to scrutiny. The NEC did not have time for definite decisions on this point).

Nervous about the havoc all this could wreak in the Labour Party, Jim Mortimer tries to limit the purge. He offers a definition: "A member of Militant Tendency is one who is significantly involved in giving financial support, in its organisation or in its regular activities". Just selling, buying or reading an odd copy of Militant, or supporting some Militant policies, would not brand someone as a member.

Mortimer also urges the NEC "to concentrate attention on the central organising group and then to win other sympathisers of Militant by the strength of our arguments".

He suggests proceeding by

BERMONDSEY, Peckham and Dulwich Labour Parties: rally, 'Defend Socialist Policies, Oppose Expulsions', Saturday December 11, 2pm to 5pm; Walworth Town Hall, Walworth Rd, London. Speakers: Reg Race, Peter Tatchell, Teresa Wrack, Richard Balfie, Jeremy Corbyn, speaker from EETPU Broad Left.



JOHN HARRIS

Now the NEC may try to purge every 'member' of Militant, not just prominent figures like Pat Wall (above)

stages. Members of the Militant editorial board will be expelled first.

Militant's paid sales organisers will be dealt with later. Eight prospective parliamentary candidates will be questioned about their possible present, or past associations with Militant, and asked to promise that "they will not promote the Militant Tendency".

Leading members of the Militant-influenced Labour Party Young Socialists will be asked to give the same promise, and stricter control will be imposed on the LPYS.

The right-wing NEC may not take Mortimer's advice on all points. Anyway, Mortimer's definition means that even a small phalanx of determined right-wingers can start purging literally thousands of Labour Party

members. The relevant parts of the Labour Party constitution are vague. Clause II(3) disqualifies from affiliation organisations "having their own programme, principles and policy for distinctive and separate propaganda, or possessing branches in the constituencies or engaged in the promotion of Parliamentary or Local Government candidates, or owing allegiance to any political organisation situated abroad".

Almost any worthwhile group has some distinctive policy, and some local organisation — and so, stretching a point, could be outlawed.

Clause II(4) then disqualifies from membership people who belong to "political parties or organisations ancillary or subsidiary there-

to" declared by conference by the NEC "in pursuance of the conference decisions" be ineligible for affiliation.

Mortimer's proposal could thus be questioned technically on at least two grounds for clause II(4) to be applicable, it has to be shown that Militant is a 'political party' (the clause was designed to use against the Communist Party), and that a NEC decision that Militant is ineligible for affiliation would be 'in pursuance of conference decisions'.

It is clear that the NEC intends to have its witch-hunt, and will trim the technicalities to suit. Only concerted and courageous defiance by Constituency Labour Parties and affiliated trade unionists will stop it.

International News International News International News

Mexico's history of struggle against oppression

by Bas Hardy

'IF YOU owe the bank £100, you have a problem. If you owe the bank £1 million, the bank has a problem.' So said the economist J.M. Keynes.

Judging by the headlines such as 'Mexican crisis shocks bankers' and 'West in \$8bn bid to save Mexico' the International Banking system has one hell of a problem and is desperately trying to patch it up so as to prevent a collapse of International Finance.

Yet the Mexican people themselves have problems of far more importance than those of the Financial extortionists in New York and the City of London. Price rises of 30% on basic goods. Unemployment. Corruption in Government on a grand scale. The 'disappearance' of political and trade union activists.

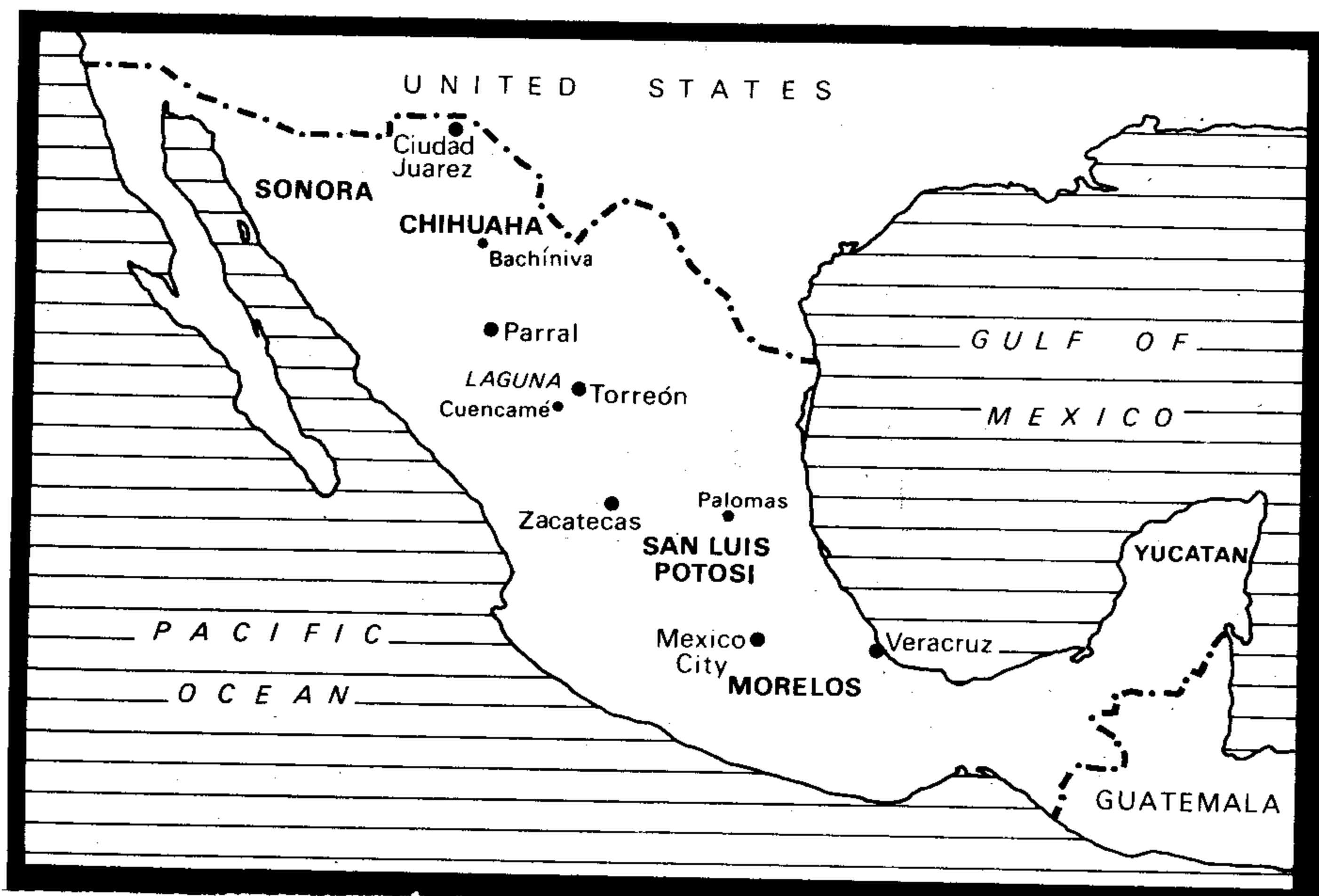
Mexico's history has been presented to most British people in the distorted form of Hollywood film — Yul Brynner as Pancho Villa, Marlon Brando in Viva Zapata!

Mexican history is portrayed as a series of mass shoot-outs, a typical example being Peckinpah's 'The Wild Bunch'.

The real history, however, is one of continual struggle against oppression by the people of Mexico, which reached a peak in a real social revolution in the decade 1910-20.

Mexico, like most of South and Central America, was colonised by Spain. For centuries its Indian population was subjected by the Spanish conquistadors and criollos (descendants of original Spanish colonists) to a slave-like existence on the land.

The first revolt against Spain was led by Miguel Hidalgo, a Catholic village priest who championed the Indian cause. He was captured by Royalists and executed. The same thing happened to Jose Morelos, who led a revolt in 1815.



Revolutionary forces arrive in Sinaloa in 1913



When Mexico finally became independent in 1821, its ruling class were the very same group which had put down the popular Indian uprisings. The

former Royalist criollos had become 'republicans', but their social attitude toward the mass of the Mexican people remained the same.

An alliance of Church and landowners, together with an army led by military strongmen, operated throughout the 19th century to further dispossession and enslave the Indian peasantry.

The old Spanish interest in Mexico was gold and silver. By independence these resources had been exhausted.

The Mexican landowners now sought to turn the country into a producer of agricultural products for the world market. The two most important products were cattle, raised in the Northern states such as Chihuahua and Sonora, and sugar from southern states like Morelos.

Slavery

This process had drastic results for the Indian and Mestizo (mixed race) population. The huge estates (haciendas) took over the community land of the villagers and the small peasants became landless labourers. Conditions of work resembled slavery and worse.

In Morelos, Zapata's home state, villages were flattened to make way for sugar-cane fields. In Sonora, the army forced the Yaqui Indians from their

ancestral land. The Governor of Chihuahua, where Pancho Villa grew up, gave the local population 'years of the noose and knife' in order to extend the land-holdings of himself and his cronies.

This system of semi-colonial exploitation reached its high point under the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz (1876-1911), who ruled Mexico in much the same way as Somoza was later to run Nicaragua, and Batista, Cuba. Diaz's most memorable statement was 'Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States'.

Diaz was, nevertheless, the main figure responsible for the penetration of US, British and French capital into Mexico on a large scale. As elsewhere south of the Rio Grande, imperialist capital built the railways and transformed agriculture to serve the needs of the metropolitan market.

The changes under Diaz did, however, have one very important consequence. The economic expansion led to the crea-

tion of a large internal market and with it the growth of a large liberal-minded middle class.

The Indian and Mestizo masses had rebelled on spasmodic occasions in the past, but these revolts were local and easily suppressed. The alliance between the rural masses and the middle class of the towns was a much more potent force. It was to end semi-colonialism and feudalism in Mexico.

The champion of the liberal democratic cause was a northern landowner and businessman, Francisco Madero. He campaigned against Diaz in the 1910 Presidential election under the slogan 'A real vote and no Boss rule'. Needless to say, he got neither.

The election was rigged and Diaz won. Madero was expected to clear off to his estates and try again next time.

What surprised everybody was his refusal to do so. He raised the standard of revolt and within a short space of time the 35 year old Diaz regime collapsed.

The army was in no position to deal with a mass nationwide popular insurrection. In Mexico City alone, officers in the Mexican army outnumbered the ranks by 2 to 1. Those with generalships were there through bribery and not military ability. They were no match for the brilliant new generals such as Pancho Villa whose mobile cavalry, recruited from the ranch hands of Chihuahua, routed the reactionary forces.

The agrarian revolt installed Madero in the Presidential palace. This was the first triumph of the middle class (bourgeois) revolution in Mexico.

Yet the Mexican middle class disliked the agrarian 'anarchy' as much as the feudal forces they had been opposed to. The history of Mexico from 1911 to 1940 was a history of the middle class now allying with the masses against feudalism, now with the right wing against the popular forces.

Continued next week



Pancho Villa leading his revolutionary troops in 1911

Retreating under pressure

IN WHAT appears to be a substantial retreat from previous public pronouncements, the underground leadership of Poland's Solidarnosc trade union has called off its series of street demonstrations called to mark the first anniversary of martial law.

The martial law crackdown was the first decisive step through which the country's ruling Stalinist bureaucracy has moved to crush and now formally declare illegal the ten million strong union, whose growing power had become a major threat to the political power of the bureaucrats.

The Jaruzelski leadership has announced its intention to convene a session of the Polish parliament, the Sejm, on December 13, the anniversary of martial law; and it is predicted that on the same date the martial law restrictions will be lifted.

This would buy the freeing of prisoners interned without trial — and the regime's stooge body, the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth, has suggested a government amnesty for those tried and jailed for offences against martial law regulations.

Perhaps partly taken in by this talk of liberalisation; probably influenced by the apparently patchy and weak response to its November 10 general strike call; and certainly under heavy pressure from the Catholic Church hierarchy, which has struck an obvious if tacit agreement with the Stalinist leaders, the Solidarnosc underground leadership has pulled back from its planned demonstrations, and placed itself at the disposal of the released Lech Walesa.

Walesa, who has asked for a month to decide his course of action after eleven

months under arrest, has also obviously been further pressured by Church leaders into taking a conciliatory line.

In their statement the Solidarnosc leaders fail explicitly to call for restoration of their organisation's status as a recognised union, though they do call for the reinstatement of all those sacked under martial law and the return of all organisations banned or suspended under it — which may include Solidarnosc.

They argue that future agreement with the government would require the liberalisation of censorship laws and the introduction of self-management in industry.

But the response from the bureaucracy to these concessions from Solidarnosc was gruffly to dismiss them as 'of no significance whatsoever'. Though seeking for their own reasons —

in particular the reopening of normalised diplomatic relations with the Western bankers and negotiation of renewed and rescheduled loans — to life the martial law, there is no sign at all that the bureaucracy is prepared to make concessions to Solidarnosc.

The answer from the international workers' movement must be to maintain the fight, demanding the recognition of Solidarnosc as a trade union. In Britain this must mean that socialists should press ahead with building the maximum labour movement contingent on the national demonstration called on December 12 by the Polish Solidarity Campaign.

by Harry Sloan

A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY
Independent Trade Unions In South Africa

90p

Bob Fine
Lawrence Welch

New pamphlet from the Socialist Forum for Southern Africa. Solidarity with anti-apartheid struggle. Available via Socialist Organiser, 25 Middle Lane, London N8 6PL.

International News International News

RISING TIDE OF PROTECTIONISM

AGAIN and again we hear import controls proposed as an answer to economic crisis, as if they were something new.

Yet widespread import controls are already in force. About half of EEC imports are of products on which it has controls of some sort. The corresponding figure for the US was 46%, and for Japan 59% in 1980.

One of the EEC's main import-control arrangements is the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA). The Economist magazine describes it: 'Now just starting its third four-year deal, the MFA has been used as a wholly protectionist weapon. Each successive MFA has exerted tighter controls on third-world suppliers (of clothing and textiles)...

The EEC has just made an import-limitation deal with the US on steel; it began operation similar agreements with South Korea, Spain, Japan, and other countries in the 1970s.

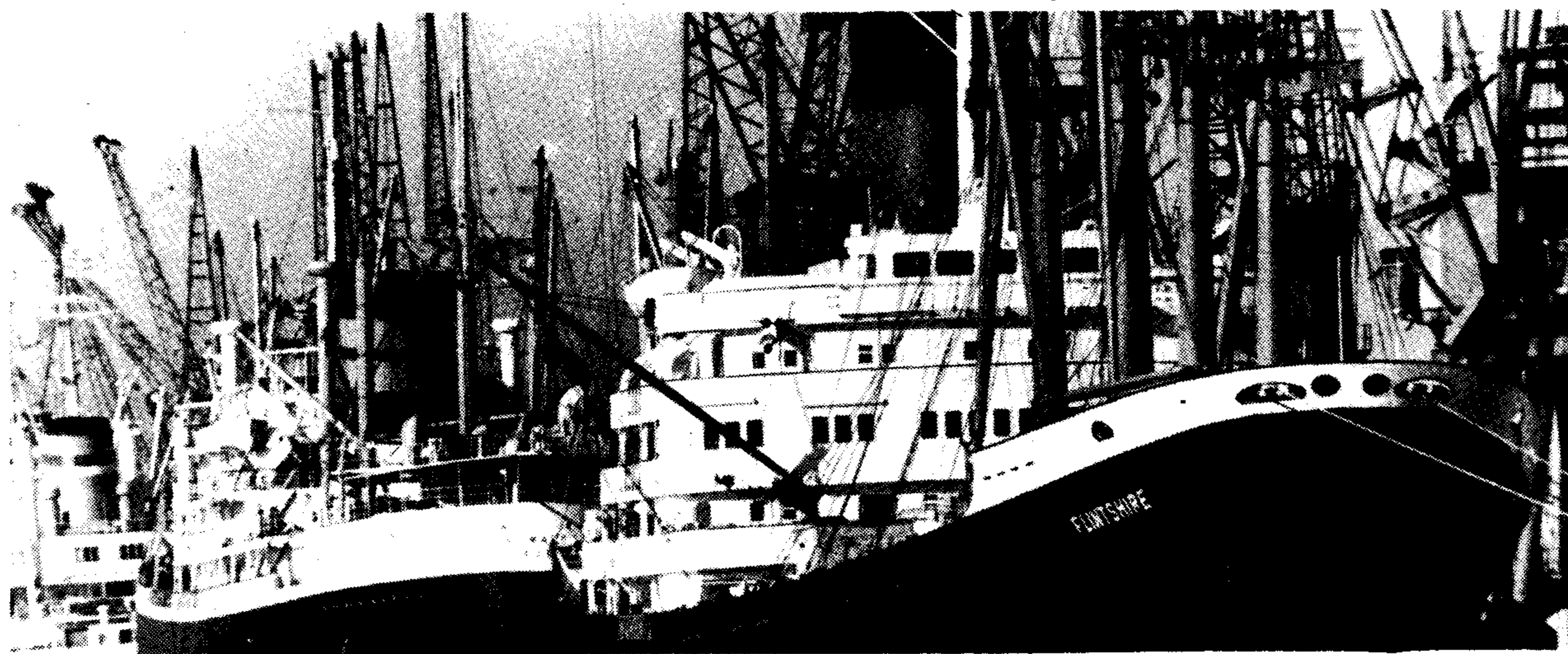
Other imports restricted by EEC countries include footwear, electrical goods, watches and motor cycles.

Over the '50s and '60s, even the 1970s, tariffs were generally reduced. In 1958 the EEC's average common external tariff on industrial goods was 10%. Now it is around 5%. The corresponding figure for Japan is 3%, and for the US 6%.

But the trend looks like being reversed. And on agricultural goods the EEC imposes import levies to raise prices to EEC-fixed levels.

Even inside the supposed free trade area of the EEC, there are more and more trade restrictions of an informal sort.

Two examples: Heineken beer (made in Holland) cannot be sold in West Germany because it fails to conform to German regulations on brewing dating back to 1516 (!); and to get a lorry load of Gouda



Victims of import controls

PROTECTIONISM has its costs for British workers. Clothing prices, for example, are estimated to be 15 to 40% higher than they would otherwise be because of import controls.

But such effects are minor compared with the effects of the protectionism of the richer countries on the Third World.

A lot of Third World countries have protectionist policies to help their infant industries develop — much as Germany, for example,

had similar policies in the late 19th century. They could hardly do otherwise.

Now some of these countries are developing to the point where they can export manufactured goods on a large scale to the richer countries. And the response of the US and the EEC is to throw up new trade barriers and to demand that the Third World countries lower their own barriers.

At the same time the Third World countries are

in desperate need of export income to deal with their foreign debt crises. The result of these twin pressures is to force these countries into slumps ten times more devastating for their working people than Britain's.

If creeping protectionism escalates into trade war, the first casualties will be the workers and peasants of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

cheese into France, Dutch lorry drivers have to get some 300 rubber stamps on their papers.

Up to the 1929 crash the capitalist world economy had more or less free trade, under the domination of Britain. In the 1930s it fell apart into competing trade blocs. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was set up in 1947 as part of the attempt to restructure the capitalist world economy post-war.

It was designed to liberalise trade on the assumption of a stable world financial system (based on the dollar)

and fixed exchange rates, i.e. the domination of the US. And it did that. World exports expanded by 285% between 1950 and 1970.

But in the late '60s and early '70s the basic assumptions collapsed. US domination was qualitatively weakened (the EEC is 2½ times bigger as a force in world trade, Japan is now a bigger producer of steel and cars). The dollar went into decline. Inflation took off. Fixed exchange rates collapsed.

The immediate cause was the effects on the US economy of the Vietnam war, but a longer-term

decay of the post-war capitalist world system was at work. The safeguards against protectionism have lasted longer than the conditions that produced them, but if their decay is slower it is no less inevitable.

Accelerating the decay is no way to save jobs — any more than wishing the 1960's would return. Instead we must look to class action — and measures like work sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay, a shorter working week, and nationalisation under workers' control of firms declaring redundancies.

AAM misses a chance

A GOOD opportunity for developing Anti-Apartheid's trade union work was mainly lost at their trade union conference last weekend.

Emphasis on how the unions could support the campaign for sanctions and disinvestment meant that there was little mention of how trade unionists here could support their fellow trade unionists in South Africa.

This is something trade unionists could do tomorrow.

Find out which bonafide, non-racial union in South Africa is a 'sister' union to them send a message of support to their office, and ask them how they can best show solidarity.

This would prepare unions for effective solidarity action and be very beneficial in terms of educating members about South Africa.

Anti-Apartheid clearly attracts a considerable number of trade union delegates, but it doesn't seem to know how to channel their energies. This is mainly because AA still seems reluctant to build support for unions inside S.A. which are independent not only from the state but also from the ANC and SACTU.

Len Murray offered TUC support for independent unions in SA in the form of training, education, etc. This is a hopeful sign.

We should press the TUC International Department to withdraw support from all racist unions in TUCSA; to open up their contacts with independent unions to shop stewards and the rank and file; to encourage the forging of direct links between British and non-racial SA unions at all levels; and to initiate solidarity actions with the struggles of black workers in S.A. in consultation with the unions which operate there as well as with Anti-Apartheid here.

Bob Fine

WRP's fresh attempt to muzzle us

THE Workers Revolutionary Party has now responded to my comments on their reply to Oxford Trades Council's defence of Peter McIntyre, the journalist they have repeatedly libelled. They threaten to go running to the courts once more.

They have demanded an undertaking from me to gag myself, and if they don't get it they say they will apply for a court injunction to forbid me to say certain things about them.

They object to two points in my article: they say it is libellous to assert that they aim to bankrupt us; and they claim I repeated one of the original alleged libels.

Let the reader mark this and remember it: if you say or imply that the WRP's intentions are less than 100% benevolent, you will be hauled up by your ears before a High Court judge in less time than it takes Gerry Healy to say 'goobledygook'.

You must remember that the WRP is especially benevolent, that it has always been benevolent towards young people, and in particular to the thousands who in the last 20 years have gone through Imam Gerry's ranks as through a revolving door.

That the WRP are trying to bankrupt us and drive SO out of business is a charge we have publicly laid against them umpteen times in the last two years. There is even one — not entirely preposterous — school of thought which says this is not just blind malice, but a fraternal service from Mr Healy to a competitor of SO's, run by friends and collaborators of the WRP. If they are being stung by this argument now, it must mean that the WRP and its friends are finding it a difficult point to answer.

For the last two years we have been careful not to flout court procedures by repeating any of the three alleged libels. By contrast the WRP has repeated the alleged libels in letters to Tribune and the Morning Star and — often, and again last Friday — in Newsline.

I referred to one of the three items in SO to make the point that they are suing us for comparing them with certain religious cults while pointedly ignoring the grave assertion that it is widely believed that the WRP gets money from certain Arab governments.

They respond to the new challenge by once again ignoring the most serious question — that they are or have been pensioners of anti working class governments. They have been active against SO on the journalistic front, too — no less than three Newsline editorials in a week. The first was a response to my piece on McIntyre laced with heavy-handed attempts at humour.

The humour was rich man's humour. If we feel they are trying to bankrupt us, why don't we go to the Inns of court and hire barristers, inquires Newsline. If you don't have 'bread', go eat cake. Or you can apologise and pay costs...

They had given us an ultimatum for 10.30 Friday morning, after which they threatened to go to court unless we gave them certain undertakings. The second editorial appeared on Friday morning, by which time they may have expected our formal undertakings to be in the hands of their solicitor.

They weren't going to be gagged or silenced. Entitled

'Mr Benn and the Courts', the editorial said that Tony Benn was inconsistent to defend Militant going to court and at the same time to condemn the WRP for taking SO to court. For Mr Benn's instruction they reprinted my alleged libels in full.

The third editorial, on Monday, dealt with the Labour Committee on Palestine conference, which the WRP packed. Blatantly evading all the issues, this dollop of Gerry-thought is notable for the following comment on the precise and accurate account of the LCP conference published by the Guardian.

'Individuals in the labour movement who collaborate with the capitalist press against their political opponents can be deemed to be well and truly in league with the class enemy. Everyone knows (!) that the state runs the capitalist press and the Guardian is no exception'.

Is it more or less heinous a crime to go to the Guardian than to go to Oxford Trades Council and the NUJ? There is nothing to choose between them, of course, from the WRP point of view. Gerry cannot hope to influence either.

Is there then no refuge for the WRP, no place where a discredited but rich little sect can hope to escape 'the class enemy' and those who are 'in league with' it, where it can hope to find people with the competence that Oxford Trades Council and the NUJ lack to judge affairs like their slander of Peter McIntyre?

Of course there is — the High Court. 'Everyone knows' that this has nothing to do with 'the class enemy'. And the rich WRP can hope to buy massive advantages within the formal equality of the law: for example the WRP can indeed 'go to the Inns of Court' and buy good barristers.

The WRP uses threats of the courts to suppress free discussion of what it is, who it works with, and where it gets its money from. It is in the most vital interests of the labour movement to resist this crude bludgeoning.

Therefore I refused to voluntarily enter into any self-gagging agreement with Ms Redgrave's lawyers, that is, indirectly with the WRP. Let us see what an honest judge makes of the three ridiculous editorials from the Ayatollah of goobledygook, Gerry Healy, if he dares put it to the test.

Sean Matgamna

Help us fight!

A LABOUR INQUIRY, NOT THE COURTS!

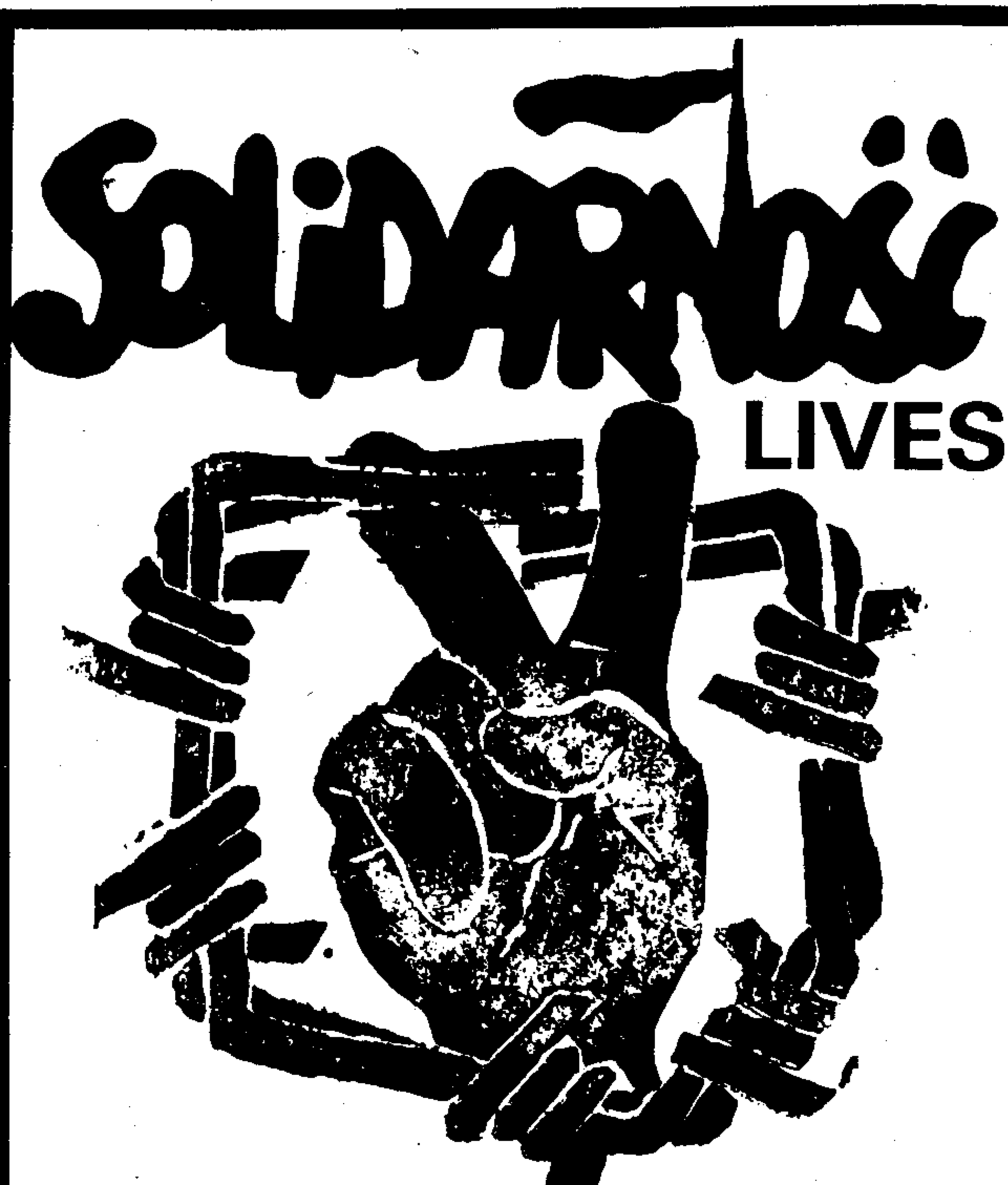
The Labour Movement Press Defence Fund is appealing for donations to help to defend free comment in the labour movement.

Name

Address

Amount: £.....

Send to: Labour Movement Press Defence Fund, 214 Sicker Court, London N1.



SOLIDARITY lives despite one year of martial law. national demonstration in support of those struggling for free trade unions in Poland. At last an official TUC spokesperson joins our platform.

Assemble 1pm, Sunday

December 12, at Hyde Park for rally and march to Jubilee Gardens. Vigil from 6pm to midnight outside Polish embassy for workers killed or detained by Jaruzelski's regime.

Polish Solidarity Campaign, (01) 748 3085.

IN BRIEF

Coalition looms in Ireland

IT IS to be either a minority Fine Gael government supported by Labour, or a new Fine Gael/Labour coalition government in the 26 Counties of southern Ireland.

The Labour Party is meeting in conference on December 12 to decide.

Fianna Fail is still the biggest party in the Dail [Parliament], though Fine Gael, for 50 years the 'underdog' of the bourgeois parties, has gained nearly 30 seats in the three general elections of the last 18 months.

The Labour Party left did badly. Michael D Higgins, anti-coalitionist and recent-

ly the candidate of the left for Party leader, lost his seat.

So did Independent Socialist Party deputy Jim Kemmy from Limerick, the only TD [MP] to march in the recent 2,000 strong national demonstration in Dublin against the proposed anti-abortion amendment to the Irish constitution. The secularist and anti-nationalist Kemmy was a victim of a sustained campaign against him by the Irish SPUC.

Sinn Fein, which did badly in the last southern election, did not contest any seats.

Frank Higgins



Mass protest stopped Corrie last time. Now he has a chance to try again.

New threat to abortion rights

ON November 9, in the House of Lords, Lord Robertson of Oakridge introduced an amendment to Section 1 of the 1967 Abortion Act to insert the words 'serious' and 'substantially' as follows:

"... that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve serious risk to the life of the pregnant woman, or if injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family, substantially greater than if the pregnancy were terminated..."

The second reading will

be on December 6. It will then have to be debated in committee, which in the Lords is an open debate of the full House, the results would then be reported and the bill would have a third reading and come to a vote. It could be amended at any stage in this process.

It would then go to the Commons, where it would be put at the bottom of all other private members' business. It is unlikely to proceed much further, unless the government provides time for it.

However, John Corrie drew Number 1 in the Pri-

vate Members' Bill Ballot on November 11 and the following three MPs at the top of the list are all anti-abortionists: Norman St John Stevas (C), Ray Whitney (C), and Donald Stewart (SNP).

Pressure

Although Corrie has said he will not try another anti-abortion bill, there is obviously a great deal of pressure on these MPs from anti-abortionists to take on an abortion bill. The biggest danger is that

one of them might take up the bill going through the Lords, which would shorten the Parliamentary procedure considerably.

The National Abortion Campaign is asking supporters to write letters of protest to Lord Robertson (House of Lords, London SW1), with copies to Lord Douglas Houghton, 110 Marsham Court, Marsham St, London SW1 — a pro-choice Lord.

Letters

NAC also wants supporters to write letters to

the MPs named above (all at the House of Commons, London SW1), urging them not to take up an abortion bill in the Commons.

Meeting

The titles of Private Members' Bills are to be announced in the Commons on December 1. In anticipation of an abortion bill coming up, NAC has provisionally arranged a meeting on Thursday December 2, 7pm at County Hall, London SE1.

More details: NAC, 01-278 0153.

CND plans 'canvass'

By Judith Bonner
(YCND National Committee)

1300 people, delegates and individuals, attended the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament conference in Sheffield on November 26-27-28.

It was a critical conference for CND. Cruise missiles are coming to Britain next year, and unless CND can mobilise its support as the biggest mass campaign in Britain effectively, it faces a serious setback if not collapse.

The current leadership of CND fails to bring political debate into the open and increasingly shies away from mass action. Conference, by a small majority, supported the leadership's planned 'Peace Canvass 83' as the central campaign against Cruise and Trident.

The idea of Peace Canvass 83 is to show that CND represents the 'people's will' over Cruise and Trident. "Instead of

asking people to come to us, we are going to them".

From January to June next year, much of CND's financial and physical resources are to be put into a doorstep canvass to monitor public opinion against Cruise and Trident. But discovering the exact proportion of the population opposed to this horror is not likely to stop it.

Conference voted for non-violent direct action and civil disobedience as the major tactics in the anti-Cruise, anti-Trident campaign. The problem with this is that it could focus the campaign on courageous, but symbolic, actions by small groups, instead of turning it out to the power of the labour movement, which can actually force nuclear disarmament.

On a more positive note, it was agreed to hold a trade union rally against Cruise and Trident on October 22 1983, and to urge trade unionists to strike on that day to join the rally.

CND links with the labour movement were one of the most important debates. A composite resolution was passed, calling for CND to make more links with the trade union movement by setting up workplace CND branches and by campaigning at all levels of the labour movement for support — including where necessary industrial action — to achieve CND's aims.

Debate

The biggest debate of the conference was on a resolution for 'NATO out of Britain, Britain out of NATO' as a major campaigning slogan for the next year. This was passed despite strong opposition from the leadership.

Conference was run in a fairly bureaucratic manner. For example, none of the resolutions on Youth CND were taken. These included one from YCND National Committee calling for YCND to have greater autonomy and representation within CND.

Women lead anti-Cruise fight

ON SUNDAY December 12 there will be a massive European women's demonstration at RAF Greenham Common, a year ahead of the scheduled installation of 96 Cruise missiles there.

The demo is being organised by the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, whose members have been subjected to increasing legal harassment in recent months, to the point where 23 of them have recently been jailed for 14 days for refusing to be bound over to 'keep the peace'.

From 1pm on Sunday 12th until midnight on Monday 13th it is intended to completely encircle the base. This, hopefully, will mean that US Air Force personnel and building workers who are constructing

missile launcher pads and more accommodation for the influx of US air force men will be prevented from working on the base on the Monday.

Sunday's protest will be based on seven themes, each centred on one of the seven gates. The 'Work Gate' at the entry to the building site seems the obvious place for women in the labour movement to gather. (All men are asked to help with childcare and food at the 'Children's Gate').

Unfortunately, there seem to be no 'Gates' specifically based on the themes of black women's and lesbians' oppression. If you feel strongly about this, get in touch with one of the London contacts (see below).

This is to be a non-violent event, with strong emphasis placed on women's opposition to war and conflict. The West European women's peace movement has attracted the support of hundreds of thousands of women, many of whom were not previously active (e.g. more women than men in Britain now oppose the installation of Cruise and Trident).

Nevertheless, it does not appear to have drawn in, or made strong links with, black women's groups or Irish or other anti-imperialist women's groups.

All women coming on Sunday 12th are asked to bring personal things that 'express our lives, our anger and our joy — for example, photos, posters, banners, writing, card-

board 'gravestones' with the names of victims of male violence, children's clothes, toys, ribbons, balloons... to hang on the base fence.

Perhaps women who are Socialist Organiser supporters should think of appropriate short texts which make the link between war, imperialism and women's oppression; maybe we should bring photos, etc. of female victims of imperialism, e.g. women in Armagh Jail, El Salvador, etc., and details of Polish Solidarity women who have suffered under martial law.

The demo would be a good place to have informal discussions with other women about our principles and analysis — why we aren't pacifists, etc.

It is extremely important

that as many women as possible stay over to the Monday to blockade the base and/or to act as legal observers of the blockade. Those intending to do so should contact Lynne Jones, 78 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1, 01-722 4180.

On both days, please also bring warm, waterproof clothing, food, drinks, sleeping bag/blankets, wool, string, scarves and a candle.

Banners and songs are also asked for, and tents, caravans, transit vans with sleeping accommodation and/or survival bags will be very welcome, even for the day only.

(Lots of tents being put up will enable the Camp women to defy a legal prohibition to put up their

own tents).

Information, maps, and a programme of events will be available at every gate. There will be medical supplies, sanitation, legal support, and a creche (and limited domestic accommodation — contact Angela Phillips, see below).

Posters are available from Deborah Law, 1 Crowland Terrace, London N1 (01-226 1474).

Main contact number: 01 274 6655 from 4.30 to 6.30pm.

Donations and offers of accommodation to: Angela Phillips, 27 Salcombe Rd, Newbury, Berks (tel. Newbury 34284). Offers of help (e.g. food, clothing, blankets, marquees; tents, CB/walkie-talkie radios) to Deborah Law (as above).

Fascist meeting disrupted

THE national meeting of the British National Party was reduced to just over an hour by a demonstration of over 150 anti-fascists who picketed Burleigh Community College in Loughborough last Thursday.

The British National Party had won an injunction against the County Council, allowing them to hold the meeting. Items for discussion were the 'Middle East' and the 'Jewish question'.

The NUT school group immediately issued a statement to the press and the radio, opposing the decision. The following day, the Principal of the College made a personal decision to lock up the school, and no member of the staff was prepared to open up.

When the County solicitor and his staff tried to open the gates of the school, they found the lock was jammed with strong glue.

Demonstrators formed a picket in front of the gate,

and three NUT members were arrested when the police moved the demonstrators away from in front of the gates.

The fascists eventually got in to the school on another gate, and police dogs were used to patrol the grounds.

The strength of the demonstration was that although there is no organised anti-fascist movement in the area, anti-fascists in large numbers were mobilised at less than 24 hours notice from Loughborough, Leicester and Nottingham.

The problems of the anti-fascist movement were clear at this mobilisation. The tactics and leadership have not been developed, to effectively prevent fascists from holding their meetings. We must build an anti-fascist movement in the trades unions and community, capable of carrying out the policy of no platform for fascists.

Helen Flack
NUT rep.

December

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10 17 24 31

11 18 25

WHAT'S ON

HULL Socialist Organiser supporters' meetings, every Wednesday. Details from SO sellers.

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).

ISLINGTON Socialist Organiser group: next meeting, Sunday December 12, 3pm at Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd. For baby-sitting phone Nik, 607 5268.

OXFORD Socialist Organiser meetings:

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

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

SOUTH EAST London Socialist Organiser meeting: Bob Sutcliffe on 'Spain after the elections'. Thursday December 16, 8pm, at the Lee Centre, Aslibie Road, off Lee High Road.

CAMPAIGN for Labour Party Democracy Women's Action Committee AGM.

Saturday December 4, from 11am, at County Hall, London SE1.

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.

OXFORD Socialist Organiser Grand Xmas Bazaar. Saturday December 11, 2pm at 44b Princes St, off Cowley Rd. Gifts, cakes, bottle stall, books and other goodies.

OXFORD Claimants' Defence Committee invites you to continuous showings of the 'Oxfraud Incident' on video. 11am, noon, and 1pm on Saturday December 11 at East Oxford Community Centre.

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Saturday December 4, 11am to 5pm, Sheffield Centre Against Unemployment, Bridge St, Sheffield.

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.

Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC) t-shirts. Hammer and Sickle around map of the world with the initials TILC overprinted. Cost £3.00 plus 50p postage from WSL, PO Box 135, London N1.

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.

MIDDLE East Solidarity night: Strathclyde University Students Union, John St, Glasgow, Monday December 13, 7.30. Speakers, slide show, discussion: jointly organised by International Solidarity Front for defence of Democratic Rights in Iran, General Union of Palestinian Students, and Turkey Solidarity Campaign.

HULL Labour Movement Polish Solidarity Campaign. demonstration, Saturday December 11, assemble 11am, Victoria Pier.

LONDON Workers' Socialist League educational on basic Marxism. Next one: 'The roots of women's oppression'. Friday December 10, 7.30pm. For details of venue write to WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

CLASS FIGHTER Steering Committee: Saturday December 11, 12 noon, Keski-dee Centre, Gifford St, London N1. Details phone (01-) 609 3071.

TEBBIT'S LAW

Most of Tebbit's anti-union law becomes operative this week. But the TUC's plans for solidarity with trade unionists victimised under the law are hedged about with ifs and buts. John McIlroy reports.

JOHN HARRIS



Thatcher: her strategy of confrontation hinges on cowardice of TUC leaders

THIS WEEK nearly all the clauses of the Tebbit law, which received the Royal Assent in October, become operative.

The big exception is the provision which requires a yes vote of 85% of the workforce before the law recognises a closed shop. This will become law in two years' time.

Ostensibly the delay is to allow time for employers to prepare for ballots. In reality this is another example of the flexible tactics which the Tories have used to introduce a sophisticated and detailed edifice of labour law in a fragmented fashion, testing out union resistance at every stage.

The Tory strategy for a further five years involves the abolition of wages councils, the imposition of compulsory secret ballots, and a restructuring of the political relations between the unions and the Labour Party. By the 1990s the unions' legal rights and obligations, certainly in the arena of industrial action, will be worse than those prevailing a century before.

The TUC is not unaware of this. Len Murray has described the Tories' present legal offensive as 'the greatest threat facing trade unions this century'. The TUC correctly grasp the objectives of the Tebbit law. 'Its real purposes are to make it harder for working people to defend their living standards and their jobs and to undermine the bargaining strength of trade unions and the Movement's ability to promote alternative policies'.

They also understand the threat posed for the institutional interests of the union leaderships by the breaking of closed shops — hence loss of membership, hence loss of finances — and by the fact that as from this week legal actions can be brought directly against union funds.

Declaring their total opposition to Tebbit and the necessity to fight it in a thousand speeches, the General Council have, since the Special Conference of Executives of Affiliated Unions held at Wembley in April, developed what they describe as 'an effective plan of campaign aimed at neutering the aims of the proposed legislation'.

Yet those who are seriously committed to the neutering of Tebbit must see the General Council's judgement as dangerously self-congratulatory and complacent.

In reality the plan failed to stop Tebbit reaching the statute book. It will almost certainly fail to stop Tebbit when it is used.

Deficient

The TUC strategy is deficient on many counts. For example, withdrawal of TUC representatives from industrial tribunals hearing closed shop cases is a pin prick compared with the impact a TUC withdrawal from all tripartite machinery would have.

However, the core of the TUC's plan to stop Tebbit is contained in clause 5 of the 8 points adopted at Wembley. This states:

'where the General Council receive a request to assist a union faced by or experiencing legal action by an employer and are satisfied that assistance from the movement is justified, they are empowered:

(i) 'To co-ordinate action by other affiliated unions in support of the union in difficulties including, if necessary, calling for industrial action against the employer concerned or more widely,

(ii) 'To provide financial assistance to a union which experiences severe financial problems as a result of damaging actions'.

The General Council will only think about acting where there is a request from an affiliate. This is no small point.

You will recall that no such request was forthcoming from the EETPU during the summer when legal action was taken against Sean Geraghty, and this might be true of other unions in similar circumstances if Tebbit is used.

Even if a request is made assistance must be 'necessary and justified' if the TUC is to take action.

Now, surely this is ridiculous. Surely the whole point about a united TUC campaign against Tebbit is that the law is inherently anti-union and its use against trade unionists illegitimate. If it is used against a union assistance must be 'necessary and justified'.

To put it another way: are there circumstances in which the General Council think that the use of Tebbit is justified and circumstances in which they feel that victims should be left to the tender mercies of the

judges? If so, hadn't they better spell these circumstances out in a detailed way now?

Our suspicions are increased when we look at the explanatory rubric to point 5, '...while there is a consequent need for flexibility of tactics the General Council will stand ready where they are satisfied that it is warranted to organise support...'.

Again, if Tebbit is used against stewards or unions defending closed shop, picketing other workplaces, blacking goods in solidarity or taking any of the measures Tebbit is attempting to outlaw, how is it possible that support would not be warranted?

Not automatic

The TUC adds: 'That cannot mean nor would affiliated unions expect (!!) that a union or a group of its members encountering legal difficulties should automatically receive support from the TUC and other unions irrespective of their circumstances ... They (the General Council) would need to be satisfied that the union was justified in the action it was taking and would also expect the union to take full account of the views they might express about the form and continuation of the action which had given rise to the legal case.'

The General Council would need to be assured of the response from other

parts of the union seeking support to the group of members whose action had given rise to the legal case as it is unreasonable for a union if difficulties to seek TUC help ... unless it has mobilised its own members and resources and has the support of other unions in the workplace affected.'

Loopholes

The TUC document is drafted as if the main aim of the game is not to give confidence to the front line troops who will have to break Tebbit's law, nor to assure them that if they defend their organisations these organisations will back them to the hilt, but rather to provide a series of carefully drafted loopholes to protect the General Council.

W.C. Fields would have had no problems here. The General Council do not need to do anything until they are assured that all the other members of a far-flung disparate organisation like the TGWU are already taking action to support say a group of TGWU car workers.

The General Council do not need to give support until they are assured that all other unions in that workplace, AUEW, APEX, EETPU, ASTMS, etc., etc., are taking action.

This is a justification for inertia by the people who should themselves be doing this very job of mobilising

other trade unionists.

But perhaps the key phrase is that which points out that before any support is forthcoming TUC advice on 'the form and continuation of the action' must be taken.

'Yes,' we can envisage Len Murray saying, 'your strike is official and to win it you need to picket other workplaces which Tebbit outlaws. But we don't want a national stoppage over 1,000 workers, do we? Get that picketing called off.'

'You can continue the strike ... even though it will be totally ineffective!'

'Yes,' we can hear Moss Evans argue, 'your blacking is justifiable to help another group of workers. But if you continue it will cost us thousands and we don't want that, do we?'

'Call it off now ... there's good lads! The other workers ... they'll get by!'

Anybody who believes that this is just sectarian carping about a document which is just carefully drafted to take care of future possibilities should consider the practice of the TUC in the cases of ASLEF and of Sean Geraghty.

In the first case a relatively small group of workers fighting for the interest of all trade unionists were not simply deserted by the General Council. They were ordered back to work.

In the second case — all too typical of those likely to occur under Tebbit? — the TUC averted its gaze and did absolutely nothing while a dedicated trade unionist was hauled before the courts for showing solidarity with the TUC-led NHS dispute and for carrying out the policy of his union and the TUC in fighting Tory laws.

This practice is a policy for disaster. It can have a rolling effect of demoralisation.

If trade unionists feel they will get no support from their union they will not defend the closed shop, picket or black when they are told it is against the law. If unions feel that they will get no support from the TUC they will become even more passive.

If this happens, if the practice adopted over ASLEF and Geraghty continues, then Tebbit will succeed — and transform the tactics, strategy, and bargaining power of the trade unions.

The TUC anti-Tebbit programme now concentrates in policy the practice of the General Council over ASLEF and Geraghty. It sanctifies the stunted conceptions of solidarity which are losing more and more disputes for trade unionists in the 1980's.

But perhaps most importantly this programme is intended to centralise strategy in the hands of the General Council. The actual struggles against the Industrial Relations Act, helped as they were by TUC opposition, were initiated by the rank and file over Penton-

ville and by the AUEW over Goad and Con Mech.

In a changed environment the rank and file look more to their unions and individual unions look more to the TUC.

With a fighting leadership this would be a healthy tendency. This programme is intended to reinforce this tendency and give the General Council control of any struggle from the outset. But, of course, we do not have a fighting leadership.

Any real support by the TUC to a union or group of workers attacked by Tebbit would ultimately require escalation into a General Strike. The TUC, knowing the determination of the Thatcher government, is not prepared to risk its present positions weakened as they are, in a struggle which like all struggles involves an element of risk.

They remember with anxiety the upheavals of 1972-4. They want peace. Indeed their main ideological attack on Tebbit is that it disrupts the prospects of peace.

'They (the government) have refused to listen when we have tried to impress on them that the intrusion of more and more restrictive legislation into industrial relations weakens voluntary efforts to promote positive improvements.'

As an example of how to effectively control workers and weaken strikes they cite their own notorious TUC Guides of February 1979.

Relying on pacifism, dreaming of a future Labour government, TUC control is likely to imprison struggles against Tebbit within the political limitations of the General Council paralysing their potential. If that potential is to be realised, then we have to argue that the present TUC programme is as full of holes as HM Sheffield.

It will discourage many from taking on Tebbit.

We have to argue that we need no 'justifications', 'assurances', 'special circumstances'. If Tebbit is used against any union or group of workers then yes, TUC support should be automatic.

Such a policy, if strongly and clearly circulated, would fire the union troops and discourage the enemy. It would allow the movement to start preparing right now for the day when Tebbit is used.

We need to campaign for this policy within the unions but we also need to start campaigning now for immediate action by the rank and file and individual unions if Tebbit is used. We cannot wait for the TUC.

The ASLEF and Geraghty cases reaffirmed once more that the only time the General Council will act is when they are forced to by intense and widespread pressure of the rank and file. That is what can beat the Tories.

TUC in retreat

BRITAIN'S ANSWER

Filling in thousands of members' union ballot papers himself; helping to get union branch officers who crossed him sacked, then breaking a strike in their defence; and instructing members to scab on the national drivers' strike in 1979 — those were some highlights of the career of Alan Law, TGWU full-timer for road haulage drivers in the Midlands.

Tony Corfield's book 'The Rule of Law'* gives one account of this. Bill Peters gives another.



The 5/35 Branch, a potential power base for class struggle, was cynically used by Law as the base of his own empire

How the weekly Socialist Press depicted Alan Law's conflict with his members during the national road haulage strike of 1979. (Alex Kitson was at that time, before his rise to the Deputy General Secretary position, still speaking on behalf of Scottish lorry drivers).

TONY Corfield's 'The Rule of Law' is a more or less biographical account of the career of Alan Law, the Transport and General Workers' Union Birmingham road haulage secretary, from his appointment in 1958 to his controversial early retirement in 1979.

Although the book is presented as an important contribution to the history of trade unionism at grass roots level, it certainly does not live up to it. Neither does it live up to its self-description as "an important contribution to the study of industrial relations in Britain".

This is particularly true because Tony Corfield is dealing with an important subject, but ends up white-washing some of the worst abuses of democracy seen in the TGWU in recent years. In so doing he offers nothing to those carrying out the crucial fight for democracy and accountability in the TGWU and elsewhere in the labour movement.

Tony Corfield projects a view of Alan Law as a tough no-nonsense organiser who made an outstand-

ing contribution to the trade union movement but made 'mistakes' and had 'lapses'. This view must be challenged both for the sake of historical record, and for the sake of the struggle for democracy today.

It is true that Alan Law presided over a very important development of trade union organisation among haulage workers in the Midlands (in a period of a major general rise of trade unionism in the area). An evaluation, however, must be based on what kind of trade unionism he promoted, and how he used the power placed in his hands.

The inescapable fact is that Alan Law's trade union career stands as a monument to the cynical abuse of the considerable power vested in an appointed official by a major trade union like the TGWU.

If Alan Law built an 'impressive' trade union structure, it must be judged in an all-round way, in relation to the principles he built it on. The fact is that any objective view shows it as a structure purpose-built to facilitate his own personal power base, and everything which flowed from that.

American-style

It is undeniable that Alan Law projected American-style 'business unionism' to a very developed degree. That it was from a regional base makes it no less dangerous. He was, for example, militantly apolitical, he was an open admirer of former US Teamsters' leader Jimmy Hoffa, and consequently he held democracy, and the democratic procedures of the union, in total contempt if they conflicted with his own plans

and aspirations.

Tony Corfield's view of Alan Law is very different to mine. He subtitles the book, 'A study in trade union organisation and method' — note the 'and method'.

Incredibly, while Corfield mentions some of Law's worst crimes, his overall assessment is that "Alan Law's actions were never arbitrary"; that "his hold over his members derived from mutual self-interest, not tyranny"; and that "his exercise of power was ordered and rational".

He says that none of Law's failures can "dim the tactical brilliance of the change he made in trade union attitudes and organisation". "He personified trade union power and the artistry in using it".

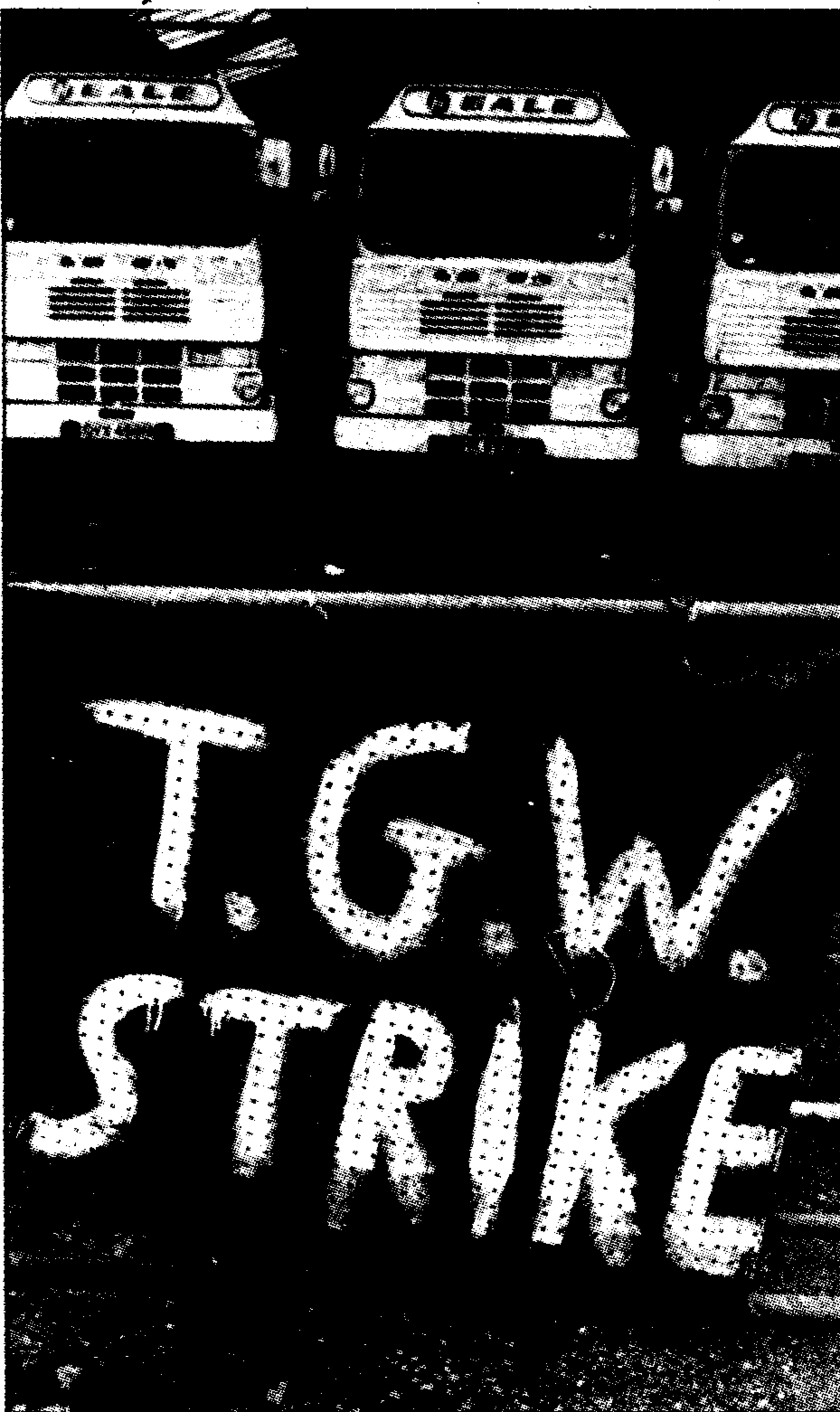
Perhaps Corfield's most astounding statement — to those who knew Alan Law — is this: "He succeeded in taking his members another long stride along the path of industrial democracy".

To challenge this view requires a detailed account of some of the major events Tony Corfield leaves out, giving more elaboration to those he has skimmed over, and correcting the sections where he has justified, in various ways, the indefensible actions of Alan Law.

This makes a review of the book quite difficult. In fact, it makes it somewhat of an alternative biography, since it is necessary to tell the other side of the story, to look at the real Alan Law.

To justify my case, therefore, let me begin with Alan Law's notorious dual position as full-time official and also holder of the lay position of branch secretary for the 5/35 branch. This is diplomatically referred to by Tony Corfield as a 'constitutional anachronism'.

It was a set-up which gave Alan Law exactly what he wanted, absolute power over the members he was dealing with. Normally, if members have a complaint about an official, they go to the branch.



As lorry drivers walked out in the winter of discontent, Law opposed a national strike and sabotaged action in the Midlands by concluding a scandalous deal.

But Law controlled the branch as secretary.

Full-time officers are supposed to carry out the policies decided by the lay committees, including the branch. Again, Law as secretary controlled the branch which was supposed to control him.

Branch secretary of a branch of 4,500 was also a very lucrative job, entitling Law to 15% of membership dues — well over £300 per week at today's dues levels, something like half that when he was secretary.

This money is paid because branch secretary is a lay, unpaid position. It is administration money, paid to volunteer secretaries to meet the expenses of a very considerable job. Law, of course, was a paid official, and the branch was admin-

istered by staff paid by the union — in this case, his daughter.

Tony Corfield recognises that the dual positions gave Law power. But he puts it rather differently. He says it gave him the executive authority he needed to do the very good work he was doing.

This is simply not the case. Any doubts about why Alan Law wanted absolute power, how he exercised it, and on whose behalf, can be dispelled by a few examples.

It can be shown by how he reacted when that power was challenged, as at Autocar in 1974.

At Autocar there was what Law interpreted as a challenge to a small segment of the network of personal supporters he had

developed in the haulage firms in the Birmingham area. His reaction to it was incredible.

Tony Corfield ducks right out of the Autocar issue because, he explains, he is writing about Alan Law from the point of view of the 5/35 branch, which was his main base, and Autocar had its own separate branch.

But the general conclusions he has drawn are from Alan Law's role in the Midlands road haulage industry, which goes far beyond the 4,500 members in the 5/35 branch, important as that branch was and is. Law was responsible for 1400 other members covered by a number of branches.

Voted out

Sections like car transporters (such as Autocar) and tanker drivers were a major part of Law's involvement, although they were not in the 5/35.

The 'problem' arose at Autocar when the membership voted out of office the chairman and secretary of their branch. It was simple enough. The drivers were dissatisfied that nothing was being done about wages and conditions at Autocar, and they exercised their democratic rights in an election.

Normal and democratic or not, this was totally unacceptable to Alan Law. The secretary voted out was Billy Birmingham, a member of the TGWU General Executive Council, and the chairman voted out was Stan Moore. Both were very important to Law's apparatus. Birmingham had controlled Autocar for Law for 15 years.

Law, therefore, was determined that the decision would be reversed.

The new officers took over during the oil crisis, on January 1 1974, and were immediately faced with lay-offs. They called a branch committee meeting to discuss the situation.

That meeting never took place. As soon as Law learned of the lay-off situation, he intervened and arranged a meeting with Autocar managing director

Norman Parker, himself, and the new branch officers.

Significantly, Parker was formally one of Law's men in the TGWU. Parker promptly said that he wanted 44 drivers laid off, and Law couldn't agree quick enough.

What the new branch officers, Phil Morris and Pat Healey, failed to grasp at that stage, was exactly why Law was so quick to accept the lay-offs.

They got the message a few days later, when Parker announced that he wanted 22 of the 44 laid-off drivers to be permanently switched to another depot. Morris and Healey were both in that 22. The other depot, needless to say, came under a different union branch.

If Morris and Healey did not sign papers agreeing to the transfer by 7pm on January 11, said Parker, they would be sacked. When they turned to Alan Law for support, they were told, "Mr Parker is a clever man. The management could be right".

Strike

On January 17 Law wrote to Phil Morris to say that Autocar management would not consider reversing their decision. So on Monday January 21 Morris and Healey met the Autocar membership, and they voted for an all-out strike.

Already Law was intervening to stop the strikers gaining the support of the Birmingham Car Delivery Council, which covered the five branches for the car delivery industry. This body was crucial if the strike was to be spread throughout the Birmingham area.

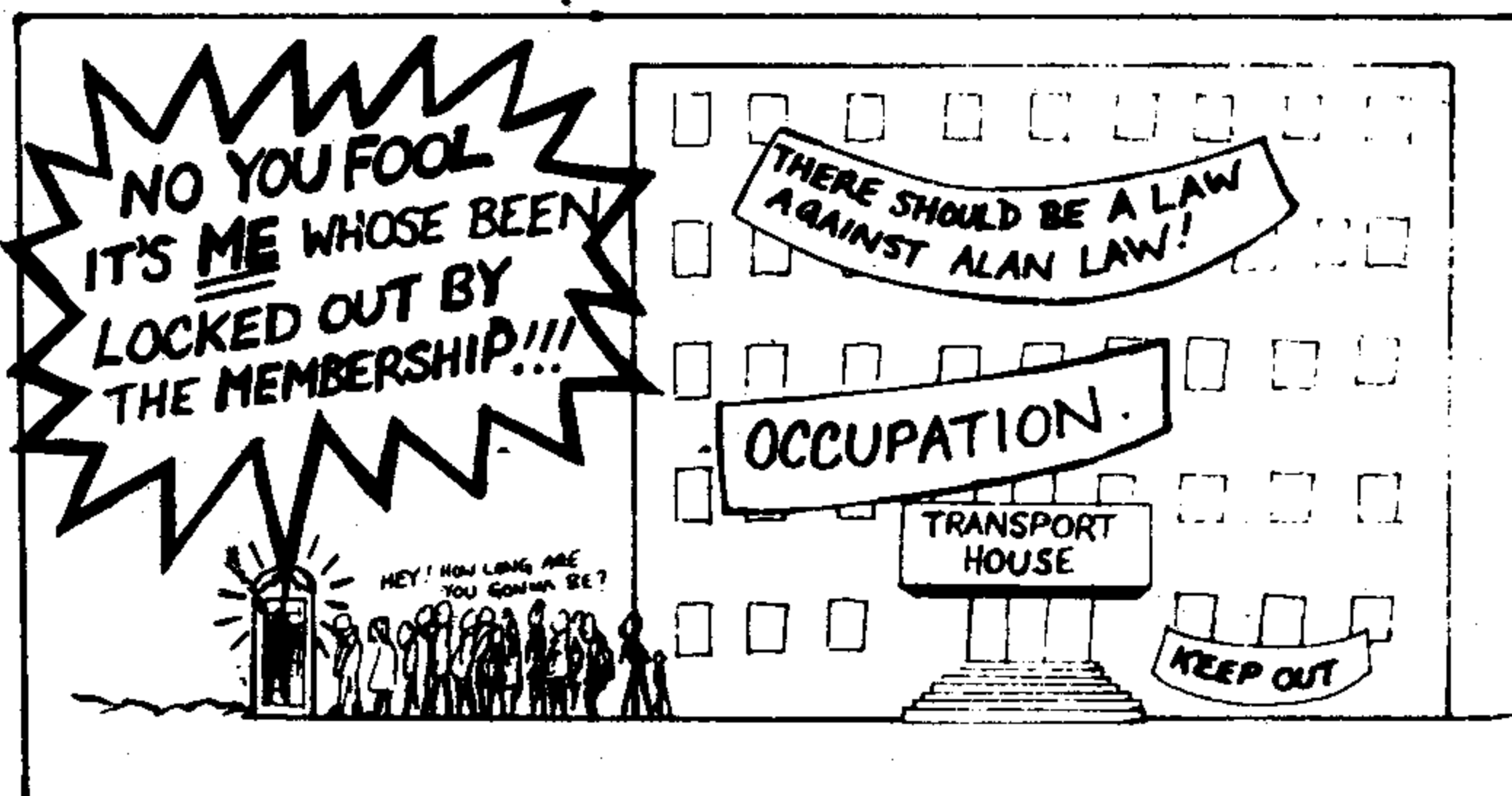
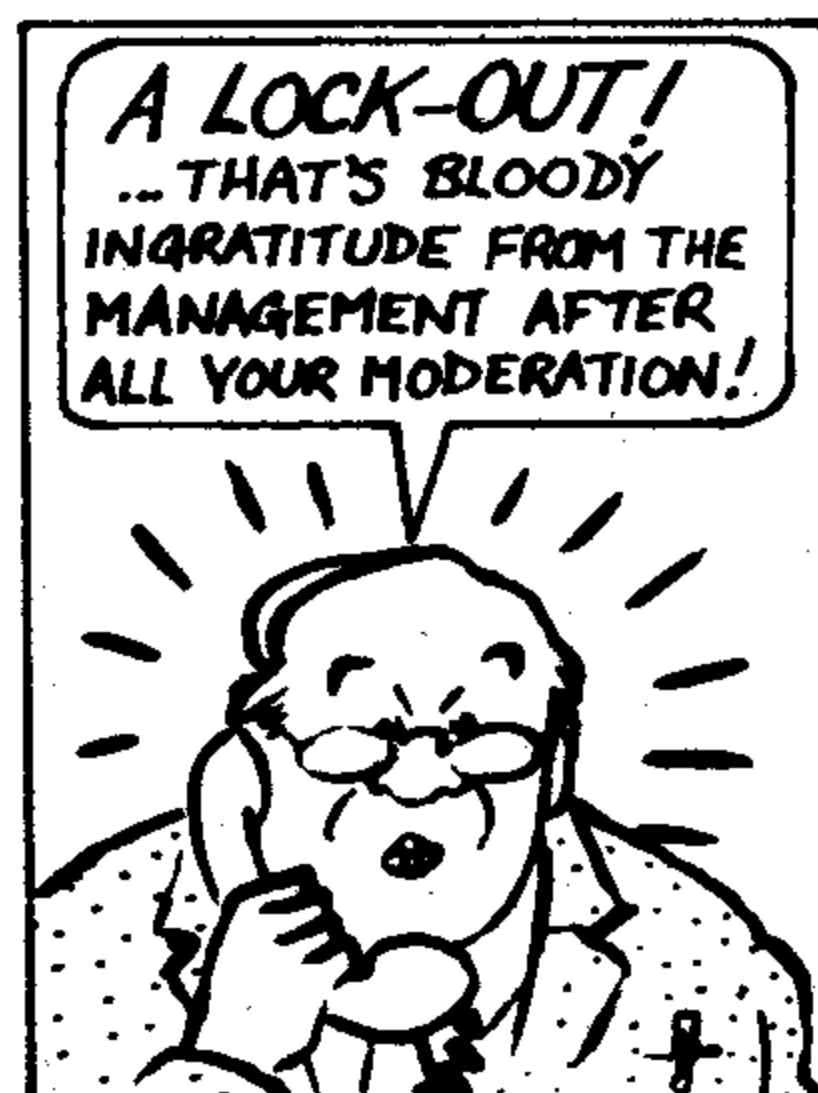
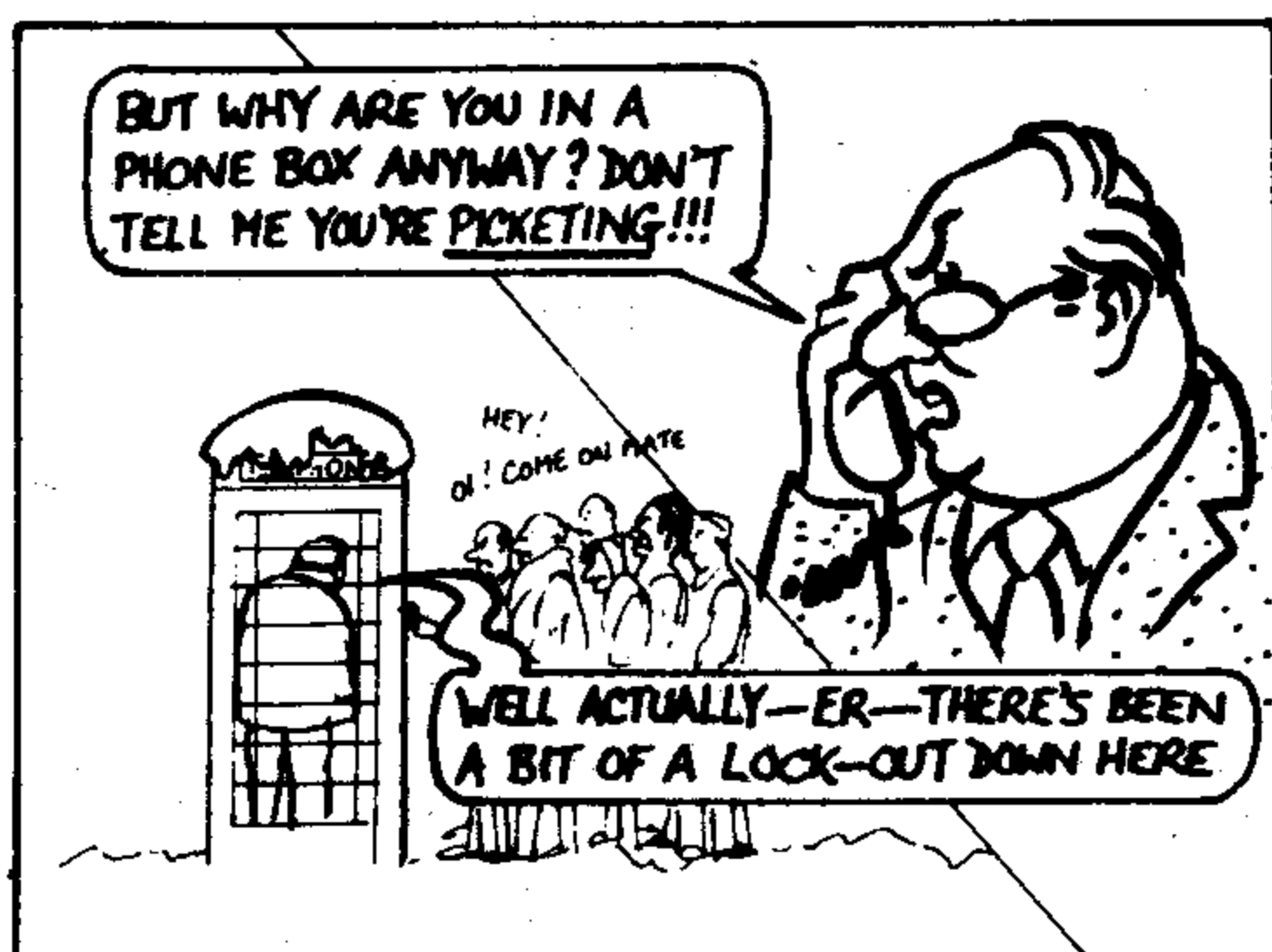
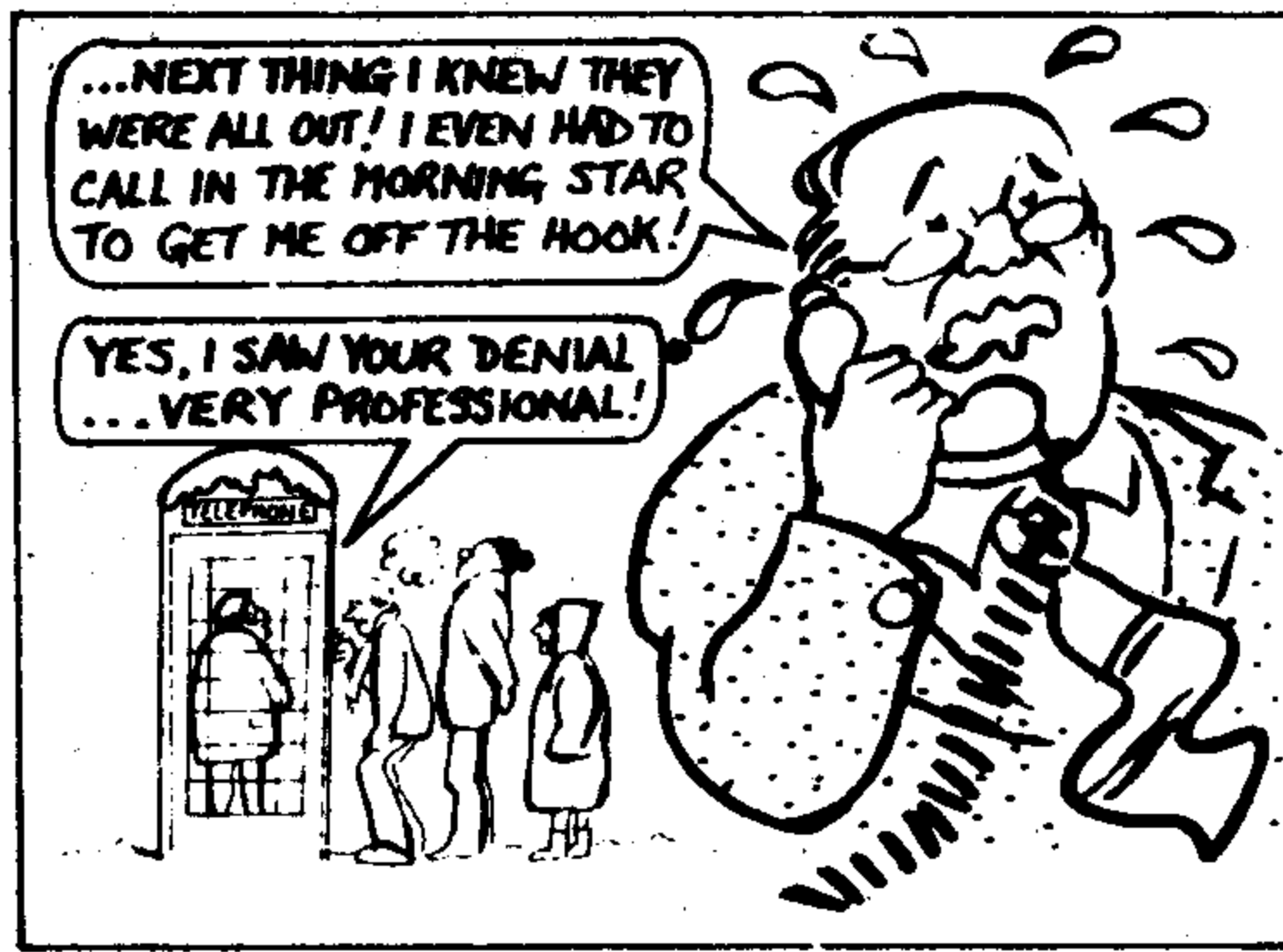
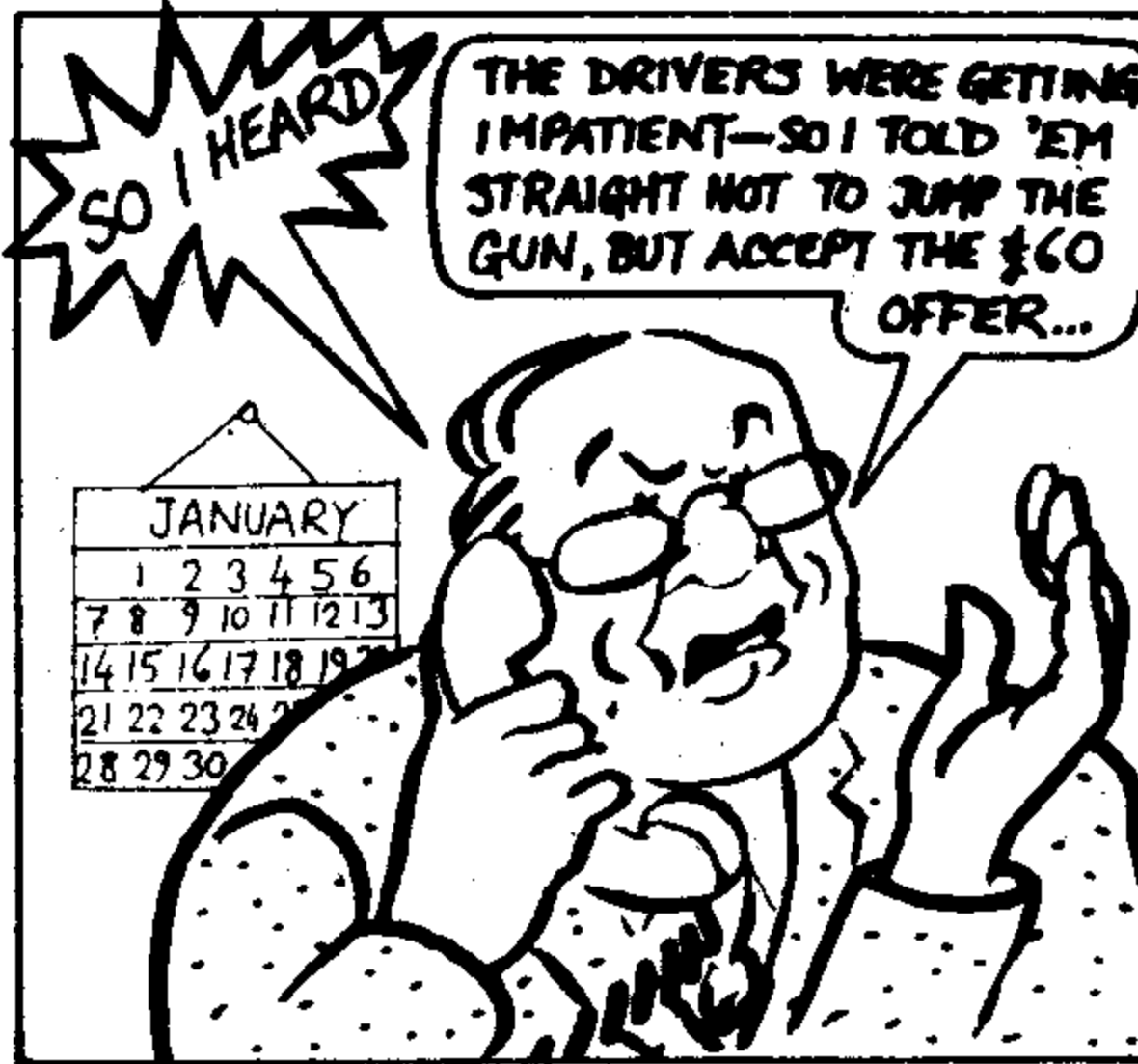
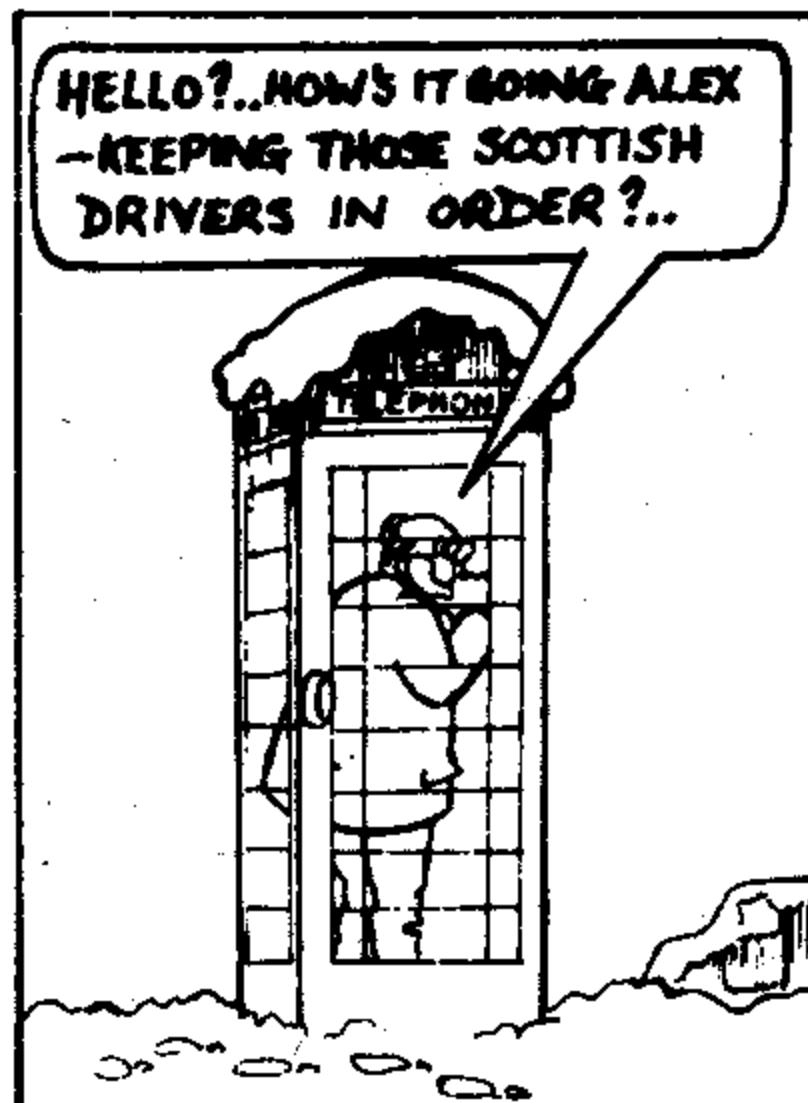
On the day after the strike began, the strike committee wrote to invite the members of the Car Delivery Council to their meeting to be held at Transport House at 7.30pm that Thursday.

The room had been booked through Law's secretary/daughter, who confirmed that it would be available. At 11am on Thursday morning, an invitation was delivered

Region 5 Secretary Brian Mathers: refused an inquiry into Law's ballot rigging.

* Tony Corfield was formerly secretary of the TGWU political, research, and education departments; director of the Workers' Education Association social studies centre; and principal of Fircroft College, Birmingham. He is now Director of Industrial Relations Study Services. The book (R. Briery Publications, £5.00) can be obtained from IRSS, 12 Welches Close, Birmingham B31 2XT.

TO JIMMY HOFFA



by hand to Alan Law. Four hours later, his daughter phoned to say that the room was no longer available.

Underestimating his opponents, Law assumed that this would be enough to ensure that the meeting would never take place. He wrote a letter to the members of the Car Delivery Council and had it delivered by the hand the following morning.

The letter was a witchunt, and began by referring to "the unofficial element amongst our Car Delivery Organisation". It went on: "This body has been acting in a subversive fashion for a long time now, but it has been kept ineffective by the combined efforts of the responsible people within the Branches. Now an opportunity has arisen for them to come out into the open and show their hand".

He continued: "The membership at Autocar are being deliberately misled and used, and will be cast aside when they have served their purpose, mark my words".

Unfortunately for Law, Phil Morris and Pat Healey were not so easily taken in. They had not trusted Law's daughter and had booked a second venue in case Transport House was suddenly 'unavailable'. The meeting had been attended by all the members of the Car Delivery Council.

Moreover, it had voted to give full backing to the strike, and decided to approach Brian Mathers as regional secretary to urge that the strike be made official. When no reply was received, the secretary of the Council, John Cassidy, telephoned to ask why. Law gave the answer — and it was as a considerable shock.

Cassidy was told that the Council no longer existed. It had apparently been defunct since 1968.

Protests that Alan Law himself had only recently been corresponding officially with the Council cut ice. It had been retroactively disbanded. Law said that he was going to a new body, called the Birmingham Car Delivery Committee.

The crunch came in the

third week of the strike. On February 4 the strike committee and the management met together with a conciliation officer. The strike committee pressed management for a return to the 'status quo'. Autocar's managing director Stanley Alton told them that the company would be happy to agree, but Alan Law had told them that if they did he would cut off their fuel supplies.

(Is Tony Corfield still prepared to tell us that Alan Law's actions were 'never arbitrary', or that his exercise of power was 'ordered and rational', or that 'his hold over his members derived from mutual self-interest, not tyranny'?)

That was not all. On Wednesday February 6 the Autocar strikers picketed the Longbridge plant as a part of a day of protest. The picket was directed mainly against Law, with placards saying, 'Law's Wages — Who Pays?', 'No Brother In Law', and 'We Want Justice'.

Two hours later, three transporters from BRS, led by shop steward Geoffrey Hewlett, crossed their picket line. When challenged later, Hewlett explained that BRS area manager Ron Halifax — a former TGWU steward and friend of Law's — had threatened to sack anyone who refused to cross the picket line.

But Hewlett was not so innocent. He had been campaigning for months for clearance from region to set up his own T&G branch. This had been repeatedly refused.

Within days of his scabbing he was given permission to set up his own branch — the 5/809. (A few months later, he was made a full-time official and sent to Oxford. His first public statement was about the necessity to stamp out the 'extremists'.)

On February 11 Law stood on a miners' picket line at Saltley Coke Depot and told drivers: 'Cross this picket line and you may never work in Birmingham again'.

Two days later, Billy Birmingham and Stan Moore (the two officers voted out at Autocar) crossed the Autocar picket line and returned to work. The same

evening, BP tanker drivers were instructed by Law to cross the picket line.

It emerged that Law had telephoned the BP depot at Kingsbury and instructed T&G branch secretary Emrys Jones and his shop stewards personally to take tankers and drive through the line.

Brian Mathers, as regional secretary, then ordered the Autocar strikers back to work.

Law had smashed the strike and achieved his objective. Billy Birmingham and Stan Moore were immediately reinstalled by Law as secretary and chairman of the Autocar branch.

On February 19, some very bitter victimised men from Autocar demonstrated outside the Midlands Regional office of the T&G. Their placards read: 'TGWU — The Union That Gets Its Members Sacked', and 'The Great TGWU Conspiracy'.

Law agreed to see them. He handed around a tray of lamb chops, a bottle of scotch, and three bottles of rum, and paid them £10 each. Needless to say, they remained angry and bitter.

Tony Corfield had no right to leave out this disgraceful episode when passing judgment on Alan Law. But that is not all.

Ballot-rigging

In November 1977 Alan Law was caught ballot-rigging on a massive scale. He filled in almost all the 4,500 ballot papers issued to the branch himself, for each of three elections: national trade group committee, regional committee, and General Executive Council.

This was revealed by scrutineers in November 1977, who disqualified the branch returns for what they bashfully described as 'block voting'. The right word is, of course, ballot-rigging — a criminal offence.

Tony Corfield says that Law should not have been surprised that the 'regional authorities' took the matter seriously. In fact they did nothing of the sort.

At that time they took no further action at all. It took two angry but misguided militants, who — after months of frustration trying to get it raised

within the union — made a formal complaint to the police, to bring it to the notice of the membership.

Given the urgent need for democratic reforms inside the TGWU, not least of the ballot procedure, Tony Corfield does no service by treating the episode lightly. He assesses branch opinion as not regarding the ballot-rigging as a serious offence, and points to the fact that the same candidates were elected on a re-run ballot.

Inquiry

Tony Corfield should have made it clear that this is beside the point. Members are supposed to fill in the ballot papers themselves. In fact Tony Corfield's assessment of opinion appears to be wrong, since a meeting of 500 5/35 members demanded a full regional inquiry into the incident — which was refused.

Alan Law himself was absolutely unrepentant. He simply said he had not had time to send out the ballot papers (despite being a full time official, with a full-time staff, doing a lay officer's job and getting a lay officer's administration allowance). He said he would do the same again in the same circumstances.

This is way out of step with Tony Corfield's general assessment of Law. In fact he quotes from an article Law wrote in the T&G journal Highway in March 1977.

"Too many people allow too many other people to make decisions on their behalf (!), without wanting their own voice to be heard, without demanding their rights to be heard, without insisting that their points of view be taken into consideration". So runs part of this quote which, says Tony Corfield, "most fully expresses" the outlook of... Alan Law, who fills in other people's ballot papers without their knowledge and casts their votes for them!

I can only say about this that either Tony Corfield doesn't take his assessment of Alan Law seriously, or he doesn't take ballot-rigging seriously, since the two do not add up.

Apart from re-running the ballot, the Regional Committee decided to remove Law as branch secre-

tary and split the branch into four in order to break up his power base. (They also got his agreement to retire at 60, a year or so later). That was enough for the Director of Public Prosecutions, who then decided not to proceed with criminal charges.

This was all very well, but the 5/35 branch was not Law's property, to be broken up as a form of punishment. It was a large, active branch in its own right, with strength, organisation, and rights, quite independent of Alan Law. To break it up was to break up an effective fighting force and weaken Midlands haulage workers in face of the employers.

Law was absolutely cynical about the break-up of the branch which he had precipitated. In order to protect Law's reputation, the Region gave the reason for the break-up of the branch as Law's increasing deafness.

Bemused branch members could not understand why this incapacity had led to the break-up of the branch. It was months later when pressure revealed the real reason, ballot-rigging.

Right to meet

Months of campaigning, with Law in opposition to them, by members of the 5/35 branch, eventually established the right of the four branches to meet together once a month, although they remained constitutionally three branches. They continue that way today: still a strong, important branch, with monthly meetings of between two and three hundred, but seriously weakened by the actions of Alan Law.

One more example can usefully be given of Law's determination to defend his own power base — that is the national haulage strike which began in January 1979. It precipitated a major break between Law and the 5/35 branch.

A demand for £65 for 40 hours was advanced by a national road haulage conference. This threatened to override agreements which Law had in the Midlands, such as the Birmingham differential. More importantly, it trod on his patch.

He was, therefore, unlike the 5/35 branch, completely opposed to it from the outset. On top of that, he feared that it could become a political confrontation with the Government, and he wanted nothing to do with that.

The strike went ahead as a solid national action. Law's reaction to the backing which the 5/35 leadership was giving to the strike was to negotiate a scandalous deal with the West Midlands Road Haulage Association, to the effect that he would keep the West Midlands drivers out of the strike while the employers would agree to match any increase gained at national level.

This deal was backed by Brian Mathers, Region 5's notorious regional secretary, cryptically referred to throughout the book as "the regional authorities".

It caused a crisis in the strike nationally. It was a move that only a mind dominated by business unionism and devoid of any principle could have entered into.

To their great credit, the 5/35 leadership, whom Tony Corfield sees too much as a creation of and appendix of Alan Law, fought him all the way, along with other branches in the region.

Law's move created such bitterness that one branch occupied his office when

they heard he would be meeting the West Midlands employers in it. Law had to switch the venue to a Birmingham hotel.

Mathers then intervened on behalf of Law, sending out in the post a direct appeal for a return to work in the West Midlands. This would be open scabbing on the national strike, which by this time was effectively confronting the Labour government over wage controls.

The tremendous strength of the strike, both nationally and in the West Midlands, meant that the treachery of Law and Mathers was doomed to failure. The drivers ignored the appeals, and remained militantly on strike.

Law, having lost the day, refused to take responsibility for the strike. It was taken over by the officer who was to replace him a few months later when he retired.

Although Tony Corfield gives a full account of this period, he partly justifies Law's treacherous role. For him, Law was protecting conditions which existed in the West Midlands, where the union was strong enough to achieve what it wanted without a damaging strike.

Tony Corfield does no service to the trade union movement in making a folk hero out of Alan Law. The issues involved are too important for that.



Hewlett: his scabbing rewarded with a full-time official's job

**"The only ones to
boycott will be the
hard left"**

TO REGISTER?

CLPD has campaigned for conference sovereignty right from the start. It should therefore have no difficulty in deciding whether to comply with the conference decision endorsing the NEC's Register of Groups.

If it does not wish to lose its credibility, CLPD must comply. The constitutional changes for which CLPD campaigned – mandatory reselection, wider franchise in the election of Party leader, the Manifesto – were all ways of bringing conference sovereignty nearer.

CLPD campaigns for conference sovereignty because it is the essential precondition if the Party is to regain its political effectiveness, its electoral credibility, and ultimately the chance to achieve a socialist Britain in the foreseeable future.

For the main cause of the problems the Party is experiencing at present is the structural separation of the Parliamentary Party from the Party in the country. This is why the Party tends to speak with two voices, why the policies agreed at conference are in conflict with those pursued by Labour governments, and why internal conflicts have become so pronounced in recent years.

These difficulties will be overcome only when the sovereignty of conference is firmly established.

Even though some steps have already been taken towards the acceptance of the principle of conference sovereignty, the battle is far from being won. Further advance, however, is not possible if those campaigning for it adopt a double standard.

Until recently it was only the PLP [Parliamentary Labour Party] which rejected conference decisions of which it disapproved. It would be ironic if those who criticised the PLP because of this, now started to imitate it. If CLPD took up this position, its credibility would be completely undermined and the chances of making conference sovereignty a reality would become very slim indeed.

A number of comrades on the CLPD Executive argue against CLPD applying to be placed on the Register. These comrades are confusing two different issues. One is the question of complying with majority decisions. The other is the question of agreeing with those decisions.

In fact, CLPD's objective of establishing the supremacy of conference decisions never presupposed that these decisions would necessarily be right. Nor does it mean that those who do not agree with them should not campaign against them.

Campaign for LABOUR PARTY Democracy

Some Labour activists argue that to boycott the 'register' established by this year's Labour Party conference is to use the democratic 'right of resistance' against a witch-hunt; others, that bad though the register is, democratic principles oblige us to comply with it. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is currently conducting a consultative ballot on whether to register. On this page we print Vladimir Derer and Pete Willsman's argument for registration; on the facing page, articles by Jon Lansman, Nigel Williamson, and Andy Harris against registration. The Derer/Willsman, Lansman and Williamson articles are taken from the CLPD bulletin, Andy Harris's from London Labour Briefing. An article by John Bloxam of Socialist Organiser against registering was in SO 108 and also appears in the current CLPD bulletin.

Making conference decisions binding simply means that they must be complied with until they are overturned. But they should only be opposed through constitutional channels, and should not be defied.

So far as the conference decision on the Register is concerned, there is of course no disagreement. It was a bad and dangerous decision, and the sooner it is changed the better. The division is purely over the best method to do so.

Those who advocate a 'civil disobedience' campaign against the Register wish CLPD to disobey a conference decision. Not only would this make nonsense of CLPD's efforts to achieve conference sovereignty, but the proposed course of action is also quite unlikely to achieve the desired objective. It ignores the experience of how mandatory reselection and the electoral college were won, and the Manifesto reform very nearly won.

These advances resulted from a concentrated, systematic, continuous and concerted campaign within the

Party, using every available constitutional means to secure majority support for these demands.

The CLPD strategy is based on the recognition that at present the Labour Party is the sole vehicle by which any advance towards socialism can be made. Total acceptance of the Labour Party framework, with all its restrictions as well as opportunities, is therefore an absolute prerequisite.

This involves facing up to the reality of the relatively conservative and traditionalist climate of opinion which is still widespread within the Party. Not only should the demands put forward be acceptable both to the Party and trade union membership, but also our campaigning methods must be equally acceptable.

Above all, the existing rules must be scrupulously respected. Any failure to meet these conditions merely guarantees loss of support.

Some comrades present registration, or indeed any departure from the previous status quo, as an act of betrayal. To become a 'regi-

stered socialist' is to be branded with the mark of Cain.

They see refusal to register as the only honourable course, and have consistently misrepresented CLPD's campaign against the Militant Tendency Report as a sell-out.

This way of presenting the issue confuses a political question with a moral one. Moral imperatives allow no compromises. In politics, however, compromise is not only admissible, but if one is serious about one's long term objectives, it is often imperative.

In any case comrades who have turned the non-registration of CLPD into a major issue because they reject the restrictions of the Register seem to forget the written undertaking they gave when they joined the Party. This was to accept "the policy and programme of the Labour Party" and its "Rules and Constitution".

It is doubtful that when they signed this declaration they actually agreed with all the Party's policies. Why, then, should they wish to single out their disagreement over the Register for making an 'uncompromising stand' that would lead to the disbandment of CLPD on the technical grounds that it failed to apply for registration?

One can only conclude that they do not place a high value on the continued existence of CLPD.

Another argument which is being advanced is that CLPD's demand for conference sovereignty applies only to the PLP and not the rank and file. As far as the rank and file is concerned, conference sovereignty is already a fact whether we like it or not.

Prior to 1980 most CLPs [Constituency Labour Parties] were in favour of mandatory reselection. Yet they were unable to put it into practice until conference confirmed the change in the rules. Although policy decisions of conferences are often disregarded, its constitutional provisions – and the Regi-



Foot: outnumbered on the NEC by the extreme right wing

a demand which is in principle acceptable to the Labour Party as a whole.

A 'civil disobedience' campaign is clearly not.

The latter may find support at best among a minority of CLPs, but would be overwhelmingly rejected by the trade unions. Those who ignore this merely show that they have failed to adjust to the milieu in which they hope to exert influence.

In some cases this is because though old hands in sectarian activities, they are still very new to Labour Party ways and have failed to draw the necessary conclusions from their unsuccessful past political experience. Others, despite possibly many years of Labour Party membership, have never overcome the weaknesses of a basically individualistic approach.

Excessive individualism has always been tolerated by the 'Party Establishment', but has never proved effective against it. No doubt the Establishment realises that 'radical' posturing represents no real threat.

The disagreement within CLPD over how to fight the Register is neither accidental nor is it an isolated instance. It is symptomatic of the difference of approach which broadly divides most of the comrades who 'founded' CLPD or joined it during its early stages, from those who did so mainly once CLPD proved to be successful.

During the period of CLPD's advance these comrades were a great asset. Unfortunately they seem never to have accepted CLPD's strategy. Once the tide turned and the going became more difficult, these comrades failed to appreciate that a tactic different from that used during the period of advance became necessary.

CLPD has no magic formula for achieving victory in every situation. Sometimes one can only concentrate on the consolidation of gains already achieved, and from time to time even a limited though orderly retreat may become necessary. Impatient for success, our critics have abandoned the traditional CLPD strategy and have opted for one of confrontation. This can only worsen the setbacks already suffered.

Those of us who continue to adhere to the strategy which produced recent democratic gains, will not allow ourselves to be diverted into courses of action which can only result in failure. Whatever the result of the ballot, and whatever the CLPD AGM may decide, we shall continue to stick to the strategy which will make further democratic and socialist advance possible.

STOP PRESS: At the meeting of the NEC's Organisation Committee on November 10 it was recognised that the legal points Militant raised had more substance than had been realised. However, this does not affect our arguments in favour of CLPD registering.

Militant's case against the NEC partly rests on the fact that they have applied for registration. Had the NEC proceeded with expulsions before giving Militant a chance to comply with the Register's requirements, it would have broken its own rules. Organisations which do not apply for registration will be in a less favourable position.

In any case the Register has to be defeated politically. Registration remains a precondition for waging an effective campaign against it.



Labour conference: only one of its policies interests the right wing

OR NOT TO REGISTER?

Don't register; defy the NEC!

"DON'T register — defy the NEC" is the call that I as chairperson of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy make to our registered supporters as CLPD undertakes an advisory postal ballot on registration.

CLPD will take its final position on whether or not to register at its AGM in January and the final decision lies with the registered supporters there — but the outcome of the ballot will crucial in moulding opinion.

On the face of it I suppose it seems strange that someone who has advocated the implementation of conference decisions for years should be so determined the CLPD should not register. But there are very clear reasons why this Conference decision should be defied and why CLPD above all others should not register.

I actually think that a voluntary register is a good idea, for at a glance any member could learn about the nature of a pressure group, who to contact to join and whether they financial position of the group is so dire that they'd forever be shelling out money to keep it going!

CLPD gave all that sort of information to Walworth Road ages ago and we were quite happy to do so. I think we would even want to comply with a compulsory regis-



ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

ter if it were a Conference decision.

But the NEC are not really talking about a register, are they? They won't give a second glance at all the information that is sent to them.

This so-called register is a fraudulent vehicle for expulsions and I will not accept compliance with a Conference decision that is no more than a licence to expel socialists from our party — and nor must CLPD.

If we are to hold the line on expulsions it is no good saying, as Peter Hain and Vladimir Derer are doing, "support the present leader-

ship, comply with the register, and fight expulsions". This is a recipe for an almighty defeat.

First of all the present leadership is not supportable — Michael Foot is a stumbling liability and is acting as a Trojan horse for the Right. How can we be expected to rally round Foot after his Falkland position, his statement on Peter Tatchell and his vote against Paul Boateng's endorsement [as parliamentary candidate], to name but a few?

Foot has anaesthetised sections of the Left which can't shake off memories of his radical past and he has

made it that much easier for the Right to take control of the NEC.

Secondly, once you comply with the register (and CLPD would be allowed to register), you effectively isolate those still further whom the NEC seeks to expel.

GLC Briefing has taken a lead in refusal to register. I confidently expect the NEC to 'lose' GLC Briefing's letter of refusal because although as convenor/treasurer I'm not telling them how many GLC councillors are paid up members of this Left caucus, I can assure them it is far more than the four

which is all they would need to expel to bring down the GLC administration. Let them try it!

I urge all registered CLPD supporters to vote no to registration in the postal ballot and to attend the AGM in County Hall on January 29 determined to keep the most important organisation on the Left from falling into the Right's trap of legitimising expulsions.

Stand firm. We have strength in numbers and elected positions — let's use them to our advantage.

Andy Harris

Lobbying Labour's NEC in opposition to the witch-hunt

Register infringes members' rights

"THE ISSUE of the supremacy of conference decisions is not a simple one. In the past the Right of the Labour Party used it to harass dissenters in the party.

"For the Left the issue is one which must combine a respect for the rights of conference and a defence of those who are in the minority. It is the basis of democratic socialism".

Those words, written in September 1981 by Dick Clements, formerly editor of Tribune and now political adviser to Michael Foot, go right to the heart of the current argument about whether we should comply with the register of groups allowed to operate within the party.

The 1982 annual conference accepted the register by an overwhelming majority. The argument that the Left has always fought for the supremacy of conference decisions and must, therefore, comply with the register, is clearly a strong one. But in reality it is not so clear cut.

Consider, for instance, the case of two Labour MPs, Leslie Solley and Konni Zilliacus, who were expelled from the party in 1949.

That, too, was a conference decision, and the charge against them, in the words of Sam Watson, speaking on behalf of the NEC, was that they "had persistently and consistently opposed the policy of the party as decided by annual conference". To the intolerant Right wing of those days, such dissent was an offence carrying a sentence of expulsion.

The Left opposed that philosophy and fought against the expulsion of Solley and Zilliacus. It did so because while accepting the principle of conference sovereignty, it recognised, correctly, that conference surrendered that supremacy when it used its position to to usurp the rights of constituency parties and individual members.

Policy decisions should always be binding on the

party's elected spokesmen. No one can doubt that.

But decisions affecting the democratic rights of individuals are different. That is not just a piece of sophisticated casuistry, because even elected party representatives are free to dissent from conference decisions from the back benches without fear of expulsion.

And in anything other than a democratic-centralist organisation, it is quite right that they should be able to do so.

Dissent and non-compliance with the register is a similarly honourable position which does not contradict our belief that conference policy must be implemented by the party's elected representatives.

For the register places adverse restrictions on the functioning of dozens of legitimate groups and thousands of individuals in the party in order to deal with the problem of one group which the NEC regards as 'illegitimate'. As such, it represents an unacceptable infringement of the rights of groups and the individuals who belong to them.

And if we believe in all conscience that the register does represent such an infringement, then we have the right to refuse to comply with it without compromising our belief in the sovereignty of conference.

For, as democratic socialists, of course we accept the supremacy of conference. But as Dick Clements pointed out, we must also reconcile that with protection of the rights of minorities. If we accept the register now, we must inevitably later accept expulsions. Both are an unacceptable infringement of the rights of individuals and groups and as such undermine us as a democratic socialist party.

On that basis, we can and must vote against registration.

Nigel Williamson

Boycott is the lesser evil

THE LAST Labour Party conference endorsed the National Executive's action in setting up a register of Labour Party groups by a substantial majority. The majority of the Left which was and remains opposed to the Register is now faced with a problem — to what extent should we feel bound by conference decisions?

Certainly we have always campaigned for conference decisions to be binding on the Parliamentary Party. That is enshrined in the CLPD constitution and is based on the very reasonable expectation that, in a party system of democracy, people who stand for public office for a party have some obligation to implement the policies of that party when in government.

But we surely also support the rights of minorities to continue to express their views. We have ourselves made use of this right when we continued to pursue demands for constitutional changes which had been defeated by conference.

We specifically campaigned against the three year rule to allow us to bring back defeated demands without procedural obstacles. And we have never argued

by Jon Lansman

that back-bench Labour MPs should not be allowed to express minority views.

So there are clearly limits to the extent to which we are bound by conference decisions. That is not to say we are not bound in any way by conference decisions, since we are always bound in some way by the need for party unity — never more so than at election time when disagreements on policy matters are necessarily subsumed in the effort to make electoral gains.

The only conclusion we can draw about the extent of conference sovereignty in relation to the activities of rank and file members of the party is that it is a grey area. And a grey area which stops well short of democratic centralism.

Our actions must therefore be determined by the individual circumstances of the case, taking into account

the great weight of a majority conference decision, but taking other things into account as well.

The case against the register, which forms common ground within CLPD, deals with the arbitrary nature of the powers it seeks to confer on the NEC and the effect of these on the rights of individual constituency parties and unofficial groups. These arbitrary powers also provide a case against registering, since the register runs completely against the autonomy granted to constituent parts of a federal party.

Not to register may be to defy a conference decision, but to register is to accede in the defiance of the party's structure and many years of history.

One can only opt for the least bad, as we are forced to do in many other circumstances.

Some people argue, for instance, that because the Labour Party seeks to replace bad laws with good laws by legal means, it is wrong to defy bad laws. But defiance of Tebbit's laws is demanded by their devastating effects on the rights of individuals and groups. It can be argued that the register creates a similar necessity within the party.

I do not think there is an absolute case against registering, especially if CLPD's very existence was at stake. But at present CLPD is not under threat.

Two other organisations have already been refused registration but permitted to continue to operate — Labour Friends of Israel and the Labour Committee for Europe.

The General Secretary of the Party has said that refusal to register will not be grounds for disciplinary action unless combined with a contravention of Clause II. Even well-known witch-hunters such as Roy Hattersley have admitted that there are no grounds for action against CLPD.

Until this situation changes, there does not appear to be anything to gain in registering, but we would be strengthening the hand of the Right to expel Militant if we did. That is why I urge you, in the ballot, to vote against registering.

If circumstances do change, which we cannot rule out, the AGM or the executive would be quite within their power to overrule the ballot in the light of changed circumstances.

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Militant: latter-day Gironde?

THE decision of Militant to register with the Walworth Road bureaucrats has thrown a major question into sharp relief: what is the political nature of the Militant tendency? Is it a genuine revolutionary Marxist movement or is it something else?

The modern day vocabulary for evaluating political parties was conceived during the French Revolution. At the first convention of the Constituent Assembly in

1789 Lafayette told delegates:

"On the right of this historic convention sit the Constitutional Monarchists of the Abbe Hart, in the centre we have the Girondins represented by Monsieur Brissot, while on the left we have the Jacobins of M. Georges Danton. For the first time in the history of a free people we have a democratic representation of the Three Great Estates of Society."

We would classify Militant as a new Girondist current. They fear the concept of a workers' government and all the practical steps needed to create such a regime — as much as the original Girondins feared the Revolutionary Republic of Robespierre.

But they are also petrified of a Labour Party re-modelled in the image of John Golding — a Labour Party much more akin to the US Democratic Party, which

would spell the annihilation of Militant in its present form.

Ireland

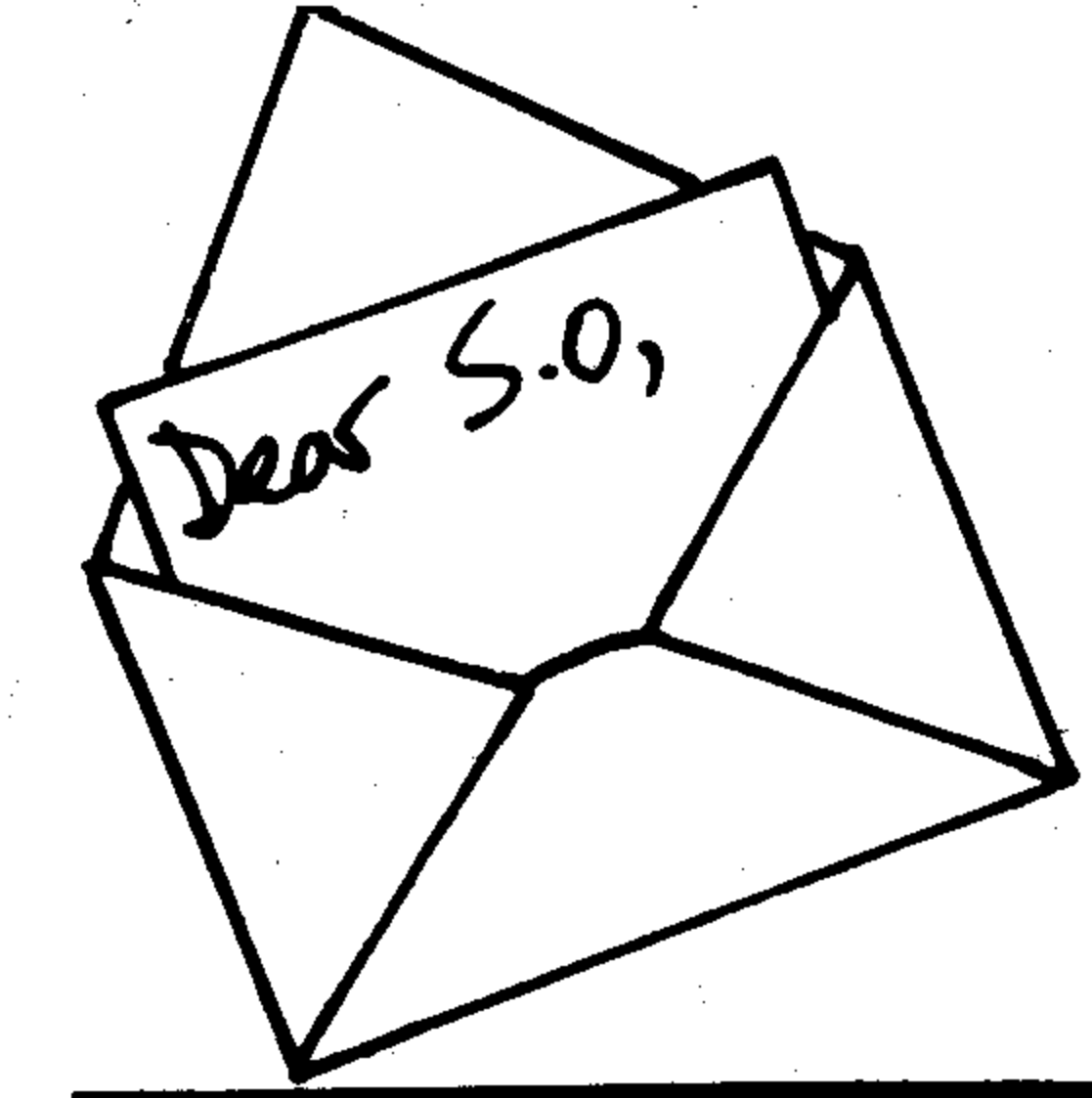
Take the issue of Ireland, which is surely a key test for any new organisation claiming Marxist credentials. Peter Taaffe and friends veer away from the correct position of giving unconditional support for the national liberation movement and a United

Ireland. Taaffe, feeling the hot breath of the Labour bureaucrats down his neck, in no way distinguishes himself from a Bill Sirs or a David Basnett.

Militant are a hybrid mutation of some elements of Trotskyism, straight reformism and on some questions (women and gays) downright reactionary ideas — all rolled into one.

TOMMY MARTIN
RAY ATTWELL
Rochdale

Writeback



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

Send to
'Writeback',
Socialist Organiser,
c/o 28, Middle Lane,
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USSR and Marxism

IN HIS last writings (e.g. 'The USSR in War', September 1939, to be found in 'In Defence of Marxism'), Trotsky accepted for the first time the theoretical possibility that the USSR could be considered a new form of class society on the basis of the existing bureaucratically collectivised economy.

Discussing the theoretical possibility, Trotsky nevertheless considered the conclusion premature.

For the remaining 11 months of his life, he very strongly argued from the position that collectivised property remained historically tied to the proletariat and the perspective of proletarian revolution. Max Shachtman and the SWP (USA) minority who in 1940 founded the Workers' Party developed the theoretical speculation of Trotsky in September 1939 into an attempt at a distinct analysis of Stalinism as a new form of class society. I think it is therefore possible to argue, as Laurens Otter does (letters, SO 110), that had Trotsky lived he would have developed an entirely different analysis to that which the so-called orthodox Trotskyists produced in response to the survival and expansion of the Stalinist system.

But we cannot know (and if we did, that would not necessarily be the last word).

Most of the post-war Trotskyists developed the positions Trotsky actually fought on in 1939 and '40 and which he applied to the



Stalin and Ribbentrop sign the notorious 'Stalin-Hitler Pact' in 1939

expansion of Stalinism into Eastern Poland and the Baltic states. I did concede in my reply to Glynis Powell that Trotsky saw Stalinism as a transitional phenomenon, and therefore that its survival and expansion had implications for the theory.

These cannot be decisive.

My original article quoted Trotsky's 1940 assessment of what had happened in 1928, when the bureaucracy, in control of the state machine and having defeated the Communist opposition, defeated its bourgeois competitors for 'control of the surplus product'.

That too was a historic turning-point in the consolidation and stabilisation of the rule of the bureaucracy. There too Trotsky's thinking had to change and develop.

He had, earlier, in a much quoted letter to the oppositionist Borodai, derived the (deformed) working class character of the USSR from the fact that the deformed revolutionary party remained at the centre of the state and could be reformed. That ceased to be true by the late '20s.

Some oppositionists therefore concluded that at that point the bureaucracy had to be considered a

new ruling class.

Trotsky? He insisted that the nationalised property was now the decisive remnant of October, despite the complete political expropriation of the working class.

Logical and political inconsistency? No — a Marxist attempt to keep abreast of reality. For the loss of working class political power did not, as Trotsky had feared, lead to bourgeois counter-revolution and the snuffing out of October. The bureaucracy developed, in its own twisted and oppressive way, the nationalised property rooted in the workers' revolution.

Trotsky related to that

and developed a working class programme accordingly. By 1933 he drew the conclusion that a working class political revolution was necessary to restore direct workers' power in the USSR and to realise the progressive potential of the nationalised property forms.

There is a parallel between Trotsky in 1928 and after, and the 1940s 'orthodox Trotskyists'. For the latter it was not a question of 'taking the line' from old texts but of analysing the world and specifically the survival and expansion of Stalinism.

Comrade Otter has no

grounds for certainty that Trotsky would have gone with Natalia and Grandizo Munis (saying the USSR was state capitalist) or with Max Shachtman (saying it was bureaucratic collectivist).

What the 'orthodox Trotskyists' made of their theories, and the origins of the recurring gravitation of segments of them towards Stalinism — that's a significant question, and a big one. Those who have stood on the same degenerated/deformed workers' state analysis and yet retained a Trotskyist hostility to all variants of Stalinism prove that the gravitation is not an inevitable consequence of the analysis.

Laurens Otter misses my point about repression: my original article surely dealt with the concrete oppression in the USSR. But when we are trying to classify the societies where Stalinist bureaucracies rule, it is not useful to talk about oppression on a level of abstraction which can accommodate all historical forms of class society.

Otter himself makes the same sort of mistake when, discussing one possible development of Trotsky's views, he talks about 'surplus value'. This implies capitalism, not the 'bureaucratic collectivist' theory developed by Shachtman, which would have been the conclusion of Trotsky if he had pursued his theoretical speculation of September 1939.

JOHN O'MAHONY,
London.

Militant cold shoulder

IN THE 108th issue of Socialist Organiser November 11, Alan Campbell asked 'Why support Militant?'. I read his arguments with interest.

While I share, reluctantly, some of the criticisms of Militant, with regard to women's rights, gay rights and the anti-nuclear campaign of CND, there is one argument I don't share. In fact I doubt that he has put over the issue of the Falklands correctly.

Would he like to quote 'chapter and verse' on this? Where did Militant ask its supporters to join the armed forces?

My reason in tackling Alan Campbell is to clarify in my mind at least, the role played by the Militant at present. I have heard on a few occasions recently descriptions of activities of the Militant that I find unrecognisable to me. Except for a few.

I shall not go through each issue in turn. On the issue, though, of the Register, four socialist groupings have come together to fight Golding's McCarthyism.

Yet the Militant, to whose aid I thought they went, have appeared to cast off this offer of cooperation. Indeed, they have gone after the clothes of 'respectability', Labourist 'respectability'. 'Please Sir, it wasn't me'.

Some years ago, Ron Hayward told a conference that 'No one should tell anybody else what sort of socialist they should be'. Until now, Stalin and Beria were intent on deciding what sort of 'Communist' a Party member should be in the Soviet Union. Now Golding, Mortimer and Healy will be deciding what sort of 'socialist' Labour Party members should be.

To return to the question. Perhaps I should ask a question instead. 'Why support Socialist Organiser?' [a good answer may win you a recruit]. Socialist Challenge is the paper of the IMG. Newline is the paper of the WRP. Socialist Worker is the mouthpiece of the SWP. Militant is the paper of... [the RSL according to the Stalinists and their friends on the Labour Right].

So who do the Socialist Organiser speak for?

Yours for Socialism
and Enlightenment,

David J Lawton
York Labour Party and
NUPE

* SOCIALIST ORGANISER is the paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance. Membership of the local SOA groups is open to all supporters of the paper and policy, is decided by regular meetings of delegates from these groups.

SCIENCE Shopping for advice?

by Les Hearn

THE conference last weekend of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS) was one of the largest yet, with over 150 socialist scientists attending. But I came away feeling disappointed and frustrated.

Though the discussion groups and the contributions from European speakers were useful, the discussion of strategies for socialist science in Britain was a low point — none were discussed!

And virtually all the speakers were white, middle-class men as well.

The speaker from France showed how Mitterrand's approach differed little from that of previous right-wing governments. While making gestures towards socially responsible science, in practice

Mitterrand's policy boiled down to more science while not questioning the direction of research.

Reactors

Mitterrand has possibly been even worse than Giscard. For example he cancelled the Plogoff reactor in Brittany (opposed by a local mass movement) but announced several more reactors in areas where opposition would be less likely. He also overcame the boycott of radioactive waste imports by Cherbourg dockers by shifting the imports to naval dockyards! All this underlined the dangers of leaving science policy in the hands of right-wing reformists.

A speaker from the West German Green Party reported

how they had forced changed to nuclear power policies, while also encouraging alternative (renewable) energy sources that would make nuclear power unnecessary (such as Biogas generators in farms). He claimed that German workers were starting to look to the Greens to defend their interests.

Could it be that given the policies of German Social Democracy and the police state regime inside the SPD and trade unions that the best way for Marxists to get through to the working class is to work with the Greens, campaigning against nuclear power, for safety at work, for community control of technology and challenging the centralisation of the state?

The Dutch speaker talked about the 'Science Shops' set up by universities, but in fact serving working class interests. One example given was of the Dutch foodworkers' trade union which asked one science shop to find out the effects of pouring milk into rivers.

Pollution

It turned out that whenever milk workers struck, employers poured away the milk and accused the workers of causing pollution. The science shop found that this was quite harmful to the environment, but that milk poured onto grasslands was actually quite beneficial. This provided the workers with quite a good defence.

Perhaps we should be

pushing for Labour councils to set up science shops here. (I can't see British universities doing it!)

Apart from a few Socialist Organiser readers I met, it was noticeable how few of the participants were involved in the 'organised' left. This indicates a serious weakness in both the left and the radical science movement. This could quite possibly lead to a situation where the Labour Party has a paper left policy on all issues except science.

Postscript

Four new members have gone onto the Labour Party Science and Technology Study Group from the NEC — Ken Cure of the AUEW (new chair of the STSG), Betty Boothroyd, Anne Davis and Denis Healey!!

They join Doug Hoyle and John Golding. Outsider for the post of chair was Tony Benn though, as New Scientist points out, he 'at least has experience in science and technology policy — unlike the new NEC nominees'!

Correction.

Readers were probably wondering where Chipko activists in India got the money to buy trees to save them from being chopped down. The answer is that they hug the trees — a more dangerous but cheaper way of protecting them. Apologies for my poor handwriting!

Contact SO Science Group, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Lenin and the Russian workers' Revolution

In this article, Andrew Hornung and John O'Mahony take up the story from Lenin's 'April Theses' of 1917, when he developed the Bolsheviks' perspective into one identical with Trotsky's 'permanent revolution'

Both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had believed that the revolution possible in Russia was a bourgeois revolution like that of France in 1789. They differed in that the Mensheviks deduced mechanically that the revolution would be led by the big bourgeoisie.

Concrete as ever in analysis, Lenin insisted that the bourgeoisie would not, and did not wish to, carry out the bourgeois transformation of Russia in a revolutionary way — as opposed to the 'Prussian road' of a slow transformation from above in alliance with the landowners. One reason was their intense fear of the working class, especially after the experience of 1905. Therefore the bourgeois revolution would have to be made by the peasantry in alliance with the working class.

Trotsky agreed with the Bolsheviks, but argued that such a worker-peasant alliance, led by the working class, could not stop at completing the tasks of the bourgeois revolution, but would go on to carry through working class socialist measures. It was inconceivable that the working class could take power and yet not look to its own class interests and concerns.

To the argument that Russia was not ripe for socialism, was too backward, etc., Trotsky replied that the revolution would not finish even with workers' victory in Russia: that would be the starting point in a linked chain of proletarian revolution which would lead to the workers' conquest of power in the advanced capitalist countries. This was the theory of Permanent Revolution.

Slowly, step by step, Lenin had arrived at the same position as Trotsky. And he had done more than Trotsky. He had built a party that, once he had reformed it to understand the new possibilities, would be able to ensure that the perspective of workers' power in Russia was more than a mere possibility.

Uncritical

The Bolshevik leaders who resisted Lenin were lapsing into a neo-Menshevism because of inertia and uncritical repetition of yesterday's formulae without reference to today's realities. 'The truth is concrete', insisted Lenin. Marxism was a method for analysis of the world, not dogmas and sacred texts.



Russian workers carry the slogan "All power to the Soviets" during the 1917 revolution

The October Revolution

Once again the party had to be shaken up. In a short time Lenin shook it up, rallying the working class rank and file against the 'old Bolshevik' leaders.

In May, Leon Trotsky arrived in Russia. He had spent a brief exile in the USA and, attempting to return to Russia on the outbreak of revolution, had been arrested at sea by the British navy and interned for a number of months.

Trotsky had joined the Martov faction of the RSDLP in 1903. He had soon broken with the Mensheviks and stood alone between the factions for a number of years. In 1912 he had abortively attempted to resist the definitive rupture of relations within the RSDLP.

Fundamentally, he had failed to appreciate the tremendous constructive work that Lenin was accomplishing and had tended, from the vantage point of his theory of Permanent Revolution, to regard both Menshevism and Bolshevism as equally inadequate.

Almost immediately on his return to Russia, Trotsky started to work with the Bolsheviks, understanding

that without the leadership of the Bolshevik Party the theoretical projections of Permanent Revolution could not be made reality. He recognised that without the revolutionary party constructed by Lenin over years of struggle, the perspective of socialist revolution could not have been made reality, and the working class would be defeated. He joined the Bolshevik party that July.

Soon Lenin and Trotsky had instilled into the Bolshevik Party an understanding of the real possibilities at hand. The Bolshevik party adopted the direct goal of the taking of power by the Russian working class at the head of the peasantry.

"We don't need a parliamentary republic, we don't need bourgeois democracy, we don't need any government except the Soviet of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies".

These Soviets were a higher form of democracy — "an organisation of workers (and) the embryo of workers' government", said Lenin. They raised the slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets', although the Bol-

sheviks still lacked a majority in the soviets.

The economic dislocation became worse; the Provisional Government refused to distribute the lands of the aristocracy; it refused to discontinue the war; deserters drifted back to their homes in droves, bringing to the countryside the radicalism within the army. Both the soil and the seeds were being prepared for the victory of Bolshevism.

But in July the Bolsheviks faced repression from the Provisional Government. Lenin was ridiculously smeared in the press as being a German agent and once again had to go into hiding, while Trotsky and the other Bolshevik leaders were arrested.

On their release in September, however, the Government's situation had deteriorated. That month it faced an attempted right wing military coup by General Kornilov. The prestige and membership of the Bolsheviks also grew by leaps and bounds. Trotsky was elected chairman of the Petrograd Soviet in September.

In June Lenin had told

the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets that the Bolsheviks were prepared to take power. Now, in October, the Bolsheviks organised the working class in the taking of power from the Provisional Government on the first morning of the Second Congress. Rapid developments at the front and at home had turned June's 'ridiculous remark' into the blazing reality of October's victory.

The world's first workers' state had been established. Lenin, opening the October Congress of Soviets, said very simply: "Comrades we will now proceed to construct the socialist order".

THE October insurrection was in fact organised and led by Leon Trotsky. But Lenin was the recognised leader of the Revolution. He became the first Chairman of the Council of Soviets. Here again his actions exemplified what was a constant theme in his life, the dialectical combination of "the strictest discipline, truly iron discipline in our party" and his confidence and reliance on the creativity of the masses. "We must be

guided by experience; we must allow complete freedom to the creative faculties of the masses..."

The Bolsheviks, who had a majority in the Soviets, became the builders of the new state and the foremost fighters for its defence. It was at first a truly democratic state, with democratic rule by the working class exercised through the network of soviets, at the apex of which was the Supreme Soviet.

Robbers' peace

In the struggle for power the Bolshevik programme and the needs of the masses had been summed up in the slogan 'Land, Peace and Bread'. Now, in relation to the war the Bolshevik slogan was "Peace without annexations". But revolutionary Russia, bled white by war and famine and with the remnants of the Tsarist Army simply useless, did not have the strength to impose this peace programme. German imperialism was able to impose a robbers' peace on the new workers' state.

The Bolsheviks were

forced to make a retreat, giving massive territorial concessions to the Germans in the forced treaty of Brest Litovsk, signed in February 1918. This was the first of many retreats the Bolsheviks were forced to make in their isolation. The revolution in Europe still had not broken out. The Bolshevik Party experienced the sharpest factional division on this question. The majority around Bukharin advocated an immediate revolutionary war, Lenin advocated immediate peace, making the necessary concessions to Germany.

Trotsky favoured an attempt to dramatise to the workers of Europe, and especially to those who had been told that the Bolsheviks were German agents, the forced character of the concessions the Bolsheviks were having to make to the Germans, but he recognised, with Lenin, that concessions were unavoidable.

Dragged out

Consequently, using the slogan 'neither peace nor war', he dragged out the negotiations at Brest Litovsk as long as possible until the Germans launched a new onslaught on the workers' state. Lenin, who had been in a small minority on the Central Committee, now gained the majority against the Bukharin faction for immediate peace, with the support of Trotsky and his allies.

Lenin had faced the situation with brutal realism. Most significant, however, is that in the heat of the argument he insisted on proclaiming his opinion that if necessary the Russian revolution should be willing to sacrifice itself and face defeat in order to hasten the German revolution.

All eyes were now on Germany. The revolution did break out in Europe, beginning towards the end of 1918 a revolutionary wave swept Europe, brushing the monarchies from power in Austria and Germany and putting the right wing Social Democracy in power.

Revolutionary workers' governments were established briefly in Hungary and Bavaria. In 1919 and 1920, the Italian state virtually collapsed, with the working class seizing the factories. But everywhere the revolution was defeated. Everywhere it was demonstrated negatively that the work Lenin had successfully accomplished, the building of a hard revolutionary party, was irreplaceable if the revolution of the proletariat was to be victorious.

The existence of the Bolshevik party had alone made the October revolution possible in Russia, a revolution made in the belief that Russia was the first link in a necessary chain of proletarian revolutions throughout Europe.

The lack of similar parties in Europe led to the defeat of the proletarian revolutions that erupted, as the Marxists had expected, in the wake of the First World War.

This in turn led to the isolation of the one successful revolution, embattled Russia. And from this isolation came, from the middle of 1918, tremendous difficulties for the Bolsheviks and ultimately the Stalinist counter-revolution.

Continued next week
* There was a mistake in the last but one article in this series. Cracow before World War 1 was in Austrian-ruled Poland, not Russian-ruled.

IN BRIEF

THE ACTSS-NUJ strike by staff at the National Union of Students was settled last Friday, 26th.

The staff ACTSS secretary told us that five of the staff's six demand (centred round descriptions) had been met, and the dispute had been "very satisfactorily settled".

"We hope that the (NUS) Executive and management have learned a few lessons from this dispute — that you can't just push people around".

NUS president Neil Stewart, however, said: "All the principles we sought acceptance of before the strike have been gained, and the major threat to the NUS's finances contained in the staff's proposals on severance pay has been removed".

Student support for the staff had come from a number of colleges in Scotland. At a meeting of the NUS Scottish Council on November 20-21, ten colleges eventually walked out in protest.

Staff strikers had lobbied the Council, saying that they wanted the meeting to go ahead but without staff work like minuting.

In a statement issued later, Russell McVean of Glasgow School of Art and Donny Hyslop of Paisley Tech report: "We put up a motion condemning the Scottish and National Executives and supporting the staff action."

"We won it, 26 votes to 25 votes, until the 'recount' which bumped the votes up to 26 votes to 31. [Then] we walked out because we were disgusted at the attitude to the staff dispute, and because we could not participate in an unconstitutional meeting which, by recording decisions etc., was scabbing on the staff's work".

STRIKERS at Air India had a further meeting with management at the government arbitration service ACAS this Tuesday. They expected little progress.

Pickets and solidarity action have cut the airline's freight to 30% of normal, and the strikers hope to stop even more.

Messages/money: Air India TGWU, c/o Transport House, 7-9 South Road, Southall, Middlesex.

Will Adams

MEMBERS of ACTSS at Stanford's map shop in Covent Garden, London, have now been out for nine weeks.

The management have withdrawn the offer of re-engagement under new terms and conditions which the strikers had rejected in hearing at the government arbitration service ACAS. There are no further meetings planned with ACAS.

Support for the strike is still needed. A recent benefit social for the strikers was a great success. Another one is planned for December 21 at the Seven Dials Club, Shelton Street, Covent Garden.

Messages/money: c/o ACTSS, 173 Chapham Road, London SW9 0QF. Cheques payable to J A Cook and R P D Hobbs, Stanford Strike Account.

Will Adams

ON Friday November 19 Macmillans publishers in Basingstoke sacked Phil Spreadbury, an NGA member at the company. The stated reason was that he had attended a TUC-run health and safety at work course.

The NGA chapel responded immediately and came out on strike. They got a leaflet out to other sections of the firm. Local Socialist Organiser supporters mobilised at meetings over the weekend for a picket on the Monday morning.

The picket was well attended and effective. By 10.30 the management had reinstated Phil Spreadbury and issued a public apology.

Alasdair Jamison

Strikers evicted

FROM 5.30am on Tuesday November 30, police started filling the streets round Arlington House hostel in Camden. By 7am the area was sealed off by about 300 cops — "they were just everywhere", convenor Jack Jenkinson told us — and bailiffs went in, smashing down doors to evict strikers from their rooms in the hostel.

TGWU members at Arlington House, a 1066-bed hostel for single men, have been on strike since September 10 for improvements on their wages, which average £30-odd a week. Rowtons, the owners of the hostel, sacked the strikers and then got a court order to evict them from the

hostel.

But the strikers are still determined. A mass picket of around 100 was maintained for many hours on the night of Thursday 25th, when the eviction order first came into operation. Camden's Labour council has provided accommodation for the evicted men — not very good accommodation, but the strikers are keeping up pressure on the council for somewhere better.

And a mass demonstration has been called for Saturday December 11, from 9am at the hostel in Arlington Road, Camden. "We want to make this one really big", said Jack Jenkinson,

"not 100 or 150, but more like 1000. It's really important to show that Rowtons are out on a limb."

"We're pressing for the TGWU to make an official call for this picket and to circulate Region 1 of the union".

Donations are also needed — to the strike committee at Camden Labour Centre, 8 Camden Road, London NW1 (485 1100) — and help with picketing at the hostel and at the 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.

UCW: divided we stand

THE Special UCW Conference on the Future of the Operator Service held in Bournemouth on November 19 had both its positive and negative side.

On the negative side there was the defeat of an impassioned plea by Sylvester McGovern from London Overseas Tels Branch to delete the Executive's recommendation to take existing work away where it is currently performed by other grades.

In moving the deletion, Sylvester said we must forget the sectarian divides left over from the Civil Service days; Trade Unions were meant to be in the business to keep people in jobs and that management enjoy the situation of playing one off against the other. It was up to the UCW to give a lead.

In her reply Kim McKinlay (Assistant Secretary on the Tels Executive) said they were stating openly to take existing work from existing grades.

It is apparent from this that it is not only in management's interest to divide and rule, but also in the interests of union leaderships. While inter-union disputes persist it will be more and more difficult to amalgamate with these unions — at least the union leadership are adept at protecting their own jobs!

An amendment from Glasgow seeking forecasts with a view to increasing productivity payments for every stage locally and nationally was withdrawn after debate.

But it was interesting to hear Kim McKinlay state that BT have said this is the last year of national productivity deals — and that there is a real danger of them going for local ones next year.

Already the Executive are paying the way for accepting Directory Enquiry work on computers (DQ CIR) regardless of health hazards or a new technology agreement to protect jobs.

Despite Executive opposition a Composite was passed asking for a full report on trials and the effects on health to be put before a Conference.

One of the arguments being used was that we may not have time for these things to come back to a Conference and another union could get their hands on this work.

In reply the mover of the Composite said that we would be jeopardising

our health and that after the experience of micro-fiche there was a need to restore confidence and trust in the UCW.

If we didn't get DQ CIR on our terms and not at the detriment of our health, others would be welcome to it.

At the end of the Special Conference the General Secretary, Alan Tuffin, made a statement on Privatisation and the legislation that was set in motion on the previous day.

The statement was basically another call to vote Labour at the next election and calling on the BT Chairperson George Jefferson to say how he will protect his employees.

Yet the UCW still is not making it clear how it will protect their Tels members.

The members need in the next few months to tell Alan Tuffin and the rest of the Executive their views and that any further industrial action planned must be supported by the UCW this time.

Ann McKinley

BACK S&K

TGWU members at the Coventry warehouse of Sandhar and Kang cash and carry group have been on strike for ten weeks for union recognition. Strike leader Manjit Singh and a member of the support committee spoke at a meeting called by Socialist Organiser in Oxford last week.

The employer had used a medieval law to obtain an injunction that prevents strikers from picketing their own workplace. Valuable funds are being used on getting a lawyer's advice to lift the injunction.

But an unlikely success in the courts will not win this strike.

On the advice of the district official, the district committee of the TGWU has voted against backing the dispute.

The fight for official support is crucial to winning. Trade union members in the Midlands and TGWU members nationally must give priority support to this dispute, one of three (the others are Raindis and Air India) in which Asian workers are leading the struggle to obtain and defend trade union rights.

Send motions from TGWU branches, demanding the strike be made official and that the TGWU be seen to defend in practice the rights of Asian workers, to: TGWU regional secretary

At last! moves to spread DHSS strike

THE determination of the Birmingham and Oxford DHSS strikers is finally being rewarded. In standing fast in their refusal of the offer which guaranteed no permanent new posts, twice recommended for acceptance by the CPSSA national leadership, they have forced those same leaders to start concrete action to escalate the dispute — starting with a department-wide one-day strike on December 3.

Mick Duggan, CPSSA national executive member allocated to the Oxford dispute, and Phil Yewdall, section executive committee member and regional secretary for London North, spoke to Socialist Organiser on the Oxford picket line.

"The NEC meeting on Monday 22nd voted 24 to 4 for a one-day strike in every area of the DHSS, including Central Offices and headquarters, on December 3."

"There will be a national voluntary levy from every section in the CPSSA. Plans for escalation are to be

drawn up with the SCPS, and will be put to both unions' special pay conferences at the beginning of December."

Mick Duggan added: "It will probably include plans for an all-out strike in the New Year. We will stress to strike committees that greater efforts must be made to make the strikes completely effective in Birmingham and Oxford."

"A lot hinges on the success of the one day strike on the 3rd."

Phil Yewdall continued: "If you limit your demands you get limited industrial action. If you expand the industrial action, you've got to expand the demands."

"In my personal view this means stopping all cuts, a freeze on staffing levels as they are at the moment, and definitely no reductions until an end to the review of the complementing system. All cuts from November 24 should be halted."

"We've got to start the campaign to build for an all-

out strike — not merely to support Oxford and Birmingham but to come out fighting for demands that would benefit every DHSS office in the country."

Meanwhile the Joint Coordinating Committee between the strike committee and the Claimants' Defence Committee, NALGO, NAPO, and the Unemployed Workers' and Claimants' Union has just launched important new initiatives in support of the strikers.

Local neighbourhood information centre workers will start a week of solidarity action on Monday 29th which culminates in a lobby of local Tory MP Patten at his surgery on December 3.

A tour of local estates with a video of the 'Oxfrad Incident' (BBC2 Grapevine programme on the Operation Major police swoop on homeless claimants), a DHSS striker, and a Claimants' Union speaker, is being planned.

Members of the Claimants' Union will be active

down at the Emergency Payments Office at South Oxford Middle School asking claimants to support a mass letter-writing campaign to the DHSS Regional Controller supporting the strikers and demanding that the DHSS settle the dispute by granting their demands for extra staff.

The fifth strike bulletin, issued jointly in the name of the committee, will call on claimants and employed alike to support the all-day mass picket at Harcourt House from 7am on December 3.

Claimants' organisations and public service unions in Birmingham should approach the Birmingham DHSS strike committee with a view to forming a Joint Coordinating Committee there.

Claimants and unemployed groups everywhere should join with DHSS strikers on the picket lines on the 3rd. Unemployed and employed unite: one cause, one fight! Stop the cuts in the DHSS!

Birmingham picket

AS THE DHSS dispute reaches its 11th week, strikers in Birmingham have been holding a series of mass pickets in preparation for the CPSSA/SCPS one day national strike this Friday (Dec. 3).

Nearly 100 strikers turned up on Monday to picket the weakest of the 11 Birmingham offices, Perry Barr, where the majority of staff are still

working.

Morale amongst the pickets was good, but many expressed bitterness towards the national CPSSA leadership, and distrust of the motives behind Friday's strike call. One picket told us:

"Our executive is supposed to be so left wing. We've even got a President who supports the dreaded 'Militant' tendency."

"But they're all piss and wind as far as I can see. They never wanted this strike, and they've given us no real support up until now."

"Twice they've tried to get us to accept a sell-out deal involving 45 temporary new jobs and a lot of promises from management that no-one in their right mind could believe."

"Now they've called for a national strike on Friday. But a lot of us think they'd be quite happy to see the one-day strike flop. That would let them off the hook very nicely."

"For instance, they've refused to even produce a bulletin to put across our case amongst DHSS workers in the rest of the country."

It is vital for the success of the dispute that Friday's day of action is strongly supported, and used as a

spring board for spreading the action nationally.

Messages of support, donations, etc., to: Richard Horton, CPSSA, Room 337, Five Ways House, Islington Row, Birmingham 15.

Censure move defeated

A PROPOSAL to "condemn the National Executive Committee for recommending that the Birmingham and Oxford strikers accept management's latest derisory offer" was moved at last weekend's conference of the CPSSA Broad Left by Nottingham member Penny Barnett.

The motion additionally called for extending the dispute into an all-out national strike. It was opposed mainly by militant supporters, who are influential inside the Broad Left.

Despite a letter from the Oxford DHSS strikers themselves being read out, supporting the motion, it was defeated. Those opposing it said that at present all efforts should go into building the DHSS one-day strike on December 3. It was not clear what strategy (if any) they had for the campaign after the 3rd.

Mike Grayson



Pickets outside Birmingham's Perry Barr DHSS office

Problems and Policies

by Harry Sloan

Varied faces of union bureaucracy

BLOCK-headed, block-voting, boorish, bullying bureaucrats: the image of the official trade union leadership held by many rank and file militants — particularly those who have seen their leaders exposed in action — may be politically inadequate but is far from completely inaccurate.

Recent experiences have underlined the many ways and means whereby the official union apparatus ignores, or worse still, tramples under foot or actively sabotages the struggles and demands of the rank and file.

There have been the spectacular 'set piece' national level betrayals: the eleventh hour sell-out of last November's BL strike for an offer worse than that before the strike began, and the TUC Finance and General

There has been the grotesque collective retreat by union officials from any action to block or defeat Tory anti-union legislation — leaving Fleet Street electricians' leader Sean Geraghty to the tender mercies of the High Court.

On the other hand there has been an equally gross collective drive by most union leaders for action to drive socialists from the Labour Party.

As we draw closer to grass roots level we see union bureaucrats acting in effect as an extension of management: in Cowley, TGWU district secretary David Buckle allowed BL management to victimise deputy convenor Alan Thornett without issuing a single statement in his defence, but instead gave statements to management witch-hunting the campaign by TGWU stewards against Thornett's sacking.

In NUPE, Oxford area official Alf Collier, with no record whatever of struggle for action against public sector cuts affecting his members, launches a witch-hunt against prominent anti-cuts activist Anne Marie Sweeney, wheeling in right wing hand-raisers to vote for her suspension and possible expulsion from the union.

But the hostility of full-time officials to rank and file militants is not entirely a matter of political differences. There are real material interests and pressures which shape the thinking and the actions of the union hierarchy.

NALGO general secretary Geoffrey Drain, for instance, is due to retire. His job, it appears, is worth some £30,000 per year, on top, no



ASTMS and TGWU bureaucrats put their heads together

doubt, of substantial expense allowances for attendances at conferences and other top-level junketing.

His successor is not to be elected by the union's 800,000 members, but appointed by the NALGO NEC, and like Drain will hold office until retirement.

Inflated salaries are paid to most General Secretaries and full-time officials, but some of the gravy flows down the bureaucratic apparatus, to be lapped up by many members of top 'lay' committees in the form of expenses payments, luxury foreign 'fact-finding' trips and other perks.

The extent to which some of these place-men have come to identify their position with the perks is illuminated by the recent resignation of ACTT president Ron Bowey — angry at an economy measure which

requires him to submit expenses claims for prior approval to general secretary Alan Sapper!

But the onset of the recession has cramped the style of some of the more trendy bureaucrats: Clive Jenkins' ASTMS, for example, having continued recklessly to budget on the assumption of a 6% annual increase in membership and to move accordingly into new, larger premises, has lost members and run into acute cash problems.

As a result, at the end of last year ASTMS branch funds were seized under Rule by the union's central office, and there are plans to slash the union's wage bill by 28% in an across-the-board cutback in clerical staff — and even full-time officials!

Yet even in the midst of this chaos, the ASTMS bureaucracy has forged ahead

and borrowed £100,000 from the banks — in order to re-lend it to the TUC at a substantially lower rate of interest.

What have all of these episodes got in common? Each is an aspect of the complex phenomenon which is the trade union bureaucracy in Britain.

Rising above their rank and file members, as a privileged, increasingly remote, parasitic and self-perpetuating layer within the labour movement, the bureaucracy has evolved its own characteristic political outlook, and its own technique for securing its power and influence.

In the next few weeks we will look in more detail at why the bureaucrats act as they do; why and how they have been able to get away with it so far; and just what we as socialists must do to fight back.

Watch this space!

Boost for Raindi strike

THE Raindi dispute has been receiving a much needed increase in publicity during recent weeks. First there came the television interview on ITV with the strikers and the boss of the factory. However, not much was explained of the strikers' point of view. Most of the item consisted of an interview with Raindi junior who was hard-pressed to justify the extremely low wages paid to the workers. He claimed that it was because they did not work hard enough.

The scabs now sacked by P.S. Raindi explained how they were receiving about £60-£80 per week and considered that they were now treated fairly. This contrasts with the £3 million profit made by Raindi last year, which was mentioned on the TV programme. This represents

£200 profit per worker per week!

However, some of the women strikers were able to explain how bad their pay is which did something to mitigate the biased reporting.

A second piece of publicity was a social organised for the strikers by the strike committee in collaboration with Banner Theatre. The evening was well attended by a couple of hundred people and over £200 was collected for the strike fund.

The Raindi strikers also spoke to a rally against the witch-hunt in the Labour Party, attended by many Labour Party members.

They said that the strike was a test case for all low-paid workers, and called for mass picketing along the lines carried out at Grunwick.

Purposes Committee's knifing of the ASLEF strike this summer.

There have been the attempted betrayals which have not quite come off — such as the many and varied attempts by health union leaders, most notably CoHSE leader Albert Spanswick, to wear down, defuse and demoralise the marathon NHS pay fight and prevent an all-out confrontation with the Tory government.

We can stop pit closures

by John Cunningham

THE recent revelations by the National Coal Board of a list of sixty pits which could close by 1990 should come as no surprise to anyone.

The existence of such a list has been known for some time, though the NCB have been reluctant, to say the least, in revealing details until the NUM wage claim was out of the way.

As well as the sixty pits which the NCB say could close through seam exhaustion, it has another list of 30 which could close for "economic reasons".

The effect of all this on the NUM will be to reduce

its membership from its present 210,000 to about half that figure.

The disclosure of the list shows that the NCB had been deliberately misleading the miners in the run-up to the recent ballot. Whatever the tactical merits — or demerits — of linking the issues of closures and wages on the ballot paper, there can be no doubt now in anybody's mind that in principle Scargill was right in his actions.

The National Coal Board has seen the result of the ballot as a green light to go ahead with its closure plans, and also to attack the NUM at pit level.

In Yorkshire, many pits are reporting an increase in disputes, as colliery managers 'put the knife in and twist it' as one NUM official put it.

At one colliery in Yorkshire the manager has even gone so far as to refuse payment under the incentive agreement, because the men have earned 'too much'!

Suddenly, after five years of operating the incentive scheme, after five years of NCB propaganda, saying the sky's the limit, miners are now being told there's a limit as between £25 and £30 a shift to be earned on incentive.

Further moves are afoot. There are as yet unconfirmed rumours that the government intends to de-nationalise the Selby complex once its starts up. The Tories have already indicated their willingness to hived off certain NCB operations, such as transport and stock-holding, and also to increase the numbers of men allowed to work in private (licensed from the NCB) mines from 30 to 100.

The way may already be paved for such moves. Miners who have applied to work at Selby have been refused if they are, or have been, branch committee members, branch officials, or otherwise active in the

union.

In face of all this, the NUM Executive meets in December to discuss the situation, and another ballot, this time solely on closures, could be called. This is certainly what is needed. A clear statement to remove any confusion whatsoever.

South Wales and Yorkshire have already had area ballots on this subject, both showing massive opposition to any closures other than on grounds of seam exhaustion.

A clear national call for total opposition to pit closures can unite the NUM and show the NCB that we will not be dragged back into the Robens era of the '60s.

The unemployed By Chris Erswell

THE LEVEL of unemployment among teachers is high, especially so with the newly-qualified. At the same time teacher training institutions are being decimated.

But this coexists with under-staffing and cutbacks in the schools.

The struggle against closure of Croxteth comprehensive school in Liverpool — which began in the last week before the summer holidays, and is still continuing — shows, however, the possibility of the unemployed fighting alongside employed workers.

After a two year campaign of lobbying and petitioning, which successfully

reversed a city council decision to close their school, Croxteth parents came up against the brick wall of Keith Joseph. They were faced with either accepting defeat or physically preventing the removal of equipment in the final week of the summer, when the school was due to close.

They occupied, and immediately put out a request for unemployed, retired and part-time teachers to come to their assistance so that the school could continue to function (the regular staff had accepted transfer to another school). The response was sufficient to keep the school running.

This struggle is important

because the 'reorganisation' of Liverpool schools by a Keith Joseph-imposed instruction, in the wake of the St Saviour's primary school riot in Toxteth earlier this year, is threatening even more closures and amalgamations of schools.

The employment of all qualified teachers would enable much more personal tuition and take some of the stress out of teaching large and difficult classes. But the Tory/Liberal council proposals are to lop off the small sixth forms of former secondary moderns like Croxteth, which are supposedly 'unviable' because there is small tutorial group teaching, and shove them all into

sixth form colleges where class sizes will increase to a 'viable' level. Tutorials are only allowed in private schools and Oxbridge, not in working class Croxteth!

In contrast to the struggle in Croxteth, the unemployed locally are being used to undermine union by the Tories and Liberals via the 'Return and Learn' scheme — which was the brainchild of local Liberal leader Trevor Jones, but is funded by the Manpower Services Commission Enterprise Scheme.

In this scheme, largely non-unionised teachers are paid £89 a week to teach un-

Exploiting jobless teachers

employed school leaver for O and A levels on an individual or small-group basis in local authority schools and community centres.

The pay and conditions of service are well below union levels, and a cheaper alternative to the established school sixth forms and Further Education colleges, where teachers and lecturers are paid the union rate.

This is clearly a dangerous trend towards dismantling the regular services, and is a good example of how the unemployed are unwittingly being used by the Community Enterprise Scheme to do the same work at a lower wage.

The demand must be raised for the scrapping of such schemes and the employment of these teachers by the Local Education Authorities at full union rates of pay.

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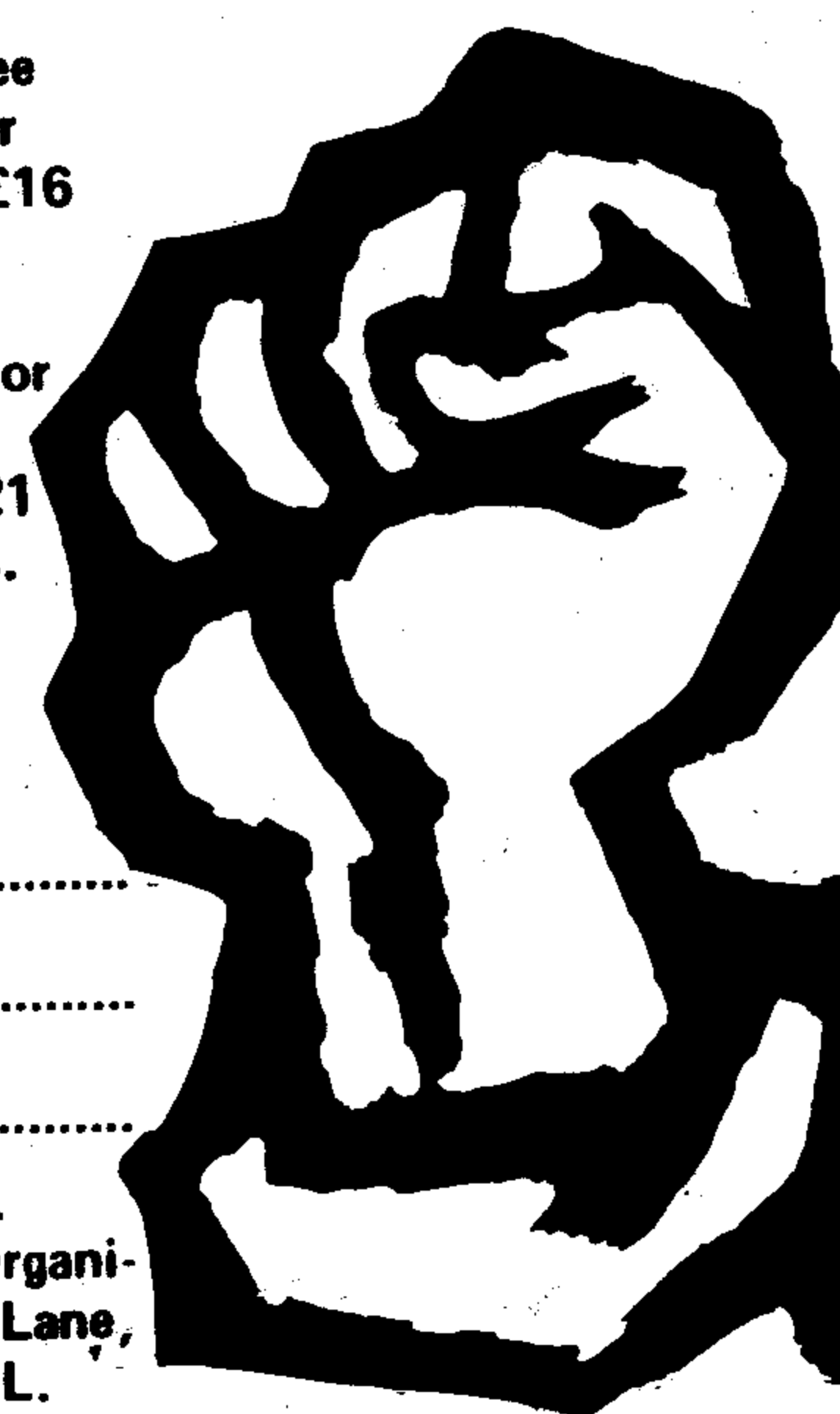
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Socialist Organiser



EEC is demanding 10% cut in imports of some Asian textiles

Sirens sound for trade war

THIS Monday, 29th, after six days of backstabbing and threats, representatives of 87 governments concluded their trade talks in Geneva with a statement vowing general goodwill and faith in progress.

Only Australia refused to sign the final declaration of the general Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) conference; but many governments no doubt shared the verdict of the Financial Times on this, the first trade summit for nine years. 'Free trade is still broadly accepted as a virtue: this is about as positive a gloss as can be put on the outcome.'

And certainly they will continue to operate on the good bourgeois principle that free trade virtue is a fine thing, but in a wicked world protectionism is necessary.

Daggers

The EEC and the US are at daggers drawn over steel exports, and agriculture too. The EEC is tightening still further its restrictions on textile imports, demanding a 10 per cent cut from Hong Kong, South Korea, and Macao.

A Bill has been proposed in the US Congress — mainly directed against Japan — which by 1985 would ban sales in the US of mass-market cars not mostly US-manufactured. The most widely-publicised of the new protectionist measures is France's decree that videotape recorder imports (mostly from Japan) must be processed through a tiny customs post in inland Poitiers, but more significant are the quarrels over the trade on newer industrial powers like Brazil, Mexico, and South Korea.

The US and the EEC are trying to block cheap imports from these countries, and at the same time demanding that they reduce their severe import controls and tariffs.

The foreign debt crises of the Third World countries, however, leave them no choice: to get themselves straight with the bankers, they are being forced to cut back imports drastically.

Declined

In 1981, for the first time since World War 2, world trade declined. 1982 figures will probably show it declining again.

The main cause of the rush to set up trade barriers was explained simply enough by a US trade



Labour movement leaders have joined in nationalist hysteria of some capitalists

official before the GATT talks.

If someone had told you a couple of years ago that unemployment would be 10 per cent, that the steel industry would be running at 45 per cent of capacity (the latest figure now is 36%), that farm income would have dropped 40 per cent in three years, that automobile sales would be running at half the 1979 rate... what would you have anticipated the state of our trade relations would be?

The slump provokes protectionism... and, in turn, blocking trade channels tends to deepen the slump further.

Each individual government tries to make the best it can of the protectionist game. Yet the capitalist governments still have some glimmering of an international overview which provides a flimsy restraint on the growth of protectionism.

Criminally, most labour movement leaders internationally identify entirely with a capitalist viewpoint on world trade — and with the least enlightened capitalist viewpoint. As steel jobs vanish worldwide, union leaders in almost every country spend their time bawling for restraints on sales of steel made by workers in other countries.

The nation-state framework created by capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries is today as much of

an obstacle to progress as petty principalities and dukedoms were in the 19th century. Almost every important industry today functions on a world scale and needs a world framework for its development. Whole continents are the minimum units for the necessary socialist reconstruction of society.

Yet labour movement leaders maintain an artificial division of the working class into competing national groups, each with its fate tied to its decaying national state.

In Britain steelworkers are mounting pickets to stop steel imports and Vauxhall workers are trying to prevent cars coming in from Spain; in the US carworkers smash up and burn Japanese cars; in France the mis-named Communist Party bellows against Spanish wine and 'a German Europe'.

As capitalist competition tears the world apart, socialists need to redouble our struggle for action against the capitalist class in each country, and for international working-class unity.

Join LAW

THE 'Labour Against the Witch-hunt' campaign set up from the October 30 conference of Constituency Labour Parties and unions has just issued its first newsletter.

It includes reports on the November 24 Labour National Executive meeting, Hornsey, and Bermondsey, and notice of the first National Council meeting of LAW.

The National Council is open to delegates from all LAW-affiliated Constituency Labour Parties, and to observers. The meeting is on Sunday December 12, 11am to 4pm at Room 143, County Hall, London SE1.

To join/affiliate to LAW, fill in and return the form below:

Name of organisation

Name for correspondence

Address

Fee enclosed £..... (CLPs and unions £10, wards £5, individuals and other organisations £3).

Send to: LAW, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16 (01-802 1709).

NHS pay outrage

HE MOVES to close Tadworth children's hospital have produced outrage even from the Fleet Street press.

But if Norman Fowler and the Tory government get their way, there will be many more hospitals shut. Closures of geriatric hospitals may cause less outcry than a closure of Tadworth, but no less human misery.

The current NHS pay offer of 7½% for nurses and 6% for ancillaries, with 4½% next year, is due to be funded in large part by health service cuts. And if the offer is accepted it will be a blow to health service trade unionism that will make further closures much easier for the Tories.

Acceptance will mean that health workers have been so worn out by seven months' ups-and-downs from their leaders that they settle for a deal worse than the previous offer. (The current offer withdraws five months' back pay included in the previous offer).

NUPE and ASTMS have recommended rejection. But you would hardly guess it. The leaders of these unions have organised no campaign like Arthur Scargill did for the miners' strike ballot. They have done nothing to rally and convince the members, nothing to show them that the leadership is ready and willing to pursue its paper policy of inaction. It is down to rank and file militants to organise and to push the leaders to action.

All the more so in unions like CoHSE, where the executive will decide a recommendation only on the eve of the union's special conference on December 14.

The consultation is due to be completed by the TUC Health Service Committee meeting on December 15. Every day that remains needs to be used to argue the case for rejection and all-out strike (with emergency cover) in the New Year for the full 12% claim.

FUND Get your cards!

TIME is pressing for orders of Christmas cards from the Manchester Socialist Organiser group. Cards in traditional and socialist designs are available cheaply, and by buying from SO you can help the paper's finances. Orders to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8: 10p (plus 20p post) for single cards, £1 (plus 20p) for 15, £2 (plus 40p) for 35, and £5 (plus £1) for 100, all with envelopes.

On the scheme of a week's wages in fund-raising from each supporter by December 31, we have this week £50 from Les Hearn, £60 from Tony Richardson, and £60 from Martin Barclay. Other contributions: £75 Lambeth SO jumble sale, £2 from a reader renewing a subscription, and £4.50 from Mark Alexander.

This week's total: £251.50. Please send money to: Treasurer, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Cheques to Socialist Organiser.