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Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

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Majority movement

AS A further 44 women protestors appeared in court facing charges of "disturbing the peace" at the Greenham Common nuclear missile site on New Year's Day, the Sun newspaper has put forward what it feels to be a clincher of an argument against the Peace Camp.

The late Canon Collins of CND fame, points out the Sun, argued that civil disobedience was a means for a minority to dictate its views to the majority.

Plainly the Sun is selective in its reading of opinion polls. The most recent Gallup poll, commissioned by CND, showed in Novem-

ber an overall majority of the population against nuclear weapons — Cruise, Trident and even the existing Polaris system. The majority became overwhelming — over 60% — amongst women, and is also higher amongst young people.

In taking such a stance, the majority emerge in opposition both to Tory policies and to the right wing which dominates Labour's NEC.

The struggle against the arms drive of British and US imperialism must be a struggle for socialist policies, for mass action to defeat the Tory government, and for a new leadership in the workers' movement.

The more this perspective is raised in the peace movement, the more real impact the movement can have in stopping the warmongers.

DHSS FIGHT FOR JOBS

THE TUC leadership and the Labour front bench have intervened in the civil servants' fight for jobs — to sabotage it.

For four months 80 DHSS workers in Oxford and nearly 1,000 in Birmingham have been on strike demanding increased staff to cover increased work.

Between 1979 and 1982 the number of DHSS staff went down by 1,500, while the number of people receiving supplementary allowances increased from 1.2 million to 2.2 million.

The special squads devoted to hounding claimants for alleged fraud have not gone short — but claimants have to queue for hours and wait weeks, or forever, to get errors or special claims dealt with. And hard-pressed staff have often borne the brunt of claimants' frustration.

Rejected

Twice already the Oxford and Birmingham strikers have overwhelmingly rejected proposals by their union leaders to accept an offer of short-term staff increases and return to work. On December 9 a meeting of DHSS delegates held after the special pay conference of the main union involved, CPSA, voted for an all-out national strike from January 17. It decided on a branch consultation to be followed by a special conference on January 12.

Then just before Christmas the union leaderships called off the consultation, cancelled the conference, and recommended a return to work on a slightly modified offer. The SCPS circular, dated 23 December, explained that this followed "initiatives by the TUC and the intervention of Opposition spokesmen in discussions that reopened this week..."

Name

In whose name were the TUC and Labour front-benchers intervening? Whom did they consult? Not the rank and file who pay their salaries and

by Stephen
Corbishley
and Alan
Stephens

• The story behind
the settlement —
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whom they are supposed to represent!

Oxford CPSA branch secretary Morag Robertson told Socialist Organiser:

"I've not been told anything since December 21 from national office about the results of national negotiations."

The Birmingham/Oxford strike could have become a rallying point for a fight in the civil service and the rest of the public sector against job cuts and privatisation. Instead, the militancy is being squandered. The strikers are meeting this week to consider the recommendation from their leaders to return to work.

All the signs are that while the membership has been left in the dark, the 'left'-talking CPSA and SCPS leaderships welcomed the TUC/Labour Party intervention into this dispute. Not a word of dissent has been uttered by CPSA President and Militant supporter Kevin Roddy, who has supported each previous sell-out attempt.

Pre-empt

Morag Robertson commented: "The (CPSA) NEC's decision to suspend the special conference totally pre-empted any decision by the members on strike. It appears that they have accepted the offer and see it as a foregone conclusion that we will vote to return."

The TUC General Council was set up in 1921 after pressure from militants for a "general staff" which could mobilise the full forces of the trade union movement instead of leaving workers' struggles fragmented. But the current "general staff" does more to keep struggles fragmented.

Consider the recent record. In developing common action, like the September 22 day of solidarity with the NHS workers,

SUNK — BY THE TUC!



the TUC leaders are slow and cagey. But repeatedly they have been quick and decisive about stopping action.

November 1981: TUC general secretaries went over the head of the regularly-constituted Joint Negotiating Committee to fix up a return to work at BL.

July 1982: The TUC finance and general purposes committee forces ASLEF to abandon its

strike against flexible rostering, even threatening to expel the train drivers' union from the TUC if it continues the struggle.

August 1982: When Fleet Street electricians decide to strike in line with appeals by the TUC to back the health workers, TUC Health Service Committee chairperson Albert Spanswick advises them to back down in face of legal threats from the employers.

Despite all their talk about defying Tory anti-union laws, the TUC leaders are nowhere to be seen when electricians' branch secretary Sean Geraghty is taken to court under these laws.

October 1982: Rank and file pressure finally pushes the health union leaders into a call for indefinite action. Then as soon as the consultation starts for this action, they rush to find a settlement, in the process

dumping every principle they have proclaimed in the pay campaign.

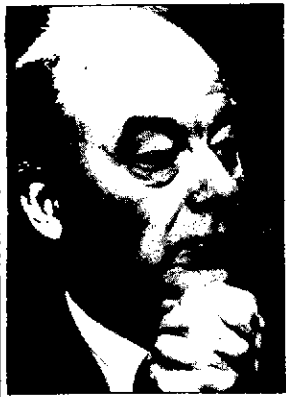
And the Labour front bench? If it were a matter of a fight to extend action, they would be saying: "This is a trade union matter, we can't do anything." But now they decide that the gulf between 'politics' and 'trade unionism' is not so wide after all.

Just like the union leaders, they do it all with no regard to the views and

interests of the members they are supposed to represent. Just like the union leaders, as a result of their life in the committee-rooms and corridors of power, insulated from the rank and file, they have come to fear mass mobilisation more than anything else.

The fight for democracy and an accountable leadership needs to be pursued in every section of the labour movement.

Plan to make students pay



Tory minister Boyson

IT'S not really surprising that the Government's latest package of proposals on student support should include a move to replace grants with loans. It's even less surprising that the proposal is a dilution of Tory education minister Rhodes Boyson's original proposals, and comes mingled with other seemingly generous alterations — it's election year.

They've been floating the idea for years, as part of their idea to privatise everything that moves, and they now seem set to go ahead with making students pay

for their education.

The plan at present seems to be a half grant, half loans system, therefore affecting those students who receive most grant, or whose parents wouldn't/couldn't contribute. Those, of course, whose parents could afford to pay, wouldn't need to tie themselves to a loan which would take many years to pay back. Higher Education, therefore, becomes more of a privilege, and less accessible to working class youth.

Would you do a course, to be faced with paying for

it years into the future (at the same time being taxed to pay for education)?

A future officer class in the forces would be all right, of course, as would those aspiring technocrats who could gain multinational company sponsorship for their courses. With the existing bias against women on such science courses, they would be further squeezed out, and such organisations would begin to fulfill a real selective role within higher education.

The fight against loans must extend beyond the resolution-passing approach

of NUS and many student unions, and must be built around joint action with campus trade unions and the grant for the further education students that university and polytechnic students so often forget. We must make it clear we want a free, non-means tested grant for all over-16s in education, and free access to education for all over 16.

The future for education looks bleak, but with loans it looks desolate. This issue is one we simply cannot afford — either politically or financially — to lose.

Simon Pottinger



Heyford base blockaded

by Dave Spencer

The US Air Force bomber base at Upper Heyford, near Banbury, was closed down by demonstrators for the day on December 31.

The authorities claimed that personnel had been given a day's holiday anyway, but peace camp members reported an unusual amount of activity the day before with aircraft being tested taking off until 1 am.

On the 31st itself, all the gates were closed and nothing was happening on the base, except the patrols of the military police and the MoD police cars watching the demonstrators outside.

Over 14,000 American servicemen and their dependents live on the site — one of two, with Lakenheath, for the F111 long-range bombers.

There are 74 F111s at Upper Heyford, ten of which are on permanent alert and can be airborne in 30 seconds, with missiles at the ready.

The 20th Tactical Fighter Wing at Upper Heyford have nuclear bombing specialists who will assist programmers of enemy target lists in the US 7555 Theatre Mission Planning Squadron based in the huge underground bunker at High Wycombe.

Unit

This is the new unit reported in the Guardian last month which will function as one of the war headquarters of the US European Command.

Peace campers have been at Upper Heyford since last Easter. They have been anxious to gain public support and have shown the film 'The War Game' in various parish halls in the area, with some success as well as starting discussions in local pubs.

They claim that the authorities are paranoid and that any US servicemen seen speaking to them are put on an immediate charge and that any activity like sit-downs in front of the main gate brings an immediate halt to work inside the base.



WHY should the Daily Mail begin 1983 with words of near praise for the new Soviet leader Yuri Andropov?

The leader of the Fleet Street 'reds' under the beds brigade was making distinctly unimpeachable noises about the Soviet offer to talk about arms reduction.

Instead of telling the godforsaken Commie bastard what to do with his summit, the Daily Mail suggested the offer could be the first round in a serious bid to limit nuclear weapons.

You might expect — rightly — that to be the editorial line of the Guardian, or even the Sunday Times, but surely there is a place in Mrs Thatcher's own bunker for the editor of the Daily Mail.

There has to be somebody on hand as the great fry-up goes on above, to record the speeches of the wartime leader to the various council apparatchiks across the country. (One of the disadvantages of being the next great wartime leader will be that the collected speeches will have to wait for the dust to settle before finding a publisher).

So why on earth should the Daily Mail be muttering wetly about seeing if the offer to talk means something.

It is odd indeed for the Daily Mail to find itself singing the same song with almost exactly the same words as David Steel and Shirley Williams, to name two more potential survivors. (Wouldn't you just like to feel the quality of the carpet in the SDP bunker?)

The reason for the Daily Mail's sudden flirtation with the menace of Bolshevism is that just at the moment the women of Greenham Common seem a sight more dangerous.

Attempts to label the whole peace movement as an offshoot of Trotskyism are as futile as they are laughable (a fact continually and sharply brought home to us Trotskyists). The Daily Mail has made and no doubt will continue to make a brave attempt to convict the several million people who now openly espouse unilateralism of being fellow travellers. But they have been forced to pay lip service to what Mrs Thatcher and her friends call, through gritted teeth, "sincerity", a synonym in their language for cretinous stupidity.

The problem with the peace movement is that, like other anti-establishment movements, it thrives on a certain level of oppression. Jailing the women of

Greenham Common may come to seem to historians one of the grandest follies of the Thatcher government.

The words of Yuri Andropov come, therefore, to seem like the reassuring patter of a rival hood who speaks the same lingo. At least there is no nonsense from him about unilateral action.

The same thinking was revealed by Sir Frank Cooper, the retiring civil servant at the head of the Ministry of Defence, in an interview with John Mortimer in the Sunday Times.

The interview began with Mortimer asking "If you could wave a magic wand and deprive Russia of all nuclear weapons, do you think the world would become a much safer place?" to which Cooper replied candidly, "No, much more dangerous."

He adds "It is very important that Europe has a strong NATO alliance and a strong Warsaw Pact. That's what leads to stability."

The Daily Mail is not in fact letting its side down. It has responded to the captain's instructions for a change of tactic.

The paper has been learning the message that Steele and Williams have been preaching — that if they

want to rescue multilateral disarmament from the rubbish bin of political ideas, it would be as well to have some kind of talks in prospect. That is why the Daily Mail has a new banner on its masthead: better dead than unilateral.

Shoot to kill

'SHOOT to kill' was the headline in the Daily Express. It frankly admitted that the British Army and the RUC have been told to shoot first and ask questions afterwards in Ireland.

People shot dead by the army on the streets these days are accused of "appearing to carry firearms".

The Express concedes that this policy will cause a few protests from predictable sources, but assures us that it will be welcomed by all right thinking people.

As it points out, the policy was not in force before because of government fears that the Catholic population might be driven into the arms of extremists. But if they are going to vote Sinn Féin anyway, then you might just as well shoot them dead. It's nice to have the truth told once in a while.

Who's cashing in on Coin St?

by Graham Norwood, chair of planning, Lambeth Council

MICHAEL Heseltine's plague on civilisation as we know it is not restricted to local government finance — more recently, he has been lining the pockets of property speculators through a series of controversial planning decisions in London.

The most recent, and so far most controversial, concerns the site of Coin Street on the south bank of the Thames, straddling the riverside area bordering Lambeth and Southwark.

Just before Christmas — in a bid to avoid adverse publicity — Heseltine announced his verdict on the two public enquiries into the use of the site. After years of delay and an estimated £1 million on enquiries and

investigations, Heseltine gave permission for two rival schemes proposed for Coin Street.

The two rival schemes were from Greycoat Commercial Estates, and the Association of Waterloo Groups — an umbrella organisation involving the local residents and supported by the Labour councils in Lambeth, Southwark and Greater London.

The Greycoat scheme approved by Heseltine was for 884,512 square feet of offices, car parking, luxurious housing and some amenity facilities.

The AWG scheme was for family housing, light industry, public open spaces and community facilities.

By approving both, Heseltine has shown that he really favours one — because he knows Greycoat have massive financial resources to go ahead with their scheme, while the AWG have

insufficient cash for their proposals... made worse by Heseltine's own reductions in central government grants to the London local authorities who would have to fund the AWG's housing plans.

Even in strict capitalist terms, Heseltine's decision is bizarre. He has recently allowed another international business enterprise to start work on a one million square foot office scheme nearby, and in London now there are 11 million square feet of complete offices left vacant. To allow more is to pander solely to speculators, and to flick a V-sign at those people looking for homes, community facilities and jobs in London and other inner city areas.

The AWG's fighting record will not dissolve in the face of what they have called a Berlin-wall of offices — they have already pledged to fight "using every means open to us" to stop the Greycoat scheme.

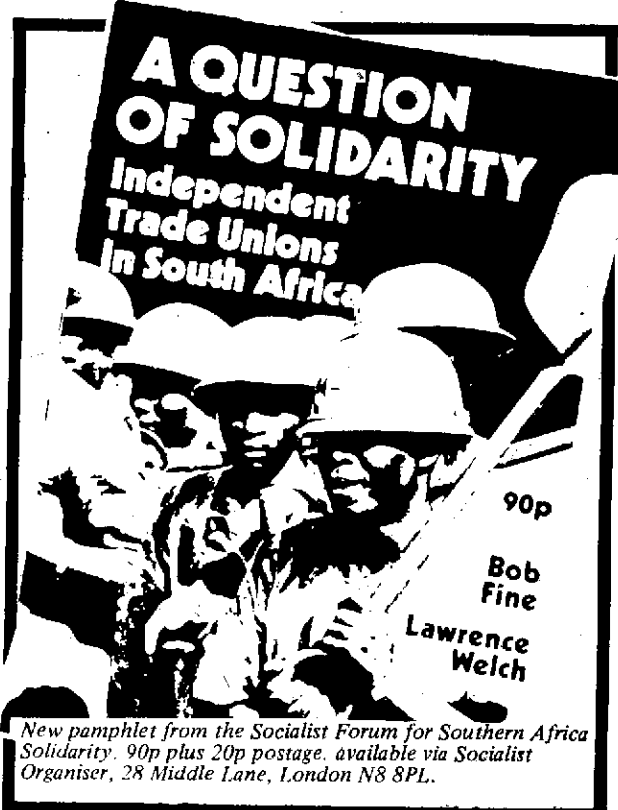
Lambeth, the planning authority in which most of the site lies, has pledged to obstruct and delay the Greycoat scheme if it ever starts. The same goes for Southwark and the GLC, who are united behind the community's desire for low-scale development in the interests of the local people of Waterloo.

Every means may have to be called upon to resist what has become a cause celebre in the world of planning and property speculation — the further decline of a working class residential area in the face of pressure from capital.

Turkish jailings

TURKEY'S military junta has sentenced 149 members of the illegal Turkish Communist Party to jail terms of up to 10 years on charges of "forming an illegal organisation aimed at establishing a Communist state."

The military court acquitted 110 of the accused and deferred judgement on a further eight, the Anatolian News Agency said in Goleuk.



What happened at COWLEY



New Leyland Action Committee pamphlet, 10p plus postage from I.A.C. 194 Dawl. St. Road, Birmingham 29

Lessons of NHS struggle

BACK in January, general secretary Albert Spanswick appeared at a COHSE region to support a resolution against the Tories' 4% public sector pay norm, so that he could use it at a press conference the same day. Later the COHSE NEC rejected

the same resolution. APRIL 26: COHSE 'authorised' a work-to-rule, in advance of the other unions. MAY 24: NUPE conference votes for all-out action. Opposition by COHSE leadership enables NUPE leadership to claim policy cannot

be implemented. MAY 25: COHSE members at Royal Edinburgh Hospital forced to abandon indefinite strike by leadership refusal to make it official. JUNE 14: Spanswick beats down all-out strike call at COHSE conference — and

retrospectively declares out of order conference decision to affiliate to the National Abortion Campaign. JULY 1: Spanswick sends out telex to COHSE branches insisting that the TUC Health Service Committee three-day strike on

July 19-21 is not a strike after all. JULY 28: Spanswick blusters about withdrawing emergency cover. (At the COHSE conference he had opposed all-out strike with emergency cover on the grounds that it would be

illegal!) AUGUST 10: Fleet Street electricians defy court injunction to strike in solidarity during NHS week of action. Spanswick as chairperson of the TUC Health Service Committee has advised them not to strike,

and gives no support. SEPTEMBER 22: Spanswick chairs mass rally in Hyde Park on TUC one-day strike for NHS. No clear call to follow up success of September 22. Instead TUC HSC calls regional days of action. OCTOBER 19: Spanswick tells a press conference that TUC HSC will be calling for a petition campaign and another one-day action on November 24. He has to be called to order by other union leaders.

When TUC HSC eventually calls for all-out action, Spanswick claims that COHSE constitutionally cannot start such action until March! DECEMBER 14: COHSE special conference. Spanswick puts NEC recommendation for all-out strike without emergency cover — and says that members should consider the dire consequences of such action, or else accept the Tories' offer. Conference rejects this, calls for no two-year deal, no split pay settlement. DECEMBER 15: TUC HSC accepts two-year split deal. JANUARY 14: Ballot papers have to be in for Spanswick's successor. The main right wing candidate is David Williams, who offers perhaps a different style from Spanswick but essentially the same recipe of occasional 'militant' demagoguery and consistent sabotage of struggle.

Broad Left challenger Andrea Campbell explains in her election address. "Our leadership has failed to represent the needs and wishes of the membership... That is one of the main reasons why I am standing for General Secretary."

in the labour movement. A million workers will now understand why so many strikes fail, and something about how to stop them failing. The same tactics used to wreck the steel strike in 1980 were used in 1982 on the NHS dispute.

We have seen first hand how the TUC leaders consciously stop sections of workers from striking simultaneously — the ASLEF workers called back to work on Sunday night when there was strike action beginning in hospitals on Monday morning, the consecutive 'days of action' of the POEU, water workers, and NHS workers, all out on different days in the same week... all fighting the Tories.

The empty rhetoric of 'left' leaders such as Bickerstaffe has been exposed. NUPE members now know that he will look for any excuse not to have to turn his words into action.

Hundreds of thousands of women have been at the forefront of the pay campaign — and of the solidarity action. Those women will not be content to go back to positions of insignificance in their branches or to abandon the fight against low pay.

Shop stewards' committees have taken shape locally, and an attempt to build a national stewards' organisation has begun.

We didn't get the 12%, but we have a more politicised and active section of NHS workers than we have seen before.

We need to build on that consciousness — we need to fight on privatisation, democracy in the trade unions, democracy and workers' control of the health service, and we need to maintain and build the JSSCs set up during the strike.

The main lesson of 1982 — in ASLEF, NUR, BL, and the NHS — is that the trade union leadership do not and will not fight for the working class. We must organise to replace them with leaders representative and accountable to the membership. And then we will have a real chance of winning.

Our leaders: more frightened of their members than the Tories!

By Jane Goss

"IT'S BEEN worth it", said COHSE general secretary Albert Spanswick on the eve of the NHS sell-out, "we have gained a lot".

What gains? Approximately 30 pence, and a Tory government firm in its conviction that it can smash the workers and be returned for another term of office?

Our gain, from 8½ months of industrial action, is our organisation and the lesson learned that we can't trust the trade union officials. They will sell out struggles every time. Their interests lie not in changing the system which keeps us on low pay with intolerable conditions, but in perpetuating that system.

The NHS dispute — the longest big dispute in the history of the British labour movement since the 1926 miners' strike — could have been the catalyst for a general strike. It wasn't. And the reason is that the TUC refused to organise.

Their priority is cleansing the Labour Party of activists determined to fight for the working class — not kicking out the Tories.

15 months ago Thatcher announced that public sector pay rises should not exceed 4%. We had not had a pay offensive since 1979 — the 'winter of discontent'. That strike was marred by widespread scabbing by different sections of workers and pitted union against union. The legacy of mistrust and anger had not yet faded when militants began the campaign this year for strike action against the 4% offer.

For two consecutive years we had settled for pay rises well below the rate of inflation. At the beginning of this year's action, over a quarter of health service workers were living on wages below the official poverty line. Nurses were making an average of £108 (female nurses, £99), compared to the overall national average of £140, and ancillary workers were averaging £87 (female ancillaries, £84).

Long hours

In order to earn even these low amounts, workers are forced to work long hours and sometimes double shifts. Even the full claim (12%) would still have left health service workers well below the national average.

Two important things separated 1982 from the 'winter of discontent'. One was a common settlement date (April 1), which had been campaigned for over a long period by the rank and file; and the other was the common core claim (12%).

Traditionally the NHS has been split into two different 'sectors' — on the one hand the 'carers', nursing and professional staff, and on the other hand the ancillary workers. Almost all previous



NHS trade unionists lobbying the TUC Health Service committee are thrown out of Congress House. The union leaders weren't so keen to throw the Tories out of Downing Street.

industrial action in the NHS has been characterised by nurses scabbing on ancillary workers. This artificial split has been perpetuated by the Royal College of Nursing, and sometimes, disgracefully, by the major unions.

But last year real attempts were made at local level to resolve differences and to establish joint stewards' committees. At national level, too, there was the TUC Health Services Committee.

The national unity was a step forward. But it was also flouted at times, used as an excuse at others. When COHSE declared unilateral action in the form of a work-to-rule on April 26 (already three weeks after the settlement date), the other unions delayed for three weeks. Then in the summer, at a lobby of the TUC organised by Health Workers for the Full Claim, Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of NUPE, refused even to discuss indefinite strike action with me because I am a COHSE member. "Take it up with your own union", he said.

The TUC Health Service committee ended up being ruled and led by the weakest unions and not by the strongest. In May NUPE conference passed a resolution for indefinite strike action with emergency cover only, in conjunction with other health service unions. Instead of

pushing the other unions to take up this call, the supposedly left NUPE leadership used them as an excuse for not calling the members out. They actively and consciously avoided a vote on all-out strike action at the TUC Health Service committee. They were delighted when COHSE conference voted, on the recommendation of the National Executive Committee, to oppose indefinite action and go for sectional strikes.

Secondary

Areas like Edinburgh which defied the delaying tactics and came out on strike were forced back to work by the union leadership.

But through the local Joint Shop Stewards' Committees, solidarity action was built. It was not the wheeling and dealing over beer and sandwiches at TUC level which got miners, dockers, and steelworkers out in support of the health workers — it was the health workers themselves, through stewards' committees making approaches to other workers and sending speakers to mass meetings.

The sympathetic strike action was unprecedented. Workers everywhere were prepared to support us and defy the anti-union legislation of the Tories. Secondary picketing was an everyday

occurrence.

The magnificent stand of Sean Geraghty and the Fleet Street EETPU branch brought a much-needed boost in August, when health workers were becoming increasingly demoralised by our leaders' procrastination. But the TUC Health Service committee, with Albert Spanswick as its mouthpiece, even tried to stop that action.

Spanswick asked the print unions not to take strike action. Fortunately the electricians ignored him. But when Geraghty was hauled up in court, at the demonstration in his support only one national union leader (Bill Deal of the FBU) put in an appearance.

All the TUC's talk about defying the Tebbit proposals vanished into hot air. Chapple washed his hands of Geraghty — and COHSE members washed their hands of Spanswick, and began to demand a change in the no-strike policy which the COHSE leadership had rammed through conference only a month earlier.

Lobbies

Increasing pressure was also put on the NUPE leadership to implement its mandate for indefinite action.

Health Workers for the Full Claim, the only rank and file group uniting workers around the 12% claim, called

two lobbies of the TUC to press our leaders for indefinite strike action. They called the police to throw us out of Congress House.

But eventually, under pressure from the rank and file, the TUC called a national day of action (if they had been serious about winning, it would have been a one-day general strike) of all affiliated unions on September 22.

Stewards built for the 22nd. The morale of the health workers rose as promises of support came in. During the summer months the leadership had been saying that we were losing our will to fight — but the 22nd proved that health workers were not beaten!

Over 200,000 demonstrated in London, over 3 million workers took some form of industrial action. September 22 showed the way to win — keep the health workers out, and build the solidarity action.

If only the TUC had done that, we could have won. But following the most successful strike day since the general strike in 1926, the TUC defused the action by recommending regional days of action. Even hardened militants were astonished at this move.

The regional days collapsed in most areas, and then a planned transport day of action was called off as a gesture of goodwill when

ACAS stepped in for emergency talks (much to the relief of Sid Weighell and Moss Evans).

The TUC had finally decided to consult the unions on whether they were prepared to step up the action to all-out strike. A national meeting of shop stewards was called from committees in Leicester and Sheffield. The bureaucrats, more frightened of their own members than of the Tories, did their best to sabotage the meeting, which resolved to campaign for a rejection of the offer and for indefinite strike action in January. It insisted especially on two principles: no differential offer between ancillaries and others, and no two year deal.

Tory health minister Fowler offered a 'new deal' — an extra 30 pence, and tying this year's pay deal to a settlement for 1983-4. This was honourable enough for the union barons, and the consultation on strike action became linked to the disgusting offer. The Tories, having rammed a two year deal through British Leyland, were looking for another scalp.

COHSE, under strong pressure from the membership, called a special conference. The NEC and the national officers who had ruthlessly opposed indefinite action with emergency cover in June took the hypocritical and outrageous position of recommending all-out strike with no emergency cover!

Apart from anything else, this meant that a union not known for its defence of militants was recommending to nurses that they should take action which would ensure that they were struck off the register.

The delegates treated the recommendation with the contempt it deserved, and instead forced through a vote for a one-year deal only, with no split in the offer. On December 15 the TUC Health Service committee voted to accept the existing offer.

ASLEF had been knifed quickly and mercilessly by the TUC. Health workers were instead slowly bled by the bureaucrats into a position of demoralisation and despair.

But links have been made

International News International News International News

NO RESPITE FOR POLISH WORKERS

Raiders force Mugabe deal

ROBERT Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe has been forced to sign a three year deal for petrol and diesel fuel from South Africa.

The background to the deal, a prolonged fuel shortage, indicates the scope of moves by the multinational oil firms and by the apartheid regime in Pretoria to harass and destabilise the Zimbabwe government as part of their pressure on neighbouring nationalist regimes in Mozambique and Angola.

The decisive factor in forcing the Zimbabwe approach to South Africa was the sabotage of fuel storage tanks at the Mozambique port of Beira — which supply the pipeline to Zimbabwe.

The tanks were blown up by members of the South Africa-run guerrilla grouping, the so-called Mozambique National Resistance.

But Zimbabwe's government-backed newspaper has also pointed out the failure of the oil monopolies to supply adequate amounts of fuel. If these firms had broken sanctions to keep Ian Smith's regime running, the Herald asks, "surely they can now do the same for Comrade Mugabe?"



only talk to the regime with the old leadership of Solidarnosc by his side.

Though he still talks of the spirit of 1980, Walesa has plainly been to a large extent neutralised.

But in the ranks of Polish workers bitter lessons have been drawn from the Solidarnosc experience. The best sections are recognising that it is impossible to reform the Stalinist bureaucracy from below: it is necessary to prepare for its

revolutionary overthrow.

And a recent Warsaw bulletin expresses the need to link up with 'left wing movements' outside Poland in this struggle.

The material conditions which prompted the rise of Solidarnosc have not been abolished: in the struggles which will break out again, Polish workers will need political and material assistance from the international labour movement.

The danger at present is

"If after a year we get 10-15% of workers to join, then it will be a success", claimed one leader of the new state unions in Poland.

There was little sign on day one of the new unions — 2,500 of which have been registered at workplace level — that they would reach anything like such scope. Warsaw's Huta Warszawa steelworks saw 300 applicants out of 17,000 workers; the Ursus tractor plant claimed 200 out of 17,000 and Lech Walesa estimated applications at 172 out of 17,000 workers at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk.

This is in stark contrast to the scale and vitality of Solidarnosc whose ten million members embraced 75% of the country's workforce, organised on a regional level with a participatory democracy which put most unions to shame on a world scale.

Polish workers know full well that the stooge bodies

set up last October by Jaruzelski and the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy are not unions but — like the old, discredited state unions — simply instruments to control the working class.

The lifting of martial law last month did nothing to change the real conditions faced by Polish workers. The two main provisions of martial law (the illegalisation of Solidarnosc and the imprisonment of thousands of its militants convicted under emergency provisions) remain in force. Over 5,000 activists are still in jail.

Indeed the lifting of martial law coincided with the arrest and charging of seven leading left wing Solidarnosc members. And the release of Lech Walesa came on the same day as the sentencing of Wladislaw Frasyniuk, key member of the TTK underground leadership of Solidarnosc, to six years in jail.

The Jaruzelski leadership

is courting on the one hand new credits and restored relations with the West, and on the other seeking, through new accords with Archbishop Glemp and the Church hierarchy, to secure their assistance in neutralising Solidarnosc.

Thus while the firm hand of repression continues to mete out jail sentences and has forced Anna Walentynowicz into an asylum, the bureaucracy has agreed to the Pope's visit next year provided the Church leaders use their considerable influence in working for stability.

This is not without problems for Glemp — who has come under fire from lower echelons in the Church, and even been implicitly criticised by Walesa.

Yet at the same time Walesa has toed the required line — abandoning previous calls for the recognition of Solidarnosc and dropping his insistence that he would

REAGAN'S AMERICA

IN the world's richest country, the USA, an estimated two million people are now destitute, homeless, and on the streets.

Unemployment stands at 12 million — 11% overall, and a much bigger percentage among many groups like young blacks — and the unemployed get state benefits cut off after six months.

The effects are shown by a story sent to us by a St Louis reader from the local Globe-Democrat newspaper.

"About 1,000 people — some of them unemployed union members — stood in the mist and rain outside a Bridgeton motel Friday in hopes of getting one of about 50 jobs offered by a St Louis grocery wholesaler to replace strikers.

"I know it's rough being a strikebreaker, but, hell, there's 16 million people out of work, including me, and I have a family to feed", said Ronald Washington, 36, of Maplewood. The unemployed truck driver who was laid off in August is a former member of Teamsters Local 610.

Those hired from among the applicants will replace nearly 125 members of Teamsters Local 688, who went on strike Thursday against Associated Grocers' Co. of St Louis, after they rejected the company's latest contract offer.

That proposal would reduce wages by about 20 per cent and initiate other contract concessions, a company spokesman said. Twenty-seven other employees, members of Teamsters Local 610, are honouring the picket lines.

The company spokesman said the non-union replacements would be paid \$8.14 an hour — which is 50 cents an hour less than the wage proposed to the strikers.

While many of those who stood in the parade the night of the election were

tions said they were reluctant to cross the picket line, they said they had no other choice.

"I feel if anyone's going to turn down \$8 to \$9 an hour, they don't deserve the job", said Scott Laurent, 22, of Jennings. "I've got bills to pay, and I'm more than willing to work for half of what they are turning down."

"So, what am I going to do: worry about them, or feed myself?", said the unemployed mail clerk who was laid off in March."

The edgy, aggressive rejection of the union by these workers becomes easier to understand in the light of another item in the same newspaper. The Globe-Democrat reports

steelworkers' president Lloyd McBride deploring his members' vote to reject 10% cuts in wages and benefits demanded by the bosses.

"I was convinced that the proposal was essential. I'm disappointed, obviously", said McBride.

With leaders like this, some workers are bound to give up and go for a philosophy of 'look after no. 1'. Their prospects are not good — the wholesalers refused to give any assurance that the strikebreakers' jobs would be more than temporary. And sooner or later the anger and frustration will turn itself against the real enemy — the US ruling class.

THE SUNDAY Times of January 2 reported on another evil effect of the decay of US capitalism. In a society constantly generating new technologies and scientific discoveries, the prejudices of a century ago are able to dictate what schoolchildren learn.

Mel and Norma Gabler would be unpleasant but harmless eccentrics, if it were not that these two elderly right-wing religious fundamentalists have been able to pressure the Texas board of education to reject several textbooks.

"There are a lot of things the Gablers do not want taught to American children. Top of the list is evolution. They have won a fierce battle to have creationism taught alongside evolution in biology classes, and publishers of science books in Texas must now refer to evolution as theory, not fact."

They turn their attention to other matters. "There's a museum nearby

in a maths book that there are no absolutes, every value he's been taught is destroyed. And the next thing you know, the student turns to crime and drugs."

"Also unacceptable in the world according to the Gablers is:

- The women's rights movement — because it can only come if women 'abandon their highest profession — as mothers moulding young lives'.
- The suggestion that America ranks only third in per capita income after Sweden and Switzerland — because it might lead children to believe that there are benefits to socialism.
- Any teaching about the depression of the Thirties — because 'it will only succeed in raising doubts about our system'.

It will take a lot of legislation against raising doubts about our system, to stop such doubts arising in the minds of young Americans who see the

DESPITE the glossy holiday brochures, it's no paradise for workers on the "paradise island" of Sri Lanka.

Right wing President J.R. Jayawardene has since his election five years ago embarked upon a Thatcher-style process of opening up the whole island to the plundering attentions of multinational corporations — offering a low-paid, repressed workforce and a minimum of overhead taxation.

Anti-union laws, backed up by a continuing state of emergency in force since 1980, and an appalling lack of social services, keep down the costs to imperialist investors as 'JR' attempts to attract sufficient industry to turn Sri Lanka into a new South Korea or Taiwan.

But such policies have not gone without opposition in Sri Lanka. In October

1982, Jayawardene comfortably outstripped a divided political opposition, securing 52% of the vote in Presidential elections.

But were the same voting pattern to be repeated in Parliamentary elections due this year, he would have found his overwhelming domination of the 168-member Parliament (in which his UNP currently holds 143 seats) substantially undermined. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party, led by former Prime Minister Mrs Bandaranaike, which has six MPs would have stood to win 60 seats.

Under such conditions Jayawardene could have faced problems in holding his ruthless economic policies.

His answer? To seek a referendum on the proposal to suspend parliamentary elections until 1989, leaving the existing MPs in office for an extra six years! He went further — arguing that he needed 15 years uninterrupted rule for his plans to reach fruition!

The campaign over the referendum was conducted under the state of emergency though Mrs Bandaranaike, (who is formally deprived of all civic rights for seven years following political offences during her term of office) was allowed to campaign against the proposal and attracted large crowds of supporters.

'JR' wins six years in control

by Harry Sloan

One-third of the Sri Lankan population is the oppressed Tamil minority living largely in the north of the island, whose Tamil United Liberation Front also campaigned against the referendum.

But on Wednesday December 22, the referendum produced a majority for Jayawardene by a margin of 3.1 million to 2.6 million votes, and the next day the 79-year old President signed a law suspending elections for six years.

While Bandaranaike and her careerist bourgeois followers will no doubt find ways and means of securing their interests under the semi-dictatorship of Jayawardene, the full brunt of these latest changes will fall upon the working masses of Sri Lanka who face an austerity programme designed to confront Sri Lanka's chronic balance of payments crisis, and a prolonged period of super-exploitation at the hands of Jayawardene's multi-national sponsors.

Referendum

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The fight for a 'no' vote was also supported by the Sri Lankan Communist Party — and their daily paper Aththa was suspended by the government.



Jayawardene wants to rule for 15 years

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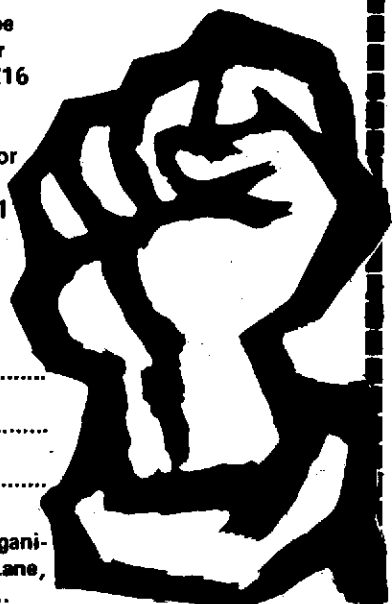
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International News International News International News

ISRAEL'S WIDENING

WAR

Report
from
Haifa,
Dec. 5

ISRAELI spokesmen keep tirelessly explaining to the Jewish public here about the need for a long and consistent war to root the PLO out of the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

The blitz invasion of Lebanon was supposed to be a massive blow in this war. Now it turns out to be another long and not at all easy war to subdue the Lebanese and Palestinians. There is talk about the 'Vietnamisation' of the war.

Killings

Mass killings continue to be the main weapon of both the Israelis and the pro-imperialist Lebanese. In their grand plan for a new

order in Lebanon, the most immediate target now is the villages on the Shouf mountain, just outside Beirut.

Druze

The mostly Druze population there was organised on a semi-feudal basis, and allied with the Muslim-Palestinian Left in the civil war. In the Shouf mountain itself there were no Palestinian bases, and the local villages enjoyed autonomy at the time of the civil war, with no problems between the Druzes and the Christian minority.

When the Israelis occupied the area, in June, there was almost no resistance. With them they brought the Falangists,

who had never dared to show themselves in the area before, and a wave of kidnapping and killing started.

Apparently, the autonomy of the Shouf was seen as an obstacle to the new 'centralised' rule. The intention of the mass killings is to persuade the villagers to give up their arms and submit dutifully to the official Lebanese army. As that army has no real strength in itself, they try to make the situation unbearable for the people first.

It is more than half a year now after the Israeli invasion, and the killings in the Shouf continue to mount. There are now dozens each day.

IN ADDITION to the tens of thousands killed and wounded in the war and bombing, we now have more details about the fate of many thousands of prisoners taken by the Israelis.

The main concentration camp is in Al-Ansar. The Israelis do not recognise the Palestinian and Lebanese freedom fighters as prisoners of war, and do not bring them to any trial, so the only authority in the military prisons is the 'Shin Beit' — the security services — and no international conventions are recognised as applying.

The prisoners in Al-Ansar continue to live in tents on the ground, with no beds or mattresses, only blankets. The winter in

Lebanon is cold, rainy and snowy. There is no sanitation in the camp, and rain water runs on the tent floor.

There have been some attempts at protest by the prisoners in Al-Ansar. On December 2 three prisoners were killed and more wounded by one of the guards. These prisoners do not only include fighters.

Worse still is the danger to the lives of an unknown number of prisoners held in 'investigation' centres, both in occupied south Lebanon and inside occupied Palestine. It is estimated that thousands of prisoners have disappeared in these centres. Now some news has come out of one of them, Geleini, situated near Kibbutz Yagur, on the

Haifa-Nazareth road.

Within one month more than 14 prisoners there have died of torture, and a bigger number have lost their sanity because of what they have suffered and seen.

Atrocities

Prisoners have been beaten cruelly and thrown bleeding near the prison wall, where time and again the soldiers come and beat them to death. One prisoner was banned from drinking for a week. When he was then caught drinking, the soldiers pushed a water pipe down his throat and pumped in water until the man was blown up from inside and died. Such atrocities



A new order in Lebanon?

ties are performed before the eyes of all the prisoners.

A guard in the Atlit military prison, where the Syrian soldiers are kept (and officially recognised as POWs) tells more horror stories. The prisoners are beaten daily and held in inhuman conditions. When the Red Cross comes to visit, everything is tidied up for the day.

All this massacre, terror and killing doesn't secure success for the Israeli invaders. Seventy cases of military resistance against the Israeli forces have been reported for November alone. There is no progress in the American negotiations for a plan that will ensure the retreat of the Syrian and PLO forces from the northern part of Lebanon, where the fascists cannot now enter.

The main reason for the stalemate in Lebanon now is the weakness of the Gemayel regime installed by Israeli bayonets.

Beirut

The battle for Beirut still continues. The Israelis, wishing to divert attention from their atrocities, published the news that 1,200 people were kidnapped and killed in Beirut after the Sabra-Chatila massacre, in operations by the Lebanese army accompanied by French and American forces. When an attempt was made to kill Walid Jumblatt, the Druze leader and leader of the left 'Patriotic Movement', a general strike was called in Beirut, and partially succeeded.

The Israelis try to utilise the weakness of Gemayel to demand a permanent military presence and economic domination of the whole south as part of any settlement. The Israeli minister responsible for non-military activity in south Lebanon is Meridor, a many-times-bankrupt businessman with the habit of turning to the state to cover



Sharon and Begin

his debts.

He got his fame before the 1981 election when he announced that in a secret laboratory his scientists had found a new type of energy that will free the world of the need for Arab oil. This was later proven to be a fake by a crook well-known to the police.

Now he is 'responsible for aid to the civilian population'. Up to last month he stopped any rebuilding in the destroyed Palestinian refugee camps in an attempt to push the dwellers beyond the Syrian lines. Now, with the rift between Israel and President Gemayel, he is trying to sell the refugees the ready-made houses that his new private company has built in Israel.

Of Gemayel, he says: 'A president that has nothing to say even in his country, and that is a hero as long as we sit in Lebanon, won't tell us when to leave Lebanon.'

Gemayel, on his side, aspires to become a client of the US on his own. He has demanded that the imperialist force currently policing Beirut be expanded to 30,000 soldiers, and be ready for a long stay. Up to then he is not sure even of his rule in Beirut, and neither he nor the Americans seem to be pressing hard for a quick Israeli withdrawal.

Many Israelis emit a sigh as they pass the Lod (Tel-Aviv) airport terminal on the Jerusalem-Haifa road. There is even a popular love-song for 'terminala'.

But now El-Al, the state airline, has been closed by the government, and the airport declared 'a police arena', prohibiting the 5,000 workers from entering their former workplace. Some workers demonstrating elsewhere, near the company's headquarters, were dispersed by cruel police beating.

The whole El-Al affair developed through a series of open government provocations, designed to force the workers into confrontation and humiliating defeat, despite their agreement to severe pay cuts and lay-offs.

The problem for the government is the very reason for its current popularity with the Jewish masses — the war boom. They can boast no unem-

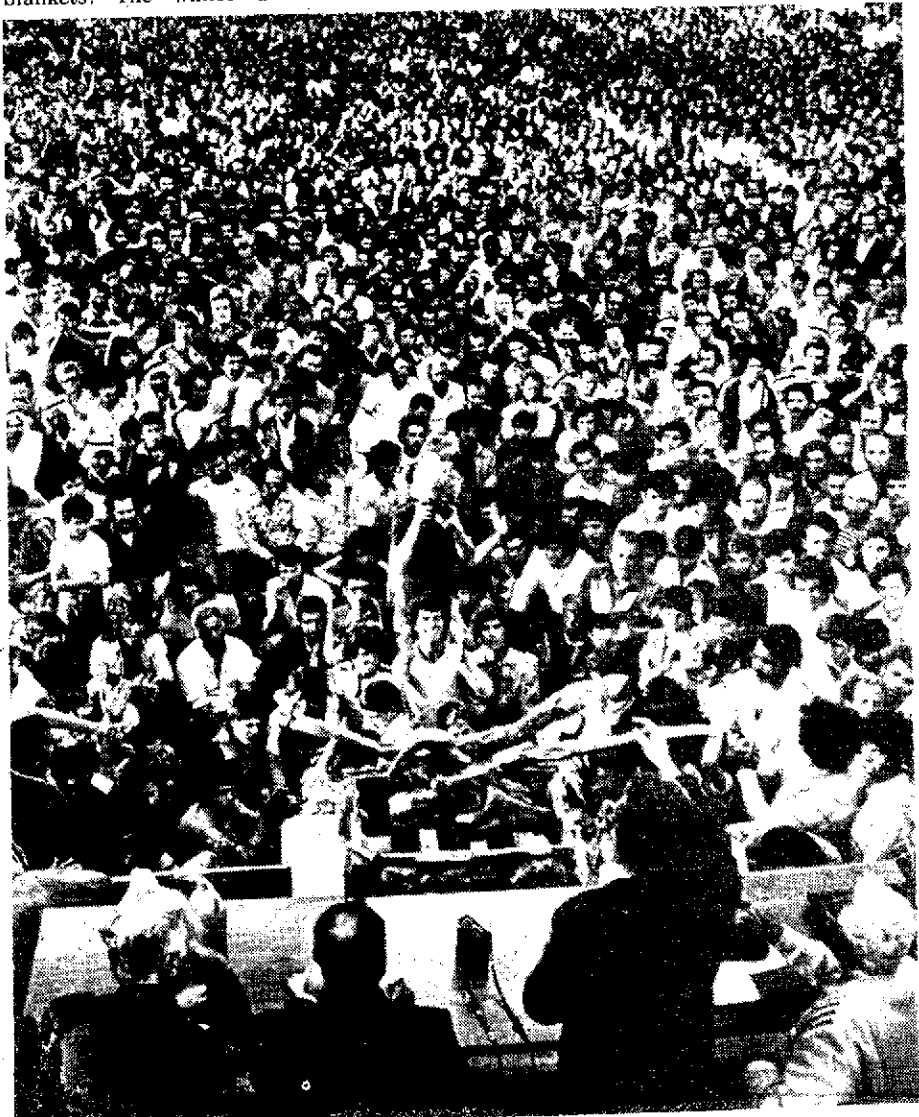
ployment at a time of a world crisis, no fall in living standards, and an almost free villa on offer for every Jew ready to settle on the West Bank, half an hour drive from Tel-Aviv's centre.

All this financed by printing shekels, at the cost of inflation soaring above 170% and sure to set a new Israeli record this year ... and by American dollars.

The issue of American aid has brought a new political scandal. The party of the (somewhat sober) well-to-do-buyers, the 'Labour Ma'arakh', is blamed for calling on the US to cut aid and topple the Begin government.

The war itself is losing popularity as it drags on, but 'Labour' is winning nothing from that. They supported it all along, and even now do not call for withdrawal from Lebanon.

Their gamble on the US seems to have gone wrong, as the American congress is discussing raising Begin's war royalties even farther.



Arab protest rally in Nazareth — "defending our land"

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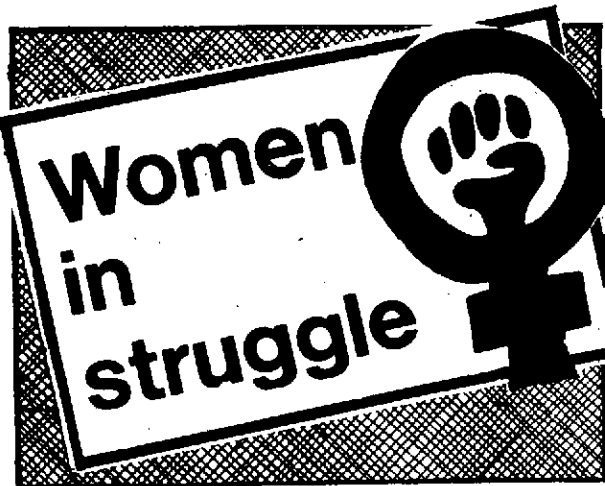
NEW!

The Socialist Workers' Party of the USA, an old-established Trotskyist group, has recently and suddenly announced that Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution' was wrong after all. This new pamphlet — 40p plus postage from PO Box 135, London N1 0DD — looks at the arguments



Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

Making women's voices heard in the unions



Mary Wilkins spoke to Sue Lister, a member of the women's advisory committee in the white collar union ASTMS, about organising women in the unions

IN our union, the Women's National Advisory Committee (NAC) is certainly more radical than the NEC. The NAC supported the Greenham Common women when they were arrested and demanded their immediate release. It has also been active on the question of women's rights in Ireland.

ASTMS organises the whole of Ireland. The NAC has been fighting attempts to make contraception illegal in the South, and has taken up the question of abortion rights in the North and the South.

The NAC is made up of activists. All the women on it are active on the divisions. At the same time the NAC meetings are far more constructive and supportive than most ASTMS meetings. Women listen to each other and don't keep interrupting or trying to dominate the discussion in the way men do.

It was set up in 1975 to advise the NEC on issues relating to women. Some women were opposed to a Women's National Advisory Committee on the grounds that it would enable the NEC to shelve women's



Fighting the cuts: "In our union, the women are certainly more radical than the NEC"

issues and exclude them from NEC discussions – and this is what the NEC hoped would happen. Fortunately they were proved wrong and the NAC has become an effective 'ginger group' to pressurise the NEC into activity.

Each division has a women's advisory committee just as each has a health service advisory committee, BL advisory committee, etc.

Delegates

All divisional advisory committees except the women's advisory committee elect their own delegates to the National Advisory Committee. The delegate to the Women's National Advisory Committee is elected by the full divisional council – clearly so that it can control

the Women's Advisory Committee. This is just one example of the anomalous situation the Women's Advisory Committee has to contend with.

One division, Yorkshire, has actually wound up its women's advisory committee on the grounds that the Women's National Advisory Committee deals with women's issues. The NAC is chaired by the only woman NEC member and the secretary is one of the few women full-time officials.

Are issues affecting women taken up at a local level?

Most divisional advisory committees have regular day schools on specific bargaining issues affecting women and 'combat schools' on how to negotiate with management on health, low pay, sexual harassment or general

matters about women's involvement in politics.

We hoped initially that the NAC would be able to initiate industrial campaigns on issues affecting women. This proved impossible because industrial campaigns are controlled by the industrial sections in the union, to which the NAC has no input except via the NEC.

We have had considerable success on other issues. We have been able to make childcare a union issue. Now conferences have creches and there are child-care allowances for people attending union meetings. This was only achieved through NAC pressure.

On the question of abortion rights, the NAC was able to put pressure on the NEC to campaign against Corrie. This in turn meant

that the TUC was pushed to organise action against the Bill.

Similarly the NAC was able to ask the Parliamentary Committee of ASTMS to support the Breast Cancer Clinic in London which is under threat of closure, without having to wait for the NEC.

The main role for the NAC is to pressurise the NEC to take up issues affecting women in the union. It is also able to make an input into the TUC women's committees, the EOC and other national bodies.

Do you think the Women's National Advisory Committee has improved the position of women in the union?

The problem is that the NAC is purely advisory. Power lies with the NEC. When the NAC makes pro-

posals to the NEC they either get passed because the NEC doesn't want to be seen to oppose them, or the NEC refers them back to the NAC.

Example

To take one example, the last Annual Delegate Conference called for an inquiry into women's involvement in the union at all levels. Nothing was done until last November when the NEC called on the NAC to do the work. The NAC pushed it back to the NEC, arguing that it was the NEC's job to make an inquiry and improve women's position in the union – and criticised the NEC for delaying, and leaving insufficient time before the next ADC in May, to carry out the inquiry.

This situation will only be resolved when there are

more women on the NEC, through whom the NAC can have a direct input.

Are you trying to increase women's representation on the NEC?

Yes. At the moment only one member of the NEC of 24 is a woman – despite the fact that 20% of ASTMS members are women. I think only three women have ever stood for the NEC – and one of them was me. But we have just won agreement in principle from the NEC to set up women's seats. Letters have gone out to divisions asking how this should be organised.

The NEC is proposing two national women's seats, elected by all the members. The women elected would have to represent all 16 divisions.

My Divisional Advisory Committee, on the other hand, is calling for four seats, each elected woman responsible for four divisions and thus answerable to a clear section of the members and ask to fight for their demands.

Nothing can change, however, until the 1984 Rules Revision Conference.

If we win women's seats on the NEC, the future will be much better. We will be able to exert more pressure on the NEC, and hopefully establish effective contact with the industrial sectors. The NAC will still be vital – possibly even more than now. Women NEC members will need the support of the NAC, and their work will be complementary.

Do you think other unions should have a Women's National Advisory Committee?

Yes. In most unions, women members are under-represented on the leadership bodies. Until we get equal representation, NACs are the only way of pushing forward on women's issues. This means not only taking up questions which affect women, but making it more possible for women to be active in their union.

German women get organised

IN the face of a concerted attempt by government, employers and the media to force us out of the workplace and back into our 'natural' place in the home, women have to respond

with a campaign for a woman's right to work and for a woman's right to choose.

So what's new? Well, these are the conclusions reached not by women

fighting against the effects of Tory economic policy in Britain, but by women in West Germany.

The call for a national campaign for a woman's right to work came from the

women's workshop at the first national conference of unemployed workers' groups held in Frankfurt on December 2-5.

There are now nearly two million unemployed in

West Germany. Union leaders have accepted large scale redundancies over the past few months without fighting back. But while these waves of redundancies have only just begun to hit male German workers, immigrant and female workers have been experiencing redundancy for much longer – and are already well acquainted with union leaders' unwillingness to fight for their jobs.

Five

The workshop felt the campaign should be based on five main demands:

1. A woman's right to a paid job.
2. –cut the working week with no loss of pay to get rid of unemployment.
3. –workers' control of working conditions.
4. No discrimination at work or on job applications.
5. Workers to fight redundancies.

nationality.

5. Improved training for women, especially apprenticeships for young women.

It was generally agreed that these demands could not be won in a capitalist system. But there was a call for unemployed women's groups to be set up, to organise women to fight for these demands, with a national conference planned for the spring.

West German women are also organising for improved abortion rights. The Catholic Church has just officially launched a national anti-abortion (sorry, pro-life) campaign, with a series of local rallies, with some backing from the Protestant church. The Church is expecting support from the new CDU/FDP (Conservative/Liberal) coalition government which looks likely to be returned at the Spring election.

And of course, in campaigning against abortion, the Church is helping foster a climate of opinion

which will help the right to be elected.

Pro-abortion rights campaigning in West Germany is done by the '218-groups', who held a national conference in Hanover on December 4-5. (Paragraph 218 is the anti-abortion clause in West Germany's constitution).

The fifty women from 17 different towns who attended discussed ways of campaigning against this attack, but also discussed the current campaigning around the 'Dortmund decision'. This is the recent case where a court ruled in favour of a woman who protested that she was being forced to finance abortions by paying her 'National Insurance' contributions. The case has now gone to appeal.

The conference has called a national demonstration on February 26 for 'A Woman's Right to Choose'.

Jenny Fisher



"Women have a right to work, too"

'BRIEFING'

REACHES OUT

London Labour Briefing, founded in 1980, has now become a widely-read monthly bulletin of the Labour Left, and inspired other Briefings in Brighton, Merseyside, Nottingham, Strathclyde, West Midlands, etc. On February 5 they will be meeting in London to discuss a national network. Martin Thomas interviewed Graham Bash, political editor of London Labour Briefing.

SINCE Briefing started, it has had two major campaigns — the campaign to get a left Greater London Council [GLC], and Target 82, the campaign directed towards the borough councils. What's next?

There's no immediate answer to that. Briefing now faces a more general task — to build up concentrations of strength, to build up a unity for the hard left in the Labour Party, and to turn the Labour Parties outwards so that we can recapture lost ground.

Above all, we must learn the lesson of the Deputy Leadership campaign: the hard left has got to build outwards, in particular in the trade unions.

If there is an immediate specific campaign, it is preparing for the next general election. We can help forward the sort of campaign that was originally developed by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory [in 1979]. The concept of fighting for a Labour victory on a hard left socialist programme was a very valuable one.

Clearly there is something in Briefing which goes beyond the immediate campaigns. that's shown by the fact that other Briefings have developed elsewhere.

We on London Briefing start from one fundamental principle: that our practice is primary, that the labour movement will respond to our socialist, to our Marxist ideas, to the extent that the movement is feeling its strength. Only insofar as it we are collectively strong can our consciousness be revolutionary.

So our number one task is to transcend the divisions which prevent us from feeling our strength — divisions between different sections of the revolutionary left, divisions between the revolutionary left and the best sections of the Bennite left, between the constituency Labour Parties and the trade unions, between the struggle in Britain and the struggle internationally, between the labour movement as a whole and the women's movement, and between politics and life itself.

We've seen ourselves as organising from within the constituency Labour Parties because that's where we're strong, but at the crossroads with the other levels of politics.

We don't work by imposing our ideas from above on those in struggle, but by allowing the movement through our pages and structures, to speak for itself.

I think that's the attraction

of Briefing — a certain openness, and also, hopefully, though perhaps not sufficiently so, a hardness and inflexibility when it matters.

The February conference will have a limited role: conferences rarely go far beyond the existing state of what is.

We want to create a liaison between the various Briefing groups. I'm not talking about a national paper, or destroying the autonomy of the local groups, but some sort of link-up.

You talked about a turn to the trade unions being a priority for the hard left in the Labour Party. What role can Briefing play in that?

The role London Briefing has played in that has been not very much, but what we want to do is to attract around us people who can do that work.

We've found that some of our most important allies on this have been the other revolutionary groups. You'll find that most of the industrial articles in Briefing have been obtained with the assistance of members of other revolutionary groups.

How much Briefing can do in the trade unions depends mostly on the extent to which we can help transcend the divisions between the various revolutionary groups.

But our work in building a cohesive left in the constituencies is also a contribution to the fight in the unions.

Briefing has a wide readership, but a comparatively tiny core of activists producing it. Do you see that as a problem?

It's certainly a problem. We must further establish Briefing as the legitimate voice of the broad left, commanding some loyalty from all the groupings of the hard left and the revolutionary left, then we can bring in some of the energy from those groupings. It depends on winning the support of existing activists who are already involved in other campaigns, rather than creating a new layer of activists.

What balance sheet would you draw now on Briefing's two main campaigns, for the GLC and for the borough councils?

The GLC campaign has been a success.

The GLC is generally seen to be under the control of the left. Ken Livingstone's role on the Irish issue, for example, has been absolutely crucial. It has made it clear that as well as the Labour

Party of Foot and Concannon, there is another Labour Party — the Labour Party of Livingstone and Bundred — which takes a very radical position, not only in words but in deeds, on crucial questions.

Whatever criticisms we have of Livingstone on the fares campaign — and those criticisms were pretty clearly voiced in Briefing — I think on balance that that campaign was a success.

It's not quite so clear in the boroughs. The Labour Party as a whole took a battering in the borough elections, and apart from a couple of areas it can't be said that the hard left have a great influence in the borough councils.

But in Islington there are people of the hard left in leading positions, and they are having to face up to some very difficult problems — such as what to do next year about the rates.

I have had lots of criticisms of Socialist Organiser being opposed to rate rises apparently on principle, and it seems to me that now that some of the comrades of Socialist Organiser are in leading positions on councils and facing the problems, we'll see the divisions transcended.

Another round of rate increases is still a possible option.

Certainly Ken Livingstone has played a good role on issues like Ireland and gay rights. But don't headlines like "London's Ours" (June 1981) and "Fortress Islington" (June 1982), reflect self-deception? Far from the left's position in the GLC and Islington representing a revolutionary seizure of power, the GLC wasn't even able to cut fares.

Aren't you in danger of accommodating to existing structures, reconciling the Left to the role of admini-

strators, sacrificing political sharpness, for the sake of supposed strength and power which in fact is illusory?

A really good question! Certainly we do not, and must not, mistake the assumption of office in the GLC or Islington with a revolutionary seizure of power.

But such slogans as "London's Ours" were, in my opinion, justified. We have to learn to throw the stigma of illegality onto the class enemy — applying at a local level the same type of approach used at a state level by the Bolsheviks in 1917.

We had just won an electoral victory in London, and we were insisting on the Labour Movement's right to govern London — 'to run London our way'. It was meant as a statement of intent, a challenge to those extra-parliamentary forces of the ruling class that have thwarted Labour's right to govern.

Yes, the dangers of accommodating to existing structures are real enough — at whatever level we operate. But what is the hard Left to do? We are in a real dilemma here. If we are not careful, we can end up being just administrators of Tory policies, and worse still, taking political responsibility for those policies.

But because the GLC was defeated on the fares, are you saying it was wrong for the hard Left to have intervened in the fight for, and assumption of office of, the Labour GLC in the first place? Have we really reached the stage at which the GLC is merely the administrator of Tory policies?

Have not important gains — however limited — been made for the labour movement by the role of the Left in the GLC, in Sheffield, and in Islington?

It is true, however, that Heseltine's latest penalties



"Opposition to cuts... a defining issue for the hard left"

are a further major step toward a situation in which it becomes impossible for Left councillors to operate at local level, and in which it would be wrong for them to continue.

So I do take your point.

How would you assess the experience of the last two or three years with rate rises?

A lot of councils have cut jobs and services. The criticism should be concentrated on that fact, and not on rate rises.

But I would rather look forward. We would agree that the campaign must be to force more money out of central government, as Islington is now doing.

To the extent that the movement is strong, we can get more resources out of central government. To the extent that we're not, we can't.

I'm not at all admitting defeat in advance, but to the extent that we're not successful in the immediate future, local authorities have got to make some decisions.

In certain circumstances there can be a case for majority opposition, or for going into bankruptcy. The case for disengagement is certainly strengthened by Heseltine's latest penalties, which could mean enormous rate increases in some boroughs.

Disengagement would be a statement that we have reached the stage at which socialist councillors are no longer able to use their positions to defend services. But it would be useless for one or two authorities to disengage in isolation. To be effective disengagement will have to be organised in key boroughs throughout London.

That means an immediate confrontation. If we've got the strength to do that, we should do it. But if we haven't the strength...

Rate increases are no part of a socialist solution. They are so nothing imposed on us to the extent that we lack strength.

But if I recall the argument about rate rises three years ago, you were saying then that rate rises were no part of a socialist solution.

I don't know. It's time until we're strong enough to impose our solutions on the bourgeoisie. To the extent that we're not strong enough it could be time, time, time.

What would you say?

I don't think any of these rate rises have gained time. In Lambeth, for example, the rate rises prepared the way for the council to be panicked into cuts.

Councils will never have the strength to defeat the government. A council has very little power. What socialists can do is use the council as a platform to mobilise against the government.

They should say that the alternatives are a big rate rise — in Islington, for example, at least £4 a week on average — or severe cuts. They should say they are willing to fight both these alternatives and to face the consequences — surcharge, disqualification, etc.

They should agitate for a fight and try to win a majority in the local labour movement. They may not be able to get that majority, but that's what they should fight for and give a lead for.

Defining

But to go back to what you saying about the role of Briefing as a framework for unity of the hard left: in that context, what would you see as the defining issues for the hard left?

Total commitment to all of the constitutional victories that have been won by the Labour left, total opposition to the register and refusal to register. Commitment to accountability.

A principled anti-imperialist position on the international issues — Briefing has been quite consistent on Ireland and on the Malvinas (where, frankly, I think we had a far more coherent position than Socialist Organiser). Opposition to Stalinism. And support for the growth of the women's movement.

The last point, I think, means not only support for the fight of women within the Labour Party, but also building the Labour Party outwards so that it becomes a working-class

definition of politics itself. We've tried to build a connection between sexual politics and class politics.

Finally, on local level opposition to cuts. Questions such as rate increases are legitimate areas for disagreement.

If Briefing did become a framework for unity of the hard left, with masses of activists, how would you see it being organised?

To some extent we've already built a structure which can create bridges between the different levels of movement. This has not always been without paying price, and I think on some occasions there's been a failure of principled sharpness and differentiation.

Be that as it may, we made a start on uniting within our structures many of the best sections of the left. The left can unify its forces and embody the strength of the working class if we learn to throw away competing ideologies as such, a party lines, in favour of a method that is open and flexible.

The model I think is useful is the way the Bolsheviks developed in the revolutionary period in 1917 when they transformed themselves into a very open democratic organisation.

We have our debates in the open, we're imposing a line from above but allowing the best activists to express their own experiences and their politics through those experiences.

The problem is, as I say, that we haven't many activists. Well, we have lots of activists who are prepared to associate loosely with Briefing. We have got 125 self-styled Briefing in London.

We're not a disciplined revolutionary organisation. I'm not at all denying need for a disciplined revolutionary organisation — a Leninist, and I accept need for such an organisation. But in Briefing, operating at a different level, and I think what we've got is a role in creating a working-class

Impact of Solidarnosc in China

"OUR WORKING CLASS"

Abridged and adapted from the Hong Kong monthly October Review, this article describes the movement for free trade unions in China sparked by Poland's example

THE 1980 autumn heat from Gdansk reached Peking, ten thousand kilometers away.

When the workers' strike movement started in Poland, regimes of the Soviet bloc at once signalled a red light and denounced the workers for their "anti-socialist" attempt to form an independent trade union. The Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) was urged to respond with an iron hand.

But in China, the Communist Party leadership responded quite differently. In the official organ of the CCP, the People's Daily, anti-USSR propaganda had been focussing on Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and (allegedly, through Vietnam) in Kampuchea, and the anti-USSR feelings of the Polish people apparently tuned in well with the propaganda; thus, its coverage on the strike movement in Poland was rather detailed and favourable.

This proved to have far-reaching consequences.

White-hot

From August 14, 1980, when the strike movement began to turn white-hot, the People's Daily reported on the developments almost every day for a month. On August 18, the front page headline read "Some factories in Poland set up Strike Coordinating Committees to lead the strikes in unison, and put forward 16 demands to the government".

The report quoted from the Strike Coordinating Committee's communique:

"Even when the strike is over, the Strike Coordinating Committees will not dissolve but will continue to struggle for the realisation of their demands, they will become the provincial committees of the free trade union... The workers make political demands such as the end of censorship, guarantee of the freedom of speech and publication, formation of free trade unions, elimination of privileges, release of political prisoners and others."

Pickets

After August 20, the People's Daily even carried photos showing the striking workers distributing leaflets and the picket lines guarding occupied factories.

Thanks to the reportage in the CCP official papers, the people of China have generally come to know the methods, political demands and victory of the Polish workers. The stimulus was beyond the CCP leadership's calculation and in the later stage, irretrievable.

Of course, the People's Daily repeatedly attacked Soviet hegemonism, yet it could not disguise the fact that although anti-USSR feelings played a part, the Polish workers' struggle was directed first and foremost at the PUWP bureaucracy. The Polish workers were putting forward demands primarily as workers and not as Poles. The People's Daily, on August 20, had made a reference to the demand of the Polish workers in 1976: "All power to the working

class!"

As the Polish events unfolded, the CCP was increasingly aware that it was playing with fire. The People's Daily started carrying articles meant to persuade the people that the CCP and the PUWP were different.

The papers described how the trade unions helped with the livelihood of the workers and how the 3rd session of the 5th National People's Congress was "a congress of democracy and reform".

Boundaries

The CCP leadership takes the Polish event seriously. It is conscious that the Chinese workers are likely to follow the Polish example, and perhaps in a more radical way.

The Hong Kong Seventies Monthly (April 1981) reprinted an internal document produced by the propaganda department of a provincial committee in China on 25 November 1980, which pointed out that "the impact of the Polish event far exceeds its national boundaries."

It proposed that the authorities should adopt measures including the following: "To express that it would promote extensive socialist democracy, recognise that the trade union is an independent, self-governing institution of the working class, recognise that workers have the right to strike."

Extension

The document concluded by saying that "some countries in Eastern Europe are very scared of the extension of the Polish phenomena. Czechoslovakia and East Germany have taken measures to blockade news about the Polish event, and have repeatedly published sayings condemning the emergence of anti-socialist currents in Poland."

The Czechoslovak

authorities, in order to prevent the extension of the Polish event, are intensifying their measures to further control the trade unions, continue the repression on the Charter 77 movement, and prohibit underground Catholic publications.

Hungary tries to prevent the emergence of independent trade unions by giving more power to [state] trade unions. Lately, East Germany ruthlessly repressed a strike of underground railway workers in order to prevent the appearance of the Polish events in East Germany. All these induce international observers to make a rather justified prediction that in the 1980s, new upheavals caused by the Polish events will occur in Eastern Europe."

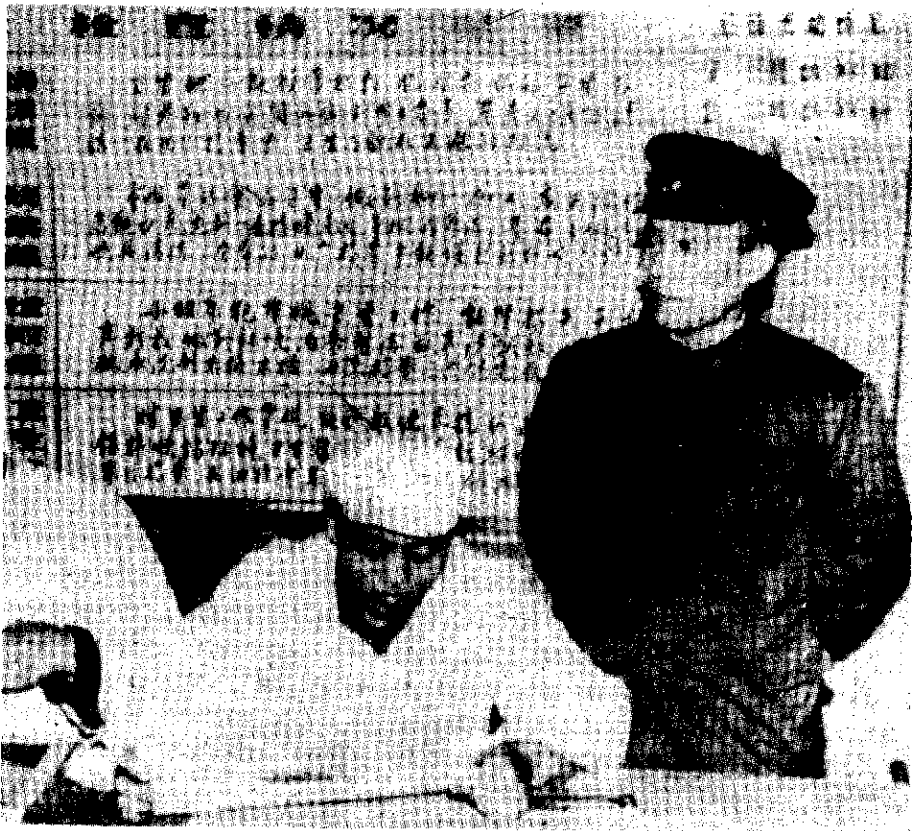
Although this paragraph did not mention China, its implications were obvious. It is not known how the debate went on in the party. But speeches made by CCP leaders and the regime's subsequent measures clearly indicated the result of this debate.

Posture

On 30 April 1981, Chen Yu, vice-chairman of the official China National Federation of Trade Unions, took pains to affirm that people in China who want to set up a Polish-type free trade union "do not get the support of the masses", and stressed that his union was totally "independent".

In the beginning, the CCP tried to put up a posture of reform to moderate its antagonism to the people. At the end of 1980, election of people's deputies on the county level was conducted throughout the countryside, and the system of workers congresses was practised in some enterprises.

On 21 March 1981, when a delegation from the French CFDT visited China, a CCP official told the delegation



Maoist 're-education'... but the 're-educating' effect of Solidarnosc was more powerful.

that among China's 400,000 enterprises, 38,000 had established workers' congresses. He frankly admitted that this was one of the means to prevent a Polish-type labour crisis in China.

However, since the bureaucrats at different levels of the hierarchy do not wish to give up their power, the county-level elections had come across much opposition from the cadres. The so-called workers' congresses exist only in name. Besides, the CCP is entrapped in increasing economic difficulties and political crises.

Thus, the CCP finally decided to go on the road that Czechoslovakia and East

Germany took, and carried out a ruthless repression of opposition forces.

In April 1981 the CCP authorities launched a massive arrest of democratic movement activists, and almost all editors of the main samizdat publications were arrested. At the end of May 1982, after over a year's detention, two of them, Wang Xizhe and He Qiu, were sentenced to 14 years and 10 years in jail.

In November 1981, the Peking Municipal Government promulgated a decree forbidding the people to demonstrate, rally or give speeches at the Tian An Men Square.

But the seeds of the anti-bureaucratic struggle of the Polish workers, ironically dispersed by the CCP, found rapid germination and growth in the soil of China. The Chinese people expressed their excitement over the Polish events both by words and by action.

Samizdat

Samizdat publications wasted no time in congratulating the Polish workers, analysing this valuable experience, and drawing lessons from the struggle of the Polish workers. The Chinese working class also reacted by actual organisation, action and strikes; the demand for a Solidarity-type independent trade union gained popularity.

Even students demanded an independent students' union and started the organisational work of linking up with each other all over the country.

Samizdat publications, whose banner is democracy and whose aim is to carry the Chinese revolution to the end, burgeoned in Peking in November 1978. It did not take long for such publications to spread all over the country. Most of them managed to stay independent of party control.

The samizdat publications responded to the Polish event with enthusiastic greetings and unconditional internationalist solidarity. The editorial of Sea Waves of Qingdao, No. 7 (August 1980) said: "Public ownership of the means of production has not eliminated

exploitation and repression... Privileges which have replaced capital are repressing the labourers in a more undisguised, intensive way than capital. There is no sign whatever of Marx's most basic idea - the emancipation of man..."

"From Poland came the news of victory of the struggle of the working class. This event tells us that: socialism should be a method for seeking the emancipation of man... one-party structure leads to dictatorship."

Party

In November 1980, Sea Waves said: "The Polish workers' strike movement led by Walesa gained victory with the formation of the independent trade union, and it has become the most glorious new starting point in the history of the international communist movement..."

"When the workers go on a massive strike and themselves organise a trade union that represents the interests of the workers, when the workers have the possibility of their own independent activities, a political party in essence has come out. Political parties are simply organisations which have common purpose, unified will, a programme and unanimous interests. The Polish Solidarity has all the above conditions..."

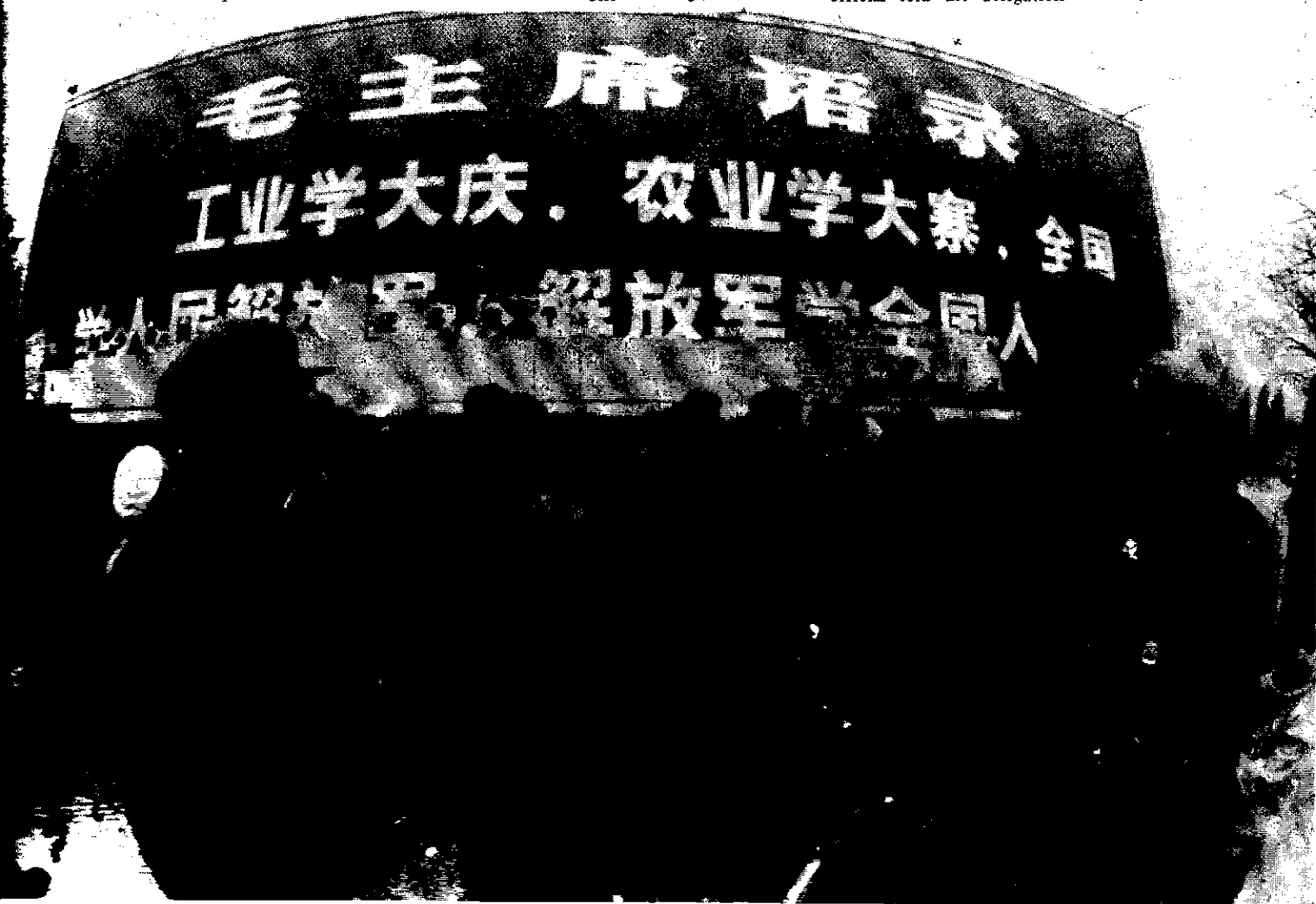
"Therefore, a second political party has finally emerged in socialist Poland, and it is a political party truly belonging to the working class."

Continuous

"The impact of the victory of the Polish working class is far from what they themselves can estimate, and it is not limited by national boundaries. It is a brand new milestone for the communist system. It has shaken and negated all regimes carrying the brand of socialism."

"It is an example for the labouring people of the socialist countries. It starts and develops the possibility of continuous revolution under socialist conditions."

The Free Forum of

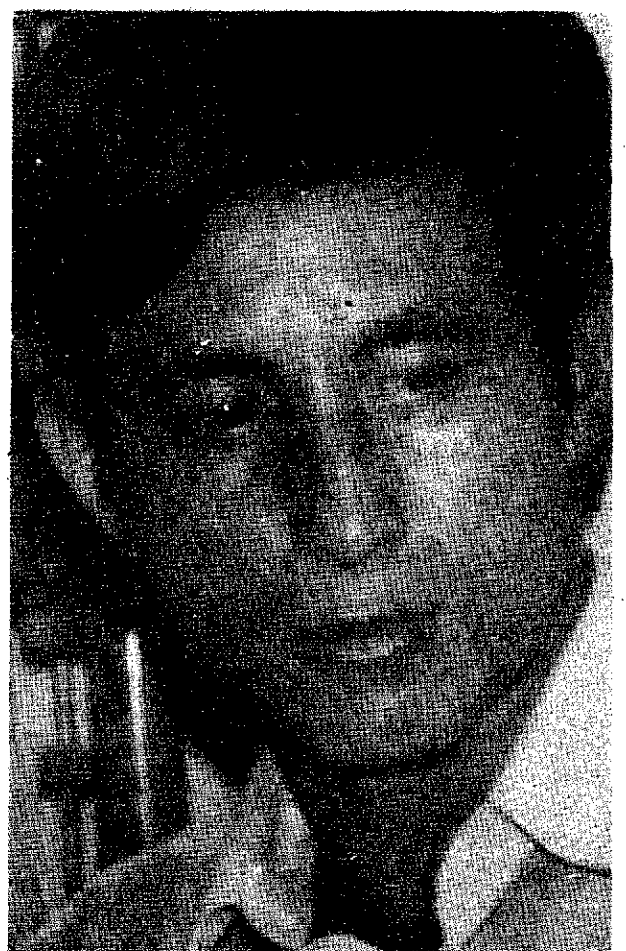


1979 Demonstration in Beijing. The demonstrators clamped down.

... IS RE-AWAKENING"



Soldier restrains demonstrators in Shanghai



Jailed: Wang Xizhe



Modernising but retaining old-fashioned repression: Deng

the workers in the Taiyuan Steel Factory. This action was linked to the Polish trade movement and the article proclaimed that "the working class of our country has re-awakened."

The official Changjiang Daily, 14 January 1981, reported on attempts to organise independent trade unions. The official Wuhan Daily, on 29 January 1981 reported that some Wuhan workers demanded the formation of free trade unions.

The editorial of the official Workers' Daily, 16 February 1981, mentioned that in many regions (including Shanghai, Wuhan and Xian), workers wanted to organise independent trade

unions. On 8 March 1981, three printing workers from Taiyuan were sentenced to imprisonment for organising the "China Democracy Party".

The demand to organise independent trade unions was not limited to the central plains of China. The Lhasa Radio reported on 24 January 1981 that among those arrested during a demonstration, there were workers wanting to organise an independent trade union.

It is difficult for the outside world to know the number and scale of strikes not reported in the official media. However, speculations can be made of the degree of seriousness from

the fear and vigilance expressed by the government leaders.

Students were also affected by the Polish example. The official Changjiang Daily of 14 January 1981 reported on attempts to organise independent students unions. Samizdat publications revealed that Tu Shen, the Hunan student leader, went on a hunger strike with 87 students in October 1980 and then led a student delegation to petition in Peking.

On his way he exchanged ideas with students from other universities, and they discussed preparations for setting up a national students union.

In April 1982, the CCP central leadership proposed

to the National People's Congress to delete from the Constitution the article guaranteeing the workers' right to strike.

And in May 1982, the State Council issued "Regulations concerning rewards and penalties for workers in enterprises" which threatened workers with economic penalties and administrative dismissals in order to tighten its control over the workers.

The country is still bogged down in deep economic and political crises. Party cadres on all levels continue with, if not intensify, their corruption, bribery, privilege-seeking activities, so that the authority that the Deng faction had when it first resumed power has declined drastically. The

party is confronted with an unprecedented crisis in faith and confidence. In this land where the people are thirsting for changes, the Polish experience is like a torch lighting up a whole pile of dry wood.

For the moment, the Chinese democracy movement has been repressed and the working class is under more severe attacks. Similarly, Solidarity has been repressed. However it has not been crushed.

With the deterioration of the economic and political situation and the further decay of the bureaucratic rule, the resurgence of a socialist movement for true democracy waged by the Chinese and Polish people is inevitable.

The Chinese with no rights

Guangzhou, The Sail of Nanxi, and the organ of the National Unofficial Publications Association, Duty, printed the "21 demands of the Polish workers" and the "Charter of rights of the Polish workers", so that the people could know the detailed demands of the Polish workers.

The samizdat publications also pointed out that in Poland, freedom of publication could be achieved through strikes.

The Qingdao Theoretical Journal (February 1981) pointed out that "the primary reason for the victory of the independent trade union in Poland is the accelerated decomposition of bureaucratic privileges and the general awakening and true solidarity of the masses."

Revolution

"The rule of the bureaucratic class must not be replaced by the rule of the bourgeoisie... the only correct way out is to build a system of proletarian democracy suitable for this particular transitional period in history, organically and firmly linking up true public

ownership with true democracy so that they will complement and guarantee each other in the forward stride on the road to true socialism..."

"There is the possibility that China would accomplish radical revolution by a road more chaotic than Poland's... Let us firmly unite under the banner of proletarian democracy, and fight to eliminate all class rule, class exploitation and class repression, and help advance China's overall modernisation construction!"

The impact of the Polish workers' movement was not only on militants of the samizdat publications. Despite the government blockade of news, fragmentary information shows that since November 1980, strikes and workers' actions have repeatedly occurred in China. Moreover, the demands that the workers put forward are not limited to economic ones, but also include the demand to set up Polish-style independent trade unions.

The samizdat The Sail (December 1980) reported on spontaneous action by

THE issue of dual nationality of Hong Kong and Macao Chinese has been drawing increasing attention and worries from among Chinese here in these two places through the increasingly discovered and publicised cases of the disappearance of Hong Kong Chinese travelling in China and the refusal of the British colonial government in Hong Kong to take any responsibility over the legal and political rights of these Hong Kong travellers.

No-one knows how many Hong Kong Chinese travelers have vanished in China. One estimate is that 100 people at least were arrested last year for one reason or another. 4.5 million Hong Kong Chinese visit China each year.

In one case in 1981, a Hong Kong Trotskyist, Ng Chung-yin, was arrested on a visit to China and pressured to become an informer. Dozens of Chinese oppositionists may have been arrested as a result. Ng has been expelled from the Revolutionary Marxist League.

On the one hand, the Chinese government does not recognise dual nationality for any Chinese national.

That is apparently in line with the long-existing refusal to recognise the colonial status of these two places, officially spelled out by top Chinese officials in 1949 and thereafter.

However, the continuing colonial rule of Hong Kong under the British and Macao under the Portuguese remains largely impossible without the material support and implicit approval of the Chinese government as the two places depend heavily on the supply of basic foodstuffs, electricity, water, etc from the mainland.

The British colonialists, on the other hand, continue to rip off enormous wealth and snatch huge economic and political benefits from the colony. While paying lip-service to the interests of the population of Hong Kong and insisting on the legal justification of the three unequal treaties (in 1842, 1860 and 1898) that

brought Hong Kong under colonial rule, they are refusing to defend the basic legal rights of Hong Kong Chinese from the colony while travelling in China.

This does not mean to say that it is in the interests of the Hong Kong and Macao Chinese to insist on the consolidation of the colonial rule against the formal claim of China, but the naked hypocrisy of the colonial government must be exposed and condemned.

And the question of re-integration back into China does not stand on its own. Re-integration without socialist democracy, the right of the population in the democratic say in the running of the economy and of the political administration and without the eradication of the system of privileges and bureaucratic rule, is not what the population here wants.

The fight together with workers, peasants and democracy fighters in the mainland and Taiwan for genuine socialist democracy and for democratic re-integration

should be the only viable political way out for the Hong Kong and Macao population.

Meanwhile, we should start from the concrete defence of the political and legal rights of Hansen Huang, Liu Sanqing, as well as Xu Wenli, He Qiu, Wang Xizhe and other detained Chinese Democratic Movement activists.

From the Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement, November 1982.



Jailed: He Qiu

*Hansen Huang is a lawyer from Hong Kong who vanished in Peking early this year.

*Liu Sanqing, a Hong Kong political activist, went to Canton for a two-day visit in December 1981, and has not been heard of since.

*Xu Wenli, a well-known activist in the Chinese democratic movement, was arrested in August 1981 and in June 1982 sentenced to 15 years' jail for "organising a counter-revolutionary clique", etc.

*He Qiu was reportedly sentenced in May 1982 to 10 years' jail for "counter-revolutionary propaganda" and "sabotage".

*Wang Xizhe was sentenced, also in May, to 14 years' jail on similar charges.

*Contact: Chinese Democratic Movement Resource Centre, PO Box 89278, Kowloon City Post Office, Kowloon, Socialist Committee in Defence of the Democratic Movement in China, c/o 41 Brondesbury Road, London NW6.

Change and Conflict in the Gorbals

Power without glory is the theme of a recent book* on community struggles in Glasgow's Gorbals. Ronnie Clyde reviews it

*"Change and Conflict - A study of community work in Glasgow", Barbara and Richard Bryant, Aberdeen University Press, £6.00.

"Change and Conflict - a Study of Community Work in Glasgow" was published three days before the recent by-election in Queen's Park (Glasgow).

The Glasgow Evening Times reported on this book's contents under the headline "Book's Shock Attack on Gorbals MP", whilst the SNP candidate in the by-election called for an immediate inquiry into its allegations about the late Labour MP Frank McElhone. Socialist Organiser supporter Stan Crooke, recently

expelled from Queen's Park CLP for his criticisms of the local councillors and late MP described the book as "my ticket back into the Labour Party". But Helen McElhone the widow and now successor of the late MP would only say: "I have not read the book... to libel the dead is dreadful".

Local community activists who have had a chance to read relevant chapters of the book, however, vouch for its accuracy. Throughout the seventies the authors were community work teachers attached to Cross-

roads, a network of tenants associations, community groups, etc., covering the Gorbals and neighbouring Govanhill.

Most interesting is their detailed description of the late MP's attacks on two Crossroads "fieldwork units" i.e. information centres, one in the Gorbals and one in Govanhill, in 1977 and 1978.

The first attack came after a particularly stormy public meeting of the Gorbals Anti-Dampness Campaign (then at the height of its activity) at which McElhone had come in for heavy criticism from the local tenants.

After the meeting Richard Bryant was phoned at home by McElhone. The MP accused him and the students under his tuition of "masterminding an attack on the local Labour Party", and "reminded" Bryant, that he, McElhone, as a Junior Minister at the Scottish Office, had direct responsibility for the funding of the Crossroads units.

Not long after this incident, McElhone, together with various civil servants and Regional Councillors, paid Bryant and his students



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a visit. In three hours of "tense discussion" he accused them of "encouraging irresponsible action", of "acting as 'cheer-leaders' at demonstrations and generally 'stirring things up'" and claimed that one or two of the units should be transferred since they allegedly represented "too great a concentration of community work resources" in the area.

Support was also sought from sympathetic local Labour Party members such as the late Geoff Shaw, one-time convenor of Strathclyde Regional Council.

Unfortunately "the hard line taken by the MP was supported by a majority of the active members of the local Labour Party". But elsewhere, due to their deep involvement in the struggles of the communities in the Gorbals and Govanhill, the Bryants and their colleagues had no problem getting support. And this, together with support from individual Labour Party members, was enough to beat back McElhone's attack.

Just a year later, when Richard Bryant handed in his resignation to leave for Ruskin College, McElhone returned to the attack. Attempts to advertise for a replacement were blocked.

The Crossroads staff mounted a similar campaign as in the previous year, but under much more difficult conditions. Geoff Shaw had died in the meantime and "bringing pressure to bear on the MP from within the Labour Party became a far more difficult task". Of the three local Labour councillors, "only one was regarded as being positively pro-Crossroads".

A public meeting was organised, attended by over 100 tenants representing 21 local groups, and addressed by McElhone. He again accused the Crossroads staff of organising actions which were "unnecessary, damaging to the image of Glasgow, and directed against the Labour Party".

He also claimed that Crossroads received "generous grants", whilst, "many other organisations in Gorbals and Govanhill - including the Labour Party - did valuable voluntary work without receiving a penny of public money."

Those present were unimpressed. They forced McElhone to sign a statement allowing Richard Bryant's post to be re-advertised.

Subsequently, McElhone manoeuvred to get three conditions tagged on: "Transfer of one of the fieldwork units in the Gorbals and Govanhill."

"A revised job description for the post."

"Applications to be vetted by a selection committee (of which McElhone was to be a member)."

The Crossroads management committee (which consisted of delegates from the various tenants' associations and so on in the area) met to consider McElhone's proposition. One view was summed up by a delegate's statement: "I'd prefer not to have a unit in the Gorbals than one controlled by the Labour Party".

In the event, by just one

vote, the meeting voted to accept McElhone's proposals.

A replacement was duly appointed. And the transfer of one of the units? With the Conservative general election victory in 1979, McElhone disappeared from the Scottish Office, and with him the threat of a closure of one of the units!

"It is ironic to note that Crossroads might have been one of the few community work agencies in Scotland to have positively benefited from the return of a Conservative government", note the Bryants.

Why were McElhone and so many of the Labour councillors opposed to the local community groups? All of them were, after all, "only" fighting for a better deal for the area.

The answer is simple. The late MP, and the councillors who shared his viewpoint regarded themselves as the source of power and privilege in the Constituency.

They wanted all attempts to improve the area to go through the "existing power structure", i.e. themselves.

Activity

But the community workers, the anti-dampness campaign and the Govanhill Action Group worked on a different set of ideas. They saw improvements being achieved through the activity of the community itself. That is why they met venomous hostility from the local Labour autocrats.

McElhone's attitude is reflected clearly in his statement: "The failure of Crossroads was not to take advantage of myself sitting as Minister for Social Work for the last three years - a Minister who dictated to his officials."

McElhone and his ilk would have preferred the community workers to play another role. "There was enough work for them on the social side - looking after the senior citizens, helping them fill in forms, that would have been a lot more appropriate than the public meetings with a lot of heckling."

A statement from someone described as "a prominent Labour Party member from Gorbals and Govanhill" sums up their whole concept of politics:

"I believe in the kind of Tammany Hall business if you want things done - you speak to so and so, to speak to so and so, to manipulate the situation, rather than having open confrontations... I've always had it in my head that this is the way to influence people."

The appalling conditions in the Gorbals and Govanhill today are proof of the bankruptcy of such an approach. The most significant victory gained in the last ten years

was re-housing and compensation for the tenants in the dampness-ridden Hutchesontown 'E' scheme. This was not achieved by "Tammany Hall" politics, but by mobilisation and confrontation.

Under the rule of McElhone, the Labour Party failed to fight alongside the tenants. It was a crutch which McElhone used to prop up his autocratic regime.

Threat

McElhone's followers in the party were opposed to the anti-dampness campaign:

"Some members of the local Labour Party resented the style and tactics of the campaign. It was too abrasive, bloody-minded, and went over the score in the demands it made on the local councillors... (it) could not be disciplined or controlled by the established power structure of the Gorbals... In short the campaign was seen as a threat".

Inevitably, McElhone's manipulative use of the Labour Party to defend his position of power and privilege ended up bringing the Party into disrepute. The fact that members of the Crossroads management committee preferred having no fieldwork unit at all to one "controlled by the Labour Party", or the previous refusal of the Govanhill Action Group to allow the Labour councillors to use their premises as a surgery, are sad reflections of this.

Break

The Labour Party hopes to run society. But these militant community activists didn't want to see it running even an information centre. This was the lack of respect brought upon the Labour Party through the hostile attitude and actions of McElhone, the councillors and members of the Party to local, independent working class mobilisations.

The Bryants' book also explains why the SO supporter recently expelled from the CLP met such a fate. Many of those voting for his expulsion must not only have been aware of the disgraceful events described by the Bryants in their book. They must have also actively colluded in them.

McElhone has gone, but his tradition lives on. The CLP remains in the hands of the Right, with an MP who will no doubt prove a "worthy" successor to her late husband.

To break the hold of the Right, the left must organise with the same determination which, as the Bryants' book clearly demonstrates, the Right has used to stay in power.

Richmond United

ALL over Greater London, the need of Londoners for homes gets greater and more desperate. Yet Council housing stocks are depleted by being sold off, and all too often, the only building and development taking place is that of huge office blocks.

The deepening crisis of capitalism dissuades finance houses and pension funds from industrial investment towards land speculation and in particular, the over development of office blocks, irrespective of whether they will be let in the immediate future.

Thus in all the 'villages' that comprise the Greater London conurbation, we see vast empty unwanted offices blighting the environment and offering no benefits to the community - monuments to the 'alienation' of capitalist production that Marx detected 100 years ago.

A dozen or so campaigns have grown in Central London focussing on the need for 'homes not offices', from the 'Green Giants' of Vauxhall to the Docklands Development of East London. And the problem has spread to the suburbs.

In Richmond-upon-Thames (main industry tourism) it became clear to many concerned residents that the main purpose of the 1980 Richmond Town Area Action Plan, was to bulldoze much of the townscape for 290,250 sq. ft. of office space. Much of this has now been built, but not a part of it rented or even likely to be in the immediate future.

Of course, the Area Action Plan was loaded with promises of conservation and restoration of buildings listed for their historic and architectural interest, but the Richmond Council (controlled by the Tories through the Mayor's casting vote) has reneged on most of these promises. For 20 years they have allowed the Riverside

site of once attractive historic buildings to fall into extreme dilapidation.

The legislative reforms for building preservation contained in the 1971 Town & Country Planning Act depend for their effectiveness on the willingness of local authorities to serve repairs notices on owners of such property. Richmond Council refused to do this for the Riverside Site (of which they were owners of a third) and evicted the squat organised by Battered Wives, smashed up the interiors of the buildings, and refused to disclose public information. 140,000 sq. ft. of offices were agreed for the 'viable conservation' of the site, but now only 2 facades of one building will be conserved.

Richmond's Old Town Hall on this site was donated to the 'inhabitants of the Parish for municipal purposes in 1888, but is now to be en-

tirely gutted for offices and shops. As Labour's Spokesperson at the Public Inquiry of 1980, I formed an amenity and conservation group in March 1982 specifically to defend the Old Town Hall, and generally to fight for 'Consultation not Croydonisation' - 'Homes Not Offices'. The group attracted the support of nearly all residents of the town across all party political divisions, and named itself Richmond United, (the suggestion Richmond Resistance being rejected).

A public rally at the Old Town Hall on June 8 1982 was packed with 400 people. In August, the Council leaders rushed to the High Court in the Strand for a ruling on their right to sell off the Town Hall. Richmond United challenged their right, so did the Attorney General who opposed their plans in court. Justice Warner ruled

that because the actual word 'Trust' had not been used, the Council were not bound by the terms of the gift.

Since then, Richmond United has broadened its campaign, studied local traffic problems, organised a petition of over 3,000 names collected in less than 3 weeks, held another rally on July 30, lobbied the Council, and is now organising a local demonstration.

Office development Protest Walk. Saturday January 29 '83. Assemble at Richmond Old Town Hall at 11 am. Proceed through the town centre laying 'white elephants' on the steps of Richmond's 290,250 sq. ft. of empty unwanted offices. Rally at the Riverside (near the White Cross) at approx. 12 noon.

Tim Summers



Site for more offices

Nuclear-free councils must unite

West Midlands county councillor Dave Spencer reports

THERE ARE now 144 local councils who support the Nuclear Free Zone concept and regard the idea of civil defence in the event of nuclear war as a farce. These councils refused to take part in the government's war planning exercise, Operation Hard Rock, last September.

As a result of this, CND's plans for an opposing parallel exercise (Hard Luck), and NALGO's advisory circular to its members in Town Halls, Willie Whitelaw 'postponed' the whole operation.

At the same time he threatened to amend the regulations under the 1948 Civil Defence Act in order to force councils into line. The Home Office produced its proposals on October 6. These are to be discussed by councils by December 10, then taken to Parliament and made law by April 1983.

The haste of all this shows the fear with which the Tories view the growing peace movement.

The new regulations include new powers for the Home Secretary to give individual councils specific directives. Failure or refusal to comply with a directive would allow the government to take over the job and charge costs to defaulting councillors.

Local authority workers will also be compelled to undergo civil defence training if it is regarded as being appropriate to their normal work. Council will be expected to provide suitable war headquarters and to equip them with communications and other equipment. They will also

be obliged to organise civil defence volunteers.

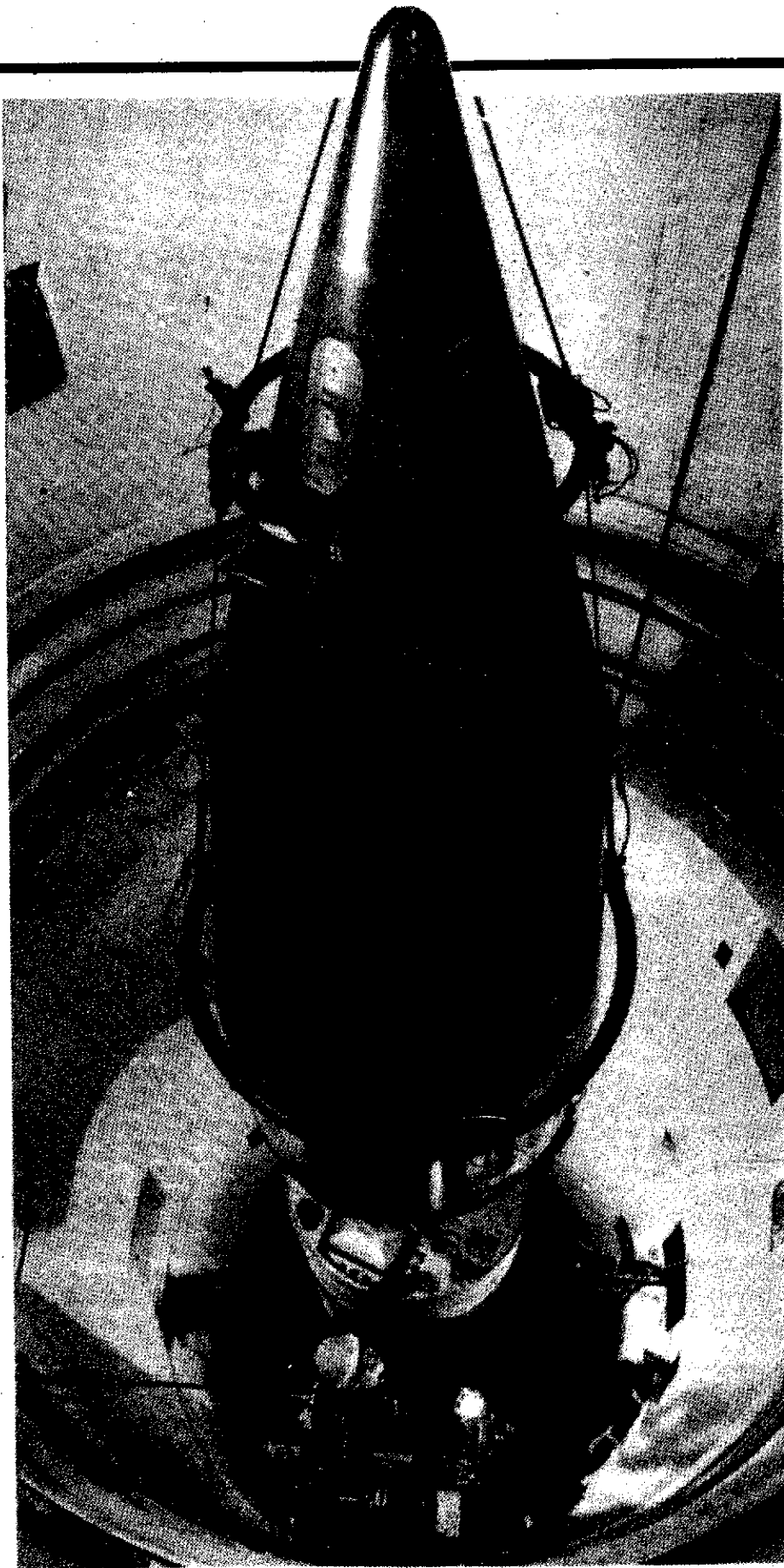
Delegates from the 144 NFZ councils met at a special conference in Manchester on December 3, and discussed an 8-point action plan. The most important item in my view is point 7: "Work with local peace groups to promote public awareness of the government's proposals".

Important in this are the links made with public sector unions whose members can be conscripted into civil defence training — for example NALGO, hospital workers' or teachers' unions, and so on.

Failed

In the past Labour councils and the labour movement have failed to unite against the government and the courts on the cuts, on cheap fares, and so on. This time there is no question of money or rate increases — it is a plain political and moral question. Again there seems to be no leadership coming from the Labour Party nationally.

With the general election coming up and the Labour Party conference committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament, you would have thought this was an election issue which ought to be taken up by the Labour Party in a big way. It is up to rank and file Labour Party members to run campaigns involving leaflets, film shows, etc, to bring home the issue of civil defence and not to leave the Nuclear Free Zone resolutions on paper only.



Don't forget the aspirin!

by councillor Chris Hickey

"THE FUNCTION of civil defence is not to encourage war, or to put an acceptable face on it. It is to adapt ourselves to the reality that we must live with, and to prepare ourselves so that we could alleviate the suffering which war would cause if it came".

With this humane explanation, William Whitelaw and George Younger introduce the pamphlet 'Civil Defence: Why We Need It', the government's official apology for its civil defence plans.

For anybody with half an eye on survival, however, such words cannot be taken as face value.

The Christian Aid/Oxfam sponsored journal New Internationalist provided the following illuminating account of the effects of "just one ten megaton bomb exploding over the average city hall... Such a bomb would:

- Flash quicker than the eye can blink, burning out the irises of people over 200 miles away who were looking in that direction.

- Leave a crater one and a half miles wide and deeper than London's deepest underground railway.

- Smash all houses, shops, offices, factories, bridges and railways for a further eight to ten miles.

- Burn or melt most things, including cars, houses, trees and people up to twenty miles away.

- Create a firestorm... a flaming pillar sucking in winds of up to 150 miles an hour within 25 miles of the city hall, the firestorm would suffocate and roast everyone in shelters.

- Dump lethal radioactive dust and rubble downwind from the explosion... in a corridor 20 to 30 miles wide and 100 miles long, everyone not in a well-equipped shelter would be killed by radioactivity".

But, as the magazine

points out, a nuclear war would see more than one bomb dropped. Indeed, the recently cancelled Hard Rock civil defence exercise planned for last autumn was based upon a scenario in which 105 nuclear missiles would hit Britain.

These would be equivalent to 13,000 bombs of the type that destroyed Hiroshima and killed 140,000 people.

How does the government propose to protect us? Mass evacuation? Deep communal shelters? A shelter for every family? Oh no — this would be far too expensive.

The Civil Defence pamphlet states, "the risk of war is considered so slight that the enormous expense of providing shelters to every family in the land could not be justified... As it is, more is being spent on civil defence than previously — about £45 million a year by 1983-4".

Our frugal masters appear less thrifty when it comes to the actual weaponry of mass destruction. The replacement of the Polaris missile by the Chevaline warhead is costing some £2,400 million, and Trident £5,000 million.

Whilst huge sums are spent on tooling up the British state, we, its subject people, are given ludicrous advice on how to save ourselves on the cheap.

"If you live in a block of flats... five storeys high or more, do not shelter in the top two floors... Use the cupboard under the stairs (as shelter)... You may have casualties from an attack which you have to care for, perhaps for some days, without medical help. Be sure you have your first aid requirements in your survival kit... household medicines and prescribed medicines. And at least aspirins or similar tablets, adhesive dressing, cotton wool..."

Don't forget the aspirins. The blast may give someone a headache!

But while the rest of us huddle under the stairs, top politicians, civil servants, military personnel, and, no doubt, a few captains of industry, will race for their secret bunkers in the Chilterns, Salisbury and elsewhere.

Britain will be divided into 12 administrative regions, run by ministers, and sub-regions run by the Chief Executives of the county councils.

Parallel with the administrative regions will be military commands. They will undertake the 'control of selfish and disgruntled minorities', 'subjection and elimination of hostile elements', 'support and protection of special courts', and 'guards on internment areas'.

Operation Square Leg, the civil defence exercise held in 1980, set aside over 6,000 troops to move against 'subversive' elements.

Civil defence is about the defence of 'order', of the preservation and domination of the bourgeois state machine before, during, and after a nuclear war. If we are serious about the survival of humanity, then that state machine must be broken, and the order it both protects and is part of must be overthrown.

The slogan 'socialism or barbarism' has never been more relevant than it is today.

SCIENCE

Killer cancer

by Les Hearn

Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS) was a very rare skin cancer affecting elderly men of Mediterranean ancestry or young blacks from Tropical Africa. Since 1979, though, several hundred youngish, healthy American men have been found to have KS, and already nearly half have

died. Also since 1979, several hundred have caught pneumonia caused by Pneumocystis carinii, a bacterium related to the one that causes tuberculosis. This pneumonia has also often been fatal.

The link is that some 85% of victims have been gay or bisexual men.

Previously, both diseases had been observed in transplant patients. Their immune defences had been suppressed with drugs to prevent rejection of the foreign organs.

Lymphoma

Diseases which exploit such loopholes in the body's defences are called "opportunistic" and many others have been found in gay men, such as a type of lymphoma (a cancer of the immune system), fungal and protozoal infections, and infections of viruses from the herpes group.

The herpes viruses include herpes simplex (which causes cold sores and genital herpes), herpes zoster (measles, shingles and encephalitis), Epstein-Barr virus (glandular fever and Burkitt's lymphoma), and cytomegalovirus (a type of glandular fever, congenital deformities — and possibly KS).

So what is the "opportunity" some gay men seem to be "offering" to these diseases? The answer is AIDS — Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. 95% of its victims are men and 98% of them live in the US. In people with AIDS, disease organisms (bacteria, viruses, protozoa, fungi or cancer cells) can get established without the immune defences killing them.

How does the immune system work, then, and what is AIDS?

Blood cells

When foreign substances (e.g. germs) get into the

body, white blood cells respond by making antibodies, which help destroy the intruders. Two types of white blood cells, called B- and T-lymphocytes, are involved in this.

The B-cells make the antibodies, while the T-cells control and regulate the B-cells.

There are two types of T-cells — "helpers", which encourage the B-cells to make antibodies; and "killers" which stop B-cells making antibodies (preferably after the germs have been dealt with).

Usually, there are more helpers than killers. But in AIDS victims, there are more killers than helpers — with disastrous consequences. Any disease organisms which get into the body can have a field day!

No one cause has been found for AIDS though the following factors may be involved.

1. Use of drugs. Lots of American gays sniff "poppers", drugs such as

amyl, butyl and iso-butyl nitrites, which speed up the heart and enhance feelings of pleasure. Poppers seem to cause an imbalance in the T-cells and have been linked with KS.

Hydrocortisone ointments are also used to treat piles and various skin complaints — and one side-effect can be to suppress the immune system.

2. Frequent use of syringes (i.e. to inject drugs). This seems a possible cause of AIDS in heterosexuals as well. A virus that causes hepatitis is already known to spread in this way.

3. Anal intercourse. Not restricted to gays, though probably less common in heterosexuals with the advent of reliable contraception. Viruses may actually find it easier to get into the body (through sore skin or haemorrhoids) than by vaginal intercourse. And repeated infections with viruses can wear down the immune defences.

4. Many partners. AIDS

victims seem to have more sexual partners than non-victims and the distribution of cases (50% in New York, 25% in California and 7% in Miami) suggests that something is being transferred between partners.

Research into AIDS may help answer many questions about viruses, the immune system and cancers, as well as possibly removing a source of fear and suffering from gay men. And there is now a fair amount of research in the US going on, though I wonder whether more would have been done if the victims had been middle class, middle aged heterosexuals like sufferers from "Legionnaire's disease".

In Britain, little publicly-funded research is going on and little pressure seems to have been mounted to encourage more, though the London gay community has launched a memorial fund (the Terry Higgins Trust) to pay for more research.



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

Anti-imperialism and CND

I WAS pleased to read in SO 111 about the linking of CND with imperialism and women's oppression.

At a CND meeting recently I asked whether CND should be openly anti-imperialist. A member of the Communist Party said that by being anti-imperialist CND would lose the support of the "General Public" such as the support of the people who supported the sending of the Task

Force.

At a CND rally I was told to take down an El Salvador solidarity poster by a member of Easington District CND because we "didn't want to appear anti-American."

I have been told that Trotskyists within CND are using the campaign to achieve their own political ends. There is a strong anti-Trotskyist feeling in CND at the moment and

there is a feeling that the influence of the left is too strong.

Judith Bonner stated in her report of the CND conference that "the current leadership of CND fails to bring political debate into the open". Logically CND should openly oppose the Labour Party witch-hunt. Without the left in the Labour Party unilateral nuclear disarmament will never become Labour

Party policy.

Jack Dormand stated in a letter to myself that "It is not correct to assume that a policy must be included in the manifesto because it obtains a two-thirds majority at a Party Conference. In accordance with the constitution the final decision has to be taken by a joint committee of the National Executive and the Shadow Cabinet."

How political should

CND be? Should CND be openly anti-imperialist and form links with groups like ELSSOC? Should CND be linked with women's rights issues? These are issues that should be debated.

GARY SCOTT
Secretary of Easington District CND

Writeback



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

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



ILP view on LCC

YOUR description of the AGM of the Labour Coordinating Committee (John Bloxam, Socialist Organiser, November 25th) is fascinating, but alas in error.

The article states that "Ann Ceseck and Jon Lansman were kicked off the EC and Audrey Wise lost her position as Vice Chair, as the Clause 4/ILP/Peter Hain grouping tightened their grip on the LCC."

In fact, nobody was "kicked off" anything. Democracy ruled, votes were taken and certain individuals lost. A political decision was being made, and the EC voting was in keeping with the line adopted on the register which was surely unsurprising. Audrey Wise's loss of position might just have had something to do with the fact that she wasn't present and that her record of attendance at EC meetings left something to be desired.

Against

As for this homogeneous group called Clause 4/ILP/Peter Hain - presumably your correspondent failed to notice that ILP spoke and voted against the Clause 4/Peter Hain statement which appeared as an amendment on the LCC order paper. We were strongly against making such a commitment to the "existing leadership" and said so loudly and clearly.

Could it be that anyone opposing the Socialist Organiser position on the register is automatically dumped in the "enemy" camp... on every issue? What hope have we of convincing the world when other socialists jump to such simplistic conclusions?

Yours fraternally,
ANNE-MARIE GRAHAM
General Secretary,
Independent Labour
Publications

Trousered Philanthropist or The Road to Wigan Pier, so they did not really understand what socialism is about.

This is why the LPYS is so important. Because if you can get people when they are young and show them what socialism really means then you can stop them ending up like Alan Law. After all, how do we know that Bill Peters or any other socialists won't become like Alan Law, if they become elected into High Office?

Yours sincerely,
Irwin Alexander

Greenham sexism?

We are writing in angry response to the article 'Campaigning against the missiles' SO no. 108 and also to draw critical attention to the present state of CND.

Because the article appeared under the 'Women in Struggle' page and emphasizes the fact of it being purely a women peace-camp, we must question its effectiveness and relevance to the women's struggle as a whole. The activists did not use the publicity to draw links between women's daily struggles under capitalism and how this relates to the imperialist war drive. This would have benefitted both the women's and the peace movements.

Instead, the women allowed themselves to be exploited by both CND and the media as objects of sympathy because they were women.

As socialists we must point out the relationships between imperialism, capitalism, and the bourgeois state. Therefore the women would have realised the state would never interpret the word peace in their interests.

the end an ineffective secretive group, so the peace camps lead to the general neglect of the mass campaign.

The middle-class nature CND shows itself in the moralistic and libertarian approach to the practical struggle for nuclear disarmament: the martyrdom and the sexism of Greenham common, and its inability to confront the

state due to its class origins.

Civil disobedience and a reformist attitude to the state are a product of the class nature and lack of political direction of CND. All practical activity is judged by the amount of publicity it gains and not on its contribution to building the campaign.

The major and the crucial failing of CND is its inability

to confront its own historical errors. Thus small gains are seen as triumphs and major defeats as minor setbacks. This inability to face reality will bring about CND's inevitable downfall.

Dianne Pearson
and Brian Scott
Nottingham SO

Law unto himself?

Dear Comrades,

I am a member of the LPYS and I would like to comment on Bill Peters' article on the T&GWU leader Alan Law. Comrade Peters compares this man to the mafia chiefs in the USA like Jimmy Hoffa. Is this really true?

Why do trade union officials behave in such a terribly corrupt way? Surely they got involved with trade unionism in the first place, like myself, because they cared about the sufferings of working people?

Bill Peters did not really

explain why they become bad. I don't believe you can say it's because they get a big salary and drive around in big cars, because Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn have lots of money and yet they have been the only ones of our leaders who have tried to get people out on strike against the Tories.

classic

I think one reason may well be that as young men or women they never read any of the socialist classics like the Ragged

No support

As socialists our attitude to peace camps should be one of no support. Peace camps, and the double-speak of non-violent direct action which they engender, serve only to distract from the major task of building the mass campaign, based in the working class - building links with Unions, the Labour Party and LPYSs, the unemployed, etc. In short, winning the working class to a revolutionary programme, the only effective means of achieving unilateral nuclear disarmament.

In the same way as individual terrorism replaces the revolutionary party, and class with an elite and in

WHAT'S ON

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.

LONDON ASSEMBLY: the second London Assembly will take place on Saturday January 29 1983, from 10 am to 1.30pm at Friends House, Euston Rd, London NW1. Called by the Greater London Council and other groups to 'bring Londoners together to discuss how we can defend, extend and improve our services'. Org. anisations are invited to nominate up to two representatives.

WOMEN'S MARCH for Jobs: National Planning Meeting, Saturday January 15, 11.30am, County Hall, London SE1. All women welcome. Details: Women's Campaign for Jobs, 41 Ellington St, N7.

LABOUR Against the Witch-hunt: public meeting with Reg Race MP. Sunday January 9, 11am to 1pm, WEA, Cartwright House, Broad St, Hanley, Stoke on Trent.

LABOUR Against the Witch-hunt: public meeting with Reg Race MP. Chair: Mark Fisher, prospective parliamentary candidate for Stoke Central. Sunday

January 9, 11am to 1pm, WEA, Cartwright House, Broad St, Hanley, Stoke on Trent.

BLOODY Sunday commemoration demonstration - Sunday January 30 in Leeds. North London mobilising committee meeting, Monday January 10, John Barnes Library, Camden Road, London N7.

DON'T WAIT for the by-election. Bermondsey needs your help NOW.

MASS CANVASS. Sunday January 9, 11am, from 133 Lower Road, London SE16.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland: annual general meeting 1983 will be on March 26. Resolutions to be on by February 27. There will be an extended meeting of the LCI National Council on January 22.

IRISH Plastic Bullets: a Labour movement delegate conference. Saturday February 26, from 11am at UMIST, Barnes Wallis Building, Sackville St, Manchester 1. Sponsors include Labour Committee on Ireland. To sponsor, send delegates (fee £31, or to order leaflets (£6 per 100), contact: Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 161-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

HAND-printed silk-screened T-shirts. Give them as Christmas presents - for wearing next summer.

• Socialist Organiser: paper masthead, with option of local group's name added at 20p per T-shirt extra.
• Solidarnosc logo, red on white.
• Labour against the witch-hunt.
• Red star on white background.

£2.50 each except SO T-shirts, £3. Postage 50p. T-shirts come in white or yellow, please state preference. Also individual designs undertaken, cost £6, must have details of design and idea. Allow 14 days for delivery. Send orders to Kevin Glover, 19 Ranton Way, Leicester.

Preparing to hive off the railways

Rob Dawber looks at British Rail's plans for Sector Management — and what they mean

THE most fundamental change in the structure of British Railways since nationalisation in 1948 is now a year old. It is to divide off the profitable from the unprofitable that British Rail has introduced a whole new concept — Sector Management.

While eyes have been turned toward the disputes in the railways about Flexible Rostering, scrapping of guards and the 1982 pay claim, British Rail management have been steadily making preparations for new sections of the railways to be privatised.

They have almost sold off all the Hotels with little opposition indeed, the NUR invested half a million pounds in the first group sold. They had a temporary setback with Scalink, when members of the NUS occupied on August 2 and prevented wage cuts and lengthening of hours. Now, they're going for train services.

Hotels

British Transport Hotels, Scalink and British Rail Engineering (the workshops) are all separate boards within the overall BR Board, and could each be hived off as a unit. But the same is not true for the profitable part of the train services.

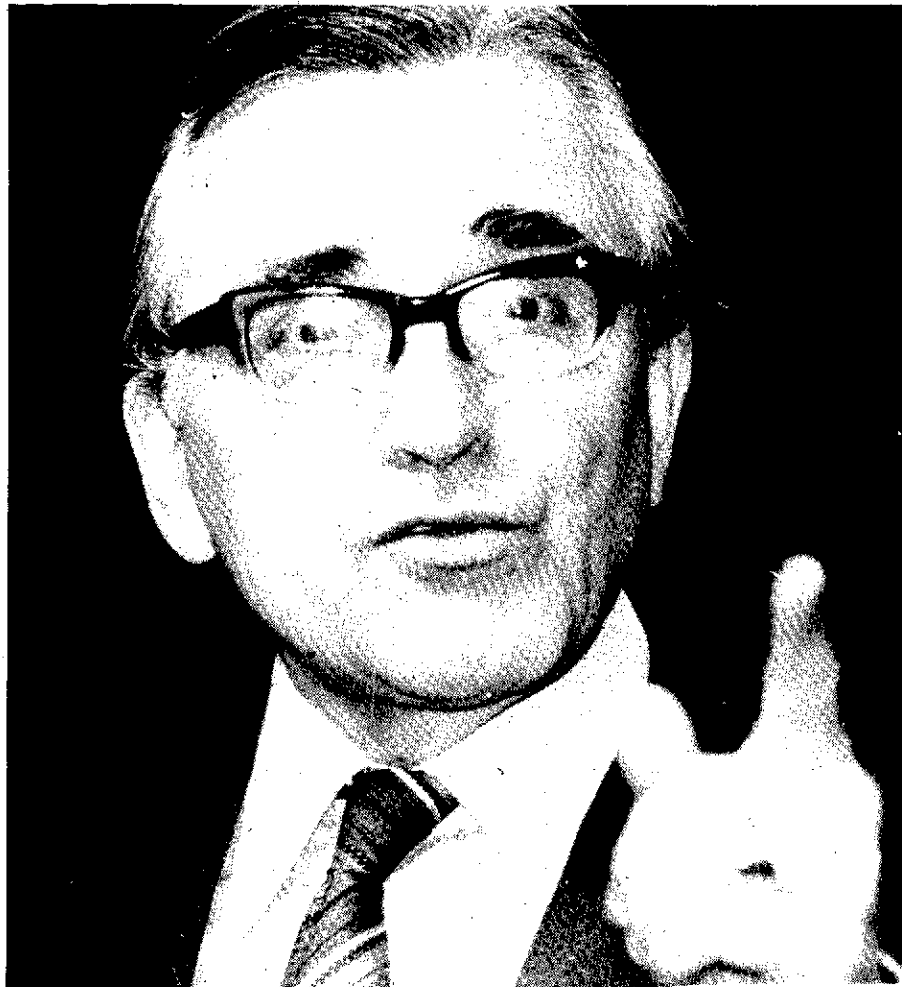
Main line services to London carrying business traffic, for example, are mixed up with cross-country traffic and rural lines in each of the railway regions. Freight and parcels use lines that also carry inter-city traffic.

The regions more or less continue the structure and area of the five companies that were nationalised in 1948.

Hence Sector Management. In January 1982, Chief Executive Reid appointed five Sector Directors, each with a new area of responsibility.

They are provincial services; London and South-Eastern; Inter-City, Freight; Parcels. The last three of these are felt to have a profitable future.

The rail network, locomotives, coaches and wagons are being divided between them. The railway tracks



Will Weighell's successor fight to stop rail lines closing?

themselves will be allocated to Sectors on the basis of a "prime-user" determining track and signalling standards and pay the costs. If a Sector has to use another Sector's tracks, it will pay rental.

London and South-Eastern will deal with most suburban passenger lines into London and the rest of the South-East, provincial services will have what is left of the passenger lines, apart from Inter-City.

The Inter-City lines are the six major routes where the money is to be made. These are the East Coast Main Line from Edinburgh to London; The West Coast Main Line from Glasgow to London; London to Bristol and South Wales; London to Plymouth; routes from North-east and North West

England to South Wales, the West of England and the South coast; and the Midland Main Line from Sheffield to London St. Pancras. In all this constitutes 2,000 miles of the 11,000 mile BR network.

In 1981 these Inter-City lines generated £472 million revenue against direct costs (train crews, fuel, rolling stock maintenance) of £344 million. This left £128 million to pay indirect costs (track, signalling, and electrification infrastructure) as yet unallocated between sectors.

Break even

The Inter-City Sector has been instructed to break even by 1985 and thereafter make a 5% profit. Sector

Director Cyril Bleasdale outlined his aims in the December issue of the BR paper "Railnews" — a 20% reduction in costs and a 10% increase in revenue.

He expects cost savings to come from:

1. A 25% reduction in coaches without greatly reducing train mileage, with greater use of the High Speed Trains. Already this has meant the closure of carriage cleaning at, for example, the Nunnery in Sheffield.

2. Re-routing of Inter-City trains onto fewer lines e.g. re-routing the North-east/South-west service via Doncaster and cutting out the present direct route, York to Sheffield. Bleasdale says this will save Inter-City up to £18 million.

Such exercises will prob-

ably mean closures. As Inter-City withdraws from a line, the whole burden of maintenance will fall on (probably) Provincial Services, who may then argue that it is unviable.

3. Reduction of train maintenance costs from £40 million to £10 million. This has resulted in the closure of main line locomotive maintenance depots at Worcester (last June), Springs Branch, Wigan (last October) and left York with only stabling and refuelling since last January. Holbeck (Leeds) is now on the hit list.

Boost

How to boost revenue by 10%? Bleasdale explains the kind of service he is aiming for in the December issue of "Modern Railways".

He believes that average fares are low, doubts the benefit of 'ultra-low Saver type fares', wants to emphasise looking after the business traveller in first or second class, and believes the first class traveller has a relatively poor deal for extra fare today.

Pullman

"We have to make sure that these passengers are looked after superbly — a return to Pullman-type individual service if you like."

Without ASLEF and NUR strikes the Freight Sector was expected to make £30 million profit in 1982 compared with £13.5 million in 1981. In the event the forecast is for £1.3 million on a turnover of £600 million. The process of trimming down continues:

the 135 marshalling yards are to be reduced to 72 by May 1984.

But the 85 daily Speedlink services are to be boosted to 150, supported by 300 trip and feeder services.

The capacity will be equivalent to 3,250 32-tonne gross laden weight vehicles, making Speedlink the biggest single 'trucking' operation in Britain... and a very attractive business for sale at the right price.

Service

All Sectors will meanwhile develop a 'contractual' relationship with the Regions and with the central engineers' departments. The Regions will be instructed as to what service is required of them by the Sector Directors for the price paid, while the engineers' departments will be opened up to greater competition from the likes of GEC and Westinghouse for the installation of equipment.

There is now talk of maintenance also being put out to contract.

With the decision by BR that all BREL workshops are to be sold, with the exception of Shildon and Doncaster, the attacks on railworkers' jobs and conditions continue.

Limbo

'And what are the leaders of the major rail union, the NUR, doing? With Weighell gone the union is in a state of limbo awaiting the election of a new General Secretary.

Weighell's policies of working with management to shed jobs, lines and depots in the hope of government money must go as well. Railworkers cannot afford otherwise.

Wafer-thin margin in CLPD poll

Campaign for



Democracy

by John Bloxam

THE result of the CLPD 'consultative' ballot on registration was a virtual dead-heat. 67% of individual supporters voted, with 344 in favour of registration now and 338 against. There was a smaller turnout among organisations affiliated to CLPD — 46% of Labour

Party organisations, and 31% of trade union — but the result was very similar, with 85 voting in favour and 80 against.

There was no significant regional variation in the voting.

At the CLPD EC on December 18 nobody argued

that this wafer-thin majority gave any mandate, or that the ballot decided anything. In fact a resolution submitted earlier that the EC should recommend the AGM accept the ballot result was withdrawn.

The original authors of the 'consultative' ballot were obviously looking for a mandate for registration, which could then be used to pressure the AGM which formally had the 'final' decision. To get this mandate they tried to turn the ballot into a vote of confidence in themselves, the main originators of CLPD.

Although they won a majority in the end, the ballot result was clearly a defeat for this strategy, and showed the solid feeling against registration.

Inside the Party, the issue

of registration has now been overshadowed by the right wing's proscription of Militant. The fact that the register still exists as a disciplinary and controlling device means that the fight for an effective boycott of it must go on, and the CLPD AGM remains central to that.

But recent developments emphasise that the main issue is still opposition and resistance to expulsions, and the vote at the CLPD AGM on whether it will openly side with CLPs delaying the purge will be the most important one.

For the CLPD, however, the registration question has also been important as the latest stage in a much wider debate. At issue over the last year has been whether CLPD will remain consistently at

the forefront of the fight for democracy and democratic rights inside the Party, or whether it will begin to bend and equivocate under the pressure of the new situation. Not surprisingly, this debate is reflected in a number of the resolutions for the AGM — on registration, but also on the register and resistance to expulsions.

Closely related to this debate has been the question of democracy inside the Campaign, and specifically the implementation of past AGM decisions, the treatment of disagreements and recently the use of open threats to split the CLPD.

This will also be a major issue at the AGM, and one of the resolutions condemning some of the practices has been submitted by CLPD's President, Joan Maynard.

She has also submitted one of the constitutional amendments that aim to correct the widespread use of co-opting votes onto the EC during the last year through the 'key person' system.

In all, over 60 resolutions and constitutional amendments have been submitted for the AGM on January 29. They also cover the regularly recurring issues of whether and how to alter the Conference voting proportions between CLPs and trade unions and also whether CLPD should break from its practice of the last ten years and directly involve itself in a campaign for trade union democracy.

The deadline for amendments to the resolutions, and also nominations for the new EC, is by first post on Friday January 14.

Teachers against the Bomb

WHEN the National Union of Teachers paper prints the resolutions submitted for NUT Conference in its January 7 edition there are likely to be nine disarmament motions, seven of them unilateralist.

Left groups in the NUT have agreed to support the Inner London motion when branches vote on Conference priorities.

There are weaknesses with this motion. It does not mention CND affiliation or withdrawal from NATO: Socialist Teachers Alliance members have given notice that they will be submitting an amendment to Conference.

But the worse problem is elsewhere. The NUT has already passed a unilateralist motion at last Easter's Conference (though narrowly rejecting affiliation to CND).

You could be forgiven for not knowing about it, for despite the vote and despite Rule 3 of the NUT Constitution ('Conference is the supreme authority of the Union'), the bureaucracy has declared it outside the aims and objects of the Union.

The disarmament motion was left out of the officially circulated list of resolutions passed by Conference, the President, Alf Budd, has issued a statement saying that the motion is inoperative, and the officers have backed this up with weighty-sounding legal advice.

This year, already the NUT solicitor has advised that the Inner London motion is outside NUT aims and should be ruled out of order in branch meetings. It seems certain that the President will rule it out of order at Conference and his decision will have to be challenged (as was done successfully last year).

It is even possible that the disarmament motions will not be printed for consideration.

The Rochdale association (NUT branches) called a conference on November 13 in Manchester, to discuss the twin issues of union democracy and defending Conference policy on disarmament.

The major role in this Conference was played by the Socialist Teachers' Alliance, which is the prin-

cipal left grouping in the NUT. However, it was also attended by two leading members of the NUT 'Broad Left'.

Unlike Broad Lefts in other unions this is actually a very narrow group of Communist Party members and mild reformists at Executive Committee and local officer level. In the past they have supported the leadership against the left, but now an alliance seems possible on the unilateralist issue.

In December a conference of 'Local Associations for Peace' met in London, called by the 'Broad Left'-dominated Lewisham association, but with an organising committee and platform drawn from both groups.

Over 30 associations sent official delegates and in the afternoon session we discussed the practicalities of the tactical alliance on unilateral disarmament.

It is vital that socialist teachers attend their union meetings in the coming months, and particularly that they contest elections for Annual Conference delegates.

For details of the Socialist Teachers Alliance write to the membership secretary, Pete Flack, 11, Nook Street, Newfoundpool, Leicester.

Tony Gard

Settlement ends Raindi strike

by Lynne Gregory

THE strike by 200 Asians at P.S. Raindi in Smethwick is over. At a packed meeting at Smethwick Sikh Temple the strikers accepted a union recognition agreement and elected a shop stewards committee, over half of whom are Asian women.

The agreement also covers the Raindi subsidiary, Supreme Quilting.

The meeting was opened by the singing of the latest version of a Punjabi ballad about the strike composed by West Bromwich bus driver Prakesh. Inspired by this example, the treasurer of the strike committee sang his report in verse as well!

The settlement is not a good one. A phased return to work is involved, although

an undertaking to reinstate all the strikers has been obtained.

But the exception to this is the three union members at Supreme Quilting, whose dismissal started the strike.

They volunteered to accept the sack to make a settlement possible when support for the strike

seemed to be flagging before Christmas.

The new committee will be responsible for negotiating piece rates. Basic rates will be the garment workers agreed national minimum rate. They will also have to hold the workforce together during the period of the phased return to work.

The agreement includes a section on the release of shop stewards for training. No doubt Raindi will soon be looking for experienced foremen.

One major item for discussion at the meeting was the reflection of the strike inside the Asian community and particularly inside Sandwell Labour Party.

The IWA spokesman stressed the need for the businessmen on the right of the Party to be expelled, but this required a much greater participation of Asians in the local Labour Party. Hopefully, this may be one good result of the strike.

Raindi's was a dispute where total victory was possible, but could only have been achieved by extending the strike to the other Asian sweatshops in Sandwell. If the new shop stewards committee is able to consolidate the union, it can still serve as a beacon for workers in the local clothing industry.



Total victory could have been gained by spreading the strike

Problems – and Policies

By Harry Sloan

Why the branch meetings are empty

IT is claimed by the right wing witch-hunters in the Labour Party and the unions that the left are 'undemocratic'. We are accused of seeking through procedural wrangles to drive 'ordinary' members from meetings, and then to railroad through 'extreme' motions in late-night sessions of rump committees.

The reality of course is completely the opposite. It is the right wing and the established union bureaucracy that have consolidated a position based upon perpetuating and manipulating the ignorance, apathy, confusion and cynicism of this rank and file membership.

Any attempt to confront and defeat the union bureaucracy demands first an understanding of the techniques it employs to preserve and extend its control.

For union officials, who seek simply to work within the system to win concessions and reforms for their members, the task is to strike a 'balance' between workers' legitimate demands and aspirations and the opposed interests of the employers with whom they negotiate.

To avoid straining relations with the employers, this means securing sufficient concessions on wages and conditions to placate and secure the more or less willing support of the most privileged sections of the membership.

But the more acute problems of the most exploited sections of members – the lowest paid, women workers, youth,

part time workers – can in most instances not be answered short of an all-out confrontation with management; and they thus tend to be brushed aside for attention sometime in the indefinite future.

For the average union official, therefore, the ideal relationship with his members (and the vast majority of officials are men) will be one in which he occasionally meets with the most privileged and conservative sections to receive their endorsement.

It is thus no accident that union branch meetings are so commonly infrequent, badly publicised, and generally held in the evenings at times and venues inaccessible for many women and single parents. It is no accident that their rules and regulations appear crafted to alienate and exclude the active participation of newcomers – particularly youth and women new to trade union affairs.

Accident

It is no accident that, with rare exceptions, union officials are not the ones who lead struggles to unionise the low paid or black workers, or that so many union rulebooks in a period of mass unemployment are careful to keep out or marginalise unemployed people.

By cultivating a structure of small, exclusive meetings of 'old hands' – long-standing convenors, stewards and branch officials – the union bureaucrats can cling on to a routine existence.

It is when such a strategy

fails – such as during the 8-month NHS dispute, in which whole sections of low paid members made their voice heard over Spanswick and the bureaucrats – that officials are forced into action.

But what has always been an elitist, narrow structure in the unions becomes even worse in a period like the present recession.

Far from being able to win concessions and reforms, union officials, whose whole approach remains one of working within the existing capitalist system, wind up as leading advocates of accepting redundancies, speed-up and other attacks on working conditions, along the lines that 'half a loaf is better than no bread'.

Once again the first and main casualties of such retreats are those most excluded from the life and structures of the union – women, youth, black workers.

At the same time the wholesale employers' offensive on shop floor trade union organisation – attacking shop stewards' committees, and seeking to undermine or victimise key militants – also has the effect of strengthening the group of full time union officials over the rank and file members.

The bureaucracy rests upon ensuring that the bulk of union members are inactive and thus largely indifferent to the deals and manoeuvres that take place: the technique of the decisive say on the election of union leaders.

The fight for an alternative, revolutionary lead-

ership in the unions must begin by galvanising, educating and organising the membership, taking up their problems, giving them the confidence and collective strength to demand action, and focussing their attention upon the words and deeds of their present leadership.

In place of the continuous retreats on all fronts, we must campaign for action in defence of workers' living standards, for all-out action against closures and redundancies, and put forward policies in the unions which address the problems of women, black people, young workers and the unemployed.

Accessible

In this way we can give those presently active in the unions reason to turn out to union meetings and to fight for them to be held under conditions as to be accessible for the majority of members.

We must spell out our demands for the democratisation of the unions, to institute the regular election and accountability of all officials. The employers have been on a war footing since 1979: it is time we rallied our troops for the fight back.

The retreat by the TUC and successions of sell outs that have demoralised sections of workers and allowed Thatcher to drive unemployment to 4½-5 million cannot be halted overnight: but unless we fight now to build from shop floor level a fighting new leadership to combat today's bureaucracy, the setbacks will continue.



Union meetings are often held at times and places inconvenient for women members

No lead in Kinneil fight

Dave Milliken reports from Scotland

KINNEIL Colliery, Bo'ness, 12 miles west of Edinburgh, will close in mid-April with the loss of over 300 jobs.

The failure to seriously resist this closure will undoubtedly result in the Coal Board feeling confident enough to press ahead with the decimation of the Scottish coalfield.

It was known for months that Kinneil was likely to prove the focus for a fight

to save jobs, and workers there had campaigned long and hard to raise support, so some serious questions are now being asked about how it came to be that last Monday's conference voted by 12 to 7 to back down.

Simon Martin, NUM Branch Secretary and Labour Party member feels that it can be primarily put down to a lack of leadership. "We weren't

getting any real help. We were being left on our own. I have been instructed by the branch to write to the Executive with some questions to be answered. I feel that if this dispute had been made official we would have won. When Mick McGahey met out branch officials he told them the situation was dark, we weren't getting the support. Much the same can be said of the

Labour Party leadership, despite the Conference decision in October.

Regroup

"We have had nothing from Jim Mortimer or Michael Foot. We did however, win the support of every Scottish constituency party. We shall have to regroup our forces for the future."

Wales must turn the tide

THE South Wales miners' area executive will be meeting the area Coal Board management on Monday 10th to press its demands for more investment, and on Wednesday 12th there will be a special area conference to decide plans for the strike called from January 17.

17 out of 33 pits in South Wales are classified by the Coal Board as 'short-life', and investment there is tiny compared with other areas. Thus the South Wales NUM strike decision, taken before Christmas, was a move to come out fighting against closures.

It had the possibility of starting a movement that would, in the words of NUM president Arthur Scargill, "spread like wildfire through the coalfields."

Miners at Kinneil quickly followed the lead. They struck and 12 of them started a sit-in. But then things started going wrong.

Mandate

The Scottish miners' area leadership did not put into action its standing mandate to call a strike over Kinneil. It called a special area conference on December 28 — and recommended a return to work at Kinneil.

The line of the leadership, and of area President Mick McGahey, was that support was insufficient. The Financial Times report, presumably reflecting McGahey's private explanations, said that the area executive had made "behind the scenes" efforts to drum up support but had insufficient res-

ponse.

Whatever the behind the scenes efforts, they could not have the same value as a bold public campaign by the area leadership. No one can guarantee that such a campaign would have been successful. But we can guarantee that the

Stock excuses in DHSS sell-out

THE CPSA National Executive (NEC) was presented with the new settlement formula on the afternoon of December 22, after negotiations conducted by the chair and secretary of the union's DHSS section executive (SEC) in almost complete secrecy from the elected members of both the SEC and the NEC.

There were three changes from the previous offer. In Birmingham the 12 local offices would keep the posts otherwise to be cut following the introduction of Unified Housing Benefit and Employers' Statutory Sick Pay, for a period of at least six months. They would thus have 100 'extra' posts from April 1, to drop to 50 from September 1. The extra would be whittled away over time by natural wastage.

This offer applies only to Birmingham, and effectively seals off the Birmingham dispute from the rest of the union.

Second, management withdrew the strings that tied CPSA to a promise of no action on cuts or casual

labour and no overtime ban. This was no major retreat, since cuts in DHSS have already led to a drastic reduction in overtime and will lead to a further reduction in casuals.

Third, the Tories seem to have indicated that they will put more effort into the joint review on staffing, in an attempt to sort out mounting chaos in the offices. But the CPSA NEC seems to have taken too much on faith. Oxford SCPS chair Barbara Brookes told SO: "If the government won't move on staffing levels while we're on strike, it certainly won't do it in a review body."

These three points were enough to persuade the Broad Left dominated NEC to vote — unanimously! — to recommend the offer, and to accept the sting in the tail: The NEC voted to suspend the consultation on all-out action, and the special conference on January 12.

The initial returns from the consultation had shown growing militancy in DHSS, for example a clear majority for action in Scotland.

For its part, the SCPS executive has given the union bureaucrats' stock excuse: 'we are convinced that the support that would have been necessary to produce an effective escala-

appropriate.

But there is still plenty of will for a fight in the coalfields. "They had better not sell us out in Ayrshire", shouted one angry delegate leaving the Scottish conference. The South Wales miners can turn the tide.

tion of the dispute would not have been forthcoming from Society members'.

This is their conclusion after campaigning, not for an all-out strike, but against it, and in favour of their own plan of a series of rolling regional strikes.

Rowtons' 'Xmas spirit'

CHRISTMAS day brought an episode which strengthened the resolve of the strikers at Arlington House hostel, Camden, to continue the fight against the hostel owners, Rowtons.

The hostel provided no meals on Christmas day for the single men who live there. And no cafes would be open, either. The local Labour council offered to provide meals-on-wheels — and Rowtons refused to allow them in.

450 meals provided by the council were served to the residents by strikers at a nearby council day centre.

Help on the picket lines, and donations, are still needed. Contact: strike committee, c/o Camden Labour Centre, 8 Camden Road, London NW1.

Asian sacked

AN Asian worker, Mr Athiringer Velayudhan, has been sacked from the Ford Dagenham body plant for refusing to submit to a passport check at work.

The case illustrates the increasing use of passport checks as a process of growing internal controls, but also the racism of the labour movement.

Despite an Industrial Tribunal ruling in his favour, the plant unions have refused to force the management to reinstate him.

Mr Velayudhan had been working at Ford since 1973. In November 1981 he was advised by his doctor to take sick leave after having undergone a serious operation. He used the time to visit his wife and children in India.

He returned in February 1982 to be asked by a Ford Personnel Officer for his passport. He refused, as he was entitled to, and the

management response was to sack him for 'absence from work in unacceptable circumstances'.

Since February Mr Velayudhan has sought help from his union, the GMWU, and his TGWU section steward. Both unions told him to produce his passport. They refused to back him despite the fact that he was entitled to refuse and that he had broken no company rules by going to India on sick leave.

The inaction of the unions should be condemned. It opens up all black workers to future racist victimisation.

The need to build a genuine anti-racist leadership within workplaces becomes more burning. Anti-racists within the GMWU and TGWU should demand removal from office of all racists, and build solidarity for this black comrade.

EVERTON WILLIAMS

Where to find us

• SOUTH

Oxford. Meets alternate Thursdays. For details ask paper sellers. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday, 11am to 1pm).

Basingstoke. Meets every other Tuesday, 7.30pm, Chute House. Next meetings, January 11 and 25.

• LONDON

North-West London. Meets fortnightly: contact Mick, 624 1931. SO is sold at Kilburn Books.

Islington. Meets on Sundays, 3pm, Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd/Copenhagen St. Next meetings: January 23, 'Decentralising council services', and February 15, 'Council budget 1983'. For childcare phone Nik 607 5268.

Haringey. Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941. Meets every other Sunday, 6pm, Trade Union centre, Brabant Rd. Next meeting January 16.

Tower Hamlets. Contact 790 4937. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30 pm. Next meeting January 14.

Newham. Socialist Organizer/Communist Party debate, 'Which Way to socialism', Thursday January 27, 8pm. For venue phone 555 9957. Speakers: John Grahl (CP), John O'Mahony (SO).

South East London. Contact 691 1141.

Lambeth/Southwark: meets every other Wednesday, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5. Business 7.30 to 8.30, open forum discussion 8.30. Next meeting January 19.

Hounslow. Meets fortnightly on Sundays, 8pm. For details phone 898 6961.

Hackney. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Colletts, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks.

SO GAY CAUCUS: meeting Sunday January 16, in London. For details phone 01-609 3071.

THERE ARE Socialist Organiser groups in most major towns and cities. See below for details of your area — and if you want more details, or there is no group listed for your area, fill in and return the 'Get Organised' form.

• SCOTLAND

Glasgow. For details of meetings contact paper sellers or Stan Crooke, 114 Dixon Avenue, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at Maryhill dole (Tuesday mornings) and Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunchtime).

Edinburgh. For details of meetings ring Dave, 229 4591. SO is sold at Muirhouse (Saturday 10.30-12) and the First of May bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

• NORTH-WEST

Wallasey. Contact Colin Johnston, 1 Wellington Rd, Wallasey.

Liverpool. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Accrington. Contact 395753. SO is sold outside Woolworths, Town Centre, Saturday 11-12.30.

Rochdale. Contact 353 Rochdale Old Rd, Bury. Group meets second Tuesday of each month, 8pm, Castle Inn, Rochdale. SO is sold at Metro Books, Bury.

Manchester. Meets every Sunday evening, 7.30pm, Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St. SO is sold at Grassroots Books, Newton St, Piccadilly.

Stoke. Contact Arthur Bough, 23 Russell Road, Sandford (84170).

• YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST

Durham. Meets every Tuesday, 6.30pm, Students Union bar, Durham university. SO is sold at the Community Co-op, New Elvet.

York. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

Leeds. Contact Garth Frankland, 623322. SO is sold at Books and Corner Books, Woodhouse Lane.

Bradford. Contact Barry Turner, 636994. SO is sold at the Starry Plough bookshop.

Sheffield. Meets alternate Wednesdays, 7.30pm at the Brown Cow, The Wicker. Next meeting Wednesday January 19. SO is sold outside Boot's, Foregate (Saturday 12 to 1) and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Road.

Hull. Meets every Wednesday, 8pm; details from SO sellers. Childcare available. SO is sold at the Prospect Centre (Saturday 11-12).

Halifax. Contact 521566.

• MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alternate Fridays, 7.30, the Labour Club, Bristol St. Next meeting Friday January 14. SO is sold at the Other Bookshop, Digbeth High Street.

Coventry. Contact Keith White, 75623. SO is sold at the Wedge Coop, High St.

Nottingham. Meets every Friday 7.30pm at the International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd. SO is sold outside the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1) and at the Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St.

Leicester. Contact Phil, 857908. SO is sold outside Supasave (Friday 4.30 to 6), the Co-Op, Narborough Rd (Saturday 11-12.30), and at Blackthorne Books, High Street.

Northampton. Meets alternate Mondays. Next meeting: January 10, 'Women and socialism'. For details contact 713606.

• WALES

Cardiff SO. Contact 492988.

24 hours for race attackers

IN Tower Hamlets, East London, two 15-year old youths who attacked a woman with a brass-studded piece of wood and hit her in the face with a shoe were sentenced to 24 hours in an attendance centre.

The leniency of the sentence no doubt reflects the fact that the youths — part of a gang — were white and the victim, Mrs Sara Bibi — was black.

So too was the fact that the police refused to prosecute on the case, arguing that since no police officer had seen the attack, they could not take action. The case only came to court because Mrs Bibi, with financial and legal help from the local Community Alliance for Police Accountability, brought the prosecution herself.

As a CAPA spokesperson pointed out, the fact that the youths were

found guilty in December was in this respect a triumph — exposing the attitude of the police, who had only taken any statements after sustained pressure upon the local commander.

But the sentence itself, though indicating guilt, was a "real disappointment". And the police have attempted to cover up their own role: an extensive report by Thames TV was scrapped after Scotland Yard falsely insisted that they had tried without success to bring a prosecution.

With racial violence on the increase in Thatcher's decaying wasteland Britain, such racist attitudes from the police underline the necessity for the labour movement to mobilise in defence of black people and their communities.

Socialist Organiser Alliance

Get Organised!

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

If you agree with what we have to say, you can help. Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance — groups are established in most large towns.

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

Name

Address



... all the way to the Bank

'WE will have to use the power of appointment', said Labour front-bencher Robin Cook, 'if we are going to undo the opposition to our policies that we will face as a result of appointments made by Mrs. Thatcher over the past three years.'

And the Sunday Times speculated that a Labour government might sack the Tories' new appointment as Bank of England governor, Robin Leigh-Pemberton.

The appointment was the latest in a series of moves to fill top jobs in the permanent state machine with reliable Thatcherites. 'Insistence on the complexity of policy issues,' by the former governor, Gordon Richardson, is reported by the Financial Times 'not always to have gone down well in Downing Street.'

According to the Observer, at meetings with Thatcher Richardson 'would hardly be in the door when she would loose off at him floods of abuse. Then he would say: "Err, Prime Minister, if I might..." but he would be silenced by another salvo.'

Leigh-Pemberton has no training in banking or economics. Eton, Grenadier Guards, legal practice, and several years as a Tory county councillor are his background. His current colleagues at the National Westminster bank, trying to say a good word for him to the FT, described him as 'the bank's figurehead', 'frightfully good with

people'. An FT editorial coldly described the appointment as 'surprising and regrettable.'

But Leigh-Pemberton calls himself unabashedly 'right of centre', and has promised to 'resist' the devaluation of the pound which is (wisely or otherwise) part of Labour's economic plans.

Would a Labour government do better with a governor in the mould of Richardson? The FT's warm tribute to him tells us: 'His influence was almost certainly felt in the



Leigh-Pemberton

decision by Mr. Denis Healey ... to introduce stock appreciation for tax purposes in 1974' (a decision which virtually exempted firms from paying corporation tax), 'also in the lifting of business rent controls.'

'And when the Treasury was holding back Mr. Healey on the introduction of money supply targets' — the centrepiece of monetarism — 'the Governor ... egged him on.'

Such a role for the Governor of the Bank of England was not unprecedented. In his memoirs Harold Wilson has described events in November 1964. The pound was sinking on the money markets. 'That night we had our most desperate meeting with the Governor of the Bank (then Lord Cromer). Claiming that our failure to act in accordance with his advice had precipitated the crisis, he was now demanding all-round cuts in expenditure, regardless of social or even economic priorities, and fundamental changes in some of the Chancellor's economic announcements.'

'Not for the first time, I said we had now reached the situation where a newly elected Government with a

Socialist Organiser

JOHN HARRIS



Stop the fish war

THE growing protectionism and nationalism of world capitalism erupted this week into a 'fishing war' between Denmark, Britain and Norway.

Denmark rejected an EEC ministers' decision demarcating fishing zones, and Danish fishermen are planning to sail into British waters in defiance of the decision. The British navy and RAF are patrolling to defend the property rights of British capitalism. And Norway has declared a dispute with both Britain and Denmark.

Nature was constructed without regard to the prejudices of 'national interest', and capitalism has been unable to make the sea private property. Yet it cannot design a rational plan for the use of the sea, either, and it cannot decisively supersede its outdated national frontiers to organise economic activity on the world, or at the least continental, scale that modern productive forces require.

The world is not short of natural resources to be developed, and especially not of resources in the oceans. Not lack of sea space, but the system of production for private profit, is at the root of the 'fish war', as of the dozens of other moves to economic nationalism launched in the current recession.

Socialists can take no responsibility for the seagrabbing ambitions of any of the national fishing industries. International working class unity, and the fight for a socialist and democratic united Europe, should be our answer.

mandate from the people was being told, not so much by the Governor of the Bank of England but by international speculators, that the policies on which we had fought the election could not be implemented; that the Government was to be forced into the adoption of Tory policies to which it was fundamentally opposed. The Governor confirmed that that was, in fact, the case...

So what's the answer? In the US, many state officials are newly appointed after each election, and others are directly elected. Tony Benn rejects election of officials but proposes measures to increase the weight of government ministers as against their civil servants.

If the bureaucratic com-

plex including the Governor of the Bank of England, top civil servants, and nationalised industry bosses is the bulwark of conservatism that Tony Benn rightly paints it as, then sterner talk from ministers across committee tables will not deal with it.

The minimum democratic policy for a Labour government should be the direct election of all the top officials. But it looks like even Cook's modest proposal will be slapped down by the Foot-Healey leadership.

Also, matters could not stop there. It would come to a class showdown. The Governor of the Bank is supposed to be appointed by the Queen, and the monarchy could well attempt to block Labour

moves to sack a Governor. Lord Denning has publicly called for judges to rule illegal the abolition of the House of Lords.

Such moves would prepare the way for the backbone of the permanent state machine — the armed forces hierarchy — to move against any radical Labour government in the name of 'defending the constitution.'

The whole team of entrenched Tories — in the bureaucracy, in the forces, in the judiciary, in the monarchy and the House of Lords — holding power whoever holds office, needs to be swept away and replaced by decentralised, direct administration by elected and recallable delegates.

Tories plan new racist laws

TORY right-wingers, whose rebellion on December 17 brought the defeat of government immigration legislation, seem likely to secure a revised and more restrictive set of proposals.

The Tory Chief Whip has asked the backbench 1922 Committee to draw up a plan that will 'unite' the Party's MPs — and given the stubborn nature of the right wing stance this can only mean more draconian restrictions.

One scheme being floated is for the introduction of a register of potential immigrants linked to a quota system for their admission to Britain — producing still further delays, inconvenience and suffering for those seeking to settle

here.

Such a plan would placate the strong racist lobby which has been pressuring so-called 'left' Tories who had supported government moves to ease restrictions on the entry of foreign husbands of British registered or British naturalised wives.

But coming at a time when the deportation of men and women caught up in existing racist immigration laws is already a major and growing problem — primarily affecting black people — the Tory plans must be opposed by the full strength of the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

National Day of Action
STOP THE DEPORTATIONS!
Suspected 'illegal immigrants' are facing not only threats by the Home Office to deport them, but refusal by the DHSS to pay them supplementary benefit and child benefit. The Khan and Kaur Defence Campaign has called for a protest on Monday January 31.
PICKET YOUR LOCAL DHSS

See page 15

Fund appeal

Magnificent! Keep it up!

THANKS to all our supporters [listed below] who sent in donations of a week's wages after the last edition of our paper, and to comrades in London (£140 from an Xmas Fair) and to SO supporters who organised an Xmas Bazaar in Oxford, which raised £234.72.

Special thanks to comrades of Socialist Fight in Australia, who, despite their own financial problems, sent us a donation of £15.

Altogether we had a magnificent £1,290.65 before the end of December.

Now for the January target! We're aiming to raise at least £500 this month, and to start us off we have donations of £50 from Les Hearn, £71 from Steve Good and £40 from a Hackney SO supporter as well as £25 from Dave Ayrton and £1.50 from Sheffield SO supporters, giving us a total of £187.50.

December contributions came from: Jo Thwaites £2; Dave Spencer £50; Coventry social £75.53; Coventry unemployed SO supporter £15; Coventry Xmas cards £5; two Coventry readers £3.50; Siu-Ming Cheung £50; Jeff Slee £40; Nick Driscoll and Kath Lorrisey £5; Chris Hickey £50; Karen Hammond £50; two Hackney supporters £2 each; Mike Foley £40; Pete Radcliff £80; Stan Crooke £2; Jim Kearns £5; Pete Flack £9; Barry Walton £50; Leicester SO supporters £40; Oxford SO supporter £55; Oxford SO supporter £30; Simon Temple £3; Nick Lawrence £8.50; R. Paine £20; Dave Ludlow £80; Phil Hardy £25; Ian McCalman £10; Ian Nicholl £2; Andy Chapman £2; Winnie Murphy £20; Ian Oxford SO supporter £20; Sue Arnall £25.

All donations to the fund should be sent to the treasurer, Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.