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Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

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Date set for Bermondsey

THE writ for the Bermondsey by-election was moved in the Commons this week. Polling day is February 24. The Labour candidate, Peter Tatchell, faces the prospect of 17 other candidates, including three 'independent Labour', the Communist Party, the RCP, various nationalist and fascist candidates and a number of cranks as well as the Tories and the SDP/Liberal Alliance. The most serious challenge will come from former Southwark council leader John O'Grady, backed by former Labour MP for Bermondsey Bob Mellish.

With the prospects of a massive Fleet Street intervention against Peter Tatchell, the campaign is going to be a hard one. But the outcome could prove crucial to the left within the Labour Party. Socialist Organiser will be following the progress of the campaign during the coming weeks and SO supporters will be participating in the by-election campaign. If you want to help, contact your local Party secretary. Peter Tatchell interview, see pages 6-7

As Thatcher looks to troops, strikers must REACH OUT FOR SOLIDARITY

The water workers' case
— four page Socialist
Organiser broadsheet
available, £1 for 20, £4
for 100, post free, from
SO, 28 Middle Lane,
London N8 8PL.

Again -
the
Jack
Jones
show?

IN 1974-5 TGWU general secretary Jack Jones was the lynchpin of the social contract and then of the £6 pay policy.

Now Jones' successor Moss Evans is bidding for a similar role.

In an interview reported in the Financial Times on Tuesday 1 February, he proposed not only incomes policy but also a no-strike pact in the public sector.

"If a Labour government is elected, I think the unions would be prepared to conclude what you could term an accord. There are a number of important public sectors in which we have to devise a way of solving our problems without recourse to industrial action.

"No-one wants to take away, in a free society, the right of workers to withdraw their labour. But there ought to be some practical arrangements made to make a stoppage of work in these sectors a last resort."

He said that he would support a:

"progressive incomes policy, allowing flexibility for plant level collective bargaining within a framework of the national economic assessment" and added that even with the Tories in office unions could not "insulate themselves" from the government (i.e. they should collaborate with it).

AUEW general secretary Gavin Laird has called in the latest issue of the engineers' journal for the unions to talk to Tebbit on his latest anti-union Green Paper.

Meanwhile Moss Evans' deputy Alex Kitson was voting on Labour's National Executive to proceed towards the expulsion of all 'members' of Militant (story, page 2).

Will TGWU members allow their leaders to get away with this?

Centre pages:
Why has Thatcher
been winning?

IN several areas water workers have withdrawn emergency cover.

Pickets at Sandford, near Oxford, explained why to us. Management had been falsifying emergencies and driving scabs through picket lines.

In other areas, too, where emergency cover was being maintained, pickets were angry at management tactics.

At Minworth sewage treatment works near Birmingham (the largest in Europe), for example, pickets told us that they felt management were abusing the emergency cover. It would certainly be withdrawn if troops were sent in.

Emergency cover under workers' control should be the answer. But if the employers' tactics force strikers to withdraw the cover, then the employers must be responsible for the consequences.

has donated £100 to the water workers.

But the Tory government will not easily give way. It would be their first major industrial defeat since the miners' victory on pit closures in February 1981.

From all evidence they were ready for a fight. They intervened to push the initial pay offer down to 4%. They propose this year to scrap the National Water Council, and with it all national agreements.

If the strike begins to hit industry seriously the Tories will implement their well-prepared plans to send in troops.

Water workers need to prepare too. Making contacts with power workers, sending delegations to power stations, seeking commit-

ments from power workers to refuse to work with water supplies provided by army scabs, would greatly strengthen the strike.

Power workers themselves have a pay claim outstanding. Action both in solidarity with the water workers and for their own claim would put the Tories on the run.

Contacts need to be made with other industries which are major users of water, too. And gas workers and power workers both have pay claims outstanding: by taking action for these claims now, they could get the Tories really on the run.

The top union leaders are taking no such steps to strengthen the struggle. Just the opposite: GMBU leader David Bassett last week specially phoned the Labour Party National Executive to get it to suspend a resolution of support for the water workers (story, page 2).

Union leaders have also kept Scotland out of the strike (story, page 15).

Water workers cannot trust these leaders. And they cannot trust a negotiating committee which is entirely — all but one member — made up of full-time officials.

As well as contacting other workers, local strike committees need to be contacting each other to lay the basis for a rank and file network which can ensure victory despite the top leaders.

IN its second week, the water strike is getting stronger.

The latest offer has been massively rejected. On paper it was 7.3%. But since it was spread over 16 months, it was worth no more in real terms than the previous 5.9% offer: in fact, less, because inflation will almost certainly be increasing again by later this year.

"Newall (the GMBU negotiator) said at the weekend that he might settle for the going rate. But with the vote to reject, he's got no option but to carry on", said Brian Halcup, a GMBU picket from Farmoor works near Oxford, speaking to Socialist Organiser.

"There's no wavering. Everybody's of the same opinion — we want what we originally came out for, the full 15%".

Tim Sirett, a GMBU fitter at Farmoor, added: "The statements by Tebbit, King and Thatcher have enraged people and made everybody more determined. 'If I'm part of a union that brings down the government, then I'll be very

proud. 'We need more picketing. The longer this goes on, the nastier we'll have to get'".

Craftworkers like Tim Sirett are out alongside the manual grades in many areas. Support has also come from other parts of the labour movement. In Birmingham, one of the DHSS offices recently on strike over jobs



"CONTRARY to what the press say, the real average wage is £85.50, and the lowest £78. Sewage workers are taking home £54 a week. Included in the average

quoted by management are earnings of craft workers and supervisors up to grade 6." Graham Atkinson, GMBU senior steward, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent

Why not give us £1?

LIKE every socialist paper, Socialist Organiser needs fund-raising to keep it afloat. And just as important as the big contributions from committed supporters are more numerous, smaller donations.

Many readers wouldn't feel ready to become active supporters or sellers, but feel that the paper does a job worth supporting. If that description fits you — then we're appealing to you to give Socialist Organiser 75p a week, by paying £1 for your paper instead of the normal 25p.

75p a week won't bankrupt you — and it will help us fight the Tories and the witch-hunters.

CLPD setback in fight for Labour democracy

THE CENTRAL debate at the crowded AGM of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, last Saturday 5th, was on whether CLPD should register. It ended with a 270 to 297 defeat for the Left.

Just before this debate there had been practically unanimous votes opposing all expulsions on the basis of the register, and it started on a comradely tone.

Moving the pro-registration motion, Maurice Jones said that he 'detested' the register and would vote for a group like Labour Against the Witch-hunt to boycott it. There was 'a limit to what he would accept from conference' — he would defy decisions to expel socialists.

But, he argued, CLPD could not afford the risk of a boycott, which would lead to it losing trade union affiliations and members.

John Bloxam replied. CLPD especially should boycott the register, be-

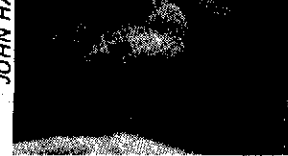
Martin Thomas and John Bloxam report

cause its job was to lead the fight for democracy in the Labour Party. An effective boycott could be organised. The alternative was for CLPD to give aid and comfort to an increasingly discredited device for witch-hunting.

Then the debate degenerated. Jim Devine shouted threats that all CLPD's Scottish affiliates would withdraw if the campaign boycotted the register. Alistair MacRae made a similar threat — similarly with no apparent mandate — from NUPE.

Leading CLPD official Pete Willsman claimed that: 'A lot of people in this room have very little

JOHN HARRIS



Vladimir Derer: victorious on the register

interest in CLPD. They want to throw CLPD across the railway lines for their own purposes'. Willsman and others had openly threatened to split CLPD if the AGM voted to boycott.

Speaking for the boycott, Reg Race condemned the threats and the implication that the pro-boycotters were johnny-come-latelies.

Kevin Barron, speaking for the Yorkshire Area NUM, also favoured boycott.

Audrey Wise pointed out that the NEC had already backed down considerably on the register, conceding that non-registered groups would not necessarily be outlawed. This, she said, was a measure not of the NEC's tolerance but of the strength of the campaign to boycott.

The conference decision on the register was different in nature from decisions on issues like unilateral nuclear disarmament, she said. Democracy also included rights for minorities. Maurice Jones had said he would resort to defiance against expulsions. Audrey Wise drew the line at the register.

Jo Thwaites argued that the register is simply a machine for witch-hunting. If the CLPD was going to accept that conference sovereignty legitimated this, then the next step would be to accept expulsions.

The force of Jo Thwaites' argument was shown later when CLPD secretary Vladimir Derer opposed a call for CLPD to support constituency Labour Parties defying the NEC on expulsions because it 'could open our organisation to attack'.

But the vote showed that a solid pro-registration bloc had been mobilised. Clearly a wide range of people accepted the argument

from Labour Party conference sovereignty. But what swung the vote was the numbers provided by Clause 4 and the LCC — currents close in political outlook to the Communist Party.

Sweep

In elections for the CLPD executive, pro-registration people got a clear majority (about 2:1). But, with the AGM so finely balanced, the bloc behind leading CLPD officials Derer and Willsman did not get the clean sweep they sought.

On three important resolutions, moved by John Bloxam, Reg Race, and Nigel Williamson, the Left won.

Despite Vladimir Derer's arguments, the AGM voted to 'call on CLPs not to carry out expulsions, and oppose any consequent action taken against them'. Many who had accepted the 'conference sovereignty' argument on registration drew the line (unlike Vladimir Derer) on expulsions. The AGM also instructed the EC to 'campaign vigorously' for 'total repeal' of the register, and threw out the Derer line of going for a 'modified' register (the 'Manchester Withington' formula).

AGM also defeated a blustering resolution from Derer and CLPD treasurer Victor Schonfield, calling



Anne Pettifor presented the CLPD Women's Action Committee's plans to fight for women's rights in the Labour Party. The AGM expressed doubts about giving unions block votes, to be decided by Women's Conferences of those unions, at the Labour Women's Conference, but endorsed WAC's other proposals.

on the Left 'to face facts and accept the CLPD strategy'.

The Derer faction had listed all these, alongside registration, among the issues on which they would split unless they got their way. Reg Race voiced a fear shared by many: that the faction will now use its domination on the EC simply to ignore the AGM decisions it finds unacceptable.

The conduct of the new EC majority in the period before the AGM can only have damaged CLPD's standing as a leading force in the fight for Labour democracy.

But policies passed at the AGM provide a basis for it to continue in the front line. The size of the Left

vote, and the election of a section of the Left onto the new EC, show the strong feeling for a united campaign.

The test for the CLPD now is whether the AGM decisions will be carried out — in particular, the dumping of the 'Manchester Withington' formula, and an open fight to block expulsions.

Join the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy
£4 individuals, £2 unwaged, £4.50 couples.

Affiliate your organisation: £5 per year.

To: Victor Schonfield, Treasurer, 21 Wallingford Ave, London W10 6QA.

Manifesto talks — behind locked doors

THE Labour Party National Executive Committee meeting passed a resolution supporting the water workers. Few water workers will get to hear about it because it was left 'lying on the table'.

David Basnett had phoned in during the meeting to say that it would be 'inopportune' for the Labour Party 'to get involved'.

It looks like a similar fate awaits Labour's more radical policies as the election manifesto is drawn up.

After the rank and file revolt of recent years, an open and contemptuous veto (as with nationalising 25 companies in 1973, and abolition of the House of Lords in 1979) is out of the question for Labour's establishment. Now they are cobbling a deal in secret.

The manifesto is being prepared by an NEC sub-committee called the Campaign Committee. All its members are right-wingers except Eric Heffer.

At the NEC, Foot reportedly boasted that the committee was 'leak-proof', and it is certainly sealed off from the Labour Party and trade union rank and file — and even from the NEC.

Refused

Even the NEC gets no minutes from this committee. When Tony Benn asked to submit a paper to the committee, he was refused. When it was proposed that Jo Richardson and Frank Allaun attend as observers, this was rejected.

As with the Register,

doors

by John Bloxam



Basnett: 'inopportune' for Labour to back his members on strike

others have easier access. Jack Straw put a paper to the committee. Political advisors for Foot, Healey, and Shore have got in as observers. So, apparently, has David Basnett.

The leaders' intention is clearly to keep the manifesto under wraps as long as long as they can, and then present the Party with a gutted and lame document as a fait accompli just before an election. In the meantime they are all innocence. They just denied the report on Channel Four that unilateralism was being dropped.

At the Labour Against the Witch-hunt secretariat last Wednesday evening,

26th, we decided agreed to circulate the following model resolution: 'This... expressing alarm at the alleged reports that unilateral policy has been watered down in the campaign document, calls for the full policy to be included in the document'.

The NEC meeting last Wednesday also included the following:

- Register: agreement to admit both the Labour Movement for Europe and Labour Friends of Israel.

- People's March: Foot said he would reconsider his position.

- Peter Tatchell was endorsed — with opposition from John Golding, Betty Boothroyd, Gwyneth Dunwoody, and Ken Cure.

- Rejigging the NEC: on reference back the vote was 13-13, which meant that the principle of the proposal was accepted. The NEC then decided to let it 'lie on the table'.

- Militant: Foot moved the resolutions to proceed, and both were carried by 18 votes to 8. This commits the NEC to expel all 'members' of Militant, defined as those financially supporting it or organising its activities. People will be given a chance to make an undertaking that they will immediately cease to be 'members'.

John Golding moved that a case be immediately prepared against the five members of the Militant editorial board, to be considered at the next NEC, and that lawyers should be instructed to be ready for possible legal proceedings. This was also carried 18-8.

PRESS GANG

NEWS that the Government intends to spend £1 million on a propaganda campaign to make nuclear weapons more acceptable to the average householder have of course been welcomed by the editorial board of Socialist Organiser.

We expect to get a considerable fall out from this decision in terms of whole page advertisements especially aimed at the 'hard left' (Slogan: 'Wanna see the whole world red?.....')

But J Walter Thompson the US owned PR agency which is best known for its ads for Unilever soap powders, and Pepsi Cola, has so far only drawn up sample ads for TV. Some of these have been exclusively leaked to our team of reporters.

1. The Soft Sell:

Soft music in a red sunset. Camera pans across the skyline of Birmingham's famous bullring. An American voice heavy with masculine assurance eases its way onto the screen.

'Hello there, indigenous population. All your life

you have longed for security. The security which means you don't worry about your children flunking at school. The security which means your wife doesn't have to go out looking for work. The security that your family is exactly where you know you can find them.

'Now you can have all this and still win yourself the Cruise of a lifetime. Just four minutes — yes, that's right, four minutes — after hearing this noise your worries will be at an end.'

(Camera focuses in on loudspeakers in public square. The loudspeaker alerts the attention of passers by with a two tone bell like sound.

A woman's voice, dripping with charm delivers the message.)

'Hello everyone. Those of you with nuclear shelters within easy reach should now go there and wait for further instructions. Those of you who have not yet bought a shelter are asked to wait exactly where you

are and need do nothing at all.

'If this is a false alarm a shelter sales team will be calling at your address right soon. If it isn't... better luck next time. Please do not clog up the subways and bus routes trying to get home if you haven't a shelter to go to.

'And remember, now that a nuclear war looks like starting I bet you'd feel pretty silly if you knew we had gone unilateral.' Fade out to sound of Mick Jagger singing 'Gimme Shelter'.

Two: The ethnic minority vote:

Camera zooms in on a sunny park in Yorkshire where a young child, part Asian, part West Indian, part Chinese, is playing cricket like Geoff Boycott. Grinning adults begin to skip after him as he dances through the centre of the park balancing the cricket ball on the end of his bat.

Pensioners get up and join in. The crowd becomes a throng. They pass two jaded hippies lying on the

ground with a CND banner. They try to get up to follow but are too stoned to move and can only stare in dismay as the happy multitude leaves them behind, their fingers clutching at the air.

A happy tune starts in the background and swells up.

In unison they are singing:

'I'd like to make the world go bang,

In perfect harmony.

A million corpses all around To keep you company...

It's the real thing.

Three: The 'straight-from-the-shoulder - no - messing' version:

Disco music: Words flip onto screen in heavy lower case type: Gruff voice barks them out as they appear:

'Bone crunchin' Lip stickin' flesh peelin' gut stewin' throat tearin' eye searin' bowel flushin' crop roastin' hair fallin' child burnin' man screamin' woman howlin' dog pawin' town dyn'city fallin' life endin'..... Pershin'.'



Socialists and the Election

ACCORDING to Channel 4 TV, the 'campaign document' from which Labour's manifesto will be drafted does not include unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Peter Shore's economic plan omits the Labour Programme '82 commitment for a 35 hour week without loss of pay, and — in plain contradiction to Labour opposition to incomes policy — proposes to 'intervene in the operation of market forces' to 'contain' wages.

'An extension of public ownership' is mentioned once in its 64 pages — in passing and with no details — and that's it.

And the way Labour's leadership is going, the story will be the same on other crucial Labour conference commitments. Policies to repeal the immigration laws, to ban plastic bullets, to improve welfare services, to introduce grants for

school students over 16, to extend women's rights, will all disappear in a mess of words.

This is no way to win an election. Those who want social democracy and capitalism with a liberal gloss can and will vote for it directly. Labour cannot win votes by apologising for and scrapping its radical or anti-capitalist policies — particularly under conditions of 'mass, chronic unemployment in which only wholesale sweeping changes can offer any real hope to the vast majority of working class voters.

Moreover, such preparations for the manifesto are a clear signal that a Labour government, if elected, would be a repetition of 1974-79's fiasco: and this at a time when capitalism leaves little scope for reformist tinkering.

The left has protested against these moves by the Labour leadership. How should we fight them?

We should fight to call the leaders to account. But in any probable time-scale now, they are almost certain to get a manifesto gutted of radical commitments.

Should the left then shrug our shoulders and shelve the issues for the sake of anti-Tory unity? To do so would be a shameful retreat, a declaration that we weren't serious about the whole struggle after 1979 designed to make sure that Labour governments would never again be like 1974-9, and flagrant irresponsibility unless we mean not a word of all we have said about socialist policies being an urgent necessity now, not an optional extra for the future.

Whatever the new government, the working class will have no option but to fight against the ravages of decaying capitalism. Struggles will continue against employers and against government

moves to buttress capitalism at the expense of the workers. The left has to continue fighting to create an adequate force to organise and lead those struggles. And that can't be done if we sink our differences with Dennis Healey at election time — which, like it or not, is a major focus of political attention.

So we must try to organise the left in the Labour Party and the trade unions — as much of it as we can convince and mobilise — to fight the election for Labour, but on its own platform. 'Vote Labour but prepare to fight' should be the slogan.

What the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory did in 1979 can serve as a rough model — though we should be able to do something much bigger and better this time.

The Briefings conference this Saturday, 5th, will be a good opportunity to start discussions and consultations about the campaign we need.

How we campaigned in 1979

IN 1978-9 the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory ran an alternative left-wing election campaign within the official Labour election effort. Martin Thomas reviews the experience.

The SCLV was, in a small way, a breakthrough for the left. Perhaps for the first time since the early days of the Communist Party, the Marxist left found a way to relate actively to what is after all one of the high points of political activity as it exists today, a general election.

From time to time various revolutionary groups had stood independent candidates — but always ended up with a pretty dismal balance-sheet. Apart from that the Marxist left could do little but debate the precise slogans to add to our call to vote Labour.

I don't think those debates were futile. Clarifying our ideas was a precondition for doing anything serious. But we had to recognise that for most people, even most labour movement activists, the precise form of the wince or grimace or gritting of the teeth with which we accompanied the call to vote Labour made very little difference.

With the SCLV we tried to go beyond commentary, to reach out and organise the left, to get as many Labour candidates and local Labour Parties as possible to campaign independently from and in opposition to the Labour Government's record.

The SCLV produced its own election material — leaflets on union rights, racism, jobs, housing, Ireland, and women's rights, a poster, and a broadsheet. We got constituency Labour Parties and Labour candidates to sponsor the campaign and use this material as official election literature.

Where that wasn't possible SCLV groups or individual supporters, some-



Brick Lane: the SCLV's first publication called for Labour to mobilise on the streets to help the Asian community fight off the NF Nazis

times LPYSs, used the SCLV leaflets alongside their constituency's official material.

Four constituencies sponsored the SCLV — Brent East, Hackney North, Hornsey and Norwood. Five candidates did: Ted Knight (Hornsey), Ken Livingstone (Hampstead), Jane Chapman (Dover and Deal), Peter Tebbutt (Falmouth), and Ernie Roberts (Hackney North). Joan Maynard, Arthur Scargill and Emlyn Williams sent messages of support.

The extent of support from these constituencies and candidates varied, of course. Hackney North took many thousand leaflets, while Ted Knight in Hornsey took only a few hundred and was markedly evasive when red-baited by Tory opponent Hugh Rossi for his sponsorship of the SCLV. Norwood took no leaflets officially, but adopted a local manifesto based largely on the SCLV material.

From the SCLV we also launched Socialist Organiser. After a trial number in September 1978 it appeared monthly from January 1979, with extra 'election specials' in the weeks before the May election.

Through this paper, through establishing local groups, and through campaign activity of many sorts, we tried to link up the election effort with an ongoing political fight.

The first issue of Socialist Organiser, for example,

carried a front-page call from Patrick Kodikara of the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Campaign to mobilise for the defence of Brick Lane's Asian community against a National Front march on September 24, 1978. (Much of the left, unfortunately decided that the Anti Nazi League concert in South London that day was more important).

We also held a special SCLV meeting round Brick Lane, where some 70 or 80 local Asians came to hear Patrick Kodikara and a speaker from the Virk Brothers Defence Commit-

tee. The last issue of Socialist Organiser before the election led on the killing of Blair Peach, calling for the disbanding of the SPG and support for black self-defence.

The SCLV did more than create a left voice in the election campaign. It established a regroupment of the Labour 'far left' which made many other things possible.

After the general election, for example, the SCLV was central to organising a labour movement 'Troops Out Now' contingent on 12 August 1978 'British withdrawal from Ireland' demonstration. And most import-

ant, the SCLV was the essential lever for organising the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy — an unprecedented united front of the Labour Left — in 1980.

Without the initial regroupment round the SCLV, the RFMC would never have been possible.

The SCLV was initiated by Workers' Action, and it came out of two discussions we had been having among ourselves.

Since mid-1977 we had been trying to correct what we saw as a sectarian bent in our work, especially in the

Labour Party. In strikes and economic struggles, we would operate by basing ourselves on the existing struggle and mapping out ways to go forward to victory; but in political struggles, especially in the Labour Party, we tended to 'intervene' like people parachuting in from outside with propagandist commentary.

In the trade unions, we worked by developing rank and file groups, alliances, left caucuses; but in the Labour Party mostly we related to the rest of the left only by ideological debate.

We identified this as a problem. But we couldn't immediately see an answer.

Then we started discussing what our reaction should be to the possibility — which then seemed real — of the IMG and SWP cooperating to put up a substantial slate of revolutionary candidates in the general election. We concluded that the primary importance of fighting for socialist policies within the established labour movement made support for such a slate impossible. But the discussion brought home to us sharply the untenability of just plodding through the election with nothing but propaganda in our newspaper to distinguish us from the Callaghan leadership.

We should try to organise a distinctive left campaign within the official Labour

election effort, we decided.

At first we had no notion that this campaign would attract more than a few people apart from ourselves. We knocked out a brief platform and distributed leaflets at the Easter 1978 Labour Party Young Socialists conference.

We were pleasantly surprised. The Chartist group immediately agreed to come in on the campaign, and proved crucial to its success.

Not only did they do valuable work themselves, they brought in leading figures of the London Labour left like Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone, Keith Veness and Jeremy Corbyn.

With them we formally launched the SCLV from a conference of 200 activists in July 1978. It wasn't huge — but it was the biggest 'unofficial' Labour left conference since the Clay Cross support rally of 1974. We had discovered for ourselves a way out of our sectarian trap, and for many individual left activists in the Labour Party a way of uniting with other similar activists.

Vehement

Quite a few Workers' Action supporters had doubts about the project. Some had vehement objections, saying that the appeal for the SCLV conference, drafted jointly by WA and the Chartists, was far too 'soft' politically.

We replied that the platform was not meant to be a scientific statement of the Marxist programme — though indeed such statements are irreplaceable — but a summary of immediate class struggle responses adequate to rally the left against the Tories and Callaghanism.

And in the 1979 election campaign the SCLV was at least as sharp and clear on socialist policies as groups like the SWP and IMG — without the problem of sectarian self-counterposition to the mass labour movement.

The success of that pioneer effort, and the development of the left since, should make it possible to do something similar on a much bigger scale for 1983's or 1984's election.

A change of heart?

SOCIALIST Challenge's editorial of January 28 concludes: 'The left must immediately begin to explore the basis on which a united Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory centring on unilateralism can be formed. This is the next step forward; this is the basis for unity.'

It's always good to win new converts. But the call for unity would ring more true if Socialist Challenge had taken the trouble to approach the real Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, instead of making a broadcast appeal for a new one as if we didn't exist.

And the appeal would come across better if it were accompanied by some signs of candid political accounting.

In 1978-9 Socialist Challenge said they supported the SCLV. In fact they did nothing for it. The two Socialist Challenge representatives elected to the SCLV committee at its founding conference just kept a 'watching brief'.

During the election period, the only mention of SCLV in the columns of Socialist Challenge was a cursory attack on it — without explanation — for allegedly neglecting the

'mass struggle'. Socialist Challenge instead focussed on their 12 'Socialist Unity' candidates — who ended up not with 'mass' votes, but poor scores.

After the election Socialist Challenge commented: 'We realised that many of the people who agreed with our programme would still vote Labour. That did not matter to us. Shop stewards in places like Birmingham and Manchester... time after time told our canvassers, 'Yes, I agree with what you are calling for but I must vote Labour and keep out the Tories'...

It seems that the folly of standing candidates without a firm basis of support only to have to say afterwards that it 'didn't matter' whether people voted for them or not is now clear to Socialist Challenge. Good: but it would be better to have the issue discussed openly. A Marxist tendency is, after all, supposed to be the 'memory of the class', not a factional opportunity-grabbing machine, switching and turning to pick up good ideas with no regard for consistency.



Ken Livingstone

Iran: preparing for a general strike

MEHDI AGHAH, an Iranian Kurd recently escaped from Iran, spoke to Mary Corbishley about the present situation in Iran and some developments in the opposition groups.

The attacks by the Islamic Regime of Ayatollah Khomeini continue with the same ferocity. All forms of freedom of speech or press have disappeared. Executions are now no longer reported and the majority of people are ignorant about how many there are — many of them are of young people.

If you wear a moustache you can be executed — it is seen as an act of rebellion. There is no system of trial.

The position of women is terrible. Islam is against women and it's not just the regime which is attacking women.

Men throughout society collude in these attacks. If a woman is not completely covered when she goes out into the street then she is liable to be beaten up by male passers-by if not dragged off to prison by the Pasdars ('Revolutionary Guards').

Walls are daubed with slogans such as 'death to women', 'women are prostitutes'.

A nine year old girl can be executed, while women who are virgins are raped prior to execution because Islam forbids the execution of virgins.

Any workers' committees or workers' organisations that sprang up during the uprising against the Shah have been destroyed.

The Pasdars shoot workers who have tried to organise within the factory, outside the Islamic committees.

There are still attempts to develop secret committees and create links between factories in preparation for a general strike.

The regime cannot stop this completely because the lesson of the uprising was that the workers and people can organise and they have not forgotten that.

The war with Iraq is the main way that the government has survived and that's why they want it to continue.

The war has had a devastating effect; the economy is in chaos and the death toll, especially of young people, is very high.

Young children 8, 9, etc., have been used as a human barricade in the war, sent into minefields and blown to pieces in order to clear the

A 16 year old girl was executed in Evin prison after 2 days imprisonment.

The prison authorities justified the execution to her father on the basis that she had 'confessed to being a member of the Mojahedin'. The girl was born dumb.

path for the tanks behind.

Kurdistan is the only part of Iran where the struggle against the regime continues.

The movement in Kurdistan belongs to the people; everyone works for the struggle — even if they are not actually fighting as Peshmergas.

The regime is not able to smash this movement, which has a long history going back to the Republic of Mahabad in 1945 and even before that.

The regime has used the war to continue the attack on the Kurdistan that they started in 1979 as they have on the rest of the mass



Anti-imperialist? Iranian soldiers at war with Iraq

within a year. Only eight or nine of these still exist.

Many of these organisations supported the Islamic Republic, believing that this petty-bourgeois regime could be anti-imperialist.

The struggle has shown that no section of the petty bourgeoisie can be anti-imperialist. By some organisations supporting the regime on the grounds that it was anti-imperialist, and others attacking it for being anti-working class, the mass movement became confused.

For 30 years the left has had no experience of open activity and has been unable to develop. Because of the confusion that arose after the revolution people began to leave organisations and the struggle.

The Marxist left groups have been decimated as members have been arrested and executed. Those remaining have gone underground.

The National Council of Resistance, the opposition movement consisting of the Mujaheddin, the KDP and Bani-Sadr — an ex-minister of the present regime — has some power outside Iran, but not inside, except the KDP.

movement that developed during the uprising against the Shah.

There are links between the Kurdish struggle in Iran and the Kurds in Iraq, Syria and Turkey. If this support didn't exist it would be difficult for the Iranian Kurds to continue fighting as the regime has cut off petrol and food from Kurdistan.

In Iraq, the war has enabled the guerrilla struggle against Hussein to be stepped up.

In the rest of Iran, the organisations of the opposition are in disarray. At the start of the revolution, 63 different organisations emerged

Over the past 2 years support for the Mujaheddin has declined. At the beginning the Mujaheddin tried to mobilise against individuals of the regime rather than its ideas.

Their fusion with Bani-Sadr made people see that they were not against the Constitution. Bani-Sadr was responsible for the attack on the Universities and is the same person who told the army 'do not rest or sleep until you have smashed Kurdistan'.

Regime

Therefore he cannot be a revolutionary. He is against individuals in the regime but his political line is no different because it is on the same political basis.

Those who are opposed to the regime will get support because the people hate the regime: that's why they gave support to the Mujaheddin.

Of the other groupings. The Fedayeen was a large organisation before the revolution. Afterwards there was a split. The majority have continued to support the regime.



can be overthrown. It describes the nature of the present regime and the situation in Iran.

It believes that other organisations have failed. In four years no political programme for the Iranian revolution has emerged and therefore it is necessary to build a new organisation.

People joining the SR Tendency should understand the past history of their political organisation and see the bankruptcy of the left struggle in Iran.

The HKS (Socialist Workers Party) supports the paper and are making propaganda for it because they believe it has the best political programme for overthrowing the regime.

The SR tendency of the minority have changed their view of armed struggle.

They now see the armed struggle in the context of the political struggle, so a mass armed struggle is needed not an armed guerrilla group.

It is difficult to say what the immediate perspectives for Iran are.

Within the regime there are two factions fighting each other, one group who support Khomeini called the 'Followers of Imams Live', and the other more right wing called 'Hojatdiah'. So it is still very unstable. A coup could be on the cards, led by the monarchists who support the Shah's son. Or a new regime could be developed around Bazargan and the National Front.

Minute

There is no way of being sure but every minute, every action can change events in Iran.

Labour movements everywhere should support the distribution of anti-regime information about the repression in Iran and the relationship between the regime and Imperialism. The working class is the same everywhere and solidarity should be built with the working class in Iran.

The women's movement especially should campaign against women's oppression in Iran.

Fianna Fail flounders

CHARLES J Haughey, recently defeated prime minister and leader of Fianna Fail, survived a meeting of his Dail [Parliamentary] party last week — by promising that he would go, but in his own time.

That his time is now likely to be short is agreed by most of the professional Fianna Fail watchers.

A long series of scandals has shaken Fianna Fail and deepened the split that opened when Haughey shouldered Jack Lynch out of the leadership three years ago. Some of the scandals are farcical.

A man since convicted for two especially nasty murders is on the run from the police and finds refuge in the home of the Attorney General! A minister uses the powers of the sovereign Irish Republic to

interfere with the prosecution of a relative for a traffic offence. (The Northern Ireland police were asked to pick up a 'dangerous' witness and held him for a few days).

A prominent Fianna Fail supporter of Haughey is, in effect (though there is a thin disguise of words around it) offered £100,000 to ditch Haughey: he has taken the precaution to have cronies use police equipment to tape-record the conversation.

Haughey, on his way out as Taoiseach [prime minister] rushes to make a political appointment to the police force. Leading political journalists, including one for the Fianna Fail paper Irish Press, have their phones tapped — they are known to be on intimate terms with Garret Fitzgerald and with anti-

Haugheyites in Fianna Fail (thus the 'Haugheygate' tag).

All this is especially important because it is part of what may be a fundamental shift in southern Irish politics — the decline of Fianna Fail.

In the last few years Fine Gael, for 50 years the weaker bourgeois party which could only govern as part of coalitions, has increased its Dail strength, while Fianna Fail has weakened. They are not too far apart now, and the Fine Gael/Labour coalition has a stable majority.

More important, however, Fianna Fail has been ruptured by savage power struggles which saw off Jack Lynch and now, it seems, Haughey. The discipline and cohesion of this party of one-time revolutionaries is shattered, and

may never recover.

If the party goes into real decline it will open the road it has long blocked — the road to a powerful political party of the working class. (Whether that would be a development of the present Irish Labour Party is another question).

Fianna Fail has been a populist party of limited social reforms and the major party of the working class and the small farmers. It has also had the powerful mystique (partly myth) of 'the Republican party' which was the unyielding defender of Irish rights against Britain.

Fianna Fail and its predecessor pushed the labour movement aside, and the leaders of the labour movement led themselves be pushed, during the Anglo-Irish war. Whereas the forces of the labour move-

ment were central to the 1916 Rising led by James Connolly, Connolly's successors in the leadership of the labour movement, though they organised general strikes during the war of independence, did not contest the 1918 election. They left a clear field for the nationalists (Sinn Fein).

Labour never recovered the initiative. The Fianna Fail splinter from Sinn Fein became the party of the poor and oppressed, and Labour a satellite first of Fianna Fail and then, for 35 years, of Fine Gael.

The fact that southern Ireland has changed into a mainly urban society in the last 25 years must be an added pressure to displace the Fianna Fail party of basically rural populism — once it begins to crack.

It seems to be cracking.

John O'Mahony

Advertisement

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



Philippines workers fight dictatorship

RECENT years have seen an important development of struggle by the working class of the Philippines against the Marcos dictatorship. Central to this has been the remarkable development of KMU (or May 1st Movement — since it was formed on May 1, 1980). Bill Peters, who has been in Japan, interviewed WILLY MARTENEZ, the KMU representative who was there for the conference of Rodo Joho (Labour Information), a militant left-wing grouping based around a fortnightly newspaper.

Tell me about the growth of the KMU.

The KMU is the only militant trade union federation in the Philippines. This is the significance of its development. Before it was established at a conference on May 1, 1980, we had only yellow and rightwing trade unions.

I believe it grew very quickly?

Yes. In 1980 it had 50,000 members and by 1982, 150,000 members. Now it has a strong structure with many Regional branches.

What made this possible?

Firstly it is because it is the only union giving any answers to the terrible conditions facing the Philippine workers and because it takes up the political struggle against the yellow unions.

Secondly, it reflects the fighting spirit of the workers in the Philippines.

There is also another factor, that is the attitude of its leaders in contrast to the yellow unions. They do not enrich themselves at the expense of the workers. Quite the opposite, they fight for the interests of the workers of the Philippines. Recently our offices were raided and some of our leaders arrested in a crackdown.

What conditions are workers facing in the Philippines today?

Conditions are very bad. Wages are low. The workers do not have the money

Marcos: offering the multi-nationals anti-strike laws and 'the most competitive wage rates in the world'

workers face corruption in the government and corruption in the military.

What has been the response of the workers to this?

The upsurge came in 1981, making that year a phenomenal year for the working class movement. There were strikes in many sectors of industry, which Marcos could not control.

So what did he do about it? In 1981 he made a law which is BP 130. (BP is the 'Batas Pambansa' which means Cabinet Bill).

go on strike there is a minimum of 15 days cooling off period.

Contracts (CBAs — collective bargaining agreements) have to be of 3 years duration by law, and if the strike involves the CBA there is a 30 day cooling off period.

But even after that you can't strike! The union then has to give 7 days notice of strike action to the Ministry of Labour.

Then you can strike?

No, there are many other problems.

A union has to be recog-

nised by the employer to pay the legal minimum wage rates are banned!

So how does a union become recognised?

There is a procedure. First you have to get 30% of the workers into membership. Then you can apply to the Ministry of Labour for a certification election. If they grant it, they will then conduct it and the union has to get more than 50% of the vote.

Do the government discriminate in issuing the certificates?

Yes, of course they do! If it is a militant union like the KMU the management will use every method to break the union during the certification process — sacking the leaders — using goon squads to attack militants — everything.

Even if you are recognised it is only for 3 years — then there can be another election if anyone demands it. What the employers do is bring in a right wing union or create a yellow union who then demand a certification election.

It is then a three way fight — one union, the other union, or no union.

If workers are discriminated against, they have to decide if they are prepared to take the consequences of a strike under Marcos in the Philippines.

Have there been strikes against these laws?

Oh yes, there was an upsurge of strikes after BP 130 took effect. Workers challenged the provisions and some were successful in doing so. It resulted in the militarisation of the picket lines and many police abuses. But the balance tilted in favour of the workers. The foreign investment climate became disrupted and tremendous production losses were recorded. It was these factors which brought

about a piece of sister legislation to BP 130 — BP 227.

What is that?

This is fraudulently called by Marcos the 'anti-sab and picketing law'.

Under BP 130 the management used to send in goons to attack the pickets, and then the government would ban the strike for breach of 'public order'.

BP 227 claimed to protect the pickets against the goons. In fact it did nothing of the sort, the goons continued but BP 227 brought in new restrictions on strikes.

For example, it gave the Minister of Labour the power to issue an injunction order against a strike — without even talking to either side.

It also outlaws strikes in what it may decide is a 'vital sector of industry'. To Marcos, every section of industry is 'vital'.

There is also a law, BP 473, which totally outlaws strikes in 'export oriented industry'. Which of course protects the multinationals in the free trade zones.

Tell me about the free trade zones.

In the post war period, the imperialist powers, notably the USA, Great Britain and France, granted formal independence to former colonies but sought greater control through more subtle but equally effective methods.

Imperialism shifted its concern from purely extractive economic activities to systematically exploiting local labour resources.

In the Philippines today, this development is characterised by export-based and foreign-led industrialisation geared at producing processed and manufactured goods for the world market.

The period of the 1960s, particularly after import substitution was over, saw

this development. The multi-nationals moved into electronics, tropical food processing, garments, and cars.

American Imperialism has worked on this with the multi-nationals, the IMF and the world bank.

They have possessed awesome power over neo-colonies plagued with chronic economic crisis whose only hope of stabilisation lies in the funds controlled by the IMF and the World bank.

Seemingly independent states, the Philippines foremost amongst them, willingly comply. External loans to the Philippines are not \$18 billion.

This has led to the setting up of the free trade zones in the Philippines in designated geographical areas in which every incentive and facility is given to

the multi-nationals and nothing to the Philippine workers.

These companies are not even required in practice to comply with the minimum legal wage.

Marcos advertises to the multi-nationals that in the free trade zones of the Philippines strikes are illegal and the wage rates 'the most competitive in the world.'

What are the living conditions of the workers in the Philippines?

Probably worse than you can imagine. Whole families live in one room a few metres square. Everything is done in that room, living, cooking, sleeping, washing for maybe 6 or 8 people! One quarter of the population of Manila (2 million) live in the shanty towns. They are called 'squatters'. They are regularly harassed by the government and their houses bulldozed down. In the banana plantations it is even worse.

I believe there is an armed struggle against Marcos?

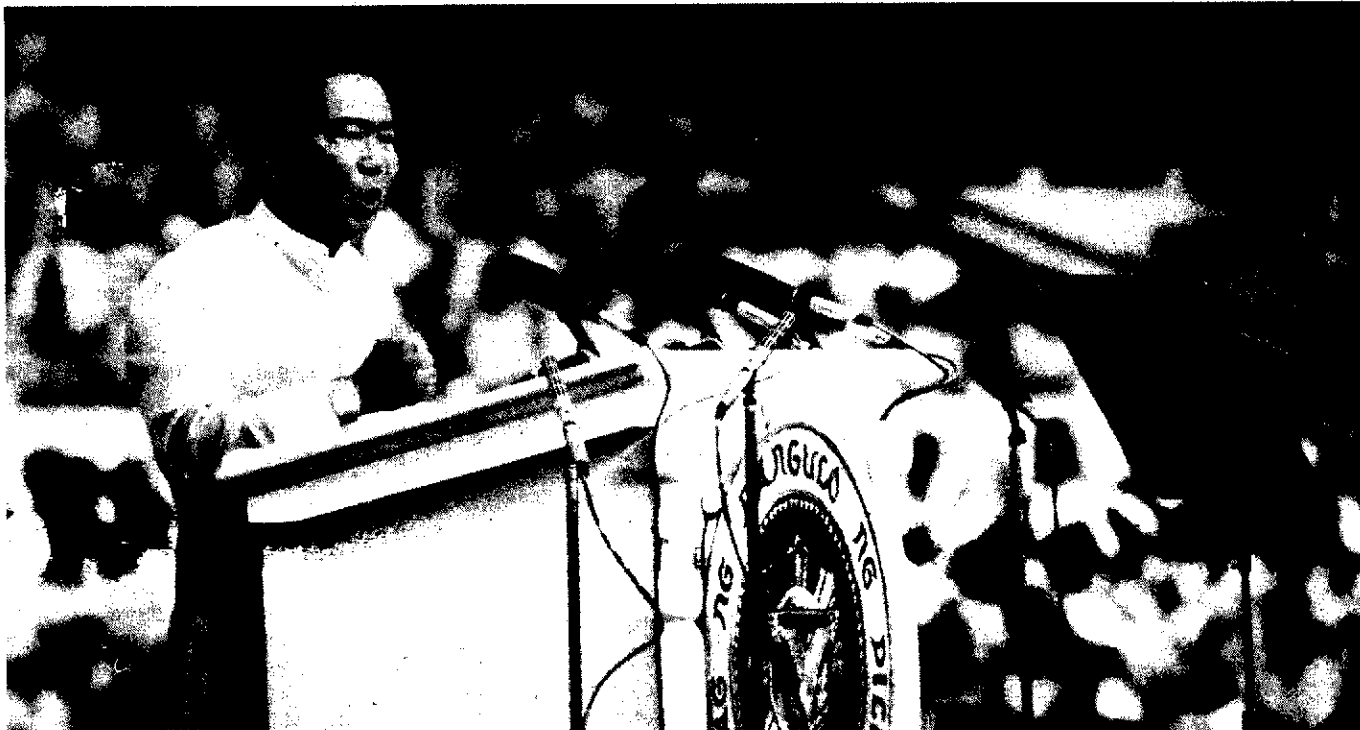
Yes, I understand from the newspapers that it is getting stronger. There are some liberated areas. It is conducted by the New Peoples Army.

What is the attitude of the average Philippine workers to the armed struggle?

They are sympathetic, particularly in the countryside. Everyone wants to see an end to the Marcos military regime.

How do you see things developing now in the Philippines?

The KMU will not compromise. We intend to continue to represent the workers of the Philippines in their struggles against the Marcos, the employers, and the multi-nationals!



to buy proper food or to buy clothes or the things they need to live. I don't have the exact figures, but unemployment is very bad — far worse than in any of the first world countries. We don't have the right to strike and the multi-nationals get fat at the expense of the workers of the Philippines. The

This ambiguous law claims to restore the right to strike, but in reality makes it almost impossible since it imposes so many conditions.

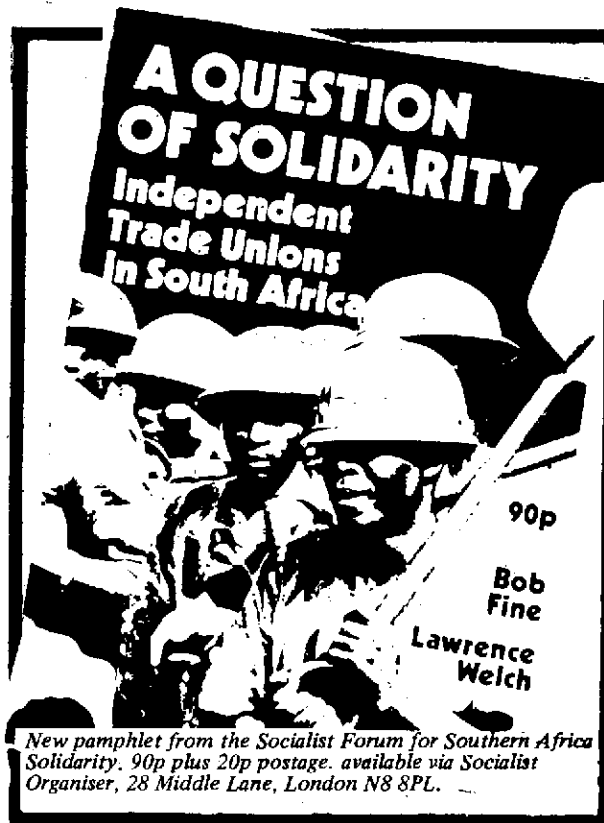
First to strike you have to have a two thirds majority of the general membership — all the membership, not just those voting.

Secondly before you can

nised by management before it has the right to strike.

Can you strike to demand recognition?

No, all strikes demanding recognition are illegal. All strikes over trade union rights or the breach of collective agreements are banned. Even strikes over



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Briefing

Labour's

left wing

REPRESENTATIVES of groups from London, Brighton, Merseyside, Nottingham, Bristol, Strathclyde and West Midlands will meet and attend discussions on local government, sexual politics, trade unions and aspects of Briefing production and organisation.

The conference is a working conference. We are not forming a national organisation with one centralised base or founding a national newspaper. We are simply extending our links whilst preserving the autonomy of the local groups.

Simply

Yet it is obviously something more than 'simply' a working conference. It is occurring in a very peculiar political context and the need of Briefing groups to come together is largely a result of that context. It represents an opportunity for a reappraisal of the role of the left in the Labour Party; and the possibility of the realignment of that left.

The left in the Labour Party is in a state of spasmodic retreat and uncertainty. The defeats inflicted at Annual Conference and, above all, the political crises in such organisations as CLPD are all symptoms of the new political situation the left is now facing.

The successes of the democratisation movement, of the GLC elections and the setbacks over the register and NEC elections have led to questions over strategy and tactics of how socialists should work in the wider labour movement and which way they should proceed.

Strategy

Questions over the strategy for socialists in local government; over which direction the accountability movement should take; over the relations the Labour Party should have with groups outside traditional labour movement structures (i.e. ethnic minority groups and, increasingly, the unemployed) over the impact of feminism and the women's movement; and, above all, over how socialists should organise in the trade unions.

These are the kinds of questions the Conference will discuss. They are among the most important questions for socialists in the Labour Party and it is hoped that Socialist Organiser supporters will play their part in that discussion.

GRAHAM USHER

Local Labour Briefing groups from many cities will meet in London this Saturday to discuss a national network. Richard Paine surveys the different Briefings.

THIS Saturday, February 5, at County Hall in London, there is to be a national conference to try and pool the experiences of the various Labour Briefings from throughout the country. The continued success of London Labour Briefing since its launch in 1980 has spawned a growing number of similar magazines elsewhere — including Brighton, Bristol, Nottingham, Strathclyde, Merseyside and most recently the West Midlands.

All have been modelled in different ways on the London experience; even visually those in Brighton, Merseyside and Nottingham bear a striking resemblance. All have origins peculiar to their own situations.

In Nottingham 'Briefing' grew in October 1981 directly from the desire to extend, and draw lessons from, the success of the Left in Nottingham East CLP to the rest of the area.

In Brighton 'Briefing' emerged in January 1982 as the old Labour Left was

breaking up. The Labour Left was a pressure group of those both to the left and right of the Militant which disintegrated when the more right wing elements took their political opposition to Militant to the level of organisational exclusion. The left reconstituted itself as Brighton Labour Briefing, the old 'right' rump in the Labour Left collapsed.

In Bristol 'Briefing' (a much smaller and less ambitious publication) grew directly in late 1981 out of the left on the local District Labour Party and confined itself very much to this subject.

On the other hand Strathclyde Labour Briefing, faced with even greater old guard domination of the local and District Labour Parties, has tried since mid-1982 to serve as a focus for local campaigning and community action groups, as well as for the experiences of the left in the wards.

Politically the local 'Briefing' groups outside London are diverse. Whilst

all aim to promote discussion within the left, and support local struggles both inside and outside the Party, the influence of particular political ideas and tendencies has varied.

In Merseyside, for instance, it was pressure within the local Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) in the summer of 1982 which led to the establishment of 'Briefing'. After sharp political discussion it was agreed that the magazine should be independent of the LCC and other groups, be open to sponsorship, and have open editorial meetings.

Rationale

Politically its major rationale was to campaign, albeit independently of Militant (which is very strong in the area), against the witch-hunt. Recently a local branch of LAW (Labour Against the Witch-hunt) has resulted from this focus.

'Brighton Labour Briefing', on the other hand, is politically a much more homogeneous group with many revolutionary perspectives. Maybe this results not just from its origins, but also from the remoteness in Brighton of the prospect of the Labour Party capturing political power on the local councils. In other areas, Briefings are often much more focussed on council affairs.

Typical of the political perspectives of Briefings however are the four points proposed as a basic plat-

form in the first issue of 'Nottingham Labour Briefing': community and trade union involvement; adherence to Conference decisions; abandonment of managerial outlooks on the local council; and the defence, and extension, of accountability in the Labour Party.

Councillors

Involvement of sympathetic Labour councillors has been sought by all the Briefing groups. In some this focus has been exaggerated so that the Briefing concentrates primarily upon council affairs (a fault in the 'West Midlands Labour Briefing' launched in November 1982). The Merseyside and Strathclyde Briefings, despite the latter's lack of professional polish and appearance, have perhaps been the most successful to date in their coverage of local campaigns and community issues.

One feature common to all Briefings, despite their many variations, has been the distinct coolness, if not hostility, shown towards them by local Militant supporters. Once again that group's horror of participating in a more or less open forum controlled by no one political tendency clearly shows itself.

Despite this the majority of Briefings have undoubtedly suffered from a lack of organisational cohesion, and particularly adequate finance. The visual quality, and readability of both the

Nottingham and Strathclyde magazines have declined over recent issues. It has been difficult, too, to expand the nucleus of activists involved in writing and editing the local Briefings. The sales force is usually larger, but still limited.

A typical level of individual involvement is Merseyside where a dozen or so people form the editorial hard-core, with a further dozen involved less systematically, and perhaps 40 'Briefing' sellers. With some Briefings there has been a tendency for the numbers involved to decline as the workload increases.

Whilst no doubt this may be attributed partly to the pressure of time on many activists, as well as the ebbs and flows in the local political situation, it may stem crucially from an inherent, and damaging, localism.

Contact

There is little or no contact between the various Briefing groups. The national conference on February 5 must redress some of this, and try to give a national focus to the existing Briefings and an impetus to the development of new publications.

Left caucuses and Labour Lefts, many with their own regular publications, already exist throughout Britain. These must not be seen in isolation from the

development of Briefings. neither must one be necessarily counterposed to the other.

The experience in Leeds is illuminating. The Leeds Labour Left, set up during the Benn campaign, has proved very successful in capturing control of the local District Labour Party, helping to overturn the bureaucratic stranglehold on the local Trades Council, and taking control of the editorial board of the 'Leeds Weekly Citizen'. This is the decades-old local weekly Labour newspaper, editorially controlled by the Leeds Labour Party, quite unique in Britain.

Wide

To establish a Labour Briefing on a city-wide basis is therefore an unlikely proposition in present circumstances; but as a method of organising the left on a county-wide basis it could very well be a useful tactic. This suggestion, first floated some 18 months ago, is likely to be pursued again by SO supporters, among others, over the next few months.

The Briefings Conference will hopefully then look not just at the relationship between Briefings in different areas and the lessons each can learn from the other, but also at the possibilities of Labour Lefts developing into new Briefing groups. Similarly the relationship between Briefings and the Labour Party itself.

BRIGHTON LABOUR BRIEFING Womer No 2 NOVEMBER

MERSEYSIDE LONDON LABOUR 30p **BRIEFING** No 26 FEBRUARY 1983

BENN All over

TOWARDS A NATIONAL NETWORK

BRIEFING

COUNTY HALL FEB. 5, 10.30-5.30

Media barrage colours battle

Peter Tatchell spoke to Ian Swindale



JOHN HARRIS

We have seen a massive media campaign against you in the last 12 months, what impression do you have of its impact?

We have got eight major complaints into the Press Council about fabricated stories which have appeared in the Fleet Street popular press.

The Sun, for example, said that I went to the Gay Olympics. I never went. The Daily Star said that I am a member of Militant. I am not and never have been. The Daily Express ran a sneering story about me at the TUC conference last year

when I was away on holiday and was not even in the country at the time.

Undoubtedly stories like these and the whispering and smear campaigns put out by our political opponents locally have had a very damaging effect. A lot of people have been taken in by it.

Now, as a consequence of all these hate stories, which frankly just play upon people's prejudice and bigotry, I face daily threats against me — when I'm walking down the street, in the local shopping centre, on the doorstep.

Almost every day I get threats made against me. I've had over two dozen death threats in the last year and a fairly uninterrupted stream of hate mail.

Three weeks ago I was chased by two blokes with an iron bar. I've had milk

bottles and bricks thrown at me from cars and from balconies on council estates, and last Saturday I had a bloke chase me in East Street market, threatening to shoot me. In fact he was carrying something wrapped up in a newspaper which looked long and very ominous, so I just ran.

I accept that most of these people are just cranks but I have had a lot of near misses and I'm frightened that one day one of these people are actually going to get me.

Nights

To give you one typical example, a couple of nights ago, I was cycling home late at night and a car swerved right in beside me and tried to run me down.

They screamed out of the car window as they

went past "Why don't you fuck off back to the Gay Olympics you communist cunt".

That is something which emanates directly from a fabricated story which appeared in a Fleet Street newspaper. And that is the consequence of the hate campaign which Fleet Street has been running.

And I wish the journalists who print these lies had to live with the consequences of their actions. They wouldn't like it and I certainly don't.

What are the main points you are trying to get across in your election campaign?

Mellish and O'Grady attack me, not on political grounds or on policies, but mainly because I'm an 'outsider', because I wasn't born in Bermondsey. And they claim I don't understand the

area, the issues or the people.

Therefore, to compensate we are putting a lot of effort into fighting a campaign which is very strong on local issues.

Our first point is a rent freeze. The next Labour government is pledged to freeze rents for all tenants for at least one year, and thereafter introduce very strict controls.

Then we want houses and not flats or offices. In North Southwark and Bermondsey we've probably got more flats and less houses than any other place in Britain. It's nearly all very dense estates of flats built in the 1920s and '30s, a lot of them now falling to pieces.

We've got quite a lot of high rise blocks and tower blocks with elderly people and families with kids

No cuts in women's health!

Anger erupts on hospital closure

TOTAL uproar and chaos greeted the members of Wandsworth District Health Authority (DHA) as they prepared to vote for the closure of the South London Hospital for Women at their meeting on January 27.

They would have preferred to have taken the decision in the quiet and calm of the usual DHA meetings without having to answer to the people who will be affected when the hospital closes.

But the document proposing the "savings" was leaked, and in only two weeks a substantial campaign has built up to pressurise the authority to keep the hospital open. Petitions were presented with over 27,000 signatures.

In an effort to prove how reasonable and nice they were the chairperson of the Authority 'allowed' three speakers to put views of why the hospital should stay open.

The chair (who was part of the authority which recommended the closure of St. Benedict's) had opened the meeting by outlining the current position. He was very pleased to say that the authority was at present £245,000 underspent, and by the end of the financial year would be able to increase that to £694,000! He reminded the members of their statutory duty to keep within the cash limits set by the government.

Over 250 people had packed into the meeting to hear the arguments against closure. A consultant from the hospital, Val Wise, on behalf of the GLC women's committee and the Secretary of the campaign, were each given ten minutes to speak. They outlined the need for the services to be maintained and expanded, not cut. Their arguments were good, but it was obvious that they were falling on mostly deaf ears.

Priority

The real priority for the consultants, administrators and Tory members who make up the bulk of the DHA is St. George's — a large teaching complex.

The members pushing for its expansion at any cost all admitted that it is more or less a white elephant. They said that if it was in the planning stages now, it would be a different story

by
Jane Goss

and it would not have been built.

But, there is now a hole in the ground on the site waiting for phase two and the only way to fill it is to close the South London Hospital (and no doubt other hospitals in the District) and build another trunk onto the white elephant!

A member of the public suggested that it should be filled with water and turned into a swimming pool for the people of Tooting.

The public were vocal and were not prepared to listen to the same arguments they have come up with time and time again in this District to justify the rundown of health care.

It was obvious that the battle is between the powerful consultants — whose interests are in building medical empires with little regard to individual patient care — and the community, who have a good, accessible small hospital and don't want to lose it.

The District Community Physician is backing the



closure and was not concerned that a very good day-care abortion unit will close and that women will then be referred to a hospital where the doctors have objections to carrying out abortions.

She also maintained that waiting lists would not grow as a result of the bed losses. Emergencies are now admitted within a week and that level will be maintained!

The meeting was summed up by Dick Muskett, a left member of the Authority, who said that the whole thing had been set up. The proposal put forward at the beginning of the meeting made it impossible to support more beds at St. George's and also to support the retention of the South London. The financial arguments in the paper when queried were found to be not quite accurate — 'simplified for purposes of getting the paper out quickly' said the District Treasurer.

The people attending the meeting were given a first hand show of exactly how

decisions affecting their health are made — on trumped up statistics, false figures, on personal interests, and in support of a Tory government determined to ruin the health of the working class.

The most disgusting spectacle was Peter Wayland, a local Labour Party member, putting forward his reasons for supporting the closure.

He spent fifteen minutes justifying his stand. In his opinion there were only two choices: either close the hospital or resign from the authority because he would have gone against Fowler's dictum that cash limits must be adhered to.

Members of the Tooting Labour Party who were listening were furious and barracked him throughout his speech. Andy Harris, ILEA rep on the committee gave short shrift to Wayland's arguments and said that the third option was to vote for St. George's, for the retention of the

South London and for the expansion of health care in Tooting.

If the Tories then decided to disband the authority "so be it. If we are put in jail and surcharged then so be it." This is the kind of attitude that all Labour members on the DHAs should be adopting. It is not their job to do the Tories' work for them.

Local women who were listening had had enough. It was obvious that the resolution to close the hospital would be carried. The frustration of three hours of debate had been too much. The kindly knife in the back, the protestations that "we are sorry and sad but have no other choice" were impossible to swallow.

Some women stormed the meeting area, ripping out the microphone and overturning tables and chairs.

The polite chairperson and authority members were suddenly flustered.

Closing hospitals had become such a commonplace thing to them that they couldn't quite understand why people were getting so upset.

They ran out the back door to another meeting hall, called the police, and took the vote to close the hospital in secret. The vote was nine to six and the 'consultation' procedure will now take place.

The real campaign must now begin. Petitions and public meetings are a good and necessary part of the fight, but the workers in the hospital must now take a firm stand against the imminent rundown of the facilities and build for a massive fightback from both the hospital and the community.

Fighting racist laws

OVER 200 women came to the 'Women, Immigration and Nationality' Conference in County Hall last October. We shared our experience of fighting sexist and racist immigration and nationality laws — and there was a huge enthusiasm generated to go on doing so, as previously isolated women realised their common strength.

On Sunday, January 30, just over 30 women came to the recall meeting to tackle the problem of how to go on. We came to no conclusion — other than to have another meeting — but this is an outline of the discussion to show the problems we face in setting up a worthwhile common fight.

Do we want to set up a place where women affected by immigration and nationality law could seek advice from other women? This was generally rejected. We felt that women generally seek advice from where they live. A national centre would not be much use.

But we did see a need for a body which could provide local centres with up-to-date information and which could assemble information on the law, lawyers, and on individual campaigns and spread it.

But we also need a campaigning body. There's a national campaign waiting to be run to highlight the sexism of the immigration and nationality laws, as well as their racism, and to fight them. Such a body could provide literature — say, a pamphlet on the question — it could provide the bridge between women campaigning in various areas, and it could link up that work with other bodies into a national campaign.

It could bring the issues of immigration and nationality into women's groups, Labour Party Women's sections, and women's trade union caucuses.

But how do we organise a national campaign? The meetings so far have been completely open, and it's been up to the women there to decide what to do.

We can't go on just having national meetings, but if we have a smaller body to run things — say, a Steering Committee — how do we organise that?

There was a general feeling that we don't want to continue in the form of a GLC working party (one idea which was put forward). It doesn't give the impression of being an autonomous campaign, and would imply we were a London-based organisation, working for women in London only.

The real problem facing us is how to involve the women who are most affected by immigration and nationality laws. For example, there was one suggestion that if we had some sort of 'steering committee' that we should make sure all ethnic minorities were represented.

But our black sisters were quick to point out that we didn't want another campaign dominated by white British middle class women, campaigning on behalf of women affected by immigration and nationality laws.

The space exists for a campaign run by the women most affected by the laws themselves, leading the campaign, and directing it. This could provide a forum for all women to act together and campaign against the laws and their effects.

So, another meeting, more discussion. We need to resolve our differences before we act, but I hope it will be soon. We don't want to go ahead, find we've got it wrong, and be a nine-day-wonder campaign. But there is a will to fight there, and if we don't harness it now, it would be a great waste.

Jenny Fisher

Next Meeting:

Sunday, March 13, County Hall, London. 1.30-4.30 pm
Creche on premises — All Women Welcome

AFIA BEGUM has had an interview with Immigration Officials, and is now awaiting their decision. Just to make sure they remember the support her case has, there has been a picket of the Home Office organised.
AFIA WILL STAY! — PICKET THE HOME OFFICE
February 7, 12-2, Queen Anne's Gate
[opposite St. James' Park tube]

for Bermondsey

trapped there. The case for better housing, particularly for houses with gardens, is very strong.

So far as offices are concerned, we've already got too many offices — lots of them are standing empty.

Roads

All the main roads in the area have been taken over by offices, and shops have closed, doctors and dentists have gone. So the Labour Party is saying we don't want any more offices, we want houses with gardens and more shops.

We also have a lot of people living on pensions and social security. Over 25% of the population is elderly, so the issue of better pensions is very important.

We attack the Tory proposal to claw back 90p off pensions this year.



One in nine households are single parents, so we will be pushing very strongly Labour's case for an increase in child benefit by £2 a week.

The unemployment rate in the borough is now 20%. We have 20,000 people on the dole — more even than during the 1930s depression.

600 of those are young school leavers who have never had a job.

Labour's commitment to abolish tax on the dole, and our opposition to the scrapping of earnings related supplement, together with a campaign for a major increase in unemployment

Bermondsey Labour Party urgently need help with their by-election campaign. Each ward in the Bermondsey constituency has been 'twinned' with several London Constituency Labour Parties. Contact your CLP (or phone Herbert Morrison House 01-703 6511) to find out which ward you are twinned with and mobilise members of your ward Labour Party to go to Bermondsey and help with the canvassing.

benefit is going to be very important.

Do you have any particular plans for winning the votes of the young people of Bermondsey?

There is going to be a special Young Socialists leaflet prepared which will focus first of all on jobs and the problems of youth unemployment and also on the problem that so many young people have had to move out of Bermondsey in recent years because there are no jobs and no decent housing.

It is also important to attack the Youth Opportunities Programme for what it is — cheap labour and exploitation. It's a way of playing on the plight of the unemployed to get them

to work for more or less starvation wages, which in the end boosts the profits of big business.

How do you think it is possible to counter the effect of the press witch-hunt against you?

The only way is to go out and meet people personally on the doorstep. And that is what I have done. In the last year I have personally met something like 23,000 people on the doorstep in 17,000 homes in the constituency.

This has been an enormous task, in all weathers, often for six or eight hours at a time. But the reason why I've done it is because I know it is the only way I can possibly counteract the lies of Fleet Street.

WHY HAS THATCHER BEEN WINNING?

IT LOOKS more and more likely that there will be a general election in 1983. Its importance — and the importance of a Labour victory — cannot be overestimated.

Nonetheless, its outcome — whether a return of the Tories, a right wing Labour administration or a coalition — will mean an intensification of the struggle on the industrial front. There may be different methods, there may be different means, but any administration taking power will be forced to attack the trade unions.

In these circumstances it is important to take stock of the existing position on the industrial battlefield, the problems and prospects, if we are to prepare for the big battles to come.

The Thatcher government's economic policies have failed. Attempts to control the money supply have been increasingly

John McIlroy opens a discussion on recent set- backs for the labour move- ment — and how to turn the trend

futile. Attempts to cut state spending have foundered on the rocks of the massive increases in unemployment benefits. Productivity and profitability gains are wholly insufficient for the bosses. There are no signs of the much heralded

upturn. It certainly will not occur before the General Election.

The next twelve months promise a small increase in inflation, continuing pressure on interest rates, a climb in unemployment of around 400,000 and output static or increasing only marginally.

Yet Thatcher has scored a substantial political success. Her consciousness of the interests of her class, her decisive, pugnacious leadership, have consolidated the coalition of middle class and backward working class support that gave her the edge in 1979.

And the Tories' coherent strategy and élan confront unrequited collaboration, disorientation and defeatism in the leadership of the labour movement.

Thatcher's political offensive, symbolised by the Falklands, and highlighted at the moment by

the confident raising of basic questions of trade union democracy and function in Tebbit's Green Paper, has exploited all the weaknesses of the working class movement. The existing leadership represents reflects and reinforces those weaknesses: and Thatcher has knocked whatever stuffing there was out of the General Council and Labour Party tops. Even sections of the Communist Party are now discussing how the left can appropriate Thatcher's success with issues such as patriotism and law and order, or forge a coalition with the SDP.

Kinneil

As 1983 opened, the decision to let the NCB close Kinneil Colliery put the top hat on a major reverse for the NUM — the crack troops in the working class army — in the war over wages and pit closures.

The action in South Wales was called off, and now any movement against closures is unlikely in the short term.

The Tory government has blunted the edge that the proletariat's Praetorian Guard gained through their successful action over closures in early 1981. The position of Scargill and the left within the NUM has been skilfully undermined.

This setback, coming hot on the heels of the defeat of the CPSA and SCPS social security staff over the vital issue of cuts in social services, simply set the seal on the 1982 as a year of retreat on the industrial front.

Both for traditionally well organised groups — such as the car workers who failed to take action over the victimisation of Alan Thornett — and for those new to the struggle, such as the NHS workers sent back with a worse deal than was on offer months before, victory has been elusive on every issue: pay, conditions, union rights, redundancy or closure.

Control

The TUC has moved to a new level of involvement to control the fightback, taking greater powers than ever before to intervene in strikes at the Special Wembley Conference in April. It illustrated what this meant in practice by moving like greased lightning to break the ASLEF

Resolute Tories, union leaders who put the telescope to their blind eye when a fight back appears — that's the recipe for sell-outs and defeats

strike — and with the rapidity of a senile tortoise to organise support for Sean Geraghty in what was an obvious dress rehearsal for employers using Tebbit's law against militants.

It was clear by the end of last year — if it wasn't before — that the view of the General Council is not merely that industrial action cannot win but that action must not take place because it endangers already weakened union organisation and the possibilities of a 1974-style Labour government being returned.

What was most worrying was the success of this strategy within the movement.

All the broad indices of the level of militancy appear to confirm this dismal picture. Days lost through strikes in 1982 were four million down on the 12 million figure of 1980. Paper pay settlements are averaging around 7%, and real take-home pay has been on a downward spiral for the past twenty-four months.

Employers are attempting to restructure industrial relations, working practices and job controls to intensify the rate of exploitation. A recent study in local government, transport and engineering in the Manchester area confirmed this. Stewards' facilities are being whittled down, stewards are being successfully bypassed in favour of a

direct approach to the members.

Stewards are being effectively victimised or pressured out. Some are not replaced, others opt for a quiet life.

GEC opted out of national bargaining to negotiate plant based agreements linked to productivity: "the closer the bargain to the point of production the more realistic — that is, the lower — it will be". (Financial Times, 18 December 1982).

British Steel

The refusal of BSC to negotiate nationally, insisting on local deals "linked to radical changes in work practices", shows the employers attempting to maximise the advantage the swing in bargaining power gives them.

Similarly, the attempt to abolish national bargaining in the water industry, and discussion of sectional arrangements in the NHS, show the government's conscious strategy of undermining the potential of national strike action and maximising sectional attitudes through sectional structures.

Two-year deals, achieving greater predictability and managerial control in the NHS, BL, BOC, Hoover, British Airways, Liverpool Docks and Independent Television, and the three year deal at Caterpillar Tractors have blazed

the way for other employers.

The Megaw Report is talking about 4-year deals in the Civil Service. In the public sector there is even a flight from traditional employers' tactics such as arbitration.

Other employers are scrutinising the attempts of Birmingham Corporation and British Rail to weaken closed shop agreements in accordance with Tebbit. Requirements for secret ballots for the election of stewards and to approve industrial action are being writhed into procedures. Companies are attempting to remove the political levy from check-off arrangements.

A recent Financial Times report on the West Midlands typifies the switch from the velvet glove to the mailed fist we are seeing across industry.

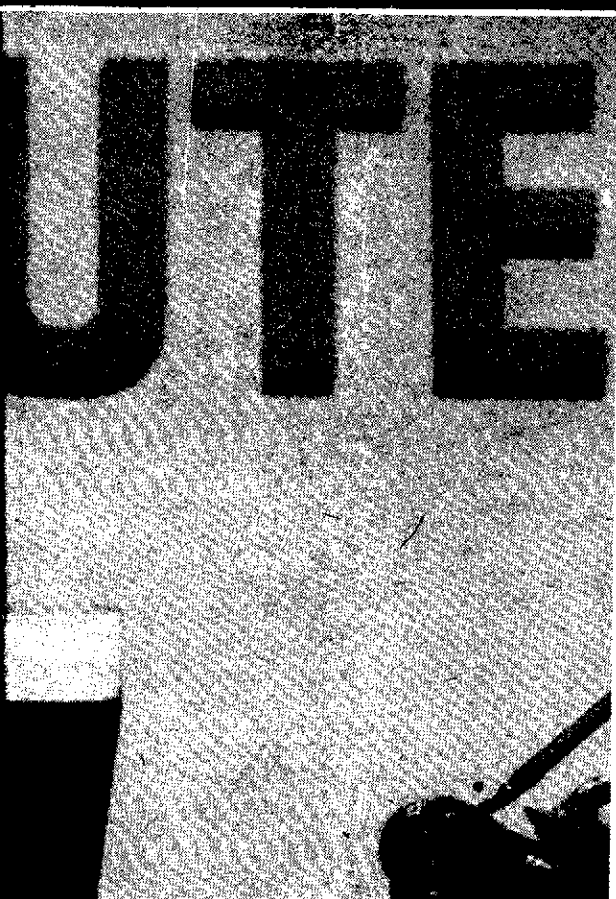
"Shop stewards have been consulted, but the choice of whether to change work practices or face even bigger redundancies has been put direct to employees. The emphasis placed upon the survival of the company has strengthened the role of the line manager as against the industrial relation specialist."

"A lot of the jobs once considered very important, such as organised training courses and services to improve the quality of staff, are now regarded as peripheral."

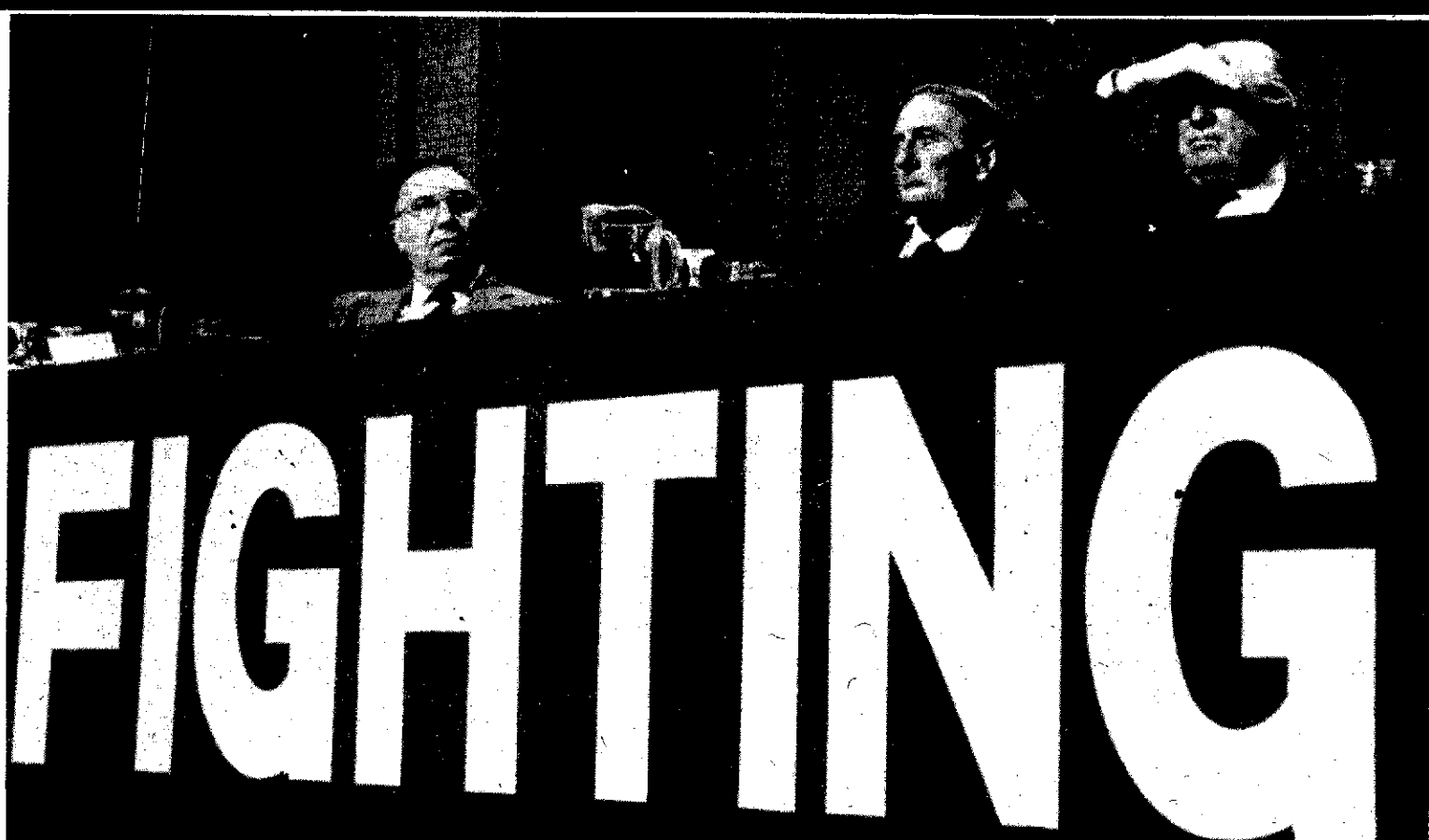
"The trend now is to give



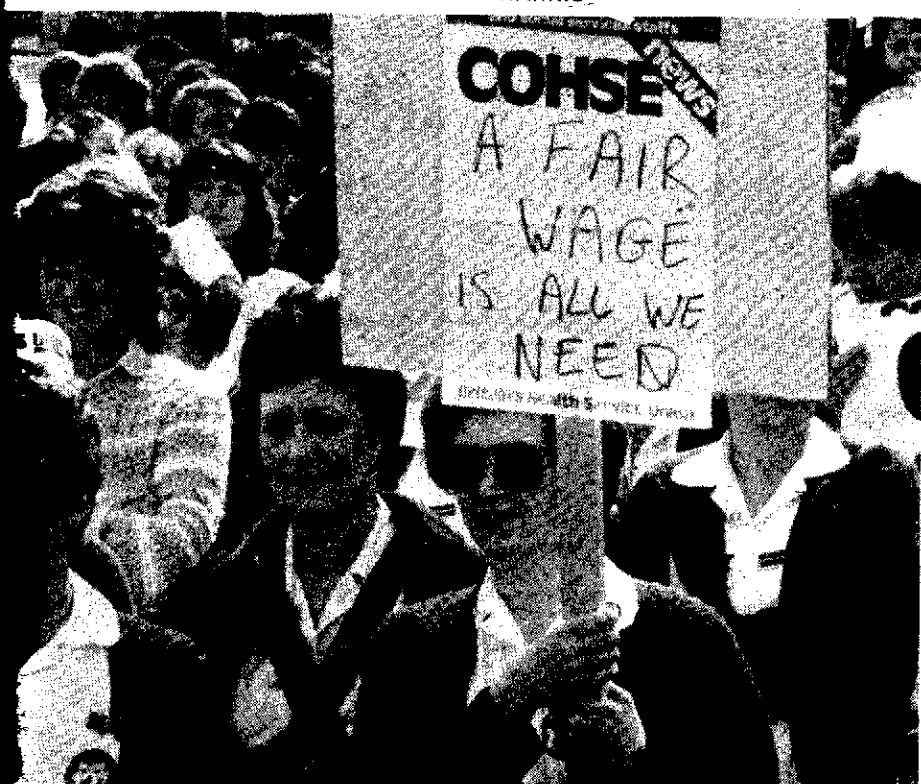
JOHN HARRIS



JOHN HARRIS



JOHN HARRIS



ed since 1926, overshadowing in the depths of recession the action against the Industrial Relations Act in 1972.

The Sean Geraghty affair showed that rank and file militants are prepared to fight Tebbit, even without the support of their union or the TUC.

The pages of the left press disclose weekly that workers are prepared to struggle not only over wages but over jobs and over union rights. Daily Telegraph; Leyland Windows; Heathfields; London Newspapers; BBC TV; electricians; Rhondda Council workers; Park Royal Ambulance workers; National Union of Students employees; Air India; Sandhar and Kang; Arlington House — the list is a long one.

Most encouragingly, it includes many workers regarded as weakly organised and new in trade union terms. It covers women workers, and it covers blacks.

The recent disputes at the Times and at P.S. Raindi and at Timex highlight the small-scale and limited victories which are still being won. The social security offices strike, in particular, showed that workers are prepared to strike for a considerable period over cuts and are prepared to say 'no' to the attempts of the full-time officials to send them back.

Resistance is strong considering the level of unemployment.

Paper pay rises (and they are still rises) are more or less matching the rate of inflation, and their decline is being halted — although a Balkanisation is taking place as the weaker groups are separated from the stronger.

The fall in inflation means that the real value of pay rises was higher in 1982 than in 1981. A recent report by Industrial Relations Review and Report notes a broad stability in a study of 600 pay settlements between November 1981 and November 1982 — between 5% and 9%, with a recent bunching around 7%.

Though noting that productivity deals and demanning were all too often an ingredient, they also confirm the TUC evidence on moves towards shorter working hours, longer holidays and fringe benefits.

The Tories failed to impose a 4% pay limit in the last pay round. A CBI survey showed that only about 30 of 1150 reported

settlements were for 3% or less. The miners, for example, were turned back but 8.5% is far more than will be available next time round. Other groups received final offers of 3 or 4% and ended up with 5, 6 or 7%.

While strike days are down, 1982 still showed an increase — almost a doubling — on the previous twelve months. The number of workers taking part in industrial action was also sharply up, at about 2.4 million — and if these figures are down on the average of the previous decade (nearly 12m) they still show a considerable level of resistance.

The same can be said of the figures on trade union membership. Unions which

would have us believe. The possibilities of a fightback and the power to undertake it are still there. One group of workers confronting the government could still at this stage provide the opportunity.

Whether we look at British Leyland (the massive vote at Cowley Assembly Plant for industrial action over wages, the night shift vote to support Alan Thorne), the miners (the vote for action in Scotland, South Wales, Kent, the fact that Kinneil was willing to fight), or the NHS dispute, we see that even after all the shots are called against the workers there is a sizeable minority willing to fight the Tories and a smaller minority conscious

war proportions on the working class. Yet if we look back to 1920, the year when the attempt to break the working class strength amassed during 'the Great Unrest' and the First World War began, we find that organisationally the unions are far stronger today than they were then. They cover a far wider range of workers, with far superior organisation and with a far greater potential stranglehold over the productive process and the whole functioning of society.

Stewards

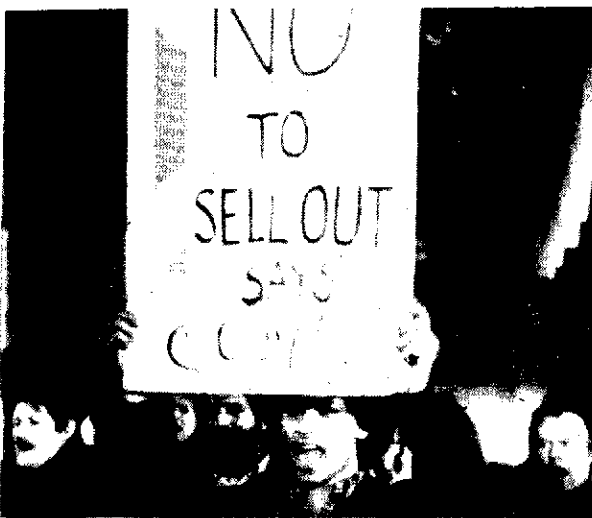
Of course in this sphere there are weaknesses, weaknesses exploited and developed by state orchestrated attempts to 'reform industrial relations' from the mid 60s to 1979. Written agreements have tied down shop stewards. Formal grievance, disciplinary and shop stewards procedures; closed shop and check-off arrangements (agreements all influenced and underpinned by allegedly pro-union legislation); the replacement of piecework by measured day systems; the growth of full-time convenors in hierarchical workplace structures, have all pulled stewards away from their members and led to greater integration in, and control by, formal union machinery and formal rational negotiating machinery.

This problem is also present in the new unions, where, despite in many cases less bureaucratised union structures, steward systems have often been fostered from above. The stewards have never had the direct bargaining over cash which was at the root of the close relationship with members developed by stewards in manufacturing industries, and they have developed workplace organisation within the confines of the procedure-based industrial relations of the last 15 years.

But while organisational developments are important, it is in the field of politics rather than organisation that the problems of organising a fightback really lie.

In the next part of this article we will look at some of the political arguments and analyses.

Continued next week



JOHN HARRIS

will increasingly become the cockpit of the class struggle such as NUPE and COHSE have seen their membership increasing, and NALGO has just registered a small loss after an increase over the previous two years.

The growth of unemployment has not yet precipitated a secondary haemorrhage of employed workers leaving the unions because of their ineffectiveness. In unions like the NUT or CPSA, where these factors might be expected to operate, membership loss is still cuts-based.

There is a downturn but no decisive defeat. Our overall verdict must be that the severe setbacks of 1982, particularly in the NUM, illustrate that there is a retreat on the industrial front. To fail to recognise this would be to indulge in wishful thinking.

Nevertheless, Thatcher has not succeeded in imposing a crucial defeat on the unions. They remain organisationally intact. The game is not up as the TUC

of the why and how.

Moreover, if we are to start analysing the present relationship of class forces, we have to set this empirical evidence against the class requirements of the Tories and British capital. Despite three years of relentless hammering away, despite an unprecedented level of post-war unemployment, Thatcher has failed as yet to even emulate the last Labour government in imposing between 1974 and 1977 what the economists Andrew Glyn and John Harrison calculated as the greatest cut in living standards this century.

She has not yet decisively, still less permanently, blunted the working class organisations which stand between her and her requirements: a lasting reduction in the share going to wages, a lasting increase in productivity, a lasting restructuring of British capital.

If she is to achieve these objectives, Thatcher needs to impose a defeat of inter-

control to the line managers. They are the people who take the responsibility for production; they can also manage the labour."

The report points out that in this area pay increases have fallen to within the range 4%-6% and concludes:

"Throughout West Midlands industry there is a growing belief that the substantial productivity advances made — the shakeout of surplus labour, the flexibility in work practices and the breakdown of inter-union skills — will not be clawed back."

The unions have failed to come to terms with Tory strategies such as privatisation, which are intended in British Telecom, local authorities and the NHS to permanently weaken bargaining power. And government and employers have chalked up success after success in the fight for redundancies.

They have effectively shifted the ground so that voluntary redundancy and natural wastage agreements are seen as major successes. A fight is likely only against compulsory redundancies or closures, and even there the chances of a stand-off, let alone a fall for the employer, are slim.

Destruction

There is no sign of a slow down in the destruction of the traditional manufacturing industries. Steel is the

most perfect example. But take engineering. It has lost 22% of its workforce since 1979. On one day in January 1,000 jobs were declared lost in the West Midlands car components industry.

Less dramatically, the North West Engineering Employers Association covering Liverpool and Manchester reported 2,640 job losses from September to November 1982, and announced 500 redundancies in the first full week of December. Comparable figures were returned by other local associations such as Bolton, Wigan and Preston.

The reserve army of nearly five million unemployed, swollen by such casualties, also represents a serious decline in trade union membership. A vicious circle of membership loss — financial problems — conservative stance on industrial struggle — more membership loss has been set up.

The TUC lost 500,000 members last year. The membership of affiliates stands at 10.5 million, almost two million down on the 1979 peak.

Union membership returns are optimistically inaccurate but the TGWU, for example, despite amalgamations, claims 1.6 million compared with its 2.2 million peak. The GMWU admits losing 1,000 members a week, and even a relatively protected organisation like the

EETPU has lost 30,000 members in the last eighteen months.

The organisational dangers of poor leadership can be seen in the case of the NUR, where attempts to discipline those who blacklegged on the national stoppage have led to a management-orchestrated exodus in several branches.

Nor should we underestimate the impact of unemployment in dividing and demoralising the working class. Apart from exerting pressure on the unemployed, it cuts a whole generation off from involvement and training in the unions, and opens them to the full force of Thatcher's ideas. 25% of workers under 20 are out of a job.

Unemployment also reinforces other divisions, with areas such as the South East remaining relatively sheltered compared with Scotland, Merseyside or Wales, and the public utilities being reasonably well off compared with manufacturing industry.

This catalogue of unrelieved gloom is important to assimilate. It presents, however, a one-sided picture. Even in its details it needs developing.

Despite its eventual failure, the NHS dispute illustrated the deep reservoir of anger and aggression that exists amongst workers new to trade unionism and inexperienced in large scale industrial struggle. It also produced solidarity action unparalleled

Fighting racism

Sick? Passport please!

by Jessica Daniels



ON OCTOBER 1 last year internal checks came into force in the National Health Service.

The aim is supposedly to prevent abuse by overseas visitors who are not eligible for free health care. Tory minister Norman Fowler reckons that £6 million a year could be saved, £1 million from overseas students alone.

An independent survey conducted in Manchester revealed that less than 1% of patients would be liable to pay, and the figure of £6 million is no more than a guess.

The checks are thus not aimed at saving money, but have another purpose.

The implementation of internal controls is a two-fold attack on the working class. Firstly, it is a direct attack on black people.

All black people will be seen firstly as visitors, and

will have to prove their right to free health care. A new form with three questions has been introduced, but in many places the person's passport will be, and has been, asked for as proof of eligibility.

Secondly, this could be another move towards privatisation of the NHS, with insurance schemes in place of universal care. It is a first breach in the principal of provision for all.

At the 'No Pass Laws In Health' conference held in December last year, the trade unions involved had the opportunity to put forward their programme of resistance.

Checks

CoHSE, represented by Malcolm Macmillan, recognised that the checks were discriminatory ag-

ainst 'non-whites', and that both the trade unions and the public had been hoodwinked.

CoHSE's proposed plan of action is non-cooperation with the scheme on the grounds that abuse is insignificant. But if members are threatened with suspension for not implementing the checks, then CoHSE is not prepared to take any industrial action or risk any jobs over this issue.

The reason for the lack of resistance against the checks was put down to the unwillingness of members to fight. Apparently the same reason goes for NUPE and NALGO not having any policy of resistance, not even non-cooperation.

Alternative arguments were however put forward. Andrea Campbell, CoHSE Broad Left candidate for general secretary, argued

that if the leadership of the unions were willing to back up their members, then those members would be more likely to fight.

Writer Amrit Wilson rightly pointed out that the NHS has been, and is, increasingly used as an instrument for racism. The lack of provision for such illnesses as rickets, sickle cell, TB, etc., and the much lower level of wages for jobs where a large proportion are black workers, shows the racism in the NHS.

The checks are just the latest move in what is becoming a 'state war' against black people. The checks are not separate from the severe exploitation of black people both in this country and in other countries bled dry by the multinationals.

Nor are they separate from the new immigration

controls, the 1981 Nationality Act (now implemented), the threat of deportation or forced repatriation, and the police's moves towards increased 'crowd control' and control of street crime. These new checks represent a new expansion of internal controls of black people.

Speakers

All Socialist Organiser supporters should invite speakers from this campaign to black, community, women's, and labour movement meetings. We need to mobilise now to fight for a leadership of the labour movement that will fight state racism.

For more information and speakers: No Pass Laws to Health campaign, c/o 146 Kentish Town Rd, London NW1 0JH (01-607 2461 or 01-485 6672).

Black teacher sacked by cops

JOHN Fernandes, a black teacher, was employed by Hendon Police College to run a course of 'multi-cultural' education. When he insisted on running the course not by examining the culture, habits and attitudes of different parts of the black population, but instead by taking up the racist attitudes he found in many of the cadets, he was sacked.

The Ad Hoc Defend John Fernandes campaign has

been set up to fight John's sacking and also on the issues of police racism and academic freedom.

The executive of NATFHE, John's union, have said they will take the case up only on an individual, casework basis, not in terms of the wider issues involved. But, as John says, 'it's not me who's the problem, it's the police'.

Support for John's campaign has come from the

National Convention of Black Teachers, the Labour group on Brent council (which employs the teachers at the Police College), and other black and labour movement organisations.

Resolutions are needed to Brent Council and to the NATFHE executive supporting John's campaign. So is financial support. Contact Ad Hoc John Fernandes Committee, 16 Ashley Rd, London N19.

Unions support Idrish

'THIS is only the start of the campaign,' pledged Bengali social worker, Muhammed Idrish, after hearing that his appeal to stay in Britain had failed.

The Home Office claims that he is partly responsible for the breakdown of his marriage to a British-born woman and should be deported.

But he is not even legally separated, let alone divorced. The adjudicator has only the Home Office's word for it. But that is enough for him!

All through the report, the government solicitor's statements are taken as gospel truth, while Idrish's defence is dismissed as 'not true', 'an unsatisfactory explanation', 'a direct lie', and so on.

But in a situation where the Home Office makes the charges, appoints the adjudicator, and the final appeal can only be made to the Home Secretary, what chance of justice is there?

As Idrish said after the decision was announced, 'This is a typical example of the way that the vicious and discriminatory immigration laws are used.'

The Muhammed Idrish Defence Committee is calling

on the 19 Labour MPs who have supported his case to lead a delegation to see the Home Secretary to support his right to stay.

Idrish will also be speaking to the Birmingham Trades Council meeting on February 3rd, and ASTMS Birmingham Central Branch has put forward a resolution supporting him. He has already won the full backing of his NALGO branch and of the union's West Midlands region.

A resolution is also going to the next London regional meeting and to the union's national conference.

Supporters of the campaign will form a deputation to see Muhammed Idrish's MP, Peter Snape, on Friday 4th, and he will also be speaking at a meeting called by Sandwell branch Labour Party on February 11.

SANDWELL BRANCH LABOUR PARTY PUBLIC MEETING

Against the Immigration Laws
7.30 pm Rookery Road School

Speakers: Alex Lyon, MP; Muhammed Idrish; Phil Rose (Prospective Council candidate)

Axe over Manchester health

by George McLean

LIKE others throughout Britain, hospital workers in Manchester have been stabbed in the back by Spenswick and his conspirators. But we are here now faced with mutilation by the North-Western Regional Health Authority and the DHSS.

No sooner were the knives of section action pulled out than we read our obituaries in the evening paper. We'd lost the national pay battle, but also in Central Manchester — one of our three District Health Authorities — there are to be 250 surgical beds 'relocated' with a consequent loss of at least 600 jobs.

Further, this story had been leaked to the press, not by management, but by a consultant. The bosses at Region were enraged that their masks of concern for the NHS had been ripped away to expose the truth that they are merely the cringing servants of Fowler.

Last year the Region's Chairperson was sacked because he asked for a 4% pay rise. His replacement — John Page — obviously knows where the axe will fall.

Under a ten year strategic plan published in 1979 Region estimated that



After the pay fight — now the fight for jobs and services

Central Manchester DHA would serve a much smaller population as people moved to the suburbs. This meant relocating certain services to outlying areas from the prestigious Manchester royal infirmary, St. Mary's Hospital, and the Royal Eye Hospital.

At a meeting on November 29, 1982 the Region and the DHSS said that a new phase of reducing surgical beds would begin by 1985.

But the Region's figures are extremely dubious, and even the Community Health Council — not exactly a revolutionary socialist body — has recom-

mended that they be rejected. The Joint Shop Stewards Committee, which came out of last year's dispute, have numerous and powerful objections to the strategic plan.

Crucially, the statistics underestimate the numbers of patients we'd treat. They seem to be based on Manchester hospitals serving the region, and anyone not living along these lines is judged outside our catchment area. Region has failed to allow for the choice of hospital by patients and GPs. Moreover, we take patients from way outside Manchester.

Are peripheral hospitals going to be as technically

well-equipped as the long-established services in Central Manchester? As underfunding is at the heart of the strategic plan, the answer is clearly no.

Not only do the Central hospitals serve the deprived inner city Moss Side is on our doorstep, but the reshuffle of beds will mean at least 600 jobs lost (some estimates are up to 2,000), so aggravating the physical and mental problems that unemployment brings to families.

It's true that some consultants could move to new hospitals. But the ancillary and technical staff would largely be left behind. We've yet to hear from

Region what would happen to staff who refused to be pushed miles away. Maybe we'd be issued with bikes.

But even with the medics all is not well. They rightly object to teams of workers being broken up. Apart from the loss of prestige — important to consultants and administrators — the JSSC agrees that relocation does not mean a better all-round service.

Devious

Workers must see clearly that the Region is deviously trying to disguise the 2% cut in the NHS by buying off some Districts.

Many workers in the hospitals have been danger-

ously sceptical about these cuts. The JSSC has been refused permission to hold a mass meeting of staff to discuss the implications.

In fact, the administrators have not recognised the JSSC as a negotiating body of affiliated trades unions, preferring instead to maintain the 'Joint Management/Staff Committee' — a Good Ship Lollipop packed with the so-called professional organisations like the RCN whose only contribution to the 1982 struggle was to scab. The affiliated unions have withdrawn from this farcical talking-shop.

We now hear that North and South Manchester Health Districts are faced with 175 and 301 bed-closures respectively. The total loss in Manchester would be equivalent to closing an entire District Hospital.

We are now seeing Tory national health policy in action. Unless health workers and comrades outside the NHS unite in resisting any such cuts, Fowler's axe will swing wide and deep.

The lessons we learned in 1982 must not be forgotten. We can win working class unity and resistance on the immediate issues of decimated patient

care and job-losses — but for socialists there must be more than 'fire-fighting'.

At the core our unity must be centred on understanding the political nature of the cuts. The issues go deep into the debate about patients' and workers' control of health delivery, and the lack of accountability of administrators and medics. Ultimately, workers must question the priorities and aims of NHS bureaucrats, governments, and the multinationals who pull the strings.

Immediate

On the immediate issue, we are making contact with local political and other pressure groups including Labour MPs. With or without management permission we must soon have a mass meeting. The Community Health Council has arranged a public meeting for February 10 in the Town Hall at 7.30pm.

I shall endeavour to keep 50 readers fully informed about this fundamental fight. Messages of support to:

George McLean, Central District JSSC Secretary, c/o Pathology, St. Mary's Hospital, Manchester M13 0JH.

KILLING OFF THE ELDERLY

Tens of thousands of old people are dying because of government policies. Anne Marie Sweeney reports

Last winter tens of thousands of people died as a result of government policies in this country.

Yet hardly a word has been said about this "genocide" by the main trade union and labour movement organisations.

There have been no TUC marches, no strikes; nobody seems particularly concerned.

Last winter 46,243 people over 65 died in December compared to 33,002 in June 1982, a difference of 13,241 people.

Most of them died either directly from the cold or from cold-related illnesses — bronchitis, pneumonia or heart conditions where the heart couldn't cope with the extra strain of losing body heat.

ITV's 'World in Action' (Monday January 17) gave a devastating breakdown of how this happens to what must count as one of the most oppressed sections of capitalist society, the elderly.

Elderly

The elderly are being hit hardest in every direction by Tory policies.

The cutbacks in housing programmes leave them in cold, damp, dilapidated housing; they face cutbacks in welfare and social services, fewer health visitors, social workers, home helps; increases in fares and cutbacks in transport services.

Health service beds for geriatric patients have been the first to go and elderly patients have been sent home early. Staffing in old people's homes has been cut, homes closed, and charges put up for home helps and meals on wheels. Food bills and heating costs have been soaring.

After much research, the last Labour government issued guidelines that 70° Fahrenheit was the temperature day and night recommended for the elderly in winter, and that they should not live in temperatures below this.

When it was reported that nine out of ten over-65s were living in temperatures below 70° and this necessitated some action, the Labour government withdrew its guidelines and buried them!

Figures

This year's figures show 55% of the elderly over 65 years living at temperatures below 60° (the legal minimum level set for workplace health and safety). 75% live below 65°.

The major reason so few have adequate heating is cost. Few can keep adequate heating in the daytime with electric fires with bills over £100 let alone at night as well.

But Lynda Chalker, Tory Minister for the DHSS doesn't think the government should interfere in the level of heating a person

We read many headline stories about old people brutally battered to death by thugs.

Why would the press not print the story of the 80-year old woman who was found a week after she died falling onto her cold stone floor while trying to light her electric fire with a box of matches? That same week she had been refused admission to Longworth geriatric hospital — because the Tories are closing it down!

has:

"I am one of those who believes that people would like to make their own decision on this sort of thing."

Heating

The heating in Lynda Chalker's department offices is a permanent 76°!

In 1951 6.8 million people were over 65; in 1983 there are almost 10 million.

In 1971 1.8 million were over 75. In 1982/3 the figure is 3.2 million.

The ageing population is creating a 'problem' for society, as important as unemployment.

How convenient it would be if nearly 13.5 thousand unemployed could die quietly, unobtrusively, in cold weather, with no publicity — their working days over, no more use to society, simply causing a lot of unnecessary expense in social security.

What an outcry there would be!

The scale of the indictment of this system, that bases itself on planning for profit, not need, is shown by the neglect and suffering of those who have worked all their lives to build it, and are left to die in the cold.

Women

The great majority of pensioners are women. When socialists and feminists talk of women trapped in the home, few think of elderly women, literally stranded in their homes, with a lifetime of caring behind them and nobody to care for them now.

Look at the conditions they live in. Incontinent and no indoor toilet — over 65 years old, 12%; over 75 years old 15%.

No central heating, no coalfires, no hot water...

Every worker anticipates old age. Not everyone thinks of themselves as being unemployed. But for many the poverty of unemployment will simply merge into the poverty of a pension, with just a change in name.

Feel

Workers do feel as strongly about the elderly and would fight for those who can't fight back, given a lead and a direction.

The employed have shown this year they are capable of great solidarity action over the NHS dispute. It was criminal this

was not allowed to develop further to bring down the Tories.

There are plenty of opportunities to organise similar solidarity action.

Hundreds of important services to the elderly are being cut. Workers must organise to fight these cuts by occupation of hospitals, homes, day centres for the elderly threatened with closure, by organising supporting strike action within the area.

By boycotting work on the administration of charges e.g. on home helps, meals on wheels.

By defending direct works for sheltered housing.

By taking strike action with emergency cover to prevent any further run-down of already skeleton staffing levels, in hospitals, home helps, social worker staffing.

Demands for the care of the elderly flow over into demands for a useful programme of public works that would create new jobs. In every street and district there should be provision of sheltered, centrally heated housing, with a warden and a system of free transport. All over 60 should have a free heating allowance, and be entitled to free meals on wheels and home help services. It is not a lot to offer those who have worked all their lives.



'When socialists and feminists talk of women trapped in the home, few think of the elderly...'

The new Poor Law

"IT MADE me, and I dare say many others, realise that if you're out of work or drawing benefit, you aren't classed as a human being any longer. You are just a government statistic which can be spied on, attacked, arrested, persecuted and used whenever and for whatever reason the bureaucrats and capitalists think up."

Those are the words of Tony Kelleher, one of the people held then released when police arrested 283 claimants in Oxford last autumn, and they form the foreword to a detailed study just published of what the police called Operation Major and the press dubbed 'The Sting'.

The report, drawn up by five organisations, roundly condemns the raid as a political exercise designed to heighten anti-claimant

hysteria.

It has been written by freelance journalist Ros Francy, who has painstakingly researched the raid, subsequent court appearances, and press propaganda.

It includes the first published account of a statement to police alleging that one of the landlords was collecting money from claimants not staying at his address.

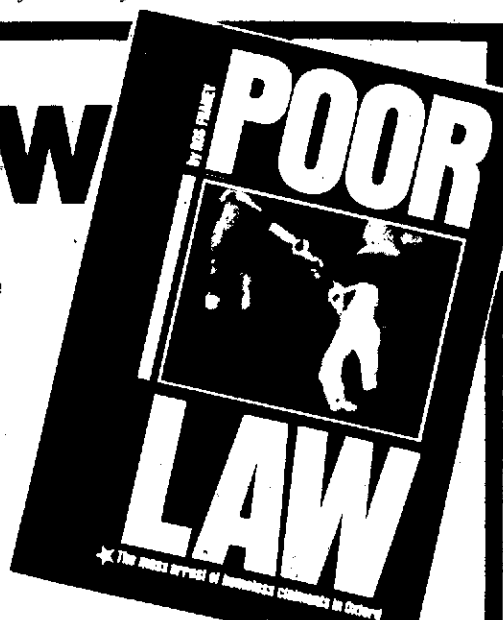
The report is essential reading for anyone who wants an understanding of the role of the state towards the homeless and unemployed. The presumption behind the whole operation — to borrow a phrase used about Stephen Waldorf — is that they are either guilty or 'tainted with criminality', and therefore fair game for any abuse of civil rights.

The report publishes fig-

ures collected on a local community association computer, which shows the total fraud involved in Operation Major at just under £60,000 including offences taken into account. This is a far cry from the £1.5 million quoted without a source in the Fleet Street coverage. (In fact, when the amount claimants were entitled to is taken into account, the sum involved in the frauds falls still lower).

'Poor Law' is easy to read, well set out, and a fascinating insight into the mechanics of the police, courts and press coverage they generated. It is weaker on its recommendations. It calls for a police authority investigation into the role of the police, and an investigation by the Lord Chancellor's department into the role of the courts.

by Peter McIntyre



But against this, and encouragingly, 'Poor Law' calls for guidelines to be drawn up by the NUJ and the technicians' union ACTT for filming and reporting of social security events.

'Poor Law' is published, price £1.95, by CHAR (campaign for single homeless

people); Child Poverty Action Group; Claimants' Defence Committee; National Association of Probation Officers; and National Council for Civil Liberties. It can be obtained via Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 (include 25p p&p).

'Autonomy' call is not democratic

Writeback

JIM Denham's letter in SO 116 compounds the confusion in the calls for Protestant autonomy within a federal, united Ireland which have appeared in recent issues of Socialist Organiser. He says this is part of a democratic programme to 'take into account and (hopefully) neutralise the protestant community's fear of and hostility towards unification.'

This leaves out of account the political role allotted to the Protestant community by imperialism and the basis for that community's hostility to Irish unity.

Autonomy for minority groups can have a legitimate place in a Marxist

programme, e.g. a call for an autonomous Kashmir in a united socialist states of India, or autonomy for the Basque country in Spain. In all these cases autonomy would involve oppressed, disadvantaged minorities.

The Moslem population of Kashmir were forced into the Union of India in 1947 on the whim of their Sikh prince, while centralising governments in Madrid have traditionally suppressed the cultural identity of the Basques.

The situation of the Northern Ireland Protestants is quite different. This community has for generations been used as the agent of British imperialism to oppress, exploit



"This community has for generations been used as the agent of British imperialism"

and divide Ireland; in return it has enjoyed relative material privileges compared with the Catholic majority. Partition enshrined these privileges, empowered the Protestants to oppress the Catholics in the north, and perpetuated the division of

the Irish working class.

The task for Marxists is to convince Protestant workers that their interests lie in unity with the Catholic working class. Of course that must involve the formulation of democratic demands, but in the Irish context autonomy

and federalism can only be seen as concessions to Protestant current sectarian, pro-imperialist consciousness. Thus it reinforces rather than overcomes the division of the working class.

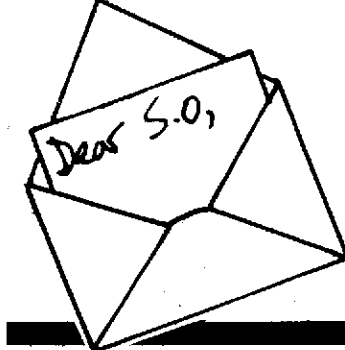
Naturally Protestants fear that they would be disadvantaged in a Catholic Ireland, and we should call for full civil and religious rights for both Protestants and Catholics within a fully secular state. But that is a far cry from autonomy.

What would autonomy mean in practice? However you draw the border an autonomous Protestant province would still include a substantial body of Catholic workers. A number of geographically separate Protestant enclaves (part of Belfast, parts of Antrim, a few streets in Derry etc., etc), perhaps linked by a communal assembly, would not avoid the problem, and the administrative chaos would be a breeding ground for sectarian strife.

The only alternative to geographical autonomy would be special legal provisions, reserved seats in Parliament, reserved posts in the government and so on: in other words a confessional state on the lines of Lebanon.

Clearly the talk of Protestant autonomy is the reverse of a democratic demand. It is a reactionary, divisive notion which has no part in a Marxist programme.

TONY GARD
Lewisham



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.

What slogans for Bolivia?

THE article on Bolivia (SO 116) was very welcome and was another indication of the fast improving international coverage in the paper. (At one time there was very little international news in SO).

However, although it was informative the article lacked any demands that should be raised in order to take forward the struggle of the workers and peasants of Bolivia (and the rest of Latin America).

In the elections of 1978, 1979 and 1980 it was only the POR (Masas) who raised the correct demand for a government of workers and peasants, pointing out that in a country like Bolivia there is no economic base for a reformist government and that the alternative to a workers' government was (at least in a lasting sense) a milit-

ary dictatorship.

This was when the rest of the Bolivian left were mesmerised by electoralism.

Only in imperialist countries can there even be the economic basis for reformist governments, as the wealth needed to grant reforms comes from the super-exploitation of the people in imperialised countries such as Bolivia. Despite the personal popularity of H. Siles Zuazo, his UDP government cannot last, caught as it is between international finance capital and the small but militant Bolivian working class.

□ For a workers' and peasants' government in Bolivia!

□ Forward to the Socialist United States of Latin America!

JOSE SANTAMARIA
Nottingham

Algiers masterpiece

WHILE Martin Thomas' review of The Battle of Algiers explained the historical background, it failed to give an idea of why the film is so powerful and convincing.

Part of Pontecorvo's achievement is that he doesn't fall into the trap of producing a socialist Western, with the FLN as the 'goodies' and the French as the 'baddies'. Events are presented in a far more neutral way — as if they speak for themselves.

The film's political sympathy with the FLN is not based on glossing over the FLN's methods, such as

indiscriminately bombing cafes frequented by Europeans. Above all, it comes over because the FLN is shown as representing the oppressed Muslims, who faced every day indignity, racism and exploitation at the hands of the colonists.

The film shows this in many incidents. Women, traditionally viciously oppressed in Muslim society, become part of the liberation struggle and are shown playing a leading role. The French become victims of their own racism when they let women carrying bombs through their checkpoints because they

are wearing European clothes and look European.

The French police use loudspeakers to tell the Arab population of the Casbah to break with the FLN; the Muslims pass in sullen silence. A young boy creeps round behind the guard post and steals the microphone and begins shouting FLN slogans. Suddenly, the streets become full of Muslims shouting 'long live Algeria! Long live independence!' and whooping in contempt for the real weakness of the French.

The film is partly so convincing because of those taking part, there were few

professional actors. Most of the rest were ordinary inhabitants of Algiers, many of whom had lived through the events the film shows and could bring real conviction to their roles in the film.

Classic

The Battle of Algiers is a classic because it shows a people struggling to determine their own future and escape oppression — but does so without the romantic and uncritical approach so often found on the left. If you get a chance to see it, go at all costs!

BRUCE ROBINSON
Islington

POEMS: HAVE A GO

CONGRATULATIONS on publishing the poem by Ray Attwell in SO 116. I would like to see more poetry and suggest that other readers have a go.

Politics involves a bit more than strikes and the last GMC meeting, and our personal experience under capitalism is political and should be communicated to our brothers and sisters. We have to try and change ourselves as people whilst struggling to overcome the system that produces the deformations that at times make us worse than animals.

For example, why have there been no articles on ecological movements in SO? Look at the Greens in the FRG.

Also, your coverage of CND had been extremely limited, almost tokenistic.

I really do think that some of the letters, such as that from Nottingham SO are very silly indeed. It is tremendous that these women have done something.

Congratulate them on this, and then criticise them in a supportive and sisterly fashion, otherwise you just piss them off.

But coming back to Ray, I do think that his poem, which obviously reflects his experience on the factory floor was too macho-male and northern working class centred. And what about the sexism of the title?

The poem glorifies conflict. Isn't all this 'bar room bevvy' the kind of thing we should be trying to transcend not glorify? I'd be interested in the views of other SO readers.

WENDY WHEELWRIGHT
Liverpool

Politics of Greenham Common

IN THEIR letter entitled 'Greenham Sexism?', SO 114, Dianne Pearson and Brian Scott make a number of false assumptions about the politics behind Greenham Common and the nine other peace camps now existing throughout Britain.

The implication is made in their letter that Greenham is a branch or offshoot of CND and is controlled by them. This is untrue. Greenham is part of the women's peace movement who organise entirely independently of national and local CND groups and operate in a completely different way. More about that later.

In answer to doubts about the relevance of Greenham to the women's struggle as a whole: involvement in Greenham

Common has been a first political step for many women and a politicising experience for all of us.

Through our actions, which have been in direct confrontation with the state, we have grown more aware of its nature and power, through, for example, daily police harassment and the distortions of the media. At the same time we have grown more conscious of our own power to act.

Neither are we naive enough to think, as the letter suggests, that nuclear weapons are an isolated issue. We have been working solidly within the unions and the Labour Party — regularly sending speakers to discuss opposition to cruise and other nuclear weapons, and to talk about the links between the arms race and

unemployment, cuts in services and so on. Much of our financial support comes from Labour and trade union branches.

Women from Greenham Common have joined in with the picket outside South Africa House, the health workers demonstration on September 22 and demonstrated against the Falklands War during the 'Victory Parade'.

One action now being planned is a women's one-day national strike on May 24. We are calling on women in paid employment, women working in the home and women students to leave their usual jobs for the day to picket nuclear bases and construction companies engaged in work on nuclear bases. We will be building support for this through the Labour Party and trade

unions as well as women's and CND groups.

We certainly don't see ourselves as objects of sympathy, and object strongly to the media's portrayal of us in recent weeks. However, we have very little control over what the 'gutter press' choose to write about us any more than do, for example, the Labour Left who have been subjected to smear campaigns.

The action on New Year's Day when 44 women entered the base and occupied the top of the missile silos was designed to refocus media attention on what is happening inside the base and away from the shock horror stories of 'burly man-eating lesbians' and trivial domestic details of the camp.

We have future actions planned along similar lines

but also important are our moves to decentralise the campaign. We are anxious to make it clear that the Women's Peace Movement exists not only at Greenham but that there is now a rapidly growing and nationwide (no, European-wide) network of women engaged in anti-nuclear and anti-militarist activity of an effective nature.

All our actions are planned and all decisions made on a collective basis, involving all women who live on the camp, women who visit the camp and the women working in our London support groups.

We have no leaders or hierarchies, and this is fundamental to the way we work, because we recognise that we have to break down these power structures which are the very thing which on a larger scale

gave rise to nuclear weapons.

We know it is not simply a question of getting rid of the weapons because it would be impossible to get rid of the knowledge of how to make them; it is the whole structure of society that must be changed and that the need to possess these weapons in order to protect positions of power and privilege is eradicated.

ANDREA HEATH
Greenham Common
Peace Camp



February	
Monday	7 14 21 28
Tuesday	1 8 15 22
Wednesday	2 9 16 23
Thursday	3 10 17 24
Friday	4 11 18 25
Saturday	5 12 19 26
Sunday	6 13 20 27

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.

BAN 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. Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

WOMEN, Immigration and Nationality: meeting to discuss our future as a campaign. Sunday March 13, 1.30 to 4.30pm, County Hall, London SE1. All women welcome. Creche on premises.

NOTTINGHAM Campaign Against Rayner conference: Saturday February 19, 10.30 to 4.30, at Nottingham Centre for the Unem-

ployed, Hounds Gate. Creche and lunch available. Morning includes speakers from CPSA NEC and Child Poverty Action Group, and a Labour MP; afternoon workshops on ESSP, job centres/ethnic monitoring, new supplementary benefit legislation.

Open to all unemployed people and delegates from trade union and labour movement organisations.

LABOUR democracy and local government: day conference for District Labour Parties, Saturday March 26, 10.30 to 4.30, at Manchester Poly Students' Union. Sponsored by Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester DLPs. Contact: Frances Done, Manchester City Labour Party, Hulme Labour Club, 1 Stonelyow Close, Manchester M15

NHS SHOP Stewards' conference: Saturday February 5, 11am, Memorial Hall, Barker's Pool, Sheffield. Agenda includes Joint Shop Stewards' Committees, privatisation/cuts, and defending the unions. Contact: Peter Taylor, c/o Dept. Immunology, Hallamshire Hospital, Glossop Rd, Sheffield S10.

LABOUR Briefings national conference: Saturday February 5, 10.30 to 6, County Hall, London SE1.

LABOUR CND national conference: Saturday February 19, West Midlands County Hall, Lancaster Circus, Birmingham.

Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine public meeting: THE FIGHT FOR PALESTINE Speakers: Tariq Ali, Ron Brown MP (Leith), Jeremy Corbyn, and speakers from Women for Palestine and Lebanese National Movement. Wednesday February 23, 8pm at County Hall, London SE1.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland: annual general meeting 1983 will be on March 26. Resolutions to be in by February 27. There will be an extended meet-

ing of the LCI National Council on January 22.

LABOUR Against the Witch-hunt National Council meeting. Saturday February 12, 1pm to 6pm, County Hall, London SE1. All CLPs affiliated to LAW should send delegates. Doubly important because of the NEC's definite decision to start proceedings against Militant.

Sheffield Labour movement conference on Ireland, Saturday March 19, Sheffield University Students' Union, 9.30 to 4.30. Sponsored by Sheffield Trades Council, Sheffield District Labour Party, and Sheffield LCI.

Ireland - which way forward?

A number of letters in this and recent issues of *Socialist Organiser* have focused on the question of political perspectives for Ireland, and in particular the politics of the Republican movement and the issue of the Protestant working class in the Six County Northern statelet.

This question is of paramount importance both for the British left and for the building of a revolutionary leadership for the Irish working class.

But for it to be adequately discussed involves examination of historical and political questions which cannot be adequately handled within the restrictions of a letter column.

Socialist Organiser is committed to self-determination for the Irish people as a whole and unconditional withdrawal of British troops. There are, however, different views among us on such questions as whether to support a federal solution giving some autonomy to the Protestant-dominated areas within a united Ireland.

For this reason we are opening our pages for the submission of discussion articles on this and related questions on Ireland. The discussion is opened with an article, in two parts beginning this week, by John O'Mahony, who has contributed most regularly to the paper on Ireland.

We invite further articles as contributions to the discussion. While not restricting the scope of replies, we would urge readers to express themselves as succinctly as possible.

WRITERS in *Socialist Organiser* have been talking about the rights of the Protestants for over four years, and I have been writing about them for over 16 years — usually, for the last 11 of those years, in articles defending and explaining the Republicans.

We usually express it as a general idea — 'as much autonomy as is compatible with the democratic rights of the majority of the Irish people' — because to advocate some precise scheme would be panacea-mongering. (I think the best unit for federalism would be the 4 counties where a very big majority is Protestant). In my view there are only two other alternatives: conquer the Protestants, or drop the whole idea of a united Ireland for now and accept Partition as it is. A focus on 'socialism now' and proposals for working class unity is a variant of the latter.

The defence of federalism has not been *instead* of support for the Catholic revolt and (against Britain) for those leading it: it has been argued for as a necessary part of a policy to bring that revolt to the successful conclusion of a united and politically independent Ireland.

For anyone to assert that *Socialist Organiser* or myself 'dissolves' a defence of the Republican movement 'in a mass of words defending the Protestant community' is a straightforward libel. The central focus of the paper, front-page articles and so on, has consistently been defence of the Catholics and Republicans, and denunciation of the British government, its allies and its policy.

I think Tony Richardson (letters, SO 115) wants to say that any criticism of the Republicans on this score, and any reference to a solution involving rights for the Irish Protestants as a community, is impermissible. He should say that and argue for it without libellous demagoguery.

In this article I want to spell out my conception of what is involved, and hope thereby to provide the starting point for a more detailed and serious discussion than we have been able to have recently.

Back in 1972, when the Provisionals forced Britain to abolish the Protestant supremacist government at Stormont, and victory seemed in sight, they adopted federalism (albeit in a peculiar form) as a democratic framework for coexistence between Catholics and Protestants in a united Ireland.

Against the opposition of veteran Republican leaders like David O'Connell and Rory O'Brady, it was dropped as policy in late '81 and from Sinn Féin's constitution three months ago. 'Recognition' as a distinct segment of the Irish people has been withdrawn, and now the Protestants are defined as just 'pro-imperialist'.

O'Connell has described this move as the withdrawal of 'the hand of friendship offered to the Protestant people of Ireland' in the heady days of 1972. I think he's right.

Thus the Republicans' turn to 'radical campaigning', led by northerners like Gerry Adams, is unfortunately accompanied by a plainly Catholic-sectarian turn. Arguably, it

The problem of the Protestants



James Connolly warned that partition "would help the Home Rule and Orange capitalists and clerics to keep their rallying cries before the public... All hopes of uniting the workers irrespective of religion or old political battle cries would be shattered..."

was always implied in what they have been doing, as distinct from what they have been saying, but now the Northern Provos have followed the INLA into explicitly leaving themselves no possible way of relating to the Protestants but by an attempt to conquer them. The politically lightweight INLA has long used the Provos' present 'political' definition of the Protestants as a licence for open, or very thinly disguised, sectarian assassinations.

But the Protestants are a distinct community, a separate section of the Irish people, with their own history, culture and viewpoint. They are entitled to equality and respect for what they are in so far as that does not mean oppressing or denying the rights of the much bigger Catholic Irish population.

Though at an earlier period some of the Protestants were the democratic and revolutionary vanguard, it is true that they have played a bad role in modern Irish history. It is true that they have more than had their interests looked after because of their alliance with key sections of the British ruling class.

However, to say, as Tony Richardson does, that "insofar as they are a 'community', they identify themselves through their pro-imperialism", is both untrue and beside the point.

British and Anglo-Irish ruling class, led by the Tory party and its future prime minister Bonar Law, had brought Britain close to civil war rather than agree to a (limited measure of) Home Rule for a united Ireland.

That's the outline of the dominant element in the historical picture.

There is also another side to it. The opposition, in the late 19th and early 20th century, of the Protestant masses, which included the main section of the Irish working class, to a united Ireland, and their availability to sections of the British and Anglo-Irish ruling class as political and military shock-troops against a united Ireland and against the social struggle of the Catholics (in the 1880s war in the South between landlords and tenants, for example) was also a matter of hostility and die-in-the-last-ditch opposition to being incorporated as a minority in a largely agrarian, backward and priest-ridden Catholic bourgeois state.

What bound them to England and the ruling class arose in the first place from the fact and the awareness that they were different, that their part of Ireland was more advanced, and from their feeling of being threatened.

Today it is opposition to incorporation into the Catholic confessional state that has evolved in the South since

Partition.

Only if the Irish national revolution had taken a radical working-class-led form, and had been able to link up with a radical British working class movement, could the division in the Irish people, and in the first place in the Irish working class, have found a framework within which it could perhaps have healed rapidly.

For example, the British working class militancy of 1919 to '21 found a powerful echo in Northern Ireland in great strikes in 1919 — during the 'Black and Tan' war, and at a time when there were radical social currents developing in the South ('soviets' were declared by strikers at small cooperative dairies in 1920).

But the movements did not coalesce. History evolved differently. 1920 saw the armed struggle against Britain in the the South reflected in Belfast with savage pogroms against Catholics, and Catholics being driven out of the shipyards.

In history there are many similar tragic examples of the socially most developed section of a people being turned against the struggles of the agrarian oppressed. In Mexico workers and trade unionists were organised to fight the peasant insurgents. In Italy militant Northern workers had a quasi-racist attitude to the agrarian and backward South, and to southerners in their midst; etc.

Meshed

In Ireland this intermeshed with the struggle of the British state to keep a grip on Ireland, mainly for military-imperial reasons. (In pursuit of military security the British state also carried out an agrarian revolution from above. It was completed by the Free State in the 1920s, eliminating the landlords).

It could have been different if there had existed a powerful revolutionary socialist party in Britain. If... instead it turned out tragically, as have so many other situations, for lack of an adequate revolutionary movement.

The Protestant working class was isolated by Partition within the 6 County ghetto, with its massive (35%) Catholic minority. In the South the Green Tories ruled. In Britain the

labour bureaucracy betrayed and helped the ruling class defeat the revolutionary potential that existed in the '20s until after the betrayal of the General Strike.

In the '30s and '40s the Irish Stalinists gained a powerful influence in Northern Ireland — and sold it to British imperialism when Russia entered the war in 1941. They even 'partitioned' the 'Communist Party' into separate Northern and Southern parties (until 1970).

Partition became 'permanent', and the two Irish states — the Northern Ireland bourgeoisie did have full control of NI's internal affairs for 50 years — became sectarian caricatures of each other.

In the North, the ruling class, in the person of the prime minister, talked of a 'Protestant state for a Protestant people', and in the South from the mid '20s legislation based on Catholic social teaching was systematically imposed.

The Southern Irish bourgeoisie talked of Irish unity, but acted where they ruled like the backward, Catholic, bourgeois partitionist bigots they were. In the North the Protestant working class had privileges over the Catholics in better chances of jobs and houses, etc, amidst permanent high unemployment. The Catholics were 'kept down'.

This discrimination was important, especially in dividing the working class. It did not create the division, and was not the primary cause of it. To talk of it as being 'exploitation' of the Catholics is to falsify the reality.

The Catholics were the worst off. But the Protestant workers, then and now, were also victims, living in slums and poverty. James Connolly wrote with terrible prophetic accuracy when, arguing that no Home Rule for any part of Ireland would be better than partition, he declared:

"... the betrayal of the national democracy of industrial Ulster would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements while it endured..."

Of course concern for the Protestant workers — who continue to play a reactionary role — cannot override support for the democratic rights of the Irish people as a whole or for the struggle of the 6 County Catholics, the most direct victims of partition.

The way forward for the Protestant working class is within the framework of a united Ireland — and possibly within a wider British/Irish or European framework. But within this, and with these qualifications, we must, as socialists, as internationalists, and as working-class democrats, be concerned for the maximum democratic rights for the Protestant people.

If we do not have a democratic programme, then we rise no higher than the miserable partitionist Southern Irish bourgeoisie — which opposed, and still opposes, partition in words, and yet created and maintains a sectarian Catholic state. We rise no higher than the reflection within the ranks of the petty bourgeois nationalists (both left and right) of this bourgeoisie and the state it has created.

We must instead be consistent democrats.

Concluded next week

SCIENCE

The facts of the Matter

by Les Hearn

PART 2 of my occasional series on the Forces of Nature and the Nature of Matter — and news of a breakthrough!

But first a recap: The universe is made up of matter and energy.

The matter is mainly made up of protons, neutrons and electrons, which are joined together to form the atoms and molecules that make up the universe we know.

The energy mainly exists as the movement energy of these particles and as photons, little packets of light, heat, X-rays, radiowaves, etc, which have no mass and always travel at 300,000 km per second.

The behaviour of matter in everyday life can be explained in terms of two

forces — the Gravitational Force, which affects all matter and energy; and the Electro-Magnetic Force, which affects only matter with an electric charge. Both forces act over enormous distances.

There are certain types of behaviour that need to be explained by the existence of 2 other, very short-range, forces — the Strong Force, which holds protons and neutrons together in the nucleus of atoms; and the Weak Force, responsible for some types of radioactive decay.

There may be other forces in nature, but 4 is the minimum number needed to explain the phenomena we know.

Back in the 19th Century it was thought that there were only 3 forces: Gravi-

tation, the Electric Force and the Magnetic Force. It was the great achievement of the physicist Maxwell to demonstrate that the E and M forces were but aspects of each other — a moving electric field created a magnetic field around it, and vice versa.

The number of basic forces was therefore reduced to two, while a whole range of inventions, from the dynamo to the radio, were made possible.

Since my last article, a similar unification of forces has been achieved — this time between the EM and the W forces. Each has been shown to be an aspect of an 'Electro-Weak' force.

Theoretical physicists in the 60s arrived at a mathematical model or description

of an EW force, which seemed to fit quite well to reality — except that it predicted that the W Force was transmitted by enormously massive particles, called W and Z, and no one had ever 'seen' these particles.

Particles

Now, all known particles are capable of being created in particle accelerators. These work by giving some readily available particles an enormous amount of energy and then smashing them into a target. Some of their energy is then converted into new particles (according to Einstein's prediction that matter can be changed into energy and vice versa).

Up to recently, it had not

been possible to produce enough energy to make W or Z particles, but at CERN in Switzerland, researchers got round the problem by accelerating two sets of particles in opposite directions round the same track and smashing them into each other head-on.

The particles used were the familiar proton (which make up about half our body weight!) and the bizarre anti-proton (identical to protons, but with an opposite electric charge).

When protons and anti-protons meet each other they usually destroy each other in a flash of gamma-rays, but in the CERN experiment, a few instead produced a very massive but short-lived particle which then broke up into an elec-

tron (the negative particles that balance the charges on the protons in our bodies!) and a neutrino (particles with no mass which have virtually no effect on matter — they will pass through the earth as though it wasn't there!).

This is exactly the predicted behaviour of the W particle — and so it seems that another great unification of forces has been achieved.

Whether this has a similar impact on our lives to the unification of the E and M forces remains to be seen.

In the mean time, physicists are dreaming of unifying all the forces of nature and arriving at a beautifully simple description of the universe!

Shipbuilding runs aground

LAY delegates at a conference of the confederation of shipbuilding and engineering union (Confed) workers employed by British Shipbuilders (BS) on January 20 heard of BS management's plans to wreck the industry.

BS's plans include making 2,364 people redundant, 527 of which were left over from the last round of voluntary redundancies, by March this year.

The 'consultative papers' presented to the unions by BS thanks the Confed's shipbuilding negotiating committee for their co-operation with re-structuring in the past. Since 1977 28,000 jobs have been lost in BS from a total of 93,000.

The documents catalogue the way the economic crisis is hitting BS sector by sector and how BS's original predictions for revival of the industry in 1982 were 'totally haywire'.

The Merchant Report states that worldwide 19m tonnes of dry cargo carriers and 57m tonnes of

by Lol Duffy
GMBATU (B) shop
steward Cammel Laird
Shipyards [in a
personal capacity].

tankers are laid up. This is a record level of 11% of merchant tonnage.

The problem of getting orders is blamed on over-staffing, lack of productivity, foreign competition and under investment.

With 1085 jobs being cut in this sector they still say that more reductions are not ruled out.

WARSHIP BUILDING

The cut of 40% to 50% defence expenditure between 1981 and 1986 is cited as a major cause of this sector's problems. Although the Falklands replacement orders are proudly greeted. Most yards in this sector will be

facing redundancies starting mid '83 if no more orders are found — and even with orders there will be redundancies.

SHIP REPAIR

Most European ship repair yards are facing problems. BS predicts no upturn for at least two years. This sector's answer is to cut Labour and reduce the amount paid to workers on idle time.

ENGINEERING

Walsingham Steel is already on a 3 day week (this fact was not circulated to other yards by the SNC). BS say they have no option but to close.

There is an average of three and a quarter months work left for the present workforce in this division as from October 1982.

the Clark Hawthorn (Tyne) workforce was to be reduced from 1,956 at October '82 to 793 in December '82, none of which have volunteered according to latest information.

BS predict that there will

only be enough work to employ 80 people by December '83.

OFFSHORE

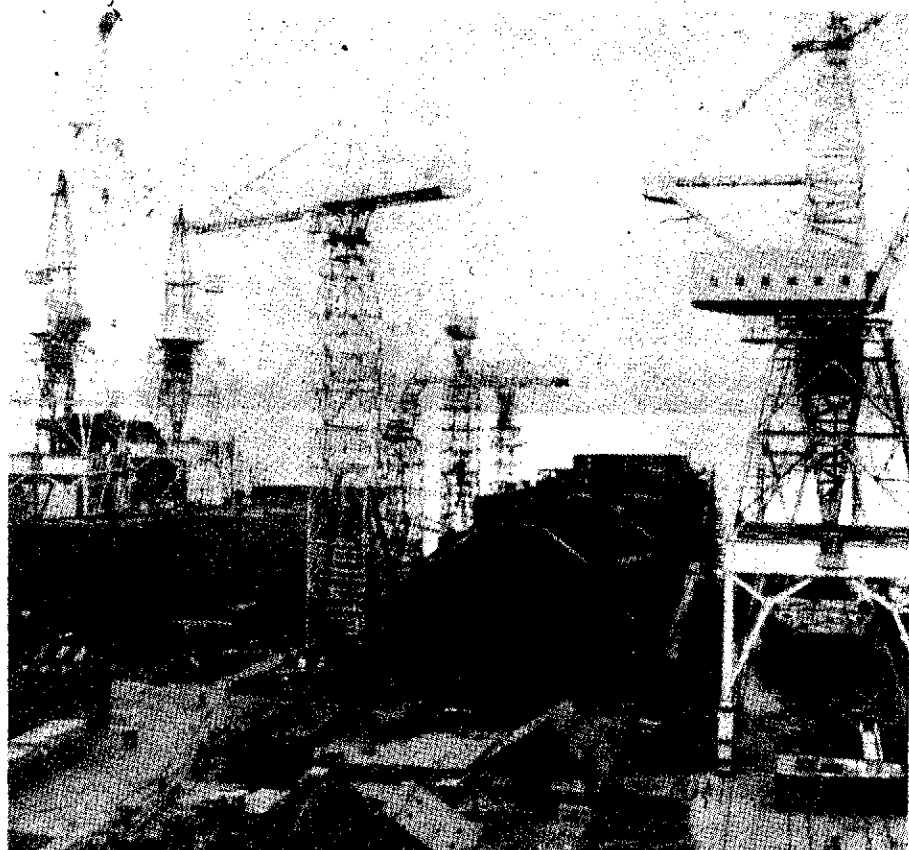
There are 12 semi-submersible and 48 Jack up rigs inactive worldwide.

In the quarter ending September '81 30 major structures were ordered worldwide in the same quarter in '82 only 2 were ordered.

Cammell Laird (Mersey) and Scott Lithgow (Clyde) face 'substantial demanning' beginning mid '83.

In his introduction to the document Robert Atkinson (Chair of BS) states that BS has had a constructive (!) relationship with the government since nationalisation, in the work to achieve the basic objective of 'a viable and flourishing shipbuilding industry'.

He also states that management's record was 'a good one' over the last two years and that he had no hesitation over further rationalisation, manpower reductions, closures and



28,000 jobs have been lost in British Shipbuilders since 1977

company disposals (privatisation).

Mass meetings are taking place between now and February 17 when a re-call lay delegates conference will be held to discuss plans for action. One problem is that no recommendation has come from the SNC so mass meetings will either have to blindly support the SNC's proposals without having heard them or come up with proposals themselves.

There is a tendency in shipbuilding to competition

for jobs among the yards and sectarianism between the unions.

But unity throughout BS and spreading any action to supply industries is the key to winning the fight against redundancies and closures.

Plans

The SNC has gone along with BS in its plans to make a viable, read profitable, shipbuilding industry in the past without offering alternatives to those conned into voluntary redundancy.

One day strikes and overtime bans will not stop BS this time.

The action must bring in questions such as work sharing, reduction of hours, alternative production, workers' control of the industry and the nationalisation of the merchant fleet and oil production.

Just to add insult to injury BS are proposing that BS workers go without a pay rise for at least 12 months. This must be totally opposed and a rise that at least makes up for inflation must be sought.

Telecoms ring up record profits

THE announcement of British Telecom's record 6-monthly profits from April to September 1982 (which trebled from £89m to £268m) alongside their decision to delay the 3% increase in charges from April to July 1983 has to be seen in the light of the future privatisation of BT.

Firstly the profits figure — £268m — is not by any means the full picture. It is estimated that the full year's profits will amount to around £540m, £82m above the 1981/82 figure.

Yet one has to consider what profits would have been made in the recent period if BT (to attract business customers) had not cut the cost of international and inland trunk calls which in the words of Chairperson Jefferson 'will save customers £340m in a full year.'

That decision in effect has meant that BT instead of making £540m in a full year could have made £880m, plus the extra from the now postponed 3% increase in charges.

Charges for directory enquiries were and still are a feature of this next increase. Yet this alone is not the full picture.

The 1982 profits are declared at £457.8m. But on closer analysis the figures turn out to be well over £1 billion.

This is arrived at by adding:

- a) £541m which BT puts aside to cover inflation on equipment replacement.
- b) £127m the 'accelerated depreciation charges' on telephone equipment.
- c) £50m from changes in accounting policies.

Also there is the £½ billion spent on interest payments.

Scheme

There has also been the deliberate underfunding of the Post Office super-annuation scheme to help fund investment, which means that BT is now having to pay off the £1,250m still owing out of an initial debt to the fund of £8 billion.

Where have these huge profits come from? International calls, though only 2.1% of the telephone traffic, account for 48% of the profits, netting £218.5m.

300 companies contributed 30% of BT's income of £1,712.34m.

But the 1983 Report will show a turnaround, in which residential customers will be contributing an increased percentage of the profits.

The cuts of £340m that

Jefferson quotes are in essence to help and keep the business customers.

Increases

When increases in charges were last made (November 1981) it was an estimated increase of 13.4% for residential users compared with 6.8% for the average business user. The November 1981 increases have effectively meant a public handout to big business of £56m.

Telecommunications itself is an almost unique industrial area of growth. And the field in which demand is rising the fastest — international calls — can be provided at a fraction of the cost. The present charging structure according to the same economists is based on historic costings which bear no relationship to current technology.

Another area in which BT has profited is being able to reduce its workforce.

Jefferson stated: 'Increased efficiency and encouraging business growth despite the recession have played their part in securing this favourable half-year outcome.'

Extra

The workforce has been reduced by more than 4,500 while at the same time attracting an extra 425,000 subscribers.

The target is officially to 'lose' 15,000 jobs over 3

years — but a leaked Department of Industry circular is calling for a reduction of 45,000 by 1987.

Women (77,000 are employed by BT) are first in the firing line, mainly because of job segregation, while the jobs they dominate (telephonists, clerical staff, etc.) are as ripe for new technology in the next 10 years.

The 6-month profit works out to £10m a week — with 250,000 employees that works out to £40,000 per week per employee.

Last year telephonists got a 6.75% increase: given the present leadership in the UCW they are not likely to get much more this year.

Decent

But workers in BT are even less likely to get a decent wage when it's privatised.

The response of POEU General Secretary Bryan Stanley to the profits does not help:

'The Government's proposal to privatise BT is an enormous irrelevance for British Telecommunications. These latest results show why such changes are totally unnecessary.'

But it's that its very profitability — far from ensuring employment and prosperity for BT workers — is what encourages the Tories to privatise the industry and threatens jobs.

Ann McKinley

NALGO needs a Broad Left

by Ann McKinley

THERE is no tradition of a strong broad left on a national basis in NALGO and the SWP-sponsored NALGO Action Group, which at one time played an important role in involving rank and file activists, has folded.

Unfortunately, not all left activists see the need at present for a nationally organised broad left.

The two main arguments against are that as each District elects its own delegates to the NEC, and there are no national elections, that the focus for the left should be at District level.

Second, that a national left organisation should not be established until there are functioning left groups in all of NALGO's twelve districts.

The need for left activity at District level is clear; but that is simply not enough.

On the issue of Labour Party affiliation a national organisation had to be built up from scratch to campaign for a yes vote.

The campaign failed to make any significant impact amongst the membership because there was no active left organisation on a national basis and valuable effort was spent on trying to build a national network of contacts.

My branch is centrally involved in the campaign to develop shop stewards' systems and it very quickly became clear that we had to take up the campaign on a national basis to have any chance of success.

Our campaign and others would benefit enormously if there was an active national broad left group in NALGO.

Some sections of the left seem to see the establishment of a broad left as no more than an electoral machine. This is a view which must be countered at every opportunity. The way forward, surely, is to campaign around the issues which most affect our membership: low pay, cuts, privatisation of services.

Two broad left groups in the northwest and London are functioning at the moment and there is a measure of left control in the Scottish district.

At the national level a conference was held last October, sponsored by Militant, after canvassing for support at last year's Annual Conference. However, the North West and London broad lefts have rejected the approaches of the Militant-led national initiative.

It is clear that sectarian calls to ignore this or that grouping will only play into the hands of the right wing.

Left activists in the union should support calls for any joint initiatives between the present groups, especially those that are aimed at action amongst the membership.

The need for joint discussions is clear and a positive step will be a call for a meeting during annual conference in June of all groups and individuals on the left to plan co-ordinated campaigns of action.

Bill Hamilton
Newham NALGO

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Timex, steel, water — Stan Crooke reports on setbacks on three fronts in Scotland

IT'S been a busy week for Scotland's top union bureaucrats. Not only did they have to stop the water workers' strike spreading north of the border, they also had to get out of mounting any real fight back against job losses in the Scottish steel industry and at Timex in Dundee.

On January 25, NUPE water workers' shop stewards voted to join the strike from midnight the following day. Their own full-timers backed this decision. But not so the full-timers of the GMBU and TGWU, who organise the bulk of Scotland's 2,200 water workers.

GMBU full-timer Bob Sharp described the NUPE vote to strike as an attempt to 'bulldoze' his union, as an 'irresponsible act', and a cheap recruiting gimmick. He openly called on his members to scab: 'We will be telling our members to carry on working... If that means walking through picket lines, so be it'.

The following day, Sharp and TGWU full-timer Hugh Wyper issued a joint statement appealing to Scottish water workers not to strike, on the grounds that 'we have got what we want'. This was a reference to the promise by Scottish employers to give water workers the same increase as south of the Border — provided that no strike action is taken.

Even if the employers keep to their promise, it will not do anything about

Officials watch Timex go by

the fact that Scottish water workers pick up £20 a week less than water workers south of the Border, and are demanding parity with them.

Sharp and Wyper even claimed that NUPE would be striking 'on an issue other than the pay claim'.

Thus isolated, a series of mass meetings of NUPE water workers voted down the proposed strike action. Then Sharp and another GMBU full-timer, Morrel, changed their tune and stated that by February they might call their members out on strike!

Meanwhile, 2,000 more jobs are to go at Ravensraig and Gartcosh steelworks, and another 427 at Craigmiles. When the whole of Ravensraig was under threat, the unions campaigned — not by working-class mobilisation but by 'all-party' pleas to the Tories. Now they are proposing the same bankrupt approach again.

As ISTC full-timer Clive Lewis put it: 'It's galling to have to crank our campaign back into action... but the losses will not happen if we and the allies of all parties [i.e. including the Tories] who support our case get their act together again'.

The same collaborationist approach has taken its toll at the Timex factory in Dundee, where 1900 jobs are to go. Launched on a wave of Scottish nationalism, the campaign has already run

down.

Every household in Dundee was leafleted, but campaigning among the union membership for strike action and for opening the books was never even attempted. Workers for whom management said there was no work were left to sit around the factory playing cards.

Links with the workers at

GEC return

AT A mass meeting on Monday January 31, the 550 striking staff at GEC Openshaw voted by 3 to 1 to return to work.

The strike began after the suspension of 14 production control workers. They were suspended because of management's refusal to negotiate new working agreements after the introduction of a new on-line computer system.

On Monday, union negotiators reported that management had not shifted their earlier intransigent position. However, instead of recommending indefinite strike action, the negotiators called for a return to work.

Speaking to us after the meeting, one militant suspected that the negotiators were under pressure from the local officials of the unions involved (ASTMS, AUEW-TASS, MATSA and APEX). The national officials had certainly made no attempt to mobilise support throughout GEC.

the French factory in Besancon were not built upon. Instead, the union leadership wallowed in anti-French chauvinism, condemning as unfair the grants given by the French government to Besancon.

So over 1000 workers, including 20 of the 120 shop stewards, have gone for voluntary redundancy.

Cowley defiance

AS WE GO to press, TGWU stewards at BL's Cowley Body Plant have voted at a meeting on Tuesday 1st to call a plant mass meeting if management tries to implement manning cuts in any section.

The cuts were originally planned for Tuesday 25th, but sectional stoppages forced management to postpone them to this Wednesday 2nd.

At stake are about 200 jobs which will be cut to redistribute workers to the new LM10, instead of employing new workers from the dole.

The workforce remains strong. The problem is that the right wing plant leadership might do a deal.

Meanwhile the skilled men in the plant are resisting moves to put some of them on to production work.

NUT snub to gay members

THE NUT Executive went ahead with the choice of Jersey as the venue for the 1983 Conference in the full knowledge that properly elected delegates who were gay men risked trial and imprisonment because of the Executive's choice of venue.

This is evident in a letter, dated as far back as September 1981, from a Jersey solicitor to the NUT, that came into the hands of the Gay Teachers' Group. It concluded: 'I feel a fair summary would be to say that any overt act of homosexuality would be pursued and charges brought...'

The NUT is not alone in choosing a venue that criminalises its gay male delegates. NALGO and TGWU are holding their conferences in the Isle of Man this year. This is particularly interesting as regards NALGO, who have adopted a policy of no discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

A Gay Working Party has been set up by NUT members involved in the Gay Teachers' Group and the Socialist Teachers Alliance. The aim is to build a campaign around the issue, culminating in a fringe conference on Gay Rights (at

which an NUT Executive member will be speaking), and the launching of a booklet on gay rights, education and the role of the NUT.

Support

This campaign requires your support — financial and otherwise.

Send money to: Geoff Hardy (Coordinator, GWP), 6 Mays Court, Grooms Hill, London SE10 (Cheques payable to Gay Teachers Group or GTG).

Fight for and support gay rights in your union/CLP.

Canteen women firm

TWELVE women canteen workers at BL's Dreads Lane plant in Birmingham are now entering their second month on strike.

The dispute began when their old employers, Grand Metropolitan, lost the Dreads Lane catering contract to Bromwich Caterers. The day before the Christmas break, Bromwich announced that all the existing canteen workers would be sacked.

The women, members of the GMWU, voted unanimously to strike.

Although five women were subsequently offered reinstatement and broke ranks, the remaining 12, including the shop steward,

have remained rock solid, demanding full reinstatement for all the old staff.

They are particularly angry that Bromwich have taken on more new staff than the number they sacked, and that some of the new staff have been recruited into the T&G (also those who broke ranks and crossed the picket line are still in the G&M).

The women have made a point of explaining their case to the workforce as a whole, and as a result the Dreads Lane workers have mounted a total boycott of the canteens.

However, the response at the adjacent Common Lane

plant has not been so good. The workers there are still using Bromwich canteen facilities, and the T&G convenor even came out on the gates and abused pickets, saying that the dispute was nothing to do with him or his members.

The strike is clearly having an effect. Bromwich are reported to be considering giving up the contract. But to really hit Bromwich, efforts must be made to spread the boycott to Common Lane, and to build upon the goodwill of the Dreads Lane workforce for solidarity stoppages.

Jim Denham

Where to find us

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 if 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 Johnstone, 1 Wellington Road, Wallasey.

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Manchester. Meets every Sunday evening, 7.30pm,

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Saturday March 5, 11am to 5.30pm, Co-op rooms, 57 Micklelegate, York. (Phone 0904 425739 for accommodation or creche). Please make plans to choose and mandate your group's delegates now.

Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St. SO is sold at Grassroots Books, Newton St, Piccadilly.

Stockport. Contact c/o 38 Broadhurst St. Meetings every Sunday, 7.30pm: phone 429 6359 for details. SO is sold at Stockport market every Saturday, 11 to 12.30.

Rochdale. Contact 353 Rochdale Old Rd, Bury. Next meeting Monday February 14, 8pm Castle Inn: John McIlroy on 'Why Thatcher is winning'. SO is sold at Metro Books, Bury.

Hyndburn. Contact Accrington 39573. Meetings weekly — see SO sellers for day, time and venue. SO is sold at Broadway, Accrington, every Saturday from 11.30 to 1pm.

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: 425739. SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday mornings, at the Community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings. Day school: 'The politics of Socialist Organiser', Saturday February 5, 10 to 5 at the Co-op rooms, Millgate, York.

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 every other Wednesday, 7.30pm at the Brown Cow, The Wicker. Next meeting Wednesday February 16: 'The Tories and the Falklands Factor'. SO is sold outside Boot's, Foregate (Saturday 12 to 1), and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Road. Contact: Rob, 589307.

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

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Halifax Wholefood, Gibbet St, and at Tower Books, Hebden Bridge.

• WALES

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

• 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 Co-op, High St. Meets on first and last Thursday of each month, 7.30 at 'The Queen', Primrose Hill St, Hillfields. Next meeting: Thursday February 3, Godfrey Webster on 'Ireland: which way forward for socialists in Britain?'

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 meet-

ing February 7. For details contact 713606.

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.

SOUTH

Oxford. Next meeting Thursday February 3, on the water workers' strike, with local striker speaking. 8pm, 44b Princes St, main hall. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday 11am to 1pm) and outside Tesco, Cowley Rd (Friday, 5pm-7pm). Also at EOA Books, Cowley Rd.

Basingstoke. Next meeting: Tuesday February 17, 7.30 at Chute House.

• LONDON

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

Islington. Meets every other Sunday, 3pm at Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Copenhagen St. On February 6 there is instead an Islington Labour Left meeting, same time, same place, on how to fight for no cuts and no rate rises. For childcare, phone Nik, 607 5268.

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

Tower Hamlets. Contact 790 4937. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30pm. Next meeting February 11.

Newham. SO jumble sale: Saturday February 5, 2pm at Harold Road Centre, Harold Rd, E13. Contact: 555 9957.

South-East London. Contact 691 1141. Next meeting Thursday February 10, 7.45pm at Lee Centre, Islibie Rd, off Lee High Rd. Pat Longman (Islington councillor) on 'Socialists and local government'.

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 February 16.

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

Hackney. Contact c/o Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, N16.

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Colletts, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks, Bookplace [Peckham Rd, SE15], and Reading Matters [Wood Green Shopping City].

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Trade union Broad Lefts Organising Committee conference: Sat. Feb. 19, County Hall, London SE1, on 'Democratising the Block Vote'.

Credentials for delegates from trade union bodies and Broad Lefts from Phil Holt, 108 Prince's Boulevard, Bellingham, Merseyside L63 7PE (051 645 1375).

Socialist Organiser

WITH February just 3 days old, our readers are showing their support for Socialist Organiser. We said that we needed a fund of £1,000 a month to guarantee that we could keep publishing SO in 1983.

The response has been £172.50 from various donations – and a marvellous £500 from a reader in London.

As it's early in the month, we're going to try and achieve our February target as well as the £500 donation, so that we can spend that on special items. Our ancient plumbing hasn't supplied hot water to the office since last summer (we need hot water in the darkroom); our duplicator only works with a mixture of gentle coaxing and direct verbal abuse – and we need new materials to give SO a new look.

Let's see if we can raise another £827.50 for our February fund – so we can have a break from our routine of only just managing on our money, and spend this £500 "wind-fall" on the extras, not the necessities.

Send money to the treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, London N1.

Thanks this week to: Anon £500; Hornsey SO supporter £25; Bas Hardy £50; Ricky Houston £10; Dave Ludlow £25 (again); Aly Mir £30; Simon Pottinger £5; John Whitton £5; Nick Parsons £5; Stockport SO £17.50 from donations and Xmas raffle

EXPOSE HACKNEY'S RACIST COPS!

"AT 11.25 on the night of Wednesday 12 January, Colin Roach died in Stoke Newington police station. Two hours later, the police issued a press release stating that Colin had committed suicide by shooting himself with a sawn-off shotgun.

"The same night, Colin's father was questioned for three hours by the police. While being questioned he was not told of his son's death. Police then searched the Roach home. During this search, a policewoman grabbed Mrs. Roach by the throat.

"Two days later, the Roach family had still not been given any explanation as to how or why Colin died. Yet three statements were issued to the press by the police. Some newspapers claimed that Colin had a history of mental illness, a story obviously inspired by the police."

This story – told in a leaflet issued by the Roach Family Support Committee – is the latest in a long series involving Hackney's police.

Hackney cops seem proud of their reputation. The current issue of "Voice" reports that, "A young woman who was arrested last week claimed that Stoke Newington police told her they shot Colin Roach."

At last month's meeting of the local Labour council a motion calling for an independent inquiry into the Colin Roach case was passed overwhelmingly. The same call has been backed by local Labour Parties and community organisations, as well as the Roach Family Support Committee, Hackney Black People's Association, and Hackney Legal Defence Committee.

They are also calling for

Roach Family Support Committee: March and Rally.

For an independent public inquiry into the death of Colin Roach Saturday February 12, 1pm, Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, E8.

There are also regular pickets of Stoke Newington police station each Saturday morning.

an end to the police intimidation and mass arrests used against people protesting about the Roach killing.

On January 17 60 black youth picketed Stoke Newington police station and 17 were arrested (their case comes up on March 1). Forty protesters were arres-



Colin Roach

ted in the week after Colin Roach's death.

The protests have all been peaceful, but the police decided to provoke "disturbances".

Hackney Black People's Association has written to Superintendent Moore of the Metropolitan Police accusing the police of provocations outside Hackney Town Hall and along the route of a protest march, and noting that: "Our observers at the two earlier protests report that it was police officers who baton charged protesters on both occasions. Some of the people arrested have complained of racial abuse and violence by police officers..."

The police are also busy

feeding lies to the press. The Sunday Telegraph for instance, ran a headline after the march, "Black Demo Gang Loot Jewels Shop – Violence after Police Station Death Protest".

In fact the jewel robbery took place before the protests and had nothing to do with them.

The "free" press has done its usual job. The Daily Telegraph simply reported that "A coloured man with a history of mental illness walked into Stoke Newington Police Station late on Wednesday and shot himself through the head with a single-barrelled sawn-off shotgun. Police are satisfied no one else is involved."

The Daily Mail's sympathetic story started "A mugger not long out of jail..." And last week the Evening Standard ran a front page story in which it claimed that Keith Scully, a friend of Colin Roach who saw him only minutes before he went into the police station, had said that Colin was beside himself with fear.

A subsequent interview with Scully on Channel 4, although reportedly heavily

edited, has cast doubt on the comments attributed to him by the Standard.

People living elsewhere – white people in particular – might wonder why Hackney people aren't more willing to accept the police version of the event.

The reason is simple: the experience of Hackney's black community is that the

police are truncheon-toting terrorists and racists. Their experience is of false arrest, harassment, beating, racist abuse, intimidation and frame-up.

An interpretation of the death as police murder fits this experience better. There have been three police station deaths in recent years.

Several demands are being raised – close Stoke Newington police station, suspension of Stoke Newington police station officers until an inquiry is completed, community control of the police – but the key one to unite around is that of the Support Committee: for an independent inquiry into the death of Colin Roach.



JOHN HARRIS

2,000 marched in Leeds, and 3,000 in Derry, on Sunday 30 January to mark the 11th anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday', when British troops shot dead 13 peaceful demonstrators in Derry.

There was also a Scottish demonstration, organised a week early on Saturday 22nd, so as not to clash with Leeds and Derry. 800 joined a Glasgow Irish Solidarity Campaign march in Port Glasgow.

The Labour Committee on Ireland is now organising for a 'Ban Plastic Bullets' conference in Manchester on February 26. Credentials for labour movement delegates cost £3 from Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

Shagari's 2m scapegoats

by Harry Sloan

EVEN while his government issued marching orders to an incredible two million "illegal" immigrants from neighbouring states, Nigeria's President Shagari had the cheek to make a speech in India denouncing the racism of South Africa's apartheid state.

Nothing could more clearly indicate both the hypocrisy of the "anti-apartheid" rhetoric of the world's capitalist governments and the inextricable link between capitalism and national chauvinism.

Scapegoats

While immigrants – skilled or unskilled – are welcomed into capitalist countries at times of economic expansion and boom as a source of cheap labour – the pattern the world over is that they are the first to be made scapegoats for economic decline, pilloried to divert anger from the government and the ruling class, and all too often forcibly deported from their homes

and jobs.

The capitalist government of Nigeria – the leading economic power in black Africa – is no exception. Faced with an acute crisis following the collapse of the price of oil, and unresolved problems in agricultural production, it has turned its attack upon the working masses in general, and the most downtrodden and vulnerable sections of workers in particular.

The form and scale of the attack – the untold tally of misery in the instant deportation of so many men, women and children – may seem completely incomprehensible: but in its cynical and reactionary content, Shagari's move is identical to the racist legislation and the continual – smaller scale – flow of deportations of "illegal" immigrants from Britain by Thatcher's Tory government.

Always the argument comes down to the same miserable clichés and distortions. There are "too many people", too many

"foreigners" taking the few available jobs.

Yet in Britain it is self-evident that Thatcher's racist government has presided over the scrapping of more jobs than there are black people.

In Nigeria, too, the victimisation of the Ghanaian and other immigrant workers is used alongside an 'austerity' plan as an alternative to any planned expansion of the productive forces to provide new jobs and raise the pitiful living standards of the majority of the country's 80 million people, 70% of whom remain illiterate, and whose



life expectancy is only 49 years.

The natural wealth and resources of West Africa are ample to sustain its population if adequately developed.

But the Shagari government is wedded to the capitalist oil monopolies, the western bankers and the Nigerian capitalist class; it is therefore wedded to a perpetuation of the reactionary and arbitrary division of West Africa into separate, dependent nations.

The interests of the workers and peasants of Nigeria and West Africa as a whole demand quite the opposite: the breaking down of national barriers and antagonisms, and the common struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist united states in the area.

The Nigerian working class which staged massive strikes in 1981 – must play the key role in such a struggle. And this requires the building of a leadership prepared to confront Shagari's chauvinist campaign.