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Party

Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

Weekly paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No. 124 17 March 1983 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

THE Fleet Street press has presented the recent High Court injunction brought by Tory Newbury District Council against the Greenham women as a setback for the women's Peace Camp and the whole anti-nuclear struggle.

Socialist Organiser went to interview the women at the camp to find out how they interpret the court ruling.

We spoke to Amanda and Bea, two students from the National Film School.

"The papers say we've moved the camp. It appears we gave up without a fight. But as you can see, we have not moved off Newbury District Council land at all. The camp has actually expanded onto all the land around the main entrance to the base, including the Ministry of Transport area near the road," Amanda told us.

"The injunction applies to one piece of the common near the main gate that the Council have managed to get ownership of. We emphasise that they will have to move us off this before they get real possession," Bea added.

This was confirmed by all the women we talked to.

"The injunction has been used to divert attention away from the real issue of Cruise missiles and to focus attention falsely on legal battles and arguments.

"For me, the issue separates into two parts. In serving the injunction on the 21 women to leave, the state is trying to pick off what it sees as the leaders of the camp. They can't understand that there are no ringleaders. If there is one thing that we've got in common with capitalism it is that if Thatcher was killed tomorrow, they'd soon find a replacement for her. It's the same here.

"The more they arrest and imprison, the more women come and take their place on the camp."

"The second thing is that they are not really trying to get rid of us. If they really wanted to they've got enough clever lawyers involved in the case. They are really trying to exhaust people through legal action and the threat of eviction.

"Over the last few days the police presence has noticeably increased. There are constant foot patrols along the inside of the perimeter fence. Two van loads of police are constantly in the vicinity, night and day, cruising between three parking places."

YOUTH CND sponsored march, 19-20 March.
Saturday 19 March:
morning - Civic send-off in Oxford Town Hall and march through Oxford.
Early afternoon: march to Abingdon and march on Heseltine. YCND challenges him to a public debate.
Evening: rally in Didcot followed by Disco in Didcot Labour Club. Overnight stay. (The march passes through Heseltine's constituency on Saturday).
Sunday 20 March:
March to rally at Greenham Common base addressed by women's Peace Camp.

Last Thursday, 10th, Newbury's Tory council got a court order to evict the Greenham Common Peace Camp. But the women are defiant. Socialist Organiser went to Greenham Common, where the peace camp women told us they would be standing firm: "In fact, it has made us bigger and stronger".



International Women's Day, Birmingham: 500 women marched in support of the Greenham Common Peace Camp. Photo: John Harris

THE Greenham Common women won't easily be defeated by courts - or by the heavy-handed propaganda campaign that the Tories are attempting against CND.

But there are more ways than one of blocking unilateral nuclear disarmament. And Dennis Healey has another way.

Labour is firmly committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament as conference policy. But Healey has stated that he will refuse to serve in a Labour government that implements this policy.

He has proposed an alternative which amounts to little more in definite terms than cancelling Trident - something supported on technical/military grounds by people like the SDP.

The 'campaign document' on which the Labour manifesto is to be based talks about unilateral nuclear disarmament - but 'not all at once'. Clearly the fact that Labour is not yet opposed to NATO is going to be used to make disarmament conditional on discussions with NATO, i.e. to prevent it.

The Greenham Common women have shown that mass support for unilateral nuclear disarmament can be rallied. The job for Labour and trade union activists now is to fight to hold Labour's leaders to Labour policy.

The fight must start from the rank and file. We can set about it by organising support for Greenham Common, and for the events planned by CND at Easter; by involvement in CND's 'Peace Canvass'; and through 'Socialists for a Labour Victory', the campaign recently established by Labour's left to work for the general election on the basis of Labour's radical policies, whatever Healey and Foot do.

CND Easter events: Thursday March 31, mass blockade of women and men at Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory, and women's blockade at USAF Greenham Common. Friday April 1, 14-mile human chain from Greenham to Burghfield via Aldermaston, followed by rally in Aldermaston. Saturday April 2: Scottish events - 12 noon mass 'die-in' in George Square, Glasgow, followed by march to festival at Kelvin-grove Park. Sunday April 3, demonstration at Faslane nuclear base.



Cars

Fighting back

After victories in local struggles at BL Longbridge and Cowley, car workers at Ford Halewood are on strike against the victimisation of a worker for alleged 'sabotage'. Behind the strikes: a workers' revolt against attempts by the companies to use the slump to tighten management control and cripple union organisation. Reports: page 3.

"What the injunction is trying to do is stop women even talking about Greenham Common and to stop people from encouraging other women to come down here.

It hasn't done it because obviously everybody is still here, and more people are coming every day. It hasn't achieved anything. In fact, it has made people more determined and more angry.

The women who have had the injunction are not allowed to come to meetings about it or incite other women to come down here. It's conspiracy or something!

And the women named in the injunction have been back here talking to visitors, doing articles, going to meetings. Three of the women have been arrested in Italy for protesting. It has had zero effect on us.

In fact it has made us bigger and stronger. Personally I'm not moving from where I live until someone knocks it down. So they're going to have to forcibly move me.

Some people have moved tents down onto the Ministry of Transport land and they knocked them down and impounded them. But I don't live in a tent, so they can knock down what I live in and I'll build another one further down.

The Ministry of Transport will probably get an eviction order on us but it will take several months to actually get it going, by which time we might have found somewhere else. Everybody is a bit tense about the eviction, but not really demoralised. I think it has had the reverse reaction that they expected. They thought it would knock the wind out of our sails but it hasn't. We've got more support in the area now than we used to have. People are beginning to be much nicer to us and our supporters. There are pubs here that really do support us. And people in the shops support us."

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Labour Party

SLV: start now! Scots stifled by 'unity'

The draft declaration will be discussed this Thursday by the 'Socialists for a Labour Victory' campaign. Contact Andy Harris/Mandy Moore, secretaries, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

SOCIALISTS for a Labour Victory is a campaign pledged to organise for a Labour victory in the forthcoming General Election on the basis of the socialist policies passed at successive Labour Party Conferences.

The campaign must start now. The possibility of another Thatcher government is one of the gravest threats ever faced by the working class and oppressed groups.

Only a fighting lead from the Labour Party can save working people from another five years of Toryism. Labour can gain massive support and win the election if it clearly presents its socialist policies, and mobilises the support of all sections of the community who will benefit from them. SLV believes that Labour conference policies in the following areas should be the core of the campaign.

1. Unequivocal commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament and removal of all nuclear bases in Britain.

2. An economic policy which returns to full employment, nationalises the 25 top companies, returns social spending to 1977 levels in real terms, introduces a 35 hour week, withdraws from the EEC and expands the NHS, and education for all. Massive house building programmes and renationalising of hived-off sections of public industry without compensation.

3. A commitment to raise working class living standards, and that there should be no incomes policy. Defence of trade union rights and immediate repeal of all Tory anti-union legislation.

4. Full campaigning and commitment to all Party policies for women, including positive action in employment, public spending, child care and health, including legislation to give women the right to control their own fertility.

5. The repeal of the racist Nationality Act, the Immigration Acts and a determination to eradicate racial prejudice and inequality.

6. To increase civil liberties, obtain police accountability and repeal repressive legislation.

7. Labour's policies cover many other central areas. A

united Ireland; support for liberation movements in other countries. These must also be part of a socialist campaign.

We pledge ourselves to fight for a Labour government committed to implement these policies. We will campaign for the election of a majority Labour government. After the General Election there must be no formal coalition with other parties in the House of Commons. There must be no informal deals with other parties in the House of Commons where a Labour Government agrees to water down its programme in return for Parliamentary support. If Labour has no overall majority in the House of Commons, then we support the creation of a minority Labour Government which will seek to carry through its programme.

We expect and demand that the Parliamentary Labour Party be accountable to the Party and implements Conference decisions.

The fight for socialist policies and a witch-hunt against socialists inside the Party are incompatible. We demand an immediate end to the witch-hunt in the Party, and a united campaign around agreed socialist policies.

If we are to get rid of the Tories and elect a Labour government, Labour's socialist campaign must start now. We will demand and campaign for Labour's socialist policies to be clearly stated in the Labour Party's official campaign document and Manifesto, and that the Party as a whole campaigns for them. We will campaign ourselves on the basis of these policies.

We will reach out to and campaign with all those who want a Labour victory; who are fighting for aspects of Labour Party Conference policies; and who are fighting the Tories. We support the Greenham Common women; the People's March for Jobs and all those taking mass action against the Tories. We call for sponsorship, support and help from all Labour Party organisations, trade union bodies, MPs and PPCs who agree with the need for socialists to campaign now and organise for a Labour Victory.

"B is for bucket. That's where all these motions are going, whether they are passed or not."

This is how one delegate to this year's annual conference of the Labour Party's Scottish Council, held in Perth last weekend, summed up his feelings about it.

He was not alone in having such an attitude: U is for unity, and that is what the conference was all about. The result? Most items of potential controversy were prevented from reaching the floor of the conference.

A motion on the Falklands mysteriously disappeared. A motion on Ireland, calling for British withdrawal, was not discussed: debate was closed just as it was time for it to be moved.

Motions on Iran and civil defence were also remitted to the executive.

A motion opposing the expulsion of any socialists from the Party was passed, but only after the unions had forced a card vote.

Attempts to move an emergency resolution condemning the expulsion of the Militant editorial board were successfully blocked, however.

A delegation from the current strike at Flexible Ducting in Milngavie was prevented by TGWU bureaucrat Hugh Wyper from getting backing for their struggle from the conference.

The last incident did much to expose the hypocrisy of many of the speeches made at the conference about saving jobs and restoring full employment.

There was no shortage of pledges for defence of jobs in the threatened steel industry. But confronted with the

chance to provide support for someone involved in a struggle to win back his job, many trade union bureaucrats and MPs clearly didn't want to know.

In place of hard debate on how to organise against the Tories and for the return of a Labour government committed to attacking capitalism rather than running it, the main theme of the conference was a series of less than convincing appeals for party unity behind Foot and Healey.

Stan Crooke

Flexible Ducting

THE strike at Flexible Ducting in Milngavie (on the outskirts of Glasgow) for the re-instatement of victimised sub-convenor Andy Martin is now entering its third week.

The whole of the shop-floor (members of TGWU) immediately struck for Andy Martin's reinstatement, and their strike is being declared official by the union. But the foremen and office staff (members of TGWU-ACTSS) and maintenance (AUEW) have

refused to support the strike and daily cross the picket lines.

One of the pickets summed up working conditions at the factory by saying 'I've never known a place like this for abuse from management. Their attitude is: if you don't like it, you know what you can do.'

Contact: TGWU branch 7/17/157, c/o B. Christie, 61, Drummore Road, Glasgow G15.

Stan Crooke

North-west

At the North West Regional Labour Party conference in Blackpool last weekend, 12 and 13 March, discussion of the witch-hunt was blocked.

An attempt to refer back the Standing Orders Report, to allow time for discussion of resolutions on this, was defeated by 553,000 to 481,000. This vote was taken early on the Saturday morning, before many delegates had arrived.

A joint Labour Against the Witch-hunt and Militant fringe meeting was held, with Les Huckfield and Keith Dickinson speaking.

In an important breakthrough, delegates voted for nationalisation of the banks against the Regional Executive's recommendation.

Resolutions calling for a living wage of £90 to £100 for NHS workers were defeated after a disgraceful manoeuvre by the conference chair, who refused to acknowledge calls for a card vote.

A call for Labour councils to defend the working class by fighting the cuts and not introducing rent or rate rises was heavily defeated, 927,000 to 132,000.

The women's debate produced an interesting contortion by the right wing and supporters of Militant on the question of action to overcome women's oppression. Resolutions calling for abortion on demand, child care facilities, communal laundries, etc., and for special efforts to make the labour movement habitable for women were defeated, with Militant supporters voting against.

Resolutions supporting the nationalisation of the women's conference were carried with Militant supporters voting against.

Important composites in favour of unilateral British nuclear disarmament were carried. Socialist Organiser supporter Lol Duffy from Wallasey CLP explained that the present NEC won't carry out Labour Party policy unless they are forced to do so. He also emphasised the need for the labour movement to develop plans for alternative employment for workers in the arms industry.

Andy Dixon



Support spreads for Daleside picket

by Dale Ackroyd

TEXTILE workers locked out of Daleside Hadden Ltd, Nottingham, remain solid and determined in the sixth week of the dispute.

On January 26 boss Keith Fry called a mass meeting of workers and management to discuss, or rather dictate, a new 'continental' shift system — for £4 a week more!

At the meeting one worker told Fry that he wouldn't work the new shifts at any price. Fry said there were three million unemployed who might. Did Fry mean that they'd be sacked if they didn't accept the new shifts? "Yes".

As some workers started walking out, Fry sacked them all on the spot. Out of the 110 workers at the firm, only 30 have gone back on their knees to Fry and accepted his conditions.

Offers from the workers to return to work on the basis of the pre-lockout status quo and begin negotiations about new shifts have been flung back by management.

Daleside workers have had no wage increase for four years. Workers have been constantly threatened with the sack if they refused overtime. A typical conversation

between Fry and a worker would go something like this:

'Are you coming in Sunday night?' (to do overtime)

'No, I'm going out.'

'Would you be going out if you were on the dole?'

Fry also had 16 year olds working 40 hours for £30!

During the lockout he tried to get three old-age pensioners who did cleaning at the factory to work the machines. When they refused he sacked them on the spot. Throughout the lockout workers have maintained a 24 hour picket, though police have had a constant presence, stepping in when it looked like scabs might be stopped going in.

Two workers have been arrested on trumped-up charges of stealing chemicals and throwing stones at scabs.

One of these workers had been told by Fry on a Friday morning that he would get him off the picket line; by Sunday he had been arrested and had a court order slapped on him preventing him being on the line.

However, Fry is being hit hard by the picketing and blacking action. No Trans-

port and General drivers are crossing the line. Workers at Meridian, Daleside's biggest customer, have been blacking its products for four to five weeks, and blacking is in effect at the vast majority of Daleside Hadden customers.

Despite Fry's bold claims in the scab local paper, The Evening Post (notorious in Nottingham for its sacking of NUJ journalists for responding to a national strike call),

that the factory was on 'full production', convenor Frank Day estimates that it is no more than 30% of the pre-lock-out level. Other workers have pointed out that machines are rarely running.

Blacking action is clearly hurting Fry. He whined in the Evening Post about a union 'hit list' to black his goods.

Fry has taken on some temporary workers in a bid

to boost production. Their reward is rumoured to be a wage £25 per week less than the one before the strike!

The lockout has had a big impact on the workers' movement in Nottingham. Most unions have had banners or members on the picket line at one time or another.

As picket Brian Shaw pointed out, "We're not just fighting for ourselves, we're fighting for the rights of

every trade unionist in the country".

Mass pickets are on Mondays and Thursdays, but Frank Day stressed the importance of a strong picket seven days a week, 24 hours a day, to stop vital supplies such as oil.

Donations/messages to: Daleside Hadden Strike Committee, Martin Lawson, 1 Eugene Gardens, The Meadows, Nottingham.

John Harris

Brent: the rate for the job

Brent's library workers are in dispute with the Labour-controlled council. One of their stewards explained the issues to Pete Firmin.

'Job evaluation in 1980 exposed gross anomalies in the pay structure, with library assistants on one grade taking home £35-£40 a week less than those on the next grade doing the same work.'

The results of this evaluation were announced in September 1981 and in July 1982 management wrote to all library assistants informing them they would be

regraded. But the July pay packet contained no regrading, and when regrading did come through, an 18-month probationary period was introduced, which the union disputed as unnecessary.

Our dispute with the Council was backed by the AGM of Brent NALGO in November 1982 and we held one-day strikes on February 7 and 28 this year. We also introduced a policy of disruptive action in the libraries such as not ordering books or handling enquiries.

The first strike closed 8 of the 13 libraries, with

about 70% of the membership on strike. The second strike would also have closed 8 libraries but management organised scabbing.

Councillors

There have been numerous meetings with councillors. They have seen them as consultation — 'collecting information' — we saw them as negotiations.

The councillors believed what their officers told them — that there were no real grounds for the union claim, and that a hierarchical struc-

ture is essential to the library service. The union disputes this. We are basically asking for the same rate for people doing the same job.

The indication now from some councillors is that they are prepared to meet the union's claim. We hope this materialises.

Brent NALGO backed us at the AGM, but our action has been unofficial. To get official backing you have to prove that negotiations have 'truly broken down'. But we have had a lot of support from other NALGO stewards."

A VICTORY AT LONGBRIDGE

One of the strikers
spoke to Jim Denham

'Police raids on Longbridge workers' homes are nothing new, but this year it's been worse than ever and it's been stores workers in particular who've been suffering.

In January a black worker, Junior, had his house turned over by the cops and was beaten up in the police station. He was completely innocent and nothing was found.

Then, on Wednesday March 2nd, a storeman, Tom, on the 10-2 shift in CAB1, was raided just as he was about to leave home for work. There were three civil police plus two BL security people.

They found three flasher units and two bulbs, but these were too old to have been stolen from Longbridge. One of the BL security men claimed that a spanner of a very common type could have been stolen from Longbridge.

Five days later, this worker was called into the office and suspended on suspicion of theft. No stewards had been informed of any of this - the first the stewards knew was when Tom returned on Tuesday, after his 24-hour suspension.

Colin Willetts from the Works Committee went into the office with Tom and a local steward.

John Yeats, the Unit 2 industrial relations manager, and Dave Harbush, the superintendent, met them and made it clear that they intended to sack Tom.

The stores blokes held a meeting the next day, Wednesday, and endorsed the action of Willetts and the local stewards in defending Tom.

As the meeting broke up, there was a call from the floor of the meeting demanding strike action if anything similar occurred or if Tom was in fact sacked.

Amazingly, just five hours later, exactly the same thing happened again, this time to a worker on the night shift. Interestingly, as well, it was the same police station as the previous case, Droitwich.

Searched

Five coppers plus someone else in plain clothes - it could have been a BL security man - had gone into this worker's home.

They searched everywhere, in his loft, the lot. The only thing they didn't do was dig his garden up.

Well of course, when this bloke came in, everyone on the night shift was furious. They'd already heard about what happened on days, and they wanted action.

As the 6am-2pm shift came on (it overlaps with the night shift), the night blokes told everyone what had happened.

The day and night stewards called a meeting of all the storemen, and the local management flew into a real panic. It was like a Burton's shop window come to life with all the dummies running about in their suits!

Harbush, the superintendent, collared the stewards and pleaded with them to get the blokes back to work.

The management offered talks in exchange for a

resumption of work. The stewards put this to the blokes, who replied 'Bollocks'.

Then two drivers' stewards came over and said, 'Do you mind if our people join in your meeting?' So we held a joint meeting with the drivers.

When the 6-2 shift and the day shift heard all the details about what had happened on nights, they wanted action. They wanted to know why, how, and by whom the search warrants had been issued.

From the floor of the meeting came a proposal for immediate strike for the rest of the week (it was now Thursday) and a further meeting on Monday. The stewards asked the movers to withdraw this, which they did.

But the blokes were insistent about Tom, the bloke who had been suspended and threatened with the sack.

'We want him back,' they all said.

The stewards reported this to industrial relations boss Gwyn Evans, who replied simply that he would not talk while we were in dispute.

Chaos

Then the stewards collared CAB1 industrial relations boss Bernard Monaghan, who claimed total innocence - 'All I know is that the police say they received an anonymous tip-off', he said.

Everyone just laughed at this. Meanwhile, chaos reigned in CAB1. Plant manager Tony Sergeant was going round the tracks telling all the production workers they were laid off. At the same time local supervision was telling them that they weren't, and at the gates, the works police were trying to get them to go back inside.

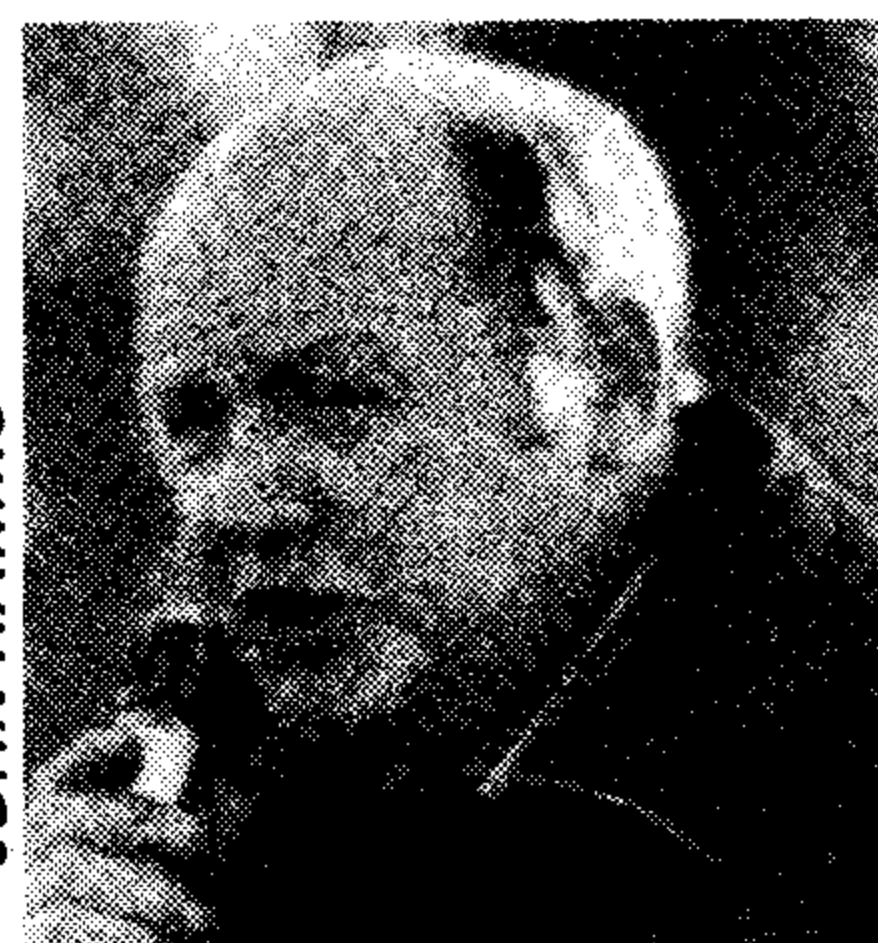
Then Jack Adams, the convenor, came up from the Works Committee and suggested reconvening the shop meeting to get the blokes back to work while he tried to sort things out with the management.

The local stewards went along with this, mainly I think because they were all a bit confused and didn't know what to do for the best. The whole issue was very far-reaching, and we hadn't formulated any precise demands, although the general feeling was that we wanted access to Company files on employees and details of their relationship with the civil police.

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Adams: pushed for return to work

Anyway, the meeting was reconvened and Adams put a resolution calling for a return to work. This was massively defeated and the day-shift drivers and storemen all went home.

Meanwhile, in the CAB2 area (which covers the Ital tracks) drivers and storemen held a separate meeting and all came out in solidarity.

When the 2pm shift came in, they held a meeting and voted to go home even before the steward had finished moving the resolution!

On nights the same resolution - the Works Committee's proposal for a return to work - was again put, but there wasn't even a second for it, so the night shift storemen and drivers all walked out.

The tracks were laid off at 9.35 pm on Thursday night. Earlier on Thursday Tom, the suspended worker, had gone to see management along with Colin Willetts from the Works Committee.

Monaghan and Rowley from the Company finally agreed that there was no case for Tom to answer and apologised. Tom was paid all the shift allowance and bonus owed to him, as well as his basic rate.

When the day shift came in the stewards and Works Committee put the same resolution as the day before, and again it was rejected.

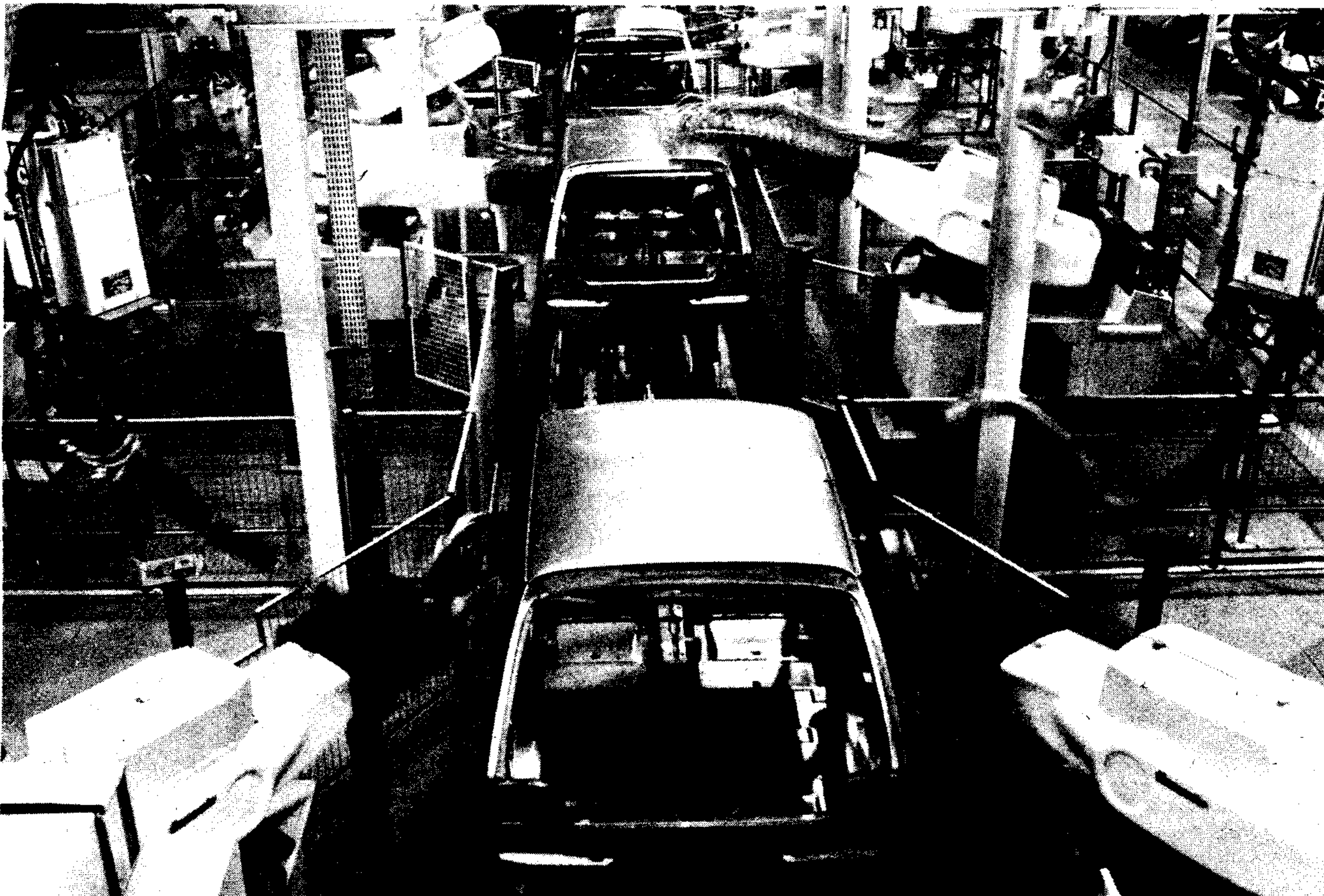
The 2pm shift didn't come in at all. At around am on Friday, the stores in the East Works came out in support and a bit later, drivers and storemen in the North Works and the South

Works did the same, halting all the engine supplies to Cowley. But the stewards were stuck. What should they be going for? What demands should they be raising?

A meeting was arranged for Friday between the stores stewards, the Works Committee and the T&G full-timer, Sam Robinson. All Robinson seemed concerned about was getting bad publicity in the Press!

By this time the local stewards had drawn up a list of demands including the stopping of raids on workers' homes 'on information received', public apologies from the Company and the police to the workers who'd been raided, the right of access to your own records from the Personnel Department.

For some reason, apparently, Adams got very angry about these demands and seemed to think that the local stewards were upping the stakes to prolong the strike. Finally, it was agreed to call another meeting on



The robots can't produce cars on their own!

Leadership blocks Cowley strike

Manning struggles have erupted at BL's Cowley Body Plant. We reported last week the victorious opposition to manning cuts on the Rover/Ambassador build line.

This was victorious because the workers insisted on implementing the plant policy of calling a mass meeting in defence of any section in confrontation over manning.

The leadership have opposed this. Senior steward Bill Roche has argued through his section to give the company's manning a try. He opposed the spreading of the action. At the mass meeting he argued against the plant going out on strike.

But the strike was victorious and the status quo

was installed on the section.

As soon as the plant returned to work on Wednesday, the company hit out in all directions to try and undo the success.

Stewards were disciplined; manning cuts took place; workers on the Maestro stopped work on Wednesday morning as did workers on the Ambassador final line.

On Thursday morning, Bill Roche was warned by management for saying to the Oxford Mail 'that a formula' had got a return to work and not a company victory.' He was also warned for addressing the first mass meeting.

On Thursday afternoon the Acclaim stopped over manning and so did the Paint

Shop. The Paint Shop night shift followed the day shift as they tried to enforce the factory policy of mass meetings by both going out onto the sports field first thing in the morning on Friday.

The leadership and the District Official, David Buckle, called a shop stewards' meeting and spent four hours trying to talk the stewards out of backing the Paint Shop.

This was unsuccessful. But as large numbers of stewards abstained in the vote, the leadership declared that although the resolution was carried, the vote wasn't big enough and therefore the Paint Shop had to go back to work.

But still a meeting of Paint Shop workers refused

Monday for all the drivers and store workers from CABs 1 and 2.

When that meeting occurred, the Works Committee resolution for a return to work was carried, although feeling was very strong, and there was a small minority who seemed determined to stay out.

However, we made it clear that we had only suspended our strike and warned BL, 'Any more police raids on our homes, and we strike again.'

Jack Adams later told the local press, 'We had a great deal of difficulty getting the men to agree to our recommendations to go back to work. They insisted on adding a rider that if what they see as indiscriminate searches continue, then they will take action, and the next time they'll stop out.'

We also won one very significant victory. The Company has now agreed that all Longbridge workers will have access to their records in the Personnel Department. Of course we all know that the company will keep any information that they don't want us to see on separate records, but it is still a very worthwhile propaganda victory and a good basis for a broader fight for the opening of the all company's secret files and books.

Cars



Ford jobs fight

THE common factor in the current wave of strikes in the car industry is a revolt against the attempts by management to assert and increase its authority on the basis of the slump and the recent defeats for the unions in the industry.

At the Ford Halewood assembly plant on Merseyside, 4,500 workers are out, demanding the reinstatement of Paul Kelly.

Paul Kelly was sacked for alleged vandalism. As he himself points out, 'If the company is allowed to get away with sacking me, it could be anyone else tomorrow or next week.'

The Halewood body plant workers have been laid off because of the assembly plant dispute. But during the lay-off Ford have come forward with plans to abolish demarcation and increase work flexibility - having the same workers doing both maintenance and production work - and to seek 1,300 redundancies.

A body plant mass meeting has voted to strike against these plans.

Meanwhile the conclusion of factory votes in Vauxhall may show a majority against lifting the ban on imports of the new S-car. While the focus on stopping imports can only harm the necessary unity between workers in different countries where GM [the parent company of Vauxhall] has factories, the voting clearly shows increased confidence and readiness to fight.

How much help are the car industry strikers getting from their national union leaders?

None from AUEW president Terry Duffy, for sure. Last Saturday he told the press that 'it was sad that now the car companies were producing world-beating models the strikes should begin again'.

And he proposed that a 'cooling-off period' should be instituted against strikes.

This would enable the companies to victimise, to change manning and conditions, and to impose arbitrary speed-up, without an immediate comeback from the workers.

The Science column got squeezed out this week in the competition. Sorry! It'll be back next week as usual.

In Brief

'To focus on this so-called tribalism is to the disadvantage of the poor people and the advantage of the government. It's the poverty and the social issues that should be the focus. And you'll find those issues in every factory and mine'.

A meeting called by Socialist Organiser in London last Sunday, 13th, heard a Zimbabwean comrade argue that the press is misrepresenting the issues.

Also at the meeting were a number of comrades active in Southern Africa solidarity, including three who had recently been in Zimbabwe. They agreed that the repression - which has now claimed probably more than 2500 dead - is essentially a drive to eliminate political opposition especially the more radical elements in ZAPU, and to enforce the submission of the peasantry through mass terror.

Far from effectively countering South African efforts to 'destabilise' Zimbabwe, the repression opens the way for intervention by the apartheid state.

Some comrades stressed the need to promote a class analysis of capitalist Zimbabwe, as against the vague nationalist and populist ideas which are current on the left and lead many to acquiesce in Mugabe's suppression of democratic rights. Behind the current conflict lies the fact that the Mugabe government has done very little to improve the conditions of the black workers and peasants, and is now, under IMF pressure, going for wage controls.

Promises of land reform have not been kept. And wage-workers in large-scale capitalist agriculture - the biggest section of the Zimbabwe working class - find their exploitation unchanged.

British imperialism shares responsibility for this, through the Lancaster House agreement. And right now several hundred British troops are involved in training and organising the forces of repression.

The nature of the dissident movement is unclear. The government makes an amalgam between political opposition [ZAPU and others], bandits, South African agents [who doubtless are operating] - and practically the whole population in Matabeleland. But we should not let ourselves be confused on the basic issue of democratic rights.

We decided to plan a further meeting to organise a campaign of information in the labour movement and the Left.



MUGABE CRACKS DOWN

With Joshua Nkomo fleeing abroad, conflict is escalating in Zimbabwe. Jennifer Jackson and Bob Fine look at the background to the latest events.

UNDER THE guise of the suppression of 'dissidence' the Mugabe government in Zimbabwe has unleashed a formidable apparatus of terror.

Approximately 5000 men, women and children - according to opposition reports - are detained by the security forces. The best known of them are former leaders of ZAPU's military wing, ZIPRA: Demiro Dabengwa, former ZIPRA chief-of-staff, and his successor, Lookout Masuku. These people are accused of treason arising from the discovery of arms caches last year.

Less well known are the thousands of former guerrillas, unemployed youth and villagers suspected of harbouring dissidents now in detention camps and prisons.

The largest of these camps is near the Botswana border, at Tsholotsho. It was set up by the government earlier this year in its 'Clean Up Matabeleland' campaign.

It actually consists of two camps: the larger one holds 2000 people, mainly peasants from Matabeleland, and unemployed from Bulawayo; the smaller holds 300 people, mainly former members of the Zimbabwe National Army, for intense 'interrogation'.

The prison camp at Gonakudzingwa, where both Nkomo and Mugabe were held for many years by the Smith regime, has been reopened under its new management. And there are camps in the North where Shona and former ZANLA (ZANU military wing) 'dissidents' are held.

Overall, the scale of detentions is on a par with the Smith era.

Primitive

Conditions in the camps are primitive: food usually reserved for cattle, in inadequate quantities and only once every two days; no shelter; no washing or toilet facilities.

At the interrogation camp at Tsholotsho there are reports of constant beatings, the use of electric shocks, barbed wire bound around inmates, wet sacks put over the victims' heads, and other means of torture to extract confessions of dissident activity. Many people have not been seen since their interrogation.

The camp is operated by the 'Task Force', a special unit of about 1000 men. It

was members of the 'Task Force' who were filmed by British TV beating suspects. They are responsible for the 'clean up Matabeleland' campaign, which reportedly includes the use of exemplary public executions in the villages.

Old apparatus

The Task Force is made up of former members of such units as the Rhodesian African Rifles, the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the Special Air Service, the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit (now Police Support Unit), Central Intelligence Organisation, and the Selous Scouts (the crack troops under Smith). Many of these are trained by the British. It is a vivid example of how the new regime in Zimbabwe employs the old apparatus.

They work alongside but are distinct from the Fifth Brigade, a kind of 'Praetorian Guard' also notorious for its atrocities, trained in North Korea and comprising mainly ex-ZANLA troops.

All these troops are put above the law, thanks to the reintroduction of Smith's old Indemnity Act, according to which security forces cannot be prosecuted for abuse of powers.

South Africa

What is the significance of this crackdown? The government presents it as a fight against dissidence stemming mainly from the aggrieved Matabele tribespeople who have supported Nkomo and ZAPU and some of whom serve as agents in one way or another of South African imperialism. In the name of national unity and the fight against imperialism, the government declares, these people must be suppressed.

Certainly former members of ZIPRA have been involved in hit and run attacks on farms, stores and buses. The government says that the South Africans have set up four military camps with 4000 Matabele recruits, and are infiltrating them into the country. Whatever the truth of this, it is certainly the case that South Africa is imposing an economic squeeze.

Supplies

South Africa handles about 75% of Zimbabwe's trade through its ports, transports most of its fuel supplies, and is Zimbab-

we's largest export market.

The apartheid regime can easily intensify its hold by attacking fuel pipelines and railway lines through Mozambique - the only alternative to the South African connection - and Zimbabwe troops now find themselves locked in battles to keep these lines secure in Mozambique against the South African backed insurgents of the Mozambique Resistance Movement.

Beneath the surface, however, there is another story to tell. After a period of impressive economic growth in the first two years of independence, the economy has hit the rocks.

Austerity

Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, Mugabe is introducing a potentially severe austerity package. A 20% devaluation is raising the cost of living through higher import prices (the main beneficiaries are the mining companies in Zimbabwe, who have sought government permission to lay off workers); government subsidies on food are probably being withdrawn and the price of food in particular is expected to soar; annual Christmas wage increases have been put off until July, and the IMF is calling for wage restraint and the erosion of minimum wage laws brought in by Mugabe after independence.

The government's growth plan of 8 per cent per year appears to most observers as pie in the sky; at present growth runs about 2 per cent per year. Mugabe hopes the difference will be made up basically by private foreign investment. This is one reason why he is so keen to make a show of a firm hand against the forces of instability.



South Africa's Botha



Mugabe and Nkomo with Young and Owen: the Anglo-American settlement laid the basis for the current conflicts



Smith regime soldiers interrogate nationalist fighters. Now the same methods - even the same personnel - are used against black opponents of the Mugabe regime.



Arms alleged to have been found on Nkomo's farm

The long and the short of it is that the government is both expressing and exploiting tribal prejudices between Shona and Matabele, as it directs attention away from the class consequences of its economic and political policies. The effect, moreover, is to facilitate South African intervention, as dissidents - lacking any alternative centre of gravity - are in part drawn into the South African net.

Terrible logic

Imperialism in Zimbabwe works in diverse ways: through South Africa, through the IMF, and not least through Mugabe's state. Repression of the Matabele may not be a 'rational' way forward by any standard, but given the factional nature of class rule in Zimbabwe, it is perhaps in accord with a terrible logic.

A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY

Independent Trade Unions In South Africa

90p
Bob Fine
Lawrence Welch

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

A visit to Toyota City

"More like gymnastics than work in a car plant"

Previous articles have looked at the remilitarisation of Japan, under US auspices, after World War 2, and the growth and promotion of yellow company unions, which now dominate in cars, steel, shipbuilding, etc. This article looks at how the system operates in a Japanese car plant.

TOYOTA City is about 200 miles from Tokyo, and an hour's ride on a modern subway train from Nagoya, one of Japan's major cities.

It is an old city, but has been completely taken over and re-named by the Toyota company, which dominates the city administration.

Four of Toyota's five assembly plants (in effect, stamping, body, paint and assembly complexes) are in Toyota City, as are three of its five supporting plants.

In addition to its Japanese plants, Toyota has 27 plants abroad — including assembly plants in 19 different countries. These range from plants in the USA to plants in Third World countries like the Philippines, where they take advantage of the conditions of dictatorship and the free trade zones.

Toyota was established in 1937. Since then its Japanese plants have produced 40 million cars.

By
Bill
Peters

but the difference in productivity between Europe and Toyota is very great indeed.

The rate of exploitation in Toyota is absolutely brutal, consistently reaching the limits of physical endurance.

I watched assembly workers doing jobs which were more like an exercise in gymnastics than a work effort in a car plant. I did not see a single worker even pause for a few seconds during a work period for the whole time I was in the plant.

An overall comparison with BL is interesting. Structurally the two companies are very similar. The Toyota labour force is only slightly larger — 54,000 as against BL's 47,000. The processes are similar. Each manufactures the engines (most of them), the transmissions (most of them), builds the body, paints and assembles the car. Toyota buys in 70% of components, which is only slightly more than BL. The technical level in assembly is about the same. In body-build Toyota is rather more automated.

Exploitation

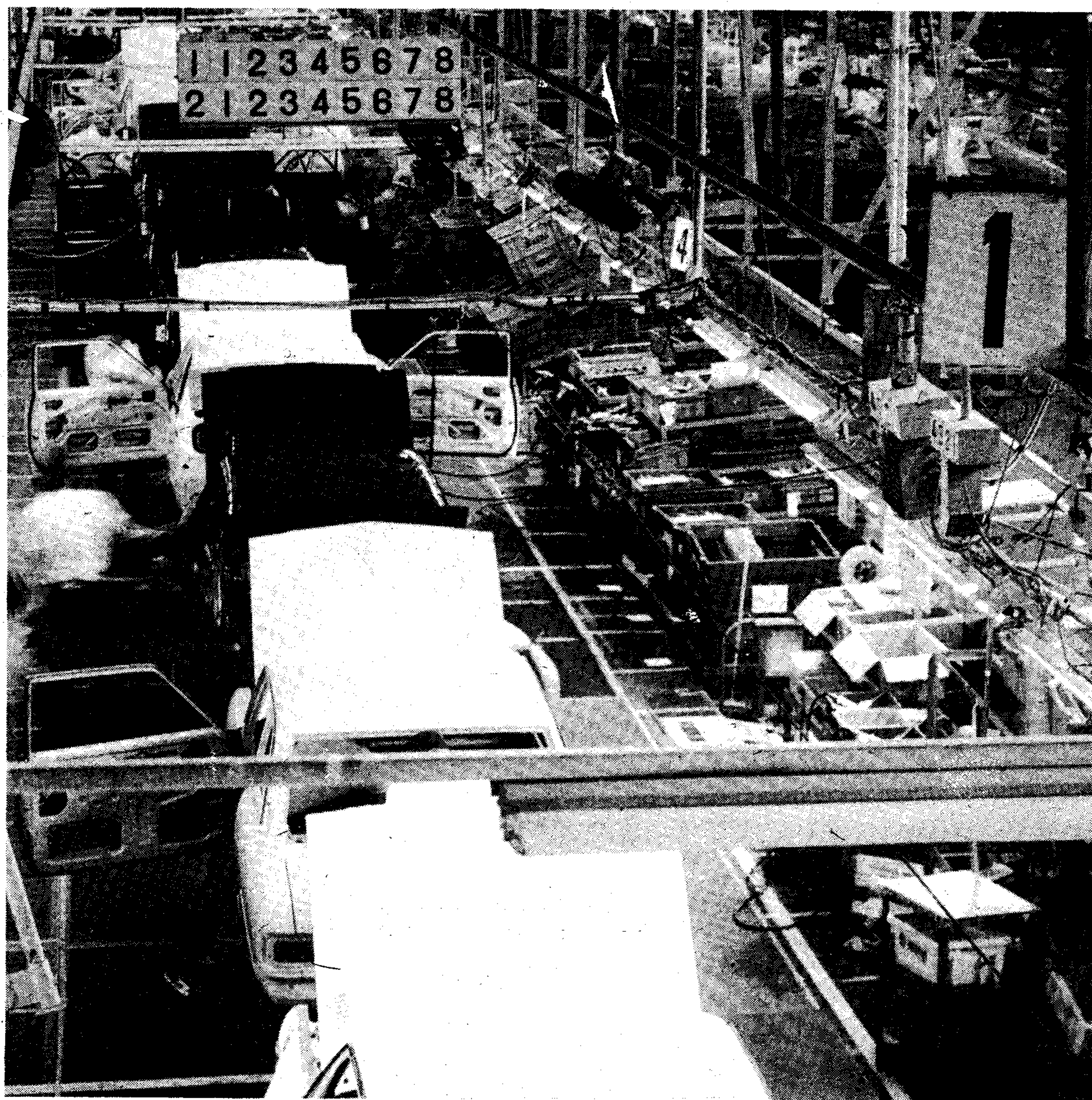
Some BL cars, like the Rover and the Jaguar, are a lot bigger and more complicated. But, having taken those factors into account, compare the production figures.

BL produces less than 750,000 vehicles per year. Toyota produces 3.2 million.

The factor overwhelmingly responsible for figures like that is the incredibly high rate of exploitation achieved in Japan — a rate which western manufacturers stand no chance of equalling, despite all their attacks on the unions.

It is no wonder that the world car manufacturers are interested in Japanese management techniques.

After visiting the factory



"They don't use work study. They simply increase the effort until the worker cracks..."

I talked to a group of militant Toyota workers who were contacts of Rodo Joho. They gave me information about the yellow union structure and the working conditions in Toyota.

There are two federations covering car workers' unions in Japan, the 600,000 strong Jidosha Soren and the smaller, 220,000-strong Jidosha Roren. The Toyota union, a yellow company union, is affiliated to Jidosha Soren.

The Toyota union, like all the yellow unions, has an extensive structure through which it controls the workers. There are committees at every level — corporate, plant and section. This structure corresponds to and is integrated with the management structure.

The shop floor representative, or shop steward, each covering about ten workers, is invariably the section leader or sub-foreman. The representative on the committee above is normally the foreman, and above that the superintendent.

It is so difficult for the left to penetrate the system that even the Japanese Communist

Party, which has between 50 and 100 members in Toyota, has only a few positions, and only at the very lowest level. (This is affected a bit by the policy of the JCP, which is to concentrate far more on parliamentary than on industrial questions).

The seniority wage system (described in detail in the second of these articles) is used to great effect in Toyota. A part of a worker's wage depends directly on the discretion of the foreman. Although theoretically it takes into account factors such as education and work performance, in reality the biggest factor is loyalty to the company. Management's intelligence service against both employees and potential employees is regarded by the workers as near-perfect from a management point of view.

A worker can therefore lose a lot of money if the foreman decides that he or she is in any way anti-management. Standing as a representative against the section leader or the foreman would be regarded as absolutely anti-management, and would result in the worker being witch-

hunted as well as losing pay.

(Pay levels are difficult to translate into British terms, given their complicated structure, the rate of exchange, and the high prices in Japanese shops, but generally the standard of living of a Japanese car worker is a bit higher than his or her British counterpart).

Management control of the shop floor is absolute, and of course strikes are absolutely unknown. Militant workers wanting to make a protest have to find ways which in British terms seem small, but in Japanese terms are very difficult.

Standing as a representative is one way. If that is not possible, and generally it is not, asking a critical question at the 'tool box meeting' in the morning is a way of protesting, but even that can have effects on the seniority part of a worker's wage.

(It should be said that the day in factory begins with exercises to music, and then the tool box meeting, at which the foreman gives a lecture on productivity levels for the day. All this is in the workers' own

time).

The extraordinary management pressure exerted on workers through the yellow union is demonstrated by the situation with holidays.

Personal holiday days are based on seniority. They start at eight days per year and rise to a maximum of 20.

Incredibly, none of Toyota's 54,000 workers takes more than half of his or her personal holiday entitlement. They are encouraged by the 'union' to donate holidays to the company, in order to improve productivity.

This extraordinary situation probably demonstrates more clearly than anything else the degree of control and commitment to the management which has been achieved through the techniques of the Japanese employers and the control of the yellow unions.

Such would be the pressure on any worker who wanted to take his or her full holiday entitlement, that none do. It would involve being seen as anti-management.

After that, it is not surprising that Toyota has considerable control in other

directions. Within a plant mobility and flexibility, for example, is absolute. Any worker can be moved anywhere at any time without question. The agreement gives management the right to move a worker to another location, possibly over long distances, for a period of three months.

In addition, management are now promoting what they call multi-skills. For example, a worker will be both a maintenance welder and also work on the track.

The entire workforce is organised into QC circles (the principle and significance of these was detailed in the second article). These are groups of about ten workers. Their job is to discuss and improve such things as productivity, quality and maintenance. They are presented as 'workers' participation' and 'workers' self-management'.

They used to be voluntary. Now they are compulsory (compulsory self-management?).

The requirements of productivity, however, restrict the activities of the QC circles in working hours. They are now allocated only two hours per month, which is inadequate for their role.

It is therefore normal for the QC circle to take place after working hours in the home of one of the workers in the group. There they discuss how they can work harder when they get back to work.

It is often not even possible for workers not committed to management to just go through the motions, since failure to produce positive results can be regarded as anti-management.

The extent of this, and the pressure involved, can be seen by a recent increase in the suicide rate in Toyota. Workers have left notes to the effect that they could not stand the pressure and meet the requirements of the QC circles.

The high work effort contributes to this as well, of course. Relief times (off-track relief during the shift) is ten minutes morning and ten minutes afternoon — less than half the normal relief time in Britain.

Toyota have their own ways of establishing work effort. They don't use work study. They simply increase the effort until the worker cracks, then they decide if they will accept the cracking as genuine.

European managers may go on their pilgrimages to Japan and return starry-eyed and determined to force such conditions on British car workers. They should remember, however, how far they have to go — even after the attacks of the unions over the past four years.

Women in struggle

Report by Anne Marie Sweeney (acting chair, Oxfordshire district action committee against NHS cuts) and Debbie Cameron

THE Regional Health Authority centred in Oxford is proposing a series of cuts and closures which seem to be designed specifically to attack the health of women in the area.

By April 1 they propose to close three Family Planning clinics, with drastic reductions (of up to four sessions) at eight clinics and staff losses at a further eight.

According to the Health Authority itself, the effect of these reductions will be to:

- reduce the choice of clinics and sessions,
- restrict the opportunity for clients to be seen quickly,
- extend recall period (the time between appointments),
- reduce training flexibility for staff,
- reduce screening procedures within the clinics.

The implications are clear. More waiting around, shorter consultations because less staff, and increased risks of cervical cancer and infections because of reduced screening.

Women needing contraceptive advice and prescriptions will be transferred into General Practitioners' waiting rooms, with a bad effect on already overworked GPs. Also, not all GPs have the necessary expertise or are even willing to prescribe contraception to women.

Finances

If NHS finances are examined, these measures won't even save any money in real terms — simply reallocate spending.

The average cost of family planning per woman is £10 at a Family Planning Clinic, but £15 through GPs. The difference is that while the FPAs are funded through health authorities, the costs of GP provision fall to the Family Practitioner Committee, which is covered by central government.

At the moment the FPC budget is open-ended — not least because it covers doctors, chemists and dentists, and, by covering prescription costs, is the main channel through which profits are made by the drug industry.

Further cuts being considered include introduction of 24-hour maternity care. This is phrased — like other cuts proposals — in an attractive way, as the 'development' of 24 hour care.

Of course some women would like to get back home as soon as possible after childbirth — but imagine returning home just one day after childbirth, especially if you live in dilapidated, damp, cramped housing, if you're a young mother learning to cope with your first baby, or if you have a large family and as soon as you get home will face pressure to care for the other children, husband, and home.

Paediatricians consider the first week of a baby's life to be of great importance. Who is going to be around to help mothers cope with feeding problems, post-natal depression and sleepless nights? Certainly not district nurses and health visitors, who are receiving their share of cuts.

Brunt

The major brunt of the £8 million 'savings' is to fall, however, on services to the elderly, which will be rationed (as the RHA itself puts it) 'to a level well below that which now exists'.

Again we see the euphemisms; services to the elderly and mentally ill are to be cut back and responsibility transferred to 'the community'.

The notion of 'community care' features strongly in long-term planning, and as it is always made out to be a Good Thing (so much nicer than putting Granny in an 'institution'), it's worth looking at what it really means.

No-one should be deceived into imagining that the patients' welfare is what the health authority cares about.

Their report says, "A commitment should be given to a much greater emphasis on community care with a lesser dependence on institution-based (and therefore capital-dependent) services".

This fits in nicely with the Tories' Family Policy Group's 'Think Tank' proposals.

Drastic cuts in women's health care



Longworth's occupation to stop closure: public opinion is not enough.

The RHA plan to reduce institutional care — on the assumption that people will get support services in their own homes. But those support services — social workers, home helps, meals on wheels, etc. — are themselves being cut back by councils.

When the health authorities turn the elderly away from the hospitals, they know full well what a low level of support they can expect in the community. In reality they expect the family to look after 'their own'.

This means that daughters or daughters-in-law should give up their jobs to take care of elderly dependents. If no such 'caring woman' is available, then the elderly person can quite

simply anticipate a desperate, degraded, solitary wait until they are 'lucky' enough to fall down stairs or have a heart attack, and thus qualify for emergency hospital admission.

One old incontinent woman in Oxford with no family spent over 24 hours sat on a commode propped up against a table until eventually she was 'got into' a private nursing home some 30 miles away.

Closure

The Oxford Regional Health Authority is also proposing the closure of beds for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people. Where will they go? Who will look after them?

We know the answer all too well: women, some of whom will have lost their paid jobs in the public sector, will be forced to provide the same service for free 'in the community'.

Cuts

The proposed cuts are to take place on top of cuts that have been made in the region of 400 other beds. In Oxfordshire alone 100 beds have been lost, and the number of nurses at work cut by 211.

With the notable exception of the occupation of Longworth geriatric hospital for women, very little has been organised in active opposition to past cuts and closures by the health service trade unions.

mittee is in the process of establishing district action committees.

In the month since it was constituted by a public meeting of over 60 trade union and labour movement delegates, the Oxfordshire Campaign to defend the NHS has been extremely active.

It has focused its effort initially on the cuts and closures in the family planning clinics, which are due to take place by April 1.

It has produced a leaflet, a petition, and a model letter to the press, which it has distributed in the Oxford shopping centre with a stall on International Women's Day.

Door-to-door leafletting and petitioning is taking place in the areas which are losing their clinics. Staff at FPA clinics are being talked to about action that could be taken to prevent closure. Stalls are being set up in shopping centres and market places in Banbury, Abingdon, Wantage, Carterton, and Cowley Centre.

The major drive is for a mass lobby of the District Health Authority on March 22 at 9.45pm in the grounds of the John Radcliffe Hospital.

Public meetings are being set up all over the county, focusing especially on the attack on women's health.

Apart from the NHS trade unions and Trades Council, the action committee is getting most of its support from women in NAC, Rape Crisis Centre, the university women's group, the Claimants' Union, and Labour Party women's sections.

Missing

Missing from the proposals, as yet, are any concrete guidelines as to how the NHS could be defended in the region by direct action.

We need to be educating and 'coordinating' public opinion to give active support to such actions in the NHS as strikes and occupations to defend services. And we need to encourage the wider trade union movement to help the fight, for example by sympathy strikes.

It is, however, early days, and the regional com-

Affiliate

If you can help in any way, ring Oxford 723071. If you wish to affiliate your organisation to the action committee, please send £5 (trade union/Labour Party groups) or £2 (community groups) to Mike Delieu, 31 West St, Chipping Norton (0608 3173).

Campaign to stop women 'disappearing' by Jenny Fisher

HOW do you launch a national women's campaign to fight the racism and sexism in the Nationality and Immigration laws? Well, a group of 30 women meeting on Sunday March 13 in County Hall, London, may have found the answer.

This was the second recall meeting from the first 'Women, Immigration and Nationality' Conference held in London last October — a conference which brought over 250 women together to share their experiences of sexist and racist laws.

After the enthusiasm of the Conference, the first recall meeting was frustrating with hardly anything having been decided — except to hold another meeting.

But this time the second meeting was much more productive. It was decided that a national campaign would be launched, involving women at the 'grass roots', not an advice agency, or a small, elitist bunch of women writing submissions for the Equal Opportunity Commission.

As a campaign, we want to focus on the areas where sexism and racism overlap, as we feel that's where the vacuum is. But we recognise that that doesn't mean vowing never to mention men. Sometimes, for example, a campaign which

seems to be focused around the deportation of a man (or men) may be grounded in the denial of rights to women — to be joined by husbands, for example.

Rather than rushing off on every issue, we shall focus first on two main campaigns:

□ There are now children being born in Britain who are not 'British' (and who may have no nationality at all). This will have immense repercussions in 18 years time, when a generation of people who've lived all their lives in Britain suddenly find they have no right to remain.

There was some concern expressed that we were falling into a trap by linking children with a women's campaign, as if the two 'naturally' went together. But this was outweighed by the feeling that we should have one 'easier' topic to campaign around.

We might well persuade a Labour government to reverse this part of the Nationality Act, and it would be a boost to win one of our demands.

□ The sexual discrimination in Immigration law as seen in the 'Marriage Rules', which allow women different (and fewer) rights than men. There are many separations causing great distress now, and this would be a very topical campaign.

We're also starting two other projects. The first is to examine the position of

women in Immigration and Nationality law; the way we are treated and our status defined through men.

For example, a woman who's in Britain in her own right on a work permit, will, if she marries an overseas student, 'disappear': her status will be 'wife of overseas student'. We want to build up a picture of this discrimination throughout the law.

Many people are deported each day who have a right to stay in (or enter) Britain, but who don't know their rights, don't seek help, and are turned away by Home Office harassment and threats. So we are aiming to write a pamphlet to give women a guide to their rights.

The above tasks — together with the drafting of a constitution and the working out of some ideas for campaigning — are being carried out by working parties, who will report back to the next 'National Planning Meeting'.

We've still got a few problems to solve — like how we're going to branch out outside London — but at least we've agreed a lot, and started some constructive work.

The next National Planning Meeting will be in London on May 15: all women welcome. In the meantime, W.I.N. can be contacted by writing to 44, Theobald's Road, London WC1.

March to DEFEND

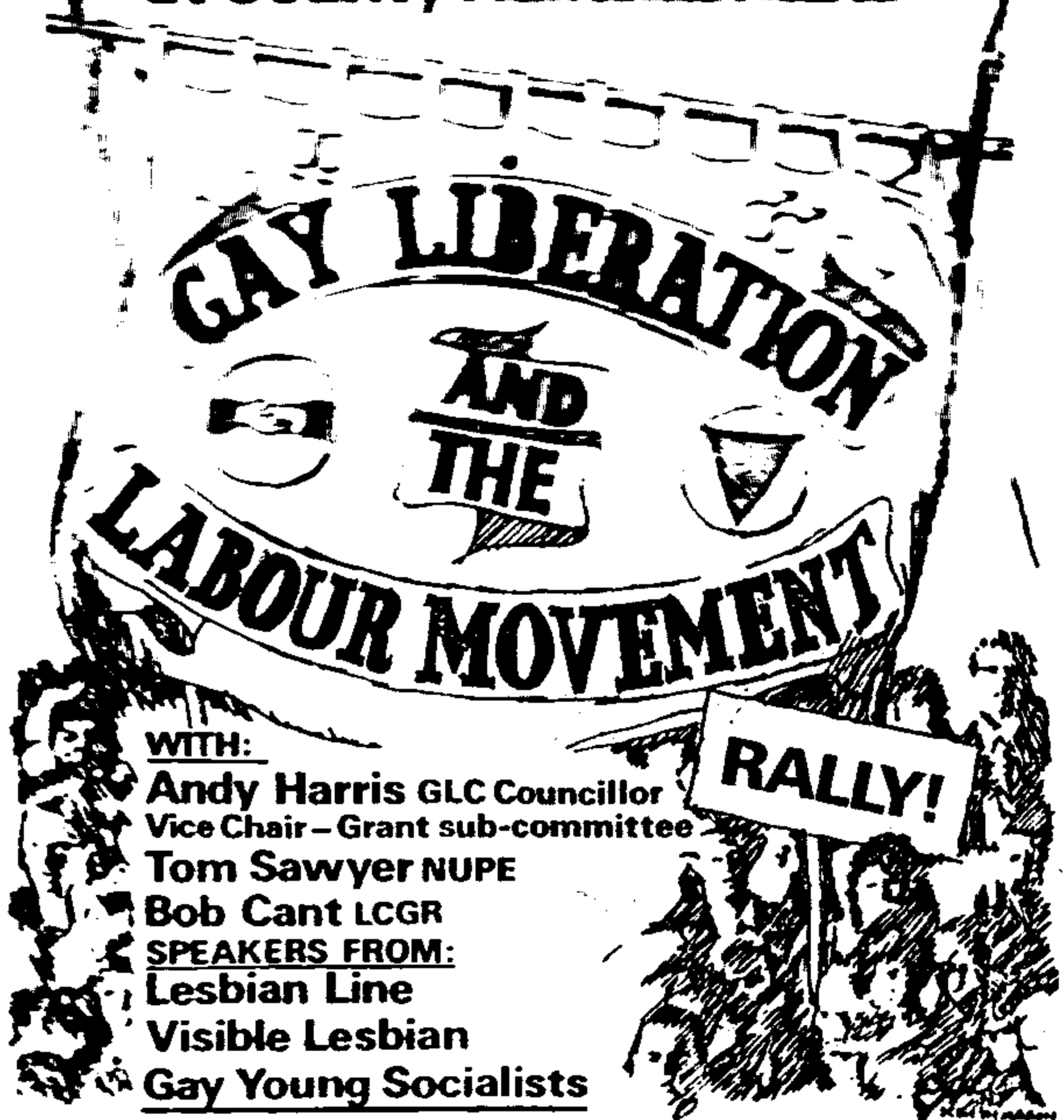


S. London Hospital!

March and rally: March 19, 11am from St Benedict's Hospital, Church Lane, London SW17

LABOUR CAMPAIGN FOR GAY RIGHTS

Friday 18 March - 7.30pm
at County Hall



Marxism belongs to the workers...

Irritated by the muddle-headedness of his supposed co-thinkers in France in the 1880s, Marx once declared that "what is certain is that I am no Marxist".

One can imagine his horror at the situation today, in which 'Marxism' has become the official ideology of repressive Stalinist states spanning Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, whole chunks of Asia, and Cuba; and where slightly varying types of 'Marxism' are proclaimed by the treacherous leaders of official Communist Parties in almost every capitalist country.

Theories which emerged as the scientific basis of proletarian revolution; theories which fearlessly criticised, analysed, exposed and debunked the existing order, offering workers the basis of an independent world-view representing their own class interests, have been hi-jacked, neutered, perverted, inverted, rendered semi-mystical, and used to justify and preserve the existence of privileged ruling bureaucracies and their international hangers-on.

To take a stand in defence of Marxism today means to wage a struggle against Stalinism, a struggle begun in earnest by Trotsky and the Left Opposition sixty years ago in 1923.

Material

But this has never been simply an ideological task, to be resolved through debates and polemic. At the root of the perversion of Marxist positions by Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy in Russia were *material* interests.

The state and Party bureaucracy which arose in the dislocated and shortage-ridden economic conditions of post-revolutionary Russia was spearheaded by the most backward and conservative 'Old Bolshevik' element in the hard-pressed Communist Party: but it rested upon a spectrum of forces ranging from more prosperous sections of the peasantry through technicians and managers to small and middle businessmen grown fat on the crisis measures of the New Economic Policy, and sections of the armed forces.

Many of these 'old Bolsheviks' during 1917 had lacked the confidence in the working class and the grasp of Marxist analysis which inspired Lenin — against their opposition — to press forward to the seizure of state power.

In the struggles that followed after the revolution, their conservatism, far from being overcome, was redoubled. Defeats for revolutionary struggles in Germany and elsewhere in Europe not only compounded the problems of the Russian revolution, but further convinced the conservative elements that they should abandon any notion of defending the Soviet Union through international revolution.

Careerists

Instead they looked to consolidating the new state, through further concessions to the peasantry.

These views coincided with the needs of the careerist elements recruited to the Party after the revolution, and of the privileged sections of administrators and petty business people who feared



By
Harry
Sloan

that the completion of the revolution would jeopardise their power and relative wealth.

In a ravaged economy which still had not repaired the war damage, let alone taken strides towards alleviating pre-revolutionary poverty, there was no short-term prospect of eliminating shortages and want: and under such conditions a state bureaucracy, to administer and distribute the inadequate supplies available, remained firmly entrenched.

This was very different from the kind of state power envisaged by Marx or by Lenin as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx never anticipated a proletarian revolution taking place first in a backward country; and Lenin had anticipated that such problems could be resolved by a rapid extension of the revolution into industrialised Germany and throughout Europe.

Recall

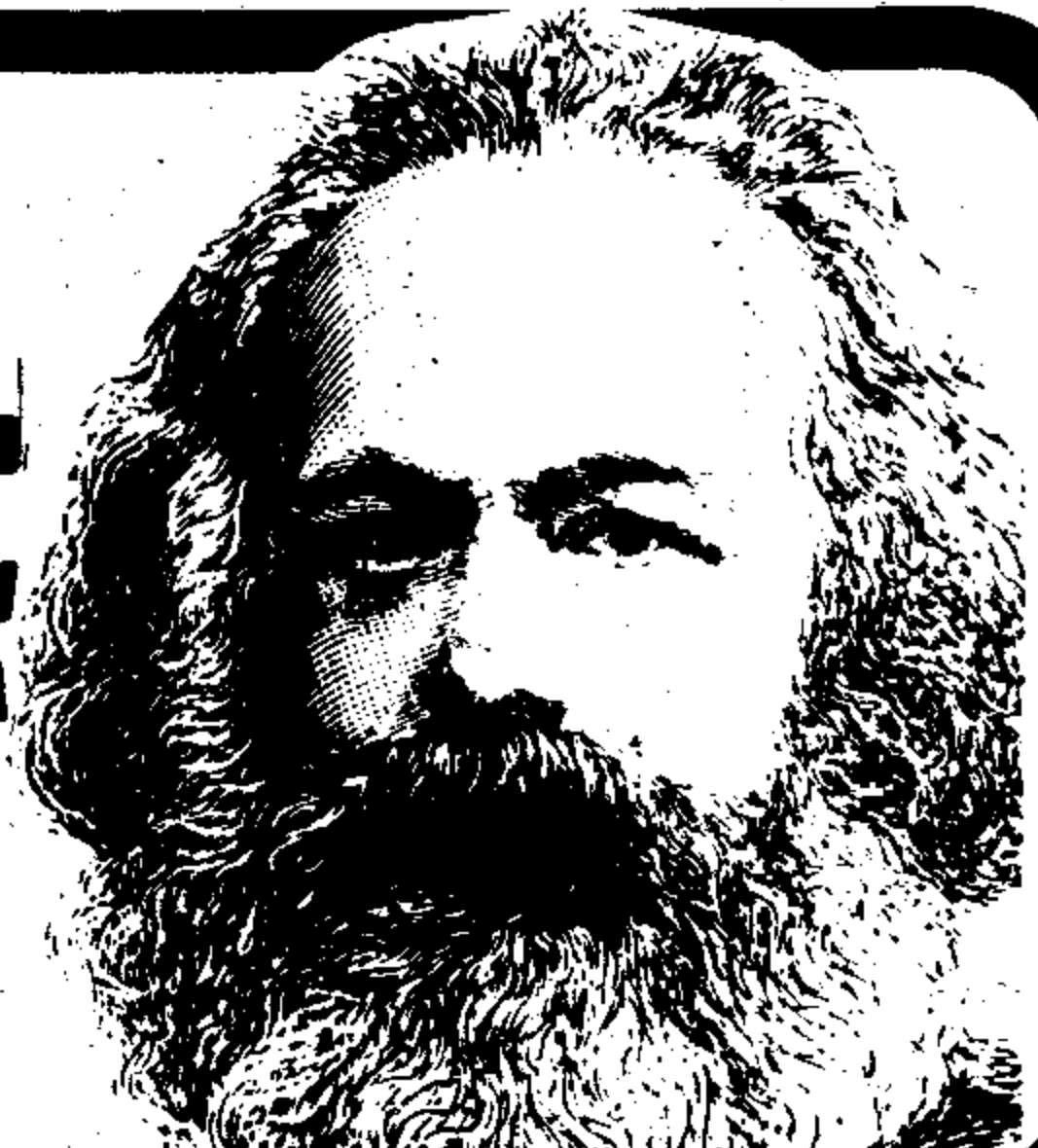
In the event, a distorted and isolated Soviet Union was confronted with a burgeoning and authoritarian state bureaucracy, quite the opposite of the type of transitional 'dying state' advocated by Marx and Lenin, which would fade away with the elimination of material want, and in which all officials would be elected and subject to recall at any time, and paid no more than the average wage.

Lenin had stressed the need for "immediate transfer to a regime in which all will fulfil the functions of control and supervision, so that all may for a time become 'bureaucrats', and therefore nobody can become a bureaucrat".

These proposals in 'State and Revolution' stemmed directly from the lessons Marx and Engels had drawn from the Paris Commune.

"Though the Stalinists opposed the essence of the writings of Marx and Lenin, they arose as an opportunist wing of a Marxist party in the new workers' state. Rather than overtly challenge Lenin's legacy and oppose Marxism, they sought to dress up their own views in 'Marxist' terminology, and falsely to brand Trotsky and other critics as "counter-revolutionary" opponents of Marx and Lenin."

Marx Centenary Socialist Organiser Special



'During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to hallow their names to a certain extent for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its substance, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarising it'.

Lenin, 'State and Revolution'



Kadar, Zhivkov, Andropov, Husak, Honecker, Ceausescu, Jaruzelski: Marxists?

...not Stalin's heirs!

But plainly the emergent, privileged bureaucracy had no interest in such mass, participatory democracy. Even before Lenin's illness and death in 1923-4 they had acquired a mighty power, with their hands on key levers of the state machine. After 1924 their position, championed by Joseph Stalin, became dominant, and by 1927 they were powerful enough to expel and then exile Trotsky, Lenin's co-leader in the October Revolution.

Though the Stalinists opposed the essence of the writings of Marx and Lenin, they arose as an opportunist wing of a Marxist party in the new workers' state. Rather than overtly challenge

Lenin's legacy and oppose Marxism, they sought to dress up their own views in 'Marxist' terminology, and falsely to brand Trotsky and other critics as 'counter-revolutionary' opponents of Marx and Lenin.

"Get rich"

Thus it was that in 1924, immediately after Lenin's death, the Stalinist notion that it was possible to build 'socialism in one country', seized upon and eagerly supported by the bureaucracy, became retailed as 'Marxism', while Trotsky's

insistence that Russia could go on from the revolution to achieve socialism only with the aid of the proletariat of the West was vilified and suppressed.

Similarly, from 1923 to '28, Stalin's line of economic concessions to the prosperous sections of the peasantry, the kulaks, and Bukharin's invitation for them to 'get rich' as a solution to the economic crisis, were portrayed as 'Marxism', while Trotsky's insistence on the need for a five-year plan of industrialisation and collectivisation 'by example' was castigated as 'underestimating the peasantry'.

As the impending crisis Trotsky had warned of erupted, and the bureaucrats lurched into panic measures to ram through a brutal pace of industrialisation, forcible collectivisation, and elimination of the kulaks, the Left Opposition was increasingly portrayed as a right wing pro-capitalist — eventually

Continued on back page

From abstract ideals to scientific socialism

This brief account of Marx's place in the development of socialist politics is the conclusion of 'What is Economics?' by Rosa Luxemburg.

Luxemburg was one of the main leaders and theorists of the left wing in the socialist movement before World War 1, and of the German Communist Party until January 15 1919, when she was murdered by paramilitary forces operating under the right-wing Social Democratic government.

'What is Economics?' is the first chapter of an introduction to economics written by Rosa Luxemburg on the basis of the classes she gave from 1907 to World War 1 at the German Social Democratic Party activists' school in Berlin. She argued that the development of economics was bound up with the development of capitalism. In previous societies that were relatively slow-changing, and where economic relations were determined by customs of servitude, there could be little room for economic science. But bourgeois economic science, once developed, opens questions that it cannot answer.

Thus it was that "the final conclusions of the science analysing the capitalist mode of production were drawn by a man who, from the very beginning, stood on the watchtower of the revolutionary proletariat - Karl Marx".

AS AN IDEAL about a social order built on equality and fraternity for all men, as an ideal about a communist commonwealth, socialism was thousands of years old.

Among the first apostles of Christianity, among the various religious sects of the Middle Ages, in the peasant wars, the socialist ideal had always flared up as the most radical expression of the revolt against contemporaneous society. But as an ideal which could be advocated at all times, in any historical milieu, socialism was only the beautiful vision of a few enthusiasts, a golden fantasy, always out of reach, like the airy image of the rainbow in the skies.

At the close of the eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the socialist idea, freed from all religious sectarian frenzy, as a reaction to the horrors and the devastations which ascendant capitalism perpetrated in society, appeared for the first time with real force behind it. But, even at that time, socialism basically was only a dream, the invention of a few bold minds. If we listen to the first vanguard fighter of the revolutionary upheavals set into motion by the proletariat, Gracchus Babeuf, who attempted a coup de main during the Great French Revolution for the purpose of introducing social equality forcibly, then we shall find that the sole argument on which he is able to base his communist aspirations is the crying injustice of the existing social order. In his impassioned articles, pamphlets, and also in his defence plea before the tribunal which sentenced him to



By Rosa Luxemburg

death, he never tired of picking the contemporary social order to pieces.

His gospel of socialism consists of an indictment of society, the denunciation of the sufferings and the torments, the



The Paris Commune: "the glorious harbinger of a new society"

wretchedness and the debasement of the working masses, on whose backs a handful of idlers grow wealthy and rule society. For Babeuf, it was enough that the existing social order well deserved to perish, i.e. it could have been overthrown a hundred years previous to his time, if only a group of determined men had been found who would seize the state power and who would introduce the regime of equality - just as the Jacobins seized political power in 1793 and introduced the republic.

Propaganda

In the 1820s and 1830s, socialist ideas were represented with a great deal more genius and brilliance by three great thinkers: Saint-Simon and Fourier in France, Owen in England. They based themselves on altogether different methods and yet, in essence, on the same line of reasoning as Babeuf.

Of course, not one of the above-mentioned men thought even remotely of any revolutionary seizure of power for the realisation of socialism. On the contrary, like the entire generation which followed the Great Revolution, they were disappointed with social overthrows and with politics, becoming express adherents of purely pacific means and propa-

ganda. But the postulation of the socialist idea was the same in all of them; basically, it was only a scheme, the vision of an ingenious mind who prescribes its realisation to suffering humanity, for the purpose of rescuing it from the hell of the bourgeois social order.

Thus, in spite of all the power of their criticism and the magic of their futurist ideas, these socialist ideas remained without any noticeable influence on the real movements and struggles of the times.

With a handful of friends, Babeuf perished in the counter-revolutionary tidal wave, without leaving a trace, other than a short, shining inscription on the pages of revolutionary history. Saint-Simon and Fourier succeeded in establishing sects of enthusiastic and talented followers who - having sown rich and fertile seeds of social ideas, criticism and experiments - went their separate ways, looking for greener pastures. Of them all, Owen gained the greatest hold on the proletarian masses, but, after having attracted an elite group of English workers in the 1830s and 1840s, his influence also vanishes with hardly a trace.

A new generation of socialist leaders emerged in the 1840s: Weitling in Germany, Proudhon, Louis Blanc, Blanqui in France. The working class itself had

begun to take up the struggle against the clutches of capital; the class struggle had been initiated by the revolts of the silk weavers of Lyons in France, by the Chartist movement in England. However, there existed no direct link between the spontaneous movements of the exploited masses and the various socialist theories.

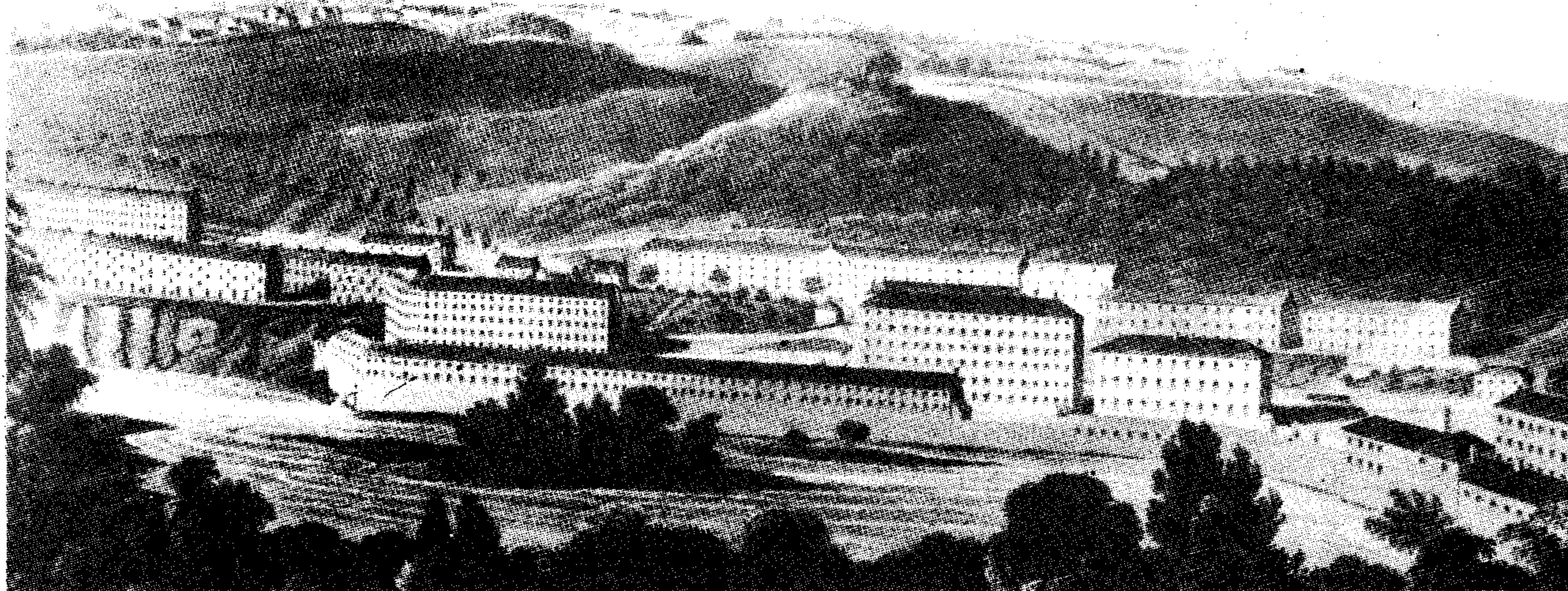
The proletarian masses in revolt did not have a socialist goal in view, nor did the socialist theoreticians attempt to base their ideas on the political struggle of the working class. Their socialism was to be instituted by certain cunningly devised artifices, like Proudhon's People's Bank or Louis Blanc's productive associations.

The only socialist who looked on the political struggle as an end towards the realisation of the social revolution was Blanqui; this made him the only representative of the proletariat and of its revolutionary class interests at the time. But, basically, even his socialism was only a scheme - attainable at will - as the fruition of the iron determination of a revolutionary minority and the outcome of a sudden coup d'etat carried through by the same minority.

The year 1848 was to be the high point and also the critical moment for the old socialism of all varieties. The Parisian proletariat, influenced by the tradition



a trade union demonstration in Manchester, 1874



New Lanark — Robert Owen's "island of socialism"

of preceding revolutionary struggles, agitated by the various socialist systems, passionately espoused some nebulous notions about a just social order. As soon as the bourgeois kingdom of Louis Philippe had been overthrown, the Parisian workers utilised the favourable relationship of forces to demand the realisation of the 'social republic' and a new 'division of labour' from the terrified bourgeoisie.

The provisional government was granted the famous three months period of grace for complying with these demands; and for three months the workers starved and waited, while the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie secretly armed themselves and prepared to crush the workers. The period of grace ended with the memorable June massacre in which the ideal of a 'social republic', attainable at will at any time, was drowned in the blood of the Parisian proletariat. The revolution of 1848 did not institute the reign of social equality, but rather the political domination of the bourgeoisie and an unforeseen growth of capitalist exploitation under the Second Empire.

Foundation

But, at the same time, while socialism of the old stripe seemed to be buried forever under the smashed barricades of the June insurrection, the socialist idea was placed on a completely new foundation by Marx and Engels. Neither of the latter two looked for arguments in favour of socialism in the moral depravity of the existing social order, nor did they try to smuggle social equality into the country by means of inventing new and tempting schemes. They turned to the examination of the economic relations of society.

There, in the very laws of capitalist anarchy, Marx discovered the real substantiation of socialist aspirations. While the French and English classicists of economics had discovered the laws according to which capitalist economy lives and grows, Marx continued their work a half century later, starting where they had left off. He discovered how these same laws regulating the present economy work towards its collapse, by the increasing anarchy which more and more endangers the very existence of society itself, by assembling a chain of devastating economic and political catastrophes.

As Marx demonstrated, the inherent tendencies of capitalist development, at a certain point of their maturity, necessitate the transition to a planful mode of production consciously organised by the entire working force of society — in order that all of society and of human civilisation might not perish in the convulsions of uncontrolled anarchy. And this fateful hour is hastened by capital, at an ever-increasing rate, by mobilising its future gravediggers, the proletarians, in ever greater numbers, by extending its domination to all countries of the globe, by establishing a chaotic world economy, and by laying the foundation for the solidarity of the proletariat of all countries into one revolutionary world power which shall sweep aside the class rule of capital.

Socialism ceased being a scheme, a pretty fancy, or an experiment carried out in each country by isolated groups of workers, each on its own hook. As the common political programme of action for the entire international proletariat, socialism becomes a historic necessity, because it is the result of the operation of the very laws of capitalist development.

It should be apparent by now why Marx put his own economic teachings outside the pale of official economics, and named them *A Critique of Political Economy*. The laws of capitalist anarchy and of its future collapse which were

developed by Marx are only the logical continuation of the science of economics as it had been created by the bourgeois scholars, but a continuation which, in its final conclusions, is in polar opposition to the point of departure of the wise men of the bourgeoisie.

The Marxian doctrine is a child of bourgeois economics, but its birth cost the mother's life. In Marxist theory, economics found its perfection, but also its end as a science. What will follow — apart from the elaboration of Marxist theory in details — is only the metamorphosis of this theory into action, i.e. the struggle of the international proletariat for the institution of the socialist economic order. The consummation of economics as a science constitutes a world-historic task: its application in organising a planful world economy. The last chapter of economics will be the social revolution of the world proletariat.

The special bond between economics and the modern working class is shown to be a reciprocal relation. If, on the one hand, the science of economics, as it was perfected by Marx, is, more than any other science, the indispensable basis of proletarian enlightenment, then, on the other hand, the class conscious proletariat is the only receptive audience these days capable of understanding the teachings of scientific economics.

With the crumbling ruins of the old feudal society still before their eyes, the Quesnays and Boisguilleberts of France, the Adam Smiths and Ricardos of England surveyed the young bourgeois order with pride and enthusiasm, and with faith in the coming millennium of the bourgeoisie and its 'natural' social harmony, without trepidation, they permitted their eagle eyes to scan the depths of the economic laws of capitalism.

But the growing impact of the proletarian class struggle, and especially the June insurrection of the Parisian proletariat, has long since destroyed the faith of bourgeois society in its own godlikeness. Since it has eaten of the tree of knowledge and learned about modern class contradictions, the bourgeoisie abhors the classic nakedness in which the creators of its own classical political economy once depicted it, for all the world to see. The bourgeoisie became conscious of the fact that the spokesmen of the modern proletariat had forged their deadly weapons from the arsenal of classical political economy.

Deaf ears

Thus, it has come about that for decades not only has socialist economics preached to the deaf ears of the propertied classes, but bourgeois economics, to the extent that it once was a real science, has done the same. Unable to comprehend the teachings of their own great forebears, and even less able to accept Marxist teachings which flowed from them and which, moreover, sound the deathknell for bourgeois society, the bourgeois professors serve up a tasteless stew made from the leftovers of a hodge-podge of scientific notions and intentional circumlocutions — not intending to explore the real tendencies of capitalism. On the contrary, they try only to send up a smoke screen for the purpose of defending capitalism as the best of all economic orders, and the only possible one.

Forgotten and forsaken by bourgeois society, scientific economics can find its listeners only among class-conscious proletarians, to find among them not only theoretical understanding but also concomitant action. The famous saying of Lassalle is applicable first and foremost to economics: "When science and the workers, these two opposite poles of society, shall embrace, they shall crush in their arms all social obstacles".

Brief Glossary

BABEUF (1760-97): LEADER OF THE Conspiracy of Equals, which in 1795-6 attempted to organise an uprising to introduce a communist society in France. He based himself on the aspirations to equality proclaimed by the French Revolution, and its inability to realise them. He was arrested and guillotined before the uprising could take place.

BLANQUI (1805-81): a continuator of Babeuf who in the course of his long revolutionary career moved closer to the class-struggle socialism of Marx. Scorned utopian schemes; looked to class struggle and political action (the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' comes from Blanquism); but still tended to see the conspiratorial organisation of an armed uprising as central to winning socialism.

SAINT-SIMON (1760-1825): coined the idea of socialism involving the transition from the government of people to the administration of things and the organisation of production, i.e. the abolition of repressive state authority. But he identified the working class as including both workers and employers — as against the parasitic aristocrats.

FOURIER (1772-1837): advocated socialist communities, in which work would become attractive rather than oppressive. The first to argue that "in any given society the degree of women's emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation".

OWEN (1771-1858): advocated worker cooperatives and 'labour money' to ensure fair exchange. Stressed, like Saint-Simon, that economic circumstances determine views, habits and character. Marx commented on this view that it "forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating. Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one is superior to society". Owen spent time trying to persuade aristocrats and princes to sponsor his socialist communities.

WEITLING (1808-71): preached a sort of Christian socialism, but advocated revolution. Tended to look to the unemployed and semi-proletarians rather than the working class proper.

PROUDHON (1809-65): advocated a society of worker cooperatives linked by 'fair exchange' (and without a state). Very influential among radical French workers in his time.

LOUIS BLANC (1811-82): also advocated cooperatives, but looked to constitutional action and government measures to introduce them.

QUESNAY, BOISGUILEBERT, ADAM SMITH, RICARDO: early bourgeois economists.

LASSALLE (1825-64): founder of the German workers' movement. Marx was at one time friendly with him, but later clashed with him politically.

1848: In this year, revolutions — aiming mainly for democracy and national liberation or unity — swept continental Europe. They were from one angle a reassertion of the ideals of the French Revolution against the reactionary settlement imposed on Europe after the final defeat of France at Waterloo. But the working class also came forward with its specific demands — especially in Paris, where on June 23-26 1848 workers demanding the right to work clashed violently with the republican government that had only in February ousted the monarchy of Louis Philippe.

Louis Philippe's was called the 'bourgeois monarchy', in contrast to the Bourbon regime that it had replaced in 1830, because of its close links with big bankers and industrialists. The Second Empire was the name given to the rule of Louis Bonaparte (nephew of the first Napoleon), who overthrew the republican government in 1852.



Who was Karl Marx?

KARL MARX was born into a middle-class family in Trier, west Prussia, in 1818. Going to university, he was soon drawn into the radical democratic politics of the day.

Germany was at the time divided into many kingdoms and principalities; the most powerful was Prussia, whose territories were mainly in eastern Germany but also included parts of the Rhineland in the west, and was ruled on a highly bureaucratic and militarist monarchic system. The working class was small, but Marx was impressed by an uprising of the weavers in Silesia (east Prussia) in 1844, and influenced by his contacts with radical workers in Paris, where he went in 1843-4. In Paris he also met Frederick Engels.

He became a communist. At the time, as Engels wrote later, 'socialist' meant utopian or social quack, "in both cases, people who stood outside the labour movement and who looked for support rather to the 'educated' classes. The section of the working class, however, which demanded a radical reconstruction of society, convinced that mere political revolutions were not enough, then called itself *Communist*... And since we were very decidedly of the opinion as early as then that 'the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself', we could have no hesitations as to which of the two names we should choose".

Marx was banished from Paris in 1845, and went to Brussels, where he continued discussions and activity with the communist groups of the time and also, with Engels, worked out his theoretical ideas. In spring 1847 Marx and Engels joined the Communist League — an international (mainly German/French) organisation of the Babeuf/Blanqui stamp. Within it, they fought against conspiratorial, sectarian socialism; for it, Marx wrote the Communist Manifesto (1848).

Marx took an active part in the revolutions of 1848, mainly in Cologne (west Prussia); on the basis of that activity, and his analysis of the 1848 events in France, Marx further developed his political views in writings such as 'The 18th Brumaire' (1852).

He was banished from Germany in 1849, and went into exile in London. First he tried to reorganise and reorient the Communist League, but soon decided to concentrate on his theoretical work.

By 1857-9 he had developed the main ideas of his great work, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy', and written a rough draft.

He returned to practical activity from 1864, when the International Working Men's Association — the First International — was initiated by English and French trade unionists. The International drew in all the scattered socialist sects of the time — Proudhonists and Blanquists in France, anarchists (followers of Mikhail Bakunin) in Spain and Italy, Owenites in Britain, etc. — as well as not-very-radical British trade unionists. Marx fought to educate and organise the movement on the basis of class politics. In this period also he finished and published 'Capital' volume 1 (1867).

In 1871 the defeat of France in war with Prussia led to the workers seizing power in Paris for nine months. For the First International Marx wrote a rousing defence of the Commune: "Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society" — but the International collapsed under the pressure of the official witch-hunt that following the crushing of the Paris workers.

The last ten years of Marx's life were dogged by ill-health, and he was unable to finish 'Capital'. (Five further volumes were prepared for publication from his drafts after his death, by Engels and Karl Kautsky). He died in 1883. It was after his death that mass Marxist workers' parties developed in Europe, along with the rapid extension of large-scale capitalist industry.

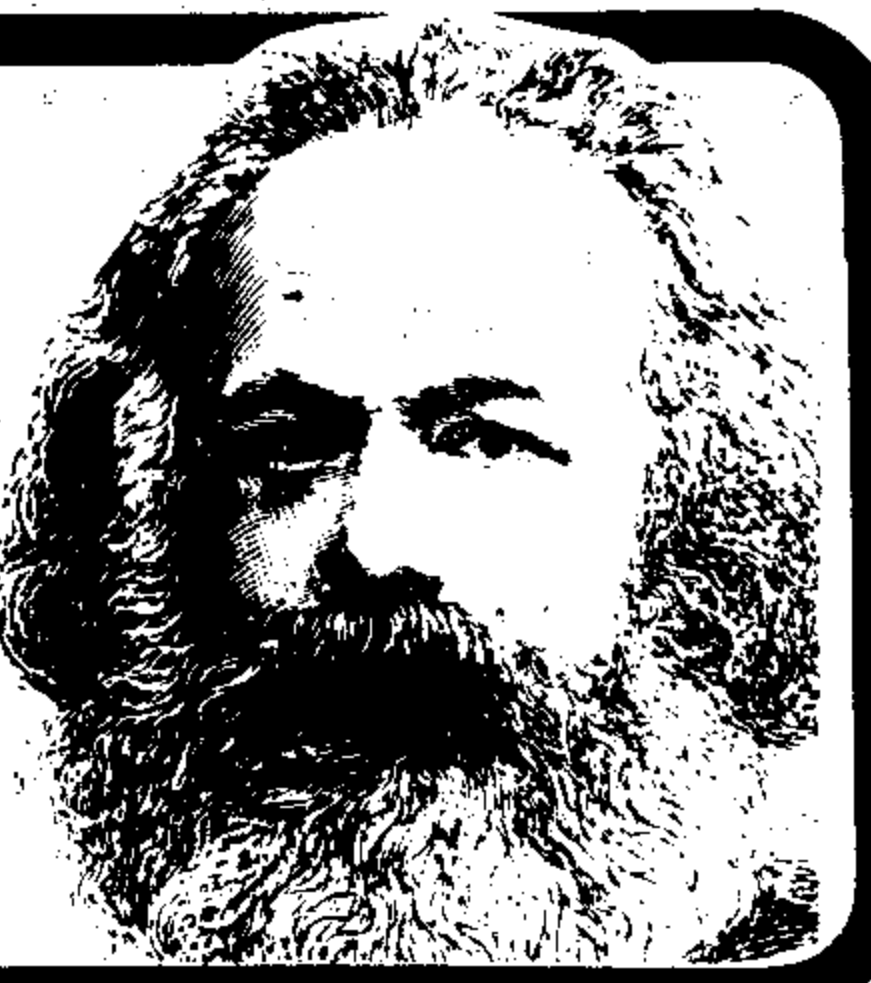
WHAT TO READ: David Ryazanov's book, 'Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels', is short, readable, not expensive, and vivid. Ryazanov was the Bolshevik party's main expert on Marx's life and work, and the book is based on classes he did for Bolshevik party members.

Franz Mehring's 'Karl Marx' is the other classic biography. Mehring was a close comrade of Rosa Luxemburg in the left wing of the German Social Democratic Party and the internationalist opposition to World War 1, and two chapters are contributed by Luxemburg. The main drawback of Mehring's book is its price (£7.95), but many libraries have copies.

David McLellan's 'Karl Marx' is written not by a revolutionary but by a professor. It is however clear and competent: it has the advantage over Ryazanov and Mehring that it deals with some of Marx's writings that were not published until the 1930s.

Of Marx's own writings — 'Capital' volume 1 is by no means as difficult as is often said, though chapter 1 is not easy. 'Wage Labour and Capital' and 'Wages Price and Profit' are short summaries of his main economic ideas. The Communist Manifesto and 'The Poverty of Philosophy' (where Marx explained his basic outlook and method, in a polemic against Proudhon written in 1846) are also especially important. 'Anti-Duhring', by Engels, is a summary of the whole theory; 'Socialism Utopian and Scientific' is an excerpt from 'Anti-Duhring' published separately as a pamphlet.

Marx Centenary Socialist Organiser Special



Marxism v Stalinism (from front page)

even 'fascist' — opposition to the 'Marxist' line of the bureaucrats.

The 'theory' of socialism in one country heralded the practical abandonment of the struggle for international revolution. From 1924 onwards the leaderships of the Communist International and the main Communist Parties were purged from above by the Stalinists, to replace their potential opponents and supporters of Trotsky with loyal adherents to the new, official 'Marxism'.

In place of the development of revolutionary, proletarian leaderships, there came the cultivation of pliable place-men and diplomatic relations with 'left' bureaucrats such as those in the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee in Britain (who sold out the 1926 General Strike) and with the 'anti-imperialist' Chinese nationalist leader Chiang Kai Shek, who ordered the literal decapitation of the Chinese Communists in 1927.

Cynical

In place of Lenin's subordination of the national to the international revolution, the Stalinists chopped and changed the politics of the Communist International in line with the national requirements of the Kremlin bureaucrats. Thus the 1928-34 'Third Period' of crash industrialisation and enforced collectivisation was characterised *internationally* as a period of 'class against class', in which CPs were pushed into abandonment of the early Comintern's tactic of the united front, and took up wild sectarian denunciations of social democratic leaders and their rank and file as 'social fascists' — a policy which divided the working class and opened the door for Hitler's rise to power in Germany.

The shifting needs of Soviet diplomacy, now fully committed to deals and alliances with capitalist governments, brought a similarly abrupt and arbitrary shift of the line of the Comintern in 1935, to adopt the tactic of the 'Popular Front' of Communists with social democrats and so-called 'progressive' sections of the bourgeoisie against fascism. This policy, accompanied by the cynical manoeuvres of the Kremlin, eventually brought the defeat of the Spanish working class by Franco in 1939.

And while show trials and mass imprisonment hounded and murdered Trotskyists as 'fascists' in the Soviet Union, Stalin himself was moving towards an attempted accommodation with the high priest of fascism, Adolf Hitler, signed in 1939.

Each of these actions was explained and rationalised in phrases which almost seem designed to parody Marxism, and took place at the hands of a leadership formally committed to 'Marxism' as official state ideology.



Stalin

In the same period emerged a whole generation of new forces — not all of them cynical careerists, some being honest militants miseducated by the official pronouncements and by the practical actions of the Stalinist bureaucracy, but destined just the same to carry forward Stalinist politics into the post-war period.

Marx's doctrine of the class struggle as a continuing international struggle was replaced by theories of class collaboration and compromises with national chauvinism. Marx's insistence upon the need not to reform but to *smash* the capitalist state apparatus and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat was supplanted in the western CPs by notions of 'peaceful' parliamentary roads to socialism, while the post-war Stalinist bureaucracies have interpreted the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as the ruthless suppression of all forms of political opposition by a dictatorial police/military apparatus installed *over* the working class.

Marx's conception of the leading role of the working class to complete the struggle even for democratic demands, drawn from the experiences of the 1848 revolutions, and developed by Lenin in the struggle for the October revolution, has been ousted in favour of the Stalinist notion of the 'two stage' revolution in economically backward countries, in which workers should in the first 'stage' subordinate their demands to the politics of bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalists.

Privileges

And Marx's very definitions of communism and socialism have been stood on their heads in efforts to rationalise the nationalistic policies, and actions of the bureaucracy, while the backward Soviet economy — for all its advances since 1917 — still lags painfully behind the developed economies in the West.

Workers in the Stalinist states are not so easily taken in by such propaganda: this is one reason why the bureaucrats dare not trust to their 'Marxist' ideology, but maintain a vast police/military apparatus to repress the working class, and a Party machinery which rests not on the revolutionary commitment of its members but upon the material privileges and power on offer to the holders of a 'Communist Party' card.

Hence in the 'Soviet Union', the soviets as organs of actual workers' democracy have not now operated for 60 years. And behind obscene professions of 'Marxist' orthodoxy, cynical bureaucrats use brute force where — as in East Germany 1953, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, and Poland, 1970, 1976, and 1980-1 — the working class shows signs of asserting its independent strength.

Cliches

Just as the capitalists and imperialists use the once revolutionary banners of 'freedom' and 'democracy' to mask their brutal enslavement of the mass of workers and peasants to a lifetime of exploitation and poverty, so generations of Stalinist bureaucrats the world over have come to use the clichés of a neutered 'Marxism' to cover their betrayal and containment of the international workers movement.

The retrieval of the revolutionary spirit of Marx, Engels and Lenin is a task that now falls to Trotskyists in the struggle to build a new proletarian leadership capable of leading the overthrow of capitalist property relations in the West and the political overthrow of the degenerate Stalinist gangsters in the hideously deformed workers' states.



May Day in Petrograd, 1917

Leading backwards

By Martin Thomas

In A cruel twist of history, Stalinism has not only misled thousands of militants into mistaking bureaucratic manipulation of the working class for 'Marxist leadership', police-state repression for working class self-discipline, but also given a new lease of life to pre-Marxist socialism.

Marx commented on the 'social democrats' of the 1840s that they "want all the advantages of modern social conditions without the struggles and the dangers necessarily resulting therefrom. They desire the existing state of society minus its revolutionary and disintegrating elements... By changes in the material conditions of existence, this form of Socialism... by no means understands abolition of bourgeois relations of production, an abolition that can be effected only by a revolution, but administrative reforms, based on the continued existence of these relations..."

By the early 20th century Rosa Luxemburg could confidently assert that the working class had outgrown such ideas. But the same sort of ideas now dominate most of the world's most powerful and organised working classes.

The spine-crushing, mind-numbing methods of Stalinism — and the defeats which they helped bring about — demoralised and scattered the most thoughtful, educated and militant workers. The political and theoretical culture developed over decades was pulverised and corrupted.

As young militants have come forward from new struggles, social democracy has seemed to them to be the 'democratic' alternative to Stalinism. And for some decades, after World War 2, it seemed to produce tangible results, too, in the form of reforms in the conditions

of the working class.

A delay in revolution elsewhere created the conditions for the degeneration of the USSR; and that degeneration, in turn, led to a massive regression of the world workers' movement, and further delay for socialism.

In the Third World, the 'Marxism' of the Stalinist bureaucrats has been co-opted by bourgeois nationalists, who use it to channel the working class into the role of foot-soldiers for the construction

of national state capitalisms.

Many of the ideological battles fought by Marx and Engels have to be fought over again — and under conditions where the opponent ideologies have powerful organisations and bureaucracies within the workers' movement.

But the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatuses. And the heritage of defeat is being thrown off. Genuine Marxism is reviving in the workers' movement.

Socialist Organiser Alliance

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Name

Address



Norwood's line explained...

While Islington Central and Hammersmith North CLPs have refused to recognise the expulsion of Militant EB members, Norwood Labour Party - the other CLP involved - has voted to 'note' the expulsion. The CLP secretary has circulated this letter to the left press.



Ted Knight

Dear comrade,
The Norwood Labour Party regardless of major differences with Militant on such issues as the Falklands war, Ireland, Palestine and women's rights, has firmly opposed the witch-hunt of Labour Party members associated with that paper.
Yet at the Greater London Labour Party Regional Conference we experienced an insidious smear campaign of lies and distortion directed against our CLP, and particularly against our chairperson, Ted Knight. This reached the gutter level of delegates being told in behind the scenes

discussions that Ted has 'moved the expulsions of Militant members from the Labour Party', and that Norwood was backing the witch-hunt.
The position of Norwood Labour Party is, clearly spelled out in our letter to the NEC dated March 2 1982 which is reproduced below:
The Norwood Labour Party GMC meeting on March 1, in noting your letter of February 24 recorded its total opposition to the expulsions of comrades Doyle and Walsh, and also to that of comrades Dickenson, Grant and Taffe.
It calls on the NEC to

reverse this decision, and to end the witch-hunt against members of the Labour Party associated with the Militant paper.
It is the view of the Norwood Labour Party that the 1982 Annual Conference did not give the authority to expel such members and notes that the letter from the General Secretary does not indicate under which rule the action has been taken. We therefore insist on an answer to this question.
The Norwood Labour Party has had bitter experiences of similar witch-hunts in the 1950s and 1960s, and know that such

actions are politically damaging and electorally counter-productive.
The Norwood Labour Party is committed to campaigning within the Labour Party and the trades unions to reinstate the expelled members. Likewise, we will campaign to reverse the decision on the 'Register' and any attempt to reintroduce 'bans and proscriptions'.
A meeting between the officers of Islington Central, Hammersmith North and Norwood has already been arranged to plan a joint campaign for the reinstatement of the expelled members, and the support

of other CLPs and trade union branches will be sought.
The enthusiasm with which the Tory press greeted Ted Knight's removal from the Regional Executive Committee is a tribute to both him and the Norwood Labour Party, but regrettably is a boost to the right-wing majority on the NEC.
We suggest that all our energies should now be directed to stopping the witch-hunt and to reinstating those expelled.
Yours fraternally,
Ken Phipp
PARTY SECRETARY

... and challenged by expelled Militant supporters

Militant editorial board members Clare Doyle and Lynn Walsh have replied, calling on the CLP to reconsider.

Dear Comrade,
We are writing to the Executive of Norwood Labour Party following the decision of the General Management Committee on March 1 to 'note' our expulsion from the Labour Party. We also wish to reply to the letter, dated March 7, which you sent to 'Militant' and presumably to other papers.
As Norwood CLP's policies had previously been one of strong opposition to the right-wing's witch-hunt against 'Militant' and in view of repeated statements by representatives of the Executive that Norwood CLP would stand firm against expulsions, we are surprised and shocked by the GMC's decision to 'note' the NEC's instructions to delete our names from the party's membership list. This is, in reality, a shame-faced way of accepting our expulsions.

Rushed through

It is very disturbing that the Executive's proposal to reverse its policy and merely to 'note' our expulsions was rushed through the GMC without any notice and before the issue could be discussed in the Branches and affiliated trade unions. We recognise, however, that to their great credit a significant minority of GMC delegates voted to reject our expulsions, and we would like to thank them for their support.

We were also surprised and disturbed that the officers of the party, despite our approaches, were not prepared to consult us in any way about



Left: Keith Dickenson - Hammersmith North won't recognise his expulsion. Right: Clare Doyle, Lynn Walsh - Norwood 'notes' their expulsion



the expulsions or the CLP's proposed reaction.
In contrast to Islington Central CLP and Hammersmith North CLP, which are refusing to accept the expulsions of Peter Taaffe, Ted Grant and Keith Dickinson, Norwood's decision can only weaken the campaign to reverse the five expulsions and defeat the witch-hunt.

We would therefore ask the Executive and the GMC to consider the issue further and to discuss firm action based on a refusal to accept our expulsions.

We enclose a statement which we have drawn up, and we request that it is circulated to all Norwood GMC delegates prior to further discussion (we will provide copies).

It is to be hoped that the Executive of the newly reorganised Norwood Party, in spite of comments by some present EC members, will not attempt to hide behind the old CLP's Standing Order 19, which rules out further discussion on a motion which has been voted on for three months. If the motion passed at the March 1 GMC really means what it says, that the NEC's decision is 'noted', this should not in any way rule out a discussion of further, more resolute action in line with Norwood's previous

policy.
We would also like to take up some of the comments in your letter to the press of March 7, and answer the allegations which, by implication, could be taken to be aimed at 'Militant' supporters.

We are not aware of any allegations that members of Norwood EC or Ted Knight personally have 'moved expulsions of Militant members from the Labour Party' or have backed the witch-hunt, and we have certainly never implied anything of the kind. We do not believe that anyone in Norwood CLP welcomes our expulsions.

Capitulation

However, we have strongly argued that 'notes' really means 'accepts', and this, in practice, means capitulation without a fight. Norwood CLP's renewed declaration that it will campaign to reverse the expulsions is completely undermined by not taking the expected action of refusing to accept expulsions.

The Militant Editorial Board have never advocated a policy of deliberately provoking the disbandment of CLP's. We disassociated ourselves from those who, at the beginning of the battle, began irres-

pensibly to talk of disbandment as if they were courting such an outcome. But we were certainly not advocating that expulsions should be accepted without a fight.

Campaign

The response of the right-wing dominated NEC to a rejection of the expulsions, and whether or not the NEC can get away with closing down Norwood, Islington Central and Hammersmith North CLPs, will depend on the strength of the campaign of CLPs and Trade Unions against expulsions and the witch-hunt. When the GMC discussed the issue on March 1 there was no threat of disbandment or any other action by the NEC.

If and when the CLP faces the threat of disbandment, Norwood can decide how to deal with such a threat. We believe, however, that the witch-hunt can be defeated by a determined fight. Today is not the 1950s and 1960s, when the Gaitskillite right completely dominated the party. The overwhelming majority of CLPs and an increasing number of active trade unionists are totally opposed to any attempt to trample on the democratic rights of CLPs.

A determined fight does

not 'play into the hands of the right'. It is capitulation without a fight which will strengthen the right, and could encourage the right-wing NEC to intervene even more boldly against left-wing parties.

You say that Ted Knight's removal from the Regional Executive in the elections held at the Greater London Labour Party Annual Meeting on March 5/6 is 'a boost to the right wing on the NEC'. We would point out, however, that the conference remained firm in its commitment to left-wing policies; re-elected an overwhelmingly left-wing regional executive; and passed a resolution condemning the five expulsions by 469,000 to 254,000.

Defeated

A resolution calling for the three CLPs to refuse to accept expulsions was fairly narrowly defeated, by 400,500 votes to 338,000. The Regional Executive recommended support, and the great majority of constituency delegates voted for this resolution but it was defeated on the strength of the trade union block votes.

In relation to Ted Knight's failure to be re-elected to the Regional Executive, we can only

assume, in the light of other Conference decisions, that the glaring contrast between Ted's earlier bold opposition to the witch-hunt and his present refusal to advocate decisive action was one factor which led many delegates not to support him.

We notice that at the beginning of your letter to the press you refer to Norwood's firm opposition to the witch-hunt against Militant 'regardless of major differences with Militant on such issues as the Falklands war, Ireland, Palestine and women's rights'. This comment is puzzling in that, while the GMC has undoubtedly passed resolutions on these questions, there are nevertheless many differences within Norwood CLP and there can hardly be said to be a hard-and-fast, unified line on all these questions.

You might also have mentioned Militant's opposition to Lambeth Labour Group's decisions to sell council houses, to raise rents, and to attempt to avoid cuts through imposing massive rate increases on working-class rate-payers. These measures have undoubtedly contributed significantly to the party's poor showing in recent elections and the alarming rise in resignations among Norwood

CLP's working-class membership on the estates. As you know, Militant supporters have consistently argued for a strategy based on mobilisation of a mass movement of opposition to the Tory government, on the basis of no cuts, no rent increases, and no massive rate rises to compensate for cuts in the central-government grants. After beginning such a fight in 1979, Lambeth Council Labour Group then retreated prematurely.

These are all issues on which there will inevitably be argument and debate. We believe, however, that on the issue of our expulsions we should be able, now the crunch has come, to rely on Norwood CLP's firm backing. We are both Labour Party members of 19 years standing, and we work for a socialist paper which has always campaigned for the return of a Labour government and the implementation of Labour's programme. Militant, unlike some papers and groups in the past, has no intention of allowing itself to be separated from the Labour Party.

Effective action

The firm action clearly required by the present situation is refusal to accept our expulsions. We agree that 'all our energies should be now directed to stopping the witch-hunt and to reinstating those expelled'. We therefore urge you again to back up your denunciations of the witch-hunt with concrete proposals for immediate, effective action.

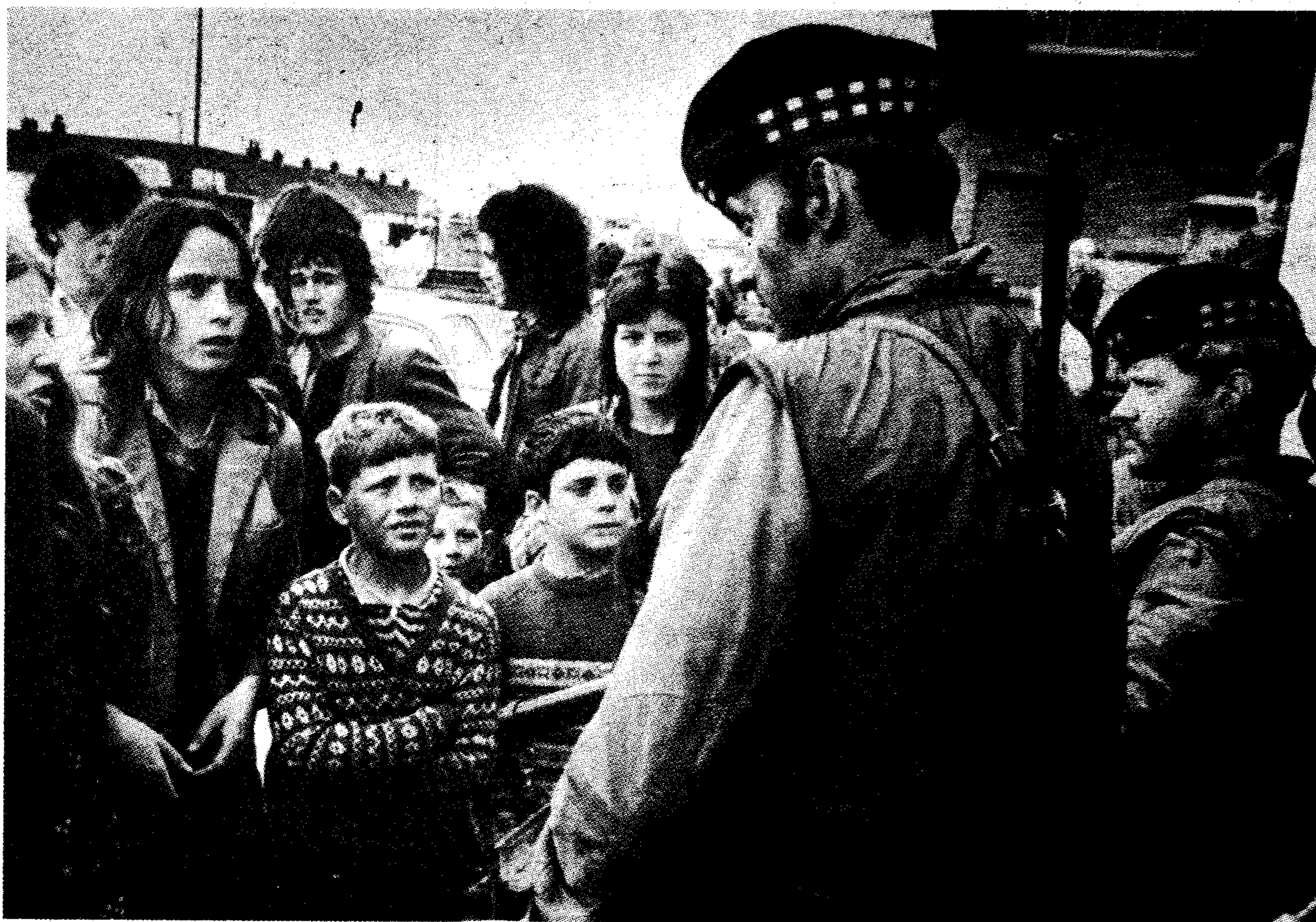
When the working class is faced with the most reactionary Tory government since the 1930s, our over-riding task should be to unite the party membership around a fight for socialist policies, the defeat of the Tory-SDP/Liberal enemy, and the return of a majority Labour government committed to the implementation of a socialist programme.

Yours fraternally,
Clare Doyle
Lynn Walsh

British Labour and a united Ireland



In the first part of this interview, last week, Clive Soley, the Labour Party's deputy spokesperson on Northern Ireland, explained Party policy and his own views. The second part, this week, covers some of the issues raised. Next week: a commentary by the interviewers, Jonathan Hammond and John O'Mahony



"The Catholics, for very understandable reasons, don't trust the security forces..."

JO'M: What do you think of the fact that the Unionists seem to be divided into only three political trends: those who want Northern Ireland independence, those who want something like the old system of Protestant rule, and those who want integration with Britain?

CS: I wouldn't define them in that way. I'm looking for those who vote Unionist because there is nothing else for them to vote but who realise that things can't stay as they are, that there have got to be changes, and you have got to make concessions.

They are not going to be your party activists, by any stretch of the imagination. The vast bulk of those will be opposed to what I am saying — very opposed, regardless. The Northern Ireland Labour Party is just as opposed to me as the Democratic Unionists (Paisley) and the Official Unionists.

Margaret Thatcher's unemployment has probably done more to make the sort of policies that I am talking about make sense to some of the people than almost anything else. Harland and Woolf five years ago would have eaten grass rather than take orders from the South. Now they will consider taking orders from the South. You know what the difference is in Harland and Woolf and what the impact is.

I'm after the bulk of people who are not deeply involved in the political process, and who desperately want economic and political stability, and are prepared to move.

JH: In Britain recently there has been a mobilisation of racist anti-Irish feeling. You can see it in the right wing of the

Tory party saying that votes should be taken away from Irish citizens. And the outcry against Ken Livingstone inviting over representatives of Provisional Sinn Féin highlighted some of the anti-Irish feeling that exists. How will the next Labour government deal with anti-Irish feeling over here?

CS: The party in the House of Commons is very strongly opposed to any nonsense like taking the vote from Irish people, and is generally aware of the dangers of that sort of racist feeling.

But the danger to the sort of policy I'm outlining doesn't come from the Parliamentary Labour Party, as some people think. It actually comes from the bulk of the labour movement. The further north you go in Britain, there are within the trade union movement very deep Protestant feelings.

I understand this. It is one of the prob-

lems I face, and I think the party doesn't always face up to it generally — that the unionists are to some extent supported by attitudes within the labour movement here. That, frankly, is a bigger danger to my policy than just anti-Irish feeling generally. That will always be around while there are bombings and so on.

The fact is that we have imposed the problem on the Irish, and we ought to face up to our responsibility. I get quite a good response to that from MPs. It's not necessarily so good in some sections of the labour movement.

JO'M: One view of what's happened since, say, the Labour government was returned in 1964, would be that pressure by that government on the Orange state for reforms simply exacerbated the situation and made it more explosive. You had the Orange backlash, the destruction of the old political system because of

the incapacity of people like O'Neill, Chichester Clark, etc. to lead the masses of Protestants. Britain acted timidly all the way through. It simply stirred up the antagonism, and then, when it came to the crunch in 1974, backed away from the Protestant general strike.

Desirable as some of the things in your policy might be, they are all skirting the problem, all avoid tackling it head-on — particularly, I would say, your commitment to a majority within the artificial Six Counties.

It could be argued that you are merely going to exacerbate the situation instead of tackling it head-on — by, for example, a decision to get out, a declaration of intent to get out, an energetic attempt to reach an agreement with the Republic about restructuring, and British payment of all sorts of indemnities or whatever you want to call them.

CS: It's surprising you should say that. The picture you describe is not different from what I've been saying except that you are saying in some way you do it without consent.

JO'M: No.

CS: My question back to you is, what happens in a new Irish state if the unionists fight?

JO'M: I think you could not coerce the unionists. Quite certainly you would have to have a federal Ireland and give them rights over their own affairs. The thing is that a British Labour govern-

ment could create the political conditions for change by a declaration of intent to withdraw; by really energetic determination to change the whole structure and framework to make some form of a united Ireland realistic politics for the Protestants — give them options where they would have an incentive to accept change.

CD: I haven't ruled out any of that.

JO'M: But if you start by accepting the majority's rights within the artificial entity, then you are in fact saying to them: "We'll always let you veto us".

CS: No, I'm not saying that at all. All I'm saying, very clearly, is that what we'll do is first have talks with the Dublin government — whatever government it happens to be — to set up new economic and social institutions, and we do not allow them to veto that.

I've already indicated that, obviously, governments can get pressurised and deflected if the pressure is strong enough. That's where the political skill comes in.

There would be a major effort not to allow any group or any individual to veto those things that were agreed by London and Dublin. In effect what I'm saying is: Yes, we are giving a strong commitment to get out. We are not setting a date. I think, as I've said, a commitment to getting out is not a policy for a united Ireland — it might be that the real policy is to have a commitment to a united Ireland, and that's what I'm saying. You yourself say we can't do it by coercion. Therefore we have got to do it by consent. But you don't allow them to veto the political process.

JO'M: How would a new Labour government treat the Catholics?

CS: Better!

JO'M: For example, it was a Tory government which granted political status as part of an attempt to find a new solution after Bloody Sunday (when 13 unarmed men were shot dead in Derry, on January 30 1972). A Labour government took it away. You still seem to be committed to a policy that would involve a continual harassment of a big section of the Catholic population.

CS: I would hope things like the Prevention of Terrorism Act can go, and that we would have a major review of the Emergency Provisions Act. I would want to have a whole look at human rights issues there, like the delay in getting death certificates and coroners' reports on children killed by plastic bullets, and all sorts of other things like that.

That won't come about quickly. The Catholics, for very understandable reasons, don't trust the security forces, and it's very difficult to change that quickly. I mean, I'd like to change it tomorrow morning.

We'll make the forces be seen and felt to be totally impartial. I haven't got a magic wand that would do that. I have got a number of things in my mind, including an all-Ireland police force, that would help do that. But not overnight, I fear.

JH: What do you feel about restoring political status to Republican prisoners?

CS: I would not give political status. I've always been very opposed to political status, not least because as an ex probation officer I very strongly take the view that if you decide to lock people up for whatever reason then you should treat them equally, except on the grounds of security (i.e. a burglar doesn't get the

"I would want to have a look at human rights issues there, like the delay in getting death certificates and coroners' reports on children killed by plastic bullets... We'll make the forces be seen and felt to be totally impartial. I haven't got a magic wand that would do that..."



"The fact is that we have imposed the problem on the Irish..."

same sort of security as a mass murderer).

I think it is wrong in principle. The only justification for it would be under the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war, in which case you have got to have two states that have declared war on each other, both sides wearing recognisable uniforms.

One of the most dangerous things about political status for nationalists is that you also give it to Loyalists. If you do that, and you then have a united Ireland, you hand over a large number of Loyalist prisoners of war to the new state, which is the surest way I know of saying to the Loyalist people — you have a legitimate fight, you are entitled to prisoner of war status too, you have got it, and make sure you keep it.

I know that the unionists will be prepared to fight and kill and die themselves for their cause, as are the nationalists at present.

JO'M: But you accept that the Catholics have been oppressed terribly for 60 years at least. On what definition are the IRA straightforward criminals?

CS: They're not. Of course they're political, I'm not disputing that for a moment. But if we lock them up, that doesn't mean they should be treated differently.

You are saying that an ordinary criminal should be treated worse. As a penal reformer I reject that strongly. There is no reason why a so-called common criminal — personally I find the phrase very offensive — should be treated worse than you who committed your act for political reasons.

Secondly, what's political? If you are a young black in this country, you feel the police don't defend you, and you take out a brick in your pocket to defend yourself — is that political or not? I would argue it is political.

JO'M: So would I.

CS: Someone who goes shoplifting and says, 'I don't like the present structure of society in capitalism', is political.

JO'M: You're mixing up two questions, though. I'd be in favour of penal reform, and of recognising the political dimension in the case of the young black or the unemployed person shoplifting. But there is a qualitative difference between the political element in these things and the political army of an admittedly oppressed community, with grievances which — you admit — pose a united Ireland as the only solution, even if you disagree with their methods.

CS: That's not a reason for treating them differently. And certainly no reason for treating them better — which is the request.

JO'M: They are soldiers.

CS: If they are soldiers, then prisoner-of-war status comes from a very specific agreement. It is the Geneva agreement, which covers two states at war, and wearing a uniform when you are in combat. It's a dangerous policy because at the end of the day you'll wind up with a Loyalist prisoner-of-war camp in a united Ireland. If you want that, OK. But it's dangerous.

JO'M: The Geneva convention in its details is a product of established governments. We are talking about an oppressed people and their guerilla army, which does not wear a uniform because it is outnumbered and so on. But they are soldiers.

CS: By that definition, anyone who is fighting the British state as such, includ-

ing the Tartan Army in Scotland and the Welsh arsonists and the Angry Brigade, are soldiers. We give them political status, do we? What sort of status would you give them, and why treat them better?

JO'M: I think you are using the whole business about penal reform to obscure the qualitative difference. For example, the Catholics in 1969 did not have guns. The IRA offensive grew out of the civil rights movement in reaction to the Protestant backlash and the pogroms. Your picture about how the armed conflict developed is somewhat askew, because one of the earliest events was the British curfew in the Falls just after the Heath government was elected, in July 1970 — before the IRA offensive got under way. The whole chronology of how it developed shows that the IRA began as the defensive militia of the Catholic community.

CS: I think that people who pursue this line are, not intentionally, betraying socialist values. There is no reason to argue that people who are less articulate — the vast majority in your prisons are working-class people — don't in fact have political motives for what they do. Some of them act as organised groups like the Provisionals do. Obviously there is a qualitative difference. But that does not justify unequal treatment. If you want specific prisoner of war status, then two things follow: one, you must accept prisoner of war rules and regulations, under the Geneva Convention; two, to my mind more importantly, you must give PoW status to Loyalists too. You must take on board that you will hand over to a united Ireland political prisoners of war, and you are virtually saying to the rest of the unionist population that this legitimises their fight against the new Irish state.

JO'M: Isn't that the distant, or mid-

distant, future?

CS: I don't think so. I'm working as fast as possible on this programme. Although I'm not setting dates, I'm not writing it off as some distant future aim.

JO'M: You are using the 'unionist PoWs' argument and the political element in ordinary so-called criminal activity to obscure the actual problem, that the Provisional IRA is an army of an oppressed people.

CS: I've been working for good treatment in prisons for donkey's years — but I want it for everyone, not just one group.

JO'M: So you're in favour of a blanket reform in prisons.

CS: Yes. One of my positions from early on in the hunger and dirty protests was that if we had made such reforms, we would have had no problem — the five demands would have been met.

JO'M: So your policy in Northern Ireland will be to bring in a complete prison reform to include all sorts of rights for political and other prisoners?

CS: In fact Northern Ireland prisons are better than the ones here, which are appalling. If we could do more to liberalise prisons, I'd be very happy.

JO'M: You will in effect grant political status to all 'ordinary criminals' in Northern Ireland?

CS: No. You are twisting my words. I'm saying I want good conditions for prisoners, and I'm not prepared to distinguish as to why a person committed an offense or not.

JO'M: You are evading the actual point.

CS: I don't think so, but we'll have to leave it there.

JH: Thank you very much.



The Provisionals demonstrate. "I would not give political status... Of course they're political... But they shouldn't be treated differently..."

The Six Counties: Britain's wasteland

JOHN O'MAHONY reviews Panorama's feature on the Northern Ireland economy (Monday March 14).

CARRICKFERGUS is a town of 30,000 people not far from Belfast. It is mainly Protestant, and in the past has been one of the islands in the Protestant archipelago of industry and comparative prosperity dotted around the long-depressed economy of Northern Ireland. But in the last three years it has been devastated by the slump.

Synthetic fibre plants owned by Courtaulds and ICI have closed, wiping out 5,000 jobs. Last Monday's excellent Panorama report (by Peter Taylor) showed vast areas of empty factory space, unused, and under the capitalist system, unusable. There were shots of plant being dismantled — to be taken across the border and used in the 26 Counties. A bored-looking Orange band, the 'Carrick Defenders', practised playing the Orange triumphalist anthem, 'The Sash': 75% of them are unemployed.

Shots of Ian Paisley speaking in Carrickfergus: "All the jobs are gone." The centre of gravity had shifted to some as yet undefined part of Europe, away from London. Northern Ireland was now the periphery of the periphery, he added, with unmistakable implications of 'Protestant Ulster nationalism'.

In parts of Derry unemployment among heads of households is 70%. Derry's shirt factories for long employed women and girls, and produced a substantial social role reversal, with many more men than women unemployed and looking after the house and kids. Now even the shirt factories have closed. Courtaulds abandoned Derry in 1981, wiping out 1000 jobs.

Shots of a literacy class for Catholic teenagers, with the diary of hunger-striker Bobby Sands as text: their choice.

Carrickfergus and Derry are typical. Unemployment in Northern Ireland has doubled in the last five years, to over 20 per cent. 70,000 industrial jobs have been lost in the last decade. There are now only 77,000 left — 15,000 less than the number of unemployed. It is estimated that only 25,000 of the jobs lost have gone as a result of 'The Troubles' and the rest is the bombless work of the slump and of the policies of the Tory government.

The state is now the biggest employer in Northern Ireland, 67,000 public sector jobs have been created since 1969 — almost the same as the number left in industry. Severn per cent of the population are in government training and employment schemes. Social security in Northern Ireland costs £1 billion per year, almost equal to the Westminster subsidy to Northern Ireland.

The Industrial Development Board created in 1980 has a target of creating 60,000 jobs in the next five years — by 'attracting investment'. But the tax concessions and grants available to the enterprising or social asset stripping capitalist in the 26 Counties are far more attractive than anything available in Northern Ireland. In fact the N.I. Development Board is not very ambitious: by creating 10,000 new jobs a year it would just keep unemployment at its present level.

Inevitably, as industry drains away, the pressure to push wages down below the customary UK-linked level is having an effect, and Northern Ireland is being turned into a low-wage economy — what both an ICTU official and a university economist called "a Hong Kong economy", the one with indignation, the other with Thatcherite relish.

Peter Taylor presented the case of Hyster, the fork-lift truck manufacturers. They pay £95 on average in Northern Ireland. They used to pay £118 in Scotland — before they recently forced the Scottish workers to accept a cut, to take them almost to the N.I. level — which they are trying to make the norm.

The average gross weekly wage of men in Northern Ireland is £10 below that in England, £9 below Scotland, and £7 below Wales. Wages are lower than anywhere else in the UK, and, as Hyster's Scottish workers found out, can be used to lever wages in slump-hit Britain down too.

The economic devastation has of course made things worse for Catholics in, for example, Derry, than for 50 years. But things were never very good for the Catholics. For political reasons, during the boom industry was shifted to the Protestant areas. It is those areas that are experiencing something new.

Protestant unemployment is now as high as Catholic.

There is continuing job discrimination by Protestant councils, but there is now no Protestant Stormont government to take special care of the Protestants. There is now Protestant emigration where before it was mainly Catholics who got out.

Twenty years ago the average standard of living in the Six Counties was twice that of the South. It was the industrial part of Ireland, with a distinct economic identity. The economic transformation of the South since 1958 (when they began to dismantle protectionism and opened the country to international capital) has changed all that.

The slump is scouring and levelling by way of impartial devastation, inflicted on Protestant and Catholic communities alike. It is difficult to avoid the image of a society being pounded and made malleable in the crucible. Much of the economic differentiation is being eradicated between Catholics and Protestants.

Could some sort of — even minimal — inter-communal working class unity to fight back arise out of this common affliction, where there is now little possibility of major Protestant advantages being seized or offered? Panorama reporter Taylor interviewed Paddy Devlin, who thought that it might be possible. (Devlin was a power-sharing executive minister in 1974. With Gerry Fitt he was the 'social democratic' part of the leadership of the now largely nationalist SDLP, before they left it).

He recalled, with fascinating newsreel shots, the famous events of 1932, when the unemployment level was 100,000, about what it is now. British government cuts in welfare ('outdoor relief') hit impartially at Catholics and Protestants, and led to united protests and barricades against a common enemy being erected in both the Protestant Shankill and the Catholic Falls Road. Bands dropped their sectarian anthems and instead played a 1932 hit tune: 'Yes, we have no bananas'. The Stormont state forces used guns against the Catholics (killing two and injuring 15), but batons against the Protestants. Soon they had fomented sectarian rioting again.

The same basic conditions certainly exist — Protestant and Catholic workers in roughly the same situation. And there is even a more recent Protestant tradition of struggle against unemployment. At the beginning of the 1960s there were mass demonstrations — one of 20,000 in 1962 — mainly Protestant, against unemployment...

Let us at least dare to hope...

The politics of 'Briefing'

SINCE London Labour Briefing was launched in 1980, it has expanded to a circulation of over 3,000, and similar publications serving as an axis for the local Labour Left have emerged in Strathclyde, Merseyside, Humberside, the West Midlands, Nottingham, Bristol and Brighton. A conference, 'Towards a National Network', was held on February 5.

Socialist Organiser has collaborated closely with London Labour Briefing in many enterprises, such as a joint trade union conference last year and the new 'Socialists for a Labour Victory' campaign. At the same time we have debated differences on issues such as rate rises and criticisms of the Greater London Council Labour group leadership.

This week we print — as part, we hope, of the continuing debate — an open letter from Brighton Labour Briefing to London Labour Briefing, with an introduction by the authors. Next week we will carry an extended reply from Chris Knight of LLB.

BELOW IS printed an open letter from Brighton Labour Briefing to London Labour Briefing. The letter also has signatures from Merseyside Labour Briefing and from comrades based in London. The reason for its publication in Socialist Organiser is that LLB refused to print it.

This refusal is regrettable and may be due to a confusion by a majority of LLB comrades over the motives that lay behind the letter. We therefore feel obliged to present publicly just what these motives were.

BLB worked very hard (with LLB) to organise a National Conference of Briefing groups. The conference finally took place on February 5 this year. We believed a national conference was essential for three reasons: (a) to provide a focus for the various regional Briefings that had sprung up around the country and ensure some form of organisational links between them; (b) to begin to build a united national left-wing movement in the Labour Party, convinced that Briefings' localised yet open organisation provided the most suitable structure within which such a movement could take form; (c) and, in the critical situation now facing the left, to debate what perspectives and strategies the left should adopt in building this movement, particularly in the areas of community, local government and the trade unions.

As the letter relates, many people, particularly in Brighton, were disappointed because the conference failed to address these questions. The letter was intended simply as a comment on and as a response to this failure. It, too, had three motives: (a) to criticise the conference; (b) to initiate a debate, within the pages of LLB, on what direction a national coalition of Briefings should or could take and, indeed, what would be the political basis of such a coalition; (c) and to criticise what we take to be the increasing lack of political direction of LLB.

These were and are our motives for writing the letter. We are obviously not trying to 'wreck' LLB — our own record in Brighton, and the commitment we have consistently shown to LLB, are adequate repudiation of that. We are simply trying to initiate, and engage in, a debate. We approached LLB initially because we believed LLB, with its ostensible 'open editorial policy', would be the most appropriate place to express these criticisms. This, it appears, is not the case. It is indeed a strange 'open policy' which allows overtly sexist letters to be printed (see 'Streetlife Letters', LLB no. 27) yet not critical ones.

We hope, anyway, that this statement goes some way in correcting LLB's present misconception about the 'purpose' of our letter.

Bryn Griffiths
Tony Greenstein
Jane Mardell
Liz Godden
A. Bridger
B. Oldfield
Mark Holmes
Dave Lowney
Janice Turner
Chris Scott
Daniel Ben Ami
(BRIGHTON
LABOUR BRIEFING)
Sam Semoff
(Merseyside Labour
Briefing)

G. Usher
Lesley Lee
(London Labour
Briefing)
Anthony Clavane

IN THE last 18 months the left in the Labour Party has suffered a series of defeats, starting with Benn's Deputy Leadership battle, followed by loss of the NEC to the hard right, control of the Manifesto, the Register, and now loss of the very organisation which pioneered much of the left's advance — the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.

With a General Election in the offing, we face a witch-hunt of unprecedented proportions as much of the left replies with the call for unity. On the industrial front we have seen the defeat of the NHS dispute, the isolation of the miners, and the inability of any section of workers to challenge the government.

As the soft left moves rightwards, the hard left and what remains of the Bennites find themselves without any strategy or perspective. The acrimonious debate over the rates, and the Labour Labour Briefing's campaign to bring any

reflects the crisis of the left in the Party.

It was with this in mind that Brighton Labour Briefing (BLB) proposed in a meeting with LLB last October that a National Conference of Briefing groups be held. We believed that a national Left Wing Movement in the Labour Party



The fares fight: was Briefing's political edge blunted by 'an effort to preserve its relationship with former comrades who are now in leading positions'?

urgently needed to be built around the left's base in the CLPs, with a clear orientation towards work in the trade unions at the grassroots and amongst the unemployed.

Yet what transpired at the Conference held on February 5? Graham Bash opened the Conference with a call for unity on the hard left. Ken Livingstone told us a harrowing tale of what happens when you are elected and then held accountable. Sharks swimming everywhere, looking for an easy bite! Given that local government and accountability have been Briefing's two main planks, as Graham described vividly when referring to the de-selection of London's Labour Right, this hardly bodes well for the future.

Trade unions

Only Jeremy Corbyn dwelt on the need for work in the trade unions, and this was not taken up by any other speakers.

It was into this vacuum that the highly original proposal for a Socialist (or more accurately CND) Campaign for a Labour Victory was made by Socialist Challenge supporters.

We do, of course, support a really Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, one which also highlights other aspects of Labour

policy, e.g. on repeal of the Immigration/ Nationality Acts, International Solidarity (not least Palestine), and progress towards implementation of Clause IV.

Still less attention was given to what happens after the election, especially if Labour lose, and the consequences of this for the left inside and outside the Party.

Directionless

BLB's proposals for syndicating articles nationally were ignored, and no progress was made towards generalising Briefing nationally. In response to the left's crisis, LLB has become increasingly directionless. In an effort to preserve its relationship with former comrades who are now in leading positions, it has started to abandon any criticism whatsoever.

Nowhere is this process more evident than in the meetings of LLB Editorial Committee, whose meetings seem to be a camouflage for decisions taken elsewhere. No doubt this is due in part to the separation between production and editorial functions.

A case in point is the position of LLB arising out of the Labour Committee on Palestine conference. One would have thought, given the role of LLB in spear-

heading the fight for democracy inside the Party, that it would have unequivocally condemned the actions of those, in particular the LCP's former Treasurer, Ted Knight, for introducing 100 members of the WRP into a Labour Committee on Palestine, and would therefore have supported those who walked out to form the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine (LMCP). Indeed, this is the position taken by Brighton and Merseyside Labour Briefings.

Instead the LLB Editorial merely 'regretted' the action of the WRP, even though the editorial when first approved condemned its 'outrageous' behaviour. All references to Knight were omitted after he made threats to sue LLB for libel. Even mention of the threat to sue was arbitrarily removed from LLB.

Equated

Similarly, articles by individuals in the LCP and LMCP have been equated with each other regardless of content, in particular an article on Women and Zionism. There are reactionary elements in feminism which often emerge over international issues, not least the recent coverage in Spare Rib over Palestine/Israel. Socialist feminists and socialists should allow space for that import-

ant political disagreement, and not allow threats by certain groups to withdraw to quash real political debate by trying to exclude a socialist analysis of feminism and imperialism.

Quest for unity

The reasons for this watering down and compromise lie in the quest for unity at all costs, a unity in which political differences are submerged in exchange for a formal cooperation between different political tendencies.

The threat by a leading Socialist Challenge supporter that they (SC) would have to reconsider their position in Briefing if an article went in on LMCP unopposed by one from the LCP is indicative of how the quest for formal unity blunts Briefing's political edge.

LLB has a deserved reputation for uniting those in the Party who had previously been divided. But the basis of that unity then was around a set of political objectives. We believe that a reassessment of those objectives is urgently needed if LLB is not to become increasingly irrelevant. The same political criteria need to be applied now as then, if the left in the Labour Party is not to continue to retreat down the road to oblivion.

	March				
	7	14	21	28	
Monday	1	8	15	22	29
Tuesday	2	9	16	23	30
Wednesday	3	10	17	24	31
Thursday	4	11	18	25	
Friday	5	12	19	26	
Saturday	6	13	20	27	
Sunday					

WHAT'S ON

PAID ads 5p per word, £4 per column inch. Send copy to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8, to arrive by Saturday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

CALDERDALE March for Jobs. Organised by Sowerby YS. March 19: assemble Cornholme 8.45am. Rallies at Todmorden 10am, at Hebden Bridge 12.15pm, at Sowerby Bridge 3.30pm, at Halifax Town Hall 5pm.

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 Stoneyclose Close, Manchester M15.

EL SALVADOR Solidarity Campaign: Labour Movement conference, Saturday May 14, 10am to 5pm, County Hall, London SE1. Credentials £2 from ESSC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

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.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland Annual General Meeting: Saturday April 23, 10am to 5pm at County Hall, London SE1. Resolutions to be submitted by April 8. Contact: LCI, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.

LABOUR Campaign for Gay Rights, Glasgow: meeting to discuss future strategy. Tuesday March 22 1983, Trades Council (Room 3), 81 Carlton Place, 7.30pm. Contact: c/o Russell McVean Glasgow School of Art SRC, 168 Renfrew St, Glasgow.

ISLINGTON Labour CND meeting on the Civil Defence regulations: Tuesday March 22, 8pm, at the Town Hall, Upper St.

TROTSKYISM or Castroism: a pamphlet analysing the move away from the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution by the Socialist Workers' Party of the USA. Published by the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee: 40p plus postage from PO Box 135, London N10DD.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, National Conference on 'The Fight in the Labour Movement for Lesbian and Gay Male Rights'. Saturday 9 April, 11-5, Shepherd's Hall, Old Market Street, Bristol. Creche. Details: phone Bristol 634203

OUT NOW! 'The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Trotskyists Today'. A new book from Workers Power Irish Workers Group. 120 pages, £1.85 including postage. From: Box 7750 BCM WC1N 3XX or left book shops.

Peace groups in E. Europe

I HAVE no doubt that some of you read my letter to SO a few weeks ago on the subject of the dissident or unofficial peace groups in the Soviet bloc.

In the letter I was only able to mention the most sizeable of such groupings, the "Swords into Ploughshares" movement in the German Democratic Republic.

There is also a movement of similar size and political composition emerging now in Hungary. Last of all there is the Moscow East-West Trust Group.

This grouping has received publicity in the West in quite inverse proportion to its size because the Cold War press in the West wishes to use the example of its persecution by the Soviet authorities as a propaganda weapon against the Western peace movement in highlighting Soviet "hypocrisy".

The group itself is very small in membership and made very beleaguered by a policy of systematic harassment and arrest of leading individuals by the KGB.

The Group's only crime has been to break away from the official Russian peace council and to call for creative dialogue between citizens of the USA and USSR on the nuclear arms race and hence creating trust between the "super powers".

Liberal

By Western political standards the group would be described as liberal or apolitical but in no way could it be described as adopting a stance of Cold War hostility towards the Warsaw Pact despite the cynical way its plight has been highlighted by NATO apologists and rabid right wingers (like Ronald Reagan in his speech at the United Nations special session on disarmament) soon after the group was first formed.

Any comrades who would like further information on the whole subject of dissenting peace groups should refer to the following sources of information.

1. An article on the East German peace movement in the February 10 issue of Tribune.

2. Two pamphlets presently in print, published by the Campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament (END). 'The New Hungarian Peace Movement' by Ferenc Hobzrgz and E.P. Thompson and the 'Moscow Independent Peace Group' by J. Stead and O. Grunberg, price 90p and 75p respectively. They can be obtained from 227 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

As a third source of information I suggest the current edition of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe.

Solidarity

Lastly I would like to propose the same question as before. Will a Trotskyist group such as SO show international solidarity with the dissenting peace groups? Will it adopt after proper debate a position of unconditional defence of such groups as we would for persecuted peace campaigns in the West, while making correct and proper political criticisms of their sometimes reformist

politics?

I hope this will be the case and that comrades do not fall into the trap of believing that Soviet defensism means we must ignore or condemn groups whose sole motivation is the desire to freely discuss in their own countries the most important question facing the human race — nuclear war.

ALEX SIMPSON
Cambridge CLP



Pamphlets on the East European peace movements are available from END.

Scargill to blame

MY article on the South Wales miners' strike and the NUM national strike ballot which was carried on the front page of last week's Socialist Organiser, ended up significantly altered in the editorial process.

Two paragraphs (11 and 13) were inserted, which altered my assessment of Arthur Scargill's role in the dramatic decision of the Executive of the NUM the rescind the strike decisions taken in the Yorkshire, Scottish and Kent coalfields and to call a national ballot.

The inserted paragraphs put the onus on the right wing, by suggesting that Scargill probably only supported the move for a national ballot because he knew he would be outvoted by the right wing majority on the Executive.

If this were true it would imply that there was never really a chance of a national miners strike developing area by area in support of South Wales and against closures since it would be aborted as soon as the Executive met and that the policy of the South Wales NUM to try and spread the strike area by area was wrong.

My argument was that such a strike was viable and probable, given the way things were developing up to the point where the executive was convened. It is not at all clear what happened at the Executive meeting itself. But only 24 hours before the meeting Arthur Scargill announced publicly that he had taken the initiative to call the EC together in order

to support the developing strike movement.

He opposed a national ballot, quoting rule 42 of the NUM Rule Book as the constitutional authority for a strike called area by area.

He said he expected a unanimous vote on the executive for that policy. As far as I know, at that point no-one was predicting even the possibility of a vote for a national ballot on the EC.

Straight after the EC meeting, Scargill went on television to claim that he had personally supported the motion for a national ballot

which had been carried unanimously.

Afterwards he told the Morning Star: "We did not pick Lewis Merthyr. But the unofficial action to save it was a fact of life. Accepting the strike had taken place, the only sensible thing to do was to go for a national ballot."

All this convinces me that there was more to it than just pressure from the right and that the key factor was precisely Scargill's avoidance of the sharp fight with the right wing.

ALAN THORNETT

'Minorities' and issues

I FEEL I must write in response to the letter by Brian and Gregory of the Gay LPYS Group — although I am in complete sympathy with their/our cause, the article they had published in Socialist Organiser was more a plea for legitimacy on the grounds of minority status.

I am totally opposed to the categorisation of certain struggles as "minority issues".

Four million

I concede that certain "causes" directly affect a minority of people, the best example being immigrants. We never consider the four

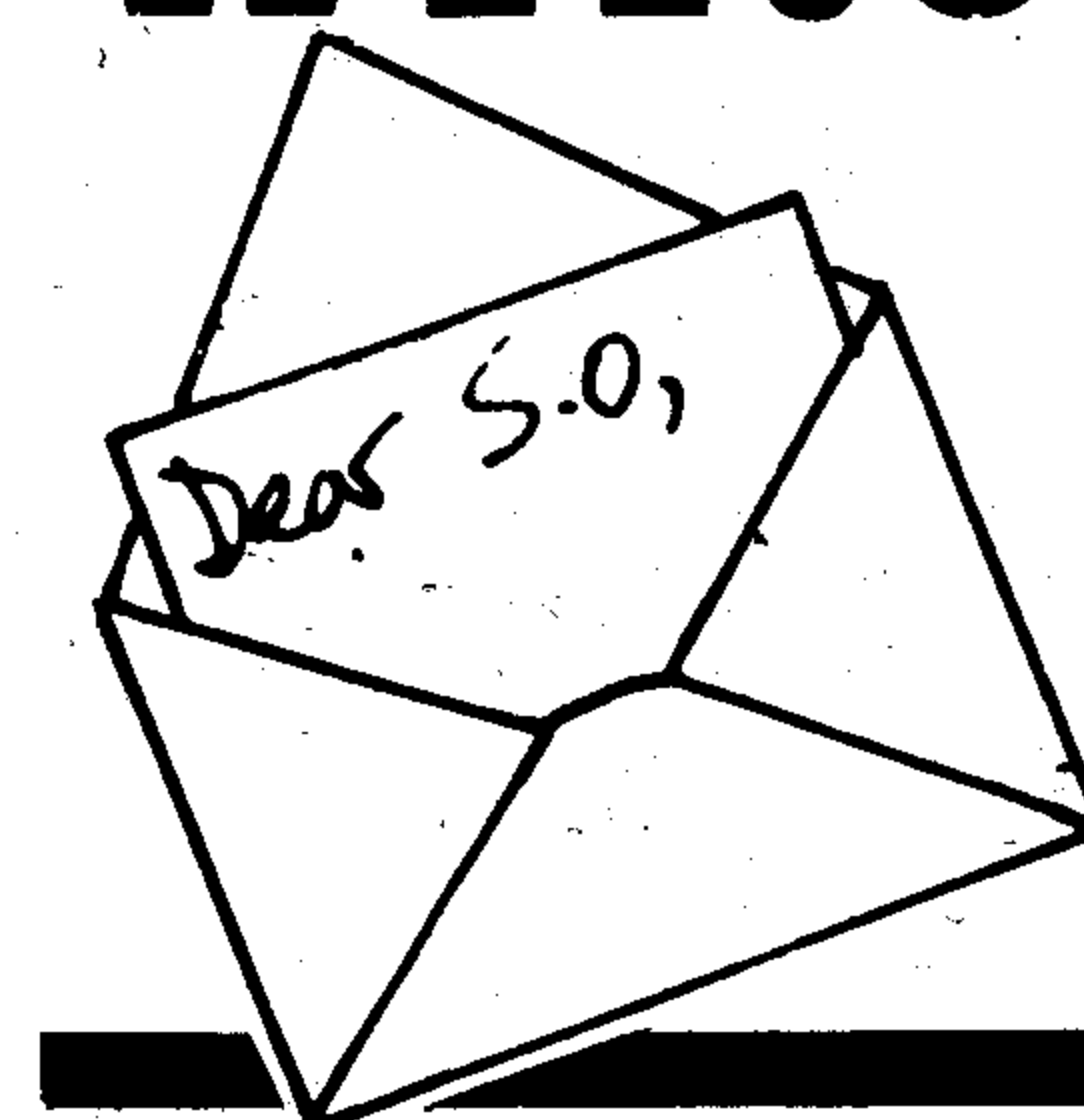
million unemployed as a minority issue, but then again one is predominantly social and the other the "all-dominant economic" issue.

The best example of a minority issue that is never a minority issue is gay and lesbian rights and liberation.

Revolutionary

For this struggle to be successful would mean a revolutionary change in the role of the dominant monogamous heterosexual relationships in this society — the subservient role of women in our society, and the whole existence of masculinity and all the

Writeback



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

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

reactionary values within that. The gender system would have to be smashed and with it the role of the family in our society.

But Marx, Lenin, Trotsky never wrote anything about it, so it must be a marginal issue.

We must never go cap-in-hand to socialist organisations, especially the ones that claim to be Trotskyist. They have a lot to learn from us. If the socialist society that they are ourselves are fighting for is to be truly free for all, they not only have to learn from us but put what they learn into practice and make it an integral part of their policy.

Granted, being gay in our society at present is not cosy — but let us never fall into the trap of being taken in by the half truths, lies and hypocrisy of this primitive and repressive society we live in.

I also agree that the Trotskyist groups have done little to promote or respond to gay issues.

With that kind of response no wonder many of our gay brothers and sisters turn to the Liberal and other reformist groups — who can offer them only legal rights but never to liberate us and create a society where all forms of sexist expression are as valid as the heterosexual's.

JEFF EVANS

Where to find us

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Sunday April 24, in London. Please make plans to choose and mandate your group's delegate now.

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. Meets on the 2nd Monday of the month, at the Castle Inn.

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. Public meeting and Social. Arthur Bough on 'A Socialist Campaign for the Election'. Sunday March 27, 7.30 pm. The Swan, Barslea, Stoke-on-Trent.

For creche ring Neil 818541 or Arthur 84170.

And Lol Duffy on setting up workplace Labour Party branches with a speaker from Merseyside Labour Briefing on Briefing Groups.

• 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 morn-

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 Wick-er. 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

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Halifax Whole-food, Gibbet St, and at Tower Books, Hebden Bridge.

• WALES

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

• MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alternate Fridays, 7.30, the Hen and Chickens, Constitution Hill. Next meeting Friday March 17.

Next meeting: Thursday March 31: an Islington councillor on 'Can Local Councils fight the Cuts?' SO is sold at the Other Bookshop, Digbeth High St

ings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

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: March 31, 'Rosie the Riveter'. Film

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 Monday. Next meeting March 21. 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. 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. Business meetings March 25 and April 8. Public meeting: May 16, 'Is a Socialist Revolution possible in Britain?' All meetings, 7.30pm, Chute House.

• LONDON

North-West London. Readers' meetings first Sunday of month. Phone Mick, 624 1931, for details. SO is sold at Kilburn Books. **Islington.** Next meeting March 27, 4pm at Thornhill

Neighbourhood / Project. Orkney House, Caledonian Road/Copenhagen Street. Martyn Honeywell (Latin America Bureau) on 'The War in El Salvador'. For childcare phone Nik, 278 1341.

Haringey Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941. Meets every other Thursday, 7.30 pm, Trade Union Centre, Brabant Rd. Next meeting March 24.

Tower Hamlets. Contact 377 1328. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30pm. Next meeting March 24.

Southwark/Lambeth meets every other Wednesday, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, SE5. Business meeting 7.30pm. Open Forum discussion at 8.30pm. Next meeting:

Wednesday 30 March — speaker from South London Women's Hospital.

Educationals in basic Marxism: Sunday March 20 at 7.30pm. 'How do bosses make their profits from workers?' For details fo venue phone Ian on 609 3071.

Hounslow. SO sold outside All Saints Church, Hounslow High Street, Saturday 10.30-12. Next meeting: Sunday March 17, 'Socialists for a Labour Victory'. For venue ring 609 3071.

Hackney. Contact c/o Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, N16.

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Collets, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks, Bookplace (Peckham Rd, SE15), and Reading Matters [Wood Green Shopping City].

Subscribe!

Rates: £5 for three months, £8.75 for six months, and £16 for a year.

Bundle of five each week: £12 for three months. Bundle of 10: £21 for three months.

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Cops attack Colin Roach demo

by councillor Susan Carlyle

DROP THE CHARGES!

COLIN Roach's family have already suffered the death of their son — found shot dead outside Stoke Newington police station on January 12 — and the refusal of the Home Office to grant a full enquiry.

And now, at each demonstration protesting about Colin Roach's death and police racism, more and more people are arrested.

Last Saturday 12th, Colin's father was a passenger next to a local Labour councillor driving the campaign lorry at the head of the demonstration. He received punches to the head as he and Denis Twomey were dragged out of the vehicle.

The windscreen was

smashed and the loudspeaking equipment was damaged beyond repair while several arrests for 'assault' were made.

Later other arrests were made outside the local police station, with continuing harassment by the cops.

Denis Twomey went to hospital for treatment for cuts and returned to custody, but was denied bail. When he appeared in court, he refused to accept the conditions demanded that he should cease his activities with the campaign — ludicrous conditions, especially for a local councillor who has a right to follow up constituents' problems.

He was remanded in

custody for a week, and finally released without bail conditions only at a High Court hearing on Tuesday 15th.

Besides working to set up a campaign to support the Roach family, Denis Twomey has pushed the Labour Party to set up a borough police committee. This is due to be debated in council next week.

Other Labour councillors, with labour movement and community groups, have organised a public meeting on Friday 18th in support of Dennis Twomey and on the general issue of the police.

The campaign is calling for the dropping of all charges against all those arrested.

Socialist Organiser



PHOTO: HUMPHREY NEMAR

Let's rally the YS for CND!

by Jane Ashworth

ON Monday 14th, members of London branches of the Labour Party Young Socialists met to discuss the YS's relationship to Youth CND.

We heard from Judith Bonner, a member of the YCND National Committee and Coventry South East LPYS, how YCND views the YS: they don't think very much of our input!

Judith commented on how ridiculous it is that the two largest progressive youth organisations in the country, who have the same policy, for unilateral nuclear disarmament, only rarely work together.

The meeting felt that we should try to improve the relationship between the YS and YCND. We agreed to try to persuade our YS branches to campaign with YCND to build the May 7 Rock the Bomb festival in Brockwell Park, South London.

We also decided to organise a contingent on the march to Brockwell Park and produce our own leaflet about the need to be in the Labour Party fighting for nuclear disarmament as well as in YCND. This leaflet will be available from Peckham YS, Lansbury House, 41, Camberwell Grove, SE5 by the end of the week.

Another leaflet for YS conference will urge the YS to organise for the Festival.

The YS regional committee is apparently going to produce a leaflet for the festival, but we thought we couldn't wait for this. We were also not convinced that it would have a very positive approach to YCND. We don't want to give out leaflets which just lecture about the need to nationalise the armaments industry.

Letters will be sent out to YS branches inviting them to send a representative to future meetings of YS for YCND.

YS for YCND (London) would like to hear from YS branches or members in other parts of the country who support YCND. We can be contacted through Peckham LPYS at Lansbury House.

YS CONFERENCE '83
April 1-4, The Spa Centre, Bridlington

Fringe meetings by Labour Committee on Ireland, YCND, Labour Against the Witch-hunt and more. Accommodation £12 per head — deposits (£5 per head) and numbers as soon as possible please to Class Fighter, 13 Buxton Road, London N19, or phone 01-609 3071.

Shoring up the system

Behind the OPEC crisis

REMEMBER 1973? And 1979? As the capitalist world plunged into slump and millions lost their jobs, western governments wrung their hands and blamed it all on the greedy Arabs.

Now the world stands in danger of a new economic disaster if oil prices go down too fast!

There is a grain of truth in the argument. The conditions for crisis are created by the inherent chaos of production for profit. But sudden price shifts can be the last straw.

The essence of capitalism is that nothing can be done economically without a suitable

flow of money. The balance of the system depends not on planning for need, but on regulation through the movements of money. So sudden price shifts can create widespread havoc.

The OPEC decision on Monday 14th was what the oil-importing capitalist big powers have been looking for: a controlled, moderate price reduction.

It could also ease the plight of the oil-importing underdeveloped countries, which have been the main

sufferers from the 1970s' oil price rises. At the same time it will aggravate an already grim situation for countries like Mexico, Venezuela, and Nigeria. Peasants and workers like the immigrants recently expelled from Nigeria will bear the brunt.

If the OPEC agreement breaks down, and prices plummet, then it will mean catastrophe for these countries and chaos in the capitalist world.

Two trends lie behind OPEC's crisis. First, declining demand. Capitalist world

consumption of oil is about 10% down on 1980. Recession, and moves to economise on energy or substitute alternative sources, combine to generate this result.

Second, the rise of non-OPEC producers. OPEC production in 1982 was barely more than a third of capitalist world consumption. In 1973 it was over 60%. The USSR has been selling more, and so have Mexico, Britain and Norway.

The current crisis broke when the British National Oil Corporation recom-

mended a \$3/barrel price cut from February 1. Nigeria, hard hit by competition, responded by breaking OPEC ranks and cutting its prices by \$5.50/barrel.

What gives OPEC nightmares now is the prospect of North Sea producers cutting prices further to respond to the OPEC reductions. Saudi Arabia's Yamani said it would be 'inviting a price war'.

Energy supplies are too serious a matter to be left in the hands of oil companies and capitalist governments.

FUND

Thanks to all our supporters who've sent in money this week. We've had £271.28, bringing our March Fund to £413.28.

But that's still under half our target of £1000!

We need £586.72 in two weeks. Send your contributions to the Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1 2SY.

Thanks this week to: Geoff Williams, £50; Mary Ireson, £100; Christine McKimmie, £1; friends in St. Raphael's Wood, £5.58; Sheffield supporters: Dave Ayrton, £3.50; Elaine John, £27; Mick Sidaway, £15; Stoke supporters: Mick Dimmelow, £5; Neil Dawson, £10; York supporters, proceeds from a social, £20; Basingstoke supporters, from a jumble sale £32; Science column birthday presents, £2.20.

STILL DEFIANT!

by Jane Andrews, chair, Islington Central Labour Party *Writing in a personal capacity*

JIM Mortimer wrote to the Secretary of Central Islington CLP on the day of the Bermondsey by-election to inform us of the NEC's decision "to expel forthwith from the Labour Party Messrs Taaffe and Grant." We were asked to delete their names from our membership records.

In accordance with policy the officers wrote back immediately, and our reply was with Jim Mortimer on the following Monday morning. We informed him that the Party does not recognise the expulsions and that we continue to regard Comrades Taaffe and Grant as full members of this Party.

At a Special GC on Thursday 10th, (called to discuss the rates) I took the opportunity of informing members of our actions. We were congratulated for our speedy response and our reply was unanimously endorsed. Part of the process of fighting the expulsions will be to keep the party membership informed at every stage.

Our position is firm. As in Hornsey I believe it is essential that we adopt a consistent principled stand against the NEC's unprecedented interference with the rights of CLPs to decide who shall be Party members.

When the NEC realised they could not dictate to Hornsey they lifted the December 31st deadline that the Party refuse to admit Tariq Ali to membership or be disbanded. In saying that we do not recognise expulsions we also are challenging

the NEC to think again.

Now a campaign must be mounted among CLPs and throughout the trade union movement which will make it impossible for the witch-hunt to continue. How many more times must it be said that Conference did not vote for expulsions but it did vote for clear socialist policies — unilateralism, no incomes policy, repeal of racist immigration laws, support for women, etc.

Unity for the election will be achieved by campaigning around agreed policies, and not by expulsions of activists and socialists.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCHHUNT NATIONAL COUNCIL

The next meeting of LAW's National Council will be on Saturday April 9, 12 to 5pm, at County Hall, London SE1. Any affiliated CLP may send a delegate. If you're not yet affiliated send for details and a letter of invitation to the secretary, Keith Lichman, 11 Wilderton Rd, London N16.