

Join the
Labour
Party

Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.125 March 24 1983 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

Labour leaders' scheme for unity with employers

"PARTNERS" IN CRIME?

LABOUR PARTY and trade union leaders are trying to commit us to a re-run of the 1974-9 Labour government.

The TUC-Labour Party liaison committee document, 'Partners in Rebuilding Britain', is due to be published at Easter. Under the title of the National Economic Assessment, it promises, effectively, a system of TUC-policed incomes policy.

Each spring there would be an "agreed statement on the framework within which decisions will be made on investment, prices, employment and pay". The Labour Party 'campaign document' (on which the Labour election manifesto will be based) states that the National Economic Assessment "will take a view on what changes in costs and prices will be compatible with our economic and social objectives". And the joint secretaries of the TUC-LP committee have commented: "The question of incomes... would form an essential part of discussions concerning the national economic assessment... Considerable extra responsibilities would fall on unions..."

Amendments rejected

There are still a fair few radical promises in the campaign document, and unfortunately some on the Labour left have argued that we should accept it as being as good as we'll get.

At a Labour Coordinating Committee rally in London on March 21, Robin Cook declared that "If the left doesn't campaign for the policies in this document, nobody will".

True enough. The right wing will not campaign for the document's compromises: it regards them only as a first step in its drive to gut Labour's radical policies. But the left's answer should not be to accept the compromises, but to campaign for full Labour conference policies.

The campaign document isn't the end of it. The manifesto will be more diluted still. Then a right-wing Labour government will most likely ignore most of the manifesto.

On incomes policy the campaign document includes a sentence from Tony Benn: "We will not return to the old policies of Government-imposed wage restraint". But a further amendment by Benn to replace the word 'old' by 'any' was lost at the Labour NEC. And an amendment by Dennis Skinner to delete all reference to the National Eco-

nomics Assessment governing incomes was also defeated — being supported only by Jo Richardson, Frank Allaun, Laurence Coates, and Audrey Wise.

This process of trimming the labour movement's aspiration to fit within the administration of capitalism can only be challenged by a determined fight, every inch of the way, to hold the leadership to account. That's why the fight for Labour democracy over the last four years has been so important — and why it must be continued, with a fight against the fudges in the campaign document and the TUC-Labour Party document.

Tony Benn at the LCC meeting spoke in the same spirit as Robin Cook, thus dealing a considerable blow against the left. He also said a good deal in a completely different spirit.

The Labour policy commitment to a 3% per year rise in real NHS spending is missing from the campaign document



JOHN HARRIS

DEMONSTRATE

Sunday 27
March

12 noon
Assemble
Jubilee
Gardens
near
Waterloo
Station

CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIST LAWS

- Repeal the Immigration and Nationality Acts
- Stop race checks ■ Stop racist deportations
- Unite the divided families now

BLACK PEOPLE have suffered the heaviest of the Tory attacks that have been meted out to the working class.

Under Labour's right wing governments previously they had faced discrimination, racist immigration laws, and shared in the general fall of working class living standards.

Since Thatcher came to office, amid a new barrage of racist propaganda and pressures from the Tory rank and file to strike new blows against black people, these problems have been redoubled.

In the generalised slump, the highest levels of unemployment are amongst black people, especially women and youth. In the housing crisis, it is black families and black areas that face the most dire shortages and appalling conditions.

New racist provisions and 'checks' in the NHS and Department of Employment have added to harassment of black people, while the Nationality Act has piled on the misery for thousands of divided families, and the toll of deportations continues to rise.

While derisory sentences have been meted out to white youth who beat up blacks, the Bradford 12 had to battle to secure recognition of the right to defend themselves, and police racism has been repeatedly exposed in the case of the Newham 8, and more recently in the death of Colin Roach and the Brent SPG raid (page 3). John Fernandes, the black teacher who lifted the lid on racism at the Hendon Police College, was sacked.

The challenge before the labour movement is whether it can throw off the appalling racism and indifference shown by the bulk of its official leadership towards the problems of black people, and make the struggle against racial oppression a central plank of its fight against the employers and the Tory government.

Not until black workers see in practice that the organised workers' movement is prepared to act in their defence does the workers' movement have the right to count on the necessary support from the black working class for the re-election of a Labour government and the struggle to secure socialist policies.

In giving our support to the CARL demonstration, Socialist Organiser urges our supporters in union branches and Labour Parties to follow through the fight against every aspect of racial discrimination as part of the socialist campaign for a Labour victory.

INSIDE

Labour's campaign document: a new Social Contract, p.14; lessons from France, p.2: fudging the issues, and SLV gets underway, p.12. People's March, centre pages. CND and Greenham Common, back page and page 2. Ford workers fight Japanese methods, back page, and report from Japan, p.5. National Union of Students conference, page 2.

Raising the tempo in Hull

What is the Hull Women's Peace Group, and why did you decide on the action you took in the city centre a few weeks ago?

The Hull Women's Peace Group is a group of about 20 women who started meeting together towards the end of last year. We went to Greenham for the December 12 and 13 action, and went down for the court appearance at the beginning of February.

Eight of us had been to Greenham very recently. When we returned to Hull we felt it was necessary to take immediate action to try to stir people. The women at Greenham are very hopeful that women will take direct action all over the country — and not just at Greenham.

So we decided to occupy the local RAF recruiting office. Four of us decided this on the Friday evening and by the next day 30 women and some men had turned out.

We had contacted various groups in the women's movement, the labour movement, CND, etc. Unfortunately when we arrived the recruiting office was shut for the day, so we set up a vigil and asked passers-by to sign a petition in support of the Greenham women who were in prison.

This didn't seem to be gaining an awful lot of attention, and some women felt it would be more effective to lay down in the main road.

This was quite impromptu — and in the end some twelve women were laying across the road stopping the traffic. The police eventually arrived after half an hour and arrested 15 people, including three who were standing on the pavement. The police seemed to be taken quite by surprise and didn't really know how to deal with us.

Do you think that this

Leonne Griggs spoke to Anne, one of the women involved in a demonstration in Hull to show support for the Greenham women in their fight against Cruise missiles.

Anne is one of twelve women from the Hull Women's Peace Group who lay down in the road outside the RAF recruiting station on 19 February, stopping the busy Saturday traffic for half an hour.

She was arrested along with the other women, including her 15 year old daughter. After a court appearance on the following Monday, which was picketed by over 100 supporters, she and the others were bound over on surety of £200 each.

action was effective?

I feel that it was effective in that it sparked interest in people. The busy traffic was stopped for half an hour and some people got very angry — one man almost kicked me. A lot of other people showed their support by signing the petition.

People don't want to think about nuclear weapons and don't want to think about demonstrations against them. The two are linked.

By taking direct action that affects people, they have to decide how they feel about it, and they have to discuss why the action was taken. Support for our action was also shown by the large numbers picketing the court on the following Monday. This gained local press and TV coverage.

Why do you think that women-only action is important?

I think it is difficult for the police to be violent towards women in this context, therefore women only demonstrations can be very effective. I also think that men would find it difficult to restrain themselves from being violent whilst taking direct action. However I do not think that the sitting of cruise missiles will be stopped by women alone.

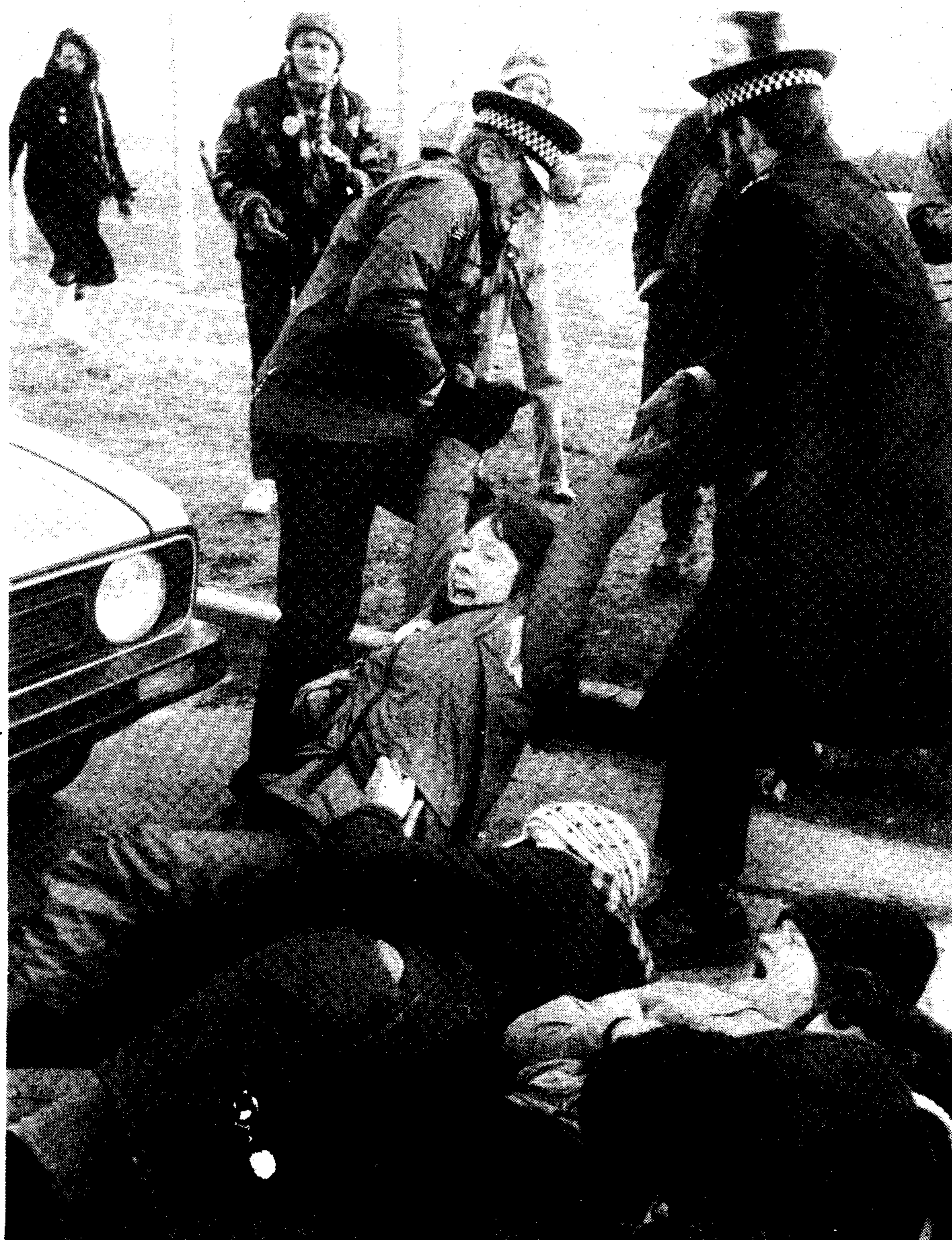
Now is the time for women to demonstrate and state that they do not want men to go and fight wars. I feel that it is important for women to become informed about nuclear issues and learn to argue and to become articulate.

The best way for this to happen is for us to be in women's groups, where the emphasis is on encouraging each other to speak and to become confident. Mixed groups do tend to be dominated by men in them and the atmosphere can be competitive.

Women only action also means that we begin to realise that we too can have power, and that we start to think about our lives in relation to society and gain strength and confidence to act and change.

I have recently heard the notion from some Labour women that the women of Greenham are men-hating and do not see an end to nuclear weapons being related to a change to socialism. Do you have any comments on these views?

First I would say very strongly that the women of Greenham Common are not men-hating. Many are married with children. Men play very strong supportive roles to the



"Women-only action also means that we too can have power..."

women and are encouraged to do so.

The women of Greenham realise that nuclear weapons can only be abolished with a change in the structure of society and work closely with other groups to that end.

What future action is being

planned in Hull?

We had a planning meeting attended by 30 women and decided to start a network called 'women's web'. This will mean women forming affinity groups. They are groups consisting of about 10-20 women who meet regularly together.

We are hoping that many women will go to Greenham on the morning of March 30 ready to blockade the base at 6.30am on the 31st — and then go on to the CND-organised link between Greenham and Aldermaston on April 1 and 2nd.

**Labour
CND
fights
NEC
retreat**

LABOUR CND is campaigning to commit CLPs, trade unions and Labour MPs and prospective parliamentary candidates to fight for unilateral nuclear disarmament. It is circulating the following statement:

We, the undersigned, express our concern and alarm that the draft campaign statement leaked to the press does not contain a full commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament which was carried by well over a two-thirds majority of the Labour Party conference. We note in particular that the proposal to keep the Polaris force as a negotiating tool is totally contrary to the spirit of the conference vote on Composite 51.

Conference clearly and unconditionally voted to close down nuclear bases, both British and American on British soil or in British waters. We demand that this clear commitment should be contained in the campaign document without compromise or fudge. Furthermore, we demand that a clear commitment should be made in the document to support for the position of Nuclear Free Zone local authorities.

Notify support to: Joy Hurcombe, secretary Labour CND, 11 Penbury Road, Worthing, Sussex.

Students

'NUS has to stand up and fight Tories'

John Moore is a part-time member of the executive of the National Union of Students and Socialist Student Alliance candidate for national secretary of NUS next year. He speaks to Jane Lawrence.

Why are you standing?

To give the NUS a group of far left executive members who will argue the case for action up and down the country.

NUS has always passed relatively good policy on issues like cuts, but it has never really been implemented. Most action has been token action.

Now the Tory government is intent on dismantling further and higher education and the grant system as well as its other economic policies on nuclear power and weapons.

NUS has to stand up and fight the battle against these attacks. To do this requires the type of leadership which will campaign and organise the mass of the student body in campaigns to bring in or resist the proposed cuts.

The campaigns we need to run must be designed to win, and not just token protests.

The people who say that students can't win anything by themselves are wrong. Minor gains can be made by students by themselves. But if we are to defend the whole of the education system against the Tory attacks, then it's got to be by united action with the people who work in the colleges.

Unity has got to be built

in action, otherwise it's a false unity. That's why occupations are a good tactic, which puts the campus unions on the spot.

In my own experience I've also found that other things as well as college issues can be done. I've been involved in a campaign for a school where the NUS and ASLEF participated.

We've got to look for unity in colleges and among the wider working class.

WHAT'S coming up at NUS conference?

The main policy debates are on further education, government economic policy, lesbian and gay liberation, and women.

Politically the most contentious is lesbian and gay liberation, and we should

not underestimate the success of the activists who got it prioritised for debate.

What I hope will come out of this is an acceptance that lesbian and gay liberation is a political priority for NUS and that the lesbian and gay campaign should be given a level of autonomy and that the NUS executive should see it as a priority.

In the economic policy debate, the most right-wing position comes from the exec and NOLS (the National Organisation of the National Students), and that's the Alternative Economic Strategy.

There are a couple of interesting amendments. One from the SWP says there is no difference between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, which illustrates the

majority of students that the SWP has given up political analysis for good.

There's also a position on calling for an NUS campaign for a Labour vote, and that's going to be very strongly opposed by the national executive.

WHAT do you think of that?

The prospect of another Tory government brings with it the abolition of the grants system, introduction of loans, abolition of compulsory membership of student unions, and the reduction of funds to student unions.

Basically students and student unions will be subject to a full-scale attack. We've got to do everything within our power to make sure they don't get in, and I certainly have al-

ways argued that students should vote Labour.

DO YOU think it would be wrong for NUS to call for a Labour vote?

No. But whatever government gets elected, we still have to mobilise. If it's the Tories, then it will be to get them off our back. If it's Labour, well, I'm sure that the manifesto will have a few goodies to attract the 500,000 student vote, especially in the 42 margins where the student vote is decisive. But the government won't just give them to us. We'll still have to campaign long and hard for them.

We'll also have to mobilise to ensure nuclear disarmament.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THE NOLS backing Jane

Taylor of the Left Alliance (Communist Party, Liberals and fellow-travellers) for national secretary instead of yourself?

Essentially NOLS believe that there is a need for the NUS right wing (the Left Alliance) to have a full-time officer on the national exec. I totally reject this idea, particularly now when we are going to be involved in a big fight.

It's a tactical decision by NOLS to try to cover themselves from attacks from the right. These will come anyway — from Tories inside and outside of NUS. Any attempt to placate the right wing will be futile.

I believe that NOLS delegates to NUS conference will see this, and instead vote for a socialist.

French lessons for Labour

FRANCE'S Socialist-led government is going through its equivalent of the last British Labour government's 1975-6 turn to cuts at the behest of the International Monetary Fund.

It has announced a new package of austerity measures and a government reshuffle.

It is the quid pro quo for an agreement with other EEC powers in the European Monetary System (EMS) to readjust exchange rates and thus allow a devaluation of the franc. (The EMS normally fixes exchange rates within a certain range, in order to give more stability for capitalists doing international business in the EEC).

IMF team

To complete the picture, an IMF team arrived in Paris on Wednesday 23rd — though the IMF declared that it was just its routine annual survey.

The French government wanted devaluation because of their foreign trade deficit — \$14 billion for the last 12 months. They hope the devaluation will improve this by reducing imports.

The austerity measures



Mitterrand

are designed to 'deflate' the French economy, reduce imports, cure the trade deficit, and avoid further devaluations.

The Socialist-led government came to power in 1981 with a policy similar to the Alternative Economic Strategy. It was more radical in some respects, such as nationalisations. It

increased minimum wages and legislated for a one hour reduction in the work week without loss of pay.

The result? An inrush of imports, the trade deficit, rapid inflation — and unemployment slightly up, at 2 million (9.4%).

German

Last June the government shelved most of its programme and went for wage controls and deflation. It was rather like July 1975 in Britain — the Jack Jones/Dennis Healey £6 limit. Now the new economic course will be dramatically confirmed.

The French Communist Party's answer is in line with their slogan — 'No to a German Europe'. 'The Germans and the Belgians want to bring us to heel'.

In truth the main enemy is closer to home — French capital. The CP is only counterposing the capitalist policy of the 1930s — protectionism — to the capitalist policy of the 1980s, and pumping nationalist poison into the French working class in the process.

What are the lessons for the British labour movement?

The National Economic

Assessment idea got overwhelming support from Labour Party conference because it was presented as a way of extending working class power via collective bargaining to issues beyond wages and conditions. In fact it is just the opposite: a means of hamstringing the unions. The campaign document and the TUC-LP document make this clear.

There is a lot about industrial democracy, but nothing about forcing the bosses to do anything they don't want to. The bosses are to be conciliated and cajoled: meanwhile the unions undertake 'the responsibility with employers to ensure that industrial relations arrangements contribute to the needs of economic reconstruction and that any disputes are conducted with proper regard for the interests of the community and in accordance with TUC guidelines'.

A Labour government could either fight for the interests of the working class, or aim for social harmony within capitalism. It cannot do both.

It can support every fight for better pay, or try to trim wages to the level suitable

for profit-making. It can cut the work week without loss of pay, and spend millions on public services instead of arms — or try to nudge capitalism into expanding fast enough to reduce unemployment.

It can support workers' control, or try to 'appeal to managers'. It can take over the commanding heights of industry and finance and make democratically-controlled economic planning possible, or be the victim of the ebbs and flows and capital. It can link up with working class struggles internationally, or be tied by the constraints of collaboration with other capitalist governments.

It cannot do both.

And the same principle applies to the TUC. It can represent workers' interests. Or it can be the general conciliator of all classes. But not both.

Labour's radical conference policies are moves off the class-struggle road. The job of socialists is to fight for implementation of those policies while also explaining the mass struggles and the overall revolutionary programme which we think will be necessary to get them implemented.

35 Heures
EN 5 JOURS
POUR TOUS



'Community policing' — SPG-style

Brent East Labour Party has called for the withdrawal of the SPG from the area. MICK WOODS reports.

'ROOTS, Rules and Tribulation' is a play written by Andrew Bethell, the ex-head of English at Brondesbury and Kilburn High School.

It concerns six years of doing community service, and involves racial, sexual and social conflict in modern Britain.

The performance of the play on Wednesday, March 9 at Brondesbury and Kilburn school didn't take place, however. Many of the cast had joined 100 of their schoolmates down at Kilburn police station to demand the release of 3 black B&K school students, who had been arrested at half past three that afternoon.

Witnesses told SO that a fight had started between 3 racist youths, who were not B&K students, and the 3 arrested.

When the first police arrived, they went straight for the black youth, which caused their schoolmates to protest.

Isolated

Feeling isolated, the police called up reinforcements. Witnesses told us that four vans arrived, as well as a car of plain clothes police. Police drew truncheons, pushed students around, and almost ran over several of them as they screamed off, closing the doors as they went — real Sweeney-style.

The school students went down to the station en masse to demand their friends be



Really we only want to help...

released, and that the racists be arrested, which eventually occurred.

Even the policeman injured in the incident, PC Strachon, told the local paper that he thought the local police had 'Erred in only arresting the blacks at first'.

Some police tried to convince us on the night that the SPG weren't involved. Well, we feel that it wasn't the SPG, but the Instant Response Unit (a synonym for the SPG when under local control).

The SPG issue has been a live one in Brent for a couple of years now. In 1981 they went into Harlesden, and now they've been sent into Kilburn for the last three weeks.

This itself caused a local furor when the police only told the Council about it the night before they were due to go in. Most Labour councillors refused to attend the meeting, or walked out, as it became clear that this 'consultation' was nothing but a sham.

'No objection'

A local meeting on the South Kilburn estate had been held six weeks before, and, in a wide-ranging discussion on estate security, not one tenant called for SPG-type presence.

The Brent community relations council bears a lot of responsibility for this by indicating to the police that

they had had 'no objection to the SPG going into Kilburn'.

This attitude has got to be changed.

Brent East CLP passed an emergency resolution the next night, calling for the SPG's removal from the area; its disbandment; a public inquiry into the incident; and for the fledgling Police Committee to take up this incident.

Image

Cricklewood AUEW has sent a similar resolution to the Police Committee and the Trades Council, where we hope to have it debated this Wednesday, 23rd.

There has been a lively debate over policing in Kilburn, in which the local paper attacks Socialist Organiser's position on labour movement community patrols. SO's response included various accusations of police malpractices in Kilburn nick, evidence of which is at present being collected.

The local police have tried desperately to present a 'Community Police' image to the population at large, whilst not changing their more traditional practices. In fact, while we were waiting in the station for the youths to be released, my eye caught a poster by the desk. Yes, it was an advert for 'Roots, Rules and Tribulations'.

Mick Woods

Drop the charges!

by Susan Carlyle

OVER 60 people attended a meeting following the arrest of a Tower Hamlets councillor at a Colin Roach demonstration the previous week.

The response clearly shows concern at the lack of an explanation or any response from the authorities concerning Colin Roach's death and in addition the increased viciousness of the police, with arrests now numbering over 80 — the vast majority of them black youth.

Speakers from the campaign stressed the difficulties they were experiencing as a result of police harassment, but how they were still maintaining a regular Saturday picket outside Stoke Newington Police Station, where Colin died.

On his arrest, Dennis Twomey saw the police coming for him in the mistaken belief that as a white person he was responsible for bringing the white people to the demonstration and must be some sort of leader.

In the police bus, where he discovered his ear was bleeding, he realised that the police would have to accuse him of assault to justify their actions during his arrest. The need to discredit him was continued in the refusal of the police to allow bail on the grounds that he shouldn't have been there!

A defence committee with backing from sympa-

thetic solicitors and legal aid is also meeting weekly to co-ordinate the many defendants, for whom money must be raised.

The campaign has extended to include the demand: 'Drop all charges'.

Labour councillors organised this meeting and are looking to spread the campaign throughout the borough, but especially within Tower Hamlets Labour Party, which though already supporting it, has not gone beyond the paper resolution stage.

In addition, left councillors facing expulsion for following Labour Party policy are attempting to set up a police committee, which like that in neighbouring Hackney, can try to focus the labour movement and bring about police accountability in the long run.

The meeting endorsed the Roach Family Support Committee call for a full independent inquiry into the death of Colin Roach.



Colin Roach

Halimat's appeal

Halimat Babama came to Britain from Nigeria in 1980 to join her husband. In July 1982, after separating from her husband because of his violence, she applied to the Home Office for permanent residence for herself and her two young children, Hakeem, aged four, and Mustapha, aged one. She was refused. She is appealing against this decision.

The Home Office has given no date for the appeal.

Halimat points out that her children will be taken

from her, that her husband's violence will continue and that she herself will be made destitute if she is forced to return to Nigeria.

A leading expert in Muslim Law, Dr. David Pearl of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, has confirmed that Halimat's husband 'would have little difficulty in obtaining custody'. He adds, 'so far as authority over the wife is concerned, the husband has the right to control the wife's activities such as whether she works and so

on.'

What you can do:
1. Write to: David Waddington, The Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1.

Write to Halimat's MP, Stan Cohen, House of Commons, London SW1.

Write to your own MP.
2. Pass resolutions of support for Halimat at your union branch, women's group, etc and send donations.

Contact: Friends of Halimat Babamba, Box HB, 59 Cookridge St., Leeds LS2.

In brief

FINES against the confederation of Quebec's teachers' unions, the CEQ, could total 5.5 million Canadian dollars (£3 million).

14,000 teachers have been charged under the province's labour codes, and 145 charges have been brought against the CEQ, against constituent unions, and against union officials, under the Quebec government's draconian new Law 111.

No charges have yet been brought against individuals under Law 111 — if they are, the total in fines could rise much higher still.

The charges arose from strike action taken by the teachers against moves by the provincial government to extend working hours and cut jobs. The government has also cut and frozen public sector wages.

Despite calls by other union leaders for all-out action in their support, the CEQ and other teachers' unions have suspended their strike action. Initially it was until March 14, and now, for the duration of negotiations with third-party conciliators.

The government still insists that, while it will modify details, it will not budge on the total amount of the cuts in its teachers' wage bill.

"THE easiest thing in the world would have been to bull-headed and not agree".

So claimed Joseph Odorich, the vice-president of the American United Steel Workers Union, as he emerged from marathon talks with the seven main steel firms in which eventually took the 'harder' course — and conceded a 9% wage cut for his 260,000 members!

His rationalisation for concessions that saddle steelworkers with a 41-month deal while handling the employers a \$2 billion bonus was a classic statement of the thinking of reformist union leaders around the world.

Instead of starting from the needs of the workers, and the defence of their interests, he sees first the problems of the employers.

"To have a union you have to have a company — and that company has to make money".

It is no great surprise to read such statement for a US trade union leaders, who like almost every American bureaucrat, is tied hand and foot to the twin political parties of US capitalism — the Democrats and Republicans.

With soaring unemployment in the USA and Reagan's policies grinding living standards ever lower, the need for the unions to build a political party that champions the needs and demands of the working class and oppressed in the USA — a Labour Party — is greater than ever.

Odorich shows that such a fight will need to combat the union bureaucrats — just as the fight for mass action and socialist policies in today's British Labour Party demands a fight against the bureaucratic leaders of the TUC.

Imperialist legacy leads to Assam massacre

IN the last few weeks, well over 2,500 people have been killed in communal violence in the state of Assam in North-East India.

In the worst-hit area, the Brahmaputra Valley, martial law was declared on Wednesday March 2 in a desperate attempt to stop communal riots. Here, 230,000 people have been made homeless and the refugees have settled in 130 camps in Assam and West Bengal.

Of the casualties, 1,000 were Bengali Muslims murdered by local hill tribes in the midst of a mass 'anti-foreigner' campaign.

The occasion for the communal atrocities was the decision of Indira Gandhi's Congress (I) government to hold a state election in Assam after a year of direct rule from Delhi which saw a marked increase in Assamese chauvinist agitation.

The origins of the conflict date back to the consolidation of British rule and the colonial development of the area.

Migrate

Before 1901 Assam, despite its high soil fertility and abundance of well-irrigated land, had not been developed by either the Assamese or the British. From 1901 onwards, however, peasants from the densely populated Bengal began to migrate to Assam in search of land. This process started slowly but was quickened by the extension of the rail network in 1903 and the unification of Assam and East Bengal into one administrative unit by the British from 1905 to 1912.

By 1921, 258,000 Bengalis had settled in the Goalpara district of the Brahmaputra valley, and by 1947 the numbers of settlers and their dependents numbered over one million.

The British colonialists welcomed the migration. It increased the labour supply in this isolated province and Bengali peasants were acquainted with more advanced agricultural techniques than the indigenous Assamese.

Divide and rule

But immediately there were cultural conflicts. The Assamese Hindus viewed the mainly Muslim Bengalis as foreign invaders from another country, and feared the loss of their religious and linguistic identity.

The British had almost perfected the art of divide and rule since they began to

ALY MIR looks at the history of the recent conflicts in North East India.

conquer the Indian sub-continent in the eighteenth century. From 1920, the colonial administrators introduced a type of apartheid — the 'line system' — which geographically separated Assamese from Bengali, and so reduced local conflict in the short-term while continuing immigration and maintaining communal mistrust. The Assamese agitated for stricter controls on Bengali immigration.

By 1936, 37.7% of the total occupied land in Assam's Nowgong district was under Bengali settlement, whilst 62.3% was still under Assamese cultivation. Yet many thousands of land-hungry Muslims still wanted to move to Assam, and resented their forced settlement on crowded settlement land whilst vast areas of Assamese land went uncultivated.

Organise

Soon the Bengalis began to organise against the segregation and they received support from some Assamese Muslims, such as Khan Bahadur Nuruddin Ahmed, who tried — unsuccessfully — to unite Bengali and Assamese Muslims.

In 1926 the chauvinist demagogue Ambikagiri Raychaudhury organised the Assam Samrakshini Sabha (Association for the Conservation of Assam). C.S. Mullan, an English colonial official, systematically aggravated the already delicate situation by stirring up fears of immigration, launching a Muslim-scare campaign amongst Hindus and referring to a 'Muslim invasion' that would leave the Assamese with only the Sibsagar district.

Thus, the same colonialists who maintained constant Bengali immigration for their own economic interests consciously exploited Assamese backwardness by inflaming communal prejudice.

The Assamese press launched a campaign for the do-

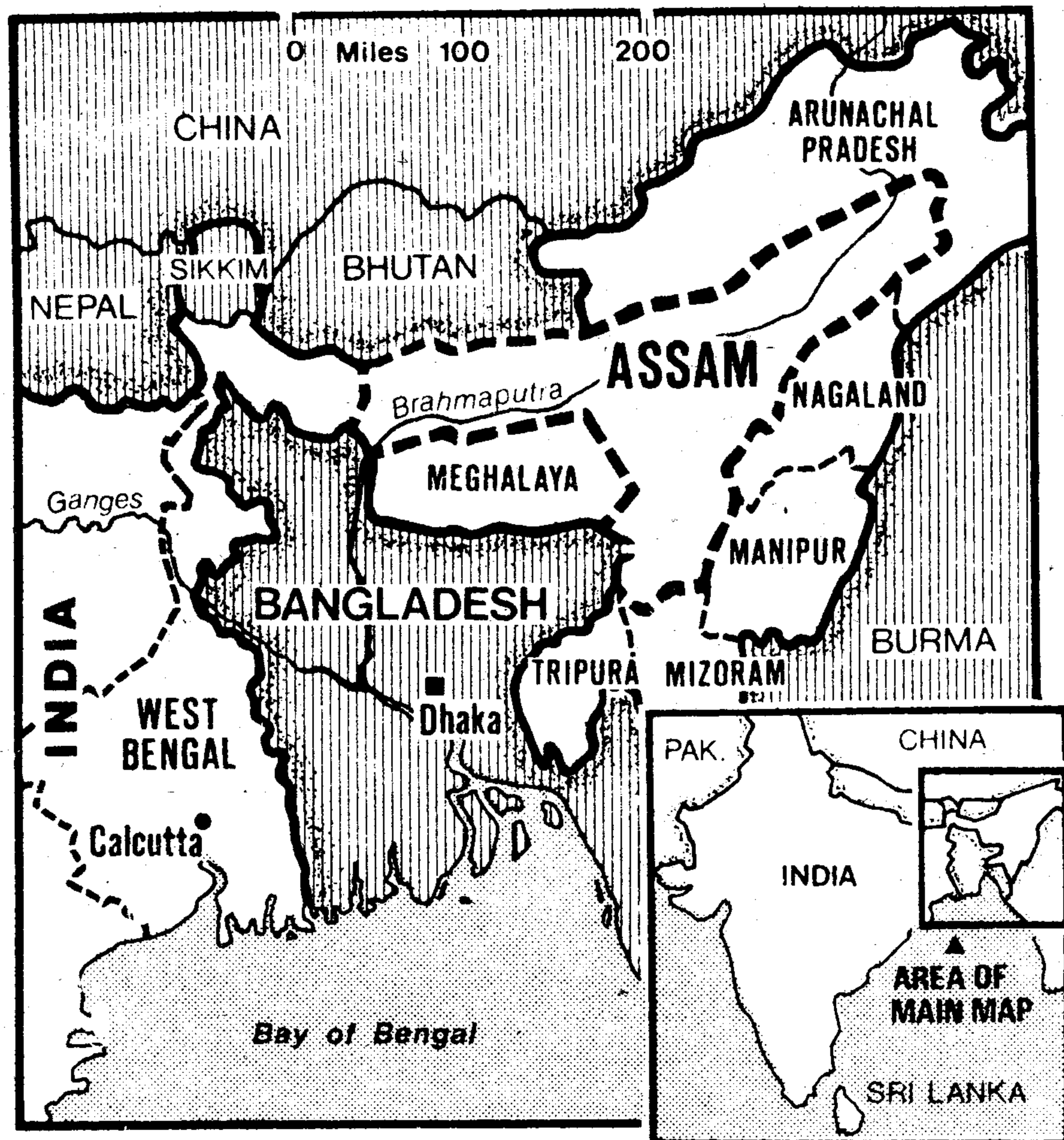
sing down of Bengali school classes and the introduction of tighter segregation.

The bourgeois nationalists of the Indian National Congress equivocated on the question of opposition to the line system and adapted to Hindu prejudice. Congress leader Jauraharlal Nehru echoed the concerns of the colonialists when he said in 1937: 'From the point of view of developing Assam and making it a wealthy province immigration is desirable. The real problem is how to control and organise this immigration.'

Another Congress leader, Rajendra Prasad, considered introducing Bihar Hindus to Assam to hold back and intimidate the Bengali Muslims!

Left isolated from the Assamese Muslims and deserted by the Congress, the Bengalis organised under Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan in opposition to the Assamese Hindu majority. 'The Maulana of Bhasani', as he became known, exploited the immigrants' vulnerability in order to build a political base for himself on a peasant land reform programme and the preservation of the Bengalee language.

In 1943 the colonial-dominated Assam govern-



ment moved towards dismantling the line system in the areas where Hindus were in a safe majority. Yet this only provided chauvinist Assamese groups with an opportunity to raise the 'Hinduism in Danger' slogan, whilst the Muslim League pressed for the complete abolition of the line.

Sir Saadulla's government continued to hope that this compromise might work. But prolonged government-sponsored All-Party Talks in 1945 revealed that there was no basis for agreement between the Muslims, who wanted the abolition of line segregation, and Congress, which refused to even accept an amnesty for Bengalis who had illegally settled on land eight or more years ago!

Thus, by the end of the period of direct British colonial control, Assam, already legally divided into two separate electorates, was socially divided, and as Partition transformed East Bengal into East Pakistan communal violence broke out.

Three years after India became independent, communal riots erupted

again in Assam and 100,000 Muslims were forced out. The Congress regime in Delhi suppressed the dissent of the Assamese and hill tribes, but neither Delhi, nor the Assamese-dominated state council of Ministers, made any effort to tackle the fundamental cause of the communal friction, which was the unequal land settlement and the separation of Hindu from Moslem.

The communal violence of 1950 intimidated many Bengalis into falsely giving their language as Assamese in answer to census officials. The publication of this census in 1951 gave the Assamese an apparently substantial majority, and the Assamese mobilised to remove Bengalis from prominent positions.

But after 1971 things changed. The Pakistani civil war which created Bangladesh also led to a considerable refugee displacement — many settling in neighbouring Assam.

This restored some of the confidence of the Muslims and led to a revival of the Bangalee language. This in turn alarmed sections of the Assamese petty bourgeoisie who raised the old 'Hinduism in Danger' slogan of the 1930s and encouraged a Hindu-Assamese cultural revival.

Stalinists

It is ironic that two of the most prominent Assamese writers to be revered in this chauvinist climate have been Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, once a sympathiser of the Communist Party of India (CPI), and Bishna Prasad, formerly a member of the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI).

Today's Stalinists have continued to flirt with Assamese nationalism, and by doing so have played into the hands of the extreme right-wing.

But it has been the more consistent chauvinists of the right who have made the greatest impact.

It was against a reactionary cultural offensive that the current agitation matured. It only took a careless remark in 1979 by the then chief election commissioner S.L. Sakher, and the 'discovery' of 45,000 illegally registered Bangladeshis on Assam's electoral rolls, to start the mass 'anti-foreigner' movement.

In four years four state governments have been brought down by 'people's strikes' and 'people's curfews'. Oil production, vital to Indian capitalism, and banks and local government offices were all closed. The All-Assam Students' Union had led the calls for mass repatriation and denials of rights to Bengali immigrants.

Faced with the choice of giving power to the popular-front 'Left and Democratic Alliance', led by the Communist Party of India, or imposing 'Presidential rule', Assam's governor chose to do the latter because Congress (I) had proved completely incapable either of controlling communal violence or crushing the Tea Workers' Strike (Assam's biggest ever labour protest).

When the year of Presidential Rule allowed under the constitution expired, Gandhi gambled on calling the election. But the boycott by the extreme right and the world focus on the elections led to the near hysteria that caused India's worst communal atrocities since Partition.

Even though Congress (I) beat the Left & Democratic Alliance the victory is a hollow one given the destabilising influence of the violence and the Assamese strikes that have paralysed most of the state.

The crisis in Assam is a result both of British colonialism's near-apartheid land settlement segregation, and the post-independence record of the Indian bourgeoisie which has neglected India's remote peripheral states and become increasingly dependent on imperialism.

RODO JOHO

Bimonthly 'News from Militant Japanese Workers' in English. Copies available, 30p plus postage, from Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.



Nissan — where union goon squads lay into dissidents

Ford bosses in Halewood openly model their plans "After Japan". In the last of his series on Japan, Bill Peters looks at the grim prototype.

I HAVE tried, in this series of articles, to give a flavour of the conditions faced by the working class in Japan; the dominance of the yellow unions in the major manufacturing industries and the tremendous control Japanese management is able to exercise over the workers through those unions.

Such a picture, however, would be far from complete if I did not say something about a 'union' which, as far as I can see, excels, even in Japanese terms, in the despotic rule it systematically imposes on its members on behalf of the employers.

I am talking of the notorious yellow union at Nissan, which is affiliated to the Federation of Japan Auto Workers — Jidosha Roren.

Nissan — maker of the Datsun — is Japan's second largest vehicle producer.

Whilst in Japan I was privileged to discuss with a group of workers from the Nissan Kawaguchi heavy truck and bus plant in the Northern suburbs of Tokyo.

These workers have waged a courageous fight for many years against the brutal Nissan Union/management set up, including physical assaults by union goon squads.

Not enough

One of the workers I met in particular, Yoshiji Azuma (who has been 10 years in the Kawasaki plant), was personally beaten by goons, and union officials, when he argued at a lunch time meeting that the demands of the 1981 wage claim were not high enough.

(At Nissan the 'claim' is fixed behind the scenes with the Company before it is publicly announced so that agreement is always reached).

Azuma was eventually forced to go to the police after repeated physical attacks, illegal confinements, abuse, threats and intimidation over the course of a month.

This case is not the exception but the real face of the Nissan 'union'. Its leaders see themselves as a campaigning force for yellow unions on behalf of the Japanese employers as a whole.

It is an affiliate not just of Jidosha Roren but also of the ultra right wing IMF-JC Federation.

The Nissan union in its

By
Bill
Peters

present form was founded on violence.

When Nissan merged with the Prince Automobile Company in 1965 there were two unions in the new company. The Nissan union which even then was reactionary and affiliated to the Doreic Federation; and the union from Prince Auto, Zenkin, which belonged to Sohyo.

Dissolved

As soon as the merger was completed the Nissan union demanded that Zenkin be dissolved and the member join the Nissan union.

Many of the activists in Zenkin were opposed to being absorbed by a yellow union and refused to join.

Many of them were beaten up by goon squads and subjected to physical assaults in various ways. Zenkin was forced to take legal actions for such assaults against over 50 officials of the Nissan union.

The bureaucrats who control the Nissan union also have means of intimidation other than physical violence.

In 1979 seven militant workers from the Atsuzi Parts plant were expelled by the Nissan union for persistently campaigning for trade union democracy. Because of the closed shop they were promptly sacked by the Company.

After they were sacked, militant activists in the area mounted a defence campaign to demand their reinstatement. Supporters of the campaign were promptly beaten up by goons and had their cars smashed.

Ideological

I don't want to give the impression, however, that the Nissan union rules its members of behalf of management simply through fear and intimidation; far from it. Like all the big yellow unions in



Japanese militants demonstrate against plans to merge the more militant Sohyo unions with the yellow Domei federation

Japan it has sophisticated methods of political and ideological control of the workers.

The Nissan union does have influence. It is much more powerful in a formal sense than for example the yellow union at Toysta — which is structurally broadly similar.

It has to be consulted by management for example before a worker can be moved from one job to another. The union President has to be consulted before a promotion at any level can take place. Even at multi-national level it has considerable influence in, for example, investment policy or the decision to build a plant in another country.

The Nissan union makes its assessment of the labour relations in a country where a plant is to be built — and may veto the decision if it assesses that militant unions are likely to be established.

It has been reported, for example, that the President of the Nissan Union Shioji Ichiro went to Mexico in 1981 to ensure that no militant unions were established in the new Nissan plant there.

The question of how that influence is used, however, is adequately answered by the Nissan unions slogan — 'The Company's Prosperity'. It is a slogan that the union sets out in the most determined way to make a reality.

In addition to the generalised methods of Japanese management (which have been described in previous articles) in such as QC circles, wage rates based on loyalty assessments,

etc. — all of which of course operate within Nissan to great effect, Nissan has some systems of its own.

Nissan has a slogan 'Productivity, Progress and Participation' — summarised as 'P-3'.

This refers to the 'Economic Co-operation Committees'. It is a land of ultimate in 'Worker participation' — as its name suggests.

Hard to oppose

These committees are established at every level in the Company. There, all Company decisions are put to the 'union reps' and endorsed, thus making everything joint union/management policy and much more difficult for anyone to oppose.

Another feature of Nissan is the degree of integration between the individuals who staff the 'union' and those who staff the management.

This has reached the point where a period as a 'union official' becomes a recognised part of the career training of a top manager. If the Company decides that one of its managers should become a union official it simply gives them an instruction to that effect: they then go off and become a union official.

A few years later management will probably decide that they have gained their experience and return them to a formal management position.

The 'democracy' in the Nissan union which allows and facilitates such incredible practices must be

the envy of Frank Chapple or Terry Duffy. It operates in the following way:

Shop stewards, the lowest level of representation, usually covering about 10 workers, are not elected but appointed by the senior shop steward.

The members are then asked to endorse the nomination at a morning meeting. Those nominated are invariably unanimously endorsed since the implications for a worker raising an objection to the Senior Stewards nomination are far reaching.

In the history of the union no nominated candidate has failed to get elected.

The election of a Senior Shop Steward is even less 'democratic'. The nomination for this post is decided by a committee appointed by the union. There is no other way to be nominated therefore there is never more than one nomination.

Having only one candidate, however, is not enough for the bureaucracy. They demand a 100% vote for that candidate. Anything less would undermine the authority of the union in front of the management (?).

They can achieve this due to the voting procedures. The workers line up at the ballot box to have their names checked off. They then fill in the ballot form on a table in front of the foreman. Under these conditions it is very rare that a blank paper is returned. If it does, an enquiry usually occurs to try to establish how it happened.

It can easily be seen by this method how the management can put their



Militaristic Prime Minister Nakasone: Nissan workers' views on him are kept on file

people in and out of the union structure.

In the same way that 'elections' obtain 99% votes, so do policy decisions. Major management/Participation decisions are taken in front of section meetings and mass meetings. There the unanimous approval of even the most potentially unpopular decisions is the norm.

A worker who asks a critical question or abstains on the vote (a vote against would be very unusual indeed) would be browbeaten, victimised, black-listed and may well end up outside the plant.

The bureaucrats argue that the union would be embarrassed if views contrary to its policy were voiced at one of its meet-

think of the new Prime Minister? — What do you think of various critics of the government?

Workers are asked what they do in their spare time or what they did at the weekend, which intimidates workers against involvement in any kind of left wing or militant activity.

These reports when they are compiled are sent to secret sub-committee, discreetly called the 'intelligence sub-committee'. From there they are sent to the union President and the Federation.

From this the obvious intimidation arises. Workers are told not to speak to militants and so on.

It is a great tribute to the small number of

As we go to press, we hear that Yoshiji Azuma and fellow dissident Masao Kayama have been endorsed by the Nissan Union to run for the next elections in August 1983. This abrupt and unexpected switch of position by the leadership appears to flow from the decision of the management to scrap some of the formal consultations with the union. In retaliation the Nissan Union last October announced its withdrawal from the P3 movement as Union Chairman Shioji Ichiro manoeuvres to restore his close working relationship with Nissan President Ishihara Takushi.

ings. (In reality, of course, that is views contrary to management policy).

The direct ideological control of the workers is horrific. Once a week the 'shop steward' or rep has to make out an ideological report on the 10 or so members he (there are no women production workers, of course, in Nissan plants) represents.

The report has to include: who is complaining about anything? Who has caused any trouble? Questions must be asked of the workers: what do you

militant activists in Nissan that they continue to struggle under these conditions.

The workers I spoke to were organised with activists outside the plant who could distribute leaflets for them and stood a candidate for shop steward in the 1981 elections for shop steward. They intend to do the same at the next elections.

We should salute the struggle, and the struggles of other militant activists in Japan, and wish them success.

Court circular

Sinister court moves suffer a setback

by Harry Sloan

AN astounding court case has just concluded in the USA, in which a lawyer expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in 1979 unsuccessfully demanded a Federal Court act to reinstate him and remove from the SWP's leadership people whom he alleges are government agents.

The plaintiff, Alan Gelfand, a \$30,000 a year attorney in Los Angeles, was expelled after he took court action against the SWP in 1978.

The bizarre behaviour however is not the idiocy of an individual, reactionary, petty bourgeois crank: it is a sinister, well-financed, disruptive operation, in which Gelfand admits he has been working hand-in-glove with Gerry Healy's British Workers Revolutionary Party, and its American offshoot, the Workers League.

Since 1975 Healy and his acolytes have waged a slander campaign against the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party, alleging that veteran SWP leader Joseph Hansen had been for 40 years a double agent of the FBI and GPU — and then that Hansen's colleagues and successors in the SWP leadership were also spies and agents.



The late Joseph Hansen

These slanders have been roundly condemned by every self-respecting revolutionary organisation around the world.

Gelfand in 1977 began to raise these very points within the SWP, in close collaboration with the British WRP. In evidence given under oath in pre-trial depositions, he admitted that his campaign within the SWP began only after a "vacation" in England in 1977.

In the summer of 1978, he contacted the WRP's paper, and spoke to WRP Central Committee member Alex Mitchell. Shortly after that he contacted Healy's leader in the US, Workers League National Secretary David North. In December 1978 he began the legal action against the SWP.

He discussed on as many as six substantial occasions with North up to the time of his expulsion in 1979. Such collaboration with an opponent organisation is clearly in breach of the constitution of the SWP.

Since his expulsion he has met WRP leaders in England in 1980 and 1981, and admits to over 15 meetings with WL leaders.

From October 1980 onwards he admits to receiving money from the WL "to help with the costs of his case", which in 1980 alone totalled \$30,000 in lawyers' fees.

During 1980, 1981 and the first quarter of 1982, Gelfand spent no less than \$115,000 simply on legal fees — over and above other expenses including travel and transcript costs.

He admits that he had by then received no less than \$40,000 from the WL towards these expenses, while North and two other WL members had been working full-time on his lawsuit as "investigators".

His case is that the SWP is not a legitimate

political party since its leadership was taken over by US government agents 40 years ago, and that he was expelled because he sought to expose the agents in the leadership.

Gelfand's panel of witnesses is a motley array of Healyites, cops and narks. They include David North, long-serving WL member Jean Brust, and WRP veteran Cliff Slaughter, along with Los Angeles cops Richey Gibby and Vincent Perizzi, who infiltrated the SWP in the 1970s, and FBI informer Ed Heisler, once a leading member of the SWP.

United front with cops

These are curious bed-fellows indeed for Healy, whose stock response to political opponents is to attempt to portray them as 'police agents'.

Here — at enormous expense — the WRP and WL constructed a 'united front' with self-confessed cops in an effort to disrupt and destroy an opponent political organisation.



Healy (foreground, with Slaughter to his right) on WRP march against a police raid on their Derbyshire school in 1975

And the continuation of the case rested on the co-operation of District Court Judge Mariana Pfalzer, who admitted that Gelfand has no evidence to present, but who herself has a seamy record of involvement in approving spying activities by the Los Angeles police against left wing organisations like the SWP.

Mensheviks

What are the 'principles' which Healy and his lawyer friends are claiming to defend? Gelfand is demanding that the court apparatus of the capitalist state

intervene in the internal life of an organisation of the workers' movement and overturn its rules, constitution and leadership.

In 1903 when Lenin and the Bolsheviks split with the Mensheviks, one of the central issues was precisely that of party rules, and thus the type of party that was to be built.

Lenin fought tooth and nail against the Menshevik conception that anyone who chose to do so could regard themselves as a member of the party: he insisted upon a level of political agreement, disciplined political work and financial support as the basis for a revolutionary organisation.

Yet the self-styled 'Bolshevik' WRP has urged on and financed a court action by Gelfand in the USA which flouts all of these principles, by seeking court action to impose upon the SWP a 'member' who plainly has no agreement with them, has for years acted in defiance of SWP discipline, and whose public legal attacks on the Party have cost it tens of thousands of dollars, and threatened its very independent existence.

As many US trade unionists and labour movement activists realised, if Gelfand and his Healyite backers had succeeded, the precedent would have stood

as a threat to every left wing or radical organisation.

No longer would the membership be able to determine who should or should not be a member or a leader of the organisation: the courts would do that over their heads.

As such, the Healyite action was an outright attack on the constitutional rights not only of the SWP but the whole American labour movement.

Its complete lack of scruple in invoking the apparatus of the capitalist state against its opponents in the labour movement is paralleled by the court action for libel being taken by Vanessa Redgrave and the WRP against Socialist Organiser, the costs of which threaten our paper with the prospects of bankruptcy.

SO has consistently argued that the WRP allegations of libel and our defence should be discussed not in the capitalist courts offering a field day for the media witch-hunters but presented to an independent labour movement inquiry.

In the meantime, we face mounting costs as the court deadline looms ever closer. Donations are urgently needed to the Labour Movement Defence Fund.

LMPDF: c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY

Will WRP sue the the BBC?

THERE is need of a thorough investigation into the links of the 'Workers Revolutionary Party' (WRP) with various Arab governments.

There is a lot of circumstantial evidence which suggests that the WRP receives substantial sums of money from Libya, and possibly from other Arab governments.

Not long ago it was putting out Iraqi government public relations handouts with imprint of Newline on them. One glossy Newline pamphlet, for instance, carried an account of the career of the butcherous Ba'athist dictator Saddam Hussein sycophantic enough to be an

official handout. At the same time the wretched Newline hacks wrote articles justifying the shooting of members of the Communist Party of Iraq by Hussein's regime.

Relations with Iraq seem cooler now: but sycophancy towards Col. Gaddafi and his 'green revolution' oozes all over the pages of Newline.

In the past the WRP has — wrongly — called him a fascist.

Regular readers of SO will know that while we are being sued for libel by the WRP, they have surprisingly ignored our repeated statements that they are widely believed to receive Arab government money.

Last Sunday's BBC Money Programme carried an investigation of the financial links between Libya and the WRP. It established a circumstantial case based on the fact that the tiny WRP has a vast printing press, and a daily more lavishly printed than any Fleet Street paper with a tiny circulation (they said 10,000, probably it is a great deal less).

Print works

The programme showed shots of the Astmoor Litho printing works at Runcorn. The WRP would not answer the door to them. Sinister-

looking closed-circuit TV cameras filmed the filurers. The usual paraphernalia of the WRP's paranoid Ayatollah Healy, it will have impressed the viewers that the left are very odd indeed.

The programme was both shallow and underresearched. It talked of the revolutionary left in general as possible linked to Gaddafi by chains of gold. It talked about the left and ethnic press, but said nothing about the ethnic press.

The programme suggested that as much as £1½ million may have been channelled to the WRP by the Libyan government by way of overpayment for 'commerc-

ial work'. It did not investigate the financial side of WRP films like 'The Palestinian', which are popular in Arab countries.

It left a great many avenues unexplored. But it did plainly allege that the WRP gets money from Gaddafi. Will the WRP sue the BBC? Such a libel case would force the WRP to 'open its books' to their opponents' solicitors.

There is still a need for a thorough investigation into the links of the WRP with Arab governments — a labour movement investigation.

Sean Matgamna

Science

WINDSCALE FALL-OUT DEATHS

by Les Hearn

READERS may have missed newspaper accounts of a recent report by the National Radiological Protection Board (the government agency which oversees all aspects of radio-



activity and safety).

The report, into the long term effects of the famous fire at Windscale in 1957 caused a lot of embarrassment at the Sizewell Public Enquiry, because it estimated that, far from having no serious effect on people's health, the radioactive fall-out in Cumbria which resulted from the fire may have caused up to 260 cancers of the thyroid gland with some 13 deaths!

The Windscale fire caused the release of clouds of radioactive Iodine-131 (the ordinary non-radioactive form of Iodine is Iodine-127). Now in abso-

lute terms, Iodine-131 is not very dangerous. It breaks down very fast and is virtually all gone in a few weeks.

Unfortunately, it is concentrated by the human body into the thyroid gland, where it is incorporated into thyroid hormone, which controls the body's metabolism, and some aspects of growth and development.

So a small amount of radioactivity spread throughout the whole body can become a relatively large amount when concentrated into a small gland at the base of the neck.

Most at risk are young children, and because thyroid cancer typically takes decades to appear, some of those exposed in 1957 (namely children in the northern counties) may still be at risk.

How come it has taken 26 years for this report to come out? British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. used a much lower estimate of the radiation released by the fire, and also instigated the pouring away of milk from cows grazing across 500 square kilometres of Cumbrian farmland. At the time BNFL said they were 'erring wildly on the cautious side' but according to the NRPB they missed about 88% of the Iodine-131!

AND again from Sellafield [Windscale].

Last week a former employee, John Taylor, was appealing against dismissal, claiming that he had been forced into resigning after he had alleged that:

- The plant's laundry was inefficient and failed to completely remove radioactivity from overalls.
- That a report he wrote on this was not acted on.
- That automatic alarms were adjusted so as not to go off too often.

Taylor says that staff 'suffer a significant radiological exposure which could easily remain completely undetected'. This is because the detectors check the overall level of contamination, though contamination is often 'highly localised and correspondingly intense'. Do YOU believe THAT?!

Sweet nothings?

ANOTHER aspect of our unhealthy capitalist diet.

Medical researchers in Manchester and Nova Scotia have found a striking correlation between the amount of sugar in the diet and breast cancer — across 20 countries. And Britain has the HIGHEST sugar intake and the HIGHEST rate of breast cancer!

Baked Beans

Why do we eat so much sugar? Sugar is added to vir-

tually all processed foods — for no reason in most cases [why is it added to baked beans, processed peas, tomato ketchup, Daddie's Sauce and Colman's mustard?!]. It is addictive, and therefore adding it to processed foods makes it more likely that people will keep on buying them, in preference to fresher food products which carry lower profits.

And the price we pay is diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and now, it seems, breast cancer.



"If the area officer doesn't support the demonstration and pickets, it's bad. He always says he was busy..."

'This fight should not just be left to the members'

On Saturday's lively demonstration against the threatened closure of South London women's hospital, Andrea Campbell and Debbie Cameron interviewed Frank Faulkner, NUPE Branch Secretary (Bolingbroke and South London Hospitals).

WHAT is management saying about the closure?

I've written to the DMT (District Management Team) three times, asking about the situation, requesting figures about bed capacity in the District and for other information. Three times, and they have not replied.

What support have you had from NUPE?

I'm disgusted. It should not just be left to the members. The top people in the union should do something. It gives the members a lack of confidence in the union.

If the one area officer doesn't support the demonstration and pickets it's bad. He always says he was busy. But what could be more important than this demonstration today?

They know all about it at head office. They sent a reporter to write something for NUPE news. Then they only put a small article on the back page.

Management are putting a lot of pressure on union reps in this district. One has resigned under severe pressure. Another is being harassed because he raised the question of asbestos in his hospital. We need support.



Is the hospital being maintained?

What they are trying to do now is scare people. Two doctors from St. George's, who will gain if we lose, are complaining that it is not up to standards. Well, if that is the case, why did they allow it to happen in the first place and only point it out after they decided to close it?

Is that part of a smear campaign?

Yes, I think it is. It's all part of their propaganda — that the hospital isn't safe. I am watching every minute; very carefully.

They are trying to phase out the Health and Safety Committee.

Why?

Because it keeps the hospital upgraded. If we didn't pressure them through the Health & Safety Committee, then the hospital deteriorates.

A month ago we demanded to see the DMT about the future of this hospital. Now, they come to tell us it has to close. When I asked why they said because Wandsworth Health Authority is too rich.

Is it rich?

It can't be that rich, or they wouldn't keep closing hospitals. Where is the money they supposedly saved from St. Benedict's, the Weir maternity, and

Queen Elizabeth house?

We keep getting told by the Tories that they haven't got the money.

Do you think that is true?

No — it can't be if they can pay out all that money, billions, on the Falklands war — and now billions more to keep the army there.

It's priorities. Their priority is arms. There is too much spent on defence.

Do you think you will win the fight to save the hospital?

Yes, definitely. We will keep fighting and we will win.

New 'Life' attack on women

by Jenny Fisher

THE Director of Public Prosecutions is considering whether to prosecute the British Pregnancy Advisory Service for supplying the 'morning-after' pill. This follows complaints made to the Sheffield police by the anti-abortion 'Life' group.

A successful prosecution could make the 'morning after' pill illegal and have far reaching consequences.

At the moment, scientific opinion takes pregnancy to start from the time the fertilised egg is implanted in the womb. So the

morning-after pill, which stops the egg being implanted, is counted as a contraceptive measure not as an abortion.

But 'Life' believes that life starts from the moment of conception — the moment the egg is fertilised. If the DPP and then the courts accept this view, then the 'morning-after' pill will be subject to the same legal controls as abortion.

There are also implications for women using the 'Intra-Uterine Device' (IUD) as a method of

contraception. This method relies on inserting a 'coil' into the womb, to prevent the fertilised egg being implanted.

Medical research would also be affected. Doctors check that fertilised eggs haven't been damaged before they implant them in the mother's womb for 'test tube' babies. Damaged eggs aren't implanted.

If it were decided that a fertilised egg is a 'life', then not implanting an egg would be murder.

Doctors researching into infertility and genetic disorders would also be affected. Their research depends a lot on being able to fertilise eggs and then see what's wrong.

Life's argument puts pseudo-scientific speculations above women's real, immediate rights.

For the woman who has been raped, whose contraception has failed, or who has had sexual intercourse without contraceptive protection, it is a much better alternative to take the 'morning after' pill than to wait to see if pregnancy is confirmed, and then make the choice between abortion or carrying on with the pregnancy.

And there are 250,000 women in Britain using an IUD for contraception. Many of these use the IUD because medical reasons prevent them using the pill on a daily basis.

We need to defend the partial rights we have at the moment, and fight to extend them to a right to abortion on demand.



Contact:
National Abortion Campaign,
374, Grays Inn Road,
London WC1.

German women defend abortion

FIVE thousand women and several hundred men demonstrated in Karlsruhe on February 26, against attempts to curtail abortion rights in West Germany. A counter-march attracted 300 — mostly men.

The protest took place on the eighth anniversary of a legal decision in Dortmund, which interpreted the constitutional right to abortion to mean that there was no obligation for the National Health Service (provided by private insurance companies) to pay. The court's ruling has meant that the whole legal position of abortion is under doubt.

The "218-group" (named after the relevant clause in the constitution) is campaigning for the removal of this confusing clause, and calling for the state to fund full abortion and contraception facilities.

The campaign sees this as an important part of fighting the reactionary moves to force women back into the home and stress their role within the family which the government has been making, as the economic recession worsens.

By broadening out the campaign, they have attracted the support of lesbian groups, who hadn't been involved in the fight for abortion rights before, and of women trade unionists. The Karlsruhe DGB (West German TUC) mobilised for the march (although only supporting limited demands), and there were solidarity greetings from the ASF — the union of SPD (Labour) women.

The women come from different political groups, but are united seeing that a fight against cuts in public spending is the only thing that will defend and extend women's rights.

The 218-group is now preparing for September 4. This is the first anniversary of the founding of a Catholic anti-abortion group: the "Choose Life Initiative". 80 women protested on the day it was founded: now the task is to see that the protest is much larger when it celebrates its first anniversary.

The missing ranks

WHICH meeting could pass a motion calling for peace, applaud the Greenham Common Peace Campers — yet muster an audience of only ten people at a fringe meeting addressed by a woman from Greenham?

The TUC Women's Conference.

Which meeting could pass a motion calling for an end to sexual discrimination in the immigration laws, ignoring a call from a CPSA delegate to reject the motion on the grounds that implicitly it accepted racism in immigration procedures?

The TUC Women's Conference in a move hardly likely to inspire

confidence among black women workers.

One look at the Women's TUC bulletin shows how little it is concerned with the everyday struggles of its women members. The height of activity is the odd presentation to government bodies; a report here, a conference there.

The Labour Party Women's Conference has shown the way forward for women unionists. By building up Labour Party women's sections, and ensuring participation at Conference by rank and file delegates, Labour women are slowly winning control over their own

conference.

There is already a clear difference at the TUC Women's Conference between the unions which send their full-time officials as delegates, and those that elect women at national conferences.

There must be more such rank and file delegates if the Women's TUC is to be changed into a body that can co-ordinate campaigning activity to fight for women's interests in and out of work.

In the meantime, we'll just have to console ourselves with the thought that at the TUC Women's Conference, out of a platform of 15 only five were men!

Make the 'People's March

Carol Hobbs looks at some questions about the new People's March for Jobs

SHOULD we support the People's March for Jobs? Every single step of the way. We should pull out all the stops to build the March and ensure that as many of our comrades as possible are involved.

We have to take up our criticisms by participating. It is only in the context of active support that they will gain an audience and be taken seriously.

A march like this, with all the publicity it will receive, can be a tremendous focus for the anger and seething frustration millions feel against a government which openly accepts responsibility for the devastation of unemployment.

We have to take this march and try to imbue it with the spirit of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1920s and 1930s which sang from one end of the country to the other:

"Millions of workers are starving in revolt.

With our flag of red we blaze the trail.

Marching forward onto London Town.

Marching forward onto victory.

Give us your help boys (and girls).

We're fighting the battle for you

With the NUWM we fight as the shock troops of the Unemployed."

Those are fine words but wasn't the 1981 People's March organised on a very different basis? Wasn't it aimed not at rousing resistance to fight the Tories but rather as an attempt to plead for jobs? Wasn't it more like the Jarrow Marches than the NUWM demonstrations?

Unfortunately you are quite right and it does look as if this march will be the same.

The real basis of the last March was that unemployment was a natural disaster — something like an earthquake or an outbreak of cholera.

Something that we all, rich and poor, belted earl, archbishop, and unemployed school meals worker would oppose, if we were of good will and keen conscience.

Nothing at all to do with capitalism or the Tories.

The unemployed were therefore unfortunate casualties, objects for sympathy and soup kitchens. Len Murray described the 1981 London Rally as 'another compelling call for compassion', and it was quite appropriate that its finale should be the presentation of a humble petition at 10 Downing Street, politely requesting Mrs Thatcher to change her

mind and help the victims.

If you think a bit about it — and Len Murray and the march organisers have — you will see that reality is completely different.

Four million or more unemployed is in the interests of Thatcher and the class she represents. That's why she has intensified the inherent movement of British capital towards that figure.

We won't change the minds of Thatcher and Tebbit and the interests they represent by petitions, but rather by confronting them head on.

This government is as unresponsive to knee-bending as it is to logic or reason. All they understand is the equivalent of a Kirkby kiss or a Yosser Hughes as I believe it is now styled.

But why isn't the TUC supporting political marches against Thatcher's policies? Surely Murray



"The massive rally in London provided a platform where Arthur Scargill called for industrial action as a reply to redundancy"

wants to get short of Thatcher and get Labour back into Downing Street again, like with Jack Jones and Wilson and Callaghan?

Len Murray, like most full time officials, is scared stiff of organising a real fightback, or even moving in that direction.

At the time of the last March there were numerous groups of workers actually fighting the unemployment the March was supposed to be against — Plansee, Ansells, Laurence Scotts, Schreibers, Lee Jeans, to name a few.

If Murray had wanted to stop the Tories in their tracks he would have tried to link up these struggles and fuse them with the March, calling at least a one-day national strike instead of a petition as the march's culmination.

This would have been difficult then. It is even harder now — but possible.

Murray and Co were not prepared to gamble their positions and organisations on this kind of struggle. If the Tories win, they reckon, they will have less prestige and privilege. But if such a struggle wins, then it will radicalise the workers a thousandfold and accelerate the forging of a completely new leadership and the ditching of Murray and Co.

So they are not going to lead this kind of struggle, and they are going to try to make sure that nobody else does.

So the last People's March was a way of showing workers that Murray and Co were doing something while diverting attention from what they were really up to. And that makes a very unsavoury story.

At the end of the Plansee dispute, the strike committee declared their disillusion with their District Secretary, George Caborn. George of course was deeply involved in organising the People's March.

When the Ansells workers went to the March Rally in Birmingham who should they see large as life on the platform but their regional official Brian Mathers, who had tried to get them to accept redundancy at several mass meetings, and had instructed them that their strike was official only in Region 5 and outside picketing was barred.

And John Boyd and Terry Duffy spent months sabotaging the attempts by the Laurence Scott workers to fight for their jobs. But of course they totally sup-

ported the People's March against unemployment.

So Murray and Co are supporting this year's march on the same basis as the 1981 affair?

Not quite! Murray's mind is even more on the election and less on the plight of the unemployed than it was two years ago. And he thinks that pictures of unemployed marchers on the telly shouting slogans and abusing the press helps Thatcher hammer home arguments about "extra-Parliamentary action" and "violence on the streets", alienates middle class and right wing voters, and affects Labour's election chances. Michael Foot thinks the same.

Secondly, Foot and Murray know that a march gives 'extremists' the chance to agitate about unemployment and cause trouble generally.

Thirdly they feel that the resources needed to keep the march in 'good order' could be better used in the

Trade Unions for a Labour Victory drive at present getting under way in the constituencies.

So Foot and Murray are far to the right compared with 1981. The General Council in November voted not to support this year's march. Several major unions, TGWU, NALGO, NUPE and NUM felt they had been railroaded.

At the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee — the TUC's 'inner cabinet' — Murray got beaten 7-4. At the December General Council he was outpointed 23-17.

"I have a very busy year," Len Murray pontificated afterwards. "I shall use my time how (sic) it is most effectively used — in the interests of the trade union movement."

So who will be actually organising the March? Are there any problems here?

The march will be in the hands of the TUC Regional Councils and trades

councils, which are answerable to Congress House.

Power lies in the hands of full-time officials like Colin Barnett (North West NUPE), Pete Carter (Midlands UCATT) and Jack Dromey (South East, TGWU).

As for the unemployed themselves, even the TUC unemployed centres are not given even a 50% say in decision-making.

This was the same last time around, and it meant that the march was tightly controlled from the top.

In terms of respectability and a looming election, it will be even tighter this time out.

In 1981 there were TUC-appointed marshalls and stewards. On the Eastern leg you had to sign a form stating you agreed to love, honour and obey them, otherwise, quick divorce.

Plansee strikers on the march who visited workplaces to raise support were reprimanded. The organisers then called a general meeting and warned

Natural disaster, or the fruit of a rotten system? "The real basis of the last March was that unemployment was something like an earthquake or an outbreak of cholera...."

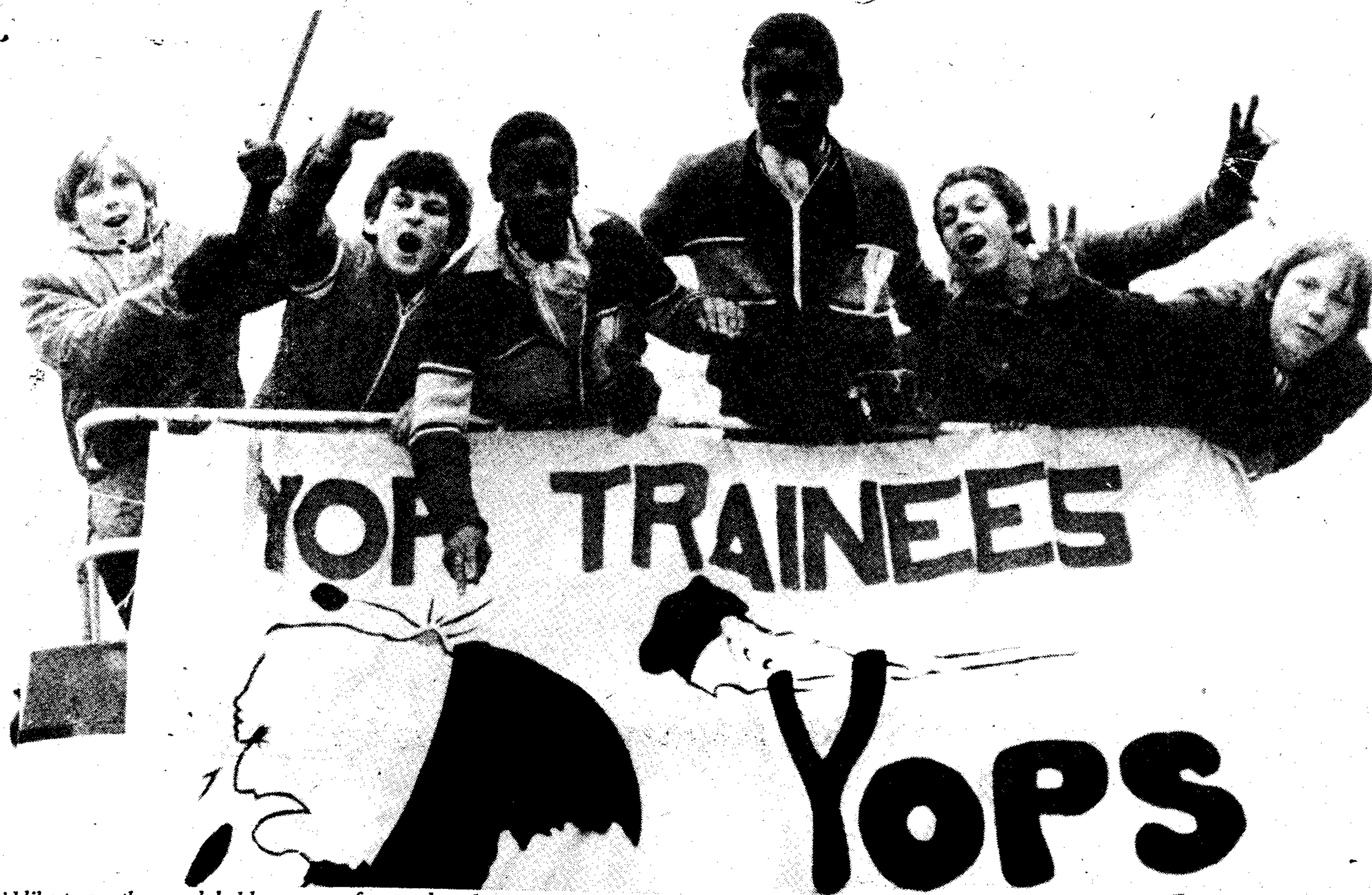


More 'people' to be united against unemployment? March organiser Jack Dromey argues that we must 'reach out and persuade the centre ground to join us'



h'into a workers' march!

WHAT TO DO



The march starts from Glasgow on April 23 and finishes with a rally in London on June 5.

The route is: Carlisle (May 1), Lancaster, Preston, Chorley, Bolton, Manchester, Stockport, Altrincham, Northwich, Crewe, Stoke (May 15), Stafford, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Birmingham (May 22), Daventry, Northampton, Bedford, Letchworth, Luton, Watford, Brent, Southall, London.

A TUC national organising committee has been set up, with Ron Todd of the TGWU as chair and Alan Jkinson of NALGO as secretary. They are planning for 500 'core' marchers, to be selected by the TUC Regional Committees.

Application forms and guidelines are being sent out this week from Congress House to regional TUCs. The regional TUCs are then responsible for circulating the forms to trade union branches in their regions and recruiting marchers. TUC guidelines call for an effort to make sure there are good numbers of women and black people on the demonstration.

The TUC expects that other marchers in addition to the 'core' 500 will join the March as it moves through the country.

Feeder marches will also run from Humberside and from Keighley through Rotherham and down the route of the 1981 People's March Eastern Leg to Northampton; from Land's End to Swindon, from Liverpool to Manchester and from Great Yarmouth to London.

What can we do?

*Get marchers nominated and sponsored now through your trade union branch or trades council, and write to your Regional TUC requesting the relevant forms.

*Participate in the town march committees, or take the initiative in setting them up. Fight for the maximum influence of these committees by the unemployed themselves.

*Argue for the march itself to be under the democratic control of the unemployed.

*Fully support and participate in the march, but argue that a march alone is not enough. The unemployed need to be organised locally and nationally in a movement that will continually campaign against all the effects of mass unemployment.

*Stress the need for the march to have contact with the employed, especially those involved in struggle, to build links between the unemployed and the employed.

*Argue for the right of all unemployed to have access to full trade union membership.

So what would you want to see on this year's march?

We'd like to see a political, workers' march aimed at uniting employed and unemployed workers against the Tory government.

We'd like to see the march led by groups of unemployed women and blacks — the greatest victims of Thatcherism.

We'd like to see workers striking when the march comes to their town. We'd like to see the march visiting every workplace where there is industrial action.

We'd like to see this time a democratic march placed

under the control of the marchers. We'd like to see the TUC call a one day general strike on the day the march enters London.

We have to argue for all this and more. Whether we get it is another matter. We should certainly try to get together on this basis all groupings in the Labour Party (and outside it, like the SWP) who will fight to turn the march into a weapon for fighting unemployment now as the best means of electing a Labour government, pledged to socialist policies in the coming contest.



Len Murray opposed this year's March — and now hints he may keep away. 'I have a very busy year'

"We'd like to see the march led by groups of unemployed women and blacks..."

marchers that if disobedience continued, the March would be halted.

So there was little internal democracy. When, after the death of Bobby Sands some marchers wore black armbands, they were ordered to remove them.

On the Liverpool leg the marchers were more successful and were able to elect their own stewards.

A constant problem was the attempts to stop the marchers linking up with anti-redundancy struggles.

Twice the Ansell workers were prevented from addressing rallies, while the likes of Roy Hattersley and Mather held forth, speaking volumes for the organisers' priorities.

In Sheffield the Plansee convenor was refused permission to speak from the platform because, it was argued, the local bishop, also down to speak, didn't

like strikes!

The youth on the Eastern leg who had been chanting 'What do we want? The Right to Work. How do we get it? Organise, Occupy, Kick the Tories Out' were in the end reduced to chanting in answer to the second question 'We're not allowed to say!'

But that's ridiculous. What kind of politics did the organisers have?

Basically those of the Communist Party and the Stalinist-influenced section of the Labour Left. You get a lot of left junior bureaucrats who think like that. They won't go place.

Jack Dromey thinks that if Norman Willis, Muraay's No. 2, takes over in a year or two, then Jack will be TUC general secretary in 1990.

Peter Carter told the marchers 'you have got to unite the nation. It's a very

big job on your hands."

Dromey told Tribune "some on the left may criticise the People's March for being too broad. We utterly reject this. We want to see socialism in Britain, but we are not going to see socialism unless we reach out and persuade the centre ground in British politics to join us."

Peter Carter retorts in the CP magazine Challenge that as far as unemployment is concerned, 'the middle classes are also feeling the effect, with students, professional people, executives and small businessmen being unable to find work. The march will unite these people behind a call on the government to make full employment its first priority.'

That's why it's called a People's March and not a workers' march, why Peter Carter could state 'respect the views of the Churches', and why respecting those views meant that the Plansee convenor was not allowed to speak.

But don't we want the support of everybody regardless of colour, creed or class? I know people like Cyril Smith supported the 1981 march and also building companies like Tyson. Doesn't every little bit help?

First off, while the kind of people you talk about gave some support it was minimal.

The March was organised, built and sustained by the working class. But, despite the fact that the Cyril Smiths and the bishops gave little real support to the March, and none at all in terms of reducing unemployment, the organisers were so thankful for the respectability that they trimmed the basis of the march to what Liberals and vicars would find acceptable.

In this kind of alliance, workers always do the donkey work while the middle class call the tune.

Yes, we need a 'broad front'. Thousands and thousands of employed and

unemployed workers did not support the 1981 March. Shouldn't we be concentrating on getting their support?

What about ensuring that when the 1983 march comes rolling through each town, every single worker downs tools to welcome them. Isn't the real broad front one between unemployed and employed workers? What have Tysons done to help the working class movement? I bet you a pound to a penny they donate to Tory Party funds. I know that if there was an upturn in the building trade, Peter Carter would find them trying to weaken trade unions, and sacking workers once the downturn came again.

Our interests are different to those of Tysons. They can't help because it's their system that causes unemployment and it is they who do the sacking.

In 1983 we've already got CP members and Bob Litherland MP saying that what is required 'is a broad movement like CND'.

But CND is not already based on the unions like the People's March is. Our job is to take CND into the unions. What the CP argue is that we should dissipate the strengths the People's March already has by taking it into the middle class and saying 'If you support us, we'll just say what you want. We won't criticise your system at all. We'll pretend unemployment is something you can catch like Herpes.'

Imports

Wasn't the last march also based on calling for import controls? Wasn't there a 'buy British' policy amongst the organisers?

That's right. But import controls are no answer to the problem of unemployment. Like the Tysons business, they can lull some workers into believing that the gaffers are not the enemy, foreign workers are.

At the time of the last

March Moes Evans was saying about the bosses' failure to call for import controls: 'We take the view that the CBI ought to end its silence and represent the interests of its members properly'.

Import controls will be met by retaliation in other countries and this will reduce the standard of living of British workers. But that's not the point. They increase nationalism, unite us with the bosses, and divide us from our brothers and sisters in other lands.

You've painted a fairly black picture of the last People's March and the prospects for this one.

I don't want to do that, but we are looking at what the problems were last time so that we can try to draw the lessons this year.

There was another side to it. There was constant tension between the rank and file marchers and the organisers. One of the great perils of a march is it brings workers, particularly the youthful, together.

As in some of the examples I have given, the rank and file were constantly chafing at the bit. Thousands demonstrated, hundreds struck, as the March went through each town and city.

The way the TUC left struggles like Ansell's or Plansee isolated was at least raised. Attention was focussed on the politics of unemployment. The last massive rally in London provided a platform where Arthur Scargill called for industrial action as a reply to redundancy and Gardiners' convenor Tom McAfee pointed out 'We will not beat them by speeches, but by action. We must strike and occupy'.

The March made an impact. Our argument is it could have made a bigger and better impact. If that is to happen this time, then it is up to us. Nobody else.

To anybody who says we shouldn't support the march, I'd ask what is the alternative?



Debate/Briefing

Often someone has to step in and say "cool it"



CHRIS KNIGHT of London Labour Briefing replies to the 'Open Letter to London Labour Briefing' which we published last week from Brighton Labour Briefing and others. The Open Letter criticised LLB for political accommodation to 'former comrades now in leading positions' and fudging issues for the sake of formal unity. This reply was written as a letter to Dave Lowney, one of the signatories of the Open Letter.



"Yes, there are times when Ken needs keeping on the rails, but I think we've done more of this than anyone..."

Dear Dave,
Between Graham and myself on the one hand, and Tony Greenstein on the other (with supporters on each side), we seem to have got ourselves locked into a fight over 'principle' which is threatening to blow up out of all proportion, as such conflicts tend to do. It would seem to me ludicrous to allow a 'split' which begins in personal incompatibility between Greenstein and Bash and then flows outwards to turn into anything remotely like a split between you and your comrades in Brighton and myself and my comrades up here. I'm not writing to you to try and fob you off or 'mollify' you all in Brighton as Tony has alleged I'm offering to do. The fact is that at the last LLB Editorial Board I offered to try and see if matters could be cooled a bit by you and I corresponding and perhaps arranging a meeting between us. My idea is to by-pass Graham and Tony, who seem to be driving each other crazy. I also want to make sure that your joint 'Open Letter' to Briefing is published by us, as I think it must be (I don't think there is any dispute about that on the E.B.: I will come to what happened there later).

Fissiparous

Let me explain what I think the dispute is about. It concerns a conflict between two 'principles', each of which is absolutely correct. The first is programmatic: the second is organisational. It's like the difference between speaking in a meeting and trying to convene and chair the meeting so that it takes place. Graham feels that he has to be the 'chair' in order that the fissiparous tendencies of which the Briefing alliance is composed hold together. Sometimes the chair has to be very firm and just shut people up if they've gone on for too long or if an issue is 'dead' and somebody's still got a bee in the bonnet about it and keeps resurrect-

ing it. Sometimes a whole meeting can get completely derailed because a single individual is allowed by a weak chair to dominate the whole thing, to the exasperation of everyone else who had thought the meeting was supposed to be about something quite different. You know the sort of thing I mean, I'm sure. The two principles, then, are 'free speech' on the one hand, and firm structuring of discussion by an impartial 'chair' on the other.

Individual view

Tony's problem is that he doesn't see the need for a 'chair'. He wants the 'chair' to state openly and explicitly that he takes one hundred per cent one individual's - Tony Greenstein's, to be precise - side in an argument between two factions present at the meeting. It is no secret that the two factions in this dispute are really Socialist Organiser on the one hand and Socialist Challenge on the other. That's what it's really all about. If you want my political views, Dave, then I can state quite openly: I feel and always have felt immeasurably closer to SO than SC.

It so happens that I know that this has usually been Graham's position, too, in terms of policies and politics. But as 'chair', would it be right for Graham to state that and to say that in his capacity as editor of Briefing these are the positions held? Please be clear about this: it is precisely this that Tony is demanding. Instead of presenting the arguments on his own behalf and within the framework of a properly chaired discussion, Tony is insisting that Briefing itself adopts his own 'line', in the context of a dispute between two factions within which this 'line' follows consistently one side. In effect, this is demanding that one faction occupy the chair.

When bitter disputes blow up out of small beginnings, there is often a need for someone - it doesn't really matter who - to step in and

say 'Cool it!' This is so even when it is clear as daylight that one side is absolutely right and the other absolutely wrong. If both factions are part of the movement and we need them both, then someone just has to act fairly toughly to make them calm down. There is no question in my mind as to who was right or who was wrong as between Tony Greenstein and Ted Knight in the Labour Committee on Palestine Conference. Neither Graham, nor anyone else on the Briefing EB, except, of course, for the Socialist Challenge comrades, entertained any doubt on this score. We made this clear enough, even to the extent, unusually, of inserting in LLB an editor's note to that effect. My own personal view is that, because Knight's was such a scandalous violation of democratic procedure, Graham should not have changed the word 'outrageous' to 'regrettable' as he did. But please give Graham the benefit of the doubt here, instead of flinging accusations at him in the way Tony is doing. In trying to 'chair' the discussions in Briefing on this issue, Graham just wanted to cool things down a bit. He also wanted to protect his own position as 'chair', in order to protect the formal relative 'impartiality' of Briefing itself. If Tony doesn't understand the need for this impartiality in form, he really understands nothing of the secret which has enabled Briefing to be so successful in the past, and nothing of the method we will need if Socialist Organiser and Socialist Challenge are to fuse - as we hope can be achieved - to enable a really powerful united revolutionary organization and paper to be built in the period immediately ahead.

Warning

Tony's 'open Letter', in the form in which he demanded its publication at the meeting last week, contained:

1. A useful political warning

to us and a criticism of our relative 'lack of direction' in Briefing. This point is taken. 2. A criticism of our 'inability to adopt any position or perspective' in relation to 'the acrimonious debate over rates'. This is a valid viewpoint, although I don't share it. Our position is perfectly clear: unless or until we can find some other source of finance (e.g. expropriating the bank vaults in the City through armed insurrection) then we must ensure that local services are financed and employment maintained within the system to the extent that the Tories remain unable to prevent us. Our commitment to no cuts is absolute. Those of us controlling Labour Councils will listen to comrades' suggestions regarding alternative sources of finance other than the rates, but they must show us that the money will be available before pay-day at the end of this week. If we were to offer the local authority work-force 'socialist campaigns' and 'programmes' in place of their wage-packets in this present political climate and situation we should get a boot up the arse from the trade unions and dead right. This is what we think. We could have made all this the 'line' of Briefing, as Tony in other contexts demands. In the interests of a fair discussion, however, we have tried not to do this but have published articles expressing our viewpoint alongside others with a different line.

Courageous

3. An attack on Ken Livingstone's contribution at the Briefing Conference. Tony speaks mock-pitifully of Ken's 'harrowing tale' of being under fire from all sides at County Hall. Ken Livingstone is among the most courageous leading class-fighters this country has so far produced, in my opinion, and I must say I value Briefing's links with Ken's supporters throughout London and beyond even more than I value my links with Tony Greenstein of Brighton La-

bour Briefing. Yes, there are times when Ken needs keeping on the rails, but (a) I think we've done more of this than anyone in the movement anyway and (b) Tony's comments sound like cheap sneering and wouldn't have the slightest positive effect with Ken's supporters whom, presumably, it is Tony's intention to try and reach.

Unions

4. An attack on us for not having taken up Jeremy Corbyn's appeal for us all to take trade union work more seriously. I grant Tony's right to make comments like this, but still I find it irritating when people keep telling other people to 'take the trade unions seriously' instead of giving up their teaching jobs, etc., and doing it themselves. The letter is an 'Open Letter' from Brighton Labour Briefing as a whole. Is it that somehow, BLB feels angry that we have little industrial coverage and involvement compared with what you have in Brighton? I would have thought it was the other way around, but we don't write 'Open Letters' to you complaining that you are 'too much student-based', etc. These are matters for comradely discussion amongst ourselves, not for flinging down public gauntlets. Unless, of course, we are political opponents trying to 'expose' one another in public. I was utterly astonished to learn at the Editorial Board meeting that this was, indeed, how Tony felt things should proceed. It came completely out of the blue. 5. An attack on the 'highly original' proposal of Socialist Challenge to set up a 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory'. I presume that the barb about 'highly original' proposals refers to the fact that we set up - i.e. Workers' Action and the Chartists as we then were - the first 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory' in 1978 and 1979. Why complain when SC flip on their backs, change their policies, admit that we were right and

try to make themselves feel good by 'taking the initiative' in doing something which they knew we were poised to do anyway? Why on earth assume, from this, that SC are going to run the thing? Nothing has been decided regarding this, and it's really up to Socialist Organiser and the rest of us to make sure Socialist Challenge don't get away with the soggy, mainly-CND campaign which they perhaps lean towards if they were left on their own.

Syndication

6. 'Brighton Labour Briefing's proposals for syndication articles was ignored' at our 'for a National Network Conference'. That is really rich. I remember speaking at Brighton Labour Briefing's founding meeting about the desirability of syndication articles nationally, and repeating this suggestion at several joint meetings with BLB after that. It was invariably BLB who seemed most anxious to preserve autonomy and not to synchronise production times with or between us. We respected that, and ever since then, have tried to be very tentative, tactful, cautious and sensitive about mentioning anything suggestive of a nation-wide integration and tightening up of structure. But if you've all changed your minds - great! Let's start! But why on earth was not a word of this said at the Conference itself? 7. The points about Ted Knight and the Palestine Committee refer to a correspondence we have decided to close. That's all. We've decided to say: 'This correspondence is now closed', and that's it. We're fed up with it and so is nearly everyone who reads Briefing in London. In any long-drawn-out wrangle in the correspondence columns of a paper, there comes a point when this sort of thing has to be done, and we've done it. This has nothing to do with our political position. It's just the sort of thing you have to do if you find yourself in the chair. To Tony I would just say: don't keep challenging the Chair's rulings unless you are really moving a vote of no confidence and have got an alternative chair in mind who could do better. Shut up and sit down. I'm as angry as Graham over this, and fully behind him.

8. A complaint about the fact that one article, a very long one, among all the many long articles submitted to us by Tony Greenstein, was actually not published in the last issue of Briefing. We just hadn't the space for it. It's going in the next issue. It's on Women and Zionism, and seems to me to be well-argued and essentially correct. Instead of shortening it ourselves, we asked Tony to do his own editing-down and I believe he's agreed. This saved us having to chop it down or say 'No' to the article as a whole. But why on earth make our earlier decision to delay publication an item in an 'Open Letter' from Brighton Labour Briefing as a whole? Who the hell does Tony think he is? 9. An accusation that we want 'unity at all costs' with Socialist Challenge, even to the extent of abandoning our principles and politics. I

can't understand why Tony believes or writes such crap. To take only two points. On personal politics and feminism, we are miles apart from Socialist Challenge. Socialist Organiser are much more open-minded, I think. Equally on the question of Clause 4 as central to a 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory' (Socialist Challenge don't want to stress it). On most issues, we are much closer to Brighton Labour Briefing, and also to Socialist Organiser, than we are to Socialist Challenge. Why accuse the chair of being in league with the other side all the time just because he/she doesn't want two separate meetings in place of one? 10. An accusation that we are becoming 'increasingly irrelevant', retreating 'down the road to oblivion'. But in that case, why does Tony keep wanting to publish his long articles in our paper? Or is it that he realises that if he didn't publish his articles in London Labour Briefing they would be unlikely actually to be read?

Let me explain now that at the Editorial Board meeting we did agree to publish Tony's letter, but asked him to take account of what we had said at that meeting in taking it back to you in Brighton and seeing if you wanted it re-drafted at all. We just couldn't believe that this letter was the considered verdict of all of you, thrashed out and discussed at a proper Editorial Board meeting of Brighton Labour Briefing. If the letter had been signed in Tony's own name alone, then of course it would have been published in full and without question, as we publish all letters submitted to us as a matter of principle. But when (a) other people's names are dragged into a letter, when we know these people personally and when (b) the collective name of Briefing as such is used, we have to make the proper checks.

Real debate

Dave, please tell me: is this letter really yours? If you respond in writing and would like your letter published, I can guarantee you that it will go in Briefing because that is what we are for. If you really insist on replying only with the draft rejected at the last Editorial Board you would give us all a real headache, although I suppose I myself would feel obliged to vote for it. My own view is that it would be far more productive for all of us if a real debate were to take place, and if the question of form in these matters was given a certain amount of weight. Tony really didn't give us a chance. He just said he wasn't changing a word of the letter and faced us with an ultimatum point-blank. It turned out that this ultimatum was: either we agreed, or he'd publish it in Socialist Organiser. Faced with that kind of thing, all we can say is 'Get Stuffed!' Since Tony pushed it to a vote, we had to say: No, we're not publishing the letter until you've taken it back to the Brighton comrades for their re-drafting in the light of our own response.

I think I'll leave it there. Warmest comradely greetings,
Chris Knight

Leadership is the key to rank and file consciousness

TONY RICHARDS opens a reply to John McIlroy's recent series of articles in *Socialist Organiser* on the state of the industrial struggle

McIlroy, Richards argues, minimises the role of leadership. But "the central problem was and is the leadership given, not the rank and file. It is certainly true that betrayals can have a cumulative effect on workers' attitudes over years. But the problem remains one not of consciousness of the rank and file, but of leadership".

THERE are advantages and disadvantages in the fact that the series of discussion articles by John McIlroy on the state of the class struggle spanned five weeks.

The disadvantage was that so much space was allocated to an analysis which played down the role of the union leadership in the defeats, setbacks and retreats which have occurred.

But the advantage was that even during the publication of McIlroy's analysis events in the class struggle were showing it in practice to be defective. By week five, the first part of the article — which said that any movement by the miners against closures "is unlikely in the short term" — had been demolished by the developing mass strike spreading from the South Wales coalfield, only to be betrayed by the leadership's call for a ballot.

A confrontation at national level between the miners and the Tory government would have dramatically changed the political situation in the country, including the situation in the Labour Party. The betrayal has allowed the Tories to run rampant over the working class.

Ironic

It was bitterly ironic that at this very high point of leadership betrayal *Socialist Organiser* was completing McIlroy's four-part series minimising the role of leadership.

There are two central themes to the articles. Firstly, the argument that the industrial downturn is not solely due to the leadership but also to the state of consciousness of the working class.



"The main example used by McIlroy is the miners. But he leaves out the background..."

And secondly that we need to "politicise" struggles through the Labour Party. McIlroy even goes so far as to say that this is what is happening anyway, through workers joining the Labour Party.

There is also a third strand of argument, which directs away from the necessary programme of transitional demands through which we as Marxists must connect with and raise the present-day consciousness and struggles of the working class to the level of grasping the need for revolutionary leadership and revolutionary mass action to resolve their problems.

Accepts

Leadership. Some of the examples used by John McIlroy to argue that "in today's conditions the rank and file share many of the ideas of the bureaucrats" must be analysed.

I think the problem is that in pursuing such an argument McIlroy himself accepts the same pre-conceived position of the 'left' bureaucrats — that the rank and file are to blame for the situation. They then look round for "facts" to bear this out.

The main example used by McIlroy is the miners. He cites the fact that they voted for strike action in 1972 and 1974 but not in 1982 in the ballot on jobs and wages. On top of this he adds the Kinneil decision.

But he leaves out the

background which shaped those decisions. In 1972 the miners were one of the lowest paid sections of the working class — getting a little over half the wages of carworkers. Today they are among the top paid manual workers, well ahead of car workers.

In 1972 and 1974 the NUM was led by a right winger. When the right wing led a strike, the left wing supports it. But when the left are in the leadership they invariably face sabotage from the right wing.

In the 1982 wage review, miners had already been offered 8% — more than almost any other section got, and without a strike.

On top of this, coal stocks were huge, there was a personalised witch hunt against Scargill, and an overall media witch-hunt against the left in general, including Peter Tatchell.

With closures threatened, but none actually announced, wages were the immediate issue before most miners. It is for this reason it was wrong to put everything into winning the vote by throwing in the question of pit closures.

Drift

Once the ballot on the combined issues had been lost, the Coal Board was encouraged to step up the offensive on jobs. Yet the NUM leadership, far from intensifying its efforts to educate the membership on the growing danger to jobs, allowed matters to drift.

The wealth of information they have assembled on the scale of the NCB attack on manning levels and "uneconomic" pits was not made accessible to the members.

Worse, the struggle against closure at Kinneil was sabotaged by the Communist Party-led Scottish area leadership, who left it up to the militants at rank and file level to fight for the spreading of the action, and when this ran into difficulties, moved in to declare the struggle defeated.

Weakened

This criminal role played by McGahey and his comrades weakened the fight by the Welsh miners: they were forced to take action in the wake of a well-publicised sell-out, while it was clear that the right wing would not fight and important elements of the left were scared.

But the Lewis Merthyr strike triggered action throughout South Wales and began to spread, securing strike decisions in most areas. Scargill at first insisted — correctly — that a ballot was not needed, and appeared to be giving clear, decisive leadership.

The very next day, in the face of a press campaign, Scargill switched his position and declared for a ballot. This move was catastrophic. By killing the strike wave stone dead, and conceding everything to the right wing, it ended any chance of winning the vote.

Miners, already faced by a determined, hostile government, huge coal stocks and a situation of high unemployment, needed a determined leadership, who they could rely upon to stand firm.

But instead the left — mouthing meaningless phrases about 'unity' — backed down in the face of a press witch-hunt and dealt a body-blow to NUM militants.

Trotsky describes precisely this kind of betrayal in his book 'Where is Britain Going?', when writing about reformist trade union leaders in Britain, he points out that they are guided by bourgeois 'public opinion'.

A brief period in the NUM has therefore exposed the limitations of the most left wing of the reformist leaders, as well as the Communist Party.

But the lessons John McIlroy draws are not in relation to the leadership of the class, but the consciousness of the rank and file!

Victimised

A second example he cites is that of the victimisation of Alan Thornett in BL's Cowley Assembly Plant:

"When, for example, Alan Thornett was victimised in 1974, the manoeuvring of the union apparatus was, if anything, far more of a problem than in 1982. Workers will always have to face such manoeuvring. The point is that at one time they overcome it, at

another they don't.

"Overall at the moment, the bureaucrats who don't want a fight take the workers with them against the militants who do."

This ridiculous example is used more than once. But again the background to the events proves the opposite of McIlroy's point.

In 1974, Alan Thornett was a recognised deputy senior steward, who chaired all factory meetings. The TGWU ended up supporting his struggle to defend his stewardship: Moss Evans — then National Organiser — was involved in the negotiations.

But at the same time the TGWU bureaucrats intervened to remove Thornett and convenor Bob Fryer from the leadership of the plant, to break 'up the powerful trade union structure in the plant, witch-hunt the left wing and instal a vicious right



Bill Sims

wing convenor.

The results of this 1974 betrayal were reflected in the events of 1982. The two situations were completely different.

In 1982 Thornett, though repeatedly elected deputy senior steward in shop floor ballots, was consistently refused recognition by management. As a result he was largely isolated in his own section, and known to most workers largely through memories of past struggles and the continuing press witch-hunts.

From 1974-82 Cowley workers were betrayed on each wage review, to the point where their wages have dropped dramatically in value, while speed-up was imposed with the collaboration of national union officials.

When the second victimisation of Thornett took place, a particularly weakened workforce was called upon to engage in an indefinite strike to defend someone they knew only by slanted media coverage.

To cap it all, the union official concerned, having made not a single statement in defence of Thornett refused to attend the mass meeting to decide on action — and the struggle was finished there and then.

The central problem was and is the leadership given, not the rank and file. It is certainly true that betrayals — as in this instance — can have a cumulative effect on workers' attitudes over years. But the problem remains one not of consciousness of the rank and file but of leadership.

In BL in 1981 the prospect of all-out strike action brought a massive response from the most apparently conservative plants. Or we could look at the steel strike. There had been repeated and colossal betrayals of the steelworkers between 1926 and 1980: but when a firm, decisive strike call (not a national ballot!) was given, the response was 100%.

Stewards

Another ridiculous example used by McIlroy is of the stewards at Vauxhalls Ellesmere Port, who said that their members would only struggle over imports, not on wages.

Not only have these workers just rejected the call for import controls, but it was plain from the outset that it was the stewards who wanted an easy way out. Their diversion on imports was a follow-on from their one-day strikes over wages. They never even tested a serious call for all-out strike action.

It is, of course, possible that this would have been rejected: but to use the timidity of a group of stewards as an example of the retreat of the working class is to stand things on their head.

Continued next week

L.A.W. widens the fight

Ducking out on gay rights

ONE of the most outrageous fudges in the 'campaign document' is on gay rights.

"We are concerned that homosexuals are unfairly treated. We will take steps to ensure that they are not discriminated against — especially in employment and through the laws of privacy". That's all it says. Not even the Labour Programme 82 commitment to reduce the age of consent for gay men to 18 is included, let alone the more radical policies widely supported in the party.

Ireland is an issue, like nuclear weapons, on which Labour's policy faces two ways. Just as commitment to NATO clashes with unilateral nuclear disarmament, so does commitment to the artificial British created Northern Ireland state contradict the aim of a united Ireland.

The campaign document, like Labour's Programme 82, even promises to try to establish a 'devolved administration' in the Six Counties. And it fails to include the policy, passed by the last Labour confer-

The revised version of the SLV statement is now ready, and can be obtained from SLV, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. Send SAE.

ence, of banning plastic bullets.

On abortion rights, the campaign document's wording is subtly and suspiciously different from Programme 82. The Programme promised "to ensure that all women have a right of choice in the termination of a pregnancy"; the campaign document promises that "we will remove barriers to the existing right of choice." Even the Programme, however, had half-nullified its promise by granting a free vote to Labour MPs.

On reversing cuts, there are no precise commitments. The Labour Programme 82 commitment to increase the NHS budget by 3% a year in real terms has gone.

A number of important proposals are still in the

document: repeal of the Nationality Act and Immigration Acts; repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act; a promise that "we will not permit the siting of cruise missiles in this country" (which logically should mean removing them if they are already here); a commitment to repeal Tory anti-union laws; £30 a week and union rights for youth training schemes, and £20 for 16-19 year old students; abolition of the Tory-imposed NHS charges for 'overseas visitors'; a one-year rent freeze; and renationalisation with purchase-price compensation of sectors hived off.

Withdrawal from the EEC is also there — something that many (by no means all) SO supporters consider to be a nationalist diversion, but a policy strongly supported by the majority of the left.

As well as campaigning on the issues that aren't in the document, we will also need to make sure that these points which are in it aren't lost in the manifesto.

Socialist campaign gets organised

THE first meeting last Thursday, 17th, of the Socialists for a Labour Victory steering committee finalised the campaign's basic statement, elected the main officers, and agreed an immediate programme for launching the campaign.

Mandy Moore and Andy Harris had already been elected joint-secretaries at the inaugural meeting. On Thursday Nigel Williamson was elected treasurer, and Reg Race, Joan Maynard, Jo Richardson, Ken Livingstone and Ernie Roberts as chairpersons.

SLV will be publicly launched at a Press Conference on Monday March 28. Representatives of campaigns and oppressed

groups that SLV will be seeking to work with have been invited.

The immediate priorities are:

*Getting signatures and commitments for the SLV's statement from PPCs, MPs, CLPs and trade union bodies.

*Getting sponsorship and affiliations to the SLV. Already Labour CND has affiliated, and South-west-Peckham CLP.

The priority must be affiliations from CLPs and trade union organisations, to ensure that SLV becomes not a left caucus but a campaign based on and representative of Labour's rank and file.

Affiliation/sponsorship

is £5 for organisations and £3 for individuals.

*Organising the SLV on both a local and regional level. Starting to campaign now for sponsorships from CLPs; getting CLPs to use the model leaflets that SLV will be producing; using the SLV bulletins and speakers to win support, particularly in workplaces and trade union branches.

If Labour is to win, we must urgently turn to those who are fighting the Tories now, and establish an alliance between them and Labour's rank and file.

Fight cuts

There is the fight to defend the NHS, and resist cutbacks and closures; the fight against racist attacks, and the CARL demonstration this Sunday; the fight against the threatened nuclear holocaust, with the Greenham Common and CND activities at Easter; the Greenham Common call for a one-day women's General Strike and peace canvass on May 24; the fight against unemployment and the People's March starting on April 23.

A central part of the SLV campaign, both nationally and locally, must be to mobilise Labour's organisations behind these battles.



Signatures

Representatives of the two campaigns agreed last Wednesday to launch a joint appeal for further signatures to the advertisement, a second instalment of which is due to be published in early May.

The first instalment attracted considerable attention earlier this month because it established that the NEC was likely to experience great practical difficulties and resistance in carrying through its expulsions. Among the signatories are Islington Central and Hamersmith North CLPs whose members include Militant editors Peter Taaffe, Ted Grant and Keith Dickinson.

The General Committees of these parties have subsequently confirmed by large majorities that they will not comply with the NEC's request to delete the names of these lifelong socialists from their membership records.

The two anti-witch-hunt bodies are also discussing common activity to secure the NEC's reinstatement of the five editors by the next Labour Party conference at the latest, and a broad campaign has also been suggested for the adoption of the Greenwich amendment to the Labour Party constitution.

Rights

This amendment would establish the right of all groups to operate in the party who accept its aims and objectives and who do not stand candidates against it in elections.

Labour movement bodies and individuals wishing to add their names to the Tribune advertisement when next published should write, enclosing £3, to 'Tribune Advertisement', 11 Wilderton Road, London N16.

After Plastic Bullets conference

Tell Soley to resign!

An open letter to the conference organisers

Dear Comrade,

The Conference on Plastic Bullets yesterday was an important political initiative which must be built on in this country, and you and the other conference organisers (whoever they were!) should be congratulated, and especially for your decision to give Owen Carron, M.P., a political platform in England.

However, not having been allowed to speak to the Conference, I would make some criticisms by letter. Firstly, although the pristine purity of the politics of the R.C.P. has about as much appeal as chastity, the

speaker from the platform who described them as Paisleyites should have been called on to withdraw that remark. Not only is it untrue, but resorting to the use of smears of this kind merely stop the mouth of political argument and is more a 'political style' associated with Fleet Street by-election (and the rest) reporting.

Secondly, I thought it was misbegotten and indefensible that the letter from Clive Soley, M.P., should have been read out from the Chair, like holy writ, — without the Conference even being afforded the opportunity to let this Member know what it thought of his views — which the Chair insisted be contributed and

treated like every other contribution to the Conference. Fair enough, but every other contributor to the Conference was open to criticism by the delegates attending. The Conference Organising Committee even refused to allow a resolution to be put to Conference responding to Soley's letter and formally communicating a view to him from the delegates in attendance. What does M.P. stand for? — Monopolist of Privilege?

Responses

As I see it, the Conference could have made two responses to Soley's message — either the Organising Co-

mmittee could have circulated Suggestion Slips to delegates inviting ideas on what alternative technologies to plastic bullets are available both to maintain law and order (sic) and to soothe 'liberal' consciences (we could have offered a prize for the best suggestion of a place on one of Kenneth Newman's training courses, or a day outing in Mansfield with Don Concannon) OR, and what I think should have been done, the Conference could have made a call on Soley to resign forthwith.

To quote your letter of welcome: 'The Conference is organised in support of Labour Party policy which condemns the present gov-

ernment over its use of plastic bullets... The NEC, the PLP and our Parliamentary spokespersons on Northern Ireland were instructed to campaign for the withdrawal of Plastic Bullets...' Soley's Conference message was nothing more or less than a repudiation of this.

Where mainstream Labour Party Conference decisions are slapped in the face by our so-called parliamentary representatives, the entryist left are up in arms over it — or, more accurately, very indignant indeed. Why should it be any different in this case? Adopting a complacent political perspective towards Soley and his ilk won't result in the kind of broad withdrawal movement that Owen Carron was calling for — all it will result in is brown tongues all round, which will be wagging in conferences for ever more, when they're not in Committee Rooms et al in the Palace of Westminster.

In conclusion, the Conference was a really useful initiative — I just hope future Labour Movement Delegate Conferences will have built into them all labour movement democratic norms — including the putting of resolutions so that delegates at a Conference can take whatever positions and decisions they like — and not be in the business of tracking such essential democratic procedures for spurious sponsorships.

Yours fraternally,
Ian Juniper
Conference Delegate from North & District TUC, member of ASTMS & North East Labour Party.

Ireland: London motion

Islington South Labour Party last week passed this resolution:

"This CLP notes Ken Livingstone's article in the Guardian (7/3/83) and supports his proposals that:

"The government must refuse to be bound by the Unionist veto, should announce a planned withdrawal within two years and convene a constitutional conference of all northern and Irish parties."

We call on the London Labour Party Executive to convene a special policy conference to discuss how to win support for these proposals and how to implement Labour Party policy of a United Ireland.

Further we fully support Ken Livingstone's and other GLC councillors' efforts to win broad support for a constructive dialogue on Ireland."



Labour Committee on Ireland: Box BM 5355, London WC1N 3XX.

Just out from Pluto Press: an analysis of capitalism in crisis from regular Socialist Organiser contributor Bob Sutcliffe. £2.50 from bookshops, or (with 50p post and packing) from Pluto, The Works, 705a Tottenham Avenue, London N4E



Miners' retreat: not a simple sell-out

CONCERNING the front page article on the miners' ballot, the 'no' vote cannot just be explained by the 'sell-out' analysis. There is an unresolved crisis among the leadership of our class. They have failed to present any form of socialist analysis of the present economic crisis, even less to challenge the ideology of the Tories, bosses and the media amongst workers or even in Parliament.

Police target blacks

THE article in SO 124 about the Colin Roach demonstration does not give a clear picture of the full scale of events.

To begin with he was not 'found outside Stoke Newington police station'. His body was in the police station, which is notorious for its record of racist attacks.

The police deliberately and provocatively attacked the demonstration. They had tried all the way back from Stoke Newington station to pick off isolated marchers but were unable to do so because of the solidarity of the demonstrators.

So they deliberately provoked the march by attempting to commandeer the truck leading it, carrying Mr and Mrs Roach, Colin's friends and councillor Twomey. They grabbed the banner and set about kicking, beating and arresting mostly black youth. Nineteen people were arrested. The police were grabbing and smashing cameras.

Despite all this the marchers regrouped and went back to Hackney Town Hall.

There a decision was taken to go to City Road police station and demand the release of those arrested. The police, not really prepared for this, desperately tried to delay and divert the march.

As we passed council estates, black youth came and joined the protest. The marchers, led by the Roach Family Support Committee decided what route to follow and the police were at one point left driving down a road as the march went a different way.

A full contingent of police, eager to continue their racist practices were at City Road police station by the time the march got there. The road was blocked while the crowd angrily demanded the release of the sisters and brothers arrested while protesting against racism.

No doubt the police are anxious to pressurise and attempt to discredit the white people involved in fighting for an inquiry into Colin Roach's death. But their main target is not local councillors — it is a black community fighting back against oppressive and racist state attacks.

ANDREA CAMPBELL

This has left our class worried, alienated, and vulnerable. Where workers have felt the confidence to strike, they have been cynically betrayed by the bureaucrats. The result of this has been general demoralisation from which miners are not immune.

The decision to call a national ballot was neither a tactical error nor an objective left retreat. A strike can only be won by a confident, conscious membership.

A strike without a ballot would have meant the concentration of media, Tory and government pressure on a non-militant yet productive coal area such as the Midlands. This could have resulted in a return-to-work ballot called by the right-wing Area Executive.

Furthermore, a national ballot was desired by many members, and the NEC was correct to grant this democratic demand although they were under no rule book obligation to do so.

The defeats at Kinneil and Snowdown were not so much due to the 'October blunder'. 69% of Scottish miners voted to strike against closures, but the McGahey-led sell-out prevented action to save Kinneil and disillusioned workers.

Kent NUM also voted against closures but the disheartening news of the Scottish sell-out and the promise of 'generous'

redundancy payments broke Snowdown's will to fight.

The decision to include South Wales miners in the national ballot was correct. This area was certain to cast a 'yes' vote, thus increasing the likelihood of an overall majority in favour of a strike.

With regard to 'reports' about Scargill's attempted

compromise with the NCB: Scargill is reactionary on the issues of women's emancipation and the struggle of our comrades in Solidarnosc, but he is a militant union leader who wants to prevent closures. The revolutionary left will only alienate militant workers if 'reports' of attempted sell-outs are not backed up with firm

evidence.

We just cannot tell Scargill to 'pull miners behind' South Wales, they have to be convinced of the necessity of solidarity action. For all their cohesiveness and militancy, mining communities are often introspective. The union has always been plagued by sectionalism.

The present disunity is partly due to the insidious productivity deal pushed through against the miners' wishes by Gormley, the NCB and the Judiciary.

This has turned 'rich' miners in areas like the Midlands against their South Wales workmates. This division has been exploited by the NCB's Coal News which has promised Midlands areas a rosy future.

Therefore the ballot result is not only due to the leaders who did make a mistake. We must bear in mind the sectionalism and frightening spectacle of closures of other industries in mining areas.

For instance the tragic steel closures in mining areas like Scotland, the North East and Wales must have made miners think twice about the prospect of a successful fight.

I hope these points will help us understand the state of the NUM so that together we can reverse the recent setbacks.

Yours fraternally,
MARTIN HOARE
Bridgend



Did Scargill have a choice?

I WOULD criticise the front page article of SO 123 in the opposite sense from Alan Thornett (letters, SO 124).

I don't know what happened at the NUM executive. But neither does Alan Thornett.

It may be that Arthur Scargill folded at the first word from the right wing.

But it is equally possible that the right wing had a majority for a ballot, or that a solid right wing minority had threatened to openly campaign against a strike called without a ballot.

Could Arthur Scargill have called the right wing's bluff? Arguably. But Alan Thornett does not argue it. He assumes that

it was within Scargill's power to generate a national strike movement.

Conditions

Given the conditions — the recent defeats, the slump, the high level of coal stocks — I'm not sure that is right. I am sure that to interpret the Trotskyist idea of the crisis of leader-

ship as meaning that 'correct' leadership can automatically, always, and at will, generate and win struggles, is to crudify it impermissibly.

I think we need more careful and detailed argument before we can denounce Scargill's retreat.

Martin Thomas
Islington

Permanent revolution and Ireland

MARTIN Collins (SO 120) argues that Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is applicable to Ireland today. 'Permanent revolution has never been something in the revolutionary cookbook for which the peasantry was the main ingredient, but a means of looking at how to make a revolution in countries where capitalism had thoroughly distorted any 'natural' or 'national' economic development.'

A strategy based on such an analysis is 'the only possible way to win in Ireland.'

This whole frame of reference seems to be to be wrong, scholastic, and a vulgarisation of Trotsky's theory. If all that comrade Collins is saying is that the solution to the national and social problems facing Irish workers is a working class solution — the seizure of power by the working class, then, of course, there can be no disagreement.

Whilst personally I do not think that it is necessarily true that a united Ireland can only be achieved

on a socialist basis, a capitalist Ireland is clearly not something to which socialists limit the aim of their struggle.

But comrade Collins is not merely saying this. He is further claiming a) that the theory of permanent revolution applies to Ireland, and b) that the theory of permanent revolution is to do with strategy in 'distorted' economies.

First, the theory of permanent revolution was related to countries in which the bulk of the population were peasants, i.e. in its original formulation to Russia.

Trotsky's analysis was that the combined contradictions created by the development of capitalist social relations and the crisis of pre-capitalist agriculture (or at any rate the crisis created by the transition to, not the fully fledged development of, capitalist agriculture), generated social tensions in which the working class was placed at the heart of the class struggle as a whole, and no other class would be able to effectively deal with, overthrow, Tsarism.

This did not mean that the coming revolution was simply 'socialist'; on the contrary, that the coming revolution was a bourgeois revolution that the bourgeoisie was not capable of carrying out, and that once in power, the working class would have to 'uninterruptedly' go further than the 'bourgeois stage'. It also did not mean that the peasantry was irrelevant — Trotsky and Lenin entirely agreed on the necessity of an alliance of proletariat and peasantry.

The difference was that for Trotsky the working class would be dominant in the alliance and appear before the peasantry as its liberators. The dynamics of rural revolt were central to Trotsky's perspective. In Ireland, on the other hand, there is no land question — the crisis of agriculture is a crisis of capitalist agriculture. The same combination of social contradictions simply do not exist.

So whilst I would agree with comrade Collins that what is required in Ireland is working class revolution — there is nothing 'permanent' or uninterrupted about this revolution, in the sense that Trotsky understood such a perspective.

To insist that there is, is to ignore the real content of Trotsky's theory — his actual analysis of social relations — and substitute Militant-type platitudes about 'only socialism...'

Second, Trotsky's theory had nothing to do with the 'un-natural' or (worse) 'un-national' character of capitalist development in Russia. His argument was that the combined and uneven development of capitalism internationally (which requires no utopian judgements in terms of how 'natural' or 'national' it is), created particular conditions in which capitalism in Russia, and so the working class in Russia, was inextricably linked to capitalism internationally, determining both the potential of the working class power in

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.

Why oppose these plans?

SOCIALIST Organiser has consistently denounced the witch-hunt. Please explain how you reconcile this with your attitude towards counter-proposals.

The proposal put forward by Manchester Withington and Hendon South CLPs is that only Annual Conference should have the power to take action against a pressure group. The most the NEC could do would be to make recommendations.

The Greenwich CLP proposal, on the other hand, explicitly authorises the NEC to declare membership of a pressure group to be incompatible with membership of the Labour Party. As with the proposal merely to reject the Register, the powers given by the Party constitution for the NEC to take action against pressure groups are left untouched.

Clearly the Manchester Withington/Hendon South proposal would prevent the NEC proceeding against Militant, while the alternatives would not. Yet SO has campaigned for the last nine months with everything at its disposal against the former and in favour of the latter. The contrast between left-wing rhetoric and right-wing reality speaks for itself.

Some other explanations are also called for. John Bloxam's report of the London Labour Party con-

ference (SO 123) describes the Hendon South proposal as 'a sanitised version of the Register'. Just which part does he object to, and why? even if he can cobble up some pretext, his allegation fundamentally remains no more than a smear against the only proposal which could stop the witch hunt.

In the same report, John says that the Hendon South proposal was 'thrown out'. In fact it was simply declared lost on a show of hands. If the mover's request from the rostrum for a card vote had been accepted, the proposal would almost certainly have been carried.

Lastly, a footnote to John's report claims that CLPD's AGM rejected the Hendon South proposal. This is only half true. The AGM also called for Annual Conference to be the only body entitled to curtail the activities of pressure groups, thereby in principle endorsing Hendon South and rejecting other proposals.

All in all, SO's position on the witch-hunt seems every bit as dubious as its campaign against conference sovereignty, and its abortive takeover bid for CLPD. Your answers are awaited with interest.

Yours fraternally,
VICTOR SCHONFIELD
London W10

Russia and the necessary perspective for maintaining it.

The purpose of workers' revolution in backward capitalist countries is not to secure 'national development', but — along with revolution in other countries — to secure workers' interests.

My objection to comrade Collins' argument is not therefore an objection to a perspective of united working class struggle — that is what the debate in SO is about — but an objection to a method that abandons actual analysis for a set of ritualistic assertions.



Trotsky

Of course — this is not in dispute — the national question remains central to the class struggle in Ireland. Of course this indicates a certain incompleteness of the bourgeois revolution in Ireland. Of course what we need is socialist revolution. But these three 'of courses' do not amount to the basis for talk of 'permanent revolution'.

The national question in Ireland is historically specific and exists in the context of a capitalist economy (in which certainly the working class has been divided and oppressed by British imperialism) in which there is no land question, no mass of peasants. The problem of the border is a problem for the working class: its abolition does not constitute a 'bourgeois revolution' in any meaningful sense.

We cannot derive socialist strategy from timeless recitation of a few misunderstood elements of Trotskyist theory.

CLIVE BRADLEY
Manchester SO

Social Contract? Never again!

Martin Thomas examines Labour's campaign document in the light of the experience of the 1974-9 Labour government

WHAT happened last time with the 'Social Contract'?

The 1978 TUC rejected incomes policy, and the Labour Party conference resolved that the LP "rejects totally any wage restraint by whatever method... declares that it will only support the planning of wages when prices, profits and investment are planned within the framework of a socialist planned economy."

Moving the motion, the Liverpool Wavertree CLP delegate pointed out that: "The social contract was accepted by the trade unions on the basis that sacrifice by higher-paid workers would help their lower-paid brethren... What has been the result of all this sacrifice? ... the biggest fall in living standards for over 100 years. On top of this we have the grim spectre of mass unemployment..."

The final result was a victory for Thatcher. That was the outcome of the Social Contract last time round. And a repeat, with capitalism in worse crisis than it was in the mid-'70s, can only mean a worse outcome next time.

The TUC-LP liaison committee argues that their National Economic Assessment will work because "both the government and the trade union movement will be anxious to maintain the momentum on jobs and steady progress on living standards, and yet both will also be concerned that their policies do not result in disruptive inflation or balance of payments crises. Employers in turn will know that this will provide a framework for the steady development of constructive and profitable activities..."

And so millionaires and unemployed youth, stock-market sharks and the low paid, exploiters and exploited, can all march hand-

in-hand into the future! The

secretaries' comment on the committee document expresses the wish "to provide some appeal to managers".

This approach always in the end comes down to trying to make capitalism work at the expense of the working class. There is a lot about nudging and persuading the capitalists into more beneficial policies. But if they won't be persuaded? As always under capitalism, the working class will pay.

Already, many of the Labour policies which would seriously challenge capitalism have been watered down in the 'campaign document'.

Unilateral nuclear disarmament is proposed as an aim, but the only immediate steps proposed are cancellation of Trident and rejection of Cruise. (Will Labour remove Cruise missiles if they have already been installed? It's not clear). In flat contradiction to unilateralism is the proposal that the Polaris force be subject to international negotiations.

Labour policy for nationalisation of the top 25 monopolies is not included. "We are not talking about massive public ownership", front-bencher Mervyn Rees told the BBC. So much for Clause 4.

Abolition of the House of Lords is not among the immediate measures promised. Instead it is among those to be done "as quickly as possible". The first step will be "to abolish the legislative powers" of the Lords (but not its delaying powers?).

Labour policy to disband the SPG is not in the campaign document. Nor is any commitment to elect control over the police (and the Metropolitan Police in particular), though there are vague words about accountability.

BL women show the way!

THE Longbridge sewing room is not usually thought of as a militant area. But last week's strike there proved that women workers can be at least as militant and determined as men.

Having reluctantly agreed to a trial run of a new working arrangement which involves the loss of all grade 4 jobs (putting the increased work onto the grade 3 workers) the women then found themselves being abused by the foul-mouthed operations manager Tony Sargent and a

side-kick when they refused to start the trial without their stewards being present (there was a joint shop stewards meeting on that day).

As usual with this management, Sargent's message was 'Do it as we say or be sacked' - but not put so politely.

Not only did the women walk out, but they also picketed the gate - something that rarely happens these days.

Within hours of the walk-out management were forced

to apologise and admit that they were in the wrong.

On Monday, a meeting of all the sewing room voted to return, but made it clear that they would be out again if there was any repetition of this behaviour from management.

Another mark of the rise in militancy at Longbridge was the resolution passed in support of the sewing room on Friday. This stated that if there was any further attack or harassment like that in the sewing room, the Works Committee would recom-

mend a complete walkout of the plant.

Meetings of the rest of the plant have been held and overwhelmingly have supported the JSSC resolution.

Indeed in some areas the meetings have wanted to know why they weren't called out with the sewing room on Friday.

The sewing room women showed the way. We don't have to accept this management's arrogant bullying, and we can win if we unite and fight!

Save the Prince!

OVER the past five years the Prince of Wales general hospital in Tottenham has been progressively run down. In the last two years five wards have shut with little fight or response from the local labour movement.

In line with the Tory attack on hospitals, the Prince is now earmarked for closure. If this goes ahead, not only jobs but also lives will be lost.

With the Royal Northern in Islington closed, and the threatened closure in neighbouring Hackney, a massive area in north London will be without effective accident cover.

So support is now being organised to save the Prince. At a recent meeting over 200 local residents, mainly elderly, turned up. The hospital workers themselves have developed an alternative 'people's health plan' for Tottenham.

A major demonstration is planned for April 6 to bring the campaign into the streets of Tottenham.

However, such pressure, while necessary, will not by itself stop the closure. The need is to begin organising for occupation, and to link up with similar struggles in Hackney.

Michael O'Sullivan

Tilbury fight to spread?

Tilbury dockers, fighting for a £29 increase in basic rates, have been promised solidarity action by 2,000 riverside dockers in London if they vote tomorrow (Thursday) to stay on strike.

The pay demand centres on parity with white collar staff on the docks, whose basic rate is £135. A solid strike could halt supplies of newsprint as well as containers and steel imports.

DLO debate

THE national Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) combine was set up last year, on an initiative from Tyne and Wear, to bring together all DLOs in a common struggle against the Tories threat to shut down DLOs through the Local Government and Land Act.

At a recent weekend school attended by about 100 members and stewards from around the country, many of the problems facing DLOs were discussed.

Should we seek unity with council housing workers or see ourselves as

essentially local authority workers? How should we use the Labour Party - setting up Labour Party workplace branches, getting trade union delegates onto GCs? What relationship should the combine have to the trade union leaders?

The meeting resolved to start production of a regular combine paper which would be directed at the shop floor and to produce an alternative to the present agency for Labour Party contact of DLOs.

Michael O'Sullivan



Joseph steers clear of sit-in

DOZENS of parents and several pupils and teachers from the Nechells Junior School and nursery confronted Keith Joseph when he visited Birmingham on Friday 18 March.

Joseph was visiting three Birmingham schools but had arrogantly ignored the

parents' invitation to visit Nechells, threatened with closure by Birmingham's Tory council.

"We received no reply to our request so we decided to bring the school and its problems to Sir Keith", said parent/governor Carol Walker, one of the protest organisers.

The Nechells Action Committee have produced a well-researched document arguing the case against closure. "Nechells School is the focal point of the community, with its annexe building now a community centre. It has a warm and pleasant atmosphere and a loyal and dedicated staff."

The community is involved in both Christian and Muslim festivals celebrated at the school... the government report states that Nechells is the third most deprived area in England. It has the highest proportion of unemployed in England and it has the highest proportion of single parent families in Birmingham.

They stress that the closure would be particularly unfair on Muslim families.

"If Nechells School is closed, the only non-denominational school for the whole area will be Cronwell Street. This would create a severe imbalance between the 1170 places available in denominational church schools and the 380 places available in non-denominational local authority schools."

Meanwhile, parents Margaret Newbold and Kathy Barnes, are continuing their occupation of the school staffroom and the Nechells Action Committee is campaigning for support in the labour and trade union movement throughout Bir-

mingham.

"We deplore the uncaring hard-nosed attitude of the Tory administration on the City Council" say Margaret and Kathy. "The decision reached by the Education Committee was unfair, immoral and damaging to local democracy. The decision was made purely on party political lines with no concern for the children, parents or residents of Nechells."

Messages of support to, and details of the campaign from: Nechells Action Committee, 8 Brockley Place, Nechells, Birmingham 7.

OOOPS!

THERE was a blunder in the brief biography of Marx we carried last week. It said that the Paris Commune lasted for nine months. It was nine weeks.

In Socialist Organiser of March 3, in our report on the labour movement 'Ban the Plastic Bullets' conference, we wrote: "The conference heard from Brent East CLP, who hope to select Ken Livingstone and want support from the pro-Republican left".

While we may agree with the sentiment expressed, the delegate was obviously stating a personal opinion and not any agreed position of the CLP. Brent East CLP is still waiting to be given the go-ahead by the NEC to start the selection process, and we would wish to avoid making statement which could be used to further delay this.

		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.

DEBATE: Revolutionaries and the Labour Party. John O'Mahony, SO EB Hille Tickin (Critique EB) 7.30pm, Thursday March 31, Clubroom, Block 40, Stirlingsauld Place, The Gorbals, Glasgow. Nearest underground: Bridge Street.

Stop Witch-hunts. Labour Briefing Open Meeting. 1pm on Saturday 26 March at the Saracen's Head, Stone St., Dudley. Speakers: Les Huckfield MP; Jack Turner, PPC, Selly Oak; Pete Bilson, PPC, Edgbaston; Peter Tatchell.

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 Stoneylow 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.

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.

HARINGEY Labour Committee on Ireland. Public meeting 'Speak to Sinn Fein'. Speaker: Steve Bundred (GLC) and Geoff Bell (LCI).

7.30pm on Thursday 14 April at Brabant Road Trade Union and Community Centre, off Station Rd., N22.

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.



Maxwell sacks printers

ON Monday 21 March 400 printers at Park Royal in North West London and 150 in East Kilbride, near Glasgow, were sacked by millionaire Labour Party member Robert Maxwell.

Sacked workers, members of the print union SOGAT 82, who print four million copies of the Radio Times, have been singled out by the boss of Pergamon and British Printing Communication Corporation (BPCC) Group because of their resolute defiance of Maxwell's survival plans which destroyed nearly 2,000 jobs.

Last week the employers refused to pay wages and money owing to the SOGAT 82 chapel members, thus leading to the withdrawal of cooperation by them.

Maxwell's accusation of wildcat strikes is patently untrue. The SOGAT 82 chapel have had enough of Thatcherite approach to industrial relations and have indicated a willingness to oppose such policies.



FORD from back page

workforce for the confrontation they are planning immediately afterwards.

All this makes the present dispute a very strategic battle indeed. And it points to the problem that has existed in BL, when such crucial confrontations take place — it is inadequate for one plant to take on what is effectively a corporate policy.

The obvious need is for a united struggle by all Ford workers against the AJ Plan and all its tricks, aimed at cracking the central strategy of management.

Although the strike has been made official by the TGWU, there are no signs at all of such a policy emerging from the leadership of Ron Todd, the national organiser of the TGWU, and Ford NJNC chief negotiator.

Broke down

He said after the talks broke down on Monday that if other plants came out in support of Halewood "they would be listened to sympathetically" by the unions.

Such an attitude leads to the danger of the Halewood plant being isolated and

vulnerable to all the tactics open to corporate management.

It was the defeat of workers in the main strategic battles which gave BL management the strength to very seriously undermine the shop stewards movement at plant level.

The Ford combine committee should meet and ensure that the battle is won and that the renewed enthusiasm for higher levels of exploitation given to Ford managers by their Japanese counterparts, is not vented on Ford workers.

BLACKING NEEDED TO WIN THE STRIKE

HOTEL workers are again taking on the bitterly anti-union Trust House Forte company.

Pickets have successfully stopped refuse collection by Westminster council, mail, and a number of other deliveries since 28 union members were sacked at THF's leading hotel, the Grosvenor House in Park Lane, London.

On Sunday 20th the workers were joined by supporters on the picket line as the BBC screened the British Academy Awards from the hotel. Members of the Association of Broadcasting Staffs had refused to cross the picket line until instructed by a court order on Friday 18th.

Injunction

THF has also tried to get an injunction to stop the hotel workers picketing, saying that it is costing them thousands of pounds — but the judge threw it out. The union is going to court on March 31 to try to force THF to grant contracts of employment and reinstatement.

The GMBU started recruiting in the hotel last July, and soon won some improvements. But on February 26, 28 members were sacked. THF said they were casuals, though some had worked at the hotel for 20 years.

Legal

This is not by any means the first such experience in the fight for union organisation at THF. But the fact that the union is relying upon legal action (and industrial tribunals) to secure the rights of their members is an indication that the officials have learned nothing from previous bitter struggles.

The only way to confront a vicious and nation-wide employer like THF is by a full-scale mobilisation of industrial action, involving the blacking of supplies and services and the systematic picketing of Grosvenor House and other THF hotels by GMBU and other unions.

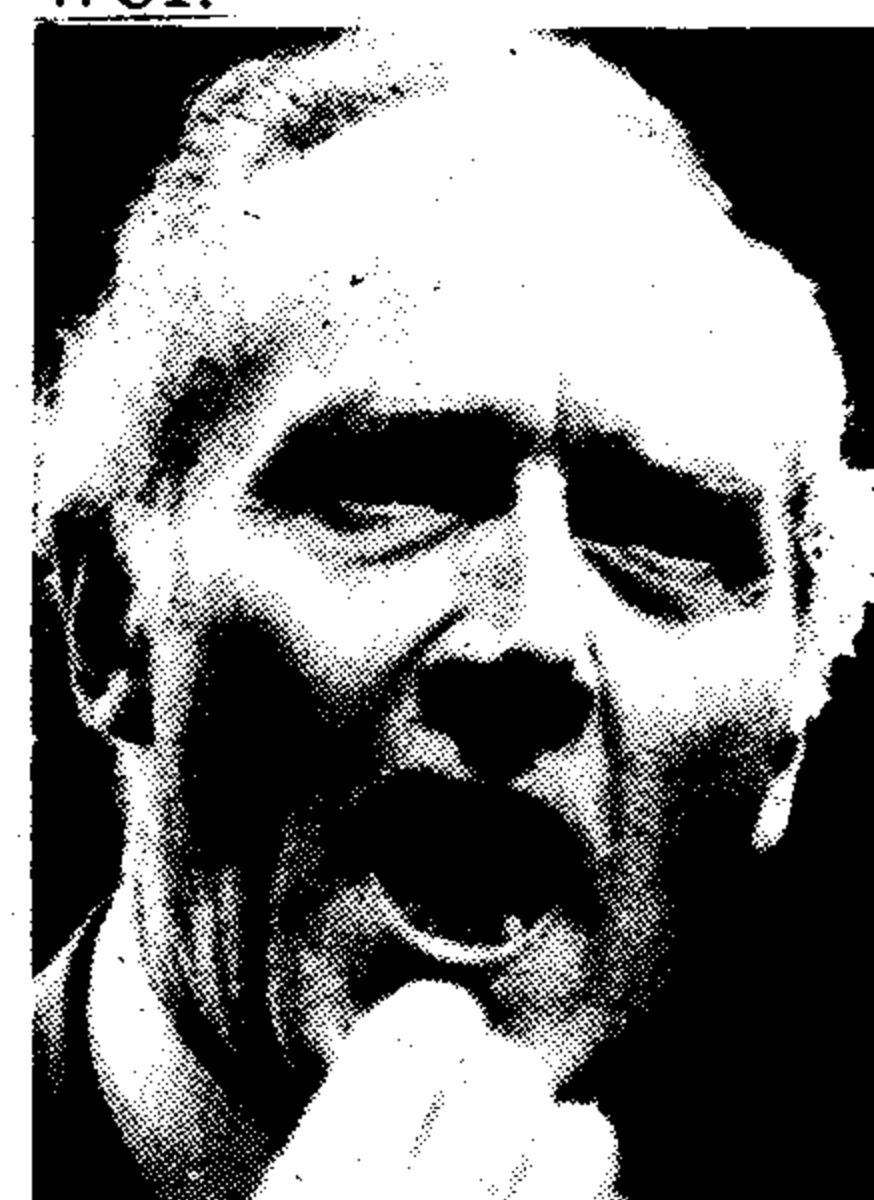
The GMBU has shown itself willing to spend money on an apparently determined campaign: the next few

weeks will tell whether they are prepared this time to commit themselves to the extension of the fight in defiance of Tory anti-union laws, which alone can secure a victory.

The whole labour movement must rally round to help crack this bastion of unorganised labour in the catering industry.

As one picket told us: THF "don't mind unions as long as you don't join one."

Messages and donations to Pam Gudgeon, GMBU, 4-6 Dukes Road, London WC1.



GMBU's Basnett

Where to find us

• SCOTLAND

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

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

• NORTH-WEST

Wirral. Contact Colin Johnstone, 1 Wellington Road, Wallasey. Next meeting: Thursday April 14, 8pm, at the Labour Club, Church Road, Seacombe: 'SO's role in the local and general elections'

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at

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

News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Manchester. Public meeting, Thursday March 24, 7.30 at the Millstone pub: 'Workers' Democracy or Tebbit's Democracy?' — Speaker: John McIlroy. Business/Educational meeting: March 17, 7.40 pm, UMIST Students Union. 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 1.30 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: 796027. SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday mornings, at the community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings.

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 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 12 to 1), and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Road. Contact: Rob, 589307.

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

• WALES

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

• MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alternate Fridays, 7.30, the Hen and Chickens, Constitution Hill.

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

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.

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.

Educational in basic Marxism: Sunday April 10 at 7.30 pm. 'Why the working class is a revolutionary class'. For details of venue phone Ian on 609 3071.

Hounslow. SO sold outside All Saints Church, Hounslow High Street, Saturday 10.30-12. Next meeting:

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).

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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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Socialist Organiser Alliance

Get Organised!

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

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

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

Name

Address



FUND

Last week's contributions to the March fund brought us to just over £400. We appealed for an extra effort, with over half our £1000 target to collect in two weeks.

Instead we've had the lowest amount this year: £25.50 brings us to £438.78. Socialist Organiser is taking a break next week, so there is another 7 days to send money in for the March appeal. We need over £500 in those seven days. That means every supporter sending a donation this week — and planning fund-raising for April now. Rush donations to the Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Thanks this week to Martin Barclay (Cardiff) £20, Cambridge readers (Alex Simpson £3.25, Alastair Todd £1.50, Pete Fenwick 75p).

Socialist Organiser

War danger in Central America

Ford bosses fight for Japanese methods



As in 1978 Ford workers are giving a lead on a class-wide issue

IN the face of a strike by the 4,500 assembly workers at Halewood, now in its third week, Ford management are standing firm over their decision to sack Paul Kelly, an assembly worker, who they accuse of vandalism for allegedly bending a bracket on a Ford Escort.

Their uncompromising stand makes nonsense of their own case. It is inconceivable that they would be prepared to lose over £50 million of production to date if there were not far more behind it, and of course there is.

Ford have obviously taken a policy decision in relation to the sweeping changes in working methods which Ford Europe have been trying to introduce since Bill Hayden, the vice-president of Ford Europe, visited Toyota plants in Japan, back in 1980.

He came back fired with enthusiasm by his glimpse of the methods by which the most successful ruling class in the world exploit the Japanese workers.

He had compared the performance of Toyota in

by Alan Thornett

Japan with Ford in Europe and came back quoting figures to the effect that Ford Europe in 1979 produce 1.6 million cars with 124,000 workers whilst Toyota with 65,000 workers produced over 3 million.

A strategy plan was drawn up involving changes in work practices, rationalisation of production methods, and cuts in the workforce. The strategy was called the AJ programme, which means "After Japan".

Progress on the plan has been slow. Although the AJ scheme was built into a 1980-82 wage deal, they failed to implement it significantly in any of the 24 plants of Ford UK.

But Ford have now clearly taken the decision to

hot up the pace by introducing a hard-line management style, modelled on the recent experience of BL.

That means harsh discipline, no compromise when a strike takes place, and a policy of seriously undermining the trade union organisation. Halewood is the first in line.

In Ford UK this management offensive is clear enough. On January 7 Ford announced 1,360 voluntary redundancies at Halewood, with 1600 more to come. The Halewood production manager says that this is linked to new work practices which are necessary to bring the plant up to the productivity levels they claim exist in the plant at Saarlouis in Germany where the Escort is also produced.

AJ plan

This is a useful argument since when the unions claim that all this is part of the AJ plan which has never been agreed, they argue that they are not implementing the AJ plan but simply implement-

ing European criteria.

It is, of course, all part of the usual tactics of playing off one plant against another, as with the often repeated threat to close Halewood down altogether.

In fact the present strike was provoked by management on the very eve of the introduction of these plans into Halewood.

Overall offensive

Seven days before the strike began, management at Halewood body plant put into the Ford disputes procedure, which provides for a 15 day status quo period before major changes can be introduced, a series of radical changes in work practice. They therefore will consider that they have the right to introduce the changes eight days after the current strike comes to an end.

The present dispute is therefore very much a part of the overall company offensive. They hope that the strike will soften up the

Continued p.15

ALL OUT FOR DISARMAMENT

by Judith Bonner

"WE ARE asking women everywhere to take a day out for positive action for disarmament".

What is effectively a women's general strike against the missiles is being

NEXT ISSUE

We'll be taking a one week break over Easter, so the next issue will be out on April 6. Please try to get feature articles to use before the Easter weekend, and phone in last-minute reports on the Monday

organised by women from Greenham through the May 24 planning committee.

By working through a network of local contacts the women are encouraging action on the following lines:

- Blockading and picketing military bases, banks, factories which support the nuclear arms industry, government offices, army recruitment centres, etc.

- Calling on trade unions to support the day, especially NALGO workers in local councils.

- Asking women workers to stay off work (but not risk losing their jobs)

- 'Die-ins' outside Town Halls, etc.

- Set up peace camps in towns just for the day (or longer if wanted)

- Call a town meeting of all women,

- Take kids to town and city and county halls, and demand to know what provisions have been made for them in the event of a nuclear war.

- Occupy civil emergency planning offices and demand details of/expose civil defence

- Picket prisons, hospitals and schools, to make the connection between lack of public spending and the arms race

- Conducted tour of towns, pointing out neglected, falling-down schools — and the nuclear bunkers

- Educational displays in shopping centres.

This event is not limited to Britain. Already the contacts made via support action for Greenham in 25 different countries are hoping to conduct similar activities — and to extend to still more countries!

The original idea came from a visit paid by two women to Sweden. Women there had involved themselves in similar action against nuclear weapons (Sweden is a 'neutral' country). Seeing that all over the world the press was suppressing news of Greenham, they decided that action should extend

world wide.

As yet no union has declared in favour of the strike call: there is a vast amount of organising to be done in the workplaces, branches and committees to build for a stoppage.

The Labour Party nationally has not supported it, so it is vital that we pass resolutions and organise locally, calling on the Labour NEC to organise for and support the day. To leave the fight to individual trade unionists is not enough.

The May 24 Organising Committee is emphasising that they don't want activity confined to 'the white middle class women', but to involve working class, black and Asian women.

Local groups are urged to issue translated material, and there are plans for a national leaflet in Urdu.

For a list of regional contacts, and an information pack for organising for May 24, write: May 24 Organising Committee, 16 Arundel Road, Brighton.



JOHN HARRIS

NICARAGUAN defence minister Humberto Ortega has warned that there is a 'serious danger of war' with Honduras following the biggest incursions by US-backed counter-revolutionaries since the Sandinista victory in July 1979.

Ortega pointed to the fact that Honduran troops are massing on the border, while a contingent of 1,500 "contras" have pursued their armed aggression within Nicaraguan territory over the past seven weeks.

In the most recent clashes, a two-pronged attack on the North and centre of the country was largely contained close to the frontier — but about 200 right wing troops of the so-called "Nicaraguan Democratic Front" (FDN) penetrated to within 100 miles of the capital Managua, and claimed to have captured two towns.

Invaders

The Sandinistas claim to have killed 200 of the invaders and wounded a further 300. And the government has strongly attacked the Reagan administration for "provoking war" by its heavy military and economic sponsorship of the FDN reactionaries, with aid funnelled by the CIA via the US embassy in Honduras.

In Washington the US regime has refused to comment, or even admit the latest clashes are taking place, declaring blandly that it is "watching the situation".

The CIA operation in Honduras is part and parcel of a continuing US attempt to undermine the Sandinista regime by military and economic means.

The FDN forces are composed of a motley gang of former Nicaraguan National Guardsmen, together with a number of Miskito Indians: they have been trained by CIA and Argentine "advisors" in camps in Honduras.

Harassment

The harassment they have mounted in repeated cross-border raids has forced the Sandinistas to budget an estimated \$125 million on defence this year.

But despite the profound economic crisis of the Sandinistas, it is plain that the reactionaries have no popular support within Nicaragua itself.

The whole operation is reminiscent of the abortive 'Bay of Pigs' invasion of Cuba mounted by the CIA in 1961: a 1,500-strong force of reactionaries set out from Guatemala expecting to catalyse a mass movement and overturn Castro. Within 3 days all 1,500 had been killed or taken prisoner.