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Cowley workers insist that "the six minutes are sacrosanct"



Buckle: leads at the Assembly Plant, holds back Body Plant

Cowley backlash against Thatcherism on shopfloor

EACH MASS meeting of the 5,000 strikers at the BL Cowley Assembly Plant has grown stronger.

At today's meeting only a handful voted to accept BL's terms and return to work. As workers filed into the plant sports ground for the meeting, the mood was obvious. This was a spectacular backlash against repeated management attacks and the treatment workers are receiving on the shop floor.

Placards called for 'all BL' to be called out and for 'no sell-outs'. Others read: 'Duffy and Evans - don't wash your hands of this strike'.

The backlash is not just at Cowley or BL. It represents a mood in the working class as a whole against Thatcherism - which is in essence what BL workers are facing on the shop floor.

The militant demonstration of shipyard workers on Tyneside on Monday shows it clearly.

These conditions, however, do not make top trade union leaders any less determined to get the strikers back to work on any terms. The now-famous meeting between those leaders and BL bosses at a plush hotel near Gatwick on Monday arose from a secret get-together between Terry Duffy and management, held with no local negotiators present.

The problem for Duffy and for Evans (who arrived in the same car as BL chief Harold Musgrove) was that BL management would have no compromise on the six minutes washing up time - or anything else. In fact they simply restated their original position with a different date: 'Audited Plant Status' would be introduced on May 16, and bell-to-bell running would then operate forthwith.

That was a very nice offer. A four week strike to get a three week delay! And (though none of the so-called leaders have managed to grasp this) the workers

NO COMPROMISE!

NO SELL-OUT!

By Alan
Thornett

the specific issue of the six minutes.

The decision that the stewards took at their previous meeting, that the six minutes are 'sacrosanct', is a big problem for Cure and Hawley.

It is also becoming clearer to the workforce how far BL intend to go if they are not stopped. BL boss Geoff Armstrong has said that the efficiency measures already taken in BL are 'only the beginning'. BL wants a workforce 'equal to the best international standards in Japan, the continent and the USA'.

As with Ford's AJ (After Japan) plan, Japan is the real target. In Japanese car plants independent unions were smashed many years ago, and replaced by yellow unions controlled completely by management. BL will need a non-union shop at Cowley if it is seriously to compete with the levels of exploitation achieved by the

Japanese capitalists.

Tomorrow, talks with BL management resume, with apparently little chance of a settlement. Management are unlikely to compromise, and their terms are unacceptable. Duffy could simply

ing four crucial models. They were forced to postpone their sacking threat from Tuesday to Thursday, and now Thursday is hardly viable and they may have to shift again.

If the union leaders can't

DISTRICT councils in the Oxford area have been asked what accommodation they could provide for workers being moved in to fill jobs. Although most of them appear to have shied away from the proposal, it shows that BL management are at least speculating about it.

If they went ahead, it would undoubtedly be responded to with massive picketing and probably the occupation of the plant.

order the AUEW members back to work, as he did in the 1981 BL strike, but that could fail this time.

Management also have a big problem. The plant has been at a standstill for four weeks, paralys-

break the strike, management have to try to do it themselves. But it is not easy.

They could carry out the sacking threat, open the gates, call on the police to enforce the Prior and Tebbit laws to let a few scabs



Duffy

in, get something started, and begin recruiting new labour. But politically it would not suit the Tories at the moment to have the pitched battle that would inevitably ensue.

Contingency plans have however been laid (see inset).

Although the strike is very strong, it has obvious leadership problems. TGVU district secretary David Buckle has emerged as the main local spokesman. He is a local magistrate, with a long history of betraying struggles in the plant. Last November he refused to attend a mass meeting in my support after I was sacked by the same BL management he now so roundly denounces.

Rank and file control is crucial to the strike. The people running the strike should be the strike committee which has been elected from the shop stewards.

David Buckle's belated stand is
Continued page 2

Prepare to counter BL's sacking threat!

EDITORIAL

THE workers of Timex in Dundee deserve the support of the trade union movement. Like their brothers and sisters at Cowley they are fighting back. We applaud them for that.

But the report we publish in this week's Socialist Organiser (page 15) shows fatal weaknesses in the campaign to save the factory — not weaknesses of spirit or will, but wrong political decisions which could waste the efforts of the workforce.

Consider the reaction of the French union members who visited the factory: "They say they sympathise and give us support but cannot jeopardise their own jobs" What else could the convenor say to a demand that boils down to "British jobs for Britain"? What would Gordon Samson, the Dundee convenor, have said to the French workforce if the positions had been reversed and the demand had been French jobs for French workers?

Companies like Timex treat their production units in different countries like bargaining counters. It is revolting that jobs should be casually discarded, that men and women of whatever nationality should be treated like the small pence in international balance sheets.

But the letter from Thatcher shows the danger of appeals to national interests.

The same woman who threatens and bullies workers in struggle throughout Britain acknowledges in her letter to the Timex unions "public concern" about the French grant. She hopes to present the issue as one between British people (of whatever class) and the French (of whatever class).

If the issue is British or French, then there can be no basis for a joint common strategy for the workers of both countries.

The EEC is a charter for multi-national big business. It is never going to stop companies playing off different workforces, any more than a British government is going to stop BL trying to divide workers at Cowley and Longbridge.

Just as the answer in Britain is for joint action by Longbridge and Cowley against common threats, so internationally the demands must be — no job loss, whether French or Scottish.

The strategy of the campaign — unfair competition — is fatally flawed.

The tactics too seem to us to be the opposite of what is needed to win. Since the press (with the exception of the Dundee Standard) is pro-management, any strike is likely to bring 'bad publicity'. But to avoid strike action at the other three plants near Dundee will bring worse.

It divides the workforces. It allows the management to have production at the factories they want to keep open, but no production at the factory they wish to close. It will isolate the Milton workforce.

It may of course be difficult to achieve united action at all four plants (and doubly difficult to win joint action with the French workforce). But the Dundee Timex workers are facing a ruthless and determined class enemy. Only the strategy which can win should be pursued.

And central to this strategy must be the demand for supporting action by the whole trade union movement to boycott supplies and distribution of Timex — to force management to their knees.

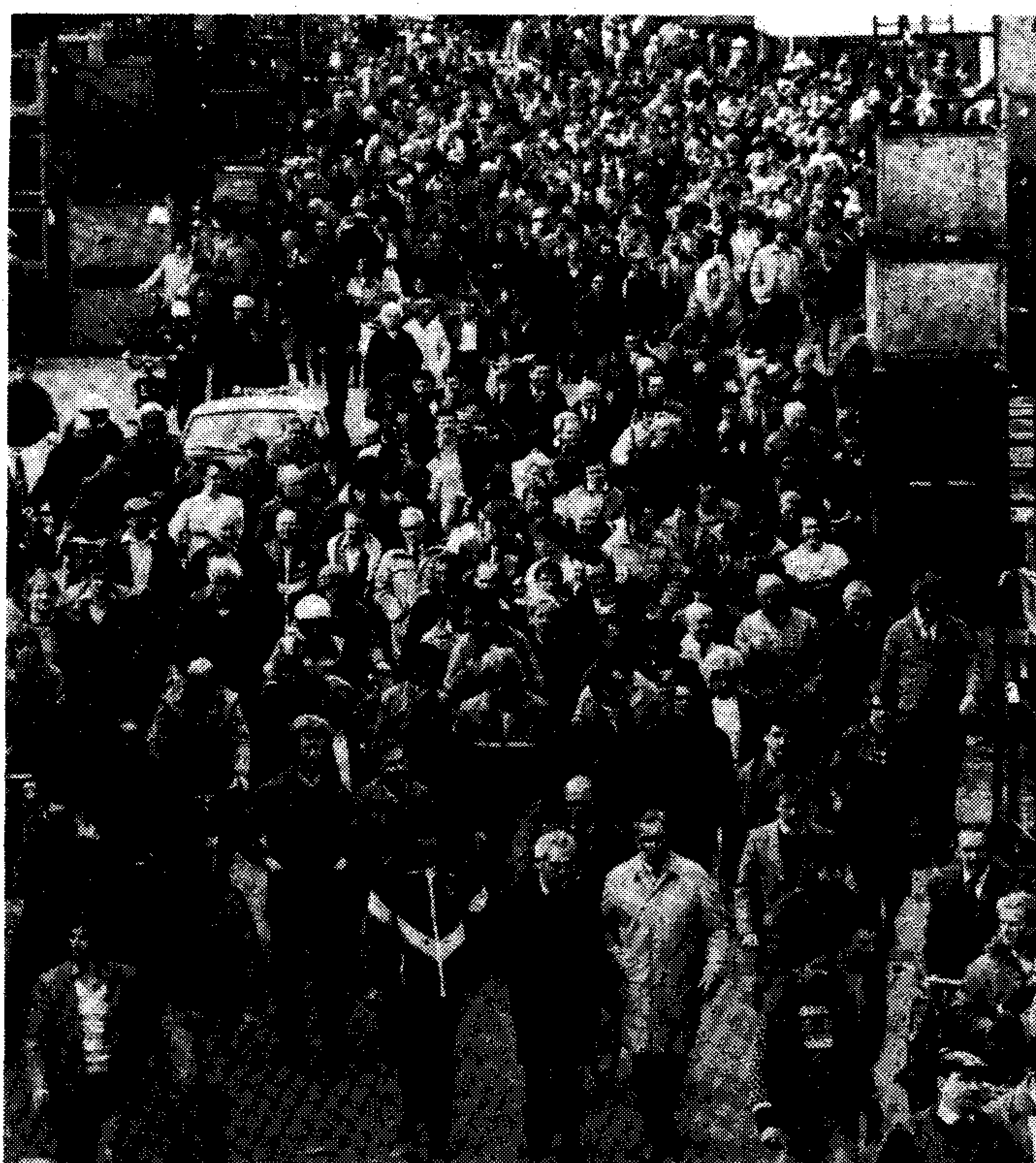
We call for support for the Timex occupation whatever the demands, and whatever the tactics. But we also say the Timex workforce should change course. The willingness of the workforce at Timex to fight is a tribute both to the workforce and to the union organisation. It is too precious to waste.

Socialists for a Labour Victory

- Unilateral nuclear disarmament and removal of all nuclear bases in Britain
- Nationalise the top 25 companies, return social spending to 1977 levels in real terms. 35 hour week, withdrawal from the EEC, expansion of NHS, education, house-building. Renationalisation with compensation only on grounds of proven need and without gain to the recipients
- No incomes policy. Repeal of Tory anti-union laws
- Women's rights, including the right to control their own fertility
- Repeal the Nationality Act and Immigration Acts

- Police accountability, repeal of the Police Bill
- A united Ireland. Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, ban plastic bullets
- A socialist foreign policy supporting liberation movements abroad
- No formal coalition, no informal deals. End the witch-hunt
- A Labour government that carries out Labour conference decisions.

Contact: Mandy Moore/
Andy Harris (joint secretaries); c/o 28 Middle Lane,
London N8. Affiliation fee:
£3 individuals, £5 organisations.



Cowley strikers, standing firm

No fudging on missiles!

From Labour CND

THE SUCCESS OF THE CND Easter demonstrations once again shows the strength of public opinion in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. It is important that the Labour Party takes a public lead in campaigning for disarmament.

Too often in the past, we have left it to the peace movement and we have not made clear political demands.

Labour CND calls on Labour Parties up and down the country to step up their public campaigns to show to people who have not consistently voted Labour and to young people voting for the first time, that the Labour Party is the only party with a commitment to stop the arms race, refuse Cruise missiles, cancel Trident and close down the nuclear bases.

While we welcome those sections of the Campaign Document [the draft recently published on which Labour's election manifesto is to be based] which clearly support party policy on Cruise and Trident, Labour CND is alarmed at the suggestion that Polaris should be kept as a negotiating tool. This is totally contrary to the vote at conference to reject defence policies based on nuclear weapons.

Composite 51 stated that we should abandon nuclear weapons, not bargain with them. Labour Party leaflets and publications have said no nuclear weapons.

The next Labour government should begin a non-nuclear defence policy by de-commissioning Polaris immediately it takes office. Scrapping Polaris should not be subject to negotiations with third parties or it may never happen. Labour CND urges Labour Parties to campaign for party policy on Polaris.

There is some ambiguity in the Campaign Document on the bases. Composite 51 clearly demanded that all nuclear bases, both British and American, should be closed down by the next Labour government. It did not say take time, go slow, delay or compromise. Time is something we have not got.

There must be no loophole for the bases to remain. Labour CND calls on all Labour Parties to demand that the nuclear bases are closed down as soon as the next Labour government takes office.

Labour CND believes that the Labour Party's commitment to stay in NATO has caused much of the watering down on Polaris and the bases. We will continue to fight for a change of party policy on NATO. However, composite

51 does not depend on getting out of NATO to achieve unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The unconditional abandonment of all existing weapons and bases together with a rejection of Cruise and Trident would give us a full and unambiguous policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament. This is what we voted for at the Labour Party conference at Blackpool. Composite 51 gained a massive majority. We cannot settle for less.

Please join us in demanding a clear statement to scrap Polaris and close down all nuclear bases unconditionally. With this commitment we can go on to win the general election!

Brent suspense

ON Wednesday 27 April the Labour Party NEC will be finally deciding on whether to let us go ahead with re-selection.

Brent East and Brent South are the only two constituency parties in the country with sitting Labour MPs who have not yet reselected.

The decision on Brent South is likely to be uncontroversial, but not so for Brent East. Although the report to the organisation sub-committee on April 11 from the national officer who has been 'supervising' the parties for the last six months was favourable, there are many other issues involved.

Brent East has gone over the NEC guidelines' limit of three years since the last general election — despite the fact that part of the responsibility for this rests with the NEC itself, and despite the fact that the constitution says clearly that every CLP has a mandatory duty to carry out selection. The NEC is taking legal advice on this.

The NEC will also decide on whether to take disciplinary action against the organisers of a left caucus which met last September to discuss who to put up in opposition to Reg Freeson, the sitting MP.

Last Thursday the GMC of Brent East agreed, with only one vote against, to call for the NEC's co-operation in taking immediate steps to start the selection procedure from an EC meeting on the 28th — the day after the NEC meeting.

It was also agreed to organise a lobby of the NEC meeting and we are asking other CLPs to give their support — with trade union,

Cowley... from front page

welcome, but workers should not have to rely on an appointed official over whom they have no control. His boss is Moss Evans, not the rank and file workers.

What right does Terry Duffy have to make public statements about buying out the six minutes, without any authority from the strikers — particularly when he calls for a 'small' buy-out payment!

TERRY DUFFY is not content to stab his Cowley membership in the back, he is dead set against the policies supported by the vast majority of the rank and file in the unions and the Labour Party.

On Monday 18th, he took time out from meetings with employers to address his union's conference — and launch into an attack on Labour's policies of unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from the Common Market. "They will damage the chances of getting elected", he claimed.

Even the harmless Michael Foot came in for a tongue-lashing from Duffy, who is one of the clique of extreme right wing union leaders seeking to oust him and install Dennis Healey in the leadership.

Duffy pointed out that during the last war a bullet shot the chin-strap off his helmet. He did not say which side fired the bullet. Many workers may well wish it had been aimed a couple of inches higher.

The officials are now talking about a public inquiry into the management's attitudes in BL. Who needs an inquiry into that? They are threatening to sack the entire labour force. What more evidence is needed?

The reality is that BL's position does not start from being humane or inhumane. They start from their need for profitability.

The unions should be demanding, not just an inquiry into their attitudes, but to

open the books and investigate their entire business. Management use their sole control of information to back up their productivity drives.

The strike also needs a clear policy in the event of sackings, which will be a major industrial and political issue if BL goes ahead. All BL must be called out in that event.

Moss Evans talked about this before he went to the Gatwick meeting. Local officials have now opposed a call on these lines from the stewards, on the basis that it would be dangerous if it were not successful. But the mood in the other BL plants is strong. Conditions in all the main plants are the same as Cowley. BL workers know that Cowley is fighting a battle with corporate management which is also their battle.

NOT all BL employees are offered a pittance for their annual wage increase. Ray Horrocks received a pay increase of 15% last year from less than £60,000 to over £75,000 on being made Group Chief Executive, Cars.

There is no information as to whether the deal involved a commitment to bell-to-bell running by Mr Horrocks.

An official call to the other BL plants would get a tremendous response. The combine committee should meet and organise to ensure that in the event of sackings all BL is called out on official strike.

5,000 workers sacked for going on strike would be a national political issue for the whole trade union movement. It would be a fundamental challenge to the right to strike — and should be treated as such.

The campaign must begin now in support of the Cowley workers. Trade union branches and shop stewards' committees should discuss general support, and active support in the event of sackings. Trade union and Labour Party branches and wards should pass solidarity resolutions and raise cash.

The workers at Cowley are prepared to fight. Let's rally the movement behind them.

- *Rank and file control of the strike!
- *Open the books of BL!
- *Bring out all of BL!
- *Appeal for supporting strikes to the whole trade union movement in the event of sackings!

Donations to the Treasurer, A. Brown, 4 Knott Oaks, Combe, Oxon., OX7 2PJ.

WITH A future Labour government still little more than a glint in the eye of Party activists, already the manoeuvres to lay the basis for an incomes policy are underway in the union bureaucracy.

The Scottish TUC saw NUM and SCPS delegations get their heads together to reword a composite motion and thus avoid specific opposition to the 'National Economic Assessment', which is the current code word agreed by Labour and TUC leaders to cover future wage controls.

But an emergency GMBATU resolution enthusiastically welcoming the TUC/Labour Party programme was pushed through. In such manipulation workers get a taste of things to come: the fight for a Labour government must be coupled with the fight for trade union democracy and independent policies to defend living standards.

* After being refused entry, 50 supporters left the hall shortly after 8pm. Ken Livingstone informs us that he raised the issue with the meeting organisers, and they agreed to let us in — but told him they had gone out before 8pm and found no-one there.

Buckle's role in isolating Cowley strikers

THE PRESS has claimed that the Cowley Assembly Plant is the only BL factory that has 'hand-washing time'.

This is untrue. The Cowley Body Plant also has this agreement — and should be out on strike alongside the Assembly Plant.

There is a reason why it is not — and that is its leadership, and mainly David Buckle, the TGWU district secretary.

The 'three minutes' issue is only the latest of a series of management attacks. Speed-up and brutalisation of the workforce came to a head first in the Body Plant. Three weeks before the cur-

By Pete Jones

rent strike, the 4000 TGWU members there walked out against speed-up on the Rover/Ambassador line. At a mass meeting they voted to strike on a Monday and meet again on the Friday.

After two days the company withdrew the speed-up and the workers went back after Buckle had urged the shop stewards to recommend a return.

Two days later the company implemented further manning cuts, in the paint shop. Buckle argued against calling a mass meeting. He said the company had a right to implement 'their' manning. He argued that Leyland workers could not fight the 'blue newspaper' (the agreement on productivity and management authority imposed in 1980 by Michael Edwards which has been used as a charter for many attacks on work conditions since then).

Despite a clear majority of stewards voting to support the paint shop — only eight were against — the leadership of the plant argued that 'too many had abstained'.

But the paint shop stood firm and the membership assembled for a mass meeting in their support.

As some sections were not there, Buckle argued against taking a decision, and a further mass meeting was called for the following Monday morning. He was the only person who addressed that meeting. The mood was to support the paint shop. But in his speech Buckle did not even mention the paint shop.



AUEW members who feel that they are battling against their leadership almost as much as BL management will be confirmed in this view by Executive member Ken Cure, who told the Financial Times

"I don't want to see anyone beaten into the ground, and that includes the company as well as our members"



Hard-faced: Musgrove (left) and Armstrong

He argued BL workers could not fight the "blue newspaper"

He just argued against fighting the 'blue newspaper' and for a return to work — though he said that if the company did not change their attitude he would be willing to have an official strike in the future.

If he had argued for strike action, then there is no doubt that the struggle at Cowley would have centred on the manning issue and on the Body Plant. As it is, the company ended 'hand-washing' time in the Assembly Plant, and there was no lead from the senior stewards, all right-wing supporters of Buckle.

Convenor Bill Roche simply said that he expected workers would continue to take the time.

In the Body Plant the tracks stop five minutes early, but the workers are not allowed to clock out early. The tracks are not run fast to make up for this time.

Stewards

When the Assembly Plant walked out Roche was pushed into calling a stewards' meeting, which in turn called a mass meeting. Stewards urged that a strike vote be put to this meeting. Instead Roche argued that the workers had a choice — 'stay in and fight, or go out indefinitely'.

In other words, he argued that it was possible to fight without losing money. After the sell-out on the manning strikes, it is hardly surprising that a section of the meeting, particularly the paint shop, was now against strike action. And Roche's attitude tipped the scales.

On the vote, the meeting was evenly divided. The chairman de-

clared that it had gone against a strike.

Some sections still walked off the job at their normal time, under threat of discipline, and others didn't. But within a day or two most of the plant was laid off, so the issue is still in the air.

Some of the workers still in the plant are being threatened, but no action has yet been taken against them.

If the Body Plant struck, then that would stop most of Longbridge as well as Cowley. Buckle is being presented in the press as a fighter against the company's speed-up and dictatorial attitudes, but his record in the Body Plant shows something different.

Karl Marx on 'washing-up time' Vampire capitalism

Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him.

If the labourer consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist.

The capitalist then takes his stand on the law of the exchange of commodities. He, like all other buyers, seeks to get the greatest possible benefit out of the use-value of his commodity. Suddenly the voice of the labourer, which had been stifled in the storm and stress of the process of production, rises:

The commodity that I have sold to you differs from the crowd of other commodities, in that it uses it creates value, and a value greater than its own. That is why, by its use. That which on your side appears as a spontaneous expansion of capital, is on mine extra expenditure of labour power.

Two days out of one

We see then, that, apart from extremely elastic bounds, the nature of the exchange of commodities itself imposes no limit to the working day, no limit to surplus labour. The capitalist maintains his rights as a purchaser when he tries to make the working day as long as possible, and to make, whenever possible, two working days out of one. On the other hand, the peculiar nature of the commodity sold implies a limit to its consumption by the purchaser, and the labourer maintains his right as seller when he wishes to reduce the working day to one of definite normal duration. There is here, therefore, an antinomy, right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchanges. Between equal rights force decides. Hence is it that in the history of capitalist production, the determination of what is a working day presents itself as the result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital, i.e. the class of capitalists, and collective labour, i.e. the working class.

Moments are profit

These "small thefts" of capital from the labourer's meal and recreation time, the factory inspectors also designate as "petty pilferings of minutes," "snatching a few minutes," or, as the labourers technically called them, "nibbling and cribbling at meal-times."

It is evident that in this atmosphere the formation of surplus value by surplus labour, is no secret. "If you allow me," said a highly respectable master to me, "to work only ten minutes in the day overtime, you put one thousand a year in my pocket." "Moments are the elements of profit."

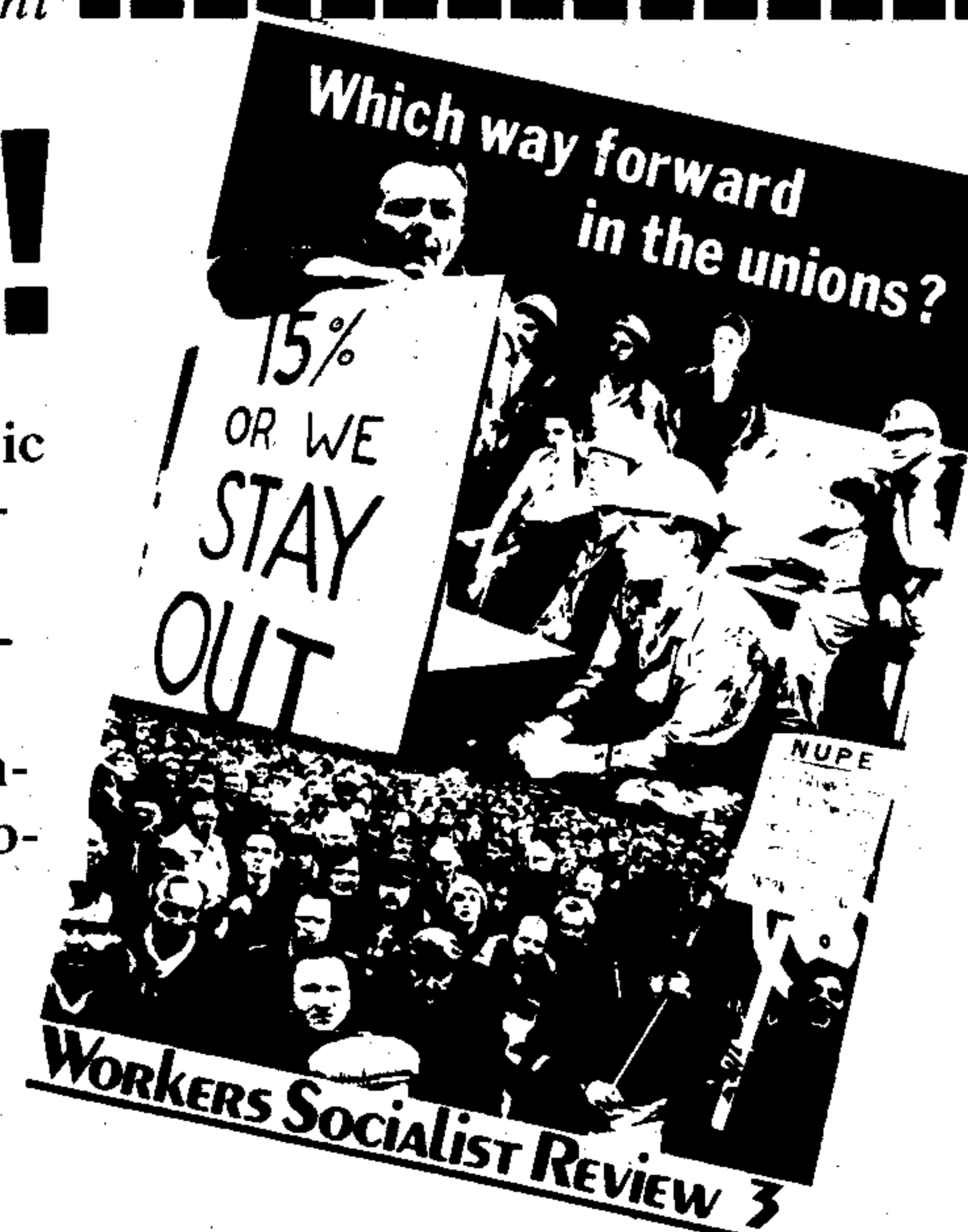
Karl Marx — Capital volume 1

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Overcoming 'bigotry with a human face' How we got gay rights into our LP Manifesto

FOR THE first time, the Labour Party in Nottingham has written a Manifesto for the City elections with the widest participation from inside and outside the Party.

Working groups of interested members met regularly to discuss policies and write drafts of their sections of the manifesto, and last November a consultative conference enabled community groups to state their needs.

The gay response was initiated by the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, several of whose members joined the working party to write up the 'equal opportunities in employment' policy and to propose relevant amendments on equal opportunities in city services.

It was not easy to convince some of our comrades of the validity of our demands, or why they should be spelled out unequivocally in the manifesto. These are some of the arguments we encountered.

"I'M NOT prejudiced against them, but..." What usually follows is a litany of racist comments, dressed up as objective observation.

And it's familiar to gays too, when we listen to straights talking about us. It is the language of the 'liberal bigot' - the person who is just a shade too sophisticated to be an outright bigot but still thinks that he or she needs to emphasise his or her superiority as a heterosexual.

During the preparation of the manifesto this language had been heard with depressing frequency, and not only from the Right.

The first hurdle we had to overcome was the argument that blacks and women are clearly oppressed but gays are too insignificant in numbers or degree of oppression to be considered at all.

This objection was eventually overcome by conceding that gays were one of the 'disadvantaged groups' in society.

The next obstacle was reluctance to specify gays wherever the disadvantaged groups were mentioned. The objection was raised that if all such groups were mentioned the document would resemble a dictionary. If gays were to be included, what about other minorities, such as fat people?

This was eventually overcome



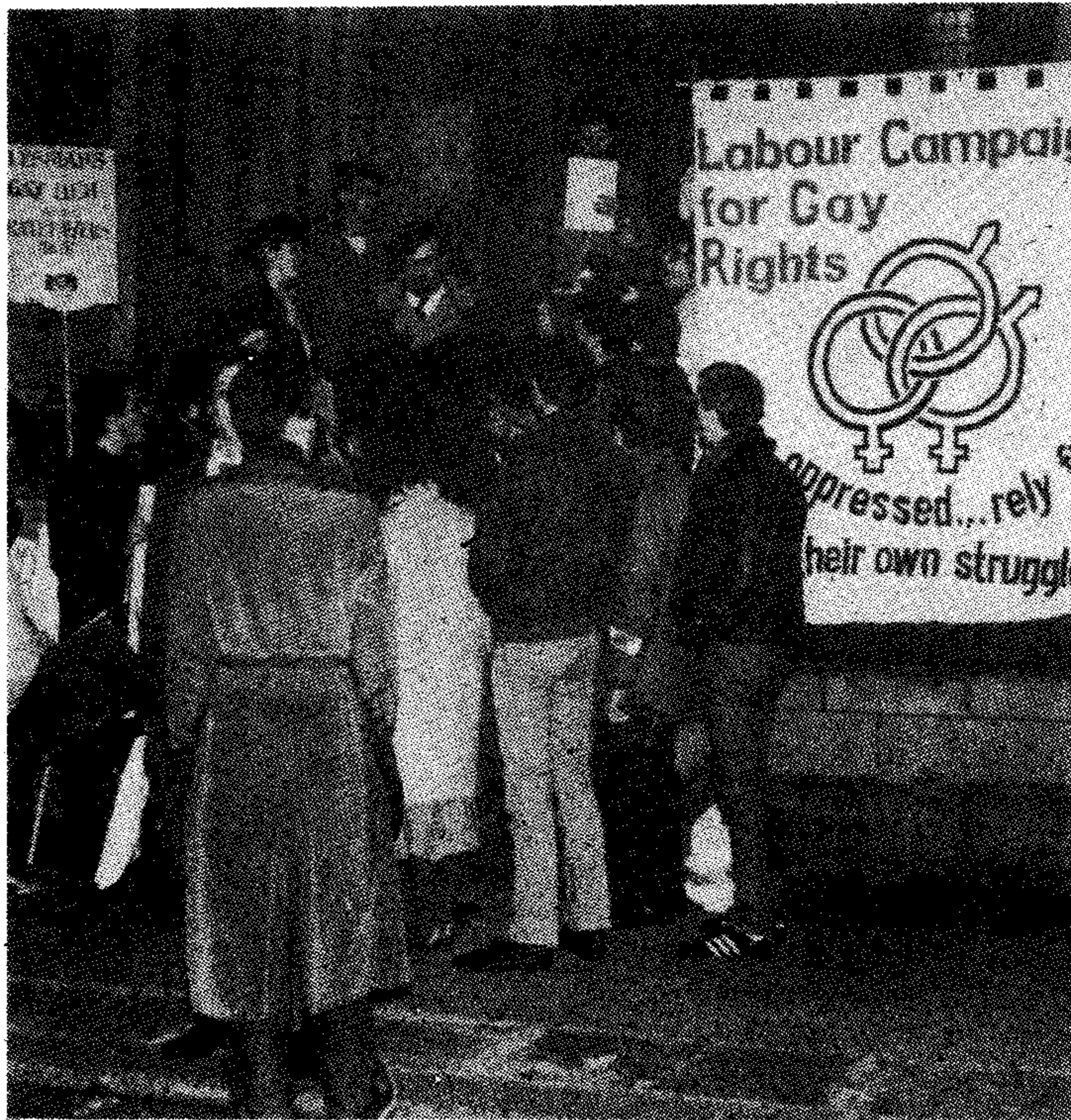
By Chris
Richardson

too. Then there was the problem of space. Too many demands specific to gays would create a lack of 'balance'. The West Nottingham CLP resolved that problem by mandating its delegates to the District Party to remove all references to gays from the Party's drafts. Back to square one.

The space objectors, however, had a problem when the equal opportunities section was replaced by an amended version which included the agreement made by the Labour City Council and the trade unions - and its reference to gays.

How could the city councillors present object to a policy they had voted for three months earlier?

They did so by deploring the growing length of the manifesto. They wanted the Equal Opportunities Policy to merely "... en-



Gay rights supporters picket Manchester City Council

dorse the recent agreement between the city and unions."

No-one actually mentioned the gay references in the policy, until one of the less discreet councillors suggested that "... certain sections of the manifesto might not be helpful to us..."

Space was a problem for sections of the left, too. We expected a Labour council with a built-in right wing majority, and that's why we were writing a detailed manifesto in the first place. It would be more difficult for the right wing to ignore or sidestep proposals once elected.

So for the left to delete gay references would be transparent hypocrisy. The problem was solved for some by asserting that gay demands might only appear where those of other disadvantaged

groups were specified.

So the relatively minor demands that the city's nominees on the Area Health Authority and Community Health Councils should support a shopping list of pro-gay policies came in for an unexpected and sustained attack.

Why were there no demands on women and blacks? And how could we expect to have preference over these groups?

Progress

We had made progress, however. The working party on the subject eventually agreed to include the section. Perhaps gays need not be subordinate to women and blacks after all.

But progress was short-lived. An almost identical group of people meeting later in the guise of a District Party left caucus decided not to support the proposal when it came up for discussion at the next District Party.

It was not surprising, after these obstacles, that the 'corruption theory' should put in an appearance. And of course it did.

The City Council's support for the establishment of youth groups would be the hottest potato of all, and would lose us the election without any doubt. So out it came.

But if the Right were to be believed, the election had already been 'lost' several times over.

It had been 'lost' in the East Nottingham Constituency a fortnight before when that Party agreed that security of council tenancies on the death of a gay partner and joint mortgages for gays would be included in the housing section.

"But they were already housing committee practice", cried the Housing Committee chairman, so there was no need to mention them at all.

Comma

No matter that most gays would not know this. To tell the gays would mean telling everyone else too. And many straights would certainly object.

However, after numerous hours spent in working parties and four special meetings of the District Party the manifesto was completed and approved down to the last dot and comma.

A vain attempt by the Right to have it 'edited' by the Executive Committee failed and we now await its publication. Before the election, we hope!

Building the campaign in the labour movement

Report from LCGR conference

The conference, whose theme was the fight in the labour movement for lesbian and gay rights, was sponsored by local MP Tony Benn and Pam Tatlow, prospective parliamentary candidate for Bristol West.

Opening the conference, Brian Underwood, secretary of the Bristol Trades Union Council and a member of the regional council of the TUC, set the tone of the meeting by affirming that: "Gay rights is a political, and not merely a personal, issue". He supported the aims of the campaign and informed the conference of the positive policies on gay rights that the local TUC had adopted.

Pam Tatlow said it was important that people in the Labour Party who were not gay knew where we stood so that their support could be more effective. She also expressed disappointment at Campaign 83's lack of a detailed commitment to gay rights.

ently issued Campaign Document. We determined to work with our supporters to campaign all the more vigorously for a clear commitment by the party to absolute equality with heterosexuals for lesbians and gay men.

The conference was also disappointed at the failure of the recently formed Socialists for a Labour Victory to place gay rights on its election agenda or to invite LCGR to its foundation meeting.

Heterosexual socialists have no difficulty in opposing the Labour Party conference decision on the register - saying that no conference should have the authority to deny the rights of minorities within the party. Why then was there a reluctance to say that the conference has no right to pass policies which fail to remove discrimination against one of the country's largest minorities?

At the very least, SLV should state its commitment to campaigning for equality in the law.

This was a landmark conference for the Gay Young Socialists, as it was the first at which they had been present as an organised, autonomous entity. They arrived fresh from their organisational victories at the recent Labour Party Young Socialists conference at Bridlington.

This annual event has been, in recent years, dominated by supporters of Militant, whose official policy refuses to recognise any significance in sexual politics.

Undeterred, GYS members stickered delegates with gay liberation badges, and distributed leaflets throughout the three-day event. Significantly, their highly visible presence encouraged Class Fighter and Revolution Youth supporters to raise the issue of gay rights on the conference floor.

GYS member Brian West summed up the progress they had made, saying: "In past years we have kicked and spat upon by delegates. This year we only had to suffer verbal abuse and threats of violence".

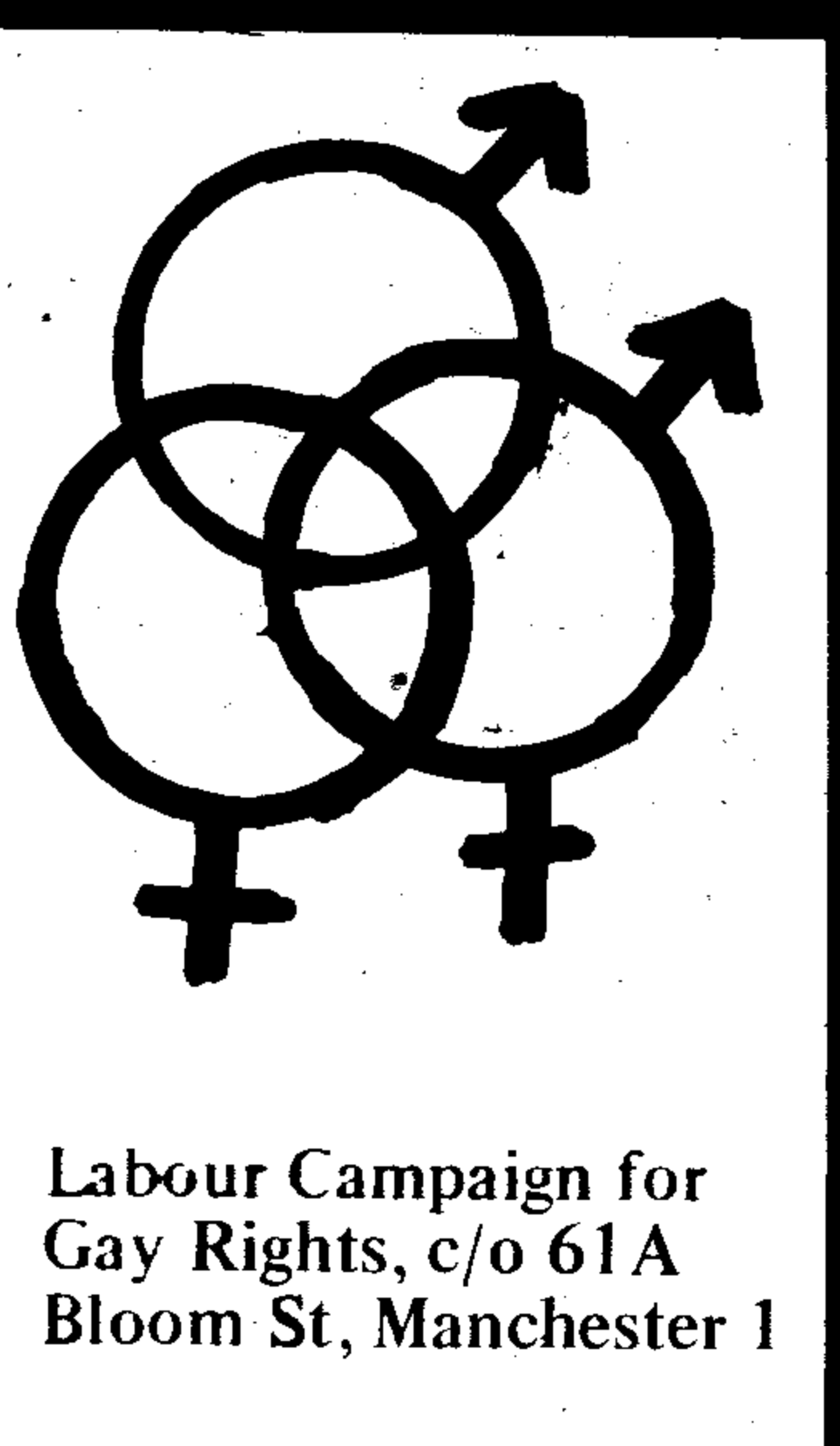
Given the current political climate, it is even more important for our allies to actively support us, and not to allow sexual politics to be once again swept under the carpet.

DEFEND THE NEWHAM 8!

The Newham 8 - Asian youths aged between 15 and 21 - face charges of conspiracy as well as threatening behaviour and actual bodily harm.

They were arrested on September 24 1982 after an incident with plain-clothes police officers. In the previous week there had been three major racist attacks on Asian schoolchildren at Little Ilford School, in Newham, and an incident where 60 or 70 white youth with iron bars and sticks went on the rampage in East Ham and Manor Park.

Send invitations for speakers, or resolutions of support, to Newham 8 Defence Campaign, c/o PO Box 273, London E7 9JN.



Labour Campaign for
Gay Rights, c/o 61A
Bloom St, Manchester 1

Rescuing the Reagan plan

DISMAYED US officials were last week trying to salvage pieces of their latest Middle East strategy, after it ran aground on the rocks of Palestinian resistance.

The 'Reagan Plan' was launched last autumn in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. It was based on the belief that the profound military and political setback the invasion inflicted on the PLO and their allies in the Lebanese left could create conditions to force humiliating concessions from the PLO leadership as well as the most pro-imperialist Arab regimes.

As one State Department official said at the time:

"We believe the time has come to stop talking about peace and start sitting down at the table, negotiating directly between Israelis and Arabs and the United States."

But this cynical scenario left out the fact that these three points of view on the situation in the Middle East, though united in seeking to contain the explosive Palestinian issue, are otherwise divided.

Begin's Zionist government was fully supported by the imperialists when it launched its massive invasion of Lebanon. But its interests in the Middle East are not identical to those of Washington. Begin is less interested in placating the Arab regimes than in intimidating them, and less interested in a negotiated settlement than in holding on to the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, which he terms "Judea and Samaria".

Begin therefore flatly rejected Reagan's plan, and has done everything possible to sabotage it — from maintaining the 30,000-strong Zionist army of occupation to stoke up tension in Lebanon to encouraging a new rash of settlements on the West Bank.

From another side of this three-cornered table, the Arab leaders have not been simply free agents to make the deal they would wish to make with the Zionists and with imperialism. They have had to reckon with the political opposition to a sell-out from the Palestinians themselves — whose pressure for a hard line have produced evident splits within the PLO and abrupt shifts of position by Yassir Arafat.

Another strong voice of opposition to any deal along the lines of the Reagan plan has come

from the Syrian regime, which fears that the outcome would leave Zionist troops on the Syrian Golan heights, menacing Damascus.

With these divisions in the Arab camp, the attention of the US imperialists has been focussed on persuading the Saudi rulers and other voices of "moderation" to use their financial and political leverage to force the PLO into making concessions — the most important of which was that they empower King Hussein of Jordan to negotiate on their behalf in the cobbling together of a deal.

At present every Arab regime with the exception of Egypt has acknowledged the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people — thus effectively handing them a veto.

Hussein himself had been offered US military aid and hardware if he would act as an imperialist stooge in some form of talks; and it appeared that the arm-twisting was having its effect until an abrupt shift of position by the PLO — demanding that they be physically present at negotiations — made it plain that his participation would be a meaningless gesture. The scheme had collapsed.

It appears that a decisive factor in the PLO position was their well-founded scepticism that Reagan — or any other US President — could or seriously wished to force any concessions out of Begin.

But if they have escaped an immediate top-level sell-out, the Palestinian people still face immense political pressures from their self-styled 'friends' in the Arab governments.

Their alternative 'peace plan' drawn up in the Moroccan capital of Fez last autumn implicitly recognises the long term existence of the Zionist state by calling only for Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders.

And its references to an "independent Palestinian state" with Jerusalem as its capital therefore point to some form of tokenistic ghetto "mini-state" which can by no means secure the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination or to return to their country.

As Reagan and his political sympathisers seek to refloat some form of initiative in the Middle East, the need for labour movement solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and for political clarity within that struggle remains stronger than ever.



Salvadoran troops on the hunt for guerrillas

CIA's war in Central America

Schultz twists Mexican arms

By
Harry
Sloan

"We are not doing anything to overthrow the Nicaraguan Government", claimed a straight-faced Ronald Reagan at a news conference on April 14.

And, despite the murderous activities of CIA-backed guerrillas committed to the overthrow of Nicaragua's Sandinista government, despite the clandestine military moves against Nicaragua sponsored by US agencies in Costa Rica, despite the economic sabotage of Nicaragua spearheaded by US imperialism, in a sense Reagan is right.

He knows — and cynically admitted — that the small numbers of counter-revolutionary guerrillas (known as 'contras') could not hope to overturn the Sandinista regime, which rests on a wide measure of popular support, coupled with a large army, a larger militia, and the political backing of the Cuban bureaucracy.

Contras

The raids and killings by the contras — who include large numbers of the hated former National Guard of Nicaraguan dictator Somoza — are intended both to harass the Sandinistas, creating favourable conditions for the emergence of popular opposition; and in doing so to prevent the Nicaraguan revolution having a "knock on" effect on other struggles now being waged in Central America.

If the US could produce a situation of civil war in Nicaragua four years after the defeat of Somoza, it would deal a blow to the morale of the left wing forces currently battling against dictatorship in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

It would also further reduce the comparatively small flow of arms and material assistance from Nicaragua to the guerrilla fighters of the FMLN in El Salvador. And it could pile added pressure on the Cuban leadership and their Soviet backers, who have shown themselves reluctant to become in any way directly involved in the Salvadorean conflict and only to a limited extent committed to material aid for Nicaragua.

Secret document

In this context, Reagan could hope — if all turned out according to plan — to press for a regional settlement, in which the weakening US position in El Salvador could be offset by holding several thousand guns to the heads of the Nicaraguan leadership.

to the US for talks on a negotiated solution to the war.

It is not so much the 'reasonable' line and diplomatic attitude of the FDR but rather the weakness of the Salvadorean military in the face of the FMLN struggle and the revelation of the extent of CIA involvement in Nicaraguan raids which have persuaded a growing section of the American ruling class to oppose Reagan's strategy and seek means further to restrict his ability to intervene in Central America.

But the struggles of the Salvadorean workers and peasants and the defence of the Nicaraguan revolution must not be left in the hands of the capitalist parties in the US Congress: the workers movement internationally has the responsibility to mobilise in solidarity with the masses of Central America.

One step towards this in Britain would be for trade union and Labour Party activists to support and attend the forthcoming conference on El Salvador in London on May 14.

Release Liu San Qing!

THE CHINESE Stalinist leadership has sentenced a Hong Kong left winger, Liu San Qing, to ten years' imprisonment for his involvement with the Chinese Democracy Movement.

Liu had been held by the Chinese authorities since December 1981, but only in March of this year has his father been officially notified of his whereabouts after two fruitless visits to China.

As a Hong Kong citizen, the Chinese government has claimed that Liu is also a Chinese national, whose security and trial is the sole national affair of China.

Although Liu was accused of 'unlawful deeds' inside China, no exact verdict or date of his trial has been released, and it is believed that he was seized and sentenced because of his active solidarity work in Hong Kong for the Chinese Democracy Movement.

The Committee for the release of Liu San Qing is urging all those who support the fight for socialist democracy in China to write to the Chinese government urging his immediate release, and to raise petitions along these lines in labour movement organisations.

Liu is one of 30 leaders of the Chinese Democracy Movement who have already been detained by Deng's regime for two full years.

Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine: c/o 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmeigh Road, London N16.



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Interview with West Bank student leaders

Imperialism wants alliance with Israel and Arab rulers

From our correspondent in Haifa

THE WEST Bank and Gaza have been under Israeli occupation for 16 years now.

The military government there depends on a strange mixture of Jordanian laws, military regulations, and fascist terror under the army's auspices.

Especially since it reshaped itself under the name of 'civil administration', it forbids any political activity or free expression. It tries to use this oppression to build a new leadership, under the title of 'village leagues' to serve its purpose.

The people in the occupied territories have already exposed all sorts of camouflages for Israeli annexation, from Begin's 'autonomy for the inhabitants but not the territories' to the November 1981 'civil administration'.

What do they want? How do they see their situation today after Israel's invasion of Lebanon?

I put these questions to two leaders of the 'Progressive Student Action Front', the main grouping of left-wing students. It works legally on the student union level, and has gained growing support in union elections in recent years.

How do you see the situation following the Lebanese war?

First you should understand that even before the war there was a dangerous period before us — the Camp David period.

Imperialism is trying to build an alliance between Israel, as its military base, and the Arab bourgeoisie, an alliance that will constitute the strategic framework to defend its rule against the Arab liberation movement, of which



Israeli rule in the West Bank

the Palestinian liberation movement is a part.

This is to be more than a military alliance. It is also an economic alliance, as can be seen from Israeli economic activity in Egypt and its intervention in the Lebanese economy.

Besides this, imperialism is trying to bring the alliance to the level of social and cultural fusion of the Zionist and Arab ruling classes.

Do you see this as a real possibility?

Yes. The Zionist bourgeoisie is stronger than the Arab bourgeoisie, and it has stronger links with imperialism. So it is clear who will be the strong side in that alliance: the Zionist bourgeoisie will enforce its conditions.

It can be seen from examples like the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor that the Zionist bourgeoisie can act on its own and still

enjoy imperialism's friendship, but imperialism cannot impose its will on Israel. The Arab bourgeoisie, on the contrary, does not make moves on its own. For example, Saudi will not give information from the AWACS surveillance planes about what is going on in Lebanon to the Palestinians.

And in Fez the Arab states actually endorsed the US-imposed plan.

The framework for this alliance was set at Camp David, and now the US wants to develop it. They want to impose it on Syria by military and political pressure, and buy Jordan, so that it will enter Camp David.

But the Israeli moves, like the annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights, or the settlements in the West Bank and their claim to a security strip along the Jordan river, all testify that Jordan and especially Syria will gain nothing if they enter the settlement framework. That is why they do not enter.

The stand of the Palestinian revolution, and the Lebanese National Movement, against the imperialist plan, strengthened the position of Syria and Jordan. That is why imperialism wanted to destroy these strong parts of the Arab national movement.

That was how the war came about?

Yes. Israel speaks about 'Peace in Galilee', but it is clear that its aim is to destroy the Palestinian revolution. Also, Israel wanted to change by force the political situation in Lebanon.

They hoped that a blow to the Syrian presence in Lebanon and liquidation of the PLO and Lebanese National Movement will speed up the entry of the Arab bourgeoisies into Camp David — first Lebanon, then Jordan, and then Syria.

Why exactly now?

First, it was a critical time for imperialism, as Camp David came to a dead end.

Secondly, imperialism tried both political and military methods. The political moves included the Fahd plan and the first Fez

conference in 1981.

This conference completely failed when the Palestinian revolution, Syria and Libya rejected the Fahd plan. Then imperialism turned to the military option.

So in the invasion of Lebanon there was both Israel's military role, which we have already described, and the political role of Arab reaction, after the invasion, expressing itself in the second Fez conference.

How do you see the outcome of the invasion?

The two main components of the Arab liberation movement were much weakened — at least from the military aspect.

The fact that the Palestinian forces had to leave Beirut, and the entry of the Marines and the French forces, strengthened Lebanese and Zionist fascism.

Israel won a victory, maybe partial, on the Lebanese link in the Camp David chain. It has already imposed negotiations on Lebanon, de facto normalised relations, and imposed Gemayel as Lebanon's president.

What next?

They now want the Jordanian link, and the Reagan plan is based on integrating Jordan and some Palestinians into the imperialist alliance.

This plan emphasises the prime place of Israel — it supports Israel's negation of any possibility of a Palestinian state, and wants to assure this by including the Palestinians in Jordan.

This brings us back to the Palestinian National Council and its 16th Congress. Pressure was mounted by Jordan's supporters on the council to support the Reagan plan and entrust Jordan with representing the Palestinian people.

The Council rejected the Reagan plan and did not leave a place to Jordan and its agents in the occupied territories to exploit them — and hence the military blow was not translated into a political defeat.

Can the Reagan plan succeed in

the present period? I personally think it cannot.

In my view the situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip resembles what happened in the Galilee triangle and Negev after the 1948 occupation.

Israeli fascism is trying to annex these areas and has already expropriated 60% of all the land for its settlements.

Reagan didn't manage to integrate Jordan into his plan because he did not offer it anything real.

The aim of Israel is to destroy the Palestinian People with all its institutions and to solve the Palestinian problem across the Jordan river, as was stated by its then Defence Minister, General Sharon.

Jordan has interests in the West Bank and it wants to rule it — but the balance of forces is to Israel's advantage, and any settlement will express this imbalance.

Even Jordan finds it hard to accept the Israeli conditions — and those suggested by the Israeli Labour Party are just as bad as Begin's.

So what did the Palestinian National Council have to discuss?

There were five main topics at the 16th Congress:

- 1) National unity — and how to protect the international legitimacy won by the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, so that neither Jordan nor other personalities would be able to take over.
- 2) Defining a Palestinian stand toward the Reagan plan.
- 3) Relations with Jordan and Egypt.
- 4) The new Fez plan.
- 5) Confirmation of the armed struggle as a basic means for liberation and establishing the independent Palestinian state.

How do you assess the conference's discussions?

In the present hard conditions both the discussions and the resolutions can be seen as a success. A minimum on which all the Palestinian organisations agreed was reached — and beyond it there remain the specific positions of each organisation, as expressed in the conference, which excelled in its democratic discussion and atmosphere of openness.

Maybe the world press said that the right wing was strengthened in the conference — but on the Palestinian level the decisions gave strength to the left. Many of the left's positions were endorsed and the fact that they were endorsed at a time of weakness, after a military blow, points to the strength of democratic discussion. The left struggled for a long time to actually implement that democracy — and that is the root of its strength and the weakness of the right wing, which prefer discussion in closed rooms.

In the past there was discussion too, but it was not open, and when a decision was reached it was not clear what each position was. This time the position of people like George Habash, Naef Hawatmah, Ahmed Jibril and others were heard and published all over the world. Habash, for one, sharply attacked not only the Reagan plan but also the Fez plan.

Two main political lines were expressed in the discussion: the right wing, represented by Al Fateh and the left, the main tendency within it being the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

All agreed, in spite of the differences, on a common minimum in order to unite on a line that is in the interests of the Palestinian people.

Continued next week



The plans

Camp David

Camp David Agreement, September 1978.

*Inhabitants of West Bank and Gaza to elect 'self-governing authority' whose powers would be defined in negotiations between Israel, Egypt and Jordan to replace the existing Israeli administration.

*Five year transitional period to begin when self-governing authority established, marked by withdrawal of Israeli forces.

*Not later than the third year of transition, negotiations to begin between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, the representatives of the West Bank and Gaza 'to determine the final status of the West Bank and Gaza' by the end of the transitional period.

*Parallel negotiations between Israel, Jordan and elected Palestinian representatives to conclude a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan by the end of the transitional period.

*All four parties to cooperate in maintaining security and public order during transitional period.

*Egypt and Israel to conclude within three months a full peace treaty and invite other parties to the conflict to do likewise.

*Peace treaties between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to be based on principles establishing 'relationships normal to states at peace with each other'.

*US to be invited to participate in all negotiations related to implementation of the framework agreement.

*UN security council to be requested to endorse and underwrite the peace treaties.

Reagan

The Reagan Plan — September 1982.

*Elections among the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to prepare for 'full autonomy' in these areas.

*A five year transition period in which the Palestinians would take over control, leading up to a 'final status' of 'self government' by the Palestinians in association with Jordan.

*Israeli withdrawal from these occupied territories in accordance with UN Resolution 242 adopted after the 1967 war.

*The status of Jerusalem to be opened up for 'negotiations'.

*Peace treaties to be signed by the Arab states recognising Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

*An explicit 'ironclad' guarantee of Israel's security.

Fez

The Fez Plan — September 1982.

*Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem.

*The dismantling of Zionist settlements on these territories.

*Guaranteed freedom of worship.

*The recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and of the PLO as the Palestinians' sole legitimate representative.

*The West Bank and Gaza Strip to be placed under UN control for a transitory period.

*The establishment of an independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital.

*A UN guarantee of peace among all states in the region.

*UN guarantee of respect for these principles.

A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY

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Bob Fine

Lawrence Welch

Manchester plan Nursing after the holocaust?

WHAT WOULD happen if a five megaton bomb were dropped on Manchester?

Nurses in Manchester have had a rude awakening as parts of secret document covered by the Official Secrets Act have been made known to them.

This document goes in great detail into the procedure to be adopted if such a bomb is dropped.

The full details are available only to consultants, senior nursing officers and suchlike, but they have to tell the minions below them, the nurses, what they are expected to do.

90 per cent of the nurses are expected to be 'lost'. But senior nursing staff and consultants will go to the local bunker (widely believed to be Heaton Park, site of the Post Office tower, and a communications centre).

As the 30-mile wide fireball engulfs Manchester and surrounding areas, and the blast hits areas as far south as Derby and as far north as Preston, the rest of the surviving hospital staff would be 'required' to organise teams of nurses as conscripts to attend to the injured.

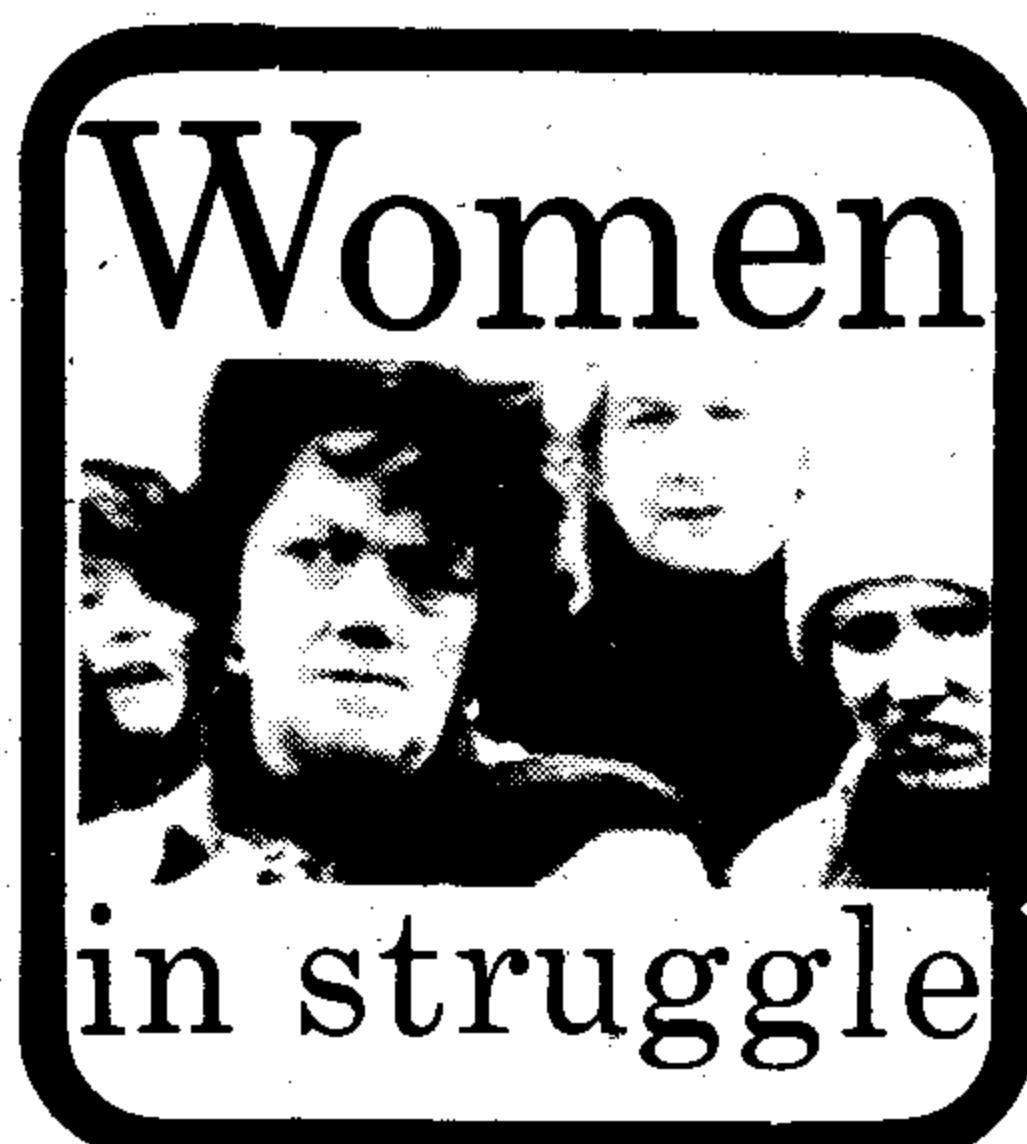
They would not be allowed to go home to be with their families: they would have to go wherever they were told to do.

Armed guards

Armed guards would 'protect' the hospitals, supposedly to stop 'marauding gangs' from attacking them in search of food supplies or drugs. Road blocks would be set up to stop anyone moving.

All the conscript nurses would be issued with radiation counters, but no special protective clothing apart from what there is already in the hospital. They would be equipped with painkillers, and able to treat survivors with coronaries, broken limbs, etc: but there would be no treatment for radiation. Nursing staff would have to assess 'patients' to see if they would survive: if not, presumably, no 'treatment' (painkillers) would be administered.

The first draft of this document is believed to have appeared roughly two years ago, around the



time 'Protect and Survive' was published. Nurses feel sure that there are much more detailed plans than this, and that civil defence plans have been well

Hiroshima after the Bomb

implanted in the higher echelons of the hospital administration.

Recently nurses in Manchester have been issued with identity cards, supposedly for their own protection against unauthorised visitors in hospitals at night. Some nurses now suspect that there is more to these ID cards than meets the eye — all have a picture and the rank of the member of staff, and they could clearly be used as

an aid to conscripting them more efficiently.

The document once again shows how absolutely useless is the advice given in 'Protect and Survive'. Whitewashing windows is utterly pointless when the whole area for 30 miles around will be caught in the midst of a raging fireball.

The Tories' Civil Defence is a horrific charade — a few selected top people can go in the bunkers and the rest of us can burn to death.

Can a better case be made for nurses and other health workers to respond to the call made by the Greenham Common women for a day of strike action against

the missiles on May 24?

The fight should be taken up in every hospital and health union branch for meetings to discuss strike action on that day — coordinated with action led by other sections of women workers in industry and local government, and with local demonstrations, protests, and meetings on the day.

What to do for May 24 strike

What you can do:

■ Find out from your Regional Contact what has already been planned, offer your services and suggestions. Phone Brighton (Carmel or Laura) 0273 553466 for your regional contact.

■ Raise support for the day of strike action in your union, workplace, estate, shopping centre, school college, nursery, just anywhere you go.

■ If your local council has a nuclear free zone policy, and many do, demand that the council gives over office space for organising for the 24th. Sheffield and Leicester City Councils have already done so.

■ Plan action for the day itself — we can do ANYTHING, occupy, encircle, decorate, die-in, blockade at military bases, banks, armaments factories and supporting industries, nuclear bunkers, Ministry of Defence Offices.

■ Leaflet everywhere, so there can be no excuse for not knowing what's happening on May 24. If you don't have local leaflets, they can be obtained nationally from the London Greenham office.

■ Demand the support of men. Ask them to take supportive strike action as well, and to help organise creches so children can be looked after and the women are free to take the main action on the day.

■ Pressure to get unions to support May 24 must now be generated in local branches. Trades Councils can arrange for every delegate to take support for May 24 into their branches and arrange for speakers from Greenham Common to address meetings.

■ Help set up local organising meetings, including women's centres, women's groups, minority ethnic women's groups, trade union women's groups, anti-cuts campaigns, etc.

■ Labour Party Women's sections can take up the call and show that there are Labour Party rank and file members who are determined to commit the Labour Party to campaign on conference resolutions.

Let's make May 24 the biggest, most successful action yet!

Ringling few bells

IT IS almost impossible to judge whose picture of the health service 'On Duty' is.

Everything seems to be there. Low wages, closures, racism, harassment, and yet nothing seems quite right.

It is a play in which there is little characterisation and fewer contradictions, where every character delivers their own slogans dutifully without ever becoming real. In fairness it is a black play with one black hero, two black heroines, one black clown and one white heavy.

I winced. The audience seemed to enjoy it. Perhaps it reflects something I was never aware of and nobody bothered to explain to me.

The story is loosely based on the struggle at St. Mary's Hospital in Paddington, London. As a result of the cuts, wards are being closed, ward orderlies are being forced to do two or three jobs, low pay and bad conditions hang over the play like a cloud. An orderly has died of overwork and Phyllis, the real heroine of the play, begins to see that the NHS is a murder machine for its employees.

Sister Parks represents both patronisation for Phyllis as a good worker who she has had a working relationship with for 19 years, who hasn't struck, and later she shows the face of open racism when Phyllis begins to resist.

Hubert Boyce, the trade union official is a pathetic cameo, walking around with his briefcase and baggy suit, talking about his holiday in Barbados and how backward they are over there.

It is a Dave Spart image of the trade union bureaucracy, or perhaps an Uncle Tom out of early literature, and an insult to those immigrant workers who struggled to establish trade unionism in the health service.

The militant in the play, a black nurse, keeps rushing on from a picket line, delivering a leaflet, speech, a call to join the strike/occupation which is happening stage left, never really contacting or communicating with those people in the play.

Colin the patient sits there in bed and moves from indifference to actively siding with Phyllis against Sister Parks. Colin wants to be an actor you see. As a black lad such ambition is slightly suspect in itself.

Mick Woods, ex TGWU shop steward at St Mary's hospital, London W9, reviews 'On Duty'. The play is showing at the Factory Community Centre, 107 Mathias Rd, Islington, on April 21; at St Matthews Brixton on April 27; at Tottenham Community Project on April 28; and at the Factory, Chippenham Mews, on April 30 & May 1.

Colin delivers the real moments of humour in the play delivering his Sidney Poitier or Victor Romero schtick to the

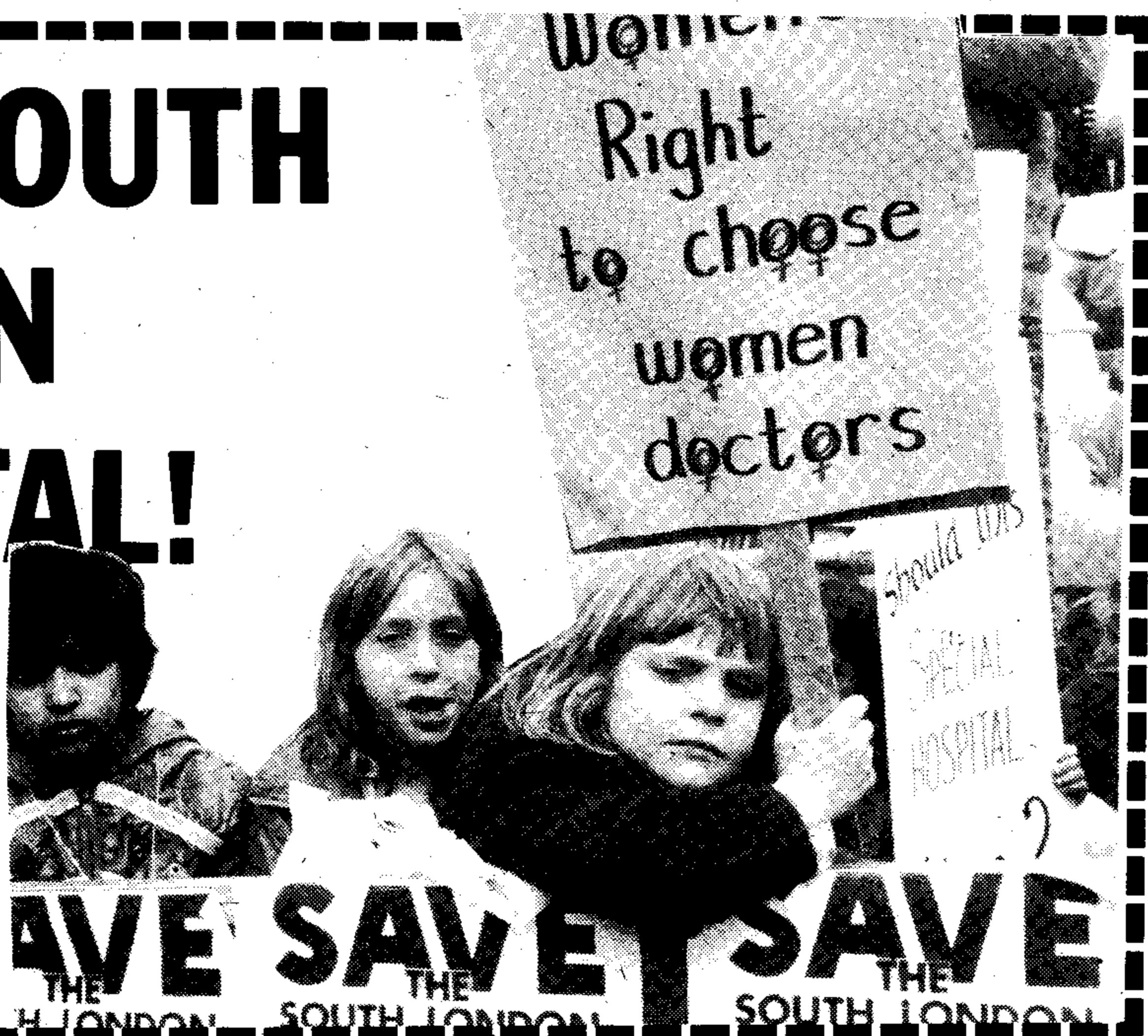
bewildered Phyllis. In the end Phyllis abandons her old ways, tells Sister Parks she won't cooperate with the ward closure and heads off to a union meeting to organise resistance.

As I said earlier, it is more of a play for black people than for trade unionists. Significant was the dearth of hospital workers in the audience, proving, I suspect, that this play would ring few bells.

The characters aren't hospital workers but mouthpieces. Although well acted, the play never comes alive. Perhaps the struggle in the NHS will have to wait for better.

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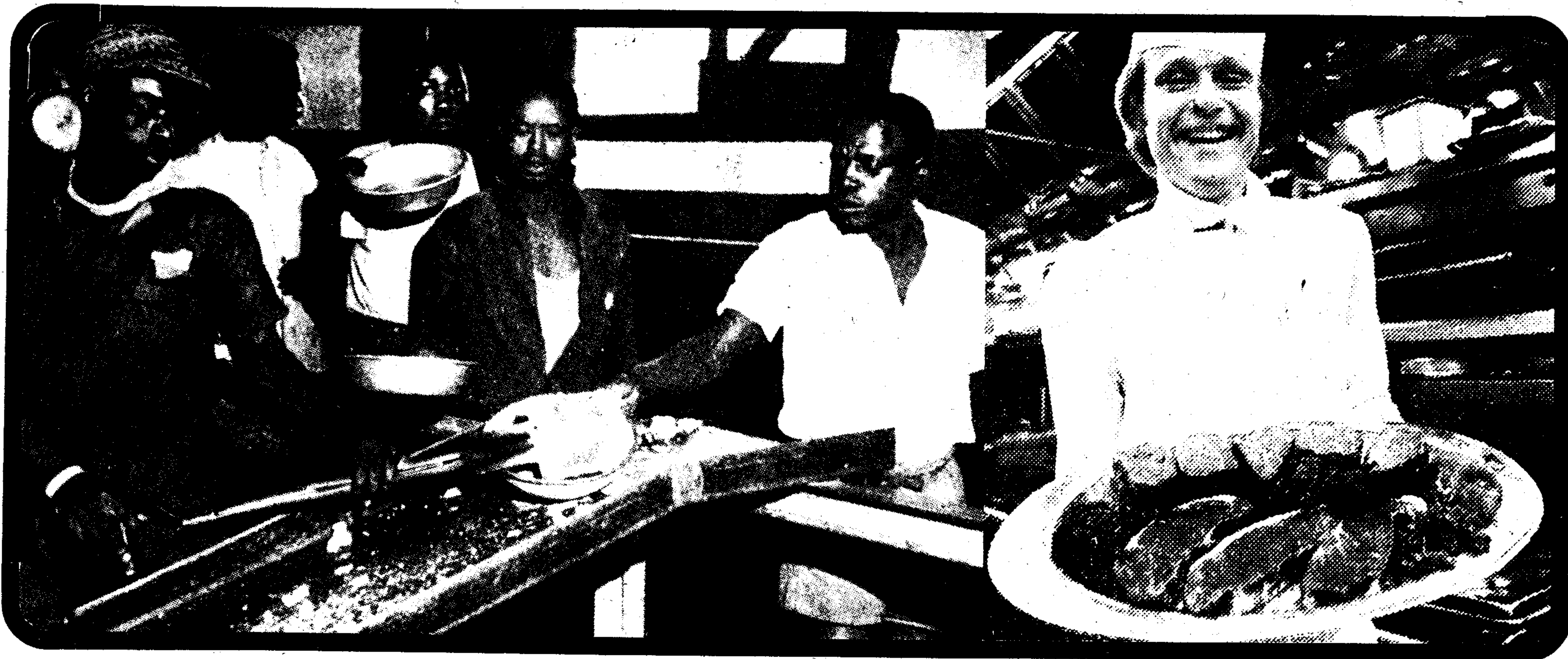
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"I must correct some of Bob's criticisms of the AES"

If you want to know about what has been going on in the world economy, then this is the book for you. Bob Sutcliffe condenses his wide ranging but intensive knowledge of the world economy into a short and readable three chapters. While his analysis would not always be accepted by all socialists he is usually scrupulous about pointing out where his own views are different from those of others.

If you want to know what to do about them it is not much use. The last two chapters of the book are devoted, like the Ministry of Circumlocution in Dicken's Little Dorritt to how not to do it. Chapter 4 tells us how Thatcher and Reagan are failing to do it. Chapter 5 tells us how advocates of the Alternative Economic Strategy will fail to do it.

In the last three sections of Chapter 5 when he starts to tell the reader how he might go forward, the focus remains negative. We read that what we need is an anti-capitalist alliance against militarism, racism, sexism, oppression of gays, lesbians etc. He tells us little about what is to unite

Tom Ramsborough is a supporter and advocate of the Alternative Economic Strategy. He takes issue with Bob Sutcliffe's criticisms of the AES.

this alliance apart from its largely imperceptible common enemy.

Most of this review will be devoted to an appraisal of the criticism of the Alternative Economic Strategy. But there is one point in the descriptive chapters which will be confusing to British readers.

When describing the collapse of production and employment in the 1980s, Bob fails to point out the uniqueness of the British experience. Output has hardly fallen in any industrial country since 1979 except the UK where it has fallen 5% in spite of a rise in North Sea Oil production.

Similarly the number of jobs has increased in most industrial

countries. It has fallen slightly (about 1%) in Germany and France (before Mitterrand). In Britain one in fourteen jobs has disappeared since 1979. It is important that these facts are clearly understood by those who would combat the Thatcherite myth that it is the world recession which is responsible for economic collapse in this country.

To some extent Bob adopts this perspective in order to play down the role of Government policy in the crisis. In terms of his argument this is unnecessary.

As he argues clearly one of the ways in which the profitability crisis affects output is through inducing Governments to adopt restrictive policies. Given that the profitability crisis in the UK has particularly taken the form of a fall in the rate of exploitation, one would expect state reaction to be severe.

Insensitive

The early parts of Chapter 5 are devoted to criticisms of the AES. It is castigated as nationalistic, reformist, not socialist, insensitive to the needs of women, centralist, hostile or negligent to the third world. In addition it contains many detailed criticisms.

Some of the points are useful and well made. Underlying all of the points is the general implication that the AES is not addressing the fundamental profitability crisis of capitalism. It is here where his analysis is in my view inconsistent.

His analysis suggests rightly that the adoption of Thatcherite/Reaganite policies by the state is a response to the crisis of profitability. Reversing these policies means reasserting the gains made by the working class and undermining the capitalist attempt at restructuring.

The AES is not socialist (and has rarely claimed to be). But it does represent a working class challenge to capitalist restructuring. Assessment of the AES must depend on how effectively it can unite anti-capitalist forces.

At one point on page 108 Bob concedes that the anti-capitalist

alliance needs a coherent economic programme. He implies that it may look a bit like the AES. His main point is that an economic programme is not enough by itself. Few advocates of the AES would disagree.

It seems that it would be more in keeping with the book's programme of a non-sectarian alliance if it were to adopt a position of critical support for the AES rather than his currently negative stance.

I must also correct some of his erroneous criticism of the AES. The most serious is the charge of nationalism.

The AES is neither a plan for exporting unemployment, nor is it a plan which can only be successfully adopted by one country at a time. Import controls by themselves – as adopted by the US for example – do export unemployment. But adopted as part of a general strategy to expand output and imports at the same time will increase employment both in the original country and in the countries with which it trades.

If every industrial country adopted an AES, this would achieve the improvement in employment more easily. It would also, incidentally achieve great benefits for third world countries.

He incidentally conflates together import controls and exchange controls. Controls on the exchange of money are a fairly general capitalist practice.

Britain is almost unique in having abandoned them.

The accusation of centralism in the advocacy of planning in the AES is possibly relevant to some versions of the AES. Recent developments, and in particular the integration of planning and industrial democracy in Labour Party policy have moved beyond this stage. This may not be the intention of those framing the policy, but this integration could develop as a political dynamic of its own in creating demands for greater measures of workers' control.

Recent versions of the AES have shown a much greater response to feminist criticism also than the older ones. Older versions of nearly all left strategies are open to a similar change.

The acceptance of Thatcherite arguments on the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement are surprising. Even the most devoted monetarists have failed to show any evidence of a link between Government borrowing or public spending and inflation.

Many of the points the book makes on nationalisation, the shorter working week, and price controls, are important, and should be taken seriously by advocates of these elements of the AES.

It would be sad if by his generally hostile tone Bob prevented believers in the AES from taking him seriously and believers in him from taking the AES seriously.

We need more analysis of capitalism

By

IN 94 crisply-written pages, Bob Sutcliffe describes a world of hunger and of plenty, of grinding misery and of lavish waste.

This inequality continued, and indeed got worse, in 20 years of boom in the '50s and '60s – a period when wealth and new inventions increased faster than ever before in world history.

That boom also greatly increased the international integration of capitalist economies. World trade grew by 8.6 per cent per year between 1950 and 1970, and of that trade something between 25 and 40 per cent is 'transfers' between different branches of the giant multinationals which increasingly dominate capitalism.

Trading in foreign exchange

HARD TIMES

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, 105a Torriano Avenue, London NW5.



views on Bob Sutcliffe's new book



need a dynamic analysis of capitalist crisis

Martin Thomas

has escalated even further – to 20 times the value of world trade in goods and services.

Capitalism also grew 'internally': in the 25 years starting 1950 the proportion of workers in agriculture in the advanced capitalist countries fell from 22% to less than 8%.

But in Bob Sutcliffe's view, "Probably the key difference between capitalism in the post-war boom and all previous epochs of capitalism has been the growth and change in the economic role of the state."

And that role has also been central to the renewed capitalist crisis since the late '60s. Bob Sutcliffe holds "the fundamental theoretical question in crisis theory to be the contradiction between the production and realisation of surplus value."

"Much of state spending has a

... contradictory role: it assists the realisation of surplus value [i.e. the transformation of workers' unpaid labour into actual money profits, by the sale of the goods produced] by maintaining high demand for goods and services (and it is this aspect which was stressed by Keynesians), yet at the same time its financing demands one way or another a subtraction from surplus value produced (which is the aspect stressed by the anti-Keynesians)."

This contradiction lies behind the failure of Thatcher's and Reagan's attempted capitalist solution. They have focused on attacks on the working class designed to improve conditions for production of surplus value, but simultaneously worsened conditions for its realisation. Moreover, their experience shows that "no matter how hard governments of modern

advanced capitalist economies try to cut government spending, it is very hard to achieve."

It is, however, according to Bob Sutcliffe, "basically a crisis of profitability of capitalism... other aspects [such as] the fiscal problems of the state... follow from that and are not primary."

Bob's argument, if I have understood it properly, is that reduced profitability means both (obviously) worse conditions for production of surplus value, and (also) worse conditions for realisation (because investment slumps and wages are held down) – hence the production/realisation contradiction is aggravated.

He attributes the decline in the rate of profit principally to wages push – though warning that "It does not follow from this that if the working class had agreed to the level of wage increases demanded by the capitalists then the crisis would not have occurred... It would have meant rather that the manifestations of the crisis would have been different". If wages had stayed lower, capitalism would first have run into problems on the side of realisation of surplus value.

In the last 19 pages, Bob Sutcliffe examines alternatives, and finds the official 'Alternative Economic Strategy' wanting. The AES centres its plans on increased state spending – and ignores the evidence that today such spending produces "inflation, uncontrollable state deficits, and so on".

The AES sometimes proposes price controls to deal with this problem: but these could be implemented seriously only under "an economic police state", including wage controls, and with corruption and black markets on a grand scale as its flipside.

As for the AES's proposal of 'planning agreements' – "capitalists cannot be forced to plan in accordance with the needs of workers and consumers. They are in business to make profits..."

Behind these 'economic' problems, the more fundamental flaw of the AES is that it is a strategy for a national government – and for a national government. Bob Sutcliffe insists that socialism must be an international programme, and one that looks fundamentally to mass action rather than to reforms from on high.

In his preface, Bob Sutcliffe warns that "This book... does not pretend to solve the problems involved in analysing the crisis. Its emphasis is more descriptive than theoretical".

Far better this approach than the one neatly described later in the preface: "Too often theoret-

ical writing has had the same function as wearing a lapel badge saying, 'I am orthodox...' Yet it seems to me that there are flaws in the book which weaken its important and well-written argument against the AES.

I would agree with Bob Sutcliffe in rejecting the "suggestion that Marxist theory of economic crisis is basically an extension of what Marx called the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall". However, his formulation of the production/realisation contradiction seems to me to be not so much an answer to the problem of crisis theory, as the question restated in more high-sounding terms.

Yes, if wages move up then (all other things being equal) it worsens conditions for production of surplus value while improving conditions for realisation, if they move down, improving conditions for surplus production, then that makes it more difficult for capitalists to realise the surplus.

But bourgeois economics is familiar enough with problems of this sort, and argues that they find their solution in a perpetually self-renewing balance. According to pre-Keynesian bourgeois economics, the gap between production levels and demand from wage-earners is made good by investment, and if investment is not sufficient then interest rates will automatically fall so that investment rises to make good the gap.

The novelty of Keynes was the argument that investment generally would not rise sufficiently, and so supplementary state intervention would be necessary. The state investment would more than pay for itself by the snowball effect of the additional production it stimulated.

Now it is pretty clear that the system does not work so smoothly. But the point of theory is to show why the contradictions result neither in perpetual balance – nor in constant imbalance. The production/realisation scheme, at least in the summary form proposed in this book, neither shows precisely why capitalism is not always in crisis, nor adequately refutes even the pre-Keynesian bourgeois argument, let alone the Keynesian. Or so it seems to me.

The argument, I think, has to be cast in more dynamic terms: not just in terms of a general 'contradiction' between production and realisation, but in terms of an inherent tendency of production to move 'out of sync' with demand. (This point connects with the book's unfortunate tendency – in my view – to talk about 'the

crisis', rather than specific crises).

The other place where the book is weak, I think, is at the very end. Having demolished the AES, Bob Sutcliffe proposes instead "a broad, democratic and anti-capitalist alliance" – "an alliance of organisations, movements and individuals which combat oppression, of minorities against racial discrimination and prejudice, of the people of poor countries for their national liberation and for economic development in democratic conditions, of young unemployed against the failure of capitalism to offer them any future, of women against their double oppression in today's society, of lesbians and gay men against our nearly universal social oppression".

Alliance

Some SO readers will have started frowning as soon as they saw the words 'broad democratic alliance'. And indeed I think Bob Sutcliffe could have devoted a sentence or two to explaining how what he proposes is different from what the Communist Party proposes under the same name.

However, if I have understood properly, what he proposes is different. In 1926 the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci wrote: "The proletariat, in order to be able to rule as a class, must rid itself of all corporative hangovers, of all syndicalist prejudices and incrustations... The metalworkers, the joiners, the builders, etc., must not only think as proletarians and no longer as metalworkers, joiners or builders, but they must take a step forward: they must think as members of a class which aims at leading the peasants and the intel-

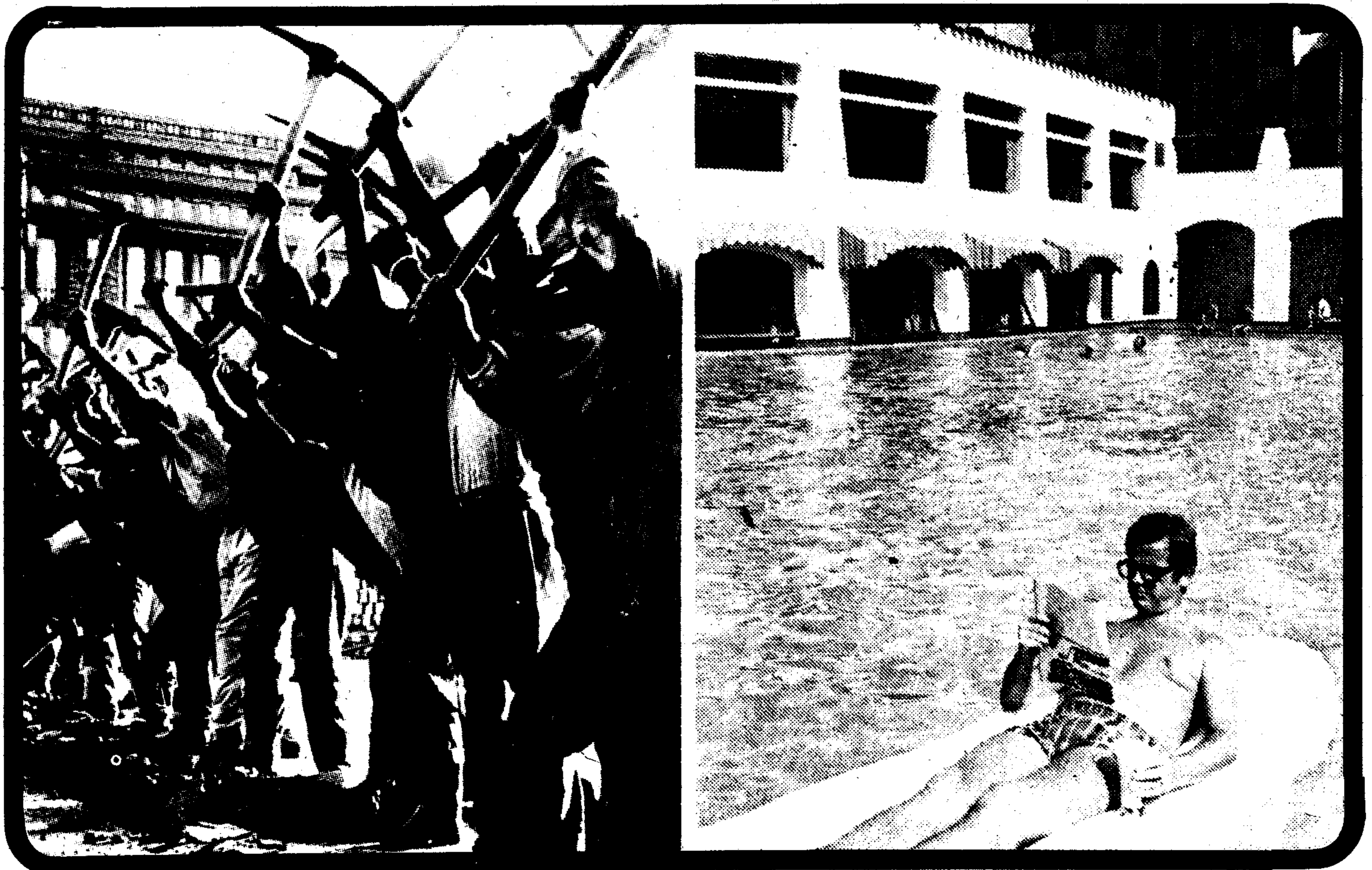
lectuals..." ('The Southern Question'). The same, basic idea, it seems to me, should be interpreted today as the need for the working class movement to become the leading centre for such movements as the women's movement and the gay/lesbian movement – for all struggles for liberation.

How did Gramsci fight for his concept of an alliance? He started by fighting to crystallise, educate and organise first a coherent left wing in the Socialist Party, then a Communist Party. His attitude was: first demarcate the revolutionary forces, organise them in opposition to the reformists, and raise their political and intellectual level, then fight for an alliance. The alliance required raising the workers' movement to the level of fighting for a new society, rather than just for its own trade union type interests – not restricting it to a political lowest-common-denominator, as with the Communist Parties today.

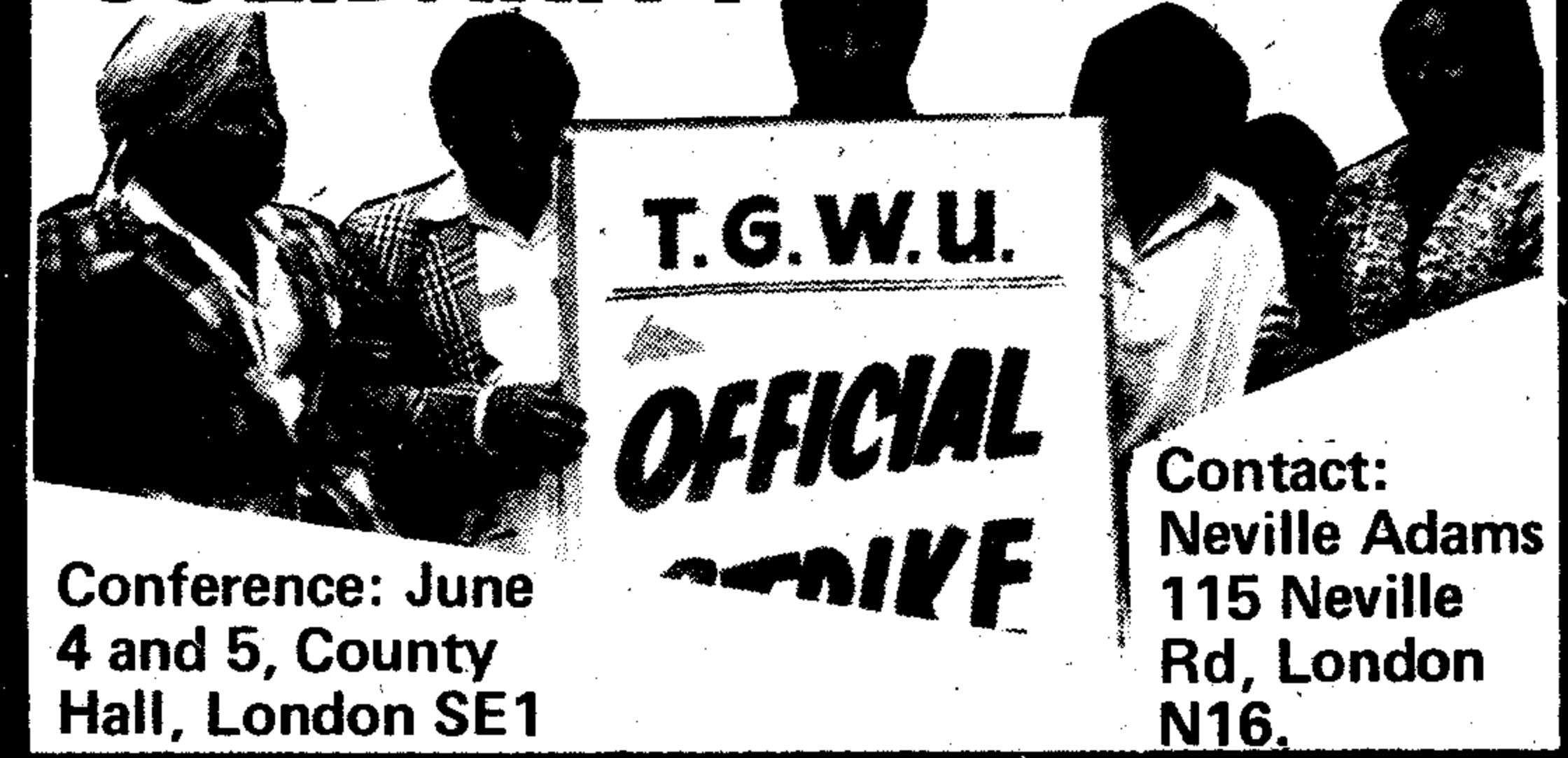
The reference to Gramsci points to another problem in Bob Sutcliffe's book. He calls for the broad alliance of millions. But he says nothing about how we can get to it from where we are now.

Defenders of the AES can therefore reply, with a shine of plausibility, that the revolutionary programme favoured by Bob is the property at most of thousands (and those thousands seriously divided among themselves), and that even if the AES has faults it is the only basis for an alliance of millions.

To answer this, I think we have to show how the forging of a clear-headed (and inevitably, at this stage, relatively small) left wing today connects with the mobilisation of millions of tomorrow.



Black trade unionists SOLIDARITY



Conference: June
4 and 5, County
Hall, London SE1

Contact:
Neville Adams
115 Neville
Rd, London
N16.

Marx on rights and equality

"Fair deals" or a new society?

THE CENTRAL target of all Marx's criticisms of the Gotha Programme is the Lassallean and Social Democratic conception of the State and of society, which is thoroughly ideological.

At the same time it was still held by most German Social Democrats and it was very clearly articulated in the draft Programme.

This was a fateful time for the socialist movement. The most numerous socialist workers' party which the world has so far seen was coming into existence. For Marx it was once again necessary to protest — in an unequivocally vigorous way, as always, against opportunism — at a draft Programme which contained the characteristic ideological errors of Lassallean socialism, scientifically long outdated and now merely heated up again.

In doing so, Marx had to affirm the validity in all its rigour and results of the basic 'materialist' principle of which he had summed up some decades before in the following pregnant passage: 'Legal relations as well as forms of the state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life, the sum total of which Hegel, following the example of the Englishmen and Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, combined under the name of "civil society". However, the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy.'

In direct contradiction to this materialist and economic conception of Marx, the Gotha Programme in its very first sentence accepts the thoroughly ideological position of Lassalle, according to which the claim of all members of society to the product of their labour should be based on the idea of 'equal right'. Founded on this lofty principle, it proceeds consistently in section II to demand a 'free State' in which 'all social and political inequality' is overcome, and ends by making only one socio-economic demand — the establishment of producers' co-operatives 'with State aid'.

The draft (and the definitive version of the Programme) add to this no less than seven purely political and bourgeois-democratic demands. According to Engels every one of these 'directly and literally coincides with the Programme of the People's Party and the petty bourgeois democracy'. The one instance of 'internationalism' is an abstract, ideological-political profession of the idea of the 'international brotherhood of peoples' (changed in the final version to the 'brotherhood of men').

Karl Marx had devoted his whole life to transforming socialism from a theoretical ideology and practical utopia into a realistic and material science and practice. It is not surprising that a programme like this deeply disappointed and dismayed him. This is why the whole letter on the Programme became one blazing indictment of what he explicitly stated to be a 'thoroughly objectionable programme, which would demoralise the Party' in everything it said.

The theory and practice of



Ferdinand Lassalle: a founder of the German workers' movement, but his followers substituted vague talk of 'equal rights' for scientific politics

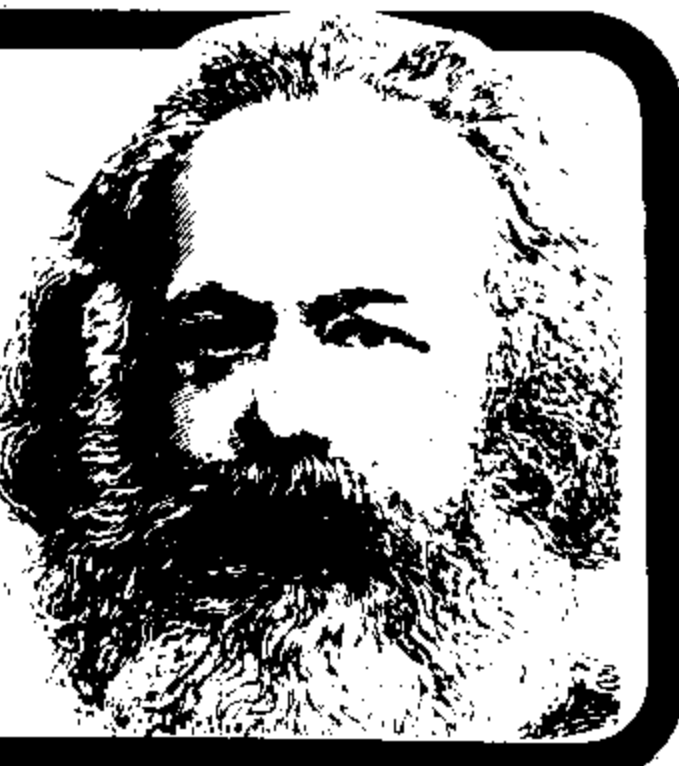
"NEXT TO the Communist Manifesto of 1847-8 and the 'General Introduction' to the Critique of Political Economy of 1857, the Critique of the Gotha Programme of 1875 is, of all Karl Marx's shorter works, the most complete, lucid and forceful expression of the bases and consequences of his economic and social theory". It is also not easy reading. In it, Marx unsparingly criticises the draft programme produced for the unification congress in Gotha that year of the two German Socialist parties.

On item after item, he points out, the programme has used phrases which conceal a not-very-radical meaning beneath a radical appearance. The worker's right to the "undiminished proceeds of labour"; "equitable distribution of the proceeds of labour"; the idea that all other classes are "one reactionary mass" in contrast to the working class; the "iron law of wages" (that wages can never rise above bare subsistence); the "free state" — all these formulations are ripped to shreds.

The 'Introduction' to the Critique of the Gotha Programme from which we print excerpts here was written in 1922 by Karl Korsch, one of the many brilliant theorists who flourished in the great Marxist renaissance of the early Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky, but were crushed or pushed out as the Stalin faction took control.

Korsch was a member of the German Communist Party, and in 1923-5 editor of its theoretical journal. Rebelling against Stalinism after 1925, he moved to an ultra-left position. After being expelled from the CP in 1926 he formed an independent group, but that soon collapsed and Korsch turned to purely theoretical work. Despite their political differences he had close relations with Berthold Brecht. In his later years, isolated in exile in the US, he moved away from Marxism. He died in 1961.

Marx Centenary
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scientific socialism is materialist. The draft Programme is Lassalle — that is, ideological and utopian. Even if one were able and willing to ignore this, the Programme is worthless taken in and for itself.

Marx therefore holds it to be his 'duty' not to accept such a theoretically and practically unprincipled Programme 'by a diplomatic silence'. He 'comments on' it and 'criticises' it with the

greatest thoroughness.

We begin with the law of wages. First, let us mention Marx's critical remark in his letter that 'proceeds of labour' is a 'loose' (i.e. imprecise) idea which 'Lassalle has put in the place of definite economic concepts'. The 'definite economic concepts' Marx talks of here are obviously those of his theory of value and surplus value, and in particular a scientific discovery that is basic

for any understanding of Marxist communism, but which is regarded today as 'meaningless' by all his opponents and even by some of his followers.

This discovery is that wages are not, as the bourgeois economists would have it, the value (or price) of labour but only 'a masked form of the value or price of labour power', which is sold on the labour market as a commodity before it is employed productively (as labour) in the capitalist's enterprise.

It is not without justification, nor out of blind hostility to Lassalle and his followers, that Karl Marx lays such emphatic stress on these key aspects of his theory of surplus value and fights Lassalle's slogan 'the iron law of wages' with such merciless vigour.

The idea that wages are the value of labour power and not of labour is not merely intended (as some people have thought) to enable Marxist economic theory and science to have a clearer and simpler conceptual structure. On the contrary this discovery contains the nucleus of the true essence of class contradictions within capitalist society. It provides a systematic explanation of the material reasons why these class contradictions arose and why they have developed and sharpened in spite of a continuing rise in the productive power of social labour. It also explains why this very rise in productivity eventually creates the 'material' possibility and necessity of a complete abolition of class contradictions in a communist society.

By contrast, the theory of the 'iron law of wages' is based partly on natural science and partly on the philosophy of Right. It can neither explain the real social origin of class contradictions nor is it able, except on ethical and idealist grounds, to argue for the necessity of a real 'supersession' of this law and with it of the 'curse' it imposes on the working class. (This is why Lassalle's dogma, now adopted by the bourgeois economists, is such a danger to the proletariat's struggle for emancipation).

Once this important connection is realised, the full import of the striking comparison made at the end of section III immediately becomes comprehensible. There Marx says that to base the workers' struggle for emancipation on Lassalle's 'iron law of wages' would be like basing a slave rebellion on the undernourishment involved in the slave system.

Marx, in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, sets out the total contradiction between the ideological state socialism of Lassalle and his own materialist communism. As he never tires of saying, the Lassalleans do not have communist society as their final aim, but only a dreary middle position.

It is true that the latter will have overcome private ownership of the means of production and related 'inequalities' and 'injustices' in the distribution of goods. But in every other respect — economically, ethically and spiritually — it will still bear the stamp of the old capitalist society of today.



August Bebel was Marx's closest ally in the German workers' movement: but even he saw the criticisms by Marx and Engels as the quibbles of two cantankerous 'old men' in London

The myth of 'fair shares'

THE DRAFT programme called for "equitable distribution of the proceeds of labour". Marx comments:

What is 'equitable distribution'?

Do not the bourgeois assert that the present-day distribution is 'equitable'? And is it not, in fact, the only 'equitable' distribution on the basis of the present-day mode of production? Are economic relations regulated by legal conceptions or do not, on the contrary, legal relations arise from economic ones? Have not also the socialist sectarians the most varied notions about 'equitable' distribution?...

Within the cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labour employed on the products appear here as the value of these products, as a material quality possessed by them, since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labour no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of the total labour. The phrase 'proceeds of labour', objectionable even today on account of its ambiguity, thus loses all meaning.

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly the individual producer receives back from society — after the deductions have been made — exactly what he gives to it.

What he has given to it is his individual amount of labour... He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labour (after deducting his labour for the common fund), and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labour. The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another...

Equal right here is still in principle bourgeois right, although principle and practice are no longer in conflict, while the exchange of equivalents in commodity exchange only exists on the average and not in the individual case.

In spite of this advance, this equal right is still stigmatised by a bourgeois limitation. The right of the producers is proportional to the labour they supply; the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an equal standard, labour....

Right by its very nature can only consist in the application of an equal standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are only measurable by an equal standard in so far as they are brought under an equal point of view, are taken from one definite side only, e.g. in the present case are regarded only as workers, and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored.

[But some workers can do more labour in a given time than others; and some have more children, or different personal circumstances, etc. Thus... one will in fact... be richer than another...]

But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and the cultural development thereby determined.

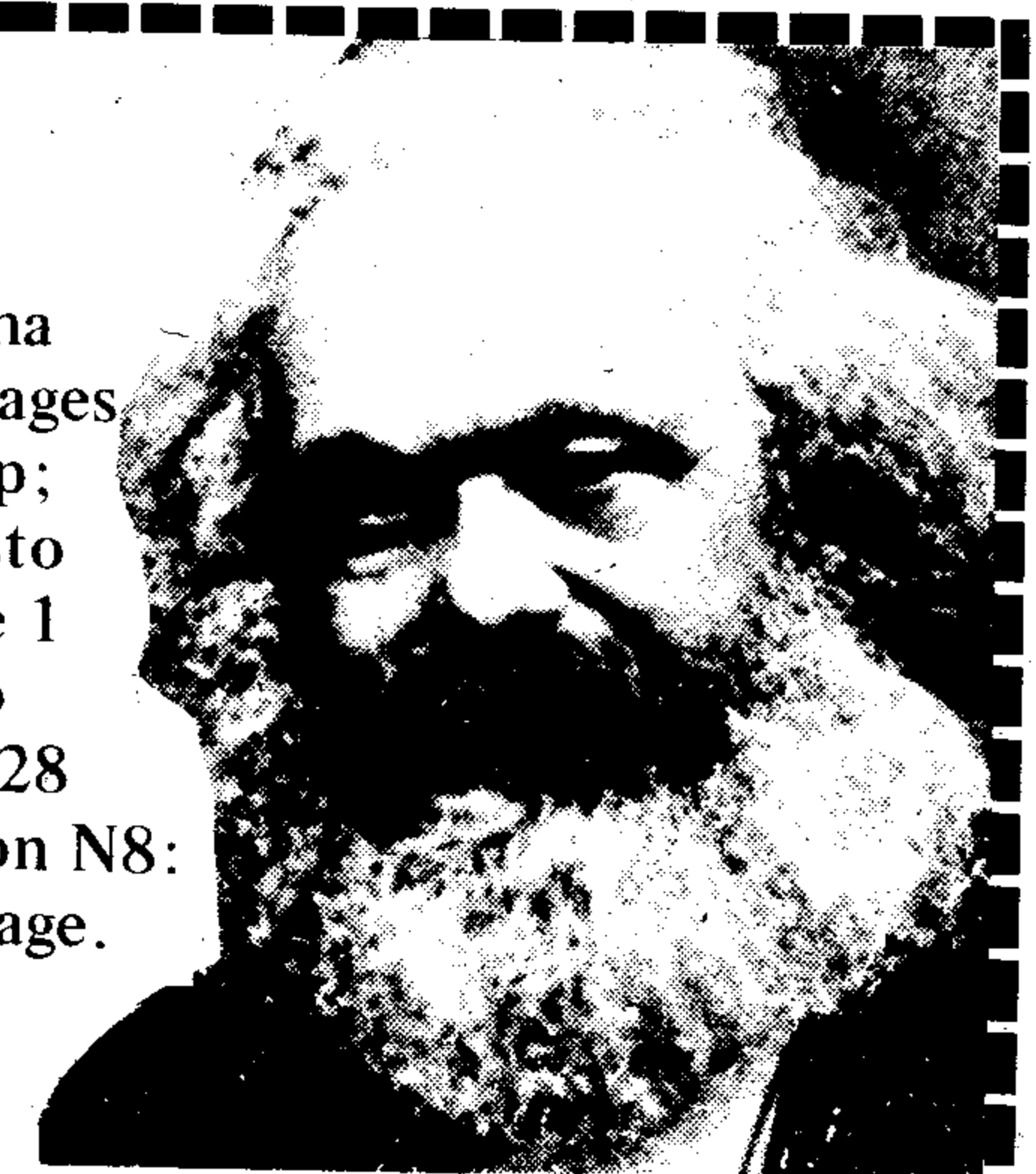
In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour, from a mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly — only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!

I have dealt more at length with the 'undiminished proceeds of labour' on the one hand, and with 'equal right' and 'equitable distribution' on the other, in order to show what a crime it is to attempt... [to] pervert the realistic outlook, which has cost so much effort to instill into the party, but which has now taken root in it, by means of ideological nonsense about 'right' and other trash common among the democrats and French Socialists.

BOOKS

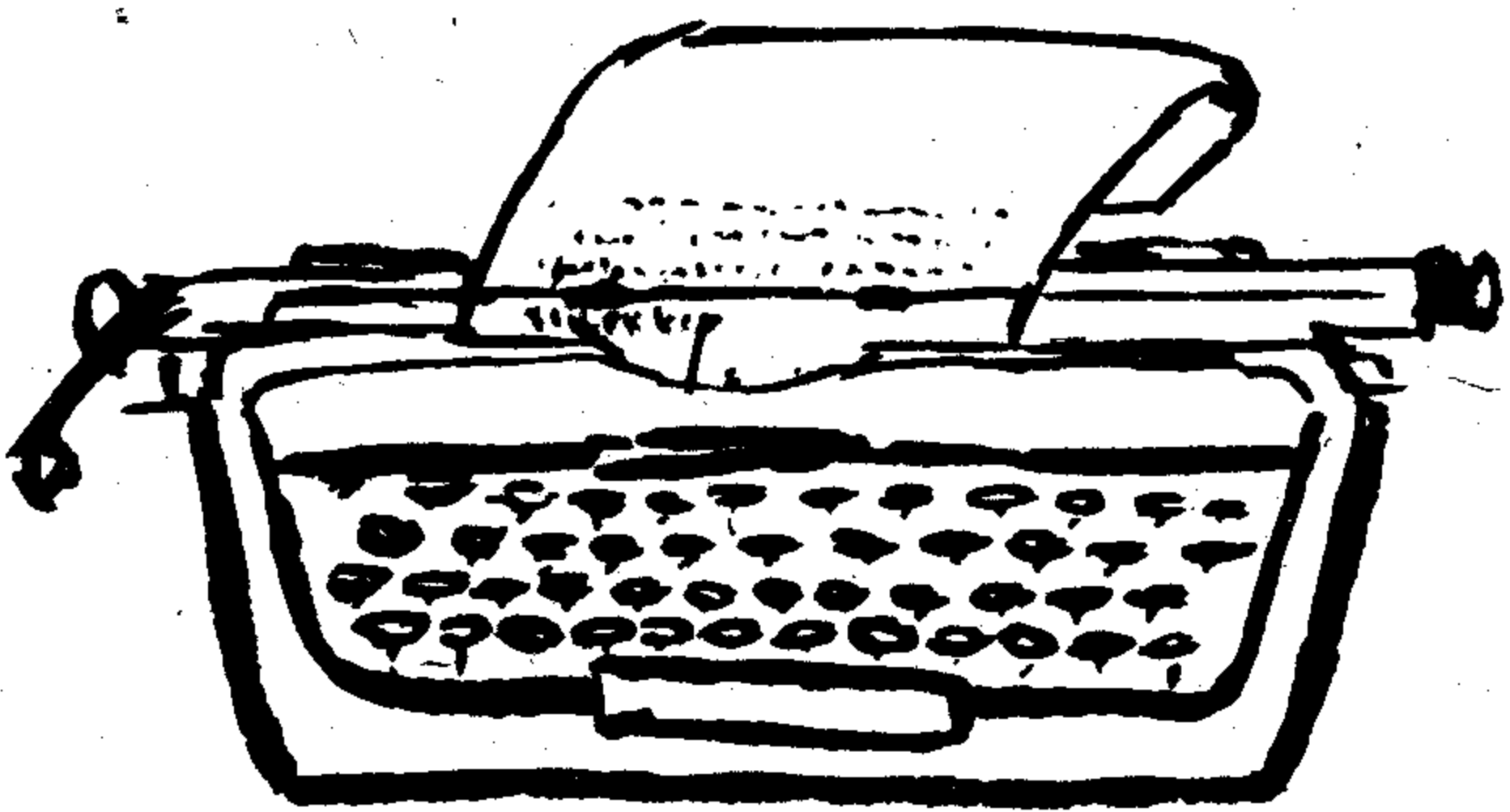
Critique of the Gotha Programme, 30p; Wages, price and profit, 40p; Communist Manifesto 60p; Capital volume 1 £3.95. Available c/o Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8: add money for postage.

by **MARX**



Marx devoted his life to transforming socialism into a realistic science and practice

Writeback



Send letters to Socialist Organiser,
28 Middle Lane, London N8. No
longer than 400 words, please:
longer letters are liable to be cut.

Better red than green

I READ with particular interest this week's Science column in SO describing the need for a socialist science policy. A few months ago a comrade and I drew up a discussion document for Class Fighter arguing for an ecological perspective in the movement and was frankly very disappointed by the negative response it drew.

Due to our geographical isolation here in our village, the document was presented by a Manchester comrade, Jeff Evans, to SO supporters in that city. I believe he also talked to SO supporters at a national level and received little encouragement from that quarter either.

Our main contention was: 1. There exists objectively the threat of a severe ecological crisis due to the nature of capitalist industrialism. This comprises a danger to humankind as serious as political oppression, war or economic crisis and all these phenomena are inextricably interrelated in the system of world imperialism.

2. The exploitation of humankind by humankind can therefore not be separated from the exploitation of nature.

3. There is a growing recognition of this reflected in the Green movement, Green CND, Animal Liberation etc., etc. Although these are presently petit-bourgeois led movements, they are at least responding to a manifestation of capitalism which the revolutionary left has not even recognised yet!

4. As Marxists we must continually re-analyse developments in the objective world, not just of society and production, but of the relation between production and nature.

There should be no Green movement. To be Green should mean to be fighting capitalism with a complete perspective of all that capitalist exploitation entails for our planetary survival.

5. This is also integral to our conception of socialism. Are we fighting just for a better means of "carrying the productive forces forward" or for a complete revolutionary transformation of social and human-natural relations.

There is growing concern in

the Labour Party and YS about these issues. It is not a petit-bourgeois trend. It is a growing awareness of the terrible implications of capitalism - radioactivity, acid rain, marine pollution, environmental devastation, the irreplaceable loss of species.

SO should be in the forefront of this if it is to be in the forefront of the fight for socialism. Your column should be at least a page and act as a kind of "Doom-watch" on all the ecological consequences of capitalist science and technology.

This should also be the main role of the Science Shops. We should expose everything from industrial diseases to atmospheric pollution and portray people as part of the world ecosystem - not as triumphant conquerors over nature.

We preface our document with a quote from Engels (Origins of the Family . . .) "Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory it takes its revenge on us." I do not have a copy available at present but if you are interested I will send you one.

I, and I am sure when we have an opportunity to discuss it, my comrades will be glad to help you in any way in hammering out a revolutionary Marxist perspective on science, technology and the ecosystem.

Venceremos,
ALAN BROOKE

P.S. We will have to work out a position on our attitude to the Socialist Countryside Group, SERA, the Ecology Party, etc.

Don't go soft on Scargill!

THE responses to Alan Thornett's article criticising Arthur Scargill show a very dangerous tendency to give Scargill the benefit of the doubt.

Both Mark Starr and Martin Thomas cite the slump and the high level of coal stocks as major factors in the minds of miners voting against a national strike. Now, although power stations have carried extra stocks of coal since 1974, the bulk of stocks are held at pits and depots. Given the picketing experience of the miners and the solidarity of NUR members, stocks could be sealed up for the duration.

The idea that a strike would take 4-5 months to bite is rubbish and most miners know it.

The real divisions in the NUM come from the bonus scheme and from different investment levels in each coalfield. Miners who see millions spent on their pit do not feel that their jobs are threatened by closures.

As in any other industry, if the question is posed to them cold, on a piece of paper, 'will you strike for jobs?', a strike is not very likely; especially if they've just been through the procedure over Kinneil in Scotland.

The South Wales militants, organised through the unofficial Joint Lodges Committee, deliberately set out to overcome that inertia, starting with a stay-down strike in Lewis-Merthyr pit, and a

conference that forced a coalfield strike on a reluctant 'left-wing' leadership. They then sent out delegates to other areas to argue for supporting action culminating in a national strike.

It was a strategy designed to get around the divisions between the different coalfields and it was entirely within the NUM rule-book.

Scargill was, understandably after Kinneil, quiet about these developments, but after the Executive decision to go for a national ballot he actually presented this as an escalation of the dispute, instead of the setback it was. Alan Thornett is absolutely right to criticise his support for this

decision, because the ballot call headed off a mounting strike wave and let the right wing in. It was not impossible to get a 'yes' vote, which is why over a thousand and South Wales miners picketed every pit in Britain, but it made it very difficult (certainly more difficult than I personally thought it would be).

After the defeat in the ballot militants in South Wales, although demoralised, led an orderly retreat to conserve their strength for the next time, which, hopefully, is not too far away.

MARTIN BARCLAY
Cardiff



JOHN HARRIS

How wide is SL net?

D. BIGGS in SO 126 says that the Socialist League for many years has been in favour of a united organisation with the Workers Socialist League. He argues that the differences are only of a tactical nature, can be contained within the same group, and that anyway a united grouping would encourage left independents to join. Haven't we heard this somewhere before?

In 1978/9 the IMG made the same offer to the SWP (UK). An organisation, by the way, that says that every single socialist revolution since 1917 has simply created a new form of capitalism, and that sees the Labour Party as just another capitalist organisation. The IMG said these differences were "only tactical". Do they still maintain this view?

If so, then surely they should also be calling for a united organisation with the Militant Tendency - a group which formally espouses the same programmatic

documents as does the IMG's parent, the USFI. After all, I'm sure that Militant's conception of a left Labour Government passing an Enabling Act to initiate socialism can be inserted within the IMG's notion of "the dynamics of the objective process propelling the movement in a socialist direction".

In reality the Socialist League's conception of a united revolutionary organisation is so broad and amorphous as to include almost anybody and everybody to the left of the Communist Party. Even more, there is substantial evidence from the USFI's past and present practice that shows that they see many communist parties around the world as being "revolutionary".

For them, both the parties of Pham Van Dong and Castro are revolutionary parties. Indeed, the Socialist League have taken this policy further in their recent offer to both "Marxism Today"

and "New Socialist" for joint publications with their own organ, "International".

Furthermore, in an article in Socialist Challenge in 1979 Tariq Ali, then editor, bemoaned the potential collapse of the Morning Star, "as a great blow to the movement". Surely, the Socialist League should be making an orientation to the CP as well? If not, why not? The argument against could not be the 'sectarian' notion that the CP was not revolutionary, could it?

And of course, let us not forget our old friends, the WRP. In a purely formal sense, they are an orthodox Trotskyist current. Do they not stand by the gains of the October revolution, the first four Congresses of the Comintern etc. Of course they might possess a few sectarian deviations - but didn't Lenin say that sectarianism was a lesser evil than opportunism?

No, comrade Biggs, there is no substantive reason why your own brief for a united organisation cannot be applied to these "conscious", "semi-conscious" or "unconscious" Trotskyists.

In their bizarre view of working class parties around the world, many of these parties whether they know it or not seem to agree with Socialist Action. Can comrades really imagine a Central Committee meeting at which Gerry Healy, Castro, Ted Grant, Colonel Quadrafi, Tony Cliff, Alan Thornett and Bob Pennington all agreed on a united policy on the Labour Party?

I suggest that a preliminary meeting of these dignitaries be called forthwith.

Yours fraternally,
BARRY QUICKSILVER

In line with Militant?

JOHN O'Mahony's review of the Panorama feature on Northern Ireland (Monday March 14) in Socialist Organiser no.124 raises some important questions.

The explicit and implicit view throughout the review tallies by, and large with the political formulation put forward by the Militant group on this question. Essentially this view states that the Protestant working class will see that their conditions are not fundamentally different to their Catholic counterparts, that the Protestant workers and unemployed will see that they are being exploited/are suffering from the same conditions as their Catholic brothers and sisters, and out of this realisation will come the unity of the divided working class in the North East of Ireland.

Permeated

The review article is permeated with this type of view. For example: "Protestant unemployment is now as high as Catholic... Much of the economic differentiation is being eradicated between Catholic and Protestant... The same basic conditions certainly exist - Protestant and Catholic workers in roughly the same situation".

Now I am not necessarily opposed to Militant's views per se - if they are correct - but on many questions, particularly Ireland, they are fundamentally incorrect politically. It is very worrying therefore to see a political line virtually indistinguishable from a major plank of the Militant line being put forward in the pages of Socialist Organiser.

Complicated

Unfortunately for the Militant type of political view the reality of the situation is slightly more complicated in the North East of Ireland. Of course all revolutionary communists and socialists would want unity between the divided sections of the working class. But in the specific situation, i.e. within the confines of a sectarian statelet, the possibilities are to say the least limited.

It is arguable that the whole nature of the Northern statelet depends for its very existence on the suppression of the nationalist population which constitutes one third of the population. That, in my understanding, was the political line of Socialist Organiser on the question.

If that view is correct, then it

follows that unity will ultimately only be possible within a united socialist Ireland and when the artificial statelet of northern Ireland no longer exists.

Implicit in the Militant type argument of working class unity within the present context is the view that there is some kind of automatic transfer/connection between economic conditions and social consciousness. What we have in the review is some kind of immiseration thesis!

Unfortunately matters are seldom as simple as this in the real world. Over four million unemployed in Britain has not led to massive radicalisation or to an erosion of racism. (In fact many of the NF supporters are unemployed and live in similar conditions to those they physically and verbally abuse).

The philosophical idealism implicit in the review article does not accord with what I understood to be the general line of Socialist Organiser on Ireland. Maybe the article is an aberration when the author was in a sentimental mood and involved in wishful thinking. Let us at least dare to hope that this is the case.

MIKE FOLEY,
Newham

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Poem

Moderate
Not very
Extreme.
Not very
Revolutionary.
Not very
Militant.
Not very
Active.
Very
Conservative.

Vote Moderate
Keep out the left
Do what's Right
If you're only Moderate
Give up without a fight
Cos you've got no bark
You've got no bite.

"Don't think about South America
Don't think about South Africa.
Forget Vietnam
Ignore Northern Ireland
Let the rest of the world
Look after themselves.
The workers of the world
Will never unite.
So forget about
El Salvador.
It's YOU,
THE MEMBERSHIP,
MY VOTERS,
I'm fighting for".

So,
Vote Moderate
Keep out the left
Do what's Right
If you're only Moderate
Give up without a fight
Cos you've got no bark
You've got no bite.

"When I was at school
I never broke a single rule.
Although I am not very old
I always do as I am told.
Although I work for next to nowt
I will never shout
'All-out strike!'
Cos I am
After all
Fuck all
Only Moderate".

Vote Moderate
Keep out the left
Do what's Right
If you're only Moderate
Give up without a fight
Cos you've got no bark
You've got no bite.

"When the government
Offers me
Half a per cent pay rise
I'll accept it
Because I am
After all
Fuck all
Only Moderate."

Gary Scott

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

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.

NORTH WEST London conference against the missiles — called jointly by Brent Trades Council and Willesden and Wembley CND. Saturday-Sunday, April 23-24, Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley: starts 10.30 each day. 50p, free for unwaged.

MAY DAY Peace Festival organised by the GLC. Sunday May 1, noon to 7pm at Victoria Park, Hackney.

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.

BLACK Trade Unionists Solidarity Movement Conference, June 4 & 5 at County Hall, London SE1. International Black speakers. Credentials from Neville Adams, 115 Neville Road, London N16.

NEWHAM 8 Defence Campaign. Details of activities, speakers and model resolutions from PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7 9JN

HULL Trades Council May Day march — Saturday April 30. Assemble 10.30am Willforce Monument, march through city centre led by Humberside contingent of People's March for Jobs 83. Speaker from Greenham Common.

HULL Trades Council 'Rock Against Thatcher' with Bushfire, Bocks O'Phroggs, Student Centre, College of HE, Cottingham Rd. Saturday April 30, 7.30pm: £1.25, £1 NUS, 50p UB40.

BRENT EAST Labour Party public meeting on Ireland: ban plastic bullets, troops out, repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Speakers: Ken Livingstone, Pat Finnegan, Frank Hansen. Monday April 25, 8pm, South Kilburn High School, Stafford Rd, London NW6.

Chile Solidarity Campaign presents: In Concert for Chile, 'Quilapayun' and 'The Boys of the Lough'. Sunday May 1, 7pm, Dominion Theatre, Tottenham Court Rd. Tickets from Chile Solidarity Campaign [272 4298], £6, £5, £4 and £2 unwaged.

ROCK the BOMB!

Youth CND Festival Saturday May 7

ASSEMBLE 11am at the Embankment. March to Brockwell Park for Rock the Bomb Festival with Paul Weller and more



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.

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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 Rd, Wallasey. Next meeting: Thursday May 12, 8pm, at the Labour Club, Church Rd, Seacombe: 'Democracy in the unions'.

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Manchester. SO is sold at Grass Roots Books, Newton St., Piccadilly. Contact: 273 6654.

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 second Monday of the month, 7.30 at Castle Inn.

Hyndburn. Contact Accrington 395753. Meetings weekly — see SO sellers for details. SO is sold at Broadway, Accrington, Saturdays 11.30 to 1pm.

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

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Durham. SO is sold at the Community Co-op, New Elvet.

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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. SO is sold outside

Boots, Foregate (Saturday 12 to 1) and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Rd. Contact: Rob, 589307.

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

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

York. Contact: 796027. SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday mornings, at the Community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

• WALES

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

• MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alter-

Where we stand

* **Organise** the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket-line; no state interference in our unions! No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions.

* **Wage** rises should at the very least keep-up with price increases. For a price index calculated by working class organisations, as the basis for clauses in all wage agreements to provide automatic monthly rises in line with the true cost of living for the working class. The same inflation-proofing should apply to state benefits, grants and pensions.

* **Fight** for improvements in the social services, and against cuts. Protection for those services against inflation by automatic inflation-proofing of expenditure. For occupations and supporting strike action to defend jobs and services.

* **End** unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs. Fight for a 35 hour week and an end to overtime. Demand work-sharing without loss of pay. Organise the unemployed — campaign for a programme of useful public works to create new jobs for the unemployed.

* **Defend** all jobs! Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers and bankers, to elected trade union committees. For occupation and blacking action to halt the closures. For nationalisation without compensation under workers' management.

* **Make** the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions, without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.

* **Freeze** rents and rates.

* **Scrap** all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets. Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence. Build workers' defence squads.

* **The** capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, M15, etc.), public accountability, etc.

* **Free** abortion on demand. Women's equal right to work and full equality for women. Defend and extend free state nursery and childcare provision.

* **Against** attacks on gays by the state: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stand publicly.

* **The** Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.

* **The** black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.

* **It** is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.

* **The** chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control. The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist alternative in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and the bosses.

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

South. Meets every other Friday, 7.30pm, the Hen and Chickens, Constitution Hill. April 22: Tebbit's Democracy or Workers' Democracy? Speaker: John McIlroy. 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 the month, 7.30 at the 'Queen', Primrose Hill St, Hillfields.

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 St.

Northampton. Meets every other Monday. Next meeting May 2: 'Socialists and the trade unions'. 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 11 to 1) and outside Tesco, Cowley Rd, Friday 5 to 7. Also at EOA Books, Cowley Road.

Basingstoke. Public meeting May 16. 'Is a Socialist Revolution Possible in Britain?' 7.30, Chute House.

• LONDON

North-West London. Readers' meetings first Sunday of month. Phone Mick, 624 1931, for details. SO is sold at Kilburn Books.

Hounslow. Next meeting Sunday April 24, 8pm: 'The Politics of Nuclear Power'. SO is sold outside All Saints Church, Hounslow High St, Saturday 10.30am to 12.

Haringey. Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941. Meets every other Thursday, 7.30, Trade Union Centre, Brabant Road.

Tower Hamlets. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30pm. Contact 377 1328 for details.

Southwark/Lambeth. Meets every other Wednesday at Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, SE5. Business meeting 7.30pm, open forum discussion 8.30 p.m. Next meeting, April 27: Jane Stockton, editor of London Labour Briefing Streetlife supplement on women's liberation and the labour movement.

SO Marxist Discussion Group: next meeting Sunday 24 April at 7.30 pm. on 'Why the working class is a revolutionary class'. For venue ring Ian on 670-3279.

Islington. Next meeting: Sunday April 24, 7pm, Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd/Copenhagen St. Speaker on Campaign for Press Freedom. For childcare phone Nik, 278 1341.

Hackney. Contact Andrew Horning, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, N16.

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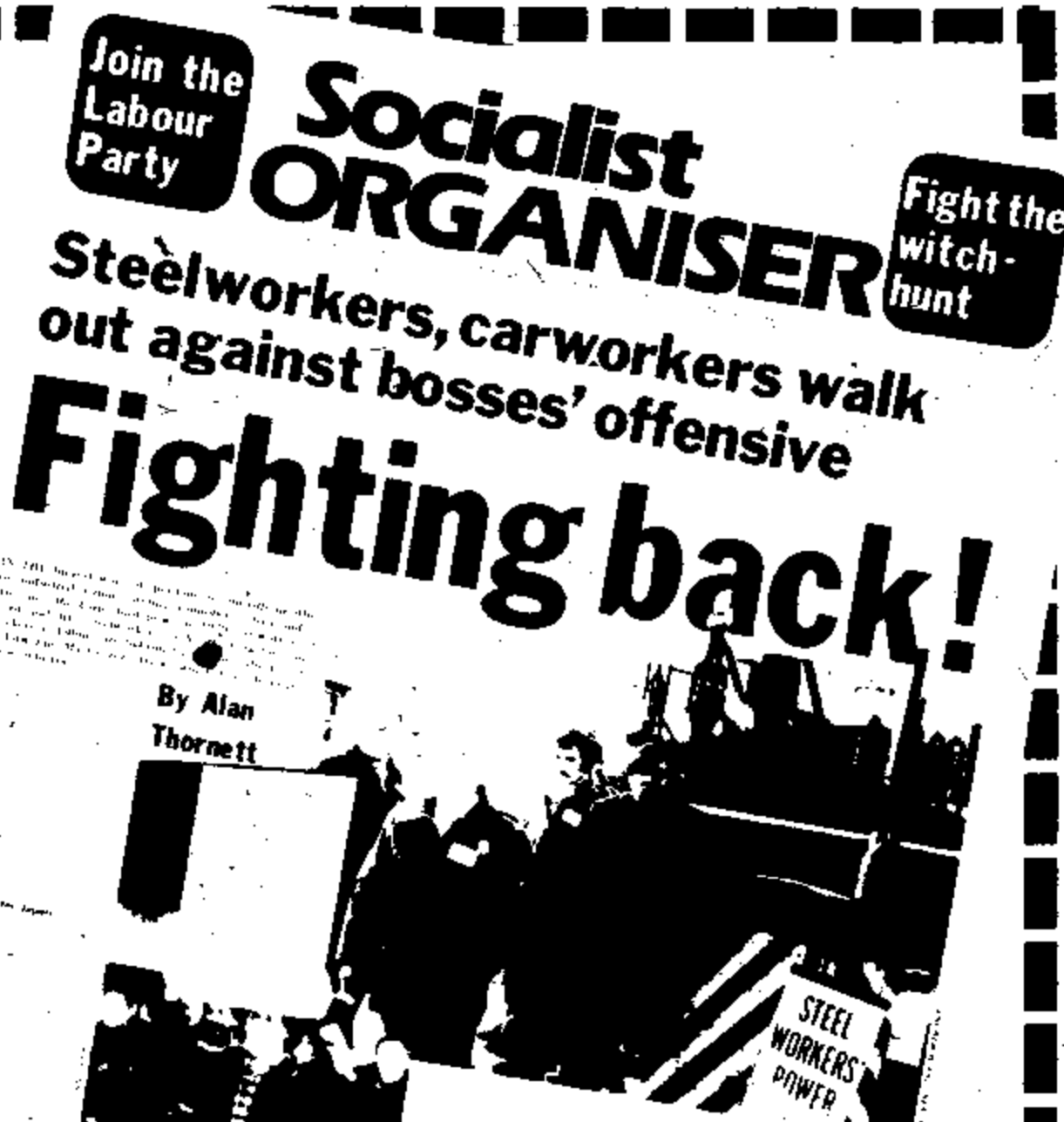
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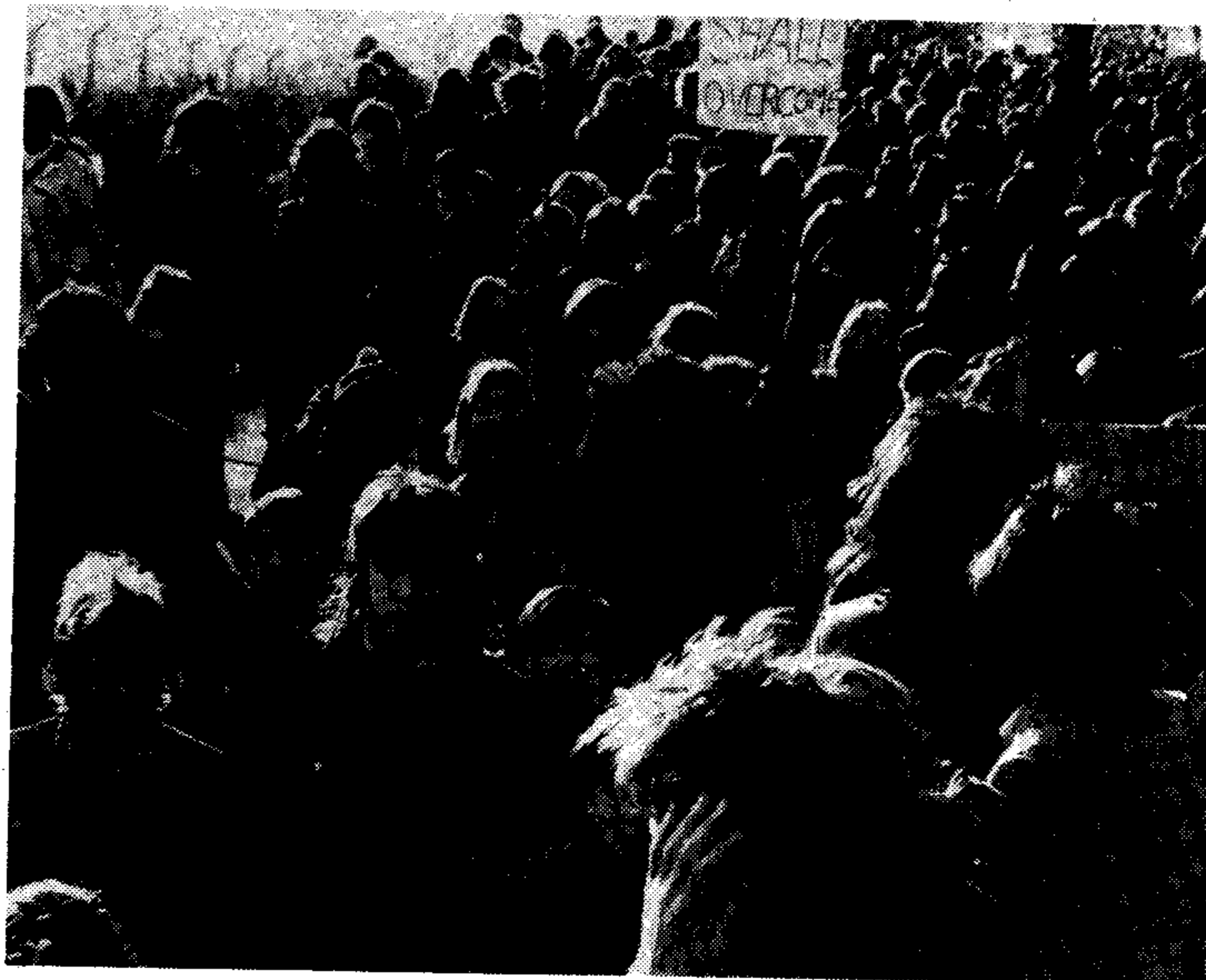
An open letter to John O'Mahony

Provos, Protestants and Permanent Revolution

By Rayner Lysaght

Rayner Lysaght, who has lived in Ireland since the mid '60s, is a leading member of People's Democracy, the Irish grouping associated with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (the British affiliate is the Socialist League). He was a founder, and for a decade a leading member, of the Movement for a Socialist Republic, one of the components of the present PD.

He is the author of a book, 'The Republic of Ireland', and a number of pamphlets about Irish politics.



Bloody Sunday 1972 - before the troops opened fire

Permanent Revolution to Ireland and, a most serious new development, your bolstering of this position with a medley of half truths and Unionist propaganda.

This last is new. Your view on Permanent Revolution has remained constant, though it has covered a number of contrasting positions. In 1969, it was held to justify a call for the repartition of Ireland.

Some seven years later, you told me firmly that, after all, the Ulster Protestants were simply 'colons'. Now you return to your original line. However, this is no longer justified by ignorance.

After 14 years in the Irish Solidarity movement, the contradiction between your revolutionary tasks and your view is becoming critical. Your recent articles are a major part of the process in which a slight scratch is becoming a threat of gangrene.

You deny the relevance of the Permanent Revolution to Ireland because 'Ireland, north and south, is an advanced bourgeois society'. There are three replies to this.

The first is that it is based on an over-simplification of the normal conditions for Permanent Revolution. The second is that if the said over-simplification is accepted then it should be applied to Ireland throughout this century.

Orangeism

After all, Ireland in 1914 had a larger proportion of its population employed in industry than had Russia. As far as the peasantry was concerned, more than half its land had been taken from the landlords. Perhaps, then, Connolly should not have gone out in the national democratic Rising in 1916? Such is the conclusion of Militant Irish Monthly, the Irish branch of the International Ted Grant Fan Club.

And with this we come to the

third argument in favour of the Permanent Revolution in Ireland. For, in practice, if the way forward for the Irish workers is not through the said process and strategy, then ways would be open that would otherwise be diversions.

It might be possible to unite on a lasting basis within the borders of the Six County state Catholic and Protestant workers. In a Permanent Revolution scenario, this would be to try to unite vanguard and rearguard without the centre. Without such a concept, a shortcut appears to a workers' state, regardless of the democratic aim of national unity.

(Again, you claim that Britain would grant this only for the Protestants; and against all published evidence, that it has been manoeuvring to this end since 1964).

Obviously, such a shortcut would have to be used by socialists and it has indeed been followed by, amongst others, Paddy Devlin, Conor Cruise O'Brien, the Workers' Party (formerly Official Sinn Féin), the British and Irish Communist Organisation and, of course, Militant Irish Monthly.

Two factors link this motley crew. All deny Permanent Revolution's validity in Ireland and all have moved steadily rightwards in the fourteen years since the start of the present struggle.

Why should this be so? It is because all the above have tried to unite an anti-imperialist section of the working class with a section that opposes imperialism politically, if at all, from the right: from positions that counter specific British Government tactics on reactionary grounds and with reactionary allies. This was the case in 1886, in 1894, in 1912, in 1920, and indeed in 1974. (Had any normal strike enjoyed the collusion of the forces of 'law and order' to the degree that the UWC did, it would have been won in half the time).

Sections of the Protestant working class do sometimes vote for socialism and may even march against an overconfident Unionist government as in 1932. Many, if not most, of these combine such a vote with a reluctance to do anything concrete to abandon the small but real privileges that give Protestants as Protestants advantages as against Catholics.

In the main, they identify their community as anti-Catholic, not in the sense that they defend the positions of the Age of Reason, but in the sense of defending a superior material place against the Catholics in the name of religious positions not, now, qualitatively better than those of their opponents. As long as they can get away with this, they will have no need to change.

How this happened can be understood from three episodes.

1. The Protestants did not come to Ireland 'mainly by free immigration from England and Scotland' (going back to pre-history) and, much less importantly, by official British colonisation. The Protestant settlements of Cos. Antrim and Down differed from those in Central and Western Ulster because, less famous and more thorough,

The territories concerned had been cleared as a war measure before 1603, after which they were leased to the clearers (Chichester, Hill, Conway) after that date. They planted their lands with Protestants. These were as much colons as those in less-effectively settled Fermanagh and Donegal.

Their knowledge of the fact (and fear of counter-attacks like those of 1641 and 1690) would handicap their future progressive development.

2. This was seen even in their most radical moment in 1798. Though the Presbyterian left led the Irish national revolution for a couple of months many of its number did so looking over their shoulders.

The veteran Belfast Republican, William Drennan, retreated into passive fear of the Irish majority. Henry Monroe lost the Battle of Balinahinch by refusing to use his Catholic troops in a night attack. The defeated James Dickie remarked that victory would have meant a new Catholic-Protestant civil war.

3. Such fears multiplied extensively and intensively because of the way Ulster was industrialised.

Perhaps one should be grateful to you, John, for not asking the question: why was the Protestants' part of Ireland more advanced? However, to beg a question is not qualitatively better than giving a wrong answer.

Insurance

In fact, Ulster's industrial supremacy was ensured by a far greater defeat of its Protestant manufacturing proletariat than anywhere else in the British Isles. (Its mainly Catholic opposite numbers in the rest of Ireland had stronger unions: capital, there, answered by removing itself).

From this pauperisation developed working class Orangeism (You don't mention the Orange Order once in your historical analysis. Why not?) Trade unionism was replaced by or co-existed with workplace discrimination on religious sectarian grounds.

By the criterion of industrial expansion, Belfast had a claim to be the British Isles' Petrograd. Instead it became - Belfast.

Fear of a 'largely agrarian, backward and priest-ridden Catholic bourgeois state' was only the subjective expression of renewed fears of displacement: now fears of largely unskilled Catholic workers taking Protestant jobs.

The 1886 Anti-Home Rule pogrom came after rumours of a Catholic threat to take over the shipyards. The 1920 pogrom was aimed at expelling Catholics employed in the wartime boom. Contrariwise, those who signed the Ulster Covenant against Home Rule in 1912 did not worry much about the right of divorce or a constitutional ban on abortion.

Historically, then, the Ulster Protestants originated as colons. Their consciousness is still a colon consciousness. Yet the objective basis for this consciousness is no longer one of colonisation. No displaced native peasantry exists on a scale that could re-settle the

Protestant farmlands around Belfast and the Lagan valley.

In any case, even if their colon status was an objective fact, they would still have the right to stay if they would accept the same rights as the native Irish.

The most accurate description of the Ulster Protestant workers is that they, or a nucleus of them constitute a labour aristocracy recruited by religion. More generally they are a backward part of the all-Ireland workforce, kept backward by imperialist concessions.

They will join us in struggle, they will fight alongside us, but they will join us late and only as a result of a thirty-two county fight. Before they join us, the struggle will have spread south of Ulster. By doing so, it will fight as a proletarian struggle as it did in 1972 and at times during the H Block agitation.

Faced by this Thirty-Two County mobilisation, sections of and eventually the bulk of the Protestant workforce will join it.

Perhaps then, the federal Ireland will be revived as a tactical move to ease the Protestants into Irish unity. However, it remains a matter of conjuncture and of conjuncture.

With all good wishes,
D.R. O'CONNOR LYSAGHT

P.S. One last point, John, it does not behove a British revolutionary, even one with Irish ancestors, to attack Irish revolutionaries for not doing what he thinks best to avoid civil war. Such warnings are being used far too often already and, again, usually from the pro-imperialists. (They are a favourite gimmick of Conor Cruise O'Brien).

Quite apart from being patronising, it ignores the fact that today there is not much that can be done to avoid civil war short of unconditional surrender to the class enemy. Such struggles normally have highly reasonable causes: they are battles between social orders, objectively if not in form. Few Cubans or Nicaraguans would now deny the historic necessity for their country's civil struggles.

On the other hand, a defeat for progress as a result of such a war tends to come as a result of successful outside imperialist intervention as in Spain and Lebanon.

TROOPS OUT NOW!



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

MAY 7

Britain out of Ireland; self-determination for the Irish people. Demonstration sponsored by Labour Committee on Ireland and others, Saturday May 7, 1pm from Hyde Park (Speakers' Corner).



Moving in for battle at Timex

THE single storey Timex factory in Dundee was built just after the war on an industrial estate a short bus ride from the town centre. A notice at the front gate tells all visitors to check in with security before entering. These days they check in with a member of the factory's occupation committee before the padlock on the front gate is unlocked. Company notices are overshadowed by large placards proclaiming the factory to be under new management.

Inside, narrow corridors lead to the main production shop floor where rows of machines sit like dead insects. If the company has its way they will soon be silent for ever.

Round another corner and into the canteen. It was the spring fair when we visited and the workforce was 'on holiday'. A local Labour Club had provided indoor bowls, pool and miniature snooker. Children had come with their parents into the factory to sustain the first stage of their battle.

It was the phony war. The management had not yet reacted to the occupation. The workers were waiting for the following Monday when the management were due to reopen after the holiday.

Shop steward Ian Ramsay said: "We will ask them if they will participate in the occupation and if they don't, they will be turned away."

The occupation started - with only five votes against - on the last nightshift before the holiday break. The company had announced the end of watch and computer production and the transfer of work on the modern flat tube TV.

The AUEW convenor and chair of the occupation committee, Gordon Samson, had just left for a journey to London to campaign for support. The atmosphere inside the plant was calm and confident. With 17,000 people registered unemployed in the Dundee area and only 300 vacancies, a final walk out of Timex could be a final walk out of a job.

Peter McIntyre visited the occupied factory as part of a NUJ delegation during his union's recent conference in Dundee-

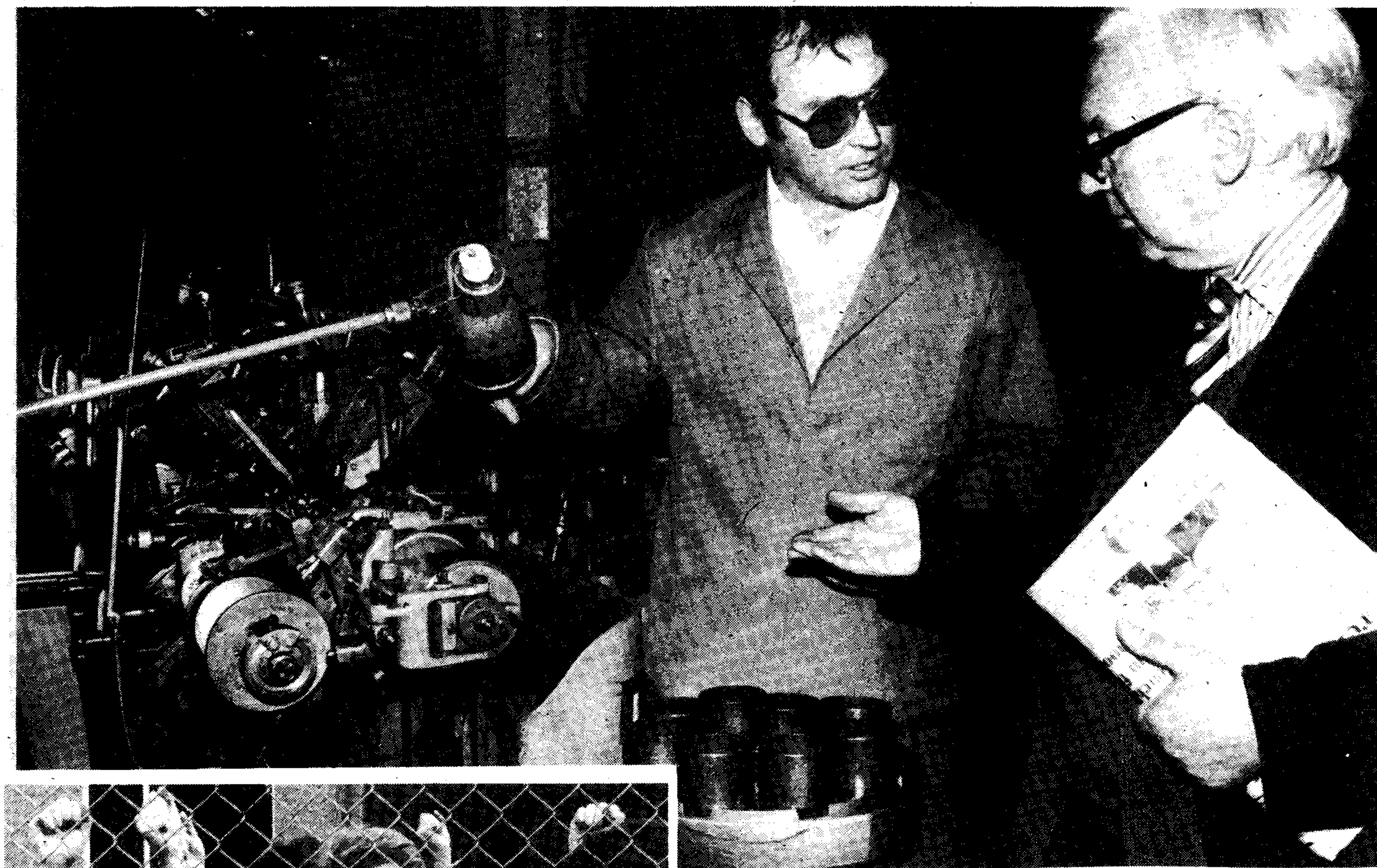
The occupation committee says there is plenty of work in hand and they blame unfair French inducement to the multinational firm (headed by the shipping magnate Olsen) to transfer production to their Besancon factory.

Ian Ramsay said: "We have evidence that there is work here for the whole of this year. We got hold of documents which prove that the work was being transferred to France. The French are subsidising the firm in the region of 40 million francs."

"The French convenor came across in January. They say they sympathise and give us support but cannot jeopardise their own jobs. They have sent us piles of documents."

There are four factories in the Dundee area, the stricken plant at Milton complex, a home computer production and assembly plant at Camperdown, and two blocks in between. The company has always done its best to keep the plants separate and doubled up on components between factories in Scotland and France to weaken union control.

The other three Scottish



ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)



RICK MATTHEWS (JFL)

plants have been exempted from action. Ian Ramsay said: "We will be producing as normal at other factories. We felt that to include them might get bad publicity."

In all, the four factories had 4,200 jobs when in January the management announced a redundancy programme of 1,900, calling for volunteers to leave.

When the company later announced the complete closure

of the Milton complex they claimed that more than 1,700 workers had volunteered and that they would be selecting 190 compulsory redundancies. The unions (AUEW and TASS) dispute these figures and are fighting the occupation on the basis of all 650 jobs at Milton being under fire.

The workforce was half and half men and women, but proportionately more women have left

than men. There are five women stewards and two women on the eight strong occupation committee.

The occupation committee is now seeking support. It has been made official and 70,000 leaflets & 70,000 emergency issues of the AUEW paper have been printed.

The notice board in the canteen is given over to letters of support, mainly from Labour MPs and trade union branches. But amongst them is a letter from Thatcher, sent in February, when the unions first raised the allegations of unfair French competition.

The letter says: "We have received assurances from Timex that no production has been transferred to France, more specifically the 3-D camera, presently made in Dundee will be made in Japan."

After a reference to a world-wide decline in demand, Thatcher writes: "There is clearly a great deal of public concern about this question." She said that the British government was raising with the EEC the £12 million grants to the Besancon factories.

But already the EEC has said that there does not appear to be any breach of its regulations.

The workforce at Dundee needs more than crocodile tears from Thatcher. It needs a sustained and developing programme of industrial action. It will not achieve that without the active support of trade unions and Labour Party organisations. Messages of support and money to: Gordon Samson, chair of Occupation Committee, Timex, Milton of Graigie Road, Dundee.

See Editorial, page 2

Prior Act used

A TGWU convenor and a national organiser gave a High Court undertakings to call off secondary picketing in a dispute near Bradford - and thus staved off a possible injunction.

21 Asian textile workers have been on strike at Aire Valley Yarns since March 14, following the victimisation of shop steward Liaqhat Ali. Management's answer was to sack the whole workforce and bring in scabs.

The TGWU made the dispute official, and Peter Attack, convenor of the dyeing firm of Charles Busfield and Co. blacked Aire Valley goods.

The union was then taken to court by Atlantic Yarns - a firm giving the same address as Aire Valley Yarns - seeking an injunction against secondary blacking and damages.

The dispute continues. Messages of solidarity and donations should be sent to L. Ali, 34 Dirkhill St., Bradford 7.

Right Guy?

While the right wing in the TUC shamelessly twist and manoeuvre to force through their joint 'social contract' election platform with Labour's right wing, the left wingers and in particular the three Communist Party members on the TUC are forced to trot out lame excuses for their refusal to fight.

Sheet Metal workers' leader George Guy, a prominent CP member, was stung into writing a letter of explanation to the Stalinist 'Morning Star' in reply to an editorial critical of his role. He accuses his comrades of "a complete lack of understanding of what working with the broad left means."

Apparently it means that if the broad left wants to support the right wing, CP members must go along with them, because otherwise "our broad left colleagues might well have seen us as people they no longer wished to support on other issues." By such means have the old Stalinist-style "broad lefts" traditionally been turned into impotent movements incapable of fighting the right wing - but simply giving careerists of various stripes a leg-up into the higher ranks of the union bureaucracy.

The newly emerging non-Stalinist broad lefts in various unions should note this wretched example, and firmly reject the course of compromise with the bureaucracy if they are to achieve their objectives in terms of new policies and trade union democracy.

Betting shop victory

SEVEN full-time workers employed by Racing Services Ltd, a chain of seven Liverpool betting shops, picketed their shops in protest at management's refusal to pay extra money for extra work involved on National day.

Management had consistently refused to recognise the TGWU, to which all seven belong. The

picket lines were also supported by unemployed trade unionists, mainly members of the TGWU 6/612 branch and from local unemployed centres.

By the Monday all workers had been suspended for a period of one week without pay and shop steward Andy Jameson was suspended for a fortnight.

The dispute was soon made into an official strike with the owner, Vincent McNally, refusing to meet with the union and taking on part-timers to cover.

By the Friday, all seven shops were being successfully picketed with good support from most of the punters.

McNally had sent out letters to all the strikers asking them to report back to work as normal, and they would receive a final, written warning. By this time McNally was losing a lot of money and this was when he played his best card by serving, through his solicitor, injunctions against the seven strikers and the TGWU to stop them picketing his shops.

This greatly confused ourselves and the police as nobody was sure that McNally was using Tebbit's law or if the police had the power of arrest. The police just took our names, asked us to keep the numbers down and went away.

However, later on the following Saturday, McNally agreed to meet with the union and on Tuesday night the strike was won with union recognition, rates of pay and withdrawal of all the injunctions and final warnings all agreed to.

There will also be further negotiations on working conditions.

This victory was important not only because the management was anti-trade union but also because six of the seven strikers are women and all of them have had little experience of working in the trade union movement.

Because of the excellent solidarity shown by the unemployed, they were prepared to fight for their rights in a traditionally poorly-organised area of work.

They, and their supporters who mounted the picket lines were prepared to go to jail if necessary, knowing that they had good support from the local union leadership.

So what are the lessons? We have seen some of the most militant strength of the working class come from the most poorly organised and this has been untapped by the traditional workers movement.

Legislation against secondary picketing will be used fully to the advantage of big and small employers alike, especially where trade union resistance is thought to be weak.

Finally, that the unemployed and the employed can unite successfully around the strike. The unemployed played a full part in the strike committee and without their physical presence on the picket line as secondary pickets, the strikers could not have covered all the shops.

Tebbit-style

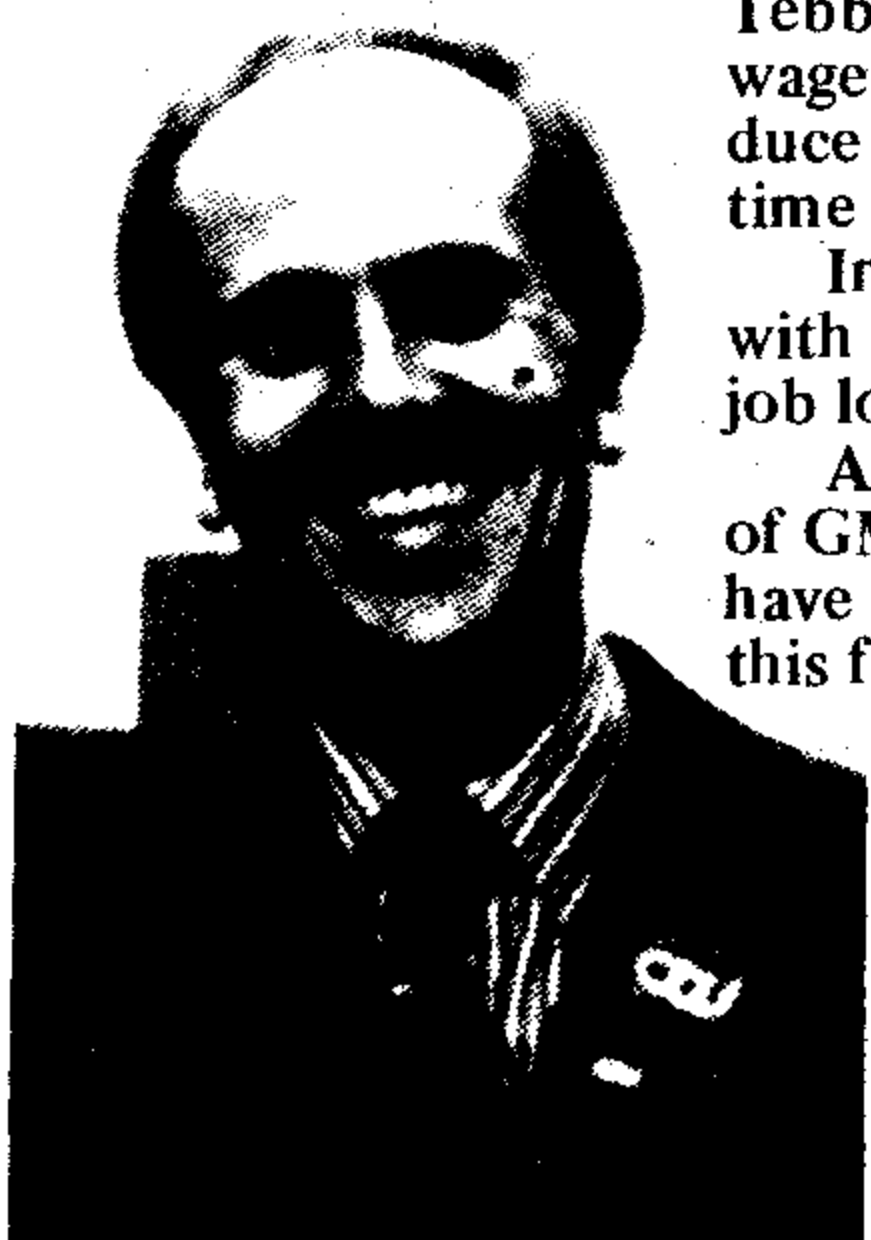
Management at N Greening Ltd, Warrington, seem to have got the message from Norman Tebbit: they want to abolish the annual wage claim, end negotiated holidays, and reduce trade union facilities, removing the full time convenor's post.

In addition they want 89 jobs to go, with the closure of half the site and further job losses to come within six months.

All 400 workers at Greenings - members of GMBU, EETPU, AUEW and NUSMW - have been on strike for five weeks to stop this full frontal attack on their union rights.

The strikers have been visiting other workplaces to get support. This week they visited the Ford plant at Halewood.

Messages/donations: N Greening Joint Shop Steward Committee Strike Fund, c/o Len Blood, 26 St John St, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside.



Turkey Solidarity Campaign: BM Box 5965, London WC1 3XX. Affiliation fee: national organisations £25, district organisations/TCS £10, local organisations/TU branches £5, individuals £3.

In reply to Newsline's frenzied campaign against SO

An open letter to Ms Redgrave

IN THE last four weeks Newsline has run a frantic campaign against the BBC and... against Socialist Organiser.

Bluster as you will, however, the important question in this matter – whatever the BBC's intentions – is this: are the allegations true? Do you get money from Libya?

You have sued us for – among other things – comparing you to certain religious sects. Yourself claiming to be part of the labour movement, you answer your labour movement opponents and critics with the law courts.

Yet you try to answer the BBC, which you say witch-hunts and libels you, with a 'political' campaign in the labour movement! You invoke the state against a section of the labour movement, and appeal to the labour movement against what you call an arm of the state!

Why, Ms Redgrave, don't you sue the BBC? Why have you allowed me for two years to say and repeat that there is circumstantial evidence of WRP getting money from Gaddafi, and not added another item to the string of writs your lawyers have served on me?

You are probably the most litigious people in Britain today! The fact that you don't go to court on this question, when you rush to the lawyers so easily on much smaller matters, suggests that you don't dare do it.

You say that the BBC cleared it with lawyers first, and therefore are not open to being sued? I have not cleared this letter with lawyers. I'll say it again for you as plainly as I can.

All the political and circumstantial evidence indicates that you receive money from the reactionary Islamic government of Libya – whose 'anti-imperialism' you mocked, calling Gaddafi (inaccurately) a fascist, when you were a political organisation; that you are impressed not by the green but by the gold in Gaddafi's 'Green Revolution'.

The opulence of your tiny organisation would not be possible without that. Nor would Newsline, the first colour daily paper with a four-figure circulation. Nor would be the huge sum you spend on law suits. According to the US Militant, for example (15.4.83), you spent \$750,000 to \$1 million on an unsuccessful lawsuit against the US Socialist Workers' Party by your associate Alan Gelfand.

The evidence also suggests that until two or three years ago you were in the pay of the Iraqi government or its agents. Certainly you published sycophantic articles and a pamphlet glorifying Saddam Hussein and his vicious anti working class military dictatorship. At that time you publicly

justified Hussein's execution of members of the Communist Party of Iraq.

Whether you have been paid directly by the governments concerned or by their agents, I do not know, and anyway it is a detail.

The evidence is strong enough to make urgent a labour movement inquiry into your relations with these regimes.

Is that plain enough? In that case sue me – or shut up. If you don't sue me, it will amount to an admission that the charges are true.

In the Newsline campaign you rely on the idea that an allegation can't be true because the left has good reason to distrust those who make it.

Yes, the BBC were trying to smear the left in general: the programme talked vaguely and in general about Gaddafi financing 'the left press' and 'the ethnic press' – but when it came to it had nothing to say about any 'press' but yours and those who could be implicated because they could be linked to the WRP press (Labour Herald, Dundee Standard).

Nevertheless it is a matter of public concern in the labour movement whether or not you do have golden links with Gaddafi. It is of concern to those like the publishers of the Dundee Standard

whether or not by an innocent commercial association with your press they lay themselves open to being witch-hunted. It is of concern to George Galloway, a prominent advocate of Palestinian rights, whether he unknowingly lays himself open to having his motives impugned because of the Dundee Herald's links with you and your private dealings.

If there is truth in the allegations, then you are a major liability to the left.

You talk about the dangers of the state prying into your affairs. The state has means of keeping itself informed about such matters anyway. It is the labour movement activists who think you are just an especially eccentric variety of 'Trotskyist' who don't know. It is the youth and those who struggle and scrape to help finance your organisation who don't know.

Your campaign has two objectives: you want to use the fact that the BBC has said a fraction of what could be said, to inoculate your members and those sections of the left who occasionally see Newsline. Cashing in on the hatred the left feels for the hostile, red-baiting and anti-Labour media, you want to seize the chance to line people up on your side and thereby commit them to

the belief that leaders of your organisation are being libelled.

You calculate that people who are themselves victims of the media will not stop to ask: is there any truth in what the BBC said? As always you hope to benefit from the fact that the WRP and its antics strain credulity.

That is why you take us to court, and appeal to the labour movement against the BBC.

Your second objective is to tie Socialist Organiser to the BBC by way of an 'amalgam'. You tried the same sort of trick with your lying and libellous allegation that Socialist Organiser supporter Peter McIntyre had worked with the police to prepare the Oxford raids on social security claimants – an allegation for which you were condemned by the National Union of Journalists.

The 'logic' seems to be that because Socialist Organiser, which in the last two years has repeatedly pointed to your probable financial links with Gaddafi and others, now repeats the allegation and reports on the BBC version of it, we bear responsibility for the programme and for its smear against the left in general.

A remarkable logic! We don't denounce the BBC programme for repeating what we have said



Gaddafi repeatedly – so we are responsible. We 'witch-hunt' and 'smear' you.

No we don't! We use our right to comment on the affairs of the 'left'.

You hope to create a spin-off effect against Socialist Organiser by rallying a reflex left defence against the BBC. The fact, however, is that if the BBC can launch a plausible witch-hunt, and drag the Dundee Standard into it that is because you cannot give a proper account of yourselves.

Bluff, bluster, smokescreens and diversions won't get you away from that.

Only a labour movement inquiry can properly establish the facts about your relations with Libya and Iraq. Either sue me, agree to such a labour movement inquiry, or shut up!

The 'Workers Revolutionary Party' paper Newsline has been campaigning against the 'witch-hunt' by the BBC – whose 'Money Programme' recently looked into the WRP's possible financial connections with Libya – and Socialist Organiser, which has long drawn attention to this issue. Sean Matgamna replies with an open letter to Newsline, and to WRP leaders Vanessa Redgrave and Gerry Healy.

Strike nears victory

by Martin Thomas

THE STRIKE at Arlington House hostel in North London is nearing victory.

TGWU staff at the hostel have been on strike since last September, fighting for better wages and then against sackings. It now seems certain that the hostel will be taken over by the local (Camden) Labour council, and the strikers are already negotiating with UK Housing Trust (who will run the hostel for the council) on wages and conditions.

The hostel will be renovated, and day-to-day running will be in the hands of a management committee with representatives of staff and residents.

The two other hostels in London run by Rowtons (the owners of Arlington House) are also likely to be taken over by Labour councils, in Tower Hamlets and Lambeth. And union membership is now developing in them.

Currently an independent valuer is preparing a report on the three hostels to determine the purchase price.

This victory is due entirely to the determination of the strikers, who with very little help from the top officials of their own union have organised and picketed tirelessly for eight months. What they need most now is funds to keep them going: they are on only £12 a week strike pay.

Send donations to Arlington House strike fund, c/o 8 Camden Road, London NW1.

House of horror for homeless

Tower House is one of the hostels for homeless people run by the Rowtons company. JIM LAWRIE, from the residents' committee, speaks to Sue Carlyle about conditions in the hostel, and how the residents are fighting.

LIVING conditions are appalling. There are 700 homeless men in Tower House, with a large proportion of OAPs. Many of them are old and infirm, living on the top floor, with no lifts, but 7 or 8 flights of stairs, and it's the worst for fire hazards.

Tower House is often wrongly labelled as "full of dossers and drinkers", but many residents are victims of economic unemployment, who have been forced to live rough in parks and on the streets. Many form part of the floating population of seamen. They've worked for the Port of London for years, but now the recession has laid many of them off.

When people book in, it's £15 a week for a cubicle. For that they get a bed (often stained, smelly, and bed bugged) in a

room that's filthy, never cleaned, with the walls caked with dirt, graffiti. There's no furniture, except a cupboard on a wall with an odd chair. It's like a prison cell.

A lot of the residents spend most of their time in the day room. It's dark and murky, absolutely filthy, with nothing

Homelessness and housing conditions in Tower Hamlets have been highlighted in an Observer article (Sunday April 10) on TB. The report outlines how tuberculosis is thriving in Tower Hamlets with 80 cases per 100,000 of the population, compared with the national average of just over 15. The death rate from TB is nearly six times the national average.

In Tower House, the TB rate is 100 times higher than the national average.

but wooden benches and tables. The other 'lounging areas' consist of hard chairs, undecorated walls, no heating – and a television halfway up the wall. Again, there's hardly any light.

The canteen, where a big majority of the men eat, is filthy. Tables are never wiped. Bread and cakes are set out on tables, with no hygienic covering. It's cleaner

in prison – and the food is better! Tower House uses reject food, that's been offloaded cheap. There are bouts of food poisoning every so often.

The kitchen conditions are overcrowded too, with bugs, etc. Staff are generally recruited from

residents, and have to work in awful conditions at low pay. They receive their bed and board, but they can't complain, because they'd be slung out. There are pressures within the hostel against trade unionism, but many workers are joining the residents' association.

We want the Borough of Tower Hamlets to make a compulsory purchase of Tower House, and then to improve the living conditions, and start a phased closure of Tower House, rehousing the residents according to their wishes and needs.

That way the residents association would be dealing with people who are directly answerable to those who are elected to office. We want co-management between residents and the council, and to work with properly negotiated conditions, and trade union rates.

Private enterprise will not look after the needs of the residents. Management has no intention of fulfilling their legal and moral obligations to residents, they are answerable only to shareholders via the profit motive.

Poor turn-out for WRP protest

AFTER A full month of campaigning against the BBC and Socialist Organiser (!) 'witch-hunt' against them, the WRP managed to get two or three hundred people to a protest meeting on Monday 18th. Many came to hear the 'star studded' platform – Ken Livingstone, Ted Knight, Jack Collins, and Peter Tatchell, as well as WRP leaders.

A number of SO supporters attempted to enter the meeting – among them Sean Matgamna, who has been the target of much of the venom in Newsline over the last month. They were refused admission, though the meeting was advertised as public. One who got in was recognised and thrown out.

But most people took a leaflet containing Sean Matgamna's open letter to Gerry Healy and Vanessa Redgrave (above).

Alex Mitchell told the meeting that "the workers of Britain have more in common with the government of Libya than with the BBC". He said the WRP challenged Tory MP John Biggs Davidson to support the BBC's allegations outside Parliament so they could sue him. He did not pause to say why they were not suing the BBC or (on this issue) SO.

Mitchell said that the 'witch-hunt' "showed the grip of Zionism in the labour movement – Poale Zion had sprung a thousand heads in its efforts to turn the labour movement against the Palestinians and their ally the WRP".

Livingstone and Knight complained that their Labour Herald was being persecuted and witch-hunted too.

Michael Banda compared Socialist Organiser to 'a bunch of political hyenas feeding on the entrails of other revisionist movements'.

Livingstone – who finds SO hateful for being less than 100% uncritical of himself – applauded such speakers. Alex Mitchell had a second go: holding up a green briefcase with the emblem of Libya on it, he said he had just come back from Libya, and that

was all he had brought back. He opened it dramatically to reveal Colonel Gaddafi's 'Green Book' – whose ideas the WRP used to call fascism. He had been to a Libyan conference to study and interpret it.

Finally a resolution was passed condemning the state and the BBC and... calling on SO supporters to denounce the paper and force the Editorial Board to 'retract'.

SO supporter Gaius Vincent managed to stay unrecognised in the meeting under the watchful eyes of the numerous stewards by clapping all the speakers. He rose to speak and managed to ask Knight, Livingstone and Tatchell what they were doing on such a platform and why SO people had been kept out of the meeting where such a resolution was to be moved. Then he was shouted down amid uproar and surrounded by stewards.

The meeting answered none of the questions that need answering. In its own way it showed yet again the need for answers. If they can only get a couple of hundred people – the same sort of numbers that almost any outfit could get by fielding such a well-known platform of speakers – how do they manage to put out Newsline daily? Where does their opulence come from?

AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNT!

Join LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCHHUNT Membership open to Constituency Labour Parties, trade union organisations, Labour Party affiliates, and individuals.

Fee. CLPs and unions £10, wards £5, individuals and other organisations £3. Write to-LAW, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16.

Help defend freedom of political comment in the labour movement press against the WRP's use of its money and of the capitalist legal system. A labour inquiry, not the courts!

Donations towards our defence costs to: Labour Movement Press Defence Fund Treasurer, Jonathan Hammond, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Socialist ORGANISER

Don't just march, organise!

THE PEOPLE'S March for Jobs sets out from Glasgow this Saturday, 23rd. Other branches of the march are starting on Wednesday 27th from Keighley and Saturday 30th from Newcastle.

The People's March 81 roused hundreds of thousands across the country against unemployment. After two further years of Tory devastation, this March should do the same thing on a much greater scale.

The question is, what will be built from it. Pleas and petitions won't shift the Tories. To win the right to work, we need not only protests but also organised force.

The unemployed can become a force only by organising and making links with employed workers. The main ways this can be done are:

- * Recruiting the unemployed into unions. Most union leaderships have built great obstacles to this. The main exception is the TGWU Region 6 (North-West), where active unemployed branches like the 6/612 and 6/88 exist.

- * Organising unemployed workers' groups or associations that can be linked up with each other, and with the unemployed inside the unions, through the National Unemployed Workers' Movement.

- * Organising unemployed centres run by the unemployed themselves in liaison with the local labour movement. Trades Councils and Labour Parties should take the initiative on this, and in some areas have done so.

- * Organising unemployed

By Martin Thomas

youth through the LPYS.

Organised, the unemployed can become a force to take direct action for their rights, to support struggles to save existing jobs, and to win the trade unions and Labour Party for policies which can secure the right to work.

- * Work-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay, to spread the jobs among those seeking work. A shorter work week.

- * Expansion of public services and projects, with trade union labour at trade union rates.

- * Occupation of factories that declare redundancies, to fight for workers' control and nationalisation without compensation.

But the last People's March steered in a different political direction. It confined itself to the general appeal that the government should make jobs 'a priority', and the organisers tried to stamp on marchers who chanted, 'Occupy, Nationalise, Kick the Tories Out!' While bishops were featured on the platforms, workers fighting for jobs at Ansell's and at Plansee were excluded.

From all indications the same problems will come up this time. And there will be the same resistance from rank and file marchers, who last time forced a much more democratic organisation of the March than the top officials intended.



The People's March 1981 roused hundreds of thousands against unemployment

Whose centres for the unemployed?

by Frank O'Brien

THERE ARE over 170 TUC-recognised unemployed centres in Britain — a network which potentially could be the base for a mass of organising work.

Labour Research magazine published a survey of 90 of them in its February issue. The first unemployed centre, they report, started in Newcastle five years ago, under the auspices of the local Trades Council.

But in early 1981 the TUC agreed guidelines for the centres with the government Manpower Services Commission, which has become the major source of funding for the centres. The Gwent centre told Labour Research, "MSC guidelines mean that we cannot now be involved in marches, campaigns, etc", and Bradford said, "MSC money hampers political activity".

The MSC has pushed for the management of centres to be in the hands of local authorities and Trades Councils, not the unemployed themselves. And its influence has certainly worked against the centres becoming bases for unemployed workers' associations. Only 10 per cent of the centres replying to Labour Research's questionnaire reported having unemployed workers' associations.

Nonetheless many centres have done limited campaigning, for example for cheap bus fares for the unemployed. They provide welfare benefits advice and social facilities, and also, in many cases, courses and classes. Some have made special efforts to run women's studies courses or women's groups.

Labour Research also reports that most unemployed centre organisers were bitter about official trade union attitudes. "The unemployed feel that unions have

let them down, the same as everyone else" (Bracknell); "The trade union movement does not want to give recognition to the unemployed movement" (Stirling).

A 'national workshop conference' of 150 delegates from TUC unemployed centres was held in London on March 15 — and the delegates had plenty to say from the floor.

They demanded:

- * That the unemployed be represented in the TUC.

- * That all unemployed centres staff have the right to participate fully in trade union activities without jeopardising their jobs or the centres' funding.

- * No government job schemes unless they are 'topped up' to the full trade union rate, and no enforced part-time work.

- * Make the centres independent of the MSC, with funding from the TUC and the labour movement generally.

- * That the conference be recalled within the next six months with a direct input from the centres both on the platform and the agenda. There should be a series of conferences resulting in the formation of a national campaigning movement of the unemployed, with the election of a national organising committee as the first step towards this.

The TUC was also criticised for not consulting centres over the People's March 83.

The summing up by TUC official Ken Graham was the worst part of the conference. He said it was a very hard job to be elected to Congress. It had taken him several years. But they might be able to let us visit.

The job of the centres' staff, he said, was to carry out the work as defined by the management committees. As for funding — TUC has no money, only the unions have money, and it's up to them what they spend it on.

Mr Graham said he had no apologies for what he and his colleagues have done on the MSC, and that they report to the General Council and Congress, not the



Polish arrests

A WAVE of arrests of Polish underground Solidarnosc activists and the repeated questioning of Lech Walesa have once again thrown the spotlight on the failure of Jaruzelski's regime to reconstruct the old, discredited state-run "unions".

Though the ten million strong Solidarnosc has faced vicious repression, the country's Stalinist rulers have not crushed the spirit of revolt which animated the whirlwind movement that created the biggest and most democratic union in the world, and struck fear into the hearts of bureaucrats everywhere.

With the visit of the Pope to Poland looming ever closer, Solidarnosc activists plainly hope to use the event to further their struggles, just as Jaruzelski hoped it would legitimise his regime's suppression of the workers' movement.

It is certain that the Pope could not be counted upon to show the same deference to the dictatorial regime in Poland that he showed to the bloody military rulers of Central America on his recent visit there.

But the repeated statements by Archbishop Glemp urging moderation from Solidarnosc supporters would suggest that once again the role of the Church is to pressurise rather than overturn the Stalinist state bureaucracy with which it has happily coexisted, and from which it has materially benefitted for over 30 years.

The recent events should also remind the British workers' movement of the continued need to support the Polish workers' struggle and oppose all links between British union bureaucrats and the stooge "unions" of Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Our common interest is not with the faceless hatchet-men installed as labour lieutenants of Andropov and Jaruzelski but with the millions of workers seeking ways and means of organising independently to oust their bureaucratic rulers and seize control of the nationalised economies, opening up the possibility of genuine planning and expansion.

ON THE MARCH

There will be seven legs — from Glasgow, starting April 23, Land's End (May 11), Liverpool (May 9), Newcastle on Tyne (April 30), Keighley (April 27), Hull (May 1), and Great Yarmouth (May 21) — all marching to enter London on June 4 & 5.

The 500 core marchers will be selected by the Regional TUCs, though the TUC organisers say they expect more to join sections of the march along the way.

Ron Todd, chair of the national organising committee, told a press conference on March 28 that he expected "at least a quarter of a million" in London on June 5".

FUND

AT LAST the week's post has brought a sizeable set of donations to the April Fund. Up and down the country, supporters have responded to our appeals by digging into their pockets and sending cheques and cash totalling £387.82.

But even this amount — the highest for some weeks — brings our total for April to just £548.82.

Our target is to raise £1000 a month to keep pace with our present commitments. Every pound less than £1000 puts us a further pound into the red.

So thanks to all supporters who donated this week — and now let's have a drive from all the others next week. We need £451.18.

Send your donations now to The Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Thanks to: Ross Catlin £60, Les Hearn £50, Wendy Frankland £20, Rob Dawber £15, Nik Barstow £10, Peter Kenway £10, Bruce Robinson £10, Teresa Munby £10, Ken Williamson £10, Sarah Bryant £10, Ivan Wels £10, Jeff Slee £10, Rob Johnston £6, Jean Lane £5, Dave and Anna Lunts £5, Linda Mouldsdales £5, Peter McIntyre £5, Steve Hall £7.50, supporters in the West Midlands £129.32.