

Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory



60,000 Strike and March against Cuts

"WE WANT to show other Labour councils that the labour movement can be mobilised", declared Lambeth council leader Ted Knight at the SCLV's rally on Saturday 24th.

Lambeth's demonstration on November 7th showed that workers will mobilise against the cuts. And the 60,000 strong demonstration in work time on the 26th was proof positive.

That willingness to mobilise can beat the cuts — if it is organised, given a clear policy, and oriented to taking on the Tories with direct action.

Knight explained that Lambeth Council took its stand against cuts because of a decision by the local Labour Parties. "We should demand other Labour Councils accept that sort of accountability. We have no intention of being another Clay Cross, of being isolated. We intend to break the isolation."

"That's why we organised the demonstration on November 7th — not because we thought one march could defeat the Tory Government. Not only Labour Parties and trade unions were mobilised, but community groups, black groups, kids' play groups..."

"Lambeth can be defeated if it is isolated. We want to make sure we are not isolated. Lambeth Council shop stewards have set up a committee for a campaign

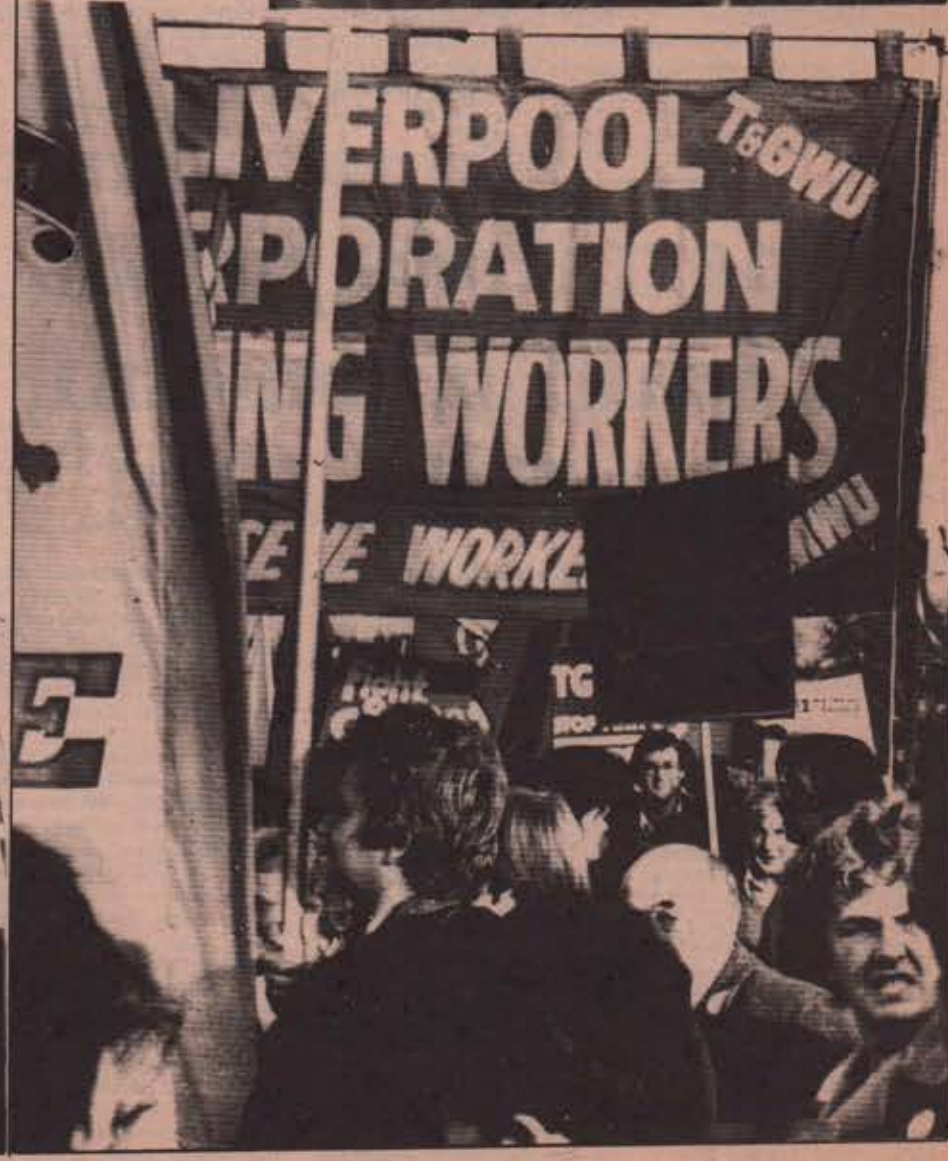
and are going out to other boroughs. We intend to link up with the trade-union fight against the Tories".

"I haven't entered into any argument on rate rises", said Knight, "because we've got to go into this on the basis that we're going to defeat the Government".

"The fight will not be won in Parliament. With friends like Roy Hattersley, who needs enemies? I told the MPs: when you have marched with us, then we'll talk to you..."

"And it's not just an anti-Tory fight, but a fight for socialist policies. The Callaghans and Heeleys who get in the way will have to be removed."

"But the key is mobilisation. The way we judge anybody, and any policies, is whether they help to mobilise the working class"



LCC — the promise of a fighting Broad Left?

THE LABOUR Coordinating Committee could be a huge campaign with a massive response in the Labour and trade union movement. It could lead a real fight not only against the Tories, but also against the right wing in the party. It could be a model of democracy and open debate.

But it isn't any of these things. The Manchester meeting of the LCC (Nov. 3rd-4th) only attracted about 200 — most of whom were not LCC members presumably, as only some 60 people attended the closed session which argued out the policy and structure for the LCC.

As yet it has led no real struggle — at Manchester all campaign and policy questions were referred to a special 'policy conference' to be held early next year — in fact, as yet, it has not gathered its forces at all.

In the debate on LCC structure, the view prevailed that the Executive should be elected by postal ballot, not by the LCC general meeting, and that the LCC Executive would keep its right to bar people from membership without their having the right to appeal to conference. This hardly encouraged the view that the LCC would be a democratic organisation.

Should we then write off the LCC? On the contrary: we should push for our policies within the LCC. There are, of course, divisions at

the top of the LCC — important political differences, for instance, between those who see the alternative economic strategy as the axis for a real mobilisation of the working class in struggle and those who have a much more manipulative outlook.

But these are differences within a political framework, which is essentially bureaucratic, nationalist and timid.

One of the most important discussions at the LCC was the discussion about how to make the Labour Party a mass party — a mass active party. Here Peter Hain put forward some refreshing proposals, as did a number of other speakers. But Hain's proposals, for all their energy and imagination, still give pride of place to Parliament as the agent for social change. 'The party', he said, 'is far too committed to parliamentarianism, so avoiding the task of creating a mass movement outside capable of exerting sufficient power to make feasible socialist change inside Parliament...'

To combat these and other shortcomings of the LCC, we should take work within the LCC most seriously. And we should also build up the SCLV as a distinct fighting left wing in the Labour Party, clearly to the left of the LCC.

NIK BARSTOW
In next month's SO: another view of the LCC.

Puffs of smoke or real democracy

■ What is the Campaign's attitude to the NEC inquiry?

□ The CLPD didn't want the Inquiry at first. There seemed to be no point; in fact, originally it looked like a manoeuvre and it seemed that the trade union leaders would keep firm control over it and keep its proceedings fairly secret. We feared at one stage that a high level bureaucratic inquiry might damage the Party.

But as Conference has gone along with the idea, now that it is an extended activity of the NEC, then — if the NEC and the unions think that special activity in the form of an inquiry is desirable — we go along with it.

I don't think there will be a CLPD submission to the inquiry. But we do strongly argue that the Inquiry is held in public and that its minutes are public — including the voting record — and that issues under discussion should be debated throughout the movement as a whole.

■ Bassett has said that he doubts that the Inquiry will be ready to report to the next Party Conference. Do you see any danger in this, an attempt, perhaps, to delay implementation of the decisions that conference has already made?

□ Certainly it is important that the constitutional questions of the 1979 conference can be confirmed or, in the case of the decision over the drafting of the Manifesto, constitutionalised as soon as possible. Apart from that I don't think that the timing of the Inquiry report matters. Whatever the original intentions of the Inquiry, it could now have a positive effect in that the issues it is dealing with will become the subjects of a broad discussion within the Party — and that shouldn't be rushed.

■ Presumably the CLPD will now be concentrating on the question of how the Party leader is chosen?

□ Yes, we would like to see a decision in favour of the electoral college method. We

STEPHEN BODINGTON of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy talked to Andrew Hornung.



are not discouraged by the defeat of this proposal at Conference, after all it was quite a knife-edge affair. It was only by Jim Murray of the AUEW not using his vote that Terry Duffy was able to use his casting vote and thus tip the decision against our proposal.

■ But why not support election by Conference? Why the electoral college?

□ A year ago lots of us felt that Conference should decide. But there are very real practical difficulties. You can decide questions of policy at Conference, but it is much more difficult to decide on people. You can't mandate the same way you can on policy. There are lots of complications the movement hasn't yet worked out.

At the coming AGM of the Campaign we will be discussing a whole range of other ideas also related to extending party democracy, including positive discrimination in favour of women and manual workers and opposition to any sort of 'primary' for choosing Labour candidates.

As you know, this question of 'primaries' — the sort of thing they do in the US — has been raised as a direct response to the moves towards making MPs more accountable. People like Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams

who haven't raised questions of democracy for decades are now pushing for this primary system. Suddenly they are 'concerned'! But how can an MP be accountable to 2,000 or even more people, many of whom are not regularly involved in party activity?

The big issue is not one of mechanisms but the movement. It is whether we are a purely Parliamentary party or one which tries to get the widest possible involvement of trade unionists and the community. Peter Hain's attitude is right here: he sees the parliamentary and local council positions as being aids to that wider struggle rather than the other way round.

I think the most important campaigns now would be campaigns for full employment and campaigns around corporate plans like the Lucas and Parsons plans. These need to connect up with local employment campaigns.

Of course, certain mechanisms are important: while the Campaign hasn't got a position on workplace branches I myself am very strongly in favour of them. I am not at all impressed by those who say there is going to be a lot of paperwork. There is no harm if people have dual membership.

■ Lastly, the CLPD has circulated a motion calling for no choosing of a new Party leader should Callaghan resign before the next Conference. Why is that?

□ If we went through the whole 'puffs of smoke' ritual to choose a new leader, it would be all the more traumatic if, four months later, with a more democratic system, we wanted to choose again. In other words, a quick choice could be used to avoid the more democratic procedure that will quite likely be endorsed by the 1980 Conference. So we say: if Callaghan resigns, let Foot take his place as is usual for a Deputy Leader and then wait until after Conference to choose a new leader.

Zionist charges Hackney CLP with being anti-semitic

WHEN HACKNEY North and Stoke Newington Constituency Labour Party passed an anti-Zionist resolution, there was immediately an outcry from some among the constituency's estimated 12,000 Jews. There was also an outcry from non-Jewish Labour Party members whose political principles amount to no more than the slogan, 'Don't rock the boat'.

The resolution stated that, 'This Party declares its opposition to the Zionist state of Israel and fully supports the struggle of the Palestinian people for the liberation of their homeland and the establishment of a non-sectarian, secular society in Palestine which will accommodate all the people presently living in the area on an equal basis'.

In order to explain this stand and so that the rank and file of the Party could debate the issue, a Party aggregate was called on 27th November. Two Israeli Labour Movement Zionists, an Israeli anti-Zionist, and a Palestinian were invited.

What drew most anger from the meeting was the accusation by one of the pro-Zionist speakers that the Party was anti-Semitic and at least an objective ally of John Tyndall, Führer of the National Front.

Clearly this was the response of those with no real argument to put forward. Indeed, the meeting learned from the anti-Zionist speakers something of Zionism's plundering of Arab lands, Israel's discrimination against Arabs — even those within the 1967 boundaries — and some of what it means to be a Palestinian in Israel or in the camps of the Arab countries.

All speakers seemed genuinely surprised at the amount of support for the Palestinian cause in the local Labour Party. But is there enough in the Party as a whole to mount a serious campaign against its traditional pro-Zionist policies?

ANDREW HORNUNG

★ Turn to page 10 for a glimpse of the reality of 'democratic', 'socialist' Israel.

Imperialists, hands off Iran! Khomeini, hands off the Left!

"DON'T call them murderers and torturers", Carter begged Congressmen concerned about the Tehran Embassy siege, according to the magazine Newsweek.

Why the begging? After all, those holding the hostages in the Embassy are not either murderers or torturers. Carter's begging was, of course, necessary because it is normal in the 'democratic West' to slander radical movements in the third world and because any lie is justified to cover up military intervention — or at least imperialism has always thought so.

Whatever the real motives behind the Embassy siege, socialists living in the heartlands of imperialism should first remember imperialism's crimes against Iran — exploitation, military occupa-

tion, suppression of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, installation and propping-up of the Shah. When the Iranian masses condemn those crimes, they are one hundred per cent correct.

The extradition of the Shah has been seized on by the Iranian government as a way to divert attention from their inability to solve Iran's social problems. But the capitalist governments who eagerly concert their efforts to extradite everyone they call a terrorist have no right to refuse the demand for extradition of the bloodstained tyrant Pahlavi.

Meanwhile plans are discussed for military intervention. The Economist even recommends that the US should seize Iran's islands in the Gulf, the Tumbs

Islands. Direct military intervention still does not seem the most likely development. But a counter-strike by the US against some other target outside Iran is possible, as is an attack on Iran by some neighbouring country or nearby state — like Saudi Arabia or Israel.

Every socialist should oppose such intervention. We should also oppose the present dragnet of Iranian students in the US and the moves to expel 1250 for visa irregularities. This is nothing but the doctrine of collective guilt in action.

Within Iran there is massive support for the anti-imperialist campaign of the government. But at a recent rally in Tehran, Iranian leftists and democratic organisations condemned the govern-



Iranian students jailed in New York for visa irregularities

ment's campaign as being nothing but cynical manipulation of the popular hatred of imperialism.

The Fedayeen, the largest leftist organisation in Iran, point out that the government is trying to divert the masses from the real problems — bread, work, land, repression — to which the authorities have no answer. The campaign is probably a prelude to another wave of repression against the left and — if the authorities feel strong enough — the working class organisations at rank and file level.

Their fear has been fuelled by Khomeini's statement that he doesn't think the US will dare make a direct military intervention, but imperialism has 'a long arm' and many agents.

Among those 'agents' Khomeini mentioned, specifically and lyingly, the Fedayeen. Today the US Embassy staff, most of whom are probably quite innocent, are made scapegoats to cover up the government's failure to do anything real against imperialism and against the economic chaos in Iran. Tomorrow the Fedayeen and

the left could be the scapegoats.

Our voices should be raised against the possibility of any military intervention, against the deportations of students in the US, and against the vile hypocrisy that seeks to cover up the decades of imperialist terror in Iran. At the same time we should give solidarity to the genuine radicals and anti-imperialists of Iran against the renewed repression they are likely to face from the demagogic anti-imperialists of the Khomeiny government.

JAMES DAVIES

Will the barricades go up again in Belfast?

UNDER the smokescreen of Ireland minister Atkins' proclaimed political initiative, a massive wave of repression has been launched against the Catholic ghettos of the North and, in particular, against the republican movement.

As Atkins cajoles the political leaders, the British army of occupation has moved hard into the nationalist areas of West Belfast. 'Screening' and 'census' checks were renewed with vigour in mid-October.

These amount to the wholesale harassment of entire districts. For instance 500 homes were raided in the space of two days in the Turf Lodge area in October. (So indiscriminately was the operation carried out that one of the army's victims was, embarrassingly, peace campaigner Des Wilson.)

This was happening at the same time as a Belfast judge declared indiscriminate questioning to be outside the army's powers under the Emergency Provisions Act; but they did it anyway.

Despite militant opposition from local people and factory workers, the army have impounded a whole industrial estate in the Whiterock area as a new fort right in the middle of a Catholic district. The Northern Ireland Office have now had the effrontery

to serve an eviction order on Provisional Sinn Féin to get out of the small shop they have been squatting for four years.

Is it coincidence that the recent crackdown on BBC reporters has accompanied the escalating repression? In Carrickmore itself (centre of the Panorama censorship row) army patrols killed a visiting Irishman, Peter Groogan, while knocking him about.

Loyalist sectarianism has asserted itself again, backed by Unionist Euro-MP John Taylor, who called for attacks on the south of Ireland. A joint Loyalist/Unionist resolution calling for curfews in Catholic areas, longer prison sentences, and sanctions against the southern state was passed by a majority of local councils.

These demands have been voiced as the price of Loyalist support for the Atkins initiative. Paisley's praise of Margaret Thatcher seems to imply that the Tory government, like Labour before it, is quite willing to pay the Loyalists' price.

In face of this, and under the pressure of the continuing resistance of the Catholic community, the Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDLP) rejected Atkins' proposal of talks. SDLP leader Gerry Fitt resigned from the

party over this. With the Official Unionist Party also unwilling to take part in Atkins' talks, the fact that the government really has nothing to propose for northern Ireland except increased repression is glaringly clear.

A number of events have recently put some pressure on the government to act like it's trying to solve the 'problem': the intervention by Irish American politicians and a restatement of basic Irish nationalism by an official report which estimated that 70% of the southern population want national unity and that over 20% support the Provisionals 'to some degree'. Premier Jack Lynch is doing his best to placate both sources of dissension but, to back him up, the British must be seen to be moving towards a political settlement.

The continuing intransigence of the nationalist population is a constant thorn in the side of all this political manoeuvring. As a united campaign for political status for republican prisoners gets underway, the British could soon face a vigorous challenge yet again to its control of the streets in the North.

The question in Britain remains: which side of the barricades will the British labour movement be on this time?

Stop the laws! Stop the trials!



About 20,000 people, predominantly from immigrant groups: Indian Workers' Associations, Asian, Kashmiri, Sikh, Bangladeshi and Pakistani youth and workers' organisations, demonstrated against the new immigration rules on Sunday 25th. Also on the march were a number of trade union bodies, Labour parties, left groups, anti-racist groups and women's groups.

At the crowded rally in Trafalgar Square at the end of the march, one speaker after another called for unity of black and white workers, and support for the 342 Southall defendants.

Tony Benn explained that "when capitalism has not got a large empire to sustain itself, it goes into slump and decline and there is an attack on the working class. We need a united campaign to restore the standards a civilised society needs", but was heckled when he said that the Labour Party policy is for repeal of the '71 Immigration Act. Suresh Grover, of the Southall Defence Committee, asked where Tony Benn was during the four years that the Labour Government administered the '71 Act. He stressed that the problem is not immigration, but racism, and that we must oppose all immigration laws.

Mr. Chowdhry, of the Organisation of Pakistani Communities, asked what use were commissions such as the Commission for Racial Equality when the government is busy creating racial inequality. Along with other speakers from the Indian and Asian community organisations, he called for a united fight.

The march in fact marked the unity in action of many organisations which have worked separately for a number of years. Such action must develop and spread, taking a firm line against all immigration controls, and against racism in any form.

DISBAND THE S.P.G.!

Public meeting called by the Friends of Blair Peach.

Speakers: Michael Meacher MP, Bill Keys (SOGAT), Mrs Desai (Grunwick strike committee), Parita Trivedy (Southall Campaign Committee).

7.30pm, Tues. Dec. 4th, Friends Ho., Euston Rd.

Aeysha's mother died when Aeysha was 2 years old. Since then she has been brought up by her aunt, Mrs Rojob, whom Aeysha, now seven, regards as her mother.

The immigration authorities are trying to send Aeysha back to Bangladesh on her own. There is no-one in Bangladesh who can look after her. But the immigration laws say she should go.



No reprieve for woman who killed 'a monster husband'

JUNE GREIG's appeal against a six year jail sentence for killing what Scotland's newspapers described as 'a monster husband' failed last week.

June's husband had consistently abused and beaten her over seven years of marriage. He kicked her in the stomach when she was pregnant, slashed her ear and neck with a knife, and burned her with cigarettes. She and her daughter had been beaten and punched on numerous occasions.

The night she killed him he had come in drunk and angry, and she could tell that she was 'for it' yet again. June had taken enough. She stabbed him twice with a kitchen knife.

In passing the six year sentence, the judge, Lord Dunpark, decided to make an example of her. He justified the severity of the sentence by saying it was "a deterrent to all battered women who may be tempted to kill their husbands".

And Lord Wheatley, at the appeal last week, said, "There are various expedients open to a woman regularly subjected to rough treatment by her husband — but a licence to kill is not one of them".

No-one would suggest a 'licence to kill'. But the other 'expedients' are so limited as to easily drive a woman to desperation. The six-year sentence of June Greig is

merely a way for the state to take vengeance on a victim.

25% of all violent offences reported to the police are wife-assault, and there must be many more not reported. The police are notoriously useless in these situations, dismissing them as 'domestic tiffs'.

The other expedient open to June Greig would have been to leave — but where could she go? She had no money, she was responsible for seven children, and eventually he would have found her.

There are Women's Aid refuges, but they can only provide temporary help, and are increasingly short of places. In Edinburgh, Women's Aid is being cut back, with six job losses by the end of 1979 under the urban aid programme.

The campaign to free June Greig, initiated by Edinburgh Women's Aid and supported by women's groups and trade union and Labour Party branches, has organised publicity, got coverage in national newspapers and TV, and received numerous donations and letters from women in the same situation as June who have often felt that they might do the same as her.

JO THWAITES

* Contact: Free June Greig campaign, c/o Women's Aid, 88a George St, Edinburgh.

Support grows for anti-NF demo

SUPPORT is building up for the demonstration on December 3rd against the National Front HQ in Shoreditch, South Hackney. The demonstration, called by Hackney Trades Council, supports the enforcement order put on the NF to get out of their HQ by Hackney Borough Council, on a technicality of abuse of planning permission.

The Department of the Environment has ordered a public enquiry into the enforcement order, and the NF has appealed. The hearing begins at 10.30am on Tuesday December 4th, in Hackney Town Hall.

The anti-racist movement, strong from the very successful demonstration against immigration laws last Sunday 25th, has a chance to deal a body-blow to the NF's organising centre. In addition, internal fighting over leadership and control since the summer has lowered NF members' morale.

The demonstration on December 3rd starts at 7pm at Shoreditch Church, at the intersection of Shoreditch High Street, Hackney Road and Kingsland Road.

There is a picket on the Town Hall, in Mare Street, from 9.30 to 11.30am on the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th.

MARK DOUGLAS



IRELAND TROOPS OUT NOW

DURING THE General Election campaign, Edinburgh Central LPYS members were violently bundled out of a meeting in Edinburgh where Callaghan was speaking because they tried to get the question of Ireland raised. After that it looked as if the YS would be witchhunted over the incident — and a resolution was narrowly passed at Edinburgh Central GMC calling for some sort of disciplinary action which was not specified.

By the July GMC members had been convinced that the YS's position deserved to be listened to and not suppressed. As its 'punishment', the YS was asked to produce a document explaining why it supported 'Troops Out Now'.

The result — a 24 page draft pamphlet — has just been presented to the GMC.

After outlining the history of British violence against Ireland, the YS answers the argument that "Northern Ireland has a Protestant majority. It is only democratic that it should continue to exist."

They say: "It is an argument which bears little, if any, relation to reality. Why?"

entity in history, politics or economics.

* It contains only six of the nine counties of the historic province of Ulster.

"It is a completely artificial state designed to include as large an area as possible, but with a safe overall Protestant majority."

The YS also answers the argument that the troops must stay to avoid even worse violence that at present.

"There has been bloodshed in Ireland since the British first went in 800 years ago, and it would be utopian to think that 800 years of history can come to an end in a few days. But the withdrawal of troops poses the only possibility of ending the violence. If the demand here was taken up in a big way by the trade unions and Labour Party in Britain and the workers' organisations in the South of Ireland, that would begin to crack Orangism even before withdrawal."

The YS is sending speakers round ward meetings to explain their position. At the January GMC meeting, a so far unnamed 'expert on Northern Ireland from the PLP' will debate with the YS.

The YS will soon be producing their pamphlet for wider distribution. For copies, contact Edinburgh Central YS c/o William Graham Memorial Hall, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh.

Late buses, high fares: that's the cuts, too

AS TORY GLC cuts bite deeper into subsidies for public transport, bus and rail passengers in the capital are facing the prospect of a 50% increase in fares in less than a year. Plans currently before the Greater London Council propose across the board increases of 19% to take effect on the buses from February and on the underground a month later.

This week, the GLC committee with special responsibility for London Transport approved the plan, making it almost certain that final authorisation will be given at the next meeting of the full council.

Only weeks after fare increases in July and September of this year, which were well above the general rate of inflation, this latest blow means that fares will have risen in real terms by

20% since the Tories came to power in London in 1977.

But the attack does not end there: under the Tories, bus mileage in London has been cut by a tenth since 1977, producing a sharp drop in the regularity and reliability of the service. As anyone who has to travel on the buses knows only too well, what this means is that you wait longer for fewer buses and pay more when one eventually arrives.

All of the steep rises in fares, and much of the deterioration in service can be traced directly to one cause: the massive cuts in GLC controlled expenditure on public transport. The GLC has deliberately shifted the balance of its expenditure on transport from public to private. The greater congestion on the roads as a result of this

further disrupts the bus service.

In the last full year of Labour control, the fares relief grant from the GLC made up one third of London Transport's revenue. In 1980, the grant will be no more than one ninth of revenue, equivalent to a cut of £100 million.

In view of the inadequacy of all but a few Labour GLC councillors, it is hardly surprising to find them unwilling or unable to fight these cuts. But the Labour Party must start a fight against this clear example of what Tory cuts mean for working people.

The 19% fares increase will be quite insufficient to allow London Transport to fulfil its financial obligations in 1980, based as it is on the totally unrealistic inflation forecast of between 10% and 13%. On the more realistic

forecast of 17% inflation, London Transport calculated that it would require a fares increase of 28%. It made this explicit in its original budget submission to the GLC.

Such an unequivocal demonstration of the results of a policy of cuts proved too much for the Tories to take, and they duly rejected that clause.

This leaves the Tories still firmly on the hook. By early next summer the GLC will once more be faced with one of three options: a further fares increase, a major service cut (which could only be achieved by axing jobs or by cutting earnings through a restriction on overtime working) or an increase in the fares relief grant. Tories sitting in less than safe seats are already rediscovering the political virtues of public expenditure.

But at best public transport will be no worse next year than this, its worst year ever.

If returned to power at County Hall in 1981, Labour should unquestionably commit itself both to a massive injection of public money and to using some of that money to finance a cut in fares, and to improve both the regularity and the frequency of services.

Given a free hand, London Transport would choose to run a service a third as large again as its present operation, and the lower the fares, the higher is the ideal level of service. Such service levels are probably out of reach for some years. But a Labour GLC could make substantial progress on rebuilding London's public transport system to meet needs instead of capitalist financial principles.

JOSEPH O'TOOLE

THE TORY Government, and Environment Minister Michael Heseltine, are out to smash 'over-spending' councils — those Labour councils that make more effort than most to provide public services in their areas.

On November 16th, Heseltine announced the new rate support grant (the money allocated from central government to the local councils). It is based on next year's council spending being cut by 2½% in real terms. It is skewed so as to hit city areas harder than the shires. And it will be adjusted so as to specially penalise the so-called 'over-spenders'.

In 1981-2 a whole new system for the rate support grant will be introduced, in place of the present complicated system. The Government will calculate how much it reckons each council should spend. The grant will then be equal to the difference between that calculated amount and what

the council's rates income would be if it levied a notional standard level of rates.

Almost certainly this recalculation will sharply hit Labour councils in the inner cities.

'Transitional arrangements' are planned for 1980-1. The distribution of the rate support grant will be changed so that inner cities lose more than shires. Labour boroughs in London like Hackney, Brent, Haringey and Lambeth will be specially hit.

The rate support grant calculations are based on inflation of only 13% over the next year, and on all councils raising rents by £1.50 a week. When prices rise faster, or if councils refuse to squeeze tenants, that means more cuts.

And there will be "a reduction in entitlements... made next November if there are local authorities who overspend substantially. The measure of over-

spending will be any large difference between an authority's actual rate... and the 'notional uniform rate'..."

Even to maintain existing, usually miserable, levels of services will be impossible under this system. To offset Heseltine's cuts through rate rises will, according to most calculations, need rate rises of about 50% in some areas in London — and councils doing that could find themselves soon penalised.

For those who have said, 'squeeze the ratepayers for now, and maybe there'll be a real battle sometime in the future', the day of reckoning is suddenly very close. There is no basis for thinking that a future eked out by huge rate rises will provide a better time for confrontation than the coming months. We must go all out now to make the Tories back down — or see jobs and services slashed.

ISLINGTON

Take on the Tories — or get out!

"TAKE ON the Tories — or get out!" That's the message Islington councillors will be getting loud and clear when they meet on Tuesday December 4th. Islington Campaign Against the Cuts is organising a mass lobby for that evening to demand that the Labour Council honour its manifesto pledges to develop public accountability, expand social services and to 'complete the reconstruction of Islington's housing'. The Campaign will also be demanding that the Council freeze rent and rates.

Tuesday's lobby will be the culmination of a series of activities staged as part of the Week of Action called by the South East Region of the TUC. Torchlight vigils outside the hospitals challenged with the chop, and outside the Town Hall; a public meeting addressed by the Secretary of Labour's Local Government Committee, the Secretary of the Trades Council and representatives from tenants' organisations and local branches of NALGO and the GMWU; distribution of 30,000 leaflets and posters outside tube stations, in the markets and shopping centres and round the estates; and hopefully a tour with a loudspeaker van — all of this for a campaign only one month old.

This level of activity has only been possible because the Campaign has fought from the start for the broadest possible unity among working class organisations in the borough. The Labour Council — notorious for its eagerness to

make cuts — now faces virtually unanimous opposition. Moves are afoot in the Labour Party to expel some of the most reactionary councillors — and if this happens, the balance on the Labour group could change greatly. But such methods cannot in themselves prevent cuts taking place: even a 'left' majority on the Council could not face up to Heseltine and his crew without the might of the organised working class behind them.

That's why the Cuts campaign is concentrating on getting the trade unions involved at shopfloor level, and is considering making a big push to popularise the idea of rent strikes among tenants.

December's council meeting will mainly be discussing rent increases of up to 25% for most tenants (with shared singles facing increases of several hundred per cent) rather than further cuts in services, as we originally expected. The Council leadership has obviously decided they can expect less opposition to cuts at a meeting scheduled for early January next year. But the Campaign believes they will come to regret their decision.

A big turnout of tenants now, mobilised by the Cuts Campaign and demanding a freezing of all rents, will help to draw into activity many people who might otherwise have seen rent rises or cuts as the only alternatives.

Further information on the Campaign from James Ryan, (Convenor), 41 Ellington St, London N7.

IS COVENTRY COUNCIL SPEAKING WITH A FORKED TONGUE?

ON SATURDAY December 8th, two delegates from each Labour Council and minority Labour Group in Britain will be coming to Coventry's St. Mary's Hall.

The conference is being called by Coventry's Labour Council for a major discussion of the response of Labour Councils to the cuts.

Coventry Council, with the support of the district party has already implemented two rounds of cuts. It has said that it will not implement any more cuts come Easter and the new financial year.

The plans for cuts have already been drawn up and in some cases announced. Local public sector unions, led by NUPE, have opposed the cuts. NUPE have put verbal opposition into pract-

ice whilst the T&G have already allowed a number of jobs to disappear. A demonstration on the day of the conference, called by the District Labour Party and local unions, will unite them with the Council in opposition to the cuts.

That unity is essentially false. A public meeting on cuts organised by the District party on Wed 21st had Ted Knight on the platform, alongside Bernard Dix, assistant General Secretary of NUPE and Arthur Waugh Snr. — leader of the Labour Group. It only took one speech from the floor to draw out the glaring contradiction between Knight's position and that of John Hughes, also a local Labour councillor. Joe Little, secretary of

Coventry Council NUPE and a member of the NUPE NEC, accused Hughes and the other councillors of "speaking with a forked tongue". On the one hand, they were verbally opposing the cuts, on the other hand they were really introducing them.

Allen Torrance, a NALGO Shop Steward, drew out the Council's dilemma: "You ask us to support you — but support you doing what?" Dave Spencer of NATFHE and Coventry Trades Council pointed out that what was needed was a lead from the Council, such as Lambeth and Lothian Councils had given.

Coventry Council's defence is that they don't want to become another Clay Cross, but the real issue is one of

support for Lambeth Council and a united fightback.

This is also the issue facing the meeting on December 8th. This meeting is bureaucratic — Councillors only — the only opportunity rank and file Labour Party members and Trade Unionists will have to make their voices heard will be through the demonstration outside the hall and then a rally in a nearby precinct.

Both this meeting and the demonstration will be of great importance in mobilising the local Labour movement and in showing their strength to the assembled councillors.

Assemble: 9.30am Pool Meadow Coach/Car Park, Coventry.

Newcastle Council fails to fight the cuts

NEWCASTLE upon Tyne's Labour controlled council has been singled out by the Tory government as one of the half dozen which have 'overspent' most.

The council's initial response to the Tory cuts was to instruct its officials to draw up a series of 'options', setting out the cuts in services necessary to achieve various levels of cuts in spending which might be demanded by the Tory government. The leader of the council then published the cuts being discussed in the council's 'City News' and the local press, asking that the public's comments be sent to him.

The published list of 115 items included closure of all nursery schools and classes (with 250 redundancies), reduction of other working staff by 75, reduction of the number of home help to 200, the closure of two old people's homes, and an

increase of 53p per week on council house rents.

Two conferences were arranged to discuss the cuts: the first was a general meeting based on the District Labour Party, but open to other Labour Party members; the second was a wider conference to which the Trades Council was also invited and which was split into subject groups to discuss the cuts in detail.

About 35 people attended each conference. The council's tactics emerged at the conferences: the cuts were designed to be general, and some of the detailed cuts contained no alternatives, and rather than using services as a commodity to be sold, they were to be provided by the council itself. The council's aim was to reduce the number of council workers to 200, the closure of two old people's homes, and an

electorate that it was all the fault of the Tories.

A small number of people opposed these tactics and called for resistance to the Tories on the slogan of "No cuts, no rate increases", with a mass campaign based on these demands. It was pointed out, for example, that £16 million of one year's housing expenditure of £16 million went on interest charges, and that the people who received this interest were suffering poverty.

The call for a mass campaign was rejected in favour of a Labour Party and trades union regional march. However, the opposition was asked to organise its own campaign.

The Labour Party Young Socialist Organisation, in consultation with regional offices, proceeded with its plans to organise its own demonstration to link up with the regional march. The

regional organiser subsequently banned the LPYS march on the grounds that the Regional Party had never positively approved the march.

The Labour Party and trade union regional march took place on the 10th of November, with an estimated 10,000 people demonstrating their opposition to the cuts. The rally after the march was addressed by Len Murray and officers of the regional Labour Party and Trades Union Congress.

As yet, the council's cuts have not been finalised. However, opposition to the council's policies seems to be gaining ground. Both the District Labour Party and the Trades Council are critical of the council, and when the cuts have been decided upon they may be prepared to adopt a more positive line.

J.E. Jackson

MAKE EVERY LABOUR COUNCIL INTO A LAMBETH

AN ANTI-CUTS RALLY immediately after the SCLV Conference pledged support for Lambeth's fightback, and underlined the link between the cuts fight and the battle for labour movement democracy and for socialist policies.

"Some members were almost dribbling with rage", said Ken Livingstone, as he described how a London Labour Party Executive delegation was received "with fear and loathing" by the

Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) Labour Group on Friday 23rd.

Livingstone described how he had been one of only 7 in the ILEA Labour group who voted against the delegation being asked to withdraw after making their statement opposing cuts.

He was then one of only three against 31 who voted against a Labour group decision for 4.2% cuts, which will mean 1000 teachers on the dole next year.

"The vote they cast last night shows that these people will do nothing against the Tory government. We should call for those Labour members who voted for the cuts to resign and be replaced."

There are representatives from every Labour council in Inner London on ILEA. Livingstone said he would circulate the CLPs in Inner London on how their representatives voted. "Then it's up to you. Don't spend a day discussing and then let these characters carry on."

He urged left-wing activists to put themselves forward as Labour candidates for the Greater London Council, so that the right-wing councillors and candidates can be ousted.

Councillor Jeremy Corbyn described the battle in his own borough of Haringey. When the Tory cuts were announced in June, the Labour council quickly decided to go for 2.7% cuts in the borough.

Opposition was built up in the local labour movement — and in late September the Labour group reversed its policy. "For about three weeks Haringey had a 'no cuts' policy."

Then the Council leaders said they would resign if Labour stood by this 'no cuts' policy. The left said: very well, resign! But the right wing stepped up the pressure, and despite 'lobbies, marches and a lot of resolutions, Haringey

Labour group then voted to make cuts.

This points up the need for accountability, democracy 'not just to pass resolutions, but to get the people in the Town Hall to carry out the Manifesto'."

Jeremy Corbyn also stressed that cuts campaigns need to be political. The Haringey Cuts campaign, which is continuing vigorously, says openly that it is out to bring down the Tories.

If the official bodies will not coordinate the cuts campaign in London, then the Haringey campaign will do that itself.

Stephen Corbishley (CPSA National Executive, in personal capacity) said that "we must not see Lambeth as a single heroic fight, but make every Labour council into a Lambeth".

This doesn't mean leaving the fight to Labour councillors. It is vital that we take the cuts issue into the trade unions.

The fight will be to kick the Tories out — but not only to kick the Tories out. To avoid a repeat of the experience of the last Labour government, we must fight for democracy in the Labour Party.

Ted Knight of Lambeth Council also spoke (see page 1), and the rally also heard appeals from Mick Woods (Manchester AUEW), on behalf of the Adamsons Containers strikers, and from Jim Denham (TGWU shop steward, Longbridge), for the BL strikers.



Nov. 7th: the Lambeth march

Tottenham hospital work-in

NURSING STAFF and doctors at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Tottenham, have occupied the hospital's Casualty Unit and are working-in, following an attempt to 'temporarily' close the unit on Friday 23rd November.

At 8.30pm two members of the Unit Administration walked into Casualty and announced to the staff that they should all be working on other wards, as the Casualty Unit was shut. They were in such haste to close the unit that one patient was locked in.

On Saturday 24th, the staff reopened the casualty unit and they are continuing to treat patients. The Unit Administrators have threatened that the patients may be removed at any time, and that if any patient suffers accidentally while being treated, then the doctors, and not the Area Health Authority, will be liable to prosecution.

In addition, a gynaecological ward has been completely shut down, with a loss of 65 beds and 40 nursing jobs.

Jeremy Corbyn, NUPE district organiser and a member of the Haringey Campaign Against the Cuts, said that the attempted closure was in fact illegal, as it was carried out by the administrators without any authorisation from the Area Health Authority. He added that three of the Area Health Authority's members were attempting to get a special meeting of the AHA called at which the Prince of Wales could be discussed.

The AHA has discussed closure of the Prince of Wales Casualty several times in the last two or three years, and each time has decided against.

To counter this, hospital workers and local labour movement activists are mounting daily pickets of the Casualty Unit between noon and 2pm and 5.30pm-6.30pm.

A lobby of the AHA meeting is being organised for 2pm, Wednesday December 5th, adjacent to the North Middlesex Hospital, Tanners End Lane, London N8.

NEIL COBBETT

Jeremy Corbyn, NUPE, and Stephen Corbishley CPSA, [standing] at the rally for Lambeth on 24th November



'Living in the real world' - or in Hackney

IN LATE November, Hackney Borough Council called a meeting which could have been entitled "Our hands are tied."

The meeting was called to discuss cuts and the rate rises in the borough which will be due around March.

500 people attended the lively meeting in the hope that HBC were going to give a lead for a fightback against the Tories. But their hopes were dashed as soon as the Deputy Leader, Councillor Kotz, got up to speak.

He started by saying that "The party was over" — some shouted back "What Party?" He then talked for 40 minutes. His whole speech was basically an apology for future rate rises.

Kotz said that the council had called the meeting because the Council had been elected on a mandate. They wanted to carry out that mandate. They were not going to run away from their responsibility, but at the end of the day, the Council would decide whether or not they were going to implement rate increases.

At this point, somebody shouted, "What the hell have you called the meeting for?" Kotz then went on to apologise to the Tory government by saying that the government cannot accuse Hackney Council of being spendthrifts.

During his speech he was constantly heckled by people shouting "No rate rises" and "Fightback against cuts". He turned round and said "Slogans are alright but we have to

live in the real world."

No other councillor was allowed to speak from the platform or even from the floor. The Mayoress said that this had been decided beforehand because the meeting was for the benefit of the people of the borough. What it meant was that the councillors who supported the Tory cuts were given cover.

Kotz was asked from the floor if Hackney Council would give support for its workers to go on the march on the 28th. He said "Yes". He was then asked from the floor if this would be with pay, and he said that if people were committed to going on the demonstration they should "go for free".

Tommy Douras, a Hackney Council workers' shop steward, said that if Hackney Council put up a fight they would have the support of all trade unionists in the area, and any threats against the council by the Tory Government would be carried out over their dead bodies.

All this didn't seem to impress Cllr. Kotz. He wound up by saying: "The meeting hasn't been a waste of time but the council will have to meet to decide where they stand in relation to cutbacks, the Tory government are behaving criminally but we have to expose them and what they intend to do. We don't know yet how far they will go."

Well, Cllr. Kotz, the Tory government will go as far as we will allow them to.

FRAN BRODIE

CREAM CAKES AT EATON SQUARE, DEATH AT THE OLD PEOPLE'S HOME

THE arch-conservative representatives of the shires, the Association of County Councils, have produced a document which their press release describes as "revolutionary ideas on how local authorities can save money". This 'revolution' smoothes the path of the government in cutting public expenditure and in setting Britain firmly on the road back to the nineteenth century.

The problem for local authorities faced with a cut in public expenditure is, according to the ACC, that they are "hampered by a lack of discretion over parts of their services because of Parliamentary and legal restrictions", and therefore that "the removal of many statutory provisions would go a long way in helping local authorities to provide services, especially the basic part of these services such as the teaching of children".

The list of obligations which they recognise is wide ranging, covering education, libraries, social services, planning highways and transport, consumer protection, finances, fire services, and safety. One of the key proposals is the familiar one for capitalist enterprise: charging the "economic rate" for the job. Another recurrent theme is the demand that standards of service be lowered.

In education, the ACC calls for the removal of the statutory requirements to provide free school transport, and free school milk. It wants

local authorities to have the "freedom" to decide whether to provide school meals, and to decide on the nutritional standards to be adopted and the charging policies to be followed. Already the government has taken up these proposals in its Education Bill.

(At their plush headquarters in Eaton Square, however, there is no question that the staff should be charged for the coffee, tea and cream cakes provided in the breaks. And whoever heard of senior staff calling their own taxis, or having to travel second class on the railway?)

The ACC wants to relax regulations governing standards of school building, and to speed up school closures. It advises that the period of statutory schooling should be cut from 5 to 16 years to 6 to 15. It seeks to enable authorities to charge for nursery education.

Libraries are next on the list: local authorities want the power to charge, and John Grugeon, chairman of the policy committee of the ACC, questions the need for a public library service. He wants to see a smaller number of large, centralised libraries for students and specialists, and asks whether that would not be "better than having Agatha Christie on the rates?"

Overall spending on libraries is less than 1.5% of local authority expenditure: an average cost to the ratepayer of 6p a week. Grugeon does not question the necessity

of enriching finance companies on the rates; no doubt he understands their position well, working as he does for the Save and Prosper Unit Trust Group.

Social services are also attacked: the ACC demands that the obligation be removed to provide the full range of community homes, and that the present provision of welfare services to the chronically sick and disabled should be made discretionary, along with the provision of pocket money in old people's homes. How much would that mean — save?

The ACC wants to charge for planning applications; to repeal the power of magistrates to enforce highway authorities' responsibility to maintain highways; to reduce or remove requirements on public participation; and to remove statutory requirements from a range of Acts designed to protect the consumer (e.g. the 1961 and 1971 Consumer Protection Acts; the 1974 Control of Pollution Act).

They also want to leave in abeyance the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act as they affect all local authority premises — and to give 'discretion' in whether authorities carry out much of the costly improvement work demanded by government inspectors. Considerable pressure came from Hertfordshire authorities who objected to having to spend £10,000 on a fire tower

recently to prevent fatal accidents during fire practices. They also aim for cuts in safety committees and staff.

They have discovered a new way to ease the financial burden of old people's homes: "postpone introduction of new regulations under the Fire Precautions Act 1971". How many deaths in recent fires in old people's homes have been found to be due to inadequate fire precautions even under the present law? They also seek to give greater discretion on fire cover, and to raise the limit on numbers below which hotels are not required to make statutory fire arrangements.

And for those who survive, the ACC recommends that local authorities are given greater powers to make charges (on the appropriate insurance company) towards the cost of rescue and fire services.

The ACC's policy makers, on its eleven committees, are elected by county councils covering a population of some thirty million. Their list "is not intended to be exhaustive, and the Association would wish to reserve the right to add to the suggestions after further consideration".

The one obligation of expenditure which they will doubtless defend to the last is the payment of interest charges; the members of the committees have strong links with big business, in farming and in the city.

On Saturday 24th the SCLV's second conference was held in London. About 200 people attended. 28 labour movement bodies sponsored the SCLV and sent delegates: five CLPs [Selly Oak, Norwood, Brent East, Hackney North, Ilford

South: Hornsey elected delegates who didn't attend], four Trades Councils [Basingstoke, Ealing, Hounslow], and 19 other bodies.

MARTIN THOMAS reports. On these pages: details of the debates. On page 8: text of the main resolutions adopted.

THIS CLASS STRUGGLE TORY GOVERNMENT

OUTLINING the SCLV's tasks in the Political Report which opened the conference, John O'Mahony said "this is a class struggle Tory government which is assaulting the working class".

We have to understand why this government emerged. First: "Labour in government laid the basis on which the Tories are now building". Second: we are in "the worst capitalist slump for 40 years. Britain is rotting all around us".

What to do? Fight to kick the Tories out. Until such time as we can kick them out, break collaboration with the Tories. And use our strength where we are strong: in industry.

The struggle at BL shows "the class is obviously going to fight back". Our task is to give support, but also to understand. We must remember the lessons of 1972-74: "we defeated the Tories industrially, and look

what we got". It is not enough just to fight back. The labour movement has not been prepared to reap the fruits of victory.

And so we need to "renovate, rearm, reconstruct the labour movement — turn it into a class-struggle labour movement, a movement which recognises the class struggle not as something to be conciliated but as a fight to be fought to victory".

The decay of British capitalism prepares the way for the eruption of great class struggles. And unless we succeed in our tasks soon enough, eventually we will face the "danger of the destruction of our movement" — for "Britain cannot continue as at present".

The SCLV was started with the perspective of organising a left wing at the election against both Tories and Callaghan.

"For the first time since perhaps the 1920s we had an independent voice inside the labour movement and the Labour Party at the elections". But the activity of organising a class struggle left wing is not confined to election time.

Our basic idea is to "renovate the labour movement". The Brighton decisions on Labour Party democracy are not enough by themselves. We must fill them with serious socialist content. We must build in the trade unions as well as the Labour Party. We must recognise that our movement has been particularly weak ideologically, despite its industrial strength, and fight to rearm it.

"The SCLV is not a revolutionary party. But it is more than a casual conference. We must organise around the SCLV's platform and the paper".

RATE RISES: A WAY TO FIGHT THE CUTS?

AFTER SHARP debate, a motion opposing rate rises was carried. It was moved by Gordon Brewer (Lothian).

"The question of the rates", he said, "is more and more becoming the dividing line between a campaign against the cuts based on direct action, and a campaign that confines itself to verbal opposition".

Rate rises are another form of cut. For council tenants, for example, rate rises are indistinguishable from rent rises. And rate rises as a way of squeezing the middle class are not progressive. "We won't win over people by attacking them".

In any case, rate rises cannot offset the cuts. Without an all-out fightback, the result will be, not rate rises or cuts, but rate rises and cuts. This is double true after Michael Heseltine's recent announcement that the government will take action against councils levying big rate rises.

Rate rises run counter to a fight against the cuts: "It is ludicrous to think you can mobilise people by cutting their living standards". And indeed, the arguments for rate rises "base themselves not on the class struggle perspective of challenging the capitalist system, but on the existing role of councils, on the alternatives within the existing framework". Rate rises are often "the way right wing and soft left councillors get out of mobilising for a struggle".

Pete Rowlands (West London) agreed that rates are a regressive form of taxation, that "we would not argue that rate rises are some way of offsetting cuts", and that within the next two years it will become impossible to use rate rises. But, he said, in the short term, "if a council feels incapable of fighting both cuts and rate rises, that position should not be opposed".

Councils opposing rate rises as well as cuts will go down to defeat — just as

Clay Cross was "a defeat for our movement". And "we are not in favour of heroic defeats. Better to have a Labour Council in Lambeth next year, even if it has to raise rates, than to have Commissioners sent in by the Tories".

Bill Bowring, one of the Lambeth councillors who opposed cuts even in July when the council majority voted for cuts, spoke against



Against rate rises: Gordon Brewer, Dave Spencer

rate rises. "It is a question of mobilising the working class as a whole politically against this government".

Labour councillors are not shop stewards, touting for the best deal they can get, he said. They are people who manage the local state. "Are we going to be the agents of the capitalist state in carrying out these cuts" — thus directly opposing the working class?

Rate rises are another form of cut. And "it is nonsense", said Bowring, "to say that it is better to

have left Labour councils carrying out cuts or rate rises than to have Tories doing it".

Geoff Bender (Lambeth) said that "none of us is over the moon about the prospect of rate rises", but the question is to have an analysis and strategy rather than posturing.

We must "unite with material forces capable of defeating the Tories". And the real dividing line is on making cuts or not, not on rate rises. Brewer had said that rate rises were another form of cut — how did he explain Heseltine's promise to penalise councils who raise rates?

Those arguing against rate rises would, said Bender, fail to support Lambeth Council against the Tories if Lambeth raises rates. But without rate rises, Labour councils will go broke.

Dave Spencer (Coventry) disputed Pete Rowlands' assertion that Clay Cross was a defeat. By making a stand, Clay Cross had shown to wide sections of the labour movement that it was possible to defy the government.

Many Labour councils, like Coventry's, are "anti-cuts" in words — but they "speak with a forked tongue". We should tell them "we don't want them to mat age on behalf of the Tory government. We want them to make a stand and mobilise against the Tory government".

Al Crisp (UPW, International Telephones) said that "If councils don't raise rates, they will go bankrupt". That means not paying wages, not providing services. Those opposing rate rises are "walking away from the fight" and refusing to back councils like Lambeth against the Tories.

Martin Thomas (Islington) replied that there is "no question" of us not supporting Lambeth's def-

continued on p.8



SCLV - keeping sharpening the

A DEBATE on SCLV perspectives ran right through the conference, raised from several angles round different resolutions.

The main perspectives document, which those resolutions sought to amend or supplement, was introduced by Councillor Ron Heisler (Hackney). "The principal theme", he said, "of the perspectives is the struggle of the working class, especially the trade union movement".

The fact that this year will see more strike-days than any since 1926 shows great tasks and opportunities in the trade union movement. And not just on industrial issues. On Ireland there is "a significant groundswell in the Constituency Labour Parties for our position" — but the Labour Party conference showed very little feeling for "Troops Out" in the trade union delegations. "That indicates our tasks".

The SCLV, said Heisler, should welcome the emergence of the Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) as a broader left wing in the Labour Party, "but the SCLV should be a harder left ... a distinct body to the left of the LCC".

The first amendment came from Julian Wells of the West London SO group. He wanted to define the relations between the LCC and the SCLV in completely different terms.

"Is the SCLV a pool in which the various fish on the left of the Labour Party

swim around", he asked, "or is it a fish in another pool?" Referring to the lively controversy inside the SCLV on issues like rate rises, he said that the SCLV was, and should be, an open organisation for debate.

"We want a formulation which would include all the disparate elements who voted for the resolution on party democracy. The line should be drawn between us and people like Shirley Williams and Roy Hattersley". Within that broad left spectrum, "the LCC has a more coherent and sharply defined view — one that we in West London would agree with fairly closely".

Martin Barclay (Cardiff) replied. West London, he said, proposed to "build the SCLV as a forum for debate", not as a fighting left wing focused round working class direct action. This would mean, essentially, "a passive SCLV".

The West London amendment was lost overwhelmingly.

Similar issues came up around an amendment on the LCC moved by Simon Temple (Birmingham), which proposed a drive for democratic functioning in the LCC, to promote SCLV policies inside the LCC, and to approach the LCC for joint action on the cuts and women's rights.

Mick Sullivan (Islington) and Hugh Richards (Battersea), *Socialist Challenge* supporters, opposed the amendment. "The LCC has already mobilised a sub-

stantial layer of militants opposed both to the Tory government and to the Callaghan/Healey leadership. We need to debate with them in a forum which at the moment they unfortunately control", said Richards.

The amendment, in which they proposed that the SCLV should focus on developing debate in the LCC, was not debated by conference, because it was submitted by two individuals and not, as laid down by the Conference Arrangements Committee, through a Socialist Organiser local group or sponsoring body. The Standing Orders Committee recommendation to discuss it despite the irregularity was challenged from the floor and defeated. So Richards called for abstention on the section of the perspectives dealing with the LCC.

Andrew Hornung (Hackney) replied. "At present", he said, "the LCC has potential but doesn't deliver the goods. The people who run it have tight control and know where they're going. They're going to Parliament and then to Government — and to Government with very very weak policies".

"Yes, we should join the LCC and enter the debates. Everyone agrees on that; but what is *Socialist Challenge* proposing if not that the SCLV drops its own campaigning activity?"

Don Flynn (Hackney) said: "I would disagree. The LCC is a democratic organisation". And even among its leaders there is "a very very important debate going on". "It would be wrong for us to consider the LCC as another campaign to enter and replace its policies with our 'perfect' programme".

The Birmingham amendment was clearly carried, as was the section of the main perspectives saying that "Our role should be that of a harder left, challenging the LCC politically, yet working in unity with it as far as possible".

Then Al Crisp (UPW, International Telephones) called for a re-writing of the SCLV's platform. It should start with "what we are seeking to achieve in the movement", and should be "written in a less declamatory way, with less empha-



Don Flynn: the left doesn't need us to dive in and lead it



From top: M. Mackay, M.

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our cutting edge, struggle



Davis, Doug Thomas

lar demands... emphasis on the... or socialism... build it... as it stands... of immediate... socialist... And with... tone... 'It... Transitional... 1938 I don't... adequate for... now... inside (Man... that Crisp's... asked for... for nothing... programme for... power and... the Trans-

itional Programme or something very much like that". And, by downplaying the definite demands, "it would leave us as a smaller LCC", just vaguely "for socialism". It would gut the SCLV of the vital element which "marks us off from the soft reformists and the would-be Marxists who just talk".

The amendment was very clearly lost. In the afternoon, the organisational report by Mike Davis (SCLV Secretary) opened a debate raising many similar issues. After the election of a Tory government, "the working class, the Labour Party, and the SCLV all face decisive tests".

"The key issue", said Davis, is whether the SCLV grows and reaches out, "or becomes the preserve of a few particular tendencies".

As positive achievements of the SCLV, Davis highlighted our election work, which was strengthened by the fact that "we didn't see ourselves purely as an electoral campaign"; our mobilisation to defend Brick Lane; the August 12th demonstration on Ireland; our work at the Labour Party conference; and the conference in June on Labour councils and the cuts.

The SCLV is and must be a broad alliance, drawing in many people who are not fully convinced yet, as it did at the June conference.

"Comrades who believe it is all laid down in the Where We Stand are on the wrong track... The platform is a guide to activity — but not all SCLV supporters need agree with everything in it. We must relate in a non-sectarian way to the LCC, Tribune and other currents. We must be ready to learn from the movement... We need a structure which will allow a lot more involvement".

Martin Thomas reported on the paper *Socialist Organisation*. It has had an exceptionally wide range of contributors, opening its pages to many campaigns and many debates. But as well as offering a forum, it has insisted on sharp campaigning calls on crucial issues.

We need more first-hand reports from struggles. And we need better organ-

ised distribution, both to increase circulation and to make the paper more of an organiser.

Doug Mackay (Birmingham, Selly Oak) stressed that the paper must cover not just Labour Party internal debates, but also those struggles which at present largely by-pass the Labour Party.

Mike Davis had moved a resolution on SCLV structure from the outgoing Secretariat, which provided for an elected Steering Committee of 25. Frank Hansen (Brent) moved an amendment to delete a clause saying that a 40% minority on the SC could



Jon Duveen

have a broader meeting convened, with delegates from local SO groups, if it felt an issue needed wider discussion.

The SCLV, Hansen argued, had had "a unique form of organisation", taking up "the basic principle of the united front". The principle of the Steering Committee elected in 1978 was that no political tendency had a majority. But the *Workers' Action* tendency, said Hansen, had a clear majority in the conference. He interpreted the 40% rule as a "failsafe blocking device" for the largest tendency.

Pete Firmin (Brent) asked what could be undemocratic about allowing a large minority to appeal to the SCLV membership over controversial issues. Hansen's amendment was clearly lost.

Jon Duveen (Hackney) then spoke against the whole SCLV structure resolution, and in doing so drew out the implications of the *Socialist Challenge* argument on the LCC. We should not, he said, form SCLV organisations and groups separate from the

LCC, but make the paper a forum for debate with the LCC leadership. The paper should be controlled by open meetings of SCLV supporters.

The structure resolution was clearly carried. Don Flynn then proposed a lengthy resolution from the Hackney *Socialist Organisation* group on how the SCLV should operate.

There are three views, said Flynn, about the way forward. One sees the SCLV as leading the left wing fightback in the labour movement; it presents the SCLV as the organisation with the right politics in the Labour Party.

Flynn supported another view, which he identified with Mike Davis' speech: the left in the Labour Party "has never been better organised, never more clear and confident". It "does not need us to dive in and give leadership". The SCLV should have a "structure which puts a premium on debate and discussion".

The third view, which Flynn rejected equally with the first, was Jon Duveen's: effectively "to dissolve the SCLV".

Clive Bradley put an amendment from the Manchester SO group. He did not disagree with Flynn on the need for debate and discussion. But at the same time, the SCLV must stand on a clear platform.

Bradley also pointed out that a clause in the Hackney



Geoff Bender and Bruce Robinson



Clive Bradley: SCLV needs a clear platform

resolution, apparently saying that no tendency should have a majority on the Steering Committee, was anti-democratic; it could only mean a restriction on the conference's right to vote whom it wished on to the SC.

Bruce Robinson (Islington) said that straw men had been set up. Everyone agrees on debate, discussion and work within the LCC. But the cutting edge of the SCLV has to be clear political ideas.

It is true that the SCLV represents an alliance of different tendencies. That is its strength and that should continue. Discussion will continue and minorities will have full rights. But the Hackney proposal on the Steering Committee would disenfranchise the SCLV conference.

Geoff Bender (Lambeth) backed the Hackney resolution as pointing to "a broad left wing alliance rather than a super-cadre sect".

The Manchester amendment was carried, and then the Hackney resolution as amended.

The conference concluded with perhaps the most extreme statement of the argument that SCLV perspectives and structure are "sectarian". John Connolly (West London) denounced the fact that *Socialist Organisation* has "chosen to tell councillors off in no uncertain terms if it doesn't like what they are doing". Because of this "passive propagandist" direction, he said, the West London group now takes no papers.

He moved a motion on SO which, though containing little of what he had said, was clearly defeated. (It argued for less general political comment and more Labour Party focus).



AN ARROGANT ATTITUDE TO FEMINISM ?

THE DEBATE on the SCLV and the women's movement centred around two alternative perspectives. The main perspectives document, amplified by an amendment from Lothian, proposed "attempting to create a socialist women's movement based in the working class", including by "restructuring and reorientation of sections of the existing women's movement".

Hackney SO group proposed instead an orientation to "support the existence of an autonomous women's movement" and "to strengthen the Socialist-Feminist current".

Both agreed in supporting the SCLV's Fightback for Women's Rights Campaign, though it was given a more central role in the main perspectives document and the Lothian amendment than in Hackney's proposals.

Sexist

Ros Tyrrell, moving the Hackney amendment, said that the main perspectives document was weak because it ignored the Socialist-Feminist current. The SCLV should "reaffirm its support to the already existing women's movement" and the work of the Socialist-Feminists, trying to raise issues of importance to working class women. But: "the women's liberation movement would not claim to represent working class women and we should not either. We should look at the lessons of the Working Women's Charter. Many trade unions supported it without anything changing much. The WWC focused too much on policy demands, rather than a broader fight against sexist attitudes".

Jo Thwaites (Lothian) argued that sections of the women's movement would join the fight against the Tories, but in an uneven way. The contentious clause about "restructuring and reorientating sections of the women's movement was therefore necessary".

The Hackney amendment placed great stress on fighting sexist ideas. But, said Thwaites, the Lothian proposal made explicit how sexism will be fought.

Dave Statham moved an amendment from Brent East YS which included parts of the Lothian proposals but not the clause about "restructuring and reorienting". That clause, he said, implied a "patronising" attitude to the women's movement.

Generally Statham agreed with the Hackney amendment, except that it seemed "to imply that organising women within the labour movement is less important than the women's movement".

Pat Longman (Islington) said the Hackney amendment would defocus the SCLV and undermine the rationale of the Fightback for Women's Rights Campaign. Fightback is not counterposed to the existing women's movement. But it recognises that that movement is amorphous and not well prepared to take a part in mass struggles.

Longman opposed Hackney's idea that the SCLV should specially support the

Socialist-Feminist Current. The SCLV supports the National Abortion Campaign for example, as a single-issue campaigning organisation. "The Socialist-Feminist current is not an active, campaigning body, but an ideological current".

The ideas of the Socialist-Feminist current, as expressed for example in 'Beyond the Fragments', include an evolutionary, semi-reformist concept of socialism. "I disagree with these ideas", Longman said, "and I think we can't commit the SCLV as a body to support them, though individuals within the SCLV may do so."

"We should not be passive cheerleaders for the existing women's movement, but build Fightback, and draw in working class women."

Mike Davis (Hackney) argued that we should first support the existing women's movement, focus on the fight against the Corrie Bill and then situate Fightback within that. "Many comrades do not understand the significance of the autonomous women's movement." Even if we do not agree with all of 'Beyond the Fragments', it does "raise important points about patriarchal attitudes."

Alice Pfister (Lothian) said that the Brent East amendment would leave us with no clear idea of how to relate to the existing women's movement. On the whole, that movement has no clear orientation to working class women and that flows from its politics and analysis. So we must argue for "restructuring and reorientation".

Angela Shariff (Brent East) replied: "We don't accept that the SCLV can be so arrogant as to think we know the ways for the women's movement to restructure and reorient itself."

Class

Chris Goodwin (Leicester) referred to the women who rushed the head of the anti-Corrie march on October 28th. "They deliberately snubbed the trade union movement", she said. "We sympathise against the bureaucratic running of the march, but we work within the labour movement... women's oppression can only be overthrown by the working class." The women's movement as it is at present fails to give a lead for the struggle.

Rachel Lever (Islington) also supported the Lothian resolution. It's not a matter of us telling the women's movement what to do, she said. But we can't just give confidence to the women's movements as they are. For one thing, women in this movement are themselves losing confidence in the ability of "more intimate and personal methods of struggle" to cope with organising for mass pickets, violent demonstrations and confrontations with the growing power of the state.

"We take good ideas from the women's movement, but translate them into terms working class women can mobilise around."

On the voting, Hackney's amendment was lost. Lothian's was carried and Brent East YS's then fell.

FIGHTING THE CUTS

TO FORCE the Tories to retreat on their cuts requires a campaign of united action by Trade Unions, Labour Parties, Labour councils and community organisations. The SCLV fights in the Labour Movement for such a campaign to be carried forward by: the occupation of schools, hospitals, etc. threatened with closure; strike action against the cuts and loss of jobs; and local authorities refusing to act as agents of government policy by making cuts or raising rates.

The working class must not pay for the crisis of the capitalist system. We fight for labour movement bodies to campaign

for: the nationalisation, without compensation, of the banks and financial institutions; the removal of the burden of interest charges on local authorities and the abolition of the cash limits system.

The leaders of the labour movement, deeply implicated in making cuts, have tried to confine action to passive protest. But Labour controlled local authorities, like Lambeth, are now set on a course for confronting the government by refusing to implement the cuts.

Lambeth's fight was initiated by the rank and file of the local Labour parties who rejected either making cuts

or levying a supplementary rate increase. The SCLV, by the work that it has done, is in a good position to broaden support for such policies and the stand Lambeth council is making.

The SCLV will, as a priority, work to build a national labour movement support conference for Lambeth's stand, to build on the success of the November 7th demonstration and provide a national focus for a fightback.

We will also organise maximum support for the November 28th demonstration against the cuts.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

THE 'Fightback for Women's Rights' Campaign has already been started. The immediate focus of our work should be around the conference of this Campaign scheduled for March 22nd. We continue to support the National Abortion Campaign and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign in the fight to defeat Corrie and to impose a three-line whip on all Labour MPs in support of Labour Party Conference policy. But we believe that in the present situation of Tory attacks and with the increasing sectarianism of the Women's Voice

organisation, the ground is ripe for attempting to create a socialist women's movement based in the working class.

We see such a movement being built through the restructuring and re-orientation of sections of the existing women's movement by drawing into active working class women newly involved in struggle, and by the development of women's self-organisation in the Labour movement. We must fight to build up Labour Party Women's sections and trade union

women's caucuses, and to affiliate these and local socialist women's groups to the Fightback campaign.

Fightback will seek relations of sisterly dialogue and collaboration with existing women's campaigns. We do not seek to counterpose Fightback to these campaigns, but to present a central co-ordinating political focus on the labour movement for women activists. Within the Fightback campaign, Socialist Organiser must explain and argue for a clear socialist programme for women's liberation.

THE NEW STEERING COMMITTEE

25 activists — the top 25 on the list below — were elected to a new SCLV Steering Committee

	votes
Jeremy Corbyn	203
Mike Davis	200
Ron Heisler	196
Keith Veness	193
Geoff Bender	191
Rachel Lever	174
Jenny Morris	172
Bill Bowring	172
John Bloxam	169
Stephen Corbishley	168
Nik Barstow	166
Andrew Hornung	163
John Sweeney	160
Martin Thomas	158
Mary Corbishley	158
John O'Mahony	155
Gordon Brewer	154
Mark Douglas	152
Pete Rowlands	151
Dave Spencer	146
Cheung Siu-Ming	145
Pete Keenlyside	140
James Ryan	136
Jonathan Hammond	122
Peter Tebbutt	114
Frank Hansen	96
Don Flynn	86
Alan Crisp	79
Graham Bash	79
Graham Durham	65
Chris Knight	65
Paul Franklin	62
Pete Towey	58
Denis McShane	51
Deirdre Wood	49
Lol Duffy	37
Mick Cashman	36
John Douglas	36
Rob McGonigle	27
Andy Dixon	13
Sid West	10
Gareth Davies	4
Paul Harland	3

43 nominations
Votes cast: 235

SCLV ORGANISATION

1. From its inception the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory and its paper Socialist Organiser have striven to unite all those on the left of the Labour Party and wider movement who wanted to defeat the Tories and re-elect a Labour government while fighting for the SCLV platform. Despite the fact that SCLV and the Labour Party as a whole failed to stop the Tories, the aim of organising a united socialist left wing around our militant platform and general perspectives must continue to animate and direct the work of SCLV/SO.

2. In that context, the axis of the work of SCLV/SO has been the need for a class struggle alliance and, in the election, for supporting Labour against Tory — which at that point was a political expression of the fight of class against class. Within that perspective the campaign has sought to sharpen the political cutting edge of the Labour component in the class struggle with views, policies and methods of struggle which are capable of defeating our class enemy and bringing about a revolutionary transformation from capitalism to socialism.

3. Many of the policies which point in the direction of this transformation of both our movement and capitalist society are already Labour Party policy. On certain fundamental issues the SCLV/SO wages a fight to change existing policies — as on Ireland, withdrawal from NATO, wages automatically protected from inflation, etc.

4. The aim of SCLV/SO over the next period is the organisation of a militant, socialist left wing around our platform and policies in the Labour Party, workplaces, and trade unions. An alternative based on independent working class policies combining political

and industrial action. This socialist left wing aims to defeat both the policies and the leadership of the Labour Party — which were largely responsible for the Thatcher victory — and their reformist co-thinkers in the trade union bureaucracy, and challenge the class collaborationist, nationalist and bureaucratic ideas dominant even on the left.

5. To pursue these ends the SCLV/SO needs to maintain the overall conception of a campaign organisation which has guided it from the start. Namely, that SCLV is a broad alliance involving comrades from other political tendencies [Workers' Action, Chartism, etc.] and many unaligned independents, with no single group or individual having complete domination of the campaign. The Steering Committee elected at the launching conference in July 1978 reflected this broad alliance with decision generally agreed by consensus. Differences over work priorities, policies, or methods of work have to be argued out on the leading bodies of the campaign with people being won to a particular position after debate. This means that respect for majority decision at conference and at the Steering Committee/Editorial Board is of the utmost importance.

At the same time, however, it is clear that the SCLV can only suffer — possibly fatally — if any tendency which finds itself in a majority were to ride rough-shod over minority tendencies and individuals, making the SCLV merely a factional play-thing, and if any minority were to show complete disregard for properly arrived at decisions.

6. In pursuing the aim of making SCLV/SO a militant socialist alliance we need to

become more open towards other currents active in the Labour Party and tendencies and movements outside, e.g. socialist feminists, gays, the black movement, etc. The relative sharpness of the platform heightens rather than obviates the need for dialogue and unity in action with other Labour left groupings, movements outside the Labour Party and those not convinced of the importance of LP membership. Without this dialogue there is the danger of splits and isolation for the solid core of the SCLV's supporters. To extend the dialogue and unity in action, conference calls on the incoming Steering Committee/EB to:

(i) Keep Socialist Organiser open to debate with other Labour left groups (e.g. LCC, Tribune, IWC, ILP, LPYS) with a view to extending the alliance and clarifying differences.

(ii) Seek to hold common public meetings and debates with these groupings.

(iii) Continue to promote the work of single and special issue campaigns, e.g. Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Campaign Against the Immigration Laws, Labour Abortion Rights Campaign and, NAC, United Troops Out Movement, SERA, ANL etc., and offer them space in SO.

(iv) To support the existence of the autonomous women's, black and gay movements.

(v) To maintain a non-sectarian but critical attitude to those left groups outside the LP and persuade them to join the work of SCLV/SO.

(vi) To organise and carry through the campaigns outlined in the resolutions and perspectives of this conference or as decided at future Steering Committee/Editorial Boards.

RATE RISES

RATE RISES, even when they do hit local capitalists, also hit working class householders and tenants, and can drive middle class people into the hands of the Right. Moreover, they are not a way of avoiding cuts: to maintain services by raising the rates would — in many local authorities — require a 50% or 100% rate increase each year, which is not feasible.

At best, rate rises may be a compromise tactic to gain time — forced on the local labour movement where there are Labour councils who have fought, and who are fighting, to mobilise class action against the cuts. But any serious campaign must start out as a battle to beat both cuts and rate rises.

A policy which starts out with rate rises — like that of many Labour councils — cannot hope to mobilise the necessary class action. For some Labour councils, in fact, rate rises have been a let-out from the fight.

The SCLV therefore reaffirms its opposition to rate rises.

GAY RIGHTS

"GAY RIGHTS are a class issue", said Ian Dunn (Lothian), moving an addition to the SCLV's platform.

"That is not only because most gay men and women are working class, but because the Tories and the ruling class use their reactionary sexual morality against the working class".

Dunn described the recent case of John Saunders in Stirling, sacked for being gay and having his sacking upheld by an industrial tribunal. But the labour movement is beginning to move.

Edinburgh Trades Council has taken up the gay rights issue, and next year the Scottish Labour Party conference will be debating a resolution on discrimination against gays.

The conference unanimously supported Dunn's proposal for the SCLV to take a clear stand in its platform.

EASTERN EUROPE

THE SCLV must give full support to the fight for democratic rights in the Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and the USSR.

We oppose the persecution of dissidents. Some of these dissidents (like Petr Uhl in Czechoslovakia) are revolutionary socialists whom we recognise as our comrades in those countries; some (like Rudolf Bahro) are socialists who at least are infinitely closer to the cause of the working class than are the ruling bureaucrats.

Some (like Scharansky and Bukovsky) are reactionaries. We oppose the persecution of these people too. The threat to the progressive social conquests in the USSR and Eastern Europe posed by their activities is insignificant. The reactionary effect of the bureaucrats' restrictions on free exchange and expression of ideas is enormous.

We give special support to working class opposition in the Stalinist states and especially to the recent attempts to form genuine trade unions (i.e. unions independent from the state) in those countries.

RESOLUTIONS were passed without opposition on the cuts, on Ireland, on Southall, and on East European dissidents.

The Irish resolution calls for continued campaigning for 'Troops Out Now'. On Southall, conference decided to support the Southall Defence Fund, to organise public meetings supporting the defendants, and to campaign for the disbanding of the SPG. An amendment from the Leicester SO group added support for the Leicester Defence Fund.

The resolution on East European dissidents gave "full support to the fight for democratic rights in the Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and the USSR".

Two more controversial resolutions — on the Common Market and on the Alternative Economic Strategy — were, in view of the conference's tight timetable, remitted to the incoming Steering Committee for further discussion.

RATES

continued from p.6

iance on the cuts if Lambeth raises rates. "We support any section of the labour movement that fights the Tories. But we also say when we disagree with their policy".

Rate rises may be a necessary compromise forced on a local labour movement that has to retreat in struggle. But "if you retreat before you start, you certainly won't win".

If the Tories are not defeated, rate rises will not stop councils going broke. It will be rate rises and cuts. Rate rises are not an alternative to cuts, but an alternative to a fight.

Keith Veness (Islington)

argued that rates are a form, however imperfect, of redistributive tax and of increasing public expenditure. "We are being asked to vote against increasing public expenditure". And "any form of redistribution of incomes is preferable to no redistribution of income".

Thus the "no rate rise" policy is "abstentionist", it means "sitting on the sidelines", it would "in a certain sense, mark the bankruptcy of the SCLV".

The Lothian motion opposing rate rises was carried by 155 votes to 67. A separate count was made of the voting by labour movement delegates (who had multiple votes: 5 for CLPs and Trades Councils, 2 for trade union branches, etc.): on that count the Lothian motion was carried by 44 to 33.

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. The same should go for state benefits, grants and pensions.

★ Start improving the social services rather than cutting them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.

★ End unemployment. Cut hours not jobs — share the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35-hour week and end to overtime.

★ All firms threatening closure should be nationalised under workers' control.

★ 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.

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

★ Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work, and full equality for women.

★ 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 to affirm their stance 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 and of Zimbabwe should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles, and armed combat against the white supremacist regimes. 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 system in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for the crumbs from the table of the bankers and bosses.

by
**GRAHAM
NORWOOD**

ABORTION: STOP THE COSY COMPROMISES

MUCH debate today centres on the 1967 Abortion Act and the many recent attempts, including the Corrie Bill, to amend that Act.

It is worth remembering that legislation before the 1967 Act was framed not only by Houses of Parliament dominated massively by men (as they still are) but at times when women did not (or did not all) have the vote. The 1861 Offences Against the Person Act and the 1929 Infant Life (Preservation) Act are two major pieces of legislation which still today influence the law on abortion: not to defend infants, but to shackle women.

The Labour Party has committed itself to creating a fair and just society with equal opportunities for all people irrespective of race or sex. One of the biggest influences on has been the strong women's movement which has grown up in the last decade.

Before that, attempts going back half a century or more ago to bring feminist issues into the party's political programme were ignored or at best given only the slightest attention.

The names of Marie Stopes, Stella Browne, and Havelock Ellis are probably only familiar to labour historians. Their contribution produced small results, but not for lack of effort nor because they lacked the cogent arguments in their attempts to make the Labour Party and the labour movement take up women's rights, birth control and the right to abortion. Their contribution in commitment and effort was enormous, but appears as little because the party was blind to their wisdom.

Today, such isolated individuals have been replaced by collective groups, and through a mushrooming interest in political action by these groups the cause of women's political and social rights has become a major influence on the politics of the 1970s and will probably be a still more powerful force in the 1980s.

In the fight for abortion rights, the prominent organisation has been the National Abortion Campaign, who have mobilised tens of thousands of women into action to

organise collectively to fight an establishment which denies them rights over their own bodies. But like so many campaigns and pressure groups which have come to the fore in the 1970s, their emergence could be seen as a sign of Labour's weakness in failing to tackle such deep-rooted injustices.

The Labour Party was not

Campaign (LARC). Though many people — including, regrettably, a large number of Labour MPs — still refuse to see abortion as a political issue, LARC sees two important strands of thought which confirm the issue's political nature.

First, abortion is an issue particularly important to working class women, who can least afford an un-

der for a safe, fast abortion, and have no trouble paying for it.

The second indicator of the political nature of the abortion fight is that only by a committed political programme can the demand for abortion on request be turned into reality.

Many people seek to confuse the issue by claiming that we have abortion on request now. Nothing could be further from the truth. In 1977, 90 per cent of abortions in the Birmingham Health Authority area had to be done privately; in the Liverpool area that figure was

71 per cent. The availability of abortions on the NHS depends on the facilities in the area and these vary enormously. So also does the willingness of senior doctors in an area to allow abortions.

In places like Birmingham and Liverpool, it is only too plain that the 1967 Act is already so restrictively applied that thousands of women are forced into unwanted pregnancies if they can't afford to 'go private'.

To get an even spread of facilities throughout the country, we need a political programme which aims to put more money into the NHS and foster facilities like day-care clinics, counselling bureaux, and so on.

The Labour Party has a duty to come out publicly in support of working class women who wish to take control of their lives.

The party has already come some way in this direction. In 1977 and again in 1979, Conference discussed abortion and came out massively for abortion on request and for an extension of NHS facilities to meet the demand. But policy is not enough — we have the problem with this policy, like so many others, of getting

Labour MPs to support the decisions of the party.

Many Labour MPs still see abortion as an issue that goes over and above 'party politics' and that therefore they may vote as they wish rather than in line with party policy. The anti-abortion lobbyists exploit this to put local pressure on MPs to vote against party policy.

Yet Labour's policy is not accidental, nor isolated from the rest of traditional Labour thinking in favour of working people have control of their own lives.

Why shouldn't Labour MPs be put under a three-line whip for votes on abortion, just as they are for other important aspects of party policy?

At the second reading of the Corrie Bill in July, the Tories put a one-line whip on their MPs to support this private member's bill, although in the past the Tory party has not officially supported any of the bills to restrict the 1967 Act.

A one-line whip doesn't mean very much — a number of Tories voted against Corrie — but it indicates that the Thatcher government saw the Bill as being in line with its policy.

Beyond all doubt, Thatcher wants to so restrict women's rights and facilities that they stay in the home bolstering the economic system on which the Tory government thrives.

The Tories recognise how the abortion issue fits in with their right wing, repressive policy and ideology. It's time Labour also brought its policy on abortion into the mainstream of party policy and forced MPs to vote accordingly.

A lot of hard work has to be done to beat the Corrie Bill and to pressure the Labour Party to act positively for a woman's right to choose. We have the policy now. What we need is the political will by our leaders and our representatives in parliament, to stop their cosy compromises.

The Labour Party is committed to equality for women and that stand is a political one. We either believe women to be equal members of society, or we don't. There is no half-way house. As the Labour Party begins to take on a more progressive and democratic complexion, it must stand unequivocally on the need for women to have free access to abortion.



Petitioning against the Corrie Bill

taking up the issues of working people who had justifiable grievances. On the abortion issue, we simply did not take up the need for women to control their bodies and to determine their lives.

For that reason a group of activists in the Labour Party decided three years ago to help Labour return to its supporters by forming the Labour Abortion Rights

planned pregnancy and who live in the worst housing, have the lowest paid jobs and suffer worse health. They have the bleakest prospects in a free enterprise society.

If there is any restriction of the 1967 Act, these are the vulnerable women who could be forced to go to the backstreet butchers who did such a roaring trade before 1967. Wealthy women will be able to go to a private doctor

WE WON'T GO BACK TO THIS

THE CORRIE BILL will make it illegal for a doctor to perform an abortion unless certain conditions are met. The first possible basis for an abortion is if the woman's life is in grave danger (whatever 'grave' may mean).

The second is if there was a substantial risk of serious injury to her physical or mental health or that of her children. The inclusion of those two words — substantial and serious — will make it virtually impossible for most women to get abortions.

The Bill does not say what substantial or serious mean, nor does it give any guidance as to how this could be interpreted by a court of law. Any doctor, who would be open to criminal prosecution if he performed an abortion which was deemed unnecessary under this new Bill, would for good reason want to be very, very cautious.

The Bill also proposes to reduce the upper time limit for abortions from 28 to 20 weeks, and to separate referral agencies from the charity clinics which perform a quarter of all abortions carried out today in England and Wales.

The charities depend on referral agencies for their work,

and without the connection many working class women now using the charities will not know how to go about getting a safe abortion.

Taken together, these provisions make the Corrie Bill the most reactionary, anti-women, anti-working class piece of abortion legislation to come before parliament since 1945.

The labour movement has demonstrated its opposition, most dramatically in the enormous march led by the TUC together with NAC on October 28th. The medical profession has come out against it too — the BMA, the Royal College of Midwives and Nurses, and countless doctors, nurses and health officials have publicly condemned the Bill.

The abortion charities say it places their continued existence in jeopardy.

In 1960, 30 women were dying every year as a result of illegal abortions. By 1977, that number was down to one.

In 1968, 3,100 women needed hospital treatment for septic abortions done by unskilled people in unsterile conditions. By 1977 this number was down to 610.

Are we going to return to those days?

THE CAMPAIGN against the contraceptive injection Depo Provera continues, as there is evidence that it is still being offered to women.

A number of women recently complained to the Salford Community Health Council (Guardian, 8th Nov. 1979) that they were given the injection without being made fully aware of what it was for and in the Hackney campaign we have met women who have been offered the injection recently.

Some of the worst examples of abuse were given on the London Weekend Television programme in the summer of 1979. A doctor admitted giving the drug to a 15 year old West Indian girl while she was under a general anaesthetic. He had not asked her permission beforehand. His excuse was that she would not feel the pain of the injection!

Instead she had discomfort and unpleasant symptoms for the next three months which she could do nothing about as the drug lasts at least that time. Her health was possibly put at risk.

Depo Provera is a massive dose (150 mg) of one of the hormones in the combined contraceptive pill. Its effect usually lasts for 3 months but can last for up to 9 months.

It may cause long term infertility after the drug has been stopped. It can cause weight gain, depression and heavy or

DANGEROUS DRUGS; TRY OUT ON ANIMALS AND WOMEN

by a member of Hackney Depo-provera campaign

no bleeding.

There is a possibility that it may cause cancer of the cervix, indicated by research on beagle dogs. It is passed into the breast milk, and its effects on the infant have not been established.

Deprived

Depo Provera is currently being used on between 3 and 6 million women, mainly in Third World countries. It has not been approved by the US Federal Drug Administration who consider it dangerous for use on US women. It cannot, as a result, be supplied by the US Agency for International Development (AID) but the United Nations and the International Planned Parenthood Foundation supply it.

Reports of its use have come from Thailand, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and South and Central America. It fits in well with the

needs of imperialist-sponsored population control programmes which show no concern for women's rights.

In the UK, according to the manufacturer of DP, Upjohn Company of Michigan, 18,000 prescriptions were issued for DP in 1976, 33,000 in 1977 and 19,000 in the first six months of 1978.

It was first used in the UK in 1973 by the Glasgow Domiciliary Family Planning Service. 162 women were given the drug on a long term basis. An article in the British Medical Journal of 11th December 1976 by the senior medical officer of the Glasgow family planning centre says "medroxyprogesterone acetate (i.e. Depo Provera) has been used overseas since the early 1960's and it was thought that a trial of the acceptability of this method in the Glasgow domiciliary service was worthwhile, the theoretical risks being outweighed by the advantages to a group who

were already severely deprived."

Why should those already deprived (and therefore more likely to suffer ill health) be put to further risks?

The injection has been given with rubella (German measles) vaccine after delivery of a baby, often to women who are breast feeding. Immigrant women, particularly Asians, have been given it in the East End of London frequently without proper examination or an interpreter.

Risk

The most oppressed sections of the working class community get the worst of all worlds. They are more likely to suffer ill-health, yet they receive a relatively smaller slice of the health-care cake than the better off. Then drugs which can cause further harm are foisted on them without their proper consent or adequate

information.

The other method of hormone contraception, the pill, also has dangers. The recently published book, 'Politics of Cancer' by Samuel Epstein states, 'In June 1960, the FDA approved the first oral contraceptive pill, Enovid, marketed by G.D. Searle Company. This was rapidly followed by competitive products from other pharmaceutical companies, including Syntex, Ortho and Eli Lilly.'

This enormous experiment, in which a non-medicinal drug was mass marketed without adequate prior safety testing, took place with the approval of the FDA and an uncritical medical establishment.

He goes on to say that there is 'overwhelming evidence of the carcinogenicity of sex hormones in both experimental animals and humans.'

A report by the (British) Committee on Safety of Medicines also indicates, on the basis of experiments with mice, that the pill increases the risk of cancer.

Other risks to pill users include blood clots and increased blood pressure. Dr. Valerie Beral, writing in the British Medical Journal of 15th Sept. 1979, claims that in 1975 (when her study was done) there were more deaths between the ages of 25 and 44 in England and Wales from these adverse effects of oral

contraceptives than from all complications of pregnancy, delivery and the period after delivery combined. Complications of pregnancy includes abortions.

Why is the pill still prescribed to more than 60 million women world wide? It represents a big source of drug company profits. In the US alone oral contraceptives represent a market in excess of \$100 million a year.

Safer

The FDA recently banned the import into the US of a shipment of a shipment of cervical caps (which are like a smaller version of the diaphragm) from Britain. Barbara Seaman, a well-known American writer on women's health, claimed that the confiscation was the result of drug company pressure; the cap is not only a safer form of contraception but is less profitable than the pill.

Safe and effective birth control is every woman's right. Although there is a long way to go to develop a really safe contraceptive, alternatives to Depo Provera and the pill do exist.

Contraception must be taken out of the hands of drug companies and away from medical mystique, and new methods must be developed in the interests of women.

AFTER ten years of the women's movement, anyone who wishes to look back — and forward too — and take stock will observe tremendous gains, and glaring faults.

The women's movement, scattered among a myriad of local groups, cultural and artistic initiatives, publications, health and self-help centres, caucuses and conferences, has done more in ten years to change attitudes to women than all the good intentions and well-meaning articles and speeches of socialists did over decades. It has produced a real flowering of ideas, a ferment of activity and a rise in confidence and sense of identity among women, all of which is a real gain.

But after ten years, little of material value has changed, and much has changed for the worse. *Spare Rib* itself included in its new 1980 diary the telling slogan: *my consciousness is fine, it's my pay that needs raising.*

The gains have been as fragile as any other reforms, easily threatened by an economic squeeze or the ideological assaults of a Tory government.

It is beyond dispute that the majority of women fighting back right now are not organised by the women's movement at all. One of the most glaring failures of the women's movement has been its failure to organise working class (indeed, working) women, who form the majority of women, who are the most oppressed and exploited women, and who also have the potential for collective action which is massively more powerful and effective than anything the women's movement can mount.

Fight

It isn't that the women's movement has tried to organise working women, and failed. Rather, this is something it has never sought to do, for a number of related reasons.

First, it has been more concerned with 'intimate, personal areas', self-inquiry, counselling and therapy to cushion the impact of a sexist and brutal society.

Second, there really isn't any way to organise working class women without doing serious work in the trade union movement. The women's movement would have had to summon up the determination to brave that world of brothers and bureaucrats, of resolutions and rules of procedure which it prides itself on having superseded. It would mean organising in a much tighter way to cope with organisational structures which are condemned as male.

Even the most 'rank-and-file' approach would have to enter into and learn to live and fight in this world if it aimed to change it into something more approachable by women. To change the atmosphere, language and assumptions, to alter the arrangements (eg creches, union meetings in work time etc), to achieve appropriate representation locally and nationally, and to challenge the priorities (skills and jobs for the boys) — all this requires a hard fight inside the trade union movement itself.

Most important, the leading ideas in the women's movement give it no incentive to take up a working class orientation.

A whole section of the movement sees men, not capitalism, as the enemy. Those who do see themselves as socialists do not have a class struggle approach and are strongly in-

Out of the feminist archipelago

BY RACHEL LEVER

fluenced by utopian concepts ('pre-figurative socialism') of 'living socialism' now.

This sort of 'life-style' politics is of course only open to women who are free of the pressures that bear down on the working class.

And, as Lynne Segal observes in *Beyond the Fragments*, 'Our lack of structure perhaps made it difficult for working class women, outside of our friendship networks, to know how to get involved'.

Nor do those women who regret the middle class domination of the women's movement know how to get involved themselves with working class women: without working in the labour movement, all they can see is a patronising populism which not surprisingly they find repellent.

The estrangement of thousands of militant feminists from the workers' movement has meant that trade union attitudes have changed very slowly and very little in response to the last ten years work of the women's movement. Shifting much more slowly than the liberal media or the middle class professions that have made their little nods in the direction of women's liberation, they remain male bastions.

But an active struggle by a

significant segment of the women's movement could have forced a much greater response in the trade union movement, bringing the issue of women's rights into a more prominent place on the agenda.

But it should not be posed as a choice — women's movement or the trade unions. The trade union movement, though it organises many times more women than are involved or even consciously influenced by the women's movement, can never substitute for a women's movement.

Substitute

It was not built to serve that purpose, and no amount of women's officers, or women officers, or women's caucuses, can serve as a substitute.

We need an active, fighting movement in which working class women organise for themselves, set their own priorities and decide their needs, so that women's rights are guaranteed all the emphasis we can give them and are not an optional extra.

Women in such a movement will have to sort out what is and what is not useful to them from the insights and methods developed in the women's movement so far.

are very much more oppressed than their middle class sisters who are likely to have more money, more (and pleasanter) space, more leisure, more freedom and a better education.

Moreover, while middle class women can choose to opt for a 'pre-figurative' feminist archipelago, a working class women's movement must confront the broader political issues that face working class women as part of their class.

The women who have marched to keep the Corby steelworks open, those who have to walk their kids to and from school because the lollipop man has been cut, and those fighting to keep the local old folks home open are all up against the raw edge of capitalism. Ultimately, to win, they will have to seek out the way to socialism by smashing capitalism, by like large swathes of the women's liberation movement, they can't turn their backs on capitalism or carve out an 'alternative' life-style that can evade the whole question of class power.

Unfortunately without ever drawing the real lessons from her observations, Lynne Segal in *Beyond the Fragments* makes this devastating indictment of the women's movement as it has been: *The split remained*

between economic, workplace issues and 'the big wide world' of socialist politics.

The absence of such a women's movement does not mean the absence of women from industrial, political and community struggles.

Hundreds of thousands of women are organising and marching, taking industrial action and petitioning, mobilising and rallying others onto the streets, in a spontaneous fightback which didn't start with the Thatcher government but which has taken on a new urgency and vigour in face of the deliberate onslaught against women by the party of the family, private property and the bourgeois state machine.

In the fight against cuts, against the Corrie anti-abortion bill, against attempts to dismantle hard won legal rights and against the special sex discrimination threatened against our immigrant sisters, the old boundaries may begin to loosen. We could see a regrouping and re-forming of sections of the women's movement and of the working class movement.

Wider

Women who have come to see the shortcomings of the women's movement, and who want to engage in a real fight with the government, will be coming together with those drawn in over the cuts or the Corrie Bill or other single issue campaigns who feel the need for national coordination in a movement that has wider and longer term aims than this or that local or specialised campaign. And the pressure of the mass of working class women taking militant action is bound to reverberate through the trade union movement making possible big changes in the old male bastions.

The Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights can play an important part in this ferment. It can contribute a conception of a working class orientation that isn't limited to pay and conditions but recognises all the ways in which women are oppressed.

At its conference in March and in building and preparing for that conference, it will set out to bring together a large number of specific campaigns, making their work and their understandings more widely known and acted upon.

It will promote initiatives and ideas of the women's movement in the labour movement — both for their own value and worth, and in the hope of encouraging a wider acceptance among feminists of the possibilities open to women in the labour movement.

Together with other groups and campaigns, it will initiate united actions in response to events as they occur.

Through action and through dialogue, the polarities that have marked the first ten years of the women's movement may be radically shifted, to make the next ten years more productive and effective.

Fightback for Women's Rights CONFERENCE

March 22, 11am to 5pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

Working meeting to plan the conference: Hemingford Arms, Hemingford Road/Offord Rd, London N1, 1.30-3.30pm, Saturday December 8th.

GO ON, SAY WHAT YOU LIKE, IT'S A FREE COUNTRY

TWO RECENT incidents in the town of Nablus, on the West Bank, have thrown a spotlight on the true nature of Zionist rule.

On November 11 the mayor of Nablus, an Arab town, was summoned to the office of the local military governor and told that he was to be expelled from the area. The charge against Mayor Bassam Shaka was that he 'identified himself with terrorism'.

A strange charge indeed. What had really happened? Five days before, Mayor Shaka was brought before the local military commander Aluf Matt. Matt began to question the mayor in a bantering sort of way, but became increasingly angry when he managed neither to provoke Shaka nor to win the argument.

He then asked him what he thought of the 'Coastal Road killers', a group of Palestinians who had attacked Israelis in a raid last year. 'The Coastal Road assassins carried out their action,' replied the mayor according to a tape recording made by the military commander's staff, 'because of the occupation (of Palestine by Israel). As long as there is occupation and killing, you can expect many such actions.'

Matt tried in vain to get Shaka to say that he thought that the assassins' actions were all justifiable. Shaka would only repeat that such actions were the inevitable response to the general situation of Zionist occupation.

The interview soon drew to a close: 'This conversation only goes to show what a democratic country Israel is,' remarked Matt.

Bassam Shaka didn't quite agree, and how right he was — within days he was arrested by the same military commander and told he was to be expelled for the remarks he had made in that conversation. The West Bank immediately erupted into protest: there were strikes (some of which are still on), protest marches, hunger strikes, petitions, a United Nations resolution even supported by the US, and protests in the Knesset, Israel's parliament.

Not many miles away lies the settlement of Eilon Moreh. This was established on Arabs' land by members of the ultra-nationalist Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful) movement. The military authorities had confiscated the land from the Arab farmers and protected the Gush while they took over.

Now the High Court has ruled that the land, because it was not confiscated for military purposes — a phrase that covers the robbery by Israel of land in the 'occupied territories' with a veneer of legality — must be returned.

The Gush, however, have so far refused to budge despite pressure from the government. They say that if they have to go, then there will be an avalanche of claims by Arabs whose land has been taken for settlement. So desperate is the government not to have to use force against these robbers (who are in any case Begin supporters) that it has announced a new plan for increased settlement that it hopes will bribe the Gush to give up Eilon Moreh.

The plan, if implemented, would cost the equivalent of half Israel's national budget — that's quite something for a country with an inflation rate of 150% — and involve the confiscation of even more land.

ANDREW HORNUNG



How to link the organised women's movement and women workers in class battles?

Letter from
LeicesterThe start
of a
fightback

A short report on the cuts in Leicester in our last issue said that the Labour City Council has not yet decided on cuts, "but the prevalent mood is summed up by the Spinney Hill ward of Leicester South Labour Party" who talk of "reductions" without "indiscriminate cutting".

As chairman of Wycliffe Branch Labour Party (Leicester South) and a supporter of Socialist Organiser, may I comment on the article published about Leicester in the November issue.

Firstly, it is relevant to note that my branch supported the SCLV campaign, and Spinney Hill did not.

Secondly, that as far as I am aware, there are no supporters of SO in the Spinney Hill branch.

Thirdly, my branch has invited an SO speaker and will shortly be deciding on support for SO and a delegate to the Conference.

What your article failed to mention was that both branches agreed to hold a joint public meeting as Highfields against the Cuts, but Wycliffe branch refused to endorse the Spinney Hill leaflet and then went ahead to produce its own in both English and Gujarati. The Wycliffe leaflet mentioned cuts in the housing programme, the rate support grant, rent increases, rate increases, and increased defence spending.

It also said "The Labour City Council must make the stand they promise. They need your support and pressure to oppose these enormous cuts".

Speakers were invited from the IWA (GB), NUPE, TGWU and NUT in addition to the local councillors and the MP, Jim Marshall. The meeting was publicised over Radio Leicester and nearly 5,000 leaflets were distributed.

The result was, from a few people's hard work, an attendance of over 100 people and a headline in the local newspaper. This has confounded some Labour councillors but is the start of our fightback!

There is also a mass demonstration against the County Council on November 28th, and two petitions entitled 'Save our Services' and 'Save our Schools'. These have been organised by the Public Services Liaison Committee.

Yours fraternally,
BERNARD HYNES
Chairman, Wycliffe Branch
Labour Party

Rate rises: 'do it while you can'

Bernard Misrahi
presents a minority
view on the issue of
rate rises.

DESPITE the drenching rain, several thousand council workers, school students and other opponents of the cuts marched through Lambeth on November 7th to show their support for the council which had refused to implement cuts and which had decorated every notice-board and every office window with 'Join the Big March' posters.

Here at last was a municipal authority which was transcending its administrative role and openly campaigning politically.

A great start — but from now on the choices will be more difficult. Massive rate increases to avoid cuts — or bankruptcy next April.

The Government is cutting 5% off the subsidies it gives to local government (about five hundred million pounds) and is distributing more of what is left away from the inner cities to the shires. They have threatened to cut the rate support grant of any council which levies an excessive rate increase, but they

need special legislation to do this which will not be ready for this coming financial year.

Should progressive councils avoid cuts by imposing really massive increases of 50% and beyond — or should they effectively resign by refusing to cut or increase rates?

Some socialists equate rate increases with cuts in services, which both amount to a cut in real wages. By that token, this year's tax cuts should have been welcomed! Anyway, in most boroughs the majority of rates are paid by businesses, but the proportion varies greatly from borough to borough.

Businesses pay 75% of the rates in Camden, but less than 50% in other places. A rate increase might mean a few pounds less in the bank — but cuts mean less day nurseries and an even longer wait for council flat repairs: hardly likely to help the fight against the Tory government responsible for the shortages.

It is all very well to demand 'Lambeth (or South Yorkshire) must not stand alone', and also call on industrial workers to support progressive councils. If sufficient support is not forthcoming the campaign will still have to continue. Rate

increases will be necessary to give us more time.

As councillors are personally responsible for any shortfall that arises when they deliberately refuse to raise enough money to meet their programmes, they can be surcharged for the difference. Some St. Pancras councillors who were surcharged in 1952 are still paying off — as are the Clay Cross councillors (who, incidentally, did increase the rates). Not surprisingly, even radical councillors doubt whether the labour movement will dig deep enough to bail them out.

Yet the option of rate increases might not be open the following year (1981/2). Then, councils might have to go for the final all-out confrontation. Our job this year will be to prepare the movement for this assault by making sure that even progressive councils such as Lambeth refuse to back-track and implement cuts rather than levy a sufficiently high rate increase.

To put it crudely, we should be arguing for rate increases to maintain services, not against them.

Refusal to raise enough

money to meet expenditure will almost certainly result in the Tories sending in commissioners who will gleefully savage those services which have the greatest ideological significance — the direct labour building force, the law centres, the radical, locally-funded community groups and resources centres such as Union Place in Camberwell.

Before this all-out confrontation, the majority of council workers must realise what they are letting themselves in for (the council not having the money to pay their wages, perhaps). Support this action, and have some contingency plans to deal with the consequences. Not that council workers on their own can do much against an intransigent employer, simply by going on strike.

Last winter, Tower Hamlets councillors were unmoved as rubbish decomposed in the street markets, and even when they were locked out of their offices. It is the job of fightback campaigns and Labour Parties to develop this support, based on an understanding of what is at issue, over the next year. Even in Lambeth we have only, perhaps, made a start.

The consumers of council services, the tenants in particular, have to be mobilised to defend their services. Easier said than done, when the experience of many is shoddy work and bureaucracy.

Another task for our campaigns is to make contact with tenants' organisations (where, usually, no contact previously existed) and together work out how housing management — and, for that matter, care of the elderly and all the other services — can be changed so that the consumers and workers who provide them can have far greater control.

Don't just defend existing services — fight to change how they are operated.

To grudgingly accept rate increases is not to be defeatist but is to realise the magnitude of the tasks facing us. To oppose rates increases on principle is to suppose that 'the masses' will rally in support of a heroic gesture. Heroic gestures will have to wait — till 1981 maybe — we have enough to do trying to develop a struggle that will venture where constituency Labour parties have never trod.

The SCLV eighteen months on

MARTIN COOK
(Socialist Charter)
explains his criticisms of the decisions of the November 24th SCLV conference (see report, pages 6-8).

EIGHTEEN months ago, more than 200 socialists gathered to launch the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

At that time, the low profile of the 'official left' in the movement made it look as if the coming election would pit reactionary Thatcher against reactionary Callaghan, with no visible socialist presence. Our aim was to group together, on a flexible and non-sectarian basis, all the forces inside (and out, in some cases) of the Labour Party prepared to fight for a Labour victory on a clear anti-capitalist and class-struggle platform.

OK, so a lot has changed. The left has re-emerged in style at Conference and otherwise. It appears a genuine

revitalisation of some of the shrivelled grass roots in the constituencies may be under way at last.

This implies all the greater urgency in unifying and organising the new Left against the certain right-wing counter-attack and for the battles of the future — not a retreat down the well-trodden paths of purist abstentionism and bombastic sloganeering.

In almost every respect, the decisions of the recall SCLV/SC conference held on November 24th represent a consolidated move in the wrong direction. The aim of the Workers' Action supporters, who had a clear majority for their positions on the day, appeared to be the generation of a hard-line intransigent campaign imbued with the idea that it has all the political answers and that the rest of the left is wandering about without a clue what to do next: just waiting for us to corral them in!

Thus, a resolution from West London SO group

which made a rather obvious (one might think) call for SCLV to be open to those in the Party ready to break with the social-democratic leadership and go forward to the socialist reconstruction of society was thrown out.

So was one from the (UPW) Overseas Telephones SO group, which suggested the 'What We Stand For' platform be re-written 'in a less declamatory way, with less emphasis on particular demands and more emphasis on the movement for socialism and how we can build it'. So we retain the 'shopping list' format of umpteen demands, reading suspiciously like a rehash of the Trotskyist Transitional Programme.

This hardly seems like the way to involve in the Campaign many of the dedicated socialists in the Institute for Workers' Control, Independent Labour Publications and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee — not to mention many of the unaligned socialists around.

The successful Perspectives section on women blithely called for the 'restruct-

uring and reorientation of sections of the existing women's movement...', and so on — an approach that can only be treated with justified contempt by the feminist activists now getting involved in the Labour Party, as being an arrogant and patronising sectarian posture.

WA supporters in fact expressed only distaste for the existing women's movement and its Socialist-Feminist current, while projecting a 'Fightback' campaign which sounds like a re-run of the ill-fated Working Women's Charter Campaign (which ended up as a 'zoo' for rival Trotskyist sects to haggle over irrelevant programmes). For them, the feminist emphasis on consciousness-raising and non-hierarchical forms of organisation is an occasion for snide digs.

The rates issue illustrates a similar mentality. Of course, the conference was quite entitled to pass by more than two to one a resolution condemning rate hik-

es in principle. Yet no alternative strategy was seriously put forward for the inevitable showdown involving bankruptcy or prison.

One comrade stated that the main divide in the movement lay not between those prepared or not to fight the cuts, but between us intransigents and those who tactically resorted to raising rates (i.e. including Lambeth Council which the SCLV claims to support).

The logic of the majority view is either that a mass anti-capitalist movement exists, just waiting for SCLV to give the lead and blow the Tories away... or else that striking a 'holier than thou' stance is more important than giving any practical lead on how limited gains or defensive campaigns can succeed in the here and now. This is the All or Nothing view of socialism, beloved of the Militant tendency.

So far as this issue of SO is concerned, I leave aside (for reasons of space) the organisational problems left by conference, of which I also have fundamental criticisms.

Leyland unions: clear out the traitors

continued from p.12

The gist of the AUEW Executive's decision was that all AUEW members were instructed to go back to work. The rest was a disgusting charade — all the more so because the BL bosses still said openly that they would not reinstate Robinson, whatever the results of the inquiry.

The AUEW Executive apparently proposes nothing at all about the three shop stewards who got final warnings.

Johnny Barker, the TGWU district official covering Longbridge, described the deal as "disgusting and diabolical", and said the AUEW Executive had "disregarded the basic principles of trade unionism". TGWU official pickets were still on the gates at Longbridge on Tuesday evening, but obviously it will be ten times more difficult to maintain the strike after the betrayal by the Executive of the

AUEW. Robinson's own union.

On Wednesday 28th the TGWU regional committee called on TGWU members to return to work.

When the news of Duffy's treachery reached the Longbridge strike committee on Tuesday afternoon, men were throwing their AUEW cards on the floor and some were close to tears.

Before that deadly setback, the BL bosses must have been beginning to think they had miscalculated.

Longbridge struck immediately after the sacking was announced on Monday 19th. On Monday 26th, over 4,000 workers marched through Birmingham to a rally where a resolution calling for the dispute to be made official was passed unanimously. The Leyland Action Committee's slogans for an all-out strike got a good response.

Despite big efforts in the local press, only about 500 scabs could be rallied.

If the Longbridge workers

go down to defeat now, then the BL bosses will have a green light for a major purge of militants.

Robinson's sacking came just after BL bosses had replied with an 'offer' (or ultimatum) of 10% for skilled workers, 5% for the rest, and 85 pages of strings. The strings spell out the details of the 'Edwardes plan' which BL workers were blackmailed into voting for in October by the threat of BL otherwise shutting down altogether.

Edwardes had already said 42,000 jobs would go. The 85 pages outline the prospect for the remaining BL workers: total mobility, ending demarcations, loss of most lay-off pay entitlement, reduction of the night shift rate, reduction of the pay of disabled workers, reduction of rest allowances — and a clause saying work study men would deal directly with individual workers, cutting out the shop steward.

With the 85-page document, with Robinson's sacking, and with the purge that

could follow it, Edwardes is seeking to break the back of trade union organisation in one of Britain's biggest companies.

Whether or not the Tory government has been directly involved in the decision to sack Derek Robinson, certainly it is centrally involved in the whole strategy leading up to that sacking. As a build up to the sacking, Industry Minister Keith Joseph had announced that the government's plans for BL would depend on the workers' reaction to BL's 5% plus strings 'offer'.

And, with their planned anti-union laws, the Tories want to do to the whole movement what Edwardes is now trying to do to the organisation in BL.

In conditions of relative capitalist prosperity, battles between trade unions and bosses can usually be fought out within more or less stable 'rules of the game'. In today's crisis-ridden capitalist Britain, that is no longer true. The Tories and the

bosses are out to kick over the negotiating tables and tame the unions. Crush the bosses' power, or be crushed by them: that is the alternative which will eventually face our movement.

The whole future of our movement depends on whether we can restructure and reorient it in time.

The combine committee in BL must be reorganised on a more democratic basis, to develop the rank and file confidence and the firm links required to be able to lead battles despite and against the official union leaders where necessary.

Terry Duffy, John Boyd, and the other right-wing leaders of the AUEW must be cleared out: resolutions calling for their resignation should go through every branch and district committee, and the national engineering shop stewards' committee should call an emergency conference to start building a rank and file movement strong enough to prevent future sell-outs.

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Socialist Organiser

JUDAS!

BY BUCKLING under to BL, Terry Duffy and the AUEW Executive have stabbed every trade unionist in the back.

It is not just the militants and the left-wingers that they have betrayed. Derek Robinson, for all that the press says, is no red revolutionary; he has spent more time trying to put down what he calls the 'ultra-left' than in leading a fight against the BL bosses.

But for BL boss Michael Edwardes, the fact that Robinson led some opposition to the bosses' plans was too much. On Monday 19th Robinson, convenor at the Longbridge plant and chairman of the BL Combine Committee, was told he was sacked for putting out a pamphlet criticising Edwardes' plan for speed-up, job cuts, and curbing shop stewards' rights in BL.

If a convenor at a major plant can be sacked for that, then any trade unionist, even the most 'moderate', who makes any effort to speak out for his or her members against the bosses, is at risk.

It was made very clear when Len Brindle, convenor of the bus and truck plant at Leyland, Lancashire, was called in to receive the final warning which he and two other combine leaders were given at the same time as

Leyland unions: clear out the traitors

Robinson was sacked.

Brindle asked what would happen if he were to speak against Edwardes' plan for BL at a mass meeting. The management replied that he would be sacked.

He then asked what would happen if any worker were overheard criticising the plan. They replied that the worker would be disciplined.

Duffy and the AUEW Executive are undermining the foundations on which the trade union organisation they claim to lead is built.

The AUEW Executive met on Tuesday 27th. The day before Duffy had told the press that he expected the Executive would make

the strike against Robinson's sacking official. The TGWU made the strike official at midday on the Tuesday, and outside the AUEW offices there was a lobby organised from Longbridge demanding AUEW official backing.

But, after going into the meeting, the Executive members left by a back door to meet Edwardes. According to Duffy, Edwardes told them that if they made the strike official, he would sack every single striker.

Instead of throwing this ridiculous threat back in Edwardes' face, the AUEW leaders crumbled. Their fear of a long, bitter battle was stronger than any attach-

ment they had to the basic principles of trade unionism.

So they made a 'compromise deal' — in which all the compromise is on the union side. Robinson remains sacked, but will be given full pay while the AUEW organises a 'union inquiry into his conduct'.

Inquiry into what? A trade unionist is sacked for criticising the bosses' plans. The facts of the case are clear and disputed by no-one. There is nothing to inquire into — except how someone like Terry Duffy got to be president of the AUEW.

continued on p.11



Every steward is at risk

AT THE SCLV conference (see report, p.6-8), £40 was collected to be divided between the Longbridge strike committee and the strike fund at Adamsons Containers, Manchester, and the conference voted to send a telegram of support to Longbridge.

Jim Denham, a T&GWU shop steward at Longbridge, told the conference, "It is not a question of a personal feud between Michael Edwardes and Derek Robinson, as the press has tried to present it. Robinson's record has been disgraceful and treacherous, but that is not the point."

"Edwardes, almost certainly with the close connivance of Keith Joseph and the Tory Government, is trying to kick out a symbol of the shop stewards' organisation. If he can get away with that, a massive attack on the stewards' organisation will follow."

Denham also pointed to the political lessons to be learnt, "about the nature of the nationalisations carried through by the Labour Government — which I would call state capitalist nationalisations."



Defend our Unions'
EMERGENCY
CONFERENCE
12 noon, Saturday 1
December, at the
Digbeth Civic Halls,
Birmingham.

WHY WE BACK ROBINSON

ON THE march in Birmingham (November 26th), several BL workers spoke to Socialist Organiser.

Frank King (TGWU, Castle Bromwich) said, "I'm proud to be on strike for the reinstatement of Derek Robinson."

"If Robinson and the other three members of the combine committee can't oppose the Edwardes plan, then who can? Edwardes won't tolerate any opposition, even from his own managers."

"On the same day Robinson was sacked, Keyworth, the top boss at Castle Bromwich, was removed for opposing the plan. I've no sympathy for Keyworth, but the point is that if Ed-

wardes has his way, no-one will be allowed to oppose him."

Roy Norris (TGWU, Longbridge) said, "It's a question of free speech. Whatever you think of Robinson, he is our representative. We must support all union members against this kind of attack. If the BL management's present campaign succeeds, then the whole shop stewards' movement is at great risk."

At the time the AUEW had not yet taken any official position. Many workers denounced its attitude.

Ken King (TGWU, and Longbridge strike committee) said, "While the strike

is still unofficial, all the scabs feel safe to cross the picket line". Steve Griffiths (AUEW, Rover Solihull) said, "If the union leaders would only act, we could finish off Edwardes once and for all".

Tony Hillsdon (AUEW, Longbridge) said, "It's time we got some support off our union leaders... If Duffy won't do this, then it's up to the membership to get rid of him". Ian Weaving (TGWU, Longbridge) told us, "AUEW members have been betrayed by their leaders". And Adrian Chadwick (TGWU, Longbridge) said, "I think Duffy would be happy to see the Longbridge fight collapse".

MINERS IN THE FRONT LINE

AS WE go to press, it seems certain that the bosses' £15 offer will be accepted at mass meetings at the Ford plants. And the miners will vote on Friday 30th on giving their union Executive a mandate for industrial action for their claim for £19/£55 pay rise and a shorter working week.

The Ford bosses have bought peace. Their offer — which is reckoned at 21½% and which also includes a promise to 'seek ways of reducing working time' next year — is not brilliant, but it could set a norm for wage rises this year which would allow real gains in workers' living standards.

Ford made the offer because they are getting good profits and don't want a repeat of last year's nine-week strike. The Tories are energetically using this fact to argue that Ford should not set a target for other workers. Workers in firms with

good profits may get bigger pay rises, but those in unsuccessful firms must make do with less.

But the cost of living is the same for all workers. And the ill fortune of this or that firm is irrelevant to our struggle against the exploitation of the working class as a whole by the capitalist class as a whole, in all its branches, industrial, financial and commercial.

The miners will not get an easy offer. Since their great victory in 1972, their relative wages position has been gradually eroded. In 1978 incentive schemes pushed through by the right-wing union leadership gave the miners more money, but enforced speed-up and damaged their unity.

This time, even Executive right-wingers are calling for a yes vote for industrial action. The claim is for £140

basic for faceworkers (who at present get £85) and £80 for surface workers (as against £61). The Coal Board has offered £102 for faceworkers, £74 for surface workers, and nothing on the other elements of the claim: a shorter working week, earlier retirement, and pay guarantees for older miners downgraded after sickness or injury.

It is not likely, however, that the Executive right-wing is ready to lead the sort of fight needed to win serious advance on the full claim. A big victory for the miners would be a tremendous boost for the whole of the working class, and the Tories will make a major effort to stop it.

To win this time will need the same spirit of militancy and class solidarity as in 1972. And the stakes now are just as high as they were then.

COLIN FOSTER

CPSA: new cuts, new lead needed

THE EXPECTED date for the new cuts in the civil service to be announced is December 4th.

Instead of announcing all their planned cuts, the Tories may push through staffing cuts of around 10% for now. This will mean about 75,000 jobs going. Already redundancies have been declared at the Prices Commission, the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Wealth and Income, the British Council, etc. 22,000 jobs have gone in all through Tory policies since May.

The CPSA National Executive has a four point policy:

- a ban on overtime,
- a ban on temporary promotion and substitution,
- a ban on worksharing, and
- a ban on cooperation with any measures to increase workloads or make cuts.

The Executive, with some reluctance, gave authority to

some branches to 'black' staff not respecting this policy. The first crunch point was in Liverpool, at the Breckfield Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) office, where seven clerks were suspended. Industrial action led to a compromise settlement.

Tory DHSS Minister Patrick Jenkin pressed on with the offensive. Suspensions in the Nuneaton DHSS office followed, affecting up to 10 CPSA members, some for more than two weeks. Then management started suspending CPSA and SCPS members at the Kennington DHSS office in South London.

That office is now closed, with 25 CPSA and four SCPS members suspended.

While the CPSA National Executive is paying strike pay to the suspended members, and giving them official backing, they have forced the members at the Department of

National Savings, Glasgow, back to work. There, 400 members had been suspended for refusing to cooperate with people who broke the ban on overtime and on working out of their grade.

The failure of the CPSA National Executive to give a strong and firm lead against the suspensions in Glasgow will rebound on any fight against the new cuts. To make action effective, suspensions must be defeated; and that means the action must be extended. The CPSA leadership must call for rolling strikes, workplace mass meetings, and demonstrations in solidarity with those suspended. And it must integrate the campaign against cuts in the civil service into the wider fight against cuts in public services.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY
[CPSA National Exec., in personal capacity]