

What is the SO Alliance?

THE SHOW must go on!
The TUC leaders may have thrown in the towel — but at shop floor level, militants need more than ever to unite around policies and tactics that enable them to fight the employers and beat back the sabotage of full-time officials.

Woodwork

As new figureheads of the right wing — like CPSA loudmouth Alastair Graham — emerge from the TUC woodwork, and bureaucratic dinosaurs battle for territory on the General Council, rank and file trade unionists must organise in determined fashion to democratise and open up the unions for the active participation of the most oppressed sections of the working class — women, black people, youth and the unemployed.

In the Labour Party, as

Kinnock sews the final stitches into his personal election victory, while heading the Party away from Conference policies and towards future election defeats, the most committed fighters for socialist policies and for a campaigning party must offer leadership to a confused, defensive and disorientated left wing.

Socialist Organiser is committed to the fight across the whole labour movement for principled policies and a new, fighting leadership.

We have waged this fight consistently since 1978, before the election of the Thatcher government.

We have always rejected the role of sideline critics of the class struggle.

Instead, we have been at the forefront of battles both in the unions and the Labour Party, patiently arguing for

tactics and policies that can advance the fight and crystallise the real issues before the workers' movement.

In major strikes — and in the run up to the General Election — we have insisted that the real strength of the labour movement lies in its rank and file: that its real weakness lies in its present leadership. We have pointed to ways in which the rank and file can and must be mobilised on an independent basis.

Overtun

The reality is clear. To defeat Tory policies, it is necessary both to defeat the government and to overturn the capitalist system which dictated policies of unemployment, public spending cuts and wage controls to previous Labour governments.

We need not another Labour government — like previous timid reformist governments, but a real workers' government, accountable to the rank and file, which can move boldly against capitalist power and property.

To carry through such a sweeping change in society, the labour movement must be mobilised — but it must also be transformed from top to bottom.

It must adopt and fight for new policies and perspectives which can win and involve broad layers of workers; and to do this it must also create democratic forms and structures through which the rank and file can call to account and dispose of the current bureaucratic leaderships whose political conservatism and defence of their own power and privilege hang like a millstone round the neck of the labour movement.



JOHN HARRIS

We have been at the forefront of battles in unions and Labour Party.

Socialist ORGANISER

How to fight the Tories

A Special Supplement for the SO 'How to Fight the Tories' Conference

The struggle against Tebbit's "Youth Training" Schemes

JOHN HARRIS



What the scheme really means

MANY of those involved with YTS have misgivings about the scheme. No one denies the need for proper training and jobs for young workers. The doubts listed below give some idea of some of the shortcomings that need considering.

1. The YTS trainee allowance of £25 per week will severely depress wage rates for all youth. According to the New Earnings Survey, the average weekly earnings for 16 year olds are £47.50. The rates for electrical contracting apprentices have already been cut from £41.62 to £27.88.

2. The YTS scheme shifts almost all training costs from employers to the Government. In recent years employers have paid some 50% of the total costs of vocational training.

Under YTS, the employers will receive £1,850 per trainee which includes £1,300 to cover the full amount for the training allowance, £550 for overheads and an addition of £100 per trainee if the employer is a managing agent.

3. YTS is accelerating the destruction of the apprenticeship system. YTS comes in the wake of the destruction of 17 out of 24 of the Industrial Training Boards. MSC plans to reduce apprentice support grants next year from £52.2 million to £33 million.

4. YTS will certainly give rise to job substitution. On MSC's own estimates, this took place on 30% of YOP

SOCIALIST Organiser argues that the TUC should withdraw its endorsement for the Youth Training Scheme, and end its collaboration with the Tories in the Manpower Services Commission.

Some trade unions — NGA, NUJ, CPUSA — simply have a policy of boycotting YTS. Obviously we must support them if they fight to defend that policy against employers, and obviously unions must retain the option of boycotting YTS.

But boycott alone does nothing to *organise* the YTS trainees — and, for socialists, *organising* is always the key to a fight back.

Unions must demand full information on where schemes are operating in their area, and set out to recruit the youth involved.

The basic non-negotiable demands should be:

- * Trainees pay to be topped up to trade union rates.
- * Union membership for trainees.
- * Employee status for trainees. (Otherwise they have no legal rights under the Race Relations Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, and the Employment Protection Act, and only limited rights under the Health and Safety at Work Act.)

These demands strike at the basic cheap-labour purpose of YTS, and are a starting point for further demands. They can be won. Hackney and Islington councils in London, for example, have agreed to them. Where they are not conceded, the unions should campaign openly and strongly against the schemes being introduced.

The most important other demands are:

- * A guaranteed job at the end.
- * No job substitution.
- * Training to be done in local authority colleges and to lead to recognised qualifications.
- * All trainees to receive a card stating their rights. (This is supposed to be an MSC rule).
- * More than the minimum 18 days holiday.
- * Positive discrimination for women and blacks.

The demand for guaranteed jobs for youth at the end of the scheme can also be pursued jointly with the rest of the workforce at the end. It should be raised from the outset as an objective of the unions.

Continued over

JOHN HARRIS



In Northern Ireland, 40% of eligible youth have rejected a YTS Scheme already operating there

placements. 5. Health and safety of trainees cannot be ensured. About 70% of YOP trainees were placed with small, low-paid, non-unionised work-places — the majority of which were never monitored. 6. CPSA have highlighted their inability to monitor YOP schemes because of low staffing levels in the MSC. Under YOP, the backlog of visits overwhelmed MSC workers and limited targets of likely unscrupulous employers were set. SCPS have stressed that only 30% of these targeted employers were even visited. A huge number of employers had renewals for further schemes without being monitored. 7. The MSC describes YTS as an "employer-led scheme". The MSC is encouraging employers to form managerial consortia for YTS schemes with their grants to managing agents of £100 per trainee. Managing agents will be allowed to monitor their own schemes. 8. YTS trainees are not covered by protective employment legislation, the Race Relations Act, the Sex Discrimination Act. There is no plan to challenge sex stereotyping. There are real fears that since employers in the private sector will be selecting their own trainees, that mode A (private sector) will become the white trainees sector whilst mode B will become the black one. 9. No nationally recognised standards have been set for the training element of the scheme. Five times more money is spent on training programmes on the continent. 10. YTS gives the green light for the privatisation of local authority education. As the former Liberal MP, John Pardoe (Managing Director of Sight and Sound Ltd — the largest private contractors for YOPs and TOPs), points out "it is the first time an organisation has been set up to buy part of the education service on a cost effective basis". Under YTS, further Education

Colleges will have to compete for training contracts with firms like Sight and Sound. The implications of such competition were summarised by one Birmingham full-time union official who stressed that 'price means ensuring all the time that trainees are taught in groups which are as large as possible'. 11. No allowances will be made to youth who choose to continue in F.E. colleges as full-time students. The Birmingham Careers Service has collected evidence under YOP that indicates that many students will be discouraged by YTS from pursuing further education. 12. The decision to put some YTS trainees with the armed forces has alarmed a wide spectrum of opinion. 13. YTS has already been in operation in Northern Ireland in the past year. Evidence collected so far shows there has been a massive 40% reduction of the scheme by local youth. Checklist on 'The Issues' prepared by Birmingham Trades Council

Birmingham policy on YTS

Birmingham Trades Council Policy Statement on the Youth Training Scheme (YTS)

THE Youth Training Scheme is presented as a new initiative to solve Britain's training needs. Yet 17 Industrial Training Boards have been abolished, apprenticeship schemes destroyed, and Further Education cut. YTS is, above all else, a cynical attempt by the Government to remove some 460,000 young people from the dole queue in an election year. The Role of Trade Unions

Nationally Birmingham Trades Council believes that the TUC and national trade unions should campaign for:—

- [a] a totally different approach to the question of unemployment which will mean policies to introduce shorter working time, more real jobs by re-generation of industry, etc;
- [b] the replacement of YTS by a properly funded programme of quality training and maintaining apprentice wages rates;
- [c] expansion of Local Education Authority funded courses

A programme for union democracy

Union Officials and Committees

All officials should be elected for definite terms (no more than two years) and subject to recall at any time. Full-time officials should be paid the average wage in their industry.

Union policy-making bodies should be made up of elected lay members only. The same should go for Standing Orders Committees and Appeals Committees.

Full minutes and voting records of policy-making bodies should be circulated. National delegate conferences should have supreme policy-making power.

Elections

Voting should be at workplace meetings or by workplace ballot. It should not be by postal ballot. We want informed, collective working class decision-making, not ballots manipulated by Fleet Street life-machines. Election addresses must be circulated unaltered, and candidates and their supporters must have unrestricted rights to circulate literature.

Strikes

Strikes should be automatically official until declared unofficial. All strikes for trade union principles, work conditions or wages should be made official. Strike committees must be elected from (and subject to recall by) mass meetings. Through mass meetings and strike bulletins, they must keep the membership fully informed throughout the strike.

There should be no secret negotiations. Every stage of negotiations should be subject to rank and file ratification at mass meetings. Mass meetings should never be presented with package deals unless each part of the deal has been voted on separately by the meeting beforehand.

Workplace Organisation

Shop stewards must be elected at mass meetings held in the workplace, in company time if possible. They should hold regular report-back meetings, also if possible in company time. Joint Shop Stewards' Committees should be set up on a plant, combine and international basis. Technical and clerical workers should also be represented on these committees.

Policies adopted by Socialist Organiser conference, April 3 1982.

Despite the general need for unity, there will be cases where shop stewards disagree strongly with the majority of the stewards' committee and want to put their minority views to the membership. They should have the right to do so, after notifying the committee of their intention, so long as they also make it clear to the membership what the stewards' majority view is.

Union branches should have the right to meet at the workplace and in worktime if possible. If not, creche facilities must be provided to ensure women workers can attend. Labour Party workplace branches should be set up with all the rights of ordinary ward branches.

Closed Shop We must campaign: for 100% trade unionism; for the right of trade unionists to enforce closed shops; for the right of trade unionists to discipline fellow workers who scab or flout democratic decisions; against the check-off system; and against employer-policed 'agency shops'.

Women's Rights

Implement the TUC Charter for Women Within Trade Unions. Proportional representation for women on national executives, conference delegations (including to TUC and Labour Party conferences, regional, district and divisional, sectional or rules revision conferences) and, where applicable, local branch committees.

The right of all women's committees, caucuses and conferences to bring resolutions to the policy-making bodies of the union at that level. Recognition that sexual harassment is a trade union issue and that an offence against women is an offence against trade unionism.

Support for positive discrimination as a way of compensating for the extra barriers women face at work, in the trade unions and in politics. Broad lefts should lead the way by practising it in their own structures.

Black and Immigrant Workers

No discrimination against black or immigrant workers in the unions (including in social clubs). Positive discrimination to ensure racial equality. Support for the right to form black caucuses. Campaigns to recruit immigrant workers to trade unions (using leaders in the immigrant's own language).

A purge of open racials from all positions in the labour movement. Expulsion of fascist activists from the union. A vigorous and sustained trade union fight against racial and sexist job discrimination. Automatic endorsement of all strikes against discrimination.

Youth

Full trade union rights for young workers, including the right to strike. Formation of youth committees.

The Unemployed

Unionisation of the unemployed, with full rights within the unions.

Individual Rights

Right of members to criticise union policy; to meet unofficially to write, circulate and/or sell political literature. Right of appeal direct to union Appeals Court.

All education or other special qualifications for union officials to be abolished. No member to be disqualified from holding union office on political grounds, other than fascist or racist activity.

Rights of Branches and District Committees.

Defend the rights of trade union branches and district committees against the central union bureaucracy. For the right of branches to take appropriate industrial action.

Developing Solidarity

Develop links between unions. Expand trade union cells to include representation from the unemployed, tenants and students, and, most importantly, direct representation from factory committees and other shop floor organisations.

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JOHN HARRIS

Affiliate trade unions to the Labour Party and local union branches to the local CLP. YUC and Labour Party conference delegations should be bound to follow union policy where it exists. There should be democratic control of the thick vote cast at Labour Party Conferences: delegations should be elected and consist of lay members. Members of all working class parties, and tendencies should be eligible for inclusion in the delegation. Trade union branch delegates to Trades Councils and Labour Parties must report back regularly.

Breaking collaboration

Trade unions should fight for full independence from the state. Total non-co-operation with the Tebbit Law and the Employment Act: state money for postal ballots should be rejected.

The National Economic Development Council and all the other governmental and industrial participation bodies should be opposed and boycotted. Trade unionists must be answerable to the membership, not to joint committees with the bosses.

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CLASS FIGHTER

Tory axes sharpened

GOVERNMENT health warning

NO CRUISE

INSIDE

LIFE WITH YTS

MP

MP

Class Fighter — monthly paper, organising the struggle of youth against the Tories. 25p including postage from 214 Sicket Court, London N1 2SY.

Fighting for gay rights in the labour movement

THE number of local authorities with Equal Opportunities policies providing protection for gays could almost be counted on one hand. (Lothian Region, Greater Manchester, GLC, Nottinghamshire, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Lambeth.) Only seven out of 517 are known to have added those two important words, 'Sexual orientation' to the attributes listed in Equal Opportunities policies as free from negative discrimination in employment.

On the positive side, all seven are Labour controlled and there are prospects of others amending their policies in the coming year, as a result of the leftward moves in the composition of some Labour Groups following the local elections in May. Manchester City and Islington come immediately to mind.

Nottinghamshire County Council is the latest to approve a new employment policy, and so became the first authority with teaching functions to protect its employees from anti-gay discrimination. In this it is in advance of the Inner London Education Authority where, it is alleged, the lawyers are worried about conceding equal opportunity to gay teachers.

Indeed, Nottinghamshire Tories objected to the inclusion of sexual orientation in the statement of Employment Policy on the depressing familiar grounds that children would be 'at risk' from gay teachers.

Human morals would be debased to the lowest possible

The ultra-positive view is advanced that since they don't discriminate against anyone it is unnecessary to single out minority groups, such as gays, which might consider themselves in need of protection.

To single out groups would, so the argument goes, be a form of discrimination. This was the attitude of Barking Council's Director of Social Services in 1977, replying to a National Council for Civil Liberties questionnaire.

Yet it was Barking's Labour Council which dismissed Care Assistant Susan Shell last year, solely for being a lesbian, and which ignored the approaches of the trade unions and the hundreds of postcard objections sent to the Leader of the Council in a campaign organised by Gay Rights at Work.

Like women and blacks, the gay movement has learned from cases like Barking the need for positive written commitments to non-discrimination as an essential first step towards equality in all aspects of employment.

Few of us are so naïve as to believe that a small change in the print of an employer's policy statement is, in itself, going to make any dramatic change in the work situation and quality of life for gays, but it is a necessary campaign to wage.

Raising the issues becomes an educational event for both sides; often positive responses conceal strong underlying prejudices. In Nottinghamshire the controlling Labour Group recently accepted an offer by the local Campaign for Homosexual Equality to be shown the tape/slide kit 'Homosexuality: A Fact of Life' prior to the monthly Group meeting.

Held early on a Monday morning it was perhaps not surprising that only 15 of the 55 Labour councillors turned up to see it, but the really unfortunate aspect of their response was that so many believed that showing the kit in schools would 'lead youngsters at an impressionable age into a life of homosexuality', to borrow a familiar cliché.

They still saw gayness as, at best, a temporary aberration, or, at worst, an unfortunate accident to be tolerated the country.

among those born 'that way'. And they still believed that homosexuality could be passed on like some contagious and incurable disease to those who were naturally, healthily heterosexual.

Perhaps it is therefore significant that the Nottinghamshire change in policy came about primarily as a result of trade union initiative. Eight years have elapsed since Nottinghamshire gay trade unionists began their campaign for job protection in the County branch of NALGO, which resulted in their Equal Opportunities Committee taking up gay and lesbian rights as a relevant issue.

Gay activists in CHE meanwhile kept NALGO informed of research into anti-gay discrimination at the workplace.

With NUPE also committed by national conference decision to support the rights of its gay members the situation was ripe for a joint approach to the County Council, and this also took place last year in the context of a re-negotiation of employment policies.

The County's policy includes some useful clauses which must be pursued by the gay and labour movement locally: firstly all employees are to be informed of the Statement. Secondly, 'more detailed research in consultation with the trade unions, ethnic minorities and other minority groups' on aspects of employment discrimination is to be undertaken.

Thirdly, the policy is to be monitored, with the likely appointment of a permanent officer to carry out this work. Fourthly, the Joint Education/Social Services/Leisure Committee is to be asked to consider the implications of the new policy.

The conditions should thus be created for permanent access by gays and gay organisations to Council and trade union bodies, and through them gay rights at work can be developed and extended into other areas such as County support for changes to the school curriculum to recognise the validity of gay relationships, support for gay counselling, support for gay self-help groups, including the provision of gay community centres. These are realistic demands that could be repeated within authorities up and down the country.

At the sharp end of the industrial struggle against Tory plans to privatise the state sector are British Telecom engineers organised in the POEU. Their special conference to discuss the issue is on September 18. RICKY HOUSTON looks at the situation.

THE Post Office Engineering Union Special Conference on Privatisation takes place this weekend in London. The conference is probably the most important conference the union has ever had. Privatisation faces the vast majority of the membership; a direct threat to their jobs and working conditions.

The Tories' Bill for the privatisation of British Telecom has now had its second reading. It will be passed in the Spring of 1984 — unless the POEU can lead a struggle like it never has before to fight the Tory government to a standstill under conditions which are far from easy.

Thatcher's resounding election victory in June was only equalled in the eyes of POEU members by the resounding election victory of Broad Left-supported candidates to the Union's National Executive Committee, the first time this had occurred since 1948.

Since that election a heated war of propaganda between BT management, the government and the POEU has been going on.

From BT's point of view this is intended to undermine the POEU's industrial action; and from the POEU, to rouse and mobilise its 133,000 members.

This reached a new peak in the BT staff magazine 'Telecom Today', when a special edition was published at the time of the 'Cowley Mole' sackings, claiming that some unions were being led by a 'militant minority' bent on destroying BT.

That particular edition has been replied to in the POEU's Campaign News. The Broad Left's victory was due in a large extent to the lack of faith in the then right-wing leadership's campaign against the Bill, which had concentrated almost solely on parliamentary opposition. This was recognised by many branches as inadequate.

However the effect of the defeat of that campaign in the June 9 election, and the continuation of the campaign by the organised right wing faction can still be seen in a number of proposals to abandon any industrial action against the Privatisation Bill, and a few more propositions which accept that the Bill will be passed.

Tough fight to defend Telecoms from hiving off

A weekly sum of £1 per member is building up an industrial action fund to sustain the blacking action that the newly elected NEC sanctioned against connection of the privately-owned Project Mercury to the BT network. This has gone some way to

tackling the demoralisation amongst some of the rank and file that the 'old' campaign's failure caused. The blacking action against Mercury has been confined almost solely to the London area, where Mercury aided

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ANNA ARNONE

Privatisation has already undermined wages and conditions in local government services like Wandsworth (above); will BT be next?

by BT management, have attempted interconnection but in the last month this has been extended beyond London by initiating selective blacking action against Mercury's backers — BP, Barclays Bank and Cable and Wireless.

Extending the blacking action has led some of the areas now involved into taking a more militant line at the conference. One example is Aberdeen branch, which covers major BP North Sea Oil installations. They call for an escalation of the present action (which only blacks package switching in major offices) to blacking all equipment in all the offices and other buildings occupied by Mercury's backers.

The majority of propositions and amendments which call for industrial action both against the Bill and Project Mercury call for selective action against government lines and those financial institutions, which was a fairly successful tactic employed in the shorter working week fight of 1976.

Some POEU branches not surprisingly noticed this was occurring and have propositions recognising it. Tyburn branch notes the ineffective National TUC-co-ordinated efforts to date against the Government attacks on the Public Sector Services. This was especially true in

both the ASLEF fight last year and the Health Service pay battle, which brought forth solidarity action throughout the labour movement, including some POEU branches, only to be strangled by Len Murray and assorted friends.

Tyburn further calls for the setting up of Public Sector alliances at area and regional levels to complement the POEU's proposition to the TUC conference which calls for a national public sector alliance to co-ordinate public sector industrial action.

The POEU alone is taking industrial action at present, but there are a number of propositions urging the BTUC, the umbrella body for all BT unions, to organise solidarity action of all the unions representing BT's 245,000 workers.

The most important and detailed proposition being put to the conference comes from London City Branch, one of the largest branches in the country and one of the branches that has been directly involved in the small scale selective action against Project Mercury.

It complements a proposition from Westminster Branch which calls for the industrial action overwhelmingly endorsed by the POEU's Annual Conference three days before the General Election.

A motion was carried then which instructed the NEC to immediately begin a campaign of industrial action if Thatcher were re-elected pledged to privatise BT. Westminster Branch notes that the NEC have delayed carrying out this proposal.

London City's motion addresses itself directly to the enormity of the threat that the POEU faces both from the earlier liberalisation Act passed in 1981, and now from the Privatisation Bill.

How we built our LP workplace branch!

The idea of workplace Labour Party organisation sounds fine: but how to set about it in practice? Last December LOL DUFFY, secretary of the workplace branch at Cammell Lairds shipyard on Merseyside, spoke to JOHN O'MAHONY.

WE HAVE 46 members already, though we only needed 10 to set up the branch.

How did you go about setting it up?

We had been trying to get something started for a couple of years, even before the Labour Party national conference decided for factory branches.

We tried various things, a 'Broad Left' for example. Through inter-union rivalry, at leadership level mainly, we failed.

Now the convenor of the G&M and myself have initiated this Labour Party branch.

We went round to everyone we knew was in the Labour Party and we got a leaflet out inviting people to join and help us set up a Labour Party branch. We linked it to the question of closure and the threat of denationalisation, and things like that.

The G&M convenor is chair, and I'm secretary.

So are all Labour Party members you know of at Lairds now in the workplace branch?

No. One Labour councillor isn't. There is an antagonistic element. In general our members are on the young side, rather than the old Labour Party traditionalists.

But we've only had two meetings. We meet fortnightly, at dinner time, in a pub over the road.

We will alternate between a business meeting and a political discussion meeting with invited speakers. We get a reasonable attendance.

We got 22 at the inaugural meeting — only 11 at the second, — business, meeting, but we should get good attendance at the political discussion meetings, which we will advertise.

JOHN HARRIS



The Lairds yard

What do you plan meetings on?

The next one is a Labour Party conference delegate's report. This is important because not many of the members are involved in their local Labour Party wards.

What is your relationship with the local Labour Party structure?

We are a recognised part of the Labour Party. The regional official attended the inaugural meeting, after the G&M convenor approached the regional office.

Workplace groups are on a rather similar basis to YS groups. We are allowed one delegate to each constituency if we have 10 members who live in it. If you don't have 10 in any one constituency, then you send a delegate to the one where you have most members.

Are there any other Labour Party factory groups locally?

Yes. One is in Liverpool City Council housing department, and one in a post office. There is a plan to set one up in Birkenhead Tech. I haven't heard of others.

Have you any advice for people setting up workplace Labour Party branches — what to do, how to do it?

First get out a leaflet explaining the need to link up the unions and Labour Party, and issues affecting the workplace. Put a form on the bottom, saying get in touch. Take it from there. We found it was dead easy. There was a demand which we met.

You often find that people who are industrial militants are not necessarily in the Labour Party, and that those who are in the Labour Party, or willing to join, are not necessarily the workplace militants. How does the membership of the Labour Party group compare with the trade union militants at Lairds?

I think it is pretty much the same people. We managed to get round and recruit people not previously in the Labour Party. A few of the stewards were Labour Party members already.

Will the Labour Party branch discuss trade union affairs?

Only in so far as this supports the work of the union in the

yard. We are not allowed to take up trade union affairs directly where it cuts across the sphere of any constituent trade union. But there is no doubt that we will be the ones who will do the linking up between any struggles going on in the yard and struggles outside the yard.

Are all the unions involved?

It's mainly the G&M and my own union, the Boilermakers, which is merging with the G&M. I suppose this reflects who it was that initiated it. But we hope to change that. We will have a drive to recruit. People are coming up to us all the time.

Any reaction from management?

We plan to ask them for a place to meet. I don't suppose we will get it. There are no union meetings here, and management is very much opposed to outside speakers. We may try to get some 'big name' labour movement speaker — Benn, perhaps. He was involved in balling out Luttrell in the '60s.

The traditional separation of the industrial and political sides of the labour movement has always been one of our great weaknesses. Do you think workplace Labour Party branches can help tackle this?

Yes. If the Labour Party is even in part rooted in the conditions of day-to-day working class struggle, this can greatly boost the work of trying to make the Labour Party itself into an instrument of working class struggle.

Workplace branches can draw the party directly into industrial struggle, and draw working class Labour supporters who otherwise passively into the affairs of the party. This in turn, I hope, will help them begin to think more about the political questions.

Propaganda and other activity by committed socialists is of course essential if this development is in the end to be a positive contribution to the work of self-renewal we have seen the political labour movement engaged in over the last three years. But that's what Socialist Organiser is all about.

JOIN

Membership of National CND is £6 (adult), £9 (couple), £3 (student) and £1 for Youth CND (under 21). Send to CND, 11 Goodwin St, London N4.

ON

MARCH

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OCT.



JOHN HARRIS

Women's concern with hours of work and the service they provide can strengthen the fight on cuts and privatisation.

of smaller struggles shows no sign of letting up. NALGO residential workers — hardly conceived of as the shock-battalions of the working class, like the nurses before them — have been drawn into industrial action.

No doubt other groups of women workers will follow, forced by their very need for survival into conflict with the Tories.

Women have traditionally been scorned by chauvinists (especially in the bureaucracy) for their concern with 'fringe' issues such as conditions, hours of work and the service they provide, rather than 'real' money issues.

Yet, with privatisation and the break-up of the welfare state, these are precisely the issues that are coming to the fore.

Public sector workers faced with the sack or living-off to private firms can only defend their own jobs if they take on board the concerns of the consumers of those services — largely working class people themselves.

The lack of division in women's lives between work and community, motherhood and public service, far from being a break on militancy (as has been traditionally argued) enables women much more easily to make the link between the Tories' attack on all fronts.

Within the Labour Party the same disparity appears between official torpor and rank-and-file activism, as is shown in the TUC Day of Action.

The Election campaign, despite radical Manifesto commitments on women which had been strenuously fought for over the years, fell back on cosy stereotypes of the

'family', an all-male public face and timidity in presenting what could have been electoral assets.

Yet, on the ground, more women were involved actively than in previous elections. And the record number of women's resolutions to Labour Party Annual Conference shows these women are not going to be content to be pushed into a back seat.

Despite attempts by Labour councils to back-track on commitments to 'unpopular' or 'fringe' groups, black and lesbian women are far from accepting this marginalisation.

The formation of a Labour Party lesbian group, the growing strength of black trade unionism, the demands for fairer representation, and the increasingly vocal black feminists all indicate that the most oppressed sections of women are no longer prepared to heed appeals to unite behind hetero-

Socialist ORGANISER Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Freeze rent and rates.

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

*The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, MI5, etc), public accountability, etc.

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

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

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

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

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

*The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control. The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file.

Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist alternative in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and bosses.

JOHN HARRIS



Right wing CPSA General Secretary Alastair Graham

CPSA Broad Left: time to stop the rot!

By Stephen
Corbishley

is not far off.

And this position in the best organised sections of CPSA (i.e. DE and DHSS) is the key background to how the CPSA Broad Left is developing.

The CPSA Broad Left founded in 1976 is now the largest Broad Left in the country, with over 500 members; its is an open and democratic Broad Left, with dominant influence over CPSA Conference, and holding the leadership of the best organised sections of CPSA.

It is a Broad Left in which the left and the militants freely debate strategy, and have the real possibility of leading struggles not only in their local offices, but also nationally.

Yet in many ways the Broad Left is crumbling from its previous authoritative and dominant position within CPSA. The roots of this crisis lie firmly in the inadequacy of

OXFORD and Birmingham DHSS workers spontaneously struck in 1982 in a struggle to not only defend the staff-ing levels in local Social Security offices, but also the structure and operations of the Social Security system itself.

After 3 months struggle a compromise was struck that saw some extra staff being assigned to the Midlands offices, and a review of the numbers of staff required to work the service.

In May of this year the Liverpool DHSS CPSA members struck — again in defence of jobs and the benefits service; but were forced back to work by a combination of threats from CPSA HQ and concern at the size of the Tory majority in the General Election.

It is now widely accepted that in the attack on both Civil Service staffing levels generally, and the DHSS/DE Benefit Service operations in particular, a fight on jobs

(Continued over)

SUPPORT LABOURS POLICIES

NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE NO DEFENCE

March

SUNDAY OCT 2ND

AT THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

130 - THE LEVEL, B'N

RALLY 2.30 - SEATON TOWN HALL

UNITED STIVERS AT 11 AM INCLD

NO CRUISE, TRIDENT, BASES. JOBS NOT BOMBS

TONY BENN KEN LIVINGSTONE

HELEN JOHN CATHY ASHTON

RICHARD BALF LIZ FREUTHAL

KEN CAMERON & OTHERS

Defending your hospitals

Workers will constantly be putting their jobs on the line in fighting the cuts and closures. Any action will be in contravention of the Tebbit legislation. Workers will be fighting managers, their trade union leaders and often the police.

They risk massive fines and imprisonment. The very least the Labour party and trade union members on the district health authorities can do is vote against closure.

Yet at meeting after meeting we hear them saying that they must stick to the cash limits (because Norman Fowler says so) and they must make the cuts. Let the Tories make their own cuts. Labour should be defending the working class.

Smoke them out!

District Health Authorities should not be allowed to make their cuts in a quiet room with only a few people there. Members of the public are allowed into the meetings. Many people do not know this.

Make sure that there are a lot of people at the meetings where the cuts are being discussed. You are technically not allowed to speak: but why should a totally un-elected and unaccountable body be able to ruin the health of the community in silence? The plan of DHA meetings has proved valuable in the past and shows the advantage of an occupation base. It might not have an easy time trying to change the hospital.

But the real way to win and to save hospitals is by industrial action. There have been several militant hospital occupations since 1977.

Cynthia argues that they have not saved the hospitals and are therefore not worth the problems involved.

The KJA closure was postponed for three years through an occupation. St. Benedict's occupation was ten months long and was only broken by massive police force and private ambulances. Every fight to save a hospital makes it harder to close another one. Every occupation involves the issue of workers control. Suddenly the workers find that they are making the de-

tal will run. They are in control of their working environment - for the first time. The hospital usually runs smoother during occupations. The patient/worker relationships are much better, with patients cooperating in trying to keep the hospital open. In geriatric hospitals like St. Benedict's many of the long stay patients were actively involved in the occupation, taking their place on the picket rota.

Workers' control

Occupations essentially involve the workers declaring that they will not participate in the closure of the hospital and that they will actively oppose it.

Many workers do not know exactly what an occupation involves. Does it mean they will not get paid? Do they have to sleep at the hospital? What about their families? Will they be sacked? Should management be banned?

The best thing to do is to call a mass meeting at the hospital and to invite a speaker who has experiences of occupations.

Unlike industry, during NHS occupations the workers continue to get paid. This is a very important advantage. As long as there are patients in a hospital the District is required by law to ensure their treatment. You cannot be locked out or lose pay. It usually does not require sleeping in although if you take over a room of office for an occupation base it might be necessary to have someone there all the time.

Occupations do put stress on the workers and their families. It is good to get the family involved in picketing and petitioning, etc.

Don't trust the bosses

In some cases management is banned. This is a difficult question and depends on the strength of the occupation and the size of the hospital. A good rule from the beginning is to ban any senior managers who do not normally come to the hospital. It is best to ban management completely at some stage. They may be police and pretend that they really do not

but their real sympathy is with their careers. Don't trust them.

A regular picket is necessary to prevent the removal of equipment and patients, and to keep track of who is coming and going. Most areas have law centres who will give advice on legal rights etc and it is good to involve them from the beginning.

It is true that an occupation cannot win on its own. It needs the support of the community but particularly it needs the support of other trade unionists in the area.

Because of management's 'divide and rule' tactics and because the trade union officials are hostile to occupations there has not been the necessary level of supporting strike action in other hospitals and in other sectors.

Supporting strike action

During the St. Benedict's occupation the workers committee went around to all the hospitals speaking at meetings and asking for supporting strike action. Many of the stewards and members were prepared to come out if the officials had approved the

action.

DON'T CRY! OCCUPY



JOHN HARRIS

action. The officials did not move.

They will be less likely to move now with the Tebbit laws the rank and file must be convinced to come out on strike whether or not it is official. Administrators will be less likely to act in a heavy-handed way if they know that there will be district wide strike action in support of the threatened hospital.

The Tories' plans for the decimation of the NHS can be wrecked. The labour movement has thwarted governments before, and it is strong enough to do it again.

The NHS has the sympathy of nearly every worker in Britain. The strength of feeling was shown during the dispute in 1982. That strength must be harnessed to save the NHS and to stop the Tory destruction of the welfare state.

Saving hospitals is not easy. But we have learned a lot in the past struggles and we can win with united action.

Why workers won't buy the AES

By Martin Thomas

WHY didn't the Alternative Economic Strategy convince working class voters? Certainly it didn't. If Labour's plan for jobs had won their confidence, no amount of media attacks and diversions could have produced the big swing away from Labour that actually took place.

Not too much weight can be put on opinion poll figures, but they confirm this conclusion. The first reason for working class voters not to believe Labour's promises was the record of the 1974-9 Labour government. Unemployment was 600,000 in 1974, 1½ million in 1979 - even though the 1974 manifesto contained much the same promises as 1983's.

So talk of 'tried and tested' policies rang hollow. Yet the national leaflet 'What Labour offers you', read:

'We'll invest in industry, Transport, Housing, New Technology. It's a tried and tested way to create new jobs and reduce the debt bill. With jobs again, people can buy things again. To produce them, industry takes on even more people.'

We'll also help the economy to grow by spending more on Pensions, Education, Health, Child Benefits.

And we'll help firms take on extra workers. Even if voters were prepared to forget about 1974-9, this was not very convincing.

More state spending? But that means increased taxes, or more public borrowing. More public borrowing tends to mean more inflation.

More demand for goods? That means more imports, more balance of payments problems. The leaflet also promises lower interest rates - which tend to mean money flowing out to where it can get better rates.

The leaflet doesn't mention these difficulties or try to answer them directly. It does, however, answer them indirectly by including promises of price controls and import controls. (Exchange controls were also part of the manifesto).

will get that money invested. Planning and new public enterprise will channel the investment to where it's needed the most.

We will also control the way that firms use the money through growth plans agreed with workers and management.

The problem of nationalism arises again: if investment by British capital is a Good Thing, why shouldn't other countries have the benefit of it as well as Britain?

Aside from that, some questions are begged. How will the Labour government enforce these controls? What if the big banks are not swayed by mere 'pressure' from a Labour government? What if management doesn't 'agree' the 'growth plans'?

More fundamentally: can capital be controlled by labour without ceasing to be capital? Capital is not machines and equipment: it is the accumulated profits of past exploitation, constantly seeking to expand as fast as possible through new exploitation and new profits.

No wonder Labour wasn't convincing.

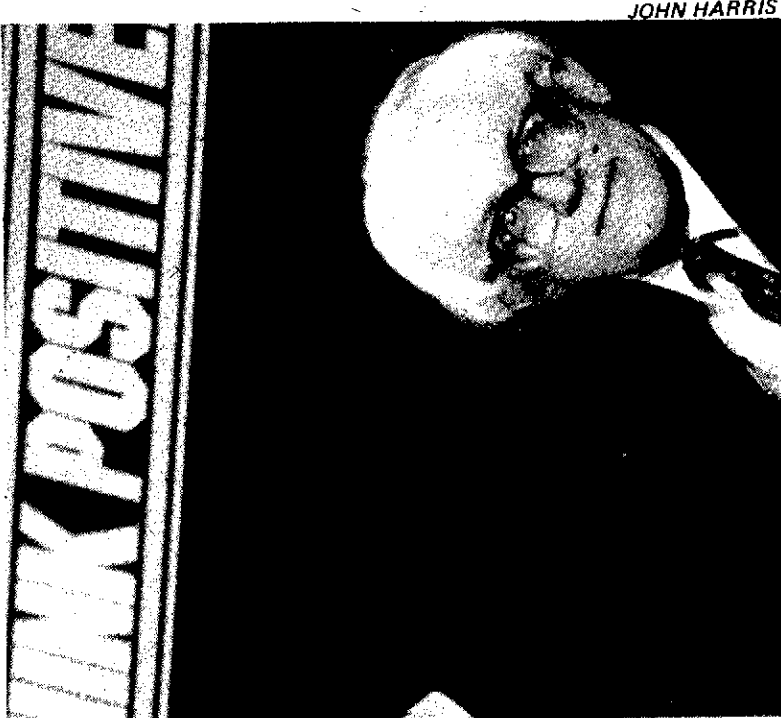
Class Struggle

The economy can be democratically planned, or run for profit - but not both simultaneously.

Moreover, not even the 'control of capital' was put in terms of class struggle - workers' power against the power of the bosses and bankers.

Almost every voter I spoke to while canvassing who gave a positive reason for voting Labour said something to the effect that s/he regarded Labour as the party of the working class. Yet neither the official leaflet nor the more left wing local material even used the words 'working class' or 'class struggle'.

No wonder Labour wasn't convincing.



JOHN HARRIS

Foot's salesmanship failed the test

The means of production and distribution are forms of capital only so long as they serve the purpose of profit-making. If they are owned and controlled by the working class - and that is the only way that the economy can really be planned and decent jobs for all secured - then they are no longer 'capital'.

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LABOUR AGAINST THE PARTY WITCH-HUNT!

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

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

How to defend your hospital

While the TUC and union conferences pass motions against the cuts or even calling for 'resistance', the task of organising a real fight falls invariably to the rank and file. These articles reprinted from Socialist Organiser offer guidelines on how to do it.

THE Tory attacks on the NHS need an organised and militant fightback. There is no sign or likelihood that the trade union leadership will fight — it is up to the rank and file to build action against the cuts and closures.

This action will be linked with opposing privatisation and the contracting out of services. It is much easier to close a hospital which employs domestics on contract and a lot of agency nurses.

Once management decide to recommend the closure of either wards or an entire hospital the rundown begins. The rundown has not been authorised by the District Health Authority (DHA) at this point — it is being done by an entirely unaccountable group of bureaucrats.

Over the last five years there has been an almost identical scenario for closures:

- *ancillary and nursing staff who leave are not replaced;
- *conditions for both patients and workers deteriorate;
- *it becomes almost impossible to get routine health and safety work done, old obsolete equipment is not replaced;
- *then, suddenly the administrators announce that the hospital is becoming unsafe.

No cover

They create the conditions which make the hospital unsafe and then use the conditions to justify closing the hospital.

These 'creeping cuts', nearly always preliminary steps in the closure process need to be resisted.

COHSE, NUPE and NALGO all have policies of no cover for unfilled vacancies.

Shop stewards should ensure that that policy is implemented. At St. Mary's, Harrow Road, the domestics were told to clean floors when they had never done it before. Management were preparing the rundown and did not want to hire new people. The domestics refused this addition-

al job and provided a focus for other workers in the hospital who wanted to oppose the closure.

The trade union bureaucrats will constantly try to sell out and sabotage this sort of action. It rocks their pleasant relationship with managers.

This kind of obstruction from the full-time officials to deter-mined action by the workers will continue right through the fight to save beds and jobs.

The battle for hospitals is not just about fighting the Tories — it is just as much about fighting the trade union leadership.

Build Joint Stewards' Committees

The most effective way of organising to save the NHS is through joint stewards committees. Most hospitals had them during the 1982 dispute. In some areas they are still functioning, in others they collapsed. But, if we are to fight and win they must be built again.

Opposing the coming onslaught, particularly in London, will need just as much coordination and support as we saw in the fight for wages in 1982.

Health and safety committees are particularly important — at the South London Hospital the Health and Safety Committee has forced management to make major repairs that they were hoping to leave to use as fuel for their arguments about the hospital being 'run down'.

As soon as word leaks out that a hospital is threatened (we know of 53 in London alone) the workers and community must organise. It takes time for the implications of closure to sink in. Most workers, although they are aware that other hospitals have been closed think it can never happen to their hospital.

All health service facilities are threatened by the Tories; thinking that if another hospital in your district closes yours will be okay is disastrous.



CHRISTINE CADIN

In Wandsworth five hospitals have closed since 1978 and now the South London is earmarked for closure. Management use the fear of closure and the false hope of saving one place at the expense of another to try to pit worker against worker.

In Wandsworth they have said publicly that if the South London Campaign succeeds then something else will close. This tactic is one of the most vicious and has to be squashed immediately.

Unity essential

It is vital that workers fight the Tories and the axemen who chop for them as a united force.

All work necessary to close hospitals should be blocked. Stewards should oppose three and six month contracts which make it easier to assimilate people from the hospital about to be closed.

Usually a district will only issue 'temporary' contracts for a whole year's run-up to a closure. So, new staff are effectively sacked in order that workers from the closing hospital can be shopped in.

The whole process undermines trade union activity and militancy and makes some workers wary of even joining a union in case they jeopardise the renewal of their contract.

Workers in the threatened hospital must refuse even to discuss alternative employment with management. They should ignore any letters or demands that they get from supervisors telling them to attend meetings (usually on their own) to have preliminary discussions.

Meet in the hospital

Health service managers are now experienced in the techniques of closing hospitals. They try to do it quickly and quietly through administrative measures and intimidation. They do not like well organised campaigns with experienced people who know their tactics.

It is sometimes hard to convince workers just what rotten and unprompted tactics managers will use. Yet, in every fight against closure there are intimidation, victimisations, dirty tricks. Only a strong and coordinated campaign can effectively oppose this kind of operation.

The most successful fight-backs — EGA, St. Benedict's, Longworth, St. Mary's — have involved workers and supporters meeting together either weekly or fortnightly.

Meeting in the hospital is best because the workers will see people coming in every week to support them and the supporters will feel part of the hospital (and know its layout).

It may seem too frequent at first — but managers work very quickly and things can change on a daily basis. There is no need to ask permission for these meetings — management will almost certainly refuse.

Just pick a room and have the meetings. It is unlikely that administrators will make an issue of it as they do not want to provoke action early on! A public profile is essential. Everyone in the community should know that their hospital

is threatened. Leaflets, posters, petitions, pickets and demonstrations are all good for attracting interest.

Workers who are a bit frightened about fighting management and are not sure about the levels of support they will get can be bolstered by seeing a large demonstration or a lot of people turning up to picket outside the hospital.

It is important to challenge management at every step in the campaign. The administrators and consultants will constantly be putting out statements about the terrible financial conditions, weeping crocodile tears that they have to close the hospital, and saying that they really have no choice and that there is no money available.

Workers should be reminded of last year when we were given the same arguments about why we could only have a 4% increase. There was no money then, but suddenly billions were found for the Malvinas war, extra money was found for the judges and the police.

The money is there

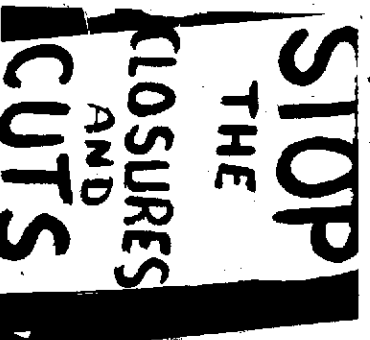
The fact is that there is money available for the NHS — but the Tories do not want to spend it on health. Workers should challenge the District's financial figures and demand to open the books and see just how the districts spend their allocations. We should use figures showing the huge profits made by the drug industry and by other suppliers.

Lobby Health Authorities

HEALTH Authorities are weighed in favour of the wealthy and the ruling class — Norman Fowler sees to that. However, in several districts in London there is a real possibility of the DHA's rejecting the cuts — if only the Labour party representatives on the DHA's would vote against.

Labour party activists should get the GMCs to adopt a position that members of the party on authorities must oppose closures which are made for economic reasons.

In Wandsworth recently two women labour party members voted for the closure of the South London.



JOHN HARRIS

