

Socialist Organiser

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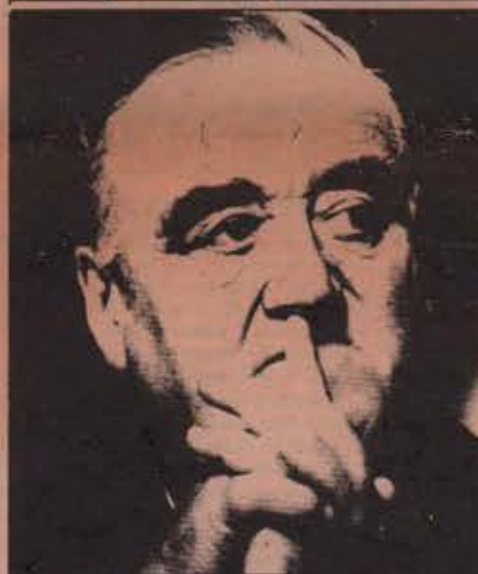
JANUARY 1980

15p

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

Support the steelworkers

STOP THE TORY BLITZ



by
JOHN O'MAHONY

HOW CAN the labour movement stop the full-scale offensive launched by the Thatcher government in the last seven months and set to continue and escalate?

Already the steel unions are launched into a major strike battle with the Tories. The British Steel Corporation, under orders from the Tories to show a profit or go under, has refused to give the steelworkers more than a token pay rise. With inflation soaring, the Tories want to condemn steelworkers to a 15 or 20% cut in real wages.

The steel union leaders insist that their strike is only on the pay issue. But millions of workers know that the issue is an overall Tory offensive.

Already the steel strike is clashing with the Tories on another front: pickets' rights. To be effective quickly, the steel strike must be backed by solidarity blacking and flying pickets at steel stockholders and private

steelworks.

The judges have done a lot over recent years to outlaw solidarity action and mobile pickets. Now the Tory government wants to wrap up their work with a law. The steel strike challenges the Tories.

Jobs are also an issue behind the steel strike. The steelworkers' ability to defeat Tory plans to axe 52,000 jobs in their industry will stand or fall with their ability to win this strike.

But even this strike does not match the scope of the Tory offensive. The Wales TUC has decided that the only way to stop the Tory offensive against steel jobs — an offensive which also poses the threat of the closure of the entire South Wales coalfield, and the cutting of thousands of livelihoods dependent on the steel and coal industries — is general strike action.

The Wales TUC general council, on December 19th, called on all workers in Wales to strike from January 21st unless the steel closures are halted.

The same conviction that

general action is necessary to stop the Tories led, at a meeting of the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils and the South Yorkshire Labour Parties, to a call for a general strike in their area for one day on February 18th. A decision on that general strike call is to be taken on January 5th.

Moving according to the same line of thought, the Scottish TUC scheduled a half-day strike for February 13th, though it has now put it off while it consults with other trade union bodies on a joint date.

On November 28th, 60,000 struck work to demonstrate against the cuts, responding to the TUC and Labour Party call. On September 13th, many workers joined a borough-wide strike and day of action against the cuts in Hackney, East London. They too saw the need for all-round class action to counter the all-round Tory offensive.

The Wales TUC has called on the British TUC to join its stand. Every trade union organisation should back that

continued on p.5

- Steelworkers offered only a token pay rise — which would mean 15 to 20% cut in real wages.

- 52,000 steel jobs for the axe.

- BL workers offered only 5% pay rise — which means nearly 15% cut in real wages — and that tied to 85 pages of conditions crippling stewards' organisation and slashing shop floor rights.

- A threat held over BL workers' heads: fight back and we'll shut the lot down. BL's leading convenor sacked for speaking out against the bosses' plans.

- Devastating cuts in already half-starved public services. The Child Poverty Action Group estimates that the net effect of the cuts and Tory tax changes will be £12 a week loss for the average family. The poorest will be worst hit.

- Threats of Government action against 'overspending' councils — the Labour councils which try to improve conditions for the worst-off working class communities.

- Attempt to outlaw flying pickets and solidarity pickets, to outlaw workers' solidarity while bosses' solidarity rules unchecked.

- Further racist scapegoating of black people, with new immigration curbs.

- Rolling back of abortion rights and Labour's women's rights legislation.

- And all to boost the police and armed forces and to put more money into the pockets of the rich. All for the sake of profit.

LABOUR'S ENQUIRY: WHAT THE LEFT SHOULD SAY

by RON HEISLER

IT WOULD be a foolish prophet who proclaimed that the 'built-in' Left majority on the NEC Committee of Inquiry into Party Organisation will stay the course and fully withstand all the blandishments and pressures of the Right. Such 'built-in' Left majorities have crumbled before.

However, it is predictable that certain issues will not be conceded to the Right, such as the Manifesto Group demand that the NEC be restructured, with the creation of an NEC section elected by the MPs and another section elected by local councillors. Too many current NEC members have a vested interest in the status quo.

The NEC is also unlikely to capitulate to those Right extremists who clamour for a purge of groups such as *Militant*, although it must not be assumed that the YS, as constituted at present, will remain inviolate. The low membership of the Young Socialists will inevitably attract heavy criticism.

What Labour Party members must be on their guard against is the more sophisticated approach that is starting to emerge from right wing trade unions, and their research departments, in their strategy of trying to reverse the fundamental swing to the Left that the Party has experienced outside parliament in recent years.

Sid Weighell's article in *The Times* lays out this strategy quite clearly: if they cannot win control of the NEC, then they must seek to undermine the powers and standing both of the NEC, as the supreme committee of the Labour Party, and of Annual Conference, its sovereign body.

Weighell, taking his cue from Roy Hattersley, is now a convert to the idea that Labour's 'policy making must be driven back to the grass roots of the movement'. Weighell is not

notorious for preaching this doctrine in the NUR. He attacks the democratic institutions of the Party thus: "It is ludicrous that annual conference should be required to take an ill-considered view of 30 major policy statements and find that none can be implemented. It would be far more sensible that it should examine three policy areas in detail, with the confidence that they are going to be carried out by a Labour government." On this basis, of course, a major policy area such as Ireland could be discussed once in ten years.

The much vaunted processes of consultation with the grass roots would remain as precisely that — consultation, and of the worst kind: vague and inconclusive, with few hard and fast decisions at Annual Conference.

Even the regional conferences are under threat. Weighell tells us that they "fulfil no useful function" at all. From the Right's point of view, he's probably quite right.

However, it would be tragic and self-defeating if the Left adopted a purely

expelled members retain full membership rights until their cases have been heard by the NEC.

(ii) A new form of party branch, the factory branch, should be recognised in the Constitution. We should also aim to enable dynamic social groups such as the tenants' movement and housing and industrial co-ops to affiliate to the Labour Party directly.

(iii) We should aim to make an honest woman out of the parliamentary labour party, which should be forced to function as the equivalent of a Labour Group on a council, with minutes kept and published, including the voting records of MPs.

(iv) The NEC should be told, if the NEC structure comes under serious consideration, that the progressive position on reform is not to create sections elected by local councillors and by the MPs, but to enlarge the constituency section from its present seven members, allowing MPs only to run for seven of the seats. It is indefensible that since 1947, with the exception of the YS, the NEC has been exclusively monopolised by trade union officials and people whose careers have been in parliament. Our message to the NEC is simple: break the 'closed shop' of elites and bring genuine lay representation onto the NEC.

(v) Finally, it is worth noting that the trade unions have stated that the block vote system at Annual Conference should not be excluded from discussion by the Inquiry. In these circumstances, we should argue for a fundamental reform of a system under which trade unions cast 90% of the Conference votes, although this completely overrepresents their overall financial contribution to the Labour Party. It also discriminates viciously against constituency parties, who at present pay far more to Transport House for each individual members they affiliate upon, than do the unions.



Will Labour conference democracy be gutted as the Right try to counter the Brighton reforms?

We are also told that Labour's policies get "endorsed — and, very often, worse, amended — on the basis of a hasty and normally quite superficial debate at annual conference". Weighell's aim is clear: namely, to reduce the number of concrete major decisions taken at Annual Conference, so that the Party leadership and the trade union bureaucracies can settle matters more easily in private, without having to endure too much pressure from the grass roots.

defensive posture in regard to the Inquiry. There are, in fact, several areas where important reforms should or could be fought for.

(i) Expulsion procedures require changing. At present, members are being expelled to remove them from party activity, because they pose a potential threat, not because they have actually infringed party rules. With mandatory reselection coming close, expulsions will multiply as besieged MPs struggle to retain their seats. We should argue that

Let's open up the debate on Ireland

by DON FLYNN

A GROUP of constituency party activists involved in the battle to get resolutions on Ireland debated at the 1979 Labour Party conference has set up a campaigning body to ensure that the fight continues.

The Labour Committee on Ireland is in the process of circulating local constituency parties with a model resolution which it is asking the parties to support and send to the NEC.

The model resolution calls on the NEC to initiate a thorough-going debate on the party's policies on Ireland by inviting constituency parties to submit statements on their opinions of policies pursued in the past in Northern Ireland to a special sub-committee the NEC has set up to review the party's past record on this subject.

A spokesperson for the LCI said, "If we are going to win the Labour Party to support radical anti-imperialist policies then the first step is to get the rank and file involved in the debate about Ireland and the British military presence there."

That is why we are asking local parties to build up the pressure on the NEC by making it clear that ordinary party members are anxious that the NEC sub-committee should carry out

an honest review of past policies on Northern Ireland and not just produce a cover-up job for bipartisanship and continued military rule in the Six Counties.

The LCI is also planning a day conference on the subject of Ireland and the British Labour Party to be held in London on 29 March 1980. The conference will be considering ways in which party activists can continue to campaign on the issue of Ireland in the period leading up to the 1980 party conference. For further details of the LCI, please write c/o S Stamford Hill, London N16.

This CLP welcomes the NEC's decision to review Party policy on Ireland by setting up a special sub-committee on the subject.

In order to involve as many Party members as possible in the work of this sub-committee we call on the NEC to ensure that:

- the sub-committee meets frequently [at least once a month];
 - it invites CLPs and affiliated organisations to submit evidence and views on present Party policy on Northern Ireland;
 - that all such evidence and views submitted are made available to Party members on request.
- We also feel that the sub-committee should include the question of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland in its brief.

What's On

SUNDAY 13 JANUARY. Leyland Combine Shop Stewards Committee conference in support of Derek Robinson. 11am to 3.30pm at Birmingham Town Hall. Credentials: Colin Willetts, 25 Hawne Lane, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3RN.

SATURDAY 26 JANUARY. Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference on the Tory anti-union laws. Friends House, Euston Rd, London NW1. Credentials c/o 137 Wanstead Park Rd, Ilford, Essex.

SATURDAY 26 JANUARY. Islington Campaign against the Cuts march. 11am, Whittington Park (Holloway Rd) to Islington Town Hall.

SATURDAY 2 FEBRUARY. Labour Party Young Socialists national rally against the Tories. 12 noon, Porden Rd, Brixton (by Brixton tube).

SATURDAY 22 MARCH. National Conference against the cuts, called by Merseyside District Labour Party and Liverpool Trades Council. 11am, St George's Hall, Liverpool. Credentials from A Dodswell, 70 Victoria St, Liverpool 1.

SATURDAY 9 FEBRUARY. Mass rally and demonstration against the cuts, in Sheffield, called by South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils.

IRELAND SOCIALIST REVIEW

No. 6, Winter 1979-80, OUT NOW.

An independent journal covering the class and national struggle in Ireland and its consequences for the British labour movement. Articles in this issue include: Ireland in the world economy, by Marie Smith; Ireland and the Labour Party conference with a transcript of the full debate; plus reviews.

Price 50p incl. postage. Subscriptions: £1.00 per annum. 20 copies given to Ireland Socialist Review. From: 132, Loughborough Rd, London EC1A 3BB.

NOTICE: The next meeting of the Steering Committee of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory and the 'Socialist Organiser' editorial board will take place in London on Saturday 12th January.

12 pages, 15p.

WORKERS' ACTION

Revolutionary socialist weekly. Now includes magazine section. Single copies 23p inc. postage, or sub. rates on request, from PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Chartist

No. 78, Dec/Feb 1979/80. Feature: John Maclean and the British CP. Also: Focus on Labour Left, the LCC, Unemployment & Trade Unions, Freud, Beyond the Fragments, Sexual and Social Revolution, Using the Media, Marxist Economic Theory. 40p plus 15p p& p from Chartist Publications, 60 Loughborough Rd, SW9.

FIGHT THE TORIES!

BUILD

barricade

Barricade, the new magazine for young socialists. First issue out now, 20 pages for 10p.

Order your copy (15p incl. postage) from 'Barricade', PO Box 135, London N1 0DD. Bulk orders £1 for 10 copies.

Published by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16 and printed by Anvil Press (TU). Signed articles do not necessarily represent the point of view of the SCLV.

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, MI5, 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 run 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 business and bosses.

Stand by Labour policy:

No Cruise missiles!

HOLLAND, Denmark and Norway have opposed the NATO plan for a new build-up of nuclear missiles in Europe. The Dutch Labour Party has played a leading role in the opposition in Holland. And in Belgium 20,000 turned out for a march against the missiles.

It is high time for a campaign in Britain.

The NATO Council on December 12th decided to base 464 Cruise and 108 Pershing II missiles in west Europe.

Britain is to have 160 Cruise missiles (probably at Lakenheath in Suffolk and Upper Hayford in Oxfordshire), Italy 112, and Holland and Belgium 48 each. (Those 96 have been postponed, in a

compromise to get round the Dutch and Belgian opposition). West Germany will get 96 Cruise missiles and 108 Pershings.

These are medium-range missiles, with more striking power than the 7000 'tactical' nuclear missiles which NATO presently has in western Europe. It is a major new round of the nuclear arms race, another turn of the crazy roundabout that puts all our lives in the hands of the Pentagon hawks and the men who blitzed Vietnam and Cambodia.

Socialist Organiser says:

- Stop the Cruise missiles
- Withdraw from NATO
- Unilateral nuclear disarmament
- Disarm the warmongers!

FRANK ALLAUN MP, chairman of Labour Action for Peace, told Socialist Organiser:

The Labour Party policy is, as decided by the 1978 conference, no Cruise missiles. And it's also part of our poli-

cy that there should be no new nuclear generation in succession to the Polaris submarine missiles.

The National Executive Committee stands by that, though I can't say the Parliamentary leadership has

done.

A number of new Labour MPs have very strong anti-war attitudes. I can tell you also that in the last couple of weeks the TGWU, with over two million members, has affiliated to Labour Ac-

tion for Peace.

The main job now is to get the Parliamentary leaders to carry out Party policy, and it is this determination which lies behind the struggle to make the Party more democratic.



Belgian anti-Cruise missile demonstration

Labour movement Fightback for Women's Rights

By RACHEL LEVER, secretary of FIGHTBACK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

NINETEEN eighty will be the year in which women lose their rights, the year of the sack and the knitting needle, bleak in every respect except one: women are not going to go quietly.

Will it be the end of 13 years of legal (if hard to get) abortions? Will the stereotype of male earner and female housewife, childminder and unpaid household nurse become a reality?

The pattern is already emerging. Cuts will push

'If the Good Lord had intended us to have equal rights and to go out to work and to behave equally, he really wouldn't have created man and woman'

Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State, DHSS.

women out of jobs in schools, hospitals and local and central government, or make it impossible for them to work because there is no service left to mind the children, the old and the sick. There is even a proposal to bring in a single-session school day, with no meal: that cuts out the meals staff and means that mothers of school-age children will find it difficult to go on working.

The 'trend' of women back into the home will then be observed by statisticians and give the signal for legal changes in women's status, some open, some surreptitious. And these in turn will make it easier for bosses in the private sector to victimise women in the coming recession.

Nineteen eighty must also mark a serious fightback for a woman's right to work, a woman's right to choose, and a woman's right to legal equality. We must defend every job and every nursery place, fight to keep and extend every service, take to streets, occupy workplaces and be ready to support those who are victimised for standing up for women's rights or for taking matters into our own hands.

Crucial in building up strength, flexibility and striking power will be the *Fightback for Women's Rights* conference on March 22nd.

It will bring together activists from the women's movement and from trade unions and Labour Parties. In addition, two dozen campaigns and specialist groups have been invited to contribute, enabling the conference to build up a precise outline of the coming battles.

Working sessions will map out key demands and practical ideas for action which will build links between activists in different fields of work and create a network of support and solidarity. The focus will be on the labour movement, in an attempt to make defence of women's rights a top priority.

A major problem for the conference to tackle will be how to balance self-help now with the need to fight to keep state-provided services. Another question will be the possibility of building women's action councils — working with existing trades councils but having a much wider frame of reference to involve tenants' groups, women in the home, local women's groups, and activists in campaigns like the National Abortion Campaign.

Women's groups, cuts campaigns, trade union and Labour Party branches and women's sections, are invited to send representatives to the conference (preferably

women). The main areas we will be looking at will be abortion; cuts; legal rights; maternity rights; and ways to strengthen women in the labour movement.

A further meeting shortly after the conference will be

'Maybe in years to come the country will look at the labour market and decide perhaps it would be better for women with children to stay at home'

Lynda Chalker, Parl. Under-Secretary of State for Social Security

held for those wishing to set up local *Fightback* groups.

In preparation for the conference, a broadsheet will be produced later this month, with further details and a briefing on the subjects for discussion. To help us prepare this broadsheet, we would welcome news and information from local activists on conditions as they are finding them, with particular reference to cuts and job losses. Send us a copy of your local anti-cuts bulletin, or cuttings from the local rag. And if you wish to help organise the conference, let us know and we'll send you a kit with information, registration forms and leaflets to mail to local labour movement organisations.

Conway Hall
Red Lion Sq WC1
Sat. March 22
11am - 5pm

Further details from *Fightback for Women's Rights*, 41 Ellington St., London N.7. (01-607 5268)

The TUC international dept HAND IN GLOVE WITH THE FOREIGN OFFICE

THERE is growing embarrassment at the TUC over revelations of a secret arrangement between the TUC's international department and H.M. Foreign Office. The intimate relations between the two were highlighted when it was discovered that a two-year secondment to the TUC had been arranged for a senior FO official.

Under the pretext of learning about international diplomacy, the TUC's international department has been seconding its own officials to the FO. Mike Walsh (tipped to succeed Alan Hargreaves as head of the department) has just come back from a two-year stint as deputy to the FO's Overseas Labour Adviser, H.R.G. Hurst, and now another international department man, Tom Jenkins, is installed at London Office.

The two-way traffic in personnel would give the FO access to TUC records and to the closed meetings of the General Council. But in the TUC's international affairs, there would be few secrets for Our Man in Congress House to find. For the TUC's international committee, dominated by rabid anti-communists, has for years worked hand in glove with the Foreign Office. It has spent its time and money (some of which comes straight from the FO) making sure that in countries within Britain's sphere of influence are firmly on the right, and channeling money and aid to 'safe' trade union bodies.

Of the money it has received from the Foreign Office, the vast majority in the first year was spent on bringing trade unionists from Britain's ex-colonies to this country for 'education'. Such schemes have been rejected by European trade unions after it became known that these 'trade unionists' often turned out to be governmental figures, high civil servants or even businessmen.

Concern over the arrival at Congress House of a paid agent of British imperial-

ism has prompted new attempts to pierce the veil of secrecy that shrouds the TUC's international committee. Now a campaign has been launched to get a full debate at next year's TUC, to press for accountability for the work of the department and an answer to some immediate pointed questions about its work; and for a discussion of the sort of international solidarity links that are needed, especially against multinational companies.

The campaign's sponsors write: 'The main cause for concern is TUC failure to make its overseas work



Alan Hargreaves

accountable to the membership. This secrecy makes impossible even the idea of workers' international solidarity. At the same time the global recession and erosion of trade union rights makes it imperative that workers link across frontiers.

A group of concerned trade unionists are planning to hold a public meeting in London in February (Sunday 10th, 2pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square) to launch a national labour movement campaign to make the TUC's overseas work accountable to the membership.

Sponsors of the campaign include Reg Williams (CPSA Executive), Jack Collins (Kent NUM), Tony Ayland (TUC South West Regional Council), Peter Heathfield (NUM Executive), Ernie Roberts MP, Ken Coates (Institute for Workers' Control), Joan Maynard MP, Stuart MacLellan (CPSA), George Anthony (North London AUEW), Stan Newens MP and Roland Sherritt (Sec. Stirling Trades Council).

All inquiries to Don Thomson, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1

SIX QUESTIONS FOR TRADE UNIONISTS

■ The TUC now spends about £600,000 a year on international work. Most of this is trade union money, but some comes from the Foreign Office. Why don't TUC reports to conference explain who overseas receives this cash?

■ Although the TUC subscribes to the idea of 'free and independent' trade unionism the international department appears to relate more closely to the Foreign Office than the membership. Why have recent TUC reports to conference failed to report that two members of the international staff have been seconded to the Foreign Office or that it was planned that someone from the Foreign Office be seconded to the TUC's international department?

■ Why does the TUC still maintain official links with a Latin American and Caribbean regional affiliate — the Inter-America Organisation of Workers (ORIT) — named by a US Senate Committee as being associated with the downfall of a number of democratic governments in that region and since discovered to have played a role in the downfall of Allende's government in Chile?

■ A number of past and present members of the TUC international committee have said publicly that because of their jobs they didn't have the time to properly administer the TUC international programme. Why is there no advisory committee to assist and vet the TUC's overseas work similar to that which exists for other TUC departments?

■ In 1975 the TUC, Foreign Office and CBI met to discuss jointly funding an overseas 'labour' programme. Why was the TUC membership not informed about this scheme and what are its implications for the idea of workers' international solidarity?

■ The relevant standing order defining the purpose of the TUC's international work reads: 'The TUC shall enter into relations with trade unions and labour movements with a view to united action'. Is this any longer sufficient?

January 19 & 20

Southall calls for action

SOME OF THE heaviest costs faced by the defendants in the Southall trials have yet to come.

The acquittal of four members of the People's Unite Community centre in Southall on Dec 19th occurred because not even Barnet magistrates would accept wildly contradictory police evidence about "assaults". It is, however, very much an exception. Over 20 more serious cases deferred at Barnet Magistrates court are yet to be heard. 18 cases have been sent to the Crown Court where defendants accused of injuring police officers or similar offences,

face the prospect of long jail terms.

The only real step forward in the courts has been the victory by Blair Peach's family in the Appeal Court in December — where judges were forced to grant a jury inquest.

The decision was made because of the overwhelming evidence that many SPG officers on duty in Southall on April 23rd had their own non-regulation weapons including lead-weighted truncheons, pickaxe handles and sledgehammers. The Appeal Court judges were forced to say that the fatal injuries suffered by Blair

Peach might well be repeated in future incidents.

The Southall Campaign Committee, the Friends of Blair Peach and the Anti-Nazi League are campaigning to make sure that the Southall trials aren't forgotten. On Saturday 19th January they have called a 'Southall Day of Action' with street meetings and leafletting in most major towns.

The following day there will be a march to and picket of Pentonville Prison where most of the jailed defendants have been held. The march leaves from Euston Station at 1pm on Sunday 20th

27 seized in 'terror' dragnet

by BRUCE ROBINSON

On DEC. 12th 27 people were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in London, Liverpool and Southampton. Those arrested included several people active against British involvement in Ireland but with no political connection with the Provisionals and a Belfast woman visiting her husband who is awaiting trial in London. Their six children are left without either of their parents. The woman she was staying with was also arrested.

The police claimed that by these arrests they had prevented a Christmas bombing campaign in England and this was seized on by the press. No concrete evidence was ever brought out to support this.

In fact, the police use the PTA as a dragnet to gather information and intimidate the Irish community. 16 out of the 27 were eventually released without charges, having been held by the police for up to a week and two others were released on bail.

One of those arrested and not charged, Val Greene,

an activist in the "Hands Off Ireland" campaign, told the press she was given no reason for her arrest. When she refused to answer questions or allow her photograph or fingerprints to be taken, the police took photos and fingerprints by force.

When she was released she was found to have widespread bruising on her arms, legs, back, chest and stomach. She also had all her clothes taken away and was left in a cell with only two dirty blankets for more than 24 hours. She is now planning to take legal action against the police.

The latest arrests also show clearly how the PTA undermines the legal rights of those arrested. Before the PTA, the right of Habeas Corpus meant that all suspects had to be charged within 24 hours or released and while held they had the right to see a lawyer. Under the PTA the police can hold people for up to seven days without charges. They usually do so if only to try to get information.

An application by three of those arrested under Habeas Corpus was made three days after their arrest. The court postponed the hearing for another three days, so that the police could get their evidence together, by which time those

arrested had in any case been held for nearly a week.

The police are also increasingly winning control over all communications between those arrested and their lawyers. Initially they refused to allow any of the 27 access to their lawyers. When a judge eventually allowed one of those arrested, Jackie O'Malley, to contact a lawyer by means of a written statement (itself not a traditional practice) the police were allowed to decide whether the information should be given to her lawyer.

Nine of the 27 were charged, most under the vague catch-all conspiracy laws and three with 'withholding information'. This offence under the PTA simply means refusing to answer police questions, though the right to silence, like Habeas Corpus, is supposed to be basic to British justice.

A campaign must be built in the labour movement and Irish community to ensure that the PTA is repealed and to provide immediate support for those arrested. The PTA is being used as the spearhead of both the state's attempt to legalise political activity by the Irish community in Britain and as part of a general attack on civil liberties and legal rights.



Tory Minister Timothy Raison takes on another 'threat to our culture': Anwar Ditta's children.



Now racists go for little children

by BERNARD MISRAHI

ANWAR Ditta's family is being destroyed by Britain's immigration controls.

Anwar was born in Birmingham and brought up in Rochdale. She married Shuja Ud Din in Pakistan and they had three children — Karan (now 9), Imran (7) and Saima (6).

In 1975 Anwar and her husband returned to Rochdale, leaving the children with their grandparents until they had found work and a home for them in Rochdale. Then they sent for the children.

But the three children were refused entry, on the grounds that 'the couple had not established that they were the parents of the three children'.

So what is the evidence? Anwar has birth certificates and medical records, letters and family photographs. Solicitors say that the evidence is so conclusive that it need only be presented at the appeal to prove the case.

Why then was the original application rejected? The reason is simple: the Home Office has refused to admit Anwar's children because they are black. Or, to put it another way round: has such a thing ever happened to a single white family?

Anwar's case is far from unique. The immigration laws separate thousands of black wives, husbands, parents and children from those they want to join here.

Virtually all black people who have no family here were excluded years ago. As the laws get tighter, there are fewer people left to exclude, and immigration officials and Home Office bureaucrats turn on little children like Karan, Imran and Saima. More and more racist restrictions generate an atmosphere where all black people are unwelcome.

The changes in the immigration rules recently proposed by the Tories will make things even worse. Not only will husbands and fiancés of women not born in Britain be shut out, but it will be impossible for black people to bring over their parents and grandparents.

On top of all this, overseas students will have to pay colossal fees, and the DHSS have told GPs to look out for 'illegal immigrants' who may be on their lists.

A further nightmare to come is a White Paper on British Nationality which, for some reason, the Tories have delayed publishing. This is expected to divide us all into first class and second class citizens, with different rights according to our colour and pedigree.

The Campaign Against the

Immigration Laws is calling a picket of the Home Office (Queen Anne's Gate, across the road from St. James Park tube) between noon and 3pm on Friday 1st February. We aim to take in a petition demanding that Anwar's children be allowed home, and calling for the repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act, and all the various Rules it has spawned, under which thousands of others like Anwar's children are persecuted.

It is in this building that the final decisions on whether to remove or deport or let someone in are taken by Home Secretary William Whitelaw, or more usually by his sidekick the Minister with responsibility for immigration, Timothy Raison.

We want to let the people in this fortress know that the victims of their legislation are not isolated but that they are fighting back.

For more details about the picket, or to invite a CAIL speaker to your union or Labour Party branch phone Bernard (01-720-2328) or write to CAIL c/o Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove London SE5. If you live in the Greater Manchester area and want to get directly involved in the Anwar Ditta Defence Committee, they can be contacted via Rochdale and District CRE, Champness Hall, Drake Street, Rochdale (Rochdale 31491).



The protest now being waged by nearly 400 hundred men 'on the blanket' in the H-blocks of Long Kesh and forty women 'on protest' in Armagh jail has now entered its fourth year. Sinn Fein is appealing for funds to help continue its campaign in support of the prisoners and their demand for restoration of political status: send to H-Block appeal fund, 85b Falls Rd, Belfast.

The pamphlet 'The H-Block conveyor belt', has been produced to explain the prisoners' demands and expose the whole 'British-manipulated legal system geared to the needs of its war machine in the occupied six counties' [of Northern Ireland]. Available from the H-Block Information Centre, 170 Falls Rd, Belfast BT 12 Ireland: send a 10p stamp to cover postage.

Sun. 27th Jan: Bloody Sunday Commemoration demonstration. 2pm, Sparkhill Park, Stratford Road, Birmingham. Organised by Provisional Sinn Fein.



Break collaboration!

continued from p.1

appeal, and call for the TUC to *organise a general strike*, with the immediate demand that the steel closures plan be dropped.

And we support the Wales TUC strike call whether the British TUC does or not. Preparations to get trade unionists out on January 21st must begin now — and not just in Wales.

A general strike could pull together the partial responses so far — none of them quite coming to grips with the scale of the Tory offensive — into a mighty power. In place of the hawking and dithering which has characterised labour movement resistance to the Tories so far, we would have full mobilisation of our strength against their full mobilisation of their strength.

The growing murmur of general strike moves indicates that, within six months of the return of a Tory government to power, the labour movement has had to begin to rediscover the direct industrial action reflexes it learned to use as the only reliable political weapon to hand in 1969-74.

It is still only beginning, and there have even been some setbacks recently. But the hard facts of a Tory assault in the midst of gathering economic crisis must inevitably drive the labour movement to rediscover the powerful experience of using industrial action directly for political ends which it built up in the struggle against In Place of Strike and then in the battles against Heath's Tories.

Crisis

Now, even more than in the period after June 1970, we face a vicious and reactionary Tory government with the knuckledusters on for the working class. Motivated by middle-class spite and blind bourgeois economics, and driven on by the desperate state of the British economy, they are making the working class pay for British capitalism's crisis and for the Tories' quack solutions.

At the same time, their anti-union laws strike a first blow aimed to weaken the ability of the labour movement to resist and defend itself.

They build on the policies of the Wilson/Callaghan governments and add their own vicious twists. Encouraged by an electoral victory which was handed to them by the right wing policies of Callaghan's government, they have moved to make the third attempt in a decade to shackle the trade union movement.

Now — exactly as in 1970 and after — we face a militant class-struggle Tory government, firmly entrenched behind a large and stable Parliamentary majority and backed by all the military and police power of the British state. They are determined to make war on the standards, conditions, and organisations of the working class. In their attack on our class they will use to the full their legal right to make the laws and control the finances of the state.

Either the labour movement will allow this Tory government with its programme of blatant ruling-class legislation to rule and administer society in the in-

terests of the class they represent — even to the extent of the movement obeying anti trade union laws in the hope that, *maybe*, five years from now, *perhaps* a Labour government will be voted in which *may* undo some of the Tory damage.

Or the movement will fight back here and now,

to spell out and win support in the labour movement for this immediate objective — to stop the Tories, to force them to retreat, to defeat their attacks, to stop their closure policies decimating working class communities, to make them abandon their cuts policies, to break their will, to thwart their plans,

probably would, the Tory government might remain in office after such a defeat. In fact, though, defeat would put the skids under the government and probably drive it from office.

And the level of self-mobilisation needed to allow the working class to defeat this entrenched govern-

the law. Implicitly it poses the question of who is master in the country, and explicitly it challenges the automatic right of the ruling class to control the general affairs of society.

If the Tories retain power after such a defeat, they would quickly counter-attack. So indeed would a right wing Labour government based on Parliament and committed to the capitalist system, should such a government be installed as the result of the working class offensive. (The 1974-9 Labour government continued the build-up of police power started under Heath).

But that would be the round after this one. The job now is to win this round. The experience before 1974 showed us how we can win it. After we win, we will be stronger to face any counter-attacks.

The situation now differs from that of 1971 and 1972. There were 27 million strike days in the first ten months of 1979, more than in the whole of 1972 (24 million). The mood in the working class is different, however.

Every

The Welsh call for general industrial action against the Tories is the first call within the labour movement, and the Wales TUC has yet to launch any vigorous campaign for its call.

So the role of socialist militants must be to formulate the lessons and experiences of 1969-74 and pose the need for a campaign to stop the Tories by every means necessary, specifically by industrial action.

Concretely, what can we do?

• Support the steelwork-

ers. Organise solidarity on the picket lines and through blacking action. Help to defend the picket lines against police attacks.

• Support the Wales TUC call for strike action from the 21st. Demand that it be generalised, and that the TUC organise a general strike. Where other strike action is planned, bring it forward to link up with the general action.

• Argue within the unions and the Labour Party for a full scale offensive to *stop the Tories*, using the strength we have here and now, refusing collaboration.

Cosy

Demand the Parliamentary Labour leaders start a campaign of Parliamentary obstruction. Demand they pledge themselves to complete repeal of the Tory anti-union law and to restoration of all Tory cuts when they return to office.

Demand the TUC leaders break off their cosy chats with the Tories in the National Economic Development Council and dozens of other governmental and industrial 'participation' bodies. No talks on the anti-union Bill: start a fightback! Demand the TUC withdraws its Guidelines on picketing.

Demand Labour councils defy the Tory cuts.

We must call for the leaders of the trade union movement and the National Executive of the Labour Party to launch such a campaign to stop the Tories, including preparation for a General Strike. We must be prepared to fight to remove Parliamentarians, councillors, and trade union leaders who collaborate and cooperate with the Tories.

• We ourselves — the militants, the socialists — must prepare on a local level, now. A General Strike will be won through the network of workers' committees and organisations, most of which exist already as part of the routine self-defence and self-betterment of the working class: stewards' committees, combine committees, etc. We must transfuse into these bodies the urgency of preparing for a head-on clash with the Tories, and equip them with the necessary democratic structure and flexibility to mobilise millions of workers for that clash.

• We must build and renew links between the Labour Parties and the trade union organisation in the workplaces. We must build workplace Labour Party branches.

Policy

• We must fight to rearm the labour movement politically with socialist policies, with the sort of working-class demands fought for by *Socialist Organiser* and the *Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory*. The labour movement must in fact represent a real alternative to the Tories, so that there can be no repeat of the tragic and dismal experience of 1974 and after — when a Labour government, returned as a result of a huge wave of working class militancy, carried through essentially Tory policies and demobilised and disheartened its supporters.

No closures No cuts No anti-picket laws Prepare a general strike

recognising no Tory or ruling class right to meddle with the trade unions, to cut into the standards which the working class has won in decades of activity, or to destroy whole working class communities through closure policies. It will refuse to keep within the normal channels of official politics. It will resist the Tories' attacks by every means necessary.

For a start, that means the labour movement must *break off collaboration* with the Government and use the strength and power which we have now and can choose to unleash, irrespective of who has the majority in Parliament. That means using industrial action to stop the Tories in their tracks. Just like we did last time round.

It is because these are the only alternatives here and now and for the foreseeable future that sections of the labour movement have begun to raise demands for an industrial offensive and talk of a general strike is again heard.

To be sure, talk of the need for 'the big industrial battalions' to go into action against the Tories can be used as a cop-out by people who want to avoid a fight here and now, in their own areas.

Left

Some left councillors excused their own unwillingness to refuse to carry out cuts last summer with such talk. Joe Gormly called for a general strike in 1973 as a basis for arguing against the miners alone going into action.

It is necessary to *fight now and on every front*, at the same time as we argue for and prepare for general industrial action.

The labour movement needs to develop, and organise round, an overall strategy to stop the Tories. For Thatcher can be stopped, just as Heath was stopped.

In the first place, we need

and to drive them from office as soon as possible.

The outrageous anti working class politics of this Government demand from the entire political and industrial labour movement — from every section of it which claims to represent the working class interest, all the way through to the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Shadow Cabinet — a refusal to collaborate with the Tory government and its agents, backed up by offensive actions to kick out the Government.

The movement must demand that its leaders really fight the Tories, and really fight for Labour Party policies. And we must be prepared to break with and get rid of those who refuse to fight.

Such a policy, accompanied by a Labour and trade union campaign to explain the issues and to mobilise the working class, could have a tremendous effect.

Despite some setbacks, industrial action, or talk of industrial action, against cuts and closures, is already beginning to be a normal response. We need to generalise such responses, to link up the different battalions in conflict with the Tory government. In short, we need to concentrate the power of the labour movement.

The Wales TUC is absolutely right. A general strike could at the very least force the Tories to change course on trade union laws, on closures, on cuts, or on all of these policies.

In July 1972 the Government quickly changed its mind and released the five dockers jailed under the Industrial Relations Act, in response to a spontaneous strike wave of a few hundred thousand workers and the mere threat by the TUC to stage a one-day general strike.

In theory, if its Parliamentary majority held, as it

ment would open up tremendous possibilities beyond the limited objectives of defeating Tory policies or even of defeating the Tory government itself.

A general strike is more serious than a sectional strike. It challenges directly and openly the bosses' right to make and enforce



THE TORIES' LAW TO SQUEEZE THE COUNCILS

by MARTIN THOMAS

THE TORY Government has stepped up its drive to ram through the cuts with its Local Government Bill, published on December 4th.

The Bill has three main prongs.

• Tory Minister Michael Heseltine will have power to order a council to disband its direct works department and sack all its building workers.

Direct works departments will be banned from projects outside their council's area. And within the area, for contracts above a certain size, they will have to tender for the work in competition with at least three private firms.

Direct works departments which do not make what the Minister considers a satisfactory profit will be disbanded.

• The Government will set a ceiling on the level of capital spending for each council. This replaces a more com-

plex system of project-by-project controls.

• Heseltine will have power to cut off central government funds for councils which he reckons are overspending.

This third prong is most menacing for the fight against the cuts in public services and jobs.

At present the rate support grant — the central government funding for local councils, amounting to about 60% of their income, on average, — is calculated according to a complicated system, supposed to allow for the needs of the area and for its ease or difficulty in raising money by local rates.

The Tories will introduce a simpler system. Central government will calculate how much it thinks each council needs to spend. Then the grant will be equal to the difference between that calculated amount and what the

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

This system will almost certainly be worked in such a way as to hit the (mostly Labour) inner-city authorities more than the (mostly Tory) counties. Indeed, Heseltine has made it clear that he wants to bash the 'overspenders'.

Couple that with the overall cuts in spending on public services, and councils trying to get round the Tory measures will have to levy truly huge rate rises. This is where the penalty clause comes in.

New Society magazine explained it. "Local authorities which spend above the government's limits will have to bear an increasing proportion of the cost themselves through the rates. By how much will be determined by a sliding scale, which relates expenditure levels above

the limits to rate increases. This is fixed at the Secretary of State's [Minister's] discretion, and will be used to 'claw back' grant from 'overspending' authorities. How severe the penalties will be cannot yet be predicted".

The new law is due to come into action for the financial year 1981-2. There is an interim set-up for the year 1980-1. The rate support grant has been calculated with a 2½% overall cuts, and with a skew so as to cut the inner-city grants more than the shires.

The grant has a cash limit, based on pay and price rises of 13%. If pay and prices rise more ... too bad for the councils!

And there will be "a reduction in entitlements ... made next November if there are local authorities who overspending substantially. The measure of overspending will be any large differ-

ence between actual rate...

ional uniform... The Govern... al uniform ra... (i.e. £1.19 ra... the rateable... rent); dome... pay slightly... levels includ... ingey (dome... 106p in Cam... Lambeth and...

All the... even the s... iation of... are agains... posals. Bu... to suppose... Bill sets the... cils to sta... confrontation... by increasin... clash with th... Within th... the Tory m... tine can c... which cou... Then the p... will have to...

HACKNEY: A LABOUR COUNCIL SHAP

Hackney councillor KEITH LICHMAN wrote in last April's Socialist Organiser in favour of an 86% rate increase: 'It would cause hardship. Not to levy it, however, would cause even greater hardship. It is not a solution, but it does at least begin the fight'. In fact Hackney went for a 50% rate rise last year. Talking to Socialist Organiser last week Keith Lichman gave his view of where the issue stands now.

100pc rate rise to avoid the cuts?

you would need a rate rise of about £3.33 a week for an average ratepayer. It's virtually 100% increase.

We want the council to lead the sort of campaign that has been going on in Lambeth. In that context you could justify a rate increase, if you lost. You've made a case that you need the money, you need the services and if you fail, then a rate increase would be the lesser of two evils.

But in the absence of any campaign, you can scarcely demand a 100% increase to bolster up a council like ours. Lambeth would be in a position to cushion the effect of the government cuts by putting the rates up, having first of all fought a campaign.

Their intention is not to put the rates up. Their intention is to win the fight. But Lambeth are fighting on their own. The attitude of our council, and I suspect of many others, is: thank god Lambeth is up front, and let's all cringe behind.

The problem is not whether there should be a rate increase, but that most councils aren't prepared to fight the Government.

The arguments that took place within Hackney North over rate rises a few months ago were very counter-productive, and I don't think many of us see them now quite the way we did then.

□□ So how will a fightback develop?

When workers start reacting to the situation, because of the council's attitude, it'll probably turn out to be a fight against this Labour council rather than against the Government. This council really will be acting as an arm of the government, much as it'll be saying that it isn't.

It ought to be a very clear issue of the Conservatives attacking working class living standards, but it's been totally muted here.

□□ Surely the conclusion must be that in order to fight the Tories we must also fight the right wing in the labour movement?

Yes, but I'm not quite sure we've got the measure of what that means. Perhaps there is a subconscious reluctance to see it.

The fight's got to go on inside the Labour Party, but it's got to be a much more ruthless fight than it's ever been before.



Hackney trade unionists: ready for a fight, but is the Council?

Hackney councillors PATRICK KODIKARA and JOHN SWEENEY talked to Socialist Organiser about the fight against the cuts in Hackney

THE Council leadership's options for the coming year haven't crystallised yet, said Patrick Kodikara, but the calculations more or less take a 25% increase in rents for granted.

There'll be about 80% increase in heating and hot water charges: so that means the council tenants are being hammered.

In order to stand still, without any expansion, the proposal is that we'll need an increase of about 70% in our rates. No way will the council implement a 70% increase. So they'll probably come down to a level of about 45% rate increase, which will inevitably mean some things will have to be cut back, or charges increased.

■■JS: They will probably say that all they're doing is cutting growth, but that's not true. We had a programme,

In order to stand still, we'll need an increase of about 70% in our rates

and they're cutting that programme. They'll cut staff.

□□PK: They are negotiating redundancy agreements involving something like 500 direct labour workers.

They'll also leave a higher vacancy rate. They won't fill posts as they come up, they will wait for three, four or six months to fill them.

These are the only options that they can pick up — unless they decide to fight.

■■JS: We provide a service, changing linen for people who are house-bound and incontinent. We charge 12½p; they've put it up from 12½p to 50p, and that will make a saving of £600.

Obviously they've told the officers: go through the various services and see where we can charge more. They're on that road, and it's all to accommodate what Thatcher's doing.

□□PK: Let's cost it. The 25% rent increase, to families who have a three or four bedroom house, would be around £4.80. The largest families are probably the families in greatest need, and we're going to hit them hardest.

The increases... water charges... £4 a week for so... The rate inc... of that, would... £2 a week. Y... about clobberin... ■■JS: And w... very low base:... come per fami... London. On th...

"The first don't get we'll drive dustcarts parliame"

indices of pove... out top of the... orities in Engla... □□PK: The... shop stewards... indicated that... meet with the... to discuss a jo... fighting the cut... of the Labour g... won't meet an... trade union mo... not a member... Party — know... some of the l... joint shop ste... tee are not... card-holders... They don't v... debate. But t... stewards leade... dicated at a p... that if the coun... to give the leas... fully with the... fightback. On... 'They will car... over our dead b... A NUPE sho... — 'Some peop... you do not car... or increase th...

The That... program... direct ass... working c... living sta

won't be able... first time we... pay, we'll drive... to Parliament!

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■■JS: But be... unions' planne... put the name... our job...

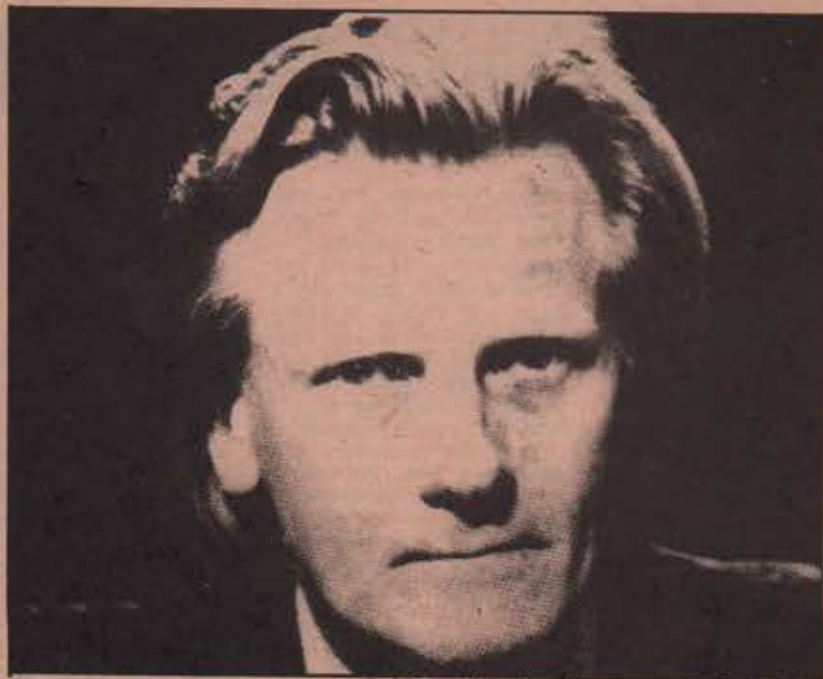
□□PK: We... the marke... able to... know th... and th...

to raise rates still further (to make up the money lost by the penalty) or to make cuts.

They can pull harder and harder at the rate-rises rope until it strangles them. Having backed rate rises as an answer to cuts, when do they say 'no further'? And how do they credibly mobilise labour movement support on that basis?

Moreover, different councils will be penalised to different extents, at different times. It will be much more difficult to mobilise a united front against the Tories than if a clear 'no cuts, no rate rises' line is taken now.

The Tories are putting councils, and the services they provide, into a vice. Either Labour councils and the labour movement will mobilise working class action to break the jaws of that vice — or our services and our jobs will be squeezed to death.



Heseltine: leaving no way out but a fight

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about 12% or 13%, they're going to have a cut in their living standards.

There is a campaign against the cuts, which has been launched by the trades council. It's fairly broad-based; it's got the Labour Party and the various other left political parties, trade unions, and community groups such as tenants' associations.

When that anti-cuts campaign's leaders came to address the last council meeting, they got a very cold reception. They were told that their representation would be passed on to the Policy Committee — and we know what will happen. It will lie there for the next six months.

■ ■ JS: I think the trade union movement is going to clash, sooner or later, with this government. We've got to start forging links so that when the crisis comes, it's not just going to be the TUC versus Thatcher, it's going to be the local authorities and the TUC and others.

We've got to make propaganda for what we think is right, and forge those links. Even as a small left wing group, though we might be a minority, that's a very important role for us.

I'd like to see the council resign, if four or five councils resigned and went for reelection on a platform of no cuts, and if we came back with, say, a doubled majority, then we'd have a platform. We could say: we were elected by the people of this

borough to make no cuts; and we'd have some force behind us.

□ □ PK: I don't agree with you on that. We were elected on a manifesto to increase and improve the services in this area. We can't do that

we should have to seek another mandate.

The Thatcher programme is a direct assault on working class living standards. We should defend the working class people who elected us, and if we're going to do that we've got to fight.

I don't want us to get too bogged down on the question of rate increases versus no rate increases, although that is an extremely important plank. We should be looking at ways of defying the government, even if it means we will get surcharged and go to jail. That is the only way.

If we just say we are fighting, but at the end of the day we put up the rates, then that means: because we don't like what the Tories are doing, we are hitting our own people. That is no strategy for a fight.

■ ■ JS: But the council on its own is not going to go anywhere. It's got to be a broad-based fight or nothing.

We should be moving towards something like a Charter of Rights, or Bill of Rights. We should decide what is needed for Hackney, to make Hackney a decent place to live. Too often we just respond, rather than making demands.

The government is saying: you will have what we can afford to give you. A great myth builds up about the national cake and us living beyond our means. We've got to build up a campaign of demands.

At the moment we're discussing it all behind closed

doors. That's what is so wrong.

Our Labour group would not want the local Labour parties involved. But the issues should be out in the community, being debated.

If we place ourselves firmly within the class, the class will defend us; but if they don't know what we're doing and why we're doing it, it'll be very easy for the leadership to try to kick us out.

□ □ PK: Ted Knight says this can't be done, and the real world is such that we've got to find the money locally. But what happens next year? What is Ted going to do then? If he going to clobber the ratepayers even more, or is he going to take some risks? If he's prepared to take the risk next year, why isn't he taking it now?

It would be a phony struggle to march up and down the streets and at the end of the day clobber working class people through raising the rates. If we're not prepared to take the risks, we should manage the cuts and get on with it.

■ ■ JS: We should put forward demands, rightful de-

If the present system can't give you your demands, you should not damp down your demands, you should change the system

mands, and say: if the present system can't give you your demands, you should not damp down your demands, you should change the system. People say: can we afford more nurseries, or homes for the mentally handicapped? We've got to point out who's already getting the resources, and reply: yes, we can, if we change the system.

□ □ PK: Our entire rate yield is going to the City to pay loan charges — £28 million. In other words, we take money from the people here and give it to the City.

Our strategy should be linked up to causing a crisis to bring this Conservative government down. Labour councils, linked up with the trade union movement, can bring this government down.

Our entire rate yield is going to the City to pay loan charges

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A RED GLOSS FOR RATE RISES?

IN HIS ARTICLE in the December issue of *Socialist Organisation*, Martin Cook discusses several themes of the SCLV Conference.

While I disagree with most of what he says on all of them, I wish to concentrate on the issue of rate rises.

The motion which was passed at the Conference took the position that rate rises are against the interests of the working class, and do not amount to a fighting option for Labour councils who want to avoid implementing the Tory cuts. Instead, the motion committed the SCLV to fighting for working class action to stop the cuts in their tracks. Labour Councils could be the focus for this fightback by refusing to implement cuts and to put up the rates.

Martin Cook disagrees with this position. Fair enough. But his presentation of the arguments is way off beam.

For example, he states that "one comrade [presumably myself] stated that the main divide in the movement lay not between those prepared or not to fight the cuts, but between intransigents and those who tactically resorted to raising rates (i.e. including Lambeth Council, which the SCLV claims to support)".

ABSOLUTE

Far from making rate rises the absolute divide between those for and against the cuts, the motion explicitly stated that in the case of a Labour Council fighting against cuts and failing to get the necessary industrial support, the SCLV would be in favour of putting up rates rather than making cuts.

And one anti rate-rise speaker spent most of his contribution explaining that it is absurd to say the SCLV does not support Lambeth because the Council may resort to rate rises. He explained that we support the campaign against the cuts, even though we (like the Lambeth Labour Parties and Lambeth Trades Council) disagree with the Lambeth Council leadership over the rates — just as we support any group of workers fighting the Tories, even if we do not share all their political views, or agree with all their tactical decisions.

What I did say in moving the motion on the rates was that at the present time the question of rate rises is becoming a dividing line between those who want to take on the Tories in action, and those who want to limit themselves to verbal opposition.

For most Labour Councils that are putting up the rates have not tried to build a campaign in the local labour movement against cuts and rate rises. They have decided in advance there is no such support, and used this as an excuse to implement rate rises.

Of course, they are engaging in a self-fulfilling prophecy, as they will not get any support if they do not go out and build it. One of the points of the resolution was to throw the limited resources of the SCLV into building a campaign which would



GORDON BREWER, who moved the successful resolution on rate rises at the SCLV conference in November, replies to Martin Cook's letter in the last Socialist Organisation criticising the conference decisions.

not leave councillors with this excuse.

The effect of comrade Cook's position is merely to paint these councillors with a coat of red gloss, rather than taking our starting point from the needs of the struggle.

But if comrade Cook's presentation of the majority position lacks something in accuracy, how are we to explain his position?

The clue, it seems to me, is in comrade Cook's use of the term 'strategy'. He attacks me and the others who argued against rate rises for not putting forward any alternative strategy for Labour Councils that refuse to implement cuts.

In a certain sense this point is correct. We do put forward a strategy based on mobilising the labour movement — but we do not put forward any strategy based on giving councillors good budget-making advice on how to avoid cutting services, for the simple reason that there is none. There is no way that councils on their own, and within a traditional Labour conception of what councils can do, can stop the cuts.

ADVICE

Comrade Cook wants to give such advice. And as there is none to give, he opts for rate rises.

At the root of his ideas is a failure to challenge the day to day practice of reformism, so that those like ourselves who fight for a break from that tradition in calling for a campaign of mobilisation against the Tories are denounced as 'holier than thou' intransigents comparable to the Militant tendency.

It is not a holier than thou attitude to put forward demands based on the needs of the struggle and to go out and fight for them. It is thoroughly opportunist to dress up those who are trying to avoid a struggle as politically identical with those who are struggling, except with better tactical wisdom!



Brent: 'no cuts' ...and no fight

by PETE FIRMIN

BRENT council in north west London looks virtually certain to avoid cuts in services in next year's budget; but it will do it by increasing rates by 40% and raising council rents too.

Brent's Labour council says it opposes cuts, but it was one of the first to make cuts after the Tory budget, when £3 million was lopped off.

The council's stance of implementing cuts while oppos-

ing them in words has produced a degree of cynicism in the labour movement there. The council also showed its real attitudes over the demonstrations against the cuts on November 7th and 28th.

The full council passed a motion supporting Lambeth council and 'inviting employees to participate in the demonstration'. However, when teachers got hold of a copy of the resolution (which was being kept very quiet) and began to organise for a large turnout, they were told that only a small deputation was permissible. Some were even

threatened with disciplinary action.

For November 28th the council decided to inform public sector employees that delegations could attend. For schoolteachers, there was a letter to head teachers which most sat on and kept quiet unless they were actually asked about it. The council did nothing to encourage maximum turnout.

Now the councillors are discussing next February's council budget. A 40% rate rise will mean an average rise of £2 a week for householders, coming on top of a

39% rise in last year's budget.

The 'no cuts' stand is not what it seems either. There will still be a 'drive to improve efficiency' and no commitment has been made about cuts in jobs.

Opposition is still disorganised. None of the local public sector unions took a clear line against the cuts, let alone action. Two local campaigns against the cuts exist: one has a clear position against all cuts and rate and rent rises, but it has failed to win support from local unions, and the one backed

by the trades council has no policy at all.

In the Labour Party, opposition has not been helped by the left wingers who have argued for rate rises. They have fallen into the trap of conducting the debate in terms of balancing the income and expenditure for Brent Council Ltd., instead of drawing a clear line and insisting that the working class should not pay at all.

These comrades should now be able to see where their policy leads — to both rate rises and cuts (and council rent rises as well).



LAMBETH COUNCIL LEADER SAYS: RAISE RATES, PREPARE FOR A FIGHT IN NOVEMBER

Last July Lambeth's Labour Parties, at a special conference decided on a policy of no cuts and no rate rises. When Lambeth's Labour council reversed its previously-decided cuts and followed the Labour Parties' policy, that put it in

the forefront of the struggle against the Tory cuts.

Now Lambeth must carry on its struggle — and also draw up 1980-1's budget. MIKE DAVIS reports on some of the plans and options being discussed.

After the successful November 7th demonstration against the Tory cuts, Lambeth Labour Group are planning to hold a conference to discuss strategy and policy. The Labour Group should finalise the date and details of the conference at its meeting in January. Councillor Mathew Warburton told SO, "We must set the scene for the debate at the

London Labour Party Conference and make sure Lambeth is not isolated in its stand against the cuts". The aim is to convene the conference in late February or early March. It will be open to Labour Party delegates and affiliated organisations.

Lambeth Council are likely to go for a 56% rate rise to avoid making cuts and

seek a confrontation with the Tories in November when Heseltine will undoubtedly seek to impose penalties on "overspending" boroughs like Lambeth. "We want to fight the Tories in the open, with other Labour authorities, not in the courts which is what refusing to raise the rates in April would mean", said Lambeth Labour leader Ted Knight recently.

Meanwhile the Lambeth Fightback campaign is divided on the approach to take towards the Council's stand.

John Yates, secretary of Fightback told me he had been arguing for strike action on February 18th, to coincide with the 24 hour stoppage called by South Yorkshire Labour councils and TUCs. "If we are to build the vital wall of resistance across the country that Ted Knight talks about, we must join actions called

by other areas". "Fightback's paper has suggested a march from Victoria Park in Hackney (the site of Poplar Council's famous stand in the 1920's) through the City to Westminster, but no definite decisions have been taken".

"The problem is some people in the campaign are getting bogged down arguing against rate rises and for more policy changes instead of sticking to our policy of no cuts, democratic control of services and expansion of provision and building a united opposition against the Tories cuts with the Council".

"LAMBETH Fightback has gained many sponsors from local trade unions, tenants associations and neighbourhood councils — we must stick to a broad based campaign like this if we want to defeat the Tories".

Lothian: Tory writ against Council that backed the big demo

by JO THWAITES

BRIAN MEEK, a Tory councillor, has taken out an interdict [writ] against Lothian's Labour Council to prevent it paying wages to 30 council workers who went down to the anti-cuts demonstration on November 28th.

Lothian Regional Council (covering the region round Edinburgh) has a policy of no cuts, and the council workers were representing that policy on the demonstration. The case has not yet come up in court, but when it does the right wing can expect a huge picket showing the strength of feeling against the Tory cuts from the Edinburgh labour movement.

The Edinburgh and district Trades Council cuts committee, consisting of delegates from local unions and Labour Party branches, has called a demonstration on February 13. A half day strike was also hoped for, but Scottish TUC support for that has been withdrawn.

To build for this demonstration, the Trades Council cuts committee is producing a newsheet outlining what the cuts and rate rises would mean, for a blanket distribution.

It is particularly important that there is a large turnout that day in order to show the regional council that there can be no backtracking, as the budget for the coming year will be on the council agenda on Feb. 19th.

Given a position of no cuts, the options open to the council then will be to budget for deficit (which would probably mean an immediate clash with the law and the Tories) or to raise the rates. Whichever the council decides to do, there will be a conflict with the Tories, and there must be a mobilisation of the labour movement: everyone recognises that.

But those who support rate rises ("because we have got to get the money from somewhere") find themselves in the contradictory position of saying, on the one hand, "no we are not making cuts", and on the other hand, "sorry, the rates are going up by 40%" (which is what would be required in Lothian).

Average households would

have a rate increase of £2 a week (according to Councillor Peter Wilson), to be added on to their rent or mortgage payments. So there may not be cuts in services — but the working people of Lothian are going to be paying more in rates directly out of their own pockets.

It is bound to deflate a campaign against the cuts if, in effect, cuts are being made in workers' living standards. The Edinburgh and district cuts committee and the Lothian Regional Labour Party recognise this, as both have policy against rate rises.

The Bill going through Parliament at the moment, seeking to deduct from the rate support grant the amount of money councils raise rates by above a certain limit, does not apply to Scotland. George Younger, the Tory secretary of state for Scotland, would have to put a bill through separately for Scotland, and he has not done that.

So the Tories will allow Scottish councils to put the



rates up this time round, and thus diffuse a campaign against the cuts and diminish the prospect of a united front with Labour councils in England and Wales. This probably indicates that the Tories realise that they can't take on a concerted attack by the working class in an area which is traditionally Labour and militant.

All the more reason for the labour movement to force Labour councils to take a fighting stand: no cuts, no redundancies, no rate rises, and, yes, we will fight the Tories' anti-working class policies!

Haringey: more cuts, more rate rises

JOHN BLOXAM

FOLLOWING a 20% plus increase in rates and 2½% cuts this year in Haringey (North London), the leaders of the ruling Labour group are already shaping up to deal with next year's Tory-inspired cuts in similar fashion — to pass the burden on to the local working class community, but this time twice as big a burden.

They are now talking about an average 5.1% cut across services, together with a rent increase of £1.50 per week and a rate increase of something like £3.46 a week for an average three-bedroomed council house.

The figures are provisional — and quite likely to be higher if inflation and wage rises go over 13%, and given likely 'significant increases in the demands of the precepting authorities, in particular the police and the GLC'.

Despite much talk about 'socialist economies' and 'cuts without reductions in services or jobs', even the council leaders admit that the cuts will involve redundancies.

These facts emerged in a series of meetings held in December in Haringey's Labour Parties (Tottenham, Hornsey, Wood Green). The discussion in the Parties came from a move to work out a joint policy between the Parties and the councillors in the face of the Tory attack.

Many of the right wing councillors had to argue their position in front of the Parties, and there was strong feeling against their record. However, because that feeling has yet to be tied to concrete moves to make the councillors accountable, there is a danger of the discussions as a 'democratic cover' for their policy of cuts.

There was a feeling in the Parties that, even if there had been a majority for a 'fight now' policy, many of the councillors would have done as they often have in the past — put two fingers up to the Parties.

But it appears unlikely that the majority of the Parties have been won to such a policy, although the Local Govern-

ment Committee's decision is not until January 7th. There is certainly little support for the right wing councillors' package, but the most strongly-backed alternative also involves cutting back living standards in Haringey through a large rate increase this year. It is true that this option also mentions organising opposition to the Tory Government, but this is relegated to the future with no pointers as to how it will occur.

Any such pointers, of course, would have to deal with the problem of the effect of a £3.46-plus rate increase now on efforts to mobilise opposition later on. It is a policy, supported by a number of those in the forefront of the fight against the cuts last year, of putting off the fightback against the Tory government to the future, accepting defeat on this year's cuts, and proceeding to administer the local state more or less as usual.

In fact, the debate in the Parties has not been so much between this policy and the

right-wing councillors', but between it and the policy of organising the fightback now. A policy of no rate rises and a fightback now was only narrowly defeated in Tottenham CLP's December GC after two members delegated to support it switched their votes.

Some councillors are also coming out for a policy of resignations and standing for re-election on the basis of organising a fight, as the only way out of the 'Tory pit' for Labour councillors.

At the January Local Government Committee meeting, it appears that the main alternative policy will be large rate rises now and hope for a fight in the future. The earliest and most likely fight in Haringey, however, will not be that hoped for one. It will be one against the Labour council for implementing cuts. It might well also be against the Labour Parties for putting forward a policy for reducing the living standards of the working class people in the Borough.

Tories to have 1000 more SS snoops

SHORTLY before Christmas Social Services Secretary Patrick Jenkin announced that the number of special investigators employed by the Department of Health and Social Security to detect fraudulent claimants is to be increased from the present 435 to nearly 1,500. This step fulfils the promise made by Geoffrey Howe in his Budget of 'urgent measures to tighten up on abuse and fraud' in the social security system.

It will save the nation's taxpayers millions of pounds, claim the Tories, and will encourage the 'workshy' to do an honest day's work (if there are any jobs around, that is...)

In reality the measure has little to do with saving money. The amount of detected fraud is negligible. In the year 1978-9 it represented just under £4 million, or 0.027% of benefits paid out, according to figures provided to MP Frank Field. Nor is there any reason to believe that the proportion would rise significantly with a larger number of investigators.

What most probably will come about is an increase in the number of people wrongly refused benefit and in the amount of benefit not claimed by those entitled to it. The amounts unclaimed are far bigger than those 'overpaid'. So are taxes evaded.

Proven tax evasion, over the years, runs at about ten times as much as welfare benefit fraud, and Michael Meacher MP has estimated that the rich cheat their way out of over £700 million a year in death duties alone.

The Social Security Bill published at the end of November will introduce new restrictions on who can claim what, and make it more difficult to establish your right to benefit when once it has been refused.

Together with the anti-scrouter witchhunt, this Bill will undoubtedly limit the rise in spending which would otherwise occur as unemployment mounts. Thus Jenkin boasts to his Cabinet colleagues that his increase in staff will actually save them money. But this is only icing on the cake.

The Tories' immigration restrictions have no significant effect on the already tiny number of blacks allowed into the country, but they do serve to intimidate those already here — and they add fuel to the fires of racism.

Similarly, DHSS snoops will be used to police the jobless, and will provide good copy for the Tory press in its task of persuading its readership that the unemployed are all bums and parasites who could get a job tomorrow if they chose.

On November 28th (see pictures) 60,000 trade unionists showed that they were ready to fight the cuts. Since then the Tories have brought in a Bill to bash 'over-spending' councils and destroy direct works departments, and Thatcher has promised further cuts to come. The only areas not cut are the armed forces, the police and social security snoopers (see left): such are Tory Britain's 'public services'!

In Belgium, the trade unions called a one-day general strike against cuts last month (see right). But Britain's TUC is still stuck in the mud: its day of action is not scheduled until May 14, and even then it is not calling for strikes. (Below, right)

The public service workers' union NUPE has called for Labour councils to reject the cuts, raise rates, and resign and seek re-election if the Tories try to crush them (below, left). But GMWU leader David Basnett, a prominent figure in the TUC top brass, promptly denounced NUPE.



NUPE tells Labour councils: no cuts



— Alan Fisher

IN A LETTER to Ron Hayward general secretary of the Labour Party, NUPE general secretary Alan Fisher has said:

* Labour councils should not make cuts.
* They should raise rates to make up for cuts in money from central government.
* If the Tories clamp down on the councils, they should resign and seek re-election.

The GMWU's David Basnett immediately denounced NUPE's call. Another GMWU official, Charles Donnet, said that Shadow Minister Roy Hattersley had described NUPE's proposals as 'utter

non-sense' — and agreed with him.

The GMWU's concept of campaigning against the cuts seems to be limited to putting out posters and leaflets saying that public services are a good thing.

But there will be many NUPE members who will see shortcomings in their Executive's stand. From a narrow viewpoint of saving council workers' jobs squeezing the ratepayer may make sense — for a while. But council workers themselves, and other working class people will have to pay those higher rates.

And many Labour councils already have a mandate to defend and improve services. Won't the people who elected them see it as a cop-out if as soon as the going gets hard they resign and ask for a new mandate? And what will the councils promise to do when reelected if the Tories are still intransigent?

What militant NUPE members will want from their executive is a pledge to support councils defying the Tories with industrial action.

COLIN FOSTER

TUC will fight — but not yet

by Stephen
Corbishley, CPSSA
National Executive
Committee [in
personal capacity]

A MONTH BEFORE the massive demonstration against the cuts on Nov 28th the TUC Local Government Committee issued a call to its affiliates urging them to play down the activities on the 28th. It argued for 'making it clear that the committee is not recommending industrial action' and 'suggesting that unions consider selecting delegations to join the lobby.'

After seeing the 50,000 turnout and realising how far the Tories' cuts will go, the TUC is planning new activities. Early in December the TUC Economic Committee agreed to recommend to the General Council that it organise a national demo on Sunday March 9th, followed by a day of action two months later on May 14th.

The General Council called these actions so far in the future because, they claimed, the unions had to be given enough time to get feedback from their members and to see how

hard the cuts will bite. But before the General Council endorsed these timid proposals, they were read a letter from the Society of Civil and Public Servants calling on the General Council to organise a national stoppage on the cuts. This was rejected and the Economic Committee now have the job of organising these two highpoints of TUC challenge to the Tory offensive.

But it is clear that pressure is mounting on the TUC to give a harder lead earlier. The decision of the Wales TUC to call for indefinite all-out action from Jan 21st to prevent the loss of jobs in Wales; the call from Lambeth Trades Council for action from Feb. 18th to help build direct support for Labour councils resisting the cuts; and the call from the South Yorkshire Labour Party for all-out industrial action over cuts, indicate the growing mood for confrontation with the Tories to stop them in their tracks.

The fight will be on two fronts — one against the Tories and their attacks, and another to make the official leaders of our movement lead and fight, not organise a campaign of whimpering protest.

Belgian workers strike against cuts

THE BELGIAN government faces a growing wave of strikes in response to plans to cut public spending.

The proposed cuts would fall particularly on health and social security spending, and Belgium's doctors, dentists and chemists, who face a cut in the fees paid to them by the state, have been on strike since before Christmas.

Their strike follows a one-day general strike on December 7th, which paralysed Brussels and the French-speaking areas of Belgium. The general strike involved all public transport, the banks, newspapers and TV, the post, teachers, large stores, and large private industry. The railwaymen have also been working to rule.

In 1960-1 Belgium had an 11-week general strike against a similar austerity plan. Many areas were effectively under the control of committees of trade unionists. This time the union leaders chose a one-day strike, aiming more at a token protest against the government than a concerted struggle.

This was despite the fact that the coalition government, weakened by divisions over NATO's plan for new nuclear missiles in Europe and over the language question, looks likely to fall in the next few weeks.

With the official figures showing unemployment at nearly 8%, cutting working hours has provided another focus for Belgian trade unionists. The government hoped to negotiate union support for the cuts in exchange for legislation to cut the working week, but the unions refused. Although the employers are strongly opposed to any reduction in hours, the unions have made a breakthrough by winning a 36 hour week at one of the largest electrical engineering firms in the country, which had had a 14 week strike last spring.

Despite the feebleness of their leaders, the Belgian trade unionists are showing the sort of response that is possible when the labour movement seeks to mobilise industrial action to fight against cuts, instead of just making verbal protests.

BRUCE ROBINSON

Socialist Organiser

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JOHN Corrie's anti-abortion Bill is now going through its committee stage in Parliament. With a solid 12-to-5 anti-abortionist majority on the Committee, the Bill is certain to reach its third reading in February in undiluted, or even more restrictive, form.

The National Abortion Campaign is calling for strikes and other protests on Tuesday 5th February, in the week of the third reading. It is clearer and clearer that such mass action is the only way to defend abortion rights.

MANDY WILLIAMS reviews the committee proceedings.

BOTH THE previous anti-abortion Bills — James White's and William Benyon's — eventually fell for lack of Parliamentary time, after pro-choice MPs had fought them every inch of the way in the committee stage.

The Corrie Bill's backers want to make sure nothing similar happens again. So the committee stage has been pushed through in the most bureaucratic way, with substantial evidence excluded and most of the Press barred.

The late publication of the Bill has made drafting amendments very difficult for those opposing it.

William Benyon produced a series of amendments in mid-October after three months of deliberation and consultation, giving the opposition little more than the three hours of that committee sitting to produce amendments of their own. And since the chair judged that the amendments did not substantially alter the nature of the Bill, and therefore needed little consideration, the amendments were rammed through in double-quick time.

Then Corrie, complaining about the length of deliberations over the first clause (time limit and grounds for abortion), pushed through a move for six sittings a week instead of one. Those opposing the Bill (Jo Richardson, Oonagh McDonald, Stan Thorne, Ian Mikardo, and William Hamilton) have considerably more commitments outside the committee than the Bill's supporters, and have to divide their time between the various committees on which they serve.

Adjourn

Supporters of the Bill have resisted all attempts to adjourn the committee to obtain legal advice and clarification (for example relating to the fact that the laws of Scotland and England differ). And Gerard Vaughan, the Minister of Health, after a request to get information on laws in other countries, has produced details of the restrictive legislation in countries such as Australia and New Zealand, but not on the more liberal laws of the Scandinavian countries.

On the committee, leading Corrie supporter Bernard Braine was challenged to say whether he agreed with the Papal edict of 1937, "Better that ten thousand mothers should die, than one foetus should be unjustly killed". He said nothing.

Racketeers and moralists against women's rights

The first clause considered concerns the lowering of the time limit for legal abortions to 20 weeks. The major amendment, more or less identical in effect to Corrie's original clause, was put by Benyon, and, of course, won.

The main addition is a proviso that the Secretary of State can lower the time limit at some future date by a resolution put to Parliament, with no need for another Bill. Such a procedure only allows for 90 minutes debate, usually late on a Friday night.

Of course, there is no provision for adjusting the time limit upwards.

According to Benyon, "It is straightforward: after hearing all the evidence, one decides whether 20 or 24 weeks is the right period. It is a simple, straightforward decision". He regards it as a simple matter of arriving at the correct formula through considering the medical evidence. Yet, after making great play of having consulted various medical bodies about this, he was forced to admit that the great majority disagreed with him.

'Mistakes'

John Corrie admitted that "all the medical weight is 26 weeks now", but, because of the possibility of "mistakes", and because the limit of viability may fall in the future, "why not come to a point where there can be no doubt?" He quoted, once and without conviction, the World Health Organisation definition of live birth, which makes no mention of independent viability, only of various physical signs visible in many fetuses incapable of independent life.

John Corrie and his ally Stan Cohen, particularly, seemed singularly ill-informed about the recent cases so publicised by anti-abortionists and subsequently discredited by a Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) investigation, and Vaughan was obliged to put them right. Vaughan, under pressure from the British Medical Association and other medical bodies, pushed for a compromise at 24 weeks, at which age no fetus has survived.

A case of a supposedly 23-week fetus surviving in Chertsey was investigated and the committee heard that it was in fact over 24 weeks old and erroneously estimated to be 23 weeks old by a consultant who also happens to be a supporter of the anti-abortion group LIFE.

The second part of the first clause deals with the grounds for abortion. The 1967 Act's proviso for abortions on the grounds of risk to the mother of continuing the pregnancy is to be restricted by saying the risk to

the mother's physical or mental health must be 'serious' or 'grave'. Benyon, who is much more active than Corrie in speaking to the Bill, was unwilling to go over all the arguments which arose over exactly the same terms in his own Bill, and again tried to treat the matter as extremely simple.

While admitting that the definition of such terms as "grave" and "substantial" is difficult, he argued that the issue could confidently be left to the courts who will eventually be required to interpret the Act. So women's rights, and doctors' safety from prosecution, will be subject to the say-so of aged, right-wing, upper-crust, male judges.

Benyon also introduced a new part to Clause 1, allowing abortion regardless of time limit in certain medical cases. But since risks will again have to be "serious" and "substantial", even mothers whose children are sure to be born with, for instance, spina bifida, will only be offered the choice of an abortion by a consultant who is willing to risk prosecution.

The second clause, on conscience, was passed unamended. Doctors will be enabled to opt out of arranging for an abortion on any grounds they see fit, and without saying what those grounds are. In such cases women may believe that they have been refused abortion on genuine medical grounds.

The promoters of the Bill produced no evidence that the present conscience clause is inadequate — none of the medical bodies say it is — so they relied on hearsay reports of doctors being refused jobs because of their conservative views on abortion.

Grounds

The fact that there will now be "other grounds", not religious or ethical, and not specified, for doctors to refuse abortion, particularly worries black women. They fear it could be used selectively — encouraging abortions for those not considered to conform to the medical profession's view of 'good mothers', like many black women, and refusing them to white women whom the doctors feel will make suitable, if not willing, mothers.

Clause 4, concerning the licensing and running of the pregnancy advisory bureaux, was defeated (after literally hours of argument in its defence by Bernard Braine), in favour of a new clause, with identical effect but better drafted, introduced by Benyon. Its main effect is to make illegal any financial connection between the advisory services and abortion clinics.

For Braine, the nub of the

argument was that because between 90% and 98% of those who go to the charities for advice and counselling end up having an abortion, a large proportion (if not all) of them must be persuaded or tricked into it, thereby enriching the charities and those who work for them. In fact the charities are non profit-making and the people who work for them get fixed salaries regardless of the number of abortions done. Braine's evidence consisted of what consultant friends, not a few in private practice and in competition with the charities, have said to him.

Finance

Jill Knight (of whom Ian Mikardo remarks, "Cast iron wouldn't melt in her mouth!") quoted lies about BPAS (one of the largest charities) from *Private Eye*, without checking them. None of the Bill's promoters have bothered to visit the charities' clinics or nursing homes.

Vaughan remarked that the financial connection "seems to me wrong", but conceded that the DHSS's already rigorous approval procedures are quite adequate, and admitted that as a result of breaking the links "we shall realise some of the fears about back street abortion".

Of the Bill's proposals on licensing for advisory services, Vaughan said that they "would introduce a serious element of inflexibility... It would increase considerably the cost of administration and the complexity of legislation... I remain of the view that it is neither necessary nor desirable for such a scheme to be embodied in statute".

Oonagh McDonald asked why the same criticisms of bias are not levelled at LIFE, an anti-abortion group which advertises itself as a pregnancy advice service. Because of its commercial connections with the manufacturers of pregnancy testing kits, it is able to offer free pregnancy testing. By its own admission, LIFE is assumed by a number of women who approach it for pregnancy testing to offer abortions.

The counselling given to pregnant women, though, is intended and calculated to make them feel guilty if they seek an abortion. The term murderer/ess is frequently used. And no protection exists for women against the biased counselling they receive from Roman Catholic or other doctors who don't believe in choice.

One part of the new clause requires that all doctors be circulated with a list of all agencies offering pregnancy counselling. But such agencies, supposedly for financial reasons, will not be inspected or approved by the

DHSS as at present. The British Medical Association, among others, is very unhappy about such a list, since it means effectively referring women to counsellors who may not deserve any confidence.

There is little likelihood of amendment to this clause. The hopes of amendment raised by the strong criticisms of the Bill from the British Medical Association and other medical and nursing bodies are falling flat.

Braine and his colleagues have quoted at length from the evidence submitted to the Lane Committee a few years ago by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, who at the time supported a 20 week limit. When they were forced to admit that the RCOG now favours a 24 week limit, and when Stan Thorne read a recent resolution from the BMA stating that it "deplores the persistent attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act and reaffirms its belief that it is a practical and humane piece of legislation", the anti-abortionists' faith in medical bodies disappeared. They expressed doubts in doctors' ability to make such decisions, and on the democracy of the processes by which the policies of "a bunch of doctors" are made.

'Abuses'

Corrie and Benyon insist that they are not against abortion, just against 'abuses' of the 1967 Act, and that their arguments are based on evidence, not on moral beliefs or prejudices. They are, however, unable to provide the evidence for such assertions as that the rate of back street abortions is unchanged, if not increased, since the 1967 Act (Michael Ancram), or that "in many areas facilities which should be used for other cases are now being taken away from people who are actually ill and being used for abortion cases" (Corrie).

John Corrie claims that it is merely a matter of finance that he is not pushing for more National Health Service abortion facilities. Yet when Willie Hamilton raised the Lane Committee's recommendations of improved NHS pregnancy testing and diagnosis, elimination of delays, and more NHS day-care abortions, Corrie asserted that "if day care facilities of that kind were available, a great many women would feel that they could simply pop into the day centre down the road and have an abortion, and would therefore be less likely to use contraception".

If Corrie and Benyon are shifty, Bernard Braine and Jill Knight are perfectly confident in making the law according to the dictates of their own consciences, with

scant consideration of the evidence offered. Braine, for instance, states that, "it is morally wrong and medically unsound to permit abortion on request", and that "the unborn child is entitled to life, and we have a duty to protect that entitlement".

They do not distance themselves from the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, that it is a mother's "duty to die" if that might enable the fetus to live: "Better that ten thousand mothers should die, than one fetus should be unjustly killed".

Vaughan had no answer when Jo Richardson asked why there has been no enquiry into the death of Susan Bradbury in childbirth after having been refused an abortion although she had severe heart, circulatory and kidney problems. Richardson read from a letter which Susan Bradbury's husband sent her, unsolicited:

"Actually, though I say I am asking for your help, there is nothing anybody can do to help me; Susan is dead and that is final and irreversible. I have heard of a certain Mr Corrie who is said to be holy and pious and very concerned with life, but I doubt whether he can raise the dead!"

"To forget the whole affair would probably be the least painful course for me, but not only would that be disloyal to Susan's memory, I am concerned by how many other women will be killed in coming years to placate the moral whims of the Festival of Light brigade".

Weak

The five opposing the Bill valiantly put up last-minute amendments to modify, and even negate, the effects of the Bill. But they have weakened their case by putting undue weight on medical opinion, and by dissociating themselves from the call for abortion on demand.

With concessions like Hamilton's "I think that all honourable Members on this side would agree that it is probably morally reprehensible and indefensible to permit abortion on request or on demand", the anti-abortionists gain considerable strength for their moral battle.

And the class issue is always muffled, as is the party political side of the struggle, except in a spirited attack by Ian Mikardo on the Labour MPs supporting the Bill on the committee, James White, Stan Cohen, and James Dunn.

"The backstreet abortionists, the Harley Street racketeers and the Heathrow taxi tots who were their agents and procurers, are in a way... exemplars of the heroes of Tory folklore. They are models of enterprise and initiative, go-getters, merchant venturers..."

Profit

"In common with all other modern businessmen, they bitterly resent anyone who lessens the potential profit of their enterprise by offering the same service not for profit, but as an act of service. Every abortion carried out under the National Health Service and by the charities represents a reduction in their market and, hence, in their potential profitability..."

"The entrepreneurs, therefore, welcome all the more the efforts being made in the Bill to hamper and reduce the activities of the charities. They welcome the prospect of higher profits which that restriction will provide for them".

Tories out to push through more police powers

by RICHARD KINSEY

LABOUR'S Criminal Justice Bill for Scotland would have meant dangerous extensions of police powers if it had completed its passage through the last Parliament. Now the Tories have introduced a new Criminal Justice Bill, with even more menacing powers for the police.

The Labour Bill provided for four headings under which the police could detain people without arrest, charge, caution, or right to legal advice.

1. The police could use 'reasonable force' to detain any person 'reasonably suspected' of an offence, 'for the purposes of identification and interrogation'.

2. A police constable could use 'reasonable force' to detain any other person who he believed might have information about an offence 'in order to obtain and verify his name and address'. This would include witnesses, and relatives, friends and acquaintances of suspected persons.

3. The police could use 'reasonable force' to detain persons 'reasonably suspected' of an imprisonable offence for up to four hours in a police station.

4. The police could stop and search any person 'reasonably suspected' of carrying an offensive weapon.

The Tory Bill provides for the powers of detention under points 1 and 2 to be exercised in a public place, in private homes, or "any place where the police constable is entitled to be". Under the Labour Bill, those powers were restricted to public places.

The Tory Bill also extends the period of detention under point 3 to six hours.

It is proposed that the police should be able to make

body searches of suspects detained, as well as of clothing and baggage. Detainees could be compelled to give their fingerprints (though the Bill says that the fingerprints should be destroyed if no charges are brought).

The proposed powers of detention have not been widely reported however. The bill obscures these aspects with a welter of minor changes in court procedure designed to reduce delays.

The Tories have stressed these elements of the bill and dressed up the proposals in law and order rhetoric. The element of the bill the Tories have stated is 'controversial' is the supposedly new power to stop and search for offensive weapons, which in fact only marginally extends existing legislation. The most dangerous part of the Bill — the fact that the police can pick up 'suspects' without any concrete evidence of any offence — is thus conveniently ignored.

But Labour opposition to the bill is likely to be muted. Not only were large sections of the bill approved by the Labour government, but the fact that it only covers Scotland has led English Labour MPs to ignore its wider implications.

The Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure will look at Scottish legislation before it reports this year and is likely to use what could then be an existing part of the legal system in Britain as a precedent for new legislation covering England & Wales.

Activists in CLPs and union branches should press their MPs to oppose the Scottish Criminal Justice Bill and involve their organisations in the campaign against it. Details from: Campaign to Stop the Scottish Criminal Justice Bill, 58a Broughton Street, Edinburgh.

BL stewards call 'reinstate Robinson' conference

UNION RIGHTS UNDER FIRE

by ALAN CHERRETT

THE BL Combine shop stewards' committee has called a conference "in defence of victimised trade unionists" on Sunday 13th January (11am at Birmingham Town Hall).

The Conference is also being supported by the Birmingham area of the Confed and the Birmingham TGWU Automotive Committee.

Clearly the major item for discussion will be the victimisation of Derek Robinson and the fight for his reinstatement. But there must now be serious doubt about the commitment of the BL union leadership to winning unconditional reinstatement and to a real battle against Edwardes' anti-union offensive.

The first sign of a retreat came when Robinson himself agreed to cooperate with the AUEW's farcical 'union enquiry' — a body understood by every trade unionist in BL to be no more than a device for derailing the struggle for unconditional reinstatement.

When Arthur Harper (the convenor at Drews Lane) refused to take Robinson's place at the national negotiating committee (LCJNC), again it was Robinson himself who forced Harper to

climb down and attend in his place. Robinson's blustering speech to the National Union of Students conference about closing down the whole of BL may have sounded militant to the assembled students, but it has not been accompanied by any preparations for further action within BL.

More ominously, the LCJNC has still not finally rejected the company's insulting 5% pay offer or the 85-page document which accompanies it, containing wholesale attacks on shop floor conditions and union rights).

If the Birmingham confer-

ence is to serve any useful purpose, it must hammer out a strategy for linking the fight for Robinson's reinstatement to a fight against the 85 page document and the Tories' anti-union legislation.

That means at the very least:

- a commitment to fighting for all-out strike action in BL demanding Robinson's unconditional reinstatement, the withdrawal of the 85 page document, and a serious pay offer.

- Full support for the Engineers' Charter campaign to remove the AUEW Executive under Rule 15, para. 5 of the

union rule book (a campaign that the CP has actively opposed in some areas of the country).

- Maximum pressure on the TGWU to maintain its position of outright opposition to the Edwardes plan. (There have been signs recently of the TGWU preparing to back down on this).

- For a joint conference of the 'Defend our Unions' campaign and the LCDTU against the Tory laws.

★ Credentials for the conference can be obtained from Colin Willetts, 25 Hawne Lane, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3RN [021 550 6652]

WILL THE TORIES REALLY SCRAP BL

BL WORKERS are very familiar with blackmail. For years the bosses have been telling us, "start a fight-back, and you'll all be out of a job". But now that threat has to be taken much more seriously.

In a letter to the Cabinet meeting which endorsed the 1980 Corporate Plan and agreed to a further funding of £400 million over the next four years, BL boss Michael Edwardes wrote, "If there is a significant shortfall in cash flow, whether due to major disruptions through internal or external strikes or to delays in any of our programmes for investment and launch of new products, restructuring and redundancies or for improving productivity and working pract-

ices, or to any other cause, internal or external, the board will abandon the plan".

In other words, any opposition to any aspect of the Edwardes plan could result in the closure of the whole company. Even events completely outside of BL (like a national steel strike) could lead to closure.

Is Edwardes bluffing? We can't know for sure, but it would be idle to write off the possibility that he means what he says.

Already Aveling-Barford, Prestcold, Alvis and Coventry Climax have been put up for sale. Speculation is rife that Leyland's Bus and Truck division may soon follow.

If he doesn't get his way, Edwardes may be prepared

to adopt a 'fallback' position of selling off the profitable areas of the company and letting the rest go to the wall.

But BL workers cannot afford to draw the conclusion that any opposition to the Edwardes plan is futile. If BL succeeds in fobbing the workforce off with yet another 5% pay deal, tied to a document that would cripple shop floor rights, working for BL would become intolerable for most people.

The only way out for BL workers is to fight every aspect of the company's attack, and to be prepared to counter any attempt at closure with occupations and the demand for a fully nationalised car and components industry under workers' control.

Meccano's Christmas present

by BAS HARDY

THE CHRISTMAS present Airfix bosses gave 940 workers at Meccano in Liverpool was a 40-minute redundancy notice. For New Year they will probably go one better, and deliver an eviction order on the workers sitting in at the Edge Hill plant.

So far only the telephones have been cut off, but electricity supplies to the occupied factory are now threatened. Despite all the threats, the majority of the workforce are solidly behind the shop stewards' fight to scrap the redundancies.

This support was expressed in the high turnout of workers to the factory over the holiday period.

The Airfix management have adopted what is locally described as a hard-faced attitude to the Meccano workforce. Their decision not even to give the 90-day redundancy notice required by law has drawn criticism from Tory Ministers although of

course no threats of prosecution of Airfix have been made.

Attempts by the Liverpool Labour Party to have Meccano municipalised have also fallen through because of Liberal and Tory opposition on the Council.

But workers at Meccano have no confidence in any other solution for saving their jobs short of industrial action. The shop stewards are calling for negotiations with the company, yet they are certain that the bosses will not back down at present.

If eviction notices are served, "day and night pickets and a national blacking of Airfix products will follow", says Mike Egan, a spokesperson for the shop stewards committee.

In the meantime, the workers are calling on labour movement organisations for financial aid. Donations are to be sent to Meccano Fighting Fund, c/o Mike Egan, GMWU, 99 Edge Lane, Liverpool L7 2PE.

BRUCE ROBINSON reports on the campaign to get the AUEW Executive kicked out.

WHILE the AUEW is still holding its 'enquiry' into the sacking of Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson, a growing number of AUEW branches are calling for a ballot to throw out the union's executive.

Under the union's rules, if 10% of the branches calls for such a ballot the Executive has to hold it. The Birmingham Northfield branch, which covers AUEW members at Longbridge, started a campaign to get branches to pass a resolution demanding the ballot. 288 branches are needed and by Christmas over 80 had already sent resolutions to AUEW Head Office.

Though it is unlikely that, if a ballot occurred, there would be the two-thirds majority needed to force the Executive to resign, the Executive wants to avoid holding a ballot if at all possible. John Boyd, the General Secretary, has put a circular round to branch secretaries describing the campaign for a ballot as "unconstitutional", and telling branches to have nothing to do with it. The Executive may also try to ignore some of the branch resolutions by claiming that they are not in the correct form.

The Northfield resolution reads as follows:

This Branch of the AUEW censures the AUEW Executive Council for:

1. Failing to defend one of

80 AUEW branches say: Duffy out

their leading shop stewards, Brother Derek Robinson, who was victimised by top BL management in a completely unconstitutional manner, as confirmed by the local full-time official, Brother B. Benson.

2. For failing to defend the most basic hard won rights of their members — the right to free speech.

3. For failing to support the thousands of members who had taken industrial action in defence of that right, to make their strike official in spite of the unanimous full recommendation of the Birmingham West District Committee.

4. For dividing the trade union movement by instructing their members to return to work by crossing the official picket line of another union.

We believe the Executive Council has brought our union into complete disrepute and we therefore call on the General Secretary to hold an immediate ballot on the removal of the entire Executive Council as per Rule 15, para 5.

All branches passing the resolution should notify Engineers' Charter, at 265a Seven Sisters Road, London N4, who are monitoring the campaign.



Duffy: 'bringing the union into disrepute'.

Socialist Organiser

ZIMBABWE: TORIES UNITE WITH S. AFRICA AND RHODESIAN RACISTS

by BOB FINE

THE 'settlement' in Zimbabwe, now rapidly being put into effect, is a farce — and also a tragedy for the struggle of the Zimbabwean people.

The British governor, Lord Soames, has announced elections for February. The interim period of two months gives ZANU and ZAPU totally inadequate time to prepare for the election.

Meanwhile the process of herding the liberation forces into assembly points and isolating them from their field of action is under way. While the British authorities speak of the 'positive role' played by 'our men' from ZANU and ZAPU in bringing the guerillas in, 2000 South African soldiers are still working alongside the Rhodesian Army, which the Governor is using as his strike force against 'ceasefire violators'.

Soames has just used them to prevent the so-called incursion of guerillas across the Mozambique border. This happened just after Rhodesia's General Walls declared that if the Patriotic Front won the election there would be a civil war.



Blacks rejoiced as Patriotic Front leaders entered Salisbury; but British governor Soames, hand in glove with white settlers' general Walls (left), is making sure their aspirations for a real end to racism are blocked.

The British commissioner in charge of the election, John Boynton, appeared on TV to speak of the difficulties of an election among the 'unsophisticated' Africans (who are presumably unused to the democratic ways of the whites) and of the danger of intimidation by African guerillas. As he spoke from his armoured car, Boynton was surrounded by a cordon of white soldiers.

He is also keeping open the option of proscribing any party which fails to observe the ceasefire and preventing it from taking part in the election.

The Patriotic Front, always precariously united, has split into its two wings. ZANU's main proponent of the united front, Josiah Tongogara, has died in a car accident in Mozambique. Whatever the cause of his death, it has effectively put paid to a united presence of the liberation forces in the election and has thus made success in that election even more unlikely.

The strength of popular feeling for the liberation movement was shown by the 10,000 people who turned out for a ZANU rally in Salisbury. It is increasingly unlikely, however, that their aspirations for national liberation, for an end to racism,

for land, for trade union rights, and for decent wages, can or will be realised by the ZANU or ZAPU leadership, who are now trapped in the repressive arrangements forced upon them by the Tory government in conjunction with their friends in Salisbury and Pretoria.

For the people of Zimbabwe the 1980s offer continuing oppression, albeit in less blatantly racist form. It will require a major regroupment of the liberation forces before their rhetoric of popular pow-

er can be translated into reality.

The outcome of the settlement, it seems, will be to safeguard white privilege and imperialist interests in a modified form, to disarm and demobilise the liberation forces — and probably to leave a minority of the liberation forces fighting on against far worse odds. That is what British troops and a British governor are in Zimbabwe for. That is why we should say: British troops out of Zimbabwe!

LIAISON COMMITTEE
CONFERENCE, JAN. 26th

DEFEND OUR PICKET LINES

SHORTLY BEFORE Christmas the Tories published their Bill to curb trade union rights.

Most importantly, the Bill would make all picketing unlawful except by workers at their own place of work and in a trade dispute with their own employer. This major attack on workers' rights is wrapped up in a varied bundle of other measures to try to turn the clock back: curbs on the closed shop, rolling back of parts of Labour's Employment Protection Act, state money for secret ballots to replace decision-making at workers' mass meetings.

Already the official labour movement resistance to the Bill is showing weakness. Shadow Cabinet spokesman Eric Varley said in Parliament that a new Labour government would not repeal the whole Bill, even though Len Murray of the TUC has called for a promise of total repeal.

Murray himself is still only suggesting that the TUC may withdraw its cringing Code of Practice on picketing. And the TUC's day of action on the Bill and the cuts is not until May.

A conference called by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions in London on January 26th will be a chance to start organising the rank and file fightback. Delegates are invited from all trade union branches, shop stewards' committees and Trades Councils.

A programme of action is needed against the Bill:

* Win our trade union organisations to the Rank and File Code of Practice

adopted by over 1000 trade union delegates at the Defend the Unions conference last June.

* Assert the right of workers' self-defence, the principle of workers' law and order as against the bosses' law and order.

* Demand the disbanding of all SPG-style picket-busting police squads.

* Insist that the TUC withdraw its Code of Practice and break collaboration with the Tories.

R&F code of practice

- 1 No crossing of picket lines.
- 2 For the building, and defence of, 100 per cent closed shop. For sanctions against any individuals breaking closed shop
- 3 For full rank and file discussion and decision making by traditional democratic procedures — no enforced secret ballots
- 4 Pickets to be positioned at whatever locations necessary to win the dispute and in sufficient numbers to ensure that

picket lines are observed. Strikes to be run by elected strike committees

5 All appeals for blacking and financial assistance for disputes to be carried out wherever practicable.

6 Support calls made by strike committees for mass and sympathy pickets.

7 No settlement of disputes without full report backs to, and decision making by, the members concerned.

An appeal to the Labour movement

IN February local authorities will have to prepare a budget for the coming year. They will draw up their budgets under the threat of the Tory axe.

The Tories are trying to force the councils to implement the cuts. They are pushing a bill through Parliament which will mean that councils that put up rates in order to offset the cuts will be punished by deductions from the Rate Support Grant.

Rate rises are not a way round the cuts. They hit workers in council housing with the same effect as an increase in rents. They hit workers and middle class people with their own homes, who are already hit by the massive increase in the cost of mortgages.

And to offset the cuts, rate rises would have to be impossibly large. So it is not a question of rate rises or cuts, but rate rises and cuts.

And a fight with the Tories over the right of councils to put up the rates would be a fight on territory not of our own choosing. It is difficult to mobilise people to support your right to cut their living standards!

We believe Labour councils should stand up now to the Tory attacks. They should refuse to implement the cuts, and they should refuse to put up the rates.

That means a fight against the Tories. It means not thinking that Labour councils can dodge round the Tory attacks, but mobilising the organised labour movement to stop the Tories in their tracks. We need to build support in the trade unions for councils who take a stand against the cuts, and pledges of action in the event of the Tories moving against them.

We ask you to put the following resolution to your trade union/Labour Party branch to be sent to Labour regional and District parties: 'We call on Labour councillors to refuse to implement the Tory cuts, and to refuse to put up rates to offset the effect of the cuts. We pledge our support to the council in taking this stand, and pledge our full support in the event of the Tories trying to take punitive action against councillors.'

Fight the cuts now!

This spring's council budget-making is a crucial time for the fight against the cuts. If Labour Councils are to defy the Tories, active support from the labour movement must be mobilised, summoning up the power to defeat the Tories.

This appeal for support has already gained a few initial signatories over the holiday period. In the coming weeks a campaign will be mounted for further signatures, and for organisations to pass the draft resolution in the appeal. [Send news to John Bloxam, c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16].

Initial signatories: Jimmy Burnett, John Mulvey (Lothian Regional Council), Des Loughney [sec. Edinburgh Trades Council], Alex Wood (LP Scottish Exec.); Patrick Kodikara, John Sweeney (Hackney Council); Jenny Morris (Islington Council); James Ryan (convenor, Islington cuts campaign); Stephen Corbishley (CPSA NEC). All signatures in a personal capacity.